

## QATAR MUSEUMS UNVEILS SITE-SPECIFIC PUBLIC ARTWORKS BY OLAFUR ELIASSON, SIMONE FATTAL AND ERNESTO NETO NEAR NATION'S NORTHERN HERITAGE SITES

**NEWLY COMMISSIONED ARTWORKS ARE PRESENTED AS PART OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST  
AMBITIOUS PUBLIC ART PROGRAMMES COMPRISED OF MORE THAN 100 WORKS THAT WILL BE  
ON VIEW DURING THE FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR 2022™**

**24 October 2022, Doha** –Qatar Museums and its Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani today unveiled large-scale, site-specific artworks by renowned artists Olafur Eliasson, Simone Fattal and Ernesto Neto that were commissioned for the desert outside of Al Zubarah and Ain Mohammed heritage sites in the nation's northernmost region. The works join more than 100 public artworks that Qatar Museums has installed across the nation's public spaces, from the Hamad International Airport to the bustling Souq Waqif, in time for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, when 1.5 million visitors are expected to be in Doha. Olafur Eliasson and Ernesto Neto were in attendance for the unveiling of the installations, which took place as part of Qatar Creates, the year-round national cultural movement that curates, promotes and celebrates the diversity of cultural activities in Qatar.

Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, said: "Today is an especially proud moment for Qatar Museums, not only because we have introduced extraordinary, permanent artworks by three of the most admired contemporary artists in the world, but because in doing so we celebrate Qatar's storied heritage sites. Al Zubarah, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has been lovingly preserved to help visitors understand Qatar's national identity and the fascinating story of the pearl trade, while the historic structures of Ain Muhammad village are being consolidated and preserved by the Al Nuaimi family to serve the public today and tomorrow as a place of hospitality and traditional sport. There are just two of the examples of how we honor the physical fabric of our culture. As residents and tourists visit this region of Qatar to experience these new art installations, they will learn about Qatar's natural landscape and history and come away with a better understanding of the diversity of Qatari culture."

Olafur Eliasson's *Shadows travelling on the sea of the day* (2022) continues the Icelandic-Danish artist's longstanding exploration into the interplay of human perception and the natural world. The installation comprises twenty mirrored circular shelters, three single rings, and two double rings that are positioned according to the axes of a fivefold symmetrical pattern, with the ten shelters at the centre forming a pentagram, or five-pointed star. The principles behind such patterns were recently discovered by mathematicians in the West,

although they may have informed some of the sophisticated designs found in Islamic cultures since medieval times.

Regarding his artwork, Olafur Eliasson said, "*Shadows travelling on the sea of the day, 2022*, is an invitation to resync with the planet. It is a celebration of everything being in and moving through the desert site north of Doha at the time of your visit – animals, plants, and human beings; stories, traditions, and cultural artefacts; wind, sunlight, air, and shimmering heat.

On arriving at the installation, looking up at the mirrored undersides, you will come to realise that you are, in fact, looking down – at the earth and at yourself. Above and below, sand envelops you, together with anyone else sharing the space. It is a kind of reality check of your connectedness to the ground. The mirrors connect and perfect what is physically distinct and partial, linking the actual surroundings with the reflected space and creating a sea of interconnections. The oscillation of your gaze, together with the movement of your body, may amplify your sense of presence, while the curving structures seem to dematerialise, becoming natural cultural landscape."

For *Maqam I, Maqam II, Maqam III* (2021) Lebanese artist Simone Fattal has created three monumental sculptures that appear to be geographical landmarks, making them in a blue-coloured granite with a manifold shape that can be perceived as a dune, a construction or a tent. These shapes, both natural and manmade, connect deeply with the archetypes of the landscape and history of Qatar.

Simone Fattal said of her work, "Realized in Brittany in blue granite, the sculptures are especially there to create a make believe, to make people do a double take: Are they pyramids of old? Are they tents suddenly fixed there for a long time? They are both. They will offer shelter to the passerby, and cool from the sun, and will talk to the imagination, as they represent a composite image of what we expect to find in the desert."

Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto's immersive installation *Slug Turtle, TemplEarth* (2022), a chant for the Earth, pays homage to the natural environment and creates a space for meditation, reflection and communion between visitors and the spirit of the desert. *Slug Turtle, TemplEarth* is a structure composed of 8 football goal frames in an octagonal ring, centered on a ceramic earth globe sculpture and surrounded by a vast surface made of white crocheted netting. The work continues the artist's ongoing inquiry into body space, balance and gravity, informed equally by energy and spirituality.

Neto said of his work, "*Slug Turtle, TemplEarth* invites people to inhabit its body, to sing, dance, sit down on its cushions, to feel and breathe in the energy, the force, the air, the beauty and the love of our wonderful paradise planet. The work creates a space to meditate about our present, past and future in a social-ecological network shared by humans, birds, bugs, plants and all other forms of life. Commissioned on the occasion of the 2022 World Cup, *Slug Turtle, TemplEarth* was conceived with a dream of inviting the leader of every participating country to meditate together in silence about the miracle of living in this cosmic mother Earth hug: our goal is the draw."

The installation of these important artworks brings to light the significance of Qatar's nearby heritage sites, which Qatar Museums is responsible for preserving and protecting. Al Zubarah, which was

named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2013 and is located approximately 100 km northwest of Doha, is the best-preserved example in the Gulf region of an 18th-19th century pearl merchant town. Unlike its contemporaries, it is largely intact and has not been lost beneath the region's vast modern cities. Ain Mohammad, an abandoned village located 3.5 km north of Al Zubarah, sits directly opposite the new Al Zubarah Visitor Centre and consists of 24 buildings including 2 mosques and a fort. The village has recently been consolidated in an effort to repurpose it as a site for heritage activities and traditional sports, among other programs.

In addition to the installations by Eliasson, Fattal and Neto, the nation's public spaces are being transformed into a vast outdoor art museum experience with artworks by Jeff Koons, Ugo Rondinone, KAWS, Yayoi Kusama, Katharina Fritsch, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Suki Seokyeong Kang, Shilpa Gupta, Shezad Dawood, Shua'a Ali, Faraj Daham, Shouq Al Mana, Monira Al Qadiri and Salman Al Malek, among other international, regional and Qatari artists. All of these works will be installed before the World Cup begins. Making art a part of everyday life, Qatar became one of the first countries in the Gulf to create a comprehensive contemporary public art programme. Qatar Museums is working with various entities on Qatar's public art programme including the Hamad International Airport, the Supreme Committee of Delivery and Legacy, and the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) to install artworks in a variety of both highly trafficked and unexpected public spaces designed to surprise and delight passersby.

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### **Qatar's Heritage Sites**

Qatar Museums strives to protect, preserve, and promote the history linked to heritage sites throughout the country. Recent work has focused on transforming expert research, produced by heritage professionals, into narratives that are engaging, appealing, and relevant to present and future visitors. Qatar Museums aims to ensure that the significance of each site is clearly communicated, accessible, relatable, and enjoyable to visitors and is working to re-activate sites in a way that encourages people to feel ownership, pride, and responsibility for their protection. Qatar's heritage buildings and sites, which bear testimony to eras from prehistory through the Middle Ages, the Islamic period, and beyond, include Al Zubarah, Qatar's first UNESCO World Heritage Site; Al Najadah District; the Barzan Towers; the heritage village of Al Jumail; the 19th century desert forts Al Rakayat and Al Thaqab; the Abbasid settlement of Murwab; the rock art site Al Jassasiya; and many more. The efforts of Qatar Museums include activating heritage spaces through adaptive reuse inspired by the narratives of the space and the ethos of the sites, and are supported by collaborations with government entities such as Qatar Tourism, Ministry of Municipality, Ashghal, and more.

### **About Qatar Museums**

Qatar Museums (QM), the nation's preeminent institution for art and culture, provides authentic and inspiring cultural experiences through a growing network of museums, heritage sites, festivals, public art installations, and programmes. QM preserves, restores, and expands the nation's cultural offerings and historical sites, sharing art and culture from Qatar, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region with the world and enriching the lives of citizens, residents, and visitors.

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and led by its Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, QM has made Qatar a vibrant centre for the arts, culture, and education in the Middle East and beyond. QM is integral to the goal of developing an innovative, diverse, and progressive nation, bringing people together to ignite new thinking, spark critical cultural conversations, educate and encourage environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, and amplify the voices of Qatar's people. Since its founding in 2005, QM has overseen the Museum of Islamic Art and MIA Park, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar, QM Gallery Al Riwaq, QM Gallery Katara, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, and Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar.

Through its newly created Creative Hub, QM also initiates and supports projects—such as the Fire Station Artist in Residence, the Tasweer Qatar Photo Festival and the creative hub for innovation, fashion and design M7—that nurture artistic talent and create opportunities to build a strong and sustainable cultural infrastructure.

Animating everything that Qatar Museums does is an authentic connection to Qatar and its heritage, a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and a belief in creating value through invention.

## About Qatar Creates

Qatar Creates curates, celebrates, and promotes cultural activities within Qatar. Working with partners in museums, film, fashion, hospitality, cultural heritage, performing arts, and the private sector in Qatar, the Qatar Creates platform amplifies the voice of Qatar's creative industries, directly connecting audiences to events.

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