Press release

Aga Khan highlights architecture’s potential to inspire dialogue

Six projects receive 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia, 13 September 2019 – The six winning projects of the 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) were acclaimed earlier today at a ceremony held at Kazan’s Musa Jalil State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre. Mintimer Shaimiev, State Counsellor of the Republic of Tatarstan, accompanied His Highness the Aga Khan, hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Ismaili Muslims, in presiding over the Award Ceremony.

The six projects to share a US$ 1 million prize, as selected by the 2019 Award Master Jury are:

- **Revitalisation of Muharraq**, Bahrain
- **Arcadia Education Project**, South Kanarchor, Bangladesh
- **Palestinian Museum**, Birzeit, Palestine
- **Public Spaces Development Programme**, Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation
- **Alioune Diop University Teaching and Research Unit**, Bambey, Senegal
- **Wasit Wetland Centre**, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The six Award recipients, spanning three continents, include an urban heritage intervention, a floating school, a national museum, an ambitious programme to introduce public spaces across hundreds of localities, a university’s classrooms and halls, and an ecological centre.

“You are implementing the largest charitable, educational and humanitarian projects, support proactive, creative people, regardless of nationality or confession, said Mintimer Shaimiev in acknowledging the contribution of His Highness. “Your peacekeeping mission, your commitment to bringing civilisations closer and achieving unity in diversity are consonant with our goals, especially to me, as the UNESCO Special Envoy for Intercultural Dialogue.”

Speaking at the ceremony, His Highness the Aga Khan noted that on this visit to Tatarstan, he had seen “how committed people can honour the power both of cultural identity and cultural pluralism.”

“It is striking to see how churches and mosques, for example, have been built and preserved right next to one another as powerful symbols of a profound intercultural dialogue,” he said. These were examples, the Aga Khan explained, of what the world was in particular need of today, as we seek to meet accelerating environmental, social, technological, economic and political challenges.

The Award Ceremony was attended by Eleonora Valentinovna Mitrofanova, the Ambassador-at-large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other government officials, ambassadors and members of the international diplomatic corps, and leading members of the architectural community from around the world.
Speaking about the theme of “Architecture in Dialogue”, which emerged from this 14th cycle of the Award, the Aga Khan explained the potential of the architectural world to inspire and enrich creative dialogues, embracing diverse and even divergent perspectives. “The rich architectural dialogue we seek to foster should include a renewed respect for the diversity of Islamic cultures themselves,” he said. It was also necessary, he added, to foster a dialogue with non-Islamic cultures including diverse religious traditions. “Architecture can lead the way in this effort – as we listen to one another and learn from one another across old divides.”

The Aga Khan went on to explain why the Ismaili Imamat was involved with architecture. “The simple answer lies in my conviction that architecture – more than any other art form – has a profound impact on the quality of human life,” he said. “I believe that we all have a responsibility to improve the quality of life whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. Our commitment to influencing the quality of architecture – intellectually and materially – grows directly out of our commitment to improving the quality of human life.”

Yesterday, the Aga Khan visited Bolgar, which was a Muslim religious centre as early as 922 and is renowned for its historic and archaeological significance. He toured the Bolgar Islamic Academy, where he attended a special stamp cancellation ceremony to commemorate the Aga Khan Award for Architecture ceremony in Kazan. Later in the day, he visited the White Mosque and the Bulgarian Civilisation Museum where he viewed one of the world’s largest Qurans. The historical and archaeological complex at Bolgar has been designated as a UNESCO heritage site.

For more information please contact:

Davlatsulton Dorgabekova [Kazan]
+7 (903) 625 42 83

Semin Abdulla [International]
Communications Manager
Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)
Semin.Abdulla@akdn.org

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About the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

The 2019 Awards Ceremony marked the conclusion of the 14th three-year cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which was established by His Highness the Aga Khan in 1977. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture’s mandate is different from that of most 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. Prizes have been given to projects across the world, from France to China. Architects and planners from New York to Dhaka have received one of 128 awards to date.

The 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture Master Jury’s Statement noted that for architecture to maintain its relevance in relation to today’s challenges, it is imperative that the profession reposition itself to address human, societal and environmental challenges. Reflecting that need for repositioning, the Master Jury stated that it had sought to select projects in this Award Cycle that question the conventional practice of the profession and, more importantly, set in place inspirational and ingenious pathways through which architects can take on societal problems and engage with them seriously.

The Venue for the Award Ceremony

Ceremonies to announce winning projects and mark the close of each triennial Award Cycle are held in settings selected for their architectural and cultural importance. Previous venues for Award ceremonies encompass many of the most illustrious architectural achievements in the Muslim world,

Press Material

For a complete on-line press kit, which includes briefs on each of the winning projects, high-resolution images, broadcast-quality video (for use by television stations and websites) and other information, please see https://www.akdn.org/2019AwardWinners.

Useful Links

The 2017-2019 Award Master Jury
The 2017-2019 AKAA Steering Committee

Read online: https://www.akdn.org/press-release/aga-khan-highlights-architectures-potential-inspire-dialogue