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60 SECONDS WITH

Artist Adel Abdessemed

The Paris-based conceptualist on upside-down drawing, his favorite neighborhood spots and the romantic reason he always wears blue pants



Jason Schmidt/David Zwirner, New York/London

AGENT PROVOCATEUR | Adel Abdessemed

(2014).

JUST STEPS FROM the fashionable quais of the Canal Saint-Martin, Adel Abdessemed's Paris studio is teeming with sketches, fabrication plans and prototypes. Tabletop maquettes of exhibition spaces around the globe are adorned with to-scale models of the artist's recent work. The world is about to see a lot of Mr. Abdessemed.

This is an artist who likes to think and work big—he uses entire airplanes or a foundered boat the way a sculptor might use clay or wood. His recently opened survey, "Adel Abdessemed Je suis innocent," at the Centre Pompidou (through Jan. 7), greets visitors with intertwined passenger planes ("Telle mère tel fils," 2008) and a larger-than-life sculpture depicting French soccer star Zinedine Zidane's infamous head-butt ("Coup de tête," 2012). Meanwhile, the 41-year-old artist is working with German publisher Steidl and his New York-based gallerist, David Zwirner, on a multi-volume catalogue while preparing major solo exhibitions for Mr. Zwirner's new gallery space in London (2013), the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow (2014) and the Yuz Museum in Shanghai

My art is an extension of myself—not only conceptually, but physically as well. When I make a drawing while hanging upside-down from a helicopter, I become part of the medium.



© Adel Abdessemed, ADAGP Paris 2012/David Zwirner, New York/London

'Coup de tête'



Le Verre Volé

Marie Genel



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To work, I need the noise and presence of my family. I have four daughters: Ksu, Elle, Rio and Elektra, who are welcome in my studio. One will be doing arabesques, the other flying around like a bird and another on my knee. None of it breaks my concentration, but we do have to look out for the youngest, who is only 2.

I always wear blue pants. Bright cobalt is the color of typical workmen's pants. It's also the color of the Mediterranean. But for me the color symbolizes something different. I was wearing this blue when I met my wife, Julie, and she loved it. So I made her a promise—I didn't have a ring, but I vowed I would wear blue from that day on. Yves Saint Laurent has been making these blue pants for me for years.

While I work, I listen to everything from Mahler to Burmese harp music to Charles Ives.

I don't distinguish between works I make with my own hands and projects that require outside manufacture. Historically there have always been artisans and technicians involved with the fabrication process.

I like to give and receive gifts as a gesture of friendship, but I rarely buy things for myself. To paraphrase one of my favorite poets, Vladimir Mayakovsky, When an artist or a poet has nothing more to say, he collects.

For poetry, I love Paul Celan. I often come back to Nietzsche. A writer I enjoy, who is also a good friend, is Gilles Clément. He writes fascinating essays about gardens and public squares.

An artist I would have enjoyed meeting is Barnett Newman.

A great local haunt is Le Pont Tournant, which I discovered by chance. I was walking by and the wonderful Raï music drew me in. It's charming and lively but also a bit raw—sort of a *coin perdu*.

I often eat lunch at Le Verre Volé, which is around the corner from my home/studio. They serve inventive

'Telle mère tel fils'

dishes but nothing overly complicated.

One of my first memories is from when I was about 3, in Algeria. I saw a poster advertising the circus with an image of a lion putting its mouth over the head of the trainer. This image was my first experience of art.

—Edited from an interview by Mara Hoberman

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