

Qatar a rising 'brain of the world' in architecture and design: Philippe Starck

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DOHA: World-renowned creator and designer Philippe Starck (*pictured*), whose prolific career spans architecture, interiors, product design and futurist concepts, has hailed Qatar as one of the most compelling laboratories of creativity and intelligence in the world today.

Starck is in Doha for a five-day design workshop organised by Qatar Museums alongside François Pappalardo (Lead Architect), Eitan Hammer (Head of Architecture at Starck Network), and Mathias Romvos, engaging with local talents and exploring Qatar's evolving cultural and architectural landscape.

In an exclusive interview with *The Peninsula*, Starck reflected on his deeply personal design philosophy, his unconventional childhood, and the solitary creative process that has shaped his work for decades. Yet it was his admiration for Qatar's bold trajectory in design, innovation and cultural leadership that stood out most strongly.

Starck, who first visited Doha 30 years ago, said he had witnessed one of the most dramatic national transformations anywhere in the world. "I see how a country, a city can bloom only with energy, vision and intelligence," he said. This evolution, he noted, is not merely one of infrastructure or aesthetics, but of intellectual ambition.

"Qatar is becoming the brain of the world. Some people dedicate their country to money, some to war, but Qatar is dedicated to education, creativity, art, technology."

He credited the Qatari leadership

— and in particular H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani — for driving a continuum of creativity anchored in heritage yet aimed squarely at the future.

For Starck, Qatar's architectural evolution is remarkable not because it imitates global trends, but because it cultivates an authentic narrative from the desert to the digital age. "Qatar is a continuum from the roots — the desert, the family — to the highest level of creativity, technology, inspiration and art," he said. This makes the country, in his view, an ideal environment for future-oriented creativity.

Despite leading a globally recognised design practice, Starck maintains an intensely solitary creative life. Working from remote natural landscapes — "the forest, the dunes, the mud, the sea" — he designs alone, producing an average of one major project per day. His team, he says with affection, shares his values so deeply that meetings are mostly filled with laughter rather than discussion. "If they work with me, that means we share the same value. And when you share the same value with somebody, you don't need to speak."

On global challenges, Starck reiterated his belief that architecture must return to humanity rather than materiality. "More materiality means less humanity," he said, urging designers to focus on empathy, generosity and essential needs rather than excess. Sustainability, he argued, begins by asking fundamental questions: "What do we need really?" The answer should guide

the choice of technologies — neither too high nor too low — to ensure that architecture enhances life without suffocating it.

As Doha continues to position itself as a crossroads of art, culture, design and innovation, Starck's reflections underscore the country's growing influence in shaping conversations about the future of architecture. "Qatar, he suggests, is not just building structures, but cultivating intelligence — a model that may inspire nations far beyond the region".

