

Murals transform Doha streets into open-air galleries

By Aruzhan Muratbek

A woman in an abaya stops on a Msheireb sidewalk to photograph a mural above her. The image shows a Qatari man in a thobe, painted in black lines on cream concrete. Several people stand nearby with phones, taking pictures of the wall.

Murals have multiplied across Doha over the past five years, transforming blank walls in Msheireb Downtown and Katara Cultural Village into canvases for local and international artists. Scattered graffiti has evolved into a coordinated public art program that positions street art as part of Qatar's cultural identity. The murals attract tourists, engage residents and signal a change in how the city uses public space.

Qatar Museums launched JEDARIART in 2020 to bring street art into everyday spaces. The program invites artists to paint murals across the city, from metro stations to highway interchanges. More than 50 murals now appear in locations where thousands of residents pass daily. "JEDARIART is an open call throughout the year. Artists can apply anytime," says Alya Al-Khalifa, curator in Qatar Museums' Public Art department.

Noora Al-Mansoori, 23, a Qatari muralist who studied art at Virginia Commonwealth University Qatar, painted a surrealist piece at Old Doha Port in 2023 as part of the Worldwide Walls festival, a global street art collaboration. The mural shows a face surrounded by jellyfish-like forms in blues, pinks, and corals. "I wanted to move away from galleries where you see the same people every time," Al-Mansoori says. "Street art lets anyone walking by experience the work. Everybody can see it without paying entry or knowing anything about art."

Al-Mansoori notes tension between creating personal work and representing Qatari culture. "People expect Qatari artists to always paint traditional symbols, such as falcons and Arabic calligraphy. Sometimes I do, sometimes I do not." Her choice to paint in public rather than private

spaces reflects her goal to make art part of daily life. "When I paint, I am not deciding who gets to see it. I think the street decides."

At Al-Abraj Park, Abdulla Al-Emadi, 31, a full-time artist, painted "Limbo," a mural showing a figure trapped inside a box. The self-taught Qatari artist works with blues and bright accent colors in his paintings to create symbolic images spurred by his experience during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. One such image in 'Limbo' resembles an aura surrounding the trapped figure, representing his emotional state during isolation.

"The quarantine period affected everyone differently. Personally, painting was a way to express what isolation felt like," Al-Emadi says. "I hope viewers bring their own experiences to it. The surrealist elements mean different things to different people."

Al-Emadi draws inspiration from manuscript illustrations, mythologies and surrealist movements. He applied to JEDARIART through the program's open call, and "Limbo," which he completed in 2020, marked his first major public art project. "I did not expect to get selected," Al-Emadi says. "Now hundreds of people see my work every day."

Jawaher Hasan, 27, a Doha resident, walks past murals in Msheireb several times a week on her way to work. "Honestly, I did not notice them at first. They were just there," she says. "Then I saw tourists stopping to take pictures and I thought, what am I missing?" Now she occasionally photographs murals and sends them to friends. "Some of the murals show Qatari heritage, others are just colorful. I am not an art person, but they make the area less boring."

JEDARIART has expanded internationally, with Qatari artists creating murals in Chile and Argentina in November 2025 as part of the Qatar-Argentina-Chile 2025 Year of Culture, an annual program fostering cultural exchange between Qatar and partner nations, according to [The Peninsula Qatar](#). Since its 2020 launch, JEDARIART has added murals across Doha, part of Qatar's public art landscape that includes installations at Hamad International Airport, along the Corniche and at metro stations.

"The program aims to create tourist attractions and brings art into everyday spaces." Al-Khalifa says. "People should see art on their way to work, at metro stations, in parks." The program supports local artists by providing space, materials, and public exposure through murals in high-traffic areas across Doha. Qatari artists including Al-Mansoori, Al-Emadi and Mubarak Al-Malik have participated alongside international artists.

For residents like Hasan, the murals have become part of the daily routine. "I do not think about them anymore when I walk to work. They are like the buildings now," she says. "Maybe that is the point."