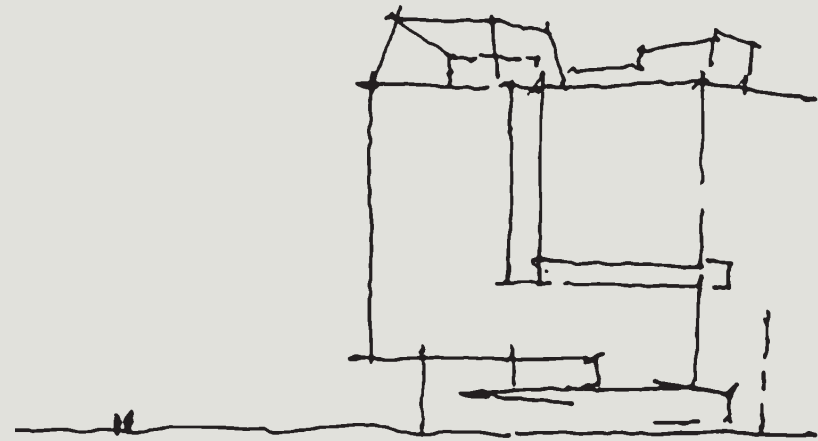




AGA KHAN CENTRE



F.M.

An early conceptual sketch
of the Aga Khan Centre by
Professor Fumihiko Maki

PREFACE

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Based on a tri-partite concept, the design of the Aga Khan Centre allows for external gardens, terraces and courtyards at different levels, as well as the distinctive silhouette of the crown and central atrium

“All Muslims are called upon to improve the physical condition of our world, and honouring our cultural heritage is vital to that calling. Our response in simple terms is that not a day goes by where my institution – the Ismaili Imamate – is not building or rebuilding something somewhere: a historic site perhaps, but also a hospital, a university, an industry...”

His Highness the Aga Khan, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS),
50th Anniversary, London, 22 October 2015



PREFACE

His Highness Aga Khan IV

The opening of the Aga Khan Centre marks the start of an exciting new chapter for institutions of the Ismaili Imam and the Aga Khan Development Network in the UK as we inaugurate their new purpose built home.

We are delighted to have been involved in the regeneration of King's Cross and to have been able to contribute through the development of two signature architect designed buildings – a student halls of residence – Victoria Hall – and the Aga Khan Centre. The Aga Khan Centre is an academic building that incorporates teaching and learning spaces, a research and lending library as well as administrative offices for The Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and the Aga Khan Foundation UK.

Based in London for over forty years now, our institutions contribute actively to the fabric of British civil society and its rich heritage of academic endeavour and international development, while fulfilling an international mandate which has a far reaching, global impact.

Recent times have witnessed an acceleration in the processes of globalisation and technological change and more people than ever before encounter each other across geographic, linguistic and cultural divides. Societies are faced with an important choice: either we come together, seek to understand and to celebrate our shared heritages or we choose to divide, to judge and to risk antagonising each other.

Pluralism that celebrates diversity has been a key value of the Ismaili Imam since its inception over 1,400 years ago. These values are rooted in the ethics and humanism that the message of Islam espouses. Another key value in Muslim heritage, is scholarship and the search for knowledge. The institutions of the Ismaili Imam, including the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network have been founded to put into practice these values; and also, to realise the moral conscience that informs Muslim notions of social justice and civic responsibility.

Our key aim in founding The Institute of Ismaili Studies and the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations was to address a knowledge gap and, through scholarship, teaching and publication, create a better understanding of Islam and of Muslim cultures.

The research and academic courses taking place at these Institutes depart from conventional programmes in several respects. First, they eschew the traditional scholarly disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, mysticism and so forth, opting instead to treat the materials of Islam using the common framework of an intellectual, social and cultural history. Moreover, their graduate programmes give equal importance to the many different ways in which Islam is practiced globally – from China to Canada, from Malaysia to the UK – without placing particular importance on any one particular region.

The Aga Khan Foundation on its side focuses on alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life for some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people and societies without regard to faith, origin or gender. The aim of the Foundation’s work is to help people become self-reliant while being equal partners in their development. Our UK office reflects London’s character as an international centre as we work closely not only with the UK’s Department for International Development, but operate as a hub for relationships with partners across Europe and Asia, acting as a bridge between the developed and the developing world.

The Aga Khan Centre is the third project we have worked on with the distinguished architect Fumihiko Maki, a master of form and light. This project has two very distinctive features – the first is the ribbon pathway of green spaces connecting to the public realm by way of a series of private courtyards, roof gardens and terraces – inspired by the plurality of architectural traditions from within Muslim cultures and societies. The second is the roof-scape, whose glass crown creates a link to the design features of the Imamate Delegation and the Aga Khan Museum in Canada.

The ribbon pathway of green spaces not only illustrates the Islamic garden as a concept, it also creates a unique collection of outdoor spaces in London, all with their own identity; the sum of which seeks to reflect the pluralism that characterises the Islamic world. Each green space was inspired by a particular cultural landscape of a given region where the Ummah resides. A Persian *talar*, a Middle Eastern *iwan*, the Moghul-inspired Garden of Life and the Andalusian inspired rooftop Garden of Light all should create a sense of seclusion, environmental privilege

and contained beauty. The concept of this journey through different regions and typologies of Islamic gardens was the result of serious academic research and has been realised by a group of very talented specialist landscape designers.

Both the Islamic garden in itself, and the pluralism of gardens within the Ummah, are features of Islamic culture that are practically unknown in London. By opening to the public for guided tours of the gardens in both our buildings, we hope to address this knowledge gap and create a unique experience for visitors.

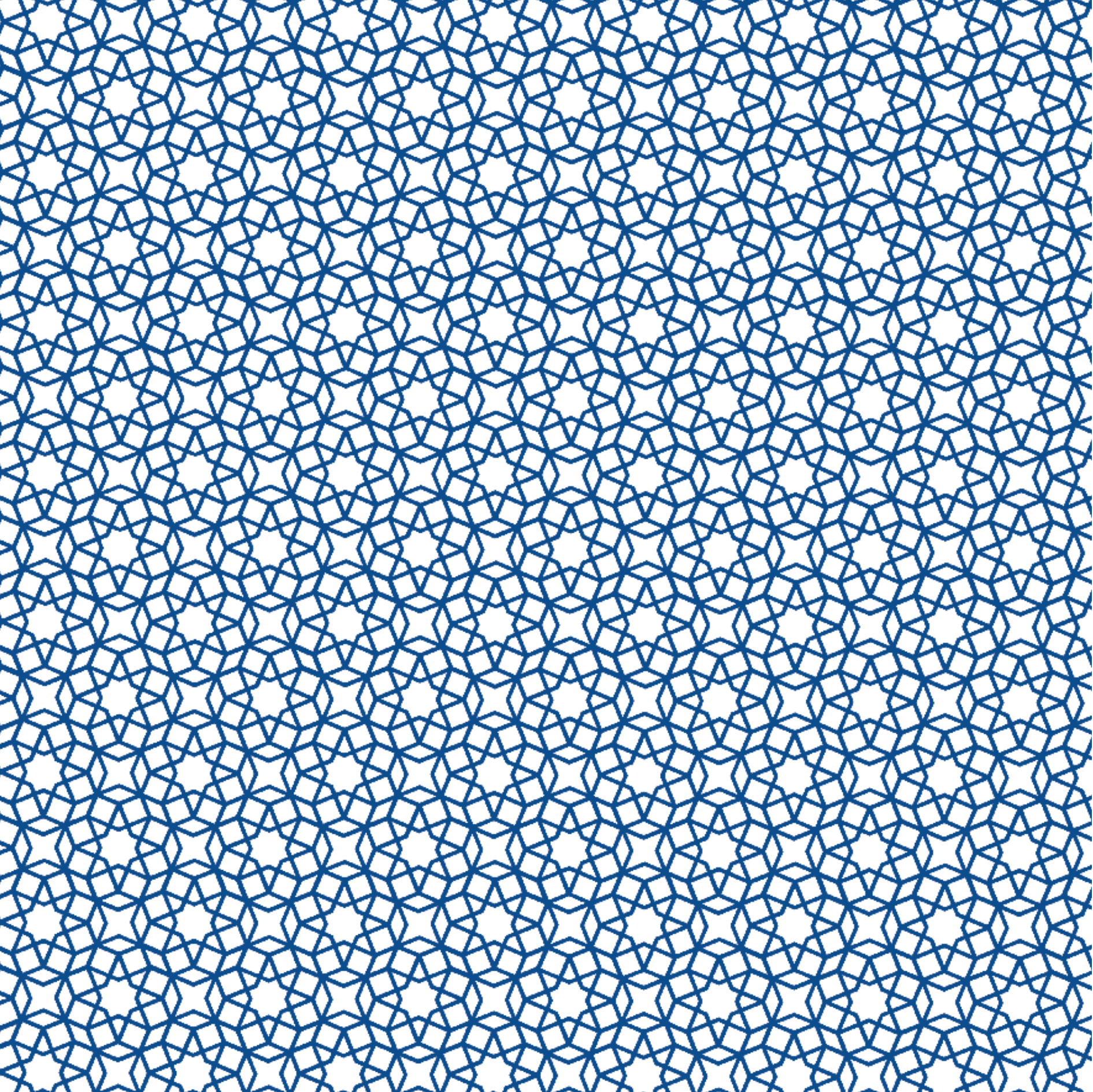
The opening of the Aga Khan Centre today marks a significant achievement. Projects like these require a range of skills, much creativity and a lot of hard work to realise. There are many who I would like to thank for their contributions – the design and construction teams, our project management team and our development partners Argent and the King’s Cross Central Limited Partnership. I would also like to acknowledge the support and co-operation we have had from local and central Government over the years.

We have also benefitted from substantial contributions of time and knowledge from members of the Ismaili community who have overseen these projects. I note with joy that several people who helped in the design and development of the Ismaili Centre in South Kensington all those years ago have again been deeply involved at King’s Cross.

I would like to express my deep admiration and gratitude to the very generous donors who have contributed to the projects we have undertaken here at King’s Cross. I hope that they and their families can look to these buildings and the impact of the institutions housed within them with satisfaction in the decades ahead.

Lastly, I would like to extend a special word of appreciation to my brother Prince Aynn Aga Khan who – as in so many of the projects we have built over the years – played a critical role in guiding these projects through their design and development.

His Highness the Aga Khan IV



INTRODUCTION

AGA KHAN CENTRE

A new home for the institutions of the Ismaili Imam and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in the United Kingdom

The Aga Khan Centre is a bespoke new home for three UK based institutions, founded by His Highness Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. Providing teaching and learning facilities, offices and work areas, convening space and public venues, and enabling a wide variety of programmatic activities, the Aga Khan Centre will be a vibrant hub for education, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations.

The institutions of the Ismaili Imam and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have been active in the UK for some 40 years, through the work of three institutions: the Aga Khan Foundation United Kingdom (AKF UK), The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) and the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). AKF UK improves quality of life, enhances self-reliance and promotes pluralism in partnership with local communities, the private sector as well as governments in the UK and elsewhere. IIS and AKU-ISMC are institutions of higher education, with a focus on research, publications and graduate studies, encouraging innovative scholarship in applying the approaches of the humanities and social sciences to the study of Muslim cultures. These institutions of learning offer important pathways for a more pluralist and peaceful world, by addressing what His Highness the Aga Khan has described as a “clash of ignorances”.

His Highness Aga Khan IV is the founder of all three institutions – AKF, AKU and the IIS. He is the 49th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, a trans-national community. The institutions of the Ismaili Imam represent the succession of Imams since the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century. The role of the Ismaili Imam (the leader of the community) is both spiritual and temporal with his authority being that of religious guidance and interpretation. At the same time, Islam fundamentally upholds the concept that the spiritual and material worlds are inextricably connected. This means that faith requires Muslims, and their Imams, to be deeply engaged in daily, practical matters of family life, business, community affairs and well-being.

Exterior of the Aga Khan Centre,
view from Lewis Cubitt Park

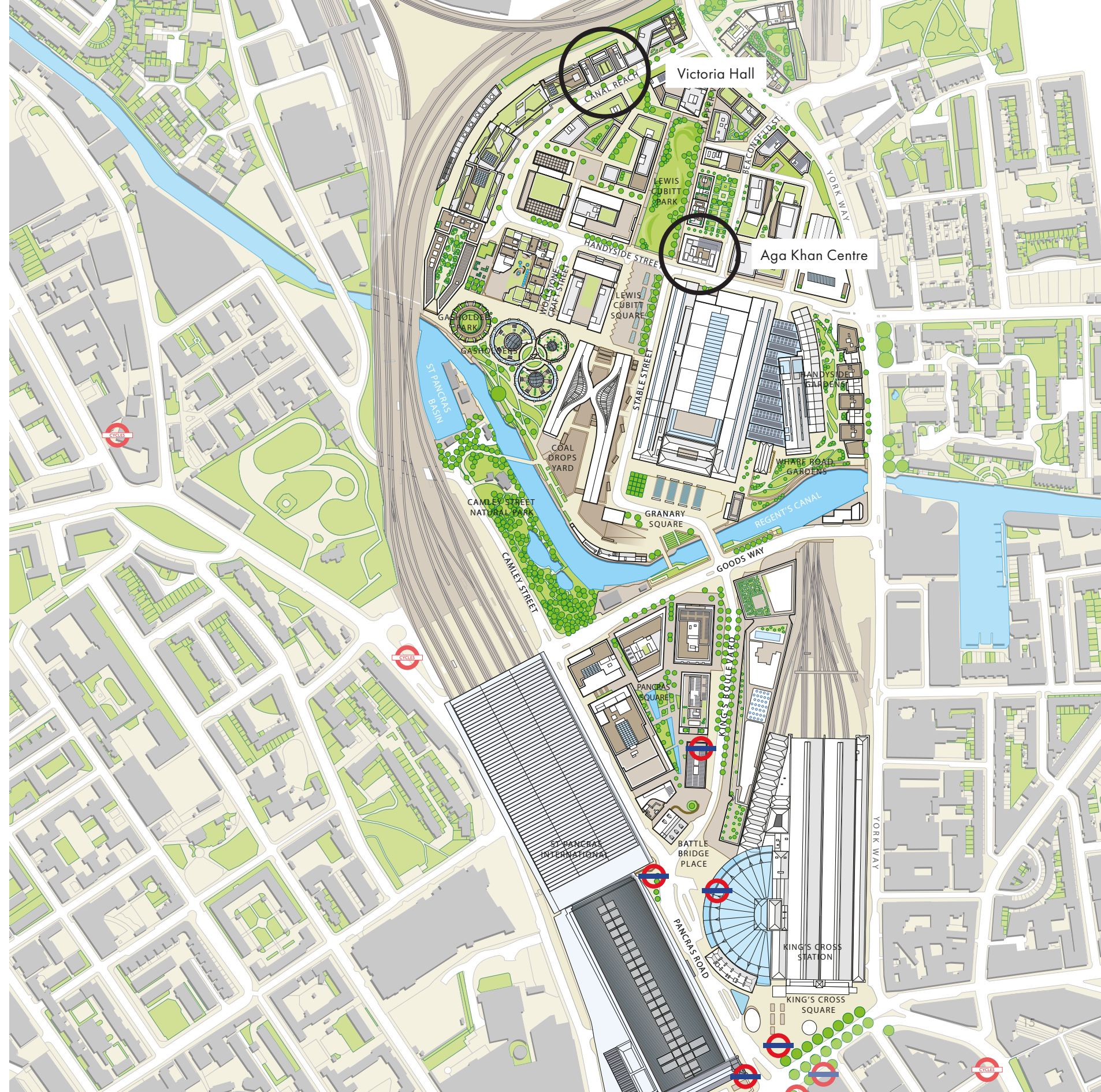


Over the centuries, the Ismaili Imams have actively contributed to education, art and culture as well as an array of social and economic endeavours. The Imam is not only concerned with interpreting the faith, but also takes the lead in improving the security as well as the quality of life of his community and all those amongst whom the community lives. This is realised in part through the work of the institutions of the Ismaili Imam, including the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network whose Chairman is His Highness. The overarching mandate of AKDN is to improve the quality of life of humankind – especially the poor and the marginalised – by alleviating poverty and providing long-term, sustainable solutions while simultaneously reinforcing pluralism and strengthening civil society. The institutions that carry out this work under AKDN’s umbrella operate in 30 countries with a large presence in the developing world. AKDN employs approximately 80,000 people who work to build local capacity in the fields of education, healthcare, food security and infrastructure, among other activities. While supported financially by many institutional partners and individual donors, AKDN also benefits from the Ismaili tradition of voluntary service. AKDN’s approach to development is holistic and comprehensive, encompassing economic, social and cultural interventions in specific settings.

The Aga Khan Centre at King’s Cross, designed by the Pritzker prize-winning Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki (Maki and Associates), gives these institutions a bespoke residence. Maki and Associates have created an efficient, collaborative space that will enhance the AKDN’s interconnected way of working. The Aga Khan Centre will bring together students and researchers, offering access to its growing library and specialist collection of rare books and manuscripts. It offers open areas for encounters and dialogue, as well as secluded spaces for reflection. Accommodation has been built for students of the IIS and AKU-ISMC in nearby Victoria Hall designed by Stanton Williams Architects, 2012 winner of the UK’s most esteemed architectural award, the Stirling prize.

The vision for the King’s Cross project was laid out in a letter from His Highness the Aga Khan to the architect Fumihiko Maki at the start of the design process. The Aga Khan Centre, conceived as a cosmopolitan gathering place for scholars, students and development professionals, aims to

The developer Argent’s masterplan of the King’s Cross regeneration project. The largest mixed use development in single ownership in central London for over 150 years





be well suited to the multicultural and diverse character of London. The Aga Khan Centre also contributes significantly to London's built environment drawing organically from the materials and typographies of its architectural traditions. Its signature series of gardens, courtyards and terraces – born out of an Islamic heritage and interpreted for a modern European city – brings standard-setting architecture to London's remarkable skyline.

The Aga Khan Centre is located within London's recently established Knowledge Quarter – one of the most comprehensive knowledge clusters anywhere in the world. The Knowledge Quarter occupies a small area around King's Cross, Euston Road and Bloomsbury, with members ranging from the nearby British Library (with its world-standard collection of books and manuscripts) to the Francis Crick Institute and Google, who utilise mega-data to improve modern life. The urban regeneration project at King's Cross now represents an era of British heritage and identity that is congruent with the reality of a re-imagined 21st-century London, as a city that embraces diversity and intellectual pluralism.

Bringing a decidedly international flavour to King's Cross and to the Knowledge Quarter, the resident organisations of the Aga Khan Centre will promote a thriving learning culture that fosters new thinking, encourages debate and expands the range of knowledge production and dissemination.

Historically, the very notion of a knowledge quarter has been a significant facet of Islamic urban centres, with the historic Fatimid *Dar al-Ilm* complex in Cairo and *Bayt al-Hikma* in Baghdad being perhaps two of the most famous examples. Their libraries and academic institutions have been widely recognised as key hallmarks of their civilisations and have provided inspiration for intellectual activity for over a millennium.



(Opposite above) An aerial view of King's Cross before the redevelopment – 2009

(Opposite below) An aerial view of King's Cross now – 2018

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Improving Quality of Life

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is made up of 10 private, non-denominational, international agencies. Each agency works within their individual but complementary mandates covering: education, healthcare and the environment; agriculture, social development, disaster reduction and infrastructure provisions; micro-finance, banking and the promotion of private-sector enterprise; architecture, culture, urban regeneration, media and communications.

The institutions of AKDN draw their inspiration from the ethics of Islam, bridging the two realms of *din* and *dunya*, the spiritual and the material.

“... accordingly my spiritual responsibilities for interpreting the faith are accompanied by a strong engagement in issues relating to the quality of life and wellbeing. This latter commitment extends not only to the Ismaili community but also to those with whom they share their lives – locally, nationally and internationally.”

His Highness the Aga Khan, Graduation Ceremony at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, 15 June 2007

Aga Khan Academy,
Mombasa, Kenya



Aga Khan University, Karachi
campus, Pakistan

Pluralism that celebrates diversity is a key tenet of the vision of His Highness the Aga Khan and a guiding principle of AKDN's projects, which help enterprising communities enhance the lives of all their citizens – irrespective of gender, age, cultural, religious or ethnic affiliation.

Across its work, AKDN enhances self-reliance and local ownership, helping citizens and communities take charge of their own development. AKDN agencies work together to establish vital infrastructure for social development such as schools, healthcare centres, banks and universities. They also help national systems improve delivery of these services to remote and marginalised communities. These activities provide people with opportunities to unlock their potential and transform lives. For example, each year, AKDN reaches over two million students



of all ages, through early childhood programmes, primary and secondary education, vocational studies, as well as university and professional development courses. AKDN agencies are also engaged in developing innovative responses to challenges posed by natural hazards and climate change including food security, safe housing, water supply and sanitation.

A vibrant and competent civil society forms the cornerstone of a healthy and prosperous community. Accordingly, AKDN carefully supports robust institutions that explore, embrace and accommodate diversity. By expounding values that drive progress and positive change, civil society institutions – in the fields of education, healthcare, science, research and culture – can harness the private energies of citizens committed to the public good.

Ultimately, such institutions and programmes can respond continuously to the challenges of social, economic and cultural change. To ensure long-lasting, locally-rooted solutions, AKDN operates in close partnership with governments, other international organisations, private companies, foundations, hospitals, universities and schools.

AKDN and the built environment

“Muslims believe in an all-encompassing unity of man and nature. To them there is no fundamental division between the spiritual and the material, while the whole world, whether it be the earth, sea or air, or the living creatures that inhabit them, is an expression of God’s creation. The aesthetics of the environment we build and the quality of the social interactions that take place within those environments reverberate on our spiritual life, and there has always been a very definite ethos guiding the best Islamic architecture.”

His Highness the Aga Khan, Lecture at University of Virginia, 13 April 1984

The principle of the interconnectedness of the spiritual and the material realms is a key tenet of AKDN’s engagement with the built environment. This is especially visible through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s Historic Cities Programme; the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Archnet.org, a digital asset bank of the built heritage of the Islamic world; and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which promotes architectural excellence as a means of improving knowledge and understanding.



The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, Beirut, Lebanon, was designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. It won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in the 2014-2016 cycle. This building, radical in composition but respectful of its traditional context, “floats” above an exterior courtyard



The Al-Azhar Park project in Cairo, Egypt, carried out by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, included the revitalisation of the adjacent neighbourhood of al-Darb al-Ahmar

The Historic Cities Programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) carries out urban regeneration projects that include restoration of historic structures, formation of public spaces, creation and rehabilitation of parks and gardens, as well as support for community-based reconstruction projects. Individual project briefs reach beyond mere technical restoration and address questions of the social and environmental context, adaptive re-use, institutional sustainability and training. In Cairo, for example, the creation of the 74-acre Al-Azhar Park, in a city with very few green spaces, has been a powerful catalyst for urban renewal in the neighbouring district of al-Darb al-Ahmar, one of the poorer districts in the city. In Delhi, the Humayun's Tomb, Sunder Nursery and Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti Urban Renewal Project combines cultural heritage with socioeconomic initiatives. Located in the heart of old Delhi, the Nizamuddin heritage precinct comprises the areas of Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, the Mughal-inspired 90-acre Sunder Nursery, and the World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb. The project's objective was to improve the quality of life for local residents while creating an important new green space for the people of Delhi.

The prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture was established in 1977. The Award is presented every three years to projects that set new standards of excellence in architecture, planning practice, historic preservation and landscape architecture. The Award seeks to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of societies across the world in which Muslims have a significant presence. One such example is the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, which won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in the 2014-2016 cycle. The design of the Issam Fares Institute accommodates a modern-day think tank on a lush campus, one that is in harmony with the rest of the American University of Beirut.

Through its concern for and engagement with the built environment, AKDN connects people and cultures as part of its commitment to a more pluralistic world. As reflected in London's Aga Khan Centre, AKDN encourages architecture that reconciles the past with the future, thereby creating a dialogue between a wealth of heritages encompassed within the civilisations of Islam and those it encounters in Europe and elsewhere.

THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES

Co-Director, Dr Farhad Daftary on how the IIS has achieved its academic standing



Farhad Daftary, Co-Director of
The Institute of Ismaili Studies

“In November 2017, The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) celebrated its 40th anniversary. While 40 years is a very short time in the life of an academic institution, through our research, teaching and publications we have already established ourselves as a serious institution of academic learning and have been acknowledged as the first point of reference for Ismaili studies all over the world. We balance this with our dual role of providing crucial education services to the Ismaili community.

We have built up academic standing through our distinctive approach to Islamic scholarship. Rather than treating Islam exclusively as a religion, we focus on it as one of the great civilisations, taking an all-inclusive and objective approach that allows for a multiplicity of interpretations which transcend the Sunni-Shi'i divide. Within this pluralistic frame, we assign specific priority to the study of Shi'i Islam in general and its Ismaili traditions in particular.

Having established our credibility in Ismaili studies, we have now branched out into the broader field of Shi'i studies. We have a special unit working on Qur'anic scholarship. Although we have an empathy towards the Ismaili tradition, our aim is to bring out the multiplicity of interpretations of the Qur'an.

By remaining objective in our scholarship, we have earned credibility and recognition that would not have been possible for an institution focusing primarily on the religious education of a faith-based community. Because of this atmosphere of openness and tolerance, we have an appeal to scholars of diverse faiths, cultures and traditions.

The Institute of Ismaili Studies has one of the largest faculties of Islamic studies in a single location in Western Europe, with more than 30 members. Specialists come to us not only because of our scholarship but also to use our collection of rare manuscripts, part of the Ismaili Special Collections. We have an extensive and ambitious publications programme – the IIS has published 140 books since the mid-1980s. The publications are born out of our research activities, which focus particularly on Shi'i and Ismaili studies, both previously marginalised areas of the study of Islam.



Scholars at the IIS examining a
manuscript from the Institute's
Special Collections

THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES

Founded: 1977

Staff: 115

Students: 86 students from 13 countries

Graduates: 600+

Research: Ismaili studies, Shi'i Islam, Qur'anic studies and Central Asian studies

Publications: 140 publications on Ismaili history and thought; occasional papers; monographs, editions and translations of primary and secondary texts and conference proceedings

Curriculum: Early Years, Primary and Secondary curricula materials and teaching resources developed in 10 languages

We currently offer two post-graduate programmes open to Ismaili students from over 25 countries. The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) – which will be validated by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London from 2019 – is an interdisciplinary Masters programme exploring the relationship of religious ideas within a wider cultural context. Students spend two years studying at the IIS followed by a third year at a UK university. We also offer the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) which results in two postgraduate awards. The Post Graduate Diploma (PgDip) component is awarded by UCL Institute of Education (IOE), and from September 2019, the MA component will be validated and awarded by SOAS University of London. The Institute of Ismaili Studies currently sponsors approximately 50 Ismaili students to train as teachers, who then work as secondary teachers within the Ismaili community for three years after they complete the programme. As well as training teachers, the IIS plays a significant role in producing primary and secondary level curricula resources for religious education. The curriculum is translated into more than 10 languages. We also offer short courses for diverse adult constituencies within the global Ismaili community.

We have grown to over 100 full-time staff compared with just 15 when I joined the Institute of Ismaili Studies 30 years ago. The beautifully designed Aga Khan Centre, it is hoped, will generate fresh enthusiasm and encourage further interaction with academic and Ismaili communities. At the hub of the building, the Aga Khan Library, London, will encourage scholars to use our resources more readily and allow us to showcase our manuscripts more widely. The Ismaili Special Collections, which will be housed in the Aga Khan Centre, is a repository of some 3,000 manuscripts making it the largest collection of Ismaili manuscripts worldwide. There will also be more opportunity for special events such as major international academic conferences, for example, *The Renaissance of Shi'i Islam in the 15th to 17th centuries* which will take place in October 2018.”

Dr Farhad Daftary is Co-Director and Head of the Department of Academic Research and Publications at The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

www.iis.ac.uk

The experience of an IIS student, Karam Alkatlabe

“I am in my first year of the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) at the IIS. My background is in architecture and after the programme I will be studying for a Masters degree as part of my ambition to work as an urban designer in Islamic societies.

I finished my architectural training in 2014 at the University of Homs in Syria and taught for three years at the Faculty of Architecture at a new university in my home town of Salamiyya. At the same time, I worked as a volunteer at the Aga Khan Foundation, which gave me the chance to work part-time as a building operations supervisor. I also took part in the Aga Khan Foundation's Young Development Professional Leadership Programme in Syria and Lebanon, which helped inform what I want to do in my career.

I now feel grateful that it took me three years to secure a scholarship, as during this time I was able to decide that I want to become involved in architecture with a social benefit, by helping to rebuild local communities. The Masters programme gives me the chance to understand how Islamic societies were formed historically as well as the opportunity to study Urban Design in my final year at an accredited university. I feel this combination of study will qualify me for what I want to do in the future.

Being a student in London is amazing. Firstly, the teaching process is really good. All the professors have very different ideas which really broadens our horizons. At the moment I am studying the topics of Muslims in History, Islamic Art and Architecture, Rituals of Religion, as well as examining different ways of reading the Qur'an and learning Persian. It is pressured but it is a good pressure – I am really enjoying it and it is comforting that I know what I want to do afterwards. I am also enjoying life in the comfortable surroundings of Victoria Hall in King's Cross and hope to take more advantage of all the activities one can participate in outside school such as conferences, visiting art galleries, workshops and tours.

As an architect, I appreciate the design of the new student residence, Victoria Hall. It is an impressive building and every part of it reflects a valuable meaning. I consider living there to be a crucial part of my learning journey – the daily interactions with international students add greatly to my experience and knowledge.

I am planning to apply for a PhD and hoping to gain more experience that I can put into practice when I return to Syria. The crisis in Syria has damaged much of the infrastructure. The effects of the displacement of a large segment of the Syrian population needs attention and I am hoping to be able to help with this in the future.”

Karam Alkatlabe, GPISH student at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

Karam Alkatlabe and fellow classmates in a GPISH class



Scholars and students have access to over 52,000 books at the Aga Khan Library, London, in a range of languages including English, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Gujarati and Sindhi among many others.

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF MUSLIM CIVILISATIONS

Director Dr Leif Stenberg on developing critical thinkers



Leif Stenberg, Director of Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

“One overall mission at the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) is to develop our students into critical thinkers. We want them to ask difficult questions and engage in debate so that they can use the knowledge and experience they gain, to lead change and development.

Being able to make this difference through our teaching is very attractive to faculty members and we have a highly qualified staff drawn from many different countries. AKU-ISMC was founded in London by the Aga Khan University in 2002 and is part of a growing university network spanning three continents and 13 campuses. As we move to King’s Cross it is worth reminding ourselves that our location in London is central to delivering a transformative experience for our students. The intellectual freedom and opportunities the city offers are hugely important factors in the journeys that our students take.

Unlike the approach adopted by theological programmes, we study Muslim civilisations and religious traditions through the lens of the Social Sciences and Humanities, using critical thinking that is separate from personal belief. We look at how Islam is manifested within Muslim contexts and teach our students the importance of not making value judgments of its many different interpretations. The MA is a very intense course with a combination of topical and language components that build the skills needed to engage creatively and critically with the challenges faced by Muslim societies. One third of our students go on to study at PhD level at universities in North America, Europe and Asia, while others work in journalism, public office, teaching and with NGOs.

At AKU-ISMC, our students are very close to the extensive research programme we undertake. Our mission is to carry out academically innovative research that has an impact on Muslim communities. Current work concerns the construction of knowledge about Muslim societies and cultures while also seeking to understand the processes of change within these. The Institute is also leading a major project funded by the European Research Council to enable a digital text comparison of Arabic manuscripts from the Middle Ages, in order to understand how texts and knowledge may have developed over several hundred years.



AKU-ISMC Graduating Class of 2016, MA in Muslim Cultures



AKU-ISMC students in the Garden of Reflection at Victoria Hall



A researcher in the library

These important research projects inform not only our teaching but also our public-facing activities. Communicating good research that shows the everyday meaning and practice of Islam in particular contexts, rather than focusing only on the misconceptions about Islam and Muslim life, gives us a much stronger voice.

AKU-ISMC also has a busy publishing programme in collaboration with Edinburgh University Press. Publications include the series *In Translation: Modern Muslim Thinkers* which provides much needed access to scholarship from Muslim societies in English.

Looking ahead, we hope to strengthen the interaction between AKU-ISMC and the rest of the Aga Khan University, and to build and develop relationships with universities across the world, including institutions in North America and Europe. The Aga Khan University itself is expanding its focus from health sciences and education to more of a full faculty institution with the creation of a new Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Karachi, Pakistan.

Our new neighbours in King's Cross are diverse and vibrant; their work is often at the cutting edge of academia, technology, the arts, science and the media. Being a part of this community will be incredibly energising for us. The move is an opportunity for us to kick-start new initiatives and to take public engagement to a new level with lectures, talks and conferences. There is also scope for cultural events – anything from cinema to sport and music such as Muslim hip-hop or the food cultures of East Africa. Our new location at King's Cross opens up a very good opportunity for us and we intend to make the most of it.”

Dr Leif Stenberg is Director of the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations
www.aku.edu/ismc

AKU-ISMC

Founded: 2002

Staff: 34

Students: 22 students from 6 countries, currently Egypt, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uganda

Graduates: 101

Research: Construction of Knowledge; Processes of Change in Muslim Societies; Governance

Publications: 17

The experience of an AKU-ISMC Student, Nairozeen Chagani

“I was born in Pakistan, where I completed a Master of Business Administration in Karachi. Before moving to London, I worked in Quality Assurance at the Aga Khan University. My prolonged interest in and the passion for understanding Muslim cultures and their encounters with other parts of the world inspired me to come to the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations. I am now a final-year student of the MA programme. Along with other thought-provoking courses, I am working on a dissertation which deals with museums, particularly with the nuances involved in the display and educational role of Islamic art museums. Courses such as Islamic jurisprudence and law, philosophy, late antiquity, literature, Muslim minorities and cultures, and most importantly, language, lead me to delve into the complexities and the nitty gritty involved in the study of Muslim civilisations, and into the heterogeneous nature of Islam and Muslim societies. I believe this MA in Muslim Cultures will be a foundation and the first step towards my academic career, as I aspire to pursue a PhD in the near future.

Of course, living and studying in Central London is the cherry on the cake. I enjoy every bit of my stay in London. The King’s Cross area in particular is a happening and lively place where you find a variety of cultural events, social gatherings and cuisines from all around the world. Living in Victoria Hall is another great part of my experience. Our residence is equipped with every necessary facility, from spacious en-suite rooms to historical gardens, a modern gym, and indoor games and social spaces for students coming from diverse cultures. The communal spaces are used not only for social gatherings but also for group studies and discussions.



AKU-ISMC students at the British Library

Since the day I came to London in 2016, I have been watching the new Aga Khan Centre rise in front of my eyes, day by day. Seeing it completed and in operation is something I am really excited about. I have been ardently following its news and the plans for its opening. I also feel sad that I might not be able to see it in operation in the next academic year. However, I truly intend to use it once it is open for students while I am here. I think the Islamic gardens are one of the most intriguing features of the AKDN buildings, both at the student residence and the new academic building.”

Nairozeen Chagani, MA in Muslim Cultures student at the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION UK

CEO Dr Matt Reed discusses the role of AKF UK and looks forward to raising the visibility of the Foundation in London



Matt T Reed, CEO,
Aga Khan Foundation UK

“Our new building provides a more visible presence for the Aga Khan Foundation, and the Aga Khan Development Network, in London.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life, to enhance self-reliance, and to promote pluralism and inclusion in the countries where we are active. We work holistically across interrelated areas – agriculture and livelihoods, education and health, water and sanitation, financial inclusion and job creation, local infrastructure and energy provision – in order to create a tipping point for positive change. The empowerment of girls and women is especially important, and has been ever since we were established in 1967. Underpinning all this, we promote an active civil society to ensure lasting change. Each year, AKDN works with over 40,000 civil society organisations alongside the initiatives it implements directly.

The Foundation’s work has grown about threefold in the past 25 years. We operate in Asia and Africa, working in some of the poorest and most remote areas. We make long-term commitments – AKDN has been present for almost a century in India, Pakistan, and parts of East Africa, for example. As AKF, we have been there for some four decades, and we will be there for the foreseeable future.

The UK office works with donor governments and foundations from a wide range of countries – we are an international hub for AKDN partnerships. Most of AKF’s core operations are funded by His Highness the Aga Khan and by endowment income. We then work with other government, foundation and not-for-profit agencies to take that work to greater scale, building on other AKDN agencies as well. AKF is a development actor – we implement our own programmes – and also a connector.

All of AKF’s initiatives are designed in collaboration with the communities we serve. Once we have been invited in, we initiate dialogue about the issues they are facing and which ones are most important. Then we create a joint development plan and work on it together.

(Opposite) Pioneering early childhood development programmes to ensure girls and boys have the best start in life in Uganda



Building bridges, connecting communities and catalysing economic development at the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border



Supporting women to establish livestock businesses, earn an income and become more financially independent in India



We are seen as a partner, and that is really important. AKF is helping local people take charge of their own future by creating healthy and resilient communities that can confront development challenges and bring about lasting solutions. The process has to be inclusive –if you want all parts of society pulling in the direction of development, you have to unleash the potential of everyone, whatever their background or gender. It’s important that people feel that they have agency in their own lives. Helping them become self-reliant is fundamental to everything we do.

This sense of commitment and responsibility to the places that have welcomed us drives the Aga Khan Foundation’s focus on quality. We have a duty to do things right. We evaluate our projects rigorously and regularly ask communities what they think is important and whether our programmes have helped. The answers inform the design of future projects and provide wider lessons for development organisations.

While AKF is highly visible in many of the countries where we work, we have not been as well-known in the UK. Now, we have a new space to project our voice and to welcome others. We hope our programme of exhibitions, talks and events will raise the profile of the issues and communities we address. In doing so, our new building will enable us to contribute much more actively to London’s civic and cultural fabric.

We are constantly striving to be more inclusive, more relevant and more effective. Our fundamental values of inclusion and pluralism are reflected in the openness of the new building’s design and its gardens. The fact that we are part of a new Knowledge Quarter at King’s Cross is very important. We want people to feel welcome in our new home and to learn more about AKF and its work. London has an active international development scene and we want to use this space to make common cause with others. We are looking forward to expanding the conversation.”

Dr Matt Reed is Chief Executive Officer of Aga Khan Foundation AKF UK
<https://www.akf.org.uk>

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION UK

Founded: 1973 (Aga Khan Foundation 1967)

Staff: 17 UK staff, 4,000 globally and countless volunteers

Countries with active Aga Khan Foundation programmes: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, United States.

AFGHANISTAN: GIRLS' EDUCATION

The Aga Khan Foundation has been working to promote girls' education in Afghanistan since the start of its work there in the mid-1990s. Its latest programme, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) since 2013, has so far educated 135,000 girls and 111,000 boys, trained 6,000 teachers and engaged over 100,000 community members across 16 provinces. Based on this success, the Government of Afghanistan has adopted its lessons into the national education policy. The programme's strategy has been to open schools near where girls live, train female teachers and work with local government, communities and religious leaders to demonstrate the value of girls' education. The UK Department for International Development has just renewed the programme for another four years, allowing the AKF and its partners (Aga Khan Education Services, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and Save the Children) to support 210,000 girls and over 12,700 boys to attend, and stay in, school. As the Foundation expands this programme even further in the coming years, it will be sharing its knowledge with other organisations delivering girls' education in Afghanistan and elsewhere.



AKF's strategy has been to open schools near where girls live, train female teachers, and work with local government, communities and religious leaders to demonstrate the value of girls' education

(Opposite) AKF has been working to promote girls' education in Afghanistan since the start of its work there in the mid-1990s





Over the past decade, AKF has built five bridges and cross-border markets to link the mountainous regions of Central and South Asia, bringing people into contact again, sparking local trade and supporting livelihoods

AFGHANISTAN & TAJIKISTAN: MULTI-SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

Aga Khan Foundation and AKDN have been working along and across the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan since 1996 to address the difficulties faced by these remote, mountainous areas. Pamir Energy – an Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development project company – is the first public-private partnership delivering energy resources in Central Asia. Its hydropower now provides affordable, clean energy to 98% of eastern Tajikistan and exports power across the river to Afghanistan, bringing electricity to some of its villages for the first time in history. Over the past decade, AKF has also built five bridges and cross-border markets to link these lands, bringing people into contact again, sparking local trade and supporting local livelihoods.

AKDN's broader programme here includes cross-border work in health, education, agriculture, economic development, policy development and humanitarian assistance. All of this work has been done through AKDN's own contributions and the support of multiple partners, including the governments of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, as well as the European Commission, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. By demonstrating the potential and bringing on board other partners, AKF has helped catalyse regional development and (re)integration in this part of Central Asia.



AKDN's Pamir Energy is the first public-private partnership energy provider in Central Asia. Its hydropower now provides affordable, clean energy to 98% of southern Tajikistan and exports power across the river to Afghanistan, bringing electricity to its villages for the first time in history

‘As one looks back over the history of learning and of advancement, one sees time and again that centres of learning flourished in strong, outward-looking cultures. Great universities and libraries benefited from the nurturing conditions provided by self-confident civilisations and in turn gave back to those civilisations the useful products of scholarship. The strong university was not a sign of government's weakness, but rather its aspirations and its strength. In the great expansion of Muslim culture from the 8th through the 11th century, centres of learning flourished from Persia to Andalusia.’

His Highness the Aga Khan, Convocation Address, AKU 10th Anniversary, Karachi, 19 November 1994

AGA KHAN LIBRARY, LONDON

Head Librarian, Dr Walid Ghali speaks about how the library will serve future generations of students and scholars

“The new building is a milestone for the Aga Khan Library, London. Here we have state-of-the-art facilities and technology for our collections and services, as well as the optimal environment to welcome scholars, researchers and students from around the world.

The Aga Khan Library combines the libraries of the IIS and AKU-ISMC, serving as a resource on Ismaili studies, Muslim civilisations and AKDN.

The library will not just be a repository for valuable collections. It will also be a place for the active production of knowledge through reading, research, analysis, debate and discussion. This follows in the great tradition of libraries throughout the history of Muslim civilisations. The Fatimid dynasty (909-1171 CE) in North Africa and Egypt, for example, which brought significant cultural change wherever it went, embraced the concept of a universality of knowledge that could be accessible to everyone. As well as court and private libraries, the dynasty founded public libraries which functioned not just as spaces for holding collections of manuscripts but also as centres that hosted discussions among scholars and espoused cultural events. The Ismaili community has inherited this tradition through the Ismaili Imamate, descended in a direct line from the Fatimids. We hope to continue this tradition of the universality of knowledge at the Aga Khan Library, London.

The library currently holds 43,000 volumes including 3,000 reference titles and more than 1,000 rare books, mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries. As our visibility grows in our new home at the Aga Khan Centre, we anticipate that more donors may consider gifting their library collections to us for posterity. We expect our collections to have grown to 50,000 volumes by 2020. In the new King's Cross premises we will have the space to expand further, holding up to 100,000 volumes.

The collections of the original IIS library have made us the leading resource centre for Ismaili books and manuscripts in Europe, with over 3000 manuscripts acquired from the Middle East, Central and South Asia. The IIS library, established in 1979, was shaped by the Institute's intellectual endeavours and fields of activity. When it merged with the AKU-ISMC library in



Walid Ghali, Head Librarian at Aga Khan Library, London, and Assistant Professor (AKU-ISMC)



2014, its research collection was supplemented by resources relating to the study of Muslim civilisations and contemporary Islam. As well as primary resources, we have an accompanying collection of secondary resources in many other languages.

Our primary stakeholders are students, researchers and faculty members from the IIS and AKU-ISMC as well as AKF. We are a resource for researchers, fellows and scholars from universities and libraries not only in London such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the British Library – but also from institutions all over the world. We are excited to be part of the Knowledge Quarter and are happy to share our resources with other institutions. Additionally, we serve the academic needs of the Ismaili community both in London and globally.

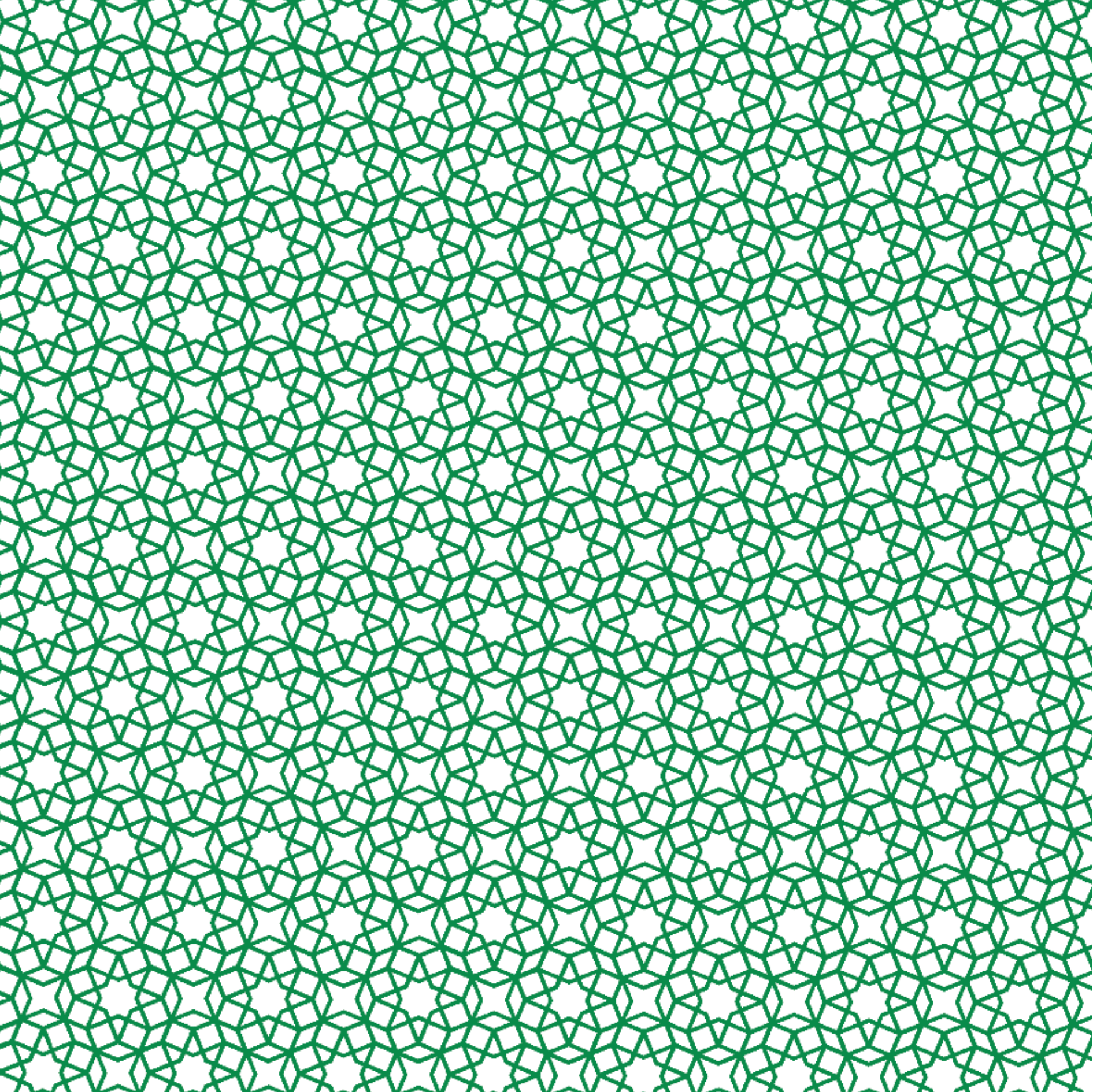
Our prominent new home will enable us to fulfil our mission as a leading research and academic library for both Ismaili and wider Islamic studies, while providing an excellent interface for public engagement and partnerships. We now have the right space to support activities such as reading clubs, book launches, debates and exhibitions.

The spacious new library offers enclosed reading rooms for concentrated study and a new learning commons where students can work more informally and collaboratively. We are also enhancing our collection of digital resources. In this way, we can accommodate both traditional users who prefer to work with the original manuscripts and the new generation who wish to work with new technologies, all contributing to the production of knowledge.

These are very exciting times. Having established our new physical home, the library's next step is to become a premier electronic resource by digitising some of the rare materials and manuscripts in the library and making them available for wider research communities.”

Dr Walid Ghali is Head Librarian of the Aga Khan Library, London

Treatise on Prediction with astrological tables, completed in Shawwal 945 AH/1539 CE



ARCHITECTURE
AND LANDSCAPE
DESIGN

SEARCH FOR A PERMANENT HOME

Why King's Cross, London?

When the UK-based institutions of the Ismaili Imamat and AKDN started looking for a permanent London home, they wanted a location close to other cultural institutions and conducive to academic research, in a central area with development potential and good transport links.

Not far from their leased Euston Road offices, an area of 67 acres was already under development in King's Cross NIC, planned to be one of London's largest mixed use developments, set north of the major railway stations of King's Cross and St. Pancras International. As the stations were remodelled to accommodate the Channel Tunnel Rail Link into St. Pancras, the developer, King's Cross Central Limited Partnership (KCCLP), began the task of regenerating the former shunting-yard area. KCCLP's ambitious masterplan sought to involve leading businesses and have now attracted organisations such as Google, Louis Vuitton and Universal Music. The arts college, Central Saint Martins (part of the University of the Arts London) was among the first residents, moving into the brick-built former Victorian granary at the heart of the project's Granary Square. There was a sense of excitement: here was a new generation of millennials and emerging tech industries working on the digital future and this resonated with AKDN's long-term thinking. From 2007, during the very early stages of the redevelopment, AKDN and KCCLP began discussing possible opportunities for cooperation in the regeneration of this academic and creative district.

AKDN's experience of urban regeneration is extensive and includes Cairo's Al-Darb al-Ahmar district and Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti urban renewal projects, as well as the commissioning of several signature architect buildings in a number of Canadian cities. The redevelopment of the King's Cross area in London became an opportunity for AKDN to create a lasting architectural statement in London that would express a set of key values.

The new King's Cross development met many of AKDN's stated criteria: a central location, proximity to a transport hub and other significant cultural and educational institutions including the British Library, the British Museum, University College London and the School of Oriental and African Studies. The masterplan showcases a network of public spaces, Granary Square and

Aerial view from the north, looking south, of King's Cross Central's illustrative scheme, one of the most ambitious regeneration projects in Europe



Lewis Cubitt Park and Square, as well as Regent's Canal with its winding walkways leading to more urban spaces. Unlike most of central London, street traffic here is kept to a minimum and buildings do not have to be designed to mitigate traffic noise and pollution.

KCCLP have restored more than twenty historic buildings, leading to the new King's Cross area being dubbed an English heritage site. From the outset, their vision was to create a high-density part of London where people could live and work. Before the master plan was drafted, KCCLP drew up its vision for King's Cross in a document titled "Principles for a Human City." This outlined the intention to provide the optimal conditions to improve and enhance urban life as the key for economic development. KCCLP wanted to design its scheme to offer a truly sustainable mixed-use project based on combining economy, equality and the environment.

AKDN has developed two buildings, each with a series of gardens, courtyards and terraces in King's Cross. First was Victoria Hall, designed by Stanton Williams as a residence for students, many of them studying at the IIS and AKU-ISMC. The second building, the Aga Khan Centre, designed by Maki and Associates, brings together teaching, learning, library, research and development activities to become the home for the UK institutions of the Ismaili Imamat and AKDN. It also serves as a point for public engagement through a programme of exhibitions, lectures and conferences.

(Right) Central Saint Martins, part of the University of the Arts London. Photo taken from Granary Square



(Opposite) A regenerated outdoor space, facing Regent's Canal at King's Cross



DESIGN OF THE AGA KHAN CENTRE

The Making of a Unique Place

The Aga Khan Centre was envisaged as a signature building of exceptional quality. With the help of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), three leading architectural practices were invited to submit design concepts. The Tokyo-based architectural firm, Maki and Associates, led by Fumihiko Maki, was chosen to design the Aga Khan Centre in 2011. The London practice of Allies and Morrison was later appointed as executive architects.

The design of the Aga Khan Centre was intended to present the rich heritage of Islamic design and architecture in an interpretative manner within a modern, London context. A robust set of requirements was drafted that would allow for growth while avoiding extravagance in the use of space and materials.

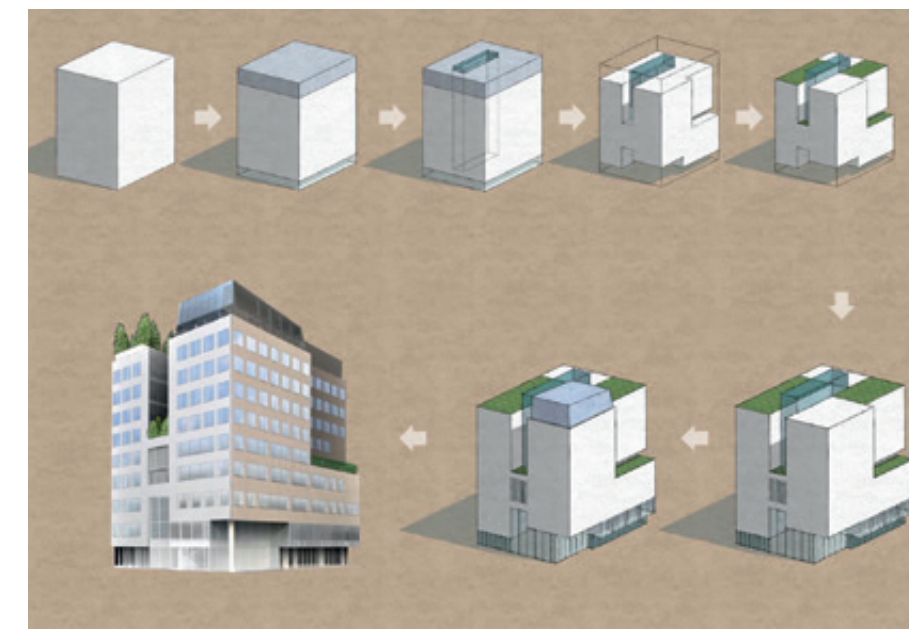
The design brief stipulated a key feature: that of utilising gardens, courtyards and terraces to showcase the diversity of interpretations and practices in architecture across Muslim societies and cultures over a variety of geographic regions and time periods. At the same time, they would speak to an abiding and visceral British interest in heritage, horticulture and garden design.

Research became an integral aspect of the approach to designing the building, requiring the architects to understand how a building might incorporate both internal and external spaces, both “open” and “closed” rooms, into the concept. Another important requirement entailed understanding the essential elements of landscape design and of classical Muslim architecture, in which light and how it moves through a space becomes a defining feature. They also studied how calligraphy and geometric patterns function as motifs that allude to the metaphysical. At the same time, the building was required to be contemporary in its interpretation, looking to the future with confidence and responding sensitively to its central London context, to the historic warehouses and to the ambitious masterplan of King’s Cross itself.

“It has been a great honor to design three projects for the Aga Khan Development Network. The Delegation of the Ismaili Imam in Ottawa, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and the Aga Khan Centre in London – A “Trilogy.” In all three projects we have expressed what His Highness the Aga Khan advocates as pluralism in culture and in architecture. Modernism is expressed in appearance on the exterior but an ambience of Islamic Culture in the interior.

At the Aga Khan Centre, Islamic Culture is powerfully expressed in the gardens, interior spaces, screens and artwork. The façade is clad in a light colored limestone from Spain giving a special identity in King’s Cross. We have great appreciation for the unmitigated trust and support given to us, the architects, by His Highness, Prince Ayn and the AKDN to all three projects.”

Fumihiko Maki, 23 May 2018



Evolution of the Aga Khan Centre building



Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, also designed by Maki and Associates

MAKI AND ASSOCIATES

The architectural practice Maki and Associates has a history of collaboration with His Highness the Aga Khan and AKDN. In 2008, the practice completed the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam in Ottawa, the base and local headquarters for the Ismaili Imam in Canada. In 2012, the Delegation building was awarded a coveted Governor General's Medal in Architecture. Maki's design for the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, built in 2014, uses light to animate the museum in myriad ways: throwing patterns onto the exterior walls of Brazilian granite, lighting interior spaces and illuminating the open-roofed courtyard.

Founding principal of the practice, Fumihiko Maki, has taught and lectured in the US and Japan on urban design and architecture. He has been awarded two of the world's highest accolades for architects, the Pritzker Prize in 1993 and the Praemium Imperiale from the

Japan Arts Association in 1999. Maki and Associates is best known for its sensitive approach to urban planning, as demonstrated by the Hillside Terrace Complex in Tokyo, that was built over 23 years in six phases. At the other end of the scale, Maki and Associates was invited to design 4 World Trade Centre, New York, the first high-rise building to be constructed at Ground Zero.

Gary Kamemoto is the lead architect from Maki and Associates, assigned not only to the Aga Khan Centre building at King's Cross but also to the other signature buildings commissioned by AKDN, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam in Ottawa and Aga Khan Museum in Toronto. Born in Tokyo and trained at the University of Southern California, Kamemoto has been with Maki and Associates for 33 years and is Director of International Projects.

ALLIES AND MORRISON

Architects and urban planning practice, Allies and Morrison, has been the executive architect for the Aga Khan Centre. Their other work includes the London 2012 Olympics masterplan, along with academic and office projects across the UK. Allies and Morrison and Porphyrios Associates have worked on the transformation of the King's Cross regeneration project since its inception. They co-designed the initial masterplan with its angled lines, picking up on the canal and the train lines that once criss-crossed the site.

Professor Fumihiko Maki of Maki and Associates and David Walters of Argent, looking at a model of the King's Cross masterplan



Exterior: A Beacon of White

Today the Aga Khan Centre embodies a hybrid identity. A restrained modern exterior is executed with crisp precision while inside, a tapestry of global materials and influences from Muslim aesthetic sensibility slowly unwinds. The motif of the eight-point star follows the light as the gardens, courtyards and terraces weave their way up the nine storey atrium. Pockets of design elements inspired by geometry, the arabesque and mosaic, punctuate the building as a unique beacon of white amidst the greyscale architectural landscape of King's Cross.

The Aga Khan Centre is the first building designed by Maki and Associates in London. The practice was able to explore the city with fresh eyes. The new King's Cross development was conceived as a new neighbourhood of central London, with its own character of public life. The masterplan showed a high-density development, but when visiting the site the architects also took note of the traditional dark brick of the area's existing industrial and transport heritage. These dark hues reappear on new offices to the south of the site while the dark brick itself rises in warehouse-style facades on the apartment buildings to the north.

(Opposite) Exterior view of the Aga Khan Centre from Lewis Cubitt Park



The white limestone facade of the Aga Khan Centre creates a contrasting luminosity against neighbouring buildings.



Aga Khan Centre's white limestone facade juxtaposed with the dark brick exterior of the Western Transit Shed on Stable Street

Maki and Associates saw the opportunity to distinguish the Aga Khan Centre by designing it in white. Hence the building does something very different from the neighbouring dark industrial buildings by creating a contrasting luminosity to face Lewis Cubitt Square and Park. Maki and Associates proposed using another traditional London material for the cladding – limestone. This has been the material of choice for Britain's great public and institutional buildings for centuries, from St Paul's Cathedral, Somerset House and Buckingham Palace in the capital, to town halls, museums and other prestigious buildings across the country. Maki and Associates noted that the white limestone facade gave a certain dignity to the Crown Estate's string of grand regency buildings along London's Portland Place and Regent Street. These buildings used Portland limestone from quarries on the Isle of Portland in Dorset, off the south coast of England. However, the supply and durability of modern British limestone could not support the scale of Maki and Associates' vision and the design called for an even whiter stone. A global search for the right material took the architects, somewhat poetically, to southern Spain, where that masterpiece of Islamic architecture, the Alhambra, in Granada, also has arches and ornamental details fashioned from a white limestone quarried from the Andalusia region – and they came upon Caliza Capri limestone from Alicante.

Maki and Associates took advantage of the UK's advanced pre-cast concrete skills for the facade. To achieve precision in line and finish, the Caliza Capri limestone was taken to a factory in Stoke-on-Trent where the 25cm x 75cm blocks were laid out in a mould before concrete was poured on. This pre-casting process allowed the facade to be efficiently assembled in large sections containing over 16,000 blocks.

Flush windows have been whitened with a pattern of ceramic fritting and are set into the limestone to catch the movement of light, creating an iridescence that unifies the external facade into a single beacon of white against the other buildings of King's Cross. As one approaches the Aga Khan Centre, the finer textures of the individual blocks reveal themselves. Hints of the richness found within emerge from the higher floors as touches of green from the gardens and terraces, carved out of the building, become visible.

Flush windows, whitened with a pattern of ceramic fritting and set into the limestone facade



Detail of facade of Aga Khan Centre on Handyside Street

Like many London buildings, the Aga Khan Centre, arranged over nine storeys with an additional two levels underground, uses its precious plot of just over 1,000m² to the utmost. By organising the form and facade into three horizontal sections, Maki and Associates has forged a connection between the Aga Khan Centre's own network of spaces and projects across the King's Cross development area, whilst echoing other well-known references around the city that conform to the classical tri-partite composition – expressed as base, body and crown.

The base of the Aga Khan Centre is delicate and transparent, opening onto the pedestrian flow from the rail and tube stations to the south and from Lewis Cubitt Square and Park alongside. A cutaway corner at ground level, which required some engineering gymnastics to achieve, welcomes the public, students, staff and guests. Around the perimeter, a limestone facade stops one storey, and in some places two, short of the pavement where the building meets the ground with an expansive and transparent layer of glass, appearing to be almost floating. The corner entrance, where the double layers of glazing, fritted with the eight-point star motif, cast star-shaped shadows on the floor and the glass walls. Here, openness co-exists with a sense of privacy, heightening the sense of anticipation.

The body of the building is solid in its white limestone, with the uniformity of its windows, revealing little of the inner operations. The ninth storey meeting room, the 'Crown Room', is a high-tech jewel. Steel mesh between layers of shimmering glass enclose the distinctive trapezoidal form. The clean lines and striking forms of the building are deceptively simple, belying the great care that has been taken with details and finishes.

Cutaway corner, under construction, at the main south-west entrance of the Aga Khan Centre on the corner of Handyside Street and Stable Street. The limestone facade stops one and two storeys short of the pavement with a transparent layer of glass



Interior: A Study in Revelation

The external language is pared back at the entrance and the building opens unexpectedly into a richer set of materials and spaces. The outside barely hints at the richness inside, a reminder of the Islamic ideas of apparent meaning, *zahir*, and inner hidden knowledge, *batin*.

The Aga Khan Centre has been conceived of primarily as an academic building, incorporating a polyphony of multi-purpose zones that meet a wide range of spatial requirements while bearing in mind the non-profit nature of the AKDN's commitment to remain responsible regarding cost. Flexible learning studios have been designed to accommodate changing pedagogy and spaces where students, scholars and staff can share ideas and work together. Open plan offices are laid out around the central atrium to foster a spirit of cooperation and shared resources; with spacing in relation to the flush windows and the garden terraces arranged to access quality light, aspect and views.

There are six gardens, courtyards and terraces at the Aga Khan Centre. They rise through the teaching and learning spaces on the first and second floors to the library on the third and fourth floors; offices from the fifth to eighth floors and meeting and special event rooms on the top floor. On the ninth floor, a garden, a courtyard and a terrace create a series of spaces that offer multiple vantage points over the city. Laurie Olin from the landscape architects OLIN developed the brief for the landscape designers.

“From afar, many of the garden spaces will be visible on the exterior of the buildings, arousing interest and curiosity from passers-by. From within, it is envisaged that each garden space will be strategically intertwined with the programme spaces and spatially linked through a major atrium (enclosed garden). Through this interaction, each garden space will evoke numerous psychological experiences, connections and interpretations. One will have the opportunity to move through a constantly changing landscape and scenery as one progresses through these buildings, encouraging visitors to create their own interpretation of the gardens.”

Laurie Olin, 2013



A six metre-wide atrium connects the residents of the building vertically and diagonally. The play of light and shadow throughout the course of the day creates movement

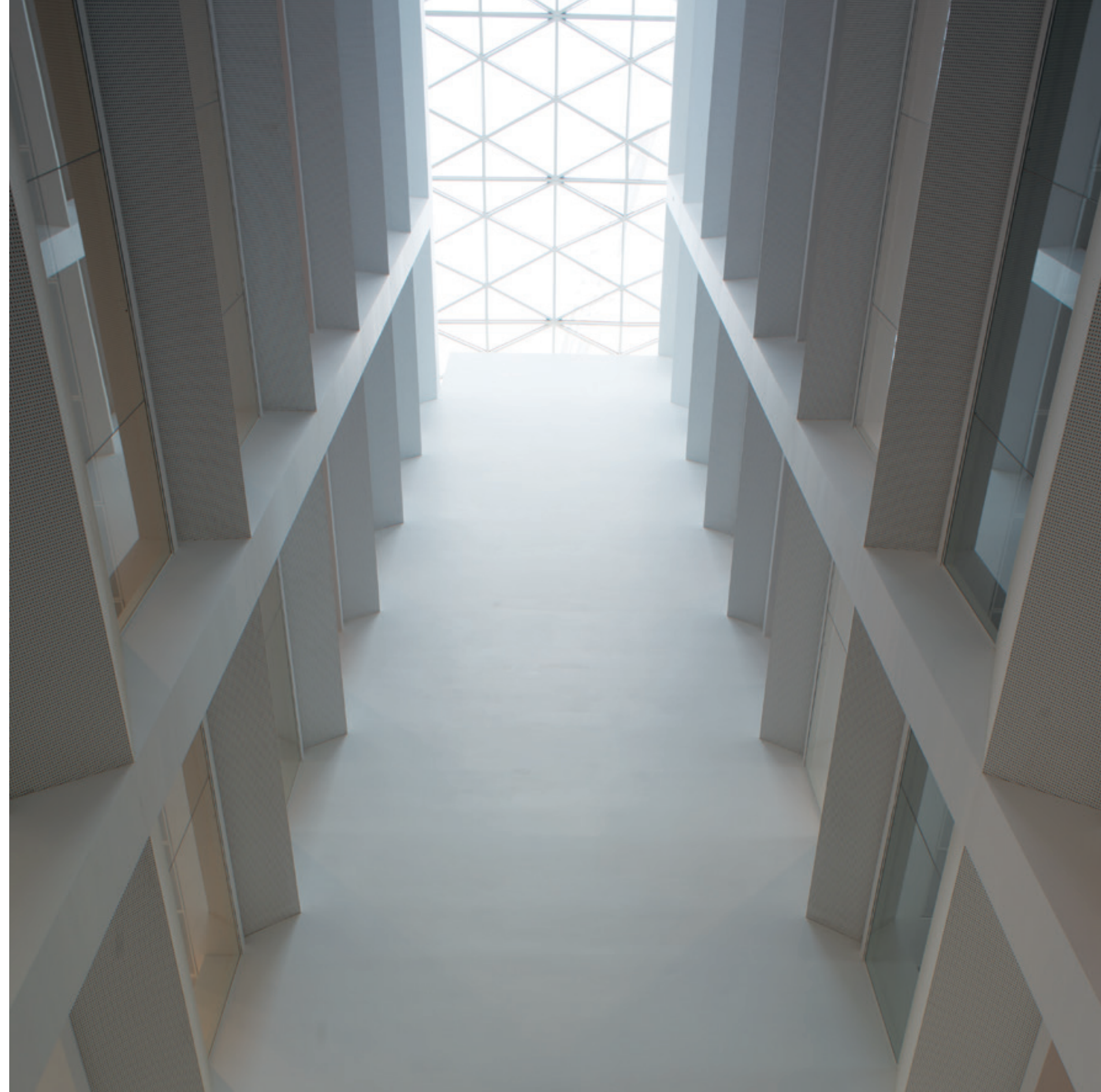
Six gardens are physically sculpted out of the building with five of them visible from outside. However, there is a seventh, metaphorical garden at the heart of the building – the Atrium. The Aga Khan Centre is punctured by a shaft of light in the form of a six metre-wide, nine-storey high atrium that connects vertically and diagonally the residents of the building – from students and academic staff to researchers, administrators and development professionals. It draws the light down, linking the nine floors and bringing the spaces inside the building together. Referencing the Islamic architectural form of an interior quadrant courtyard, the atrium becomes the light and transparent backbone of the building. Beginning at the first floor and evoking a Central Asian, Middle Eastern or Indian *haveli*, the meeting point at the base of the atrium becomes a connector – a space enabling chance encounters that might spark different conversations and collaboration, thereby leading to a broader and more pluralist discourse.

The bright geometric lattice-work of the artist Rasheed Araeen's bespoke sculpture rises through the atrium leading one's gaze upwards to the elaborate glass and steel matrix at the top of the atrium. With the glass roof-scape, Maki and Associates reference the work of the architect and gardener, Joseph Paxton, for his work on the 1851 Crystal Palace Great Exhibition and Decimus Burton, for his design of the 1863 great glass Temperate House at Kew Gardens, both in London.

The skylight, part of the roof-scape at the Aga Khan Centre, creates a design link to the roof-scapes at the Imamat Delegation and the Aga Khan Museum, Canada



(Opposite) The Atrium forms the heart of the Aga Khan Centre, capturing the light and drawing it down into the building.





(Left) Artist Rasheed Araeen

(Opposite) London-based Pakistani artist Rasheed Araeen has reinterpreted classical Islamic geometric forms into a three-dimensional sculpture that rises nine-storeys high

RASHEED ARAEEN ON HIS ATRIUM SCULPTURE

“For the Aga Khan Centre, I have designed a geometric structure rising approximately 33m through the atrium. It is made of 32 powder-coated, aluminium panels, each approximately 220cm x 220cm x 33cm, and is a unique example of the transformation of the functional lattice structure of engineering, into an aesthetic form within postmodern architecture.

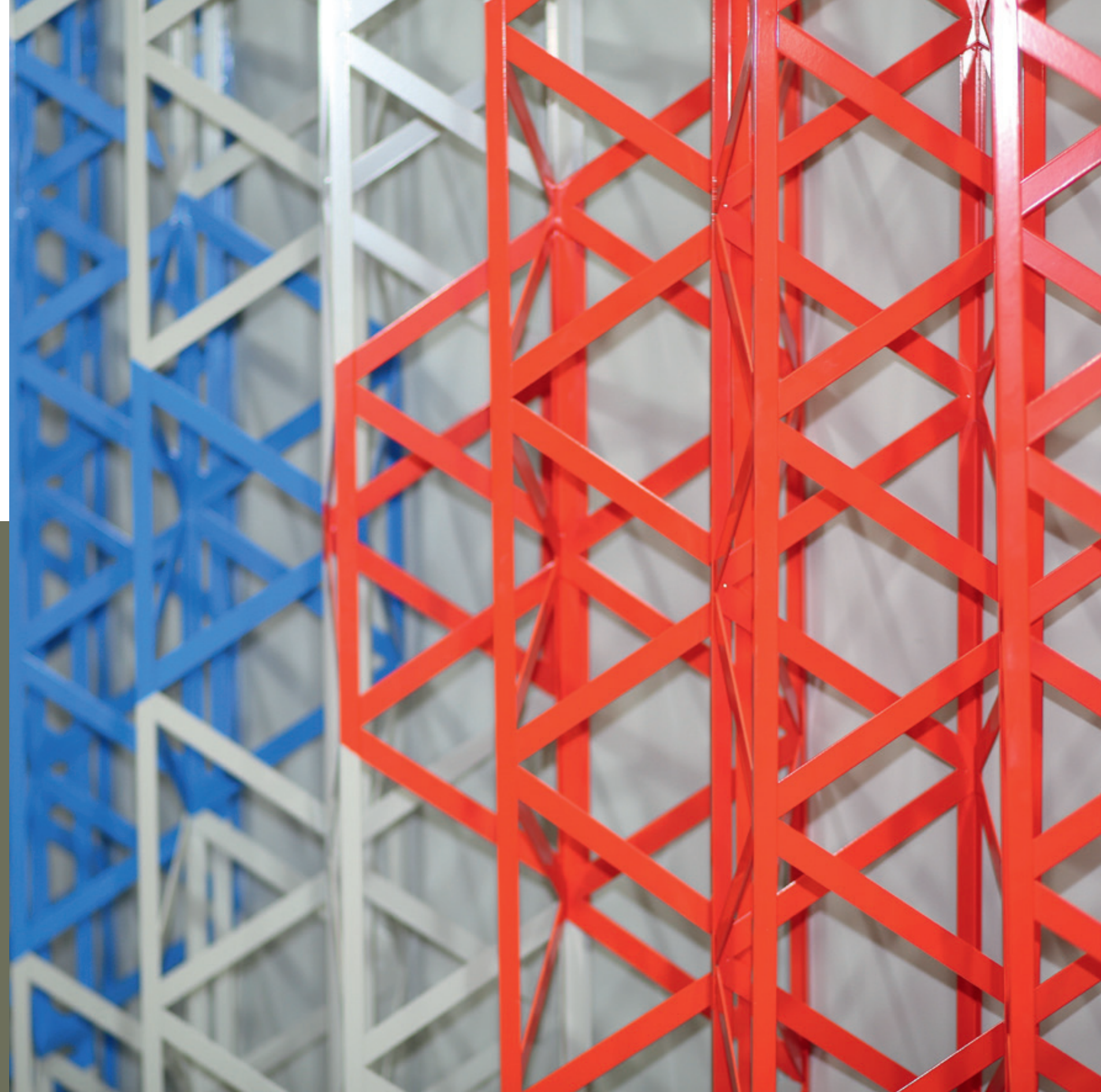
I first began exploring the aesthetic transformation of the lattice structure in my Minimalist work of the 1960s. Although my work involving geometry emerged from my engagement with the geometric abstraction of 20th-century Modernist art, its historical roots lie in the geometry of Islamic art, formulated as early as the 8th century and expressing Islam’s own unique worldview, involving the whole cosmos. It developed in opposition to, and in defiance of, the sacred language of the time which was based on the symbolism of a Divine being that was visible and tangible in its representation on Earth in the form of a human body.

This teleology produced art which was pictorial, involving the figuration of living beings seen and experienced by the eye. However, the emergence of photography in the middle of the 19th century led to a crisis, culminating in the most important pioneering movement in the art of the 20th century – Cubism. It was Cubism, then, which led to geometric abstraction, whose ultimate manifestation occurred in Minimalism.

The geometric abstraction of my work is historically related to Minimalism. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that the idea of looking at the world through geometry was already profoundly expressed by Muslim artists more than a thousand years ago. This fact must now be recognised within the narratives of modern art history by making a connection between 20th-century geometric abstraction and the achievements of Islamic civilisations. It has been my aim for some time to make this connection, and to put Islam at the centre of modernity today. My work for the Aga Khan Centre at King’s Cross helps me enunciate and celebrate

this connection, particularly in the context of the educational aims of the institutions it houses.”

Rasheed Araeen is a London-based conceptual artist, sculptor, painter, writer and curator. He graduated in Civil Engineering from Karachi’s NED University of Engineering and Technology in 1962, and has been working as a visual artist since his arrival in London from Pakistan in 1964. He founded the art journals *Black Phoenix* (1978), *Third Text* (1987) and *Third Text Asia* (2008).

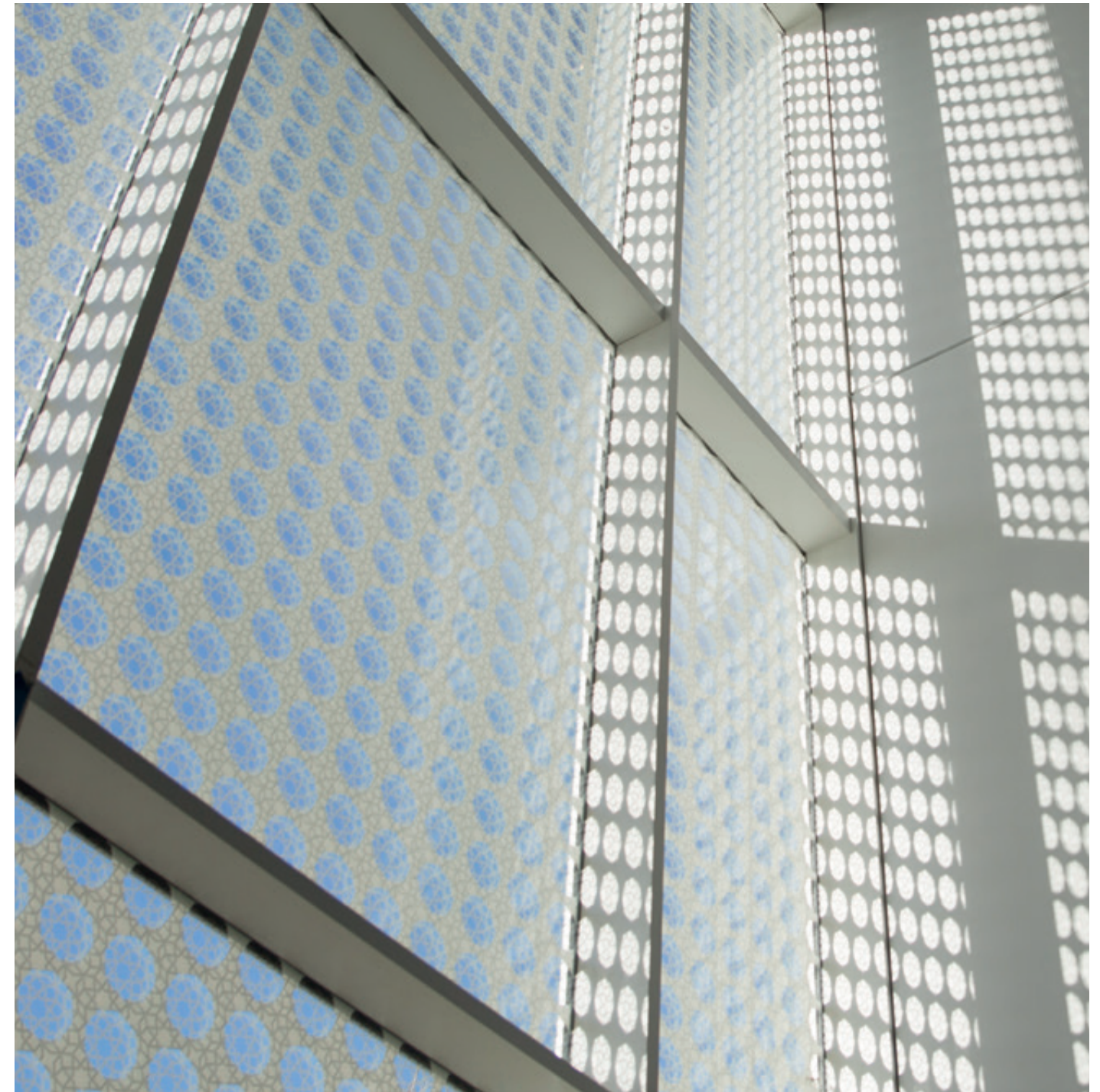


The Aga Khan Centre is subtly ornamented by variations of a bespoke eight-point star pattern that Maki and Associates have drawn from the heritage of geometry and abstraction in Islamic art. It has inspired the design of architectural elements such as in the lattice-work screens that mirror the *mashrabiyya* and *jali* screens of the Middle East and the Indian Subcontinent, as well as in steel balustrades, ceilings, carpets and in mosaics. The pattern has also been used in the Victoria Hall student accommodation. The eight-point star connects these two buildings by creating a perpetuum mobile as found in decorative elements of Muslim civilisations. It is also used as the logo for the Aga Khan Centre.

The ground floor of the building performs many functions. It will house a retail space, restaurant and a small gallery to engage with the public. The gallery will host exhibitions that weave together many thematic threads and interests of the institutions of the Ismaili Imamat and AKDN. Inspired by manuscripts in the Library's special collections, some exhibitions will present artefacts connected with Muslim cultures and civilisations, while others will be related to the development work of the AKDN. These exhibitions will offer insights into important present day themes and showcase some of the lesser-known facets of Muslim cultures. Associated events and garden tours will also give visitors the chance to discover and explore the Aga Khan Centre.

(Right and overleaf) *Mashrabiyya* lattice-work, also known as *jali* screen-work in South Asia, is used in various ways throughout the building

(Opposite) *Mashrabiyya* lattice-work creates the effect of dappled-light across the interior of the building. View from the ground floor





OPENING EXHIBITION – GARDENS AND WELLBEING: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Islamic gardens and parks illustrate the ways in which Islam touches all aspects of human life. This exhibition ranges from the spiritual to the intellectual, from the scientific to the sensory and emotional, from the artistic to the environmental and from the cultural to the socio-economic. It combines a display of physical manuscripts, high-resolution projections and recordings of poetry. By juxtaposing images from medieval manuscripts and artefacts with videos of contemporary projects, the exhibition offers a travelogue of the past and present. One of the manuscripts on display will be *The Canon of Medicine* by the 11th-century polymath, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), who collected classical Greek knowledge and expanded it to such an extent that for centuries *The Canon* retained its importance in the understanding and practice of Western and non-Western medicine. Book Five of the Canon contains more than 800 medical preparations including formulas aimed at elevating the vital spirit with natural fragrances, rose oil and honey. The inclusion of current projects such as the renovation of the Sunder Nursery in Delhi, on the other hand, will showcase the role green spaces play in improving quality of life, creating socio-economic regeneration, neighbourhood cohesion and exercising environmental responsibility.



(Above) The Sunder Nursery in Delhi, a revitalisation project carried out by AKDN in partnership with the government of India. It aims to showcase the ecological and built heritage of the 90-acre nursery located in the Humayun's Tomb complex

(Left) Cover of the Latin translation of Ibn Sina's *Qānūn fi'l-ṭibb*, known in English as *Avicenna's Canon of Medicine*. It was translated from Arabic into Latin in the 12th century and remained in use in European medical schools as the standard medical text until the 17th century

The first four floors of the Aga Khan Centre are dedicated to learning. Seminar rooms and learning studios are modular and can be adapted with the use of screens to make larger or smaller teaching and gathering spaces. Seating areas that look out onto a courtyard garden provide students and staff with a space for repose.

Connecting the third and fourth floors with an internal staircase, the Library creates its own world. The busier spaces on the lower level lead to book stacks and more private study carrels on the upper level. Desks around the perimeter of the library have been carefully situated to offer views of the city. A museum-quality archive room provides a carefully controlled secure facility for rare books and fragile old manuscripts.

Levels five to eight accommodate offices and open-plan working spaces, configured around the central atrium to foster a spirit of cooperation and shared resources. These include meeting rooms and offices for academics, development professionals and staff. Each institution has been assigned its own colour accents, visible from the atrium, as a reminder of the diverse activities taking place in the building.

At the top, on the the ninth floor, lies the sycamore-lined Crown room with its spectacular glass and steel roof and its Persian-inspired terrace. The two other gardens on this floor both sit alongside the geometric angles of the atrium roof light. An executive room opens up onto the enclosed courtyards by means of a full wall of glass.

The Aga Khan Centre has been designed to be sustainable, targeting an 'Excellent' rating from sustainability certification BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method). It has a high-performance facade that takes sun and shade into account. A sophisticated building management system intelligently controls the low-energy lighting and ventilation systems. The building is connected to the local low-carbon district energy supply and also has 148m² of photo-voltaic panels on the roof to generate electricity from the sun. The gardens, including a small brown roof of crushed stone, will support biodiversity.



“If all the green spaces are relatively small, relatively secret, and can be physically contained, then the overall approach gives us an opportunity to create for each space, a sense of seclusion, environmental privilege and contained beauty...”

...We have an opportunity to create a relatively tight series of beautifully enclosed roof gardens with various orientations... it might be worthwhile to consider that each green space within our complex of buildings should correspond to a particular cultural landscape of a given country or region in the Ummah... thereby creating a unique concentration of visual spaces in London, all with their own identity, but the sum of which would represent the pluralism of the Islamic world, and give value to all its identities and representations.”

His Highness the Aga Khan's letter to Professor Maki, 23 December 2011

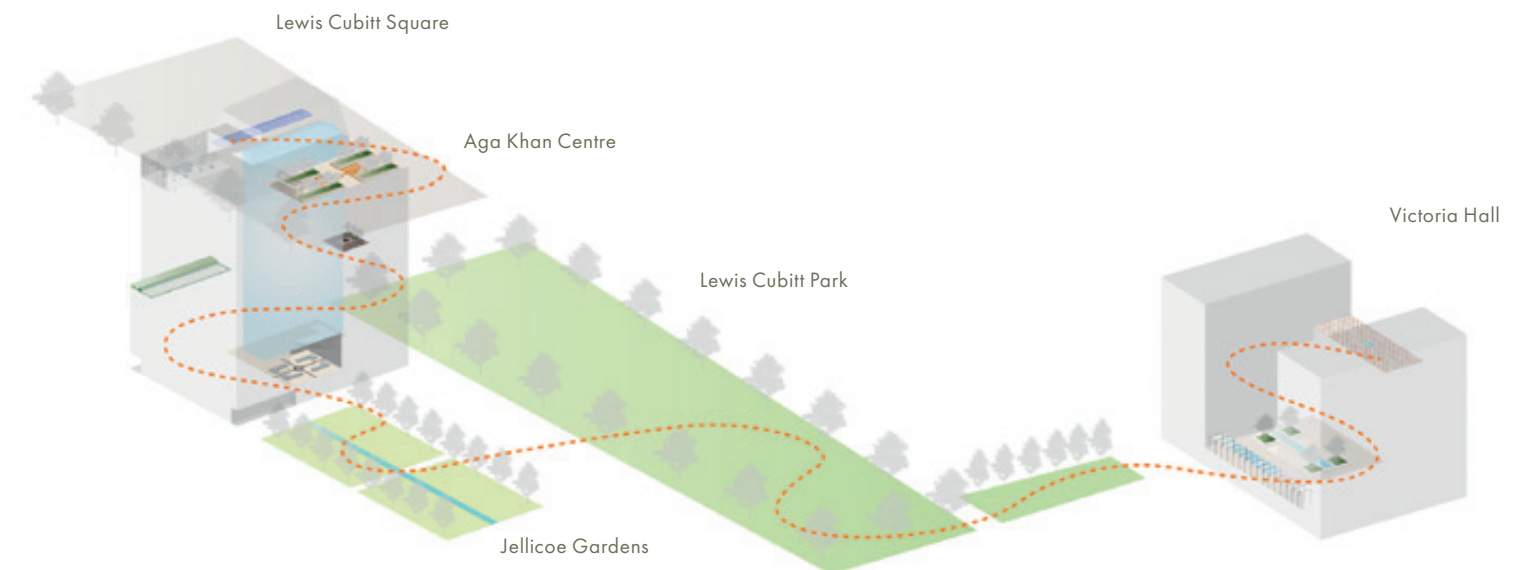
THE ISLAMIC GARDENS AT KING'S CROSS

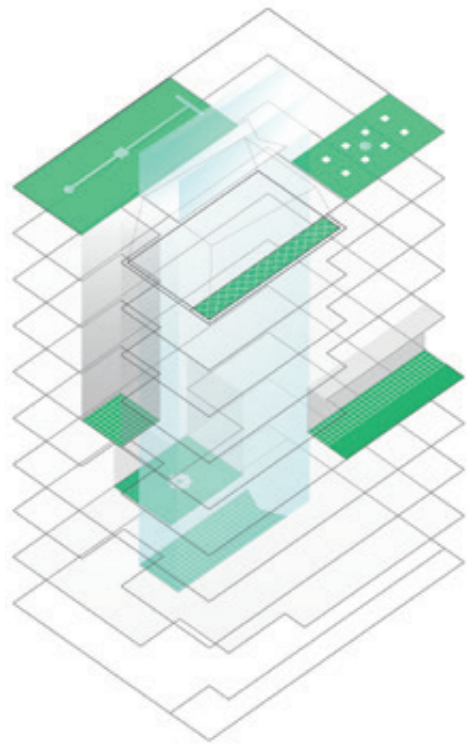
A ribbon pathway of gardens, courtyards and terraces

This journey of discovery through Muslim regions and cultures around the globe – from North Africa and Spain to Syria, Persia and India – was conceived of by His Highness Aga Khan IV. The eight gardens, courtyards and terraces at the Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall along with two public gardens at King's Cross, make up a collection of Islamic-inspired green spaces in central London. These define a route of exploration for the public, with spatial, material and planting revelations along the way, as well as spaces for activity and contemplation for those who occupy the buildings. The Islamic Gardens at King's Cross have drawn upon the experience of AKTC in developing and restoring gardens and parks globally.

Landscape architects Laurie Olin and James Wescoat, Aga Khan Professor for Islamic Architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), were engaged to develop the brief for the landscape designers. Laurie Olin's firm, OLIN, has had first-hand experience in designing Islamic gardens and understand their plants and traditions. The geometry, forms and materiality of historic Islamic gardens carry compelling resonances across cultures, even if the plants and materials change in accordance with local climates, soils and underlying geology. After an international search, a shortlist of landscape architects was compiled to bring modern interpretations of Islam's diverse garden heritage to life, primarily within buildings – and within the constraints of London's climate.

Concept of the Ribbon Pathway of green spaces





Location of the six gardens at the Aga Khan Centre

One of the aims in creating the Islamic Gardens at King's Cross at the Aga Khan Centre is to communicate the plurality that exists in Muslim societies through the lens of landscape design, and to educate visitors about the heritage across diverse Muslim cultures of valuing gardens as spaces for regeneration and inspiration. The gardens, courtyards and terraces are woven into the architectural narrative, bringing the exterior composition of "landscapes" into the inner language of rooms and places for gathering. The Islamic Gardens at King's Cross have been designed to give pleasure to the senses, promoting well-being and reflection, inspiring creativity and encouraging intellectual pursuits. Many types of Islamic gardens can be found across the globe, from tomb to pleasure gardens, medicinal and botanical gardens. Certain aspects such as water, geometry, symmetry and architectural elements, especially hard surfaces, are dominant themes, but even so there exists a plurality and diversity among these features. Although many gardens throughout the Islamic world are in arid regions, often with limited amounts of planting, there is a long tradition of cultivating colourful flowers, fragrant shrubs and trees that bear symbolic fruit.

Ten gardens in total form a ribbon pathway of gardens: six gardens and terraces in the Aga Khan Centre, two at Victoria Hall and two in the public realm (Lewis Cubitt Square and Jellicoe Gardens). The two public realm gardens have been commissioned by the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership. Their design connects the landscape design narrative of the wider King's Cross environment to that of the Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall in a dialogue between the public and the private. The culturally diverse garden designers and landscape architects come from Lebanon, Japan, the US and the UK.

"Islamic gardens are places of refreshment, physically and spiritually, and are often contained spaces of sanctuary within a harsh or bustling environment. They often possess stone or tile paving and invariably have water in the form of basins or fountains. Depending upon the region and climate the amount of planting is variable, however a handful of trees and flowers is common. At King's Cross the AKDN projects all have gardens in one form or another, emblematic of various Islamic gardens across the regions of the world that embody aspects of historic gardens."

Laurie Olin 2018

(Opposite) Night-time view of Lewis Cubitt Square, designed by OLIN and Townshend Landscape Architects Ltd



LAURIE OLIN

In 1976, Laurie Olin left his architecture practice to found a landscape architecture firm that is now known as OLIN. As a young man he studied English and Italian gardens. Between them, Olin and members of his firm have been fortunate to work and travel to many regions of the globe. More recently the practice researched Islamic gardens to create the brief for the Islamic Gardens at King's Cross, drawing on the practice's varied experience in Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Spain, Turkey and elsewhere. Alongside his practice, Olin has also taught at the University of Pennsylvania for many years. The practice's best known project is Bryant Park in Manhattan, a green roof above the 3 million volumes belonging to the New York Public Library next door, that changed the character of the area. At the J. Paul Getty Centre in Los Angeles, OLIN reinterpreted a classic Italian Renaissance villa and garden as a public institution. In London, OLIN designed the landscape

for Canary Wharf and Exchange Square and more recently for the new US Embassy, London, with meadow planting spiralling into internal gardens based on six significant US landscapes. OLIN also designed Lewis Cubitt Square, south-west of the Aga Khan Centre, together with Townshend Landscape Architects.

JAMES WESCOAT

Professor James Wescoat is the Aga Khan Professor for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). For the greater part of his career, Professor Wescoat has focused his research on the historical waterworks of Mughal gardens and cities in India and Pakistan. His early work involved a Smithsonian Institution research project on "Garden, City & Empire: The Historical Geography of Mughal Lahore", which led to a number of publications recognised by the Governments of Pakistan and Punjab. This was followed by research on the water systems of Mughal gardens in

Agra, India, opposite the Taj Mahal; and on Rajput garden waterworks in the palace complex of Nagaur, Rajasthan, led by conservation architect Minakshi Jain and the Mehrangarh Museum Trust. Professor Wescoat has worked with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) on garden conservation in the Nizamuddin area of New Delhi, the Qutb Shahi tomb complex of Hyderabad, and the Bagh-e Babur tomb-garden in Kabul, Afghanistan. He has offered advice on contemporary AKTC garden design proposals in Edmonton, Canada and King's Cross, London. In terms of teaching, Professor Wescoat has organised MIT graduate student design workshops to learn from the AKTC team in Delhi. MIT students and faculty also work with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) on disaster-resilient water, housing, and landscape planning in Gujarat and Tajikistan.

Garden of Tranquility

Garden design: Maki and Associates

Location: Aga Khan Centre first floor, onto atrium and staff and student lounges

Orientation: North facing, overlooking Jellicoe Gardens

Area: 90m²

Features: Central water feature, four benches, patterned ceiling, patterned balustrade

The Garden of Tranquility is on the same floor as the teaching spaces of the Aga Khan Centre. Inspired by the loggias of Egypt, the Middle East and Persia, that act as transitional spaces between the interior and the exterior, the Garden of Tranquility plays an informal role as a shared recreational space for staff and students within the private realm of the building. The Garden of Tranquility follows the model of a three-sided enclosed garden that overlooks another garden, the three sides in this case being glass. Echoing an observatory, it traditionally sits in the comfort of the shade

while the lower garden, within one's field of vision – here the Persian-inspired Jellicoe Gardens – is sunlit. Catering to London's climate, the Garden of Tranquility offers sheltered views over Jellicoe Gardens. A limestone floor captures the light and leads the eye to the central fountain. The eight-point star motif used on the ground floor reappears on the ceiling, glass wall enclosures and balustrades of the garden, tying in the larger themes of Muslim garden design.

“The aspect of the gardens in this project is unique... they are supposed to be inspired by Islamic gardens which are very diverse. And part of the agenda of the building is to educate and become an inspiration to the Western world of what the Islamic world has to offer through these garden landscapes.”

Gary Kamemoto, Maki and Associates, 2017

The Garden of Tranquility was inspired by Bagh-e Eram in Shiraz, Iran which overlooks another garden



The Garden also took inspiration from the patterned ceiling found at the Hasht Behest Pavilion in Isfahan, Iran



(Opposite)
Garden of Tranquility,
located on the first floor
of the atrium between
the student and staff
lounges. Designed by
Maki and Associates



Terrace of Learning

Garden design: Maki and Associates with Tom Stuart-Smith
Location: Aga Khan Centre, onto fourth floor and the Library
Orientation: South facing overlooking Central Saint Martins
Area: 108m²
Features: Mosaic tiles, fragrant evergreen herbs

The Terrace of Learning extends the Library outdoors. Echoing the cloisters of Spain, the Maghreb and Egypt, the Terrace of Learning reflects a subtle combination of architectural and botanical elements. The tilework is formed with a mosaic of laser-cut marble in a geometric design based on a square, repeatedly rotated at 45 degrees, that is a common design feature in many Islamic gardens. This geometric accent continues as the mosaic floor flows seamlessly into a bench. Tom Stuart-Smith chose scented evergreen herbs – lavender (*Lavandula grosso*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and

myrtle (*Myrtus communis* subsp *tarentina*) – white, mauve and blue flowers such as verbena (*Verbena bonariensis* ‘Lollipop’) for the tall mosaic-clad troughs of green serpentine stone along the parapet. This terrace offers fragrant respite from the intensity of the more formal rooms of the Library, while still remaining a quiet space. Stuart-Smith also worked on planting for the Courtyard of Harmony and designed Jellicoe Gardens in the public realm.

Tom Stuart-Smith

The work of landscape design practice, Tom Stuart-Smith, includes gardens for Windsor Castle, Fort Belvedere in Windsor Great Park and for the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley. Eight of Tom Stuart-Smith’s gardens at the Royal Horticultural Society’s Chelsea Flower Show have been awarded gold medals and three have won Best in Show. He recently designed the gardens for Le Jardin Secret in Marrakech in which one space restores an ancient garden fed by water from the Atlas Mountains, while another is an exotic garden of plants from all around the world.

Terrace of Learning was inspired by the Bahia Palace, Marrakech, Morocco



Another inspiration for the Terrace of Learning was the Alczar palace in Seville, Spain



(Opposite)
Terrace of Learning, designed by Maki and Associates. The fourth floor and reading room of the Aga Khan Library, London lead onto the terrace



Courtyard of Harmony

Garden design: Maki and Associates with Tom Stuart-Smith

Location: Aga Khan Centre, offices on fifth floor

Orientation: Facing west overlooking Lewis Cubitt Park

Area: 36m²

Features: Decorative marble floor with calligraphic motifs, Pomegranate trees (*Punica granatum*), marble bench

This small courtyard is set into the fifth floor. It is an outdoor room enclosed by the building on three sides, like the semi-enclosed spaces of the *iwān* arch, often found in Islamic architecture across the Middle East and Central Asia. Laid into the floor and marked out in grey basalt set into a base of red hues are the words *insijam* (harmony) and *jamal* (beauty) in Arabic architectural Kufic script. A central seat, under the open sky above, offers a lookout point for contemplation and introspection. Pomegranates

(*Punica granatum*), a symbolic fruit tree in Muslim cultures, grow in three large pots and are underplanted with creeping thyme (*Thymus pseudolanuginosus* and *Thymus 'Pink Chintz'*) that flowers in pink, softening the architectural lines. In spring, the trees bear striking scarlet flowers and in the warm micro-climate of central London, they are expected to fruit.

Courtyard of Harmony was inspired by Manouchehri House in Kashan, Iran



Courtyard of Harmony also took inspiration from the Beit al-Joury Hotel in Damascus, Syria



(Opposite) Courtyard of Harmony, designed by Maki and Associates. Laid into the floor are the words *insijam* (harmony) and *jamal* (beauty) in Arabic architectural Kufic script



Terrace of Discovery

Garden design: Maki and Associates

Location: Aga Khan Centre next to the Crown Room on ninth floor

Orientation: South facing overlooking Handyside Street and the King's Cross estate

Area: 63m²

Features: Geometric, blue and white tiled floor, patterned balustrade

This long balcony, or terrace, staged alongside the Crown Room, alludes to the *talar* – the name given by Persian monarchs to the throne carved out from the rock tomb of Darius near Persepolis. Later it came to refer to the ruler's court of assembly. In the Muslim cultural context, a *talar*, often located at the front of a building, under the main vaulted arch or typically a columned space to frame a view overlooking the central courtyard, became the place from which the congregation was addressed. In the

Terrace of Discovery, under the translucent glass and mesh vault of the roof, visitors to the Crown Room, on a clear day, can enjoy spectacular views over King's Cross and the London skyline beyond it. The eight-point star motif is expressed here on the floor in blue and white tilework in an ensemble with the same pattern manifested in the stainless steel balustrade.

Terrace of Discovery drew inspiration from Ali Qapu Pavilion in Isfahan, Iran



Terrace of Discovery was also inspired by the Chehel Sutoun Pavilion in Isfahan, Iran



(Opposite)
Terrace of Discovery,
under construction,
designed by Maki and
Associates, with 180
degree views of London



Garden of Life

Garden design: Madison Cox

Location: Aga Khan Centre, near the Crown Room on the ninth floor

Orientation: Facing north and west overlooking Jellicoe Gardens

Area: 283m²

Features: *Chadar* waterfall, water channels and basins, sandstone benches, trees and other planting.

Trees: Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*); Fastigiata English Yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'); Pear tree (*Pyrus communis*); Hazelnut tree (*Corylus avellana*); Medlar tree (*Mespilus germanica*); Quince tree (*Cydonia oblonga* 'Vranja').

Shrubs: Flowering Japanese quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Eximia'); (*Chaenomeles speciose* 'Mango storm')

Climbers: Chocolate Vine (*Akebia quinata*); Confederate Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)

Perennials: Persian Lily (*Fritillaria persica* 'Ivory Bells'); Siberian Iris (*Iris sibirica* 'Butter and Sugar', 'Perry's Blue', 'White Swirl')

Capturing the essence of the Mughal garden, which is traditionally monumental in scale, the Garden of Life borrows the sky and its views to expand its small footprint. It reinterprets the late Mughal form of the vertical Kashmiri *chadar* waterfall in white Indian marble, spilling water through the trees in this contemporary rooftop setting. The Garden of Life evokes key elements of Mughal landscaping styles from the four-part layout to the use of red sandstone for the benches and on the terrace. Water flows down the marble wall fountain through to

elegant water channels reminiscent of agricultural irrigation into a square basin that occupies the centre of the garden. The water then flows out into a circular basin before it begins its return journey again. The planting brings seasonal diversity to the garden, with a range of blooming trees from Pear to Hazelnut and Medlar to Chocolate Vine climbers. Scented flowering plants include the Confederate Jasmine, the Persian Lily with its remarkable petals, and yellow, blue and white Irises.

Madison Cox

Garden designer Madison Cox brings years of experience of private garden design to the Garden of Life. He designed his own cliff-top garden in Tangiers, Morocco. Based in New York, Paris and Marrakech, he has edited, *The Gardener's Garden*, published by Phaidon (2014). He is closely involved in nurturing and developing the Jardin Majorelle – the intense 'blue garden' in Marrakech developed by the French painter Jacques Majorelle (1886–1962) over a period of 40 years and most recently owned by Yves Saint Laurent. In London, he has designed gardens inside the St. Martin's Lane Hotel and the nearby Sanderson Hotel.

Garden of Life took inspiration from Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, India



(Opposite and overleaf)
Garden of Life, designed by
Madison Cox, captures the
essence of a South Asian
Mughal garden





Garden of Light

Garden design: Nelson Byrd Woltz

Location: Aga Khan Centre next to the Executive Meeting Room on the ninth floor

Orientation: South facing, enclosed to a height of 4m

Area: 98m²

Features: Patterned screens with poetry and extracts of the Qur'an carved in relief into marble panels, Magnolia trees (*Magnolia x loebneri* 'Merrill'), water feature

Inspired by the courtyards of Andalusia, the Garden of Light is found on the ninth floor. Hidden from the exterior, the Garden of Light only reveals itself from within the building when one enters the room next to it. Inside the garden, the 4m screens are mediated by intricately designed geometric patterns on tall panels of thin ultra-high performance concrete that refer to the *mashrabiyya* and *jali* screens of the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent respectively. Verses from the Qur'an, and poetry by Ferdowsi, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Hafez, Nasir Khusraw and Sa'di, invoke the traditions of contemplation, pause and reflection that define Muslim attitudes to the search for knowledge and gnosis. These verses are lovingly carved in relief into marble panels set into the walls at eye level. They have been designed

by the calligrapher Elinor Aishah Holland, once again, creating resonance across a rich heritage within Muslim cultures. The quality of light filtering through the screens changes throughout the day, casting shadows onto the honed limestone paving, which gives the garden its name. A central fountain in the form of an eight-point star reinforces the predominant geometric theme of the building. Dark polished limestone rills further emphasise the geometric order of the garden. The number eight is echoed by eight magnolia trees in individual square wells, each filled with smooth pebbles. In spring, the magnolias infuse the space with white flowers, intensifying the experience of the white textures also apparent in the paving and screens.

"The garden at King's Cross is an abstract garden. There aren't the typical things that you'd imagine like large fountains or canals or lots of plants. In fact it's a garden of the imagination. But it will create an atmosphere of light and sound when you're in this courtyard that will transport you, and I hope you will feel, a timeless connection to Islamic traditions."

Thomas Woltz, NBW, 2018

Garden of Light was inspired by the Hall of the Two Sisters in the Alhambra, Spain



Garden of Light also took inspiration from the Orange Tree Courtyard at Seville Cathedral, Spain



(Opposite)
Garden of Light,
designed by
Nelson Byrd Woltz



Nelson Byrd Woltz

The projects of US-based landscape architects Nelson Byrd Woltz range from private gardens to community and farm projects. The firm has also designed the 10-acre Aga Khan Garden at the University of Alberta's Botanic Garden in Edmonton, Canada, which is inspired by Mughal landscape traditions. Its research activities for this and for the Garden of Light took it deep into the literature and histories of Islamic gardens, then across the world to study living examples. Nelson Byrd Woltz has been inspired by forms such as the *chahar bagh* which originated in an understanding of the profound importance of water in creating productive spaces in arid regions. The firm drew their inspiration for the Garden of Light from the Maghreb and Spain and, more particularly, the Hall of the Two Sisters within the Alhambra, the Orange Tree Courtyard at Seville Cathedral, Spain, and the Bou Inania Madrasa and the Al Attarine Madrasa, both in Morocco.

Other projects by the practice include the Asia Trail at the National Zoological Park in Washington D.C., Hudson Yards in New York, and Memorial Park in Houston, Texas. Principal and owner Thomas Woltz is one of the American Society of Landscape Architects' Council of Fellows.

Elinor Aishah Holland

Elinor Aishah Holland is a New York-based calligrapher of Arabic and Latin scripts. She studied with the American master calligrapher, Mohamed Zakariya, for many years and received her *ijaza* (diploma) in the *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts in 2013. Her involvement with the art of the script includes exhibiting, teaching, and especially commissioned work. Clients include the Smithsonian Institute, the Society of Scribes in New York City, Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

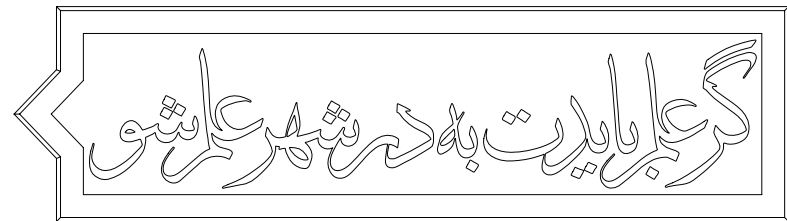
Diwan, Qasida no. 122, verse 25 (tr. Karim Javan)

Nāṣir-i Khusraw

If you seek knowledge, go to the gate of the City of Knowledge!
There, the glint of its fortune will enlighten your heart

گر علم بایدت به در شهر علم شو
تا بر دلت بتابد نور سعادتش

گر علم بایدت به در شهر علم شو



(Above and opposite) Select verses from the Holy Qur'an and Persian poems are lovingly calligraphed before being carved in relief into marble panels set into the pre-cast screens at eye level



Calligraphy in the Garden of Light

Specific verses from the Holy Qur'an and from Persian poets have been calligraphed and carved into stone panels in the Garden of Light on the ninth floor. These verses remind us of the long-standing tradition of contemplation and scholarship in Muslim heritage.

The Holy Qur'an Sūrat al-Naḥl / Chapter of the Bee

Verses 10-13, 68-69

(transl. Tarif Khalidi)

In the name of God, Merciful to all, Compassionate to each

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

He it is who made water descend from the sky,

of which some is for you to drink

and some for trees from which you eat

With it He causes vegetation to sprout for your benefit: olives,

palms and vines, and all types of fruit

In this is a sign for a people who reflect

He made the night to serve you as also the day, the sun, the moon

and the stars – all are made to serve by His command

In this is a sign for a people who understand

Behold what He created for you on earth, diverse in colour

In this is a sign for a people who remember [...]

Your Lord inspired the bees:

Take the mountains for your habitation,

as also the trees, and what they erect on a trellis

Then eat of all fruits,

and follow the paths of your Lord, made easy for you

From their entrails comes a drink, of diverse colours,

in which there is a remedy for mankind

In this is a sign for a people who reflect

God, the Exalted, the Majestic, has spoken the Truth

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ

مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسَبُّونَ

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ

وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَبَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ

وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

وَمَا ذَرَأَّا لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي

مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بَيْوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا

يَعْرِشُونَ نَّمِ كُلِّي مِّنَ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ

فَأَسْلِكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ

مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمُ

Mathnawī-yi Ma'nawī, 1:1126-1129 (tr. Reynold A. Nicholson)

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207–1273)

The light that gives light to the eye is in truth the light of the heart:

The light of the eye is produced by the light of hearts

Again, the light which gives light to the heart is the light of God,

Which is pure and separate from the light of intellect and sense

At night there was no light: you did not see the colour;

Then (the light) was made manifest by the opposite of light

First comes the seeing of light, then seeing of colour,

And this you know immediately by the opposite of light

نور نور چشم خود نور دلست

نور چشم از نور دلها حاصلست

باز نور نور دل نور خداست

کو ز نور عقل و حس پاک و جداست

شب نبد نور و ندیدی رنگها

پس به ضدّ نور پیدا شد ترا

دیدن نورست آنکه دید رنگ

وین به ضدّ نور دانی بی‌درنگ

Ghazaliyat, Ghazal no. 115, verse 1 (adapted from tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke)

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ al-Shīrāzī, known as Ḥāfiẓ

Plant the tree of friendship, which bears the fruit of fulfilment

Uproot the sapling of enmity, which bears countless suffering

درخت دوستی بنشان که کام دل به بار آرد

نهال دشمنی برکن که رنج بیشمار آرد

Diwan, Ghazaliyat, Ghazal no. 296, verse 6

Sa' dī Shīrāzī (d. 1292)

In the eyes of the wise each leaf of the green foliage of trees

is a book on the knowledge of its Maker

برگ درختان سبز در نظر هوشیار

هر ورقش دفترست معرفت کردگار

Diwan, Qasida no. 79, verse 30 (tr. Annemarie Schimmel)

Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. ca. 1078)

Make a shield from knowledge

For there is no stronger shield against calamities

از علم سپر کن که بر حوادث

از علم قویتر سپر نباشد

Shahnama, Prelude, verse 14 (tr. Arthur Warner & Edmund Warner)

Ferdowsi (d. 1020)

Thy source of might is knowledge

thus old hearts grow young again

توانا بود هر که دانا بود

ز دانش دل پیر برنا بود

Garden of Reflection

Garden design: Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture

Location: Victoria Hall, first floor

Orientation: Facing south east

Area: 350m²

Features: Reflecting pool, limestone benches, winter flowering Cherry trees (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis Rosea')

As the visitor climbs the stairs to the first floor of Victoria Hall, the student residence, the view opens up onto the tranquil Garden of Reflection, lit at night to showcase the four multi-stemmed winter flowering cherry trees whose reflection shimmers in the reflecting pool. In spring, the delicate white-pink petals bring out the warmer tones in the bricks, while later in the year the leaves echo the pattern of the 'hit and miss' brickwork behind them. A planted platform is set above the sandstone paving to provide depth for the tree roots. Benches alongside the reflecting pool, which is raised on a dark granite plinth, invite sociability, being

a perfect place to take in the calming sound of the falling water. An oversized pergola adds to this sense of enclosure with the polished finish underneath, catching reflections of the garden from the pavement outside. The Garden of Reflection draws inspiration from the Islamic gardens of Andalusia that were conceived of as extensions of the inner realm. Like this garden, they are experienced both intimately from within and panoramically from a distance.

Garden of Reflection was inspired by the Court of the Myrtles at the Alhambra, Spain



Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture

Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture, based in Broumana, Lebanon, places nature at centre stage. Their work aims to provide for a range of experiences within landscapes that nurture social interactions, but respond equally to individual needs for moments of serenity. The firm designed the Aga Khan Park in Toronto, Canada next to the Aga Khan Museum and Ismaili Centre Toronto after a research process that included trips to Morocco, Egypt, Andalusia, and India. In Toronto, the gardens try to capture the essence of an Islamic garden. The formal garden is split into the four quadrants of the traditional *chahar bagh* with five raised water tables of black granite, one in each quadrant and one at the centre. Other projects include the Energias de Portugal Park in Lisbon, Portugal, alongside the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, and the pedestrian precinct in the Ambulatory Care Zone at the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan. Vladimir Djurovic received an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2007 for the Samir Kassir Square in Beirut, Lebanon.

“The essence is in the apparent simplicity, the geometric layout, the seamless integration with the architecture, water as a central feature; but more importantly, in classic Islamic gardens the sum is always much greater than the parts”

Vladimir Djurovic, 2018

(Opposite) Garden of Reflection, designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture



Terrace of Unity

Garden design: Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture

Location: Victoria Hall, eighth floor

Orientation: Facing south east

Area: 136m²

Features: Zellij tiles, water basin, built-in seating

Zellij tiles are typical of the gardens of Morocco and the Maghreb. On the Terrace of Unity, high up on the eighth floor, everything is embedded within an unfolding marble carpet. The floor and the walls are all densely covered in individually cut marble tiles set out in a zellij-inspired pattern. The singular material gives the garden a remarkable, energetic power. Water is a central element in gardens of the Maghreb, often appearing in a contained feature such as the cast bronze basin used here that collects rainwater and reflects the light. This garden is conceived of as a place for gatherings and relaxation.



(Right) Terrace of Unity was inspired by the inner courtyard of Ben Yusuf Madrasa in Marrakech, Morocco

(Opposite) Terrace of Unity, designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture



Jellicoe Gardens

Garden design: Tom Stuart-Smith

Location: Public garden north of the Aga Khan Centre

Area: 2,200m²

Features: Pavilion, pool, rill, *bustan* (orchard)

Commissioned by King's Cross Central Limited Partnership (KCCLP) and AKDN

The design inspiration of the public spaces of Lewis Cubitt Square and Jellicoe Gardens resonates with the Islamic Gardens of King's Cross, linking the gardens, courtyards and terraces of the Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall to the public spaces of King's Cross. These spaces were commissioned in consultation with the Aga Khan Development Network and draw on the vocabulary of Islamic gardens in terms of planting and materials, as well as the use of geometric patterns and water.

Jellicoe Gardens, which marry Persian and English influences, are set alongside the Aga Khan Centre and are overlooked by some of its gardens. The name was chosen by local residents' suggestions and is also the name of the UK's founding father of modern landscape architecture as a profession, Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900–1996). Sir Geoffrey and his wife Lady Jellicoe were fond of Islamic gardens, referring to them often in their work and writing, and were the authors of *The Gardens of Mughal India: a History and Guide*. Jellicoe Gardens are inspired by the sixteenth-century *Bagh-e Fin* in Kashan, Iran, adapting the typologies of the pavilion gardens of Iran to a British setting. A rill runs through the centre and into

a large square pool that marks the meeting place of the upper and lower gardens. To either side are regular blocks of planting and trees – a British interpretation of the Persian *bustan* or orchard. In season they are filled with dense carpets of flowers and shrubs, euphorbia, anemones, grasses and ferns, joined later by spring bulbs and then the tall heads of alliums. This is reminiscent of the Persian carpets that would have covered the floor of the pavilion in *Bagh-e Fin*, where people sat and picnicked, shaded from the fierce sun. In London, with less need to create shade, the pavilion is just a structure rather than a roof, simply suggesting the protection of a pavilion.

Persian ironwood trees (*Parrotia persica*) were brought over from Germany to be grown and shaped before planting here, while oriental plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) mark out the upper garden at the northern end.

For more on Tom Stuart-Smith, see page 86.



Jellicoe Gardens were inspired by the Bagh-e Fin in Kashan, Iran



(Opposite) Artist's impression of Jellicoe Gardens (opened 2020) viewed from Aga Khan Centre's Garden of Tranquility

Lewis Cubitt Square

Garden design: OLIN/Townshend Landscape Architects

Location: Public square to the south west of the Aga Khan Centre

Area: 3,600m²

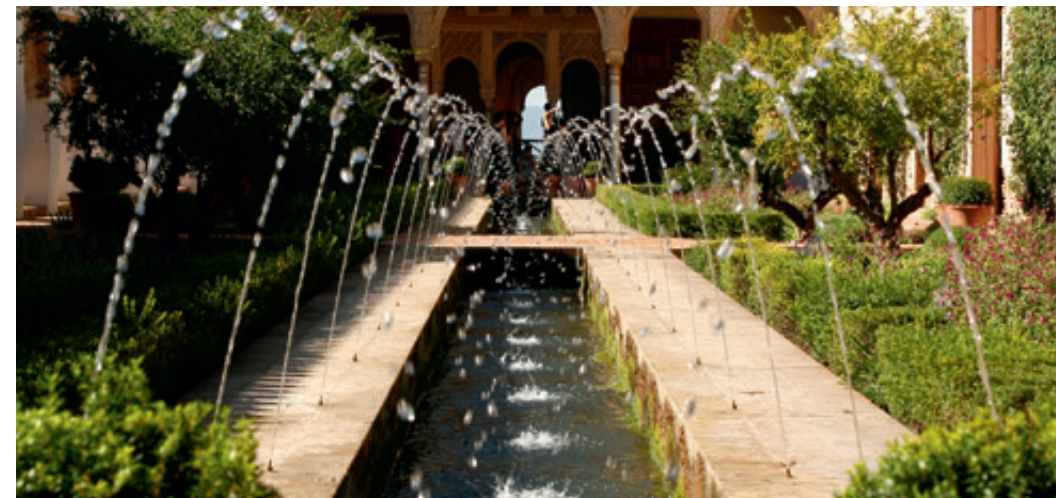
Features: Fountain jets, event space

Commissioned by KCCLP and AKDN

Lewis Cubitt Square was designed by landscape architects OLIN together with Townshend Landscape Architects, the master planners and designers of much of the landscape at King's Cross. The Square has 55 arching water jets, animating the large paved areas with a distinctive playfulness inspired by the Alhambra's *Generalife* garden. As the daylight wanes, the jets of water are illuminated by a clean white light that plays on the water droplets. The colours of the polychromatic pattern in the granite paving are brought alive by water – from the fountains and the rain. The square itself is reminiscent of a Middle Eastern *meydan* or an Italian *piazza*. It is a place for gathering and for holding markets. It hosts outdoor film projections, concerts and fitness camps, and can accommodate more than 2,000 people when the fountains are turned off. Unobtrusive timber benches are designed in

two modes: some straight, which can be used as tables or plinths as well as benches from which to watch the fountains, some curving to create sociable spaces for conversation. The spring-flowering Judas tree sits above hebe (*Hebe x 'Great Orme'*), viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii 'compactum'*), ferns (*Nandina domestica 'Harbor Dwarf'*), bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), and hellebore (*Helleborus x 'Royal Heritage Series Mix'*), blue bells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and meadow-saffron waterlily (*Colchicum 'Waterlily'*). The London plane trees (*Platanus acerifolia*) are fittingly a natural cross between the Asian plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), common throughout the Middle East in parks and gardens and particularly associated with Persia, and the American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) that arrived in London in the late 17th century.

For more on OLIN, see page 83.



Lewis Cubitt Square was inspired by many gardens around the world including the *Generalife* Garden at the Alhambra in Spain

Townshend Landscape Architects

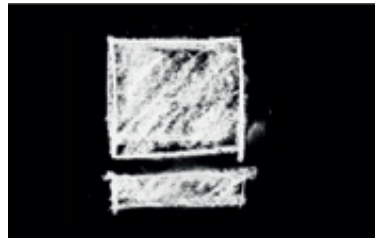
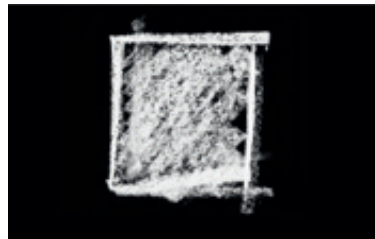
Townshend drew up the landscaping masterplan for King's Cross and many of the landscaped spaces in the regeneration area have been designed by them. The most dramatic is Granary Square, in front of the University of the Arts, south of the Aga Khan Centre with fountains and pleached limes (*Tilia*) giving it character – though it is often taken over by crowds as an event space. Much of Townshend's work has been at cityscape level, working with developers and architects to connect the built environment for people through landscape. Previously Townshend worked on the Birmingham canal-side development, Brindleyplace, and on More London, a development near London Bridge.

(Opposite) Fountains at Lewis Cubitt Square



VICTORIA HALL

Creating a home for students



Early sketch of Victoria Hall by Stanton Williams Architects

Rising 12 storeys, Victoria Hall student accommodation is situated along the northern edge of the King's Cross site, as part of an emerging terrace along the railway lines leading north. Victoria Hall opened in 2016 and has 198 student rooms shared between international students from The Institute of Ismaili Studies and Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, who occupy half of the bedrooms while the rest are rented to other London-based students.

Award-winning practice Stanton Williams Architects, who had already worked with the King's Cross developer Argent, and had experience of designing student housing, was an obvious choice for the project. Victoria Hall articulates an unusual, special interpretation of student housing.

The design concept is of a single form, carved out to create two 12-storey blocks, bookending a sunlit plinth. On top of the plinth is the Garden of Reflection – a Spanish inspired courtyard in front of an eight-storey block set back from the street. This middle block has another beautifully tiled garden on its top floor – the Terrace of Unity – inspired by the courtyard gardens of Morocco and the Mahgreb.

The student residence also sought to reference North African and Yemeni adobe or mud architecture. Therefore Dutch bricks with a slightly cracked, rough texture were chosen and mixed by hand, giving an extra human imprint. The openings in the 'hit-and-miss' brickwork appear small, as they would be to cope with the heat of North Africa, creating a latticework behind which are windows that can be opened to allow rooms to have fresh air without issues of security or safety. The brickwork also increases the sense of privacy in this densely populated development and bathes the interior in a variegated light, while reducing heat gain from facades that face the sun.

The eight-point star pattern designed by Maki and Associates has also been adopted into this building, subtly emphasising its connection with the Aga Khan Centre.



View of the Garden of Reflection, taken from above

The ground-floor entrance is spacious and allows clusters of students to gather. Benches are found both in the reception area and carved into the niches of the corridors, turning these spaces into social zones. Behind these benches the eight-point star pattern has been cut into the wood, unusually by water jet, to achieve precise lines. Rooms off the main passages on the first floor are made more private by the addition of individual lobbies behind an American white oak wall of tall panels that slide behind doors.

Like the Aga Khan Centre, Victoria Hall does not reveal itself immediately but unfolds as the visitor walks up to the first floor, where the Garden of Reflection is laid out on the terrace, green and calm with a great sense of order. This garden is visible from the walkways, studios and bedrooms all the way up the building.



The eight-point star pattern designed by Maki and Associates has been used in the main lobby at Victoria Hall to create continuity with the Aga Khan Centre

Victoria Hall has been benchmarked against other student residences for costs and rental income. Room sizes and finishes clearly make for comfortable living. Ready-assembled bathrooms were made as plumbed and wired pods in a factory in Nottinghamshire and then lifted into the building by crane before the outer walls were installed.

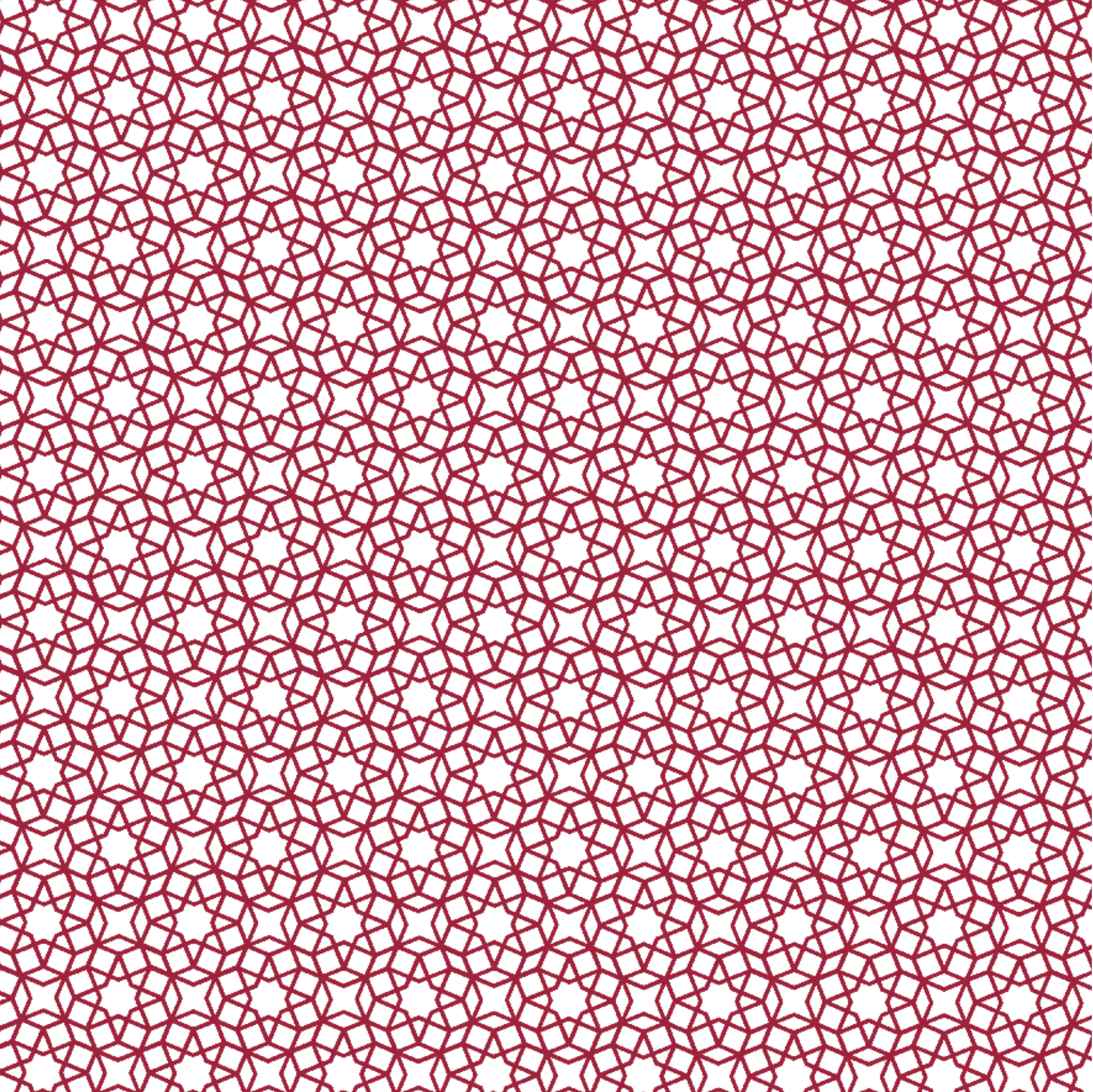
Active and passive design methodologies have been applied to minimise energy use and to meet sustainability requirements while decreasing long-term energy consumption. Victoria Hall has a BREEAM sustainability rating of 'Excellent'. Power, heating and hot water supplies are provided through the central low carbon district heating system at King's Cross.

Stanton Williams Architects

Stanton Williams Architects is one of the UK's leading architecture practices, with offices on the Regent's Canal, not far from King's Cross. It had already worked closely with Argent on the dramatic conversion of the 19th-century granary building, a neighbour to the Aga Khan Centre, into a new home for Central Saint Martins, part of the University of the Arts, London. Stanton Williams' other contributions to the area include The Lighterman restaurant and bar, perched next to the canal and King's Cross Square in front of the railway station. It has applied its calm sophistication to student housing, arts buildings and many academic projects. Most notable of these is the Sainsbury Laboratory in Cambridge, which marries materiality with friendly collaborative work space. Stanton Williams won the UK's highest architectural accolade, the RIBA Stirling Prize, in 2012 for this project.

(Opposite) Front entrance of Victoria Hall student residence, a twelve-storey bookend building





THE ISMAILI
COMMUNITY

THE ISMAILI IMAMAT

Shia Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims, more commonly known as Ismailis, adhere to the Shi'i interpretation of Islam, one of the two major branches of Islam, Sunni being the other. The Ismailis form a well-organised, transnational community living in over 25 countries, mainly in Central and South Asia including Afghanistan and Western China, Iran, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in Europe, North America, the Far-East and Australasia.

Islam is the last in the Abrahamic family of revealed monotheistic traditions. All Muslims affirm the unity and transcendence of God (*tawhid*) as the first and foremost article of the faith, followed by that of Divine guidance through God's chosen messengers, of whom, the Prophet Muhammad, was the last. The Holy Qur'an, God's final message to humankind, was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. This affirmation constitutes the *shahada*, the profession of faith, and is the basic creed of all Muslims.

Like all Shi'i Muslims, the Ismailis affirm that after the Prophet's death, Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, became the first Imam – spiritual leader – by virtue of his designation by the Prophet. This spiritual leadership, known as the Imamate, continues thereafter by heredity through the progeny of Ali and his spouse Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims, in direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad through Imam Ali and Fatima al-Zahra. Aga Khan IV succeeded his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan III, to the Imamate on 11 July 1957, at the age of 20. Consistent with 14 centuries of the Muslim tradition of leadership and ethics, covering all interpretations of Islam, the Imam guides the community in matters of faith and also leads the effort to ensure its security and quality of life, as well as that of those among whom it lives. In this tradition, the Aga Khan established and presides over the Aga Khan Development Network as a contemporary endeavour of the Ismaili Imamate to realise the social conscience of Islam through institutional action.

Widening the frontiers of knowledge through science and learning, and confronting positively the ethical challenges of an ever evolving world, are both seen as a requirement of the faith. The relevance of the message of Islam, for all time requires the faithful to embark on a lifelong intellectual journey in order to comprehend God's creation, and indeed one's own self. The Ismaili Imamate has always emphasised that as the last revelation, Islam is constantly valid at all times and in all places. Spiritual allegiance to the Imam and adherence to the tenets of the Shia Imami Ismaili *tariqah* (persuasion) of Islam, according to the guidance of the living Imam, have engendered in the Ismaili community an ethos of unity and self-reliance. Wherever Ismailis live, they have, under the guidance of their Imam, evolved a well-defined framework of cultural, social and economic development institutions for the common good of all, regardless of race or religion. It is through these institutions that the Ismaili community has been able to express the ethic of compassion and concern for the less fortunate, and to realise Islam's social conscience.

Eleventh July 2017 marked the 60th anniversary of the accession of His Highness Aga Khan IV as the Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. Over the course of the ensuing year, July 2017 to July 2018, the Ismaili community globally has celebrated His Highness's Diamond Jubilee.

ISMAILIS IN HISTORY

Throughout their history, the Ismailis, who had settled in different parts of the Islamic world, such as the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, Persia, parts of North Africa, the South Asian sub-continent and Central Asia, have made significant contributions to the development of Muslim civilisations. For example, during the period of the Fatimid Caliphate (10th to 12th centuries CE), they established the cities of Mahdiyya (Tunisia) and Cairo (Egypt), they founded the university of Al-Azhar and the academy, *Dar al-Ilm*, in Egypt, as well as other centres of learning. This period was not only distinguished by the development of maritime trade between the lands comprising the Fatimid Empire (such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Corsica, Crete, Malta and Sicily) and far-off lands in Asia, but also by the quality of its scholarship, which drew upon people of all creeds, including Christianity and Judaism. It was an era of profound intellectual and cultural development that established an ethic of pluralism which the Fatimids strongly espoused.

Towards the end of the Fatimid caliphate, in 1094, the Ismailis were subdivided into Nizari and Musta'alian branches. The seat of the Nizari Ismaili Imam moved from Egypt to Persia. With its headquarters at Alamut in northern Persia, the Ismaili state consisted of a network of fortified settlements that extended from Persia in the east to parts of Syria in the west. The Nizari Ismailis, who had prolonged encounters in Syria with the Crusaders, established important libraries in their castles, and also extended their patronage of learning to scholars outside the faith. Following the Mongol invasions in 1256, which led to the destruction of the Nizari Ismaili state, Ismaili centres of activity were strengthened in the South Asian subcontinent, in Afghanistan, the mountainous regions of the Karakorums, the Pamirs of Central Asia and parts of China. The Musta'alian Ismailis eventually left Egypt, taking with them libraries and theologians, settling philosopher-poets, architects and astronomers in Yemen where an Ismaili state was also founded.

In 1841, the 46th Imam, Aga Hasan Ali Shah, left Persia, where the Imam had been located for many centuries, to settle in India, establishing his seat at Bombay in 1848. He was the first Imam to bear the hereditary title of Aga Khan, bestowed by the Persian Qajar monarch, Fath Ali Shah. Deputations from the Ismaili community came to him from as far afield as Bukhara, the Middle East and Africa. The 47th Imam, Aga Ali Shah, Aga Khan II, building on the initiatives of

his father and predecessor, set about the long-term task of the social development of the community, beginning by establishing educational institutions in Bombay and other Ismaili centres. His successor, the 48th Imam, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, held the office for 72 years (1885-1957). During Sultan Mahomed Shah's Imamate, far-reaching social, political and economic transformations affected the lives of the Ismailis and neighbouring communities, especially in Africa and South Asia. In response to world events and challenging times faced by the Ismaili community, numerous clinics, hospitals, schools, hostels, co-operative societies, savings institutions and insurance companies were established under the 48th Imam's guidance, with the aim of safeguarding the community's security and long term stability. Since acceding to the Imamate in 1957, the present and 49th Imam, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, has expanded and transformed these institutions as well as founding new ones, creating the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of international development agencies serving peoples of all faiths and origins.



Present day photo of the courtyard and porch of Al-Azhar, founded in 973 CE by the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz

THE ISMAILI COMMUNITY IN THE UK AND THE ISMAILI CENTRE, LONDON

With the end of the Second World War, and the subsequent demise of colonial rule, Ismailis like others in the former British Empire, began to migrate, seeking better livelihoods and higher standards of education. A growing number settled in the UK as well as in North America. In the UK, the first place of congregation for the Ismaili community – a *Jamatkhana* or gathering house – was established at a private residence in London in 1948. It became a place for the offering of prayers and for social assembly for the many Ismailis who had come from East Africa and the Indian sub-continent to pursue education and entrepreneurship in the UK.

A few years later, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, acquired a house in Kensington to serve as a centre for the growing community of Ismailis living in London. In 1953, after considerable refurbishment, the house was able to be used as an Ismaili religious and social centre.

Over the next 30 years the Ismaili community in London flourished and expanded. The first purpose-built Ismaili Centre, in what is now a global network of six Ismaili Centres, was established in South Kensington, London, in 1983. It was built as a response to meet the social, cultural and religious needs of an established and growing community. What was once an immigrant community has now, over three generations made Britain its home, priding itself on being forward-minded and engaged citizens of the UK, contributing socially, economically and culturally to the greater tapestry of 21st-century Britain.

Ismaili Centres are also *Jamatkhanas*. A *Jamatkhana* is a space for prayer and gathering used traditionally by Sufis, Shi'is and particularly by the Nizari Ismailis. Architecturally unique, each Ismaili Centre incorporates spaces for social and cultural gathering, intellectual engagement and reflection as well as spiritual contemplation. Ismaili Centres serve as ambassadorial hubs, representing the Ismaili community's attitude towards faith and modern life, while extending a hand of friendship to enhance relationships between faith communities, governments and civil society. Ismaili Centres are, therefore, not only places for spiritual search, but also spaces that aspire to broaden intellectual horizons and to foster inclusivity.

“Architecturally [the South Kensington Ismaili Centre] is designed both to reflect the aspirations of the Ismaili people, and to fit harmoniously into its immediate environment, providing a new additional dimension to the existing public buildings of varying periods.”

Lord Soames, 6 September 1979, Foundation Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, London



Exterior of the Ismaili Centre,
London, in South Kensington

The Ismaili Centre, London, was formally inaugurated in 1985 in commemoration of 25 years of the Imamate of Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, by the then Prime Minister, the late Margaret Thatcher. The design brief demanded a skillful fusion of East and West to create a meeting place for the Ismaili Community in London.

The Ismaili Centre London was to be a religious, cultural and social centre for Ismailis. The architectural narrative demanded a contemporary vocabulary that would express Muslim values and ethics in the context of British architecture and in harmony with the historic, urban fabric of South Kensington.

The design was informed by the work of the historian of Islamic art and architecture Professor Oleg Grabar and William Porter, then Professor of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The architects were Casson Condor Partnership – a leading London firm with offices a mere 50 yards from the site.

Their design solution elevated the building mass, which includes a 1,200-person prayer hall, by inseting the ground floor. Visitors to the Ismaili Centre London find the ground and first floors imbued with a lightness and verticality that is emphasised by the distinctive first-floor bay windows of teak and polished steel with bevelled glass for privacy. Inside, the late renowned German Muslim artist Karl Schlamming has evoked Muslim material culture with the use of geometric patterns and calligraphy.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher opens the Ismaili Centre, London, with His Highness Aga Khan IV on 24 April 1985



On the top floor is a roof garden, its wall sensitively chamfered back to avoid obstructing its neighbours' light. The enclosure creates a calm, peaceful space even in this busy area of Central London. Six tonnes of soil allowed the Boston-based Japanese firm of Sasaki Associates – which had previously worked with His Highness the Aga Khan – the freedom to design a beautiful growing garden. It is inspired by the Islamic *chahar bagh* with four channels of running water, varying shades of green, fragrant flowers, herbs and a fig tree. Thus the Ismaili Centre speaks to both its London setting and its Islamic heritage.



Roof garden with fountain at the Ismaili Centre, London

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Aga Khan Centre was inaugurated on 26 June 2018. The formal opening formed part of His Highness's celebratory Diamond Jubilee visit to the United Kingdom and marks a significant moment in the history of the institutions of the Ismaili Imamate and the Ismaili Community in the UK as well as around the world.

Located at London's revitalised King's Cross development, the Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall represent a generation of British heritage and identity that is congruent with the reality of a re-imagined 21st-century London, one that embraces its diversity. The new buildings and the organisations residing therein, infuse an international flavour to King's Cross and London's Knowledge Quarter. Through their educational and research programmes; exhibitions and increased public engagement activities; the residents and users of the Aga Khan Centre will help promote a thriving learning culture that fosters new thinking and encourages conversation and debate. The gardens, courtyards and terraces will be open to the public with the aim of providing an insight to the plurality of Muslim cultures and an interesting addition to London's rich array of visitor attractions.

The Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall will contribute significantly to the capital's built environment and to its cosmopolitan character. The defining design concepts of both buildings are born out of a decidedly Islamic heritage, from geometric ornamentation to structural solidity and porous textures, as well as the use of gardens and water-features. Simultaneously, these two buildings and their eight gardens, courtyards and terraces are distinctly modern London buildings in the ways in which they adapt to and embrace their new setting.

Bringing together the tradition of urban gardens as places for regeneration and inspiration, the series of gardens, courtyards and terraces that are woven into the architectural narratives of both the Aga Khan Centre and Victoria Hall, introduce a new set of values to the architectural conversation. These green spaces are designed to give pleasure to the senses, thereby promoting well-being and reflection, inspiring creativity and encouraging intellectual excellence. At the same time, the Islamic Gardens at King's Cross offer the opportunity for a quiet pause, for taking in fresh air, for sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of busy London life. Taking their cue from a diverse range of regional heritages of Muslim architecture and British garden culture, the gardens embody contemporary landscape design and symbolise the connectivity of the intellectual and the physical as well as the esoteric and exoteric realms.

Aga Khan Centre exterior,
a beacon of white





THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AGA KHAN CENTRE
WAS PERFORMED BY
HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES, KG, KT, GCB, OM
ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH OF JUNE 2018
IN THE PRESENCE OF
HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN
FORTY-NINTH IMAM
OF THE SHIA ISMAILI MUSLIMS



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
(International) in the United Kingdom
Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Credits

Aga Khan Centre

Architect Maki and Associates led by Fumihiko Maki

Executive Architect Allies and Morrison

Landscape Architects Maki and Associates, Madison Cox, Nelson Byrd Woltz, Tom Stuart-Smith Ltd

Main Contractor BAM Construct UK Ltd

Cost Consultant & Employer's Agent

Gardiner & Theobald

Structural Engineer Expedition

Mechanical Engineer Arup

Victoria Hall

Architect Stanton Williams Architects

Landscape Architects Vladimir Djurovic
Landscape Architecture

Main Contractor BAM Construct UK Ltd

Cost Consultant & Employer's Agent Aecom

Structural Engineer AKT II

Mechanical Engineer Grontmij

Acoustics & Lighting Consultant Arup

Cubitt Square

Landscape Architect OLIN

Executive Landscape Architect

Townshend Landscape Architects

Jellicoe Gardens

Landscape Architect Tom Stuart-Smith Ltd

Executive Landscape Architect

Townshend Landscape Architects Ltd

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The eight-point star, used as the key architectural motif throughout the Aga Khan Centre, also serves as its logo. This archetypal geometric pattern, is known in Islamic geometry as the *khatim-sulayman*. Maki and Associates have reinterpreted it using modern forms.