



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

SKY FORUM

Sharjah Art  
Foundation

Mirage City Cinema  
Al Mureijah Square

# SKY FORUM

Sky Forum is a public programme that accompanies Shona Illingworth's residency at Sharjah Art Foundation, which took place in April, 2019. Sky Forum will contribute to Illingworth's installation *Topologies of Air*, commissioned by The Wapping Project. The residency and programme have been generously supported by the British Council, DCMS and GREAT through the UK-Gulf Culture and Sport Programme.

THE  
**WAPPING**  
PROJECT

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**5:00 pm-6:00 pm**

## **Panel 1: In Traces of the Past, the Sky Reveals its Secrets**

Starting with reflections on the significance of the sky and cosmos in Bedouin, Arab and other cultures, this panel contemplates the myriad dimensions of this borderless celestial landscape through historical perspectives and personal narratives. It also contrasts the arrival of modern aerial technologies of warfare—a transition where enclosures and threats from above begin to operate and appear, transforming the nature of the sky, of conflict and of our relationship to both. What might we learn from a bygone era when the sky was open and belonged to us all?

Dr. Mashhoor Ahmad Al-Wardat – Deputy General for Academic Affairs, Sharjah Academy for Astronomy, Space Science and Technology

Dr. James Lockhart – Assistant Professor of History, Zayed University

Nada Raza – Artistic Director, Ishara Foundation

Moderator: Shona Illingworth - Artist

**6:00 pm-6:15 pm**

## **Break**

**6:15 pm-7:15 pm**

## **Panel 2: Precarious Ecologies (or Welcome to the Last Earth)**

This panel examines the present conditions of human and natural life in a global context and how geopolitical realities

and climate change transcend borders and threaten the sustainability of existence on our planet. Here the sky stands as a metaphor for life, sustenance, mobility and universality, in an age when these are being threatened and curtailed. This session reveals the ways in which the sky has become an occupied space of political power, governance, restriction and surveillance—a field of domination—but also a field of scientific emergence, competition and discovery. How are sky and Earth being territorialised and who is policing these borders? Who determines our access to knowledge and the tools of technological development and how might these be turned into shared resources for the protection and advancement of all humanity? And finally, how do anthropogenic changes in our atmosphere portend a dire future, and what can be done to halt it?

Dr. Ilias Fernini – Deputy Director, Research Laboratories and Observatory, Sharjah Centre for Astronomy and Space Science

Dr. Majid Al Qassimi – Adviser to the Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment

Dr. Elham Seyedsayamdost – Chair, Department of International & Middle Eastern Studies and Associate Professor of International Studies, American University in Dubai

Moderator: Marta Michalowska - Artistic Director, The Wapping Project

**7:15 pm-7:30 pm**

**Music Performance by Azhar Kubba**

**7:30 pm-7:50 pm**

**Break**

**7:50 pm-8:45 pm**

**Panel 3: The Sky Is (Not) the Limit**

As our Earth undergoes radical transformation and humanity looks to the future, what are the new frontiers of travel, exploration and technological innovation? How might we imagine the future—both human and post-human—with the rise of robots, artificial intelligence and the search for life beyond our solar system? Can we arrive at a model of co-existence rooted in the idea of a 'commons', where land, air and space are deregulated and universalised? As issues of class and privilege demand our critical eye, what new paradigms and imaginaries emerge to challenge our colonising instincts?

Dr. Riad Al Ajlani – Associate Professor of Public Law, United Arab Emirates University

Dr. Hoda A. Alkhzaimi – Director, Center for Cyber Security and Research Assistant Professor, NYU Abu Dhabi

Khalifa Alhemeiri – Mechanical Engineer (Oil and Gas Industry), Energy Researcher

Dr. Toral Gajarawala – Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, NYU New York

**8:45 pm-9:00 pm**

**Break**

**9:00 pm-9:45 pm**

**A Conversation with Artist Shona Illingworth**

In this session, Marta Michalowska, Artistic Director of The Wapping Project in London, speaks to artist Shona Illingworth about her practice and how research, forums and public discussions feed into it. Showing excerpts of the artist's earlier work and clips from her current work in progress, Illingworth and Michalowska will also discuss the interdisciplinary nature of the artist's work, which encompasses not only art but also science, law and engineering.

Shona Illingworth – Artist

Marta Michalowska – Artistic Director, The Wapping Project