

Princess

A series of portraits showing women with tattoos on their faces.

These portraits are painted after the famous photos of Marc Garanger, taken during the war in Algeria, in regroupment camps. The purpose of these photos was to create identity cards, which helped the French army to control the movements of the population. Women were forced to lower their veil in front of soldiers, and experienced these sessions as a rape of their intimacy. These photos are a testimony of this independence war.

I have chosen to work after these photos because, primarily, they moved me. Because they talk about women of my country, whom I identify myself with. My painting is a tribute to them.

My bias is not to denounce the humiliation that suffered these women. It is to get out of the victim role through the re-appropriation of these pictures. I wanted to show the beauty of these women, restore their dignity and say that despite the forced unveiling, these women still are princesses.

I would like to quote a sentence of Hannah Arendt, drawn from her book *Responsibility and Judgment*.

"Thinking and remembering *is the* human way of striking roots, of taking one's place in the world into which we all arrive as strangers."

Thinking, I can't help remembering. Remembering the heritage of History I've received. An history that I haven't lived through, but that makes me think.

Hannah Arendt makes me understand the importance of the act to think and to remember. It was something I knew, but that I could not express, except in my art. This importance goes further than the fact to strike roots into the world. It prepares the world to change.

What I feel very deeply is that my artistic work is a part of the movement which is creating connections. My work comes from me, talks about my country, Algeria, about things that move me. But in the end, the result is not identifiable to a particular person. In the "Princess" series, one can look beautiful women, adorned with gold, who sometimes have a hard look in their eyes. But essentially, everyone can identify with them. That's what creates connections. They belong to humanity.

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