

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

GCC

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH | CHELSEA

534 West 26th Street

October 13–November 26

GCC's first exhibition with the gallery, which features multiple wall pieces, a sculptural installation, and sound work, is concerned with the evolution of various holistic practices—such as alternative healing and life coaching—that are gaining significant influence in Arab Gulf states. The eight artists who make up the collective are all strongly connected to the UAE and the Middle East, and their acronym loosely references that of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Here, they examine the multifocused, multifaceted synthesis of philosophies that fall under the rubric of “Positive Lifestyle” and the implications such Western, New Age ideas have in the Gulf’s ultramodern, constitutionally Islamic societies. Central to GCC's investigation of the sociological dimension of this phenomenon is the question of how this lifestyle movement is being adapted to and swayed by the region’s economic, religious, and political apparatus.



GCC, *Positive Pathways (+) (Version II)*, 2016, reinforced plaster, sand, rubber, spray paint, dimensions variable.

With respect to the utility of “positivity” conditioning within a culture repeatedly associated with a variety of inherited melancholic conditions, GCC observes that influential parties interpret the apparent conflict between theistic, noetic, and mystical ways of understanding body and self as a coupling of piety and productivity. *Positive Pathways (+) (Version II)*, (all works cited, 2016), a plaster and sand sculpture that expands on the group’s installation for the Berlin Biennale, presents a woman performing the Quantum Touch technique on a child in the center of a racetrack. Scenes of practitioners performing ceremonies, taken from YouTube stills and rendered in 3-D on flocked thermoform (“Gestures”), blend digital broadcast imagery with iconographic motifs. Messages of ascendancy, devotion, and conquest delivered by a voice in the audio recording *Victory, Triumph & I Love You*, are eerily suggestive of the occult techniques from which mind control developed, exploiting the powerful appeal of being part of a love-filled communion. Expressed as feminine, the voice of authority and the power it exercises—to reference Foucault’s ideas on the favorable mechanisms of power—is presented as constructive and sanguine, rather than juridical, repressive, and negative,

— Genevieve Allison