

**'Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change'**  
**Sharjah Biennial 8, 4 April – 4 June 2007**

**Symposium 5–7 April 2007**

**A Sharjah Biennial programme in collaboration with RSA Arts & Ecology, Latitudes and the American University of Sharjah (AUS)**

**Venue: Expo Centre, Sharjah**

**Symposium conceived and developed by:**

Max Andrews and Mariana Cánepa Luna (*Latitudes, Barcelona*)

Michaela Crimmin (*Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce, RSA, London*)

**In collaboration with:**

Jeremy Bendik-Keymer (*American University of Sharjah, AUS*)

Amir Berbic (*American University of Sharjah, AUS*)

Roderick Grant (*American University of Sharjah, AUS*)

Tarek Talat Al-Ghoussein (*American University of Sharjah, AUS*)

**Symposium Coordinator:**

Sharon Ahimaz (*Sharjah Biennial*)

*Offset of 70 tonnes of Carbon.*

*The conference language is English.*

The Symposium aims to explore specific aspects of the relationship between culture and ecology - not least the challenges and the contradictions. The event profiles the extraordinary work taking place in architecture, the visual arts, across new technologies, in design and on screen. Discussions involve artists, academics and students, architects and designers, people living locally and a number of key contributors from other continents. It draws from and builds on previous discourse – capturing the perspectives of people who are addressing ecological issues on a daily basis. The Symposium bravely takes place in a country which is prepared to look to the future and the changes we are all going to have to make.

**:: THURSDAY 5 April ::**

**9.30 – 10am: Refreshments and Orientation**

**10 – 10.15am: Welcome by Jack Persekian (Artistic Director SB8) and Michaela Crimmin (Director RSA Arts and Ecology programme, London).**

**10.15 – 10.45am: Keynote speaker: 'Ecology and the Politics of Change', Bruce Sterling, Author, journalist, editor and critic, Texas and Serbia.**

**10.45 – 12.00: Panel Discussion: The lure of the 'eco'**

*Eco-art, eco-fashion, eco-tourism, eco-politics, eco-activism, eco-village ... In almost every aspect of how and where we live, work and play, the eco has embedded itself. How has what we mean by ecology transformed and evolved through the practice of everyday life?*

**Panelists:**

**Sarah Rich** (Managing Editor, Worldchanging and inhabitat.com, a weblog covering sustainable design and green building, Seattle)

**Sergio Vega** (Artist, Gainesville; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Siobhan Leyden** (producer and presenter of the daily talk show 'Siobhan Live' on Dubai Eye radio, 103.8 FM)

**Stephanie Mahmoud** (Marketing and Management student, AUS)

**Chair: Jeremy Bendik-Keymer** (Philosophy teacher, Department of International Studies, AUS)

**12 – 12.45pm: Film Programme Excerpt and presentation by Andrej Zdravic, director of Riverglass: A River Ballet in Four Seasons, 1997 (41 mins)**

"*Riverglass* presents the 'materiality' of the river Soca. A symbol of importance in Slovenian culture, the film presents the force and clarity of the water from the point of view of the river itself, a Gaian perspective possibly. In its content and development of specialist filming equipment it recalls other film-makers landscape interventions (for instance Michael Snow's *La Region Centrale* (1970) or Robert Beaver's *The Stoas*, (1991-97)." – Mark Nash

**12.45 – 2 pm: Lunch Break**

**1.45 – 3.00pm: Parallel Seminars:**

**I. Emergencies and Risk**

*What is the role of architects, designers and artists concerning housing and communities? With increasing pressure on resources and space, and an increasingly volatile political climate how can we move from coping with aftermaths to try to mitigate risk before crises? Can design and architecture be a political act?*

**Susi Platt** (Architecture for Humanity's leading post-Tsunami reconstruction designer, Sri Lanka)

**Michael Rakowitz** (Artist, New York; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Moderator: Mehdi Sabet** (Associate Professor, Architecture & Interior Design, School of Architecture and Design, AUS)

**II. Resources: Truth and Materials**

*How far are recycled or sustainable materials a consideration for artists, designers and architects? How do such considerations affect our experience/perception of materiality in art and the built environment? And how does this relate to wider questions of resources—water, energy, etc.?*

**Tomás Saraceno** (Artist and architect, Frankfurt; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**3.00 – 3.30pm: Coffee Break**

**3.30 – 4.15pm: Feedback and group discussion**

**Susi Platt** (Architecture for Humanity's leading post-Tsunami reconstruction designer, Sri Lanka)

**Sarah Rich** (Managing Editor, Worldchanging and inhabitat.com, a weblog covering sustainable design and green building, Seattle)

**Sergio Vega** (Artist, Gainesville; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Michael Rakowitz** (Artist, New York; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Jeremy Bendik-Keymer** (Philosophy teacher, Department of International Studies, AUS)

**Tomás Saraceno** (Artist and architect, Frankfurt; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Mona El Mousfi** (Sharjah Biennial architect and Assistant Professor, School of Architecture and Design, AUS)

**4.15 – 5.15pm: In Conversation. ‘Kumar Shahani: Politics and the ecology of change’**

**Mark Nash** (curator of Sharjah Biennial 8 film programme; Director of the MA Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art, London) and **Geeta Kapur** (Critic and Curator, New Delhi, and member of the Jury for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial 8 Art Prize) in conversation about the work of Indian filmmaker Kumar Shahani.

**7.00 – 7.45pm: Presentation by Rem Koolhaas (Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rotterdam) at Qanat Al Qasba**

**:: FRIDAY 6 April ::**

Welcome by **Michaela Crimmin**, Director of the RSA Arts and Ecology programme, London

**4 – 5.30pm: Panel discussion: Offsetting / Upsetting. 'Art vs. issues'**

*Much work in the field of art and ecology has emerged in the field of remedial actions in industrial sites. Today carbon trading and offsetting are, more abstractly, being proposed as a way of restoring the balance of the atmosphere. How might these two motions be linked? How or should the work of some artists might generally be regarded as a form of offsetting or redressing? How do some artists desire tangible palliative results, while others offer strategies of friction or resistance? What is more important, the issues or the art?*

**Panelists:**

**Koyo Kouoh** (Cultural producer, Arts Manager and Programming Consultant, Dakar)

**Peter Fend** (Artist, Berlin; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Charles Esche** (Director, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and member of the Jury for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial 8 Art Prize)

**Chair: Stephanie Smith** (Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Curator of Contemporary Art, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago)

**5.30 – 6pm: Break**

**6 – 7pm: Jonathan Watkins** (Co-curator, Sharjah Biennial 8 and Director Ikon Gallery, Birmingham) to introduce Cornelia Parker's project for Sharjah Biennial 8: Video interview with **Noam Chomsky**.

**:: SATURDAY 7 April ::**

**4.30pm: Welcome back by Michaela Crimmin, Director of RSA Arts and Ecology programme, London**

**4.30 – 5.30pm: Artists' presentation: e-Xplo with Ayreen Anastas** (Artists *New York, San Francisco, Venice and Berlin*; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**5.30 – 7pm: Panel discussion: Urban Planning and the future city.**

*What is the future of the city as a habitat for humanity? Increasingly dense housing, commercial, cultural, infrastructural and civic spaces seem to contradict our desire for space, openness and freedom. What lies ahead for the city as a living, symbiotic form of inanimate structure and animate inhabitants?*

**Panelists:**

**Samir Srouji** (Artist, Palestine; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8)

**Samer Kamal** (Founder, Bee'ah, Sharjah Environmental Company, Sharjah)

**Kevin Mitchell** (Associate Dean, School of Architecture and Design, AUS)

**Siobhan Leyden** (producer and presenter of the daily talk show 'Siobhan Live' on Dubai Eye radio, 103.8 FM)

**Reinier De Graaf** (Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rotterdam)

**Chair: George Katodrytis** (Architect; Professor of Architecture, School of Architecture and Design, Professor of Architecture, AUS)

**SB8 Symposium Speakers (in order of appearance):**

- **Bruce Sterling** (*Author, journalist, editor and critic, Texas and Serbia*)
- **Jeremy Bendik-Keymer** (*Assistant Professor of International Studies, American University of Sharjah College of Arts and Sciences, Sharjah*)
- **Sarah Rich** (*Managing Editor, Worldchanging and inhabitat.com, a weblog covering sustainable design and green building, Seattle*)
- **Sergio Vega** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8, Gainesville*)
- **Siobhan Leyden** (*producer and presenter of the daily talk show 'Siobhan Live' on Dubai Eye radio, 103.8 FM, Dubai*)
- **Stephanie Mahmoud** (*Marketing and Management student, AUS, Sharjah*)
- **Mehdi Sabet** (*AUS School of Architecture and Design, Associate Professor, Architecture & Interior Design, Sharjah*)
- **Susi Platt** (*Architecture for Humanity's leading post-Tsunami reconstruction designer, Sri Lanka*)
- **Michael Rakowitz** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8*)
- **Mona El Mousfi** (*Sharjah Biennial architect and AUS School of Architecture and Design, Assistant Professor, Sharjah*)
- **Tomás Saraceno** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8, Frankfurt*)
- **Mark Nash** (*curator of Sharjah Biennial 8 film programme; Director of the MA Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art, London*)
- **Geeta Kapur** (*Critic and Curator, New Delhi, and member of the Jury for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial 8 Art Prize*)
- **Rem Koolhaas** (*Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rotterdam*)
- **Koyo Kouoh** (*Cultural producer, Arts Manager and Programming Consultant, Dakar*)
- **Peter Fend** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8, Berlin*)
- **Charles Esche** (*Director, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and member of the Jury for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial 8 Art Prize*)
- **Stephanie Smith** (*Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Curator of Contemporary Art, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago*)
- **Jonathan Watkins** (*Co-curator, Sharjah Biennial 8, Birmingham*)
- **e-Xplo with Ayreen Anastas** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8, New York, San Francisco, Venice and Berlin*)
- **George Katodrytis** (*Architect; AUS School of Architecture and Design, Professor of Architecture, Sharjah*)
- **Samir Srouji** (*Artist; participating in Sharjah Biennial 8, Boston*)
- **Samer Kamal** (*Founder, Bee'ah, Sharjah Environmental Company, Sharjah*)
- **Kevin Mitchell** (*Associate Dean, School of Architecture and Design, AUS, Sharjah*)
- **Reinier De Graaf** (*Partner, Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rotterdam*)

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