

The Art Newspaper

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

1 November 2022



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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



Yayoi Kusama's *Ascension of Polka Dots on the Trees* (2002/2022) Installation view, *My Soul Blooms Forever*, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar.

Photo by Iwan Baan. Artwork © YAYOI KUSAMA. Courtesy David Zwirner, Ota Fine Arts, and Victoria Miro

From a giant inflatable sea creature by Jeff Koons to Olafur Eliasson's installation of mirrored shelters in the desert, the 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 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.



© Iwan Baan

Jeff Koons, *Dugong* (2022), Al Masrah Park, Doha

Jeff Koons’s shiny inflatable, towering more than 20 metres high and 30 metres long over Doha’s Corniche, takes the form and the name of an endangered marine mammal that has inhabited the Gulf’s waters for thousands of years. *Dugong* will remain in place for around six months as a symbol of the need to protect Qatar’s wildlife.



Photo by Iwan Baan; Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York and Los Angeles; Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro

Ernesto Neto, *Slug Turtle, TemplEarth* (2022), near Al Zubarah Fort and Ain Mohammed

Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto's crochet environment, also located in the northern desert, invites visitors to enter inside an octagonal football goal with a ceramic globe at its centre. Open to the elements, it is intended as a place of meditation and communion: between human beings and the desert and between people of different nations.