



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

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**March Meeting 2021 to Examine Evolution of  
The Biennial Model and Sharjah Biennial through  
Online Programme Featuring Artists, Curators and Arts  
Practitioners from Around the World**

**Annual Sharjah Art Foundation Convening from 12 to 21 March Sets the Stage for  
Sharjah Biennial 15 with Extended 10-day, Online Programme**

**Free and Open to the Public with Registration**

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) today announces the full schedule for March Meeting 2021 (MM 2021), the Foundation's annual convening of artists, curators and art practitioners to explore critical issues in contemporary art through panels, lectures and performances. Running in an expanded **10-day online programme** from **12 to 21 March 2021**, the March Meeting will examine the 30-year history of the Sharjah Biennial and the future of the biennial model. **March Meeting 2021: *Unravelling the Present*** sets the stage for **Sharjah Biennial 15: *Thinking Historically in the Present***, which was conceived by the late Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) and is curated by SAF Director Hoor Al Qasimi in conjunction with the Sharjah Biennial 15 (SB15) Working Group and Advisory Committee and opens in spring 2022.



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

MM 2021 explores the past 30 years of the Sharjah Biennial as an initiative and a model for disrupting the power of artistic monolingualism and as a horizon for developing another theoretical space for thinking historically in the present. Titled *Unravelling the Present*, this edition of the March Meeting brings together former Sharjah Biennial curators, artistic directors and artists as well as art historians and critics to consider the role, place and impact of the Sharjah Biennial in the region and the global contemporary art scene at large. MM 2021 also explores the evolution of the Sharjah Biennial, focusing on its shift away from traditional modes of curating and displaying art by activating non-institutional spaces, moving to non-geographic models of representation as well as the development of a year-round programme enabled by the establishment of Sharjah Art Foundation.

March Meeting 2021 presents panels and keynotes featuring more than 50 speakers and participants across 10 days, including:

- Roundtables examining the evolution of the Sharjah Biennial featuring SAF Director **Hoor Al Qasimi**, artist **John Akomfrah**, Darat Al Funun Founder **Suha Shoman** and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art curator **Eungie Joo**.
- Lectures on a number of contemporary issues such as decolonising the architecture exhibition presented by RCA School of Architecture Dean **Adrian Lahoud**, and on restitution in the art industry presented by Princeton University Professor **Chika Okeke-Agulu**.
- A discussion of artmaking as a form of civic engagement led by The Africa Institute Director and Cornell University Goldwin Smith Professor **Salah M. Hassan** with art critic and curator **Geeta Kapur** and artist **Zarina Bhimji**.
- An exploration of curating in times of crisis with Ashkal Alwan Founding Director **Christine Tohme** and NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore Founding Director **Ute Meta Bauer**.
- An examination of biennials' relationship to the nation-state in the time of globalisation with Castello di Rivoli Director **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, Centre Pompidou Deputy Director **Catherine David** and curator **Gabi Ngcobo**.
- Presentations of **commissioned essays on the subject of biennials** selected from an open call by the SB15 Working Group, including Murtaza Vali's 'Lost Horizons' and Sadia Shirazi's 'Against Art History'.

The complete list of MM 2021 participants, the **full schedule of programmes** and a link to register is available [here](#).

MM 2021 is an integral part of the framework for SB15 laid out by Okwui Enwezor. Reflecting on his tremendous impact on contemporary art, Enwezor's visionary work transformed contemporary art paradigms and laid out an ambitious intellectual project that has influenced the evolution of institutions and biennials around the world, including the Sharjah Biennial. Enwezor saw the



## SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

Sharjah Biennial as a model for displacing older, Western-based biennials by offering a critical alternative that was committed to the future of the art exhibition as a relevant platform for engaging with history, politics and society in our global present. The Biennial will be realised by Hoor Al Qasimi as curator in conjunction with the SB15 Working Group and Advisory Committee.

### Registration for March Meeting 2021

MM 2021 is free to attend. To register, click [here](#).

### On View at Sharjah Art Foundation in March 2021

Coinciding with MM 2021, the exhibitions **Rayyane Tabet: Exquisite Corpse**, curated by SAF Senior Curator Ryan Inouye, and **Unsettled Objects**, curated by SAF Director of Collections and Senior Curator Omar Kholeif, will open on 12 March 2021. **Zarina Bhimji: Black Pocket** and **Tarek Atoui: Cycles in 11**, both curated by SAF Director Hoor Al Qasimi, will also remain on view through 10 April 2021. Special curator and artist-led tours of the exhibitions will take place throughout MM 2021. Additional information on all spring 2021 exhibitions is available [here](#).

### About Sharjah Art Foundation

Sharjah Art Foundation is an advocate, catalyst and producer of contemporary art within the Emirate of Sharjah and the surrounding region, in dialogue with the international arts community. Under the leadership of founder Hoor Al Qasimi, a curator and artist, the Foundation advances an experimental and wide-ranging programmatic model that supports the production and presentation of contemporary art, preserves and celebrates the distinct culture of the region and encourages a shared understanding of the transformational role of art. The Foundation's core initiatives include the long-running Sharjah Biennial, featuring contemporary artists from around the world; the annual March Meeting, a convening of international arts professionals and artists; grants and residencies for artists, curators and cultural producers; ambitious and experimental commissions and a range of travelling exhibitions and scholarly publications.

Established in 2009 to expand programmes beyond the Sharjah Biennial, which launched in 1993, the Foundation is a critical resource for artists and cultural organisations in the Gulf and a conduit for local, regional and international developments in contemporary art. The Foundation's deep commitment to developing and sustaining the cultural life and heritage of Sharjah is reflected through year-round exhibitions, performances, screenings and educational programmes in the city of Sharjah and across the Emirate, often hosted in historic buildings that have been repurposed as cultural and community centres. A growing collection reflects the Foundation's support of contemporary artists in the realisation of new work and its recognition of the contributions made by pioneering modern artists from the region and around the world.

Sharjah Art Foundation is a legally independent public body established by Emiri Decree and supported by government funding, grants from national and international nonprofits and cultural organizations, corporate sponsors and individual patrons. All exhibitions are free and open to the public.

### About Sharjah

Sharjah is the third largest of the seven United Arab Emirates and the only one bridging the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Reflecting the deep commitment to the arts, architectural



## SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

preservation and cultural education embraced by its ruler, Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Sharjah is home to more than 20 museums and has long been known as the cultural hub of the United Arab Emirates. In 1998, it was named UNESCO's 'Arab Capital of Culture' and has been designated the UNESCO 'World Book Capital' for the year 2019.

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