

Media release
Zurich, 20 August 2020

Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'Kader Attia. Remembering the Future', the artist's first exhibition in German-speaking Switzerland

From 21 August to 15 November 2020 the Kunsthaus Zürich presents sculptures, photos, videos and installations by the French-Algerian artist Kader Attia. His first exhibition in German-speaking Switzerland revolves around Europe's colonial past and its legacy.

Kader Attia was born in 1970 to Algerian parents in a suburb north of Paris. Now working in Berlin and Paris, he draws on the experience of living in two cultures as the basis for his artistic practice.

NEW VIDEO INSTALLATION

At the centre of the exhibition 'Kader Attia. Remembering the Future', which comprises a total of 38 works, is the new video installation 'The Object's Interlacing' (2020), which Attia has created specially for the Kunsthaus Zürich. In it, he addresses the much-debated topical issue of 'restitution' of non-Western, especially African artefacts. The work is an attempt to delve deeper into this complex subject. It includes the voices of historians, philosophers, activists, psychoanalysts and economists. Kader Attia gathers the varying standpoints together, without apportioning blame, in order to achieve a nuanced analysis of the topic.

COLONIALISM AND ITS LEGACY

Kader Attia has been concerned with Europe's colonial past and its after-effects for many years. In the first room of the exhibition he presents a series of collages and researches that explore the links between modern architecture and the history of colonialism. This interplay is strikingly symbolized by the large sculpture 'Indépendance Tchao' (2014), which references the now-abandoned 1960s 'Hôtel de l'Indépendance' in Dakar. It is made out of old metal filing boxes used by the French colonial police in Algeria during the war of independence to collate information on the rebels.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND RACISM

'The Body's Legacies. The Post-Colonial Body' (2018) tackles structural violence against black bodies. The impetus for the video came from an incident that occurred in a Paris suburb in February 2017, in which a young black man, Théo Luhaka, was beaten and raped with a truncheon during a routine stop by the police. Kader Attia uses this brutal manifestation of French state power as the basis for a reflection on what the body of formerly colonized and enslaved peoples has become – an issue of urgent topical relevance given the tragic death of George Floyd in the US.

'REPAIR' AND KADER ATTIA AT THE KUNSTHAUS

The theme of 'injury' and 'repair' plays a central role in Kader Attia's work. 'Repairing' something means restoring it to its former state; but for Attia, the word also extends to reparation – making amends for a previous wrong. He plays with this double meaning, investigating the various concepts that lie behind the term in both the Western and the non-Western world. Attia presented a striking work on the subject at documenta (13) in Kassel in 2012, where his large-scale installation 'The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures' filled an entire hall. Among other elements, it comprised wooden busts of people with disfigured, 'broken' faces. These 'gueules cassées' were soldiers who survived the First World War but were scarred for life by the terrible wounds they suffered. Kader Attia travelled to Africa with photos of the injured that he had found in German and French historical archives and, working with traditional craftspeople, sculpted busts from the photos in the former colonies. The work deals with the horrors of war but also references the relationship between Western modernity and Africa – and turns history around. The Kunsthaus Zürich purchased one of these busts for its collection in 2015 and has since added further works by the artist. They are now on display in the exhibition, alongside new works as well as loans from other museums and from private collections.

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Attia is not only an artist but also an activist. Until recently, he ran a discourse and exchange platform in Paris, in which people from a wide range of cultures and social backgrounds participated. Together with exhibition curator Mirjam Varadinis, Kader Attia has conceived an accompanying programme for the Kunsthaus Zürich:

Artist talk: with Kader Attia and exhibition curator Mirjam Varadinis. In English. Sunday 13 September, 11 a.m. Kunsthaus Zürich, admission CHF 10 / CHF 8 (concessions).

'Postcolonial Switzerland' symposium. This symposium examines the colonial history of Switzerland. Although it never had any direct colonies, Switzerland was implicated in the colonial project in a wide variety of ways. The event considers ideological and cultural aspects as well as economic involvements, and their

ongoing repercussions in the present day. With Patricia Purtschert, Noémi Michel, Bernhard C. Schär, Fatima Moumouni and others. In German.

Sunday 1 November, 2 p.m., Kunsthaus Zürich, auditorium. CHF 10 / CHF 8 (concessions).

Public guided tours in German take place on 29 August at 1 p.m. and 29 October at 6 p.m.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a three-part, newspaper-like publication. Each part focuses on a different aspect of Kader Attia's work and functions independently of the others. Part 1 appears when the exhibition opens, and presents text excerpts, film stills and research material on the central new video installation 'The Object's Interlacing' (2020) in collage format. Part 2 will be published in September and will contain comprehensive pictorial documentation of the exhibition as well as the newly created works. Part 3 is planned for the end of October to accompany the symposium on 1 November at the Kunsthaus. Price: CHF 6 for one part, CHF 15 for all three parts.

Supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art, the Yanghyun Foundation, the Dr. Georg and Josi Guggenheim Foundation and Christen Sveaas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthaus.ch

Fri-Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthaus.ch

Admission: CHF 16 / CHF 11 (concessions and groups).

Combination tickets including the collection and exhibition CHF 26 / CHF 19.

Admission free to visitors under the age of 17. Information subject to change.

Advance sales: Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, info@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on admission when travelling by public transport: www.sbb.ch/kunsthaus-zuerich.

INFORMATION FOR THE MEDIA

This media release and current illustrations are available for download at www.kunsthaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/.

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