

Sharjah Architecture Triennial announces theme for third edition:
Architecture Otherwise: Building Civic Infrastructure for Collective Futures

- Launching in November 2026, this iteration will explore how architecture can foster new forms of connection in today's hyper-urbanised world
- Curated by Vyjayanthi Rao with Tau Tavengwa, it will adopt a multi-disciplinary perspective grounded in anthropology, attuned to human relationships and cultural context
- Select participants will be invited to create work as part of month-long residencies, embedding the Triennial within the social and cultural fabric of Sharjah
- The edition will contribute new long-term research and frameworks, reaffirming SAT as a critical platform for architectural discourse across West Asia, South Asia, and the African continent



Lunchtime recreation at Horniman Circle Garden, Mumbai. Photo: Rajesh Vora.

The Sharjah Architecture Triennial is pleased to announce the theme of its third edition (SAT03), *Architecture Otherwise: Building Civic Infrastructure for Collective Futures*, opening in November 2026. Curated by Vyjayanthi Rao, with Tau Tavengwa as Associate Curator, SAT03 will examine the urgent question of how architecture can help shape collective life in a world marked by rapid urban transformation.



Continuing SAT's mission to reframe architectural discourse from the vantage points of West Asia, South Asia, and the African continent, this edition addresses the growing complexity and dominance of urban life, particularly in fast-developing regions. As cities evolve into hyper-connected infrastructural networks, they have become the primary terrain where social, economic, political, technological and ecological forces collide, fundamentally reshaping how we live, connect and build together. Urban environments now extend beyond the physical boundaries of cities, encompassing vast territorial and cultural differences, digital realms and migratory flows - and every shift resonates across communities with potential global consequences. In this context, architecture must reclaim its role as a critical and imaginative force capable of responding to the nuances and complexities of how we inhabit the world today.

Expanding on her approach for SAT03, Vyjayanthi Rao said: *"This edition adopts a multi-disciplinary perspective, exploring architecture through the lens of anthropology, grounded in the locality of phenomena and context and remaining attentive simultaneously to global conditions and cultural difference. We are especially interested in exploring migratory movement and the rapid extension and localization of urbanism as building blocks of contemporary social life. The edition will foreground propositions for building civic infrastructure hospitable to these flows, creating new pathways for collective life to prosper in an uncertain and rapidly mutating world."*

This curatorial vision reflects the long-standing work of Rao and Tavengwa: Rao as an anthropologist and teacher at the Yale School of Architecture, who focuses on urbanism in India and the U.S.; and Tavengwa as a writer and co-founder of CS Studio, which develops experimental methods to reframe cities through plural, interdisciplinary lenses.

Architecture Otherwise will embed the Triennial into the city and the Emirate of Sharjah through site-specific installations, exhibitions, performances, workshops and public events. It will convene architects, artists, designers, scholars, cultural institutions and local communities from across the Gulf and the Global South, bringing the Triennial into direct dialogue with the region. For the first time, select participants will also undertake month-long residencies in Sharjah, allowing them to embed their work within its cultural and social context. These initiatives will activate a wide range of urban spaces and invite audiences to engage in critical conversations about the future of architecture and civic life.

In line with SAT's commitment to long-term engagement and research, this edition will generate enduring tools, insights, and frameworks that extend beyond the event itself - contributing to a richer, more inclusive architectural discourse. The second public event of SAT03 will be held in November 2025, marking one year until the Triennial's opening. The programme will include the announcement of the first group of participants, followed by a conversation between the selected participants and the curators.

To read the full curatorial statement by Vyjayanthi Rao and Tau Tavengwa, click [here](#).

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Notes to editors

About Sharjah Architecture Triennial

Founded in 2018 by Khalid Al Qasimi, Sharjah Architecture Triennial (SAT) is a platform for architecture and urbanism in a region that extends from West Asia to South Asia and the African continent. Physically anchored in Sharjah and the United Arab Emirates, SAT aims to engage diverse audiences and stakeholders in a collective conversation on architecture at the neighbourhood, city, and regional levels. Institutional research and programming support on-going critical reflection through exhibitions, publications, and public programmes in tandem with its international editions. SAT is committed to pursuing a multi-disciplinary approach that fosters an understanding of the broader role of architecture, including its relation to social and environmental issues.

Vyjayanthi Rao

Vyjayanthi V. Rao is an anthropologist, writer, artist and curator, currently teaching at the Yale School of Architecture. Her work focuses on the built environment and urbanism in India and the United States. She has published extensively on these subjects and currently serves as Co-Editor in Chief of the journal *Public Culture* (Duke University Press). Her curatorial projects include the exhibition *Multiplicity* as part of the Lisbon Architecture Triennale (2022) and *Seeking Refuge and Making Home* at the Center for Architecture in New York (2023). She has participated as an artist in the Kochi Biennale (2016), the Venice Architecture Biennale (2021), the Chicago Architecture Biennale (2023) and in the Berlinale Film Festival (2025). Her current projects include *Beneath The Placid Lake*, a film installation and lecture performance developed in collaboration with filmmaker Kush Badhwar. Rao received her PhD in socio-cultural anthropology from the University of Chicago and has held teaching positions at Yale University, The New School for Social Research and the City College of New York.

Tau Tavengwa

Tau Tavengwa is the founder and editor of *Cityscapes Magazine*, a periodical publication and long-running collaboration with the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town about knowledge, ideas and narratives on the future of cities, society and the built environment from a Global South perspective. He is also a co-founder of CS Studio, a discipline-agnostic urbanism studio focused on developing tools to enable a better understanding of cities from a broad range of perspectives and experiences through experiments.

He is a 2018 Loeb Fellow at Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD), a 2020-22 Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics' LSE Cities, and since 2016, Curator-at-Large at African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, and was a Max Planck Institute Fellow in advanced digital visualization. With a background in architecture and design as well as art & architecture publishing, Tau has curated several exhibitions and multiple book projects. Tau has been a curator on the Lisbon Architecture Triennial among others, and participated in several juries, including more recently, the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023, and Art Electronica's STARTS Prize.

Hoor Al Qasimi

Hoor Al Qasimi is President and Director of Sharjah Art Foundation, the public art institution she established in 2009 as a catalyst and advocate for the arts in Sharjah, the UAE and around the world. Director of Sharjah Biennial since 2003, she has curated and co-curated major exhibitions for the Foundation and numerous international institutions, including the critically acclaimed Sharjah Biennial 15 (2023), the major touring retrospective *Hassan Sharif: I Am The Single Work Artist* (2017–2018) and solo exhibitions of artists Simone Fattal, Rasheed Araeen, Yayoi Kusama, Farideh Lashai, Khalil Rabah, Bouchra Khalili, Emily Karaka, Antonio Dias and William Kentridge.



Al Qasimi also serves as President of the International Biennial Association; President of The Africa Institute, Sharjah; President of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial; head of Sharjah's Global Studies University; and President of the Sharjah Creative Quarter. Al Qasimi curated the 2020 Lahore Biennial and is Artistic Director of the 6th Aichi Triennale (2025) and the 25th Biennale of Sydney (2026). She recently received the insignia of Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters), conferred by the Embassy of France in the UAE.

Mona El Mousfy

Architect Mona El Mousfy is the founder of SpaceContinuum, a research-based architecture practice that explores the relationship between space, shared social practices, and socio-cultural conditions. She serves as the Advisor to the Sharjah Architecture Triennial and played a key role in founding the initiative in 2018.

El Mousfy currently leads various adaptive reuse projects, working with teams at the Sharjah Architecture Triennial and the Sharjah Art Foundation. Among her recent works, *The Flying Saucer* (2020), was shortlisted for the 2022 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. She also designed the Al Mureijah Art Spaces (2013), which was also shortlisted for the 2019 Aga Khan Award.

Since 2005, she has contributed to nine editions of the Sharjah Biennial, evolving from exhibition design to venue and site preparation, an experience that has deepened her exploration of the relationship between art and architecture.

El Mousfy is a member of the UAE Modern Heritage Technical Committee and serves as architecture advisor for Sharjah Creative Quarter project. From 2002 to 2014, she was a full-time faculty member at the College of Architecture, Art, and Design at the American University of Sharjah.