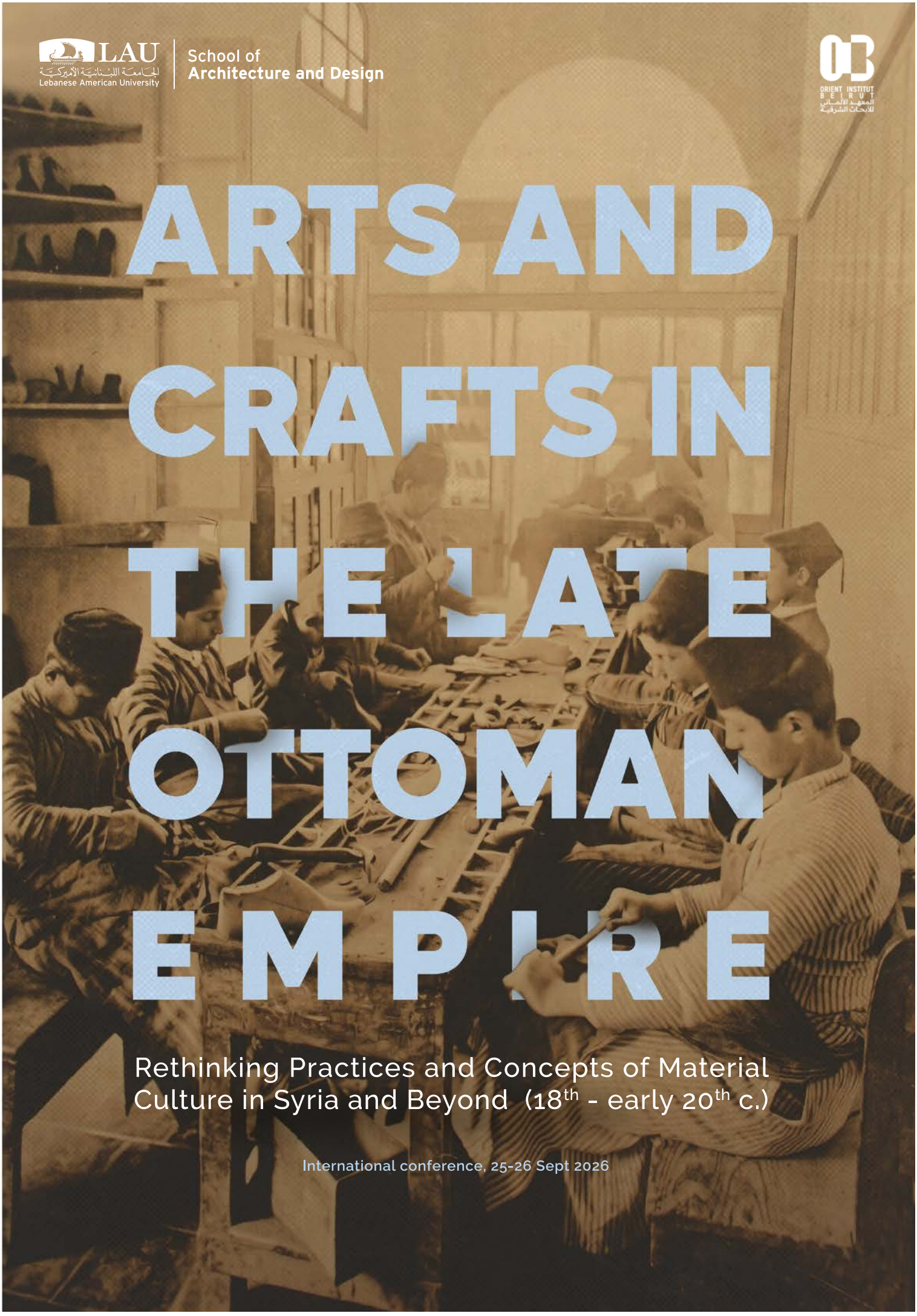
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# ARTS AND CRAFTS IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

## Rethinking Practices and Concepts of Material Culture in Syria and Beyond (18th - early 20th c.)

International conference, 25-26 Sept 2026

... Rethinking the relationship between material culture, knowledge, and modernity as an integral part of the history of the Islamic world.



▲
Sarrafian Brothers, 142. Shoemaker's shop. Circa 1901 - 1920, print on postcard. (Reproduction)
The Fouad Debbas collection at the Sursock Museum.



# ARTS AND CRAFTS IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

## Rethinking Practices and Concepts of Material Culture in Syria and Beyond (18th - early 20th c.)

International Conference
Hybrid Format

**25-26 September 2026**
Lebanese American University, Beirut

**Convenors:**
May Farhat & Sarah Sabban

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Sarrafian Brothers, 237. Home Cabinet shop. Boys industrial, Urfa
Circa 1901 – 1920, print on postcard. (Reproduction)
The Fouad Debbas collection at the Sursock Museum.


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# Conference Statement

Arts and Crafts in the Late Ottoman Empire aims to advance art-historical and interdisciplinary research on the practices and concepts of material culture in Ottoman lands between the eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries. While inviting contributions on all geographies of the Empire, this international conference foregrounds late Ottoman Syria as a case through which to expand the analytical and historical horizons of Islamic art and architecture studies and to contribute to broader debates in Ottoman and Arab historiographies of modernity.

Following the methodological program of entangled histories, our endeavor is not limited to chronologically expanding the scope of study; it also strives for a deeper reflexive commitment to rethinking the relationship between material culture, knowledge, and modernity as an integral part of the history of the Islamic world. We propose employing "entangled modernities" as a critical site of inquiry into the materialities, epistemes, and temporalities shaping arts and crafts in the late Ottoman Empire. Integral to this approach is the premise of polyvalent and malleable thinking that can transcend rigid boundaries, undo dichotomies, and illuminate processes of transformation.

The timespan covered by the conference reflects a strategic decision to unsettle and productively reframe the usual terms of periodization and the pre-given contours of modernity and pre-modernity that set the objects of study and their temporal coordinates. We thereby encourage serious attention to local temporalities embodied or performed in objects, concepts, and material processes that reveal new matrices of continuity, rupture, and revival. Indeed, the period under consideration witnessed the Empire's gradual integration into the global economy and the implementation of a series of reforms, culminating in the Tanzimat period (1839-1876), which signaled profound changes that the state and society had to contend with. These developments raise the question of plural and contested temporalities, which gains further importance considering the increasingly unequal terms of exchange and interaction that characterized Ottoman relations with a fast-industrializing, expansionist Europe.

Our approach emphasizes the mutually constitutive nature of cross-cultural encounters, often between parties of unequal power, and, to the extent possible, contextualizes their components and outcomes in a processual, holistic, and heuristic manner. It equally entails the necessity to historicize categories of knowledge that organized the material world, transformed it, and were transformed by it. Categories such as "art," "craft," and "industry" were neither neutral nor necessarily equivalent to the terms Ottoman actors used to understand practices of making, skills,

production, and aesthetic value. The many languages spoken across the Empire fostered unique environments in which the emerging European systems of knowledge and classification were refracted in many directions and reflected local and regional histories. Translation between languages and epistemes undoubtedly depended on emergent, experimental, and contingent forms of knowledge that can instruct the modern historian on the changing conditions and materialities within which they existed.

The staggering effects of the Industrial Revolution on the material world and people's engagement with it cannot be overstated, but they were not all-encompassing, simultaneous, or uniform. Hence, this conference on the arts and crafts will reconsider all aspects that constituted, (re)shaped, and represented material culture across this period of more than 200 years, including conditions, modes, and tools of production; regional and global circulations of goods and technology transfer; interplay between science, economy, and state; relations between makers, patrons, merchants, and consumers. It also considers apprenticeship and other forms of knowledge transmission; the relationship between artisanal skill and mechanical production, changing regimes of values and taste, and how economic and legal reforms mediated between local interests and global pressures.

Taken together, the contributions approach late Ottoman material culture through the interconnected lenses of materiality, knowledge, and temporality that underpin the conference's critical inquiry into the entangled modernities of Ottoman arts and crafts, in Syria and beyond. They engage with many of the themes discussed above, expound on them in innovative ways, and offer a compelling spectrum of interdisciplinary research, object-centered studies, case-based micro-histories of concepts, people, and institutions, as well as historiographical questions on sources, archives, conservation discourses, and digital humanities initiatives dealing with material culture.

## **Day 1** - Friday, September 25, 2026

# SCHEDULE

**8:30–9:00** **Registration**

**9:00–9:20** **Welcome Remarks**
Dr. Elie Haddad, Dean, School of Architecture and Design
Dr. May Farhat and Dr. Sarah Sabban, Convenors

**9:20–10:30** **Opening Keynote - Marcus Milwright**
Survival, Revival and Invention: Exploring the Metalworking Traditions of Egypt and Greater Syria in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries [online]

**10:30–10:50** **Coffee Break**

**10:50–12:10** **Panel 1**
**Revealing Craft Worlds through Indigenous Ecologies, Orientalist Records, and Technologies of Representation**
**Moderator:** Sana Tannoury-Karam (School of Arts and Sciences, LAU)

**Luzan Munayer** - Threads of Water: Reed Craft and Memory in the Hula Valley [online]
**Sarah Tabbal** - Traditional Costumes of Bethlehem in Nineteenth-Century Textual and Visual Sources [online]
**Yasmine Nachabe Taan** - Between Studio and Leisure: Gender, Class, and the Photographic Practices of Karimeh Abboud and Marie el Khazen in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine and Lebanon

**12:10–1:10** **Lunch Break**

**1:10–3:00** **Panel 2**
**Crafting Architecture: The Princely, the Vernacular, and the Sacred**
**Moderator:** May Farhat (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)

**Veronika Poier** - Shaping Transregional Heritage: The Role of Syrian Craftsmen and European Travelers at Beit ed-Din Palace (1800–1840) [online]
**Étienne Coppé** - Is There a Lebanese Architecture? A Case Study of the Triple-Arch Houses (1860-1920)
**Rita Kalindjian** - Sacred Spaces, Shared Practices: Church Decorations in Ottoman Lebanon
**Selma Pandžić** - Decorative Painting *(Kalem-işi)* in Bosnian Mosques as a Craft Practice in the Late Ottoman Empire [online]

# DAY ONE

3:00–3:20 **Coffee Break**

3:20–5:10 **Panel 3**

**Rethinking Material Culture through Collections, Art Markets, and Theatre Performance**

**Moderator:** Alya Karame (Orient-Institut Beirut)

**Jenny Norton-Wright** - Manuscript Copying and Collecting in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Lebanon: The Case of Yūsuf Ṣayfī [online]

**Yumna Moussa** - Navigating the Ottoman, Crafting the *Nahḍa*: Three Syrian Manuscript Dealers and their Global Art Networks (1885–1935)

**Cafer Sarıkaya** - The Exhibits of the Ottoman Empire at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago

**Sarah Johnson** - Performing the Ethnographic: A Theatre Collection from Ottoman Syria Created for the 1894 World's Fair in Antwerp [online]

5:10–5:30 **Coffee Break**

5:30–6:50 **Panel 4**

**Traveling Imagery, Hybrid Practices, and the Popular/Decorative Arts in Syria and Beyond**

**Moderator:** Leyla el Sayed Hussein (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)

**Hala Qasqas** - Crafting Popular Modernities: Abū Ṣubḥī al-Tīnāwī's Underglass Paintings and Late Ottoman Damascene Material Culture [online]

**Ava Hess** - Islamic Chromolithographs and Reverse Glass Paintings between the Maghrib and *Bilād al-Shām* (ca. 1880s–1920s) [online]

**Sara Saeidi** - Artistic Hybridity in Ottoman Syria: Intersections of Persian, European, and Local Aesthetics in Decorative Arts (Eighteenth–Early Twentieth Century) [online]

# SCHEDULE

**9:00–10:20** **Panel 5**

**Reconsidering Production: Ecclesiastical Contracts, Chibouks, and Silkworm Egg Boxes**

**Moderator:** Sarah Sabban (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)

**André Nassar** - Charcoal Production in Mount Lebanon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries [in Arabic]

**Jacopo Boschini** - The Production Chain of the Chibouks in the Ottoman Empire [online]

**Yixin Pu** - The Materiality of *Fenn*: Armenian *Tohumcular* and Transimperial Mobility in Ottoman–Russian Borderlands

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**10:20–10:40** **Coffee Break**

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**10:40–12:30** **Panel 6**

**Industrial Enterprises and Perspectives on Material Modernities**

**Moderator:** Jens Hanssen (Orient-Institut Beirut)

**Fatma Filiz Özsuca** - Ottoman Industrialization and Glass and Crystal Factory Initiative in Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo [online]

**Sarah Sabban** - Industrializing Late Ottoman Beirut: Urban Notables and the Quest for Modernization

**Didem Yavuz Velipaşaoğlu** - Connected Utopias: Mapping the Hereke Factory across Europe and the Middle East's Artist Colonies [online]

**Youssef el-Khoury Salem** - Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq and Material Culture in Late Ottoman Society

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**12:30–1:40** **Lunch Break**

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**1:40–3:30** **Panel 7**

**Material Intertwining: Taste, Identity, and Commercial Networks of Woodwork and Ceramics**

**Moderator:** Ziad Mawlawi (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)

**Damla Göre** - Damascene Musa's Furniture Store: Woodcraft, Retail Modernity, and Consumer Culture in Late Ottoman Istanbul [online]

**Camille Tarazi** - Maison Tarazi and Bespoke Oriental Decorative Arts

**Valentina Vezzoli** - Ceramic Landscapes of Rural Northern Lebanon: Material Culture and Patterns of Connectivity in Late Ottoman Koura (Eighteenth–Early Twentieth Century) - Results from the Northern Lebanon Project [online]

**Yasmine Yakuppur** - Importing Taste in Ottoman *Bilād al-Shām*: European Porcelain Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century

# DAY TWO

**3:30–3:50** **Coffee Break**

**3:50–5:10** **Panel 8**

**Heritage Technologies and Museum Politics**

**Moderator:** Ümit Fırat Açıkgöz (School of Architecture and Design, AUB)

**Nur Efeoğlu** - Reframing Islamic Crafts: Museum Practices and the Art–Craft Divide [online]

**Sevim Musaoğlu** - Between Damascus and Antioch: Michel Écochard and Entangled Temporalities of Architecture and Heritage [online]

**Rania Kataf** - The Role of Digital Archives in Safeguarding Syrian Arts and Crafts: The Syrian Heritage Archive Project (SHAP)

**5:30–6:40** **Closing Lecture - Anke Scharrahs**

Materials and Motifs in the Interior Decoration of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Private Homes in Damascus: Changes in Taste and Materiality



Keynote Speaker


# Marcus Milwright

University of York, UK


## ABSTRACT

### Survival, Revival and Invention: Exploring the Metalworking Traditions of Egypt and Greater Syria in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Opening Keynote

ONLINE


Competition from mass-produced goods from Europe led to the decline or disappearance of some Middle Eastern crafts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while others adapted to the changing tastes of local clients and tourists. The challenges of modernity are captured in contemporary writing and surviving objects. The huge surviving assemblage of decorated metalwork from Egypt, Greater Syria and Iraq presents a fascinating window into craft practice at this crucial time, encompassing faithful revivals of older styles to objects that engaged directly with modern themes. The implications of these issues are explored in three short case studies. The first deals with the copying of the hexagonal stand made for Mamluk Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

The second case study examines the selective use of themes from the Baptistère de Saint Louis on inlaid candlesticks made in Cairo. The third case study turns to the manufacture of cheaper chased and pierced brass objects, specifically for export to Europe. These case studies focus on how motifs and larger designs were recorded and disseminated among workshops in Cairo and Damascus, as well as the role of dealers and international exhibitions in shaping consumer demand. The conclusion returns to the economic and political context in which this craft activity took place and considers the impact of World War I in changing practices of manufacture and consumption in the urban societies of the Middle East.





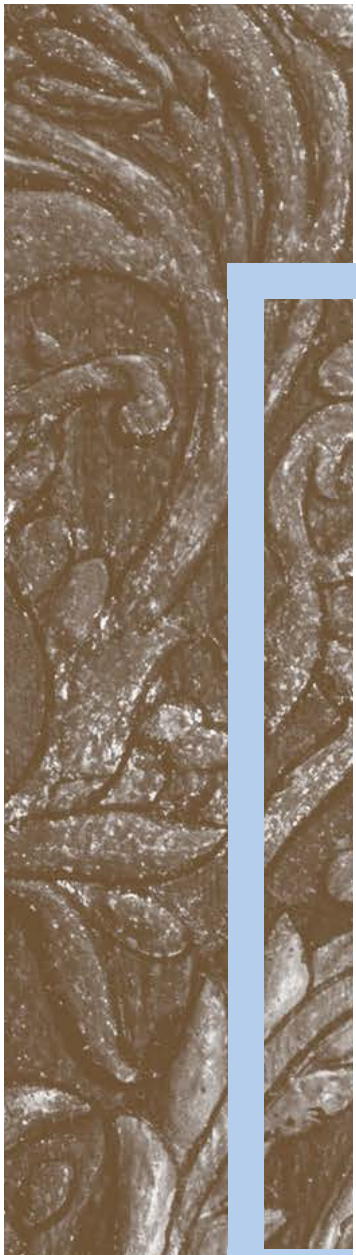

Brass box inlaid with silver. Cairo, late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Credit: Mohammad Khaleeq Collection, UK.

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Marcus Milwright** is British Academy Global Professor in the Department of History of Art, University of York, and professor of Islamic art and archaeology at the University of Victoria, Canada. His research focuses on the art and archaeology of the Islamic Middle East, labor and craft practices in urban environments, and cross-cultural contacts in the medieval Mediterranean. He is involved in archaeological and architectural projects in Jordan, Syria, Iran, and Greece and has created the Crafts of Syria, Crafts of Iraq, and Talking about Art websites. His books include: *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* (Edinburgh, 2010), and *The Dome of the Rock and its Umayyad Mosaic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh, 2016); *Islamic Arts and Crafts: An Anthology* (Edinburgh, 2017); *The Queen of Sheba's Gift: A History of the True Balsam of Matarea* (Edinburgh, 2021); and *A Story of Islamic Art* (Routledge, 2023). He has edited two volumes, *Encounters: Medieval Islamic History in 50 Objects* (Routledge, 2025) and, with Evanthia Baboula, *Made for the Eye of One Who Sees: Canadian Contributions to the Study of Islamic Art and Archaeology* (McGill/Queens University Press, 2022). He is co-editor of Brill's series, Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World. He is currently completing a study of architectural designs from a decorated Qur'an found in the Congregational Mosque of Sanaa, which will be published by Edinburgh University Press.



Detail of a brass platter inlaid with silver and copper. Cairo, late nineteenth century. Credit: Mohammad Khaleeq Collection (Ktr19).



Keynote Speaker

# Anke Scharrahs

Freelance Conservator, Germany

## ABSTRACT

### Materials and Motifs in the Interior Decoration of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Private Homes in Damascus: Changes in Taste and Materiality

Closing Lecture

For centuries, Damascus's location at the crossroads of major long-distance trade and pilgrimage routes ensured a continuous flow and exchange of a wide variety of goods, such as precious textiles, glass, ceramics, porcelain, and objects made of metal, wood, paper, and leather. Along with these objects came new ideas, motifs, and trends that traveled along trade routes between England and China, as well as in a north-south direction. In the city's residential buildings, all these influences have found their way into private rooms, reflecting which motifs, materials and colors came into fashion – or fell out of favor – in which decades. Damascus is one of the few cities in the region where around 4,000 historic residential buildings dating from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century have survived. These buildings, which have evolved over the centuries, offer a unique insight into the self-image and everyday culture of their builders and inhabitants.

The houses were richly decorated with stone mosaics, tinted mortar paste decorations, polychrome stone reliefs, colored glass-gypsum-windows, murals, mirrors, tiles and painted wood panelling and comfortably furnished with sumptuous carpets, cushions and other textiles. The wooden ceilings are reminiscent of carpets from Mamluk Egypt, whilst the wall panelling is influenced by motifs from Safavid Iran. In addition, influences from Ottoman and European court art, Chinese and Meissen porcelain, Delft and Iznik tiles, Indo-Persian silk fabrics and cotton prints are evident. This lecture offers insights into the wide variety of painted and real elements in Damascene interior design across 250 years of the late Ottoman period and celebrates the creativity and sophisticated craftsmanship of the artisans.





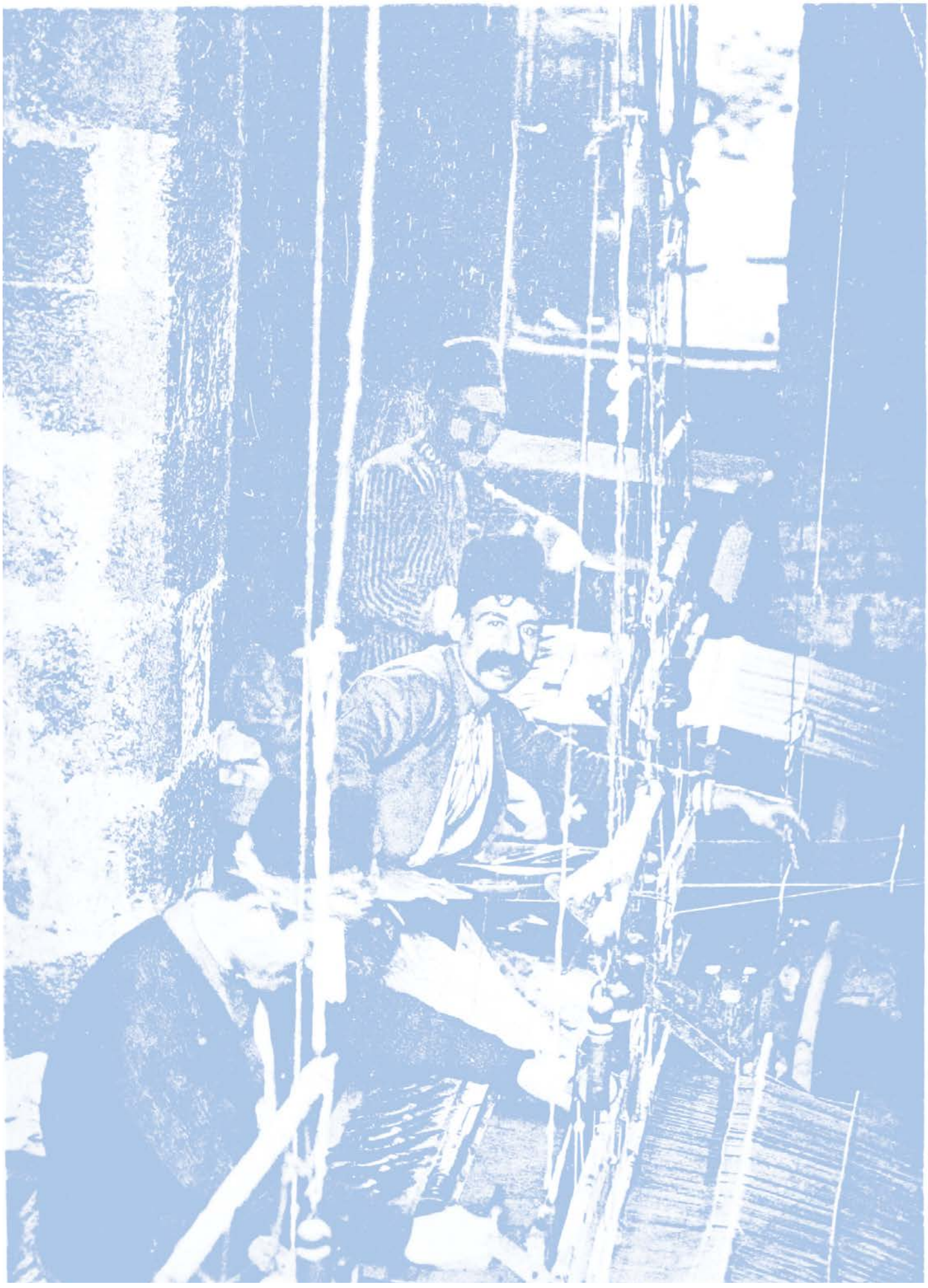
Bayt Nizam, Damascus, inner courtyard, east wall of the iwan, ablaq decoration made around 1800, photo: Anke Scharrahs, 2012.

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Anke Scharrahs** is a freelance conservator specializing in polychrome wooden objects, with a special focus on elaborate wall and ceiling panels from seventeenth- to nineteenth-century urban palaces in Syria. Her PhD thesis focused on the historical production techniques of these splendid interiors (Academy of Fine Arts Dresden, 2013). For 25 years, she has researched and conserved Syrian interiors in museum collections in Berlin, Dresden, New York, Los Angeles, Honolulu, Dublin, Cairo, Doha, Cincinnati, and Paris, as well as in historic houses in Damascus and Hama. Her research interests include the materials, use, and alteration of these interiors. She has lectured and published widely on her subject, including the book *Damascene 'Ajami Interiors: Forgotten Jewels of Interior Design* (Archetype Publications, London, 2013) and the book co-authored with Filiz Çakir Phillip *Syrian Living: Medieval to Modern* (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, 2022).



Cartouche of a wall panel, Damascus Room, dated 1225/1810-11, Ethnographic Museum, State Art Collection Dresden, photo: Anke Scharrahs, 2017.



▲

Sarrafian Brothers. 1212 Weaving in Syria. Circa 1901 – 1920, print on postcard. (Reproduction)
The Fouad Debbas collection at the Sursock Museum.

# Jacopo Boschini

Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

## The Production Chain of the Chibouks in the Ottoman Empire

ONLINE

With the discovery of the American continent at the end of the fifteenth century, tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), like many other commodities, entered the Western world and, through established exchange networks, also reached the Ottoman Empire. Initially regarded as a medicinal plant, tobacco rapidly spread as an everyday consumer good across all levels of Ottoman society, without distinction, primarily through pipe smoking. Ottoman pipes, commonly known as chibouks, represented the main means of tobacco consumption from the late sixteenth century to the early twentieth century. They featured a tripartite structure: a mouthpiece, a stem, and a ceramic bowl. That latter component is most frequently recovered in archaeological contexts within the Ottoman Empire, making it an excellent candidate as a "guide fossil" for identifying and defining the Ottoman period.

For a long time, scholars relegated such material to antiquarian interest, and only toward the end of the twentieth century did it become the subject of systematic scholarly investigation in major centers such as Istanbul, Corinth, and Athens. As a result of the increasing volume of research conducted across the empire in recent years, a preliminary typological framework is now beginning to take shape. This presentation aims to illuminate a still understudied aspect of this element of daily life: the production chain. Drawing on ethnographic and archaeological evidence that has emerged in recent years, it seeks to reconstruct the production process, from procuring raw materials to producing the finished product, including the role of workshops and the craftsmen involved in its manufacture.

**Jacopo Boschini** is an archaeologist and PhD student in Sciences of Antiquity at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He graduated with honors from the same university with a thesis on Ottoman pipes from Kurdistan and continued his research on this subject during his PhD. He is currently the field director of the Zeyd Archaeological Project (ZAP), under the supervision of Professor C. Tonghini.

# Étienne Coppé

Independent Researcher, Lebanon

## Is There a Lebanese Architecture? A Case Study of the Triple-Arch Houses (1860–1920)

It is commonly asserted that Lebanon's heritage architecture is unique to the country and exemplifies how it differs from that of its neighbors. In this regard, the triple-arch houses (1860-1920), commonly found in Beirut and copied across the region, are often regarded as perfect exemplars of indigenous domestic architecture, born of Lebanon's multicultural roots.

This viewpoint further reinforces the perception of Lebanon as possessing an exceptional status that distinguishes it from the broader Arab world. While such a view can be seen as "dacianism" (i.e., a tendency to ascribe an idealized past to the country as a whole), this interpretation is nevertheless open to question. Indeed, no nation is an island, and understanding Lebanon's historical architecture requires a regional perspective that extends to the Levant (i.e., current Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Jordan) as well as the recognition of Lebanon's historical position within the Ottoman Empire.

In this talk, I will explore the deep Arabo-Ottoman Levantine roots of this Lebanese architecture, examine related developments in neighboring countries, and question its role as a pivot between Western and Eastern architecture, drawing on visual and textual evidence from across the Levantine region and from foreign sources.

**Étienne Coppé** is a French heritage architect who has studied and lived in several Mediterranean countries (France, Italy, Algeria, and Lebanon). He specializes in heritage architecture and environmental design. He has managed construction sites and projects for twelve years, especially in Mediterranean and Arab countries. Through his projects and on-site research, he has accumulated practical and theoretical knowledge of Levantine architecture.


# Nur Efeoğlu

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Türkiye


## Reframing Islamic Crafts: Museum Practices and the Art-Craft Divide

ONLINE

This paper draws on the author's PhD thesis on Islamic art in British museums and ongoing research on Islamic visual and material culture. It reflects on how museums frame, categorize, and interpret Islamic crafts. Objects such as calligraphic panels, textiles, metalwork, and ceramics occupy a central place in the Islamic world's artistic traditions. Yet in museum displays, they often oscillate between being presented as works of fine art and as ethnographic or functional artifacts. This ambiguity invites closer scrutiny of the curatorial logic that shapes their interpretation.

The paper explores the following questions: through which discourses are Islamic arts and crafts framed in museum settings? On what criteria are objects labeled as "art" or "craft," and how do these classifications reflect broader epistemological hierarchies shaped by Western modernity? It also considers how the museum space itself—through practices of display, labeling, and contextualization—may transform the religious, everyday, and aesthetic meanings of these objects once removed from their original contexts of production and use.

Drawing on critical art history and museum studies, this study suggests that the aestheticization of Islamic crafts often foregrounds visual form while marginalizing labor, material processes, and devotional or functional dimensions. By isolating objects in vitrines and emphasizing authorship, chronology, and stylistic development—often at the expense of use and making—museum displays risk reproducing a modernist separation between art and craft that sits uneasily with

Islamic artistic traditions. Rather than offering a definitive model, the paper invites a reconsideration of how Islamic crafts are exhibited and interpreted and argues for more contextual and materially grounded approaches that acknowledge the integrated nature of artistic production in Islamic societies.

**Nur Efeoğlu** received her BA in Theology from Marmara University in 2013. She completed her MA at the University of Exeter in 2017, with a thesis entitled "Cultural Symbolism in Contemporary Mosque Architecture." In 2024, she received her PhD from the same institution with a dissertation entitled "Representing the Seljuk and Ottoman Past in British Museums." Her research focuses on Islamic art, museum representation, material culture, and the intersections of art, craft, and curatorial practice. Since 2024, she has been a faculty member in the Department of Islamic Arts at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University.


# Damla Göre

Koç University, Türkiye


## Damascene Musa's Furniture Store: Woodcraft, Retail Modernity, and Consumer Culture in Late Ottoman Istanbul

ONLINE

Ottoman woodcraft revived in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite rising competition from capitalist integration and a flood of European industrial imports. Spearheading this revival were local merchants working with Syro-Lebanese workshops, who carved out a space for themselves in the booming mercantilist market of Istanbul—a strategic site where foreign commerce, domestic consumption, and palace patronage converged. These private actors bolstered the craft industry by building regional retail networks and modernizing commercial practices through ads, showrooms, print catalogs, and diversified product lines.

My paper describes this dynamic life of late Ottoman woodcraft through the commercial practices of an understudied merchant: Joseph Elian Sarkis (Yusuf ibn Ilyan ibn Musa al-Dimashqi Sarkis, 1856–1932). An Ottoman Imperial Bank employee, bibliographer, and collector-dealer, Sarkis operated a furniture store in Yeni Çarşı Han near Istanbul's Grand Bazaar in the 1900s, among other merchants trading "oriental" artifacts. Strategically branding himself as "Damascene Musa" and describing his goods as products of the "*sanâyi'-i nefîse-i şarkiyye*" (eastern fine arts industry) sourced from the province of Syria, Sarkis positioned his enterprise at the intersection of regional craft traditions and the cosmopolitan taste for Islamic decorative arts. I examine the growing retail industry for wooden decorative objects in the Ottoman Empire through the material sites of the furniture store and its catalog, arguing that these windows into the marketplace reveal how craftwork adapted to contemporary trends and market demands.

Through this microhistorical approach to a mid-scale furniture and furnishing store, the paper positions Damascene retailers as pioneering agents of the empire's modern consumer culture, expanding scholarship on Ottoman merchant families. It additionally challenges Islamic art market studies that typically relegate Ottoman woodcraft to oriental curios or antiquities of a residual past.

**Damla Göre** is an architect and researcher exploring the cultural histories of interiors in the Eastern Mediterranean. She works at the intersection of gender studies, design theory, and architectural history. She completed her doctorate in 2025 and earned the ETH Silver Medal for her dissertation. The Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED, Koç University), the Istanbul Research Institute (IAE), the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), and SALT Research, among other institutions, have supported her research. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Koç University and serves on the managerial team of *Manazir*, a platform connecting art, architecture, and visual culture across the Middle East and North Africa.


# Ava Hess

University of California, Los Angeles, USA


## Islamic Chromolithographs and Reverse Glass Paintings between the Maghrib and *Bilād al-Shām* (ca. 1880s–1920s)

ONLINE


An equestrian couple appears in strikingly similar compositions in two works: a reverse glass painting made in Sfax in the late 1880s, and a chromolithographic poster produced in Algiers before Wassily Kandinsky purchased it in 1905. The sword-bearing Sīdī ʿAbdallah and Amīna ride together on a single black stallion, recasting a legend of the seventh-century commander ʿAbdallah ibn Jaʿfar and the Byzantine princess he captured at the conquest of Tunis as an epic romance.

These works open onto a broader study of two related yet materially distinct mediums. Algerian chromolithography and Tunisian reverse glass painting grew out of Ottoman-era networks of trade, migration, and visual exchange linking the Maghrib and eastern Mediterranean, where the same imagery and techniques circulated.

The paper draws on archival research and doctoral fieldwork in Tunisia and Algeria, in dialogue with material from Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*—from chromolithographs produced for Christian and Muslim audiences to the work of Damascene painter Abū Ṣubḥī al-Tīnāwī and reverse-glass tattoo panels from Cairo. Using this eastern Mediterranean material as a comparative provocation rather than a fully parallel case, I trace how an overlapping visual repertoire—heroic figures and episodes from Islamic history, local saints, and modern political figures—was reproduced, translated, and localized across different mediums and geographies.

Furthermore, this paper examines late Ottoman popular art as a site of entangled modernities linking two Ottoman "peripheries": *Bilād al-Shām*, while still under direct Ottoman rule, and the Maghrib, where Ottoman visual-material culture persisted long after Ottoman administration ended. By foregrounding the circulation and transformation of shared Islamic imagery, the paper challenges linear center–periphery models that privilege Istanbul or Europe as the sole vectors of transmission. It instead proposes a lateral history of Ottoman culture that repositions popular art as an archive of intersections between artisanal and mechanical production, oral and visual knowledge, and Ottoman and colonial temporalities.

**Ava Katarina Tabatabai Hess** is a PhD candidate in Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Her dissertation examines vernacular Islamic art from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, especially nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century reverse glass paintings and chromolithographs as well as their later recuperations by states, institutions, and artists. Starting in 2027, she will participate in Khamseen's Getty-funded project "The Futures of Islamic Art History: Remapping the Field," and will join the Art Institute of Chicago as a curatorial fellow focused on the Islamic arts of Africa.

# Sarah Johnson

Wereldmuseum, Netherlands

## Performing the Ethnographic: A Theatre Collection from Ottoman Syria Created for the 1894 World's Fair in Antwerp

ONLINE

In 1894, a theatrical troupe called *E. Lakiss & Co.* set up a stage at the Syrian Pavilion of the World's Fair in Antwerp. The registration records of the fair list 'Eid Lakis' from Beirut as the director of the troupe, with actors coming mostly from Beirut or Damascus. The troupe performed the story Antar and Abla, along with various dances and pantomimes of daily life in Syria. The Rijks Ethnographisch Museum in Leiden (today the Wereldmuseum) collected many of the costumes and some watercolors used by the Syrian theatre troupe. Based on current research, this is the only surviving collection of theatre costumes used by an Ottoman troupe at a World's Fair.

This paper examines the collection in the Wereldmuseum alongside surviving archival records to understand how E. Lakiss's theatre performed an idea of Ottoman Syria for a European audience. The paper considers the troupe's choices in relation to contemporary developments in theatre in Syria and the broader Ottoman Empire, as well as to similar displays from Syria and the Ottoman Empire at World's Fairs. Can comparisons be made, for example, to the work being done at the same time by playwright Abu Khalil Qabbani (1835–1902) in Damascus? How do the objects used in the performance compare with other objects from the Ottoman Empire sold at the same fair, and how do they fit into a narrative of the ethnographic being produced by European museums? The theatre's position at the intersection of performance, identity projection, and the development of European ethnographic museums offers a lens for exploring modernization projects between Ottoman Syria and Europe.

**Sarah Johnson** is currently the curator of the Middle East and North Africa collections at the Wereldmuseum in the Netherlands. She completed her PhD on modern art in twentieth-century Iraq at the Freie University in Berlin. She held fellowships in Beirut at the Orient-Institut and in Lisbon at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. Previously, she was a curator of Islamic collections at the British Museum in London, and a researcher in the curatorial department at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C.

# Rita Kalindjian

University of Balamand, Lebanon; EPHE, France


## Sacred Spaces, Shared Practices: Church Decorations in Ottoman Lebanon


This paper presents a detailed example of the insufficiently documented wall decorations, paintings, plaster imprints, and bas-reliefs found in Lebanese churches between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unlike the well-studied medieval murals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these late Ottoman Levantine ecclesiastical decorations remain largely undocumented. This example is significant because it condenses the technical and stylistic features observed across the broader corpus of 75 sites, making it a representative sample. The study situates ecclesiastical decorations within their historical and architectural contexts, tracing possible influences through an interdisciplinary methodology that combines art history, archaeology, museology, and scientific analysis.

By situating this style within the broader framework of late Ottoman material culture in Syria and the Levant, this approach highlights the interplay of Christian theological themes and motifs common in Islamic art and shared across Ottoman material culture, particularly arabesque, geometric, and floral motifs. It also reveals how Christian communities in Ottoman Lebanon engaged with shared artisanal practices and adapted local craft traditions to articulate identity within the empire's artisanal/cultural pluralism framework. Beyond devotional imagery, ecclesiastical decoration functioned as a medium of cultural negotiation. It embedded sacred spaces within wider Ottoman and Mediterranean artistic currents.


**Rita Kalindjian** is a fine artist (MA), archaeologist (BA), museologist (MA), and is currently a PhD candidate at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) in Paris. Former honorary director of the Armenian Genocide Orphans' Museum and former lecturer at the Lebanese University, she is now a full-time affiliated researcher at the University of Balamand (Department of Archaeology and Museology), where she also serves as director of the Ethnography Museum. She is also the vice-president of the Lebanese committee of ICOM. Her research interests focus on Lebanese and Armenian cultural heritage, sacred art, ethnography, and material culture, with particular attention to the Ottoman period.


# Rania Kataf

Independent Researcher, Syria


## The Role of Digital Archives in Safeguarding Syrian Arts and Crafts: The Syrian Heritage Archive Project (SHAP)


Digital cultural archives play an essential role in collecting, organizing, preserving, and facilitating access to data and cultural memory. They also lay the foundation for future research and development in the field. In 2013, as a result of the war in Syria, the Syrian Heritage Archive

Project (SHAP) at the Museum of Islamic Art, Pergamon Museum in Berlin, worked to construct an archive that helps preserve Syrian cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible aspects, by creating a website with over 30,000 images, numerous articles, and an interactive heritage map.

This initiative expanded access for a wider audience. Its inclusive approach helped spread invaluable knowledge and supported the future revival of cultural preservation, including arts and crafts, by providing layers of digital media content submitted by diverse participants from various research backgrounds, including the German Archaeological Institute (DAI). Its particular focus on transmitting cultural practices situated Syrian crafts at the core of architecture, tradition, and social life, three of the five pillar categories listed on the website. SHAP is far more than a digital repository; it actively fosters community resilience and has given rise to new projects, including Multaka, Memories of Aleppo, and my personal initiative, R's Culture.

**Rania Kataf** is an independent Syrian cultural heritage researcher based in Damascus, Syria. She earned her master's degree in World Heritage Studies at the Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU) in Cottbus, Germany, and has a certificate in Art Crime and Heritage Protection from the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) in Italy. With ten years of experience in the field, Rania has participated in research projects with various institutions, including Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, and the Katonah Museum in New York, and works as a co-curator at the Japanese Palace in Dresden, Germany. Her work focuses on documenting and safeguarding traditional material culture, with a focus on oral history.

# Youssef el-Khoury Salem

American University of Beirut, Lebanon

## Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq and Material Culture in Late Ottoman Society

In the early 1870s, Arab belletrist and leading *nahdawi* intellectual Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1801–1887) purchased a desk. He was so proud of the acquisition that he described sitting in a comfortable posture, placing his pile of papers on his left-hand side, and conducting his studies at the center of this essential modern-day piece of furniture. He also advised fellow writers to consider this new way of writing and a healthier way to sit while working. Though he enjoyed this practical item in his old age, in his youth he was trained as a scribe who sat cross-legged on the floor and copied manuscripts on his knees or, at best, on a small, low stool. His writings, in addition to being literary and lexicographic, were also materialistic and worldly, marked by an avidity for new objects and industrial products. After his journeys across Malta, France, and England, he became more convinced of a global process of mobile modernity propelled by steamships, trains, and omnibuses, and founded on commercial exchange and material production.

My paper draws on vignettes of material culture in his writings. It argues that, beyond being a poet, littérateur, and journalist, al-Shidyāq experienced, through his extensive travels, more than any of his contemporaries the material aspects of Western modernity and sought to translate them for an Arabic reading public. Whether in a visit he made to the Office of the Telegraph, in London, where his curiosity compelled him to touch the machinery and feel the mild electric current run through his fingers, or in his tour of the pavilions of the first *Exposition Universelle* of 1855 in Paris, he demonstrated a strong interest in material and not merely abstract forms of *tamaddun* – the term he adopted for modernity. His call for industrialization in the Ottoman Empire led him to focus more on the lived, everyday experience of economic and material advancement.

**Youssef el-Khoury Salem** specializes in the history of the modern Arab Middle East. He completed his graduate studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Sociology (MA, 2011) and later in History (MA, 2020). His graduate research, "Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq in the Public Sphere: *al-Jawā'ib* (1861–1884)," won the 2021 AUB award for best thesis in Ottoman/Arab history. He studies the sociology of nineteenth-century Arab intellectuals, their dynamics of exchange, and their entanglements with the West. He is currently a PhD student in modern history at AUB.

# Yumna Moussa

Megawra–Built Environment Collective, Egypt

## Navigating the Ottoman, Crafting the *Nahḍa*: Three Syrian Manuscript Dealers and their Global Art Networks (1885–1935)

The names Dimitri Andalaft, Mohamed Aly, and Mohamed Amin al-Khanji recur in archives of Islamic art collections worldwide. They are linked to three Syrian dealers who dominated the Arabic manuscript market during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beyond supplying global collectors with rare copies of illuminated *Qur'āns*, these men were celebrated locally as the intellectual founding fathers of the *Nahḍa* and leaders of the Arabic print movement.

By exploring their personal archives, writings, and memoirs, this paper frames the men's curation of manuscripts as an act of navigating entangled identities in post-Tanzimat *Bilād al-Shām*. It explores how their decisions regarding what to edit and print locally, what to ship to Western museums, and what to withhold reflect modes of aesthetic valuation and epistemic judgment central to the late Ottoman moment. Within these men's political fight for Syria's decentralization, and their escape from persecution by Ottoman governors, manuscripts became a site of conflict, where they could practice Arab agency and reverse unequal epistemic flows with the Ottoman center and the West. They achieved this by forming global intellectual networks, promoting Arabic manuscript circulation, and manipulating the art market through pricing. The curatorial efforts and networks of Andalaft, Aly, and al-Khanji shaped foundational collections at the National Museum of Damascus, Cairo's Dār al-Kutub, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Penn Museum, Princeton University Library, and many more. These three men not only shaped the twentieth-century art market but also paved the way for the study of Islamic manuscripts for future generations.

By highlighting the active role Syrian *Nahḍa* intellectuals played in curating modern collections of Islamic art, this paper rethinks gaps in the field as silences intentionally engineered in response to early twentieth-century entangled temporalities. It argues that late Ottoman Syria is key not only to understanding modernity but also to unlocking the fate of lost Ottoman and pre-Ottoman art.

**Yumna Moussa** holds an M.A. in Islamic art and architecture from the American University in Cairo. Her thesis explores Cairo's Ottoman *wikālas* (urban caravanserais), their use as sites of manuscript production, and their links to the development of nineteenth-century print houses. Moussa is affiliated with Megawra-Built Environment Collective, an Egypt-based architectural conservation office, where she has helped preserve several Islamic sites, including the Mausoleums of Yahya al-Shabih and Safiyy al-Din Jawhar. Most recently, she has led the research for Megawra's "Patterns of Cairo" project, an open-access online database documenting Cairo's decorative arts.

# Luzan Munayer

Independent Architect and Researcher, UK

## Threads of Water: Reed Craft and Memory in the Hula Valley

ONLINE

This presentation examines reed weaving practices in the Hula Valley, north of Lake Tiberias, as a site-specific craft tradition embedded in wetlands, seasonal labor, and regional knowledge networks spanning Ottoman *Bilād al-Shām*. Historically, this craft has largely been absent from art and architectural records because of its rural character, ecological specificity, and reliance on water bodies rather than urban workshops or formal production sites. Its disappearance following the forced displacement of Indigenous Hula communities during the 1948 Nakba further compounded its material loss and archival absence.

Engaging the analytical frameworks of temporalities, epistemes, and materialities, the study traces the craft, its associated lifeways, and the collective memory surrounding it. Nineteenth-century travel accounts describe reed huts and woven structures around Lake Hula, while sources from the British Mandate period attest to the continuity of these practices well into the twentieth century. Read together, these accounts reveal indigenous temporal rhythms grounded in collaborative production, ecological cycles, and craft apprenticeship; rhythms that challenge linear narratives of rupture between Ottoman and modern temporalities in *Bilād al-Shām*.

**Luzan Munayer** is an architect and researcher whose work examines how space, memory, and representation intersect amid geographic and political rupture. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the American University of Beirut and an MA in Architecture and Historic Urban Environments from the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Luzan's practice spans architecture, urban research, and curatorial work, exploring the entanglements between places, spatial practices, and material histories.

# Sevim Musaoğlu

EHESS, France


## Between Damascus and Antioch: Michel Écochard and Entangled Temporalities of Architecture and Heritage

ONLINE


This paper explores architecture, restoration, and museum-making in early twentieth-century Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean through the framework of entangled modernities, foregrounding the interplay of materialities, epistemes, and temporalities. Centering on the early career of Michel Écochard, it offers a comparative analysis of his involvement in restoring historic buildings in Damascus and his design of the Museum of Antioch (Antakya). Rather than approaching these practices as discrete or purely technical domains, the paper treats them as interconnected sites of modern knowledge production embedded in post-Ottoman and colonial contexts.

During the early 1930s, while still in his twenties, Écochard participated in major restoration campaigns in Damascus, including the Azm Palace, the Mosque of Bosra, and the Temple of Bel in Palmyra. Under French Mandate rule, these interventions operated at the intersection of late Ottoman architectural legacies, colonial property regimes, and emerging international doctrines of heritage conservation. Restoration functioned as an epistemic practice that reordered the city's material fabric by translating Ottoman-built environments into scientific, preservationist, and universalizing temporal frameworks. In this process, indigenous spatial practices and craft traditions were neither simply preserved nor erased, but selectively reframed and hierarchized. Écochard's first independent colonial project, the Museum of Antioch, offers a complementary perspective on these dynamics. Combining architectural references to ancient Syrian forms with modernist spatial design, the museum materialized archaeology as a coherent and progressive historical narrative. Through its architecture and display regimes, the museum produced a specific temporality in which antiquity was rendered legible, authoritative, and compatible with modern epistemes of history and aesthetics.

By juxtaposing restoration practices in Damascus with museum architecture in Antakya, this paper argues that both constituted mutually reinforcing arenas for negotiating modernity in the early twentieth-century Eastern Mediterranean. Together, they reveal modernity not as a singular rupture with the Ottoman past, but as a contingent and contested process shaped by translation, continuity, and the entanglement of colonial power with local material and epistemic traditions.


**Sevim Musaoğlu** holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in political science and public administration from Ankara University, where she focused her research on the role of institutions and elites in modernizing Turkey. Her doctoral thesis, entitled "From Planning to Construction Law, Birth of Modern Cities in Turkey, 1923-1956: The Roles of French Architects," which she began in 2024, will be prepared under the supervision of Frédéric Hitzel at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS).

# Yasmine Nachabe Taan

Lebanese American University, Lebanon


## Between Studio and Leisure: Gender, Class, and the Photographic Practices of Karimeh Abboud and Marie el Khazen in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine and Lebanon


This paper examines the photographic practices of two pioneering Arab women photographers, Karimeh Abboud (1896–1940), a professional photographer in Nazareth, and Marie el Khazen (1899–1983), an amateur photographer from Zgharta, Lebanon, through the lens of entangled modernities in the late Ottoman and Mandate-era Levant. By situating their work within the material, social, and cultural contexts of their locales, it explores how gender, class, and geography shaped photographic labor, circulation, and reception, offering new perspectives on early twentieth-century Arab visual culture.

Abboud, widely recognized as Palestine's first professional woman photographer, ran a studio crafting hand-colored portraits, wedding photographs, and images of domestic and public spaces. Her work circulated as postcards and studio prints, revealing intersections of craft, commercial practice, and emerging modern visual culture. In contrast, el Khazen's domestic photography, enabled by personal equipment and a home darkroom, produced experimental portraits and staged images that playfully negotiated gender, identity, and leisure, demonstrating how elite households engaged with modern technologies and aesthetic frameworks.

This study foregrounds the materialities of photographic production, including tools, techniques, and circulation. By juxtaposing Abboud and el Khazen's practices, it challenges inherited binaries of public/domestic, amateur/professional, and colonial/national frameworks, contributing to broader debates on the period's entangled visual and material cultures. Examining their photographs positions Arab women photographers as active agents in shaping modernities. This paper advances a critical, interdisciplinary approach to Arab photographic history, highlighting the creativity, adaptability, and agency of women photographers, and situating their work within the evolving visual, social, and material landscapes of the Eastern Mediterranean.


**Yasmine Nachabe Taan** is Professor of Art and Design History and Director of the Institute of Art in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University in Beirut. Her research explores visual culture, gender politics, photography, and design history in the Middle East and North Africa. She has written four books, including *Reading Marie al-Khazen's Photographs* (2020) and *Saloua Raouda Choucair: Modern Arab Design* (2019). She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Design History Society (London), chairs the Khatt Foundation (Amsterdam), and serves on the Scientific Committee of Fotografia Arte e Femminismi Research Center.

# André Nassar

Lebanese University, Lebanon


## Charcoal Production in Mount Lebanon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

IN ARABIC

The *mashḥara* (charcoal kiln) was one of the most distinctive features of the traditional Lebanese village, alongside the village square, the common land, the granary, the *tannūr* oven, the *ṣāj* griddle, the communal bakery, the olive press, the mill, the *matrūf*, the lime kiln, and the spring. The word *mashḥara* is of Syriac origin, derived from the root *shḥr*, meaning "blackness." The extensive forested areas of Mount Lebanon—particularly those dominated by oak (*sindiyān*), gall oak (*'afṣ*), and *'adhar* trees, which were considered the finest species for charcoal production—provided the raw materials required for this craft. Several Mount Lebanon inhabitants made charcoal by building and operating charcoal kilns.

Charcoal production constituted an important source of income for local communities, who used it for heating and cooking or sold it in local markets. Today, hundreds of charcoal kiln sites scattered throughout Mount Lebanon still bear witness to the importance of this industry, which was widespread in both the recent and more distant past. Documents preserved in the archives of the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerké, dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, detail several contracts concluded under specific conditions between ecclesiastical endowments (*waqf*) and private individuals. These agreements granted the right to exploit certain forested lands by cutting down trees for firewood sale or charcoal production. The documents also include assessments of the estimated value of charcoal yields from forest lands, as well as records of illegal tree cutting and encroachments on other wooded areas.

Among these are documents relating to the Monastery of Ain Warqa, dating from 1882, 1883, 1884, 1908, 1909, 1921, and 1929. They provide information on leases of forest land in Jabal Moussa to local inhabitants, granting them the right to benefit from the timber and produce charcoal. These records demonstrate the economic significance of charcoal production and the financial returns it generated for both contracting parties. They also highlight Jabal Moussa's importance as a source of the raw materials needed for charcoal production, where the remains of several charcoal kilns are still visible today.

**André Nassar** is Professor of Historical Methodology and Medieval History at the Lebanese University, Faculty of Letters and Humanities (Branch II); he also lectures at the Lebanese Military Academy. He is Secretary-General of the Lebanese Historical Society and a member of the Union of Arab Historians, which awarded him its Medal in recognition of his scholarly contributions. He has participated in numerous national and international conferences. He has published widely on historical and cultural subjects in academic journals and periodicals, including *al-Mashriq*, *Chronos*, *al-Majalla al-ʁahanūtiyya*, *al-Ḥikma*, *'Ālam al-fikr*, *al-'Arabī*, *Dirāsāt jāmi'iyya*, *Marāya al-turāth*, *Ṣawt al-Matn*, *al-Anwār*, and *The Qatari Encyclopedia*.

# Jenny Norton-Wright

National Trust, UK


## Manuscript Copying and Collecting in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Lebanon: The Case of Yūsuf Ṣayfī

ONLINE

This paper presents ongoing research into a group of Arabic manuscripts now divided between the British Library and the University of Leeds, UK. As stamps and paratextual notes in the volumes testify, they once belonged to Yūsuf Ṣayfī (Mount Lebanon, d. after 1847), with many of the texts possibly copied or completed by Yūsuf himself or his brother Anṭūn. Other manuscripts were acquired around 1842, amidst great political and social upheaval in the region.

The volumes show hybrid features that combine traditional Arabic scribal approaches with Western-style bookmaking methods, including textblock edge and flyleaf finishings made with modern synthetic chemicals now known to be hazardous. Most of the original bindings are lost, but a few that do survive testify to nineteenth-century bookbinding practices and Christian contexts of creation.

The texts included in the Ṣayfī collection also reflect the ongoing modernization and western-ization of the late-Ottoman Levant, and invite questions about Ṣayfī's personal, professional, and religious identity. The manuscripts mostly contain works on medicine and pharmacology, alongside astronomy, grammar, poetry, magic, and Christian devotional and theological tracts. For example, one title is a work by Ṣayfī's contemporary, Ibrāhīm al-Najjār al-Dayrānī (d. 1864), one of the first Lebanese students to train in Cairo at the medical school founded by Antoine Barthélémy Clot ("Clot Bey"; d. 1868) at the behest of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pāshā (d. 1849).

After its compilation, the collection was rarely used or circulated, largely preserving its state. This paper pieces together this unstudied collection and contextualizes its physical and intellectual characteristics. Together, these provide a snapshot of Arabic manuscript scribal and collecting practices against a backdrop of rapid social change and the evolving reconfiguration of medical and pharmacological practices in nineteenth-century Lebanon.

**Jenny Norton-Wright** was Arabic Scientific Manuscripts Curator at the British Library from 2019 to 2026, where she researched and cataloged manuscripts for inclusion in the Qatar Digital Library. With a background in museum curatorship, Jenny previously served as an Early Career Curator for Islamic and South Asian Art and Material Culture at the Manchester Museums Partnership and currently works as a researcher for the National Trust. Jenny's research interests encompass transmission practices and ownership and collection histories within Arabic manuscript cultures. She holds a BA in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies (Cambridge), and an MA in History of Islamic Art (SOAS).

# Fatma Filiz Özsuca

Atılım University, Türkiye


## Ottoman Industrialization and Glass and Crystal Factory Initiative in Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo

ONLINE

The nineteenth century signifies a pivotal era of modernization and subsequent industrialization within the Ottoman Empire. This industrial movement emerged as a localized reflection of global trends and a fundamental component of the Empire's reformist agenda. Among the premier industrial landmarks, the Beykoz Glass and Crystal Factory synthesized traditional Ottoman craftsmanship with European technical methods, primarily serving the imperial court and the social elite.

Within the framework of Ottoman industrialization and Beykoz glassware research, this study examines archival documents on the establishment of glass factories in the provinces of Damascus, Beirut, and Aleppo. The emergence of such an industrial initiative in a region distant from Istanbul is particularly significant, as it represents a unique case of provincial industrial entrepreneurship. According to archival records, Ömerzade Mehmet Müslüm El-Ümri, a merchant from Damascus, petitioned for a 25-year concession (*imtiyaz*) to manufacture glass and crystal. Although Michel Nassif Effendi submitted a competing request, the government dismissed it for procedural negligence and lack of legal merit.

While local administrative councils and chambers of commerce endorsed Müslüm Effendi's proposal, the central government—seeking to limit monopolistic practices and foster competitive markets—opted to grant a special license (*ruhsat-ı mahsusa*) rather than an absolute concession. Regulatory provisions protected the livelihoods of existing artisanal workshops while also granting the entrepreneur the right to prevent imitation of his factory's specialized products. Furthermore, the requested duration was curtailed to ten years. Consequently, the concessionary terms were restructured, leading to the ratification of a formal contract. This case study illustrates that Ottoman industrialization efforts were not exclusive to the capital but also extended into the Empire's southeastern territories, highlighting a broader geographical scope of modernization.

**Fatma Filiz Özsuca** began teaching in the Department of Industrial Design at Anadolu University after working in various sectors and international projects. She also took an active role in projects conducted by the Industrial Designers Society of Turkey, serving as General Coordinator. In 2013, she joined the Department of Industrial Design at Atılım University as a full-time instructor. She received her master's degree from the History of Art Program at Hacettepe University in 2019, with a thesis entitled "Domestic Products Exhibition – Early Turkish Republic Applications." In 2026, she received her PhD from the same program with a dissertation entitled "The Intersection Point of Art History and Industrial Design History: 19th Century Ottoman Factories and Production."

# Selma Pandžić

Museum of Islamic Culture and Art Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina


## Decorative Painting (*Kalem-işi*) in Bosnian Mosques as a Craft Practice in the Late Ottoman Empire

ONLINE


Decorative painting (*kalem-işi*) played a central role in shaping the visual and material character of mosque interiors in the late Ottoman Empire. While existing scholarship has predominantly focused on imperial centers, provincial craft practices, particularly in the western Ottoman territories, remain underexplored. This paper examines decorative painting in mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century, approaching wall decoration as an artisanal practice embedded in architectural production, material knowledge, and local socio-economic conditions.

Rather than prioritizing stylistic or iconographic analysis, the study foregrounds the processes of making: labor organization, preparation of architectural surfaces, use of pigments and binders, tools, and the transmission of technical knowledge. Through selected case studies of mosque interiors in Sarajevo and central Bosnia, the paper investigates how local craftsmen adapted established Ottoman decorative repertoires to regional resources, patronage structures, and architectural forms. These examples demonstrate that provincial decorative painting was not merely derivative but constituted a dynamic site of negotiation between imperial visual languages and local craft traditions.

The paper further situates Bosnian decorative painting within broader Ottoman craft networks, addressing issues of artisanal mobility, apprenticeship, and the circulation of technical knowledge across regions. By analyzing decorative painting as material culture and craft practice, this contribution responds to current calls to rethink arts and crafts in the late Ottoman world beyond center-periphery models. It argues that mosque decoration in Bosnia offers valuable insight into the entangled modernities of Ottoman artisanal production, where continuity, adaptation, and innovation coexisted within local architectural contexts.


**Selma Pandžić** studied Oriental Philology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and earned her master's degree in art studies at the University of Tehran, specializing in Islamic visual culture. With extensive experience in cultural media, she combines communication expertise with curatorial and educational practice. As an educator, she teaches *tazhib* (Islamic illumination) and has participated in collaborative exhibitions highlighting the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of Islamic art. She is currently a curator at the Museum of Islamic Culture and Art Sarajevo, contributing to narrative-based and multisensory exhibition models that reinterpret Islamic heritage for diverse audiences.

# Veronika Poier

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, UK


## Shaping Transregional Heritage: The Role of Syrian Craftsmen and European Travelers at Beit ed-Din Palace (1800–1840)

ONLINE

My paper adds a material culture perspective to the study of Shihab patronage in late Ottoman Lebanon. To discuss the regional and global implications of Beit ed-Din Palace, I will first focus on the craftsmen from Aleppo and Damascus and how they calibrated Istanbul's novel aesthetic to their patrons' medieval tastes. Second, I will describe how the palace itself became *a lieu de mémoire* of Mount Lebanon through accounts from European diplomats, travelers, and missionaries who frequented the Shihab palace on their journeys to the Middle East in the early nineteenth century.

My interdisciplinary method combines art history, network theory and materialities and ties into the topical discussions pursued by art historians on local specifics of Ottoman "provincial" artmaking at the advent of modernity (Weber, 2009; Rafeq, 2010), as well as experts on the movements of artistic communities (Gonnella, Kröger, 2008; Scharrahs, 2013; Dayoub, Kasmo, Mollenhauer, 2023) and technical studies on the global spread of ornament (Necipoğlu, Payne, 2016).

I will present unpublished contemporary sources from the Oxford Middle East Centre Archive and Lambeth Palace Archive by the British Swiss Traveler John Lewis Burckhardt, the British theologian William Palmer, the British dragoman and consul Richard Wood, or the British diplomat David Urquhart and the French writer Alphonse de Lamartine. In addition to discussing the wooden panels in '*Ajami* relief painting and the potential function of the palatial rooms at Beit ed-Din, I want to contextualize the apparent anachronism in Shihab architecture at a time when ideas about "Moorish Palaces," as well as crusader legends about Middle Eastern fortifications, circulated among European travelers (Haddad, 2007). I will discuss how visitors to Beit ed-Din narrated and shaped Bashir II's self-fashioning as a lord of a medieval-looking palace, with hundreds of horses in the courtyards, even as Damascene wall paintings already embraced modernity and featured Ottoman steamships.

**Veronika Poier** is the Fellow in the History of Islamic Art and Material Culture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. She holds a PhD in the History of Art and Architecture from Harvard University and is invested in the transregional spread and preservation of traditional craftsmanship and intangible heritage in the Ottoman Empire. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on knowledge exchange among artistic and scientific communities, with a particular interest in the actors and social groups who preserve and spread artistic and scientific knowledge amid concurrent warfare.

# Yixin Pu

New York University, USA; Orient-Institut Beirut, Lebanon


## The Materiality of *Fenn*: Armenian *Tohumcular* and Transimperial Mobility in Ottoman-Russian Borderlands

Scholars of the late Ottoman world have traditionally separated histories of trade from material culture studies. The former often constructs a state-centered narrative defined by institutions and macro-economic statistics, whilst the latter privileges high art and luxury manufacture. This disciplinary disjunction obscures the materiality of everyday capitalism, where the aesthetic and the practical were inextricably bound. By overlooking the making of ephemeral artifacts, narratives of technological modernity often default to a diffusionist model, treating the history of Ottoman silk primarily as a quintessential example of the region's descent into a periphery of raw materials.

This paper intervenes by foregrounding a unique archive of silkworm egg boxes currently held at the State Silk Museum in Tbilisi, Georgia, read in direct dialogue with Ottoman petitions (*arzuhals*) and French consular correspondence. It approaches these artifacts not as disposable packaging, but as "epistemic objects" that materialized the experience of Armenian *tohumcular* who fought against imperial border regimes using the political currency of scientific expertise. During the late nineteenth century, the anxious Ottoman state frequently denied passports to Armenian *tohumcular* seeking to trade in the Caucasus. At the same time, French *graineurs* tried to win over this transimperial seed market. Now, the physical survival of these multilingual, Ottoman-produced boxes in Georgia, corroborated by French consular panic over overwhelming "Turkish" market dominance, reveals a stark historical paradox.

Through a close reading of graphic design, juxtaposing the ubiquitous "Pasteur System" credential with multilingual stamps like "Graduate of the Bursa Sericulture Institute," this paper examines how non-Muslim Ottoman *tohumcular* weaponized state-sanctioned scientific expertise (*fenn*) to negotiate transimperial mobility as well as to claim the identity of a loyal, productive Ottoman citizen. Ultimately, this paper opens the black box of the Pasteur system, revealing how aesthetic design and scientific credentials came together to serve as a functional technology of transimperial mobility in Ottoman-Russian borderlands.

**Yixin Pu** is a PhD candidate in History and Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies at New York University. Her dissertation offers a historical anthropology of "making" raw materials in the late Ottoman world through the lens of the inextricably entangled socio-political, economic, and ecological production and circulation of silkworm eggs. By tracing these blurred boundaries across diverse imperial regions, her research explores how this fragile organism seeded capitalist dreams and anxieties, as well as scientific ambitions and frustrations. Currently a Doctoral Fellow at Orient-Institut Beirut, she is conducting archival and ethnographic work across Lebanon and welcomes suggestions and collaboration.

# Hala Qasqas

Riwaq, Syria

## Crafting Popular Modernities: Abū Ṣubḥī al-Tīnāwī's Underglass Paintings and Late Ottoman Damascene Material Culture

ONLINE

This paper draws on the work of Abū Ṣubḥī al-Tīnāwī (1888–1973) as a micro-history to re-evaluate arts and crafts in late Ottoman and early twentieth-century Damascus. Situating his underglass paintings within Damascene workshops and coffeehouse interiors, it examines reverse-glass painting as a hybrid craft practice embedded in local artisanal lineages yet shaped by broader Mediterranean circulations of glass, pigments, images, and tastes. In this context, al-Tīnāwī's panels are approached not as marginal "naïve" curiosities, but as crafted objects that shape popular visual culture and negotiate modernity from below.

Through a close analysis of recurring motifs—such as mounted heroes, swords, palm trees, saints, and fantastical beings—the paper argues that these images operate simultaneously as ornament, narrative device, and ethical commentary. They translate epic and religious traditions into a legible visual language for coffeehouse publics, sustaining collective memory and popular piety while responding to shifting regimes of value and display. Engaging the conference's framework of temporalities, epistemes, and materialities, the study traces how al-Tīnāwī's practice spans late Ottoman reforms and the Mandate era, revealing continuities rather than ruptures between "traditional craft" and emergent modern visualities. It further foregrounds the artisanal knowledge, workshop routines, signatures, and modes of exhibition that anchor his production within concrete economies of making and viewing.

By placing al-Tīnāwī's underglass paintings at the intersection of coffeehouse culture, urban sociability, and cross-regional material flows, this paper positions Damascus as a central site in current debates on late Ottoman arts and crafts. It argues that popular image-making and so-called folk ornament were active agents in configuring entangled modernities in Syria, inviting a reassessment of their place within the historiography of Islamic art and material culture. References to recent work on crafts and modernity in the Islamic Mediterranean as well as on Damascus's urban transformation underpin this reevaluation.

**Hala Qasqas** holds a PhD in Art History and Visual Studies from the University of Victoria. She is currently Curatorial Assistant for the Syria Pavilion at the 2027 Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah and founder of Riwaq Syria, an initiative dedicated to documenting and sustaining Syrian cultural heritage and traditional crafts. A former Barakat Trust Fellow at the Khalili Research Centre, University of Oxford, her research focuses on the visual, material, and performance cultures of Ottoman Damascus, particularly shadow theatre, coffeehouses, domestic architecture, and artisanal traditions.

# Sarah Sabban

Lebanese American University, Lebanon


## Industrializing Late Ottoman Beirut: Urban Notables and the Quest for Modernization

Recent studies have revisited the historical and enduring relationships between artisanal crafts and industrial production, suggesting complex, interactive, and mutually transformative relations. Building on this momentum, my presentation explores the phenomenon in late Ottoman Beirut. It focuses on the less-researched enterprises of the ʿArdātī and the Dāʿūq families, Muslim Sunni urban notables in the rising port city. I present preliminary findings on the commercial, industrial, and educational initiatives undertaken by these entrepreneurs, who sought to promote socio-economic progress and reduce Syria's material dependence on Europe.

Muḥammad ʿArdātī and Muḥammad Dāʿūq owned *Makhzan sūriyya* (Syria's Shop or Department Store) in *sūq al-ṭawīla* since the late 1860s. They opened their first factory by 1890, which included a steel foundry and a carpentry workshop. At the turn of the century, *Dāʿūq Ikhwān* (Daouk Brothers) established another steel factory that produced equipment for industries, among a spectrum of other manufactures, near the Syrian Protestant College (est. 1866) in Ras Beirut. Nearby, ʿArdātī and Dāʿūq co-founded *Madrasat ṣanāʿiʿ Bayrūt* (the Beirut Industrial or Crafts School), which formed part of their larger project of local industrialization.

My study brings forward the role of provincial urban notables in fostering Ottoman industrialization and their negotiation between the European model and local conditions. In the concrete details of these enterprises, I highlight the interplay between traditional and emerging modes of knowledge, artisanal and industrial production practices, and changing socio-cultural relations.

**Sarah Sabban** is a historian of the Arab and Islamic worlds with interdisciplinary training in modern Arab and Middle Eastern history, Islamic art and architecture, and socio-cultural anthropology. She recently completed her PhD on nineteenth-century Arabic discourses and practices related to scientific knowledge, material culture, and economic development in late Ottoman Beirut. Her research interests include Islamic art and its historiography as well as anthropology of art and museums. Sabban currently teaches in the Islamic Art and Architecture program at the Lebanese American University.

# Sara Saeidi

Independent Researcher and Designer, UK


## Artistic Hybridity in Ottoman Syria: Intersections of Persian, European, and Local Aesthetics in Decorative Arts (Eighteenth–Early Twentieth Century)

ONLINE

Between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ottoman Syria developed a remarkably hybrid artistic vocabulary shaped by the interaction of Persian, European, and local Levantine traditions. This hybridity emerged from the region's position at the crossroads of long-standing cultural flows, expanding global trade, and the shifting political landscape of the late Ottoman Empire. Rather than adopting foreign motifs passively, Syrian artisans integrated diverse influences into existing visual systems, producing distinctive works in textiles, woodcarving, and metalwork. In textile production, especially in Damascus and Aleppo, Persian designs such as the *boteh* (paisley) and rhythmic floral repeats blended with European naturalistic botanicals. Moreover, Rococo curves were introduced through imported goods and new markets.

Although European industrial dyes and tastes altered color palettes and pattern scales, local weaving traditions preserved characteristic Damascene color schemes and motifs, resulting in fabrics that balanced foreign inspiration with regional identity. Woodcarving and inlay arts reveal similar aesthetic convergence. Damascene '*ajami* rooms and furniture incorporated Persian-style arabesques alongside Baroque, Rococo, and neoclassical elements favored by European patrons and Ottoman elites. However, techniques such as mother-of-pearl inlay and geometric designs, deeply rooted in Levantine and Mamluk traditions, remained central, allowing artisans to infuse new motifs into familiar structural frameworks. Metalwork from Aleppo and Damascus further demonstrates this synthesis: Persian vegetal scrolls and *saz* leaves coexist with European coats of arms, monograms, and figurative imagery, often produced for export markets. At the same time, local iconography, Arabic calligraphy, and traditional engraving methods continued to anchor the craft in regional aesthetics.

Ultimately, the hybridity of Ottoman-Syrian decorative arts reflects more than stylistic borrowing; it expresses the cosmopolitan social environment, commercial adaptability, and cultural resilience of Syrian artisans. Through selective integration and reinterpretation, they created a visual language that was simultaneously Ottoman, Syrian, Persianate, and global.

**Sara Saeidi** is an interdisciplinary researcher and designer at the intersection of visual culture, material heritage, and archival studies. Her work examines the gendered and cultural dimensions of collecting, cataloging, and knowledge production, particularly in Persian and Islamic art, with implications for understanding how materials, motifs, and practices circulate across time and space. Sara combines archival analysis, art-historical scholarship, and practice-based research, with extensive experience working with manuscripts, prints, textiles, and mixed-media collections. She also serves as Trustee of Persian Bloom (UK), a charity supporting initiatives to promote Persian music, visual arts, and cultural heritage.

# Cafer Sarıkaya

Independent Scholar, Türkiye


## The Exhibits of the Ottoman Empire at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago

The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was organized in the United States to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America. The Ottoman Empire participated in this exhibition with theatrical amusements and musical performances, including those from its Middle Eastern regions. Pierre Butros Antonius, a Christian Arab from Mount Lebanon, directed the Ottoman theatre. Theatre managers sent agents across Ottoman-Arab lands to study customs, manners, and costumes, and to recruit performers. In the Turkish Village, sixty-five men, women, and children formed the theatrical company. These were gathered from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Samaria, Damascus, Beirut, Lebanon, Aleppo, Constantinople, and Smyrna.

The Exposition was also extremely valuable ground for an historical ethnography as well as environmental history of the Ottoman Empire, with the special publication of the official catalogue of Ottoman exhibits, *The Exhibits of the Ottoman Empire at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago*, compiled and arranged by Hohannes T. Pushman, secretary of the Imperial Ottoman Commission in the Chicago Exposition. This publication includes detailed information about the Exhibition Commission's members and gives an extensive report on the products and manufactures of the Ottoman Empire exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition, together with the statistics of the leading agricultural products of the Empire's provinces, including Adrianople, Scodra, Izmid, Angora, Biga, Lebanon, Tchataldja, Diarbekir, Soor, Salonica, Syria, Jerusalem, Kastamouni, Kossova, Konia, Monastir.

**Cafer Sarıkaya** holds a PhD in History from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, where he also completed his master's thesis, "Celebrating Difference: 'Turkish Theatre' in the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893." His research interests mainly include the Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, as well as diaspora, Black Sea, and Middle Eastern Studies. Cafer is a member of the editorial board of the *Kurdish History Journal* and fluent in Turkish and English; he also has reading knowledge of French, Armenian, Ottoman Turkish, and Turkish in Armenian Script.


# Sarah Tabbal

Lusail Museum, Qatar


## Traditional Costumes of Bethlehem in Nineteenth-Century Textual and Visual Sources

ONLINE

In the nineteenth century, the traditional costumes of Bethlehem women were renowned for their aesthetic appeal. This reputation stemmed from the fine quality of their fabrics, intricate embroidery, and distinctive accessories, such as the headdress (*shatweh*). Primarily handmade

by women who incorporated personal details and regional characteristics into each stitch, Ottoman Syrian costumes held not only decorative and aesthetic value but also provided information about a woman's village of origin, marital status, and economic standing.

The reception of traditional Ottoman Syrian arts and crafts in the nineteenth century remains largely neglected in art history. However, numerous Western writers and artists traveled to the region during this period and were fascinated by the local people's clothing and jewelry, documenting them in textual and visual sources. Mary Eliza Rogers (1828–1910) provides detailed descriptions of women's costumes in her travelogue *Domestic Life in Palestine*. Belgian painters Albrecht De Vriendt (1843–1900) and Jean-François Portaels (1818–1895) portrayed women in dresses from Bethlehem, and Félix Bonfils (1831–1885) photographed them. Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900) studied Ottoman Syrian costumes carefully in his drawings and collected them. William Gale (1823–1909), Jean Lecomte du Nouÿ (1842–1923), and James Tissot (1836–1902) painted religious scenes featuring people in traditional Bethlehem costumes, creating the image of a supposedly unchanged region since biblical times.

What knowledge did Western travelers have about Ottoman Syrian costumes, and how accurate were their descriptions and depictions? Taking a new approach to Orientalist studies, this paper focuses on textual and visual sources from Western travelers to the Ottoman Empire that document Bethlehem's material culture, examining how they can serve as historical sources to shed light on neglected regional arts and crafts during the late Ottoman period.

**Sarah Tabbal** studied Art History, Classical Archaeology, and Psychology at LMU Munich and Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. In 2020, she completed her PhD in Art History at LMU Munich, specializing in nineteenth-century French and Spanish Orientalist painting. From 2020 to 2024, she worked as a postdoctoral researcher on the SNSF project "Luminosity of the East" at the Vitrocentre Romont in Switzerland. She is currently working as curator of paintings and drawings at the Lusail Museum in Doha. Her research interests include Orientalism, Islamic art, and the arts of glass.

# Camille Tarazi

Maison Tarazi, Lebanon

## Maison Tarazi and Bespoke Oriental Decorative Arts

Maison Tarazi was founded in 1862 in Beirut by Dimitri Tarazi, as the city emerged as a major commercial and cultural center of the Eastern Mediterranean. The company gradually expanded by establishing branches in Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, and later Alexandria, creating one of the region's most prominent networks for Oriental decorative arts. Specializing in the production and trade of fine furniture, architectural woodwork, metalwork, and luxury decorative objects inspired by Arab artistic traditions, Maison Tarazi flourished during the period of intense cultural exchange and tourism that characterized the late Ottoman era. From its foundation until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the company attracted an international clientele comprising diplomats, aristocrats, scholars, collectors, and travelers seeking exceptional examples of Levantine craftsmanship.

The discovery of the company's original guest books reveals the names of distinguished clients from around the world, as well as prominent local patrons. Among them was Alfred Moussa Sursock (1870–1924), who served as First Secretary at the Ottoman Embassy in Paris from 1905 before returning to settle in Beirut around 1914. The Sursock Cochrane family archives preserve invoices bearing the letterhead of Dimitri Tarazi & Sons, initially addressed to Paris and later to Beirut. Together, these archival documents attest to an enduring professional relationship that resulted in several important commissions, as this presentation will illustrate. It will also show that these prestigious commissions encouraged Maison Tarazi to further develop its expertise in bespoke decorative works, establishing it as a leading reference in Oriental art and craftsmanship.

**Camille Tarazi** has a degree in architecture from the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) and an MBA from Beirut's ESA Business School. Camille belongs to the fifth generation of Maison Tarazi, a family business founded in 1862 and renowned for producing *objets d'art*, furniture, and oriental décor, as well as publishing postcards around the turn of the twentieth century. His book *Vitrine de l'Orient*, recounting 150 years of Maison Tarazi in text and images, was published in 2015.

# Valentina Vezzoli

University of Udine, Italy

## Ceramic Landscapes of Rural Northern Lebanon: Material Culture and Patterns of Connectivity in Late Ottoman Koura (Eighteenth–Early Twentieth Century) - Results from the Northern Lebanon Project

ONLINE

Recent scholarship has increasingly challenged the narrative of decline in late Ottoman artistic and material production, highlighting the vitality and adaptability of local practices across the Empire instead. However, rural areas of Ottoman Syria and Lebanon remain underrepresented in archaeological and art-historical studies. The Northern Lebanon Project (NoLEP) provides new data from the Koura region, a historically significant rural hinterland of Tripoli, illustrating the richness of material culture in a late Ottoman context. Koura's settlement and agricultural patterns, integrated into the Ottoman Eyalet of Tripoli since 1516, supported a dense, continuous rural population. Archaeological evidence reveals a landscape shaped by vernacular architecture, olive cultivation, and milling installations, reflecting the region's economic foundations and its integration into a wider context.

NoLEP surveys uncovered a substantial assemblage of glazed and unglazed ceramics from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. The ceramic repertoire includes locally produced common wares and imported glazed types, notably Çanakkale and Didymoteichon wares from the Eastern Aegean region. These findings highlight Koura's integration into regional and interregional trade networks while reflecting local consumption practices. Despite challenges in establishing a fine-grained chronology due to limited comparative data, the ceramic evidence underscores the persistence, connectivity, and creativity of rural material culture in late Ottoman Lebanon. This case study contributes to ongoing efforts to expand the geographical

and thematic scope of Ottoman material culture studies, situating rural *Bilād al-Shām* within broader debates on economic, social, and artistic life during the late Ottoman period.

Marco Iamoni (University of Udine) and May Haider (Lebanese University) are co-authors and directors of the NoLEP project.

**Valentina Vezzoli** holds a PhD from Ca' Foscari University of Venice and is Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at the University of Udine. Her research focuses on the material culture of the Islamic world, particularly ceramic assemblages from archaeological contexts and museum collections as evidence of social, economic, and cultural processes. She has held research positions at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the Institut Français du Proche-Orient in Beirut. She has collaborated on archaeological projects in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurdistan. Since 2023, she has directed the Bazhera Archaeological Project in Iraqi Kurdistan.

# Yasmine Yakuppur

Columbia University, USA

## Importing Taste in Ottoman *Bilād al-Shām*: European Porcelain Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century

The production, distribution, and consumption of glazed ceramic dining wares materialize social, studies have traditionally focused on isolated production centers such as Iznik, Kütahya, and Çanakkale, a postcolonial approach necessitates recontextualizing glazed wares as embodiments of cross-cultural exchange that emerged through commercialization and globalization from the eighteenth century onward. This paper examines the circulation, consumption, and reception of European porcelain dining wares in *Bilād al-Shām* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, within the context of globalism, Orientalism, and colonialism.

When European porcelain began to be produced in the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was among its earliest markets. The palatial taste for Chinese porcelain that characterized the previous two centuries gave way to novel European wares that were more accessible as they were regarded as neither elite nor rare. By the nineteenth century, European porcelain became common in middle-class households across *Bilād al-Shām*, facilitated by developments in transportation networks and changes in trade policy during the Tanzimat period. Direct relationships between Europe and *Bilād al-Shām* were concretized, with Beirut and Jaffa emerging as principal ports that welcomed French and British ceramics, and Tripoli and Haifa distributing wares to inland cities such as Damascus and Jerusalem. Although seemingly neutral, these exchanges negotiated asymmetric power dynamics via economic structures, colonial ambitions, and Orientalist epistemes.

Although European porcelain was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century homes, such objects are rare in *Bilād al-Shām*'s museums today, appearing primarily as static artifacts of the past in archaeological excavation records or mentions in primary sources instead. Building upon the work of scholars such as Marcus Milwright and Véronique François, this paper aims to reframe European porcelain dining wares as active commodities that mediated modern-era experiences in late Ottoman *Bilād al-Shām*.

**Yasmine Yakuppur** is a doctoral candidate in Columbia University's Department of Art History and Archaeology, specializing in the arts of Southwest Asia. Her research focuses on ceramic dining vessels made, used, and circulated in the Ottoman Empire and its provinces from the mid-seventeenth to early-twentieth centuries. Yasmine holds a BA in Art History from Columbia and an MA in the History of Art and Architecture of the Islamic Middle East from SOAS. Since beginning her PhD, she has received Provost, FLAS, and GSAS Teaching fellowships, participated in conferences in New York, Istanbul, Pennsylvania, and Groningen, and published reviews in the journal *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual*.

# Didem Yavuz Velipaşaoğlu

Izmir University of Economics, Türkiye

## Connected Utopias: Mapping the Hereke Factory across Europe and the Middle East's Artist Colonies

ONLINE

This study explores the interactions between the Ottoman textile enterprise known as the Hereke Imperial Factory and the artist colonies that emerged across Europe and the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Artist colonies, conceived as self-sustaining habitats, were shaped by utopian ideals that promoted free, collective creativity among artists and artisans, including adults and children engaged in art, craft, and craftsmanship. Founded in 1842 as a factory town in İzmit, on the outskirts of Istanbul, the Hereke Imperial Factory embodied a rural idyll and, by the 1910s, supported about 3,000 inhabitants, including women and children. By producing silk and woolen draperies, rugs, carpets, blankets, and broadcloth, the factory aimed to model Ottoman modernization.

Archival sources from the Ottoman Archives of the Turkish Presidency indicate sustained interactions between the Hereke Imperial Factory and European and Middle Eastern elites. In 1894, for instance, Kaiser Wilhelm II expressed his desire to visit the factory after encountering Hereke textiles in the imperial palaces during his visit to Sultan Abdülhamid II. In the same year, Emine Valide Paşa, mother of the Khedive of Egypt, traveled by train from Haydarpaşa to Hereke. These elite visits continued throughout the following decade. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Empress Augusta Victoria returned to the factory in 1898, while the Shah of Iran visited in 1900 following the establishment of a new rug-weaving workshop, and again in 1902. Additional visits included those of the German emperor and a princess in 1901, diplomats from the German and Italian embassies in 1905, an Iranian ambassador in 1907—who presented books to the factory's drawing office—and Archduchess Gisela of Austria in 1908, who received carpets, rugs, and textiles as gifts.

This study's original contribution lies in its examination of European and Middle Eastern approaches to art, craft, industrial education, and artist colonies, and in its analysis of how these models informed practices at Hereke. Rather than treating artist colonies as isolated phenomena, this research examines them as interconnected entities operating within a broader transregional network.

**Didem Yavuz Velipaşaoğlu** earned her master's degree from the Architectural Design Program at Istanbul Bilgi University in 2008 on a full scholarship, after graduating in Architecture from Istanbul Technical University in 2006. As a Fulbright Scholar, Didem earned her PhD from the joint Urban Systems program at Rutgers University and New Jersey Institute of Technology in 2018. She co-founded MVDY Architects and is an Assistant Professor at Izmir University of Economics. She is the author of *Crafting an Empire: The Hereke Factory Campus (1842–1914).*



Jean-Baptiste, Charlier. TFDC_635, Wood Turner. Scene shots series.
Circa 1877, 1 side of a stereoscopic view, albumen print. (Reproduction)
The Fouad Debbas collection at the Sursock Museum.



▲
Jean-Baptiste, Charlier. TFDC_629, Maker of inlaid work. Costumes and occupation series,
Circa 1877, albumen print mounted on cardboard. (Reproduction)
Published by the New-Church Theological School.
The Fouad Debbas collection at the Sursock Museum.

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