

Critique as Infrastructure

Organic Growth and the Rise of Visual Arts Organizations in the UAE

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Since Richard Florida's 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, literature on creative and entrepreneurial cities has suggested that the creative class drives economic growth. Scholars have also established the pivotal role of arts and culture in forging the modern, cosmopolitan nation-state, above and beyond the scale of the city. For example, in 1991, Carol Duncan noted that 'public art museums are important, even necessary, fixtures of a well-furnished state...having a bigger and better art museum is a sign of political virtue and national identity – of being recognizably a member of the civilized community of modern, liberal nations.'^[1] This is part of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power^[2]: as opposed to 'hard' or brute force power, such as military might, so-termed 'soft' power lies in cultural exchange programs, supporting the arts, education, sports, and social development initiatives.^[3] Thus prevailing popular literature in the development and business field has argued that supporting the arts and cultural sector is a prudent economic decision for city and state governments, and this is often taken as truth with little evaluation of the realities of producing and nurturing in the art world. What does supporting growing arts and cultural infrastructure look like on the ground, and what are the potential challenges of this type of venture?

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) offers an interesting case study in this regard. Depending on which news source you follow, you might date the start of art practice and arts institutions in the UAE back to the early 1980s with the establishment of the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi or the Emirates Fine Arts Society in Sharjah. In 2007, however, the announcement of plans for Saadiyat Island outside Abu Dhabi, to include a Louvre, a Guggenheim, and a National Museum thrust the Emirati art scene into the international spotlight. Initially slated to open in 2012,^[4] these museums are currently projected to open in 2016 (the Louvre Abu Dhabi), 2017 (the Zayed National Museum), and 2018 (the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi). While much has been made of the delayed opening of these museums, their announcement alone has sparked a slew of activities and developments worth analysing. British philosopher J.L. Austin (1911–1960) famously described performative speech as words that make things happen,^[5] and Austin's concept is useful in thinking about the rhetoric and discourses around arts production in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.^[6] Indeed, the announcement of these museums has created a whirlwind of activities and supporting institutions including art galleries and artist training programmes. It is this growing cadre of arts institutions that I analyse here,



Courtyard at Emirates Fine Arts Society.
Courtesy Elizabeth Derderian.

attempting to frame how these organizations have grown and evolved within the particular climate of the UAE to understand the arts landscape of the country: what kinds of organizations have emerged? What kinds of debates about practice and profession are taking place amongst those working and building this community?[7]

To offer one example of a burgeoning cultural landscape and to examine some of the debates that arise as institutions attempt to support and nourish artistic and cultural development, I survey the existing landscape of arts organizations in the UAE. I argue that infrastructure, and in particular the idea of critique as infrastructure, is a way to understand the particular form and ways in which the arts scene is growing in the UAE context, informed by and reflective of the local resident community. While policy literature and case studies often detail the organizational and physical infrastructures, as a cultural anthropologist I want to draw attention to the theoretical infrastructures that undergird arts and cultural production in the region. The current debates in the UAE highlight the role that art plays in society, emphasising physical and theoretical infrastructures that my

interlocutors believe are required to sustain a thriving arts and creative economy in the UAE.

Surveying the Scene: the Arts Landscape in the UAE

Since the 2007 announcement of the mega-museum projects in Abu Dhabi, other organizations, including art galleries and arts foundations, have popped up across the UAE. A few art galleries have opened (and re-opened, in the case of the Salwa Zeidan Gallery) in Abu Dhabi in advance of the museums. Inaugurated in 2010, the Shaikha Salama bint Hamdan Foundation opened Warehouse421 in Abu Dhabi in November 2015 as part of a broader initiative to support emerging Emirati artists and create new audiences for Emirati art. Abu Dhabi Art Hub opened its doors in 2012, hosting international artists-in-residence and offering monthly rotating exhibitions. The Shaikha Salama Foundation also began its Emerging Artists Fellowship programme in 2013, graduating the first cohort the following year.

In Dubai, Tashkeel opened in 2008 to offer artist residencies, training and courses, and studio spaces. Meanwhile galleries have continued to open, with a total of 96 galleries, art venues, and other arts-affiliated businesses to date listed in Art in the City's regional guide: ArtMap (volume 23).[8] In addition, the art hub at Alserkal Avenue (established in 2007) doubled its former size in January 2016, opening several new galleries and design studios, including heavyweight galleries such as Custot Gallery, The Third Line and Leila Heller Gallery. In March 2016, Alserkal and Rem Koolhaas announced an additional major project for the avenue.[9]

Alongside the emergence of these bricks-and-mortar institutions, seasonal arts programming has also increased. Sharjah established a biennial in 1993, which Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi took over and reoriented ten years later, in 2003. Since 2008, Sharjah also hosts the March Meeting annually, a multi-day conference for arts practitioners.

The commercial art market has also boomed over the years. In 2006, the Art Dubai commercial art fair was inaugurated in partnership with the Abraaj Group, a private equity investment firm. Art Dubai includes the Abraaj Group Art Prize as well as the Global Art Forum, a curated symposium featuring artists, thinkers, and performers. Dubai also hosts Sikka Art Fair, now in its sixth edition, and World Art Dubai, an affordable art fair. Meanwhile, in Abu Dhabi, the cultural authorities established Art Paris – Abu Dhabi art fair and then inaugurated Abu Dhabi Art in 2010 with the opening of a temporary exhibition space Manarat, on Saadiyat Island, the future home of the Guggenheim and Louvre Abu Dhabi. This year, Alserkal Avenue in Dubai moved Quoz Fest to January from its previous slot in November, in order to offer more consistent arts programming throughout the year for a largely resident, rather than international, audience. In sum, the year's cultural agenda in the UAE begins in November with Abu Dhabi Art, Quoz Fest (Dubai) in January, followed by the Sharjah Biennial, the March Meetings (Sharjah), Art Dubai, and Sikka Art Fair (Dubai) in March.

All of these organizations and programmes, of course, need staff and funding or some kind of support in order to operate. Anthropologist Neha Vora has analysed the influx of expert labour to the Gulf, problematizing professional expertise as a kind of migrant labour (as opposed to manual labour, which the term 'migrant labour' so often delimits).[10] Taking a cue from Vora, I wish to highlight another surge of migrant workers: the cultural professionals who have flocked to the Gulf for these opportunities: as many have shared with me, there is ample funding for the arts in the UAE that just is not available anywhere else. Because of this surge of workers – both manual labourers and white-collar arts professionals – and the large sums of money involved,



Mary Ellen Carroll installation at Alserkal Avenue for Art Week 2016.

Courtesy Elizabeth Derderian.

many journalists and intellectuals have written about the arts in the UAE. Their editorial take on the various arts endeavours often foreground concerns about freedom of speech and of expression, and a perceived necessity of museums and universities, as Enlightenment-derived institutions, to operate in settings with government-protected rights with regards to labour and freedom.

Many criticisms and concerns that have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *VICE* or other media which ask how the UAE can accommodate and nurture artists and contemporary museum practices fall into one of two categories: logistical or theoretical. Thus the first set of critiques importantly focuses on the living and working conditions of labourers building the museums (*how* these arts projects are physically built); the second set often assumes that the arts are not *indigenous* to the UAE and thus these projects are merely an attempt to *import* high culture (*why* these organizations have not emerged here organically, as it were). This second cluster frequently insinuates that cultural production in the UAE is inauthentic, imported rather than homegrown. In my research, I have explored the second critique to understand these discursive constructions and how power and influence are navigated and negotiated in this community. My project includes Emirati and foreign, white-collar migrants who are artists or professionals working in arts and cultural institutions, and I seek to understand how this community engages (or not) with the assumption that the art scene is a construct of inorganic imports. Is authentic organic growth in the art scene even a debate here?

Critique as Infrastructure: Debate and Development of a Professional Arts Scene

Early on, I learned from my interlocutors, who are artists and arts professionals in the UAE, that debates and dilemmas about the art scene today do not focus on addressing these largely external criticisms of the scene's inauthenticity, but rather focus more on professionalization and infrastructure. As I continued my research, I realized the issue was far more nuanced than this, and therefore best described differently: debates about authenticity in the UAE's art world do not appear as debates about authenticity per se, but rather debates about professionalization and infrastructure actually serve as an important vehicle for addressing questions of authenticity, framed to mean *organic* or *naturally developing*. In other words, debates about professionalization and infrastructure are often, at their core, debates about authenticity. The question of the organic – or inorganic – nature of art, artists, and institutions becomes suffused with how various individuals and organizations come into being, grow, and survive in the particular arts ecosystem of the Emirates. *How* an institution or artist develops can serve as a litmus test for authenticity.

Cultural policy advisor Ayeh Naraghi also stressed that the involvement of non-Emiratis does not make something inauthentic in the UAE. When talking about Alserkal Avenue, she explained, 'It's authentic because the initiative was led by long-term residents and expats, and grew out of the cultural developments here, and therefore it's a reflection of the local cultural ecosystem.' Naraghi's comment highlights two important distinctions that are key to understanding how my interlocutors frame authenticity: first, they challenge the idea that an institution must be run and staffed by Emiratis to be 'local,' noting that this obscures the contributions of many long-term residents. The definition of 'local' and 'resident,' then, become highly political, as they signal cultural – if not legal – belonging to the Emirati nation. Second, they focus less on the *origin* or *original framework* of an institution or a work in claiming its authenticity and instead highlight growth and adaptation to the local environment and market. Thus it is less important that the original Louvre is located in Paris, and more important in the ways that the Louvre Abu Dhabi as an institution will respond to and reflect its local context: by offering Ladies' Preview Days, navigating local standards of modesty in the choice of which artworks to display, exhibiting work from regional artists, and so on. In a move that illustrates these two points, the Sheikhha Salama Foundation expanded their Emerging Artist Fellowship programme in its second year to accept long-term residents (non-Emirati citizens). Graduates of this cohort emphasize the importance of this inclusive approach in building an arts community in the UAE, but also applaud the Foundation for adapting the programme to better suit its context and community. Thus it doesn't matter where the seed came from, but how the tree grows.

Organizational growth is a key indicator of how an organization takes root and adapts to the particular arts ecosystem in the Emirates, and by extension, its authenticity. In this way, then, infrastructure and organization become critical. The rather large scope of many decrees and vision plans often introduce new challenges for young arts organizations, as the lofty language of these plans often do not offer concrete steps clarifying how organizations are to realize these goals and declarations. As Liam, a European cultural professional working on a major new museum project recounted, 'I don't need to train one person. I need to train 50!'^[11] Khulood, another cultural worker, commented that many staff in cultural institutions perform two or three jobs at once, even before some of the institutions are open to the public and the workloads are due to increase. Because many arts and cultural institutions are growing so fast and have huge missions to deliver, it is also imperative to recruit and train workers and to create audiences for these institutions. In fact, the training of Emirati nationals for professional roles in museums was a 'key element' of the initial agreement between the Guggenheim and the Abu Dhabi government.^[12]



Bait al Shamsi space at Sharjah Art Foundation.
Courtesy Elizabeth Derderian.

In addition to training initiatives for staff, many of my interlocutors also debate the role and place of formal training for artists: a second important definition of *authentic* or *real* art is professional art, as distinguished from amateur endeavours. Formal training can provide a pedigree to authenticate an artist in the UAE and elsewhere. Some prominent young Emirati artists curate their own training through workshops at Tashkeel in Dubai, photography institutes, or other short-term course options, while other regional artists undertake training in the UK or the USA before returning to the UAE to work. Travelling abroad for fine arts study is a well-established practice in the UAE: older generations of artists like Hassan Sharif and Dr. Najat Makki, for example, studied fine art in London and Cairo, respectively. At the moment, MA programs in the arts or museum studies exist at University College London (UCL) in Qatar, but no graduate degree programme exists in the UAE and Emirates-based students are unlikely to travel to Qatar for training.^[13] Around 2012, the American University of Sharjah began offering a certificate programme, but by 2015, the programme was no

longer active. Some affiliated with the programme shared that it struggled because students did not want a certificate, but rather a formal graduate degree. As for undergraduate training, NYU Abu Dhabi offers BA degrees in Visual Arts as well as in Art and Art History. Upon graduation, however, artists must pursue advanced degrees elsewhere or transition to alternative modes of working, including using studio space at institutions like Tashkeel, the Sharjah Art Foundation, or the forthcoming workspaces at the Warehouse project of the Sheikha Salama Foundation.

Thus, the mechanics of becoming an artist, from a very infrastructural perspective, come sharply into focus: the kinds of training programmes that exist, the types of studio spaces that are available, the sort of work that can physically be made and where it can be shown. On a panel sponsored by the Sheikha Salama Foundation, Tashkeel founder Jill Hoyle commented that a master's programme in the arts in the UAE would allow students a path to develop.^[14] Another presenter raised the question: do young artists see art as a professional, full-time career? The role of formal training is key here, as artists must weigh travel, study abroad and notions of the professional full-time artist versus the amateur.

Finishing a formal training programme in the arts presents its own difficulties in the UAE, as it does in many other communities. In particular, several younger artists have remarked on the difficulty of making work after graduating from college. While in school, budding artists have access to studio space and more expensive tools and resources (such as enlargers, scanners, studio space, computers with advanced software, and so on). However, upon graduation, students no longer have access to these resources, making it more difficult to produce artwork. The availability and affordability of studio space thus becomes important. One artist reported to me that a foundation had plans to create more studio spaces for artists to work in Abu Dhabi; meanwhile, several of Dubai's galleries host resident artists and institutions like Tashkeel (Dubai) and the Sharjah Art Foundation and Emirates Fine Arts Society (both in Sharjah) offer member artists, spaces in which to work and practice.

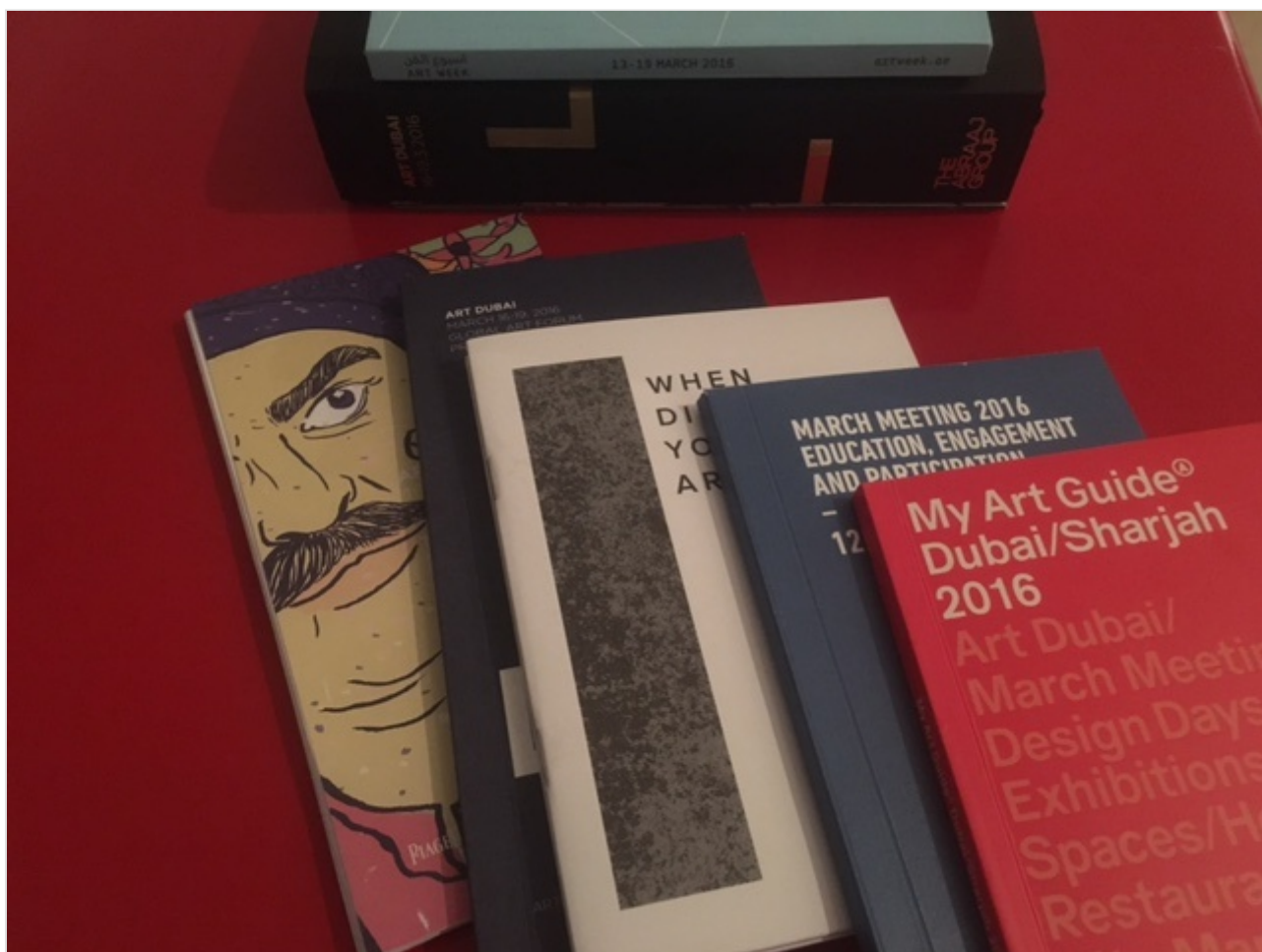
Studio spaces are not the only logistical concern of my interlocutors. What positions were necessary, and which institutions were key in helping to support and nurture emerging artists? In addition to studio spaces in which to work and gallery spaces in which to sell art, what other types of organizations could structure and support the development of artists? While there are many commercial galleries in Dubai, for example, there are fewer places where artists can practice. Creating community organizations that can host both exhibitions and artists' studios is one strategy adopted by Abu Dhabi Art Hub as well as Tashkeel. At a public talk on supporting artistic production, Tashkeel manager Jill Hoyle remarked that when it opened, many people did not understand what the organization was for, or why artists needed spaces to work.^[15] Thanks to organizations like Tashkeel, the Jam Jar, the Sharjah Art Foundation, Dubai Culture Authority, and prominent arts events like Art Dubai and the Sharjah Biennial, Dubai and Sharjah residents now have more familiarity with the arts and with the idea that art is work that requires a place to be conducted in.

This transition from producing art to presenting and displaying it is critical. In a similar vein, Salah, an Emirati photographer, recounted the difficulty of developing prints in the UAE, noting that he sometimes sends his film to Germany or the USA for processing. He also commented appreciatively that some of the galleries he works with have been exceptionally helpful in mentoring him as he transitioned from student to working artist – for example, offering suggestions about framing and presenting work for display in a professional gallery setting. In addition to these kinds of institutions and specializations in terms of spaces, organizational missions, and skillsets, some of my interlocutors have made asides like 'the founder needs to hire a curator,' 'that event is for

amateur painters,' or 'that collection needs professional valuation.' While seemingly innocuous, these comments all highlight the various roles that contribute to an arts community, and the different types of expertise that many in the art community deem necessary to have a fully-fledged, well-developed and professional art world. Many arts professionals come from art communities in the USA and Europe where roles like art critic, appraiser, art handler, and curator are well established, and these cultural workers are hired to bring that expertise and implement that particular structure of an art world to the UAE, and many Emiratis working in arts-related careers go to the USA or UK for professional training. There is also international pressure and expectation that comes with having international museum projects and commercial art fairs. One arts professional, Ekaterina, told me that she debated a collaborative project between her organization and UNESCO, but withdrew because she felt her organization wasn't 'on that level yet' and she feared working with UNESCO at an early stage in the organization's development, when the team had not formalized many roles and has not secured yet a key position in the arts community, which might ruin or foreclose future opportunities.

Debates about professionalization also touch on questions of aesthetics. For example, the way a show looks is important. Several arts professionals noted that it was inappropriate or even 'embarrassing' when prices were listed next to the artworks on display at shows in fairs or at galleries, or when works were mounted too closely together, creating a more jumbled mosaic appearance (more akin to the cabinet of curiosity, perhaps) rather than adhering to the white cube way of presenting art. The location and visibility of such shows was also a factor – for example, some arts professionals commented that the airport is not a suitable place for fine art and some art aficionados in the UAE made disparaging comments about art sales kiosks in airports. Furthermore, the presentation of work is critical too. A foreign artist-in-residence, Phil, recounted being asked to sign his artworks on the front, noting, 'It's considered very old-fashioned.' When encouraged to do so for his residency in the Emirates, he recounted saying, 'Did you see signatures on the paintings at the art fair?' It is noteworthy that this foreign artist used the local city's art fair as a paradigm of professional practice. What is critical about these discussions is not whether these commentators are right or wrong according to a particular standard, but rather that those involved in the arts community actively negotiate what counts as 'fine' art, what does not, where 'good' art can be shown and what those displays look like.

Yet by far the most pervasive comment I have heard from artists and arts professionals, foreigners, and Emiratis alike, was that the Emirati art scene lacks critique or criticism. Artists expressed a desire for critique to improve their work and their practice, and arts professionals noted that the scene requires art criticism to be taken seriously internationally. While there are many journalists or bloggers who write about art, they do not position themselves as 'art critics.' And there is no branch of AICA, the International Association of Art Critics, in the Gulf region. A Qatari colleague, Alia, noted to me that peer review 'is in actuality a novel idea for the Arab world and the Gulf... you don't really have critique, there isn't space for critique. The individual is disciplined to NOT critique.' NYU Abu Dhabi professor and photographer Tarek El-Ghoussein echoed this colleague's assessment that critique is not an indigenous practice in the Gulf at a recent public talk at the 2015 Abu Dhabi Art Fair, commenting, 'Critique is essential. In this part of the world, part of the challenge is getting used to critique, not taking it personally. The only way you can grow is an honest, direct critique.'^[16] Emirati artists hailing from the *jeel al-jadid* (new generation) as well as those from the *jeel al-ruwad* (pioneers' generation) lamented the absence of critique in the Emirates. Charles Pocock, head of Meem Gallery in Dubai, wrote about this lacuna in 2012, as did Dubai-based arts commentator Danna Lorch in a 2015 article for *Contemporary Practices*.^[17] At a recent public panel, RISD faculty member and instructor in the Sheikhha Salama Foundation Emerging Artists Fellowship programme, Pradeep Sharma, commented that while critique can often be mysticized, it is important that critique be undertaken carefully – in order to continue, rather than to stop, the



Artweek publications.
Courtesy Elizabeth Derderian.

Artists and arts professionals frequently correlated a lack of critique to Khaleeji (Gulfi) cultural norms of politeness and acceptable speech, and a broader Middle Eastern understanding of critique as inherently negative and not constructive. As one Khaleeji[19] colleague told me, saying no to someone's face is very rude. A more polite, and socially acceptable, tactic is deferral – for example, to say 'yes, inshallah'[20] and then simply not respond to someone's subsequent emails or calls. A cultural bureaucrat, Huda, responded to my question with a horrified look: 'To walk into someone's exhibition and say, no I don't like that, it would be very rude. To their face? No.' This comment is interesting for many reasons: first, it reveals that she understands critique to be unilaterally negative and second, it firmly outlines the social mores of polite speech in the Emirates. In this social context, my interlocutors emphasized, the first art critic in the UAE must be an Emirati, and 'someone with a position' who understands how to be delicate.

Given some of the commentary on why critique reportedly doesn't exist in the UAE, we can also examine an emergent politics of respectability that is unique to the Gulf context.[21] These civilizing rituals[22] are part of what the sociologist Erving Goffman (1967) would call face-work: they are also culturally embedded and point us to the culturally specific nature of critique in the UAE. I argue that critique does exist here, but in a localized form that does not exactly mimic a Euro-American framing of critique. As one cultural commentator pointed out

to me, critique in the UAE can be more about what one does not say, than what one does, wisely noting that conspicuous omission is also a form of critique. Therefore perhaps we should think about a politics of silence and, as anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1997) advocated, look for the silences to better understand infrastructural development, hierarchy, and art in the UAE.

What can we make of this longing for critique, and in addition, a particular iteration of critique? Some of my interlocutors clearly view critique as a critical element of the infrastructure of an art world, and one that is missing in the Gulf region. This is a fascinating take on critique, which perhaps in other contexts is viewed as dying out,^[23] but also provides insight into the labour critique performs (or at least a labour that some cultural professionals and artists feel it performs) in the art community. First, critique provides a feedback mechanism, which also allows artists to develop their practice. Many artists residing here bemoan the inevitable response to their work as unhelpful: the 'your work is so nice' comment does not challenge these artists to improve. On a deeper level, critique works to instantiate a difference between amateur and professional, but also mediates between audience and artist. Art criticism and critique practices for artists differentiate the amateur from the professional artist, which some of my interlocutors have raised as a concern. Because recent arts funding in the UAE has attracted many new practitioners, some feel a need for a funnelling or winnowing process. This is important both for these artists' own pride in their work but also, they argue, for the country's international reputation. Critique thus serves as a kind of professional infrastructure for the art world: it can instantiate hierarchy and delineate amateur professional, as well as providing a means for artists to navigate and rise up in that hierarchy.

While Michael Orwicz has noted that art criticism has no codification or easy definition, and therefore a lack of 'internal coherence'; other commentators, such as Michael Shreyach, point out that many observers consider art criticism to be a form of mediation: 'a conventional assumption about art criticism is that it mediates between the critic (a professional who produces specialized knowledge about artists and artworks) and a public that seeks to be educated or enlightened about a market of artistic or intellectual products.'^[24] Critique emerges as a means of balancing and mediating an institutionalizing system, for separating professionals from mere enthusiasts, and thus as new institutions appear across the UAE arts community, it should perhaps not be surprising that critique becomes increasingly desirable. Furthermore, Boris Groys has also noted that 'images without text are embarrassing,' and thus the art critic's job is to give metaphorical clothing to the artwork. At the same time, he argues, art criticism is written for this appearance rather than to be read.^[25] In this way, art criticism alerts the international arts community that the art world here is professional, that there is a system to separate the professional from the amateur, and that works emerge from a rigorous vetting. Here we have a discrepancy in hierarchies of etiquette and politics of respectability with a concern about falling shy of a perceived global standard. Yet simultaneously, in the context of Shreyach's observations, perhaps we can read this desire for a critique as a desire to engage with and be legible to the broader local community, a pitch for the legitimacy and necessity of the artist in society.

In pulling these strands of thought together, it seems that part of the longing for critique reflects a desired audience or public, and points to deeper questions about the varying roles of art in society. It is worth considering that the philosopher Immanuel Kant noted the need for disinterested, unbiased art critics in his *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) and that the figure of the critic emerged in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century in Europe, alongside the emergence of the notion of a broad democratic public. Thus the figure of the art critic has long been correlated to and imbricated with notions of publics and audience. In addition, the flexibility of the canon of art criticism as a particular form of writing can also create space for a locally specific

form of art criticism that accommodates, even if at some level reworking, Khaleeji or Emirati politics of respectability. Finally, we might expect a longing for independent critique to appear with the rise of institutions, as a kind of organic balance in the burgeoning system, and as a means for artists to find their place in and communicate with their broader community. It is rather ironic that international media critiques of arts initiatives in the UAE, which deride them as inauthentic imports, have failed to see the ways in which these initiatives continue to mediate and negotiate an internationally renowned arts community with authentic, culturally appropriate behaviour. We might also consider varying models of critique, and consider whether critique necessarily manifests in the form of words or texts but might not also appear in gaps and silences, and become more proficient readers of those politicized silences. Those who are not long-time Emirati residents can learn to recognize and acknowledge this nuanced and localized practice of critique while resident artists and local organizations continue to navigate and formulate critique on their own terms and in ways that reflect the political and cultural landscape of the UAE.

I have argued here for a contextually specific understanding of critique, but also that the idea of critique as a form of professional infrastructure for the art world enables us to think more about the labour critique performs in a community. It is also a useful hermeneutic for thinking about art as a profession: by seeing the scaffolding architectures on which professions are built and power is deployed, we can see the ways actors deploy critique in the development of artists, as a means to give them feedback, but also to signify and externally represent a robust, professional arts community that supports multiple professions. Thinking about critique as infrastructure also helps capture the specific, lived practices necessary to navigate hierarchies within individual arts communities and the global art world. By exploring critique as infrastructure in the UAE, we learn both the local specificities of the art world, and also which practices those situated here consider to be essential practices in a broader, global professional art world.

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[1] Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,' in *Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. I. Karp and S. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian, 1991).

[2] Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[3] For a critique of this thinking, see Jessica Winegar, 'The Humanity Game: Art, Islam and the War on Terror' in *Anthropological Quarterly* 81.3 (2008): pp. 651-681.

[4] See: Alan Riding, 'Abu Dhabi Is to Gain a Louvre of its Own,' *The New York Times*, 13 January 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/13/arts/design/13louv.html>.

[5] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[6] The Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf was established in 1981 and is a regional organization with six members: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

[7] I should also note that given fluidity of exchange and movement of artists and works, especially to and from Europe, Iran, and India, the UAE's arts community is not bound to national borders.

[8] See: <http://www.artinthecity.com/en/artmap/>.

[9] See: Harlie Rush, 'Rem Koolhaas Unveils Plans for Art Space in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue,' *ArtNet News*, 18 March 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/rem-koolhaas-dubai-project-unveiled-452102>.

[10] Neha Vora, 'Expert/Expat Camps: Redefining Labor in Migration,' in *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf*, eds. Adam Hanieh et al (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

[11] Throughout the article, when names appear without a last name, this indicates that they are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of my interlocutors.

[12] See: <http://www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi/press-room/press-releases/1852-operating-framework-release>.

[13] This is largely because if students travelled abroad in pursuit of education, they would likely opt for prestigious programmes in London, Paris, or New York.

[14] 'Artist Communities: Nature/Nurture Panel', Shaikha Salama Foundation, 3 February 2016. With Jill Hoyle, Manager of Tashkeel; Maisa al Qassimi, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority; and Pradeep Sharma and Anais Missakian, faculty from Rhode Island School of Design and the Salama Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship. Moderated by journalist Myrna Ayad.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] 'Zayed National Museum: the Evolving Nature of Museum Collections' talk, Abu Dhabi Art, 20 November 2015.

[17] Danna Lorch, 'Towards a Culture of Critique in the Visual Arts of the Gulf Region,' in *Contemporary Practices: Visual Arts from the Middle East* 16 (2015).

[18] 'Artist Communities: Nature/Nurture', *op cit.*

[19] Term referring to a citizen of one of the Gulf Arab states.

[20] Arabic for 'God Willing.'

[21] I do not mean to imply that all art communities understand critique in the same way or that other art worlds do not have similar forms of critique, rather to encourage culturally and contextually specific understandings of various forms of critique.

[22] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. E Jephcott (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers,

1994).

[23] James Elkins, *What Happened to Art Criticism?* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

[24] Michael Shreyach, 'The Recovery of Criticism,' in *The State of Art Criticism*, eds. J. Elkins and M. Newman (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008).

[25] Boris Groys, 'Critical Reflections,' in *The State of Art Criticism*, *op cit*.

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Gulf

Civil Society

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