

AKPIA@MIT

Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT

Established in 1979, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and MIT is supported by an endowment from His Highness The Aga Khan. The program is recognized today as a leader in the study of architecture and urbanism in the Islamic world. A considerable number of our PhDs and SMArchS (Master of Science in Architectural Studies) graduates are teaching in leading universities in various parts of the Islamic world and in the West, while a few are curators in major museums, and most are either self-employed as designers or employed in architectural and construction firms. The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at MIT is dedicated to the study of Islamic architecture, urbanism, visual culture and conservation, in an effort to respond to the cultural and educational needs of a diverse constituency drawn from all over the world. The aim of the program is to concentrate its teaching and research activities in the following directions:

- a) To enhance the understanding of Islamic architecture and urbanism in light of critical, theoretical and developmental issues.
- b) To support research at the forefront of the field in areas of history, theory and criticism of architecture and urbanism.
- c) To explore approaches to architecture that respond critically and thoughtfully to contemporary conditions, aspirations, and beliefs in the Islamic world.
- d) To provide an extensive base of information about architecture in the Islamic world and to share it with scholars, teachers, and practitioners from everywhere.

Along with the focus on improving the teaching of Islamic art and architecture and setting excellence as the standard in professional research, AKPIA also continually strives to promote the visibility of pan-Islamic cultural heritage.

Academic Programs

Ph.D Program in History Theory and Criticism, with a concentration on Islamic Architecture and Urbanism

The History, Theory and Criticism Section at MIT is one of the foremost Ph.D. programs in architectural history and theory in the US. Its mission is to encourage advanced historical research and to promote critical and theoretical

reflection within the disciplines of architectural and art history. The concentration on Islamic architecture and urbanism is an integral part of the HTC section. Usually, one student a year is admitted to work on an Islamic subject and is funded through the Aga Khan Program endowment. Students are expected to fulfill all HTC requirements before embarking on their thesis project. Research projects vary in scope, method, and range from the classical period to the present. Recent Ph.D. topics include: architectural sensibility in eighteenth century Istanbul; planning colonial Beirut; Hasan Fathy's environmental concerns; the evolution of the Shrine of Shaykh Safi al-Din Ishaq in Ardabil, Iran; architecture and nationalism under Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi in Iran; Umayyad settlements in the Levant; and the villas of 10th century Cordoba.

Master of Science in Architectural Studies, Architecture and Culture, with an emphasis on the Islamic World

MIT offers interested students a concentration in Architecture and Culture as part of the two-year Master of Science in Architecture Studies (SMArchS) degree. This program prepares students for careers in research, design, and teaching. Topics covered in the curriculum include the interaction between architecture, society, and culture; critical study and historiography of architecture in the Islamic and developing worlds; strategies and policies of urban and architectural preservation; and sustainable Architecture.

Public Activities

The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT and Harvard University hosts a number of events during the academic year that are free and open to the public.

The schedules of the "An Evening With" series at MIT and the "Friends of Islamic Art" series at Harvard are posted on the web along with announcements of other AKPIA-sponsored lectures, conferences, exhibits and concerts.

Faculty

Nasser Rabbat

Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor, teaches courses on Islamic architecture, urban history, cultural and post-colonial criticism and Orientalism. Two of his courses are on the web: Religious Architecture and Islamic Cultures <http://web.mit.edu/4.614/www/> & The History of Cairo, <http://web.mit.edu/4.615/www/>

Professor Rabbat received his BArch from the University of Damascus, MArch II from UCLA, and Ph.D. from MIT. He has published *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* and *Thaqafat al Bina' wa Bina' al-*

Thaqafa: Buhuth wa Maqalat fi Naqd wa Tarikh al-'Imara (The Culture of Building and Building Culture: Essays and Articles on Criticism and History of Architecture). He is currently writing a book on the fifteenth-century urban historian al-Maqrizi and editing a book on the courtyard house.

AKPIA at Harvard University

Harvard University offers graduate degree Programs in Islamic architecture in both the History of Art and Architecture Department and the Graduate School of Design (GSD). Cross registration in AKPIA MIT /Harvard allows students enrolled in one institution to take advantage of course offerings in the other. Please visit <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Eagakhan/index2.html> for further details.

Admissions

The Aga Khan Program provides financial and logistic assistance for graduate students who are working on Islamic subjects, but it is not a degree program. The two courses of study funded at MIT by the Aga Khan Program are the SMArchS degree (the architectural master of science degree) with a concentration in Architectural Studies of the Islamic World, and the Aga Khan component of the Ph.D. program in History, Theory and Criticism. The AKPIA website provides more information on program activities, professors, and course descriptions: <http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www/>

Information on admissions requirements and descriptions of the two degree programs appear on the Department of Architecture's website: <http://architecture.mit.edu>. When applying to MIT the prospective student should make it clear that he or she is interested in AKPIA, should specify their field of work and explain how it relates to the focus of the Program. Interested individuals can obtain admissions and application materials at this website: http://web.mit.edu/cgi-bin/agapwreq.sh?I_Dept=4 , or from this address: Department of Architecture, MIT 7-337, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139-4307. The fax number is 617-253-8993.

The deadline for admissions to MIT graduate programs is December 15 for the following September admittance. The portfolio can arrive separately by January 2. Applicants should verify these dates as they may change on certain years. As part of the admission process, the department refers students interested in Islamic architecture and urbanism to AKPIA to be considered for financial support.

Financial Aid for Students

Program funds are available to graduate students in Islamic art, architecture, urban history, and the history of landscape architecture.

At MIT, only students who have been admitted to, or are already enrolled in, the Ph.D. program in History, Theory, and Criticism in the Department of Architecture or the SMArchS program, with a concentration in Architectural Studies of the Islamic World, are eligible for AKPIA funding. However, since funds are very limited, no student should expect full support.

Post-Doctoral Fellowships

The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT sponsors a postdoctoral fellowships program for research in Islamic architecture and urbanism. The program is intended for young scholars with Ph.Ds in any field related to architecture and architectural history who are engaged in research on Islamic architecture defined in the broadest sense. One or two fellowships are granted every year. The fellowship duration can range from two to nine months (maximum of two semesters).

Fellows are expected to give at least one public lecture during their stay at MIT and to participate in the program's scholarly and academic activities. The fellowship award consists of stipend and travel expenses.

AKPIA will provide fellows with library access and an MIT e-mail account.

Applicants are encouraged to seek other sources of funding to supplement the fellowship award. Scholars with their own financial resources who wish to apply to AKPIA fellowships are also welcome.

Applications requirements are announced each year in late January and the application deadline is usually mid April.

Travel Grants

The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT awards summer and IAP travel grants to all graduate students and to undergraduate students who are preparing an Optional Senior Thesis in the MIT School of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Applicants should be in the thesis preparation stage of their program. Topics must be primarily focused on some part of the Islamic world or an Islamic community. Comparative research that includes some part of the Islamic world is also welcome. Theses requiring research in an archive or collection with holdings related to the Islamic world, past or present, are also eligible.

Four to five grants are awarded yearly. Award recipients must complete their travel either in the Summer or IAP. Depending on their travel completion, they must present their research at an AKPIA sponsored event during the following academic year. A final report on the research will also be required.

Applications requirements are announced each year in late February and the application deadline is usually mid April.

Library Services

Library services and collections of printed and visual materials on Islamic art, architecture and urbanism have been developed at both MIT and Harvard with assistance from AKPIA funds.

The MIT collections, located in the Rotch Architecture Library, concentrate on architecture and urban development in contemporary Islamic cultures but covers many historical periods as well. The Harvard collections, housed in the Fine Arts Library at the Fogg Museum, are accessible to MIT students, and document the art, architecture, and visual culture of the Islamic world, with an emphasis on the period before 1900.

Visual archives at both Harvard and MIT constitute a repository for materials that have been produced or funded by AKPIA, or that have been donated to it. These collections provide images of a vast array of historical and contemporary examples of Islamic art and architecture.

Library Resources

MIT

Omar Khalidi

Collections Librarian
Rotch Architecture Library
MIT Room 7-238
77 Mass. Ave.
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02139-4307
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e-mail: okhalidi@mit.edu

Johanna Woll

Islamic Architecture Image Collections Specialist
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Harvard

Andras Riedlmayer

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Contacts

MIT

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Admissions and Financial Aid:

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Harvard

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Sackler Museum 413

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Ph.D. Program in Islamic Art History:

Admissions Office

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Byerly Hall, Harvard University

Cambridge, MA 02138-3802