

Exhibition Open Call – Design Doha Biennale 2026

Department: Exhibition & Curatorial Affairs

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Brief:

Design Doha is pleased to announce an Exhibition Proposals Open Call for the 2026 edition of the Design Doha Biennale in Qatar. We invite curators, cultural institutions, architecture and design colleges and universities, designers & design studios of MENA descent from around the world, including those with roots in the GCC, Levant, or North Africa, to participate and craft extraordinary exhibitions that spotlight the rich cultural narratives and groundbreaking design talent of these regions. Design Doha provides: exhibition venues, marketing and PR support, inclusion in the programming. Selected proposals will be included in the official Design Doha Biennale calendar.

About Design Doha:

Established in 2024 by Qatar Museums under the leadership of its Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Design Doha Biennial is a premier international design festival celebrating contemporary design, innovation, and creativity. Spanning three months, the Biennial serves as a global platform for exhibitions, installations, awards, and special events, bringing together designers, industry leaders, and visionaries from around the world.

The inaugural 2024 edition transformed Msheireb Downtown Doha—a smart and sustainable city district covering 310,000 sqm—into a dynamic hub of design excellence. Featuring 14 venues, 24 exhibitions, 18 panel discussions, 11 public programs, and 58+ speakers, Design Doha attracted 118,000 visitors, including nearly 4,000 international buyers and industry leaders. The Biennial generated an economic impact of 62 million QAR, reached 45.6 million people across various channels, and secured 742 media features across 21 countries, with a total marketing exposure value exceeding 13.5 million QAR.

With a strong focus on the MENA region and a growing international reach, Design Doha is committed to positioning Doha as a leading global hub for design, innovation, and creativity. The next edition will take place from 16 April to 30 June 2026, with an exclusive three-day opening ceremony from 16 to 18 April 2026.

Exhibition Categories:

Product Design	Sound Design	Furniture Design	Graphic Design
Architectural design	Urban Space Design	Craft Design	Interior Design
Urbanism Design	Communication Design	Environmental Design	Digital Design

Eligibility Criteria:

- Curators, cultural institutions, architecture and design colleges and universities, designers & design studios based in or from MENA region (GCC, Levant, North Africa)
- Open to collectives and collaborative teams.
- Proposals must be original, focused on the unique aspects of the chosen region, and involve a diverse selection of designers.
- Applications need to be only from mid-career and established curators or designers.
- Insurance must be considered from the exhibitors.
- No direct purchases will be permitted at the exhibition venue during the time of the exhibition.

Submission Guidelines:

- **File Format:** Submit all documents in PDF format.
- **Language:** All submissions must be in Arabic or English.
- **Deadline:** Submissions must be received by Monday, 12 May 2025 (12pm, Doha time zone).
- **Originality:** Only original proposals will be considered, with the applicant having all the intellectual property rights to deliver the exhibition.
- **Incomplete Submissions:** Applications missing any required components or not adhering to these guidelines will not be considered.
- **Curation:** Each proposed exhibition must have its own dedicated curator. Collaborative projects with multiple exhibitions must clearly identify the lead curator for each exhibition.

Submission Requirements:

Curatorial Statement (200 - 300 words): Briefly describe your approach and vision for the exhibition.

Exhibition Proposal (600–1,000 words): Outline the exhibition concept, significance to the chosen region, and relevance to Design Doha's mission.

Potential Designer List: Include designers list proposed for the exhibition, with links to their profiles/bios.

Checklist of Proposed Works: Include images, titles, dates, mediums, specific installation requirements if applicable.

Public Program Proposal: Suggest public engagement programs (talks, presentations, workshops and etc...) related to your exhibition theme.

CV: Highlight curatorial experience.

Budget: Budget breakdown and feasibility, fundraising plan / confirmed source of funding.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Conceptual Clarity** (30%): The proposal should have a strong conceptual framework with a clear and cohesive narrative.
- **Relevance to Region** (20%): The proposal should engage meaningfully with the chosen region's cultural context, highlighting unique design and cultural narratives.
- **Innovation and Originality** (20%): The proposal should reflect creative thinking and present fresh, thought-provoking perspectives.
- **Curatorial Experience** (10%): The applicant's previous curatorial work, especially in the MENA region, will be considered.
- **Feasibility and Practicality** (10%): The proposal's scope and logistics should align with the resources and timeline provided by Design Doha.
- **Budget allocation confirmation – 10%**

Deliverables for Selected Proposals Curators:

- **Exhibition Concept Document:** A full outline of the exhibition concept, including a checklist of proposed works and artists.
- **Curatorial Essay:** A 3,000–5,000-word essay that delves into the exhibition's theme and relevance.
- **Designer liaison:** Serve as the lead contact for coordinating with selected designers, including arranging any necessary loans or permissions.
- **Interpretive Texts:** Draft exhibition captions, wall texts, and any other interpretive content.
- **Public Programs:** Propose and plan 2-3 public programs related to the exhibition, such as panel discussions, workshops, or guided tours.
- **Media Engagement:** Availability for interviews (virtual/in-person) and collaboration with the media team to promote the exhibition.
- **On-Site Support:** Be present during key stages of the exhibition, including the site visit, installation, and opening.
- **Post-Exhibition Report:** A final report summarizing the exhibition's impact and insights for future reference.
- **Marketing Collateral:** Exhibition Brochure design and printing.

Application Terms & Conditions:

- Applications must be original and the intellectual property rights belong or be licensed to the applicant and must provide supporting documents to verify the originality of their submission. Plagiarized or previously submitted work will be disqualified.
- Applicants must commit to visas and travel for site visits, curatorial work, installation, and de-installation, exhibition opening periods in Doha (based on the provided timeline).

- The selected curators must comply with the timeline and deliverables as outlined by Design Doha.
- Design Doha retains the right to modify or adapt submitted proposals as needed to align with the overall theme or venue of the Biennial.
- Applicants will be required to sign a contract outlining their responsibilities, deliverables, and curatorial fee.
- Selected curators are expected to collaborate professionally with Design Doha team, designers, and external stakeholders.
- Failure to meet deadlines or deliverables may result in the termination of the agreement and disqualification from the Biennial.
- All submitted materials, including images and written content, may be used by Design Doha for promotional purposes.

Timeline:

Task	Start	End
Open Call Phase		
Open Call Launch (Application guidelines, eligibility criteria, and submission requirements shared via Design Doha's website and media channels.) – Application forms to be filled on the website	13 March 2025	-
Open Call Closing	12 May 2025 (12pm GMT+3)	-
10 Shortlisted proposals Announcement (Via email)	26 May 2025	-
Unsuccessful proposals Announcement (Via email)	27 May 2025	29 May 2025
Exhibition Development Phase 1		
Initial Communication with exhibitors Curators	01 June 2025	05 June 2025
Official Interviews	8 June 2025	12 June 2025
Venue confirming, Sharing Venue layouts with exhibitors	-	17 July 2025
Exhibition Development Phase 2		
Exhibitors Visits to Doha	20 July 2025	24 July 2025
Submission of Initial Exhibition Design including plans with descriptions, renders, or any other and Object list (even if not final) to evaluate the feasibility of the installations.	25 July 2025	14 August 2025
Sharing Design Doha's Contacts for logistics, art handlers, exhibition built to exhibitors	27 July 2025	14 August 2025
Initial onboarding session for exhibitors to outline the next steps (online)	17 August 2025	21 August 2025

Exhibition Development Phase 3		
Submission of initial curatorial texts, object details	24 August 2025	31 December 2025
Submission of Insurance and initial shipping plans	14 September 2025	31 December 2025
Submission of Final Exhibition Design including plans with descriptions, renders, shop drawings, lighting, power requirements or any other	01 October 2025	31 December 2025
Submission of public engagement programs (talks, presentations, workshops and etc...)	2 November 2025	15 January 2026
Submission of Final curatorial texts, object lists, shipping plans, Installation plans, and technical requirements	01 December 2025	15 February 2026
Approving all submitted requirements from Design Doha to exhibitors and securing venues (Failure to meet deadlines or deliverables and Uncertainty in delivery on time may result in the termination of the agreement)	16 February 2026	19 February 2026
Exhibition Execution		
Submission of request for import and customs support documents	22 February 2026	26 February 2026
Submission of request for Permission to work (PTW) and venue access	01 March 2026	05 March 2026
Construction at Venue	08 March 2026	22 March 2026
Installation at Venue	22 March 2026	11 April 2026
Submission of Exhibition Condition report	12 April 2026	14 April 2026
Exhibition Duration	16 April 2026	16 June 2026
Post Exhibition		
Submission of request for export and customs support documents	12 July 2026	26 July 2026
Venue restored to original condition post-event	17 June 2026	30 June 2026
Submission of Final Exhibition Condition report	21 June 2026	30 June 2026
Submission of final report summarizing the exhibition's impact and insights for future reference	1 July 2026	23 July 2026