

Armenian Jewellers Foundation

Geneva, Switzerland

Advancing the Heritage of Armenians in Jewellery

ANNIVERSARIES WORTH CELEBRATING

On this 24th anniversary of the founding of AJA and 30th anniversary of the creation of the third Armenian Republic, I join AJF trustees and supporters in congratulating all compatriots who contributed to the success and prosperity of our beloved AJA/AJF and the Fatherland!

On 17 September 1997, thirteen (13) jewellers from across the globe met in Yerevan to create an international network of jewellers (AJA) to better contribute to the advancement of the industry and to the sacred task of nation-building.

The Armenian Jewellers Foundation (AJF), the sister organization to AJA, was established in 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland, to advance the heritage of Armenians in jewellery through academic research, as well as educational programs to form a new generation of industry leaders.

Since inception, AJF has collaborated with scholars, participated in academic conventions, launched a digital library project online and we have subsidized more than 100 scholarships in gemology and 3D jewellery design for talented young Armenians from various communities, including veterans in Armenia and Syrian-Armenian refugees.

With support from generous donors, the foundation embarked on a major museum project with Saint-Petersburg's prestigious Museum of Ethnography to publish the now acclaimed Treasurers of Western Armenia. This undertaking was considered the most significant publication dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Recently, we've been diligently working on a new major research and publication project of national and international significance that we will be sharing with you in the coming months. We have also stepped up our game in the social media realm thanks to a dedicated new team based in Armenia, featuring unique stories. Please follow us on our Facebook and Instagram.

The main article featured in this newsletter is a sampling of the Armenian jewellers' rich contribution to the world jewellery heritage we intend to showcase periodically!

Armenians are a Nation of Jewellers. Indeed, we are to jewellery what the Swiss are to watches. At AJF, we are committed to promoting this proud Armenian heritage to the world!



Pierre Akkelian

Chairman, AJF Board of Trustees

The Spectacular 18th Century “Jewelled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I” Confirms Contribution Of Minority Voices After Expert Inspections

Baltimore: February 26, 2020 - The spectacular “Jewelled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I” underwent expert inspections in order to confirm the contribution of a Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire to the treasured artifact. The National Museum of Armenian Ethnography and the History of the Liberation Struggle (Araks, Armenia) recently announced that the 18th Century “Jewelled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I” - a stunning artifact held in the collection of the Walters Art Museum (Baltimore, Maryland) - was given a new label that now attributes its remarkable jewellery to the Armenian Christian, Hovhannes Agha Duzian.



Made for Ottoman sultan Mahmud I, the bejeweled gun conceals compartments for a dazzlingly adorned dagger and set of writing instrument.



The 18th Century “Jewelled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I”—a stunning artifact held in the collection of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.



Prof. Dr. Chookaszian, the Chair of Armenian Art History and Theory at Yerevan State University (left) and Julie Lauffenburger, and Director of Conservation at the Walters Art Museum (right), amid inspections of the bejeweled gun.

“The Walters is incredibly fortunate to have this stunning and historic object as one of the highlights of our collection,” said Julia Marciari-Alexander, who is the Andrea B. and John H. Laporte Director of the Walters Art Museum.

The 55 inch-long (139.7 cm) gun - crafted in 1733 and bejeweled with countless diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other gemstones - has garnered international scholarly interest and as a result has been the subject of ongoing research. During a week-long exploration of the piece and an intensive study of its archival history, the crucial Armenian contribution to the gun’s manufacture took center stage.

At the request of counsel to the National Museum, Karnig Kerkonian of Kerkonian Dajani LLC, and upon the invitation of Marciari-Alexander, experts Dr. Ashley Dimmig, the Wieler-Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow in Islamic Art at the Walters, and Prof. Dr. Levon Chookaszian, the Chair of Armenian Art History and Theory at Yerevan State University, joined Walters’ museum curators and archivists for a meticulous, week-long inspection of the treasured gun on location in Baltimore.

At the conclusion of this collaborative exploration, it was determined that the label of the artifact should be revised to reflect the valuable contribution of the Armenian Christian, Hovhannes Agha Duzian.

Duzian served as the Chief Goldsmith under Sultan Mahmud’s predecessor, Ahmed III, and continued to work in that esteemed position for Mahmud I. It was while serving as the Chief Goldsmith to the Ottoman court that Duzian created the gun’s most striking feature: its astonishingly ornate jewellery.

Prof. Dr. Chookaszian remarked that “the artifact itself constitutes a valuable component of the rich and storied history of Armenian art and, indeed, of Armenian civilization” and commended this collaborative undertaking with the Walters “as an example of a sophisticated, exemplary approach to understanding and uncovering the depth and breadth of the Armenian contribution to the art of the era.”

Marciari-Alexander added that “our staff is honored to have had the opportunity to work closely with Prof. Dr. Chookaszian to restore the attribution of the gun’s remarkable jewelery to Hovhannes Agha Duzian.”

The two museums have also expressed an interest in further collaboration and exchanges. The new label and a full description of the “Jeweled Gun of Sultan Mahmud I” may be found on the Walters Art Museum website.

For press inquiries please contact press@kerkoniandajani.com or (312) 416-6180.



The participants of the week-long exploration of the bejeweled gun pictured at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. Pictured from left to right: Karnig Kerkonian (counsel to the National Museum of Armenian Ethnography and the History of the Liberation Struggle); Anna Clarkson (Archivist at the Walters Art Museum) at Julia Marciari-Alexander (the Andrea B. and John H. Laporte Director of the Walters Art Museum); Julie Lauffenburger (Director of Conservation at the Walters Art Museum); Prof. Dr. Levon Chookaszian (the Chair of Armenian Art History and Theory at Yerevan State University); and Dr. Ashley Dimmig (Wieler-Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow in Islamic Art at the Walters).