

Spring Exhibitions & March Meeting 2021: Unravelling the Present

12 March–15 June



The talks, panels and presentations at March Meeting 2021: *Unravelling the Present* will take place online while the performances and film screenings will take place at the Foundation's venues. All times listed are Gulf Standard Time (GST).

Friday, 12 March

4:00 pm Spring 2021 exhibitions open to the public

Rayyane Tabet: Exquisite Corpse

Galleries 1, 2 & 3, Al Mureijah Art Spaces

Unsettled Objects

The Flying Saucer, Dasman

Tarek Atoui: Cycles in 11

Bait Al Serkal, Arts Square

Zarina Bhimji: Black Pocket

Galleries 4, 5 & 6, Al Mureijah Art Spaces

5:00 – 5:15 pm March Meeting 2021: Welcome remarks
Hoor Al Qasimi (President and Director, Sharjah Art Foundation)

5:15 – 7:15 pm **Sharjah Biennial in Retrospect**
Roundtable
Mona Al Khaja (artist), **Hisham Al Madhloum** (artist), **Dr Yousif Aydabi** (Cultural Advisor, Sheikh Dr Sultan Al Qasimi Centre), **Mohammed Kazem** (artist)
Moderator: **Noora Al Mualla** (Director of Learning and Research, Sharjah Art Foundation)

The panelists in this roundtable played a crucial role in the establishment of the Sharjah Biennial. They will reflect on their experience, and offer historical and critical feedback on the conception and evolution of the Biennial, from its inception in 1993 to the launch of a new approach in 2003.

7:20 – 9:20 pm **Sharjah Biennial in Retrospect**
Roundtable
Hoor Al Qasimi, **Peter Lewis** (curator), **Jack Persekian** (Director, Al Ma'mal Foundation), **Suha Shoman** (Founder and Chair, Darat Al Funun, The Khalid Shoman Foundation)
Moderator: **Tarek Abou El Fetouh** (curator)

This roundtable will focus on the three editions of the Sharjah Biennial held after 2003, when the Biennial shed its traditional model of nation-state representation and blossomed into a curated exhibition with an overarching theme and collateral events.

8:30 – 10:00 pm *The Man Who Sold His Skin* (2020)
Film screening
Kaouther Ben Hania
Mirage City Cinema, Al Mureijah Square

Saturday, 13 March

5:00 – 6:00 pm ***Dismantling the Master's House***
Keynote
Françoise Vergès (author, public educator, decolonial feminist)

Françoise Vergès will reflect on the increased violence on women's bodies worldwide, including mutilations, dismemberment and burning as well as the assaults on refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples and communities of colour. She will discuss how platforms bringing together artists, activists and scholars can contribute to thinking about these issues 'historically in the present'. The keynote will be configured as a palimpsest of memories, images and histories of struggle.

6:10–8:10 pm ***Sharjah Biennial in Retrospect***
Roundtable
John Akomfrah (artist, filmmaker), **Eungie Joo** (Curator of Contemporary Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), **Omar Kholeif** (Director of Collections and Senior Curator, Sharjah Art Foundation), **Amina Menia** (artist), **Otobong Nkanga** (artist)
Moderator: **Aisha Stoby** (curator/researcher)

The final session of the three roundtables will focus on the last four editions of the Sharjah Biennial and their impact on the contemporary art scene, both regionally and globally.

8:10–9:10 pm Breakout session for the audience and March Meeting participants to discuss topics related to MM 2021: *Unravelling the Present*.

Sunday, 14 March

5:00–6:00 pm ***Signs and Transmissions: Decolonising the Architecture Exhibition***
Keynote
Adrian Lahoud (Dean, School of Architecture, Royal College of Art London, Co-chair, Rights of Future Generations Working Group and Curator, first Sharjah Architecture Triennial)

This presentation will discuss the challenges posed to architectural exhibition making in the context of the Global South. Drawing on the inaugural edition of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, *Rights of Future Generations*, Adrian Lahoud will explore the way architecture exhibitions can respond to climate change as one of the legacies of colonialism. The decolonisation of the architecture exhibition might be said to operate along two interconnected lines: in practical terms, as a multiplier within ongoing social struggles, and in theoretical terms, as a set of concepts and ideas that promote a multi-perspectival understanding of relationships between societies and environments.

6:10–8:10 pm ***Art and the Civic Imagination***
Panel
Zarina Bhimji (artist), **Geeta Kapur** (art critic, curator), **Ming Tiampo** (Professor, Art History, Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture, Carleton University and Co-Director, Centre for Transnational Cultural Analysis)
Moderator: **Salah M. Hassan** (Director, The Africa Institute, Sharjah and Goldwin Smith Professor, Cornell University)

This panel considers civic imagination as civic engagement, which March Meeting has a long history of tackling through its many relevant subjects and themes. Panelists will discuss new social and political practices as well as artistic visions aimed at achieving a 'better society'. As ideas of what comprises a 'better society' can vary widely, speakers will also comment on art and curating as spaces for imagining what such a society might look like. Biennials, unlike museums, tend to involve participatory or challenging projects that are not necessarily or purely aesthetic; that is to say, they possess social and political implications as well as potentially risky attitudes. These social and political implications are also exhibited in the forms and practices that are mobilised in thinking about, curating and presenting the art.

Monday, 15 March

5:00–7:00 pm

Sharjah Biennials in a Regional Context

Panel

Anita Dube (artist, curator), **Reem Fadda** (Director, Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation), **Yuko Hasegawa** (Artistic Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo and Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts), **Alia Swastika** (curator)

Moderator: **Arshiya Lokhandwala** (art historian, curator and Founder, Lakeeren Art Gallery)

Composed of curators, art critics and art historians, this panel will focus on the Sharjah Biennial within the context of biennials in the Middle East and South East Asia. The panelists will rethink the form of biennials both in relation to their location and in relation to the global art world. They will discuss old and well-established biennials but also consider the role of new ones, including biennials in Alexandria, Baghdad, Cairo, Jakarta, Karachi, Kochi, Lahore, Qalandiya/Riwaq and Yogyakarta.

7:10–9:10 pm

Sharjah Biennials in a Regional Context

Panel

Ehab Ellaban (Director, Center of Arts, Cairo), **Vasif Kortun** (curator), **Qudsia Rahim** (Executive Director, Lahore Biennale Foundation and Director, Lahore Biennale), **Nada Shabout** (Professor, Art History and Coordinator, Contemporary Arab and Muslim Cultural Studies Initiative, University of North Texas)

Moderator: **John Tain** (Head of Research, Asia Art Archive)

Composed of curators, art critics and art historians, this panel will continue the discussion on the Sharjah Biennial within the context of biennials in the Middle East and South East Asia. Speakers will rethink the form of biennials both in relation to their location and in relation to the global art world. They will discuss old and well-established biennials but also consider the role of new ones, including biennials in Alexandria, Baghdad, Cairo, Jakarta, Karachi, Kochi, Lahore, Qalandiya/Riwaq and Yogyakarta.

Tuesday, 16 March

6:00–7:30 pm

Fanon and Glissant: On De-Opacification and the Right to Opacity

Keynote

Manthia Diawara (Professor, NYU, and filmmaker)

This talk will focus on two theoretical concepts: de-opacification and the right to opacity, as deployed by Frantz Fanon and Edouard Glissant respectively. What did Fanon mean by the term 'de-opacification'? How did he intend it as a tool of the liberation struggle and decolonisation? Is Glissant's demand for the right to opacity a response to Fanon's and other thinkers' over-reliance on a philosophy of transparency and existential dialectics? Is our consent to the opacity of the Other the best way of maintaining human and nonhuman diversity?

7:30–8:30 pm

Breakout session for the audience and March Meeting participants to discuss topics related to MM 2021: *Unravelling the Present*.

Wednesday, 17 March

5:00–7:00 pm

Biennials and Postcoloniality

Roundtable

Thembinkosi Goniwe (Assistant Professor of Art History, Rhodes University), **Margarita Gonzalez Lorente** (Vice Director, 13th edition of Havana Biennial and Curator, International Contemporary Art, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana), **Hou Hanru** (Artistic Director, MAXXI)
Moderator: **Iftikhar Dadi** (Associate Professor, History of Art and Director, South Asia Program, Cornell University)

This panel will reflect on postcoloniality and postcolonial theory and their role in the critical decentring of the art world in the context of the emergence of 'Global South/Third World' biennials. Sharjah, Havana and Dakar are among the locations where biennials conceived after the Cold War era have participated in the project of decolonising and decentring. These biennials and others arose out of historical and political experiences, engaging with critical thought in terms of the centre versus the periphery and the decentring of the art world and artistic production through engagement with critical forms of postcoloniality and the imagining of a 'multi-trajectory' contemporary art world.

7:10–9:10 pm

Curating in the Age of Crises

Panel

Sammy Balaji (visual artist and co-founder of the Lubumbashi Biennale) and **Lucrezia Cippitelli** (scholar, curator), **Enrique Rivera** (Director, Biennial of Media Arts of Santiago), **Christine Tohme** (Founding Director, Ashkal Alwan), **Tirdad Zolghadr** (Associate Curator, KW Institute for Contemporary Art and Artistic Director, Sommerakademie Paul Klee)
Moderator: **Ute Meta Bauer** (Founding Director, NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore and Professor, School of Art, Design and Media, NTU)

Art practitioners from major global cities, including Santiago, Lubumbashi, Ramallah and Beirut, will reflect on their experiences in curating engaging biennials. They will explore current political, environmental, economic and social crises around the world and debate what it means to produce art in such challenging times. Everywhere one looks these days, crises with global implications, one after the other, are becoming the norm. What resources can biennials bring to bear in these complex times? What durational projects can address the different forms of crisis?

Thursday, 18 March

5:00–7:00 pm

The Biennial Nation

Panel

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Director, Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art and Director, Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti), **Catherine David** (Deputy Director, National Museum of Modern Art, Centre Pompidou), **Bongiwe Dhlomo-Mautloa** (artist, curator), **Gabi Ngcobo** (curator, educator), **Octavio Zaya** (Executive Director, Cuban Art Foundation)
Moderator: **Coco Fusco** (artist, writer and Professor, Cooper Union School of Art)

This panel will engage with the form of biennials in relation to the notion of nation-state in the age of globalisation. It will explore ways in which biennials can become spaces for the imagining of nations but also provide critiques of nations. Panelists will take a critical look at biennials as spaces of cultural diplomacy and examine what this diplomacy means as these biennials become spaces for projecting national images. Several biennials, including the Whitney Biennial, Gwangju Biennale, Shanghai Biennale, Biennale of Sydney and Manifesta, have courted controversy over issues of diversity, sponsorship, censorship and politics.

7:10–7:40 pm

The Biennials in Pakistan

Presentation: Sadia Kamran

7:50–8:20 pm

Karachi Biennial 2019: Censorship and Curatorial Responsibilities

Presentation: Samina Iqbal

Friday, 19 March

6:00–7:00 pm

On Restitution and the Art Industry

Keynote

Chika Okeke-Agulu (Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University)

In the summer of 2020, Christie's auction house sold a pair of Igbo sculptures, known as *alusi* or 'sacred sculptures', from eastern Nigeria, despite the controversial provenance of the artefacts. In autumn, acclaimed architect Sir David Adjaye unveiled his design for the Edo Museum of West African Art, a collaboration between the British Museum and Nigerian authorities. The new museum will house nearly 300 bronzes, on loan from European museums, that were looted by British soldiers in 1897. Though seemingly unrelated, these two events are joined on the one hand by the vexed ideological foundations and practices of art history and the so-called universal museum, and on the other, contemporary debates around colonial expropriation and restitution of African cultural heritage. This lecture combines scholarly, critical and personal perspectives to address urgent questions about decolonising the art industry, art history and the museum.

7:10–7:40 pm

Lost Horizons

Presentation: Murtaza Vali

7:50–8:20 pm

To Avoid or To Embrace

Presentation: Wided Khadraoui

8:30–9:30 pm

Breakout session for audience members and MM 2021 participants to discuss topics related to MM 2021: *Unravelling the Present*.

8:30–10:00 pm

Drowning Letters (2020)

Film screening

Paula Palacios

Mirage City Cinema, Al Mureijah Square

Saturday, 20 March

5:00–7:00 pm

Global Modernism/New Scholarship

Roundtable

Elizabeth Giorgis (Associate Professor, University of Addis Ababa), **Alex Dika Saggerman** (Assistant Professor, Rutgers University), **Sadia Shirazi** (architect, writer and curator, Cornell University and Whitney Independent Study Program)

Moderator: **Iftikhar Dadi** (Associate Professor, History of Art and Director, South Asia Program, Cornell University)

The last two decades have witnessed a major shift in the study and theorisation of modernity and modernism, moving away from the standard Eurocentric conception to a more global and multiple one. Hence, the claim to modernity, as suggested by Rasheed Araeen, is better understood as being open and not necessarily limited to a universalised European construct or monopoly. This roundtable is meant to sample new scholarship in the field of modernism from a global perspective, by highlighting the work of several authors who have produced groundbreaking studies on modernity and modernism in the last few years.

7:10–7:40 pm

Srinagar Biennial

Presentation: Melissa Carlson

7:50–8:20 pm ***On the Verge of Now***
Presentation: Sabrina Moura

8:30–9:00 pm ***Art Biennials and the Mediterranean Conundrum***
Presentation: Chiara Cartuccia

Sunday, 21 March

5:00–5:30 pm ***Redefining the Role of Art Institutions***
Presentation: Silke Schmickl

5:40–6:10 pm ***The World in Which We Find Ourselves***
Presentation: Grace Aneiza Ali

6:20–6:50 pm ***Thinking Presently with History at the Ethnographic Museum***
Presentation: Sarah Johnson

7:00–7:30 pm ***Against Art History***
Presentation: Sadia Shirazi

7:45–9:00 pm ***Rayyane Tabet: Exquisite Corpse***
Conversation
Rayyane Tabet (artist) in conversation with **Omar Dewachi** (Associate Professor of Anthropology, Rutgers University); **Uzma Rizvi** (Associate Professor of Anthropology and Urban Studies, Pratt Institute and Visiting Professor at Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Pakistan); and **Andrea Wallace** (Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Exeter)
Moderator: **Ryan Inouye** (Senior Curator, Sharjah Art Foundation)