Diana Al-Hadid

About

Born
1981 (Aleppo, Syria)

Education
Kent State University, BA
Virginia Commonwealth University, MFA

Lives and Works
New York, New York

About the Artist
Diana Al-Hadid’s large-scale sculptures and wall hangings are the outcomes of process-based investigations into materials such as fiberglass, polymer, steel, and plaster. Exploiting the innate tension between mass and gravity, Al-Hadid is particularly interested in the point at which her works are fixed to the ground, often seeking to create what she describes as “something that seems improbable.” Making drawings since her adolescent years with her grandmother, Al-Hadid creates meticulous renderings driven by a fascination with the depiction of space and perspective. While critics often cite Al-Hadid’s Syrian background as influential to her ornate works, the artist is just as likely to make artistic references to ancient Rome, the Renaissance, or Mannerist painting.

Media and Materials

drawing
installation
painting
sculpture

Key Words and Ideas
architecture
comradery
daring
gavity
illusion
inspiration
layer
perspective
physics
process

Related Artists
El Anastui
Phyllida Barlow
Kevin Beasley
Mark Bradford
Cai Guo-Qiang
Rackstraw Downes
Leonardo Drew
Theaster Gates
Katharina Grosse
Guan Xiao

Thomas Hirschhorn
Brian Jungen
Barbara Kasten
Anish Kapoor
Julie Mehretu
Martin Puryear
Sarah Sze
Ursula von Rydingsvard
Jack Whitten

“...to lift off the floor, that’s the first way to rebel.” — Diana Al-Hadid
**How to Use This Guide**
Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Diana Al-Hadid into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

### Before Viewing
Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

1. Why does an artist have a studio? What can a studio represent?
2. What might an artist be responsible for, beyond making art?
3. How do the sciences, like physics and math, connect to art?
4. Have you seen an artwork that balances illusion and reality? Describe the artwork to the class. How did the work achieve that equilibrium?

### While Viewing
Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

1. What are the benefits of having people in the studio to help with the making of art? What are the drawbacks?
2. How does Al-Hadid encourage the viewer to pay attention to weight, volume, and space?
3. How does seeing Al-Hadid’s process influence your perception of it? Which part of the process intrigues you? Why?

### After Viewing
Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

1. How is comradery, or mutual trust, a factor in Al-Hadid’s work?
2. In what ways does Al-Hadid’s use of physics and math strengthen the impact of her work?
3. Compare Al-Hadid to Phyllida Barlow, featured in the "London" episode. What motivates both artists to explore materials or objects that Barlow describes as “badly behaved”? How does the work of each artist convey the themes of construction and building?

### Related Activities
Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- Consider Al-Hadid’s use of scale: tiny, delicate details within an imposingly large final piece. Prompt students to create a work that uses scale in multiple ways.
- Allow students to listen to an audio book or podcast as they work, either individually or as a group, just like Al-Hadid listens to *Anna Karenina* in the episode “Diana Al-Hadid Plays the Classics.” At the conclusion, ask students if listening to a creative product by another person influenced their process.
- Use the episode “Diana Al-Hadid at the 55th Venice Biennale” as inspiration for conversations between student artists. At the conclusion of a unit, ask students to interview each other about their work. During the interview, students should consider similarities and differences to their own work, like materials used, original intention, and problems solved. Lastly, ask how the work of their peers might lead to future inspiration.

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Did you use this guide, Art21 films, or Art21-featured artists in your classroom? If so, tag Art21 on social media or email us at education@art21.org.