

Orientalism Revisited

British Council and Sharjah Museums Department are hosting a unique public debate on contemporary cultural issues, as part of the exhibition Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting 1830 - 1925 organised by Tate Britain in partnership with the Pera Museum – Istanbul, Sharjah Art Museum – UAE, and the British Council.

Entitled 'Orientalism Revisited', the theme of the debate is 'Representing the Other: Arab cultures through Western eyes/ Western cultures through Arab eyes.'

Although the exhibition presents an overview of mainly 19th century art, the issues raised seem more relevant than ever. In fact, to approach the theme of the 'Other' culture through 'Our' eyes takes on a whole new significance in the world in which we live today, where communication and tolerance is widely practiced, yet cultural divisions still reign strong.

Designed to coincide with the showing of the Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting exhibition, the British Council and Sharjah Museums Department welcome you to this lively debate about some of the more controversial issues raised by this exhibition. The debate will be modelled on the popular BBC TV series Question Time and is intended to provide a platform for interactive intercultural dialogue.

This important live debate opens up a field of thought relevant to anyone interested in interconnections between art, identity, and representation in the Arab World from the nineteenth century to the present.

The exhibition and the debate provide a unique opportunity for a frank discussion about our shared history – including areas of connection and conflict. We expect to hear questions covering all cultural aspects of the relationship between the West and the Middle East:

- What is the role of art and representation in shaping public perceptions?
- Can art and culture bridge gaps that politics cannot touch?
- What is the responsibility of the artist in a global society?
- What is the relationship between creativity and national identity?
- Is the idea of representing the 'Other' a negative thing, or does art prove otherwise?

British Council and Sharjah Museums Department are pleased to welcome you to Sharjah Art Museum, on Saturday, 7th March 2009. We hope that you will find the debate between this panel of eminent speakers both interesting and pertinent. Please visit www.SharjahMuseums.ae for location of Sharjah Art Museum.

The programme:

1700 – 1800 Arabic and English gallery talks in The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting exhibition

1800 – 1900 Reception

1900 – 2100 Orientalism Revisited debate

Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting was first shown at The Yale Center for British Art, USA, and then Tate Britain Art Gallery, London. The UK press was widely appreciative, commenting that the exhibition managed to balance the claims of art and politics in a uniquely sensitive manner (Jonathan Jones, The Independent).

The exhibition was then toured by the British Council to the Pera Museum, Istanbul; the first time that an exhibition of this scale and importance from Tate Britain has been shown in Turkey.

Sharjah Art Museum will be the final showing of the exhibition, and it is fitting that the exhibition's first showing in the Arab world should be in this prestigious venue, which has led the field in cultural development for the region.

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The debate is chaired by Andrea Rose, Director of Visual Arts at the British Council, and the panellists are:

Reem Kelani



Photo by Sahar Nuhoglu
Roll magazine, Istanbul

Reem Kelani was born in Manchester, of Palestinian parents, brought up in Kuwait and now resident in London. An outstanding singer and musician, Reem released her debut solo album "Sprinting Gazelle – Palestinian Songs from the Motherland and the Diaspora" in 2006 to critical acclaim. The Financial Times and the New Internationalist selected Sprinting Gazelle as their pick-of-the-year. Sprinting Gazelle is to be launched in the Middle East in spring 2009 by Incognito.

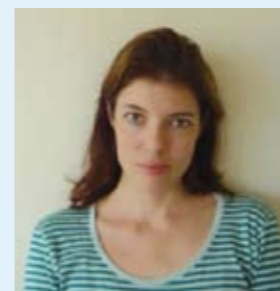
Broadcasting credits for the BBC include 'Distant Chords', featuring the music of migrant communities in the UK, and 'Salome', looking at how the original story was transformed through Orientalism's changing prism. In June 2008, Reem received a special commendation from the Arab-British Centre for her outstanding contribution to the British public's knowledge and understanding of the life, society and culture of the Arab people.
www.reemkelani.com

Jack Persekian



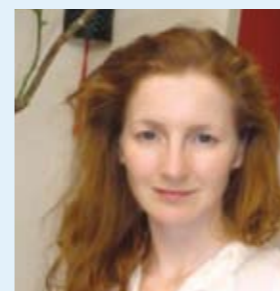
Artistic Director of the Sharjah Biennial, Jack Persekian was born in Jerusalem, and lives in Jerusalem and Sharjah. Curator and Producer, Founding Director of Anadiel Gallery, the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art in Jerusalem and XEIN Productions. Head curator of the 7th (2005) Sharjah Biennial and Artistic Director of the 8th (2007) + 9th (2009) Sharjah Biennial in Sharjah, UAE. Recent curated exhibitions include: The Jerusalem Show, Jerusalem (2007); Reconsidering Palestinian Art, in Cuenca, Spain (2006); Disorientation - Contemporary Arab Artists from the Middle East, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2003); in weiter ferne, so nah, neue palastinensische kunst, Ifa Galleries in Bonn, Stuttgart and Berlin (2002); Official Palestinian Representation to the XXIV Biennale de Sao Paulo (1998). Additional productions and directing include: The Palestinian Cultural Evening at the World Economic Forum in the Dead Sea, Jordan (2004), The Geneva Initiative, Public Commitment Event, Switzerland (2003), the Millennium Celebrations in Bethlehem- Bethlehem 2000 (2000), in addition to the production of short films and video works.

Antonia Carver



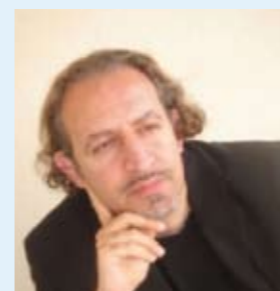
Based in Dubai, Antonia Carver is a writer and editor working with contemporary artists and filmmakers. She is editor-at-large of the Middle Eastern arts quarterly Bidoun, and manages the organisation's curatorial wing, Bidoun Projects (www.bidoun.com). Antonia is a correspondent for the Art Newspaper and contributes to magazines, newspapers and books in the Middle East and beyond; recent essays include Of Time and Place in In Absentia: Photographs by Tarek Al-Ghoussein (The Third Line, 2009). Publications include With/Without: Spatial Products, Practices and Politics in the Middle East (co-editor, with Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar, Bidoun/Moutamarat, 2007) and BLINK (as editor, Phaidon, 2001). She is also a member of the programming teams for both the Dubai and Edinburgh international film festivals, specializing in Arab and Iranian cinema.

Elisabeth Kendall



Elisabeth Kendall studied at Oxford and Harvard Universities, where she gained a first class degree in Arabic, a PhD in Modern Arabic Literature and a postgraduate certificate in Turkish. She was a post-doctoral fellow at Queen's College, Oxford for comparative research into Turkish and Arabic literature before moving to Edinburgh University in 2003 as lecturer in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Her core research is on modern Arabic cultural and literary trends. Her latest book, Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt, appeared in 2006. She retains a strong interest in Arabic language pedagogy, advocating a more practical approach to teaching. As part of this initiative, she published Media Arabic: An Essential Vocabulary in 2005 and played a leading role in the construction of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), a consortium of Edinburgh, Durham and Manchester Universities launched as part of a UK government initiative in 2006. She was appointed Director of the Centre in 2008.

George Katodrytis



George Katodrytis is an architect involved in practice, teaching and research. He is currently Associate Professor of Architecture at the American University of Sharjah. He studied architecture at the University of Manchester and the Architectural Association in London. He has worked in Paris and in London and taught at the Architectural Association. His work addresses issues of contemporary architecture, urbanism and cultural theory, with a focus on experimentation and writings on contemporary design methods and the 'city', especially as it evolves in the 21st century.
<http://www.katodrytis.com>