



The Change in Interior Design in 19th Century Ottoman Architecture. Art Nouveau Season Panels

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Abstract: With the start of the era of Westernization in Ottoman architecture at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Western architectural styles began to display a dominant influence in both facades and in interior decoration. The imported architectural styles from Europe were a cultural dynamic that steered a change in Ottoman architecture, continuing to impact design trends up until the end of the nineteenth century. Particularly with the advent of the era of Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-1909), Ottoman architecture revealed imprints of the Neo-Classic, Neo-Baroque, Neo-Gothic, Orientalist, Eclectic, Swiss Châlet, and English Victoria styles. One of the architectural styles coming into the Empire from abroad was Art Nouveau, a style of design that began to be seen in Ottoman architecture at the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century. The Ottomans named the Art Nouveau style *Tarz-ı Cedid* (New Style) as they adopted this mode of design in all aspects of life—from works of architecture to interiors and common everyday articles. The aim of this paper is to present the most famous of the ceramic tile “season panels” seen in interior decoration schemes in Ottoman architecture as from the 1890’s, works of art that reflected the Art Nouveau style and depicted the four seasons. The examples to be described are the panels to be found at Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie and Villa Mon Plaisir.

Keywords: 19th century Ottoman architecture, Westernization, interiors, Art Nouveau, season panels.

Introduction

The first changes to be seen in interiors in Ottoman architecture appeared at the beginning of the 18th century in a period known as the “Period of Ottoman Westernization.” In 1715, Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi was sent to Paris as an envoy to the court of Louis XIV and upon his return, Çelebi described in great detail Versailles, Fontainebleau, Marley, the palace and parks to Sultan Ahmed III and his Grand Vizier, Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha. These narrations soon led to the first signs of the Westernization movement in the form of the Cedvel-i Sim (Silver Road), Kağıthane Stream waterworks and the Sadabat building activities (Arel 1975, 18; Eyice 1981, 166). Sadabat Palace was the most important structure in the architectural plan known as the “Kağıthane Building Operation” and was constructed along the model of palace and grounds plans brought to Istanbul by the French ambassador Marquis de Bonnac (Eyice 1981, 168). The palace is similar to

the palaces that were the fashion in the 18th century in Europe, rising inside vast park grounds and bordered by a canal abutting a stream, complete with cascades and fountains (Eyice 1981, 168). This area also became home to two hundred wooden pavilions or kiosks that were built again as reminiscent of French palaces and as locations where water was a prominent element. The kiosks had sumptuous facades, one more eye-catching than the other, and their grounds were made up of gardens. Each kiosk had a vaulted path in the form of a gallery. The vaulted galleries adorned by lattice-trellises added to the kiosk entrances recalled the treillage of French landscape gardening and again were remindful of elements in western architecture (Arel 1975, 26). These kiosks were referred to as the “Sadabat Kiosks” and belonged to state officials. Their interior decoration programs boasted of Rococo and Baroque influences.

The most beautiful examples of the Baroque style in Ottoman civil architecture are to be seen in

the rooms, salons and kiosks commissioned by the sultans and princes of the Palace. The interiors of the sections of the Palace known as Princes' School, Princes' Classrooms, Sultan's Sofa, Apartment of the Sultan's Mother Mihrişah, Chamber of Abdülhamid I, Chamber of Selim III, Kiosk of Osman III and Sofa Kiosk boast of Baroque and Rocaille ornamentation, all of the rooms having been decorated by foreign artists (Kuban 1994, 63). In this period, the classic Turkish hearth with its tiles and *yaşamak* (decorations made from wood) had been replaced by hearths that were decorated in the Baroque and Rococo styles. The Palace in this period also had many fountains built in the Baroque style.

During these times, the Palace opened out to the west and invited foreign artists to take on the interior decoration of especially the new shoreside palaces that the sultans were building around the main Palace. Baroque and Rococo styles were used in these spaces. When Dallaway visited Istanbul in the latter part of the 18th century, he described the decorative features in the style of Louis XV with great astonishment (Kuban 1994, 65). Most of these palaces have since been demolished but an engraving in the interior of a salon created by Thomas Allom for the Esmâ Sultan Palace in Eyüp clearly shows the extent of the extravagance of the Baroque-Rococo decorative work seen in the palaces of Istanbul.

Another style used in interior decoration in Ottoman architecture during the Period of Westernization is the Empire style, which started to appear around the middle of the 18th century, eventually becoming almost an official architectural movement in the second half of the 19th century (Eyice 1981, 169). When the Austrian painter and architect Antoine Ignace Melling (1763-1831) came to Istanbul upon the invitation of Sultan Selim III, he built a shoreside palace for the sultan's sister Hatice Sultan at Defterdarburnu, between Ortaköy and Kuruçeşme. Immediately adjacent to the palace, he built a kiosk of masonry in the Empire style for himself (Artan 1994, 19-20). Antoine Melling produced another shoreside palace in the Empire style for the other sister of Selim III, Beyhan Sultan, on the shores of Eyüp.

The western trends seen in the palaces also appeared in residences and it was during this period that it became the fashion to create a sumptuous program of

interior decoration (Kuban 1994a, 233), that included *kalem işi* (hand engravings) decorations and murals, or wall paintings, all of which evolved into a tradition. Such paintings became popular, and besides vegetative designs, city panoramas—particularly of Istanbul and the Bosphorus—boasting of urban landscapes and scenery that did not include people, as well as architectural works of art, were their predominant themes. These paintings were seen not only in the homes of non-Muslim and foreign families but also in the houses of affluent Muslim Turkish families. The works of art were generally produced by foreign artists in the embassy communities that had commissioned the building of their *konaks* and *yalis* (Kuban 20007, 606).

At the beginning of the 19th century, with the advent of the era of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842-1918), foreign architectural movements grew in number and Ottoman architecture began to reflect the influences of the Neo-Classic, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Baroque, Orientalist, Eclectic and Art Nouveau styles in architectural ornamentation (Kuban 1994, 233). One of the architectural styles imported from the West was Art Nouveau, which came to be the most admired during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Art Nouveau (1890-1910) in particular had become exceedingly popular among the Western aristocracy and the higher bourgeoisie, major purchasers of industrial products (Batur 1985a, 1087). The pieces of furniture produced by the French Art Nouveau designer Emile Galle, for example, were especially regarded as objects of prestige among the Ottoman intelligentsia (Baytar, 2019, 458). Daily items of use reflecting this new imported style were sold in the deluxe shops of the capital Istanbul. These goods proved to be collectively effective in promoting an affinity for Art Nouveau in the population (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 32). Publications for women such as *Servet-i Fünun* and *Malumat* played a role in the popularity of Art Nouveau in Ottoman society. These illustrated magazines consistently displayed the Art Nouveau style (Batur 1993, 58). The new style, known in Ottoman society as *Tarz-ı Cedid* (New Style), represented the contemporary trend prevailing in the capital in all its aspects.

Art Nouveau found a special place for itself in the civil structures of the era. Many kiosks and pavilions (*kasır*) built in the 19th century showed a preference for

Art Nouveau on both facades and in interior decoration. The style became the fashion, especially in the homes of affluent Ottomans (Barillari, Godoli 1997, 145). It was particularly the designs of the Italian architect Raimondo D'Aronco, the head architect in the court of Sultan Abdülhamid II, that was a leading force in changing the face of the capital Istanbul (Batur 1993, 45). D'Aronco gifted Istanbul with many works in the Art Nouveau style, each with facades that exhibited the stirring plasticity of sculptures.

As from the 1870's, the Art Nouveau influence could be extensively seen in interior settings, pervading the big cities and making an impact on Ottoman residential culture (Yücel, 1996, 303). The intellectual movement of Art Nouveau found space to spread, aided by the facility provided by new modes of communication. Art Nouveau wielded an impact on all areas of art, including interior decoration, painting, furniture, fabrics, graphics and industrial arts. Its impact was felt until the early part of the 1900's, finding expression in the articles found in interiors, in fabrics and furniture, as well as in the cast iron banisters of stairs, and in ceiling and wall decorations.

One of the areas of interior decoration in which Art Nouveau made an entrance into Ottoman society during the Ottoman Period of Westernization was tile decorations. Ceramics and tiles in the Art Nouveau style began to be used in wet spaces such as baths, bathrooms and toilets. The bathrooms of the Ottoman palaces spearheaded this new fashion. It was seen, however, that the faience and tiles generally displayed floral ornamentation rather than figurative designs. However, examples of figurative Art Nouveau are also seen in Ottoman architecture. One of them is the seasonal panels. The aim of this paper is to present the most famous of the ceramic tile/faience "season panels" seen in interior decoration schemes in Ottoman architecture as from the 1870's, works of art that reflected the Art Nouveau style and depicted the four seasons. The examples to be described are the panels to be found at Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie and Villa Mon Plaisir.

Method

The article will attempt to describe the seasonal panels of tiles and ceramics produced in the Art Nouveau style, as exemplified by two of the most representative of this art in the Ottoman Era—Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie and Villa Mon Plaisir. As from the 1870's, the Art Nouveau style took hold of Ottoman architecture, particularly in facade and interior decoration, and it is the seasonal panels and their spatial contribution to their surroundings that will be discussed here. Descriptions of the panels will be presented and interpreted in terms of the progress of the Art Nouveau movement and will be supported by literature resources.

Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie

As from the 19th century, Pera was known for its entertainment venues, deluxe shops and passageways. Some of the passageways had stores and shops on the first floors, while the upper stories were used as residences. Another of the major passageways at Pera was the Passage Oriental, built in 1840. Many well-known shops of the day took their places there, such as the famous bookshops Koehler Brothers and Mandus Printing House, the popular hairdresser Coiffure Kristich, Tailor Mulieri and the Dry Goods Store *Çiplikçi Kalagas* (Akın 2011, 225).

Lebon Patisserie opened on La Frande Rue de Pera in 1810 in the Passage Oriental Store No. 362. The founder of the patisserie was Edouard Lebon, who had started to work as a chef for the thirty-third French Ambassador General Horace Sebastiani in Istanbul in 1806. As owner of the patisserie, Edouard Lebon was also the brother-in-law of the French architect Alexandre Valluury (1850-1921), who had made such major contributions to 19th century Ottoman architecture. It is also said that it was actually Edouard Lebon's son who established the shop (Kargı 1994, 200).

Operating as a pastry shop-café-restaurant, Lebon is one of the venues that put its stamp on Istanbul's social life. "*Chez Lebon, tout est bon*" (Everything's good at Lebon) was the slogan that etched out the tradition of the European cafés in Istanbul (Kargı 1994, 200). The interior decoration of the shop was distinctly in the French Art Nouveau style.

In 1938, Monsieur Lebon left the management of the pastry shop to a Greek-Turk named Kosti Litopoulos, who had been his employee. The venue continued to serve its exclusive clients in Istanbul as a pastry shop and restaurant. Lebon Patisserie was transferred to the ownership of Avedis Ohanyan Çakır in 1940. Çakır decided to change the name of the shop to "Markiz" in reference to the chocolates and candy he produced that boasted of the same quality as the famous *Marquise de Sevigne* of Paris. After that, the establishment began to be known as "Markiz" (Batur 1994a, 300). It maintained its lively popularity up until the 1960's. Serving customers for years on end candies, cakes, breakfast and other dishes on Limoges porcelain, with silver vases and Christofle silver, Markiz was also an Istanbul venue where academic discussions took place on art, politics and literature (Kargı 1994, 200). This was the first Ottoman patisserie to bring together generations of Neo-Ottomans, writers of *Servet-i Fünün*

and the *Fecr-i Ati* literary movement, and lastly the generation of 1940 (Batur 1994a, 301).

Lebon Patisserie (Markiz) was built as a two-story shop by Alexandre Valluary. The restaurant was on the upper floor, while the lower floor housed the pastry and candy shop (Batur 1994a, 300; Kargı 1994, 201). The entrance was through a small foyer and the far end of the store was allotted to serving customers. A set of stairs up the side of the store led to the restaurant on top. The plan was rectangular, and all the walls with the exception of the front facade were divided into three parts by a series of arches that were connected with pilasters. The interior design of the lower floor displayed floral decorations in the Art Nouveau style, set inside the arches over the door. The keystones of the arches were adorned by gilded bronze decorations in the Louis XVI style (Fig 1). The arrangement of the lower floor is thought to have been designed by Alexandre Valluary (Batur 1994a, 300; Kargı 1994, 201).

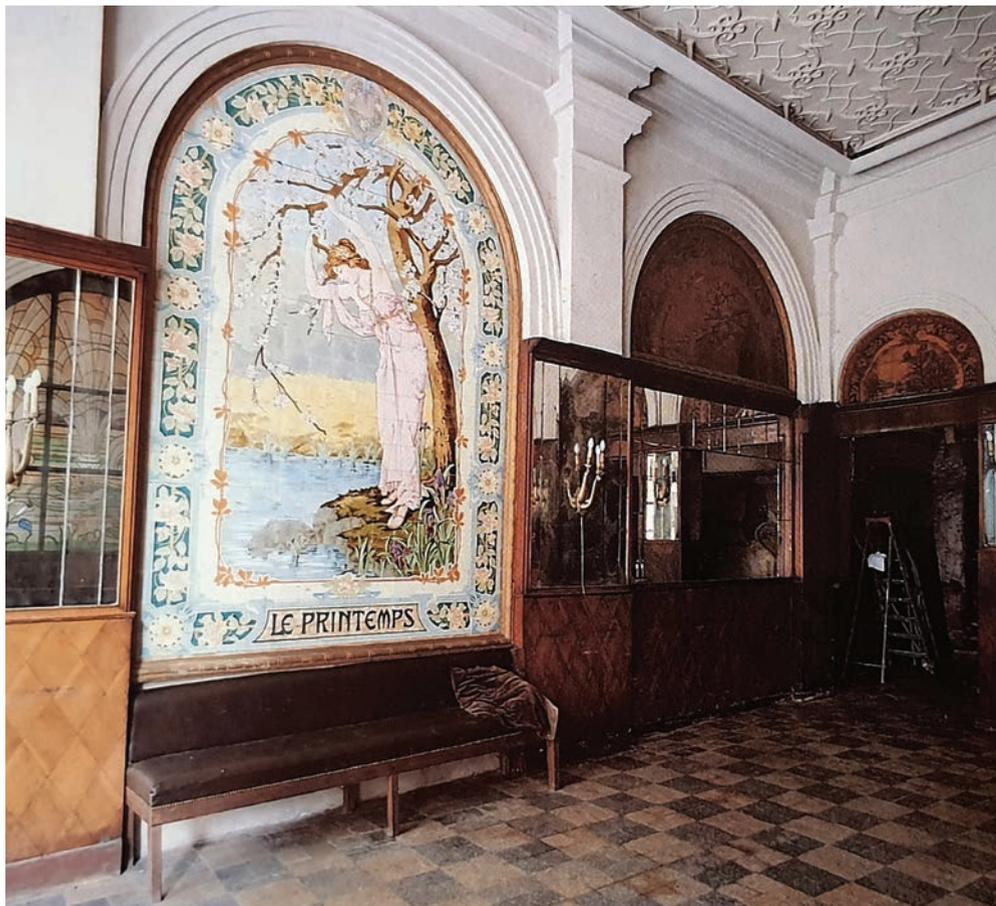


Fig. 1: Wall mirror in place of L'Été (Summer) panel (Barillari, Godoli, 1996, 160).

In 1905, Edouard Lebon ordered a faïence panel from the French tile company Ch. Boulanger Choisy-Le-Rois to be hung on the walls of the shop. The artist of the panel was the French artist J. A. Arnoux, who was commissioned to produce a panel in the Art Nouveau style that would symbolize the four seasons. Of these panels, L'Hiver (Winter) never took its place on the walls because it was damaged either during transport or the installation. The "L'Été (Summer) panel is thought to have been removed and replaced by a mirror (Fig 1) (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 158; Batur 1994a, 301). Inside the two arches on the south wall were the season panels of tile "L'Automne" (Fall) and "Le Printemps" (Spring).

Allegorical women's figures were used in the season panels of Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie. They featured the floral lines and color palette that were characteristic of Art Nouveau. Both seasons (Le Printemps, L'Automne)

personify a woman standing up under the shade of a tree by a river (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 102).

The two panels are side by side and the one near the showcase (L'Automne-Fall) depicts a woman in the contrapposto pose of a Greek statue, wearing a blue, long and flowing garment, her shoulders and throat exposed in décolletage (Fig. 2: Right). The figure has one hand on her waist, the other at her chin. She is smiling slightly, her hair a golden color tied up in a bun and adorned with a decorative hairpin. She wears summer sandals on her feet (Batur 2005, 78). The young woman is leaning up against a tree of grapes on which some branches are green and some have dried as symbolic of autumn. The grass and shrubbery at the young woman's feet appear in all shades of green, and there are yellow, white, purple and orange sunflowers in front of a batch of violet chrysanthemums that strike the eye. In the background,

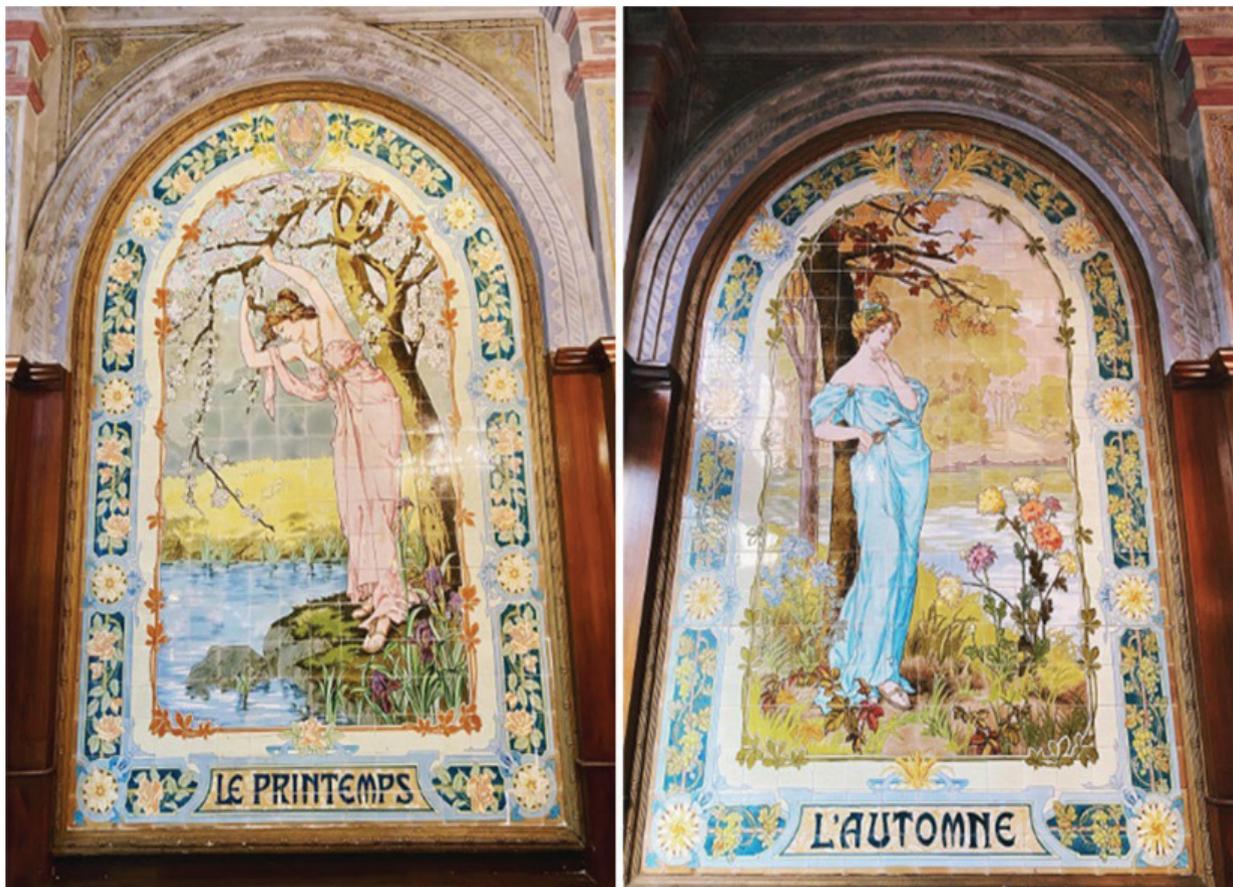


Fig. 2: Right: The L'Automne (Fall) Panel. Left: The Le Printemps Panel (Barillari, Godoli, 1996, 160).

behind the woman, is a forest to be seen on the opposite bank of the river. The road reaching between the trees with their fading leaves has been painted in the sfumato perspective technique.

There are two borders that wrap around the woman's figure. The outer border contains grape leaves and bunches of grapes, the symbol of autumn, weaving in-between yellow rosettes on a blue background. The inner border is composed only of grape vines and leaves. At the apex of both borders is a medallion that has been used as a keystone, each containing a floral wreath with an ear of grain around it symbolizing the fall.

One of the panels mounted on the south wall side by side is *Le Printemps* (Spring). This panel closely resembles the composition of *L'Automne*. The figure again appears in the center of the panel, leaning against a cherry tree by the river. The young woman is holding onto a tree branch and is standing, slightly bent toward the river, looking over the water (Fig. 1, 2: Left). She

wears a long, dusty rose, flowing garment that leaves her shoulders and bust bare, and has brown sandals on her feet. She has long, blond hair that is free and thrown back and she bears a flowered hairpin on her head. The young woman has a necklace of brown gems around her throat. There are irises in the green turf underneath her feet. The pointed leaves in the water are water-lilies. Reeds grow behind the young woman, along the banks of the river in the background (Adigüzel 2006, 101). The outer border beyond the woman is full of pink and rose patterns among yellow rosettes on a dark blue background. There are brown leaves along the inner border. At the apex of both borders are again medallions placed as keystones inside the arch.

Still another visual opulence in the inner space of Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie is a stained-glass work of art created in 1949 by the Turkish artist Mazhar Resmol (Fig. 3). The stained-glass composition is set in-between the arches of the pilasters on the north wall.



Fig. 3: Art Deco stained glass created by Mazhar Resmol (Barillari, Godoli, 1996, 160).

With its Art Nouveau vegetal motifs, the work strikes a synthesis between this style and the geometrical abstraction of Art Deco (Batur 1994a, 301). The artist has used the iconographic theme of splashing water, so popularly depicted in the 1920's. The water-lilies in the water and the hyacinths along the shore stand out in the composition.

Villa Mon Plaisir

Villa Mon Plaisir, located at No. 79 Kalamış Caddesi in the Fenerbahçe district of Kadıköy was built for the Frenchman Jean George and his family in 1906 and is the home of another example of exclusively produced four season panels. The word "plaisir" (pleasure, happiness, joy) in the name of the structure is a reflection of the perspective of "La Belle Époque" (Beautiful Epoch), a period in which taking pleasure out of life became an objective (Batur 1994b, 389).

The structure was constructed in a timber-frame system in two stories over a ground floor of masonry above the basement, and with a front and back garden (Fig. 4). It was built in the *châlet* style, which was fashionable especially in the summer houses of 19th century Ottoman architecture. The windows of the villa's ground floor of masonry are of clay roofing tiles and have low, rounded arches decorated with keystones. The walls between the windows have been adorned with four large tile season panels. These panels were inspired by those in Lebon and commissioned to the French tile company Ch. Boulanger Choisy-le-Roi and created by the French artist J. A. Arnoux (Barillari, Godoli, 1996, 158). The panels are in the Art Nouveau style and are strikingly similar to those in Lebon.

These tile panels, produced in the multicolored underglazing technique, again personified the four seasons with allegorical female figures. Each panel



Fig. 4: Villa Mon Plaisir (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 161).



Fig. 5: Villa Mon Plaisir. Printemps (Sprig) ve Été (Summer) panels (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 161).

measures 14.5x14.5 cm (Adıgüzel 2006, 117). Framed by brown border tiles, the panels have an inner border composed of curled branches and stylized leaves in the form of a rosette. In the lower part of the tile panels, there are cartouches on a palmette-cornered turquoise background on which is inscribed the name of the season. Each panel features a woman in the center, amid a scene of nature, symbolizing one of the seasons.

The first panel on the left wall of the ground floor is Printemps (Spring). The figure of a young girl is featured at the center; she is standing and wears a long, light blue chemise (Fig. 5). The girl is holding her skirt with one hand while her other hand is resting on her chest and holding a bouquet of flowers. She is blue-eyed and smiling and her brown hair is in a bun, with wisps falling down, forming a halo of flowers and green leaves. Near the feet of the figure, in the foreground, are fleurs-

de-lis on the right and pink roses on the left. To the left of the girl rises a tree with large leaves, reaching for the upper frame of the panel. A calm river flows behind the figure and clusters of mountains and dense forests seen along the opposite bank of the river complete the scene. Trees and tufts of flowers signal the coming of spring all around the young girl.

The next panel next to the window beside Printemps (Spring) is the Été (Summer) panel. In the middle of this composition, there is again the figure of a smiling young woman standing in contrapposto pose with one foot behind the other, her knee slightly bent (Fig. 5). She is wearing a long blue dress with one shoulder bare. Her hair is in a bun and sprinkled with yellow and red flowers, in the form of a halo. The young woman is touching the tree beside her with one hand while the other holds a sickle. There is a cluster of white daisies,

lilies and red poppies in front of the figure and bunches of pink roses on the left. Beside the woman, immediately underneath the tree, is a bundle of two ears of grain. In the background is a field of grain and clusters of trees. The sky has been depicted as pale blue.

On the wall next to the Été (Summer) panel, again beside the window arch is the third season panel- L'Automne (Fall). There is a young woman represented in the center of this composition as well; she is walking happily along a path in the woods, beside a tree of grape leaves (Fig. 6). She has on a long, pink dress leaving shoulders and chest bare; a blue scarf flutters behind her. There is a blue brooch on the bodice of the dress. The young woman holds in one hand a staff studded with a pine cone and wrapped with flowers and she is arranging her hair with the other. On top of her upswept hair is a floral wreath resembling a halo. On the lower right corner of the composition are grape vines and grapes representing autumn, and on the left corner is a

batch of various fruits-grapes, cherries, walnuts, pears and apples. There is a vineyard on the right of the path the young woman is walking on.

The last panel Hiver (Winter) is alongside the Printemps (Spring) panel. Winter is portrayed by a softly smiling young woman who is standing along a snowy path, underneath a snow-covered tree that has shed its leaves (Fig. 6). The woman wears a long-sleeved dress and she has a head-covering that flows down her shoulders, leaving but the front of her hair in sight. There are white flowers at the spot where the ends of the scarf meet. The young woman holds her skirt with one hand and in the other, she holds a bundle of brushwood (Adıgüzel 2006, 118). In the forefront on the right can be seen a burning winter fire; on the left is a cluster of primrose. In the background, there is a snow-covered single-story house inside garden walls as well as snow-clad mountains further out.



Fig. 6: Villa Mon Plaisir. Automne (Fall) and Hiver (Winter) panels (Barillari, Godoli 1996, 161).

Evaluation and Conclusion

Influenced by Western architecture starting at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Ottoman architecture continued to follow the fashions adopted in interior design in houses and palaces, incorporating flowers, scenery, iconic pieces of architecture and urban panoramas throughout the 19th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, in the era of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Art Nouveau style entered the annals of Ottoman architecture, making a striking entrance also into many other areas such as furniture, dinner settings and everyday household items.

In Istanbul, Art Nouveau was more commonly seen in residential culture and in interiors as Ottoman society began to make use of this style in the decoration of apartment buildings, pastry shops, hotels and other new types of structures. As a result of the changing societal structure and contemporary trends, it was initially the Levantines and the non-Muslim population inside the Ottoman intelligentsia that brought Art Nouveau into the decorative arts. One of the spheres of influence of Art Nouveau could be seen in panels made from tiles and ceramics. In this period, wall tiles in the Art Nouveau style began to be seen in the entrances to apartments and in the interiors of commercial buildings. The tile panels first appeared in floral Art Nouveau patterns, evolving in time to figurative ornamental work. Two important examples of this are the tile panels that were featured at Lebon (Markiz) Patisserie and Villa Mon Plaisir.

Both panels constitute major evidence of the influx of European decorative art into Ottoman society and its entrance into Istanbul. They were the work of the French tile company Ch. Boulanger Choisy-le-Roi and created by the French artist J. A. Arnoux in the Art Nouveau style. The artist personified the four seasons in both examples with allegorical representations of young women. These young women symbolized the effervescence of Art Nouveau and were depicted against a background of Nature, in a lavish floral atmosphere, wearing long, flowing, fluttering, pastel dresses and long, wavy or short, upswept hair, each figure's head adorned with flowers or decorative ornaments. The figures are standing and appear beside trees and in the foreground;

in the back are woods, seasonal plants, flowers, and clouds floating over river and mountains. Sometimes the figures are pictured in contrapposto poses such as in the statues of antiquity and they are surrounded by stylistic images of seasonal vegetation. The young women are generally smiling and in accordance with the popular fashion in the Art Nouveau style—particularly used by Alphonse Mucha and Gustav Klimt—they are carrying jewels of some kind. The images are surrounded by inner and outer borders composed of rosettes of curled branches and plants.

In a society in which the depiction of human figures was prohibited, these compositions heralded social change, and the use of tiles and ceramics in interiors was evidence of how Ottoman society was changing in parallel to Europe. The tiled panels represented an exquisite reflection of the taste for European culture in interiors as well as an expression of the aspirations towards modernization in Ottoman society.

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