

## **KADER ATTIA**

### *Essential*

Opening: Saturday 11 February 2012, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-12 midnight

Until 31 March 2012, Tuesday-Saturday, 2-7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present *Essential*, a new solo exhibition by Kader Attia. The project comprises a series of recent works, some of which have never been shown in Italy.

A French artist of Algerian origin, Kader Attia quickly and forcefully made a name for himself on the international art scene. Taking the plurality of his cultural background as a point of departure, the artist tackles themes regarding the relationship between East and the West, with particular reference to the complex historic events associated with colonialism and its consequences. He investigates the concept of diversity, be it cultural or religious, sexual or socio-political. His works, often expressed in a symbolic language and with a minimalist aesthetics, explore the tensions, traumas and fears of our daily lives.

*"Between the moment in which a spirit imagines something it wants to realize and the moment in which the thing is realized, there exists a temporal void: a space."* It is that same infinitesimal space which Michel Foucault identified between the elaboration of a thought and the moment in which it is expressed verbally. This is the reflection chosen by Attia to introduce *Mimetism* (2011). The work consists of a sheet of lead placed on a pedestal. Lead is a ductile material, which can be manipulated in any way without it ever breaking. The viewer has the possibility to give this sheet any sculptural form whatsoever, expressing, through this action, the creative desire within us all. *Mimetism* is conceived as an endless sculpture which materializes the thoughts, emotions and fantasies of the viewer.

Fullness and emptiness, the formal tension between presence and absence, and the metaphysical distance between artist, object and observer are the underlying concerns of Attia's work. The artist is fascinated by what takes place in the physical and temporal space between two things. His practice focuses on the experience rather than the result, on the rendering visible of what is absent besides what is present. *To resist is to remain invisible* is what is written – white on white, imperceptible at first glance – on one of the walls of the gallery. Attia views this work as a gesture that can assume universal value: it can be realized in any part of the world and translated into any language, depending on the geographic context and the person who produces it. *"Resistere è restare invisibili"* is an affirmation that seems at odds with what happened in the recent Arab Spring, but not for the artist, who regards resistance as a daily practice, a natural rather than a cultural act.

An evanescent, fleeting gesture is also represented in *Revolution*. Of the lemma that Attia traces with water on a large sheet of paper, there remains just the slight wrinkling produced by the water which has dried, and a video of the performance.

Many of Attia's works dwell on the theme of boundaries, of geographic borders, of physical and social barriers. *Untitled (Concrete blocks)* is a large installation made from a series of concrete blocks arranged in a spiral. Until the age of 16, the artist used to spend his summers at Bab el Oued, one of the poorest suburbs in Algiers. Near this neighbourhood is a pier named Roches Carrés. The beach – which once faced onto the sea and was an escape route for those desperately trying to leave the misery of the country by swimming out to a ship bound for Marseilles or Spain – was completely cemented over in the 70s and became a kind of pier built from large blocks of concrete.

From then on access to the sea became difficult and dangerous; the 'Roches Carré' had not just created a full-blown frontier but also an insuperable psychological passage that dashed all hope of change. *"This beach is the border separating these people from the continent, but above all from their dreams of a better life. This massive and strange construction imprisoned them in a cruel reality, as did the French slums where many immigrants ended up living. With the passage of time,"* continues Attia, *"I find it ironic that I grew up in the midst of concrete buildings in a poor Paris suburb, and that I often spent my summer holidays playing on the blocks of this beach, also made of concrete."*

Also featuring in the show is *Inspiration / Conversation*, a video installation where two screens transmit the image of two faces in profile which, face to face, blow into an empty bottle. Recurring here once again is the concept of emptiness but also of a retrieved everyday object, which, through this action, becomes something else: a sculpture, a trunk, a body extension, a sexual organ. As the artist comments, *"we must rediscover our vital, repetitive, orgasmic movements: a cry, a breath, a movement. Re-appropriation is a natural gesture. This re-appropriation will take place through the absorption and the "translation" of the objects of our everyday environment, as has always been the case. In recycling plastic water bottles, there is no talk about the big problem of the lack of water in the future. Recycling plastic objects, as in this case, hides the reality of the problem of water. It is the invention of a moral for the protection of our existence from that of the environment in which we live."*

Kader Attia was born into an Algerian family in 1970 in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis. He currently lives and works in Berlin. Attia spent his childhood between France and Algeria, growing up in the cultural melting pot of the Paris neighbourhood in which he lived, the Islamic Maghreb and the world of the Algerian Sephardic Jews. The multicultural vision of Attia's work is rooted in the artist's own personal life experience: the inter-cultural conflicts experienced when he was a child, like the years spent in Congo, Venezuela and Algeria, are constantly recurring features of his work. Attia's first solo exhibition was in the Republic of Congo in 1996, and his international artistic career has been on the up ever since. He showed for the first time in Italy in 2003, as part of the 50th Venice Biennale, curated by Francesco Bonami. In 2005 he was invited to take part in the 8th Lyons Biennial; in 2007, he realized his first solo show, *Momentum*, in the United States, at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston. This was followed by two further personal exhibitions, *Square Dreams* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Newcastle (2007), and *Black & white: signs of times*, at the Centro de Arte Contemporaneo di Quarte in Spain (2008). In the same year he had a residency at the IASPIS in Stockholm, Sweden. In 2009 he took part in the Paris Triennial (*La Force de l'Art*) and the Havana Biennial, and also curated the show *Periferiks* at the Centre d'Art de Neuchâtel in Switzerland. He won an award at the Cairo Biennale in 2008, the Abraaj Capital Prize in 2010 and a place in the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship Program. In the same year he contributed to the Sydney Biennale, the Busan Biennale in Korea and shows at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar, the Haus der Kunst in Munich, Germany. In 2011 he showed at the 4th Moscow Biennale, the Dublin Biennial and in many other internationally prominent venues, including the Tate Modern in London, the Mori Museum in Tokyo, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Sharjah Art Foundation in Sharjah. In 2012 he is showing work in the group exhibition, *Hajj, Journey to the heart of Islam*, at the British Museum in London. Works by Kader Attia are housed in many private and public collections, including those of the Tate Modern, the ICA of Boston, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the Collection Centre Georges Pompidou.

**For further information about the show and for photographs:**

**Silvia Pichini, Communication Officer: [press@galleriacontinua.com](mailto:press@galleriacontinua.com), cell. +39 347 45 36 136**

# Kader Attia

Born 1970 in Dugny (Seine Saint-Denis)  
Lives and works in Berlin

## Studies :

- 1996-98        Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France  
1993-94        Escola de Artes Aplicades " La Massana ", Barcelona, Spain  
1991-93        Ecole Supérieure des Arts Appliqués " Duperré ", Paris, France

## Solo shows :

- 2012    **Collages**, Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, Germany  
         **Essential**, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy
- 2011    **Ghost**, Galerie Christian Nagel, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2010    **Holy Land**, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy
- 2009    **Po(ly)etical**, Krinzinger gallery, Vienna, Austria  
         **As a fold, Horizon is not a space**, galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, Germany  
         **Kasbah**, Centre de Création Contemporaine de Tours, Tours, France  
         **Signs of Reappropriation**, The Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, USA  
         **Failures**, Noga gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel
- 2008    **Signs of Reappropriation**, The Savannah College of Art and Design, Atlanta, USA  
         **Black & white : signs of times**, Centro de Arte Contemporaneo Huarte, Huarte, Spain  
         **Kader Attia – New Works**, Henry Art Gallery, Faye G. Allen Center for the Visual Arts, University of Washington, Seattle, USA
- 2007    **Momentum 9**, ICA, Boston, USA  
         **Square Dreams**, BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, UK  
         **Who cares ?**, Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel  
         **Do what you want but don't tell anybody**, Christian Nagel gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2006    **Tsunami**, Magasin, CNAC, Grenoble, France  
         **Kader Attia**, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France  
         **Sweet sweat**, Andréhn-Schiptjenko gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2005    The Gallery @ Sketch, London , UK
- 2004    **HALLAL**, Kamel Mennour gallery, Paris, France
- 2002    **Alter Ego**, Kamel Mennour gallery, Paris, France
- 2001    **Photostories**, Martine et Thibault de la Châtre, Paris, France
- 2000    **La Piste d'Atterrissage**, l'Atelier, Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, France
- 1997    **Instants Urbains**, Galerie L'œil du huit, Paris, France
- 1996    **Humanistes au Congo**, Centre culturel Français de Brazzaville, Brazzaville, Congo

## Group shows

- 2012 **Hajj, Journey to the heart of Islam**, the British Museum, London, UK  
**Beijing Online Inlive - 10 Hands 100 Fingers**, Galleria Continua, Beijing, China
- 2011 **4th Moscow Biennale**, Moscow, Russia  
**Wunder. Kunst, Religion und Wissenschaft vom 4. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart**, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg / Germany  
**The Global Contemporary. Art World after 1989**, ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany  
**Dublin Contemporary**, Biennale of Dublin, Dublin, Ireland  
**Contested Terrains**, Tate Modern, London, UK  
**Evergreen**, Crédit Agricole de Montrouge, France  
**French Window**, Mori Museum, Tokyo, Japan  
**PARIS-DELHI-BOMBAY...**, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France  
**Miracles**, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany  
**Living Room Exotica**, Kunsthau Glarus, Glarus, Switzerland  
**PROJECT EUROPA: Imagining the (Im)possible**, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York, USA
- 2010 **Told|Untold|Retold**, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar  
**PastPresentFuture – Highlights from the UniCredit Group Collection**, Centro Culturale Yapı Kredi, Istanbul  
**SUD 2010**, Salon Urbain de Douala, festival triennal d'art public, Espace doual'art centre d'art contemporain Place du Gouvernement Bonanjo, Douala, Camerun  
**SPHERES 2010, 7 énergies autour d'une nouvelle expérience d'exposition**, Galleria Continua, Le Moulin / France  
**Lo spazio del sacro**, Galleria Civica di Modena, Modena, Italy  
**La Route de la Soie**, New Chinese, Indian and middle eastern art from the Saatchi Gallery, Lille 3000, Tri Postal, Lille, France  
**PICHA festival**, Lubumbashi Image Encounters, Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo  
**Living in Evolution**, Busan Biennial 2010, Busan Yacht Center, Gwangalli Beach, South Korea  
**Make Yourself at Home**, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark  
**Geo-graphics, A Map of Art Practices in Africa, Past and Present**, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium  
**THE BEAUTY OF DISTANCE: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age**, Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia  
**Dreamlands**, Beaubourg - Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France  
**Told|Untold|Retold**, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar  
**The Future of Tradition - The Tradition of Future**, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany  
Centenary of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile, Chile  
**PROJECT EUROPA: Imagining the (Im)possible**, The Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art - University of Florida, Gainesville, USA  
**SUD2010**, Douala, Cameroon  
**Utopia and Monument II. On Virtuosity and the Public Sphere**, Exhibition for the public space, Graz, Austria  
**Street & Studio – From Basquiat to Séripop**, Kunsthalle Wien, Wien, Austria  
**The Flower of May**, Kunsthalle Gwangju and City Museum, Gwangju, Korea  
Art Unlimited, Art Basel 41, Basel, Switzerland
- 2009 **Disorientation II**, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
**Los de arriba y los de abajo**, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico DF, Mexico  
**FIAC**, Musée national d'art moderne et contemporain, Algiers, Algeria  
**Frontières**, 8th African Biennale of Photography, Bamako, Mali  
**Sphères**, Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, Boissy-le-Châtel, France  
**Dispositifs optiques**, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville, Spain  
**Cargo**, Autocenter, Berlin, Germany  
**Pulisoni Performative Nell'Arte Contemporanea**, Torrione Passari, Molfetta, Italy  
**Entre-Temps**, Espaço Cultural Oi Futuro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
**ART TEL AVIV 09**, Tel Aviv, Israel  
**Louis Vuitton: A Passion for Creation**, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, SAR  
**Nation State**, The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

- Time out of Joint : Recall and Evocation in Recent Art***, The Kitchen, New York, USA  
***Praxis, Art in Times of Uncertainty***, Thessaloniki Biennale, Thessaloniki, Greece  
***La Force de l'Art***, Paris Triennial, Grand Palais, Paris, France  
***Entre-Temps***, MIS - Museu da Imagem e Do Som, Sao Paulo SP, Brazil  
***Integration and resistance in the global era, 10th*** Havana Biennale, Havana, Cuba  
***Nation State***, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa  
***Looking Inside-out***, Kunstnernes, Oslo, Norway  
***Unveiled: New Art from the middle east***, Saatchi Gallery, London, United Kingdom.
- 2008 ***The Other***, Cairo Biennale, Cairo, Egypt  
***Crossings Traversees***, Darb 1718 Contemporary Art and Culture Center, Cairo, Egypt  
***Travesia***, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, Spain  
***Réfléchir le Monde***, La Centrale Electrique, Brussels, Belgium  
***In the Desert of Modernity***, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany  
***Defense***, Skeppsholmen, Stockholm, Sweden  
***Pontevedra Biennale***, Pontevedra, Spain  
***Representations of the artist as an intellectual***, D21 Kunstraum, Leipzig, Germany  
***Traversée***, Art Paris, Paris, France  
***Elefante Negro***, Diego Rivera Museum, Mexico DF, Mexico
- 2007 ***Suite Française***, Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna, Austria  
***The Big Easy***, ACC Galerie Weimar, Weimar, Germany  
***The Big Easy: Relocating the Myth of the "West"***, Stiftung Federkiel - Halle 14, Leipzig, Germany  
***Les Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid***, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France  
***Temporally***, The Israeli Center of Digital Art, Holon, Israel  
***De leur Temps (2)***, Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France  
Sulpture Park, Frieze Art Fair, London, UK  
***Equatorial Rhythms***, Sternersen Museum, Oslo, Norway  
***Theater of Cruelty***, White Box, New York, USA  
***Signes d'Existence***, MAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile  
***New Economy***, The Artists Space, New York, USA  
***Dialogues méditerranéens***, St Tropez, France  
***Accélération***, Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland  
***L'Emprise du Lieu #4***, Domaine Pommery, Reims, France  
***Politics of Fear***, Albion, Londres, UK
- 2006 1<sup>st</sup> Art, Landscape & Architecture Biennial, Canary Islands, Spain  
***BLACK PARIS***, Kunst und Geschichte einer schwarzen Diaspora, Iwalewa-Haus, Bayreuth, Germany  
***Nuit Blanche***, Paris, France  
***Infinites***, Art Unlimited, Art Basel 37, Basel, Switzerland  
***Take a walk on the wild side***, de Pury & Luxembourg gallery, Zurich, Switzerland  
***Notre Histoire***, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
- 2005 ***Meeting Point***, Sternersen Museum, Oslo, Norway  
***In between times***, Tramway, Glasgow, UK  
***Regards des photographes arabes contemporains***, Institute of the Arab World, Paris, France  
***Big Bang***, Jewish Art and History Museum, Paris, France  
***Expérience de la durée***, 8<sup>th</sup> Lyon Biennale, Lyon, France  
***Living for the City***, J. Shainman gallery, New York, USA  
***The Loop***, Art Unlimited, Art Basel 36, Basel, Switzerland  
***SingulierS***, Guangdong Museum of Art, Canton, China
- 2004 ***The Sweatshop***, Art Position, Art Basel Miami, Miami, USA  
***Videozone***, Video Art Biennale, Herzliya Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel  
***Near East Project***, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany  
***Continental Breakfast***, Belgrade, Czech Republic  
***Shake***, OK Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz, Austria  
***Shake***, Villa Arson, Nice, France
- 2003 ***Correspondance***, Statement Area, Art Basel 34, Basel, Switzerland

***Fault Lines***, 50th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy  
***Voyages d'Artistes***, Foundation Electra, Paris, France  
***Ouvertures Algériennes : créations vivantes***, La Criée, Rennes, France

2002 ***Les vertus sont des titres, les souffrances sont des droits***, FRAC Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême, France

2001 ***L'Alchimie de la rencontre***, FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France  
***L'état des choses part.1***, Kunst-werke, Institut d'Art Contemporain, Berlin, Germany

### **Symposiums / Lectures / Others**

2010  
The Falmouth Convention, University College Falmouth, Falmouth, UK  
SITAC VIII, International Symposium on Contemporary Art Theory, Mexico DF, Mexico  
Clinicas symposium, Mexico DF, Mexico

2009  
Eastwards = westwards, Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands  
Artistic Design of the ballet « Comedy of Change » by Rambert Dance Company, UK

### **Residency Programs**

2008  
JCVA, Jerusalem, Israel  
IASPIS, Stockholm, Sweden

### **Grants / Fellowships / Prizes**

2010  
Smithsonian Institution Artist Research Fellowship Program, Washington DC, USA  
Abraaj Capital Prize, Dubai, UAE

2008  
Cairo Biennale, Prize of the Biennale, Cairo, Egypt

2005  
Nominee for the Marcel Duchamp Prize, Paris, France

1997  
The Leica Special Prize / " Une Algérie d 'Enfance", Paris, France