

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Chicken River

Raafat Ishak

Dates: 29 June – 5 August 2018



Image: Raafat Ishak, *Pecan*, 2017.

Foundational within Raafat Ishak's practice is an interest in and knowledge of Arabic and Western art histories, and the evolving contemporary collisions and mutations through migration and points of conflict. Through painting, drawing and installation, Ishak has created a unique visual language that explores concepts of cultural intersectionality, recontextualising cultural motifs from the Middle East and the West to reflect upon a more porous global context, yet one still marred by ideological differences. For his project at Gertrude, Ishak continues this interest in cultural transference and the collapsing of historical temporalities, constructing a staircase through the gallery ceiling, enraptured by a suite of paintings that examine an imaging of the 19th century classical revival in Athens and mid 20th century Australian warplane industry.

Selected recent exhibitions include: *100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art*, The Barjeel Collection, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, 2017; *1977*,

Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, 2017; *Painting, More Painting*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2016; *Shifting Geometries*, Embassy of Australia, Washington DC, 2012; *The Other's Other*, Artspace, Sydney, 2012; *The Future of a Promise*, Venice Biennale, 2011; *NEW10*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2010; *Raafat Ishak: Work in Progress*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2010; *Cubism and Australian Art*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2009; and the *6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2009. Raafat Ishak is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

7-10 CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Arts Levels 7 – 8

Explore and Express:

VCAVAE033

Explore visual arts practices as inspiration to explore and develop themes, concepts or ideas in artworks

VCAVAE034

Explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in art works

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVAR039

Identify and connect specific features of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary times, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Visual Arts Levels 9 - 10

Explore and Express:

VCAVAE040

Explore the visual arts practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts and themes in art works

VCAVAE041

Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVAR045

Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences

VCAVAR046

Analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore differing viewpoints

7 – 10 LEARNING ACTIVITY

Question: Artist Rafaat Ishak is interested in Arabic and Western art histories, can you detect this interest in his practice? Why/Why not? What do you think is meant by the term cultural intersectionality? What connections and intersections can you observe by looking at the artworks in the gallery space?

Suggestion: As you walk around the gallery space, in groups think about and discuss, what you see, what you think the artworks are about, and what you think the artist is trying to communicate/convey? Finally discuss what it makes you wonder, emphasizing what you do and don't understand.

- Remember in your groups to think about the mix of text, imagery, sculptural elements, use of colour and the ways artworks are displayed and grouped together in the gallery spaces.

Activity: Artist Rafaat Ishak works across painting, installation and site-specific drawing, and his practice is informed by diverse influences including, history, architecture and his cultural heritage. Compare and contrast an artwork from Ishak's exhibition, *Chicken River* with an image, text or artwork you have found that you believe connects with Ishak's artwork in some way. It could be a poem, an image of Australia's war plane industry, a Greek sculpture etc. Share your chosen artwork and found image/artwork/text with a classmate and discuss what connections you have found and why you think artists explore and are informed by diverse subjects.

VCE CURRICULUM LINKS

VCE Studio Art

Unit 3

Area of Study 3: Artists and studio practices

In this area of study students focus on professional studio practices in relation to particular art forms. Students investigate the ways in which artists have interpreted subject matter, influences, historical and cultural contexts, and communicated ideas and meaning in their artworks.

VCE Art

Unit 2

Area of Study 1: Contemporary Artworks and culture

In this area of study students focus on the ways in which art reflects and communicates the values, beliefs and traditions of the societies for and in which it was created. Particular emphasis is placed on the influence of contemporary materials, techniques, ideas and approaches to making and presenting artworks.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Question: 'Foundational within Rafaat Ishak's practice is an interest in and knowledge of Arabic and Western art histories, and the evolving contemporary collisions and mutations through migration and points of conflict.' With your teacher unpack this statement and discuss what you think it means and how it connects with the artist's work. What artistic and cultural traditions might Ishak have been influenced by?

Suggestion: As you move around the exhibition think about, identify and discuss how Ishak has used sources of inspiration in his work. Also think about and discuss the historical and cultural context in which the artist is working. How do such contexts shape artists and artworks? Think specifically about how Raafat Ishak's work reflects and communicates values, beliefs and traditions. What visual clues can you find in his artworks?

Activity: An Important outcome for both VCE Studio Art and VCE Art is a student's ability to recognize, research, discuss and write about artworks, exhibitions and sources of inspiration. It is also important that students effectively investigate the ways in which artists have interpreted subject matter, influences, historical and cultural contexts, and communicated ideas and meaning in their artworks. This activity is designed to support the development of these outcomes.

For his exhibition at Gertrude Contemporary, Ishak 'continues his interest in cultural transference and the collapsing of historical temporalities'. The artist has constructed a staircase through the gallery wall, and created a series of painting works influenced by '19th century classical revival in Athens and mid 20th century Australian warplane industry'.

Using a Rafaat Ishak artwork as a base you will choose another artist and artwork to compare one of his artworks with. Your research will focus on comparing the historical and cultural contexts in which the artists were and are working and the artworks themselves. You will do this through an investigation of how influences have affected both artist's practices and the ways these influences are communicated in their work. The activity could take a visual form as you annotate each artwork and draw connections between them. These annotations will then be shared in class either as a brief oral presentation or in smaller groups presentations.

Glossary

Western Art History – encompasses the history of visual art in Europe.

Recontextualising - is a process that extracts text, signs or meaning from its original context (decontextualisation) in order to introduce it into another context. Since the meaning of texts and signs depend on their context, recontextualisation implies a change of meaning, and often of the communicative purpose too.

Cultural motifs – a decorative image or design, especially a repeated one forming a pattern.

Middle East – The Middle East is a transcontinental region centered on Western Asia, Turkey (both Asian and European), and Egypt.

Ideological – An ideology is a set of opinions or beliefs of a group or an individual. Very often ideology refers to a set of political beliefs or a set of ideas that characterize a particular culture. Capitalism, communism, socialism, and Marxism are ideologies. But not all -ism words are.

Temporalities - the state of existing within or having some relationship with time.

Aesthetics - Specific artistic awareness, or a deep appreciation of the meaning of an artistic experience through intellectual, emotional and/or sensual response to a work of art; relating to or characterized by a concern with beauty or good taste; a particular taste or approach to the visual qualities of an object.

Audience/s - Individuals or groups of people who experience the arts in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement.

Perspective/Viewpoints- A person's perspective is their point of view, the position from which they see and understand events going on around them.

Artists and Artworks - Artist is the term for the creators and makers of an artwork. Artwork is the term for a work or performance.

Practice/s - In Visual Arts the use of conceptual and practical processes in art making such as the use of sources of inspiration, exploration of ideas, exploration of and experimentation with materials and techniques, and the development and refinement of art works.

Key Resources

Gertrude Contemporary: <http://www.gertrude.org.au>

Sutton Gallery: www.suttongallery.com.au/artists/artistprofile.php?id=2

NGV: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/11491/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocAiG20939k>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/246217697>

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Fragmented Memories

Khadim Ali

Dates: 29 June – 5 August 2018



Image: Khadim Ali, *The Arrivals #1*, 2016

For this new body of work, Khadim Ali interrogates the temporal linearity of past, present and future as it may pertain to the experiences of those dislocated from their cultural and geographical connection points. Drawing a parallel with the triangulation of the relationship between a mother, father and child, Ali brings attention to what may eventuate with the rupturing of linkage points between family, and indeed between connection points to time. Central to these inquiries is what might constitute home when geographically estranged, and what might constitute a past when the present is so unfamiliar. Through his intricately rendered drawings and paintings, and tapestries produced in cooperation with traditional artisans, Ali connects the present condition of diasporic peoples with historical narratives of struggle, persecution and dislocation.

Selected recent solo exhibitions include: *The Arrival*,

Milani Gallery, Brisbane 2016; *Transitions / Evacuation*, ARNDT, Singapore, 2014; *The Haunted Lotus*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong, 2013; Rustam, Rohtas 2, Lahore, Pakistan, 2007, and Green Cardamon London, UK, 2005. Selected recent group exhibitions include *Enough* خلاص *Khalas*, University of New South Wales Galleries, Sydney, 2018; *Bearing Points*, Dhaka Art Summit 2018, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2017; *The National*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2017; *On Return and What Remains*, Artspace, Sydney, 2014, and CACSA, Adelaide, 2015; *No Country: Contemporary Art from South and Southeast Asia*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2012; and *dOCUMENTA(13)*, Kassel, Germany; Kabul, Afghanistan, 2012. Khadim Ali is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

7-10 CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Arts Levels 7 - 8

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVAR038

Analyse how ideas and viewpoints are expressed in art works and how they are viewed by audiences

VCAVAR039

Identify and connect specific features of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary times, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Explore and Express:

VCAVAE034

Explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in art works

Visual Arts Levels 9 - 10

Explore and Express:

VCAVAE041

Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works.

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVAR045

Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences.

VCAVAR046

Analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore differing viewpoints.

7 – 10 LEARNING ACTIVITY

Question: A recurring theme, influence and line of inquiry in Khadim Ali's work relates to ideas of what constitutes home, particularly when one is geographically separated/estranged from their homeland. What does the idea of home mean to you and how do you see these ideas illustrated in the artist's work? Also, how has Khadim Ali used collaborative processes in his artworks? How do these collaborations shape the meanings of his work, in particular his tapestries?

Suggestion: As you explore the exhibition try to connect the artworks visual elements, (colour, line, tone, texture, shape & form etc.) and principles (scale, proportion, space, contrast etc.) with other artworks, artefacts, objects and images you have seen outside the gallery. What visual connections can you make with the artworks inside the gallery and the outside world?

Activity: The curators at Gertrude Contemporary have chosen to display Khadim Ali and Raafat Ishak's exhibitions alongside each other, why do you think this? How do you think these two exhibitions connect and communicate with each other? In order to explore these ideas, compare and contrast one artwork from each artist in the two exhibitions and investigate the following ideas.

- You can do this in your visual diary or through discussion with another student.
- The artists' interpretation of subject matter, influences and cultural references.
- How the artworks have been installed and how meaning and significance are communicated through the making and presentation of artworks.
- Use of materials, techniques, artistic practices and approaches. What aesthetic qualities and styles are evident?

VCE CURRICULUM LINKS

VCE Studio Art

Unit 4

Area of Study 3: Art Industry Contexts

You will visit a variety of art exhibitions and examine the different methods and roles undertaken in the preparation and presentation of art to the public.

VCE Art

Unit 2

Area of Study 1: Contemporary Artworks and culture

In this area of study students focus on the ways in which art reflects and communicates the values, beliefs and traditions of the societies for and in which it was created. Particular emphasis is placed on the influence of contemporary materials, techniques, ideas and approaches to making and presenting artworks.

VCE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Question: In Khadim Ali's intricately rendered drawings, paintings, and tapestries the artist connects the present condition of diasporic peoples with historical narratives of struggle, persecution and dislocation. What do you think this statement means and how do you see these ideas and your own interpretations of these ideas illustrated in the artist's work? Do you think it's important for artists to draw inspiration from their personal experiences?

Suggestion:

- As you move around the exhibition think about and discuss how the artist has used sources of inspiration in his work. Also think about and discuss the historical and cultural context in which the artist is working and inspired by.
- As you move around the exhibition think about and discuss how the artist has used specific materials, techniques and processes to visually express his ideas. Also think about and discuss the historical and cultural context in which the artist is working.

Activity: For his new body of work, now showing at Gertrude Contemporary, Khadim Ali's exhibition *Fragmented Memories*, interrogates the temporal linearity of past, present and future as it may pertain to the experiences of those dislocated from their cultural and geographical connection points.

In relation to this statement and your experience of the exhibition consider the following:

- What are the key ideas being presented by the art gallery and the artist?
- What is the role of the artist in the presentation of artworks in a gallery space?
- How are the artworks displayed?
- What is the role of the curator in the design, display and conservation of the artworks on display? (consider, works on paper, the tapestries etc.)
- How does the viewer engage with the exhibition space and the artworks on display– consider use of space, light and positioning of forms.

Glossary

Triangulation – A relationship between three points forming a triangular shape.

Diasporic - Typical of most migrant populations that retain objective components of a coherent ethnic identity, such as a shared history, language and culture, and in some cases, diasporic identity also contains a powerful link (imagined or real) to the territorial homeland.

Aesthetics - Specific artistic awareness, or a deep appreciation of the meaning of an artistic experience through intellectual, emotional and/or sensual response to a work of art; relating to or characterized by a concern with beauty or good taste; a particular taste or approach to the visual qualities of an object.

Audience/s - Individuals or groups of people who experience the arts in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement.

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Practice/s - In Visual Arts the use of conceptual and practical processes in art making such as the use of sources of inspiration, exploration of ideas, exploration of and experimentation with materials and techniques, and the development and refinement of art works.

Key Resources

Gertrude Website: <http://www.gertrude.org.au>

MCA: <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/artists/khadim-ali/>

Milani Gallery: <http://www.milanigallery.com.au/artist/khadim-ali>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1o201EP450>

Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvvn_NdmiGw

Guggenheim: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/khadim-ali>