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The **Emerging** **Cultural Center** of the **Arab World**



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Qatar is in a race with its Gulf neighbours to be the ascendant arts and culture reference point in the Arab world. While Qatar has managed to up its national pedigree in the arts and culture arena within the region over the last 10 years by utilizing its vast resources as one of the world’s strongest economies (in 2011 it registered almost 20 percent economic growth rate, the fastest in the world and the world’s highest GDP per capita rating), no amount of money guarantees supremacy in the race for top-billing as the regional arts and culture center.



As part of the QNV2030, the Qatar Tourism Authority has been tasked with pursuing niche markets like cultural tourism rather than gearing itself as a mass tourist destination

However, Qatar's leaders have thrown their weight behind a longterm plan – called the National Vision 2030 – that includes significant resources being allocated to the development of arts and culture. The logic behind this strategy, according to Qatari heir apparent HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, is to “promote the diversification of Qatar’s economy in order to lay the groundwork for a productive and creative society that will create new opportunities for Qatari youth,” presumably long after Qatar’s hydrocarbon wealth has run its course.

In 2010, Qatar’s capital Doha was awarded the Arab Capital of Culture under the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Cultural Capitals Program. The program, initiated in 1996, was designed “to promote and celebrate Arab culture and encourage cooperation in the Arab region,” and in Qatar’s case, the appointment drew extraordinary attention to Doha – a city that has been the beneficiary of huge state-funded development projects for cultural tourist initiatives.

According to the National Development Strategy 2011 - 2016, the Government

funds set aside for developing Qatar’s tourism infrastructure is around \$17 billion, and as part of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) has been tasked with pursuing niche markets rather than gearing itself as a mass tourist destination. “We see many visitors coming to Qatar looking for business opportunities,” QTA chairman Ahmed Al Nuaimi said, adding it is not uncommon for these visitors to extend their stays because of the growing offering of cultural attractions that Qatar has to offer.

Cultural Tourism

For most of the last 3 decades, Qatar’s past cultural heritage was the highlight of its cultural tourist industry, and played heavily in the development of Qatar’s cultural landmarks. The National Museum complex is one clear example of this commitment to Qatar’s past. It was opened in 1975 in the restored former palace of Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani, and in 1980 was awarded the prestigious Agha Khan award for its commitment to the rehabilitation of Islamic architecture. Currently, the National Museum is being expanded as a

portent of things to come, with the former palace acting as the cultural heart of a new complex designed by famed French architect Jean Nouvel - scheduled to open in December 2014.

The Al Wakrah Museum on the east coast of Qatar and the Al Koot Fort Museum Doha, are both cultural landmarks that have traditionally attracted international and domestic interest in Qatar's past as a pearl fishing trade center and in the country's Bedouin roots. Additionally, forts and castles from Qatar's mid-19th century like the Al Ghuwair Castle, the Al Thughab desert fort and the Barzan Tower have gone through years of restoration to provide unique insight into Qatar's relations with former European colonial powers and other rival Arab cultures.

But, HE Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, chairperson of the Qatar Museum Authority notes, "What has been achieved in the past must be transformed into a living future."

And Qatar is increasingly attracting tourists with an expanding list of state-funded and privately owned galleries and cultural institutions like Souq Waqif Art Centre, located in Doha's old market area (Souq Waqif), one of the country's most popular tourist destinations. The site anchors the fledgling gallery scene with Al Markhiya gallery being the country's most prestigious art gallery space - host to some of the most ground-breaking private gallery exhibitions in the MENA region since its doors opened three years ago.

Of course Qatar's own connection to its Islamic cultural roots are on full display at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) designed by world renowned Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei who was coaxed out of retirement to design the space. The MIA has been called by the NY Times "an art museum of imposing simplicity," and has lured international visitors back in droves since its unveiling in November 2008 - not least because of its permanent collection of 6,000 Islamic art pieces that took more than 30 years to accumulate.

From Warhol to Cai Guo-Qiang: the Al-Thani's Shock the Art World

Where the purchase of art is concerned in the Arab world, the Qatar royal family has thrown down the gauntlet with no less than \$430 million spent on "cultural exports" in



the last 5 years. This has meant spending hundreds of millions of dollars on Arabic art and on the work of world-renowned artists like Warhol, Koons, and Rothko. And with this the Al-Thani family has thrown their own personal reputations into the mix in what one prominent arts and culture journalist said was a "relentless pursuit of cultural initiatives and partnerships."

Luckily, Qatar's cultural stewards are truly tastemakers in their fields. The daughter of the Emir, Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has been universally praised in the art world for her contribution to Qatar's emerging arts and culture scenes. She not only helped develop the Doha Tribeca Film Festival that partnered with film legend Robert DeNiro's Tribeca Enterprises, but she was voted Art & Auction magazine's number one most influential person in the art world in 2011.

Equally influential in Qatar's emerging art scene is Sheikh Hassan bin Khalifa Al-Thani, a self-identified artist himself who founded the Mathaf, known in English as the Arab Museum of Modern Art. As Sheikh Hassan told ArtInfo, "In 2003, I wanted to take practical measures to assure the permanence of my (personal) collection," begun in the 1980s, "so that it could become an accessible resource — and especially an educational resource — for Qatar."

The Mathaf opened in December 2010 under Sheikh Hassan's guidance, and represents an integral collaboration between up-and-coming cultural institutions like



MIA Park

Richard Serra's First Work in the Middle East

According to the QMA Chairwoman Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the QMA lauds the MIA Park as a significant cultural destination that "will be a dynamic place of learning and exploration" for children and for art enthusiasts alike.

Situated on nearly 280,000 square-meters of land, MIA Park is designed by Pei Partnership Architects of New York and will eventually feature 5 kilometers of lighted pedestrian pathways shaded by native palm trees.

Without a doubt the most important contribution to the Park is the inclusion of a sculpture by famed American sculptor, Richard Serra. "The MIA Park is host to an extraordinary work by Serra, one of the leading sculptors of our time. Like the Museum of Islamic Art itself, Serra's sculpture will serve as a beacon for the arts in Qatar," Sheikha Al-Thani said.

The Serra sculpture featured in the Park is his first public artwork in the Middle East. As he explains; "It is my hope that the piece," a vertical steel sculpture of monumental proportions, "will provide both a public place and private space for people to gather and experience the narrow, vertical, open column in relation to themselves, the MIA, the city of Doha, the surrounding sea and the sky as seen through the opening at the top of the sculpture."

The Park is located along the Doha Corniche and will also offer paddle boat rentals from a small cove in Doha Bay, as well as offering refreshments from a cafe and various kiosks that will line the pedestrian pathway. Among the year-round activities that are planned for the park are film screenings, sporting events, art workshops and storytelling programs.

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The Doha Film Institute (DFI)
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organisation established to
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under one banner. With film
funding, education, production,
and the annual Doha Tribeca
Film Festival, DFI aims to build
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one which aims to empower
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DFI also invests in a slate
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opportunities between MENA
countries and the rest of the world.



'Rain',
Qatar
DFI Production,
Animated Short Film



'Omar Killed Me',
Morocco / France
DTFF 2011 Award Winner,
Best Narrative Director, Roschdy Zem



'What's your story',
Palestine, Qatar
DFI Grantee



'Where Do We Go Now?',
Lebanon / Egypt / France / Italy



'Normal',
Algeria / France
DFI Grantee and DTFF 2011 Award Winner, Best Narrative Feature



'The Three Disappearances of Soad Hossni',
Lebanon / Egypt / United Arab Emirates
DTFF 2011 Award Winner, Best Director, Ikhfifa'at Hossni Ali-Thalathat



'The Virgin, The Copys and Me',
Egypt / Qatar / France
DFI Grantee and DTFF 2011 Award Winner, Best Documentary Film,
Official Selection, Berlinale 2012, Panorama



'Playground Stories',
Morocco / France
DFI Grantee



'Window',
Iraq, Qatar
DFI Grantee



'Bastardo',
Tunisia / Qatar / France
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Qatar hosted the Old Vic Theatre Company's production of *Richard III* in late December 2011 starring Hollywood acting legend Kevin Spacey and directed by famed British playwright and Academy Award winning film-director Sam Mendes

Qatar Foundation and Qatar Museum Authority. It boasts perhaps the richest permanent collection of contemporary Arab art in the region with more than 6,000 pieces of art spanning the last 150 years. And like its founder Sheikh Hassan, the Mathaf has been unafraid to represent itself as an evolving cultural institution whose future is attached to the country's own commitment to artistic institution-building.

In its three inaugural exhibitions – *Sajji: A Century of Modern Art*, *Interventions and Told/Untold/Retold* the Mathaf managed to display an evolving tapestry of contemporary Arab art history, and in the final exhibition of 2011 – *Swalif* (August – October 2011) the museum showcased more than 4-decades of art work from Qatar's most important artists like Ali Hassan, Faraj Daham, Salman Al-Malik, and Yousef Ahmad, considered the founding father of Qatar's contemporary art scene.

Mathaf's current show *Saraab* ("mirage" Dec 2011 – May 26, 2012) is the first solo exhibition in the Middle East of famed

Chinese artist Cia Guo-Qiang. Curated by Wassan al-Khudhairi, the show features over 50 of Cuo-Qiang's works including 17 newly commissioned pieces that highlight the hidden connections between Asian and Middle Eastern cultures dating back to the Silk Road.

Asserting the State's Guidance: Qatar Museum Authority

In late 2005, Qatar Museum Authority (QMA) was formed to manage the resources of all of the museums in the State of Qatar. "Like an evolving lever, it moves to mobilize, educate, and connect various publics, at both the national and international levels," Sheikh Hassan said, adding, "with multiple facets, its plan of action celebrates Qatari identity, builds bridges between cultures and welcomes visitors from all over the world to Doha." (ArtInfo).

Since the formation of the QMA, Qatar has been a primary leader in the region with regards to state-supported new museum

ventures, and has been the vanguard institution in proposing laws related to cultural preservation within Qatar.

Ruling Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, himself a world-renowned art collector for decades, long envisioned a Qatar with direct impact on the art world, and according to insiders, part of his vision included the purchase of Christies, the world's most famous auction house. But instead of acquiring Christies, in June of 2011, Qatar poached Edward Dolman, Christie's former chairman to be a part of the QMA.

Dolman, who led Christie's to a record \$5.2 billion in total sales in 2010, joined the QMA board of trustees, and became Executive Director for Sheikha Mayassa's QMA office. Working alongside Dolman is the QMA executive director, Roger Mandle, art historian and former head of the world-renowned Rhode Island School of Design. Together, they are now in the driver's seat of perhaps the most ambitious arts building campaign in the Arab world.

A list of museums the Qatar National Museum administers includes, Qatar's Weaponry Museum, Ethnographic Museum, Al Wakrah Museum, Al Khor Museum, the Ethnographic Museum, and of course the kingdoms' jewel pieces – the I.M. Pei-designed Museum of Islamic Art, the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the Jean Nouvel designed National Museum of Qatar.

As Dolman with the QMA said in *The Art Newspaper(dot)com*, "Qatar is looking to deliver a series of exciting cultural projects in time for the World Cup in 2022."

It Takes a Village to Build the Art: Katara Cultural Village

Added to this growing list of cultural landmarks in Qatar is the Katara Cultural Village Foundation, which opened during one of Qatar's premier cultural events, the Doha Tribeca Film Festival in 2010. Katara features a huge complex of innovative architectural spaces with performance halls, galleries and a 5,000 seat Roman-style amphitheater.

In October 2011, the Cultural Village opened the Katara Art Centre (KAC) as part of Katara's long term vision to "educate, entertain and demonstrate the importance of cultural exchange." The KAC is part of a larger Qatari initiative to house artists from through-



out the Arab world, bringing their studios to Qatar to advance their own work in tandem with initiatives that allow these visiting artists the chance to pass on their arts knowledge through active dialog with local artists.

As Abdul Rahman Al Khulaifi, President of the Katara Foundation describes, the Foundation is a place to "nurture local talent, provide them with a platform to showcase their artistic abilities and the tools to develop their talents."

Currently, the Katara Cultural Village is host to professional organizations like the Qatari Society for Engineers, as well as the most significant arts and culture institutions like Qatar's Fine Arts Society, the Qatar Visual Arts Centre, the Qatar Photographic Society, the Qatar Childhood Cultural Centre, the Theatre Society and Qatar Music Academy.

Passing the Baton: the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra's Ascendancy in the Region

As with the arts scene, the Katara Cultural Village has become the premiere centre for the performing arts in Qatar. Situated in what is known as Building 16 of the Cultural Village is the state-of-the-art Qatar Opera House and the smaller Drama Theatre. These are the primary performance spaces



of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra which will be entering its 4th season in 2012 that has welcomed the likes of 22-year old French piano virtuoso Lise de la Salle, and resident composer and Arabic music legend Marcel Khalife.

The QPO is a young orchestra made up of more than 100 musicians hailing from 30 different nations. Combining the best of Eastern and Western musical traditions, the QPO has been under the musical direction of such famed conductors as Maestro Lorin Maazel, former New York Philharmonic Music Director (2002-2009), Marck Minkowski, Dmitri Ktjenko, Nanshe Gum



Han-Na Chang, and Nader Bbassi current Artistic Director & Principal Conductor of the Cairo Opera Orchestra, and Musical Director of the QPO from 2009-2011.

The 2011 – 2012 season will be under the musical direction of Michalis Economou, the permanent conductor of the Athens Symphony Orchestra, and will include 45 public performances, including performances of Marcel Khalife's Kanoun Concert, Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet and Philharmonic violinist Maias Alyamani's Around the Arab world in 80 Minutes.

According to Kurt Meister, the QPO's Executive Director and former Managing Director of the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Broadcast Company – recognized as one of the top five orchestras in the world under Meister's tenure – with

each season the QPO grows as an ensemble. Guest performers in 2012 will include Egyptian composer-pianist Omar Khairat, Feras Charestan, and Simon Chaheen performing his own Concerto for Oud. Nader Abbassi will also be returning in 2012 conducting Rahmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto and opening the Katara Cultural Foundation's Roman-style Amphitheater with a new production of Aida in March 2012.

What has made the QPO's efforts even more impressive is their commitment in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage and the newly launched Qatar Music Academy. Together they hope to bring music to Qatar's schools as a means of promoting music literacy. Started in January 2011, the non-profit Qatar Foundation helped found the Qatar Music Academy, which aims to

promote and preserve Arabic musical traditions centred in and around the Arabian Gulf. According to Dr. Abdul Ghafour Al Heeti, the Principal and Acting Director of the QMA, the music academy was set up to increase appreciation of music in Qatar, and to place Qatar in position as "champions of music excellence in the wider region."

Break a Leg: the Growing Influence of Qatar's Theatre Scene

Qatar's Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage launched the first Doha Festival for Professional Dramatists in March 2011, in coordination with International World Theatre Day. According to the ministry, it is yet another initiative aimed at developing the theatrical scene in Qatar and the region by treating contemporary intellectual trends and providing support for state of the art productions. As well, the festival aims to identify that next generation of Qatari dramatists who need only gain access to technical and educational opportunities to advance theatre arts in the country and region at large.

In December 2011, the Qatar National Convention Centre opened its doors in Doha's famed Education City – boasting unparalleled cutting edge performance facilities that are architectural standouts and which are considered among the "world-first green technology venues" - with the entire convention centre built to the gold certification of the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

The inaugural performance at the QNCC's 2,300-seat technologically unrivalled theatre space was a massive production of Shakespeare's historical play Richard III in late December 2011. This collaboration between London's prestigious Old Vic Theatre Company, BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music), and the UK production company Neal Street starred Hollywood acting legend Kevin Spacey (current artistic director of the Old Vic), and was directed by Sam Mendes, famed British playwright and Academy Award winning film-director most known for his 2000 Best Picture Oscar for the film American Beauty.

Commissioned by the Doha Film Institute and co-hosted by the Middle East Theatre Academy, more than 4,000 people attended the 2 nights of sold out performances with



Qatar's Art Buying Spree

Qatar has made no secret of its plan to have one of the most impressive permanent art collections in the world, and in June, the prestigious art magazine ARTINFO reported that Qatar had risen atop the art world as the single largest procurer of modern art - having gone on a buying frenzy that has totalled no less than \$430 million since 2005.

This entire art buying spree is set amidst the backdrop of the Qatar Museum Authority's unprecedented boon in the design and construction of new government-funded art spaces, including the Museum of Islamic Art (2008), the inauguration of the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art (2010), and the opening of the Jean Nouvel designed National Museum of Qatar in 2014.

While it is indisputable that Qatar has the purchasing power to enter the art market with near unprecedented capital, it would be a simplified explanation to say that this is happening without clear direction. Qatar's cultural tastemakers like Sheikh Saud bin Mohammed bin Ali Al-Thani have long recognized the need to expand the kingdom's cultural influences in a rarified world that has seen Western countries monopolizing the art market for decades.

From the 1990's to the early 2000's Sheikh Saud bin Mohammed bin Ali Al-Thani was one of the world's most voracious art collectors - in both Islamic and contemporary western art buying circles. According to Artnews, he is one of the world's top ten art collectors, having spent more money on art than any other collector in a 12-month period last year.

Another key player in Qatar's art buying spree has been Philippe Segalot, whose Paris, New York City partnership Giraud, Pissarro and Segalot has agent-ed the sales of influential collections like those of the late filmmaker Claude Berri, whose paintings by Robert Rymann, Ad Reinhardt and Lucio Fontana are said to have equaled more than 50 million euros.

From an institutional perspective, the torch has been passed to the next generation of collectors in the Qatari royal family. Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammad bin Ali Al-Thani is the founder of Mathaf, and Sheikhha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Chairperson of the Qatar Museum Authority.

critics universally praising the production as "world class." As well, Doha joined an illustrious list of commissioning cities including Athens, Istanbul, Madrid, Singapore and Sydney, and in keeping with Qatar's vision of passing on the artistic knowledge to the next generation, DFI partnered with the Kevin Spacey Foundation to offer a series of acting workshops at two local schools.

The Next Generation

As the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 clearly indicates, the next 5 years are key in the implementation of the Qatar National Vision 2030, not the least because the country's current place as a cultural trendsetter in the region can only be assured through the continued diligence of its leadership.

While the United Arab Emirates struggles to complete hyper-ambitious projects like the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim Museum - the cornerstone of the UAE's Saadiyat Island project - Qatar has managed to continue its move forward at a steady pace where arts and culture institution-building is concerned.

The opening of the Museum of Islamic Art in 2008, the Mathaf in 2010, the Qatar National Convention Center in 2011, the MIA Park in 2011 and planned openings of the Katara Cultural Center's Roman-style Amphitheater in the Spring of 2012 and the Qatar National Museum in 2014 are all testaments to Qatar's commitment to provide institutional anchors for future cultural growth.

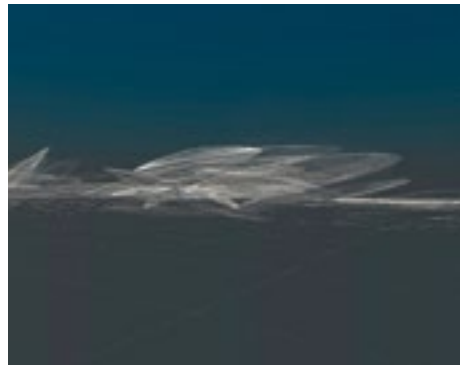
» The Museum of Islamic Art has emerged as one of the most encyclopedic collections of Islamic art in the world
The NY Times

And there is no doubt international recognition will continue to grow for Qatar's arts and culture scene not least because of partnerships struck with prestigious art and cultural institutions like the Rifksmuseum Amsterdam Projects, and because the country's primary cultural leaders like Sheikhha Mayassa and Sheikh Hassan have a finger on the pulse of the next generation of artistic trends in ways that distinguish Qatar from its neighbours.

That being said the government's massive resource allocations towards the arts and culture scene in Qatar will have little future if the local population does not realize or take advantage of the opportunities being offered. With programs like the Qatar Music Academy, the Katara Art Centre and the Al Markhiya Gallery's 40 Minus Program (which seeks out artists under the age of 40), there is hope that the next generation of Qataris will be in place to take the mantle of their forbearers.



Jean Nouvel's New Masterpiece The National Museum of Qatar



Mathaf: Deepening the Conversation about Arab Art and Helping Advance the Creativity of the Arab World.

Qatar inaugurated its Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in December, in 2010, occupying a former school building in Doha's Education City and showcasing no less than 4 renowned exhibitions in the year that it has been open to the public including the critically acclaimed inaugural Sajjil ("Act of recording") exhibition and the recent Cai Guo-Qiang exhibition, Saraab ("mirage").

The space, re-designed by the French architect Jean-Francois Bodin, is home to more than 6,000 works of modern Arab art that span the 1840s to the present. It is the brainchild of the QMA Vice-Chairperson, Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Al-Thani, who had for more than two decades envisioned a museum that could be both a one-of-a-kind exhibition space for contemporary Arab art, as well as a center for global dialog, research and scholarship.

"Now, with the opening of Mathaf, we make Qatar the place to see, explore and discuss the creations of Arab artists of the modern era and our own time," QMA Chairperson Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa explains.

Mathaf's 5,500 sq meters temporary home includes galleries on two floors, a café, and a museum shop. Museum visitors are treated to a large terraced seating area for the cafe that is arrived at through an entrance that also serves as a screen-wrapped scaffolding-style façade that the museum can project imagery and video works on at night. In keeping with its commitment to education the Mathaf also features a research library and a wing devoted to educational initiatives.

According to the QMA, "Inside Mathaf, the flexible space has an informal and contemporary aesthetic. Like the collection that it houses, this temporary home expresses a balance between the old and the new."

The building at its core is designed to connect collectors, curators and their audiences that H.E. Sheikh Hassan says will inevitably, "deepen the conversation about Arab art and help advance the creativity of the Arab world."

The desert swallows everything in the end. It's a process that ebbs and flows with the ages, and is as fluid and permanent as the sand itself. The local Bedouin traditions in Qatar have always understood the delicate balance of living in such a harsh environment, but as their culture has become increasingly urbanized, the need to maintain cultural connections to this fading world have become an increasing priority for Qatar's leaders.

In keeping with that concept, the Qatar Museum Authority (QMA) teamed up with Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel to present a masterpiece of cultural symbolism in practical form: the National Museum of Qatar.

It's ground-breaking 1.5 million square-foot design at the south end of the Corniche in Doha, is an extension of the desert - with interpenetrating disks that define the walls, roofs and floors of the building all tilting in what Nouvel says is a "bladelike petal of the desert rose, a mineral formation of crystallized sand found in the briny layer just beneath the desert's surface."

The 430,000 square feet of indoor space will house a variety of exhibits all intended to celebrate Qatari cultural traditions and give Qataris the chance to learn more about their societal foundations and regional roots, and learn about the formation of Qatar's earliest cities in tandem with historical, material and cultural heritage symbols that will be showcased in the carefully curated exhibitions.

Built around the Fareq Al Salatah Palace that served as a heritage museum for 26 years, the National Museum will also have a 1.2 million square foot landscaped park that showcases the flora of the Qatari desert. And the entire complex will be a living experience that as Nouvel states, "will communicate through high-definition cinema, incorporating visitors' movements into its museography."

Aligned with one of Qatar National Vision 2030 pillars - sustainability, the entire complex will seek LEED Silver certification, relying mostly on traditional building practices to create shady and cool areas with thermal buffer zones.

"This museum is a modern-day caravan-serai. From here you leave the desert behind, returning with treasured images that remain engraved on your memory. The National Museum of Qatar will become the voice of a culture, delivering a message of modernity, metamorphosis and the beauty that happens when the desert meets the sea," concludes Nouvel.

Qatar's Cultural Renaissance

By Dr. Karen Exell & Dr. Robert Carter



photo credit: Engel & Völkers

UCL Qatar academic staff Dr Robert Carter, Senior Lecturer in Arab Archaeology and Dr Karen Exell, Lecturer in Museum Studies explore the cultural renaissance taking place within Qatar.

Over the last decade the oil- and gas-rich country of Qatar with a visionary Emir, H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, has begun investing heavily in culture, heritage, the arts and education, in an impressive cultural renaissance. During this period, Qatar, a tiny country on a peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, has established a number of world-class museums, supported the excavation of significant archaeological sites, and developed an Education City that includes representative campuses of the best universities in the world.

Much more than the Museum of Islamic Art

Perhaps best known of Qatar's cultural institutions is the Museum of Islamic Art, opened by the Emir in 2008 and housed in a stunning building designed by the iconic architect I. M. Pei. The building takes as its inspiration the austere forms of medieval Islamic architecture, drawing directly on the 9th Century Ibn Tulun mosque in Cairo. The collections themselves represent a global Islamic heritage and place Qatar at its heart.

At Mathaf: The Arab Museum of Modern Art, artworks from the 19th century onwards, with a special emphasis on Arab artists, can be viewed in a contemporary building designed by the French architect Jean-François Bodin. Mathaf showcases the collection created over the course of twenty years by H.E. Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali Al-Thani, who also acts as the Vice-Chair of the Qatar Museums Authority.

These museums demonstrate the drive to locate Qatar at the heart of Arab culture, and to celebrate and promote this culture to the wider world. They offer an example of the strategic vision of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, which emphasises the significance of Arab culture at the heart of the booming economies of the Gulf. Alongside the development of an international cultural profile, local Qatar heritage is also celebrated: the National Museum of Qatar is slated to open in 2014, showcasing the archaeology and history of Qatar from the Neolithic period to the present day, and the Doha Cultural Village (Katara) offers traditional-style architecture in a stunning sea front location, with demonstrations of pearling and marine heritage activities.



In November 2011, for five days, the Cultural Village hosted the first Dhow exhibition, offering access to a collection of sailing vessels from a two hundred year period, an exhibition attended by school children, foreign-workers and visitors as well as Qataris and a sure sign of the deep interest in, and appreciation of, local Qatari heritage.

UCL: Education and Culture, Hand in Hand

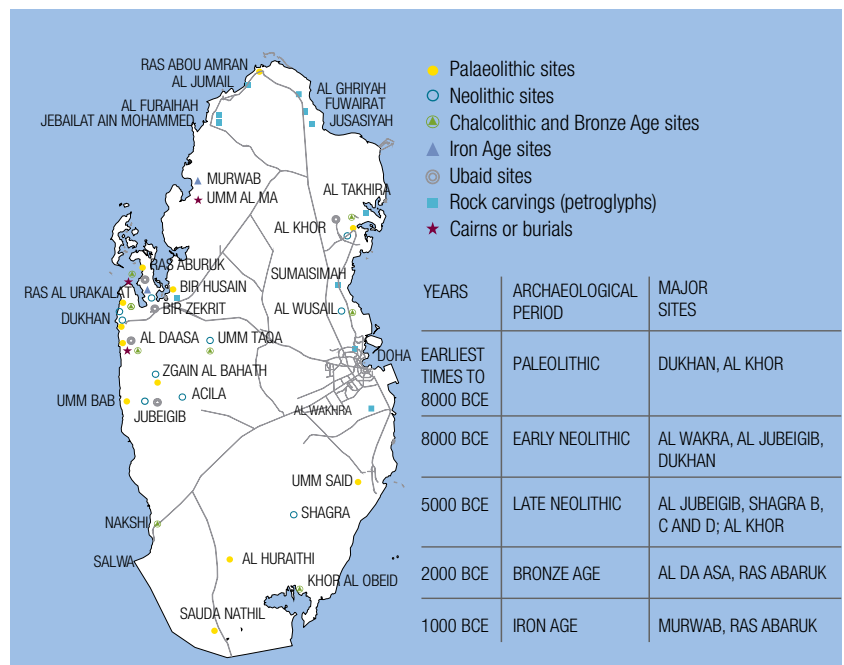
The vision of His Highness the Emir and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned recognises that investment in education and training within Qatar will allow cultural development to flourish. This investment in culture and education echoes the cultural initiatives of the golden age of Islamic learning, perhaps best exemplified by the Abbasid court, when the Caliphs gathered scholars and polymaths from around the Middle East and Mediterranean, of diverse faith and nationality, to preserve, translate and further the arts and learning of antiquity.

Today Qatar can offer a world class education to Qatari and international students through the establishment of Education City, which is home to six US universities, one French, one Qatari and now one British; teaching programs in, amongst other things, Fine Arts, Medicine, Engineering, Business, Islamic Studies and Cultural Heritage. Additionally, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, a multidisciplinary and research-led institution will soon open its doors.

As part of the country's cultural renaissance, Her Highness, Sheikha Moza invited the London university, UCL, a world-leader in teaching and research in the ancient world and heritage studies, to establish a campus to teach archaeology, conservation and museum studies, working closely with Qatar Foundation (founded in 1995) and Qatar Museums Authority (founded in 2005).

In mid-2011 the first operational and academic staff arrived in Doha to set up the teaching and research programs, and two-year MA courses in Archaeology of the Arab and Islamic World, and Conservation and Museum Studies, will be offered from September 2012, as well as short courses for heritage professionals as continuing professional development. The MA course on Archaeology of the Arab and Islamic world will run through the key stages of Middle Eastern civilization before and during the Islamic period. Among other issues it will explore the origins of civilization and the enduring legacy that ancient and more recent Middle Eastern cultures have bequeathed us, in art, architecture, philosophy, science and literature. The MA course in Conservation and Museum Studies offers training in preventive and interventive conservation, research into materials and technologies, museum, heritage site and exhibition management and development, digital heritage and education and outreach, as well as exploring the ethics and principles that lie behind such work. UCL also brings its expertise in archaeological science and materials to Doha in the form of the Director of UCL Qatar, Professor Thilo Rehren, and the establishment of cutting edge laboratories at the UCL Qatar campus.

Qatar's commitment to the study of the past and its cultural legacy is also evident in its sponsorship of numerous archaeological excavations, particularly over the past three years. These include a major excavation at the Islamic site of Zubara, currently one of the two largest archaeological projects in the Middle East, and jointly run by QMA and the University of Copenhagen. The site is currently the subject of a UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination, as befits the best-preserved major maritime trading town of the 18th-19th centuries in the Gulf. Although now in ruins, Zubara exemplifies an urban pearling and trading heritage that has now been lost to development in all other countries of the region. Other excavations are taking place at Ruwaydha (University of Lampeter), another seafaring centre on Qatar's north coast, of earlier date than Zubara. The same team



has been exploring a Late Islamic site at Ras Ushayriq. Meanwhile, a Birmingham University team is busy constructing the Qatar National Historic Environment Record in conjunction with the Department of Antiquities, making innovative use of aerial and satellite imagery, as well as conducting underwater investigations, and excavating a prehistoric site at Wadi Debayan. UCL Qatar is keen to start research excavations of its own in Qatar, which will also serve as training grounds for future generations of local and international archaeologists, conservators and museum specialists.

Very Rich Heritage

Because of such archaeological work, which began in Qatar with a Danish expedition in the late 1950s, we have learned that Qatar has a long and varied archaeological and cultural record. It seems that Qatar was most densely populated during the Stone Age (so-called Neolithic period), and during the last three centuries. During the Neolithic, between 8000 and 5500 years ago, centuries of wetter climate caused the peninsula to become a vast green plain when bands of herders and fishers roamed the country. In more recent times, a boom in the international demand for pearls between the 18th and early 20th centuries caused people to settle permanently in towns on the coast, most notably Zubara and Doha, and devote themselves to the pearl fishery, also partaking in the maritime trading activities that flourished as improved global communications drew the Gulf region ever more closely into the international economy.

During the intervening centuries, however, the country was not empty of people. Archaeologists have discovered evidence for Bronze Age inhabitants who specialised in making “Royal Purple” dye from a certain species of sea shell, remains of a Hellenistic settlement on the west coast, perhaps an outpost of the Greeks who followed in the footsteps of Alexander, and of nomadic tribes who buried their warriors in burial mounds during the centuries leading up to the coming of Islam. By the time of the Abbasids a series of settlements is found, the best known and most extensively excavated site being Murwab, an inland settlement with a rich array of luxury international ceramics, which probably partook in the caravan trade to the interior. Historical evidence suggests that pastoralists and pearl fishers were here during the later medieval period too, and archaeological evidence for this period will surely emerge as excavations progress. Much remains to be discovered, and UCL Qatar intends to be a part of this process.

Alongside great benefits such as the sponsorship of culture, education and research, one of the inevitable results of rapid development is the threat posed to cultural heritage, not only in the case of archaeological sites swept away by buildings, urban expansion and infrastructure work, but also traditional architecture, and even memories and understanding of the past ways of life.

UCL Qatar therefore also hopes to contribute to the preservation of Qatar’s record of the past. We hope that this

will not only take the form of practical work by staff and students in the preservation and conservation of historic buildings and objects, in collaboration with the Qatar National Museum, Antiquities Department and Ministry of Culture and Heritage, but also in the promotion of public understanding and appreciation of Qatar’s history and heritage, not only to the benefit of scholars and researchers but for all Qataris, international residents and visitors. The appreciation of and care for Qatar’s and the World’s cultural heritage are central to the country’s vision of its future, and UCL Qatar is proud to make its own significant contribution to the cultural renaissance currently experienced by the Gulf region.



Dr. Karen Exell

Karen has worked for over 15 years in museums and heritage in the UK and Egypt. She has a BA in Egyptology from Oxford University and a PhD in Egyptology from the University of Durham. She has worked predominantly in university museums, curating ancient Egypt and associated collections at the universities of Durham and Manchester as well as teaching Egyptology, Archaeology and Museology. Karen is also a Trustee (and has served as Chair of the Board) of the Egypt Exploration Society, and has worked with this organisation developing archaeological field schools in Egypt.

Karen’s research interests include the reception and perception of Egypt in the West, museums and the creation of knowledge in relation to heritage and archaeology, and the impact of museums on cultural identity. She is currently developing a project to evaluate the impact of the rapid development of museums and heritage sites in Qatar on local cultural identities and external perceptions of Qatari heritage. In addition to her research, Karen will be responsible for teaching Museum Studies at UCL Qatar.



Dr. Robert Carter

Robert Carter has been studying and working in the Gulf for nearly 20 years, as an archaeologist, museum consultant and historian. He originally trained as a historian at Oxford University, before switching to archaeology at University College London, completing his Masters in 1993 and PhD in 1998 (on the Bronze Age in eastern Arabia). Since 1993 he has conducted fieldwork, artifact studies and consultancy in most countries of the Gulf, including Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah and Iran.

At UCL Qatar Robert is looking forward to teaching a great range of topics in Middle Eastern and Arab World archaeology, from the Palaeolithic to the coming of Islam, and hopes to enthuse future generations of local and international archaeologists. He hopes to start excavations soon in Qatar, and make the best use of this unprecedented opportunity to promote research in Qatar, the Gulf and the Middle East.



► MIA announces 2012 schedule

The MIA announced a series of workshops and monthly lectures to engage the community in MIA's educational programs during 2012. The lectures and workshops would cover a wide range of subjects concerning art, especially Islamic art and its diverse traditions. (December, 27th)

► Doha International Book Fair concluded

Doha's 22nd International Book Fair was visited by a large number of people with over 456 publishing houses representing 24 Arab and foreign countries taking part and occupying about 747 pavilions. (December, 24th)

► QMA opens MIA Park

Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) opened a new recreational destination. The new seafront MIA Park is nearly 280,000-square-meter (68-acre), crescent-shaped and designed by Pei Partnership Architects of New York. It will feature a vertical steel sculpture by internationally acclaimed American sculpture artist Richard Serra. (December, 16th)

► Katara welcomes award winning Pianist Károly Mocsári

Katara presented a unique classical music concert in celebration of International Franz Liszt Year in partnership with the Embassy of Hungary. The Károly Mocsári in Liszt concert will take place at the Katara Opera House. (November, 21st)

► Qatar elected for seat on UNESCO's World Heritage Committee

Qatar won a seat to join 20 other nations that form the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO. Led by Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) along the Ministry of FFAA and Qatar's permanent delegation at UNESCO, the candidature effort was announced during a presentation of Qatar's most prominent heritage sites and cultural institutions including: Zubara Fort, Barzan Tower, Souq Waif, Katara, Museum of Islamic Art, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art as well as the future National Museum of Qatar. (November, 15th)

► "The Dream of a King – Dresden's Green Vault" exhibition at MIA

The MIA hosted the world renowned "The Dream of a King – Dresden's Green Vault" exhibition. Famous for being one of the richest exhibitions in Europe, the exhibition, also known as Grünes Gewölbe, has attracted millions of visitors. It showcases around 3000 masterpieces including: jewellery, objects made of amber and ivory, gemstone vessels and bronze statuettes. (November 1st)

► Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) Concludes with "The Lady"

The 3rd edition of the DTFF concluded at "Katara" with the screening of The Lady, true story of Aung San Suu Kyi, the woman at the core of Burma's democracy movement and her husband, Michael Aris. (October 31st)

► The 4th Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art opens at the Museum of Islamic Art

VCU-Qatar in partnership Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts and Qatar Foundation celebrated the Fourth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA). (October 31st)

► Mathaf holds media briefing in Quanzhou to announce plans for Caiguo-Qiang

Mathaf's Director Wassan Al-Khudhairi shared details on the Museum's upcoming exhibition; Cai Guo-Qiang: Saraab with Chinese journalists in the artists' hometown of Quanzhou, China. (October 3rd)

► Mathaf showcases 75 Qatari artworks

Showcasing the transition of the visual arts in Qatar over four decades, Mathaf opened an exhibition featuring some 75 Qatari artworks. Swalif: Qatari Art Between Memory and Modernity features works from the collection of Mathaf that brings together the intimate responses of twenty-three artists to Qatar and art during the country's staggering development. (August 15th)

► HE Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage to open Qatari Culture Week in Moscow

HE Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage inaugurated in Moscow the Qatari cultural week. Other Qatari institutions will also participate in the festival including Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), Qatar Foundation and Al Jazeera Channel. (June, 2nd)

► Arab Filmmakers Receive Vital Funding to Bring Their Stories to the World

In a time of industry change and rising film production costs across the MENA region amidst changing political societies, Doha Film Institute (DFI) announced 25 new film grants for projects in various stages of development, and called for more collaborative financial support from the Arab world to support storytellers from the region. (March, 14th)

► GCC Archaeology Show at Katara from May 2

Nearly 420 objects will be displayed at the 'Heritage without Borders: The third GCC Archaeology Exhibition' at QMA Gallery in Katara. The relics, some dating back several millennia, are from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. (May, 21st)

► Qatar University signs agreement with museums authority

A memorandum of understanding has been signed by Qatar University (QU) and the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) to pursue staff development initiatives. The two parties are to develop joint arrangements in the form of conferences, seminars, exhibitions, research projects, publications and special lectures. The agreement also facilitates training of QMA staff by QU faculty to upgrade their academic and administrative skills. (January 6th)



Doha Tribeca Film Festival

As diplomats converged in Doha in late October to discuss the future of Libya, post-Gaddafi, the 3rd annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival was welcoming its own dignitaries across town in the 5-day annual film festival - Qatar's single most significant entertainment event annually for the past 3 years.

This year's DTFF also premiered Qatar's first international co-production, an epic \$55 million dollar family adventure film called "Black Gold," co-produced by DFI and directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud starring Antonio Banderas, Freida Pinto, Tahar Rahim and Mark Strong

The event this year took place during a year of unprecedented social and democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa, and Hollywood A-listers and Arab celebrities came en masse to the DTFF this year to pay tribute. Among those in attendance were Antonio Banderas, Michelle Yeoh, Luc Besson, Omar Sharif and Tribeca Enterprises NY co-founder Robert De Niro.

"I'm curious to see what other movies will come here next year after the Arab Spring... and how the story unfolds," De Niro told the BBC's Shaimaa Khalil in November.

Amanda Palmer, executive director of the DTFF's umbrella organisation, the Doha Film Institute, pointed out that many of the Arab film entries to this year's festival were inspired by the events in the region, but she admitted that many of the best feature films from the Arab Spring are likely to emerge in the coming years, citing films made about Iraq in the years following the US occupation (BBC).

The DTFF has since its inception attempted to promote emerging Arab filmmakers, and at its second edition launched a special Arab film competition category to award prizes for Best Arab Narrative Film, Best Director in Narrative Film, and Best Actor. The competition was expanded in 2011 to include Documentary filmmaking along with feature narratives.

Now in its fourth year, DTFF was born out of a cultural partnership between DFI and TE, with the desire to bring together a community through film. Both DFI and TE share the core values of creating a community based audience driven Festival that is family oriented and also share a joint mission to promote Arab cinema and support Arab storytelling.

The awards are in keeping with the focus of Qatar and the Doha Film Institute's commitment to nurture a regionally-based community oriented approach to film, partnering with talent and producers from other major film markets. This was the develop-

ment approach that DFI's Board Chair and founder Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, daughter of the Emir of Qatar, wanted to explore through the cultural partnership with New York's Tribeca Enterprises, which resulted in the DTFF.

Mohammed Malas, the Syrian filmmaker, presided over the 2011 jury for the Arab Narrative Film Competition this year, continuing the tradition of calling on well-respected Arab filmmakers to have a hand in the recognition of trendsetters in new Arab cinema. Malas and the Jury awarded the 2011 prize for Best Narrative Film (worth \$100,000) to "Normal," a film written and directed by Algerian filmmaker Merzak Allouache and completed with support from the DFI.

Other Arab films this year included "Omar Killed Me" (Omar M'a Tuer) by Franco-Maghربي filmmaker Roschdy Zem who took home the Best Director prize (worth \$50,000); "The Virgin, The Copts and Me," by France-based Egyptian-born filmmaker Namir Abdel Messeeh took the Best Documentary Film award (worth \$100,000); and the short "Where are you?" (Weinak?) by Saudi filmmaker Abdulaziza Al-Nujaym took home Best Arab Short (worth \$10,000).

In a lavish outdoor closing ceremony at the Katara Cultural Village open air theatre, the venue that played host to the festival, Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, best known for her 2009 film (and Cannes Film Festival favorite) *Caramel* took the Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature with her film "Where Do We Go Now?," a musical-comedy about sectarianism set in a post-war village in a country with uncanny similarities to Lebanon.

American filmmaker Morgan Spurlock took the Audience Award for Best Doc for his film "Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan" about the comic book fanatics that travel every

Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, best known for her 2009 film (and Cannes Film Festival favorite) *Caramel* took the Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature with her new film "Where Do We Go Now?"



year to the San Diego Comic-Con, an event started in 1970 that has taken on huge cultural significance in the years since.

This year's DTFF also premiered Qatar's first international co-production, an epic \$55 million dollar family adventure film called "Black Gold," directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud and starring Antonio Banderas, Freida Pinto, Tahar Rahim and Mark Strong. It featured huge-name Hollywood talent, including a score by American composer James Horner of *Titanic*, *Glory!*, and *Avatar* fame.

Qatari filmmakers Mohamad Rezwan al-Islam and Jassim al-Romalhi were awarded a DFI Engraved Ipad in the "Made in Qatar" program segment for their film "A Falcon, A Revolution" (Asaqar Wa Asawra).

The festival itself exhibits a number of innovative background elements within the pomp-and-circumstance of the film screenings, world premieres, and red-carpet extravaganzas. Makers of the world's first Arabic language web drama series out of Lebanon, *Shankaboot*, an Emmy award winning web-series, took part in an online interactive exchange at the DTFF's Social Media Lounge.

Billed as "This year's new hub for filmmakers, for the DTFF crew and guests to mingle, tweet and post updates online," it was livestreamed and included interactive tweeting, Facebook comment exchanges, and was the source of breaking industry info; *Shankaboot* announced they were



set to take their series to four countries in the next season during their Social Media Lounge session.

And, in keeping with past DTFF traditions live music performances were some of the main highlights of the event with performances this year by the likes of Grammy Award-winning Beninoise, singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo, and British singer-songwriter Leona Lewis who performed for the closing ceremonies.

While the Doha Tribeca Film Festival is held in the same two-month period as the Abu Dhabi and Dubai film festivals, the differences in mandates are clear. While the other two are more based on film commerce, Doha Tribeca was more about community engagement, film development and showcasing the linkages between Arab filmmakers and the Doha Film Institutes commitment to growing and developing a new generation of regional filmmakers.



DTFF 2011 featured musical performances by the likes of Grammy Award-winning Beninose singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo, and British singer-songwriter Leona Lewis who performed at various musical events during the Festival

Doha Film Institute: “Film is Life”

Under the banner “Film is Life,” the Doha Film Institute (DFI) has arguably become one of the most influential up-and-coming film institutes in the Arab world, and among the most innovative in the Asian-African rim.

Incorporated in May 2010, The Doha Film Institute (DFI) was amongst the first independent cultural organizations established in Qatar, under the Ministry of Culture and a Doha Film Institute Board which includes Board Chair and Founder, H.E. Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. DFI undertook the nation’s cultural mandate for film, to be the foremost cultural organization dedicated to developing film appreciation, building a film culture, enhancing industry knowledge and expertise and contribute to building a long term film industry in Qatar.

DFI is primarily focused on building and supporting the next generation of Arab filmmakers through a variety of programs - including year-round education, diverse funding initiatives, film screenings and most notably the body responsible for stewarding the creation of a sustainable home-grown film industry that Qatar hopes will compete for film production budgets from Hollywood and beyond. “Film can do more than just entertain; it can educate, inspire and unite communities and we want to nurture and support filmmakers as we continue to grow Qatar as a cultural hub for film,” H.E. Sheikha Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani said during the DFI inauguration.

The DFI’s annual film festival - the Doha Tribeca Film Festival - is the jewel of the new Arab film festival circuit. Founded in 2009 in cultural partnership with New York’s Tribeca Enterprises, the film festival provided at least part of the impetus and prestige necessary to vault the DFI into immediate consideration as a leader for film development in the region. DFI enjoys cultural partnerships with various local and international organizations. These cultural partnerships enable DFI access to an extensive film archive for screenings in Qatar, whilst also providing local filmmakers with opportunities to travel for cross-cultural experiences, high-quality international workshops and hands-on professional training.

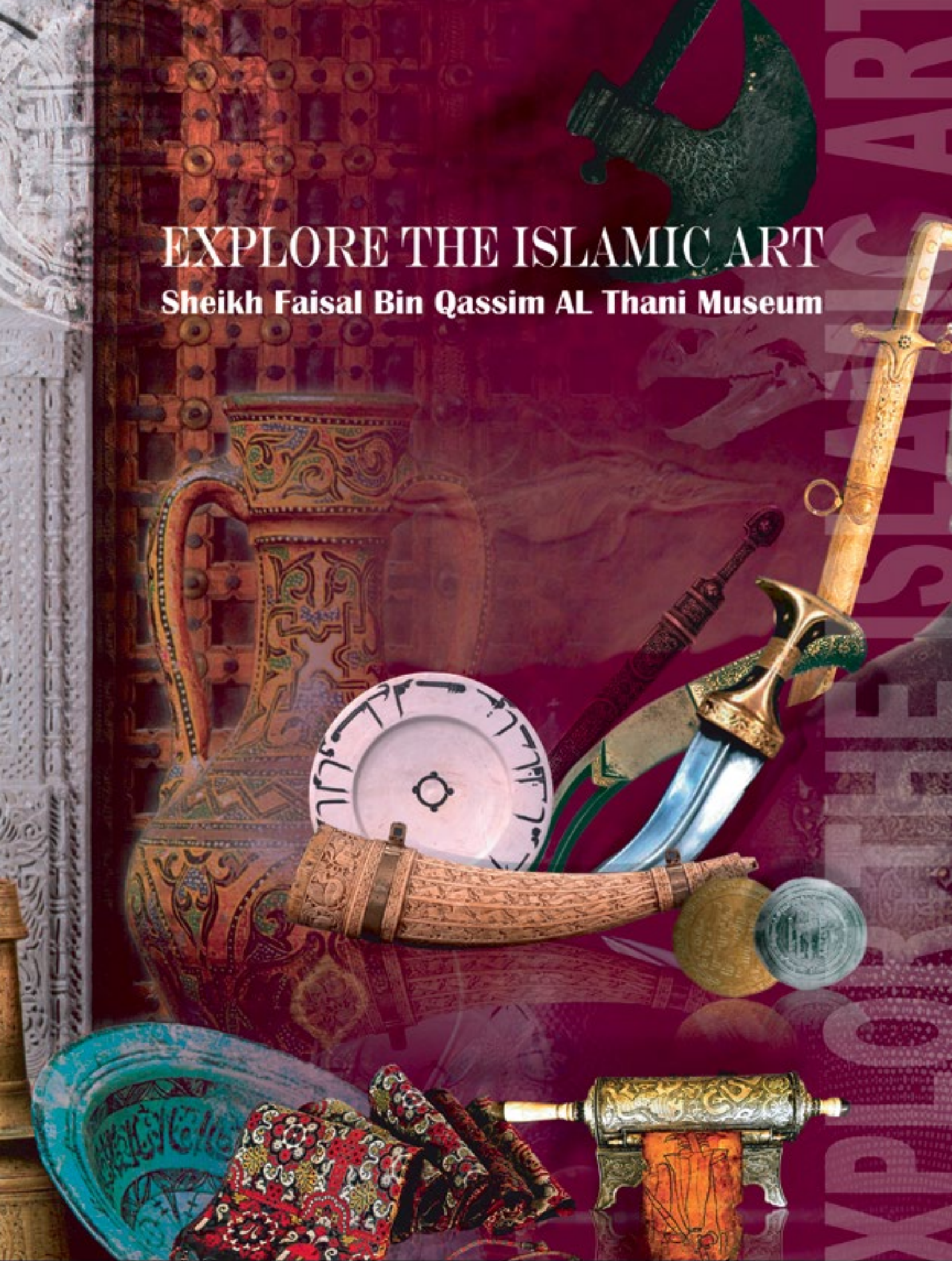
In addition to its cultural partnership with Tribeca Enterprises; DFI has also partnered with Mira Nair’s Maisha Film Labs, Martin Scorsese’s World Cinema Foundation, Claudio Gubitosi’s Giffoni Experience, which has resulted in the Doha-Giffoni Experience in Qatar and Katara.

Nair’s Maisha Film Lab aims at facilitating cross-cultural exchanges with filmmakers and students from East Africa and South Asia granting access to professional training and production resources. Since 2009, DFI has partnered with WCF to help in the restoration and preservation of international films of cultural significance, in order to make them accessible to current and future generations of film lovers.

To date, the DFI film financing division has helped support more than 60 regional films and Qatar’s first international co-production “Black Gold,” directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud and starring Antonio Banderas, Freida Pinto, Tahar Rahim and Mark Strong.

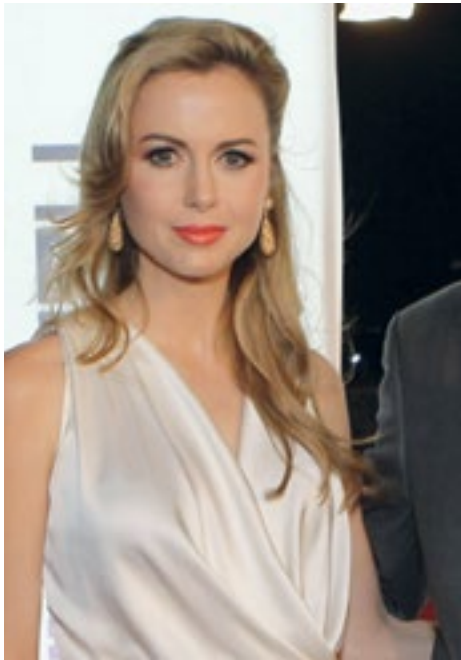
EXPLORE THE ISLAMIC ART

Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim AL Thani Museum



Q&A Ms. Amanda Palmer
Executive Director, Doha Film Institute

Instilling a Film Culture in Qatar



Under the banner “Film is Life,” the Doha Film Institute (DFI) – established in 2010 - has arguably become one of the most influential up-and-coming film institute’s in the Arab world. The DFI’s annual film festival - the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) - is the jewel of the new Arab film festival circuit. Founded in 2009 in cultural partnership with New York’s Tribeca Enterprises, the film festival provided at least part of the impetus and prestige necessary to vault the DFI into immediate consideration as a leader for film development in the region. B’HERE sat with Ms Amanda Palmer, DFI’s Executive Director, to discuss her views on how to build a film culture in Qatar, the institute’s strategy and the importance of the DTFF to achieve these goals.

DTFF’s success really signalled that Qatar was ready for the development of a film industry

] The Doha Film Institute (DFI) emerged after the establishment of the Doha Tribeca Film Festival in 2009. It seems that a lot of the stated aims of the DTFF and the DFI dovetail with each other – namely the “development of a sustainable film industry in Qatar.” Was the DFI formed to fill a vacuum not met by the DTFF? Can you explain the genesis of the DFI and what prompted its formation? You may already know this, but Qatar launched the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) as a cultural partnership with Tribeca Enterprises in 2009, before the Doha Film Institute (DFI) officially launched in 2010. That cultural partnership was a conduit to various things; in one sense, it enabled us to work with an established film festival in New York that we knew shared the values Qatar wanted to inject into its own festival – the core ones being that the festival was both community minded and audience driven; embracing to families in celebrating film culture and education; and also a great supporter of emerging filmmakers.

And since then, our relationship with Tribeca has evolved, in many respects becoming much more about culture and insight exchange, which I think is a really positive thing for us all. We now have an important platform for Arab filmmakers not just from Qatar, but also the region, in New York, and beyond. DTFF has now become an important gateway for the world to discover this region’s talent and stories, and to know that a festival like Tribeca is aligned to our mission of supporting Arab filmmakers year-round, and also at their own festival, is a truly important part of this relationship.

As I’ve said, DTFF is still a young festival continuing to evolve, but I think we all discovered pretty early on that this country was hungry for more great films. In 2009, at the first DTFF, 5000 people joined us to watch our opening night film and audiences have continued to grow, quite dramatically, every year.

But one major thing we did realise after the success of the first festival was that the demand for film was not going to be met by

a five-day festival alone. I had locals coming up to me and telling me how much they adored the Festival, but who were genuinely distressed because they believed that they would have to wait a whole year to have any sort of interaction with the industry again. Obviously, you can’t build any real film culture by holding an event, five days once a year – the approach needs to be developed, sustained and reinforced.

DTFF’s success really signalled that Qatar was ready for the development of a film industry, and as part of Qatar’s 2030 strategy of development, that the country was also ready to take on an ambitious year-round approach, not just supporting the creation of features but also short films, advertisements, and storytelling generally. This is where DFI came in, a year-round Institute that supports on-the-job educational opportunities in film and content productions; that finances short and feature films as well as trans-media content creation. Now, 18 months since incorporating, DFI has supported the development of 55 regional film projects through grants; educated close to 550 film aspirants through acting, filmmaking and industry workshops; and coproduced a major international film, *Black Gold*, with another currently in the post production, Mira Nair’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

] What makes the DFI unique in the world of film development compared with other initiatives in the Gulf and in established film industries like Hollywood and Europe? DFI is really focused on growing the industry organically in Qatar. The Gulf doesn’t have a strong legacy of filmmaking like other Arab countries, but we are strongly committed to unlocking the talent and fostering storytelling from this region, which is hugely underestimated in cinema right now - much of the filmmaking talent and the stories themselves has existed in television series. This year we are developing various projects that will see us working with Gulf professionals, alongside our Arab neighbours in the MENA region as well as doing major international projects that will provide them opportunities to work on a different scale. I think another really



important thing to realise is that both this organisation and industry are important parts of Qatar's 2030 National Vision towards developing a knowledge-backed economy, as well as the long-term development of the MENA region. Creative and knowledge industries are some of the fastest growing in the global economy, and currently account for nearly 4 % of the Middle East economy - a percentage that will no doubt increase further, particularly as the World Cup gets closer. So, from that perspective we have a lot to bring to the table, because we are creating new jobs and spurring innovation and creativity.

Overall, in the 18 months since it was incorporated, I really do think that DFI has established itself as a unique organisation in the region and internationally. It has achieved some great milestones in a country where the industry and skill-specific labor didn't previously exist, and where some cultural challenges remain around the notion that film is simply 'entertainment' or misaligned with local traditions and culture.

You've helped establish a number of strategic cultural partnerships with leading international film development organizations - namely Tribeca Enterprises,

Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Foundation, and Mira Nair's Maisha Film Labs to name the main partners. How are these partnerships proving beneficial in a practical sense?

DFI cultural partnerships are strategic in the sense that they provide us with various expertise and relationships, which we can utilize to provide opportunities for the new generation in the Arab world that wants to work in film or be engaged in film culture.

They can be as simple as providing access to a huge film archive for screenings, which can be used for historical and education purposes in Qatar and regional universities like WCF - that's something we get from the World Cinema Foundation partnership, for example.

In the case of Maisha, this cultural partnership has allowed us to provide aspirant filmmakers from Qatar with opportunities to travel to Africa for cross-cultural filmmaking, amazing high-quality international workshops and hands-on professional training with international film experts.

As I explained earlier, DFI and Tribeca Enterprises have been in a cultural partnership since 2009, which culminates each year in

the DTFF So, in essence, our partnership is about facilitating cultural exchange and exposure for the greater good of both our industries.

What criterion do you use to decide which productions the DFI is willing/able to produce and or co-produce?

Well, for a start our co-production financing is completely distinct from our film grants, which are available exclusively to projects from MENA countries - that distinction needs to be made clear because it dictates the eligibility criteria for each type of funding.

In terms of co-productions, we can invest in projects originating from within or outside the MENA region but they must, for a start, be at the late development stage, packaging and/or financing stage and actively seeking development or production finance. The question, for us, then becomes whether a project has the capacity to contribute to the overall development of this industry in some way? - i.e. will the investment foster industry networking, transfer of knowledge and expertise and bilateral collaborations? From an investment perspective it is not essential for international productions to be Arab themed, but the filmmaker or filmmakers must be open to locating part of

the production in Qatar and/or other MENA countries as well as enabling educational opportunities for young Arabs.

] **The Hollywood film production world and the Hollywood system is by and large a profit driven process. The DFI approach seems to be much more about development of an Arab film community. Is this an accurate assessment and can you explain more about why you think DFI's aims are unique in the region/world?** DFI had an aim at its beginning, to support people in this region in making films, because ask anyone working in the film business in this region and they will tell you that getting Arab financial support has been a struggle for many years. But DFI has since emerged as much more than just a film financier; it is now seen by many as a new organisation committed to building a hub for filmmakers and connecting them to the world, and there's not many organisations like this in the world, let alone the MENA region.

And yes, I think you're right to point out that DFI's work is not profit-centred, but rather community-focussed. That's not to say that we are just supporting film as a hobby – we are really aiming to develop a new generation of film professionals who can contribute to Qatar's 2030 National Vision, as well as the long-term development of the MENA region, and at the same time provide resources – be they educational or financial – to facilitate growth and exposure of regional talent, as well as a positive portrayal of Arab voices globally.

] **As mentioned before, the DFI and DTFF cover some of the same ground where film development and promotion is concerned. Thus, is it accurate to say that the DTFF has become the DFI's main platform for promoting DFI productions at the moment?** It's very important that DTFF is seen as a stand alone international film festival event, with the aim of promoting Arab and international cinema to audiences in Qatar, and not a tool for the promotion of DFI because DTFF has not, and never will be a platform to expose or promote DFI productions alone. It plays a much wider role in expanding local perceptions of film, through enabling us to import and share with local audiences a rich cross section of international films – many of which might not otherwise be seen in Qatar or the broader MENA region. In doing such, DTFF plays a really important role in opening up this region as a viable



film market for international industry, which is important because there is a widely held misconception that MENA audiences are only interested in certain types of films.

I think another really important thing to recognize is that we don't just produce a film, screen it at DTFF and then forget about it. As a co-producer or investor we then work on marketing and publicizing the film, building local and global audiences, supporting its launch into cinemas and perhaps using our industry connections to have the film screen at other festivals and in some cases securing theatrical releases.

] **"Black Gold" was the DFI's first major feature film co-production. What was learned with this collaboration with (Ben Ammar's) Quinta Communications and what other significant co-productions are in the pipe at the moment?** 'Black Gold' taught us unbelievable amounts about the film business and our audiences. As I've said, Qatar, through DFI was looking to work on an international project that would provide educational on-the job opportunities for local Qataris, as well as build infrastructural knowledge about shooting in Qatar, something which is really important for the development of this industry. Being Qatar's first international coproduction it was also really important to create a film that had universal themes but also meaning and significance for Arab audiences.

In saying that, we do want people to understand that 'Black Gold' was a stepping stone. Like anything, we hope to improve and increase our input creatively each



time we get involved in a project – as with anything, experiences teach you lessons – what worked what didn't – and you learn from them.

DFI's next international production is Mira Nair's 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist', which is a film adaptation of Mohsin Hamid's bestselling novel about a young Pakistani man living in New York post-September 11, and the many issues he faces with identity, money, power and religion living in that society. Unlike 'Black Gold', which, you know, was very much in the epic-adventure genre, 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist' is much more a foray into independent film. Despite such, this production will have a stellar cast comprising some big names - Kate Hudson, Kiefer Sutherland, Liev Schreiber and Riz Ahmed, to name a few – which we hope will really help us take this story to wider audiences.



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Now Open

Qatar Philharmonic and the Renewal of Arabic Music

By Kurt Meister



The world has yet to discover the wealth of Arabic music. When I came to Qatar several years ago, I frankly did not realize that wealth, despite decades of experience managing some of the world's great orchestras.

Our role at the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra is to bring about a union of Arabic and Western music, to lead the way for children and adults to appreciate classical music, and to inspire those throughout the music field including composers, conductors and soloists.

At the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, we program only the music, conductors and soloists that we believe in. Almost every one of our concerts this year included Arabic music. Middle Eastern soloists appeared 49 percent of the time. Two-thirds of our conductors were Middle Eastern. We performed many times with oud, kanoun, rebaba or darbuka.

Arabic music has a distinguished lineage. There isn't much known about ancient music in the Arab world, but we do know that the ney, an end-blown flute, has at least a 5,000-year history. Pictures of the ney have been found in the pyramids, and archaeologists have found examples at Ur. In the early Islamic period, the famous Greek treatises on music were studied in the Arab world and theoretical works in Arabic were added to the literature.

Western music throughout the last millennium has drawn on that lineage and other Middle Eastern traditions. Two important instruments of the European Renaissance period, the lute and the rebec, were related to the oud and rebaba. In the Classical period, Mozart and Haydn in-

corporated cymbals, triangles and bass drums into their music in imitation of Ottoman military bands. European composers incorporated so-called orientalism in the later nineteenth century, particularly by incorporating the augmented second interval to imitate Arabic scales. Without this color, it's hard to imagine the flowering of Russian music through Glinka, Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and then Stravinsky. Then in the twentieth century, composers explored half-tones and then microtones, led in part by Arabic music.

Today Arabic music is in a period of renewal, with bi-directional influence with Western composers. This has gone on in more popular forms of music in film and television for decades. Just look at the music of Egypt's Omar Khairat, a recent guest performer with the Qatar Philharmonic. Virtually every genre of pop music has its Arabic form as well.

Marcel Khalife's music has always shown this pattern. His Concerto for Rababa is a particular favorite of mine. In the slow movement he calls for the bodies of the cellos to be thumped, using them as a percussion instrument. The rhythm recalls bedouin culture by imitating a camel's walk. More recently, the Western composer Daniel Schnyder has written concertos for kanoun, oud, and ney. His activity and interest came out of joint performances with Arab musicians such as Bassam Saba.

As with so many other disciplines, Qatar has provided leadership for this renewal. It was the vision of Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned to establish the Qatar Philharmonic as part of the Qatar Foundation to spur cultural interchange and to inspire the reemergence of Arabic orchestral music. There are



other orchestras in the Arab world, but none with the goals and resources of the Qatar Philharmonic.

Our 101 musicians come from 31 countries and were selected from more than 3,000 applicants through competitive auditions. Katara Cultural Village has provided us with a magnificent home, a well-equipped opera house with instrument storage, a library and office space. We play more than 50 concerts a year and we've already toured Vienna, Paris, London, Washington, Milan and Damascus, with conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Dmitri Kitajenko, James Gaffigan, our outgoing music director Nader Abbassi and incoming music director Michalis Economou. It's easy to forget that our first concert was as recent as 2008.

We perform both Western and Arabic masterworks in the opera house. We bring in schoolchildren and families, both Arabic and English-speaking, so that children hear music in a fun and engaging way. We get letters from them all the time that tell us how they now want to learn an instrument. Composers, conductors and soloists from the Arab world have reason to be encouraged that our orchestra provides their music-making an opportunity to be realized.

But Qatar's music story doesn't stop with the philharmonic. The Qatar Foundation has also founded the Qatar Music Academy, which draws on our musicians for its faculty. The Academy offers studies in both Western and Arabic music. Concert halls are being built everywhere, including a magnificent 2,400-seat hall in the Qatar National Convention Center. The distinguished Egyptian pianist Amira Fouad makes her home in Doha and the Lebanese composer Marcel Khalife make it his second home. There's even a Doha Community Orchestra here.

There is no better way to illustrate how Qatar is moving from a carbon economy to a knowledge economy than the Qatar Foundation's gift of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra to the people of Qatar. But this is also a gift to the world as the philharmonic is helping to discover and learn from Arabic music and culture.

Qatar Music Academy Music Is No Longer a Luxury

In January 2011, Qatar Foundation launched the Qatar Music Academy as a ground-breaking initiative to promote and preserve Arabic musical traditions centered in and around the Arabian Gulf.

According to Dr. Abdul Ghafour Al Heeti, the Principal and Acting Director of the QMA, the music academy was set up to increase appreciation of music in Qatar, and to place Qatar in position as "champions of music excellence in the wider region." "This is reflected by our teachers, who are world-class musicians, and our cutting-edge facilities," Al Heeti said, adding, "Our Preparatory and Outreach programs have been carefully developed in order to lay the foundation for a vibrant music culture and industry in Qatar and the region."

The first institute of its kind in the Gulf, the QMA is situated in Katara, the cultural village that is home to a number of artistic and cultural associations, theatres and concert halls. The QMA has two youth programs: the Preparatory Program and the QMA Community Outreach Program. The Prep Program is designed to develop local talent ages 8 to 10, while the Community Outreach Program is aimed at anyone over ten years old. Both programs are designed to encourage and help nurture a new generation of musicians by focusing on one-to-one lesson plans and a series of group activities that enable youth to discover and play a wide variety of Arabic and Western instruments and musical styles.

In 2011, the QMA Preparatory Program accepted 80 students of which eight percent were Qataris, while the Outreach Program commenced activities in March catering to a wider breadth of young people than its mandate described - including two-year old toddlers, as well as teenagers and adults. The latter program offered a variety of courses and workshops that included singing and music composition.

The QMA plans on expanding its programs in 2012 to institutionalize music education in the curriculum of the Qatar school system with teachers coming from the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra and other esteemed institutions.



Kurt Meister

Executive director of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra

Kurt Meister was born in Munich, Germany. A bassoonist in the Bavarian State Opera, he then managed the Bavarian State Opera, the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Broadcast Company, and the Munich Radio Orchestra. He has worked with such conductors as Riccardo Muti, Carlos Kleiber, Karl Böhm, Rafael Kubelik, Sir Georg Solti, Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta and Mstlav Rostropovich. Mr. Meister worked with Lorin Maazel on more than 450 concerts. The Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Broadcast Company under the management of Kurt Meister was recognized as one of the top five orchestras in the world.