

Architectural historicism and the future of identity

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Article Information

Received: 13/6/2025

Accepted: 29/7/2025

Keywords

Architectural Historicism, holism, individuality, development, Architectural identity.

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Abstract

This research investigates architectural historicism as a framework for reconciling cultural identity with the individuality of the present in shaping future-oriented architecture. It emphasizes the concepts of holism, individuality, and development, and explores two key mechanisms: interpretive reproduction and integration/contrast. These are demonstrated through two case studies. The King Fahd National Library in Riyadh exemplifies a high level of holism by reinterpreting the Arab tent in a contemporary form and integrating the existing historic structure within a new architectural envelope. The project reflects rooted identity through modern materials and technologies, achieving harmony between past and present. In contrast, the Haas Haus in Vienna employs a reflective façade that visually engages with its historical surroundings without mimicking them. It expresses individuality by asserting postmodern character while integrating symbolically with the context through reinterpretation of Roman curves. Both examples illustrate that architectural historicism is not a mere imitation of the past, but rather a dynamic process of reinterpretation that enables the creation of culturally grounded, innovative forms. The study concludes that historicism offers a productive design approach for generating authentic architecture that connects historical memory with contemporary needs.

I. Introduction

Historicism initially emerged in Germany within the context of the rise of historical science, and thus encompassed various intellectual currents claiming to adopt historical methods in opposition to traditional approaches such as Classicism, which emphasized repetition, universality, and timelessness in architectural practice. However, the concept of history as a "whole" and thought as a "collective individuality" appeared at the end of the eighteenth century with the advent of architectural historicism [1]. Umbach defines "architectural historicism" as a preoccupation with the past, viewed as a series of distinct periods connected to the present. He also emphasizes that historicism was far from being a

conservative approach; rather, it was highly dynamic [2]. Murphy further discusses the progressive, future-oriented aspect of historicism, stating that architectural historicism is a means of using artifacts from the past to revitalize modern art and architecture in creative and unique ways. He argues that architectural historicism holds the potential to achieve more forward-looking objectives and is neither regressive nor aesthetically outdated [3]. Mađanović points out that the determinism of returning to the past that characterized nineteenth-century architectural historicism was reflected in the role of the artist, who was tasked with concretely expressing unity with the past in the present, and thereby providing direction for the future [4]. Mađanović proposed that historicism is not only the idea that the present is a product of the past, but more specifically, that the present represents a stage in an ongoing process of development. Thus, historicism offered a new perspective that integrated experiences of change into a narrative of gradual development encompassing the past, present, and future [4]. In an effort to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the term “historicism” in architectural criticism, Colquhoun identifies three interpretations of the term: the theory that all social and cultural phenomena are historically determined and all truths are relative; that there is an interest in the institutions and traditions of the past; the use of historical forms [5]. It was not until the formulation of historicist theory that the idea of the relativity of cultural values became a central issue. Architectural historicism made it, in principle, impossible to favor one architectural style over another, as each style was organically tied to a specific spatial and temporal culture and could only be evaluated on its own terms [5]. Thus, from 1850 onward, historicism gave rise to a widespread movement that broke away from Classicism, aiming instead to draw freely from the past and from the history of architectural and artistic movements. The objective was not to imitate or replicate a former style, but to invent an entirely new one—freely inspired by various historical styles [1]. Alhusban notes that architectural historicism achieves a balance between cultural considerations and contemporary aesthetic values [6].

Accordingly, the significance of this research lies in its provision of a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding historicism as a critical architectural practice—one that moves beyond repetition or superficial ornamentation. It also contributes to guiding contemporary design practices toward the generation of authentic forms rooted in a conscious reading of history and cultural identity.

2-Methodology

The research adopts an analytical-comparative methodology that combines theoretical analysis with practical architectural evaluation. The approach is structured around three foundational concepts derived from architectural historicism: holism, which reflects the connection to the historical whole; individuality, which represents the influence of the political and cultural present; and development, which signifies the reinterpretation and transformation of historical meanings toward a future architectural vision. To operationalize these concepts, the study utilizes two practical mechanisms drawn from the theoretical framework: Interpretive reproduction explores how past architectural vocabularies and cultural meanings are reimagined in a contemporary context through symbolic and conceptual adaptation. Integration and contrast examines how contemporary architecture can balance continuity and rupture through the coexistence of historical and modern elements.

These mechanisms are applied to two architectural case studies selected based on their representational value and relevance to the study's objectives. The first case, King Fahd National Library, is analyzed for its approach to the embodiment of identity through reinterpretation and enclosure. The second case, Haas Haus, is evaluated for its contrasting strategy of reflection and spatial negotiation with historical context. The comparative analysis is guided by a set of practical criteria derived from the theoretical framework to assess the projects' effectiveness in achieving culturally grounded and future-oriented architecture.

2.1 Architectural historicism and its connection to the historical whole

Architectural historicism played a pivotal role in shaping the concept of identity, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when national identities began to take form. Architects at the time recognized the importance of employing architecture as a tool to express and reinforce collective identity. Culture and art were seen as crucial factors in unifying emerging national identities. Consequently, architecture was tasked with formulating a "stylistic sequence linked to a specific national narrative," one that would be embedded within the spatial environment of a particular community. In other words, each nation sought to create an architectural style that reflected its historical narrative, popular spirit, and affirms its material and cultural presence [7]. Identity is defined as the essence and true nature of a thing. It refers to the core that remains constant even as it evolves. The identity of a nation, therefore, consists of the characteristics that distinguish it from others and reflect its civilizational nature. Sekhri defines identity as an expression of heritage and a source of authenticity, modernity, and culture. Linguistically, he defines it as the very thing itself; its truth and specificity. In architectural terms, identity can be defined as follows: "It is based on a theoretical principle that architectural elements, forms, and vocabularies reflect the way of life of the society that produces them, encompassing customs, traditions, patterns of thought, religious beliefs, and social values" [8]. From this, we understand that the identity of a particular nation remains constant in essence, while the ways in which it is embodied may vary depending on the conditions of society and the trajectory of its material development. According to Coetzee, the sense of identity is something that is constantly changing, adapting, and reweaving itself. One identifies with a group for political and moral purposes, and Rorty describes identity as the distinguishing feature of a social group defined in contrast to other groups. The sense of identity is thus achieved through the comparison of one's own society with others [9]. The relationship between identity and historicism is therefore an organic one: architecture derives its specificity from the history and cultural environment of its society, while at the same time contributing to the consolidation and re-manifestation of that identity. Gligor summarized this interrelation best when he argued that the individual can only be understood within the context of the society to which they belong, and that society cannot be understood without studying its past, its values—that is, its history—and the forces that shaped it [10]. From this, we understand that while the sense of identity is subject to change, identity itself remains constant and is intrinsically linked to the historical whole. This forms the entry point for architectural historicism in realizing a temporal Individuality in the present—by re-embodiment identity in a manner inspired by the historical whole. This process grants architects the ability to imprint their own creative and individual touches in response to the conditions, capabilities, and needs of the present.

2.2 Architectural historicism and the individuality of the present

"Individuality" in architectural historicism refers to the specificity of time and place, where no architectural style or form is regarded as an absolute universal standard, but rather understood within the context of its society and conditions. This concept is closely linked to Romantic thought in the late eighteenth century, as expressed by Gutschow, who emphasized the necessity of understanding each phenomenon within its temporal and spatial framework [11]. To clarify the principle of historicist individuality in architecture, this research divides it into three main aspects in order to demonstrate how the individuality and conditions of the present influence the embodiment of architectural identity derived from history.

Noble discusses the Individuality of the present and its relationship to history, suggesting that it is useful to consider two specific conditions that profoundly influence architectural historiography: the presumed authority of an "origin" emerging from the past, and the presumed authority of "progress" emerging from the present toward the future [12]. By the 1830s, it had become clear that buildings were situated within a new temporal framework. On an epistemological level, architects had to take a position regarding the times to which they were referring. Historicist buildings could position themselves against the Greek, Roman, or Gothic past, evoking some of the qualities of the chosen past but also necessarily adapting the chosen language to the function, new users, and new progress. In other words, although buildings could take their form by reference to existing historical models (origin), their translation from time to time required consideration of the experience and context of their new, modern users (progress) [13]. Encountering historical precedent has always been a precondition for intervention in the built environment, allowing that encounters with the past have been constantly colored by the contemporary situation and the meanings attributed over time to the tangible remains of earlier periods. In this way, historicism can serve more progressive purposes [3].

2.2.1 Relationship between individualism, the political dimension, and the existing social system

Individuality in historicist architectural thought is one of the central concepts through which the identity of peoples and nations is expressed architecturally. This individuality is not understood as mere personal expression, but rather as a socio-political product that embodies the spirit and era of a nation. Political individuality reveals how regimes and states utilize architectural symbols to assert national identity or to reconfigure the society's relationship with history [7]. Gutschow discusses this idea, noting that although he held great respect for the complex foundations of Greek architecture and its modes of representation, he insisted that each historical era must be judged according to its own merits and its own standards. Greece was not the ideal by which all other eras should be judged, but rather a highly valuable example from which we can learn. He emphasized that the forms of each individual era are defined by the social and political character of a particular people, as well as by the materials and technologies available to them [11]. To clarify the political influence on architectural production and give it its own Individuality based on the vision of the political system or ruler of a particular society of history. The research refers to the Baghdad Central Station building. The station reflects a dual influence: the British colonial presence on one hand, and local

materials and heritage on the other—resulting in a unique building shaped by both its contemporary context and the historical whole. The overall architectural style of the building is a hybrid, combining elements of late Victorian English design with early signs of modernism, while incorporating local features through the use of brick as a primary material. A hemispherical dome was employed to cover the main hall, and this turquoise blue element granted the building a local character, resonating symbolically with the sky and the sacred [14]. as explained in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Baghdad central station, explained architectural individuality resulting from political influence in the present through the integration of classical elements with local materials and architectural features.

2.2.2 Individualism and national character

Burke discusses national character through the change and constancy of human nature. He argues that if human nature asserts itself morally, then the universality of the moral law is linked to the universal unity of human nature. Burke often reiterated his view that basic human nature never changes [15]. Regarding second human nature, he explains that a society develops over the centuries through the customs, feelings, opinions, and prejudices that become an integral part of national character. A person born into a nation absorbs its national temperament and thus acquires what Burke calls his second nature. As he progresses through life, man, by his moral nature, becomes a creature of prejudices, a producer of opinions, habits, and the sentiments that arise from them. These constitute our second nature, as citizens of a country and members of a society. As forces of national cohesion, they are even more important than laws, for laws largely depend on them. Through them, the mind is prepared to operate in a wise and virtuous direction. Prejudices make human morality a habit, not a series of unrelated actions [15].

Bos emphasizes that historicism involves adopting an individual perspective rather than a general one. This is linked to the existentialist idea that the historical process is shaped by individuals. These individuals may be persons, but they may also be higher-order phenomena such as states, which are individual entities governed by unique principles [16]. Bos links the historical development of a people to their national character, which is determined primarily by cultural and spatial factors [16]. Architectural historicism in the nineteenth century differed from previous historicist approaches in one important respect: it was capable of expressing a "certain national character" and representing a concrete nation. Historicism paved the way for the possibility of architecture having an individual "character."

Architectural style only became the primary and decisive bearer of meaning at the moment when the old-world order collapsed and humanity stood exposed in the world with only its own history [17]. Fig. 2 shows Laugier's portrait of the individual development of national character linked to the historical specificity of a particular people.

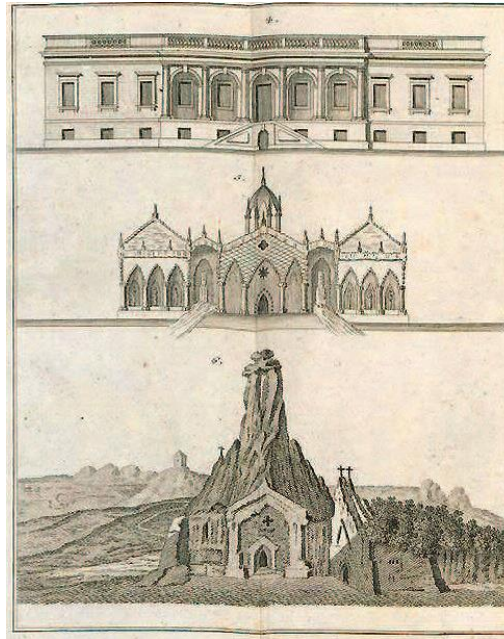


Fig. 2. The connection between national character and history [17].

2.3 Architectural historicism and the development of history towards futurism

One of the fundamental concepts of historicism was the idea of development. Different cultures were not only the result of geographical and temporal displacement, and cultures were not only unique and irreducible to a single set of principles, but they were also subject to the law of growth and change. The idea of genetic development was essential [5]. Colquhoun pointed out that historicism must reconcile two inherently contradictory principles: our culture—and architecture, as one of its manifestations—derives its uniqueness in the present from historical development, yet it also operates within a historical context and carries within it its own historical memory [5]. Le Roy also explains that history records the development of architecture and its "primitive ideas" in a series of interconnected positive and individual transformations. This makes origins relative, as the superior artistic achievement of some peoples and cultures is measured over others through qualitative change, not simply a matter of chronology. Le Roy analyzed formal development through taxonomic comparison, in order to identify relative stylistic periods and artistic achievements. He observed that stylistic changes throughout ancient times depended on social, cultural, geographical, and climatic contexts, and described them as a non-linear, progressive process [18]. In this context, the English architect Bordeleau compared the architectural styles of different civilizations and buildings, classifying them according to their diverse origins in a distinctive way, to illustrate the process of progress, chronological development, and Individuality of different architectural origins. He focused on the comparative characteristics of thirteen selected architectural styles [13]. As shown in Fig. 3, Bordeleau also provides a summary of the most important architectural landmarks in ancient and modern times, drawn to the same scale,

with shapes and dimensions drawn from the best references. It illustrates the extent of qualitative difference and temporal development between different buildings in different eras [13]. as shown in Fig. 4.

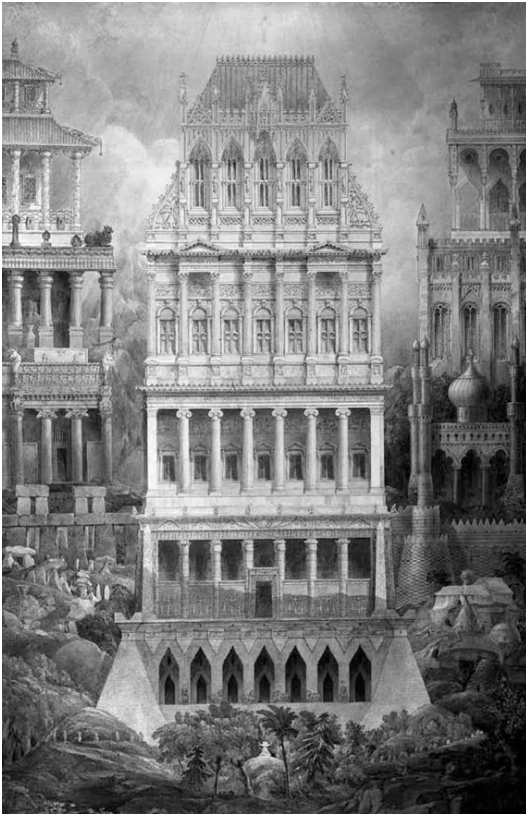


Fig. 3. Bordeleau, comparative characteristics of thirteen unique architectural styles [13].

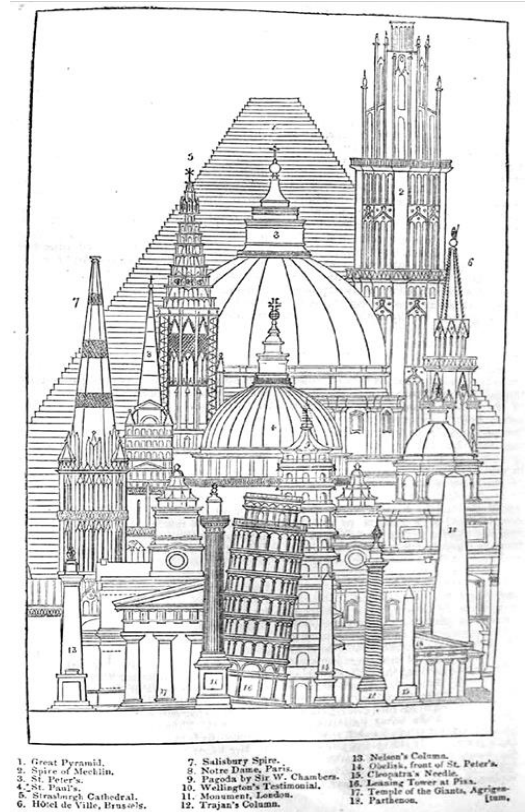


Fig. 4. Bordeleau, comparative drawing on the origins and progress of architecture [13].

Jacoby discusses the qualitative development of architecture and its temporal link between past and present. He states: "Everything must have a precedent; nothing ever comes from nothing, and this can only apply to all human inventions. These 'pre-existing seeds' are found in formal precedents and first principles, which, as moral (intellectual) inventions, are always bound by emotion" [19]. Jacoby believes that artistic styles are conditioned by circumstances and relationships. This presupposes a teleological and historicist outcome—not the linearity of history—and the presence of artistic invention through style and method [19]. With the loss of conviction that non-historical frameworks can adequately explain the true complexity of history, historicist consciousness has come to understand the development of historical time in terms of difference, individuality, and change. Each stage along the path of development was defined by its unique relationship to what came before it and its unique contribution to what came after [20]. Therefore, several ways of relating the past to the present and developing it emerged, stemming from unique identities and origins. Based on the above, the research will delve into explaining and summarizing two mechanisms of architectural historicism in the process of embodying the cultural and architectural identity of peoples, based on the previous essential whole and the individuality of the present, and arriving at a future architecture. These are as follows:

2.3.1 Reproduction (*interpretive pluralism*)

This type of historicism is defined as being built on multiple layers of rich speculation, myths, and semantic projection. In other words, it constructs a "fiction," which will prove to be a productive—albeit ambiguous—layer of meaning that offers new insights [21]. In this category, the common view is that none of the forms should bear a direct resemblance to original forms in history; however, some may include forms that evoke those origins. Sometimes, these forms are said to be the product of conscious and deliberate production, and there may be a subtle evocation of the past. The final form of the composition in the creative process emerges with the designer's interpretation [22]. The transmission of knowledge depends on historicity. "One learns, not literally, but in the spirit of these teachings. To imitate the ancient does not mean to repeat what the ancients built, but rather as the ancients themselves would have built, had they responded to the same new demands, needs, and circumstances." Tradition and precedent are only conceptual, not formal, and the artistic achievements of each period must be judged on their own merits [19]. The best examples of this kind of historicity are Botta's works. Manrique asserts that Botta's works extract "conceptual qualities" rather than the stylistic aspects of the local built context. Manrique's interest in the particular origins of Botta's scripts may stem from a desire to legitimize the scripts and establish their authenticity through historical precedent. Botta's historicism thus consists of a set of possible historical references and expected meanings. This enables Botta's work to resist strict classification—as modernist, postmodernist, revivalist, traditionalist, classical, or any other term—because it seems to be all of these things at the same time [21]. Fig. 5 shows one of Botta's historicist works in which he reproduces the local past, achieving a kind of ambiguity that has led to multiple interpretations.



Fig. 5. Mario Botta: Office and apartment building, Lugano, 1985–1990 [21].

Perhaps the most common claim about the origin of Botta's lines is that they refer to various Italian traditions of planed construction. These traditions begin with the Roman practice of planed brick and stone construction that emerged in the third and fourth centuries, as in Fig. 6, and evolved over about 1,000 years into the planed facades of medieval Romanesque and Gothic churches found mostly in northern Italy [21].



Fig. 6. Brick and stone construction on the Aurelian walls, Rome, 3rd century AD [21].

2.3.2 Contrast and integration

Bildhauer discusses the issue of the connection between the past and the present, the contradiction of needs between them, and the historicist position on the preservation of architectural heritage and how it has developed over time, historically, leading to an integration of the past and the present. He notes, "Although I am always frustrated when I visit a medieval church and am not given any information to tell me which elements are old Gothic and which are new Gothic, it is also a pleasure to see layers of time and modifications accumulating on a living building in use, not somehow original and out of time" [23]. Frost has recommended the best way to deal with architectural heritage, noting that "the fashion for imitation alterations and additions in the renovation of ancient buildings has been misleading." In early times, this type of forgery was impossible. SPAB also acknowledged that past eras had the ability to add to existing structures, increasing their value [24]. If a building is deemed valuable enough to be preserved, all contemporary additions must be stylistically separated from the original, thus defining all forms of "new" architecture as a style [24]. This underscores the importance of the principles of historicism's individualism and development in dealing with architectural heritage, and hence the mechanism of simultaneous integration and contrast between past and present in dealing with history. Frost provides an example of historical falsification of existing historic buildings through additions, which blur some of the lines between old and new. This is the restoration by architect Hans Dolgast in 1957 of the Alte Pinakothek, which had been bombed by the Allies in World War II [24], as shown Fig. 7. In contrast, the Fürst & Friedrich office and retail project in the center of Düsseldorf is a new and stunning building, opened in 2019. It embodies the historical approach to the architectural additions to the existing heritage, which gives the building a new meaning and importance that enriches the existing structure and provides new layers of development, through the mechanism of contrast and integration by preserving the original building in its essence and original form, as in Fig. 8.

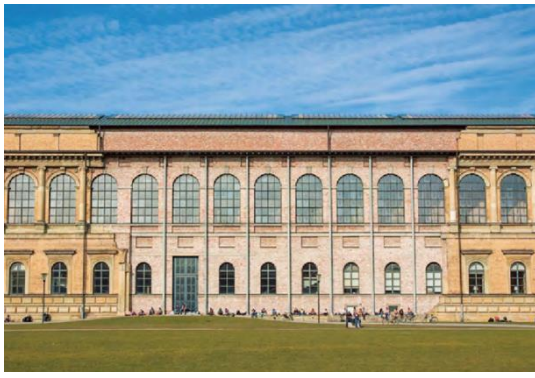


Fig. 7. Comparison between the Alte Pinakothek Museum after its bombing by the Allies and after the Dolgast repairs: Left [25], Right, [26].



Fig. 8. The Fürst and Friedrich building, the contrast and integration in the exterior and interior design between past and present, materially and formally [27].

Table 1. The theoretical framework, derived practical criteria, possible values, and application mechanisms.

Concept Type	Concept	Derived Practical Standard	Possible Values
Primary Concept	Holism	The extent of returning to historical references to consolidate identity and achieve a degree of connection with historical origins.	Selective attachment to history includes: attachment to ideas and customs, attachment to forms, attachment to the symbolic and emotional side.
Primary Concept	Individuality	The extent to which the rooted cultural identity is linked to the uniqueness and context of the present without resorting to general, comprehensive interpretations.	Zeitgeist influences: The vision of the existing political and cultural order, local materials, and construction technology.
Primary Concept	Development	The level of creativity and innovation in reshaping historical elements to suit the requirements of the present, leading to a unique future architecture.	The extent of historical development and its connection to the present through: the development of forms, the reinterpretation of concepts, the interaction between historical memory and the uniqueness of the contemporary moment.
Secondary Mechanism	Reproduction	The quality of evoking intellectual and conceptual characteristics in producing new architectural forms that have the spirit of the past, the uniqueness of the present, and the innovation of the future.	Transforming ideas and concepts into new architectural forms, creativity, formal development, and interpretive pluralism of architectural form.
Secondary Mechanism	Contrast and integration	The ability to combine the temporal differences of the past and present in a balanced manner that achieves harmony between history and modernity.	Formal contrast, integration between the old and the new, the developed, the difference in materials or forms.

3. Applied examples of architectural historicism

This section presents examples that illustrate the principles and mechanisms of historicism, derived from the theoretical framework through practical examples. The research will analyze these examples and their architectural applications, demonstrating the process of linking the past to the present and how contemporary architectural development inherently relies on historical precedents.

3.1 King Fahd national library project, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2013, Gerber architekten.

It is one of the most important cultural buildings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The project combines the challenge of designing within the existing building stock while taking into account Arab culture [28]. The symbolic cubic shape of the new building surrounds the existing building on all sides, integrating it in an unusual way, in accordance with the principles of archaeological conservation. This presents the National Library as a new architectural form in the Riyadh cityscape without disregarding the old building, which now serves as an interior block. The new square building is covered with a delicate textile facade that follows traditional Middle Eastern architectural patterns and connects them with the latest technological advances. The existing building, topped with a dome, is hidden within the new building. The project aimed to design a building that reflects authentic Arab culture and is befitting of its distinguished location. This design was intended to preserve the essence of the existing historic building [28]. The main element of the facade was developed specifically for the new building. It is a cladding composed of diamond-shaped textile canopies, characterized by their flexibility to be revealed and concealed. The white terraced canopies, supported by a tensioned steel cable structure, act as sunshades and interpret the construction tradition of the Arabian tent in a modern way. This juxtaposition of old and new creates a unified and prestigious architectural appearance with a distinctive style. This decorative steel cable structure has a solar transmittance of only 7%, yet simultaneously allows visibility from both inside and outside. With outdoor temperatures reaching 50°C, the fabric façade, optimized for the local sun path by light refraction, combines the required solar protection with maximum transparency that allows light to penetrate [29]. As shown in Figs. (9,10, and 11).

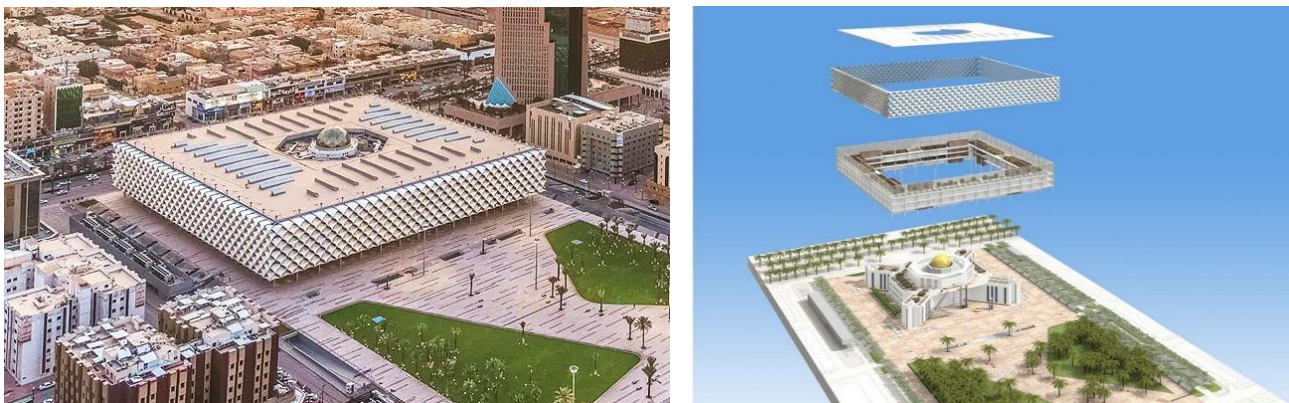


Fig. 9. The new addition to the existing project, and how the old building was completely surrounded to achieve a contemporary architectural look [29], [30].



Fig. 10. Details of the diamond-shaped textile canopies, which were taken from the idea of the Arab tent, but in a unique and advanced form that is in harmony with current progress [28].

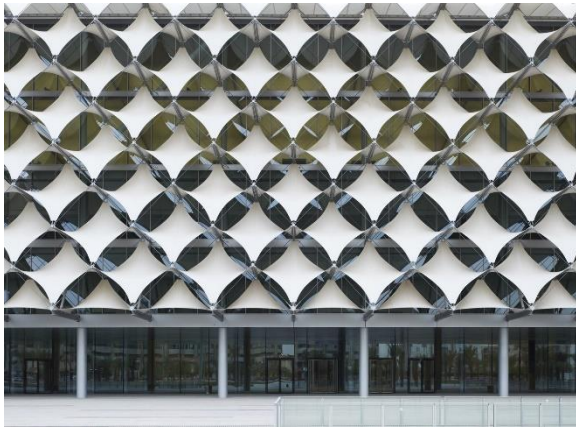


Fig. 11. The exterior facade of the new building, which is controlled by the opening and closing of the textile elements [29].

3.2 Haas-Haus, Vienna, Austria, 1990, Hans Hollein.

The modern Haas-Haus was one of the most controversial building projects of the late 20th century in Vienna. Viennese architect Hans Hollein designed a concrete and glass structure opposite St. Stephen's Cathedral. The circular curve of its facade echoes the ancient Roman fortress of Vindobona, whose design can be traced back to Vienna. This is one of the principles Hollein used to blend into its surroundings, despite its architectural style being at odds with its surroundings [31]. The Haas-Haus is a modern building and stands in stark contrast to the historic St. Stephen's Cathedral. As the building stands in such stark contrast to the St. Stephen's Cathedral opposite it, it sparked heated debate when it was built. This building attracts attention with its modern style and its striking mirrored window, which provides an interesting contrast to the traditional architecture of St. Stephen's Cathedral. It is a symbol of change and development in the city and an important example of contemporary architecture in Vienna. The striking design of the Haas building, particularly its large mirrored window, gives it a unique aesthetic appearance. The reflections of the surrounding historic

buildings and St. Stephen's Cathedral on the building's facade create impressive visual effects and an exciting connection between old and new. The Haas Haus is therefore an expression of the progressive mindset and innovative spirit that characterizes Vienna. It represents the city's desire to combine tradition and modernity while creating space for creative innovation [32]. Along with careful consideration of how the building relates to St. Stephen's Square, Hollein also sought to demonstrate a clear distinction between the building and its historical past by incorporating new design techniques and stone materials. Through all these careful considerations, architect Hans Hollein effectively demonstrated how to integrate the new style of postmodern architecture with its architectural predecessors [32]. The building's design therefore reflects critical thinking, aiming not only to recover the past, but also to reframe it within a progressive present. As shown in Figs. (12, 13, 14, and 15).

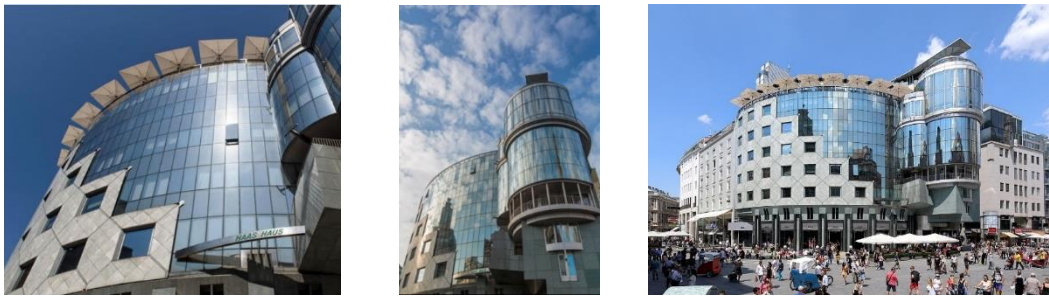


Fig. 12. The Roman curves on the building's facade, which mimic the layout of the ancient Roman fortress of Vindobona and re-formulate it visually and aesthetically, linking the architectural form to the city's historical context [33].



Fig. 13. The building's reflective facade, which showcases the complex architectural relationship between the past and the present, through the reflection of the historical surroundings, including St. Stephen's Cathedral [33].

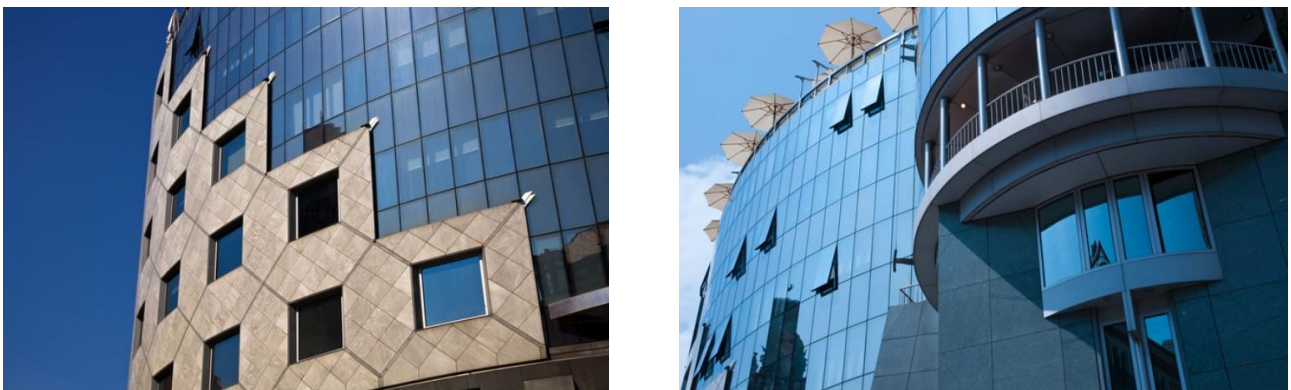


Fig. 14. The building combines the use of modern reflective glass with traditional stone, a deliberate choice aimed at creating a physical balance between the progressive structure and the symbolic structure of the historic site [33].



Fig. 15. The historical site and St. Stephen's Cathedral adjacent to the Haas House building [33].

4. Results and discussion

Analyzing the two projects (King Fahd National Library and the Haas House building) reveals that architectural historicism is not merely a formal imitation of the past, but rather an effective means of reproducing cultural identity through the tools and specificities of the present. The study successfully demonstrates that contemporary architecture can derive its elements from history, not as an imitation, but rather as an interpretive process that reshapes the past according to contemporary requirements.

In the first project (King Fahd National Library), the architect achieved a high level of "holism" by repurposing the symbolism of the Arab tent in a modern way, integrating the ancient building into a contemporary structure without losing its original meaning. Individuality was also achieved through the use of modern techniques and local materials that reflected the spirit of the place and its time. This resulted in an architectural development that reinterprets heritage elements in a new, sophisticated form, reflecting harmony between past and present.

The second project, Haas House, represented a bolder approach to integration and contrast, confronting the historical context surrounding St. Stephen's Cathedral with a reflective facade that visually reproduces the city's history without imitating its details. Here, the degree of "inclusiveness" was less, given the project's reliance on contrast rather than integration. However, it demonstrated a remarkable distinction in "individuality" and "Development," interpreting ancient Roman symbols in a modern architectural manner, combining stone-glazed glass with contemporary technologies.

Returning to the theoretical framework upon which the analysis was based, the mechanisms of (interpretive reproduction) and (integration and contrast) proved effective in achieving design results that go beyond superficial replication of the past, and achieve architecture with conceptual depth and a clear cultural identity.

Evaluation of the first project according to the derived practical criteria, possible values, and application mechanisms:

Table 2. Results of Application of theoretical criteria to the first practical project.

Theoretical Criterion	Possible Values	Project Description	Efficiency Level
Holism	Selective engagement with history, including: ideas and traditions, formal elements, symbolic and emotional dimensions.	- The project achieves <i>intellectual</i> engagement with history through the reinterpretation of the Arab tent. - The old building is integrated into a new symbolic mass tied to the community's emotional heritage.	High: Successfully connects material historical elements with contemporary reality in a creative way to achieve identity.

Individuality	Spirit of the age: Political and cultural context, local materials, construction technology.	- Use of contemporary materials and technologies (steel structure, solar control systems, glass panels) in a spatial expression that reflects the spirit of the time.	High: Clearly expresses spatial and temporal specificity.
Development	Degree of historical development and relevance to the present through: form development, reinterpretation of concepts, interaction between historical memory and contemporary uniqueness.	- Novel reinterpretation of traditional meanings and concepts (tent structure, flexible fabric, mashrabiya for light and view control). - Harmonious integration of contemporary technologies with local architectural heritage.	High: Conscious employment of history to generate new forms rooted in historical concepts.

Table 3. Results of Applying the Theoretical Framework Mechanisms to the first practical project.

Mechanism	Derived Practical Criterion	Project Description	Efficiency Level
Reproduction	Quality of evoking intellectual and conceptual characteristics to produce new architectural forms that embody the spirit of the past, uniqueness of the present, and innovation of the future.	A new form was generated carrying values, ideas, and identity of the past (tent, fabric, mashrabiya) within a contemporary architectural expression.	High: The project demonstrates deeply rooted and renewed design thinking.
Contrast and integration	Effectiveness in merging temporal differences between past and present in a balanced way that achieves harmony between history and modernity.	A degree of contrast between the old structure and the modern cubic envelope, with functional and aesthetic integration between the historical and contemporary buildings in a balanced manner.	Medium

Evaluation of the second project according to the derived practical criteria, possible values, and application mechanisms:

Table 4. Results of Application of theoretical criteria to the second practical project.

Theoretical Criterion	Possible Values	Project Description	Efficiency Level
Holism	Selective engagement with history, including: ideas and traditions, formal elements, symbolic and emotional dimensions.	- Symbolic integration of history through the inspiration of Roman curves linked to the ancient Vindobona fortress. - The reflective façade visually revives the historical context, linking the building to the city's historical fabric. - Partial use of traditional stone in the facade.	Medium: Due to reliance on a high level of contrast with the context, despite integrating with it.

Individuality	Spirit of the age: Political and cultural context, local materials, construction technology.	- Design reflects the uniqueness of postmodern architecture within a historical setting. - A contemporary project that does not replicate the past, but rather engages with it through modern techniques and materials such as reflective glass and concrete.	High: The building stands out from its surroundings in a unique and harmonious manner.
Development	Degree of historical development and relevance to the present through: form development, reinterpretation of concepts, interaction between historical memory and contemporary uniqueness.	- Reinterpretation of circular curvatures from the Middle Ages in a new way. - The design includes formal development through the use of mirrors that reflect the historical surroundings in an indirect manner. - Excellent integration of contemporary uniqueness with the collective memory of society, as Hollein effectively embeds this postmodern building into St. Stephen's Square.	High: Clear visual and conceptual development.

Table 5. Results of Applying the Theoretical Framework Mechanisms to the second practical project.

Mechanism	Derived Practical Criterion	Project Description	Efficiency Level
Reproduction	Quality of evoking intellectual and conceptual characteristics to produce new architectural forms that embody the spirit of the past, uniqueness of the present, and innovation of the future.	The building develops a new form based on historical concepts such as Roman circular curves using modern materials. Additionally, the concept of reflecting the surrounding history onto the building gives it varying forms from different angles.	Medium
Contrast and integration	Effectiveness in merging temporal differences between past and present in a balanced way that achieves harmony between history and modernity.	Clear contrast and integration between modern materials (glass, concrete, metal panels) and the traditional historical surroundings of the medieval era.	High: Contrasting with the historical environment and integrating with it visually and aesthetically

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that architectural historicism is not a reactionary approach, but rather an analytical and creative tool through which cultural identity can be reconstructed through a conscious understanding of history and its application within the specificities of the present. The projects studied demonstrate that using elements from the past does not mean imitating them, but rather invoking their meanings and content within new contexts, producing architecture that is distinct in both form and content.

Therefore, it can be concluded that:

- Architectural historicism represents a creative medium that links the past with the present to produce an architectural future with a distinct cultural character.
- Architectural identity is not copied, but rather reformulated through interpretive mechanisms based on spatial and temporal specificity.

- Reconciling the concepts of "holism", "individuality" and "Development" is key to producing a future-oriented architecture that derives its legitimacy from its roots without losing its modernity.

The research recommends relying on historicism as a creative approach in contemporary architectural design practices, provided that it is treated as a critical interpretive process and not as a means of literal copying.

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