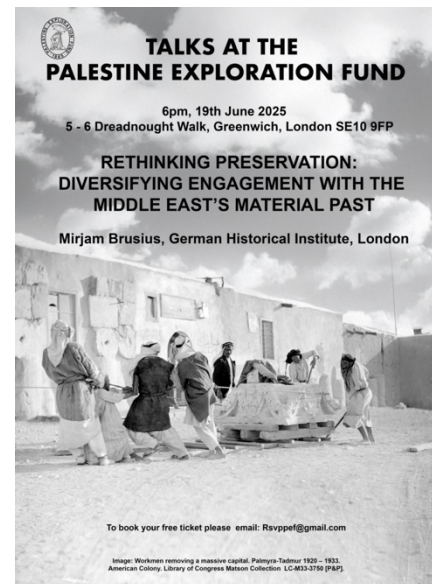


## PEF EVENT

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 6pm**

### **RETHINKING PRESERVATION: DIVERSIFYING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MIDDLE EAST'S MATERIAL PAST**

- Mirjam Brusius, German Historical Institute, London
- PEF, 5-6 Dreadnought Walk, Greenwich, London SE10 9FP
- Free, please email [rsvppef@gmail.com](mailto:rsvppef@gmail.com) to reserve your ticket/s



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#### **Summary**

Why is the museum (and the heritage institutions that adhere to its concepts) considered to be the safest place to preserve heritage? Collections bombed in Berlin's museums in WW2, flooded storage rooms in the Louvre, and the recent scandal involving the theft of approximately 2,000 items by a curator at the British Museum, suggest otherwise. The lecture takes as its starting point the discourse about the destruction and preservation of heritage in and from the Middle East to discuss specific local practices to highlight the heterogeneous ways artifacts are preserved and destroyed, past and present. Accepted heritage practices continue colonial legacies which emerged in the 19th century, a fact which remains largely unchallenged in public debate and scholarship. Equating 'The Orient' with destruction and 'The West' with salvage, for instance, as current debate often tends to do, presents a troubling recurrence of these 19th- and 20th-century tropes. This lack of historical self-reflection happens at the expense of more nuanced and potentially more effective understanding and theory of how preservation has been determined over time and from different perspectives. How can preservation practices which do not correspond with established museological ideals and terminologies in Western heritage preservation be acknowledged? And when was heritage even destroyed by Western imperial powers in order to be 'preserved'? In other words, which consequences does the West's 'thirst for heritage' have for local inhabitants (and worshipers), and how have they engaged with the past in history? The lecture intends to theorize preservation and destruction as historical phenomena, which were rarely exclusive, but rather connected and identified in crucial ways.

#### **About the speaker**

Dr Mirjam Brusius (Research Fellow in Colonial and Global History, German Historical Institute, London) is a cultural historian with an interest in the circulation of objects and images in and between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. She specializes in the history of photography, museums, collecting and race in colonial contexts. She is particularly interested in where museum objects come from and where they go, why some objects are displayed while others remain in storage, and what happens to repatriated objects. She also explores the scientific misuse of antiquities and the afterlife of objects beyond museums.

## HOW TO FIND US

THE PEF is situated on the south bank of the River Thames, a short walk away from Greenwich train and DLR station, Greenwich Pier (Riverbus) and Island Gardens DLR and Greenwich Foot Tunnel. Cutty Sark CLR station is currently closed until Spring 2026.

