

ISMAILI CENTRE TORONTO





“We will seek to demonstrate that spiritual insight and worldly knowledge are not separate or opposing realms, but that they must always nourish one another, and that the world of faith and the material world are the dual responsibilities of humankind.”

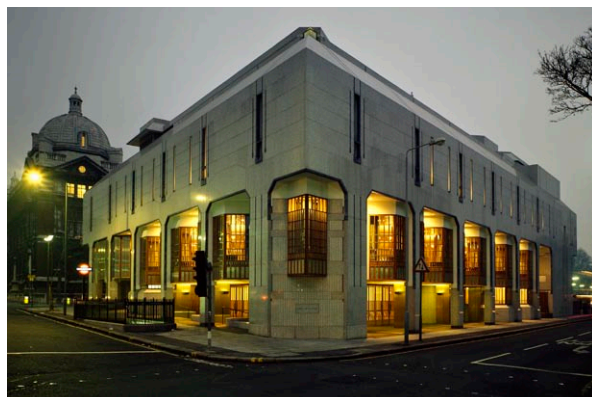
*- His Highness the Aga Khan -
Inauguration of Ismaili Centre, Dushanbe, Tajikistan*

Ismaili Centres

Around the world, Ismaili Centres are places for contemplation and the search for spiritual enlightenment. The Centres serve to reflect, illustrate and represent the community's intellectual and spiritual understanding of Islam, its social conscience, its organization, its forward outlook and its positive attitude towards the societies in which it lives. They endeavour to share Islam's values of peace, humanity and the shared responsibility for advancing the common good with the broader community in the countries in which they are located.



Dushanbe, Tajikistan



London, United Kingdom

The Centres provide programmes that stimulate the intellect, encourage dialogue, and celebrate cultural diversity.

The Ismaili Centre Toronto, currently under development, is the second in Canada after Burnaby, British Columbia, established in 1985. Other Ismaili Centres are located in London (United Kingdom), Lisbon (Portugal), Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Dushanbe (Tajikistan). Ismaili Centres are also being planned for Houston (USA), Paris (France) and Los Angeles (USA).

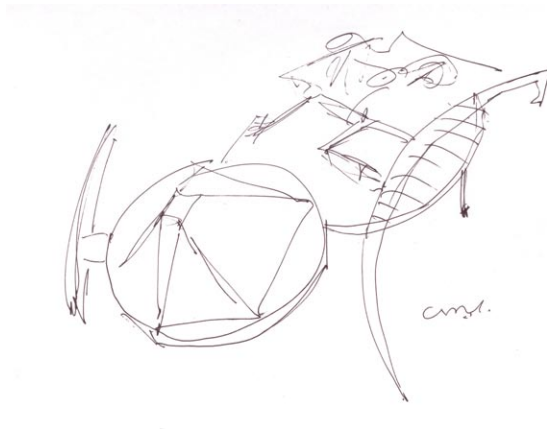


Burnaby, Canada

Ismaili Centre Toronto

The Ismaili Centre in Toronto reflects the commitment of His Highness the Aga Khan, as spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, to Toronto and Canada. The Centre will strive to not only be a place of gathering for prayer, but also a space for intellectual discourse.

Through programmes ranging from lectures, seminars and exhibitions, to cultural and social events, the Ismaili Centre Toronto will create an understanding of the values, ethics, culture and heritage of Ismaili Muslims, and of the work of the Aga Khan Development Network. It will also be an important space for the search for mutual understanding among all communities and cultures.



The Ismaili Centre will include a place of prayer (Jamatkhana) for the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslim community as well as spaces for institutional, social, educational and cultural activities.

It has been designed by the acclaimed Indian architectural firm Charles Correa Associates in collaboration with the internationally recognized, award winning, Toronto-based firm of Moriyama & Teshima Architects.

Architect, planner, activist and theoretician, Charles Correa is one of the few contemporary architects who aims to create meaningful architecture, but also address issues associated with low income housing and urban planning.

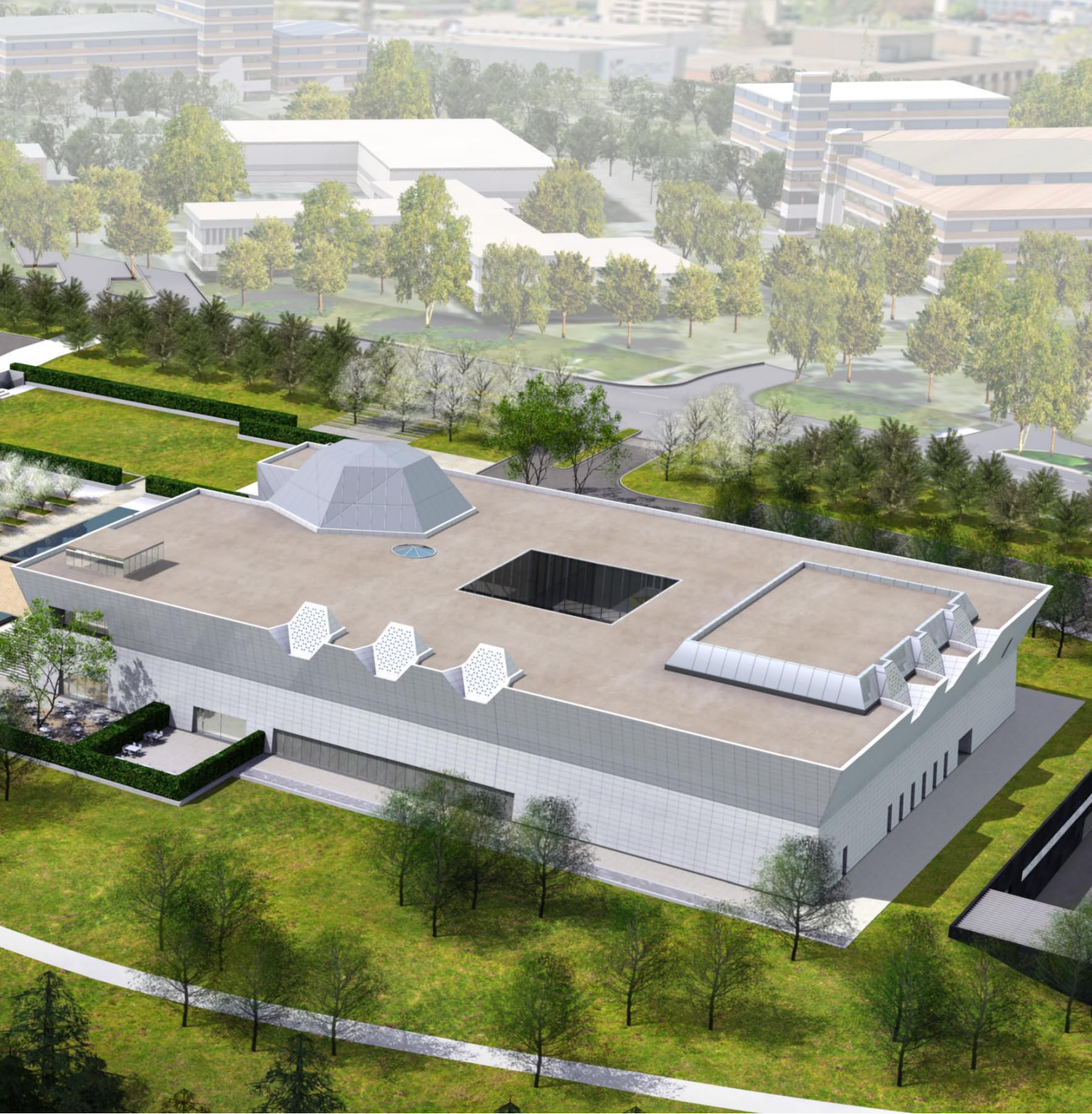
His work covers a wide range of projects and scales. Correa was chief architect for 'Navi Mumbai', the new city of two million people across the harbour from Mumbai. He was appointed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as the first Chairman of the National Commission on Urbanisation. Correa has taught at several universities, both in India and abroad. He currently spends part of his time teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Correa has been awarded the highest honours of the profession, including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Praemium Imperiale of Japan and the Gold Medals of the Union of International Architects and the





Architecture

Correa's vision for the Ismaili Centre was to create a building that responds to the traditions of Islamic Architecture in a contemporary vocabulary and with modern materials. For example, the form of the prayer hall with its glass roof is reminiscent of the corbelling in many of the traditional domes in the Islamic world.



The orientation of the building is determined by its urban context, which provided a grid with which to work. Set against the grid is the circular prayer hall. A glass column pierces through to the terrace above, bringing in natural light and setting up the Qibla axis which aligns with the Prayer Hall.

Adding to this gesture, the prayer hall is spanned by a double layer of glass sitting on elegant structural steel trusses of various depths and dimensions. The glass rises in the shape of a cone and is pieced together to form a fractal skin.



When the prayer hall is lit, the glass roof emits a warm glow from within. The circular wall surrounding the prayer hall is rimmed with a slanted glass skylight along its perimeter to allow natural light to wash down on its surface.

The social hall anchors the scheme opposite the prayer hall. It has a large, slanted glass skylight and irregular faceted geometry on the ceiling. The social hall is surrounded by an atrium library, an entry foyer and classrooms. On the upper level connected to the social hall is a large roof terrace that looks down on the garden.

The Ismaili Centre will share the 6.8 hectare site with the future Aga Khan Museum designed by renowned Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki in partnership with Moriyama & Teshima Architects.

The Aga Khan Museum will be established as a permanent institution with an international scope and mission. It is dedicated to the collection, research, preservation and display of objects and artifacts of artistic, cultural and historical significance from various periods and geographic areas of the Muslim world. The Museum will be a repository of heritage and a source of inspiration, and through its permanent and temporary exhibitions, education programmes and cultural activities, will offer unique insights and new perspectives into Islamic civilizations.



The Park

Connecting the Ismaili Centre and the Aga Khan Museum will be a beautifully landscaped Park designed by landscape architect, Vladimir Djurovic, in collaboration with Toronto-based Moriyama & Teshima Planners. Djurovic has worked to create a simple yet expressive space that will unite the two distinctive buildings and describes his vision for the Park as one that “captures the essence of the Islamic garden and translates it into an expression that reflects its context and contemporary age.” The Park will incorporate the Islamic “chaar bhag” or formal garden with reflecting pools, walkways, and components suited to the climate of Toronto, so that the garden captures the stark beauty of the Canadian winter as well as the flowering of summer. It will include spaces for educational programming and outdoor gatherings as well as offering a place of tranquility and relaxation.



Working with the City of Toronto, additional areas will be landscaped to enhance the green spaces available to the visiting public. The goal is to ensure that the Park, through its design and extensive use, becomes a permanent legacy to Toronto and Canada. For His Highness the Aga Khan, buildings and public spaces are physical manifestations of culture in societies, past, and present. They aim to represent human endeavours that serve to enhance quality of life, foster self-understanding and community values. For the developing world in particular, they aim to expand opportunities for economic and social development in the communities they serve.





- His Highness the Aga Khan and The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada -

His Highness the Aga Khan

His Highness the Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader), of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims and Founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network. In the Ismaili tradition, the Imam's responsibilities involve not only the interpretation of the faith for the Ismaili Community, but also the relationship of that faith to conditions in the present. For the Aga Khan, this has led to a deep involvement with development, as a process grounded in the ethics of Islam, in which economic, social, and cultural factors converge to determine quality of life.

Aga Khan Development Network

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) was founded and is guided by His Highness the Aga Khan as a group of development agencies, institutions, and programmes that work primarily in the poorest parts of Asia and Africa. AKDN focuses on health, education, culture, rural development, institution-building and the promotion of economic development. It is dedicated to improving living conditions and opportunities for the poor, without regard to their faith, origin or gender.

The AKDN works in over 25 countries around the world and employs approximately 60,000 people, the majority of whom are based in developing countries.