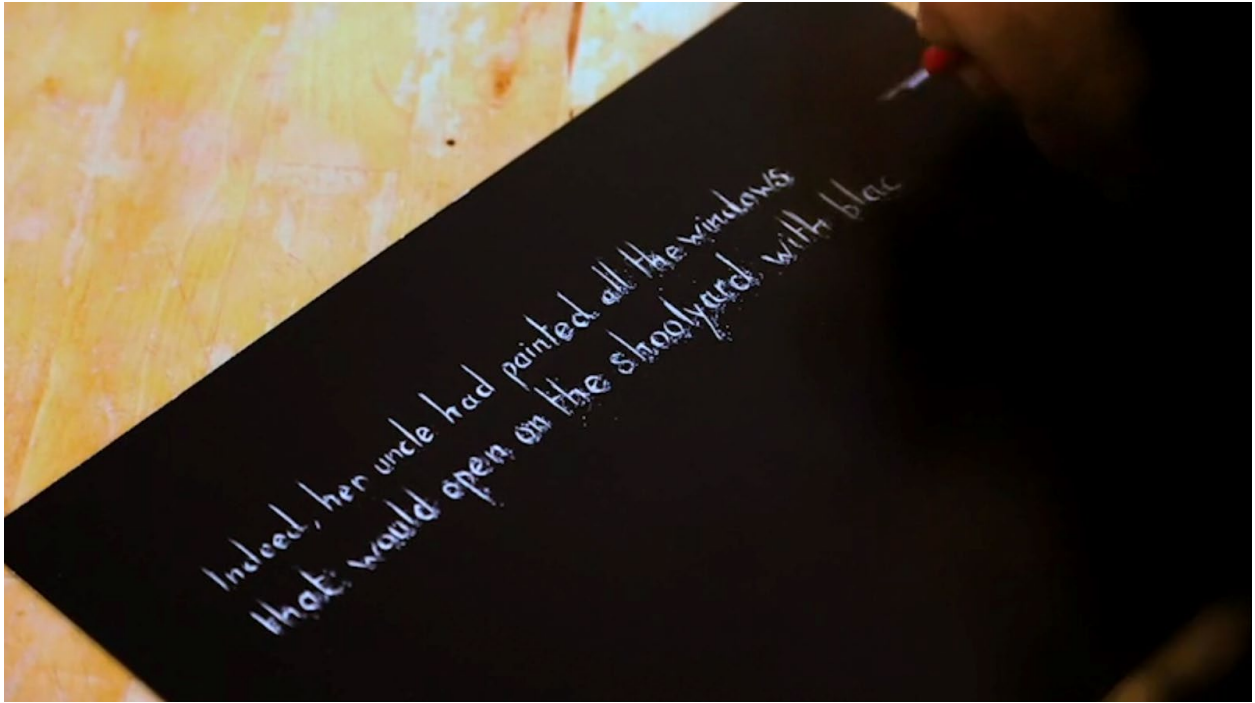


EDUCATOR GUIDE



Kader Attia: A Thread of Light

September 4, 2020 – January 17, 2021



Welcome!

Dear Educators,

We are delighted to bring you Kader Attia at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). The exhibition is on view from September 4, 2020 – January 17, 2021.

In much of his work, Attia shines light on situations of oppression. In this engaging video, we see the artist's hand reveal a story told by his mother. *A Thread of Light* is impactful not only in the story being told, but also in the way it is presented. The sound amplifies his mother's story, becoming a memorial to the absence of visibility and the unspeakable violence that many have witnessed, yet remains impossible to illustrate.

Attia's work lends itself to discussions about empathy and actions that must take place to begin repairing the emotional damage caused by oppression, marginalization, racism, and colonization.

We invite you to explore, create, immerse yourselves, and discover what stories, connections, and lessons can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy!

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kader Attia

- Born in 1970 in Seine Saint-Denis, Dugny, France.
- Spent several years in Congo and in South America.
- Attia believes that through this type of re-appropriation, disparities between superior/inferior, traditional/modern, and exotic/familiar can begin to dissolve.
- Attia's work demonstrates the lasting material and immaterial scars caused by colonization and its insidious spread of influence and control across the present day.
- He compassionately investigates means of repair through his meticulous research, which he presents through works that are intellectually compelling, but also accessible and emotive.
- His videos feel notably collaborative, making space for voices that offer alternative modes of thinking, and of knowledge.
- They demonstrate a curiosity that is not tinged by an outsider's or colonial gaze but defined by an openness to see the world differently, through the eyes of others.



About Attia's work

- Works with installation, sculpture, photography, and video.
- Attia examines the symbiotic relationship between colonizer and colonized, as evinced in visual and cultural borrowings found in cuisine, architecture, and design.
- Many of Attia's videos rely on the interview structure to shed light on the personal accounts of oppressed populations.

Quotes

- "His socio-cultural research has led Kader Attia to the notion of Repair, a concept he has been developing philosophically in his writings and symbolically in his oeuvre as a visual artist. With the principle of Repair being a constant in nature — thus also in humanity —, any system, social institution or cultural tradition can be considered as an infinite process of Repair, which is closely linked to loss and wounds, to recuperation and re-appropriation. Repair reaches far beyond the subject and connects the individual to gender, philosophy, science, and architecture, and involves it in evolutionary processes in nature, culture, myth and history."
-RISD

Vocabulary/Key words

Repair oppression colonialism empathy

Themes

Repair: Here Attia discusses repair as he explores his mother's childhood trauma. After spending 20 years interviewing his mother, he is surprised that she has never spoke of her experience before. This is an example of recognizing past or present trauma and the process of preparing one's self for healing.

Oppression: In the piece, we gain a small understanding for Attia's mother's experience. As a child she was imprisoned by the people entrusted to take care of her. Attia explores the trauma of his mother as he has with other's storied of oppression.

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, "Why not starting something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I'll help you."

By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollack and Rita Rentschler raised \$5000 (about \$93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their "office" consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NYTimes called the structure, "the best new building since the Cold War."

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to "open their minds" to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and

the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC's 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid's first American building and is the first American museum building designed by a woman. Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC's former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.

Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis. Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine's "100 Most Powerful Women," and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World," and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.

RULES AND GUIDELINES

- Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
- We require that there must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.

- No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
- Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
- Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
- Walk throughout all galleries—no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

- Our facility is ADA compliant and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
- Hearing protection is available upon request.
- Fidgets are available upon request.
- Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
- Large text is available upon request.
- Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Contemplation Room.
- For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at sturner@cincycac.org.

ARTWORK DISCUSSIONS

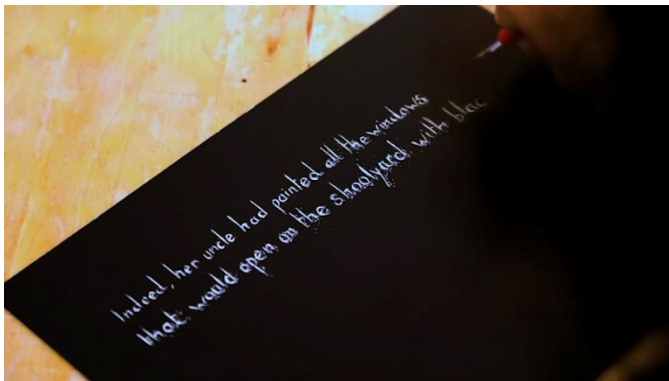
These discussions can occur during and after viewing.

- Where do we see examples of repair within this work? Where do we see it in our own lives or society?
- How does the visual experience of seeing words differ from that of an image?
- How does the material and technique emphasize the story being told?
- In this story by Attia's mother we learn of the environment she was placed in as a child. How does Thread of Light recreate this environment for viewers?
- What role does sound play within Thread of Light? What are words that come to mind when he is scratching and when there is silence?
- The movement/pacing of the piece relies on the labor of digging into the scratch board and the emotional impact of the words being written. Do we see the presence of repair here? If so, how? How does the movement/pacing of the video relate to the process of repair?

LESSON PLAN IDEAS

1. Discuss the importance of listening to other's stories. Have students interview their parents or caregivers. Students could ask for their subject to tell them a story of a time they felt challenged as a child. Have the students write or create an artwork based on their interviews.
2. Discuss the importance of one's choice of material and how it can emphasize the meaning of their artwork. Assign a medium choice project to reinforce this idea.
3. Have the students make their own scratchboard and create artwork on it. There are a few different ways to create a scratchboard that is kid friendly.
 - Using a white cardstock, crayons, paint brush, black tempera, laundry detergent and toothpicks tape down cardstock. Color the card leaving no white behind. Mix 1:1 paint and detergent and layer that mixture on top of the crayon. Once it is dry students can use a toothpick to scratch into the paint revealing the color underneath.
 - Using oil pastels students do a layer of color which is topped by a layer of black. Students can then easily use a toothpick to scratch through the pastel.

ARTWORK AND WALL TEXT INFORMATION



Kader Attia
A Thread of Light, 2019
Digital color video, with sound
9 min. 18 sec.

Introductory Wall Text

Working with installation, sculpture, photography, and video, Kader Attia examines the symbiotic relationship between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and the oppressed. Attia's research-based practice focuses on understanding the individual, national, and

societal wounds shaped by Western imperialism and its aftereffects. *A Thread of Light* (2019) is a nine-minute video wherein Attia explores his personal family histories of trauma through the childhood recollections of his mother. Refusing to depict these untold sufferings with images or articulate them verbally, her memories are instead mediated through the artist, who incises them, word by word, into black scratchboard.

Many of Attia's videos rely on an interview structure to shed light on the personal accounts of persecuted and displaced populations. In the film, *Héroes Heridos* (2018), for example, Attia used first-person narratives of immigrants and activists to document the plight of asylum seekers, shedding light on issues related to citizenship, migration, and political nativism. However, while Attia has interviewed and filmed his mother for more than 20 years, *A Thread of Light* withholds that archival material. Rendering her story with text alone, Attia rejects showing her likeness, questioning the conventions of representation itself. The film's abrasive soundtrack, which alternates between silence and intense scraping, references the repeated acts of transgression performed by his young mother, as she scratched away the black paint her caregiver had applied to all windows in the house where she was raised. Although a minor offense, her gesture serves as a symbol of resilience and resistance against gender-based violence and the silencing of victims of abuse. Attia's video is a censure against structures of oppression and a testament to the limits of image-based modes of visibility.

RESOURCES

<http://kaderattia.de/kader-attia-the-museum-of-emotion-the-hayward-gallery-london-by-julia-schouten-2019/>

<http://kaderattia.de/biography/>

<https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/kader-attia/biography>

<https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/kader-attia/videos>

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Ohio Common Core Links

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards>

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards>

Kentucky Common Core Links

<https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx>

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf

Indiana Standards Links

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards>

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts>

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change

<http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives>