Destruction and Documentation: Saving Syria’s Cultural Heritage

a talk by

Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

Syria’s civil war has resulted in widespread damage of its cultural patrimony. Watching the minaret of the Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo fall on Youtube, witness looters in Apamea on satellite imagines, or verify if Jobar Synagogue was destroyed has encouraged archaeologists and scholars to mobilize and address the crisis. A team of scholars invested their unique skills in Manar al-Athar (http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/), an open access photograph database on the Middle East’s human cultural heritage—though founded prior to April 2011 when battles started. Prof. Macaulay-Lewis will explore this project, its capacity to serve as a resource for understanding the degree of harm inflicted upon archaeological sites by war, other types of conflict, increasing population, and/or development.

Prof. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis is the deputy executive officer of the M.A. Program in Liberal Studies (MALS) and director of the MALS track Archaeology of the Classical, Late Antique, and Islamic Worlds. She is completing a monograph about Sephardic houses in late Ottoman Damascus. She serves as a contributing editor for the Arts of the Islamic World, at Smarthistory.org, an open-access art history website supported by the Khan Academy.