

Game On! New Aga Khan Museum Exhibition Reveals How Games and Sports Connected Global Cultures Across Centuries

In anticipation of Toronto hosting the world's biggest soccer tournament this summer, the new exhibition showcases over 100 masterpieces from major institutions in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, Malaysia, and the Museum's collections, to explore how games have travelled across cultures and continue to connect people today.

Toronto, ON – March 24, 2026 – This spring, the Aga Khan Museum invites visitors to explore the creativity and cultural exchange found in games and sports across time and place. Opening April 3, 2026, *Game On!* brings together paintings, photography, historic game boards, and contemporary installations to explore how games connect people, spark creativity, and build communities.

As the leading museum in North America dedicated to showcasing the arts and culture of Muslim civilizations, the Aga Khan Museum is bringing global perspectives to Toronto as the city gets ready to celebrate global soccer matches in June and July.

"Games have long brought people together across cultures and centuries, creating shared experiences that connect us beyond borders, languages, and differences," said Bitia Pourvash, Curator at the Aga Khan Museum. "Whether played on boards, performed through physical skill, explored via the spoken or written word, or navigated in digital worlds, games carry educational, symbolic, and social roles that shape how we learn, connect, and make meaning through play."

Organized into three thematic sections, "The Board," "The Quest," and "The Arena," the exhibition follows the journeys of games as they travelled between regions, adapted to new contexts, and helped shape traditions worldwide. Seen through this cross-cultural lens, it reveals an enduring tradition of creativity and exchange. Visitors will encounter games of strategy and intellect, as well as stories of adventure and competition, that capture the energy and cultural significance of games and sports.

Game On! features masterpieces from the Aga Khan Museum's collections along with rare loans from other leading international and national institutions, including the [British Library](#), the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#), the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), and the [Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia](#).

Highlights of the exhibition include:

- **Play it by Trust** by Yoko Ono, a conceptual, all-white chessboard and pieces that create a space of cooperation and shared experience. The work reflects the artist's response to world events in 1966.
- A **12th-century chess set** from Iran, on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The nearly complete chess set is among the earliest surviving examples known.
- **Damask Rose** by Jawa El Khash, newly commissioned for this exhibition, the digital experience continues the legacy of games as tools for storytelling and exchange through a virtual live simulation.
- A **16th-century folio** from the "Shah Tahmasp" *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) by Firdausi, showcasing Prince Siyavush's skill and composure in a royal polo match before King Afrasiyab.

"Play is a universal language that everyone understands, and the exhibition is the starting point for us to dive into how games and sports have been one of humanity's great connectors," said Dr. Sascha Priewe, Director, Collections and Public Programs at the Aga Khan Museum. "From talks, workshops, and festivals to family activities, performances and the public viewing of soccer games, we invite visitors to experiment with strategy, storytelling, and creativity, offering immersive ways to experience the cultural stories and artistic traditions behind games from around the world."

As a complement to the exhibition, the [Great Canadian Jersey](#), part of Rogers' *This Is Our Game* campaign, will be on display at the Museum from June 16 to July 12, 2026. Created from patches donated by fans across every province and territory and handcrafted by designer and former Ontario Hockey League player Cameron Lizotte, the patchwork jersey celebrates the diversity of Canada's hockey community in a single, unifying emblem of the game.

As Toronto prepares to welcome visitors from around the world for the upcoming global soccer tournament this year, *Game On!* offers a timely opportunity to reflect on how games and sports bring people together. During the Museum's annual [Rhythms of Canada](#) festival, sports fans will also have the chance to gather for a series of free livestreams of the major international soccer matches taking place across North America, creating a shared space to celebrate the joy of games together.

Game On! runs through September 7, 2026. For more information, visit agakhanmuseum.org/gameon.

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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.

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