

# ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS / 03-28-2016



*As a Black Man, 2013–14, series of ten C-prints, 23 1/2 x 16".*

**Mounir Fatmi**

## THE MARRAKECH MUSEUM FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL ARTS

El Badii Palace

January 30–May 30

There are too many faces in *Who Is Joseph Anton*, 2012. This psychedelic amalgamation of literary giants includes Salman Rushdie, Anton Chekhov, and Joseph Conrad. They may be three unique personalities, but Mounir Fatmi intends for them to be just one: Joseph Anton, a character who exists only in Rushdie's mind, a pseudonym that the besieged writer uses to divert attention from his real identity in order to survive. On the opposite wall, a series of ten photographs document a man's transformation from light to dark skinned in *As a Black Man*, 2014. The concept of "real" identity discomforts viewers and triggers questions: In which direction is he transitioning? Is he disappearing? Is this more than just one man? The answer to this last inquiry seems to be affirmative, and here, too, are multiple personalities. Motivated by his desire to understand the Other, American journalist John Howard Griffin—the subject of the portraits—attempted to turn himself from white to black. But how powerful is a staging of identity addressed only in black and white photographs? There are more psychological shades of gray to unpack in this intellectual interrogation.

Peering at the surgery in the operating theater depicted in the photograph *The Blinding Light*, 2013, there is no gore, but rather uncomfortably, the doctors' heads have been replaced with those of classical saints. In what reads like a twisted prayer for the dying, the patient has a saint's head, too. Fatmi's images merge faith, science, and history in a visual narrative that asks the question: Who do you identify with?

— Myrna Ayad