

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2017





Our Mission

The Aga Khan Museum is dedicated to fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of the many major contributions Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

In 2017, the Museum entitled its bold vision for the future “Changing Perceptions.” Though ambitious, the vision is an imperative challenge for us to undertake given the times and needs of our world to create a future forged through exchange and dialogue. Changing Perceptions means bringing together for our public seemingly diverse communities from across the world using the universally accessible medium of art. Over the past year, through a wide array of innovative temporary exhibitions and public programs, the Museum has proudly played an important role in fostering understanding and in building bridges across our fractured world.

Message From Prince Ayn Aga Khan, Chairman Of The Board

In September 2017, the Aga Khan Museum celebrated its third anniversary, and I am happy to say that, although we are still young, the Museum has, I think, already made serious progress in fostering dialogue, and in instilling mutual understanding among people with different backgrounds and from different cultures. Remarkably, we have accomplished this and are continuing to do so not only in Toronto but also around the world through public programs that are innovative and that are specially conceived to educate, uplift, and inspire.

It is in the spirit of friendship that the Museum is able to accomplish its work, and it is with the utmost gratitude that I would like to thank our extraordinary donors, lenders, and partners. Our mission to foster a greater appreciation of the arts and cultures of Islamic civilizations and to reveal the centuries of cross-cultural dialogue that have existed between the different areas of the world, is, I feel, capturing hearts and changing perceptions on a wide scale. We began 2017 auspiciously with *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Persians*, an exhibition that premiered in Canada, travelled to the United States, and touched a chord internationally at precisely the moment when its insights into contemporary Iran and Iranians were most needed.

We welcomed spring with the equally exciting and innovative *Syrian Symphony: New Compositions in Sight and Sound*, which united art and music to spark empathy for a storied land, now troubled but which has played so large a role in giving us our common human cultural heritage. In the summer, the museum-wide installations of *HERE: Locating Contemporary Canadian Artists* celebrated the complex history and diverse identities of an exemplary pluralistic nation and its people. We closed the year with a unique exhibition called *Arts of the East: Highlights of Islamic Art from the Bruschettini Collection*, which brought to the public spectacular works of art not seen before to illuminate



the bridges that have continually connected and mutually inspired cultures through the ages.

Throughout the year, our performing arts and educational programs brought such luminaries such as Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, poet George Elliott Clarke, musical group Nishtiman, and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk to the Museum. Each unique event unveiled the myriad of ways that cultures communicate through the arts and further built upon the Museum's reputation as a remarkable incubator of creativity and pluralism. This reputation was further enhanced by our strong school programming, including Visual Storytelling, which invited students to learn through observation and inquiry to craft and share their own unique visual literary narratives.

If we made big strides in 2017, however, we are just at the beginning of our journey. As far too many headlines this past year have demonstrated, the gaps between cultures seem to be growing larger, not smaller, with anti-Muslim sentiment, most often ill-informed, on the rise rather than on the wane. The Aga Khan Museum's work is perhaps even more urgent now than it was three years ago at the time of our founding. We will continue to grow and to innovate and we will seek to unleash the power of art and culture to foster truth, to launch conversations, and to unite us. Unity is the child of diversity, and the Aga Khan Museum will continue to seek to impart new insights, to inspire unexpected discoveries, and to bring cultures together with the aim of promoting an enlightened society where people are united.

Prince Ayn Aga Khan
Chairman of the Board

Message From Henry S. Kim, Director and CEO

We are fortunate to make our home in what has become a landmark edifice. I am reminded of this by the thousands of people who flock to the Aga Khan Museum, many for the first time, when we participate in Doors Open, Toronto's annual celebration of architecture. Yet we are more than bricks and mortar, more than an important collection in a beautiful building. We are a museum of ideas, and our achievements in 2017 have made that abundantly clear.

Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet proved to be a stunning exhibition, not only for the quality of the artwork it displayed, but also for the power and relevancy of the ideas it drove forward about the multiple identities of contemporary Persian art. *Syrian Symphony* moved many visitors to tears on the strength of its ideas about the crucial role of artists in times of conflict. That exhibition demonstrated that not only does the Aga Khan Museum generate ideas; we make the most of them. We orchestrated for our visitors a multi-sensory experience borne of visual and musical artists working in tandem to create, in the Museum itself, new and original artwork. We are a museum not only of ideas, but also of innovation and impact.

We are making that impact on individuals and on the community. This year we animated the Aga Khan Park like never before, inviting neighbours near and far to public programming outside the walls of our beautiful building. The outdoor photography exhibition *Skate Girls of Kabul* visualized ideas about empowering young girls, and demonstrated them with a pop-up skate park. Our creativity is breathing new life into the very concept of an exhibition. During *Nuit Blanche*, Toronto's all-night art event, we wove the visual and the aural into a sunset to sunrise event that changed perceptions about the culture of Islamic civilizations in profound and visceral ways.



Throughout the year we connected minds and cultures by bringing together diverse communities of acclaimed scholars, institutions and collectors from Toronto, Canada, and around the world. We forged significant partnerships to bring the Museum works of art from the Afkhami Foundation, the Bruschetti Collection, and innumerable other private collections. For the third year, we welcomed Tiraz fragments from the Royal Ontario Museum into our Museum Collections gallery, further deepening the ongoing dialogue between our unique yet complimentary collections. Our virtual museum initiative received powerful fodder in the form of fifteen internationally recognized scholars representing institutions including the University of Pennsylvania, the Metropolitan Museum of New York, Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, and others. We also actively reached far beyond the Museum's walls to share our very own expertise and collection internationally through new research initiatives and performing arts programming.

While seeing and thinking and learning are critical to the work we do at the Aga Khan Museum, so too is feeling. We are opening the eyes of tens of thousands of people – and, through our ingenuity and creativity, we are opening their hearts, too. We are truly a museum like no other.

Henry S. Kim
Director and CEO

Changing Perceptions

The Aga Khan Museum believes there is no greater social imperative than to find creative ways of uniting people through education and art. Only through social change can we build a more enlightened society, one that works together to overcome global concerns that transcend borders and cultures.





Changing perceptions and attitudes takes time. However, with a bold vision, strategic leadership, and the support of the very community we aim to impact, we can make this vision a reality. Changing Perceptions rests on the following three cornerstone goals.

Thought Leader

By focusing on the key platforms of research, education, and conservation, we will emerge as a national and international thought leader of Islamic art and culture with an expansive array of art, artifacts, and performances. Becoming a thought leader will require investment in Directorships, Curatorships, and Fellowships to attract recognized scholars. It will necessitate the creation of a Conservation and Care of Collection Fund to acquire urgently needed equipment and tools. And it will require the establishment of an Education Development Program to communicate ground-breaking ideas and inspire dialogue and debate.



Educator Without Walls

The potential for impact is far-reaching, but only if we can engage an inspire even more people, beyond the 120,000 visitors and 12,000 schoolchildren a year who step inside our doors. To become a true catalyst for global change, we must build a Virtual Museum and harness technology and partnerships to share our collections and exhibitions, as well as our performing arts and education programs, with individuals and communities around the world. The creation of a Travelling Exhibition Fund will allow us to continue reaching beyond our physical location as we strive to introduce the world to our unique mission and collection.



Centre for Innovation and Creativity

We will grow the Museum into a hub of both presentation and creativity. Our Artist-in-Residence Program will attract established visual and performing artists from around the world, support them in the creation of new original works, and provide them with a platform to share insight into their artistic process through workshops and presentations. The Aga Khan Museum Creativity Incubator will provide a unique space and opportunity for diverse artists to collaborate on cross-disciplinary works in support of the Museum's mission.

The Aga Khan Museum is already connecting cultures through art. Now, with our ambitious new vision, we will grow, innovate, and impact even more people around the world, uniting them in the face of adversity while spreading peace through understanding.



Exhibitions

In 2017, the Aga Khan Museum delivered to the public four major exhibitions that were not only unique in their content and engaging in their presentation, but also relevant to the lives of visitors, whether because of the timeliness of the themes or the immediacy of the artwork.

Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Persians

As the first survey of contemporary art from Iran to be shown in North America, *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet* offered what was for most visitors a unique opportunity and singular experience. The exhibition opened as the United States' immigration ban was making international headlines, and with Iran named as one of the seven countries whose citizens were banned from entering the US, *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet* secured extensive and positive media coverage in Canada, the United States, and internationally that carried the exhibition's perspectives far beyond the walls of the Museum. The exhibition itself travelled, too, opening at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston to critical acclaim and furthering the Aga Khan Museum's reputation as a global catalyst for insight.



“Given the destruction of so much culture and so many lives, not only in Syria but in other countries who have for centuries enriched our culture, this museum is acting as a bridge of hope.”

– Visitor

Syrian Symphony: New Compositions in Sight and Sound

An immersive and interactive response from artists to the current situation in Syria, *Syrian Symphony* demonstrated how, by showcasing art created in times of crisis, museums can be brave. The exhibition stands as a major milestone in the Museum's goal to become a centre for creativity, as musicians and visual artists came together to create a collaborative, multi-sensory environment. *Syrian Symphony* spanned the spectrum of cultural expression, and the opportunity to experience art and music in this personal way resonated with visitors, a great number of whom took up the invitation to leave their own response to the exhibition.





HERE: Locating Contemporary Canadian Artists

HERE: Locating Contemporary Canadian Artists illuminated the diversity of contemporary art by showcasing the work of 21 artists who grapple with the complexity of Canadian identity in broadly relevant, yet profoundly personal ways. The Museum worked with an unprecedented number of living artists, who took inspiration from our collection to create original works of art. Displaying historic and contemporary pieces in the same exhibition space communicated that the language of art is eternal, and, with its many messages and media, *HERE* demystified contemporary art by offering visitors many possible points of connection. In demonstrating that there is no one single Canadian identity, the exhibition inspired visitors to contemplate their own sense of self.

“It’s hard to think of a better representation of what Canada is today.”

– The 10 best art shows of 2017, *NOW*



Arts of the East: Highlights of Islamic Art from the Bruschetti Collection

The first-ever exhibition in North America of a collection assembled over many decades by renowned collector Alessandro Bruschetti, *Arts of the East* was a stunning complement to the Museum's Permanent Collection. With its hand-picked selection of artworks arranged in groupings that acknowledged the many Muslim civilizations that emerged from Spain to China between the 13th to 17th centuries, the exhibition revealed the many connections between diverse cultures. The monumentality of the marvelous carpets challenged the Museum's creativity and inspired new display techniques that awed visitors, while the programming brought in international scholars and visitors, enhancing the Museum's reputation as a thought leader.

“The carpet displays were majestic — and the stories they told were beautiful.”

— Visitor



Acquisitions & Loans

The Museum's evolving Permanent Collection was enriched with multiple new acquisitions and loans in 2017. Ranging from an iconic steel structure to handcrafted glassware, these artworks have strengthened the ability of our galleries to inform, educate, and inspire visitors about the arts and cultures of Muslim civilizations.

“Beautiful collection of Islamic artifacts and art. The museum tells the story of Islam from its roots to present day, and provides a beautiful venue for discussing the important matters of diversity, tolerance, and understanding. Bravo.”

– Visitor

Notable Loans

Robes

Central Asia, 19th–20th century. Silk and cotton; plain weave, embroidered.

On loan from Marshall and Marilyn R. Wolf Collection

Pictured to the left, these vibrant robes made from silk and cotton are decorated with stylized flower motifs and depictions of tulips, a common wildflower in Central Asia. They were mounted on a custom-designed display in the Museum Collections gallery, greeting visitors with their wide, open sleeves.



Notable Acquisitions

Candlestick

Turkey, early 16th century. Brass. 2017.2.12

Purchased with funds provided by Farida Mangalji

Rosewater Sprinkler

Probably Egypt or Syria, 10th–12th century. Glass. 2017.1.1.

Purchased with funds provided by Farida Mangalji

Big Heech

Parviz Tanavoli, 2014. Stainless steel. 2017.3.1

Purchased with funds provided by Orbital Technologies Inc.



Performing Arts



New, expanded, and continuing programming under the Performing Arts banner was guided by the vision of “Changing Perceptions” in 2017. Performances both inside and outside of the Museum’s walls invited visitors to engage with live music and interactive dance workshops, illustrating and celebrating the potential and power of the universal language of the arts.

Feathers of Fire: A Persian Epic

For the first time, the Museum engaged in a partnership with Tirgan, the city of Toronto's prominent Persian presenter, for a cinematic shadow play at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. Our first presentation in that space, *Feathers of Fire* took place as part of the Nowruzgan Festival, a celebration featuring local and international artists aimed at connecting Persian arts and crafts with Canadian content.

Duende Flamenco Festival

Our annual Flamenco Festival continued into its third year with standout performances from Spanish and local companies, and a strong response from audiences. The three-day festival presented audiences with the soulful expressions and contagious energy of both local and international flamenco artists.

Conversation Nation

Presented to complement our *HERE* and *Arts of the East* exhibitions, our Conversation Nation series featured standout performances by artists from across Canada's geographic and artistic landscape. Moe Clark headlined the series by presenting a world-premiere performance uniting Métis, Inuit, and Arabic musical influences, and Montreal-based ensemble Constantinople joined with Kinan Azmeh to kick off a four-part collaborative performance series.

Global Conversations

Our Global Conversations series continued to welcome a wide range of acclaimed performers from Canada and around the world, including the widely acclaimed Aga Khan Music Initiative project Trio Da Kali, and Kurdish supergroup Nishtiman. The series concluded for the season with a standout performance by Afghan superstar Dawood Sarkhosh making his North American premiere at the Mississauga Living Arts Centre.





Education

The Museum continued to create innovative public programs that inspired creativity and conversation in unique and extraordinary ways, with relevance to diverse groups of interest. This year, the breadth of programming invited participants to engage with arts and culture in a multitude of ways, ranging from a hands-on workshop on Aleppo soap-making to a multiplayer Silk Routes board game, custom-designed by the Aga Khan Museum team.

New and Continuing Partnerships

The Museum's Education and Public Engagement department continued to develop new, meaningful, and ongoing community relationships and partnerships with the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, New Circles, the Toronto District School Board, Ontario's Ministry of Education, and family outreach workshops. These connections have resulted in visits by new school groups and further opportunities for professional development for teachers.

Curriculum Resource Development

In partnership with Ontario's Ministry of Education; Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport; Ministry of Immigration; and the Ismaili Council for Canada, the Museum created online content to help educators realize the lessons told by our Collection and artifacts, and to encourage the folding of these ideas into teaching plans across Ontario and beyond. This development provided techniques for teachers to include ideas of pluralism and the arts of Muslim civilizations into their lessons, continuing to impact and influence students year after year.

Fredric Roberts Photography Workshop

For another year, the results of the extraordinary weeklong workshop in which 20 students engaged with the language of photography were displayed in the public space of the Museum's atrium. These special workshops provided the Museum with an opportunity to focus on building community relationships and youth programming, which continued with additional opportunities for mentorship and portfolio building throughout the year.

“The artifacts at the beautiful Aga Khan Museum offer a unique opportunity to interact with the Museum's Collection and connect them to a variety of Social Science and Family Studies courses. Most importantly, it challenges our students to think critically about Muslim civilization, its history, and its impact, and immerses them into its culture and practices, bringing learning to life.”

— Derek Wun, Teacher at Cawthra Park Secondary School and President of the Ontario Family Studies Home Economics Educator's Association



Community Engagement



The Museum expanded its reach quite literally in 2017, by mounting exhibitions and installations in the Aga Khan Park aimed at engaging people new to the Museum in new ways. From all-night musical programming in the yurt and skateboarding lessons for girls to a continuing commitment to Pop-up Performances and yoga, the Museum's community outreach initiatives are changing public perceptions about what a Museum can be and do.

Doors Open Toronto

Organized by the City of Toronto in partnership with the broader Greater Toronto Area community, the annual Doors Open Toronto event brought more than 8,000 visitors to the Aga Khan Museum in just one weekend. Specially installed for the weekend, a number of large-scale monoliths were placed on the pathway leading to the Aga Khan Museum, providing visitors with information on the operations and worldwide impact of the Aga Khan Development Network and its agencies.

Pop-up Performances

Our ongoing Pop-up Performances supported by TD Bank Group brought a new range of artists into the Museum and Park, engaging audience members with music from China, India, the Caribbean, and beyond. The performances attracted multi-generational and multi-ethnic audiences to engage with diverse artistic traditions that reflect Toronto's multiculturalism, and covered more than 30 different artists and performance groups, including Kurdish *kamancheh*, Indian sitar and classical dance, Cameroonian kalimba, Inuit throat singing, belly dancing, Afro-Brazilian capoeira, harp, beatboxing, western classical cello, and many more.

Skate Girls of Kabul

By bringing to a North American public the work in Afghanistan of Skateistan, an organization that empowers girls through education and sport, the outdoor photography exhibition *Skate Girls of Kabul* demonstrated the power of empathy in the age of globalization. As well, it attracted children and youth with community partnerships and programming.



“When you think of a young skateboarder, what pops into your head? Probably a boy, growing up in a North American city. But a highly praised photography collection from British photographer Jessica Fulford-Dobson shows a different type of skateboarder: feisty, athletic Afghan girls.”

– CBC.ca



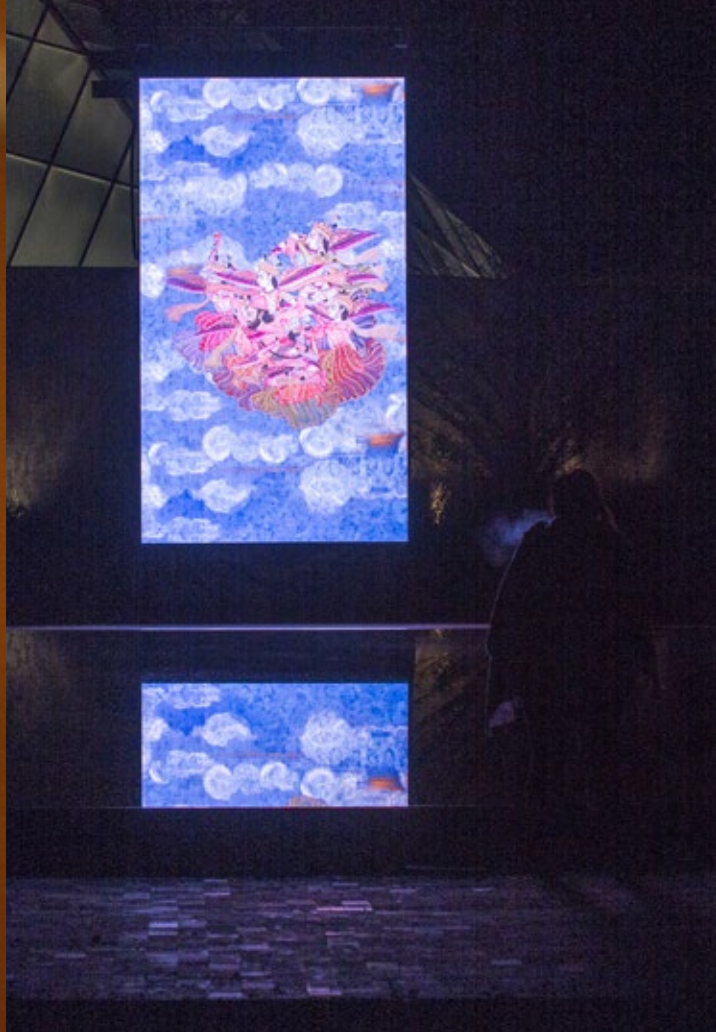
Dancing in the Park: Celebrating Community

Programming in the Aga Khan Park expanded greatly in the summer of 2017. Visitors were invited to take part in interactive workshops on Museum grounds and learn new or familiar folk dances, from the Gujarati *Garba* and Punjabi *Bhangra* to First Nations dance and more.

Dancing in the Park: Films Under the Stars

For a second year, night-time film screenings were presented in the beautiful grounds of the Aga Khan Park. Visitors enjoyed a duo of family-friendly films that celebrated movement and dance: the Oscar-winning movie *Happy Feet* (George Miller, 2006, 108 min., PG) and the 1950s classic *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952, 120 min., PG).





Nuit Blanche Toronto

The annual night-long celebration of art saw more than 6,500 people pass through the Museum, aided in part by regular downtown-shuttle service provided in partnership with the City of Toronto and the Broadview Hotel.

Programming throughout the Museum, Park, and Ismaili Centre, Toronto included Shahzia Sikander's monumental "Disruption as Rapture" video installation, a celebration of Rumi with Rumi Canada, morning *raags* presented in partnership with Raag-Mala Music Society of Toronto, and sunset-to-sunrise performances by award-winning indie bands and international artists in the transformative setting of two traditional Mongolian yurts.



Commercial



A healthy expansion of all types of private events – corporate, social, and weddings alike – generated a tremendous awareness of the Museum and brought an additional 1,000 visitors each month. Feature-length film production developed at the Museum, with globally released films such as *Downsizing* (Alexander Payne, 2017) and the *Star Trek* television series, has brought profitability and recognition to the Museum as a destination rich in architectural achievement and visual appeal.

“The Museum is an amazing venue which impressed everyone at our event and offers a very pleasant atmosphere. The contemporary space is flexible to fit a variety of functions — small to large, casual to executive... It was a real pleasure for me to work with you and I hope to have this pleasure again in the future.”

– Nathalie Baltus, Events Expert, Clearstream Banking–Deutsche Börse Group

Diwan Restaurant

At the vanguard of the new Middle Eastern culinary movement that is sweeping North America and Europe, Diwan continued to be known for its delicious exploration of tastes inspired from throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. Exciting and sensual Syrian and Italian menus were created, taking inspiration from and complementing the evolving temporary exhibitions.

Aga Khan Museum Shop

The Shop has become a recognized brand representing elegance, supporting artisans from all corners of the world and telling emotional stories about locally-sourced arts and craft. The 2017 activation of Shopify as an e-commerce platform has helped move the retail shop beyond the walls of the Museum, and into homes across the globe.

Pop-up Shops

Nine pop-up shops located from Dubai to Houston to Toronto, including a pop-up shop in Toronto’s bustling Yorkville Village, contributed well over 10% of retail sales in 2017, and importantly helped spread the message of the Museum and further the brand globally.



Volunteers



“Every tour that I have conducted has been a unique experience. Engaging with people from all walks of life and delivering the content story of the permanent gallery [gives me the] tremendous satisfaction of sharing, educating, and connecting.”

– Altaf Virani, Volunteer

In 2017, our 300 volunteers donated more than 37,000 hours of service. These dedicated individuals demonstrated utmost commitment in making the Aga Khan Museum a welcoming space where guests can expect to receive exceptional service. Whether greeting our patrons with a smile, taking visitors on a breathtaking journey through the galleries, or equipping shoppers with gifts for friends and family, volunteers of the Aga Khan Museum excel in all that they do.



Thanking our Supporters



Our passionate supporters are without question the heart and soul of the Aga Khan Museum. Through their unwavering generosity, they are helping make the Museum's vision for the future a reality. Together we will continue to unleash the power of art and culture to unite people in the face of adversity to spread peace through understanding.

Thank you for helping us change perceptions.

“We became Patrons when the Museum launched, and we take being Patrons to heart. It isn’t about what we can get, but what we can contribute. When we hear of a concert, we bring friends who love music. When we have a celebration, we think of Diwan. Just about every gift to friends comes from the Museum Shop — but our Patron’s membership has been like a gift to ourselves. We’ve found incredible joy in the opportunity to participate.”

– Anonymous, Aga Khan Museum Patron since 2014

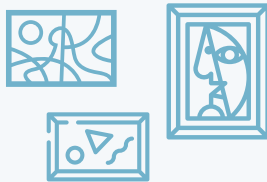
ONE MUSEUM LIKE NO OTHER...

It was a landmark year for a singular museum. The Aga Khan Museum’s supporters demonstrated their ongoing support of the Museum’s mission to connect cultures through art and steadfast faith in the Museum’s vision for the future, raising a total of

\$6.35 MILLION

296

works of art from 12 national and international public institutions and 17 private lenders were installed in our galleries for temporary exhibitions



7,000

students engaged with our architecture and Collections during innovative hands-on programs in one record-breaking year



71,437

people attended 31 Museum events, programs, and exhibitions in 11 cities outside Toronto and around the world



11,700

people experienced

14,040

minutes of Pop-up Performances by

167

artists

...CHANGED COUNTLESS PERCEPTIONS.



Lapis Ball

The Aga Khan Museum's 2017 Lapis Ball was a remarkable evening of inspirational international artists reflecting a diverse range of world cultures, gourmet cuisine prepared by one of the world's top chefs, and superb décor evoking the blue of the Museum's signature stone, lapis lazuli. Thanks to the following individuals, corporations and charitable foundations, the Lapis Ball raised \$500,000 in support of the Museum's cornerstone goals.

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The Museum relies on the invaluable support of many individuals and organizations to achieve our mission and vision, and we would like to acknowledge our most generous supporters. The following have provided support of \$25,000 or more in 2017.

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On behalf of the Museum, Henry S. Kim, Director and CEO, acknowledges and appreciates the tremendous support received at the Director's Circle level (\$25,000) in 2017.

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We apologize for any errors or omissions that may have occurred.

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