Celebration in Bahrain for Aga Khan Award Laureate “Revitalisation of Muharraq”

Bahrain, 11 January 2020 – The Revitalisation of Muharraq, a series of restoration and reuse projects that highlight the World Heritage site’s pearling history, was celebrated today at a ceremony under the presence and patronage of H.E. Sheikh Khaled Bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain; H.E. Sheikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, and Farrokh Derakhshani, Director of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The event was held at the Pearling Path Visitors Centre in Muharraq.

Initiated as a series of restoration and adaptive reuse sites, the project evolved into a comprehensive programme that aimed to re-balance the city’s demographic makeup by creating public spaces, providing community and cultural venues, and improving the overall environment. Eventually known as the “Pearling Path”, it sought to entice local families back through improvements to the environment and the provision of community and cultural venues.

The pearling industry was historically crucial to Bahrain’s economy, with the former capital Muharraq as its global centre. The project highlights that history by preserving a number of sites and numerous buildings, from humble divers’ houses to prestigious courtyard residences. All are connected through a visitor pathway, with vacant plots landscaped as public spaces.

For more information about the “Revitalisation of Muharraq”, including images and video, please see: https://www.akdn.org/architecture/project/revitalisation-muharraq

For a full on-line press kit for all the laureates, which includes briefs on each of the winning projects, high-resolution images, and other information, please see https://www.akdn.org/2019AwardWinners.

About the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture’s mandate is different from that of many other architecture prizes: it not only rewards architects, but also identifies municipalities, builders, clients, master artisans and engineers who have played important roles in the realisation of a project. His Highness established the Award the Aga Khan in 1977 to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully addressed the needs and aspirations of communities in which Muslims have a significant presence.
The Award’s Master Jury

The nine members of the independent Master Jury, who chose the Revitalisation of Muharraq, as a laureate of the 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture, included: Anthony Kwamé Appiah, an Anglo-Ghanaian American philosopher; Meisa Batayneh, founder and principal architect of maisam architects & engineers; Sir David Chipperfield, whose practice has built over 100 projects for both the private and public sectors; Elizabeth Diller, a founding partner of a design studio whose practice spans the fields of architecture, multi-media performance and digital media; Edhem Eldem, a Professor of History at Boğaziçi University (Istanbul) and the Collège de France; Mona Fawaz, a Professor in Urban Studies and Planning at the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy at the American University of Beirut; Kareem Ibrahim, an Egyptian architect and urban researcher who has worked extensively in Historic Cairo; Ali M. Malkawi, a professor at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design and a founding director of the Harvard Center for Green Buildings and Cities; and Nondita Correa Mehrotra, an architect working in India and the United States, and Director of the Charles Correa Foundation. For more information, please see the biographies of Master Jury members.


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The Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) was established by His Highness the Aga Khan in 1977 to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of communities in which Muslims have a significant presence. The Award recognises examples of architectural excellence in the fields of contemporary design, social housing, community improvement and development, historic preservation, reuse and area conservation, as well as landscape design and improvement of the environment. Since the Award was launched
43 years ago, 122 projects have received the award and more than 9,000 building projects have been documented.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). It currently operates 1,000 or so programmes and institutions in 30 countries – many of which date back over 60 years, and some over 100. It employs approximately 80,000 people, the majority of whom are based in developing countries. The AKDN’s annual budget for non-profit development activities is approximately US$ 950 million. Its economic development arm, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), generates annual revenues of US$ 4.3 billion, but all surpluses generated by its project companies are reinvested in further development activities, usually in fragile, remote or post-conflict regions.

Read online: https://www.akdn.org/press-release/celebration-bahrain-aga-khan-award-laureate-“revitalisation-muharraq”