

IMA
INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

Invisible Border

10 April-05 June 2021

Education Resource



How to Use this Kit

This education kit has been developed for use when visiting the exhibition *Invisible Border* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.

Content covered in this resource aligns to current Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority and is targeted at senior students learning under the new senior syllabus.

Teachers are encouraged to use the worksheet for learning experiences in the gallery. The analytical framework scaffolded in this resource can be adapted for use in the classroom and prompts students to develop their research and reflection outside of the gallery setting.

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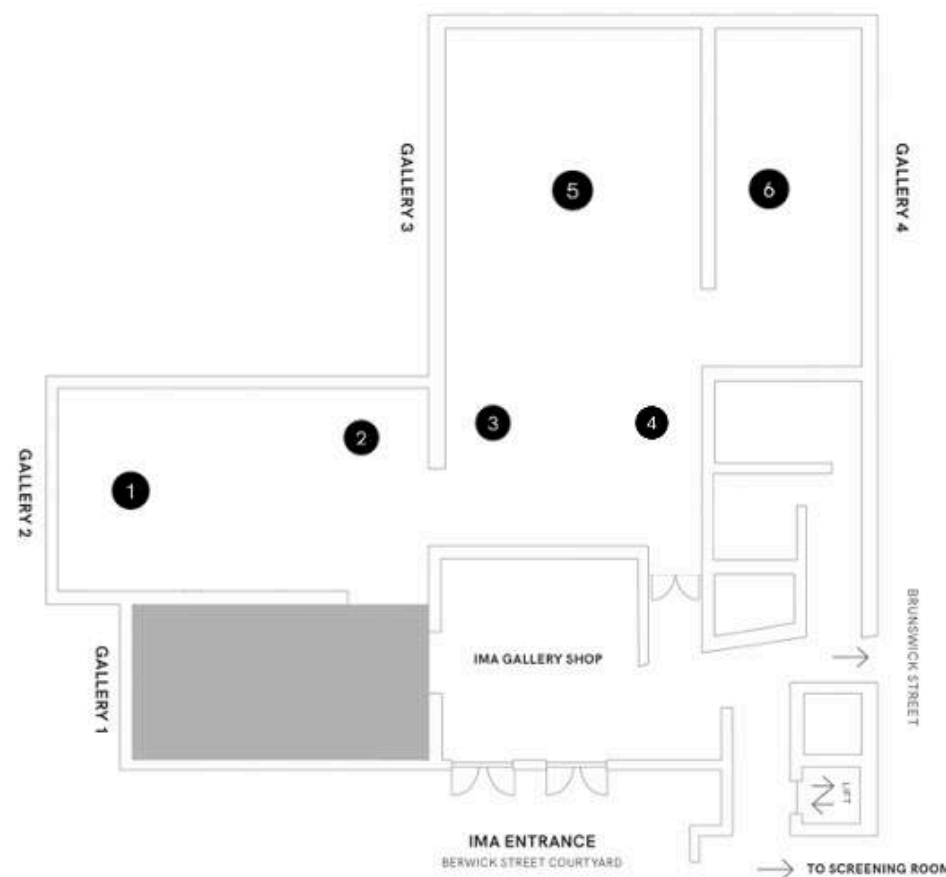
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Floorplan & Artworks



1. Sermon on the Mount, 2020
2. Untitled 1 (from Sermon on the Mount series)
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Exhibition Introduction

Invisible Border

"I became other. I became one of the wearied, dusty faces from across the border. And although there was no boundary between us, and we were all citizens of one country, suddenly an invisible border of horror was drawn around me that made it impossible to get out"—Khadim Ali

Invisible Border is the artist's largest ever solo exhibition in his adopted country. Comprising sound installation, miniature painting and intricately constructed textiles; the exhibition features new works that have been created in collaboration with a community of men and women in Afghanistan, some who have lost family members in war.

Ali's interest in tapestries developed soon after his parents' home in Quetta was destroyed by a car bomb. Amongst the rubble and debris left from the blast, a collection of rugs and weavings remained the only items intact: miraculously able to withstand the reign of terror inflicted upon his family and community. In these new large-scale tapestries Ali makes comment on war, geo-politics and personal trauma, drawing from a range of historical and contemporary influences including the recent Black Summer bushfires, Persian literary masterpieces, children's fables and the Mughal Dynasty.

Expressing the profound horror of modern-day warfare, *Invisible Border* is testament to the climate of propaganda, violence, and fear that pervade global relations.



Image Credits

pg 2: *Sermon on the Mount*, 2020

Linen, cotton, nylon, ink, natural dye, synthetic dye, acrylic paint; painting, hand and machine embroidery, appliqué

557 x 397.5cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2021

Photograph: Marc Pricop

This page: *Untitled 1* (from *Sermon on the Mount* series), 2020

Gouache, ink and gold leaf on paper

250 x 140cm

Photograph: Marc Pricop (opening night)

Artist Profile: Khadim Ali

born 1978, Quetta, Pakistan

lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Khadim Ali is one of Australia's most acclaimed artists, known for his masterful works that poetically explore the experience of displaced people across the globe. A member of the persecuted Hazara ethnic minority, Ali is the third generation of his family to be exiled from his homeland of Afghanistan. After growing up in Pakistan as a refugee, Ali was trained in classical miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore and in mural painting and calligraphy in Tehran.

Selected exhibitions include the Venice Biennial (2009); Safavid revisited, APT5, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2006); British Museum, London; No Country: Contemporary Art for South East Asia at the Guggenheim New York (2013); Documenta (13) (2012); Rendezvous, Biennale de Lyon (2017), Lyon France; The National (2017) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Dhaka Art Summit (2018). Ali's work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Australian War Memorial, Art Gallery of New South Wales, QAGOMA, Brisbane, Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.





Image Credits

Sermon on the Mount (detail), 2020
Linen, cotton, nylon, ink, natural dye,
synthetic dye, acrylic paint; painting,
hand and machine embroidery,
appliqué
557 x 397.5cm
Collection: National Gallery of
Australia, Canberra, purchased 2021

1. Draw the artwork below

2. Word association adjective list:

-
-
-
-
-

3. Visual analysis table

	Literal (what I see)	Non-Literal
Materials		
Processes		
Visual Language		
Context		

4. Ideas I need to explore and want to know more about:

- ? -----
- ? -----

5. Let’s talk it out:
Before doing any reading, discuss your visual analysis findings.
How can you begin to make meaning by connecting ideas?

Worksheet



6. Ground your understanding through further research and reflection by reading and absorbing the following contextualising information:



6.1 Materials & Process: This is a photograph of Ali's collaborators, a community of Hazara men and women in Afghanistan. These craftspeople interpret Ali's digital drawings and translate them into hand embroidered tapestries, as seen above in this work in progress shot.



6.2 Visual Language & Context: *Sermon on the Mount* is a reimagining of this 15th century illustration from the *Anwar-i Suhayli*, a collection of influential fables describing animals as heroic creatures. Explicitly, there is a direct link between composition and subject matter. Implicitly, Ali references a fable of morality in which the animals gather to discuss the destruction of mother nature at the hands of humankind.

**Sermon on the Mount** (Excerpt)

by Khadim Ali and Asad Buda

A group of animals took refuge in the mountains from the fire that had burned and destroyed their homes. They gathered at the foothill of the mountain to find a solution for their survival. The koala that was affected the most by this catastrophe went up the mountain and delivered a speech as follows:

'I have no good news for you. I have come to inform of the great extinction. I am the voice of the earth: the voice of this common mother, who will soon be destroyed from many wounds... Truly man is the executioner of life. Our killer, the killer of the earth and the killer of themselves.

6.3 Contemporary & Personal Context: This short story, also titled *Sermon on the Mount* was written by Ali and Asad Buda (writer and historian) in response to the devastating 2020 Black Summer bushfires which devastated much of Australia's bushland. The story is written from the perspective of the Koala and imagines the koala's teachings.

7. Through this process you have looked closely at the work, made associations and contextualised your thinking through research and reflection. As a result, your understanding of the work has deepened. What has this work made you think more deeply about?



Responding Ideas for the Classroom

Resolving our thinking:

Select one of the below *Context Questions* to construct a written response to Ali's artwork.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

How does Khadim Ali:

- Provoke ideas about current issues and challenge established philosophies?
- Expand on artistic traditions through contemporary art forms, subject matter and display?

CULTURAL CONTEXT

How does Khadim Ali:

- Explore cultural traditions?
- Reflect community interests through social commentary?
- Invite you to consider how your own cultural values and background influence your interpretation of the work?
- Explore the impact of historical and contemporary events on the meaning of his artwork?

PERSONAL CONTEXT

How does Khadim Ali:

- Use shared experiences to influence your construction of personal meaning?
- Generate ideas from his own personal stories and memories?

FORMAL CONTEXT

How does Khadim Ali:

- Enhance the interpretation of the artwork through processes, materials and media?
- Enhance the interpretation of the artwork through stylistic characteristics shared with traditional artforms from other times and places?

Making Ideas for the Classroom

Survival of Culture

This activity responds to Khadim Ali's use of the tapestry as a direct reference to the rugs and weavings that miraculously survived the bombing of his parents' home in Quetta, Pakistan. Students are to reflect on their own homes and identify an object that could miraculously withstand destruction and consequently symbolise their cultural identity. This object could become the basis of a series of drawings, photographs or small-scale sculptures.

Reimagining Folklore

For this activity students are to find a mythical story or fable, preferably from their childhood and reinterpret it through a contemporary global event. This activity is inspired by Ali's combining of a fable from *Kalila and Dimna* and the 2019-2020 Australian bushfires in his work *Sermon on the Mount*. Drawing on Ali's process, students are encouraged to use digital collage, taking imagery directly from media sources and combining them with visual references from their chosen fable or mythical story.

Image Credits

pg.9 *Invisible Border 1*, 2020

Acrylic paint and dye, hand and machine embroidery stitched on fabric

210 x 900cm

Collection: Sharjah Art Foundation

Photograph: Marc Pricop

pg.11. *Invisible Border 4*, 2020

Hand and machine embroidered, stitched and dye ink on fabric

300 x 220cm

Collection of the artist

Photograph: Marc Pricop



Support Material

In Conversation with IMA director Liz Nowell:

<https://soundcloud.com/instituteofmodernart/in-conversation-khadim-ali>

Artist Profile: <http://www.artistprofile.com.au/khadim-ali/>

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

Cultural Context:

Afghan War Rugs short article and image:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1114983>

Afghan War Rugs, short video from Penn Museum (US):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ1twdwHbe8>

Many of Ali's works reference *Shahnameh: Persian Book of Kings*.

Synopsis and brief overview:

<https://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/inside/corner/shah/synopsis.html>

Formal Context:

Link to reference image for *Sermon on the Mount*:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1920-0917-0-5

Link to reference image for *Invisible Border 4*:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1948-1009-0-69

Many of Ali's works reference the fable *Kalila and Dimna*. Brief overview:

<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/8933/>

Ali discusses miniature painting and his process:

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

Contemporary Context:

Impact of bushfire on Koalas:

<https://www.wwf.org.au/news/news/2020/wwf-60000-koalas-impacted-by-bushfire-crisis#gs.xulgfg>

Personal Context:

Article in The Sydney Morning Herald:

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/heros-journey-teaches-khadim-ali-the-art-of-embracing-your-inner-demon-20170326-gv6xia.html>

Curriculum Links for Teachers

Worksheet Activities are connected to the follow areas of the QCAA's new senior Visual Arts syllabus.

E = Explain
Q = Question

1. Draw Artwork

Syllabus objective: Researching
- reacting to stimulus

- E. By reading the artwork through drawing you have commenced your visual analysis. This is because you examined and considered key visuals in order to explain and interpret it.
- Q. Considering the visuals, you were drawn to, what would you say are the essential visual language elements?

2. Word Association List

Syllabus objective: Researching
- reacting to stimulus: interpretation of meaning in artworks

- E. By describing the work, you are making your first associations to find meaning.
- Q. Can you use these adjectives to form a descriptive passage about the work?

3. Visual Analysis Table

Syllabus objective: Researching
- reacting to stimulus: analysis and interpretation of literal and non-literal meaning

- E. By identifying the literal components of the artwork we can begin to make associations and build our non-literal interpretations; we are building meaning.
- Q. Is there a reoccurring word appearing on your table? Are you beginning to piece together a theme or key concept for this work?

4. Ideas I needs to explore further...

Syllabus objective: Reflecting
- considering ideas and information: identification of relevant sources in formulation of ideas
- states opinions relevant to ideas

- E. As art audience good descriptive analysis should inspire further research.
- Q. What do you need to know more about to help you form a critical understanding of the work?

5. Let's Talk it out...

Syllabus objective: Resolve
- communicating as audience: recognise and distinguish features of artworks and practices

- Q. Through discussion, can the collective start to find links between their ideas?

6. Materials and Process

6.2 Visual Language and Context

6.3 Contemporary and Personal Context

Syllabus objective: Researching
- reacting to stimulus: analysis and interpretation of literal and non-literal meaning and the ways the selected contexts shape the inquiry

- E. Your personal interpretations and associations are invaluable but to formalise our thinking we need to look to outside academic writing and thinking. As a senior visual art student, you are constantly considering how artworks can be analysed and interpreted through contexts; personal, contemporary, formal, cultural.
- Q. Can you build on one of your associations from the table with this further research?

Syllabus objective: Reflecting
- considering ideas and information: evaluation of art-making approaches and practices of others that inform ideas, media, techniques and processes

- E. An essential part of the visual analysis process is making an informed judgement about an artists' work by synthesising information and ideas, determining the significance of the work after considering the work deeply.
- Q. How could you argue the significance of this work? What are the strengths, implications and limitations of the work?

7. Thinking Deeply

Syllabus objective: Resolve
- communicating as audience: recognise and distinguish features of artworks and practices
- language conventions to construct written responses that analyse, interpret, evaluate and justify visual language, expression and meaning in artworks

- E. As the final step in this process it is important that we communicate our thinking and understanding to others. It is also important that we recognise how our thinking has evolved and resolved through this process.
- Q. Reflecting on how far we've come in terms of building our capacity to think critically when engaging with art, can you identify THE piece of info that shifted your thinking today?

Acknowledgements

Khadim Ali

Invisible Border

10 April – 5 June, 2021

Curated by Liz Nowell

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This education resource was written by Kate Nash for the Institute of Modern Art, April 2021.

About the IMA

Since 1975 the Institute of Modern Art has been the hub of Brisbane's contemporary art scene, presenting an annual program of exhibitions, public programs, publications, and offsite programs by Queensland, Australian, and international artists.

As one of Australia's leading independent contemporary art spaces, our vision is to become a truly inclusive, sustainable, and future focused organisation. Through our artistic programs, which include exhibitions, publications, offsite projects, and public programs, we invest in the local, shape the national, and impact the international.

The IMA is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, the Australian Government through Australia Council for the Arts, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Federal, State, and Territory Governments. The IMA is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia.

Terms of Use

This education resource has been produced by the Institute of Modern Art to provide information and classroom support material for education visits to the exhibition *Invisible Border*. The reproduction and communication of this resource is permitted for educational purposes only.

Visiting the IMA

The IMA is open Tuesday – Saturday, 10am to 5pm.

We are located in the Judith Wright Contemporary Arts Centre at 420 Brunswick St Fortitude Valley QLD 4006.

The 199, 196 and 195 buses stop directly outside the Judith Wright Arts Centre, and the IMA is just a five-minute walk from Fortitude Valley train station.

Visit the [Translink Website](#) for more information.

Our Education Program is free and tours are available for secondary and tertiary groups on weekdays during exhibition seasons. Bookings are required, please get in touch to arrange your visit:



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