

March Meeting 2024: *Tawashujat*



1–3 March 2024

[Khalid Bin Mohammed School](#), Al Manakh, Sharjah

The 16th edition of Sharjah Art Foundation's annual March Meeting brings together collectives whose embodied practices consciously intertwine diverse forms of artmaking and community building. March Meeting 2024 (MM 2024) comprises talks, lectures, workshops, breakout sessions, performances and other formats of social engagement.

The MM 2024 theme *Tawashujat* refers to the Arabic word for intertwining, coming together or the meeting of thoughts and ideas. It represents the programme's focus on collaboratively imagining more inclusive, equitable, sustainable and livable futures. The meeting explores collaborative methods that reappraise artistic, curatorial and activist approaches to reconfigure the role of art and artists in our current times. It also looks at the myriad forms of coming together, such as learning platforms, activist movements and publishing, which can serve as toolkits for social justice, solidarity and political mobilisation.

With its emphasis on critical encounters through the sharing of knowledge among artists, scholars, students and cultural producers, March Meeting has historically been a site for convening, debating, listening and engendering transregional solidarities. MM 2024 draws attention to collectives who work in communities to advance social justice through relational and cooperative practices. How does collaborative work enhance notions of artistic agency, especially in moments of global unrest? Can the mutual sharing of artistic and cultural resources help us navigate precarity, stimulate dialogue and encourage equity?

Thursday, 29 February 2024

Tours: Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Africa Institute and Sharjah Art Foundation

10:00 am–11:00 am

Tour of Sharjah Architecture Triennial 02: *The Beauty of Impermanence: An Architecture of Adaptability*

[Al Qasimia School](#), Sharjah

11:00 am–3:40 pm

Toni Morrison Fellowship Inauguration Programme

[The Africa Hall](#), Sharjah

11:00 am – 11:10 am | Introductory Remarks

Philathia Bolton – Inaugural Toni Morrison Senior Fellow, The Africa Institute (GSU), Associate Professor of English, The University of Akron

11:10 am – 1:10 pm | Film Screening

Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am, directed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

1:10 pm – 2:30 pm | Lunch

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm | Panel Discussion

Riché Richardson – Professor of African American Literature, Cornell University,
Philathia Bolton – Inaugural Toni Morrison Senior Fellow, The Africa Institute (GSU), Associate Professor of English, The University of Akron and Moderator:
Surafel Wondimu Abebe, Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Theory, The Africa Institute, (GSU)

3:30 pm – 3:40 pm | Song Performance

Al-Multaqa Chamber Orchestra

4:00 pm–6:30 pm

Tour of *Concrete Tent* (2023), DAAR (Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti)

[Al Madam Village](#), Sharjah

6:30 pm–8:00 pm

Tour of *In the eyes of our present, we hear Palestine*

[Old Al Dhaid Clinic](#), Sharjah

8:00 pm–9:00 pm

Dinner

Day 1: Friday, 1 March 2024

March Meeting 2024: *Tawashujat*

[Khalid Bin Mohammed School](#), Al Manakh, Sharjah

8:30 am–9:00 am

Registration

9:00 am–9:10 am

Welcome remarks

Hoor Al Qasimi (President and Director, Sharjah Art Foundation)

9:10 am–9:30 am

Introduction

Nawar Al Qassimi (Vice President, Sharjah Art Foundation)

9:30 am–11:30 am

The Catalytic Power of Collectives

Panel

Ivet Ćurlin, Nataša Ilić (Artistic Director, Kunsthalle Wien and member, What, How & for Whom); **Sofia Villena Araya, Deniz Kirkali, Amelie Wedel** (topsoil); **Mirwan Andan** (ruangrupa)

Moderator: **Amal Khalaf** (Director, Cubitt; Curator at Large, Public Practice, Serpentine and Sharjah Biennial 16 co-curator)

In the last 50 years, art and curatorial collectives have carved open new spaces for collaborative research, discourse-making and cultural practice. This panel examines the impulse towards collectivity within the art world, manifesting resonances between collectives and social movements as multitudinous sites of popular resistance, agency and critical inquiry.

Against a backdrop of deepening inequality and scarcity, this discussion asks: How are collectives reimagining self-organisation and non-competitive, horizontal approaches to creativity? How are they challenging western-centric trends, tropes and neoliberal cultural values through art and exhibition-making while also unsettling notions of creative labour and authorship? What are the future implications for cultural production and consumption in a largely commercialised art market?

This panel unpacks collective worlding practices in art stemming from grassroots solidarities and an ethics of radical care that seek to envisage and realise more equitable and humanist futures. It asks how we can create together and collectively make new imaginings possible.

11:30 am–12:00 pm

Breakout

12:00 pm–1:00 pm

On Being in the World

Assembly

Tariq Ali (writer)

In times of crisis, cultural producers must fundamentally choose between remaining silent, justifying the acts of those who have provoked the situation in question, or critically

responding in ways that challenge the centres of power. Creativity has long been a force for such change, solidarity and collective consciousness, actively shaping public discourse and intersecting with grassroots activism. New technologies speed up transmission to global audiences, viewers and readers. A completed poem or a painting can reach another city or country within minutes or hours. This assembly asks: What are the effects of technology and digital media on cultural dissemination and the evolution of human consciousness? How does creativity intersect with a collective and radical engagement with the world?

1:00 pm–1:30 pm

Just as a Precaution

Performance

Taysir Batniji (artist)

Palestinian artist Taysir Batniji reactivates *Just as a Precaution*, a participatory work he created as part of the instructive art project *do it بالعربي* in 2015. The artist will introduce his practice and provide audience members with instructions to make photocopies of their keychains. Each ensuing two-dimensional image will then be pinned on a wall, until the entire surface is covered.

This gesture can be thought of as an act of intentionally leaving a trace of one's passage in the here and now, a bit of one's 'home', or oneself, 'elsewhere'. The act may recall certain imposed practices of security control, whereby visitors are often 'recorded'.

The work intends to speak to the present moment, when nearly two million Palestinian people in Gaza have been displaced since the beginning of the Israeli offensive on 7 October 2023, obliterating and erasing more than half of the city's infrastructure.

1:30 pm–3:00 pm

Lunch

3:00 pm–5:00 pm

(Re)learning Indigeneity: Ecologies of Art, Sustainability and Resistance

Panel

Nida Sinnokrot, Sahar Qawsmi (Sakiya); **other indias**; **Beatrice Catanzaro, Fatima Kaddumy** (Bait al Karama)

Moderator: **Alia Swastika** (Director, Jogja Biennale Foundation and Sharjah Biennial 16 co-curator)

The ravages of (neo)colonialism and extractive capitalism have systematically threatened and stripped Indigenous communities of their land rights and sovereignty, contributing to environmental degradation and grave injustices of an existential magnitude. Widespread grassroots resistance intertwines the struggle for decolonisation with the struggle for sustainable practices.

This panel explores how artists and collectives are working at the intersection of art, sustainability and ecology, (re)learning Indigenous and agrarian traditions as well as marshalling new green technologies and practices in emancipatory ways. It also addresses how such practices enable renewed forms of self-sufficiency and cultural resilience, while ensuring that environmental justice is maintained.

How can the convergence of art, science and agrarian heritage bridge class and demographic divides? What role can farmers and Indigenous activists assume alongside cultural actors in the public sphere? How can ancestral knowledge be (re)learned to create shared prosperity, ecological stewardship and collective liberation for Indigenous peoples?

5:00 pm–5:30 pm

Breakout

5:30 pm–7:00 pm

Constellating the Human: Politics, Creativity and a Canopy of Solidarities

Assembly

Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta (Raqs Media Collective)

This lecture performance by Raqs Media Collective unpacks the notion of ‘the canopy’ which they have described as ‘a disposition, a practice of gathering—in joy, togetherness, celebration and anger’. The artists elaborate on what the canopy offers with regard to rethinking interconnected political and creative modalities of engagement and to reformulating networks of human association.

The canopy offers a point of departure for challenging the limited view of collectivity as relating merely to a temporal event or transient response to incendiary times. Instead, we are invited to consider how collectivity can be seen as a sustained way of being in the world, where associative life becomes a foundational aspect of human, social and creative interaction and of navigating the crises we commonly face.

7:00 pm–7:30 pm

Poems Under the Rubble

Reading

Mosab Abu Toha (poet)

Since 7 October 2023, tens of thousands of people have been killed, mostly children and women, as Gaza has been relentlessly bombed. More than half of the housing units have been destroyed, along with schools, hospitals, churches and mosques. Poets, artists, journalists and their families have been systematically targeted, among countless others. Poems and stories are no longer written in Gaza with the pen but with shards of glass, under rubble and fire. These poems carry the scent of war and the scars of shrapnel. Mosab Abu Toha, whose award-winning 2022 collection of poems *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear*, attests to the complexity of life under siege in Gaza, will share his poetry alongside the works of his peers such as the late Refaat Alareer.

7:30 pm–9:00 pm

Not Food (Private event, by invitation only)

Culinary performance* by **Shayma Hamad** (Founder, Food in Law)

Shayma Hamad invites us to contemplate the meaning of death and the rituals of mourning through communal dining. The culinary performance draws from the Arabic word ‘naqisa’ [missing], which is ever-present in times of death. It is inspired by the artist’s observation and reflections on how women in Palestine cope at times of such adversity. Arabic mourning traditions involve gathering with the deceased’s family for solace over a shared meal, thus collectively remembering the one who has passed. In being surrounded by the ‘wanissa’ [comfort] of the familiar, the bereaved feels a presence amidst the void.

During this performative dinner, the audience is invited to eat and also experience what is ‘not food’. The artist posits dough-making and kneading as resonant with the act of digging and shares stories collected from the lives of women who have had to excavate a place for the deceased. Not Food reveals how food becomes a means for prayer and wishing.

**Private event, by invitation only*

7:30 pm–9:00 pm
Dinner

Day 2: Saturday, 2 March 2024

March Meeting 2024: *Tawashujat*

Venue: Khalid Bin Mohammed School, Al Manakh, Sharjah

9:00 am–9:30 am
Registration

9:30 am–11:30 am
Towards Counter-Hegemonic Infrastructures

Panel

Yazan Khalili, Lara Khaldi (The Question of Funding); **Dady de Maximo Mwicira-Mitali, Joachim Hamou, Nabila Saidi** (Trampoline House); **Leah Gordon, André Eugène** (Ghetto Biennale)

Moderator: **Zeynep Öz** (Independent curator and Sharjah Biennial 16 co-curator)

The urgency to forge new spaces for the articulation and realisation of alternative modes of social relation, art and critical pedagogy has never felt greater. Artists and creative communities are increasingly finding avenues to self-organise, gather, work, imagine and produce as well as to resist marginalisation, xenophobia, displacement and erasure.

This panel looks at organising principles that exist within these infrastructures that render them counter-hegemonic. How do such spaces give a home to inclusive social cultures that transmit hope in times of struggle? And how does the act of renovating and repurposing old structures serve as an act of radical reclamation, broadening accessibility to art and learning that hold promise for social change?

From Palestine and Haiti to Denmark's refugee and migrant communities, artists and collectives are accelerating encounters that allow for a shared imagining of inclusive, participatory and grassroots possibilities for our world.

11:30 am–12:00 pm
Breakout

12:00 pm–1:00 pm
New Visions Case Study: Art as an Act of Change and Resistance

Assembly

Nabil Anani, Sliman Mansour, Tayseer Barakat, Vera Tamari (New Visions) in conversation with **Ismail Al Rifai** (Consultant of Arabic Editorial and Content, Sharjah Art Foundation)

Palestinian artists Vera Tamari, Sliman Mansour, Nabil Anani and Tayseer Barakat have long been credited with transforming the artistic and cultural scene in occupied Palestine, shaping the visual identity of Palestinian resistance art from the 1970s until the present.

These key figures will discuss the emergence of the New Visions group in 1988, after the first intifada in 1987 and its profound impact on all aspects of Palestinian life, including the emergence of new modes of thinking and artistic production. This rekindled hope for

liberation and emancipation resulted in a radical overhaul of the very concept and aspiration of artistic practice as an essential component of popular resistance.

This discussion will address the historical and political background in Palestine that led to the inception of New Visions; the group's establishment and its role as a bridge between local fine art practices and contemporary currents in the Palestinian art movement.

1:00 pm–1:30 pm

The Father of Stars, The Mother of One Day

Performance

Jumana Emil Abboud (artist)

Jumana Emil Abboud will blend folk tale, water-lore and myth with present-day lived experience in this performance. The artist will also draw upon her long-term collective practice around water bodies as sites of story and as a human/non-human community sanctuary. This spoken-word performance intends to unfold as a cultural antidote to the scars of displacement. It reveals how co-authored storytelling processes can hold our fragmented selves with care, unscathed by the misaligned weight of history.

1:30 pm–3:00 pm

Lunch

3:00 pm–5:00 pm

Art Spaces and Institutions as Sites of Futurity

Panel

Emily Jacir, Aline Houry (Dar Yusuf Nasri Jacir for Art and Research); **Tayeba Begum Lipi, Mahbubur Rahman** (Britto Arts Trust); **Delphine Buysse, Fatima Bintou Rassoul Sy** (Raw Material Company)

Moderator: **Natasha Ginwala** (Artistic Director, Colomboscope and Sharjah Biennial 16 co-curator)

Non-profit art spaces and institutions provide a crucial lifeline for cultural producers and artists, especially those who have been historically underrepresented or are outside western art centres. A plethora of dynamic initiatives and platforms around the world step in to ensure that opportunities, mentorship and learning for such artists' practices are sustained.

This panel surveys the work of art outfits and collectives operating within the contemporary contexts of Palestine, South Asia and Africa that seek to re-centre such practitioners as critical agents of our common human future.

In providing room for radical experimentation and the framing of new social discourse, how do such spaces shape the future of cultural production? In what ways do these institutions facilitate innovative pathways for practitioners and curators with regard to professional development, education and knowledge production? Whose 'futurity' do these platforms actually speak to and what constituencies do they seek to strengthen and support?

5:00 pm–5:30 pm

Breakout

5:30 pm–6:30 pm

Measuring the Distance Between Individual Efforts and Collective Echoes

Assembly

Samir Joubran (Le Trio Joubran) and **Samer Jaradat** (Jafra Productions) in conversation with **Hasan Hujairi** (Music Department Manager, Sharjah Art Foundation)

Private cultural initiatives have long exerted a profound influence on Palestine's cultural fabric, given the unique political context in which they exist. These initiatives shape and are shaped by the settings in which they operate, and this dynamic interplay is at the heart of preserving and nurturing artistic traditions in such challenging environments.

In this conversation, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the Palestinian oud band Le Trio Joubran, Samir Joubran and Samer Jaradat discuss the intricate balance between individual artistry and collective efforts within such enterprises.

Hailing from a storied lineage of musicians and oud craftsmen in Nazareth, Joubran speaks with a sense of urgency and poignancy. His family's musical heritage, stretching back to his great grandfather, underpins his passion for the subject. Jaradat, the manager behind the award-winning Le Trio Joubran (consisting of brothers Samir, Wissam and Adnan Joubran), discusses the challenges and strategies they use to ensure their continuity and success.

This dialogue bridges the creative and administrative aspects essential in sustaining initiatives like Le Trio Joubran, especially in the Palestinian context.

7:00 pm–8:30 pm
Dinner

Day 3: Sunday, 3 March 2024

March Meeting 2024: *Tawashujat*

Venue: Khalid Bin Mohammed School, Al Manakh, Sharjah

9:00 am–9:30 am
Registration

9:30 am–11:30 am
Identity, Memory and Materiality
Panel

Ayan Cilmi, Fozia Ismail (dhaqan collective); **Soledad Muñoz, Matthew Asaminew** (Woven Memory); **María José Murillo** (Noqanchis); **Yasmeen Mjalli** (Nöl Collective)
Moderator: **Hadeyeh Nader Badri** (Senior Adult Learning Coordinator, Sharjah Art Foundation)

This panel explores the intersection of contemporary art practices, cultural identity and collective memory. It reflects specifically on the tangible materiality of textiles through an examination of weaving, embroidery and tailoring practices. It also reflects on how the raw material resources that are central to the global system of extractive capitalism (and to the wars waged to maintain it) are incorporated into artistic works.

This session brings together artists and collectives working across diverse global locales to unravel the common thread of identity resilience through these enduring material art practices. It considers the ways in which textile art can preserve and transmit cultural histories through novel forms of storytelling.

What is the relationship between memory, materiality and histories of struggle? How do questions of sustainability shape contemporary practices within the textile industry? How

does the persistence of collective practices centred on material culture help defy forces of neo-colonial destruction and erasure?

11:30 am–12:00 pm

Breakout

12:00 pm–1:00 pm

Art and Feminism: New Ways of Creating as a Collective

Assembly

Christa Krings, Susana Alvarado, Maya Juracán, Vekis Morales, Jimena Galán Dary, Fernanda Alvarado (La Revuelta)

La Revuelta is a collective representing a newer generation of diverse Guatemalan women who seek to create a community for women to forge their own radical and creative paths in the cultural, social and political sphere. With a focus on curatorship and cultural management, La Revuelta works towards shaping an intersectional and decentralised space for its practice and narratives.

In this discussion, La Revuelta members discuss their evolution as a collective and explore how art and activism can help to foreground women's perspectives and issues. How can art challenge ossified societal norms and structures and enable the reclaiming and rewriting of feminist narratives, and in what ways can art unify women's struggles?

1:00 pm–2:30 pm

Lunch

2:30 pm–4:00 pm

Casablanca Art School: Intimate Memories and Contemporary Legacies

Assembly

Amina Agueznay (artist) and **Mujah Maraini-Melehi** (film director) in conversation with **Morad Montazami** (curator, publisher, art historian)

The Casablanca Art School (CAS) was established by French colonial powers in the 1920s and later came to revolutionise modern art in post-colonial Morocco. The School became a cornerstone for a radical and innovative reimagining of Moroccan art and art education among its staff and students in the 1960s, with a lasting legacy that impacted the entire region.

This session will explore the history and legacy of the Casablanca Art School, commencing with a lecture by curator and publisher Morad Montazami (Zamân Books & Curating) followed by a panel discussion with two cultural practitioners embodying the School's avant-garde ethos.

Amina Agueznay, a visual artist and daughter of Malika Agueznay, will share her intimate memories of this postcolonial revolution. She will be joined by Mujah Maraini-Melehi, a documentary filmmaker and the daughter of Toni Maraini and Mohamed Melehi. Agueznay will reflect on her own experience and artistic approach to collective practice while Maraini-Melehi will discuss her work as a filmmaker who draws on this rich history and legacy.

4:00 pm–5:30 pm

Feminist Recentering: Activism and Discourse in the Public Sphere

Assembly

Nighat Khan (Women's Action Forum) and **Aisha Bilkhair** (Research Advisor, National Library and Archives, Abu Dhabi)

Moderator: **Jiwon Lee** (Curatorial Department Manager, Sharjah Art Foundation)

This panel examines the evolution of feminist activism, scholarship and discursive practices through a discussion on the revolutionary Women's Action Forum (WAF) in Pakistan in the 1980s and contemporary feminist work in the United Arab Emirates through the work of writer and lecturer Aisha Bilkhair.

WAF emerged as a significant feminist movement in the 1980s in response to repressive state policies and conservative measures introduced by the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq; these included laws that adversely affected women's rights and marginalised their participation in public life.

Aisha Bilkhair is an expert in oral history, ethnographic studies and the African diaspora with a special interest in women, the transformation of identity and the evolution of women's education in the United Arab Emirates, among other things.

This session will examine the diverse strategies employed by prominent women to challenge patriarchal structures, amplify marginalised voices and foster inclusive public discourse. It will look at how these figures navigated the complexities of feminism and women's identity alongside questions of intersectionality, plurality and global solidarity.

5:30 pm–6:30 pm

Closing Remarks

Assembly

Lubnah Ansari, Bhoomika Ghaghada, Fatima Al Jarman, Shazia Salam

After three days of observing and participating in March Meeting's programming, artists and writers Bhoomika Ghaghada, Shazia Salam, Lubnah Ansari, and Fatima Al Jarman will critically respond to this year's iteration. Centring collective work as a methodology—to witness, produce, mobilise, and sustain practice—based on shared values and the pooling of resources, the panelists will reflect on the *Tawashujat* programming. They will also facilitate an open discussion around the absences felt.

7:00 pm–8:30 pm

Dinner

Monday, 4 March 2024

Sharjah Art Foundation Spring 2024 Exhibitions Tours

10:00 am–11:00 am

Tour of *Henok Melkamzer: Telsem Symbols and Imagery*

[Sharjah Art Museum](#), Sharjah

11:00 am–1:00 pm

Tour of *Lala Rukh: In the Round* and *Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970–2023*

[Al Mureijah Art Spaces](#), Sharjah

1:00 pm–2:30 pm

Lunch

2:30 pm–5:00 pm

Tour of *The Casablanca Art School: Platforms and Patterns for a Postcolonial Avant-Garde (1962–1987)*

[Al Hamriyah Studios](#) and [Old Al Diwan Al Amiri](#), Al Hamriyah