

THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY HOUSE
PRESS PACK

Adjaye Associates

September 2019



ADJAYE ASSOCIATES UNVEIL NEW LANDMARK PROJECT IN ABU DHABI FOR HIGHER COMMITTEE OF HUMAN FRATERNITY

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Sir David Adjaye OBE design for The Abrahamic Family House – a key project inspired by the Document on Human Fraternity – unveiled

Adjaye Associates have been announced as the winner of the competition for the landmark project, The Abrahamic Family House on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi.

The Abrahamic Family House commissioned by The Higher Committee for Human Fraternity, is a collection of three religious spaces, a mosque, a synagogue and a church, which sit upon a secular visitor pavilion. The project is one of the first initiatives set by The Higher Committee, a new body, who are overseeing the implementation of the “Document of the Human Fraternity” at both regional and international levels. The landmark project hopes to embody the relationship between the three Abrahamic faiths whilst providing a platform for dialogue, understanding, and coexistence between their religions. The founding Higher Committee members include Christian, Islamic and Jewish faith leaders with new members to be invited to join in the coming months.

Unveiled at an event held at the New York Public Library on 20th September, The Abrahamic Family House will serve as a community for inter-religious dialogue and exchange, nurturing the values of peaceful co-existence and acceptance among different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. Within each of the houses of worship, visitors will have the opportunity to observe religious services, listen to holy scripture and experience sacred rituals. The fourth space - not affiliated with any specific religion - will serve as a center for all people of goodwill to come together as one. The community will also offer educational and event-based programming.

Sir David Adjaye, Founder and Principal of Adjaye Associates, comments on the project:

“My experience and learning with this project brought a clarity, I’ve always seen these three religions as very different – it’s what we’re led to believe, but then you discover these incredible connections and overlaps that sit with these distinct differences. The evolution which then developed the narrative was to discover what was adjacent, surprisingly close even. The Form is translated from the three faiths, we use the lens to define what is similar as opposed to what is different and we use the power of that revelation to make the form.

We were led towards these powerful plutonic forms with a clear geometry, three cubes sitting on a plinth – though not aligned, they each have different orientations. The story then starts to become apparent through the power of the silhouette, unified with commonality and the articulation of the three forms. These structures represent a safe space, each volume illustrated with colonnades, screens and vaults to represent the sacred nature. Our discovery continued with the common ground, the public space in-between, where the difference connects. I saw the garden as a powerful metaphor, this safe space where community, connection and civility combine – this space exists between the three chambers, the three faiths. The podium allows you to interact with each space, there’s no preventative threshold, and this way you dissolve the perceptions of not being included and encourage the celebration of this collective history & collective identity.”



Synagogue - Exterior View



Synagogue - Interior View

Sir David Adjaye, Founder and Principal of Adjaye Associates, comments on the competition:

"I am humbled and honored that our design has been selected. I believe architecture should work to enshrine the kind of world we want to live in, a world of tolerance, openness, and constant advancement. Architecture and landscape design can interpret the fabric and principles of a place, to advance the conversation, reassess current assumptions about the world, and discover more meaningfully what a place can give back. As an architect I want to create a building that starts to dissolve the notion of hierarchical difference – it should represent universality and totality – something higher, that enhances the richness of human life. We hope we have set out a plan for a beautiful and thought-provoking space that celebrates the three faiths and stimulates dialogue and understanding at a critical time for the world. Built in the UAE's capital, the space will be open to the world, and our hope is that through these buildings people of all faiths and from across society can learn and engage in a mission of peaceful coexistence for generations to come."

The Higher Committee comments on the competition result: "The contemporary design was chosen after a rigorous process that included architects of diverse backgrounds and faiths from around the globe. Adjaye Associates design is particularly striking, incorporating separate worship spaces for each religion as well as a shared space for collaboration and informal gathering. As a modern design concept it also reflects the goal of creating an enduring space for future generations."

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, who hosted Pope Francis in Abu Dhabi earlier this year, welcomed the progress made in realizing the ambitions for peaceful coexistence expressed in the Human Fraternity document. He also commented that the UAE was pleased to support initiatives like this that foster tolerance, co-operation and coexistence.



Church - Exterior View



Church - Interior View

Notes for Editors

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About Adjaye Associates

Adjaye Associates was established in June 2000 by Founder and Principal, Sir David Adjaye OBE. Receiving ever-increasing worldwide attention, the firm has offices in London, Accra and New York and completed work in Europe, North America, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The practice's largest commission to date, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, opened in 2016 on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Further projects range in scale from private houses, exhibitions, and temporary pavilions to major arts centres, civic buildings, and masterplans. Renowned for an eclectic material and colour palette and a capacity to offer a rich civic experience. Adjaye Associates' buildings differ in form and style, yet are unified by their ability to generate new typologies and to reference a wide cultural discourse.

Completed works include: Ruby City, a centre dedicated to the acquisition and presentation of postmodern and contemporary art in San Antonio, Texas (2019); Ghana Freedom, the first Ghana Pavilion at the 58th International Venice Art Biennale (2019); Making Memory, an exhibition at the Design Museum in London focusing on seven of Adjaye's buildings, showcasing how architecture can reflect on history and memory (2019); the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. (2016); the regenerative Morning Lane Arches retail corridor in Hackney, London (2016); Sugar Hill museum and housing development in Harlem, New York (2015); the Aishti Foundation arts and shopping complex in Beirut, Lebanon (2015); Alara Concept Store in Lagos, Nigeria (2014); Marian Goodman Gallery, London (2014); the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African and African American Art at the Hutchins Centre, Harvard University (2014); two neighbourhood libraries in Washington DC (2012); the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO (2010); the Stephen Lawrence Centre in London (2007); the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver (2007); Rivington Place Gallery in London (2007); The Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo (2005); and the Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets, London (2004 and 2005) – two pioneering community libraries in London's Tower Hamlets.

Selected current projects include: 130 William, a high rise residential tower in Manhattan, New York, The National Cathedral of Ghana in Accra, Ghana, the UK's first National Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre in London, UK; a new home for The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; offices for the International Financial Corporation in Dakar, Senegal; and a regenerative cultural campus on the site of Tel Aviv's disused former central bus station.

About the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity

The Pope's visit to the United Arab Emirates in February 2019 and the signing of the historic Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together inspired leaders from across faith communities and wider society to create a bold new humanitarian mission.

Guided by the values and principles outlined in the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, the Higher Committee's global mission is to progress a culture of mutual respect and dialogue across all backgrounds, beliefs and nationalities.

The founding Higher Committee members include faith leaders from around the world, and new members from other religious groups will be invited to join in the coming months. The Higher Committee's inaugural meeting took place in September this year. The Higher Committee includes:

- Monsignor Yoannis Lahzi Gaid, Personal Secretary of Pope Francis;
- Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, Former Advisor to the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb
- His Eminence Elect Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue;
- Prof Mohamed Hussein Mahrasawi, President of Al-Azhar University;
- Rabbi Bruce Lustig, Senior Rabbi at Washington Hebrew Congregation

– Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi;

– Dr Sultan Faisal Al Rumaithi, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Elders;

– Yasser Hareb, an Emirati writer and YV presenter

About the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together

At the invitation of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, His Holiness Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church, made the first ever papal visit to the Arabian peninsula. During this trip, Pope Francis and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar, signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

The landmark document addresses how people of different faiths can live together harmoniously. Pope Francis and the Grand Imam describe the need to adopt “a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.”

The document also calls on world leaders “to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace...to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence in order to confirm the importance of these values as anchors of salvation for all, and to promote them everywhere.”



Mosque - Interior View



Mosque - Interior View



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