ART AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION
IN THE GCC

SUMMARY REPORT
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About the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS)
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Guided by the principles of academic excellence, forward vision, and community engagement, the CIRS mission revolves around five principal goals:
• To provide a forum for scholarship and research on international and regional affairs
• To encourage in-depth examination and exchange of ideas
• To foster thoughtful dialogue among students, scholars, and practitioners of international affairs
• To facilitate the free flow of ideas and knowledge through publishing the products of its research, sponsoring conferences and seminars, and holding workshops designed to explore the complexities of the twenty-first century
• To engage in outreach activities with a wide range of local, regional, and international partners.

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In an effort to explore the evolution of the art and cultural scene in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and to understand the complexities of these fields, the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at Georgetown University in Qatar undertook a two-year research initiative titled “Art and Cultural Production in the GCC.” Artists, cultural administrators, curators, critics, and academics were invited to Doha to attend two separate meetings in which they debated topics of relevance to the GCC’s cultural field. The research culminated in the publication of original studies in a special issue of the *Journal of Arabian Studies* (August 2017). This project builds on the available literature by contributing towards furthering knowledge on the prevailing issues around art and cultural production in the Gulf.

Much of the research in this area tends to focus on the rapidly growing museum culture and the acquisition of foreign art as indicative of Gulf states’ use of oil revenues. In recent decades, the Gulf states have been inundated by significant demographic, economic, and social changes that continue to challenge the more traditional customs and values. Rapid development has affected social and political institutions underpinning Gulf societies, as well as artistic and cultural institutions and their undertakings. Particularly in the wealthier states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), governments have focused on development of the art and culture sector. They are investing in state-of-the-art museums such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, and the Louvre and Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi, and hosting international and regional annual art festivals. Indicative of the emerging art market in the region, this surge of interest in the cultural field has prompted international auction houses to open offices in the region, and to hold annual international auctions for the sale of foreign and Middle Eastern art to prospective buyers in the Gulf.

Interrogating the literature on the Gulf’s culture scene, a main theme running throughout this project revolves around the tensions between local and international art and cultural institutions. There are a variety of epistemological tensions arising from the Gulf states’ investments in what are deemed to be “universal” cultural institutions, but which exist according to predominantly post-Enlightenment Western principles and practices. The supremacy of a Western-centric discourse, in both the arts and the media, often means that alternative histories and understandings of cultural practice become incommensurable with, and indefensible against, established norms of Western knowledge traditions. Thus, the papers resulting from this project deal with the contested subject of “authenticity” in the Gulf’s cultural scene, and how arguments of what is “authentic” are transmitted to local and international audiences. The majority of these accounts are journalistic, and often depict the Gulf region as a “tabula rasa”, a place devoid of culture and history, where cultural industries only came into being with the formation of the nation state—or, more tellingly, with the introduction of Western institutions. The notion of “authenticity” is a lucrative signifier, and one that is politically entangled in relations of power, privilege, and capital.

While the Gulf states of the UAE and Qatar initially channeled their investments into acquiring foreign art, they, along with the remaining GCC states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Oman have begun focusing on the curation of local and contemporary art. The developmental process of art and cultural production in these states have had different trajectories, but there has been a primary interest directed towards local contemporary artistic movements that showcase and reflect everyday lived experiences and perceptions of *khaleeji* culture.
ART AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE GCC
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Introduction: Art and Cultural Production in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States
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1. Authenticating an Emirati Art World: Claims of Tabula Rasa and Cultural Appropriation in the UAE
Elizabeth Derderian, Northwestern University

2. Of “Gray Lists” and Whitewash: An Aesthetics of (Self-)Censorship and Circumvention in the GCC Countries
Nancy Demerdash, Wells College

3. Utopian Ideals, Unknowable Futures, and the Art Museum in the Arabian Peninsula
Karen Exell, UCL Qatar and Qatar Museums

Lesley Gray, UCL Qatar

5. Reflections on Public Art in the Arabian Peninsula
Nadia Mounajjed, Abu Dhabi University

6. Contemporary Art and Migrant Identity “Construction” in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar
Sarina Wakefield, Zayed University
Over the past few decades, the GCC states have been strategically working towards diversifying their economies by translating abundant natural resource capital into other areas of investment and institutional infrastructure. The governments of these countries have crafted their nation-building masterplans according to the cadence of oil and gas prices and the rise and fall of wealth accrued from their hydrocarbons industries. The long-term unsustainability of a hydrocarbon-based economic future has become a major concern for the GCC states, and is one of the main driving forces underpinning the search for alternative modes of economic development—ones that attempt to create, then tap into, what is termed “human capital” in the creeping market-centric parlance. Towards this end, the GCC states have been making record, headline-grabbing investments in the fields of finance, healthcare, education, sports, and, as is the concern of this special issue, art and culture.

As relatively young nations emerging onto the global scene, the GCC states have invested strategically in the hallmarks of the modern nation state, and are defining themselves according to the visions and missions of their leaderships, many of whom, but especially those of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), are giving unprecedented importance to the cultural sector. Like so many other sectors of their rentier economies, art and cultural institutions are being created and promoted as state-driven industries, and according to particular nation-building and branding objectives that have been in place since their inception. State patronage of the arts captures the institutional significance of the culture industry for the national project, and as an integral force provides domestic as well as international benefits—both financial and reputational. For their efforts, Doha was designated 2010 “Arab Capital of Culture” by UNESCO, and Sharjah has been named as both “Cultural Capital of the Arab World” in 1998 and “World Book Capital” for 2019 by UNESCO. Both Qatar and the UAE, especially, are using the fields of art and culture as means of symbolizing their ambitions on a global scale, in the process influencing, and being influenced by, leading regional and international art and culture markets.

With many countries of the Arab world debilitated by a variety of economic and political setbacks, GCC nations have been using their wealth advantageously to carve out a space for their symbolic and hegemonic leadership roles in the region, and beyond. By taking their cues from the rich history of Arab cultural conquests, the GCC states have seized the opportunity to fill the regional cultural power vacuum by re-articulating the meaning of Arab identity through a revival of Arab-centric cultural products and practices. The success of the “soft power” of these GCC states lies in their ability to attract, accommodate, bankroll, and own some of the world’s most respected cultural institutions. Making waves with their competitive acquisitions, the UAE and Qatar boast a variety of international educational, sporting, and culture institutions. These projects range from fully- or partially-funded GCC-based branch operations, as well as partnerships with some of the world’s most highly-regarded universities, with respected international film festivals and art institutions, with renowned sporting events, and with international
museums and auction houses dealing in some of the world’s most exclusive and expensive artifacts and artworks. If cultural influence is taken to be a powerful component of economic might, then the GCC states, and especially the UAE and Qatar, have found extraordinary amplification of their voices through these state-sponsored projects.

Suzi Mirgani is Managing Editor at the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS), Georgetown University in Qatar. She received a Ph.D. in Communication and Media Studies from Eastern Mediterranean University in 2010. Mirgani is author of Target Markets: International Terrorism Meets Global Capitalism in the Mall (Transcript Press, 2017) and co-editor (with Zahra Babar) of Food Security in the Middle East (Oxford University Press/Hurst, 2014). She is an independent filmmaker who works on highlighting stories from the Gulf.
1. Authenticating an Emirati Art World: Claims of Tabula Rasa and Cultural Appropriation in the UAE
Elizabeth Derderian

The Arab Gulf region is often painted as a tabula rasa, devoid of culture and history, where skyscrapers and highways appeared overnight with the nationalization by many Gulf states of their oil industries, around 1970. The announcement in 2007 that the rulers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had contracted the Louvre and the Guggenheim to build museums in Abu Dhabi, their capital city, was met with incredulity and media accusations of buying or importing so-called “high” culture, seen as another in a long line of imports from the US and Europe.

In this article, I lay out a brief history of the development of arts initiatives and arts practice in the UAE. I then focus on claims of tabula rasa and cultural appropriation which are, at their core, contests over the authenticity of these initiatives. In so doing, I challenge ostensibly universal Enlightenment-derived paradigms of authenticity, by contending that the prevailing concept of authenticity (as a seemingly “homegrown” object or practice with an aura stemming from its originality or singularity) largely derives from the Frankfurt School, who framed capital as polluting the authenticity of art. In addition, I discuss the role of place and argue that in this context the concept of “cultural appropriation” is another form of the authenticity argument. The notion that a particular cultural practice is authentic is often deeply correlated with originating from and belonging to a specific place. Thus, questions of cultural appropriation are ultimately conversations as to whether an object or a practice is authentic, where it “belongs”, and who is allowed to claim that object or practice. I show how these situated claims of authenticity, or its absence, become a means to discredit khaleeji (Gulf) arts scenes and to reiterate the superiority and dominance of US and European regimes of knowledge and expertise. I also focus on the erasures that ensue from these claims, which reiterate a Bedouin heritage and further an ethno-nationalist conception of the state.

Much of the discussion that follows focuses on the UAE, my primary field site, but I also make links to Qatar and the Gulf as a region where relevant. In addition to conversations with Emirati citizens working as artists, gallerists, and curators, I also conducted research with lifelong and long-term UAE residents, carrying Filipino, English, Russian, Australian, Indian, Pakistani, American, Iranian, Syrian, Canadian, Lebanese, French, Iraqi, and Palestinian passports, who work in the art scene. Rather than simply assuming that authenticity is a relevant and/or value-free analytic, I ask: who do claims of authenticity (or its absence) serve in the Gulf art scene, and to whom do they give power and authority? After considering tabula rasa and cultural appropriation claims aimed at undermining the perceived authenticity of the UAE art scene, I examine the discursive labor these claims impose on the lives and work of my interlocutors.
Elizabeth Derderian is a Ph.D. candidate in the Cultural Anthropology department at Northwestern University. She works on politics of representation, globalization, and neoliberalism. She received a Fulbright grant to conduct her dissertation research, which focuses on the development of Saadiyat Island, an arts and cultural center with a Louvre and Guggenheim museum, in the UAE, and other similar cultural projects across the Arabian Peninsula.
2. Of “Gray Lists” and Whitewash: An Aesthetics of (Self-)Censorship and Circumvention in the GCC Countries

Nancy Demerdash

Enactments of censorship in the GCC region are not transparent decisions or processes. Since there are spaces of ambiguity and contradiction, it is crucial to caution against blanket statements; instead, instances of censorship should be treated on a case-by-case basis, since the various states of the GCC present differing levels of political tolerance for types of cultural creativity. This is akin to what the renowned Egyptian feminist author Nawal El Saadawi refers to as being marked on the “gray list” of the Egyptian regime—effectively a mode of indirect repression that results from the exclusionary tactics utilized by authoritarian regimes to excise and ban writers and artists from all forms of public discourse (e.g. publishing houses, television, radio, magazines and newspapers, etc.). This gray site occupies that nether-space where artists, writers, and intellectuals are neither actively imprisoned nor entirely free to circulate their work. Strategies of circumventing, and therefore undermining, censorship apparatuses do, however, exist on an unprecedented level, yielding a potent and radical aesthetics of resistance through artists’ outward espousal of a stance of ambivalence. It is in these instances that the “gray lists” often become productive spaces.

The political structure of authoritarian regimes and the religious and cultural frameworks mutually reinforce each other and, as with artistic freedom, these structures are fundamentally integrated. Even so, there are spaces of ambiguity and contradiction, and it is crucial to caution against blanket statements, and instead treat instances of censorship individually, since each GCC state presents differing levels of political tolerance for different types of cultural creativity. What this article seeks to examine specifically are these gray areas, or “gray lists”—spaces in which the lines of transgression are muddled and the discourses are rendered mutable. Artistic censorship in the GCC is not a black and white affair. Rather, the processes by which works receive endorsement and acceptance, or scrutiny and rejection, present (through a combination of private sponsors, patrons, or the public) a complex fabric of actors beyond the state apparatus and extending to institutions and organizations. But for each entity within this network of actors and interlocutors, public(s) are envisioned. By virtue of their precarious financial dependence on individuals and institutions with weight and clout, artists find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place. The actual legal structures and disciplinary mechanisms of censorship—the ideologies, political agendas, the information machines of communication and technology—are less the subject of this article than are the interventions and circumventions of artists, against and within these established powers of authority.

Inasmuch as this paper examines suppression and artists’ collusion in, or subversion of, such tactics and polemics, it also analyzes the outlets through which aesthetic alternatives arise. It seeks to illuminate a more nuanced perspective of artistic freedom and aesthetic choices with respect to the cultural spaces, institutions, and biennials of the GCC states. Though this is by no means an exhaustive set of questions, the following lines of inquiry guide this study and could be developed further in future research: In what ways can one define artistic freedom generally within the GCC countries? How do artists of the Gulf engage
with the region’s religious customs and everyday politics? In what ways do such artists wittingly self-censor, thus effectively depoliticizing their practice? Does censorship ever yield a robust creativity? How does the intended viewership of an artist inform his or her production? If the Arab world’s art has, in recent years (following the so-called Arab Spring), become increasingly situated or defined as “activist”, “political”, or “revolutionary”, where is the place of these types of art forms in the Arab Gulf states? Or perhaps a better question would ask, what shape does this engagement with unstable or transgressive content take? What are the aesthetics of art forms that cannot be openly dissident or subversive in these countries?

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3. Utopian Ideals, Unknowable Futures, and the Art Museum in the Arabian Peninsula
Karen Exell

A sense of unreality pervades the contemporary experience of living in the wealthier Gulf states whose inhabitants occupy a liminal zone between a traditional past and a planned future, both of which represent utopias of a very different kind. Central to the near future of states such as Qatar and Abu Dhabi are spectacular art museums, glossed as tools of intercultural dialogue, cultural production, and regional and global cultural branding. The investment by the GCC states in art museums is part of a selective regional and state-level engagement with Western capitalist modernity, intended to realize geopolitical agendas of international security, as well as economic and cultural agendas connected with state branding. In terms of audience, the regional priority has been until recently international (i.e. Western) rather than local engagement, while attempts have been made to justify the vast expense required to construct and operate these museums through arguing for social and educational benefit, and the creation of new art histories that recalibrate the geographical range of the established art historical canon; these are concerns that have been investigated in depth elsewhere.

This paper focuses on the utopian ideals that these museums are claimed to represent, and the contemporary regional response to the translation of such an ideology into the Arabian Peninsula, using the work of anthropologist Marc Augé to frame a discussion of architecture and time, as well as the dark side of capitalist modernity that such institutions also embody. The transference to the Arabian Peninsula of what I term “global art museums”—i.e., art museums constructed according to dominant Western art historical principles and museological practices, such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the planned Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi—has brought with it a rhetoric of post-Enlightenment humanist idealism that is depoliticized and reformulated as presenting a “universal” good. This rhetorical position argues for the ability of these museums to instrumentalize international peace and understanding, and to offer solace on an individual level through solitary communion with works of art, resulting in a transcendental experience, one that is desirable in a secular society, but perhaps unnecessary in a Muslim one, where faith structures individual experience. In doing so, my discussion examines differing concepts of time—cyclical, linear, and so on—and introduces the idea of the present moment as an aberration, rather than a natural forward step, as rationalized in post-Enlightenment concepts of progress.

I then contrast Enlightenment utopian ideals with a form of Islamic utopian imagining that regards institutions such as these art museums (which are both secular and Western) as entirely dystopic. The positing of two forms of utopia implies the possibility of many more; however, the discussion engages with just two—Enlightenment social utopianism as a position embraced by Western art museums, and Salafi utopianism as significant in the Arabian Peninsula region. The argument outlined here asks theoretical, yet arguably necessary, epistemological questions that challenge assumptions about the role of the new museums in the Gulf, moving beyond debates around, for instance, audiences and collections, to interrogate the new museums at an ideological
level. The discussion concludes by presenting and evaluating suggestions that have been put forward for the future of the art museums in the Arabian Peninsula.

Karen Exell is Honorary Senior Research Associate at UCL Qatar, and a consultant at Qatar Museums. She directed the MA in Museum and Gallery Practice at UCL Qatar from 2011-2015, after teaching museums studies and holding curatorial positions in university museums in the UK for several years. Her research interests include museum pedagogy in Qatar and exploring the concept of national identity in relation to the planned new National Museum of Qatar. She is involved in two QNRF-funded research projects on both these topics. Her recent publications include the co-edited volumes, Cultural Heritage in the Arabian Peninsula: Debates, Discourses and Practices (Ashgate, 2014); Museums in Arabia: Transnational Practices and Regional Processes (Ashgate, 2016) and Modernity and the Museum in the Arabian Peninsula (Routledge, 2016).
In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the sustained rise of oil prices in the early 2000s changed the region's political and cultural landscapes. Although often less visible than their powerful neighbor, Saudi Arabia, these countries have emerged as regional and even global players in their own right, as evidenced by the way in which they have chosen to invest the income from their abundant natural resources into building influence on a global scale. Both Qatar and the UAE have ruling elites who have implemented development plans that focus on rapid urbanization, including a significant emphasis on the development and promotion of the arts and museums. This development has, in turn, inspired other regional countries to follow suit, most significantly Azerbaijan, situated on the Caspian Sea and itself flush with petrodollars and a ruling family intent on bolstering Azerbaijan’s international reach.

This paper examines the way in which the development of cultural resources has been used by the governments of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to create a global image through international art and culture media, and the extent to which this development acts as an agent to promote modernity on a global scale. It looks in particular at the use of contemporary art and its liberal values as an agent of global inclusivity, and then analyzes this strategy through a case study of Azerbaijan, a regional neighbor that has adopted a similar approach to cultural development. Museums have long been agents of soft power, and continue to grow in importance as cities become more global and seek to attract an international audience. Museums—and contemporary art museums and organizations in particular—have the potential to convey, simultaneously, both unique identity and global belonging. Inclusion in a global art movement, such as contemporary art, conveys modernity in a subtle but prescient way—to be part of the global contemporary art world is to be part of the global elite. For countries emerging from the remnants of twentieth-century imperial influence, investment in art and museums is one of the most direct ways in which relevance and inclusion can be telegraphed to a global audience. If Western-style modernity includes technological progress, human rights (humanism), and mediated global participation, to what extent do Qatar, the UAE, and Azerbaijan accept Western modernity? Or do these reflect a different framework?

The paper also focuses on discussions of contemporary art and modernity in a global context, and how the idea of “Western” modernity, as expressed through contemporary art, is part of a shared, aspirational global dialogue in which emerging economies seek inclusion through the development of art and cultural institutions. It examines how these institutions are being developed in the Arabian Peninsula—with a particular focus on Qatar—and in Azerbaijan, as a way in which to use this dialogue to their own advantage. The success of this development is then considered through a media discourse analysis, to determine if art and culture provide a dominant, alternative narrative to criticisms of these
places that often take place in Western media. Finally, the paper considers whether modernity as telegraphed by contemporary art needs to be reframed to more accurately reflect myriad, and specifically non-Western, contemporaneity.

Lesley Gray is a Ph.D. candidate at University College London, Qatar, and a museum studies researcher based in Doha. Her research interests focus on the development of contemporary art scenes in the Arabian Peninsula and Caspian Sea, considered within the context of current art and social science theory and the growth of non-Western art centers. She is currently carrying out research on the impact of arts and cultural development as an agent of cultural dialogue in both regions. In addition to her undergraduate and graduate work in anthropology and art history, she holds an MA in Museum and Gallery Practice from University College London, Qatar.
5. Reflections on Public Art in the Arabian Peninsula

Nadia Mounajjed

This paper examines the emergence of public art in the Gulf states in the context of post-oil modernization and urbanization patterns. The rise of public art in the region goes beyond the traditional classification of public artworks, and can be related to local psychogeography—a taxonomy based on the relationship between artworks and Gulf urbanization patterns. The notion of public art has expanded, along with the expansion of urban developments. Gulf public art was once synonymous with public architecture, and the rapidly urbanizing cities laid the groundwork for a new concept of public space, which in turn led to the possibility of a public art in a way comparable to its contemporary manifestation. Today, with increasing Gulf urban developments, artworks, sculptures, installations, and site-specific artworks have become a feature of public spaces around Gulf cities. From land artworks that seek to demarcate a place in vast desert spaces, to art in the heart of Gulf cities, to art in transit, contemporary Gulf art is superimposed on the local topographies from deserts to corniches and coastal lines, and from infrastructural landscapes to airports, metro stations, and malls.

Recent public art initiatives in the Gulf states seek to offer a new role to public art with performances and experiments conducted by conceptual artist Hassan Sharif in urban sites in the UAE, and the 2009 Sharjah Art Biennial's relocation of artworks to the Al Shuwaihean area—a public space in the heart of old Sharjah, with artworks occupying outdoor public spaces, courtyards, car parks, and storage facilities of the Sharjah Arts Area, as well as urban pockets around the museum. Many other public artworks are being commissioned in the United Arab Emirates, from the sculptures placed around Yas Island to the UAE's Memorial Park near the Sheikh Zayed Mosque. Public art is also a central program in Qatar Museums' mission to push the boundaries of the traditional museum model to offer cultural experiences in public spaces. The sculptures installed along Doha's corniche and at Hamad International Airport are among examples that support this goal and reflect the mission of Qatar's Vision 2030 regarding education and engagement with Qatari society.

The installation of art in public spaces by local and international artists and their patrons is an opportunity to promote contemporary, even controversial, art to Gulf publics, as well as a means of instilling “social meaning” and a sense of place and belonging. Public art has often been used to act as a mediator between various institutions and publics, to create a space for discussion and social interaction, or to reinforce an image of power. Public artworks in the Gulf have often acted as mechanisms for strengthening national identity as a form of soft power, and yet there are times where they are also perceived as intimidating and threatening local values and order. In this context, public art in the Gulf has oscillated between local national narratives and Western influence—and with its fair share of controversies. Because of the level of exposure public artworks have, controversies have arisen due to the placement or meaning of the work.
Drawing on the role of public art as an “arena” in which diverse communities can come together to engage or debate, this paper contemplates the potential of Gulf cities to become “agoras”, where public artworks can act as mediators between communities, and perhaps even as exponents for what has become termed “cultural democracy”. However, the vision for the agora is not without challenges, particularly when considering the diverse makeup of Gulf societies and community ways-of-seeing, as well as the nature of public space in Gulf cities. The polemics around public artworks examined in this paper, and the debates accompanying the rise of contemporary public artworks, raise many questions on the future of public art (and public space) in the Gulf.

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Museum and heritage developments in the Gulf states have garnered the interest of academics and museum and heritage practitioners, both within and outside the region. This growing interest has led to an increase in academic research, particularly in relation to the production and presentation of museums and heritage. The museological literature relating to the Gulf has focused predominantly on how museums and heritage institutions have been used to position and present the past in relation to localism, nationalism, regionalism, and transnationalism. Considerations of alternative or unofficial forms of identity-making and representation have received much less interest.

In this paper I explore the relationship between contemporary art and migration in the Gulf, and examine how migrant laborers—broadly defined as low-paid workers from South Asia—are represented in contemporary artistic practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. These migrant workers are often regarded as being culturally poor and so are generally excluded from officially-sanctioned discourses and cultural representations. Yet migrant workers and the migrant experience are rarely invisible in the Gulf, and this paper aims to contribute towards bridging this gap by illustrating how artistic practices and cultural representation can be examined in order to shed light on migrant identity. In particular, I am interested in exploring how migrant identity is represented within contemporary art exhibitions and collecting practices in the Gulf.

Drawing on case studies from Doha and Dubai, I first contextualize the discussion of migration by providing a brief background to migratory processes and their effects within the Gulf states. I then summarize how these complex migrant identities have been largely excluded from Gulf heritage discourses. I examine how museums have engaged with labor migrants, then explore how labor migration is represented through museum collections and exhibitionary practices. Finally, I analyze how migrant identity is produced within contemporary art exhibitions by looking at specific examples from Doha and Dubai. Ultimately, this paper suggests that contemporary art is a significant medium for representing and exploring migrant identity in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Art exhibitions provide an important source of social commentary, and contemporary artists in the Gulf are increasingly engaging in their work with migrant identities and representations, as well as with the social and political processes of migration. However, as I point out in this paper, it is also important to analyze the artists’ interpretations in order to understand how these are shaped by the socio-political circumstances in which they create their works. The dominant image of the migrant as a worker and laborer needs to be problematized, and expanded, and to take into account the individual. Museums, galleries, and sites of heritage, tangible and intangible, convey messages about what nations value as representative aspects of their past. Significantly, they have the power to help foster a sense of belonging and to create spaces for debate. It is only by creating critical and reflexive analyses of different exhibitionary and collecting practices in the Gulf that we will begin to develop a broader sense of how unofficial forms of heritage operate and are visualized within the Gulf states. Exhibitions are
places of social representation and, as such, provide opportunities for cultural dialogue and exchange. Significantly, they have the power to help foster a sense of belonging and to create spaces for debate. And as artists continue to engage with the social and political processes of migration in the Gulf states, it gives us the opportunity to see if, and how, laborers are involved in the representation of their identities and experiences. In sum, I suggest that there is scope to further explore how artistic practice in the Gulf States can inform our understanding of this under-researched area.

Sarina Wakefield is an Adjunct Lecturer in the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises, Zayed University (Dubai Campus). Wakefield has lectured at UCL Qatar and has worked on museum and heritage projects in the UK and Bahrain. Her primary research focuses on critical heritage studies and museology of the Gulf. She is interested in transnational identity, globalization, universal museums, franchise museums, global art market and dissonant heritage. She has published around these subjects in international journals and books and co-edited the volume Museums in Arabia: Transnational Practices and Regional Processes (Routledge, 2016), and is currently working on her monograph Museum Franchising in the Age of Cross-Border Heritage: Beyond Boundaries (In Preparation, Routledge), which is based on four years detailed ethnographic research in the UAE. She also co-founded and directs the international conference series Museums in Arabia. She received her BSc in Archaeology and her MA in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester (UK) and her Ph.D. from the Open University (UK).