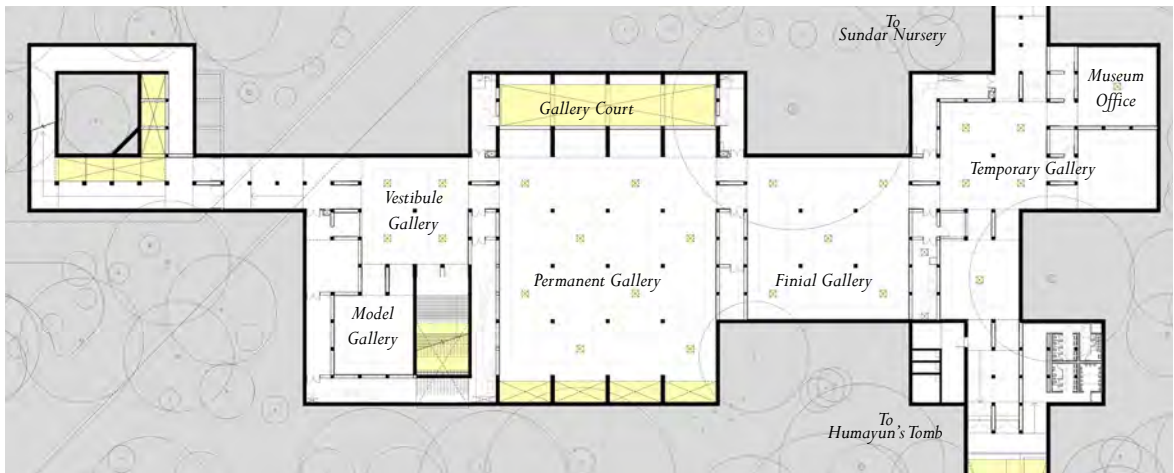
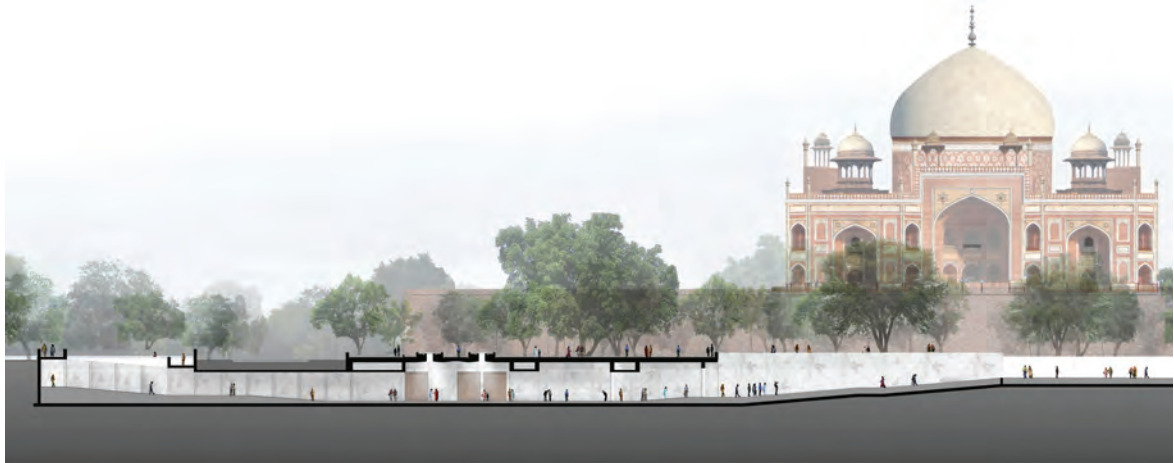




AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Humayun's Tomb - Sundar Nursery - Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti
URBAN RENEWAL INITIATIVE

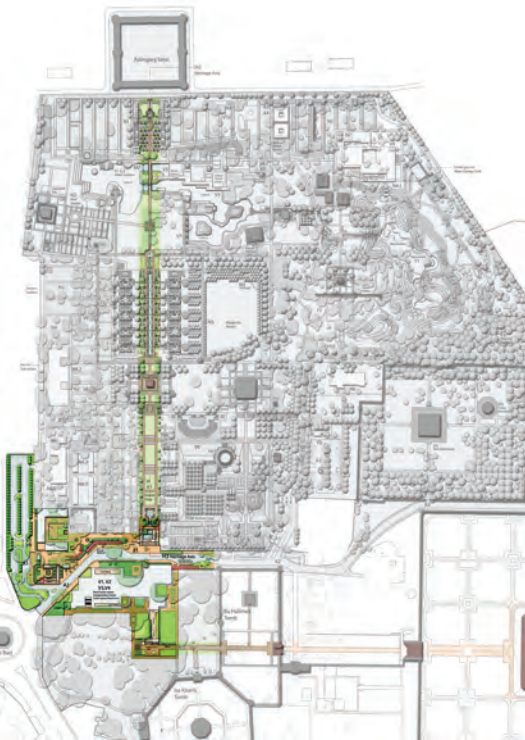


HUMAYUN'S TOMB SITE MUSEUM

a facility of the Archaeological Survey of India

Funded by the
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

April 2015



INTRODUCTION

Following a decade-long revitalisation efforts undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which included the conservation of monuments, restoration of parks and gardens and related socio-economic projects in neighbouring districts, the Humayun's Tomb Complex now receives almost two million visitors annually, over 500,000 of them are school children. A greater number of pilgrims – from across the world and of many faiths – visit the adjoining Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the 14th century Sufi saint who continues to be revered seven centuries after his death.

A state-of-the-art site museum is to be built at the entrance of the World Heritage Site to: enhance visitor experience; allow a better understanding of Mughal architecture and building craft traditions; shed light on the development of the Nizamuddin area over a millennium; and, most significantly, explain the pluralist Sufi cultural traditions that defined Hindustani culture for at least five centuries. This will be the first of the Site Museums planned for the 25 *Adarsh* or “model” monuments recently designated by the Government of India's Ministry of Culture.



BACKGROUND

The need for a Site Museum was first expressed in 2010 by the Archaeological Survey of India. Planning studies commenced to determine the most appropriate site to serve visitor needs as well as enhance interest in the Nizamuddin area – without disfiguring the historic character of the area or damaging any underlying archaeology and mature trees.

The entrance zone was considered most appropriate as this would enable the Museum to serve as a bridge between the (presently) segregated sites of Humayun's Tomb, Sundar Nursery and the Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti. Ground-penetrating radar surveys confirmed the results of the archival research that showed that no archaeological remains existed on the site.



The conceptual design presented in 2011-12 envisaged a sunken building inspired by the traditional *baolis* of northern India. This would ensure that visual linkages amongst adjacent 16th century monuments, such as the Sabz Burj, Isa Khan's Tomb and Sundarwala Burj, would not be disturbed. AKTC commissioned a heritage impact assessment on the design prior to seeking planning approvals. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has pledged Rs 49 crores towards the construction cost of the Site Museum.

(Top) Plan showing the underground Site Museum with historic linkages with Humayun's Tomb and Sundar Nursery; (Middle) Original 18' finial of Humayun's Tomb will be housed with several other architectural fragments; (Bottom) The Museum will bring alive the seven centuries of pluralistic cultural traditions

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Situating the Museum at the entrance zone of the Sundar Nursery and Humayun's Tomb Complex, just off Mathura Road and Lodhi Road, allows vehicular access on an otherwise narrow access path.

The architecture of the Museum has been inspired by the tradition of geometric forms in Mughal architecture. The gallery spaces are arranged in a sequence of intersecting squares, with wide column spans of eight meters. Given the high volume of visitors expected at the site, the public circulation sequence has also

been developed along a primary axis, spanning the entire length of the Museum. Natural light, filtered through skylights and open courtyards, illuminates the gallery areas. These courtyards are critical aspects of the gallery, enabling curated displays of Mughal architecture, including façade treatments, landscape elements and ornamental traditions. Complex engineering systems required for a modern museum are woven around each gallery through dedicated service corridors, thus facilitating optimal curatorial and management protocols.

The entry plaza, comprising multiple ticket counters, public amenities and a cafe, as well as access to a souvenir shop, an auditorium, library, crafts gallery and seminar rooms, is sensitively arranged under the foliage of large trees. A two-storied structure that defines the northern end of the plaza is built on the footprint and height of the existing structure. Its facade is clad with red sandstone. The plaza also functions as a threshold from which visitors can orient themselves, familiarising themselves with the many features of the area.

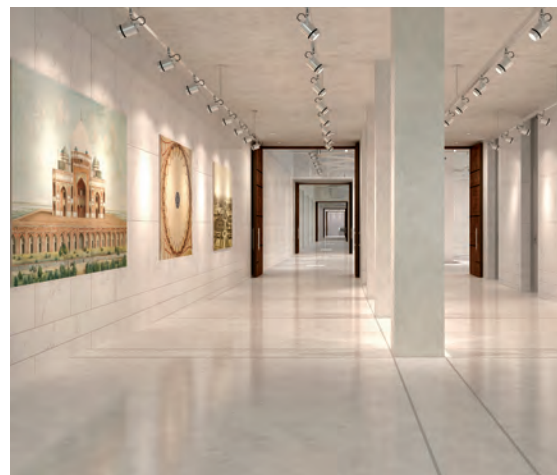
To enter the museum galleries, visitors descend down a wide ramped garden, walk through an enclosed entry gallery, and arrive into the Vestibule Gallery at a depth of six meters below ground level. This gallery gives visitors a choice of visiting the “Model room” – showcasing in 3D the entire site as it would have been at the end of the Mughal reign – before entering the permanent gallery. Those in a hurry can exit from here directly to the Humayun’s Tomb Complex.

The high-ceilinged Permanent Gallery, flanked by courtyards, allows light to play on with marble floors and walls. Displays here will include architectural models and objects associated with the Mughals and the site taken from the reserve collections of the Archaeological Survey of India. Reconstructions of prominent architectural elements of monuments and landscapes from the greater Nizamuddin area will also be featured.

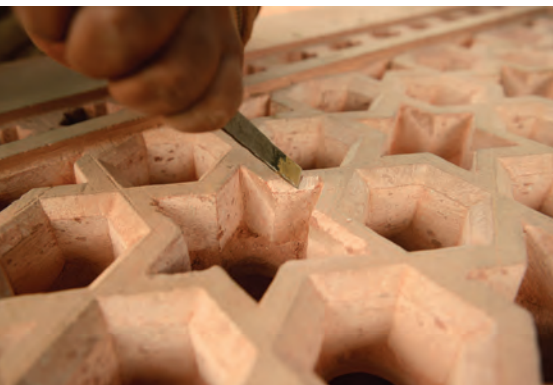
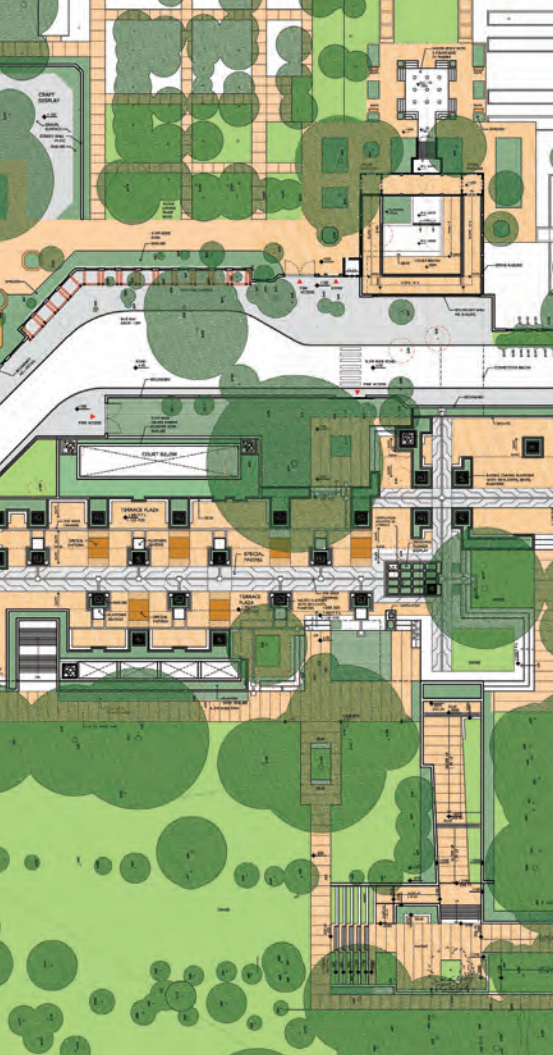
The restored copper finial of Humayun’s Tomb, as well as other original architectural elements recovered during the conservation effort undertaken at the Humayun’s Tomb complex since 1997, will be displayed in the Finial Gallery, adjacent to the Permanent Gallery.

The Museum will enable visitors to experience the magnificent craft traditions that were introduced to India during this period and which continue to flourish in myriad ways. The illuminated plastered ceilings reflect the geometrical sophistication of the Mughal age.

Digital exhibit technology will allow visitors a diversity of experiences including, but not limited to, experiencing the construction of Humayun’s Tomb and other monuments in the area. It will allow visitors to plan their visit through virtual walks. They will also be able to experience the musical traditions inspired by Hazrat Amir Khusrau who, in the 14th century, proudly compared India to paradise and placed Delhi in the centre of the civilised world.



(Top) A series of walkways, gardens and plazas offering pleasant experience for families, small groups and school parties; (Below Images) Temporary and permanent gallery spaces are arranged in a sequence of intersecting squares will display the architecture, history, evolution and pluralistic message of the area



(Top) Detail of landscape plan which illustrates and interpret the rich traditions of design and planting associated with gardens of the Mughal period; (Bottom) The Museum will draw the visitor into the conservation story, showcasing the architectural wonders, restored ornamental ceilings, tiles and inscriptions and traditional craftsmanship

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Following planning permissions received from the Land & Development Officer of the Government of India's Ministry of Urban Development, National Monument Authority, Delhi Development Authority, Delhi Government's Chief Fire Officer, South Delhi Municipal Corporation, Delhi Urban Art Commission, amongst others, construction will commence in April 2015 and is expected to take 30 months.

LANDSCAPE

The landscape – both at ground level around the complex as well as at its lower level – is designed to function as a series of generously proportioned walkways, gardens and plazas that offer a pleasant experience for families, small groups and school parties. Each space benefits from the shade, shelter and visual interest offered by the many fine mature trees found on the site.

Each of the three main access courts is designed to exhibit a distinct landscape character. The principal entry court is a sunken garden in the shade of a large existing tree; the exit to Sunder Nursery has a traditional water-cascade as its dominant feature, making a symbolic connection with the central axis of the Sunder Nursery; and, the main approach to Humayun's Tomb is a wide, impressive pathway gently inclined along a grass slope set within the length of a large linear court.

The intent of landscape design is to illustrate and interpret the rich traditions of design and planting associated with gardens of the Mughal period. The extensive roof of the sunken block of the Museum – just a few steps above the surrounding garden – is imagined as the contemporary interpretation of a garden carpet design, mostly in sandstone. The conventional features of such a garden in the Persian style – a central water channel, planting beds, and narrow runnels for irrigation – are represented as very simple patterns in the paving, and as thin shallow channels incised into the surface and suitably sloped for rain water run-off.

EXHIBIT THEMES

The Humayun's Tomb Site Museum will focus on bringing alive the seven centuries of pluralistic cultural traditions, art and architectural history of the Nizamuddin area in a meaningful, elegant yet entertaining manner that will appeal to a cross section of visitors, from school children to international tourists. The Museum is also expected to serve as the first point of visit for tourists interested in visiting Mughal India's prominent monuments, including the Taj Mahal, which was built after – and inspired by – Humayun's Tomb.

Live demonstration of building crafts such as stonework, tile work, use of incised plaster work, as well as other prominent Mughal crafts such as metalwork, textiles and painting for manuscripts, will be a permanent activity. The use of these crafts in construction as well as in the display of contemporary products will demonstrate the continued impact and potential of these traditions.

Temporary gallery space will allow exhibitions of associated themes to be regularly on show. The Museum thus aspires to promote an understanding of the cultural and aesthetic practices that flourished during the Mughal era, and to create a contemporary experience worthy of a 21st century addition to this extraordinary World Heritage Site.

Architectural Design: Vir Mueller Architects; Landscape Design: Shaheer Associates