

## First Principles

The following “first principles” form the basis of Moshe Safdie’s design philosophy and approach to architecture and urban design.

## Shaping the Public Realm

One of the most important goals in architecture is to create meaningful, vital, and inclusive social spaces. As architects, we are responsible for shaping not only a project's program, but also its larger civic role of enabling and enriching the community. Our firm has designed civic buildings and public spaces, including museums, cultural centers, libraries, memorials, schools, urban parks, and religious facilities that serve as anchors of a vibrant public life in neighborhoods in cities around the world.



National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

## Architecture with a Purpose

We believe that architecture grows out of a vision of the way it can affect the lives of the individuals for whom buildings and public spaces are created. As architects, we are responsible for designing buildings that address human needs and aspirations. For example – a school, above all else, must be a wonderful place for learning. Every element of each design must be an expression of the life intended in a building.



Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

## Responding to the Essence of Place

The strength of our practice lies in the geographic and cultural diversity in which we work. We have created buildings in communities around the world: Boston, Los Angeles, Ottawa, Jerusalem, Bangladesh and Singapore, among many other places. Our designs are specific to place and culture—they are inspired by, and woven into, the historic and social fabric of their site. Our solutions evolve in response to the context that defines a place – local and regional characteristics of landscape, climate, cultural heritage, and contemporary life. Celebrating the unique character of each place, we create buildings that belong.



Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts

## Architecture that is Buildable

Architecture is not about building the impossible, it is about building what makes sense for a specific program and for a particular setting. It is about allowing the specific qualities of materials and the processes of construction to inform the design. The notion of “inherent buildability” is central to our work. We find elegant solutions that reflect the designing hand of nature. We are innovative architects and builders who use resources intelligently and carefully. We employ a full range of building tools and cutting-edge technologies to ensure efficiency and ease of construction.



United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC

## Building Responsibly

Sustainability has always been a guiding principle of our work. As architects, we have a responsibility to respond to the issues of energy conservation and ecology, and to use resources efficiently while we advance our clients' goals. Sustainability, at its core, implies a way of building that is sensitive to local geography and culture. This approach not only addresses important ecological goals, it also enhances the sustainability of a building's use and value to its owners. Whenever possible, we chose to work with indigenous building materials and local labor. We always aim to preserve resources and construct the most with the least.



Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California

## Humanizing the Mega-Scale

In the 20th century, urban development has been shaped by factors such as proliferation of the automobile, greater population densities, and the advent of high-rise buildings made possible by new technologies. Architecture must cope with rapid urban growth, congestion, and resisting the dehumanization of the environment that is too often a result. As architects and urban designers, we work towards effective urban strategies to address these challenges, mitigate the dehumanizing effect of mega-scale, and enhance the quality of life in our cities and neighborhoods.



Habitat '67, Montreal, Canada