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Portraits of Empires

Habsburg Albums from the German House in Ottoman Constantinople

Robyn Dora Radway

DESCRIPTION

In the late 16th century, hundreds of travelers made their way to the Habsburg ambassador's residence, known as the German House, in Constantinople. In this centrally located inn, subjects of the emperor found food, wine, shelter, and good company—and left an incredible collection of albums filled with images, messages, decorated papers, and more.

Portraits of Empires offers a complete account of this early form of social media, which had a profound impact on later European iconography. Revealing a vibrant transimperial culture as viewed from all walks of life—Muslim and Christian, noble and servant, scholar and stable boy—the pocket-sized albums containing these curiosities have never been fully connected to the abundant archival records on the German House and its residents. Robyn Dora Radway not only introduces these objects, the people who filled their pages, and the house at the center of their creation, but she also presents several arguments regarding chronologies of exchange, workshop practices, the curation of social networks and visual collections based on status, and the purposes of these highly individualized material portraits.

Featuring 162 fascinating color images, *Portraits of Empires* reconstructs the world of Habsburg subjects living in Ottoman Constantinople using a rich and distinctive set of objects to raise questions about imperial belonging and the artistic practices used to articulate it.

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