

PRESS RELEASE

**Tashkent's Modernist Architecture Inscribed
on the UNESCO World Heritage List**

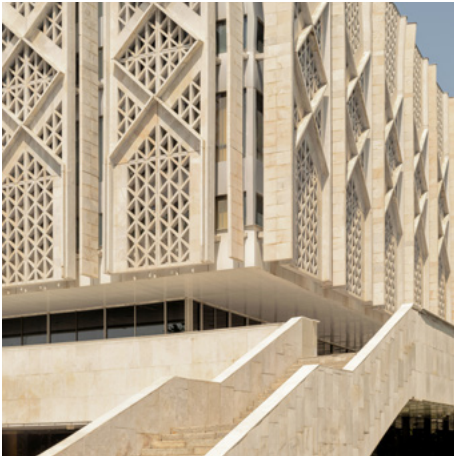
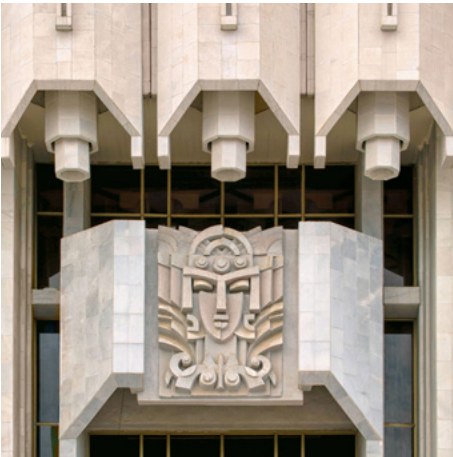


Uzbekistan
Art and Culture
Development
Foundation

TASHKENT MODERNISM



PRESS RELEASE



TASHKENT'S MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE INSCRIBED ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

**27 JULY 2026,
TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN**

- Ten buildings dating from the 1960s to the early 1990s have been inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and make Uzbekistan the first country of Central Asia to be recognised for its twentieth-century architectural heritage
- Tashkent's Modernist Architecture reflects the synthesis between Soviet-era planning and construction, and Central Asian spatial traditions, climate-responsive design, monumental art and craftsmanship
- Now officially the youngest properties (by date of construction) to hold World Heritage status, the inscription follows five years of research, documentation and international collaboration initiated by the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF)
- The Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI research project was coordinated by Milan-based architecture studio GRACE jointly with a team of international experts; the World Heritage nomination was coordinated by Politecnico di Milano–Mantova Campus, in collaboration with GRACE and others



**Top: Kosmonavtlar Metro
Station (1982-84)**

**Bottom: The State Circus of
Tashkent (1965-1975)**

**Two of ten modernist buildings
in Tashkent being inducted onto
UNESCO World Heritage List
Courtesy of ACDF**



The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has inscribed Tashkent's modernist architecture on the World Heritage List at its 48th session in Busan, Republic of Korea. These include ten landmark buildings in Uzbekistan's capital dating from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Modern architecture emerged in Central Asia as early as the 1930s, making the region a participant in the development of the international modern movement. Tashkent's architecture of the 1960s to early 1990s represents the second more innovative chapter of twentieth-century modernisation. The inclusion of these buildings on the World Heritage list acknowledges their Outstanding Universal Value and recognises how international modernity merged with Uzbekistan's social ambitions, material culture, climate and spatial traditions at that time.

Inscribed under the World Heritage criterion (iv), the properties span cultural, civic, commercial, infrastructural, scientific and residential architecture. Across different programmes and scales, the buildings combine standardised systems with site-specific construction, environmental and seismic performance with expressive forms, and modernist abstraction with courtyards, loggias, geometric ornament and monumental art.

This UNESCO recognition advances the strategic vision of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, positioning cultural heritage as a fundamental pillar of national development and renewal. It highlights the nation's legacy as a dynamic, evolving force—one historically capable of synthesizing diverse influences, from antiquity to the present, into a cohesive and enduring collective identity.

“This inscription brings a vital part of Uzbekistan's recent architectural history into the international account of twentieth-century heritage and the global modernist movement. These buildings record how Tashkent imagined public life, collective identity and the future through architecture.

The UNESCO recognition also carries a long-term responsibility: to conserve these buildings with rigour, keep them part of the life of the city and pass their knowledge to future generations.”

Gayane Umerova, Chairperson of the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation and Chairperson of the National Commission of Uzbekistan on UNESCO Affairs

TASHKENT MODERNISM

Tashkent's modernist transformation began before the earthquake of 26 April 1966, which accelerated existing plans and allowed them to be realised on a far larger scale. Broad avenues, public squares, landscaped spaces, housing and civic institutions reshaped the capital, alongside experimentation in prefabrication, reinforced concrete, seismic engineering and environmental design.

Architects adapted international modernist principles to the society and culture of the Uzbek Republic. Shading devices, deep façades, courtyards and water responded to the climate, while ceramic, mosaic, carved and cast surfaces connected architecture with the country's art and craft traditions. Familiar spatial typologies were reworked for new uses. What emerged was a broad field of architectural ideas that set Modernism's universal ambitions against the cultural conditions of Uzbekistan. Their inscription reflects a wider reassessment of the modernist movement and of the geographies through which it has traditionally been understood.

These buildings - museums, research institutes, cultural venues, a market, a metro station and a residential building - remain in use after Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, although they were seldom regarded as heritage.



Top: Taskent Skyline

Bottom: Map of Uzbekistan

Credit: Getty Images

**FROM RESEARCH TO
LEGAL PROTECTION**

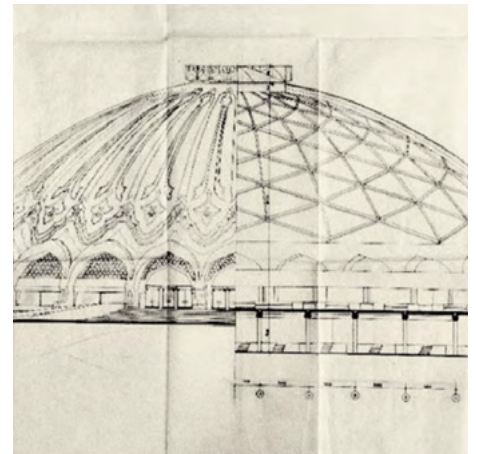
The UNESCO recognition grew from *Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI*, a research project commissioned and initiated by ACDF in 2021 and undertaken by an international team coordinated by Milan-based architecture and design studio GRACE. Core collaborators include: GRACE, Politecnico di Milano's Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, architectural historian Boris Chukhovich, Laboratorio Permanente, Novaya Zemlya, and photographer Armin Linke. Rem Koolhaas and Jean-Louis Cohen were close advisors to the project.

The team documented twenty-four buildings and produced detailed passports combining archival research, technical information and assessments of conditions and conservation needs. Between 2019 and 2024, twenty-one modernist buildings were added to Uzbekistan's State Cadastre of Cultural Heritage. In 2024, the passports became legal reference documents for their conservation and management.

**L: Central Exhibition Hall of the
Academy of Arts (1972-1974),
Archive imagery**

**R: Chorsu Market (1983-1990),
Archive imagery**

**Archive imagery
courtesy of ACDF**



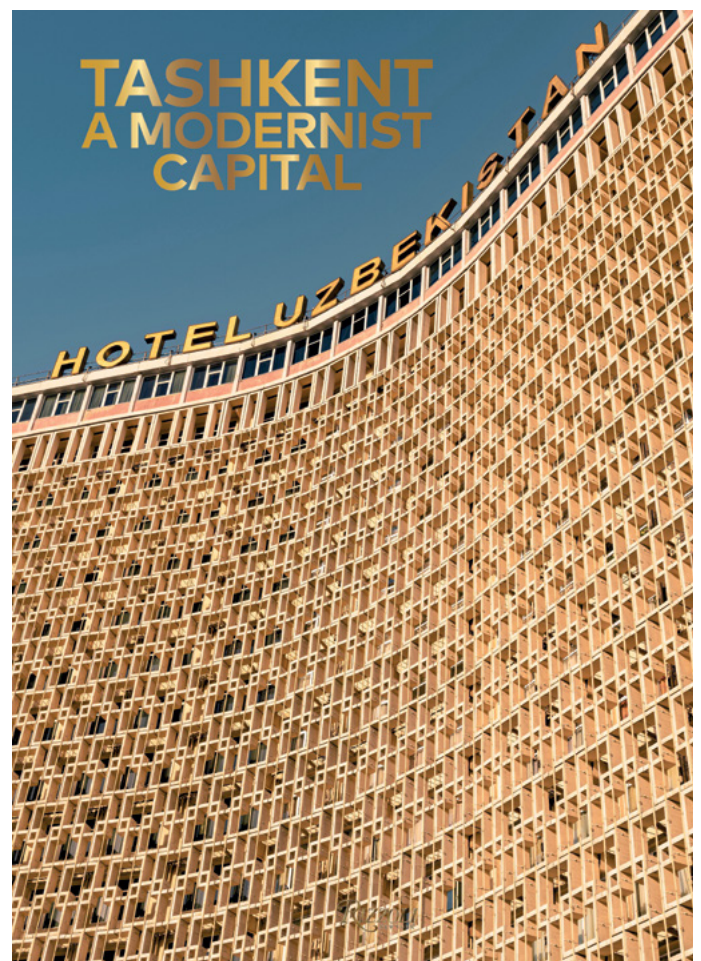
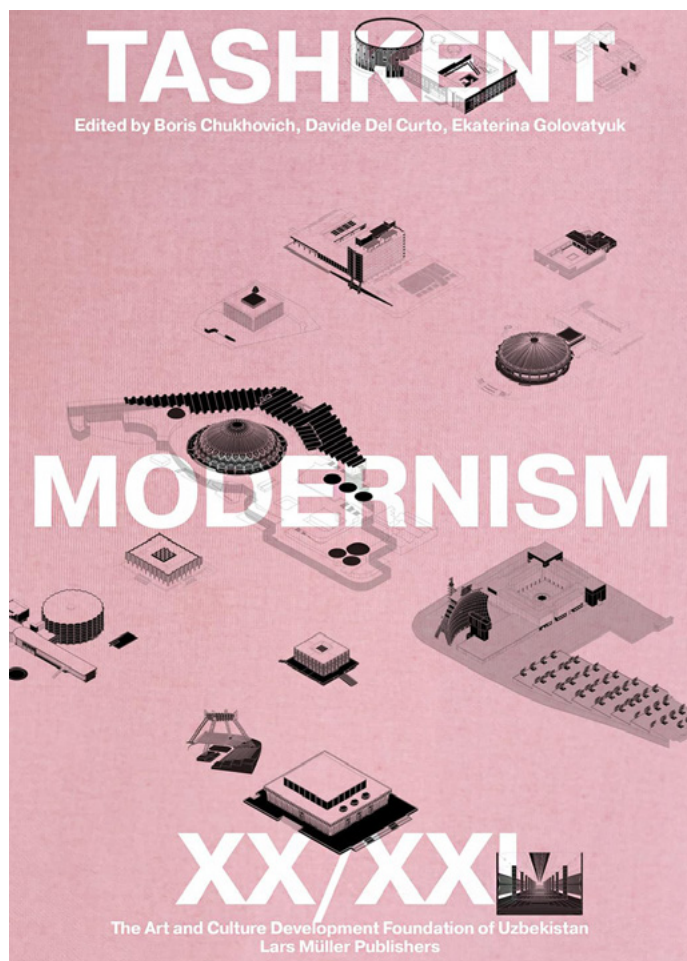
“Our research aimed to contribute to the broadening recognition of the diverse ways modernism has manifested itself globally. It stimulated a conceptual rethinking of modernism’s cultural and geographical roots and the way and places it arose and flourished worldwide.”

Ekaterina Golovatyuk, co-founder of GRACE, and Davide Del Curto, Professor of Architectural Conservation at Politecnico di Milano

The research also reached a wider public through exhibitions, conferences, workshops, teaching and publications - even an app, *Tashkent Modernism*. These included *Tashkent Modernism Index* at Triennale Milano and the State Museum of Arts in Tashkent (2023); *Tashkent: Appropriating Modernism* at the Sharjah Architecture Triennial (2023–24); *A Matter of Radiance*, Uzbekistan's pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia (2025); and the books *Tashkent: A Modernist Capital* (Rizzoli, 2024) and *Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2025). These placed the individual buildings within broader discussions about urban development, typology, institutional history, Orientalism and the process by which twentieth-century architecture becomes heritage.

L: *Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI*
(Lars Müller Publishers, 2025)

R: *Tashkent: A Modernist Capital*
(Rizzoli, 2024)



THE WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

The research formed the basis of the World Heritage nomination. In February 2024, sixteen buildings were entered on Uzbekistan's Tentative List, the formal first stage of the process.

The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Politecnico di Milano – Mantova Campus, under Davide Del Curto and Sofia Celli, coordinated the nomination dossier. GRACE and international experts supported this effort. The Politecnico di Milano team included Gunce Uzgoren and Karolina Pieniazek; the GRACE team comprised Ekaterina Golovatyuk, Giacomo Cantoni and Ksenia Bisti. Participating experts were Boris Chukhovich, Luka Skansi, Francesco Bandarin, Ana Tostões and Teresa Cunha Ferreira.

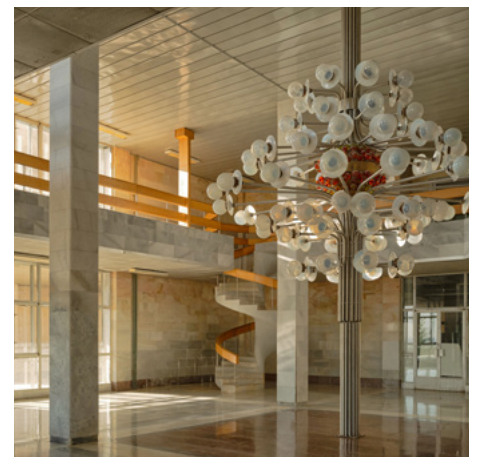
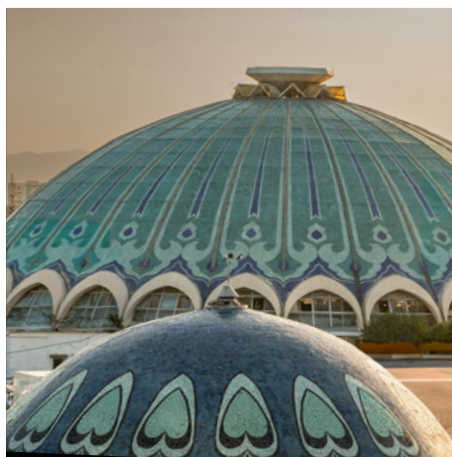
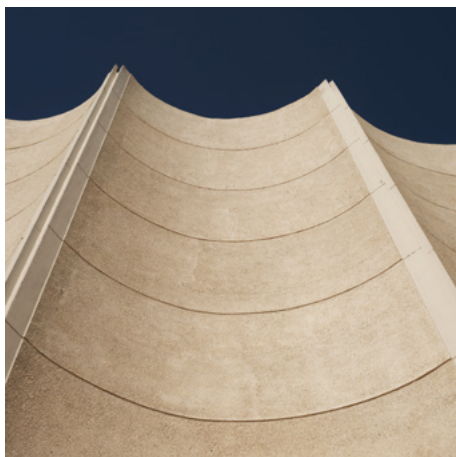
The dossier refined the selection from sixteen buildings of the Tentative List to ten component parts and set out the series' proposed Outstanding Universal Value, comparative analysis, conservation evidence, legal protection, buffer zones and management systems. ACDF submitted it in January 2025.

World Heritage status provides an international framework for the properties' long-term stewardship. ACDF will serve as joint manager and coordinating body within the Tashkent Modernist Architecture Expert Council. Priorities include conserving the buildings' architectural fabric and monumental artworks, protecting urban and landscape relationships, strengthening monitoring, and ensuring that future adaptation respects each building's significance.

L: Alisher Navoi Cinema Palace (1962-1964)

Middle: Chorsu Market (1983-1990)

R: Big Solar Furnace (1981-1987)



WORLD HERITAGE INSCRIPTION CHRONOLOGY

2021	ACDF initiates Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI; the international research is coordinated by GRACE.
2021–23	Twenty-four buildings are documented and analysed; detailed building passports establish significance, condition and conservation priorities.
February 2024	The research passports are adopted as legal reference documents for the conservation and management of protected modernist heritage.
2024	A sixteen-component property is entered on Uzbekistan's UNESCO Tentative List.
January 2025	Uzbekistan submits a ten-component nomination dossier coordinated by Politecnico di Milano – Mantova Campus in collaboration with GRACE.
8–14 September 2025	ICOMOS undertakes its technical evaluation mission in Tashkent. the conservation and management of protected modernist heritage.
November 2025	Davide Del Curto, Sofia Celli and Ekaterina Golovatyuk present the nomination to the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel in Paris.
December 2025 – February 2026	The State Party responds to ICOMOS's interim report with additional documentation.
March 2026	ICOMOS adopts its Advisory Body Evaluation and recommends inscription under criterion (iv).
27 July 2026	The World Heritage Committee considers the nomination at its 48th session in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The 10 Inscribed Buildings



1. ZHEMCHUG RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

A sixteen-storey experiment in collective dwelling whose monolithic concrete structure and suspended communal courtyards translate the social and spatial logic of the mahalla into a high-rise form.

Built 1975–1985

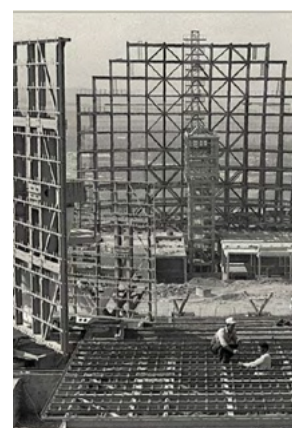
Images courtesy of ACDF

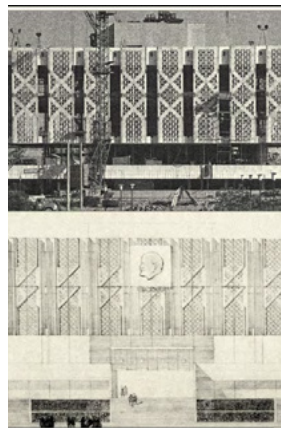
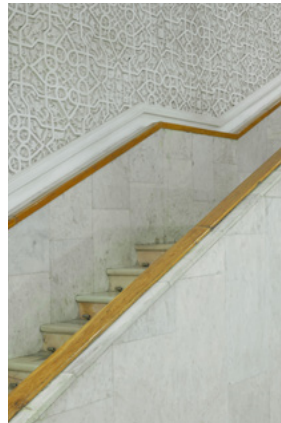
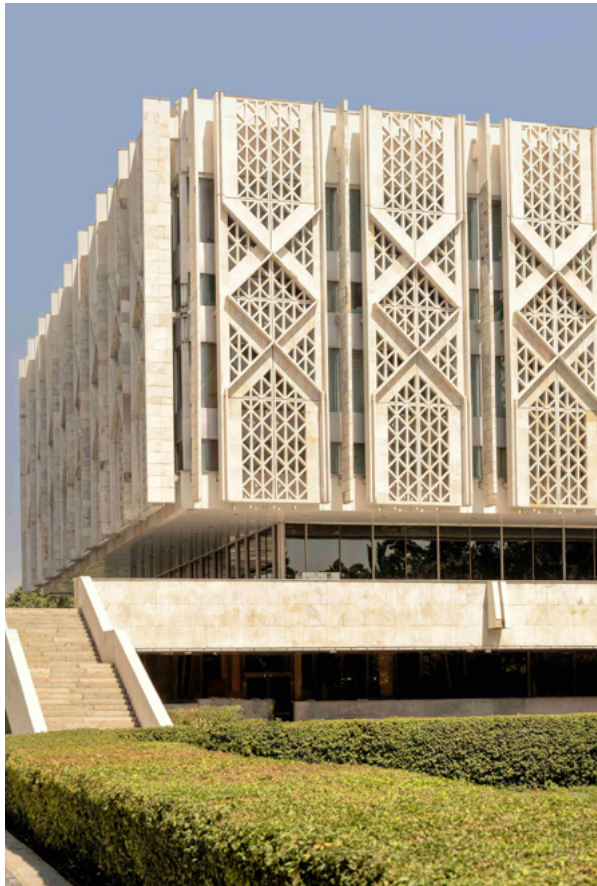
2. BIG SOLAR FURNACE AT PARKENT

A monumental scientific ensemble in the foothills east of Tashkent, which directs sunlight onto a vast parabolic concentrator for high-temperature materials research, uniting advanced solar engineering with a distinctive landscape, architectural and artistic programme.

Built 1981–1987

Images Courtesy of ACDF





3. STATE MUSEUM OF HISTORY

One of the earliest modernist Lenin museums in the Soviet Union, conceived as an urban pivot between two Tashkent's major squares and distinguished by the integration of modern construction with regional architectural references.

Built 1968–1970

Images courtesy of ACDF

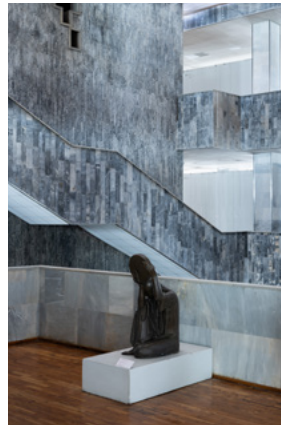
4. PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP PALACE

Tashkent's largest modernist congress and concert venue: a monumental civic building whose deep lattice screens control solar exposure and visibility.

Built in the second half of the 1970s–1981

Images courtesy of ACDF





5. STATE MUSEUM OF ARTS

A composition of square geometries and a four-storey atrium, bringing modernist abstraction into dialogue with the mathematical order, experimental materials and traditions of Central Asian architecture.

Built 1967–1974

Images courtesy of ACDF

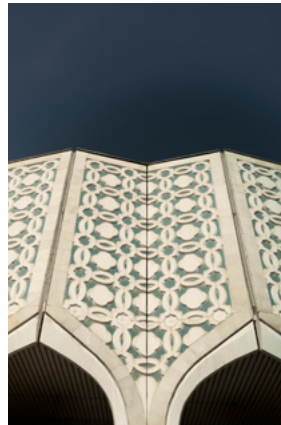
6. STATE CIRCUS

A purpose-designed, 3,000-seat circus that departed from standard Soviet prototypes, using steel and reinforced concrete to answer Tashkent's particular functional, seismic and climatic conditions.

*Built 1965–1975;
inaugurated 1975*

Images courtesy of ACDF





7. CENTRAL EXHIBITION HALL OF THE ACADEMY OF ARTS

A multi-level exhibition building set on a civic podium, with pleated façades in geometric and floral mosaic that bind modernist composition to the city's tradition of monumental art.

Built 1972–1974

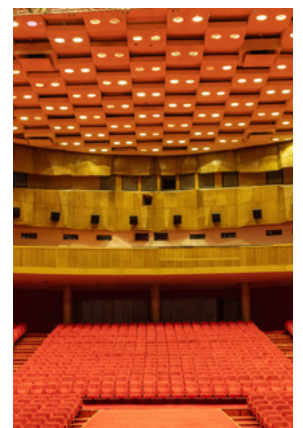
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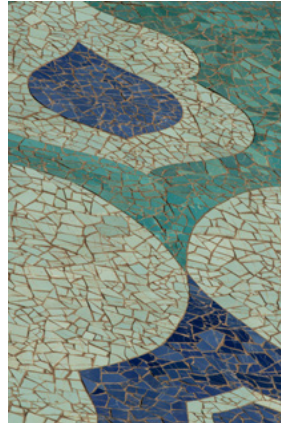
8. ALISHER NAVOI CINEMA PALACE

A radical response to panoramic cinema technology: its cylindrical volume and 2,300-seat auditorium register the 1960s shift towards innovation.

Built 1962–1964

Images courtesy of ACDF





9. CHORSU MARKET

A late-modern market ensemble on the site of Tashkent's historic bazaar, where domed structures reinterpret the spatial intensity of the traditional marketplace.

Built 1983–1990

Images courtesy of ACDF

10. KOSMONAVTLAR METRO STATION

A complete subterranean environment in which graded blue ceramic tiles, glass-clad columns, light and portrait medallions transform transport infrastructure into a narrative of flight, science and collective aspiration.

Built 1982–1984

Images courtesy of ACDF



NOTES TO EDITORS

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ABOUT THE UZBEKISTAN ART AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (ACDF)

The Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF) preserves, promotes and nurtures Uzbekistan's heritage, arts and culture. Positioned at the forefront of Uzbekistan's cultural development since it was founded in 2017, and led by its chairperson, Gayane Umerova, ACDF is committed to fostering the cultural ecosystem of the country, driving the creative economy and providing opportunities for practitioners on a local, regional and global stage.

To date, ACDF has reached over 5 million visitors through landmark exhibitions in Uzbekistan and across the world. With projects in more than 17 countries and collaborations with over 40 international museums and cultural institutions – from the Louvre and Arab World Institute in Paris to the Uffizi in Florence, the British Museum in London, and the Palace Museum in Beijing – the Foundation is amplifying Uzbek voices and stories in the world's most influential cultural arenas.

ACDF has recently overseen the development of the Centre for Contemporary Arts Tashkent (CCA Tashkent) which opens to the public on 6 September 2026 as a new cultural hub for the region. Other significant ACDF-led architectural projects currently taking place include the construction of the new National Museum of Uzbekistan designed by Tadao Ando, set to become a landmark in the heart of Tashkent and the Jadids' Legacy Museum which will see Lina Ghotmeh restore a 19th century house in Bukhara to tell the story of the reformist Jadids' movement. ACDF launched "Tashkent Modernism XX/XXI", an ongoing research project documenting and protecting Tashkent's modernist architecture, highlighted by publications in collaboration with Rizzoli New York (2024) and Lars Müller Publishers (2025).

ACDF is the commissioner of the Bukhara Biennial that continues to connect the world with the local community of Bukhara – its inaugural edition in 2025 welcomed over 1.8 million visitors, and its next edition will run from 3 September - 21 November 2027. ACDF spearheaded the inaugural Aral Culture Summit bringing together global experts to work towards ecological and cultural renewal for the region – its second edition will be held from 11 - 13 September 2026. In Samarkand, ACDF hosted the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference (30 October - 13 November 2025), a landmark decision for UNESCO that showcased Uzbekistan's role at the forefront of global conversations around cultural heritage.

Capacity building to support a future creative ecosystem is central to ACDF's mission and in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara, ACDF has launched artist residency and curatorial programmes to support and nurture the next generation of creatives in the region. The Aral School in Nukus is a new ecological education programme focusing on the Aral region. Internationally, the ACDF has commissioned the Uzbekistan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale Arte and Architettura since 2021 – including its most recent 2026 pavilion The Aural Sea – as well as Uzbekistan's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka. Recently it has overseen two significant exhibitions in Milan and Venice - When Apricots Blossom, an immersive design exhibition at Milan Design Week 2026 and Akhunov: Instruments of the Mind at Palazzo Franchetti in Venice which is open until November 2026. It also partnered with London's The Science Museum to highlight the rich scientific contributions of Islamic cultures now and throughout history.

acdf.uz | @acdfuz

ABOUT GRACE

Founded in 2016 by Ekaterina Golovatyuk and Giacomo Cantoni, GRACE (www.grace.eu) is an international architecture, research, and design studio based in Milan. Prior to founding GRACE, Golovatyuk and Cantoni collaborated for many years with OMA/AMO, working on cultural and research projects across Russia, Europe, and Hong Kong. On behalf of OMA, they were directly responsible for the design and realization of the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow.

A substantial part of Grace's portfolio is dedicated to exhibition design, museum architecture and preservation. The exhibitions, occasionally also curated by Grace, reveal key themes in the bureau's work, questioning the relationship between the artwork and its context, and the ubiquitous notion of "white cube". Grace's design investigates the possibility for new narratives through display, suggesting a more curious and open relationship to history, art, new media, and architecture.

Preservation is a central theme/concern of the office's work, with particular focus on the 20th century heritage. Besides several individual projects in Central Asia, Grace's current collaboration with Uzbekistan Arts and Culture Development Foundation, Politecnico di Milano and a group of local and international researchers to revise the legal framework and develop strategies to preserve 24 modernist buildings in Tashkent has led to forming a particular expertise and establishing a critical position on the subject, beyond current ideological and market driven paradigm. The project was translated into a series of exhibitions and a publication by Lars Muller publishers. In 2025, Grace curated the National Pavilion of Uzbekistan at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, dedicating it to one of the modernist buildings near Tashkent, The Sun Institute of Materials Science (big solar furnace).

grace.eu | [@grace.office](https://www.instagram.com/grace.office)

**ABOUT POLITECNICO
DI MILANO –
MANTOVA CAMPUS**

Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi) is the largest scientific-technological university in Italy and the number one university in the country for academic prestige and reputation. Founded in 1863, it is the oldest university in Milan and is internationally recognized for its excellence in engineering, architecture, and design. In the QS World University Rankings, Politecnico di Milano ranks 87th and 6th by subject for Architecture & Built Environment.

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU) works in the fields of architectural and urban design, spatial planning and land management, urban policies, conservation and interventions on built and natural heritage, and the historical-critical interpretation of architecture, cities, and landscapes. It carries out research and design experimentation for the transformation, care and management of settlements in historical and contemporary landscapes.

Davide Del Curto is professor of architectural conservation and vice-rector for the Campus of Mantua, a regional campus recognized as a world-class centre for architectural heritage and preservation hosting the UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities since 2012.

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**ABOUT UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE**

The World Heritage List was established under the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The World Heritage Committee inscribes properties of Outstanding Universal Value that meet requirements for integrity, authenticity, protection and management. Tashkent Modernist Architecture: Modernity and Tradition in Central Asia is inscribed under criterion (iv).