



## CRUCIBLES, VECTORS, CATALYSTS: ENVISIONING THE MODERN CITY

ONLINE EVENT, ZOOM

2 MARCH 2021, 15.00-18.30 (UTC)

9 MARCH 2021, 15.00-16.30 (UTC)

### Explore modern cities and architectural production in the blurred era of the independence and postcolonial period

Join us for three sessions which will bring together scholars, researchers and curators to explore architectural production in the blurred era of independence to the post-colonial period of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, focussing on cities in Africa, Middle East and South Asia.

Whether driven by socialist agendas (Nehruvian in India and Nkrumah in Ghana), monarchies (Pahlavis in Iran and Hashemite in Iraq), quasi colonial protectorates, or pan-continental aspirations, architecture (and especially Modernism) was a key apparatus for nation-building, for re-imagining identities and a means to project and invent a new image of the future. The seminar seeks to explore the use of architecture as both physical infrastructure and symbolic expression, as well as its vulnerability to the vicissitudes of changing politics and policies of the times.

The role of cities as crucibles, vectors and catalysts for developing new expressions of identity, change and power is key. Cities in this period saw the emergence of schools of thought, dynasties and collaborations were formed, networks and ideas were shared and publications were disseminated. While the desire of a newly independent nation was often to consolidate a single national collective identity, it was through the urban centres that strands of coherent, yet often multiple identities were formed. The role of figures such as Rifat Chadirji, Mohamed Makiya, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry were important as they often operated within multiple cities and cross-cultural contexts that spanned the colonial to postcolonial divide.

These urban centres were either newly built, or they were remade and reimagined through city infrastructure, government buildings, universities, cultural institutions and national monuments. Architecture schools, state sponsored projects and external agencies feed into the discussion and warrant further exploration. The seminar explores the transnational connections, diverse political agendas and complex allegiances which informed architectural development in this period.

#### Seminar convenors:

**Iain Jackson**, Professor of Architecture and Research Director, Liverpool School of Architecture

**Clara Kim**, The Daskalopoulos Senior Curator, International Art, Tate Modern

**Nabila Abdel Nabi**, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern



## PROGRAMME

### TUESDAY 2 MARCH

#### Session 1 | Crucibles, 15:00-16:30 (UTC)

#### **Building the Modern City: Expressions of Identity, Change and Power**

Moderated by Iain Jackson

This panel will explore state-sponsored programmes, planned cities and masterplans in cities such as Lagos, Tehran and Baghdad. It will examine architecture as expressions of nationalism and nationalist political agendas, as well as its relationship to big business, corporations and mercantile ventures.

Presentations:

#### **Building a (Cosmopolitan) Modern Iran**

**Talinn Grigor (University of California, Davis)**

In September 1946, the editor of the first Iranian architectural journal, Iradj Moshiri, wrote, “The *Architecte* is purely a technological and aesthetic publication, which cannot and does not wish to have the slightest involvement with the world of politics.” In the same issue, his colleague, leading architect Vartan Hovanesian, articulated the central dilemma of contemporary architectural thinking: “...should one imitate the past and recreate the notable works of that era or should one look towards the future and adapt architectural design to the modern lifestyle?” Both of these preoccupations – i.e., whether architecture should partake in political discourses and whether it should look back or forward in history for design solutions – epitomized the ideological hinge upon which Iranian modernity at large and the Modern Movement in architecture and art rotated around during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The paper will first trace the architectural project of the Society for National Heritage as examples of historicity, then will trace the impact of Armenian and Baha’i architects on Iran’s state-sponsored modernism.

#### **Lagos International Metropolis: A City’s Adventure in Tropical Architecture as an Expression of Dynamic Modernism and Growth in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Ola Uduku (Manchester School of Architecture)**

From the 1950s to the late 1970s, Lagos achieved extraordinary growth in its socio-economic and political status. This in turn led to its rapid urbanism and growth as an international regional metropolis. Despite a devastating civil war fought between 1966–1970, this in no way slowed the rapid growth of Lagos which effectively became the prime metropolis for business and commercial development in West Africa. The architecture of the city at this time clearly represented this status in its innovation and symbolism of a tropical modernist style. As a coastal city these buildings presented a positive symbol of growth and development across the Atlantic coastal skyline. This new architecture was modern, bold, and involved a combination of actors; expatriate architects and others in the building trade who had worked with the past colonial regime but now were part of an emerging group of international practitioners working in Lagos. Also, there were a number of indigenous Nigerian architects who were also able to bid for design contracts on their own or sometimes in association with established expatriate architects. This paper argues that this was a unique period in Lagos’ history where these alliances produced a vibrant new architectural style which was short lived, as nationalisation policies changed the dynamic of the city’s architectural



landscape and national policy moved the capital city and investment in its infrastructure from Lagos to Abuja. A number of the buildings and actors, as well as the context to this era, are discussed in this paper.

### **Rupture, Transition and Continuity in Baghdad's Master Plans: From Minoprio to Miastoprojekt Lukasz Stanek (University of Manchester)**

This talk will discuss the urban planning and development of Baghdad during the political shift from the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy to the socialist-oriented government of Qasim that overthrew the monarchy (1958), and those that followed. In particular, I will discuss three master plans for the city: the master plan by the British planners Minoprio, Spencley, Macfarlane (1956) and two master plans delivered by Miastoprojekt, a state planning office from socialist Poland (1967, 1973). While firmly subscribing to the tradition of modern architecture and urbanism, these documents differed in their responses to the shifting requirements of economic modernisation, social development, and nation building in Iraq. I will argue that their comparison is not just a historiographic procedure—one that brings to the fore the ruptures and continuities in urban planning in Baghdad—but also an essential part of the restructuring of urban knowledge production in Cold War Baghdad. In particular, I will argue that comparative procedure was part of a broad political, economic, and cultural restructuring of Cold War Iraq, and that the involvement of Eastern Europeans into these procedures came with both emancipatory potential and risks for Iraqi decision-makers.

### **Session 2 | Vectors, 17:00-18:30 (UTC)**

#### **Connecting the Modern City: Networks, Alliances and Knowledge Production**

Moderated by Clara Kim

This panel will explore the practice of modern architecture through colonial-postcolonial networks and geopolitical alliances. It will explore cities in Mozambique within the context of other Lusophone countries, post-Partition East & West Pakistan, as well as the dissemination of knowledge and technical expertise through pedagogy.

Presentations:

#### **Correspondences, Transfers and Memory: Maputo's "Age of Concrete"**

**Ana Tostões (University of Lisbon)**

This presentation considers the singularities that have led to different ways of developing architecture in Angolan and Mozambican cities during the colonial period till 1974 and analyses how these buildings have survived in these postcolonial societies. Based on the concepts of memory, history and identity, it draws on the social and political context in order to discuss the overlaps between the old colonial rules and the establishment of a new architectural and urban discourse. Under colonialism, many African cities were divided into central urban cores and large, informal peripheries conditioned by a lack of basic urban infrastructure. While a city's centre was often designed with Western settlers in mind, the periphery became large slums for the native working class. This stark spatial division has left permanent marks on contemporary African metropolises across the continent. Modern Maputo's development began in the 1940s under Portuguese colonial domination and went through moments of revolution, as well as the independence movement from 1975 to the present. Following liberation, the city's architecture underwent a physical and symbolic



transformation. Modernism, having come into a world framed by colonialism, where visions for improvement and innovation overlapped with brutal destruction, required reinvention. Today, these buildings compose one of the continent's great ensembles of modern architectural heritage. Shaped by themes of conflict, segregation, and domination, this talk offers a complex and difficult history on Architecture of the Modern Movement. Reconsidering the Colonial Modern as a hybrid process, the aim is to bring fresh insights to the way in which citizens recognise postcolonial spaces, select symbols and acknowledge their heritage.

**Archaeology of the Future: Constantinos Doxiadis in East and West Pakistan**  
**Farhan Karim (University of Kansas)**

As political questions behind Pakistan's emergence distilled themselves into aesthetic questions of how to represent a country without a "past," the debate erupted through the spatial practices determining the form and architectural character of the government buildings in East and West Pakistan. The elite bureaucrats, political leaders, military generals, and professionals advocated for a modern Islamic architecture and urban space that they believed would provoke a collective aspiration for "development" and "future." This talk focuses on Greek architect and planner Constantinos Doxiadis' works in East and West Pakistan that brought together local and foreign stakeholders and invested in creating an image for a unified "future." Ironically, as the vision of the future was grounded in differing interpretations of the idea of Pakistan, this talk suggests that Islamic architecture in postcolonial Pakistan was a shifting discourse missing a precise contour and a fixed centre. The indecisiveness of "Modern Islamic architecture," and the ambivalences of such a discourse were informed by contested interpretations of Islam, the West, and the Modern.

**Global Perspectives and Private Concerns: The AA's Department of Tropical Architecture**  
**Patrick Zamarian (University of Liverpool)**

Founded in 1954, the Architectural Association's Department of Tropical Architecture (DTA) played a central part in the global dissemination of a specifically Western understanding of modern architecture. By the early 1960s, the department conducted pioneering research into environmental physics; it carried out consultancy work in several African and Asian countries; and it attracted postgraduate students from all corners of the fast-dissolving British Empire. This paper will focus on the origins of the DTA. It will explain how – and why – an international network of stakeholders in 'tropical architecture' converged on an independent school of architecture in London. In doing so, the paper will show that despite the stated intention to improve the quality of building in the developing world, the department owed its existence to rather more mundane considerations, namely its potential to generate income for the Architectural Association (AA) and create employment opportunities for British architects. The paper will argue that its institutional setting within the AA proved vital for the department as its loose governance and autonomous status allowed it to respond swiftly to changing circumstances. Within years of its creation, the DTA transitioned thus from a late-colonial job creation scheme to an internationally renowned finishing school.



**TUESDAY 9 MARCH**

**Session 3 | Catalysts, 15:00-16:30 (UTC)**

**Fragments of the Modern City: Memories, Echoes and Whispers**

Moderated by Osei Bonsu

This panel will explore the collaborations, connections and entanglements that developed between art and architecture during a dynamic period of building in Morocco, India and Iraq. It will examine the legacy and afterlives of these projects through the investigation of under-recognised figures and narratives in art and architecture.

Presentations:

**Initiatives toward saving modern heritage of Morocco**

**Lahbib el Moumni & Imad Dahmani (founders of MAMMA, Mémoire des Architectes Modernes Marocain)**

Upon independence in 1956, young Moroccan and foreign architects had the challenge to build the new face of Morocco. The need for modern infrastructure, new administrations, education, and health facilities allowed many professionals to express their vision. They were also asked to develop modern affordable housing to face the massive urban expansion. This generation of architects, artists, and builders proposed a new form of Modern architecture embodied with local culture and climate, henceforth opposing the colonial vision of urban design in Morocco. This presentation will share case studies that MAMMA has been involved in studying and archiving. As an association that aims to highlight and preserve modern heritage, it will showcase how communicating, archiving and publishing in different forms of literature and media helped get Moroccan's youth interest in this heritage.

**Building Modern Delhi, The Nehruvian Post-Independence Renaissance**

**Ram Rahman (Photographer/Curator)**

At independence from British rule in 1947, Delhi, the capital, was a small city with medieval Sultanate ruins. In addition, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's 17<sup>th</sup> century city was badly scarred by the British crushing of the 1857 revolt, and the ambitious Imperial British Lutyens/Baker New Delhi was built between the 20s and the 40s. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru led the creation of a democratic, egalitarian, modern and secular country fired by the incredible energy and vision of the peaceful freedom movement, influenced greatly by Gandhi. A visionary constitution was adopted, and with Nehru's internationalist perspective, India inspired the decolonisation of much of Africa and South East Asia through the Non-Aligned Movement of nations, resisting the Cold War politics of the post-war era. This spirit also fired an incredible burst of modern architecture in Delhi, by young newly-trained Indian architects, recruited by Nehru who was actively involved in creating an Indian modernism. Delhi witnessed massive construction - much of it state building - housing, office buildings, universities, and cultural centres in a city hard hit by partition and the influx of hordes of refugees. The cosmopolitan modernist vocabulary in Delhi developed by three generations made it a unique site of influences of the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, and American Modernism, making the city a rich site of an Asian Modernism.



## Syntheses Across Disciplines: Rifat Chadirji and Art-Architecture Liaisons in Modern Baghdad Amin Alsaden (Independent Scholar)

In the years following WWII, Baghdad became a locus for artistic and architectural encounters, contributing to the global transformation of these disciplines while engendering unique local movements. This paper examines how Baghdadi artists and architects envisioned a transnational imaginary anchored in a polemical integration of indigenous emblems and local materials into an otherwise modernist framework. Against the backdrop of rapid development and political instability, the group's shared artistic-architectural culture evolved swiftly, moulding its members' intellectual agenda and aesthetic forms, and emphasizing a deep engagement with contextual specificity. Demonstrating the overlapping social and professional circles within which this culture emerged, the paper accounts for cross-disciplinary synergies and highlights the discourses pioneered by the artists and later embraced by architects such as Rifat Chadirji. Best known for his experiments with the round arch as a generative motif, Chadirji was also an important intellectual who articulated the group's ambitions and whose career epitomized their collective mission. The paper builds on several years of research and is part of the first study to consider the fundamental role that both artists and architects played in shaping the distinct creative project for which modern Baghdad became known, and which was later exported to the Arab world.

### Biographies:

**Nabila Abdel Nabi** is currently Curator, International Art at Tate Modern, working closely with the Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational. Previously she worked as Associate Curator at The Power Plant, Toronto, and prior to this as Gallery Manager at The Third Line, Dubai. Nabila has worked on solo exhibitions and facilitated new commissions by artists including Abbas Akhavan, Kader Attia, Omar Ba, Yto Barrada, Karla Black, Kapwani Kiwanga, Amalia Pica and Vivian Suter among others. She recently curated the exhibition *Hold Everything Dear* with Hajra Waheed at The Power Plant, Toronto and was previously Art Editor at literary magazine *The Point*. Nabila holds degrees from The Courtauld Institute of Art and University of Chicago.

**Amin Alsaden** is a scholar, curator, and educator whose work focuses on transnational exchanges of ideas and expertise across cultural boundaries. His research explores modern and contemporary art and architecture in the Arab world, particularly post-WWII Iraq, documenting endangered heritage, and examining how precarious archives and scarce resources shape lopsided global narratives. He has published and lectured widely.

**Osei Bonsu** is curator of International Art at Tate Modern, where he is responsible for organising exhibitions, developing the museum's collection and broadening the representation of artists from Africa and the African diaspora. He is author of the book *African Art Now* (forthcoming from Octopus Books and Tate Publishing, 2021) and will curate the 2022 Hyundai Commission in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. In 2017, he curated the 10th edition of Satellites, *The Economy of Living Things*, an exhibition co-commissioned by Jeu de Paume and CAPC: Centre for Contemporary Art, Bordeaux, and has worked on a number of projects focusing on African art, including *Pangaea II: New Art from Africa and Latin America*, Saatchi Gallery, 2015, and *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair*, 2013-14. Through his writing and research, Bonsu focuses on the relationship between art and issues of migration, race and identity in contemporary society.





**Lahbib El Moumni and Imad Dahmani** are both architects and professors at the School of Architecture in Casablanca. They founded MAMMA (Mémoire des Architectes Modernes Marocains) in 2016 to help highlight the postcolonial heritage of Morocco during the period between 1950 and 1980. Their main work in MAMMA ranges from public events, conferences, workshop and seminars on Modern Architecture, art and history.

**Talinn Grigor** is professor and chair of the Art History Program in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of California, Davis. Her research focuses on 19th- to 21st-century art and architectural histories through the framework of postcolonial and critical theories, grounded in Iran, Armenia, and Parsi India. Her books include *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (2009); *Contemporary Iranian Art: From the Street to the Studio* (2014); and *The Persian Revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture* (Penn State Univ. Press, 2021).

**Iain Jackson** is Professor of Architecture and Research Director at the Liverpool School of Architecture. His PhD research catalogued and surveyed Nek Chand's Rock Garden in Chandigarh India. He continued to work in Chandigarh after his PhD, investigating the architecture of Modernist pioneers, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. This research took him to West Africa where he continued his documentation of Fry and Drew's work, as well as that of other practices during the late colonial period. He co-curated with ArchiAfrika an exhibition of Mercantile Accra in Jamestown in 2019, and will commence a new research project investigating the architecture of the *United Africa Company* in June 2021 in collaboration with archivists at Unilever.

**Farhan Karim** is an associate professor in the School of Architecture and Design at the University of Kansas. His research focuses on the postcolonial history of architecture and city in South Asia. He is the author of *Of Greater Dignity than Riches: Austerity and Housing Design in India*. He edited *Routledge Companion to Architecture and Social Engagement* (2018) and co-edited *Boundary, Flows and the Making of Modern Muslim Selves through Architecture* (2021). His research has been supported by the Graham Foundation, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Aga Khan Center for Muslim Architecture at MIT, Mellon-Volkswagen fellowship, the Getty Research Institute, and Australian Leadership Award. He is currently preparing a book manuscript on the partition of South Asia and the involvement of Euro-American architects in postcolonial Pakistan (1947-71).

**Clara Kim** is The Daskalopoulos Senior Curator, International Art at Tate Modern where she is responsible for the research and acquisition of art from Africa, Asia & Middle East. She was co-convenor of the international conference *Axis of Solidarity: Landmarks, Platforms, Futures* (2019); curator of a major survey on the work of artist/filmmaker Steve McQueen (2020), 2019 Turbine Hall commission with Kara Walker, and *A Year in Art: 1973 Chile* (2019-20). All held at Tate Modern. Other exhibitions include *Imagined Nations/Modern Utopias* for the 2018 Gwangju Biennale and *Condemned to be Modern* as part of the Getty Foundation's PST: LA/LA initiative in 2017. Both examined the contested legacies of modernism through art and architecture.

**Ram Rahman** is a photographer, designer, curator and activist in New Delhi. Son of an architect, he photographed the work of two generations of Delhi architects in the 80s and 90s. His documentary work has been shown around the world and he has curated exhibitions of photography, architecture and of his artist activist group Sahmat. His recent work has focused on the modernist architecture of Delhi.

**Łukasz Stanek** is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) at the Manchester School of Architecture, The University of Manchester, UK. Stanek authored *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban*

*Research, and the Production of Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011) and *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 2020). Currently Stanek studies the *Africanization of Ghanaian Architecture*, as part of the Centring Africa Program at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Besides Manchester, Stanek taught at the ETH Zurich, Harvard University GSD, and the University of Michigan.

**Ana Tostões** is an architect, architecture critic and historian. She is also President of Docomomo International and Editor of the Docomomo Journal. She is a professor at IST-University of Lisbon where she coordinates the Architectural Area. She has been invited as professor worldwide and her research field is the Critical History and Theory of Modern Movement Architecture focussing on the colonial and postcolonial condition. She published *Modern Architecture in Africa: Angola and Mozambique* which was awarded the Gulbenkian Prize 2014.

**Ola Uduku**, took up a Chair in Architecture at the Manchester School of Architecture in September 2017. Prior to this she was Reader in Architecture and Dean International for Africa at Edinburgh University. Her research specialisms are in modern architecture in West Africa, the history of educational architecture in Africa, and the contemporary issues related to social infrastructure provision for minority communities in cities in the 'West' and 'South'.

**Patrick Zamarian** trained as an architect at ETH Zurich. He is a lecturer in architectural design and humanities at the University of Liverpool, where his research centres on the history of architectural education in the United Kingdom. He is the author of *The Architectural Association in the Postwar Years* (Lund Humphries, 2020).