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الشارقة للعمارة
SHARJAH
ARCHITECTURE
TRIENNIAL

Press Release, 25 May 2018

Rights of Future Generations announced as the theme of the first Sharjah Architecture Triennial



Drone image of aerial view from Al Sharq Street overlooking Khalid Port, Sharjah.

In an event held today during the Vernissage of the Venice Biennale, curator of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial Adrian Lahoud has announced **Rights of Future Generations** as the theme of the first edition. Running for three months, the Triennial will open in November 2019 in the Emirate of Sharjah as the first major platform for dialogue on architecture and urbanism focusing on the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa and South Asia.

Emerging as a radical proposal within indigenous struggles and international law, **Rights of Future Generations** aims to fundamentally challenge the way we think about designing societies and environments with important implications for architecture, urban design, and planning. The exploration of this concept both within the context of the Arabic-speaking world and the global south is at the heart of the inaugural Sharjah Architecture Triennial.

Adrian Lahoud commented:

"Rights of Future Generations is an invitation to radically rethink fundamental questions about architecture and its power to create and sustain alternative modes of existence. The last decades have seen a massive expansion in rights, yet this expansion has failed to address long-standing challenges around environmental change and inequality. A focus on rights to health, education, and housing as individual rights has obscured collective rights such as rights of nature and environmental rights. At the same time, the conceptualisation of rights as basic standards reduces the diversity of human existence to mere subsistence within a universal minimum.

These deeply-held preconceptions expressed in very basic ideas like shelter continue to inform how we think about architecture as something that protects us from the environment, or as some primordial need that exists irrespective of the existential differences between societies. The same is true for concepts like habitat that are deployed in the same way and by the same institutions. This colonial legacy has never ceased informing the kinds of desires and ambitions the discipline and the profession authorizes. Any emancipatory project will have to start with this condition.

Rights of Future Generations questions how inheritance, legacy, and the state of the environment are passed from one generation to the next, how present decisions have long-term intergenerational consequences, and how other expressions of co-existence, including indigenous ones, might challenge dominant western perspectives. Turning to alternative concepts of architecture and the environment, the Sharjah Architecture Triennial will focus on moments where experiments with architectural and institutional forms collaborate to generate new social realities. Architecture's power is fundamentally propositional and pedagogical. Design is an opportunity to bring alternative modes of existence into being, including new concepts of what buildings, cities, landscapes, and territories are. In order to do that effectively, architecture has to find ways of working alongside institutions that are able to structure the protocols, habits and rituals that organize lives according to these new ideas."

The Triennial theme is motivated by the unique circumstances that architects, scholars, planners and artists in the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa, and South Asia face, from non-existent or fragmented archives, to restrictions on travel, or the absence of institutional support. It aims to respond to this situation by initiating an archive of social spatial experimentation, laying the groundwork of a lasting resource for generations of architects, scholars, planners and artists to come. It will also use the occasion of the inaugural Sharjah Architecture Triennial to create a platform for dialogue between an emerging generation of architects drawn from across the global south, the Arabic-speaking world, and their diaspora.

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Notes to Editors

Sharjah Architecture Triennial is a non-profit initiative legally housed under the Sharjah Urban Planning Council and funded by Government of Sharjah. Founding Partners include Sharjah Urban Planning Council; Directorate of Town Planning and Survey; American University of Sharjah, College of Architecture, Art & Design; Sharjah Art Foundation; and Bee'ah (the UAE's leading integrated environmental & waste management company).

Each edition will be led by a curator who spearheads a core programme of exhibitions, urban interventions, conferences and public talks with the participation of local, regional and international practitioners and researchers.

www.sharjaharchitecture.org

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Khalid Al Qasimi

Khalid bin Sultan Al Qasimi is Chairman of Sharjah Urban Planning Council and the Sharjah Architecture Triennial. Drawing on his academic background in architecture and design at the Architectural Association and Central Saint Martins in London, Al Qasimi oversees integrated inter-governmental efforts to introduce a new vitality into Sharjah's urban development. Under his leadership, Sharjah Urban Planning Council ensures that Sharjah and its residents have access to a future with sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing. Building on this foundation, the Sharjah Architecture Triennial serves as the first major platform to address critical reflection on the architecture and urbanism in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia region, placing Sharjah's development in dialogue with the wider region.

Adrian Lahoud

Drawing on nation building projects in the post-colonial period and the mobilisation of climate research by the global south, Lahoud's PhD titled *The Problem of Scale: The City, the Territory, the Planetary* sets out a theory of scale drawn from architectural practice in the context of emancipatory struggles. Further recent exhibits include: *The Shape of the Eclipse* at Let's Talk about the Weather: Art and Ecology in a Time of Crisis, Sursock Museum Beirut, *Secular Cosmologies* in After Belonging: Triennial of Architecture Oslo. Recent lectures include: *Architecture and the Social Imagination* at City Debates, American University of Beirut, *Fallen Cities: Architecture and Reconstruction* at The Arab City: Architecture and Representation, Columbia University, and *Floating Bodies* at Conflict Shorelines Princeton University. Recent publications include: *The Mediterranean: A New Imaginary* in New Geographies, Harvard University Press, *The Bodele Declaration* in Grain, Vapour, Ray: Textures of the Anthropocene MIT Press, *Nomos and Cosmos* in Supercommunity, MIT Press.

Key design projects include a competition entry for a cultural centre in Istanbul and a proposal exploring forms of co-existence between high-density development and historically significant inner city areas in Tripoli.

He is currently acting President of the Jury for the Saradar Collection Architectural Competition in Lebanon and working on a large installation titled 'Climate Crimes' that was first presented in the *Future Starts Here* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in May 2018.