

Q LIFE

MAGAZINE | ISSUE 13



GENERATION *to*
GENERATION





GENERATION *to* GENERATION

Table of Contents

1 Foreword	13 Amna Al-Misned Redefining Qatari Fashion with TRZI	23 Shouq Al Mana Bridging Tradition and Tomorrow	35 Turning Back Time Qatar's Mission to Preserve Regional Heritage at the National Library
3 The Barsham Legacy A Family's Journey to Sporting Greatness	17 Qatar's Falcons From Desert Hunts to High-Tech Skies	27 The Cooking Academy Mastering the Art of Qatari Cooking with the Al Tamimi Duo	39 History, Geography, and Culture An Education through Architecture
9 Al Shaqab Preserving the Tradition of Qatari Horsemanship	19 Family Heirlooms A Family Legacy of Business, and Jewellery	31 Through Her Lens Mashael Alhejazi's Tribute to the Traditional Qatari Home	



Foreword

Qatari culture has evolved in unimaginable ways over the last 25 years, yet it has never been truer to itself.

The 13th edition of Q Life Magazine – Generation to Generation – explores the breadth of Qatar's ever-evolving traditions and celebrates the individuals and families passing down their heritage to future generations.

Within the lifetimes of Qatar's parents and grandparents, the country has undergone dramatic transformation. Those reflecting on the past thirty years recall a Doha that feels worlds apart from today's reality. Yet, rather than fading into history, Qatari culture and traditions continue to flourish, staying true to their roots while embracing modern technology and growing more vibrant in an ever-changing world.

This edition highlights the individuals bringing Qatari culture to life. From young Qatari artists and designers reimagining their heritage through new mediums, to passionate equestrians preserving horsemanship as an intrinsic part of Qatari family identity, Generation to Generation explores how a nation remains deeply invested in celebrating its heritage.

During our conversations with families about their hopes, aspirations and the legacy they want to create for future generations, it became clear that heritage is not always something tangible. For many, values such as honesty, determination and resilience are just as integral to their cultural identity as traditions and customs.

With staggering developments in technology, the world is moving at lightning pace and traditions of the past risk being left behind. However, the people of Qatar have made it their mission to preserve their heritage, while fully embracing innovation, creativity and the future – in other words, the next generation.

The Barsham Legacy

A Family's Journey to Sporting Greatness

Athletic prowess rarely runs so deep within one family. In an exclusive interview, legendary Olympian Mutaz Barsham, his football star younger brother Meshaal, and their father, renowned track and field athlete Essa, reflect on the inspirations and friendly rivalry that have propelled them to the very top of professional sport – collectively sharing 4 Olympic medals and an Asian Cup.



On a warm Tokyo evening in 2021, Mutaz donned his iconic sunglasses in his usual pre-competition ritual - not yet knowing he was about to propel himself, and the Barsham name, into the Olympic history books. That night, he leapt 2.37m to clinch Qatar's first-ever track and field gold medal in the high jump and displayed a level of sportsmanship unseen for more than 100 years, graciously accepting a joint first place with his friend and fellow athlete, the Italian Gianmarco Tamberi.

"As sports people, we are very greedy and that's the only way to get to the top," explains Mutaz. However, that night he most famously chose a different path.

Having suffered a potentially career-ending injury in 2018, it was a miracle that he had made it onto the world stage again - and with such success.

"I felt like God gave me one chance, I wanted to do something different." And so, a shared gold medal came to be.

While the scene touched audiences around the world, such displays of Mutaz's character in the face of adversity were also a profound source of inspiration for his brother Meshaal, a well-known football star who plays for Qatar's national team.



From left to right: Essa Barsham, Meshaal Barsham, Mutaz Barsham



“
I felt like God gave
me one chance,
I wanted to do
something different.”

MUTAZ BARSHAM
Olympic high jumper

"I'm really inspired by my brother's dedication... When he got injured and the doctors told him that he might have to stop competing after the surgery, he came back and won the gold medal at home in front of the fans," says Meshaal, referring to Mutaz's golden triumphs at the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships in Doha.

Meshaal is a goalkeeper for Qatar's most successful football club, Al Sadd, and a career-defining national achievement of his own came in February 2024 as he helped his country win back-to-back titles at Asia's biggest football tournament, the AFC Asian Cup.

As the brothers joke between themselves, it is made very clear that just as Meshaal looks to his older brother for inspiration, Mutaz speaks ardently about his younger brother's day-to-day dedication and consistency, on how he is never swayed into complacency despite his success.

However, Mutaz and Meshaal are not the only bearers of sporting prowess and inspiration in the family.

As the two brothers sit side by side, they both agree they have been inspired and owe a measure of success to their father, Essa Barsham. Essa was a track and field athlete himself and, according to Mutaz, a man who has "sport running in his veins".

"Sports can be passed down through generations. When a child sees their parent is an athlete, they can grow to have the same passion," Essa says. "When Mutaz was just a boy, I used to take him with me to Khalifa International Stadium and he watched me train."

When Meshaal began to show an inclination for football, Essa was his biggest supporter. "I try to never miss Meshaal's games, except if I'm working. Even if I have training, I'll prioritise him".

This philosophy from Essa ran through Mutaz and Meshaal's childhood, spent trackside as their father trained, and playing games in their neighbourhood where they would hear friends shouting - "Hey, your father's on TV!"

As their talents quickly grew, the young Barshams also drew inspiration from the aptly named Aspire Academy, a Qatari institution renowned for its development of young athletes.

“Aspire Academy is like our second home,” says Mutaz, his brother adding, “I wouldn’t be where I am now without the Academy.”

Coming from such an encouraging environment, the brothers were then greeted with fierce national support that has, at times, even helped tip the scales in favour of victory. This was the case in the Asian Cup semi-final when Qatar’s football team were exhausted and fighting for the win, explains Meshaal, “When we heard the fans – it was the loudest sound I’ve ever heard,” and suddenly a second Asian Cup victory was within reach.

“When we reached the semi-finals [of the Asian Cup], I had this feeling,” Meshaal recalled, “I told Mutaz, you have to get me some glasses and I’m going to wear them in the final after we win the competition.”

And sure enough, in what became a now legendary moment in the sporting history of Qatar, Meshaal donned a pair of bright blue shades not only as his team won the tournament on home turf, but as he accepted the Best Goalkeeper award at the 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

Their father’s philosophy that ‘Sport is life’ has clearly been the foundation upon which Mutaz and Meshaal have built their extraordinary careers. In the end, it is their unwavering support for one another and their shared love for sport that have solidified this family’s legacy in Qatar’s rich sporting history.



MESHAAL BARSHAM
Goalkeeper for the Qatari National Team and Al Sadd SC.

Al Shaqab

Preserving the Tradition of Qatari Horsemanship

Just west of Qatar's capital, Doha, lies a horseshoe-shaped complex spanning over 980,000 square metres – the Al Shaqab equestrian centre. Located on the site where Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani led the State of Qatar to independence on horseback in 1893, Al Shaqab is a world-leading hub for the preservation of the Arabian horse breed and Qatar's equestrian tradition.

A pastime rooted in nomadic bedouin traditions, horseriding has been integral to everyday life in Qatar's storied history. Recognising the importance of protecting this heritage, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani established Al Shaqab in 1992. Under his visionary guidance, the centre has evolved into a globally renowned institution.

This mission has been carried out by individuals such as Khalid Al Jahni. From his first steps as a young equestrian to his current role as Breeding and Show Manager at Al Shaqab, Al Jahni represents how the centre bridges Qatar's rich equestrian past with its ambitious future.



How did your passion for horse riding begin?

My passion began when I was 10 or 11. I was playing football around Al Shaqab and we noticed just behind the fence there was a group of people riding horses. I was with my brother and cousin and from that moment my passion for horse riding began. The next day we decided not to play football and instead go horse riding. I started formal riding three times a week and then began participating in endurance races and show jumping.

How does Al Shaqab ensure that traditional methods and skills are passed down to future generations?

When Al Shaqab started, they were educating people on breeding Arabian horses. However, a few years later, they established the riding academy. Both departments are essential to pass equestrianism to the next generation, as they help the community in Qatar, locals and even people from abroad to learn about horsemanship.

Could you give a brief history of horsemanship in Qatar?

The best way to explain horsemanship in Qatar is with the founder of Qatar, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani. In his time, they brought the best horses from around the region to Qatar for trade, and even battles. The care of the Arabian horses began in that time and, gladly, it continues until now.

“
I believe this
tradition is inherited
by all Qatari families.”

KHALID AL JAHNI
Breeding & Show Manager at Al Shaqab

What do you think the future of horsemanship and equestrianism looks like in Qatar, and the world?

Al Shaqab organises five-star show jumping competitions, including the Longines Global Champions Tour Doha and CHI Al Shaqab, with many top riders participating in these events. Continuing to organise these events and teaching the current generation to ride and lead the Arabian horse, I believe will expand equestrianism in Qatar and keep Qatar in the lead.

Can you tell us about some of the key achievements that Al Shaqab has attained in the global equine field?

The first stallion bred by Al Shaqab was Al Adeed Al Shaqab, born in 1995. The success of Al Shaqab started from there, and then with Ghazal Al Shaqab, who also became a world champion. Then came the legend Marwan Al Shaqab who was born in 2000 and became world champion three times in three categories. He also produced more than six world champions and was the lead breeding stallion for ten years.

Would you say that there is a tradition of horse riding or horse breeding in your family?

Not only in my family, I believe this tradition is inherited by all Qatari families. If you look around, you find that in their history, all families were involved with horses. It's a part of Qatari culture.

On a personal level, as well as in your capacity as a manager at Al Shaqab, how do you hope to pass on your passion for equestrianism?

I hope for myself and Al Shaqab to pass the legacy of equestrianism to the next generation through achievement and success. We hope that the next generation can continue and keep Qatari equestrianism and Al Shaqab in the lead.



Amna Al-Misned

Redefining Qatari Fashion with TRZI

Qatari fashion designer Amna Al-Misned is the founder of TRZI, a brand transforming traditional Qatari attire.



Described by *The New York Times* as 'traditional meets modern', Amna founded her brand TRZI to connect today's aspirational women to their cultural roots.

With this innovative approach, Amna has elevated her fashion house to become a pioneer in the region, captivating not only Middle Eastern clientele but also gaining recognition on the global stage.

It is hard to believe that her journey began with something as simple as a family wedding.

At just 15 years old, ahead of an upcoming celebration, Amna's mother encouraged her to drape a piece of fabric for the first time, which she then had sewn by a tailor. Reflecting on that moment years later, Amna considers it the start of an incredible career.

Further encouraged by the time spent with her aunt at the sewing machine, Amna decided to study fashion design at university – though things could have been very different. After graduating from high school, Amna felt pressure to make the 'smart' choice and study a subject like business, but found herself drawn towards her creative ambitions.

"I was lucky enough to have [my family's] support and belief in this passion that I had," she says gratefully. With their blessing, Amna graduated with a BA in fashion design.

It was during her academic studies that Amna founded TRZI – a brand that has since been consistently at the forefront of Qatari innovation in fashion.

“ It’s your identity, it’s who you are, it’s part of your journey.”

AMNA AL-MISNED
Founder of TRZI

From sustainability initiatives allowing buyers to have their clothes repaired or redesigned, to the brand's central mission of reimagining traditional elements of the abaya for modern audiences, Amna's company is forward-looking and embraces ethical practices.

Counting women and art among her inspirations, at the centre of her passions lies something centuries old: “I think tradition and culture is the core of everything that is in the present moment,” says Amna, “It's your identity, it's who you are, it's part of your journey.”

With this philosophy at the heart of her approach, Amna began designing clothes for her family, giving back to the women who first supported and believed in her. The designs integrated the sights and feelings she encountered growing up in Qatar – taking inspiration from regional architecture and local Qatari customs.

TRZI does not only seek to celebrate the culture as it is, but to blend it with global fashion trends. “That was the main mission since the very beginning,” Amna says. “I like to take those elements and turn them into something that is relevant to today and make it contemporary.”



Amna explains through taking a minimalist approach, TRZI allows wearers to access the contemporary through tradition. Through simple designs, customers can dress pieces up or down to suit their modern lives and individual preferences all the while celebrating their heritage.

For Amna, individuality is a central tenet of her brand – and is even seen in its name. With a helping hand from her father, the brand was named after a term meaning ‘tailoring’ or ‘embroidery’ in many cultures – a feeling that Amna wanted buyers to experience when wearing her pieces.

However, Amna does not take credit for this approach of merging the contemporary and unique with tradition. She speaks fondly of how young people have adapted Qatari traditional dress while being true to their own style, while emphasising her hope that the pride she feels in her culture will continue with the younger generations. She notes that this pride extends “not only to our clothing or traditional garments, but also to our way of living, having pride in that, and holding on to it.”

Since founding TRZI, Amna has gone from strength to strength, opening a flagship store in Msheireb Downtown Doha, having her designs worn by Qatar's leading female figures, and designing the uniforms for the National Museum of Qatar, taking inspiration from its stunning architecture.

Despite her myriad successes since she draped that first piece of wedding fabric years ago, Amna's regard for her family in these moments is clear. She credits them for her love of culture and tradition which permeates her work – gifts from the past that have changed not only her career but her very self.

She speaks of the discipline that her family passed down to her - it is this same tireless discipline that has propelled Amna from the backroom of her family's home to the world stage. However, looking back on this impressive journey, Amna emphasises the importance of every step on that path. “[TRZI] was very small. It was very simple. But I learned so much from these little moments,” she says, “I see how they built up my courage to be here today.”

Qatar's Falcons

From Desert Hunts to High-Tech Skies

Falconry has a storied history in the Arab world, particularly in Qatar, where the practice is recognised on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List.

Once an essential skill perfected by Qatar's bedouins to hunt for food, falconry has evolved into a popular sport – often passed down from one generation to the next. Despite its constant evolution, the essence of falconry remains unchanged.

As one explores the world of falconry, it becomes clear that the sport offers a delicate balance between past and present.

A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD BOND

The bond between a falconer and his bird is built on trust, respect, and mutual dependence – a connection that has been cultivated over many centuries. This relationship becomes especially intimate due to the extensive time and effort required to train a falcon, resulting in a deep bond of mutual dedication.

PRECIOUS CARGO

What began as a nomadic practice rooted in survival now spans the globe, with falcons even having their own passports as they jet-set around the world. In the Middle East, it is not uncommon to see these regal birds travelling alongside passengers on planes.



21ST CENTURY APPROACHES

Like most sports, falconry has embraced modern technology. Where lightweight bells once tracked falcons during hunts, today's falconers use advanced radio transmitters with ranges extending up to 50 kilometres.

The annual Katara International Hunting and Falcons Exhibition, also known as S'hail, serves as a hub for enthusiasts to showcase the latest technologies, from state-of-the-art 4x4 vehicles to air-conditioned facilities for their birds.

FALCON AUCTIONS

S'hail hosts falcon auctions, where the value of birds is determined by their breed, training, and hunting skills. Wild-caught birds are highly prized for their superior hunting skills compared to their farm-raised counterparts. In recent years, some birds have sold for up to 800,000 QAR (\$219,500 USD).

ADVANCED MEDICAL CARE

The high prices these majestic birds command reflect their esteemed status in Qatari culture. Owners take great care of their birds, which in Qatar, led to the establishment of the specialised Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital. While tourists and casual enthusiasts admire these birds at the Souq Waqif market, close by, dedicated falconers can ensure their companions receive the best care, with the hospital servicing up to 130-150 falcons a day during peak season.

Family Heirlooms

A Family Legacy of Business, and Jewellery

Ali Al Khalaf and his daughter, Mariam Ali Al Khalaf, have been integral to Qatar's fine jewellery scene, demonstrating an unwavering passion for a craft that has long been an essential element of their country's heritage. With two generations of Al Khalafs deeply involved in the jewellery business, Mariam and Ali share how their heritage inspired the founding of their respective ventures, GEMA and Arts & Gems.

"In the past, pearl trading was like oil trading today," Ali Al Khalaf reflects.

With pearl diving in Qatar dating back to as early as 4,600 BCE, by the beginning of the 20th century, nearly half of the peninsula's 27,000-strong population was employed in the pearling industry. As a result, jewellery and fine craftsmanship remain deeply intertwined with Qatar's heritage.

This history is not only that of the country but also of Ali Al Khalaf's own family. Generations of Al Khalafs have been inextricably involved with the pearl trade, a passion that culminated in Ali's founding of Arts & Gems, a high-end jewellery brand. Through his business, Ali sought to elevate the intricate designs rooted in Qatari culture to the global stage, attracting clientele from around the world to share in these pieces of history.





A true entrepreneur, Ali balanced his jewellery business with his work at the Ministry of Commerce, unknowingly setting a precedent that his daughter would follow. Mariam Ali Al Khalaf grew up immersed in the world of fine jewellery, accompanying her father to the workshop and watching him undertake the intricate processes of watch and diamond setting. “As a young girl, I knew the difference between sapphire, ruby, and emerald diamonds,” Mariam recalls fondly.

Mariam’s mother also played a crucial role in nurturing her appreciation for jewellery’s beauty, introducing her to unconventional designs that fused traditional gold-heavy styles with jewels rarely seen in the Middle East. This early exposure fueled Mariam’s ambitions, leading her to study jewellery grading in the US before returning to establish GEMA, a sub-brand of Arts & Gems designed for ‘the woman of tomorrow’.

While Arts & Gems focuses on high-end pieces for special occasions, GEMA offers versatile designs for daily wear, bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary styles.

“I love to mix Qatari identity and tradition into modern jewellery,” Mariam explains. Just as her father integrated traditional Qatari designs with his own business instincts, Mariam’s jewellery often features elements inspired by her cultural surroundings. Her ‘Jiwan’ collection, for instance, includes pieces adorned with motifs like the Arabian oryx and *dhow* boat, symbols deeply rooted in Qatar’s heritage.

As Mariam focuses on jewellery that makes generations of history wearable for everyday life, Ali too has observed a resurgence of interest in traditional pieces among younger generations. Despite the global trends towards modernisation in fashion, Ali



finds that many young women in Qatar are returning to heritage pieces, emphasising the timeless appeal of traditional Qatari jewellery.

Through GEMA, Mariam not only celebrates traditional designs but also preserves her own family heirlooms, values of honesty and innovation inherited from her parents. Mariam strives to elevate GEMA to the prominence her father’s Arts & Gems has achieved over decades, while simultaneously propelling her father’s legacy to new heights.

Together, the father and daughter duo continue to shine in the jewellery industry, demonstrating the enduring power of heritage, passion, and tradition. Through Arts & Gems and GEMA, Ali and Mariam are not only creating beautiful pieces; they are crafting a legacy for Qatar’s jewellery scene that will undoubtedly flourish for generations to come.

“
I love to mix
Qatari identity
and tradition into
modern jewellery.”

MARIAM ALI AL KHALAF
Founder of GEMA

Shouq Al Mana

Bridging Tradition and Tomorrow

Shouq Al Mana is a contemporary Qatari artist focusing on themes of culture and identity, influenced by her interest in merging elements from the past and present. With an impressive array of artwork under her belt, Shouq is a rising star in Qatar's burgeoning art scene.

EGAL, SHOUQ AL MANA

Egal is a tribute to Qatar's traditions, representing a piece of headwear worn by men as part of the national attire.



What began your interest in art?

One of my earliest memories that sparked my interest in art was when I first picked up a paintbrush as a child. The sheer possibility of creating something entirely new and personal from a blank canvas captivated me. I vividly recall the joy and freedom I felt, which ignited a passion for art that has remained a driving force throughout my life.

Your work focuses a lot on painting and sculpture, what drew you to these mediums?

The duality of painting and sculpture allows me to convey my ideas in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms, offering a broader spectrum for artistic expression. Painting provides a platform for exploring colour, texture, and emotion, while sculpture engages with physical space and form. This combination enables me to explore and present different facets of a concept, enriching the narrative and impact of my work.

How do you find a balance between preserving traditional Qatari culture and embracing modern influences?

My style is a fusion of traditional and cultural Qatari elements translated into a contemporary vision. This blend creates a visual dialogue that bridges the past and the present, allowing me to address themes of identity, culture, and unity.

Balancing traditional and modern elements involves a deep respect for our cultural heritage while being open to contemporary techniques and ideas. I strive to create works that honour the past but are also relevant and engaging to today's audience. This interplay between tradition and modernity is essential for keeping our cultural narratives alive and evolving. By incorporating traditional motifs and modern aesthetics, my work creates a sense of shared heritage and contemporary relevance with diverse audiences.



Could you speak about your Egal sculpture at Lusail Marina Promenade and how it connects to Qatari culture?

The Egal sculpture is a tribute to Qatari heritage, symbolising unity and resilience. My aim was to convey the importance of cultural heritage and the enduring spirit of the Qatari people. The sculpture is a reminder of our roots, values, and the collective strength that defines us.

The egal, a traditional headpiece worn by men across the region, embodies the strength, pride, and identity of our people. By monumentalising this symbol, the sculpture serves as a cultural beacon, celebrating our heritage and its relevance in contemporary society.

What was it like working on more unconventional pieces like a Formula One race helmet?

Working on Pierre Gasly's Formula One race helmet was a unique and thrilling experience. It provided an opportunity to blend art with the dynamic world of sports, creating a visually striking and culturally infused piece. Adapting my artistic style to a different medium and audience was challenging yet immensely rewarding.



Can you explain the power of contemporary art in translating history and culture to younger generations?

Contemporary art has the unique ability to make history and culture accessible for younger generations. It can reinterpret traditional narratives in ways that resonate with modern sensibilities, sparking interest and pride in their heritage. Through contemporary art, young people can connect with their roots in a way that feels relevant and inspiring.

I've witnessed firsthand younger audiences engaging with my work and their curiosity and enthusiasm, coupled with a renewed sense of pride in their cultural heritage, are incredibly fulfilling and affirm the impact of my artistic endeavours.

“
I strive to create works that honour the past but are also relevant and engaging to today's audience.”

SHOUQ AL MANA
Contemporary Qatari Artist



The Cooking Academy

Mastering the Art of Qatari Cooking with the Al Tamimi Duo



Before she became a celebrated chef with numerous cookbooks and a cooking show on Qatar Television spanning many years, Aisha Al Tamimi grew up in a house where everyone cooked – except for her.

As the youngest in her family, she grew up watching her parents and older siblings cook without feeling a particular pull towards the kitchen herself. It wasn't until she got married that she began to learn the craft, realising from her family that food was one of the greatest ways to show love.

Leaning on her family to teach her the basics, Aisha's passion for cooking quickly grew as she discovered the world of *Khaleeji* cooking – *Khaleeji* being a term describing the people and culture from the Gulf region. As Aisha began to immerse herself in the regional cuisine's traditional techniques and spices, she found a whole culinary world waiting for her.

"I wanted to learn as much as I could. I watched cooking shows and read food magazines. Whenever I found an idea I liked, I would scribble down the recipe. I still have those scraps of paper, even 27 years later," she recalls.

But as a young mother and schoolteacher, food was still just a hobby for Aisha. She loved experimenting with different recipes, baked goods and treats to see what her friends and family enjoyed. With each new culinary invention during those early years in the kitchen, a simple question followed: "Aisha, how did you make this dish?"

Looking back, Aisha remembers how this question changed: "One day, my friends said to me, why don't you write a cookbook?"

With unwavering support from her loved ones, Aisha set out to do just that, and after years of research and recipe testing, she published her first cookbook in 2005. "When I saw how much people loved the book, my passion grew even more."

The following year, Aisha hosted her first live cooking show on Qatar Television, becoming one of the first to do so in the country. "My life has felt like a ladder, every stage I passed elevated me to the next."

A witness to this never-ending ladder of success was Aisha's son, Mohammed Al Hammadi. Watching his mother pursue her passion, Mohammed couldn't help but develop a similar connection to food.

For him, this connection blossomed when he fasted for the first time during the holy month of Ramadan. Restless and hungry, he made his way to the kitchen, where Aisha handed him a thin sheet of filo pastry and taught him how to fill it, fold it, and fry it. In that moment, Mohammed quickly forgot everything but the intricate task in front of him, becoming an expert in *samboosas* – a triangular filled pastry common throughout the Middle East.

Mohammed honed his cooking skills further during his time studying abroad. Craving a taste of home, cooking helped him feel closer to his family despite the miles between them.

Although trained as an aeronautical engineer, Mohammed continued to lend a hand to his mother's culinary endeavours over the years. He watched Aisha represent Qatar at global events, from Expo Milan to the Rio Olympics, while her curated menu travelled the world onboard Qatar Airways flights. As his mother's reputation grew, Mohammed realised the impact she was having on the global prominence of *Khaleeji* food.

Together, they founded The Cooking Academy in 2018, opening a space for culinary education and introduction to Qatari cuisine. "The inspiration behind The Cooking Academy was Chef Aisha," Mohammed says. "For years I saw her invite people into our home to teach them about Qatari cuisine." Their passion project aims to preserve Qatari culinary traditions, ensuring they are exposed to the next generation and shared with new audiences at home and abroad.

"Our generation has preserved our culinary traditions," Aisha says, "I urge the future generations to continue preserving it... traditional *Khaleeji* food must be documented, and untouched." While appliances may change and techniques develop, Aisha insists that the authentic foods and spices remain the same.

Beyond her hopes for the preservation of Qatari cuisine, Aisha also reflects on a more personal level about what she hopes to leave behind: "My kitchen is my legacy. I taught generations how to cook. It's a great feeling to know you have accomplished this."



“
My kitchen is my legacy. I taught generations how to cook. It's a great feeling to know you have accomplished this.

AISHA AL TAMIMI
Chef and Co-Founder of The Cooking Academy

Through Her Lens

Mashael Alhejazi's Tribute to the Traditional Qatari Home

Mashael Alhejazi is a photographer and artist known for capturing the essence of Qatari life and tradition through her lens.

She is known for her exhibition titled 'My Mother Lulwa's House', a heartfelt tribute to the traditional Qatari family home. The exhibition celebrates the various spaces within Qatari homes, emphasising the love, warmth, and familial bonds that fill them.

In this interview, Mashael shares insights into her creative journey, the inspiration behind her work, and her passion for documenting Qatari culture for future generations.



How did you become interested in photography?

My journey with photography began when I was a young girl. It was my favourite way to capture and preserve happy memories. I started using instant and artistic cameras, and over time, I subconsciously honed my skills until my photos began to stand out compared to others.

What inspired you to pursue art and photography?

What inspired me most was my desire to focus on this hobby that I love. My academic background is in finance, which brings a lot of stress, and being a mother also comes with its pressures. I needed something to escape from the demands of everyday life, and photography became that outlet.

I started taking photos professionally in 2016 when there was a lot of momentum for photographers in Qatar, but I never wanted to compete. Instead, I focused on what mattered to me, starting with documenting the doors of Msheireb, the neighbourhood where I grew up. This led to my project, 'My Mother Lulwa's House'.

Could you tell us about the inspiration behind your exhibition 'My Mother Lulwa's House' ?

The exhibition was inspired by the Qatari family and community. I wanted to present a typical Qatari family in a way that felt true and expressive. The idea came to life when I was shown where my work would be displayed - a restored heritage house in the Al-Jufairi neighborhood, close to Msheireb where I grew up. The house seemed lifeless at first, but I wanted to bring it back to life through simple, focused photography, capturing a Qatari family with minimal distractions.



Masha'el Alhejazi breathes life into this traditional Qatari space with portraiture of her family members.

How do you believe photography can help preserve Qatari traditions?

Freezing a moment in time is the essence of photography. Photography helps preserve Qatari heritage and traditions in a unique and straightforward way, documenting moments for both the present and future generations.

How would you describe a traditional Qatari family home for those who may not know much about it?

In 'My Mother Lulwa's House', the two rooms I highlighted represent the core of a Qatari household. The men's *majlis* is where all the male gatherings take place, and the mother's room is the heart of the home, filled with warmth and memories of the children. The mother's photo is central in the room, symbolising her role as the foundation of the house.

I want people to appreciate the simplicity of the traditional Qatari home from my pictures. My photos reflect my personal experience growing up in a Qatari family. As a Qatari woman, I aim to preserve certain values and ideas, capturing the essence of my identity through my portraits.

Could you explain the importance of preserving and honouring Qatari traditions?

Preserving Qatari traditions is crucial, whether through art or other means. When we are represented internationally, we are recognised as Arab artists with strong values and principles. These values, when upheld, allow us to leave a lasting impact.



Turning Back Time

Qatar's Mission to Preserve Regional Heritage at the National Library

Issue 13

When first encountering the Qatar National Library (QNL), it's immediately apparent that this is no ordinary building. Designed by acclaimed architect Rem Koolhaas, the structure's curved glass windows and spaceship-like entrance draw visitors into a space flooded with natural light and an impressive collection of over one million books.

But beyond the books and manuscripts on display lies the library's Conservation and Preservation Centre. Here, a dedicated team of specialists has undertaken the vital task of protecting and restoring not just Qatar's national heritage, but that of the entire region.

Maxim Nasra is the Head of the Preservation and Conservation Centre, in charge of the meticulous processes behind conservation. Talking to Nasra, he discusses the most treasured pieces in the collection and explores how the Centre's efforts resonate throughout the Gulf.

For Nasra, it isn't just about preserving pages and objects – it's about safeguarding the stories that have shaped the world today.

THE COLLECTION

The Centre's collection includes rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and textiles, some dating as far back as 610 CE. Among its many projects, the Centre also runs the Family Archives initiative, enabling Qatari families to have their photographs and documents digitised and preserved within the library's broader collection.

"The collection tells the story of the culture, the region, Islam, and the relationship between Qatar and the rest of the world," Nasra explains, "We learn a lot from the past for our future."

THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANIC MATERIALS

Nasra explains that organic materials like parchment and textiles pose unique challenges for conservators. "From parchment to manuscripts, organic materials are ultimately food for bacteria and insects," he notes. Factors like light, humidity and natural deterioration must all be carefully managed to preserve these fragile artefacts.

"All these factors affect the materials," Nasra explains. "That's why you don't hear about books from 2,000 years ago or 3,000 years ago, things like that mostly survive in more durable forms like metal, stone or jewellery." The Centre's multi-stage preservation process, including preventative conservation, bio-deterioration analysis and non-invasive restoration techniques, allows them to faithfully preserve the region's heritage.

SAFEGUARDING REGIONAL HISTORY

The Qatar National Library has been designated as the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) Regional Preservation and Conservation Centre for the Arab region and Middle East. "This means we support the region in preserving and conserving documentary heritage," Nasra explains.

In addition to its preservation facilities, QNL provides training on techniques such as restoration, preservation, and preventing illicit trafficking of artefacts.

MAXIM NASRA
Head of the Preservation and Conservation
Centre at Qatar National Library



NASRA'S MOST MEMORABLE ITEM:
THE BLUE QURAN

When asked about his most memorable item, one piece stands out, the famous Blue Quran. In general, there aren't too many historical Qurans written on coloured papers, explains Nasra. Crafted centuries ago in Kairouan, Tunisia, two pages from the Blue Quran are housed in QNL. Over time, counterfeit pages of the Blue Quran have appeared on the market, so Nasra's team has carefully analysed the materials to authenticate the pages in QNL's collection. "We do scientific reports to make sure the structure, the fibre, the writing material, the parchment - everything is the same," he explains.



History, Geography, and Culture

An Education through Architecture

One of the first things you notice upon arriving in Qatar's cosmopolitan capital, Doha, is the futuristic skyline, a striking array of towering skyscrapers and diverse architectural wonders.

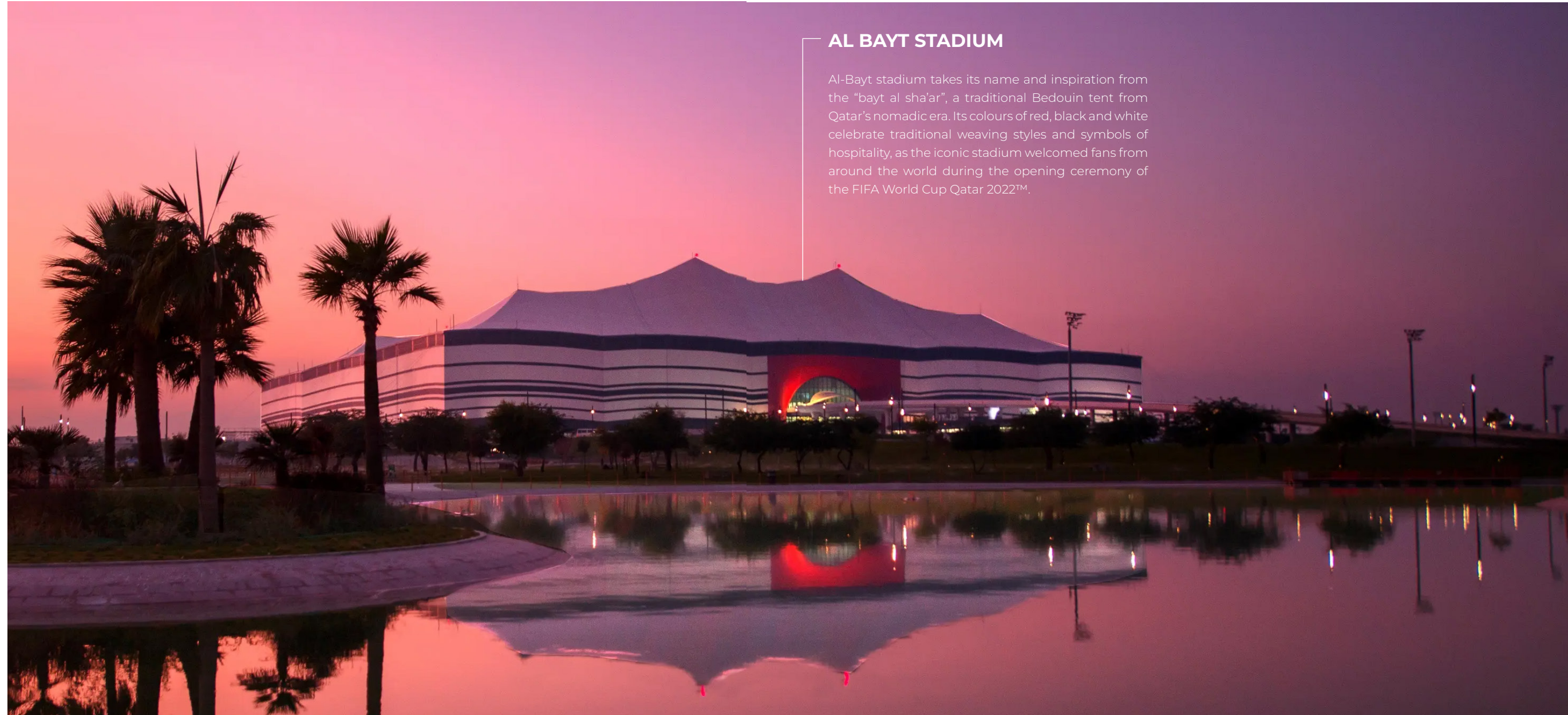
What many may not realise is that these buildings are deeply rooted in Qatari history, geography, and culture, with these elements often intrinsically woven into their design.

Across Qatar, tradition and modernity blend effortlessly, not just in food, art, culture, but also in urban planning and architecture.

From World Cup stadiums to national museums, renowned architects such as Jean Nouvel and I.M. Pei have helped shape Doha's unique urban identity by merging past with present.

AL BAYT STADIUM

Al-Bayt stadium takes its name and inspiration from the "bayt al sha'ar", a traditional Bedouin tent from Qatar's nomadic era. Its colours of red, black and white celebrate traditional weaving styles and symbols of hospitality, as the iconic stadium welcomed fans from around the world during the opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.



SIDRA HOSPITAL

The eye is drawn to three towering sails, inspired by the traditional Qatari *dhow* boat and a nod to the country's rich history of pearl diving.

QATAR NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER

Featuring a striking steel exterior, Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) pays homage to Qatar's native Sidra tree, representing resilience, growth and stability. The centre seamlessly integrates elements of traditional Islamic architecture with cutting-edge technologies, making QNCC one of the most sustainable convention centres in the world.

MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART

Known for designing the Louvre pyramid, part of one of the world's most iconic art museums, I.M. Pei's vision for the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) is no less breathtaking. Situated on the shores of the Arabian Gulf, MIA offers sweeping views of Doha's skyline and coast, while its limestone façade evokes the awe-inspiring desert landscapes found beyond the city. Sitting atop the structure, is an upside down Batoola – a traditional face covering worn by Arab women from the Gulf region.

BURJ DOHA

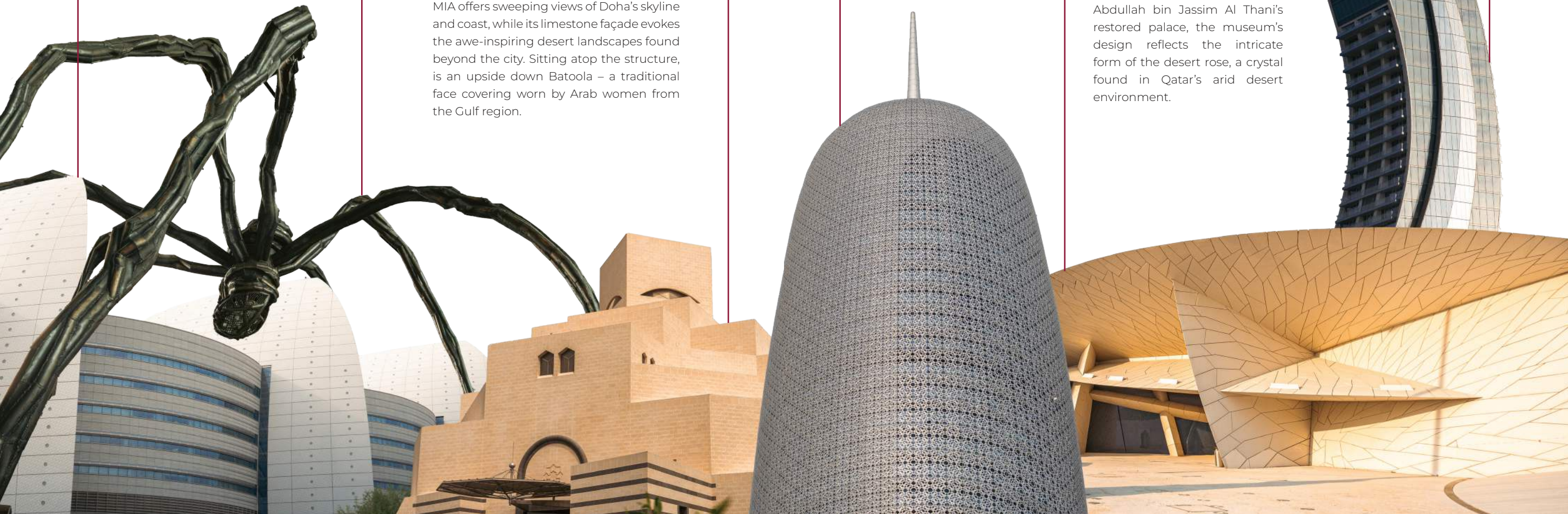
Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, whose works span from Seoul to Paris, Burj Doha features an aluminium façade that evokes the latticework of the *mashrabiya* seen throughout the Islamic world. Traditionally used to capture shade and wind, this design now shields the offices inside from solar exposure, while still offering breathtaking views of Doha's Corniche.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

Another masterpiece by Jean Nouvel, the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) draws inspiration from Qatar's landscape. Built around His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani's restored palace, the museum's design reflects the intricate form of the desert rose, a crystal found in Qatar's arid desert environment.

KATARA TOWERS

In Qatar's 'City of the Future' rise two gleaming towers, inspired by the two scimitar swords depicted in the country's national emblem. With Raffles Doha in one tower and Fairmont Doha in the other, Katara Towers has quickly become the go-to spot for luxury hospitality in Qatar.



About Q Life

Q Life is a platform dedicated to the people and ideas that are spurring advances in sports, the arts, business and culture in Qatar.

With human development being at the centre of the Qatar National Vision 2030, Q Life continues to amplify the stories of those in Qatar creating a positive impact within their communities, both at home and abroad.

From one-on-one interviews with Qatar's most creative minds, to uncovering the many unknown stories hidden around every corner, Q Life promises to educate global audiences on the ambitions flourishing across the country. Q Life Magazine is our bi-annual print publication that is distributed globally.

To read more from Q Life, including the online version of this edition, visit our website at www.qlife.com or on Instagram at [@qlife_com](https://www.instagram.com/qlife_com).

The logo for Q Life, featuring a large, dark blue serif letter 'Q' with a small red dot at its base, followed by the word 'LIFE' in a smaller, dark blue serif font.

Q