

قريباً هو الذي أرسل رسوله بالهدى و
من نور أنزل معه على الذي وكله
بالحق بالقرآن العظيم

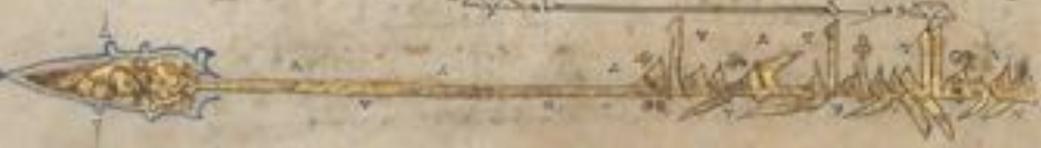
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله الذي جعل القرآن
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وأن محمداً عبده ورسوله
يؤمنون

Workshop

Friday, December 16th, 2022

The Qur'anic Manuscript in its Artistic Context

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Abstracts & Bios

Umberto Bongianino

The Hand, the Eye and the Intellect: Towards a Theory of Andalusi Illumination

What inspired the aesthetic choices of a *mudhahhib*? How did Muslims experience illuminated Qur'anic frontispieces and finispieces in the medieval Maghrib? While Arabic sources extolling book illumination and documenting contemporary responses to it are extremely rare, Maghribi literature abounds with ekphrastic passages in praise of architectural decoration and a wide variety of artefacts, from minbars to luxurious textiles. Since the close affinity between the repertoire of medieval Maghribi illuminators, plaster carvers, woodworkers, and other categories of craftspeople is undeniable, this paper will argue that all these visual idioms should be approached through a common interpretive lens. The aim is to demonstrate the applicability of aesthetic concepts generally associated with other media — such as brilliance, perfection, delicacy, enthrallment, and a range of natural and supernatural similes — to the visuality of illuminated manuscripts.

Umberto Bongianino is Departmental Lecturer in Islamic Art and Architecture at the Khalili Research Centre, University of Oxford. His research focuses on the material cultures, epigraphic traditions, and scribal practices of al-Andalus and the Maghrib. His recently published monograph is titled *The Manuscript Tradition of the Islamic West: Maghribi Round Scripts and the Andalusi Identity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

Noha Abou Khatwa

A Confluence of Paper and Stone: Agency and Patronage in the Arts of the Qur'an in Fourteenth Century Cairo

Mamluk patronage (1250-1517 AD) produced one of the greatest artistic traditions within Islamic art, a tradition so powerful that it perpetually stamped Cairo. Cairo as we know it today is Mamluk in all aspects of its material culture. The two suns, as it were, on the horizon of the Mamluk artistic scene are Qur'an manuscripts and architecture. It is time, therefore, to study the artistic connections between both representational arts, in particular architectural decoration and Qur'an illumination and calligraphy. Many of the Qur'ans exhibit in their illumination and calligraphy a great resemblance to the stuccowork and stone carvings adorning contemporaneous buildings. Many of the objects endowed to these buildings, primarily made of wood or metal, also echo these similitudes that connect both these great arts. Were the design ideas first implemented in Qur'an manuscripts and then carried to the other media? This is a question we may never answer, but for the time being speculations can be made. The more pertinent query for understanding the nuances of the movement of Qur'anic artistic vocabulary is: what role did patrons and artists play in this dialogue between the motifs in Qur'an manuscripts and the buildings in the city? It is thus the focus of this paper to connect the details of both arts through an exploration of their common motifs and the people behind their presence in fourteenth century Cairo, a century that encompasses the Qur'ans and buildings produced under Bahri Mamluk rule and the early years of Circassian Mamluk rule. We are very fortunate that a plethora of Mamluk sources exist to help us with details about the people and connect the dots for us. Examples from amongst those who shine in the sources in this regard, and are prolific patrons and intellectuals, are Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (r. 693-4/1293-4, 698-708/1299-1309 and 709-41/1301-41) and his later entourage and descendants. Of special interest are Sultan Hasan (r. 748-52/1347-51 and 755-62/1354-61), Sultan Barquq (r. 1382-9, 1390-9) and amirs Sirghatmish (d. 759/1358), Muhammad al-Muhsini (d. shortly after 1361) and Uljay al-Yusufi (d. 775-1373). Their

personal motivations and dhwaq were the stimulus behind this rich dialogue between Qur'an calligraphy and illumination, and the Qur'an's spatial context.

Noha Abou-Khatwa is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at American University in Cairo. Her main research interests are the manuscript culture and architecture of the Medieval Muslim world, with a focus on the Mamluks. She earned her PhD from University of Toronto in Islamic Art and Material Culture, writing a dissertation on "Calligraphers, Illuminators and Patrons: Mamluk Qur'an Manuscripts from 1341-1412 AD in light of the collection of the National Library of Egypt." Prior to joining the University of Toronto, she worked at the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, where she started and directed until 2006 the Dar al-Kutub Manuscript Conservation Project. She also founded the Islamic Art Network, which was created to aid researchers and scholars in the field. She publishes on epigraphy, calligraphy and Qur'an manuscripts.

Nourane Ben Azzouna

Ilkhanid Qur'ans in their Artistic Contexts

In my book *Aux origines du classicisme: calligraphes et bibliophiles au temps des dynasties mongoles* (Brill, 2018), I examined the Qur'ans produced in the Ilkhanid period in the context of the overall manuscript production, i.e. in relation to other types of manuscripts produced during the same period. In this paper I would like to return to this comparison and extend it to other types of artistic production: epigraphy and geometric and floral decoration on various media, from architecture to portable objects. One of the questions raised by this period is the diffusion of round calligraphic styles (i.e. Muhaqqaq, Thulth) in epigraphy, particularly on architecture and on textiles. Did Qur'anic manuscripts play a leading role or were they only one aspect of this phenomenon? What about other calligraphic styles, and illumination? How were the constraints of Qur'anic manuscripts such as the rectangular frame of the page or the divisions of the sacred text adapted in other media? Were circulations across media due to common patrons, to versatile artists or to the physical transferral of manuscripts and visual models? Is it possible to identify stylistic and aesthetic groups across media?

Nourane Ben Azzouna is an associate professor in the Institute of Art History, and deputy dean of the Faculty of Historical Sciences at the University of Strasbourg, France. Previously, she was an assistant professor in the Institute of Art History at the University of Vienna, Austria (2013-2016), and an assistant curator for the Islamic arts at the Agence France Muséums – Louvre Abu Dhabi (2009–2013). She holds a PhD from the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France (2009). Her research interests include the codicology and palaeography of Arabic and Persian manuscripts, images, and painting in medieval Islam, and transculturality.

Maxime Durocher

Inscribed Qur'an and *maṣāḥif* in their Architectural Context in Medieval Anatolia:
Preliminary Research

While recent research has highlighted the Qur'anic tradition – and more largely the art of illuminated books – in Medieval Anatolia (13th-14th centuries), the relations between *maṣāḥif* and their broader artistic context is still to be investigated. This paper aims to explore these relations, particularly with the architectural landscape of Medieval Anatolia, by focusing on two aspects. First, I will discuss a group of Qur'anic inscriptions and their form (calligraphy, placing and ornament) in comparison with contemporary manuscripts. Second, I will turn towards a preliminary analysis of an unpublished 12th Century Qur'an held in Tokat Museum, trying to replace it in its broader artistic context and to evaluate its possible links with the

architectural ornament in Northern Anatolia during the Danishmendid and early Seljuk period.

Maxime Durocher is lecturer in archaeology and art history of the Islamic world at Sorbonne Université (Paris) where he held his PhD in 2018, focusing on the architecture of dervish lodges during the Medieval period (13th-15th centuries). His actual research deals with the settlement history and archaeology of Northern Anatolia as well as material culture and architecture related to Sufi communities. He also explores the epigraphic tradition and its place in the visual culture of Medieval and Early Ottoman Anatolia and co-organize the international research project CallFront (Calligraphies at the Frontiers of the Islamic World) lead by Eloïse Brac de la Perrière.

Michelle Al-Ferzly

Maxims and Moralia: Epigraphic Ceramics in 10th-11th Century Samanid Visual Culture

This paper examines a corpus of epigraphic wares hailing from medieval Central Asia and datable to the Samanid period (819-1005). Ostensibly used as table-ware, these dishes feature Arabic maxims reminding the viewer to exercise sound and ethical judgements. These moralistic messages were most frequently painted on the spare white ceramic body with dark glaze, forming a circular band of epigraphy along the rim of the vessel. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Samanid epigraphic ceramics were primarily used in ninth- and tenth-century Central Asia, constituting a unique decorative composition not found within the broader corpus of medieval Islamic ceramics. While previous studies have largely sought to decipher and catalog the textual components and moralistic messages found on these epigraphic wares, my study focuses instead on placing these objects within Samanid visual and material culture. As I will show, the selection of the various calligraphic styles on the Samanid wares related directly to both coeval architectural epigraphy and Qur'anic manuscript production from the medieval Persianate world. I contend that the conscious appropriation of this calligraphic mode onto three dimensional objects, such as bowls and plates, played a key role in the production and reception of the Samanid wares. Indeed, the transmediality of the vessel's epigraphy, through its link to sacred and public text, generated additional meaning to these objects beyond their original function as food containers. Through an examination of the corpus of Samanid wares, I argue these objects constituted visual and material manifestations of *adab* (civility), otherwise understood as refined, pious, comportment. In the medieval Persianate world, this increasingly religious code of etiquette also governed the rules upholding proper ways to consume food and drink, and, by extension, the objects used for dining purposes. The visual emphasis placed on the Arabic epigraphy within the decorative composition of the Samanid ceramics, was not only significant for the contents of the maxims inscribed on the object, but also for the ways in which their visual appearance evoked Qur'anic and architectonic text, thereby further reinforcing these objects' function as signifiers of *adab*.

Michelle Al-Ferzly is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is a specialist of medieval Islamic Art and Architecture from the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, and is writing a dissertation on the material and visual cultures of medieval Islamic foodways. Currently, Michelle is a Research Assistant at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and previously served as a curatorial assistant at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto. She is the co-author of the 2021 volume, *City in the Desert, Revisited: Oleg Grabar at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, 1964-971*. Michelle holds a B.A. from Wellesley College and an M.A. from Bryn Mawr College. Her research has been supported by the Fulbright Program, the Social Science Research Council, and the Barakat Trust.

Alya Karame

Moving from One Surface to Another: Shaping the Qur'an's 'Multidisciplinary' Affect

To find the same motifs across media in medieval times raises questions related to their translation from one surface to another, and the skills and agency of artists involved in the process. In this presentation, I highlight how artists, specifically those copying and illuminating the Qur'an, cross 'disciplinary' boundaries. Their knowledge of various media, and their ability to think on different registers and in multiple artistic spheres, challenge the notion of multidisciplinary artistic practices of our times and the debate on the relationship between fine arts and crafts in contemporary art. In a context where artists work fluidly across disciplinary boundaries, the Qur'an emerges as a melting pot that produces and reproduces various motifs, and in which aesthetic ideas are absorbed and transformed. A repository for sensorial experiences, Qur'anic manuscripts reflect spaces and the experiences within them, reference surfaces and their tactile qualities – often revealing the ways in which they were perceived vis à vis other arts by their makers and used spatially by their beholders.

Alya Karame is a research associate at the Orient-Institut Beirut, writing her book on medieval Qur'ans. She was the holder of the Mellon Postdoctoral fellowship (2019-2020) at the American University of Beirut where she also taught. Previously, she was a fellow of the Khalili Research Centre at the University of Oxford, supported by the Barakat Trust (2018-2019). Before that, Alya joined the Kunsthistorisches Institut research program in *Florence Connecting Art Histories in the Museum* and was based for two years at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin (2016-2018). She obtained her PhD in Islamic Art History from the University of Edinburgh (2018) and her MA in History of Art & Archaeology from the School of Oriental and African Studies (2011). In the last few years, she received numerous awards in support of her research and lectured widely on her work.

Eloïse Brac de la Perrière

Closing remarks

Eloïse Brac de la Perrière is Professor of Islamic Art at Sorbonne University and scientific advisor at the National Institut of Art History (INHA). She has devoted several studies to manuscripts in Sultanate India, including *Le Coran de Gwalior. Polysémie d'un manuscrit à peintures* (2016). She has led a research program about the painted manuscripts of Kalila wa Dimna at the Bibliothèque nationale de France which led to an exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in 2016 and, more recently, to the publication *Les périple de Kalila et Dimna. Quand les fables voyagent dans la littérature et les arts du monde islamique* (Brill, 2022). Between 2015 and 2022 she supervised, with Salima Hellal and Sandra Aube, the scientific inventory of the Islamic art collections of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon. She is currently directing the Calligraphy at the Frontiers of the Islamic World (CallFront) project devoted to the development of non-canonical calligraphy in Arabic script in the Iberian Peninsula, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian world, China, South-East Asia, Anatolia and the Balkans.

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