

Connecting Stucco in the Mediterranean (Ankara/online, 16–18 May 24)

Bilkent University and Erimtan Museum, Ankara / Zoom, May 16–18, 2024

Flavia Vanni, University of Birmingham

Connecting Stucco in the Mediterranean (c. 300 BCE – 1200 CE). Methodological approaches and the state of research. Hybrid Conference.

The use of plaster reliefs (stuccoes) as architectural decoration is a well-known phenomenon in the Mediterranean. Recent decades have witnessed a renewed interest in stucco, but it has been mainly done within the boundaries of specific disciplines and chronological specialisations. While this allowed scholars to recognise the relationship of stucco with specific architectural traditions and technologies, it did not allow to spot long-term trends and cross-cultural interactions. This is due to the lack of coordination of scholarship on the study of stucco, which appears to develop at different speeds and aim at different goals depending on the field of study.

The conference connects experts in the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic periods up to ca 1200 CE to address common questions that can help to see long-term phenomena and cross-cultural exchanges in the Mediterranean.

Conference Programme

Thursday, 16th May – Bilkent University Campus C-Amphi Block

8:30-9:00 Registration and tea/coffee.

9:00-9:10 Opening remarks by Dominique Kassab Tezgör (Chair, Department of Archaeology) and Simon Wigley (Dean, Faculty of Humanities)

9:10-10:00 Opening lecture

The "Byzantine" Mediterranean in transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages (ca. 500-ca.900).

Luca Zavagno (Bilkent University).

10:00-10:20 Tea and coffee break.

10:20-11:20 Keynote lecture

Looking Forwards, Looking Back: The state of the field of Medieval Stucco Studies in the Wider Mediterranean region.

Richard McClary (University of York).

11:30-12:30 Session 1: Use and perception of stucco from the Roman to the Late Antique period

Chair: Dominique Kassab Tezgör (Bilkent University)

Stuccowork in the Herodian Palaces – A Roman influence in first-century BCE Middle East?

Lena Naama Sharabi (Hebrew University, Jerusalem).

Decorated stucco moulded cornices and faux-marble columns from Dura Europos (3rd cent. CE): ideological choice or practical necessity?

Barbara Crostini (Uppsala University).

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 Session 2: Stucco in the Late Antique built spaces

Chair: Roland Smith (Bilkent University)

When Change is a Relief: Stucco surfaces and aesthetic values in Late Antiquity.

Jessica Plant (University of Cambridge).

On a group of standing saints in stucco or the perception of "γυφοπλασίας" in Late Antiquity.

Stefanie Archut (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn).

The virtual reconstruction of the Umayyad period revetments from Khirbat al Mafjar.

Ignacio Arce (German Jordanian University).

15:30-15:45 Tea and coffee break.

15:45-17:15 Session 3: Technical aspects in the Early Middle Ages: East and West

Chair: tbc

Stucco techniques in Lombard and Carolingian Architecture: insights from the "Tempietto Longobardo" in Cividale, the Church of St. Benedict in Mals, and the Monastery of St. John in Müstair.

Luca Villa and Patrick Cassitti (Stiftung Pro Kloster St. Johann).

Early Islamic Prefabricated Stuccowork.

Andrea Luigi Corsi (University of York).

Byzantine stucco recipes in the Mediterranean context (10th -11th c.)- first data from archaeometrical analyses.

Flavia Vanni and Eirini Tsardaka (Newcastle University – Ormylia Art & Diagnosys Center).

20:00 Speakers' Dinner.

Friday, 17th May – Erimtan Museum, Ankara

9:00-9:10 Welcome speech by Nazan Gezer (Director of the Erimtan Museum)

9:15-10:15 Session 4: Between the Sassanian and Islamic stucco production (1)

Chair: Prof. Lutgarde Vandeput (Director of BIAA)

Stucco productions from Gawr Tepe (KRI, Iraq). Preliminary results of a MiSAK-earthHeritage multidisciplinary and comparative study.

Luca Colliva and Serenella Mancini (MiSAK – Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna).

The production process of traditional Gypsum in Iranian architecture. Case study: Takht-e Soleyman world heritage site.

Mozaffar Abbaszadeh and Mohammad Jafarpanah (Urmia University – Shahid Beheshti Universi-

ty, Tehran).

10:15-10:30 Tea and coffee break.

10:30-12:00 Session 5: Between the Sassanian and Islamic stucco production (2)

Chair: tbc.

The Ghassanid and Umayyad stucco revetments from Qasr al Hallabat.

Ignacio Arce (German Jordanian University).

East versus West: the origins of the Umayyad style in the art of stucco.

Siyana Georgieva (UniToscana).

Beyond borders: exploring the dispersed stucco treasures of Kharg Island.

Hassan Moradi (National Museum of Iran, Teheran).

12:10-13:40 Session 6: Methodological aspects

Chair: Pelin Yoncanci (METU)

Exploring the aesthetic harmony: Islamic stucco patterns and calligraphy in Architectural Design.

Engy Farrag (Delta University).

Methodological approach to characterize two stucco collections from Iran in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Atefeh Shekofteh and Federico Caro (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

Some remarks and recommendations for examination of Mediterranean stuccoes based on research of Medieval Persian carved stuccos, tiles and wall paintings.

Ana Marija Grbanovic (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg).

13:40-14:30 Lunch.

14:30-15:30 Session 7: People, materials, and images on the move from the Persian Gulf to Egypt (1)

Chair: Alessandro Carabia (University of Birmingham)

Stucco workshops in the Early Islamic Bilad al-Sham and the Arabian/Persian Gulf. The problem of artistic patronage.

Agnieszka Lic (Polish Academy of Sciences).

Tracing decorative dialogues: cultural exchange and artistic assimilation in stucco and brickwork between the Iranian world and Armenian region in 11th-13th centuries.

Miriam Leonetti (Università di Firenze).

15:30-15:45 Tea and coffee break.

15:45-16:45 Session 8: People, materials, and images on the move from the Persian Gulf to Egypt (2)

Chair: tbc

The long-distance mobility of Iranian stucco craftsmanship in Cairo.

Leila Danesh (University of York).

How Mamluk stucco decorations inspired Revival architects during the 19th -20th Century AD?

Menna Naguib (Alexandria University).

18:30 Reception hosted at the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA).

Saturday, 18th May – Bilkent University Campus C-Amphi Block

9:00-9:30 Roundtables.

9:35-10:10 Plenary discussion.

10:15-10:30 Closure remarks by Luca Zavagno, Flavia Vanni and Agnieszka Lic.

Afternoon: Visit to Ankara's Castle and goodbyes.

Practical info:

- Dates: 16-18 May 2024

- Location: Bilkent University and Erimtan Museum, Ankara (Türkiye) and Zoom.

- Registration for online attendance is required:
<https://connectingstucco.com/2023/10/15/registration-form/>

- For more info: <https://connectingstucco.com/> and connectingstucco@gmail.com

Organizing Committee:

Dr Agnieszka Lic (Polish Academy of Sciences).

Dr Flavia Vanni (ANAMED, Koç Üniversitesi -Newcastle University).

Dr Luca Zavagno (Bilkent University).

Scientific Committee:

Dr Dominique Kassab Tezgör, Director of the Department of Archaeology, Bilkent University.

Dr Karol Juchniewicz, Head of Islamic Archaeology Research Unit, Polish Academy of Sciences.

Dr Anaïs Lamesa, Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes (IFEA).

Ass. Prof. Pelin Yoncanci, Middle East Technical University.

Dr Daniel Reynolds, Director of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham.

Conference assistant:

Zehra Demirci, Bilkent University.

Reference:

CONF: Connecting Stucco in the Mediterranean (Ankara/online, 16-18 May 24). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 10, 2024 (accessed Jul 5, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/41601>>.