

The logo for Whitechapel Gallery, consisting of a bright blue square with the text "Whitechapel Gallery" in white, stacked vertically. Below the square is a horizontal blue bar.

Whitechapel
Gallery

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection Imperfect Chronology – Mapping the Contemporary II

23 August - 08 January 2017

Large print labels and interpretation

Gallery 7

From left of gallery, clockwise:

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection:

Imperfect Chronology

An exhibition in four parts: 8 Sept 2015 – 8 Jan 2017

Part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme opening up rarely seen art collections from around the world, a series of four chronological displays highlights works from the Barjeel Art Foundation's collection of Arab art. The theme of an 'imperfect chronology' is the series' starting point: how do we narrate the history of Arab art through the lens of one collection? Over 100 works of art by 60 artists from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day are brought together here to tell this story.

The Barjeel Art Foundation is based in the United Arab Emirates and was founded by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi in 2010.

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It holds one of the most extensive collections of art from the Arab world and its diaspora – a region that extends across North Africa and southwestern Asia encompassing the 22 countries of the Arab League. With a population of over 350 million of various ethnic and religious identities, Arabic (in its various dialects) is the dominant language of expression.

Imperfect Chronology

Mapping the Contemporary II

23 August 2016 – 8 January 2017

The final presentation from the Barjeel Art Foundation collection continues to explore the themes of mapping and migration in the Arab world; in particular, it focuses on how artists respond to the shifting urban spaces in the cities in which they live, work and also imagine.

The display includes Marwa Arsanios's installation, *All About Acapulco* (2010-11). The starting point for the project was a building on the outskirts of Beirut which was affectionately referred to as the 'spaceship' or 'donut' for its peculiar design.

The building was one of the most famous of the architect Ferdinand Dagher and sat on a beach coast formerly referred to as Acapulco Beach. Today, refugees mostly inhabit the site. In this multi-media installation, Arsanios re-imagines the changing history of this location.

The changing urban landscape is a subject addressed in Lawrence Abu Hamdan's *The All Hearing* (2014). In this video, the artist explores the aural fabric of the city of Cairo through its history of noise pollution. The central focus is a staging of two Muslim clerics declaiming the ills of noise effluence; their voices blare out of loudspeakers, ironically filling the very sonic landscape which they are attempting to clear.

The city of Cairo also resurfaces in Susan Hefuna's *Cairotrace* (2014), a series of layered watercolour drawings influenced by the architecture of her native city. Also on view is a monument by Iman Issa, *Proposal for a Crystal Building* (2003) a glittering tower made of hundreds of crystals – a proposition for a unifying structure to be erected in a public square in the Egyptian capital.

Other works in the exhibition examine the geopolitics of the region including Lebanese artist and poet Etel Adnan's abstract tapestry *Champs de Petrol* (2013), which describes a cartography of oil fields while Zineb Sedira's series of closely cropped photographs refer to the routes and traces of the global sugar industry.

Ali Cherri

(b. Beirut, Lebanon, 1976. Lives and works in Beirut and Paris)

Le grande vide/Statue Assad (The Great Emptiness/Statue of Assad)

2011

Serigraphy

I Carry My Flame

2011

Serigraphy

On 17 December 2011 Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against conditions of poverty and despair in Tunisia. His desperate act led to uprisings across the Arab world and Ali Cherri has since been interested in what leads someone to self-immolate as a form of protest, which he has explored in film, photography and installations.

Another body of work reflecting on the current situation in Iraq and Syria focuses on monuments and how the symbols of both fallen and existing regimes are dealt within times of conflict. In *le grande vide/Statue Assad*, a statue of the former President of Syria Hafez el Assad has been removed from its plinth to prevent its destruction by anti-government forces.

Screening Room:

Lawrence Abu Hamdan

(b. Amman, Jordan, 1985. Lives and works in London and Beirut, Lebanon)

The All-hearing

2014

Video, 12:14 minutes

Iman Issa

(b. Cairo, Egypt, 1979. Lives and works in New York, US and Cairo)

Proposal for a Crystal Building

2003

Wooden structure, crystal, lights, treated image of the structure

Sophia Al-Maria

(b. Tacoma, US, 1983. Lives and works in Doha, Qatar and London)

Class A

2014

Video, 9:14 minutes

Evil Eye

2014

Video, 1:51 minutes

In the mid-2000s, Al-Maria coined the term Gulf Futurism to convey the fast moving social, technological and cultural developments in the Gulf region. In 2013, she began filming *Beretta*, a rape revenge feature film set in Cairo exploring sexual violence against women. The film remains unfinished but these short videos were made in the spirit of DVD extras. *Class A* is a video-ode to an actress in the film who was jailed before filming began while *Evil Eye* is a direct response to the delays during the development stages of the film.

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The evil eye in Middle Eastern and other cultures is cast by a malevolent glare. Leading to bad fortune, evil eyes can be used as protective talismans. Here, Al-Maria uses a violent scene filmed in pre-production of an animal slaughtering during the Islamic celebration of Eid, creating her own talisman against evil.

Zineb Sedira

(b.Paris, France, 1963. Lives and works in the UK, France and Algeria)

Sugar Craters (2)

2013

Digital C-type print

Zineb Sedira

(b.Paris, France, 1963. Lives and works in the UK, France and Algeria)

Sugar Routes (3)

2013.

Digital C-type print

Jumana Manna

(b. New Jersey, US, 1987. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany)

Unlicensed Porch Jabal al-Mukaber

2014

Limestone, mortar, wood and concrete

Known for the subtle subversion of familiar objects from everyday life, Jumana Manna has removed this limestone bench from East Jerusalem to be re-installed in a gallery environment.

Taken from its original context and used simultaneously as a barrier and a bench, the sculpture reveals the complexities of urban life in the city of Jerusalem, where the divisions of East and West and who is 'licensed' to roam and own the land is dictated by an individual's religious and ethnic points of origin.

Etel Adnan

(b. Beirut, Lebanon, 1925. Lives and works in Paris, France)

Landscape, 2014

Oil on canvas

Champs de Petrol (Petrol Fields), 2013

Hand-woven wool tapestry

Marwa Arsanios

(b. Washington D.C, US, 1978. Lives and works in Beirut,
Lebanon)

All About Acapulco

2010-11

Mixed media

Projection:

Sadiq Alfraji

(b. Baghdad, Iraq, 1960. Lives and works in Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

The House That My Father Built (Once Upon a Time)

2010

Video, 6:12 minutes.

Susan Hefuna

(b. Berlin, Germany, 1962. Lives and works in Cairo, Düsseldorf and New York)

Cairotrace

2014

Ink watercolours on paper

Plinths:

Manal Al Dowayan

(b. Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, 1973. Lives and works in Dubai, UAE and Dhahran)

Suspended Together – Standing Dove, Eating Dove

2012

Porcelain

Manal Al Dowayan's work encompasses black and white photography, sculpture, video, sound, neon and large-scale participatory installations often focused on the conditions of life for women in Saudi Arabia.

Forming part of a larger work made up of over 200 ceramic doves suspended and unmoving in the air, all of the birds bear the imprint of official stamps and permission to travel documents for women granted by their male guardians. As the artist writes, 'regardless of age and achievement, when it comes to travel, all these women are treated like a flock of suspended doves.'

GCC

Nanu Al-Hamad (b. Kuwait City, 1987; lives in New York), Khalid Al Gharaballi (b. Kuwait City, 1981,; lives in Kuwait City), Sophia Al Maria (b. Tacoma, US, 1983; lives in London), Abdullah Al-Mutairi (b. Kuwait City, 1990; lives New York), Fatima Al Qadiri (b. Dakar, 1981; lives in New York), Monira Al Qadiri (b. Dakar, 1983; lives in Beirut), Aziz Al Qatami (b. Kuwait City, 1979; lives in Kuwait City), Barrak Alzaid (b. Kuwait City, 1985; lives in Dubai), Amal Khalaf (b. Singapore, 1982; lives in London).

Micro Council

Wood, brass, acrylic glass, glass, fabric. 2013

GCC is an art collective founded in Dubai in 2013 and is made up of 9 'delegates' whose activities mirror and comment on the Gulf Cooperative Council, an economic and political body consisting of the rapidly expanding oil rich nations of the Gulf: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Shrunk down to the size of an ornamental souvenir, this work raises questions about the aspirational forms that power structures take and the ways in which young economies form and relay their cultural identities.

ACCESS INFORMATION

For details on parking, assistance dogs, adapted toilets, lifts, large print transcripts and free audio described tours or any other access facilities:

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