



30th Levantine Heritage Foundation dinner gathering in London, with guest speaker Talitha Schepers and Coline Houssais.

Perceiving the Sublime Porte: Habsburg-Ottoman Diplomatic Encounters as seen through the Eyes of Netherlandish Artists (1526-1574)

In 1553, the Netherlandish artist Pieter Coecke van Aelst's widow Mayken Verhulst published a nearly five-metre-long monumental frieze entitled *Customs and Fashions of the Turks*; the only record of the artist's journey to Constantinople in the trail of the Habsburg diplomat Cornelis de Schepper (1533-1534). Similarly, in 1572, the Flemish artist Lambert Wijts travelled to Constantinople where he was in touch with several members of Habsburg ambassador Karel Rijn's diplomatic entourage, including the artist Lambert de Vos. Both Wijts and De Vos compiled a costume album; the only records of their journey to the Ottoman Empire.

Interestingly, these three Netherlandish artists – Coecke, Wijts and De Vos – have never been studied within the context of Habsburg-Ottoman diplomatic encounters. Furthermore, traditional scholarship has considered their visual materials merely as an early ethnographic expression of European interest in the Ottoman – the so-called “Image of the Turk”. The only notable exception to this is that of the Danish-born artist Melchior Lorck, who accompanied Imperial ambassador Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq on his diplomatic mission to the Sublime Porte (1554-1562). Whereas Lorck and Busbecq have received a significant amount of scholarly attention, other sixteenth-century encounters between the Habsburg Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire have been largely overlooked. Thus, rather than focusing once more on Busbecq and Lorck, Talitha Schepers will examine Habsburg-Ottoman diplomatic encounters as seen through the eyes of the lesser known cases of Coecke (1533), Wijts (1572) and De Vos (1574).

While reconsidering these artworks as visual testimonies of Habsburg-Ottoman diplomatic encounters, Talitha's interdisciplinary talk also examines a rather unknown set of prints attributed to Coecke as well as the ambassadors' travelogues and correspondence. Her talk seeks not only to enhance our understanding of Habsburg-Ottoman diplomatic encounters, it also aims to shed light on the function of Netherlandish artists and their artworks within these cross-cultural interactions.



“Procession of Süleyman I”, from *Customs and Fashions of the Turks*, Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550), woodcut print, 299 mm (h) x 394 mm (w), 1553, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-2304L.



Talitha Schepers is a PhD student at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, where she examines the function of sixteenth-century Netherlandish artists who travelled to the Ottoman Empire in a Habsburg diplomatic context. After obtaining her Bachelor and Master's degree in Art History from the KU Leuven University in Belgium, Talitha gained professional experience as a freelance museum guide in Belgium and as an English Language Teacher in Turkey. She resumed her academic career by studying for a Master's degree in Art History, Curatorship and Renaissance Culture at the Warburg Institute in London. Subsequently, she was awarded a Robert Owen Bishop Research Scholarship in History at Christ's College, University of Cambridge, followed by a pre-doctoral fellowship at a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities in Cologne, Germany. Both pre-doctoral fellowships allowed Talitha to develop her current PhD project. Over the years, she has presented her research at several international conferences and she is currently working towards her first peer-reviewed publication.

Paris and its historic connections with the Arabic world

Paris, City of Lights, is also one of the capitals of Arab culture. Far from being a recent phenomenon based on post-war worker migration from former French colonies, the relationship between Paris intellectuals from North Africa and the Middle East is grounded in a history dating back to the late medieval period. In turn a beacon of enlightenment, a safe haven, and the symbol of colonial oppression, the streets of Paris carry the memory of this peculiar heritage. Going back and forth between past and present, arts and politics, micro-history and international politics, this talk will take you through a virtual walk of Paris that you have never seen before.



Grande Mosquée de Paris completed in 1926 that also served as a secret refuge for Algerian and European Jews during the German occupation.



[Coline Houssais](#) is a researcher, curator and writer, specialising in Arab contemporary cultures and societies. A graduate from Sciences Po and the London School of Economics, Coline currently teaches History of Arab Politics and Culture in Europe, as well as Music and Politics in Contemporary MENA at Sciences Po. In addition to regular contributions in Wahed, a French-Arabic magazine on culture and current affairs, Coline is currently writing her first book on Arab music. She is also the creator of "The Lovebirds of Baghdad", a live video and storytelling performance about Iraqi Jewish music, and released her TEDx talk entitled "This is not a veil" on the history of female headwear in France. In 2017, Coline Houssais started teaching the following courses at Sciences Po: "East in the West: History of Arab Politics and Culture in Europe", "From Tan-Tan to Tehran: Politics of Music in Contemporary MENA" et "History Workshop: a Reflection on museums and heritage".

17 April 2019, 6.00 pm start (meet in the Britannia Bar), talks start 6.30 pm, ending 8 pm, event end 10 pm
Royal Thames Yacht Club, 60 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LF

Talks are free for all but booking essential: <https://30th-lhf-gathering.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Optional informal dinner after the lectures in the venue where guests pay via booking, but for numbers please still register even for lectures only, which are free. For gentlemen jacket and tie is required in this venue.

Dinner tickets costs £35 for LHF Members, £40 for non-Members, plus Eventbrite booking fee.

Please support these events by becoming a sponsor. We provide these talks for free as part of our mission to preserve and promote the research and public understanding of Levantine heritage. Sponsoring the talks helps cover the LHF's costs in arranging these talks in central London. For sponsorship packages, please contact chairman@levantineheritage.com. All sponsors will be recognised at events and on our website.