

[Book Launch - Pierre Loti's Collection of Oriental Arms and Armour](#)

Announcement published by Loyal Mohammad on Tuesday, May 14, 2019

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Event

Date:

June 24, 2019

Location:

United Kingdom

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Fine Arts, French History / Studies, Middle East History / Studies, Islamic History / Studies

The Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations is delighted to invite you to the launch of Stéphane Pradines' new book; ***La Collection d'armes orientales de Pierre Loti (Pierre Loti's Collection of Oriental Arms and Armour)*** on Monday 24 June 2019.

The discussion will be followed by a reception.

Abstract

Pierre Loti was a famous French Orientalist writer, a traveller who used his house and his fabulous collection as a permanent theatre. All the objects that he accumulated became part of the house and supported the Orientalist dreams of Pierre Loti. "The Elsewhere House" as Loti describes his abode, has three Oriental rooms, decorated with various objects, including an array of weapons in the Turkish Salon. Pierre Loti's residence in Rochefort follows a pattern that is inspired by both the Neo-Gothic styles and Orientalism, two fashions of the 19th Century. Orientalist fantasies still remain a 'secret garden' and the Oriental rooms are not discernible from the outside; the front of the building looks like any other very conventional façade, just like the façade of the famous house that once belonged to Frederic Leighton, located near Holland Park in London. This connection between artists and explorers is particularly interesting in the case of Pierre Loti who was not only a writer but also an illustrator, photographer and traveller. Pierre Loti's house is now closed for restoration and all the furniture and objects that were in the house were transferred to storerooms and laboratories for conservation and research. It was during this period that AKU-ISMV faculty member, Stéphane Pradines, studied Loti's collection in Rochefort, from 2015 to 2018. This study provided two scientific events organised by Claude Stefani: an exhibition and a publication.

La Collection d'armes orientales de Pierre Loti is an exhibition catalogue published by the Mairie de Rochefort, Ministry of Culture and the Museum of Hébre with the support of the Fondation du Patrimoine, and the Arms and Armour Society in London. Around 80 objects are described in detail in the 159 page catalogue, including arms and armour from Africa, the

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Arabian Peninsula, the Balkans, Turkey, Caucasus, Central Asia, Persia and India. These objects are mainly Ottoman, Mughal and Qajar arms and essentially from the 18th - 19th Centuries. The catalogue is in French but the first two chapters, introducing Pierre Loti and his arms and armour collection, are in both English and French. Stéphane Pradines has not simply published a catalogue of objects, he also explains and analyses the complex relationship between arms and armour collectors and orientalists, an initiation that is necessary to be able to interpret the use of arms, not only as costume accessories or disguises, but also serving as an element of interior decoration in a house dating from the end of the 19th Century. A historiography of oriental arms and armour studies is also provided and the author places arms and armour in a broader context of Islamic art.

Arms and armour deliver information about influences and exchanges between cultures and people. For example, Algerian and Moroccan swords are related to Barbary corsairs and the influence of Italian converts in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean warfare. Daggers and swords are closely related to social status and also the beliefs of their bearers. Axes and representation of Zulfiqar swords testify the role of the Bektashis and the Sufi orders in the Ottoman army. Calligraphy and talismans provide information not only about the artists who made these objects but also about their users or consumers. Finally, Stéphane Pradines uses arms and armour to explore Muslim cultures and to explain the symbolism behind the objects.

Speakers

Stéphane Pradines is an archaeologist and Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMIC) in London. He was the Director of the excavations of the Walls of Saladin in Cairo and many other excavations in the Indian Ocean and East Africa. He is a specialist of the Indian Ocean medieval trade and material culture of war in Muslim Africa.

Claude Stefani is Conservateur du patrimoine, curator of the Hébre Museum and Director of Pierre Loti's house in Rochefort. He is an archaeologist by training and graduated from the University of the Sorbonne. He is a specialist in North American archaeology and Oceanian art.

Time and Venue

Monday 24 June 2019, 18.00-20.00

Atrium Conference Room,

Aga Khan Centre,

10 Handyside Street,

London N1C 4DN

Booking

This event is free but booking is essential. [Book as soon as possible.](#)

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