

Art Basel

Qatar

PRESS RELEASE

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Inaugural Art Basel Qatar opens in Doha, launching a new chapter for the global fair Monumental Jenny Holzer commission unveiled at the Museum of Islamic Art

Art Basel today opens its first-ever fair in the MENASA region (Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia), marking a significant new chapter in its global evolution and for the international art market. **Art Basel Qatar**, presented in partnership with **Qatar Sports Investments (QSI)** and **QC+**, takes place across Msheireb Downtown Doha and runs through **7 February**.

The inaugural edition of Art Basel brings together **87 international exhibitors**, presenting the work of **84 artists** -- more than half of whom hail from across the MENASA region. Taking place across **M7 and the Doha Design District** in Msheireb Downtown Doha, the fair is structured around solo artist presentations rather than a traditional booth model, offering a more open and focused way to experience the work on view. Under the artistic leadership of **Vincenzo de Bellis**, Art Basel's Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Fairs, and **Wael Shawky**, Artistic Director of the inaugural edition, the fair is shaped by the theme *Becoming*, reflecting a format designed to encourage deeper engagement and to grow in dialogue with its context over time.

On the eve of the fair's first VIP Preview Day, Art Basel and **Visit Qatar**, the fair's Lead Partner, celebrated by unveiling **SONG**, a new site-responsive work by **Jenny Holzer** and the tenth work in the fair's Special Projects program, at a welcome event at Doha's **Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)**. The work activated the museum through two simultaneous projections across the main façade and inner courtyard, accompanied by a single, choreographed performance of over 700 drones in the night sky.

Using poems by **Mahmoud Darwish**, the celebrated Palestinian poet whose lyrical voice has profoundly shaped modern Arabic literature, and **Nujoom Alghanem**, the acclaimed Emirati poet and filmmaker known for her intimate and incisive writing, Holzer brings Arabic and English text into public space as illumination, rhythm, and interruption. Following its debut, the work remains on view to the public nightly as a projection on the museum's main façade throughout the fair.

Representing a defining moment in Art Basel's 55-year history, the new fair responds to Qatar's long-standing investment in culture by establishing a platform that connects the region's burgeoning artistic production with Art Basel's global network, nurturing long-term growth and exchange across the art market.

To learn more about the fair and related programming, including the Galleries sector highlights, Special Projects commissions, Conversations series and more, [please visit our press dossier](#).

Art Basel Qatar will take place from February 5-7, with preview days on February 3 and 4. All visitor information [can be found here](#).

Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums said:
"Today marks a special moment – one that connects talent and industry, by welcoming the establishment of Art

Basel in the Middle East. This is the beginning of a bold, exciting, and truly unique undertaking – one that merges with and amplifies the cultural and artistic ecosystem we have been building, piece by piece, for the past fifty years. We are here not just to present yet another art fair, but to curate a platform that uplifts the creativity of an entire region, remaining deeply human-centered and humane, and inviting the world to be curious about who we really are, and engage in meaningful conversations.”

His Excellency Nasser bin Ghanim Al-Khelaifi, Chairman of Qatar Sports Investments said: “The launch of Art Basel Qatar marks a historic moment, showcasing Qatar and the Arab world as a place where the world comes together to exchange ideas and be inspired. It also reflects our national vision rooted in creativity, culture, innovation and openness. We are very proud that Art Basel Qatar continues the great legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, alongside many other leading global events in Qatar every year - uniting people through sports, art and culture; and inspiring positive cultural change and understanding all around the world.”

His Excellency Saad bin Ali Al-Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar, said: “The arrival of Art Basel Qatar marks an important milestone in Doha’s evolution as a global cultural destination, building on years of investment in museums, creative districts, and international events. As Lead Partner, Visit Qatar is proud to support a platform that places culture at the heart of the destination experience, inviting the international arts community to engage with Doha as a place of dialogue, inspiration, and exchange. This partnership reflects our shared ambition to strengthen creative industries and position culture as a bridge between Qatar and the world.”

Andrea Zappia, Chairman and Group CEO, MCH Group, said: “I’m incredibly proud to see Art Basel Qatar come to fruition – a hugely important milestone for the Art Basel business and for MCH Group’s wider work across the region and globally. Qatar’s vision and long-standing investment in culture have created fertile ground for entrepreneurship, partnership, and cultural collaboration, and we see extraordinary opportunities across the board. We are honoured to have worked with QSI and QC+ to bring Art Basel’s platform to Doha at this moment and excited for both this inaugural week, and what is to come.”

Noah Horowitz, Chief Executive Officer, Art Basel, said: “Art Basel Qatar represents a pivotal moment for our platform and for the global art market. Conceived specifically for this place and developed in close partnership with our Qatari collaborators, the fair reflects the region’s extraordinary cultural ambition as well as our commitment to building platforms that are both locally and globally resonant. By connecting the broader MENASA region more deeply with Art Basel’s international ecosystem, we are creating new opportunities for artists, galleries, and audiences – while advancing a model of growth that is entrepreneurial, inclusive, and built for the long term.”

Vincenzo de Bellis, Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Art Fairs, said: “With Art Basel Qatar, we wanted to rethink how an art fair is structured and experienced. The multi-site format across Msheireb and the decision to work exclusively with solo artist presentations create a slower, more deliberate rhythm – one that prioritizes focus, context, and return over speed and accumulation. This approach reflects how we believe art fairs can evolve: as platforms that remain commercial, but also offer deeper, more sustained engagement with artistic practice.”

Wael Shawky, Artistic Director of the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar, said: “What interested me about this role was the possibility of an art fair that doesn’t separate the market from education, but understands them as part of the same ecosystem. The open format of Art Basel Qatar allows artists to present complete thoughts rather than fragments and invites audiences to truly encounter the work. In that sense, the fair is not only a place to acquire art, but a cultural platform that can generate long-term knowledge, dialogue, and opportunity for artists.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

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, please visit artbasel.com.

About Art Basel Qatar

Debuting in Doha in February 2026, Art Basel Qatar will embed itself in Qatar's vibrant cultural landscape and provide an unparalleled platform to showcase leading galleries and artistic talent from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and further afield. The new fair is the centerpiece of a one-of-a-kind partnership between Art Basel; its parent company MCH Group; Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), a major investor in sports, culture, entertainment and lifestyle; and QC+, a strategic and creative collective specializing in cultural commerce.

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 **Lead Partner** is Visit Qatar.

Visit Qatar is the main marketing and promotional arm of Qatar Tourism, dedicated to promoting and expanding tourism in Qatar by cultivating its rich culture, developing thrilling attractions, enhancing Qatar's calendar, becoming the leading MICE destination in the region, and diversifying events and luxury experiences. Visit Qatar is rooted in Service Excellence, boosting the entire tourism value chain, and increasing local and international visitor demand in Qatar. Through our network of international offices in priority markets, cutting-edge digital platforms, and marketing campaigns, Visit Qatar is expanding Qatar's presence globally and enhancing the tourism sector.

As the Lead Partner for Art Basel Qatar, Visit Qatar curates a welcoming space that brings together conversation, creativity, and cuisine, offering a glimpse of Qatar's spirit and contemporary identity. Through this collaboration, Visit Qatar reinforces the nation's position not only as a premier travel destination but as a place to live, create and imagine new possibilities.

For more information, visit www.visitqatar.com.

Art Basel Qatar's **Premium Partner** is Qatar Airways.

Named the World's Best Airline a record ninth time at the 2025 Skytrax World Airline Awards, Qatar Airways leverages its network of over 170 destinations to connect people, places, and cultures. As Art Basel's Premium Partner, the national airline of The State of Qatar showcases its ability to be a catalyst for discovery and cultural

dialogue. This long-term alliance sees the airline support all of the fair's prestigious annual exhibitions – in Basel, Paris, Hong Kong, Miami Beach, as well as its newly launched edition in Qatar, marking an exciting introduction of the renowned fair's debut in The Middle East.

Additionally, Art Basel Qatar's **Associate Partners** are UBS, Audemars Piguet and BMW; its **Official Logistics Partner** is GWC; its **Official Partners** are Media City Qatar and Zegna; and its **Official Hotel Partner** is Rosewood Doha.

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

For more information, please visit artbasel.com/partners.

Upcoming Art Basel shows

Qatar, February 5-7, 2026

Hong Kong, March 27-29, 2026

Basel, June 18-21, 2026

Paris, October 23-25, 2026

Miami Beach, December 4-6, 2026

Media Information Online

Press releases and high-resolution images can be downloaded directly from 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, find us on Facebook at facebook.com/artbasel, or follow @artbasel on Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, and WeChat.

Press Contacts

Art Basel, Darah Ghanem

press@artbasel.com

Brunswick Arts, Darrell Rocha

artbaselqatar@brunswickgroup.com

QC+, Megan Sprenger

megan.sprenger@finnpartners.com

Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), Fiona Cumberland

fcumberland.ext@qsi.com.qa

MCH Group, Lucia Uebersax

media@mch-group.com