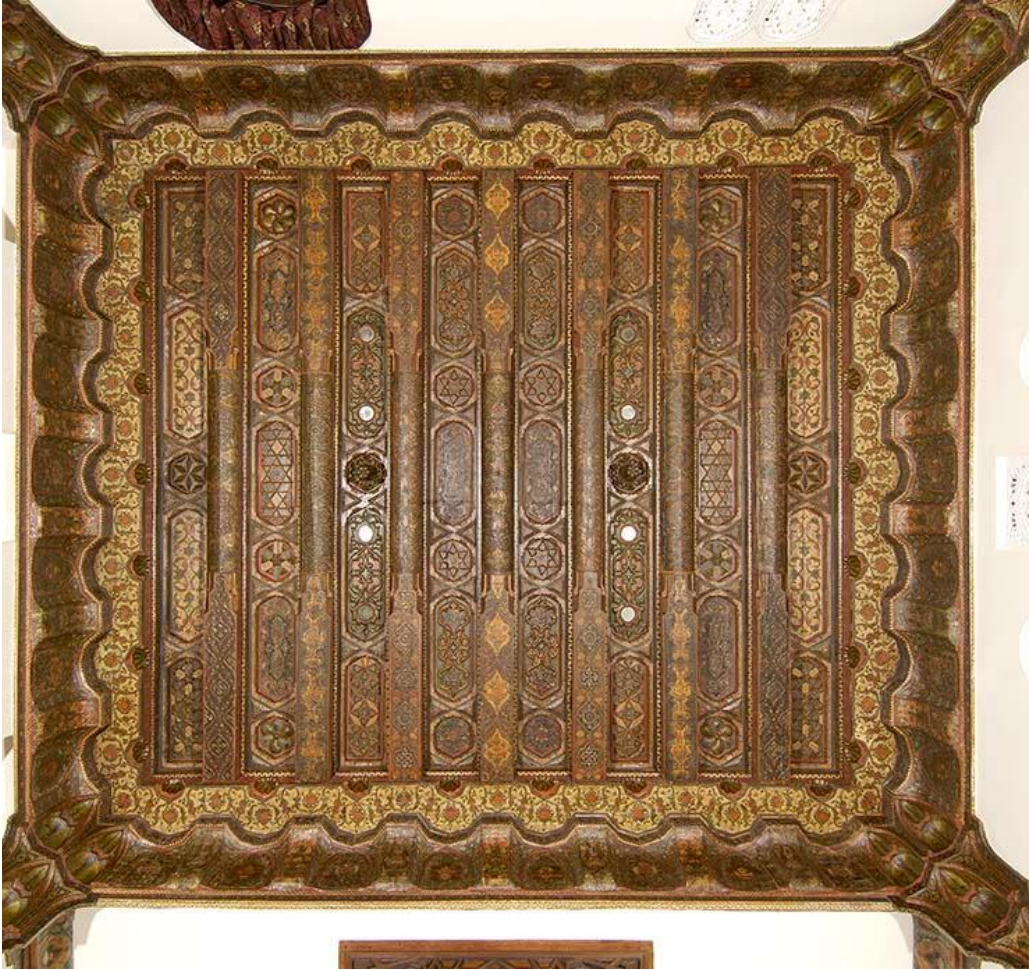


Object Summary



Carved Wooden Ceiling and Muqarnas Squinches with Gilded, Painted, and Mirror Insets ('Ajami Technique)

18th century

Syria (Damascus)

Ottoman

Wood, polychrome pigments, gilding

Overall: 171 3/4 x 180 in. (436.2 x 457.2cm)

Object Summary

Interiors of affluent homes in Damascus were typically decorated from top to bottom. The ceiling overlooking the 'ataba, or antechamber, of the Ottoman Gallery is no exception. The ceiling is composed of long, decorated planks of wood framed with muqarnas, a honeycomb vault-like embellishment that often appears in architecture throughout the Islamic world. The painting technique used to decorate the ceiling is known as 'ajami, a technique wherein gesso is applied in relief, illuminated with metal leaf, and tinted with colorful glazes. As visitors move through the room, light glimmers and dances off of the illuminated surfaces and the tiny mirrors inlaid into the surface of the ceiling. Today, the decoration of the wooden ceiling appears dark brown with muted tones due to a layer of varnish applied at a later date. Made of natural resins, the varnish darkened the surface color over time. The original, unvarnished ceiling would have been bright and colorful.