

Landmark Exhibition Celebrating Morocco's Artistic Heritage Opens at the Museum of Islamic Art

"Splendours of the Atlas: A Voyage Through Morocco's Heritage" Displays Around 200 Rare and Never-Before-Seen Artifacts in Qatar

DOHA, Qatar – 1 November 2024 – Today, the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) opened *Splendours of the Atlas: A Voyage Through Morocco's Heritage*, a landmark exhibition exploring Morocco's rich artistic and cultural traditions. The opening reception was attended by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Chairperson of Qatar Museums and the Years of Culture initiative. The exhibition is presented as part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture, an international cultural exchange designed to deepen understanding between nations and their people.

Featuring around 200 artifacts, manuscripts, jewelry pieces, photographs, and musical instruments, some of which have never been displayed before, *Splendours of the Atlas* narrates the vibrant history of Morocco and its enduring cultural legacy. The exhibition features key loans from prominent Moroccan institutions, such as the National Foundation of Museums and the National Library of Rabat. These rare objects will be complemented by previously never-before-seen works from Qatar Museums, MIA, and the forthcoming Lusail Museum, including an Alawite headdress decorated with golden plaques and precious stones, silver Amazigh jewelry, as well as 11th to 13th century wooden beams from a building in Fez. Though acquired by Qatar Museums separately, these beams were identified as part of the same structure during the restoration process in preparation for the exhibition. The exhibition, curated by Dr. Mounia Chekhab-Abudaya, MIA's Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, will be on view from 2 November 2024 to 8 March 2025.

"This exhibition is a tribute to Morocco's vast and varied artistic achievements, spanning centuries of rich cultural history," said MIA Director Shaika Al-Nassr. "By showcasing objects of extraordinary craftsmanship, from intricate jewelry to ancient manuscripts, we offer a rare glimpse into the heart of Morocco's artistic heritage. Visitors are invited to explore these treasures and reflect on how Morocco's unique cultural legacy continues to resonate on the global stage."

Dr. Mounia Chekhab-Abudaya added: "The concept behind the exhibition was to take visitors on a journey to explore Morocco through its people, landscape, and contributions to scholarship and artistic production. In developing this exhibition, we had the rewarding but challenging task of selecting from the plethora of objects from Moroccan and Qatar Museums collections. About sixty to seventy percent of objects presented in this exhibition will be shown for the first time."

The exhibition features a special commission by Nouredine Amir, an artist who uses garments to create his body of work. He has created an installation of panels made from raw, organic materials native to Morocco utilizing traditional weaving techniques.

"The materials I use determine how I form each piece. This approach comes from my mission to awaken our instinctive drive to reconnect with nature and the Earth, something that is deeply rooted in my heritage and I am excited to share with visitors to the *Splendours of the Atlas* exhibition at the Museum of Islamic Art," said Nouredine.

The exhibition is organized into five thematic sections:

- In **"Faces of Morocco: Landscapes and Society,"** visitors are immersed in a vivid visual journey through Morocco's ecologically diverse landscapes and its people. The gallery showcases powerful photographs by renowned artists such as Bruno Barbey, Irving Penn, and Lalla Essaydi, offering glimpses into the everyday lives of Morocco's Arab and Amazigh communities.

- **"The Soul of Morocco: Kings, Saints, and Scholars"** takes visitors through Morocco's rich dynastic history, a period marked by flourishing theological scholarship and groundbreaking scientific advancements. The cities of Fez and Marrakesh emerged as pivotal centers of learning, where rulers created an environment ripe for discovery in fields like astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Highlighting the intellectual legacy of the era, the section features the University of Al Qarawiyyin, founded by the trailblazing female scholar Fatima al-Fihri in 859, and celebrated as the world's oldest continuously operating degree-granting institution.
- **"Threads of Tradition: Morocco's Artisanal Mastery"** is the exhibition's largest and most intricate section, dedicated to Morocco's craft traditions. Displays explore leatherwork, textiles, carpets, ceramics, jewelry, and woodwork, all testament to the craftsmanship that has thrived in Morocco for generations. Ceramic pieces reflect Morocco's rich Islamic—particularly Amazigh and Andalusian—heritage, while intricately woven tapestries showcase Morocco's role as a cultural crossroads where African, European, and Middle Eastern influences converge. Finally, costumes and jewelry, including traditional garments such as bridal kaftans, showcase how designers and artisans have preserved customs and adapted them to contemporary needs. The gallery design is informed by artisanal workshops and Moroccan markets, creating an immersive experience.
- **"Traditional Sounds of Morocco"** dives deep into the country's diverse musical heritage, featuring an array of instruments from the prestigious Dar Jama'i Museum in Meknes. This section celebrates Morocco's unique musical landscape from the classical Andalusian melodies that echo through northern cities to the rhythmic, soul-stirring *gnawa* music of the South. Accompanying videos bring the instruments to life, offering visitors an auditory journey through the distinct musical traditions of various regions.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 216-page publication featuring short essays by MIA's Dr. Mounia Chekhab-Abudaya on each of the show's key themes. Photographs and detailed object entries of each work in the show are also included.

In partnership with the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture, MIA is also presenting *Ektashif: Morocco* on view from 2 November 2024 – 26 February 2025. The exhibition, features works by seven Qatari artists and designers who toured Morocco earlier this year gaining new skills in traditional and Islamic arts and learning from expert artists and craftsmen.

-ENDS-

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.

FIND US ONLINE:

Years of Culture

Website: yearsofculture.qa

X: [@YearsofCulture](https://twitter.com/YearsofCulture) | Instagram: [@YearsofCulture](https://www.instagram.com/YearsofCulture) | Facebook: [@YearsofCulture](https://www.facebook.com/YearsofCulture)

PRESS CONTACT

Regional media:

Anya Kotova

Brown Lloyd James

anyak@bljworldwide.com

International media:

Julia Esposito

Polskin Arts

Julia.esposito@finnpartners.com