

Technische Universität Wien
Institut für Architekturwissenschaften
Fachbereich Architekturtheorie und Technikphilosophie
Substitute, Basics in Rhetoric and Poetics for Architects
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Univ.-Prof. Dr. phil. Vera Bühlmann
Univ.Lektor Michael Sebastian

Azem Palace

Mais Msto
01650812
e1650812@student.tuwien.ac.at
+4367762922427

Azem palace in Damascus, Syria:

This building has been renovated several times. In 1930 by the French government and in 1945-1961 by Agha Khan foundation. The work needed for extensive research, resourcefulness and imagination.

The conservators in 1945-1961 relied on plans made by the French in the 1920s and on descriptions by members of the Azem family. They used the stones and ornament from other buildings of the same period being demolished to make way for the modern roads being constructed in Damascus. The jury commended the project for being an important one in re-establishing cultural identity and cultural continuity and in developing expertise and artisanal skills.

NOSTALGIA!

Chapter I: me arguing if Azem palace is a masterpiece

YOU, the built expression of our stories.

Having such a brave soul, expressions and a specific sound.

The sound of the mosaics flirting with water.

Telling me:

Come to the courtyard

Walk around

Corner to corner

Tile to tile

Come to the most inspiring architecture in the country of jasmine

Come to Learn how to balance black and white in one ABLAK wall

Then maybe you will understand the real function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its lining.

But listen!

It was my thoughts, my words before I decoded you!

Before I asked myself if you are a masterpiece?

So,

You were and you still a function, a response to necessity.

Necessity does stop the creation of master- pieces;

You were and you still what we want to keep alive, as a book, as a feature of our population.

You did preserve the identity of people
Identity does stop the creation of master- pieces;
You were and you still are a living history
History does make identity
Identity again does stop the creation of master- pieces

Chapter II: Azem palace answering me

So, am I not a masterpiece?

But who decided for these criteria?
Let us not accept what other defined

listen!

Ask not If I am a masterpiece!
Ask what masterpiece is representing if not me!

Through decades, I listened, I preserved,
I conquered

Maybe, I am not a masterpiece!
But I am what my silence through years and years still presents.

So, let me tell you about my truth

It is all about my calm anger
About my scared confidence
About my new wheels
About my tongue-tied by my thirsty to exist
To exist but only by my own!
These neighboring buildings are shamefully misplaced
And right they restored me
And right they made me up
But this place is poorly limited after them
Their stones, their ornaments are now here
They are me!
It is a kind of restful death inside me!

What is my substance after they repeatedly renovated me?

They make me what they want to remember

What their imagination wants, to be forever immortal

Am I supposed to be proud of gathering other building's stones inside me?

What if that all white and black stones, or none, or few, didn't want to be carried and kept inside me?

What about those millions of strange shadows that I carry?

All I could is to express your parts gathered in me

But listen!

Here I am, still preserving you

Standing forever to shape your togetherness.

Am I right if I say, "Me is all of you"?

Or should I say, "All of me is you"?

NOSTALGIA!

They always come searching for it inside me

marvel at the beauty of my existence, of my story

But I am still thirsty to understand, to experience what does nostalgia mean?

So, tell me how I can feel what I am supposed to preserve, to keep!