

Lecture – Wednesday, 13 July 2016, 19:30, in English

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.

Nasser Rabbat is Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. An architect and historian, his scholarly interests include the historiography of Islamic architecture, art, and cultures, urban history, and post-colonial criticism. He presents architecture in ways that illuminate its interaction with culture and society and stress the role of human agency in shaping that interplay. His books include *Thaqafat al Bina' wa Bina' al-Thaqafa* (The Culture of Building and Building Culture) (Beirut, 2002), *Al-Mudun al-Mayyita: Durus min Madhih wa-Ru'an li-Mustaqbaliha* (The Dead Cities: Lessons from its History and Views on its Future) (Damascus, 2010), *Mamluk History Through Architecture: Building, Culture, and Politics in Mamluk Egypt and Syria* (London, 2010). Two books, *L'art Islamique à la recherche d'une méthode historique*, and *al-Naqd Iltizaman* (Criticism as Commitment) will be published in the coming year.

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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Arab Cities, Modernity, and Heritage

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