

MEDIA ADVISORY
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Aga Khan Award for Architecture

ISLAMIC CEMETERY, IN ALTACH, AUSTRIA RECEIVES 2013 AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE

Lisbon, August 2013 – The Islamic Cemetery, in Altach, Austria, has received a 2013 Aga Khan Award for Architecture, one of the most prestigious prizes in the field. His Excellency Aníbal Cavaco Silva, President of the Portuguese Republic His Highness the Aga Khan presented the award at a ceremony held at the Castle of São Jorge in Lisbon, Portugal.

According to the Master Jury’s citation, “The Islamic Cemetery, in its restrained and measured expression, belies a complex cultural negotiation”, says the Master Jury’s citation. “In the context of its host environment, it presents a symbolically charged site as a place of resolve. The project brought together a multi-faith, multi-ethnic group of actors to realise the wish of an immigrant community seeking to create a space that fulfils their spiritual aspirations and, at the same time, responds to the context of their adopted country with a culturally sensitive design and aesthetic. Simple in expression and poetic in form, it not only engages the natural landscape in an intelligent manner but also suspends any notion of declaration. While emphasising spiritual pluralism, the Cemetery also provides the final destination for a minority group in a dominant society.”

Until recently, some Muslims in Austria would send their dead back to their countries of origin for burial. But the desire of Muslims to be buried in the countries of their birth led to the creation of a multi-faith, multi-ethnic group of actors, including local authorities and an NGO, to create a cemetery where funeral rites could be administered locally.

The design was lauded by the Award’s Master Jury for the way it realised “the wish of an immigrant community seeking to create a space that fulfils their spiritual aspirations and, at the same time, responds to the context of their adopted country”. Inspired by garden design, it features roseate concrete walls, five staggered, rectangular grave-site enclosures, and a structure housing assembly and prayer rooms. The principal materials used were exposed reinforced concrete for the walls and oak wood for the ornamentation of the entrance facade and the interior of the prayer space.

The US\$ 1 million prize will be shared with the four other 2013 Award recipients: Revitalisation of Birzeit Historic Centre, Birzeit, Palestine; Rehabilitation of Tabriz Bazaar, Tabriz, Iran; Salam Centre for Cardiac Surgery, Khartoum, Sudan; and the Rabat-Salé Urban Infrastructure Project.

(For a **full on-line press kit** including press releases on each of the winning projects, as well as high-resolution images and video, please see www.akdn.org/Aga_Khan_Award_2013, which will be password-protected until 6 September 2013.)

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which was established by His Highness the Aga Khan in 1977, is given every three years. It recognises all types of building projects that affect today's built environment, from modest, small-scale projects to sizable complexes.

As this cycle's recipients illustrate, the Award's mandate is different from that of many other architecture prizes: it selects projects – from innovative mud and bamboo schools to state of the art “green” buildings – that not only exhibit architectural excellence but also improve the overall quality of life.

The US\$ 1 million prize, which will be divided among the five recipients, does not necessarily go to the architect. The Award also identifies municipalities, builders, clients, master craftsmen and engineers who have played important roles in the realisation of a project. The Master Jury has the discretion to apportion the prize money however it sees fit.

Since the Award was launched 36 years ago, 110 projects have received the award and nearly 8000 building projects have been documented.

The 2013 Award Master Jury

The Awards are selected by an independent Master Jury appointed by the Steering Committee for each three-year Award cycle. The nine members of the Master Jury for the 2010-2013 Award cycle are:

- Mr. David Adjaye, *Principal, Adjaye Associates, London, United Kingdom*
- Dr. Howayda al-Harithy, *Professor, Department of Architecture and Design, American University of Beirut, Lebanon*
- Mr. Michel Desvigne, *Landscape Architect and Founder, Agence Michel Desvigne, Paris, France*
- Professor Mahmood Mamdani, *Professor and Executive Director, Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR), Wandegaya, Uganda*
- Mr. Kamil Merican, *Principal Designer and CEO, Group Design Partnership, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*
- Professor Toshiko Mori, *Principal, Toshiko Mori Architect, New York City, USA*
- Ms. Shahzia Sikander, *Artist, New York City, USA*
- Mr. Murat Tabanlıoğlu, *Architect and Founder, Tabanlıoğlu Architects, Istanbul, Turkey*
- Mr. Wang Shu, *Architect and Founder, Amateur Architecture Studio, Hangzhou, China*

Full biographies of Master Jury members can be found online at:

<http://www.akdn.org/architecture/jury.asp>

Steering Committee

The Award is governed by a Steering Committee chaired by His Highness the Aga Khan. The current members of the Steering Committee are:

- His Highness the Aga Khan, *Chairman*
- Mohammad al-Asad, *Founder & chairman, Center for the Study of the Built Environment, Jordan*
- Homi K. Bhabha, *Director of the Humanities Center, Harvard University, USA*
- Norman Foster, *Founder and chairman, Foster + Partners, UK*
- Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, *Architect, Syria*
- Glenn Lowry, *Director, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA*
- Rahul Mehrotra, *Principal, RMA Architects, India*
- Mohsen Mostafavi, *Dean of the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, USA*
- Farshid Moussavi, *Principal, Farshid Moussavi Architecture, UK*
- Han Tümertekin, *Principal, Mimarlar Tasarım Danışmanlık Ltd, Turkey*

Farrokh Derakhshani is Director of the Award.

A monograph featuring the projects of the 2013 Aga Khan Award, entitled “Architecture is Life”, has been published by Lars Müller Publishers www.lars-mueller-publishers.com (September 2013).

For more information, please see the website www.akdn.org/architecture and on-line press kit www.akdn.org/Aga_Khan_Award_2013 (password protected until 6 September 2013) or contact:

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Notes

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture was established by 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.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is part of the Geneva-based Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which has a wide range of activities aimed at the preservation and promotion of the material and spiritual heritage of Muslim societies. Its programmes include the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (HCP), which works to revitalise historic cities in the Muslim world, both culturally and socioeconomically. Over the last decade, it has been engaged in the rehabilitation of historic areas in Cairo, Kabul, Herat, Aleppo, Delhi, Zanzibar, Mostar, northern Pakistan, Timbuktu and Mopti. The Trust also supports the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as well as www.ArchNet.org, a major online resource on Islamic architecture.