



Architectural Discourse and Gender: Analyzing Egyptian Women's Representation in Architectural and Engineering Periodicals in 20th Century Egypt

Mai Aboul-dahab ^{1,2*}, Yasser Moustafa ², and Yasser Mansour ¹

¹ Department of Architectural Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Ain Shams University, Egypt

² Department of Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design, College of Engineering & Technology, AASTMT, Egypt

Abstract

Architectural magazines serve as valuable historical documents, enriching the narrative of architectural history and informing teaching practices. This paper examines the representation of women in five Egyptian architectural and engineering magazines published throughout the 20th century: *al-'Imara* (The Architecture), *al-Nashra al-Ma'marya* (The Architectural Bulletin), *al-Ma'mar* (The Architectural), *'Alam al-Bena'a* (The Construction World), and *Majallat al-Muhandisin* (The Engineers Magazine), covering the period from monarchy till President Mubarak's era, which had complex shifts toward women's status in society and architectural thought.

This study employs discourse analysis, examining both the visual and textual elements of the content in the selected magazines, with particular attention to the language used. It traces how these magazines contributed to shaping the image of women in architecture. Early publications, like *al-'Imara*, reinforced male dominance in the field, associating women with domesticity and consumerism. Nevertheless, women resisted these narratives by engaging in writing, art exhibitions, and architectural patronage, though often within constrained frameworks. Publications, such as *Majallat al-Muhandisin*, aligned with socialist ideologies, presenting women as professionals and maternal figures in line with state-driven modernization efforts. By the late 1960s, however, women's visibility in professional discourse diminished. The late 70s and early 1980s marked a shift, with a growing number of female architects and increased representation in magazines like *'Alam al-Benaa*. Despite this progress, gender imbalances persisted, as women's contributions to completed architectural projects were limited and often framed as collaborative efforts with male colleagues. The research highlights the fluctuating

representation of women in architecture, shaped by political, cultural, and societal transformations in Egypt.

Keywords: Women architects, Architectural magazines, Discourse analysis, Shifting perceptions, Egypt

1. Introduction

Architecture has never been neutral regarding social issues, as it can reproduce societal values. The reproduction of values, as such, opens up possibilities of either conforming or transforming them. Therefore, architecture has been at the forefront of social struggles for a long time (Schalk et al., 2017, p. 13). Gender social struggles are also reproduced through architecture. Leslie Kanes Weisman has historically noted, "The man-made environments which surround us reinforce conventional patriarchal definitions of women's role in society and spatially imprint those sexist messages on our daughters and sons." (Weisman, 1981, p. 6).

Scholars worked to explore the gender dynamics in architecture in the late 1970's. Feminist architectural design, history, and theory have changed over time. Feminist architectural history developed from telling 'her story' in which they aimed to recover women architects' roles to embracing theory and interpreting architectural representations historically (Rendell, 2012, pp. 90–91). late 20th-century architectural theoretical publications on gender built on the constructivist thinking of the third wave of feminism in the 1980s and 1990s, which focused on gender as a cultural construct. Scholarly work has evolved to address the discriminatory social practices of architecture that establish and maintain gender differentiations (Heynen & Pérez-Moreno, 2022, p. 111).

This study builds upon the above scholarly work. It explores the history of female architects and their professional development in Egypt. The study aims to understand how the image of women and female architects was represented and constructed in 20th-century Egypt through Egyptian architectural and engineering periodicals.¹ The paper reviews five Egyptian architectural and engineering magazines covering the period from monarchy till President Mubarak's era, namely *al-Imara* (The Architecture), *al-Nashra al-Ma'marya* (the Architectural Bulletin), *al-Ma'mar* (The Architectural), *'Alam al-Bena'a* (The Construction World) and *Majallat al-Muhandisin* (The Engineers Magazine). The paper employs discourse analysis to reveal the shifts in the perceived image of women in architecture in Egypt while underscoring the influence of political and societal changes in shaping this image.

2. Architectural periodicals disseminating knowledge

Architectural periodicals are one of the various forms of media that are used to circulate and legitimize architecture. Mitchell Schwarzer (1999) notes, "The architectural periodical is consequently one of the best discursive sites for investigating how changing theoretical argumentation and historical narration intersect with day-to-day architectural practice and profession" (Schwarzer, 1999, p. 342). Hélène Janniére and France Vanlaethem (2008, p. 60) refer to two approaches to addressing architectural periodicals in scholarly work. The first approach involves writing the history of architectural periodicals themselves. This interest grew

¹ The terms 'journal' and 'magazine' are adopted as synonymous with the term 'periodical'—each deployed according to popular usage to describe categories of serialized, non-newspaper publications.

in the 1970s; an example of this approach is Rolf Fuhlrott's (1975) survey of German-language architectural magazines. The second approach uses them as accessible documents, compared to architectural archives, to write the history of architecture. Consequently, they function as architectural practice records and contributors to the theoretical frameworks shaping it.

Steve Parnell (2023) extends on Janni re & Vanlaethem's approaches to architectural history by splitting their second approach into two; he names them histories' through' architecture magazines and histories' from' architecture magazines. He defines histories' through' architecture magazines as the approach that uses periodicals as evidence or witnesses to events. His third approach, histories from' architecture, acknowledge architectural periodicals as active agents in constructing the discipline and history of architecture. One of the early and distinct examples of this approach is H  l  ne Lipstadt's (1979) doctoral research, which examined the social history of France's earliest art, architectural, and civil engineering publications. Her study focused on Cesar Daly and his architectural periodical *Revue Generale* as a case study, basing her analysis on the sociology of Bourdieu. She argues that the magazine was more than just a source but was implicated in the social and political realities of those producing it.

Scholarly work using architectural magazines has become more established across different countries, contexts, and historical periods. For example, Emilee Mathews (2021) examines four major architectural publications to analyze the representation of women of color in leadership roles within featured architectural firms. Daniel Mart  nez (2021) explores the role of advertisements in *Art & Architecture* magazine in postwar American society, specifically how they contributed to the association of women with the domestic sphere, particularly the kitchen. Sina Hajiabadi (2024) analyzes the representation of women in Iranian architectural magazines from 1946 to 2001.

Meanwhile, in the Egyptian context, in particular, three studies are influential. Mercedes Volait's (1988) review of *al-Imara* magazine analyzes its development, highlighting its themes and content over the publication lifetime. Marwa El- 'Ashmouni's (2013) PhD dissertation studies Egypt's local architectural discourse and how it reshapes both local and global frameworks, impacting the profession within the Egyptian context. She focuses on *'Alam al-Bena'a* magazine as a case study and employs Edward Said's contrapuntal reading as a method of analysis. Mohamed Elshahed (2015) investigates how Egypt's architectural modernism converged with the country's political transition from monarchy to military republic. His study utilizes widely circulated printed sources and publications, including visual materials in the press, professional magazines, state publications, and propaganda booklets to provide a critical cultural history. Our research continues this line of using architectural periodicals as a site for investigation, but our focus is on the image of the women architects they circulated.

3. Method and sources

This paper employs a qualitative method. It uses discourse analysis to reveal a broader understanding of how the image of women and women architects was constructed in architectural magazines. In its broader sense, discourse studies language used in society, expressed through conversations or documents (Cook, 2008, p. 216). Discourse analysis is derived from multiple disciplines, including linguistics, semiotics, social psychology, and cultural studies (Muncie, 2006, p. 74). Our use of discourse analysis here follows Michel Foucault's genealogy. Foucault's approach to discourse identifies the discursive practices inherent in language (Cook, 2008, p. 217). According to Michel Foucault, discourse is not a group of signs forming text; instead, it is a set of "practices that systematically form the objects

of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourse, as such, produces something else rather than something that exists and is analyzed in isolation from other things (Mills, 1997, p. 17).

This study applied a set of criteria focusing on both visual and textual elements of the content in the studied magazines. The criteria included examining the frequency and context of female appearances, as well as the roles attributed to women, such as professional, domestic, or passive roles. The study also assessed the language used by male architects and engineers to describe women or architects roles, it also examined the language employed by women themselves. Additionally, the research analyzed these images while positioning women status within the broader social and political context of the time. This approach enabled the identification of patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and stereotyping, shedding light on how these discursive practices contributed to the construction of gendered identities within the architectural profession.

3.1 Egyptian architectural and engineering magazines in the 20th century

One key publication during the first half of the 20th century was *al- 'Imara* (The Architecture), a bimonthly periodical. It was the project of architect Sayyed Karim. He started its publication in 1939 and continued till 1959². *Al- 'Imara* was renamed *al- 'Imara w-al-Funun* in 1952 because it included arts and architecture. It faced censorship for not sticking to the architectural field in its content, but it resolved the issue by changing its title to include both (Volait, 1988, p. 53). Due to its highly informative nature and the mass of projects published, Volait mentions that it serves as Egypt's modern architecture repository.

In the 1960s, *al-Nashra al-Ma 'marya* (The Architectural Bulletin), published by the Society of Egyptian Architects (SEA) in 1964, became another significant source. However, it was short-lived, and its last issue was published in September 1970. The editorial board of The Architectural Bulletin included both architects Tawfiq 'Abd al-Gawwad and Mohamed Hammad, which both were authoring before in *al- 'Imara*, thus bringing in with them their expertise (Elshahed, 2015, p. 121).

Our search for architectural publications from the 1970s yielded no results. However, in the 1980s, two architectural magazines emerged. In 1982, the Society of Egyptian Architects³ They launched another magazine titled *al-Magalla al-Ma 'marya* (The Architectural Magazine), with Architect Yehya Eid as the editor-in-chief, who also served as the Secretary-General under board chairman Ibrahim Nagiub. Except for 1982, issues were published yearly, although intended to be a quarterly magazine. In 1987, the magazine was renamed *Al-Ma 'mar* Architectural Magazine when Architect Taher El Sadek took over as editor-in-chief, and Hassan Mohamed Hassan became the society's board chairman. Two issues were published per year. Unfortunately, the journal was short-lived and ceased publication in 1989 after releasing 16 issues.

The other magazine published in the 1980s was *'Alam al-Bena'a* (The Construction World). A monthly magazine published by the Center of Planning and Architectural Studies (CPAS). Architect Abdel Baky Ibrahim, who was its director and also served as the magazine's editor-in-chief, began publishing it in 1980 and continued until 1999.

We also included *Majallat al-Muhandisin* (The Engineers Magazine) in our review since architecture in Egypt falls under the broader engineering framework, with architects commonly

² Volait notes the conflicting reports regarding the exact dates of *al- 'Imara*'s final publication. Some sources cite 1959 and 1962 as the last years of its release, while she has not been able to examine issues after 1957. Similarly, we could not locate any publications of *al- 'Imara* beyond 1957, and thus, our review concludes with this date.

³ The society was named in the magazine The Association of Architectural Engineers.

referred to as "architectural engineers" *Muhandis M'amari*.⁴The magazine, published monthly since 1945 by its founder, Engineer Ibrahim Osman, who was the head of the Egyptian Engineers Syndicate and still published by the syndicate today, offers valuable insight into all aspects of engineering, including architectural engineering.

In the following sections, we provide a chronological overview of the representation of women in architectural and engineering publications, aiming to understand how they constructed the image of women architects.

4. Women in architectural magazines in the early 20th century

4.1 The context

As Elshahed noted, the architectural profession in Egypt underwent a process of "Egyptianization " during the first half of the 20th century. Through Egyptian architects' production of architectural journals, professional conferences, and engagement in national projects, they increasingly asserted their presence in the field throughout the 1930s. The publication of *al-Imara* was part of the increasing professionalization of Egyptian architects (Elshahed, 2015, p. 98).

As for Egyptian women, women of the upper and middle class were cultivating a feminist consciousness by the end of the 19th century, parallel to the emerging culture of modernity. In the early 20th century, they started to claim public spaces through philanthropy, intellectual programs, and teaching. They began to claim new societal roles, moving beyond their traditional confinement to the home, but they were still constrained by the force of the conventional patriarchal moral code (Badran, 1995, pp. 47–60). Women were accepted to enter faculties of law, science, and commerce during the 1930's (Reid, 1990, p. 105). However, a field like architecture remained a male-dominated field until the mid-20th century. Women were exempted from entering Engineering faculties as such architecture, while there was no prohibiting law, according to Amina al- Al-Sa'id, the deans were rejecting their entry (Al-Sa'id, 1952, p. 31).

4.2 Promoting women domesticity

Al-Imara celebrated male architects' contributions to modernity; it reflected the broader gender dynamics of the time by relegating women primarily to domestic roles. In its second issue, the journal identified itself, its roles, and its readers. It explicitly addressed housewives, emphasizing their influence over the home. Men were associated with public architectural achievements; they were addressed as the architect, the contractor, the owner, and the artist ("Magallat Al-Imara," 1939, p. 90). Articles identifying the architect's role emphasize this image by promoting the discipline as being purely for men. Articles identifying the architect's role emphasize this image by promoting the discipline as being purely for men. For instance, an article titled *Al-Muhandis al-Mi'mari wa ma yajib an yatawafara fih* by Mohamed al-Din, a lecturer on design and theories of architecture at the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, describes the architectural engineer and the qualities he must possess. He identifies the architect as follow:

The modern definition of the architect is 'the artist who creates buildings, defines their proportions, and works in his own unique way to distribute and beautify their elements. He is the one who supervises their construction according to his vision, estimates their costs, and monitors

⁴ The limited availability of Architectural periodicals in the 1960s and 1970s limited our ability to chart women architects' images during this important period. Therefore, we relied on Engineers magazine to fill in this gap.

their expenses. He is both an artist and, at the same time, a man of work and craftsmanship (Mohy-al-Din, 1939, p. 320).

He continues by explaining in earlier eras and any other era, the architect is perceived as a man of art, craft, and extensive knowledge—a sociable and global man

Advertisements in the magazine also circulated such images of women in the bathroom and kitchen. They promoted their image as primary consumers of home products, including textiles, bathrooms, and Air conditioners. However, throughout its pages, a broader engagement of women is also revealed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Advertisement promoting women's position in the house and their roles as consumers



Source: al-Imara, volume 1, issue 9, 1939

4.3 Parallel resistances: women as authors, artists, and patrons

Despite the magazine promoting the traditional women's image as consumers and their delegation to the domestic realm, other counter-discourses penetrate the magazine. Women participated in architecture in other influential ways. They authored eight articles in Al-Imara. Six of these articles appeared in the first two volumes of the journal, focusing primarily on women's roles in home decoration, reinforcing the association between women and the domestic realm. For instance, Layla Ibrahim (1939) wrote about flower arrangements in the inaugural issue, framing women's contribution as 'Touching of the house.' In contrast, Lilly Doss⁵ (1939) critiqued male interior designers, whom she described as "dictators" imposing their vision on women, urging women to assert their agency through furniture choices and interior design. These articles illustrate a negotiation of women's roles in domestic architecture, where they were encouraged to assert some control over their environment on the one hand. On the other hand, writing became a tool that asserted its penetration into the male-dominated field of architecture. After the initial two years, only two more articles by women were published. This act of

⁵ Lilly Doss was a social work pioneer. She co-founded the Women's Association for Health Improvement in Egypt.

dismantling women authors returned the discourse towards a male-centric image of the architectural discipline.

However, female artists continued to be featured in *al-Imara*. Women had already been involved in the arts scene in Egypt before formally entering the Faculty of Fine Arts. They participated in the Cairo Art Salon, an annual art exhibition, during the 1930s (Radwan, 2018, pp. 119–120). Women organized both solo and group exhibitions. Their work was reviewed in *al-Imara*. Architect Mohamed Hamad, for instance, devoted articles to women artists, showcasing their art exhibitions and highlighting their techniques and the philosophy behind their artwork. The active participation of women in arts was also evident in their collaborative organization of exhibitions. *Al-Imara*, for instance, reviewed *M'arad Gam'at al-Sayydat* (The women's union exhibition). The exhibition displayed both artworks by Egyptian and foreign women. Hamad also covered women's art events; he reviewed *M'arad Sayadat al-Qahira* (The Cairo Ladies Exhibition). He describes it as a "sign of women's participation in the arts renaissance" (Hamad, 1948, p. 36). Placing this discourse in the broader context where women were also not allowed to join the faculty of fine arts specifically, promotes an image of women's resistance to this cultural norm of excluding women; at the same time, it promoted a wider acceptance of women in arts. Meanwhile, it became acceptable for architects as they did not cross into the 'real' work of the architectural discipline.

Beyond the arts, women's patronage of architectural projects, mainly residential buildings, was notable. Throughout *Al-Imara*'s publication, 13 projects commissioned by women were documented, including high-profile commissions such as Injy Zadah's tenement building designed by Antoine Selim Nahas and Madame Marseil Ouzonnian's building by Sayyed Karim. Women also commissioned private villas. One notable example is the villa of the famous Egyptian singer Om Kalthoum, designed by Aly Labib Gabr. This aligns with Hilde Heynen's (2005) observation that women in the early 20th century often took on the role of clients in architectural projects, shaping the built environment through their patronage. Nevertheless, even though women were the central commissioners, architects describing these projects completely neglected this fact; they did not reference the negotiations undertaken between the client and the architect to deliver the project. They described the project's functions and design, emphasizing that it was all the one man, the architect, decisions, and work.

Only one project deviated from this dominant discourse, Asma hanem's waqf⁶ for an industrial school and women's care home. The project architect Tawfik 'Abdel Gawad (1949) admired Asma Hanem's choice for this philanthropy project. He stated the following on his introductory for the project:

And here is a new chapter in the pages of charitable and philanthropic works, contributed by a virtuous lady, the late Mrs. Asma Hanem Halim, the daughter of the late Ibrahim Pasha Halim, who sought to establish an industrial school to teach children manual crafts and to create an entity as a women's care shelter to host women who suffer from poverty.... thus, the esteemed lady set a remarkable example of genuine compassion toward women whose circumstances had worsened over time ('Abdel Gawad, 1949, p. 15).

⁶ In Egypt, there is a long-standing tradition of aiding people experiencing poverty through the awqaf system, where individuals dedicate a property as a waqf for the benefit of others

'Abdel Gawad's recognition of Asma Hanem constructs the wider acceptance and encouragement of women's participation in philanthropy; as such, her mention here comes as an act of tribute and, at the same time, an inspiration for future generations of women to continue along this path.

5. Women in architectural magazines during the 1950's- late 1960's

5.1 The context

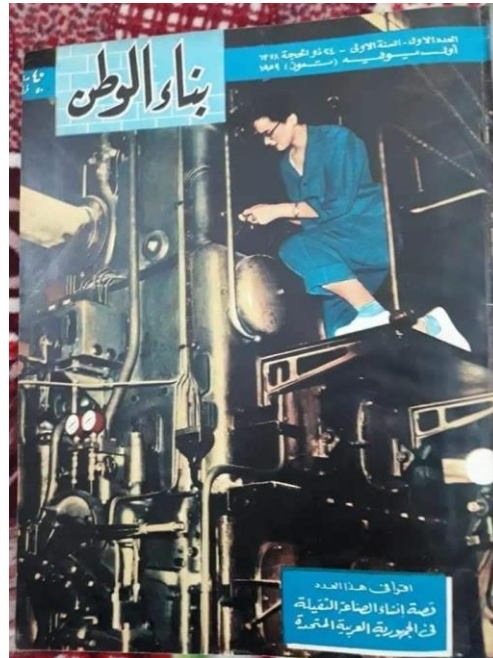
In 1952, Egypt experienced significant political upheaval after the Free Officers took control of the royal palace and forced King Farouk to abdicate on July 23. Gamal Abdel Nasser was put in charge as a prime minister in 1954 and held the presidency in 1956. The new regime had the intent of the agrarian reform to switch a considerable part of the nation's capital from agriculture to industry (Abdel Nasser, 1955, p. 207). The engineering field, in particular, became more prestigious during Abdel Nasser's regime (Moore, 1980, p. 44). The country expanded significantly on construction projects, requiring more architects to complete its development vision.

The regime also centralized women in its vision of development. By the 1960s, the regime had officially embraced Arab Socialism as its guiding ideology. A key focus of this agenda was reshaping gender and class dynamics by empowering marginalized groups, including women, peasants, and the urban poor. The status of women, in particular, was seen as a reflection of Egypt's progress toward becoming a modern, liberated nation after centuries of foreign rule (Bier, 2004, p. 100). As such, significant investments were made in expanding access to education. Female enrollment in secondary schools tripled between 1953 and 1962 (*Al-Mar'a Fi-l-Jumhuriyya al-'Arabiyya al-Muttahida*, 1962, p. 2), reflecting the regime's commitment to improving opportunities for women.

This period also marked the end of *al-'Imara*, which ceased publication in 1959 primarily due to the political downfall of its founder, Sayyid Karim (Volait, 1988, p. 52). The 1960s was a period of absence of architectural magazines run by individuals. Nationalization decisions issued in the early 1960s led the state to take control of all forms of activity and restricted the private sector. Elisabeth Kendall (2003, p. 42) notes that the government increased its hold on cultural activity by nationalizing press and publishing houses. El-'Ashmouni (2013, P.158) notes that this contributed to a parallel decline in architectural publications and discourse.

In parallel, in state-run publications, the regime aimed to transcend women's traditional roles, emphasizing women as building the nation with men and participating in fields from which they were previously excluded. This was reflected both literally and metaphorically. For instance, Between 1959 and 1966, the state used publications like the magazine *Bina' al-Watan* (Building the Nation), Issued by the state-owned *al-Gomhoriya* newspaper; to inform the public about state projects. The inaugural issue cover shoot featured a woman wearing an overall and standing atop machinery to promote women's enrollment in engineering (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Bina' al-Watan's* inaugural issue cover shoot



Source: *Bina' al-Watan*, issue 1, 1959

5.2 Promoting women professionalism

For the first time in *Majallat al-Muhandisin* (the Engineers Magazine), images of women architects were featured along with their profiles in an article by Architect Mohamed al-Hadry. He congratulated the three pioneering women architects for their graduation. He stated the following: "We have seen women as chemical engineers, architects, and civil engineers, and there is a wonder in that, as the society is progressing and moving forward and no retroactive [man] can move it backward since progressive policies are moving it to the fore" (1958, pp. 22–23). He reported on the places they worked in, embedding his narrative within the broader discourse of progress and modernity defined by the state. Given that the magazine operated under the auspices of the Engineers' Syndicate—a state-affiliated institution—it functioned as an extension of state ideology, aligning its content with official objectives and reinforcing the state's vision of women's professional development.

Majallat al-Muhandisin initially circulated a professional view towards female engineers. For example, one of the few times Sawsan El-Qusbi, the first female architect to graduate from Ain Shams University, was mentioned when she participated in the international architecture conference in 1958 with a project from Ain Shams University's architecture department. She was mentioned again when she attended the international housing conference alongside two other female architects. Although these discourses promoted professionalism, they were very few in their occurrence.

5.3 Promoting women maternal role

Sawsan El-Qusbi appeared as a member of the female engineers' committee. This committee was formed due to the syndicate's vision for women to establish it, reflecting the socialist society that

Nasser's government promoted, which emphasized benefiting from women's efforts (El-Sa'eed, 1966, p. 7). However, despite these noble goals, a magazine review reveals that the committee leaned more toward promoting women's maternal roles. This was evident from the publication of Bayt al-Muhandis (the Engineer's Home) section in the magazine, which started in 1966. It aimed to address engineers' family issues, simplify engineering concepts for their families, and provide advice on home beautification simply and economically (al-Hefny, 1966). The first articles in this section included titles like "Light Furniture for Your Home," "A Child Asked Me How Airplanes Fly," and "Passivity and Isolation in Our Popular Proverbs." The cover image for this section also promoted women's maternal role rather than their professional development. The image depicted the engineer's house as one where the man, the engineer, works on a drafting table while the woman, the wife, knits (Figure 3).

Only one article in Issue 8 for the year 1966 mentioned the participation of female engineers in the second international conference in England, supervised by the Women's Engineering Society in London, which two committee members attended. This was the only acknowledgment of female engineers' professionalism, leading to women being again associated with home and child education rather than being recognized as professional engineers. This section lasted only briefly; it was last published in 1968.

Both images promoted were aligned with the broader discourse of progress and modernity as defined by Nasser's state. The state did not abandon the pre-revolutionary ideas about women's roles in the domestic sphere. However, they were reshaped, creating new dynamics where tensions between state-building and preserving traditional roles persisted (Bier, 2011, p. 71).

Figure 3: Bayt al-Muhandis cover page



Source: Majallat al-Muhandisin, issue 7, November 1966, p. 23

5.4 Women going invisible

By the late 1960s, discourses around women becoming invisible were taking place. An article titled *Hawā' wa Fursatah al-'Ākhīrah* (Eve's Last Opportunity) reported on the female engineers' committee being dissolved in 1970 after its chairperson left the syndicate. The syndicate decided that such a committee was unnecessary as it promoted segregation, as no

comparable 'male engineers' committee' existed. The author stated the following: "The name of the committee has limited it to female engineers, excluding male engineers, which will undoubtedly lead to its failure" (*Hawā' Wa Fursatah Al-'Ākhīrah*, 1970, p. 20). It proposed renaming the committee to the 'Engineers' Families Care Committee to allow male participation. This, it argued, would align with the principle that women are eligible to participate in all committees. While this discourse may promote women and men collaboration, it projected the view that women-only initiatives were destined to fail without male involvement. The article's title also framed the situation as a final opportunity for women while subtly suggesting an atmosphere of male intolerance.

As for architecture magazines, *al-Nashra al-Ma'mariya* (the Architectural Bulletin), with its few issues, women were virtually absent from the magazines as architects with featured buildings. By the end of the 1960s, they were on the editorial board and members of the Society of Egyptian Architects. Unfortunately, it is not known how they engaged in magazine editing since no reference to the authors of articles is given, emphasizing again that the circulation of women's work is going invisible.

6. Women in architectural magazines from the 1970s to the Late 1990s

6.1 The context

Sadat succeeded Nasser in 1971. He led a coup on all the values and notions of Arab nationalism, bringing about divorce from the past (Osman, 2013, p. 16). He declared the open door policy *al-Infitah* to private investment in 1974. El-‘Ashmouni (2013, p. 170) notes that the regime's shifting resulted in a comparably major shift in architectural discourse. Sadat's promotion of consumer capitalism often resulted in the marginalization of poor communities while simultaneously idealizing the American urban model. This vision manifested in unrestricted investments, the proliferation of shopping malls, and the construction of massive five-star hotels dominating Cairo's skyline along the Nile.

The Sadat era continued the progress in expanding access to education for women, which started under Nasser. As for women architects, there was a significant increase in graduates from architecture departments and those registered by the engineer's syndicate. The number of registered architects in 1980 was almost 270, compared to 1970, around 50. Thus, the number multiplied by 5.⁷ A significant increase appeared between 1977 and 1978 when the number of registered women exceeded double the previous year. Abdel Nasser's earlier efforts to integrate women into various sectors were undoubtedly a factor in the increasing presence of women in engineering, coupled with the relaxed entry requirements for engineering—applying as such for students who later pursued architecture—as the high school score required became lower than previous years by the late 1960s.

The 1973 war had a further impact on the workforce. As Moore (1980, p. 139) notes, women were being called upon to fill engineering positions left vacant by men who were conscripted into the military. However, with the open-door policy *al-Infitah*, the government stopped hiring, putting employment completely in the hands of the private sector. For instance, the employment order for engineers was suspended in 1976.

As for the press, In the 1970s, there was a noticeable lack of architectural documentation in Egypt, mainly due to the absence of architectural magazines. The Architectural Bulletin, as mentioned earlier, published its final issue in September 1970, coinciding with the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following this, President Sadat began dismantling Nasser's cultural framework, and most journals sponsored by the Ministry of Culture were closed down (Kendall, 2003, p. 45). Coincidentally, it was not until 1982, During Hosny Mubarak's rule, that the Society of Egyptian Architects resumed publication, introducing its new journal, *al-Ma'mar*. While *‘Alam al-Bena'a*, as El-‘Ashmouni (2013) observes, its publication emerged at the height of the *Infitah* policy. When Hosny Mubarak rose to power in 1981, he continued Sadat's policy of openness.

6.2 A continuation of women's contributions going invisible in the seventies

The lack of architectural publication in the seventies rendered both male and female architects' contributions invisible. However, women were still invisible in *Majallat al-Muhandisin*. The last mention of Sawsan El-Qusbi was in 1971 when a delegation of architects from the Soviet Union

⁷ This data is calculated from the records we collected from the Egyptian Engineer's Syndicate of registered women architects.

visited Cairo to strengthen ties between the two nations. During a reception hosted by the union, a woman in the delegation remarked that she had not seen any female Egyptian architects during her visit to Egypt, she posed the following question "Where are the women architects?" ("Jusoor Al-Sadaqa," 1971, p. 20). The article had a picture of the woman whom asked the question and a man by her side and the photo caption included the following comment: "Alexanderofna wished that an Arab female architect would be by her side instead of the architect Hassan Abdul Mutal, so that there could be an intellectual feminine meeting" ("Jusoor Al-Sadaqa," 1971, p. 19). This led to a clarification being published in the magazine, stating that the syndicate had invited ten female architects. However, none attended, and Sawsan El-Qusbi was blamed for her absence despite previously being an active syndicate member.

Majallat al-Muhandisin featured only one project by a female architect during the seventies—Zakya Shafie's design for the Engineers Syndicate Social Club. However, her name was not mentioned in the article about the project; it only appeared in tiny print on the project images. Without prior knowledge that she was the project architect, dedicating her involvement to the small print would have been difficult. As such, this promoted women's invisibility in favor of the engineer's syndicate focus on highlighting the project as its own rather than emphasizing the importance of the architect's name.

6.3 Women architects as authors and academics

When the Society of Egyptian Architects resumed publication with its new journal, *Al-Magalla al-Ma'marya*, women were visible in authoring articles. It included nine articles authored by women architects exploring formal and informal housing in Egypt, housing in desert areas, and the intersection of psychology and architecture. The significance appears throughout the issue in circulating a narrative of women's interest in academia; the nine articles justify this: they were authored by six women; four were PhD holders and continued pursuing academic careers as lecturers in different universities.

Additionally, The presence of women architects in *'Alam Al-Bina* magazine is notably prominent in writing. Women played a significant role in contributing to the magazine; not a single issue was published without articles written by women. The editorial board, headed by Abdel Baki Ibrahim, usually consisted of women. Again, women's interest in academia is visible in the number of articles authored by PhD holders. Furthermore, of the three women featured in the personality of the issue section, a section which featured an architect with their work profile, two pursued academic careers; they were PhD holders and then lecturers in universities.

6.4 Architectural projects the realm of men?

Al-Magalla al-Ma'marya notably lacked any features on completed projects by women architects. This absence may be attributed to the journal's primary focus on government-endorsed projects, given its status as a publication managed by a state-supervised organization. However, *'Alam Al-Bina*, which was run by an individual, not a state organization, also had a similar approach. The magazine showcased several projects designed and implemented by women, though all were in partnership with men. These projects show that women contributed to significant works, including hospitals, museums, and resorts. However, the representation of such projects remains disproportionately lower compared to those by male architects. Over the course of the magazine's publication, only 13 projects were featured in which women appeared as partners alongside men, and only one project was led solely by a woman. To put this into

perspective, the magazine showcased over 400 projects in total, highlighting the persistent gender imbalance within the field. The fact that these projects were all in partnership with men highlights women's collaborative architectural efforts to overcome professional challenges. Furthermore, the magazine's section 'Personality of the Issue' highlighted three Egyptian women architects: Zakya Shafie, Mona Serag El-Din, Rami El-Dahan, and Suheir Farid. Their work and professional careers were showcased, marking their first appearance in a specialized architectural magazine. However, the number of women featured in this section was deficient compared to the men featured; through the magazine's 20 years of publication, only three women were featured, while more than 50 male architects were presented. This again underscores the gender imbalance of the field and circulates an image that completed architectural projects are the realm of men.

7. Discussion

During the first half of the 20th century, when men refused women enrollment into engineering or fine arts faculties, where architecture departments were housed, *al-'Imara's* publication circulated a discourse that promoted architecture as a male sphere to strengthen this inherent tradition. The magazine circulated a discourse that reinforced the image of women in the domestic realm and promoted their association with consumerism. Despite this, women resisted such constructs by contributing through writing, participating in art exhibitions, and sponsoring architectural projects; their voices and work penetrated this male-dominated magazine. These efforts introduced alternative discourses. For instance, women's writing focuses primarily on home decoration, reproducing the association between women and the domestic realm. The promoted image of women in arts became acceptable as they did not cross into the 'real' work of the architectural discipline. When architectural projects sponsored by women were discussed, the focus remained on the male architect's work, sidelining the collaborative dynamics of client-architect interactions. The only notable recognition of female patronage in *al-'Imara* framed it within the context of philanthropy, aligning with early 20th-century efforts to construct an idealized image of women's societal roles as supportive of people experiencing poverty rather than as active shapers of the architectural discipline.

Majallat al-Muhandisin, given that it operated under the auspices of the Engineers' Syndicate—a state-affiliated institution—functioned as an extension of state ideology's vision of a socialist society, one which promoted women's participation in fields like engineering, which they were previously excluded from. The magazine circulated two counter-narratives, women as professionals and women's maternal role; both were aligned within the broader discourse of progress and modernity as defined by Nasser's state. In the late 1960s, women became invisible in the two state-affiliated institutional magazines, *Majallat al muhndsin* and *al-Nashra al-Ma'marya*. The latter included women in its editorial board but did not mention how they contributed, rendering them invisible. The lack of architectural publication in the seventies rendered both male and female architects' contributions invisible. However, women architects, mainly, were still going invisible in *Majallat al-Muhandisin*.

Al-Magalla al-Ma'marya and *'Alam Al-Binaa* showed a broader engagement of women. By the 1980s, the number of female architects registered in the syndicate was five times higher compared to the 1970s, signaling growing societal acceptance of architecture as a viable profession for women. However, despite this progress, both magazines perpetuated gender imbalances by framing an image that promoted completed architectural projects as the realm of men, through either the complete absence of featured projects by women in *al-Ma'mar* or a limited number of projects involving women, primarily in partnership with male architects in

'Alam Al-Binaa. This underscored the gender imbalance in the field. The fact that these projects were all in partnership with men highlights women's efforts to overcome professional challenges. Those challenges are attributed to customs and traditions that hindered women's professional advancement.

8. Conclusion

This paper examined the role of architectural magazines as a medium for circulating and legitimizing architecture, specifically focusing on the portrayal of women architects in Egyptian publications throughout the 20th century. It revealed how these magazines employed various strategies to construct the image of women in architecture, reflecting an interplay of political, cultural, and social factors. Rather than merely reflecting the status quo, these magazines played a crucial role in reinforcing gendered divisions of labor, particularly within the male-dominated field of architecture.

In the early 20th century, when women were systematically excluded from architectural education, magazines such as *al-Imara* promoted architecture as a predominantly male profession, solidifying gendered boundaries. Simultaneously, advertisements often depicted women as consumers of domestic products, which can be interpreted through Erving Goffman's (1987) framework on gender roles in advertising. Goffman argued that such portrayals reflect societal expectations of gender roles, rather than actual roles played in reality. This aligns with broader feminist theories that consider gender as a social construct, where various media serve to perpetuate gendered ideologies in professional settings.

This perception of women in architecture is not unique to Egypt. Scholars such as Hayden and Wright (1976) have observed in different contexts that women have often been perceived not as professionals but as passive clients—either appreciative or intractable. However, women also exhibited resistance, asserting their agency through writing, participating in exhibitions, and sponsoring architectural projects.

By the mid-20th century, magazines like *Majallat al-Muhandisin* embodied the state's vision of progress and modernity, portraying women's professional roles alongside their maternal responsibilities. This dual representation aligns with the feminist concept of the "maternal ideal," where women's professional visibility is often tempered by societal expectations of their nurturing roles.

In the 1980s, as more women were registered in the engineers syndicate, the number of female architects in the field grew. However, *'Alam al-Binaa* featured women only in collaboration with male counterparts, in a very limited number of projects. This ongoing gender imbalance reflects the tension between women's increasing participation in architecture and the persistence of gendered constraints within professional practices. Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in completed projects contributes to the erasure of role models for aspiring women architects. The Royal Institute of British Architects (2019) has emphasized the importance of promoting positive and inclusive role models in the profession. Amy Linford (2016) highlights that the visibility of women in architectural media and education is crucial for inspiring future generations of architects.

In conclusion, an analysis of these magazines reveals the complex interplay of progress and resistance—how women navigated societal constraints to assert their presence in architecture, and how cultural norms continued to shape their representation within architectural discourse.

9. Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its exclusive focus on architectural and engineering journals, which represent only one facet of the broader disciplinary context of architecture in Egypt, especially considering that architecture in Egypt also falls within the framework of the arts. Incorporating art magazines from the same period could provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender representations in architectural discourse. Additionally, the research was constrained by the scarcity of architectural publications in the 1970s, limiting the ability to form a continuous and comprehensive narrative of women's representation in the field during this time. This lack of publications created gaps in understanding how cultural and political shifts influenced the visibility and recognition of female architects.

Future research could expand the scope by incorporating art magazines and comparing the portrayal of women in Egyptian architectural and engineering magazines with those in the arts, offering new insights into the construction of women architects' images. Additionally, examining Egyptian architectural magazines alongside those from other regions of the Middle East or beyond could reveal regional differences in gender representation within the architectural profession. A comparative study of this nature could also explore how geopolitical shifts, such as post-colonial changes or global feminist movements, have influenced the portrayal of women architects across various cultural contexts.

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