

Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2025

**School of  
Architecture  
and Design**

# FACULTY RESEARCH DAY 2025

Friday April 25, 2025  
LAU Beirut  
Gezairi Building  
Room 910

This event is organized by the SArD Teaching and Learning Committee and brings together research-active and interested faculty members from across the school. It aims to highlight research conducted within the school while providing a platform for the exchange of ideas, cross-disciplinary discussions, and the dissemination of research-related support and resources provided by LAU. The SArD Faculty Research Day distinguishes itself from other research-oriented events at LAU by focusing on research unique to the art, design, and architecture faculty at the university.

All faculty members within the school are welcome to attend, listen to the presentations, and participate in the discussions.

## Program

**8:45 am — 9:00 am**

**Light breakfast and coffee**

**9:00 am – 10:30 am**

### **Session I**

Presentation by Mario Rebeiz, Director of Grants and Contracts, on External Funding for Research, including Q&A

**10:30 am – 12:00 pm**

### **Session II**

Faculty research presentations, including Q&A

## SESSION I

9:00am – 10:30am

### External Funding for Research

Mr. Mario Rebeiz

This presentation and discussion aim to enhance SArD faculty members' ability to apply for grants at LAU. It covers how to identify funding opportunities, utilize various platforms, and explore interdisciplinary research options. It will unpack the Call for Proposals (CFP) and help faculty members understand eligibility criteria while navigating institutional requirements. The session will also distinguish between academic and non-academic proposals, explain departmental and PI roles, and introduce the RED approach for planning submissions. Finally, it offers practical guidance on proposal development, timelines, and using the EDMS application for internal submission.

## SESSION II

10:30am – 10:40am

### Contested Geographies: Iraq's Great Shi'i Shrines Amidst the Ottoman-Safavid Rivalry (1508-1648)

Dr. May Farhat

From 1508 to 1639, the Iraqi Shi'i shrine cities of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and others became central to the rivalry between the Safavid and Ottoman empires. These sacred sites, holding the tombs of Shi'i Imams and their descendants, were politically and religiously significant to the Safavids and changed hands multiple times during their military conflict with the Ottomans. This period saw the shrine cities transformed architecturally and urbanistically, with major renovations to the shrines and large-scale infrastructural works, including canal digging to improve water supply. Both empires invested in these efforts to legitimize their rule and assert control over Iraq's sacred Shi'i landscape. While Safavid patronage is often credited for shaping the architecture of these shrines, this presentation challenges that assumption by critically examining the historical evidence. It also highlights the overlooked contributions of the Ottomans to shrine development. Drawing on a range of Safavid and Ottoman sources—including Nasuh Matrakci's illustrated travelogue and recent studies on Ottoman-Safavid relations—this study situates the shrine renovations within a broader religious, ideological, and geopolitical context, revealing the complex interplay of architecture, empire, and sectarian identity in early modern Iraq.

10:40am – 10:50am

### Control of Public Spaces in the Production of New Urban Spatial Sequences. Social and Economic Consequences in the Case of Kabukicho in Tokyo.

Dr. Cristiano Lippa

In the last 20 years, we have witnessed a series of top-down urban transformation policies, linked to global events such as the Olympics and Expos, and to choices aimed at significantly increasing the tourism industry. Many strategic areas of Tokyo have undergone significant regeneration projects that have compromised their urban structure and created phenomena of social and economic tension. The choice to regenerate Kabukicho, Tokyo's red-light district, in terms of accessibility to international tourism, has altered its urban spatial balances and created unexpected social phenomena. The new "hard" systems of closure and control of private spaces with public access through the use of metal barriers and concrete blocks, in contrast with the traditional "soft" control system ensured by neighborhood or criminal associations, has generated a systemic crisis of economic activities. The workers are pushed directly onto the street (the only truly public space) in search of customers by organizing new spatial areas made of new longitudinal corridors, thresholds and transversal obstacles. Using the Methodology of Spatial Analysis of Differential Planes and visualizing human activity trajectories, the research aims to catalog the new configurations of urban spaces that are being observed in these areas, trying to record where possible, the human and social causes that lead to morphological and spatial changes in urban areas.

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10:50am – 11:00am **Reimagining Beirut through Urban Agriculture:  
The Growing Role of Green Spaces in an Urbanizing City** Dr. Carine Lteif

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In a city that is increasingly urbanizing and facing unprecedented challenges, it becomes critical to investigate the potential of unbuilt lands for the mitigation of resulting negative externalities. While green spaces are not a panacea for cities' problems, they are increasingly demonstrating their multifunctionality and their significant contribution to citizen's well-being and health. In this presentation, I will share my research on urban agriculture, which I have explored as multifunctional landscapes in the city. I will also present findings related to my investigation of Waqf lands, exploring their potential to preserve and even develop agriculture linked to the city.

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11:00am – 11:10am **Design as Politics** Ms. Karma Dabaghi

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In the face of unsustainable conditions and destruction brought about by wars, political and activist designers need not be bystanders. Becoming an agent of change through instrumentalizing design to the end of redirecting current practices can be done through collaboration with non-designers: namely industrialists, researchers, forensic journalists, and lawyers. The agency of designers can be detected at many levels. Design can act as an instrument of change within various settings. For instance, discursive design can serve as a tool to normalize the integration of ethical principles into commercial practices, while within protest environments, designers can contribute to resistance by making utilitarian **objects** or building protest structures to strengthen and **prolong the act of disobedience**. Even during violent conditions, designers can apply their skills with the aim of bringing perpetrators to justice. They can do this through various means, such as analyzing photographic and documentary evidence to recreate three-dimensional environments, investigating conditions, and sharing evidence that can be used in a court of law.

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11:10am – 11:20am **Performativity in Design** Dr. Chahid Akoury

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This article explores the importance of proprioceptive and haptic performative abilities for the design process and looks to Augmented Reality as the medium that re-establishes these abilities within digital design. Moreover, the role of augmented perception in enabling unforeseen organizations, and in synthesizing bodily movement and interaction with objects and spaces, is highlighted and discussed. This article capitalizes on two distinct characteristics that enrich the design process, which are multiple readings of the same, and non-linear spatio-temporal immersion. The former allows for all appearing and absent information to be incorporated in the design decisions, whereas the latter enables a destabilization of perceptive capacities. Both incite a more profound investigation of the formal, the experiential, the spatial, and eventually the design narrative.

11:20AM– 12:00PM

**DISCUSSION**