

Fellows



Sofian Merabet

IFK_Research Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. March 2015 bis 30. June 2015

Sofian Merabet

PROJECT TITLE

Hotel Beirut

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

His research project bridges urban anthropology and history. It focuses on the archives of a former Beirut hotel that has captured the imagination of many Lebanese as a quintessential symbol of urban pleasure from the time of its construction in the late 1950s by a queer-identified megalomaniac owner

until it was destroyed in 2008. In an effort to critically reconstruct what has come to be called the “golden era” of pre-civil-war Lebanon and its violent aftermath, my project examines the history of what I call the “Hotel California Beirut” by engaging in a methodical investigation of written administrative records and personal documents salvaged by a local research institute just before the hotel’s demolition. Together with ethnographic interviews I have conducted over the past three years, the textual study of the information available in this archive has enabled me to reconstruct the micro-history of the hotel and link it to the social, political, and religious macro-history of the city as it relates to three distinct periods; first, the heydays of pre-civil-war tourism (1959–1975), second, Lebanon’s civil war (1975–1990), and third, the post-war years (1990–2001). A unique physical and conceptual space, the hotel is also a repository of practices and performances, and the very locus for the circulation of stories. In sum, and as a vantage point unexplored before, it becomes an eclectic resource from which to assess the urban pulse of time.

CV

Sofian Merabet earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University. He currently teaches at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. His interdisciplinary research analyzes the human Geography of queer identity formations and the sociocultural production of space as constitutive features of wider class, religious, and gender relations in the contemporary Arab world.

Publications

(u. a.): Queer Beirut, Austin 2014; Queer Habitus: Bodily Performance and Queer Ethnography in Lebanon, in: *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 21, No. 5, pp. 516–531, 2014; Se dire „gay“. Entre la (ré)appropriation d’un espace queer et la formation de nouvelles identités dans le Liban d’aujourd’hui, in: *Tumultes* n°41 (octobre 2013); Dire les homosexualités d’une rive à l’autre de la Méditerranée, Paris 2013, pp. 131–140.