

GUEST RELATIONS

04 NOV
نوفمبر
2023

28 APR
أبريل
2024

علاقات الضيف

GUEST RELATIONS

Bringing together artwork, archival material and architectural research from across the Global South, 'Guest Relations' examines the historical, political, social and cultural transformations accompanying processes of intense touristification. The exhibition emerges out of, and responds to, the context of Dubai - one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations in the world. Part of a broader strategy to ensure continued prosperity beyond fossil fuels, the city's model for urban development - driven by significant state and private investment in the hospitality industry - has been widely emulated. 'Guest Relations' foregrounds social complexities and narrative possibilities beyond projections of luxury and spectacle, elucidating the cultural and historical contours of what we might call the 'work of welcome'.

Focused on the transactional nature of modern hospitality, the exhibition centres the hotel as a historical subject and a site of artistic investigation, while touching on other key sites of the hospitality industry such as airlines, cruise ships, amusement parks and social media platforms. Hotels are spaces of temporary residence, providing visitors with the comfort and security of home in faraway lands.

They are enclaves where complex relations and negotiations between guest and host play out. Through the second half of the 20th century, hotels across the Gulf were engines of modernisation and treasured icons of modernity. Vital, if exclusive, communal hubs, they provided rare opportunities for leisure, consumption and entertainment. They became magical portals to a cosmopolitan elsewhere, zones of exception where, under the guise of tourism, practices outside social norms were permitted.

Tracing the hotel's history, from colonial hubris and grandeur to its ubiquity in the age of globalisation, 'Guest Relations' narrates histories of nationalism, modernity and war, and their intersections with labour and class, through the material and immaterial infrastructures of hospitality. The exhibition unfolds through galleries inspired by different spatial features common to hotels - the building, the lobby, the room and the corridor. The journey concludes by offering hotels and the hospitality industry as prompts for the imagination, for telling stories and narrating histories, for revisiting pasts and reimagining futures.

Curated by:
Murtaza Vali
with Lucas Morin

Abdul Halik Azeez
Asma Belhamar
Sophie Calle
Tenzing Dakpa
Shezad Dawood
Meschac Gaba
Mario Garcia Torres
Lamy Gargash
Joana Hadjithomas
& Khalil Joreige

Mati Jhurry
with Nabla Yahya
Eisa Jocson
Hilmi Johandi
Ranjit Kandalgaonkar
Ahmed Mater
Hind Mezaina
Park Sunyoung
& Lee Somi
Michael Rakowitz

Marwan Rechmaoui
Yiyo Tirado Rivera
Salma Serry
Taryn Simon
Svay Ken
Rayyane Tabet
Hale Tenger
Sung Tieu
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Photography by Daniella
Baptista

GUEST RELATIONS

04 NOV 2023
25 APR 2024

علاقات الضيف

1. **الهدف من العلاقات مع الضيف**
 2. **مكونات العلاقات مع الضيف**
 3. **الخطوات المتبعة في العلاقات مع الضيف**
 4. **الوسائل المستخدمة في العلاقات مع الضيف**
 5. **التحديات التي تواجه العلاقات مع الضيف**
 6. **الفرص المتاحة للعلاقات مع الضيف**
 7. **الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في العلاقات مع الضيف**
 8. **النتائج المتوقعة من العلاقات مع الضيف**
 9. **الخلاصة**
 10. **المراجع**





Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin
H Facts: Hospitality/Hostility
2003–2007

Hotel signs
Courtesy of the Estate of Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin and GALERIST

The six hotel signs displayed here are part of a larger series by Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, inspired by small hotels he encountered during nighttime walks in the Istanbul districts of Tarlabası and Laleli in the early 1990s. Once associated with the city's underworld, these neighbourhoods were being transformed by an influx of migrants and refugees from Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan and the former Soviet states. For Alptekin, these modest establishments – when compared to well-known multinational hotel chains – were representative of a vernacular or bottom-up model of globalisation, driven not by the unfettered mobility of the privileged but by those forced to move in search of safety and livelihood.

Tapping into desires for the foreign and exotic through names of faraway non-Western cities – the full series includes places such as Beirut, Bombay, Baghdad, Casablanca, Rio and Tirana – the signs stand in contrast to the rundown appearance of the low-end hotels that bear them. Though they seem to belong to actual hotels, they were designed and produced by Alptekin, who spent years carefully studying and documenting such signage, paying close attention to the typography and colours used.





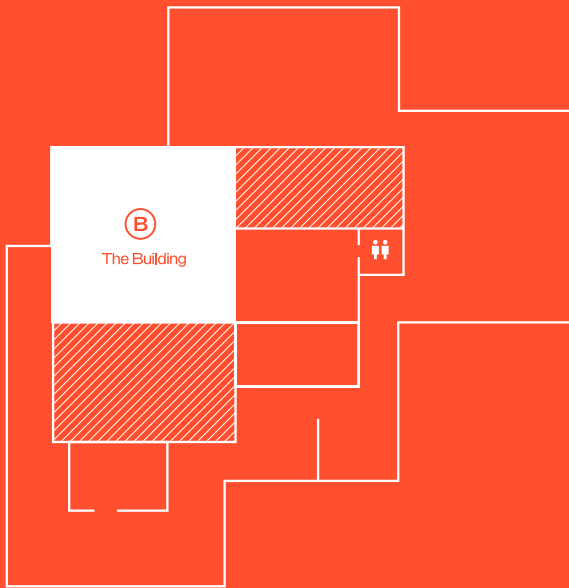
Lamya Gargash

Familial: Al Jazira Hotel Lobby, Red Sand Hotel Lobby, Al Rabiah Hotel Lobby
2009

C-print
Courtesy of the artist and The Third Line, Dubai
Private collection, UAE

Commissioned for and presented as part of the UAE's first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009, Lamya Gargash's *Familial* documents the lobbies and rooms of the many budget hotels that dot Deira, Dubai's old city centre. Deira is home to a number of newcomers, who start their lives in Dubai in such hotels. These establishments are also frequently patronised by the many small-scale traders – hailing from post-Soviet states through the 1990s and, more recently, from across Africa – who travel to Dubai to bulk purchase consumer goods unavailable at home, for resale.

Gargash presents a vision of Dubai distinct from the glitz and glamour usually associated with it. Her photographs draw attention to the modest spaces used by lower-income travellers, who remain vital to the city's economic success but disappear behind its projected image as a luxury tourism destination.



Works by:

Pio Abad
Asma Belhamar
Shezad Dawood
Meschac Gaba

Ahmed Mater
Marwan Rechmaoui
Hale Tenger
Yiyo Tirado Rivera
Lantian Xie

THE BUILDING

Hotels are architectural landmarks, central to branding cities and countries as desirable tourist destinations. Art and architecture historian Annabel Jane Wharton has proposed two useful terms for understanding the symbolic functions that hotels can play: as “totems”, they embody power and capital; as “fetishes”, they project these qualities while masking their absence. Parodying features commonly used in hospitality or real estate trade shows - scale models, architectural drawings, digital wallpaper - the artworks in this gallery hover between totem and fetish. They transform the landmark hotel into something altogether more fantastical and elusive: a sandcastle, a ghost, a glazed ceramic, a colourful abstraction, a hand-braided wig, a plastic perfume bottle, a concrete ruin, and an elegy.



Yiyo Tirado Rivera

*Castillos de Arena (Sandcastles):
Caribe Hilton*
2020

Plastic, sand and wood
Courtesy of the artist and El
Kilómetro Gallery

Yiyo Tirado Rivera offers a trenchant critique of the influence of the tourism industry on his Caribbean island home of Puerto Rico – an unincorporated territory of the United States – viewing it as a contemporary expression of colonialism.

Caribe Hilton is part of an ongoing series titled *Castillos de Arena (Sandcastles)* inspired by the spate of modernist hotels and resorts constructed in Puerto Rico between the late 1940s and the 1970s, coinciding with the expansion of air travel to the island and its promotion as a beach holiday destination. Opened in 1949, San Juan's Caribe Hilton was the first Hilton established outside the continental US, marking the beginning of Conrad Hilton's eventual State Department-sponsored Cold War campaign to establish 'little Americas' around the world to counter the spread of communism.

Each detailed scale model, based on original architectural drawings, is made out of, or carefully encased in, a layer of local beach sand, turning these edifices into mirages that slowly deteriorate over the course of an exhibition. Their fragility highlights the unsustainability of the tourism industry as an economic provider for the territory, with its profits often failing to benefit the local population and hindering other paths to prosperity. The sculpture's gradual erosion is also a poignant reminder of the harmful effects of such tourism-related terraforming projects on local landscapes and ecosystems.





Lantian Xie

Metropolitan Hotel No. 1-15
2015–2016

Colour pencil on paper
Art Jameel Collection

Metropolitan Hotel No. 1-15 is a series of drawings of hotels named 'Metropolitan' from across the world – including global cities like New York, Washington DC, Barcelona, Cairo and Sydney – that no longer exist. Rendering them ghostly, Lantian Xie's delicate graphite drawings memorialise their absence.

Xie began these drawings soon after the 2013 demolition of Dubai's iconic Metropolitan Hotel. Opened in 1979, and designed by John R. Harris & Partners – the architects behind the Dubai World Trade Centre – the hotel, a popular hangout for European and American expats and locals alike, was one of the first major buildings on the then largely desolate road to Abu Dhabi, now named Sheikh Zayed Road, the central spine of 21st-century Dubai.

Hotels have long provided the comforts and amenities of metropolitan life in the hinterland or the colony. Xie's project reveals how an acknowledgement of this important original function of the hotel – as a bastion of modernity and cosmopolitanism – has become a much-copied and diluted global brand, manifesting in a variety of architectural styles. His drawings rehearse the paradox of the contemporary hotel, pitched between the global and the local, the generic and the authentic, a temporary rest stop for people and a world in perpetual motion.



Asma Belhamar
Phoenicia Grand Hotel
2022

Carbon graphite paper,
acrylic on paper
Art Jameel Collection

Phoenicia Grand Hotel #2
2022

Carbon graphite paper,
acrylic on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Green
Art Gallery

Asma Belhamar's practice explores personal and collective memories associated with the UAE's built and natural landscapes. Working across drawing and sculpture, Belhamar deconstructs and distorts the façades of iconic modernist buildings, transposing them onto twisting topographical surfaces.

The subject of her two *Phoenicia Grand Hotel* drawings is a two-star hotel built in the 1970s, located on the lively Baniyas (formerly Gamal Abdel Nasser) Square in Dubai's Naif neighbourhood. Surrounded by some of the city's earliest high-rise structures, and the location of its first cinema, the square was Dubai's commercial heart at the time, its former name acknowledging the regional influence of Pan-Arabism. The establishment's name, most likely inspired

by Beirut's famous Phoenicia Hotel (which is also the subject of a nearby work by Rayyane Tabet), acknowledges the Lebanese capital's postwar importance as a regional hub of tourism, trade, and finance, a mantle that Dubai inherited after the start of the Lebanese Civil War.

In Belhamar's drawings, the building's hexagonal windows, arranged in a neat grid, replicate and dissolve into their constitutive geometries, slowly dispersing across the page. This entropy reflects the ways in which such modernist landmarks, once central to the commercial and social life of the city and many now facing demolition, are fading from the collective consciousness, as a glittering new skyline erupts elsewhere.

Images courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery, Dubai



Marwan Rechmaoui
Monument for the Living
2001-2008

Casted cement
Courtesy of Sharjah Art
Foundation Collection

Marwan Rechmaoui's *Monument for the Living* is a cement-scale model of Burj El Murr, an abandoned high-rise that continues to dominate Beirut's skyline. Funded by construction magnate Michel Murr, it was the first skyscraper in Beirut to utilise precast concrete. Rechmaoui meticulously precast each floor and window in the same material to create his architectural facsimile.

Scaled down to the size of a person, Rechmaoui's coffin-like monolith, though not of a hotel, indexes an important postwar development in the hospitality industry: the high-rise modernist hotel. Begun in 1974, the building remained unfinished due to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), playing a pivotal role in the brutal Battle

of the Hotels (1975-1977). During this time, various militias fought for control over it and other nearby high-rise structures, such as the famous Phoenicia Hotel and the then recently opened Holiday Inn in central Beirut's Minet el Hosn district.

Novel construction techniques like precast concrete, and technological innovations like high-speed lifts and air conditioning, enabled the construction of these skyscrapers. While hotels, owing to their close association with foreign elites, are often symbolic targets, the soaring heights and strategic locations of these structures, ironically designed to maximise panoramic views, made them highly coveted tactical assets during the civil war.





Hale Tenger
Beirut
2007

Single channel video projection
Courtesy of the artist, Green Art
Gallery, Dubai, and Galeri Nev,
Istanbul

Hale Tenger visited Beirut shortly after the former Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri was killed by a truck bomb just outside the St. Georges Hotel on February 14, 2005. Opened in 1934, the iconic French colonial-era establishment – an enduring symbol of Beirut’s glamour that had been abandoned during the Lebanese Civil War – was severely damaged in the explosion.

While a special UN-led tribunal investigation of the assassination was underway, access to the site was restricted, prohibiting unauthorised individuals from taking photographs or shooting video. Tenger, who happened to be staying nearby, was able to surreptitiously film the hotel’s front façade from her balcony. Set to gentle music, the resulting footage captures the serene yet

desolate flutter of white sheets in the hotel windows, hung by its owners in protest against Hariri’s real estate company Solidere International. The beautifully composed static shot belies the violence that occurred there.

Her footage of the same scene at night has an eerie green glow, reminiscent of military and surveillance equipment. Tenger overlays this with sounds of explosions and sirens recorded during the 2006 Israeli invasion. Presented as an endless loop, the video is a succinct but profound meditation on the interminable and cyclical nature of war, and the trauma it produces.

Image courtesy of the artist, Green Art Gallery, Dubai, and Galeri Nev, Istanbul



Pio Abad

Oh! Oh! Oh!

(A Universal History of Iniquity)
2013

Digitally printed wallpaper, plastic perfume in the shape of a camel, a palace, a khanjar, the Burj Al Arab and the Burj Khalifa, and narra wooden shelves
Courtesy of the artist

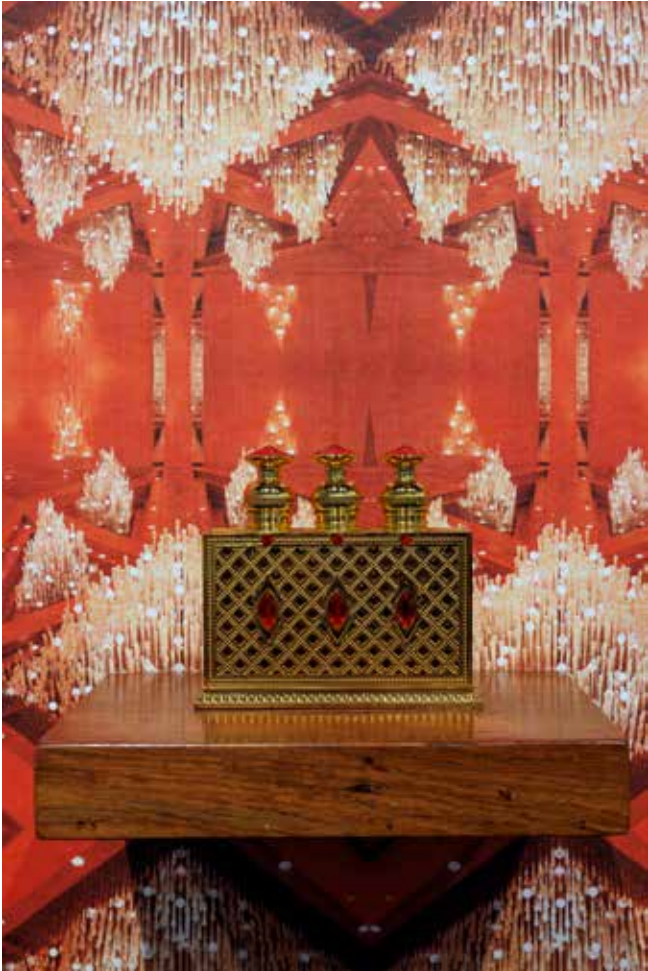
Pio Abad's installation features a kaleidoscopic wallpaper composed of a repeated image of a chandelier from the Philippine Plaza Hotel in Manila. Part of the Cultural Center of the Philippines – a complex of modernist buildings embodying Imelda Marcos' vision for a 'New Society' that was erected during her husband Ferdinand's dictatorship – the hotel, designed by architect Leandro Locsin, was built to host the delegates of the 1976 International Monetary Fund Meeting. The event announced the Philippines' entry into global capitalism, inaugurating the huge outflow of overseas Filipino workers to the Gulf, where they have played a crucial role in constructing and sustaining cities like Dubai.

This wallpaper serves as a backdrop for a series of equally baroque plastic perfume bottles in the shape of a camel, a khanjar, a palace and two Dubai architectural icons, Burj Al Arab and Burj Khalifa, together forming what the artist calls 'an

impoverished tableau of Middle Eastern progress.' Opened in 1999, the 'seven-star' Burj Al Arab, with its tastefully restrained Orientalism and exorbitant price tag, was instrumental in promoting Dubai as a destination for luxury tourism. Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, followed a decade later, further amplifying Dubai's global appeal. Abad purchased the perfume bottles at an East London street market popular with immigrant families, evidence of just how far this appeal had spread.

By juxtaposing these two architectural moments – albeit through debased versions that he evocatively describes as 'modernity as wallpaper, monumentality as cheap perfume' – Abad reveals the proximities between hospitality and political power, tracing the transnational networks through which tourist desire circulates, and the global flows of labour needed to make those dreams a reality.







Meschac Gaba

Perruques Architectures Émirats Arabes Unis: Burj Al Arab, Dubai 2019

Artificial braided hair and metal structure

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie In Situ-fabienne leclerc, Grand Paris

Long fascinated with urban forms as tangible expressions of globalisation, Meschac Gaba created his first architectural wigs during a residency in New York in 2004. Inspired by the extravagant and intricate sculpture-like creations he saw in the windows of Harlem-based hairdressers, Gaba adapted their West African hair braiding techniques to whimsically recreate parts of the city's famous skyline. Commissioned for the 14th Sharjah Biennial in 2019, Gaba's *Perruques Architectures Émirats Arabes Unis* is a set of thirteen wigs based on architectural landmarks from across the UAE.

The example displayed here is based on the 'seven-star' Burj Al Arab hotel, which opened in 1999 and was a key part of Dubai's campaign to refashion itself as a luxury tourism destination. Recreating the building's

trademark sail-like shape out of hair braids, Gaba vernacularises its sleek monumentality and domesticates its superlative claims to opulence, simultaneously celebrating the ingenuity of Beninois hairdressers and the labour of the countless construction workers who helped build it. Paralleling the way city branding reduces architectural icons to the status of kitsch souvenir, Gaba's translation highlights the performative role that Burj Al Arab has played in Dubai's projected self-image, an eye-catching ornament adorning the body of the city, a literal 'vanity project'.



Shezad Dawood

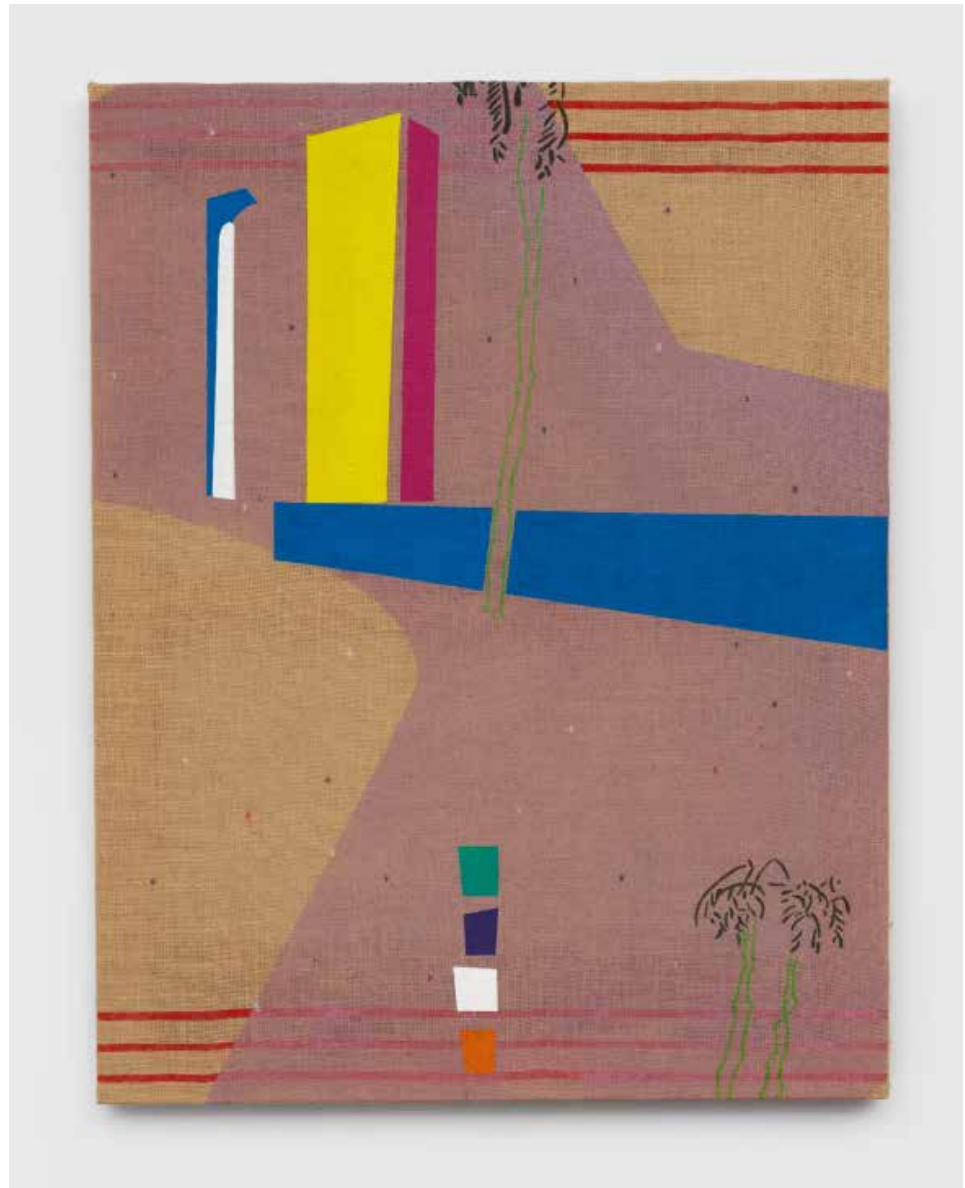
Abdeslam et Patrice
2022

Oil and acrylic on linen
Courtesy of the artist

Shezad Dawood's *Integrations* – a series of paintings on jute and glazed ceramic sculptures – pays homage to postwar modernist architecture in newly-independent nations across the Global South. Each painting is an abstract portrait of a building, titled after the first names of the architect(s) who designed it, a gesture of intimacy that recaptures the heady spirit of Third World solidarity embodied by the 1955 Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement.

The project's title is derived from *Les Intégrations*, a collaborative infrastructural development and artistic programme launched in the 1960s by the Moroccan

architects Abdeslam Faraoui and Patrice de Mazières that sought to promote the role of the fine arts in a changing society. The painting *Abdeslam et Patrice* is of one of their buildings, the Hotel Ibn Toumert in Taliouine, Morocco, built in 1974. The structure is renowned for its site-specific collaborations with School of Casablanca artists Mohamed Melehi and Mohamed Chabâa, whose art and pedagogy shared similar ideals, promoting a localised modernism that synthesised art, architecture and local craft traditions. Now abandoned, the hotel, and the much-celebrated artworks within, are threatened with demolition.



Shezad Dawood

Edvard
2022

Oil and acrylic on linen
Courtesy of the artist
and Barakat, Seoul

Each painting in Shezad Dawood's *Integrations* is an abstract portrait of a building, titled after the first name of the architect(s) who designed it. The subject of *Edvard* is Baghdad's Babylon Hotel. Located on the banks of the River Tigris, it was one of a slew of modernist hotels constructed in the Iraqi capital in anticipation of the (eventually postponed) 7th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1982. Described by some as a modernist 'ziggurat', it was actually based on an unrealised design for a beach resort on Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast, conceived by Slovenian architect Edvard Ravnikar, and eventually purchased by Saddam Hussein's government. Operated by the Indian hospitality company The Oberoi Group when it opened, the

geographic constellation behind the hotel's design, construction and operation – which spans the Balkans, West and South Asia – exemplifies the transnational networks of cooperation made possible by the Non-Aligned Movement. A celebration of the ways in which the dogmatic aesthetics and ideologies of Western modernism were reshaped in response to local aesthetics, craft traditions, climate and cultural norms, Dawood's brightly coloured, pattern-like, abstract compositions resurrect the radical convictions and utopian aspirations of an earlier generation of architects, artists and even statesmen, who sought to redefine modernism, sovereignty and solidarity on their own terms.



Shezad Dawood

Biosphere (1980)
2023

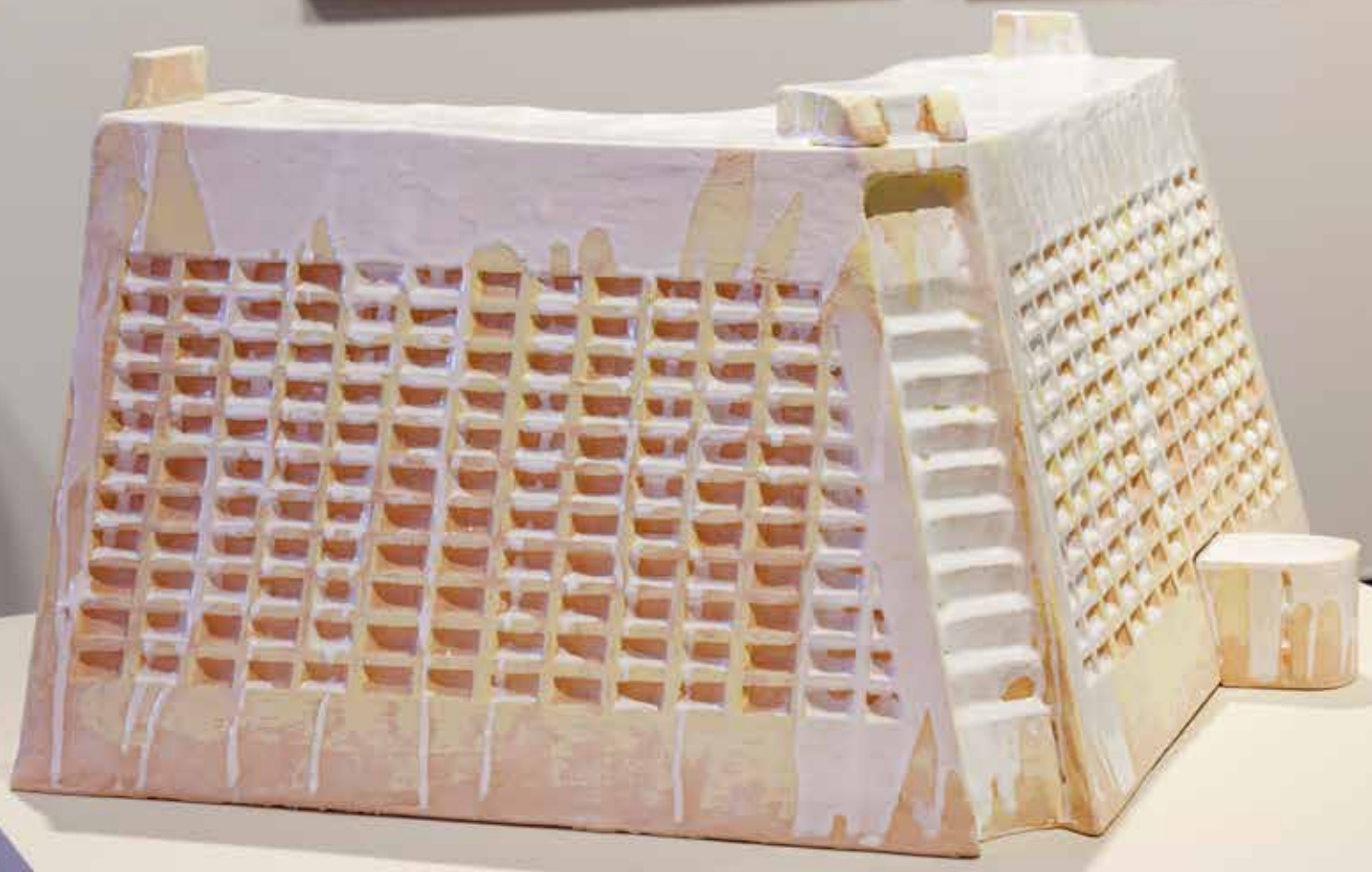
Hand-glazed ceramic in 2 parts
Courtesy of the artist
Commissioned by Art Jameel

Shezad Dawood's *Integrations* consists of both paintings on jute and glazed ceramics. His sculptures translate the tabletop model commonly used to design and promote architectural projects into a human-scaled craft object.

Designed by The Architects Collaborative, the resort-style Sharjah Inter-Continental, begun in 1976 and completed in 1980, was one of many international luxury chain hotels to open in what was then the UAE's nightlife capital. The twelve-story structure's distinctive feature was its pyramid-shaped atrium, topped with a sloping glass roof. Providing respite from the desert heat and humidity, this temperature-controlled oasis hosted a range of facilities

and services including restaurants, cafés, shops, bowling alleys, squash courts, a barber shop and halls for weddings and corporate events. While occupancy rates were low, the hotel remained popular among locals and expats through the 1980s, playing a vital social role akin to the malls of today.

Changing hands multiple times, the hotel was most recently a Radisson Blu, and like many such landmarks of its time, now sits abandoned, its future uncertain. Commissioned by curator Murtaza Vali for this exhibition, the sculpture celebrates the formative role that such hotels played during his Sharjah childhood and mourns his unrealised dreams of becoming a squash pro.





Ahmed Mater

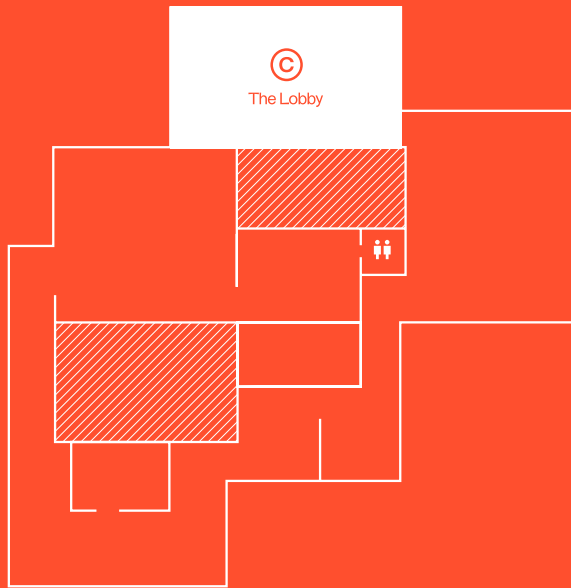
Abraj Al Bait Towers
2012

Diasec mounted fine art
latex jet print
Art Jameel Collection

Ahmed Mater's multi-year research project *Desert of Pharan* (2008-2015) examines the large-scale urban redevelopment taking place in the Holy City of Makkah. In the artist's own words, the project "maps the tension between public and private space" in a city that annually hosts millions of visiting pilgrims for Hajj and Umrah. Through photographs and videos, Mater documents the towering skyscrapers and opulent hotels that now surround the Ka'aba. These monumental structures stand in stark contrast to the modesty and sense of equality that one might associate with pilgrimage, and with the humble means of the city's 1.5 million residents and the migrant construction workers who helped build these structures.

In contrast to conventional images of Makkah, the Ka'aba, though still visible, is not the primary focus of the two large-scale photographs from the project included in this exhibition. In *Abraj Al Bait Towers*, it can only just be glimpsed between the imposing concrete façades of the eponymous high-rise complex nearby that houses numerous hotels. In *Room with a View (\$3,000/night)*, on display in a later gallery, it is faintly visible through the window of a luxury guest room, as if appearing on a flat-screen television.

Image courtesy of the artist and Athr Gallery, Jeddah. Art Jameel Collection



Works by:

Hilmi Johandi
Ranjit Kandalgaonkar
Hind Mezaina
Park Sunyoung & Lee Somi

Salma Serry
Taryn Simon
Svay Ken
Rayyane Tabet
Ala Younis

THE LOBBY

Always a performance, hospitality is stagecraft. This quality is perhaps most apparent in the modern luxury hotel's public spaces, from its elegant lobby and reception area and lavish ballrooms to its exclusive restaurants, swimming pools and spas. From their inception, hotels have also been associated with power and privilege. Society's elites would gather and mingle in its public spaces, with government leaders and industry titans continuing the work of business and politics there. Unfolding through the scenography of hospitality - from twinkling chandeliers and exotic floral arrangements to vintage serving ware - the artworks in this gallery investigate these proximities between stagecraft and statecraft.



Taryn Simon

Agreement to develop Park Hyatt St. Kitts under the St. Kitts & Nevis Citizenship by Investment Program, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, July 16, 2012 (From the series 'Paperwork and the Will of Capital')
2015

Archival inkjet print in mahogany frames with text in a windowed compartment

Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

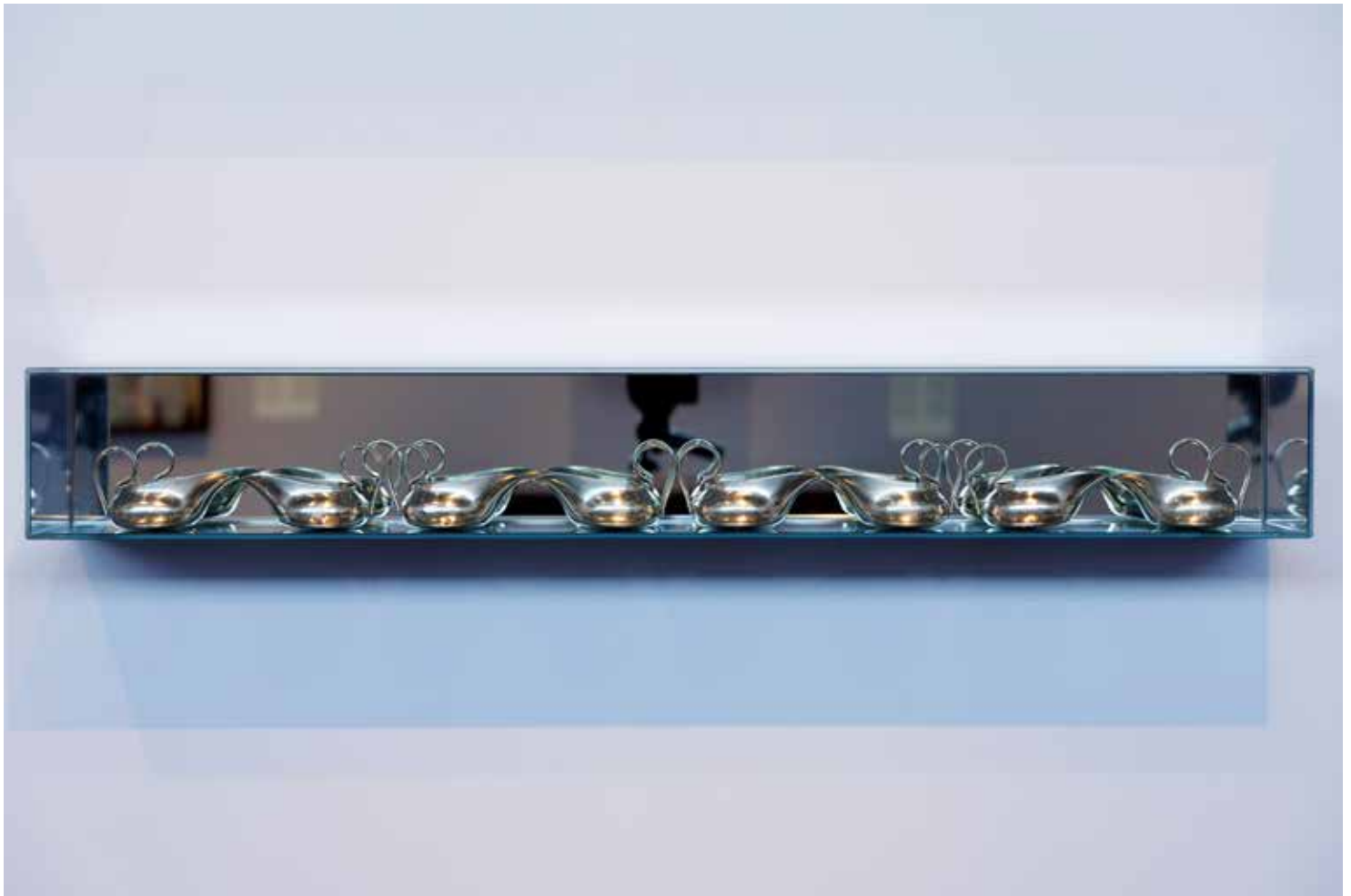
Collection of Alexander V. Petalas

Taryn Simon's *Paperwork and the Will of Capital* features 36 large-scale photographs of floral centerpieces that were present at the signing of treaties, contracts, decrees or political accords around the world. With the help of botanists, Simon painstakingly recreated the flower arrangements based on archival photographs of the events. Much like the ones featured in 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings, each centerpiece is an 'impossible bouquet', a fantastical grouping of species that naturally bloom at distinct times in different geographies, their realisation only made possible through the globalised industrial production and trade of flowers.

In the work on display here, the agreement, signed in Dubai, was for the development of a Park Hyatt in the small Caribbean nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, offering citizenship to investors. While the photograph's coloured background – inspired by the staging of the original signing – evokes the welcoming turquoise waters of the Caribbean, the proposed investment scheme may have been particularly attractive to local residents for whom naturalisation is not a possibility. Simon's photograph reminds us that modern hospitality is a performance, one that is transnational, where visions of leisure and luxury mask the machinations of state power and global finance.

Photo: © Taryn Simon. Courtesy Gagosian





Rayyane Tabet

Circular Economy
1961–2023

Eight engraved stainless steel sauce bowls from the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut, mirrored shelf/enclosure

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

Circular Economy extends Rayyane Tabet's ongoing investigations into the history and provenance of archaeological artefacts to a seemingly commonplace object: a stainless steel saucière, whose sweeping boat-like shape uncannily echoes the engraving of an ancient Phoenician ship that appears on it.

The engraving is the logo of Beirut's famous Phoenicia Hotel. Inaugurated on December 23, 1961, the building was designed by American architects Edward Durell Stone and Joseph Salerno with Lebanese architects Ferdinand Dagher and Rodolphe Elias. Part of a concerted postwar push to establish the city as a regional tourist hub, the hotel, an exemplar of International Style architecture adapted for the Mediterranean climate, became a key asset during the Battle of the Hotels in the early years of the Lebanese Civil War.

Possibly looted during or after that conflagration, the eight saucières shown here, silent witnesses to the conflict, were purchased by the artist's father at Beirut's Souq Al Ahad (Sunday Market) in 2016. Tabet presents them within a mirrored display that multiplies the object into a seemingly never-ending representational matrix. Tracing its journey from a culinary service item for a burgeoning hospitality sector to war loot to flea market find to contemporary artwork, Tabet questions the distinctions between these categories of objecthood and the socio-cultural processes through which value is differentially ascribed to them.





Park Sunyoung and Lee Somi

Hotel with white pebbles
2021-2023

Graphite on paper, colour braille
print on film
Courtesy of the artists

In 2021, Park Sunyoung and Lee Somi stayed at several hotels, left eerily empty due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, across their hometown of Seoul and in nearby Incheon. Of particular interest was the Seoul Hilton whose demolition had just been announced. Built in 1983, the structure was an icon of Korean modern architecture and a beloved landmark of the capital city, symbolising South Korea's rapid economic growth and democratisation process.

Park, a visual artist, drew a series of surreal grisaille depictions of hotel spaces, objects and textures, somewhat familiar scenes but filled with distortions and absences, as if haunted. Lee, a writer and curator, wrote over 100 anecdotes and stories to complement

them. The outcome of their collaboration was *Black Spell Hotel* (2022), an artist's book featuring 68 drawings and as many stories in braille, readable only through touch.

Park and Lee deliberately flipped the conventional notions of accessibility: visually impaired readers gain complete access to the stories, whereas others must rely on translation or on their own imagination. The display here showcases a selection of the original drawings, accompanied by stories in braille.

The original Black Spell Hotel artist's book can be viewed in the Jameel Library's Special Collections on the ground floor. Our Library team will be happy to help you find it.



Ala Younis

Double-Sided Mirrors 2023

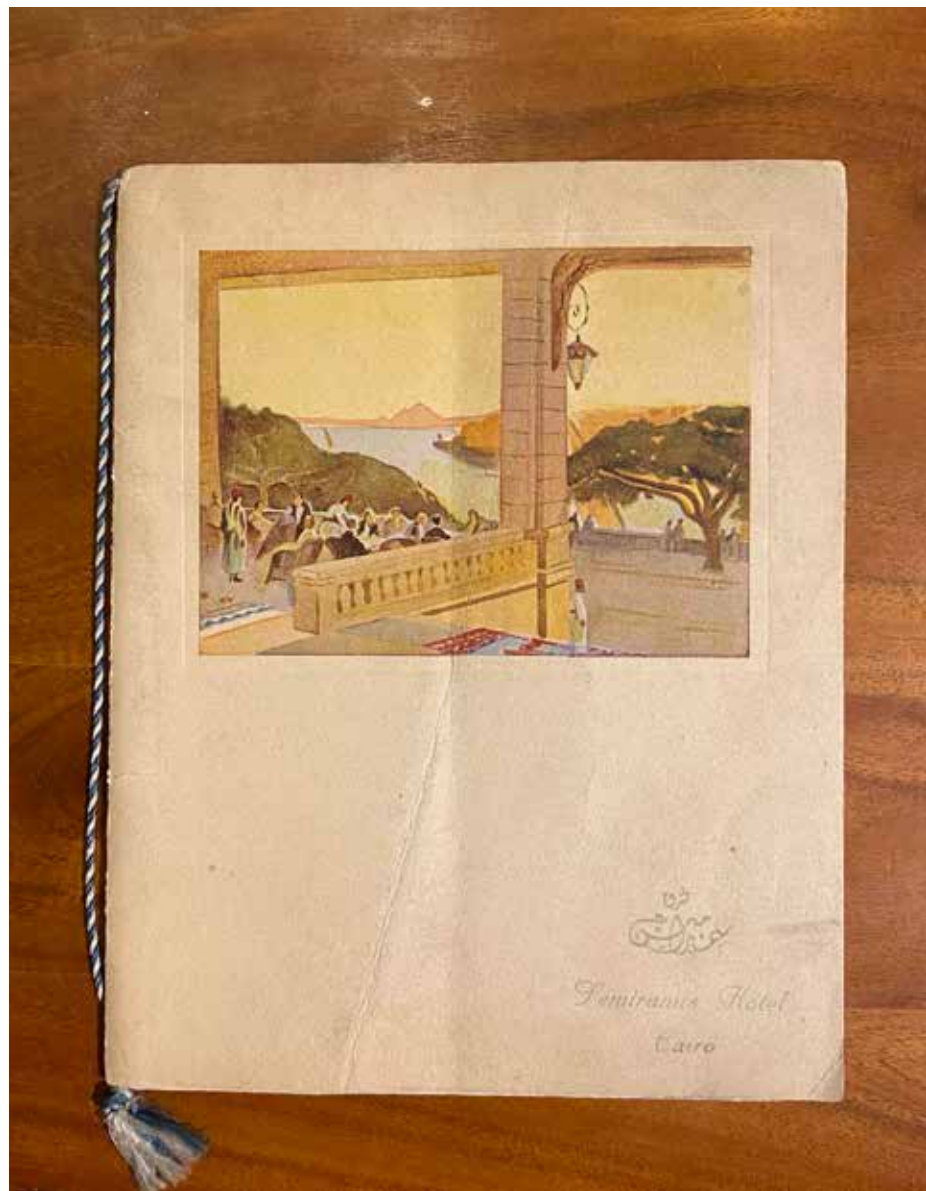
Resin, glass, crystal prisms,
plastic, paper and metal
Courtesy of the artist
Commissioned by Art Jameel

Located in the Green Zone, Baghdad's Al Rasheed Hotel – the subject of Ala Younis' *Double-Sided Mirrors* – was completed in 1982 to host the 7th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. It was part of a spate of modernist hotels (including the Babylon Hotel, the subject of Shezad Dawood's *Edvard* in the previous gallery) constructed in the Iraqi capital in anticipation of that event. Funded by oil revenue, they were meant to project the developmental successes of Saddam Hussein's regime to the visiting dignitaries. The security threat posed by the Iran-Iraq War resulted in the event's postponement and eventual relocation to New Delhi in 1983.

Rumoured to be outfitted with double-sided mirrors so as to spy on visiting dignitaries, the hotel was the base for foreign journalists reporting on the Gulf War. Its entryway floor

featured a mosaic of George H. W. Bush designed by Iraqi artist Layla Al-Attar, which forced visitors to walk across it, a sign of deep disrespect in Arab culture. The mosaic was destroyed by US troops in 2003.

Inspired by the chandeliers found in the hotel's lobby, Ala Younis presents these and other episodes from the hotel's chequered past behind a twinkling veil of crystals, further fragmenting and multiplying them, rendering any singular or definitive history impossible.



Salma Serry

The European Hotel in Egypt's History: A Culinary Infrastructure 2023

Multimedia installation
Courtesy of the author

Spanning a century of European-owned hotels in Egypt, this selection of historical menus from the collection of food researcher and historian Salma Serry provides insights into the culinary infrastructure of colonialism. The oldest menu is from Cairo's famous Shepherd's Hotel, considered by many historians as the first modern hotel in West Asia and North Africa. Others include the Semiramis Hotel and the Mena House Hotel near the Pyramids, both managed by the same group that owned Shepherd's, and the modernist Nile Hilton. Each marks a key historical moment: the British occupation of Egypt, which started in 1882; World War II; the period just before the 1952 revolution; and Anwar Sadat's economic 'infitah' of the mid-1970s, which opened Egypt up to multinational corporations.

The accompanying video shifts attention onto those who served in these establishments, through an orientalist archetype of native servitude: the soufraqi. Often of Nubian origin and dressed in Ottoman tropes such as the tarboush and 'harem' pants or the galabeya, a traditional garment indigenous to the Nile valley, he appears on the cover of the 1951 menu from the Semiramis Hotel. Serry's video collates clips from Egyptian cinema from the 1930s-1960s that feature this figure, doubly othered through his dark skin and accented Arabic, revealing how he permeated into and persisted through popular culture.



Svay Ken

Hotel Le Royal
1994

Oil on cotton
Collection of National Gallery
Singapore

For four decades from 1955 on, Svay Ken worked as a porter, a server and a handyman at Hotel Le Royal in Phnom Penh. Opened in 1929, during the French occupation of Cambodia, the colonial-era hotel was popular with journalists covering regional conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s. Forced to close from 1975 to 1979 under the Khmer Rouge regime, it subsequently became a favoured hangout for the United Nations authority that ruled Cambodia in 1992-1993, after two decades of brutal conflict.

Svay painted *Hotel Le Royal* while he was still employed there. It is a carefully observed study of the hotel's formal dining room, with the red-walled kitchen appearing in the top left corner, and an elaborate banquet on the right, possibly a gathering of UN officials, who, unlike most Cambodians, were well-paid in foreign currency and enjoyed a lavish expat lifestyle. The painting presents a clear-eyed view on the division of labour at play within the establishment, highlighting disparities of wealth and power in Cambodian society.

Image courtesy of National Gallery Singapore



Hilmi Johandi

My Raffles Experience
2019

Courtesy of the artist and
Ota Fine Arts Singapore/
Shanghai/ Tokyo Collection
of Daisuke Miyatsu

Hilmi Johandi delves into depictions of Singapore as a luxury paradise, as portrayed in marketing ephemera from the mid- to late-20th century. Toying with nostalgia, his paintings probe the rapid development and modernisation that Singapore has become synonymous with. His painting series *Stagecraft: Landscapes & Paradise* examines how state power is crafted and staged through the hospitality industry and its myriad representations.

The subject of *My Raffles Experience* is the Raffles, a renowned colonial-era hotel named after the British officer credited as

the founder of modern Singapore. Based on a 1980s postcard produced as part of state-sponsored endeavours to promote the island city as a tourist destination, the painting's title is derived from a social media hashtag introduced by the hotel in the 2010s, suggesting parallels between marketing strategies past and present, and the artifice that lies behind them. Johandi reimagines the scene as if it were a theatre or movie set, complete with props, dramatic stage lighting and painted backdrops, positioned so that their plain wooden structures are clearly visible, revealing the visions of luxury and leisure they project as fabrications.

Image courtesy: © Hilmi Johandi. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts Singapore/Shanghai/Tokyo



Hilmi Johandi

*Landscapes & Paradise:
Attractions and Sceneries
(Fountain Gardens)*
2020

Oil on linen, emulsion paint
on wood, sandbags
Courtesy of the artist and Ota
Fine Arts Singapore/
Shanghai/ Tokyo

Crystal Chandelier
2019

Oil on linen
Courtesy of the artist and Ota
Fine Arts Singapore/ Shanghai/
Tokyo Private collection, Asia

Sometimes appearing as a floating monochrome, a vibrant blue pervades Johandi's work, contrasting with his otherwise desaturated palette. Associated with decorative fountains, swimming pools and tropical beaches, it recurs throughout the postcards from the 1980s and 1990s that inspired Johandi, distilling the sophisticated theatrics of hospitality down to a single colour.

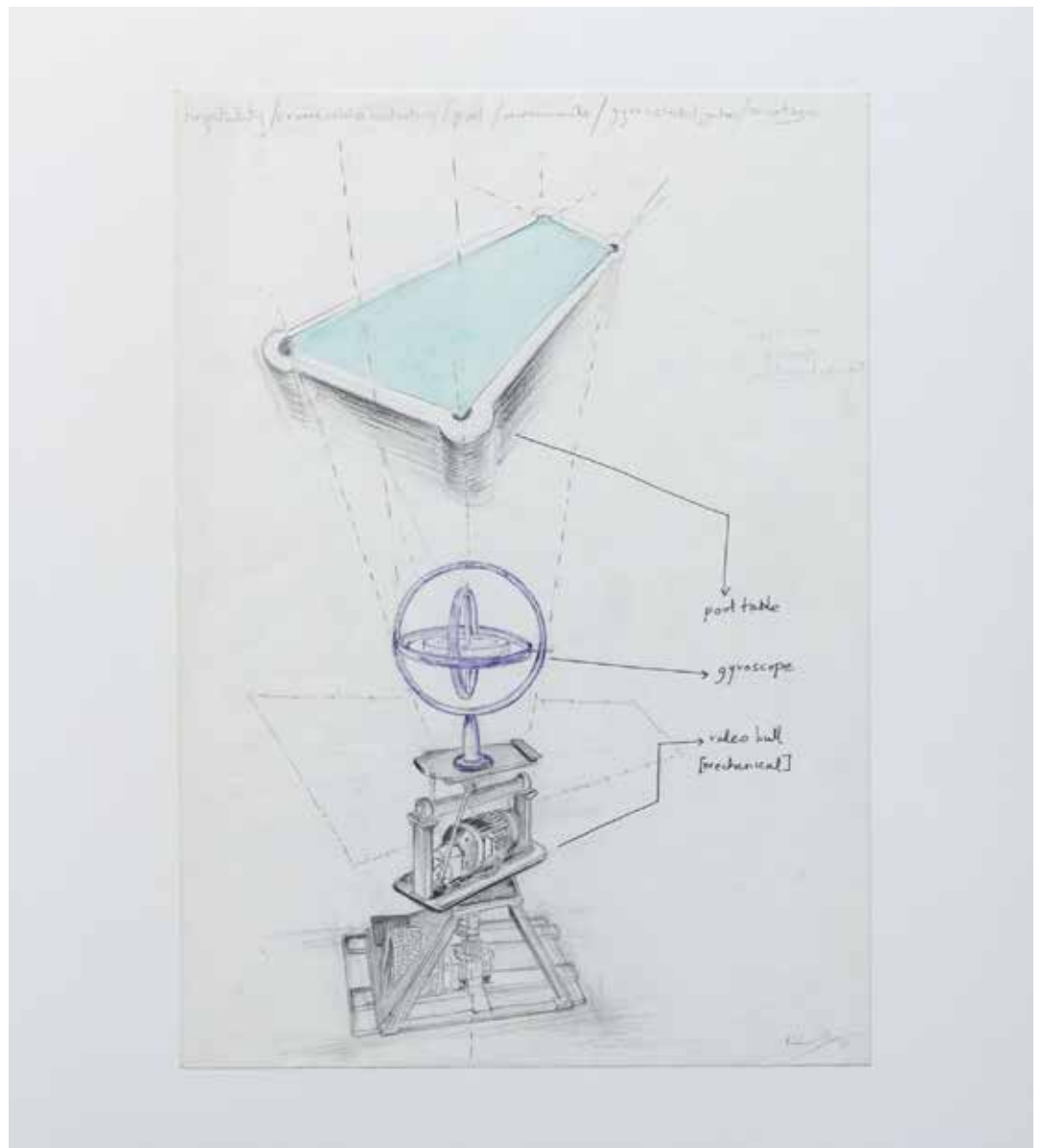
The sculpture *Landscapes & Paradise: Attractions and Sceneries (Fountain Gardens)* repurposes images of the now-demolished

Fountain Gardens from Sentosa Island, a popular island resort in Singapore, into an actual moveable backdrop.

In *Crystal Chandelier*, based on a postcard, the majestic chandelier of a hotel lobby takes centre stage, overshadowing a nearly imperceptible human figure standing nearby. Removing individual features, Johandi intentionally depicts people in a generic manner, turning them into mere stage props.

Image courtesy: © Hilmi Johandi. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts Singapore/Shanghai/Tokyo





Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

gyro-pool-stab-rodeo
2023

Graphite pencil, colour pencil,
acrylic and microtip on
cartridge paper
Courtesy of the artist
Commissioned by Art Jameel

One of the key focuses of Ranjit Kandalgaonkar's research-driven art practice is the history and politics of modern shipping, of which the cruise ship industry is an important component. Floating all-inclusive resorts and amusement parks rolled into one, colossal cruise ships are notorious for the pollution and ecological destruction they cause and for their exploitative labour practices, which conveniently take advantage of the fact that they operate in maritime space, outside territorially-bound legal jurisdictions.

Kandalgaonkar's *gyro-pool-stab-rodeo* ironically stages the misguided hubris and sublime excesses of the cruise ship industry. He draws inspiration from an ingenious technological innovation, a

gyroscope-stabilised 'self-levelling' pool table that, in the artist's words, allows patrons to "maximise their potential for play while on a get-your-money's-worth cruise ship." However, the promise of stability offered by this solution is limited to the playing surface itself, and does not extend to the players around it.

Kandalgaonkar proposes placing such a pool table atop a mechanical bull, which would simulate the flux of the sea's surface. The obvious double artifice of this bizarre but humorous contraption highlights the cruise ship's profound alienation from its natural environment, an exceptionality that enables both the fantasies it promises and the nightmares it inflicts.



Hind Mezaina

Good Life
2023

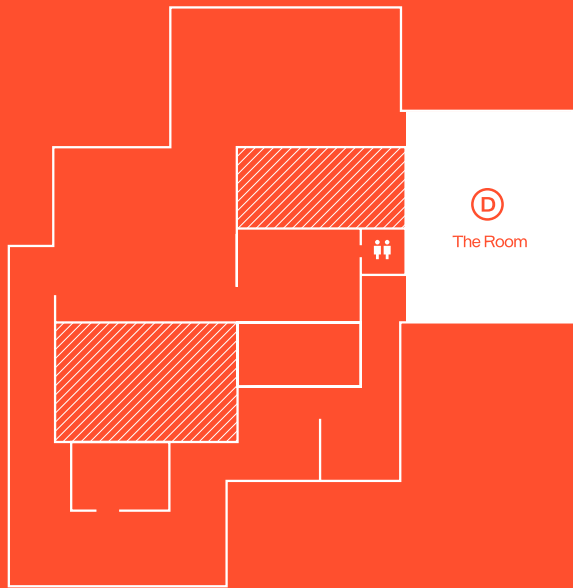
Reproduction of advertisements
from *What's On* magazine,
1979–1986

Courtesy of the artist

Over the years, artist, film curator and writer Hind Mezaina has accumulated a wealth of material pertaining to pop culture and entertainment in the United Arab Emirates. In her research-based art installation, *Last Days of Disco* (with Tulip Hazbar, 2018) and the essay “Good Vibrations: Living It Up In Sharjah Hotels,” featured in *Building Sharjah* (Birkhäuser, 2022; edited by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi and Todd Reisz), she focused on Sharjah’s nightlife in the 1970s and 1980s.

As part of her research, Mezaina scanned issues of *What's On*, a Dubai-based English-language monthly entertainment magazine. Her display reproduces a

selection of advertisements related to hotels that appeared there from the magazine’s founding in 1979 to 1986, the year following Sharjah’s ban on alcohol. These advertisements demonstrate the diverse social roles played by hotels during the early decades of the UAE, before most of Dubai’s malls were built and it had established itself as a premier international tourist destination. While some of the advertisements clearly targeted the European or American expatriate community, others featured music, cinema and other events that held broader appeal. This archive demonstrates the importance of hotels in spreading new cultural practices and social attitudes throughout the country.



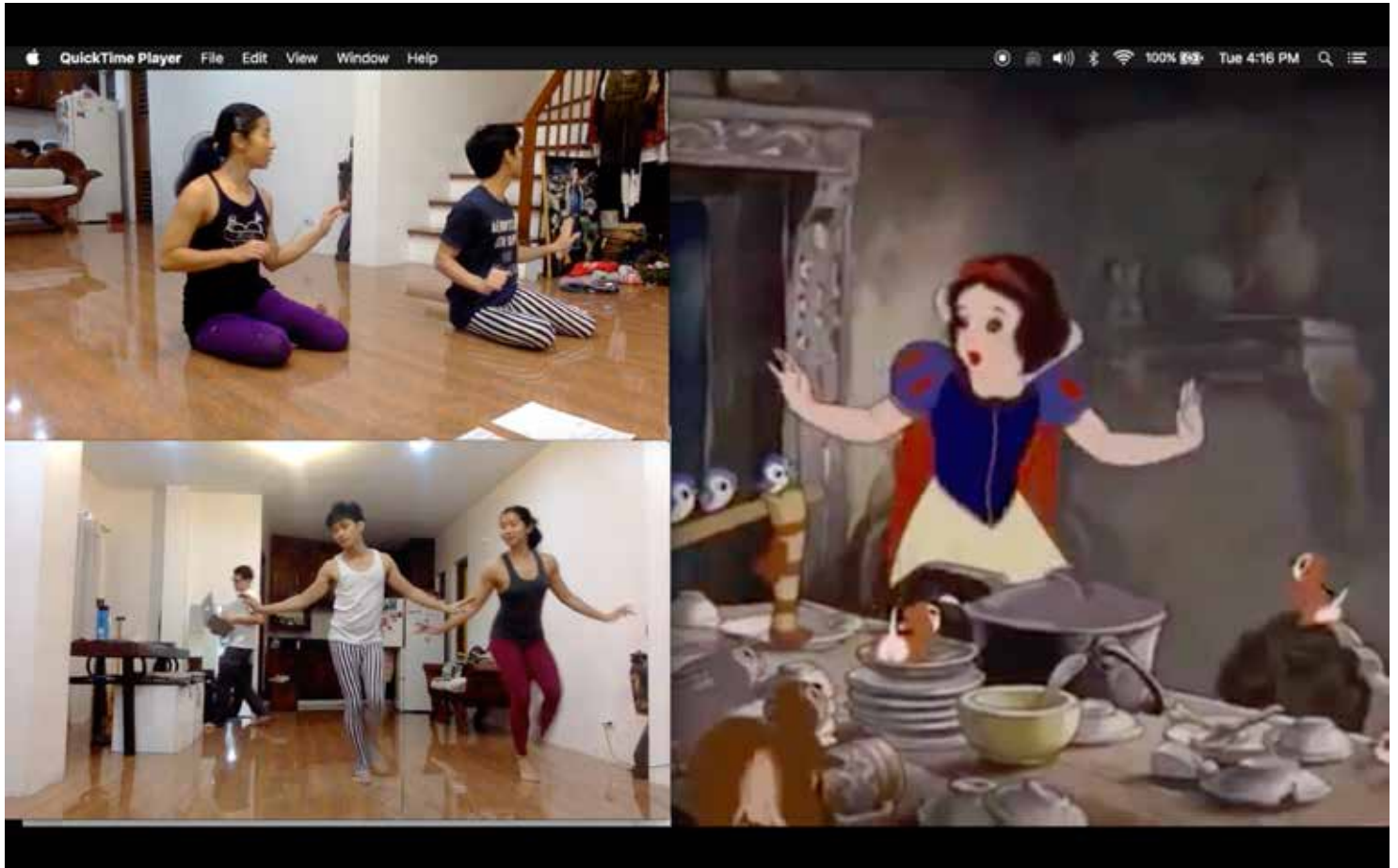
Works by:

Sophie Calle
Tenzing Dakpa
Lamy Gargash

Mati Jhurry with Nabla Yahya
Eisa Jocson
Ahmed Mater
Svay Ken
Yiyo Tirado Rivera

THE ROOM

The guest room is a hotel's primary product, its most private and commodified space. Its most dominant feature, the bed, both familiar and generic, symbolises the hotel's promise of rest, comfort and security far from home, yet we share it with all the strangers who occupied the room before us. This tension between standardisation and individualisation is a core feature of the industrialisation of hospitality. Artworks in this gallery intentionally blur this distinction by introducing moments of care, intimacy and domesticity into the otherwise impersonal spaces of the hotel room. And while patrons might associate the guest room exclusively with rest and leisure, for others, it is a work site. This gallery also presents artworks that reveal the uneven distribution of labour that ensures the comfort and luxury that the hospitality industry promises.



Eisa Jocson

Princess, Corponomy Online
2017/2021

Video, colour, sound
Courtesy of the artist

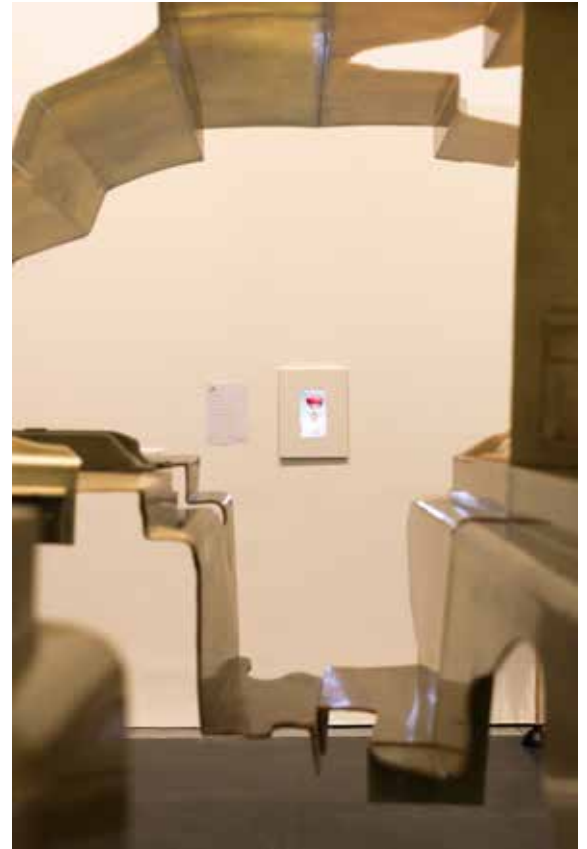
Artist-choreographer Eisa Jocson's three-part project *HAPPYLAND* highlights the vital contribution of the Filipina-o labour force to the economy of amusement parks, resorts and entertainment venues in Asia. The title, a play on the famous tagline of Disney theme parks, also alludes to one of Manila's densest slums – a double meaning that emphasises the stark contrast between what the artist calls the 'performance of happiness' that constitutes labour for many of these workers, and their less-than-joyful realities back home.

Due to the predominant whiteness of Disney's core characters, these performers are often relegated to playing supporting roles. Jocson challenges this bias by inhabiting and deconstructing the role of

Snow White. In *Princess*, she and a male dancer, dressed as this quintessential Disney heroine, mimic her movements and speech from the 1937 animated film, subverting her white femininity by intentionally transgressing its normative race and gender assignments.

In the video seen here, Jocson juxtaposes snippets of the original film with documentation of the performance and of rehearsals conducted in her kitchen. Highlighting the gendered division of labour within Snow White's 'household', she posits a link between the performative labour of Filipina-o amusement park workers and the daily domestic tasks performed by so many of their compatriots abroad.

Image courtesy of the artist



Mati Jhurry

Lavatory videos from the archive of 'Emirates staff No. 460956' 2023

Video, print on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Born and raised on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, Mati Jhurry's art practice and research interests examine the 'other side' of hospitality, looking at the politics and labour of those whose performances of hospitality help make our holiday fantasies come true. In *Emirates staff No. 460956*, Jhurry shares her durational performance as a cabin crew member for Emirates, one of the national airlines of the UAE.

Accompanied by a printout of the official certificate of completion of a standard three-year contract, Jhurry's video work log methodically catalogues her labour. In short clips surreptitiously shot on her smartphone in the plane's lavatory, Jhurry states the number and destination of the flights she worked, her words sometimes barely audible over the engine's pink noise.



Mati Jhurry with Nabla Yahya

*reconstruction: Crew Rest
Compartment from the archive of
'Emirates staff No. 460956'
2023*

Glass-reinforced plastic
Courtesy of the artists
Commissioned by Art Jameel

Mati Jhurry's commissioned sculpture, made in collaboration with artist Nabla Yahya, recreates the onboard rest compartment for crews working long-haul flights, from fading recollections and the limited documentation available online. Giving us partial access to a part of the plane that is otherwise entirely off-limits to

passengers, the sculpture reminds us that those who serve and assist us also need the time and space to recharge. Together, Jhurry's works provide an alternate, more intimate, perspective into the hard work that goes into making us feel comfortable as we journey to luxurious, faraway destinations.







Yiyo Tirado Rivera

Plantation
2019-2020

Floor mops, wire, wood, plunger
Courtesy of the artist and
El Kilómetro Gallery

Yiyo Tirado Rivera's *Plantation* sculptures repurpose simple store-bought janitorial supplies into comical models of palm trees. These lush tropical trees have become enduring symbols of the tourism industry, representing exoticism and seaside leisure. Many holiday destinations import them to meet tourists' expectations, often at a dire cost to the environment, as their cultivation can require colossal amounts of water.

While the sculptures' title explicitly links the tourist industry to histories of colonial exploitation across the Caribbean, Tirado Rivera's use of floor mops and plungers draws attention to an otherwise invisible part of the hospitality industry, the vast workforce that helps clean and maintain palm tree-heavy vacation destinations, for whom the idyllic dreamscapes depicted are experienced not as spaces of leisure but of labour.



Lamya Gargash

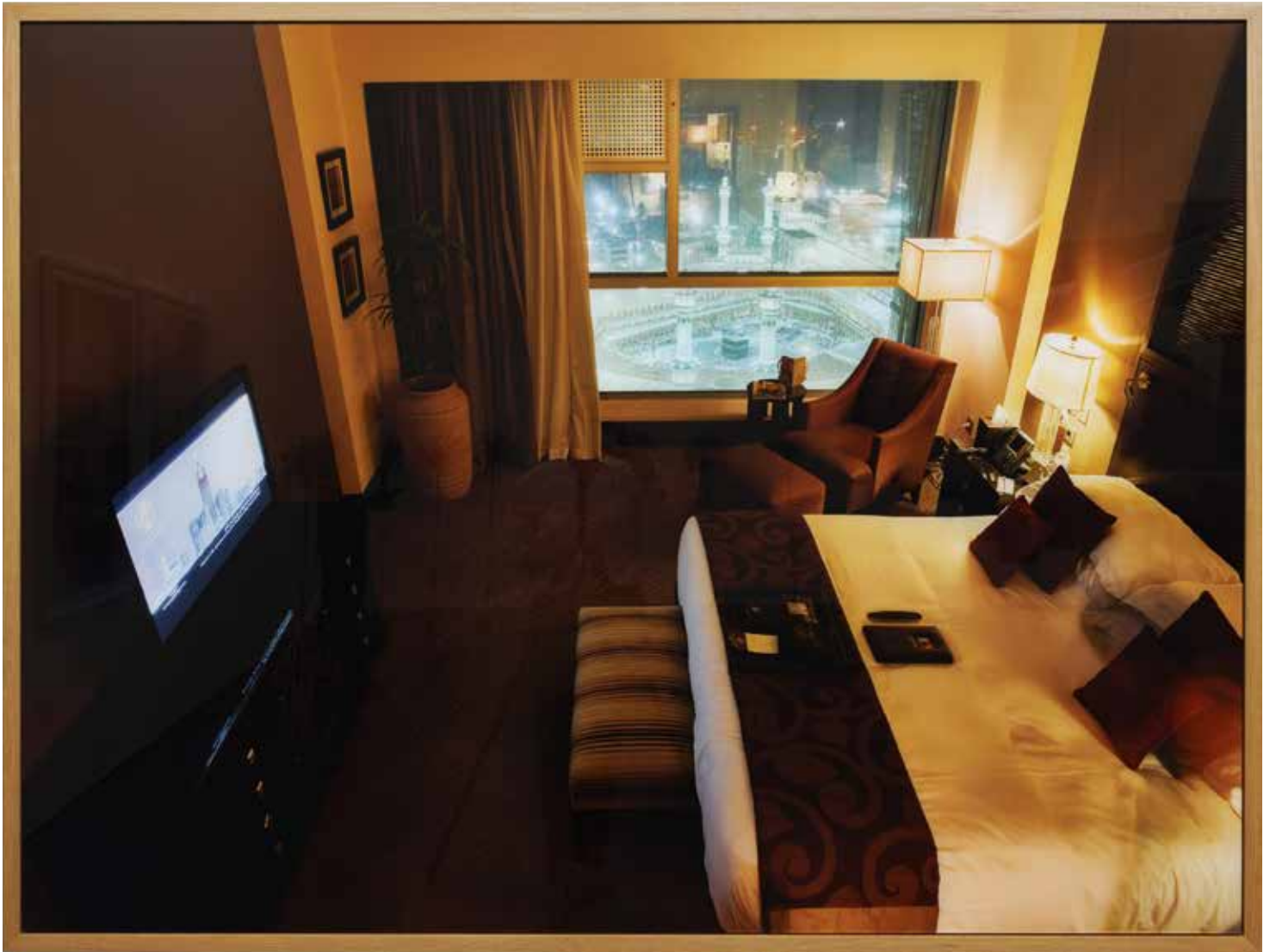
*Familial: Al Shamal Hotel,
Sima Hotel I*
2009

C-Print
Courtesy of the artist and
The Third Line, Dubai
Private collection, UAE

Commissioned for and presented as part of the UAE's first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009, Lamya Gargash's *Familial* documents the lobbies and rooms of the many budget hotels that dot Deira, Dubai's old city centre. Presenting a vision of Dubai distinct from the glitz and glamour usually associated with it, her photographs draw attention to the modest spaces used by lower-income travellers, who remain vital to the city's economic success but disappear behind its projected image as a luxury tourism destination.

As an Emirati woman, these otherwise impersonal and generic spaces felt alien and inaccessible to Gargash, who introduced framed photographs of her own family members into some of the rooms, questioning whether such familiar traces might help overcome barriers of class and privilege, making these spaces more hospitable.

Images courtesy of the artist and The Third Line, Dubai



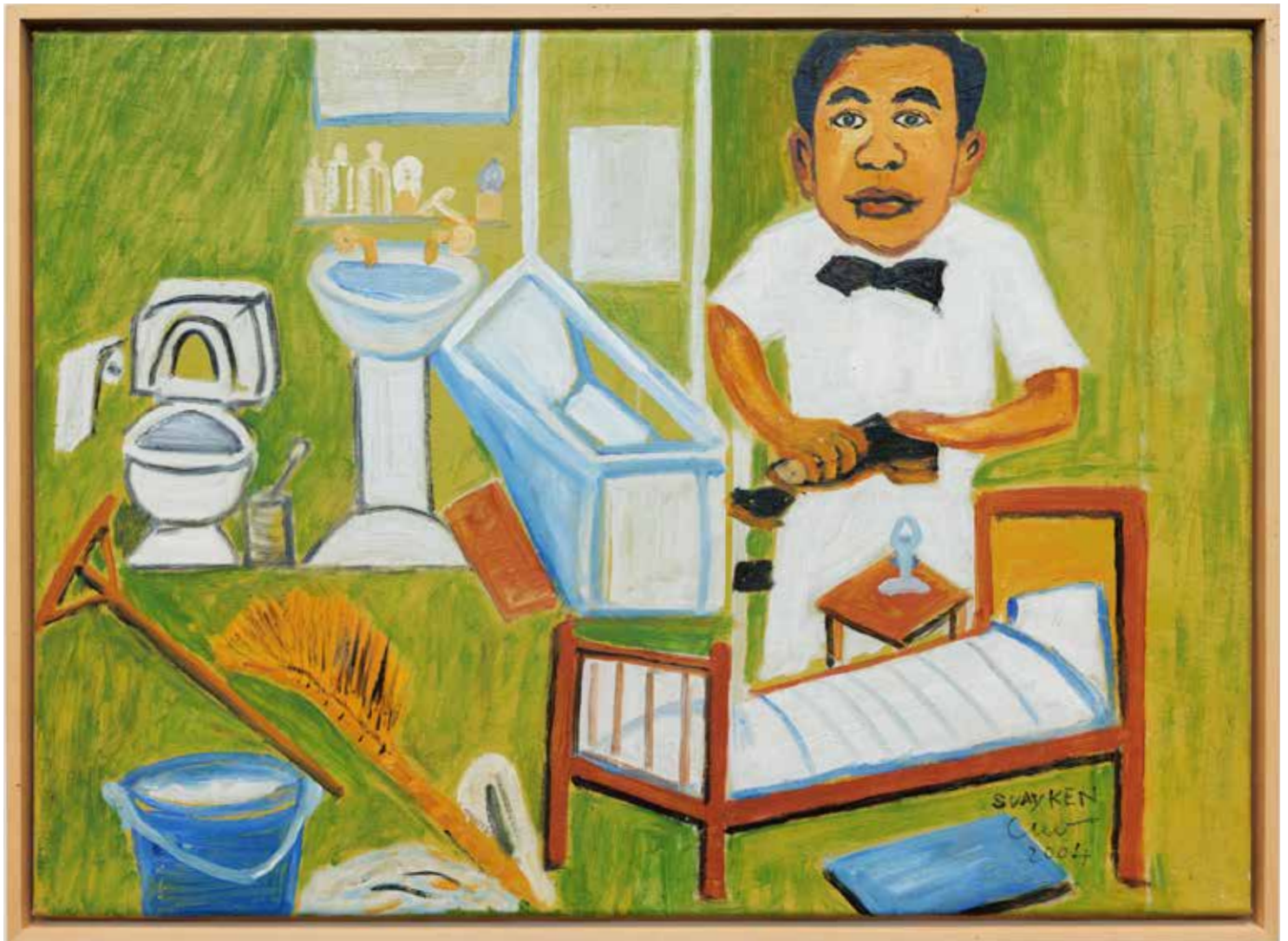
Ahmed Mater

Room with a View (\$3,000/night)
2014

Diasec mounted fine art
latex jet print
Art Jameel Collection

Ahmed Mater's multi-year research project *Desert of Pharan* (2008-2015) examines the large-scale urban redevelopment taking place in the Holy City of Makkah. In the artist's own words, the project "maps the tension between public and private space" in a city that annually hosts millions of visiting pilgrims for Hajj and Umrah. Through photographs and videos, Mater documents the towering skyscrapers and opulent hotels that now surround the Ka'aba. These monumental structures stand in stark contrast to the modesty and sense of equality that one might associate with pilgrimage, and with the humble means of the city's 1.5 million residents and the migrant construction workers who helped build these structures.

Mater's two large-scale photographs point to an important post-9/11 development in the hospitality industry across the region: the rise of religious and so-called 'halal' tourism. *Room with a View (\$3,000/night)* documents this unlikely combination of luxury tourism and obligatory pilgrimage, its subtitle revealing the considerable economic potential of this sector, which justifies the recent surge in high-end hotel construction. As Mater observes, "hotel construction makes vain efforts to keep pace with the impossible capacity demands."



Svay Ken

I in Hotel Room
2004

Oil on cotton
Collection Dr Christoph Bendick
and Dr Ulrike Diedrich, Germany

Svay Ken, who was self-taught, started painting in the early 1990s at the age of 60, and began selling his work to the hotel's international clientele, especially the many expat NGO workers who lived and socialised there. Realising he could make substantially more money from his art, he left Hotel Le Royal in 1994 and continued to paint until his passing in 2008, becoming a major figure in Cambodia's art scene.

While Svay is best known for his depictions of historical events during the Khmer Rouge period – when he, like many Cambodians, endured forced labour – he also painted scenes of his daily working life at the hotel. Numerous self-portraits, like *I in Hotel Room*, show him in uniform cleaning bedrooms, carrying new sheets and towels and attending to (and sharing his work with) guests by the swimming pool.



Sophie Calle

*L'Hôtel, Chambre 44 /
The Hotel, Room 44
1981–1983*

Colour and black-and-white photographs, framed
Courtesy of the artist and
Galerie Perrotin

In 1981, Sophie Calle worked as a chambermaid, assigned twelve rooms on one floor at a luxurious hotel in Venice for three weeks. While the guests were out and she was cleaning, Calle documented their rooms, taking careful notes and both colour and black-and-white photographs. She went as far as intrusively rifling through their belongings and reading their diaries. Her observations and recordings, which hover between diary and investigation, were presented as 21 text-and-image diptychs, one for each guest who stayed at the hotel during her period of employment.

Building on literary and artistic precedents, Calle presents the hotel room as a space of narrative possibility,

a prompt for the imagination. While the diptych displayed here hints at desire and romance, Calle intentionally leaves the interpretation open-ended, allowing viewers to draw their own conclusions.

Hotels are liminal spaces, curious hybrids of public and private space. While Calle's trespasses might feel sinister at first, revealing the contingent privacy offered by hotel rooms that we take for granted, they also highlight an otherwise easily overlooked perspective, that of the housekeeping staff, whose invisible labours allow guests to return, at the end of each day, to a clean room.

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin, Photography by Claire Dorn



Tenzing Dakpa

The Hotel
2018

Archival pigment print
Courtesy of the artist and
Indigo+Madder, London

The subject of this photographic series by Tenzing Dakpa is his childhood home, a hotel managed by his family in Gangtok, Sikkim, India. Dakpa and his family are displaced Tibetans, and his practice focuses on Tibetan diasporas worldwide. As the only member of his family who no longer works at the hotel, Dakpa experiences a dissonance between his childhood and his current life as an artist who chose to study and live abroad, unlike his parents and other Tibetans who were forced to leave their homeland.

During a visit home, Dakpa encountered a new family member, a kitten named Dughkhar. Following the cat around the

hotel with his camera allowed him to see his home afresh and provided a different perspective from which to photograph a setting and people so familiar to him. Photographs of his family at work, which reveal the hidden labour behind hospitality, are juxtaposed with those that capture simple gestures of love and care. Testaments to his parent's ability to create and sustain a sense of home in spite of and through their work at the hotel, Dakpa's photographs reflect on how one settles in a space marked by transience, a struggle familiar to many Gulf residents.

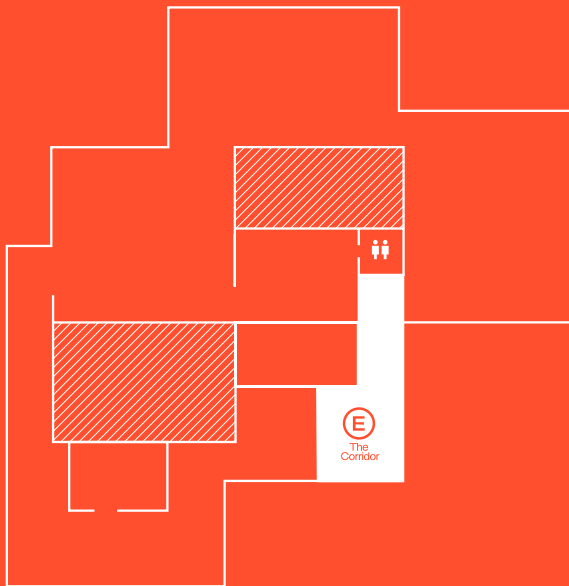


The Corridor

As historian Maurizio Peleggi has suggested, hotels are both “comfort zones” and “contact zones” - spaces of individual rest and refuge and thresholds marked by difference, where the unfamiliarity of the foreign is evaluated, negotiated and managed. An extension of the border’s surveilling logic, the standard practice of showing your passport at check-in is perhaps the most banal instance of the hotel as a “contact zone”. Throughout history, hotels have also been sites of espionage and intrigue, of targeted assassinations and terrorist attacks. This tension between comfort and contact, between the self and the other, is most intensely expressed in the hotel corridor, which connects the lobby’s public sphere to the private, if temporary, sanctuary of the guest room. From countless spy thrillers to horror classics like Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980), the corridor has long been represented as a site of anxiety and uneasy in-between.

الممر

في العديد من الأحيان، يعد الممر في الفنادق مكاناً ممتعاً ومثيراً للاهتمام. إنه منطقة "مناطق الراحة" و"مناطق الاتصال" - مساحات فردية للراحة والهدوء ومساحات للتفاعل والتفاوض على الاختلاف. امتداداً للمنطق الحارص للحدود، الممارسة القياسية لإظهار جواز السفر عند التسجيل ربما تكون أبسط أمثلة على الفندق كمساحة "مناطق الاتصال". عبر التاريخ، الفنادق كانت أيضاً مواقع للتجسس والمؤامرات، والقتل المخطط والمخاطر المستهدفة. هذا التوتر بين الراحة والاتصال، بين الذات والآخر، يتم التعبير عنه بشكل أكثر وضوحاً في الممر، الذي يربط بين الفضاء العام للوبي والمساحة الخاصة للغرفة. من أفلام الرعب الكلاسيكية مثل *The Shining* (1980) لـ ستانلي كوبريك، إلى أفلام الميال والخيال العلمي، الممر في الفنادق قد أصبح دائماً مكاناً للقلق والتوتر والقلق. إنه المكان الذي يتم فيه التفاوض على "الخطوط الرمادية" بين الراحة والاتصال.



Works by:

Lamya Gargash
Sung Tieu

THE CORRIDOR

As historian Maurizio Peleggi has suggested, hotels are both “comfort zones” and “contact zones” - spaces of individual rest and refuge and thresholds marked by difference, where the unfamiliarity of the foreign is evaluated, negotiated and managed. An extension of the border’s surveilling logic, the standard practice of showing your passport at check-in is perhaps the most banal instance of the hotel as a “contact zone”. Throughout history, hotels have also been sites of espionage and intrigue, of targeted assassinations and terrorist attacks. This tension between comfort and contact, between the self and the other, is most intensely expressed in the hotel corridor, which connects the lobby’s public sphere to the private, if temporary, sanctuary of the guest room. From countless spy thrillers to horror classics like Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980), the corridor has long been represented as a site of anxiety and fear in literature and film, an eerie and uneasy in-between.



Lamya Gargash

Familial: Sima Hotel Corridor
2009

C-Print
Courtesy of the artist and
The Third Line, Dubai
Private collection, UAE



Sung Tieu

Moving Target Shadow Detection 2022

HD animation and sound,
18 min. 56 sec.

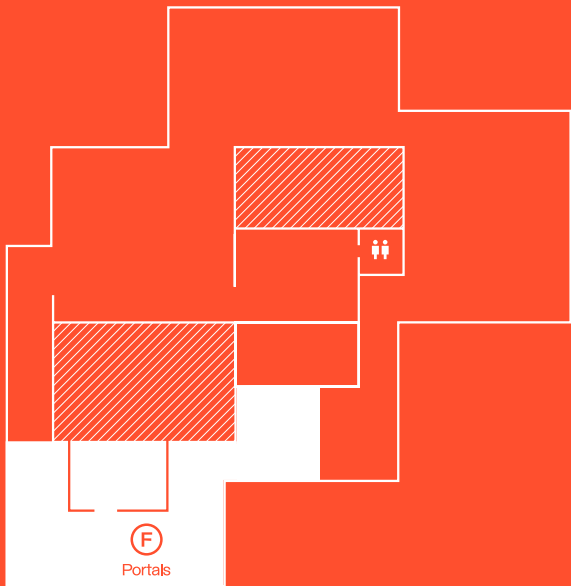
Courtesy of the artist
and Sfeir-Semler Gallery,
Beirut/Hamburg

Sung Tieu's practice centres on sound as a weapon, and its use throughout history for psychological warfare, such as by the Psychological Operations department of the US Army during the Vietnam War. *Moving Target Shadow Detection* focuses on the Havana Syndrome, a puzzling ailment affecting US government personnel working abroad, that was first reported in the Cuban capital in 2016. Its symptoms include nausea, fatigue, memory loss and brain injuries resembling concussions, with one potential cause being a sonic attack of undetermined origin, an invisible imperceptible threat.

Tieu digitally recreated the lobby, lift, corridor and guest room of the famous Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana, where the first alleged

sonic attack reportedly occurred. Unable to film onsite due to the Covid-19 pandemic, her 3D rendering is based on tourist photographs of the hotel found on the travel website Tripadvisor. Alternating perspectives between surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras and a drone, Tieu resurrects the paranoia of the Cold War and histories of international espionage associated with hotels at the time. Her video reminds us that, despite our understanding of the hotel as a comfort zone, it is also a space of surveillance, where the threat of the foreign is contained and evaluated.

Image courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg



Works by:

Nadi Abusaada
Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin
Marwa Arsanios
Abdul Halik Azeez

Mario García Torres
Joana Hadjithomas
& Khalil Joreige
Ranjit Kandalgaonkar
Michael Rakowitz

PORTALS

Cultural figures such as artists, writers and musicians have long been drawn to and sought refuge in hotels. Perhaps the institution's liminal status, between private and public, between familiar and foreign, between stability and impermanence, between guest and host, feels particularly hospitable to those often cast to society's margins and whose life is often marked by movement. This gallery, a microcosm for the exhibition, presents artworks that propose hotels (and the hospitality industry in general) as portals to other times and places, as prompts for the imagination, for telling stories and narrating histories, for mourning the past and imagining other futures.



Marwa Arsanios

All About Acapulco
2010–2011

Mixed-media installation using cardboard, balsa wood, plaster, plexiglass, wire, crepe paper, magnets, digital prints mounted on MDF and SD video
Courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah

Marwa Arsanios' *All About Acapulco* is inspired by Chalet Raja Saab, a beach house designed and built by Ferdinand Dagher in 1950 (who also designed the Phoenicia Hotel referenced in Rayyane Tabet's installation). Located along the coast south of Beirut, the structure is notable for its distinctive doughnut shape, raised on concrete pilotis, with an encaged spiral staircase filling its central void. The futuristic building subsequently became part of the hip Acapulco Beach Resort established by restaurateur Pépé Abed. Part of the significant Lebanese diaspora in Mexico, Abed returned home in 1954, bringing with him memories of the glamorous beach town on the Pacific that he restaged at the resort. As Arsanios evocatively notes: "The house was calling for Acapulco to come and inhabit it."

In the installation, a maquette of the original chalet hovers like a UFO over potted cacti, referencing the resort's landscaping and serving as a metonym for 'tropical modernism', a postwar architectural movement that adapted the dogma of International Style to warmer climes. Surrounding the model is documentation of the building through history, from archival material to photographs, showing its recent transformation into a makeshift home for Palestinian and Lebanese families displaced by regional conflicts. True to its otherworldly design, the building allows us to travel through history and across geographies, tracing the shifting conditions of hospitality associated with it, from the cosmopolitan decadence of its mid-century heyday to the basic need for shelter of its most recent inhabitants.





Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

Le Mostræ della Laguna
2021

Mixed media
Courtesy of the artist

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar's mixed-media installation proposes the revival of architect and urban planner Le Corbusier's final project: a much-needed but never built public hospital on the island of Venice.

Conceived of in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, which revealed the shortcomings of public health infrastructure around the globe but also left tourist facilities eerily empty and unused, Kandalgaonkar's speculative proposal suggests realising Le Corbusier's 1965 design across the site of Venice's Marittima cruise ship terminal, effectively blocking its future use and safeguarding the city from that industry's many deleterious effects.

Venice's cruise ship terminal was built in the 1980s to boost mass tourism, a strategy that has been recently adopted in both the Arabian

Gulf and Red Sea contexts. Bringing in waves of short-term visitors, the humongous cruise ships that dock at these terminals, are linked to many of the island city's current struggles, further enabling over-tourism and displacing residents, threatening its ancient wooden foundations and damaging its fragile lagoon ecosystem. A series of 'little monsters', drawings that tell the stories of the biodiversity currently under threat are interspersed within the constellation of drawings and prints presented.

What appears at first to be a poetic or utopic gesture is actually a practical and realisable solution that prioritises people, communities, and public welfare over tourism and profit. A hospital, if built, would serve as essential social infrastructure for the local community.





Abdul Halik Azeez

On this picture you can see a local man presenting his jumping skills
2019

Digital print, Instagram story videos, zine
Variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

In a dizzying installation that both mimics and scrambles Instagram’s unending scroll, Abdul Halik Azeez demonstrates the important role social media platforms play in driving tourism today, especially in his native Sri Lanka, where the industry has emerged as an important economic sector since the 2009 end of a decades-long civil war.

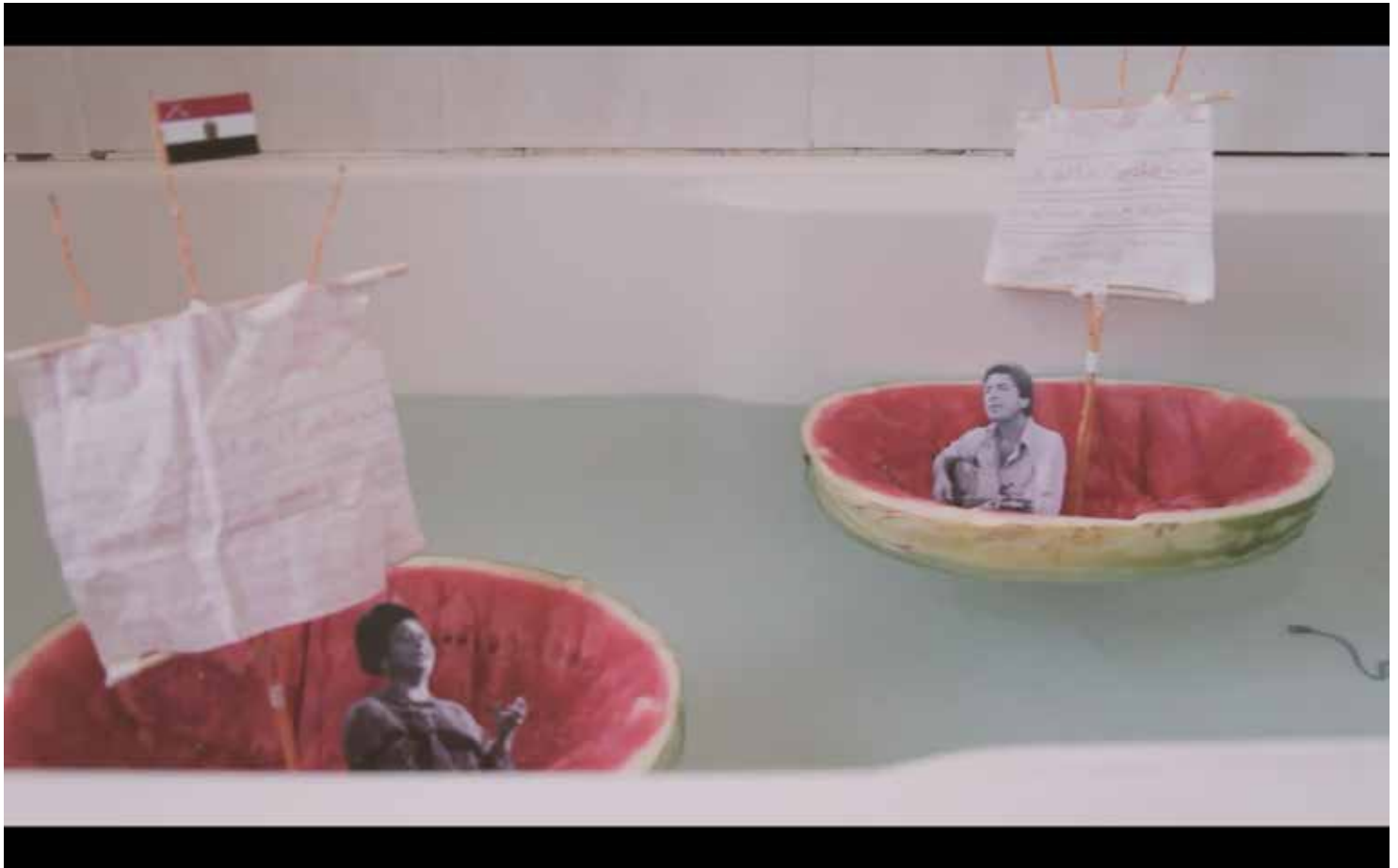
Drawing on his background in linguistics, Azeez collates and organises photographs sourced using public hashtags and location tags related to Sri Lanka into ‘apophenic’ clusters, revealing the extent to which the myriad complexities of a place and a people are reduced to an exoticised image of a tropical beach paradise through a social media amplified touristic gaze. Updating colonial and Orientalist desires and tropes for the 21st century, this gaze, driven by an insatiable quest for online influence, produces a stream of clichés: selfies on the beach, by the pool or in the midst of yoga or

surfing; the horizon at sunset and sunrise; picturesque vistas of tea plantations and heritage sites; shots with locals grinning or performing for the camera.

Azeez supplemented his online research with ethnographies conducted in the south, the country’s tourism hub, sharing these observations on his own account (@colombedouin) and within both the physical installation and an accompanying zine. Comparing social and cultural dynamics on the ground with the algorithm-driven content on Instagram, his installation reveals the damaging effects of touristification.

Viewing this installation in a city synonymous with spectacle-driven luxury tourism, one wonders what the results of Azeez’s deconstruction of touristic desire through Instagram would look like when applied to #dubai.





Michael Rakowitz

I'm good at love, I'm good at hate, it's in between I freeze
2019

Video (colour, sound),
32 min. 44 sec
Courtesy of the artist, Galerie
Barbara Wien, Berlin, and Green
Art Gallery, Dubai

At the heart of Michael Rakowitz's *I'm good at love, I'm good at hate, it's in between I freeze* is a letter the artist wrote to the legendary poet and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen in 2015. Written on Cohen's own Olivetti typewriter, which Rakowitz purchased on eBay, the letter asked for permission to perform Cohen's songs in Ramallah on his behalf. It remained unanswered.

Despite a loyal fanbase in Palestine, Cohen had never performed there. A proposed concert in Ramallah, prompted by calls to boycott a 2009 concert in Tel Aviv, was dismissed as a token gesture and eventually cancelled. Cohen never performed in Palestine before his death in 2016. Rakowitz, an ardent fan, struggles to reconcile the principled humanism of Cohen's lyrics and music with the singer's support of Israeli troops during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, and his decision to perform in Tel Aviv despite the ongoing cultural boycott.

Rakowitz had intended to film at New York's legendary Chelsea Hotel, where Cohen had lived in the late 1960s. Instead, he shot at Ramallah's Alhambra Palace Hotel – a private residence built in 1926 that was converted to a hotel a year before the Nakba in 1948 – which was and remained popular with visiting Arab royalty, dignitaries, musicians and movie stars through the 1970s.

Following its premiere, Cohen's estate withdrew permission to use his songs, due to the film's perceived pro-Palestinian stance. Rakowitz fills the resulting gaps with commentary by colleagues reflecting on the nature of silence and being silenced in the Palestinian context and with compositions by Chicago-based musician Bill MacKay. His film is a meditation on art's capacity to sustain complexity in a deeply polarised political context, to dwell between love and hate, between conviction and compromise, between fandom and boycott.

Image courtesy of the artist, Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin, and Green Art Gallery, Dubai



Mario García Torres

¿Alguna vez has visto la nieve caer? (Have you ever seen the snow?)
2010

Eighty-nine 35mm slides transferred to colour HD video, sound 56 min.
Courtesy of the artist

Seeking respite from Italy's politically charged Years of Lead, the artist Alighiero Boetti visited Kabul for the first time in 1971. On his second trip, he purchased and established the One Hotel with local partner Gholam Dastaghir, a young hotel attendant he had befriended during his first visit. Boetti would stay there during his subsequent biannual trips, overseeing the production of his iconic *Mappa*, a series of embroidered world maps made in collaboration with Afghan artisans. While the exact date is uncertain, it is likely that the One Hotel had already closed before Boetti's last visit to Kabul, shortly before the 1979 Soviet invasion.

Prompted by his ongoing interest in the histories and legacies of conceptual art, and in artists as hosts, Mario García Torres set out in 2005 to learn more about the One Hotel, which has entered art history as one iconic, oft-repeated, black and white photograph. Reminiscent of the photographer in Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-Up*, García Torres forensically dissects this archival image in his slide projection *Have you ever seen the snow?*, uncovering clues as to the hotel's location and its surroundings. García Torres is aided in his remote quest not just by archival research and oral histories but by the abundance of images of and information on Kabul produced and circulated online during and after the US-led war on terror.

Image courtesy of the artist



Mario García Torres

Tea 1391 SH
(2012 CE)

35mm film transferred to colour
HD video, sound 64 min.
In Dari, English, Spanish;
English subtitles
Courtesy of the artist

Commissioned by documenta 13, García Torres directed *Tea* two years later, chronicling and reflecting on his journey to Kabul and to the site of the One Hotel, “returning to a place [he] was visiting for the first time.” Footage of the garden villa being refurbished and time spent in the neighbourhood are punctuated by shots of García Torres preparing and drinking tea,

an everyday act of hospitality across South Asia and an important part of life at the One Hotel. Tracing parallels between his home in Mexico and Afghanistan, the film is a meditation on what it means to travel to and dwell in a faraway place, to host and to be a guest, to tell stories and narrate histories, and the often-blurred lines between them.

Image courtesy of the artist



Nadi Abusaada

Microcosm of a Nation
2022

Multimedia display
Adapted from 'Al-Ma'rad,'
Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center,
Ramallah
Courtesy of the author

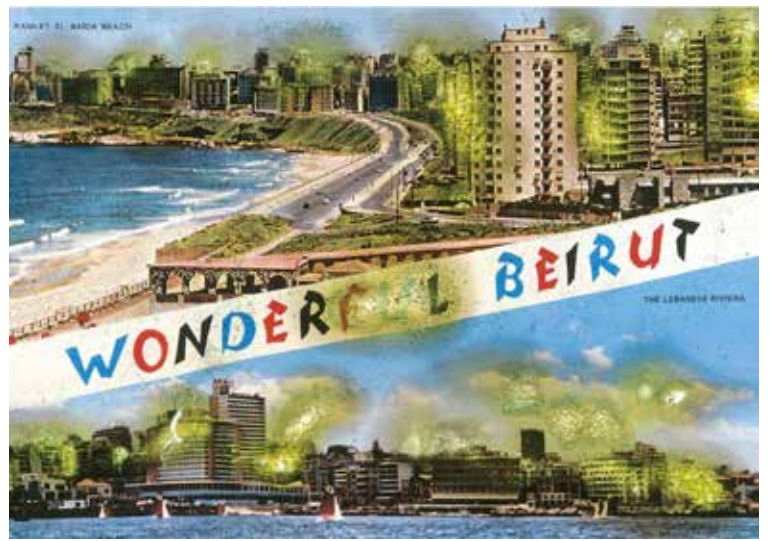
This research display focuses on the Palace Hotel in Jerusalem, a historic luxury establishment now owned by Hilton's Waldorf Astoria chain. Close to the Jaffa Gate, the hotel's construction was ordered by the city's Grand Mufti during the British Mandate era in Palestine. Opened in 1929 to facilitate pilgrimage and tourism, the Palace Hotel was a powerful expression of Palestinian and Arab identity and nationhood in a neighbourhood bursting with Zionist and British construction. Rivalling the likes of the neighbouring King David Hotel, it was the first Palestinian building to use reinforced concrete, then clad in limestone.

This display was one of the chapters of the 2022 exhibition 'Al Ma'rad' at the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah, which

examined the 1933 and 1934 Pan-Arab Exhibitions held at the Palace Hotel. Architect and researcher Nadi Abusaada spent five years identifying, locating and acquiring artefacts and photographs of both the exhibitions and the hotel dating back to the 1930s.

This landmark hotel, a triumphant expression of Palestinian national identity and pan-Arab solidarity, was leased by the British colonial government in the late 1930s, and in a cruel twist of fate, was where the first partition plan for Palestine was drawn up in 1937. The hotel was eventually seized by the Israeli colonial authorities in 1948.

Image courtesy of the artist



Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige

Postcards of War
1997–2006

Part 2 of the *Wonder Beirut* project
Ink on paper, series of 18
Courtesy of the artists,
Galerie In Situ-fabienne leclerc, Grand Paris, and
The Third Line, Dubai

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Wonder Beirut* is a multifaceted project inspired by the work of a fictional Lebanese photographer named Abdallah Farah. Commissioned by the Lebanese State in the late 1960s to take photographs to be used on postcards, Farah captured picturesque views of Beirut's then-bustling downtown and the luxury hotels of the famed Lebanese Riviera. Beginning in the fall of 1975, after the start of the Lebanese Civil War, he systematically documented the damage inflicted on these sites and structures as burns on his original negatives, the photographic archive registering traces of injuries inflicted upon the city.

Farah functions as an alter ego for the artists, who used vintage postcards of Beirut in the 1960s as a substrate for cataloguing the costs of the civil conflict, both physical and symbolic. They transform the touristic gaze, geared towards attracting international visitors, into a localised vision that bears witness to the destruction and trauma of war.

Reproduced as a set of takeaway postcards, the final images are unsettlingly ambiguous. Pitched between elegy and testimony, they are simultaneously nostalgic souvenirs of a glamorous past and documents of the subsequent conflict that obliterated that fantasy.

Image courtesy of the artists, Galerie In Situ-fabienne leclerc, Grand Paris, and The Third Line, Dubai



Unless otherwise noted:
All images courtesy of Art Jameel
Photography by Daniella Baptista

