

Auto-Orientalism and Clothing in Turkey

Applicant: Student name

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Faculty Mentor: Faculty name

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3. Project Description

Throughout my academic career I have been interested in demystifying the tensions of the “east” and the “west” that scholars have often attached to the region of Turkey. I also have a deep interest in researching these concepts and how they influence cultural design processes, their effects on craft culture in general, but more specifically in clothing/fashion design. Furthermore, I would like to pursue a career in costume design, so this project will let me learn and explore techniques that I would not get a chance to accomplish otherwise. This project is an accumulation of my academic career at Reed, and it will allow me to further pursue my interests and skills. As I will already spend my summer in my hometown of Istanbul, I would like to spend time working on a project that will be incredibly valuable to my future career.

My goal with this project is to create a fashion collection of 5 contemporary pieces that simultaneously reflect Ottoman traditions while resisting the concept of auto-orientalism found in most post-Ottoman representations of Ottoman clothing. “Auto-orientalism” is an idea that takes into account Edward Said’s conceptualization of “Orientalism” as an assertion of power in representations of an “Other” and applies it to representations of the self. In my present art history research, through my junior qualifying paper, I am writing an outline of several textile traditions that reflect the concept of auto-orientalism functioning by way of two perspectives. One of which is a rejection of non-western cultural ties throughout the region of Turkey and to westernize/“modernize” the region through a contemptuous rejection of the Ottoman past. The second method of auto-orientalism is of a more contemporary kind and

takes the form of glorifying the Ottoman past by legitimizing the orientalist views of the Ottoman by western Europe thereby romanticizing a past that only existed in the eyes of western Europe. These two forms of self-orientalizing function in conjunction with each other to justify the erasure of specific ethnic identities in the region of the Turkish Republic, in an effort, by the Turkish state, to mark Turkey as a nation under one ethnic identity with the most proximity to whiteness or imperial power. Although the goals and consequences of both of these methods are pretty much the same, it is important to understand them as separate forms of viewing that directly apply to the disparate political ideologies of laïcism¹ and religious nationalism, respectively.

Through my junior qualifying paper, I will have an extensive understanding of the concept of auto-orientalism in the context of Turkish culture, more specifically clothing, and politics and will have done substantial research on subjects that will be the crux of my project. My research and ideas are not grounded in distinguishing what is/is not authentically Turkish/Ottoman/eastern/western, but rather the ways in which these historical and aesthetic categories exist to justify the dominating culture in Turkey. The goal of my project through this grant is to actualize/materialize the concepts that I have researched with my qualifying paper and to contribute to Turkish fashion research through redefining concepts of cultural tradition and unpacking certain perspectives on regional history through wearable garments. Throughout the summer, I will interact with the work of different Turkish designers, who may be global fashion houses or artisans who have had their stores in the Grand Bazaar their whole lives. My project will not only explore different traditional methods of garment design and construction in Turkey but will also

¹ Secular control of social and political institutions, established by Kemal Atatürk in Turkey after the republic's formation.

survey what it means to be traditional through materializing my research.

As seen in Şakir Özüdoğru's paper "Ottoman Costume in the Context of Modern Turkish Fashion Design"², representations of Ottoman clothing tradition in Turkish fashion design has been largely clouded by different conventions of self-orientalism. My contribution to the greater field of Turkish Fashion studies with this project will be to reflect on various ways in which tradition can be represented to a foreign audience without the aura of auto-orientalism. My current research focuses on unpacking these auras of auto-orientalism that exist in the work of current Turkish fashion designers, however, I believe criticism is not complete without an offer for a solution, so my two projects/research will work simultaneously to explore relevant problems that exist within considering history in relation to the contemporary world.

Schedule for Project

May 23, 2022 - May 29, 2022

Preliminary research

- Getting in contact with designers
- Reflecting on junior qualifying paper and diving deeper into research

May 30, 2022 - Jun 5, 2022

- Scheduling tours of various Turkish museums with collections on Ottoman clothing such as: Uluumay Museum of Ottoman Folk Costumes and Jewelry, Topkapi Palace Museum

² Özüdoğru, Şakir, and M. Angela Jansen. "Ottoman Costume in the Context of Modern Turkish Fashion Design." Essay. In *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Jun 6, 2022 - Jun 12, 2022

- Visits to the museums and tours of various destinations in Istanbul, such as the Grand Bazaar, that include sales of “Ottoman Folk” clothing
- Collection of photos and images related to my research from the past 3 weeks and a creation of a working visual collage and preliminary sketches of my garments

Jun 13, 2022 - Jun 19, 2022

- Visits to various textile shops in Istanbul and gathering of materials (patterns, models, more detail in budget section), as well as finalizing sketches of garment design

Jun 20, 2022 - Jun 26, 2022

- Beginning the actualization of the garments: will have all of the materials needed

Jun 27, 2022 - Jul 3, 2022 & Jul 4, 2022 - Jul 10, 2022

- Will finish at least 2 of my garments

Jul 11, 2022 - Jul 17, 2022 & Jul 18, 2022 - Jul 24, 2022

- Completion of garments except for finishing touches

Before Aug 1, 2022 Completion of at least 5 ready-to-wear garments