



Aga Khan Award for Architecture

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WINNING PROJECTS

**Revitalisation of the Hypercentre of Tunis**

Tunis, Tunisia

*Architect:* Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis

*Client:* Municipality of Tunis

**Project Description**

The nineteenth and early twentieth-century architectural heritage of North African cities embodies an important cultural exchange between the southern and northern Mediterranean. This heritage commonly lies adjacent to the old *medinas*, and has often been neglected in the drive to revitalise the historic centres of cities in this region. The *Ville Nouvelle* of Tunis, which was built when Tunisia was a French Protectorate, reflected a move from the urban patterns of the old *medina* to a grid plan that changed the character of the city. The urban revitalisation plan, devised and spearheaded by the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (ASM), has restructured the public spaces of the area around Avenue Bourguiba and Avenue de France and made them chiefly pedestrian. It has also listed and restored key monuments, such as the Théâtre municipal de Tunis, Marché central, Ancien Tribunal administratif and Cinéma Palace, which are once again in use. The ASM continues to actively guide institutions and individuals in the public and private sectors who wish to undertake preservation projects, in order to ensure overall quality and meet the objectives of the many stakeholders.



## Jury Citation

“The revitalisation of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century built heritage in the Hypercentre district-Bab B’Har-of Tunis, is an important and inspiring contribution to our changing understanding of the recent history of the Islamic world, particularly of the cultural legacy of the colonial era.



“The achievement of the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (ASM) lies in preserving the important landmarks and facades of this period, which have been neglected and destroyed in many Muslim cities, and using them as the catalyst for an ambitious and eclectic economic regeneration programme. The project has not only created a lively and prosperous area, but fostered a richer, more nuanced understanding of Tunisia’s recent history, without disguising the nature of colonialism.



“Equally impressive is the process through which the ASM, a tiny, passionately committed organisation of modest means, transferred the technical knowledge gained in their earlier preservation of the old medina to the Hypercentre. The local community was consulted throughout to ensure that existing businesses would benefit from regeneration, and that the process would be sustainable. These goals were reflected in the innovative financing of the project, and in the training of local craftsmen to undertake the restoration work.



“During the colonial era, many Muslim countries were the focus of modernist experimentation, often by young European architects developing radical ideas. The sensitivity and ambition of the revitalisation of the Hypercentre in Tunis shows how the same Muslim countries can now play an equally innovative and influential role in the preservation of modern heritage.”

## Project Data

<i>Client</i>	Municipality of Tunis, Tunisia
<i>Architects</i>	<p>Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis, Tunisia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sémia Akrouit-Yaïche, General Manager; Zoubeïr Mouhli, Deputy Director for Architecture and Urban Planning; Faïka Bejaoui, Deputy Director for Rehabilitation and Construction Permits; Abdelkerim Gazzah, Deputy Director of Restoration Works, Tunisia</li><li>• Mohsen Azaïez, Khaled Bouzid, Soulef Aouididi, Lassaâd Ben Slimene, Mourad Ghanoudi, Sadika Ghouma, Amel Meddeb-Ben Ghorbel, Khaled Ayed, Moez Jïed, Moez Tabib, Mehdi Ben Abdallah, project architects, Tunisia</li></ul>
<i>Craftsmen</i>	Safouane Ftouha, painter; Mongi Harbaoui, carpenter, Tunisia
<i>Site area</i>	<p>Hypercentre: Around an axis 1,433m long x 60m wide (Avenue Habib Bourguiba and Avenue de France)</p> <p>Théâtre municipal de Tunis: 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> Marché central: 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> Ancien Tribunal administratif: 2,530 m<sup>2</sup> Cinéma Palace: 1,100 m<sup>2</sup></p>
<i>Cost</i>	US\$ 19.5 million
<i>Commission</i>	1998
<i>Design</i>	1994-2002
<i>Construction</i>	1999-2007
<i>Occupancy</i>	2007 (and ongoing)
<i>Website</i>	<a href="http://www.asmtunis.com">www.asmtunis.com</a>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<p>Zoubeïr Mouhli and Justin McGuinness, under the direction of Sémia Akrouit-Yaïche and Viviane Bettaieb, <i>Médinances: Huit Visages de la Médina de Tunis</i> (Tunis, 1998).</p> <p>Zoubeïr Mouhli and Justin McGuinness, under the direction of Sémia Akrouit-Yaïche, <i>Tunis, 1800-1950. Portrait architectural et urbain</i> (Tunis, 2004).</p> <p>Jean-Baptiste Minnaert, <i>Histoires d'architectures en Méditerranée XIXe-XXe siècles. Ecrire l'histoire d'un héritage bâti</i> (Paris, 2005).</p> <p>Mohamed Awad, <i>Patrimoines partagés en Méditerranée. Eléments clés de la réhabilitation</i> (Programme Euromed Heritage II; Alexandria Preservation Trust, 2005).</p>

## Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis

The Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis (*Association for the Preservation of the Medina of Tunis*; ASM) was founded by the Tunis municipality in 1967. Its main purposes are to rehabilitate the image of the old city and to redefine the role of the old city within the urban agglomeration; to preserve the specificity and the unity of the historic city and to ensure its integration into the capital in order to prevent it from being marginalised. The ASM carries out its missions with the assistance of its architecture and planning unit and site team. In addition, the ASM serves as a meeting point and a research centre on urban, architectural and socio-economic aspects of the old medina of Tunis. The ASM received an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1983 for the Hafsia Quarter; in 1989 for the Sidi el-Aloui Primary School; and in 1995 for the Reconstruction of the Hafsia Quarter II. Sémia Akrouit-Yaïche, an architect and planner, has been Director General of the ASM since 1993.

