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Production still from
the *New York Close Up*
film, "Diana Al-Hadid's
Studio Boom."
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art21.org/dianaalhadid



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.

"For me to get a sculpture to lift off the floor, that's the first way to rebel." —Diana Al-Hadid

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

drawing
installation
painting
sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

architecture
comradery
daring
gravity
illusion
inspiration
layer
perspective
physics
process

Related Artists

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| El Anastui | Thomas Hirschhorn |
| Phyllida Barlow | Brian Jungen |
| Kevin Beasley | Barbara Kasten |
| Mark Bradford | Anish Kapoor |
| Cai Guo-Qiang | Julie Mehretu |
| Rackstraw Downes | Martin Puryear |
| Leonardo Drew | Sarah Sze |
| Theaster Gates | Ursula von |
| Katharina Grosse | Rydingsvard |
| Guan Xiao | Jack Whitten |

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.