Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Architects, urban planners and academics gather in Pakistan to discuss
Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Pakistan's Institute of Architects presents a Citation to His Highness the Aga Khan for Patronage of Architecture

Karachi, Pakistan, 7 November 2014 - Architects, urban planners and academics from around the world gathered in Pakistan to discuss the latest Aga Khan Award for Architecture recipients at a seminar hosted by the Aga Khan University (AKU). The projects that not only showcase architectural excellence but also improve the overall quality of life.

The winners of the 2013 cycle encompass a bridge in Morocco, a hospital in the Sudan, the revitalisation of the centre of a historic old town in Palestine, a bazaar in Iran and an Islamic cemetery in Austria. These projects cover infrastructure improvement and urban planning, rehabilitation of historic spaces that lead to the creation of employment and the revival of traditional crafts.

“AKAA is one of the most prestigious international architectural awards in the world. The US$ 1 million award recompenses all the actors involved in the achievement of excellence, whether they are architects, clients, craftsmen, engineers or end-users,” said Farrokh Derakhshani, Director of the Award.

Many in Pakistan have contributed to the Award procedures during the last twelve cycles. Four local projects are among the 110 recipients so far. In 1983, the Tomb of Shah Rukn-i ‘Alam in Multan was recognised for its conservation and restoration, and the populist Bhong Mosque in Rahim Yar Khan was cited for its folk-art exuberance and its service to the community. The Khuda ki Basti project in Hyderabad was selected in 1995 for its exemplary incremental development for low-income inhabitants. The Alhamra Arts Council complex in Lahore was awarded in 1998 for its contemporary architectural design.

“The very first Aga Khan Award for Architecture was presented in 1980 at the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore. It was an event whose importance was recognised by the Government of Pakistan, which issued a stamp featuring the gardens,” recalled Hasan-Uddin Khan, convenor of the first cycle of the award and distinguished professor of Architecture and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, USA.

He stressed that Pakistan plays an important part in the story of the Award: it was here in the mid-1970s that His Highness the Aga Khan announced his plan to establish an award for architecture that would recognise and reward the outstanding creative achievements of individuals, communities, and institutions that contribute to the elevation of the quality of architecture and life in contemporary Muslim societies.
“AKAA introduced the notion that in the judgment of successful architecture, one needs to consider it as the production of a group of people, which includes the client, architects, the builders, craftspeople and the users themselves. This was an idea that was largely absent from the architectural discourse when the Award was first established. This is an enduring contribution to architecture and the way in which it is mediated,” he added.

The exhibition "Architecture is Life" presents the 20 projects, located in 15 different countries, which were shortlisted during the 2011-2013 Award cycle. It will open to the public from November 9 to 16, from 11:00 am till 7:00 pm, at the AKU Sports and Rehabilitation Centre.

For more information:
Sam Pickens
Website: www.akdn.org/architecture
E-mail: aaka@akdn.org

NOTES

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is part of the 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. As the cultural agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, the Trust leverages cultural heritage as a means of supporting and catalysing development. Its programmes include the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme which works to revitalise historic cities in the Muslim world, both culturally and socio-economically. Over the last decade, it has been engaged in the rehabilitation of historic areas in Cairo, Kabul, Herat, Aleppo, Delhi, Zanzibar, Mostar, North Pakistan, Tombouctou and Mopti. The Trust also supports the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the website www.Archnet.org, a major online resource on Islamic architecture, the Aga Khan Music Initiative and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a private, international, non-denominational development organisation, which is active in 30 countries and employs over 80,000 people globally. Its nine agencies address complex development issues, including the provision of quality healthcare and education services, cultural and economic revitalisation, micro-enterprise, entrepreneurship and economic development, the advancement of civil society and the protection of the environment. For more information, please see: www.akdn.org