
**THE 2005
VINCENT
SCULLY
PRIZE**

**HIS HIGHNESS
THE AGA KHAN**

**NATIONAL
BUILDING
MUSEUM**

WASHINGTON DC

**AWARD CEREMONY
& SYMPOSIUM
TRANSCRIPTS**



Carolyn Brody and His Highness The Aga Khan



His Highness The Aga Khan and Carolyn Brody



Vincent Scully and His Highness The Aga Khan



Award ceremony and dinner at the National Building Museum
Photos by Vivian Ronay Photography



Vincent Scully



Charles Correa



James Wolfensohn



David M. Schwarz



His Highness The Aga Khan

Award Ceremony January 25, 2005

Participants:

David M. Schwarz - Founding Chairman, The Vincent Scully Prize

Carolyn Schwenker Brody - Chair, National Building Museum

Charles Correa - Architect, Bombay, India

James D. Wolfensohn - President, The World Bank

His Highness The Aga Khan

DAVID SCHWARZ: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David Schwarz. I am the Chairman of the Vincent Scully Prize Jury and it is my pleasure and my honor to welcome you here this evening and to thank you for coming to support both the National Building Museum and to pay tribute to this year's extraordinary recipient, His Highness The Aga Khan. I cannot tell you how much it means to me to see all of you here tonight both in support of His Highness, the National Building Museum and the Vincent Scully Prize. I'm not here to speak about His Highness; others will speak of his profound contributions to the world in which we live later on this evening. Rather, I want to talk to you about the prize itself, and the Museum's role in furthering our understanding of the built environment across diverse geographies and cultures. The Vincent Scully Prize was created in 1999 to recognize and encourage those who have committed their lives to interpreting, improving and helping us to understand the built environment. In doing so, they help us understand the world in which we live and help us to improve the built environment we leave behind as our legacy. The prize is named after Professor Vincent J. Scully who is with us this evening. A brilliant teacher, author and scholar, he has spirited the debate about the future of cities and the towns in the United States for over 50 years. He has guided and inspired generations of architects, planners, as well as thousands of students who have taken his courses at Yale University and the University of Miami. His students have found their lives and viewpoints forever changed by their experiences with him. No other single person in the field has had a greater impact on the way Americans feel about the places we build. He is also the first recipient of this award. Vince, would you please stand. Who does the built environment impact? The answer is simple — everyone.

Humankind lives and works and most often plays in the built environment. It is one of the very few common denominators among all people around the world. We experience the built environment each and every day. It provides a frame for almost all human interaction. It is visible from mopeds, rickshaws, trains, planes and automobiles, as well as the sidewalks and mud tracks of the world. We may not be conscious of it, but it has a deep and profound impact on how we live our lives. The most recent disaster of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean reminds us of just how fragile this built environment can be and how disruptive lives become when that environment is taken for granted and taken away from us. These reminders are important and should not be ignored. The Vincent Scully Prize recipients have never ignored the importance of the built environment. Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* taught us the dangers of massive highway

construction, clearance of slums and high rise construction in cities, and taught us that such things more often rob cities of their vitalities and unique character rather than contribute to them. Andres Duany and Liz Plater-Zyberk whose writings have taught us that livable cities can be created by the restoration of traditional neighborhood values and that structure is probably the only viable escape from suburban sprawl. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (Robert who is with us this evening) who, in their early books, *Complexity and Contradiction in Modern Architecture* and *Learning from Las Vegas* gave us a new way of looking at the world, and whose writings have had a profound impact on those who both study and practice architecture.

Bob, would you please stand. The world has changed profoundly since 1999 and the inception of the Vincent Scully Prize. In September 2001 it became painfully clear that we in the United States had not understood how many others in the world view us. It became clear that we had to reach out and attempt to understand their views of the world and how their culture can affect and enrich our own. It became clear that our educational and cultural institutions had failed to help us understand how much of the rest of the world's population perceive us, our values and our culture, and had not taught us to appreciate and understand their values and culture. We, as the members of the Vincent Scully Prize Jury and the leadership of the National Building Museum decided it was time to address some of these issues with our selection of this year's recipient, His Highness The Aga Kahn.

His vision and commitment to preserving and improving the built environment has had a profound impact on much of the world. The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture has brought an awareness of architects and architecture to the western world that might otherwise have been ignored. The Aga Kahn Trust for Culture has long acknowledged that architecture, urban planning and preservation, social and political issues are forever intertwined, and that by doing so has worked to preserve and improve the built environment. Through its work, it had become one of the world's most important institutional advocates for architecture. I had the honor of participating in a roundtable discussion with His Highness this afternoon, and had the opportunity to see firsthand how special His Highness really is. Many people in the world have passion, many people in the world have vision; very few have both. Rarely are the two combined into a single individual, thus enabling him or her to cause real change in our world. His Highness is one of those very few, special people endowed with both. We are very fortunate to have him care about the world in which we live. All of the Vincent Scully Prize recipients exemplify this unique combination. Fortunately for us, they help us think about the places we live and, more importantly, to care about them. And in so doing so they help each and every one of us to build a future that may be, in fact, worthy of our past. Thank you very much for coming this evening. Thank you for celebrating this Museum. Thank you for celebrating the Vincent Scully Prize. And, please, enjoy your dinners.

CAROLYN BRODY: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Carolyn Brody, Chair of the National Building Museum. And it is with a great pleasure that I welcome you tonight to

celebrate the achievements of His Highness The Aga Kahn, on whom the Museum is bestowing its highest honor, the Vincent Scully Prize. But first a word about the Museum—as David so eloquently phrased and in his welcome, the built environment is often a legacy to future generations. This magnificent building in which we sit tonight is a testament to that premise. Completed in 1887 it was designed to house the Pension Bureau by Montgomery Meigs, an engineer and architect, as well as a general in the U.S. Army. While this was his last architectural work, it was also the one which he was the most proud of—and with good reason. When it was completed—and still today—it is considered a marvel of engineering and also one of Washington's most spectacular structures with an ingenious system of windows, vents and open archways which allow the Great Hall to function as a reservoir of light and air. And, of course, there are the eight colossal Corinthian columns which are, as you can see, among the tallest interior columns in the world. I wonder if Meigs could ever imagine that this building would become the most visited museum of its kind in the world as well as America's premier cultural institution dedicated to architecture, construction, urban planning and engineering, or if he could have envisioned this building on a school day when the Museum resonates with the sounds of elementary and middle school students here to discover the ways in which they, too, can have a positive impact on the built environment by actually building a small house, constructing a geodesic dome or learning how different kinds of bridges function. Created as a private institution by an act of Congress in 1980, the National Building Museum welcomes more than 350,000 visitors a year to its extensive exhibition and education programs. It regularly features lectures by leading architects from around the world. And it has become a vital forum for exchanging ideas and information about such issues as the revitalization of urban centers, the quality design of affordable housing and environmentally sensitive design and construction. Through such awards as the Vincent Scully Prize, the Museum also recognizes individuals who contribute to the understanding and improvement of the built environment. But enough about us for tonight.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Charles Correa, an internationally respected architect who has come from India to pay tribute to His Highness. Since he began his architecture practice in 1958 in Bombay, Mr. Correa has earned worldwide recognition through his commissions, numerous awards and extensive publications. He has received many of the world's most prestigious architecture awards, including the Royal Institute of British Architects Royal Gold Medal, the Praemium Imperiale for Architecture and The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture. Please join me in welcoming Charles Correa.

CHARLES CORREA: It's really a pleasure and an honor to salute His Highness The Aga Kahn, for the incredible range of his concerns and commitments. From the Award for Architecture to the Historic Cities Program to the cultural and educational programs, his is an extraordinary achievement, one which is relevant to all of us around the world. And it was accomplished by one person in the course of less than three decades. It all started with the Award for Architecture which began in a meeting in 1977, which isn't so long ago, to discuss with His Highness his concern for the confused state of architecture which was happening in the Gulf and

all over the Islamic world and his intention of creating a prize, an annual award for the best piece of architecture which would act as an exemplar for other architects and clients.

From our discussions it became clear that just one example would not suffice for an entity as enormous, as diverse, as pluralistic as Muslim societies around the world. It's not a monolith world; it's a very, very diverse world all the way from the deserts of North Africa to the lush tropical forests of Malaysia.

So that one prize became a group of prizes to be selected and awarded over a three year cycle. And this architectural award, as you know, spawned other activities as small projects that gradually blossomed into full-fledged programs on their own, like the Historic Cities Program and the Education Program at Harvard and MIT. So it was a wonderful experience for all of us who were lucky enough to be part of that. It was like going forward into the darkness. His Highness was extremely courageous and he encouraged that whole process, and yet he was very tough about making us think about where we were trying to go.

Let me give you an example. For instance, in the case of The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture, to me it is different from, let's say, the RIBA Gold Medal or the AIA Gold Medal or any of the other major prizes, architectural awards in that it is not about a an individual's lifetime work; it's about buildings.

That was something which surprised some of us because it's a much tougher thing to look at buildings than to generally say, "Oh, yes, that's a very good architect. He should get the Gold Medal." When you look at buildings, you have to look at why you are giving them this prize. That means you have to look at what they're about, very specifically what issues do they address, what are the values they put forward, etc. And although to single out a single building is a very complicated logistical problem—it's a nightmare, you've got to send technical teams there to appraise it, photograph it, etc. But it also necessitates examining those key issues. In the search for issues and questions, which is absolutely endemic to The Aga Kahn Award, it is this that has made the award so different from the other awards and why it continues to grow in stature. Because it's always concerned with issues and with the questions raised by these projects.

I think here in this country we all know that the questions that Louis Sullivan initiated in the 1880s in Chicago launched essentially a whole sanctuary of architectural creativity. That's how important questions are. For when we stop asking these fundamental questions, I think we are in danger of slipping into styling or even worse, fashion. Well, one last point which I must add. I think His Highness has a special quality, one which, indeed, is extremely rare. It is the ability to understand that the integrity of a process and the product are one, you cannot separate the process from the product. That's what the prize is about. This is best exemplified at the end of each three year cycle when the Master Jury, which is a separate group from the Steering Committee, presents to the Steering Committee the winners they have selected. As you might well imagine, there's a vast range of reactions in the room from spontaneous clapping to muffled sobs. Really, it is! Only one person sits through it absolutely calm, the Chairman of the Steering Committee, for he knows that the process is autonomous and sovereign. That's a truly marvelous

quality and one which prompted a friend of mine who has been closely connected with the award to say, "One thing for sure. Never play poker with him." Your Highness. Thank you.

AGA KHAN VIDEO: The Aga Kahn Awards for Architecture was founded in 1977 to focus attention on the architectural achievements of Islamic societies. The award seeks out excellence and heightens awareness of the rich and varied Islamic architectural tradition. It celebrates a broad range of achievements from social housing and community improvement to reuse, conservation and contemporary design.

The award is part of The Aga Kahn Trust for Culture but focuses on the physical, social, cultural and economic revitalization of communities in the Muslim world. To qualify, projects must be designed for or used by Muslim communities. They must also have been completed within the past 12 years and have been in use for a minimum of one year prior to entry.

Up to \$500,000, the world's largest architectural prize, is awarded to projects selected by an independent Master Jury appointed for each tri-annual cycle. The nine member jury is chosen by the Awards Steering Committee, chaired by The Aga Kahn. The Steering Committee also set the criteria and thematic direction of each award cycle.

Because of the broad range of issues and locations involved, professionals from all backgrounds and religions are appointed to the jury. It chooses a short list from several hundred submissions. On-site reviewers then visit these projects, returning to present their findings at a final meeting.

This is when the winning projects are selected. The first cycle of the awards in 1980 established themes of social responsibility and sustainability. Controversy followed when an award was made to a self-help community planning program, the Kampung Improvement Program in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Prior to this, spontaneous building was largely considered to be outside of the realm of architecture. But with the first award the architectural community was encouraged to reappraise its definition of architecture. As well as social schemes, excellence in private housing has also been recognized.

The Salinger residence in Malaysia is hand-built using traditional skills, yet has a strikingly modern presence. The awards have a long-standing tradition of rewarding conservation. Many cities have a wonderful heritage that has disintegrated. With the right approach and skills, entire towns can be brought back to life.

Awards were made in 1995 for the conservation of Old Sana'a, Yemen, and for the conservation of Mostar Old Town in Bosnia-Herzegovnia in 1986. Juries have recognized the social and cultural importance of historic monuments and awarded projects that restored such buildings.

The restoration of the 14th Century Tomb of Shah Rukn-i-Alam in Pakistan is one of many projects that have seen the rediscovery of long-lost crafts and skills. Contemporary pressures on the built environment mean many old structures can no longer be used for their original purpose.

The awards have, therefore, encouraged imaginative, adaptive reuse of buildings. This building in Katau was once a ruined palace but is now a national museum. The question of how to regenerate urban areas has been an important consideration for the awards. Solutions include the Great Mosque of Riyadh, an old city center redevelopment in Saudi Arabia that won an award in 1995 for reinterpreting styles of the past to create a meaningful dialogue with the present.

Other approaches include innovative landscaping schemes like Bagh-e-Ferdowski Park on the outskirts of Tehran. The Aga Kahn Awards have promoted examples of architecture where the construction technology has seemed wholly appropriate. The Hajj Terminal in Riyadh was designed to house the million or more pilgrims who make their way to Mecca every year.

This prompted the design of the largest roof in the world. The 1983 Jury called the design “brilliant and imaginative.” Throughout its 25 year history the award has celebrated outstanding excellence in contemporary architecture. Examples include Vidan Bhavan, the striking state assembly building in Bhopal, India, designed by architect Charles Correa and awarded in 1998, and the National Assembly Building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, designed by Louis Kahn.

Awarded in 1989 the building is now widely regarded as a masterpiece. Despite these many areas of recognition, the award is still searching for exemplary solutions to certain building types. These include affordable mass housing, hospitals, work environments and industrial spaces.

As the search for excellence continues, the jury of the ninth cycle of The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture has selected a diverse range of building types from different parts of the world. In the 24 year tradition of the awards, the jury has chosen seven agenda-setting projects that provide yet more inspiring and thought-provoking solutions to the compelling questions in architecture today.

BRODY: (Wolfensohn to the stage.) Jim Wolfensohn has served with enormous distinction as president of the World Bank since 1995, making the bank’s overarching mission the reduction of poverty in the most sustainable of ways. Untiring in his commitment to better understand the challenges facing bank member countries, he’s traveled to over 120 countries meeting with the bank’s government clients and representatives from every walk of life. The result of this extraordinary commitment has placed the bank at the forefront of addressing global challenges including primary education, basic health, HIV AIDS programs, the environment and biodiversity.

A true Renaissance man, Jim served as chairman of Carnegie Hall in New York during the 1980s, leading a successful restoration of that landmark building. And then, as if he did not have enough to do, he became chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, serving in that capacity for six years until his appointment as president of the World Bank. And last, but not least, he is an accomplished cello player. Please welcome Jim Wolfensohn.

JAMES WOLFENSOHN: Your Highness, ladies and gentlemen. I’m here because I’m the

leader of the groupies of the Aga Kahn, not so much for his work in the built environment (although I must say to you that I am deeply impressed by all that he’s done) but by his work in the human environment.

And it is in that context that I’m given a few minutes to pay tribute to him and to tell you something about him. In my 10 years at the bank I’ve had the opportunity of meeting many people in the so-called development business. People that are concerned with the issues of poverty, people that in various ways display their interest in humanity, their concern for history, their concern for hope and for the future.

And in that 10 years I can tell you that there is one person who stands out in my mind as an icon of not only thought and philosophy but of action. And I have to say this in front of His Highness, that I don’t say this about everybody in the development business. He has truly done the most amazing job not only for the Ismaili community throughout the world, but really for all the communities that he serves.

He started The Aga Kahn Development Network in 1967. It was his idea. And he has grown it in the most remarkable way, starting with the needs of education, dealing with all levels of education from preschool education to particularly the education of women. He has looked through high schools, ordinary schools to universities.

And I think many of you will know of the preeminence of The Aga Kahn University in Pakistan and the remarkable work that it has done in nursing, healthcare, management, and in everything that it touches. Now he has expanded that into Tanzania and into other parts of Africa where he’s also set up recently The Aga Kahn Hospital—I learned this only tonight—the first teaching hospital in east African which is giving Aga Khan University degrees. But even beyond that when we were talking a couple of years ago about the work that we have done in information technology, His Highness said to me, “Well, we’re going to set up a university in the mountains in Tajikistan to serve Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan because these are high mountainous areas. And we are going to teach through internet and through using information technology because people can’t move around. And so we’ll set up a university on top of a mountain.” And already he is providing courses in those areas, working with governments and with officials to strengthen capacity in terms of management.

His work in health is legendary as is his work in education. And he also does it in a remarkable way in that The Aga Kahn Fund for Economic Development (which is another invention of his) deals with getting the private sector involved in income-producing projects that allow for the creation of work and for the profitable use of investment in the countries that he serves.

I have never met anybody who not only has the vision but who has the personal management capacity to be able to take these visions and realize them. And I have to say that as someone who is in the professional field, he has a wonderful way of doing it, which perhaps gives him an advantage over most of the rest of us, in that he draws on remarkable experts, but he makes the decisions. I have dreamed of that at the World Bank.

And so when I look at him, I not only admire him but I envy him terribly in the way in which he can operate and, indeed, bring to an effective end the work that he's doing. And through it all, having seen him in many, many parts of the world, and having talked to him at length on many subjects, there is one thing which distinguishes him, which is not in the buildings and not in the organization. It is the extraordinary sense of humanity that he has. The great depth of real feeling for real people wherever they find themselves in society. He is a holy man. He is the leader of his faith. He's a man who represents the very best in Islam. Something that all too often we tend to forget these days. That Islam carries with it values and a culture from which we can all learn. And so it is especially wonderful tonight that he's being honored with this prize for the built environment at a time that we're also thinking of the work that he's done at the human level and, indeed, the level of faith and morality which he does so remarkably well.

The last thing I'd like to say to you is that because of my interest in music, Yo Yo Ma approached me. He's another cellist that you may have heard of. I've helped him a lot in his musical career. But Yo Yo came to me and said that he had this project for the Silk Road to go back and look at the traditions of the Silk Road in terms of music and performance and creativity in the arts. And he said did I know anybody that might be supportive. And one name jumped into my head immediately, which is, of course, His Highness. And he was a little skeptical at the beginning, I must say. But there was a love fest, I think, between him and Yo Yo built around the strength of both of their convictions and both of their beliefs in culture and, in this case, music and performance.

And without The Aga Khan Cultural Trust there would be no Silk Road project as we know it today.

And so tonight we have the pleasure of hearing some music from two remarkable players, two great artists who have joined us. Hodayun Sakhi who is considered by many the finest rubab, that's lute, player of his generation. He studied with Ustad Omar and he performs in a style of music which reflects the classical raga tradition of north India and where he infuses instrumentation and rhythms and ornamentation from his Kabuli heritage. And he will be accompanied by Mohammad Essa who is performing on the tabla. They will give you a musical tribute to add to the tributes that Mr. Correa and I, I hope, have conveyed to you. We salute you, Your Highness. You're a fantastic guy.

(Musical tribute)

BRODY: Thank you, Hodayun and Mohammad for sharing with us your magical artistry in the music of Afghanistan. And now it is my honor and privilege to present the National Building Museum's most important prize to His Highness The Aga Khan. You have heard from Charles Correa and Jim Wolfensohn about the length of breadth of The Aga Khan's contributions to the world, a world which, at the moment, is experiencing some rather unusual times new to some of us and of ancient origin to others. We present the Vincent Scully Prize to His Highness for his contributions to improving the built environment. At the same time we pay tribute to the immense positive impact The Aga Khan and his Aga Khan Development Network have made in culture making for the world in general by providing a beautiful and inspiring window into the Muslim world. His Highness shared with me tonight a piece of news that I

find especially inspiring. In addition to the physical aspect of the prize, which is sitting here beside me, there is also a cash prize of \$25,000. And The Aga Khan is matching this amount for a total of \$50,000, which he is contributing to architectural students from the third world who study at Harvard, MIT and Yale to help underwrite the cost of their studies. And as many of you know, there is an Aga Khan program through Islamic architecture at both Harvard and MIT. And he's including Yale in his general gesture as a tribute to Vincent Scully. Your Highness, please join me on stage.

THE AGA KHAN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

BRODY: On behalf of the Vincent Scully Prize Jury and the National Building Museum, I present you the 2005 Vincent Scully Prize.

THE AGA KHAN: Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, first I would like to thank Charles Correa and Jim Wolfensohn for their kind words. Charles, through your work you have made an immense contribution to the built environment. Your buildings have brought timeless elegance to societies in the East and the West. Your inspirational use of their many languages of design will speak powerfully to many generations hence. I would also like to sincerely thank you for your contribution over many years to The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, as a member of five different Steering Committees, a Master Jury and as an Award winner yourself in 1998.

Jim Wolfensohn, you have changed the very nature of the World Bank, creating an ethic that recognizes that the development of individuals and communities are as important as return on equity. Hundreds of millions of people around the world, faceless and desperate in their poverty, may not know, but should know, that you have seen their plight and have heard and understood their needs. You have been successful in harmonizing the activities of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which has made both more effective in achieving their respective goals. And you have been an ecumenical leader in building bridges between and among faith-based organizations and recognizing their importance in international development. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your presence here this evening.

And thank you to the National Building Museum for honoring me with this recognition. I am humbled to receive an award carrying the distinguished name of Vincent Scully. His work as a teacher and critic has reminded the world of the importance of a humane architecture that both respects the past and embraces the future. I might add that my only regret, as a Harvard man, was that Mr. Scully chose to do so much of his work at Yale.

Ladies and gentlemen, some 30 years ago I began to question why architecture in the modern Islamic world seemed to have lost touch with the great achievements of its past. I began working

with leading architects, philosophers, artists, teachers, historians and thinkers — from all religious faiths—to establish an Award for Architecture. We sought to reshape and reposition knowledge and taste in the public psyche and to change the behavior of the vast range of actors who shape the built environment. Now some 28 years later, the extent to which we have been successful is due to a multitude of individuals and organizations from all regions, faiths and occupations. They have been cemented together by their mutual commitment of service to people through the contribution of time, talent and knowledge. It is on behalf of this broad spectrum of qualified men and women that I accept the Vincent Scully Award this evening. These include members of the nine Award Steering Committees and Master Juries. From the beginning, they pushed the notion of architecture far beyond the act of building and technical perfection. They were concerned with quality of life, social justice, pluralism, cross-cultural exchange, education, the proper use of resources and corporate responsibility. Thank you to William Porter, former Dean of MIT's School of Architecture, for a persistent advocacy of community responsibility and to Oleg Grabar, from Harvard and Dogan Kuban, from Istanbul, who brought depth to the Award's understanding of the traditions of Islamic Architecture. Thank you Nader Ardalan for pioneering climatically relevant and socially meaningful modern architecture. Hasan Uddin Khan helped us communicate with the architectural community by establishing the architectural magazine *Mimar*, a publication still much missed today. Robert Venturi helped the Award address popular expressions in architecture. Frank Gehry has been an adamant supporter of social responsibility. Peter Eisenman and Charles Jencks helped us involve younger talent and fresh ideas as did Glenn Lowry from the Museum of Modern Art of New York. Renata Holod of the USA and Canada, helped us build the foundation of Award procedures, seminars and field visits. Saïd Zulficar, Secretary General of the Award from 1981 to 1990, helped to further refine our procedures, and to deepen the Award's interest and presence in contemporary societies where Islam had historically been at the forefront of architecture and learning. Suha Özkan now the longest serving Secretary General of the Award, has helped us gain momentum for the future. Some who contributed are no longer with us. The late Professor Charles Moore, brought a real understanding of plurality in contemporary architecture and Hassan Fathy, made an enormous contribution with his advocacy of appropriate building traditions. The late Sir Hugh Casson molded contemporary architectural expressions from Islamic heritage. The many other architects, planners and thinkers who contributed are a pluralist microcosm of the world itself. And here is just a partial list: Kenzo Tange, Fumihiko Maki and Arata Isozaki of Japan, James Stirling of the United Kingdom and Zaha Hadid of the UK and Iraq, Kenneth Frampton of the UK and USA, Balkrishna Doshi of India, Moshen Mostafavi of Iran and the USA and Farshid Moussavi of Iran and the UK, Elias Torres Tur of Spain, Glenn Murcutt of Australia, Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh, Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka, Alvaro Siza of Portugal, Jacques Herzog of Switzerland and Billie Tsien of the US.

And there are many more. I know of no process where so many people of such different backgrounds have come together to improve the living conditions of more than one billion people. Thank you to the more than 1,000 nominators worldwide who have brought such a diversity of projects to our attention. Thanks also to the dozens of highly-qualified reviewers who conducted

the in-depth analysis of short-listed projects to enable the judges to assess them impartially. Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to the thousands of architects, builders, designers, financiers and planners who had the inspiration, creativity, and most of all, the patience and determination, to bring so many worthwhile projects to completion.

There were 2,261 such projects in 88 countries that made our short lists over the last 27 years. They are the living proof that the built environment can truly be what we want it to be. Thank you.

BRODY: Thank you. And, once again, congratulations. We've now come to the end of our evening together and the National Building Museum, once again, is eternally grateful to all of you who came tonight for this spectacular evening, for the financial support that you've provided, for the endowment of events and Vincent Scully Prize and, most importantly, for your presence here tonight.

By so doing, you contribute to the world around you. And now on your way home tonight please take a moment, as we've been saying all evening, to look out and observe the built environment which matters so much to all of us. Good evening and thank you again.

Symposium January 26, 2005

Participants:

Chase W. Rynd - Executive Director, National Building Museum

Vincent Scully - Sterling Professor Emeritus, Yale University

Robert Ivy - Editor-in-Chief, Architectural Record

His Highness The Aga Khan

Charles Correa - Architect, Bombay, India

Martin Filler - Architecture Critic

CHASE RYND: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. My name is Chase Rynd and I'm the director of the National Building Museum. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome all of you to the Museum and to this very special program this evening. I am also greatly honored to welcome the distinguished individuals who are on tonight's program.

I will now invite them up to the stage by their name to take their seats. Each of them will receive a more complete introduction later in the program. Allow me to invite Robert Ivy, Editor-in-Chief of *Architectural Record*. Charles Correa, an internationally acclaimed architect from Bombay, India. Martin Filler, an architecture critic based in New York City. And our honored guest, His Highness The Aga Kahn. Tonight we will celebrate and explore the many contributions of His Highness The Aga Kahn, to promote design excellence, urban revitalization and historic preservation in countries where Muslims have a significant presence.

In recognition of his sustained and successful efforts to improve the built environment in the Islamic world, the Museum organized a gala ceremony last night to present His Highness with our highest award, the Vincent Scully Prize. Established in 1999, this prize is named after the illustrious and influential Yale University Professor, Vincent Scully. The prize recognizes exemplary practice, scholarship or criticism in architecture, landscape design, historic preservation, planning or urban design. Previous recipients are Vincent Scully himself, Jane Jacobs, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

As you will learn over the next hour and a half, His Highness The Aga Kahn also richly deserves this prize. The Museum is deeply honored that he has accepted it. And now I am delighted to inform you that Professor Scully is here with us this evening. He now will pay a brief tribute to His Highness. Vincent.

VINCENT SCULLY: Thank you very much. Your Highness, ladies and gentlemen. I met His Highness The Aga Kahn for the first time last night and though I've known his work and admired it for a long time, it was only last night that I came to realize what a kind and gentle man he is.

So this is an especially happy occasion for me. His Highness The Aga Kahn honors this prize by

accepting it and further ennobles the cause of architecture which he has already served so well. Architecture itself is a mediating art. It mediates between humankind and nature's implacable laws, and it shapes the communities in which we live together.

The awards so generously conceived and supported by The Aga Kahn do much the same thing. They encourage architecture and city building at their best to mediate between the cultures of east and west, bringing the most beautiful buildings and the most humane urbanism of contemporary Islam forcibly to western consciousness and admiration.

They, and everything they stand for, shine as bright lights in a darkening world. They embody the hope of well-intentioned people everywhere for civilization itself, for mutual understanding, decent brotherhood and peace. For this, the Aga Kahn deserves our profoundest gratitude.

And we take this occasion to thank him and to assure him that we share his faith in architecture's grand and healing role. Thank you.

RYND: Thank you, Professor Scully, for those insightful observations about the contributions made by His Highness to improving the built environment. And coming from the person for whom the prize is named, they carry very special meaning. This year the National Building Museum is celebrating its 25th anniversary. And what better way to start our celebration than to have His Highness with us tonight. According to the act of Congress that established the Museum in 1980 as a private, non-profit institution, our mission is to present exhibitions and education programs interpreting all aspects of the world that we build for ourselves. Today we are recognized as America's premier cultural institution examining architecture, planning, engineering and construction.

And now a word of explanation about tonight's program. First, there will be a short video that focuses on The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture. And speaking of this award, the world's largest such prize, I should inform you that our Museum Shop, which is located right over there, has specially obtained advanced copies of an informative book about the current Aga Kahn Award winners and stories about His Highness' views on architecture. And you may obtain copies of this book after the program. Following the video, His Highness and then Charles Correa will give brief remarks. They will then engage in an extended dialogue with Martin Filler and Robert Ivy. The Museum is extremely grateful to Mr. Correa, Mr. Filler and Mr. Ivy for agreeing to participate in this program.

And we have very special thanks, especially, to Charles Correa who has come all the way from Bombay, India, just for this program. Robert Ivy has graciously agreed to moderate tonight's program. He is an architect in his own right, as well as a highly respected writer and editor. As I already mentioned, he is Editor-in-Chief of *Architectural Record*. In early 2002 he published an extended interview with His Highness in *Architectural Record*. Since he assumed leadership of this periodical several years ago, it has grown to become the world's largest professional architecture

magazine. In 2003 it earned publishing's highest honor, the National Magazine Award for General Excellence. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Robert Ivy to the podium.

ROBERT IVY: Good evening. Mr. Rynd, Your Highness, fellow panelists and guests tonight, what a splendid occasion and what a splendid space we find ourselves in. We're gathered in, I think, an unusual occasion, to celebrate a man whom we collectively admire, His Highness The Aga Kahn.

And congratulations, Your Highness, on your recent honor, the Scully Prize. And what a wonderful moment to have Mr. Scully here with us. Tonight, for all of our admiration, however, we share a unique opportunity to engage His Highness in a frank discussion building on the work that he has done over these years and examining that work and the programs that surround it.

While his own religious community is Islamic, residing on four continents, what relevance might the programs that he has established have for our own countries, cultures, for our own communities? What meaning can we draw from it? I have had the privilege, as Mr. Rynd mentioned, of interviewing His Highness at his headquarters at Aiglemont outside Paris.

And I can tell you that you're in for a treat because he is frank and open and intelligent in a way that I think will astound you. A component of this evening is exploratory and some is didactic. All of us can learn more about the specific programs that have led the Aga Kahn to this moment and this evening.

He was awarded the Scully Prize not only because of his own awards program, which we will learn about, but also because of an inter-related network of programs and initiatives that affect the Muslim world, including an educational component, a historic cities program, economic development and more.

We hope to learn more about all of these, but let us say that they put what contemporary governments might do to shame. To achieve these goals, the Museum has assembled a thoughtful, small gathering on stage, and it will engage in a discussion. We're going to attempt to make this, the grandest public space in Washington, as intimate as possible and have a frank and open conversation.

Even though we're all admirers, we will not quite gush because he wouldn't want us to; we'll steer our discussions toward reality and the realities of the world. So to begin, we'll learn more about The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture and the programs that it engages, which is now fully described in a video that we'll see.

AGA KHAN VIDEO: The Aga Kahn Awards for Architecture was founded in 1977 to focus attention on the architectural achievements of Islamic societies. The award seeks out excellence and heightens awareness of the rich and varied Islamic architectural tradition. It celebrates a broad range of achievements from social housing and community improvement to reuse, conservation and contemporary design.

The award is part of The Aga Kahn Trust for Culture but focuses on the physical, social, cultural and economic revitalization of communities in the Muslim world. To qualify, projects must be designed for or used by Muslim communities. They must also have been completed within the past 12 years and have been in use for a minimum of one year prior to entry.

Up to \$500,000, the world's largest architectural prize, is awarded to projects selected by an independent Master Jury appointed for each tri-annual cycle. The nine member jury is chosen by the Awards Steering Committee, chaired by The Aga Kahn. The Steering Committee also set the criteria and thematic direction of each award cycle.

Because of the broad range of issues and locations involved, professionals from all backgrounds and religions are appointed to the jury. It chooses a short list from several hundred submissions. On-site reviewers then visit these projects, returning to present their findings at a final meeting.

This is when the winning projects are selected. The first cycle of the awards in 1980 established themes of social responsibility and sustainability. Controversy followed when an award was made to a self-help community planning program, the Kampung Improvement Program in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Prior to this, spontaneous building was largely considered to be outside of the realm of architecture. But with the first award the architectural community was encouraged to reappraise its definition of architecture. As well as social schemes, excellence in private housing has also been recognized.

The Salinger residence in Malaysia is hand-built using traditional skills, yet has a strikingly modern presence. The awards have a long-standing tradition of rewarding conservation. Many cities have a wonderful heritage that has disintegrated. With the right approach and skills, entire towns can be brought back to life.

Awards were made in 1995 for the conservation of Old Sana'a, Yemen, and for the conservation of Mostar Old Town in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1986. Juries have recognized the social and cultural importance of historic monuments and awarded projects that restored such buildings.

The restoration of the 14th Century Tomb of Shah Rukn-i-Alam in Pakistan is one of many projects that have seen the rediscovery of long-lost crafts and skills. Contemporary pressures on the built environment mean many old structures can no longer be used for their original purpose.

The awards have, therefore, encouraged imaginative, adaptive reuse of buildings. This building in Katau was once a ruined palace but is now a national museum. The question of how to regenerate urban areas has been an important consideration for the awards. Solutions include the Great Mosque of Riyadh, an old city center redevelopment in Saudi Arabia that won an award in 1995 for reinterpreting styles of the past to create a meaningful dialogue with the present.

Other approaches include innovative landscaping schemes like Bagh-e-Ferdowski Park on the outskirts of Tehran. The Aga Kahn Awards have promoted examples of architecture where the construction technology has seemed wholly appropriate. The Hajj Terminal in Riyadh was designed to house the million or more pilgrims who make their way to Mecca every year.

This prompted the design of the largest roof in the world. The 1983 Jury called the design “brilliant and imaginative.” Throughout its 25 year history the award has celebrated outstanding excellence in contemporary architecture. Examples include Vidan Bhavan, the striking state assembly building in Bhopal, India, designed by architect Charles Correa and awarded in 1998, and the National Assembly Building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, designed by Louis Kahn.

Awarded in 1989 the building is now widely regarded as a masterpiece. Despite these many areas of recognition, the award is still searching for exemplary solutions to certain building types. These include affordable mass housing, hospitals, work environments and industrial spaces.

As the search for excellence continues, the jury of the ninth cycle of the Aga Kahn Award for Architecture has selected a diverse range of building types from different parts of the world. In the 24 year tradition of the awards, the jury has chosen seven agenda-setting projects that provide yet more inspiring and thought-provoking solutions to the compelling questions in architecture today.

IVY: And now it is my pleasure to present His Highness The Aga Kahn.

THE AGA KAHN: Honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin my comments this evening by thanking the National Building Museum for the occasion of this seminar. I would also like to thank Professor Scully particularly warmly for having used this occasion to pay compliments to the work that I have done in the past years.

I have taken an example from your book. People have often asked me why I created this award for architecture. And I think the video has shown you some of the examples of the issues that have faced people in the developing world, and particularly the Islamic world, as their physical environment changes.

I was concerned that much of the building that was taking place in the Islamic world had lost its sense of direction. There was a hiatus in cultural continuity. There was lack of clarity and precision in the educational institutions that were forming the young architects of the future.

I profoundly believed that architecture is not just about building; it is a means of improving people’s quality of life. At its best, it should mirror the plurality of cultural traditions and the diverse needs of communities, both urban and rural. At the same time, it must employ modern technologies to help fulfill desirable aspirations for the future.

In Islam, the Holy Koran says that man is God’s noblest creation to whom he has entrusted the stewardship of all that is on earth. Each generation must leave for its successors a wholesome and sustainable social and physical environment.

For these reasons, I began in 1977 working with leading architects, philosophers, artists, teachers, historians and thinkers from all religious faiths to examine issues in the built environment and to

establish an award for architecture.

The task was extremely difficult and some thought impossible. We sought to reshape and reposition knowledge and taste, and to change the behavior of those who have an impact on the built environment. That meant not just architects and their clients, but governments, planners, granting organizations, village organizations, educational institutions and builders large and small in urban and in rural areas.

If we could achieve this, there was a real chance we could launch a process that would become self-sustaining to help bring about the truly profound change that we sought. That led us on a long journey of inquiry and action based upon the premise which, strangely enough, was never put formally in writing.

We were interested in architectural achievement not just in design, but how good design could help improve the daily lives of the users and beneficiaries. It was from this service perspective that the award parameters grew. One example was the definition of architecture.

The users were largely in developing countries. So we pushed our definition far beyond the so-called architected buildings and into self-built environments, many of them in rural areas, most of them poor. It was from this notion of service to people that we were led to search for best practices.

We sought example of best practice for vastly different local situations, from the ultra-poor in rural environments to the ultra-rich cities and towns of oil-producing states. The solutions we found ranged from restoration of historic buildings to the new high-tech buildings of modern societies.

The criteria for best practice varied to reflect conditions. Poor communities, for example, do not have the resources to replace buildings every few decades. So we looked to best practice that emphasized efficient and creative refurbishing, old to new construction design for a much longer economic service life than in industrialized countries.

As the inquiry process became more widely known in the communities where we were focused, they responded to us with two basic requests. First, teach us how to do things differently. And second, show us examples of best practices in real world situations. In response a number of programs were spawned to teach these best practices such as the Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard and MIT and the on-line ArchNet resource which supports global dialogue and research.

We were challenged with findings ways of making these best practices available to broad segments of the population in order to have a continuous and positive impact. In the developed world that would mean reaching the middle classes. In the developing world it meant making these best practices accessible to the poor.

We have had some success in this regard through our Historic City Support Program which we launched to develop best practice models in the real world. That program has been applied in some of the poorest settlements, many of them in rural areas. We have shown how human and material resources can be applied to deteriorated and underused cultural assets.

The result has been new economic activity and a better quality of life. So I am pleased that 28 years later we have had some success in achieving our original goals. We are gratified that so many others are now engaged in the cause. We have created a momentum that has become a self-sustaining and unstoppable force for change in the human habitat of the Muslim world.

And I am most pleased the principles we have established are having an impact in much of the developed world as well. But there is still much to be done. Quality housing remains the most essential need for societies everywhere, both in rural and urban environments.

Industrial facilities and work places are not at a level of excellence that makes them exceptional. Rapidly expanding urban centers throughout the world lack public parks and open urban spaces. Problems of transport, congestion and pollution have too few solutions emerging.

The growth of slums, the consequence of the relentless forces of urbanization has not stopped or even slowed down. And although many fine examples of rural projects have been represented in past award cycles, still there are not enough. I am also concerned that there's too little attention being paid to design for communities to protect residents from the effects of earthquakes, many of them in remote, rural areas. Two million people died as a result of earthquakes in the last century and 100,000,000 were severely affected. There are vast populations that live in seismic-sensitive, high mountain areas where we must focus attention. And the massive devastation of the Indian Ocean tsunami has taught us a terrible lesson that the destructive power of earthquakes can reach far beyond the initial disturbance.

It will no doubt lead to new thinking and new approaches toward seaside construction. So we are by no means at the end of our task. To quote Churchill, "We may be at the end of the beginning." I hope next quarter-century of the award will contain as much innovation and surprise as the first.

To the extent that it does, it will be thanks to the many hundreds of capable individuals who have given so generously and continue to give of their time, their knowledge and their talent. To all of them, I'm enormously grateful. Thank you.

IVY: Thank you, Your Highness. We'll now hear from an architect who is seated on the panel and who happened to speak last night. His name is Charles Correa. And as a measure of his interest in this program and of The Aga Kahn's work, he flew from India to join us in these proceedings over these days.

He is an Indian architect who is internationally known. He's a planner. He's an activist. I first heard Charles, as many architects have, in public forums in a darkened room somewhere in the United States. I have no idea when that occurred or where, but I remember being mesmerized by a man who sat there with uncommon common sense.

He seemed to be able to take problems that existed in everyday life in India and translate them into poetic structures. Not a small accomplishment. And he continues to do that today, not only in

housing for which he became extremely well known, low-cost shelter for the Third World became something he wrote and articulated about in 1985 in a book called *The New Landscape*.

He's been awarded most major prizes, including The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture in 1988, the Praemium Imperiale, the International Union of Architects Gold Medal and RIBA's Gold Medal. Ladies and gentlemen, a man of uncommon common sense and poetry, Charles Correa.

CHARLES CORREA Thank you, Robert. Good evening, friends and The Aga Kahn. I think at the outset I want to try to establish something. It's this: that the award, The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture, is not something in another box very far away from the world in which we live, that's safe for me in India.

It's very, very easy to relate to the issues. One of the issues which we were talking about, which His Highness just spoke about, is architecture as design, architecture as development, architecture as identity. Architecture is not neutral. It's not even politically neutral.

You know, you quote Churchill. Churchill said something else. I hate to quote Churchill, but I must say this. He said... I don't know how we are quoting Churchill but anyway... Maybe it's the room that makes us quote Churchill. Anyway, he said, "We build our buildings and then our buildings build us." That's a profound statement. We have to be careful of what we build because it's going to affect the people who live in it. Now that's something I can relate to in India. It becomes, really, the central concern I would think of the awards. I think it's something which you in America can relate to.

Aren't you concerned about what's happening to your environment? If I jump back to an architect like Frank Lloyd Wright whom, of course, Professor Scully has written much about, it's amazing what Wright did. He faced exactly the same issue. How do you invent the way Americans are going to live for a whole century?

Whenever I go to Chicago, I go to Oak Park and if ever I saw a brave new world, it's Oak Park. It's a whole century ahead of a young country and young self-made millionaires and Wright showed them the way. That's what this award is about. He built buildings which built Americans differently than they were built by Stanford White who made them like Europeans. No, he made them Americans the way Whitman made American poetry. It's not such an unusual challenge. It's not just an exotic challenge which the Islamic world, poor things, face; it's a challenge which we all face. And that's what I think is important about this award.

And that's why I think I can relate to it and I think any architect or any human being relates to it. Now how did the award get involved in these questions. And I think here there are two things. First of all, I think right from the beginning, for some reason, Your Highness, you insisted that it should be not for a lifetime's work but for individual buildings.

And yesterday we discussed this a bit. That was a profound decision. And it's what makes it

different from all the other major awards which are given in a more, what should I say, more generic. You can just say, “This is a very wonderful architect and he deserves this gold medal.”

No, in this award you have to look at the building. You have to know why you are giving it this award. You have to ask questions about it. What are the issues exactly? So in asking those questions, it’s exactly what Frank Lloyd Wright, what Louis Sullivan and all went through.

You question what you build. You question why you think it is valuable. And I think this is why this award continues to grow in stature and will continue to grow. And I think now although it doesn’t really address built structures in the west so much, I don’t think any building in the Western hemisphere has been awarded.

Except in Paris there was the *Monde Arabe*. There have been buildings. But in spite of that, I think it has tremendous relevance to these issues because of the parallel it has. Now anyway, in trying to find these issues the award then had to learn what people who lived in these parts of the world were concerned about.

And there have been a whole series of seminars started which took on a life of their own. And, again, I think what is unusual about this award (and it’s very much thanks to His Highness) is that whenever you’re thinking about something, a possibility opens up like a door at the other end of the room and you don’t know if you’ve got the courage to walk through that door because you know you’re gonna find yourself like Alice in Wonderland in another room with another door.

You know? And that’s how I think this grew. Because there was the courage and the integrity to know that if we have to go there, we go there. So through these seminars, which were remarkable (it started in the late ‘70s and the ‘80s and still goes on) a whole lot of people in different parts of the world, starting with the Islamic world but now it’s spread elsewhere, would meet and discuss what they thought concerned them.

And these were all people who were doers. They were architects but there were lots of other people who were social workers, social scientists. And the issues which came up as His Highness just said were quite staggering. People were concerned not only with architecture and the metaphysics of building, but also with issues of urbanization, issues of squatter housing.

These are very big issues. And the award had to decide, “Is it going to go into that room, into that area.” Because when you go into these fields, you will find that the problem of housing is huge and intense, but the solutions—the perfect solutions—do not yet exist.

What exists is what I think Louis Kahn used to call “The First Axe.” For someone who understood, an axe is not just a stick with a sharp edge, you have to have a stone and a lever arm. So the award realized that we have to look at... How do I put it? It’s like you can reward the finest fruit at the top of the tree, but you can also realize the importance of new roots which one day will bear fruit. Now that’s very remarkable for an award. And that’s how the award could proceed into all the squatter settlement/resettlement programs, etc.

And it’s very unusual for a major award to stick its neck out, I mean, to go where no award has dared to go kind of thing. And none of them do it. They play it very safe. But we realize that, again, with the encouragement and energy of His Highness, we went into these areas.

And when I say, “we,” I meant the whole series of Steering Committees and Master Juries which have involved, as he said, hundreds of people right across our profession. And I think to that extent it has changed our profession. It has had a big influence.

And so I was going to say that really, in a way, the whole experience of what I participated in was really a journey into darkness. You had to have the enormous faith that it was going to work. And I’m so happy and proud for His Highness’ sake that it has worked. That in less than three decades all this has been accomplished in the field of the built environment and also, yesterday as we heard from Wolfensohn, in the field of human development. Thank you.

IVY: And now we transform this collegiate stage in front of all of you into a more intimate setting in which we are going to engage in conversation. And I think to add to this conversation we have another member of our panel. Martin Filler. You know, facts are everywhere today. Data’s cheap. Opinions are a dime a dozen. But an informed opinion is worth any price. And Martin Filler provides the world with informed opinions. He is an architecture critic par excellence who will tell us what he thinks. He has done that for the *New Republic*, for *House and Garden* for 20 years. And he’s also contributed to the *New York Review of Books* regularly. You may have been to a museum show that he has guest curated, seen a film he has made, or heard one of his lectures. He’s one of three living Americans in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as an architecture critic. Martin, welcome.

MARTIN FILLER: Thank you.

IVY: Your Highness, Charles. We have things not to solve but to explore here this evening. And, Your Highness, I must begin with you. Rarely would we have a chance to chat in public like this. You eloquently described many of your programs and your hopes, but we find ourselves in a period, I think, internationally, where government is retreating from the social sphere.

In this country that is true. We’ve seen it in Russia as well. Large countries, small countries. And there’s been a return to sort of the individual—the rational individual—as someone who can manage their own affairs and their own lives.

You represent a large religious community scattered throughout the world. And I’m interested in your perspective on how architecture can work, how your programs can interact through a program that is non-governmental. What is the interrelationship, if you will, of this large and vast network of programs that you have and government today?

THE AGA KHAN: I'm not sure that there's an interrelationship with a government as a government. I think the interrelationship is with the entities of civil society. And I think it's the entities of civil society which are going to be the carriers of change in the years ahead.

In fact, this program is attempting to invest in the carriers of civil society. It's in education, it's in community organizations, it's in financing agencies, it's affecting the pillars of civil society, I think, which will become the anchors of change.

IVY: So rather than relying on your own abilities, you are transforming communities and aspects within communities worldwide? And those changes are then broadening out?

THE AGA KHAN: Yes. We are trying to assist organizations of civil society to set new standards, to look at cultural history, to look at proper use of resources, to look at what people are looking for from their buildings, because you made the point yourself that the ultimate validation of a building is the way in which it is used and appreciated by its users.

IVY: Uh huh. Vince Scully mentioned that we're in a perilous moment in the world. We've had natural disaster, political turmoil, we find ourselves at war. It's a moment that's fraught with great danger in a sense and a very serious one. And yet we're looking at architecture, we're examining architecture, we've just emerged from the emergency in India. Well, just informationally, is your organization engaged? These are communities that you serve. In what ways and how?

THE AGA KHAN: We're engaged in a number of situations. We're engaged in post-conflict situations such as in Afghanistan; we're engaged in situations where directed economies are becoming liberalized economies; we're engaged in a new development capacity, particularly in areas such as micro-credit.

So we're engaged in a number of areas which are impacting the quality of life and the way change occurs. And we're looking at countries in the developing world which are exploring new forms of government. But exploring new forms of government alone could be a perilous exercise. And that's why there is such necessity to build human capacity, to underwrite the processes of change. And that's what I mean by civil societies.

IVY: With the awards themselves, let's broaden this to the group now and talk about The Aga Kahn Award for Architecture. I think we're all admirers of the program. That is a given. But is it possible to characterize these projects collectively?

And I throw this to the group. Charles, Martin, as well as Your Highness, is it possible to characterize these as a group? They seem remarkably disparate in scale, scope, type. Charles, what's your opinion of them as a...

CORREA: I would think that's actually a virtue because it is a pluralistic world we live in. Architecture addresses many things – technology; it addresses history. But it addresses aspirations. You know? And people have different aspirations and I think you get a great variety of architectural projects, of planning, of housing. And I think that's very good that we don't have a kind of approved style. I mean, obviously, you wouldn't want to do that.

IVY: In thinking about that, I think as a journalist, there's this group that is quite varied in its scale and scope. Martin, from your perspective as a journalist writing about and thinking about these projects, I'd be interested in your perspective on them as a group. What strikes you about the program or the group of projects?

FILLER: Well, I think it's the very diversity of the awards that I find so encouraging. Alfred Barr, the Founding Director of the Museum of Modern Art once said, "That if 10 percent of the works he picked for the permanent collection of the museum stood the test of time, he was ahead of the game."

And I must say, looking back over almost three decades of The Aga Kahn Architectural Award, the percentage is vastly superior to that. Inevitably, any critic will look at any year's prizes and say, "Well, how could they have given it to that and not to this one." Quite frankly, in the last cycle there were some of us who felt we could really not see perhaps the justification for the Petronas Towers.

But this particularly has to do with Islamic architecture. Be that as it may, even if one looks at a very well-known cultural award such as the Nobel Prize in Literature, you look over a century of awards and you think more in terms of who is missing from that list than who was included in it.

The other thing that I think is so extraordinary about the awards, and I think it parallels The Aga Kahn's own very strong personal belief of avoiding a cult of personality around himself, in that this is an award not going to star international architects, but to projects honoring, in many cases, patrons, the architects of course, and the communities who represent them.

And I think this is running counter to a cultural phenomenon of out of control international celebrity. I've written very caustically about my opinions about the Pritzker Prize, by far the most celebrated of the architectural awards, which to me seems to be confirming the obvious in many cases.

And it's quite interesting to me that in the late 1970s, just about at the point The Aga Kahn board was being founded, the Pritzker gave its very first award to the man who they said we

must give it to because we must establish credibility for this award. Unless we give it to this man, no one will believe we're serious.

And it turned out to be Philip Johnson. And I think looking back now that seems rather shocking given the subsequent history of architecture. So I think in a way it might be easier for lazy journalists to publicize star or celebrity architects. The dumbing down of architectural discourse, the sound byte, the quick news image feeds into that.

It's not easy to summarize the accomplishments of this award. But once one has a few hundred words extra in your column, I think it's quite easy to explain it.

IVY: Well, it is an interesting thought because every project has a story. And they're not chosen simply for their formal characteristics, which most awards programs recognize, which often are based on rather superficial or quick takes by a jury. There's this tri-annual, three-year, very careful appraisal. But it seems that everyone has a story. And I'm interested, Your Highness, in your own interaction with the juries and how actively you are engaged. I've heard you talk about this but I think they'd like to know how much or little do you know about what is going on as these stories are unfolding over a three year period.

THE AGA KHAN: Well, let me get back, first of all, to why the award has got such a variety of projects which it looks at. When the award was founded, the question was asked, "What are the processes of change and who is being affected by the processes of change?" And the decision was taken, I think, correctly, to say that the award wanted to cover the widest spectrum of processes of change in the developing world.

And the processes of change are not restricted to the wealthy. They're not restricted to architect-built buildings. They're not restricted to urban environments. The majority of the population in many of these countries is rural. Therefore, we took the decision that if the award wanted to impact the processes of change, then it had to have the opportunity and the ability to make decisions on all these different levels of activity.

And this was a decision that was taken after considerable discussion. And I hope and believe time will show that it has been correct. With regard to my own involvement, yes, I'm involved but the jury is totally independent. The relationship between the Steering Committee and the jury is a very interesting one because the Steering Committee has a three year mandate. The jury comes in every three years and looks at what's happening. And this interrelationship between the continuum of involvement of the Steering Committee and the one-time analysis of the jury keeps the award very much up to date and on its feet. So in a sense, I'm involved with the Steering Committee. I'm involved with obviously knowing who the jury members are. But I'm told about their decisions at the same time as everybody else. For good or less good.

IVY: For good or ill. This year there were seven winners and just to reprise for the group they included the Grand Library at Alexandria in Egypt (which is a bold, new building, very contemporary, very strong, powerful, formal and also theoretical); a primary school in Gando which was a modest school that I think sort of caught people's imaginations with its own formal story and its human story; a sandbag shelter prototype building that could be built in a number of locales; restoration of a mosque; revitalization of the old city of Jerusalem; a very powerful house for two brothers in Turkey; and the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur.

This is a diverse group. You say pluralistic, this defines that in architectural terms, let us say. Charles, among those—is there a particular project among those that you think summarizes ideas that you have, understandings that you've seen over the years about this program?

CORREA: Well, luckily, I wasn't on the jury this year so I don't have to justify what they did. But I'd like to ask you a question, Robert. You know what? The point that I was trying to make was that what's important about this award is how relevant it is to so many societies around the world, including this one right here, and I'd you to comment on that if I may ask you, and Martin too.

I mean, supposing we had the equivalent in America. I think just now that you said... I forgot exactly what you said.

Now I forgot what I was saying. Anyway... [Ha, ha, ha, ha]

IVY: The relevance for our society.

CORREA: The relevance for your society. And you have different income groups, you've got different lifestyles. And some of them have wonderful ideas but they get lost in the shuffle because of all the media, the superstar thing. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you had someone here in this country, in this society, or we had someone in India...

And there are people here. There are the MacArthur Awards which I suppose do draw a big net and find the best people. It seems to me that we all need this. We all need to understand the nature of change, the vital role of architecture as an agent of change, as a catalyst because it touches on all these things.

It's much more than just the brick, than the mortar we see. It's the passion and it's all the implication, the culture, etc. I would think that's what I find interesting about the award. It's not something that's happening in a kind of Disneyland which is exotic and worth watching and commenting on.

It's something which you can passionately connect with where we live.

IVY: I think that part of the attraction for me personally... You asked... You're turning the tables here on the moderator and that's okay. But is that, yes, I knew, for instance, about several of these projects. In fact, they had been published in the pages of our magazine.

We had written extensively about the Library of Alexandria and the Petronas Towers, for instance. However, I had never seen the primary school in Gando, nor met the architect who had designed that school. And I happen to be from the poorest State of the United States by birth, Mississippi, which faces, if not analogous situations, very strong challenges there. And I saw what this individual faced and I was moved by it, but also informed and encouraged in the sense that real architecture could change someone's life in a small town. That's a basic and fundamental story. The challenge there, I think, is the tree falling in the forest. And that is The Aga Kahn Awards, now through their... How many years is this, Your Highness? Is this...

THE AGA KHAN: Twenty-eight.

IVY: ...have built up a reputation that does attract media attention. But the communication of the ideas is part of the challenge. It isn't merely that the award is excellent; it's how are those ideas conveyed and how are they perceived. Martin?

FILLER: Well, the other thing that I think is important to stress about The Aga Kahn Awards is that they do not look at architecture as an isolated aesthetic phenomenon. Not only are the awards given very diversely to contemporary design, to urban planning, to historic preservation, but they're part of the larger Aga Kahn Network in which architecture, as it correctly should for all of those who believe in the sociological approach to architecture of Lewis Mumford, is part of an economic, political and social fabric of society.

And I think one of the things that makes so much contemporary architecture so shallow is that it is focused so thinly on style. And, yes, there has been a breakdown of the great architectural patrons of the past. The state is no longer doing that except perhaps in France.

But, you know, the great patrons of the Renaissance, of the period of new classicism do not exist in the same way, to say nothing with what you were mentioning about the retreat of the state worldwide through social issues.

So I think by seeing and promoting the idea of architecture as something integrated into larger social developments, that you can't have architecture without education, you can't have education without healthcare, you can't have healthcare without architecture. It becomes a unified sense of architecture and, therefore, the works that emerge from that point of view, I think, are more resonant.

Yes, we want beauty, we want things that are attractive and are aesthetically pleasing, but not to have that as the final goal of architecture.

IVY: Your Highness, in a previous conversation you mentioned your initial foray into the world of design and the design process, and that it led you (and I think still leads you, in fact, as an observer) into inquiry. You seem to be always asking questions yourself.

What are the questions you are asking today? What are the questions we should be asking today? What are the relevant questions that continue to confront you and that you confront others with?

THE AGA KHAN: Right. I think from the awards point of view the inquiry processes have not been able to cover all categories of building. And that, in itself, is a source of concern. Let's keep in mind that the economies of these countries are changing. As they change, more and more development—physical development—will occur under private initiative, corporation initiative, single initiative.

And I am concerned that those processes of change should be analyzed and validated so that workplaces become places of quality. That's not the case at the present time. So industrial buildings, commercial buildings are categories, types of buildings which we, I think, need to do a lot more work on.

Public space. There's enormous pressure in these cities on public space. And, yet, it seems to me that by tradition the Islamic world has premiated public space. It's been an area of real importance. And I would like to see more of that occurring. So I think that in looking to the future there are two areas of concern.

One is a critical mass of knowledge of good buildings in rural environments, for example, so that we can say 10, 15, 20 years from now we understand the processes have changed in the rural environment and we have enough information to share with rural communities so that we can help them improve those processes of change.

And then, of course, there's the economic issue of industry, commercial buildings and housing, frankly. Housing in-fill is a major problem in our part of the world.

IVY: I want to take those up separately and distinctly, perhaps, in a moment. Let's just take the issue of housing, for instance. Charles, you face in India, for instance, a burgeoning population that will soon be the world's largest. What is the role of architecture and how is it addressing sort of this immense growth that is occurring right under your nose?

CORREA: You know, it's a huge problem. I don't think it's an architectural one necessarily though. Architects are absolutely part of the solution. I mean, we have to bring such skills as we have of organizing space and layouts, what have you. But the reason we have such a terrible shortage of housing in the Third World is that with the distress migration from the villages—and this goes for Rio de Janeiro, for Brazil, it goes for Indonesia, for India, etc., although we knew that the population—the urban populations—would grow, we did not increase the supply of urban land. So people became squatters. And so the solution goes way beyond designing a house for someone.

In fact, I always feel it's kind of insulting, you know, like if there's a famine in India and then I run around writing cookbooks telling people, "This is how you..." you know, it implies they're starving because they don't know how to cook. They're starving because it's a game on which I'm on the winning side and they're on the losing side.

And that's true of housing too. So it seems to me that if you really want to do something about housing, and that's what we're trying to do even in Bombay, you've got to increase the supply of urban land on a scale commensurate. And we're trying to do that with a big land in the center of the city which is being changed.

Now when I say "urban land," it's land which has jobs or access to public transport. People are coming to the cities not for housing. They've got houses. But they're coming for jobs. And where those jobs are located, how you generate them, how you tie them back in a city like Bombay, which I think you saw, it's a long linear thing.

You've got a railway system which goes up; they're really going up north. But people started to live around the railway stations. And that's how Bombay still works. People can jump on a train and go up and down. It's like Bogotá. Now if you subsidize the train, you are indirectly subsidizing housing. You understand? You make the housing affordable. So it's things like that that open up land. So architects are part of this. We should all help with the solution, but the real thing is this business at least of opening up the structures of our cities.

We've been very lazy about that. You know, here in this country this sentence of "Go west, young man" is the most politically profound statement of all because it really says, "Don't hang around this place. Use space as a resource." And we haven't done that enough. That's why you get squatters in these cities, in Rio de Janeiro.

IVY: But this gets to one of those fundamental questions about housing and gets back to the program in a sense because housing, we know, confronts the contemporary civilization at the economic, the social, as well as the areas that directly affect architecture planning and so forth. The program engages a number of those things that you've described, for instance, job creation, I would assume, through Historic Cities Program. Could you comment on that, how you see this interplay affecting ultimately something as discreet as architecture?

THE AGA KHAN: Well, I would start by saying that I still think there's a significant disequilibrium between quality of life in rural environments in many of these countries and the perceived quality of life of urban environments. And unless there's a better equilibrium which is built into the development processes, we're not gonna see urbanization slow.

And I don't think it can be stopped, but I think it can be slowed by better balancing between the two environments. The second thing is that the Historic Cities traditionally have been transit spaces for newly urbanized populations. And, therefore, they are very often the very poor coming from the countryside going through historic spaces that are degraded by the process of changing hands every two, three, four years.

And I think what we found is that if you invest in those cultural spaces, you can actually turn them into economic generators. And when you turn them into economic generators, you stabilize the population that is in them and you stabilize the value of the cultural asset.

Now that does sometimes mean you have to reutilize the cultural asset for different purposes and that's sometimes sensitive. But certainly in areas like Cairo and, I think, Kabul, we are finding that we can, through investment in these cultural environments bring a totally new economic context to, in the case of Cairo, 200,000 people.

So these cultural liabilities become cultural assets and economic assets if you invest in them. The most well-known of these, I think, was Musta—and Musta was the case study situation which taught everybody else that you actually can convert these cultural liabilities into cultural assets.

Now it's quantifiable. That's what's interesting about it. It's not that you can't measure the improvements in longevity, access to education, disposable incomes and all those issues.

IVY: Martin, this is not the way we normally talk about architecture.

FILLER: More is the pity.

FILLER: No. I was very pleased this summer to have attended the rededication of the Musta Bridge in which The Aga Kahn Foundation, along with World Bank and World Heritage, helped restore the famous 16th Century bridge, the marvel of pre-modern span masonry engineering.

Now what interested me as a journalist to go there, because the very oversimplified story is the bridge symbolizes the Muslim and Christian in this war-torn section. And it was almost a cartoon-like oversimplification thing. When you go there you see still that the terrible social divisions that exist there. That this is not a quick and easy fix. That it's going to take, you know, many, many years of concerted economic development. And the mere fact that there was such a mass migration of the populations there during the war to all parts of the world (to Scandinavia,

to Texas and the United States a large Musta community)—people who will probably never return there. Who will replace those people? What will be the industries that will replace the light industries that were the major source of employment, that were destroyed? These are many things that tend not to get covered in the general press coverage.

I mean, when we're talking about the oversimplification of architectural criticism, you just look at the kind of newspaper coverage of the aftermath of the war and Musta itself. What was wonderful, though, was to see the painstaking quality with which the restoration around the bridge took place.

What The Aga Kahn Foundation did wasn't just to do the bridge which, in fact, I think, was largely an effort of World Bank, which, by the way, departed from its traditional format of doing dams and other kinds of infrastructure and deemed this, thanks to Jim Wolfensohn, a special case. It was restoration but it was also a bridge, so they could get it in under the rubric. But to see what was being done in the areas around the bridge where the historic structures, which will become restaurants, shops, all employers to help revitalize tourism. Coaches that come now on day trips from the Dalmatian Coast with tourists now will be encouraged to stay overnight to pour some more money back into the local economy.

And this isn't a solution for revitalizing the entire town but it's the fact that The Aga Kahn Foundation is looking at the whole context, and, by the way, restoring those historic, if not architecturally masterful buildings in the immediate environment, with the care and precision that they would a masterpiece of Islamic architecture.

IVY: All that gets to another point that you raised earlier and that is the level of contemporary debate and discussion; in fact, the other awards programs, tend to focus on relatively simplistic ideas. Style, for instance, which seems to be the word in coinage right now.

There's even been a book written called *The Substance of Style* in which style has its own value and its own validity. Yet, these awards clearly, as you've demonstrated, engage something deeper. Charles, what is the relevance of a word like "style" in a, say, East Asia or in Asia?

What place does that rather ephemeral sounding word have in a place where needs are great and the populations are changing?

CORREA: No, I think to design or to create something elegant is a reward in itself. I mean, just because people are poor, they don't have to lead ugly lives. In fact, the irony is that some of the poorest societies in the world produce the most beautiful handicrafts, as you know.

Mexico right next to you, Nepal, India, other places. I don't think they live with ugly things. I think in spite of that, you know, they do very well. So I think there is style there. I think what I was saying about housing, I'd just like to return to that, is that I was talking about squatters.

When it comes to housing for people who can afford, let's say, a three or four story building, which means (I'm not talking about a huge building), that's really the middle class. And I'm very happy to see that all over the Third World, including the Islamic world, there's a lot of effort made by architects to deal with housing.

And that's gone out of some of the best. Certainly gone out of America—North America. And that's a great shame, I think, Robert. The whole modern movement, as you know, was fueled by the issue of housing. Everybody, whether it was the futurist, what have you... And it gave the energy now.

So, first of all, there was an idealism. Now today the most important buildings are museums and airports. These are two buildings which are totally culture free. They are green field buildings. They're unconnected with society. Housing is something developers do despite that.

That's very sad. When you design housing... It seems to me when you design a — and I'm not against museums and airports, I think it's wonderful—but we must recognize it's like producing a beautiful world. It exists in isolation. Housing is connecting worlds because housing means syntax.

It's a completely different process. It's the ability to connect things. And, therefore, it informs the rest of your work. In your office if you're doing some housing, it's gonna change the way you design that museum. And the other way around too.

So I think it's very sad that practices of architecture which have this big range have gradually become very much about this one special object, it seems to me. And that has a huge implication in this part of the world.

But not in India and not in most of the Muslim world, not in China, where in schools of architecture they teach a lot of courses about housing. But it's really what I would call middle-class housing. It's housing which people can afford, really walk-up apartments and stuff like that.

IVY: So housing is an area that's ripe for the awards focus?

THE AGA KHAN: Yes. Very much so.

IVY: And other areas that you want to see covered or premiated through this process?

THE AGA KHAN: Housing certainly, workplaces...

IVY: Workplaces.

THE AGA KHAN: Industrial buildings. I think commercial buildings, office buildings are an area that we will need to be looking at also.

CORREA: I understand. I wonder if I could add one, and that is something which we might call “urban coherence” or “urban form.” What I find dismaying about India and about much of the world is that our cities are getting uglier and uglier. And people adapt to that. They don’t seem to notice. You know? And that’s really scary because people are learning to live with very ugly things. Buildings are built meaninglessly. And we have to build up some sort of, how to say, coherent way of relating those words of language. Yes.

IVY: And speaking of language, there are a number of words that form a sort of lexicon that surround this program that I’ve plucked here and there from a number of the publications and the conversations that we’ve had. Pluralism is one. Context is another.

The disparity of urban and rural cultures is another. Your Highness, what about this word “pluralism?” That seems to mean a great deal to you and something that you care very much about and that you discuss. Could you talk to us about what that particular word means to you in the context of architecture?

THE AGA KHAN: Yes. Yes. Well, I think the nature of the Muslim world is pluralist. It’s pluralist in terms of its civilization, it’s pluralist in terms of its language—languages, it’s pluralist in terms of its physical environment. And it seems to me that the cultures that have developed in the history of the Islamic world are cultures that deserve to be respected and not washed aside by some normalizing process.

And, therefore, keeping value to historical continuity is an issue which the award, I think, has felt was important. And, therefore, this notion of pluralism is really a notion of respect for cultural identities in a pluralist form. That’s the notion of pluralism in this environment.

IVY: And it’s played out in the very diversity of the choices that we saw on the screen tonight and that have been celebrated in the awards themselves. Another word is context. That seems to be a word that arises. It’s been, obviously, in coinage, in favor for a decade. But here, context... What does context mean to you today?

FILLER: Well, it’s interesting to me that at the time the award was founded in the late 1970s, it was this sort of high water mark of this idea of contextualism that was rising up in reaction against the governing of the international style which was imposing a very bland universal

approach to architecture in all kinds of places, without regard for local building traditions and, even worse, local environmental conditions where I think a real complaint could be made.

And there are fashions... We’re talking about styles in architecture, but there are fashions in architecture as well. And the pendulum has swung in recent years away from the idea of contextualism which often could get very literal in terms of vernacular, and the worst kind of toy town dramatic architecture. Now swinging completely away from that towards the dominance of theory in the architecture schools and in architectural practice which, in general, I would characterize as an imposition of certain intellectual constructs that completely ignore the artifact, that completely ignore the object and the visual aspects of the art form.

I would hate to see some of the very important affirmations of context that the award defined in its early years, certainly with awards such as the Masters Awards particularly to Hassan Fathy and to the Jeffrey Bawa. And to move in another direction, I know there’s always the fear we want the award to keep up with the times.

We want it to reflect current developments. We want to encourage younger architects to submit and to make their work available to us. But I think that idea of context, especially in the Islamic world where there are very, very sound reasons for the way building forms emerged, very practical, very environmentally intelligent and sustainable ecologically, that would be disastrous if they were lost if the pendulum goes too far in the opposite direction.

IVY: Let me bring one final question to the group because the hour is drawing on. And this is a word that is much reviled in contemporary discussion, and the word is “beauty.” It’s one that’s whispered among lovers perhaps. But I think it has formed a component of Islamic architecture. I’m interested in the group’s perspective of that word. You said it’s an important part of the life of regular people. So, what is its place in contemporary society, this word?

CORREA: Well, that I don’t but let’s say in the architect’s life it’s very, very important. It’s what motivates you to design. But in that process you realize that there are other issues involved of development, etc. But you certainly would like to do something which is very—which is very elegant, very beautiful. And there’re so many examples of it. I think Hussein Fatti’s work is a great example where just using mud he made things of absolutely ephemeral beauty, just the most beautiful things.

IVY: Your Highness, what works of Islamic architecture move you? What do you love?

THE AGA KHAN: That’s a difficult question to answer. But there are many buildings and

many public spaces which I find very, very powerful. Today, the absence of public spaces in the Islamic world is something of major concern to me. And, Charles, you were talking about city planning.

I think we are, generally speaking, in the Islamic world still very weak on landscape architecture and planning. We will need to do a lot more there. A number of architectural schools actually are linked to schools of engineering. And that, in itself, tends to bring a form of architecture which may not necessarily be what we would be looking for.

I'm not criticizing that, but I'm saying what used to be a great strength in Islamic design seems to have disappeared. And one of the issues that we're trying to develop now is to restore value to these traditional forms, and keep in mind that these materials in these forms are not without meaning.

In many, many cases they're symbols, symbols of interpretation of the faith, symbols of viewing of the future and so on and so forth. So I think it's very important that this notion of beauty should be respected and developed. Now taste changes so I think we have to be careful not to try to take the sense of taste of the past and stick it on an airport or stick it on a modern building.

I mean, I think we have to live in our time and live in the future also. And that's why the award has been very careful and, in fact, the Master Juries have watched this, never to ignore modern building. In all the award cycles that I can recollect there has always been a modern building which has been premiated, dealing with modern issues.

IVY: Well, with that final remark I think the panel has concluded its work for the evening. Thank you both, thank you, Your Highness. And, Mr. Rynd, the evening goes back to you.

RYND: Your Highness, thank you again for honoring us with your presence and your wisdom. It's been a wonderful evening for all of us. Mr. Filler, Mr. Correa, Mr. Ivy, thank you for such an engaging dialogue. It was really quite wonderful. Thank you so much.

And thank all of you for joining us here this evening for this extraordinary program. Now this does conclude our evening's program, but I would ask you for your cooperation, and please remain seated while His Highness departs the National Building Museum. Thank you for being here. Have a wonderful evening. Good night.



His Highness The Aga Khan



Vincent Scully



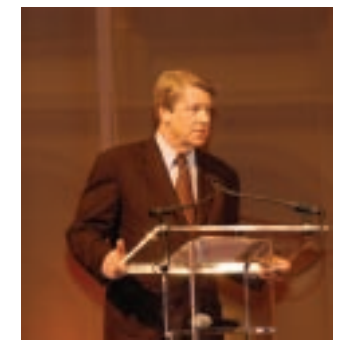
Symposium at the National Building Museum



Panelists



His Highness The Aga Khan



Chase W. Rynd



Martin Filler
Photos by Vivian Ronay Photography



Charles Correa



Robert Ivy and Charles Correa

