

Legends and reality in Morocco

When *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* was preparing this number dedicated to contemporary architecture in Morocco, there were two types of reactions. Some key players on the Moroccan architectural scene expressed satisfaction hinged with impatience: "At last!" Other architects and observers from abroad, were surprised: "Why Morocco?" Because, in 2014, the Venice Architecture Biennale welcomed a pavilion in the effigy of the Cherifian Kingdom, whose aim was to demonstrate its vibrant architectural production. By examining the historical typologies illustrating the urban fabrics ability to adapt – from the medina to social housing of the 1980s – with prospective projects exploring the potential of the desert, this pavilion echoes a major book that inspired a generation hoping to relocate Morocco on the architectural creativity map. In 1998, Monique Eleb and Jean-Louis Cohen published the fruit of nine years of true detective work. *Casablanca, Mythes et figures d'une aventure urbaine* (Hazan) confirmed the theory that Morocco, and especially its economic capital, were a real architectural and urban testing ground during the 20th century. This metabolizing laboratory of the modern project ended with the implementation of an ordered post-modernism supported by the speech by King Hassan II, on 14 January 1986, which urged urban planners, engineers and architects to return to typically Moroccan architecture. A "Moroccanisation" movement that continued until the political and economic opening of the country at the end of the 1990s. What happened afterwards? What is the architectural trajectory of Morocco in the 21st century? *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* wished to explore this territory through the following questions: without seeking to measure this architectural production in terms of the effervescence of the 20th century, what creativity does it represent? What about architecture beyond a reinterpretation of the moucharaby? The question of identity is probably multiple, in Morocco as it is elsewhere, but is worth asking to reveal specific issues. Although legends persist, new realities emerge.

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