Msheireb Properties and Fast Company Middle East Host Successful Inaugural Innovation by Design Summit in Doha

Msheireb Award for Innovation in Design Recognises Four Winners Across the Categories of human-centred, technology-powered, sustainable and luxury and lifestyle design

DOHA, 24 April 2024 — With more than 400 speakers and delegates converging at the dynamic Doha Design District, Msheireb Properties and Fast Company Middle East opened the region's first Innovation by Design Summit on Wednesday. Celebrating visionary design thinking, the organisers also launched the Msheireb Award for Innovation in Design which recognised four outstanding winners and signalled Msheireb Properties' plans to be an active player in shaping the future of design innovation in the Middle East.

Opening the Summit, Msheireb Properties CEO Eng. Ali Al Kuwari said, "I'm proud to be here today in the heart of Msheireb Downtown Doha to say that Qatar is leading the way in design across its many aspects. Smart, sustainable design is the future, and it's something we're proud to champion."

Adding to this sentiment, Fast Company Middle East Publisher Ravi Raman said, "Organisations and governments are realising the positive impact design thinking can bring. Our mandate at Fast Company Middle East is to highlight this with storytelling and impactful summits."

The Summit delved into various facets of design and its societal impact, covering topics from biophilic design to AI in content creation. Discussions also explored urban planning's role in creating people-centric cities, the fusion of technology and creativity, and designing for the experience economy and Gen Z. In addition to featuring several high-profile Qatari innovators as speakers at the Summit, the organisers platformed some of Qatar's most beloved talent, with Dana Al Fardan performing a selection of her latest compositions and Hamad Al Amari entertaining the crowd of local and international guests.

Speaker comments and quotes:

– "Challenging that shopping is at the core of an airport experience, we put in a garden at the centre of Singapore Changi Airport that is open free of charge, 24/7 with no commercial activity," said Charu Kokate, Senior Partner, Safdie Architects. Charu is the Project Director of Jewel Changi Airport and headed its design integration and construction that has redefined the air travel experience.

– Guests on the "Can we adopt sustainable new-age materials" panel, which featured Faysal Tabbarah, Associate Dean and Professor of Architecture, American University of Sharjah, Matthew Utley, Principal, Grimshaw, and Nasser Abulhasan, Principal, AGi Architects, discussed regional challenges to sustainability. This included the lack of regional data, the inability to establish a consensus on the value of sustainability, and the fact that industrial development itself can be at odds with the idea of sustainability, making it important to challenge the idea of what humans really need.

– NFT artist Amrita Sethi encouraged creatives to design for the future as more and more people will expect the ability to interact with objects in the digital world. She also launched her newest Bucket Monsters NFT collection.

– Dr. Mario R. García, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, García Media, cautioned to "Mind the AI Gap" but was optimistic about the future of AI because: "AI is a tool, and a human is a creator. We

can make connections where none appear to be, and connectivity is crucial to innovation."

– Speaking during the "How can museums use technology to become immersive" fireside chat, Manager of Exhibitions and Programs at Msheireb Museums Fahad Al Turky emphasised that putting human needs at the heart of technological development is key to creating successful interventions. Sometimes, it's about not having any technology at all to ensure people have the type of experience they can engage with. Director of the Museum of Islamic Art Shaika Al-Nassr offered an example of just such a project done in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, called Speaking Objects From the World of Islam, which animates texts written on ancient artefacts to make them easier to read and understand.

– During the panel exploring if "The Middle Eastern design language become global," designer Abdulrahman Al Muftah remarked that regional festivals, biennales like Design Doha and other regional platforms are key to take advantage of the opportunities the region has to offer. Chief Creative Officer and Co-founder of UnlockBrands Miguel Viana said that a focus on consistency is key in terms of opening up different cultures to each other to create huge opportunities for the development of design in the region. Co-Founder of the Khaleeji Art Museum, Sharifah Alhinai, was excited about the opportunity to elevate the region by investing more in digital platforms like digital museums to reach global audiences at the click of a button.

– During the panel exploring "Is technology empowering creativity or stifling it?" Head of Robotics and AI at the Qatar Scientific Club, Mohammed Al-Qassabi remarked that the most constructive opinion on AI is that humans should work with AI rather than fight it. "We need to learn how to utilise these tools and work with them," he said. He also stressed that the education sector should teach and train students to use AI tools efficiently, as the importance of AI is increasing, as well as its demand.

– In the "Are we designing for the experience economy" panel, Snoonu Founder and Chief Executive Officer Hamad Mubarak Al-Hajri said that the experience economy is all about finding synergy between diverse stakeholders. "Business cannot thrive without the positive interaction between the creative and technological industries to deliver the right value proposition for people." To help prompt creativity in this space, he added that organisations must review their customer engagement practices and organisation structure. "Going directly to the people to see how they are using your products and creating nimble, small teams to work collaboratively can help break through the creativity block," he said. Speaking about the success of Snoonu, he said, "We don't build startups, we build ecosystems that welcome creativity, challenges and collaboration."