



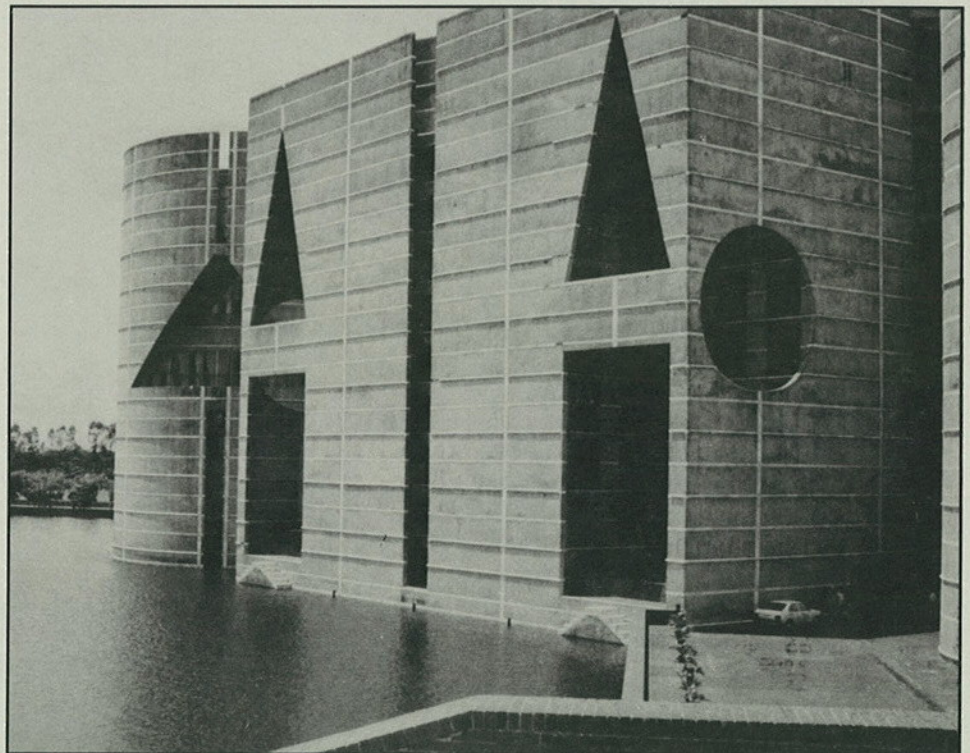
# AKP newsletter

## The Ontological Centaur: Louis Kahn and the Capitol Complex in Dhaka

*A symposium entitled "Sher-e-Banglanagar: Louis Kahn and Dhaka" was organized at MIT by the Aga Khan Program from October 26 through October 27, 1991. Imran Ahmed and Samuel Isenstadt, both graduate students in the History, Theory and Criticism program at MIT's Department of Architecture, attended the symposium and prepared the following report.*

The Sher-e-Banglanagar project by Louis Kahn was built just after the era of colonial domination had ended and before national empowerment had triumphed. The project illustrated an effort to combine Western "know-how" with indigenous social and political organizations. Francesco Passanti, assistant professor of architecture at MIT and the symposium coordinator, focused the proceedings around this theme with individual papers selected to evaluate the project both within the context of Kahn's own work and within the tradition of Western architectural production in non-Western countries. The project, commissioned as the capitol complex for East Pakistan in 1962, was finished twelve years later as the capitol complex for the by then newly-independent Bangladesh.

Kahn's own evolution as an architect was outlined by David Brownlee of the University of Pennsylvania in "The Adventures of Unexplored Places: Early Themes in the Work of Louis I. Kahn." Brownlee traced the various formal influences on Kahn's early work from the academic classicism of the University of Pennsylvania under Paul Cret, through the modernist experiments with public housing in the 1940s, to a rejection of functionalism at Yale in the 1950s in favor of a more evocative geometry drawn from the past. David



*Louis Kahn's Capitol Complex in Dhaka*

De Long, also of the University of Pennsylvania, presented a study, "The Mind Opens to Realization: Conceiving a New Architecture, 1951-1963," that picked up where Brownlee left off. De Long saw the later productive phase of Kahn's career as an inspired revitalization of his Beaux Arts education: a mature formal vocabulary of

mass, spatial differentiation, juxtaposed geometry, and richly-layered architectural definitions.

Broader cultural dimensions of Kahn's work were explored by Sarah William Ksiazek of Columbia University. Her paper, "Monumentality, Regionalism and the New

## MESA 1991 Annual Meeting

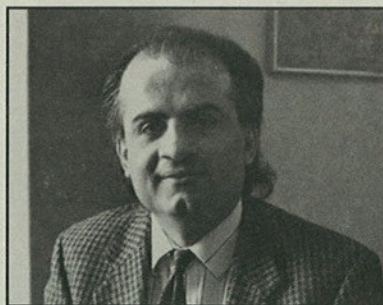
On November 23–26, 1991, the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University sponsored the 25th annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, D.C. MESA, the largest professional association of Middle East scholars, drew 2,400 members to the meeting with approximately 500 of them presenting papers or acting as discussants on more than 100 panels that examined a wide variety of topics. Many members of the AKP community were contributors. **Nasser Rabbat** (PhD, HTC, MIT), AKP Assistant Professor in the History of Islamic Architecture at MIT, chaired a panel on medieval Islamic palace architecture and presented "The Ablaq Palace in the Citadel of Cairo." **Gülru Necipoğlu** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard), John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities at Harvard, was a discussant at the same panel while **Scott Redford** ('89 PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) and **Roya Marefat** ('91 PhD, CMES, Harvard) each presented their respective papers, "Rum Seljuk Palaces" and "Takht-i-Sülayman: Pleasure Palace or Military Stronghold?" **Mohammad al-Asad** ('90 PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) presented "The Baghdad State Mosque Competition" and **Rebecca M. Foote** (PhD candidate, Fine Arts, Harvard) "Historicism and Modernity in Egypt's Post-colonial Architecture, 1922–1952" in a session on political architecture with **Oleg Grabar** (former AKP Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at Harvard) as discussant. A session on the preservation of the architectural heritage of Iran was chaired by AKP affiliate **Nader Ardalan**, Jung/Brannen Associates, with papers presented by himself, "Isfahan: Continuity within Change"; **Mohammed-Reza Haeri** ('90 AKP Visiting Fellow from Institute for the Preservation of Historic Iranian Houses), "Kashan: City of Domes and Dust"; and **Mina Marefat** ('88 PhD, HTC, MIT), "Tehran, the Elite and the West." In the final session called Culture and Society, visiting professor **Bernard O'Kane** gave a lecture, "The Nine-Bay Plan in Islamic Architecture."

## Staff & Faculty News

**Barbro Ek**, AKP director, was present at the MESA annual meeting held in Washington D.C. in November and attended the board meetings of a number of research organizations in which the AKP has memberships. In January and February, she traveled to Amman in conjunction with University of Jordan parallel center activities and stopped in Cairo to visit alumni and local architects.

**Masood Khan**, visiting associate professor at MIT, went to Lahore, Pakistan, in March to initiate a parallel Boston/Lahore design studio at the National College of Arts and will return there in May for the concluding studio. **William Porter**, Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning at MIT, also participated in the parallel studios where, in April, he gave three lectures: one to the architecture students of the College of Arts and the parallel center at the Dawood College of Engineering and Technology, "Theming the Landscape: From Myth to Mickey"; a second to interested members of the architecture faculty, "Design as Inquiry: a New Post-professional Course"; and a third to the architectural community in Lahore, "The Aga Khan Awards: A Thematic Account." He also traveled to Jordan in February as part of the Amman parallel center evaluation team. In March, he acted as the general academic

chair of the American College Schools of Architecture conference that took place at the Epcot Center in Florida.



Professor Nasser Rabbat  
photo: Elisabeth Silliman

**Nasser Rabbat**, Aga Khan Assistant Professor in the History of Islamic Architecture, won the 1991 Malcolm H. Kerr competition in the humanities category for his dissertation, "The Citadel of Cairo 1176–1341: Reconstructing Architecture from Texts." The award was announced at the 1991 MESA conference where he chaired a panel on medieval Islamic palaces. Prof. Rabbat offered a creative three-day course during MIT's Independent Activities Period entitled "Visualizing Architecture of the Past."

**Gülru Necipoğlu**, John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities at Harvard, was the recipient of the Turkish Studies Association Prize for the best article of the past two years. Her winning article, "Süleyman the Magnificent

and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," was published by *The Art Bulletin* in 1989. In February, she discussed Middle East architecture on the Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications program "Understanding the Modern Middle East." Later in the spring, she lectured on "The Topkapi Palace and the Formation of an Ottoman Imperial Tradition" at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts and at the University of Pennsylvania. "Geometry and the Imagination" was the topic of her Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies seminar. At the Morocco International Symposium, *The Maghrib in the Ottoman Period*, that took place at the Université Mohammed V in Rabat, she presented "Design Scrolls and Geometric Decoration in Maghribi Architecture." Prof. Necipoğlu is organizing the AKP symposium, "Pre-Modern Islamic Palaces," scheduled to take place May 15 and 16 at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

**Jeffrey Spurr**, Islamic cataloguer for visual materials at Harvard, presented a talk on "Mamluk Carpets" for the New Boston Rug Society this March. ♦

The newsletter is published semiannually by  
**The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard and MIT**

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## News from the Parallel Centers

### Dawood College

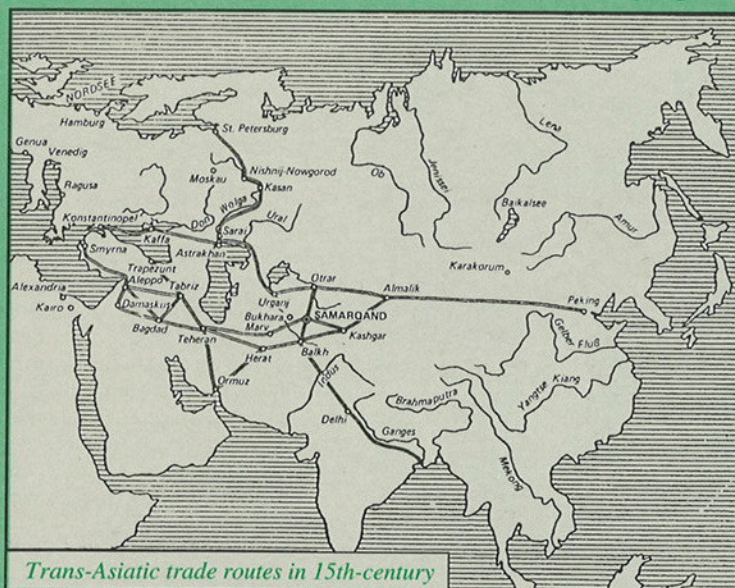
In the spring semester, design studios were offered at MIT and the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, on the same problems of urban structure, but applied to Boston and Lahore respectively. The problem assigned in Boston dealt with taking a central artery underground and in Lahore with the renewed relationship of the old citadel with the old walled city. Although the studio was held at the National College of Arts in Lahore, students and faculty from

the Dawood College of Engineering and Technology in Karachi participated. As part of the outreach activities, professors Masood Pasha of the National College of Arts in Lahore and Muhammad Asif Nawaz of the AKP parallel center at Dawood College in Karachi visited the MIT Design for Islamic Societies studio for three weeks this spring. In exchange, MIT professors William Porter and Masood Khan taught at various stages of the studio in Lahore. On May 12, eight students joined professors

# Test Your Library Research Skills

How well do you know your library collection?

Below is a type of bibliographic scavenger hunt that is both fun and challenging.



## Column A — Visual Collection

- 1 You are illustrating a lecture on trade in the Islamic world. Locate slides illustrating caravanserais and bazaars from two regions, of caravans proper, of traditional commercial textile production, and of a map depicting trade routes.
- 2 You are looking for illustrations of various expressions—iconographic and behavioral—of Muslim piety. Find five.
- 3 To illustrate the 19th-century European Orientalist enthusiasm for things Islamic, find at least two images from each of the following categories: (a) European-American buildings, (b) paintings on Orientalist themes, (c) visual depictions of Islamic cities or buildings.
- 4 Find miniature paintings of the Iskandar (Alexander the Great) legend drawn from at least three works by different authors.
- 5 Find at least six slides to illustrate the development and variety of tile decoration on Islamic architecture in Iran and Central Asia between the 11th and 17th centuries.
- 6 Locate a set of photographs of a major Islamic architectural monument to illustrate changes in its condition through time from deterioration and/or restoration. If necessary, slides may be added for completeness.

András Riedlmayer, the Aga Khan Program bibliographer, and Jeffrey Spurr, the Islamic cataloguer for visual materials, conceived of the scavenger hunt to test the library research skills of students concentrating in Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. The hunt was held last October as part of a year long proseminar entitled "Approaches to Islamic Studies," given by William A. Graham, professor of the history of religion and Islamic studies and the director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Spurr and Riedlmayer designed the hunt for students pursuing degrees in Islamic art and others looking for visual documentation of Islamic culture. It can easily be adapted to fit the resources of any library.

The Islamic scavenger hunt was distributed to the students a

week before the proseminar met at the Fine Arts Library. They were instructed to choose two items from column A, two from column B, plus one from either column and submit photocopy proof of their findings. Most students were comfortable working with the book collection; many were mystified by the visual collection, bringing in copies of book images rather than solving the problems from column A with available slides or photographs. It is important, they quickly learned, to know how and when to ask reference questions of the specialists at the library. The session left the students more confident at being able to navigate their way through the collections and better acquainted with the resources available. The problems the students were sent off to solve are the following:

## Column B — Book Collection

- 1 Using at least two different sources, find examples of images of Palestine and Jerusalem as portrayed in the art of the Iranian revolution.
- 2 You have a citation for a recent work on Islamic Spain by Enrique Antonio, entitled *La Alhambra Hermetica*. Verify and complete the citation and locate the book.
- 3 Find the earliest article published in a learned journal on the subject of Islamic architecture.
- 4 For research on the history of education in Egypt, you need 19th-century images of traditional theological schools and their students. Find at least two of each.
- 5 Find an English translation of the memoirs of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's court architect Sinân ibn 'Abdülmenân.
- 6 You are looking for information on early Islamic medical illustrations. You were referred to an article by Sami Hamarneh in *National Museum Bulletin* 228 (1961). Find the article.

Porter and Khan, as well as students and faculty from both Pakistani institutions, for the final two-week joint workshop in Lahore.

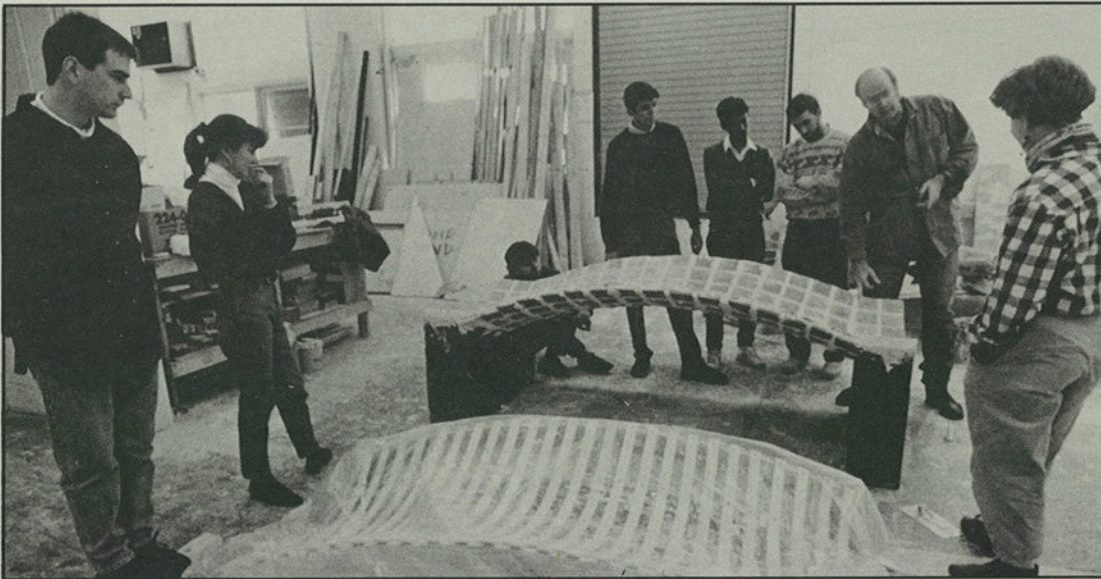
## University of Jordan

There is a lot happening at the University of Jordan's department of architecture. The leadership of Kamel Mahadin, chairman of the Department of Architecture, coupled with the arrival of Aga Khan Professor Elmar Dittman last September, has resulted

in efforts on a number of fronts: a new graduate program curriculum has been created providing specialization in architectural design in the Arab context, urban design and housing, and architectural and urban conservation in the region; local area resources and sites are being increasingly integrated into the undergraduate curriculum, particularly in studio courses; and several joint faculty projects involving research, teaching and advising, the refinement and expansion of research tools, and the establishment of an

information bank on Jordan are in process. In addition, the university administration has provided a large room and office to hold the Aga Khan visual collection, the videodisk, periodicals, student theses, and selected publications. The 5,000 slides making up the initial visual collection, as well as the 1,700 books belonging to the architectural collection, are being computer indexed and classified by a full-time professional librarian. ♦

## Architecture with a Conscience: an Interview with Jody Gibbs



Architect Jody Gibbs (second from right) critiques tile arch and rammed earth wall construction project created by workshop students.  
photo: Judy Janda

Rammed-earth walls and double-curved Catalanian vaults took shape under the tutelage of Arizona architect Jody Gibbs during MIT's Independent Activities Period. "The theories and techniques were presented in a manner that was inspiring and easy to understand," says Vivek Agrawal, an AKP architecture student in the two-week construction workshop, which is offered annually by the Design for Islamic Societies unit to demonstrate the limitations and potential of local materials and traditional practices. Gibbs's enthusiasm for simple, practical, hands-on construction grows out of his conviction that poverty-stricken communities can be helped through the use of the materials at hand.

*You have returned to the Design for Islamic Societies unit to teach the hands-on construction workshop for the past seven years. What compels you to return year after year?*

I enjoy the AKP students and understand the kind of conditions they face at home and the frustrations involved in getting an education that will address the problems of the poor. I enjoy learning about new information collected by MIT students and faculty during their research and travels, and the contrast between East Coast teaching and Arizona living is pleasant.

*What is the value of a construction workshop?*

Architecture graduates need a foundation in and knowledge of building construction. Ninety percent of them have never built a building. I believe that architectural theory and criticism must be balanced by practical experience.

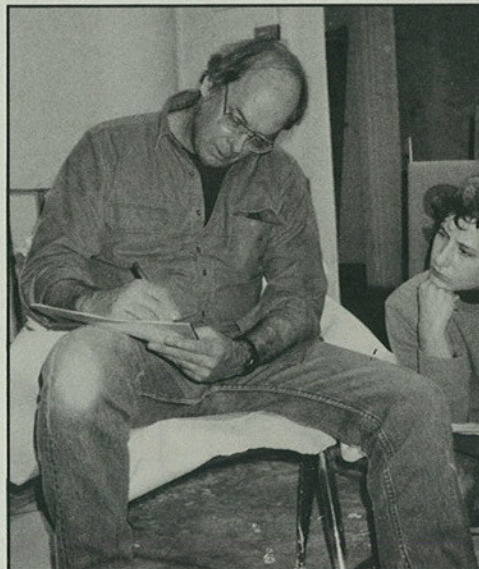
*You are the architect and director of Tucson Community Development and Design Center. Were you also its founder?*

Yes, I founded it 20 years ago. The Design Center organizes people to demand equality in the built environment. I believe that providing housing for the poor is not just giv-

ing them the minimum sustenance, like a toilet and some heat. They need those things, but architecture is something that can empower the community and make it feel like a part of the whole. The culture must be in place first, then the architecture should reflect that culture.

At the Design Center low-income community groups come to us to ask for help with a school, or a clinic, or a community center. If they are a community group with a valid concern, we work with them to try to determine why they do not have what they need, who is responsible for their situation (the government, the school district, the city council), and try to establish a plan of action. Along with a committee from the community group, we then look at the county or city plans for community buildings and perform a needs analysis. If we establish that the group is in need of the desired facility, then we start to ask questions of the authorities. If we are successful, we get both the money for the design and the contract to build the building. If we are partly successful, the community group will receive

the money for the building, but they will have to contract a different architectural firm to build it. If we are completely unsuccessful in getting either the resources to address the problem or the contract to design and build the structure, at least the community group understands who in that community is saying "no" and they will remember that person in the future. The Design Center is a positive role



Gibbs assists student with construction project.

model; we need centers of this sort all over the world.

I would like to see AKP students use information about conservation and historic cities they have collected to influence people in their countries in a similar way. To do this, students have to improve their skills in photography, book design, typography, graphics, video, etc. Charles Correa learned early on the importance of publicizing his ideas and as a result he has considerable influence.

*Tell me about your idea for the Center for Basic Human Settlements.*

The Center for Basic Human Settlements is as much a dream as reality. The elements involved in basic human settlements include clean water, adequate sanitation systems, efficient energy sources, control of land on which to build, and the enhancement of indigenous materials in a particular climate. All of these elements are tempered by economic, cultural, and political problems faced by the poor. Organizations such as Housing and Urban Development set standards that are boring, expensive, and often do not have regional application. I want this Center to address problems of the poor by studying traditions, forms of urbanization, housing and rural buildings, and existing materials and to develop creative design and construction solutions.

I will be structuring the Center for Basic Human Settlements in the near future. I have land in a rural, arid region of Arizona with beautiful mountains and a stream. My goal is to attract some MIT architects, art historians, technology experts, and economists into working with me on this project. I also want to establish working relationships with professional counterparts abroad.

*What are your thoughts on the AKP and what more could it do to assist in the problems of the poor?*

No one else is funding issues of urbanism in the Third World in the same way that the AKP is, which makes it an exceptional program. The AKP has stimulated the investigation of indigenous architectural solutions and a respect for the relationship between culture and architecture. I think the program needs to go a step further by building something and developing technology. I would like to see advanced graduates

Continued on page 7

## Alumni News

**'91 Basel Kotob** (SMArchS, DIS, MIT) has been working at the Al Ain town planning department in the United Arab Emirates since December 1991.

**Omar Razzaz** (PhD, Urban Planning, Harvard) taught housing policies in developing countries at the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning this spring. In February, he co-coordinated an MIT conference, "Global Transformations and Property Rights," at which he presented a paper, "Re-examining the Property Rights Paradigm in Relation to Land."

**'90 Nadir M. Khan** (SMArchS, DIS, MIT) is a junior partner with the Islamabad firm Architectural Design Systems. He is also involved with the promotion of Salazar Adobe Forms, a low cost, high volume adobe construction alternative particularly suited to arid, labor-intensive, high population regions.

**'89 Beatrice St. Laurent** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant through the American Scholars of Oriental Research (ASOR) to spend the 1992 academic year at the Albright Institute of Archeological Research in

Jerusalem. Her research topic will be "The Dome of the Rock: Restorations and Political Implications in the 18th through the early 20th Century." This July, Beatrice will present a paper, "Cultural Institutions and Politics: The Palestine Museum of Antiquities 1890-1901," at the International Congress on Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey in Aix-en-Provence.

**Zahra Faridany Akahan** (PhD, FAS, Harvard) visited the Art University of Tehran in April to prepare a course she will teach there next fall on the history of Timurid and Safavid art.

**'88 Kazi Ashraf** (SMArchS, DIS, MIT) has moved to Philadelphia to continue his PhD studies in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Maria Luisa Fernández** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) was invited to Mexico to lecture at the Opec-Center's Master Degree Program on International Relations in January. Her lectures were "The Arab and Islamic Legacy to

Latin-American Culture," "Muslims in the ex-Soviet Union," and "Religion and Politics in the Art of the Middle East." In March, Maria Luisa lectured at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire on "Medieval Art in Spain: from the Mozarabs to the Modejares," and participated in Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunication's video program *España Diversa* speaking on "The Arts in Spain and the New World."

**Shakeel Hossain** (SMArchS, DIS, MIT) will return to India and Pakistan in May to continue his Smithsonian sponsored research on the *tazi'a* for the next six months.

**'87 Michael Brand** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) continues his collaborative work with James Wescoat, Jr. of the University of Colorado on a Mughal gardens project in Lahore funded by the

Smithsonian Institution. As the curator of Asian Art at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra, he is organizing an exhibition and conservation project with the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. Michael's wife Tina gave birth to their first child, Isabel Gomes, on October 15, 1991.

**'82 Eva Hoffman** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) presented a lecture on "Early Islamic Manuscript Illustrations and the Late Antique Tradition" in March as part of the AKP Friends of Islamic Art lecture series.

**'81 Stephen K. Urice** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) has recently been appointed Deputy Director and Counsel of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation in Los Angeles.

**'80 Nancy Pyle** (PhD, Fine Arts, Harvard) was appointed Vice President for International Planning and Development at the American University of Beirut on January 1, 1992. Her primary responsibilities will be to coordinate AUB's development and alumni activities worldwide, cultivate new sources of support, and to integrate development strategies with the University's long-term planning. ♦

### Visiting Scholars Program

After a two year postponement, The Aga Khan Program is reactivating the Visiting Scholars and Research Fellows Program for the 1993-1994 academic year. In 1991 and 1992, the Program was unable to provide stipends for those visiting scholars or research fellows seeking appointments; those who did receive appointments came with funds provided by other organizations.

Appointments receiving a stipend range from three to nine months. Preference goes to recent doctoral recipients who demonstrate outstanding promise and to young professionals interested in scholarship and research. For more information and applications, please contact the AKP central office: MIT 10-390, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139.

Application guidelines will be mailed after November 1992.

## Student News

**Vivek Agrawal** (SMArchS, MIT) traveled to Lublin, Poland, to participate in the MIT Special Interest Group in Urban Studies (SIGUS) housing workshop over spring break. In January, Vivek married Ritu Bhatt, an architecture graduate student at Kansas State University whom he met as an undergraduate in Roorkee, India. Vivek will travel to Lahore, Pakistan, in May along with fellow AKP SMArchS students **Wael Al-Masri**, **Tarek Beshir**, **Asiya Chowdhury**, **Zisong Feng**, and **Mahbub Rashid** for the conclusion of the joint MIT/National College of Arts studio. **Zisong Feng** (SMArchS, MIT) joined the AKP this winter from the Tsinghua University in China. Zisong has worked as an architect studying and writing about sacred places and human settlements in Tibet and designing Tibetan architecture. While at MIT, he intends to explore the fundamental nature of socio-historic laws and philosophical intentions that underlie Tibetan architecture and to apply them to

his own architecture and urban design.

**Imran Ahmed** (HTC, MIT) plans to marry Lubna Jafri in Detroit this June, after which he will take a leave of absence from MIT. His article on the fall symposium, *Sher-e-Banglanagar: Louis Kahn and Dhaka*, appeared in the March 1992 issue of Mimar.

**Gauvin Bailey** (PhD program, Fine Arts, Harvard) received a 1992 AKP summer travel grant to conduct research in India and Macao. Other AKP summer travel grant recipients include **Vivek Agrawal** and **Sonit Bafna** (SMArchS, MIT) for research in Cairo, Egypt; **Wael Al-Masri** and **Tarek Beshir** for research in Morocco; **Robert Gonzalez** (SMArchS, MIT) for research in Portugal; **Valeria Koukoutsis** (SMArchS, MIT) for research in Spain; and **Leslie Schick** (PhD cand., Fine Arts, Harvard) for

research in Greece and Germany.

**Katherine Dunham** (GSD, Harvard) and

**June Williamson** (SMArchS, MIT) will participate in AKP summer internship programs in Pakistan and Jordan respectively.

**Julia Bailey** (PhD cand., Fine Arts, Harvard) will return to her position as assistant curator of Islamic and Later Indian Art at the Sackler Museum at Harvard on July 1. This past fall, Julia was the guest curator for the exhibit *Through the Collector's Eye: Oriental Rugs from New England Private Collectors*, that originated at the Rhode Island School of Design and moved to the Textile Museum in Washington,

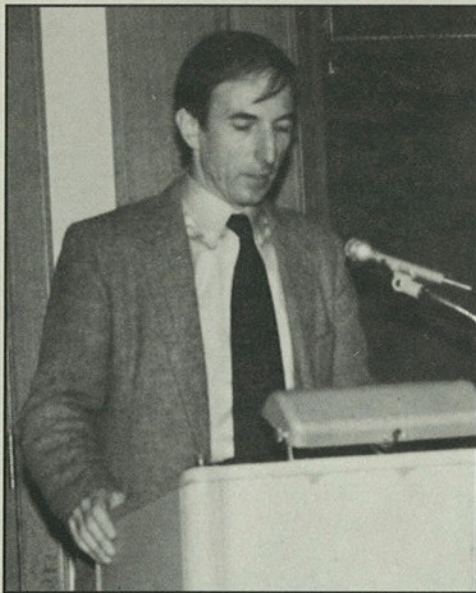
D.C. this spring. Julia is also a contributor to the exhibit's catalogue.

**Murat Germen** (SMArchS, MIT) submitted his thesis mid-March and began working with architect Jody Gibbs in Tucson, Arizona, on the design and construction of an

elderly center for the Tohona O'odham Native American tribe and on the Center for Basic Human Settlements to be located in Arivaca. Murat plans to return to his native Turkey next spring.

**André Tchelistcheff** (SMArchS, MIT) completed his videotape, "Journey to Tatarstan," recounting his survey of mosques in Kazan in the former Tatar Socialist Soviet Republic on a 1991 AKP travel grant. A copy of the 45-minute video can be seen at the MIT Rotch Visual Collection. André is now living and working in New York City. ♦

Louis Kahn — continued from page 1



MIT Professor Francesco Passanti, symposium coordinator, delivering opening remarks.

Humanism in Kahn's National Assembly Building," introduced the theme of assembly in Kahn's public architecture. In Kahn's notion of assembly, Ksiazek observed a desire to express a participatory democratic ideal through a monumental architecture that had as its premise the figural abstraction of archetypes. The same search for fundamental moments by Kahn was the subject of Stanford Anderson's meditation, "Louis I. Kahn: Reading Volume Zero." Anderson, head of the MIT architecture department, identified Kahn's endless inquiry into beginnings in his desire to read the volume before the first volume of English history, that is, volume zero. Kahn sought the impulse prior to the social agreements embodied in precedent and tradition. In this imaginative, at times frankly troubling, fundamentalism, Anderson explored a profound dimension of Kahn's thought and work that is essential to any understanding of Sher-e-Banglanagar.

The National Assembly did not spring whole from the mind of a single architect. In his paper "Architectural History of the Region as a Background of Louis Kahn's Project," Meer Mobashsher Ali of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology surveyed local architecture in an effort to understand Sher-e-Banglanagar in terms of a formal vocabulary specific to the region. Now the capitol is a widely accepted symbol of Bangladesh's independence and the beginning of a new Bengali architecture that alludes to a rich past and aspires to a hopeful future. Kazi Khaleed Ashraf of Pratt Institute and the University of Pennsylvania,

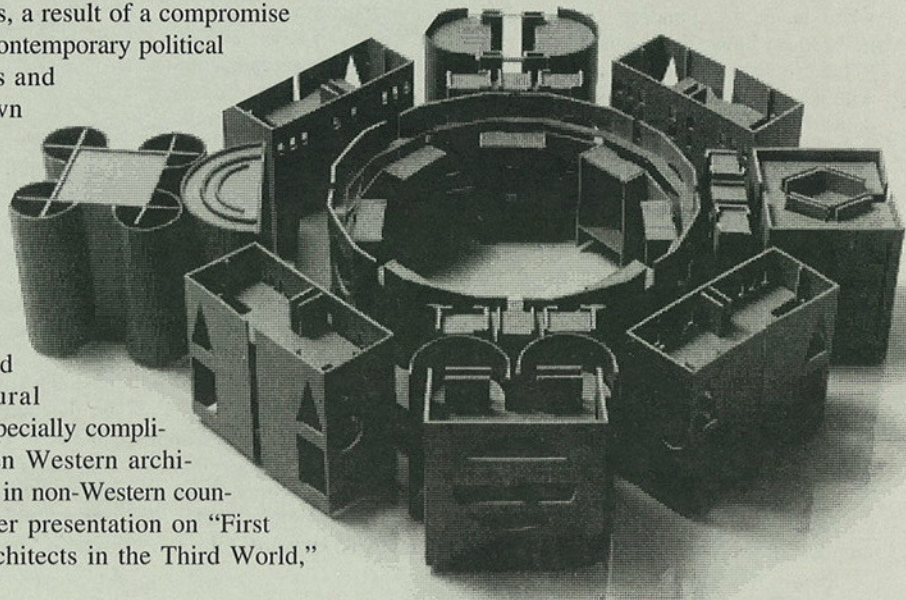
in his presentation, "Mythic Themes and the Architecture of the Capitol Complex," related the National Assembly's mediation of land and water to regional myths. The mythic core of the region was, in its reflections in the nineteenth-century Bengali renaissance, to be sought in the landscape; Kahn absorbed the surrounding landscape and, for Ashraf, his building thus embodies an architectural experience of archaic tradition. Peter Reed of the University of Pennsylvania explored a parallel issue in his presentation on "Professor Kahn's Great Game: Building Dhaka's National Symbol." Reed traced Kahn's adroit manipulation of forms through the stages of the project's development. Kahn's success in registering the complex secular and institutional programmatic requirements that Reed discusses was measured in a paper given by Saiful Haque: "Architecture in Bangladesh after Sher-e-Banglanagar." Haque, of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, demonstrated how Sher-e-Banglanagar is a touchstone for those architects trying to synthesize Bangladesh's traditional architectural heritage with the changes brought about by modernization.

In his "Government by Urban Design: Twentieth Century Capitol Complexes," Lawrence Vale, a professor at MIT's urban studies and planning department, linked the National Assembly at Dhaka with other attempts to give architectural form to national identity. Vale showed how government complex types are organized according to their most important government function: executive functions as in New Delhi, legislative function as in Washington, D.C., and general assembly or "plaza centered function" such as that found in Canberra. Dhaka, Vale argued, was a hybrid of the legislative- and plaza-centered types, a result of a compromise between contemporary political actualities and Kahn's own transcendental vision.

The connection between political aspiration and architectural form is especially complicated when Western architects work in non-Western countries. In her presentation on "First World Architects in the Third World,"

Zeynep Celik of the New Jersey Institute of Technology elaborated on such situations within the broader context of an oppositional discourse based on levels of technological development. She established the interchangeability of civilization and technology as the premise of this opposition, and consequently brought the entire polarization into question. Neil Levine, chairman of the Fine Arts Department at Harvard, explored a similar opposition operating in particular cases of architectural design. In "Plotting Colonial and Post-colonial Architectures on the Coordinates of Nature and Culture," Levine showed how several architects in their designs for Baghdad in the late 1950s displayed a Western predilection to overlook the cultural landscape of the non-Western nation in favor of its "natural" conditions. In most of the cases he cited, Levine observed an eager readiness on the part of first-world architects to focus on "problems" of climate; cultural abundance is simply not considered. Sher-e-Banglanagar locates itself midway along Levine's conceptual axis of nature and culture: the project attends to indigenous architecture through abstract formal references and an idealized horizontality.

For Louis Kahn, the idea of architectural origins was less a nostalgia for the distant past or a desire to erase the recent past, than a point of departure for a re-imagined future. The exploration of such origins, both formal and cultural, is a key to the re-invention of national meaning. It proceeds from the fundamental twofold nature of Kahn's searching and the actual physical and political context; it materializes in a complex that is at once transcendent and a visible index of unforgettable disparities. ♦



# AKP Happenings

## The 1991-1992 "An Evening With"

lectures, coordinated by Professor Nasser Rabbat, discussed the various ways in which East and West have interacted to influence creative and artistic production within different milieus at different times in history. Architect Gulzar Haider presented "Ibn Batuta at the Epcot Center" on February 19. The other lecturers are pictured below.

## The 1991-92

### Friends of Islamic Art Lecture Series

Coordinated by Professor Gülru Necipoğlu, this year's lecture series was entitled *The Interaction Between Islamic and Non-Islamic Visual Cultures in the Mediterranean World*.

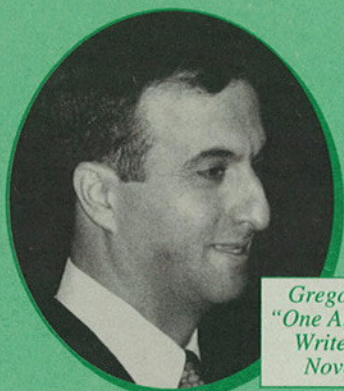
Robert Ousterhout, "The Byzantine-Ottoman 'Overlap' Architecture," November 8.

Dogan Kuban, "The Steppes, Iran and the Mediterranean: Three Stages of Turkish-Islamic Art History," November 15.

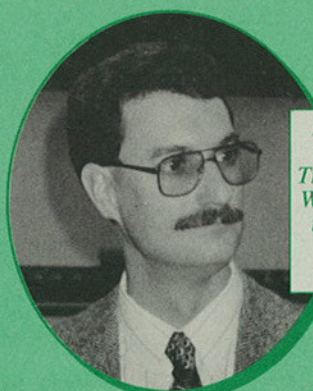
Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "Painting and Identity on the Frontier," December 6.

Charles Nicklies, "The Architecture of SS. Pietro e Paolo d'Agrò, Sicily," February 21.

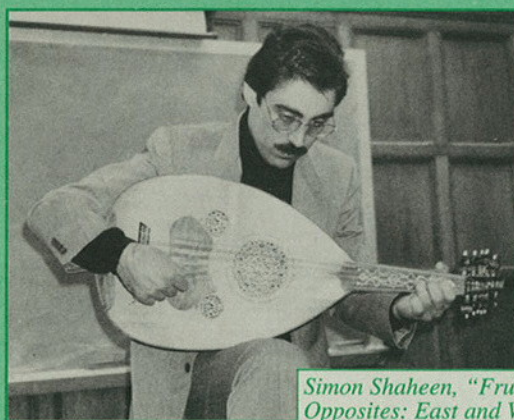
Eva Hoffman, "Early Islamic Manuscript Illustration and the Late Antique Tradition," March 13.



Gregory Orfalea,  
"One Arab American  
Writer's Road,"  
November 13.

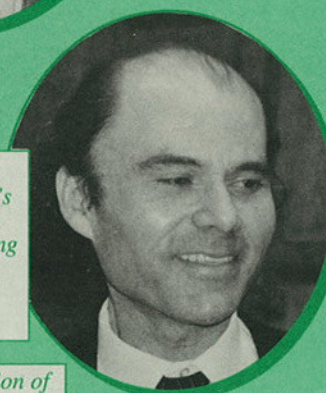


Dwight Reynolds,  
"Translation and  
Transformation: The  
Western Creation of  
the Thousand and  
One Nights,"  
December 11.



Simon Shaheen, "Fruitful Marriage or Flirtation of  
Opposites: East and West in Arabic Music," a musical  
lecture-demonstration, March 4.

Kanan Makiya,  
"Saddam Husain's  
Monument: An  
Exercise in Thinking  
About Cultural  
Relativism,"  
March 18.



On November 9, 1991, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University co-sponsored a concert of traditional Turkish and Sufi music by the Necdet Yasar Ensemble in the courtyard of Harvard's Fogg Art Museum. Mr. Yasar is the acknowledged grand master of the Turkish tambur and unrivaled in his improvisations (taksim); he is also known for his technical knowledge of the makam system, a complex modal construct brought to a high level of development under the Ottomans.



From left to right: Necati Çelik on the ud, Hasan Esen on the kemence, Nurettin Çelik as the vocalist, Göksel Baktagir on the kanun, and Necdet Yasar on the tambur.  
photo: Mübeyyin Batu Altan

Continued from page 4

and faculty working on professionally sound projects for three or four years at a time, in cooperation with the professionals and students of a given country. Drawing on MIT's technological, economic, and art history resources, the students would then get a more inclusive education in a specific culture. It disturbs me that so many students do not have better access to ways of working on the problems of the poor in the Islamic world after they leave. I'd like to see graduates have more opportunities to put their skills to use on socially important problems.

*What is your evaluation of architectural education today and how would you like to see it change?*

For the last 30 or 40 years, architectural students all over the world have been getting a very cerebral education. They are not educated in the fine arts, so they are not as skilled at creating as are art students. Nor are they being educated in engineering or technology, so they do not have technical skills. Instead they are taught to make decisions, solve problems, and manage people. The result is that they continually end up being administrative architects. Our environments reflect this; architecture is bland and not very artistic, and the profession is becoming impoverished because it has to hire technical consultants who cost more than the architect can charge the client. Architects aren't taught to face the problems that the majority of the people have. Architecture is still a profession that serves rich patrons who will always manage to take care of themselves. It is the poor—more than half the people in the world—that need our services. We need to figure out how to educate architects so that they will go out and work on these problems.

Architects need to be people who understand culture, politics, and economics. They need to be able to do advanced engineering, develop materials, seek out new information, influence people, and be extremely artistic. Students today must learn to use their hands as well as their heads. As educators, we must be confident that our students have good ideas, are well-educated, and most importantly, know how to make correct moral decisions. If we do not develop these ideas and skills in the students, I think there is much less of a chance that they will have the influence needed to improve the conditions and environments that people live in. ♦

## Recent AKP Publications

### **Muqarnas 8: K.A.C. Creswell and his Legacy**

Papers presented at a symposium organized by J.W. Allan and Julian Raby and held at Oxford University in May of 1988.

Articles by James Allan, Sheila S. Blair, Jonathan M. Bloom, Eric Fernie, Teresa Fitzherbert, Robert Hillenbrand, Mark Horton, Gloria Karnouk, Geoffrey King, Cyril Mango, Alistair Northedge, Julian Raby, J. Michael Rogers, and John Warren.

1991

27.5 x 21.5 cm. clothbound. 138 pages.

Plans, drawings, and halftone illustrations.

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The Netherlands.

### **The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Iran and Transoxiana** by Sheila S. Blair

Publishes the 78 earliest extant inscriptions surviving on architecture in Iran and Transoxiana from the first five centuries of Islam. The book puts inscriptions into their historical, social, and political context.

1991

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The Netherlands.

## Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power

by Gülru Necipoğlu

The Architectural History Foundation and The MIT Press have recently published Gülru Necipoğlu's latest contribution to the history of 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman architecture and institutions. Her book leads the reader in a step-by-step tour of Istanbul's Topkapi Palace complex and addresses the fundamental concerns about the ideology of absolute sovereignty, the interplay between architecture and ritual, and the changing perceptions of a building through time.

January 1992. 25.5 x 21 cm. 336 pp. Plans, drawings, and halftone illustrations. ISBN 0-262-14050-0. \$50.00.

Order from The MIT Press, 55 Hayward St., Cambridge, MA 02142; telephone (617) 625-8569 or 800-356-0343.



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