

PREFACE

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Some four decades ago, rapid change and transformation in built environments had reached crisis levels in a great number of countries. New models of building were being adopted or imposed and were not responsive to the needs of communities faced with the deterioration and loss of existing traditions; the conflict between global trends and local requirements had become apparent both in architecture and in the societies for whom such architecture was intended. Observing this led His Highness the Aga Khan to establish the Award for Architecture in 1977, with the hope and objective of creating a platform to search for common experiences and examples that would point to directions for the enhancement of the built environment for future generations. From the very beginning, it was vital to conceive and nurture a dynamic process that would keep the Award at the vanguard of contemporary thought and ensure its present and future relevance. The Award embodies the belief that culture in general – and that architecture, the tangible manifestation of culture, in particular – is an essential vector of social development and cohesion.

It is in this manner and spirit that the Aga Khan Award for Architecture strives to stimulate discourse on the betterment of human life through the built environment. This monograph features the dialogues initiated and the path taken by the Award during the three-year period from 2011 to 2013, the 12th triennial cycle since the Award was founded. The directions taken by the Steering Committee reflect the specificity of this particular cycle – yet it is also aware of the Award's continued existence over time and the need to integrate the issues and debates of each cycle into a vision for the future. The process began with the hundreds of nominators around the world who contribute by identifying recently completed projects that are already in use. The Steering Committee identified an initial set of pertinent challenges and issues confronting contemporary societies that are reflected in the built environments; and it is the Steering Committee that selected

the members of the independent 2013 Master Jury who, in their turn, debated these challenges and issues, as well as others brought forward by them, in the context of the actual building projects submitted and documented for the triennial Award. During this cycle, the Master Jury studied the pool of 411 nominated projects and selected amongst them a shortlist of 20 finalist projects, each exceptional in its own right. Experts conducted thorough On-Site Reviews of the shortlisted projects, after which the Master Jury selected five of them to be the recipients of the 2013 Awards.

In his introduction, Steering Committee member Mohsen Mostafavi describes the dynamics of the Award process, and the rigour and constancy of dialogue and debate that characterise it. In his essay “The Particular and the Universal”, Mahmood Mamdani, Chair of the Master Jury, addresses some of the complex free-ranging topics and multifaceted issues that informed the Jury in its deliberations, and other members of the Jury have written on further topics for discussion and consideration. The volume concludes with an afterword by Steering Committee member Homi Bhabha, addressing the concept of the quality of life within the context of the Aga Khan Award, and other Committee members have contributed essays on ideas essential to the ongoing evolution of the Award. Throughout, we believe that the projects presented in this volume demonstrate unique and creative solutions for the communities in which they are built, and contain lessons for professionals all around the world. These past three years reflect yet another step in the Award's journey in search of architecture to enhance the quality of life for future generations of human society.