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NEWS

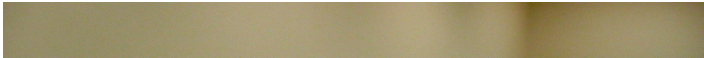
Artist Kader Attia Files Plagiarism Lawsuit over French Rap Video

YouTube took down the music video for a song by the French rappers Dosseh and Nekfeu after Attia filed a lawsuit claiming it plagiarizes one of his works.



Benjamin Sutton

December 7, 2016



 **comments (1)**

Kader Attia, “Ghost” (2007) (photo by [Herry Lawford/Flickr](#), courtesy the artist and and Nagel Draxler, Berlin)

A music video for the song “Putain d’époque” by French rappers [Dosseh](#) and [Nekfeu](#) has been removed from YouTube after the artist [Kader Attia](#) filed a lawsuit claiming it plagiarizes one of his works. A version of the video for the song (whose title translates, roughly, to “These Fucking Times”) without sound is [still on YouTube](#), and shows, beginning around the 18-second mark, a group of crouched figures wearing shiny survival blankets. According to French news site [20 Minutes](#), this image is the focus of Attia’s plagiarism claim, for too closely resembling his 2007 installation [“Ghost.”](#)

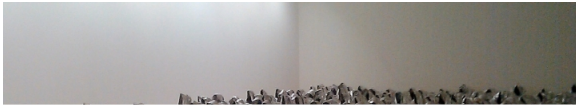
“The scenes in question are the ones in which I and members of the #YuriNation are wearing survival blankets, and in which the idea was to visualize the

fact that, in the times through which we're living, the world is so hard — for many reasons we won't go into here — that we spend more time surviving than simply living,” Dosseh — who just released his debut album, *Yuri*, earlier this month through Universal Music — [wrote on Facebook](#). “The legal department of Universal is currently doing what's necessary to find a solution to this situation.”



Still from Dosseh and Nekfeu's “Putain d'époque” music video (screenshot by the author via YouTube)

“Ghost” consists of 102 crouched figures made from thin layers of aluminum and was acquired by the Centre Pompidou in 2008. In a statement sent to Hyperallergic by his New York gallery [Lehmann Maupin](#), Attia explained that he is not holding the rappers responsible for the alleged act of plagiarism, but rather their record label.

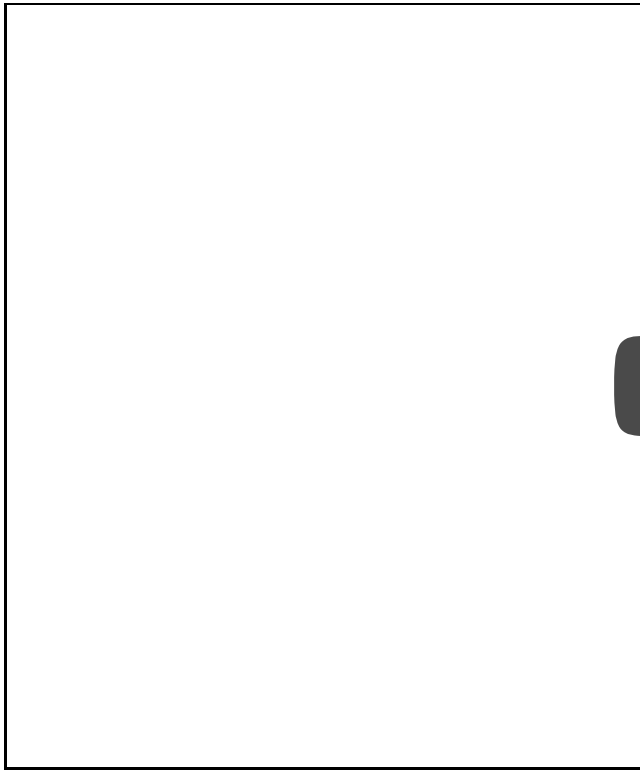


Kader Attia, “Ghost” (2007) (photo by [Olivier Duquesne/Flickr](#), courtesy the artist and and Nagel Draxler, Berlin)

“First of all, I would like to correct something: I haven’t filed a lawsuit against the rappers Dosseh and Nekfeu; I have nothing against them. I am filing a lawsuit against Universal Music,” Attia’s statement, reprinted in full below, begins. “Universal are responsible; they perfectly know how to defend copyright when fighting against illegal downloading. Each artist, would it be musician, visual artist, or anything else, has to fight for the integrity and the respect of his work.”

In response to the plagiarism accusations, the South African artist [Kendell Geers](#) wrote an [open letter](#) to Attia, criticizing his decision to file a lawsuit over the video. “If I were you, I would take it as a huge compliment that young French

artists have decided to Cut your work Up into their online video,” Geers writes. “It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Plagiarism is not theft and in the context of Dosseh and Nekfeu, I would be flattered if I were you.” Geers’s letter goes on to draw parallels between his own work and Attia’s as a way of pointing out the subjective nature of plagiarism claims in situations like these. He adds: “Given the proximity between some of your works and my own, the insecure artist might cry plagiarism, but I am flattered by your references.”



Attia isn't the first visual artist to sue over a musician's apparent sampling of their work. Another French artist, Orlan, filed a [\\$31 million lawsuit against Lady Gaga in 2013](#) (and then [again earlier this year](#)), claiming that the pop star had plagiarized several of her works. That case could serve as a cautionary tale for Attia — Orlan not only [lost](#), but had to pay Lady Gaga and her record label's court fees.

Here is Attia's full statement:

First of all, I would like to correct something: I haven't filed a lawsuit against the rappers Dosseh and Nekfeu; I have nothing against them.

I am filing a lawsuit against Universal Music. They are responsible for this plagiarism.

As artists, we have to defend ourselves against unauthorized commercial uses of our artworks. We are constantly plagiarized by the music industry, or in advertisement, or fashion ... Nobody has asked for my permission to reproduce the artwork "Ghost" in this video. Universal are responsible; they perfectly know how to defend copyright when

fighting against illegal downloading. Each artist, would it be musician, visual artist, or anything else, has to fight for the integrity and the respect of his work.

Today all these reactions, including Universal's, aim at scaring me. They are not used to an artist complaining about his work being plagiarized, above all facing big companies like Universal.

The value of an artwork is above all intimate, symbolic, personal. Seeing it plagiarized like this makes an artist suffer, until he decides to stand up and say no to this exploitation.

I won't be scared off by nasty comments. I have always resisted against the exploitation of the weakest ones, I will fight the exploitation of my work.

Regarding Kendell Geers, I am appalled to see he had to resort to such low blows to draw attention to him. I won't comment any further. Artists should stand up together and present a united front to big companies that plagiarize their work.

All the best,
Kader Attia