

**Qatar’s Foreign Minister HE Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Minister of Youth and Sports, HE Salah bin Ghanim Al-Ali, Minister of Culture HE Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad bin Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani Attend Flag Plaza Launch**

***Qatar-MENASA 2022 Year of Culture Celebrates Flag Plaza with New Public Art Installation by Najla El-Zein***

***Community Days Festival Open at Flag Plaza from 5-15 October***

**4 October 2022 – Doha, Qatar** – Qatar’s Foreign Minister His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al Thani, accompanied by Minister of Youth and Sports, His Excellency Salah bin Ghanim Al-Ali and Minister of Culture His Excellency Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad bin Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani Tuesday attended the inauguration of Flag Plaza, a new community space initiated by the Years of Culture programme, which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. The annual Years of Culture programme is an international cultural exchange that deepens understanding between nations and their people first unveiled when Qatar won the bid to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.

The ceremony was attended by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, along with ambassadors of more than 100 nations.

The Qatar Armed Forces Band Regiment, a musical unit of the national Armed Forces, performed at the inauguration ceremony, which was followed by the raising of 119 flags representing nations with diplomatic missions accredited by the state, as well the European Flag, the United Nations Flag and the Gulf Cooperation Council Flag.

**Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums said**:“The Flag Plaza is an expansive symbol of the diverse community we welcome in Qatar and the rich connections made through cross-cultural interaction. Its meaning is beautifully embodied in Najla Al Zein’s stonework creation, which will be a permanent reminder of our global interconnectedness. I invite the people of Qatar and all who visit to make use of this new space, coming together in celebration of our common humanity.”

**Aisha Ghanem Al Attiya, Director of Cultural Diplomacy, Qatar Museums said**: “The Years of Culture initiative seeks to foster connections between people whenever possible. We believe that culture is one of the most effective tools to bring people closer together, encourage dialogue, and deepen understanding between nations. Flag Plaza will be one such physical location – where different cultures are celebrated, and people come together to make new connections.”

El Zein’s *Us, Her, Him* is a site-specific installation composed of a series of sculptural benches comprising more than 313 metres of hand-sculpted limestone. The installation is an abstract reflection on human interactions, which conveys the complexity and fundamental importance of human connections. Illustrating various modes and strata of interaction such as acquaintances, friendships, love, introversion, confidence, familiarity, fluidity and obstruction, *Us, Her, Him* reminds visitors that interconnectedness is the driving force of individual fulfilment. The sculptures, which are functional and interactive, are meant to bring women, men and children together while leading the way into the Flag Plaza.

**Najla El Zein said**: *“Us, Her, Him -* is an installation that reflects on human interaction and connection. It is composed of a series of sculptural benches spanning over three hundred and thirteen meters of hand-sculpted limestone, sited all around the Flag Plaza. This is a place of unification, and working in a public space brought a new layer of meaning to my practice. The sculptures, which are intended as functional seating, illustrate various modes of interaction: acquaintance, friendship, love, introversion, confidence, familiarity, fluidity and obstruction. While each piece has its own individuality, they come together as a collective. I hope that my work will be a meaning part of this new public space, celebrating the commonality and connections that exist between individuals of all ages and backgrounds."

Flag Plaza, located near the Museum of Islamic Art Park, will serve as a community gathering space and a location for festivals, celebrations and other events for the people of Qatar. The first of these events, open from 5 – 15 October 2022, will be the “Community Days Festival.” Many embassies are taking part in the “Community Days Festival” to celebrate the many cultures and people who call Qatar home. Each embassy will present a different programme of events, ranging from stage performances to exhibit panels with information on different countries.

For information on what’s happening at Flag Plaza during the “Community Days Festival,” check out the Years of Culture website at yearsofculture.qa and Instagram @yearsofculture.

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**About Years of Culture**

Culture is one of the most effective tools to bring people closer together, encourage dialogue, and deepen understanding between nations.

Under the leadership of its Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar Museums (QM) developed the annual “Years of Culture” initiative — an international cultural exchange that deepens understanding between nations and their people. Though formal programming lasts only one year, the ties of friendship that are strengthened and formed are long-lasting.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the 2022 Year of Culture will offer programming from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA).

The Qatar-MENASA Year of Culture 2022 will include countries and communities from: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Bhutan, Egypt, India, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Qatar-MENASA Year of Culture 2022 has been developed in collaboration with leading organizations in Qatar, including Doha Film Institute, Education Above All, Katara Cultural Village, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Charity, Qatar Football Association, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Museums, Qatar National Library, Qatar Tourism, Qatar Olympic Committee, Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, with assistance from Doha-based embassies of participating countries.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Turkey 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, and Qatar-USA 2021. Past sponsors include Vodafone, Qatar Gas, Shell, Ooredoo, Shangri-La Hotel and Resorts, Lulu Group International, Qatar Financial Centre, Qatar Petroleum, and ExxonMobil.

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**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, which is currently under development.

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.

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