

PRESS RELEASE

# PASCAL HACHEM

## YOU ALWAYS WANT WHAT THE OTHER HAS (EDITION 2013)

OPENING, FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2013 H 7.00 - 9.00 PM  
28 SEPTEMBER – 7 DECEMBER 2013

FEDERICA SCHIAVO GALLERY  
PIAZZA MONTEVECCHIO 16 ROMA

Federica Schiavo Gallery is delighted to present Pascal Hachem's second solo show titled *You Always Want What the Other Has (Edition 2013)*. The exhibition is largely based on the re-incarnation of commonly used tools from both the agricultural and industrial worlds. Hachem affirmed that he was "inspired by aspects of everyday life in the city"<sup>1</sup>. Thus there is a sense of familiarity in his installations, objects and performances. All speak a language that is comprehensible by most people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even those who are not accustomed to what we call "contemporary art". Hachem's work might also be a reaction towards the intellectual sophistication of some cutting edge artists who feel the need of quoting German philosophers in each sentence, even during informal conversations:

"Art is becoming more and more for an elite - for selective public - for selective titles. Plenty of theory and less of application which makes the art world with plenty of coding system and we are losing the tangible aspect to do and change things with art!"<sup>2</sup>

Revisiting one decade of Hachem's interventions presented in Beirut, Amman, Rome, London, and Dubai, to name a few, one can be amazed how ordinary items from our lives seem to be leading the path. Food<sup>3</sup>, tableware<sup>4</sup>, furniture<sup>5</sup>, garments<sup>6</sup>, underwear<sup>7</sup>, shoes<sup>8</sup>, medical equipment<sup>9</sup>, tools<sup>10</sup>, matchboxes<sup>11</sup>, vending machines<sup>12</sup>, plastic bags<sup>13</sup>, tissue packs<sup>14</sup> and even residues<sup>15</sup> are all an integral part of his work. Finding his need in groceries and hardware stores<sup>16</sup>, Hachem plays with toys that previously have been appreciated by Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys and Arte Povera. In *You Always Want What the Other Has*, rakes, hammers, garden forks, cleaning brushes and shovels have their sticks turned on a 180-degree angle. Much like the bicycle wheel Marcel Duchamp fixed on a stool, a century ago, these items are no longer suitable for use. In the artist's words, the "direction switch of the worker's tool makes it useless". Losing his operational apparatus, the worker loses everything. "The shifting of direction equals the shifting of power."<sup>17</sup> In *Modern Times* (1936), Charlie Chaplin expressed his concerns towards alienation of masses in the industrial society. Today's Neoliberal era goes far beyond alienation and slavery: masses are deprived from everything.

*You Always Want What the Other Has (Edition 2013)* also features – as previous presentations by Hachem - items relating to food. One can see a fork into knife; a slice's been cut from a cooking pot and an empty spoon on top of a heap of flour... *You Always Want What the Other Has* is clearly a reflection on greed. Every human being wants to eat his neighbor's piece of bread. Every corporation wants to eat their own employees, as well as competitive corporations.

Every empire wants to eat the rest of the world. The idea was set, back to 1557, in a spectacular engraving by Pieter van der Heyden, after a drawing by Pieter Bruegel the Elder: *Big Fish Eat Little Fish*.

Alongside food, oil is the other form of wealth present in *You Always Want What the Other Has (Edition 2013)*. A petrol gun is installed on four stands -resembling an animal-, with two chains -a chained animal! Each side of the latter is carrying one of two words: TOTAL / POSSESSION. Another piece consists of two petrol guns turned towards each other, in a dual posture. Back to 1991, *High Moon*, an installation by Rebecca Horn consisted of two Winchester mechanized rifles face each other over a canal

<sup>1</sup> James Scarborough, "An Interview with Lebanese artist, Pascal Hachem, from London's Selma Feriani Gallery, Art Dubai 2013", The Huffington Post, March 21, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Levantine sesame flatbread (kaak kaak, 2004), pita bread (aysh, 2007). Although based on chicken feet that are improper for consumption, nausea (2003) is directly related to food.

<sup>4</sup> Plates, trays, glasses (banquet of laws, 2007), silverware, plates (kill me – eat me, 2008), forks (slow food, 2010)

<sup>5</sup> Bench (4 meters bench, 2007), table top (under the table, under the bridge, 2010)

<sup>6</sup> Various garments (how to cross a checkpoint in an express way, 2007), shirt (split, 2008)

<sup>7</sup> Y fronts (it's hush hush, 2010), (au suivant, 2010), (please touch, 2010)

<sup>8</sup> Pair of shoes (les us, 2002), (how to cross a checkpoint in an express way, 2007), (right distance, 2010)

<sup>9</sup> Surgical masks (contact sheet, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Hammers (I'll race you, 2008), scissors (d.i.y., 2009), knives (keep sharpening your knife and it will blunt, 2009)

<sup>11</sup> (look me in the eyes, 2010), (& co, 2010), (destiny, 2010), (smatching, 2010)

<sup>12</sup> (vending machine, 2006)

<sup>13</sup> (chout, 2010)

<sup>14</sup> (under the table, under the bridge, 2010)

<sup>15</sup> (colors notebook, 2006), (residues, 2010)

<sup>16</sup> He even found petrol guns at Karout, a hardware / department store in Beirut's Southern Suburb (interview with the author, September 2, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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filled of red paint. Hachem's petrol guns are engaged against each other, ready for killing. On another hand, their dual crime forms a loop and somehow impossible. These are fixed to the same pipe that is being hanged by a tie. Hanged like a criminal, is it plausible to keep on killing? Hanged by a tie. Consequently, the tie of "white-collar" is executing the "blue-collar" oil workers. The history of oil is, and has always been, a history of violence.

Lebanon, Hachem's homeland, is part of the Arab World- or what the colonial powers named the "Middle East". This part of the planet has witnessed the largest amount of armed conflicts in modern and contemporary history. The discovery and exploitation of oil is certainly no stranger to that pitiful situation<sup>18</sup>. At the time of writing this text, new missiles await to be launched and fly over our heads<sup>19</sup>. Or, perhaps, crash on our heads. When war rocked Lebanon in July 2006, Pascal Hachem was stuck in Switzerland. During his momentary exile, he produced a series of artworks featuring images of weapons. In a region where peace is more utopian than playing golf on Planet Mars, the presence of guns and other violent devices such as his terrifying glove pierced by a knife, fits perfectly in the artist's catalogue of ordinary things; amidst pita bread and shoes.

*Gregory Buchakjian*  
Art Historian and Photographer  
Beirut, September 7, 2013

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<sup>18</sup> In *War and other (Impossible) Possibilities. Thoughts on Arab History and Contemporary Art*, Alarm Editions, Beirut, 2012, the present author displays the list of armed conflicts in the region from WWII to day (pp. 47-48).

<sup>19</sup> This text was written during the days Western countries were considering military strikes on Syria. People in Lebanon and other neighboring countries were caught in a collective psychosis regarding consequences of these attacks, including the risk of a regional spill of the Syrian War.