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Redesigning Dialogues

DOHA 2026

NOVEMBER 5 - 7

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QATAR MUSEUMS

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DESIGN DOHA

THE DEMOCRACY & CULTURE FOUNDATION

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How can societies celebrate their heritage while looking toward the future? What can established artists learn from the experiments of emerging ones? Where does design end and art begin?

This year's Art for Tomorrow will take advantage of the rich culture and institutions in Doha to create dialogues that explore inherent contrasts reflected in the city itself: between past and present, East and West, pop culture and high culture. Our conversations will consider how these dualities challenge, influence and ultimately enrich one other. In a time of increasing division, we can cultivate understanding by settling into these spaces between.

This rich program of content will be complemented by exclusive cultural visits as we venture into museums, performance spaces and design studios to see the arts in action. As part of an exceptional partnership between Art for Tomorrow and the second edition of the Design Doha Biennial, this year's Art for Tomorrow conference takes place in the heart of the DDB venue in Fereej Al Asmakh.

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THURSDAY, NOV. 5 – afternoon

Venue: Fereej Al Asmakh, Zone 5

15:00 - 17:00 **Design Doha Biennial Opening Ceremony** and **V.I.P. tours of the Design Doha Biennial exhibitions** *(by invitation only)*

17:00 - 17:45 **Art for Tomorrow Keynote Conversation: The Future Is a Design Question**

Can design help us imagine – and create – a better future? From advances in sustainable architecture and urban planning to new approaches to creating and running cultural institutions, design has the power to change how we live. How can we build creative ecosystems that encourage experimentation, and sustain innovation across generations? Bringing together perspectives from architecture and cultural leadership, this conversation explores how imagination, creativity, and innovation can help shape a better future.

H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson, Qatar Museums

Lord Norman Foster, Founder and Executive Chairman, Foster + Partners

*Moderated by **Aric Chen**, Director, Zaha Hadid Foundation*

17:50 - 18:00 **Welcome Remarks**

Fahad Al Obaidly, Director, Design Doha Biennial 2026

Achilles Tsaltas, President, Democracy & Culture Foundation

18:05 - 18:50 **Panel: State of Play – Creating Public Spaces**

Public spaces are, by definition, places where the community comes together. And yet, in many cities, they are an afterthought of urban design. Some architects and designers argue that this is a missed opportunity for fellowship and interaction. Why choose between form and function, they say, when they can work in harmony? From sculptures that double as shelters and benches that look like art installations to vast green spaces at established institutions, these projects promise connection. Some balk at extravagant price tags, however, especially when public funds are involved. Are these civic vanity projects or essential urban investments?

Richard Hsu, Dean, School of Design, Shanghai University of Engineering Science

Francis Kéré, Architect and Founder, Kéré Architecture

Manuela Lucà-Dazio, Curator of Architecture, Triennale Milano

*Moderated by **Jelena Trkulja**, Senior Adviser for Academic and Cultural Affairs, Qatar Museums*

20:30 - 22:30 **Speaker/Sponsor Dinner at Cipriani, hosted by Jaidah Holdings** *(by invitation only)*

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FRIDAY, NOV. 6

Venue: Fereej Al Asmakh, Zone 5

9:30 - 9:45

Welcome Remarks

Achilles Tsaltas, President, Democracy & Culture Foundation

Elina Makri, General Manager, Democracy & Culture Foundation

9:50 - 10:30

Panel: The Blurry Border Between Design and Art

Wandering through design festivals or museums, or scrolling through social media feeds, you will undoubtedly be struck by the sheer beauty of the objects on display. You may also notice a distinct shift, as an increasing number of works appear to prioritize form over function, concept over practicality. Collectibles and limited-edition works are grabbing the spotlight in a sustainability-conscious era. Meanwhile, a growing number of artists lend their creative vision to brands, shape-shifting into designers. This focus on scarcity and beauty raises a fundamental question: Where does art stop and design begin? This panel explores the critical, commercial and philosophical forces collapsing the boundary between the two fields.

Sheikha Reem Al Thani, Deputy C.E.O., AL RIWAQ, Public Art and Rubaiya Qatar, Qatar Museums

Aric Chen, Director, Zaha Hadid Foundation

Marko Stanojevic, Design Director, Zero Bureau

*Moderated by **Tim Marlow**, Director and C.E.O., Design Museum, London*

10:35 - 11:10

Conversation: Crafting Statecraft – Tradition as Cultural Diplomacy

Traditions and heritage allow nations to project identity, build economic resilience, and cultivate cross-border alliances. From Uzbekistan's revival of Silk Road textiles to Kuwait's global promotion of Bedouin sadu weaving and Venice's defense of historic glassmaking, living traditions offer an enticing bridge for international dialogue. But can preserving artisanal heritage meaningfully sway geopolitical realities? This panel explores how – and whether – "heritage diplomacy" can drive truly constructive international relations.

Sheikha Bibi Duaij Al Jaber Al Sabah, Chairperson, AlSadu Society

Gayane Umerova, Chairperson, Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation

*Moderated by **Jelena Trkulja**, Senior Adviser for Academic and Cultural Affairs, Qatar Museums*

11:10 - 11:40	**Coffee Break**
11:40 - 12:25	**Panel: Embracing Heritage With an Eye to the Future** Iconic Doha buildings like the National Museum of Qatar, known as the "Desert Rose," and the Museum of Islamic Art are famously emblematic of the successful blending of tradition and modernity. Today, this fusion is happening at the scale of art and design, as works pay homage to local culture, craft and personal memory while simultaneously embracing contemporary techniques and technology. This regional trend speaks to a global impulse to connect to distant homelands and childhood narratives. What are some examples of these works, and their meaning to the creator and the viewer? What do they say about both our longing for home and our pursuit of novelty? **Takashi Arai**, Photographer and Visual Artist **Bouthayna M. Baltaji**, Director of Museography and Heritage Museums Development, Qatar Museums **Fernando Laposse**, Designer *Moderated by **Jane Morris**, Editorial Director, Cultureshock*
12:30 - 13:30	**Production, Education, and the Making of a Regional Design Language** **Supported by FROMM.** How does a regional design language emerge, and what does it take to translate cultural knowledge into contemporary design? This panel examines the intersection of design production, education, and cultural identity, exploring how research, material knowledge, and craftsmanship translate into contemporary design and commercial success. Bringing together perspectives from design, architecture, and industry, the discussion will consider how heritage can be reinterpreted to foster a distinctive regional design language. It will also consider what is needed to foster a sustainable and thriving regional design ecosystem. **Aline Asmar d'Amman**, Architect and Founder, Culture in Architecture **Noura Al Sayeh**, Architect and Curator, Arab Design Now *(tbc)* **Alia Rachid**, Founder and C.E.O., FROMM. **Xinyi Wang**, Architect and Founding Director, Xytopia *Moderated by **Dana Saïd**, Head, FROMM.Lab*
13:30 - 15:00	**Free Time**
15:00 - 18:00	**Tours of Design Doha Biennial exhibitions and other cultural highlights**

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FRIDAY, NOV. 6 — evening

Venue: W Hotel & Residences, Building 262, Street 831, Zone 61

19:00 - 19:15 — **Celebrating "Art for Tomorrow: The First 10 Years": The Book**

Achilles Tsaltas, President, Democracy & Culture Foundation

Jeff Koons, Artist

19:20 - 19:45 — **Creativity for Social Change Award**

Presented by **Adama Sanneh**, Co-Founder and C.E.O., Moleskine Foundation and **Achilles Tsaltas**, President, Democracy & Culture Foundation

19:50 - 20:20 — **Spotlight Conversation: Ibrahim Mahama**, Artist and Founder, Savannah Center for Contemporary Art

Ibrahim Mahama grounds his practice in deep collaboration, transforming found materials and industrial ruins into artworks and shared cultural spaces in Ghana. Challenging traditional museum models, he engages in an active dialogue with members of the community who inform and interact with the works, keeping collective memory alive. He also reinvests his commercial success into building accessible studios, converting trains and buses into classrooms, and restoring abandoned factories. His work raises a broader question: what is the artist's social responsibility in an unequal world?

*In conversation with **Jane Morris**, Editorial Director, Cultureshock*

20:30 - 22:00 — **Cocktail Dînatoire hosted by the W Doha Hotel & Residences**

SATURDAY, NOV. 7

Venue: Fereej Al Asmakh, Zone 5

10:00 - 10:10 — **Welcome Remarks**

Achilles Tsaltas, President, Democracy & Culture Foundation

10:15 - 10:50 — **Conversation: Design Can Be Good for Your Health**

Health care design is frequently dismissed as a cosmetic luxury rather than a core clinical necessity. Decades of careless planning – marked by a lack of natural light, confusing layouts, poor acoustics, and sterile environments – can amplify the trauma of illness, worsening recovery time and accelerating staff burnout. This session builds on the work of designers and neurologist Dr. Ashish Ranpura to examine how spatial design can serve as a vital tool for recovery. Drawing on the wisdom of the sanitorium, they examine how architecture can mitigate stress, build morale, and foster community – rising to Finnish architect Alvar Aalto's standard to "defend man at his weakest."

Ab Rogers, Designer

Dr. Cherif Amor, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, VCUarts Qatar *(tbc)*

*Moderated by **Rosanne Somerson**, Advisory Art Director, Dadu Children's Museum of Qatar and President Emerita, Rhode Island School of Design*

10:55 - 11:25	**Spotlight Conversation: Wael Shawky, From Mythmaker to Cultural Architect** Wael Shawky's work constructs complex narratives to question how mythologies and histories are formed. Now, as artistic director of Doha's Fire Station, he finds himself on the other side of the equation, shaping the very cultural infrastructure where emerging artists build their own practices. This conversation examines what happens when an artist known for subverting grand narratives steps into an institutional role, balancing his identities as a both world-builder and custodian for the next generation. **Wael Shawky**, Artist and Artistic Director, Fire Station, Qatar Museums *In conversation with **Jane Morris**, Editorial Director, Cultureshock*
11:25 - 11:55	**Coffee Break**
11:55 - 12:05	**Performance Short: Krantinaari**
12:10 - 12:45	**Panel: Creativity for Social Change** As finalists for the Creativity for Social Change Award, rap artist and activist Krantinaari and the creative collective Kairos Futura show how local histories can bridge public art and public life. Krantinaari uses hip-hop, folk music and spoken word to bring buried stories of female resilience and systemic suppression to light. Meanwhile, Kairos Futura uses local heritage and environmental memory to help residents design sustainable communities. This conversation examines how engaged artists are transforming traditions and stories into active – and incredible – public artforms. **Krantinaari**, Rap Artist **Willy Ng'ang'a**, Artist, Kairos Futura *Moderated by **Adama Sanneh**, Co-Founder and C.E.O., Moleskine Foundation*

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