

SAF set to host March Meeting and Spring 2022 exhibitions



Dr. Hilla Limann lighting the Flame of the Unknown Soldier after being sworn in as President of Ghana's 3rd Republic, Black Star Square, Accra, 1979.

Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) has announced its Spring 2022 programme, featuring the 14th edition of the Foundation's annual March Meeting (MM) and a wide-ranging slate of solo exhibitions by pioneering contemporary artists from the MEASA region. Building upon the 2021 edition, March Meeting 2022 engages with the theoretical framework of Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present, opening February 2023. The Spring 2022 programme also includes major solo exhibitions of work by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Khalil Rabah, CAMP, Aref El Rayess and Gerald Annan-Forson.

Taking place online and in-person March 5 — 7, March Meeting 2022: The Afterlives of the Postcolonial examines the legacies of colonialism and the contemporary impacts of related issues on cultural, aesthetic and artistic practices around the world. The three-day programme convenes key voices in art and academia to discuss contemporary art and issues through a postcolonial lens, spanning a wide range of topics including racism, settler colonialism, apartheid, social movements including Black Lives Matter, Indigenous rights, climate change and the restitution and repatriation of looted artifacts.

March Meeting 2022, in tandem with March Meeting 2021: Unraveling the Present, is an integral part of the framework for Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present (SB15), laid out by the late Okwui Enwezor (1963 — 2019).

SB15 is being curated by Hoor Al Qasimi, Director of Sharjah Art Foundation, in collaboration with the SB15 Working Group and Advisory Committee. Alongside March Meeting, the Spring 2022 exhibition programme features Lawrence Abu Hamdan: The Sonic Image, the artist's largest solo exhibition of new work to date, encompassing three new bodies of work, a large-scale SAF-commissioned installation, as well as a site-specific performance.

The season also includes Khalil Rabah: What is not, a major exhibition of work by the conceptual artist from the 1990s to today, examining states of emergency and displacement, and CAMP: Passages through Passages, an exhibition of work by Mumbai-based collaborative studio CAMP featuring video, audio and archival works — including works presented at Sharjah Biennial 9, 10 and 11 — that analyse technology, surveillance and public health.

Additionally, the Foundation is partnering with other Sharjah institutions to realise major retrospectives for the late Lebanese artist Aref El Rayess, organised in collaboration with Sharjah Museums Authority, and Ghana-based photographer Gerald Annan-Forson, organised in collaboration with The Africa Institute.

Aref El Rayess (Feb. 26 — Aug. 7), at the Sharjah Art Museum, is a major retrospective that presents a largely unknown body of work created by the prolific Lebanese artist Aref El Rayess (1928–2005).

The exhibition includes a wide range of paintings, drawings, works on paper, sculptures, and tapestries that together reveal the rich and complex artistic practice of this important Arab modernist. Organised by SAF and Sharjah Museums Authority, the exhibition is curated by Catherine David, who has been working on the artist's archive for an extensive period of time. Lawrence Abu Hamdan: The Sonic Image (Mar. 4 — July 4) at SAF — Gallery 4, 5 and 6, Al Mureijah Square, presents the artist's largest solo exhibition of new works to date.

Award winner Abu Hamdan brings together a selection of new multisensory commissions and recent works that probe the question: Can the frequencies, simulations and stimulations of sound reveal narratives concealed from history? The Sonic Image is curated by Omar Kholeif, the Foundation's Director of Collections and Senior Curator.

Khalil Rabah: What is not (Mar. 4 — July 4) at SAF — Gallery 1, 2 and 3, Al Mureijah Square, is an exhibition of works by Khalil Rabah, created from the 1990s to the present, that propose speculative frameworks and platforms for exploring how cultural institutions, curatorial practice, museological discourse and critical knowledge operate under long-standing states of emergency and displacement.

The exhibition presents an overview of the artist's ongoing projects, including the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind, the Riwaq Biennale and Collaborations: by in form, alongside his Scale models. The exhibition is curated by SAF Director Hoor Al Qasimi.

CAMP: Passages through Passages (Mar. 4 — July 4) at SAF space in Bait Al Serkal, Arts Square, brings together a body of key works by CAMP, the Mumbai-based artist studio founded in 2007 by Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran.

Presenting a cross-section of works created between 2006 and 2020, the projects encompass video and audio works, archives — including works featured in previous Sharjah Biennials, interventions and collections, and draw upon the collective's artistic and research methods.

Through them, CAMP discuss topics such as anxieties and inoculations about public health under surveillance, the longue-durée of technological methods and advancements, and ideas of movement as transport or of finding unexpected ways forward.

The exhibition is curated by SAF Director Hoor Al Qasimi. Drawing upon Enwezor's concept of the 'Postcolonial Constellation', March Meeting 2022 considers contemporary art and issues through the lens of post-colonialism, the critical study of the historical, social and cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present, which engages with Enwezor's framework, will continue to explore these themes, bringing together 30 artists — including John Akomfrah, Coco Fusco, Hassan Hajjaj, Isaac Julien, Bouchra Kahlil, Kerry James Marshall, Steve McQueen, Wangechi Mutu, Doris Salcedo, Yinka Shonibare and Carrie Mae Weems, among others — to make commissioned works, which examine histories that continue to shape the present, alongside a selection of contemporary works by international artists.

In collaboration with The Africa Institute, SAF also presents the first retrospective of the work of Ghanaian photographer Gerald Annan-Forson (Mar. 7 – July 7, Al Hamriyah Studios). Featuring photographs primarily taken by Annan-Forson between 1979 and 1985, *Revolution and Image-making in Postcolonial Ghana* traces the political and social life of Ghana during a period of revolution and transformation, offering a visual story of postcolonial Ghana and its struggles and aspirations in the post-independence period.

The exhibition is curated by artist and ethnographer Jesse Weaver Shipley, Professor of African and African American Studies and Oratory, Dartmouth College, USA.