

“The awkward reality...

Great architecture not only features but relies on
cultural appropriation.” (Harper,2018)

Can ethical frameworks guide cultural borrowing
in global Interior Architecture?

Statement of Own Work

This dissertation is protected by copyright. It is not to be copied for any purpose other than personal academic study without permission of the author.

This study was completed as part of the BA(Hons) Interior Architecture Degree at the University of the West of England. The work is my own. Where the work of others is used or drawn on, it is attributed to the relevant source.

As a way to bring my research to life, I used Grammarly (AI) tool to craft a poem for the end of my research, providing it with this command: "Write a short poem: using my dissertation chapters, that captures its most strong elements, conveying a story"



Signed: Maria Lanza Valenciano

6th January 2026
Final Word Count: 5139



Fig 2: Through Trails by J.Mulder (Mulder,2025)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ann de Graft-Johnson, for her ongoing support throughout my research and for sharing her valuable knowledge, which continually challenged my thinking and inspired new ideas.

And for the resources provided by The Architectural Review, which introduced me to new perspectives and ideas that expanded my thinking, as well as for The Architecture Student's Handbook, for guiding me with the structure and advice during the writing process.

Contents

04

Introduction

06

Methodology

07

Chapter One

08 Tracing the Ethics of Cultural Borrowing in Global Interior Architecture

10 When Majority Benefits: Utilitarianism in Design

11 From Extraction to Engagement: Relational Ethics

14 Guatemalan Brocade - Weaver Survey 2025

16 Post-colonial Perspectives: Architectural Appropriation

Chapter Two

18 Preserving the Past: Ethical Borrowing and Cultural Continuity

20 Cowan Court: A Dialogue Between Past and Present

22 Hassan Fathy: Contextual Architecture in New Gourn

Chapter Three

28 Learning from Place: Vernacular Architecture as a Design Approach

30 Zoma Museum: Vernacular Architecture in Practice

32 Materials & Techniques in Zoma Museum

34 Rethinking the Vernacular: A Critical Perspective

Conclusion

39

References

40

List Of Figures

44

Poem

48

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore how ethical frameworks, much like a moral compass, can guide cultural borrowing within global Interior Architecture, addressing the tension between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation. Situated within contemporary debates on ethics and representation in design, the research explores how architects can engage with culturally specific contexts in ways that are respectful, collaborative, and socially responsible.

The study aims to investigate how ethical thinking, through the lenses of utilitarianism, relational ethics, and post-colonial theory, can guide responsible cultural exchange in interior architecture. It questions how designers might honour cultural origins, preserve heritage, and support communities while still enabling innovation. Using a qualitative, theory-led methodology, the research analyses academic literature alongside case studies including A Rum Fellow, Cowan Court at Churchill College, Hassan Fathy's New Gourn, and the ZOMA Museum in Ethiopia.

The findings propose that ethical architectural practice emerges through relationships: between designer and community, past and present, material and meaning. By positioning architecture as a culturally embedded and socially responsive practice, this research suggests that, when guided by ethical frameworks, it can move beyond appropriation and move towards forms of design that uphold cultural identity, empower communities, and encourage responsible global architectural practices.

Introduction

Architecture does not emerge in isolation...

It is shaped by cultures and histories, embedding social values. As our world becomes more connected, interior architecture often draws from various cultural traditions, raising questions about ethical responsibility. Cultural exchange has always played an important role in architecture, but where appreciation ends and appropriation begins remains a subject of debate.

This dissertation explores whether ethical frameworks can guide cultural borrowing in global interior architecture, drawing on post-colonial theory and ethical philosophy, including relational ethics and utilitarianism. Allowing me to analyse how architectural practice can navigate cultural borrowing.

It looks at key case studies that interact with different global cultures and histories, including A Rum Fellow, Cowan Court, New Gourna, and the Zoma Museum. Illustrating both ethical successes and failures, highlighting how design choices can either honour or take advantage of cultural knowledge. Whilst also exploring the relationship between designers, communities, materials, and place, considering how being ethical can help architecture support and celebrate diverse cultures.

Existing scholarship on cultural appropriation in architecture is limited, particularly within interior architecture. Authors such as Annadorai and Joshi, and Fouzdar highlight how design practices can exploit cultural knowledge when driven by economic or aesthetic motives. Conversely, Rui & Firzan and Kararmaz & Serter state that cultural exchange, when grounded in respect and collaboration, can generate meaningful social value.

These opinions form a foundation for the research, which aims to address a gap in the literature by examining the ethical implications of cultural borrowing in a field where the spatial and material intimacy of design heightens the stakes of appropriation. This evaluation offers insight into ethical and socially responsible design practice.

By focusing on ethics, accountability, and context, this dissertation argues that interior architecture can engage in global cultural exchange without causing harm or erasing cultural identity. Ethical frameworks provide designers with practical ways to respect cultural heritage, work responsibly with communities, and create designs that are both thoughtful and innovative.

Fig 3: Line drawings reflecting self-identity prior research (Lanza Valenciano, 2026)



Methodology

The data collected for this dissertation relies primarily on secondary sources, textbooks, electronic journals and articles, and other internet sources. Comparative case study analysis allows for the identification of patterns of ethical success and failure, while critical engagement with literature provides depth to the discussion. A synthesis of existing knowledge through post-colonial and ethical lenses offers a framework to guide responsible design. “As we look to the future, it’s clear that the intersection of architecture and culture will continue to play a vital role in shaping our world...” (Akhanolu and Ahianba, 2025). Akhanolu and Ahianba underscore the importance of “thoughtful design and cultural awareness” They believe that by using these values, we can build a more “compassionate, sustainable, and vibrant world” (Akhanolu and Ahianba, 2025).



Tracing the Ethics of Cultural Borrowing in Global Interior Architecture

Every space we inhabit holds a quiet story, etched into its walls and whispered through its materials, a testament to the cultures, memories, and identities that shape it.

“Cultural appropriation—the misuse of minority cultural elements without understanding their origins—erodes traditional knowledge, impacts identities, and harms communities economically.” (Annadorai and Joshi, 2025). A delicate boundary lies between appropriation and appreciation. “Appreciation involves understanding, crediting, and uplifting cultural sources, often through collaboration or acknowledgment.” (Laverdiere, 2025).

“Architecture is an art form that reflects cultural, historical, and societal influences, shaping the built environment in unique and distinctive ways” (Al Braifkani and Günçe, 2025). Interwoven cultural narratives are increasingly shaping the twenty-first-century interior architecture landscape. According to the Research Trends Journal article “Cultural Values and Traditions on Interior Design Practices,” Interior Design is fundamentally rooted in the cultural values and traditions of the societies that cultivate it. (Mishra, Gowda & Bhuvan, 2024).

However, these culturally grounded practices are now unfolding within a globalised context. Rashdan and Ashour state that globalisation has significantly influenced visual culture and design, warning that “As societies become more interconnected, the distinctiveness of local cultural identities faces increasing threats from the homogenizing effects of global economic and social processes” (Rashdan & Ashour, 2024). Mishra et al further highlight that urban environments, in particular, have become sites where diverse cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices converge, resulting in interior spaces shaped by layered and intersecting cultural influences. (Mishra, Gowda & Bhuvan, 2024).

The challenge for Interior Architects lies in distinguishing **ethical exchange** from aesthetic appropriation. As Annadorai and Joshi argue, “the ethical dimension of design depends on the relationships and intentions that frame cultural borrowing” (Annadorai and Joshi, 2025), suggesting that respectful collaboration can transform appropriation into an act of cultural solidarity rather than extraction.

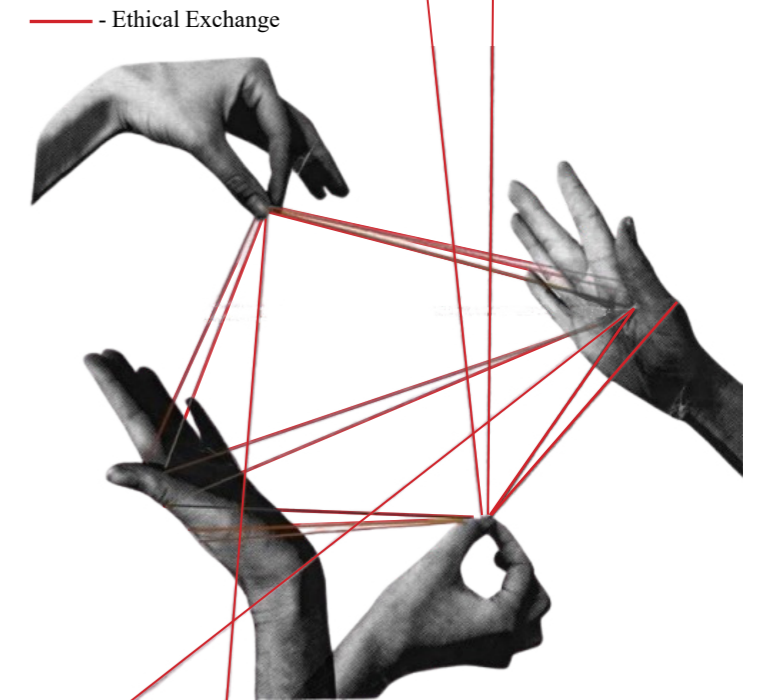


Fig 4: Connections Aesthetic by S.Telbukh (Telbukh, 2025)

When Majority Benefits: Utilitarianism in Design.

The greatest good for the greatest number. Utilitarian ethics, grounded in the work of Jeremy Bentham (2012) and further developed by John Stuart Mill (2012), evaluates the morality of actions according to their consequences. Within Interior Architecture, Utilitarian reasoning can be used to justify cultural borrowing when the integration of design elements “evoke a sense of rootedness, memories and feelings,” (Rui and Firzan, 2025). Rui and Firzan emphasise that the fusion of multiple cultural traditions instils living spaces with the richness of history, tradition and emotion. (Rui and Firzan, 2025). Highlighting the potential for culturally informed design to generate measurable social and emotional benefits.

However, when cultural elements are employed primarily for economic gain, the ethical landscape shifts. Appeals to “economic opportunity” as a moral justification can be problematic. “In design, the ethical challenges arise when elements with deep cultural or spiritual significance are used superficially, often for profit... without understanding their roots” (Annadorai and Joshi, 2025). There are crafts being mass-produced without compensating artisans.



Fig 5: They took faces...by R. Dodson (Dodson, 2020)

Annadorai and Joshi note that “the demand for cheaper, faster production” drives industrial reproductions “that exploit artisans, perpetuating economic inequality” (Annadorai and Joshi, 2025).

By prioritising consumer appeal over cultural integrity, utilitarian reasoning can favour the majority while harming minority communities. As Williams notes, “a social choice... indifferent to issues of justice or equity...” faces fewer concerns than one that considers them. (Smart and Williams, 1974), showing how utilitarian logic often overlooks fairness. Similarly, a society inclined toward utilitarian personal morality is “very likely to favour utilitarian decision[s] by government” (Smart and Williams, 1974), highlighting how utilitarian reasoning subtly reinforces unequal outcomes.

From Extraction to Engagement: Relational Ethics

“From Dots and Lines to Connections” (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025)

Relational thinking, they state, is “inherently intertwined with the discipline of architecture,” yet remains under-examined within architectural discourse despite its growing relevance (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025).

Kararmaz and Serter argue that architecture is fundamentally concerned with relationships between design intentions, “the networks of actors involved”, and the building’s life cycle, positioning the discipline as one that can “understand, create, and transform relationships” (2025). Through this lens, relational thinking frames architecture as an ongoing interplay of social, cultural, and environmental forces that evolve. (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025).

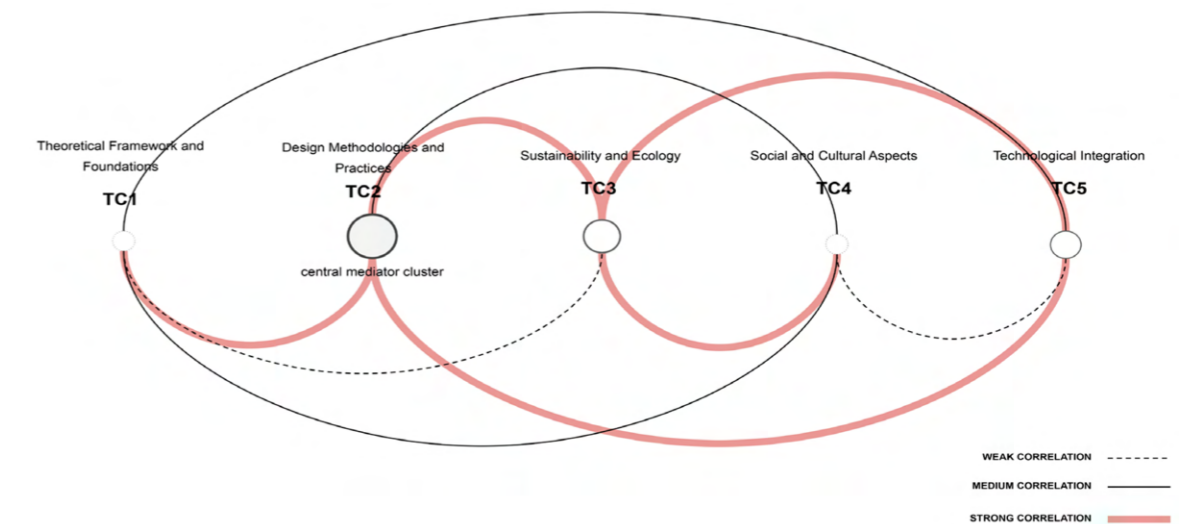
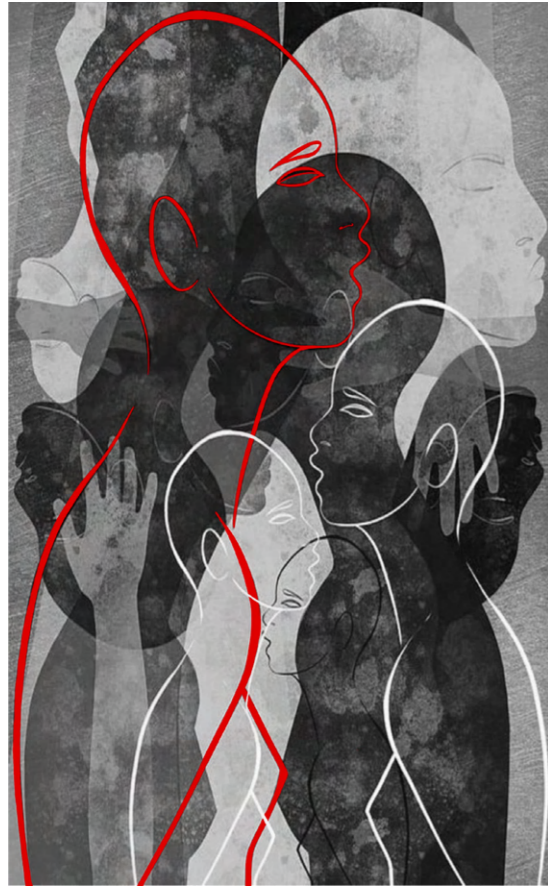


Fig 6: Correlation of relational thinking clusters in architectural discourse (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025)

Figure 5 demonstrates this relational condition by mapping the interplay between the five thematic clusters, revealing a “multi-dimensional framework” in which architecture emerges not from linear reasoning or singular authorship, but through “an evolving negotiation across systems, contexts, and actors” (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025). While the clusters TC1 through TC5 are described as “individually significant,” their value lies in their capacity to “operate synergistically across ontological, methodological, technological, ecological, and socio-political terrains”, reinforcing architecture’s role as a relational and evolving practice. (Kararmaz and Serter, 2025).

Fig 7: Fostering Community Engagement by E. Robinson (Robinson, 2018)



“Architecture is closely related to the communities it serves.” (Fouzdar, 2023). Fouzdar highlights that ethical architects ground their work in an understanding of community needs and concerns, and they are dedicated to the commitment of preserving and respecting cultural heritage. (Fouzdar, 2023).

Fouzdar emphasises the importance of including community stakeholders in the architectural design process, resulting in better-suited designs whilst encouraging a sense of ownership amongst locals. (Fouzdar, 2023). A practice clearly exemplified by the work of Dylan O’Shea and Caroline Lindsell, co-founders of ‘A Rum Fellow’.

Nicholls highlights co-founder Dylan O’Shea’s direct collaboration with Indigenous communities in South America. In the article, O’Shea reveals they were “sensitive about cultural appropriation from the beginning and always tried to pay homage and respect to the original artisans and culture.” (Nicholls, 2018).

Throughout the process of creating their own fabric line, they “didn’t just buy things in a market and... send them to India to be made by someone else”; they “were inspired by the country, wanted to learn about the process, meet the people and work with them to make the collection”.

Nicholls believes that this process will bring benefits to the community, providing financial independence as well as preserving traditional skills (Nicholls, 2018). This collaborative approach mirrors Fouzdar’s assertion that ethical design must be rooted in understanding and engaging the communities it serves (Fouzdar, 2023).



Fig 8: Maya Women by G. Cifuentes (Cifuentes, 2025a)

Guatemalan Brocade Weaver Survey 2025

The 2025 Brocade Weavers Survey, conducted by A Rum Fellow with its Maya weaving partners, found that artisans reported a significant increase in income, enhanced social standing within their communities, and improved personal and family well-being since engaging in the collaboration. (A Rum Fellow, 2025).

17 members of the weaving team responded to the survey shown in Figures 8 and 9, with several sharing statements about their lives after working with A Rum Fellow:

“We can now [fulfil] our basic necessities, for which I am grateful. It has helped me personally in my education, to climb professionally, and to dream of a better future”

“Since working with A [on] this collaboration. RumFellow, now I am a respected part of the community authorities, where I attend meetings where we work on local improvements”

“Before my job with A Rum Fellow only my husband made decisions, but now we share the decisions because I contribute economically”



Fig 9: Maya Women by G. Cifuentes (Cifuentes, 2025b)

Brocade Weaver Survey Results

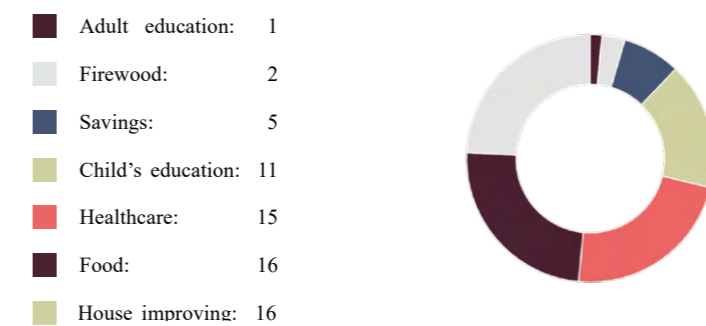


Fig 10: Income Increase % Since Working with A Rum Fellow (A Rum Fellow, 2025a)

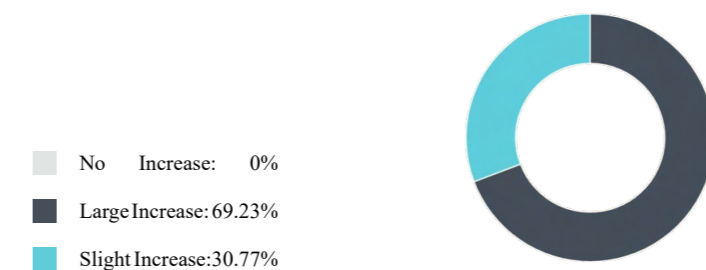


Fig 11: Expenditure Types Based on Increased Income (A Rum Fellow, 2025b)

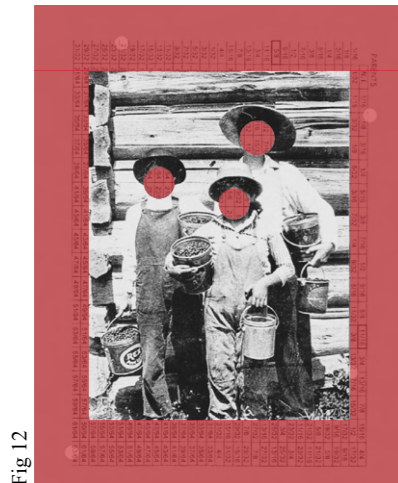


Fig 12

Postcolonial Perspectives on Architectural Appropriation

Colonial legacies shape the spaces we inhabit. As Christiansen explains, Post-colonial theory examines the enduring impacts of colonialism and the complex power dynamics that arise during and after it. (Christiansen, 2021). “Post-colonialism has had a profound impact on architectural design.” (Evans, 2023).

“The colonial period ... often led to the imposition of Western architectural styles on colonised societies.” (Evans, 2023). Evans further notes that local architectural traditions were erased, disconnecting ‘the built environment’ from its social and cultural contexts. (Evans, 2023). In architecture, post-colonial theory critiques how Western designers, including Ben Pentreath, frequently draw from non-Western cultures, a practice associated with cultural appropriation. As Nicholls reports, Pentreath himself downplays the significance of cultural origins, stating, “As far as interior designer Ben Pentreath is concerned, there are bigger battles to be fought.” (Nicholls, 2018).

In this article, Pentreath expresses fatigue with the contemporary emphasis on hyper-authenticity, claiming that “‘Sometimes a product could just as easily be made in a factory... I’m not too worried about where a dhurrie is made if I like the colour,’ He says.” (Nicholls, 2018). His stance highlights the tension between personal preference and ethical responsibility, demonstrating why post-colonial critique matters.

Furthermore, Evans stresses that post-colonialism redirects architects towards designing with the ‘cultural and environmental resources of the communities’ they serve. By emphasising context and locality, he argues that architecture should be grounded in local knowledge and lived experience, ensuring that designs respond to communities rather than being imposed upon them. (Evans, 2023).

Fig 12: Blood-Quantum Laws Are Splintering My Tribe by J. Imperio (Imperio, 2023)



Fig 13: Guatemala Trip by A Rum Fellow (A Rum Fellow, 2025c)

This approach underscores the collaborative work of O’Shea and Lindsell, who provide a practical model for ethical, community-centred design that recognises and values local knowledge and cultural resources. By integrating these principles, A Rum Fellow demonstrates how design practices can be both socially responsible and culturally enriching, rather than imposing styles that turn rich traditions into mere decorative trends. After establishing the ethical frameworks that influence debates around cultural borrowing, the following chapter explores how these principles operate in practice through architectural preservation and the maintenance of historical continuity.

Preserving the Past: Ethical Borrowing and Cultural Continuity

Building on the ethical frameworks outlined in Chapter One, this chapter explores how preservation and historical continuity function as ethical responses to cultural borrowing in architecture. Renowned architecture frequently incorporates borrowed cultural forms, raising ethical questions about attribution and recognition. “We’re not just relaxed about cultural appropriation, we’re experts” (Harper, 2018).

As Harper notes, “While most art practices are tightening the boundaries of who is entitled to create what, the best architects remain committed to skilfully mixing motifs, materials and typologies across cultural thresholds” (Harper, 2018). Yet such creative freedom raises an ethical dilemma, as Fouzdar asserts, that while borrowing itself can enrich design, ethical responsibility demands transparency and acknowledgement (Fouzdar, 2023). The issue is not borrowing itself, but whether credit, legacy, and cultural recognition remain with the original creators.

Architecture not only mediates aesthetics but also shapes cultural identity. As Ozen states, “architecture tells the story of who we are and where we come from... a reflection of our values, traditions, and aspirations.” (Ozen, 2025). When cultural references go uncredited, these narratives risk detachment from their origins, obscuring authorship and weakening the visibility of the communities that produced them.

Architecture, therefore, functions “as a medium for expressing and preserving cultural identity, illustrating its role in shaping our environments and the narratives we share.” (Ozen, 2025). Ethical architecture preserves the past, turning inspiration into a bridge across generations. Adelin highlights the importance of the connection between architecture and culture; without awareness or understanding of cultural significance, appropriation can lead to the loss of heritage and the deterioration of community identity (Adelin, 2023).

“At its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.”

— William J. Murtagh

Cowan Court: A Dialogue Between Past and Present

Kothari emphasises that architects face a profound responsibility to preserve the past while shaping the future. She notes that “Modern architecture’s role in honoring heritage extends far beyond maintaining facades — it requires a deep understanding of design principles, spatial relationships, and the cultural contexts that shaped our built environment.” (Kothari, 2025).

Cowan Court, designed by 6a Architects at Churchill College, Cambridge, demonstrates how contemporary architecture can honour the past while engaging with the present. Rather than imitating the 1960s campus buildings by Sheppard Robson, described by the studio as “one of the finest examples of English Brutalism in the UK” (Griffiths, 2016), the project thoughtfully reinterprets their forms and materials while recognising the contributions of earlier architects and cultural histories.

This approach reflects the principles of cultural preservation outlined by Kothari: “Cultural preservation in architecture transcends mere restoration; it represents a nuanced dialogue between tradition and innovation, memory and progress” (Kothari, 2025).



Fig 14: Timber Façade and Drainage Element by J. Dehlin (Dehlin, 2023a)



Fig 15

Fig 15: Contemporary Façade Reinterpreting Brutalist Material Language by J. Dehlin (Dehlin, 2023b)

“Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations...”

— (UNESCO, 2019)

By retaining the materials of ‘layered brick, timber, and glass facades of the existing college buildings’, as well as developing a ‘contemporary interpretation of the original accommodation’ (Griffiths, 2016), such as the cloistered courtyards and communal quads, Cowan Court preserves architectural memory while adapting it for contemporary use. Openly acknowledging its precedents rather than obscuring them.



Fig 16: Courtyard Perspective by J. Dehlin (Dehlin, 2023c)



Fig 17: Enclosed Courtyard by J. Dehlin (Dehlin, 2023d)

Dehlin describes the form as familiar from traditional college layouts but thoughtfully reinforced by the architects to encourage circulation towards a social space at the centre (Dehlin, 2017). According to Phineas Harper, cloisters often associated with medieval monastic architecture in Cambridge are themselves adaptations of even older typologies, tracing their lineage to the Ancient Roman peristyle, which in turn was influenced by Greek architecture (Harper, 2018). “The relevance of this approach resonates globally through UNESCO World Heritage sites, which serve as testaments to humanity’s architectural achievements and laboratories for contemporary preservation practices.” (Kothari, 2025).

Hassan Fathy: Contextual Architecture in New Gournna

“Contextual design emerges as perhaps the most crucial methodology for respecting existing cultural landscapes.” (Kothari, 2025). Kothari explains that this approach requires architects to act as cultural anthropologists, studying not just the physical environment but the social, economic, and spiritual dimensions that shaped it. (Kothari, 2025). In practice, Hassan Fathy embodied this framework: “Fathy rejected European ideas of modernism, arguing that Egypt could draw on its own regional histories to develop a national aesthetic.” (Gardini, 2023).

During his work on the Egyptian village of Gournna, Professor Fathy “lived among the villagers of Gournna, trying to advise and organise the latent architectural and artistic forces existing among the villagers...” (Fathy, 1960). Kothari believes Fathy “understood that preserving culture means preserving processes, not just products — maintaining the relationships between people, materials, and environment...” (Kothari, 2025).

Furthermore, Gardini notes that this project took place at a pivotal moment in Egyptian history, as the nation sought to redefine its identity after decades of British occupation; ‘Fathy explored that identity through architectural history’ (Gardini, 2023). His designs pulled from Coptic and Nubian architecture, and “with these, he created his own vernacular style, but in the process, he alienated the very people who were meant to live in New Gournna.” (Gardini, 2023).

“The worst contemporary architecture lands with blundering indifference to its context while the best enters into correspondence with its surroundings ...”

— (Harper, 2018)

“This was a moment in Egyptian history when, after decades of British occupation, the country was working to redefine its national identity”

— (Gardini, 2023)

“[I]n spite of the project’s failure to bring people back to the village, New Gournna remains an experiment that is studied... throughout the world today.”

— (Alhasani, 1996)



Fig 18: Hassan Fathy's New Gournia Village (UNESCO, 2011)

New Gournia

“A major issue with the new village was a design that failed to connect to the lives of its intended residents.” (Gardini, 2023). For instance, Fathy made courtyards an essential part of the residences. However, “courtyards were rarely used in that region of Egypt... they served a more practical function as a work area...” (Gardini, 2023). Moreover, the use of domes in domestic architecture was atypical in the region. As Gardini explains, domes were typically associated with “mosques and tombs, not homes,” making their use in residences “not just unusual, it was disconcerting.” (Gardini, 2023). Consequently, residents of old Gournia refused to relocate. “Fathy still created a built environment that felt foreign to those who were supposed to live there” (Gardini, 2023).

Gardini highlights that the story of New Gournia did not end in failure. In the 1970s, Fathy returned to the project as an alternative to universalising Western design principles. (Gardini, 2023). As Pyla notes, “Fathy’s ideas gained an altogether new appeal,” shaping New Gournia into “an icon of the timeless wisdom of age-old building traditions.” (Pyla, 2007).

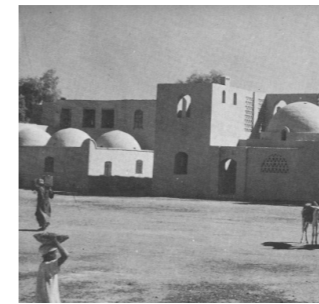


Fig 19

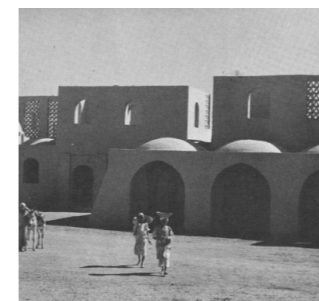


Fig 20

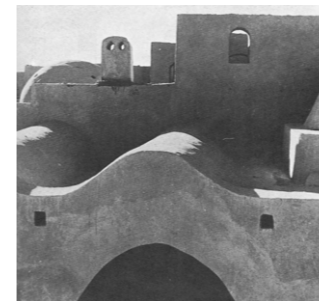


Fig 21

Fig 19: New Gournia Street View (Viollet, 2011a) Fig 20: New Gournia Street View (Viollet, 2011b) Fig 21: New Gournia Roofs (Hassia, 2011a)

“New Gournia is now celebrated for its design by architects and cultural heritage professionals alike” (Gardini, 2023). As Gardini notes, Fathy’s rejection of European modernism in favour of historically grounded local knowledge positioned New Gournia as a significant, if imperfect, urban experiment. (Gardini, 2023). UNESCO states that the World Heritage Committee and the academic world of experts submitted an international petition in 2009 for the safeguarding of this important site. The initiative addressed both “restoration and management concerns” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2011). Re-framing New Gournia as an important cultural and architectural site.

Architecture, a vessel for culture, memory, and identity. As Harper argues, meaningful architecture “enters into correspondence with its surroundings,” rather than imposing form without context. (Harper, 2018). From New Gournia to Cowan Court, preservation goes beyond copying historical styles to sustaining relationships between people, place, and tradition. Kothari frames this as contextual design, requiring architects to act as cultural anthropologists attentive to social and historical forces. (Kothari, 2025).

Hassan Fathy's work in New Gourna exemplifies relational ethics: by engaging local traditions and rejecting Western modernism, he sought to express Egypt's postcolonial identity, even if the project did not fully succeed socially. (Gardini, 2023). Similarly, Cowan Court reinterprets rather than imitates its Brutalist context, demonstrating how architecture can honour precedent while serving contemporary needs.

These cases reveal the distinction between appropriation and appreciation: when architects acknowledge origins, engage communities, and respect cultural processes, architecture becomes a medium for memory, continuity, and ethical responsibility. In this sense, preservation is not a static act but an ethical process through which cultural knowledge is carried forward into contemporary practice.

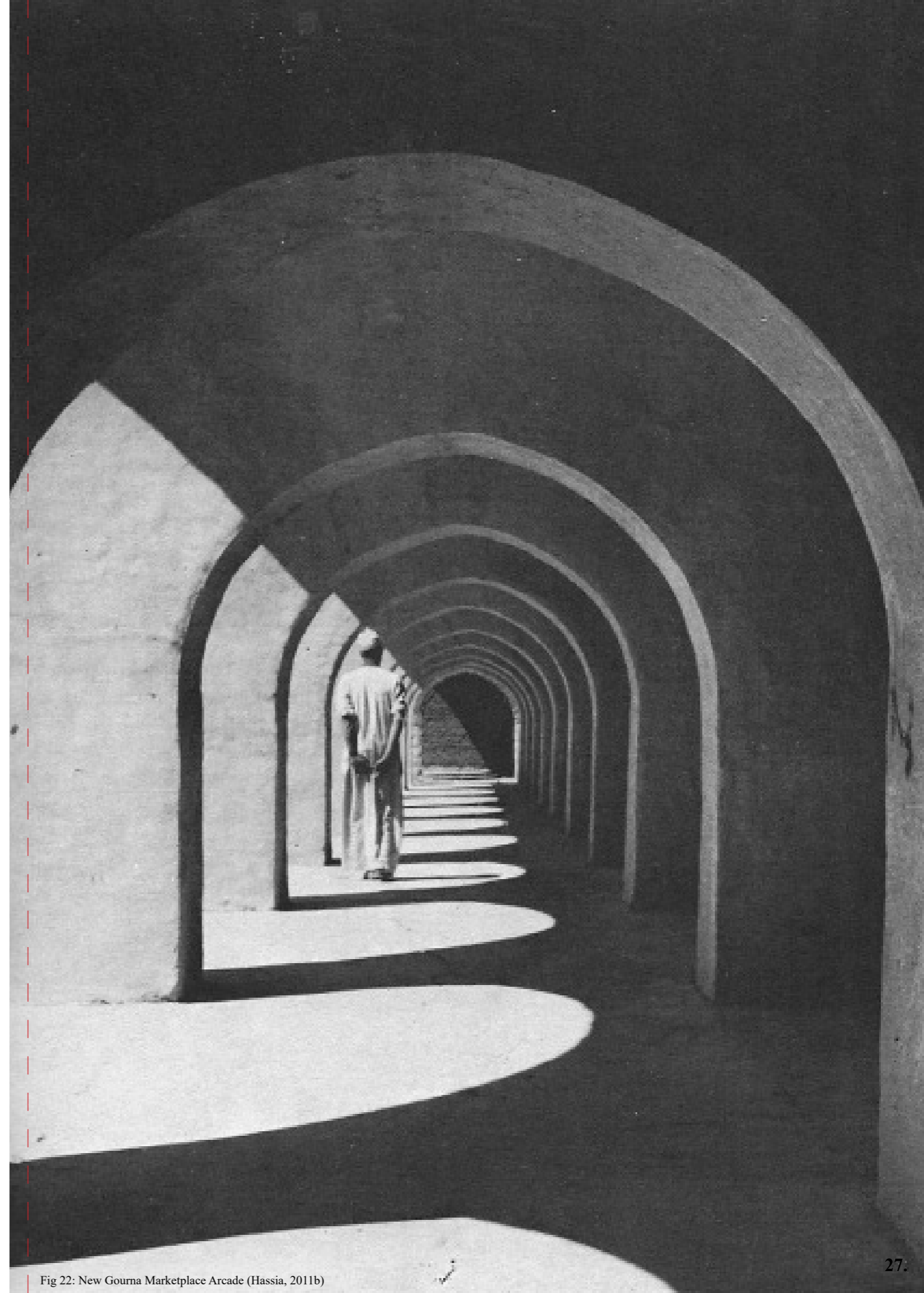


Fig 22: New Gourna Marketplace Arcade (Hassia, 2011b)

Learning from Place: Vernacular Architecture as a Design Approach

A profound expression of the cultural identity of a place, “Vernacular Architecture is more than just a style or a building method; it is a profound reflection of culture, environment, and human ingenuity.” (Ron-Harding, 2024). Ron-Harding portrays buildings as living expressions of their communities, shaped over generations to meet local climate, materials, and needs, preserving cultural identity through tradition and form.

In a world dominated by modernism, where form often outruns context, the resurgence of vernacular principles reminds us that architecture ‘should reflect the needs and values of the people who use it’ (Ron-Harding, 2024). In a world that is constantly looking forward, Vernacular Architecture (VA) reminds us to look back and learn from the wisdom of the past. (Ron-Harding, 2024).

Pardo reinforces this understanding, describing VA as “a distinctive feature of each region of the world,” shaped through continuous adaptation to climate, topography, resources, and social ways of life. (Pardo, 2023). He notes, however, that globalisation in construction techniques and contemporary lifestyles has led to the erosion of local architectural distinctiveness, with many developing countries adopting industrialised systems that often fail to meet local needs.

Despite representing over 75% of the world’s existing buildings, VA remains under-studied, and its preservation is a significant challenge. (Pardo, 2023).

Zamora emphasises the importance of VA within the architectural and cultural field. It involves specialised knowledge of local materials, climate and construction techniques, typically held by builders and craftspeople whose practices reflect an intimate understanding of their environment, “creating structures that respond to the climate and harmonize with the landscape.” (Zamora, 2024).

Materials such as stone, timber, brick, adobe, thatch, and daub are chosen for their availability, durability, climatic performance, and ability to reinforce “regional character” (Zamora, 2024). Through this approach, buildings respond to local conditions while strengthening a sense of place for communities. These principles underpin contemporary practice, exemplified by the ZOMA Museum as a case study of vernacular knowledge applied to culture, environment, and community.

“Vernacular architecture is not just about preserving the past—it’s about creating a future that honors and celebrates cultural diversity”

— (Ron-Harding, 2024)

Zoma Museum: Vernacular Architecture in Practice



Fig 23: Sculptural Vernacular Architecture in Reclaimed Landscape (Cohan, 2019a)



Fig 24: Zoma Museum Perspective (Cohan, 2019b)



Fig 25: Landscape of Zoma Museum (Cohan, 2019c)



Fig 26: Grounded in the Landscape (Cohan, 2019d)



Fig 27: Vernacular Building Structure (Cohan, 2019e)

Embodying the dialogue between vernacular knowledge and contemporary design, Zoma Museum in Addis Ababa serves as a compelling example of architecture that translates traditional building practices into a modern, context-responsive form, integrating local materials, climate adaptation, and cultural continuity. Co-founded by curator and anthropologist Meskerem Asseged and artist Elias Sime, the museum occupies a reclaimed site in Mekanisa that was formerly polluted.

Cohen highlights Asseged and Sime's exploration of vernacular architecture in the project as an achievement recognised for its innovation and thoughtful synthesis of heritage. (James Cohen, 2025). He describes the museum as "an environmentally conscious international art centre", further praised by The New York Times in 2009 as "a voluptuous dream, a swirl of ancient technique and ecstatic imagination." (James Cohen, 2025).

In this way, the museum functions almost as a metaphor, as Kidane describes it as a "bridge" between artists and architects from around the world, fostering the creation of innovative ecological art and architecture. (James Cohen, 2025). Zoma Museum combines global collaboration with local knowledge, using established building traditions. Constructed using ancient yet still-practised techniques, the museum employs materials 'including mud, straw, stone, wood, and cement' (James Cohen, 2025), allowing the architecture to emerge from its environment while sustaining cultural continuity.

Materials & Techniques

The design intentionally employs local materials and indigenous techniques. Doolan states that Assegued and Sime employed builders from across Ethiopia to construct the museum; they were “motivated by a desire to recover the vernacular tradition of building with mud... using a traditional wattle and daub technique called *chikka*,” in which a bamboo frame is stitched with strings and filled with mud and straw. (Doolan, 2021).

The result is a village of “hand-built mud huts with circular thatched roofs able to withstand weathering for decades” (Doolan, 2021). Furthermore, Doolan explains how the use of mud enabled Sime to transform the museum’s walls into expressive cultural narratives, as can be seen in Figures 28 & 29.

Sime intricately carved and sculpted the mud into patterns inspired by Ethiopian culture, “ranging from concentric circles to the four stages of a butterfly’s life cycle” (Doolan, 2021). On one of the museum’s walls, Sime incorporates the Ethiopian Ge’ez numerical system, one of the oldest written languages in the world. (Doolan, 2021)



Fig 28: Hand Carved Mud all by Sime (Cohan, 2019f)

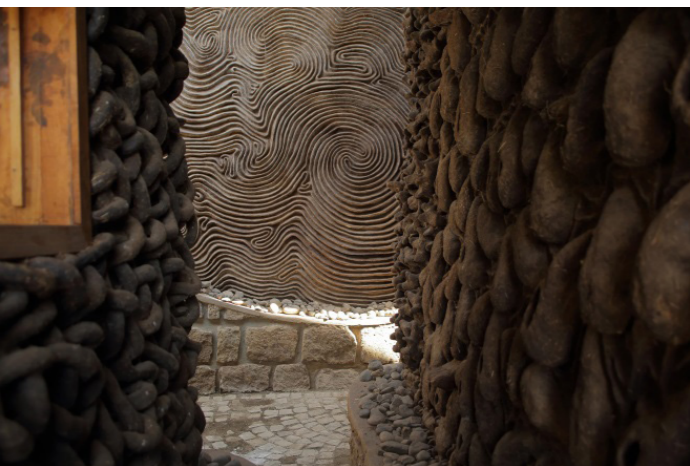


Fig 29: Perspective of Carved Mud Walls (Cohan, 2019g)

“For Sime, the history of ... materials hold meaning... They suggest the tenuousness of our interconnected world, alluding to the frictions between tradition and progress...”

— (James Cohen, 2025)

By employing indigenous architectural styles, the work of Assegued and Sime reflects the desire to create architecture guided by the land. Berlanda outlines that the site, situated at the bottom of a valley, was initially polluted by irrigation channels, leaving the soil degraded and in need of regeneration. She notes that as the top layer was removed, new earth and manure from neighbouring farms restored the wetlands. (Berlanda, 2020).



Fig 30: Greenery Around Zoma Museum (Cohan, 2019h)



Fig 31: Zoma Museum Vernacular Landscape (Cohan, 2019i)

The museum’s structures are therefore grounded physically and symbolically in the landscape; in using organic on-site materials, the land itself becomes “primary material for design” (Berlanda, 2020). As Doolan states, “The result is remarkable, bringing together traditional and contemporary architecture in a design grounded by the principle of organic growth,” demonstrating an environmentally sound, vernacular-informed approach. (Doolan, 2021)

Rethinking the Vernacular: A Critical Perspective

The Architectural Review cautions that the vernacular can become “a toxic, reactionary culture” (Holland, 2019). Holland critiques not Vernacular Architecture (VA) itself, but the assertion that some designs are inherently “more authentic” than others, which he finds problematic. He further observes that vernacular architecture is “an oxymoron: by its nature, it cannot be appropriated without becoming something else” (Holland, 2019). Architecture, he states, is a “conscious appropriation of building into culture”; As we engage with the vernacular, “we kill it” (Holland, 2019). But in doing so, we inevitably create something else.

“The appeal of the vernacular partly lies in a rejection of modernity and the universalising tendencies of global culture.” (Holland, 2019). Architectural forms, Holland proposes, may echo the past while embracing the future, but should never be limited solely to the voice of its context.

Zoma actively challenges this critique. As Doolan observes, the museum “collapses the nature–culture dichotomy”, using vernacular techniques not as symbols of authenticity but as tools for experimentation and regeneration (Doolan, 2021). Rather than reproducing tradition, Zoma re-frames it, by combining indigenous knowledge with artistic experimentation and ecological restoration. In doing so, the project demonstrates how VA does not replicate tradition but reinterprets it, showing that it can be an ethical, adaptive, and contextually original practice.

“The vernacular can lead to a toxic, reactionary culture”

— (Holland, 2019)

“We might live in the first historical period to consider every other historical period more important than our own.”

— (Holland, 2019)



Fig 32: Zoma Museum Carved Mud Walls Art (Away Travel, 2020)

In these ways, Zoma reflects architectural principles similar to those advocated by Fathy, who argued that architecture should emerge from its environment, urging designers to “build ... from what is beneath your feet.”

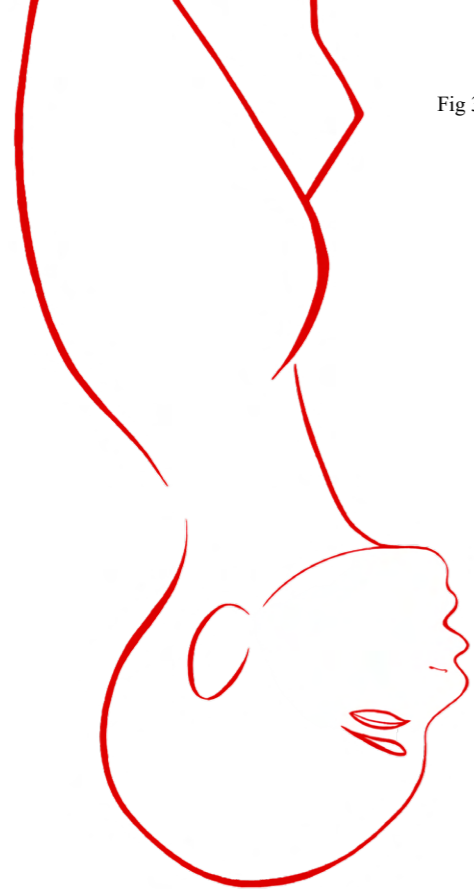
Hassan Fathy. Similar to Fathy’s work in Egypt, ZOMA does not treat vernacular forms as stylistic references, but as living processes shaped by climate, material availability, and social life. Through this approach, the museum illustrates how vernacular-inspired design can honour cultural identity while functioning as a context-responsive architectural approach.

Zoma Museum can be understood through an ethical framework grounded in both relational and utilitarian ethics as previously outlined. From a utilitarian perspective, its design reflects the principle of “the greatest good for the greatest number” (Bentham, 2012), generating social and environmental value through ecological repair, local material use, and community participation.

Rather than exploiting cultural knowledge for economic gain, as critiqued by Annadorai and Joshi (2025), Zoma demonstrates how culturally rooted design can evoke memory, belonging, and shared meaning, aligning with Rui and Firzan’s assertion that such practices foster emotional and social well-being. Zoma embodies relational ethics, emphasising interconnectedness between people, place, and process.

As Kararmaz and Polatoğlu Serter (2025) argue, architecture is shaped through networks of relationships and social interaction rather than isolated form-making. This is reflected in Zoma’s collaborative construction methods and its grounding in local knowledge.

Fig 33: Line drawings reflecting self-identity post research (Lanza Valenciano, 2026)



I d e n t i t y

This research has prompted reflection on the significance of cultural identity. Culture enables individuals and communities to recognise themselves within the spaces they inhabit, fostering belonging, memory, and continuity. When culture is erased, misrepresented, or appropriated, identity itself is diminished. Preserving and acknowledging cultural origins reinforces dignity, authorship, and self-expression within the built environment.

While cultural appropriation remains a contested and sensitive topic, the ethical frameworks explored here encourage critical reflection rather than definitive answers. By designing with humility, context, and care, architects can move beyond appropriation towards practices that honour identity, empower communities, and ensure that interior architecture acts as a responsible bridge between past, present, and future.



C o n c l u s i o n

Global interior architecture continually balances innovation with respect for cultural heritage. This dissertation has demonstrated that cultural borrowing, when undertaken with ethical awareness, transforms from a process of appropriation into a meaningful exchange, one that fosters connection, learning, and appreciation. Ethical practice in this context is not simply about aesthetic borrowing; it requires careful engagement, contextualisation, and recognition of the communities and histories being referenced

The dissertation highlights the complexities of cultural engagement, demonstrating that misusing cultural elements without attribution or understanding can undermine identity and livelihoods (Annadorai & Joshi, 2025), whereas genuine appreciation uplifts and collaborates with source communities (Laverdiere, 2025). Architecture reflects diverse cultural values, yet globalisation risks standardising these identities, making the role of ethical frameworks particularly crucial.

Utilitarian approaches, when detached from justice and equity, may justify exploitation under the guise of collective benefit, but when combined with relational ethics, they support practices that generate social, cultural, and environmental value.

Postcolonial theory further underscores the importance of recognising power imbalances and historical contexts, ensuring that architectural production engages respectfully with the communities and histories it draws upon. (Evans, 2023; Christiansen, 2021)

Across the case studies examined, a consistent pattern emerges: ethical cultural borrowing depends on relationships rather than surface representation. Projects such as the Zoma Museum and Cowan Court illustrate how learning from place, vernacular knowledge, and precedent can sustain cultural continuity while responding to contemporary needs. In contrast, the early shortcomings of New Gouna demonstrate the risks of imposing design without sufficient alignment with lived cultural practices, even when intentions are progressive.

Ultimately, ethical cultural borrowing in architecture is a practice of humility and care: a commitment to honouring the hands, histories, and hopes that shape the spaces we inhabit. By crediting origins and fostering collaboration, architects can create spaces that are functional, meaningful, and socially responsible. When guided by ethical frameworks, interior architecture has the potential to become a vessel for cultural continuity, community empowerment, and responsible global practice. Architecture becomes ethical through sustained engagement with people, place, and memory.

References

A Rum Fellow (2025) Guatemalan Brocade Weaver Survey. A Rum Fellow. 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/brocade-weavers-survey> [Accessed 12 December 2025].

A. Kidane, B. (2025) Zoma Museum Ketema Journal. September 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://ketemajournal.com/story/zoma-museum/> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Adelin , R.J. (2023) Architecture and Cultural Appropriation: Navigating the Complexity of Architecture and Culture RTF | Rethinking the Future. 30 November 2023 [online]. Available from: https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/architectural-community/architecture-and-cultural-appropriation-navigating-the-complexity-of-architecture-and-culture/#google_vignette [Accessed 26 December 2025].

Akhanolu, A. and Ahianba, J.E. (2025) Architecture as a Reflection of Cultural Continuity: A Study of Traditional Trends. International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Tech-nology [online]. 10 (2456–2165), pp. 3744–3746. Available from: <https://www.ijisrt.com/assets/upload/files/IJISRT25APR2259.pdf> [Accessed 30 December 2025].

Al Braifkani, E. and Günçe, K. (2025) A Conceptual Framework for Analysing Hybridity in Architecture: a Case Study of Baghdad University. Sustainability [online]. 17 (9). Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/17/9/4154> [Accessed 30 November 2025].

Alhasani, N.M. (1996) Tradition vs. Modernity: The Quest for a Cultural Identity. Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review [online]. 7 (2), pp. 35–41. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41757196> [Accessed 24 December 2025].

Annadorai, P. and Joshi, S. (2025) Cultural Appropriation in Design Practices: Retaining cul-tural value and moving towards ethical and inclusive practices. IIID NAT-CON [online]. Available from: <https://iiidnatcon.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/parvathi-and-shripada.pdf> [Accessed 28 November 2025].

Bentham, J. (2012) An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation [online]. Newburyport, Dover Publications. Available from: <https://web-p-ebSCOhost-com.uwe.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=35a0ab4c-2a1b-4aff-9602-66d4ec-5da0eb%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbG12ZQ%3d%3d#AN=1150411&d-b=nlebk> [Accessed 12 November 2025].

Berlanda, T. (2020) Ground control: the Zoma Museum by Meskerem Assegued and Elias Sime Architectural Review. 10 February 2020 [online]. Available from: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/ground-control-the-zoma-museum-by-meskerem-assegued-and-elias-sime> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Christiansen, S. (2021) Postcolonial Theory EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com. 2021 [online]. Available from: <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/political-science/postcolonial-theory> [Accessed 9 December 2025].

Cohan, J. (2019) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Assegued [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Dehlin, J. (2017) 6a Architects Cowan Court Divisare. 20 February 2017 [online]. Available from: <https://divisare.com/projects/337931-6a-architects-johan-dehlin-david-grandorge-cowan-court> [Accessed 23 December 2025].

Doolan, E. (2021) A Sustainable Oasis in Addis Ababa, the ZOMA Museum Collapses the nature-and-culture Dichotomy HASTA. 10 February 2021 [online]. Available from: <https://www.hasta-standrews.com/features/2021/2/10/a-sustainable-oasis-in-addis-ababa-the-zoma-museum-collapses-the-nature-and-culture-dichotomy> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Evans, G. (2023) The Impact of Postcolonialism on Architectural Design and Urban Plan-ning. Commercialarchitecturemagazine.com. 15 May 2023 [online]. Available from: <https://www.commercialarchitecturemagazine.com/the-impact-of-postcolonialism-on-architectural-design-and-urban-planning/> [Accessed 9 December 2025].

Fathy, H. (1960) Aided Self-Help Or Cooperation? Ekistics [online]. 9 (55), pp. 335–342. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43613337> [Accessed 24 December 2025].

Fouzdar, A. (2023) The Ethical Implications of Architectural Design RTF | Rethinking the Fu-ture. 16 November 2023 [online]. Available from: <https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/architectural-community/a11267-the-ethical-implications-of-architectural-design/> [Accessed 12 December 2025].

Gardini , A. (2023) Hassan Fathy and New Gourná JSTOR Daily. 8 August 2023 [online]. Available from: <https://daily.jstor.org/hassan-fathy-and-new-gourna/> [Accessed 24 December 2025].

Griffiths, A. (2016) 6a Architects adds timber-clad halls to University of Cambridge campus Dezeen. 19 October 2016 [online]. Available from: <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/10/19/6a-architects-timber-clad-halls-residence-1960s-campus-churchill-college-university-cambridge/> [Accessed 3 December 2025].

Harper, P. (2018) 'Architects Are Experts on Cultural appropriation' Dezeen. 8 January 2018 [online]. Available from: <https://www.dezeen.com/2018/01/08/phineas-harper-opinion-comment-cultural-appropriation-architecture/> [Accessed 3 December 2025].

Holland, C. (2019) Outrage: the Vernacular Can Lead to a toxic, Reactionary Culture Architectural Review. 22 November 2019 [online]. Available from: <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/outrage/outrage-the-vernacular-can-lead-to-a-toxic-reactionary-culture> [Accessed 29 December 2025].

James Cohen (2025) Elias Sime - Biography www.jamescohan.com. 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/artists/elias-sime> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Kararmaz, Ö. and Serter, Ç.P. (2025) From Dots and Lines to Connections: Re-Evaluation of Relational Thinking in Architecture. *Buildings* [online]. 15 (14). Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/15/14/2548> [Accessed 12 December 2025].

Kothari, A.P. (2025) Heritage Re-imagined: Integrating Cultural Identity in Contemporary Architecture Medium. 17 July 2025 [online]. Available from: https://medium.com/@Architects_Blog/heritage-re-imagined-integrating-cultural-identity-in-contemporary-architecture-2a8d13ee81d7 [Accessed 23 December 2025].

Laverdiere, M. (2025) The Intersection of Culture and Interior Design: Creating Culturally-Inspired Spaces Marymount University. 6 August 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://marymount.edu/blog/the-intersection-of-culture-and-interior-design-creating-culturally-inspired-spaces/> [Accessed 9 December 2025].

Mishra, S., N Gowda, N. and Bhuvan, M. (2024) Study on influence of cultural values and traditions on interior design practices. *International Journal of Trends in Emerging Research and Development* [online]. 2 (6). Available from: <https://researchtrendsjournal.com/uploads/articles/Sp-2-6-33.1.pdf> [Accessed 20 November 2025].

Nicholls, D. (2018) Imitation Game: exploring the issue of cultural appropriation in interior design [Houseandgarden.co.uk](http://houseandgarden.co.uk). 18 September 2018 [online]. Available from: <https://www.houseandgarden.co.uk/article/imitation-game> [Accessed 9 December 2025].

Ozen, S. (2025) The Role of Architecture in Shaping Cultural Identity: a Journey through Time and Tradition | Illustrarch [Illustrarch](http://Illustrarch.com). 2 May 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://illustrarch.com/articles/45536-the-role-of-architecture-in-shaping-cultural-identity.html> [Accessed 23 December 2025].

Pardo, J.M.F. (2023) Challenges and Current Research Trends for Vernacular Architecture in a Global World: a Literature Review. *Buildings* [online]. 13 (1), p. 162. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/13/1/162> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Pyla, P.I. (2007) Hassan Fathy Revisited: Postwar Discourses on Science, Development, and Vernacular Architecture. *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) [online]. 60 (3), pp. 28–39. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40480705?mag=hassan-fathy-and-new-gourna> [Accessed 24 December 2025].

Ron-Harding, B. (2024) Understanding Vernacular Architecture: What It Is and Why It Matters Today jasboutique.co.uk. 12 September 2024 [online]. Available from: <https://www.jasboutique.co.uk/blog/understanding-vernacular-architecture-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters-today/> [Accessed 26 December 2025].

Rui, L. and Muhammad Firzan (2025) Emotional Design of Interior Spaces: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities. *Buildings* [online]. 15 (2), pp. 153–153. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/15/2/153> [Accessed 6 December 2025].

Smart, J.J.C. and Williams, B. (1974) Utilitarianism: For and Against. *The Philosophical Quarterly* [online]. 24 (96), p. 279. Available from: <https://www.utilitarianism.com/utilitarianism-for-and-against.pdf> [Accessed 6 December 2025].

Stuart Mill, J. (2012) *On Liberty* [online]. Cambridge University Press. Available from: <https://www-cambridge-org.uwe.idm.oclc.org/core/books/on-liberty/62EC-27F1E66E2BCBA29DDCD5294B3DE0> [Accessed 12 November 2025].

UNESCO (2019) World Heritage unesco.org. 2019 [online]. Available from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/> [Accessed 23 December 2025].

UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2011) Safeguarding Project of Hassan Fathy's New Gourna Village unesco.org. 2011 [online]. Available from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/637/> [Accessed 24 December 2025].

Wael Rashdan and Ashour, A.F. (2024) Heritage-Inspired Strategies in Interior Design: Balancing Critical Regionalism and Reflexive Modernism for Identity Preservation. *Heritage* [online]. 7 (12), pp. 6825–6856. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2571-9408/7/12/316> [Accessed 4 November 2025].

Zamora, F. (2024) Architecture 101: What Is Vernacular Architecture? *Journal*. 11 September 2024 [online]. Available from: <https://architizer.com/blog/practice/details/architecture-101-what-is-vernacular-architecture/> [Accessed 28 December 2025].

Figures List

Fig 1: Delaney, S. (2021a) History of Here 3 [Ink, Charcoal, Pastel, Graphite on Synthetic paper, Framed]. Available from: <https://www.sarahdelaney.com/history-of-here> [Accessed 2 January 2026].

Fig 2: Mulder, J. (2025) Through Trails Online Image]. Available from: <https://jackiemulder.nl/thoughttrails> [Accessed 2 January 2026].

Fig 3: Lanza Valenciano, M. (2026) Line drawings reflecting self-identity prior research, using Figure 7

Fig 4: Telbukh, S. (2025) Connections Aesthetic [Online Image]. Available from: <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/19773685859107291> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 5: Dodson, R. (2020) They Took the Faces... [Online Image]. Available from: <https://paglen.studio/2020/04/09/they-took-the-faces-from-the-accused-and-the-dead/> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 6: Kararmaz, Ö. and Serter, Ç.P. (2025) From Dots and Lines to Connections: Re-Evaluation of Relational Thinking in Architecture [Diagram]. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-5309/15/14/2548>, Fig 4. [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 7: Robinson, E. (2018) Fostering Community Engagement [Illustration]. Available from: <https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/architectural-community/a11267-the-ethical-implications-of-architectural-design/> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 8: Cifuentes, G. (2025a) Maya Women [Online Cover Image]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/brocade-weavers-survey> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 9: Cifuentes, G. (2025b) Maya Women [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/brocade-weavers-survey> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 10: A Rum Fellow (2025a) Guatemalan Brocade Weaver Survey 2025 [Chart]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/brocade-weavers-survey> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 11: A Rum Fellow (2025b) Guatemalan Brocade Weaver Survey 2025 [Chart]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/brocade-weavers-survey> [Accessed 3 January 2026].

Fig 12: Imperio, J. (2023) Blood-Quantum Laws Are Splintering My Tribe [Photo Illustration]. Available from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2023/06/blood-quantum-laws-native-american-tribal-communities/674461/> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 13: A Rum Fellow (2025c) Guatemala Trip [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.arumfellow.com/about-us> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 14: Dehlin, J. (2023a) Cowan Court, Churchill College Cambridge. [Online Image]. Available from: <https://6a.co.uk/projects/selected/cowan-court> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 15: Dehlin, J. (2023b) Cowan Court, Churchill College Cambridge. [Online Image]. Available from: <https://6a.co.uk/projects/selected/cowan-court> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 16: Dehlin, J. (2023c) 6a Architects' Cowan Court Reinterprets the Form and Fabric of Churchill College [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architecturetoday.co.uk/court-case/> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 17: Dehlin, J. (2023d) 6a Architects' Cowan Court Reinterprets the Form and Fabric of Churchill College [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architecturetoday.co.uk/court-case/> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 18: UNESCO (2011) Safeguarding Project of Hassan Fathy's New Gournia Village [Online Image]. Available from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/637> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 19: Viollet, R. (2011a) New Gournia Street View [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architectureindevelopment.org/project/30#gallery-267-7> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 20: Viollet, R. (2011b) New Gournia Street View [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architectureindevelopment.org/project/30#gallery-267-7> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 21: Hassia (2011a) New Gournia Roofs [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architectureindevelopment.org/project/30#gallery-267-6> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 22: Hassia (2011b) New Gournia Marketplace Arcade [Online Image]. Available from: <https://architectureindevelopment.org/project/30#gallery-267-6> [Accessed 4 January 2026].

Fig 23: Cohan, J. (2019a) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 24: Cohan, J. (2019b) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 25: Cohan, J. (2019c) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 26: Cohan, J. (2019d) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 27: Cohan, J. (2019e) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 28: Cohan, J. (2019f) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 29: Cohan, J. (2019g) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 30: Cohan, J. (2019h) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 31: Cohan, J. (2019i) Zoma Museum Founded by Elias Sime and Meskerem Asseged [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.jamescohan.com/public-exhibitions/zoma-museum#11> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 32: Away Travel (2020) The 11 Best Places to See Art in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia [Online Image]. Available from: <https://www.awaytravel.com/en-gb/blogs/the-away-pages/addis-ababa-artists/> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Fig 33: Lanza Valenciano, M. (2026) Line drawings reflecting self-identity post research, using Figure 7

Fig 34: Delaney, S. (2021b) History of Here 6 [Ink, Charcoal, Pastel, Graphite on Synthetic paper, Framed]. Available from: <https://www.sarahdelaney.com/history-of-here> [Accessed 5 January

2026]. Fig 35: Delaney, S. (2021c) History of Here [Ink, Charcoal, Pastel, Graphite on Synthetic paper, Framed]. Available from: <https://www.sarahdelaney.com/history-of-here> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

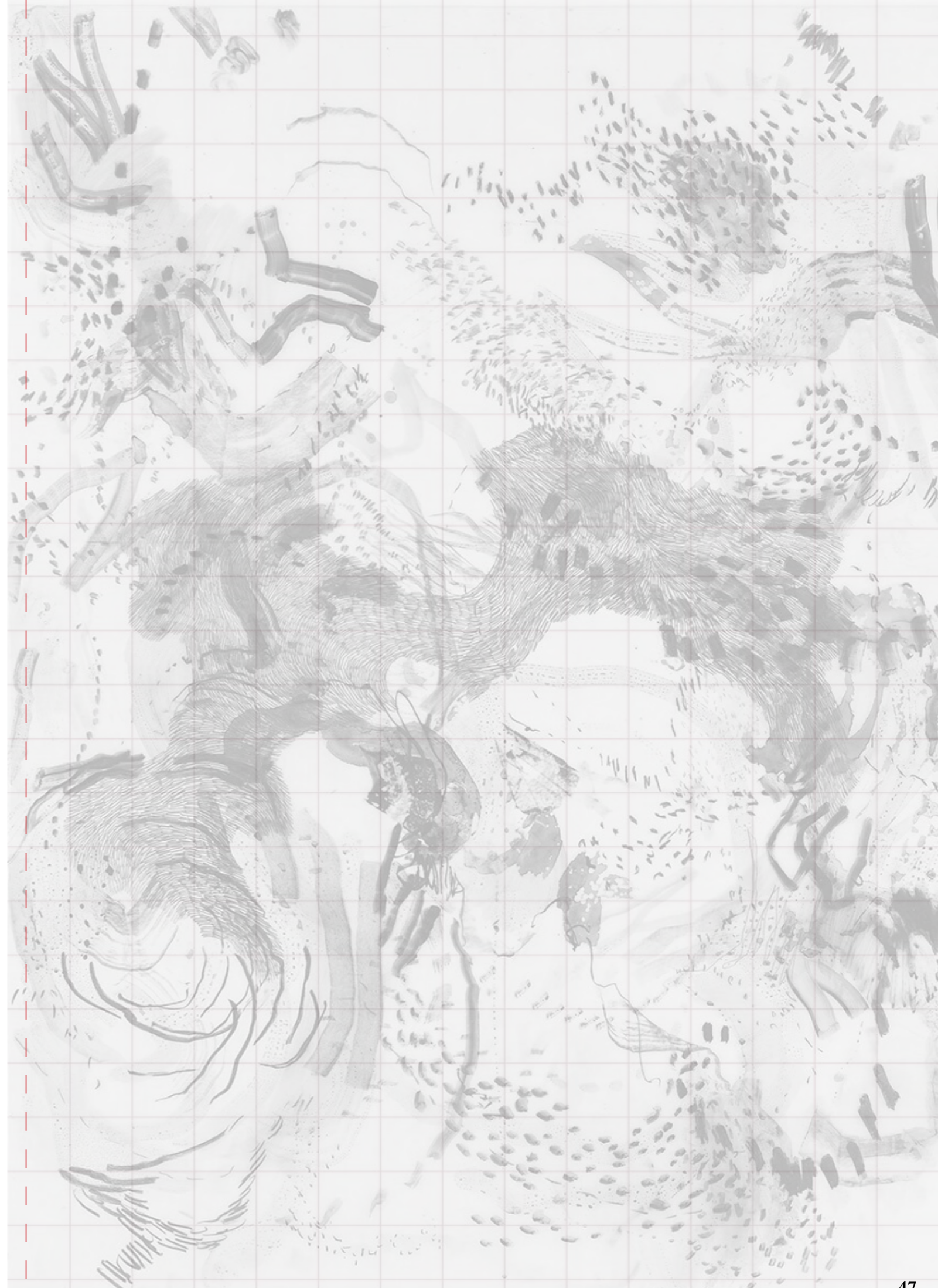
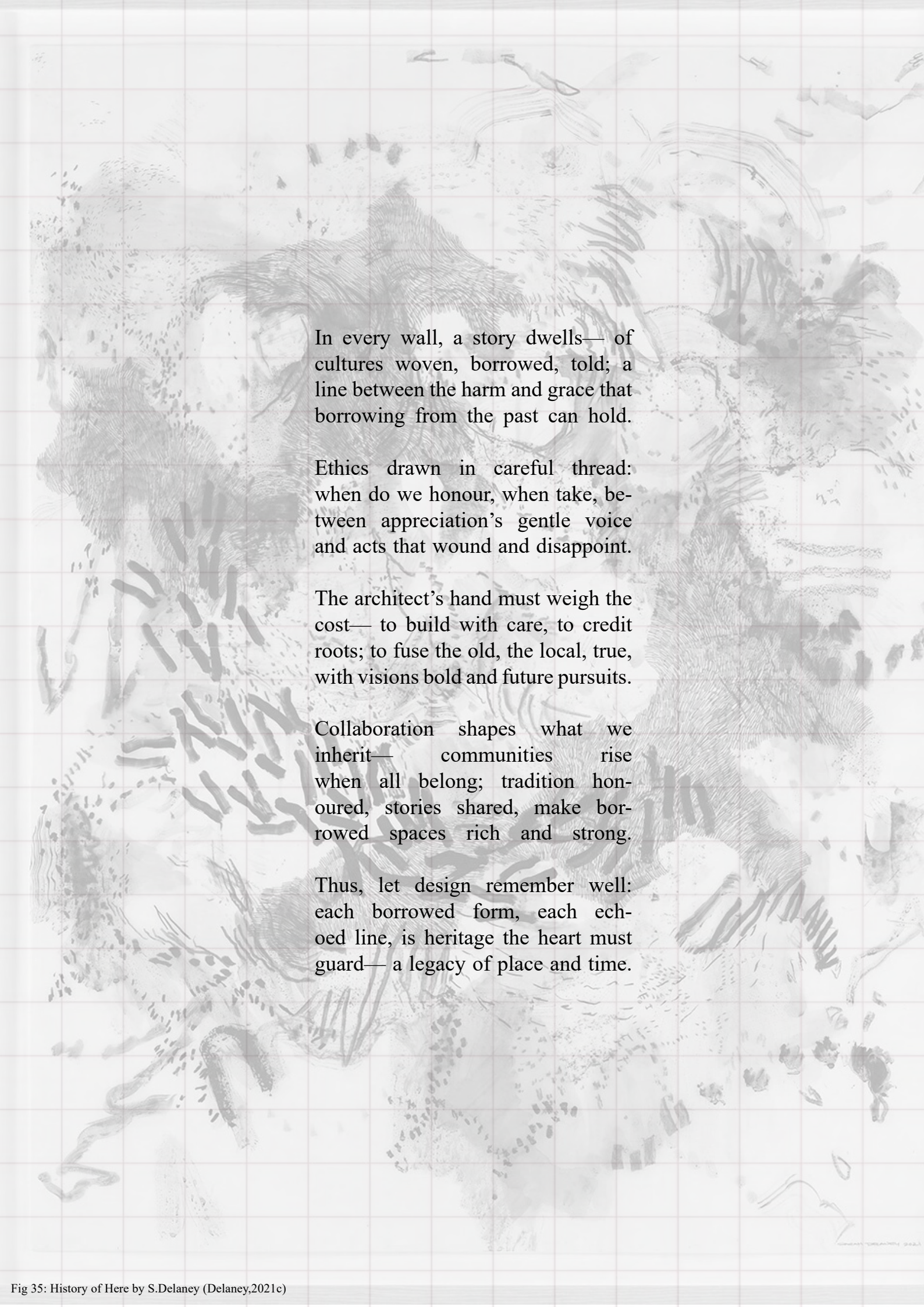


Fig 34: History of Here 6 by S.Delaney (Delaney,2021b)



In every wall, a story dwells— of cultures woven, borrowed, told; a line between the harm and grace that borrowing from the past can hold.

Ethics drawn in careful thread: when do we honour, when take, between appreciation's gentle voice and acts that wound and disappoint.

The architect's hand must weigh the cost— to build with care, to credit roots; to fuse the old, the local, true, with visions bold and future pursuits.

Collaboration shapes what we inherit— communities rise when all belong; tradition honoured, stories shared, make borrowed spaces rich and strong.

Thus, let design remember well: each borrowed form, each echoed line, is heritage the heart must guard— a legacy of place and time.