

## Prolific Qatari Artist Yousef Ahmad to Showcase New Calligraphy-inspired Exhibition in Japan

*[Years of Culture](#) initiative marks 50-year anniversary of strong diplomatic ties with Japan through “Dialogue of Paper, A Legacy of Qatar Japan year of culture” exhibition*

23 May 2022 – Doha, Qatar – One of the most prominent Qatari artists, Yousef Ahmad, is presenting the “Dialogue of Paper, A Legacy of Qatar Japan Year of Culture” at the popular 3331 Arts Chiyoda artistic hub in Tokyo, Japan — an exhibition of 28 pieces created by Ahmad and Japanese artist Hayaki Nishigaki. The exhibition will be on view from June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

A pioneer of the modern art movement in Qatar, Ahmad brings art, history, and society together through his creations. In this series of calligraphy on palm-tree paper, Ahmad and Nishigaki created a unique visual vernacular to imagine the shared history and common artistic interpretations between Japan and Qatar.

The exhibition was organized as part of the celebrations marking 50 years since the start of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Japan, which was also the first [Year of Culture](#) partner country when the initiative was established 10 years ago. Years of Culture was established by Qatar Museums Chairperson Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to promote mutual understanding, recognition and appreciation between Qatar and the world.

Aisha Ghanem Al Attiya, Director of Cultural Diplomacy, Qatar Museums said, “We are particularly honoured to have built long-lasting ties with our very first Years of Culture partner – Japan – that have only grown over the past decade. Respecting and cultivating traditions while embracing modernity is something we share with our Japanese counterparts. We look forward to many more cultural exchanges between the Years of Culture initiative and cultural institutions in Japan.”

Together with Nishigaki, who most recently planned the Festival of Kyoto Sento Art and created painted works with Japanese washi paper and sumi ink with the motif of “Godzilla as a Utensil,” the two artists infused Qatari and Japanese calligraphy as an aesthetic element onto the paper to create a series of unique artworks.

Yousef Ahmad said, “Paper has played a major role in human history and Japan stands at the forefront of introducing paper-making techniques to the world in conjunction with calligraphy. Calligraphy goes far beyond simply writing characters or words. The key to true calligraphy is to bring the mind and soul into the work and to write with your heart, which is what I have done

with our creations. My aim was to highlight the similarities in the cultural practices of papermaking and calligraphy between Qatar and Japan.”

Ahmad's fascination with paper emerged during early childhood when he used to play with paper planes. Later in life, he travelled to Japan, Thailand, Nepal, and India, calling himself "crazy about paper" as he was always exploring locally handmade papers. Ahmad's constant experimentation with a variety of media led him to create his unique palm leaf paper made from locally grown Qatari palm trees.

Nishigaki has explored the desire for communication through the process of recording with ink. For the collaboration with Ahmad, Nishigaki brought paper doughs from Japan, mixing the washi dough with the palm tree fronds dough to create a neo-hybrid paper that served as the medium.

3331 Arts Chiyoda, where the exhibition will be on view, is an independent art center based in a renovated former Chiyoda City public school. Since 2010, it has served as both an artistic hub for anyone wanting to create, as well as a relaxing and open space for the community.

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#### About Years of Culture

Culture is one of the most effective tools to bring people closer together, encourage dialogue, and deepen understanding between nations.

Under the leadership of its Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar Museums (QM) developed the annual “Years of Culture” initiative — an international cultural exchange that deepens understanding between nations and their people. Though formal programming lasts only one year, the ties of friendship that are strengthened and formed are long-lasting.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the 2022 Year of Culture will offer programming from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA).

The Qatar-MENASA Year of Culture 2022 will include countries and communities from: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Bhutan, Egypt, India, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Qatar-MENASA Year of Culture 2022 has been developed in collaboration with leading organizations in Qatar, including Doha Film Institute, Education Above All, Katara Cultural Village, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Charity, Qatar Football Association, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Museums, Qatar National Library, Qatar Tourism, Qatar Olympic Committee, Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, with assistance from Doha-based embassies of participating countries.

The Qatar-MENASA 2022 Year of Culture is supported by Qatar Airways.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Turkey 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India

2019, Qatar-France 2020, and Qatar-USA 2021. Past sponsors include Vodafone, Qatar Gas, Shell, Ooredoo, Shangri-La Hotel and Resorts, Lulu Group International, Qatar Financial Centre, Qatar Petroleum, and ExxonMobil.

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### About Qatar Museums

Qatar Museums (QM), the nation's preeminent institution for art and culture, provides authentic and inspiring cultural experiences through a growing network of museums, heritage sites, festivals, public art installations, and programmes. QM preserves, restores, and expands the nation's cultural offerings and historical sites, sharing art and culture from Qatar, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region with the world and enriching the lives of citizens, residents, and visitors.

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and led by its Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, QM has made Qatar a vibrant centre for the arts, culture, and education in the Middle East and beyond. QM is integral to the goal of developing an innovative, diverse, and progressive nation, bringing people together to ignite new thinking, spark critical cultural conversations, educate and encourage environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, and amplify the voices of Qatar's people. Since its founding in 2005, QM has overseen the Museum of Islamic Art and MIA Park, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar, QM Gallery Al Riwaq, QM Gallery Katara, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, and Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar, which is currently under development.

Through its newly created Creative Hub, QM also initiates and supports projects—such as the Fire Station Artist in Residence, the Tasweer Qatar Photo Festival and the creative hub for innovation, fashion and design M7—that nurture artistic talent and create opportunities to build a strong and sustainable cultural infrastructure.

Animating everything that Qatar Museums does is an authentic connection to Qatar and its heritage, a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and a belief in creating value through invention.

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