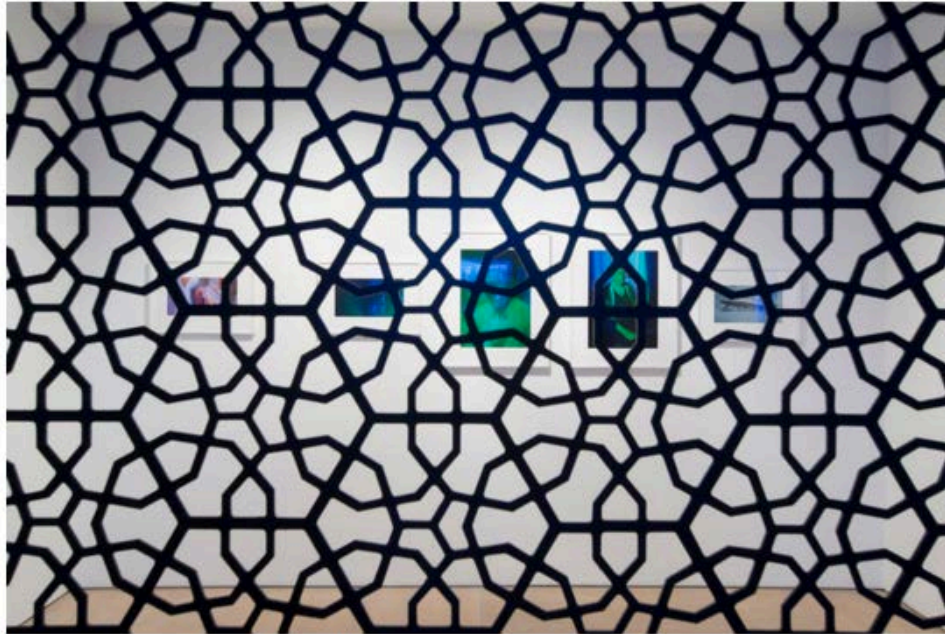


## The New York Times



Sue de Beer's installation at Boesky East.  
Courtesy of the artist and Bill Orcutt/Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York

### A Video Artist Playing With Themes of Orientalism

By Ken Johnson

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Sue de Beer's video "The Blue Lenses" is hallucinatory, obliquely political and intensely poetic. Shot in Abu Dhabi, it plays on the Western tradition of Orientalism, which imagines the Middle East as an exotic zone of magic and eros. Partitions perforated in Islamic architectural patterns, a thickly carpeted floor, big bean bag seating and a blue tint on the gallery's storefront windows provide an atmospheric setting for viewing the two-screen, 20-minute projection.

The film centers on the peregrinations of a young Arab woman and a scruffy, middle-aged con man — a white European, apparently. In alternating passages, each recalls seeing the other in different places under mysterious circumstances. It's unclear who and what is real: Possibly he is a figure in a dream she had, or he might have dreamed her. A mood of nostalgic melancholy pervades the film as each seems to be trying to find the other without ever succeeding. The phantasmagoric confusion is enhanced at times by blurry multiple exposures and psychedelic flickering effects.

At one point there's a surprisingly incongruous, funny scene: On a spare set decorated with a Christmas tree, a blond woman in a fancy pink dress performs a modest striptease, disrobing down to her underwear. All of this is reminiscent of David Lynch's films — "Inland Empire," especially. But then the video is interspersed with black-and-white documentary photographs of actual places in the region, including an attraction that's hard to believe but true: an indoor ski resort in the Mall of the Emirates in Dubai. Fantasy and reality rarely collide as evocatively as they do in Ms. de Beer's transporting movie.