

Adjaye Associates reveals design for Africa Institute campus in UAE

Adjaye Associates has revealed the design for The Africa Institute campus to be built in downtown Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The 31,882m² campus will be dedicated to the advanced study, research, and documentation of Africa and the African diaspora in the Arab world.



Image © Adjaye Associates

"I am deeply humbled for the opportunity to design The Africa Institute in Sharjah, a project which introduces an entirely new type of thinking and mission into the global academic arena," said David Adjaye, founder and principal at Adjaye Associates.

"I envision the new campus as a springboard for the concretisation of the incredible history of Africa, the African diaspora, and the Arab world," Adjaye added.

Desert typology

Adjaye's design creates an enclosed campus comprising five volumes, reaching four to seven storeys in each. These volumes are connected by a series of open-air interior courtyards and punctuated by large overhangs which produce shade and relief from solar heat.

Clad in red-pigmented concrete, the structures will be made of low-carbon concrete, enhancing the desert typology which requires a sensitive and contextual response.



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For the architecture of the building, Adjaye is inspired by the Gulf, Timbuktu, and Hausa architecture where trabeated solid masonry façades often shelter an internal courtyard and the ground floor is defined by the court which negotiates the transition between the city and The Africa Institute.

The open-air courtyards are designed on the first and ground floors which are punctuated by water features and native planters, while these courtyards also improve air circulation and provide natural cooling.

The campus will include spaces offering differing character and scale for classes and seminars as well as a research library and climatized archive facility, flexible auditorium and performance space, a restaurant and café, and a bookstore.

Entryways on each of its four façades will welcome the public and connect the architecture with surrounding institutions and public walkways.



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Site-specific installations

The Africa Institute is also commissioning artists to create site-specific installations throughout the public spaces of its new building, which will be announced at a later date.

"The Africa Institute is uniquely positioned to illuminate African and Gulf ties and to expand understanding of African and African diaspora studies as a global enterprise," said The Africa Institute director Salah M. Hassan.

"Our mission is to generate and infuse fresh thinking into an existing body of scholarship that largely conceives of the Gulf and Africa as separate entities. In doing so, the institute will shed light on important yet overlooked historical linkages that shaped the past and influence present events, including forced and voluntary migratory patterns, market-based economic fluctuations, and local and global political changes."

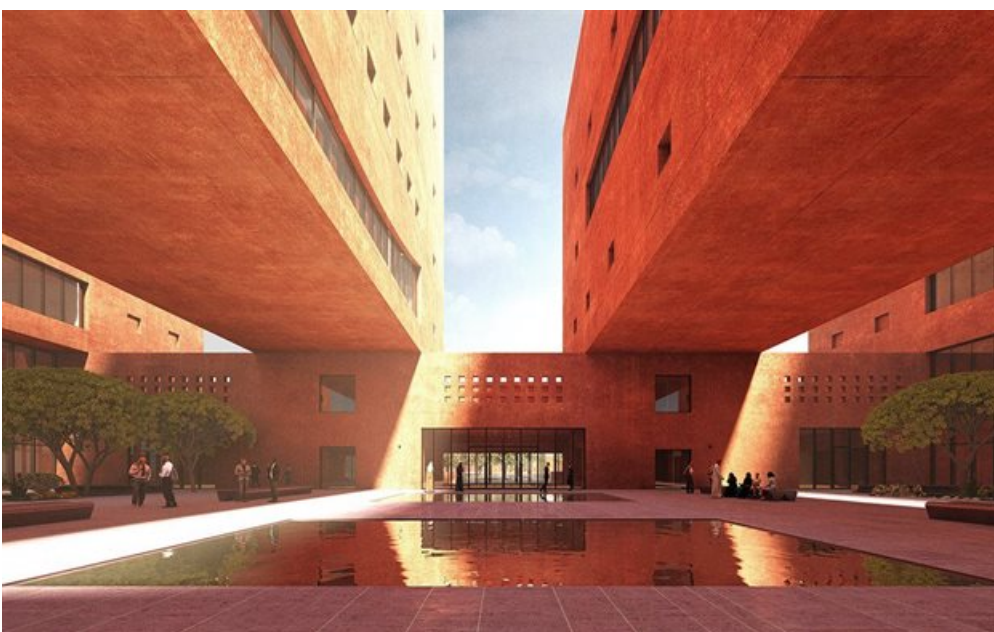


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"We selected David Adjaye to create the first purpose-built home for this vital institution because of his experience in designing buildings that foster learning, collaboration, and community building," said The Africa Institute president Hoor Al

Qasimi.

"We started working together in 2017 so that the vision for The Africa Institute and the building that supports its critical mission would be developed hand-in-hand."

"David's ability to create such a beautiful sequence of diverse spaces and welcoming sense of place will make The Africa Institute a nexus for knowledge-building and learning that will serve people in the region and our partners across Africa and around the world for generations to come," added Al Qasimi.

The campus is scheduled for completion in 2023.

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