Preserving Design Identity through Heritage-Inspired Reflexive Design

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A community's cultural identity is reflected in its diverse sources of heritage and its ability to integrate them into the social environment. Many theoreticians believe that globalisation poses a real threat to cultural identity, especially since modern designs are more likely to focus on a more synthesised global aesthetic. To maintain cultural identity, many designers have integrated elements from their heritages into their contemporary designs. This article offers a review of literature on globalisation, design identity and heritage design, then discusses a selection of design examples related to the preservation of local identity. This study explores how critical regionalism, through heritage-inspired design, can be applied to modern designs. The results identify three heritage-inspired designs aimed at preserving the respective community's cultural identity, according to the concept of reflexive modernism, therefore implying that such design directions may help preserve design identity.

Key words: *Interior Design, Globalisation, Heritage Design, Design Identity, Reflexive Modernism, Critical Regionalism*

INTRODUCTION

The current era of globalisation threatens the preservation of local and cultural identities, as it supports the establishment of an environment that can be manipulated by global forces. Although such an environment is sophisticated in nature, it lacks a unique and original identity. Thus, design identities, based on various attributes, such as religion, nationality, ethnicity, geographical location and gender, have become increasingly important. According to Kohler & Philipp (2013), due to the negative impact of globalisation on cultural identity, a new research direction has emerged that focuses on preserving design identities.

However, this perspective has been the subject of wide debate among social scientists, architects and even interior designers (Eldemery, 2009). Many studies have examined the profound changes that globalisation and modern technologies have had on worldwide spatial and economic development (Steger, 2003; Glendinning, 2010; Kohler & Philipp, 2013). More conservative designers have criticised globalisation, as it can overcome local and historical identities, obscure some ideologies and produce an undifferentiated, universal human culture (Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, rapid technological advancements and urbanisation have resulted in interior environments that are deprived of cultural and local identities by applying the same construction methods, materials and styles (Zarzar & Guney, 2008). Such standardisations are based on the idea that globalisation requires a cosmopolitan culture, that is, the global design standard cannot be implemented without replacing the existing local identities.

Consequently, the conflict between identity and globalisation has become a critical issue and interior designers have found themselves at the center of this debate because their designs are based on contrasting cultures and architectural styles, both from the past and the present. This has given rise to various ideas regarding the role of interior and furniture designers in preserving local design identity through heritage-inspired concepts and processes. Against this background, this article provides an overview of globalisation, design identity, heritage design, critical regionalism and reflexive modernism. It then discusses some examples aimed at preserving the values, meanings and flexibility of new heritage designs that maintain a local design identity while adapting to contemporary trends.

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is defined as the process by which businesses develop an international influence or start operations on an international scale (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014), driven by mutual interests and supported by a wide range of communications technology and information systems (Castells, 2004). Globalisation has also been reinforced by various policies that actively encourage open economies, both nationally and internationally (Kohler & Philipp, 2013), leading to the rise of the network enterprise as the most productive and efficient form of conducting business (Castells, 2004). Owing to these unprecedented developments, such as the widespread use of social media platforms, the amount of contact across cultures has dramatically increased (Shuter, 2012).

Although globalisation primarily refers to the development of global financial markets, the growth of transnational businesses and their increasing domination over local economies, its meaning and significance extends into all areas of our lives, including

visual culture and design (Berger & Huntington, 2002). A defining feature of globalisation within the context of design is the establishment of a global design aesthetic, despite cultural variety. Across the world, various communities have linked conflated globalisation with modernisation and as a result traditional societies have been transformed into cosmopolitan ones (Steger, 2003). Advocates of globalisation argue that it allows less-developed countries to develop their national economies and increase living standards, whereas opponents of globalisation claim that the creation of an unconstrained, international free market has benefited multinational corporations in first-world countries (at the expense of local enterprises) and contributed to the obliteration of local cultures (Castells, 2004). A certain resistance to globalisation has taken seed in such communities, owing to the increasing number of concerns raised by localism advocates.

DESIGN IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

Identity is defined as an individual's sense of belonging assimilated and expressed in shared values, beliefs and symbols, which are developed through common group members, traditions and languages (Vale, 2014). For most people, an individual's identity is a customised collage of collective identifications (Jenkins, 2014). The concept of identity combines various backgrounds, including historical, geographical and political ones (Brewer, 2000), uniting/reinforcing a sense of community and a network of typical values, thoughts and meanings. Its survival depends on the willingness of a group of people to undertake all the restrictions and liberties, as well as the symbols and meanings that define the identity concept (Scholte, 2005). Overall, identity in its original form can be considered a mechanism through which each community can receive an understandable message when communicating with others or with the social environment.

Establishing difference is indeed one of the underlying objectives of identity, regardless of whether the difference is personal or national (Woodward, 2003). Members of a community consider their own identity in relation to their environment and how they approach others. When discussing space and environment, we cannot say that they have their own identities but rather that identities are projected onto them (Brewer, 2000). Woodward (2003) pointed out that, in general, local identity and culture are strongly interwoven and are therefore mutually dependent. Moreover, since local cultures evolve over time, identity itself is not fixed but is contingent on its surroundings (Woodward, 2003).

The concept of identity carries the full weight of maintaining one's sense of belonging despite overwhelming changes in the social environment as well as the groups and networks in which people, their identities and societal structures are embedded (Howard

2000). Castells (2011) described how social actors help people manage threats to their identities: "When the world becomes too large to be controlled, social actors aim to shrink it back to their size. In addition, when an environment is dissolved, people tend to anchor themselves in certain locations by recalling their memories of those locations. These defensive reactions become sources of meaning for individuals aiming to construct new cultural codes out of heritage materials" (Castells, 2011).

If society is fluid and the symbolic markers of identity are ambiguous, then most individuals must have some space/location that they can anchor their identities in, or a place they can call "home." As psychologist Stephanie Taylor pointed out: "Discussions of place and identity, whether among academic theorists or research participants, almost inevitably return to the concept of home" (2010, 43). This concept, the bedrock of all other geographic identities, is one important way of representing ourselves to others (King 2004), and the significance of locations that we call "home" makes any challenge to the security/stability of one's identity particularly salient. Sociologist Tom Gieryn (2000) argued that being without an owned space is to be nearly non-existent, whereas Woodward (2003) proposed that the culture of a certain location provides a temporary sense of meaning, even though most people will remain strangers in a shared area. Mathews (2002) indicated that the places we inhabit are a seamless extension of our identity, as it is a natural human tendency to identify with one's city, region or country. This idea was echoed by Anholt (2010), who indicated that an individual's sense of self is not bound by one's body but extends into one's family, neighborhood, district, region, nation, continent, and ultimately the human race, thus creating a link between the concept of identity and its effects on one's physical surroundings. The literature emphasises the research objectives of this study and the practicality of these theories are further supported through a discussion of design examples in later sections.

According to UNESCO, heritage is defined as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration" (2017, p. 5). It is the outcome of human understandings and the expression of needs, which consist of patterns of living habits, beliefs and attitudes, encompassing a full range of our inherited monuments, objects and design elements. Human evolution in thought and technology, supported by our increasing needs and desire for progress and sophistication, has led us to develop an extremely diverse heritage. This, along with our ability to integrate heritage into our surroundings, allow us to distinguish between communities and determine our social, moral and design identities, all of which are derived from a tangible heritage (Tilley, 2006).

Design, through the styles, elements, order and compositional languages it employs, always reflects the self-perceptions of people in a certain environment. While localism

and identity are frequently conceptualised as existing prior to material culture, design does create or at least partake in the making of local identity rather than merely reflecting it (Butina-Watson & Bentley, 2007). As a tangible representation of a culture inhabiting the world — through the specific symbols that define it — design is the most visible and powerful way in which identity is created, shared and sustained (Tilley 2006). According to Perera (1997), commissioning, constructing, and celebrating locations and their environments can solidify nationhood, allowing its manifestations to become an intrinsic part of a certain time and place.

While the use of the past to supply models for the present depends on the ideological distortions of the past, each group of people and each society that supports their collective identity not only adopts multiple techniques and strategies (e.g., the practice of historicism) to build their nation, but also redefines and deploys the nation as a vital component of their being (Dewi, Tjandra & Niemann, 2016). Therefore, the construction of designs that express ideas, aspirations and self-perceptions is an equally valid method for establishing the concepts of a nation. Furthermore, examining designs in emerging nations, especially those that are engaged in self-discovery, can illuminate the relationship between design and national identity. According to Snodgrass & Coyne (2013), we can never change our place in time, but we can attempt to understand the concept of heritage design through hermeneutic analysis, comparison and documentation. Multiple processes are involved in constructing nationhood, though vernacular tradition is often seen as the most desirable for this purpose because it represents the imagined continuity of historical narrative, cultural identity and social relevance, as well as the collective consciousness of the communities of the past (Heath, 2009).

REFLEXIVE MODERNISM

Any response to something that is "locally distinctive" (e.g., the desire to design a new building or object that adds to the identity of its location) must first consider the local identity. In addition, to positively respond to this identity is to enter into some kind of relationship with it, especially because many modern designs ignore, compromise or even destroy the identity of an established location (Glendinning, 2010; Grafe et al., 2014; Buchert, 2019). This "site-specific design" has become the stated intention of many designers (either consciously or subconsciously).

In 2002, American architect Larry Oltmann stated, "as international architects, we should bear the responsibility for helping to preserve cultural identities" (as quoted in Adam 2012, p. 233). Since then, many designers have expressed concerns regarding how some iconic modern designs (presented internationally) may have a negative impact on local habitation, culture and tradition, further addressing the way in which the

culture of a certain group of people is tied to the identity of their locality (Sparke & Massey, 2013). While they seek to preserve the cultural identity of a certain location, they are also clear that they do not support design nostalgia nor conservatism by considering localism in a way that is not bound by convention (Pallasmaa, 2009). In other words, their apparent intention is to respond to the relationship between the identity of a locality and the way the local people identify with their surroundings.

From a modernist perspective, there is something more to a design that preserves local identity than a simple physical similarity with the existing surroundings. This sets up a potentially complex relationship between the way that designers interpret local identity and how populations formulate their identities based on their localities (Canizaro, 2007). In the predominant architectural culture of reflexive modernism, there are two techniques that go beyond simple physical similarity: the spirit of the location (i.e., site-specific design), which follows the concept of critical regionalism; and the designer's personal discovery of local symbolism, or "symbolic identity". These two techniques can be used independently or in combination, but the process behind each is distinct. Symbolic identity refers to the choice of a symbolic aspect of a design that is, in some way, relevant to the location (Lefaivre 2003). This was described by Jurgen Mayer, a Berlin-based conceptual architect, as finding "certain elements that are local that we could interpret and make into something architecturally new" (as quoted in Casakin & Fátima, 2012, p. 204). In this case, "identity" is expressed through naturalistic metaphors or analogies in an attempt to "synthesise" identity, while rarely alluding to design solutions of the past. Thus, the question arises of how to create a new and original design while balancing the influences from the past and the present. According to Canizaro (2007), avoiding imitation is critical and forward-looking innovation should be the driving force for representing identity in the future.

Reflexive modernism, as the inheritor of the avant-garde principles of modernism, maintains a certain distance from locality by considering that great art has always been produced against the norm and the conservative nature of people (Alan, 2010). This line of thinking makes any attempt to relate to the often-straightforward identity of communities, based on the physical appearance of their surroundings, somewhat difficult. Some theorists go so far as to suggest a positive disconnection from the cultural past, allowing universal modernity to become a culturally non-specific receptacle for the identity of those who have been (in some way) de-territorialised. Such theorists posit that "avant-garde design schemes, like built heritage in the past, may provide all culturally different social groups and individuals with a spatial membership" (Gospodini, 2002, p. 30).

According to Adam (2012, p. 222), "for many designers, when modernism was re-emerging as the dominant philosophy and postmodernism was in decline, Frampton's

critical regionalism provided a welcome counterbalance to an emerging awareness that globalisation was delivering a disturbing worldwide uniformity." Meanwhile, Rewal (2012) stated that "we have to re-invent modernity in terms of our own traditions and cultural heritage. It is an important task to search for a modern architectural language, which responds to our requirements, lifestyle, climate and building materials." Lefaivre (2003) distinguished an ideological implication in modernism that has gained salience as designers tried to preserve the formal concept of heritage. As Claire Parin (2007, p. 16), a French urban designer and academic, stated: "The mobility of people and the communication of information seem destined to develop without limits; it appears that in whatever cultural context, there is, even more, demand for material reference points that provide continuity with past times." However, this statement raises the question of how designs can retain local identity under rapid globalisation, the answer to which is difficult to obtain within the practical and symbolic value systems that are usually applied to contemporary projects (Zarzar & Guney, 2008).

CRITICAL REGIONALISM

The conflict between the universal aspirations of modernism and the idea of something historically specific to a location was recognised by one of the earliest exponents of modernist regionalism, Lewis Mumford. He identified two elements in every design. First is the local or regional element, which adapts itself to special human capacities and circumstances and belongs to particular people, soil and economic/political institutions. Second is the universal element, which passes over boundaries and frontiers, and without its existence, humans would still live at the brute level (Miller, 2002).

For regionalists, there was the ever-present danger of unwittingly interpreting local or regional features too literally. To avoid the accusation of catering to sentiment or imitation, even regionalists must display originality, which to the uninitiated, could disguise their regionalist intentions (Canizaro, 2007). Lefaivre (2003) indicated that regionalism can be considered an engagement with the global, universalising world, rather than an attitude of resistance.

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur discussed the paradox of how to become modern while returning to the source, as well as how to revive an ancient civilisation while participating in universal civilisation (Ricoeur, 2004). However, there is a solid and liberating heritage lying within the complex culture that we generally subsume under the "modern movement," which makes it clear that regionalism should not be sentimentally identified with the vernacular (Lefaivre, 2003).

Overall, the fundamental strategy of critical regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilisation with elements indirectly derived from a particular location, thus,

this strategy depends on maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness and may find its inspiration in the range and quality of locality (Canizaro, 2007). Critical regionalism, in this interpretation, "is to design specifically for the location inspired by, rather than imitating, what was found in the locality. In built form, [this includes] the prehistory of the place, its archaeological past, and its subsequent cultivation and transformation across time" (Adam 2012, p. 222). Designers who consider themselves activists in preserving design identity while supporting a design solution based on a sophisticated process of inspiration — integrating/reformulating local elements of heritage design and reflecting them onto modern design aesthetics — are capable of actualising this ideal.

FORMING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FROM HERITAGE

Historical design has served as both a producer and representative of the culturally designed artifacts that embody a particular history and society (Moalosi, Popovic & Hickling-Hudson, 2008). Throughout history, traditional spaces were built according to one's own values, and designs have served as the intrinsic symbols of a nation. For example, traditional orientalism, sanctified by cosmic energies, brought a certain sense of peoplehood and bestowed power to their rulers (Vale, 2014). The design-based ideology of ancient times was to construct a national consciousness as a socially cohesive imagination, thereby encouraging a strong attachment to the geopolitical body that governed a given population. It is undeniable that skillfully crafted designs bring about a sense of belonging necessary for an emerging nation, which in turn, helps maintain a collective identity (McKellar & Sparke, 2004; Comer, Prescott & Soderland, 2014).

Designers can develop a collective identity using distinctive design elements that reflect the spirit, values, connotations and concepts of a cultural heritage. These elements include various types of inherited symbols, shapes and forms that characterise a specific time period and location, which represent a nation's creativity, carry philosophical values, reflect formal semantics, and express a certain ideology and culture (Pennebaker, Paez & Rim, 2008; Comer, Prescott & Soderland, 2014). They also stem from the surrounding environment and cultural concepts, as well as the religious beliefs of the designer (McKellar & Sparke, 2004). These factors create the typical characteristics of an environment, since such characteristics are regarded as important to the perception of a certain location (Erll, 2011).

The developmental process of heritage design is driven by the creation of an image or artifact that possesses a certain value in the inhabitants' environmental cognitions (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy, 2011). Designers also attempt to capture the environmental images of architectural structures, monuments and artworks that

demonstrate cultural identity as tangible heritage. Collective identities in design contribute immensely to the organisation and classification of inherited design elements, thus creating a distinctive visual memory for each community (Neiger, Meyers & Zandberg, 2011). According to Vale (2014), design plays a significant role in the construction of certain notions through symbolic and associative meanings. The absence (or presence) of such notions imbues all types of designs with the ability to reinforce the identity of a certain people or culture. Hence, considering the multiple layers of identity, it is important to take an inclusive approach to representing the plurality of heritage design (Erll 2011; Comer, Prescott & Soderland, 2014). As the outcomes of reflexive design exist in both the cognitive and corporeal experiences of the material world, they are therefore central to the formation of identity and its contribution to a nation's construction (Butina-Watson & Bentley, 2007).

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE INTERIOR-DESIGN CONTEXT

Collective identity is reflected through material culture, for which design is a key expressive medium (McMahon 2004), thus creating meaning and invoking symbolism, cultural narratives and ideological connotations (Woodward 2003; McKellar & Sparke, 2004). Heritage design is a tangible representation of cultural identity and one of its aspects is interior design. In general, interior designers are influenced by a variety of factors, such as human interactions, emotions, desires, living habits, traditions, attitudes and beliefs, as well as culture, psychology, economy, temporality and environment. Designers' perceptions of cultural dynamics and diversity are the main forces behind their creation of an interior environment, which has led to the formation of specific interior identities for every era of human history (Jeffrey 2011; Sparke & Massey, 2013).

Although interior design has varied throughout the decades, some essential features have persisted, allowing the concept of design identity to gain momentum. Many interior designers have attempted to analyse, classify and preserve the elements of tangible heritage within a collective memory, all of which have a significant impact on the design-identity framework (Butina-Watson & Bentley, 2007; Sparke & Massey, 2013). Organising collective memories can help designers identify the typical features of a wide range of interior environments (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy, 2011). Some interior designers even preserve basic design elements from which they can produce more contemporary elements, thereby demonstrating the potential of these elements to subsequent generations of designers. This procedure supports the preservation of design identity and consequently, a culture's values and identity. By analysing and drawing inspiration from local or global elements of heritage design while integrating the concept of reflexive modernism, designers can play a significant

role in preserving a community's identity and countering the negative effects of globalisation (Manzini & M'Rithaa, 2016).

HERITAGE-INSPIRED REFLEXIVE DESIGN

Heritage-inspired reflexive design describes a method of drawing inspiration from heritage while applying the two techniques of reflexive modernism: site-specific design and symbolic identity. This method allows for a potentially complex interpretation of local identity through design, rather than a simple physical similarity with the existing surroundings. Different strategies have been developed to achieve this process of inspiration.

In this study, a literature review was conducted to identify the inspiration strategies used in interior and furniture design. The review relied on 11 interrelated sources, including books and journal articles. Using a qualitative analysis method, the authors identified three main design strategies: historical revival, eclectic historicism and free historicism. Real-world examples of these strategies are provided in the next section.

The first strategy, historical revival, involves conservatively formulating historical references, formal shapes and intellectual content. With this strategy, designers directly copy a design's compositional elements and vocabularies and make appropriate adjustments in materials and colors. Any exaggerations lead to reduced credibility in the final design (see Figure 1) (Au, Gail & Edward, 2003; Harris & Dostrovsky, 2008; Sloboda, 2008).

Second, eclectic historicism is based on the derivation of proportions and classical visual vocabularies from simulated historical references. Contemporary designs generally demonstrate indirect inspiration by reformulating a set of selected historic design elements, thereby resulting in a design that is in line with the requirements of modern technology and whose content expresses the cultural roots that are considered the main source of the design. In such cases, the success of the final design depends on the designer's vision, interpretation and in-depth understanding of the heritage source. If a designer selects a superficial historical vocabulary, this may result in a final design with incomplete and distorted geometric shapes (see Figure 2) (Pantelić, 2007; Illies & Ray, 2009; Robinson, 2013; Raynsford, 2016).

Finally, the free historicism strategy is based on the liberal use of heritage elements. In other words, it is free from any restrictions on visual properties, and designers can draw their inspirations from symbolic expressions, innovations and familiar images that use modern materials and technologies. The result is a conservative heritage design whose distinctive elements have disappeared, that is, the impact of a heritage on the final

design is not easily perceived and the degree of clarity can vary (see Figure 3) (Vacher, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Weisenburger, 2006; Figueira, 2017).

Revival historicism strategy

The inspiration concept is based on outright copying heritage islamic design composition elements and vocabulary with appropriate adjustments to materials and colors.

Gold Market – Dubai Mall

Figure 1: Examples of the historical revival strategy for inspiration

Eclectic Historicism strategy

The inspiration concept is based on re-formulate a set of selected historic design elements, resulting in a contemporary design carries in its content the heritage roots and considered the modern technologies.

Cathedral Side Table inspired from well-known Gothic lines Nobu Miake Japanese designer

Emirates Palace Hotel - UAE Interior Inspired from geometric Islamic pattern

Villa Moda – Bahrain Inspired by changing the regular geometric Islamic pattern forms

Figure 2: Examples of the eclectic historicism strategy for inspiration

Free historicism strategy

The inspiration concept is based on abstract islamic arches forms then overlapping them. The resulting design was inspired indirectly and liberal from the origin and it is difficult to recognize.

Armani hotel – Dubai reception area

Figure 3: Examples of the free historicism strategy for inspiration

EXAMPLES OF HERITAGE-INSPIRED INTERIOR DESIGN

Interior design can make a significant contribution to preserving local identity. Design solutions inspired by the local elements of a heritage can convey a culture's identity and make it appealing to younger generations. The application of critical regionalism to interior design can generate modern elements that reflect cultural heritage, rather than conservative reproductions. Such elements can already be seen in many cities around the world, serving as practical examples of reflexive modernism through the pairing of heritage-inspired designs with modern applications. The Arab World Institute in Paris, France, the Cairo Rail Station in Egypt and the Rome Fiumicino Airport lounge are prime examples of this phenomenon. These structures are not the only ones that fit into this discussion; however, as this research did not intend to exhaustively list all possible examples of heritage-inspired interior design worldwide, rather, each example was chosen to reflect at least one of the previously outlined strategies.

THE ARAB WORLD INSTITUTE

The Arab World Institute (AWI) was designed by Architecture-Studio, together with Jean Nouvel and construction took place in Paris, France from 1981 to 1987 (Hanser 2006). The architectural concept took the AWI's mission into account, which is to develop a deep understanding of the Arab world and promote its culture and civilization to France and the rest of Europe (Casamonti, 2009). The building's transparency instills a sense that the AWI is not a gateway but a screen — one that separates the old and the new. The façade facing the Seine River follows the curve of the waterway. In contrast, the southwest façade is an uncompromisingly rectangular glass-clad wall. Nouvel wanted to emphasise the contrast between Eastern and Western cultures by splitting the building in two, making room for a thoroughfare that lines up precisely with the towers of Notre-Dame.

The AWI represents a good example of critical regionalism inspired by Islamic heritage in two key ways. First, the designer followed the historical revival strategy by adding an inner courtyard and fountain, which are considered iconic elements of most Islamic buildings, to the thoroughfare that splits the building. Second, the designer implemented the eclectic historicism strategy by designing a façade inspired by the mashrabiya, a traditional element of Islamic architecture. Traditionally, mashrabiyas are made from wood with sophisticated geometric patterns that allow light and ventilation while blocking vision, thus providing the privacy required in residential buildings. The AWI's designers merged this concept with a unique piece of smart technology available at the time of construction, thus creating an extraordinary window shade for the 30 by 80 meter southwestern façade. Behind the glass wall is a metallic screen organized into 113 panels of Islamic geometric motifs, each panel consisting of 240 photo-sensitive, motor-controlled apertures that automatically open and close to control the amount of light and heat in the building. This mechanism creates interior spaces filled with filtered light, which is an effect often found in the climate-controlling features of Islamic architecture (Hanser, 2006). The innovative use of technology and the success of the buildings design catapulted Nouvel to fame. Today, it remains one of Paris's cultural reference points.

The AWI is a great example of reflexive modernism in design, as it emphasises the archetypal elements of traditional Islamic architecture and reinterprets a number of frequently used Islamic geometric patterns, exhibiting them in the contemporary form of mobile diaphragms. The space related to the expansion and contraction, the hypostyle hall that evokes the great mosques, and a deep sense of the use of reflections, refractions and backlight effects all impart a certain magic on this place (see Figure 4).
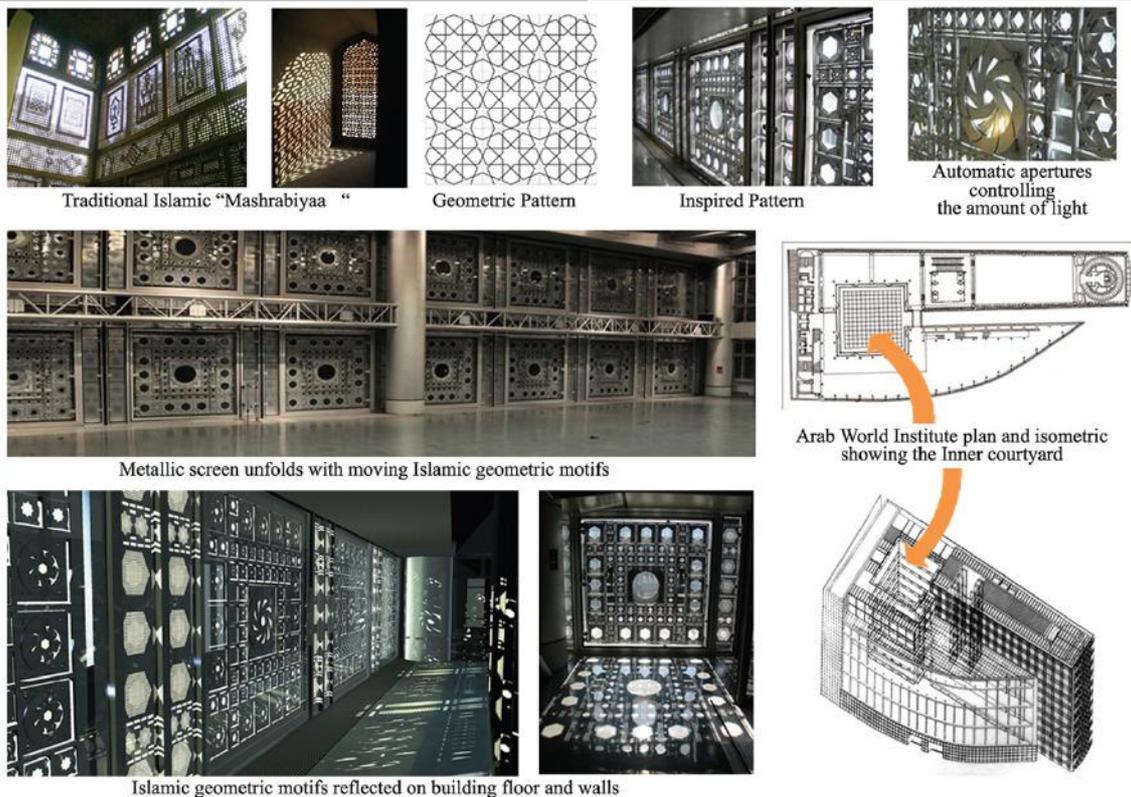
Figure 4: The AWI's interior design was inspired by the Islamic arabesque style and by smart technology
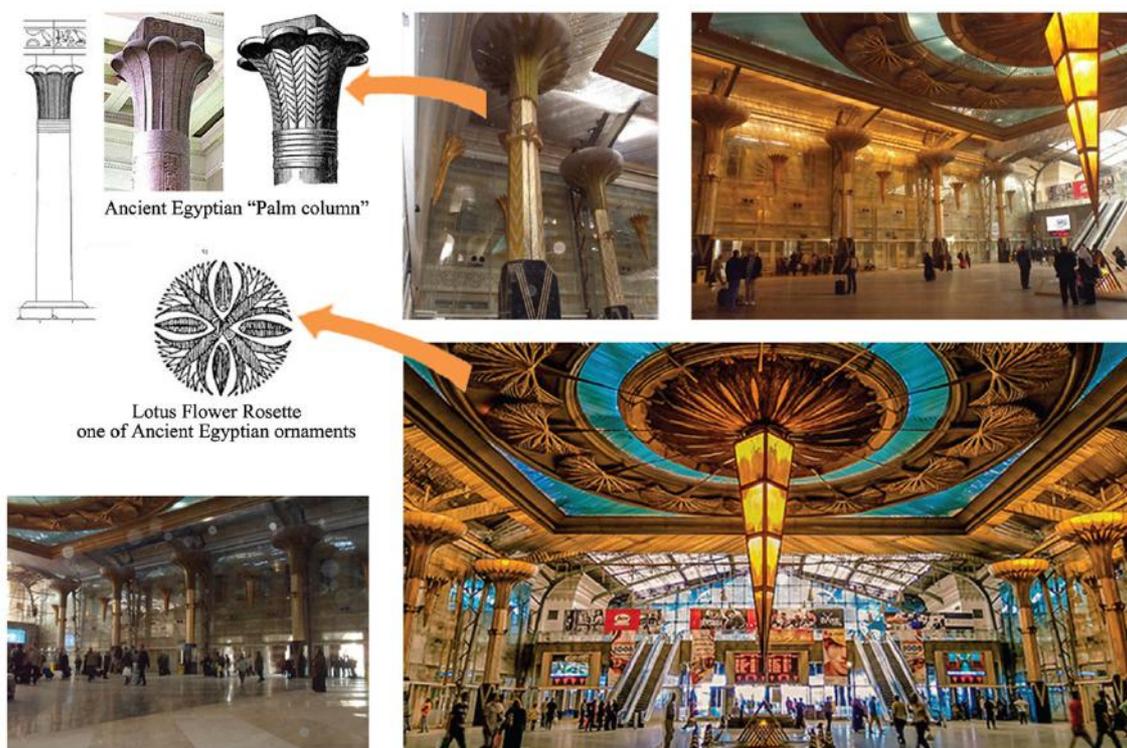
THE CAIRO RAIL STATION

The Cairo Rail Station was constructed in Cairo, Egypt in 1856. In early 2011, the station's interior was fully upgraded. Both the old and updated designs follow the concept of critical regionalism, as they were inspired by Egyptian heritage but reflect a modern aesthetic.

The original design of the station represents a direct application of critical regionalism by incorporating an Islamic heritage-inspired design using the historical revival strategy, as the designers sampled Islamic motifs typically found in Egyptian mosques and applied them to the wall treatments. The updated design also followed the eclectic historicism strategy, attempting to merge the existing design with a more modern vision of ancient Egyptian design elements, thereby reflecting different aspects of Egyptian cultural identity. The design was inspired by a selection of ancient Egyptian design elements, such as the papyrus column and the lotus flower rosette (see Figure 5), rendered in modern materials and color schemes. The station's columns incorporated an abstract design of the ancient Egyptian papyrus reed, while maintaining their original proportions, and the lotus flower rosette was applied to the design of the ceiling, serving as a traditional decorative ornament in an unusual form. The old wall treatments

function as a background for the new wall treatments, and the glass panels covering the walls, which separate the old and new design elements, successfully emphasise the coexistence of traditional and modern customs in Egyptian culture.

While some designers have criticised the updated design, claiming that it does not respect the building's original architectural style, the Cairo Rail Station is a good example of critical regionalism and reflexive modernism in design. It not only reflects the cultural heritage of Egypt by incorporating some iconic design elements but also demonstrates the extent to which different elements can coexist within the same design solution.

Figure 5: The main hall of the Cairo Rail Station, with interior design inspired by ancient Egyptian elements

THE ROME FIUMICINO AIRPORT LOUNGE

Plaza Premium Lounge, located in Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport in Rome, Italy, was inaugurated in 2018. The interior design concept reinforces a sense of place unique to Italy, that is, the Roman Colosseum arena, a global architectural icon.

The design process followed the eclectic historicism strategy in that it aimed to merge the existing design with a more modern vision of ancient Roman elements, thereby reflecting different aspects of Roman cultural identity through modern materials and

monochromatic color schemes (see Figure 6). The lounge columns incorporate an abstract design of the Doric column, replacing the crown and base with a fluted cylinder of white marble while maintaining their original proportions, and the Colosseum arches were applied to the design of the upper wall cladding.

However, the design is dominated by its lounge function and its application of reflexive modernism, as the designers could have added more elements from the rich heritage of Ancient Rome. Moreover, the designers did not reflect this heritage in the lounge's furniture or service counters to further emphasise the design concept. However, while these improvements could enhance the design identity, this design remains a good example of critical regionalism and reflexive modernism in design as it adequately invokes the cultural heritage of ancient Rome while addressing the contemporary design solution.
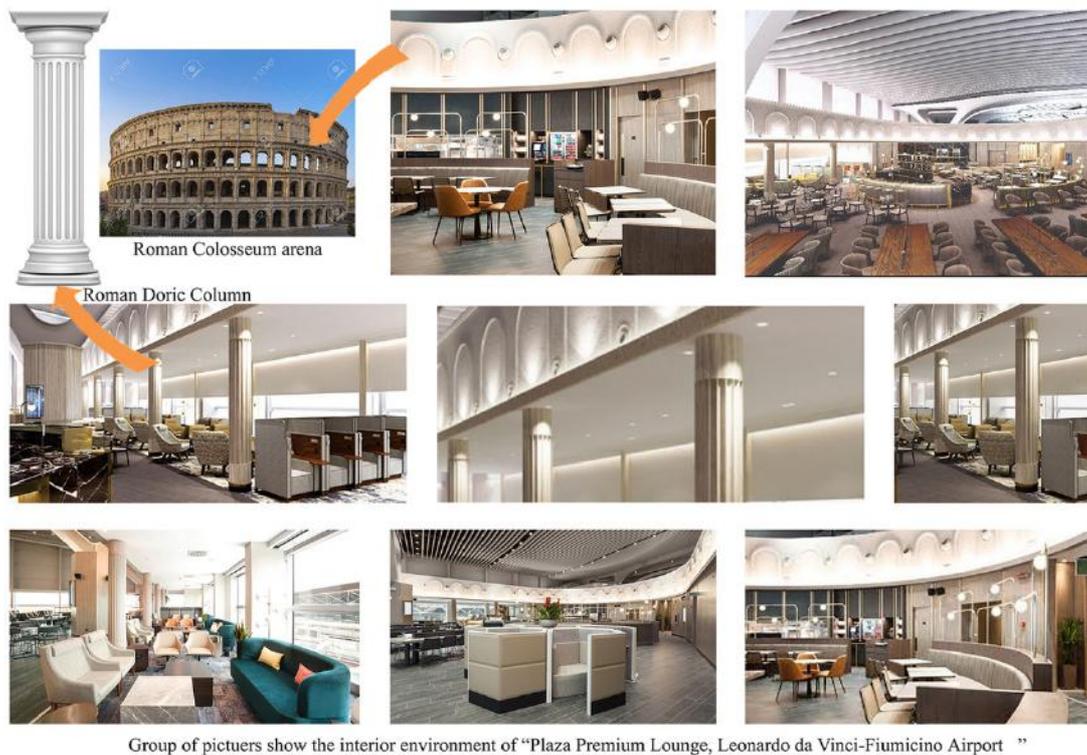

Group of pictuers show the interior environment of "Plaza Premium Lounge, Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport　"

Figure 6: The Rome Fiumicino lounge at Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport, with interior design inspired by ancient Roman elements

CONCLUSION

During this era of rapid globalisation, it is important to add value to the evolutionary process of cultural identity formation rather than become fixated on the notion of a single, unchanging identity. The practices and attitudes that only aim to establish a contrasting cultural identity should give way to a deeper understanding of how

designers can be sensitive to the shifting environments in which they work while using globally available technology, materials and resources to define an appropriate local identity.

Designers follow certain aspects of identity when creating their designs, the identity of which reflects a community's culture, psychology, economy and traditions. Inherited visual elements, such as architecture, interior design and furniture, are among the main components in the designers' collective memories, thus exerting various influences on the generation of design solutions. Collective memories, especially visual elements extracted from a tangible heritage, are considered the most suitable sources of inspiration for designers practicing critical regionalism. Moreover, such visual elements can stimulate designers to implement unique design strategies, which can lead to the application of reflexive modernism. The value of collective memory stems from its ability to preserve continuity while meeting contemporary trends, which allows designers to produce contemporary designs that form a bridge between the past, present and future.

This article identified three inspiration strategies that focus on the meaning of traditional thought and how to preserve design and cultural identity despite the continuing trend of globalisation. This article also presented several examples of heritage-inspired designs that acknowledge the ongoing technological, cultural and other changes in modern society. To deepen this research, the authors recommend further theoretical explanation of how the three inspiration strategies are actualised. A future study on design practices could include an application of these strategies to develop new designs.

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