

## Report of the 1989 Master Jury

### Preamble

The Master Jury for the 1989 Aga Khan Award for Architecture met twice. In January, it considered the 241 projects submitted by the Award's Nominators, and selected thirty-two to be studied in depth by Technical Reviewers. Then, at the end of June, the thirty-two finalists were reviewed on their own merits and in terms of the issues they reflect, the questions they pose, and the messages they send. The decisions which follow are unanimous, because the Jury agreed to make it so, but unanimity was not reached for every project and sharp differences remained to the end on projects which are premiated and on some which are not. Throughout its deliberations, the Jury sought to listen to all views and to feel respectful of the projects nominated as well of its own very varied opinions. Furthermore, as it discussed the nominations, the Jury became aware of needs and opportunities for the architecture affecting Muslims everywhere which had not been as fully visible in previous Awards. The differences within the Jury and the new sense of a universal Muslim community have been incorporated in four statements the Jury wishes to make before presenting the Awards themselves.

As in the past, the Jury congratulates the staff of the Award whose dedication, enthusiasm, humour, kindness and efficiency made the Jury's labour a pleasure. It also congratulates the Technical Reviewers, all of whom undertook their uniquely responsible tasks with creative enthusiasm. They have all contributed to the richness and sophistication of the information available to the Jury and stored in the offices of the Award. No segment of contemporary architecture anywhere is so wealthy in data and so well cared for.

The overall dimensions of the architecture affecting Muslims have changed enormously since the Award was created twelve years ago, partly perhaps under the impact of the Award itself. Five aspects of these new dimensions struck the Jury: better quality of the final products and of the processes leading to them; complexity of the physical, social and economic components of social and community building; fuller coverage of contiguous Muslim regions; awareness of the large Muslim communities within non-Muslim worlds and the enormous increase in the quantity and quality of nominated projects built by Muslims. Each one of these aspects deserves its own lengthy elaboration. We only wish to stress two points. One is that the appearance of several nominations from the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union (one of these nominations was short-listed for Technical Review) allows the Award to consider itself now as the

only cultural organism which truly reflects all the sub-cultures of the Muslim world. This is a welcome event indeed with considerable long-range importance for the Award. The second point is that the proper evaluation of some of the new schemes and projects for housing upgrading requires longer use than that needed to evaluate single buildings. As a result, we specifically recommend that the next Jury consider anew the East Wahdat scheme in Amman and the Incremental Development Scheme in Hyderabad. Both seemed to the Jury to have considerable merits which need a few more years to be properly appraised, since socially related architecture requires a flexible time frame for the determination of success or failure.

The Jury's decisions reward several of the directions visible in today's architecture in the Muslim world. These decisions should not be seen as an endorsement of all the implications of the projects involved, nor do they imply the rejection of values expressed in projects which were not premiated. Two examples illustrate our point. We discussed at great length the issue of revivalism as a fully thought-out recasting of forms created and used in the past or in vernacular traditions. The premiated projects include only some examples of that particular point of view, and it behoves the Award to acknowledge additional searches for a genuine, intelligent and tasteful revivalism whose mechanisms and values are not yet fully understood in an Islamic context. Thus, this Jury salutes the efforts of Nader Ardalan with Iranian architecture and of Sergo Sutyagin with Central Asian architecture who are or have been involved with an interpretation of formal values which should enlighten our understanding of the past and shape the forms of the future.

The second example of novelty lies in the efforts of individual patrons and of non-governmental organisations in premiated projects and in many that are not. We want to emphasise how much these efforts are a welcome component in the mosaic of contemporary architecture which, especially in its social aspect, was dominated by government or international bureaucracies. We are aware, of course, of the dangers of speculation and profiteering associated with some of these private activities, and this is why we add a note of caution to our satisfaction, but the new enthusiasm of the private sector for improving society is most heart-warming.

Finally, we wish to add that the message our decisions sends is not one of contradictions, but of simultaneous and parallel activities which identify some, certainly not all, of the aspirations and built forms of Muslim communities today.

These communities are in so many places and with so many hopes and ambitions that the solutions to their needs are bound to be different from each other. A jury's decision is a judgement of their quality, not necessarily of the ideologies they imply.

### **Jury Citations**

#### **Restoration of the Great Omari Mosque, Sidon, Lebanon**

Partly destroyed and damaged by acts of war, the mosque of Sidon, originally a good example of the complex architectural history of the Lebanese coast, was successfully restored and rebuilt thanks to the generosity of a native son, the physical and emotional efforts of its users and the talents and competence of a team of architects and students from Beirut. The users refused to accept the building of a new mosque and preferred to rebuild their shattered world with a monument of their past. In doing so, they give a powerful example to all those places in the Muslim world and elsewhere which have been maimed by the horrors of war. In addition, the head of the restoration team rebuilt the mosque with scientific precision and with the taste and intelligence of one experienced in understanding the monuments of the past. This combination of human steadfastness in the face of tragedy, of restoration talent and inventiveness in particularly difficult circumstances, and of dedicated native patronage and sacrifice makes the reconstruction of the Great Omari Mosque a beacon in a tortured land and a sign of hope for the rebuilding of war-torn nations.

#### **Rehabilitation of Asilah, Asilah, Morocco**

In the area of rehabilitation, renovation and upgrading, the town of Asilah in Morocco stands out as an example of great success in the Muslim world. From a modest start but with ambitious vision, a few native sons of Asilah took it upon themselves to upgrade the physical and cultural environment of their town. With perseverance and skill, they managed to raise the consciousness of the people of Asilah and mobilise them to implement this vision. A small cultural festival was held in Asilah in the summer of 1978, attracting some one thousand visitors, mostly from nearby localities. This event, modest as it was, gave the people of Asilah self-confidence and pride, qualities which have grown steadily over the years. The Asilah Festival (the *musim*) now attracts some one hundred and twenty thousand visitors from all over the world; it has become the biggest cultural event in Morocco and one of the most important in the Arab world and Africa. This success is all the more remarkable as it relied exclusively on the participation of the town's inhabitants, including children and women, with no or minimal governmental or outside support. The men who initiated the process, and have since remained committed to it, attracted widespread attention in Morocco, Africa and the Arab world, with one of them becoming appointed as Minister of Culture in his own country.

#### **Grameen Bank Housing Programme, various locations, Bangladesh**

The Grameen Bank Housing Project attracted the Jury's attention from the beginning by the sensitivity and brilliance of its underlying concept. For here, in one of the poorest and most populous countries of the world, the compassion of Islam, the resilience of Bangladeshi rural Muslims, and the dedication of the personnel of the Grameen Bank, converge in a creative and skilful way to improve the lives of millions of people. The Grameen Bank, a cooperative non-governmental association, started a small credit programme to the rural poor, without collateral, for the purpose of initiating income-generating schemes. The initial success of this modest programme was indicated by a real rise in the income of the borrowers and by their reliability in paying back loans.

This encouraged the Grameen Bank to extend credit to its shelterless members – eighty-four per cent of whom are women – to build newer, modest but healthier houses, which are flood and water-resistant. The small housing loans average US \$350 each and include the provision of four concrete columns, a pre-fabricated sanitary slab and twenty-six corrugated iron roofing sheets. The rest is left to each borrower to procure on an incremental basis. In the course of five years, hundreds of thousands of landless rural Bangladeshis benefited from the Grameen housing project, resulting in some 44,500 simple, healthier, diverse but equally beautiful houses. More important in this respect is the socio-economic process which has accompanied this housing loan programme. Men, women and children have been involved in both income-generating activities and house-building. Health conditions and education have improved immensely. The beneficiaries of the programme have paid back their loans, including five per cent interest, at a rate of ninety-eight per cent. What started as a housing-loan scheme has turned into an overall integrated development process. The previously marginal homeless poor in Bangladesh, especially women, are now socially empowered. The brilliant success of the Grameen Bank project has attracted the attention of serious development planners throughout the world: in 1985, the American state of Arkansas asked the Grameen Bank to send a mission to help plan a similar programme to upgrade the living conditions of its rural poor. The lesson of this success lies in the thoughtful concept and the participatory process behind it – which could be emulated, not imitated, throughout the Muslim and Third Worlds.

#### **Citra Niaga Urban Development, Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia**

Through perseverance, dedication and a total commitment to their task, the project's participants have convincingly demonstrated the viability and feasibility of participatory planning at both design and implementation levels. The result is development with equity where the benefits have been shared by all parties in the process: the street peddlers (*kaki lima*), the shop-keepers and the local government. Not

only has the project achieved its social and economic objectives, it has also created a vibrant, well-designed and well-integrated urban centre which has become the pride of the town. In 1989, Samarinda was awarded the coveted Adipura Award by the Indonesian President as one of a group of cities which have successfully developed themselves. This is all the more remarkable as these results have been achieved through private and community involvement, without financial or technical assistance from the government or foreign donors.

The whole process has been a democratic one, culminating in the establishment of a management board representing the interests of the *kaki lima* through a cooperative, the shop-keepers, the local government and the consultants. This institutionalisation of the process guarantees continuity and maintenance for the project.

The concept is generic in nature and is being replicated in other cities, including the capital, Jakarta. It may enhance social effectiveness in facing increasingly complex situations in the future, where commercial interests must be harnessed in the process of urban development in more equitable ways. It can also be conceived as a social learning process, in which local governments increasingly encourage active public participation in a democratic process, preparing urban communities to face the imperatives of social transformation and modernisation.

#### **Gürel Family Summer Residence, Çanakkale, Turkey**

Through a sensitive, intelligent and unpretentious approach, this summer residence constitutes an architectural dialogue where landscape and building are of equal importance. The functions of living have been divided into component parts, each of which is self-contained, and both house and garden are positioned with careful thought, on a beautiful site overlooking the Aegean seashore.

These principles of juxtaposing spaces, economy of means, and simplicity of local construction can be a model for a range of uses and a variety of places. This residence is indeed a work of art in which nature and humanism occupy the first place.

#### **Hayy Assafarat and the Al-Kindi Plaza, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

The landscaping of the Hayy Assafarat and the Al-Kindi Plaza, which is part of it, were made possible by an enlightened client, the Riyadh Development Authority. The client requested high technological quality as well as an understanding of the local environment and heritage and his relationship to the architects and planners who worked on the project was exemplary.

The landscaping represents a realistic and imaginative understanding of the natural and spatial organisation in hot and arid regions. It takes into consideration the site's natural conditions and enriches them with new elements to create attractive sites and provide them with climatic protection and social privacy through artificial sand and stone hills. After

considerable and sophisticated research and an accurate analysis of different types of local plants and trees which grow in the region and which do not need regular irrigation, a radically new and yet totally genuine environment was created for a self-sustained ecological system in the extensive landscape areas and even rich gardens. This unique environment has attracted Saudi and Arab families in Riyadh on Fridays and holidays and they have become recreational areas for social gathering providing the privacy required of traditional Islam. Finally, this scheme played a major role in convincing the governmental and public sectors to change their concepts on landscape, to align them with the local environment, and thus to benefit from natural strengths.

The Al-Kindi Plaza is part of the main public spine which forms an essential part of the Diplomatic Quarter. It contains a Public Square (maidan) near to the central mosque of the Diplomatic Quarter. These complexes can be considered as ideal models for cities in Islamic and Arab societies. They have attractively preserved the traditional link between the mosque and the other public services of the city. The success of the whole is demonstrated by the lively public events which take place on the Square on Fridays. It is the sensitivity to the environment on such a grand scale which distinguishes this project designed and implemented by a local firm from Riyadh.

#### **Sidi el-Aloui Primary School, Tunis, Tunisia**

The Sidi el-Aloui Primary School is premiated for its courageous exploration of traditional architectural forms as an elegant – and economical – response to contemporary educational needs. The design of this school, developed by a citizens' group as an alternative to standard governmental-type designs, represents a prototype of considerable value to developing societies. Utilising an area left open by an earlier project, it develops a unique relationship to the surrounding urban setting and especially to a public park adjacent to it. It has become not simply a school but also a place for community activities.

The concise and orderly pattern of its classrooms generates a simple volume, discreetly enhanced by the judicious use of ornament and handicraft. Harmonising unobtrusively with the old buildings and narrow streets of the medina, this school constitutes a remarkably urbane and responsible building-block in the overall fabric of the city.

#### **Corniche Mosque, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

It is the architect's skill in combining historically derived forms that is the main basis for the Jury's decision. Siting and technology distinguish this building from the great majority of mosques built today. The Corniche Mosque is one of three set as pavilions along the corniche of Jeddah, an unconventional but visually arresting arrangement that lends spiritual strength to the entire territory and proclaims to the outside world the presence of Islam. Technologically, the mosque is built according to methods that the architect has developed

through research into the ways used in the construction of mostly Egyptian mosques in a traditional high culture of Islam. These beacons on the coast have also become conspicuous places of piety and rest for the population of this city. The architect should be cited as a proponent for innovative siting, for rethinking classical methods of building, and for the effort to compose formal elements in ways that bespeak the present and at the same time reflect the luminous past of Islamic societies.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

This project was noted for its intelligent use and interpretation of traditional architecture and of general Islamic urban concepts. The influence of vernacular architecture in it is abstract and at the same time fundamental. It is a contemporary work of architecture in harmony with the international architectural main-stream. The building mass is isolated from its surroundings and designed like a citadel, as the function and nature of this Ministry dictate such segregation for reasons of security and privacy.

In opposition to the blank and forbidding exterior, the interior spaces are volumetrically lively, exciting, spectacular and hierarchically organised around 'streets'. The extensive use of water and natural light softens and enhances the quality of interior spaces, in spite of less than successful decorative schemes. Simplicity and complexity are outstanding features of the design. This lavish and expensive building conveys a sense of economy and clarity.

**National Assembly Building, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

'... the most beautiful architecture in one of the poorest countries of the world. We are so proud.'

This idea has been voiced over and over by ordinary citizens, government officials and professional architects alike in Bangladesh. Faced with an imposing architectural work of extraordinary power, clarity of form and beauty, the jury could not help but question the compatibility of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar with the needs and aspirations of a poor country. Yet, review of the history of the building's design and construction, plus on-site studies, surveys, and discus-

sions with people from many different groups in society, reveal that over time it has come to enjoy overwhelming approval, that it stands as a symbol of democracy in Bangladesh, and has influenced that country in a variety of beneficial ways. The architectural potency of this building derives in part from the clarity of its overall composition and from its scale, both conveying the centrality and importance of the activity of assembly that lies at the heart of a democratic and participatory structure of governance. Reaching beyond the architecture of the immediate area, the building has assimilated important archetypes of the region, among other ways through the extension of its park and water pools. But, it has also drawn upon architectural ideas of lasting value from many civilisations around the world. Through his thoughtful and intelligent search for form, the architect has clarified an approach to architectural design that does not copy elements of regional architecture, and that does not import either contemporary or historically derived vocabularies of form from other parts of the world. The architect has re-interpreted and transformed these ideas through a process that applied concepts of construction technology to conditions specific to the Dhaka locale. The result is a building that, while universal in its sources of forms, aesthetics and technologies, could be in no other place.

**Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France**

Blending harmoniously with the banks of the Seine and provided with a beautiful site in Paris, the Institut du Monde Arabe is a showcase of contemporary architecture which has become a popular attraction in Paris and a source of pride among the communities of Arabs and other Muslims. It aspires in its architecture to serve as a place of thought about Islamic culture and admiration for its artistic heritage and, alone outside of the Muslim world, it has given importance to contemporary arts from Arab lands. Although not successful in all aspects of its design and at times overly complex to use with ease and comfort, the geometry of its facades and the numerous activities it houses have succeeded in maintaining cultural exchanges between the Arab world and France; the initiators of the project, both French and Arab, have made a successful bridge between their cultures.