

48 368 - Rediscovering antiquity

Archaeology for architects

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The course follows the intertwined histories of architecture and archaeology from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century, critically engaging with the outsized influence of classical antiquity on architectural theory and practice and its role of authority and model in the Western artistic and cultural debate.

The traces of classical antiquity, buried in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern landscape, retained part of their cultural significance over the centuries and became the object of a "rediscovery", almost a cultural obsession. Artists, travelers and architects filtered and re-interpreted the reality of ancient objects and places, conjuring up their own vision of the past and nourishing their own creative pursuits from a continuous dialogue with history. At the same time, new political agendas, new biases and new goals were associated with antiquity, influencing the way the past of the region was explored, how the finds were studied and exposed in residences and Museums, and ultimately creating a stern competition to appropriate this legacy, with deep links to colonialism and imperialism. The ripple effects are still being felt today, for example in the discussion about the repatriation of cultural heritage.

We will study the history of this moment to better understand the cultural vantage point that often influenced the fabric of our cities, presided over the creation of many of our cultural institutions and the buildings that represent them, and had a deep and lasting impact on the ideas about architecture and its relationship with history. This will help us grasp more clearly the impact of the passage to Modernism and some of the complex and still open issues it brought about.