



39th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture with guest speaker Alev Berberoğlu  
14 May 2025, 6.00 pm (UK time)

**Camera and Female Empowerment: Italian Photographer Elisa Zonaro in Ottoman Istanbul**

Elisa Pante Zonaro (1863–1945) was an Italian photographer, who worked in the Ottoman capital from the late nineteenth century onwards. Soon after studying photography in Paris with Eugène Pirou from 1893 to 1894, Elisa Zonaro opened her own professional studio called Atelier Elsa in Istanbul, which was an exceptional accomplishment for a woman at the time. From portraits to street photography, her extant works display variety and reveal her experimentality as a visual artist. Furthermore, being married to Fausto Zonaro, the illustrious court painter of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), she often collaborated with her husband in various projects and had privileged access to an elite social network with her camera. The Zonaro couple advanced each other's careers socially and created artworks together, yet the scholarship has, until recently, regarded Elisa Zonaro as merely a muse and helper to her husband. This presentation focuses on the latest archival research, which led to a dissertation and an exhibition spotlighting Elisa Zonaro's career in photography, and discusses how the camera served as a creative means of female empowerment and visual expression.

Booking essential: <https://alev-berberoglu-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>

Contact: [contact@levantineheritage.com](mailto:contact@levantineheritage.com)



Elisa Zonaro (Zonaro Family Archive)



Alev Berberoğlu is an art historian with a focus on the late nineteenth-century Ottoman visual culture. She obtained her doctoral degree from the Department of Archaeology and History of Art at Koç University with her dissertation entitled “Unwritten Histories of Photography: Elisa Zonaro, an Italian Photographer in Ottoman Istanbul.” During her doctoral years, she studied at the University of Bologna within the Erasmus+ Program and conducted research in Paris in affiliation with CETOBaC as a recipient of the French Embassy Research Fellowship. Prior to her PhD studies, she received her MA in Arts Management from Yeditepe University and completed her BA with a double major in English Language and Literature, and Latin Language and Literature at Istanbul University. In 2023, Berberoğlu joined the Department Michalsky at the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History (Rome) as a postdoctoral fellow and works on her research project “The Image of Naples in Sultan Abdülhamid II's Photography Collection.”

Please [join](#) the LHF. Members can attend online talks for free and have priority registration at in-person events. They also receive priority support for their family or academic research projects. For event sponsorship packages, please contact [chairman@levantineheritage.com](mailto:chairman@levantineheritage.com). All sponsors will be thanked at events and on our website.