We are trustees of God’s creation, and we should seek to leave the world a better place than it was when we came into it. Creating that ‘better place’ in physical terms means trying to bring values into environments, buildings, and contexts that make the quality of life better for future generations than it is today.

His Highness the Aga Khan
Based at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) is dedicated to the study of Islamic art and architecture, urbanism, landscape design, and conservation—and the application of that knowledge to contemporary design projects. The goals of the program are to improve the teaching of Islamic art and architecture; to promote excellence in advanced research; to enhance the understanding of Islamic architecture, urbanism, and visual culture in light of contemporary theoretical, historical, critical, and developmental issues; and to promote knowledge of Islamic cultural heritage. Established in 1979, AKPIA is supported by an endowment from His Highness the Aga Khan.

"I have selected two of America’s most distinguished architectural schools—Harvard and MIT—and established a program for Islamic architecture. This program will not only utilize their immense intellectual resources for the benefit of scholars seeking to understand Islamic architecture, but also circulate this expertise among students, teachers, and universities in Muslim and Western countries."

His Highness the Aga Khan

"ADVANCING THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE"

The following pages highlight the history and accomplishments of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) and its participants in several areas:

Leadership and History (pages 2 and 3)
Distinguished Faculty (pages 4 through 7)
AKPIA Alumni (pages 8 and 9)
Research and Resources (pages 10 and 11)
Embracing the Future (page 12)
Leadership and History

During the late 1970s, a series of discussions took place between His Highness the Aga Khan and faculty members at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These talks explored the feasibility of creating a permanent program, based at Harvard and MIT, to study the impact of Islamic architecture on the Third World. This resulted in the establishment of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture in 1979.

In the ensuing years, AKPIA’s faculty, students, and alumni have played a significant role in advancing the analysis, understanding, and promotion of Islamic art and architecture. Among the program’s achievements:

- The program is led by a distinguished core of five faculty members specializing in Islamic art and architecture, and enhanced by affiliated and visiting professors in allied fields.
- The combined research and publications of AKPIA faculty, fellows, and students have contributed to an understanding of Islamic art and architecture, and led to enriching critical debates.
- AKPIA alumni have assumed influential roles around the world as academics, curators, government officials, and practicing architects.
- The program is led by a distinguished core of five faculty members specializing in Islamic art and architecture, and enhanced by affiliated and visiting professors in allied fields.
- AKPIA library collections at Harvard and MIT are among the world's most extensive, comprising texts and images related to Islamic architecture and urbanism that is First World driven. Therefore, we had to accept that an educational role was necessary. The question was how to design an educational resource that would have the maximum possible impact and, at the same time, have a legitimacy which would make it acceptable to much of the Islamic world. That became the basis for the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

His Highness the Aga Khan

:: A Positive Force

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His Highness the Aga Khan
I believe that the Islamic tradition is analogous to the American notion of the "melting pot," in which a pluralistic blending of cultures, traditions, and aesthetics has resulted in a rich mosaic. This is a need – and a demand – for specialists who are qualified to explore and enrich the cross-cultural dimensions of this complex tapestry. AKPIA is one of the few places where students can experience the breadth of Islamic art and architecture in an environment that offers virtually unlimited academic and intellectual resources.

"AKPIA represents a mutually enriching collaboration between two of the world’s great universities. Harvard offers an interdisciplinary approach, enabling students to explore Islamic architectural histories within the larger context of art history. Taken as a whole, the program has helped elevate the study of Islamic art and architecture from a relatively marginal position in Western academic and intellectual resources to the many facets of this burgeoning field. AKPIA offers both a solid academic setting for the study of architecture and culture in the Islamic world, as well as a unique opportunity to foster collaborations with the makers and interpreters of architecture in that world. The program focuses on three critical issues at the core of architectural education in an age of rapid change, both in the conception and transfer of knowledge and in the definition of academic fields. First is the question of the universality and pedagogical needs of a diverse Islamic education in an effort to respond to the cultural and pedagogical needs of a diverse Islamic world. Second is the nature of architecture in view of the production of new technological models and technological devices that are reconfiguring both the discipline and the practice of architecture. Third is the agency of culture in shaping forms and meanings, especially in the Islamic and developing worlds, where architecture can still play a powerful social and environmental role. But the most profound achievement of AKPIA, in my opinion, is to argue for a critical reappraisal of the dominant paradigm of architectural history, which legitimizes a self-conscious and evolving Western architectural tradition while casting the architecture of other cultures in changeless types."

The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture

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A. Hashim Sarkis

Hashim Sarkis is the first Aga Khan Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism at the GSD, and serves as the director of the Master of Design and Doctor of Design Studio program. Professor Sarkis is the author of numerous books and articles, including Circa 1958: Lebanon in the Pictures and Plans of European Travelers (Dia Noorka, 2013). He received Bachelor’s degrees in architecture and fine arts from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), and master’s and Ph.D. degrees in architecture from the GSD, Harvard University. Professor Sarkis has taught at MIT, RISD, Yale, and the American University of Beirut, and is a practicing architect in Lebanon and the United States.

“My primary focus at the GSD is to examine the impact of development on the shaping of regional territories in the Muslim world, and to generate the means by which the design of the landscape can be improved. Since the end of the Second World War development – whether guided by the capitalist world (as in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia) or the planning models of the Soviet bloc (as in Eastern Europe and the Turkic states) – has severely affected the economy, political, and physical environments of Muslim societies. As a result, agricultural productivity and population distribution have become skewed, reflecting a collective aspiration of the nation against the region, industry against agriculture, and the city against the country.

Through research, we aim to understand the impact of such policies on the landscape of regional territories, focusing on the emerging phenomena that characterize these territories, as well as on issues related to public space, environmental concern, and land use. Thanks to the resources of the AKPIA program, we can study current conditions in the context of traditional and modern design approaches, and compare them with similar instances in other areas of the world, particularly in Latin America and Southeast Asia.”

David Roxburgh

An associate faculty member of the Aga Khan Program, David Roxburgh is a full professor in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard. His publications include The Persian Album, 930–1930 (Five-Province Fund in Collecting, Harvard University Press, 2000) and Painting for Imagery: The Writing of Art History in Twentieth-Century Iran (Yale, 2001). He completed a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in 1986, and has received numerous fellowships and conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. His research focuses on the visual arts – principally, the arts of the book, painting, and calligraphy.

“Growing up in Beirut, I lived in an environment where the architecture had been both profoundly enriched and deeply traumatized by the forces of modernity, colonialism, and nationalism. One of the courses I teach at MIT, ‘Heritage as a Battleground,’ focuses on how these forces affect the study and presentation of architectural forms, particularly within the Islamic world. More than any other program, AKPIA gives students and faculty members a forum where vital issues facing architectural culture are vigorously debated, making it a most exciting, creative, and intellectual environment.”

Heghnahr Watenpaugh

Heghnahr Watenpaugh is an associate professor of the history of architecture and the Aga Khan Career Development Professor at MIT. She received a Ph.D. in art history from the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to joining AKPIA, she served as an assistant professor of history at Rice University. Her research addresses issues of urban and architectural history in early modern and modern Islamic societies. She teaches courses on theories of preservation as well as architectural and gender, she is currently completing a book entitled The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Practice in Algiers in the Ottoman and Byzantine Centuries.

“From the time I was a child, I lived in an environment where the architecture had been profoundly enriched and deeply traumatized by the forces of modernity, colonialism, and nationalism. One of the courses I teach at MIT, ‘Heritage as a Battleground,’ focuses on how these forces affect the study and presentation of architectural forms, particularly within the Islamic world. More than any other program, AKPIA gives students and faculty members a forum where vital issues facing architectural culture are vigorously debated, making it a most exciting, creative, and intellectual environment.”
AKPIA students benefit not only from their participation in the basic components of the program, but also from numerous opportunities offered at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

- Opportunities for interdisciplinary study
AKPIA students are given a remarkable opportunity to explore and make use of these centers of learning through course enrollments in many different departments, interactions with professionals in the field, and coursework at affiliated schools and centers, contact with leading academic thinkers, and involvement in a diverse and dynamic intellectual community.

- Special Library collections
The Aga Khan Documentation Center at the Harvard Fine Arts Library and the AKPIA Collections at MIT’s B Thompson Library comprise a unique resource: thousands of books, more than 300,000 images, and other materials that provide literary and visual information on a vast range of historically important Islamic art, architecture, and ethnography. In addition, a wide range of specialized periodicals and monographs, museum and exhibition catalogues, documents of preservation and planning authorities, and of archaeological excavations strengthens the collections. Supported by program funds, these collections complement the library holdings maintained by the two sponsoring institutions. Both historical and contemporary, they provide unparalleled aids to study and research.

- Travel and Fieldwork
The Aga Khan Program has a long tradition of emphasizing travel as an important part of education. AKPIA emphasizes the value of the first-hand experiences of architecture as living culture. AKPIA provides grants every year on a competitive basis for summer research, including language study and travel related to exploration of these topics. Current examples of field-based research projects sponsored through the program include:

  - Abbas and Damascus – The Construction of Ottoman Asia
  - Athens and Atlanta – Assessment of the Impact of Summer Olympics on the Host City
  - Cairo, Leiden, London, and Padua – The Middle East and Mainstream Media and Its Images in Late Medieval Islamic Culture
  - Iran – Survey of Pre-Mongol Islamic Architecture
  - Istanbul, Damascus, and Jerusalem – Urban Water Systems and Medieval Islamic Urban Planning
  - “Miniature” Isfahan: A Study in Urban History – “Tell Tale – The Alphabet: Outcome of Millenia of Mayhem,” and “Consuming Heritage or the End of Tradition.”

- Conferences and seminars
AKPIA funds bring leading scholars from around the world to Cambridge for conferences and seminars that disseminate new ideas and promote critical debate. Past forums include “Surveying Surveys of Islamic Art and Architecture” (May 2011, Harvard), “Dubai Congresioned” (April 2011, Harvard), and “Exploring the Frontiers of Islamic Art and Architecture” (May 2011, MIT).

- Harvard University Art Museums
The Harvard University Art Museums are renowned for the quality of their extensive collections, including European and North American painting, prints, and photography (Hog Museum); ancient, Asian, Islamic, and Indian arts (Sackler Museum); and German Expressionist painting (Busch-Reisinger Museum).

- ArchNet (http://archnet.org) is a comprehensive online architectural library combining visual and textual sources. ArchNet brings together a growing global community of scholars, students, and professionals concerned with architecture, planning, and landscape design. Members gain access to comprehensive architectural resources, new perspectives on the built environment, and insights into Islamic design and culture.

- Lecture series
Each year, AKPIA sponsors lecture series that provide participants with exposure to the latest research from leading experts in the field. Recent topics include: “When Literature and Architecture Meet: Intersection of Poems and Monuments in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul,” “Furman, the ‘Misket’ Library: A Study in Urban History,” “My Sultan, My Self: The Tale of Selah and Todas in Renaissance Domestic Painting,” “MyT’s: The Middle East and Mainstream Media,” “Fall Tales – The Alphabet: Outcomes of Millennia of Mayhem,” and “Consuming Heritage or the End of Tradition.”

- ArchNet
AKPIA publishes scholarly works on the history of Islamic art and architecture. The program sponsors publication of the respected scholarly journal, *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual* Culture of the Islamic World, a yearly volume of articles on art and architectural history edited by Professor Gülru Necipoğlu. Editions of *Muqarnas* are complemented by Supplements to *Muqarnas*; Studies and Sources on Islamic Art and Architecture, which focus on specific primary sources for visual culture. In addition, AKPIA publishes books, conference proceedings, and works in progress on monographs.

- Travel
The Boston-Cambridge area boasts more than 75 institutions of higher learning, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts, which features a rich collection of Islamic art. Boston and Cambridge offer extensive cultural and recreational resources, as well as a rich tradition of academic excellence and intellectual freedom. AKPIA students benefit not only from their participation in the basic components of the program, but also from numerous opportunities offered at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Hana Alamuddin

Hana Alamuddin is the principal of Al-Mutanabbi, an architectural and design firm in Beirut. She received an M.Arch in architectural studies from MIT in 1991. An active conservationist, she has served on the Beirut Ministry of Culture’s Technical Committee for the Preservation of the Architectural Heritage of Beirut. She has received numerous scholarships and grants, including a travel grant to study the Damascus city of Tripoli, Lebanon.

“I want to AKPIA hoping to find answers to questions related to cultural identity, communalism, and other issues. Instead of finding answers, we were given more difficult questions to consider. This helped me realize the complexity of the social dynamics around architecture, and the extent of our responsibility as a builder. Being at MIT also exposed me to a rich spectrum of the world—from South America to Europe—and helped me understand how all of us are affected by the forces of politics, economics, and globalization. ‘This helped build my confidence: people at MIT are told, ‘You’re here because you can change the world,’—now go out and make a difference.’

Mohammad al-Asad

Mohammad al-Asad is an architect and architectural historian, and the founding director of the Center for the Study of the Built Environment in Amman, Jordan. He received his architecture degree at Albaha University in Lebanon and a Ph.D. in architectural history from Harvard University in 1995. He has held professorial research positions at Harvard University and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, and has taught at institutions around the world. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Royal Society for Fine Arts.

‘I enrolled in the Ph.D. program at Harvard in order to obtain the opportunity to carry out an in-depth exploration of cultural heritage. I ended up doing much more than that. I learned about the universality of human experience, and about the confluence of knowledge. I also came to understand the integral relationship that connects the ever continuing processes of seeking knowledge, research, writing, and teaching. Perhaps more importantly, I learned to always look beyond the immediate boundaries that initially sought to restrict our aspirations and opportunities.

The experience I gained as a student at AKPIA continue to be of great significance to me, initially as a researcher and ecologist, and later as a founding director of an interdisciplinary center involved in studying the built environment. The professional relationships I established at Harvard and MIT are very valuable ones, and a number of my colleagues and my support group. All of us are fortunate enough to study in a place where my students, many of whom are from the Muslim world. AKPIA and its affiliated programs, such as the Harvard Design School and MIT’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning, bring together a wealth of individuals and research in many different capacities. These webs are impacting life within Islamic societies, as well as the study of those societies and their relationship to the rest of the world.”

Elizabeth Dean Hermann

Elizabeth Dean Hermann is an associate professor of landscape architecture and architectural history, and former head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. She received a B.S. in landscape architecture and architectural history from Harvard University in 1975. She has coauthored several major initiatives include guiding the building of MoMA’s new museum, and directing the 1999-2000 capital campaign that funded the building project and enlarged the museum’s endowment. She received a Ph.D. in fine arts from Harvard University in 1982. He lectures and writes extensively in support of contemporary art and architecture, and on the role of the museum in society.

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Glenn Lowry

In 1995, Edward D. Lowery became the ninth director of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. He is a graduate of Harvard University in 1982. He lectures and writes extensively in support of contemporary art and architecture, and on the role of the museum in society.

‘APRA has played an integral role in my professional development since the late 1970s, when I first came to these designs for the Islamic world. Confronted at that time with a professional environment that I viewed the non-Western world as an exotic and fremak-all from which design styles could be indiscriminately appropriated, reinterpreted, mixed, and applied, I sought a more informed view of Islamic societies and their rich cultural legacies. At this time, I was motivated by a fascination with Islamic art and the program. It was a very heady time, when there was an open dialogue about the nature of Islamic architecture—now the current political climate.”

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While the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture has accomplished much in the past seven years in the study and practice of Islamic art and architecture in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, its work has only begun. It is the aim of the program that the pluralistic traditions of the Islamic world—and their implications for modern built environments—will continue to play an increasingly important role in academic and social and architectural practice throughout the world.

AKPIA continues to be an instrument of both theory and practice and a leading academic influence in the discipline. For those with an interest in pursuing studies in architectural history, the AKPIA Program at MIT offers a broad array of intellectual resources within a dynamic and diverse learning community.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Information
School of Architecture and Planning

Admissions—Candidates for admission to the School of Architecture and Planning must submit their applications to the Department of Architecture. Most students entering the School begin their studies in the first year. MS degrees are available in both a specialization in the history of architecture and in architecture. However, students from other backgrounds who are interested in pursuing advanced work in the history of architecture may by competition among candidates for a limited number of places. The AKPIA Program is available to students who are United States citizens or permanent residents. Admission to either program is by competition among candidates for a limited number of places. The AKPIA Program is available to students who are United States citizens or permanent residents. Financial assistance—Sources of financial assistance to the Harvard Design School are said to vary according to each student's situation. The School does not offer financial assistance to international students. Grants and federal loans are available only to individuals who are in the United States. Students who are United States citizens or permanent residents enrolled in a master’s program may be eligible for federal loans and other forms of financial aid. Harvard restricted scholarships, private loans, and other sources of student financial aid are administered by the Harvard Financial Aid Office.

For more information, to learn more about AKPIA, and to visit our websites: