

Reforms and Social Changes / Work

The 19th century saw a great upheaval in the way work was ordered in Europe as a result of technological revolution, and a new way of organising society emerged. Ever-increasing numbers of factory workers organised into trade unions to protest against working conditions. European women from the least privileged social classes worked in the fields, in factories or in domestic service. It was not until the end of the century that poor children started to go to school instead of to work. In the Arab and Ottoman world, where industrialisation was less advanced, traditional professions – primarily in the hands of men – continued to exist. Very few women worked in urban professions, but many were involved in trade and commerce or were active in agriculture. In regions under European control, the local labour force was exploited, poorly paid and had limited rights. Trade unions were set up relatively late, since the workers took a long time to organise.



Working Number:	LB 097
Name:	The water carrier
Holding Museum:	Private collector Mohsen Yammine
Date:	Late 19th century – early 20th century
Materials:	Black and white photograph
Curator Justification:	A multitude of minor professions such as this one still existed in Middle Eastern cities, towns and villages during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This traditional water carrier would have fetched water from a fountain, well or spring and carried it to the upper storeys of buildings for people to buy.



Working Number:	IT2 024
Name:	Proximus tuus [Latin: Your Neighbour]
Holding Museum:	National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM)
Date:	1880
Materials:	Bronze
Curator Justification:	The expression of suffering on the face of this peasant is evidence of the difficulties encountered in Italian rural life. Everywhere in 19th-century Europe, peasants worked from morning till evening with rudimentary tools to meet the needs of their families.



Working Number:	ET1 008
Name:	The digging of the Western Canal of the Aswan Dam
Holding Museum:	Bibliotheca Alexandrina
Date:	1898
Materials:	-
Curator Justification:	The development of transport infrastructure in Europe and in the Arab and Ottoman world required effort that was made even more formidable by the fact that the technical resources available were still inadequate. Numerous workers lost their lives on different projects to build canals, tunnels or bridges.



Working Number:	FR 093
Name:	Théâtre du Châtelet. Germinal
Holding Museum:	National Library of France

Date: 1880

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The calling of strikes and the role of trade unions had long been a largely taboo subject in 19th-century European literature. In France, Emile Zola broke this taboo by writing about a miners' strike in *Germinal* (1885). This novel was a great success and was also adapted for the stage.
