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Press Release

Qatar | 20 May | 2026

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## Art Basel appoints Wassan Al-Khudhairi as Artistic Director and announces curatorial theme for its 2027 Qatar edition

Art Basel is pleased to announce the appointment of Iraqi curator **Wassan Al-Khudhairi** as Artistic Director of the 2027 edition of Art Basel Qatar, presented in partnership with **Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) and QC+**. Al-Khudhairi succeeds Wael Shawky, artist and Director of Qatar Museums' Fire Station: Artist-in-Residence Programme, who shaped the curatorial vision for the inaugural edition alongside Vincenzo de Bellis, Art Basel's Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Fairs. Al-Khudhairi will develop the artistic and curatorial vision of this edition in close collaboration with de Bellis, and will guide the gallery selection process together with the fair's dedicated Selection Committee. The second edition of Art Basel Qatar will be held from January 28 to 30, 2027, with Preview Days on January 26 and 27. Art Basel Qatar's Premium Partner is **Qatar Airways**.

Al-Khudhairi brings both deep regional expertise and a globally informed curatorial practice to the role. Her longstanding connection to Qatar and the MENASA region was shaped most formatively by her tenure as Founding Director of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar, where she oversaw its successful opening in 2010 and landmark exhibitions including *Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art* and Cai Guo-Qiang's *Saraab*. A full biography is outlined below.

Art Basel Qatar also announces the opening of gallery applications for its 2027 edition and reveals the **curatorial theme** that will shape the fair's artistic program. The theme, *between / بين*, explores the condition of being "between" as a generative space, one that remains open and refuses a singular definition. Rather than arriving at fixed positions, *between / بين* dwells in relation, holding open a space for encounter, exchange, and fluidity, asking what becomes possible when the "between" is not a gap to be closed, but a place to inhabit.

Building on the momentum of its inaugural edition, Art Basel Qatar continues its long-term commitment to supporting and expanding the region's art ecosystem while creating new pathways for exchange between the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and the broader international art world. The strong response to the 2026 fair from galleries, artists, collectors, institutions, and cultural leaders affirmed both the global relevance of the platform and the demand for deeper engagement with artistic practices emerging from and connected to the region. The 2027 edition will continue to build on this foundation through an expanded artistic program, new collaborations, and greater opportunities for galleries and audiences to engage with the region's evolving cultural landscape of the region.

The second edition will maintain the same curated format introduced for the inaugural fair, with gallery presentations taking the form of focused solo showcases that foreground individual artistic voices and respond directly to the fair's theme. The fair will once again be hosted across Msheireb Downtown Doha in its established venues: the Doha Design District (DDD) and M7 cultural forum. The 2027 edition will significantly elevate its **Special Projects** sector, offering visitors expanded and unparalleled immersive experiences across multiple formats.

**Vincenzo de Bellis, Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Art Basel Fairs, said:** "We are thrilled to welcome Wassan Al-Khudhairi as Artistic Director of Art Basel Qatar 2027. I want to express our deep gratitude to Wael Shawky, whose vision and commitment were instrumental in shaping the inaugural edition and establishing the foundation on which we now build. Wassan's longstanding engagement with artists, institutions, and audiences across MENASA and beyond positions her exceptionally well to shape the next chapter of the fair. Her curatorial ambition is matched by a deep understanding of how art ecosystems develop – how institutions are built, how markets are nurtured, and how education and public engagement create the conditions for long-term growth. The combination of intellectual depth and entrepreneurial institutional vision is exactly what this moment calls for."

**Wassan Al-Khudhairi said:** "It is an honor to take on the role of Artistic Director for Art Basel Qatar 2027. Qatar has played a meaningful role in shaping both my career and my curatorial practice, and I look forward to bringing that deep connection to this important project. Art Basel Qatar represents an exciting new model for what a curated fair can be – one where a rigorous curatorial vision and a thriving art market are not in tension but mutually reinforcing."

Al-Khudhairi added: "For the 2027 edition, *between / بين* emerged from a curiosity about what becomes possible when a space is allowed to stay open – not as an absence of definition, but as an invitation for connections across generations, geographies, and perspectives. I look forward to building on the strong foundation established by the inaugural edition and to collaborating with artists and galleries to realize a program that reflects the depth, nuance, and diversity of artistic practices rooted in and connected to the region."

Al-Khudhairi is currently Partner at The Curatorial / Office, a practice that brings curatorial thinking beyond museum walls. Most recently, Al-Khudhairi was part of the curatorial team for the 2025 Hawaii Triennial *ALOHA NŌ*. Her extensive international biennial experience includes serving as Co-Curator for the 6th Asian Art Biennial in Taiwan, *Negotiating the Future* (2017), and Co-Artistic Director for the 9th Gwangju Biennial in South Korea, *ROUNDTABLE* (2012). From 2007 to 2012, Al-Khudhairi was the founding director of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.

Al-Khudhairi's institutional experience also includes serving as Ferring Foundation Chief Curator at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM), where she curated a wide range of critically acclaimed solo and thematic exhibitions. These include presentations with artists such as Hajra Waheed, *A Solo Exhibition*; Dominic Chambers, *Birthplace*; Gala Porras-Kim, *Correspondences towards the living object*; Martine Gutierrez, *HIT Movie Vol. 1*; Farah Al Qasimi, *Everywhere there is splendor*; Shara Hughes, *On Edge*; Derek Fordjour, *SHELTER*; and Ebony G. Patterson, *...when the cuts erupt...the garden rings...and the warning is a wailing*. Her curatorial program at CAM also featured projects by Lawrence Abu Hamdan (*Earwitness Theatre*), Bethany Collins (*Chorus*), Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Stephanie Syjuco (*Rogue States*), Guan Xiao (*Fiction Archive Project*), and Hayv Kahraman (*Acts of Reparation*). At CAM she co-produced the Radio Resistance podcast, which accompanied the thematic exhibition *Stories of Resistance*.

As the Hugh Kaul Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art, she organized *Third Space: Shifting Conversations About Contemporary Art*, for which the accompanying catalogue earned her an Award for Excellence from the American Association of Museum Curators in 2019.

Al-Khudhairi holds an MA in Islamic Art and Architecture from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. She is a graduate of the Getty Leadership Institute and a fellow of the Center for Curatorial Leadership program, and in 2020, she was honored with ArtTable's New Leadership Award.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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### **About Art Basel**

Founded in 1970 by gallerists from Basel, Art Basel today stages the world's premier art shows for Modern and contemporary art, sited in Basel, Miami Beach, Hong Kong, Paris, and Qatar. Defined by its host city and region, each show is unique, which is reflected in its participating galleries, artworks presented, and the content of parallel programming produced in collaboration with local institutions for each edition. Art Basel's engagement has expanded through new digital platforms including Zero 10 and the Art Basel App, and initiatives such as the *Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report* and *Survey of Global Collecting*, Art Basel Awards, and Art Basel Shop. For further information, visit [artbasel.com](http://artbasel.com).

### **About Art Basel Qatar**

Launched in February 2026, the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar embedded itself in Qatar's vibrant cultural landscape and established a new, long-term platform for artistic exchange, institutional engagement, and art market development in the MENASA region. Bringing together leading galleries from around the world, Art Basel Qatar provides an unparalleled gateway showcasing exceptional artistic talent from the Global South and beyond.

Art Basel Qatar is committed to developing the regional art market, supported by a year-round program that complements the annual fair. Anchored in a long-term partnership with Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) and QC+, the inaugural edition was met with an exceptional response from the international art community, reflecting the strength, relevance, and ambition of Art Basel's presence in Qatar.

### **About Qatar Sports Investments (QSI)**

Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) is a leading, global strategic investment group focused on world-class assets across sport, entertainment, lifestyle, and culture. Founded in 2004, QSI brings hands-on expertise, innovative capital solutions, and a long-term vision to each of its investments. Its portfolio includes the iconic football club Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the global professional padel tour Premier Padel, and the historic Portuguese football club Sporting Clube de Braga (SC Braga). With a proven track record of transformative impact, QSI continues to shape the future of cultural and entertainment experiences worldwide.

### **About QC+**

QC+ is a strategy group that brings culture to life through experiences that connect and inspire. We merge cultural insight with innovation, positioning culture as a catalyst for creative and commercial growth. Through impactful programmes, activations and professional services, we open up new pathways for value and engagement across tourism, hospitality, retail, and the wider cultural economy. Our expertise spans food and beverage, event hosting within our iconic locations, and art and design consultancy, through to retail and merchandising, product development, and large-scale cultural land development and rejuvenation projects.

Our in-house portfolio includes MICHELIN-awarded restaurants such as IDAM by Alain Ducasse, celebrated Qatari chef Noof Al Marri, and Qatar Creates.

We don't just preserve culture - we cultivate it. This is The Art of Cultural Commerce™.

### **Partners**

Art Basel Qatar's Premium Partner is **Qatar Airways**. Art Basel Qatar's Associate Partner is **BMW**. Art Basel Qatar's Official Partners are **Media City Qatar** and **Zegna**. Art Basel Qatar's Official Hotel Partner is **Rosewood Doha**.

Art Basel's Global Lead Partner is **UBS**.

**Important Dates for Media**

Preview (by invitation only)

Tuesday, January 26 and Wednesday, January 27, 2027

Public opening dates

Thursday, January 28–Saturday, January 30, 2027

**Press accreditation**

Online registration for press accreditation for our show in Qatar will open later this year. For further information, visit [artbasel.com/accreditation](http://artbasel.com/accreditation).

**Upcoming Art Basel Shows**

Basel, June 18–21, 2026

Paris, October 23–25, 2026

Miami Beach, December 4–6, 2026

Qatar, January 28–30, 2027

Hong Kong, March 25–27, 2027

**Media information online**

Media information and images can be downloaded directly from [artbasel.com/press](http://artbasel.com/press). Journalists can subscribe to our media mailings to receive information on Art Basel. For the latest updates on Art Basel, visit [artbasel.com](http://artbasel.com), find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/artbasel](https://facebook.com/artbasel), or follow [@artbasel](https://instagram.com/artbasel) on Instagram and WeChat.

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