

تريينال
الشارقة للعمارة
SHARJAH
ARCHITECTURE
TRIENNIAL

Sharjah Architecture Triennial (SAT) presents
A Journey into Architecture Archives: Baghdad, Damascus, Tunis
Curated by George Arbid
2 May – 12 July 2026
Al Qasimiyah School, Sharjah

Part of SAT's long-term commitment to promoting and safeguarding the architectural history of the region, this iteration takes the form of a Collection Room amid ongoing political precarity

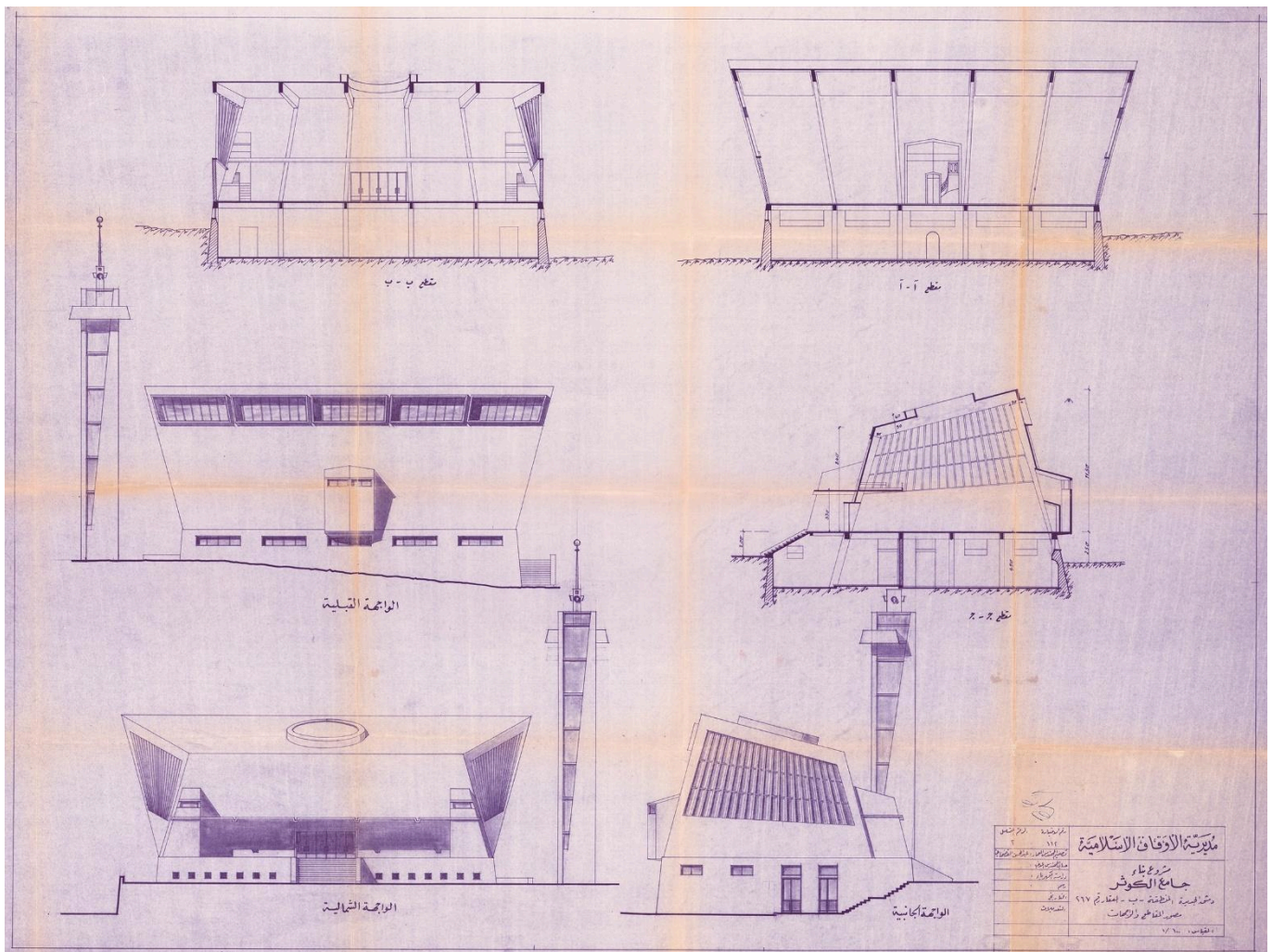


As part of its ongoing institutional programming, Sharjah Architecture Triennial presents *A Journey into Architecture Archives: Baghdad, Damascus, Tunis*, a new chapter in its long-term research initiative dedicated to

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architectural archives in the Arab world. On view from 2 May to 12 July, the project brings together rare archival materials, physical models and newly commissioned documentary films to explore histories, memories and unrealised futures across three pivotal Arab cities.

Building on the inaugural 2023 exhibition, which focused on Beirut, Cairo and Rabat, *Journeys into Architecture Archives* was developed to foster knowledge production about the region from within its own communities, while contributing to the development of a shared archival database. With a view to expanding across multiple geographies and engaging a broad network of researchers and curators, this iteration is once again curated by Lebanese architect George Arbid.



In response to ongoing political instability in the region, this edition marks a shift from the previous exhibition format to a Collection Room. This transition reflects an evolving methodology: one that moves away from the conventions of exhibition display toward a quieter, more sustained engagement with material. It also underscores SAT's broader commitment to addressing the urgent condition of architectural archives in the Arab world, highlighting both their precarity and their significance as repositories of architectural knowledge, historical insight



and cultural memory. In doing so, it foregrounds the need to locate, safeguard, and reactivate documentation that is often fragmented, endangered, or overlooked.

Focusing on Baghdad, Damascus and Tunis, the Collection Room features work from private collections and institutional archives. Revealing layered histories of buildings and neighbourhoods, it brings together reproductions of architectural drawings, documents and models dating largely from 1930 to 1980. Emphasising pre-digital design processes, visitors encounter pen-and-paper drawings and 3D printed models produced for the exhibition, positioning architecture as a tactile and narrative practice rooted in craftsmanship and discovery.

The materials on view preserve the memory of realised buildings while also revisiting those that were altered, demolished or never built. Among them are works related to the Hôtel du Lac in Tunis, designed by Raffaele Contigiani and currently under threat of demolition, alongside documentation of experimental cinemas in Damascus and modernist civic and cultural projects in Baghdad. These include the Mayorality Building by Iraqi architect Hisham Munir, developed following a 1978 competition and emblematic of a generation of public architecture that sought to reconcile modern construction with local traditions - integrating brickwork, woodcraft and arched forms with exposed concrete. Through these assemblages, the Collection Room reconstructs both lost and imagined architectures, offering insight into the ambitions and complexities that have shaped these cities.

Extending this inquiry, the project also presents three documentaries commissioned by SAT and directed by Arbid, filmed on location across Baghdad, Damascus and Tunis. These works trace his in-situ engagement with architectural archives, weaving together material discoveries with oral histories and personal accounts from architects, archivists, residents and historians. Together, they position the importance of the archive as a living and evolving form - one that continues to shape how architecture is understood, remembered and reimagined – and will be made available as a permanent resource online following the exhibition's duration.

George Arbid – curator, architect and founding director of the Arab Center for Architecture in Beirut – commented: *“This project has a long-term vision of contributing to a comprehensive and accessible architectural archive for the region. It fosters education, research and personal discovery, offering a layered understanding of the past, present and possible futures of the built environment across these three cities. In moments of conflict, our role extends beyond presenting history to caring for the stories we hold. It is great that this archive is preserved, but more importantly, it should be used.”*

Mona El-Mousfy, founding advisor for the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, said: *“The institution is committed to identifying, researching and sharing materials from architectural archives across the region. This work supports our broader mission to advance knowledge creation rooted in the host city and its wider context, while fostering dialogue with local and regional institutions and stakeholders. This marks the project’s second iteration, with future iterations to follow.”*

To mark the opening of the Collection Room on **Saturday 2 May**, Arbid will present an online lecture from **3-4pm**. Following this, Arbid will moderate an online panel discussion and Q&A in Arabic from **4-5.30pm** which will connect contributors from across the region to reflect on the challenges of working with architectural archives, extending the project beyond its physical setting. Panellists include **Salma Gharbi** (architect and founding member and chair of Docomomo Tunisia), **Zaid Issam** (architect), **Ahmad Salah** (architect and co-founder and director of AMASyria) and **Ola Seif** (art historian).



Visitors to *A Journey into Architecture Archives: Baghdad, Damascus, Tunis* will be able to book either independent or guided tours of the Collection Room online [here](#).

For further information, interviews requests or to register your interest in attending the online opening events please contact:

Pelham Communications, T +44 (0) 20 8969 3959, @pelhamcomms

Rel Hayman: rel@pelhamcommunications.com

Lucy Groom: lucy@pelhamcommunications.com

Sharjah Architecture Triennial, T +971 50 261 4423, @sharjaharchitecture

Anum Laghari: anum@sharjaharchitecture.org

To access materials relating to the 2023 exhibition *A Journey into Architecture Archives: Beirut, Cairo, Rabat*, please click [here](#).

Image captions:

1. Hotel du Lac, Tunis, 1973, Raffaele Contigiani, View. Credit: Sylvain Bonniol

2. Kawthar Mosque, Damascus, 1965, Abdul-Mohsen Kodmani, Preliminary design. Credit: Omran Kodmani

Notes to editors

About Sharjah Architecture Triennial

Sharjah Architectural Triennial (SAT) is a platform that focuses on architecture and urbanism in a region that spans West Asia, South Asia and the African continent. The Triennial was founded by the late Sheikh Khalid Bin Sultan Al Qasimi (1980-2019) and has since been led by Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, supported by a team of architects, designers and researchers.

SAT engages diverse audiences and stakeholders in a collective conversation on architecture at the neighbourhood, city and regional levels. Through exhibitions, publications and public programmes, SAT supports ongoing critical reflection and institutional research and programming in conjunction with its international editions. The Triennial complements these diverse initiatives, focusing the conversation on the critical role that architecture and urbanism can play in the present and future of a welcoming and liveable Sharjah.

About 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.

About Mona El-Mousfy

Mona El-Mousfy is an architect and the founder of SpaceContinuum, a research-based architecture practice that explores the relationship between space, shared social practices, and sociocultural conditions. An advisor of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, El-Mousfy was instrumental in founding the initiative in 2017. She also serves as an Architectural Consultant for the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) where she has worked on several projects including the successive editions of the Sharjah Biennial since 2005.

El-Mousfy is currently engaged in various adaptive reuse projects leading a team of architects at the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Sharjah Architecture Triennial. She designed the SAF Art Spaces Al Mureijah in 2013, which was shortlisted for the 2019 Agha Khan Award for Architecture, and the Rainroom Al Mugarrah in 2018. Her most recent adaptive reuse project is the Flying Saucer, 2020, where she has restored the original mid-1970s character of the building while introducing a new outdoor public space and a community space around a sunken courtyard.

El-Mousfy has previously taught at the College of Architecture, Art, and Design, American University of Sharjah, where she held a full-time position from 2002 to 2014.

About George Arbid

Following a Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures en Architecture from the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA), Arbid was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at MIT History, Theory and Criticism Program and obtained a Doctor of Design degree from Harvard University. He has held teaching positions at ALBA, AUB, and the Lebanese University in Lebanon. His research covers mostly modern architecture in Lebanon and the Arab world.

Dr. Arbid's writings include *Architecture from the Arab world (1914-2014): A Selection*, published at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2014 where he co-curated the Pavilion of Bahrain. He co-edited along with P. Oswalt *Designing Modernity: Architecture in the Arab World 1945-1973* (صوغ الحداثة: العمارة في العالم العربي ١٩٤٥-١٩٧٣) published in 2022 in English and Arabic (Jovis and Riwaq). Arbid recently delivered a report to the Ministry of Culture in Lebanon commissioned by the World Monument Fund: A Roadmap for an Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

He is a co-founder and director of the Arab Center for Architecture located in Beirut, and of Docomomo Lebanon. Besides being a practicing architect, he has served on several competitions and award juries, including the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award 2019.