Samia Touati

**Ahmad, Yousef (b.1955—)**

A writer, an art adviser, and an artist, Yousef Ahmad has contributed significantly to the evolution of art in Qatar. Ahmad set upon himself the responsibility to document and archive the development of art in Qatar. Ahmed has developed an innovative style of calligraphic painting, whereby numerous letters and words are transformed into abstract signs and manifest abstract arrangements. Being more inclined to create large-scales works, Ahmad depicts Arabic words in their variety of shapes with a particular focus on the construction of his composition.

In 1982, Ahmed travelled to the United States, where he received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Mills College, California University. Following his return to Qatar, Ahmad taught art appreciation for more than twenty years at Qatar University, where he met His Excellency Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al Thani. Sharing an avid love for art with HE Sheikh Hassan, Ahmad has played an instrumental role in collecting a variety of artworks which constitute the major collections of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the Orientalist Museum. He also acted as the first director for Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, then named the Museum of Arab Art.

With a keen interest in conveying art to the public, Ahmad and his colleagues Mohammed Ali Abdulla and Hassan al-Mulla from the Ministry of Information established a group called al-Asdiqaa` at-Thalaathah (The Three Friends) during the mid-1970s. Ahmed worked then as a manager of the Culture and Arts Department, a key position that involved the organization of exhibitions and promotions of Qatar’s artists. Ahmad has widely exhibited at international biennials and works currently as a Senior Advisor at the Cultural Advisor Office, Qatar Foundation in Doha, Qatar.

During the 1970s and 1980s, while practicing drawing and studying art history and criticism at the Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University, Cairo, he became aware of the lack of art criticism in Qatar. At that time, the art scene in Qatar was flourishing thanks to the active involvement of several schools, both governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as the opening of new cultural organizations such as the Al-Jisrah Club in 1972 and the Cultural Center in 1976. Ahmed started to write about art schools and fine art in Qatar and critiqued exhibitions of Qatari artists in a series published in the daily newspaper *Gulf Times,* and the Ministry of Information's monthly *Doha Magazine*. A member of the Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ALESCO) in the early 1980s, Ahmad was assigned to conduct a study of fine art in Qatar. Witnessing these art movements and exhibitions since their inception, the absence of any relevant art criticism along with his own research prompted him to write his book *Al-Funoon at-Tashkeeliyyah al-Mu`aasirah fee Qatar* [*Contemporary Visual/Fine Arts in Qatar*, 1986]

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