# Arts and Crafts in the Late Ottoman Empire (online/Beirut, 25-26 Sep 26)

Lebanese American University, Beirut Campus/ Online, Sep 25–26, 2026

Sarah Sabban

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

The conference “Arts and Crafts in the Late Ottoman Empire” examines the production, circulation, and transformation of material culture during a period of profound social, economic, and technological change.
Focusing on Syria and extending to the broader Ottoman world, the conference brings together scholars working across art and architectural history, material culture, heritage, and social and economic history. It considers objects and practices as products of complex networks of artisans, patrons, merchants in the context of industrialization, expanding global markets, new technologies, museums and exhibitions, and emerging modern concepts of art and craft. The papers explore both local practices and the circulation of objects, materials, techniques, and ideas across regional and imperial boundaries.
Taken together, the contributions reconsider the relationship between material culture, knowledge, and modernity as an integral part of the history of the Islamic world.

Convenors: May Farhat & Sarah Sabban
Organized by the Lebanese American University & the Orient-Institut Beirut.

Please complete the form below to register for the conference. Online registrants will receive the Webex link by email.
https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=6Bqym-fEoUmryRmhVTakaWXO3DgxgoZPrjYR6NA6JVhUQ0o2UTBLWEcwQVVSOUpHMFdSU0dHSVhXWS4u&route=shorturl
For questions, please contact: MAIA.events@lau.edu.lb

Conference Program

Day 1 — Friday, September 25, 2026
8:30–9:00 | Registration
9:00–9:20 | Welcome Remarks

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

Marcus Milwright

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

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

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)
Manuscript Copying and Collecting in mid-Nineteenth-Century Lebanon: The Case of Yūsuf ayfī [online] - Jenny Norton-Wright
Navigating the Ottoman, Crafting the Nah a: Three Syrian Manuscript Dealers and their Global Art Networks (1885–1935) - Yumna Moussa
The Exhibits of the Ottoman Empire at the World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago - Cafer Sarıkaya
Performing the Ethnographic: A Theatre Collection from Ottoman Syria Created for the 1894 World’s Fair in Antwerp [online] - Sarah Johnson

5:10- 5:30 coffee break

5:30–6:50 | Panel 4
Travelling Imagery, Hybrid Practices, and the Popular/Decorative Arts in Syria and Beyond
Moderator: Leyla El Sayed Hussein (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)
Crafting Popular Modernities: Abū Sub ī al-Tīnāwī’s Underglass Paintings and Late Ottoman Dam-

ascene Material Culture [online] - Hala Qasqas
Islamic Chromolithographs and Reverse Glass Paintings between the Maghrib and Bilād al-Shām (ca. 1880s–1920s) [online] - Ava Hess
Artistic Hybridity in Ottoman Syria: Intersections of Persian, European, and Local Aesthetics in Decorative Arts (Eighteenth–Early Twentieth Century) [online] - Sara Saeidi

Day 2 — Saturday, September 26, 2026
9:00–10:20 | Panel 5
Reconsidering Production: Ecclesiastical Contracts, Chibouks, and Silkworm Egg Boxes
Moderator: Sarah Sabban (School of Architecture and Design, LAU)
Charcoal Production in Mount Lebanon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries [in Arabic] - André Nassar
The Production Chain of the Chibouks in the Ottoman Empire [online] - Jacopo Boschini
The Materiality of Fenn: Armenian Tohumcular and Transimperial Mobility in Ottoman–Russian Borderlands - Yixin Pu

10:20–10:40 | Coffee Break

10:40–12:30 | Panel 6
Industrial Enterprises and Perspectives on Material Modernities
Moderator: Jens Hanssen (Orient-Institut Beirut)
Ottoman Industrialization and Glass and Crystal Factory Initiative in Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo [online] - Fatma Filiz Özsuca
Industrializing Late Ottoman Beirut: Urban Notables and the Quest for Modernization - Sarah Sabban
Connected Utopias: Mapping the Hereke Factory across Europe and the Middle East’s Artist Colonies [online] - Didem Yavuz Velipaşaoğlu
A□mad Fāris al-Shidyāq and Material Culture in Late Ottoman Society - Youssef el-Khoury Salem

12:30–1:40 | Lunch Break

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)
Damascene Musa's Furniture Store: Woodcraft, Retail Modernity, and Consumer Culture in Late Ottoman Istanbul [online] - Damla Göre
Maison Tarazi and Bespoke Oriental Decorative Arts - Camille Tarazi
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] - Valentina Vezzoli
Importing Taste in Ottoman Bilād al-Shām: European Porcelain Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century - Yasmine Yakuppur

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)
Reframing Islamic Crafts: Museum Practices and the Art–Craft Divide - Nur Efeoğlu
Between Damascus and Antioch: Michel Écochard and Entangled Temporalities of Architecture and Heritage [online] - Sevim Musaoğlu
The Role of Digital Archives in Safeguarding Syrian Arts and Crafts: The Syrian Heritage Archive Project (SHAP) - Rania Kataf

5:30–6:40 | Closing Lecture
Materials and Motifs in the Interior Decoration of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Private Homes in Damascus: Changes in Taste and Materiality
Anke Scharrahs

Reference:
CONF: Arts and Crafts in the Late Ottoman Empire (online/Beirut, 25-26 Sep 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 16, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54288>.