

## REVEALED: ASIF KHAN STUDIO-DESIGNED ETHEREAL PORTALS FOR EXPO 2020 DUBAI

*First photographs of Asif Khan-designed Public Realm works for Expo 2020 Dubai released ahead of opening in October 2020*



The Expo 2020 Dubai Entry Portals designed by Asif Khan - photography by Helene Binet

**Dubai, February 2020:** Asif Khan, renowned British architecture studio, has designed the Expo Entry Portals, three spectacular gateways to Expo 2020 Dubai that will grant entry to visitors from 20 October. The structures are the first works to be unveiled from the studio's design of more than six kilometres of Expo 2020 Public Realm.

The portals are a futuristic exploration of the traditional “mashrabiya”, an elegant design element used across the region to control light and airflow.

Each portal's remarkable appearance comes from being woven entirely from strands of ultra-lightweight carbon fibre composite that lend incredible structural strength. This enables the ethereal portal structures to stand 21 metres high and 30 metres long, without any additional support. From afar the portals appear to be composed of translucent planes, which up close visitors discover are made from hundreds of fine lines of structure.

The portals feature two vast doors - each door is 21 metres high and 10.5 metres wide - which will be opened every morning of the 173 days of Expo 2020 Dubai in a symbolic act of welcoming the world. They lead visitors to tree-filled arrival courtyards, also designed by Khan, in each of the three Expo 2020 districts: Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability.

The project is the outcome of a three-year iterative design process working hand in hand with a manufacturer specialising in large format carbon composite components and an aircraft engineer. The final geometric pattern resolves the requirements of structural strength against material efficiency, wind permeability, shading quantity and manufacturing time.

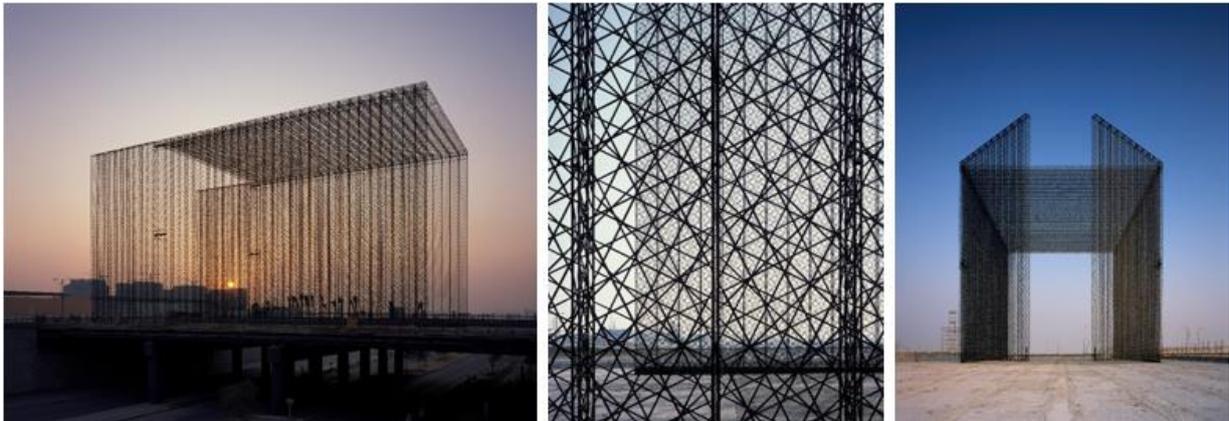
Adding to the rich lineage of innovative structures from past World Expos, these portals are a future form of architecture which is inspired by the aesthetic of the region.

Khan's wider Public Realm design interweaves a six-kilometre linear park with the entire length of concourse, alongside a running track, walking paths of soft and hard materials and places to rest. Among these are a seating project, designed in collaboration with Lebanese typographer

Lara Captan, water features, plants and trees which complete the environment. Representing the lines left on the desert as people journeyed across the landscape, the multitude of lines in the ground follow the concourses, flowing and converging with each other using a language of pattern work inspired by the UAE's traditional sadu weaving. The design enables people to explore the Expo's vastness at their own pace. After Expo, it will become a permanent streetscape for the new District 2020.

**Asif Khan** said *"The portals will be the first and last encountering moment for all who make the journey to Expo 2020 Dubai, and these capture the very transcendental moment the region is experiencing as it hosts its first World Expo - the celebration not only of UAE's heritage, but also the future."*

*Designing the Public Realm for Expo 2020 Dubai is a seminal moment for my practice; each aspect of the design invites visitors to immerse themselves in shared Islamic culture, art and language in dialogue with the future spirit of Expo. As visitors explore the many facets of the Public Realm designs, from the Expo Entry Portals to the seating I made with Lara Captan, I hope it leaves them with an unforgettable sense and experience of place".*



**Ahmed Al Khatib, Chief Development and Delivery Officer, Expo 2020 Dubai** said: *"We cannot wait to open our doors to the world on 20 October 2020, and the Expo Entry Portals will provide a wonderful way to welcome millions of people from across the globe, giving a taste of the amazing architecture and groundbreaking innovation they will experience all around the site."*

The Expo Entry Portals will be the first impression of the site upon arrival for the millions of visitors who will attend the first World Expo and largest event ever to be held in the Arab world.

Expo 2020 Dubai will be open from 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020 - 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

### Project credits

Client: Expo 2020 Dubai  
Design: Asif Khan  
Structural Engineer: Calin Gologan  
Manufacturer: Ha-Co Carbon GmbH

## Notes to Editors

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## About Asif Khan Studio

Asif Khan is a research and development led architecture studio who designs buildings, landscapes, exhibitions and installations, among other things. Khan's practice explore how material and social innovations can fundamentally alter the way people experience their environment, realised through rigorously detailed and delivered outputs.

Khan is currently working on the new Museum of London at West Smithfield, Tselinny Centre of Contemporary Culture in Almaty and Expo 2020 Dubai's Public Realm. Recently he designed the award-winning UK Pavilion at Astana Expo 2017 and the Hyundai Pavilion at the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics.

Notable previous projects include the 'MegaFaces' pavilion at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics which won the Cannes Lion Grand Prix for Innovation, the Coca-Cola Beatbox at London 2012 Olympics, a finalist entry in the international competition for the new Guggenheim Museum Helsinki from 1700 anonymous designs, and a Summer pavilion for the Serpentine Gallery in Summer 2106.

Khan lectures globally on his and sits on the Board of Trustees for the Design Museum. He was awarded an MBE for services to Architecture in 2017 and the studio were named 'Architects of the Year' by the German Design Council in 2018.

## About Expo 2020 Dubai

Expo 2020 Dubai will bring together millions of people for The World's Greatest Show, celebrating human brilliance and achievement under the theme '*Connecting Minds, Creating the Future*'.

- The six months from 20 October 2020 to 10 April 2021 will be a moment in time to be part of an unparalleled event. We are extending a warm Emirati welcome to the world:
  - 25 million visits are expected, with many visitors expected to come more than once
  - 70 per cent of visitors anticipated to come from outside the UAE, the largest proportion of international visitors in the 168-year history of World Expos
- An entertaining global celebration with something for everyone, Expo 2020 will wow visitors with 60 daily events across 173 days, showcasing the best of music, technology, creativity and culture, while 200 F&B outlets will feature famous chefs and cuisine from every corner of the world
- Expo 2020 will be an endless journey of discovery. Visitors will have access to the latest innovations and breakthroughs, with more than 200 participants - including 192 nations, multilateral organisations, businesses and educational institutions - coming together to highlight real-life solutions to the world's most pressing challenges

- Expo 2020's sub-themes of *Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability* will inspire visitors to make a conscious effort to think and live differently, and give them renewed optimism that, through collaboration, it is possible to make a lasting change to the world
- The first World Expo to take place in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) will be located on a 4.38 sqkm site adjacent to Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai South

Media are invited to register for access to the Expo 2020 Dubai Media Information System, Tawassul, at <https://media.expo2020dubai.com>. Tawassul, meaning 'connect' in Arabic, is an essential operational tool connecting media to important information and updates on elements such as media accreditation, licences and permits and content assets. If you have not already submitted an expression of interest for media accreditation, please register for Tawassul to access the expression of interest form. For enquiries, email: [media.services@expo2020.ae](mailto:media.services@expo2020.ae).

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## **About World Expos**

In 1851 the Crystal Palace was the centrepiece of London's Great Exhibition - the first World Expo. It celebrated the man-made industrial wonders of a rapidly changing world. Architecture, contents and a theme, 'Industry of All Nations', were combined to create a big idea of nations meeting nations in shared technological and commercial progress. In more recent years, participants in World Expos, including governments, international organisations and companies, have gathered to find solutions to universal challenges and to promote their achievements, products, ideas, innovations, their national brand, and their nations as destinations for tourism, trade and investment.

World Expos are held under the auspices of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), the intergovernmental organisation responsible for overseeing and regulating international exhibitions ('Expos') and for fostering their core values of Education, Innovation and Cooperation. Today, four types of Expos are organised under the BIE's auspices: World Expos, Specialised Expos, Horticultural Expos and the Triennale di Milano.