



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
(International) in the United Kingdom
Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

The Shape of Light

By Nasser Rabbat

Cultural Heritage, Urban Architecture and Creativity in Muslim Settings



The fifth in a series of ten public events interrogating how heritage and contemporary creativity enhance and affect both quality of life and sustainability in a range of Muslim contexts, co-produced by Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and held in the iconic [Aga Khan Centre](#).

Light is an essential element in Islamic architecture. For more than fifteen centuries, design strategies were developed all over the Islamic World to radiate, filter, refract, redirect, magnify, focus, conceal, and altogether mystify light. The impressive array of light architecture they have left still astonishes, stirs, and elates today. This talk will present some of the most outstanding examples of light architecture in Islamic history and examine their aesthetic, spatial, and environmental qualities as well as their symbolic and metaphysical connotations. Avoiding any essentialist standpoint, the talk will argue instead that light was shaped for a variety of purposes ranging from the purely functional to the emotive, spiritual, and awe-inspiring depending on the time, place, function, and aspiration.

Speaker

Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor and the Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. His interests include the history and historiography of Islamic architecture, medieval urbanism, modern Arab history, contemporary Arab art, and post-colonial criticism. He has published several books, most recently *Imarat al-Mudun al-Mayyita: Nahwa Qira'a Jadida lil-Tarikh al-Suri (The Architecture of the Dead Cities: Toward a New Interpretation of the History of Syria)* (2018); an online book, [The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoléon to ISIS](#) (2016), co-edited with Pamela Karimi, and *al-Naqd Iltizaman: Nazarat fi-l Tarikh wal 'Ururba wal Thawra (Criticism as Commitment: Viewpoints on History, Arabism, and Revolution)* (2015), which deals with the roots and consequences of the "Arab Spring". He is currently writing an intellectual biography of the 15th century Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi who penned the first true urban history of Cairo.



Recently, Rabbat became involved in the debate on the preservation of the heritage in Syria and in the planning for reconstruction in his devastated native country. To that end, he has formed a collaborative research project at MIT, named "Ethics of Intervention", which strives to frame the debates on the preservation of heritage and in the planning for reconstruction in countries devastated by civil wars within ethical, civil, and humanistic frameworks. He has co-curated with Filiz Çakır Phillip the exhibition, "Syria: A Living History", at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto between October 2016 and March 2017. In April 2017, he co-founded Syrians for Heritage (SIMAT), a new professional association concerned with the preservation of the threatened Syrian cultural heritage. He was guest in several episodes of the BBC series: "Museum of Lost Objects" and on reconstruction in Syria. He has also published several essays in recent years on immigration, refugees' issues, heritage conservation, and destruction and reconstruction in Artforum, Critical Inquiry, the International Journal of Islamic Architecture, and The London Review of Books.

Time and Venue

Monday 28 January 2019, 18.00-19.30

Atrium Conference Room,
Aga Khan Centre,
10 Handyside Street,
London N1C 4DN

Booking

This event is free but booking is essential:

To attend in person, please click [here](#).

To attend online, please click [here](#).

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove™

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

Aga Khan Centre, 10 Handyside Street
London, | NC1 4DN United Kingdom

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

emma®