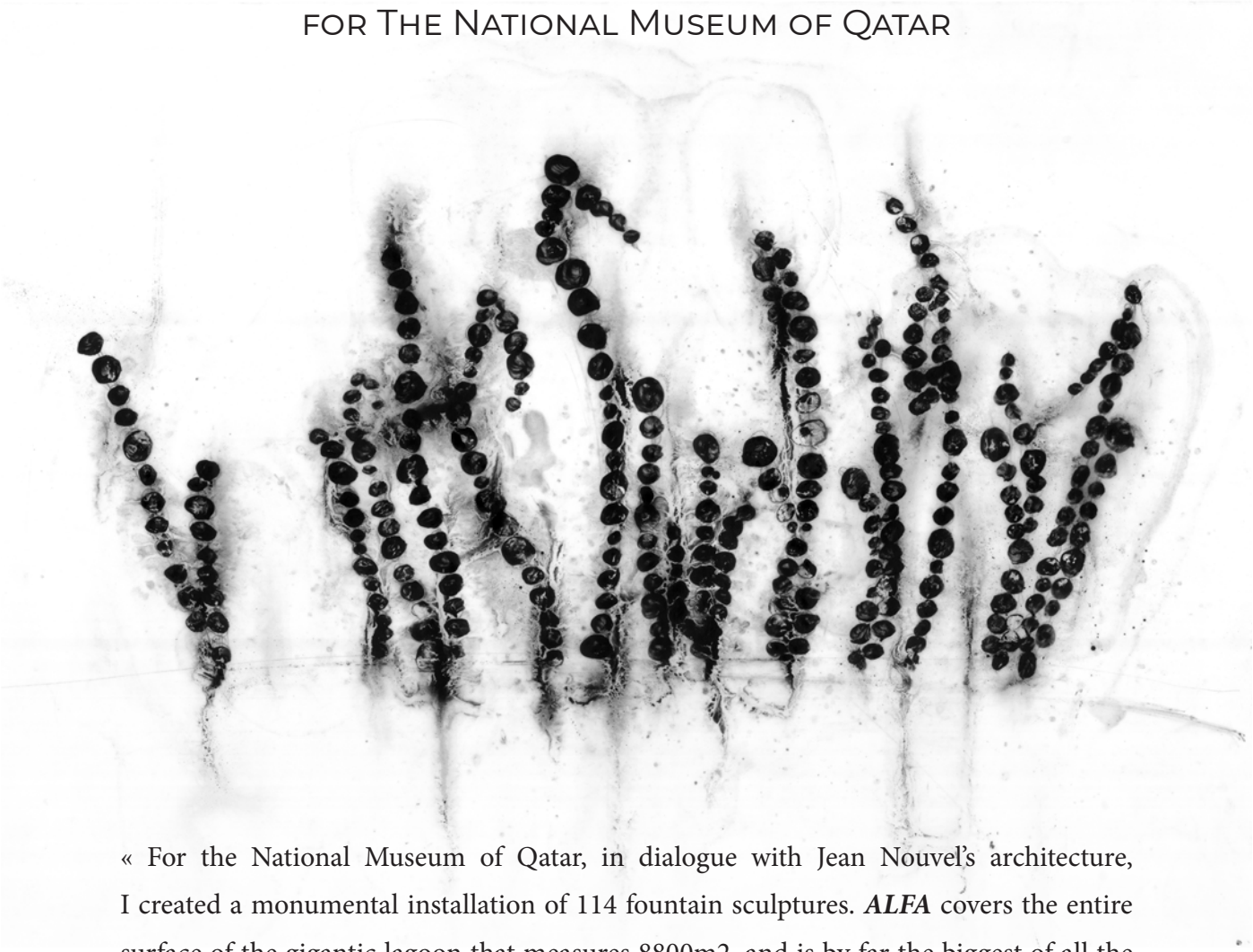
Jean-Michel Othoniel

# ALFA

## a monumental installation for The National Museum of Qatar



« For the National Museum of Qatar, in dialogue with Jean Nouvel's architecture, I created a monumental installation of 114 fountain sculptures. ***ALFA*** covers the entire surface of the gigantic lagoon that measures 8800m2, and is by far the biggest of all the monumental projects I have ever created, five times larger than my artwork permanently installed at Versailles in 2015.

The lagoon is located between the National Museum of Qatar and the Persian Gulf, at the entrance o the city of Doha. This unique situation gives amazing visibility to this public artwork from the Corniche, the museum and the sea.

The 114 sculptures arise like majestic black reeds along the 900-meter-long shores of the lagoon designed by Jean Nouvel. Walking around the lagoon, the viewer will discover, from various angles, silhouettes reflected on the water that evoke the beauty of Arabic calligraphy. At moments the sculptures are also transformed into fountains, launching arabesques of water toward the sky, hugging the curves of the museum's architecture echoing the shape of desert roses.

***ALFA,*** ink studies by Jean-Michel Othoniel, 2017.

*"Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature;*
*but he is a thinking reed*[1]**.**"



***ALFA***, 2019. Sculpture Fountains permanently installed in the lagoon of the National Museum of Qatar, Doha.

In designing this project, I discovered the richness of the art of writing in Arabic culture, and reinterpreted abstractly certain letters in the Arabic alphabet. I acquired great freedom in my ink drawings with the complicity of a professional calligrapher. While I was creating nine groups of letters, he helped me to avoid forming actual words in order for the work to remain abstract, letters themselves being one of culture's very foundations. During our conversations, I also learned that the traditional calligraphy tool is made from a simple, carved reed.

I created this installation *in situ* in keeping with the scale of the architecture and the landscape, in order to accentuate the importance of wild reeds, fragile elements of nature, as essential tools for cultural transmission ».

**Jean-Michel Othoniel**

[1] PASCAL, Blaise. *Pensées*, fragment 347.

*« At moments the sculptures transform into fountains, launching arabesques of water toward the sky, hugging the curves of the museum's architecture ».*



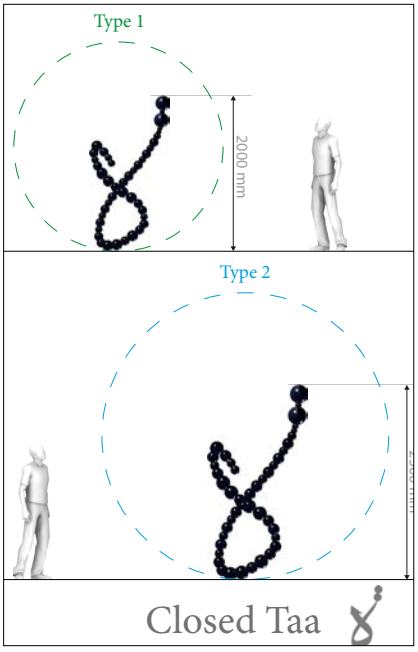


***ALFA,*** ink studies by Jean-Michel Othoniel, 2017.

When looking from a particular side, the sculptures look like gigantic reeds in the water. The calligrapher uses natural reeds he sculpts to shape his qalam and then plunge it in the ink to draw the letters. That is the reason why Othoniel wanted his sculptures to be as black as ink. Rising from the water of the lagoon, the sculptures evoke natural reeds with their reflections on the water.










When looking from another side, the sculptures evoke calligraphies in the space, an homage to the Arabic language and the writing. Here is an example of a letter Othoniel took his inspiration from in the Arabic alphabet, to turn into one of his fountain sculptures for ***ALFA*.**





# ALFA

## Key Numbers & technical informations



**114** fountain sculptures in total

**17** different letters interpreted in two different sizes, mixed on site

**9** groups of fountains

A **900** m2 lagoon

More than **5000** black colored metal beads

**5.20** m of height for the biggest fountains

The 114 sculptures are made of inox duplex stainless steel

The project took **5** years to be created



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The photograph of the reeds reflecting in the water is by ©Lucien Clergue
The images of calligraphy are from *Calligraphie arabe : Initiation,* Ghani Alani (writer), Olivier d' Huissier (photographs), 2013.