

Cities and Urban Spaces | The image of the city | Identity

A city's architecture reflects the culture and ethnicity of its inhabitants and holds clues about their social and economic state; it tells of their relationship with the past and reveals how they meet the challenges of their present as well.

Urban sites and architecture embody the socio-cultural identity of a society. They contain symbolic and historical messages as well as material content. One of the main messages embodied in the 19th-century architecture and urban design in Arab and Ottoman lands is the cultural, economic, political and military presence of the European "Great Powers", and as the environments inhabited by European communities there expressed the European lifestyle and identity they should also be considered as tools of political-national propaganda. At the same time, local architects utilised the architectural language and aesthetic of Western architecture as symbols of national modernity while the presence of the local Arab and Ottoman architectural languages and traditions as well as locally adapted alterations also confirmed and underlined the national identities of the Arab and Ottoman world.



Working Number: UA 056

Name: The Grand Bazaar Istanbul

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Department

Date: Hegira 13th century / AD 19th century

Materials: Watercolour

Curator Justification: A main site of traditional city life that manifests national identity through its form and style.



Working Number: FR 016

Name: View of Istanbul: the Valide Sultan Mosque and the port

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 19th century

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The mosque represents the core identity of Islamic architecture, a building dedicated to God. Built under the patronage of a royal woman in the old commercial centre of the city, the site also attracted business and trade activities between Muslim and non-Muslim merchants, representing another important layer in the identity of Istanbul.



Working Number: TN 097

Name: Café du Marabout in the Souk Ettrouk

Holding Museum: Institut Supérieur d'Histoire Contemporaine de la Tunisie

Date: Early 19th century

Materials: Paper

Curator Justification: An aquatint depicting the famous Café du Marabout, a vestige of the many that once furnished Arab and Ottoman cities, and which step-by-step Europeans embraced, turning them into fashionable venues for the elite. Cafés are important social spaces in the Arab and Ottoman world that are mainly frequented by men.



Working Number: UA 009

Name: Entrance to Damascus

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Authority

Date: Published 1881–1884

Materials: Wood engraving

Curator Justification: The engraving focuses on some of the most important identifying factors of Damascus: the mosque complex represents piety, Islam as the basis of an individual's life as well as the community's; the merchants symbolise a strong global presence in trade and economics; the Ottoman-style buildings represent the power of the Empire; and the new French-built road signifies the city's modern era.



Working Number: UA 066

Name: Al Azhar University, Cairo

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Department

Date: 1890

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: Depicting one of the oldest and most important universities of the Islamic world, this painting illustrates some salient features of Cairene identity: local history, tradition and lifestyle.



Working Number: UA 061

Name: The Citadel of Cairo, the Residence of the Pasha

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Department

Date: Published 1849

Materials: Lithograph

Curator Justification: Built in the Ottoman style, the design and structure of the Citadel of Cairo symbolises Ottoman power and the new ruler.



Working Number: PT 018

Name: Bullfight Arena of Campo Pequeno

Holding Museum: -

Date: 1890–1892

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The style of this building represents the rediscovery of Portugal's Arabian past and also hosts one of the country's most significant social events and traditions, the bullfight.



Working Number: PT 018

Name: Bullfight Arena of Campo Pequeno

Holding Museum: -

Date: 1890–1892

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The style of this building represents the rediscovery of Portugal's Arabian past and also hosts one of the country's most significant social events and traditions, the bullfight.



Working Number: PT 018

Name: Bullfight Arena of Campo Pequeno

Holding Museum: -

Date: 1890–1892

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The style of this building represents the rediscovery of Portugal's Arabian past and also hosts one of the country's most significant social events and traditions, the bullfight.



Working Number: DE 018

Name: Monument commemorating the installation of the Hijaz-Damascus telegraph connection, Beirut

Holding Museum: Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum, State Museums

Date: 1910

Materials: -

Curator

Justification: The monument can be considered as an expression of the symbolic interconnections between the three main pillars of Syrian society in the era: political identity (Ottoman Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid presenting Islam as a unifying factor); modernity (the telegraph system); and religious values (the Islamic hajj and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina).



Working Number: TN 086

Name: Statue of Cardinal Lavignerie

Holding Museum: Institut Supérieur d'Histoire Contemporaine de la Tunisie

Date: 19th century

Materials: Paper

Curator

Justification: The square, which is an important meeting point for the local population in the centre of Tunis, holds an important transnational monument.



Working Number: TN 098

Name: Chechia maker

Holding Museum: Institut Supérieur d'Histoire Contemporaine de la Tunisie

Date: 19th century

Materials: Paper

Curator Justification: The image depicts the daily life of an Arab city-dweller to illustrate Arab culture and handicrafts to the reader of Charles Lallemant's *Tunis et ses environs*. The "Eastern" style had a huge impact on European arts and crafts.



Working Number: DZ 062

Name: Typical North African interior

Holding Museum: Musée Public National des Antiquités

Date: 1832

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The image of the "East", seen in intimate interiors such as this, was one circulated throughout Europe. It inspired not only European art and fashion, but also the tradition of identifying cultures through architecture, ornament, decoration and costume or fashion.
