

Randa Maroufi

What do we see in Randa Maroufi's *Reconstitutions*? Street scenes in Tangier and Tétouan today, girls in tight T-shirts followed by swarms of gesticulating boys, exchanges of gazes, and hands, which convey sexual tension, a violence held back that the viewer is urged to reconstruct.

These photographs – for which Randa Maroufi claims the influence of Canadian director Jeff Wall's documentary fictions – are carefully choreographed and possess an undeniable cinematic quality. Albeit they convey movement they are not taken from life, one suspects, hence this sense of confusion: how much of it is staged, and how much is truth? Their subjects are all drawn from images of sexual harassment found on the Internet, but there is no way to tell the difference between the original scenes and those produced by the artist.

Born in Casablanca in 1987, a Fine Arts graduate at Tetouan and Angers and currently studying for a post-graduate qualification at Fresnoy, Randa Maroufi belongs to this generation that grew up in an era dominated by images. She collects them with as much eagerness as suspicion, and ceaselessly questions their veracity. "I have problems believing the media, so-called evidence and sound recordings", she explains. "I did a lot of work on image processing when I was studying, so I am aware of the wide scope for manipulation". Randa Maroufi prefers to put her ambiguous fictions in the service of reality, and the field of her experimentation encompasses the occupation of public space and gender issues, of which she highlights the founding mechanisms.

In *La Grande Safae*, a film shot in 2014 in Tangier, she puts a childhood memory under scrutiny seemingly questioning its accuracy. It was inspired by a character that was the object of much fascination for the artist, la Grande Safae, a transvestite who worked as a domestic employee for her family for several years. The film features real and fake witnesses sharing true and false memories, and various incarnations of Safae: masculine, feminine, graceful, cheerful or sad, all of which manage to avoid the easy trap of exoticism. "Mom saw something suspended, something descending", we hear a voice-over comment whisper in the soundtrack to the film. "I looked into his mess, but I found nothing", says another. It is precisely this "nothing", this unsolved puzzle that engulfs the artist and the viewers' imagination.

In September, Randa Maroufi will present at Fresnoy another project inspired by images gathered from social networks, a popular series of selfies with young Moroccans posing with knives for them. "Some do it to show off, others are real criminals. There was a police investigation, and arrests were made. But even if these images are an unhealthy and absurd form of assertiveness, everything has become staged in our lives. So I ask myself this question: are these young people really dangerous?"

Elisabeth Franck-Dumas, 2015.

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