

# Hala Qasqas, PhD

Postdoctoral Researcher, Khalili Research Centre  
University of Oxford

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Ph.D. in Islamic Art History with extensive experience researching the cultural and socio-urban history of Damascus. Specializes in studying coffeehouses and shadow theatre in early modern Damascus, examining their roles in political engagement, public discourse, and recreation. Recipient of major awards, including the Barakat Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Oxford and the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship.

## EDUCATION

Sep 2021	<b>Ph.D. in Art History and Visual Studies</b>
Aug 2025	<i>University of Victoria - Victoria, BC, Canada</i>
Sep 2009	<b>Master of Arts: Interior Design</b>
May 2012	<i>Damascus University - Damascus, Syria</i>
Sep 2002	<b>Bachelor of Arts: Interior Design</b>
Feb 2007	<i>Damascus University - Damascus, Syria</i>

## WORK EXPERIENCE

Oct 2025	<b>Postdoctoral Researcher</b>
Present	<i>Khalili Research Centre, University of Oxford - Oxford, UK</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Conduct independent research on the visual and material culture of shadow theatre in 19th-century Damascus, supported by the Barakat Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship.</li><li>Collaborate with scholars in Islamic art and architecture to contribute to interdisciplinary projects and seminars.</li></ul>
Sep 2023	<b>Sessional Lecturer</b>
Present	<i>University of Victoria, Victoria - BC, Canada</i> <p>Conduct lectures and seminars for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>AHVS 314: <i>Gateway to Paradise: Islamic Gardens and Landscape.</i></li><li>AHVS 357: <i>Arts of Mediterranean Islam</i></li><li>ASVA191: <i>Islamic Geometric Pattern</i></li></ul>
May 2024	<b>Motion Graphics &amp; Video Production Editor</b>
Present	<i>Khamseen at the University of Michigan - Michigan, USA</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop, edit, and produce motion graphics and video content integrating cutting-edge visual storytelling with scholarly research in Islamic art, architecture, and visual materials.</li><li>Enhance accessibility and engagement with academic research through innovative digital media strategies and meticulous post-production editing.</li></ul>

## RESEARCH SKILLS

- Documentation and attention to detail
- Exceptional written communication
- Excellent research and translation skills (Arabic-English)
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Proficiency with primary sources and online databases
- Information organization and evaluation
- 3D graphics conversion using computer software.

## LANGUAGES

- **Arabic**  
Native or bilingual proficiency
- **English**  
Full professional proficiency
- **French**  
Limited working proficiency

## AFFILIATIONS

2024 | MESA, Middle East Studies Association  
2024 | ICOMOS, The International Council on Monuments and Sites  
2023 | ICOM, International Council of Museums  
2022 | HIAA, Historian of Islamic Art Association

- Feb 2022  
Jun 2025
- Interior Design Instructor**  
*Pacific Design Academy - Victoria, BC, Canada*
- Taught courses including Space Planning, Design Projects, Design Development, AutoCAD, Lighting, and Portfolio.
  - Developed and updated course materials, guided students through hands-on projects, and mentored them on portfolio development.
- Sep 2021  
Feb 2024
- Teacher Assistant**  
*University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada*
- Assisted in teaching:
- AHVS 120: *Exploring World Art*
  - AHVS 311F: *Horror Video Games*.
  - AHVS 311E: *History of Video Games and Interactive Media*
- Nov 2021  
Feb 2024
- Research Assistant**  
*University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada*
- Collaborated on a project documenting the crafts of Damascus from the 19th to the 20th century.
  - Contributed to research and website development for documenting Iraqi craft history from the 7th to the 20th century.
- Jan 2007  
Jan 2019
- Senior Interior Architect**  
*Futurism, Damascus, Syria*
- Led and managed communication with contractors, builders, and clients for 50+ projects across the Middle East.
  - Created detailed floor plans and schematic designs using AutoCAD and 3D perspectives.
- Sep 2010  
Jun 2017
- Teacher Assistant**  
*Damascus University, Damascus, Syria*
- Assisted in teaching Interior Design Projects, graded assignments, and facilitated classroom activities and workshops.

## AWARDS

2025-2026	<b>Barakat Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship</b> University of Oxford, UK	£20,000
2022-2025	<b>Canada Graduate Scholarship Doctoral</b> SSHRC Social Science Research Council	\$120,000
2022-2025	<b>President's Research Scholarship</b> Faculty of Graduate Studies at UVic	\$15,000
2022	<b>Florence and Wallace Wilkinson</b> Memorial Bursary at UVic	\$5,000
2021	<b>Herbert Bertram Falkenstein</b> Graduate Scholarship in Fine Arts at UVic	\$20,000
2021	<b>Jeffrey Rubinoff Scholar</b> Art as a Source of Knowledge Scholarship	\$2,000
2021-2023	<b>University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship</b> Art History & Visual Studies	\$36,000

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2021 | Damascus Heritage Archive Project  
A community of professional researchers committed to conserving the Damascene cultural heritage, tangible and intangible.

## SOFTWARE

Microsoft Office



Adobe Creative Suite



Autodesk AutoCAD



Autodesk Maya



Autodesk 3Ds Max



Houdini



Nuke/Nuke Studio



Davinci Resolve



Zbrush



## CERTIFICATIONS

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Jan 2022	<b>French for Reading and Translation</b>
Jun 2022	University of Wisconsin-Madison – Madison, USA
Jan 2020	<b>Post-Graduate in 3D Animation</b>
Aug 2020	<i>Sheridan College - Oakville, ON, Canada</i>
Jan 2019	<b>Post-Graduate in Visual Effects</b>
Dec 2019	<i>Sheridan College - Oakville, ON, Canada</i>
Jan 2018	<b>General Arts and Sciences (ESL)</b>
Dec 2018	<i>Sheridan College - Oakville, ON</i>

## PUBLICATIONS

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### BOOKS

- Qasqas, Hala. *Damascene Mosques in the Mamluk Era*. Damascus: Dar Ninawa, 2020.
- Qasqas, Hala. *History of Damascene Coffeehouses*. Damascus: Dar Ninawa, 2019.
- Qasqas, Hala. *Damascene Mosques in the Ottoman Era*. Damascus: Dar Ninawa, 2018.
- Qasqas, Hala. *Garden Architecture*. Damascus: Dar Ninawa, 2017.
- Qasqas, Hala. *Islamic Gardens*. Damascus: Dar Ninawa, 2015.

### BOOK CHAPTERS

- Qasqas, Hala. “A Shadow Puppet from Ottoman Damascus.” In *Encounters: Medieval Islamic History in 50 Objects*, edited by Marcus Milwright. London: Routledge, 2026.
- Qasqas, Hala. “The Architecture of Sociability: Coffeehouses and Urban Spaces in Early Modern Damascus.” In *Syria's Built Heritage: Memory, Materiality, and Urban Continuities*, edited by Ruba Tamim Kasmó. Istanbul: OIC-Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) publications. (forthcoming, 2026).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Shadow Theater, Satire, and Society in Ottoman Damascus.” In *Syria: Where Cultures Interacted*, edited by Nasser Rabbat. Edinburgh :Edinburgh University Press Ltd (forthcoming, 2026).

### REFEREED JOURNAL PAPERS

- Qasqas, Hala. “Interior Publicness: The Ḥammām and the Making of Urban Public Space in Late Ottoman Damascus.” (Under review).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Damascus Silk as Living Heritage: Craft Knowledge, Urban Memory, and Continuity under Threat.” (Under review).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Reuniting Text and Puppet: Toward Integrated Documentation of Late Ottoman Damascene Shadow Theatre.” (Under review).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Coffeehouses in Damascus: Urban Fabric and Architectural Identity in the 18th Century.” *Urban History* (Under review).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Architectural Ambience and Artistic Interpretation: Damascus in Renaissance Art.” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* (forthcoming, 2026).
- Qasqas, Hala. “Traditional Artworks Roles in Damascene Coffeehouses.” *Aleppo University Journal of Engineering Sciences*, 2017.
- Qasqas, Hala. “Al-barrani, the Outside Section of Damascus Bathhouse: Social and Beauty Value.” *Damascus University Journal of Engineering Sciences*, 2016.

- Qasqas, Hala. "A Study on Entertainment Signs of Old Time Festivals in Damascus." *Damascus University Journal of Engineering Sciences*, 2016.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Al-Badri and the Discourse of Beauties: A Study of the Concept of Islamic Garden." *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, King Saud University 27, no. 2 (2015).
- Qasqas, Hala. "Ibn al-ʿAwwam and the Book of al-Filāha: The Science of Gardening in Islamic Tradition." *IUG Journal of Natural and Engineering Studies*, Islamic University–Gaza 22, no. 2 (2014).
- Qasqas, Hala. "Water in the Islamic Garden: Between the Physical and Symbolic." *Aleppo University Journal of Engineering Sciences* 102 (2011).

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Qasqas, Hala. "Reuniting Text and Object: Khayāl al-Ẓill and the Public Life of Late Ottoman Damascus." Paper presented at *Islamic Art History Research Workshop*, University of York, 2025.
- Qasqas, Hala. "The Symbolism of Motifs in Abū Subḥī al-Tīnāwī's Underclass Paintings: Visual Heritage in Damascene Folk Art." Paper presented at *FICCO 25: Second Fujairah International Conference for Calligraphy and Ornamentation*, Fujairah, 2025.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Syrian Shadow Theatre: Toward a Research-Based Approach to Preserving Intangible Heritage." Paper presented at *Strengthening Participatory Approaches to Heritage Risk Management and Protection*, Damascus: ICOMOS Syria, Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, and Ministry of Culture, 2025.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Utopian Imagery and Critique in al-Maʿarri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*." Paper presented at *Medieval Utopias: A Symposium at the University of Victoria*, Victoria: University of Victoria, 2025.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Unravelling the Socio-Urban Tapestry: Architectural Narratives and Cultural Insights from the 18th-Century Coffeehouses of Damascus." Paper presented at *MESA Annual Meeting*, Tucson, AZ, 2024.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Oral History and Social Commentary: The Legacy of Shadow Puppetry in 18th-Century Damascus." Paper presented at *The 11th Annual Wollesen Memorial Graduate Symposium*, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2024.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Liberation in a Cup: Coffee, Controversy, and Community in Damascus." Paper presented at *MISSC*, Montreal: McGill University, 2024.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Unraveling the Socio-Urban Fabric: Architectural Insights from the 18th-Century Coffeehouses of Damascus." Paper presented at *MEICON*, Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 2024.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Urban Fabric and Architectural Narratives: Exploring the 18th-Century Coffeehouses of Damascus." Paper presented at *Visual Inputs*, Victoria: University of Victoria, 2024.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Coffeehouses of Damascus: Unveiling the Architectural and Historical Narratives." Paper presented at *Islamic Art History Research Workshop*, University of York, 2023.
- Qasqas, Hala. "Diplomacy and Architectural Ambience: Damascus in Renaissance Art." Paper presented at *Visual Inputs*, Victoria: University of Victoria, 2023.
- Qasqas, Hala. "The Legitimacy of Coffee and Coffeehouses in Damascus, 1600–1800." Paper presented at *MEICON*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2022.
- Qasqas, Hala. "The Visual Heritage of Popular Tales: Folk Art in Damascene Coffeehouses, 1850–1950." Paper presented at *Visual Inputs*, Victoria: University of Victoria, 2022.
- Qasqas, Hala. "The Role of Women in Building Mosques during the Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras in Damascus." Paper presented at *Eye on the Mosques of Damascus*, Damascus: al-Takiyya al-Sulaimanyyyia, 2016.