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Kader Attia

Untitled (Ghardaïa)

2009



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[Summary](#)

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Untitled (Ghardaïa) 2009 is a scale model of the ancient city Ghardaïa in the M'zab Valley in Algeria. The model is made from cooked couscous, a staple food of North Africa, and sits on a wooden table or on the floor. The square and circular blocks cluster towards the centre of the terrain, which is marked by a tall tower. All the buildings comprise variations on simple geometric forms. The model is accompanied by three works on paper: portraits of the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and of the French architect Fernand Pouillon (1912–1986) and a print out of the UNESCO Advisory Body Evaluation of the M'zab Valley as a world heritage site. These three digital prints unframed and are attached to the walls surrounding the sculpture. By bringing these elements together Kader Attia highlights a moment of cultural exchange between France and Algeria – specifically between the architects and the city that was their inspiration – which in turn parallels the artist's personal history, as he was born in France to Algerian parents.

Untitled (Ghardaïa) reveals the influence of the East on the West, troubling the logic of colonial influence in which the coloniser dominates and degrades a native culture and civilisation. However, just as the work seems to celebrate the influence Ghardaïa has had on European Modernist architecture, it also evidences its precariousness. This is played out literally as the couscous crumbles and decays over the course of the installation, only to be refreshed when the structures become unrecognisable. But it is also suggested by the fixed gazes of the

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ON DISPLAY AT TATE MODERN

Display Room: [Living Cities \(Room 2\)](#)

Display Theme: [Level 4: Living Cities](#)

ARTIST	Kader Attia born 1970
MEDIUM	Cooked couscous on wooden table and digital prints on paper
DIMENSIONS	Overall display dimensions variable
COLLECTION	Tate
ACQUISITION	Purchased using funds provided by the Middle East North Africa Acquisitions Committee 2010
REFERENCE	T13179

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 BLOG

Work of the Week: *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* by Kader Attia

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