

Ethnologies

Urban Heritage and the Contention between *Tradition*, *Avant-garde*, and *Kitsch* : Amman's Rising "Kitsch Syndromes" and its Creeping Vernacularized Urban Landscapes

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Paysages patrimoniaux
Volume 35, numéro 2, 2013

URI : [id.erudit.org/iderudit/1026548ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/1026548ar)
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1026548ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN 1481-5974 (imprimé)
1708-0401 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Daher, R. (2013). Urban Heritage and the Contention between *Tradition*, *Avant-garde*, and *Kitsch* : Amman's Rising "Kitsch Syndromes" and its Creeping Vernacularized Urban Landscapes. *Ethnologies*, 35(2), 55-75. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1026548ar>

Résumé de l'article

Cet article se penche sur l'émergence de certaines tendances à Amman. Il se concentre sur l'essor des répliques de styles architecturaux "historisés" et/ou la ré-invention des formes d'icônes culturelles et patrimoniales dans des lieux qui ont été l'objet de plans et de projets de régénération urbaine et économique, tels que Rainbow Street et Faisal Plaza à Amman. Il présente plus précisément le patrimoine urbain d'Amman comme un entre-deux pratiques discursives menant à une réalité urbaine qui n'a pas été reconnue, appréciée, étudiée ou même intégrée dans les définitions tant officielles que populaires de la Jordanie.

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URBAN HERITAGE AND THE CONTENTION BETWEEN TRADITION, AVANT-GARDE, AND KITSCH

*Amman's Rising "Kitsch Syndromes" and its Creeping Vernacularized
Urban Landscapes*

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The fusion of culture and entertainment that is taking place today leads not only to a deprivation of culture, but inevitably to an intellectualization of amusement. (Adorno and Horkheimer 2000)

Introduction

This article investigates the rise of inferior eclectic replication of "historicized" architectural styles or/and the re-invention of forms of cultural and heritage icons (that I label as kitsch) in places that underwent or are undergoing urban and economic regeneration schemes and projects such as in Rainbow Street, in Faisal Plaza, and in Prince Mohammad Street in Amman. As a form of cultural production, kitsch might be considered by some as inferior, derogatory, or tasteless, or simply as a bad imitation of past established traditions that is attempting to cater to popular demands.

In general, this research attempts to understand the various processes and practices of "patrimonialization" that underline the contemporary making of heritage-*scapes* and reveals processes that transform places into a heritage to be protected, exhibited, and appreciated not only by state agencies and international organizations, but also by various types of publics, actors, and stakeholders involved in the definition, production, invention, and consumption of heritage and its material culture (Daher and Maffi 2014: 2-3). In particular, the research attempts to understand processes and practices of heritage "invention" by a certain group of actors (e.g., new tenants and owners of certain cafes and restaurants in the historic part of the

city of Amman that have undergone urban regeneration and conservation schemes and projects). Hobsbawm believes that “traditions” which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable past” (1983: 1-2).

This research also investigates how local populations reappropriate, invent, and consume heritage in this part of the Arab world in a manner that sometimes produces a heritage-scape characterized by kitsch and linked to consumption and entertainment. This phenomenon is not restricted to Amman; Harb (2006: 10) elaborated how in certain parts of southern Beirut (e.g., restaurant of Al-Saha), processes of heritage “invention” resulted in providing an “alternative experience to the visitor – an entertainment rooted in an eclectic *mélange* of Lebanese, Arab, and Islamic ‘tradition.’” Daher (2007: 5-6) explained that processes of heritage construction are diverse and involve various actors and agents. Heritage is produced from the top down when, for example, state agencies designate certain buildings and structures as “heritage” or when school curricula concentrate on particular segments of history or place in one’s city; or even when well-reputed international bodies declare a particular area a world heritage site. It is also produced from the bottom up when particular families, for example, rehabilitate or adapt their houses to serve as public cultural amenities; or even when certain individuals, like tenants or shop owners redesign their store fronts for consumption linked to entertainment; and even when a tour guide identifies with a particular itinerary for tourists visiting his or her city or town.

According to Greenberg (1939), the term *kitsch* originated in the art markets of Munich after the industrial revolution in the 1860s and the 1870s; describing cheap, popular, and marketable pictures and sketches. It then spread to include all forms of art such as music and architecture. According to Kjellman-Ghapin (2013: xi), the word *kitsch* “was first used in the nineteenth century to refer to inexpensive pictures sold as souvenirs to tourists. One frequently suggested etymological origin for the term is the German verb *verkitschen*, meaning to make cheaply. Thus, from its earliest usage, *kitsch* was linked with a cheap(ened) form of art, something either mass-produced or produced hastily, and without much aesthetic merit or taste.” Kjellman-Ghapin (2013: xi) also elaborated that “many early

discussions of kitsch centered on its assumed parasitic relationship to and potential enervation of 'high' art."

The methodology and research approach adopted to understand the emergence of kitsch architecture in these two places of the city depended on using ethnographic research methods in the form in-depth interviewing that was based on both open and semi-structured interviews with shop owners and users of these rehabilitated or adapted historic spaces. A total of 11 in-depth interviews were conducted in the two locations of Downtown Amman and Rainbow Street areas.¹ I presented myself as a researcher interested in the urban heritage of the city of Amman and also in conducting research regarding the transformations of its historic areas. The interviews were coupled with a survey and analysis of the interior and exterior architectural changes and additions to these historic buildings which were adapted into cafes and restaurants in most cases.

The first section of the paper will introduce the city of Amman, and the two areas of investigation: Faisal Plaza and Prince Mohammad Street in the downtown area on one hand, and Rainbow Street in Jabal Amman on the other. The second section of the paper elaborates on the fieldwork conducted and the details of this emergence of such "kitsch syndromes" in the city. The third section of the paper presents a philosophical background to kitsch criticism in an attempt to situate and understand such an emergence of this phenomenon in Amman recently. The fourth and final section of the paper presents a further discussion attempting to explain the reasons behind the emergence of such a phenomenon in the city of Amman.

The Rise of Interest in Urban Heritage in the City of Amman

Amman's recent re-emergence on the map of the region took place in the middle of the 19th century. Yet, it is a city that is under-studied (in comparison with other cities in the area such as Damascus, Cairo, and Istanbul), and its urban heritage, specificity, and history had been marginalized by discursive practices of both the "State" and academia. It is important to understand why Amman's urban beginnings and past existed as a marginalized reality that has not been celebrated and recognized by formal state practices and was even excluded from Orientalist/academic definitions of Islamic Arab cities of the region (Daher 2008a).

1. The in-depth interviews were conducted between 2010 and 2011 by Rami Daher and also by a group of graduate students from the German Jordanian University including Lara Farah, Hanin Shqair, Ziena Sabe Eleish, and Razan Atti.

Seteney Shami, in questioning why the overall consciousness, the set of meanings, the hegemonic urban discourse concerning Amman is one that negates its identity as a city, suggested that “the answer partly lies in the ways that Amman’s inhabitants construct their identities through references to a multiplicity of cities as well as to alternative identities that work against consolidating an Ammani identity” (Shami 2007: 209).

The urban heritage of Amman dating to the first half of the 20th century was discredited by Orientalist/academic discourses and practices that disqualified it and rendered it as insignificant and marginal. First, Amman as a city in general, and its urban heritage in particular had to conform to the stereotypical models of what an “Islamic” or “Arab” city should look like. The Orientalist discourse has constructed models and typologies of the “Islamic” or “Arab” City, which have been adopted and perpetuated by some contemporary academic discourses as well. Such stereotypical and typological images work to discredit a certain reality that does not fit such criteria and models (Daher 2008a).

Second, Amman’s urban heritage in particular and the city as a totality in general (with some iconic exceptions, such as the Roman Theatre or the Citadel) were kept outside the official national definition of national heritage which was grounded in a dissociation from the recent past and a constructed definition of what Jordan is. Nature sites, such as *Wadi Rum* or the Steppe (*Badiya*) and archaeological sites that link the country to an imagined point of departure (Nabataean site of Petra), were key “sites” of constructing a formal Jordanian identity. Urban realities, such as that of Amman, fell out of this formal definition of what Jordan is (Kassay 2006). It is only recently, and within the past 20 years, or so, that the city’s urban and social history and heritage has started to attract the attention of the emerging “urban creative class” and this has been represented through studies, projects, and the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of that urban heritage into contemporary cultural and other usages including some that are related to consumerism and entertainment (Daher 2013).

The downtown area at *Faisal* Plaza and Prince Mohammad Street was the hearth of an active public sphere and a buzzing commercial hub represented by the formation of several banks, hotels, books and magazines shops, retail shops, and cafés, such as *The Arab League Café*, *Hamdan*, *Central*, *Balat al Rashid*, and *Shalati*, to mention a few. Politicians, poets, novelists, journalists and other significant figures formed the nucleus of an active *Ammani* public space. *Faisal* was the place of contact of both popular and official discourses. Towards the late 1980s and with the emergence

of other commercial hubs in the city, the downtown area in general and Faisal Plaza/Street in particular lost part of its economic and social vitality and many of its upper floor buildings became vacant. More recently, Faisal underwent urban rehabilitation and public space upgrading projects that were orchestrated by the Greater Amman Municipality. It started to attract new businesses in the form of *shisha* cafes and restaurants in addition to more retail and pirated DVD shops replacing, in certain cases, previous diverse functions.

Rainbow Street, one of Amman's first commercial streets outside the downtown area, which once symbolized bourgeois shopping in the city before it went into economic stagnation, is the other place of interest for this research. Rainbow Street has been going through major spatial and socio-economic transformations recently as the area is becoming popular amongst upper-middle-class residents of western affluent Amman. The neighborhood of the First Circle area (where Rainbow Street is located) is famous for its rich heritage, history and culture. The neighborhood's architecture is diverse and dates to different periods, such as the early *Ammani* houses of the 1920s, or the elegant, yet not pretentious architecture of modernity in Amman of the middle 20th century, or the contemporary creative architecture and adaptation to place. The neighborhood is connected to the downtown by a series of steps, a typical *Ammani* characteristic.

What is also interesting about the place is its social diversity where different social and economic strata of society live side by side: a tourist can enjoy a *falafel sandwich* for less than half a dollar next to a first class expensive meal. Current socio-economic and structural transformations are completely changing the nature of the area. The several historic houses are being converted into cafes and restaurants, souvenir and craft shops are also a new popular arrival to the neighborhood, property value is increasing rapidly, and multi-national corporations in disguise are buying property from residents who sometimes are lured to the high prices or are agreeing to sell because their property (the inheritance) is already divided between many family members and descendants to the extent it would be easier to sell out to an investor who will transform the property into some tourist or upper-middle-class function (Daher 2008b). Rainbow Street also underwent, 8 years ago, an urban design upgrading initiative that centered on the creation of more inclusive public spaces along the Street's urban nodes. This initiative increased its popularity amongst different *Ammanis* and expats alike.

Emergence of “Kitsch Syndromes” in the City

In several historic areas of the city (e.g., Rainbow Street, Faisal Plaza) and after these areas went through a successful urban regeneration endeavor that was based on understanding the reality of Amman’s urban heritage and centered on minimal intervention in the creation of inclusive public space in this historic part of the city; the two areas under investigation witnessed a huge comeback of commercial, entertainment, and cultural activities leading to several individual additions to the buildings and storefront facades. Some of these interventions were more successful in respecting the authenticity of Amman’s urban heritage and in creating a distinction between the original urban fabric and their respective new additions, while others presented an “invention of tradition” or a false replication of cultural and heritage icons that I classified in several kitsch syndromes linked to alternative forms of entertainment that is entrenched in an eclectic mixture of Arab, Islamic, or other traditions.

The “Damascene” Bab-al-Hara Syndrome

In many of the shopfronts and interior spaces at Faisal or on Rainbow Street; several new cafes and restaurant owners are undertaking major additions that center on excessive cladding covering sometimes the whole shop facade in wood and even in stone using horizontal courses in yellow, black and rose colors on top of the existing historic stone facades to mimic



Figure 1. Exterior view of *Raje'en* restaurant on Rainbow Street showing excessive usage of wood and stone cladding over original gray marble facades from the 1960s.



Figure 2. Interior view of *Raje'en* restaurant on Rainbow Street showing the excessive stone cladding in the *Ablaq* Damascene tradition in addition to the water fountain and historic lanterns.

a traditional style called “al ablaq” used in historic Mamluk and Ottoman building. Other features included the addition of water fountains to the interiors of these places, of wooden pergolas on terraces, of excessive brass and other metal cladding on wooden doors and facades. When interviewed, several said that they wanted to create an ambiance representing the Arab or Damascene “Hara” (traditional residential neighborhood) with its courtyard houses (please refer to tables 1 and 2 for more details on such examples). Many of these features resemble strongly the decor details used in the stage set of the famous Syrian TV series “Bab al Hara” (door of the neighborhood) which was popular and aired in several Arab countries including Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, to mention a few. The TV series depicted traditional everyday life in one of Damascus’ historic neighborhoods at the turn of the 20th century.

The “village in the city” Syndrome

In some other shopfronts and restaurants along Rainbow Street for example; owners of restaurants in particular are creating a generic Arab village and vernacular architecture characterized by the use of rusticated



Figure 3. Exterior view of *Fatatri* sidewalk restaurant on Rainbow Street showing the “village like” stone cladding and door wooden details.

stone which is pasted on original stone facades and the use of village-like wooden doors and windows with their simple shapes and not so much developed details such as the use of olive trees and straw in the decoration. When interviewed, several of the patrons of these places added that their objective was to create something that reflects “heritage” and they felt that referring to traditional village architecture would defiantly produce this desired experience they strive to create (please refer to tables 1 and 2 for more details on such examples).

The “Alf Leileh wa Leileh” (One Thousand and One Nights) Syndrome

In yet other shopfronts and restaurants along Rainbow Street and Prince Mohammad Street in the downtown area, owners of restaurants and cafes in particular are creating an atmosphere inspired by the classical Persian/ Arab stories of the famous Scheherazade “Alf Leileh wa Leileh” (One Thousand and One Nights) characterized by the excessive wood cladding on original stone facades and the use of brass in the interior decorations with many applied ornaments and copper lanterns hanging on outdoor terraces and in the interiors as well. When interviewed, several of the

patrons of these places expressed their desire to re-create traditional Arab/Islamic traditions; in other words, they wanted the buildings to resemble a past and ancient Arabic architectural heritage and especially so because they were located in the historic part of the city (please refer to tables 1 and 2 for more details on such examples).

The "neoclassical motif" syndrome

The fieldwork resulted in identifying very few examples at Faisal Plaza in downtown Amman (e.g., banks and other public buildings) where owners of particular historic buildings dating to the 1950s have altered their building facades by removing, for example, cantilevered small



Figure 5. Exterior view of the former *Islamic Bank* on Faisal Street showing the building in its original simple *Ammani* style before the removal of the cantilevered verandas and the addition of the neo-classical motifs.



Figure 4. Exterior view of the entrance to *Afra* restaurant from the side alley on Faisal Street in Downtown Amman showing the excessive usage of wood cladding, brass, and historic lanterns.

verandas that used to overlook the Plaza and adding to the facade applied ornament in the form of neo-classical motifs such as pediments, cornices, and other classical motifs. Furthermore, these facades were obtrusively cleaned using sandblasting which resulted in the removal of the patina of time and ended up with a flashy white stone elevation. When interviewed, the owner of one particular building that used to serve as a bank but is now turned into a hotel stated that these classical details will provide the building with a touch of grandeur and



Figure 6. Exterior view of the same building after the removal of the cantilevered verandas and the addition of the neo-classical motives and sand blasting of the façade.

splendor (please refer to tables 1 and 2 for more details on such examples).

The Petra Treasury Syndrome

One of the interesting features that was used in several of the Projects in both areas of the study was the use of the Petra Treasury motif on building facades or also the use of the Petra treasury column and pediment composition as entrances to some of these

historic buildings, which in some of the cases were actually Amman's historic residential buildings dating to the "Modernity" period. In many cases the addition of the Petra Treasury motif was coupled with sandblasting of the facades turning these quaint and humble historic residential *Ammani* buildings into distorted neo-classical *temples of consumption*. When interviewed, the owners of one particular building that was turned into a restaurant declared that these Petra-borrowed motifs represent the heritage of the country (please refer to tables 1 and 2 for more details on such examples).

These phenomena, that took place in the adaptive reuse of historic urban structures, share certain physical characteristics such as excessive wood, stone, or other material cladding on original stone facades, or the appropriation of the heritage of the other (e.g., Damascene or generic Arab/Islamic) in an attempt to create and search for a "utopian Arab city" reality that had never existed in the first place, or in certain cases, to simply create or "invent" a "heritage" atmosphere within these adaptations that is based on a parochial and generalized/stereotypical conception of the term, that looks like a page torn from the *One Thousand and One Night* trilogy. While many of these projects appropriate the heritage of the other as explained before, Amman, together with its unique urban heritage, not only is not studied and reflected upon but also is rendered almost invisible by the practices of these new downtown dwellers.

Furthermore, I observed that in most of the cases the new owners or tenants of these restaurants and cafes come from outside the areas of the



Figure 7. The *Petra Treasury* mural on the terrace of the *Afra Restaurant* overlooking *Faisal Street* in Downtown Amman.

downtown or Jabal Amman, such as from East Amman or even from other cities in Jordan. In addition, many have only graduated from high school and do not have a university degree; yet, they insisted and were proud that they designed these places themselves without the help of a heritage specialist or architect. In most cases, of course, the authenticity of the original historic structures is compromised and is not even considered as a concern for design and remodeling. Yet, these projects, based on the interviews conducted,

cost huge amounts of money; one particular owner made clear that the remodeling of his building cost at least 350,000 US dollars.

The following two tables summarize the results of the fieldwork regarding the transformations that the various historic buildings underwent on both their exterior facades and their interiors. The tables address the owner's profile and role in the process of remodeling and adaptive reuse, the preferred architectural and other styles of preference for the design, and present some quotes and views of the projects' various owners.

Table 1. Projects Surveyed from the Downtown Area
(around Faisal Plaza & Prince Mohammad Street)

Name of Project	Owner Profile/ Role	Style(s) of Preference	Quotes and Narratives
Afra Restaurant & Café	From Khalda (suburb of the city). Project is designed by owner.	Traditional Arabic/"Damascene" and <i>Bilad al Sham</i> tradition/ Petra Treasury motif/ excessive wood and stone cladding	"I want something that reflects heritage"
Jador Café	High school graduate, originally from outside the city (from Arjan); design was facilitated by owner and friend.	Traditional village house combined with red-tiled roof/excessive wood cladding	"I want the authenticity of heritage"
Jafra Café	High School (maybe), comes from al Nasr Refugee Camp/ design facilitated by owner	Traditional village/ excessive wood and stone cladding coupled with the Petra Treasury motif	
Umsiyat Restaurant	Owner comes from Eastern Amman (Jabal Natheif), High school Graduate/design is facilitated by owner	Damascene Traditional Arab City/One thousand and one nights through the lanterns/excessive stone and wood cladding	"Just as the Hara in Damascus, we used wood and stone" "I have visited a lot of cities and decided to borrow the 'Damascene' Arab heritage tradition."
Former "Islamic Bank," Downtown Branch adapted to be a Hotel	Owner is an older urban man from Amman (well educated) who is enchanted with English Georgian Architecture	Neo-classical motifs (pediments, cornices, other)	"I wanted to create the same splendor through the different motifs"

Table 2. Projects Surveyed from the First Circle and Rainbow Street Area in Jabal Amman

Name of Project	Owner Profile/ Role	Style(s) of Preference	Quotes and Narratives
ER.I.E.N.D@ Café	Middle class/ Originally from Irbid but now residing in Amman	Excessive wood cladding	"it looks better than stone" "the place used to be a plain old building, so they added rocks to give a more authentic look that fits with the idea of a tourist street and people that are nostalgic for old Amman café tradition"
Raje'en Restaurant and Café	Middle-aged man interested in investing in Rainbow Street	Traditional Damascene and Arabic atmosphere/ Excessive wood and stone cladding/ traditional lanterns	"I did not know better; I only wanted to create a traditional image, I have spent an enormous amount of money"
Fatatri Side Walk Restaurant	No information is available	Village Heritage, Bab al Hara element, stone rural <i>rustification</i>	
STARS Café	Owner comes from Irbid, design is facilitated by owner and his brother	The original building material was concrete (1970s)/Stone cladding, "Damascene Traditional Arab City Walls" (ablaq)	"I want to attract tourists." "I am looking for an oriental touch without losing the western composition."

Theoretical Background to Kitsch Criticism (from Ruskin's *Parasitical Sublimity* to Adorno's Critique of the Culture Industries)

In this section, I attempt to critically present a more theoretical and philosophical argumentation on kitsch criticism prior to attempting to understand this phenomenon in the context of Amman in terms of emergence and rationale. Several philosophers and theoreticians address kitsch in the context of art and artistic production, while others address it in the context of architecture and changes and transformations inflicted on the historic built environment. If anything, most, if not all, shared one clear dogma that centered on the notion of the artist or architect's need to belong to his/her age and to the spirit of his/her time while producing new works of art or restoring or rehabilitating older works of architecture. One particular influential philosopher addressing this issue is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who emphasized the idea of the artist belonging

to the spirit of the time or age (what is termed in German *Zeitgeist*).² John Ruskin, the 19th century theoretician and thinker, called for a respect of the past, but at the same time expressed the need to establish a continuity with the past through new works of art and architecture emerging from thinking of the present (Ruskin 1907: 187-203). Ruskin put forward the building blocks to what later came to be known as the Romantic approach to heritage conservation; he believed that works of art and architecture have to be thought of in terms of continuity and development of the works of mankind, while contemporary creative work is a must for each epoch, and with time, it will acquire its own voice (1907).

In his book, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and in particular, the *Lamp of Memory*, Ruskin put forth the idea that “the right over the house, I conceive, belongs to its first builder, and is to be respected by his children” (Ruskin 2007: 98). Ruskin advocated the respect of buildings, by prioritizing what he called the “age value” of the past through the respect of the effect of time on buildings (the patina). This respect clearly required that additions to these historic old buildings, if any, carry a contemporary stamp and the spirit of the times where creative work for each epoch becomes a necessity.

See! This our fathers did for us. For, indeed the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in Walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. (Ruskin 2007: 102)

Furthermore, Ruskin distinguished between a form of the picturesque and the characters of creative works that belong to the higher walks of art. He labeled the quest for the picturesque, which he believed was degrading to art, as a parasitic sublimity, “i.e., a sublimity dependent on the accidents, or on the least essential characters, of the objects to which it belongs, and the picturesque is developed distinctively exactly in proportion to the distance from the center of thought of those points of character in which the sublimity is found” (Ruskin 1907: 193; Ruskin 2007: 103).

Later on, and towards the middle of the 20th century, Italian restorers of historic buildings like Roberto Pane and Cesar Brandi (Brandi 1996: 230-35) advocated what is termed as critical restoration (*restauro critico*). It called for a critical appreciation and assessment of the work of art or architecture while accommodating change, which is a natural trait of

2. <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~zamor22k/classweb/zeitgeist/Zeitgeist.html> (accessed on November 15, 2013)

cultural property and heritage, thus achieving harmony and unity in an evolving architectural whole. This approach depended on a historical-critical evaluation/appreciation where each work of art or architecture should be seen as a unique case. Of course, the objectives of that approach were to retain the authenticity of the original object while understanding the superior quality of all of its parts based on a distinction between existing and new interventions. Decisions should be made based on mature historical consciousness and understanding of the object's values and evolution through time. Brandi (1996: 339-41 and 377-79) emphasized, more specifically, the understanding of the creative process and how it evolved through time. He believed that conservation is not simply a technical act, but rather it is a moment of admiration and critical appreciation of the work of art. He added that the restoration process should aim at rebuilding the artistic unity of the work of art, without committing errors that would lead to artistic or historic falseness, and without deleting the impact of that work of art through time.

One important theoretician who strongly critiqued the emerging consumer-oriented societies is Clement Greenberg (1939: 34-49). He argued, based on various examples of his research, that the existence of "kitsch" is linked to the borrowing and false replication of mature cultural traditions from the past.

The precondition for kitsch, a condition without which kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully matured cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions, and perfected self-consciousness kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends. It borrows from it devices, tricks, stratagems, rules of thumb, themes, converts them into a system, and discards the rest. It draws its life blood, so to speak, from this reservoir of accumulated experience. This is what is really meant when it is said that the popular art and literature of today were once the daring, esoteric art and literature of yesterday. Of course, no such thing is true. What is meant is that when enough time has elapsed the new is looted for new "twists," which are then watered down and served up as kitsch. (Greenberg 1939: 43-44)

Greenberg also elaborated on the way that kitsch is mechanically-produced and how it had become an integral part of our productive system (1939). This could not be truer today as one notices how, for example, these replicas of neo-classical motifs are prefabricated mechanically using cheap materials such as gypsum or GRC (gypsum reinforced concrete). The same can be said for the various wooden or other material ornaments that are applied to surfaces and facades of buildings.

Theodore Adorno perceived the immense popularity of kitsch as a “threat to culture” creating a “false consciousness” about one’s heritage and leading to a deprivation of culture and “intellectualization of amusement” (Adorno and Horkheimer 2000). Within this “culture industry” (as termed by Adorno and Horkheimer), art production is controlled and formulated by the needs of the market and is given to a passive and uncritical population for immediate acceptance and consumption. The culture industry can pride itself on having energetically executed the previously clumsy transportation of art into the sphere of consumption. Such fashionable cultural industries tend to be means for mass deception, which influenced and manipulated the public into accepting the current organization of society. Such cultural industries use the past and the heritage coupled with entertainment “to sugarcoat oppression while eroding cultural standards.” In the case of Amman, the oppression that is taking place might not be orchestrated by “state” organizations but rather by the new tenants and landlords of such projects and is fueled by their lack of appreciation/knowledge about their own city.

Based on the discussion presented on the theoretical backgrounds to kitsch criticism, the current practices of kitsch syndromes in Amman, contradicts such historically and philosophically accepted dogma and practice of how to orchestrate and deal with the works of art and architecture. These emerging kitsch syndromes in the city affecting significant historic buildings in Amman are not only violating issues related to both ethics and aesthetics of good practice in historic building restoration and rehabilitation, but furthermore, these kitsch practices and current transformations in Amman lack a basic understanding and knowledge of the city’s temporal depth and moments of change and a critical understanding of the city’s unique cultural architectural heritage and its social urban traditions.

In Conclusion. Attempting to Explain the Rise of this Phenomenon of Kitsch Syndromes in Amman

The research presents several explanations in an attempt to understand the rise of such derogatory, pretentious, and denoting works executed to pander to popular demand alone and purely for commercial purposes rather than works created as self-expression. I believe that the current phenomenon of several kitsch syndromes prevailing in Amman work to camouflage the city’s temporal depth and specific social and urban heritage which has not even yet been properly accessible to the scholarly community,

let alone to the general masses. As already mentioned, Amman is a city that is under-studied and is in need of further explorations regarding the evolution of its urban and architectural traditions.

Lack of Understanding of the City's Unique "Temporal Depth" and Moments of Change and Transformation

One particular explanation focuses on presenting Amman's urban heritage as one in-between discursive practices leading to an urban reality that has not been recognized, appreciated, properly studied, or even incorporated into the formal and popular definitions of the country of Jordan (Daher 2008, 2011; Maffi 2000). The city is under-studied and its urban heritage of the early and middle 20th century has not been incorporated into the collective identity of the masses through means of scholarly research, educational curriculum, literature, or media. Therefore, the city's urban traditions have not formed yet a body of knowledge that could be integrated into the practices of heritage in the city.

During one of my site visits to Rainbow Street, I met extensively with one of the owners of a particular building that was transformed into a traditional restaurant in a very provocative and parochial manner appropriating the heritage of the other (traditional Damascene). I inquired about the sources of such interior and exterior modifications to the building after explaining to the owner the value of the street's unique and yet unpretentious architecture and tradition, being the first commercial street emerging outside the downtown area and having significant links with Amman's modernity of the middle of the 20th century. The striking reply of the restaurant owner was simply that he was not aware of the history of the place and its significance. He added that he only hoped to create a traditional "heritage" image, and if he had acquired that knowledge beforehand, he could have done things differently. Based on the survey and interviews conducted in the downtown area and on Rainbow Street, and reflecting on the practices of heritage conservation in such restored or adapted buildings, one obviously observes the emergence of a hybrid meaning of heritage and of tradition (e.g., Damascene, Arab, Petra, neoclassical, the village) in a very parochial and uncritical manner. Furthermore, and in most cases, these projects are borrowing and appropriating the heritage of the "other" as opposed to referring to the urban realities and traditions of their own city of Amman (the place where these building restorations and adaptations are taking place).

Amman's urban heritage in particular and the city in general were kept

outside the official definition of national heritage, which was grounded in a dissociation from the recent past and depended on a constructed definition of what Jordan is that centered on classical traditions and natural sites (Daher 2007). Furthermore, the city's moments of change and transformation (e.g., its heritage of *Modernity*) lacked recognition and appreciation by the general public and were not even acknowledged as part of the cultural legacy of the nation. A study of the city's urban and architectural typology and typo-morphology is needed to understand its different moments of transformation. Then, such a new understanding of the details and values of the city's architectural heritage could inform newer additions and transformations of historic buildings of the city, in addition, they could serve as an inspiration for creative contemporary practices in design, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse where new additions are distinguished from the existing historic fabric of the city.

The Role Played by the New Tenants and Landlords of these Historic Urban Places

Based on the survey and interviews conducted, it is interesting to shed light on the new tenants and, in certain cases, owners of such historic urban places. In most of the cases, they were newcomers to Amman, or from neighborhoods that are different from the ones under study (e.g., Eastern Amman, outer suburbs, other cities). In most cases as well, their educational level did not exceed high school; and they were proud that it was they (together with their friends) that came up with the design for the place. Several of these new tenants desired a utopian traditional conception of heritage for Amman that had never existed, using and borrowing a stereotypical conception of the term heritage (e.g., the Arab city represented through Damascene architecture). Bourdieu (1984) claimed that social capital is the factor determining the general taste and aesthetic appreciation rather than economic capital; and that cultural needs and practices are the product of upbringing and education. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of class. The various projects surveyed and analyzed illustrated that these different forms of "heritage production" were not only dependant on the owners' aesthetic choices and the multiple parochial images of "heritage" that we are all bombarded with on a regular basis triggering many of us to create "other worlds"; but also reflected a prevailing consumerism that is related to tourism in these historic places. This tourism-related consumerism will eventually eliminate the well-appreciated functional diversity of these urban spaces within the city.

Lack of Regulatory Urban Guidelines that Provide Control and Guidance to Urban Transformation in the City

The research has established that the authoritarian bodies responsible for urban guidelines in the city, such as the Greater Amman Municipality, are not interested to get involved in putting forward or in enforcing regulatory urban and commercial guidelines that could provide a reference point of guidance to these new tenants. Yet, I was informed that such urban guidelines had already been devised for the downtown area and also for Rainbow Street, but the Municipality is falling short of seriously thinking of an implementation strategy for such guidelines. This leaves these historic neighborhoods and streets of the city vulnerable and fragile in the face of such uninformed changes and urban transformations.

In conclusion, urban spaces in the city change in different ways and are transformed by diverse agents and actors. This study has concentrated on the emergence of particular phenomena in the city, which centered on an “invention of tradition” or a false replication of cultural and heritage icons that I classified in several kitsch syndromes linked to alternative forms of entertainment entrenched in an eclectic mixture of traditional Arab, Islamic, or other traditions. The reasons for the rise of this phenomenon could be multiple, but it should be explained and studied based on a genealogical understanding of the city and the politics and reality of its heritage definition and practices.

The research has shown that the lack of understanding of the city’s temporal depth and moments of change and transformation have contributed to the rise of this phenomenon. The urban heritage of the city is not critically defined or even protected, and this leads to an abuse that takes the form of falsification of its urban traditions at the expense of sustaining the authenticity and the legitimacy of such urban historic places. What is dangerous about the emergence of such kitsch syndromes with their eclectic blend of historical precedence in the case of Amman is that these forms of invented heritage might unfortunately serve as a surrogate alternative to the fragile and vanishing urban heritage of the city, especially when Amman’s urban heritage of the early and middle 20th century has not been fully incorporated as part of the collective identity of the masses and is in need of more investigation where its uniqueness and significance ought to be disseminated and communicated to the general public.

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