

Educator Notes

Yto Barrada: *Klaatu Barrada Nikto*

June 1–December 2, 2018



About the Artist

Yto Barrada was born in Paris in 1971 and lives and works in New York. She studied history and political science at the Sorbonne University, Paris, and photography at the International Center of Photography in New York City. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at: M-Museum Leuven, Belgium (2016–17); Vienna Secession, Austria, Tabakalera Centro Internacional de Cultura Contemporánea, San Sebastián (both 2016); Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, France (2015–16); Museu Serralves, Porto (2015); and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2013–14).

About the Exhibition

Yto Barrada mines material from a range of subjects—personal narratives, myths, educational graphics, textile history, geology, and paleontology. She is interested in the layers of history that are sometimes overlooked, and encourages visitors to go on a journey to find hidden stories and meanings. The exhibition title, *Klaatu Barrada Nikto*, is inspired by a key line in the 1951 science-fiction film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. In the film, this untranslatable message is used to shut down the rampage of robots that plan to destroy the Earth. The artist adopted the phrase not only because of the relationship to her last name, but also because of its play with authenticity and tradition. The artist's arrangement of real and imagined objects puts emphasis on how histories are communicated and taught within the context of their display. This exhibition asks us to reconsider our own relationships with time and place.

Questions for Discussion

- | Do you believe everything you see? Why or why not?
- | How do you arrive at understanding what is fact and what is fiction?
- | Explore what's "below the surface," in your geographical location, either literally or figuratively.

Suggested Activity

Imaginary Museum: Objects as Artifacts

You will need one shoebox for each student, color construction paper, drawing paper, color pencils, magazines, glue, scissors, plasticine or air-dry clay, and a variety of fabrics, artifacts, and both natural and man-made found objects in a variety of colors and textures.

First, have a discussion about the unique characteristics of your geographical location. Is the area in which you live known for a certain rock, tree, animal, food, or person? Compile a list of ideas together, then invite students to choose one idea from the list.

Have students create a museum space by covering the sides and bottom of the shoebox with construction paper or fabric. Allow students ample time to create, sculpt, draw, and install their objects in their "museum."

Younger students might consider creating an imaginary museum filled with their favorite color, shape, or texture.

Once the imaginary museums are complete, invite students on a museum tour to view each student's exhibition. Consider reviewing museum manners or expectations before the tours. For example, will viewers be able to touch in addition to looking?

For further discussion:

Have facts been created or altered through the making of the imaginary museum?

Does the placement of any object, regardless of value, change in a museum setting?

Installation view: Yto Barrada, *Klaatu Barrada Nikto*, 2018. Photo: Tony Prikryl

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