

Contemporary Art of the Arabian Peninsula in a Globalized Art World



Master Thesis

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Introduction, Historiography, Research Question and Method

Globalization of art is a concept which started in the 1990's reflecting several technological, political and economic developments of the late 1980's in the West. Most notably the fall of the Berlin Wall and communism, as well as the rise of technological capabilities such as Internet and satellite communications, contributed to this new phenomenon. This art globalization followed closely behind the general phenomenon of globalization of economics and trade fueled by these same developments. In the art world there was increased attention to artists from outside of the dominant Western sphere (Euro-American) including Latin America, South East Asia, the Middle East and especially China. Both the free travel movements of artists, curators and consumers and increased presentation possibilities through the proliferation of art biennials, art publications and criticism – also through electronic media - contributed to this so-called globalization.

Globalization is not entirely new being a gradual process with deep historical roots dating back to the establishment of enduring trade routes connecting Eurasia, Africa and the Americas in the 16th century, or the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century with new inventions such as the printing press, steam engine and the telephone, fostering inter-national and global trade. In the art sphere many European artists such as Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1576) travelled to Italy in the Renaissance leading to the establishment of new techniques and styles learned in the host country. As well, Hans Belting has extensively researched the influence and impact of Arab science on the introduction of perspective in Renaissance art.¹ More recently modern artists such as Matisse, Delacroix and others travelled to North Africa in the early 20th century and were inspired by local conditions. Likewise, many artists from that region were trained and spent time in the artistic capitals of Europe before returning to their home countries with new techniques, contacts and inspirations. However what makes globalization of contemporary art most acute is the explosion of networks – both electronic and personal - of both production and presentation at unprecedented speed which cannot be reversed.

Significant landmark art exhibitions such as *Magiciens de la Terre* (Paris, 1989) initiated the discourse around globalization which was accelerated by the proliferation of other exhibitions of a global character designed in part to counteract the negative reception of this controversial exhibition. Although a milestone in the hard fought path to recognition for non-western art, it was strongly criticized for its “misguided” inclusions and exclusions and a certain “orientalism” of the type described by Edward Said.² A recognized turning point in the global

¹ Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad, Renaissance Art and Arab Science*, Cambridge/London 2011.

² Benjamin H.D. Buchloch, 'The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin', *Art in America*, May 1989, pp. 150-162.

exhibition circuit was *Documenta 11* in Kassel (2000) curated by Okwui Enwezor, the first non-Western artistic leader to explore the idea of globalization in relation to cultural expressions such as visual art. International artists were presented according to their own artistic merits without reference to western art.³ In addition, Enwezor constituted the platform around five different themes relevant to globalization and spread over six different geographies reflecting the global realities and concerns of Western hegemony.⁴ A later exhibition *Without Boundary: 17 Ways of Looking* at the MOMA, (New York, 2006) was again criticized but did contribute further to the on-going globalization discourse and further research.⁵

There are basically two camps of opinion around the issue of globalization and art with its proponents claiming that art globalization opens up new worlds and access of artists from the traditional periphery, expanding the humanist vision. The opponents however claim that the art globalization market not only flattens the world in a positive sense but that it leads to universalism and loss of artistic creativity, largely driven by market forces.⁶ However one feels about it, in short, globalization has entered the lexicon of the art world like the terms modernism and renaissance before it. As such its importance as a critical discourse cannot be underestimated especially in emerging geographical areas which were largely previously ignored.⁷

Historiography

Various scholars have contributed to the field of study of the globalization of art from differing viewpoints and disciplines. In the early 2000's leading art historians such as Kitty Zijlmans, driven by theorizations of the end of national art histories, forwarded the proposition of a world and global art history.⁸ James Elkins "Histories of Art" disputed the dominance of Gombrich in the teaching of art history limited in its scope to a Euro-American centrism.⁹ Following suit, theorists and intellectuals linked to the ZKM Center for Art and Media at Karlsruhe introduced the concept of "global art" into art discourse to go beyond the formulas of international modernism as well as postmodern new internationalism. The ZKM began their enquiries in 2007 focusing on the museum, expanded it to audiences and markets in 2009 and

³ Anneke Schulenberg, *Beyond Borders: The Work of Ghada Amer, Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat and Shahzia Sikander*, Nijmegen 2015. Proefschrift, p. 34.

⁴ Okwui Enwezor, *Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition*, Ostfildern 2002, pp. 6-7.

⁵ Schulenberg (see note 3), p. 30-31.

⁶ David Joselit, 'Globalization' in: Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bos, Benjamin H.D. Buchloch and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900*, 2016³ (2005), p. 52.

⁷ Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum*, Ostfildern 2007; Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, Ostfildern 2009; Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, Ostfildern 2011.

⁸ Kitty Zijlmans, 'The Discourse on Contemporary Art and the Globalization of the Art System' in: Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (eds.), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 135-150.

⁹ James Elkins, *Stories of Art*, New York/Abingdon 2002. Elkins is a prolific writer and commentator on the subject of globalization and art, specifically from an art historical and canonical point of view.

followed with their publication on the rise of new art markets in 2011. An exhibition with discursive elements formed the basis for this latter research. In the 2009 volume, Belting and Buddensieg distinguished between the concept of ‘world art’ and ‘global art’: the former referring to the world heritage of art spanning all periods and countries, and the latter denoting a contemporary development of art in clear opposition to the Western ideas of progress and hegemony.¹⁰

Other scholars such as Anna Maria Guasch wish to expand the territory of art into the field of culture and develop new methodologies or approaches to analyze artistic practice.¹¹ Art historians and educators James Elkins, Hestia Bavelaar, Thomas da Costa Kaufmann and others have approached the globalization issue through an art historical and educational perspective looking at the canon of art history and inclusion issues.^{12,13} Researchers such as Olav Velthuis and Charlotte Bydler have focused on the economic side of art globalization.^{14,15} Issues of (post- and neo-) colonialism, as well as orientalism form the main thrust of articles from Rasheed Araeen, founder of *Third Text* and Edward Said.^{16,17} Terry Smith substantially contributes to the art globalization discourse primarily from the viewpoint of contemporary art, its definition and prevalence.¹⁸

These approaches led to many edited multi-authored volumes comprising a multidisciplinary approach to the examination of the global art world. Jonathan Harris situates the art world globalization phenomenon squarely in the larger picture of globalization including finance and economics, communications and geo-politics with contributions by various parties.¹⁹ Kaur and Parul-Mukherji position their edited volume arts and aesthetics in a globalizing world in a sociological and anthropological framework, with an emphasis on India and Southeast Asia.²⁰ International curators too have weighed in on the discussion with

¹⁰Hans Belting, ‘Contemporary Art as Global Art: A Critical Estimate’, in: Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, Ostfildern 2009, pp. 45-48.

¹¹ Anna Maria Guasch Ferrer and Nasheli Jiménez del Val (eds.), *Critical Cartography of Art and Visuality in the Global Age*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014.

¹² Hestia Bavelaar, *Re-imagining Western Art History in an Age of Globalization: Finding Blind Spots and Shifting Frontiers*, Saarbrücken 2015.

¹³ Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (eds.) *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, Series: Studies in Art Historiography, Farnham/Burlington 2015.

¹⁴ Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art*, Uppsala 2004.

¹⁵ Olav Velthuis and Stefano Baia Curioni (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases*, Oxford 2015.

¹⁶ Rasheed Araeen, ‘Art and Postcolonial Society’ in: Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, Chichester 2011, pp. 365-374; <http://thirdtext.org/rasheed-araeen>

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London/New York/Toronto, 1978, pp. 173-86.

¹⁸ Terry Smith, ‘Contemporary Art: World Currents in Transition Beyond Globalisation’, in: Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, Karlsruhe 2013, pp. 186-192.

¹⁹ Jonathan Harris, ‘Introduction: Globalization and Contemporary Art: A Convergence of People and Ideas’ in: Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, Chichester 2011, pp. 1-15.

²⁰ Ramnder Kaur and Parul Dave-Mukherji (eds.), *Arts and Aesthetics in a Global World*, London/New York 2014.

publications, exhibitions and artist monographs from the global circuit such as Okwui Enwezor, focusing on contemporary African art since 1980 as well as Massimiliano Gioni and Catharine David the latter two notably in their exhibition activities. Hans-Ulrich Obrist adds to the discourse in a number of exhibition catalogues.

From a theoretical standpoint, several scholars have had an impact on the discourse around globalization, especially the work of philosopher Arthur Danto (1924-2013). Danto coined the term “The Art World” in 1964 to suggest that it is not possible to understand conceptual art without the help of the art system, that is, the community of interpreters – critics, art curators, artists, and collectors – within galleries and museums.²¹ Although his intent was to help define the meaning of art itself, this same model can be applied to an examination of the globalization of art with the addition new components such as communication networks since the 1990s including Internet and social media. Howard Becker of the University of California at Berkeley has been of great importance in advancing sociological viewpoints to the art world as well.²² Other similar frameworks include “The Art Eco-system Model” of Morris, Hargreaves McIntyre 2004 as part of a research commission by the Arts Council of England. This model places dealers at the center of the equation as a means to cultivate the art market versus Danto’s focus on the artwork itself.²³ Bourriaud contributes to the globalization discourse in his theorization of concepts such as *altermodernism* and the *radicant* whereby he disparages the use of the binary global and local or traditions. He vies for a new space which he terms altermodernism being against both nostalgia and standardization maintaining that modernity is ambiguous. His concept of the radicant as it applies to globalization draws a parallel between the botanical family radicant, and those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions dependent on its wanderings in a space without deep roots. Although on face similar to the cultural theoretical concept of Deleuze’s rhizome, Bourriaud argues that it is different in that the radicant follows a certain path or trajectory in the advance of a single object unfolding and building upon its interactions with previous surfaces.²⁴ Bourriaud also postulates that there is no longer a ‘mainstream’ of art with its so-called margins traditionally used to describe global art, but rather a multitude of streams that flow in relation to each other regardless of place.²⁵

The timing and mechanisms of various periphery countries or regions to enter the global art market and their ability to remain there can be queried, for instance Latin America is a

²¹ Arthur Danto, ‘The Artworld’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61/19, 1964), pp. 571-584.

²² Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1982.

²³ Derrick Chong, ‘The Emergence of Powerhouse Dealers in Contemporary Art’ in: Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, Chichester 2011, p. 434.

²⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, New York 2009.

²⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, ‘Notes on Globalization, National Identities, and the Production of Signs’, in: Kamal Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, London/San Francisco/Beirut 2008, pp. 101-108.

region which was very successful early on in developing its global presence as well as the well-known case of spectacular growth in China's art market. Furthermore Japan is a country which despite being the world's third largest economy does not figure at all on the map of contemporary global art.²⁶ My own personal interest in the Middle Eastern geo-politics led me to ask the same question as to how this region fared with respect to the globalization of their art world and which factors are important.

Research Question

This thesis will address the issues around the concept of globalization for art from the geographic area of the Arabian Peninsula, which in itself has special characteristics tied to religion, tradition, new (oil) economics, and socio-political factors. In addition some specific historical events which may have had an effect on the production and reception of art from the Middle Eastern region include 9/11/2001, the Arab Spring of 2011 and civil wars and military invasions in the region. Increased migration of artists and diaspora due to war and conflict since the 1970's and hybrid identities have a special significance to the region as many diasporic communities are found around the world, specifically in the USA, France and the UK. The research question is as follows:

To what extent is the Arabian Peninsula contemporary art world part of the globalizing art world in terms of its production, presentation and reception?

Recognizing that the wide geography of the "Middle East" comprises twenty two countries, as defined by the Arab League, and differing religious sub-groups an attempt will be made to delineate some of the dominant aesthetic characteristics without overly generalizing. The focus of this thesis lies in the Gulf region namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This particular region of the Middle East will be studied as it is relatively accessible, currently a war-free zone with the exception of Yemen, and its status as a region of immigration from other Arab nations typifies the region as a microcosm of the Arab world with many different nationalities represented including Palestinians and Iranians. Most importantly the art produced and presented in this region is diverse, of high quality and meaningful and already part of the globalizing art world. In addition to these artistic production issues, questions of presentation as it relates to globalization and the rise and sustainability of institutions in its wake such as new mega-museums in Qatar and the UAE are key.

The main question is to determine which influences does globalization have on the production and presentation of art production of the Arabian Gulf Peninsula and if this art experiences the benefits of globalization, or is it a more local affair, or is it a combination of both – a term referred to as "glocalism". The artist Ayman Balbaaki (Lebanon, 1975) defines

²⁶ Velthuis (see note 14), p. 13.

glocalism as “seeking meaning and inspiration within local visual culture and expressing it through a plastic global language”.²⁷

The art of the Arabian Peninsula can be situated generally within the context of the Middle East geo-politics. Concerns around the dominance of the West, universality and neo-colonialism will be addressed. Some of the traditions of Arabic arts relate to the calligraphic aspects, the tradition of poetry, prose and storytelling as well as non-representation will be explored as well. Globalization and art usually conflates contemporary art and global markets or consumption – is this the same for globalization and (modern) art in the Middle East as well? Is it only contemporary or can the notion be extended back to the globalization of modern art at the turn of the twentieth century? Most students of art history in the west do not realize that the Middle Eastern countries had world class artists and art works in the region for example the surrealist movement in Egypt in the 1930’s. Landscape painting, cityscapes, families, and portraits were all subjects of paintings in their modernistic period, in parallel to the genres of the West.

The particular historiography of globalization of art from the Middle East is less theoretical and academic based than globalization studies at large and focused on providing reflections and documenting of developments of modern art from the region, or, in a sense “catching up”. Additional analytical markers such as the unique geo-political situation, religious considerations and key time markers the Arab Spring of 2011 and the 9-11 bombing of the World Trade Center led to more specialized approaches to globalization discourses about the region.

From an academic point of view, globalization of Arab art has been studied by several scholars such as art historian Nada Shabout (of Iraqi origin based in the USA) who has paid particular attention to modernism in the Arab artistic world feeling that it has largely been ignored in the West.²⁸ In the 1990’s, Ali Wijdan, a Jordanian art historian has written on the history of Islamic art, modernism and continuities which can be distinguished from Arabic art in its religious focus and an expanded geographic area outside of the Middle East.²⁹ The Middle East is not solely Islamic, nor is the Islamic religion confined to the Middle East being a world religion in other geographies such as Indonesia, parts of Eastern Europe and Africa. From a regional point of view, Kamal Boullata is a Palestinian art critic, curator, historian and visual artist, whose latter work is primarily in abstraction and color planes. In addition to editing a volume entitled *Globalization and Belonging*, resulting from the Sharjah Biennial 5 of 2002, he has published several histories of Palestinian art dating its origins to the Byzantine icon

²⁷Artist statement in: Anthony Downey and Lina Lazaar, *The Future of a Promise, Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Catalogue, Collateral Event of the 54th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale, Venezia, 1 June – 30 November 2011, Tunis 2011 (unpaginated)*.

²⁸Nada M. Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics*, Gainseville 2007.

²⁹ Ali Wijdan, *Modern Islamic Art, Development and Continuity*, Gainseville 1997.

paintings.³⁰ Most recently, less academic publications approaching the Gombrich Eurocentric model of the history of art, with overviews and high quality color plates of Arabic contemporary art, have been published. In addition, archival research and visual culture of the Middle East form a separate group of publications, reflecting an increasingly important concern of art from the arena. Anthony Downey and WJT Mitchell are important contributors to these fields of enquiry.

Key exhibitions and biennials both inside and outside the Middle East featuring art from the region have contributed to the globalization of Arabic art, most notably the Sharjah Biennial established in 1996 and participation at the "mother of all biennials", the Venice Biennial established in 1895. A critical appraisal of biennials will form part of this thesis as contributing to the globalization discourse.

Research Method

I will approach my research question employing an eco-system model of the global art world comprising a network of individuals and institutions involved in the production and delivery of artworks to an international market. I will delineate, describe, analyze and evaluate these forces as they apply to the art of the Arabic world, particularly the countries of the Gulf Peninsula. The major research method is combining published research from both local and international sources, an examination of primary works of art from a selection of artists and discussions with artists and members of the art world of the Middle East region during various conferences and panels in Amsterdam and Dubai. Fieldwork was also carried out at the Dubai Art Fair and Global Art Forum in 2016, gallery visits and artist talks in Dubai as well as during discussions with researchers and curators at the Mathaf, Museum of Modern Art in Qatar and an artist residency program in Qatar. Quantitative data of sales auction attended at Christie's in Dubai (established 2006) have been collected and analyzed as well. Interviews and discussions with various artists from the region have contributed to the thesis development. In pursuing this eco-system model in the evaluation of the globalization of art from the Arabian Peninsula I would like to determine if all parts of the chain are equally important in the robustness of the system, or if some factors are a necessary and sufficient condition for the inclusion of their art in the global art system. Are the nodes interchangeable and interdependent on each other in the Arabian context?

After this introductory chapter and historiography, I will describe in Chapter 1 the art world eco-system model which I will employ, supported by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Nicolas Bourriaud. In Chapter 2, the geo-politics of the Arab world focusing on the Gulf States will be discussed, namely those factors which may have an impact on the art produced and

³⁰ Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present*, London/Berkeley/Hamra 2009.

presented in the region. In Chapter 3, the origins of contemporary art in the region will be backgrounded with respect to both its traditional roots and modernistic developments in the 20th century. These developments will be linked to the geo-political history of the area as well as to the discourse around globalization; and the globalization of art and the artistic response in the region to this discourse. Chapter 4 will look at how the art scene is being developed via a top-down approach in some parts of the region through government policies, stimulation and institutional development. A special emphasis will be placed on Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in this regard. Issues around censorship and self-censorship will be raised. In Chapter 5, the art world eco-system model with its various components will be applied to the art worlds of the Gulf Peninsula. The chapter will look at the institutional side and the commercial aspects of art of the region including patronage, institutional and museum collections, biennials practices and commercial aspects of distribution through international art fairs, auctions and art galleries.

The structure of each section of this chapter will deal with each of the nodes in the art system model looking at the theory and importance to globalization, an analysis of the actual situation in the Arabian peninsula including any critique or dissenting opinions, followed by a conclusion as to the strength of the node for the success of the globalization question. The final chapter will examine globalization aspects of four different artists from the region. It will look at some specific art forms which are traditionally linked to the region and how they are developing to contemporary times: calligraphy, traditional crafts such as weaving and non-representational works of art. Calligraphy is one of the oldest and most prestigious forms of traditional Islamic art being associated with the Holy Qu'ran. In addition the historical past of the Gulf Peninsula and the relation to art will be explored further in more detail. The works of four artists from the Gulf region will be looked at in more detail including Hassan Sharif (UAE, 1951-2016); Ahmed Mater (Saudi Arabia, 1979), and Monira Al Qadiri (Kuwait, 1983) and the GCC, an artist collective. These artists have been chosen as representative of global art producers of the region, illustrating different aspects of the global art system. Importantly these artists are by and large living and working in their regions of origin, rather than being classified as hybrid artists having immigrated to the Western art centers such as New York or Berlin. (Unfortunately Hassan Sharif has passed away during the period of my research.) Furthermore I have chosen artists whose work I have had the opportunity to see first-hand or meet personally. Their artistic thematic explored are controversial, aesthetic and relevant to the globalization discourse.

Hassan Sharif was a long established artist in the UAE, developing from traditional modern works of art such as painting to contemporary installations and assemblages using local materials. He is an example of an artist who moved with the times, from his origins as a local artist from the early days who was formally educated in the UK and returned to the UAE and continued his career and emerged on the global scene.

Ahmed Mater is recognized as one of the most influential of Saudi Arabian artists today. Mater remains rooted in his local identity. Mater's work, widely shown in the Middle East and in Europe and in the collection of the British Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, is informed by his education and life as a medical doctor, as well as by his traditional religious upbringing and Saudi culture. His work, which encompasses photography, calligraphy, painting, installation and video, explores the narratives and aesthetics of Islamic culture in an era of globalization, consumerism and dramatic flux.

Monira Al Qadiri's work explores unconventional gender identities, petro-cultures and their possible futures, as well as the legacies of corruption. A Kuwaiti born in Senegal, raised in Kuwait, educated in Japan and now living in Amsterdam and Beirut, Al Qadiri represents a hybrid variation of a Middle East artist operating globally but not focused on the West.

The fourth artist to be discussed in the Artist Collective GCC. Al Qadiri is also part of the artist collective GCC, which has been making work that is both inspired by and critically addresses the contemporary culture of the Arab Gulf region. Comprised of eight delegates—the GCC is named, in part, after the intergovernmental body that helps bind the region. Collaboration in art and society is one of the cornerstones/key components of globalization according to Nikos Papastergiadis of the University of Melbourne.³¹ Art collectives are also a prevalent form of contemporary art organization in recent years.

Finally, in my conclusions in Chapter 6, I will summarize the results of my research question: *To what extent is the Arabian Peninsula contemporary art world part of the globalizing art world in terms of its production, presentation and reception?*

³¹ Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Collaboration in Art and Society: A Global Pursuit of Democratic Dialogue' in: Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, Chichester 2011, pp. 275-288.

Chapter 1. The Art Eco-System Model

I will approach my research question through the use of a model or schemata deconstructing the parameters of the art world, followed by case studies of four successful contemporary artists of the region in this eco-system. In addition, works of other significant artists of the greater Arab region who have contributed to the discourse on globalization, or on different elements of the contemporary global art world will be included where applicable.

This model represents the art world of 2016-2017 based on a composite view of what is necessary to be classified as being part of the global scene. There are major differences in the art worlds of various time periods, for example post-war 1950's and the art world of the 1990's. Differences may also be seen in geographical areas, which is the major subject of this thesis. It is important to note that this model is not merely about how artefacts or the art work move through an art world system but also addresses how the various elements of the model are independent agents themselves in the art world, including the artists themselves. Furthermore, it is problematical to define what determines whether an artwork or artist or region can be described as "global". My viewpoint is that recognition of global quality by the various players outside of their region is the most important criterion resulting in the third box of "global stage". This could be manifested in different ways, for example, through museum collections and exhibitions, literature and ultimately inclusion in the canon.

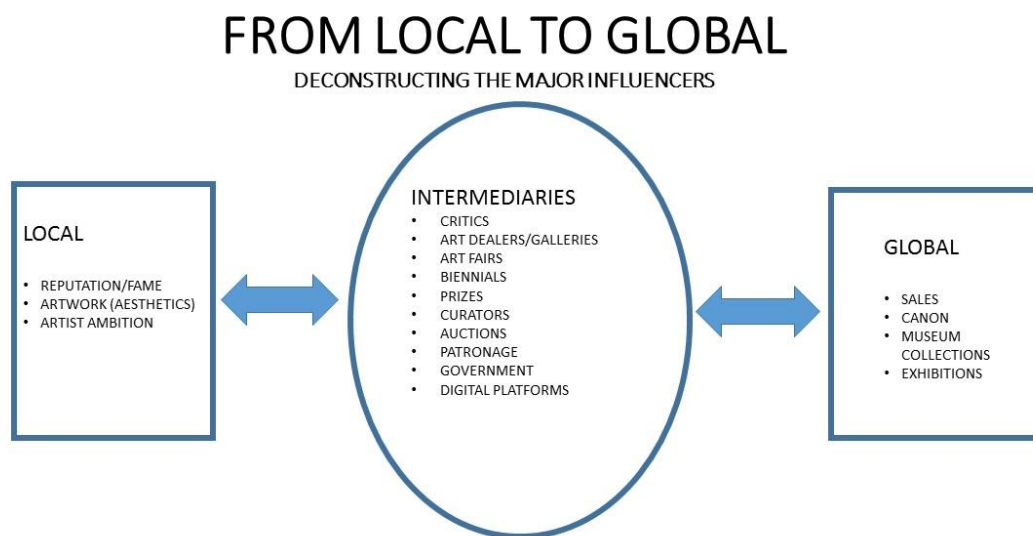


Fig. 1. The Eco-system of the Global Art World

This model (fig. 1) is termed an “eco-system”, or a network of organizations or individuals such as suppliers, distributors, customers, government agencies and others who are involved in the delivery of a specific product or service. It is loosely based on a concept developed in the 1990’s as applied to business.³² The idea is that each part of the system affects and is affected by the others through both competition and co-operation in a constantly evolving relationship. Each part needs to be both flexible and adaptable, as in a biological system in order to survive and prosper. The cornerstone of this art world model has its early origins with the philosophy of Arthur Danto in his conception of the definition of art as being rooted in the institutional framework.³³ A form of this art world model has also been further enunciated by philosophers such as George Dickie who coined the term “transnational institution of art” as well as Noel Carroll.³⁴ Related models have also been developed with a focus on the commercial side of the art world and the central role of dealers.³⁵

I will explain now in more detail the eco-system model I will employ, first from a general point of view, followed by an analysis of the role of each of these specific forces in the Gulf geographic region in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The theoretical model of Pierre Bourdieu relating to various forms of capital will be applied in the analysis of the global art world components. Bourdieu distinguished various guises of capital, namely, economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital. Economic capital is concerned with money and property, social capital comprises obligations and prerogatives and connections, symbolic capital entails status and prestige whilst cultural capital comprises education and taste. Under certain circumstances each of these forms of capital (resources) is convertible into the others. For instance, economic riches might confer a certain prestige or symbolic capital. Interestingly, Bourdieu distinguishes three “states” of specifically cultural capital: objectified, institutionalized and embodied. The first exists in cultural goods such as paintings and books, the second in educational qualifications and the third in special dispositions of mind and body such as the ability to appreciate and understand fine art. Cultural capital is unevenly distributed through modern societies by virtue of family origin and upbringing, economic holdings, educational attainment (formal and extracurricular) and social trajectory or, in Bourdieu’s terms, *habitus*.³⁶

On the production or supply side (left box), artists can be delineated by their talent as reflected in their oeuvres and reputations, both contemporarily and historically. They develop as artists through training, education and experience as well as peer group influences. On the demand or customer side (right box), patrons and art lovers may be distinguished by their social

³² The concept first appeared in J.F. Moore’s May/June 1993 *Harvard Business Review* article, entitled “Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competition”.

³³ Danto (see note 21) pp. 580-581.

³⁴ Noël Carroll, ‘Art and Globalization: Then and Now’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65:1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, pp. 131-143.

³⁵ Chong (see note 23), pp. 431-448.

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 29-112.

class and income levels as well as their tastes and preferences in art described as “high end or “low end”. The theory of art of Pierre Bourdieu is relevant here. Further delineations are with respect to the acquisition method of these buyers, either commissioned or purchased on the open market. With the rapid modernization of the Gulf region in the second half of the last century and development of civic society, many new public buildings opened up, also signaling a new market to decorate the walls and public spaces. These same patrons also influence the globalization equation by helping make key artists known in their display.

Intermediation (middle circle) plays a key role in the art world. Although artists and customers may sometimes have a direct link with each other, it is most often the case that professional art dealers and galleries mediating between the two especially at the high end of the market. With the large oversupply and specialization citizens often require assistance to distinguish quality and intermediaries to act as agents or scouts for out of town purchases. There is a large secondary market through auctions. Governments play also a crucial role in regulating market activities and often extends to educational and patronage opportunities as well as other forms of regulation.

It is notable that Hans Belting propagates a similar model but limited to three major variables: audiences, markets and museums. He also argues that there is no one single art world but it is comprised of many art worlds possibly deviating from the reigning art world model of Western hegemony.³⁷

An interpretation and application of this model to the twenty first century artist and art work does require that it be placed in context of the historical, social and cultural environment of the region which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

³⁷ Hans Belting, ‘The Plurality of Art Worlds and the New Museum’ in: Hendrick Folkerts, Christoph Lindner and Margriet Schavemaker (eds.), *Facing Forward: Art & Theory from a Future Perspective*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 93-107.

Chapter 2. The Arabian Peninsula Geopolitical and Historical Framework

Several important geopolitical and social factors have influenced the cultural and artistic production of the Arabian Peninsula and global position including a colonial history, demographics, religion, economic developments and governance.

The Middle East has been described as being in a state of turmoil and instability for almost a century after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War in 1918. This was as a result of a new political and territorial order created by the colonial powers, Britain and France. In the Sykes-Picot agreement they divided the land between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf into two sphere of influence. Palestine was placed under an international regime but was pledged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people. This new situation was defined by a lack of legitimacy by local forces, both secular and religious laying the basis for the present conflictual situation in the region.³⁸ At the close of World War II, there was a second major geopolitical shift with de-colonization with many countries of the region demanding independence, which often resulted in bloody conflicts, as well as the establishment of the state of Israel. Individual countries of the Gulf States which formerly had been a so-called British protectorate, gained independence in the 1970's.³⁹ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, also formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, had already been established in 1926 with the Al Saud tribal family consolidating power and establishing the Saudi royal family as a monarchy.⁴⁰ In Figure 2 below, one can see the individual countries of the Gulf region and surrounding area, as they stand in 2017.



Fig. 2. Map showing the Gulf region and surrounding Middle Eastern countries

³⁸ Avi Shlaim, 'The Post Ottoman Syndrome', in: Raja Shehadeh and Penny Johnson (eds.), *Shifting Sands The Unraveling of the Old Order in the Middle East*, London 2015, p. 32.

³⁹ Rebecca L. Torstrick and Elizabeth Faier, *Culture and Customs of the Arab Gulf States*, Westport 2009, pp. xii-xv.

⁴⁰ Shlaim (see note 38), p. 30.

Demographically, the total population of the six Gulf States is estimated to be 50 million as of 2015, or 15% of the total population of the 22 countries of the Arab league of 340 million. The Gulf region is made up of a large percentage of immigrants who occupy positions of construction workers and other service workers. These non-nationals comprise approximately 48% of the total population on average with a high of 88% in the UAE. This percentage also includes non-nationals from other Arab countries who have fled to the region due to war and other geopolitical occurrences, such as the Palestinian question and Iranians. Around 50% of the populations are under twenty five years of age.⁴¹

In the early twentieth century, major changes were on the horizon for the Gulf area both economically and socially. By the 1930s the Gulf pearling industry was phasing out as cultured pearls entered the market from Japan. A few decades later the discovery of oil and natural gas brought new wealth, seeded the development of nation states leading to independence, rapid urbanization and the establishment of ruling families. British power diminished and American power grew, due to economic imperatives followed by strategic and political interests. During the Cold War years, the Americans wished to protect access to the region's oil wealth. American expatriates moved to the peninsula working for oil companies due to their already established expertise in the field.

The Arab Gulf States are also geographically well-positioned being at a crossroads for trade routes between India, Africa, Persia and Arabia. The indigenous peoples of the peninsula, the Bedouin, are Arab and of tribal origin. They had adjusted to the often harsh climate and arid conditions through both nomadic and seafaring lifestyles.⁴² The Bedouin way of life resulted in an oral culture, passing down stories through the generations rather than a written or visual-based means of communication.

Islam as the dominant religion has a profound cultural impact on the region. Islam had its birth in the Arabian Peninsula in the city of Mecca beginning in the year 610 when the Prophet Muhammed began receiving revelations from God, or Allah, resulting in the writing of the Qur'an. An important landmark is the Ka'bah, a sanctuary built around the black stone of Mecca which was used as a place of worship for the various tribes. Mohammed took control of the Ka'bah and expelled the idols housed there. Today the Ka'bah is the focal point of the Hajj, or annual pilgrimage to Mecca where Muslims are obliged to take part in at least once in their lifetime as one of the five pillars of Islam (providing they are financially fit and able to do so). During Hajj, Muslims circumambulate the Ka'bah as one of their main rituals. The Hajj is a colossal operation with millions of pilgrims converging on the city on an annual basis, leading to organizational issues to house, feed, guide and control the crowds. A related tourist industry

⁴¹Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM, *GCC: Total population and percentage of nationals ad non-nationals in GCC countries (Latest national statistics, 2010-2015)*). <http://gulfmigration.eu/gcc-total-population-and-percentage-of-nationals-and-non-nationals-in-gcc-countries-national-statistics-2010-2015-with-numbers/>

⁴² Torstrick (see note 39), pp. 12-13

and building boom has grown around the Hajj pilgrimage, which has led to criticism from some quarters.⁴³

There are two main strands of Islam which can and has led to sectarian strife: The Sunni and Shia. The Prophet Mohammed died in 632 without a male successor which ultimately led to two different sects, the Sunni (al-sunnah, the Way of the Prophet) and Shia (shiat Alli, partisans of Alli). Whilst the Shi'ites believed that the right to rule should remain within the Prophet's family based on the principle of patrilineal descent, the Sunnis believed that the selection of the next leader should be based on consensus of who is best fit to lead, regardless of blood lines. In the Arab world there is also a small population of Christians, Jews (Israel) and Hindus.

The various countries which comprise the Gulf are chiefly controlled by monarchies or ruling families, with some more "democratic" than others, for example Bahrain has a constitutional monarchy. Although Islam is the dominant religion, Saudi Arabia is the only country which is a theocracy, that is to say a government operated by religious authorities who claim unlimited power in the name of God. In practice the Saudi ruling family shares power with the religious authorities.

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) is a political and economic alliance of the six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981 with the goal to strengthen relations among its member countries and to promote cooperation among the countries' citizens. The GCC also has a defense planning council that coordinates military cooperation between member countries. At a GCC summit in December 2009, an agreement was reached to launch a single regional currency similar to the euro.

Two major political events have dominated in the Arab world since the turn of the century, the first being the World Trade Center bombings of 9-11 and the Arab Spring brought the region onto the contemporary world stage. There was a heightened awareness of the world of the geopolitics of the region, with both positive and negative outcomes. Many in the "West" became aware of contemporary art from the region having previously equated it with "Islamic art" (artefacts related to the ideology and practice of the Muslim faith), even having missed awareness of the entire period of modern art. There was a now a new expectation of art and its purpose, generally described as the burden of representation whereby an entire group of artists are erroneously cast as spokespersons for an entire culture.⁴⁴

⁴³ Venetia Porter (ed.), *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*, ex. cat. British Museum, London 2012.

⁴⁴ Monica Juneja, 'Global Art History and the Burden of Representation' in: Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, Oostfildern 2011, pp. 274-297.

The year 2011 saw further important political developments in the Middle East, colloquially known as the “Arab Spring”. A wave of popular protests, demanding more social equity and stronger economic development led to political change at an unprecedented and unexpected scale. Social unrest affected many countries, but the degree of resulting political change varied across the region. Protests triggered economic, social, and political reforms in a number of countries, and culminated in the resignation of ruling presidents in Tunisia and Egypt, and a forceful regime change in Libya. The well-known civil war in Syria was also a result of a civic uprising of the same period. In the Gulf States, there were no protests or revolutionary uprisings except for the case of Bahrain which was quickly squelched by the GCC military force.

These characteristics of culture in the Gulf: religion, governance, geo-politics and (new) wealth as well as a desire to rapidly modernize in a global setting, all have a profound effect on the artistic practices and art world of the Gulf which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Art in the Arab World: From Islamic Art to Modern Art to Contemporary Art

Contemporary art production in the Gulf region is diverse and comprises all types of practice: painting, sculpture, installations, video, performance, photography and conceptual art. Traditional techniques such as painting and sculpture are dominant art forms in the region with new forms such as installations and video gaining slowly in interest, particularly amongst younger artists.⁴⁵ Archival art to present and dispute various histories are a prevalent form, especially in the Levant area (Lebanon, Syria and Palestine). However to understand contemporary art production in the Arab region it is necessary to examine it through the lens of modernity, or even further back through the lens of Islamic and traditional art.

Islamic art can be defined as art production of the Arab countries before the strong impact of Western civilization in the 19th century. In the Gulf region, the Islamic arts of calligraphy as well as weaving and geometric designs have a long tradition in the Bedouin culture already described in Chapter 2. It is a common lay misconception that Islam forbids the depiction of the human body. With different theological interpretations of the Qu'ran, coupled with Western influences there are countless examples of representation in contemporary art without being blasphemous. Animate beings are however, never found in mosque decorations nor Qu'ran illustrations. Historically, Islamic art was replaced by Western style modern art in the first 50 years of the 20th centuries.⁴⁶ Adopting modern art was seen by modernist leaders in the Middle East such as Atatürk as a necessary condition to become a civilized nation. By the mid-20th century major centers in the Arab region had adopted Western forms of art, academies or schools had been formed and local talent was recognized. Others believed that locals were better to remain artisans than artists.⁴⁷

During the 1940s and 1950s some artists began questioning the dominating trends of the time: landscape, genre painting, and still life. This was due in part to western artists who were inspired by the Islamic world such as Matisse and Klee.⁴⁸ Modernity became a serious debate topic, where in the West it meant a break with the past, modernity in the Arab world meant a reconquering of the past, re-discovering Islamic art. This new nationalism led to the goal of building post-colonial identities. As long as art remained figurative, the reference to Islamic art heritage, not considered compatible with modernity, was not a real issue. In the

⁴⁵ Zoltan Somhegyi, 'In Conversation with Sheikh Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi', *Selections*, Issue 29, Beirut, February 23, 2015, pp. 132-33.

⁴⁶ Saeb Eigner, *Art of the Middle East: Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World and Iran*, London/New York, 2015² (2010), p. 279-280.

⁴⁷ Silvia Naef, 'Reexploring Islamic Art: Modern and Contemporary Creation in the Arab World and Its relation to the Artistic Past', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 43, *Islamic Arts*, 2003, pp. 164-174.

⁴⁸ Paul Klee, 'Sunbaked Klee', *The New Yorker*, <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1997/12/08/sunbaked-klee>>

1960s abstraction became a larger trend in the Arab world (Western inspired) but reception was difficult as they had just discovered and started to appreciate figuration.

Islamic art was rediscovered in the second half of the 20th century. Through the use of the letter which was form and content at the same time, art would once again become the expression of a philosophical concept, of the artist's attitude to existence. Together with the Arabesque the calligraphic ornament had been the major form of expression of Arab civilization. Its re-employment in modern art would therefore reconcile the Arab artist with his most important and significant heritage. Nevertheless there was no thought to going back to the patterns of Islamic art. The use of the Arabic script give to the works a fundamentally contemporary and Arab character. The using Arab writing considered themselves artists rather than calligraphers. It became the start of the pan-Arab art movement adopting the *hurufiyya* style using letters to express their identity.⁴⁹ A non-Arab viewer can connect to artworks with Arabic script even without a literacy in the language, based purely on aesthetics and beauty.⁵⁰

3.1 Art Globalization Discourse in the Arab World

The discourse over globalization, and the globalization of art from the Middle East in particular, begins around 2007 and centers on several fronts. One dominant theme appears to be a criticism of the political and economic globalization and concurrent neo-liberalism which artists need to critique and respond to. Another school of thought exemplified by the Global Art Forum in Dubai in its first forum in 2007 welcomed the establishment of global art world and even positioning the Middle East as a driving force in the global art world.⁵¹

To begin with the critique of globalization in the region, some scholars assert that the era of globalization in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf was typified by cynicism for the global project being equated as a Western project and a cultural invasion.⁵² However in practice lies a paradox, namely the phenomenon of urban development especially in the architecture of Dubai and its iconic supersize skyscrapers and luxury shopping malls. This is also evident in the similar building projects of neighboring Qatar and its bid to host international sporting events such as the World Cup Football in 2022.

Further, in a collection of essays written after the Sharjah Biennial of 2007, globalization is rightfully described as a challenge to the art and cultural scenes outside of the dominant

⁴⁹ Shabout (see note 28), pp. 61-70.

⁵⁰ Kamal Boullata, Interview with artist, Barjeel Art Foundation, 2014
http://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Interview-with-artist-Kamal-Boullata_BAF.pdf

⁵¹ Jalal Toufic, *Transcripts First Annual Global Forum*
<www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads/First_Annual_Global_Art_Forum,_2007.pdf>

⁵² Nadia Mounajjed, 'Dubai's Mystified Promise of Globalisation', IBRAAZ, Platform 005.
<<http://www.ibraaz.org/essays/61>>

Western mainstream.⁵³ Key issues such as the intertwining of the local and the global, as well as the convergence of aesthetics and politics are focused on the concept of belonging, or a post-colonial reading based on the center and the periphery. New strategies of resistance against political globalism are debated and proposed. Cultural nomadism and the experience of place, national identity and transcultural expression, are discussed by artists and art world players primarily from within, or with roots in the region or other previously colonized geographies. Almost ten years later, a recent volume of essays edited by Anthony Downey continues to propagate this view with the additional critical evaluation of institutions in decline and failing to support a cultural production partially in the aftermath of the “Arab Spring” revolutions across the region of 2011.⁵⁴ The current backlash to globalization is evident in this discourse, particularly in the discussion of ‘mega’ museums being constructed in Abu Dhabi, one of the seven Emirates. (See chapter 5 for a further discussion of this.)

Salma Khadra Jayyusi, professor of Arabic literature currently based in the US, reiterates a view that civilization and humanness has its roots in the achievements of the Arab/Islamic civilizations of the medieval world. Contributing to an edited volume produced in the “West” (Belting 2007) Jayussi evokes the concept of shared spaces, for example the geography of Andalusia (in Southern Spain) where the three major religions lived in peace, side by side. She feels that this achievement has been forgotten and replaced by fear and stereotypes of the Arab world in Western eyes which has even been accepted by modern Arabs. Linking visual art and literature in describing *Qasida*, or poems as painting in words, Jayussi describes the specific characteristics of Arab art as located in the heart of the universal, maintaining it is an integral part of the creative process that should describe all good art. “Man’s heritage is for all men. Every poem, every sculpture, every etching and tune is the rightful inheritance of all mankind”. What is particularly Arab is the nomadic lifestyle which led to both alienation but also to the Arab capacity for friendship and co-existence.⁵⁵ This nomadism described by Jayussi can be said to apply to the modern Arab artist, both in their quest for recognition and participation in the global art world.

Nada Shabout, whose academic focus is on modern Arab art, discusses several factors hindering the globalization of contemporary art of the Middle East, commencing with the naming of the area which she maintains is sustaining a negative image of the geographical area situated in an oppositional binary of East and West. This is further compounded by the framing of the region in a non-aesthetic way with references to terrorism, ‘aggressive’ Islam. She feels the discourse is generated by Euro-American curators and decontextualizes the art. Thematic

⁵³ Kamal Boullata, ‘Sharing a Meaning: An Introduction’ in: Kamal Boullata (ed.), *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, London/San Francisco/Beirut 2008, pp. 11-21.

⁵⁴ Anthony Downey, ‘Critical Propositions and Institutional Realities in the Middle East’, in: Anthony Downey (ed.), *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East*, Berlin 2016, pp. 15-46.

⁵⁵ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ‘Global Culture: An Arab View’, in: Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum*, Ostfildern 2007, pp. 198-213.

exhibitions result in a type of neo-colonialism, a new Middle East constructed in the West.⁵⁶ Shabout has delineated separate art worlds including the “third space” of “globalized hybrids” described as artists with an Islamic or Arabic background living in the West, thus with a mixed identity. Citing works of Shirin Neshat and Ghada Amer she criticizes their legitimacy as representatives of culture of the Middle East, and instead characterizes them as representative tokens of the “Other”.⁵⁷ The artist, Hassan Khan, is also less than positive about the increased attention the Arab countries are receiving from the globalized art world and the proliferation of publications. He wonders why in the 1960s, when a strong and active cultural movement in the Arab world was at its height, it was largely ignored by the more traditional centers of cultural power. He questions whether the western art world was rejecting the idea of a postcolonial state’s emergence with its strong sense of localism and feared loss of power.⁵⁸

Still others fear that Arab art has only been discovered by the global art world through a commercial lens with an over-emphasis on auction results. This has culminated in a “gold rush” for art from the region without a contextualization of the art scene nor one grounded scholarly discussion. Questions are posed on the geographical location of Arabic artists including a possible need for migration to Western markets and/or self-orientalisation.⁵⁹

On the pro-globalization side, the most visible forum for art globalization discourse takes place at the annual Global Art Forum (GAF), taking place in during the Art Dubai Week in March. The Forum includes performance, music, commissioned research and projects with live talks by curators, artists and other art world players. Established in 2006, themes have centered around the topic of the globalization of art both in theory and practice with an emphasis on art from the Middle East, as well as international global players such as curators, museum directors, art collectors and academics. The continued interest and participation in GAF over the last 10 years testifies for its role in sustaining a critical discourse on art globalization.

The Sharjah Biennial also established in 2006 by the Government of Sharjah (UAE) and organized by curator Sheika Hoor Al Qassemi of the ruling family is another visible forum discussing issues of globalization which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Sultaan Sooud Al-Qassemi an extensive collector of art from the region and also part of the ruling family of Sharjah is a contributor to the discourse on art globalization of the region through interviews, publications and exhibitions. Al-Qassemi maintains that many artists prefer not to be grouped

⁵⁶ Nada Shabout, ‘Contemporaneity and the Arab World’ in: Hossein Amirsadeghi, Salwa Mikdadi and Nada Shabout (eds.), *New Vision, Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, London 2009, pp. 14-21.

⁵⁷ Nada Shabout, ‘Trading Cultures: The Boundary Issues of Globalisation’ in: Jane Kromm and Susan Benforado Bakewell (eds.), *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization from the 18th to the 21st Century*, London/Oxford/New York 2009, pp. 281-290.

⁵⁸ Hassan Khan, ‘In the Arab World...Now (Review)’, in: Massimiliano Gioni, Gary Carrion-Murayari, and Natalie Bell, *Here and Elsewhere*, exhibition catalogue (New Museum), New York, New York 2013, p.

⁵⁹ Till Fellrath, ‘Contemporary Arab Art: A Case of Identity Theft?’ in: Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath (eds.), *Told, Untold, Retold, 23 Stories of Journeys Through Time and Space*, Milan 2014, Exhibition Catalogue Doha 2015 pp.60-61.

into a regional categorization, working as global artists. He does feel that it is essential to have a minimal knowledge of a region's modern or contemporary history in order to fully understand a work. One of the biggest impediments to globalization of the marketplace beyond the region is that relatively low number of art critics and writers who can critically evaluate exhibitions, curators and artworks. He also believes it is optimal to create dialogues between different types of arts sharing a common goal, for example the visual industry with the music industry, literature and the film industry. He feels that personal contact with contemporary artists helps to create understanding of their artwork.⁶⁰ Contributing to the global exposure of art from the region, Al Qassemi has exhibited part of his extensive collection at Whitechapel Gallery in London in an exhibition in four separate displays over sixteen months, 2015-2016.⁶¹

In conclusion, it appears that the discourse around globalization and art is prevalent in the Arab Peninsula and comprises various strands of critical thought ranging from post-colonial concerns to a full embrace of the globalized art world and the Arab world's part in it. The ideology of the art system establishment firmly in place and the full participation in the system by artists and collectors alike, points towards this latter dominant discourse of full participation in the art system. The components of the art system model will be analyzed in the next two chapters beginning with a dominant party - the Government.

⁶⁰ Somhegyi, (see note 45), p. 132

⁶¹ Omar Kholeif (ed.), *Imperfect Chronology, Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary: Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation*, Munich/London/New York 2015.

Chapter 4. The Government and Art of the Gulf Peninsula: A helping hand or a hindrance?

The role of government in the art world of the Gulf States is particularly relevant to the art world model, due to its dominant role in society through the theocratic ruling system of Saudi Arabia as well as the conservative governments of the various Emirates and Qatar.

In general, governments worldwide participate in the production and distribution of art within their borders through legislative framework for the art world to operate in, including artists, audiences and distribution channels. This participation comes in several forms: cultural development and stimulation; intellectual property rights; and protection of economic rights, all of which can be seen as positive. On the flip side of the coin, less desirable is state intervention by the encouragement of art production as a form of propaganda; and/or censorship of art works deemed blasphemous and/or contrary to the desired image of state and its leaders.⁶²

On the positive side, Government support of the arts comes in several forms: art school education, building of museums and institutions to display art; and financial support through acquisitions, grants and subsidies as well as providing studios to budding artists. Several dominant (state-) institutions on the Arabian Peninsula to stimulate cultural development include: the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA); and in the UAE, the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Cultural Authority as well as the Sharjah Department of Culture and Information. There are no similar large scale government programs in Saudi Arabia.

The Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) was launched in 2008 by the ruler of Dubai to play a critical part in achieving the vision of the Dubai Strategic Plan 2021 to establish the city as a vibrant, global Arabian metropolis shaping culture and arts in the region and the world.⁶³ Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) regulates, develops and promotes the Emirate of Abu Dhabi as an inspired, authentic and diverse global destination, with the aim of supporting Abu Dhabi's evolution into a world-class, sustainable tourist destination. As Dubai, Abu Dhabi has a long term vision and plan to contribute to economic diversification, both locally and internationally wishing to become a leading global arts and cultural hub. To this end they have announced a diverse array of museums and cultural platforms in the Saadiyat Cultural District, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. However, to date there have been major delays and controversies surrounding the building of this cultural oasis which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Contrasting somewhat to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the sister Emirate of

⁶² Becker (see note 22), pp. 165-191.

⁶³ Government of Dubai, Culture <http://www.dubaiculture.gov.ae/en/>

Sharjah claims to focus on developing the inherent artistic sense of the population. The projects cover conservation of cultural heritage, active interaction with cultures across the world, construction of museums and the other cultural, scientific and artistic centers, and the setting up of a television satellite channel. There are regular cultural events such as art workshops and courses, exhibitions, lectures, seminars and literature and heritage forums.⁶⁴ The Sharjah Biennial was established in 2004 and is organized under the auspices of the Sharjah Art Foundation and will be discussed in a later chapter. The Qatar Museums Authority also develops their programs in accordance with a long term cultural vision and describe their role as a “cultural instigator for the creation generation” from within, to create an understanding within the global cultural world. Reconnecting with traditions and growing organically is paramount for the country’s art sector.⁶⁵

Overriding this apparent benevolence however, are restrictions on freedom of speech and expression throughout the Gulf region, or censorship of the arts. State censorship of the arts is still strongly enforced in the Gulf and the wider Middle East with severe punishments, raising the question of whether these undermine artistic integrity and the expansion of art in the Middle East. However this is not to say that censorship is unique to the area, nor of recent origin. A case in point is the culture wars in the USA with reduction of funding from the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) in the 1990’s due to controversial artworks of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano.⁶⁶ Political satire and cartoons, music, film, literature and visual artworks are some of the various media which artists choose to express an opinion or ideology, sometimes with a call to action.

In general, the defense of censorship can be typified by four main arguments: protection of the “Supreme Idea” from actual or potential enemies or heretics; protecting the ruling apparatus against criticism; necessity in specific moments of history; and, for educational reasons given that art can influence moral, religious and political attitudes of the populace.⁶⁷ These arguments can be applied to the current situation in the Gulf region due to its autocratic and theocratic regimes. Artists adopt strategies to circumvent this censorship, often by establishing an internal- or self-censorship. Self-censorship out of fear of financial, cultural, religious or political retaliation is becoming more widespread.⁶⁸ Importantly, taboo topics or images are not only rejected by the ruling government but are often dictated by the tastes and traditions of the artist as well as the local populace itself. For those artists who do wish to

⁶⁴ Government of Sharjah, Department of Culture <http://www.sdc.gov.ae/en/home>

⁶⁵ Qatar Museums, <https://www.qm.org.qa/en/our-purpose>

⁶⁶ HH Arnason and Elizabeth C. Mansfield, *History of Modern Art*, Upper Saddle River/London/Singapore 2010⁶ (1968), pp.724-725.

⁶⁷ Stefan Morawski, ‘Censorship versus Art, Pro’s and Cons: Typological Reflections’, *The Polish Review*, 19/1, 1974, pp. 3-16.

⁶⁸ ARTSFEX: the global network in support of artistic freedom of expression <http://artsfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Freemuse-Annual-Statistics-Art-Under-Threat-2015.pdf>

actively resist government censorship, they may use metaphorical language or symbols decipherable to their intended audiences but also conceivably apparent to the government as well. Double meanings and alternative interpretations can be used as a shield against accusations of impropriety, if necessary. Looking at the statistics of an on-line censorship watchdog *Arts Freedom*, it appears that the Gulf Region is not particularly burdened with censorship as compared to other countries such as China and Russia which can also be described as repressive. A 2015 report showed that the countries of the Gulf region with the exception of Saudi Arabia did not come in the global “top 10” of countries suffering under violations of artistic freedom of expression. Both the Emirates and Qatar each had one case of censorship whilst Saudi Arabia had two. Arts Freedom gathers data on actual, verifiable cases of persecution and compiled statistics per country under the rubrics of repercussions for censorship ranging from persecuted, attacked, abducted, detained or imprisoned, censored or even killed. Reliable statistics as regards the prevalence and extent of citizenship are not always easily obtainable and many anecdotal reports of censorship are in circulation including the firing of the curator of the Sharjah Biennial, Jack Persekian in 2011 due to an inclusion of an unapproved offensive artwork in the exhibition.

Qatar has also been identified as a country with censorship practices with respect to the arts. However they do pride themselves on a public debate forum which was established in 2010. However no longer existing, the Doha Debates were a televised open editorially independent debate format free of government control with respect to content or audience members. The focus was a single, controversial motion, with two speakers for and against. Once they have outlined their arguments, each speaker is questioned by the Chairman and the discussion is then opened up to the audience for questions followed by a final electronic vote. The question of censorship and its impact on the arts was raised at a Doha Debate on May 12, 2012, where 58% of the audience carried the motion “This House believes that censorship makes a mockery of the arts.”⁶⁹ It was a lively session as participants discussed a range of issues, including the frequent cuts made in foreign films and the blacking out of bare female flesh in Western magazines. The debate was particularly topical as Qatar and other countries in the region focus on developing and investing in art, yet continue to practice censorship in a variety of forms.

Internet surveillance is also a major factor in determining the openness of a society to exchange information, communicate within and outside the country and be exposed to new critical ideas. The Open Net Initiative identified the Gulf States as having a high penetration of Internet connectivity but also with close monitoring and blocking of websites, email and social media for political, religious, and pornographic content.⁷⁰ Again, this restriction has led to a high degree of self-censorship and possible negative effects on artistic freedom and creativity.

⁶⁹Doha debates <https://vimeo.com/42758668>

⁷⁰ OpenNet Initiative https://opennet.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI_NameofGod_1_08_2011.pdf

Restricted travel, especially for women, remains an issue. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, women cannot travel abroad without a male chaperone nor drive a car. This cultural practice surely has an effect on artistic professional development but remains to be documented.

The censorship situation in the Gulf region, although bleak, is not without hope. At a recent conference in Amsterdam the Director of Mathaf of Doha expressed a clear viewpoint: that the art should not be censored. The government should not interfere with the content nor display of art. He sees his museum as a place for debate with Mathaf open to all different political and religious views. A prominent Saudi Arabian artist on the panel, Abdusnasser Gharem, described strategies for avoiding clashes with the religious police in terms of “subversive art”, namely by remaining below the radar and thinking creatively. He described an action where he smuggled a dismantled mannequin in several numbered pieces to be reassembled in Saudi Arabia to function as a life model in mixed-sex art classes.⁷¹

In summary, it is evident that the role of government in the globalization of art from the Gulf region can be seen as both a helping hand as well as a hindrance, the latter with respect to censorship practices. However as one panel member of the previously discussed Doha Debate on censorship expressed: “You can kill the artist,” he said. “But you cannot kill the art. It survives in the public imagination.”

⁷¹ Seminar: *Contemporary Art, Islam, and the Middle East*, De Balie, in collaboration with SMBA & Amsterdam Art Weekend, http://www.debalie.nl/agenda/podium/contemporary-art,-islam,-and-the-middle-east/e_9781954/p_11742893/

Chapter 5. Deconstruction of the Arabian Peninsula Art World Ecosystem

In order to understand the art world ecosystem of the Arab Peninsula, an overview of the art market parameters will first be introduced.

5.1 The Art Market and its Mechanisms

The art market needs to be distinguished from the art world or the art system model in this deconstruction. Although the art market is a significant part of the art world, it is but one of several components of what makes up the art world and the underlying art system theory. In addition to the production of artworks from the former art world periphery which will be discussed in a later chapter, the globalization of art is also highly dependent on the art market or the sales of artworks internationally. This is for two reasons: besides the pragmatic need for an economic base in society, art sales are an acknowledgement of an artist or artwork's value and which can be measured in sales prices leading to a subsequent reputational impact.⁷²

There is no such thing as an art market as a whole, but there are hundreds of independently moving markets within the art market. Art is a real, physical asset (with tax efficient inheritance rules) compared to other asset classes.⁷³ Art is definitely accepted as an asset class with speculation in art investing. Pure collectors however feel a responsibility for the next generation and the art itself and generally do not speculate. Artworks have unique features which distinguish them from other international trade classifications and how they are bought and sold in the marketplace to institutions and private individuals. For instance, each artwork is unique with no substitute, even by works of the same artist or in a series. It is a very thin and illiquid market, with about 30 years on average for a piece of art to reappear on the art market after being sold. It is decidedly "big business" with over \$64 billion dollars in sales and attracts the investment community in addition to collectors with a love of art. Art is part of a global trading network with the most important hubs located outside of Europe. In 2010, following the art market "crash" of 2009 to a value of \$40 billion, the US was still the largest contemporary market but China overtook the UK. In 2015 the US remains the leader with 43% market share, followed by almost equal shares of around 20% each for the UK, China and the Rest of World. Globalism boosted contemporary art market recovery since 2009 and protected the downside risk of the art world and had it only been reliant on the US and Europe. The global art market is supply driven but also demand driven and also wealth driven as art follows where the money is. Growth in China can be attributed to new wealth as well as the fact that the Chinese market is "catching up" since until the end of Mao's reign it was illegal to own,

⁷² Clare McAndrew, 'The Art Market (Conversation with Hans Belting)' in: Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, Karlsruhe 2013, pp. 261-265.

⁷³ Clare McAndrew, *TEFAF Art Market Report 2016*, Helvoirt 2016.

inherit or trade a piece of art.⁷⁴ The Middle Eastern region was dealt with in a separate chapter of the annual TEFAF market report in 2008 and Dubai was identified as an art trading center with an estimated market value of over €150 million. In subsequent editions of the same annual report, the region is not reported separately due to its relatively very small size in overall figures as China became a global powerhouse on the art market. There is no comprehensive source of data on the art market for the Middle East as a whole, but auction results of international houses such as Christie's, can provide a market size estimate and year to year changes. In 2006, of the estimated €150 million for Dubai, about 50% of the buyers comes from clients from within the region. It is predicted that the future art markets will be even more globally diversified with six to eight international centers with many located in Asia, but possibly also the Middle East.⁷⁵

The art world ecosystem will now be deconstructed along two major axes: patronage – *who* are the influencers and supporters of art world outputs, both private individuals and public institutions in the form of museums; followed by the *how* or the means and systems in which the artworks are presented and/or ultimately exchanged between the artist and these patrons through the art market.

5.2 Patronage

There is a long tradition of arts patronage in the Middle East since the seventh century by governments, military leaders and members of the religious classes in all forms of architecture and art including textiles and paintings. Patronage shared many characteristics in common with European patronage but was indigenous and flourished due to its links with the religion of Islam, perpetuation of political dynasties as well as a universal personal need for recognition. This tradition continues today with contemporary art with the establishment of various cultural initiatives such as biennials and the building of museums.⁷⁶

Despite the political and social developments in the MENA region, the economies of many MENA countries have continued to grow substantially. For example, when most regions of the world were affected by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, Qatar became one of the fastest growing economies in the world, growing by 18.8% in real terms. The size of the high-income, high net-worth individuals ('HINWIs') population in the Middle East gained 10.4 percent in 2010 to 0.4 million, while their wealth jumped in a single year by 12.5% to USD 1.7 trillion.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ McAndrew (see note 72), p. 264.

⁷⁵ Clare McAndrew, *Globalisation and the Art Market: Emerging Economies and the Art Trade in 2008*, Helvoirt 2009, pp. 147-170.

⁷⁶ Layla S. Diba, 'Patronage, Art and Society in the Middle East: A Reconsideration', in: M. Amirsadeghi, (ed.), *Art and Patronage: The Middle East*, London, 2010, pp. 162-169.

⁷⁷ Roman Kräussl, 'Art as an Alternative Asset Class: Risk and Return Characteristics of the Middle Eastern and Northern Africa Art Markets', in: Olav Velthuis and Stefano Baia Curioni (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases*, Oxford 2015, pp. 147-170.

In the Gulf Region, there is a ready market for art sales with the rise of both new museums and the royal families collection activities as well as the increase in HINWI's. These individuals want to invest a portion of their wealth in alternative investments such as art, particularly in art of their own heritage. Art is seen as a financial investment vehicle by a new generation of buyers, both private and institutional, attracted by the potential of generating high returns and the ability to use art as a mean of diversifying investment portfolios because of its low correlations with other asset classes such as stocks and bonds and real estate.⁷⁸ It has been postulated that one of the reasons that the Gulf wishes to invest in art and culture is to counteract the loss of possible wealth due to the volatility of the oil market where a large share of the current wealth has been derived. Moreover, other non-financial motivations such as status, leisure, and being part of the global art world have played a prominent role. In Bourdieu's terms, the art market of the Middle East region enjoys a high degree of cultural and symbolic capital, due in part to its strong financial capital.

The study and theory of collection practices, although falling to a great extent under the rubric of museum studies, also has a number of contributions from the sociological and psychological spheres including Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard.⁷⁹ Some of the motivations of private collectors include an acquisition of status or cultural capital, national pride, establishing identity and in some cases political capital. Love of art may also be counted as a primary motivator for collectors which may be manifested through purchases and/or mécénat activities such as sponsorship.

As a fairly new entity in the region with less than a one hundred year history as nation-states, Gulf clientele are often seen by their neighbors as villains who have no history as compared to, for example, Egypt. In addition they are seen as a factor in the rapidly inflating market for contemporary art through their high profile galleries. On the positive side, the Gulf is taking a leading role in institutionalizing the collections of modern and contemporary art from other Arab regions who are subject to war, occupation and political crisis leading to destruction of artworks as well as archives.⁸⁰

The UAE is a relative newcomer to the field of collecting practices both public and private, and has a direct relationship with national and local identity. It has been postulated that it is not the viewing of artworks granting aesthetic pleasure that shapes contemporary consumer culture there, but rather the pure sensation of ownership. In Dubai there is a small group of important collectors who have traditionally been very active since 2006 and a younger

⁷⁸Kräussl (see note 77), p. 148.

⁷⁹ Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz, 'Introduction Challenges and Directions in an Emerging Field of Research' in: Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz (eds.), *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, Farnham/Burlington 2012, pp. 1-30.

⁸⁰ Mejcher-Atassi and Schwartz (see note 79), p. 13.

generation of art collectors has emerged since about 2010.⁸¹ In the book *Art and Patronage* detailed profiles are given of one hundred key private collectors and foundations from the Middle East together with photographs of the patrons surrounded by their collections.⁸² An analysis of the nationalities of the private patrons shows that 33% of the patrons hail from a Gulf country indicating the importance of the region for the development of the art system. Following the Iranian revolution in 1979, many Iranians settled in Dubai and have attained a powerful social position through business and economic activity, as well as philanthropic and cultural contributions. One example of an Iranian collector living in Dubai is Raman Salsali, who has opened up the first private museum in the Al Quoz cultural district in 2011 to display his collection and also act as a cultural base for new and established collectors. It positions itself as a contributor to the development of the UAE as an art and culture hub of the Middle East and acting as a catalyst for a new generation of collectors.⁸³ Art Jameel, established in Dubai by the Jameel family, is a key supporter of the arts of the Middle East and partners with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London since 2003.

In summary, the Gulf region patrons both institutionally and privately can be seen to possess strong motivations and financial capital for supporting the arts with some notable champions. In addition nation building, specifically a desire to enter into the global cultural world through the promotion of art museums as a tourist destination is a strong motivator.

5.3 Museums

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”⁸⁴

This definition has been put forward by the International Committee Museums (ICOM) and is continually evolving in line with developments in society. Since its creation in 1946, ICOM updates this definition in accordance with the realities of the global museum community. In this section I will analyze and evaluate the role of the museum in the further globalization of art with reference to the Arab Gulf States.

Art museums play a central role in the globalization of art by generating local and international interest in art through their activities on several fronts: in the acquisition and

⁸¹ Emily Doherty, 'The Ecstasy of Property: Collecting in the United Arab Emirates' in: Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz (eds.), *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, Farnham/Burlington 2012,, pp. 183-196.

⁸²M. Amirsadeghi, (ed.), *Art and Patronage: The Middle East*, London, 2010.

⁸³ Salsali Private Museum <http://www.salsalipm.com/>

⁸⁴ ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria on August 24th, 2007. icom.museum

presentation of their permanent collections; staging or taking part in temporary exhibitions either on their own premises or through travelling exhibitions; and, international co-operation with their colleague museums. Other important activities in the globalization of art includes research, symposia and publication of monographs on the themes and issues of globalization as well as the publication of monographs of international artists.

Much has been written about the need for new museum models in a globalized world. With the rise of global art and an expanded notion of what art is, questions of context, social, cultural and political aspects may require new ways of presentation or an “expanded notion of the museum” rather than a mimicking of the current Euro-American centric model.⁸⁵ The idea of the museum and the concept of art history were born in nineteenth century Europe and since then have been translated, accepted and developed worldwide. Apart from the classical tasks of a museum in the documentation, research, preservation and presentation of the collection, new challenges lie in the presentation of cultural heritage of a society from the late antiquity to today, in its art, architecture and archaeology have to be addressed.

The relationship between globalization and museum practices is reciprocal, both have an effect on each other. Museums influence globalization most notably in the presentation and collection sphere. Collections of art both within the region and outside the geography internationally bestow symbolic capital on art works from another periphery location. In the presentation sphere, many museums around the world have held temporary thematic and/or artist exhibitions in addition to their permanent collection.

Using Bourdieu’s model it can be postulated that museums are active in the field of cultural production as vendor, beneficiary or repository of art works. They are an institution which conserves the capital of symbolic goods and also in the field of cultural consumption, as a provider of the site where individuals manifest cultural education and dispositions. Museums are highly consecrated sites with high-volume cultural capital, where the habitus of field participants can be transformed. This can be for instance through educational programs of a museum, or through economic capital in donating artworks for political capital through public esteem and recognition. Through being included in a museum’s holdings an artist can gain considerable financial capital as the value of their work rises accordingly with a museum provenance.⁸⁶ Being collected by a museum gives an artist and their work a certain prestige.

Inside the Gulf region itself, several museum projects and their impact and influence on the globalization of art are of interest. Art museums are a fairly new concept and have only been established in the Gulf region in the past twenth years. Based on a nomadic tribal family model, many locals are not attuned to visiting museums based on cultural objects as is the case

⁸⁵ Hans Ulrich Obrist, ‘The Future of Art and Patronage’ in: M. Amirsadeghi (ed.), *Art and Patronage: The Middle East*, London 2010, pp. 82-87.

⁸⁶ Michael Grenfell and Cheryl Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts*, Oxford/New York 2007, pp. 76-77.

in Eurocentric/USA museum models.⁸⁷ Education thus becomes very important for the region, perhaps even more so than in the West.

In Doha, Qatar a number of new museums have opened since 2010 notably Mathaf, Arab Museum of Modern Art and Al Riwaq Art Space both of which will be discussed and analyzed in turn. The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) designed by the French architect I.M. Pei has a large collection of Islamic art from three continents. Although not part of the art world model being analyzed here, the MIA undoubtedly plays a role in attracting visitors to Doha and its other cultural museums.

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art

Mathaf was founded in 1994 as a private museum to house the collection of Sheik Hassan's Arab modern art and as a residency space for artists in a villa of Doha. It opened in its current location in December 2010 in "Education City" approximately thirty kilometers outside of the city center and far from the other major museums. Its mission to collect, under one roof, works by Arab artists regardless of their affiliations, schools and styles, in order to preserve, honor and expound on their legacies.⁸⁸ Besides staging solo and group exhibitions of key artists from the Arab world, Mathaf also has a permanent collection of more than 9,000 artworks from the early 1840s to the present day, and further promotes the understanding of Arab art through talks, lectures and learning programs.⁸⁹

Due to its somewhat isolated physical location and situated in the middle of several large construction sites, the museum is difficult to find and reach, two reasons to explain its relative unpopularity despite its impressive collection and programming activities. During my research trip in March 2016 the museum was largely empty of visitors, both local and international. There are innovative education programs including artist led workshops that have proven to be popular and well attended.⁹⁰

Abdellah Karroum (Morocco, 1970), the current director of Mathaf, is an international artistic director and has curated many international biennials both in Europe and in Africa, as well as being founder of an alternative space for contemporary art, *L'Appartement 22* in Rabat. He is a participant in many international forums including the Amsterdam forum in 2015 as well as the ZKW forum on biennials. During my research visit in March 2017 Karroum discussed the

⁸⁷ Karen Exell, 'Teaching as Learning: UCL Qatar's Museum Studies Masters Programme', in: Pamela Erskine-Loftus, (ed.), *Reimagining Museums Practice in the Arabian Peninsula*, Edinburgh/Boston 2013, p. 558.

⁸⁸ H.E. Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali Al Thani, Vice Chairperson, Qatar Museums. He is colloquially referred to as Sheikh Hassan.

⁸⁹ Exemplary opening exhibitions were, for instance, *Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art, curated by Nada M. Shabout, and Wassan Al-Khudhairi*; and *Interventions: A Dialogue between the Modern and the Contemporary*, curated by Nada M. Shabout and Deena Chalabi, 2010.

⁹⁰ Michelle Dezember, 'Artist Encounters: Artist-led Interpretive Programs and Inclusionary Practices' in: Pamela Erskine-Loftus, (ed.), *Reimagining Museums Practice in the Arabian Peninsula*, Edinburgh/Boston 2013, pp. 570-611.

importance of the collection for the region as well as the need to train and educate Qatari nationals in the art historical and museum worlds.

A major project of Mathaf is a research and archival project entitled *The Mathaf Encyclopedia of Modern Art and the Arab world* was initiated to provide an online, bilingual, multimedia and peer-reviewed resource to scholars and researchers on Arab modern artists and their work. Its aim is to encourage multiple perspectives on modernism in the Arab world and its development through the provision and exchange of detailed information on artists of Arabic origin including exhibitions, artworks, prizes and literature.⁹¹

It is questionable whether Mathaf has the desire or aim to be a global museum, instead preferring to be an Arab museum for local audiences, or to restore a pan-Arab artistic identity in the region which had declined in the 1990s and 2000s. According to the founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation: “Mathaf, it seems, has given Arab artists an address and a sense of belonging to a greater family.”⁹² In March 2016 however, Mathaf loaned part of its collection to Banco Santander Madrid for an exhibition entitled *Looking at the World Around You* with more than 160 works from 34 artists with themes such as historical narrative, memory and identity, and problems and changes affecting the Arab world.⁹³ This exhibition outside of Qatar would seem to be a step towards the globalization of the presentation of Arab art from a local collection.

Al Riwaq Art Space

A second important venue in Doha for the display of contemporary art is AL Riwaq, a non-collecting exhibition space built in 2010, not far from the Museum of Islamic Art on the seaside location. It exhibits global artists such as Damien Hirst, Takashi Murakami and Luc Tuymans but not only limited to the major artists of the globalized Western world. For example in March 2016, a major exhibition was held of fifteen contemporary Chinese artists curated by internationally acclaimed New York based Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang, entitled “What About the Art? Contemporary Art from China”, part of the Qatar-China 2016 Year of Culture. This exhibition together with an increase of display of art from the Middle East at Chinese museums, galleries and biennials may be symptomatic of a global re-orientation from artistic ties to the

⁹¹At the moment the Encyclopedia is limited to artists from Mathaf’s permanent collection but will be expanded in subsequent phases. There is a small team of in-house research staff who support the academic researchers and translators under the auspices of an external editorial board. It is an intensive collaborative project consuming time resources – at the moment there are only approximately forty five artists currently included in the database – all with high quality standards. <http://www.encyclopedia.mathaf.org.qa/en/Pages/About.aspx>

⁹² Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi, *The Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar, Can Mathaf Restore a Pan-Arab Artistic Identity?*

<https://en.qantara.de/content/the-arab-museum-of-modern-art-in-qatar-can-mathaf-restore-a-pan-arab-artistic-identity>

⁹³ The Art Daily, <http://artdaily.com/news/84971/World-s-largest-collection-of-modern-and-contemporary-Arab-art-visits-Spain-#.WRHqWNGM2w>

West to include an East-East alignment. Previously art collaboration between the two regions was a rare occurrence due to negative stereotypes of Islamic peoples with the Han Chinese, as well as the subject content of politics and religion, themes which are major taboos in China.⁹⁴

Qatar is also known for its patronage of the arts through the international acquisitions and collections of the Sheika Al Mayassi al Thani, sister of the country's current emir. Educated in the United States and Paris, she has played a major role in the international art world, both by hosting major exhibitions and commissioning public works of public art by internationally recognized artists such as Richard Serra. A *Ted Talk* in 2010 expounded on the theme of "globalizing the local and localizing the global", indicating the key role of the ruling family in the globalization issue. She is also Chairperson of the Qatar Museums Authority operating the above named museum spaces with the goal to serve as symbols of Qatar's innovation and openness to the outside world and helping transform the country from a "carbon economy" to a "knowledge economy". The major criticism of these efforts have evolved around the balance between importing of international art and content rather than developing the local art scene. One initiative to this end is the new *Firestation: Artists in Residence* program (visited in 2016) for hosting residencies of Doha-based and international artists. This program however is limited to artists who are already resident in Doha which severely limits the global exchange of ideas and cross-fertilization. There are also plans for a new museum to be built on the site of the former Qatar flour mills to be converted into art gallery and exhibition space. This space is widely rumored to be the future home of the royal family's collection of primarily Western modern and contemporary art.⁹⁵

In Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, two museums are currently being built based on a franchise model from established Western museums: The Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Both announced in 2006 their intention to build branches of these world famous museums. There have been considerable delays in their construction and neither one has yet been opened.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi

Louvre Abu Dhabi, expected to open in 2017, is a universal museum developed in collaboration with Agence France-Muséums. It is positioned as a product of the 18th century Enlightenment in Europe, playing an important social role in United Arab Emirates. The museum will present major objects from the fields of archaeology, fine arts and decorative arts representing all regions, periods, including contemporary art and the narrative of art history. One of its stated goals to provide a comprehensive global history of art, as an alternative to the current vision currently propagated by museums. Agence France-Muséums will provide their savoir-faire in

⁹⁴Lisa Movius, 'China's new Silk Road leads west to Middle East', *The Art Newspaper*, 11 November 2016. <http://theartnewspaper.com/news/china-s-new-silk-road-leads-west-to-middle-east/>

⁹⁵ Grace Murray, "Emerging Art Center: Doha, Qatar" in: John Zarobell (ed.), *Art and the Global Economy*, Oakland 2017, pp. 161-167.

developing the national collection, loaning works for the permanent galleries and exhibitions during the first ten years. Its location in Abu Dhabi reflects the city's position at crossroads of east and west, and its vital role in the days of the Silk Route.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi (see fig. 3) is built on Saadiyat (which means "happiness" in Arabic) which will be neighbors with the Zayed National Museum and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the latter yet to be constructed. These museums, designed by Pritzker Prize winners such as Jean Nouvel and Frank Gehry, will be part of a larger development of residences, business, leisure and hospitality. Saadiyat is located off the coast of Abu Dhabi on a natural island about ten kilometers from the City Centre.



Fig. 3. Louvre Abu Dhabi, architect Jean Nouvel, opening 2017.

The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is steeped in controversy due to their importation of a Western museale model with some dubbing it the *McGuggenheim* as a parallel to the global phenomena of the chain of American hamburger fast-food restaurants.⁹⁶ There have also been protests due to the alleged exploitation and abuse of foreign workers building on Saadiyat Island by The Gulf Labour Artist Coalition (GLAC). Some of the artist signatories in the Working Group include Hans Haacke and Walid Raad, a Lebanese artist living in New York.⁹⁷ Most recently it has been reported that the previous director of the Guggenheim who was the "architect" of the global diffusion of Guggenheim museum franchise has postulated that plans for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi should be downsized or postponed, due to socio-political factors such as terrorism, post-

⁹⁶ Saloni Mathur, 'Social Thought & Commentary: Museums Globalization', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78/3, Summer 2005, pp. 700-701.

⁹⁷ The Gulf Labor Artist Coalition, www.gulflabor.org

Arab spring and a world financial crisis. However, the Guggenheim organization insists that the project is still on track and being further developed together with the local government.⁹⁸

Questions about how new cultural infrastructures such as these global museums are affecting tradition in Arab world are also being raised by artists such as Walid Raad. Raad critiques the perceived Western hegemony in his art work *Scratching On Things I Could Disavow, A History of Art in the Arab World*, an object-based history of art in an installation accompanied by a performance/artist led walk-through, with encounters among disparate elements (new museum institutions, financial investments, political unrest, wars, individual and collective artistic practices), currently happening in the Middle East. It is a critique that cultural tourism has become an instrument of economic growth and power. Raad's project considers the ideological, economic and political dimensions of this phenomenon to ask whether and how culture and tradition in the Arab world may have been affected, materially and immaterially, by recent emergence in the Arab world of new infrastructures for the visual arts—art fairs, biennials, museums, and galleries—and how economic and military conflicts affect art, culture, and tradition.⁹⁹

Sharjah Arts Foundation

Also in the UAE is an important art venue is the Sharjah Art Foundation, an independent initiative established to manage, preserve and exhibit an extensive collection of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art of the Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi. This is a similar guiding principle to that of the Mathaf in Doha, Qatar whose collection originated with the private collection of Sheikh Hassan.

Outside of the region, two museums of note hold major collections of contemporary art from the Middle East, The British Museum in London and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The holdings of the British Museum of contemporary Arab art under the curatorship of Venetia Porter include artists from Saudi Arabia and Yemen and she is a regular speaker at Arab festival events and contributor to art publications on the Arab world. One of the reasons she gives for her interest is that the subject matter of the works may possibly offer some insight into both the politics of the region as well as how cultural tradition is expressed in artworks from the region.¹⁰⁰ Other museums include the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York as well as The Tate Museum in the U.K. with a large budget

⁹⁸Cristina Ruiz, 'Guggenheim Abu Dhabi should be postponed or downsized, says the man who launched the project: Thomas Krens doubts the time is right for an American museum "with a Jewish name" to be built in the Gulf', *The Art Newspaper*, 27 March 2017.

<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/museums/why-is-the-guggenheim-abu-dhabi-still-not-built-thomas-krens-offers-a-clue/>

⁹⁹Anthony Downey, 'The Production of Cultural Knowledge in the Middle East Today' in: M. Amirsadeghi, (ed.), *Art and Patronage: The Middle East*, London, 2010, pp. 10-15.

¹⁰⁰ Venetia Porter, 'Histories of the Present: The Changing Worlds of Middle Eastern Artists', in: Hamid Keshmirshakan (ed.), *Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses*, London 2015, pp. 203-220.

and separate curatorial teams for every continent. In both Paris and Berlin there are specific Islamic art museums as well as the recently opened Aga Khan museum in Toronto. Although primarily displaying artefacts of the Islamic culture and history rather than contemporary art, they can be seen as also serving a key role in heightening the awareness of the Arabic culture outside of the region. In addition there are several venues that regularly hold important exhibitions of Arabic art such as the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the New Museum in New York both of which helped raise the awareness and profile of Arabic art globally. The Whitechapel Gallery in displaying Arab art from the modern to the contemporary had as its goal to reimagine the regional group show as a holistic examination emerging van art practices rather than a neo-colonial exercise.¹⁰¹ It is notable that in some very recent Press coverage in March and June 2017, two global initiatives have been announced by institutions from the region. Art Jameel, a foundation currently partnering with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London will also partner with the Metropolitan Museum of New York to further raise the profile of contemporary Middle Eastern artists and increase international dialogue.¹⁰² In May a new center for Arab and Islamic art in New York founded by a member of the Qatar Al-Thani ruling family was opened as it was felt that Arab and Muslim artists were alienated from a global conversation due to misconceptions and damaged cultural interactions with the USA and lack of dedicated resources and facilities.¹⁰³

Concerning the Netherlands, very few museums have any holdings from the Gulf region of any substance. There is a small private museum located in Amsterdam: the Greenbox Museum of Contemporary Art from Saudi Arabia with holdings of approximately 100 artworks of contemporary artists from that country. Although the Stedelijk Museum appears to have few holdings of Arab art, they had an ambitious 3-year project entitled *Global Collaborations* (2013-2015) with the aim “to generate a well-informed view on the developments in contemporary art from a global perspective” including the Middle East. The project included collaborative partnerships with art institutions around the world resulting in exhibitions, publications, symposia, and performances.¹⁰⁴ Other institutions concerned with presentation of global art are the *Framer Framed* in Amsterdam set up in 2009 after a manifesto written in 2006 entitled *Naar een mondig museum (Towards an Engaged Museum)* written by a group of museum curators criticizing the Dutch art world as being dominated by the ‘egocentrism and the dominant, western ethnocentrism’.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the Sittard Art Center in the 1980s was a

¹⁰¹ Kholeif (see note 61), p.23.

¹⁰² <http://artjameel.org/collaboration/the-met/>

¹⁰³ Institute of Arab and Islamic Art <https://www.instituteaia.org/about>

¹⁰⁴ Stedelijk Museum Global Collaborations, The Archive <http://global.stedelijk.nl/?lang=en>

¹⁰⁵ Vincent van Velsen, ‘Globalisation in Dutch Art Centres’, *Metropolis M*, 4-2014, *Regels & Taboes*, 30 September 2014 <http://framerframed.nl/en/dossier/globalisering-in-nederlandse-kunstinstituten/>

promoter of art from the UAE under the curatorship of Jos Clevers (1951-2009), an artist-curator who co-founded the Flying House in Dubai together with artist Hassan Sharif.¹⁰⁶

There are however potential drawbacks or cautionary notes to be made regarding the holding of special exhibitions of art from a geography or region. Critics claim that these exhibitions are contributing to the propagation of a region as “other” rather than as part of the international art community. Claims that the art is being ghettoized by holding a geographically based exhibition rather than a thematic exhibition were rampant in the exhibition of *Beyond Boundaries: Seventeen Ways of Looking* at the MOMA in 1990. The curator has since written that her intention was precisely to bring visibility to a group of artists traditionally excluded from the canon since this was necessary in that fairly early stage, calling it “Middle East 101 Phase.”¹⁰⁷ (The term 101 refers to an introductory course level in North American academic institutions.)

In conclusion, museums are a crucial link in the art world model of globalization for both their role in acquiring and displaying artworks from international artists and furthering globalization in this regard. Their educational role in a “periphery” region such as the Gulf States is important to promote an acceptance and understanding of contemporary art as well as the art history of Arab countries both within and outside the region. In Bourdieu’s terms, they provide a kind of “consecration” leading to an increase in symbolic capital for both artists and the government who fund the museums. The globalized model of museums in the case of the Guggenheim and Louvre Museums in Abu Dhabi also has provided social capital and symbolic capital for the region to join the world art scene, although not without critique. The Qatar museum model appears also to be adopted for local interests but as yet not entirely successful. It is a top-down approach spearheaded by the Royal Family attempting to create an audience for contemporary art and develop a future generation of globally connected artists. There are few if any grassroots initiatives perhaps reflecting that it is a conservative Islamic state based on traditional values.

Museums do face some competition for resource allocation and attention for globalization of contemporary art through the phenomena of biennials which will be analyzed in Chapter 5.7. This next section will discuss the two main channels outside of the direct transactions between the patron and artist: auctions and galleries.

5.4 Auction houses

Auctions are the main conduit to sell artworks in the secondary market, or art that has previously been owned. New markets such as the Emirates have highly developed auction house channels as compared to dealer sales which make up 10% of the trade. The compares to

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/where-local-art-takes-flight>

¹⁰⁷ Fereshteh Daftari, ‘Introducing Art from the Middle East and Its Diaspora into Western Institutions: Benefits and Dilemmas, in: Hamid Keshmirshakan (ed.), *Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses*, London 2015, pp. 187-202.

France with a 30-70% split. However the traditional divide is becoming outdated. The idea of being a collector-dealer is unaffordable, most dealers working on commission as an agent. There is increasing competition between dealers and auction houses and boundaries between the two channels are blurring. It is maintained that newer buyers from emerging markets are tending to buy from auction first, due to psychological barriers and they may eventually migrate to dealers.

The presence of international auction houses in the Gulf region includes both Christie's in Dubai since 2006 and Sotheby's has recently opened an office there. Other international auction houses such as Bonham's hold annual auctions dedicated to Middle Eastern art but from their London offices. In Doha, Sotheby's has a presence but its artworks include many international artists as opposed to Christie's who focused exclusively on art from the region. Average prices also greatly increased by 260% from 2006-2008 with the increase largely driven by an increasing demand for Modern Iranian artists. Modern artists generally dominate auction values with an 83% of the total value. These figures are from 2008 but an analysis of the 2016 auction in Dubai shows a similar pattern. The increased competition of the auction houses on the contemporary segment both reflect and further propel the globalization and commercialization of the art world.

About 50% of auction sales are from buyers from the region and 50% from abroad. This is a figure which is difficult to assess but based on experiential evidence during my attendance at the Christie's auction in Dubai in 2016, I would maintain that the balance might be more in the order of 70-30 based on observations of dress and the social interactions at the auction where everyone seemed to know everyone else. The people I spoke with were from Iran as well as Dubai and I could sense few Europeans or North Americans present. An analysis of the works auctioned shows that 40% were from Iranian artists, followed by Egyptian and Lebanese at 14% each. The other Middle Eastern places of birth included Turkey, Iraq and Syria but all between 6-10%.

5.5 Galleries

Traditionally galleries concentrated on the primary segment, or representation of an artist and first time sale of an artwork, whilst auction houses focused on the secondary or re-sale market of old and modern masters. Auction houses have increasingly been moving into the contemporary market due to a by definition fixed supply of artworks contrasting to a gallery which has a permanent supply.

Dubai has an arts hub on "Alserkal Avenue", established in 2007 in an industrial area of "Al Quoz" to provide a platform for the creative community. Initially a cluster of twenty warehouses there are numerous international galleries, artist studios and project spaces. During the period of Art Dubai and the Global Art Forum in March of each year, the hub provides a full program of artist and curator talks, gallery visits and pop-up art spaces. Some

galleries such as Leila Heller and Isabel van den Eynde are prestigious and global with galleries in Dubai and the USA. However none of the galleries can be described powerhouses in terms of global galleries such as Gagosian.

In general, European art galleries are not global entities despite a professed ideology of internationalism on the part of dealers who claim the nationality does not factor into the artists they represent. In actuality, practice is quite different than the theory. Quantitative data from the representation at galleries in Berlin and Amsterdam has shown that there is a strong home bias with about 40% of the artworks coming from their respective countries. Of the international artists there was a strong representation of American artists, with only China and Japan as the only non-Western countries.¹⁰⁸ There were no artists from the Middle Eastern countries in either country. Although this data is from 2010, an informal survey from 2016-2017 conducted at various art fairs by the author supports this observation of low representation of Arabic artists in Europe. Only Krinziger Galleries in Vienna have representation of Middle Eastern art, notably that of Abdelnasser Gharem and Ahmed Mater from Saudi Arabia, the latter which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.6 Art fairs

Together with biennials, art fairs today are two of the phenomena that have become a dominant trend on the global art market. Contemporary art fairs have become events that are a microcosm of the art world with participation by all the actors: curators, galleries, collectors, artists and of course the artwork itself. Modern and contemporary art fairs have existed already since the nineteenth century, with the *Salons des Indépendants* in Paris as prime examples. The first art fair in the model as it is known today was Art Cologne in 1967, but art fairs have only started flourishing since the turn of the 21st century. According to the statistics of the *Art Newspaper*, in 2010 there were 180 art fairs rising to 300 art fairs in 2014.

Previously located as strictly commercial undertakings with the purpose of selling art objects, the new formats overlap to some extent with biennials. The boundary between a commercial event and an exclusively cultural event blurs. In some cities where there is a lack of public institutional support for contemporary art, and the gap is being filled by private organizations through the organization of art fairs. The fair has turned into a meeting point in which different professional players can come into contact with each other and exchange ideas: in short, it represents the “art scene”.¹⁰⁹ This art scene can be described as a mixture of art, (publishing, design and economics from other spheres) or alternatively a high concentration of symbolic, social and financial capital in Bourdieu’s terms. Some economic theory models in

¹⁰⁸ Olav Velthuis, ‘Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art, Why Local ties remain dominant in Amsterdam and Berlin’, *European Societies* 15 (2) 2013, pp. 290-308.

¹⁰⁹ Francesco Garutti, ‘Fairland’ in: Francesco Garutti (ed.), *Fairland: Explorations, Insights and Outlooks on the Future of Art Fairs*, Milan/London 2014, pp.13-15.

which art fairs are situated are *The Experience Economy* (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, 2011) and the “*Attention Economy*” (Davenport and Beck, 2001).

This is the positive side. However, art fairs have also been described as an art market revolution sucking up the local traditional art market and becoming a kind of black hole.¹¹⁰ The exclusionary practice of gallery selection committees creating a two-tiered system of “othering” supports this assertion.

The rise of the art fair can be traced to several factors: the convenience of patrons to have all of the major galleries under one roof (one-stop shopping), the opportunity of collectors to meet artists and other players and be part of the “art scene” at least temporarily; the opportunity of galleries to position themselves as part of the global scene; and the ability of foreign galleries to reach local audiences in a desirable region with financial capital to spend.

In the case of the Gulf region, the Dubai Art Fair, originally called the Gulf Art Fair, was founded in 2007 and comprises two separate gallery halls: contemporary and modern. The timing of the art fair in March coincides with the Global Art Forum (on the same premises) as well as the annual Christie’s auction and the Dubai Art Week in other parts of the city. It is a very global fair but also comprised of local galleries. The galleries from outside the region primarily displayed artworks from their home countries, which could be described as a globalizing strategy on their part.¹¹¹

In addition to the commercial galleries, Art Dubai has a number of not-for-profit activities such educational programs, site-specific commissioned projects and artists’ residencies, aimed at supporting emerging and mid-career artists’ and curators’ practices. There is also the Abraaj Group Art Prize with a cash value of \$100,000 for the winning artists to create a major new commission. This ranks among the world’s highest art prizes, for example the Turner Prize in Britain has a cash award of £25,000 for the winner. Art Dubai also provides curatorial training programs for young professionals which will help address the perceived lack of art criticism and local curatorial talent.

The Global Art Forum is the largest annual arts conference in the Middle East and Asia and takes place every year at Art Dubai. The conference features live talks, panel discussions and performances by regional and international thought leaders, artists, curators and writers. In 2016, the Global Art Forum theme was ‘The Future Was’, exploring the ways in which artists, writers, technologists, historians, musicians and thinkers have imagined and are shaping the

¹¹⁰ Yongwoo Lee, speech at ZKW, in: Andrea Buddensieg, Elke aus dem Moore, Peter Weibel (Eds.) Biennials: Prospect and Perspectives. International Conference at ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe 27.02. — 01.03.2014 http://zkm.de/media/file/de/2015-publication-prospect_and_perspectives-zkm.pdf, pp. 41-42.

¹¹¹ The Contemporary section presented works of 75 committee-selected galleries from all over the world including from the region itself. An analysis of the 2016 Art Fair shows that 38% of the galleries came from the Middle East, including 19% from Dubai and other countries of the Gulf. European galleries represented 33% of the galleries, followed by 16% from Asia, primarily India. American galleries made up 4% of the total. What these numbers signify is that it is a “glocal” affair.

future. The artist El Seed whose artistic works are sometimes referred to as “calligraffiti”, or the blending of the traditional art of calligraphy and graffiti or street art, was interviewed by Glenn Lowry, Director of the MOMA (see fig. 4)



Fig. 4. El Seed in discussion with MOMA director Glen Lowry, at Global Art Forum, Dubai 2016.

El Seed blends the ancient Arab art form of calligraphy with contemporary graffiti, painting images as huge murals on the exterior walls of buildings. He spoke of his most recent project in Cairo expounding on his Arab identity, tradition, and the future of street art as unifier of global peoples. He also produced a large body of calligrafitti work in Tunisia.¹¹² Another artist featured was Monira al Qadiri with her performance art project *The Colour of Polycarbonates* which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Another very new art fair in the region is START Doha launched by Saatchi Art Gallery together with the *New York Times* and W Doha Hotel in March 2017, on the occasion of the New York Times executive conference in Doha *Art for Tomorrow*.¹¹³ In Saudi Arabia, Art Riyadh was established in 2015 but is comprised primarily of an exhibition of fifteen local Saudi artists displayed at an art gallery.

5.7 Biennials

This section will focus on the relationship between one of the intermediaries of the art world - the biennial— as an important agency in globalization. Biennials as an art event grew exponentially in the 1990’s and are seen to have a key role in the display of contemporary art.

¹¹² El Seed, *Lost Walls, A Calligraffiti Journey Through Tunisia*, Berlin 2013.

¹¹³ Saatchi Gallery Start Art Fair, <http://startartfair.com/doha>

The following quote was the result of the 2009 Bergen Biennial which exhibited no art at all, but instead held a three day conference of curators to explore and reflect upon the history of biennials, their socio-political contexts and impact on artistic and curatorial practices.

*If it can be said that for more than a century museum and gallery exhibitions have largely been “the medium through which most art becomes known,” then it is the biennial exhibition that has arguably since proved to be the medium through which most contemporary art comes to be known.*¹¹⁴

The discourse on biennials has developed even further since this 2009 conference. During a 2014 conference at the ZKW in Karlsruhe, professionals debated the biennial format with respect to the theme of internationalization/globalization and its various players. In some respects the biennial is a microcosm of the art world model but on a temporary basis usually recurring once every two years, as the name implies. The biennial is a complex interplay between the artist(s), the curator(s), the governing and financing institutions and last but not least visitors. Biennials are more of an intellectual platform with no sales activities compared to a predominant commercial platform such as art fairs with some intellectual content. The biennial model represents the continuous efforts to invent alternative spaces beyond the conventional institutional system and outside of the mandate of a collecting museum. Besides being an exhibition format, biennials offer the potential for exchange and can reach new audiences, shape new artistic values, and trigger dynamics that lie beyond the art markets. It is also an opportunity to reach new and younger audiences as well as other publics who may be shying away from visiting traditional art museums. These diverse perspectives play an important role in the culture of biennials, as do reflection on biennials themselves. Curatorial attention shifted from the museum to the spread of biennials, which in many respects took over what had been the role of the museum. The striking spread of the biennial structure has brought about a multiplicity of concepts and discourses. While the biennial system is frequently criticized as a purely marketing instrument, it also provides a space for the critical encounter with political and social issues, for which existing institutions often provide no space. Clearly, the number of biennials has grown exponentially as a means of offsetting the pressure of selection produced by the art market. A multiplicity of art is produced worldwide, the platform of which is not the market and the museum, but the biennial.¹¹⁵

Since the first biennial in Venice in 1895, the number of biennials now extends to more than two hundred in 2017.¹¹⁶ This has led to a new generation of curators and art lovers who are creating a globalized art world. Furthermore also biennials challenge artists and critics to

¹¹⁴ Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal and Solveig Ovstebo, 'Biennialogy' in: Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal and Solveig Ovstebo (eds.), *The Biennial Reader*, Bergen 2010, pp. 12-27.

¹¹⁵ Andrea Buddensieg, Elke aus dem Moore, Peter Weibel (Eds.) *Biennials: Prospect and Perspectives*. International Conference at ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe 27.02.—01.03.2014 http://zkm.de/media/file/de/2015-publication-prospect_and_perspectives-zkm.pdf

¹¹⁶ Biennial Foundation, <http://www.biennialfoundation.org>

think outside their local academies. However, the biennial typology has not escaped criticism with many observers seeing the events as elitist, temporary, commercial and geared towards art tourism.¹¹⁷ It is this intersection of biennials and globalization which I will explore further here on two different axes: putting the city hosting the biennial on the art world map; and bringing international or global exposure to artists from a certain geography, in this case the Middle East. Participation in a biennial is part of the symbolic language of political gesture in the international sphere; it can signify re-entering the international visual arts arena, for example *Documenta* in Kassel, Germany in 1948 after the end of World War II, or Johannesburg after the end of apartheid in 1994. In this sense it is a kind of symbolic capital as postulated by Bourdieu.

The Venice Biennale is an important event for the globalization of art for different reasons than more thematically organized events due to its geographically organized representations. Each participating country has its own pavilion leading to a positioning of national artists on an international stage. The Venice Biennale attracts around 500,000 international visitors guaranteeing a wide exposure for the participating countries and artists. The Gulf countries began to participate in the Venice Biennale in 2011 (Saudi Arabia); and in 2015 (UAE).¹¹⁸ Qatar does not yet have a pavilion at this important event.

A proliferation of “Third World biennials” began around 1984, in non-Western geographies with non-Western cultures, for example Cairo and Havana. Work exhibited in these Third World biennials tend to be a local community of taste adjusted to earlier Western modernist tendencies. There was also a tendency to center the Third World in its own culture as part of a new global era intended to bypass Western hegemony. For instance, the Havana Biennial shifted from an initial focus on other Latin American countries towards Latin America’s relationship with Africa more than with Europe or the USA.¹¹⁹ A more pragmatic reason for the proliferation of biennials outside the Western sphere is the global production of art has massively expanded, but that Western institutions for the presentation of art have not equally expanded in number nor in interest.

In the UAE, the Sharjah Biennial was founded in 1993 as a government department and evolved from a traditional and regionally focused exhibition into an internationally recognised event in 2003 after being taken over by Sheika Hoor Al Qasimi, youngest daughter of Sharjah’s ruler and a respected curator and artist in her own right. It is now part of the Sharjah Art Foundation who produce symposia and exhibitions, as well as provides residencies, production grants, and commissions to artists. Al Qasimi maintains that the Foundation is confident in its

¹¹⁷Massimiliano Gioni, ‘In Defense of Biennials’ in: Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson, *Contemporary Art 1989 to the Present*, Malden/Oxford/Chichester 2013, pp. 171-77.

¹¹⁸Universes in Universe, <http://u-in-u.com/venice-biennale/2015/tour/united-arab-emirates/>

¹¹⁹Thomas McEvelley, ‘Arriverderci Venice, The Third World Biennials’ in: Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal and Solveig Ovstebo (eds.), *The Biennial Reader*, Bergen 2010, pp.406-415.

position within the greater global context being firmly rooted in the region with relationships with other institutions whether in the West or elsewhere.¹²⁰

Over the last ten years the biennial has often been staged around global themes such as 'Belonging' (2005), 'Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change' (2007), 'Re-emerge- Towards a New Cultural Cartography' (2013). In line with the international biennial model, the curators are drawn from outside the country (Korea and Japan and Great Britain in recent years), this year the curator Christine Tohme is from Lebanon. The biennial takes place over four different global locales: Sharjah, Dakar, Ramallah, Istanbul and Beirut with more than 100 artworks from all over the world. The title *Tamawuj*, a noun in Arabic meaning "rising and falling in waves", reflects the biennial's aim to cultivate collaborations infrastructures and strategies within Sharjah and the project localities. There are no other biennials in the Gulf States.

In conclusion, the art market mechanisms in the Gulf regions are in place and to some extent globalized and following the norms and procedures established by the Western market. Although still at a quite early stage of roughly ten years, it appears that the market players are established but still relatively new and small in size.

The new phenomenon of digital and social networks enabled by the Internet and World Wide Web, widespread since the turn of the 21st century also plays a considerable role in enabling the art world, including the market, to flourish. This will be examined in the next section with respect to the Gulf region.

5.8 Internet and Digital Platforms and the Globalization of Art

The rise of the Internet in the early 1990s has been heralded as one of the main reasons for the phenomenon of globalization due to the speed of communication and breaking down of distance for the exchange of financial capital. In the art world, digital platforms are also playing a crucial enabling role for the globalization of art on several fronts including communication, presentation and sales. On the production side, new forms of global art or digital art have been produced which may be described as "born-digital" art. Furthermore, the networked society and its implications is often an artistic motif both in finished artworks and as the subject of international exhibitions such as *Hacking Habitat: the Art of Control* in 2016. Digital technology has also played a major role in political protest, as in the Arab Spring protests which has been labelled the "Facebook or Twitter Revolution" by the Press despite the actual relatively limited usage of Internet by the masses. There is definitely however a new socio-economic class of young middle class urban youth in Egypt identified as *shabab-al-Facebook* and bloggers who

¹²⁰ Hoor Al Qasimi, 'Hoor Al Qasimi in Conversation with Stephanie Bailey and Anthony Downey, Global Contexts and Global Concerns: The Case of Sharjah' in: Anthony Downey (ed.), *Future Imperfect* Anthony Downey (ed.), *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East*, Berlin 2016, pp. 369-377.

will continue to revolutionize society.¹²¹ It cannot be denied that the Internet has a major role in mobilizing groups of people to voice their concerns which ultimately has a role on the modernization of a society and promotion of new forms of art and culture. For example, in Saudi Arabia a country which traditionally curtails freedom of expression, the Internet is helping to creating a more open 'culture of dialogue' and revolutionizing what can be discussed, initiated, and promoted.¹²² Monira Al Qadiri predicts that Saudi Arabia will be the nucleus of future artistic and cultural production in the Gulf region due to new communication technologies which allow people to self-organize at will and create grass roots initiatives. She maintains that "The Internet has created a parallel 'breathing space' to the extreme conservative ways of being Saudi in the world - and now the parallel space is definitely overtaking the old order."¹²³

New forms of digital art, or "born-digital" art, brought about through the Internet have been researched and documented showing the future potential of digital art as a medium for producing digital art which by definition is global art in its potential for dissemination.¹²⁴ For instance the Egyptian-Lebanese artist Laura Baladi created an on-line real time video installation emulating the saturation of imagery that news agencies and citizen journalists posted online and projected these images onto screens during the protests on Tahrir Square in Cairo. It has been preserved as both an artwork and archival record.¹²⁵ Baladi maintains that next to her traditional art of sculpture and installations, digital archival art will become increasingly important type of art. In the Gulf region, I have not identified yet any digital artworks emanating from the region but note that Upstream Gallery of Amsterdam were present at the Dubai Art Fair in 2016 displaying the work of two Dutch digital artists: Jan Robert Leegte and Rafaël Rozendaal. By the gallerist accounts there was a great interest from the visitors and they returned to the Dubai Art Fair in 2017.

In an analysis of the effect of the Internet in all its facets on the art world(s) of the Arab peninsula, the most important role is in the broad area of communication between artists and presentation of the artist and artworks either on their individual websites, Facebook or on gallery websites to name a few channels. The use of the Internet as a communication to conceive and make an artwork is especially relevant in the case of artist collectives such as the GCC collective as we shall see in Chapter 6. On-line publishing platforms such as Ibraaz, supported by the patron Kameel Lazaar, enable artists as well as art professionals such as

¹²¹Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*, London 2012, pp. 52-53.

¹²² Wided Rihana Khadraoui, 'Digitalizing Social Change through Cultural Institutions in Saudi Arabia' in: Ibraaz 010_07 / 9 December 2016.

¹²³ Monira Al Qadiri, 'The Saudi New Wave' in: Anthony Downey (ed.), *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East*, Berlin 2016, 010_07 / 9 December 2016.

¹²⁴ Melissa Langdon, *The Work of Art in a Digital Age: Art, Technology and Globalisation*, New York 2014.

¹²⁵ Symposium: *Vox Populi and the Syrian Archive, Public Debate on the Relationship Between Digital Archiving Practices and Activism*, Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam, January 21, 2017.

curators, gallery holders, museum officials and other interested parties to keep abreast of developments, opinions and discourse on visual culture of the Middle East.¹²⁶

From an auction or sales point of view, there are a number of e-auction platforms such as artsy.net and mutualart.com promoting and auctioning artworks on-line. The Indian art market was one of the first to develop an e-auction platform due to the unstructured nature of the art world players and entrepreneurs jumped in to redress this imbalance.¹²⁷ It does not appear to be a factor yet for the Gulf art world who have a well-developed auction infrastructure.

In summary, the Internet has been crucial in shaping the global contemporary art world and is a distinguishing feature from art world(s) pre-globalization. Its potential has yet to be fully realized but promises to be game changing, especially for art worlds formerly on the periphery.

¹²⁶ Ibraaz Platform 010 Where to Now? Shifting Regional Dynamics and Cultural Production in North Africa and the Middle East www.ibraaz.org

¹²⁷ Olav Velthuis and Stefano Baia Curioni, 'Making Markets Global' in: Olav Velthuis and Stefano Baia Curioni (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases*, Oxford 2015, p. 17.

Chapter 6. Art and Artists of the Arabian Peninsula and Globalization

In the following chapter I will introduce four different artists from the Gulf region with a view to examine some of their works formalistically and thematically in the context of globalization and the art world system(s) they are participating in. Their particular backgrounds and biographies will be considered as well as influences on their artistic practice. An assessment of their participation and presence on the global art scene will be made, as well as their perspectives on globalization of art. I will investigate possible influences of tradition and geo-politics on their art works and practices through their themes and iconography.

The role of religion in art production will also be discussed where applicable. Here the distinction between contemporary Arab art and Islamic art becomes blurry. Though in other societies religion may also play an important role in art production, notably in the pre-modern period, it may play a larger role in the Arab region. While in Western societies the self is the most important factor in an artist's choice and preferences for thematic expression, the situation is different in Islamic societies. The Islamic religion has formulated predominant parameters for individual behavior and individual expression.¹²⁸ Even if an Arabic artist is of a different religion, for example Christian (estimated 15% of the population), the Islamic culture in the region prevails on a daily basis.

Influences and inspiration from other artists including both Western and within the region will be investigated as well. Furthermore, in how far is the gender issue of importance given the perceived inequality of males and females in the Arabic world will be highlighted where applicable.

The artists which I will discuss are from three separate countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In the other Gulf countries such as Qatar and Bahrain there are not (yet) any international artists of note who take part in or influence the global art world.

¹²⁸ Fré Ilgen, *Artist, The Hypothesis of Bodiness: A new approach to understanding the artist and art*, Tübingen 2014.

Hassan Sharif (Dubai, 1951 – 2016)

The global/local father of modern and contemporary art in the UAE

Hassan Sharif is sometimes thought of as the “father” of modern art in the UAE who pioneered a process of art making in the early 1970’s. Most notably he continued to develop his work and evolved as a “contemporary artist” with installations and artworks not usually associated with an artist of his generation. His work began in Dubai becoming known with a small circle of fellow artists and friends, and gradually gained exposure in the wider Gulf region and later in Europe at the turn of the 21st century. At this time his contemporary work became very popular amongst art dealers and collectors of Arab contemporary art, jumping from a local to an international global artist seemingly overnight. A formal, historical and philosophical interpretation of his work was sometimes overlooked in favor of a comparison with his modern work and influences from other European artists.¹²⁹

His early years were spent drawing and he began commenting on the social landscape of his country through drawing of humorous caricature cartoons for publication in local newspaper highlighting the rapid industrialization of the Emirates. In the figure 5 below there is one such example.



Fig. 5. Example of published caricature cartoons of Hassan Sharif, 1970’s,

From left to right and from top to bottom: This is an employee just like us, we gave him this job so don’t get us some university graduate(1); Oh our merchants can even defeat the international forces (2); If we are studying in a civilized society... why are they not paying us a civilization allowance? (3); It’s better to develop people, not only construction! (4) 1978

¹²⁹ Catherine David, *Hassan Sharif: Works 1973-2011*, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 13-14.

However his views on caricature and commenting on society had changed in recent years. Referencing the cartoons following the Arab Spring of 2011 he maintains that they are full of negative irony and not solving problems. The job of the artist is not to solve political problems but only to reflect on reality. He stopped being a cartoonist around 1979 because of the inherent negative irony and preferred to focus on the positive in his object-art production.¹³⁰

In 1979 he was awarded a scholarship and spent five years in the United Kingdom, one of the first Emiratis to pursue an arts education abroad. Here he developed his interests in experimental and abstract art including semi-systems drawings. Returning to the UAE in 1984 he became a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society, he set about staging the first exhibitions of contemporary art the country had seen. He experienced difficulties in acceptance from the local audience, government and even artist friends who could not understand his work having moved from painting into installation type work. He also founded Al Marijah Art Atelier in Sharjah in 1984, a meeting place for a new generation of young artists. He held informal sessions as teacher and mentor in the atelier and, as not all could read or speak English, he would help them to read the art books he had brought back with him from the UK. Mohammed Kazem (Dubai, b. 1969), now one of the UAE's foremost global artists, was his first protégé.

At this time, Sharif also began what was to become a career long obsession with infusing everyday objects into his art works as "illustrations of meaninglessness". He would take newspaper, cardboard sheets, scrap metal, plastic cups, foam flip flops, spoons and other banal items and tie them together with rope or wire, thus stripping them of their original function and making a comment on consumerism with them. He became very cynical with the new world order, which he felt enslaved individuals to greedy corporate tycoons through a vulgar market mentality, especially so in developing countries. He resorted to the idea of redundant repetition in producing art, choosing the tag "weaving" requiring no physical activity nor special skill calling it the essence of localism. His wish is to develop new ways out of the ancient handicrafts and present them in a modern, contemporary visual, artistic context and aesthetic mold rather than as a desire to promote tourism or attract the media.¹³¹

In the sculpture *Cardboard and Wire* (fig. 4) we see composite natural fibers of rope, paper and cloth reconstituted as objects from our daily lives, colorfully wrapped sweets and loaves of bread and donuts set amongst construction rubble. He again comments on the mass consumption and factory line fabrication whilst referencing the art historical tradition of the

¹³⁰ Hassan Sharif, interview in Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, *Summer Autumn Winter....and Spring: Conversations with Artists from the Arab World*, Milan 2014, pp. 99-107

¹³¹ Hassan Sharif, *Weaving*, Excerpts of personal writings, <http://www.hassansharif.com/uploads/publications/39.weaving1374834539.pdf>

readymade.¹³² The earth tone colors used reflect the realities of the sand deserts found in the UAE.



Fig. 6. Hassan Sharif, *Cardboard and wire*, 1986, Cardboard, paper and wire, dimensions variable, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha.



Fig. 7. Hassan Sharif, *Jute and wire*, 1996: Cotton and wire 1996, Jute, cotton and wire, dimensions variable, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha.

Sharif was very much an avant-garde artist, as an example, he staged a one-day exhibition in Sharjah's central market in 1985 by tying pieces of string and rope around rocks, placing them in the central thoroughfare of the market. Although largely ignored by the public

¹³² Hassan Sharif, *Exhibition, Objects and Files*, 10 March – 4 September 2016, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha Qatar.

except for children and the police, he considered that this was a seminal moment in art history by introducing conceptual art to the UAE, and inviting audience participation. With this act, he also moved art from the studio into public spaces, a contested domain in the region.

In 2007, with his two brothers Abdul Raheem and artist Husain, as well as the Dutch artist-curator Jos Clevers, he founded *Flying House*, a studio and exhibition space in the cultural district *Al Quoz*, at that time the only contemporary art space showcasing Emirati art. At the time, it was the only contemporary art space showcasing Emirati art. Sharif's work also began to gain international attention at this time. In 2009, his works were shown in the UAE's inaugural pavilion at the Venice Biennale and one of his installations which was made of used slippers and wire, was shown at the Sydney Biennale that same year. Sharif was the first Emirati to show at Doha's Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art in 2010 and the following year at Abu Dhabi's Qasr Al Hosn festival, as part of a retrospective of his career curated by Mohammed Kazem and Catherine David. The work of Sharif has a large international following being represented by Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde in Dubai and Alexander Gray in New York. His work was shown several times in Whitechapel Gallery in London as well as major exhibitions in the USA.

Sharif characterizes the role of the institutions in the UAE in the art world as both nurturing the artist as well as creating an environment for the public to be aware of contemporary visual art not simply as decoration but as a cultural activity. The institution can accomplish this thorough research and analysis, experimentation and most importantly through the adoption of standards. The artist supplies only the first phase of the aesthetic and it is the role of politics, and cultural and educational institutions to transform the products into social cultural entities.¹³³

His views on globalization reflect his local orientation despite his global recognition. "You don't have to go somewhere to be an artist. If I were in New York I might have become a famous artist, but maybe not". He also stated: "I started building from the beginning, teaching younger artists, writing articles in Arabic newspapers. So I was fighting the conservative mentality. Now we have the Sharjah Art College, we have the Sharjah Biennial, we have Art Dubai and Art Abu Dhabi, and we have the Louvre and the Guggenheim coming, so there are lots of projects. I am so happy."¹³⁴

In summary Hassan Sharif was a prolific cultural producer and facilitator, moving between roles as artist, educator, critic and mentor. His deep roots lay in the UAE and after having enjoyed international art education for five years he chose to return to his homeland.

¹³³ Hassan Sharif, *The Aesthetic Phase of Visual Arts in the UAE*, Excerpts of personal writings, <http://www.hassansharif.com/uploads/publications/48.the.aesthetic.phase.of.visual.arts.in.the.UAE.1374834768.pdf>

¹³⁴ Hassan Sharif (see note 133).

His work evolved from caricatures to drawings and paintings, ending with conceptual art made with local materials and techniques such as weaving. His recognition as an artist on the global scene ten years ago was at a relatively late stage in his career but coincides with the establishment of art world structures in the UAE in that period.

Ahmed Mater (b. Aseer, Saudi Arabia, 1979)

Contemporary interpretations of Islamic art

Ahmed Mater is recognized by a cross-section of curators, critics and art dealers both inside and outside of the Arab world as one of Saudi Arabia's pioneering and successful visual artists. He has created a new visual language within the boundaries of his Islamic faith, culture and scientific training as a medical doctor. He has broken new ground for contemporary art in the Arab world, both through his artworks and his activities with the artist platform *Edge of Arabia*. He founded *Edge of Arabia* in 2003 as an artistic collaboration with British artist Stephen Stapleton and Saudi artist Abdunasser Gharem. Their goal was to connect Saudi contemporary art with an international audience and to give the world new narratives of the country which had been until that time based on stereotypes of veiled women and camel markets.¹³⁵ It is now an internationally recognized platform for dialogue and exchange between the Middle East and western world through free exhibitions, publications and public programming. There are now over 40 Saudi Arabian artists forming part of the *Edge of Arabia* network.

Mater was born in 1979 in Aseer, a mountainous traditional village on the trade route between Yemen, Mecca and the Red Sea. He was introduced to Arabian and Islamic art by his mother, a traditional painter and calligrapher and taught that art was a way to preserve his culture and religion. Later moving to a modern Saudi city with fast food restaurants and shopping malls, he began to question his conservative upbringing which led to his experimentation in art. Enrolling in medical school at the age of 19, he concurrently took an artist's studio in a newly built arts village established to support local artists by the then governor-Prince of Aseer, himself a poet and painter. It was here that he began to explore his Islamic and Aseeri identity in the context of the contemporary world. His double life as a doctor and an artist fueled his motivation to explore humanity in an era of religious, political and cultural turmoil. He cites Basquiat as one of his main artistic inspirations. He maintains that he does not know of any other way to explore his art rather than through his own life story, using the television antenna as a metaphor.¹³⁶

His views on globalization mirror the importance he puts on the local environment:

“It's important that today's artists don't pander to what a Western audience wants to see, because there are artists here who make work because they know it will go down well on CNN...it does not come from inside. Over the last decade, with the rise of the internet and satellite television many Saudi artists have been exposed to the global

¹³⁵ Edward Booth-Clibborn and Steven Stapleton (eds.), *Edge of Arabia, Contemporary Art from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, London 2012, pp.163-164.

¹³⁶ Steven Stapleton and Venetia Porter, *Ahmed Mater*, London 2010, p. 14.

media, which can be good and bad. Instead of making political art, or art about science or religion, it's important to include everything that surrounds you"¹³⁷

Three of his most well-known visual works: The Illumination Series, Magnetism, and Evolution of Man, will be briefly discussed, highlighting the links between the past, present and future and the local/global interface, as well as the Islamic religion and the geo-political oil situation.

Illumination Series – hybrid of the physical and metaphysical

This series comprise paintings with layers of rich color painted onto human x-rays, marked with religious symbols and handwritten medical notes. "An anatomy of faith in the 21st century" is how he described them. These paintings were later exhibited in Jeddah by the "Shatta" group, meaning broken up or disembodied, founded by a group of artists all producing radical works visibly breaking with tradition. The gallery owner was furious, the printer refused to print the catalogue but these objections were quickly put aside after very positive reception from the press and a new generation of visitors.

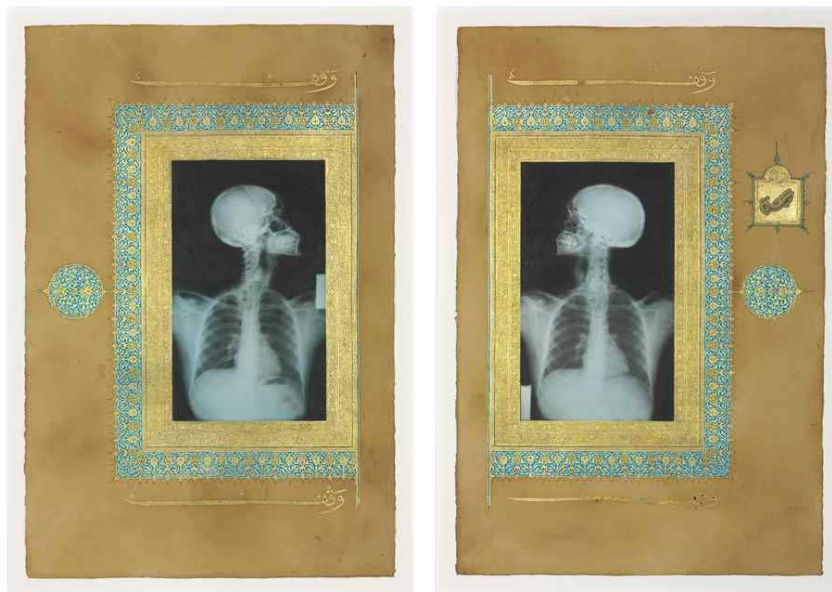


Fig. 8. Ahmed Mater, *Illumination*, 2010, Gold leaf, tea, turquoise pigment, ink, and offset x-ray film print on paper, in two parts. Each 153 x 103 cm, overall 153 x 206 cm, Christie's Dubai.

¹³⁷ Henry Hemming, *Interview with Ahmed Mater Al-Ziad Aseeri: The artist and curator is a key figure in the emerging experimental art scene in Saudi Arabia*, November 2008. <http://u-in-u.com/nafas/articles/2008/ahmed-mater/>

This particular artwork of the Illuminations series (fig. 8) is framed with decorative borders of gold leaf and calligraphy. The paper has been strengthened with tea, pomegranate and talc, which are materials traditionally used for treating the paper for Qur'anic manuscripts.¹³⁸ Calligraphic texts are part of the composition.

The X-rays paintings are a raw, authentic expression of Ahmed's world in an era of great conflict and seismic ideological change. The work which brought Ahmed to the attention of a western audience was *X-Ray 2003*, with the Ka'bah crudely painted onto the heart of a human chest x-ray. Bought by the British Museum two years after its completion, it was exhibited in *Word into Art*, a significant survey of Middle Eastern art in recent years leading to a personal endorsement from King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.¹³⁹



Fig.9. Ahmed Mater, *X-Ray*, 2003, Mixed media and X-Ray, 135 x 105 cm, British Museum London.

Further experimentation of the illuminations comprised replacing the geometric arabesque designs on the opening pages of the Qu'ran with x-rays, or adding semi-precious stones such as turquoise sourced in Yemen. A number of the Illuminations paintings reference genetic knowledge and unresolved tension between an objective representation of the human body and a subjective expression of faith and superstition.¹⁴⁰ Another artwork from the same series is displayed at the private Green Box Museum in Amsterdam.

¹³⁸ This work sold for \$38,000 in the 2016 Christie's auction in Dubai

¹³⁹ Venetia Porter, *Word Into Art: Artists of the Middle East*, London 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Stapleton and Porter (see note 124), pp. 52-75.

Magnetism – *aesthetics of the spiritual*

The Ka'bah is a cube like structure built by Abraham, the first monotheist, located in Mekka. It is the center of one of the most important rituals of Muslim pilgrims, a circumambulation during the mandatory annual pilgrimage to Mekka, the Hajj, prescribed in the Qu'ran.



Fig. 10. Ahmed Mater, *Magnetism*, 2011, Photogravure etching, 63 x 42 cm, British Museum London

For Mater, *Magnetism* conveys one of the essential elements of Hajj, that all Muslims are considered the same in the eyes of God regardless of their age or income level. In the artwork, Mater has evoked that feeling by using tens of thousands of iron filings placed within the magnetic fields of two magnets, only the upper one of which is visible. As such the iron filings represent a unified body of pilgrims all of whom are similarly attracted to the Ka'bah as the center of their world. He has expressed the roots of his fascination for the Ka'bah: "Our parents and ancestors would say there was a magical attraction in Makkah: something irresistible drawing you in to a spiritual state of mind".¹⁴¹ The four etchings are based on photographs taken during experiments in installing *Magnetism* in the artist's studio in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴²

Besides being an artist and medical doctor Mater is also a savvy businessman, having sued the watchmaker Omega in 2015 for appropriating the image in an advertising campaign replacing the Ka'ba with an Aqua Terra watch.¹⁴³ (see fig. 11).

¹⁴¹ Ashrai Fayadh in: Stapleton and Porter (see note 135) p. 95.

¹⁴² Venetia Porter (ed.), *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*, ex. Cat. British Museum 2012, pp. 252-253.

¹⁴³ <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/saudi-artist-ahmed-mater-sues-swiss-watchmaker-swatch-for-plagiarism-258653>



Fig. 11. Advertisement for Omega watches appropriating Mater’s iconography.

Apparently Mater never agreed to this commercial use of his artwork and sued the watchmaker for copyrights and moral rights infringement. He requested €1,337,500 in damages, as well as an injunction to stop using the image in France. An alternative, proposed but rejected, settlement was the acquisition of two editions of the work to donate to a museum. One of the tenets of the case is the alleged exposure of Mater to a possible *fatwa* and forced exile due to a perception that he is mocking religion and blasphemy which is a crime in Saudi Arabia. The results of the lawsuit are still pending.

Evolution of Man – *Between Past, Present and Future*

Evolution of Man (Fig. 12) is an x-ray sequence depicting an oil pump transforming into a gunshot suicide of a human being. It can be read as a straightforward critique of humanity’s dependence on oil and what “black gold” represents to those living above the reserves. A sentiment underlying the work is the (over-) exploitation of nature which will led to our own demise. It is also a statement of a doctor confronting life and death every day, a personal expression of the artist’s own fears. Mater has commented that he lives in a strange scary oil civilization where lives have changed completely in ten years.



Fig. 12. Ahmed Mater, *Evolution of Man*, Set of 5 Silk Screen Prints, 80 x 60 cm. Photo: Athr Art Gallery, Riyadh

What was crucial for the globalization of the Saudi art scene was undoubtedly the establishment of the *Edge of Arabia* platform which brought Saudi artists to the attention of audiences outside of the region. A new platform focused on the USA, CULTURUNNERS which carries on this tradition was established in 2014 by *Edge of Arabia*.¹⁴⁴ This global initiative is particularly valuable in the age of the new geo-political American reality following the 2016 election.

In summary, Ahmed Mater is a global artist firmly rooted in the traditions of his faith, country and the individual. He uses both traditional materials and methods as well as those unique to his region such as calligraphy. His iconography is based in part on his religious views and in a modern context. Through his artworks, he expresses his concerns related to the rapid urbanization of Saudi Arabia, and shares his trepidations about oil dependence with the next artist I will discuss, Monira Al Qadiri.

¹⁴⁴ CULTURUNNERS was set up by Edge of Arabia in partnership with Art Jameel, The Crossway Foundation and Azra Aksamija of MIT's Program in Art, Culture & Technology. Through collaboration with artists, media platforms and institutions, CULTURUNNERS aims to uncover counter narratives which inspire greater empathy across contested physical and ideological borders. A notable art project is a "road trip" set out from Houston Texas in a 34ft 1999 Gulf Stream RV, in search of common concerns and unofficial histories across one of the most contested ideological and political borders of our time - that of the Middle East and the United States. To date, CULTURUNNERS has traveled over 19,000 miles, teaming up with over 57 artists in 29 states across America; along the way, hosting hundreds of community events, and launching an artist-led broadcast platform. www.culturunners.com

Monira Al Qadiri (b. Dakar, 1983)

Artistic Nomad with Local Concerns

A Kuwaiti national, Al Qadiri was born in Senegal in a diplomatic and artist family, returning to Kuwait for her education and moving to Japan on her own at the age of 16 for university and post-graduate work in art theory and media. Her mother, Thuraya Al-Baqsami is also an artist, who started producing paintings and prints in the 1960s centered on female empowerment and rights. She showed her work worldwide and was a major influence on her daughter Monira.

Al Qadiri is now living in Beirut but is temporarily in Amsterdam for a 2 year residency at the *Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten*. Although her biography is international, her practice is firmly rooted in Gulf culture in terms of subject matter which could be said to be based on personal sources. Her oeuvre includes sculptures, performance art, video and installations all within the history and politics of the region. Her artistic work reflects grave political and historical ideas exploring petro-cultures and their possible futures, power structures and unconventional gender identities. She cites the Futurism art movement of the early 20th century in Italy as one of her inspirations.

Al Qadiri's inter-media art doctoral research was focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle-East stemming from poetry, music, art and religious practices. It is written in Japanese, a language she became proficient in during her stay. She does not want to have it translated to English or Arabic as she feels it might be mis-interpreted by Arabian government officials to her detriment. She feels a sense of anxiety over the impending collapse of her country's oil wealth, as the nation-state built on fossil fuels will soon find itself to be unsustainable as coal has proven to be. She questions whether there is a way to reconcile pre- and post-oil histories in the Gulf. The "petroleum interval" we are currently living through may or may not end soon, which poses the burning question of how culture will develop in the region once the oil boom is over. The work created in the first year of her Amsterdam residency (fig. 11) is an aesthetic visualization of two historical issues informing Al Qadiri's work: pearls and oil.



Fig. 13. Monira Al Qadiri, *Spectrum 1*, 2016, 3D printed plastic, automotive paint, 6 works - 20x20x20 cm each.

Linked historically, oils and pearls have the same dichroic color spectrum, with pearls on the light and oil on the darker side of the scale. Through the use of these colors and the plastic materials (plastic is manufactured from oil), she attempts to create an aesthetic and historical bond between the pre- and post-oil eras. This work is also part of the solo exhibition at the Athr Gallery in Saudi Arabia, a geo-political location where she feels is particularly important to show her work.

This artistic concept originated from a commission that al Qadiri received from the Arab Fund for Arts & Culture (AFAC) in 2014 to make a public monument to be installed at the Shindagha Heritage Village in Dubai, an old port with pearl diving boats. She chose to make a giant oil drill which she entitled “Alien Technology” (fig. 12) instead of the traditional camel sculptures or pearl diving boats usually found in public spaces.



Fig. 14. Monira Al Qadiri, *Alien Technology*, 2014, Fiberglass 3 x 3 x 2.5 m, Shindagha Heritage Village Dubai.

She made the sculpture entitled two weeks before the crash of the oil market, which has since continued to decline, testifying to her prescience on developments. In an impressive multimedia and dance performance entitled *The Color of Polycarbonates* which I experienced at the Global Art Forum 2016 in Dubai, the story of the pearl diving industry was re-enacted, again intertwining the national past, personal present and imagined futures of the Gulf area.

Al Qadiri’s work exploring gender identity includes the music video “Wa Waila” (Oh Torment) (208) based on an old Kuwaiti folk song depicting love lost, displacement, gender identity and death. The male dancers and females in the film are all in opposite roles, and the artist plays the part of the main (bearded) male singer. Another example of an artwork depicting the role of gender in the Arabian Peninsula is *Suspended Together* (2011) by Manal

al-Dowayan (see cover page). This installation consists of 200 doves made from glass fiber, with each dove holding a Saudi document authorizing women to travel alone. These documents for unaccompanied travels are co-signed by men, who are the legal guardians of women in Saudi Arabia. The documents have been donated by female journalists, scientists, artists and other representatives of Saudi society.

An important work exploring the role of Islamic religion in society is a four-channel video installation entitled *Muhawwil* (Transformer) (fig. 13). It is based on Islamic figurative murals found on electric power stations through Kuwait to convey moral advice to the public. Where once only calligraphic depictions were allowed, the use of pop images on public buildings such as transformer houses has become commonplace to reach the public with religious messages. This mildly critical piece shows the dilemma of representation existing between the ancient and the modern and the shift in religious discourse. This artwork has been displayed in several galleries and shows, including the Sultan Gallery in Kuwait and the Virginia Commonwealth University in Doha.



Fig. 15. Monira Al Qadiri, *Muhawwil*, Installation View, 4-channel video installation, 3 x 4 x 4 meters.

Behind the Sun (2013)

After the first Gulf War in 1991, countless oil fields in Kuwait were set ablaze during the retreat of invading forces from Iraq. The resulting oil fires created an apocalyptic terrain of scorched

earth and blackened skies. Monira produced the video *Behind the Sun* partly as a response to the docu-fiction film “Lessons of Darkness” of German film producer Werner Herzog on the aftermath of the war and ravaged oil fields. The Herzog film, although prize-winning, was criticized for being de-contextualized and romanticizing war with no political or geographical information. It was shot in documentary style from the perspective of an almost alien observer or God-like perspective. As a child Al Qadiri had experienced the Gulf war first hand. In her own words she felt it was “her war” and resented the mis-representation of the Herzog film which was also shot by a non-Kuwaiti.¹⁴⁵ She produced an alternative interpretation of the Kuwaiti post-war environment using amateur VHS video footage of the oil fires obtained from a local, juxtaposing audio monologues from Islamic television programs from the same period.



Fig. 16. Monira Al Qadiri, Still from *Behind the Sun*, 2013, Video, 10 minutes. Photo:

Besides being an artist, Al Qadiri is also a writer and gives lectures and talks around the world including the Middle East and Japan. She expressed the importance of the global art scene to her work and contemporary art in general, saying that one of the great advantages in living in Amsterdam is the proximity to the airport. Al Qadiri has been able to create artworks addressing the geo-political and religious realities of the Gulf region in a critical way without major repercussions, mainly through the use of humor. She feels that the repressive and censored atmosphere is not only imposed from above but is also part of the culture of the people themselves.¹⁴⁶

Al Qadiri is a founding member of the GCC Artist Collective which will be explored in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁵ ICA Off-Site: Do You Follow? Art in Circulation #2, 16 Oct 2014
<https://www.ica.art/whats-on/ica-site-do-you-follow-art-circulation-2>

¹⁴⁶ Discussions with Monira Al Qadiri, Amsterdam, December 6, 2016

GCC (2013)

Global Arabic Artist Collective Operating Globally with Local Themes

Consisting of a “delegation” of nine artists, the GCC is a multidisciplinary collective, whose name references the English abbreviation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, an economic and political consortium of Arabian Gulf nations. Founded during Art Dubai in 2013, the GCC creates videos, photographs, sculptures and installations that examine the region’s rapid transformation in recent decades as well as the Gulf’s relationship with late-capitalist consumer culture and celebratory rituals.

The collective was founded when several members were approached individually to work on a state sponsored art project. When their proposal—which referenced the bureaucracy surrounding the commission—was rejected, they met in the VIP lounge of Art Dubai 2013 and decided to meld their practices to address overlapping common topics. They wished to emphasize an anonymous shared experience rather than the perspective of any one individual artist. To this end, they also conduct interviews by email in one voice, rather than having one spokesperson for the collective. They cherish the vagueness of working without clearly prescribed roles to explore various themes. With their members living all over the world, their creative process employs a combination of online platforms and social media such as Internet, WhatsApp, Snapchat and other social media to share ideas. The collective meets up in person during different summits in order to concretize concepts and materials, as well as discuss future proposals. Each member continues to produce independent, autonomous artworks next to their work in the GCC.

The GCC is a truly global group comprised of artists from the Gulf region and living all over the world.¹⁴⁷ The GCC critiques contemporary Gulf culture through employing the images, objects and ceremonial acts that circulate in social and political spheres as raw material in their artwork. Through the guise of an inter-governmental body, the GCC investigates notions of regional and national identity by sharing their achievements with the rest of the world.¹⁴⁸ At the 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2016, the installation “Positive Pathways’ was exhibited commenting on the recent development in the UAE promoting an affirmative, “good vibes” lifestyle (fig. 17). The installation is comprised of a running track looping through an exhibition room surrounded by sand, in one of the venues of the Biennale. At the center of

¹⁴⁷ GCC delegates are Nanu Al-Hamad (b. 1987, Kuwait City; lives in New York), Khalid Al Gharaballi (b. 1981, Kuwait City; lives in Kuwait City), Abdullah Al-Mutairi (b. 1990, Kuwait City; lives New York), Fatima Al Qadiri (b. 1981, Dakar; lives in New York), Monira Al Qadiri (b. 1983, Dakar; lives in Beirut), Aziz Al Qatami (b. 1979, Kuwait City; lives in Kuwait City), Barrak Alzaid (b. 1985, Kuwait City; lives in Dubai), Amal Khalaf (b. 1982, Singapore; lives in London). An eighth member Sophia Al Maria (b. 1983 Tacoma, WA; lives in London) is a half-American, half Qatari filmmaker who recently left the group due to time pressures.

¹⁴⁸ GCC: Achievements in Retrospective
<http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/379>

this track are sculptural figures of a woman clad in flowing Arabic dress together with a young child, also in traditional dress. The woman can be described as a typical housewife from the GCC who in her gestures to the child seems to be performing a “quantum touch”, or channeling of the life force or healing. This installation is a comment on Dubai’s appointment in early 2016 of a Minister of Happiness to implement the government’s The National Happiness and Positivity Charter which aims to create a center and global destination to instill concepts of happiness and positivity in the UAE.¹⁴⁹ This includes government office set-ups emulating the California start-up culture, for instance conference tables doubling as ping-pong tables.¹⁵⁰ The installation signifies the current drive for success characterizing the Gulf region, an ideology of continuous self-improvement and the self as a product to be streamlined.



Fig. 17. GCC, "*Positive Pathways (+)*", 2016, Installation view, Berlin Biennale 2016.

The work of the GCC also comments on the phenomenon of globalization of financial markets as well as the intertwining of business and diplomacy. This contemporary globalized capitalism is reflected in homogenous aesthetics and opulence of the conference and jet setting

¹⁴⁹ DIS (Artist Collective and Curators), *9. Berlin Biennale für Zeitgenössische Kunst: The Present In Drag*, ex. Cat. Berlin 2016, p 290-291.

¹⁵⁰ United Arab Emirates The Cabinet

<https://www.uaecabinet.ae/en/details/news/mohammed-bin-rashid-happiness-positivity-are-lifestyle-government-commitment-and-a-spirit-uniting-uae-community>

crowd, including hotel and airport décor and even style of dress. However the GCC maintains that the trope of traditional Arabic wear is also employed as a national brand to profile the now powerful Gulf businessman. It is used distinguish the privileged “pure” locals from the expats usually on the lower rungs of the ladder. These tropes can be seen in fig. 16, where they transformed the façade and lobby with 4K video installations exploring the influence of technology and geopolitics on the Gulf region’s future.



Fig. 18. GCC, *The One and Only Madinat New Museum Royal Mirage*, 2014, Digital prints on perforated vinyl sticker, as part of wallpaper and sound installation, approx. 4.2 x 7 m, *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum.

A text proclaimed over the loudspeakers plays further on the theme of jargonistic bureaucracy: "This official high-level strategic dialogue shows the bloc's commitment to an artistic union under an auspicious occasion that marks the diplomatic protocols observed." Part of a video titled *CO-OP* (2014), the script is set to a series of images playing on a flat-screen television beckoning tourists and investors to a place that has wealth and faith in the future.

This was their first exhibition in the USA, presented in the format of a retrospective. The exhibition’s title, *Achievements in Retrospective*, is an intentional tongue-in-cheek play on the kind of international rhetoric prevalent at global summits. By use of the word “retrospective” for a newly formed collective, the title also implies prospective works that have yet to be made, an analogy made to the aspirational nature of some unfinished building projects in the Gulf.



Fig. 19. GCC, *Microcouncil*, 2013, Wood, brass, acrylic glass, glass, 12.6 x 67 x 67 cm, 2013, Barjeel Art Collection

In *Microcouncil*, owned by the Barjeel Art Foundation and displayed at the Whitechapel Gallery in December 2016, the GCC appropriates the gestures and self-mythologizing imagery involved in diplomatic proceedings, to uncover them as ridiculous theatre, as rituals with no real meaning. According to the artists this model of an office is also a representation of the relaxed attitude to work and the inefficient bureaucracies that prevail around the Gulf. Through humor and cynicism, the artwork evokes the feeling the ritual of work in government bureaucracies rather than meaningful results and efficiencies.

In summary, their global intentions and *modus operandi* of the GCC can be summed up by the following quote:

“Our work is more akin to a simulacrum of diplomacy—diplomacy as an international language, presented in our regional vernacular. There is an undeniably close relationship between contemporary corporate and diplomatic discourse; however, the latter is richer in pomp and protocol. Aesthetically, our work deals with the absence of labor, the import of foreign objects that have gained local meaning through filters of engagement. More than simply using corporate aesthetics as a static reflection of the "mundane," our use emphasizes the active discrepancy between the high-rise super-developments in the region and the absence and dysfunction of local labor”.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Interview GCC. Art in America, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/corporate-aesthetics-the-gcc-at-moma-ps1/>

In conclusion, the artists portrayed in this chapter have been examined with respect to globalization issues using monographs, published interviews, personal discussions and an examination of their artworks. If at all possible to group them at all, they could be classified as “glocal players”, prominent in the global art world but employing local themes such as religion, natural resources such as oil and pearls, and war with critiques on rapid industrialization, bureaucracy and consumerism in the region. The traditional materials and techniques of calligraphy and weaving are present whilst employing new innovative techniques and materials such as found objects, x-ray collages, 3d printing and multimedia exhibition decors. The artists comment critically upon some aspects of society, whilst celebrating their local roots and environment in an aesthetic manner.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

The globalization of contemporary art is a relatively new phenomenon, dating from the 1990s coupled with the globalization of financial markets and political systems. As such, art globalization has a variety of possible definitions and interpretative models including post-colonial theory; art history and the canon; and, the art market. My guiding definition has focused around the concept of “international recognition” whether that recognition is manifested in acceptance by artist peers and international curators (or in other words “being part of the scene”); artworks being acquired and displayed in foreign institutions; and, last but not least, market value abroad.

This thesis has analyzed the production and presentation of art works in the Gulf region using an eco-system art world model, supported by the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu with respect to different types of capital and concepts such as consecration. My goal was to evaluate its place and potential in the global art world. I was intrigued by the question if the art of the Middle East enjoys international recognition on the global stage as compared to other new art geographies such as China, and which factors contribute to globalization. This question was investigated through an analysis of a composite art world system conceived on the philosophy of Arthur Danto. Within a historical framework of the Middle East, I looked at the infrastructure of the institutions involved, as well as the motivations of the patrons and public, and very importantly the artists of the region. The focus was on contemporary art produced in the last 30 years but an examination of the place of modern art was necessary to understand the differences between Islamic art, Arabic modern art and contemporary Arabic art.

Although in general, the motivations, talents, abilities and desire to create artworks do not vary much among artists based on markers such as nationality, race, color nor gender - geo-political circumstances and infrastructure do play a large role in propagating the phenomenon of art globalization in the Middle East. These geo-political factors include a rapid modernization based on an oil economy and subsequent wealth; a preponderance of tradition partially based on Islam and its religious prescripts; and a conservative culture closely aligned with government policies.

To describe the Gulf globalized art world in general terms one could conclude that after globalization became a worldwide economic phenomenon in the early 1990, the art world globalization in the Gulf began to develop only 20 years later. The Gulf States entered then into what might be termed their first wave of globalization in the UAE around 2006 with the establishment of an international auction house, the re-focusing of the Sharjah biennial to a thematic focus, the launch of the Dubai Art Fair, the Global Art Forum, and the announcement of two global franchise museums in the Emirates – the Louvre and the Guggenheim. At the

same time these countries also began participating in international biennials such as the Venice Biennale.

A second wave of art globalization began on the Peninsula In 2010-2011, with the opening of major art museums in Qatar and intensive international art collection development. Additionally Qatar added art education of their local population and artists to their agenda as a priority in the years following. However, there is still a strong regional focus with an extensive collection of works from artists of the surrounding Arab countries at the Mathaf Museum of Modern Arab Art. The focus at Mathaf is primarily, but not limited to, modern art of the 20th century rather than contemporary art. Their interest in globalization can be said to have initially manifested itself in putting modern Arab art on the global map through academic study and canon-forming.

In the UAE and Qatar, globalization is primarily from the presentation side rather than the production of artworks. Contrary to the critics of globalization who stress a Eurocentric hegemonic model, the global focus also appears to be also east-east in addition to their regional focus. The governments play strong helping roles through their arts programs and a desire for the region to be a tourist destination, possibly as a hedge against a reliance on oil revenues. Developments are primarily top-down rather than grassroots initiatives. There is of course production of contemporary artworks in these two countries but this is not dominant as compared to the presentation possibilities through museums, art fairs and auctions as well as discourse through forums.

In 2016- 2017, a third wave seems to be rising with the art of Saudi Arabia and its increasingly international exposure through initiatives such as artist collectives and self-promotion platforms. In Saudi Arabia globalization is primarily from the production side rather than presentation at institutions. Museum infrastructure in that country is currently lacking and the arts education of the local population is not a priority. There are no auction or biennial platforms and relatively few galleries and art fairs. This is the same situation in Kuwait. The UAE and Qatar are both establishing museum presences abroad with institutions in the USA in 2017. Kuwait is also entering the international scene with global artists and collectives such as the GCC.

All the nodes of the art world system are required for globalization with perhaps participation in the biennial model being the most important dominant factor, being more flexible than the museum institutions in funding and programming. To reach a more general audience, the art fair model - with a related discursive program - could be more relevant than the more esoteric biennial format. The roles of the museum, biennials, art galleries and art fairs, although complementary and informing each other, are converging in many respects. The Gulf region patrons both institutionally and privately can be seen to possess strong motivations for supporting the arts of the region internationally with some notable champions such as Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi of Sharjah. In addition nation building, specifically a desire to enter

into the global cultural world through the promotion of art museums as a tourist destination is a strong motivator for the various governments. Outside of the region there are also the necessary key supporters of Arabic art such as Venetia Porter of the British Museum.

Several artists and artworks have been examined with respect to the art world model. If possible to group them at all, they could be classified as “glocal players”, prominent in the global art world but employing local themes such as religion, oil and pearls and with local concerns of rapid industrialization, bureaucracy and consumerism in the region. The traditional materials and techniques of calligraphy and weaving are present whilst employing new innovative techniques and materials such as found objects, x-ray collages, 3d printing and provocative exhibition decors. The artists comment critically upon some aspects of society, whilst celebrating their local roots and environment in an aesthetic manner.

The notion of the radican - those plants with multiple roots advancing in all directions instead of dependence on a single deep root for their growth – postulated by Nicolas Bourriaud serves as a useful metaphor for the art world system in the Gulf. The art world model which I have researched proved not to be a linear system, smoothly progressing from one node to another towards entry into the canon, as has been postulated in other models. One of the main factors was the Internet platform in all its social media variants. It has been crucial in shaping the global contemporary art world in both production and presentation as well as reception and is a distinguishing feature from pre-globalized art world(s). Its potential has yet to be fully realized but promises to be game changing, especially for art worlds formerly on the periphery such as the Gulf States.

As an answer to the research question: *To what extent is the Arabian Peninsula contemporary art world part of the globalizing art world in terms of its production, presentation and reception?*, it can be concluded that the Gulf region is a relatively small but significant part of the global art world with a great potential for further development. This assessment is based upon the region’s own ambitions witnessed by the surrounding globalization discourse in Chapter 3, the institutions and government support necessary to develop and sustain an art world system fitting into a global framework in Chapter 4 and the artistic talents demonstrated in Chapter 6. Positive reception and increasing international recognition is also prevalent as witnessed through exhibitions and acquisitions of Arabic art by collectors outside of the region especially in the USA and the UK, as well as inclusion in international symposia and publications. However, this last aspect still has to be further developed outside of the region. A word of caution is nonetheless warranted with respect to the socially conservative environment of the Gulf Peninsula which may hinder further globalization including (self-) censorship and its possible negative repercussions.

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