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Cultural Diplomacy and Global Exhibitions of Modern Arab Art from the Barjeel Art Foundation

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Abstract:

The Barjeel Art Foundation is at the forefront of a postcolonial presentation of art as cultural diplomacy through its regional and international exhibitions of modern and contemporary Arab art. Based in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, Barjeel is unique among public or private art institutions in the Middle East as an independent foundation that upholds a philosophy and commitment to present a dynamic, public-oriented venue into the historical context of Arab art and intellectuals. Barjeel's collection and exhibitions are inclusive of the region's diversity, for it has purposely collected and exhibited prominent Arab artists of diverse backgrounds and nationalities, including the prominence of women artists, as well as Jewish, Christian, Muslim, whether, Sufi, Sunni or Shia, as well as radical anarchist artists from Egypt and other countries. In just nine years, Barjeel has held over 24 regional and international exhibitions, leading to its culmination in a long-term installation at the Sharjah Art Museum, which opened in May 2018. In 2017, Barjeel exhibited the first collection of modern Arab artists ever shown in Iran, at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. With exhibitions in Singapore, Iran, France, the UK, US, and other locations, Barjeel has become a significant player in international art.

This paper will summarise an extensive research project underway at the Barjeel Art Foundation. This paper also offers a theoretical and contextualised discussion of the history of Arab art diplomacy as seen in Barjeel's collection, including the works of the Egyptian diplomat and painter Muhammad Naghi (1888-1956). A nationalist model has dominated many international exhibitions as at the Venice Biennale with its dependence on national pavilions. While the politics of censorship among the tribal-state formations of the Arab Gulf have limited the use of official cultural diplomacy in some states, a consistent policy of the Sharjah Government and the Sharjah Art Foundation's direction of the Sharjah Biennale and the UAE pavilions at the Venice Biennale offers a less nationalistic perspective. The efforts of Barjeel as a private art foundation to present modern Arab art as a cultural forum reflect a deeper understanding and commitment to present the response of Arab intellectuals to the crises and conditions of recent history, and in their resistance to state authoritarianism. The sustainability of these efforts through unofficial channels faces a myriad of political and financial challenges.

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[Art in Arab Cultural Diplomacy 1838-2017: A brief survey](#)

A brief discussion of the history of art in cultural diplomacy by Arab provincial states of the Ottoman Empire provides insight into an early attempt to seek multilateral support and exchange. In the mid-19th century, formal exchange of full-colour portraits of rulers of the Arab Ottoman provinces and Western European and American diplomats became extensions of cultural exchange and political recognition. For example, the Bardo Palace, the governing residence and administrative centre in the capital of the Tunisian Beys, became a centre for increased diplomatic exchange and receptions. Tunisia's beys, who were the provincial governors of the Ottoman Empire, were forging a cosmopolitan and liberal cultural approach to diplomacy and international recognition. They had good reasons for this. The French occupation and colonisation of Algeria in 1830, heightened their need for relations with Continental European and other foreign states, as well as to strengthen ties across the Turkic and Arabic speaking Eastern and Southern Mediterranean. On Ahmed Bey's succession as Tunisia's Bey in 1851, the young Sadok Bey (1813-1882), stood for a portrait by the French artist Louis Simil¹. (See Figure 1).

This portrait is today a part of the permanent collection of the United States Department of State, in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms. How and why it arrived at the State Department was a result of increased diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Tunisia during the American Civil War. His portrait was a reciprocal gift with the American consul to Tunis, when in 1865, Sadok Bey, received a full-length portrait by the American artist John Woodhouse Audobon’s of President George Washington (1838). (See Figure 2).

Interestingly, that painting of Washington was preserved and maintained at the Bardo palace complex. It was subsequently hidden from public view during the French colonial occupation of Tunisia from 1881 to 1956 as well as during the regime of Ben Ali, deposed in 2012 during the Tunisian Revolution of the Arab Spring. Through the determined research of the Tunisian curator Ridha Moumni, these paintings and their context have come to light and exhibited for the first time in 2017.² These rediscoveries of lost diplomatic paintings point to the function of the arts as cultural discourse in the Middle East and North Africa region, where censorship of the press, media and other forms are more direct and obvious. The arts also confront formal and self-censorship. The space provided for galleries and temporary exhibitions has found a more liberal reception and more tolerable to the state than print and modern mass media. Why and whether this will continue reflects the tenuous nature of the global art market whose capitalisation of the modern Arab art market allows for a broader discourse than found in cultural journalism. Despite this, one should note the considerable range of artistic journalism and art criticism since the 1930s, that arose with Georges, Henein, Ramsis Yunan and the Egyptian Surrealists and later generations. Their legacy directly influences contemporary curators in the region as well as those of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

These measures for cultural exchange in diplomatic exchange were increasingly common throughout the Ottoman Empire, both in Istanbul and in Cairo and elsewhere. In 1835, Muhammad Ali, the Egyptian ruler and conqueror ordered the creation of a museum repository for collections of antiquities from the many excavations underway. In Istanbul, the Imperial Museum marked the emphasis on collecting objects of history alongside its collection of armory and weapons for private viewing by diplomats that preceded its opening to the public in 1880³. Among the earliest directors of the new museum was the diplomat, bureaucrat and French-trained portrait painter, Osman Hamdi, who also became director of the Academy of Fine Arts (Sanii Nefise Mektebi) when it was established two years later in 1882. During his studies of law and painting in the 1870s, Osman studied and became proficient in the grand scale pictorial historical narrative of his two prominent teachers, the French painters Jean-Leon Gerôme, and Gustave Boulanger⁴.

In the early 20th century Egyptian diplomats and their wives took up painting this soon resonated for its importance in functioning as cultural attachés. Mohammed Naghi (1888-1956) was a prominent Egyptian diplomat and artist, who learned to paint as a young man in Alexandria. After studying law in France during World War I, he moved to Florence, Italy to study at the Academy of Fine Arts. After the war, he visited Claude Monet at his home in Giverny for tutoring in the impressionist painting. His first mural, *Nahdat Misr* (Renaissance of Egypt), received a gold medal at a Paris salon in 1920⁵. A similar mural completed circa 1935 for the El-Shoura Council. (Senate)⁶.

In the early 1930s, he requested and received an assignment from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry as a cultural attaché to Ethiopia.

While there he painted both court scenes and daily life⁷ During this period, it appears he underwent a personal transformation in his philosophy of art, and began to reorient his art toward African origins and sources of tradition, an orientation he probably shared with his sister, the artist Effat Naghi⁸

Naghi's pre-war diplomatic and continental experience enabled his promotion as cultural attaché to Italy following World War II, and later as Director of the Egyptian Academy of Rome from 1947–50, and as a director of the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo. His 1948 speech at the

Venice Biennale compared Cairo to Venice in an appeal to civility through a common heritage of historical architecture⁹. Among his final works, *National Unity* (1955) was a panoramic search for symbols and themes linking class and region. In the Barjeel collection, a painting of the birthplace of Muhammad Ali, is also a product of Naghi's dual role as a diplomat and artist. This architectural study by the diplomat and artist Mohamed Naghi is entitled, *Al Takiya Almasriya Fi Kawla (The Egyptian House in Cavalla), 1934*. (See Figure 3) Cavalla held a special place in modern Egyptian history, for it is the birthplace of Egypt's ruler Muhammad Ali (r. 1805-1848) who was born there in 1769 when Cavalla was a part of the Ottoman Empire. When Mohamed Naghi visited Cavalla in around 1834 it was now a part of Modern Greece, and given the modern spelling of Kavala¹⁰. Article 12 of the Greek – Turkish Treaty of Athens 1913, decreed that waqf properties (Islamic institutions administered as charitable foundations) in newly annexed territories would continue to be managed by Turkish communities. Management of waqfs in Kavala was assigned to Egyptian officials in the 1850s, as Egyptian property within the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, certain waqf foundations in Kavala were retained as grants to the State of Egypt¹¹. It is thus probable that Mohamed Naghi was sent there on a diplomatic assignment to look after what is ostensibly Egyptian state property. Indeed, the register of waqfs in Kavala listed Mohamed Ali's house as the property of Egypt. The property and area are quite large and the artist has chosen a low eye level that exaggerates the height of the building. This colouring and style of the painting may be viewed in the context of the artist's recent return from his posting as cultural attaché to Ethiopia during 1932¹². While in Ethiopia he produced numerous paintings of the countryside and the palace and public square in Addis Ababa that were exhibited at the showing *Paintings of Egypt and Abyssinia by M. Naghi*, held at the Société des Amis de l'Art in Cairo in 1932, and later in 1936 in London at the Beaux Arts Gallery. (See Figure 4) The pre-war cultural diplomacy, based on bilateral relations and colonial competition, was reframed in Cold War ideology and the global art market of abstract, modern and contemporary arts that arose in metropolitan centres.

Since Serge Guilbault's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, increased awareness and interest in the politics of Cold War modern art and abstraction has arisen in art history¹³. This had a direct effect on the Middle East and the Arab world, where the American Friends of the Middle East (AFME) as an overseas education office with funds from the CIA and other American government institutions to fund art and education programs in the Middle East and North Africa. Ad Reinhardt and other abstract artists went to Lebanon in the late 1950s where exhibitions of modern and abstract art and local Arab artists were encouraged to partake in these cultural exchanges¹⁴. Conscious awareness of these politics resonate among contemporary Arab art circles and is a point of considerable discourse¹⁵. Despite this, Arab modern and contemporary arts moved independently within their intellectual formation and beyond the American aim of abstract form as ideological forms. The eclipse of American global ideology is also seen at the U.S. State Department which has deliberately refrained from open public exhibitions of American art because of political concerns about ideological counterattacks and perceptions of cultural imperialism¹⁶. In more recent years, other Arab diplomats gained

distinction as professional artists. These include Jordanian diplomat and Princess Wijdan Ali of Jordan, whose abstract paintings featured in several of Barjeel's exhibitions and its permanent collection. (See Figure 5) Her advocacy, writing and support for artists in Jordan and throughout the Arab world is an example of the extension of art and diplomacy beyond national borders¹⁷.

From the late 1930s, Modern Arab appeared in sponsored international exhibitions, most notably, the Venice Biennale, Alexandria Biennale, and the Sharjah Biennale. Many of these exhibitions reflect a modernist nationalism through the retainer of nationalist pavilions. These first appeared in the Egyptian and Iraqi National Pavilions at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne. (See Figure 6) Several Egyptian artists were present or displayed at the Egyptian Pavilion, while Picasso's *Guernica* first shown at the Spanish Pavilion. These pavilions contrasted with the highly ideological form and content of the Soviet and German pavilions that competed to dominate space across from each other through their massive architectural edifices on the Seine.

A postcolonial, informal and denationalised range of Arab art diplomacy can be seen in the initiative of the Barjeel Art Foundation, that since 2010 has purposely aimed to promote international and regional exhibitions of modern Arab artists that reflect the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of its artists. In the following sections, we examine in detail Barjeel's program for a historical context of art exhibitions that by centring on the artists as philosophers and intellectuals appropriately denationalise the collection and discourse about art. This approach is in direct contraposition with exhibitions that follow an Orientalist model found in the export of Egyptian antiquities, China, Saudi Arabia. These authoritarian states favor the playing off of traditional culture and liberal dissent as a rationale for increased authority¹⁸.

[The Barjeel Art Foundation and the Early Exhibitions](#)

Formed in 2010, the Barjeel Art Foundation is the first public, non-governmental institution and museum collection dedicated to modern and contemporary Arab arts¹⁹. Through the vision and philosophy of its director and founder Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi and curators, Barjeel created a public venue for the arts and a forum for intellectuals in the Arab world. Barjeel's curators and exhibitions serve as a bridge between artists and a broader regional and increasingly international audience. Through a decade of acquisitions, public forums and exhibitions of Arab, North African and Western Asian arts, it has replaced the older paradigm of national history and culture. Barjeel has advanced a contextual theory of art that peers beyond the glass walls of the global commercial art world in which it coexists. Through its expansive art collection and exhibitions, it elicits in its audience a de-nationalised history and intellectual response. These reflect the experience of many of the key artists of the Arab world whose experience with war, imprisonment, dislocation, refugee, emigrant and exiled status resonates through their biographies and their art.

The inspiration and driving force for the Barjeel Art Foundation's collection and exhibitions is its founder, Al Qassemi, who grew up as the son of one of Sharjah's early real estate developers.

The Barjeel's administrative offices occupy the original 1970s building from which his family business drew up contracts and plans and commissioned architects for new buildings in a fast growing city. Many architects were from Palestine and other Arab countries and were respected and welcomed into the making of a new Sharjah. After completing his undergraduate studies at the American University of Paris in the mid-1990s, Al Qassemi gained practical experience in working in his father's business and a deep appreciation for Sharjah's architecture and city planning²⁰. Among the Arab Gulf cities, Sharjah is distinguished for its emphasis on culture and education and hosts the Sharjah Biennale and the Festival of Lights. These recall the dual function of Paris, as a city of art, and as *La Ville Lumière*, the City of Lights references to a shared age of Enlightenment.

Accordingly, Barjeel's exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, *Les chef-oeuvres d'art moderne et contemporain*, recognized the role of Paris as a center for modern Arab intellectuals²¹. These included the Egyptian artists Georges Henein, Ramsis Yunan, and Marguerite Nakhla who spent formative periods in Paris in the 1930s and 1940s and participated in major European art exhibitions²². Each of these intellectuals returned to their home country determined to promote comparative knowledge and culture. Nakhla returned for a brief period to exhibit her work, and Yunan resumed his art career in Egypt as a painter, art columnist and philosopher²³. When in the late 1990s, Al Qassemi returned from Paris to Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, he yearned to extend cultural programs and activity in his home country. After an introduction by his father to a local exhibition of Palestinian Arab artists, Al Qassemi began to consider the place of modern Arab art. In 2002 his first acquisition was a painting by the Emirati artist Abdul Qader Al-Rais, whose classic style of painting meticulously captures the quality of design, material and colour of the pre-oil local architecture and life in among the Emirati coastal communities²⁴. By 2010, his collection coalesced into the creation of the Barjeel Art Foundation²⁵. In Al Qassemi's own words Barjeel is "an institution that is private but for the public good," and has never charged entry fees²⁶.

In Spring 2010, "Peripheral Vision" debuted at the Maraya Art Center in Sharjah. Emirati artists featured along with other Arab artists that Sultan Al Qassemi recently acquired. A photograph by Reem Al Ghaith was a playful metaphor. In the black and white photo, a car crosses a sandy field behind a picture of a barjeel wind tower set on a dressing-room mirror that rests in the sandy foreground. The image of the Barjeel wind tower, the vernacular symbol of local Gulf architecture, was a pun on the name of the Barjeel Art Foundation. From its inaugural exhibition, a Barjeel show was not about custom, but the subversive periphery of these conventions. Expect the unexpected.

Paintings by women artists challenged the dominant gender hegemony by men around the world. These included a painting by the Iraqi artist Hayv Kahraman, "Flayed Lamb," (2008) in the style of Japanese and Chinese painted scrolls. (See Figure 7) Two exquisitely dressed women in silk and finely coiffed hair are rudely imposed upon by a hung piece of a butcher's flayed lamb, a metaphor for the treatment of women as objects of men's desire and abuse. More shocking was Layan Shawabekh's *Ladies of Gaza* (2009) whose naked and alien bodies, raped and pregnant, as symbols of impunity, brutally imposed by the dual patriarchy of the Israeli occupier and occupied Palestinian society.

During the next year, Barjeel held two other exhibitions that although organised well in advance, coincided with the Arab Spring that emerged in late December 2010 and continued into 2012. Barjeel's exhibitions were propitious, for the context of its artworks revealed many of the underlying social, political and historical themes and conflicts that emerged in the public and revolutionary demonstrations if not its corollary counter-demonstrations and repression. While these events unravelled among the poorer non-monarchy states of the Arab countries, the relative insularity and prosperity of cities of the Arab Gulf allowed them to become principal centres of the growing commercial and international art market that cast a preference for commercial over public interest. This commercial orientation in the Gulf art market suited a neoliberal global predilection to defer or bypass dissent among the poor nations. Given this market orientation in the Gulf arts world, it is all the more remarkable that a public and historical model for an art collection emerged through the Barjeel Art Foundation.

Over the next eight years, Barjeel produced and curated over 30 different exhibitions, divided between their art gallery at the Maraya Art Center in Sharjah. These included four different exhibitions in Abu Dhabi and at the Sharjah Art Museum, and installations at major galleries or museums in North America, Europe, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, and Singapore²⁷. In May 2018, the last of this series of exhibitions came to rest as a semi-permanent installation at the Sharjah Museum of Art, featuring 130 of its major works. The permanent exhibition includes sculptures and conceptual pieces by Saloua Chercaoui, Mona Hatoum and Adam Henein, paintings by Marwan, Dia Azzawi, Ramsis Yunan, Khadim Haydar, and many other key figures in Arab modernism of the 20th century or contemporary works from this century.

[The Socio-Historical Paradigms for a Public Collection of Art](#)

Barjeel created a series of community events for exhibition and discussion in rotating venues for the arts at its home galleries and museums in Sharjah and a program of international exhibitions. This communitarian paradigm offers a milieu for gatherings and discussion, a retreat from the alienation of consumer culture of the Gulf cities. Through a social philosophy of art, these exhibitions and gatherings provide a theoretical comprehension of Arab art and culture through the experience of modern and contemporary history. It allows for a comparative method for presenting artists from different countries.

The transnational perspective allowed Barjeel to move beyond the national narratives of history that dominate art history and the ideology of the museum. Al Qassemi refers to a pan-Arab perspective for his collection. Other intellectuals face regional conflict. In contrast, the Barjeel Collection present artists as intellectuals who variously produce art either within a national reference or in a deliberately de-nationalised context. This choice recognises the significant number of Arab artists who experienced diaspora and other dislocations caused by historical events and wars. By doing so, the question of artistic freedom, and the attempt to break with the paradigms of the past and present appear as a continuing struggle among modern and postmodern Arab artists.

Ethnographic, Tribal and Orientalist Hegemonies and the “Unwanted” Artist

A comparative history of Arab artists and writers shows that Arab intellectuals experience variables in their socio-cultural hegemony²⁸. Intellectuals in the Gulf, Morocco or Jordan confront tribal or ethnographic hegemonies that pressure them to reinforce conditions of the state's hold on power and allegiance. Thus in Morocco, museums are notably limited to ethnographic themes. An independent modern art museum has yet to emerge²⁹. While the royal dynasty in Morocco was a product of French colonial intervention, this created a national hegemony that emphasized a return to Islam and divided the poor and working class amid identities of Berber, Amazigh, and Arab identities³⁰. Hamid Irbouh showed how the French subordinated education in its new Protectorate of Morocco to create vocational centres. The teaching of art was limited to producing designs for French products and decorative motifs for domestic wares and the like³¹. Censorship of Muhamad Choukri's (Shukrī) realist autobiography, *For Bread Alone*, is a well-known but not an isolated example of what one scholar calls “unwanted literature”³². Accordingly, the notion of unwanted art also applies to selective self-censorship in modern Arab art exhibitions. Perhaps the Barjeel Collection better represents the importance of the Casablanca School of indigenous modernism from the late 1950s in Moroccan museums based on ethnographic models. A cross-section from its collection includes Mohamed Melehi's abstractions, and Ahmed Cherkaoui's *Les Miroirs Rouges*, (1965), that suggests deeply reflective practices of Sufism found among some Maghribi intellectuals from early modern times³³.

In Egypt, an Orientalist hegemony pervades over the art museums to mitigate class and regional struggles and to deflect attention from the radical discourse in the arts³⁴. The Egyptian Museum of Modern Art is subordinated to the antiquities in the Egyptian Museum, built in 1902, and the new Grand Egyptian Museum. The Egyptian Museum and the Islamic Museum in Cairo reproduce an Orientalist hegemony with a dominant focus on Pharaonic and Mamluk styled dynasties³⁵. This suits the aesthetic ideal of the large landowning class that collaborated with the British occupation of 1882 and used this privilege to dominate the Egyptian state and to suppress Upper Egypt as the poorer southern region³⁶. It was this same class that later began an elite orientation to introducing modern art through salons in the 1920s when the fledgeling Egyptian Museum of Modern Art was housed within the privately run Wax Museum. After several relocations, it was not until 1995, that it reopened in its current building at the internationally financed Opera House complex.

The Egyptian avant-garde from the 1930s onward resisted this elite orientation and sought to redirect the arts to a popular base that recognised different social classes. How well this broke away from the dominant hegemony or served to reproduce the symbiosis of state and class power is open to further research and debate. The Egyptian avant-garde mocked the hegemonic function of museums in Egypt as a place of national consensus. The first attack appeared in 1937 when the Egyptian poet Georges Henein, the son of an Egyptian diplomat returned to Egypt and began a series of lectures and art events upholding the subversive methods of Surrealism. When he formed a literary group called the ‘Essayists,’ they compiled the *Dictionnaire à l'usage du monde bourgeois* that mocked hierarchy and attacked sexism and conventions. The museum was ‘a large aggrandised official garbage heap’³⁷. This was also an indirect attack on the museum as a form of nation-building, as espoused by Muhammad Nagi, one of Egypt's most prominent artists

and administrators.³⁸ Later, this subversive tone resonated in Abbas Alaidy's postmodern novel, *Being Abbas* (2003). Its main character calls for the destruction of the national narrative in history books and museums as a civilisation of only the past, and for turning museums into public lavatories³⁹.

From its 1995 opening at the new Gezira Center for Culture and Modern Art, the Egyptian Modern Art Museum witnessed frequent closures and changes in directors, which included an Army general. Other rivalries persist. The Ministry of Culture manages the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art and the Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum, in competition with the Ministry of Agriculture that manages the Muhammad and Effat Nagy Museum and the Mahmoud Said Museum. These are residual effects of the class of large landowners, of whom the largest owners controlled vast plantation estates in Upper Egypt. The management of the Egyptian Modern Art Museum is a bureaucratic hot potato as directors shun the controversies that modern art raises amid the Arab Spring, the turn to Islam, and authoritarian censorship⁴⁰. After the Arab Spring Revolts of 2010, the museum closed down for three years from January 2011 until its partial reopening in November 2014⁴¹.

A variation of this hegemony exists in Lebanon where in the absence of a strong state, the compromise of sectarian politics and fiscal crises produce a greater reliance on wealthy families and benefactors to fund commercial museums. This resonates in planning by the Dalloul Foundation for a privately owned Museum of Arab Art in Beirut, scheduled to open in 2020, and the private Beirut Museum of Art⁴². Royal support including that of the artist, diplomat and princess, Wijdan Ali, was instrumental in forming the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, and private support from a wealthy benefactor led to the creation of the Darat al-Funun⁴³. Darat al-Funun supported numerous visiting Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian artists during the 1980s and 1990s. Steve Sabella argues that Palestinian galleries and museums are dependencies of post-Oslo agreement political configurations of power⁴⁴. Tunisian museums are reopening following the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime in 2011. Contemporary Tunisian arts flourished among its art schools and art institutes like Maison des Arts founded by the art critic and scholar, Ali Louati and now continued by the Kamel Lazaar Foundation⁴⁵. In the Barjeel Collection, Nadia Ayari's *The Fence* (2007) is representative; its composition places a human eye as a captive within a gated refugee camp and is a commentary on the condition of human rights⁴⁶. (See Figure 8) Her painting anticipates the Tunisian Arab Spring and the multidimensional response of Tunisian artists, playwrights and intellectuals⁴⁷.

Barjeel's collection also brings needed attention to Iraq a significant centre for art and cultural art institutions. Among the many prominent Iraqi artists in its collection are Khadim Haydar, Dia Azawi and Shakir Hasan Al Said. Al Said was a participant with Jawad Selim in the *Jama'at Baghdad li-l-Fann al-Hadith* (Baghdad Group of Modern Art) in 1951 and later founded the *One Dimension* manifesto and group in 1971. The careers of Iraqi artists, whether domestically or from exile, reflects the rapid cultural and economic development but also the setbacks of totalitarianism, the Gulf Wars and the challenges of its current era of reconstruction.⁴⁸ Similarly the history of the Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad, plagued by serial wars, looting and plunder of the collections, is worth studying as its restoration is taking different forms, legal, physical, and through online archives⁴⁹. (See Figures 9 and 10)

The Recent Barjeel Exhibitions (2015-2018)

In light of the problem of national museums, Barjeel's project takes on paramount importance. Several exhibitions featured an artistic examination of a crisis-ridden era of international and regional power struggles. Civil wars put civilians at risk of torture, detention, and bombing or starving orphans and desperate refugees. At the Paris exhibition *100 Chefs-d'œuvre* (2017)⁵⁰, Raafat Ishak's, *Nomination for the presidency of the New Egypt* (2012) exhibited during the transitional period of Egyptian elections. Composed as a manifesto for a new political party in Egypt; its Arabic script is merely a transliteration of English terms, negating a complete comprehension or praxis of action⁵¹.

At the 2015 *Home Ground* exhibit in Toronto, featured the short and complicated life of the Israeli-Arab artist art of Asim Abu Shaqra (1961-1990) was featured.⁵² A graduate of Kalisher Art Academy in Tel Aviv, he held his first solo exhibition in 1988 shortly before dying from cancer. In Barjeel's collection, Shaqra's painting, *ṣabūr*, or *Cactus*, shows the enigma of common potted plant uprooted from its native soil and transplanted as a captive onto a windowsill in his neighbourhood. The limited number of Shaqra's available works, suggests art collections skew toward successful survivors, whose marketability is a product of longevity, organisation and relative safety. (See Figure 11)

In 2017, *Between Two Rounds of Fire, the Exile of the Sea*, on the effects of war on Lebanon showed at the American University Museum, Katzen Art Center in Washington, D.C.⁵³. It was minimally presented, with little or no catalogue descriptions; instead, the artwork is subject to the viewer's reconciliation with the victims of neoliberal era wars.

A parallel exhibit from Barjeel's collection, *No to the Invasion: Breakdowns and Side Effects*, also showed in 2017 at Bard College in New York, took the anti-war art along with a catalogue of representative key articles and interviews with a selection of essential intellectuals⁵⁴. Among other writers, it featured a critical essay by Tarek El-Ariss, who relates the contemporary Arab artists' focus on the damaged human body in comparison with Ahmed Saadawi's 2014 novel, *Frankenstein in Baghdad*⁵⁵.

Marwan, Boullata, Azzawi and the De-nationalized Community of Exile

A number of the most prominent Palestinian and other Arab artists live and actively produce and write from exile. The recurring exhibitions of Palestinian artists among the Barjeel's shows, as well as its corollary Meem gallery, underscores the persistence of exile.⁵⁶ The inclusion of the Syrian artist Marwan Kassab Bachi (1934-2016), whose watercolours, oil and tempera portraits are his signature of abstracted expressions rendered in a cacophony of floral tones and deconstructed forms. In 2014, Sultan Al Qassemi travelled to Berlin to meet with the Berlin-based artist who graduated from art school in Germany, and who successfully exhibited throughout Europe for nearly 50 years. His connection to events in Syria and Palestine influenced Marwan to reference his home region. In *Three Palestinian Boys* (1970), Marwan chose to depict Palestinian youths who became iconic figures during the First Intifada as symbols of resistance. He painted them from a low angle to make them appear larger than life. He also dedicated a collection of paintings to a future Palestinian National museum. The enigmatic psychologic portrait, *Der Gemahl* (The Husband, 1966) shows three distorted limbs clutching the

upper body, chest and chin, with a third clutching a large stick, seen by some as a phallic symbol⁵⁷. Others see *Der Gemahl* as a man in middle age crisis confronting sexual frustration⁵⁸. Marwan's commitment as an intellectual allowed him to carry on a deep and lasting friendship with Iraqi based novelist Abderrahman Munif, whose Saudi joint citizenship was taken away following his publication of his searing and probative five-volume *Cities of Salt* novel. The publication of their letters reveals the philosophical approach to art as an extension of freedom in the midst of repression⁵⁹. In the Barjeel collection, Marwan's 1965 portrait of the Syrian and Iraqi political figure Munif Al Razzaz has contemporary relevance, for he was the father of Omar Razzaz, the current Prime Minister of Jordan. Other notable artists include the Palestinian born, Kamal Boullata, the Iraqi Dia Azzawi, and the Lebanese poet, novelist, journalist and artist, Charbel Dagher⁶⁰. Like Marwan, both Boullata and Azzawi maintained residences in Europe that allowed them freedom as resident exiles. (See Figure 12)

These conditions of exile and residence abroad compare with the vastly different experiences of Paul Guiragossian, the Armenian born, Palestinian and Lebanese artist who experienced multiple tragedies and a double displacement of both the Armenian genocide and the Palestinian refugee status. The 2012 exhibition, *Alienation*, included potent works on the problems of forced displacement, exile and the pressures of refugees or potential refugees in seeking any level of emigration or citizenship status⁶¹. It included insightful interviews of two of the principal artists in the exhibition, Raafat Ishak and Larissa Sansour⁶².

Women Artists and Gender Hegemony

Women across the Middle East are prominent in the modernist movements of art and literature. The prominence of Salwa Mikdadi, Nada Shabout, Sheikha Hoor Al Qassimi, and Fatenn Moustaffa and other women as curators and gallery owners are examples of influential roles in contemporary Arab arts⁶³. To a certain degree, this phenomenon reflects the vagaries of choice in modern Arab society where women have asserted themselves in the cultural sphere, where other technical and professional areas still claimed within patriarchal or custom-based practices of exclusion.

Barjeel's exhibition in Tehran featured a number of prominent women artists that included Inji Aflatoun. Her inclusion acknowledged her role in many of the emergent avant-garde movements in Egyptian arts from the 1940s-60s. Her commitment to feminism and social causes, her support for communism in Egypt led to her imprisonment during the Nasser years, when she and thousands of political prisoners were imprisoned, in her case for five years from 1959 to 1964⁶⁴. Her answer was to create a series of paintings from prison that depicts the maltreatment of women but also their own dignity⁶⁵. Aflatoun is one of the crucial women artists found in Barjeel's collection. We need exhibitions and further study of Marguerite Nakhla, Tahia Halim, Saloua Choucair, Etel Adnan and many others. Because of Barjeel's concerted effort to collect the works of Marguerite Nakhla, Inji Aflatoun and Tahia Halim, it is now easier to reconstruct and situate the fuller role and participation of women in the modern art movements in Egypt as well as in the case of Nakhla in Europe.

In the 2013 Singapore exhibition *Terms and Conditions*, Barjeel's curator, Mandy Merzaban assembled a small but representative group of works that explored realities confronted by

women. The Lebanese-Palestinian artist, Mona Hatoum's *Plotting Table*, mimics a general's planning map. Her simple arrangement of toy soldiers in endless rounded loops comprises the title, *Infinity*. Her porcelain sculpture *Witness* (2009) is a miniature reproduction of the martyr's monument in Beirut replete with the civil war bullet holes.

Museums in the Gulf Region

In the MENA region, museums are state enterprises, while temporary shows of private galleries are left to individual and family collections⁶⁶. In the Gulf states, a model of Gulf Futurism and high-tech and high-rise architecture compete against some notable examples of a more people-oriented scale of appropriate architecture. The museum fits more or less into the former⁶⁷. Around the world, the postmodern museum features dramatic exhibition halls that overwhelm the art pieces themselves. This postmodern approach is a dominant feature of the new Gulf museums as well. Given the level of initial capital and requirements of funding, these institutions are reliant on state support and commitments of capital. In return, the state receives a showpiece hybrid veneer of cosmopolitanism, that invites the corporate global art world and its gallery system, and integrates international, and Arab regional artists who more or less conform with this market. Art Dubai as an international commercial exhibition receives significant support from the now-bankrupt Abraaj Group, and other Gulf-based business consortiums. The Saudi government-funded Misk Art Institute is under the direction of the artist Ahmed Mater⁶⁸.

Another trend is found among 21st century Arab art foundations, including the Sharjah Art Foundation's biennales. This coincided with the rise of major museums in the Arab Gulf countries, the newly opened Louvre in Abu Dhabi, the Museum of Islamic Art and the Mathaf: Museum of Arab Art in Doha, and the Sharjah Museum of Art. A lease model of museum development has occurred in which the new Louvre Abu Dhabi is instead a branded enterprise leased by the Louvre to the Emirates for a set number of decades⁶⁹. Curiously, the award of recent museum architectural competitions shunned Arab architects.

Some critics see the invention of cultural heritage as a political-cultural strategy of the Gulf states that constrain the formation of intellectuals and representative politics⁷⁰. Adam Hanieh's writing on the politics of accumulation and the Arab Spring are suggestive⁷¹. A recent study of the development of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf region museums summarises several trends⁷². Tourism remains a predominant model for many of these museums and explains an ambivalence by Gulf curators and arts administrators toward their own national or thematic museums. A globalised and import model is found in curatorship and museum studies program at the Sorbonne Abu Dhabi branch of the French university and similar programs at NYU Abu Dhabi⁷³. Only brief studies of the UAE's and other Gulf art institutions, museums and art markets appear, as in⁷⁴. Among the Gulf region's museums, Sharjah Art Museum (SAM) has placed modern and contemporary art on the map as a public venue⁷⁵. Barjeel's donation of a large number of modern and contemporary works to SAM showcased in *The Short Century* and *The Modern and Contemporary* exhibitions of 2016⁷⁶.

Barjeel's New Praxis for a Museum of Modern Arab Art

Barjeel's shift to a more permanent exhibition space harkens the foundation's emphasis on public display of art⁷⁷. It is also a part of a regional expansion of art museums. Barjeel is integrated with the Meem Gallery, co-founded with Al Qassemi's business partner Charles

Pocock. Established several years before Barjeel the gallery's location in Dubai's art district, its prominent shows included Dia Azzawi and Kamal Boullata. Meem and Barjeel published extensive written works by both artists illuminating the philosophy of their art and experience.

In the Arab world, the arts of the 21st century are framed by the trajectory of history and struggle in the 20th century, the multiple Gulf wars since the 1980s, as well as the post-globalisation realignment after the crash of 2007-2008, and the aftermath and retreat from the Arab Spring of 2011-12. If the arts of the 21st century remain market driven and less community based, artists face challenges to create a social milieu for art and audience. They do so within and against the constraints of a heightened Gulf regional art market, whose rise after 2007 runs opposite the realities of global financial markets and national economies with imposed austerity. The internet and social media are new replacement venues. Animated and digital art forms will increase.

In the Gulf states, the lack of organic production of artists and art teachers out of schools and colleges has led to an import strategy for the arts. The Gulf overly relies upon the largesse and inspired choices by art foundations funded by wealthy benefactors, rather than on the traditional path for artists as art teachers⁷⁸. In the Gulf cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the gallery has until recently been the substitute for lack of museums. Amid the vagaries of the heightened luxury art market for Arab modernists and contemporary artists where the major Sotheby and Christie's auction prices now run from \$50,000 to over \$1 million. The sustainability of high finance and luxury art shows may become restricted with global financial pressures and the 2018 bankruptcy and collapse of the Abraaj Group, a primary corporate sponsor of Art Dubai. In Sharjah, with its state patronage model and less commercial approach to the visual arts, the art association and foundation was a substitute for the gallery. The Barjeel Art Foundation, as a Sharjah foundation, fits this latter model, while the co-ownership of Al Qassemi and Charles Pocock in the Meem art gallery allow them to integrate within the Dubai based commercial art scene.

The need for a community based and locally sustained arts is then an open question. As in Europe and the U.S., artists and galleries cluster among rented warehouses, lofts, and organise street shows. In Dubai, the Al Serkal Avenue artistic hub of converted industrial spaces⁷⁹. High costs especially affect non-profit foundations, many of whom remain family-owned. This forced Barjeel to end its international exhibitions and close its non-commercial gallery space at the Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah. Given the flux of these currents in the contemporary art scene in the Gulf, what is the legacy and role of the permanent Barjeel exhibitions at the Sharjah Art Museum? It promises a public display of 20th century modern Arab and a model for the contemporary viewer and artist. Without a permanent collection, this recognition would be more fleeting. To Barjeel's credit, we now have a place to study, reflect, and teach the vital role of Arab artists as significant contributors in the modern world.

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¹ Our understanding of portraits and Tunisian cultural diplomacy was enhanced by the exhibition and research of Ridha Moumni, "L'Éveil d'une nation," (Tunis: Officina Libraria 2017). I thank Ridha for his granting of a personal interview on his research project on the function and importance of the Bardo collection.

² Ibid.

³ Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman painting : reflections of western art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

⁴ *Possessors and possessed : museums, archaeology, and the visualization of history in the late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003).

⁵ 'Izz al-Din Najib, Usamat Dawstash, and Nabil Faraj, *Muhammad Nagi, 1888 – 1956*. (Cairo: Nagi Museum and the Ministry of Culture, National Center for Fine Arts, 1995).

⁶ Liliane Karnouk, *Modern Egyptian Art: The Emergence of a National Style* (Cairo: American University Press, 1988).

⁷ See this author's discussion of Naghi's diplomatic posting and the use of cultural diplomacy between Egypt and Ethiopia in the 1930s in Patrick Matthew Kane, *The Politics of Art in Modern Egypt: Aesthetics, Ideology and Nation-building* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

⁸ Effat Naghi et al., *Mohamed Naghi (1888-1956): un impressioniste égyptien* (Cairo: International Press, 1988).

⁹ Muhammad Bek Nagi, "al-Itjahat al-Fanniya al-Haditha, (The Modern Artistic Directions)," *al-Risalah*, no. 788 (1948).

¹⁰ Hassan Hassan, *In the house of Muhammad Ali : a family album, 1805-1952* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001). p. 4.

¹¹ Konstantinos Lalenis, and Elena Samourkasidou, "Wakfs in Kavala, Greece: A Legal, Political and Architectural Heritage Issue.," *ArchNet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* 7, no. 2 (2013).

¹² Cairo Société des Amis de l'Art, 1932 (567) and London Beaux Arts Gallery, January-February 1936, "Paintings of Egypt and Abyssinia by M. Naghi," (Cairo

London: Beaux Arts Gallery, London, January-February 1936, 1932).

¹³ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Details are apparent in a review of the FBI's file on Ad Reinhardt, obtained by this author through a Freedom of Information Request.

¹⁵ Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "How the CIA Secretly Funded Arab Art to Fight Communism," *Newsweek*, April 17 2017. Other discussion and analysis include Hugh Wilford, "American Friends of the Middle East: The CIA, US

citizens, and the secret battle for American public opinion in the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1947-1967.," *Journal of American Studies* 51, no. 1 (02) (2017). Frances S. Saunders, "Modern art was CIA 'weapon'," *Independent*, October 22 1995.

¹⁶ This change in official American policy toward art as cultural diplomacy confirmed during an interview of a U.S. diplomat in 2010 by this author.

¹⁷ Wijdan Ali, *Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).

¹⁸ On the counter-tactic by Chinese authorities to redirect nationalist protest in presenting the State as a moderating force for diplomacy, see the insightful work of Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014). On Arab intellectuals and their struggle against authoritarianism see, Jens Hanssen, and Max Weiss, eds. , *Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁹ While the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha arose from the personal collection of Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al Thani, and now has over 9,000 pieces in its collection, it is co-owned by two government entities, Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation. See, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, "About Us," <http://www.mathaf.org.qa/en/about-us>.

²⁰ The Barjeel Art Foundation has sponsored occasional architectural walks on the history and design of the city from the 1970s to the present. Al Qassemi's *Building Sharjah*, a forthcoming history of Sharjah's architecture resulting from his extensive personal knowledge and the research of the Barjeel Art Foundation and its affiliated architectural history scholars.

²¹ Barjeel Art Foundation, "100 Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art moderne et contemporain (100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Art)," (Gand, France: Éditions Snoeck, 2017).

²² On Paris as an intellectual center for Arab intellectuals, see among other works, Patrick Matthew Kane, "The Modernist Movements in the 20th Century," in *100 chefs-d'œuvre de l'art moderne et contemporain arabe: La Fondation d'Art Barjeel (100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Art: Barjeel Art Foundation)* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, 2017). Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

²³ For much-needed retrospective on Marguerite Nakhla see Silvia Naef, "Fr. Marcos A. Marcos/Helen Moussa/Carolyn M. Ramzy: Marguerite Nakhla, Legacy to Modern Egyptian Art " *Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Asienkunde-Asiatische Studien* 69, no. 1..

²⁴ Phillipe Van Cauteren, "Interview with Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi and Karim Sultan," in *100 Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art moderne et contemporain (100 Masterpieces of Modern and Contemporary Art)*, ed. The Barjeel Art Foundation (Gand, France: Éditions Snoeck, 2017).

²⁵ A partial listing of his many lectures, interviews, forums and videos are in the bibliography. A comprehensive list is his [personal website](#). Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Videos," <http://sultanalqassemi.com/videos/>; "Events," <http://sultanalqassemi.com/events/>; "Public-Engagements," <http://sultanalqassemi.com/public-engagements/>.. For example, see the video segment, "[Kadhim Haidar: He Told Us How It Happened](#)," on the artist's position against censorship and repression in late 1950s Iraq *Kadhim Haidar: He Told Us How It Happened* (AJ+, 2017), Video..

²⁶ Cauteren. p. 24.

²⁷ For a complete list of Barjeel's exhibitions, see the entry for Wikipedia, "Barjeel Art Foundation," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barjeel_Art_Foundation

²⁸ Peter Gran, "Arab Literary Exiles and Their Writing in Light of the Arab Spring," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47 (2016).

²⁹ On varied experiences of museums in Morocco see, Katarzyna Pieprzak, *A Private Cabinet of Curiosity: The Belghazi Museum and its Politics of Nostalgia*, Imagined Museums : Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

³⁰ Edmund III Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

³¹ Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

³² Ignacy Nasalski, "Unwanted Literature: A Case of the Moroccan Writer Muhammad Shukri," *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 1 (2016). For a discussion on the origins of Moroccan intellectual dissent in the 20th century, see Hosam Aboul-Ela, "The Specificities of Arab Thought: Morocco since the Liberal Age," in

Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present, ed. Jens & Weiss Hanssen, Max (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³³ Cherkaoui's early death in 1967 at the age of 33 was especially tragic. On his Sufism, see Edmond Amran El Maleh, *Ahmed Cherkaoui, The Passion of Signs: collective work*, (Paris: Edition Revue Noire, 1996).

³⁴ Kane, *The Politics of Art in Modern Egypt: Aesthetics, Ideology and Nation-building*.

³⁵ On the politics of the planning and opening of the new Grand Egyptian Museum expansions at the Giza Pyramids complex as part of a strategy to shift attention away from Tahrir Square, see, Mohamed Elshahed, "The Case Against the Grand Egyptian Museum," *Jadaliyya Magazine* (2011).

³⁶ On the history of Egyptology and Orientalism in the Egyptian Museum, see Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).; Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? : Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).; Okasha El Daly, "Egyptology: the missing millennium: ancient Egypt in medieval Arabic writings," (2016).. On regionalism in modern Egyptian history and culture, a good example is a study on cholera and social banditry Zeinab Abul-Magd, "Rebellion in the Time of Cholera: Failed Empire, Unfinished Nation in Egypt, 1840-1920," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (2011)..

³⁷ Sarane Alexandrian, *Georges Henein* (Paris: Seghers, 1981). p. 13.

³⁸ Muhammad Nagi, 'L'Esprit de l'Art Moderne,' reprinted in Naghi and Roussillon, (1988) p. 49.

³⁹ Ahmad Ayidi and Humphrey T. Davies, *Being Abbas el Abd* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009). See the discussion in Tarek El-Ariss, "Hacking the Modern," in *Trials of Arab modernity literary effects and the new political* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). 152-153.

⁴⁰ A survey of the conditions of various museums in the MENA region, including the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art is Silvia Naef, "'Hidden treasures'?: Museum collections of modern art from the Arab World," in *The Politics and Practices of Cultural Heritage in the Middle East: positioning the material past in contemporary societies*, ed. Irene Maffie and Rami Daher (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

⁴¹ Soha Elsirgany, "The Egyptian Museum of Modern Arts: The story behind its partial closure," *Ahramonline*, October 5 2015.

⁴² Aimee Dawson, "Private museum of Arab art in the pipeline for Beirut," *The Art Newspaper*, July 20 2017. See also, Tim Cornwell and Anna Brady, "Collectors tackle rise in fake Modern Middle Eastern art," *ibid.*, November 1.

⁴³ Sarah Rogers, "Histories in the Making: The Khalid Shoman Collection and Darat al Funun," in *Histories in the Making: The Khalid Shoman Collection and Darat al Funun* (Amsterdam: Khalid Shoman Foundation; Idea Books, 2013).

⁴⁴ Steve Sabella, "Reconsidering the Value Of Palestinian Art and Its Journey into the Art Market," *Contemporary Practices: Visual Arts from the Middle East VII* (2010).; "Reconsidering the Value Of Palestinian Art and Its Journey into the Art Market Part II," *Contemporary Practices: Visual Arts from the Middle East VIII* (2011). Another perspective is the discussion with Palestinian artist Sandi Hillal on her installation, *The Ramada Syndrome* Sandi Hilal, *Global Art Forum 4: Palestine Syndrome* (Dubai: Art Dubai, 2010).. For a general discussion of the function of Palestinian art centres, see Salwa Mikdadi-Nashashibi, *Palestinian Artists Working under Siege* by Salwa Mikdadi-Nashashibi Salwa; Station Museum Mikdadi-Nashashibi, "Palestinian Artists Working under Siege," http://stationmuseum.com/?page_id=2428.. A discussion on art centers among Palestinian communities is discussed by Alia Rayyan, director of Al Hoash Palestinian Art Court Alia Rayyan, "Alia Rayyan, director of Al Hoash Palestinian Art Court" (paper presented at the Alia Rayyan, director of Al Hoash Palestinian Art Court, at the Arts & Globalization Conference May 26-28, 2015. , May 26-28 2015)..

⁴⁵ Doura Bouzid, *École de Tunis* (Tunis: Alif les éditions de la Méditerranée, 1995) and Ali Louati, *al-fann al-tashkīli fi tūnis* (The Plastic Arts in Tunisia) (Tunis, 1997).

⁴⁶ Saatchi Gallery, "Nadia Ayari: The Fence,"

https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/nadia_ayari_fence.htm.

⁴⁷ Rafika Zahrouni, "The Tunisian revolution and the dialectics of theatre and reality," *Theatre Research International* 38, no. 2 (2013). See also, Nikil Saval, "Tunisia, Through the Eyes of Its Artists and Intellectuals," *New York Times*, November 1 2016.

⁴⁸ Rashad Selim, "Diaspora, Departure and Remains," in *Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art*, ed. Maysaloun Faraj (London: Saqi Books, 2001)., Suheyyla Takesh, "Exhibition Statement," in *Lines of Subjectivity: Portrait and Landscape Paintings*, ed. Suheyyla Takesh (Barjeel Art Foundation; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, 2017).

⁴⁹ On the condition of Iraqi art and museums see, Nada Shabout, "Whose Space is it?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (2014). Isis Nusair, "The Cultural Costs of the 2003 US-Led Invasion of Iraq: A

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⁵⁰ A conflict over the naming of the exhibit occurred when Jack Lang, IMA's director, and the long-serving former Minister of Culture overrode the wishes of the curator and Barjeel to name the exhibition *Le visage du monde*, after one of the central artworks in the exhibit by a Moroccan artist. Lang's rejection of the title suggests he holds a Eurocentric view disputes Arab artists have a worldview. Eurocentric and Francophile claims for art include the infamous declaration of Jean Clair, former director of the Picasso Museum in Paris and the artistic director of the 1995 Venice Biennale, that the Third World had no modern art.

⁵¹ Sutton Gallery, "Exhibitions: Raafat Ishak, Nomination for the presidency of the New Egypt."

⁵² Suheyra Takesh, *Home Ground: Contemporary Art from the Barjeel Art Foundation*, ed. Aga Khan Museum; Barjeel Art Foundation (Toronto: Aga Khan Museum, 2015).

⁵³ In the collaborative curatorship by Jack Rasmussen and Barjeel curators, the exhibition presented anti-war art as a reflection on the impact of bombing, displacement and exile on Lebanese civilians

⁵⁴ Center for Curatorial Studies Barjeel Art Foundation, "No to the Invasion: Breakdowns and Side Effects," (New York: Bard College, 2017).

⁵⁵ The catalogue essays are in the bibliography but include Tarek El-Ariss, "No to the Invasion: From the Archive," in *No to the Invasion: Breakdowns and Side Effects*, ed. Barjeel Art Foundation and Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies (New York: Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2017). Mandy Merzaban, "In Chronological Disorder: Revisiting Histories of Invasion," *ibid.*, ed. Barjeel Art Foundation; Center for Curatorial Studies; Bard College.

⁵⁶ Steve Sabella, "The parachute paradox (chapter from a Jerusalem memoir)," *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 21, no. 4 (2016).

⁵⁷ Charlotte Bank, "Marwan: Topographies of the Soul," in *Marwan: Topographies of the Soul* (Sharjah: Barjeel Art Foundation, 2014).

⁵⁸ Omar Kholeif, "Tracing Routes: Debating Modernism, Mapping the Contemporary," in *Imperfect Chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary - Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation*, ed. Omar; Stobbs Kholeif, Candy (London; Munich: Whitechapel Gallery; Prestel Verlag, 2015).

⁵⁹ The letters published in Arabic, Abd al-Rahman Munif and Marwan Qassab Bashi, *Fi adab al-sadaqah* (Bayrut: Dar al-Tanwir : al-Muassasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, 2012).

⁶⁰ On *hurufiyya* see the Alexandria exhibition catalogue and reproduced book text by Charbel Dagher, *Al-Hurufiyya Al-'Arabiyya: fann wa huwiyya (Arabic Lettering: Art and Identity)* [al-Ḥurūfiyya al-'arabiyya : al-fann wa-'l-hawīya] (Beirut: Sharakah al-matbu'at wa an-nashr, 2016)., "Hurufism: Pathways and Prospects," in *Tariqah*, ed. Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah: Barjeel Art Foundation, 2014).

⁶¹ Barjeel Art Foundation, *Alienation* (Sharjah: Barjeel Art Foundation; Art Advisory Associates Ltd., 2012).

⁶² Mandy Merzaban, "Interview with Raafat Ishak," in *Alienation* (Sharjah: Barjeel Art Foundation; Art Advisory Associates Ltd., 2012).; "Interview with Larissa Sansour," in *Alienation* (Sharjah: Barjeel Art Foundation; Art Advisory Associates Ltd., 2012).

⁶³ Hossein Amirsadeghi, Salwa Mikdadi, and Nada M. Shabout, *Newvision: Arab contemporary art in the 21st century* (London: TransGlobe Publishing, 2009).. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi is a curator and director of Sharjah Art Foundation and the Sharjah Biennale. Fatenn Mostafa is a curator, director and co-founder of [Arttalks](#) in Cairo.

⁶⁴ See Izz al-Dīn Najīb, *Fannānūn wa shuhda': al-fann al-tashkīlī wa ḥuqūq al-insān (Artists and Martyrs: The Plastic Arts and Human Rights)* (Cairo: Markaz al-Qāhira li-dirasat ḥuqūq al-insān, 2000).

⁶⁵ For a contemporary example of imprisoned women artists see the article on the Syrian artist Azza Abo Rebieh Lina and Anne Barnard Sinjab, "Syria's Women Prisoners, Drawn by an Artist Who Was One," *New York Times*, August 7 2018..

⁶⁶ Amirsadeghi, Mikdadi, and Shabout. John Pedro Schwartz, Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, ed. John Pedro Schwartz, Mejcher-Atassi, Sonja Professor (Ashgate, 2012). On specific problems of collecting Iraqi art see, Shabout.

⁶⁷ In the Gulf modern art museums stand in direct contrast to local museums of heritage that present an ethnographic approach of tribal life and culture from the pre-oil century to the present. The term Gulf Futurism was

coined in references to the extremism of architecture in Doha by the artist Sophia Al Maria, *The Girl Who Fell to Earth: A memoir* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012). p. 192.

⁶⁸ Melissa Gronlund, "Art Dubai to partner with Saudi Arabia's Misk Art Institute," *The National*, March 6 2016.

⁶⁹ Robin Pogrebin, "Louvre Abu Dhabi Will (Finally) Open in November," *New York Times*, September 6, 2017.

⁷⁰ Karen Exell, Exell Karen, and Rico Trinidad, "'There is no heritage in Qatar': Orientalism, colonialism and other problematic histories," *World Archaeology* 45, no. 4.

⁷¹ Adam Hanieh, "Beyond Authoritarianism: Rethinking Egypt's 'Long Revolution'," *Development and change* 47, no. 5. "Khaleeji-Capital: Class-Formation and Regional Integration in the Middle-East Gulf," *Historical materialism: research in critical Marxist theory* 18, no. 2. *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Omar AlShehabi, Adam Hanieh, and Abdulhadi Khalaf, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (London: Pluto Press, 2013). Adam Hanieh, "Overcoming Methodological Nationalism: Spatial Perspectives on Migration to the Gulf Arab States," in *Transit States : Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (London, U.K.: Pluto Press, 2013).

⁷² Karen Exell and Sarina Wakefield, *Museums in Arabia: Transnational Practices and Regional Processes* (London, U.K.: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).

⁷³ Sara Hamdan, "After a Sputtering Start, the Louvre Abu Dhabi Project Gathers Pace," *New York Times*, September 26, 2012.

⁷⁴ Atteqa Ali, "The rise of art institutions in the United Arab Emirates and its impact on contemporary art," in *Museums in Arabia Transnational practices and regional processes* ed. Karen Exell and Sarina Wakefield (London, U.K.: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016). Melanie L. and Maral Bedoyan Buffington, "Museum and Art Education as a Response to Place in Doha, Qatar," *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* 31 (2014). Steve Sabella, "Is the United Arab Emirates Constructing its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art," *Contemporary Practices: Visual Arts from the Middle East* 4 (2009). Tīlāl Mualla, "Tashtīt qawi al-ibdā' ... wa ta'ṭīl imkānāt al-ibtikār at-tashkīlī (Dispersing the forces of creativity ... and disrupting the possibilities of artistic innovation).," *ar-Rāfid* no. 7 (1995).

⁷⁵ Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "The Bellwether of Gulf Art Museums," in *Modern and Contemporary Art from the Collection of the Sharjah Art Museum* (Sharjah: Sharjah Art Museum, 2016).

⁷⁶ Other essays from the catalogue include Nadia Radwan, "The Sharjah Art Museum Permanent Collection: Filling a Void in a Fragmented World Art History," *ibid.*; Omar Abdulaziz, "The Collection of Sharjah Art Museum," *ibid.*; Patrick Matthew Kane, "The Dynamics of Sharjah Art Museum's Modern Arab Art Collection," *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Melissa Gronlund, "Sultan Al Qassemi: Taking a 'Warrior's Break'," *The National*, January 23, 2018.

⁷⁸ To this author's knowledge the first discussion on the impact of galleries and the market on artists in the United Arab Emirates is the insightful interview by the Emirati artists Mualla.. A special conference on the role of the artist Hassan Sharif in forming a public art for the UAE was held in early 2018 Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Hassan's Role in Introducing Public Art in the UAE" (paper presented at the Hassan Sharif: Interexchange Symposium, Sharjah Art Foundation, January 18 2018)..

⁷⁹ The Alserkal complex is owned by the Emirati family structured Alserkal Group of corporate companies, including the Eisa Bin Nasser Bin Abdullatif Alserkal EST., that commissioned the Dutch OMA architecture group to design the Concrete, its minimalist exhibition space. See the OMA website: <http://oma.eu/projects/concrete-at-alserkal-avenue>