

cousboy - Life was ok.

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'works that led to the creation of the meme showing Rihanna and Beyoncé looking unimpressed and captioned: when you show up to the gallery and it's just another male white artist making paintings about inner turmoil.'

This phrase partially sums up cousboy's first solo-exhibition *Life was ok*. cousboy deals with one aspect of said inner turmoil in two small gouache pieces, *Too \$hy to fuck. cousboy 2016* and *50mg. cousboy 2016*. He does so in the cynical and excessive self-exposing manner so typical to a generation that deals with and addresses virtually all emotions through the creation and use of memes.

A thematically similar series, composed of three Microsoft Paint illustrations featuring falcons feasting on their prey, contain a preposterousness that becomes relatable through their titles: *I think I'm cool enough, but am I cruel enough?* and *Am I cruel enough, for you?*. The series questions the admiration and celebration of certain character traits – more openly visible than ever thanks to social media – while admitting the artist's own attraction to them at the same time.

The consideration of reproduction, replication and citation as their own categories of creative production is also a typical trait among the internet-affine, originating from a copy paste culture. Prone to hyperbolism, cousboy may cite Jean-Michel Basquiat's drawing *Marlboro Man*, already a caricature of one of advertisement's most successful figures, in his own portrait of Algerian islamic terrorist, bandit and smuggler Mokhtar Belmokhtar, commonly known as *Mister Marlboro* (*Mister Marlboro*. iPad drawing).

In *Arabs be like...*, he reproduces a photograph of Hamas members dragging an executed suspected spy through the streets of Gaza, adding the crude yellow faces, Charlie Hebdo's Charb used in his caricatures of Prophet Muhammad and other Muslims (cousboy consciously omits using Charb's caricature of Muhammad). He thereby juxtaposes reality and cliché and adds a further level of exaggeration by making the image a meme by adding the popular caption.

Combined with an advertisement found on a porn website suggesting the advertised web application will enable the user to do the seemingly impossible – to sleep with a veiled Arab woman without being married to her – these images combined shed light on circulating depictions of Arabs.

In *God, Nation, King I-III*, a tripartite acrylic series, and in the various iPhone- and iPad-drawings of *cahier marocain*, the confrontations between reality and cliché are voiced again. Fragmental collages of elements of an Arabic/North African culture, lifestyle and its perceptions in the Western countries bespeak cousboy's own Moroccan Swiss background. The mere imitation and portrayal of certain aspects convey his criticism while debating his entitlement to even voice said critique.