**THE REIMAGINED MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART AND
QATAR’S FLAG PLAZA INAUGURATED BY QATAR FOREIGN MINISTER H.E. MOHAMMED BIN ABDULRAHMAN BIN JASSIM AL THANI**

*Museum of Islamic Art Reopens to the Public, Safar Special Exhibition Opens in MIA Park, and
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed leads flag raising ceremony in Flag Plaza*

**04 October 2022, Doha** – Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al Thani and Qatar Museums Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar Museums today reopened the iconic Museum of Islamic Art, following a year-long facilities enhancement project and the reimagination and reinstallation of its permanent collection galleries. The inauguration ceremony was attended by diplomats and cultural emissaries representing all nations of the region that together are celebrated as part of the Qatar-MENASA 2022 Year of Culture. 

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al Thani – accompanied by Minister of Culture His Excellency Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad bin Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, Her Excellency Minister of Social Development and Family Her Excellency Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser Al-Misnad and Minister of Youth and Sports His Excellency Salah bin Ghanim Al-Ali Minister of Culture – also inaugurated Flag Plaza, a new community space initiated by the Years of Culture programme, 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™. Flag Plaza, located near the MIA Park, will serve as a community gathering space and a location for festivals, celebrations and other events for the people of Qatar.

“It is with immense pride that we reintroduce the Museum of Islamic Art, inviting the community to discover the reimagined museum, and newcomers, including the many visitors who are coming to attend the FIFA World Cup, to experience it for the first time. The 2008 opening of the Museum of Islamic Art was a transformational moment for Qatar, marking the nation’s emergence as a new global cultural destination and paving the way for establishing other major museums and cultural institutions in the region. We look forward to the institution’s next chapter, which comes on the heels of Qatar Creates, a wide-ranging initiative which showcases and promotes the very best cultural experiences Qatar has to offer to help enhance the lives of all who reside in or visit the country. So many people came together to make today a reality, I thank them for their support and commitment to bringing our culture and history to the heart of our society,” said **Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums**.

**Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa continued,** “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.

**The Reimagined Museum of Islamic Art**

The Museum of Islamic Art, an architectural tour de force designed by internationally acclaimed Pritzker Prize-winning architect I.M. Pei (1917-2019), was the first institution opened by Qatar Museums in 2008 under the leadership of Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa. Prominently positioned on its own reclaimed island on the Corniche, specifically chosen by Pei, the Museum is a beacon for Islamic arts and a platform for international dialogue and exchange bridging past and present, East and West.

The reimagining of MIA’s collection galleries introduces a comprehensive visitor trail, creates expanded interpretive materials to help contextualise the masterworks, and provides new mobile and child-friendly resources to make the Museum more accessible for families and younger guests. The galleries are organised according to broad historical and cultural themes, periods and geography, and explore the great traditions of Islamic craftsmanship. MIA also introduces a new section on Islam in Southeast Asia with focus on the connection between different cultures through exhibits on the trade of commodities and the exchange of ideas across the Islamic world and beyond. The enhanced and expanded experience eases visitor flow to serve a larger audience with a reframed entrance and upgraded cafés and retail locations. All improvements to the building are in keeping with I.M. Pei’s vision. MIA once again collaborated with the French interior design and architecture firm first retained by I.M. Pei, Wilmotte & Associés, throughout the reinstallation process.

MIA Director Dr. Julia Gonnella said, “I am honoured to lead this extraordinary institution into its next chapter. The extensive enhancement introduces an entirely new storyline that takes visitors on a comprehensive journey that provides a meaningful and enriching experience for children and families to explore the rich vast history of the Islamic world through our unparalleled collection.”

Flag Plaza:

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.

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.

**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.”

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."

# # #

**Museum of Islamic Art**Founded in 2008, the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) was one of the first projects initiated by QM. Designed by the renowned Chinese American architect I. M. Pei, the MIA is a globally acclaimed museum that stands majestically on Doha’s Corniche, with panoramic views of the city’s waterfront. The museum showcases Qatar’s world-class collections of Islamic art spanning some 1,400 years. Representing the full scope of Islamic art from the 7th to the 20th centuries, the MIA collection includes manuscripts, ceramics, metal, glass, ivory, textiles, wood, and precious stones. The works have been collected from three continents, including countries across the Middle East, and reaching as far as Spain and China. MIA presents a changing programme of exhibitions illustrating the heritage of the Islamic world, as well as extensive educational activities for school children and families, making the museum a vital part of the community. The MIA has become a popular museum in the region and internationally, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Dr. Julia Gonnella has served as director of the museum since 2017.

**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.

Follow and tag Qatar-MENASA 2022 Year of Culture on: @yearsofculture, #yearsofculture #QatarMENASA2022

**About Qatar Museums**

**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.

**Press Contacts:**

Mohammed Khames Faraj mfaraj@qm.org.qa +974 5592 0088

Kerry Henrico khenrico@qm.org.qa +974 7041 3862

**Image Credit:** Museum of Islamic Art, reflected in the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Courtesy of the Museum of Islamic Art.