

MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION

Kambui Olujimi: The Rock that Cuts the Night in Two

This workshop is inspired by the recurring theme of commemoration in Kambui Olujimi's work. According to the [Online Etymology Dictionary](#), to commemorate is to "perpetuate (or carry on) the memory of" something or someone. Many of Olujimi's projects are developed over multiple years and emphasize the ways in which personal and collective memory change over time. For example, *Walk With Me* is a series of nearly 200 portraits. Olujimi created these drawings over the course of five years after the death of Ms. Catherine Arline. She was a cornerstone of his neighborhood, and, in the artist's words, his "guardian angel." *When Monuments Fall* is a series of paintings that questions who is commemorated through a monument and why. By creating works of art that commemorate personal experiences and historic moments, Olujimi engages in remembrance and preservation, as well as the generation of new narratives.

Search for an artwork in the exhibition to focus on that alludes to a specific experience or historical moment.

- Describe the people, places, or things that are depicted in the artwork. How are they arranged?
- What materials did Olujimi use to create the work?
- How does this artwork make you feel? What do you see that prompts this emotion?
- Based on your observations, what do you think Olujimi wanted to commemorate through this artwork?

After viewing the exhibition and analyzing Olujimi's work, use the prompts below to create your own commemorative artwork.

Step 1:

Option 1: Reflect on a significant personal memory. It could be a moment of joy, loss, growth, or transition. Consider why this memory stands out to you. How has it shaped your understanding of yourself or the world around you?

Option 2: Think about a historic event that has had an impact on your life or your community. How has this event influenced your perspectives or shaped your identity?

Step 2: Create an artwork commemorating your chosen memory.

- Consider what aspects of the memory or event you want to focus on. Select the materials, colors, shapes, and imagery you will use to convey this in your artwork.
- Reflect on how your memory has evolved or changed over time. Are there details that have become more prominent or have faded away? How might you suggest this in your artwork? For example, to create *Walk With Me*, Olujimi used the same reference photo for each drawing. Instead of replicating a static image of Ms. Arline, these portraits morph and change, much like the details of a memory. In addition, the fluidity of the ink further suggests the ebb and flow of memory, as well as the grief Olujimi experienced after Ms. Arline's passing.

Step 3: Share about your artwork with a partner. Discuss how the materials, colors, imagery, and composition work together to tell a story that commemorates your chosen memory or event.

Step 4: Photograph your work and share it with us on Instagram by tagging us at #universitygalleriesisu.



Kambui Olujimi, *Walk With Me*, 2015-2020. Ink on paper. 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Artist biography:

Kambui Olujimi was born and raised in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and is currently based in New York City. Olujimi received his M.F.A. from Columbia University. His work has been screened or exhibited at Sundance Film Festival; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Kunsthal Rotterdam, Netherlands; Para Site, Hong Kong; and on the screens in New York City's Times Square, among others.

Selections from the press release:

The Rock that Cuts the Night in Two features Olujimi's expansive and diverse output, including videos, drawings, paintings, photographs, silk-screens, sculptures, installations, and textiles made by the artist from 2005 through 2023. Embedded with a sense of duration and exploration of memory, the exhibition demonstrates Olujimi's long-term interest in both the construction and deconstruction of mythic spaces, via memories, monuments, and other forms of memorials.

[University Galleries](#), a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

All events are free and open to the public.