

# ARCHITECT

MIDDLE EAST

NEWS, DATA, ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR ARCHITECTS IN THE GCC

# ABU DHABI

Developing the heart of the United Arab Emirates

**MUSEUM**  
LOOKING TO  
INNOVATE

42

**RETAIL**  
THE FUTURE  
OF THE MALL

14

**Perspectives**  
Iran's spiritual  
garden

22

**Workforce**  
Buying into  
design vision

26

**Capital Project**  
Mall of the  
Future

32



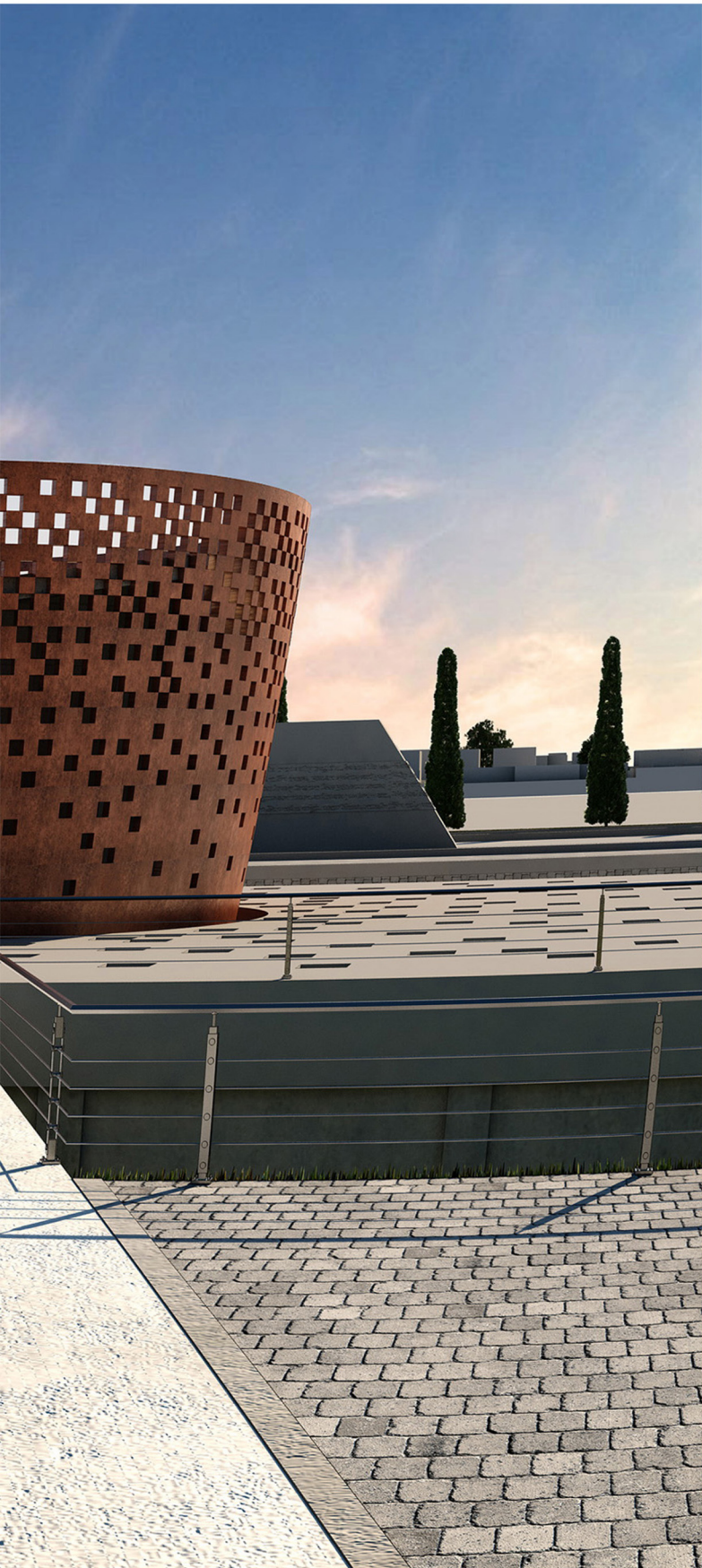
Download the FREE  
Middle East  
Architect and En  
gineering Ma  
gazine on the  
App Store  
or Google play  
www.downmagaz.com





The monument to poet Shams Tabrizi  
in the Iranian city of Khoy.





# A sacred space

## Iran's spiritual garden

The city of Khoy in the western part of Iran is the site for a cultural centre based on three facets of traditional design of the region – sequence, axis and symmetry.

The Shams Monument was the winner of the Community and Cultural Project of the Year at the Middle East Architect Awards, where the judges praised its creator BNS Co for its “respect for the heritage and history of the country which played such a vital part in the project’s success.”

The development includes a monument and memorial to the poet Shams Tabrizi, as well as his tomb, along with a sunken garden inside an area already steeped in history, which also contains an ancient cemetery and the Shams Minaret.

Architect Farshad Kazerooni said: “In Iran cultural symbols are very important and this is something we had to work with in order to completely realise the project to its full potential.”

The centre includes galleries, a library, a research facility and an amphitheatre for live performances. It is located in an area which previously consisted of agricultural land and recreational gardens, but in recent years has been swallowed up by urban development.

So the architects faced the challenge of recreating a place of reflection close to the heart of a bustling city.

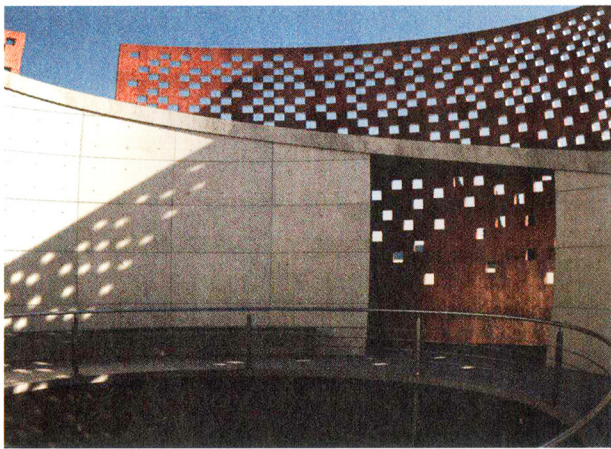
They said: “This fact triggered the idea of reusing linear geometry and square strips of agricultural fields in designing the site to revive its historical background. Thus the Shams Monument was designed in form of a garden-tomb, making it possible for visitors to roam around while at the same time the Shams’ Minaret would symbolise part of the city’s historical identity.

“Using rows of cedar trees and memorial walls on both sides of Shams Boulevard emphasises on creating a totally different atmosphere for passers-by.”



BY TOURING DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SITE PEOPLE CAN GET A VIEW OF... SPIRITUALITY AND TRADITION

THE DESIGN TEAM



## The client

The work was commissioned by the Mirmiran Institute of Architecture and the Shams Tabrizi & Molana Foundation which celebrates traditional culture and the work of the Iranian-Azerbaijani Sufi mystic and poet Shams Tabrizi.

The brief called for the landscape of the Shams Monument to be designed in such a way that it communicated with all ages. Its aim is to teach visitors about the history of the city, the spiritual values and personality of Shams Tabrizi himself, his influence on people and his philosophies.

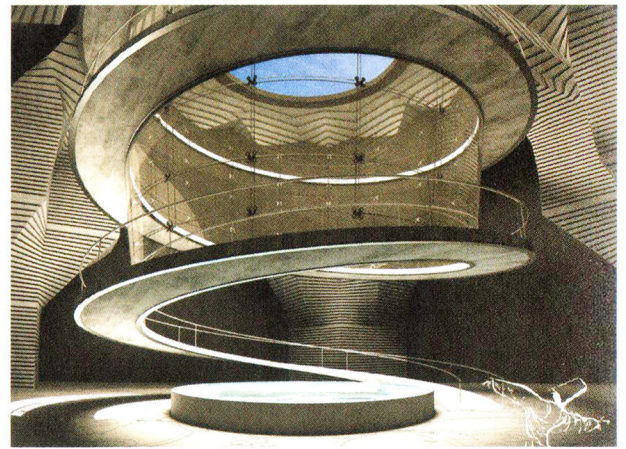
The intention is that by touring different parts of the site people can get an overall view of the importance of spirituality and tradition.

Parts of the site were not available for development, due to their historic importance, including both an ancient minaret and the remains of an old cemetery. The designers worked around these structures.



THE FEELING OF AN ASCENT FROM THE MATERIAL WORLD INTO A SPIRITUAL REALM

BNS CO



## The design

The monument itself is divided into three parts, each consisting of a 24mx24m square with each connected to the other by a pathway. The middle square contains the tomb structure itself.

The architects undertook to create the feeling of an ascent from the material world into a spiritual realm by resigning any connection to worldly attachments. The square is a symbol of the earth while a circle denotes the sky.

A traditional Iranian design form called “chahar taq” – four arches – has been applied to the created space, which also reflects dual characteristics associated with the poet: “ambiguous and clear, complicated and simple”.

The outer skin of the building is a circular perforated copper wall while the interior is made of solid concrete. A spiral ramp comes through both layers to the floor of the site.



WE WANTED TO DESIGN SOMETHING SO THAT ALL GENERATIONS CAN LEARN FROM THE PAST

**FARSHAD KAZEROONI, ARCHITECT**



## The architect

**T**he BNS Co design team on the project consisted of Farshad Kazerooni, Azin Soltani and Farnaz Bakshi. The company also had its own research team on the project.

A major feature of the design was its lighting which takes the form of a rosette while the movement of light from the centre to the sky keeps it filled with life for visitors. The amount of light which enters the building can also be controlled.

Creating something which will last for many years was also a prominent factor for the architects, who wished to emphasise the importance of what was on the site before and highlight the continuity of the country's heritage.

Kazerooni said: "The heritage and culture of the country of Iran has developed through many different ages and is very important. We wanted to design something so that all generations can learn from the past."



A WONDERFUL USE OF SPACE WHICH ALLOWS THE BUILDING TO BREATHE AND BECOME SPECIAL

**JUDGING PANEL, MEA AWARDS**



## The wider view

**T**he Shams Monument has been described by its designers as an "introspective building" as it sinks into the ground and forms part of the landscape – but at the same time stands out from its surroundings.

Voting it as top cultural project for 2014 judges at the Middle East Architect Awards called the design: "A use of seductive imagery and a wonderful use of space which allows the building to breathe and become special."

The panel were also impressed at how the architects used the linear shapes of the old field system to designate areas of the buildings - thus once more taking into account the historical importance of the area and its pre-urban roots.

The centre of the tomb also evokes the sacred dance of the Sufi where the right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive the mercy of God, while the left hand is turned towards earth. ●