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LAUSANNE

Kader Attia



PRESS RELEASE

MUSÉE CANTONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DE LAUSANNE

You are cordially invited to a press conference on
Thursday 21 May at 11 a.m. to mark the inauguration of the exhibition

Kader Attia.
Injuries Are Here
22 May – 30 August 2015

in the presence of the artist.

**GENERAL
INFORMATION**

Opening reception Thursday 21 May 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

Curator Nicole Schweizer

Press contact Loïse Cuendet, loise.cuendet@vd.ch
Tel.: +41 (0)21 316 34 48

To download press material: www.mcba.ch, press relations
Username: mcba-presse / Password: gpresse

Address Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne
Palais de Rumine, place de la Riponne 6
CH-1014 Lausanne
Tel.: +41 (0)21 316 34 45
Fax.: +41 (0)21 316 34 46
info.beaux-arts@vd.ch
www.mcba.ch

Opening hours Tuesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Saturday – Sunday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Monday : closed, except
Whit Monday, 25 May : 11 a.m – 5 p.m.
8 June : 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admissions Adults: CHF 10.–
Pensioners, students, apprentices: CHF 8.–
Under 16: free
1st Saturday of the month : free

Access Metro M2: station Riponne – Maurice Béjart
Bus 1, 2: stop at Rue Neuve
Bus 7, 8: stop at Riponne – Maurice Béjart

Special Event *Objectif gare*
5 – 14 June 2015
www.polemuseal.ch

KADER ATTIA

Injuries Are Here

22 May – 30 August 2015

THE EXHIBITION

The Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts is hosting a major exhibition showcasing the French-Algerian artist Kader Attia (born in 1970 in Dugny, near Paris, now lives and works in Berlin and Algiers). The event, curated in close collaboration with the artist himself, is his first solo exhibition in Switzerland.

Kader Attia draws on a broad range of media from installations to photography and video for his striking explorations of clashes and exchanges between culture, politics, and identity. His artistic research is heavily influenced by his own experience of growing up in France and Algeria and time spent as an adult in Venezuela and Congo. His work offers a poetic yet highly explicit reading of the relationships between Western thought and non-Western cultures, particularly through architecture, the human body, history, and culture.

Kader Attia's work over a span of nearly two decades reveals a growing preoccupation with the issue of *repair*, understood in its twofold meaning of repairing an object or healing a wound and making recompense for the harm done. This explains the significance in his oeuvre of the object and the archive as tangible traces of History and of wounds that demand reparation. He turns the installation space not only into a memorial space, but also a place for rethinking the intrinsic bonds linking political, personal, and aesthetic (hi)stories that at first glance might appear to be unconnected. The Lausanne exhibition offers a rich panorama of Attia's oeuvre, from his installations, videos, and slide shows to his canvases and collages.

Kader Attia is a well-established name in the contemporary art world, drawing international attention at the fiftieth Venice Biennale in 2003, the eighth Lyon Biennale in 2005, and dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel in 2012, alongside numerous solo exhibitions in Boston, Beirut, Berlin, Paris, New York, London, and elsewhere. Yet to date there has been no solo exhibition of his work in Switzerland. The Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne is delighted to be hosting the first exhibition to showcase Kader Attia's art in the country as part of its series of solo exhibitions devoted to major contemporary artists, with past events including artists of the stature of Tom Burr, Alfredo Jaar, Renée Green, Nalini Malani, and Esther Shalev-Gerz.

THE CATALOGUE

Kader Attia

The catalogue is a major reference work in French and English, edited by Nicole Schweizer, with essays by Noémie Etienne (Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York) and Kobena Mercer (Department of the History of Art, Yale University, New Haven), and an interview with the artist by Monique Jeudy-Ballini and Brigitte Derlon (CNRS, Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, Collège de France, Paris).

Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne & JRP | Ringier, Zurich 2015.

Price: CHF 45.- / after the exhibition: CHF 50.-

Order direct from the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts (postage and packing charges apply)

EXHIBITION GUIDE

ROOM 1

The exhibition, curated in close collaboration with Kader Attia, features works from the past decade. The visit is not arranged chronologically, though the emphasis is on the artist's more recent work, including pieces created specifically for the exhibition.

The first work on display is ***Inspiration-Conversation (2010)***, a video diptych showing men and women facing each other in profile, each blowing hard into an empty plastic bottle. The soundtrack is of the men and women breathing in and out and the plastic expanding and contracting, forming a wordless conversation of gestures in which an everyday item becomes a musical instrument, a sculpture, and an extension of the body. The videos, shot in Douala, Cameroon, fill the space with the sound of breathing; they encompass many of the most characteristic aspects of Kader Attia's work – the dialectics of emptiness and void, of absence signifying presence, the relationship between the individual and the other, the body and its environment, everyday objects and sculpture. In the words of the artist, «we must rediscover our vital, repetitive, orgasmic movements: a cry, a breath, a movement. Reappropriation is a natural gesture. This reappropriation will take place through the absorption and 'translation' of everyday objects». *Inspiration-Conversation* thus foreshadows the way the rest of the exhibition explores the key issues of reappropriation and reparation.

ROOM 2

The first work visitors see on entering room 2 is one of Kader Attia's most recent installations, ***Asesinos! Asesinos! (2014)***. The work consists of over a hundred doors split in two, placed in a capital A shape, all pointing in the same direction like a crowd on the verge of surging forward. *Asesinos! Asesinos!* evokes dispossession, barriers, imprisonment, and at the same time protests against them. The work's anti-establishment voice is strengthened by the presence of megaphones installed over almost half the doors, creating a silent clamour within the exhibition space, contrasting with the sound of breathing in room 1. The absence of sound adumbrates other voids in Kader Attia's oeuvre, such as the lines traced in a swathe of couscous grain to form the negative image of a town plan (room 6) and the prosthetic limbs signifying missing legs in the next work in room 2, *Artificial Nature*.

Artificial Nature (2014) consists of a collection of prosthetic legs dating from the two World Wars, arranged in an endless circle on the ground. The limbs bear witness to wartime injuries while acting as sculptures in their own right, echoing the white marble busts on display opposite, which represent soldiers who suffered terrible facial disfigurement on the battlefields of the First World War, «repaired» with the meagre medical means to hand (***Repair, Culture's Agency, 2014***). The artist here draws on the formal vocabulary of classical sculpture, but far from depicting heroic figures with smooth-skinned features, he confronts visitors with violent traces of disfigurement as tangible reminders of barbaric warfare. Other sculptures set such scars up in comparison with African masks to explore their physical and symbolic similarities, following on from Attia's monumental work for dOCUMENTA (13), *The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures (2012)*, a slide show of which is shown in room 8.

ROOM 3

The Culture of Fear, An Invention of Evil (2013) exposes the mechanisms of the fear of the Other, both today and in colonial times. The installation consists of a succession of shelves filled with newspapers dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for the most part, with some contemporary additions. Most of the illustrations, chosen for their scenes from colonial history, depict non-white men – Africans, Arabs, Berbers, Asians, Native Americans, and so on – on

the point of committing some heinous crime or act of violence, their victims being exclusively white, and mainly women. Depictions of «savages» as beasts and monsters were common currency in the booming late-nineteenth-century news media, which saw its role as promoting the colonial mission to bring civilisation to the benighted parts of the globe. As Kader Attia says, «People living in the colonising countries or even in the capitals of the colonies got all their ideas about the world from the caricatures on the covers, depicting the treacherous Arab with a knife between his teeth, the man-eating Negro, the inscrutable Oriental with a taste for torture. [...] I found them through various networks of vintage newsprint collectors. Some I found on line, some in flea markets in London, Berlin, Brussels, and Paris, and I started collecting them. And the more I collected them, the more I learned about the extent to which racism became prevalent in iconography. [...] Since 9/11, the Western world, which was previously focused on its Socialist enemy in the east, has changed propaganda: the new enemy in the media is Islam. Not for the first time... the politics of fear, which has always been in existence – look at the Terror in Robespierre's day – are now focused once more on the age-old enemy of the Christians, dating back to the Crusades. It absolutely has to be pointed up so that it can be eradicated”.

ROOM 4 The room is designed as a showcase for photographs and collages created specially for the occasion, making it the key focal point of the exhibition. Kader Attia's work in photography underpins his entire oeuvre, as reflected by one of his earlier works, *The Landing Strip* (2000), a set of 160 photographs of Algerian transsexuals and transvestites living in exile in Paris, where the artist spent two years working with them on a project recording their lives. The result is a highly intimate set of photographs that display considerable political awareness. The light boxes reveal the same centres of interest that are at the heart of Kader Attia's oeuvre – the body, identity, architecture, and history – in photographs of a transsexual in a graveyard, of traditional earth architecture, of a child who seems to have sprung straight from some antique fable against a backdrop of Algerian ruins. Similarly, the collages ***Modern Architecture Genealogy* (2015)**, focus on the relationship between the body and architecture, and thereby issues of reparation and reappropriation. The artist uses collage to juxtapose reproductions of modernist architecture, North African earth buildings, and photographs of transsexuals within the same space of representation, thereby positing a relationship between the bodies seeking the «reparation» of their initial gender assignment and Utopian architecture inspired by the ideal human body in Le Corbusier's Modulor. Other works spark a three-way dialogue between old reproductions of facially disfigured soldiers from the Great War, African masks broken or damaged by the passage of time, and Greco-Roman marble busts disfigured or broken by iconoclasts over history. Kader Attia in fact sees the choice of collage as a medium, placing images alongside each other, as a form of reparation in its own right, creating a third term by positing a relationship between two realities.

ROOM 5 The installation ***Dispossession* (2013)** in room 5 sets out to question the role of Christianity in colonising Africa, underlining the fact that the Vatican has a collection of over eighty thousand objects brought back by missionaries during the colonial period. A slide show features all those Kader Attia was able to photograph in the Vatican over the course of several visits he was given permission for – some forty objects in total, shown alongside photographs of objects held by the motherhouses of various European missions. The video that completes the installation consists of four interviews Kader Attia conducted with an anthropologist, an art historian, a priest, and a lawyer respectively, discussing the implications of such collections and the questions they raise about the legitimacy of ownership when it comes to objects from other cultures and how they came to

join the collections in the first place.

The second work on display in room 5, **Colonial Modernity (2014)**, is a reproduction of two history paintings, Horace Vernet's *First Mass in Kabylia* (1854, in the Lausanne museum's own collection) and Victor Meirelles's *First Mass in Brazil* (1861), inspired by the first. Vernet's monumental painting, produced for display in Paris where it was to serve as Second Empire propaganda, is a reminder that evangelisation was one of the major arguments used to legitimise Western imperialism. The mass that gave the painting its title was held by the French in Kabylia on June 14, 1853 to mark the twentieth anniversary of their Algerian colony. Kader Attia joins the two works with traditional metal staples made by a Senegalese blacksmith, signifying both the harm inflicted by colonialism and the potential for reparation.

ROOM 6 Kader Attia's interest in the genealogy of modern architecture in the colonial and post-colonial context led him to start exploring one of the central themes of his oeuvre: reappropriation. Reappropriation of a history some of whose participants have been dispossessed; reappropriation of the complexity of exchanges, influences, and hybridisation. **Untitled (Couscous) (2009)** offers a subtle play on the modernist appropriation of the forms of vernacular Algerian architecture by recreating an aerial view of the town of Ghardaïa out of couscous, the staple North African dish. The work underlines the debt owed by Le Corbusier, who stayed in Ghardaïa for five weeks in 1933, and more broadly by modernist architecture in general to traditional North African architecture, particularly that of the M'Zab valley in Algeria.

Two years previously, the artist filmed **Oil and Sugar (2007)**, a short looped video showing a white cubic architectural structure collapsing progressively as black oil is poured over it. The white cube evokes both modernist architecture and the shape of the Ka'aba in Mecca, in whose direction Muslims pray; it can also be read as a reference to the «white cube» of the exhibition space. The materials used, symbolising global trade networks, thus combine with the architectural references to create a paradoxical, troubling work exploring the links between architecture, religion, economy, and art.

ROOM 7 The series of busts carved from wood presented in room 7, **Culture, Another Nature Repaired (2014)**, was created in collaboration with traditional craftsmen in Bamako, Mali, and Brazzaville, Congo. The works are based on photographs of facially disfigured soldiers from the Great War, offering a new angle on cultural transfers and exchanges between Africa and Europe. The busts evoke early-twentieth-century Expressionist sculpture – a reminder of the fact that the great modernists of Western art history sought inspiration in the Other, with the German Expressionists and artists such as Braque and Picasso displaying a particular fascination for African statues. Here, the Other gazes back at Western men and their savage appetite for destruction. Bearing in mind that the Great War was the first truly global conflict, that many of the nations involved had their own colonies in North and sub-Saharan Africa and recruited vast numbers of soldiers from them, that imperialism in its various guises was a major issue at stake, and that the more or less long-term consequences on the colonies after the war was nothing less than disastrous, then Kader Attia's work is highly relevant. The busts also refer to current reparation techniques found in parts of Africa, where the objects created display material, historic traces of the interaction across the colonial and post-colonial periods. Kader Attia's oeuvre asks how we know what we have done and continue to do to repair History.

ROOM 8 Room 8 features a double slide show, ***The Repair (2012)***, created as part of a broader installation, *The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures*, for DOCUMENTA (13). It juxtaposes ways of thinking about and practising reparation between continents, cultures, and time periods. The work, haunted by the spectre of the Great War, invites visitors to re-evaluate the concept of perfection, thanks particularly to its exploration of disfigurement. *The Repair* invites comparison between repaired objects, ritual scarring, and the stitched-up faces of wounded First World War soldiers, highlighting the way the work of reparation follows two opposing forms of reasoning in Western and non-Western cultures. In Africa, Kader Attia reminds us, just as ritual scarring and bodily deformity are considered aesthetic strategies aimed at perfecting bodies held to be imperfect, repairs to objects are intended to improve their aesthetic appearance and should thus be left visible. In Western cultures, on the other hand, the ideal of perfection means hiding repair work as much as possible.

In juxtaposing and comparing African objects and the «repaired» faces of badly injured soldiers, Kader Attia underlines that plastic surgery, which began as something akin to a craft similar to the repairs carried out on the African objects, gradually shifted to a much subtler, more «discreet» form of reparation, as if it were a symbol of progress and modernity, though one belied by the brutality of modern warfare. By placing the objects alongside each other, Kader Attia forces visitors to de-centre their gaze, raising the question of which of the two cultures is really civilised and which is barbaric. Savagery is not necessarily to be found on the side of the so-called savages; it hides not behind the African masks, the artist suggests, but behind the flesh of the cannon fodder mown down on the battlefields of the Great War.

ROOM 9 Room 9 brings together a series of recent canvases, some produced specially for the present exhibition. ***Mirrors (2014-2015)*** at first glance appears to be plain cotton canvases mounted on stretchers waiting to be prepped for a painting. However, echoing the works in rooms 7 and 8, they bear traces of repair to the scars of a wound inflicted by the artist himself. Kader Attia slashed various parts of the canvases then patiently sewed them back together stitch by stitch, so that the tear, the wound, remained visible once repaired. The aim is to foreground the way visible repairs have stories to tell about injuries to objects and to people, while paying homage to their history. The canvases also refer back to a well-known precedent in art history: the series of slashed canvases produced by the Italian artist Lucio Fontana from the early 1960s on, which opened up the space of the painting. Kader Attia stitches back up the space behind the canvas revealed by Fontana, thereby implicitly commenting on the symbolic reparation of modernity by a traditional technique.

ROOM 10 The video that closes the exhibition, ***Mimesis As Resistance (2013)***, is taken from the TV series *The Life of Birds*, presented by the British naturalist David Attenborough. It is an astonishing recording of an Australian lyre bird that is capable of mimicking not only birdsong, but the sound of sawing, cameras clicking, and car alarms. The bird's own song incorporates the sounds that have come to disturb its habitat in an act of appropriation that is also a form of camouflage. While the video *Inspiration-Conversation* which opened the exhibition had a soundtrack of men and women breathing, offering a potential gateway to meaning via speech and dialogue, humanity here is present only as a mimetic imitation of artificial sounds. The video thus adds a further dimension to the artist's other works on the themes of reappropriation and reparation, nature and culture, the migration of forms and ideas, and new readings of given genealogies, which form a series of leitmotifs throughout the present exhibition.

KADER ATTIA
BIOGRAPHY

www.kaderattia.de

Born in 1970 in Dugny (Seine-Saint-Denis, France), lives and works in Berlin and Algiers.

Studies

1996-98 Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

1993-94 Escola La Massana de Arte y Diseño, Barcelona

1991-93 Ecole Supérieure des Arts Appliqués Duperré, Paris

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2015

Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacob's Ladder, BOZAR, Brussels

Ghost, Stiftelsen 3,14, Bergen

2014

Show Your Injuries, Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York

Nature, Another Culture Repaired, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp

Contre Nature, Beirut Art Center, Beirut

Beginning of the World, Galleria Continua, Beijing

2013

Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacob's Ladder, Whitechapel Gallery, London

Reparatur 5. Akte, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin

Les Terrasses, Public Commission, outdoor work, La Digue du Large, Marseilles

2012

Construire, déconstruire, reconstruire: Le Corps Utopique, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris

Essential, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano

Collages, Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin

2011

Ghost, Galerie Christian Nagel, Antwerp

2010

Holy Land, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano

2009

Po(l)etical, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

As a Fold, Horizon is Not a Space, Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin

Kasbah, Centre de Création Contemporaine de Tours, Tours

Signs of Reappropriation, SCAD, Savannah

2008

Signs of Reappropriation, SCAD, Atlanta

Black & White: Sign of Times, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Huarte, Huarte

Kader Attia. New Works, Henry Art Gallery, Faye G. Allen Center for the Visual Arts, University of Washington, Seattle

2007

Momentum 9, ICA, Boston

Square Dreams, BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Newcastle

Do What You Want But Don't Tell Anybody, Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin

2006

Tsunami, Magasin, CNAC, Grenoble

Kader Attia, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon

Sweat Sweat, Andréhn-Schiptjenko Gallery, Stockholm

Fellowships, prizes and residencies

2015

Northwestern University Kaplan Institute for the Humanities Artist in Residency Award

2014

Artpace, San Antonio, USA (residency)

Kunstpreis Berlin Jubiläumsstiftung 1848/1948, Akademie der Künste, Berlin

2010

The Banff Centre, Banff (residency)

Paul D. Fleck Fellowship, Banff

Smithsonian Institution Artist Research Fellowship Program, Washington DC

Abraaj Capital Prize, Dubai

2008

IASPIS, Stockholm (residency)

Cairo Biennale, Biennale Prize, Cairo

2005

Nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp, Paris

1997

Leica special award, Une Algérie d'Enfance, Paris

VISITS AND EVENTS

LECTURE By Kader Attia
Free Thursday 18 June at 6.30 p.m.

GUIDED TOURS Thursday 28 May at 6.30 p.m.
Thursday 2 July at 6.30 p.m.
Thursday 23 July at 12.30 p.m.
Thursday 6 August at 12.30 p.m.

**THE FIRST SATURDAY
OF THE MONTH** An art historian will be on hand to answer visitors' questions and to discuss the
Free works on display.
3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

YOUNG VISITORS

DISCOVERY BOOKLET Activities in the exhibition
From 7 years, free

**PARENT/CHILD
DRAWING TOUR** *Family visits: bring your sketchpads!*
Parents are invited to bring along their children and draw the works as a family to spark a discussion about the nature of art.
Wednesday 17 June and 1 July at 3 p.m.
Children aged 6 up
Bookings: 021 346 34 45 or info.beaux-arts@vd.ch

**PASSEPORT VACANCES
WORKSHOPS** *The Magic of Moving Images*
Make an optical toy to bring your drawings to life, inspired by Kader Attia's videos. Hosted in collaboration with the association Cinématismes.
Children aged 9-15
Tuesday 7 and Thursday 9 July
Tuesday 11 and Thursday 13 August
2 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Bookings: www.apvrl.ch

PRESS IMAGES

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1



Asesinos ! Asesinos!, 2014
Installation: 134 doors and 47 megaphones
Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin
Photo credits: Elisabeth Bernstein

2



Culture, Another Nature Repaired, 2014
Wood sculptures
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nagel Draxler
Photo credits: Simon Vogel

3



The Repair, 2012
2-channel slide projections, color, 15min.
Courtesy the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler, Galerie Krinzinger and Galleria Continua

PRESS IMAGES

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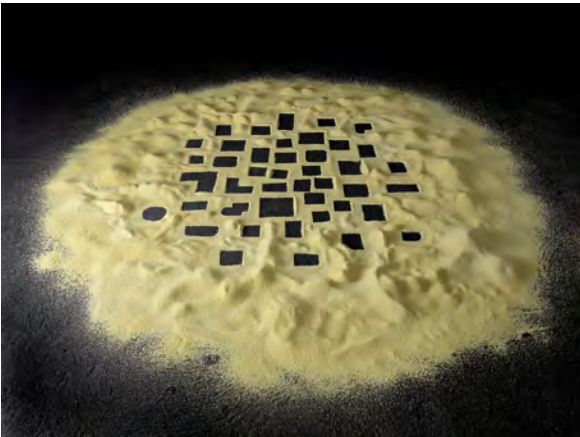


Inspiration – Conversation, 2010

2-channel video-projection, color, sound, 13min.55

Courtesy the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler, Galerie Krinzinger, and Galleria Continua, with the support of Doual'art, Cameroon

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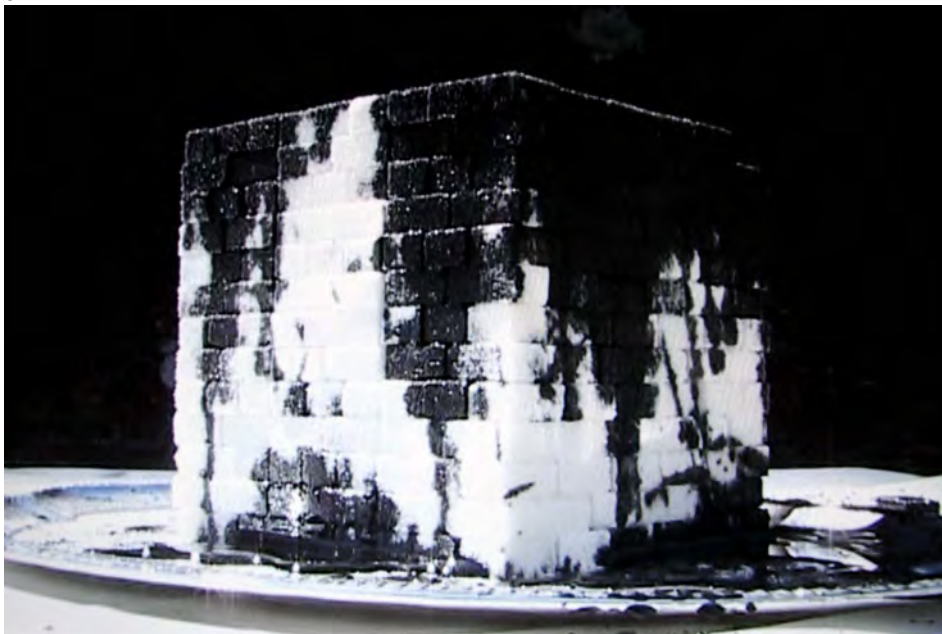
Untitled (Couscous), 2009

Floor sculpture

Courtesy the artist and Collection FRAC Centre, Orléans

Photo credits: François Fernandez

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Oil and Sugar #2, 2007

Video, color, sound, 4min.30

Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, Gift of James and Audrey Foster