

The 9th SIFHAMS International Scientific Forum:

" Islamic Scientific Tradition and Heritage in Al-Andalus "

Presented by :

Thursday, 24th April 2025

Time: 11 AM- 13 PM

Venue: College of Fine Arts and Design
(M22-041)

Zoom link & QR code:

<https://sharjah-ac-ae.zoom.us/j/95424200578>



Dr. Montserrat Benítez Fernández

TITLE : The School of Arabic Studies: from a Moorish house to a research center focus on al-Andalus

ABSTRACT : The School of Arabic Studies was founded in 1932 in both Granada and in Madrid with two principal objectives: firstly, to promote Arabic studies in Spain, and secondly, to preserve and protect the Arabo-Muslim heritage. The aim of this presentation is to provide a comprehensive overview of the School of Arabic Studies' history in Granada and of the research areas developed within it. The present paper will firstly show the building's history, from the earliest records of it being a Moorish house constructed in the sixteenth century, the so called "Casa del Chapiz. Secondly, the paper will display the transformation of "Casa del Chapiz" in a research center. Finally, the paper will examine into the lines of research carried out in the institute since its foundation until the present day.

BIOGRAPHY : Montserrat Benítez Fernández received her education as a researcher at the University of Cadiz in Spain and at the Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in France. She has held various positions at several institutions, including the University Ibn Zohr of Agadir in Morocco, the University Complutense of Madrid, and the University of Granada, all in Spain. Since 2017, she has held a tenured position as a scientist at the School of Arabic Studies. Her research interests lie in the field of Arabic linguistics, with a focus on Arabic dialectology and sociolinguistics. In this regard, she has demonstrated a particular concern for the role of gender in Moroccan Arabic varieties, as well as for the indexicality of those varieties.

Dr. Estefanía Valenzuela

TITLE : The Science of Language in Al-Andalus: Scholarship and Linguistic Diversity in Manuscripts

ABSTRACT : This presentation discusses the theoretical and practical dimensions of Arabic linguistics (علم اللغة) in al-Andalus as a scientific discipline. It first reviews the substantial body of linguistic scholarship produced in the region and highlights its significance within the Islamic intellectual tradition. It then explores the remarkable linguistic diversity found in Andalusí manuscripts. The richness of Arabic forms attested in these texts not only enhances our understanding of Arabic in the Andalusí context but also sheds light on the broader history of the language. Ultimately, the examination of “the science of language in al-Andalus” seeks to show how Andalusí linguistic scholarship and manuscript evidence contribute meaningfully to advancing the field of Arabic linguistics.

BIOGRAPHY : Estefanía Valenzuela Mochón is a tenured researcher at the School of Arabic Studies in Granada, Spain. She is a linguist specializing in premodern written Arabic, with a particular focus on the language of Arabic manuscripts produced in the Islamic West. From August 2016 to May 2018, she taught undergraduate Arabic courses at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2018, she was awarded a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF) to compile a corpus of Arabic manuscripts in European and North African libraries. She earned her PhD in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, with a focus on Arabic linguistics, from the University of Texas in 2020. Her current research explores non-standard written practices in the Andalusí *ḥisba* manuals and the expression of modality in (pre)modern varieties of Arabic.

Dr. Sami L. De Giosa

TITLE : Andalusia-Mania: The Enduring Fascination with Al-Andalus in Art and Scholarship

ABSTRACT : In the past two centuries, Islamic Andalusia has captured the imagination of writers, artists, and scholars around the world. As Washington Irving and Owen Jones demonstrated, Western fascination with Andalusia began in the 19th century and has transformed into a broader "Andalusia-mania" sweeping Arab countries today. The restored interest in Andalusian heritage has manifested itself through exhibitions, academic discussions, and contemporary artistic interpretations of Andalusian art staples in the past and present. With this paper, we will try to understand how Al-Andalus continues to inspire nostalgia, creativity and intellectual discourse. We will also highlight contemporary takes on Andalusian classics, such as modern adaptations of the iconic Alhambra vases, which merge historical aesthetics with new artistic visions. Additionally, the talk explores the content of a recent exhibition in Sharjah, where students collaborated to present innovative perspectives on Al-Andalus and Sharjah, blending tradition with contemporary artistic expressions. By exploring how Andalusian influence has evolved from 19th-century romanticism to contemporary artistic and scholarly revivals, this presentation examines why Al-Andalus remains so influential. Al-Andalus, as the talk concludes, is not a relic of the past but a contemporary source of inspiration.

BIOGRAPHY : Sami De Giosa is Assistant Professor at CFAD, University of Sharjah. Previously, he was the head of the Islamic Museum at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem center in Kuwait, a Research Fellow at SOAS, and a senior fellow at the University of Oxford. He was also a curator at the British Museum in charge of exhibitions including Hajj: Memories of a Journey. Sami's PhD at SOAS was on the architecture of Mamluk Cairo. His publications include topics on tile production during the Mamluk period and an upcoming book on artistic exchanges between Islam and Christianity during the Middle Ages.