

1388 Safar

SLAVS AND TATARS

The Berlin-based arts collective Slavs and Tatars was commissioned by the École des Beaux Arts to produce a piece commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the general strike and student protests that took over France in May 1968. Their piece titled *1388 Safar* includes an image of the River Seine overlaid with a billboard that includes the number 1388 in the Hijri calendar (1968). In an eye-catching green and yellow banner that disrupts the forward-moving traffic of cars in the backdrop, the image serves as a visual gesture that calls attention to the untold narratives of Islam in France. While the Seine is commonly referred to as an iconic emblem of Parisian cultural identity, it also carries the elided history of October 17, 1961 (otherwise known as the Paris Massacre of 1961), when French police murdered Algerian protestors during the Algerian War and threw them into the river. By overlaying the number 1968 in the Hijri calendar onto the image of the Seine, Slavs and Tatars weave October 1961 and the history of Algerians into the commemoration of the Paris protests in 1968 as commodified cultural memory. After many years of censorship and denial, the French government only acknowledged the events in 1998, without yet expressing condemnation of the police or taking political responsibility. The French national authorities' continued lack of accountability and refusal to recognize the massacre of 1961 have left details concerning death tolls unclear to this day. Ongoing research estimates that approximately three hundred Algerian protestors died, marking one of the darkest moments in France's colonial history.

SLAVS AND TATARS is an arts collective and a faction of polemics and intimacies devoted to the area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China, known as Eurasia. The collective's practice is based on three activities: exhibitions, producing books, and delivering lecture-performances.



FIGURE 1. Slavs and Tatars, 1388 *Safar* (2018). Digital print on PVC, 24 × 35 cm. Installation view at École des Beaux-Arts, Paris.