Arab cities have experienced a series of political and existential challenges over the course of the last two centuries. In this period, they had to shed their traditional, romanticized forms and absorb and react to colonialism, nationalism, modernism, socialism, Arabism, and finally the rise of Islamism combined with a glitzy new capitalist utopianism in the Gulf cities that stands in stark contrast to the ominous disintegration of the civil order in the republics of the Arab Spring today. This talk will review these changes and contextualize them, while at the same time trying to understand and explain their interconnectedness and historical trajectory.

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In cooperation with Europe in the Middle East – the Middle East in Europe (EUME) and Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices, both programmes at the Forum Transregionale Studien.

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