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# APPENDIX B: Portfolio of Publications

## Monograph

### EGYPT'S FORGOTTEN ARCHITECTURE

Egypt is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and has a colonial history that stretches back centuries. From 1882 until 1952 it was under British rule although nominal independence was granted in 1922.

Between 1880 and 1940, Cairo and other large Egyptian cities witnessed a major construction boom that gave birth to extraordinary palaces and lavish buildings. These incorporated various architectural styles, such as Renaissance or Moorish Revival, with local design heritage influences and materials. Today many lie empty and neglected, with no legislation protecting historic buildings less than a hundred years old.

Russian-born photographer Xenia Nikolskaya has documented these extraordinary structures. She has gained exceptional access and has photographed at some thirty locations including Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, Minya, Elma, and Port Said. Sadly, the state of Egypt's forgotten colonial architecture is now rapidly succumbing to time, a property market frenzy, and an ongoing overpopulation crisis. Since she began the project a number of these spaces have been demolished, while others have gone through a process of regeneration and modernisation.

COVER UK £48.00 USA



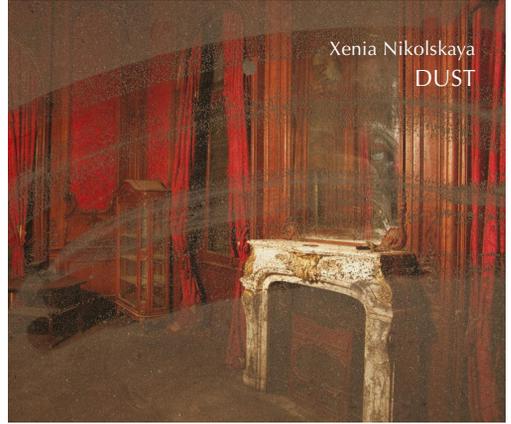
Serapiideum Palace, Cairo, 2006

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DUST

XENIA NIKOLSKAYA

DAVID LEVINE PUBLISHING



Xenia Nikolskaya  
DUST

We entered by the back door, into complete darkness. My heart was beating loudly, I felt scared, but when the candlelit switched on the light we saw a magical place – totally untouched and covered with a soft layer of dust – a wonderful multi-paned hall dating back to the early 20th century. Here was the palace of Sleeping Beauty. Yet it looked as if it was still occupied, so that the corners had only just left. Beneath a glass ceiling, books and photographs by scabbed around. On one side was the library and a salon and on the other the dining room. A pink marble staircase led up to a gilded laboratory and to the bedrooms at its base stood two grilles, marble, silk, polished wood, crystal, mirrors and paintings – the place seemed transformed into a theatre in which a drama had just been acted out – a very private drama – one that fills you with curiosity and grief, rather like reading someone's personal letters.

It now seems appropriate that my photographic exploration of empty space in Egypt should have started when I stepped into this building, the Serapiideum mansion in Cairo. Subsequently, I have entered many abandoned places, halls of decay and vanishing beauty. Initially, I was looking in these places for traces of the St. Petersburg of my early childhood. Gradually, however, I found myself drawn by their own stories.

I was born in the Soviet Union in a name which, like my hometown, Leningrad, no longer exists, and studied Ancient Egyptian art on London black & white slides from a teacher who had never been to Egypt. The first time I came, in 2003, was as a part of an archaeological mission to Memphis led by the Russian Egyptology Institute. This first trip was overwhelming. I was too busy photographing artifacts and excavations to see much of the country, but nevertheless I felt a connection. I returned again, this time on my own, in 2006, with the help of the Egyptian Embassy in Moscow. It was an adventure and as Richard Barthes wrote – "there is no photography without adventure". After

returning to Russia, the Director of the Egyptian Cultural Centre in Moscow was keen to exhibit my work, but at his office, looking through my pictures, he seemed to become more and more upset. Finally he asked, "where are the Pyramids?" I told him that I hadn't heard from very interesting, and consequently hadn't photographed them. This was the end of the meeting. He never called me back.

I have been photographing in Egypt for the last five years, but only when I felt the country could formulate my vision for the project. It was during a trip to the USA, in 2009, in New York, I met photographer Janet Ekenset, who was working temporarily as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum. Janet took me there on a Monday, when the museum is closed to visitors. The deserted building projected me back to childhood and evening school visits to the Hermitage Museum. That day revealed something to me that I had seen before but felt I was encountering for the first time: that Nationalism, the famous painting by Jan Vermeer was on display. During visiting hours it was simply impossible to ever get close to her. In the picture she is alone and in a closed museum even more so, but she doesn't appear sad. In the background, on a fine ceramic tile, we see Caspi shooting his arrow. The story is complete, she is thinking of her lover. At that moment I realised my theme: absence. It was what I had been thinking about all along.

... And so when I finally stepped out of the Serapiideum mansion in the present darkness time began again. Only later did I discover the statue beneath the dust...

This work took five years. Strangely, the last pictures were taken just before the Egyptian revolution of January 17 and the final selection was completed on February 11 – the day Mubarak stood down.

Xenia Nikolskaya, Cairo 2011

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Ahler, Alexandria, 2009

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Parson's Office, Alexandria, 2010

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Bathroom, Parson's Office, Alexandria, 2010

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Town Palace Villa, Alexandria, 2009

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Room in Parson's Office, Alexandria, 2009

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Rabia Cinema, Cairo, 2010



Taha's Workshop, Sing Department Store, Cairo, 2010



Sing Department Store, Cairo, 2010

Nikolskaya, X. (2012) *Dust: Egypt's Forgotten Architecture*. Stockport, UK: Dewi Lewis, Cover and selection double spreads

## The Image Index from “Dust: Egypt’s Forgotten Architecture”



**Wall Decoration, al-Shams Café, Cairo, 2008**  
Al-Shams café, located in central Cairo, off 26th of July Street, is a popular meeting point and a favourite cinema location. The walls are covered with paintings of pharaohs and ballerinas.



**Agricultural Museum, Cairo, 2010**  
The museum is housed in the former Palace of Princess Fatima, named after the daughter of Khedive Ismail who ruled Egypt from 1863 to 1879. The conversion of the building began in November 1930.



**Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2006**  
Built in 1902 by Italian architect Carlo Prampolini for Karl (Charles) Heinrich Beyers, owner of Credit Foncier Egyptian. He died eight days after moving in. It was then designated as the residence of Kaiser Wilhelm II for state visits to Egypt, though these never took place because of World War I. In 1924 it became a private girls' school.



**Rhinoceros, Agricultural Museum, Cairo, 2010**  
The museum contains several buildings, laboratories, themed halls, botanical gardens, cinemas and greenhouses. Little has changed since it was first established.



**House near The Citadel, Cairo, 2009**  
A simple wooden chair is a feature in every coffee shop in Cairo – they are very similar to the no.14 or bistrot chair, the iconic chair of Parisian cafés manufactured by Thonet.



**Abandoned Palace, Mamluk, Cairo, 2010**  
Mamluk is a district situated on Rhode island in the Nile, near central Cairo. A fairytale-looking palace, once spacious, luxurious and heavily decorated with gold, it is now hidden behind a petrol station in the middle of a Soviet-style urban environment.



**Wildcats, Agricultural Museum, Cairo, 2010**  
Opened in 1938, this is the world's oldest agricultural museum. As well as its taxidermy collection, there are exhibits of traditional and modern agricultural equipment and of techniques.



**Bar, Pension Viennoise, Cairo, 2010**  
Giant bottles of Sport Cola, no longer produced in Egypt, and old style Stella bottles are indicators that this bar was abandoned at least ten years ago. Restoration is unlikely.



**Pension Crillon, Alexandria, 2010**  
 Alexandria is a popular and fashionable summer destination for many Egyptians. Many of its buildings were designed by foreign architects in the modern style. Pension Crillon is situated on the Corniche, the waterfront promenade where many pensions and guesthouses are to be found.



**Empty Apartment, Mahmoud Bassiouni Street, Cairo, 2010**  
 The social rent system established by Nasser still exists in Cairo. Relatives inherit a token rent as low as 5-10 US dollars for two generations, but are unable to sell or sublet the property. Landlords usually wait for the death of the rent owner before putting the property back on the market.



**Bathroom, Pension Crillon, Alexandria, 2010**  
 An original round window in a shared bathroom facing the Mediterranean. Pension Crillon is a landmark in Alexandria though with its renovation in February 2010 many of its other original features were lost.



**Empty Apartment, Mahmoud Bassiouni Street, Cairo, 2010**  
 This abandoned apartment exemplifies an element of the Egyptian real estate frenzy: furniture and dishes have been left, giving the appearance that the space is still occupied and in use.



**Tuson Pasha Villa, Alexandria, 2009**  
 The bathroom is the only remaining original interior left in the villa of Tuson Pasha, now occupied by the Art & Architecture Department of Alexandria University.



**Atelier, Alexandria, 2009**  
 The Atelier featured in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Built in 1893, it was owned originally by an Italian named George Tarzico. Later the building was given to the artists of Alexandria. It is still used as an artist's studio and by the Children's Union of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.



**'Marie Antoinette', Pension Normandie, Alexandria, 2009**  
 Bedroom interior. On the wall is a reproduction of the well-known portrait of Marie Antoinette à la Rose by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun.



**Diwan al-Hozayen, Esna, 2010**  
 The family of Mohamed al-Hozayen, respected merchants of Esna, built this enormous guesthouse at the beginning of the 20th century. In the red salon, guests can relax and also learn about the family history. Photographs of deceased family members cover the walls.



**Diwan al-Hozayen, Esna, 2010**  
The furniture in this room was ordered by Mohamed al-Hozayen's grandparents directly from Paris and still has a company label on it.



**Tailor's Workshop, Tiring Department Store, Cairo, 2010**  
Currently, the Tiring building is partly abandoned and partly squatted, used mainly for tailors' workshops.



**Afro-Asian Writers' Association, Cairo, 2010**  
The Afro-Asian Writers' Association was established in Cairo in 1962, and later moved to a former palace on Kasr al-Aini Street.



**Tiring Department Store, Cairo, 2010**  
If you can find your way to the stairs hidden between the many kiosks and small shops that surround Tiring, you can take the opportunity to enjoy the glory of the interior décor.



**Amin Hagagy Palace, Esna, 2010**  
Built in 1942 by Italian architect Pillo Eddini for local merchant Amin Hagagy, the palace is in the small town of Esna located 55 km south of Luxor, and best known for the remains of a Ptolemaic temple on the west bank of the Nile.



**Radio Cinema, Cairo, 2010**  
Radio Cinema used to be one of the premier movie theatres featuring Egyptian films. Since production in Egypt has dropped from four hundred to four films per year, there is no longer a need for so many cinemas in the city.



**Tiring Department Store, Cairo, 2010**  
Designed by Oscar Horowitz for Les Grands Magasins, the Tiring Department Store opened its doors in 1912. The luxurious store matched the elegance of similar establishments in Paris, such as Galeries Lafayette. After the revolution of 1952 the Egyptian government nationalised it.



**Dressing Room, Radio Cinema, Cairo, 2010**  
The Ismailia Group for Real Estate Investments has a goal to preserve and maintain central Cairo. They buy property, restore it and find new owners. Radio Cinema on Talat Harb Street is one of their current major projects.



**Radio Cinema, Cairo, 2010**

The nighttime appearance of Radio Cinema must have been truly impressive, as there is still a considerable amount of neon tubing on show. Built by architect Max Edeiri, Radio Cinema used to house Cairo's largest screen.



**Blue Room, Sakakini Palace, Cairo, 2007**

The Sakakini Palace was the creation of Habib Sakakini Pasha, a businessman from the Levant. An inscription above the western entrance states that it was built in 1897. It is a perfect location for movie sets, and the film *Yacoubian Building* was shot here. It is said that the house revolves around the sun.



**Simon Arzi Department Store, Port Said, 2010**

This was once a famous department store on the Port Said waterfront. Arzi was a Jewish merchant, who had a chain of department stores in Paris, Delhi and Port Said. Today the space is used as storage by a nearby shop. Old stock and broken mannequins can still be found on the rooftop.



**Sakakini Palace, Cairo, 2007**

Located at the crossroads of major Cairo roadways, the palace has 50 rooms and halls with over 400 windows and doors, and a decor boasting in excess of 300 busts and statues.



**El-Dorado Theatre, Port Said, 2010**

Built by a Greek businessman as an opera house to serve the population of foreign nationals in the newly founded cosmopolitan city. In 1922, a cinema was added to El-Dorado. Both the cinema and theatre were active until 1970 when the building was added to the Omar Effendi department store and completely forgotten.



**Amin Hagagy Palace, Esna, 2010**

The staircase in the Amin Hagagy Palace. Located on the west bank of the Nile, the palace is a key landmark of the architectural landscape of Esna, second only to the town's well-known Ptolemaic temple.



**Prince Said Halim's Palace, Cairo, 2007**

Designed by Antonio Lasciac in 1896 for Prince Said Halim, it has a similar story to many other Cairo palaces. The British, in the wake of WWI, confiscated it as Halim had sided with the Ottomans. The future of the building remains undecided.



**Amin Hagagy Palace, Esna, 2010**

Traditionally these types of houses use the ground floor as a reception area and the bedrooms are always above.



**Palace Hotel, Minya, 2010**  
 For twenty-five Egyptian pounds a room is available to Egyptians in this remarkable hotel. Foreigners are not allowed because tourist police are not present. High ceilings, hand-painted Pharaonic murals and old tourism posters create the sense of a time-warp.



**Lobby, Palace Hotel, Minya, 2010**  
 The façade of this hotel reflects a Western Belle Époque influence, whilst the interiors reflect the New Pharaonic style very popular at the end of the 19th century.



**Wall Decoration, Palace Hotel, Minya, 2010**  
 This wall decoration reflects the mixed style of the early 20th century: ancient Egyptian ornaments with lotus and oriental subjects.



**White Bedroom, Hela Faris Palace, Delta, 2010**  
 This beautiful three storey palace, built by an unknown Italian architect, belongs to the Hela Faris family. It is protected by huge walls and hidden in the middle of the countryside between Cairo and Alexandria.



**Living Room, Hela Faris Palace, Delta, 2010**  
 The Faris family were once owners of an enormous tract of land in the Nile Delta. Today their landholding has been reduced to one villa and a farm.



**Living Room, Hela Faris Palace, Delta, 2010**  
 The villa is empty all year, except during the holy month of Ramadan when the large family gathers together.



**Villa Casdagli, Garden City, Cairo, 2010**  
 It took nearly eighteen months to get permission to be able to photograph this villa because its status was unclear, and a matter of dispute between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism.



**Villa Casdagli, Garden City, Cairo, 2010**  
 Villa Casdagli was built at the beginning of the 20th century by Austrian architect Edward Matesek for Emanuel Casdagli, a British-educated Levantine merchant with dealings in the lucrative textile trade in Manchester. It is also possible that the house was originally built for the banker Felix Suares and, following his death in April 1906, sold to the Casdaglis in 1909.



Mohammed al-Qarniya Palace, Cairo, 2010

Little is known about the palace housing al-Qarniya primary school in the Falakiy area of central Cairo. The only available information is that it used to belong to Mohammed al-Qarniya, a rich merchant, and was built by an Italian architect. The building still contains beautiful wall paintings and has coloured glass in the windows.



Abandoned School, Helmeia, Cairo, 2010

Remnants of the educational process, such as the grasshopper picture, can still be found in the classrooms.



Barbie Room, Villa Casdagli, Garden City, Cairo, 2010

For many years the Villa was used as a secondary school named after the Sudanese revolutionary – Ali Ibn Abdel Latif. The children tried to make the place ‘cozy’ by decorating it with Barbie stickers.



Former American Consulate, Port Said, 2011

The former American Consulate in Port Said is on the Suez Canal side next to the lighthouse and the Simon Arzi department store. Hand prints on the wall called khamsa wa khamsa are part of the Eid al-Adha celebration. People put their hands into the fresh blood of animals slaughtered at the end of the fast and leave marks everywhere for luck.



Abandoned School, Helmeia, Cairo, 2010

Located in Helmeia, a district of Cairo, this abandoned school was once a small villa. As in many other cases, children decorated the classroom to their taste.



Library, The Geographical Society, Cairo, 2010

The Society was founded by Kherive Ismail in 1875, for European explorers and missionaries. It is best known for its library, a cartographic collection, and a series of relief maps of Egypt. The building luckily survived a fire in the next-door L’Institute d’Egypte in December 2011, during violent clashes between protestors and military police.



Commercial School For Girls, Helmeia, Cairo, 2010

A giraffe painting and busts of Neteriti create a strange combination in the décor of the Commercial School for Girls.



‘Casa Italia’, Port Said, 2010

Benito Mussolini inaugurated the former Italian Consulate or ‘Casa Italia’ in Port Said in 1937. The building is now abandoned and has a huge crack down the middle.



Staircase, Verivo Building, Port Said, 2010

A remarkable apartment building in central Port Said, famous for its coloured glass decoration.



Staircase, Baron Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011

After its sale in 1952, the new owners were plagued with legal problems and unable to do anything with the Palace. It was left to decay for over 40 years. Belgium and Indian construction companies tried to maintain the building and garden but only succeeded with the latter. The palace seems to be a 'mission impossible' for conservators.



Al-Gawhara Palace, Citadel, Cairo, 2011

Also known as The Jewel Palace, it is in the Citadel, near Mohamed Ali Mosque. Built by Mohamed Ali in 1814 to house his administration, receive guests and as his residence. Named after Gawhara Hanem, Ali's last wife, its popular name, 'The Jewel Palace', comes from its use as a museum for the jewels of the Khedives after the 1952 revolution. Gutted by fire in 1972 during an attempted robbery, it is now closed for renovation.



Ballroom, Sultana Malak Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011

Malak Palace is hidden behind high walls and from a distance can be easily mistaken for a mosque, as the central part is built in the Oriental style. The rest of the palace reflects the peculiar and expensive tastes of the former owner.



Bathroom, Baron Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011

The Baron Palace, located in the Heliopolis suburb of Cairo, was built as the private residence for the creator of Heliopolis, 'The Baron', a Belgian businessman envisioned modern Heliopolis as a desert paradise. He, and his son, lived in the palace until after the 1952 revolution when they left and the villa was sold.



Classroom, Sultana Malak Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011

Like many other palaces, Sultana Malak Palace was turned into a school, and all the spacious rooms on the second floor were used as classrooms. You can still see blackboards and other remnants of the classes.



Sultana Malak Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011

H.M. Sultana Malak's Palace in Heliopolis is located just in front of the Baron Palace. It later became Masr el Gedida School and is currently abandoned.



Souad Sabah Palace, Garden City, Cairo, 2011

This palace now hosts the headquarters of one of the new Egyptian political parties that have emerged after the revolution of January 25th, 2011. It is difficult to imagine what the interior renovations are like, but outside, the only façade that faces the street was painted.



**Bagous Palace, Cairo, 2011**  
 Bagous Palace in Cairo is located near the train station because Bagous was a builder of Egyptian railways and the entire surrounding area used to belong to him.



**Baron Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011**  
 The plan of the building is very complicated, with many rooms, corridors and stairs that connect with each other in most peculiar ways. You never know which door will lead you where.



**Broken Piano, Bagous Palace, Cairo, 2011**  
 Bagous Palace became the Sharabeya school and was used for some years before being abandoned when new school premises were built nearby. It remains empty.



**Red Dining Room, Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2011**  
 This image, taken in June 2011, was the final photograph I took for the project. I started in 2006, in Garden City and managed to return to this place twice. Unfortunately, over the six years I worked on this project, every time I returned, I noticed that more objects and items of decoration were missing.



**Bagous Palace, Cairo, 2011**  
 The trashed main entrance and dangerous looking staircase discouraged my companions from entering the building. The only way to the second floor was to climb through the back stairs that are half-covered by bricks. The sign on the left says 'Art Studies' and explains the two broken pianos in the building and many forgotten art works.



**Photographs, Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2006**  
 On the wall are portraits of the brother of Fuad Serageldin, patriarch of the Serageldin family and last of Egypt's pre-revolutionary Pashas, and his wife. The Pasha died, aged 90 in 2000, months before publication of his niece Samia Serageldin's novel 'The Cairo House', which tells the history of the family house over the last century.



**Baron Palace, Heliopolis, Cairo, 2011**  
 Baron Empain Palace (Qsar Al Baron) was inspired by the Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia and Hindu temples in Orissa, India. Built by French architect, Alexander Marcel, and decorated by Georges-Louis Claude, construction was completed in 1911. It is rumoured that all the Hindi pieces were brought from India.



**Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2009**  
 The house still looked occupied, or as if the owners had just left. A lot of things, such as books and photos, were scattered around and covered with dust – the trademark of Cairo – remnants of a glorious past and the drama that took place inside these walls... I felt both shamed and curious, as if I was reading someone's personal letters...



**Qasr al-Doubara (Mahmoud Sabit House), Cairo, 2008**

A wonderful, frozen-in-time house in Qasr al-Doubara district. It belongs to the historian, writer and documentary producer, Mahmoud Sabit. Related to King Farouk, his family is linked to many important events in Egyptian history. It was built for his grandmother – Fatima Sabit, a cousin of Farouk's mother, Queen Nazly.



**Classroom, Prince Said Halim's Palace, Cairo, 2007**

After WWII the Palace became the Al-Nassiriyah secondary school for boys, where many government officials were educated. Drawings still remain on the walls. Centrally located, it has played an active role in Cairo's art life. Artist-residents of the Townhouse Gallery frequently use it. When I returned in May 2011, the room looked the same as in 2007, except that Mubarak's portrait was now on the floor...



**Sakakini Palace, Cairo, 2007**

The Palace was a part of the Medical Museum for a period. Leftover plastic chairs are reminders of this former use. One of Sakakini's grandsons gave his share of the property to the Ministry of Health when the Pasha died, because he was a doctor, and it was his way of contributing to the profession.



**Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2006**

In 1924, the house was transformed into a private girls' school under the care of a Swedish headmistress, Ms. Dagmar Berg. It was not a very successful project and the house had to find a new owner, this time a rich feudal landowner, Shahin Serageldin Pasha.



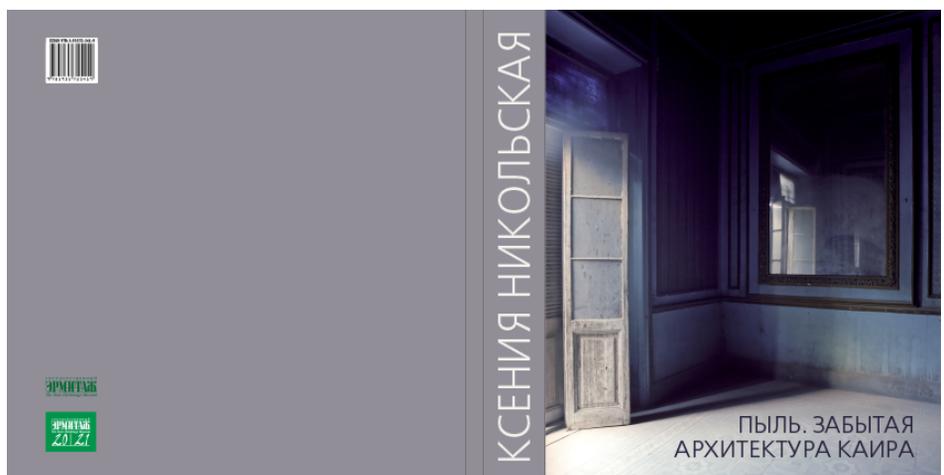
**Serageldin Palace, Cairo, 2006**

The Serageldin residence acquired its unique historical significance with the rise in political prominence of the Pasha's eldest son Fuad. It became the unofficial headquarters of the Wafd party. Fuad Pasha Serageldin became Secretary-General and held cabinet posts before the 1952 Revolution. Since his death in 2000, the house has remained abandoned as the heirs have been unable to agree on its future.

## Exhibition Catalogues



Bardaouil, S. and T. Fellrath (2013) *Le Théorème de Néfertiti*. Exhibition held at L'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris. Milan: Skira [Exhibition catalogue]. Pp. 136-137, 156-157, 210-211.



Nikolskaya, X. (2015) *Dust: Cairo's Forgotten Architecture*, exhibition held at The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg: Publishing house of the State Hermitage [Exhibition catalogue].

## Xenia Nikolskaya

Née en 1973 à Saint-Petersbourg.  
Vit et travaille au Caire.

### DUST

« Nous sommes entrés par la porte de derrière, dans l'obscurité totale. Mon cœur battait très fort, j'ai eu peur, mais quand le gardien a allumé la lumière, j'ai vu un endroit magique - totalement intact et recouvert d'une fine couche de poussière - une merveilleuse salle dallée de marbre datant du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le palais de La Belle ou bois dormant. Pourtant, il donnait l'impression d'être encore occupé, comme si les propriétaires venaient à peine de le quitter. Sous un plafond de verre, livres et photographies gisaient. D'un côté, la bibliothèque et un salon et de l'autre la salle à manger. Un escalier de marbre rose conduisait à un long balcon arrondi et vers les chambres : à sa base se trouvaient deux griffons. Marbre, soie, bois poli, cristal, miroirs et peintures - fendroit semblait transformé en un théâtre où un drame venait d'avoir lieu - un drame très privé - celui qui vous remplit de curiosité et de culpabilité, un peu comme si l'on lisait des lettres destinées à quelqu'un d'autre [...] ».

**Cristianne Rodrigues**

Ce que Xenia Nikolskaya découvre dans ce palais est à l'image de son exploration d'un patrimoine architectural oublié et dont les pièces les plus précieuses ont été édifiées entre la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et le début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les bâtiments ont succombé à la frénésie immobilière et à la surpopulation urbaine, mais ont été également victimes de la négligence des pouvoirs.

Ces photographies réalisées à partir de 2006 dans différentes villes d'Égypte, dont le Caire, Alexandrie, Louxor, Minya, Ézna, Port-Saïd et les villages autour du Delta, constituent la matière d'une série intitulée « Dust » (poussière) et qu'elle achève en 2011, alors même que va se dessiner un bouleversement social et politique qui plonge le pays dans l'inconnu.

Pour l'artiste, ces images présentent un dualisme : la poussière est une matérialité qui recouvre la ville, imprimant littéralement le passage du temps sur les objets urbains - mais c'est aussi une métaphore temporelle de l'enracinement et de l'effacement progressif des souvenirs. « Lorsque j'ai entrepris ce projet, explique l'artiste, j'étais motivée par la curiosité. Mais l'Égypte traversant un bouleversement politique et social, « Dust » est venu illustrer la stagnation économique, qui a englué le pays au cours des trois dernières décennies. Mon projet souligne l'importance de documenter un pays en pleine transformation et l'urgence de réfléchir sur son histoire, afin de préparer son avenir ».

1. Rodi Chemo, Le Caire, 2010  
2. Wifa Coudhafi, Garden City, Le Caire, 2010



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## deuxième biennale des photographes du monde arabe contemporain



MAISON EUROPÉENNE DE  
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ARABE

Cimorelli, D. (ed.) (2017) *Deuxième biennale des photographes du monde arabe contemporain*. Exhibition held at La Maison Européenne De la Photographie, Paris, Milan: [Exhibition catalogue], pp. 14-15.

Publications



DECOUVERTE

» XENIA NIKOL'SKAYA

**E**mpreinte du temps, la poussière recouvre d'un voile les espaces où les hommes qui restent de la chose. Accumulée, elle recrée l'image de l'absence en dessinant une histoire des lieux. Et si, dans le cas de l'Égypte, la réponse est politique – le contrepoint du Caire prit fin avec la Révolution de 1952 et les deux dernières décennies du régime de Mubarak ont entraîné l'effacement des quartiers centraux – Xenia Nikol'skaya l'affronte avec poésie. Elle laisse les lieux raconter eux-mêmes, individuellement, par la voix de l'histoire qui donne son nom au projet sans y être directement. Elle parvient à stabiliser le matériel pour placer les scènes dans un présent non mathématique, comme dans *Le Fleuve de George Soud*. "Ainsi, il y a une longévité, une clarté, elle, l'âme vive et l'intensité, souvent de genre et plénière d'une importante petite ville qui est restée par les fenêtres quand on l'a fait chasser par les portes. Elle était si forte et si menue, que elle est de grande flèche au lieu de marcher, et mes parents la composent à une petite fin. Les dimensions la délimitent et la renouent à un angle plat, mais on ne l'a pas plus tôt déloger d'une place qu'elle représentait à une autre." Elle explore les vestiges de l'architecture coloniale, nous invite à découvrir l'Égypte Roussette et Agatha Christie avec ses lettres de crédit respectives, ses chemises de papier, ses ordinateurs aux valeurs vides, ses vitraux 1900, ses architectes haussmanniens et un moulin à vent. Ce qui fait, ce sont les couleurs denses des bois, leurs et autres pages peintes, la chaleur qui les ont liés aux individus qui y passent. Une trace de toi, un livre aux pages coupées par une lecture passionnée, des écritures décolorées, des photographies de famille indolentes, un dessin et un portrait de Mubarak. Ce ne sont pas les traces d'un abandon. C'est un tableau éclatant de l'Égypte contemporaine. Une révolution plus tard, les lieux sont toujours là, immuables. Sur la photographie de l'atelier à Alexandrie, une ombre floue esquive un mouvement inaperçue, celle de l'air et de ce qu'il transporte. Cette présence subtile rappelle l'aspect éphémère de la matière autant qu'elle place le sujet dans un présent muable. Comme dans la série *Le Fleuve*, de Marie Anwar – des photographies réalisées à partir des diapositives émiettées par le processus constant de nettoyage – l'absence entre l'occultation et la perte illustrent la dissolution de toutes les choses. Au-delà de la reconnaissance de temps et d'une interrogation sur la matière, *Dust* est également une recherche sur les coexistences visibles d'une renaissance globale du monde. Au pays des pyramides, Xenia Nikol'skaya propose une réflexion à la fois géopolitique et sociale sur l'explosion urbaine. À travers cette enquête multilatérale menée dans une trentaine de villes, elle explore les conditions et significations de l'explosion vécue dans l'un des pays les plus densément peuplés au monde, en phase de développement urbain non durable. 1



1973 *Portrait of a Woman* (Paris, 1973) et *Le Fleuve de George Soud* (Paris, 1973)

1995 *Le Fleuve de George Soud* (Paris, 1995)

2006 *Le Fleuve de George Soud* (Paris, 2006)

2009 *Le Fleuve de George Soud* (Paris, 2009)

2010 *Le Fleuve de George Soud* (Paris, 2010)

Images magazine 101 - 67

Comet, L. (2012) 'Egyptian Dust', *Images*, no. 50, pp. 62–67.

## Faded Grandeur Cairo's forgotten architecture

WORDS  
LARRY PAVINI  
PHOTOS  
SENA NIKOLSKAYA

For a year and a half Russian photographer Sena Nikolskaya tried to gain access to the historic mansion of Villa Casdagli, located in Cairo's Garden City. The site was built in the late 19th century by Austrian architect Edward Maresch, for the British-Levantine businessman Emanuel Casdagli (hence its namesake). Described by Egyptian historian Samir Raafat as a "decaying relic of the past", the building was once home to the US Embassy in Egypt yet now stands as a symbol of the city's faded grandeur.

Nikolskaya, a native of St. Petersburg, moved to Cairo in 2010 in order to work on a book focusing on the city's forgotten buildings. Almost as once she began trying to photograph the city's rich architectural heritage, yet just as promptly found herself being ping-ponged between various government departments before she was finally granted access to the site.

In November 2012, however, Villa Casdagli fell victim to the unrest engulfing the Egyptian capital and was left damaged following the outbreak of heavy street fighting. During the clashes, looters and vandals destroyed sections of the property, even stealing the iron gates with their ornamental foliage elements, as well as the grand marble



Prussian general Rudolf Clernus, built by architect Max Klinger, used to house Cairo's largest cinema.

Top: Villa Casdagli was built at the turn of the 20th century by Austrian architect Edward Maresch for Emanuel Casdagli, a Levantine merchant with dealings in the Suez Canal (see *Trade in Egypt*).

Below: The staircase in the main meeting room retained on the west bank of the Nile. Next spread: Mohammed Ali Mosque, Palazzo in Cairo.

steps. When Nikolskaya went back to document the damage, she was refused entry by police.

Villa Casdagli's fate seems to mirror that of many other historic buildings in Cairo. They are the product of years of legal mishaps and poor planning. Many of these buildings are still technically in the hands of the state, but have now been left to rot. A great number of these 19th and 20th century buildings, many of them former grand palaces or villas of the aristocracy, were later confiscated and nationalized in the 50s and 60s to be used as public schools. While this was symbolic of the shifts in power and economics of the time, these buildings were not designed to host schools and, as such, many of them were abandoned soon after by the Education Ministry. They have remained unutilized for decades and recent history has seen the continuation of their decline, as they have become the target of looters and vandals. In many cases, the underpaid state workers tasked with "watching" these properties only became the deal makers in selling on the properties' decorative features to antique dealers in Egypt and beyond.

Today, Cairo is one of the most densely populated cities in the world, so it is perhaps surprising then that an enormous amount of its buildings sit empty. In her book, aptly named *Dust*, Nikolskaya documents many of these buildings in limbo. She notes that during a presentation in Russia last November, members of the audience asked why local artists aren't squatting in these unused spaces, creating low cost studios and galleries in a similar fashion to NYC and Berlin. Some also pointedly asked why the creative community isn't doing more to come to agreements with building owners, in order to use them as spaces for cultural production.

"Heritage must be local, and communities must be involved, otherwise we're wasting our time and missing the opportunity to revive our cities around the architectural heritage that remains."





Top: The real dining room at Seraglio Palace, Cairo.

Previous spread: The Atelier in Al-Bahariya, which was featured in Lawrence Green's *Al-Bahariya* journal. It used today as a studio for artists and as the children's center of the Bahariya Association.

"Despite the endless possibilities, Cairo is not a city where squatting in unused buildings is common," explains Mohamed Elshahed, a blogger and an expert on the topic. In order for a squatting movement to begin, some fundamental legal issues must first be dealt with. According to Elshahed, some of the same laws that have led to buildings being unused have also contributed to their continued survival. The irony is that the current legal constraints mean that while the state might recognize the "value" of a particular building in terms of its architecture and heritage, this "value" does not translate into an economic one for its owners. Thus, heritage buildings have become a financial burden for many owners, often with limited means of income and earning only pennies from their ostensibly grand properties due to outdated real estate and rental laws. This has caused land value to skyrocket, while the old building sitting on it is comparatively worth little. In turn, this strange paradox has led people to find ways of damaging their own buildings in order to get a demolition permit and sell the land.

**LEGAL MISHAPS THREATEN EGYPTIAN HERITAGE**

There are several loopholes in the current legislation that regulate buildings of historic value in Egypt.

**1—Valuable Conditions**

The first article stipulates that for a building to be demolished it has to have structural problems that would cause its collapse. This has led many of those interested in destroying such buildings to intentionally inflict damage upon them, using a variety of methods like flooding foundations, creating floor plates and injecting acid into their structures.

**2—Subjective Evaluation**

The second article prevents owners of buildings with significant architectural, historic or historic value from selling, or demolishing, their structures without permission. The office of the Prime Minister is tasked with choosing which building gets onto the heritage list. This is problematic because the national process of selection often ends up being arbitrary and lacking firm architectural or legal foundation.

**3—Corrupt Laborers**

Due to Egypt's honorarium system, many of the lawyers, engineers and architects tasked with judging a building's structural status are unethical professionals belonging to weak unions, and are prone to corruption.

Elshahed says that he hasn't been to a place with more potential for adaptive reuse of buildings than Cairo. Yet he also argues that inhabitants of the city have been engaging in adaptive reuse all along, but on a scale and in ways that don't fit the textbook definition, nor the prescriptions of glossy coffee table books. "[There's] adaptive reuse done on an individual basis," Elshahed elaborates, "often without the consultation of a professional designer and certainly without an overall vision that encompasses the bigger picture of the district or the city."

The present situation has mostly involved treating one-off buildings in the absence of a cohesive long-term plan, though there have been some initiatives by organizations like the Sebey Foundation and Takween, working on fairly low profile projects. On another front, there is Al-Bahariya, a private real estate company that has been acquiring buildings in the downtown districts with plans to refurbish them. "The company also supports art initiatives like the Contemporary Image Collective, which revamped an old, dusty flat into a photo studio, and other art projects such as the Townhouse Gallery and Mawred Culture Resource," says Nikielshahed.

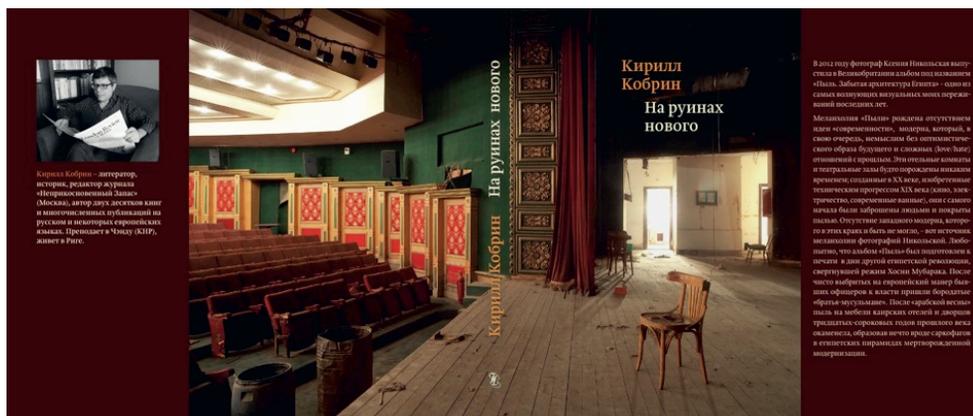
Elshahed maintains that adaptive reuse, understood in the contemporary Western sense, requires a policy that encourages the very practices that are currently absent in Cairo. At present, however, a considerable skills gap in the fields of building conservation and adaptive reuse is a persistent obstacle. Currently architects without proper training intervene in old buildings in ways that threaten their integrity. He also believes that education plays an important role, but has not yet caught up with the potential and aspirations of today's architecture students. "Often programs are managed by conservative professors. The city isn't the main focus of a single architectural program...there isn't a study program that trains young architects and provides them the tools to carry out adaptive reuse," he explains.

While the state continues to dominate all matters pertaining to heritage it has largely failed to protect, document, and publicize Cairo's architectural heritage. What's more, Cairo is not an isolated case. Other Egyptian cities with equally rich and important urban and architectural heritage (such as Port Said, Alexandria, Mansoura, Tanta and Luxor and many others) are also in dire need of a strong local municipal government tasked with heritage preservation following nationally regulated rules and criteria. On this very topic, Elshahed concludes: "Heritage must be local, and communities must be involved, otherwise we're wasting our time and missing the opportunity to revive our cities around the architectural heritage that remains."

Fahmi, S. (2013) 'Faded Grandeur, Cairo's Forgotten Architecture', *The Outpost*, issue 2, pp. 110–119.



Habib, H., and I. Mayault (2015) *Uncommon Cairo*. Ta' Xbiex, Malta: Uncommon, pp. 68-77.



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## Solo Exhibitions

**XENIA NIKOLSKAYA** the **DUST**

Vernissage 16:e november kl. 17.00-20.00

Musik: Me and My Blonde

Utställningsdatum: 17 november 16 december  
öppet: dagligen klockan 10.00-19.00

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**ART.27** Gunilla Hedén

Dust (2006) [Exhibition]. Hotel Diplomat, Stockholm, Sweden. 17 November 2006 - 16 December 2006.

**Dust**  
**Xenia Nikolskaya**  
 May 6 - June 13, 2012

زينيا نيكولسكايا  
 ٦ مايو - ١٣ يونيو، ٢٠١٢

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Dust (2012) [Exhibition]. Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt. 12 May 2012 - 12 June 2012.



# DUST

Egyptens glömda arkitektur

**16 februari - 28 april**

*Fotograf Xenia Nikolskaya har dokumenterat Egyptens förfallna och bortglömda koloniala arkitektur.*

*Sedan Nikolskaya inledde projektet "Dust" 2006 har många av de byggnader hon skildrar rivits eller bränts ned och bara ett fåtal rustats upp och moderniserats.*

*Utställningen spänner inte enbart över det estetiska utan berättar även om ett lands ekonomiska och samhälleliga förändringar.*

## VERNISSAGE

**FREDAG 15 FEBRUARI KL 17-20**

Välkommen på invigning av fotoutställningen Dust! Välkomstord av Museichef Suzanne Unga Sörling. Fotograf Xenia Nikolskaya, On Barak - Senior lecturer, Tel Aviv University. Vin och mingel.  
Tack till Sveriges ambassad i Kairo.

## EGYPTENS GLÖMDA ARKITEKTUR

**LÖRDAG 16 FEBRUARI KL 13**

Om kolonial arkitektur i Egypten och framväxten av det moderna Kairo. Dr On Barak, Senior Lecturer, Tel Aviv University. Efter föredraget ger fotograf Xenia Nikolskaya en guidad visning av utställningen. På engelska.

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Dust (2013) [Exhibition]. Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm, Sweden. 16 February 2013 - 28 April 2013.



Dust: Cairo Forgotten Architecture (2015) [Exhibition]. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, 15 March – 15 May 2015.



Ksenijos Nikolskajos fotografijų paroda  
**Dulkės: užmirštoji Egipto architektūra**

**Dust: Egypt's Forgotten Architecture**  
The photographs by Xenia Nikolskaya

2017 m. kovo 9–balandžio 16 d.

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Vilniaus g. 24, Vilnius

9 March–16 April 2017

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Dust (2017) [Exhibition]. Museum of the Radvilas Palace, Vilnius, Lithuania. 9 March 2017 - 16 April 2017.

## Critical reviews

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"A Subject of Time" by Hosni, Ahmad - Afterimage, Vol. 40, Issue 3, November-December 2012 | Online Research Library: Questia



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ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLE

*Afterimage*

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# A Subject of Time

By Hosni, Ahmad

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## Article excerpt

Dust: Egypt's Forgotten Architecture

By Xenia Nikolskaya

Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2012

128 pp./\$30.00 (hb)

Dust: Egypt's Forgotten Architecture is a book by Xenia Nikolskaya about Egypt's decaying colonial architecture--buildings in a pre-mortem state. Nobody knows how long they will be around before being demolished and the land resold for more

profitable use. Although some of them are great works of architecture, they stand in

<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-307790949/a-subject-of-time>

1/5

purgatory collecting dust. They date back to what is regarded as Egypt's belle époque. The denomination itself could be contested but, roughly speaking, the starting point is marked by the reign of the Europhile Khedive Ismail Pasha in 1863. It reached its apogee with the Opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, lasting until the onset of the 1952 military coup and eventually ending with Nasser's socialist reforms in the early 1960s.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Most of the architecture featured in the book belong to a later phase in that era--namely, that which began with the nationalist revolt of 1919 and ended with the military revolution of 1952. After the socialist reforms of 1962, some of these buildings were nationalized, while the rest were left subject to real estate legislations that reduced proprietorship to nominal status. They were left to rot, slowly, in the dust. The defilement of such spatial objects--whether intentional or not--meant the purging of the social order of colonial times and entry into the postcolonial.

Out of ruination springs the myth of a golden age. Nasser's efforts to derogate that period did not succeed in erasing it, but conversely engendered an historical imaginary of the old times. For some reason, architectural artifacts fared less well in public reverence than the artistic representations of the colonial era. It would seem as if a conspicuous materiality of the epoch--in the form of architectural products on the urban landscape--would work against the evolution of the epoch-myth. Continuity between present and past has to be severed; buildings must become monuments--or ruins if they are to work on the collective imaginary.

These buildings did not stand posturing at any monumentality. On the contrary, they drifted down a decaying path, melting away among an unregulated urban sprawl. They were leveled with their environs. And, if not physically, they were reduced to a state of banality of an everyday present that renders them invisible even to the city's inhabitants, like aging tombstones enshrouded by a growing forest of urbanism.

Nonetheless, even if they did not exist in their full visibility, they would regularly

resurface in public culture all the more refreshed. What better epitome than that of Alaa Al Aswany's bestselling novel from 2002 (and in 2006 a blockbuster movie) "The

racoubian Building, in which the whole narrative is set around one building--one of those buildings--where space is an allegory for the entire country, and ruination is the predicament of both. Who would have taken notice of the same edifice standing timidly among the overgrowth of cement and signs and human commotion of downtown Cairo anyway? With its dilapidated facades and rusty vestibule, there is nothing particularly distinctive about it, after all. Yet it made perfect sense, to anchor historiography into one contained spatial object. Architecture is a repository of time.

Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said are among those postcolonial cities of iconographic nostalgia where it is always possible to excavate a lost time. The bookstore at the American University in Cairo is ripe with English books about Egypt's lost "something." Dust will find its place on the bookshelf; but that, is probably on account of the subtitle, Egypt's Forgotten Architecture. I am more in favor of the title myself than the subtitle. In its banality, "Dust" is an unexpected syntagm to the concealed monumentality of these spaces; it moves beyond the forgotten into the abjectness of a wasteland where these ruins are on display. ...

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*The Forum* (2013) BBC Radio, 23 June. Available at:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p019v1cb> (Accessed: 1 June 2019)