

THE THIRD CYCLE: 1983–1986

For the third cycle, His Highness the Aga Khan decided to reduce the size of the Steering Committee which now included: Mohammed Arkoun, Professor of History of Islamic Thought, Sorbonne; Charles Correa, architect, Bombay; Hasan-Uddin Khan, architect, editor of *Mimar*, Paris; Oleg Grabar, Professor of Islamic Art, Harvard University; William Porter, Professor of Architecture and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and, Ismail Serageldin, architect and planner, The World Bank, Washington D.C.

The Master Jury comprised of: Soedjatmoko (Chairman of the Master Jury), Development Specialist, Indonesia; Mahdi Elmandjra, economist, Morocco; Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, architect, Egypt; Hans Hollein, architect and designer, Austria; Zahir Ud-Deen Khwaja, architect and Planner, Pakistan; Ronald Lewcock (secretary of the Master Jury), architect, restoration specialist, Australia; Fumihiko Maki, architect, Japan; Mehmet Doruk Pamir, architect, Turkey; and, Robert Venturi, architect, United States.

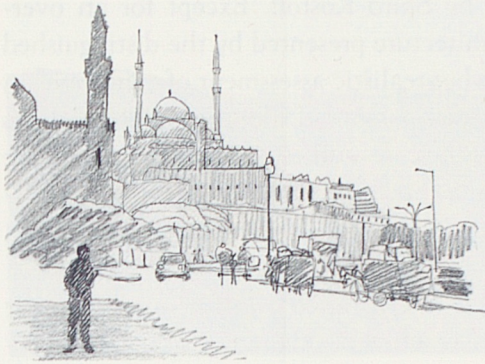
The Secretariat added an additional member, Jack Kennedy, an architect, who became Executive Officer. Saïd Zulficar and Suha Özkan remained Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General respectively.

SEMINARS, PUBLICATIONS AND THINK TANKS

Despite the considerable work on the contextual framework in which architecture is practiced in the Muslim world, the Award had not yet confronted the key problems of urban explosion that characterise the growth of mega-cities such as Cairo, Jakarta, and Karachi. The scale of the problems, the speed of urbanisation, and the intensity of the socio-economic and demographic pressures generated by this urban growth pose problems for architects and planners, both in terms of their societal role and the influence of architectural work. These are problems that transcend anything Western cities experience today.

Thus, the third cycle launched its first international seminar, "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo", in Cairo, Egypt, on November, 1984. Drawing heavily upon the Egyptian intellectual community, the Award seminar proved to be a major catalyst in joining disparate groups that seldom listen to each other. The *space of freedom* was manifest as decisions-makers, academics, practitioners, politicians, journalists and concerned citizens all joined in an inquiry revolving around four themes:

- The meaning of history in the context of present day Cairo. From A.K. Abul Magd's keynote speech via Oleg Grabar's thoughtful posing of the question to Arkoun's enunciation of the changeable and the permanent in the Muslim consciousness, Cairo's unique historical legacy weighed heavily on the concerns of participants. Both technical and philosophical issues of conservation were widely discussed, but the notion of historical legacy that concerned the participants transcended the issues of conservation of the Medieval Islamic city (which is on the world heritage list).



Cairo: an exploding modern metropolis underneath its Islamic skyline.

- The institutional context in which decisions affecting the urban environment are made. Mona Serageldin's presentation and the panels on housing and finance were the focus of lively exchanges, that explored the non-physical aspects of the planning and design processes.
- Alternatives to the urban growth of Cairo and the role of new towns. The allure of designing a new town, a physical utopia, has been the architects' fondest dream since time immemorial. Financial and political realities, however, have continued to thwart the noblest of dreams.¹⁷ Social diversity and its physical reflection in individualised designs, are the quintessential qualities for an interesting sense of urban character. Yet these are precisely the qualities that are most difficult for state planning agencies to build into their programmes.
- The international character of the problems. This was highlighted by comparative studies of Casablanca, Bombay, and Karachi. To a lesser extent, these same problems are found in all Third World cities where urbanisation is a reality with urban population growth rates running up to six to eight per cent per year.

The seminar proceedings, published in Arabic and English, attest to the scope and content of the material covered. However, in my judgment, the singular success of this seminar was the extent of the participation of the Egyptians themselves and the degree and intensity of the interaction that took place among them. Never was the Award's *space of freedom* more clearly evident.

The second international seminar in the cycle witnessed a shifting of emphasis from the series of Sana'a, Dakar, and Cairo to a new subject for the AKAA: architectural education in the Muslim world.

Having defined the domain in the first cycle's five seminars, and extended it further to both rural and urban environments in the second cycle and the first seminar of the third, the Award now turned to the question of what underpinned the training of architects.

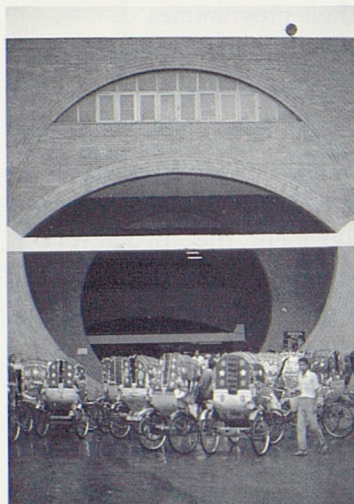
By now, the formula of the Award's international seminars was well established and continued to attract many international authorities. Although the subject of Architectural Education would naturally call forth the experience of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA), the link to AKPIA was not played up precisely to retain that by now invaluable *space of freedom*. Thus, the AKPIA was modestly presented as *one* of the valuable experiences to be reviewed.

The approach to the seminar was a telling one. The Steering Committee designed the seminar around the following conceptual sequence:

- What are the problems of architecture in the Muslim world today?
- What should architects do about them?
- What are the prerequisite skills necessary to undertake this role?
- What sort of education is needed to prepare such architects?

It is important to note the Steering Committee's preference of this sequence over the alternative possibility, namely: what are the prevailing approaches to architectural education in the world today and which of them (or which features of each of them) is most suited to deal with the needs of the Muslim world.

This preference denotes the committee's conviction that the approach to the Muslim world's problems must start from those problems. In other words, the intellectual constructs developed for training architects in the Muslim world must emanate from a correct reading of that world and not from an adaption of an imported version of what is deemed "right" elsewhere. This does not preclude an opening to the outside world. Nor does it diminish the importance of having architects from the Muslim world go abroad for training and inter-cultural cross-fertilisation. The approach merely sets out the *problematique* of architectural education in the same context of needed self-knowledge and self-awareness that is considered essential for cultural continuity, regional identity, and innovative change in architecture (all recurrent themes in the Award's deliberations over the years).



Dhaka: Cardiac Hospital.

The format selected was a well-tested one: a series of general papers followed by case studies, working groups, and a plenary session. The general papers were organised around four main themes:

- Islamic culture, modernity, and architecture;
- Architecture as art;
- Technology, form, and culture: exploring the links between technology and artistic expressions.¹⁸
- Architecture and society: exploring the links between architectural practice and society to devise some notions for the role of architects and hence their training.

The quality of the papers was high and the discussion open and candid. The tone was set by an excellent opening address by Spiro Kostoff. Except for an over-romanticised view of Islam and Islamic architecture presented by the distinguished Norberg-Schulz and a somewhat distressing but realistic assessment of conditions in the Muslim world by Gulzar Haidar, the discussion ran along anticipated lines within the four broad themes. The quality of the case-studies proved to be varied but they were enormously instructive in giving a firm base for the subsequent discussions. The working groups, once again, proved fertile ground for intense interaction and valuable networking.

Yet the nature of the enterprise was such that it raised as many questions as it answered. As expected, no conclusions were reached but there was sufficient interest in the questions raised by the seminar, and which the discussions enhanced, adumbrated, and developed further, that His Highness the Aga Khan, in his closing remarks, considered it appropriate to promise the gathering to revisit the subject in another seminar in a few years. This had never happened in an Award seminar before, and underlines the richness of the vein being mined in this discussion.

Regionalism in Architecture was the subject of the second AKA regional seminar held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, (December, 1985). It was as successful as the first seminar held in Kuala Lumpur during the second cycle in expanding the scope of the search for a meaningful regionalism and in enhancing discourse among concerned architects of the region. The international participants, including four of the six members of the Award Steering Committee, provided a bridge to international experience and concerns and also acted as catalysts for the interaction between the regional participants.

However, the intellectual activities of the Award during this third cycle transcended these seminars, important as they were, and went beyond the patient, meticulous work of identification, documentation and analysis of scores of projects from all over the Muslim world. There were many reports, memoranda, and think tanks, that dealt with the recurrent themes of the Award's concerns, but added new dimensions to each of them. Some samples of this work will be found in the third part of this book. But the major contribution of the third Steering Committee was elsewhere. Challenged by His Highness the Aga Khan to go beyond the themes of the first six years to the core issues that must be confronted for the Award to continue to be a pathbreaker, the committee responded by addressing new issues that emerged from the Award's first two cycles and that are likely to shape the concerns of the fourth cycle (concluding with the awards of 1989). These two new concerns were: Firstly, what are the constituents of the mythical imagination and the creative processes that underlie the architecture design process generally and in the Muslim world specifically? and secondly, what are the elements of an expanded architectural criticism that is suited to, and meaningful in, the context of regionalism and cultural continuity that are central to Muslim societies of today?

The challenge of these issues requires a critical approach and an intellectual framework of analysis¹⁹ that transcends what the seminars have produced to date, and which the work of the third cycle has barely started. How it might be approached is spelled out in the last section of this essay.



Industrial buildings and landscaping have been under-represented to date. Outstanding examples include Tekeli-Sisa's Lassa Tyre factory in İzmit Turkey (top) and Kamran Diba's Garden of Niavaran.

By 1986, the Steering Committee concluded that the body of the 26 premiated projects of 1980 and 1983 made a collective statement that identified both the direction to follow as well as the lacunae that needed attention. Of the former, a concern with *cultural continuity* (historic preservation, conservation), *cultural authenticity* (regionalism in modernity), *societal relevance* (issues of poverty, technology, or materials), as well as *architectural excellence* were coupled with concerns for *innovation* as a means of coping with the rapidly changing environment.²⁰ That all of these directions could be manifested in the most modest structures in Niger or Mali as well as the more sophisticated buildings in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, was now well established. Although these directions will be reinforced by future awards, there were large gaps in the challenges that must be confronted by Muslim societies, and where our knowledge and appreciation of appropriate exemplars is sorely lacking. Among these, in terms of building types, one can identify industrial buildings, landscaping, and office buildings. All of these have remained under-represented among the winners that the Award could show the world. Much, therefore, remained to be done to ensure that appropriate exemplars can be found. A major effort to identify buildings in each of these categories was undertaken, and a special brief directing the attention of the Master Jury was prepared.

The brief emphasised what by now had emerged as the three main areas of concern of the Award: Firstly assessing efforts to preserve the Islamic architectural and urban heritage; secondly assessing social housing and community building efforts; and lastly assessing excellence in contemporary architecture.

In the latter category the brief argued that the Award had already premiated a number of projects in tourism and private residences but had as yet failed to recognise industrial buildings, public office buildings and public spaces (landscaping). The Steering Committee and the Secretariat had tried hard to look for potential candidates in these areas.

Besides the brief, the Steering Committee also provided the Master Jury with the proceedings of the seminars, the AKAA files, and a verbal briefing of the objectives and philosophy of the Award. In its outline of the issues, the Steering Committee shared with the Master Jury in only the most general terms the evolving concepts of its vision of architectural criticism that it has been developing through the think tanks, research reports and other unpublished documents. As it was still in the process of being elaborated, there was little to communicate in writing, but since a number of the Master Jury members had participated in the Award seminars and think tanks, they were contributors to the development of these ideas although they were not as involved with the research and the issues as the Steering Committee members, by the nature of their assignment, were.

The Steering Committee clearly hoped that its brief, the most detailed brief yet given to a Master Jury, would orientate the Master Jury to a set of award decisions that would complement and complete the first 26 winners by filling in the lacunae and enriching the Award's message. This was indeed to happen but in directions totally unexpected by the Steering Committee. The 1986 Master Jury, like preceding ones, is a sovereign body, and it can choose to reinterpret the problem and the mandate as it sees fit. This is at the very heart of the unfettered procedures that the Aga Khan Award for Architecture is committed to in the creation of this *space of freedom* that must govern our ongoing intellectual search. The Master Jury's report clearly states a sense of purpose that has manifested itself in the six winners and the five honourable mentions that were retained for 1986. Prominent and conspicuous by their absence are a number of modern projects that have captured the imagination of the architectural profession but which did not find favour with the 1986 Master Jury. Two members of the jury chose to dissent because of this omission.

THE 1986 WINNERS

The six winning projects comprised two restoration/conservation projects, two mosque complexes, and two projects that represent refined contemporary architectural expressions for the widely different problems of large public housing project and government offices.

In addition, the Master Jury decided to designate five “honourable mentions”, which were believed to have merit but were lacking sufficient architectural excellence needed for an award. These included two “social” schemes dealing with community improvement, one public housing scheme, one modern mosque and one restoration/reuse project.

To explain these choices, the Master Jury made a lengthy statement. There were two dissenting reports and a separate statement by the Steering Committee. These are reproduced in full in Part Two of this book.

In the following discussion of the winners and honourable mentions, they are grouped by the broad issues they address and are discussed collectively. In Part Two of this book, each of the projects is presented separately.

On Conservation. The three projects that were selected in 1983 complemented the 1980 winners and made a strong statement about the Award’s commitment to historic preservation and restoration. Nevertheless, the 1986 awards went further. With two outstanding winners, and one honourable mention, they brought new dimensions to the message of the AKA; its respect for the historic heritage of Muslims and its encouragement of tenacity in the face of adversity and of innovation in the face of constraints.

The award winning scheme for the preservation of Mostar Old Town in Yugoslavia, introduced an institutional dimension into the awards for conservation, which had hitherto concentrated on the technical aspects of restoration. With the exception of the Sidi Bou Said award in 1980, which focused on the institutional measures adopted by an entire community to preserve the urban character of the environment, the other awards had mostly been given for the technical quality of the work or the importance of the effort in national terms. In the case of Mostar, the Jury premiated a scheme that showed innovation and an ability to re-channel resources generated by the old city to restore buildings within the same boundary, and thus rejuvenate the old city from the revenue of economic activities within its perimeter. This scheme, which belies the contentions by many that historic preservation is a hopelessly costly enterprise, has shown that some of the finest restoration work can be largely self-financing, and that with will and proper organisation, a substantial effort can be undertaken in this direction. Mostar is an outstanding winner in the institutional as well as the technical field and in the completeness with which it has addressed the renovation of an entire section of the old city.

The restoration of al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest shrines of the Muslim world, has shown tremendous technical ability, outstanding sensitivity, and great tenacity and dedication in the face of a most difficult situation. The Award, in premiating these noble efforts, has recognised one of the more outstanding efforts in the Muslim world today.

And yet, there was one more, perhaps even more interesting award, albeit given the status of honourable mention in 1986, which deserves to be discussed here. This is the Touring Club Restorations in Turkey. Although none of the structures in that project are particularly notable, and the technical work is not complex or outstanding, two features deserve special recognition: Firstly, this is an effort that was undertaken by the private sector and not by a government authority, and secondly, it included buildings of the 19th century, some of which are not recognised as Islamic. This latter point shows that Muslims, and Muslim societies at large, are recognising



The Touring Automobile Association of Turkey: a non-governmental organisation promotes the conservation and re-use of important historic buildings.



Shushtar, Iran: an elegant and sensitively scaled new town.

that there are no broken chains in the continuity between their past and their present, that all periods of their heritage are worthy of preservation, and that all exemplars of these periods contribute to fashioning the image that society holds of itself, its environment, and its character; that which we have come to cherish and accept as our own.

On the Social Dimensions of Design. Four projects fit in this grouping. The Dar Lamane Housing Project in Morocco (winner) and the Shushtar New Town project in Iran (honourable mention). They both represent thoughtful efforts at articulating an adequate urban environment for many inhabitants with modest economic means. Both projects were designed on original sites and the issues of integration with a surrounding urban fabric did not arise. They created their own environments.

The salient features of Dar Lamane are the presence of a pedestrian social street accentuated by occasional gateways that helps create the sense of place. The harsh geometry of the plan is softened by the mix of uses and people which bring the space dramatically to life.

The most prominent features of Shushtar are the exquisite brick work and the articulation of volumes to create an inviting, elegant environment of subtle shadings and humane dimensions. Given the dramatic and consistent failure of most public housing projects to create a decent and humane environment for its residents, both of these projects are signal successes. They manage to echo the architectural vocabulary of their regions with subtle resonances. This is a further tribute to the sensitivity of the architects.

The Kampung Kebalen Programme of Surabaya, Indonesia is a worthy successor to the Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) of Jakarta which received an award in 1980. This time, the local university teachers and students were involved in the project and its very effectiveness shows the successful and large-scale replicability of the KIP approach. The honourable mention is thus a useful reminder of the importance that the Award attaches to the improvement of the built environment of the poor in the Muslim world²¹

The Ismailiyya development project, on the other hand, marks an important shift in the Egyptian government's approach to the problem of mass housing, complementing an aggressive "new towns" policy and the forced reconstruction of Ismailiyya after it was destroyed in the 1967–1973 wars. It legitimises self-help, slum upgrading, and "sites and services" approaches, all of which were being undertaken on a pilot basis elsewhere in Egypt and which have since been adopted as part of the Egyptian government policy.

Although visually unattractive, because they are geared to process rather than product, both the Ismailiyya and Kampung projects are most striking when measuring the improvements on a "before and after" comparison. This indicates the effect of these projects on the inhabitants—the dignity and hope that have been imparted to the populations and which inspire them to upgrade their communities.

Three Mosques. The B'hong and Yaama Mosques (winners) and the Saïd Naum Mosque (honourable mention) raise interesting questions on the architectural expressions of the most Islamic of all structures, the mosque. Some of the issues echo those raised by the Niono and Sherefudin White Mosques (1983 winners).²²

The Saïd Naum Mosque represents a serious attempt to reinterpret local architecture in a contemporary fashion. The adherence to the overall aesthetics of the local traditions sets it apart from the Sherefudin White Mosque in Yugoslavia where there was a very distinct break with the Bosnian architectural tradition. Yet the conscious effort that the architect makes to transcend the traditional and the vernacular, remaining almost self-consciously modern, underlines a personal, intellectual and effective combination of the architect as creator and innovator.

The Yaama Mosque on the other hand is a popular structure in the tradition of the region. It is the epitome of the vernacular architectural expression, and thus joins the Niono Mosque as one of the major exemplars of a great living traditional architecture. The specific innovations introduced in this project, while significant in the local context, do not detract from this broader judgement.

The Bhong Mosque is a special case, that sparked considerable debate during and after the Award ceremonies. While it aspires to represent a popular aesthetic, it is this writer's judgement, shared by others, that it is a model of populism applied to architecture. The exuberance of its plentiful, even excessive decoration, is reminiscent of the buses and jeeps that are lovingly embellished by their owners with effusive and colourful designs and decoration. Whether the Bhong Mosque represents a distillation of a popular aesthetic or merely a manifestation of the semantic disorder that pervades the Muslim world today is at the heart of the ongoing debate. This question will be further developed later in this book.

On Contextualism and Modernity. For many, the most deserving architectural selection of 1986 was Sedad Eldem's social security complex which is an outstanding achievement of sensitive contextualism that does not compromise on its modernity. It is one of the few buildings likely to be considered a true "classic", an exemplar of an era when Muslim societies were groping with modernisation and self-identity vis-a-vis a hegemonic western culture whose paradigm of the modern movement in architecture reigned supreme. Its uncluttered simplicity and elegance is markedly different from much of the more playful attempts of post-modernists to introduce "historic references" in their work.²³

RIFAT CHADIRJI



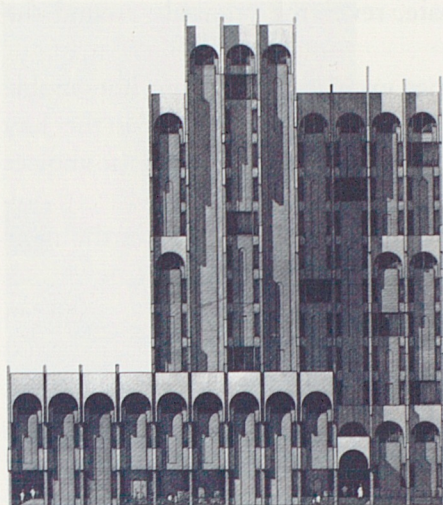
Rifat Chadirji.

The Chairman's Award for 1986 was given to Rifat Chadirji in recognition of his contribution to the architecture of the Muslim world. He is one of those rare architects who has imbued his work with a deep understanding of the roots of authentic regional expression and a true appreciation of modernism and its principles. Chadirji has shown a unique capacity for the synthesis of form and function that translates traditional architectural idioms into contemporary expressions. He has worked with materials of the twentieth century, and produced an architecture that is uniquely and distinctively recognisable as his own and as a Middle Eastern architecture, if not a universally Islamic one.

The Steering Committee felt that in Chadirji's work throughout his life there was more than just a capacity for avoiding eclecticism and eschewing pastiche. His work is the result of a patient and systematic search where the search is as important to the world of architecture as what he built in Iraq.

Indeed, Chadirji's contributions transcend a mere corpus of built work, important as that may be, for he is also a major figure in one of the most important and influential architectural schools in the Arab world. The Baghdad School of Architecture, where Chadirji taught for many years, was strongly influenced by him. Rejecting the use of the forms of the past that others espoused, Chadirji devised a synthesis of form that could translate into a new and contemporary urban aesthetics that would guide the articulation of a genuinely modern Iraqi townscape in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Not only has Chadirji influenced many younger architects in Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and elsewhere but he has also laboured long and hard at developing a deep and thoughtful critical sense of what constitutes architectural practice in today's Muslim world, particularly in Iraq. It is this critical faculty and his thoughtful approach to the intellectual basis of his architectural concepts that sets him apart from other



Central Post, Telephone and Telegraph building in Baghdad. (Etching from the portfolio of Rifat Chadirji).

practitioners in the Arab world. His description and understanding of the deep processes that underlie the intellectual enterprise of architectural design were central to his work. The originality of his work emanates from an understanding and discernment seldom encountered among architects in the region.

Important as these achievements are however, the Steering Committee felt that the recognition of Chadirji was due primarily because his entire career can be seen as a long and unbroken search for a better and deeper understanding of architecture. A pursuit of an elusive truth to which he dedicated his life. His long and distinguished career is thus marked by remarkable tenacity, determination, an uncompromising intellectual honesty and great capacity for self-denial. He is a man who never compromises on principle, who has eschewed lucrative commissions for the pursuit of a personal vision.

At present, Chadirji has retired from private practice to devote himself to research and publication on architecture. Moving between Iraq, the U.S.A. and England, he pursues his vision of truth as he develops the corpus of his intellectual contribution in a series of publications. His two-volume autobiography in Arabic is appropriately subtitled: *An Inquiry into the Dialectics of Architecture*. His work on explaining his projects and the influences upon them, published under the title *Concepts and Influences*, is a testament to intellectual honesty and illustrative of the legacy of a distinguished career. His portfolio of etchings stands as a monument of artistry and draftsmanship.

A talented practitioner, an inspired and insightful teacher, a thoughtful critic and a discerning intellectual and theorist, Rifat Chadirji is a worthy recipient of the Aga Khan's "Chairman's Award" for 1986.

The award is particularly important as Chadirji represents a modernist trend not just in architecture, but in the general intellectual movement in the Arab world. In the 1950's and 1960's when these battles for a reinterpretation of self and society were joined, he was there as an advocate of a forward looking, culturally authentic vision rooted in a deep understanding of his society and its heritage.

The award to Chadirji complements the first Chairman's Award to Hassan Fathy in 1980. The major contribution of Fathy, made primarily in the 1940's was the first appeal for authenticity from a major Third World architect and intellectual. Chadirji's major contributions were crystallised in the 1950's and 1960's. They were forward looking, embracing and encompassing the modern movement and the teachings of Le Corbusier and other international masters. That embrace was a discriminating one that could interpret and adapt as well as adopt. More importantly, Chadirji is a thoroughly modern person, who is also an authentically Arab Muslim from Iraq, and one who makes his own creative and innovative contributions to the point where Robert Venturi wrote:

*"Chadirji's analysis appears applicable in many ways to the rest of the world; to the so-called Western world as well as to the so-called developing world. For this reason it is a work which is revealing and compelling and in the end universally significant as architectural criticism of our time."*²⁴

In terms of the 1986 awards, the prize to Chadirji also brings an interesting addition to the Award's message to the world. It honours the patient search for a modern contemporary expression rooted in a deep understanding of the past forms and cultural expressions.

It is an important message that the Award has consistently sought to promote, but which some might have given insufficient weight to if they looked only at the images of the six winners without delving deeper into the corpus of work that accompanies the awards, including the thoughtful statements of the Steering Committee, Master Jury and dissenting opinions.