

Western Influence in Ottoman Lands | Syria

'The wealthy families of Damascus, inspired by the grandeur of the Ottoman capital Istanbul itself inspired by Europe, renovated their homes in the Ottoman fashion.'

The wealthy families of Damascus, inspired by the grandeur of the Ottoman capital Istanbul, itself inspired by Europe, renovated their homes in the Ottoman fashion. For example, Beit Nizam's heavily gilded interiors and mirrors reflect a taste for the European Baroque, while Beit Baroudi's large wall paintings feature the international cityscapes of Mecca and Medina, Istanbul on the Bosphorus, Paris's Place de la Concorde and the tributaries of Venice. Steamships and locomotives appear in the paintings with the words 'Sham Sheriff' – 'Honourable Syria' indicating the train's final destination. The term 'Honourable Syria' comes from the city's role as the gathering place for pilgrims and is, therefore, symbolic of the beautiful marriage between East and West, representing integration and preservation of the cultural heritage.



Name:
Beit Nizam

Dynasty:
AH 1240s/AD 1830s Late Ottoman

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The fountain and walls of the first reception hall in Beit Nizam include busily colourful paintings, carving, and gilding.



Name:
Beit Nizam

Dynasty:
AH 1240s/AD 1830s Late Ottoman

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
Sparkling brilliantly to this day is the so-called 'Qa'at al-'Inab' ('Hall of Grapes') in Beit Nizam, which represents a masterpiece of wealth and style. The extravagant use of gilded applications and mirrors reveals a very heavy European Baroque influence.



Name:
Beit Nizam

Dynasty:
AH 1240s/AD 1830s Late Ottoman

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
One of the many ceiling mirrors showing the influence of European Baroque with its outward radiance. The Crescent and Star motifs are symbols of the Ottoman Empire and are thus evidence of the marriage between imperial and European taste in this Damascene house.



Name:
Beit Baroudi

Dynasty:
AH 1280s/AD 1870s and AH 1329/AD 1911

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, are painted facing each other in the main reception room, surrounded by fanciful floral decorations. This painting shows the Ka'ba in the middle surrounded by the arcaded mosque.



Name:
Beit Baroudi

Dynasty:
AH 1280s/AD 1870s and AH 1329/AD 1911

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The many wall paintings of the Beit Baroudi illustrate an international awareness of the main cities of the time, such as Place de le Concorde in Paris, which shows an eye-witness experience of passers-by playing in the water fountains.



Name:
Bohemian glass narjileh

Dynasty:
AH 1303/AD 1885–6

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
Painted Bohemian glass became widely exported to the Arab world in the 1280s/1860s, and it can be found in the showcases of private Damascene houses. Here designed as a water-pipe, the Western product caters to the popular local past-time of smoking narjileh.
