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Civility, art and emancipation on the Arabian Peninsula

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1 | ART IN A COSMOPOLITANISM AGE

Simply stated, cosmopolitanism is the view that all humans matter. Everyone is entitled to seek a life of significance and dignity. Moreover, because humans will seek significance in different ways, this universal ideal will be expressed in different, regional ways. The cosmopolitan ideal is therefore both universal and regionally attuned. However, cosmopolitans take humanity to be prior to, and more important than the modern states of which we are members. The modern nation-state is well and good in its ability to serve the interests of it citizens. But nation-states exist contingently, to serve, and not for their own sake. Conversely, humans do not exist contingently merely to serve the interests of the state. Not only are human interests prior to the state, they cut across national borders. Because of this, cosmopolitanism is sometimes associated with globalism. But cosmopolitanism is far more normative. It does not merely concern itself with the processes of mobility and exchange across the globe, it concerns itself with the humanist moral, political, and legal norms that ought to govern these processes in the interests of humanity. Furthermore, processes of globalization tend to have a flattening effect on culture. Cosmopolitanism is more attentive to the value of regional variances in culture, because this contributes to the happiness of individuals and humanity as a group. Even though cosmopolitanism is a universal humanist norm that cuts across nationalist boundaries, it is not necessarily a globalizing norm. The cosmopolitan abjures the flattening of ideas and culture brought about by globalization, and sees value instead in diversity of ideas and cultures across the globe.

I trace two conversations shaping culture on the Arabian Peninsula, and also show how they intersect. One conversation is framed by the processes of globalization and capitalism. It has a horizontal axis that cuts across international territories. A second conversation is regional, with a vertical axis between authority and civil society within a defined territory. I consider both conversations within the broader frame of discursive cosmopolitanism, where I begin.

2 | DISCURSIVE COSMOPOLITANISM

Lucile Dupraz (2016), an art history instructor at Dar al-Hekma University for women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, documented one conversation shaping the emerging art world on the peninsula in the censorship of art history textbooks in the university's library (Fig. 1). The library staff routinely alters the reproductions of classical nudes in

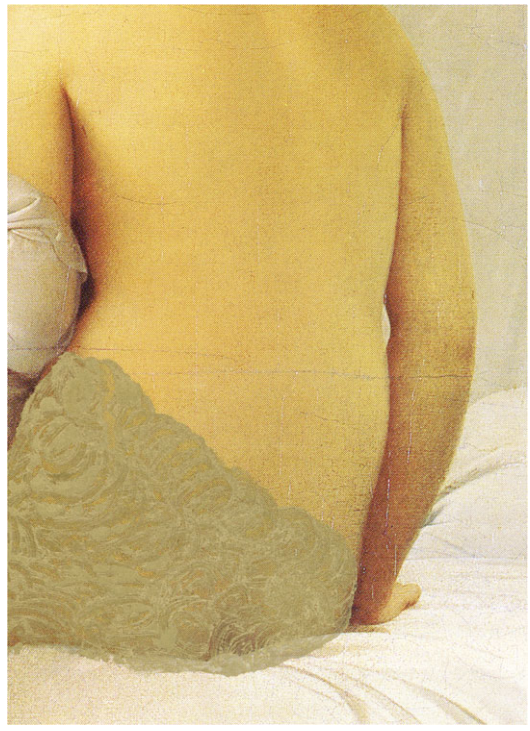

FIGURE 1 Anonymous. (n.d.). *After Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, The Valpincon Bather 1808*. Paint on book page. Photo courtesy of Lucile Dupraz

its textbooks to conceal exposed body parts. For example, in Gustave Courbet's *Nude with White Stockings* (1861), "in addition to her white stockings, [the] reclining female figure now displayed black underpants, which had been rendered using the broad tip of a pen" (Dupraz, 2016, p. 47). After all, this is "a culture in which bodies are thoroughly private visual territory" (Dupraz, 2016, p. 51). Initially, these alterations had the effect of heightening, not deflecting Dupraz's awareness of the female body. Moreover, she began to notice such alterations everywhere. In magazines she noticed that the bare upper arms or thighs of models and any cleavage were covered with "what resembled skin-tight tops and pantyhose" (Dupraz, 2016, p. 51). The few billboards that depicted women also showed them with digitally blurred faces—an alteration that is perhaps graphically closer to iconoclasm than censorship.

Over time Dupraz began to notice the artistry in the interventions in the art history textbooks. They exhibited a handmade, painterly quality. Bodies, for example, were covered with robes made to match background drapery (Fig. 1). These alterations, then, were not entirely destructive; they had a creative dimension as well. In other libraries offending images were simply removed from the art history textbooks. Even worse, consider the more extreme intervention by the insurgent group Daesh in the Middle East, where the works of world heritage are simply destroyed (Barnard, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). International law governing armed conflict is formulated to protect civil society and cultural works during armed conflict, so that they will be intact when hostilities end. Outliers who intentionally target culture are advancing their own group's identity at a disproportionate cost to the offending group. As Michael Walzer (2006) puts it, "[t]he message they deliver is directed at the group: *We don't want you here*. We will not accept you or make our peace with you as fellow-citizens. You are not candidates for equality or even co-existence" (p. 5).

At Dar al-Hekma the censors did not erase but intervened in the images. Dupraz (2016) suggests that such interventions are akin to a punk DIY aesthetic, which hijacks the products of dominant culture as a means for "oppositional discourse" (p. 61). These interventions are acts of art production, not the passive consumption of art or its aggressive erasure. Of course, the censors did not intend to make art. Their intentions were far more utilitarian; namely, to

cover up naked bodies. Yet, there is dialogue here. The Islamic female gaze and the Western male gaze fall on the contested territory of the female nude in very different ways. But the disagreement was not stifled. "Rather than stash away or otherwise remove contentious material, our institution dealt with it through aesthetic actions … a working compromise whereby unsuitable yet indispensable images are left to bear a mark of disapproval" (Dupraz, 2016, p. 68).

Art is a speech act. As such, it invites conversation and colloquy. These intimate cross-cultural and cross-historical conversations in both the production and appreciation of art are the way that a culture takes shape over time. Seyla Benhabib (2004) refers to these conversations as "iterations" (p. 138). When we iterate a concept or a term we do not merely replicate the original, we reproduce it with some variation. "Every iteration transforms meaning, adds to it, enriches it in ever-so-subtle ways" (Benhabib, 2004, p. 138). For example, when we iterate a ruling in common law we refer to an authoritative precedent, but it is "reposited and resignified via subsequent usages and references" and in this way its "meaning is enhanced and transformed" (Benhabib, 2004, p. 139). The same thing happens when we iterate a political, ethical, or aesthetic ruling. For example, in a disagreement over the permissibility of religious headscarves in French public schools, the act of wearing a headscarf as an expression of modesty was transformed into an expression of moral freedom. The civil sphere, Benhabib observes, is rife with these small conversations. And, as a cosmopolitan who takes the human, civil sphere to be prior to the national sphere, she also argues that these civil conversations ought to shape the course of national and international politics. She names this position discursive cosmopolitanism. I here consider the emerging art worlds on the peninsula within the framework of discursive cosmopolitanism. I show how the global and civil art worlds are in dialogue with each other and how they iterate new artistic and political norms on the peninsula.

By the civil sphere or civil society I mean the public sphere, a diverse social sphere separate from both the government and the family. Civil society is found, neither in government offices nor in the privacy of the home, but in public places where civilians can freely associate. The relationships that we form with each other within civil society, "civic friendship" as Hannah Arendt (1954/1990) called it, comes about not a matter of nature or kinship, but as a matter of choice (pp. 82–86). While civil society may include kinship groups, it is much broader and more urbane than these groups. The term civil society also encompasses the ideal of civility required for meaningful association within the public sphere, without which it collapses into castes and factions. Civility entails respect for one's own associates and openness to conversation, including disagreement, across associations.

The ideals of civility and hospitality are central to cosmopolitanism. Hospitality, in particular, is central to a foundational text in cosmopolitanism literature, *Perpetual Peace* by the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1795/1991). In his essay, Kant proposes a global legal order as a check on hostilities between sovereign states. He conceives of this global legal order as a contract entered into freely by sovereign states, which thereafter constitute a federation. The citizens of this federation constitute a global civil society, with the right of hospitality on foreign shores within the federation. A global civil society, Kant insists, requires more than mere tolerance of our distant fellows. We ought to recognize their equal moral standing, and even welcome them into our domicile. This idea is familiar to us now in the form of international law on the rights of refugees.

The ideal of hospitality also guides cosmopolitanism on culture and the arts. More than mere toleration, our encounters with art practices and works, near and far, require an understanding or recognition of their varying value. The art historian Erwin Panofsky (1939/1955, cited in Cheetham, 2009) argues that art history is an inherently humanistic (i.e., cosmopolitan) practice precisely because it requires this sort of hospitable engagement with the arts across particularities. This is by no means to say that all artworks have equal artistic or aesthetic value. It is only to say that for the cosmopolitan the etiquette of hospitality broadly governs our encounters with art—unlike Daesh. This is also not to say that we cannot have hard conversations with the various art practices and works we encounter, of the sort that occurred in the pages of the art history textbooks at Dar al-Hekma. But the rule of thumb is that the conversation should be more or less productive, not destructive and peremptorily ending the conversation. Nor are these conversations aimed at the obliteration of difference. Rather, they are meant to be fluid and the source of all manner of innovation in the arts. In other words, the aim of artistic iterations is not a slow progression towards a standard world culture. The aim is self-governance and its effect is cultural fluidity as well as regional distinctiveness.

FIGURE 2 Serra, R. (2014). *East-West/West-East*. 4 × 10 cm-thick steel metal plates, each level with the adjacent limestone cliffs. Photo courtesy of Adrian Gaut and Artist Rights Society New York

3 | A CIVIL ART WORLD

I will be addressing the rise of a fine arts world on the peninsula, which can be distinguished from a heritage art world. The fine arts have both a historic and contemporary dimension, but unlike the heritage arts they are not explicitly tied to the conservation of a community's history, traditions, and identity. Heritage arts tend to be conserving and educational. By contrast, the fine arts tend toward expressiveness and innovation in art making.

Cosmopolitanism, of course, is hospitable to heritage, especially if there is a living connection between a group's present identity and its cultural past. For example, in the relatively new (dating from the 20th century) nation-states on the Arabian Peninsula, heritage arts are used to foster a national identity for its citizenry and allegiance to the new states (Exell, 2016). But there is a downside to nationalism. Many (Calhoun, 2007) agree that the nation-state is useful. It is an apparatus for getting things done that make our lives better, such as protecting rights, collecting taxes, and building schools and hospitals. At the same time, history shows that nationalism can lead to isolation and hostilities among states in the international arena. Hence, Kant (1795/1991) argues, the need for a world legal order to preempt such hostilities. Similarly, the heritage arts can be source of pride, but they can also be isolating. Conflating a nation's identity with its heritage can lead to a moribund society. From a cosmopolitan perspective, culture is fluid and continually reshaping itself, even in its particularity, through dialogue with the new. Adhering too closely to heritage may place limits on a culture's possibilities.

An offset to the cultivation of heritage arts on the peninsula is the simultaneous rise of a spectacular international art world in the region. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, the cultural district on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi is in the final stages of its completion. In addition to luxury residences, the district will hold Guggenheim and Louvre franchises housed in impressive architectural works designed by Frank Gehry and Jean Nouvel, respectively, a performing arts center designed by Zaha Hadid, a maritime museum designed by Tadao Ando, and the Zayed National Museum designed by Sir Norman Foster.

In Qatar there has been a similar proliferation of public art museums, including the Museum of Islamic Art designed by I. M. Pei, the Arab Museum of Modern Art renovated by Jean-François Bodin, the National Museum of Qatar designed by Jean Nouvel, and an Orientalist Museum designed by Herzog & de Meuron. In addition to all this, the sister of the Emir of Qatar, HE Sheikha al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (Sheikha al-Mayassa) is an ambitious collector and patron of international contemporary art. Her acquisition budget on behalf of the Qatar Museum Authority is estimated to be $1 billion annually. In 2014, for example, she commissioned and installed a work by the American artist Richard Serra in Qatar's Brouq Nature Reserve, *East-West/West-East* (Fig. 2).

This international art world is centered on the fine arts, not the heritage arts. However, like the heritage arts, it is being used to foster an identity for the region as a new hub in the international art world. Swirling in the updraft of this

rising art world are a number of concerns. For one, Yasser Elsheshtawy (2012) argues that while Saadiyat is intended to "create a sense of enlightenment and modernity" for the region, it is a development for luxury living and from a planning perspective the project in fact promotes social exclusion and urban inequality (p. 29). Further, it is questionable how projects like Saadiyat, guided by global capitalism, might actually foster a regional identity (Ponzini, 2011; Tharoor, 2015). The ideal seems to be to foster a cosmopolitan identity for the region—enlightened and modern—as Elsheshtawy puts it. Cosmopolitanism is outward looking and open to exploring "the connections between seemingly disparate civilisations and cultures around the world" (Louvre Abu Dhabi, 2017). However, the cosmopolitan is at the same time rooted in regional interests (Appiah, 2007). It is hard to see how the rising international art world on the peninsula is rooted. It has a horizontal axis, relating to other regions across the globe. By contrast, cosmopolitanism requires a vertical axis, rooting the international art world in the society and culture of the peninsula. The remainder of my discussion focuses on the fraught relation between the international art world and the possibility of a regional, or civil art world, as I call it, on the peninsula. One concern is that the international art world is skewed toward the consumption of art, not its production, which seems to obviate the need for a productive grassroots art world in the region. Complicating matters is the authoritarian pall over civil life on the peninsula, which further discourages the rise of a civil art world in the region.

From early to mid-20th century, as states began to form on the peninsula, there was a shift from a tribal, egalitarian and participatory style of governance to a more paternalist style of rule based on allegiance to a territory and a ruling family (Rugh, 2007). The monarchies on the peninsula are either absolute (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman) or they are constitutional monarchies (Bahrain and Kuwait). Their ruling style is avowedly authoritarian, but always within the framework of paternalism, which is a benevolent principle. The paternalist will interfere with the freedom of others, but strictly for the good of others. For example, the redistribution of the ruling family's considerable wealth, which is derived from the sale (rent) of state oil reserves, ostensibly serves the greater good of society—so that roads are built and children are educated. However, it is the ruling family who will decide if and how all this is to be done. It was the ruling family of Abu Dhabi that made the decision to build Saadiyat, presumably for the good of Emirate society, but it did so whether this was welcome or not (Ponzini, 2011; Steiner, 2014). Moreover, society is generally expected to be thankful for this gift of modernity.

The practice of beneficence is deeply rooted in the culture and politics of the region. It follows, at least in part, from the Bedouin tradition for rewarding allegiance to tribal elites.[1] Thus, the distribution of wealth on the peninsula is not only paternalist and benevolent, it is also looked upon as gift from the ruling family for which the people are to be grateful and loyal. Farhad Kazemi (2001) argues that in the long run such beneficence is antithetical to a productive civil society becoming established on the peninsula. The state's wealth is earned from the rent of its resources to foreign clients, which obviates the need for domestic productivity. The state does not depend upon local industry and taxes for its wealth (although this is slowly changing). Rather, it is the people who are dependent upon the state for their share of rentier income. As beneficiaries, they do not wish to challenge the legitimacy and dictates of the ruling family, upsetting the status quo, because they do not wish to disrupt the charitable flow of wealth to them. In Kazemi's (2001) words, the citizenry becomes "a dependent bourgeoisie unable and unwilling to engage the state in the delineation of rights, responsibilities, and obligations" (p. 43). This creates, he thinks, a citizenry that is loyal but that has a very thin civic ethic, being consumers more than citizens. Both paternalism and beneficence, then, can be disabling to civil society. Beneficence creates a dependent and pliable citizenry that will follow the paternal dictates of the ruling family. Similarly, the rise of a paternally decreed international art world, skewed toward consumption—a rentier art world—is disabling to the rise of a civil, productive, art world in the region.

Civil society is by and large self-governing, short of illegal actions or harming others. As Václav Havel (1978/1992) argues, we tend to come together with others in civil association on some matter of faith or principle, and in doing so we find meaning in our world. Alternatively, if we are told by a religious, political, or legal authority to coalesce around some cause or another, we are likely to feel coerced and our response to the cause will be lackluster. Or, if civil life is only allowed to exist selectively and as a matter of decree from an authority, then the full potential for civil productivity will lie dormant. Government in the region is circumspect toward civil society. A ruler may like the idea of a productive civil society, to benefit from the social capital it offers, but not the idea of a self-governing civil society, preferring instead

FIGURE 3 Gharem, A. (2012). *The Stamp (Have a Bit of Commitment Inshallah*). Silkscreen, 40 × 50 in. Photo courtesy of Edge of Arabia

compliance and gratitude. Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1994) writing on the emergence of civil life in mid-19th century North America—a period poised between the *ancien régime* and modernity much like the peninsula today—noted a similar ambivalence by government towards civil society. Agreed, civil society offers benefits to government. For one thing, civilians themselves can do a lot of the work of society, freeing the government to focus on affairs of state. Leaders need not "leave the helm of state to follow the plow" (Tocqueville, 1835/1994, p. 108). Nevertheless, a government may worry that civil activities will encroach upon its own sphere. And thus, it will take a paternalist line on civil society, as a way of guiding civil society both to do good and also to prevent it from doing harm, including interfering with government business. In other words, it will insist on paternally governing both the political and civil spheres.

This is clearly the case on the peninsula. The NGO Freedom House (2017), which measures the presence of civil, political, and economic freedoms in countries worldwide ranks the monarchies on the peninsula, baring Kuwait, as not free. Even Kuwait is ranked as only partly free. Typically, these monarchies permit some civil groups to exist, if they are deemed to be useful to society, for example, groups with a development or social welfare objective, like chambers of commerce, or literacy groups, or religious associations that focus on charity and education (Alekri, Janahi, & Hafith, 2010; Crystal, 1996; Ridge & Kippels, 2016). In effect, the government uses these associations to bring about its own, benevolent, social development objectives. In fact, these civil associations are, if not *de jure*, then *de facto* government groups (Crystal, 1996; Krause, 2008).[2] Further, certain kinds of civil associations are strictly prohibited, such as labor unions or groups with political interests. The government, then, will selectively authorize a civil group, and in some cases even determine the scope of its interests and activities. Consequently, there is a lack of participation in authorized civil groups, particularly by young people (UNDP, 2016). A ruler cannot decree volunteerism. When the affairs of civil society are taken out of its hands, the civil sphere atrophies.

The Saudi artist Abdulnasser Gharem makes this argument in his work *The Stamp (Have a Bit of Commitment Inshallah)* (Fig. 3). Gharem is an army officer who, somewhat unexpectedly, makes art. Notably, the civil art world does not give us the polished. It gives us the novel, which can be invigorating for a society. In fact, one of the benefits of a civil art world is that it will eventually feed the public art museum. Gharem is now an emerging Saudi artist whose work may turn up in a Guggenheim Abu Dhabi exhibition someday. However, in order for public art museums to reap this benefit, a civil

art world must first be in place. Gharem created *The Stamp* in response to one of his earlier works being pulled from a Saudi-funded exhibition in London. The work was removed from the exhibition because it did not fit the government script for the exhibition. These sorts of stamps are ubiquitous in a society run by decree. *Inshallah* means God willing and is equally ubiquitous as an idiom of good intentions constrained by fatalism. Thus, the work humbly (*inshallah*) fashions its own decree to the government to "have a bit of commitment" to the civil art world. It might be worth it in advancing the work of society.

Tocqueville (1835/1994) acknowledges that civil encroachment is a legitimate concern for government, but he notes that in the long run a less paternalist and more liberal line on civil society offers governments "security against dangers of another kind" (p. 191). As he puts it "in countries where associations are free, secret societies are unknown … in America there are factions, but no conspiracies" (Tocqueville, 1835/1994, p. 191). In other words, allowing civil society free rein shows good will on the part of the government towards society, and this in turn fosters allegiance to the government. Perhaps, then, the best way for governments to secure allegiance is to share not only wealth but also civil freedom.

Where government paternalism is acute a civil art world tends to arise (Tripp, 2013). There is a countervailing desire from the citizenry to be heard on matters of conviction, and the arts provide a way to express these convictions in a relatively composed manner. For example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where cinemas have been banned since the 1980s and art galleries do not generally exist (although this is slowly changing), a civil art world is emerging despite all. An example is the UK-Saudi civil arts collective *Edge of Arabia*, which organized an exhibition in Jeddah in 2012, titled *We Need to Talk*. It included work by Saudi artists cautiously addressing sensitive subjects such as religious and cultural fundamentalism and government bureaucracy. This is an indigenous art world emerging from the exigencies of Saudi society itself.

Women have a strong presence in the Saudi civil art world. Consider, for example, the (soon to be lifted) fatwa in the Kingdom against women driving automobiles. State law does not explicitly prohibit women from driving, but the religious edict means that women were effectively banned from driving. However, Saudi women challenged the ban by openly driving automobiles. The experience of the fatwa for Saudi women is eloquently captured in Arwa al-Neami's 2014 work *Never Never Land*, which includes a short video of Saudi women driving children's bumper cars (Fig. 4). The video mirrors the way that the fatwa infantilizes women and allows genuine mobility only to men. The title of this work is especially apt; it evokes severe restriction ('never never'), but also freedom of the imagination and artistic expression (Never Never Land).

A functioning civil society can be beneficial not only to government but also to the public, where members can challenge, if they wish, contentious beliefs such as female adulthood. This would be useful to women's emancipation on the peninsula. In fact, there are two aspects to addressing the predicament of Saudi women in particular. First, they must be given all the rights and duties of adult members of society. At the moment they have the legal status of minor for life. They are the ward of their closest male relative and must obtain permission from their guardian for making even basic life choices. Boys can look forward to the day when they become adults. Not so for girls. Saudi women keep their legal status as children throughout life. The practice of male guardianship in the Kingdom follows from a conservative (Wahhabi-Salafi) interpretation of the shari'a. The shari'a (the way) is right action as revealed in the religious texts of Islam. It is the task of clerics to interpret and transcribe the shari'a into a practical theory of jurisprudence, which in turn guides human action and even legislation within the Islamic state. A legitimate but less conservative interpretation of the shari'a could yield a more desirable legal system for Saudi women (LeBenger, 2013).

Second, while the right to adulthood is necessary for Saudi women's emancipation, it seems also that some groundwork can be done to examine the validity of the social norms governing women within Saudi society in the first place. A functioning civil society wherein members can have this discussion is indispensable. Entitlement to rights itself is one way to challenge distorted social norms. Assigning rights to members of society bestows dignity and value on those members. But, additional work can be done within civil society itself to gain understanding and respect for certain members, and this is as important as the entitlement to rights for full emancipation within one's own society.[3]

Indeed, this particular civil discussion may impact on the authoritarian structure of peninsula politics and society more generally. Peninsula society is conservatively patriarchal, and this structure is diffused throughout society. Not

FIGURE 4 Neami, A. (2014). *Never Never Land*. Video still. Photo courtesy of Edge of Arabia. Originally exhibited in a 2014–2015 Edge of Arabia group exhibition in London, also titled *Never Never Land*

only families, but also the workplace, mosques, and schools are all ruled by a father figure who expects unquestioned obedience (Barakat, 1993). Stephan Fish (2002) notes that where we find patriarchal structures within a society, especially within the family, this is a marker that the society will have an authoritarian government. Presumably the habits of "domination and dependency" cultivated within the family are replicated within the broader society (Fish, 2002, p. 30). As John Stuart Mill (1869/1988) argued, the family is a moral school that graduates a certain kind of citizen. Conversely, Mary Ann Tétreault (2001) notes that where we find a loosening of these patriarchal structures within a society (her example is Kuwait), this is a marker that the society will have a more liberal government. In any case, women may have something to say about all this, and it is hard to hear them from within the confines of the patriarchal family sphere. A functioning civil sphere would be useful to hear their voice.

4 | THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Some acts of beneficence, such as those that bring about public institutions like universities and museums may be paternalistic, but at least they give rise to places where civil society might flourish. Even a liberal government will support and protect the civil sphere with large projects that support associational life. The idea of a public sphere is not foreign to peninsula society. Even though Bedouin society is traditionally quite reserved, as one keeps to one's own family or tribe, in addition to family and tribal allegiance there is also a tradition for common assembly in Bedouin society. The Bedouin *majlis* is both the place and the act of assembly. A *majlis* may be a designated assembly room or hall where a gathering occurs, or it may refer to the act of sitting with others for the purpose of deliberation. A private *majlis* is usually a gathering of family and friends. A public *majlis* is a gathering of elites to discuss pressing public issues. Tétreault (2000) describes the *majlis* as a nomadic public square within Bedouin society. However, the *majlis* is not as accessible as a public square. For one thing, in the desert assembly must be sheltered from the desert sun and therefore *majalis* (pl.)

now tend to occur within controlled indoor spaces. For another, even the public *majlis* is a semi-private affair, which one can attend only by invitation. Perhaps the new public art museums in the region can be seen as a cosmopolitan iteration of the *majlis*, providing more open and genuinely public places of gathering.

Whatever the reasons for building these museums in the region they will inevitably provide public places in a traditionally reserved society for citizens to assemble and think about the fine arts (and not just heritage). In principle they will also provide public places for less advantaged individuals in society, including the migrant laborers who build these mega-projects. These museums may act as a catalyst, then, for the idea of fine art, as distinct from heritage, and even for the idea of art as a practice—the possibility of art as something more than a luxury or recreational goods to be managed and consumed, but to be created—to enter into the imagination of the citizenry (Dumortier, 2014). In this way these museums fulfill the broader purpose of a public art museum, which is founded on the ideal of democratic and educational service to society.

The Western Enlightenment marks the advent of the public museum. Prior to this art was created, collected and appreciated more or less privately by the elite. With the Enlightenment came a new interest in systematically studying art, as well as a democratic impetus for disseminating this knowledge to the wider public. Art works moved from religious and princely collections into the public sphere. Even though these new public museums were the legacy of the elite they were nevertheless public, providing the general population with the novel opportunity to assemble in a public place, and to discuss the art displayed openly. For example, the salons of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris from mid-17th century onwards became public. Broader audiences gained access to the collections and were at liberty to judge the art on display according to their own tastes. Further, they could compare and defend their taste against that of others, allowing them to clarify their own tastes to themselves, as well as to work out common standards of taste with others. Tastes were both autonomous and dialogically formed (Taylor, 1992). David Carrier (2006) sees all this as preparing the way for the 1789 Revolution. Salon-goers imbibed the ideal of self-governance and the belief that their views were of consequence. In Benhabib's words (2004, citing Frank Michelman), discussants were "not only the subject but also the author" of the norms under discussion (p. 139).

Some worry, however, that the contemporary public art museum has lost its way, and has become a mere spectacle at odds with its founding purpose to display and educate about art, and to foster public dialogue (Foster, 2002). For example, many who visit the Guggenheim Bilbao do so primarily to see Frank Gehry's dazzling titanium-clad building, and only secondarily to look at the art works it houses. Similarly, some think that the eye-catching museums on Saadiyat are not about art at all. Instead they are luxury goods, and also function as benign propaganda for the professed modernity of United Arab Emirates society (Ponzini, 2011; Steiner, 2014; Tharoor, 2015). Robin Pogrebin (2013) observes that in Qatar, also, to assemble her stellar art collection Sheikha al-Mayassa does not visit art galleries or conduct studio visits or carry out arts research. Instead she delegates both curation and acquisition "to a handful of experienced [mostly Christies-trained] art advisers who do it for [her]." Although the Sheikha may appreciate art, her primary task is to establish Qatar as a new hub in the international art world, utilizing the soft power of art, not through its creation or curation, but through strategic investments in the arts as a prestige commodity (Davidson, 2013). For better or worse, the rise of the international art world in the region is a gift of modernity from the ruling families to the people, and an expression of the tradition for beneficence within the region—a noble act, but one that is somewhat at a distance from the rise of a civil art world.

A civil art world requires more than government beneficence. It also requires wide freedoms for artists to experiment, innovate, and express their ideas and convictions, and to coalesce around their self-chosen artistic interests. Authoritarian governments balk at the very idea of a self-governing civil art world. And this is true not only of the government, but also of conservative individuals in civil society itself (Alaoui, 2011). Both authoritarian governments and conservative individuals and groups in the region are wary of the arts because of their power to shape the ideas that take hold in society. In particular they worry whether or not the new ideas that might take hold will agree with their own, established views. Consequently, artists in the region suffer from both overt forms government restrictions, and covert censorship, such as social sanctions. Thus, civil society on the peninsula, although materially well cared for, is not free in the way required for a civil art world to flourish. Granted, governments on the peninsula also use their wealth to support emerging local artists in the region.[4] These initiatives are welcome, but without the possibility

of civil self-governance these efforts will not be enough to bring about a productive art world on the peninsula. Also granted, the museums on Saadiyat may serve the good of Emirate society in other ways, as public places where civil society may assemble and reflect on the value of the arts. In Qatar as well, Sheikha al-Mayassa's public art initiatives are not without benefit to Qatar society and also to the international art world. Her collections and the institutions created to house them are admirable gifts to the public. Yet these initiatives do not directly nurture fledgling artists in the region. As the authors (Schwartz, Kaye, & Martini, 2013) of a Rand Corporation report bluntly put it:

> *Other than attracting Western tourists and putting their countries on the map of the international art scene, it is not yet clear how the investment in major art museums and cultural initiatives by the Gulf States, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, will benefit artists from the region or help create an indigenous constituency in support of the arts. (Schwartz et al., p. 64)*

In contrast to all this is the civil art world, unpolished, experimental, and unpredictable. Admittedly, in the same way that we rely upon the polished, fact-checked reporting of *The New York Times*, over, say, grassroots journalism that tends to be openly biased and uneven in quality, we benefit from the polished, in-depth curation that is found only in the grand public art museum. And, let us not forget, Appiah (2008) reminds us, encyclopedic museums such as the Louvre "allow us to take pleasure in cultures with which we don't have the connection of identity, they permit us to engage with cultures to which our connection is just our connection as human beings" (p. 6). Our engagement with the arts would be diminished if we relied exclusively on one approach to the arts over the other. There has always been dialogue and reciprocity between the paternal and civil art worlds.

I conclude with some contemporary examples from the region.

5 | ROOTED COSMOPOLITANISM

Street art is a particularly polemical form of speech and it is scarce within the region. There are some exceptions such as the Saudi artist Sarah Mohanna al-Abdali, who in 2012 stenciled designs on abandoned buildings in Jeddah without permission. Street art is contentious in the West as well. But there exists a concept of public property within the democratic state—as opposed to private property graciously made accessible to the public—in which public dialogue through street art may grudgingly occur. Within the peninsula monarchies it is generally unwise for a citizen or guest to make unauthorized street art. And, to be frank, authorized street art is an oxymoron. There is no conversation, only the pantomime of a conversation. A notable exception of unauthorized street art in the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates is the graffiti that Yasser Elsheshtawy (2007) has documented "hidden and tucked away in [its] alleyways," created by the city's many migrant laborers (p. 111). This graffiti, Elsheshtawy suggests, expresses a frustrated desire for belonging. Another interesting example is the unauthorized graffiti that now graces the Serra installation in the Brouq Nature Reserve in the Qatari desert. This example, in particular, is emblematic of how the global capitalist art world in conversation with civil society opens the way to a more rooted or cosmopolitan art world on the peninsula.

I have argued that the paternal, government-sponsored international art world provides places in which the public can gather and engage with the fine arts, and take in the self-determination that the arts require as well as the emancipation they afford. This interplay can be seen in the sporadic graffiti on the Serra installation. State-sponsored art begets grassroots art. In the long run, however, a thriving civil art world requires wide freedoms and self-governance, and the possibility of open discourse. Nevertheless, this small conversation is part of the cosmopolitan conversation shaping the emerging art worlds on the peninsula.

While globalization and capitalism brought the Serra installation to the desert, it is the cosmopolitan norm of civil discussion and iteration that gives it root. For Benhabib (2004) it is only through such iterations that we are able to reconcile the universal with the particular. It is through such iterations that the region may build a less global and more cosmopolitan, tailored, identity for itself. Simply bringing an international art world to the peninsula to foster (ironically) regional identity with signature architectural works that are found worldwide is not sufficient. And,

importantly, all this requires more than allegiance from the citizenry, it also requires a civil society that can talk back (civilly) to the government-sponsored, international art world.

The discussants in this conversation are likely to include those with a lot at stake, like Saudi women and the younger generations of Saudi men sympathetic to their predicament. In fact, young Saudi men have developed their own distinctive form of public speech in the performance of joyriding (*tafheet*). Joyriding is a form of street art in which mostly disenfranchised young Saudi men associate, illegally, to display their dangerous driving skills and to evade the police on the new boulevards and highways in the Kingdom, which are wide and flat to fit their desert topography. This is a far cry from the demonstrative speech acts of Saudi women driving an automobile even a few blocks. However, both speech acts are a public expression of the speakers' particularity. Joyriding especially exemplifies how speakers in what Pascal Menoret (2014) calls a "plebian public sphere" are exercising their agency to talk back to the forces, both global and state, that determine the urban sphere in which they live (p. 10).

Cosmopolitanism conversations are always rooted within a particular interest or region. As these conversations increasingly register on the peninsula it may very well become more cosmopolitan. However, it is not certain how things will go. Bedouin culture with its traditions for egalitarianism and *majlis* provides a framework for these sorts of conversations. Also, with peak oil looming, regional governments themselves wish to move on from the rentier state, and are seeking ways to foster a new, engaged civil society ready to build a productive post-oil state. All the ruling families in the region have vision and mission statements calling for civic innovation in building a post-oil future.[5] Alas, civic innovation is not easily decreed. As Gharem suggests, perhaps it would be better to "have a bit of commitment" to civil society, allowing it the self-governance required for innovation.

NOTES

[1] Kaldoun Naqeeb (1988) argues that as the ideal of allegiance shifted from tribal elites to a bounded territory and ruling family, it has become attenuated. What is required, he thinks, is a new relationship of citizenship, based upon rights and duties, not allegiance.

[2] For example, the Women's Museum at Bait al Banat in the Emirate of Dubai chronicles the historic role of woman and women's civil associations in the region, mostly focusing on education and health care. The museum was the initiative of an Emirati civilian, but it exists by the indulgence of the state and also serves to inform museum goers of its allegiance to the founder of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, and the patronage of the current ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum.

[3] For a lively discussion on the question of what is more basic to women's interests, rights or the restructuring of social norms, see Nancy Fraser (2000) and Iris Marion Young (1997). Fraser argues that rights are more basic. Restructuring social norms will not in itself bring about social justice for women. What women require is power, not the understanding and good will of others in society. Young, however, thinks that correcting the distorted and devalued social identity of women is the foundation for their gaining social power.

[4] In liberal democracies governments establish relatively independent funding organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Arts Council of England, which distribute funds to both established and fledgling civil arts organizations. Similar organizations are emerging on the peninsula, such as the Qatar Foundation and the Salama Bint Hamdan al-Nahyan Foundation in Abu Dhabi. However, these do not function independently of government, and do not support unknown civil arts organizations.

[5] "Kuwait National Development Plan". Retrieved from http://www.newkuwait.gov.kw/en/; "Our Vision: The Economic Plan for Bahrain 2030." Retrieved from http://www.mofa.gov.bh; "Saudi Vision 2030". Retrieved from http://vision2030.gov.sa/en; "Qatar National Vision 2030". Retrieved from http://www.mdps.gov.qa/en; "UAE Vision 2021". Retrieved from https://www.vision2021.ae/en; "Oman Vision 2020." Retrieved from http://www.scp.gov.om/en.

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