

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Emory, Sami, "'From Here to Eternity' Drawings Kiss Censorship Goodbye," *The Creators Project*, November 16, 2015

the
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'From Here to Eternity' Drawings Kiss Censorship Goodbye



On canvases of military tarpaulin and plain paper, with an instrument of black stone, Adel Abdessemed has created nearly 100 drawings exploring the impact of embrace. *From Here to Eternity*, the French-Algerian artist's new show, which opens Sunday at Venus over Los Angeles, is inspired largely by the 1953 Award-winning film of the same name (think: Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr locked in a sea-soaked embrace). Abdessemed's myriad of drawings emulate scenes from the film with a focus on its most tender moments. Several of the works recreate

that epic aforementioned embrace between between Lancaster and Kerr, as the sea crashes over their entwined limbs, while others depict couples kissing through cloth, black lines blending into a smudgy smooch, and of course the film's wonderfully incidental owl.

The story behind the sensual cinematic scenes, however, is deeply autobiographical. Growing up in Algeria, Abdessemed saw films, like the mid-century classic, only through the highly filtered lens of governmental censorship. In fact, any kind of physical relationship between a man and a woman—a brush of hands, a hug, especially a kiss—was strictly forbidden and immediately edited out. But how does one watch a film like *From Here to Eternity* drained of its kisses? This is the precise question which haunts Abdessemed's prolific premiere exhibition. As Francesco Bonami explains in the catalogue which complements the show, "Kiss censorship is the cornerstone of Abdessemed's new series of drawings." Also in the catalogue, H el ene Cixous adds, "Perhaps all of Adel's work is in the image of the Kiss-Image; it bumps into us, knocks us over, rolls us frantic to the edge of the universe, to the beginnings, where you I the sea the earth thrash about in the ecstasy of genesis."

She adds, "And what about the owl? He-she watches us. Without blinking, with a tranquilly unlimited gaze. Until we understand it is consent to mortality that is holding us by the eyes. Take time, interrupt its course and you will see."