



Fiat Tagliero Service station, Engineer Giuseppe Pettazzi, 1938, Photographer Edward Denison

Asmara World Heritage Appeal

Asmara is the world's outstanding living museum of classical modernist architecture comprising a whole city with all its urban functions: housing, industries, services and administration, shopping, leisure, culture and recreation. Most of the architectural language is *architettura razionale*, the Italian modernism of the 1920s and 30s. However, there are also numerous examples of *novecento*, *futurismo*, *neoclassicism*, *neo-baroque*, *monumentalism*, as well as buildings with links to local Eritrean architecture. No other city in the world can be proud of such a comprehensive ensemble of classical modernist architecture. We see the people of Asmara and of all Eritrea united in admiring and preserving their jewel against all odds and despite some extreme adversity.

We therefore emphatically welcome and endorse the candidature of the city of Asmara to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The application for candidature was filed February 1, 2016, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to be decided by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2017.



Eritrean Ambassador Hanna Simon presenting the application to the Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre Dr. Mechthild Rössler

The Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project of Eritrea (CARP, now Asmara Heritage Office) with its founding director Naigzy Gebremedhin commissioned a survey of Asmara's architecture that resulted

in the release of the book “Asmara Africa’s Secret Modernist City” by Edward Denison, Guang Yu Ren and Naigzy Gebremedhin, London & New York, 2003. This seminal publication has laid the scientific foundation for the preservation work of Asmara’s architecture.

In the historic core of the city, in an area roughly 4 square kilometers, exist some 400 architecturally significant buildings.



2 panels showing the aerial photograph of Asmara in 1937



Cinema Impero, Architect Mario Messina, 1937, Photographer Edward Denison

We appeal to cities with similar treasures of classical modernist architecture, among them in particular Napier in New Zealand, Miami in the USA, and Tel Aviv in Israel, to form a global city-network of classical modernist architecture under the auspices of UNESCO. Such a network will help the participating cities to preserve their architectural jewels. It will attract culturally minded people from all over the world to visit these cities and thereby help them preserve their heritage. To this effect, tour operators may develop global tours of classical modernist architecture.

On the basis of the Asmara book, the Eritrean-German initiative “4Asmara – Arbate Asmera” has developed in cooperation with the Bauhaus Foundation Dessau the exhibition “Asmara – Africa’s Secret Capital of Modern Architecture”. Patrons of the exhibition are the General Secretary of

UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA). Since 2006 the exhibition has toured 16 cities in 9 countries with the support of among others the German Foreign Office and the UIA, propagating the uniqueness of the Asmara architecture. The exhibition was a special attraction at the UIA World Congresses in Turin and Durban.

The exhibition is intended as support for Eritrea's endeavours to have Asmara classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The gaining of the World Heritage status would support the maintenance of this unique architectural ensemble. Furthermore, the exhibition aims to contribute to the discourse and evaluation of classical modernism, the globalization of modern architecture, its historic value, and its impact on urban planning.

Other cities interested in forming a global network of classical modernist architecture may use the Asmara exhibition to raise awareness for their own issues and support by their own citizens. In doing so they will also be supporting Asmaras UNESCO candidature. We particularly appeal to UNESCO to show the exhibition at its Headquarters in Paris.

The exhibition consists of 25 light panels, available by now in English and German or in English and Italian, as well as 7 reconstructions and architectural models (optional) and the film "City of Dreams".



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