

Public Art and Public Space in an Emerging Knowledge Economy: The Case of Doha

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Abstract : The Qatar Museums Authority recently announced a series of public art initiatives in Doha with the purpose of 'bringing art out of the walls of the museum' to make it accessible to the public on a daily basis and to encourage discussion and debate. While the installation of sculptures in public spaces is not new in Doha, the practice of integrating art in public spaces and architectural projects is reaching a new dimension as internationally renowned artists – such as Damien Hirst and Richard Serra - are being commissioned to install their works in the public spaces and buildings of the city of Doha as well as in more remote desert locations. This research discusses the changing presence, role and context of public art in Doha, both from a historical and cultural overview, and the different forms and media as well as the typologies of urban and public spaces in which the art is installed. It examines the process of implementing site-specific artworks, looking at questions of scale, history, social meaning and formal aesthetics. The methodologies combine theoretical research on the understanding of public art and its role and placement in public space, as well as empirical research on contemporary public art projects in Doha, based on documentation and interviews and as well as site and context analysis of the urban or architectural spaces within which the art is situated. Surveys and interviews – using social media - in different segments of the contemporary Qatari society, including all nationalities and social groups, are used to measure and qualify the impacts and effects on the population.

Keywords : public space, public art, urban design, knowledge economy

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