

**Detroit: Why  
The Survivors  
Will Prosper**

**Snip and Share:  
How Firms Can  
Save Your Job**

**Islam's New Look:  
Redesigning the  
Modern Mosque**

# TIME

SPECIAL ENVIRONMENT ISSUE

## Vanishing Act

How  
Climate Change  
Is Causing  
A New Age  
Of Extinction

BY BRYAN WALSH

Sumatran Tiger  
Populations:  
Fewer than 600

15 >

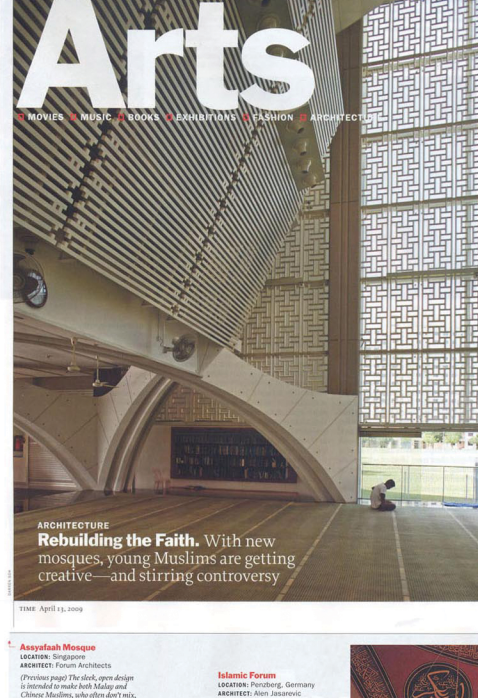
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www.time.com

**Floating Mosque**  
LOCATION: Dubai, U.A.E.  
ARCHITECT: Waterstudio.NL

Due to be completed in 2011, the mosque will have seawater pumped through its roof, walls and floors, helping to keep the faithful cool

God is celebrated in a different way in the Floating Mosque currently under construction off the coast of Dubai. Designed by Dutch firm Waterstudio.NL, the arresting building, which is due to be finished by 2011, resembles a futuristic submarine rising from the Persian Gulf with minarets so short and slender they could be periscopes. Built of floating modules of concrete and foam, it will be cooled by seawater pumped through the roof, walls and floors.



ARCHITECTURE

**Rebuilding the Faith.** With new mosques, young Muslims are getting creative—and stirring controversy

TIME April 13, 2009

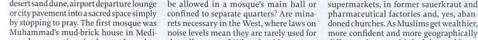
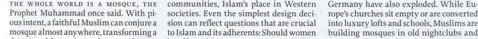
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**Assyafaah Mosque**  
LOCATION: Singapore  
ARCHITECT: Forum Architects

(Previous page) The sleek, open design is intended to make both Malay and Chinese Muslims, who often don't mix, comfortable as they pray

**Islamic Forum**  
LOCATION: Penzberg, Germany  
ARCHITECT: Alen Jasarevic

This award-winning building encourages greater understanding of Islam by allowing passersby to look in through floor-to-ceiling windows



BY CARLA POWER

THE WHOLE WORLD IS A MOSQUE, THE Prophet Muhammad once said. With pious intent, a faithful Muslim can conjure a mosque almost anywhere, transforming a desert sand dune, airport departure lounge or city pavement into a sacred space simply by stopping to pray. The first mosque was Muhammad's mud-brick house in Medina, where a portico of palm-tree branches provided shade for prayer and theological discussion. As the young religion spread, Arabs—and later Asians and Africans—developed their own ideas of what made a building a mosque. But that innovative spirit has slowed in recent decades, leaving most Islamic skylines dominated by the dome and minaret design that first appeared centuries ago.

That's now changing. A new generation of Muslim builders and designers, as well as non-Muslims designing for Muslim groups, often in Europe or North America, are updating the mosque for the 21st century, sparking not just a hugely creative period in Islamic design, but one riven by controversy. The disputes over modern mosques echo larger debates taking place

in the Islamic world today about gender, power and, particularly in immigrant communities, Islam's place in Western societies. Even the simplest design decision can reflect questions that are crucial to Islam and its adherents: Should women be allowed in a mosque's main hall or confined to separate quarters? Are minarets necessary in the West, where laws on noise levels mean they are rarely used for the call to prayer? What should a mosque attended by Muslims from different parts of the world look like? The boldest of the new mosques try to answer such questions but are also powerful statements of intent. "Islam wants to proclaim itself," says Hasan-Uddin Khan, an architecture professor at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. "These new mosques are saying, 'We are here, and we want it to be known that we are here.'"

**Designs for Life**  
AS THE NUMBER OF EUROPEAN MUSLIMS grows—from 12 million a decade ago to 20 million today—so does the need for mosques. A 2007 report by the Italian Department for Security Information found the number of mosques in the country

had grown from 351 to 735 in a mere seven years. Mosque numbers in France and Germany have also exploded. While Europe's churches sit empty or are converted into luxury lofts and schools, Muslims are building mosques in old nightclubs and supermarkets, in former sausage and pharmaceutical factories and, yes, abandoned churches. As Muslims get wealthier, more confident and more geographically diffuse—almost a third of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims live in non-Muslim-majority states—their mosques are no longer just monuments to the rulers whose names they bear. Increasingly, they symbolize the struggle to marry tradition with modernity and to set down roots in the West. The most daring buildings are dreamt up by second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants, who have the confidence and cash to build stone and glass symbols of Islam's growing strength in places like Europe. Simply importing traditional mosque architecture "doesn't express loyalty to your current surroundings," says Zulfiqar Husain, honorary secretary of an innovative new eco-mosque in Manchester, England. "It almost expresses that you want to be separate from the society you live in."

Debate is playing out within Western Muslim communities, too. "The immigrant Muslims often want [a minaret], because for them it symbolizes a mosque," says Omar Khalidi, an architect at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "But they cost a lot, and there are others who argue that [economically], they're a luxury Islam can't afford."

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For Paul Böhm, a German architect behind a new mosque planned for Cologne, minarets are a crucial part of designing a proud and honest building. "We believe this building should show its intent, and the minarets can help it do that," he says. "The Muslims of Germany have, over the last 40 or 50 years, been hiding in basements and [abandoned] manufacturing areas to pray. [Many Germans] have never recognized that they are part of society. Giving them a building which brings them up to the same status [as other faith groups] can help us understand and accept them."

But some Cologne residents disagree. Members of the right-wing Pro Cologne group have protested the \$20 million mosque, arguing that the two 166-ft. (51 m) minarets will spoil the skyline, now dominated by the city's famous Gothic cathedral. Construction is going ahead, and Böhm hopes his design will foster

nationalists. A recent report from the London-based Institute of Race Relations chronicles scores of campaigns against plans to build mosques across Europe. In 2007, a petition posted on British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's website calling for the government to scrap plans to build a mega-mosque on an 18-acre (7 ha) plot near the site of London's 2012 Olympics drew over 275,000 signatures. That same year, members of Italy's anti-immigrant Northern League party "blessed," as they called it, a site reserved for a mosque in Padua by parading on it with a pig, an animal deemed unclean by Muslims. A 2004 Dutch opinion poll found that mosques, which in the 1990s had been lauded as "enrichments to the urban landscape," were now derided as "unimaginative," "ugly" and "cheap imitations."

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