Tuesday, 19 March 2019, 10:00-12:00

**Zeynep Devrim Gürsel**  
*Rutgers University*  
“A Ghostly Red Line: the Hand of the State”

This lecture looks at four photographs sent by young men in the early 20th century back to families they left behind in the Ottoman empire. These men were similar to dozens of thousands of other newly arrived Armenian immigrants in the Americas. Young men in new homelands sought out studio portraitists, often also Armenian, to produce their likeness as a happy, successful member of society. The lecture however focuses not on the photographs of the men, but rather on the hand of the state clearly visible on the reverse of these images. How does the specter of the state trouble these images and their representation of having made it as a migrant? What histories lie behind these red letters?

Zeynep Devrim Gürsel is a media anthropologist and Associate Professor in the department of Anthropology at Rutgers University and a 2018 NOMIS Fellow at eikones Center for the Theory and History of the Image in Basel, Switzerland. She is the author of *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation* (University of California Press, 2016), an ethnography of the international photojournalism industry during its digitalization at the beginning of the 21st century, based on fieldwork conducted in the United States, France and Turkey. Currently she is researching photography as a tool of governmentality in the late Ottoman period. Specifically, she is investigating photography during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit (1876-1909) from medical imagery to prison portraiture to understand emerging forms of the state and the changing contours of Ottoman subjecthood.

**David Low**  
*(AGBU Nubar Library, Paris)*  
“The Noise of Time”: The Spatial, Temporal and Semantic Migrations of Ottoman Armenian Photographs”

This lecture begins by examining the output of Ottoman Armenian photographic studios - vernacular photography, largely family portraits, that performed a central role in the everyday life of the provinces at the close of the nineteenth century and dawn of the twentieth. It specifically focuses on the Armenians of Kharpert (vilayet of Mamuret-ul-Aziz), looking at how the photographic medium allowed people to remain in contact with family and friends abroad during a time of great migration. From these conversations across space, the lecture goes on to consider journeys across time, dwelling on the afterlives of photographs in the wake of the First World War. Inevitably, these afterlives were marked by semantic migrations and, sometimes, by formal transformations. In all cases, the ways in which photographs were looked after, displayed, annotated and reconfigured helps us to understand their transition from means of communication to icons of memory.

David Low was awarded his PhD in 2015 by the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, for a thesis on the role of photography in Armenian lives in the late Ottoman Empire. He was subsequently a Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is currently a visiting scholar at the AGBU Nubar Library, Paris, working on his book, *Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World: Photography in Erzurum, Kharpert, Van and Beyond* (I.B.Tauris, 2021).