

RADAR

Group think

THIS SPRING visitors to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City will be greeted by a huge orange melon looming over the sixth-floor terrace. The work—inspired by a mysterious fruit covered in occult writings that washed up on a Persian Gulf beach last fall—is by the international artist collective GCC. And it's a highlight of Whitney Biennial 2017, the major survey of new American art, opening March 17.

Made up of a group of eight artists, designers and curators scattered between cities in Europe, the Middle East and the U.S., GCC met four years ago in the VIP lounge at Art Dubai. Since then it has become known for projects that slyly lampoon the West's influence on the Arab world, like videoing imaginary Arabic products in a Parisian hotel (*below*).

GCC is one of six collectives and collaboratives in this year's biennial. Collectives have been included in the show since at least the 1990s, but in recent years their numbers have surged; in 2014 no fewer than eight

took part. Many in the current crop have their roots in politics. Occupy Museums, an offshoot of Occupy Wall Street, will present one of its trademark Debtfares: installations of work by debt-saddled artists, bundled like commodities. Postcommodity, a collective comprising artists from Arizona and New Mexico, will show a video shot along the U.S.-Mexico border.

GCC is on-trend in another way too: The group meets only once a year, but it communicates constantly via WhatsApp. The internet allows many collaborators to work without even having to meet in person. In today's global art world, "many artists are itinerant," says the biennial's co-curator Christopher Y. Lew. "And we're all in constant communication." Like that melon on the beach, the modern artist sends messages from far away—though they might be a little easier to decipher.—CAROL KINO **N**

Whitney Biennial 2017: New York, Mar. 17 to Jun. 11; WHITNEY.ORG



NEWSWEEK 63 MARCH 10, 2017