



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

BUILDING WITH EARTH

Great Mosque Mopti, Mali.

In Mali, the Trust is able to improve local capacity to manage a precious architectural heritage, to train people in the skills of building with earth and to re-energise the traditions of handing down knowledge of restoration methods, appropriate technologies and materials to future generations. In Mopti, the mosque restoration became the most visible part of a multidisciplinary programme aimed at improving the quality of life in the cities. These efforts included the installation of new water and sanitation systems, street paving and training of masons.

Top: Entrance to the Great Mosque of Mopti after restoration
Middle: Timber elements provide strength to the structure
Bottom: The restoration was part of a larger improvement programme in the city

Historic Cities Programme



The Mosque is an imposing earthen structure built in the traditional Sudanese style





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Great Mosque Djenné, Mali.

Djenné is the oldest known city in sub-Saharan Africa. Its historic centre, where more than 2,000 traditional houses have survived, was also designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. In 2006, a preliminary study revealed that despite its well-known annual maintenance process, the Great Mosque was at risk of collapsing. AKTC’s conservation efforts encompassed the complete rehabilitation of the roof, restoration of the mud-brick load-bearing wall structure and the complete replacement of the interior lighting, ventilation and sound systems.

Top: Replastering the Mosque is an annual community event
Middle: The Great Mosque of Djenné is one of the largest mud-built structures in the world
Bottom: A collapsed tower highlights the need for continuous maintenance

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Local master masons helped train new recruits in traditional techniques





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Djingereyber Mosque Timbuktu, Mali.

The Mosque, built in the 14th century, is the oldest earth construction building in sub-Saharan Africa. Officially listed as part of the Mali’s cultural heritage, it was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. Because the Mosque is constantly subject to the depredations of a harsh, arid climate, AKTC worked to reverse the deterioration of this important landmark and to develop existing technical capabilities through training of local craftsmen and apprentices in traditional earth building techniques and in new restoration methods.

Top: The Mosque is an ever present symbol of the rich heritage of Timbuktu
Bottom: Paved forecourt in front of the restored Mosque

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The Mosque’s minaret, timber elements provide strength to the structure





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Centre for Earthen Architecture Mopti, Mali.

The Centre, built in 2010 and designed by award-winning architect, Francis Kéré, is constructed in mud brick and contains a permanent exhibition of mud building techniques, examples of earthen architecture and an audio visual presentation of of this unique tradition that is part of Mali's national heritage. It presents the history, techniques and materials used in earthen architecture of the region thereby helping preserve this rich example of Mali's cultural heritage.

Top: Two wings of the complex
Middle: The Centre sits on a man-made lake
Bottom: The Centre is constructed with compressed earth blocks and concrete

Historic Cities Programme



The Centre contains an exhibition on Mali's mud building tradition and techniques



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THE NINE DOMES OF THE UNIVERSE

Noh Gunbad Mosque Balkh, Afghanistan.

Built between the early 8th century and the first half of the 9th century, the Noh Gunbad Mosque is believed to be the oldest and most important early Islamic-era building in Afghanistan. It stands out as an early example of an innovative style for mosques, influenced by pre-existing Irano-Sasanid patterns. The remaining, rare, stucco decorations are believed to be in early Abbasid or Samanid styles. With all nine domes collapsed, the three standing columns and two arches constitute the architectural and artistic core of the site. Badly damaged by time, the risk of structural failure of the arches in the event of an earthquake is extremely high.

Top: A protective structure facilitates conservation work on the Mosque
Middle: Plasterwork on column capitals painstakingly cleaned and restored
Bottom: Restored plasterwork and gypsum decoration

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The Noh Gunbad Mosque is believed by many to be one of the earliest standing Islamic-era religious structures in Afghanistan





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A WITNESS TO THE RISE & FALL OF EMPIRES

Ikhtyaruddin Citadel Herat, Afghanistan.

Incorporated into the northern perimeter of Herat by the Ghaznavids, the Qala stood witness to the changing fortunes of successive empires before being laid waste by Genghis Khan in 1222. In 1415, the fortifications were re-built and new buildings were erected inside its walls. The conservation has been one of the largest preservation projects in Herat, developing skills of Afghan professionals and craftsmen and generating employment. In the context of increasing pressure for redevelopment of the traditional fabric of the Old City, the project serves as an example of a successful adaptive re-use of a historical structure.

Top: Market place with the Citadel looming over Herat
Middle: Stone paving in the Citadel courtyard
Bottom: Interior, brick archways cover a new gallery function in the Citadel

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The most iconic landmark in Herat is central to the turbulent history of the city and an impressive example of surviving citadels in the region





AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

A PUBLIC GARDEN IS REBORN

Chihilsitoon Garden Kabul, Afghanistan.

Chihilsitoon Garden is Kabul's largest historic public garden. In 2015, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture commenced a multi-year rehabilitation programme with the intention of providing high-quality public spaces for social and cultural interaction, educational programming, and sport and recreational activities. The new structures within the rehabilitated Chihilsitoon Garden, are constructed from rammed earth. The Garden provides users with high-quality landscapes and building spaces capable of containing and promoting the rich and diverse forms of social, cultural and economic expression manifested in Afghanistan.

Opposite: Newly constructed rammed earth structures contain sports facilities, an auditorium, administrative offices and other public services to help make the Garden economically sustainable

Historic Cities Programme



The rehabilitation of Chihilsitoon Garden, one of the most important public gardens in the city, was completed in 2018





AGA KHAN AWARD AND HASSAN FATHY

1983 Chairman’s Award

Hassan Fathy’s early works and teachings revealed the kernels from which later works would flourish: his commitment to the poor and his extraordinary aesthetic sense. They led him from youthful attempts to improve the conditions of worker housing on his father’s estates to the mature expression of his ideas, fully developed in the village of New Gourn, Egypt. As champion of indigenous building, he has proved the graceful mud brick structures to be both economical to build and admirably suited to the climate. Hassan Fathy has taught us the value of the vernacular environment. And he has shown us that the lessons to be learned are modern lessons. His impact has been world-wide. — His Highness the Aga Khan

Top: Fathy on the terrace of his apartment in Cairo Old City
Middle: Gouache, Hamdi Seif Al-Nasr House, Fayyum, Egypt
Bottom: Hassan Fathy receives the Chairman’s Award in the presence of His Highness the Aga Khan



Domes of the mosque at Dar al-Islam, Abiquiu, New Mexico





Aga Khan Award for Architecture

AGA KHAN AWARD AND HASSAN FATHY

Hassan Fathy’s Legacy

Hassan Fathy was an Egyptian architect, artist and poet who had a lifelong commitment to architecture in the Muslim world. He perceived that a connection could be made between the continuing viability of mud brick construction and the desperate need of Egypt’s poor to be taught once again to build shelter for themselves. He devoted himself to housing the poor in developing nations and worked to create an indigenous environment at a minimal cost, and in so doing to improve the economy and the standard of living in rural areas.

Top: Akil Sami House
Dahshur, Egypt
Middle: Mosque, New Gourna
Village, Egypt
Bottom: Fuad Riad House
Giza, Egypt

Aga Khan Award for Architecture



New Baris Village, Egypt

