

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture
Honors theses

EL KHAN

Historical and functional analysis & architectural rehabilitation project

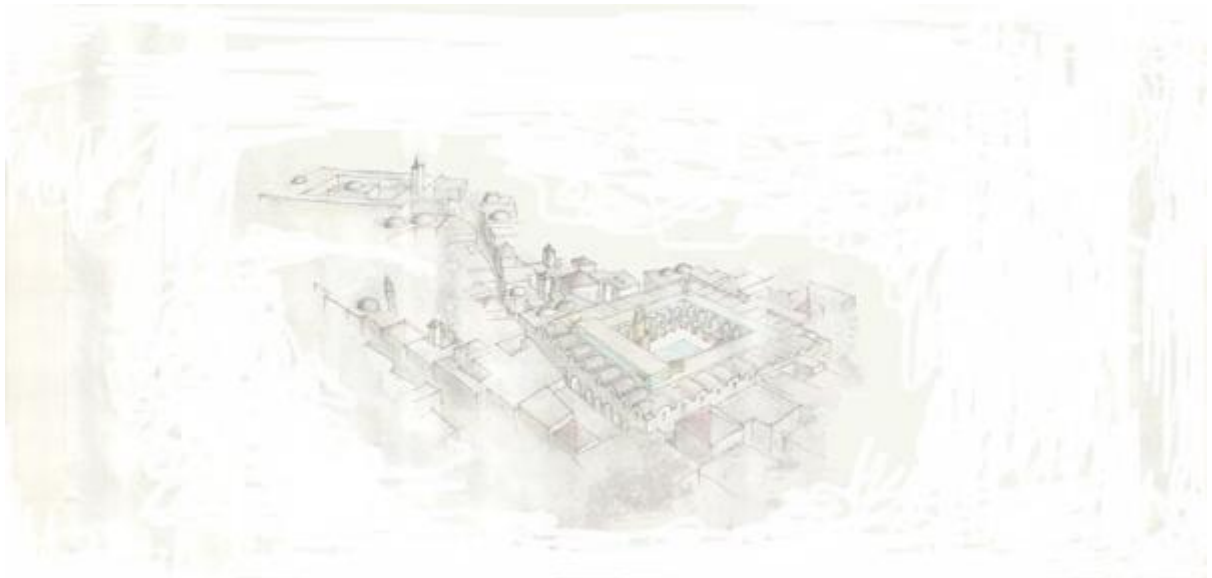
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This project proposes - through an historical and functional analysis of the historical old town of Tripoli (Lebanon) - Khan Al-Saboun architectural and stylistic salvage reinterpreted with a contemporary view.

Tripoli area was inhabited since Neolithic. There the Phoenicians founded in the fifteenth century BC the city of Athar, home of the confederation of the three cities (Tyro Sidon and Arados). The city became Persian, Greek, Roman and then, in the seventh century, Arab. Arabs founded there the library Dar Al Ilm containing three million manuscripts.

The Crusader period (1109-1289 AD) left a sign in the city which is still visible today, with the fortress of Raymond de Saint Gilles - Count of Toulouse- and the many churches that eventually became mosques.



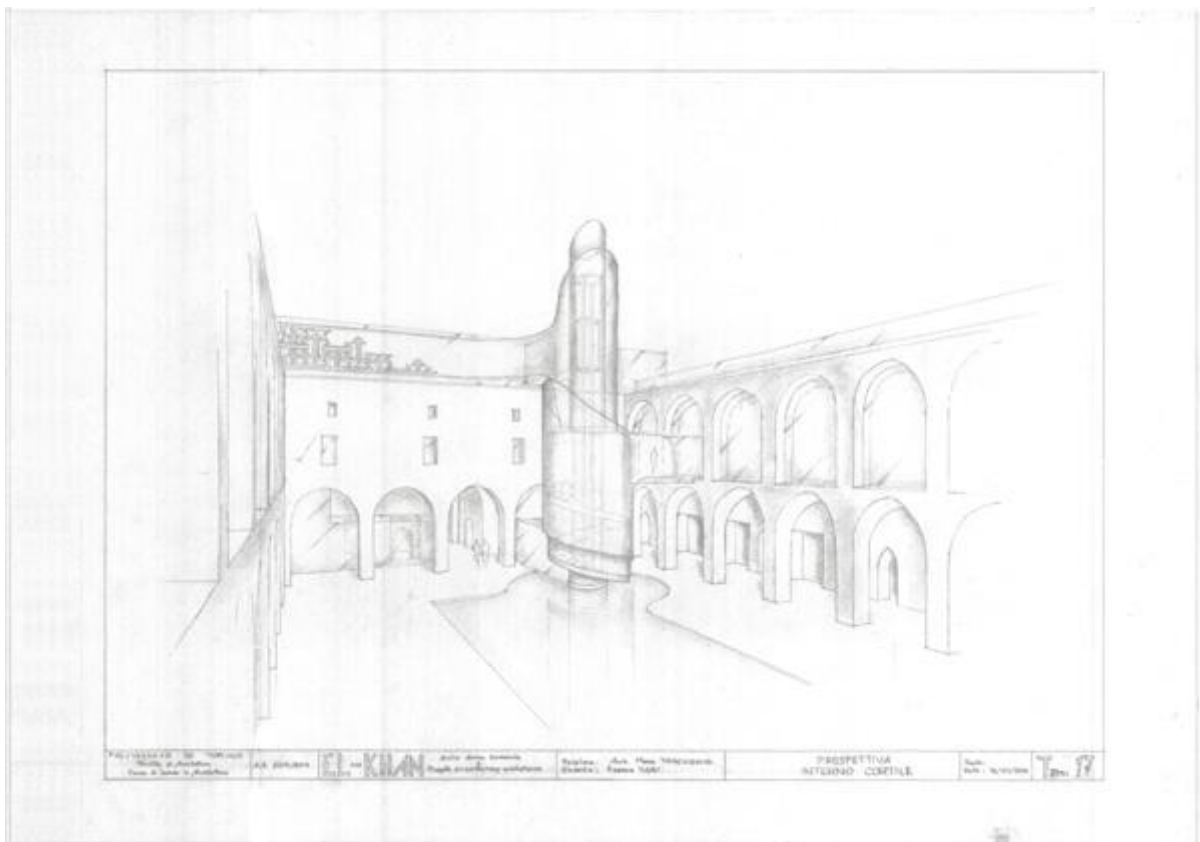
In twelfth century Mamluks redesigned the urban layout and spread their typical stylistic elements in the city public buildings that, for the vast majority, date back to this period. The most relevant urban project carried out in the following Ottoman, French and Lebanese period is the International Expo site designed by Oscar Niemeyer.

Today the old town contains Mosques, Hammam, Madrassa (school) and Khan (caravanserai) as well as medieval towers, fortresses and fountains.

Khan Al Saboun (the soap warehouse), was built by the Ottomans in the early 17th century and due to its strategic and central location was used as a military fortress, as a caravanserai and finally became a soap factory.

It is a sandstone rectangular structure of 50x40 meters, with a central courtyard decorated with a fountain and surrounded by a cloister on the ground floor and a first floor gallery. The pointed arches in the galleries create cross vaults. The ground floor was once used as a warehouse and recovery to store goods and animals, while the first floor was dedicated to hospitality for merchants.

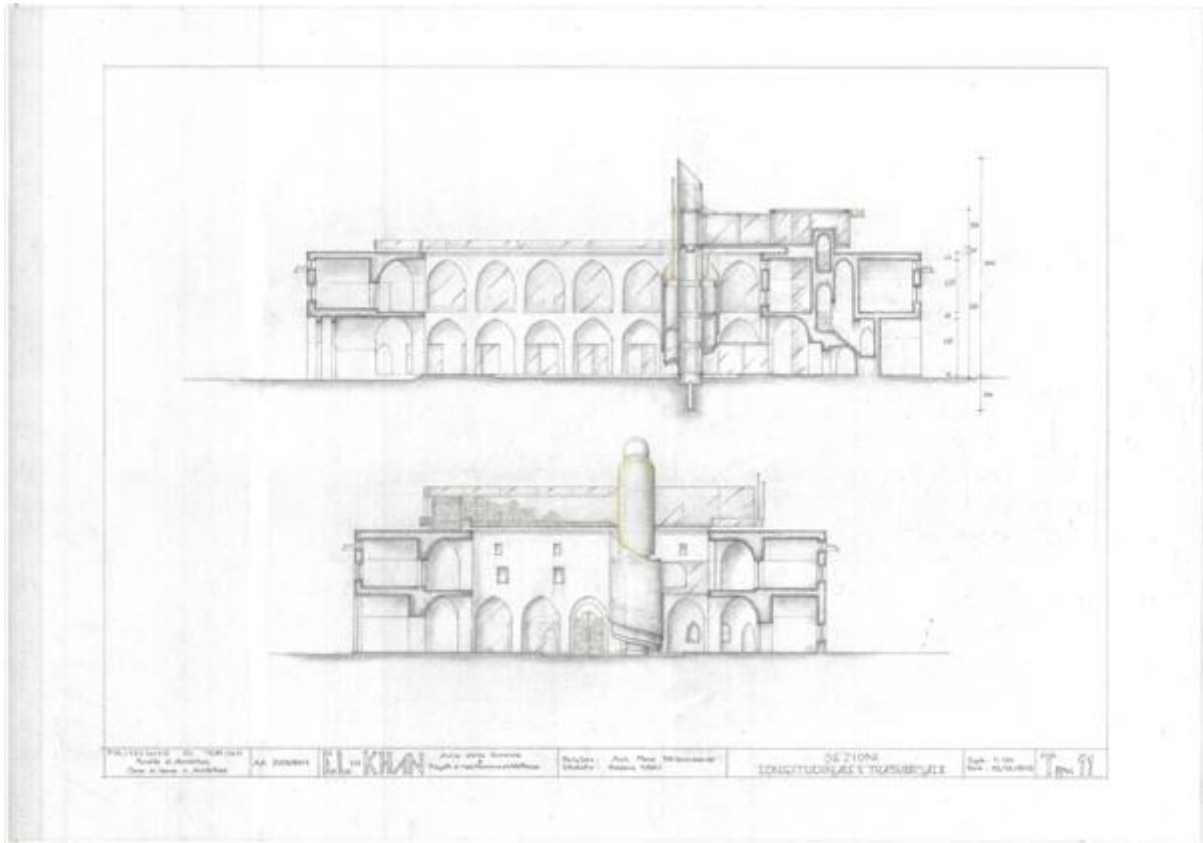
The aim of the project is to transform the military focus and centrality of the building as drawn by Ottomans in a contemporary cultural focus and centrality, partnered with the historical hospitality and commercial vocation.



Today, Khan is in a significant degradation state due to the climatic condition, to a general lack of care and the modification of the cloister which was walled up for expanding stores.

The building will be initially recovered in its original design and intent, creating a café on the ground floor, an exhibition ground, a small museum of the city and library while devoting the first floor to hotel space.

The stairs tower and the rooftop restaurant will constitute the sign of modernity. The structures in glass and metal and the shade sails will almost rest on the structure, to respect, with their physical yet not cultural detachment, the Khan identity, its original materials, its lights and colors. These modern elements reflect surrounding context, strongly influenced by Islamic art.



The design of the doors and sunscreens contain elements of strong appeal to the Mamluk decorations, broken up and recomposed in the essence of their lines in a more contemporary way; the tower design is clearly inspired by the tension towards the creator and the cosmic symbolism of Sufi philosophy.

Visitors arriving from the vibrant center of the city will cross the central doors to get into an oasis of tranquility, where the physical and cultural tradition of the old sandstone structure and the historical museum are integrated with the sign of the time of this structures of glass and steel and exhibitions of emerging local artists.

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