NEGOTIATING “TRADITION”:
DORIS DUKE’S SHANGRI LA AND THE TRANSNATIONAL
REVIVAL OF MOROCCAN CRAFT AND DESIGN

Ashley Miller
ABSTRACT
After a weeklong stay in the French Protectorate of Morocco in 1937, Doris Duke and James Cromwell hired René Martin, owner of the Rabat-based firm S.A.L.A.M., to design and produce a series of interior spaces inspired by Moroccan architecture and design for their Honolulu villa, Shangri La. In collaboration with Martin and his associates, the Cromwells engaged local craft workshops in Morocco to construct custom-made furnishings and architectural features, including carved and painted cedar ceilings, zellij tilework, and other elements in wood, plaster, metal, and ceramic. The couple’s encounter with Moroccan art coincided with a rich moment in the modern history of Morocco’s craft industries. From its establishment in 1912, the French Protectorate administration had launched an extensive campaign to “revitalize” Morocco’s “traditional” arts, and by the late 1930s a vibrant commercial market for Moroccan artistic and cultural products spanned from Morocco to France and beyond. This paper reconsiders Duke’s own participation in the “revitalization” of so-called “living craft traditions” in this historical context.

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In the spring of 1937, Doris Duke and her husband James Cromwell embarked on a two-month trip through Europe, traveling from Paris to Moscow with a brief excursion into North Africa. At the end of May they arrived by plane to Casablanca, inaugurating a weeklong stay in the French Protectorate of Morocco that would take them to Marrakech, Mohammedia (then Fedala), Rabat, and possibly Tangier. Despite its short duration, the couple’s experience in Morocco had a lasting impact on the visual environment of Duke’s Honolulu villa, Shangri La, for which the planning had only begun the year before. At the end of the trip, while staying in Antibes on the French Riviera, Duke and Cromwell drew up a contract with René Martin, owner of the Rabat-based design firm S.A.L.A.M., to design and produce a series of interior spaces—inspired by “traditional” Moroccan architectural design—to be installed at Shangri La (figs.1–2). Through their collaboration with Martin and his associates over the next two years (ca.1937–39), Duke and Cromwell engaged local craft workshops in Morocco to construct custom-made furnishings and architectural features for the living room, foyer, courtyard, and Cromwell’s bedroom (also known as the “Moroccan Room”). These included two ceilings and a monumental door of carved and painted cedar wood, studded doors of arar (thuya) wood, green ceramic roof tiles, a cedar balustrade and screens, plaster spandrels and friezes, a series of pierced clerestory windows, chemmassiat, and furniture for the living room and Cromwell’s bedroom.\footnote{Duke and Cromwell originally contracted Martin to design the fireplace and mantel for the living room, a tile fountain for the patio, and extensive tilework throughout the villa; these elements were later omitted (see “Memorandum of Items Furnished by Martin,” August 30, 1937, and handwritten corrections to “Memorandum on material furnished by M. Martin,” October 11, 1937, SHLA). Duke also purchased a number of custom-made textiles in Marrakech from Hadj el-Mahdjoub Bouzian that would be incorporated into the design of the living room and Cromwell’s bedroom (see Overton, “Commissioning on the Move,” 97, 212 n. 21; and letters from Nigel d’Albini Black-Hawkins to James Cromwell, November 9, 1937, February 18, 1938, and March 31, 1938, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA).}

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1 The original itinerary organized by Thomas Cook & Son does not specifically mention Morocco as a destination, instead proposing a week in Algiers (May 26–June 2, 1937). In examining visa stamps in Duke’s passport, however, it appears that the Cromwells arrived at the Port Aérien de Casablanca on May 31, 1937, after passing through the airports of Oran (Algeria) and Tunis (Tunisia). See Thos. Cook & Son Ltd. itinerary for Tour No. 20179/W, Shangri La Historical Archives, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai‘i (hereafter SHLA); and passports, Doris Duke Papers, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Historical Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (hereafter DDCFHA).


Due to her acts of commissioning new work for Shangri La, Duke has been described as a patron of living craft traditions in the Islamic world. In her analysis of Duke and Cromwell’s encounter with the politics of craft revival in Gandhi-era India and its impact on Duke’s own self-positioning as a patron of living artists in developing contexts, Thalia Kennedy argues that the Mughal Suite commission at Shangri La (ca. 1935–6) is “not simply a replica of Indian design, but . . . may be considered both a
significant moment in an ongoing tradition and an act of revitalization.”⁴ In a similar
vein, Keelan Overton draws a fascinating comparison between Duke’s Morocco
commission and the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 2011 collaboration with Fassi artists
to construct the Moroccan Court in its Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey,
Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia. She argues that both reflect an “appreciation of
‘living traditions’ and the impetus to, at times, preference architectural context over the
individual object.”⁵ As revealed through Kennedy and Overton’s comparisons of Duke’s
Shangri La project with two commissions from very different historical contexts—one a
moment of heightened political activism in 1930s India, the other an iteration of
contemporary exhibition strategies for representing Islamic arts and cultures within an
American institution—to be a patron and thereby contribute to the “revitalization” of a
so-called “living tradition” is not a neutral position.

In this paper, I question further the place of “living traditions” at Shangri La,
specifically examining the circumstances behind Duke’s engagement with Morocco’s
craft industries in the late 1930s. What makes an artistic or cultural practice “traditional,”
and what does it mean to participate in its “revitalization,” particularly as an actor
positioned outside of the cultural, social, or geographic context in which the “original”
practice or object was conceived? The problem of “tradition” as a concept itself lies at the
heart of these questions, intertwined with assumptions about the “authenticity” of certain
cultures, practices, or objects in relation to others. We commonly imagine “tradition” as a
fixed, unchanging set of practices or beliefs; it is something that can be contained,
something already complete. Like a family heirloom, we envision traditions being passed
from one generation to the next, all the while maintaining their integrity, their
“authenticity.” Yet, as the contributors to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s The
Invention of Tradition have made evident, the appearance of those traditions that appear
to be timeless can most often be dated to a particular moment of origin, often much less
distant than we expect.⁶ Lending legitimacy to cultural practices, social structures, or
political orders, traditions often arise in moments of transition—from one ruling power to
another, for example—or in times of uncertainty and social turbulence, such as periods of
war or rapid technological advances. The French occupation of Morocco at the beginning
of the twentieth century was one such pivotal moment, when the rearticulation of
Morocco’s cultural, religious, and political “traditions” became a powerful tool for those
actors with a stake in claiming authority in the new French Protectorate of Morocco
(1912–56).⁷

⁴ Thalia Kennedy, “Doris Duke and Gandhi: Revitalizing Craft Tradition and the Mughal Suite at Shangri
[accessed November 7, 2015].
⁵ Overton, “Commissioning on the Move,” 93–94.
⁶ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge and New York:
Cambridge University Press, 1983).
⁷ Rahma Bourqia and Susan Gilson Miller’s edited volume In the Shadow of the Sultan: Culture, Power,
and Politics in Morocco (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) addresses the cultural traditions
and symbolic practices that supported the authority and legitimacy of the Moroccan monarchy during
(among other eras) the period of the French Protectorate. Edmund Burke III’s recent book, The
Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam (Oakland: University of California Press,
2014), provides a detailed analysis of the “invention” of “Moroccan Islam” through the mechanisms of
French ethnographic research and the related development of the colonial archive in early-twentieth-
century Morocco.
The French Protectorate’s self-proclaimed duty to protect and preserve these “traditions”—a claim that was a crucial aspect of its justification for colonial governance in Morocco—was perhaps most systematically carried out through its cultural policy.\(^8\) Within his first two years as the resident general of the French Protectorate, Hubert Lyautey (1854–1934) inaugurated a legal framework and administrative departments specifically dedicated to the documentation, preservation, and promotion of Morocco’s cultural and artistic “heritage.” The French Protectorate government embarked upon a project of restoring selected buildings, city walls, archaeological sites, and other features in Morocco’s built environment, designating them as “historical monuments” to be protected from alteration and further deterioration. It also constructed museums of Moroccan art in Rabat, Fez, Meknès, and Marrakech, intervened in the management of local artisans’ guilds, and more generally took on the task of “revitalizing” Morocco’s craft industries by training a new generation of artists to produce objects that conformed to the French administration’s own conceptualization of “traditional” Moroccan art and craft.

When Duke and Cromwell visited Morocco in 1937, its local craft industries had already been subject to the French Protectorate’s policies and interventions for more than twenty years. Consequently, the couple did not encounter a “timeless” tradition of artistic production in Morocco but rather a contemporary industry shaped through extended negotiations over the meaning of “tradition” in a colonial context. Duke and Cromwell’s participation in the so-called “revival” of Moroccan craft must, therefore, be examined in the context of the French Protectorate’s own campaign to “revitalize” Morocco’s “traditional” arts. Conversely, the state of artistic production in Morocco in the late 1930s cannot be fully understood as a direct product or pure reflection of official French colonial policy. In reality, as Duke’s own engagement with living craft production in Morocco reveals, the twentieth-century “revival” of Moroccan art and design arose through innovation and cross-cultural exchange at the hands of both Moroccan and non-Moroccan actors in the context of a growing transnational market for these arts.

“FINE AND AUTHENTIC SPECIMENS”: FRENCH-PROTECTORATE NOTIONS OF “TRADITIONAL” MOROCCAN ART

The French Protectorate’s conceptualization of “traditional” art and craft in Morocco relied upon the perceived existence of an “authentic” Moroccan culture, isolated from external influence and uncorrupted by the changes of the modern world. In many ways,

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the colonial administration defined Moroccan art according to then-current assumptions about what it was not: it was neither a “fine art,” a category reserved for the expressive cultures of more “advanced” Western civilizations, nor a product of modern industry. Indeed, the terminology employed to describe Morocco’s material cultures in books, catalogs, and studies published by French authors in the early twentieth century—the most common descriptors being artisanat and arts décoratifs—reflects this politically charged system of categorizing Moroccan culture as an “other” to modern French culture (fig. 3). On the one hand, the categorization of Morocco’s arts as arts décoratifs (“decorative arts”) at once emphasized their purely aesthetic qualities, distancing them from local systems of meaning or historical specificity, and placed them in a lower rank within the hierarchy of material culture according to late-nineteenth-century formulations of civilizational progress. On the other hand, applying the term artisanat (best translated as “handicraft” or “craft”) to the practice of art-making in Morocco conceptually distanced both Moroccan artists and their products from the technological and social innovations subsequent to the industrial revolution and located them in a “pre-modern” past.

Fig. 3: Front cover of French artist and colonial administrator Joseph de la Nézière’s La Décoration Marocaine (Paris: Librarie des Arts Décoratifs, 1924).

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9 In this Eurocentric theory of cultural and artistic hierarchies, non-Western (especially Islamic) decorative arts were conceptualized both as the antithesis to figurative representation in art and as subsidiary to architecture, both high marks of European artistic “progress.” See the essays in Rémi Labrusse, ed., Purs d décors?: Arts de l’Islam, Regards du XIXe siècle (Paris: Musée du Louvre Editions, 2007) for a discussion of the notion of “decoration” or the “decorative” as it has been applied to Islamic art, particularly in French scholarship of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

10 The conceptualization of “craft,” as opposed to modern “industry,” was articulated by artists and other actors in support of varying political and social positions throughout Europe and the United States toward the turn of the century (for example, see Rosella Froissart’s analysis of the politics behind craft production in late-nineteenth-century France in her article, “Socialization of the Beautiful and Valorization of the Useful: The Decorative Arts in France, from the Utopias of 1848 to Art Nouveau,” West 86th 21, 1 [Spring–Summer 2014], 69–101). It is crucial to recognize that the application of the designation of “craft” to the products of non-European or -American cultures had various implications and participated in the assertion of unequal global power dynamics.
Lyautey’s model of governance in Morocco relied on the symbolic juxtaposition of a timeless Moroccan “tradition” and progressive French “modernity.” The French Protectorate administration reinforced the conceptual binary underpinning this proposition through specific policies created to ensure the maintenance of two distinct populations, French and “native.” The most tangible manifestation of these policies was the separation of Morocco’s major cities into “native” quarters (*anciennes medinas*) and French quarters (*villes nouvelles*). While the *villes nouvelles* were subject to architectural experimentation, urban planning, and modern enterprise, Lyautey’s administration enforced a strict policy of architectural preservation in the *medinas* and encouraged their occupants to participate in “traditional” trades like leatherworking and weaving (fig. 4). Contemporary scholars have described the French Protectorate’s physical partition of Morocco’s cities as an “urban apartheid”\(^{11}\)—and its strict conservation of “traditional” architecture in the *medinas*, along with the preservation of “historical monuments” throughout the built landscape, as the “museumification” of Morocco.\(^{12}\) In the realm of contemporary artistic production in Morocco, the Protectorate administration similarly embarked upon a process of differentiating “authentic” Moroccan art from its modern or foreign imposters, with the objective of protecting and “revitalizing” Morocco’s “traditional” arts and craft industries.

**Fig. 4:** Resident General Lyautey and administrators of the French Protectorate of Morocco inspecting restoration work at Bab al-Kabir, entrance to Rabat’s Kasbah des Oudayas, ca. 1915. Courtesy of Archives DPC-Maroc.


The Protectorate’s campaign to “revitalize” Morocco’s historical craft industries relied on the assumption that the practices supporting these industries were on the brink of disappearing. In his first years as resident general, Lyautey sent his cultural administrators, many of whom were amateur art historians, archaeologists, and ethnographers, into the various regions of Morocco to take stock of the current status of craft production in Morocco. His informants returned with the dour report that these industries were in a state of disrepair and imminent demise. According to their analyses, the aesthetic integrity of local manufacture had already begun deteriorating over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through the influence of Turkish and other foreign styles from the “East” on the tastes of Moroccan artists and consumers. According to the reports, in more recent years the trajectory of degeneration had continued, due to the accelerated influx of European goods and materials into Morocco beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Cheaper and readily available, English silver, French silk, and German linens dominated the local market; in response to this competition, Moroccan artists were using cheaper materials—also imported from Europe—such as synthetic dyes and fibers, or tin in place of gold. The state of Moroccan craft at the beginning of the French protectorate, these reports claimed, was threatened by a decline in quality and cultural “authenticity” as well as a loss of expertise.

This narrative—purporting the decline not only of traditional crafts but also of Morocco’s cultural, social, and political structures at the dawn of the modern era—was indeed crucial to the justification of French governance in Morocco. Beyond its larger claim that Moroccan culture and society were inherently “traditional,” Protectorate ideology asserted that such a “traditional” entity required the support of a more “advanced” society (i.e., France) in order to maintain its integrity in the midst of a rapidly changing world. As both the personification of “modernity” (the bearer of modern technological and social advancements to Morocco) and the guardian of Moroccan “tradition” (protecting it from the corrupting influences of these new, modern conditions, the French colonial regime held a contradictory position in this formulation. Edmund Burke has insightfully described this model as the introduction of “modernity without change.” Likewise, the French Protectorate’s campaign to protect and revive “traditional” craft in Morocco relied on modern institutions and social technologies. In 1915, the Protectorate constructed two museums of Moroccan art, in Fez and Rabat, with the objective of exhibiting exemplary specimens of “authentic” Moroccan art for contemporary artisans to emulate and potential consumers to admire. In 1918, Lyautey created the Office of the Native Arts Industries (which became the Native Arts Service in 1920), a branch of the French administration responsible for “centralizing all questions concerning native artistic production and especially for surveying the manufacture and sale of its products.” Administrators in the Native Arts Service directed schools in

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15 Burke, The Ethnographic State, 9.

which Moroccan artists worked under the guidance of French instructors, distributed diagrams of “traditional” motifs and designs to local craft workshops, and carried out a system of inspection by which artistic products received the Protectorate’s “stamp of approval” before entering the commercial market. Through the implementation of these modern educational programs and cultural institutions, the Protectorate administration compelled the Moroccan artists with whom they worked to produce, and ultimately embody, a French colonial notion of “traditional” Moroccan craft.

The Native Arts Service was equally dedicated to attracting and developing a body of “modern” consumers for these “traditional” arts. To this end, it organized public exhibitions of Moroccan art, participated in international exhibitions, and disseminated publications, posters, and other propaganda with the aim, as Lisa Bernasek has elaborated, of developing a “taste” for Moroccan art in France.17 The Service also established programs for educating those potential consumers already in Morocco, whether residents of the French Protectorate or tourists. Through the publication of articles, advertisements, and guidebooks, the French Protectorate government encouraged tourists to visit its museums and arts inspection centers and learn to distinguish works of good quality and “authentic” construction—in other words, those objects produced under the guidance of the Native Arts Service—from inferior products. In one article published by the Native Arts Service in 1933, the author warns tourists of the dangers of “uneducated” buying, proclaiming:

The near temptation of native shops becomes irresistible with their bewitching array of gaily colored carpets, embroideries and leather goods, not to mention the glitter of brass and jewels... The traveller already feels stirring within him the unsatisfied passion of the collector... [but] [W]hen a new born zeal is not tempered by a tried and judicious taste, it rarely survives the indifference and lassitude that follows... Would it not therefore benefit collectors of Moroccan art objects to first spend a little time in studying the fine and authentic specimens... that are exposed at the museums of the Office of Native Arts?... In these Museums they could gather valuable information that would spare them many future regrets.18

One such museum and inspection center was located in the Andalusian garden of Rabat’s Kasbah des Oudayas (fig. 5). As film footage taken by the Cromwells during their 1937 trip to Morocco reveals, the Kasbah, a medieval fortress on a cliff abutting the Bouregreg River and Atlantic Ocean, counted among the sites they visited.19 Perhaps in addition to enjoying the fragrant orange trees, trickling water, and intriguing landscaping of the eighteenth-century garden nestled within the walls of the Kasbah, Duke and Cromwell also visited the French Protectorate’s art museum and neighboring inspection center at the garden’s west end.

19 Film, rolls 37–41 and 44, 1937, Doris Duke Audiovisual Collection, DDCFHA.
Fig. 5: View of the Kasbah des Oudayas’ “Andalusian garden,” looking west, with the French Protectorate’s museum of art seen at the far end, ca. 1915–25. Courtesy of Archives DPC-Maroc.

Although we have no evidence that the Cromwells visited this or any other official French institution in Morocco, their experience of Moroccan art and architecture was no doubt shaped by the French Protectorate’s representation of “traditional” Moroccan art and culture, a vision promoted and reinforced through touristic itineraries, shopping guides, and public spaces of exhibition like museums, inspection centers, and even hotels and restaurants. By 1937 the tourist industry in Morocco was highly developed, supported by a solid infrastructure: a vast network of roads and railways made movement between cities convenient, and luxury hotels, restaurants, and clubs had popped up throughout the country. Tour guides suggested itineraries for visiting the so-called “cultural capitals” of Morocco, leading tourists to specific palaces, mosques, monumental gates, and other historical structures that reflected a French colonial image of Morocco’s magnificent past. Many of the sites that Duke and Cromwell visited, such as the Jama’a al-Fna’ in Marrakech and the Kasbah des Oudayas in Rabat, figured on this touristic itinerary. It was a built landscape crafted according to Lyautey and his administrators’ vision of “traditional” life and culture in Morocco that Duke and Cromwell would have encountered.

This colonial vision continued to impact the interpretation of Moroccan art and design at Shangri La through the mediation of René Martin and his associates. As the Cromwells’ Morocco commission took shape over the course of nearly two years (ca.1937–39), Martin, Duke, Shangri La’s lead architects Wyeth & King, and the artisans and designers in Morocco with whom Martin worked were engaged in continual negotiations and together developed strategies for incorporating “traditional” Moroccan craft into the Hawaiian villa’s architectural and decorative program. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this collaborative process resulted in an engagement with Moroccan craft and its modern producers that in many ways challenged colonial notions of timeless artistic tradition.
INTERPRETING “TRADITIONAL” MOROCCAN CRAFT AND DESIGN AT SHANGRI LA

In July of 1937, with the initial construction of Shangri La underway in Honolulu, Duke and Cromwell met with René Martin in Antibes to arrange a commission of architectural features and decoration for the villa’s foyer, living room, patio, and Cromwell’s bedroom. It is uncertain whether the couple first met Martin in Antibes, where the initial contract was created, or earlier in the trip. It is likely, however, that the Cromwells’ hosts in Morocco, the German actress Mary Auras and her husband, British Lieutenant Nigel d’Albini Black-Hawkins, facilitated the relationship. Indeed, Black-Hawkins is known to have brokered architectural commissions for other foreign nationals in Morocco, including the never-realized construction of a villa in Marrakech for Winston Churchill. Upon their return to the United States, Duke and Cromwell employed William Dodsworth, their agent in Paris, to manage negotiations with Martin and his firm. Duke and Martin would only meet once more, in Paris the following year. The ensuing commission transpired through the near-continuous exchange of letters, drawings, photographs, and revised contracts among the Cromwells, Wyeth & King, Dodsworth, Martin, and a French draftsman working with Martin, known only by his signature, “P. Vary.”

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20 Mary Auras was a German actress and a muse for the artist Sir John Lavery. She traveled to Tangier with Lavery and his daughter and then remained in Morocco after marrying the British lieutenant Nigel d’Albini Black-Hawkins, who was stationed in Marrakech. Auras and Black-Hawkins seem to have accompanied Duke and Cromwell through much of their Moroccan trip, playing the role of local ambassadors while visiting the popular Jama’a al-Fna’ square in Marrakech, swimming and picnicking at a villa on Morocco’s Atlantic coast—possibly belonging to the Black-Hawkinses themselves—and exploring the local souks and the historic Kasbah of Rabat. Don Hibbard suggests the likelihood of an existing acquaintance between Martin and the Black-Hawkinses, citing a letter of November 9, 1937, in which Black-Hawkins “regretted his wife did not get to Antibes, ‘to be of any help with regard to Martin, if there could have been anything she could do,’” and Cromwell’s response, in which he explains, “‘We thought Monsieur Martin had most excellent taste and upon inquiry among friends living in Morocco learned that he was honest and dependable.’” See Don Hibbard, *Shangri La: Doris Duke’s Home in Hawaii*, unpublished internal DDFIA report, November 2001 (citing page three of a November 9, 1937, letter written by Nigel Black-Hawkins in Marrakech to James Cromwell, SHLA).


22 The watercolors of the living room and foyer submitted to the Cromwells are signed “P. Vary,” and a letter of August 39, 1937, written on Martin’s stationary and bearing the same signature, implies that Vary may also have been present at the initial meeting between the couple and Martin in Antibes, as he refers to “the time of our interview in Antibes.” Letter from Vary/Martin to Wyeth & King, August 30, 1937, SHLA. Overton (“Commissioning on the Move”: 213, note 27) also directs us to a letter from Martin to Cromwell mentioning a colleague to whom he refers as “my designer who has charge of the Cromwell villa.” Letter from René Martin to James Cromwell, August 16, 1937, SHLA.
While we have limited information about René Martin as an individual,\(^{23}\) this correspondence and other exceptional references to him in publications of the era reveal clues as to the character of his business. A self-described “decorator” and “sole proprietor” of a Rabat-based business known by the acronym S.A.L.A.M., Martin seems to have specialized in the sale of “Moroccan” antiquities, interior design, and architectural commissions, ranging from projects for private residences, like Duke’s, to the furnishing of glazed tiles for the Grand Mosque of Paris (1922–26) and the Morocco Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition.\(^{24}\) Despite the location of his studio and living quarters—at 21 rue Souk al-Ghazel,\(^{25}\) directly across the street from the headquarters of Rabat’s branch of the Native Arts Service in the Oudayas garden—Martin does not seem to have been directly, officially affiliated with the French Protectorate administration. Nevertheless, as a French businessman engaged in the field of local craft production in Morocco, Martin likely interacted with members of the cultural administration, at least in Rabat, on both social and professional levels.\(^{26}\) Furthermore, we have evidence that his business was acknowledged and even promoted by this administration, as his name is included in the list of “antiquities dealers” in Rabat printed in Prosper Ricard’s 1936 edition of the \textit{Guide Bleu} for Morocco.\(^{27}\)

\(^{23}\) The identification of René Martin of S.A.L.A.M. with a contemporaneous painter working in Rabat, also named René Martin, has been suggested (see Overton, “Commissioning on the Move”). However, in comparing the signature of Duke’s René Martin to that included in a letter handwritten by the artist René Martin (located by the author in the Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Box F119, Letter from Martin to Borély April 8, 1934), it seems unlikely that these individuals were one and the same.

\(^{24}\) See René Martin letters from December 16, 1937, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA, and June 21, 1938, SHLA.

\(^{25}\) The address is printed on Martin’s stationary and was confirmed during oral interviews conducted near the former site of the residence by Keelan Overton in 2011 (Overton, e-mail message to author, October 12, 2012).

\(^{26}\) Later correspondence from Martin refers to his relationship with French Protectorate administrator Edmond Pauty, whom he calls “l’inspecteur des monuments historiques, mon ami, Edmond Pauty.” Letter from René Martin to James Cromwell, May 28, 1940, SHLA.

\(^{27}\) Prosper Ricard, \textit{Les Guides Bleus: Maroc} (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1936), 229. Here, Martin is listed as a “marchand d’antiquités”; elsewhere he refers to himself as a “decorator.” It seems that he not only facilitated architectural commissions like Duke’s but also dealt in collectible objects from Morocco and elsewhere. He furnished the Cromwells with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North African weaponry, as well as brass “Mamluk revival” plates from Egypt or Syria, and later attempted to sell them other “antiquities,” such as a fourteenth-century fragment of carved wood from a condemned \textit{madrasa} in Fez. Letter from René Martin to James Cromwell, May 28, 1940, SHLA.
More importantly, Martin’s own business model must be understood as a direct product of the French Protectorate’s interventions in the management of Morocco’s arts and crafts industries. As the name of his firm proclaims—the acronym S.A.L.A.M. stands for Société Anonyme Les Arts Marocains (The Moroccan Arts Corporation)—Martin and his associates dealt exclusively in those arts understood to be essentially “Moroccan” (fig. 6). In this way, Martin relied upon an understanding shared with his potential clients of what “Moroccan art” meant. As we will see, so-called “Moroccan art” could take on many different forms by the 1920s and ’30s, particularly in the context of its commercial consumption, but at the core of this perceived category of cultural production was a notion of “tradition” whose parameters had already been positioned through the work of the French Protectorate. Martin’s engagement with French Protectorate constructions of “traditional” Moroccan art, and his direct application of them in his professional work as a “decorator,” is confirmed through the important role played in the Shangri La commission by Jean Gallotti, the French colonial administrator of the Protectorate’s Native Arts Service.

Among the visual sources drawn upon as inspiration for Shangri La was Jean Gallotti’s two-volume illustrated work published in 1926, *Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc*, a copy of which Duke held in her library. As correspondence among Martin, the Cromwells, and Wyeth & King reveals, this publication served as a shared point of reference in the process of designing Shangri La’s Moroccan-inspired architectural features. A memorandum exchanged between Martin and Wyeth & King in 1937 refers to...
specific photographic plates in Gallotti’s book six times, and, later on, Martin relied on illustrations from the book to communicate to the Cromwells his ideas about tile flooring and mosaics for Shangri La. Certain architectural features at Shangri La are nearly exact copies of objects illustrated in the book, such as the living room’s double door (from Plate 54) and the foyer ceiling (from Plate 32) (figs. 7–8).

Fig. 7: Left, “Plate 54: Porte Peinte à la Bahia, Marrakech” (Gallotti); right, “Moroccan” door (ca. 1937) located at east end of the living room at Shangri La. Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai’i. (Photo: David Franzen, 2005.)

30 See “Memorandum of Items Furnished by Martin,” August 30, 1937, and handwritten corrections to “Memorandum on material furnished by M. Martin,” October 11, 1937, SHLA.
31 See letter from René Martin, December 16, 1937, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA.
With its 160 drawings and 136 photographic plates depicting historical residences, palaces, religious buildings, and garden pavilions from Marrakech to Tétouan, Gallotti’s book appears to be a comprehensive guide to architectural craft and decoration in Morocco. General Lyautey lent his own authority to the publication by submitting a letter to be printed directly after the title page, in which he praises Gallotti for his sensitive prose and respect for traditions, concluding that the book is indeed “representative of the mindset with which we [the French] have been able to accomplish our work in Morocco.” Even before publishing Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc, Gallotti had been deeply involved in the work of the French Protectorate’s cultural administration. In 1913, only one year after the establishment of the French Protectorate of Morocco, Gallotti was asked by Lyautey to produce one of the infamous reports on the state of the local craft industries in Morocco, in which he argued that the traditional craft industries in Morocco were facing a loss of expertise and a decline in quality. Through his work as an “inspector of industrial and artistic education” for the Native Arts Service in Rabat over the following years, Gallotti contributed to the implementation of the French administration’s program for ameliorating this danger through the so-called “reeducation” of Moroccan artisans described above.

When examined more closely, Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc also bears the clear mark of its author’s relationship to the French Protectorate’s cultural policy and ideology at the level of its organizational structure. The book reflects an approach to

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34 The illustrations for Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc bear the stamp of the French Protectorate administration in another way, as both Albert Laprade, who produced the drawings for the book, and
Moroccan art in which style, materials, and technique supersede historical and cultural context as the primary organizing principles. Chapters are divided according to the visual and physical elements of building or garden construction, beginning with a discussion of the basic structure of architectural spaces in Morocco and then narrowing on what Gallotti calls the “elements of decoration,” which are elaborated in individual chapters dedicated to different materials and their associated arts: tilework, carved plaster, wood, and painting. Likewise, the book’s illustrations, which roughly follow the structure of the text, jump between dynasties, regions, and building types in a rather haphazard way. In many instances, the location and age of the depicted object are not identified; this is the case with the ceiling chosen as a model for Shangri La’s foyer, which is simply identified as a “ceiling in carved and painted wood, one part with exposed beams and another recessed.”

The early museums of Moroccan art constructed under the French Protectorate employed a similar approach to the visual presentation of Morocco’s arts and crafts, often with galleries arranged according to material, like the faience room in the Batha Museum in Fez (fig. 9), or stylistic categories, which were often conflated with perceived ethnic categories, such as “Berber” or “rural.” Even today, many books about Moroccan art repeat this colonial-era approach to the country’s diverse artistic practices and cultures, including André Paccard’s seminal two-volume set from 1980, *Traditional Islamic Craft in Moroccan Architecture*, which closely follows the organizational structure of Gallotti’s work. Ultimately, this approach suppresses the complex histories and cultural meanings contained within the exhibited, or in this case illustrated, objects and instead presents a seemingly complete and harmonious whole: a collection of aesthetically congruous objects that make up one “tradition.”

![Fig. 9: Faience Room, Batha Museum, Fez, Morocco, ca. 1915–25. Courtesy of Archives DPC-Maroc.](image)

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Lucien Vogel, who provided the photographs, were employed by the Protectorate’s Service of Fine Arts, Historical Monuments, and Antiquities.


The combination of architectural features in the rooms of Shangri La reflects Gallotti’s foregrounding of aesthetic criteria over historical and cultural context. Duke and Cromwell’s selection of objects and decorative motifs from the pages of Gallotti’s books seems to have been led by purely aesthetic criteria, disregarding incongruences in regional or historical styles. For example, while the motif for the plaster spandrel above the living room door was inspired by one found in a fourteenth-century Quranic school, or madrasa, in Fez (Gallotti Plate 5), the carved and painted cedar door beneath it is modeled after a door of the Bahia Palace in Marrakech, a residence constructed only in the late nineteenth century. Likewise, the motifs for the chemmassiat in the foyer alternate between designs similar to those found in three examples selected from Gallotti (plates 70, 125, 126) that illustrate structures from madrasas in Salé, Fez, and Marrakesh.

Gallotti’s work provided a visual language through which Martin and the Cromwells could communicate their creative ideas. As numerous letters exchanged between the two parties reveal, the photographic plates printed in the book served as touchstones of “traditional” Moroccan design, relating Shangri La’s own decoration to real or “authentic” objects counted among Morocco’s material heritage. However, the final outcome of Duke’s collaboration with Martin was a series of spaces whose arrangement and overall appearance deviated greatly from the “traditional” Moroccan interiors illustrated in Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc. This deviation occurred because the process of designing Shangri La’s Moroccan features was not simply one of direct translation from two to three dimensions but instead involved extensive negotiations between the Cromwells and their collaborators to adapt “traditional” Moroccan design to the specific context of Shangri La and to accommodate the special requirements of the commission itself. In designing and installing the Moroccan elements at Shangri La, both logistical and creative challenges unfolded.

Counted among the logistical challenges was the simple fact that the majority of the objects were to be produced in Morocco and then shipped to France and again across the Atlantic Ocean and the continental United States before arriving in Honolulu. The temporal and spatial dislocation between production and installation not only resulted in certain losses, such as roof tiles or plasterwork broken in transit, but also required alterations to the usual processes of installation that were followed when building interior spaces in Morocco. For example, Moroccan artists historically created and installed carved plaster decoration on site, carving into soft gypsum layered directly onto the wall. Instead, the plasterwork at Shangri La, including the moldings and door spandrels in the living room and foyer, consists of castings produced in Honolulu from molds

37 Adding another layer to the “interpretation” of tradition, the Bahia Palace itself is an example of local attempts at historical “revival,” commissioned at the end of the nineteenth century by an elite official in the Sultan’s regime who employed master artisans from throughout Morocco to construct and decorate a palace evoking Morocco’s architectural achievements of the past.

38 According to Gallotti, Moroccan artists never used the technique of casting, rather than carving, plaster before the arrival of the French. He notes, “[C]asting was absolutely unknown by the indigènes before our arrival in Morocco, and it was never used for the decoration of their buildings, and the practice of carving the most complicated motifs is still like a game to their artisans . . .” (Le jardin et la Maison arables au Maroc, 68). Gallotti’s evaluation of artistic practices in pre-Protectorate Morocco, of course, must be taken with some skepticism.
created by master artisans in Fez. In other instances, furnishings and decorations proposed by Martin’s firm had to be altered or replaced to accommodate architectural plans for Shangri La in place prior to the Cromwells’ employment of Martin: while Vary’s early watercolor sketches for the proposed foyer depict a high ceiling with repeated parallel beams stretching across the room (fig. 10), a subsequent memorandum notes that the proposed ceiling would have to be “reduced . . . because of the exterior treatment which is very important in the design [of Shangri La].” As a solution, the Cromwells and their architects suggested that a ceiling similar to Gallotti’s Plate 32 be constructed instead, resulting in the ceiling with sloping sides and a much smaller central series of exposed beams that is still present in Shangri La’s foyer today.

Fig. 10: Watercolor drawing of a design for Shangri La’s foyer by P. Vary, 1937. Shangri La Historical Archives, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai’i. Compare the ceiling depicted by Vary with figure 8 (Gallotti’s Plate 32 and the actual foyer ceiling at Shangri La).

Above all, the challenges that pervaded the Shangri La Morocco commission were creative. The project must be considered a collaborative one, characterized by constant negotiations among Martin’s associates, Duke and Cromwell, Wyeth & King,

39 Duke’s decision to have the casts produced locally caused Martin great anxiety, as he was worried not only that the original molds produced in Fez could be broken or lost in transit but also that experienced Moroccan artists would not be present to rework and perfect the castings as they were pulled from the molds. Letters from René Martin to William Dodsworth, January 17, 1938, and from James Cromwell to William Dodsworth, December 4, 1937, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA.

40 “Memorandum of material furnished by M. Martin,” October 7, 1937, SHLA.
and the Moroccan artists charged with actually producing the bulk of the material. This process of creative collaboration is demonstrated through a series of exchanges between the Cromwells and Martin concerning the design of the plaster spandrel framing the doorway leading from the living room to the living room hall (later called the Mihrab Room). The October 1937 memorandum exchanged between the Cromwells and Martin identifies an illustration in Gallotti’s book, Plate 5, that was selected as the model for the spandrel’s decorative motif. Following the memorandum’s instructions, Martin commissioned a workshop in Fez to create several plaster models inspired by this illustration and then sent the Cromwells photographs of each. After a protracted dispute among Martin, Cromwell, and his advisors over the question of whether or not the actual plasterwork should be carried out in Hawai‘i or Morocco, it was finally determined that a plaster company in Honolulu would create plaster casts from a master mold created in Fez (subsequently damaged in transit and then repaired by workmen in Honolulu). The final product was a cast-plaster spandrel decorated with a motif based on that selected from Gallotti’s book but modified, perhaps to harmonize with architectural features later commissioned by Duke in Iran, as hand-written annotations to the photograph suggests (fig. 11).

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Fig. 11: Photograph (recto and verso) sent by Martin of proposed plaster models for Shangri La’s living room, with added annotations written by Drew Baker, ca. 1937–38. Shangri La Historical Archives, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

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41 Photographs sent from René Martin to the Cromwells and held in the Shangri La Historical Archives portray some of the Moroccan artists who created models and the final materials for Shangri La.
42 Drew Baker was Wyeth & King’s on-site associate for the Shangri La project. It is uncertain whether his annotations to the photographs were made before or after Duke’s trip to Iran in 1938.
Guiding such negotiations, and most often prevailing, was Duke and her architects’ ever-emerging vision for Shangri La as a whole. While Martin’s firm was occupied with adapting “traditional” Moroccan craft and design to an entirely new context, Duke was interested in joining the works commissioned through the firm with design elements and objects collected during her travels in India, Iran, and elsewhere. These two objectives often came together to produce rather idiosyncratic features, such as the plaster spandrels framing the three doorways in Shangri La’s living room (including the one mentioned above), which are decorated with Moroccan-inspired motifs but shaped with shallow pointed arches to match those in Duke’s Mughal Suite rather than the pointed horseshoe arches commonly found in Moroccan architecture (fig. 12). ⁴³ In other instances, Duke eliminated certain elements proposed by Martin’s firm completely, such as the mosaic tilework, or zellij, included throughout Vary’s original designs for Shangri La and to which Martin seemed particularly attached, as he dedicated an entire letter to Duke describing the attractions of zellij and promoting it as “specifically Moroccan.” ⁴⁴

While it is tempting to describe Martin’s firm as the bastion of “tradition” in this relationship, if we look more carefully at the initial design proposed by S.A.L.A.M., as illustrated in Vary’s 1937 watercolors, it becomes clear that Martin and his associates were not necessarily interested in recreating an “authentic” Moroccan interior. The rooms proposed in Vary’s early watercolors and drawings for Shangri La contain the basic elements of “traditional” Moroccan interior decoration as presented in Le Jardin et la

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⁴³ See letter from Wyeth & King to René Martin, July 31, 1937, SLHA, in which it is suggested that the arched doorways use “the form of arch which was designed for [Duke’s] bedroom by Mr. Blomfield, the Architect of Delhi.” The annotations written on the back of one of the photographs sent by Martin and annotated by Baker reads, “I prefer this one (B) for Living Rm. Arches to (A) . . . It is more like Persian Detail than (A), I think,” suggesting that Duke or her architects were interested in adapting even the motif of the spandrels to other features at Shangri La, such as those commissioned in Iran.

⁴⁴ Letter from René Martin to [Cromwell and Duke?], December 16, 1937, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA; and from René Martin to Wyeth & King, June 11, 1938, SLHA.
Maison Arabes au Maroc and other colonial-era publications: walls covered in plaster relief, zellij tile work, carved and painted wood ceilings and doors, turned wood screens (mashrabiyya), and cast iron window grilles. They do not, however, maintain the codified arrangement and ordering of materials typical of decorated interior spaces in Morocco, such as one encounters in medieval madrasas or other historical buildings restored under Lyautey. As the interior space of the Bou Inania madrasa in Fez exemplifies, the interior walls of such structures are typically divided into different registers, with alternating motifs as well as materials (fig. 13). Rising from the floor to chest height, a wide band of zellij is followed by a frieze consisting of two or more bands of alternating mosaics or incised ceramic tiles; often, floral or epigraphic motifs make up the central band, bordered on either side with geometric motifs. A large expanse of wall painted with whitewash or covered with a carved plaster relief fills the space above the ceramic register. These plastered walls sometimes include decorative and utilitarian elements like pierced stucco windows or false arcades. Finally, the upper portion of the wall displays carved wood panels, friezes, or corbels. Vary incorporated each of these distinctive materials—carved wood, stucco relief, and tile mosaic—in his 1937 watercolor for the proposed living room, but he reorganized their relative positions to accommodate modern European furnishings, such as bookshelves, a fireplace with mantel, and niches for individual divans. He pulled the carved wood decoration down from its usual elevated position beneath the ceiling and instead designed a lower register of carved wood surrounding these “modern” furnishings. He incorporated zellij not as an uninterrupted band around the room but in the form of discrete arch-shaped decorative panels, framed by turned wood arches reaching from the fireplace mantel to the ceiling (fig. 14).

![Fig. 13: Interior view of Madrasa Bou Inania, Fez, Morocco. (Photo: Ashley Miller.)(Image)]
In addition to reimagining the “traditional” spatial arrangement of interior decoration in Morocco, Martin and his associates produced entirely new creations for Shangri La. For example, at Duke and Cromwell’s request, the firm designed a soaring wood screen separating the foyer and the courtyard and produced a system of sliding and folding doors of pierced cedar wood installed throughout the property. Both features achieve the dynamic lighting effects of mashrabiyya, the latticework screening prevalent in architecture throughout North Africa and the Middle East, but are constructed from thick wood panels with regular geometric cutouts rather than the delicate hand-turned woodwork of the mashrabiyya encountered in many of Morocco’s historical buildings (fig. 15). That the process of designing these features challenged Martin’s firm and the artists he employed is made apparent in a series of letters in which Wyeth & King express dissatisfaction with the heavy appearance of the screening, while Martin insists that the artists found it necessary to use thick panels of wood in order to support the weight of such a massive structure.45

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45 Letter from René Martin to Wyeth & King, February 5, 1938, SHLA.
Fig. 15: left, screen designed by S.A.L.A.M. dividing Shangri La’s patio and foyer (photo: Ashley Miller); right, photograph depicting a maallam in Morocco posed behind a balustrade and screen designed for Shangri La that incorporates the more delicate lattice woodwork usual to Moroccan mashrabiyya ca. 1937–38. Shangri La Historical Archives, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

It is crucial to state the (perhaps obvious) fact that Martin himself was not responsible for creating Shangri La’s “Moroccan” features. Instead, he is more accurately understood to have played the role of mediator—albeit an opinionated one—among a complex network of actors: in addition to negotiating among the ideas and expectations of the Cromwells, the architects, and his own designer, Martin collaborated with suppliers and artists in Morocco to facilitate the translation of these ideas into final products to be shipped to Shangri La (fig. 16). It is difficult to know the extent to which the artists working with Martin were able to exercise creative license, or whether some of the features for Shangri La were actually designed by these artists rather than by Martin or Vary. There is no indication in Shangri La’s archives that the living room ceiling, for example, refers to a particular object illustrated in Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc or described elsewhere by Martin or the Cromwells. Likewise, Vary’s original design for the foyer ceiling did not specifically refer to an illustration in Gallotti’s book (only later would the Cromwells suggest a model from the book to replace the earlier design). Could Vary or Martin have drawn upon the existing repertoire of local craft workshops in Morocco as inspiration for the original drawings submitted to the Cromwells?
TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN THE COMMERCIAL MARKET FOR MOROCCAN CRAFT AND DESIGN

It is impossible to answer such a question without further historical information about the identity and work of Martin, Vary, and the Moroccan artists involved in the Shangri La commission. What we can know, however, is that each of these actors participated in a colonial market for art and architecture that brought together different audiences, practices of art-making, and visual cultures. In the French Protectorate of Morocco, social interaction and cultural exchange among the polity’s diverse communities was a lived reality. Although the French Protectorate’s ideology of “association” required two

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46 Although mostly silent in the archival material surrounding the Shangri La commission, the voices of some of Martin’s Moroccan associates come through at certain moments, such as in negotiations over payment. For example, in one letter Martin explains that the potter responsible for creating Shangri La’s roof tiles demands that his compensation be raised to accommodate for international currency fluctuations, noting that the artist is well aware that “this material is destined for America.” Letter from René Martin to William Dodsworth, June 3, 1938, Doris Duke Papers on the Shangri La Residence, DDCFHA.

47 Lyautey’s cultural campaign in Morocco arose in the context of a major shift in French colonial governance—from an ideology of “assimilation,” as practiced in Algeria until around 1870, to a policy of “association,” introduced in Tunisia in the 1890s and fully realized in Morocco at the beginning of the twentieth century. For an analysis of French colonial policy in North Africa see, among others, Raymond Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1870–1914 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961; repr. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2005); William A. Hoisington, Lyautey
societies, two cultures living side by side but preserving their essential differences, in reality these strict boundaries were not always so easily maintained. Likewise, the business of making and selling art in colonial Morocco did not proceed according to a strict division of labor along “cultural” (or racial) lines, with Moroccans working in a “traditional” way and Europeans introducing new technologies and “modern” formats. French designers and artists interpreted local aesthetics and materials in their work, just as Moroccan artisans incorporated European materials and formats into their own practice, each developing products that would appeal to the shifting tastes of their clients. As René Martin’s own business model suggests, European business owners, dealers, and artists learned from their Moroccan counterparts, who, in turn, were also active participants in the burgeoning commercial market for Moroccan craft production. Indeed, Martin is the only Frenchman appearing in Ricard’s list of Rabat-based “indigenous” art and antiquities dealers in the *Guide Bleu* mentioned above; all of the others are Moroccan: Dias, Roudiès, Taïbi El Gharbi, Mouyal, and Bouhelal.48

The commercial market for local arts and architectural craft in 1930s Morocco was characterized by the diversity of its participants and their innovative approaches to incorporating different technologies, styles, and forms to suit the tastes and demands of a modern clientele. One arena in which such cross-cultural innovation was exercised to its fullest extent was the restoration and construction of private residences. Many French officials and European expatriates in Morocco experimented with incorporating Moroccan design and local materials into the construction and decoration of their own homes. Indeed, among Gallotti’s professed intentions in publishing *Le Jardin et la Maison Arabes au Maroc* in 1926 was to provide technical information about materials and construction in order to “make it easier for those Europeans who want to build in the native style.”49 A new journal, called *Batîr* (“to build”), appeared in Morocco in 1932 and was dedicated to examining architectural developments in the French Protectorate. René Martin’s own advertisement for S.A.L.A.M. is printed in the first edition of this journal, preceding an article entitled “Villas . . . in search of a style.” In the article, the author explains that the architect and his client in Morocco face the challenge of finding a “compromise between local art and European art; a more or less satisfying fusion of one style with the other.”50

In their approach to the Shangri La commission, René Martin and his associates not only referred to authoritative formulations of “traditional” Moroccan craft, like Gallotti’s, they also drew upon their experiences as participants in this dynamic industry. Although we have few examples of the work that Martin produced for clients other than Duke and Cromwell, Keelan Overton’s discovery of Martin’s former residence in Rabat has shed light upon his own personal engagement with such stylistic experimentation outside of the Shangri La project. Martin worked and lived in an unassuming house located in the former Souk al-Ghazel, at the edge of the Rue des Consuls, one of the major arteries leading into the Rabat medina. While the building’s façade conforms to the

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plain whitewashed walls of its neighboring structures, the rooms inside are still today
decorated with some of the “European-style” furnishings that Martin himself must have
enjoyed, including a carved wood and metal fireplace surrounded by built-in
bookshelves. That these interior features date to at least Martin’s occupation of the rooms
is evidenced by their uncanny resemblance to Vary’s early design for Shangri La’s living
room, in which the proposed fireplace arrangement is a nearly exact copy of that found in
Martin’s residence (fig. 17). Martin and Vary likely turned to their own residences, or
those of their compatriots, as models for reinterpreting and repurposing the products of
“traditional” Moroccan craftsmanship to suit European—or in this case, American—
tastes and demands.

Fig. 17: left, fireplace, mantel, and bookshelves in former residence of René Martin
(photo: Keelan Overton); right, detail of drawing by P. Vary depicting proposed
fireplace and mantel for Shangri La’s living room, 1937. Shangri La Historical Archives,
Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

The French Protectorate’s initial assessment of Morocco’s reportedly moribund
craft industries identified the introduction of foreign products, technologies, and market
forces into Morocco as a threat to the “authenticity” of “traditional” artistic and cultural
production. Nevertheless, the Native Arts Service relied on the economic support of a
commercial market for the products of those industries they aimed to “revitalize.” While
some cultural administrators hoped to develop a local Moroccan clientele for these arts,
others recognized early that it would be more efficacious to appeal to foreign or
expatriate consumers. As a result, by the 1920s and ’30s, experimentation with the
production of “hybrid” artistic products, often intended to combine “traditional”
Moroccan motifs and materials with “European” forms, was not confined to private architectural projects but also occurred in the context of state-run craft initiatives. One example of such experimentation within the French colonial administration is described in a 1934 article in the illustrated journal *Nord-Sud* that explains the process by which a craft school in Meknès developed a new category of “Moroccan” furniture under the guidance of the Native Arts Service. The article tells the story of a master artisan, or *maallem*, working as an instructor in a Protectorate craft school in Meknès, who determined that the local cedar wood industry was in need of a new audience for its products. According to the article’s author, this unidentified artisan argued that the workshop should develop a style of furniture “to respond to the tastes of a European clientele” given that “the native clientele is too poor to buy wooden chests and the rich urban *indigènes* prefer European furniture.”51 And, so, in collaboration with the regional arts inspector in Meknès, Jacques Révault, the *maallem*, designed a new type of cedar furniture, decorated with carved “Berber” motifs but amenable to the “modern” home (fig. 18). Although this story was likely embellished and reimagined by its French author, it reveals a new rhetoric among the official narratives surrounding the colonial management of Moroccan craft, one that allowed for “modern” innovation in the context of “traditional” craft production.

![Ensemble du style berbère exécuté et exposé au siège de l'Inspection régionale de Meknès]

*Fig. 18: Detail from Nord-Sud (1934) illustrating furniture designed in Meknès in Révault’s Native Arts inspection center, ca. 1932–33.*

While colonial administrators in Morocco attempted to develop new products and business models to attract an imagined “modern” clientele, it was within the dynamic context of a growing transnational market for Moroccan arts and cultural products that Morocco’s local craft industries experienced a true “revival.” In perusing the advertising sections of arts-focused journals published in Morocco, like *Bâtir* and *Nord-Sud*, or the lists of private-sector contributors to local commercial fairs and international exhibitions of the late 1920s and ’30s, the historian encounters frequent references to businesses capitalizing on the trend for “traditional” craft in the “European” style. For example, in Marrakech, the French expatriate artists Jacques Majorelle and René Benezech employed leather artisans to create cushions, book bindings, and other fine leather goods decorated

with “Berber-inspired” motifs created by Majorelle to sell in the medina alongside the myriad shops run by local Moroccan artisans and business owners. And among the contributors to the 1934 Foire de Fez, one of the many commercial fairs organized by the French Protectorate government, was the Moroccan business-owner Ahmed Bennani, who exhibited furniture “of European conception but with Arab decoration.” This trend even finds its place in Duke and Cromwell’s commission from Martin: commonalities are evident between the carved cedar headboard (with matching shelves and gun rack) created by Moroccan artists for Cromwell’s bedroom at Shangri La and the furniture set created in Révaut’s inspection center in Meknès (fig. 19). While both sets incorporate motifs common to “traditional” Moroccan design, such as the central sun motif we find repeated on the Moroccan-style ceilings and door at Shangri La, and are constructed from materials local to Morocco (in both cases cedar wood from Morocco’s Atlas Mountains), their format is inspired by European-style furniture.

Fig. 19: left, detail from Nord-Sud (1934) illustrating furniture designed in Meknès in Révaut’s Native Arts inspection center, ca. 1932–33; right, furniture designed by S.A.L.A.M. in Cromwell’s bedroom at Shangri La, ca. 1938. Doris Duke Photograph Collection, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Historical Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

As Duke’s own commission of Moroccan-style decoration for Shangri La reveals, those artists and entrepreneurs who collaborated with clients even beyond Morocco’s borders encountered new creative and logistical challenges that, in turn, fueled innovation and experimentation. René Martin certainly recognized this potential, and the profits that might ensue, when he proposed future collaborations with Wyeth & King, suggesting that Duke’s peers in California and Florida would be particularly amenable to the “Moroccan”

style of architectural decoration. As the American presence in Morocco grew in the years leading up to World War II, so did opportunities for promoting the products of Morocco’s craft industries to a new audience of potential consumers. The French Protectorate government even launched official campaigns to attract American business. For example, to commemorate the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair, it collaborated with the Tourism Syndicate to publish a special English-language edition of the journal *La Vie Marocaine Illustrée* that promoted tourism to Morocco and celebrated France’s “successful renovation” of the region’s craft industries. In addition, a group of nearly fifty Moroccan artisans and businessmen traveled to the United States to participate in the fair with the objective, as Prosper Ricard, then director of the Native Arts Service, explains, of “reconquering” the American market for “indigenous” crafts. Among the products exhibited at the French Protectorate’s pavilion in Chicago in 1933 was the “hybrid” furniture set created in Jacques Révault’s Native Arts inspection center in Meknès. Outside of these state-initiated endeavors, some Moroccan artists and business owners even set up shop in the United States, including the Ben Chérif brothers, who ran a textile workshop that expanded from Fez to Paris and eventually to Boston in the 1940s.

Finally, Duke and Cromwell’s particular interest in Moroccan art and craft suggests the important role played by the network of consumers who patronized Morocco’s craft industries according to their own tastes and criteria for “modern” architecture and design. On one level, it was through personal relationships like that between the Cromwells and the Black-Hawkinses that “Moroccan” art and its creators found an audience across national boundaries. Duke’s commission through Martin may not have been inspired solely by the historical buildings and “traditional” objects she encountered in the museums and souks of Morocco; perhaps she and Cromwell were also inspired by the residences of their acquaintances in Morocco, including the seaside estate in Fedala where they picnicked with the Black-Hawkinses. Cromwell dedicated several minutes of film footage to capturing the estate’s lush gardens and its idiosyncratic combination of seemingly historical structures with an invented architecture incorporating features from throughout North Africa and further east, such as an onion-domed turret and red and white striped arches. While further research must be undertaken, it is tempting to suggest that Barbara Hutton was herself influenced by Duke’s interpretation of Moroccan design at Shangri La when she purchased Sidi Hosni, her palace in Tangier that had been transformed from a koubba (saint’s shrine) into a residence in 1925 by British journalist Walter Harris. In 1939 the home was renovated

54 Letter from René Martin to Wyeth & King, June 11, 1938, SHLA.
58 Delpy, “Le Travail du Cedre à Meknès.”
59 Film, rolls 37–41 and 44, 1937, Doris Duke Audiovisual Collection, DDCFHA.
CONCLUSION

Muriel Girard has argued that the symbolic production of “traditional” Moroccan art under the auspices of the Protectorate administration occurred through the continual recategorization of “authentic” material culture to respond to the constantly shifting social and cultural realities that shaped local artistic production and consumption.\(^{61}\) In some cases, the Native Arts Service introduced controls that imposed a rigid conception of “authentic” Moroccan art upon local craft production through the introduction of material and stylistic parameters developed by the French administration. The most famous example is Prosper Ricard’s management of textile production in Morocco through the imposition of specific materials, techniques, and motifs, all of which are extensively analyzed and diagrammed in his four-volume *Corpus des Tapis Marocains* (1923).\(^{62}\) In other instances, as illustrated by the Meknès case described above, the colonial administration developed strategies for adapting notions of “tradition” to the necessities of the market. In consequence, despite assertions by Lyautey’s administration of the “authentic” character of those modes of craft production they strove to preserve, in reality even the requirements for “traditional” or “authentic” Moroccan art according to the Native Arts Service continuously fluctuated.

In his review of Hobsbawn and Ranger’s book, John Picton reminds us that the “invention of tradition” is not always an innocent affair. Bound up with the notion of “tradition” is the concept of “authenticity”: the effectiveness of a tradition relies upon a shared belief in its durability, the notion that it is deeply connected to a distant past and unadulterated by ephemeral or foreign contingencies. But when we categorically refer to a set of cultural practices or an entire living community as “traditional,” as Picton argues, “we are in effect denying the possibilities for development within [those] traditions.”\(^{63}\) In other words, those practices, objects, and people categorized as “traditional”—whether by cultural administrators in the French Protectorate of Morocco or museums exhibiting “non-Western” cultures today—are essentially precluded from participating in the “modern” world.

And yet, as the circumstances of Duke and Cromwell’s commission illustrates, those individuals involved in the production and consumption of “traditional” craft and architecture in Morocco at the beginning of the twentieth century were in fact active participants in negotiations over the relevance of historical practices and art forms, both within Morocco and in the larger context of the modern global economy. Furthermore,


the transnational market for Moroccan artistic and cultural products realized by the 1920s and ’30s became an important source for innovation and experimentation that in turn fueled—and maybe even “revitalized”—the local craft industries in Morocco. While these reciprocal influences are difficult to measure, I argue that it was in this way—through her collaboration with Martin and the Moroccan artists he represented—that Duke indeed supported a “living tradition.” Here, I am defining “tradition” not as a fixed idea tied to a particular notion of the past but as cultural knowledge that is continually changing and growing to incorporate new lived realities. In this definition of “tradition,” innovation is not only acceptable; it is necessary.