

ART Report

Shades of East: A Journey around Middle Eastern and Indian art



Art-product
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Photo: Donna in turchese, Srilanka
Courtesy Mirko Peripimeno (Lo/Studio 35)

Art Report: Shades of East



ART Report is the magazine of art and economics drawn from the research of MPS in its sixth year of publication. The goal is to provide an in-depth monthly by the dual role, monitor the progress of the art market, and provide an in-depth historical and cultural regarding the subject.

"The number on the art Middle East and India, seeks to explore this kaleidoscope world of soft colors, shapes and great stories, as opposed to a modernity which sees these areas in strong economic growth. In the report we have analyzed the major exhibitions, numerous galleries and auction houses ; was also given space to the history and geography of these fascinating regions, where constantly growing investment in culture and art.

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Art, colors and stories from
the Middle Eastern world

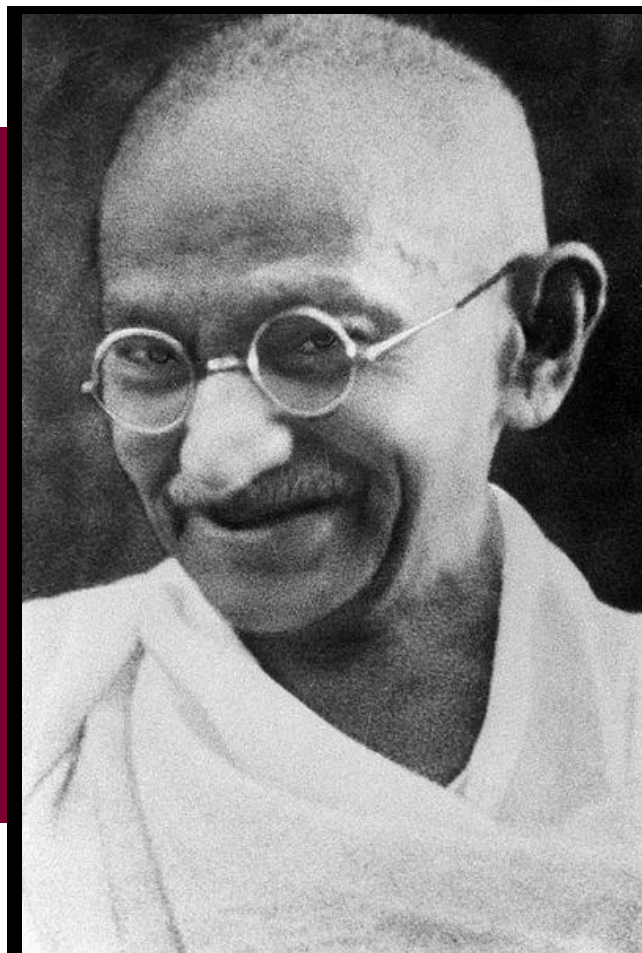
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*Strength doesn't come from physical capacity. It
comes from an indomitable will...*
Mahatma Gandhi



Photo: Paolo Ceccherini, tanneries in Fez, Morocco

Art, colors and stories from the Middle Eastern world

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“Christie’s specialist Hala Khayat interviewed on Middle East” (1/3)



Milan_London_Dubai (and return)

Edited by Theca Gallery

The present interview is conducted by Andrea Carlo Alpini (gallery owner at Theca Gallery, Milan) with Hala Khayat (specialist in Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish art, Christie's Dubai). Purpose of the dialogue is to draw a cultural and market trend in UAE and some possible guidelines in Middle Eastern market. Hala Khayat answered the questions like a major professional presenting her personal point of view in observing the trend of Modern and Contemporary Art. However, the interview would not have been possible without the fundamental support of Barbara Guidotti (specialist in modern and contemporary art, Christie's Milan) and Alexandra Deyzac (Public Relations Officer, Christie's London). Finally, I would like to thank Marta Delpiano (assistant at Theca Gallery, Milan) that has done the preliminary research for the preparation of the interview with me.

Andrea Carlo Alpini



Middle East is a wide area including different realities, ethnic groups, languages and countries, moving from Persia to Egypt, and North Africa to the Gulf Region, each of which has been developing a long tradition in the artistic background. Which area do you think will be the most artistically influent in the future? Why?

We do not have a crystal ball to predict this but what we can see today are certain trends – Abu Dhabi will be the city of museums, Dubai is the art hub of the Middle East with over 80 galleries, a respected art fair as well as a Design fair and the Sharjah biennale uniting these two positions. Saudi Arabia and its Edge of Arabia movement, a good ambassador for the contemporary art making of the country, will surely thrive on this international exposure. Lebanon and Beirut will always be interesting to watch with contemporary talents such as Baalbaki, Tagreed Darghouth and Huguette Caland to name a few, Turkey has a phenomenal important contemporary art scene and Azerbaijan has YARAT Foundation who support exhibitions and artists as well as running an exhibition center in Baku – so wherever you look, art and its creation remain the essence of each culture and each region is adding to the global culture of today and the future.

Wonderful to see is that international institutions became more and more interested in the arts from the Middle East, just to name one example: the Middle Eastern art board at Tate Modern in London or the recent Middle Eastern photography exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Christie's Auctions House, Dubai



How does the current state of the art market look in Middle East? Which are the most probable developments for the future?

10 years ago Dubai was not to be found on the so called art map – today the contemporary art scene has spread out all over the Middle East and became an international magnet. The multitude of good art fairs, the growth in galleries (a handful in 2005 in Dubai and today over 80), the international network galleries are working within, the auctions attracting buyers from over 30 countries to bit for Middle Eastern Art, the online only sale of Middle Eastern Art with thousands of viewers and bidders, all help to gain international reputation for this market and the art of the region. The Middle Eastern art market has grown quickly but its foundation is solid.

Would you please explain us which is Christie’s current guide line and trend in choosing or promoting Middle East art for the future?

Christie’s conducts auctions in Dubai since the spring 2006 and we have seen considerable change over that time and we are particularly proud to have established over 400 new artist records, to have produced 18 researched catalogues to give artists from the region a voice, and have seen works from Middle Eastern artists entering some outstanding international private and museum collections. These successes will be the measurement for our future work we will provide for Middle Eastern artists.



A Buyer at Christie's Auctions House, Dubai



Hala Khayat, Specialist at Christie's, Dubai

Considering now just the region of the United Arab Emirates, which would you consider as the most influential area in the art market for the future?

Dubai would be it in my view. It has the first private museum which opened its doors to the public, an established art market, an important gallery scene and fairs with good and solid international reputation as well as the first Middle Eastern art magazine *Canvas* being published in Dubai.

How would the development of the art market look in the region of United Arab Emirates after the present year and the inauguration of the great number of new museums as Louvre Dubai or Guggenheim Dubai?

The museums will add the last missing link to unify conservation of art and contemporary art making and its market.

Considering the development of Christie's in the Middle Eastern region, which could you mention as the best achievement of the Auction House?

To believe in this market and to expand into the region with consultants in Istanbul, Doha, Jeddah and Beirut.

In the contemporary art market which is the relation between the trend of Auction Houses and Abu Dhabi and Dubai Art Fairs?

With Art Dubai we have create a perfect synergy by holding our Spring sales alongside the fair to offer the international art community a wider overview of the art scene of the region. Since 2006 or focus lies with the modern masters of the region, a concept the fair has adapted only a year ago but strengthen therewith the work we have invested in making these masters internationally known.

Generally speaking, Middle Eastern collectors are most motivated in buying artworks from their own countries or from other nations?

No, today we see more and more multi-cultural collections being build and for every Dollar spend in Dubai the same bidders spend 15 Dollars in one of our other salerooms.

Iran National Pavilion_ 56° Biennale di Venezia

(1/3)

The Great Game: Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central-Asian Republics, Kurdish Region: art, artists, and culture from the heart of the world.



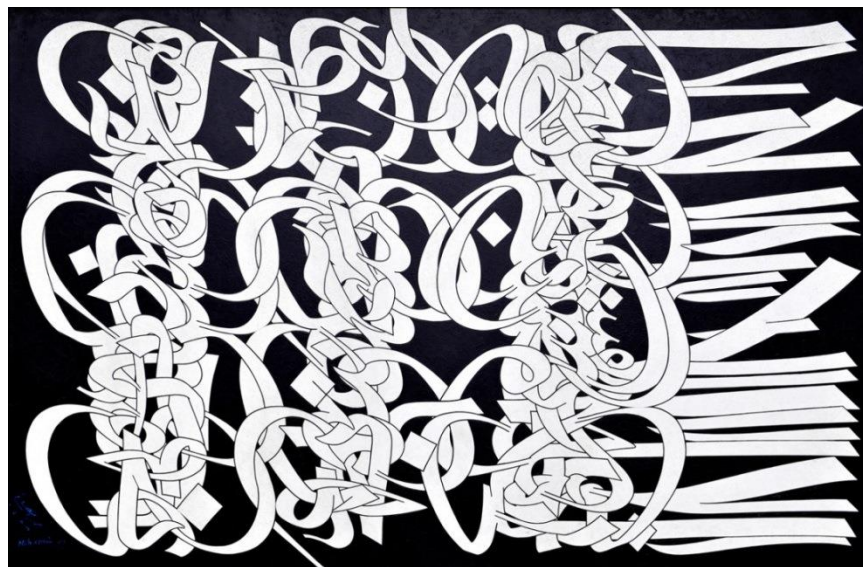
Edited by Marco Meneguzzo and Mazdak Faiznia

The idea of this exhibition comes from the consideration that the geographical area of these Countries is, in fact, a historically unique territory, its destiny indissolubly linked by its historical and cultural situation: around these places there took place, and still takes place, what since the XIX century has been known as "The Great Game" for supremacy in Asia. A tangle of political, economic, religious and social situations also finds an expression and interpretation in the art produced in these places, and it is this that the exhibition proposed for the Venice Biennale hopes to show through the work of some forty artists working in the region and who are particularly aware of social and political questions.

The exhibition demonstrates the centrality of this question and how it is perceived and reestablished by an international public through the language of contemporary art; it has already been expressed in major international shows, but it is still hampered by the genuine existential difficulties of those who have first-hand experience of a tangle of contradictions: a precise mirror-image of what could be the linguistic outcome of globalisation. So this is not an overview of the art of these countries - which by now, at least for some of them, is well known - but it is a genuine conceptual "thrust" into one of the places that is an everyday and superficially considered protagonist of the media.



1. Parviz Tanavoli
Yellow Heech
Fiberglass
186 x 82 x 61 cm
2007
Edition 4/10
Courtesy of Mr.
Mohammad Afkhami
Collection



2. Mohamad Ehsaei:
3 Barg az daftar eshg
Acrylic and oil on canvas
317 x 204 cm
2009
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Nader Mobargha
Collection

Iran National Pavilion_ 56° Biennale di Venezia

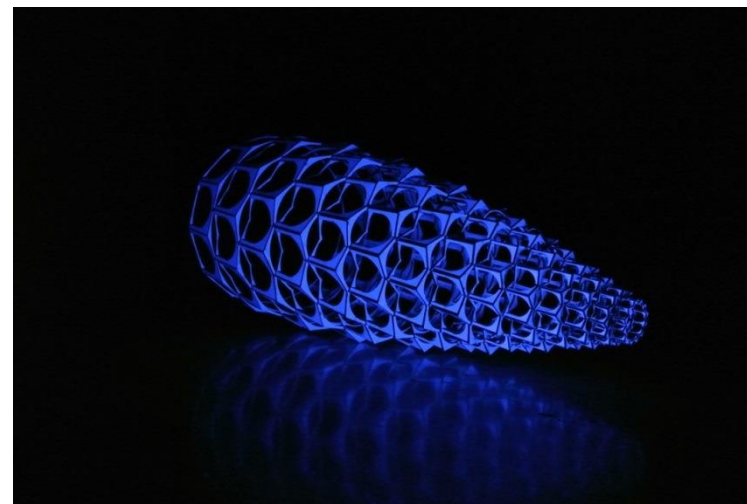
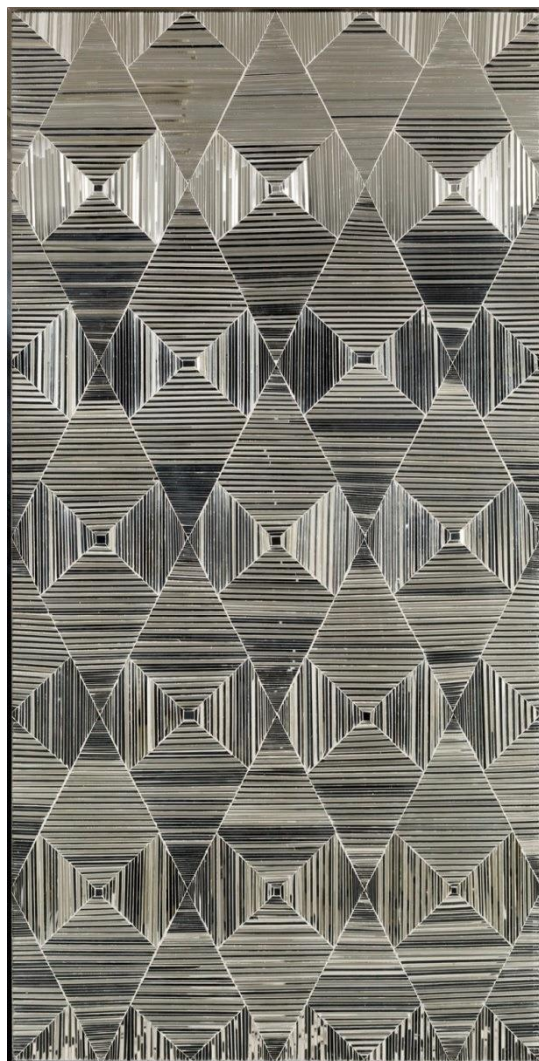
(2/3)

The Great Game: Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central-Asian Republics, Kurdish Region: art, artists, and culture from the heart of the world.



The theme chosen for the show obviously implies that these works have been chosen from among those that most meaningfully approach the problems under analysis: for this reason we have undertaken a great deal of prior research - even in loco - about the availability of works that are essential for the subject of the exhibition, while also privileging, however, the metaphoric aspect of the complexity of the culture and the forces in play (as a result, among the artists are those who could superficially be defined as "abstract", and the "handwriting" element of these cultures has also been considered as being of fundamental importance).

Marco Meneguzzo
Mazdak Faiznia



4.Sahand Hesamiyan

Sulook

Steel, UV Color, and Black Light

417x190 x 190 cm

2012

Courtesy of Sahand Hesamiyan and
The Third Line.

3.Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian

Drawing with mirrors II

Mirror mosaic

73x151 cm

2010

Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Nader
Mobargha Collection

Iran National Pavilion_ 56° Biennale di Venezia

(3/3)

The Great Game: Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central-Asian Republics, Kurdish Region: art, artists, and culture from the heart of the world.



Iranian Highlights

The section presents the work of four Iranian artists from different generations, genders, and expressive tendencies and instruments, who in this case are brought together by their will to display the wealth and complexity of Iranian art, which by its very nature is cosmopolitan, receptive, and accommodating as well as aware of its own cultural heritage. This is an exemplary homage— necessarily exemplary in form, as there are many, many more than these four current Iranian artists—to a culture that is perfectly integrated in contemporaneity and the ways of globalization.



6. Mohsen Taasha Wahidi, *In the Seventh Sky*, watercolours and mixed media with clay on vegetable paper, 61,5x32cm, 2012, dOCUMENTA(13). Courtesy Theca Gallery

5. Nazgol Ansarinia, *Article 49, Pillars*, 2014 Cast resin & paint, 40x40x20cm
Courtesy of the Artist
Article 51, Pillars, 2014 Cast resin & paint, 33x33x62cm Courtesy of the Artist



7. Riyas Komu, *Fragrance of a Funeral*, 2010, recycled wood, car painting, paint, archival printing on linen, 152x320x92cm. Courtesy Studio la Città, Verona

8. Adel Abidin, *I'm sorry*, 2008, light-box Installation, metal box, plexiglas, LED lights and light bulbs, 68.2x171x29.8cm. Edition 5-5



“Meddle in East: All Tomorrow’s Parties (in art scene)” (1/5)



Biennal Stories

Edited by Andrea Carlo Alpini:

Italy, “A population made of poets, artists, heroes / saints, intellectuals, scientists / sailors, transmigrators”. This is the inscription clearly engraved on the facade of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in Rome, in the district of EUR, built on the occasion of the Rome Universal Exposition in 1942 and designed by the architects Ernesto Lapadula, Giovanni Guerrini and Mario Romano. This year, 2015, the universal Exposition will be hosted in Milan following the leitmotif of “Culture as Oil” for Italy. Bearing Piero Ciampi’s words in mind, it could be said that in Italy the topic has been spoken “for centuries; for ten thousand years”. However, it is only recently that the first real steps have been done. On the contrary, the region of the Gulf favours the opposite sign. These regions own oil for real and this helps them developing their cultures and consequently their art market. To be more precise, Dubai and Venice share something more than the fact of overlooking stretches of water: they are doubly linked. Fittingly, if in the Adriatic Sea there are not many methane fields, the Persian Gulf on the contrary is rich in oilfields. However, Venice was the first city to support the United Arab Emirates in the Star System of art. The present text aims to reconstruct the main steps of the contemporary Middle Eastern / Iranian art development and its success in the worldwide market. In conclusion, the text presents a young Afghan artist now representing the ongoing transformation in the international battlefield of the “Great Game”.



Andrea Palladio, Basilica del Santissimo Redentore (dettaglio), Venezia, 1577

Sand dunes’ Economy

In the last fifteen years the number of acronyms added to the global vocabulary has widely increased. If we wanted to trace a graphic in order to show the trend, the best function to fit would be the equation $Y=X$, in other words, a growing line. MENASA is the acronym to refer to the economic and demographic development of Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. To this end, the acronym UAE is to mention. It dates back to 1971 when the Trucial States left their place to the United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujaira, Ras al-Khaima, Sharja and Umm al-Qaywayn. The arid territories of MENASA succeeded in inventing a New Economy able to attract a great number of huge foreign capitals able to generate impressive money flow and local investments. Consequently, the occidental area shows its interest in the ongoing economic and financial speculation of these countries, by offering them the consumerism card. The latter is conceived as the strategic element able to instil more or less basic interests and necessities, but most of all able to instil the desire of owning and showing a new “status symbol” in the consumer. The greatest international museums as well granted the exploitation of their own brand in return for the payment of important royalties; they are Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Dubai. New museum collections together with young and rich private collectors create an interesting artistic and cultural development able to occupy increasing positions in the contemporary international scene. The following paragraphs analyse the way through which such objective has been achieved. Also, the text shows the legacy and the possible development for the future. In 2009, for the first time, the Venice International Art Exhibition hosted the UAE Pavilion, and two years later at the 54th International Art Exhibition the project of the pan-Arabian show “The Future of a Promise” was presented. The exposition was produced by Edge of Arabia including artists from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq. During the show, the strong influence of Iranian culture could be perceived through the combination of both traditional and experimental artistic techniques.

Edited by Andrea Carlo Alpini

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“Meddle in East: All Tomorrow’s Parties (in art scene)” (2/5)



Gradually, Persian-Iranian pieces of art start to be part of the collections of big prestigious international museums as Tate Modern in London, Centre Pompidou in France and Guggenheim in New York. As a consequence, a first “school of leaders” is set, including: Farhad Mohshiri (1963, now living in Teheran), Ali Baniadr (1976, now living in New York), Reza Derakshani (1952, now living between Europa, Iran and USA) and Afshin Pirhashemi (1974, now living in Teheran). The art galleries supporting the quotation of these artists set the art market considering the hammer prices realised in the auction sales realised in Doha, Dubai, Casablanca, Teheran and London. To the Queen’s city the last and most important step is left: it is the artist’s endorsement in the international market. Shirin Neshat (1957, now living in New York) is the leading figure in the worldwide artistic field thanks to the Golden Lion she obtained at the XVIII Art Exhibition in Venice, in 1999. Moving now to the consideration about the Auction Houses, a great number of new branches set in the MENASA area, among the most important: Christie’s in Dubai, Sotheby’s in Doha, SaffronArt in Mumbai and Teheran Auction in Iran. If we analyse the global auction market, it could be noticed that the annual volume of artworks whose value is comprised within the valuation price of 10.000 Euros consists of almost 100-200.000 lots, whose 66% is even under the valuation of 5.000 Euros .



Bituminous sands.

Considering now the contemporary art market, the percentage of lots overpassing the value of 50.000 Euros corresponds to the 6% of the total amount, whereas the multimillionaires auction results are only the 0,3%. The latter, generates the 98% of the total information of the art market. Moving to the analysis of the contemporary Art Fairs trend in the MENASA regions, India Art Fair (in New Delhi), Art Abu Dhabi and then Beirut, Dubai and Marrakech Art fairs are the most known events. The last three mentioned belong to the Art Holding Morocco (AHM) founded by Hicham Daoudi. Dubai and Beirut Art Fairs are more consolidated and they hold a great attraction for the international galleries, whereas Marrakech Art Fair found it harder to set its position in the market. Last year the Moroccan city hosted the 5^e Edition of the Marrakech Art Biennale. It is characterised by the huge amount of cultures and artistic media, as much as the expository informality. All the installations and pieces of work were spread all around the city: from the traditional Riad, to the parks and places of national archaeological interest and to entire crumbling buildings. Everything there was deeply unusual and interesting. The cultural and economic ferment in the MENASA regions generated a good market interest for the artists coming from these Countries. The income obtained from the contemporary artworks sales in the auction realised among July 2013 and July 2014 was distributed as follows: Turkey 3,6M Euros, UAE 3,2M Euros, South Africa 2,1M Euros, Iran 1M Euros, Morocco 0,5M Euros. However, if Christie’s focuses more on modern and contemporary Iranian Turkish and Islamic-Arabian art, Sotheby’s concentrates only on contemporary art coming from Middle East and internationally known names.

“Meddle in East: All Tomorrow’s Parties (in art scene)” (3/5)



ALL the VENICE’s INTERESTS

Iranian and Middle Eastern art is now transforming into a high artistic study sector and in the last five to fifteen years it has been obtaining a great cultural and economic esteem. This artistic sector interests not only Europe but also USA, where a number of relevant international artists from the MENASA region is now living. Last year, 2014, at the Sarnoff Museum of Arts of the New Jersey College, the university researcher Deborah Sutton organised the show "Art Amongst War: visual culture in Afghanistan 1979-2014". The exhibition was the first American occasion to create a retrospective about Afghan and Iranian art during the time between the Soviet invasion and the last war fought by the Nato in Afghanistan in 2001. The show focused on the integration-contamination in politics, art and society all over the regions that have been involved in wars and genocides for thirty years. Among the exposed artists: Lida Abdul (1973, now living in Los Angeles), Gulbuddin Elham (1974, now living in Kabul), Moshtari Hilal (1993, now living in Amburgo), Zahra Orna Kazemi (1993, now living in Teheran) and Mohsen Taasha Wahidi (1991, now living between Kabul and Lahore). The latter was exposed during the last edition of DOCUMENTA(13) in Kassel curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and in the Kabul edition of dOCUMENTA(13) for the exhibition curated by Andrea Viliani and Aman Mojaddidi. Recently, Mohsen Taasha Wahidi has been selected for the Iranian Pavilion at the 56° International Art Exhibition in Venice.



Mohsen Taasha Wahidi, *Untitled Miniature (Kala Minar Series)*, 28x37cm, mixed media on paper, 2013. Courtesy Theca Gallery Milano.

On this occasion the show is curated by Marco Meneguzzo and Mazdak Faiznia, Iranian curator from Kurdistan. The exhibition titled "The Great Game" includes artists coming from Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Iraq and from the Central Asia Republics. Meneguzzo and Faiznia's project is conceived in continuity with the topic proposed by Okwui Enwezor, the director of the 56° Exposition "All the world's futures", asking the artists to represent the relation among art and the present "state of things"

“Meddle in East: All Tomorrow’s Parties (in art scene)” (4/5)



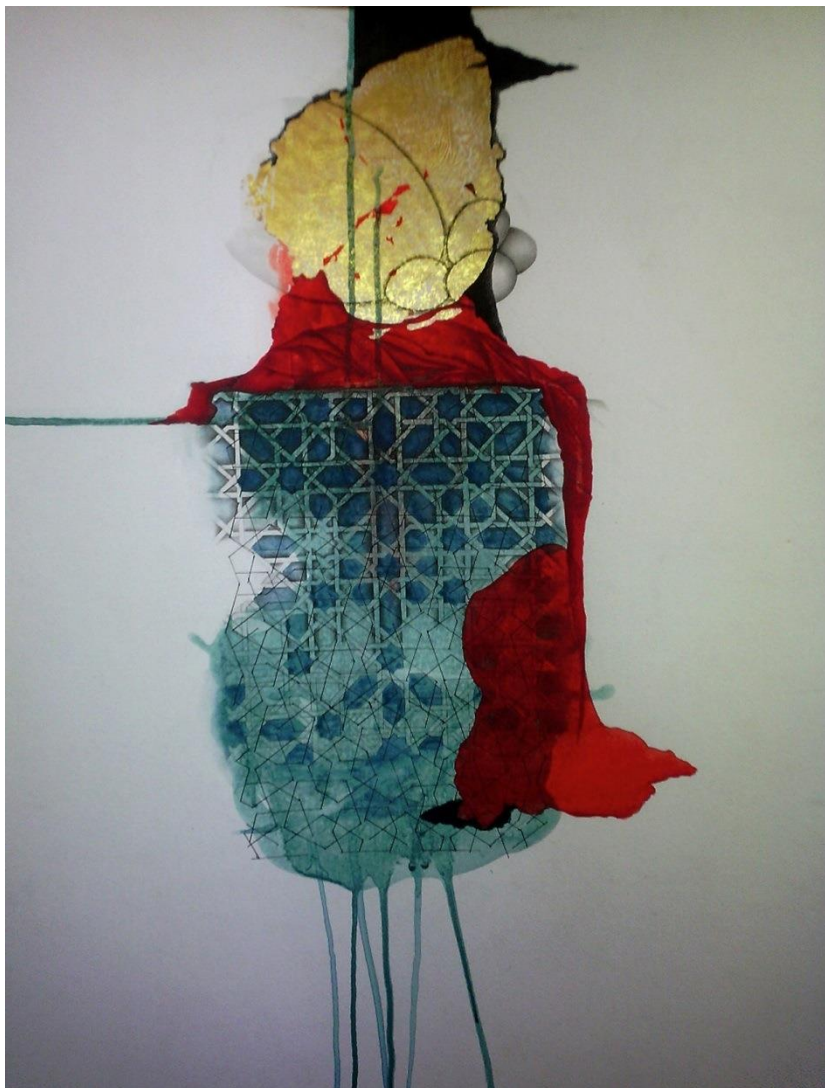
THE VENICE’s RED CURTAIN

Mohsen Taasha Wahidi was born in Kabul in 1991 and he is one of the most interesting young artists of the Afghan visual arts in the world. His work, mostly pictorial even if opened to the video and installation in his last expressions, is strongly rooted in the ancient culture of his homeland (Persia). His origins, indeed, are the main themes from which he develops a critical reflection on the socio-political situation of his countries (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan). The artist belongs to a Turkish-Mongolian ethnic minority, the Hazara, and he is of Shiite faith. As a child, Mohsen Taasha Wahidi developed his passion for drawing and started to cultivate his skills in the Institute of Fine Arts in Kabul as well as in the context of workshops on contemporary art organised in the city by international artists such as Ashkan Sepahwand, Adrian Villar Rojas, Chu and Emeric Lhuisset. After being part of the group Roschd ("The flourishing") the young man left it, due to ethnic and political frictions, and founded the Bad Artists, later called Taasha Artists ("Hidden"), name that he took as his stage name, later. Mohsen Taasha's work is made of graphics flashes of light and shadow, as well as beauty and death, all hidden in the vivid colour and delicacy of its features. The lightweight sheets of calligraphic paper on which he draws and paints are at the same time fragile mirrors and powerful critiques of a society. His works tell a grieved story, portrayed from time to time in the fusion of faceless human figures, Koranic verses and broken shouts. In his works, Mohsen Taasha Wahidi combines the wisdom of the written word, often used as a backdrop by painting directly on the pages of the Koran, to the symbolic use of color and iconographic details taken from both the Middle Eastern tradition and Western figurative universe - the surrealistic one above all. In the series "Memoir Of A Generation" for example, ancient pages of Koranic verses stained by green and orange watercolours becomes the backdrop on which to allocate the profiles of transparent men. They are the alleged owners of the truth of the past, humanoid monsters without reason whose cubic heads are made of glass and whose bodies are bloated of judgments. Despite being naked and helpless, represented in their smallness, they show the muscular arm of the law; they are covered only by a gag made of red curtain, which cannot hide the illegitimacy and reveals, on the contrary, a strong arrogance. The series "The Essence Reddish" is made of red watercolours, whereas "The Red Curtain" series is made of coloured pencils and it is the symbolic artwork testifying his participation to dOCUMENTA(13). Mohsen Taasha Wahidi uses coloured pencils in his artwork "Behsood in Blood – Kochi Attacks", which in 2009 led him to be recognised as the best contemporaneous artist of Afghanistan. His works portray the pain felt by Hazara people, and the artist among them, all victims of the complications due to the cohabitation of a number of ethnic groups in the same place. He draws people attacked in their villages by the Kochi, Pashtun nomadic people used by the Taliban to hit the rival ethnic groups, or in symbolic red compositions similar to visual streams of consciousness. In these works Taasha represents eyes, hearts, veins and Hazara blood, in so telling the endless drama and the insult of a population as well as its old culture. Moreover, on red and black backgrounds oriental figures stand out in the series about the cycles of death, "In the Seventh Sky", "On The Other World", "Death or a New Beginning" and "Voyage of Hereafter". Here, the contingency and the social and political denunciation give way to the timeless wisdom of Persian characters meditating in the moonlight about the meaning of existence and death. The scarlet red flowing violent in the other series are



Mohsen Taasha Wahidi, The Red Curtain, 34x22,5cm. coloured pencils on paper, 2012. Courtesy Theca Gallery Milano.

“Meddle in East: All Tomorrow’s Parties (in art scene)” (5/5)



Mohsen Taasha Wahidi, Memorial, Gouache on wassli paper, 55x70cm, 2014.
Courtesy Theca Gallery Milano.

reduced to small backgrounds, in compositions where blood and pathos replace the immortal calm of black and white. Death is not the most tragic end caused by the enemy but, according to Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī, the Persian poet, astronomer and philosopher -better known in the West as Rumi (XIII century AD.); on the contrary, death is the beginning of a new path of the spirit. In 2013 Theca Gallery organised the solo show, “MAIN d13 | one KaBuL (...) two TESSin [THE RIVERS]” and the same year the artist participated to the dual exhibition in Budapest: the first, “Memoriae of a collection”, was organised by Theca Gallery, whereas the second one, “La Grand Migration”, was an international show curated by Délia Vékony, focused mostly on the topic of migration in contemporary art. Both shows were welcomed at the Budapest Art Market Fair. In 2014 Mohsen Taasha Wahidi participated to a great number of collectives show, such as “White Light | White Heat” in Lugano and “Segno e disegno” curated by Valerio Dehò, director of the Merano Kunst Museum and the solo show in Vilnius (Lithuania) by Theca Gallery. Internationally, Taasha participated to the collective show titled, “Art Amongst War: Visual Culture in Afghanistan” in USA curated by Deborah Sutton at the Sarnoff Museum of Arts, in New Jersey. The show was accompanied by a catalog enriched by critical essays resulting from the deep research made by Sutton and her university department, about the artistic typologies practiced in Afghanistan among 1991 and 2014. Most of the serie “Untitled Miniature / Kala Minar” is exposed in USA and together with “The Red Curtain” and “In the Seventh Sky”, they will be represented at the 56° Biennale 2015 in Venice for the Iranian Pavilion. The main aim of the pavilion is to represent by means of the contemporary art born in those places the awareness of the socio-political practices of the area. Since the beginning of XIX century, in the area once representing the Ancient Persia, the so called “Great Game” of supremacy in Central Asia has been going on. The exposition represents the metaphorical aspect of the complexity as well as the active forces. Fittingly, the most meaningful artworks by Mohsen Taasha Waidi are the last ones he realised in Pakistan in 2014 and titled “Memorial”. Here gold leaf substitutes mud, whereas the red and black still occupy the fore ground, leaving the background for the archetypal Islamic cerulean blue geometries.

“The Picture Is History: From Tehran To Dubai” (1/3)



Some places exist only by means of the description of their colours. Middle East is one of them. Such area collects a great number of territories, each of which is characterised by its cultural traditions, variegated ethnic groups and consequently by the several linguistic and religious minorities of the place. All elements combine and collide generating the great number of transparencies that mark the whole character, essence and soul of every single cultural reality of the region. The following article aims to analyse the many artistic productions of Iran and Emirates through a cultural and economic reading of the contemporary art market. The contemporary Iranian art appears as a kaleidoscope of media, techniques and expressions of the past Persia. The political uncertainty of the area began in XIX century with the “Great Game”, the never-ending socio-political tension between the Russian and British empires. Nowadays entire generations of adults can include the war among their first personal life experiences. Considering the young Iranian artists who transformed the visual input of war into contemporary representation, Zahara Orna Kazemi should be mentioned.

All the collected data show that the Middle Eastern area is developing thanks to the present interest shown by curators, gallery owners and art advisors in favour of works coming from Iran, Emirates and India. Consequently, the acquisitions committees of big international museums such as Tate Modern (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris) and Guggenheim (New York) increase their interests in Middle Eastern art and culture. By the other hand, auction houses support the economic aspects of such artistic excitement: **Christie's opens in 2005 in Dubai, whereas Sotheby's prefers to set its activities in Qatar, precisely in Doha, where it opens in 2009.** Also, it is different the way through which the two Auction Houses plan and organise their sales. Christie's focuses its attention on modern and contemporary Arabian, Iranian and Turkish art; Sotheby's, on the contrary, combines new emerging artists from Middle East to the well established ones. Despite the support of two major auction houses in favour of Middle Eastern artists, the art market development is not very fast in the area. Often, all the suggested artists are known just in their local area and the international auction stages are not many. This is true precisely as far as New York is concerned, as the city of London is usually preferred to it. The social, political and economic Iranian reality can be mentioned among the areas that are more characterised by a never-ending process of cultural and historical change. Such area is deeply marked by a great number of experiences of instability and conflict, resulting from Khomeini's and Ayatolla's fundamentalism, from the Students' Revolution, from Ahmadinejad's austerity government and from the last political elections with the consequent political change represented by Hassan Rouhani's election. All the previous stages and experiences have marked the history of Iran, in so characterising not only the political, economic and social aspect but also the artistic and cultural one. Precisely, it is through the artistic production that the awareness of changing for a new socio-political condition takes its shape. This is the case of young artists such as Zahra Orna Kazemi that reproduces on Wassli paper the great number of transparencies of her region, described by Khaled Hosseini as a “sensitively and morally uncertain” territory. Zahra Orna Kazemi was born in Iran but she moved to Afghanistan quite soon. She spend some time in Kabul where she got the prize as the best artist in the fourth edition of the Kabul Contemporary Art Prize (2013). All the works from the Iranian artists should be read and interpreted bearing in mind the destiny and contradictions of their surrounding reality. The Occidental world considers this last aspect one of the most interesting issue of Middle Eastern culture, as it is shown by the project for the Iranian Pavilion in the upcoming 56th International Art Exhibition in Venice.

THE SENSITIVITY OF AN “UNCERTAIN” TERRITORY



The region of MENASA is one of the cultural pole now at the centre of the greatest development in the international scene of contemporary art. The economic interest associated with the cultural growth can be seen in the prevalent worldwide role obtained by the Dubai Art Fair, Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Contemporary Istanbul and India Art Fair in New Delhi. Together with the art fairs and sales organised by Christie's, Sotheby's, and SaffronArt in India, the *major galleries* are now opening their new branches in Dubai. Moreover, the market development establishes the growth of the Alserkal Avenue artistic spot as well. The Alserkal Avenue district was designed in 2007 by Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal who has recently been nominated patron of arts in the UAE. Quickly, the district developed and it is now affirmed as a great hub of art galleries, art studios, co-working and alternative places for the contemporary art. The growing trend of the Emirates became clear in 2000s, as recently provided by the Art Price Report (December 2014) presenting a dept analysis of the art market in Middle East, India, South-East Asia, Russia and Emirates.

“The Picture Is History: From Tehran To Dubai” (2/3)



ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES

The XI edition of the Dubai Art Fair, the Design Days and the Sharjah Biennale are just a few examples of the great number of international events now gathering together collectors and the international press in the same week chosen by Christie's as well to set its spring auction sale “Contemporary Arabian, Iranian and Turkish Art” (March 2015). Hala Khayat, responsible for Christie's sales in the Emirates, proudly said that nowadays not only Syrian collectors are interested in Syrian art, but also Swiss, American and Chinese people show their interest in buying artworks coming from the Middle Eastern areas. At the moment, the five best contemporary artists are: Farhad Moshiri (Tehran, 1963), Ali Banisadr (New York City, 1976), Reza Derakhshani (Iran, 1952), Koorosh Shishegaran (Iran, 1945) and Afshin Pirhashem (Iran 1974). Among July 2013 and July 2014 the overall sales income was 1,7M€. However, the Iranian art market is still at the beginning of its development, as Hala Khayat confirmed the past 18th March 2015. In this context, the artist Farhad Moshiri got an international consideration, as in 2008 a work of him almost reached the quotation of 600.000€. The past March, during Christie's Evening Sale about contemporary Arabian, Iranian and Turkish art, several pieces of works from Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Saudi Arabia combine with works by Farhad Moshiri. Also, for the first time, some works by Palestinian artists appear. Among the most assessed lots, “Babel” is noteworthy: the artwork by Ayman Baalbaki (Lebanon, 1945) is an acrylic on canvas realised in 2005 and it is made of two panels of 130x200cm each.



Ayman Baalbaki, Babel, acrylic on paper, 130x200cm. each (two panels), 2005.

The lot, inspired to “*The Tower of Babel*” by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, was sold for \$485.000, more than twice the maximum value established in the catalog, in so achieving the global record for the artist auctions. To be more precise, the auction sale was dominated by “*Zahra's Image*”, realised in 2009 by the Iranian artist Monir Farmanfarmaian (Iran 1924), whose total appraisal was comprised among a minimum of \$340.000 and a maximum of \$500.000. The glass mosaic was sold at \$395.000 and it will be exposed at the Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York. The artistic and cultural Middle Eastern background is growing for the imminent opening of modern and contemporary art museums, precisely in the Gulf Area, where the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi can be found, both of them sited in the cultural district of Saadiyat (Abu Dhabi) where the Zayed National Museum and the Centre of Performing Arts are located as well. Also, some private initiatives supporting and promoting the artists are to mention. An example of the local patronage is the Abraaj Capital Group that organises in Dubai the art prize of the same name in order to support Middle Eastern artists in the international market.

“The Picture Is History: From Tehran To Dubai” (3/3)



ORNA KAZIMI: COLOUR PARADOXES



Orna Kazimi, Untitled, Gouache on wassli paper, 38x30cm, 2013.
Courtesy Theca Gallery

Gradually, an increasing number of young and motivated artists are now emerging from the Iranian cultural background. By means of their artistic research, artists express the paradoxes and difficulties of their contemporary society. This is the case of the young artist Orna Kazimi. She was born in 1993 in Mashhad and belongs to a Turkish-Mongolian ethnic minority, the Hazara. She grows up in Iran, where she realises her first artistic studies before moving to Afghanistan. In 2009 Orna Kazimi enrolls to the Natural Resources Engineering course at the Ferdowsi University, in Mashhad (Iran), while she keeps dedicating herself to the study of arts, especially painting. Twice in a row, 2011 and 2012, she is considered the best emerging artist of Mashhad Youth Visual Arts, the specific visual arts award dedicated to young artists. The following year, 2013, Zahra Orna Kazimi is selected as the best artist during the fourth edition of the Kabul Contemporary Art Prize. After learning the basic drawing techniques at Hussain Waahid Academic Art Studio, the artist discovers her personal way of expression by using new and always different artistic techniques, such as gouaches on Wassli paper. In the series “Untitled” for instance, she reproduces Koranic verses that intersect with vertical transparencies well integrated with the dark watercolours tones. The sense of verticality prevails in the whole series and it could be identified from the combination of irregular spots of colour in contrast with the inferior dark part. In “Untitled” the hot, wide and dense tones contrast with the vertical elements that constitute and sometimes stiffen the whole composition. The colours mingle in an harmonic combination of undefined shapes from which lengthened human figures emerge as dusty reflections. Consequently, the ethereal delicate

surface from where the verticals move seems warm and blurry. Zahra Orna Kazemi’s series appears an uncertain scene, as much uncertain as the life of her cohabitants in the places where the artist works and lives; these are places characterised by conflict, dust, blood and the brutality of a precarious life. Bearing this first considerations in mind, it is right the primitive barren colours of the earth to best emerge in her whole artwork. In so doing, her artistic work becomes an authentic proof of the way the cruel reality of the never-ending Afghan conflict is an integral part of the cultural artistic tradition for the inhabitants of the region. In 2013, Orna Kazimi takes part to the “*Beirut Contemporary Art Fair*” in Lebanon, to which it follows her participation to the collective show in Milan (Italy), “*Ten to Twelve canvas project*”. Orna Kazimi belongs to the “Taasha Artists” (meaning “Hidden Artists”) an Afghan artistic group founded by Mohsen Taasha Wahidi. Orna Kazimi is the one and only woman of the group and she participates to the first collective show organised by the Taasha Artists in 2013, in *Alghuchack*, in Afghanistan. Still in the same year, Orna Kazimi starts off at the French Cultural Center of Afghanistan (FCC) in Kabul with her first solo show titled “*Naissance*”. The following year, 2014, she participates to the show “*Art Amongst War: Visual Culture in Afghanistan 1979-2014*” curated by Deborah Sutton and organised at the New Jersey Sarnoff Museum, in USA. The American retrospective is an interdisciplinary exposition aimed to analyse the changes in Afghanistan between 1979 and 2014. That means to focus on the way the visual culture has been influenced between thirty-five years of conflict. In January 2015, Orna Kazimi participates with “*Untitled*” to the show “*The Collective*” organised by Theca Gallery at Palazzo Bocconi in Milan (Italy).

Art Dubai 2015, the fair growing like international benchmark: 9 editions, 92 Gallery and over 500 artists



Edited by Grazia Tornese:

Now in its ninth year, Art Dubai is also this year as the most important art fair in the Middle East and South East Asia. From March 18 to 21 in the luxurious surroundings of Madinat Jumeirah were as many as 92 of the most important art galleries in the world. The secret of its success lies in its highly international, continued efforts in the years to overcome their geographical boundaries that allowed the festival to become an essential crossroads for industry experts.

The other aspect that makes it so attractive Art Dubai globally is its vast range of cultural non-profit organizations. Since the foundation has paid particular importance to the education sector by offering educational programs for children, scholarships for young artists and curators, internships and collaborations with universities. Other important initiatives are the Global Art Forum, which this year saw 50 reflect international guests including artists, writers, curators and technological innovators on the topic of technology applied to the world of art and Art Dubai Projects, an exhibition of site-specific works The winners of the Abraaj Art Prize Group.

A corollary also book presentations, a radio station, a video review, conferences and workshops, all in an atmosphere of strong vitality that involves the entire emirate.

Divided into three sectors, were more than five hundred artists exhibited. In Art Dubai Contemporary almost half of the galleries present solo and proposed bi personal. Such as Beirut's Galerie Tanit, which presented the biggest installation of photographer Fouad El Khoury, accompanied by poems by Etel Adnan; Chatterjee & Lal (Mumbai) that proposed a personal designs of Nikhil Chopra; the Sabrina Amrani Gallery (Madrid) that hosted the Brazilian artist Marlon de Azambuja, while the Atassi Gallery (Damascus) has exhibited the new works of the master Syrian Elias Zayat. The section also saw the presence of five leading Italian companies: the Galleria Continua of San Gimignano, which has proposed a staff of Michelangelo Pistoletto; Laura Bulian Gallery in Milan presented Elizabeth May; Marie-Laure Fleisch with the works of Giuseppe Stampone, Giacomo Guidi Art has exhibited the works of Maurizio Donzelli and Franco Noero gallery that has exhibited among others Lara Favaretto and Francesco Vezzoli.

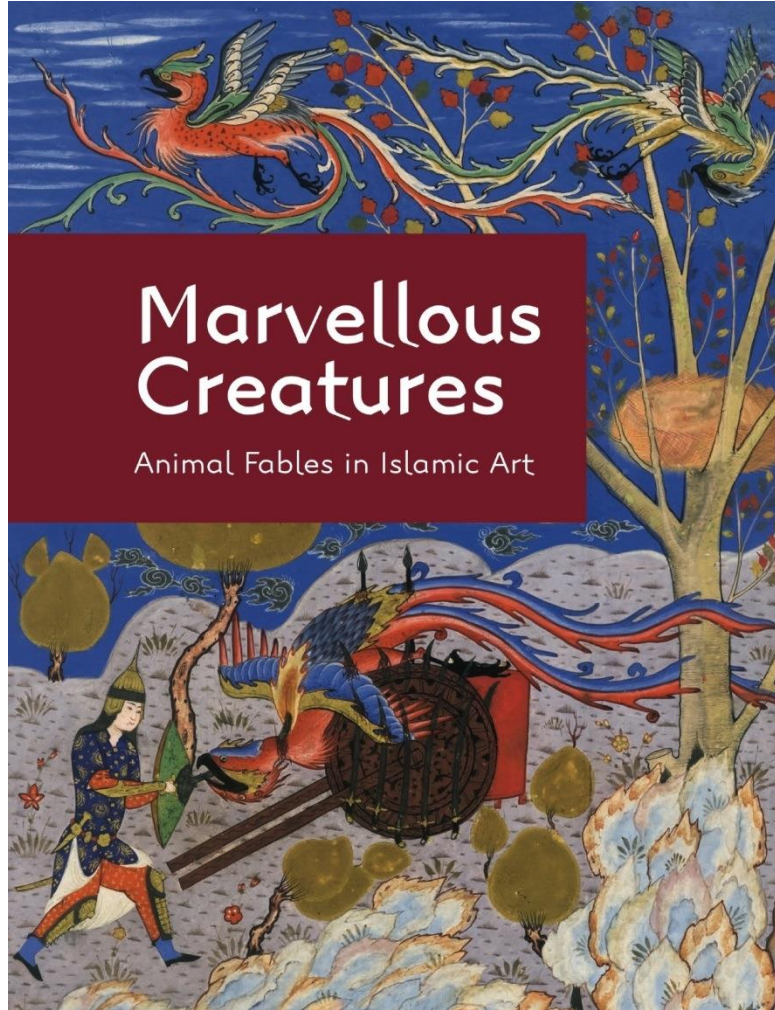


Title : Nurses
Artist : Anup Mathew Thomas
Date : 2014 Courtesy : Art Dubai 2014

Italian also a major sponsor, "the automaker Maserati. In its second year is Dubai Modern Art, the area dedicated to the artists of the twentieth century, with particular reference to the period between the 40s and 80s, who proposed solo and mixed by artists from Africa, the Middle East and from South Asia. Dubai Art Marker is the section that each year focuses on specific geographical areas and the respective relationship with the Arab world. 2015, with a group of thirty artists, was dedicated to Latin America.



Grazia Tornese studying contemporary art history at the University of Siena, a graduate student in environmental art and architecture del landscape with a thesis on the sculptor Luigi Mainolfi



Edited by Paola Gribaudo

The exhibition is at the Islamic Art Museum ,in Qatar,Doha from march 4 to july 11 ,2015,in the preface of the beautiful catalogue realized in Italy by Silvanaeditoriale,Her Excellency Sheika Al Maiassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani says that "This exhibition was an opportunity to highlight the deep cultural connections between Qatar and other areas of the Islamic world.Each object in this exhibition tells a fascinating story and The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) for the very first time is showcasing masterpieces from the national collections,as well as international institutions."



Artistic depictions of animals emerged in the cave paintings of Europe and Asia 35,000 years ago ,and the use of animal motifs,stories and symbols is central to the artistic production of many cultures,including that of the islamic world.Religious injunctions in the Islamic world mean that figural imagery is not present in the religious art ,including those in mosques.It is present from the folk tradition ,or as illustration of manuscripts ,beautiful pages with gold and watercolor decorations of 16th century from Shiraz ,Iran,embroidered textile panel in silk,leather,gold,from Mongol,a marvelous dagger hilt in the form of a parrot in jade ,gold and rubies from North India 17 th ,century,an Incense Burner or Pomander in the shape of a Falcon from Iran 12- 13 th century,a glass fish-shaped decoration from Syria or Egypt ,3th - 4 th century.



**Qatar Doha From 4 March to 11
july 2015**



The taxation of the works of art in the UAE



Edited by Alessia Panella, lawyer and professor of IED Venice

Lately there has been a twofold phenomenon that affects the combination of art and Islamic world: one is the most important museums in the world are organizing exhibitions on Islamic and some other operators in the Arab world have invested in museums or are very important managed to obtain a 'opening located in their territory. These countries are now considered by the market in general and the art world in particular emerging countries because in them is strong investment in culture and art. Thus constitute new markets. No coincidence that the international fairs are booming in the countries of the East (India, Singapore and Hong Kong) and there are many national and international operators who participate, gallery owners and collectors. Pure auction houses have moved to sell in this area of the world.

The UAE in particular have become a point of reference for art and culture internationally.

The Louvre, after many delays, is expected to open in 2018 also in the Arab city of Abu Dhabi. The new Louvre was designed by French architect Jean Nouvel and will be built on the waterfront of the Emirate, in Saadiyat Island, also known as "happiness" whose dome, also called flying saucer, will join the new home of the Guggenheim, consisting of a rectangular designed in a tangle of tube and cones by the famous American architect Frank Gehry Lord. Everything will be built next to the performing Arts Centre, designed by Zaha Hadid.

The name of museums and architects involved does understand the value of these investments in international culture and art in this geographical area. And in fact not surprisingly Thomas Krens, director of the Guggenheim Foundation, said that:



Photo: Avv. Alessia Panella,

... "The VAT on purchases in the field of art is absent, there is a 5% tax on imports and finally the legislation does not include any resale rights"...

"the Middle East is one of the most important emerging countries in terms of contemporary culture. "

Sobering then as the daughter of the Emir of Qatar, Al-Mayassa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, is on top of the list of buyers of works of art in the world and has resulted in Doha, capital of the small, priceless treasures.

This development, however, the result of very specific policy choices on taxation.

In fact the UAE is not applied any taxes except the branches of foreign banks, hotels and the big oil companies and gas. Customs duties are very low and may even be excluded for certain categories of products.

It should be noted that, for example, in Dubai there is legislation concerning tax (Dubai Income Tax Decree of 1969, as amended), but in the field of art was intended to facilitate and liberalize trade.

The VAT on purchases in the field of art is absent, there is a 5% tax on imports and finally the legislation does not include any resale rights.

To be specified later that the United Arab Emirates there are more than 30 Free Zone. In particular, in 2013, it was created the Dubai Design District (also known as D3) ie a free zone which is intended to attract world leaders in the sectors of art, fashion and design. Obviously the characteristics of the D3 are, as with all free zones, the absence of taxes and duties on imports and exports as well as the ability to bring capital abroad. It specifies that these areas will benefit from additional incentives in the art in view of Expo 2020.

In Italy we have already lost a great opportunity with Expo 2015. I wonder if our government will understand that the culture of a people is measured by what you invest in it. Hopefully in a few years even Italy can once again become the center of international investment and the art that you can then call it an emerging country!



Foto: Courtesy of: Massimiliano Pandolfi

India among economic development, art and culture

- ❑ “My East is your West”
- ❑ Asian Art development in the West
- ❑ **Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions**

*Area Research
e Investor Relations*

“My East is your West” Gujral Foundation (India) and Antonio Mazzotta Foundation (Italy) Collateral Event at 56. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte – Venice Biennale



6 May–1 October 2015
Palazzo Benzon
San Marco
Venice, 3927
gujralfoundation.org



a cura di Feroze Gujral

Opening today, My East is Your West is an exhibition which brings together the artistic practices of Shilpa Gupta (Mumbai, India) and Rashid Rana (Lahore, Pakistan) in an unparalleled effort to jointly present artists from the Indian subcontinent on a shared platform at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia. As neither India nor Pakistan has a permanent national pavilion in Venice, this presentation provides a unique platform for artists from South Asia to enter into a dialogue through the arts, representing the Indian subcontinent as one region.

“In his writings, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze says that whether we are individuals or groups, we are made of lines, which intrinsically tie humankind together. Yet, the lines that tie entities together can also possess, stifle, and partition. After sustaining a common history and cultural affinity that spans thousands of years, the Indian subcontinent was divided along an asymmetrical partition line in 1947, however, the imposed limits of nation-states and hemispheres are ruptured by the artistic imagination. Born out of the desire to reposition the complex climate of historical relations between the South Asian nation-states of India and Pakistan, My East is Your West is a proposal towards a shared cultural cartography where we meet beyond fixity.” – Natasha Ginwala

Titled after a light installation by Shilpa Gupta, My East is Your West is housed in the 17th Century Palazzo Benzon on Venice’s Grand Canal. Shilpa Gupta’s new series of work, Untitled (2014-15) brings together over four years of ongoing research into the India-Bangladesh borderlands. The India-Bangladesh border fence still under construction by the Indian state encircles its neighbour and is recognized as the longest security barrier between two adjoining nation-states in the world. Through works ranging from installation, video, photography, drawings, text-based pieces and performance, she intricately surveys the human condition from this territory and the transitory flows of goods and bodies that trespass security infrastructure, legislation and economic barriers.

In Transpositions (2013-15), Rashid Rana presents an immersive setting across five rooms surveying the conception of presence, temporality and location as collective experience, across digital printmaking, video and installation. His work negotiates between the actual and the remote, blurring the boundaries between acts of image-making and the inhabiting of a world – where the real operates as a recording of fiction, while we are made to observe the paradoxical lives of images in multi-layered constructed reality.

Comitato d'onore:

Richard Armstrong, Direttore della Fondazione Museo Solomon R. Guggenheim
Amin Jaffer, Direttore Internazionale Arte Asiatica, Christie's
David Elliot, curatore e scrittore
Anupam Poddar, fondatore direttore Devi Art Foundation
Madhuvanti Ghose, co-curatore The Art Institute of Chicago

Press day: lunedì 4 maggio ore 10 - 18

martedì 5 maggio ore 10 - 18

Ideazione e curatela: Feroze Gujral, Fondatore/Direttore Gujral Foundation

Artisti: Rashid Rana (Pakistan) e Shilpa Gupta (India)

Collaborazione per la curatela e eventi collaterali: Natasha Ginwala e Martina Mazzotta

Partner in Italia: FAM Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta

“My East is your West” Gujral Foundation (India) and Antonio Mazzotta Foundation (Italy) Collateral Event at 56. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte – Venice Biennale

(1/2)



My East is Your West is conceived by Feroze Gujral, Director and Founder of The Gujral Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting contemporary art and culture in South Asia. The Gujral Foundation has partnered with Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta on the project with Martina Mazzotta, Head Curator, programming collateral events in Italy. Natasha Ginwala is Curatorial Advisor and Curator of Public Programming.

Running alongside the project throughout the Biennale is Ancestors, a multi-part public programme curated by Natasha Ginwala as an interdisciplinary events platform for My East is Your West. Along with leading South Asian and international artists, writers, filmmakers, architects and theorists, these events seek to facilitate conversations that traverse a politically fraught region to deliberate its shared history, geographic affinity, cosmological knowledge and colonial legacies. The Ancestors public programme is held in collaboration with Britto Arts Trust, Goethe-Institut, Lahore Biennale Foundation and Sri Lanka Archive of Contemporary Art, Architecture & Design.

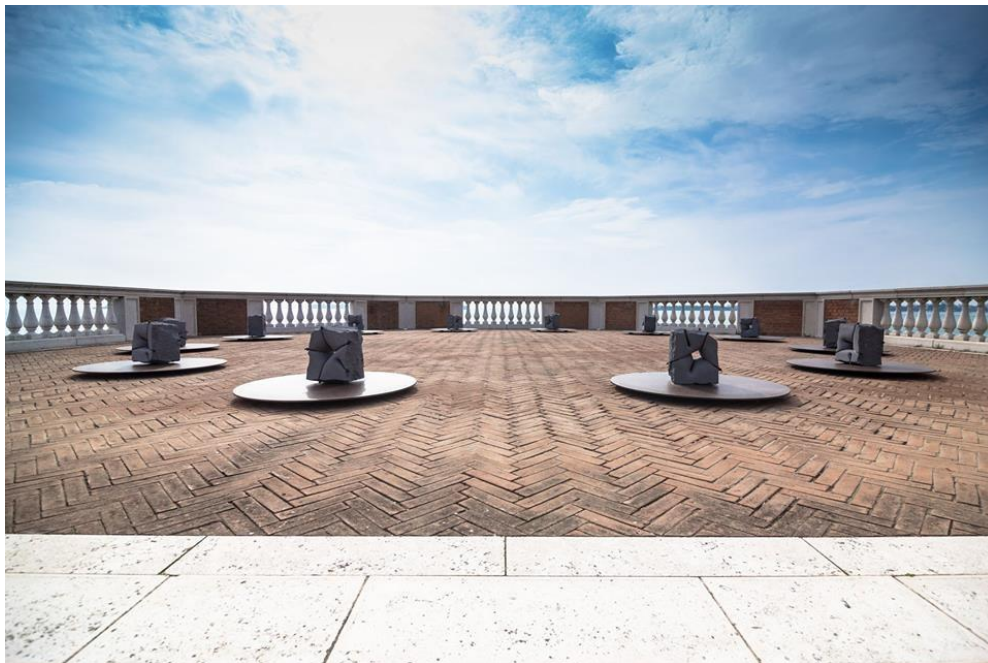
As part of the programme, artists Shilpa Gupta, Rashid Rana and Naeem Mohaiemen will participate in Imagined Cartographies, a conversation focusing on their recent practice and artistic methods to plot multiple perspectives on the idea of South Asia. The talk will take place at the Palazzo Benzon on Thursday 7 May from 11:00am – 12:30pm and will be moderated by Natasha Ginwala and Martina Mazzotta.

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Press Conference, February, 9 2015, Palazzo dei Giure Consulti, Milan.
Feroze Gujral, Martina Mazzotta Lanza



Mikayel Ohanjanyan, ? Courtesy the artist

On the occasion of the one hundredth commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the Ministry of Culture of the **Republic of Armenia** has dedicated its pavilion at the 56th Venice Art Biennale to the artists of the **Armenian diaspora**.

The exhibition, curated by **Adelina von Furstenberg**, will be located in a setting of special significance for the Armenian diaspora. It was on the Island of San Lazzaro, located between San Marco and the Lido and facing the Giardini of the Biennale, that in 1717 the Armenian monk Mekhitar established the Mekhitarist Order. It was here that in the early 19th century Lord Byron studied the Armenian language. Many important works of European literature and religious texts were first translated into Armenian on this scenic island.

The curatorial concept of **Armenity** implies the notion of displacement and territory, justice and reconciliation, ethos and resilience. Regardless of their place of birth, the selected artists carry within their identity the memory of their origins. Through their talent and willpower, these grandchildren of survivors of the Armenian Genocide—the first genocide of the 20th Century—rebuilt a "transnational assembly" from the remnants of a shattered identity. Their ingrained concern for memory, justice and reconciliation skillfully transcends notions of territory, borders and geography. Whether they were born in Beirut, Lyon, Los Angeles, or Cairo and wherever they may reside, these global citizens constantly question and reinvent their armenity.

In the context of **Armenity**, the **Piccolo Amphitheater of the Arsenale** will host from September 5 to 11 a series of performances, discussions and video projections by performing artists, poets and independent filmmakers originally from Asia Minor.

Commissioner: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia

Co-Commissioner: Art for the World Europa, Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro Island, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Italy, Vartan Karapetian

Curator: Adelina von Furstenberg

Artists:

Haig Aivazian, Nigol Bezjian, Anna Boghigian, Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, Silvina Der Meguerditchian, Rene Gabri, Ayreen Anastas, Mekhitar Garabedian, Aikaterini Gegisian, Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, Aram Jibilian, Nina Katchadourian, Melik Ohanian, Mikayel Ohanjanyan, Rosana Palazyan, [Sarkis](#) [Hrair Sarkissian](#).





Courtesy the artist

Azerbaijan presents two exhibitions to celebrate the voices of artists addressing social, political, and ecological questions of global relevance.

Beyond the Line Art can speak about environmental circumstances directly or allegorically. The Azerbaijani avant-garde artists of the mid-twentieth century, working in strictly controlled conditions, often resorted to the use of allegory. By the 1960s, artists who displayed 'rebellious' personal attitudes that deviated from Communist ideology were no longer arrested, executed, or banished. They were punished differently. Their works were ignored, they could not hold exhibitions, and they were not permitted to travel abroad. They were thus refused the guardianship of state structures regulating official art. Azerbaijan proudly presents their works in **Beyond the Line**, which showcases the Soviet period artwork of the non-conformist artists **Javad Mirjavadov, Tofik Javadov, Ashraf Murad, Rasim Babayev**, and sculptor **Fazil Najafov**.

The exhibition also includes the film 'Stepping over the Horizon' directed by **Shamil Najafzade** as well as an installation by **Huseyn Hagverdi**, whose career suffered under Soviet rule, but whose creativity nevertheless blossomed. These displays by hitherto obscure artists represents the victory of their indestructible spirit.

Today, they speak about their epoch from the heart, symbolizing 'the ecology of the human soul'.

Commissioner: Heydar Aliyev Foundation

Curator: de Pury de Pury, Emin Mammadov

Vita Vitale

Vita Vitale examines the delicate balance of our planet's ecosystem and the human impact on the natural world. It brings together contemporary artists from Austria, Canada, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Switzerland, UK, USA, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan — a presentation spanning the borders of language, cultural heritage, and geography — to raise awareness about our environment and the global transformation of the planet through human activity.

Multimedia works and installations by international artists — including **Mircea Cantor, Loris Cecchini, Tony Cragg, Jacco Olivier, Julian Opie, Graham Stevens, Diana Thater, and Andy Warhol** — the **IDEA Laboratory**, a site for developing imaginative solutions for future life, and the accompanying salon programme draw links between cutting-edge research in science and art, powerfully demonstrating how technological progress has resulted in a natural world beset by deforestation, burning fossil fuels, and ocean pollution.

The exhibition motivates us to reflect on our own integral roles in both the disruption and preservation of the ecology, asking us to confront the potential dangers of ignoring the messages that their works convey, while simultaneously suggesting creative tools and ideas for securing 'all the world's futures.'

Commissioner: Heydar Aliyev Foundation

Curator: Artwise: Susie Allen, Laura Culpan, Dea Vanagan

Artists:

Ashraf Murad, Javad Mirjavadov, Tofik Javadov, Rasim Babayev, Fazil Najafov, Huseyn Hagverdi, Shamil Najafzade, Edward Burtynsky, Mircea Cantor, Loris Cecchini, Gordon Cheung, Khalil Chishtee, Tony Cragg, Laura Ford, Noemie Goudal, Siobhán Hapaska, Paul Huxley, IDEA laboratory and Leyla Aliyeva, Chris Jordan with Rebecca Clark and Helena S.Eitel, Tania Kovats, Aida Mahmudova, Sayyora Muin, Jacco Olivier, Julian Opie, Julian Perry, Mike Perry, Bas Princen, Stephanie Quayle, Ugo Rondinone, Graham Stevens, Diana Thater, Andy Warhol, Bill Woodrow, Erwin Wurm, Rose Wylie.



Courtesy the artist

In that regards, the viewer can set a program of augmented reality on his cellular before entering the hall, and when applying this program on the phone screen or laptop or display screens inside the hall, will see two options, one negative and one positive, then the viewer chooses one. And observes the embodied in a different case the five letters switch to ten different scenes five positive and negative and deals The realistic interaction of the user by touching the screen for example, when trying to extinguish the fire with his hand on running away from fear when touching an animal. This programmed application in the Concept represents the knowledge of human being that affects his vision for the truth, and his vision in the formation of the peace that he wants under his own perspective.

Commissioner: Hany Al Ashlar

Curator: Ministry of Culture

The installation at the **Egyptian Pavilion** at the **56th Venice Biennale** consists of five three dimensional shapes that forms letters of the word PEACE covered with grass.

Peace represents Arabic lingual equivalent for paradise that is related to planting and greening as well as it represents the inner peace for The Human being.

Thus, the Audience seeks the path that achieves the word (PEACE), and represents the state that humans aim for whether aware or not aware of the entire truth.





Photo credits: The information Hole

Crawling Border is an interactive project which takes the form of a systemic chain of different chambers. "Borders" are a system of geographical dismemberment and an instrument for governing consciousness, which rapidly evolves and changes social mindsets. Part of humanity has managed to destroy the barriers which borders present, thus enabling trust, friendship and humanity to spread far and wide; but a different world exists in which hostility, distrust, racial and religious intolerance and aggressive separatism are still celebrated and where new borders or other barriers emerge and slowly crawl forward, ever expanding. Imposing differences between human beings causes conflict and alienation, and overcoming these barriers becomes dangerous and affronts human dignity. People must break through the barriers of our consciousness and create a world without borders... Georgia is a country of crawling borders, and this is the starting point of the project.

Zone

#1

Customs — Visitors must take their shoes off and place them in a plastic bag. Visitor passing through this black zone is shading and blocking light from photo of Georgia's crawling borders with his own body as a sign of lost territories.

Zone#2

Mirror Installation —A chamber with mirror screens and a mirror floor, in which a person sees his reflection with different silhouettes.

Zone#3

The Information Hole—A black corridor in which interactive videos and audio effects raise people's awareness of the events that have imposed borders upon human consciousness. After overcoming fear and emotional stress, the visitor proceeds to the **Kunstkamera**.

Zone#4

Kunstkamera - Space in which barefoot visitors feel themselves walk on sand. This room is full of vessels containing extinct organisms, stories about people leaving next to the newly appeared border, life objects and embryos as symbols of our past, future and present.

Zone#5

The Hole—A transitional corridor with crashing sounds.

Zone#6

The Final Point—The final and ironic ending point: a chamber with video art, in which people can watch milestones from their own lives through a toilet seat.

Commissioner: Ana Riaboshenko
Deputy commissioner: George Aptsiauri
Curator: Nia Mgaloblishvili

Artists:

Rusudan Khizanishvili, Irakli Bluishvili, Dimitri Chikvaidze, Joseph Sabia, Ia Liparteliani, Nia Mgaloblishvili, Sophio Shevardnadze.





Photo credits: Akam Shex Hadi, Kubani

The exhibition of this year's **Iran** pavilion, **Invisible Beauty**, will be curated by **Philippe Van Cauteren**, Artistic Director of S.M.A.K. (Museum for Contemporary Art) in Ghent. It will feature five contemporary artists from across Iraq and the diaspora. The artists work in a range of media and the Pavilion will include new works that have been produced specifically for the exhibition as well as works that have been rediscovered after long periods of inattention. The exhibition will be accompanied by a display of over 500 drawings made by refugees in northern Iraq. World renowned artist Ai Weiwei has selected a number of these drawings for a major publication that will launch at the Biennale.

'**Invisible Beauty**' refers both to the unusual or unexpected subjects in the works that will be on display and to the inevitable invisibility of Iraqi artists on the international stage. The relationship of art to survival, record-keeping, therapy and beauty are amongst the many themes raised by the exhibition. The endlessly interpretable title is intended to reveal the many different ways of approaching art generated by a country that has been subjected to war, genocide, violations of human rights and, in the last year, the rise of Isis. The systematic demolition of the cultural heritage of Iraq by Isis, seen recently in the destruction of centuries-old historical sites at Hatra, Nimrud and Nineveh and the events at the Mosul Museum, has made it more important than ever to focus on artists continuing to work in Iraq.

Curator **Philippe Van Cauteren** has said: 'Invisible Beauty is like a fragile membrane that registers the oscillations of an artistic practice permeated by the current condition of the country and the state of the arts.' The artists in the exhibition will comprise two generations of Iraqi photographers, in the shape of Latif Al Ani and Akam Shex Hadi, performance artist Rabab Ghazoul, ceramicist and sculptor Salam Atta Sabri and painter Haider Jabbar. This selection was chosen by Van Cauteren following a journey to Iraq that was organised and facilitated by Ruya and carried out in company with Tamara Chalabi, the Foundation's Chair and Co-founder. Van Cauteren and Chalabi also visited Iraqi artists working in the US, Turkey, Belgium and the UK.

Commissioner: Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq (RUYA)

Deputy commissioner: Nuova Icona - Associazione Culturale per le Arti

Curator: Philippe Van Cauteren



Israele National Pavilion_ 56° Biennale di Venezia

Beyond the Line



Tsibi Geva has been selected to present **Archeology of the Present** at the **Israeli Pavilion** in the **56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia**.

Geva, who lives and works in Tel Aviv, is one of Israel's most prominent and influential artists and has exhibited extensively in major venues in Israel, America, and Europe. Geva works in diverse media, his work often pushing beyond its physical limits into unique large-scale, site-specific installations. *Archeology of the Present* will extend over the exterior of the pavilion as well as through its interior, destabilizing familiar divisions between inside and outside, functional and the representational, high and low, abandoned, found, and manipulated elements. It will encompass formal and thematic elements characteristic of Geva's work throughout his career and will present paintings alongside sculptural installations and abandoned and manipulated objects, abolishing hierarchical distinctions between artistic mediums and structures. In doing so, the project will give expression to Geva's ongoing concern with elements related to the notion of 'home' – including terrazzo tiles, windows, shutters, lattices, and cement blocks; elements which exist as fragments of what once was, or could in principle constitute, a home.

The project will raise self-reflexive artistic concerns and epistemological questions, as well as political and cultural questions of locality and immigration, hybrid identity, existential anxiety and existence in an age of instability. The physical layout of the project will create sharp transitions between experiences of blockage, discomfort, or spatial ambiguity and intimate, poetic moments, so that fragility and crudeness, lyricism and violence, are inextricably intertwined. Geva's work contains numerous layers of significance shaped by processes of figuration and abstraction, revelation and concealment. The question of painting in particular, and of the art object in general, is present in his work alongside political and cultural questions, which simultaneously camouflage and enhance one another. Employing disruption and displacement, repetition and accumulation, Geva makes hybrid works that open up new discursive channels. Geva's long-term engagement with the stratified structure of identity, and *Archeology of the Present* in particular, will offer an opportunity to explore this notion within the wider narrative of nationality as proposed by the Venice Biennale. In a year when curator Okwui Enwezor proposes to focus on "All the World's Futures," Geva's site-specific, all-encompassing installation may also be read with regard to the current state of humanity and the world.

Commissioner: Arad Turgem, Michael Gov

Curator: Hadas Mayor

Artists: [Tsibi Geva](#)





Photo credits: Felipe Cardeña, 'Heart', 2012, Courtesy of the artist

The Origins of civilization —in taking on this theme, the Syrian Arab Republic Pavilion, now presenting its fifth exhibition at the 56th Venice Biennale, confirms the premises that have characterized it from the very first show, and that is reiterates its support for the development of a dialogue between free aesthetic expressions that represent the changing, multifarious appearance of the contemporary.

In order to respond to this theme, the Pavilion presents the work of artists from Syria (Narine Ali, Ehsan Alar, Fouad Dahdouh, and Nassouh Zaghlouleh), Italy (Aldo Damioli, Mauro Reggio, and Andrea Zucchi), China (Liu Shuishi), Spain (Felipe Cardeña), Albania (Helidon Xhixha), and Ukrain (Svitlana Grebenyuk), focusing on a stylistic physiognomy that has matured in very different environmental and historical circumstances. From this “conference” of different expressive worlds emerge urgent testimonies and questions regarding history, tradition, and the spiritual heritage of different peoples, making visitors aware of just how much the copresence of the past, present, and future sustains the human and vital drama of our times. From this point of view, the surprising polymorphism of artistic languages favors the assimilation of a complex aesthetic experience born of individual passion yet open to a vaster synchronicity of perceptions and visions.

Commissioner: Christian Maretti

Curator: Duccio Trombadori

Artists:

Narine Ali, Ehsan Alar, Felipe Cardeña, Fouad Dahdouh, Aldo Damioli, Mauro Reggio, Liu Shuishi, Nass ouh Zaghlouleh, Andrea Zucchi, Helidon Xhixha.



Turkey National Pavilion_ 56° Biennale di Venezia

Beyond the Line



Photo credits: Sarkis, photo courtesy of IKSV, courtesy of the artist

Respiro, a new installation by the influential artist Sarkis will be presented at the Pavilion of Turkey at the 56th International Art Exhibition, la Biennale di Venezia.

The presentation will take place at a dedicated new location at the Arsenale as recently secured by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) for the duration of 20 years from 2014 to 2034.

A graduate of Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Sarkis had his first exhibition at the Istanbul Art Gallery in 1960. Throughout his career, Sarkis has worked with various mediums and has been, since the end of the 1960s, an icon of installation art in particular. His works have been shown worldwide in important art institutions, museums, and galleries, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Kunst-und-Ausstellungshalle, Bonn, Germany; the Louvre, Paris; the Bode Museum, Berlin; and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany. Sarkis was also part of When Attitudes Become Form: Works - Concepts - Processes - Situation - Information (Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), Documenta VI and VII (Kassel, 1977 and 1982), and the biennials of Sydney, Shanghai, São Paulo, Moscow, and Istanbul.

Recently, Sarkis has had solo shows at Galeri Manâ (Istanbul, 2013), Arter (Istanbul, 2013), the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam, 2012); Galerie Nathalie Obadia (Paris, 2011 and 2014), MAMCO, Museum of Contemporary Art (Geneva, 2011), Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2010), and the Istanbul Modern (2009). He has been living and working in Paris since 1964.

The curator of the pavilion, Defne Ayas, has been the director and curator at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, since 2012. Prior to coming to Witte de With, Ayas was the founding co-director of Arthub Asia in Shanghai (2007-) and founding co-curator of the Blind Dates Project, an artistic platform dedicated to tackling what remains of the people, places, and cultures that were once part of the Ottoman Empire. Since 2005 she has been a curator at Performa, the biennial of performance art in New York. In September 2012, Ayas cocurated the 11th edition of the Baltic Triennial of International Art, to great acclaim. Ayas was the education and new media programs coordinator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York before attending the De Appel curatorial program in Amsterdam. She received an MA from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University in 2003, and a BA in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia in 1999.

Commissioner: Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts

Curator: Defne Ayas





Photo credits: Mohammed Kazeem, untitled (Autobiography), 1997, courtesy of the artist.

Drawing upon extensive historical research, **Sheikha Hoor bint Sultan Al Qasimi**, curator for the **National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE)** la Biennale di Venezia and President and Director of the Sharjah Art Foundation, will present a diverse assemblage of work by key figures in the country's art history at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia. Titled **1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates**, the exhibition features 15 featured artists, including Ahmed Al Ansari, Moosa Al Halyan, Mohammed Al Qassab, Abdul Qader Al Rais, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Abdullah Bulhiah, Salem Jawhar, Mohammed Kazem, Dr. Najat Meky, Abdulraheem Salim, Ahmad Sharif, Hassan Sharif, Obaid Suroor, Dr. Mohamed Yousif, and Abdulrahman Zainal. The National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development.

This exhibition will present a selection of works from different decades highlighting the emergence of art practices in the UAE. The Emirates Fine Arts Society, a non-profit association that was formed in 1980 in Sharjah, has served as a main point of focus and inspiration for research.

Commissioner: Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation

Curator: Sheikha Hoor bint Sultan Al Qasimi

Artists:

[Ahmed Al Ansari](#) [Moosa Al Halyan](#) [Mohammed Al Qassab](#) [Abdul Qader Al Rais](#) [Abdullah Al Saadi](#) [Mohammed Abdullah Bulhiah](#) [Salem Jawhar](#) [Mohammed Kazem](#) [Dr. Najat Meky](#) [Abdulraheem Salim](#) [Ahmad Sharif](#) [Hassan Sharif](#) [Obaid Suroor](#) [Dr. Mohamed Yousif](#) [Abdulrahman Zainal](#)



Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (1/6)



Gayatri Sinha

I want to speak briefly about issues of critical writing and criticality in India, my reference points will be to some foundational developments and my own position as a critic-curator; I will also dwell a little more on the recent period.

The Agency of Crisis

The critic in India is heralded along different paths; other than the media critic there is the artist-critic, who also doubles up as ideologue, or theoretician, the critic-curator, as well as the critic-biographer who has become the prolific writer of the artist monograph. The critic-curator and the critic-biographer are a contemporary phenomenon. Yet despite the proliferating types of critic and critical writing, there is universal agreement that art criticism is in a state of crisis.

It is ironic but no accident that this national seminar comes in the wake of the cultural tourism and the massive opportunities for art criticism that surrounds the mad proliferation of art fairs and biennales in a globalized world. We are in the throes of an art world food chain that moves from artist to independent curator to dealer/gallerist to critic to museum curator to art historian. In this cascade of opportunity, perhaps the language of art criticism has not been prepared for the problem of pleasure, or the problem of excess.

Art criticism of various kinds has been identified but it moves from two extremes; of art journalism to academics and very often they are pitted against each other. The academic critic dismisses art journalism as a vested interest of commerce; media structures after all are owned by private business interests.

The argument against academic criticism is that it is obscure. In *Critical Mass* ed Raphael Rubinstein, Michael Duncan states "Academic theory can be held largely responsible for the impotency of contemporary criticism". The essential questions is, whom does the art critic serve? We may expand Duncan's statement to look at the locus of art criticism today.

The practice as we know it traces its roots to what Habermas describes as the "literary public sphere", one that defined public opinion. Today the art critic's space competes in a shared field with theory, art history, aesthetics and opinion formation through curatorial writing. Recent writing in the west unequivocally suggests that as a modern practice, art criticism has not graduated to the authority of a discipline. I refer here to the two round tables organized by James Elkins and Michael Neuman with leading western world art critics and the ensuing publication titled *The State of Art Criticism* (2007). The overarching argument in the volume is that art critics have recanted from their own practice since they do not judge the art work but only describe it. At the same time art writing is flourishing through publications like catalogues – soft and flabby, without teeth and outside culture debates. By saying that "Art criticism is diaphanous; it is like a veil, floating in the breeze of cultural conversations and never quite settling anywhere", Elkins suggests that art criticism does not in fact have a location.



Charles Baudelaire's Salon of 1845 art review shocked its audience with its ideas.

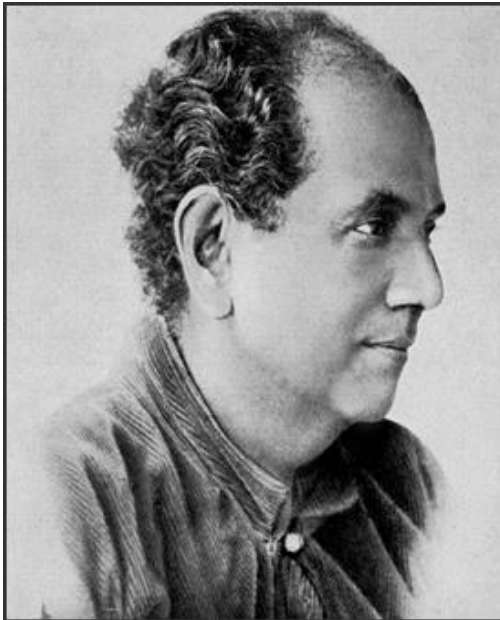
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Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (2/6)



Art Criticism: The case of India

I would like to briefly examine the case of India. Historically the artist-critic has tended to flourish and compete with the media critic. Whereas the media critic traditionally had a location in a mass publication, the artist critic would write to determine or challenge the course of art history, to establish difference. The singular artist who set up an engagement with art as critical and artistic enterprise was Abanindranath



Abanindranath Tagore

http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abanindranath_Tagore#/media/File:Abanindranath_Tagore_photo.jpg

Tagore though Rabindranath is a parallel example.

Abanindranath Tagore's association with the Bichitra Club and the Indian Society of Oriental Art created space for debate and engagement, and the setting up of a language of criticism. Art writing was intrinsic to his practice as well as a necessary aspect of pedagogy. In his essays on art Abanindranath set up a dialogic exchange with art history but also with his own practice, and this is a model that we see replicated later by KG Subramanyan. The Abanindranath case is somewhat spectacular because of the penumbra of writers, critics and artists that surrounded him, each of whom espoused the Abanindranath model. The avowed intent in the Abanindranath commemorative volume published by the ISOA was to establish him "as an artist and an art critic".

In the publication produced ten years after his death among the other essays we read Pramathanath Bisi's analysis of his literary genius, and Abanindranath's own essay on Shadanga or the six limbs of painting. There is his student Benode Bihari's essay that heralds the role of Abanindranath as a nationalist artist critic within the context of the regional, hinting hereby at the tension between the authentic indigenist critic and the western metropolitan or media critic. BB Mukherjee takes on the English language press critic and writes – "Among the newly educated society everywhere there prevailed in art criticism sarcasm in place of argument and fascination in place of aesthetic judgement. To them the verdict of an Englishman used to be the last word in matters of art". It is important to see here Benode Behari's equation of art criticism with the cultural aggrandizement of the English language press. He then quotes Havell and Coomaraswamy to argue that Abanindranath and his pupils represent "a phase of national awakening", and he concludes "It is the influence of Abanindranath that has made us modern. And now that we have become modern we turn to understand the classical Indian art".

My intention in mapping this brief history is two fold: to illustrate the model for the artist as critic/ ideologue and then map the movement into the present day when it manifests as the relationship between the local global. The artist-critic has flourished where there is a school, or a shared ideal, or what for the most of the 20th century, was the artist group, the precursor of the artist's collective. Artist-ideologues who occupy the critical space after Abanindranath Tagore are KCS Panikker who simultaneous with his paintings series Words and Images initiated an entire aesthetic of abstraction in the Madras College of Art post 1966, KG Subramanyan who with Moving Finger and other writings interjects as critic at the site of pedagogy, in this case M S University and Santiniketan. KG plays his own doppelganger with the fictitious Mu Chi, a sort of post Okakura interlocutor. His freewheeling somewhat self deprecating dialogue with Mu Chi also brings the whole East Asian influence on early 20th century art – as argued by Okakura, Rabindranath and Abanindranath – into full circle. Among the most influential of the artist as critic are J Swaminathan in his publication Contra, his writings in Link wherein he directly confronts the academic realism of Ravi Varma, what he calls the sentimentalism of the Bengal school and the imitateness of India's abstract expressionists. Swaminathan's view of the newspaper critic was dismissive, even as he assumed the mantle for himself. In Contra he described art critics as "these peripheral pen pushers of the newspaper world who bring the attitudes of a flunkey to art appreciation".

Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (3/6)

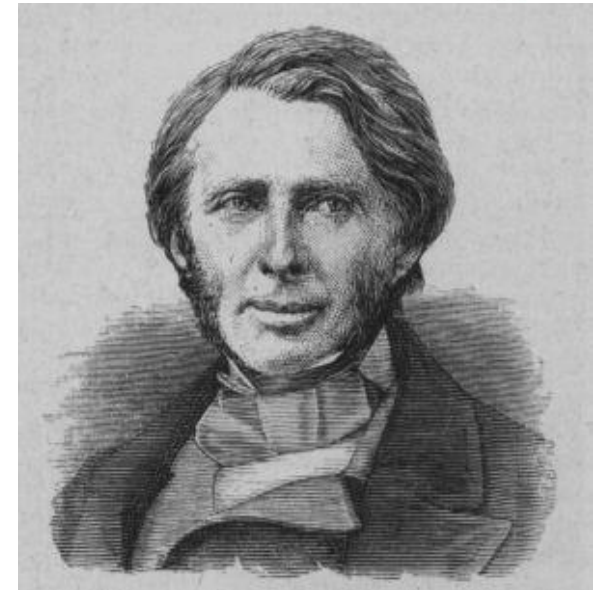


Gulam Sheikh, and Bhupen Khakhar who edited *Vrishchik* in Gujarati, Jogen Choudhury's writing in Bengali are other examples, of the influence that the artist as critical writer has wielded.

The artist-critic has also come to occupy a moral high ground especially where art aspires to the goals of nationalism, beauty, aesthetic value, and the over-determined category of 'Indianness'. This high ground shifts to that of protest with Vivan Sundaram and SAHMAT where critical values cohere with those of the secular community, and to praxis and mediatic engagement with RAQS and their association organization Sarai.

The question arises around the position of the critic in India, whether it has been enhanced or depleted by the presence of the artist-critic and more recently the curator-critic. Criticism in India is a modern discipline, although writers like Mallinath in the 9th century have been credited for his critical/analytical writing on Kalidas. India has a tradition of royal hagiography, Puranic literature, poetry and commentary; when Keshavadas wrote the *Rasikapriya* in the 17th century it attracted 300 commentaries. Criticism as a discipline comes with newspapers, art schools and the influence of **John Ruskin** in the 19th century, and has flourished where print media activity was strong. It also carries with it contemporary social and political flavour. The period of 1905-1920 which marked the nationalist struggle was also the period of the nationalist newspaper such as *Bande Mataram* edited by Aurobindo Ghosh (1906), *Madan Mohan Malviya's Leader* (1909), *Pheroze Shah Mehta's Bombay Chronicle*, *New India*

and *Commonweal* of Annie Besant, *Comrade* in 1911 by Mhd Ali Jinnah, *Independent* (1919) edited by ML Nehru, *Tribune Lahore* (1919) and among the monthlies *Modern Review* by Ramananda Chatterjee in 1911. Several of these as editor-ideologue were also free-wheeling commentators on aesthetic values in society and on the cultivation of taste. In Lahore, Bombay and pre-1940's Calcutta the English and regional language press worked closely to cover exhibitions and the line between the writer as promoter of an art-national aesthetic and as a critic was often very thin. In Bengal there were a number of art journals like *Purabi*, *Pravasi* and *Basumati*; Rabindranath Tagore and Ramananda Chatterjee's position on the academic style of Ravi Varma and GK Mhatre were played out in the public domain, Ramananda Chatterjee and Saumyendranath Tagore wrote with an implicit sympathy for Abanindranath and his followers and what came to be known as the Neo-Bengal school. In this period art critics were in the forefront of defining Indian practice. The sources for work were the numerous art salons and societies (Bombay Calcutta Simla) as well as the British Empire Exhibitions. Sarada Ukil started the Delhi School of Art in 1926 followed it with the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society and then the journal *Rooplekha*. In this period of nation building, often the art institution was the site for the art journal. Through journals like *Pravasi*, *Basumati*, *Rooplekha*, *Marg* and papers like *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Bombay Chronicle* with critics like Mulk Raj Anand,



John Ruskin, the preeminent art critic of 19th century England.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_criticism#/media/File:John_Ruskin_-_Project_Gutenberg_eText_13103.jpg

MS Randhawa, *The Times* art critic PG Konody criticism established a tone that was chatty often unashamedly critical, or ecstatic.

The list of newspaper critics of over the 60-70 years is long and exhaustive, but I would like to mention two or three periods in which the media critic has worked actively with the artist to promote a new way of receiving art. I am limiting myself to the English language press. Consider the significant shift between the Bengal art journal and the critic's role in post-Independence Bombay as dominant forms of critical discourse.

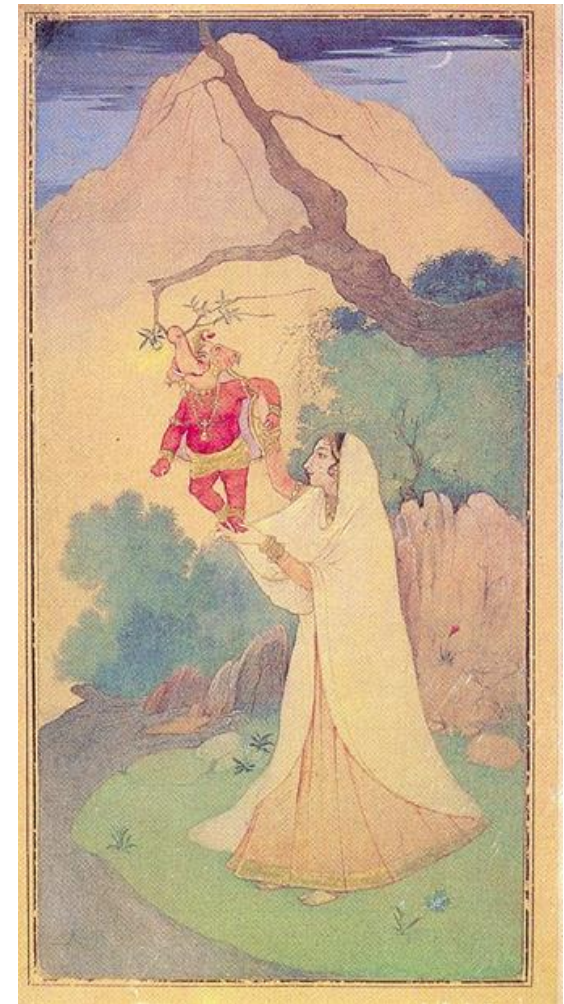
Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (4/6)



The list of newspaper critics of over the 60-70 years is long and exhaustive, but I would like to mention two or three periods in which the media critic has worked actively with the artist to promote a new way of receiving art. I am limiting myself the English language press. Consider the significant shift between the Bengal art journal and the critic's role in post Independence Bombay as dominant forms of critical discourse. The Bengal school received regular support from Bengali journals and ISOA publications. Upto the 1970's ISOA sponsored books on Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Nandalal Bose are examples in which writers from polyvalent disciplines contribute to create a bedrock that is conceptual and ideational; this is in comparison to newspaper criticism with its overriding preoccupation with the modern. In contrast Rudi von Leyden in The Times of India, Charles Fabri in the Civil and Military Gazette in Lahore and The Statesman in Delhi and later Richard Bartholomew in Delhi were influential in promoting kinds of art practice. Von Leyden and Nissim Ezekiel on the PAG, Fabri on Sher-Gil and Gujral, and Bartholomew as leading critic from the 50's to the 80's with his serendipitous espousal of Ram Kumar are some examples. The critic also played a role in demolishing established reputations putting into play conflicting claims at the site of the modern. Writing a review of Bengal art in the 1940's Von Leyden wrote "Ram Kinkar is unsuccessful in modern experiments,the school work is so disappointingly mediocre or even bad that it shocked many who expected much from the names with which it is connected..... (some of the works are) horrifying experiments of the indiscriminate mixing of styles". Here the example of Amrita Sher-Gil's success is instructive. Sher-Gil gained national recognition at least because of the espousal of her work by critics and writers over six decades – Karl Khandalavala's book published in 1946, and her enthusiastic reception by Mulk Raj, Charles Fabri, the Marg volume of 1972,

biographies by Iqbal Malik and Yashodhara Dalmina and now a forthcoming book by Vivan Sundaram. No other artist, not even Rabindranath has been so supported by generations of critical writing. Bartholomew is worth serious study because he straddled institutional and media practice simultaneously. Richard Bartholomew was director of Kunika gallery from 1960 to 1962 and critic of The Indian Express 1958-62, of Thought from 1955-60 then The Times of India from 1962 till 1980. He was also Secretary Lalit Kala Akademi from 1977-85. He drove a wedge into critical practice by being simultaneously the director of a privately owned gallery, the critic of The Times and secretary of the Lalit Kala. In this way he sets up the model of the critic-curator as we know it today. He also initiated critical biography with his monographs on Krishna Reddy and Husain (1971). By lecturing on Indian art in the USA 1970-71 on a JDR III fund Bartholomew established a unitary profile of the critic. Even though he wrote newspaper criticism Richard Bartholomew was perceived as "sympathetic". At the time of his passing Husain's glowing epitaph described him as "Richard the poet, painter, photographer, art critic and above all a true friend of us all, the artists".

The history of Indian art has been determined by critics who played a proactive role in determining an aesthetic or critical realization. I refer here to O C Gangooly on Gaganendranath Tagore, Stella Kramrisch and her espousal of Sunayani Devi, Karl Khandalavala and his support for Amrita Sher-Gil, Richard Bartholomew and Ram Kumar, Joseph James and South Indian sculpture, which he espoused for its classical/modern aesthetic and Geeta Kapur and her vision that straddles the articulation from the modern to the postmodern. These set in motion the position of the critic – biographer and the list of writing here is long – Kapur's essays on Bhupen Khakhar or Nasreen Mohammadi can be singled out.



"Ganesh-janani" by Abanindranath Tagore.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abanindranath_Tagore#/media/File:Ganesh_Janani.jpg

Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (5/6)



Abanindranath Tagore *The Passing of Shah Jahan* (1900)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abanindranath_Tagore#/media/File:The_Passing_of_Shah_Jahan.jpg

A distinct aspect of Geeta Kapur's practice is that she has overseen at least two major periods of artistic and critical transaction from the modern to the contemporary, from the post modern to the global-local. Her work has largely been supported by state and museum structures and in that sense falls within the modernist paradigm of institutional support. I am referring to the critical two or three decades from Pictorial Space in 1977 to the curated exhibitions of the Festivals of India to her 100 years of Indian Art in the NGMA.

Critical writing is deeply dependent on economies both of the state and the market. The Indian art critic's position lies between these two streams of the institutional and its precondition of presuming a kind of triumphant overarching national space and the media with its somewhat less committed positions. The third variant since the late 1990's is of the market, which would like to appropriate but has actually laid redundant both the institution and mediatic structures as we know them. There is also the phenomenon of the artist-curator who dispenses with the accompaniment of critical writing, positioning himself as an interjection into the mainstream.

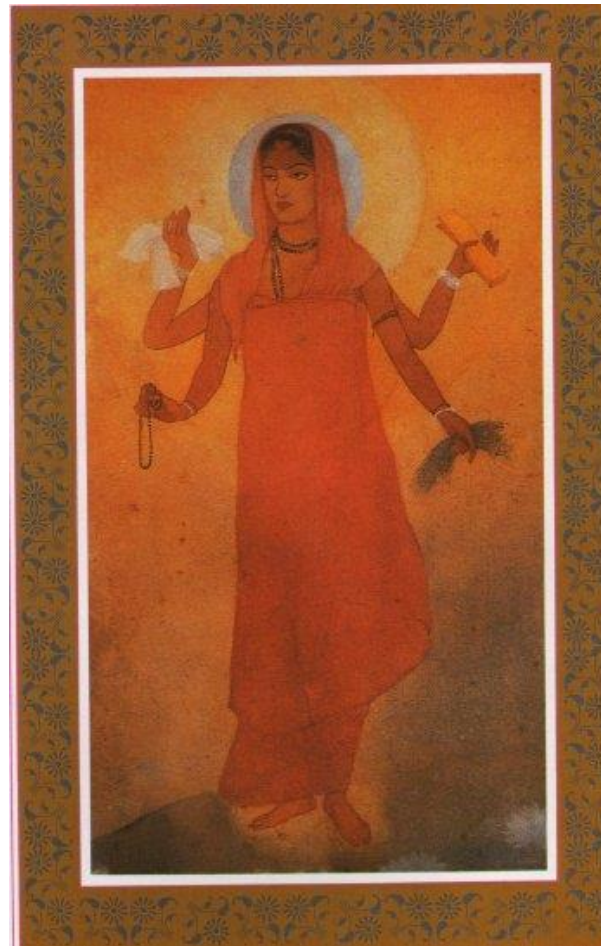
As we know it, today, the art critic is compelled to create systems, even where no systems exist. Twenty years later we may look back on this time and find a pile of excessively argued, unedited glossy catalogues masquerading as art criticism for our times. Criticism is about the creation of taste. But the critic is also interpreter who provides context – historical social, artistic. And in the best cases she is also an inspiration to practice as witnessed in Clement Greenberg's position in American abstract expressionism.

In the present context the identified areas of crisis in art criticism may be summarized:

1. Art history and criticism is dominated by meta-criticism rather than the taking of strong stands and unequivocal appraisal. .
2. Art criticism flows into cultural criticism rather than stands as an independent discipline.
3. The hermetic nature of art criticism is such that only academics can read and understand it.
4. Curators turn exhibitions into academic propositions of political positions. They have emerged more powerful in creating public opinion than art critics.

Going forward, perhaps we need to understand art criticism not only as a discipline but as a philosophy; a rhetorical activity embedded in debate around the subject of public meanings. Here finally we are confronted with two streams, and I put these as propositions before you that when a public sphere of the Habermasian kind has vanished, even as art journalism flourishes, then what can be the role of the critic? I refer to readings of art criticism by two leading critic-theorists, James Elkins and Irit Rogoff. Elkin's argument in *Art Criticism: Writing without Readers* opens thus: "Art Criticism is in worldwide crisis. Its voice has become very weak and it is dissolving into the background clutter of ephemeral cultural criticism." In the same breadth Elkins argues that art criticism has a heightened visibility through broadsheets catalogues, blogs, art magazines and so on, but as an intellectual discipline, it is dying and must function at the edges of theory or the fringes of academia. As a source it is never cited. This despite the fact that AICA, the International Association of Art Critics has 4000 members in 70 countries. Elkins own argument is that the authority of the critic lies in judging a work of art.

Art Criticism in India : A Brief History and critical compulsions (6/6)



Abanindranath Tagore : *Bharat Mata*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abanindranath_Tagore#/media/File:Bharat_Mata.jpg

What then is the undertaking of the critic? This is both a question and a lament.

The counter proposition is that perhaps it is time for us to acknowledge that the lines between art critic, theorist and writer have been permanently blurred. The critic as one in service of interpretation or explication appears to have made way for a more autonomous figure, one who does not only work in a retroactive mode. "The old boundaries between making and theorizing, historicizing and displaying, criticizing and affirming have long been eroded..... Now we think of all these practices (curation, art making, criticism) as linked in a complex process of knowledge production instead of the earlier separation into creativity and criticism, production and application." Irit Rogoff.

In my own practice I find the laying out of the skeins of such a journey. This is in my work of a news paper critic in the 1989- 2006, of a curator and editor since the 1990's with particular address of women's practice and representation, as well as work with photo archives and performativity especially in photography and video. In the late 1980's the modus operandi for any critic was report on any art event overnight – actively forming opinion in a hierarchy of public taste. In the mid 80's India was entering its first phase of the emergent critic – curator with the large festivals of India phenomenon. It was also a period when the artist's position in activism, in distancing himself from state sponsorship of the arts became apparent. The visual arts became a locus for social consciousness and by extension of social history, politics and critical theory. There is a definite movement in the brief chatty and highly opinionated reviews of the 70s to the discursive critical arguments of post coloniality, economics, the geopolitics of South Asia of the late 1980's and early 1990's. As a critic I wrote because I believe so completely in the public function of criticism, in the pleasure and possibility of language, and in the making of critical discourse.

However the space for criticism has shrunk ; there is a penumbra of failed functions, in terms of the art editor, the publication of critical writing and its wide dissemination by publishers, the lack of support by state museums to critical writing and meaningful curation.

In this journey with regard to critical writing there is both a sense of enhancement and loss, to a reworking. This is the movement that Rogoff speaks of as a movement from "criticism to critique to criticality". The movement "from finding fault to examining the existing condition with its human and political ramifications" in which the writer is finally not an observer alone, but an equal participant and fellow traveler.

GAYATRI SINHA

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The trend in the art market : focus Middle East and Indian Art

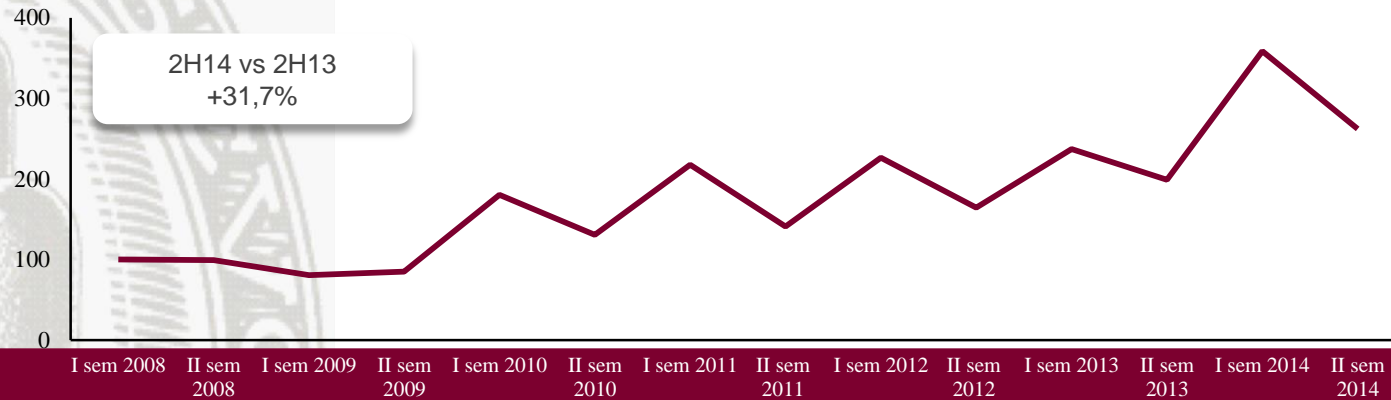
- ❑ The MPS Global Painting Art Index: evolution from 2008 to 2014 II sem
- ❑ Asian art market, focus India and the Middle East
- ❑ Available on request trends of the MPS indices based on Art Auctions
- ❑ Main auction of April

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The MPS Global Painting Art Index: evolution from 2008 to 2014 II sem



MPS Global Painting Art Index



→ Results of the second half of 2014 show a net growth in the second semester of the Year previous respect, the MPS Painting Global Index And Increase +31.7 % y/y. The result looks find evidence both segments increased capitalization, in particular: MPS Art Pre War Index (+ 73 % y / y), MPS Art Post War Index (+ 52 % y / y) and Mps Art Old Masters and 19th century Index (+ 59 % y / y)

→ The catalog makes the difference: the good works of quality, confirming a public -oriented masterpieces of historical importance.

→ Such an expansion mainly reflects the underlying growth of the Chinese market, in turn supported by the economy of the country, as well as the strengthening of the high-end segment in the West.

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Starting in the 2000s, new curators rather than art dealers, gallerists and directors of fairs began to focus their purchases on states and countries that were not previously considered among the leading manufacturers of contemporary art, such as Brazil, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Turkey, Iran and Africa. Works of Turkish, Indians and Mexicans artists started to appear at auctions in New York and then began to devote customized sessions to them, opened branches in the countries with emerging artists.

The United Arab Emirates, China, India, Brazil, Turkey: these are the new strategic markets to which auction houses, as well as potential investors, look. Christie's is always leading: in 2006 it opened an office in Dubai, in 2013 it made the first sale Shanghai and Mumbai. It was followed by Sotheby's, which has about 90 offices around the world.

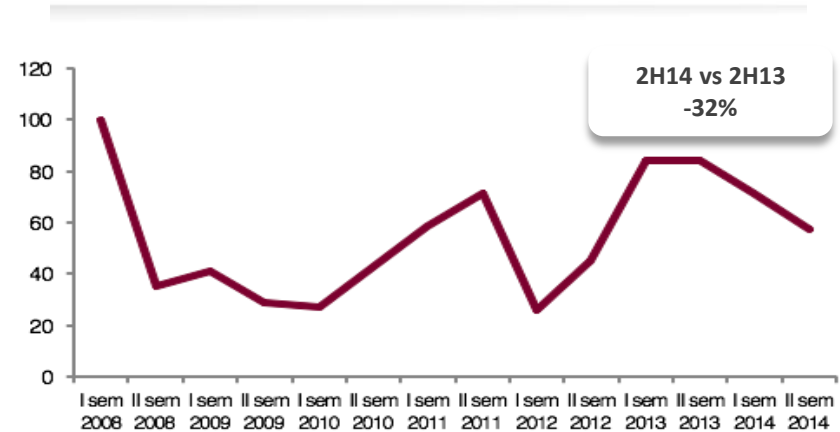
Speaking of emerging contemporary art, we must focus on the art market of the country with a GDP growth of 6.9% in 2014: India. Christie's remains the leading auction house with regard to modern and contemporary art of India, having a 49% market share in 2013, based on the traditional auction in March, June and September.

In 2013, Sotheby's held a 33% market share, while the remainder was almost entirely attributable to the auction house Saffronart. Christie's Indian Modern and Contemporary sales focus on works of painting, sculpture, photography and installations by artists from different parts of India - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The Department of South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art at Christie's is internationally recognized especially for the art auction *The Art of Souza: Property from the Estate of Francis Newton Souza* and for the sale of *Mahishasura* by **Tyeb Mehta**.

The first, held at the British headquarters South Kensington on June 9, 2010 - totaled 5.449.025 pounds, while the second sold in autumn 2005 in New York - for 1.548.000 dollars. In the last South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art session the protagonists were **Manjit Bawa** and **Syed Haider Raza**. The former, with the oil on canvas *Untitled (Durga)* totaled 425.000 dollars, the latter has placed three of his works between batches that have scored the highest hammer price:

- *Ouragan (Hurricane)*, oil on canvas, 1959, sold 341.000 dollars;
- *Untitled (Midnight Sky)*, oil on canvas, 1958, sold 221.000 dollars;
- *Blue*, oil on canvas, 1972, sold 185.000 dollars.

MPS Asian Painting Art Index



In December of 2013, Christie's inaugurated its Mumbai headquarters led by Sonal Singh. In 2013, the first auction devoted entirely to the art of India has totaled approximately 15.4 million dollars, followed by a second auction in December 2014 that totaled 12.1 million dollars by selling about 90% of the lots in the catalog. On that occasion, Christie's presented great authors of Indian art such as **Jehangir Sabavala**, **Tyeb Mehta**, **Bhupen Khakhar**, up to contemporaries such as **Subodh Gupta**, **Rashid Rana**, **Mithu Sen**, **Thukral & Tagra** and **Bharti Kher**.

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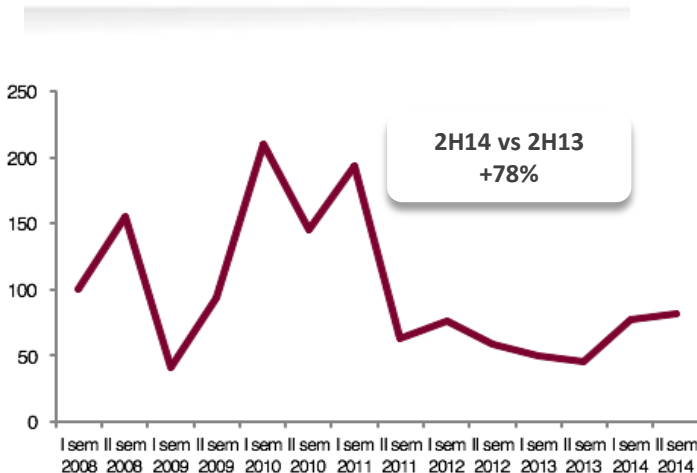
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Sotheby's, the second auction house in the world, has devoted several sessions to the *Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art* auction led by **Priyanka Mathew**. Sotheby's appointments were modeled after the calendar of its competitor, Christie's, where the last race of October 2014 sold 4.697.975 pounds (463.889.004 INR), led by the masterpiece by **Tyeb Mehta** (Blu painting, oil on canvas, 1982), purchased for 1118.500 pounds, followed by a work of **Akbar Padamsee** (*Prophet I*, oil on canvas, 1952), sold for 530.500 pounds, and one of **Sayed Haider Raza** (*Church at Meulan*, oil on canvas, 1956), sold for 206.500 pounds.

Below are the main collections of the latest **Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art** auctions:

MPS South Asian Painting Art Index



The last auction house engaged in Indian art is Saffronart. Founded in 2000 with the idea of being a platform for online buying and selling of works of art, it was then divided into various Departments. Saffronart has expanded its objective through its first Live *Francis Newton Souza: Works from the Collection of Keren Souza Kohn* in 2011, in Mumbai followed, in 2013, by other auctions devoted to *Modern and Contemporary Indian Art*. In the last auction, *Contemporary Day Sale* on 12 February 2015, all 67 lots in the catalog were sold, totaling 1.475.567 dollars. The main artists were **Subodh Gupta** (*Idol Thief-2*, oil on canvas, 2006), sold 177.049 dollars, **Bharti Kher** (*Train'D To Kill 1*, 2008), sold 167.213 dollars, and **T V Santhosh** (*A Stone's Throw Away*, oil on canvas, 2005), sold 108.197 dollars. In addition, since seven years ago India boasts an international art fair, which in 2015 was held from 29 January to 1 February. Among the protagonists, there were numerous Indian ones, such as Aakriti Art Gallery (Kolkata), Apparao Galleries (Chennai), Archer Art Gallery (Ahmedabad), Art Alive Gallery (New Delhi), Art Heritage (New Delhi), Art Indus (New Delhi), Arushi Arts (New Delhi), Chemould Prescott Road (Mumbai), Jhaveri Contemporary (Mumbai),

Nature Morte (New Delhi), Chelmoud Prescott Road (Mumbai) and GallerySKE (Nuova Dehli). The last two, in particular, have participated to Art Basel last June, presenting significant works of contemporary Indian art. The GallerySKE, which this year will be in its sixth consecutive year of participation to Art Basel, presented in 2014, the video installation *Waiting for others to arrive* by **Sudarshan Shetty**. The Chelmoud Prescott Road, participating since 2010 to the Miami and Hong Kong editions of Art Basel, has proposed an installation called *The Hero* by **Atul Dodiya** where the *assemblage* of objects and portraits constitutes a single work of art, and the installation by **Hema Upadhyay** (this year included among the artists of the 56th International Art Exhibition - Pavilion Iran curated by Marco Meneguzzo and Mazdak Faiznia) consisting of two panels of paper covered with grains of white rice with quotes philosophers readable only through magnifying glasses. The Chelmoud Prescott Road confirmed these two artists also for India Art Fair this year, while Art Basel next June will exhibit works of **Reena Saini Kallat**, **Dhruvi Acharya** and **Bhuvanesh Gowda**.

Despite the 3% growth (from 2012 to 2013) and an increase in confidence in the market dictated by the opening of Christie's headquarters in Mumbai, ArtTatic experts believe that the Indian art market will need 2 - 3 years of stable growth more to be able to be defined as art and finance industry. However, we can surely speak of a changing market.

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Main auction of April



Week	CASA D'ASTE	Tipologia	Date	Sales	Number of lots	Place
I Week	Christie's	The Winkworth Collection: a treasure house of canadiana in London	1-apr-15	5.192.998,00	308	London
	Sotheby's	Trois Collections Particulières Miniatures, Dessins Anciens et du XIXe siècle, Tableaux du XIXe siècle	1-apr-15	829.631,00	208	Paris
	Sotheby's	Photographs	1-apr-15	5.166.875,00	188	New York
	Sotheby's	The New York Sale	1-apr-15	2.101.814,00	91	New York
	Sotheby's	Contemporary Literati: Curiosity	5-apr-15	10.887.589,00	164	Hong Kong
II Week	Christie's	The Pavilion Sale - Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art	6-apr-15	\$4.721.569	132	Hong Kong
	Christie's	Fine Chinese Works of Art from the Yaogushanfang Collection	6-apr-15	\$1.571.652	27	Hong Kong
	Christie's	Don McLean's 'American Pie': The Original Lyrics	7-apr-15	\$1.205.000	1	New York
	Sotheby's	Fine Chinese Paintings	6-apr-15	\$61.653.699	338	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Magnificent Jewels & Jadeite	6-apr-15	\$37.444.505	316	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Imperial Porcelain and Works of Art from a Hong Kong Private Collection	7-apr-15	\$5.551.623	24	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Guan – From a Japanese Collection	7-apr-15	\$14.695.075	1	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	A Private Single Owner Collection of Important Wines & Watches (Watches session)	7-apr-15	\$2.631.771	106	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Yongzheng – The Age of Harmony and Integrity	7-apr-15	\$46.623.120	19	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Qianlong – Poet and Collector	7-apr-15	\$887.795	4	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	The Robert H. Blumenfield Collection of Chinese Bamboo Carvings	7-apr-15	\$1.794.785	60	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Important Watches – Including The Dunkel Collection – Swatch & Art	7-apr-15	\$16.808.267	344	Hong Kong
	Sotheby's	Important Chinese Works of Art	7-apr-15	\$29.934.377	152	Hong Kong
III Week	Sotheby's	Important European Silver, Vertu, and Russian Works of Art	16-apr-15	\$2.107.063	235	New York
	Sotheby's	The Orientalist Sale	21-apr-15	\$8.524.471	42	LONDON
	Sotheby's	Magnificent Jewels	21-apr-15	\$65.086.500	368	NEW YORK
	Sotheby's	Contemporary Art / Doha	21-apr-15	\$7.511.125	56	DOHA
	Christie's	Post-War and Contemporary	14-apr-15	9813350	218	Amsterdam
	Christie's	Magnificent Jewels	14-apr-15	41951125	237	New York
	Christie's	Oriental Rugs and Carpets	21-apr-15	1,904,500	90	London

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Tanks to, Simone D'Onofrio, Lavinia Polizzi

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