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Atlas Dubai : Art without America by Rahel Aima

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...THESE GALLERISTS ARE equally aware of the nativist and xenophobic sentiments that exist below the surface of Dubai's cosmopolitan image. The art scene exists as a mirror image of the racial hierarchy that structures other aspects of social life in the city. As Kourosh Nouri, the Iranian-Austrian codirector of Carbon 12, which is unique in eschewing the regional focus for a program featuring germanophone artists, notes, "It is significantly harder to sell an Austrian artist in Dubai than it is a Syrian or a Bahraini." A white European may command a much higher salary and benefits on the job market, but his or her artwork will find very little traction. While the local collector base has slowly become more open, people do still want to acquire work by artists who share their ethnic backgrounds, which Nouri sees as symptomatic of the market's immaturity. Geopolitical tensions leave their mark too. Nouri has observed some Arab collectors "who will not touch an Iranian artwork." Nouri added that "this regionalization of art becomes a kind of protectionism, and it does a favor to no one."...