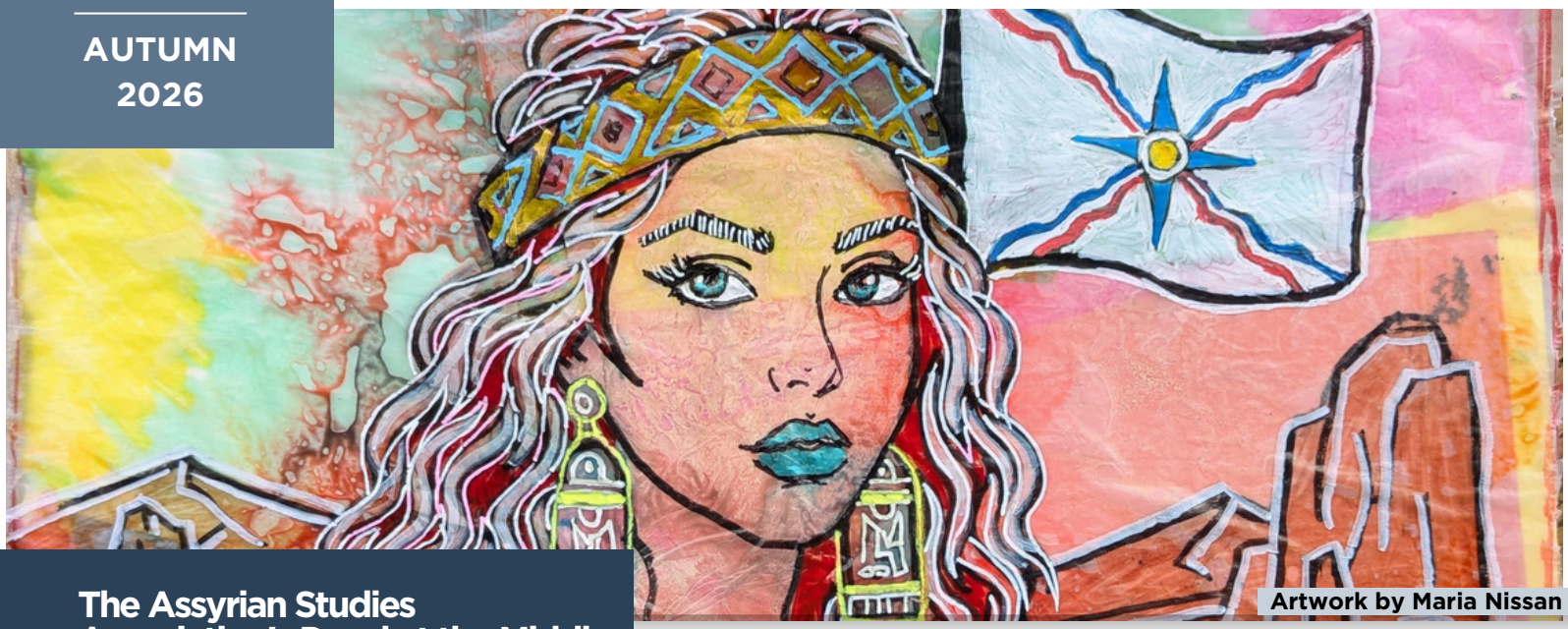
Assyrian Studies ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2026

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER



Artwork by Maria Nissan

The Assyrian Studies Association's Panel at the Middle Eastern Studies Association's Annual Meeting, Boston, MA

The Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) will present a panel discussion: *Cultural Survival and Political Struggle, Interdisciplinary Approaches to Assyrian Studies*, at the upcoming Middle Eastern Studies Association's (MESA's) Annual Meeting from November 21-24, 2026, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Read more on page 4.

Interview with our 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant Recipient

In this interview, 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant recipient Dr. Anzhela Mnatsakanyan discusses her research on Assyrian-Armenian relations and the Assyrian community in Armenia, the personal ties that motivate the work, and more.

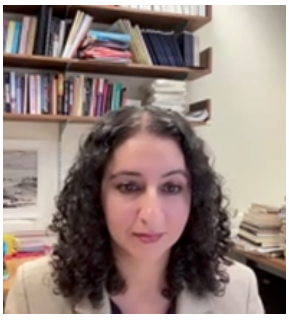
Read more on pages 6-8.



2027 Assyrian Studies Symposium at Uppsala University

Join us from June 23-24, 2027, where the Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) will host their third biennial symposium at Uppsala University based in Sweden. This is our first international symposium.

Read more on pages 1-3.



In Conversation with Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon

On July 29, ASA hosted a webinar with Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon, Dr. Mariam Georgis, and moderater Dr. Nahrain Bet Younadam about the challenges and urgency in critiquing dominant modes of scholarly inquiry about Assyrians.

Read more on page 9.

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2027 ASSYRIAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM

Care, Continuity, and Community: Interdisciplinary Directions in Assyrian Studies

UPPSALA UNIVERSITY
Uppsala, Sweden
June 23 - 24, 2027

CALL FOR PAPERS OPENS:

SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

Visit: ASAsymposium.com

(Closes on December 15, 2026)

Assyrian Studies Association to Host Third Biennial Symposium at Uppsala University, June 2027

From June 23-24, 2027, the Assyrian Studies Association (ASA) will host its third biennial symposium. This symposium will be held at Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden. Prior to ASA's first international symposium at Uppsala University, a community and cultural program will be held on June 19-21st, with another day dedicated to young scholars on June 22nd. To view the schedule, please visit www.ASASymposium.com.

The 2027 theme, *Care, Culture, and Continuity: Methods and Movements in Assyrian Research*, addresses the question of growing scholarly and communal significance: How do the Assyrian people sustain their well-being, meaning, and cultural life across homeland and diaspora?

Building on the historical and methodological foundations laid at Stanford University in 2023, (Formative History, Challenges, and New Directions) and at Arizona State University in 2025, (Innovative Methodologies in Assyrian Studies), the 2027 symposium brings the dynamics of care, resilience, and continuity to the centre of the meeting. It does so for the Assyrians, a transnational people whose presence spans the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, and Australia, and who are known, across communities and scholarly Indigeneity, by many associated names—a community whose persistence has itself become a sustained object of empirical inquiry (Atto, 2011; Cetrez et al., 2012; Hanoosh, 2019).

For the 2027 symposium, scholars can submit their abstracts on the following themes : Care, Health, and Wellbeing across the Life Course; Language and Literary



Photo Credit: TBA

Vitality; Heritage, Memory, and Creative Practice; Communication, Media, and Institutional Trust; Generations, Gender, and Inclusion; Indigeneity, Politics, Rights, and Citizenship,; Digital Methods and Research Ethics; Place, Ecology, Foodways, and Livelihood; and Open Track: Interdisciplinary and Emerging Directions.

ASA welcomes scholars of all academic fields to submit their abstracts by December 15, 2026. Visit www.ASASymposium.com.

The portal to submit abstracts is currently open.


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2027 Assyrian Studies
Symposium
Uppsala University
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The Assyrian Studies Association's Panel at the Middle Eastern Studies Association's Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts





Left to Right: Dr. Helen Malko, Dr. Onver Cetrez, Dr. Stacy D. Fahrenthold, Dr. Sargon Donabed, and Alexandra Lazar.

The Assyrian Studies Association's (ASA) panel, *Cultural Survival and Political Struggle: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Assyrian Studies* has been accepted to present at the upcoming Middle Eastern Studies Association's (MESA) Annual Meeting to be held, November 21-24, 2026, at the Hilton Boston Park Plaza in Boston, Massachusetts.

ASA is a partner organization with MESA, participating in a third annual meeting. The first panel sponsored by ASA took palce in 2019.

MESA 2026 will include approximately 300 sessions (panels, roundtables, workshops, and special sessions) on a variety of topics in Middle East studies. ASA's panel will feature five scholars, including Professor Stacy Fahrenthold, University of California, Davis; PhD Candidate Alexandra Lazar, University of California, Davis; Stanford Humanities Center's Executive Director Helen Malko; Professor Sargon Donabed, Roger Williams University; and Professor Onver Cetrez, Uppsala University.

ASA's panel brings together interdisciplinary research on the cultural survival and political struggles of Assyrians across West Asia and global diasporas. Contributors examine how communities sustain language, heritage, and collective memory while navigating state power, displacement, and shifting regional orders. The panel highlights work from history, political science, anthropology, religious studies, literature, and other related fields.

This panel's research will explore how Assyrians negotiate identity, belonging, and representation under conditions shaped by war, migration, minority governance, and transnational activism. Presentations address themes such as cultural preservation, language revitalization, heritage destruction, memory practices, community institutions, legal status, and political mobilization.

Assyrian Studies Association's Subcommittees Quarterly Update

In every quarterly newsletter, our five subcommittees provide an update to keep you up-to-date on what we are working on, what we accomplished, and what is in our future.

Archives

We are pleased to announce that ASA is in conversation with the Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, regarding the ASA Archives (including the MARA). This opportunity will provide scholars and interested researchers access to the Assyrian archival documents, photos, books, music, films, audio recordings, and textiles. More details to follow.

Education & Programming

During this quarter, our subcommittee organized a webinar with Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon to have a conversation about her latest publication, *"Propaganda of the Victims": Atrocity Denial, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Disparagement of Assyrians in Middle East Studies.* Two of our own subcommittee members, Dr. Mariam Georgis and Dr. Nahrain Bet Younadam were the discussant and moderator for the event.

On September 16, 2026, ASA and the Department of Ancient West Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, co-hosted a webinar offering a preview of the permanent galleries currently under renovation, scheduled to reopen in June 2027

Publications

We have submitted our proposal of the *Perspectives on Assyrian Studies* book series with Syracuse University Press, and we are currently awaiting their decision.

In addition, we finalized our selection for the Assyrian Academic Research Grant and have awarded $2,000 USD to Dr. Anzhela Mnatsakanyan. This year, we received our largest number of applicants (11) and are pleased with the quality of all the proposals.

Fundraising

We are currently working on fundraising for our 3rd biennial Assyrian Studies Symposium to be held at Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden in June 2027. For any organization or company interested in sponsoring our upcoming symposium, you are encouraged to contact us at info@assyrianstudiesassociation.org

In addition, we are proud to announce a landmark five-year funding commitment from the Assyrian Foundation of America. AFA has been a cornerstone supporter since ASA's inception in 2019, and its pledged contribution of $30,000 annually over the next five years will be instrumental in sustaining and expanding our work in Assyrian scholarship and cultural heritage.

Interview with our 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant Recipient, Dr. Anzhela Mnatsakanyan

In September 2026, the Assyrian Studies Association's Executive Director, Alexandra Lazar conducted an interview with Dr. Anzhela Mnatsakanyan, the 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant Recipient. Anzhela is an Armenian-Assyrian political scientist, researcher, and an Ambassador of the Assyrian Seyfo Center in Armenia. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Yerevan State University and an Advanced MA in European Interdisciplinary Studies from the College of Europe in Poland, as well as MA and BA degrees in International Relations from Yerevan State University. She collaborates with international think tanks, academic institutions, and humanitarian organizations, bridging academic research with policy and practice.



Pictured is Dr. Anzhela Mnatsakanyan, our 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant recipient.

Alexandra Lazar (AL): Congratulations on being our 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant recipient! Tell us about your research project that our Grant will support.

Anzhela Mnatsakanyan (AM): First of all, thank you very much. As I always say, "Appreciation is the best motivation," and receiving the 2026 Assyrian Academic Research Grant is a wonderful example of that. I am truly grateful for the opportunity and for the trust placed in my research. My project focuses on the historical relationship between Assyrians and Armenians, looking at the centuries of interaction between our two peoples while also bringing the story into the present day. A particular focus of my research is the Assyrian community in Armenia and the remarkable ways in which it has managed to preserve such a strong and living identity. I want to explore how the community continues to maintain its language, cultural traditions, faith, collective memory, and sense of belonging across generations. At the same time, I think it is equally important to look at the challenges the community faces today. I would also like to make one distinction that is very important to me, particularly to avoid any misunderstanding about my role. I do not speak on behalf of the Assyrian community, nor do I claim to represent it, as I do not hold any mandate to do so. I approach this work as an academic of Assyrian heritage who is deeply proud of that heritage, eager to learn more about it, and committed to studying and sharing it with respect and academic responsibility. The voices of the community belong, first and foremost, to the community itself. For me, this project is therefore not only about documenting the past. It is also about understanding how this remarkable community continues to keep its identity alive in the present, while contributing, through research, to greater knowledge and preservation of Assyrian heritage for future generations.

AL: What drew you to conduct work on this research project?

AM: I will give a very honest answer: for me, this research is also personal. I am half Assyrian, and I have always found Assyrian history, culture, language, and traditions extraordinarily rich and beautiful. What fascinates me especially is how this heritage has survived and been preserved across centuries, despite all the challenges Assyrians have faced throughout history. When something is so meaningful and valuable, I believe it deserves to be brought into the spotlight. I want more people around the world to know who Assyrians are, to understand our history, and to discover the richness of our culture and traditions. Of course, there are already excellent scholars and important research in the field of Assyrian Studies, and I have enormous respect for their work. At the same time, I believe we still need more research, more visibility, and more conversations about Assyrian communities. Unfortunately, outside our own communities and academic circles, awareness of Assyrian history, culture, and contemporary life remains relatively limited. So, for me, this project brings together something very personal with something academic: the desire to study, document, and share a heritage that deserves to be better known, while also contributing, even in a small way, to its preservation for future generations.

AL: What sources or archives have been most valuable to your research, and which remain frustratingly out of reach?

AM: One of the most valuable—and at the same time most challenging—aspects of this research is that many important sources are not available in English or are not easily accessible through conventional academic archives. A significant amount of knowledge has been preserved within the community itself: through oral histories, family memories, religious and cultural traditions, community records, and materials passed from one generation to another. For me, these sources are extremely valuable because they provide perspectives that may not appear in official documents or mainstream historical narratives. The challenge, however, is accessibility. Some materials exist only in Armenian, Assyrian, Russian, Persian, or other languages, while others have never been digitized or formally archived. In some cases, important knowledge exists primarily in the memories of community members. This is also what makes the research particularly meaningful. It is not simply about finding documents in an archive; it is about bringing together academic sources and community knowledge, and helping document stories and experiences that might otherwise become more difficult to preserve for future generations.

AL: As a political scientist, have you faced any challenges working on this project that specifically covers Assyrians?

AM: Certainly. The first challenge is the limited availability and accessibility of information, particularly when researching smaller Assyrian communities and historical experiences that have not always been extensively documented. The second challenge comes from my own academic specialization. My background is in Political Science and International Relations; I am neither a historian nor a genocide studies scholar. Yet both history and genocide studies are highly relevant to understanding the Assyrian experience and, consequently, to the research I am conducting. I think it is important as a researcher to recognize the boundaries of your own expertise. This means approaching these areas carefully, engaging seriously with the work of specialists, and being particularly attentive to methodology and sources. At the same time, I believe my

political science background brings another perspective to the research. It allows me to look at questions of identity, minority communities, state policies, political representation, collective memory, and the preservation of identity through a different analytical lens. So, while working across disciplines is certainly challenging, I also see it as one of the strengths of this project.

AL: What will this grant let you do that you couldn't before?

AM: This grant gives me the opportunity to take the research beyond what I could realistically do with the resources available to me before.Most importantly, it allows me to access a wider range of sources and archival materials, including sources that may require translation. It also gives me the possibility to travel, meet members of Assyrian communities, conduct interviews, and better understand the community not only through academic literature, but through the experiences and memories of the people themselves.

AL: Given that our 2027 Assyrian Studies Symposium will take place at Uppsala University, what is one aspect of your research you look forward to presenting?

AM: What I look forward to most is the opportunity to be part of an academic community that shares the same interest and passion for Assyrian Studies. Of course, I am very excited to present my research at Uppsala University and to have the opportunity to share my work on such a respected academic platform. But equally important to me is the opportunity to meet and learn from other scholars in the field. There are many remarkable researchers whose work I genuinely admire, and having the chance to exchange ideas with them is extremely valuable. I am particularly looking forward to receiving their feedback—hearing different perspectives, identifying areas where my research can be strengthened, and learning how I can improve my future work. For me, academia should always involve learning from one another. So I see the Symposium not simply as an opportunity to present what I have discovered, but also as an opportunity to listen, learn, build academic connections, and hopefully return home with new questions and ideas for the next stage of my research.

In Conversation: Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon and Dr. Mariam Georgis on Atrocity Denial and the Disparagement of Assyrians, Moderated by Dr. Nahrain Bet Younadam



From Left to Right: Dr. Mariam Georgis, Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon, and Dr. Nahrain Bet Younadam in conversation.

On July 29, 2026, ASA hosted a webinar with Dr. Arbella Bet-Shlimon and Dr. Mariam Georgis about the challenges and urgency in critiquing dominant modes of scholarly inquiry about Assyrians. The conversation was in light of the recent publication of Dr. Bet-Shlimon's article, '*Propaganda of the Victims': Atrocity Denial, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Disparagement of Assyrians in Middle East Studies* published in Review of Middle East Studies this year.

Dr. Bet-Shlimon is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Washington, Seattle. A historian of Iraq and the Persian Gulf in the twentieth century, she researches how people mobilize through emerging concepts of identity and how those types of individual and communal fashioning develop in relation to empire, colonialism, state making, and transformations in infrastructure and the environment. She is the author of *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

During the webinar, Dr. Bet-Shlimon discussed her latest article's core claim, that atrocity and genocide denial remain embedded in Middle East studies, persisting even among scholars who reject the label of denier. She argued that Assyrians face routine disparagement in current research, often framed as anti-colonial critique. Tracing how a flawed 1974 article on the Assyrian question came to anchor the field's citations for fifty years, she described reading the original bound journal issue and uncovering an editor's note that revealed the article had been paired with another to advance a broader denial argument – a finding she confirmed through archival work and correspondence with scholars from that era.

Dr. Georgis extended the discussion to knowledge production and state-building, arguing that dominant narratives about Iraq depend on the erasure of peoples like the Assyrians. Both scholars reflected on their experiences in fields where Assyrian identity is questioned or made invisible, and where their scholarship is often stalled by having to justify who Assyrians are before the work can begin. Each made the case that the analysis of genocide and oppression must be comparative: in their view, to refuse comparison is itself a form of denial.

Reflecting on what she hopes the article will accomplish, Dr. Bet-Shlimon said she hopes it helps "with turning the tide in academic discussions of Assyrians as well as helping Assyrians themselves think more about how our struggles are interconnected with those of other peoples."

ASA Webinar: Assyria at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

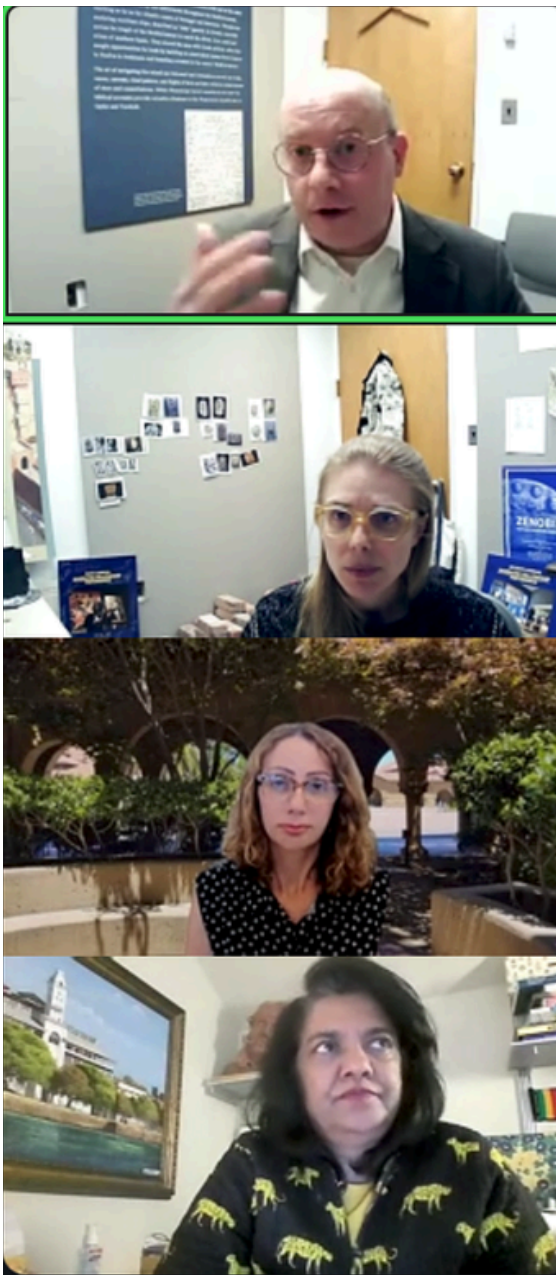
On September 16, 2026, the Assyrian Studies Association co-hosted a webinar with the Department of Ancient West Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The event offered a preview of the museum's permanent Assyrian galleries, which are currently under renovation and scheduled to reopen in June 2027.

The webinar featured Dr. Sarah Graff and Dr. Michael Seymour, both Curators at the Department of Ancient West Asian Art at the Met; Dr. Helen Malko, Executive Director at Stanford Humanities Center and Co-Founder of ASA; and Savita Monie, Program Manager, Global Cultural Partnerships at the Met.

During the webinar, Dr. Graff and Dr. Seymour walked attendees through the plans for the new space, including the layout, potential placement of the artifacts, color schemes, and offered a visual preview. The discussion gave the Assyrian community a first view of how one of the world's most significant collections of Assyrian art will be presented to the public. Following the discussion, a Q&A was moderated by Dr. Malko. Attendees expressed exitement and interest in attending the renovated galleries in June.

This webinar marked ASA's third partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, following our most recent collaboration in 2022 with Nenous Thabet and Ahmed Badr. We thank our colleagues at the museum for their continued support of Assyrian studies and look forward to the galleries' reopening.

If you would like to join an in-(no space)person visit to the Met West Asian Art Galleries in Spring 2027, and would like an invitation to the pubmic opening in June of 2027, kindly email awaadepartment@metmuseum.org with your name and email address "AWAA Reopening" as the subject line.



From Top to Bottom: Dr. Michael Seymour, Dr. Sarah Graff, Dr. Helen Malko, and Savita Monie.

Expressions of Heritage

Maria Nissan, an American-Assyrian environmental artist and activist who creates art from single-use plastics to highlight the dangers of microplastics and waste.

In 2022, Maria founded MicroPlasticsJO 501(c)(3), which offers collaborative environmental and artistic workshops that explore locally pressing environmental issues like plastic pollution, sustainability, and actions to mitigate the effects of climate change.

In the two artwork featured, they belong to the *Inheritance of Ash* and *Gold series* which reimagines the women of ancient civilizations — Assyrian, Babylonian, Mesopotamian — as eternal figures rising through time's ruins. Painted on reclaimed plastic that once symbolized suffocation, each portrait transforms waste into witness. These women are not silent relics but survivors of erasure, power, and persistence — speaking across centuries through color, texture, and defiance.



Pictured artwork is *She Carried the City in Color,* Assyrian stone, prayer, and memory woven through her blood, refusing to fade.



Pictured artwork is *The One Who Remained*, where others vanished, she became the proof they existed.

The "ash" embodies what was lost: cultures burned, histories buried, ecosystems consumed. The "gold" reflects what endures — beauty, resilience, and the sacred power of femininity. Merging the fragility of plastic with the indestructibility of spirit, Inheritance of Ash and Gold becomes both remembrance and rebellion — a testament that even after destruction, women continue to create, to transform, and to rise.

To learn more about Maria's artwork and MicroPlasticsJO, you can visit her Instagram (@marianissanart) and her Etsy storefront at (MariaNissanArt).

Assyrian Studies
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This newsletter is created and published by the Assyrian Studies Association, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization that promotes interest in the academic study of the longue durée of the Assyro-Mesopotamian heritage through supporting research, scholarly publications, and collaborative projects. It facilitates contact and exchange of information between scholars, academic organizations, and communities across various disciplines. ASA functions as an instrument to advance studies on the Assyrian people and their culture.

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