

THE PROFESSION'S FOUNDATIONS: ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

A WORKSHOP PRESENTED BY THE AGA KHAN PROGRAM FOR ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AT MIT
SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2022 - 10:30 AM TO 4:30 PM - ROOM 56-154

The global history of twentieth century architecture, as it stands, is mainly narrated as the story of Western architects and their influence on the rest of the world. This workshop contests this narrative by inviting participants explore the life and works of the early milieu of Middle Eastern architects, planners, and engineers who developed the modern architectural profession in their countries in the late colonial and postcolonial periods. It pays special attention to these professionals' role in the transnational exchange of technical expertise and the flow of architectural knowledge, experiences, and imageries both regionally within the Middle East and globally during the twentieth century.

PROGRAM

10.30 WELCOME NOTE
Nasser Rabbat, MIT
OPENING REMARKS
Nadi Abusaada, MIT

SESSION I

Discussant: Nasser Rabbat, MIT

11.00 *Techniques of Architectural Estimation and the Keşif DeFTER-i*
Yara Saqfalhait, Columbia

11.20 *The First Milieu: Palestinian Architects and Arab Regionalism*
Nadi Abusaada, MIT

11.40 DISCUSSION AND Q&A

12.00 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION II

Discussant: Kishwar Rizvi, Yale

13.00 *Transnational Exchanges: Egypt and the Arabian Gulf*

Reem Khorshid, Yale

13.20 *US Agencies and the Architecture of Development, 1949-1961*

Dalal MUSAED ALSAYER, Kuwait University

13.40 *Qasim's Architects? Rifat Chadirji and Kahtan Madfai as Post-Revolutionary Professionals in Iraq*

Huma Gupta, MIT

14.00 DISCUSSION AND Q&A

14.30 COFFEE BREAK

SESSION III

Discussant: Mark Jarzombek, MIT

15.00 *The 'Foreign' and 'Own': Approaches to Architecture And Urbanism between the Arab Region and Latin America*

Wesam Al Asali, Princeton

15.20 *From Mystic Visions to Futuristic Designs*

Pamela Karimi, UMass Dartmouth

15.40 DISCUSSION AND Q&A

16.00 CONCLUDING REMARKS

BIOGRAPHIES

Nadi Abusaada is an architect and a historian. He is currently an Aga Khan Postdoctoral Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Nadi completed his Ph.D. and M.Phil. degrees at the University of Cambridge and his B.A. at the University of Toronto. Nadi is also the co-founder of Arab Urbanism, a global network dedicated to historical and contemporary urban issues in the Arab region. His writings have been featured in a number of international publications including *The Architectural Review*, *The International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, and the *Jerusalem Quarterly* among others.

Wesam Al Asali is a 2021-2022 Fung Fellow at Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies. He is a practicing architect and cofounder of IWLab (his practice in Syria and Europe) and CERCAA (his school of building crafts and technologies in Valencia, Spain). Wesam received his Ph.D. in Architecture from the University of Cambridge, where he worked on policy, training, and design strategies of thin-tile vaulting for low-carbon construction. Through research and built projects, Wesam's work examines how scarcity-driven architecture in the Middle East and Latin America can enrich our understanding of design and environmental emergencies.

Dalal MUSAED ALSAYER is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Kuwait University. Her research lies at the intersection of architecture, environment, and development in the context of Arabia during the twentieth century. She holds a professional Bachelor of Architecture from Kuwait University; postgraduate degrees in architecture, urban design, and landscape from Columbia University and Harvard University; and a PhD in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. She is the coauthor of *Pan-Arab Modernism: History of Architectural Practice in The Middle East* (Actar, 2021) and is the co-founding editor of *Current: Collective for Architecture History and Environment* (www.current-collective.org).

Huma Gupta is a full-time Lecturer in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. Gupta holds a PhD in the History and Theory of Architecture and a Master's in City Planning from MIT. Currently, she is writing her first book *The Architecture of Dispossession*, which is based on her doctoral thesis on state-building and the architectural transformation of migrant reed-mat and mudbrick settlements in mid-century Iraq. Previously, Gupta was the Neubauer Junior Research Fellow at Brandeis University, Humanities Research Fellow at New York University-Abu Dhabi, and International Dissertation Research Fellow at the Social Science Research Council. Her work has been published in the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, *Journal of Contemporary Iraq* and the *Arab World*, and *Thresholds*.

Mark Jarzombek is a Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture at MIT. Jarzombek works on a wide range of topics – both historical and theoretical. He is one of the country's leading advocates for global history and has published several books and articles on that topic, including the ground-breaking textbook entitled *A Global History of Architecture* (Wiley Press, 2006) with co-author Vikramāditya Prakash and with the noted illustrator Francis D.K. Ching. He is the sole author of *Architecture of First Societies: A Global Perspective* (Wiley Press, 2013), which is a sensitive synthesis of first society architecture through time and includes custom-made drawings, maps and photographs. The book builds on the latest research in archeological and anthropological knowledge while at the same time challenging some of their received perspectives. He is currently finishing a book for Routledge Press entitled *The Long First Millennium: Affluence Architecture and the Making of Modern Society*

Pamela Karimi is an architect and an architectural historian. She earned her PhD from the History, Theory & Criticism of Art and Architecture Program at MIT in 2009. Her primary field of specialization is art, architecture, and visual culture of the modern Middle East. Her second area of research is design and sustainability in North America. Karimi is the author of *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era* (Routledge, 2013) and co-editor of *Images of the Child and Childhood in Modern Muslim Contexts* (Duke, 2012), *Reinventing the American Post-Industrial City* (Sage, 2015) & *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Middle East: From Napoleon to ISIS* (Aggregate Architectural Collaborative, 2016). Karimi's forthcoming book, *Alternative Iran: Contemporary Art &*

Critical Spatial Practice will be published by Stanford University Press in 2022. This book project was recently awarded the 2021 Millard Meiss Publication Fund from the College Art Association. *From Mystic Visions to Futuristic Designs*.

Reem Khorshid is an architect and researcher whose work examines architecture and urbanism. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Architecture from Yale University. Reem's work has been exhibited at Jameel Arts Centre, Tbilisi Architecture Biennial and The Spatial Sound Institute. Her writings have appeared in *Platform*, *Mada Masr*, and the *Daily News Egypt*.

Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. His interests include Islamic architecture, urban history, heritage studies, Arab history, contemporary Islamic art, and post-colonial criticism. He has published numerous articles and several books on topics ranging from Mamluk architecture to Antique Syria, 19th century Cairo, Orientalism, and urbicide. His most recent books are *'Imarat al-Mudun al-Mayyita* (*The Architecture of the Dead Cities*) (2018), and an online book, *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoléon to ISIS*, co-edited with Pamela Karimi (2016). His book on the great 15th-century Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi will come out from EUP in 2022. He is currently editing a book on the cultural history of Syria (EUP, 2023), and co-editing another on heritage conservation, destruction, and reconstruction (AUC Press, 2022). His next book project is a history of Mamluk Cairo, which is under contract with AUC Press.

Kishwar Rizvi is Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at Yale University. Her recent publications include *The Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), for which she was selected as a Carnegie Foundation Scholar, and *Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal art and culture*, editor, (Brill, 2017). Her earlier publications include *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: History, religion and architecture in early modern Iran* (British Institute for Persian Studies, I. B. Tauris, 2011) and the anthology, *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and politics in the twentieth century* (University of Washington Press, 2008), which was awarded a Graham Foundation publication grant.

She is currently a fellow at the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Art and Architecture at Harvard University.

Yara Saqfalhait is a Doctoral Student in Architecture at Columbia University (GSAPP), and a Graduate Fellow at the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. Her work focuses on the historical relations between architecture, technical knowledge and capital in the Ottoman Empire across the long nineteenth century. She was trained in Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University in Palestine, and earned a Masters degree in History and Philosophy of Design from Harvard University.