

“Performance St’art”, Moufida Fedhila
“Super-Tunisian”, still has some work ahead!

By Narjès Torchani

Tunisian artists are often accused of living in an ivory tower, isolated from the reality of their society. Just like Tunisians who were muzzled for a long time, art in Tunisia was struggling to keep up with the street and the news. This separation can certainly not be lifted overnight, but artists of all disciplines, must find a way to support the people in their transition through citizen artistry. But the street must be prepared and accepts to be part of this process. Among initiatives taken in this direction, one was made last Thursday by visual artist Moufida Fedhila. Named "Performance St'art" the idea is to respond to the distress of the street in facing the political blur the country is going through. In order to do so, the artist has opted for a campaign for "Super-Tunisian", a politically perfect character, the only one capable of saving souls. Above all this symbolic operation begins with text and ends with an action. "Today, faced with the political parties and the transitional government proposals that are far from concrete and do not meet the Tunisian people's will, " Super Tunisian "is back to decide his political future." The project was introduced with these exact words.

"Super-Tunisian" is presented as a being endowed with super strength, vision, speed and memory, allowing him to build a super country.

You can see there a way of trivializing politics or to mock it but essentially a desire to bring art to the streets, which is Moufida Fedhila' motivation since she wants to stick to the news. Dressed in the colors of Superman, she began to realize her performance in front of the Municipal Theater, carrying placards urging to vote for Super Tunisian by choosing a blue card.

"Early and transparent elections in the City" is the proposal from the artist to passersby who have been curious and eager to understand, with a desire to react and play the game, under the eye of photographers and cameramen present at the scene.

But the street is difficult and unpredictable. Everything can be found in it. This performance came close to paying a price. Quickly it attracted supporters, but also intruders. "Two men who looked like thugs", as confirmed by the artist, came to try to stop the march of "Super Tunisian". Their motives began with a "What's that?" and end with "Do not stay here" and "Enough of demonstrations and sit-ins". Another individual, a Salafi also reacted very badly to the performance. In trying to explain the principle, Moufida Fedhila was faced, according to her, with a sign of the cross on the face. She then changed locations, Still in Avenue Habib Bourguiba, reviving the "vote". Once again, many participants had fun but also protesters who basically did not see the value of such action. After a while, the "thugs" reappeared

but this time they tore down the sign "Super Tunisian", bullied photographers and cameramen and dispersed the crowd.

A witness to the scene, who was also attacked, artist and gallery host Mahmoud Chalbi published a text on Facebook, in which he explains what happened. "I was caught up and called a gang leader by the same characters, in the company of plainclothes cops, to be pushed and shoved away and finally relieved of my compact digital camera that was in the outside pocket of my jacket!" As for Moufida Fedhila, the performance and incident led her to the conclusion that Tunisian citizens are willing to go further in art and accept that it is shown in the streets. At the same time, she said, "we are still in a police state. We cannot know who exactly these people are". Nevertheless, she remains determined to continue in conceptual art, whatever the situation. "We were peaceful and did not bother anybody," she finally declared.

In this both decisive and critical milestone we are living in, this incident is revealing since it is a reflection of a society in transition, learning about democracy and freedoms. For the part they play, artists must have their place in the process. Obviously this cannot be done smoothly, but not enough to see reappear elements straight out of pre-14th of January Tunisia.

["La Presse de Tunisie", Tunis, May 2011](#)