

Nancy Ross Day Event

CTGA at the Aga Khan Museum



Caption needed

Toronto has a new jewel in its crown of must-see museums, and we were fortunate to have the opportunity to be toured through the Aga Khan museum, as the latest Nancy Ross event, organized by Petra Aykler.

There were approximately 30 in the group, and we were divided into three groups each with our own Docent.

The building itself is worth seeing for its magnificent architecture, designed by Fumihiko Maki, who, used light as his inspiration. Even on a dull, snowy day, the interior space was filled with light, primarily coming from an open courtyard, a brave feature to include for a Canadian building, where outdoor spaces have such limited use. We were told that the courtyard has under-floor heating, so the elaborately tiled floor would remain clear throughout the year, exposing a pattern of granite, sandstone and lapis mosaic work. Our Docent explained the architecture is a elegant blend of Islamic elements and modern design.

We were then shown the 350-seat auditorium, a stunning performance hall where all kinds of programming is offered, such as film, live music and dance. We climbed the stylized spiral staircase (see photo), to take us to the balcony of the auditorium, where our Docent explained how the space is acoustically idealized.



Caption needed

Since we had only seen architecture up to this point, we were now introduced to the permanent collection of art works and historical artefacts. Our first piece was a striking contemporary take on the “Persian rug” by artist (check)-see photo. This huge piece hangs in the main foyer area near the café, and has an interesting split personality; one side had a very deep pile, with a shimmering gold and intense colour palette. The Docent asked us to walk round the other side of the piece, and we saw a traditional rug pattern, with gold outlines and a very different feel. He explained that the side with the pile was created using gold covered straight pins poking outwards as if a carpet pile, and the gold outline on the reverse was the pin heads. This has to be seen to get the full impact.

We were then guided through a collection of ceramics, paintings, clothing, and highly decorated Qu’rans. The permanent collection area is introduced through a “digital feast” featuring the patterns and motifs of many of the pieces, animated digitally on the wall, which showed both figurative and geometric patterns featured.

The next section was the featured exhibition “the Lost Dhow”, where our Docent explained the story of an

excavated ship from the 9th Century containing all sorts of treasure discovered, and still has a mysterious history, open to interpretation.



Caption needed

A return to the architectural aspect of the building took us to the Donor's Lounge, a beautiful space with a tent-like ceiling, and beautiful views of the exterior. We were told to come back in the Spring, when the gardens come into their own, and there will be fountains, foliage and sculpture to enjoy as part of a 4 km. walk open to the public. The garden is designed by Lebanese-Serbian landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.



At the far end of the gardens is another building, the Ismaili Centre Toronto, a space created for social and cultural gatherings as well as prayer and contemplation.

The last stop was the restaurant, "Diwan" where a few members stayed for a bite. Another beautifully embellished space, well worth a return visit.

Everyone agreed this is a beautiful space, worth it for tourists to visit, and a great symbol of Toronto's tolerance and multi-cultural strength.