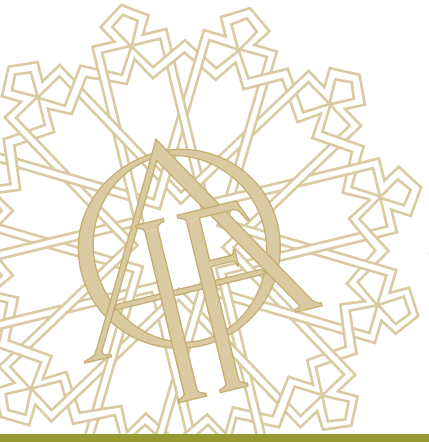
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Mohamed Elshahed

Egypt Here and There. The Architectures and Images of National Exhibitions and Pavilions, 1926–1964

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MOHAMED ELSHAHED*

Egypt Here and There

The Architectures and Images of National Exhibitions and Pavilions, 1926–1964

ABSTRACT

In 1898 the first agricultural exhibition was held on the island of Gezira in a location accessed from Cairo's burgeoning modern city center via the Qasr el-Nil Bridge. Between that year and 1926 there were 25 exhibitions held at the site, a key aspect of colonial displays of modern Egyptian economy. From 1926 the same site was transformed into a stage for presenting the country's national economy. In each of the exhibitions held at the site new buildings, pavilions and showrooms were built to exhibit national production in agriculture and industry. The history of the site captures a pivotal process in Egypt's modernization: the ways in which Egyptian strategies of self-representation developed over time. Concurrent with these exhibitions held in Cairo, Egypt participated in several international exhibitions where architecture and imagery were deployed to present the country's modernity to the world. In Egypt and abroad the architectures of national exhibitions and pavilions, as well as their circulated images, were powerful tools for communicating Egypt's modernity and progress to national and international audiences.

In this paper, exhibitions held in Cairo in 1926, 1936, 1949 and 1958 are discussed in terms of their architectures and the construction of images that put into sharp relief the state's positioning of the materiality of modernity in the Egyptian context. Egypt's participation in the 1939 and 1964 New York World's Fairs as well as the 1958 Brussels World's Fair are

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also discussed. This paper maps and situates these exhibitions in relation to one another and examines several examples of Egyptian exhibition architecture between 1926 and 1964, a period framed by the rise and fall of state-led nationalist representations of Egypt.

Keywords: architecture, Cold War, Egypt, exhibitions, modernism, Nasser, nationalism, political uses of architecture, representation, World's Fair, 20th century

✦ **RÉSUMÉ**

La première exposition organisée en Égypte sur le modèle des grandes foires internationales se tint au Caire en 1898, sur des terrains situés à la pointe sud de l'île de Gezira et desservis, depuis le nouveau centre-ville, par le pont Qasr el-Nil. Entre 1898 et 1926, 25 manifestations y prirent place, et constituèrent des éléments clé de présentation coloniale de l'économie de l'Égypte moderne. Dans chacun de ces événements, de nouveaux pavillons furent édifiés pour présenter la production nationale dans les domaines agricole et industriel. L'histoire du site illustre un élément significatif du processus de modernisation de l'Égypte : la façon dont les stratégies d'autoreprésentation nationale évoluèrent avec le temps. Parallèlement aux expositions tenues au Caire, l'Égypte participa à plusieurs rendez-vous internationaux et utilisa l'architecture pour exposer sa propre modernité au monde. À demeure comme à l'étranger, l'architecture des pavillons, et les images qui en circulèrent dans la presse, furent de puissants outils pour faire connaître le progrès et la modernité de l'Égypte à des publics nationaux et internationaux.

La présente contribution porte sur les expositions nationales tenues au Caire en 1926, 1936, 1949 et 1958 et en examine les édifices, ainsi que leur médiatisation, afin d'analyser la façon dont l'État situa la matérialité de la modernité dans le contexte égyptien. La participation de l'Égypte aux Expositions universelles de New York en 1939 et 1964, et de Bruxelles en 1958, est également analysée en contrepoint. La démarche proposée vise à étudier les installations de ces expositions en relation les unes avec les autres, afin de mieux saisir les continuités et les ruptures sur le plan architectural entre la Foire nationale de 1926 et l'Exposition internationale de 1964, au cours d'une période marquée par l'émergence et le déclin des représentations nationalistes officielles de l'Égypte.

Mots-clés : architecture, Guerre froide, Égypte, expositions nationales, modernisme, Nasser, nationalisme, usages politiques de l'architecture, médiatisation de l'architecture, expositions universelles, XX^e^ siècle

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The site in central Cairo where today's Opera House and Museum of Modern Art are located was once the country's focal point for exhibiting national modernity.[1] (Fig. 1) The history of the site captures a pivotal process in Egypt's modernization: the ways in which Egyptian strategies of self-representation developed over time.[2] In 1898 British colonial authorities held the first agricultural exhibition on the southern part of the uninhabited Gezira Island.[3] Following the 1919 Revolution, the site was transformed into a stage for the Egyptian government along with financial institutions and powerful industrialists to showcase national production in a variety of fields such as agricultural products, as well as industrial goods such as textiles. Over a period of half a century the exhibition site was altered numerous times with permanent and temporary buildings and exhibition halls. Thus, the exhibition site today with its layered histories and architectures is a palimpsest of Egypt's history of economic nationalism.[4]

Before 1926 eleven colonial-era agricultural exhibitions were held at the same site and controlled by colonial officials and companies. These earlier exhibitions were exclusively focused on agriculture, particularly cotton. The earliest agricultural exhibition held on the island was in 1898 when the newly established Khedival Agricultural Society leased 25 acres on Gezira Island for 99 years.[5] The inauguration of the 12th Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition in 1926 marked a major turning point in the site's history as Egyptian ruling elite pushed national industry and economy to the forefront of the political agenda. Two subsequent exhibitions were held in 1931 and 1936 as the Royal Agricultural Society, managing the event, opted for a five-year cycle for the exhibitions. The outbreak of WWII in 1941 interrupted the five-year cycle of exhibitions and the subsequent devastation to the economy delayed further exhibitions until 1949.[6] In tandem with these agricultural and industrial exhibitions held in Cairo, the Egyptian state also staged various pavilions and exhibitions abroad at major world's fairs.[7] These displays, at home and abroad, were stages of cultural and economic spectacle, which continued after the 1952 coup d'État/Revolution. In this paper I trace major milestones in the process of Egypt's exhibition

1. Note: The author translated into English all Arabic titles and quotes in this paper.
2. The study of Egyptian history from a Eurocentric perspective and the resulting exhibition of Egyptian history in museums beginning from the 19th century with the founding of the first museum of Egyptian antiquities, presented the Egyptian past as a series of distinct and discrete historical eras: Ancient Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Coptic and Arab/Islamic, Reid, 2002.
3. Ten subsequent colonial-era agricultural exhibitions were held, primarily focused on cotton.
4. I use the term "nationalism" throughout this study with caution, aware of its contradictions and the ways in which it "conceals within itself extreme opposites", such as liberation and oppression; Alter, 1989, p. 1. The canonical texts on nationalism are Anderson, 1983 and Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983. For a comprehensive list of studies focusing on Egyptian politics, including nationalism, between Egypt's two 20th century revolutions, see Goldschmidt, 2005, pp. 466–491.
5. "25 Exhibitions Held at Gezira Island Until Today", *al-Ahrām Magazine*, December 1958, p. 13.
6. "25 Exhibitions Held at Gezira Island Until Today", *al-Ahrām Magazine*, December 1958, p. 13.
7. The literature on World exhibitions is vast. Numerous studies investigate questions of national politics, representation and more, through the history of world exhibitions. Some examples of such studies include: Greenhalgh 1988; Bloembergen, 2006; Rydell, 1993.

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building both in Cairo and internationally. I argue that despite major political shifts happening during the period covered in this essay, the architectures of Egyptian exhibitions at home and abroad bore consistent hallmarks in their strategies of representing the country's modernity.

In Egypt and abroad the architectures of national exhibitions and pavilions, as well as their circulated images, were powerful tools for communicating Egypt's modernity and progress to national and international audiences. The circulation of images of the pavilions and exhibitions in the popular media such as the press and in commemorative postal stamps add to the allure of the subject. This article is not an attempt to provide a comprehensive history of Egyptian national and international pavilions and exhibitions, a complicated topic that requires further research and new archival evidence to be uncovered. The article also does not take up the question of reception and how various publics received such exhibitions. Instead, it maps and situates the exhibitions held during the middle decades of the 20th century in relation to one another. I examine several examples of Egyptian exhibition architecture between 1926 and 1964, a period framed by the rise and fall of state-led nationalist representations of Egypt.



Fig. 1. Cover for *L'Égypte Agricole et Industrielle*, a special issue on the occasion of the 15th Exhibition in Cairo, 1936 (Author's collection).

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Exhibiting Egypt on the World Stage

Exploring national pavilions and exhibitions as representations of the nation, as well as studying the visual and textual representations of these architectures in Egyptian media, is important because they illuminate two major aspects of Egypt's national culture during a period of political transition. First, while Egypt's exhibition displays in the 19th century were prescribed by politics of empire and orientalism, 20th century exhibitions, carried out by quasi-independent state actors and local capitalists, were driven by the politics of nationalism and national identity. Second, the exhibitions and their mediated images present a series of crystallized examples of how modernity and identity construction were negotiated by the emerging independent state in Egypt. My aim is to explore the place of architecture in displaying national culture and politics in Egyptian national pavilions at world's fairs as well as in agricultural and industrial exhibitions held in Cairo during the 20th century. These exhibitions, at home and abroad, provide insights into how the 'modern' and the 'national' were imagined and built in the process. Exhibitions were sites for the display of political imagery, opportunities for the development of foreign trade ties, and occasions for establishing domestic and global legitimacy.

Egypt was represented in the first World's Fair at the Crystal Palace.[8] Subsequently, the country was present at major exhibitions in the 19th century, most notably in Paris in 1867 and 1889 and in Chicago in 1893. The Egyptian section at the 1867 Exposition universelle was a major attraction and rivaled the Ottoman quarters in size.[9] In addition to Arabo-Islamic buildings the Egyptian section at the exposition also included an Ancient Egyptian temple in which museum items were selected and exhibited by Mariette Bey. The "temple" was rectangular in plan measuring 18 by 25 meters with a ceiling rising to 9 meters. The building was approached via a walkway flanked by sphinxes. As Zeynep Çelik notes, in the 19th century, the overall effect of Egypt's displays at World's Fairs departed from that of other "Islamic pavilions" which referenced the homeland by constructing simulacra of "residential and commercial" structures of predominantly "Islamic" architecture. While Egypt's pavilions and displays included references to Islamic architecture, "there was always a 'temple' in the style of an ancient Egyptian kingdom".[10] Çelik continues, "The architecture of the ancient kingdoms became an accepted symbol of Egypt".[11] This legacy of highlighting Ancient Egypt as part of the country's presence at international fairs in the 19th century is significant in shedding light on how as the paradigm shifted from orientalism towards nationalism in the 20th century, Ancient Egypt persisted as a key visual and architectural idiom for representing the country.

8. Moser, 2012.
9. Çelik, 1992, p. 111.
10. Çelik, 1992, p. 95.
11. Çelik, 1992, p. 116. In 1878 the Ancient Egyptian temple design was applied in the reconstruction of a dwelling; Humbert, 1998.

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The problem of representation is central to understanding Egypt's participation in world exhibitions. Timothy Mitchell described and analyzed the Egyptian display in Paris in 1889, where the country was carefully represented as oriental, frozen in time, and exotic.[12] Egypt's display in 1889 exhibited a shift away from the inclusion of modern technics and contemporary artisanal crafts as was done in Paris in 1867 and in Vienna in 1873. Thus, the country's presence in 19th century European exhibitions was inconsistent, sometimes including the contemporary and in other times denying it entirely. It is in these exhibitions, however, that Egyptian elites were exposed to the European construct of the façade as an architectural manifestation of the notion of constructing appearance and consciously representing the nation in the context of exhibitions. Egyptian constructions of exhibitions in the 20th century, first in Cairo and later in international events, demonstrate a far more consistent approach to representing the nation and producing imagery and architecture to signify its modernity. From the beginning of Egypt's presence in exhibitions, Egyptian architectural elements were installed theatrically with emphasis on symbolism. The question that arises in the 20th century displays, discussed below, in contrast with their 19th century counterparts, is how to utilize architectural theatricality and symbolism to announce modernity and progress rather than timelessness and stillness.

In the 1900 Fair in Paris a mixture of oriental and Ancient Egyptian elements were concocted in which an Egyptian temple to one side and a theater with an Egyptian facade to the other flanked a Mamluk inspired *okel*. [13] These multiple attempts at negotiating two sets of aesthetic and representational architectural paradigms in the Egyptian pavilions reveal the duality that architects had to take into account when representing Egypt to European and American publics. Nonetheless, what was already emerging in these contexts, in which European artists and architects were commissioned to represent the country, are a set of architectural representational referents with an increasingly dominant presence of Ancient Egypt as a clear architectural stylistic distinction that separates Egypt from other oriental lands. The temporal frame of the present and future seemed absent from these displays as the past became the only relevant timeframe to represent the country.

With rare exceptions such as the 1867 Egyptian display in Paris, Egyptian pavilions in the 19th century functioned as zones of entertainment. While national pavilions of European states were presented as emporiums of commerce and the display of national industry, Egypt's pavilions were representational spaces for the display of cultural and historic heritage. After the British control of Egypt in 1882, Egypt's participation in international fairs shrunk significantly in scale and ambition. However, before and during British colonialism, Egyptian pavilions on the world stage were geared towards framing the timeless past rather than representing the present or imagining the future. With the rise of nationalist movements in the 20th century, particularly after the end of the First World War, a major shift was underway in terms of how to represent Egypt utilizing the already well-established structure of pavilion exhibitions at home and abroad.

12. Mitchell, 1988, p. 1.
13. Volait, 2015.

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The Search for an Architectural Idiom

The question of how to represent Egypt architecturally and symbolically, as manifested in 19th century pavilions, stirred public debates back home during the first decades of the 20th century.[14] The choice between Islamic symbolism, specifically Mamluk, and Ancient Egyptian symbolism, was hotly debated particularly with regards to commemorative structures.[15] The period preceding World War I witnessed an increased interest in the pharaohs partly due to growing numbers in European tourism and expeditions but also due to the "proselytizing" by Egyptian pioneers of Egyptology such as Ahmad Kamal.[16] Nationalist figures appropriated pharaonic symbolism for political ends. Mustafa Kamel (1874–1908) and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (1872–1963) of the Watani Party and Umma Party respectively, both "included pride in pharaonic Egypt in their political and cultural visions".[17] The French-made sculpture of Mustafa Kamel that arrived in Cairo in 1914 shows the nationalist figure standing next to a sphinx's head, a motif that was developed further in Mahmoud Mukhtar's *Nahḍat Miṣr*, Egypt's Renaissance, sculpture inaugurated in 1928 outside the Egyptian capital's train station.[18] Mausoleums for private individuals as well as public figures, such as Saad Zaghloul's, were built in the pharaonic style.[19] By the late 1920s pharaonicism was well placed as the visual and symbolic representation of the nation in art, popular culture and in architecture. How did this impact the architecture of national exhibitions?

The buildings of the first major Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition in 1926 comprised eclectic architectural styles reflecting the plurality of perspectives regarding how to represent the nation at the time. Individual industrialists such as Abboud Pasha and major institutions such as Bank Misr built exhibition halls on the Fair grounds at Gezira that combined early modernist and Art Deco features with some historical references pointing to Islamic and pharaonic. (Figs. 2–3) The exhibition gate was entirely neoclassical in design. By the 1930s as exhibition halls were made permanent, architectural debates in Egypt regarding the national style were already underway. A lecture by the architect Sayed Karim delivered in 1940 at the Egyptian Geographic Society recounted how during the previous decade architects disagreed on a unified national architectural style.[20] The result of this disagreement is what Karim referred to as a state of confusion, a lack of harmony in style. Karim argued for a unified style for public buildings based on "honest expression of building materials and technologies".[21] Prominent buildings at the fair grounds designed by chief architect of royal palaces Mustafa Fahmy Bey had already moved in that direction.[22]

14. For example, see the debate over how to commemorate nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul, Coury, 1992.
15. Jankowski and Gershoni, 2004.
16. Reid, 2015.
17. Reid, 2015, p. 34.
18. Nadia Radwan, 2017.
19. Volait, 1996.
20. Karim, 1940, p. 271.
21. Karim, 1940.
22. Mustafa Fahmy was the first Egyptian architect to acquire a diploma in architecture from the École spéciale des travaux publics de Paris in 1912. He went on to serve many public positions such as general

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The most prominent features that appeared temporarily and sometimes permanently for the various exhibitions were the exhibition gates. Mustafa Fahmy designed the prominent, and still standing, west entry to the complex for the 1936 exhibition. The gate combines futurist elements such as the emphasis on verticality with a soaring round central pillar extended higher with a series of slender flagpoles. The lower part of the gate consists of a thin disk seemingly hovering above the ticket windows and providing shade below while clearly marking the entrance to the site. The east entry point to the site was originally adorned by a heavy neoclassical gateway with references to a melange of European historical styles. However that gate, prominently placed facing Qasr el-Nil bridge, was reshaped in Moorish style. Fahmy also authored the design, this time for the 1949 exhibition. The freestanding gate is built in a style that contrasts significantly from the earlier gate design. Two small archways flank a larger central one. Much of the surface of the gate facade is ornamented with a Moorish pattern common in historic buildings in the Maghreb. Subsequent exhibitions featured temporary gates, most memorably during the 1958 exhibition, which utilized a modernist international style. That gate, discussed below, consisted of large sweeping paraboloid concrete arch filled with geometric *brise-soleil* patterns common in late 1950s and early 1960s tropical architecture. The stylistic and architectural transformations of the exhibition gates over the years mirror the larger trends taking place with regards to official architectural representations of Egyptian modernity. Despite the stylistic difference of each gate what ties them together is their consistent links to the architectural parlance of the time, a negotiation between what was practiced in Egypt with what was emerging internationally elsewhere.

The permanent exhibition grounds on Gezira continued to be used for national displays of modern production well into the 1960s. With each subsequent exhibition temporary structures and exhibition halls were built to suit the occasion. The establishment of national industries was coupled with the rise of nationalist politics. These two trends took place during an international movement to produce modern architecture that reflects the advances of the time, the *zeitgeist*, while each national context produced its own internal debates regarding the appearance and materiality of national architectural styles. The exhibition zone in central Cairo provides a condensed case study in which these above trends can be detected and analyzed as they converged in the specific example of Egyptian national exhibitions. Other counties staged displays of their national modernity on the site as well, such as Germany's numerous exhibitions held in the 1950s in Cairo. The Egyptian pavilions in international fairs during the same period are yet another layer to be unraveled in the remainder of this essay to decode the continuities and disruptions in the architectural approaches to represent the modern industrial nation, in this case Egypt, during a time of global political and architectural upheaval.

director of *Tanẓīm* from 1940 to 1945. In 1945 he assumed the position of chief architect for royal palaces. From 1945–1948 he was the director of municipal services in Alexandria. In 1949, he briefly held the position of minister of public works and he headed the Cairo municipality from 1950 to 1952. Fahmy was influenced by traditional Beaux-Arts in his search for an Egyptian "national style" that references Ancient Egyptian patrimony. He taught architecture and urbanism at Cairo University between 1923 and 1950, ʿAbd al-Ǧawwād, 1989, pp. 155–158; Volait, 2005, p. 418.

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Fig. 2. One of the exhibition halls, built for the 1936 exhibition, used in 1949 as the exhibition hall for the companies of Abboud Pasha, an industrialist and business tycoon.
Source: *al-Muṣawwar*, 25 February 1949, p. 64.



Fig. 3. Egyptian industries in all fields ranging from chemicals, household goods, fertilizers and furniture were shown in showcases such as the one pictured here for the National Weaving Company in Alexandria.
Source: *L'Égypte agricole et industrielle*, p. 8.

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Displaying National Industries

An advertisement published in the architectural journal *al-ʿImāra* in 1941 depicts a determined woman with her right leg forward, representing a progressive Egypt, rising up and upholding the Egyptian flag.[23] (Fig. 4) The feminine figure is clad with a flowing dress exposing one shoulder; the translucent veil on her head originates from a roll of fabric carried by workers laboring behind her. In the background are the silhouettes of factory chimneys overlooking the Nile while to the distance the mosque of Mehmet Ali is witness to the entire scene from above. The text complementing this pictorial representation of industry and glory confirms the visual message, "National industries build the glory of a nation". Industry and exhibitions go hand in hand as exhibitions have proven to be profitable promotional events that stimulate production and expand markets. The advertisement promises the "largest exhibition presented by the companies of Bank Misr and local industries". However, the exhibition did not take place that year due to the outbreak of World War II.



Fig. 4. "National industries build the glory of a nation". Advertisement for the companies of Bank Misr, published in *al-ʿImāra* 3, 4, 1941, p. 113.

23. For a history of Egypt's visual representation as a woman, see Baron, 2005.

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One of the most significant outcomes of the 1919 Revolution was the founding of Bank Misr as Egypt's first indigenously owned bank in 1920. The bank's establishment was during a time when "bourgeois ideologues articulated their vision of a transformed, industrialized Egyptian economy".[24] The bank expanded rapidly and aimed to diversify and industrialize the Egyptian economy as a way of "challenging colonialism".[25] Within the span of several years the bank established a network of Misr companies working in fields as diverse as textiles, manufacturing, and mining. One of the bank's most impressive industrial developments was the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā, located in the Delta near the lands producing cotton controlled by the large landowners who held the most shares in the bank's original capital.[26] Alongside Bank Misr, several national companies established by industrialists emerged on the scene, leading the way for the need for an industrial exhibition to showcase the country's burgeoning economy and to drive national consumerism. As Eric Davis notes, "while the socio-economic trends prior to and following the first world war pointed to the inevitability of the founding of a national bank, the direct catalyst for this development was the 1919 Revolution".[27] With such impressive efforts at industrial production, industrial exhibitions to showcase Egyptian made products and goods became a necessity.

The rise of national politics paired with the notion of "national industry" and exhibitions was not unique to Egypt. The 20th century witnessed the rise of new terrains of industry outside Europe and the United States. Egypt's emerging national economy and industry, and the desire to exhibit it, was paralleled in Turkey with the Izmir exhibition and in mandate Palestine with the first Yishuv Fair in 1923 that ultimately evolved into the iconic Levant Fair of 1934 with its modernist pavilions showcasing the production of Jewish Palestine. Not unlike Bank Misr's goal, the Levant Fair of 1934, organized by the Company for Trade and Industry, aimed to create international economic and trade ties and to affirm a new national self.[28] The Izmir exhibition and the Levant Fair provide a crucial context for understanding Egyptian industrialists' desire to link industry, exhibition and nationalism in a fast-transforming post-Ottoman Middle East. The rise of nationalist movements across the region was closely linked to attempts to create self-reliant national economies.

Twentieth century fairs combined elements of industry, technology, and economy with concerns over representation, presentation and display. The arrival of such fairs in newly emerging economies put additional strain on the issue of symbolism. Building on this legacy, trade fairs in the eastern Mediterranean in the 1920s emerged in the context of shifting political boarders, rising national politics, and a fast transforming global architectural culture in which modern design was explicitly understood as a visual and spatial manifestation of modernity. Thus, building a national trade fair, whether in Izmir, Tel Aviv or Cairo, meant

24. Tignor, 1984, p. 7.
25. Davis, 1983.
26. Davis, 1983, p. 145.
27. Davis, 1983, p. 112. See also Vitalis, 1995.
28. Kunda, Oxman, 2004, pp. 52–74.

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that the architectures and the visual representations of the fairs required careful calculation and authorship. In all these examples, the initial fairs consisted of temporary and often eclectic pavilions built in zones on the edges of the urban centers on territories that were previously vacant. National elites, industrialists and financiers and their architects experimented with architectural and visual forms to represent their young modern nations seeking economic growth, independence and industrialization.

The site for the Cairo exhibition grounds was selected on the southern tip of Gezira Island, directly across from the city's al-Ismailiyya district, which had already undergone multiple waves of urban transformation. By the late 1920s the district was well established as the urban playground of the elites with grand apartment buildings, mansions and essential financial institutions such as banks and the stock exchange. In 1927 the headquarters of Bank Misr were completed in al-Ismailiyya, on designs by Antonio Lasciac in an eclectic style that blends neo-oriental with Beaux-Arts. The exhibition site was accessible from al-Ismailiyya by the Qasr el-Nil Bridge, already an iconic symbol of modernity as the first bridge crossing the Nile. The exhibition grounds, already utilized for this purpose since 1898, were designed and organized with a series of temporary and semi-permanent pavilions erected by the participating companies. The central and most significant of the pavilions was the Cotton Palace, the first permanent hall built after the 1898 exhibition. The iron and glass building was a concoction of classical European, Art nouveau and oriental architectures. (Fig. 5) The other major building erected on the site for the 1926 exhibition was the Hall of Industry, at the hefty cost of 18,000 Egyptian pounds.[29] Five years later, in time for the 1931 exhibition, the Hall of Agriculture was built and was used for the display of fauna and the popular Flower Show. Thus, this triangular tract of land located between Cairo's modern city center to the east and its agricultural hinterland to the west became a site for the production of national modernity over the subsequent three decades.

By 1936 the Fair grounds had gained a sense of architectural permanence with the construction of the Eastern Hall, the most expensive of all, costing half a million Egyptian pounds.[30] Exhibition halls with names harking back at Paris's Grand Palais and Petit Palais completed the scheme drafted by Mustafa Fahmy. They formed the western edge of the site and were built at the cost of 66,000 Egyptian pounds.[31] The architecture of the largest buildings on the site, as well as the series of smaller pavilions and the two new entrance gates to the site combined neo-Islamic decorative elements, monolithic forms influenced by Art Deco silhouettes and futurist elements such as soaring antennas and flagpoles. When it opened for the 1936 Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, the Fair grounds included the highest concentration of buildings designed by Fahmy and the site was a crystallization of his attempts at producing an Egyptian modern national style in architecture. Fahmy was the architect of numerous official buildings across central Cairo ranging from headquarters to newly established professional associations

29. "25 Exhibitions Held at Gezira Island Until Today", *al-Ahrām Magazine*, December 1958, p. 13.

30. In 1983 the Eastern Hall was allocated to become the Museum of Modern Art that ultimately opened in 1991.

31. ʿAbd al-Ǧawwād, 1989, pp. 155–158; Volait, 2005, p. 418.

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and syndicates as well as government buildings and ministries. The stylistic synthesis and architectural uniformity found in Fahmy's designs for the exhibition grounds built on his experimentations during the previous two decades. The muscular heaviness of the Grand Palais, for example, is visually rooted in ancient building traditions, while combining and adopting Art Deco motifs, such as the staggered tower. Formal elements such as arches and the grand dome over the main hall are derived from Cairo's historical catalogue of architectural references. This synthesis in massing and elevation was juxtaposed over another form of synthesis in plan and section where the buildings also combined classically inspired plans with modernist construction materials and techniques that allowed for unusual sections.

Concurrent and sometimes competing new national politics across the Middle East in the aftermath of World War I gave weight to the production of national industries and exhibitions. In Egypt, the establishment of Bank Misr and its companies and subsequently the exhibition grounds were parts of a broad process of Egyptianization of the economy, of production and consumption and of modernity and its spatial manifestations. In this sense, the exhibition pavilions and halls inaugurated for the 1936 exhibition were the culmination of these various and overlapping processes of nationalizing the modern in Egypt. The visual and symbolic values of these buildings—occupying a prominent site in Cairo and visited by thousands of Egyptians—established an architectural nationalism in an otherwise fractious national context. Visual and symbolic depictions of this movement, such as the 1941 advertisement discussed above, exemplify the ways in which the emergence of a new economy and politics was combined not only for the search of new architectures in the context of exhibitions but also the search for new modes of representation that imprint a sense of national pride locally while being able to compete regionally and internationally.



Fig. 5 Aerial view of the exhibition grounds *circa* 1958. In the center left are the Agriculture Palace (front) and the Industry Palace (back), The Grand Palais is to the right and the Petit Palais is partially shown in the bottom of the photograph. Published in *Binā' al-Waṭan*, February 1960.

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Pharaonic Futurism in New York 1939

After establishing the first permanent national exhibition site in Cairo, Egyptian authorities looked to the international stage and the 1939 World's Fair in New York as a potential site for establishing a new image of modern, industrious Egypt among the nations of the world.[32] The proposed pavilion for New York reflected the way the Egyptian state wanted to be perceived: confident, modern, progressive, industrious, and built on a rich cultural heritage. In the years leading up to the start of WWII momentum was building up for a new Egypt following the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement and with the coming of a new monarch, King Farouk.[33] The Egyptian Pavilion's design, led by Mustafa Fahmy assisted by Ahmed Sharmy and Ahmed Sedqi, combined Egyptian, futurist and nationalist aspirations.[34] Unlike previous Egyptian displays at world's fairs, this was Egypt's first display fully designed by Egyptians and it did not reproduce "an oriental street in Cairo" or showcase Egypt's Arab or Islamic histories. The pavilion exhibited a self-consciously modern Egyptian identity rooted in a diverse cultural heritage, highlighting Ancient Egypt and the country's modern-era dynasty as it presided over a modernizing nation.

In 1938, Waguih Rostum, Egyptian chargé d'affaires in Washington, signed a contract with Grover A. Whalen, President of the Exposition Corporation, for 40,000 square feet of space in the governmental area. During the signing Rostum promised, "Egypt, home of one of the earliest known civilizations, will be impressively represented at the New York International Exposition of 1939, whose theme is Building the World of Tomorrow". Egypt spent $250,000 on its exhibit, which was designed to "show the progress of Egypt from the olden days up to the present". Hussein Sabry Pasha, uncle to King Farouk and Governor of Alexandria, had been appointed commissioner to the Exposition and he went to New York to attend several events including a luncheon and a cornerstone ceremony. "We are confident", Rostum said, "that Egypt's pavilion and exhibit will be one of the most striking in the exposition. My country is most anxious to take this opportunity to show its most interesting and most important products and we shall also emphasize epochal events in the history of our country".[35]

The Egyptian consul in New York, Mr. Hassan Youssef, visited the exposition grounds to inspect building progress and was greeted by Julius Holmes, administrative assistant and

32. Egypt was also present in the 1937 World's Fair in Paris where the country's pavilion, organized by Mahmoud Khalil, was focused on the display of works of fine art produced by Egyptian artists such as Mahmoud Mokhtar's *Arous el-Nil*, created 1929.

33. The period following the 1919 Revolution, known as the 'liberal period' is punctuated by the ascent of King Farouk to the throne and the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement which required the departure of British troops from Egyptian cities while maintaining presence in the Suez Canal zone. For an account of Anglo-Egyptian relations during this period and Egypt's political history see Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, 1968 and 1977. Also see Clément 2005.

34. "Egyptian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair", 1941, p. 22.

35. The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, "Egypt Participation – Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires and Grover Whalen signing contract" (New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed July 20, 2016: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-e233-d471-e040-e00a180654d7).

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Grover Whalen, president of the New York International Exposition. "It is evident that you mean business", said Youssef, "and that the New York Exposition will open promptly, just as scheduled. I have never seen a great fair so far advanced in construction eighteen months before the opening date. This will be very reassuring to our exhibitors, who will be able to make their plans in full confidence".[36] The official record describes the Egyptian Pavilion as "inspired by the ancient temples of the pharaohs, with modern touches such as lofty translucent panels for lighting effects".[37] Egypt gained the distinction of laying the first cornerstone in the foreign zone of the 1939 New York World's Fair. The cornerstone was composed of glass bricks set in brass mullions and containing a copper chest visible through the bricks. (Fig. 6) The fair's archival photograph is accompanied by the caption "It was the first glass cornerstone to be laid in the history of building".[38]

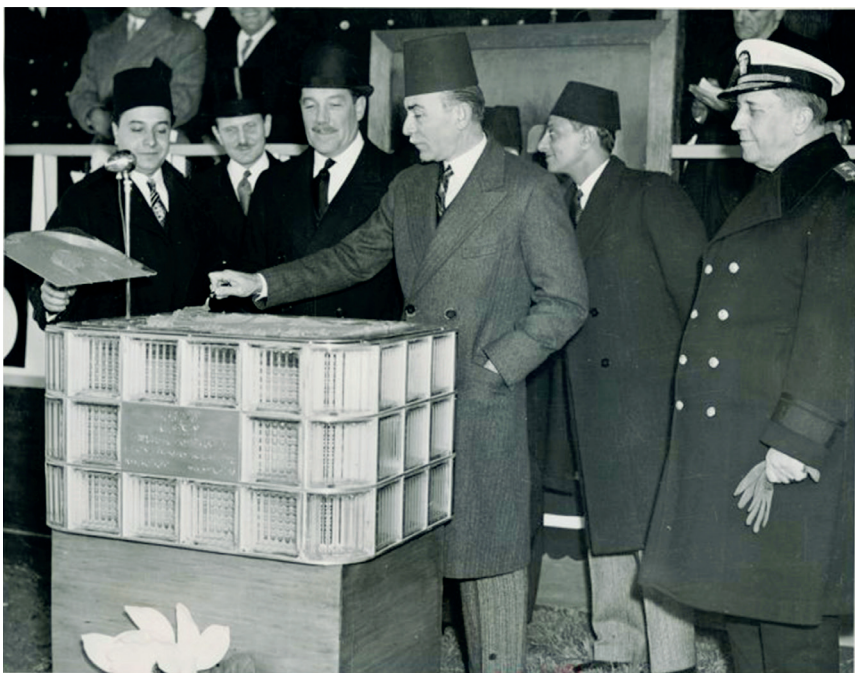


Fig. 6. Hussein Sabry Pasha (right) at the cornerstone ceremony for Egypt's participation at the 1939 New York World's Fair.
Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections, Image ID 1669675.

36. The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, "Egypt Participation – Hassan Youssef (Egyptian Consul), Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires, Grover Whalen and group look at Food Building model" (New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed July 20, 2016: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-76a2-d471-e040-e00a180654d7).
37. The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, "Egypt Participation – Hussein Sabry Pacha (Egyptian High Commissioner) and Grover Whalen sign contract with group looking on" (New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed July 20, 2016: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-8d38-d471-e040-e00a180654d7).
38. The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, "Egypt Participation – Hussein Sabry Pacha (Egyptian High Commissioner) lays glass cornerstone" (New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed July 20, 2016: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-9ce2-d471-e040-e00a180654d7).

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Upon arriving at the Egyptian Pavilion visitors were met with three flagpoles emerging from three concrete star-shaped bases representing the Egyptian flag (Fig. 7). The three stars were set in a crescent-shaped water feature made of silver. The entry court was flanked by two grand stairs, which led to the entrance on the second level. The structure consisted of a rectangular hall with two levels of gallery space with the ceiling soaring above creating a monumental space reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian monuments. The theme of the New York Fair, "The World of Tomorrow", was an opportunity to showcase Egypt's tomorrow: an ancient country making strides towards industrialization and increased modernization at the helm of a newly crowned king. The link between architectural modernism and industrialization, economic and technological modernization has haunted the historiography of modernism. A common question asked, particularly in studying non-western settings, is: How to reconcile the arrival of aesthetic modernism before the indigenization of processes of modernization in the realms of economy and technology?[39]

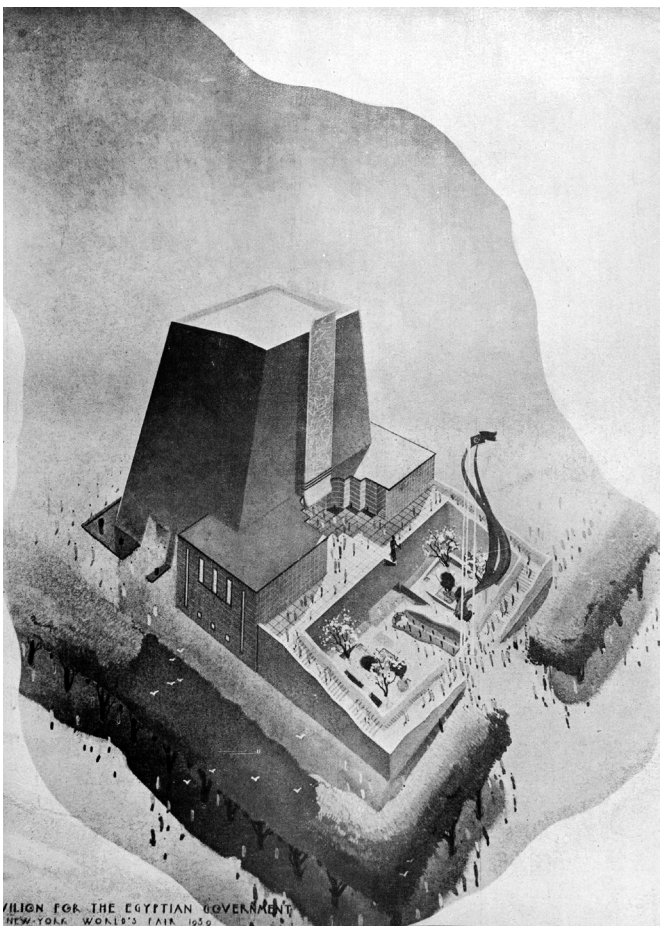


Fig. 7. The Egyptian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair designed by Mustafa Fahmy and published in *al-ʿImāra* 1, 3, 1941, p. 23.

39. Guillen, 2004, p. 7.

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While the report published in *al-ʿImāra* highlighted the modern aspects of the pavilion design, reports in the *New York Times* focused on the Ancient Egyptian inspiration with little mention of the pavilion's modernist elements.[40] The design of the pavilion certainly referenced Ancient Egypt but the soaring central hall included displays by the ministries of agriculture, trade and industry showcasing the country's modernity. Ultimately the Fair was about national products and what better way for the Egyptian government to attract viewers and potentially business (not to mention potential tourists) than to capitalize on American's fascination with Ancient Egypt and to intertwine it with Egypt's modernization and industrialization endeavors.[41] In addition, a significant portion of the display was dedicated to the history of Egypt's dynasty from Muhammad Ali to Farouk. The display included mechanized models, photographs, oil paintings, statues and various models depicting Egyptian life.

The pavilion was designed with a determined path from entrance to exit in order for the exhibition goers to see all the items. Upon entering the building visitors had a view of the entire exhibition from above. The soaring ceiling was illuminated with reflected lights and light projections with various patterns extracted from Egypt's rich artistic history. The exhibition included two mechanized focal points: the first was a translucent sculpture in the form of a lotus bud pharaonic column capital with cotton blown into its visible interior and lights reflected off the rotating object. The second mechanized model represented the Nile valley with key temples and sites built in miniature and the modes of transport (cars, trains, planes) to each site were depicted. The walls of the main hall were covered with flowing gray-green Egyptian silk curtains.

This was Egypt's most ambitious display at an international fair. Visual and spatial representation of Egypt in the 1939 World's Fair departed from past exhibitions on the international arena where the country's representation often satisfied rather than challenged European expectations by emphasizing Islamic and Arab heritage or by reproducing ancient and oriental motifs. By contrast, the Egyptian pavilion in New York translated Ancient Egyptian architecture into modern form and the content of the exhibition grounded in the decade-old national exhibitions taking place in Cairo. After designing and building the Ancient Egyptian, Art Deco infused mausoleum of Saad Zaghloul in central Cairo, Mustafa Fahmy combined his interpretation of Ancient Egyptian architecture with the New York fair's futurism theme. This transformation of Ancient Egyptian art and architecture from a curiosity, as displayed in 19th century exhibitions, to an expression of modern nationalism marked a major shift in the design of pavilions and exhibitions that followed.

40. Fahmy, Sharmi, Sidqi, 1941, p. 22.

41. For a general overview of the impact of Ancient Egypt on Western art see Humbert, 1994. For a study on Egyptomania and its relation to Egyptian modernity see Colla, 2007.

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A Grand Exhibition in 1949

After a thirteen-year hiatus the Agricultural Industrial Exhibition returned to Gezira Island in 1949 with its largest, most developed and elaborate of all Egyptian displays of modernity. It occupied an area of 60 acres and 1.5 million spectators visited it.[42] The fair zone was given a major facelift and new attractions were built to expand the exhibition's functions beyond trade and industry to encompass education and entertainment in new ways. Images of and stories about the exhibition proliferated in the press with opinion pieces, journalistic coverage, extensive advertising and political cartoons and caricatures of the event published in the most popular media outlets such as *al-Muṣawwar* and *al-Ahrām*. The exhibition was the first major national display of industry after the end of the Second World War, it also occurred only one year after Egypt's defeat in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and after a decade of turbulent national politics.[43] Political and economic forces utilized the exhibition for multiple ends: to send a message of prosperity, to enforce the domination of Cairo over the provinces and to communicate that the political regime of the monarchy was stable despite its waning popularity. Images of prosperous peasants and strong workers pervaded the popular media. (Figs. 8–9) Such images formed the visual backbone of an exhibition in which national modernity and its economy were forcefully displayed.

The image by Abu Khalil featured on the cover of *al-Muṣawwar* in February 1949 shows a woman from the countryside in vernacular dress and traditional gold jewelry superimposed on the Mustafa Fahmy's modernist-Art Deco fused Palace of Industry building. Not unlike the advertisement from 1941 discussed above, this image depicts Egypt as a woman, this time a peasant, a motif with its own history dating back to Auguste Bartholdi's original design for a robbed colossal statue at the northern entrance of the Suez Canal. Mahmoud Mukhtar's *Nahḍat Miṣr*, inaugurated in 1928 utilized the same motif of the peasant woman lifting her veil. In this context, the image by Abu Khalil featured prominently on the cover of one of Egypt's most widely read journals is inserted into a pictorial history of representing the modern nation. The image of the peasant woman was always combined with another visual element, a torch in the case of Bartholdi's statue and the rising sphinx in the case of Mukhtar's sculpture, both representing progress. In the case of Abu Khalil's illustration, the architecture of the hall of industry at the exhibition, seemingly crowning the head of the peasant, is the symbol of progress in 1949.

The visualization of industry was central to establishing an image of a modern nation to local audiences such as readers of magazines and visitors of the exhibition at Gezira Island. The cover of a special large-format publication by *al-Ahrām* dedicated to the 1949 exhibition complements the cover by *al-Muṣawwar*. Rather than focus on the peasant, agricultural Egypt is dwarfed in the foreground and overlooked by an almost mythical representation of labor

42. "25 Exhibitions Held at Gezira Island Until Today", *al-Ahrām Magazine*, December 1958, p. 13.
43. For inter-war economy and class dynamics in Egypt see Goldberg, 1986. For the period beginning before World War II into the Nasser years see Zaalouk, 1989. For post-war economy see Hussein, 1973.

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Fig. 8. Cover of a special issue of *al-Muṣawwar* on the occasion of the Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition, 25 February 1949.

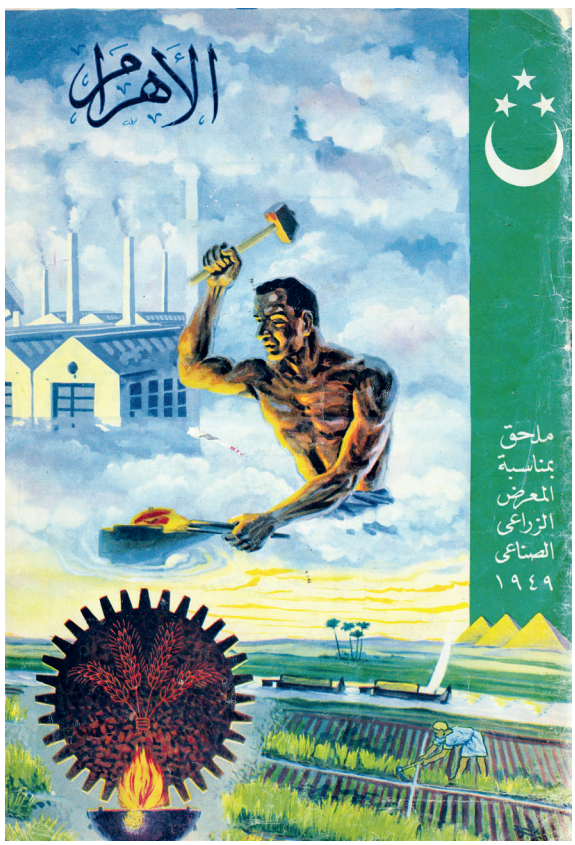


Fig. 9. Cover of a special publication of *al-Ahrām Magazine* on the occasion of the 1949 Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition.

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above. A muscular worker hammers iron while engulfed in a cloud of smoke emerging from factory chimneys rising in the background of the scene. Such images of masculine industrial labor already seen in this cover in 1949 formed the basis for images of industry and progress for the following decade during the Nasser regime. By the 1949 exhibition, the relationship between agriculture and industry had shifted drastically. While earlier exhibitions were still predominantly focused on agricultural economy, post-WWII exhibitions mark a clear shift towards industry. The feminine representation of agricultural Egypt was overtaken by the muscle bound dreams of an industrial economy.

Egyptian industries showcased their work to a mostly Egyptian middle class public, and the public was introduced to Egyptian provinces through a series of reductive, folkloric representations. "This is Egypt", proclaimed lawyer and writer Fikri Abaza regarding the 1949 exhibit. "The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibit is presented by an independent committee that is national and popular [*qawmiyya wa-šaʿbiyya*]. It was born from this nation [*umma*] and it will live on into the future".[44] The dynamics between the capital of Cairo and the Egyptian provinces developing since the 1920s culminated during the 1949 exhibition in Nile Valley Street, a series of sixteen pavilions, each representing an Egyptian province.[45] The street asserted Cairo's dominance as well as its economic dependence on the provinces. In the context of the exhibit the mutual relationship between industry and agriculture, town and country, was enforced.[46]

Nile Valley Street was a major attraction at the 1949 exhibition. (Fig. 10) Visitors were able to learn about Egypt's various provinces through the displayed products each province produced as well as through the architecture of their pavilions. *Al-Muṣawwar* Magazine proclaimed "From Alexandria to Sudan in 415 meters!"[47] In a short walk, residents of Cairo, the cultural, economic and administrative center of Egypt, could explore provinces they might never visit in person. In some cases the pavilions architecturally represented local industry, such as al-Ġarbiyya province pavilion, which took the shape of a miniature factory symbolizing the textile industries at the provincial capital of al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā. A pavilion modeled as a miniature petroleum refinery represented the province of Suez. In other cases, the provincial pavilions represented local culture by way of reproducing vernacular architectures; such was the case with the pavilions of al-Fayyūm and al-Minyā. The Sudan was represented in its entirety by a single pavilion. However, it was also the largest pavilion on Nile Valley Street.[48] These thematic pavilions not only reduced the provinces to a series of visual signifiers while highlighting their contribution to the national economy, but they also asserted the centrality of Cairo and its dominant relationship over provincial Egypt.

44. Abaza 1949, p. 9.
45. The number of administrative units, or provinces, at the time was sixteen, however the number has never been stable as successive Egyptian governments frequently redrew the administrative map of the country.
46. Abaza, 1949, p. 9.
47. "From Alexandria to Sudan in 415 meters", 1949, p. 5.
48. At the time, Sudan was being ruled by both Egypt and Britain. The Egyptian state saw Sudan as part of its territory with Farouk as its king, Powell, 2003.

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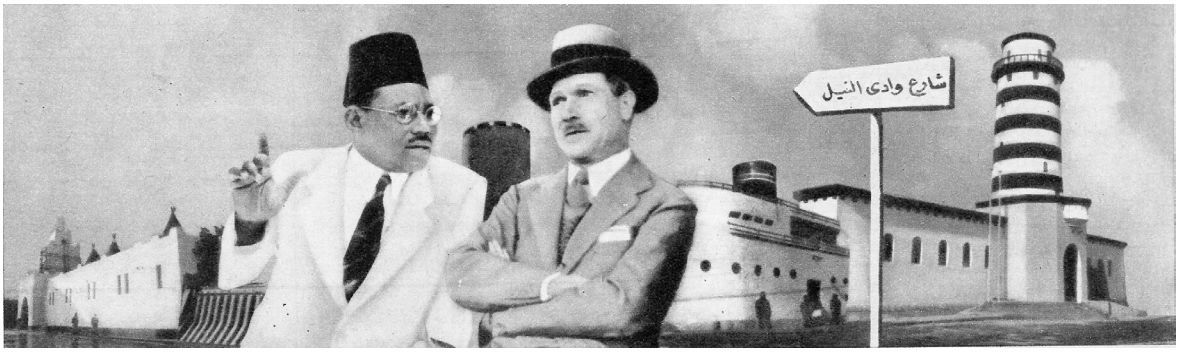


Fig. 10. A photo collage of Nile Valley Street at the 1949 Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition.
Source: *al-Muṣawwar*, 25 February 1949, p. 9.

Unlike Egypt's display at the World's Fair in New York a decade earlier, the 1949 Agricultural Industrial Exhibition was an ideal site for Egyptians, not international audiences, to explore and revel in Egypt's modernity. However, that modernity was not afforded to all Egyptians, as one cartoon published in *al-Muṣawwar* captures the disparity between different segments of society and their varying relationships to the exhibit. The cartoon depicts a middle class family visiting the exhibit, a *ṭarbūš* bearing father, a pearl necklace wearing mother and their son stand in front of the iconic pavilion of Bank Misr. At the same time two beggars wonder and question why they are not included in the commerce of the exhibition. At the same time still, a fat mustachioed "war profiteer" is depicted calling the management of the exhibition asking to reserve the entire site for a private visit. (Fig. 11) This depiction of disparately different experiences of the exhibit implies that it was a space of consumer-based national pride geared at a self-consciously modern urban middle class and concealing Egypt's poverty and uneven development.[49] However, the exhibition was widely celebrated; *al-Muṣawwar* described it as a revolutionary milestone in Egypt's industrial, agricultural, and commercial development.[50] In addition to showcasing local industry, the exhibition was also a space of leisure, which included rides and other amusements, as well as an educational section, which included the Civilization Museum.[51] (Fig. 12)

Educational aspects of the exhibit included a display of the "peasant's dream".[52] This was a model house designed by architect Mansour Farag and commissioned by the recently established Department of Rural Affairs [*maṣlaḥat al-šuʾūn al-qarawiyya*].[53] The new prototype for a farmer's

49. Ryzova, 2014.
50. "Memories of the Exhibition", *al-Muṣawwar*, February 20, 1949, p. 5. Malak Zaalouk argues "the nationalistic movement born out of the 1919 Revolution and the [Talaat] Harb experience later constituted a very real pressure upon the government to Egyptianize economic institutions", Zaalouk, 1989, p. 18.
51. The Civilization Museum was envisioned in 1939 as a permanent museum located on the exhibition grounds to educate both local and international visitors about the history of Egyptian civilization from ancient times to the present day. Due to the complexity of the project and budgets, it was not completed until 1949.
52. Anonymous, "The Peasant Dream is Achieved in the Exhibition", *al-Muṣawwar*, February 25, 1949, p. 42.
53. The Department of Rural Affairs was replaced in 1950 by the Ministry of Rural and Municipal Affairs.

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Fig. 11. Cartoon published in *al-Muṣawwar* depicting the relationship of three different classes to the exhibition: 1. an Egyptian middle class family at the fair (right); 2. the urban poor left out (center); 3. the Egyptian businessmen who profited from the war economy and whose companies were exhibited as part of national modernity (left). Source: *al-Muṣawwar*, 25 February 1949, p. 6.



Fig. 12. Architectural model measuring 155 × 100 cm of the 16th Agricultural and Industrial Exhibit which took place in 1949. The statue of nationalist figure Saad Zaghloul erected in 1938 is at the bottom right of the image, from there to the left is Nile Valley Street with its pavilions representing Egyptian provinces. Source: *al-Muṣawwar*, 25 February 1949, p. 13.

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house presented a new concept for rural dwelling that would have lured visitors. The house was designed to regulate peasant domestic space in a standardized form. The design allowed for separate spaces for living and sleeping, and raising animals. The design also included a walled garden for raising poultry, and a separate bathroom as well as a source of clean drinking water. The exterior included a *maṣṭaba*, or raised platform for seating, located next to the entrance.[54] Modernizing the peasant house was presented as key to modernizing national economy.[55] Thus, the exhibition was more than a space for commerce; it was also a space for testing and presenting experiments for new forms of living and lifestyles that will shape the future of the nation.

The exhibitor's national aspiration for development was driven by the patronage of nationally owned and managed private wealth. This explains the emphasis on *qawmiyya*, or national, in reference to the organizers and the industries presented. The 1949 exhibition sheds light on the question of representation: how Cairo officials represented the provinces and how the national government and business elite based in Cairo sought to control not only provincial cities and their development, but also Cairo's economy and by extension the city's urbanization. The exhibition was a microcosm of the Egypt as imagined by the business elite for the consumption of the local bourgeoisie. The 1949 exhibition took place during a time of increased economic nationalism. Malak Zaalouk writes: "In 1948 the percentage of share and bond capital subscribed to by Egyptians had increased to 39 per cent of the total as opposed to nine per cent in 1933."[56] Yet this emergent national bourgeoisie was a minority with little economic and political power in the face of foreign interests, but the exhibit was one occasion where the purchasing power of this new class could be showcased along with the national industries on display. Other classes such as the urban and rural poor and the workers were largely unaccounted for in the representational spaces of the 1949 exhibit.

Exhibitions After 1952

Agricultural and Industrial exhibitions continued following the ousting of the monarchy. After 1952 the exhibitions were paired with the annual celebrations marking the so-called 1952 Revolution, taking place in 1953, 1954, and 1955. The 1956 exhibition was delayed and canceled due to the Tripartite Aggression. However, the exhibition returned in 1957 and was attended by half a million visitors. The 1958 exhibition, discussed below, was the largest and most visited to date. During this time the press continuously presented the exhibitions as evidence of the new regime's progressive efforts towards national development and economy. While the ideological driving force behind the exhibitions was nearly the same after 1952 as it was before it, Nasser-era exhibitions were presented as if they were uniquely revolutionary

54. The *maṣṭaba*, a built-in bench or raised platform for outdoor seating next to a house entrance, is a traditional feature of dwellings.
55. Gasper, 2009.
56. Zaalouk, 1989, p. 22.

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spaces of modernity unlinked from pre-1952 displays and exhibitions. It is difficult to understand post-1952 exhibition culture without studying the 1949 exhibition, above. Many of the approaches, designs and architectural gestures that formed the foundation of 1950s exhibitions were rooted in the *longue durée* of the history of exhibition since 1926 but more specifically the country's most important post-WWII defiant display of national modernity in 1949.

A notable shift in the ways in which exhibitions functioned in the post-1952 years was the way in which exhibition halls were built across the country utilizing the architectural parlance of the time, concrete late International style designs, to showcase national production. Rather than represent the provinces in the capital with caricatured pavilions, the provinces became sites for representing the nation. Within a decade after the 1949 exhibition, and under the rubric of a self-proclaiming revolutionary government, architecture built in the provinces by the state—acting as the country's singular urban developer—represented the Nasser regime to local audiences. Provincial cities were, in a sense, transformed into exhibitions of the revolutionary state's efforts to undo the uneven development of the past.[57] One of the ways the new regime made visible the state's developmental politics was to showcase local products, and install across the provinces museum displays of industry and progress. (Fig. 13) New markets and exhibition halls were built where nationally produced goods were displayed and sold. Furthermore, the Industrial and Agricultural exhibitions continued through to the 1960s and utilized similar techniques of representing the relationship between the national center, and the nationalized economy, to the provinces.

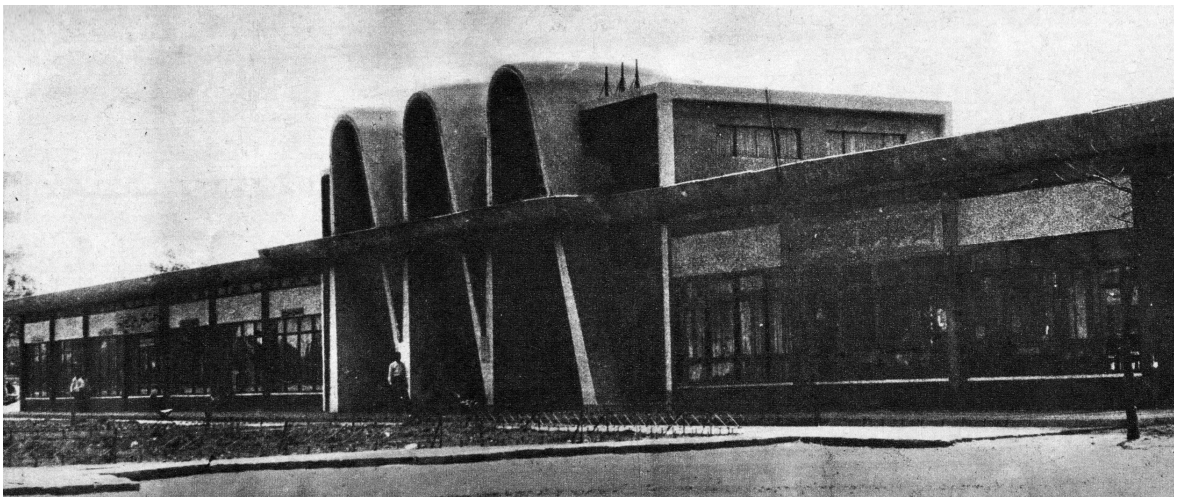


Fig. 13. An exhibition hall and market for the products of Gharbiyya province built along the Cairo-Alexandria road. Published in *al-Muṣawwar*, 12 March 1965.

57. See Frank, 1991 (first published 1966); Amin, 1976; and Wallerstein, 1974.

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Leaders of the 1952 coup d'État promised the Egyptian public, through speeches, publications and open letters in the press, to lead the country down a revolutionary path that will transform all aspects of life. However, many of the self-proclaiming revolutionary regime approaches to governance and industrialization continued monarchical era approaches. For example, similar to the 1949 display of the model peasant house, a similar concept was publicized in 1956 by the new regime as part of Egyptian-American cooperation for rural development.[58] Arabizing the word "modern" *al-Muṣawwar* proclaimed "The modern peasant in the happy village" [*al-fallāḥ al-mūdirn fī al-qarya al-saʿīda*].[59] The 1955 model house did not differ in concept or design from its 1949 counterpart. Stylistically the modern peasant village and the published images of its inhabitants share an uncanny resemblance with the Zionist kibbutzim, perhaps a result of the socialist inspiration to both nationalist projects of creating agricultural collective communities. It was implemented as part of the development program in Abis, 5 km outside Alexandria, where the central government selected and housed 84 families. The houses were part of a village without a mayor [*ʿumda*]. Instead, a village manager, a government trained employee specialized in agriculture and social development, ran the village. A doctor, a teacher and a farming consultant assisted the manager of the village. A similar model was implemented in 1957 in the al-Taḥrīr Province land reclamation project in partnership with Yugoslavia.[60] The model peasant house and village were ways for the new regime to lay its control over agricultural production.

Agricultural Industrial Exhibitions during the new era were spaces of education and entertainment as well as sites for the production of modern post-1952 subjects.[61] Modernizing agricultural production, and the display of the methods and results of such modernization in the context of exhibitions, were fundamental to the establishment of the new regime's legitimacy. However, in addition to developing agriculture and related industries, such as textiles, new industries were sponsored by the state that ranged from heavy industries such as steel and cement to other forms of production such as household items. Commerce, given a nationalist framework, was key to the production of national modernity after 1952. Nasser-era exhibitions were accessible to a larger segment of the population aiming to make middle class culture and consumption accessible to a greater number of urban dwellers. State-owned companies making household items for the modern Egyptian dwelling such as radios, television sets and refrigerators displayed their goods. Demonstrations were held at the exhibitions to showcase the products and to convince Egyptians to purchase them to support the national economy but also to become members of modern society.

In addition to displays of national industry, Cairo during the Nasser years was also a site for competing international displays of industrial production as Egypt was at the center of the Cold War. Nine foreign exhibitions were held in Gezira between 1952 and 1958. The United States,

58. Alterman, 2002, p. 93; and Alterman, 1998.
59. "al-Fallāḥ al-mūdirn fī al-qarya al-saʿīda", *al-Muṣawwar*, March 21, 1956, pp. 16–17.
60. El Shakry, 2006.
61. Bier, 2011.

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Germany and the USSR among other countries created exhibitions to showcase their industries, designs, and products. Germany's approach to Egypt in this period is a primary example: "After separate German states were founded in 1949, East and West Germany were locked into a Cold War battle for global allies, particularly among non-aligned states. One of the foremost among these prospective allies was Egypt, first under President Mohammed Naguib and then Gamal Abdel Nasser".[62] In the 1960s, *Mağallat al-Muhandisīn*, the magazine issued by the Engineering Syndicate, featured advertising by East German companies. One ad on the back cover of the June/July 1966 issue for a lighting company announced in Arabic "We Await You at the Leipzig Exhibition". Industrial trade exhibitions were a global phenomenon central to building political alliances.

In 1954 and 1957 East Germany staged two successful industrial exhibitions in Cairo. Such exhibitions provided on Egyptian soil an international context for Egypt's own efforts to exhibit its industries. The 1954 GDR exhibition, inaugurated by President Mohamed Naguib, drew thousands of visitors in its three-week duration: "220,000 mostly Egyptian visitors, including the brother of the Saudi Arabian king, buyers, industrialists, ministry officials, members of the army, students, and 'many women'".[63] "Bauhaus-trained architect, Selman Selmanagic, a Yugoslavian-born professor" who spent years in the Middle East, including Egypt, studying architecture from 1933 to 1939, designed the exhibit. Selmanagic's design for the central hall of the GDR exhibition, named 'Palais d'Orient' combined his modernist functional aesthetic with "oriental elements such as ornate archways and capitals on columns. To soften the otherwise boxy structure, coarse cotton cloth hung on the walls and gauzy fabric in the German flag colors, black, red, and gold, was draped from the ceiling to the exterior balustrade borrowing a motif from a Bedouin tent".[64] Such approaches, combining modernist functional design with "local" even oriental motifs were already seen in Egypt's national exhibitions, such as the 1949 display as discussed above.

In 1957 West Germany staged a rival exhibition to challenge East Germany's presentation of its products and political culture. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) displays were set up in the exhibition grounds on Gezira Island just months after the Soviet Union completed its own industrial exhibition at the same location. In this case architect Horst Dohnert, who utilized a "sober and modern architectural line fitting to the exhibition of industrial goods", designed the exhibition hall.[65] A published photograph of the exhibition hall shows a plain rectangular façade only ornamented with the words in Arabic and English for "Federal Republic of Germany". Immediately after the FRG exhibition, the GDR returned for a second exhibition. The architecture was relatively modest with the focus less on architectural symbolism and more on the content of exhibitions and displays. In this case architecture occupied a secondary position within the wider visual and spatial structure of these East and West German exhibitions.

62. Pence, 2011, p. 70.
63. Pence, 2011, p. 77.
64. Pence, 2011, p. 77.
65. Pence, 2011, p. 89.

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The main attractions were displays of industry, technology and the cultural programing provided by the two competing states, each aiming to convince the Egyptian public that life is better in the GDR or the FRG, respectively.

A Monumental Return in 1958

In 1958 Egypt presented a major Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition in the usual location on Gezira Island. Spreading over 25 acres with the participation of over 400 companies, 16 ministries and various associations, the exhibition, attended by nearly two million visitors, was the largest in the country's history.[66] The exhibition was a national spectacle unlike anything presented by the state to the public before. It included museum displays and models celebrating grand projects undertaken by the regime, such as the High Dam. Bank Misr built a grand hall fronted by a monumental gate composed of nine 18-meter tall arches. Inside, visitors found the products of the bank's companies, such as silk products, textiles and household electronics such as refrigerators and radios. The national radio also put on a show with an entire recording studio reconstructed on the site for visitors to watch live recordings as they happened. In another corner of the exhibition grounds, a colossal statue, by sculptor Fathi Mahmoud, represented Egypt's progress. While the exhibition was the largest of its kind, it can only be understood as a larger than life version combining elements of all the previous displays since the inception of the first national exhibition in 1926. A writer for *al-Ahrām Magazine* introduced the new and expanded exhibition to readers:[67]

> Let us visit the larger exhibition to take place on Gezira in 70 years, it only cost a quarter million pounds to build, but do not think of the old exhibitions, remove their images from your mind. Many new buildings were erected and many old ones removed, everything in the exhibition has changed.

While the products changed and the architectures transformed to match current trends, the basic pillars of the exhibitions culminating in 1958 were consistent. That is, during thirty years of exhibition making, aesthetics and formal expressions changed but the basic mission of the exhibition as a national event creating an image of progress and prosperity, remained unchanged.

One of the notable new buildings was the exhibition gate, built by the office of Harawi, a construction contractor that specialized in building exhibitions. (Fig. 14) It was a prominent feature that appeared extensively in the press coverage of the event.[68] The gate was an imposing modernist structure that marked the entrance to the exhibition grounds. The façade of the concrete acute arch-shaped structure was filled with a dazzling rectangular geometric pattern, a feature consistent with popular 1950s international design. Superimposed onto the façade

66. "25 Exhibitions Held at Gezira Island Until Today", *al-Ahrām Magazine*, December 1958, p. 13.
67. Ahmed, "How to View the Exhibition", 1958, p. 8.
68. Cover photo, *al-Muṣawwar*, 19 December, 1958.

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Fig. 14. Advertising by the construction company that implemented the gate of the 1958 National Exhibition. Source: *al-Muṣawwar*, 19 December 1958, p. 8.

was the eagle, emblem of the republic. A thin horizontal plane supported by pilotis intersected the lower part of the gate. Functioning like a theater marquis, the thin plane carried the letters that spelled out the official title of the event, "Market/Exhibition of Industrial and Agricultural Production". Inside the grounds, two main buildings housed the exhibitions; a bridge supported by a series of arches connected the two halls named the Palace of Peace and the Palace of Arab Unity. *Mağallat al- Muhandisīn* reported that the exhibition's architecture resulted from the competitive edge between artists and architects, resulting in iconic structures that will be "a source of pride for the people of the United Arab Republic".[69] The overall formalistic presentation of the 1958 exhibit reflected the spirit of the time, it was a popular contemporary international style made national with the placement of state symbols and flags.

Despite published lofty statements regarding the architecture of the exhibition, the seemingly iconic gate stirred controversy. The same issue of *Mağallat al-Muhandisīn* from January 1959 also included a comparison between Cairo's exhibition gate and the gate of the Grand Palais at the Brussels Expo only months earlier. The writer of the article, identified only with the initials N.M., recalls his amazement at the architectural similarity between the two structures. In order to confirm the similarity, the author cites a published image of the Brussels building in the 29 May 1958 issue of the British publication *Architects Journal*. The difference between the Egyptian and the Belgian gates is merely the angle of the arch: Cairo's arch is

69. Anonymous, "A Glance at the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition", 1959, p. 85.

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more acute. A published photo taken by architect Ali Labib Gabr, who visited the Brussels exhibition, confirms the uncanny resemblance. Do national and international exhibitions serve as venues for not only the trade and exchange of goods and industries but also architectural designs and ideas? This instance of architectural plagiarism sheds light on how by the 1950s architectural representations of the national and the international merged into a synonymous idiom. The same structure can represent international modernity when placed at a world's fair, while serving to indicate national progress when placed at a national exhibition.[70]

Architects Sayed Karim and Ali Noureddin Nassar opined on the questions "Is it permissible for an architect to copy the work of another? And is it suitable for the gate of an international exhibition to be mimicked for another exhibition?"[71] Both architects criticized Cairo's exhibition gate design as "borrowed" and unoriginal. Nassar argued, "gates designed for national and international exhibitions are seen by all visitors, exhibition gates are the markers of these events, therefore they must not be copied from other recent exhibitions". Sayed Karim affirmed this message by saying: "Repetition kills style, if we copy the same building several times within a month or two, its style becomes dead". The controversy over the exhibition gate is telling of several issues, on the one hand exhibitions had become a prominent part of public life and the architectural profession. On the other hand, architects paid close attention to how their counterparts in other national contexts represented national progress and industry. Finally, architects, such as Karim and Nassar, were critical of the designs built by contractors such as Harawi, who, in their opinion, at best mimicked architecture from elsewhere and lacked innovation. The exhibition ground was thus not only a terrain for the display of national modernity but also a contentious stage for the display of architectural knowhow and expertise.

Returning to the International Stage

In 1958, only months before Egypt held its Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition, the country also participated at the Brussels Expo. The expo was the first major event of its kind since the end of the Second World War. Similarly to the 1939 Fair in New York, Brussels '58 was about the future and progress. It was also about the same old 19th century notions upon which trade exhibitions are founded. However, this time in a post-war world fraught with political tensions international exhibitions attracted serious criticism. Italian critic Bruno Zevi said, "the exhibition grounds at Brussels—organized in the name of progress—only materialized irrational Cold War anxieties".[72] In this context, Egypt's political orientation, pointing the compass towards Pan Arabism and the country's unification with Syria, was architecturally manifested in the Brussels Expo.

70. Crinson, 2012, p. 115.
71. Karim, Nassar, "The Gate of the Industrial Exhibition", *Mağallat al-Muhandisīn* 15, 1, 1959, p. 88.
72. Crowley, 2012.

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The expo was criticized for its showy architecture with national pavilions competing for attention "with the most crass propaganda".[73] The most iconic building in the exhibition was the Atomium, a one hundred meter tall steel structure composed of several habitable spheres containing exhibition spaces connected by tubes supporting stairs and escalators. While the futurist aspect of the 1958 fair was prominent, the architecturally modest Egyptian participation was evidently grounded in the present and situated within Egypt's regional politics. Its architecture utilized the same language of pavilions of countries in a wide spectrum of locations with a variety of political orders. The rectilinear volume of the pavilion building appeared similar, even redundant, to others such as the Czechoslovak pavilion. The identity of the architect of the Egyptian/Arab pavilion in Brussels is not confirmed but it is highly plausible to be Sayed Karim who enjoyed good relations with the Egyptian state during this particular time period. An unpublished photograph of the pavilion's interior was found in Karim's personal papers. The year of the Brussels exhibition was marked by significant political transformations in the Middle East: the founding of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria, as well as the 14 July coup d'État in Iraq which overthrew the Hashemite monarchy. These major political shifts and the formations of new alliances across the region along with the prevalence of the discourse of Pan Arabism were manifested in the 1958 World's Fair in the form of a unified pavilion for Arab states. Thus, Egypt's deployment of international style architecture for pavilions and exhibitions was fitting in Brussels as the pavilion represented several Arab states.

The shared pavilion for Arab states included the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria), exhibited on the first floor, in addition to Jordan and Iraq, exhibited on the second floor. (Fig. 15) The international style hall was designed with a central atrium with stairs on either ends which led up to the exhibition wings for the "province of Egypt" and the "province of Syria". The ground floor was maintained open with a water feature in the center of the atrium space. Tapered columns lifted the exhibition spaces above. The exterior was encased in glass. The architecture of the Arab pavilion in Brussels extrapolated the already prevalent use of international style modernist design by individual national regimes, such as in Egypt, to a regional level. Decorative features and folkloric references were nearly eliminated from the architecture and replaced by unifying structural articulations, straight lines, white walls and floating stairs. Pan Arabism, as represented in 1958, fully embraced the architecture of internationalism.[74]

By 1964 Egypt's foreign policy expanded well beyond the goal of Pan Arabism towards Third Worldism as it played a key role in the Non-Aligned Movement. The 1964 New York World's Fair included nearly no European government-sponsored pavilions, Spain was an exception, but it was a site for national display by a wide variety of developing and recently independent nations such as India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Morocco, Sudan

73. Zevi, 1958, p. 4.
74. Shortly after the 1958 Expo, the United Arab Republic disintegrated, although Egypt maintained the name UAR until 1971.

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Fig. 15. Pan-Arab Exhibition in the 1958 Brussels Expo.
Source: Sayed Karim Collection, Rare books and special collections, AUC's Library.

and Egypt.[75] The fair was also a site of controversy in relation to the Middle East. It included the American-Israel pavilion, a follow up to the Jewish Palestine pavilion in the New York fair of 1939.[76] Despite Egypt's political position vis-à-vis the United States in the Cold War and Israel, the country participated at the 1964 World's Fair with a pavilion and exhibition that can be considered an exercise of soft power. The fair, after all, was an opportunity for visibility, education, and propaganda. The International style already adopted for the 1958 Expo was maintained in 1964 with the return of historic and folkloric elements to complement the modernist exterior and nationalist symbolism. The resulting pavilion was designed to represent a modern nation with an ancient history.[77] (Fig. 16)

Egypt's pavilion was a collaboration between Thomas DiCarlo, a New York based architect, and Ismail Nazif who was the director of the General Organization for International Exhibitions and Fairs in Cairo.[78] The architecture of other pavilions from the Middle East

75. Findling, Pelle, 1990, pp. 322–328.
76. Katz, 2003.
77. New York World's Fair, 1939.
78. Groundbreaking and Dedication Booklet, 1964.

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Fig. 16. The pavilion of the United Arab Republic at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Photograph by Bill Cotter.

such as Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan incorporated references to traditional architectural elements in more apparent ways. Lebanon's pavilion consisted of a volumetric design reminiscent of an old Arab town. Morocco's pavilion incorporated recognizable decorative elements and patterns drawn from the country's heritage of Islamic architecture. And Jordan's pavilion featured an undulating roof referencing the Bedouin tent and desert dunes. In contrast with the pavilions of other Arab countries, Egypt's was explicitly modernist in its appearance, as it contained no formal articulations of traditional architectural heritage. Yet, the building's modernism was not *avant-garde* by the standards of the 1960s; rather it was an accessible mid-century, middle class, "middling" modernism. Middling modernism, as Paul Rabinow explained, "shares the norms of industrialization, health, and sociality as well as the technological processes aimed at regulating social practices". It differs from "high" modernism "of genius *à la* Le Corbusier". Rabinow continues, "Middling modernisms' project was more

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audacious, seeking to create New Man, purified and liberated to pursue new forms of sociality that, it was believed, would inevitably arise from healthy spaces and forms". Architecturally this translates into a modernism that was universal and technocratic, which transforms high modernism into an administrative practice. I would also argue that middling architectural modernism by virtue of its efficiency and accessibility is an architecture that becomes part of the visual culture of the middle class particularly in contexts such as Egypt where the state and its architects utilize this architecture for projects that range from apartment houses to government buildings and social welfare projects.[79]

The pavilion's slightly curved horizontal façade featured a sculpture of the golden eagle with the tri-colors of the Egyptian flag in its center. The eagle of Saladin, the emblem of the republic, and the tri-colored flag were the symbols of the revolutionary Egyptian state.[80] Inside the sleek explicitly contemporary exterior were treasures of antiquity displayed alongside exhibits showcasing Egypt's industrialization and manufacturing as evidence of the country's progress and modernity. The pavilion's exterior was sleek in design with white surfaces interrupted by three imposing arches marking the entrance. By 1964, such arches had become familiar architectural features in Egyptian exhibition architecture. Visitors were not only welcomed to the pavilion by modern concrete but also by ancient statuary, three at the entrance corresponding with the three entrance arches. The exhibits in the pavilion included a museum with ancient objects representing the collections of the country's four major museums: Ancient Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic.

In addition to ancient history, the UAR was represented in New York with a display of various handicrafts as well as cultural exhibits and folklore. Egypt's national modernity was represented in an international setting by a mixture of ancient and popular arts, industrial and agricultural products all housed in a modernist structure. The official guide to the 1964 World's Fair points visitors to Egypt's "show of progress", which included "motion pictures, maps, models, and displays of products" that provide an overview of the country and its "agricultural and industrial achievements".[81] A section of the pavilion exhibited Egypt's largest construction project in its history, the High Dam. Another display showed the monuments of Nubia that were being saved by an international effort to dismantle and reassemble them on higher ground away from the waters of Lake Nasser.

79. Rabinow, 1989, and 1992, pp. 52–57.

80. The selection of an eagle as the symbol of a republic is not unique to Egypt. And the tri-colored flag was adopted by several recently independent states in the Middle East such as Yemen, Syria and Iraq. The Egyptian green monarchical flag with its crescent and three stars was replaced in 1953 with the Egyptian Revolution Flag with the tricolors superimposed by the eagle. The golden eagle was the emblem of the revolutionary state from 1953. The particular eagle adorning the façade of the Egyptian pavilion was a refashioned emblem adopted from 1958 until 1971. Presidential Decree 190/1958 specified the appearance of the eagle and its uses. *United Arab Republic*, 1962.

81. Time-Life, 1964, p. 163.

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Conclusion

In many ways the 1964 exhibition continued Egypt's representation in such events dating back nearly a century to the 1867 Exposition universelle in Paris. Egypt's modernity as displayed to an international audience was in fact about the modernity of the country's ruler, Khedive Ismail in 1867 and Nasser in 1964.[82] The 1964 Egyptian participation at the New York World's Fair was the second time that the Egyptian government commissioned such a display in that city where the previous time the focus was ultimately on presenting the new monarch, Farouk, as modernizer. The 1964 Fair took place amid the politics of the Cold War, while the 1939 Fair opened just months before the start of the Second World War. Both exhibitions were marked by perilous international politics, but they are also events that opened new windows onto understanding national politics of the participating countries.

Before and after Egypt's transition from monarchy to republic, financial and government elites displayed Egyptian modernity and economy within the prevalent format of national exhibitions and international pavilions in world's fairs. In this article I proposed a two-directional cross-cutting approach to understanding the legacy of Egypt's exhibitions. First, I considered change and continuity over time by studying exhibitions across a period interrupted by the supposed rupture of 1952. Second, I comparatively studied exhibitions across geographies to understand the relationship of Egyptian exhibitions staged for a local Egyptian audience versus those presented abroad during the same time. Egypt's participation in international exhibitions such as the 1939 and 1964 New York World's Fairs should not be studied in isolation from concurrent events held in Cairo. The proposal for the Egyptian participation at the 1939 New York World's Fair is a prime example of how the Egyptian state extended its ambitions of utilizing architecture and technologies of display for the purpose of projecting a certain image of Egyptian culture, politics and economy.

Egyptian exhibitions and pavilions at home and abroad from 1926 until 1964 shared three consistent features: first, the visibility of the country's rich cultural heritage was put on display in an effort to assert a modern identity built on ancient history while also attracting potential tourism both international and local; second, the emphasis on industry, progress and an explicit expression of modernism in the architecture of the exhibition halls and pavilions; third, the prominence of the symbols of the state, including the head of state whether the king and the royal family, on one hand, or President Gamal Abdel Nasser and his ministers, on the other. Average Egyptians figured little in national and international displays of Egyptian modernity.

The discussed exhibitions and pavilions built between the rise of nationalist politics in 1919 and the demise of such politics in 1967 served similar functions. That period, punctuated by the coup d'État/revolution of 1952, witnessed consecutive state officials utilizing exhibitions as spaces for presenting a singular top-down vision of Egyptian modernity. In this context architecture occupied the place of spectacle, not merely as a practical container of markets and showrooms but rather as an active agent in stimulating national sentiments and as evidence of

82. Mitchell, 1988, p. 17.

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the state's active modernization efforts. From 1926 there was a clear direction that embraced architectural modernism as visual and spatial representation of Egypt in the context of national and international exhibitions.

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