

# QF PRESERVES QATAR'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE AS IT INTERTWINES THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

*Lessons learned through history are helping to enrich the country's progress*

**EVEN** on the most ambitious journey of progression, a nation must ensure that its cultural heritage – a thread capable of connecting and unifying generations – can never be broken by the passing of time, and the process of transition.

Through recognizing, understanding, and nurturing the past, the people of Qatar have a platform on which to build their country's future. Culture and heritage represent identity that endures in a world that can change with rapidity.

The dedication of Qatar Foundation (QF) to preserving Qatari traditions and ethnology in order to enrich the lives of the citizens of today and tomorrow, and to connecting the contemporary pursuit, acquisition, and enhancement of knowledge with the lessons and guidance found along the path stretching back through history, is expressed in many ways.

Among the most visible expressions is the logo that, throughout 20 years of unlocking human potential, has embodied QF: the Sidra tree.

With its branches signifying diversity, its leaves, flowers, and fruit representing the nourishment of lives and the seeds of health and sustainability being sown, and its roots anchoring the past into the present and future, the Sidra tree is the quintessential metaphor for all that QF is, and all that it does.

In the words of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation: "With its roots bound in the soil of this world, and its branches reaching upwards toward perfection, it is a symbol of solidarity and determination; it reminds us that the goals of this world are not incompatible with the goals of the spirit."

As QF is encapsulated by the Sidra tree, so its devotion to preserving, and enhancing the perception and embracement of, cultural heritage is emblemized across the spectrum of its mission.

The multi-generational nature of this commitment, and its place at the core of a QF education, is reflected in the work of QF's Pre-University Education (PUE) Office, where a cohesive Heritage Curriculum immerses young people in the culture and values that are the bedrock of Qatari society; a diverse Arabic curriculum fosters and empowers language development; and year-round activities, events, and celebrations instill in students a sense of identity, self-awareness, and pride.

"We believe that, in order for our students to reach globalism, they must be firmly rooted in their language, culture, and environment, and have a proud sense of identity," explained Abeer Al Khalifa, Associate Director of Academic Affairs, PUE Office.

QF's commitment to the promotion of the Arabic language, by encouraging both

deeper understanding and wider usage, begins at this early age, and is continued – in myriad forms – across its work.

This commitment is exemplified through the World Organization for Renaissance in Arabic Language, a QF initiative, and its focus on enhancing the teaching and learning of Arabic; supporting translation and the Arabization of technical, scientific, and technological terminology; encouraging the pursuit of new research into the language; and the application of this research.

Through the communication of QF's message nationally, regionally, and globally;

promotion of cultural heritage can be found across its physical landscape. Under the Education City Masterplan, the buildings of QF demonstrate excellence and innovation in design, and adherence to the highest standards of sustainability. They also evince acknowledgement of, and respect for, Qatar's proud history, in contemporary, thought-provoking form.

"The buildings at Education City, and other QF projects, aim to reinterpret traditional models and values found in the architecture of the region, and reflect the same in a contemporary language, as well as focusing

of ideas and cultivates multiple perspectives, through dynamic programs, exhibitions, publications, and presentations of the collections," outlined Dr Abdellah Karroum, Director, Mathaf.

"We have unique collections, and we look to develop these strategically, filling our gaps in the knowledge of Arab art history, with an emphasis also on education and research. That is our goal, shared with QF and Qatar Museums, because museums are such an important part of Qatar's contemporary culture."

To preserve cultural heritage, public awareness and appreciation of its treasured place in Qatar's journey must be fostered.

Through its landmark Heritage Collection, comprising some of Qatar and the region's most historic and iconic items – including rare and valuable texts and manuscripts related to Arab-Islamic civilization – and its engagement with the community about what these artifacts say about the past and hold for the future, Qatar National Library, a member of QF, makes a pivotal contribution to Qatar's cultural landscape.

It symbolizes QF's cognizance of the need to inspire today's citizens to become curators of their own living history – and strive to sustain Qatar's cultural heritage for the generations that follow.

In its 20th anniversary year, the commitment of QF to preserving, encapsulating, and extending knowledge and understanding of Qatar's rich culture and heritage has been furthered by Msheireb Museums, officially opened by Msheireb Properties, a subsidiary of QF, in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, in October 2015.

Restored and converted into museums of high cultural significance, with the stylistic qualities and spirit of the original buildings being respected and retained, the four Heritage Houses represent one element of Msheireb Downtown Doha, the inner city regeneration project that will recreate and contemporize traditional Qatari life, with its basis being community, commerce, and a sense of shared identity.

"Through this development," said Engineer Abdulla Al Mehshadi, CEO, Msheireb Properties, "we are seeking to preserve Qatar's rich past, while shaping its identity as a modern, progressive nation, and the restoration of the four Heritage Houses is integral to this aspiration."

For QF, cultural heritage is not simply something to be chronicled. It is a conveyor of values, a catalyst for pride and inspiration, a constant reference point for identity and definition. In nurturing the past with purpose, QF is demonstrating that preservation supports progression – and that looking back is an enabler for thinking forward.

## THROUGH ITS COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL HERITAGE, QF IS

- Preserving the traditions, values, and identity of Qatar and its people
- Enriching the cultural life of the nation
- Embracing the knowledge of the past in informing the present and the future
- Promoting and enhancing the Arabic language
- Inspiring thought, dialogue, debate, awareness, and creativity
- Contemporizing the past to ensure its relevance to current and future generations
- Empowering and inspiring a sense of pride among the people of Qatar

through programs embracing innovation in language teaching, and providing the highest caliber of tuition for those seeking to learn Arabic; through community events that emphasize the richness of Arab culture and the Arabic language; and through conducting, and funding, research projects that promote the use of the Arabic language, and ensure its relevance and reach in a digital age, QF serves as a custodian of a cultural cornerstone of the Arab world, and as a pioneer in ensuring it continues to flourish.

The initiatives and activities of Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation (BQF), a member of QF, support this devotion to the appreciation and advancement of the Arabic language. Established to cultivate a vibrant literary culture, and new literary talent, in Qatar and the region, BQF provides the virtuosity and originality of Arabic writers with a global audience.

"A key part of our mission is to ensure that the very best of Arabic literature is available, in both Arabic and English, to readers across the world," said Arend Küster, Director, BQF.

"Our titles showcase to the world the wealth of creativity and unique voices that Qatar and the region have to offer."

Visible testament to QF's nurturing and

on sustainability and harmony with the environment," explained Engineer Jassim Telefat, Group Executive Director, Capital Projects and Facilities Management, QF.

Embedded in these structures is the concept of QF bridging the past and the future; of cultural heritage being preserved not only to be admired and cherished, but also to inform and inspire. This concept is the crux of the work of many QF members, among them Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.

With more than 9,000 works, dating back to 1840 – the largest specialized collection of its kind in the world – Mathaf is a space for display and dialogue, showcasing and scholarship.

Fostering creativity and cultural exchange; supporting emerging artists and original, insightful research into modernity; broadening understanding of Qatar's art history; and promoting modern and contemporary art from the Arab world and its historical and geographical connections, it represents a connector of knowledge, a preserver of legacy, and a platform for enlightenment, debate, contextual awareness, and cultural enrichment.

"The museum facilitates vibrant exchanges

# Developing a platform for excellence

Focused on transforming healthcare through innovation, QBRI is fostering collaboration and encouraging science's next generation

**WITHIN** the mission of Qatar Foundation (QF) to unlock human potential and support the building of Qatar's knowledge-based economy, science and research represents a key driver – a pathway to sustainability and prosperity that must be nurtured and advanced within an ecosystem of innovation, engagement, progression, and discovery.

Through the creation of three separate research entities under Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of QF, there exists a panorama of research – from energy and environment, to computing, to biomedicine – and QF is channeling ambition and innovation to produce outcomes that will have a transformative impact locally, regionally, and internationally.

One such research entity, Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), seeks to achieve targeted therapies and enhanced strategies in disease prevention and diagnosis, to combat the foremost health challenges facing Qatar and the region. With an ultimate goal being personalized, precision medicine, it is building its human, technical and physical capacity as part of a three-pronged strategy: to address national health challenges and priorities; to work in close alliance with stakeholders; and to reach out to the local community in order to develop the next generation of scientists and engage the public in research, as citizen scientists.

### TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

The latter area of QBRI's activities extends to its contributions toward education and training, through its combination of teaching in biomedical and health fields at HBKU and Qatar University (QU), and its contribution to the creation of biomedical graduate programs at both learning institutions.

Six of QBRI's senior scientists and principal investigators currently have joint appointments at the HBKU Biological and Biomedical Sciences graduate program, while it is also leveraging its strategic partnership with prestigious institutions such as Harvard Medical School and the International Brain Research Organization to offer unique advanced training opportunities in neuroscience and cancer for young students, scientists and clinicians in Qatar.

In the words of Dr Hilal Lashuel, Executive Director, QBRI: "We view QBRI as an extension of all national educational, translational, and clinical research institutions,"

The proactive approach QBRI has taken to education is year-round. In summer 2015 – from May to July – the institute launched a new internship initiative: its Summer Research Programme (SRP), that ran for eight weeks and provided



undergraduate students from local, regional, and international universities with the opportunity to gain hands-on laboratory research experience under the supervision of researchers at QBRI.

Speaking to *QF Telegraph*, Lina Hassna, SRP Program Manager, QBRI, said the program is emblematic of how QBRI's capacity building within the field of education is focused on allowing students to put theoretical knowledge into practice.

"It is a way for us to give back to society," she stated. "And it is an opportunity for our scientists to interact with young students and inspire them. Our approach at QBRI is not to wait until people knock on our doors. It's about being active in communicating and reaching out to our youth."

Dr Lashuel echoed Hassna's statements, saying: "We have taken a proactive approach in sharing the excitement of science, and to offer them the space and environment to learn and realize their full potential."

"We want people to be pursuing science for the right reasons, and I feel that their passion for discovery should be one of the key factors in their decision to want to become scientists."

"We aim to create opportunities and experiences for young people to feel the excitement of science very early in their career."

### COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERTISE

In addition to the knowledge transfer of its education-based capacity building, QBRI is committed to achieving this through cross-institutional

collaboration. Notable past examples of QBRI's direct involvement with local partners, stakeholders, and international organizations include hosting the landmark IBRO-MENA Neuroscience Symposium of December 2014 – which focused on behavioral disorders – and the QBRI-Kyoto University Joint Symposium in March 2015, where the focus was on stem cell advances.

Such partnerships are a key facet of QBRI's knowledge transfer strategies, according to Dr Lashuel. "We want to position QBRI strategically as a hub for advanced learning in biomedicine and health, and be a major contributor to capacity building in Qatar and on a regional level," he stated.

"QBRI is a national institution. We advance our own priorities but we also look at things from a national perspective and ask ourselves: 'What are the missing pieces of our puzzle?'"

For QBRI, the criteria for international partnerships are to work with highly reputable institutions that are leaders in their field of interest, and to partner with people and institutions on the basis of the partnership being driven by shared scientific interests and ambitions. Partnerships are based on mutual commitment between the two institutions, and the commitment that is always required of QBRI's partners is contribution to local capacity building and effective transfer of knowledge to Qatar while working on the frontiers – namely high-risk, high reward projects.

For Walid Qoromfeh, Director, Biotechnology Development, QBRI, the impact of effective partnership is multi-layered. "We look at partnerships

London, and the Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts.

Speaking about the prestige of the program and QBRI's involvement, Dr Reem Olaby, Postdoctoral Researcher, QBRI, told *QF Telegraph*: "QBRI has a unique role when compared to other research institutes. In fact, it's a lot more than a research institute because it wants to be a regional focal point for capacity building, advanced training, and networking between different minds."

"On an international level, these programs prove that we at QBRI and QF have the ability to carve our own space within scientific research, and that we want to join the worldwide race of scientific breakthroughs," she added.

"We are very pleased with the level of interest from the scientific community in Qatar and the region. The program has received more than 250 applications and we expect more than 20 students, scientists and clinicians from Qatar to take part in this unique program."

QBRI is also planning to launch a Young Scientist program, which involves QBRI staff and scientists participating in several events aimed at sharing the excitement of science with schoolchildren, to encourage them to pursue careers in science.

Designed to target students of all ages, the program seeks to increase awareness toward different aspects in the medical research and health field, via implementing different activities in an entertaining and engaging way.

The program confirms QBRI's status as a research institute dedicated to transferring knowledge of science to schoolchildren, undergraduates, postgraduates, and medical professionals, ensuring a multi-generational scope, and engagement with all members of society in Qatar and beyond.

"In order for us to achieve our goal of personalized medicine, we need the people of Qatar to be active citizen scientists," outlined Dr Lashuel. "Without their participation, sharing of their biological samples, and valuable data, it will not be possible to achieve our goal of personalized and precision medicine. We are all partners in this exciting journey."

"For this to happen, we need to have effective methods of demonstrating to the public the value of the nation investing in research. Effective engagement with the public is an absolute necessity for the sustainable development of research in Qatar. If we succeed in that goal, then we will succeed in the lab as well."

QBRI  
AIMS TO

Translate Scientific Discoveries

INTO

New Targeted Therapies And Preventative And Diagnostic Strategies

THROUGH

Creating Research Centers Of Excellence