

## PRESS RELEASE

# The Africa Institute announces its third country-focused season covering the Indian Ocean region

Opening this December 2022, this multi-disciplinary conference aims to bring the complex history, and rich cultural heritage of the Indian Ocean rim to a wide, international audience.



*Image: Building Terrain II (2012) Digital C-type print by Naiza Khan*

*December 05, 2022 – Sharjah:* The Africa Institute announces the Indian Ocean region to be the third edition of its ‘country-focused season’— an annual initiative exploring one African country or African diaspora community through a range of scholarly and public programs.

Following two successful seasons focused on [Ethiopia](#) and [Ghana](#), the 2022-2023 season is titled “Thinking the Archipelago: Africa’s Indian Ocean Islands”. The multi-disciplinary conference series is organized by The Africa Institute in collaboration with leading scholars Jeremy Prestholdt, Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego; Rogaia



Mustafa Abusharaf, Professor of Anthropology, Georgetown University in Qatar; and Uday Chandra, Assistant Professor of Government, Georgetown University in Qatar.

The four-part conference will explore core themes that will examine and reimagine circulation, mobility, race and slavery, ecological change, and cultural production through the lens of Africa's Islands by organizing panel discussions, film screenings, music performances, theatre, and more.

"These themes deserve consideration not only in comparison with other world regions but also because, unlike its Atlantic and Mediterranean counterparts, the Indian Ocean's unique nexus of translocal relationships has never received the attention it merits," said Professor Prestholdt.

"The Islands have always been integral spaces of exchange. As crucial points of contact with societies within and beyond Africa, they have been the primary conduits through which people, goods, and ideas move especially in the context of the monsoon and maritime worlds," said Professor Abusharaf.

Professor Chandra adds, "From Madagascar's immense scale and ecological diversity to Mozambique Island's compact, urban environment and Mombasa's centrality to the East African economy, islands have profoundly shaped African history. Social environments of islands such as Zanzibar, Lamu, Seychelles, Mauritius, and the Comoros have contributed to unique forms of literary production, music, dance, film, aesthetics, and art forms in dialogue with continental and more distant societies. Islands have also faced a range of environmental challenges, from cyclones and tsunamis to rising sea levels and the devastation of marine ecologies due to climate change."

To resonate with the country-focused season, The Africa Institute has collaborated with Pakistani artist Naiza Khan to use her images to visually depict the monsoonal circularities of the Indian Ocean and what it represents as a heterogeneous assemblage of power, colonial history and collective memory.

Starting this fall, the inaugural event themed "[Reimagining Mobilities/Immobilities in the Indian Ocean](#)" is set to take place in Sharjah at The Africa Institute between December 15-17, 2022, and the subsequent three renditions will be hosted in 2023 in select island locations of the Indian Ocean and in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. The schedule and free registration details are available on our website: [theafricainstitute.org](http://theafricainstitute.org).



## About The Africa Institute

Established in 2018, The Africa Institute in Sharjah, UAE, is an interdisciplinary academic research institute dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa and the African diaspora. As the only institution of its kind located in the Gulf—the historical nexus of African-Arab cultural exchange—The Africa Institute is uniquely positioned to expand its understanding of African and African diaspora studies as a global enterprise. The Institute is conceived as a research-based think-tank, and a postgraduate studies institution, which aims to train a new generation of critical thinkers in African and African diaspora studies. Offering both master’s and Ph.D. programs in the humanities and social sciences, The Africa Institute aims to be a model center of excellence that engages with, as well as shapes, new paradigms of thought in ways that will ensure Africa’s place at the forefront of the academy for years to come. This is further pursued through its named senior and postdoctoral fellowships, its programs of international symposia and conferences, visual art exhibitions and artist commissions, film and performance series, and community classes and outreach events. The Institute has commissioned Adjaye Associate to design a new campus that is scheduled to complete in 2023, which will allow for significantly expanded programming. For further information visit [theafricainstitute.org](https://theafricainstitute.org).

## Read more about the Indian Ocean Season - conference themes:

<https://theafricainstitute.org/institute-program/indianoceanseason/>

## About Hoor Al-Qasimi

Hoor Al Qasimi has been spearheading the establishment of The Africa Institute into a major international institution, building upon the rich legacy of Afro-Arab cultural and scholarly interchange in Sharjah, including the landmark 1976 “Symposium on African and Arab Relations” that envisioned a future nexus for learning and collaboration between the two regions. Working in partnership with Africa Institute Director Dr. Salah M. Hassan, she continues to shape its programming and future endeavors.

A practicing artist and curator, Al Qasimi is also President and founding Director of Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF), which was established in 2009 as a catalyst and advocate for the role of art in Sharjah, the UAE, regionally, and internationally. With a passion for supporting experimentation and innovation in the arts, Al Qasimi has continuously expanded the scope of the Foundation over its 10-year history to include major exhibitions that have toured internationally; artist and curator residencies in visual art, film, and music; commissions and production grants for emerging artists; and a wide range of educational programming for children and adults in Sharjah. In 2003, Al Qasimi co-curated Sharjah Biennial 6, and has since continued as Biennial Director. Under Al Qasimi’s leadership, the Sharjah Biennial has continued to grow as an internationally recognized platform for contemporary artists, curators, and cultural producers. Her leadership in the field led to her election as president of the International Biennial Association (IBA) in 2017.



### About Dr. Salah M. Hassan

Salah M. Hassan is the Director of The Africa Institute, Sharjah, UAE, and Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University. Salah M. Hassan is an art historian, art critic and curator, and editor and co-founder of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* (Duke University Press). He currently serves as a member of the editorial advisory board of *Atlantica*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies* and *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. He authored, edited and co-edited several books including *Ahmed Morsi: A Dialogic Imagination* (2021); *Ibrahim El Salahi: A Visionary Modernist* (2012); *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance: A Critical Reader* (2009), and *Diaspora, Memory, Place* (2008); *Unpacking Europe* (2001); *Authentic/Ex-Centric* (2001); and *Art and Islamic Literacy among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria* (1992). He also edited and introduced, *Ibrahim El-Salahi: Prison Notebook* (New York and Sharjah, MoMA and SAF Publications, 2018, and guest-edited a special issue of *SAQ: South Atlantic Quarterly*, titled African Modernism (2010). Hassan has contributed essays to journals, anthologies and exhibition catalogues of contemporary art. He has curated several international exhibitions such as *Ibrahim El Salahi: A Visionary Modernist*, exhibited at The Tate Modern in London (July-October, 2013) after premiering at the Sharjah Art Museum (in March 2012) in Sharjah, UAE; *Authentic/Ex-Centric* (49th Venice Biennale, 2001), *Unpacking Europe* (Rotterdam, 2001-02), and *3x3: Three Artists/Three: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z* (Dak'Art, 2004). He also curated several exhibitions for the Sharjah Art Foundation including *The Khartoum School: The Making of the Modern Art Movement in Sudan, 1945-2016* (2016-2017), and *When Art Becomes Liberty: The Egyptian Surrealists (1938–1965)* (2016) in collaboration with Hoor Al Qasimi. He is the recipient of several grants and fellowships, such as the J. Paul Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship, Sharjah Art Foundation, Ford, Rockefeller, Andy Warhol and Prince Claus Fund foundations. Hassan has been honored as the 2021 Distinguished Professor by the College Art Association (CAA).

### About the Convenors

**Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf** is a Sudanese ethnographer and Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University in Qatar. She was a recipient of Postdoctoral and Senior fellowships at Durham University in the U.K., Brown, and Harvard. Her work was supported by Guggenheim Foundation, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Sir William Luce Memorial Fellowship, Andrew Mellon and MIT Center for International Studies, and Rockefeller Bellagio Study Center. She writes on culture and politics, anthropology of gender, human rights, migration, and diaspora issues in Sudan, the Gulf, Oman and Zanzibar, and the Indian Ocean. She is the author of *Darfur Allegory, Transforming Displaced Women in Sudan: Politics and the Body in a Squatter Settlement* and *Wanderings*, both published by the University of Chicago Press; *Oceanic Circularities* coedited with Uday Chandra, Irene Promodh and Maurice Jackson and published by Georgetown University Press. She is the editor of the 2010 special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Duke University Press) and *Female Circumcision: Multicultural Perspectives* (Ed.) (University of Pennsylvania Press 2006). She is the co-editor with Dale Eickelman of *Africa and*



*the Gulf: Blurred Boundaries Shifting Ties and Higher Education in the Gulf* both from Gerlach Press in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In addition to numerous book chapters and essays, some of her articles appeared in the *Sciences*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Differences*, *Anthropology and Humanism*, *History and Anthropology*, *Oriental Anthropology*, *International Migration*, *Radical Philosophy Review*, *Anthropology News*, *Transition: International Review*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* and *Black Renaissance*. Abusharaf is also the co-editor of *Monsoon: Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim*, which will be published by Duke University Press in collaboration with The Africa Institute, beginning in 2023.

**Jeremy Prestholdt** is a Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego. He specializes in African, Indian Ocean, and global history with an emphasis on consumer culture and politics in East Africa. His work has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Rockefeller Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, Social Science Research Council, and the Fulbright Foundation, among other agencies. He has been a visiting fellow at Ritsumeikan University, the University of Warwick, the University of Basel, and the University of Bergen. His articles have appeared in journals such as the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of African History*, *Public Culture*, the *Journal of Global History*, the *Journal of World History*, and the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* as well as many edited volumes. He is the author of *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (2008) and *Icons of Dissent: The Global Resonance of Che, Marley, Tupac, and Bin Laden* (2019). Prestholdt is the co-editor of *Monsoon: Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim*, which will be published by Duke University Press in collaboration with The Africa Institute, beginning in 2023. He is also a co-editor of the Brill monograph series *African Social Studies*.

**Uday Chandra** is an Assistant Professor of Government, Georgetown University, Qatar. He received his B.A. in economics from Grinnell College and his Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. He received the 2013 Sardar Patel Award for writing the best dissertation in a US university on any aspect of modern South Asia. Before coming to Doha, he held a prestigious research fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Goettingen, Germany.

Uday's research lies at the intersection between critical agrarian studies, political anthropology, postcolonial theory, and South Asian studies. He is interested in state-society relations, power and resistance, political violence, agrarian change, rural-urban migration, popular religion, and the philosophy of the social sciences. Uday's work has been published or will appear shortly in the *Law & Society Review*, *Social Movement Studies*, *New Political Science*, *Critical Sociology*, *The Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Contemporary South Asia*, the *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, and *Modern Asian Studies*. He has co-edited volumes and journal issues on self-making in modern South Asia, subaltern politics and the state in modern India, caste relations in



eastern India, and social movements across rural India today. His book, *Oceanic Circularities* coedited with Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Irene Promodh, and Maurice Jackson is published by Georgetown University Press. With regard to his upcoming projects, he is working on volumes on the comparative politics of "populism" and transnational circularities in the Indian Ocean. His first monograph *Negotiating Leviathan: Making Tribes and States in Modern India* will be published by Stanford University Press. Chandra is also working on a second book project on Hindu nationalism and democracy in postcolonial India.

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