

VCUQatar Gallery Presents ‘My Rock Stars: Volume 1’

Doha, Qatar – The Gallery at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar is pleased to present ‘My Rock Stars: Volume 1’, by acclaimed London-based Moroccan artist/photographer Hassan Hajjaj. The exhibition is scheduled from 4 September to 24 October 2013 with an opening reception on Wednesday, 4 September at 6:00pm at the Gallery at VCUQatar. The event is open to the public.

‘My Rock Stars: Volume 1’ pays homage to traditional African portraiture, while celebrating present-day pop stars, unsung artists and personal inspirations in Hajjaj’s life. Created using a pop up studio erected on the streets of Morocco, London, Paris and Kuwait, the series is simultaneously an haute-couture street experiment and a revival of African photography from the 1960s and 70s. Hajjaj’s subjects range from musicians, fashion designers, dancers to singers, capoeira masters, and boxers - all of whom are immortalized in a fleeting moment in time, sealing their muse-like qualities forever.

Much like Hajjaj’s personal exploration, the photographic series, is an on-going examination of belonging in an increasingly globalized society where boundaries of cultural identity – most notably African, Arabic and Western – are constantly being pushed. Using traditional mats and fabrics as well as found objects that he sources in local markets of his hometown Marrakech, Hajjaj bridges the gap between past and present and various cultures, creating pieces that seamlessly merge folkloric elements into Western contemporary art. This exhibition also features a film on the Rockstar Series which has been provided courtesy of Rose Issa Projects, London.

"Hassan Hajjaj has brought the most dynamic life, energy and excitement to VCUQatar. And it’s an infectious energy - his work has the ability to affect you, and I have yet to see someone leave the gallery without smiling," says Caitlin Doherty, exhibition and speaker curator at VCUQatar.

Born in Larache, Morocco in 1961, Hajjaj arrived in London in his teens and grew up amid the emerging club culture in the UK. Known as the “Andy Warhol of Marrakech” Hajjaj is very much a child of the pop art generation. His work encompass many techniques and fields, from designing and producing furniture including lamps, stools, poufs made from recycled North African objects such as upturned Coca-Cola crates as stools, road signs turned into tables tops as well as custom made clothes and photography.

Hajjaj is best known for designing the ‘Andy Wahloo’ bar-restaurant in Paris in 2003, for which he decked out the entire establishment in his trademark style of recycled North Africa objects. ‘Andy Wahloo’ acknowledges one of his favorite artists, Andy Warhol, but also at the same time refers to a Parisian slang term meaning ‘I have nothing’ adopted by Hajjaj as a way of describing his work. Hajjaj’s designed spaces also include The Riad Yima guest house, an old funduq in Marrakesh in which five bedrooms, salon and terraces have been festooned in his furniture design and products.

Hajjaj’s work has been exhibited internationally in many high profile exhibitions including London, Paris and Morocco, notably Fashion in Motion, Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Africa Remix, Hayward Gallery, London and Contemporary African Visual Arts,

British Museum, London all in 2005. Most recently Hajjaj was a featured artist at Rencontres de Bamako 9, African Photography Biennial, Bamako, Mali, 2009. Also in 2009, Hajjaj participated with large installations at Le Salon, Jameel Prize, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK and Icons Reloaded, Elysee Arts Gallery, Liege, Belgium. The artist lives and works between London, England and Marrakech, Morocco.

‘My Rock Stars: Volume 1’ runs at the Gallery at VCUQatar from 4 September to 24 October 2013, with an opening reception on 4 September at 6:00 pm. The event is open to the public. For more information, please visit www.qatar.vcu.edu or email VCUQatar Exhibitions and Speaker Curator Caitlin Doherty at cmdoherty@vcu.edu.

Note to Editors:

About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:

VCUQatar is the Qatar campus of the prestigious Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia. Established in 1998 through a partnership with Qatar Foundation, VCUQatar offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in fashion design, graphic design, interior design and painting & printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design studies.

Through all its programs, research projects and community activities, VCUQatar continues toward its vision of a Qatari society that innovates through art and design. In addition to a comprehensive annual public events program that includes a wide range of exhibitions, lectures and fashion events, the University hosts the biennial international design conference Tasmeeem and the biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Islamic Art Symposium, attracting globally recognized designers, academics and thinkers while fostering sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of Qatar. For more information please visit www.qatar.vcu.edu

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world.

Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF carries out its mission through three strategic pillars: education, science and research, and community development. QF’s education pillar brings world-class universities to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. Meanwhile, its science and research pillar builds Qatar’s innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. Finally, its community development pillar helps foster a progressive society while also enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar’s heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

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