

On Documenting Architecture

If architecture is the language of civilization and a testimony to the advancement of nations, then it is even more painful to observe, and hard to explain, the general demise of the level of architecture across the Arab World. Since the early times of cultural enlightenment up to the golden years of the twentieth century, our architectural production was vibrant and distinctive. Today one looks at Cairo, Baghdad, Beirut and Manama with much sorrow over the incessant destruction of our built heritage. Buildings that have witnessed so many past decades pray to be saved, while they retain the memory of the place.

Today, we participate for the third time in this important architectural gathering in collaboration with the Arab Center for Architecture in Beirut, and in company of Pr. George Arbid and Bernard Khoury. With them, we seize this opportunity to archive and document an important part of our shared Arab architectural legacy between 1914 and 2014 and we attempt through this survey to highlight the importance of safeguarding and protecting our architectural heritage, the tangible trace of our political and social history.

Let us not overlook that whoever forgets his past is unable to protect his present or build his future. And in the end, there are no failed countries; only countries whose sons have failed to love them.

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