

## **Gulf Futurism: The Biograph(ies) of an Artistic Movement**

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In the last ten years, Gulf futurism has emerged as a trope among artists and writers in the Arabian/Persian Gulf. Their works explore hypercapitalism and consumerism, technology, and outer space ambitions, along with the ethnofutures of a region where migrant workers from the Global South constitute a majority of the population. Gulf futurism's aesthetic and tone are dystopian rather than utopian. It engages with Gulf countries' sociopolitical problems, especially as they relate to these states' ambitions for the future, stereotypes about the Gulf, the role of migrant workers, and the gendered dimensions of these issues. In my talk, I will be approaching the artistic movement of Gulf futurism through a biographical viewpoint, examining both artists who enthusiastically engage with tropes of Gulf Futurism and artists who critique the movement. I would like to discuss with participants the question of how to approach studying a relatively recent and still emerging artistic movement. Where does one start researching and writing a biography of a movement? For research proposals, I have identified five artists as a starting point, researching their works and approaches first, which would allow identifying further artistic positions at a later research stage. Yet in previous funding assessments, reviewers have often mistaken the five identified artists to be the sole focus of the research, and have instead called for an exhaustive and complete review of the entire movement. As an art anthropologist, I am wary of any holistic claims placed on the study of any social, artistic, or cultural phenomenon, and as such, I do not believe it is desirable nor realistic to produce a holistic understanding of any artistic movement. Yet, in order to acquire the funding the project deserves, the research proposal will need to strike a delicate balance between a viable entry point, and a realistic vision of which (and how many, if at all) biographies can be written about an artistic movement in a single research project.

**Short Biography:** Melanie Sindelar is an anthropologist of art with research interests in contemporary art in the Global South and global art markets. Currently, Melanie Sindelar is a Visiting Professor in Visual Theory and Practice at Central European University (CEU) in Vienna.