

# CEDAR WINGS

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GLASSBLOWING



Heritage

# MAISON TARAZI

The Art of Making Fabulous Interiors

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAISON TARAZI

They are interiors whose walls are made of painted wood panels found in elegant houses and palaces in Syria and Lebanon during the Ottoman period. The technique is known as Damascene Ajami and was carried – among other oriental artifacts and furniture – by Tarazi family for generations across the Near East and North Africa.

After more than a century, Michel Emile Tarazi and son Camille perpetuate from their workshop in Broumana overlooking Beirut, what the descendants of Dimitri Tarazi have been doing since 1862; lavishly embellishing interiors with oriental artifacts, furniture and painted wood panels. At their shop Mosaïque Maison Tarazi, the displayed items hold visitors' attention and in seconds disconnect them from the outside reality.

Since the family's early beginnings in south Turkey's Ourfa then Damascus in 1796 and later in Beirut in 1860 after escaping Damascus, the shops started to open in 1862 in Beirut, then Jerusalem, then Damascus, Cairo and Alexandria and later on in Rabat.



The shops had been consecutively an introduction or prelude to the fascinating Near East for westerners, among them scholars, artists and diplomats. The wealth of the Orient, its social classes and traditions, landscapes as well as animated bazars became a source of inspiration for such travelers and an investment for the Tarazi. The family memorialized its charm in postcards that they printed in Germany between the years 1902-1918. These postcards that presented a charming Near East, circulated across Europe; they were and still are considered as a witness of an era. After decades, Camille Tarazi was able to gather hundreds of his family's printed postcards that he found in several European flea markets.

Opposite Page:  
Four Seasons  
Hotel - Beirut by  
Pierre-Yves  
Rochon 2009  
© Imad el Khoury

Top:  
Front and back  
cover of Vitrine de  
l'Orient - Les  
Éditions de la  
Revue Phénicienne,  
a treasure of a  
book by Camille  
Tarazi

The oriental goods, furniture, silk and cotton fabrics were among the many items sold at Tarazi Oriental antique shops and that foreign tourists carried back home. The family became the supplier of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan Ottoman and several royal courts of Europe.



Left:  
Dimitri Tarazi  
(1835-1903)

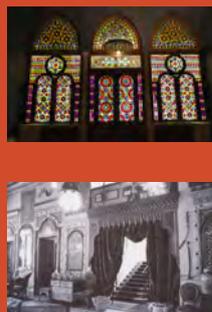
1900

Throne of Sultan  
Abdel Hamid II -  
Istanbul



1908

Villa Michel et Linda  
Sursock - Beirut



1915

Palais Alfred Sursock  
known as Palais  
Cochrane - Beirut



1916

Résidence des Pins - Beirut



## Heritage



Left:  
Siegess

Their work was much admired. They were commissioned in 1900 to make Sultan Abdel Hamid II a throne which is presented today at Yildiz Palace in Istanbul. The Sultan of Morocco Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef in 1936 commissioned an oriental reception room which Michel's father Emile installed. But because of the court's lack of recognition, Emile had to disassemble all elements. They are displayed today at Mosaïque Maison Tarazi.

The monumental gate of Residence des Pins in Beirut, as well as other wood panels inside the residence, was made around 1916 by Gebran Dimitri Tarazi. In 1998, Michel Tarazi and son Camille were to start renovating what their predecessor created decades ago.

Driven by devotion to the art and with a persistent attachment to their roots, the family has surmounted the regional events with resilience.



Left:  
Tables

1926

Palais Karame - Tripoli



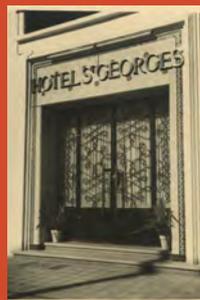
1936

Boutique Alfred & Emile Tarazi - Damascus



1949

Hotel Saint-Georges - Rabat



1953

Hotel Saint Georges - Casablanca



## Heritage



Left:  
Oriental painting

The Tarazi saga is carefully written by Camille in his book *Vitrine de l'Orient* which also tells the story of almost a two-century era with its glories and falls. In a touching description Camille brings back the family's joy, sorrows and rises.

Today, Michel Emile Tarazi and Camille's work is seen as part of the country's heritage. The old and revisited designs embrace painting, marquetry and brass, mother of pearl, moucharabieh, lighting and trompe l'oeil. The painted wood panels made to cover ceilings and walls are the quintessence of a reception room. The technique consists of drawing patterns on a wood panel with stencil. A tinted plaster is then inlaid with careful hand movements

that are driven by a passion for such art. Verses of the Holy Qur'an and poems are wonderfully written in Arabic calligraphy on the walls' cornices.

By tradition, such panels cover ceilings and walls of the room. They hold floral motifs, geometric patterns, landscapes, still life and arabesques following a certain rhythm that reflects harmony inside the room. Because the quality of light is important, the space between the ceiling and the wood panels is often filled in intervals with a type of windows made of a carved frame. They are enclosed with pieces of colored glass which bring in the daylight in a most aesthetic way. This effect is intensely felt at Robert Moawad Museum, Beirut.



1965

Casino du Liban -  
Maameltein



© Casino du Liban

1967

Hotel Byblos -  
Saint-Tropez



1970

Musée Robert  
Mouawad, ex Palais  
Henri Pharaon - Beirut



2005

Restaurant Liza - Paris



© Jean-Pierre Gabrielle

## Heritage



Left: Reception Hall of the Hotel Alcazar which became one part of the Atelier during the Lebanese Civil War

The work is performed at Maison Tarazi by talented artisans from Lebanon and Syria. They too have been transmitting their knowhow from father to son.

The 21st century has its artistic tendencies and they include Maison Tarazi's creations. Clients from Lebanon, Gulf countries and Europe seek the family's knowhow to embellish their hotels, private villas and restaurants. Their work is made in respect of the tradition but they also have been revisiting, in a modern way, the classic designs.

The mixture of materials as well as colors is audacious and in synchrony with contemporary interior trends. For the Tarazi fifth generation, it's still handmade and sophisticated but it's surely stepping into the future with loads of expertise in the field.

[www.maisontarazi.com](http://www.maisontarazi.com)



2006

Grand Hotel du Lac - Vevey (By Pierre-Yves Rochon)



2009

Four Seasons Hotel - Beirut (By Pierre-Yves Rochon)



2011

Villa Privée - Riyad (By Karina Sukar)



2013

Designers of Fabrica & ALBA for Carwan Gallery - Beirut

