

For Immediate Release

QATAR MARKS FIRST PARTICIPATION IN ART BASEL IN BASEL

Panel Discussion Featuring Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, Offers Insights into the Changing Global Art Scene at Basel's Renowned Fondation Beyeler

Qatar Pavilion Debuts at Art Basel's Collectors Lounge

[Press Kit Link](#)



From Left to Right: Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director of London's Serpentine Galleries; Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums; Jacques Herzog, Founding Partner of Herzog & de Meuron and designer of the Lusail Museum; artist Urs Fischer; and artist Wael Shawky, Artistic Director of Doha Fire Station. Courtesy of Qatar Museums.

Basel, 22 June 2025 — On 18 June Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, participated in a thought-provoking panel discussion “Beyond the Canon: Art, Architecture, and Global Imagination” at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel, Switzerland, speaking before distinguished guests during this year’s Art Basel fair. Heralding the inauguration of Art

Basel Qatar in February 2026, the event explored the public role of artists and architects in shaping today's society.

Following an introduction by **Noah Horowitz**, CEO of Art Basel, H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa was joined by Pritzker Prize-winning architect **Jacques Herzog**, Founding Partner of Herzog & de Meuron and designer of the future Lusail Museum; artist **Urs Fischer**, whose large-scale sculpture *Lamp/Bear* in Hamad International Airport is part of the Qatar Museums public art programme; and artist **Wael Shawky**, artist and Artistic Director of the Qatar Museums artist-in-residence and exhibition space Fire Station. The discussion was moderated by **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, Artistic Director of London's Serpentine Galleries.

Addressing the emergence of new cultural centers in a shifting art world, H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa said, "Under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, we continue to invest in culture as a driver of social and economic development. Our institutions are designed to support artists and creative industries as they shape the future of our region. Through creative hubs like M7, Liwan Design Studios and Labs, and the Fire Station, we are furthering the cultural economy of our nation and region. This work will be enhanced by the addition of Art Basel Qatar to our cultural ecosystem. This is also what the Lusail Museum will do as an international gathering place. Artists, scholars, students, and leaders in business and public affairs will be brought together to bridge a divided world through dialogue, art, and innovation."

Speaking about the Lusail Museum's design as encouraging dialogue in a changing world, Jacques Herzog said, "Architecture is a long-term endeavor. It must be as relevant in the future as it was when designed and built. We began working on the Lusail Museum project over 18 years ago, and it has evolved to become a place which will not only house a collection but will be a platform for political, social, and cultural exchange – and an architecture that can serve as a model for building in this region now and in times to come."

Reflecting on a question about the role of art in the public realm, Urs Fischer said, "*Lamp/Bear* was originally created out of a smaller idea, how light can shine on your face, making you appear scarier or kind of cute. This idea grew and became a bigger object, originally for a city, but through Her Excellency's vision has found a home at Hamad International Airport. Like architecture, the seed of an artwork is unknown, and then if the seed is successful, it can grow, expand and give a place an identity. Places that have public art can make you feel that you have arrived somewhere. The work gives you an idea of a place, a location."

Discussing the role of the Fire Station in advancing creative activity in Qatar and the region, Wael Shawky said, "We have just introduced a new, fully funded Arts Intensive Study Program, which is designed to foster, critical thinking, hands-on learning, and professional development for 20 emerging international and Qatari artists bringing

together students from all over the world. In doing so we are seeking to find a new format for education that cultivates talent. Our first participants, selected from more than 1,000 applicants, are going to have the opportunity to be guided by some of the art world's most influential figures, in a dynamic, immersive environment that encourages experimentation. It's a perfect embodiment of Qatar's vision of being a global center for artistic innovation and cultural exchange."



Above and Below: Qatar Pavilion at the Collectors Lounge at Art Basel in Basel featuring the Qatar Airways Lounge and Al Maha Island Gallery. Courtesy of Art Basel in Basel 2025.

Qatar Pavilion at the Collectors Lounge at Art Basel in Basel

The talk complemented and extended Qatar's programming at Art Basel in Basel. In the Collectors Lounge at the fair, the Qatar Pavilion, open June 17 – 22, features the Qatar Airways Lounge and Al Maha Island Gallery. The lounge offers a comfortable setting for meetings, and features authentic Qatari cuisine fused with international flavours by Chef Noof Al Marri, head chef of the Desert Rose Café at the National Museum of Qatar.

The Pavilion's Al Maha Island Gallery provides an advance look at the Lusail Museum and the vision for the island it will be located on, both designed by Herzog & de Meuron. On view in the gallery are examples of the Lusail Museum's unparalleled collection of Orientalist art, with paintings by Gustav Bauernfeind, John Frederick Lewis, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Osman Hamdi Bey, as well as a painting by Hamdi Bey on loan from the Musée d'Orsay as part of the programme of cultural exchange established by a 2025 agreement between Qatar Museums and the French Ministry of Culture.



The inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar will be held in February 2026 at creative hub M7 and in the Doha Design District in downtown Msheireb, in proximity to world-renowned landmarks including the National Museum of Qatar. It is a partnership among Art Basel, Qatar Sports Investments, a major investor in sports, culture, entertainment, and lifestyle, and QC+, a strategic and creative collective specialising in cultural commerce. Additional details will be announced soon.

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