



7pm, 17 October 2008
The Photographers Gallery, London
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Speakers:

Antonia Carver
John Martin
Reem Al Faisal
Alia Al Senussi

Chaired by Sultan Al Qassemi

‘Hot Property: Are there opportunities in the Gulf for artists?’

Investment in the visual arts in the Gulf region over the past five years has been an unprecedented phenomenon in cultural history. The varying strategies chosen by the different Emirates – Sharjah hosting the Sharjah Biennial for twenty years, with seventeen museums but no commercial galleries; Dubai, traditionally a trading hub, the site of Christies & Bonhams auctions, a vibrant commercial gallery scene and the first international art fair in the region; Abu Dhabi bringing world-class museums such as the Louvre & Guggenheim to its soil within the next ten years. Collecting and preserving Islamic heritage has been a priority in Qatar, where their Islamic Museum opens in November. Saudi Arabia has been less vocal about promoting culture in the region and yet the exhibition ‘Edge of Arabia’ at SOAS this October shows the diversity of artwork being produced in the Kingdom.

The Gulf is home to a number of artists displaced from Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. What opportunities are there for them and GCC Nationals now there is such a central focus on culture? Is their situation vastly improved? What is the international reaction to these newly recognised artists? Can they sit comfortably alongside global names in the contemporary art scene?

The Thinking Cloud: Talking Art
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Founded by Laura Trelford, Education Manager of Art Dubai (www.artdubai.ae) & Sonia Brewin, Director of START (www.startworld.org).

The Thinking Cloud is a regular discussion forum on the visual arts which was launched in Dubai in September 2007. Anyone with an active interest in cultural debate is welcome to attend.

Each session features an expose of an artist’s work in the UAE or wider Middle East and a topical debate is then chaired.

In 2007-8 debates were held at the DIFC in association with the British Museum; ADACH, Abu Dhabi; AUD & the Jam Jar. Future debates will take place at the Museum of Islamic Civilisation, Sharjah and Traffic, Dubai.

