



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Aga Khan Trust for Culture receives ICCROM-Sharjah award for best practice in conservation of Islamic heritage



Sharjah, UAE, 10 November 2020 - The rehabilitation of the central souk in the Old City of Aleppo by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) has received an ICCROM-Sharjah Award for Best Practice in Cultural Heritage Conservation and Management in the Arab region. The biennial Award seeks to honour and reward outstanding work that contributes to the protection and vitality of tangible cultural heritage in the Arab world.

The prize, a joint collaboration between ICCROM and the Emirate of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, is under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah.

As part of the Aga Khan Development Network's humanitarian assistance activities, including emergency health care and food aid, AKTC undertook surveys and technical studies for the rehabilitation of Souk al-Saqatiyya and planned for the Souk's rehabilitation. In Phase 1, it began a pilot project in the Aleppo Souk – the largest medieval souk in the Middle East – which had been badly damaged during the conflict.

The prototype for conservation included all public spaces along 150 metres of the Souk, including the vaulted roof and central passageway, essential infrastructure and utilities, as well as three completed shops showcasing the possible finishes of individual shops. The prime objective was to improve the infrastructure and utilities in the Souk.

During the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the work continued. This phase comprised the rehabilitation of connecting arteries in order to link the completed phase 1 work of Souk al-Saqatiyya to exterior entry points, including Souk Khan al-Harir. The Souk Khan al-Harir contains 60 shops and serves three other large khans (an inn for travelers, built on a central courtyard).

The ICCROM-Sharjah Award works to help “safeguard the cultural heritage of the Arab region; promote international ethics in the practice of tangible heritage conservation; facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience across borders; enhance public awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage; and encourage excellence through example”.

For more information:

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The *ICCROM-Sharjah Award* is given by the ICCROM-ATHAR, a regional conservation centre founded by ICCROM and the Government of UAE in the Emirate of Sharjah. ICCROM itself is a Rome-based intergovernmental organisation working to promote the conservation of all forms of cultural heritage, in every region of the world. It operates in the spirit of the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which states that “Respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security.” ICCROM stands for International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

For over 30 years, the *Aga Khan Trust for Culture* (AKTC) has shown how culture can be an asset and that it can be a catalyst for improvements in the quality of life – even in the poorest and remote areas of the globe. It works to preserve and revitalise cultural assets; reinvigorates cultural traditions; creates education programmes that foster mutual understanding; and identifies architectural excellence that positively impacts the way people live, work and interact. The Trust’s programmes include the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, the Aga Khan Music Programme, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, the on-line resource Archnet.org, and related programmes.

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