

# THE ART NEWSPAPER

## A giant inflatable Koons, a desert mirror illusion and a giant football goal: seven of the best new sculptures in Qatar

On display from the airport to the desert, the public art commissions have been installed in time for the World Cup this month

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Yayoi Kusama's dotty tree installation. © Iwan Baan

From a giant inflatable sea creature by Jeff Koons to Olafur Eliasson's installation of mirrored shelters in the desert, the three-week run-up to the Fifa World Cup 2022 in Qatar has the small Gulf state busy unveiling a raft of ambitious public art commissions.

In a statement, the chair of Qatar Museums (QM), Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, describes public art as “one of our most prominent demonstrations of cultural exchange, where we present works from artists of all nationalities and

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backgrounds”. Over the past decade, QM has installed some 70 monumental pieces by international, regional and local artists in public spaces from the airport to the Doha souq. The programme is ramping up to more than 100 works in time for the World Cup (20 November-18 December), when an estimated 1.5 million football fans are expected to descend on the country (population: 2.9 million).

Here, we look at seven of the new installations that make up Qatar’s “vast outdoor art museum experience” in the capital and beyond.



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**Najla El Zein, *Us, Her, Him* (2022), Flag Plaza, Doha**

Lebanese artist Najla El Zein worked through the pandemic with a team of stone carvers in Beirut to produce this site-specific installation stretching for more than 300 metres around Doha’s recently created Flag Plaza. The sinuous, interlacing limestone forms reflect ideas of human connection and collectivity and double up as public benches, inviting people to rest and gather.

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