

Kader Attia

Irreparable Repairs

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Seoul

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Lehmann Maupin presents *Irreparable Repairs*, an exhibition of new work by French-Algerian artist Kader Attia. For more than 20 years Attia's practice has been rooted in notions of injury and repair through works that span photography, sculpture, installation, and video. His work examines how societies and individuals bear the marks of historical trauma—and how those wounds are “repaired,” though never erased. This idea serves as a metaphor for colonial histories, personal trauma, and collective memory throughout Attia's work. In *Irreparable Repairs*, Attia's first solo exhibition in Seoul, the artist expands on this fundamental tenet of his practice to explore his recent interests in ideas of fragmentation and gathering, as well as themes of Shamanism, mysticism, and the effects of mnemonic traces on individual and collective consciousness. *Irreparable Repairs* opens alongside Attia's inclusion in the Venice Biennale's *In Minor Keys*, MoMA's *Architects of Liberation: Modernism in Western Africa*, the Brooklyn Museum's *Breaking the Mold: Brooklyn Museum at 200*, and ahead of the artist's curation of the 2027 Kochi Biennale.

Irreparable Repairs features three canvas works from Attia's longstanding *Mirrors* series, one of his most recognizable bodies of work dealing with the theme of repair. For each piece, Attia begins by making a number of incisions into the canvas, creating lacerations in the fabric's surface which he then sews back together by hand, leaving a “scar” of tight threads where the incisions were made. Although Attia uses a very precise stitching technique, he deliberately privileges the visibility of this repair. Rather than acting as though the damage did not occur, or that it has been negated by the subsequent repair, Attia's visible suturing illustrates his belief that any repair is inextricably bound up with the wound it seeks to heal. Visible repair, in Attia's practice, becomes a way of acknowledging loss while recognizing resilience.

Also included in *Irreparable Repairs* are three new sculptures of plastic carrier bags cast in brightly colored glass. These are part of a series that began in 2025 in which Attia reflects on the “Myths and Poetry of Emptiness”—an important element of his practice for almost two decades—as well as his ongoing work with ephemeral objects. By casting these bags, similar to those often found in grocery stores, pharmacies, or markets, in glass, Attia seeks to freeze or fix a typically transitory object, using a fine art material to elevate the disposable bag to the status of sculpture. Conceptually, the plastic bag is most notably a symbol of our consumer society, an object of overconsumption that we are paradoxically both endlessly using and continually seeking to discard, but these sculptures also function as meditations on emptiness, transience, and the human desire to capture the fleeting.

A number of works involving mirrors, which have been an essential material in Attia's practice, also intersperse *Irreparable Repairs*. Three new “wounded” mirrors will debut as part of the presentation, alongside a new mirrored rope sculpture, similar to those included in the artist's *Whispers of Traces* currently on view in the Venice Biennale. Attia's wounded mirror works use convex mirrors (similar to “witch mirrors” featured in 15th century Flemish paintings, which he could study during his residency at Le Louvre this year) which he then cuts into, marring the pristine surface. In the continuity of the function of witch mirrors in Classical Western painting and their role in depicting a distorted view of the world, this new series of sculptures is made of black glass, symbolizing the dystopian world in which the algorithmic governance that now governs our lives imprisons us. The mirror is no longer a silvered surface; it is the reflective quality of black glass that bears the wound it inflicts on our existence. As viewers approach they witness their reflection distorted by the object's rounded

shape and interrupted by the artificial wounds carved into the mirror. In these works Attia highlights the importance of scars, conscious or unconscious, in the human psyche, positing that they are signifiers and proof of our past experiences. In the works' mirrored surfaces, we see both ourselves and our world reflected with all its attendant distortion and historical injury, whether visible or invisible.

Mirrors have long functioned as a system of abstraction and fragmentation in Attia's practice—notably in his *Mirrors and Masks* series in which viewers' reflections are fractured as they are reflected across a myriad of mirror shards adhered to replicas of traditional African masks. In these works, the fragmentation of the subject is a primary concern, and Attia argues that human beings are

not singular subjects but rather boundless entities, containing many identities and selves at once. In his new mirrored rope works this idea of fragmentation is extended and the pieces reflect the entire surrounding environment, refracting it into a multitude of different views. This technique, while formally entrancing, also challenges our innate conviction in objectivity, suggesting that reality is in fact a composite of various histories, experiences, past events and future outcomes.

By bringing together new work from across his oeuvre, *Irreparable Repairs*, offers a glimpse into Attia's practice today, illuminating his various avenues of inquiry, artistic concerns, and recent research—including enduring questions alongside new explorations.

Kader Attia (b. 1970, Dugny, France; lives and works in Berlin and Paris) grew up in Paris and in Algeria. Preceding his studies at the École Supérieure des Arts Appliqués Duperré and the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and at Escola Massana, Centre d'Art i Disseny in Barcelona, he spent several years in Congo and in South America. The experience with these different cultures, the histories of which over centuries have been characterized by rich trading traditions, colonialism and multi-ethnic societies, has fostered Kader Attia's intercultural and interdisciplinary approach of research. For many years, he has been exploring the perspective that societies have on their history, especially as regards experiences of deprivation and suppression, violence and loss, and how this affects the evolving of nations and individuals—each of them being connected to collective memory.

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 also involves it in evolutionary processes in nature, culture, myth and history.

In 2016, Kader Attia founded *La Colonie*, a space in Paris to share ideas and to provide an agora for vivid discussion. Focusing on decolonization not only of peoples but also of knowledge, attitudes and practices, it aspired to de-compartmentalize knowledge by a trans-cultural, trans-disciplinary and trans-generational approach. Driven by the urgency of social and cultural reparations, it aimed to reunite which had been shattered.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Arter Collection, Istanbul, Turkey (2025); Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2025); CAAC Sevilla, Sevilla, Spain (2025); MUAC, Mexico City, Mexico (2025); Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand (2024); MAMBO, Bogota, Colombia (2024); MO.CO., Montpellier, France (2024); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany (2024); Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar (2021); BAK

– basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, Netherlands (2021); Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland (2020); Sesc Pompeia São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2020); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA (2019); Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2019); Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sur-Seine, France (2018); Fundació Joan Miró, Centre d'Estudis d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona, Spain (2018); Power Plant, Toronto, Canada (2018); Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2018); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2017); Ludwig Museum, Koblenz, Germany (2017); Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University, St. Louis, MO (2017); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium (2017); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (2016); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2016); Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland (2015); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2013); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2013); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2012); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2007); and Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, France (2006).



Photo by Harry Schnitger

Recent group exhibitions featuring his work include *Utopia*, Recht auf Hoffnung, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2025); *Copistes*, Centre Pompidou Metz, Metz, France (2025); *Structures*, Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa (2025); *The Story of Public Art - Dancing in the Streets (On Power)*, KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces, Køge, Denmark (2025); *Magdalena Abakanowicz*, Het Noordbrabants Museum, Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands (2025); *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica*, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, United States (2025); *My Garden's Boundaries Are the Horizon*, de Appel, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2024); *Pre-Architectures*, CIVA, Brussels, Belgium (2024); *The Atlantic Ocean*, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Hovikodden, Norway (2024); *Repair / Reparar*, Hangar - Centro de Investigação Artística, Lisbon, Portugal (2024); *Per què la guerra?*, El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòria, Barcelona, Spain (2024); *The Threshold under Turbine Vents*, The Sun Blanket Foundation, Seoul, South Korea (2024); *In the Presence of Absence*, Desert X AlUla, AlUla, Saudi Arabia (2024); *Dix and the Present*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2023); *The Great Repair*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Germany (2023); *The Other, Re- Imagine the Future*, Kunsthau Graz, Graz, Austria (2023); *YOYI! Care, Repair, Heal*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany (2022); *Human, 7 Questions*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea (2021); *The Roaring Twenties*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain (2021); *Africa Reborn*, Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, Paris, France (2021); *Smoke and Mirrors: The Roaring Twenties*, Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland (2020); *Down to Earth*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany (2020); *Global(e) Resistance*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2020); *Mythologies - The Beginning and End of Civilizations*, ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus, Denmark (2020); *Our World is Burning*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2020); *Phantom Limb*, Jameel Arts Center, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (2019), *When Home Won't Let You Stay: Migration Through Contemporary Art*, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston, MA, traveled to Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN (2019-2020); *The Warmth of Other Suns: Stories of Global Displacements*, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2019); *The Flow of Forms*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2017); *Foreign Gods: Fascination Africa and Oceania*, Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria (2016); *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise: Contemporary Art of the Middle East*

and North Africa, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2016); *Picasso in Contemporary Art*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2015); *The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell Revisited*, The Smithsonian Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C., traveled to SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2014-2015); *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York, NY (2014); *Performing Histories*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2012); and *Contested Terrains*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2011).

Attia was selected as the curator of the 12th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2022), and he participated in numerous biennial exhibitions as an artist, including 36th Bienal de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2025); OFF-Biennale Budapest, Budapest, Hungary (2025); Sharjah Biennial 15, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2023); Aichi Triennale, Nagoya, Japan (2022); the 13th and 12th Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, South Korea (2020 and 2018); 12th Shanghai Biennale, China (2018); Marrakesh Biennial 4 and 6 (2014 and 2016); 8th and 13th Lyon Biennale (2005 and 2015); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany (2012); and the 50th and 54th Venice Biennales (2003 and 2011). His work is in numerous international public and private collections, including Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates; Collection Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création, Paris, France; Fond National d'Art Contemporain, France; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Museo Jumex, Ciudad de México, México; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar; Margulies Collection, Miami, FL; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates; S.M.A.K. Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium; Société Générale, Paris, France; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Vehbi Koç Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; and the Vanmoerkerke Collection, Belgium.

Attia has received several prestigious awards including the 2017 Joan Miró Prize, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain, the 2017 Yanghyun Prize, Seoul, South Korea, and the 2016 Prix Marcel Duchamp, Paris, France.



Lehmann Maupin

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has permanent locations in New York, Seoul, and London, as well as team members throughout Asia and Europe.

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