

## THE ISMAILI CENTRE TORONTO - ARCHITECTURE

The Ismaili Centre Toronto and the Aga Khan Museum are situated within a 6.8-hectare landscaped park, a new space that showcases the work of three renowned architects. Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki designed the Aga Khan Museum, while Indian architect Charles Correa designed the Ismaili Centre. The park, which features a formal garden, was designed by architect Vladimir Djurovic of Lebanon. The Canadian firm Moriyama & Teshima are the architects of record and are responsible for integrating all aspects of the project.

In designing the Ismaili Centre Toronto, Charles Correa's vision was to create a building that responds to the traditions of Islamic architecture in a contemporary way using modern materials.

While the most notable feature of the Ismaili Centre Toronto is undoubtedly the prayer hall, whose crystalline glass dome roof lights up the skyline, the Centre is a complex of varied spaces for contemplative, cultural, and educational purposes.

The prayer hall is composed of elegant structural steel trusses of various depths and dimensions which are covered by a double layer of glass that required precise fabrication and assembly. The glass rises in the shape of an inverted cone and is pieced together to form a translucent fractal skin.

Approaching the prayer hall through the anteroom, one sees the "Muqarnas," a finely crafted corbelled ceiling whose skylight provides a subtle and peaceful transition from outer areas as one turns to face the prayer hall.

Connecting the prayer hall and social area of the building is a generous foyer; its geometric stone floor pattern provides physical and visual connections between the two distinctive spaces. In the social hall, the ceiling is almost two stories high and the descending glass roof once again fills it with natural light while the glass doors open to the gardens.

The slightly raised atrium lounge looks over and anchors the foyer and continues the experience of natural light as its glass walls rise through the upper floor to yet another skylight. A library and several classrooms are also found on this floor, while the upper level is home to administrative offices and a formal boardroom that opens onto a spacious stone terrace with views of the city and park below.



## Architects:

### *Charles Correa*

Architect, planner, activist and theoretician, Charles Correa is one of the few contemporary architects who addresses not only the issues of architecture, but also of low-income housing and urban planning. His major projects have included the Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown in Lisbon and the MIT Brain & Cognitive Sciences Complex. He 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 Royal British Institute of Architects.

### *Moriyama & Teshima*

Founded in 1958 by Raymond Moriyama in Toronto, Moriyama & Teshima has built its reputation on distinctive landmark projects that have garnered numerous awards for innovative design and planning solutions. Current projects include Etihad Museum in Dubai, UTM Innovation Centre at University of Toronto Mississauga, and Surrey Civic Centre and Plaza.



## THE ISMAILI CENTRE, TORONTO

### Fact Sheet

**Ismaili Centre Locations:** London (opened 1985), Vancouver (1985), Lisbon (1998), Dubai (2008), Dushanbe (2009), Toronto (2014)

**The Site:** The Ismaili Centre Toronto shares a site with the Aga Khan Museum. The two buildings are united by a 6.8 hectare park.

**The Park:** The Park incorporates a formal garden with five reflecting pools inspired by the traditional “char-bagh”, walking trails, and components suited to seasonal changes throughout the year.

**Architect:** Charles Correa and Associates (India)

**Architect of Record:** Moriyama and Teshima (Canada)

**Landscape Architect:** Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architecture (Lebanon)

**Contractor:** Carillion Construction Inc.

#### **Materials:**

Exterior: Limestone cladding, granite pavers, concrete, glass, wood

Interiors: Patterned glass, maple panelling and millwork, white oak and stone mosaic floors, white onyx

#### **Site Statistics:**

- Property: 6.8 hectares
- Buildings Footprint: 0.9 hectares
- Paved Walkways: 1,600 metres
- Walkway from Eglinton Ave to Wynford Drive: 560 metres
- Over 550 new trees
- 5500 shrubs
- Trees include serviceberry, maple, trembling aspen, dawn redwood, magnolia

#### **Ismaili Centre:**

- Gross Floor Area: 8,300 square metres
- Footprint: 4,650 square metres
- Prayer Hall Height: 20 metres
- 765 parking spaces on site, shared with the Museum



**Functional Spaces:** Institutional Offices of the Ismaili community; Social Hall; Prayer Hall; Library; Classrooms; Terraces; Atrium Lounge; Activity Room.

**Interior Designers:**

- Gotham, 3<sup>rd</sup> UNCLE design and Hashim Sarkis Studios

**Consulting Engineers:**

- Structural: Hallcrow Yolles (now CH2MHill)
- Electrical: Crossey Engineering Limited
- Mechanical: The Mitchel Partnership (TMP)
- Civil: Delcan

**Construction Start Date:** April 2010



## ABOUT THE ISMAILI CENTRES

Following its formal opening on September 12, 2014, the Ismaili Centre Toronto becomes the sixth in a global network of Centres.

The Ismaili Centres are symbolic markers of the permanent presence of the Ismaili community in the regions in which they are established. Architecturally unique, each building incorporates spaces for social and cultural gatherings, intellectual engagement and reflection, as well as spiritual contemplation. They serve as ambassadorial hubs, representing the Ismaili community's attitude towards the Muslim faith and modern life, while extending a hand of friendship and understanding to enhance relationships among faith communities, government and civil society.

Through their design and function, the Ismaili Centres reflect a mood of humility, forward outlook and dialogue. They facilitate the promotion of cultural, educational and social programmes from the broadest, non-denominational perspectives within the ethical framework of Islam. A central purpose of the Ismaili Centres is to encourage mutual exchanges and understanding between diverse peoples, communities and faiths. The Centres are, therefore, not only places for spiritual search, but also spaces for broadening intellectual horizons and fostering an appreciation of pluralism.

In keeping with this mandate, the Centres have hosted programs for a variety of audiences featuring speakers including Prince Charles, former Governor-General of Canada Adrienne Clarkson, Hillary Clinton, Karen Armstrong and Governor-General David Johnston.

In 1979, the foundation stone was laid for the first Ismaili Centre, in London. This building was opened by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and His Highness in April 1985 – a historic event. Several months later, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney joined His Highness to open the second Ismaili Centre in Vancouver, Canada.

In 1998, the third Ismaili Centre was opened in Lisbon. The Muslim heritage of Portugal made it appropriate for the Centro Ismaili to draw inspiration from many influences, including the distant but familiar heritage of Moorish architectural forms.

The Ismaili Centre Dubai was opened in March 2008, during His Highness the Aga Khan's Golden Jubilee, which commemorated 50 years since his accession as the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. The Foundation Ceremony for the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe, Tajikistan was held in August 2003, and the Centre was opened in October 2009.

Conceived in the ethic of respect for human dignity, the Ismaili Centres seek to empathize with, and to expand our intellectual, cultural and moral horizons. They are each a safeguard and a symbol of the core values of the Ismaili Muslim community.

