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Sharjah Architecture Triennial 2026 Appoints Vyjayanthi Rao as Curator and Tau Tavengwa as Associate Curator of Third Edition



Left: Vyjayanthi Rao. Photographed by Alfonse Chiu. Image courtesy of Vyjayanthi Rao.
Right: Tau Tavengwa. Photographed by Samer Moukarzel. Image courtesy of Tau Tavengwa.

Sharjah Architecture Triennial (SAT) announces Vyjayanthi Rao as curator of its third edition (SAT03), joined by Tau Tavengwa as associate curator. Taking place in 2026, the Triennial is a platform for architecture and urbanism from West Asia to South Asia and the African continent.

An anthropologist, writer, artist, and curator based in New York and Mumbai, Rao brings a multidisciplinary perspective and a deep sensitivity to context in her work. With a background in socio-cultural anthropology, her writing has contributed significantly to critical discourse on urbanism and the built environment, with a focus on India and the United States, and her practice increasingly bridges research and public engagement.

For SAT03, Rao works closely with London and Cape Town-based curator and publisher Tavengwa, continuing a rich dialogue that began with their curatorial collaboration for the 2022 Lisbon Architecture Triennale. Tavengwa is the founder and editor of Cityscapes Magazine, a publication dedicated to exploring urbanism from a Global South perspective, and the co-founder of CS Studio, an interdisciplinary urbanism studio.

Mona El-Mousfy, advisor for the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, comments: *'We are thrilled to have Vyjayanthi Rao as curator for our upcoming edition. Her deep knowledge of urbanism, with her particular focus on South Asian cities and neighborhoods, brings invaluable insight to the project. With her background in anthropology and her research-driven approach, she will undoubtedly offer a fresh perspective to this edition.'*

Vyjayanthi has invited her long-time collaborator, Tau Tavengwa, to join as associate curator. Tau is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of the field and reimagining the architecture Triennial model alongside her.'



The curators will collaborate closely with the Triennial team to build on its ongoing initiatives in the public realm, drawing on its deep knowledge of the city and community networks, while contributing broader perspectives on architecture's role in shaping more sustainable, inclusive, and responsive cities. Aligning with the Sharjah Architecture Triennial's focus on process as a means of idea generation, Rao and Tavengwa invite SAT03 to adopt a propositional, rather than representational, approach.

Vyjayanthi Rao and Tau Tavengwa expand: *'We are hugely grateful for the opportunity to contribute to such an important and distinctive platform as the Sharjah Architecture Triennial. Through our collaboration, we hope to open up new ways of thinking about what a triennial like Sharjah can become over time - leaving behind tangible strategies and ideas that respond to the needs and challenges of contemporary urban centres across the Global South and beyond.'*

Hoor Al Qasimi, President and Director of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, comments: *'Rao's practice, which offers vital insights into urbanisation, aligns with the context of SAT and Sharjah's ongoing urban transformation. Her work speaks directly to the Triennial's mission in terms of our commitment to research, innovation and knowledge-sharing, and we are excited to support both her and Tau in fostering a public-facing conversation around the critical, and complex, issues of today.'*

On Saturday, May 10, 2025, Sharjah Architecture Triennial will host "Meet the Curators of the 2026 SAT Edition," a public event at SAT headquarters, Al Qasimiyah School, marking the first official appearance of Vyjayanthi Rao and Tau Tavengwa as SAT03 curator and associate curator. This gathering will offer audiences a unique opportunity to engage with the newly appointed team as they share initial insights into their curatorial approach and vision for the upcoming edition. The conversation will unfold in dialogue with members of the SAT team, offering a first look into the conceptual framework shaping SAT03.

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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.