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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
18 April 2015

VCUQatar Fashion Show ‘Thread’ Enchants Audiences at The Gate Mall

Doha, Qatar –Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) presented ‘Thread,’ its 16th Annual Fashion Show, to an audience of fashion enthusiasts, VIP guests and members of the media on 14, 15 and 16 April, 2015. The event was hosted by Salam International at The Gate Mall.

‘Thread’ featured works by VCUQatar fashion design sophomores, juniors and eight graduating seniors – Tamader Alsultan, Kinda Morshed, Malia Bennett Henry, Aisha Al-Suwaidi, Maryam Al Darwish, Dylon Adonis, Marwa Al-Said, Soraya Teschner – who presented eclectic thesis collections featuring day-to-evening looks that reflected their aesthetic and creative visions.

Embroidered floral designs left a strong impression in Tamader Alsultan’s *Blooms* collection. Kinda Morshed’s *Elizabeth.Haunted* drew upon the evil queens of fairy tales and fiction; her black gowns featured exaggerated collars and dramatic feather details. For *Manic Depression*, Malia Bennett Henry aimed to convey a personal message, incorporating expressive Jackson Pollock-esque prints to transmit extremes of emotion. Aisha Al-Suwaidi made use of polka dots in *Fashion as Art*, emphasizing their charm with playful 60s-inspired silhouettes. Attention to craft and finishing was the highlight of *The Details*, a collection by Maryam Al Darwish, while Dylon Adonis remained faithful to his longstanding source of inspiration: nature. His collection, *Triggered Metamorphosis*, juxtaposed fur trims with structural tailoring to echo the tensions he sees existing between human nature and society’s expectations. A visit to New York City inspired Marwa Al-Said’s collection *Bonsoir NY*, which integrated corsets, leather and tulle in a contemporary way. VCUarts student Soraya Teschner transferred from Richmond to Qatar for her senior year. Coming to the desert from urban Virginia meant not only a big shift in culture, but also in scenery. “Qatar’s desert and beige landscape gave me a creative platform and inspired me to explore different styles in my senior fashion design year. My final collection *Modern Warrior* is inspired by hidden and rather soft strengths in women, which I found particular in the Middle East,” she said of her participation in ‘Thread.’

In a further effort to strengthen exchange opportunities between home and branch campuses, VCUQatar invited Gabriela Villalon, Rene Velasquez and Haley Choi, three senior fashion design students from the VCUarts Fashion Department in Richmond, VA, USA, to present

their fashion collections in Doha. In hosting the guest designers, the theme of ‘Thread’ was given deeper meaning through the reinforcement of international connections and creative collaborations.

This year, students had the great privilege to present their collections alongside the work of renowned French couturier Stéphane Rolland. The designer, who remembers first sketching a woman in a dress when he was only four years old, is proud to have realized his dream of creating his own Haute Couture Line. When asked from where he draws his inspiration and how he creates his pieces, Rolland explains: “I am mainly inspired by architecture, as well as the contrasts between the light and the shadow, the yin and the yang, but when it comes to creating the pieces it is very much like cooking, because you need the right balance of all ingredients.”

Held annually since 1999, the VCUQatar Fashion Show has developed into a highly anticipated annual event in Qatar, with international invitees, guest designers and media. Marion Sanguesa, a VCUQatar 2012 fashion graduate, who now works at Salam stores, remembers presenting her senior collection at the VCUQatar campus in Education City. “Salam’s The Gate Mall opens more opportunities for the students to show their expertise to a wider audience,” Sanguesa says. “It shows the Qatar community that VCUQatar students’ work is more than just a university project.”

The winners of the Fashion Show Awards were announced on the last evening of the show. This year’s W Doha Award goes to Maryam Al Darwish and her *The Details* collection. The award was presented by Clara de Lama, director of marketing at the W Doha and includes the opportunity to make use of W Doha, and another W Hotel around the globe, as a platform to showcase her collections at various events happening throughout the year. The Salam Fashion Award, introduced in 2013 by Salam International Investments Chairman and CEO Issa Abu Issa, aims to support a graduate’s transition from student designer to professional. This year, it was presented by AbdulSalam Issa Abu Issa, member of the board of directors of Salam International to Malia Bennett Henry. The award includes mentorship during the development and design of two bespoke collections, which will be sold exclusively within a dedicated space in Salam Stores, Doha. The final sponsored award of the evening was the newly established GLAM award, which was presented by Sindhu Nair, the Chief Editor. Once again Malia Bennett Henry was awarded for her outstanding creativity in the *Manic Depression* collection.

With ‘Thread,’ the Fashion Design program concludes yet another academic year with a celebration of fashion. Thanks to the continued support of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, VCUQatar continues to further the development of the country’s growing fashion industry. We look forward to today’s graduates becoming tomorrow’s leaders in the world of fashion.

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About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:

VCUQatar is the Qatar campus of the prestigious Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia. Established in 1998 through a partnership with Qatar Foundation, VCUQatar offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in fashion design, graphic design, interior design and painting & printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design.

In addition to a comprehensive annual public events program that includes a wide range of exhibitions, lectures and fashion events, the University hosts the biennial international design conference Tasmeeem and the biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Islamic Art Symposium, attracting globally recognized designers, academics and thinkers while fostering sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of Qatar. For more information please visit www.qatar.vcu.edu

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>