

As the Sun Appears from Beyond: Twenty Years of the Al Burda Award Illuminates the Aga Khan Museum This Summer

The groundbreaking exhibition, co-curated by the inaugural Al Burda Fellows, celebrates contemporary Islamic art and a shared commitment to intercultural dialogue and understanding

Toronto, ON – June 12, 2025 – Following a successful opening at the 18th Al Burda Award ceremony, hosted at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in December 2024, [*As the Sun Appears from Beyond: Twenty Years of the Al Burda Award*](#) makes its North American debut at the Aga Khan Museum on June 14, 2025. Marking a historic first, the exhibition is the result of a unique Memorandum of Understanding between the Aga Khan Museum and the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture. Featuring more than 60 spectacular artworks from the Al Burda Award collection, the exhibition places these contemporary pieces in dialogue with historical masterpieces from the Aga Khan Museum Collections. It presents an artistic and contemplative conversation between past and present, offering a captivating visual experience that bridges the physical and the spiritual.

Showcasing classical and contemporary expressions of Arabic calligraphy, ornamentation, abstract painting, and the art of the word, the exhibition celebrates some of the most outstanding artists in Islamic art today. It invites visitors on a contemplative journey through sublime beauty, deep spirituality, and breathtaking technical skill. From visual art to an interactive poetry listening station, the exhibition illuminates pathways to intercultural understanding, renewal, and spiritual connection, offering a unique opportunity to engage with the creative spirit of the Muslim world today.

As the Sun Appears from Beyond was co-curated by Fatma Mahmoud, Sara bin Safwan, and Shaikha Al Zaabi, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Museum. The young Emirati curators represent the first cohort of Al Burda Fellows, selected by the UAE Ministry of Culture to curate the Al Burda Award's remarkable 20-year collection. Their curatorial journey began in July 2024, when they travelled to Toronto for a professional residency at the Aga Khan Museum. There, they immersed themselves in the Museum's unique mandate, Collections, and approach to culturally appropriate museology before developing the exhibition around the theme of light – *Al-Noor* – in celebration of 20 years of the Al Burda Award and the Museum's 10th anniversary.

"The collaboration with the UAE Ministry of Culture and its three exceptional Al Burda Fellows has been an honour and a joy. Working on such a prestigious project together, across and beyond cultural differences, has been a truly enriching and inspiring experience for the Museum," says Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO of the Aga Khan Museum. "Together, we have opened up a new world of intercultural artistic appreciation, dialogue, and understanding. To that end, our storytelling approach is not only factual but also allows for empathetic, inclusive engagement. Striving for the art to be presented in a way that transcends cultural differences, the exhibition invites aesthetic appreciation, engenders conversation, and serves as a creative resource for intercultural learning."

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Aga Khan Museum and the UAE Ministry of Culture, signed in December 2023, aims to enrich educational and artistic initiatives for young professionals, intellectuals, art practitioners, and students. Through collaboration, it opens pathways to learning and creative development with training and mentorship. This groundbreaking partnership, driven by a shared commitment to pluralism and cross-cultural dialogue, envisions diverse opportunities at museums and cultural institutions in the United Arab Emirates and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto for emerging curators, artists, and museum professionals.

“Our collaboration with the Aga Khan Museum, highlighted through the *As the Sun Appears from Beyond: Twenty Years of the Al Burda Award* exhibition, exemplifies the powerful impact of cross-cultural partnerships in fostering artistic innovation and dialogue. This exhibition marks a significant milestone for Al Burda’s rich history and the young Emirati curators who have shaped it during their residency in Toronto,” says H.E. Sheikh Salem bin Khalid Al Qassimi, UAE Minister of Culture. “Their creative vision and dedication, nurtured by this unique partnership, underscore our shared commitment to supporting emerging voices and advancing cultural diplomacy. By bridging the artistic heritage of the UAE and Canada, we are laying the foundation for a more connected and inclusive global artistic landscape.”

Alongside the exhibition, visitors can deepen their experience through a series of talks, lectures, hands-on workshops, dynamic performances, and interdisciplinary programs inspired by poetry, calligraphy, and ornamentation. From a mesmerizing dance, exploring the rhythm and geometry of ornamental design, to deeper meditative reflections on calligraphy, these programs offer an immersive journey beyond the galleries.

About the Aga Khan Museum

[The Aga Khan Museum](#) in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Through permanent and temporary exhibitions, educational activities and performing arts, the Museum’s mission is to spark wonder, curiosity, and understanding of Muslim cultures and their connection with other cultures through the arts. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto’s Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

About the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture works to enrich the cultural ecosystem of the UAE by supporting the country’s cultural, art and heritage institutions. It provides a platform for artists and innovators, promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and delivers dynamic productions and experiences that represent the UAE’s rich and eclectic culture on a national as well as international level.

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