

Adel Abdessemed L'âge d'or

6th October 2013 to 5th January 2014

Pre-visit and post-visit materials for teachers
of students aged 12-18

Developed by Rasha Al Sarraj
and Maral Bedoyan,
Education Department



Dear Educators,

We welcome you to Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. Our guided school visits focus on three to four works of art, where students learn to look, analyze and discuss artworks on view and the ideas that emerge from them.

This pre-visit and post-visit guide provides you with information about Mathaf, the exhibition *Adel Abdessemed: L'âge d'or*, our school programs, tools and ideas to help you prepare your students for their visit, and ways to continue learning back in your classroom.

Thank you for making Mathaf a part of your classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Bedoyan', written in a cursive style.

Maral J. Bedoyan

Acting Head of Education

Guidelines

for Guided School Visits

Our guided visits foster learning through strengthening students' observational, communication, and critical thinking skills. Designed by a Mathaf educator to suit your class' needs and interests, our thematic lessons encourage students to look at the world through the eyes of an artist or *fannan*.

Experimental Fannan

What makes something art? What are the limits?
This exciting theme will explore artistic processes and materials. Students can experiment with more abstract concepts in art while debating and evaluating the definition of art.

Critical Fannan

How do artists tell us about our changing world?
This visit will focus on how art can be a medium for social change. Students will discuss topics such as social issues, politics, identity, and history.

The format of guided visits includes intensive and engaging conversations around 3-4 artworks in the museum.

We believe that students need multiple ways to experience an artwork; therefore, we include activities such as writing, drawing, small group conversations as part of our plans.

The visit can be tailored to connect with your class's needs.

What subject(s) do you teach? What are students currently studying, or what have students studied in the past, that you hope will be enhanced by a museum visit?

Guided visits are available in English or Arabic.

For more information, contact the Education Department, 4402.8853
or mathaf_education@qma.org.qa

Logistics

Chaperones

Since the museum provides one educator per 25 students, we need the support from teachers and chaperones to maintain positive group behavior and respect.

Storage

We have lockers where students can store belongings; however, we recommend that you bring as little as possible. The museum will provide all materials necessary for activities such as pencils and paper.

Food

You can enjoy a meal at our café, Maqha, which opens at 11:00 am. Kindly notify us in advance if you are planning on having lunch after the visit. Alternatively, students can bring their own packed lunch.

Photography

Photography is allowed for *L'âge d'or* by special permission of the artist. It is not allowed for exhibitions of the museum's permanent collection.

We ask that students do not bring cameras or smart phones into the galleries during tours.

Upon approval from the school and guardians, we may ask you to be a part of our public image by photographing or video recording the students during the visit.

Transportation

Mathaf is located at the edge of Education City off of Al-Luqta Street. We advise you to check the Mathaf website for a current map or news about possible traffic diversions. Parking is available for school busses. Buses can access the front gate for drop off and pick up.

Manners

We aim to create a learning environment that is positive and enjoyable. Please go over these basic points with your students and chaperones before their visit.

Mathaf Manners

Stand back from works of art, and do not touch.

Our skin has natural oils and acids that can harm the surfaces of art objects. We want to share these artworks with our visitors for a long time to come.

Stay with the group at all times.

We don't want you to get lost.

Walk, don't run.

We care about your safety. If you run you may fall and injure yourself, your friends, or an artwork.

Raise your hand to talk.

Noise can echo through the museum. Raising our hands and taking turns helps us have a conversation where everyone can be heard.

Backpacks and bags should be placed in lockers.

We want you to be comfortable during your visit, and avoid bumping into things with your bag.

Only use pencils for sketching or taking notes.

Ink and other materials are dangerous to the safety of an artwork.

No photography or mobile phones in the galleries.

To respect others while they are talking, we ask that you wait to use your phone or camera until after we are finished with the visit.

No eating, drinking, or chewing gum in the galleries.

You can enjoy a nice meal after the visit at Maqha.

About the Current Exhibitions

L'âge d'or features the work of Adel Abdessemed, an Algerian-born contemporary artist, living and working in Paris and New York.

Adel Abdessemed transforms well-known materials and imagery into unexpected and charged artistic declarations. In his work, he uses a wide range of media, including drawing, video, photography, performance, and sculpture. Pulling freely from a myriad of sources—personal, historical, social, and political—his visual language is simultaneously rich and economical, sensitive and controversial, radical and mundane. His art addresses the underlying effects of globalized society on the individual, often using his own personal circumstances as a point of departure.

Contemporary art is art produced by artists from the 1970s to the present. Unlike modern art, with movements such as Cubism or Dadaism, contemporary art defies easy classification. It incorporates ideas, concepts, questions and practices to describe a diverse array of subjects.

For more comprehensive discussions of contemporary art, consider the following resources:

Art in the 21st Century

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/learning-with-art21/on-contemporary-art/contemporary-art-in-context>

Smart History

<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/art-in-the-21st-century.html>

E-Flux

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/what-is-contemporary-art-issue-two/>

Oxford Art Online

<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/public/page/themes/artin21cent>

Concurrently on exhibit are pieces from Mathaf's permanent collection. The museum is also launching The Project Space, a space for works by contemporary artists, beginning with *Sound Element* by sound artist, Magdi Mostafa.

Pre-visit Activities

This section describes activities you can modify to suit your curriculum and subject matter, whether you are teaching the visual arts, language, history, civics or you just want to emphasize skills such as observation and critical thinking.

These activities introduce basic skills such as observation and talking about contemporary art. They also give students a preview of Adel Abdessemed's work, including his use of material, and themes.

Finally, the techniques used in these activities mirror the intensive questioning style that will be used on a guided school visit.



Hope

2011-2012

Found boat and resin

205.7 x 243.8 x 579.1 cm

Sample Activity 1:

Hope

This is an artwork by the Algerian artist, Adel Abdessemed. It is not at the museum, but it is a useful example of the way the artist works and thinks.

The boat was found abandoned on a beach in Florida, on the southern coast of the United States. The artist assumes it was used to secretly transport immigrants in pursuit of a new life. The artist has not changed the original appearance of the boat, but filled it with black bags made from polyurethane resin, which were cast from stuffed garbage bags.

The materials for this artwork were found in the United States, but Abdessemed touches on an issue that is controversial in many countries. Together the materials and title create commentary on how societies treat migrants, and asks whether migrants' dreams are truly possible. On a larger scale, the artist asks us why more people and countries do not want to take up responsibility for helping those who are in need.

What do your students make of this work?

Ask students to describe this artwork in detail.

What do they see?

What is the artwork made of?

Adel Abdessemed fuses a title and materials to create this work. This piece is entitled *Hope*.

How does the title relate to the appearance of the boat?

Does it appear hopeful? Can an object even be hopeful?

Why or why not?

What sits on top of the boat?

How are the two parts connected to each other?

The boat was found abandoned on a beach in Florida, on the southern coast of the United States. The artist assumes it was used to secretly transport immigrants in pursuit of a new life.

What do you think the artist is criticizing?

Is this issue unique to one part of the world?

How effective do you think the artist was in his criticism?

Reflect:

How is this similar or different from artworks/ artists you are familiar with?

What kinds of artworks do you expect to see in the museum?

Note:

This conversation can be structured purely as a conversation; however, you can also have students begin by listing what they see in a graphic organizer, sketching the artwork, working with partners to discuss what they see and then transitioning to a whole class conversation.



PRACTICE ZERO TOLERANCE

2008

Terracotta

1803 x 1168 x 430.5 cm

Sample Activity 2:

Practice ZERO TOLERANCE

This artwork summarizes some of the surprising aspects of contemporary art. The artist uses material in a personal and unexpected way, and draws on current events and pop culture to make a strong statement.

This artwork is entitled *Practice ZERO TOLERANCE*, and is on display at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. The artist presents a car turned on its side. Its black color and damaged appearance makes it appear as if it has been burnt. This car is a copy of a car burnt in protests in France in 2005; however, instead of using metal, the artist used terracotta. A gentle push can cause the car to fall and shatter. The internal part of the car is empty; however, you can see the fingerprints of the person(s) who molded the car into shape.

This seemingly simple object is layered in meaning. The car is a remnant of protests, capturing the energy required to create change, and the fury caused by marginalization. The title *Practice ZERO TOLERANCE* is taken from speeches by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani in response to protests. *Practice ZERO TOLERANCE* is at once about the protests Abdessemed witnessed in Paris, but also about the wider world.

Continued on the next page.

Sample Activity 2:

Practice ZERO TOLERANCE

Try looking at this artwork with your students.

Explain to students that contemporary artists often choose surprising materials or media for their artwork. The choice of material in this case is highly personal and related to the meaning of the artwork. Contemporary artists like Adel Abdessemed are often inspired by what is happening around them or events in the news.

What do you see?

What do you see that makes you see that?

What do you think this artwork is made of?

Explain that the artist was inspired by protests that he witnessed in Paris, France. The car is a copy of a car that was burned in the protest. The car is actually made from terra cotta, reddish clay used for objects such as flower pots. Inside the car, you can still see the fingerprints of the person(s) who molded the car into shape.

What does the color of the car represent?

Why is the car turned over on its side, instead of flat on the ground?

Why would an artist use a material that could easily break, instead of a strong material like stone or metal?

How can the use of material be part of creating an emotion about the artwork?

Why did the artist choose to keep the fingerprints inside the car, instead of smoothing them away?

Why does he use the car to represent the protests, instead of for example, a photograph of the protestors?

What feeling does he convey? What do you see that makes you think that?

The title of the artwork is Practice ZERO TOLERANCE, because during the protests the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, warned the protestors they would be arrested unless they stopped.

How do you think the artist feels about these events?

Is he just a witness, or does he have an opinion about these events?

What do you see that makes you think that?

Ask your students to reflect on this conversation:

What did they expect art to be like?

How was this different from their expectations?

What do they think their visit to the museum will be like?

What will the other artworks by Adel Abdessemed be like?

Post-Visit Activities

Connect the artworks and themes of the exhibition to your curriculum. Here are some possible ways you can encourage students to use their critical thinking skills in different disciplines.

Visual Arts: Working like a Contemporary Artist

Encourage students to make an artwork addressing an issue they care about, and work like a contemporary artist.

Ask students to think about their museum visit: What sets contemporary artists, artists of the 21st century, apart from artists in the past?

Help students brainstorm issues they care about. How do they want to talk about that issue?

How will they depict that issue visually, and what media will they use?

How will they make the viewer think more deeply about an issue?

Persuasive Writing: Forming an Opinion Using Evidence

What makes something art?

This is a question frequently posed about contemporary art.

Ask students to choose an artwork from the exhibition, and discuss.

Do they consider this to be art? Why or why not? Should art be beautiful or can art ask questions?

Should we use art to talk about controversial issues, or should art stay away from controversy?

Ask students to support their opinion with what they saw and learned at the museum.

Social Sciences: Can Art Have Something to Say About the World?

In some of his artworks, Adel Abdessemed explores the question, "Where does violence come from?" He explores this question from a historical perspective, as well as an ethical perspective.

After touring the exhibition, ask your students to select an artwork and discuss this question.

Where does violence come from?

Why do you think violence occurs so frequently in our world? Why is it so difficult for individuals and societies to stop violence once it starts?

Connect this question to material students may have already learned about, such as the historical causes of major conflicts.