

Teacher (s)	The Aga Khan Academies	Subject Groups	Theory of Knowledge		
Unit Title		IBDP Year	12-13	Unit Duration	4 Weeks

Inquiry: How can we judge the Arts?

A module for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme's Theory of Knowledge course focusing on the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Introduction

What is the Aga Khan Award for Architecture?

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) is an architectural prize established by His Highness the Aga Khan in 1977. It aims to identify and reward architectural projects in societies where Muslims have a significant presence, and which successfully address the needs and aspirations of Islamic societies in the fields of: contemporary design; social housing; community development and improvement; restoration, reuse and area conservation; landscape design; and improvement of the environment. It is presented in three-year cycles to multiple projects and has a monetary award. Uniquely among architectural awards, it recognises projects, teams and stakeholders, in addition to buildings and people.

The Award is of global significance for several reasons:

- it has the largest prize of any architectural award – US\$ 1 million is shared between the winners in every cycle;
- it is pioneering in the issues it identifies as significant, including a wide range of social and environmental issues and a strong concern for how a project serves its community;
- it is steered and assessed by global leaders in the fields of architecture, art, economics, sociology, philosophy and a variety of other subjects. This range of views is unique.

You can find out more about the award here: <http://www.akdn.org/architecture>

To whom is this module relevant?

The short answer is, to anyone. It assumes no previous knowledge of architecture or urbanism, and no familiarity with 'societies in which Muslims have a significant presence'. It cites examples from places as diverse as Spain, Turkey, Nigeria and Malaysia. It makes references to contemporary international visual artists such as Damien Hirst, and to artists in the broadest sense of the world, for example Bob Dylan. It has been developed to be relevant to any student of IB Theory of Knowledge (ToK) or the Arts.

The unit comprises of these Teachers' Notes and a Powerpoint Presentation which can guide the lessons with students.

This module has been developed as four lessons, with a number of extension activities. However, teachers will probably find that the amount of material far exceeds four one-hour sessions. Teachers may pick and choose elements that suit their class or choose to add some of these activities to other units. Some single activities could, in themselves, be extended to encompass whole lessons. The idea is not to be prescriptive but provide ideas to deliver a thought-provoking ToK unit related to the Arts, based on the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Structure of the module

The module is divided into 4 lessons (with possibilities of extensions):

Lesson One: Explores the question of 'What is good design?', and whether good design is objective or subjective.

Lesson Two: Explores the relationship between form, function and aesthetics in design.

Lesson Three: Explores how we present and make judgements about design projects

Lesson Four: Explores who deserves the recognition for works of art

The Aga Khan Academies and Aga Khan Trust for Culture are agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network and produce curriculum resources that support students' understanding of topics connected to Ethics, Pluralism, Cultures (with an emphasis on Muslim Civilisations), Governance and Civil Society, and Economics for Development. We would welcome feedback about your experiences using these resources in your school. If you have comments, ideas for improvements, or would simply like to know more about our work, please send an email to: curriculum@agakhanacademies.org.

Lesson 1: What is good design? Is good design objective or subjective?

Key Questions

- What is the built environment?
- What makes a built environment work well for its users?
- Which is more important in designing a built environment: aesthetics (is it pleasing?), form (what is it like?) or function (is it usable)?
- How can we judge whether design is 'good' or 'bad'?

1. What is this unit about? [5 minutes]

Share the overarching questions for the unit and of the lesson itself with students. Look at the picture of the chair to discuss the relationship between form and function – they might like the way that the chair looks, but would they like to sit on it?

2. Learning to observe and assess our environment by looking at the classroom. [15 minutes]

Ask all the students to spend some time looking at their classroom. After looking around they should give the classroom a mark out of 10. Deliberately be vague about what this should be based on – we are trying to elicit different ideas from the students about what makes their classroom good or bad. We hope that they will consider both form and function but don't guide them towards this at this stage. You can ask them to make a list of likes and dislikes, and to name the one thing they would change if they could change anything. Get them to work on this individually to ensure a range of ideas.

3. Feedback [15 minutes]

Get the students to feedback their ideas and classify these into groups. The teacher should try to group the responses according to categories. You could use the suggested groupings or create your own:

- The physical environment

- How the classroom serves the needs of its community
- Relation to its wider context
- Aesthetics
- Identity

Depending on time, you could:

- a. have the students write their ideas about the classroom on separate post-its and work out their own categories as a class, or in smaller groups, or
- b. you can give the students the categories and have them fit their ideas into the pre-set groupings.

You might find that the students did not cover all of these topics. In this case, allow students to add items afterwards to build a comprehensive consideration of the classroom. Link back to the Ways of Knowing you have covered and think about which WoK are needed to understand each category.

4. How does the teacher's perspective of the classroom compare to students? [5 minutes]

There isn't much time for this, so you may want to balance this with the previous activity.

As you present your perspective be sure to include a few things about how the space functions specifically for you as a teacher, to show that perspectives differ and that spaces and places must serve more than one user group. Together explore whether students and teachers have the same criteria, and whether they see the same things as being important in a classroom environment.

The second question on the slide (Is one person's knowledge more important than another's?) is really about acquired or accumulated knowledge. In this case, a teacher will probably have a lot more experience (memory) of what different classes need, and therefore is more likely to have knowledge informed by the ideas of others rather than just their own.

Students can think about how different ways of knowing can lead us to reach different conclusions. This can be addressed by students thinking about how they reached a conclusion about what they would change in the classroom. Through the discussion, try to highlight students' thought processes.

'The Blind Men and the Elephant' is included as an example of how different perspectives influence perception. Many students will have seen this already, but if they have not this could be a good time to explore this example.

Be aware that these questions about knowledge, different ways of knowing and different perspectives are setting up the question of whether it is possible to judge the Arts in an objective way.

5. Function and Form [5 minutes]

If you have time, look at the two slides looking at how function can lead form. They show two common architectural features – a chair rail and two-tone walls – in different contexts. Students can see how design features are often based on utility, rather than just aesthetics.

6. Introducing the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Four films are included to give students some background on the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) and some of the relevant issues – choose those that will work best with your group.

- Introductory film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBKQaqCEWZo&list=PLW5dNmLLMGqd_S3JoYA7VZmtUPo5sps9c (2 minutes)
- The first four minutes of “How Buildings Learn – Low Road Buildings” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09pekAKuXjc> (4 minutes of a longer 30 minute film)

Other Aga Khan Award films:

- <http://www.akdn.org/video/2004-aga-khan-award-architecture-vnr> (7 minutes) An interview with the Aga Khan that provides excellent historical context.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WS4L3-omIGk> (6 minutes.) “The Aga Khan gives us his vision of today’s Islamic architecture.” Design 360 CNN programme. Talks about the development of the Award, and the projects undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in Cairo.

7. Group discussion – How do we judge things that are complex? [10 minutes]

Architectural judges also need to consider changes over time, for example in a residential project the occupants change over time; they may have children, the children may leave home when they grow up. The nature of business or education changes over time. (A short clip on the idea of building changing over time and being adaptable is here for the teacher’s background, or for students if you have time <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvEqfg2sIH0>)

(Watch from 21.45-25.00)

One conclusion that the class might reach by thinking about architecture is that we often underestimate the impact of 'The Arts' on our lives. For example, what makes a hospital successful might not be just be the skill of the doctors, or the equipment, but also the place itself – which could be uplifting, calm, quiet, bright, etc. Similarly, a fork or a knife, or a lamp, or a pair of shoes, could be judged in the same way that we judge a statue, or a painting. The class should come to reflect on the fact that design means that the arts are much more present in our lives than we might initially think.

8. What are the challenges in trying to judge the arts? [5 minutes]

This broadens the question of architectural design out to the Arts in general. The issue of subjectivity should be mentioned in the context of this discussion. Also, in the arts less objective ways of knowing, (such as emotion, and memory) might be more widely accepted to be valid than they are in judging other Areas of Knowledge.

9. Extension Activity 1: Should our classroom be airconditioned?

For the Aga Khan Academies, a decision was made not to have airconditioned environments, so as not to create 'an ivory tower' educational experience. Since this decision was made, more concerns have been raised about the environmental impact of air conditioning (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/29/the-air-conditioning-trap-how-cold-air-is-heating-the-world>) It would be useful to have a general discussion about the above question without introducing this rationale, and then a second one after presenting it. It raises interesting questions about the types of environments we wish to create. Would we apply the same rationale to heating a classroom in a cold climate?

A pertinent question for the early twenty-first century is whether environmental considerations should be more important than user comfort? (One of the things that the judges of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture have consistently looked for are projects that respect the environment, and which avoid placing the comforts of individuals over the safeguarding of the environment.)

10. Extension Activity 2: Faith as a way of knowing

This activity explores Faith as a Way of Knowing (not in the religious sense but as a spiritual path). The three architects cited are very prominent visionaries who discuss faith in themselves and their work. There are film clips for each relevant to the question of faith and its influence on architects' work. This could potentially be built out to a whole lesson by itself as there is much to explore.

- Buckminster Fuller's quote discusses faith as thinking for one's self – on the following slide he also speaks of thinking and making mistakes but learning from them. As such, faith is the belief in something not proven, something that one tests for oneself. A six-minute film about Buckminster Fuller's work can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llaznEc4GnY>
- Frank Gehry talks about taking risks to try to accomplish things for humanity.
- Zaha Hadid also talks about leaving one's comfort zone.

Together the three perspectives complement each other – they discuss faith as a conviction to go out into the unknown, to try to achieve a vision. This often involves taking an uncertain path, and to subject oneself to the criticism and doubt of others.

Lesson 2: Exploring the relationship between form, function and aesthetics in design

Key Questions

- Is good design an objective thing?
- Can we decide for sure whether something has good or bad design?
- Does good design need to be practical?
- What is quality, excellence, and uniqueness in design?

The aim of this session is to reach the conclusion that a balanced combination of aesthetics, form, and function creates successful design. The lesson also raises ethical issues. For example, is a design that looks good and serves its function well necessarily a good design? What if that function is bad?

1. Which is the better bench? [5-10 minutes]

Start the lesson with a 'do now' as students arrive. Show the slide of the two benches without giving students any context or explanation and ask them to rate them. Discuss which they prefer and why. Link back to the ideas of form and function discussed in the last lesson.

Once all the students have arrived and had a chance to have a look, show them the information about the two benches. Does their knowledge of their intended functions change their view of the benches? Is this response reasoned, or emotional?

2. Finding a balance in the design [20 minutes]

Define the concepts of form, function and aesthetics. These should be familiar to students who have been in the MYP, so you may be able to reduce the time for this. Then think through how the three concepts apply to the three featured projects. You could do this as a whole class, or divide students into groups and have them report back.

- Bayt al Rauf Mosque - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjzfVZLSHI4&list=PLW5dNmILMGqd_S3JoYA7VZmtUPo5sps9c&index=8
- Jordan Conservation Centre - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKPksXbUXpc&list=PLW5dNmILMGqd_S3JoYA7VZmtUPo5sps9c&index=5

- Mahallat building in Iran - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFq-btVijlM>

Use the discussion here to think about the interplay for form, function and aesthetics in a project.

3. Developing a criteria for judging architecture [20 minutes]

Students should work in groups to decide on criteria they would use to assess architecture. How could we rank different projects, or decide who to give an award? The goal is to have students think critically, and develop a methodology that be used as a decision-making tool in later lessons. This is a first draft and students may amend their criteria as they go along, so don't worry about making it perfect at this stage. Each group should come up with around 5-7 criteria that they would use.

4. Assessing a project using the criteria we have developed [10 minutes]

Once each group has criteria, use them to do a trial assessment of Makoko Floating School, to see if the criteria work. Watch the film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI9uxa-zTV4> and then discuss whether their criteria allow them to assess all the relevant elements of the project – is there anything else that they want to add? They could discuss as a group and then refine their list if they want to.

5. Are the criteria comprehensive? [5 minutes]

Once students have finished, show them the next YouTube clip, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHWCoSi85jA> which reveals that the school sank in a storm. Did they miss any important elements in their list? Is there anything else that they would like to add to their criteria in the light of this?

6. Extension activity

There are three further questions, which can be used to extend students' thinking:

- Can we be objective in thinking about form, function and aesthetics?
- Must good design deal with practical issues?

- What is quality/excellence in design?

These are discussed in relation to a variety of case studies. You could build any of these out into a further lesson, if desired.

Lesson 3: How do we present and make judgements about design projects?

Key Questions

- Who determines which designs or works of Art we recognise and celebrate?
- How does this process take place?
- Is it possible to make impartial decisions about the Arts?
- How do decision-making processes work?
- What are the different roles of 'experts' and the 'general public' in judging the Arts?
- Does making a decision in an observed environment make it more transparent?
- Is good design subjective or objective?

I. Introduction [5-10 minutes]

Watch an introductory film about the Aga Khan Award Judging process (10 minutes):

<http://www.akdn.org/video/ninth-award-cycle-2002-2004-master-jury-deliberations-and-process-selection> (6 minutes)

Things to think about/discuss:

- How can we reach a decision in our assessment of projects related to the arts?
- What process can we follow to reach consensus?

2. How a jury chooses projects [10 minutes]

Divide students into groups. Designate one group as the 'Jury'. Give all the other groups a case study of an ACAA short-listed project. Their task is to research the project and present information to the jury, so that they can decide on a winner. Each of the non-jury groups has to read the project documents and watch the short film about the project and must prepare a short presentation for the jury.

Each group should cover the following themes:

What function does the project serve, and how well does it serve it?

- To what extent is it sympathetic to the environment?
- To what extent does it serve its community?
- To what extent is it inspired by the culture of the place?
- What are its aesthetic merits?
- Can it serve as an example that others can follow?

Each group will have six minutes for their presentation.

The final group is the jury group. They need to reflect on the criteria that have been developed in the previous sessions and decide on a definitive list of criteria that will be used to award the prize.

They will need to think through the different criteria and give each a weighting out of 5 to show how important it is to the prize.

Once they have decided on the criteria and the weighting they should share these with the research groups.

A full list of ten projects is given on the presentation. You may want to reduce this to a smaller number of choices, or assign projects to specific groups, or allocate the projects in advance of this lesson and have students watch the films and read the documentation in advance.

3. Presentations by the research groups [30 - 40 minutes, depending on the number of groups]

Each group will present to the jury for no more than 6 minutes, explaining how their project meets the criteria for the award.

The jury will then have 2-3 minutes of questions to clarify any aspects that are unclear or points that have been missed.

4. Jury Sessions [10 minutes]

The jury deliberates for 10 minutes – they must select one project to be awarded the prize. If the jury can't agree the members of the jury vote. The other groups observe the process of consideration and particularly how the weighting is applied.

5. Discussion [10 minutes] – Choose from the following questions:

- Was the jury's decision objective or subjective?
- Is this type of process successful in making distinctions or comparisons between different works of art?
- How does the process of getting experts to judge compare to things being judged as good by public opinion or mass votes? For example public polls like 'the New Seven Wonders of the World' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New7Wonders_of_the_World) or a poll for a country's favourite building?
- Does popularity mean that something is successful or beautiful? Expert opinion and popular opinion are not always aligned. Examples of popular buildings that were demolished: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/may/03/demolished-buildings-what-were-they-thinking>

And of buildings that the public hate, but experts like:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/05/t-magazine/architects-libeskind-zaha-hadid-seldorf-norman-foster.html>

- What gives a project significance and meaning?

6. Extension Activities: Other Art Prizes

- **Did Bob Dylan deserve the Nobel Prize?** Questions and links are on the PowerPoint.
- **What are the similarities and differences between the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Turner Prize?**
 - Are they similar in having a focus?
 - Are they similar in ambition?
 - Do they look for the same sorts of things in different media?
 - In what ways are art and architecture different?
 - Reflecting on Hirst's statement – what do you think creativity is?
 - Do you think it is ethical to use animals as art? Should architecture be also be judged on the materials used?

Here is some background information on Damien Hirst's work:

'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' has become embedded in popular culture as one of the most iconic images of contemporary art. Conceived by Hirst in 1989, whilst at Goldsmiths' College (part of the University of London) the 'Natural History' work consists of a thirteen-foot tiger shark preserved in a tank of formaldehyde, weighing a total of 23 tons. The shark is contained within a steel and glass vitrine three times longer than high and divided into three cubes.

Hirst says that he thought of the title before the sculpture, while he was writing his thesis on on Hyperreality and the work of Robert Longo and Umberto Eco. The title was, "just a statement that I had used to describe the idea of death to myself. Hirst recalls liking the title's poetic clumsiness because of the way it expressed, "something that wasn't there, or was there".

"I didn't just want a lightbox, or a painting of a shark" Hirst's intention was to force the viewer out of their element by introducing into a gallery setting, a shark that was "real enough to frighten you". By isolating the shark from its natural habitat, with the formaldehyde providing an illusion of life, the work explores our greatest fears, and the difficulty involved in adequately trying to express them. As Hirst states: "You try and avoid [death], but it's such a big thing that you can't. That's the frightening thing isn't it?"

<https://wunderkammer.skyrock.com/3103076153-Damien-HIRST.html> [Accessed Monday 10th December 2018]

Lesson 4: Who deserves the recognition for works of art?

Key Questions

- Is it possible to quantify contributions to a work of Art?
- Who is more responsible for a piece of Art, the person who conceptualised it or the person who made it?

1. The story of the Two Viziers [10 minutes]

Read the Story of the Two Viziers, shown on the PowerPoint.

At the end, ask students to reflect in pairs on the story:

- What is the Caliph really rewarding? Is it memory or something else?

Think of the different ways of knowing and how they might relate to the Caliph's decision.

Or, you could show the first slide and ask students which party they would reward and why. Then reveal the Caliph's decision and discuss how their thinking and the Caliph's was similar or different.

2. Reviewing the material about an Aga Khan Award [15 minutes]

Review the project film and the report on Ceuta Public Library in Spain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1-qgVFeudQ> (2 minutes)

3. How should the prize money be apportioned and why? [25 minutes]

A key principle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture is that it isn't only the architect who is responsible for a great project. The jury have the ability to divide the prize money between the different contributors, based on the significance of their contribution. Ask the students to consider all the different people who contributed

to the creation of the Ceuta Public Library – how would they divide the USD 200,000 prize? Go through the list on the slides to show the different people who might be eligible, and then have students discuss in pairs or groups. You could then try to decide as a class how you would allocate the prize.

4. Final thoughts on judgement, choice and direction in the context of design [10 minutes]

- Is it possible to make judgements in the arts, are these judgements objective? Does it matter whether they are or not?
- What level of choice do we have in shaping our environment?

Extension Activity 1: Design as a way of thinking and knowing

Can an Arts education give us a structure by which to approach life?

This centres around two case studies of people who have moved from one field of the Arts to another.

Case Study 1: From architecture to music: Thomas Brumby

Case Study 2: From architecture to fragrances: Ahmad Hamid

Extension Activity 2

- Are there projects in our own community that merit an Aga Khan Award for Architecture?
- In what ways do we think they deserve such an important award?

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is awarded on a three-year cycle. The last award was made in 2019 and the next will be in 2022. Projects are currently being nominated for the Award – so students think that any projects in their local context would be eligible. The slides give some examples of projects that might make students think more broadly about what could constitute a significant architectural project. Students might get further inspiration from the 2019 shortlist:

<https://www.akdn.org/press-release/2019-shortlist-announced-aga-khan-award-architecture>

Background Information

His Highness the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Development Network

His Highness the Aga Khan, the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. He is graduate of Le Rosey School and also of Harvard University. His Highness has been deeply engaged with the development of countries around the world for more than 60 years, through the work of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

The AKDN is a group of private, international, non-denominational agencies working to improve quality of life for people in the developing world. The Network's organisations have individual mandates that range from the fields of health and education to architecture, rural development and the promotion of private-sector enterprise. Together, they work towards a common goal – to build institutions and programmes that can respond to the challenges of social, economic and cultural change on an on-going basis. You can find out more at www.akdn.org

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) focuses on the physical, social, cultural and economic revitalisation of communities in the developing world. It includes the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, the Aga Khan Music Initiative, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, the on-line resource archnet.org and other related programmes. You can find out more at <https://www.akdn.org/our-agencies/aga-khan-trust-culture>

The Aga Khan Academies

The Aga Khan Academies form an international network of schools being established by His Highness the Aga Khan in countries across Africa, South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Academies are founded on His Highness the Aga Khan's vision to develop home-grown leaders with a strong sense of ethics and civic responsibility with the skills and knowledge to support positive development in their societies. The Academies achieve this by recruiting exceptional young people from all backgrounds and providing them with the highest international standard of education. Admission is means-blind and based on merit. Financial aid is available to ensure access for accepted students regardless of financial circumstances.

When complete, the network of Academies will form a global learning community of eighteen schools in fourteen countries. They will eventually serve approximately 14,000 girls and boys of exceptional calibre, graduating 1,500 students annually. The first Aga Khan Academy opened in Mombasa, Kenya in 2003, the second in Hyderabad, India in 2011 and the third in Maputo, Mozambique in 2013.

The academic programme offered by the Academies has been developed according to the principles of International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB provides a challenging academic programme for students and allows their achievement to be measured against international standards. In addition to providing a rigorous academic and leadership experience, the Academies help students develop an ethical and public-minded outlook through community service opportunities and education on ethics and pluralism. They also recognise that to become effective leaders, students must be both globally minded and locally rooted. Global as well as local perspectives are reflected in the curriculum, and students study in both English and the local language. The Aga Khan Academies also work to strengthen the quality of education more widely in the national context by providing professional development programmes for educators in the regions where they are present and by modelling best practices as centres of excellence in education.