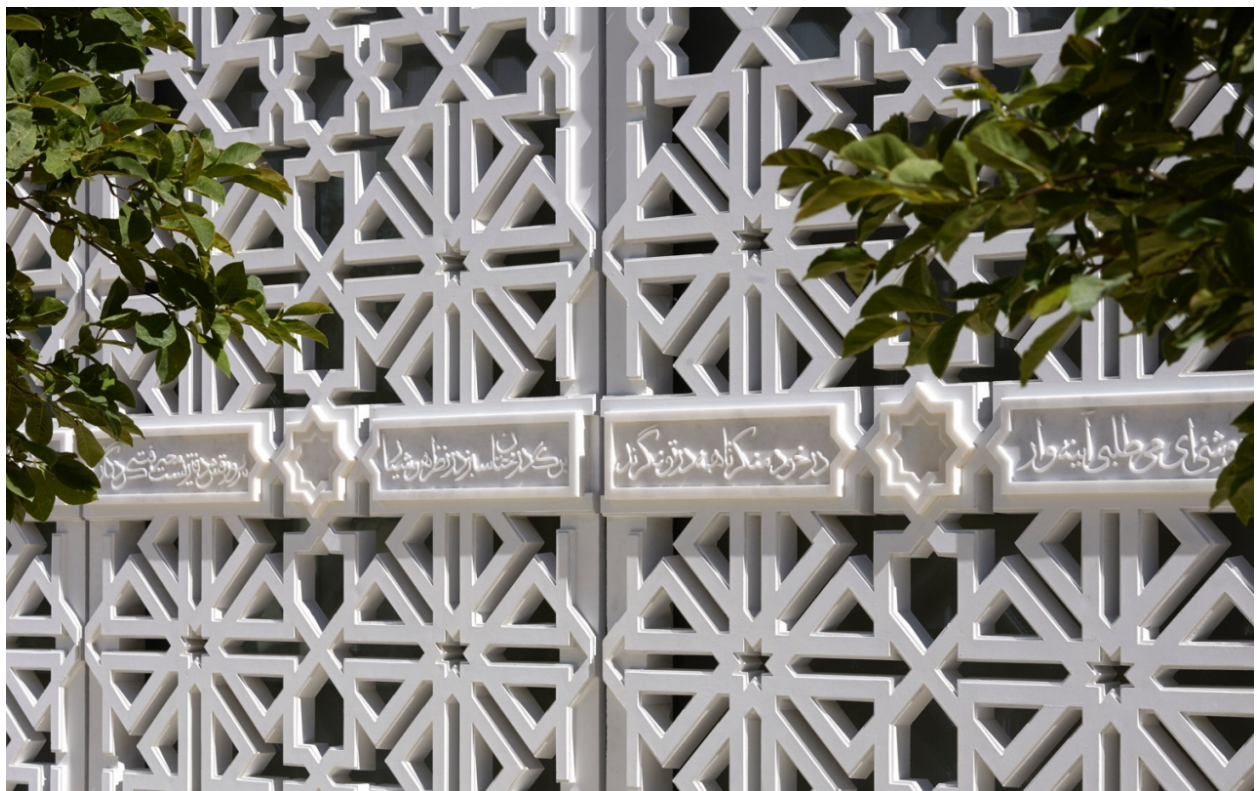


Structurally Chic

Where architecture inspires fashion

“Fashion is architecture, it’s a question of proportions”, Coco Chanel once said. Patterns and blueprints. Boning and steel. Fabrics and materials. Some of the parallels between fashion and architecture as design practices. Fashion has looked at architecture for inspiration on various instances, from motifs to forms following function. This article takes London’s Aga Khan Centre as a case study for areas where Islamic architecture and fashion collide.

Designed by renowned Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki, the Aga Khan Centre stands as a symbol of Islamic architecture and culture blending with Japanese sensibilities of calm and tranquillity. The building was commissioned by his Highness the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and the founder of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). It was established on the 60th diamond jubilee of the Aga Khan in 2018 as part of King's Cross’ Urban Regeneration Scheme.



Close up from the Aga Khan Garden of Light

"Outstanding". The centre has achieved the highest rating possible in the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) standard. The Aga Khan Centre's sustainable features such as green roofs, rainwater harvesting, and renewable energy sources have contributed to its high rating.

The Aga Khan Centre is one of a kind in terms of its design, purpose, and the values it represents. It is a hub for learning, cultural exchange, and research, dedicated to promoting better understanding and appreciation of Islamic cultures and societies. The building is also a model of sustainability and innovation, incorporating the latest technology and best practices in green building design.

How can these features be translated in fashion though?

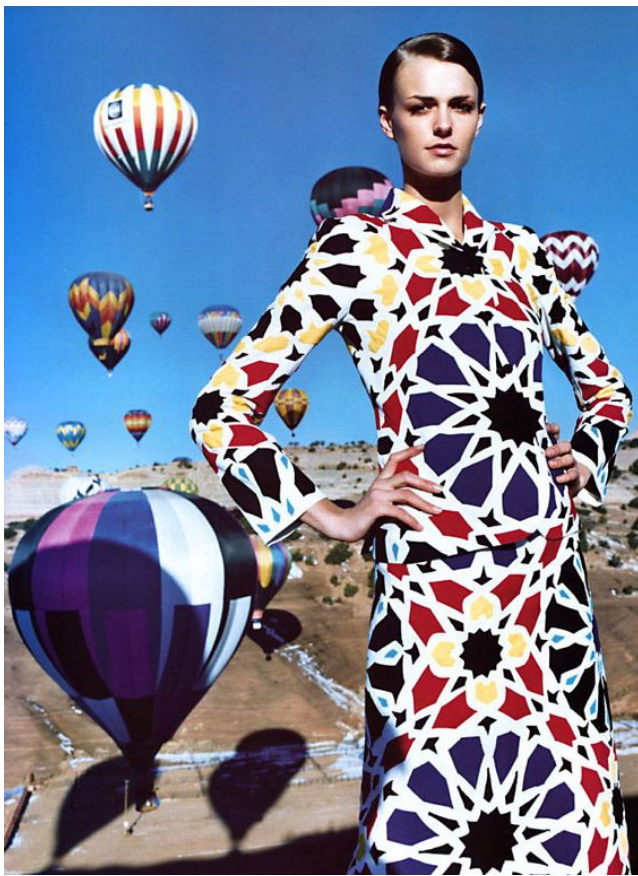
The way light filters through the Aga Khan's screens and garden trees, the sound the water fountains create, and the occasional whiff of fragrant plants and flowers create a multisensory experience that incite emotions, feelings of joy and comfort, a feeling of travel as well. Fashion is notable for impacting emotions either worn or seen on a runway. When inspired from architecture, it may evoke broader senses. Many elements from the Aga Khan Centre can be incorporated into fashion design, from geometric patterns to colours to the use of light and space.



Liliya Hudyakova's designs give away that the inspiration was a plaster arabesque like the one seen in the Aga Khan's Garden of Light. Islamic architecture features have already been executed/seen on runways and magazine covers. For instance, Chloé's Summer 2016 collection referenced the architecture's infinite patterns in lacework and repeating motifs, adding depth and texture to garments the arabesque textures into woven fabrics. Harper's Bazar featured a Greg Kadel's reproduction of the tile work. In their February 2002 issue.



Chloé Summer 2016



Greg Kadel for Harper's Bazaar February 2002

Balenciaga, Marchesa and Dolce & Gabbana are all big names who were inspired by architectural wonders the Guggenheim, the Sydney Opera House and the Beckman Tower. Architect Zaha Hadid collaborated with many fashion houses notably Chanel and Louis Vuitton and even designed her own fashion collection further demonstrating the link between fashion and architecture. Exploring the Aga Khan Centre as a case study illustrates how Islamic architecture and fashion can intertwine, creating space for cultural appreciation. The Aga Khan Centre's design centered sustainability and multisensory experience may inspire fashion beyond its aesthetic boundaries, broadening creativity.