

Last Chance to View Qatar-Morocco Year of Culture exhibits at the National Museum fo Qatar

Benchellal: Monumental “sculpting past tomorrow” complemented by a fashion showcase in collaboration with M7

Doha, Qatar – 7 January 2025: The Years of Culture initiative invites the public for the last chance to explore Benchellal: Monumental “sculpting past tomorrow,” an exhibition at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) that celebrates Moroccan-Dutch designer Mohamed Benchellal in his first solo exhibition. Alongside the exhibition, Years of Culture is also hosting a showcase highlighting the deep-rooted and evolving fashion trends of Qatar and Morocco and the sustainable nature of many traditional practices. On view until January 18, both are part of the Qatar-Morocco Year of Culture initiative.

Located at Gallery 13 in NMoQ, the exhibition features a new collection of couture dresses designed during Benchellal's Artist Residency at Liwan Design Studios and Labs. The collection is inspired by Qatar's landscapes and architectural wonders, presenting a fusion of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design. His garments are crafted with a focus on slow fashion, using sustainable materials to create a perfect balance between artistry and environmental responsibility. The exhibition highlights the designer's meticulous techniques and innovative designs, elevating the couture dresses to monumental works of art that are placed in dialogue with Qatar's stunning architectural backdrop.

The Benchellal: Monumental “sculpting past tomorrow,” exhibition offers a unique perspective on the intersection of traditional Arab design and modern couture. By blending futuristic Middle Eastern aesthetics with classic couture, his collection honors both the region's rich heritage and its forward-thinking vision – as sensibility that inspired the accompanying Years of Culture showcase.

The Years of Culture showcase explores the historical and contemporary connections between Qatari and Moroccan cultures through fashion, with a focus on sustainable garment-making practices. Highlights include a traditional wool *daffah* (cloak) from the NMoQ collection, adorned with intricate hand-stitched Zari designs. This piece demonstrates the transformation of the *daffah* from a practical garment into an object of cultural beauty and adornment. In addition, as part of the collaboration with M7, Qatari designer Mashael Al Naimi, founder of the Mhefhef brand, created a modern interpretation of the Bisht. Her creation—a handwoven Tusar silk abaya inspired by the architectural elegance of Morocco's Kasbah Gate—reimagines the Bisht with contemporary sophistication while paying homage to its heritage.

Entry is free with the museum's general admission. Tickets can be reserved in advance via the Qatar Museums website.

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About Years of Culture

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. Though formal programming spans one year, the lasting impact continues through legacy projects.

The Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture is developed in collaboration with leading organizations in Qatar with counterparts in Morocco and with assistance from the Moroccan Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication, Qatar's Embassy in Morocco, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Qatar.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, and Qatar-Indonesia 2023.

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