



Vezzoli's portraits arranged for the exhibition at the Qatar Museum Authority Gallery yesterday.

# A celebration of femininity

Italian artist Vezzoli's expo on iconic figures of last century opens at Katara

BY RAYNALD C RIVERA

**DOHA:** Portraits of iconic female figures of the last century with eyes that glisten with tears are featured at The Museum of Crying Women, an avant-garde exhibition of Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli which opens today at the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) Gallery at Katara. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) Board of Trustees, yesterday inaugurated the museum.

This is Vezzoli's first exhibition in the Middle East and features Joan Crawford, Elizabeth Taylor and Lady

Gaga, among others, in a celebration of femininity.

Adorned with Vezzoli's signature embroidered glittering tears, the portraits delve into the private histories of Hollywood legends, first ladies, fashion icons and pop culture celebrities, reflecting the drama of the female divided identities, between living a public and private life.

Vezzoli's works have been criticised as apolitical and unlike other artists of his generation he tends to tread the emotional path more than political issues. "As a person I'm not specifically interested in the history of politicians such as heads of state. I'm more interested in the history of

emotions. This exhibition is a genealogy of feelings," he said. While going through biographies of famous female celebrities, Vezzoli found most of them had been doing needlework as a pastime.

"Needlework becomes an emotional painting... Embroidery is the most intimate art, very personal and private. They have public and private personas and private is expressed in needlework." For this reason, he uses embroidery as a way to adorn the portraits with glittering tears which the celebrities hide in public eye.

In a space reminiscent of the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace de Versailles, the exhibition includes a new series of

artworks inspired by Oum Kulthom, one of the most admired female Arab singers and a bronze sculpture of Sophia Loren. Sixteen portraits of Kulthom from covers of international magazines are displayed at the expo. Vezzoli considers Kulthom as an "immortal and perennial symbol" of this region.

The expo has been created in dialogue with Hans-Ulrich Obrist (Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery, London), Rem Koolhaas (Founder of architecture firm OMA), and the artist. The show runs until November 30.

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