ISLAMIC ART AND THE MUSEUM

Approaches to Art and Archeology of
the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century

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FOUNDATION AND CHANGE

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A Concert of Things: Thoughts on Objects of Islamic Art in the Museum Context

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"The real or fantasized memories of the Alhambra, of Isfahan or of Cairene Mosques provide the objects with their meaning."[1]

In memory of Oleg Grabar (1929–2011)

This article is an attempt to reconsider objects of Islamic art in the museum context. Taking over the ongoing process of restructuring and redeveloping the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of Islamic Art) in Berlin during the next few years, my aim in this essay is to reflect on concepts, notions and museum practices. Any new start should allow for a moment of reflection; a pause to formulate its aims. I believe there is reason to do so: looking carefully over the last years into the representation of the art, artisanship and archaeological remains of societies of the Muslim world, often one finds beautifully presented objects in a systematic, clear and correct order. However, having been involved in field research in the Middle East for 12 years, I equally often find it difficult to connect objects in galleries back to their geographies and places of origin, or to link them to the cultural-historical realities of the past. I am not alone. Looking into visitor surveys generally, or analysing our own survey, the contextual-cultural dimensions of objects are not well communicated.[2] Systematic mappings of galleries with my students frequently showed very little room for consideration of – for example – crosscultural connections, which are so very important in the production of Islamic art. Museums of Islamic art, as well as many other museums of European or non-European art, often do not allow for a wider and deeper understanding of the objects and their underlying cultural framework. Since the beginning, approaches to exhibiting Islamic art have not been very robust in

conveying cultural complexity within the geographical diversity, chronological changes of the different eras between antiquity and modernity, supra-regional interaction, or the meaning of the exhibited artefacts in the context of their primary and secondary users, the production, techniques or "qualities of mastership" that give the artefacts meaning in the modern context. Key issues such as the cross-regional flow and development of taste, ideas, the aesthetic and semantic value of objects in their functional or decorative contexts, technical innovation, the cultural realities behind, for example, floral ornamentation and vibrant colours, together with the fact that the artefacts belong within specific reference systems of "good taste", are not clear – and admittedly are not easy to convey within the constraints of a museum gallery, accompanied by short captions and introductory texts, and the relatively short attention span of visitors.

Despite brilliant scholarship produced over the last century, in which authors have been able to reveal the cultural cosmos of the object, the aim of many museums seems to be different. Many prefer to follow the idea of art as an uninterrupted, purely aesthetic experience, with some collections restricting their presentation of objects to an exploration of style and technique following a formal and positivistic description, choosing to present art in relatively context-free isolation. Only exceptionally are the criteria for selection and presentation given. But, as I will argue below, the logic of museum exhibitions for the wider public leads to constraints: caption texts need to be short and extremely clear. Others reasons for decontextualisation might lie in the objective of museum curators to focus on object-based information first. Specific or common institutional traditions act as further constraints on the conceptual framework of an exhibition.[3]

However, why should it be wrong to appreciate the object *and* to explore some of its embedded cultural meanings by means of a comprehension of context? To be more specific: why is the museum visitor not allowed to grasp the rich cultural legacies of Muslim societies or the cultural embedding of an object? Whereas the field of Islamic art has developed tremendously in the last decades, and opened itself up for a wider understanding of materiality and material culture of Muslim societies, there are as yet limited attempts to facilitate the translation of this body of knowledge into the museum space. This article explores some of the structural constraints of museums of Islamic art and provides ideas for an enriched reading of the object. I have developed my main questions *vis-à-vis* the collection at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin,[4] while I have also incorporated other examples for comparison. To understand the gap in the existing body of knowledge and the meanings produced by museums, I will describe first the mechanisms of museums before discussing the objects.

Recalling the Mechanisms of Museums

For the visitor to a museum, the significance of the objects is created mainly by the references provided in the gallery, which are understood according to the visitor's pre-existing knowledge; in other words, meaning is constructed through the placement and context of associated objects which are in turn displayed in order that they appeal to the audience's own network of knowledge.[5] This placement is based on a complex system made up of several elements that structure such galleries. I will tackle these elements separately to avoid mixing up the three areas: research into an object; the way the object is presented in a gallery (the theme of the room, the order, and the means of presentation) and the visitor's reception. The mechanism of a museum can be subdivided into four different elements or agents:

1. Objects with their layers of meaning (including functional, semiotic and aesthetic values).
2. The museum with its order of systematisation and subdivision of human cultural production.
3. The museum team, comprising the curator in cooperation with the team of museum education, exhibition designers and others, who translate the contents of the selected objects into the museum space.
4. The visitor.

My main interest lies in the object, its framework of interpretation and the translation of knowledge into the gallery space. The object does not arrive alone, but is deeply embedded in its presentation and reception. I shall, therefore, briefly give some basic thoughts on how the object is located in an exhibition and how it is received, discussing in a few words the visitor (agent 4), the institutional logic of the museum (agent 2), and the role of the curator (agent 3).

Agent 4, the visitor, is the main target of the exhibition itself. As museum professionals we sometimes have difficulty overcoming our fear of criticism from colleagues, but it is important to remember who our main target group is (the target group, "researchers", should be met by excellent captions, publications and easily accessible archives). Coming from a public institution enjoying many thousands of visitors, my primary aim is to appeal to the non-specialist visitor. Without going into discussion here about different visitor types, I will discuss this issue in a more general way: how is knowledge translated into the public space? There are many possibilities: whether to present the object to the public realm as an aesthetic masterpiece, or to communicate the content and cultural framework of the object; in either case, the visitor will make sense of the object depending on his or her own framework of knowledge and intellectual capacity as well as the accessibility of the curated and related resources. In other words:

> Meaning is produced by museum visitors from their own point of view, using whatever skills and knowledge they may have [(a)], according to the contingent demands of the moment [(b)], and in response to the experience offered in the museum [(c)].[6]

If the exhibited object is not presented in a meaningful way, many visitors are lost. What is clear to us may not be clear to many: without a comparison and clear guidance many visitors may be unable to distinguish between Samarra styles meaningfully. Without some help, most will not see the different styles that derived from late antiquity and the ancient Middle East, and many may not even understand clearly what late antiquity means. They may not view the stuccos as part of splendidly decorated houses and palaces – not to mention the geographical, chronological and wider cultural setting in general, or the urban context of Samarra specifically – because there is nothing to which to connect this knowledge if the museum fails to provide the link (see Fig. 2.1).[7]

Frameworks of knowledge that are not communicated or at least touched upon in the museum will probably not be brought in actively by the visitor. This applies to the overall order of the museum and the presentation of objects: even though a visitor might know about the role of Muslim civilisations in crosscultural fertilisation, and even though the curator has applied all his academic expertise to bring out concepts of intercultural exchange – the flow of ideas, techniques and meaning – the actuality of the museum layout might still provoke a culturalistic and ahistorical notion of culture among many visitors. One reason for this lies in the institutionalised separation of different galleries. Although the museum makers of the early twentieth century were visionary, connecting Islamic art and archaeology as one sequence to the cultural-historical panorama of the Middle East at the Pergamon Museum,[8] it is probably only experienced museum visitors that make the link between the galleries of the Ancient and Islamic Middle East. Most of them will not see the connection between the regional expressions of late antiquity and early Islamic art unless this is brought into the galleries and made very clear. This applies to any other supra-regional or chronological connection – and there are many: museums of Egyptian art, classical antiquities, Asian art, to name but a few.

The isolation of an object in a showcase with limited and/or only descriptive information about material, century and dynasty is not enough to activate the pre-existing knowledge of most visitors. Both display and labelling often originate from object-based disciplines, translating a scientific means of systematisation and order into the gallery space. Is the information on the label meaningful to the wider public, or does it reflect more the curator's system of subdividing material? "Samarra, Abbasid, ninth century" alone is meaningless to most ordinary visitors, and if one considers the consequences of this informational ambiguity and thinks of the people for whom exhibitions are made, this process of communication is extremely important, though at least time and geography can be cross-referenced to existing knowledge. Concept and communication should, therefore, always consider how to meet the framework of the visitors' knowledge and link

presentation to a pre-existing raster. Connections and links must be provided clearly: if one visits an art gallery that represents European painting by nation (because the gallery may once have collected in this way), one may not wonder that the visitor fails to see the links and flow of artistic and cultural exchange of one interconnected historical period, as in, for example, the Renaissance. The visitors' interpretation of the artefacts begins where we place them. To cut a long speech short: if one wants to translate the object and its contexts into a language understood by its viewers, the presentation and communication must meet their pre-existing systems of knowledge and their background.

Agent 2, the institution or museum, does not necessarily make this process any easier since, by its very nature, it possesses institutional constraints. Any ordering of cultures by nation, period, cultural sphere, etc. will have its pitfalls.[9] Both institutions and disciplines follow their own logic, which informs the main systems of reference (*Denkräume*). Definition and the order of disciplines are part of the process of institutionalisation into, for example, a university department or a museum's physical manifestations, with their administrative borders. This automatically creates self-referencing spaces and borders of thinking that cannot easily be changed because they have strong traditions. This is imperative to keep this in mind, because this self-referential physical space sometimes has a dramatic impact on both scholars and visitors. In galleries in particular one easily accepts these spaces as adequate reflections on actual cultural spaces (*Kulturräume*). The separate gallery of Islamic art presents a closed, self-referencing system, which offers an encapsulated approach to understanding Muslim cultures, but does not reflect cultural-historical connection to past pre-Islamic cultures or to contemporaneous non-Islamic societies. For example, to display an ivory from eleventh-century Cairo with another from seventeenth-century India without accompanying the former with similar objects from Andalusia, Byzantium and southern Italy evokes the ahistorical associations. Likewise, the textual information available to the visitor would need to explain that these ivories were all elements of a supra-regional courtly lifestyle that swept across the different shores of the Mediterranean over the course of centuries, which were known in Europe as the High Middle Ages. This interconnectedness is, as we know, also characteristic of Middle Eastern societies. There are numerous examples of art and crafts made by Jewish and Christian masters for patrons/consumers of different religious (and ethnic) groups. The reason for the often systematic exclusion of cultural production in non-Muslim religious contexts in Islamic art museums lies in the traditions of our academic training and institutional order.[10] If culture and not only religion is the theme of the exhibition and if pluralistic religious identities are part of the local environment, as in Umayyad Jerusalem and Damascus or in thirteenth-century Mosul, one should try to incorporate this principle more thoroughly. Institutional traditions keep our framework of presentation tighter than our avenues of intellectual exploration. The self-immanent reference system is part of the logic of institutions. While in scholarship the crossing of art histories has been discussed intensively, the notion has only entered (or re-entered, see below) galleries of Islamic art

recently.[11] However, there are several other ways to widen the experience of visitors beyond that by:

- Opening up a horizontal view to allow cross-regional comparisons inside similar historical experiences.[12]
- Presenting the crossing of art histories, which is so important for objects that were made for intraregional and international trade (which comprises most of what is defined as the body of Islamic art).
- Bringing in objects that come from outside one's own institutional borders.
- Allowing micro-history to break down complex systems so that the most basic elements are revealed: the direct human experience brings history to a scale identifiable to the personal experience of the visitor.

It is not very difficult, in actual fact, to present Samarra styles as a simultaneous application of different traditions: why not select a late antique vine ornament, Sasanian patterned stucco frieze, an abstract tile or a stucco panel from old Mesopotamia to put next to it? Can the fascinating story of international cross-fertilisation of taste and techniques – like that of blue-and-white or lustre ceramics – be told without incorporating China and Europe into the narrative? While all these links may seem clear and straightforward, often it has not been the aim of the curator to so illuminate them.

Agent 3, our curators and assistants working with the European, American and Middle Eastern collections, are trained art historians with regional expertise whose specialist knowledge is necessary. As specialists in the "content" of the objects, the curators present the outcome of their academic understanding to their colleagues, but scholars in museums have a double function: as researchers they are engaged with the history of objects and follow the *desiderata* and schools of our field, but as museum professionals, they need to be able to convey art and cultural histories specifically in order to meet the public's need for information (knowledge transfer). To do this, curators trained primarily as scholars will need to think outside the academic box and learn to translate their specialist knowledge into easily accessible "narratives". Many of them may do well to learn from professionals of communication and exhibition design. Specialisation is also seen here as part of our modern system of the division of labour: professionals from educational services might contend to bring to the table their knowledge in order to translate content accessible to the wider public (the UK and North America are far ahead in this respect). This is in many cases not yet the standard for best practice among curators of Islamic art. The order of dynasties mentioned above, for example, reflects the structure of methodological thinking of the scholarly/curatorial field, but is by no means a useful structure with which to communicate the stories of the objects. Instead, as our study showed (see Gerbich and my second article in this volume), this procession of dynasties does not serve as a meaningful framework for museum visitors, with the single exception of those who are already familiar with the periodisation of Islamic history. This is but one example of how

the academic system is applied by curators to form exhibition spaces. It is at precisely this point that the institutional logic (agent 2) dictates the approach of its employees and their practices.

There is still a gap between excellent scholarship and the transfer of knowledge, which, if closed up, would provide excellent museological communication. Based on the observation that objects in an exhibition are often grouped according to certain assumptions in a given field (i.e. all Samarra objects style A to C in various media; all ceramics as the history of one material group) I would question whether the formulation of objectives *vis-à-vis* the audience has ever been the starting point used to structure the exhibition unit. In many cases it seems that the formal aspects of the objects, as we handle the material in depots or relate them to histories of style, have shaped the interior of the showcases. Qualitative visitor surveys will help us to explore scientifically what visitors actually perceive in the exhibition and whether their perception is congruent with the institutional and curatorial goals and aims.[13] The aim is not to please the visitor somehow, but to make sure that the curator's intention for the display reaches the audience successfully.

However, I appreciate that it might not always be the aim and goal of every exhibition to familiarise visitors with a bygone cultural cosmos and that sometimes it is "only" the visual fascination of the formal aspects of objects themselves that becomes the focus. During the second half of the twentieth century most galleries of Islamic art followed this second approach: presenting the objects as singular monuments of art with limited referential information given on the labels and gallery texts. Comparing exhibition designs of the twentieth century, one can easily distinguish the taste of the prevalent *Zeitgeist*. Concepts for exhibitions in Berlin may serve as examples: in the early twentieth century, they were based on a cultural-historical presentation, which then gradually developed – at the latest in the 1960s – into a minimalist aesthetic approach in both East and West Germany. The motivation for the development is obvious, although both principles were never applied exclusively. The exhibition that opened at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin in 2001 showed Sasanian art displayed prominently next to the Mshatta façade; this participates in the tradition of "cross-institutional", cultural-historical thinking prevalent in Berlin since Wilhelm von Bode's installations.[14] On the other hand, the appearance of the Samarra styles A to C shows an adherence to the notion that objects can be seen as an unconnected patchwork, aestheticising them beyond their stylistic and cultural implications (see Fig. 2.1).[15] The lower stucco wall-covering from the houses of Samarra became art without context. It was only for a few years after the First World War, and then again in 2004, that the niches were incorporated into the exhibition to demonstrate the architectural character of the decoration.

Before turning to the objects, I would first of all like to reflect on what I have said about how Islamic art is exhibited. I have argued for the critical self-reflection of our museum practices, where one may observe that in many (not all) cases, there is much room
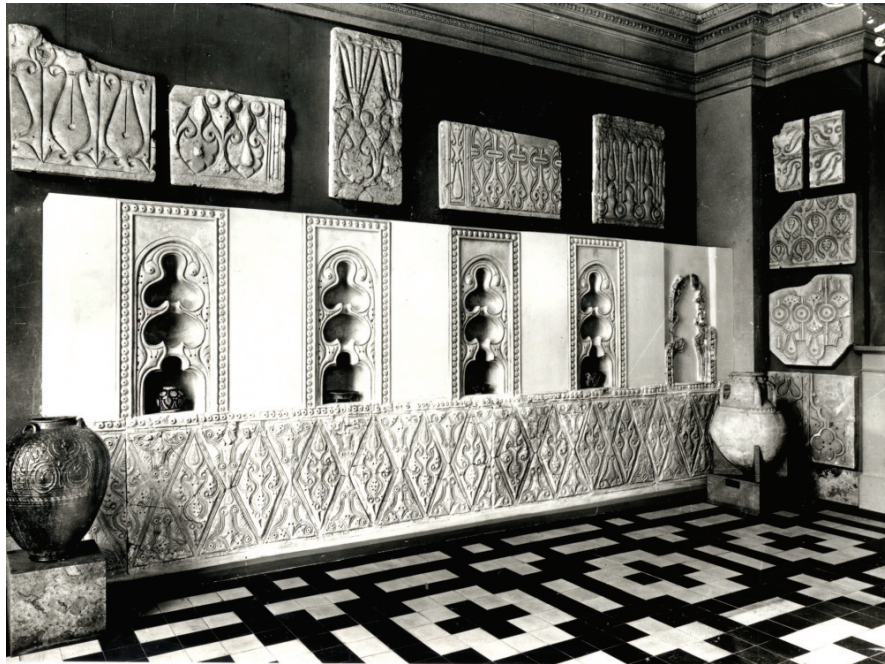
Fig. 2.1: The contextual approach seen in the Samarra presentation of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin (today the Bode Museum) in 1922.

Fig. 2.2: The Samarra presentation in the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, in 2001 as an heir to the aesthetic/stylistic approach, installed in 1932.

for improvement: in the communication of knowledge to audiences (agent 4); the limitations of a meaningful order (gallery code and cross-sections) and the still not robust enough connection to a wider interpretational framework outside our institutional constraints (agent 2); and the choices made by curators, which are often based on their academic training and social-professional environment (agent 3). Most important, however, is the understanding of an object within the museum context itself.

Qualities of the Objects

An object in a museum has several layers of meaning – which are very difficult to label with a single name. As discussed in academia, the term "Islamic art" in no way provides a significant category to frame objects meaningfully. Although this is a well-documented area that is part of our scientific self-understanding,[16] it has entered our museum practice only slowly: most of the time objects are declared as art and presented as isolated masterpieces within showcases, giving them an aura of singularity. In order not to disturb the aesthetic presence of the single object, contextual or interpretative group-display remains an exception, and information is severely limited (though sometimes longer wall text or gallery brochures are given). Illustrative drawings, photographs or digital screens etc. are still rarities.[17] As the concept of *art* with limited context is ruling many of our galleries, I will focus here on this notion (the concept of Islam is widely discussed and I briefly touched upon it when discussing agent 2).[18]

The notion of "art" to describe and exhibit objects has not grown out of the context of the "artist" and masters, but comes instead from its later non-Muslim reception. Oleg Grabar emphasises that "in fact 'arts of the object' are the result of its collecting rather than that of its 'making'."[19] Looking again at the qualities of objects of Islamic art, one distinguishes things of wildly diverse natures. Applying Western categories of art to Islamic production, most of the small objects belong to the applied arts and the French *arts appliqués* – even better to the *arts décoratifs* – somewhere in the category of arts and crafts made for the discerning customer. Most of the skilfully made ceramic, wood or metal objects were either meant for daily use or were luxury goods designed to decorate the living-rooms of higher income houses or palaces of the period. They were produced in dozens, hundreds or even thousands. Always meant to please the eye, they were nonetheless of the same "artistic quality" as some of the outstanding and unique objects: for example, fine books with calligraphy or illuminated courtly albums. This applies as well to the many archaeological artefacts which inhabit contemporary exhibitions. They are often presented in the museum as material representatives of a certain period, as mosaic stones of cultural history. They were turned into art when chosen for an exhibition during our time.

However, although the semantic adaptation of the word *fann* in Arabic and *sanat* in Turkish (in Persian *honar*, *fann* and *sana'at*) in relation to Islamic art is itself an adoption

of European concepts during the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[20] there were artists as such in the Islamic world. Celebrated masters such as the Persian painter Kamal al-Din Behzad Herawi (1460–1535), the Arabic calligrapher Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d.1298), or the famous Ottoman architect Sinan (1489–1588) along with many others – most of them unknown to us today – are good examples. One can certainly detect a *Kunstwille* in the fields of calligraphy, book illumination and architecture. Masters of their art found entry into bibliographical dictionaries of their time because of their skilful mastery of technique: chronicles such as Qadi Ahmad's *Calligraphers and Painters* (*c*.1596–1597) or theorising literature on ornament offer ample evidence.[21] The workshops of the famous Kashan potters, such as that of Abu Sa'id and the Abu Tahir family, or Abu Sa'id's silver Damascening, produced an exceptional quality of work where the name probably turned into a brand which in turn meant fine design and extraordinary refinement.[22] They were more than craftsmen, as masterpieces of glass, metal etc. prove. But most of the lovely glazed pots taken from archaeological settings do not necessarily fit the same criteria. Rather, they are the products of fine, high-quality mass production for the higher income market.

The line between artisan and artist is very thin. Expanding the definition of art just so that more objects fit the category and in order to encompass any expression of aesthetic creativity makes the term even vaguer,[23] and even if the term was widened in a meaningful way, it is likely that it would remain difficult to incorporate the myriad approaches often applied to the modern notion of art and artist. However, fitting objects to categories or the other way round is not that important. Practically every category of art allows for multiple approaches of exhibiting – which is a crucial point.

I want to emphasise that I do not wish to depart from this notion of art and the aesthetic approach, as I will argue below. However, if when dealing with objects of different qualities, we give them *one* name and *one* concept of presentation, we do not do them justice, because their qualities are various. It makes no sense to search for the unifying meaning of "Islamic art" just because it is researched, catalogued and filed by one institution as such, or because we have identified the same half-palmette with ornamental scrolls on several different objects. Naming and then defining the qualities of objects would help to develop the exhibition criterion without a pre-set category of art/artisanship/anthropology. What are the values of an object? The artist's genius, technical excellence, material, age, singularity, the object's biography (its different user-contexts and acquisition history), cultural and social significance (also informed by the state of its research), aesthetic beauty (in the eyes of different users – one of which is the museum today) – all of these give value to an object. Some of these values belong to the time when the object was made, transporting some of the realities of the past to our present, while others are based on our current appreciation. All these values endow an object with more meanings than it had at the moment of its production. In their relationship with an art object, philosophy, the applied arts, craftsmanship, consumption, sociology and anthropology are all interlinked.

Given the nature of our collections, which are made up of finds from archaeological excavations which are understood as a cross-section of material heritage and of items evaluated and selected by collectors that brought their own connoisseurship into play, the application of "art without context" as the main concept governing exhibitions is already dwindling. Even masterpieces – a term which aims to mark an object as outstanding by its technical, aesthetic or historical merits (defined by us) – are part of a very specific human experience and cannot be explored comprehensively outside their temporal and social context. Art is not timeless, and every artistic expression is deeply connected to the artistic language of its time. (Vincent Van Gogh or Tilman Riemenschneider were revolutionary in *their* time, and what they achieved was unthinkable 100 years before, but their work and practice were common knowledge a century later.)

It is here that I – before discussing several approaches to the objects – would like to bring in the people who are often left out of Islamic art galleries. While a person might adore the most brilliant knotted carpets, blown glass and carved wooden objects, she or he learns little about the masters, craftsmen, clients and patrons that commissioned, bought or owned them. The tastes of past societies, techniques of production, transmission of knowledge, organisation of labour, the aesthetics, the role of objects, and specifics of certain characteristics where style is transformed as an outcome of social/cultural change – all of these are largely absent from each individual's appreciation of the object. All objects – from masterpieces to objects of mass production – are part of human experience and elements of cultural history, a fact which many art historians reflected upon after the social and cultural shift in historiography. Practices of exhibiting Islamic art, however, sometimes retain vestiges of notions of Islam from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the main goal of exploring Muslim societies of the past followed linguistic and positivist methods of research. Sticking with this example, the institutional traditions of museums often define other cultures as geographical and historical unities without much mentioning people or demographic diversity, and they often limit the historical background of cultural and artistic production to a dynastic framework, as noted above.[24] Islam is tidily defined by a gallery border, and although a chronological order structures the exhibitions, the "Islamic mind" becomes a category of understanding in itself. Cultural and social change – a normal model to explain stylistic change in galleries of Western art – is hardly mentioned. The geographic diversity or the social background of, for example, middle class consumption – one element with which to explore Seljuq art – is often still not indicated.[25] I do not refer here to the very robust and popular discourse of colonialism and Orientalism in universities, but the issue is the same: Islamic art galleries should invite the people of the past back in as a category of interpretation and foster an understanding of societies, their cultural production and art.

As I will discuss below with reference to the Aleppo Room, this is not to reject or neglect the material-based and aesthetic approaches, but to extend and enrich these considerations. Thanks to the connections between material legacy, social practice and

space, spheres of life in which human action materialises can be brought into our galleries through objects. They range from urban construction and planning (as expression of political and social order), defence systems, water infrastructure and bathhouses, rooms of faith and religious practices and commercial buildings. They include palaces and homes with all their ornaments, whether ceramic, stone or wood, their furniture, interior design and personal objects (books, fabric, metal, ceramics and wood) and clothing; all levels of artistic expression are present and interconnected. When objects and buildings are linked back to their social context, our discussion of them is no longer limited to a description and chronological and stylistic classification, because what unfolds is their rich potential for cultural-historical understanding. Also, art and taste, as I will elaborate later, are based on human experience and concepts. They play a distinctive role in shaping societies, and not only enrich each other, but have their own social life, and are players in the concert of things.

Approaches to Objects

Looking now at the presentation of objects, I hold up first and foremost the Berlin collection with its material of very different qualities; this comprises art and archaeology spanning the periods from late antiquity to the modern period, all part of distinct regional traditions. The following pages are an inclusive framework that should allow simultaneous approaches, based on the quality of objects as discussed above. It is neither an exhaustive treatment, nor a practical guide, but simply represents some thoughts put forward for further consideration and discussion.

What I shorten here to the aesthetic approach is the most common approach in Islamic art galleries. It provides many opportunities, since the direct experience of beauty – or something we like for any reason – is intuitive, based on a holistic experience of an object's totality (in many museums key objects will provide this experience). The aesthetic approach honours a sensual experience similar to the encounter with architectural objects that add a spatial element to that experience. Among the several possibilities available with which we can approach the object, the sensual-aesthetic experience is an emotionally positive key choice to attract people; it also happens to fit works of Islamic art very well, as most of the objects were made to give the onlooker pleasure. Aesthetics also build bridges to other approaches: the visitor, attracted by something (its beauty, lustre, exotic shape, etc.), begins from this experience to ask, how was this made? (For whom, by whom, where, etc.) But while aesthetics provide the first and strongest approach, they alone are not enough to make the many layers of meaning of an object accessible, as I will argue below.

Aesthetics was instrumental in emancipating Islamic art from the Orientalist presentations of the World Fairs and helped to establish "minor" objects from the Muslim-formed Middle East as monuments of art in their own right.[26] One point of departure was

certainly the Munich exhibition of 1910 and its voluminous accompanying publication, which concentrated on the objects and qualified each as a *Meisterwerk* in its singularity by focusing on its aesthetic merits.[27] Both of the curators responsible, Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Kühnel, wanted the presentation not to be ethnic, Oriental or decorative, but to allow for an appreciation of what they deemed to be proper art, for which the concept of the *"Neue Sachlichkeit"* ("New Objectivity") offered the right museological tools:

> A priori one had, if one really wanted to meet the requirement of a new artistic savour, to do without all the scenic effects, which can be done with Oriental art so easily. One had to give the objects an unpretentious, sober environment in which their own technical qualities alone are articulated.[28]

This was an important adoption of the notions and principles of European art history, and an equally important arrival at the implicit statement of the equality of art production (*Kunstwillen*) of all nations. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* was the fashion of its time. As the exhibition mode of white walls and restrained presentation developed, it passed through important landmark exhibitions such as the Secessionsausstellung in Vienna (1904), the Jahrhundertausstellung of German Art at the Berlin National Gallery (by Peter Behrens in 1906, where the concept for the first time became part of a permanent exhibition) or the Sonderbund-Ausstellung in Cologne (1912), to a proper "white cube" seen at the Kunstverein in Hamburg in 1930.[29] In a non-European art context, the style and goal of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* – to "show art as art" – was applied in Berlin for the first time at the East Asian Art Museum by Otto Kümmel and in the old Applied Arts Museum in Berlin (today Martin Gropius Bau).[30] Ernst Kühnel's Islamic galleries at the New Pergamon Museum in 1932 continued this trend, mixing architectural context and white painted walls. The international postwar purist and clinical trend of the 1950s and 1960s was very strong in both West *and* East Germany, in Klaus Brisch's spectacularly lit galleries in Berlin-Dahlem (1971) for example. Richard Ettinghausen's new Islamic Art galleries at the Metropolitan (1974) and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington were further steps towards today's prevailing notion that affirms the status of Islamic art as art by using an aestheticising exhibition approach.[31] This logic was applied in order to draw borders with neighbouring fields like ethnology and to emancipate accordingly non-Western works from the strictures of a discipline that would not acknowledge them as art; it may seem artificial today – at least from an academic point of view – but it was a successful strategy to force the acknowledgement of the high-quality art production of Muslim societies. This acknowledgement was certainly not given at the beginning of the twentieth century, and is still questioned by some to this day.

Even today, ethnographic museums such as the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris follow the aesthetisation approach, turning ethnographic objects into art, with success among the French museumgoing public. The aesthetic presentation became what audiences expected

to find, and for Islamic art galleries, this led to an interesting homogenisation of gallery designs in the 1980s and 1990s.[32]

However, often the aesthetic presentation is not necessarily based on the visual qualities of the object but on its presentation; the aesthetics come from the exhibition design itself. The designer has an especially important task to attract and fascinate the visitor by embedding the object into an appealing space. After all, the first visual contact is not the object but the gallery spaces. This is directly connected to the overall design and installation of galleries, which is itself based very much on a collective sense of aesthetics.

While discussing the aesthetic approach, I touched on two different layers: the focus on the visual qualities of an object, and the visual representation as suggested by its installation. Focusing on the latter, one may ask: whose aesthetics are at work? The notions of art, museum practices and applied aesthetics are subjects that concern mainly the better educated strata of our societies, which is in turn one of several reasons why visitors to our galleries are mainly from these social strata.[33] Alfred Gell, in his polemic argument against aesthetics, sharpens the argument: "... the desire to see the art of other cultures aesthetically tells us more about our own ideology and its quasi-religious veneration of art objects as aesthetic talismans, than it does about these other cultures".[34] The aesthetics of our gallery designs are based entirely on the reception expected from today's visitors. It is a tool that we use *vis-à-vis* our target groups and it can be changed whenever it seems appropriate, but it is not embedded in or even suggested by the object. Nothing is wrong with that, but one should distinguish between the two aesthetics of object and installation to avoid the assumption that any crosscultural continuity of the aesthetic experience exists. The object itself was certainly handled and arranged by individuals with different concepts of beauty at the moment of its making and then in its different user-contexts. Of course, this does not mean that we have to present bygone notions of aesthetics – after all, we are exhibiting objects to our modern societies and not to those of the past. But the acknowledgement of different aesthetic ideals opens the door to a very interesting museological idea: taste as an expression of culture in different layers.

Taste and ideas of beauty are continuously changing, and different aesthetics are at work at diverse times and places: the formerly snow-white Mshatta façade, the brightly coloured wood panels (and probably stuccos) from different palaces in Samarra, the heavy ornamented stuccos of Salón Rico in Madinat al-Zahra, the lively wooden panels of the Fatimid palaces in Cairo, the "Islamic" marbles, stuccos and mosaics of the Norman la Ziza in Palermo, the clear style of the Ayyubid palace in Aleppo with its *ablaq*-defined entrance, or the kaleidoscopic halls in Mamluk palaces in Cairo, the sparkling tiled walls of Takht-e Soleyman with their strange Chinese creatures, the painted walls of Safavid kiosks in Isfahan, the unique Diwan-e Khas of Fatehpur Sikri or the Red Fort in Delhi, the different styles of Ottoman palaces – from the remains of the Saray-ı Cedid-i Amire in Edirne to the Yıldız Palace in Istanbul, or the Golestan Palace in Teheran. These are all expressions of the changing aesthetic preferences of the ruling classes, even though some

elements such as the pavilion and the garden are often seen. Tastes and concepts of beauty shifted, and they were always meaningful and authentic for the society at that time and in that place. New decorative vocabulary became part of the local language, and was charged with semantic meaning, which became important to the relevant society. In Aleppo around 1600, qilins and dragons were no longer strange elements from China, as I discuss below, but part of the shared cosmographical knowledge of the time, and they were then combined with the floral Ottoman decoration that was quite new to Aleppo. The topless ladies of the Qajar ceiling from Shiraz or Isfahan – today in Berlin – are, as much as the Ottoman-Baroque style of Damascus, a carefully orchestrated expression of good taste in the concert of things, at the time.[35]

Fig. 2.3: The painted ceiling of a house in Iran , dated AH 1263/AD 1846.

Whatever we might distinguish as good or bad taste today, the objects are fascinating proof of cultural change over many centuries, which becomes dramatically kaleidoscopic if we add the geographical and social dimension (as today, taste was probably also diverse in the past, the definition changing among different social groups of one society, or from one city to another). This allows also a fresh view of stylistic periods that in our eyes might otherwise be referred to as a decline or corruption: for example, was the Ottoman-Baroque style alien, or was it a further development of the collective human product of taste? Would the colourful painted Samarra woodcarvings and interiors be beautiful in our eyes if we had had the chance to see them shortly after they were produced? Was it a gross alienation of some mythical original when the Muslim societies were heavily influenced by – or, better, carried on with – concepts of beauty from late antiquity, ancient Mesopotamia and, later, China? Grouping objects in a period room – either physically or by means of digital media – would create a concert of things, a vehicle to explore the aesthetics and underlying cultural realities of a given society at a given period of time. In translating this into the museum space, taste and concepts of beauty are not just tools to match our contemporary notions of aesthetics, but also build a bridge to the past. In pre-

modern cultures with rich literary traditions, one can certainly find written testimonies of notions of beauty. Including these helps visitors to find a way to understand concepts of beauty of temporally or culturally distant societies, and it enables them – or at least gives them a chance – to explore other cultures' ideas of beauty.

Based on medieval receptions of classical Greek concepts, the idea of "beauty" is developed by several Muslim scholars and thinkers during the tenth and eleventh centuries, figures such as Ibn Hazm (994–1064), Ibn Sina (980–1037), Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), Ibn Haytham (*c*.965–1039). Especially influential among the wider public were the thinkers, theologians and Sufi mystics al-Ghazzali (1058–1111) and the great Romantic and Sufi-mystic poet (and scholar) Nizami (1141–1209).[36] Their writing is very helpful, but needs investigation using methods of textual critique. Thinkers' and theologians' conceptual writings on taste represent only the opinions of a limited group within society, and we can only tentatively speculate as to how these married with perhaps more ubiquitous concepts of beauty that were based on an appreciation of colour, an experience of nature, or were derived from poetry and Sufism. Comparing the tenth-century Madinat al-Zahra with the fourteenth-century Alhambra, or twelfth-century Ayyubid architecture in Cairo with fifteenth-century Mamluk architecture, it is clear that concepts of beauty and notions of the "correctly balanced relationship" of space and ornament had dramatically changed in a comparatively short time span. Can we still apply texts of the eleventh century to both cases? After all, these texts do not describe at all the dragon and phoenix combats on carpets, water basins, ceramic wall panels, miniatures, etc., nor anything even approaching these motifs. I do not want to question the relevance of these texts, as they help to distinguish certain *topoi* of Muslim cultures, such as divine order or the role of gardens (and they are very useful in museum applications as original voices of the past). However, one needs to contrast and elaborate these writings using the diverse testimonies of taste of the *Zeitgeist* as expressed in an ample concert of things. When we come to the lived experience of beauty, pleasure and luxury – the very pictures that come into focus when one combines the many beautifully created objects with the rich interiors and architecture of the houses and palaces – the theoretical texts may not be used to describe cultural realities exhaustively. A further question is where the line is drawn between *topos* and specific meaning, or norm and deviation. Is a flourishing, complicated arabesque a prayer to God's creation? And does every garden hold the eschatological implication of paradise? Or can we not – based on the actual (geographical) setting in which those elements were produced and used – conclude that probably it was just an expression of the pleasure of an abundance? While artistic expressions might have a main intention, they are, however, also successful in touching many subtexts. Muslims in different medieval and early modern settings enjoyed life, especially in gardens, as did pre-Islamic cultures in the same geographical areas. Safavid carpets, flowers and gardens on *cuerda seca* tiles or tile mosaics, book illuminations and bindings, all evoke the rich, verdant and colourful gardens, incorporating many and complex sublayers of meaning floating around *paradeisos*

as garden or *junayna* ("small paradise", a frequently used Arabic word for garden). The trap of making a quick culturalistic interpretation by subscribing to a single meaning found in the rich literary corpus is difficult to avoid. Here there is still much work to do in order to establish an *'Ilm al-Jamal*, a theory of aesthetics that includes diversity and change.

To complicate things still further with this reading of aesthetics: although we are able to reconstruct aesthetic appreciation in other times and cultural contexts, this tells us nothing about the origin, production, use, circulation or function of the artefact in the institutions of that society or even why the object was created at all. Also, its value cannot be ascertained by a study of its material, technology and design alone. The deeper meanings of objects and architecture can only be understood in the context of *Lebenswelt,* the "sphere of life" of the respective producers, clients and users. There are many models for creating this context; technical, geographical, chronological, functional and architectural (sphere of life) approaches, tested in many museum settings, have proved successful at providing a wider framework of understanding.[37] I will take this for granted and not elaborate any further. These "formal layers of meaning" can be widened by "culturally embedded layers of meaning". Structuralist, semiotic and anthropological approaches offer models for interpretation, but must be applied with caution: not every Ottoman dome is a canopy, and certainly not an heir of the yurt. Trends in the search for meaning have changed; the ethnic determinism of national discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave way to cultural identity as immanent systems – a favourite of the mid-twentieth century – which was replaced by the more culturalistic understanding that rules our notion of the "self" and "other" today (wonderfully summarised by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom).[38]

Here I want to concentrate on the role of objects made for society and culture based on theories of semiotics in social systems. This is connected with a notion of culture, which Raymond Williams defined as: "... the signifying system through which necessarily (although among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced and explored".[39] This implies a semiotic understanding of aesthetics. I will not discuss here the notion that symbols are culturally constructed bearers of meaning, although these materialised metaphors are extremely important in order to understand the decoration on many of the objects we hold in our galleries and storerooms. As important as they are, they too would need "textual criticism" and to be reconstructed by a proper methodology (especially in that they are the common favourite when looking hastily for "meaning"). Symbols, such as the representation of a cypress or a rose/tulip, are best explained through the poetry of each period – but that does not mean that a semiotic value can be assigned to each Ottoman tulip.[40] This is common ground in Islamic art history. In what follows, I will focus on taste as a collective social phenomenon, displayed in a concert of things, and playing a major role in non-verbal communication.[41]

To interpret the role of objects with their embedded or charged meanings in the interaction between *Kunstschaffen* (artistic production) and reception, we need, as

Maruška Svašek argues, an in-depth knowledge of historical and social contexts.[42] The specific localisation of an object or a monument in time, space and society should allow for the diverse expressions of Muslim cultures, which may help to overcome the acultural and ahistorical approach that reifies the supposedly monolithic character of Islamic art. Gell, in his criticism of semiotics as a system of language and of predefined meaning, argues for a more complex system of signs and significations. He proposes an analytical framework that should allow for a crosscultural practicality without predefined notions of semiotic meaning or syntax of a visual language.[43] Gell developed various factors involved in the creation and dissemination of an object (called by him a neutral *index*). In this network of action (*nexus*) between artist/producer, object/index, prototype and recipient, he defines relationships, not fixed meanings or values. In this nexus, these relationships change according to different contexts, and the meanings of objects shift. The objects have become semiotically charged and take on a quality that goes, to follow Gell, beyond the direct attribution of objects with symbolic meaning. Gell stresses the direct relationship of the object and the agent in their specific nexus: "... art ... is a system of social action – and we have to look at how people act through objects by distributing parts of their personhood into things".[44]

Fig. 2.4: An unknown religious scholar in Damascus in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This concept, derived from anthropology, is a useful means to explore aesthetics if "people do act through their objects" and "distribute their personhood into things".[45] Surrounded by biographical objects, individuals have their personalities developed through, and reflected in, them. The objects that comprise the belongings of a person present an (incomplete) picture of his/her social and cultural personality. Having a material picture of a given person in a set environment, the individual's property tells us more about him- or herself than a portrait. Taking the figure out of the picture, one may come closer to one possibility of museum presentation: that the objects speak about their owners.

"Distributing parts of personhood into things" allows us today – at least theoretically– the discovery of a person through many things. The costume of the unknown man of nineteenth-century Damascus, depicted in this figure (see Fig. 2.4), identifies him as religious scholar, the prayer rug in front of him may mark him as a pious person, while the writing utensils to his right suggest that he is a learned and well-educated man. The rest of this parlour might look to us today as an uncertain hybrid of tastes, but it is a meaningful, well-orchestrated setting of very different objects that reflect the shared aesthetics and semiotics of his time. He would never have presented himself with these things if he thought they would be inappropriate. The objects mark a precisely tuned way of life suggested by a coherent network of clothing, gestures and body language. These elements play a role that Gell would describe as "agency", as they have been charged by meaning and been positioned to convey meaning. They themselves become "agents" in a complex network of action (*nexus*), especially as they are objects that would be called in our example here "things one must have".[46] This "meaning" and agency of objects can only be reconstructed by the application of a further theoretical framework and with an in-depth knowledge of a micro-historical context.[47] In this context, the charging of meaning by systems of taste is of special importance.

Taste is the correct classification of objects in an established system of beauty and meaning. It is socially and collectively constructed, and one finds multiple expressions of taste in one society of diverse social strata, based on the prevalent *Zeitgeist* of the time. Part of taste and its execution is the appropriate combination of social and cultural ideas of what is beautiful or appropriate and the recognition of the objects in the well-orchestrated assortment of carefully attuned elements. In this concert of things, the aesthetics of an object – or much more revealing, an assortment of associated objects – become meaningful and easier to understand if seen as an expression of lifestyle. Following approaches of sociology in combination with a semiotic understanding of aesthetics, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* theorises this system of (fractal) personhood through objects. Lifestyle becomes a system of fine, harmonised objects to express good taste, as: "… a unity set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing,

language, or body hexis".[48] Each object among a person's belongings is one element in the process of exercising taste.

To simplify, one may subdivide two functions of this complex of lifestyle and classifying systems of taste. On the one hand, one's integration into systems of taste is of tremendous importance psychologically as it relates to the socialisation of each individual. The system of taste helps each individual find his or her correct style according to social status and belonging; it facilitates the definition of social positioning in a collective interconnected process. Style and taste are basic elements of our self-definition, which is always in correspondence with others' (also as a protest, which is part of the collective process *ex negativo*).[49] Social groups are marked by elements of their proper style – each individual keen to "get it right" (and not wrong) – to fall in with the appropriate markers of the social group and thus be able to place the self into a category of the social order. The possession and display of objects of taste according to social status is not an exclusive system, but one element of a very complex process of negotiating relationships within society, and finding one's own position within it. Within this logic, style-consciousness is an important element in the struggle over power and social hierarchies. Taste is part of what Bourdieu called *cultural capital*.[50] Through *Bildung* (cultivation), one can communicate belonging to a certain social group as an expression of an "offensive" self-positioning within a process of active status-seeking. It is a refined system *vis-à-vis* the more crude forms of executing power by violence or economic pressure. Taste is a visual language in a non-verbal and reciprocal communication among people in one social context. It is understandable as a language in the sense of Barthes, or works as a system of significations.[51] Expressions of good taste change and concepts of beauty are constantly remodelled, as I have argued elsewhere.[52] Especially in times of cultural and social change, social relations are often reformulated through modified expressions of good taste.[53] Excluding here historicism and retro-looks, systems of taste render themselves meaningless in time and are incomprehensible to later societies at first sight. But for scholars, taste of a certain period guides us to principles of "cultural capital" and leads us into the cosmos of aesthetic systems of non-verbal communication, good taste and even the ethics of the time, all part of a struggle over social status.[54] This certainly is also an important element of pre-modern urban societies of the Middle East, where the rich material heritage of the architecture of old cities and art objects in museums and private collections have survived as such. These fragments from the past were part of the system I have described here, which more than four centuries ago, in 1599, were described by the Ottoman historian and bureaucrat Mustafa 'Ali, in Cairo, who lists some objects of good taste: "... velvet and brocade, gold-embroidered beauties like the gold brocade made in Istanbul, in particular, jackets and sables and lynx fur, belts, set with jewels, gem-studded daggers and knives are not proper for anyone but for high notables and privileged personages".[55] He adds many more objects to his list, and develops four ideal social classes based on income, profession and social-political standing – where he merges the different career paths of

administration, military, mercantile etc. (excluding those of low income) – and which he then matches to a graduated scaled list of matching sized houses, wherein he describes the appropriate numbers of rooms, and gives some hints of the architectural layout or the *mise-en-scène* of single elements such as the garments of the servants. In the analysis of his time, Mustafa ʿAli regrets that style is not regulated by law but "only" by social punishment: "If men of lower status than these [notables] have the audacity to make use of them, sharp-tongued critics will lash them and will punish them severely by their abuse." After discussing the textiles appropriate to different social classes, he adds: "If they dare to have such clothes made for themselves, men of sense [sic!] should censure them and fine them in the currency of slander and ill talk."[56] He develops a system of an ideal social order that he says should be marked by taste, and he complains that during his time, well-established systems of taste were upturned by the elegant appearance of members of the lower classes.[57] This was, in his eyes, not only an inappropriate demonstration of luxury, but in itself, a violation against the system of social justice (to use a phrase by Tietze).

Unlike museum presentation, objects displayed in upper-class households or palaces were never alone but were part of a dense description, or better expressed, a concert of things. What we see today is only a small piece (although the Aleppo Room is a large fragment) of taste, which had many variations of cultural knowledge practised as a fine, orchestrated and reciprocally enriching matrix. After Gell, this matrix "… encompasses 'all those technical strategies, especially art, music, dances, rhetoric, gifts etc., which human beings employ in order to secure the acquiescence of other people in their intentions or projects'".[58] One may group the single elements of this matrix into two clusters. Many of them are tangible things such as those we hold in museums: garments and clothing, furnishing and fixtures, jewellery, books, cups and certainly blue-and-white ceramics, as well as architectural settings with interiors, specifically shaped parlours and houses, gardens and urban layout. Many of the tangible things are objects of consumption, part of a whole system of behaviour and possessions. Recent trends in consumption studies have tackled consumption as the marker of cultural reference (which objects were admired? Persian silks or a garment from Manchester? Were they used as tools of conspicuous consumption in a process of status-seeking or to furnish a life as part of a self-reflective attribution of objects?).[59]

Intangible things – and for us today these are more difficult to trace – are elements of cultivation such as knowledge (poems etc.), body language and manners (e.g. the use of a knife and fork, or the way in which one drinks tea or coffee), speech and habits, as well as the creation of specific atmospheres (cooling and warming), through smell (perfume, incense or flowers) and sound (music, the sounds of birds and water). They are single parts that refer to each other, while having a relationship to the whole, relating across different media. Often intangible elements and tangible elements are causatively interlinked (e.g. incense burners and poetic inscriptions). As individual elements, they form a very complex

system of lifestyle-indexing that is displayed as a multi-sensual experience, as a concert, in pre-set surroundings of time and space.

In the Aleppo Room, fine fabrics and probably fine blue-and-white ceramics formed part of the upper-class lifestyle (in this case, of a Christian merchant in Aleppo), in which social relations were negotiated by a sense of style and taste. It displays and embodies with all its different inscriptions and painted scenes the dimensions of the cultural landscape of Aleppo in around 1600.[60] The single elements of paintings (from Ottoman, Armenian and Persian repertoires), poetry (such as the love story "Layla and Majnun"), religion (the Last Supper, dervishes etc.) and courtly scenes – a cosmographic totality with animals, zodiac scenes and fantastic creatures – were citations from different categories of knowledge used to open up in front of the guest current cultural horizons. Single elements, such as the beautifully painted qilins, were not received as part of a stylistic development – as we often describe them in art history – but as mystical but familiar creatures, elements from the historical reality of the time.[61] Painted depictions and texts of common wisdom, poetry and religion were ready to be cited by visitors keen to demonstrate their level of cultivation.

Fig. 2.5: Painted wooden wall panelling of the Aleppo Room, designed for an upper-class household in Aleppo, Syria, in 1600/01 and 1603. The detail shows a deer–qilin representing the mystical Sirenia. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin.

Fig. 2.6: Visitors to a private parlour in Aleppo. (Alexander Russell, 1794, *The Natural History of Aleppo ...*, p. 102)

   To create an aura of dignity and lordliness (which in the Aleppo Room was supported by the prominent depiction of courtly scenes) and to communicate through the exercising of cultivation social position, one needs to be situated in the right place in the hierarchic seating arrangement of the room, holding the cup of coffee between the tips of the fingers (leaving the left hand to drop casually) and choosing the correct words (vocabulary, syntax, content, timing and tone of voice). The owner was responsible for creating the right atmosphere, achieved through lighting and the architectural setting.[62] The objects that formed part of the setting (the ceramics, carpets, books, clothes, etc.) are indices of a distinguished lifestyle. More or less contemporary is Mustafa 'Ali's description of consumer objects that would have discriminated the different strata of society in another major Arab Ottoman city. In Aleppo the arrangement was accompanied by the smell of jasmine and oranges and the noise of water, overall making it a sensuous experience. Architectural constructions were understood as sensational spaces, and the planning process often included a consideration of smell and sound.[63] This visual and sensual atmosphere of tangible and intangible elements was displayed to distinguish the *habitus* of its owner *vis-à-vis* his guests who, at least twice a day, were probably discussing business, social affairs and even politics in the room.[64]

   Cultural refinement, expressed in the good taste of its time and exercised in "private parlours", was of particular importance to stratify less institutionalised pre-modern

societies. If aesthetic objects form an index that is used by another system of signs as a carrier-system of meaning (here of cultural capital), it is not only pleasure that the visitor to the room will experience. The display of correct taste was one element the notables of the city had to acknowledge: taste is part of the battle over social status, political power and economic success.[65] Aleppo and many other cities of the Middle East can be proud to have achieved that on such a high cultural level. However, while discussing processes of social interaction through taste, we should not forget that this concert of things was – for whatever reason – also made for enjoyment, and obviously touches on sensual, positive experiences that transcend time and specific locations. As our survey showed, the Aleppo Room is by far the most beloved object among our visitors – in 2011 alone more than 732,000 visitors found their way into the Museum of Islamic Art. One reason for this is that architectural elements give the most complete sensual experience, to such an extent that the Mshatta façade, the prayer niches and the Alhambra dome are four of the five favourites. This, and out of a cultural and chronological vicinity, the Aleppo Room touches people; it probably taps also something universally human. Today, as we experience fragments from the past, we enjoy them as pure pleasure even without understanding the specific cultural codes or the whole *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), which is definitely lost. This is the very enchantment that cannot be described but only experienced. The defined qualities of an object will guide us to an arrangement that elicits maximum sensual experience while showing us where and how a deeper contextual understanding should be sought.

Conclusion

The focus here has been on the concert of things, chosen in order to explore some of the visual avenues objects possess as a part of a wider understanding of historical aesthetics. Certainly the meanings of objects could be further widened. What things were valued? Which things mattered? What made taste change? To understand things that matter, one may explore the relationships between people and their objects in different Muslim societies. Research into libraries and inheritance records of the Ottoman world is one recent development that seeks to examine the property of the diverse social strata.[66] A special role – another field for future research – is played by the valuable gifts given as part of social networking. These objects embody the social relationships of the day through which objects changed ownership. They served as the ties that bound and which were material symbols of social relationships in a network of connections.[67] As discussed above, objects may develop an agency by way of charged value, which could be the appreciation of a certain age, implications of an earlier belonging, function, aesthetic merits, technical excellence (combined with knowledge transfer) and the material and its enhancement (for example, light shining through rock crystal) – to name only a few. Gell gives the

object/index itself an agency, but maybe it is better to say that objects are charged with agency by their making and reception.[68]

When it is not based on the object's material characteristics, this value is added and changes over time. The social life of things – how they were used and handled and were charged with meaning – wrote the biography of objects: "... in which the object may not only assume a number of different identities as imported wealth, ancestral valuable or commodity but may also 'interact' with people who gaze upon it, use it and try to possess it".[69] The museum lives of objects are part of these biographies. Most objects of Islamic art are not made to stay in their place of origin, but to be handled and traded, and often to traverse large distances. Travel is by intention an implemented part of their life story. The "social life of things" is often very much connected to the trajectories of their use through generations and recontextualisation:

> It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculation that enliven things. Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context.

This is most visible with Fatimid (909–1171) rock crystals and their use in church treasuries. They have always been appreciated for their beauty in their place of origin and in the secondary user-contexts of church treasuries or palaces in Europe. The most spectacular example is the sensational find of a rare rock crystal ewer, which went on auction at an estimated £100 to £200 in Somerset, England, as a French claret jug of the late nineteenth century. A few people in the know noticed that it must be some 900 years older. Seen again at auction in 2008 at Christie's, London, the hammer fell at a completely different price when the de Unger family acquired it.[71] The ewer – like many other rock crystals – is in itself a hybrid object due to its biography. Hollowed out to a thickness of only 1 or 2 mm, almost certainly in Cairo some time between 975 and 1025, it stands 30 cm high and shows a stylised cheetah with a chain around its neck, a symbolic attribute of courtly life, as cheetahs were used for the princely pastime of hunting. The ewer was a luxury item made for the upper stratum of Fatimid society, which at its height was the richest state in the Mediterranean. In the Fatimid palace alone, 90 of these ewers existed though only 9 others have survived, all of them in European contexts. At the peak of Fatimid power, rock crystals were already being imported to Europe, where they were appreciated as extraordinarily precious objects, as the cup and plate on the pulpit commissioned in 1014 by Heinrich II for Aachen Cathedral shows. The roles and meanings of some of the many dozens of surviving Fatimid rock crystals – ewers or small vessels and objects – changed when they entered church treasuries. Here they became hybrid objects by way of their integration into a new *objet d'art* (reliquary or ambo) and were then overwritten with new meanings, often accompanied by physical alterations.[72] The rock crystal ewer in question

became instead part of a private collection, where new mounts were added in the mid-nineteenth century, by the important lapidary Jean-Valentin Morel (1794–1860). This extremely rare object will still wander after its stop over at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, and will change its meaning again when it moves to the next chapter of its life.[73]

Telling these stories while neglecting to communicate concepts of beauty – including material, form, technique and design – would be a lost chance. Elaborating on the form, technique and design without mentioning the embedded stories would be a missed opportunity as well. Visitors appreciate "narratives of art", and aesthetic appreciation is also part of the story. Presentation of objects should not be determined only by aesthetic experience or by features immanent to the production of the object – such as dating, origin, shape, material and technique. Presenting a masterpiece of Riemenschneider – a master of materiality – without context or only framed by religion, would be a negligent undervaluation.[74] Considering museums' exhibitions, there are many choices as to the presentation of objects, despite their different qualities. The definition of objects as art as such does not exclude any possibilities: no art object exists without historical and cultural context. Object and context inform each other. Beyond the aesthetic value and the pleasure an object gives, it is contextualisation above all that provides today's viewers with the means to understand as well its other values. In the case of the communication of Islamic art and cultural history, it is important that the visitor experiences an object not (only) as something beautiful and alien but as something from of a specific sphere of life, which the museum must help them to comprehend.

The different layers and qualities of objects I have discussed here are certainly too complex to communicate to the visitor in the few minutes we have their attention. Also, the gallery space needs to be a very carefully orchestrated concert of things. How will this look in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin? I'm not sure I know yet: we have much to learn from other museums to develop our ideas, which we will then test. For this reason, I am extremely happy that the opening of the new galleries is scheduled for 2019.

Notes

Introduction

1   Thus we were missing many close colleagues, among others Julian Raby and Massumeh Farhad from the Freer and Sackler Gallery in Washington; Sophie Makariou and her team with their innovative approach at the Louvre; Tim Stanley, Mariam Rosser-Owen and Moya Carey from the V&A in London; Sheila Canby and Nevina Haidar and their team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Linda Komaroff from the Los Angeles County Museum; Karin Ådahl from the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm; Nazan Ölçer at the Sabancı, the representatives of the Türk ve Islam Müzesi, Topkapı-Sarai Müzesi and the museums connected to the Koç-Family like the Pera Müzesi or Hülya Bilgi from the small pearl of the Sadberg Hanım Müsezi; Shaikha Hussa with her long experience in Kuwait (Dar al-Athar al-Islamiya) and Mina Moraitar from the beautiful Benaki Museum in Athens and our colleagues from Brussels and Lisbon.

1. The Role of the Museum in the Study and Knowledge of Islamic Art

1   The exhibition *Taswir – Pictorial Mappings of Islam and Modernity* (5 November 2009 to 18 January 2010 at the Martin Gropius Bau) was curated by Almut Sh. Bruckstein Çoruh and Hendrik Budde.

2   Herzfeld, Ernst, "Die Genesis der islamischen Kunst und das Mshatta-Problem", *Der Islam* 1 (1910), 27–63, 105–144.

3   The exhibition *The Song of the World – Iranian Safavid Art, 1501–1736* (5 October 2007 to 7 January 2008) was curated by Souren Melikian-Chirvani.

2. A Concert of Things:
Thoughts on Objects of Islamic Art in the Museum Context

1   In his discussion on the newly opened galleries of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, New York (1974). Grabar, Oleg, "Islamic Art and Beyond", *Vol. III, Constructing the Study of Islamic Art*, Hampshire, 2006, p. 16; chapter 2 is a reprint of Oleg Grabar, "An Art of the Object", *Artforum* 14 (March 1976), pp. 36–43. See also Komaroff, Linda, "Exhibiting the Middle East: Collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art", *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000), p. 4.

2   See Christine Gerbich, in this volume.

3   This general critique is, of course, not applicable to all museums of Islamic art, and certainly not to the same extent. In the last two decades there have been enormous efforts to elaborate exhibition approaches. However, in general, this critique accounts for the exhibition concepts of the second half of the twentieth century. Without being comprehensive, I will name a few examples of museum approaches in the following pages. The process of making museums of Islamic art is not yet that well documented or researched. Next to the history of our museum, by far the best documented example of a recent re-making of an Islamic art gallery is the Jameel Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum, cf. Crill, Rosemary and Tim Stanley eds, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London/New York, (2004); "Jameel's Gift: The New Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London", *HALI* no. 147 (2006), pp. 29–33, cf. footnote

13. The most comprehensive overviews are provided by: Linda Komaroff's edited articles in *Ars Orientalis*, 30 (2000); Kröger, Jens and Désirée Heiden eds, *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen. 100 Jahre Museum für Islamische Kunst Berlin*, Berlin 2004; Vernoit, Stephen ed, *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, London/New York 2000; and articles in *Museum International* (Islamic Collections), 51, 203 (1999). See also Roxburgh, David J., "Staging the Orient – A Historical Overview from the Late 1880s to Today", in Chris Dercon and Avinoam Shalem eds, *The Future of Tradition – The Tradition of the Future: 100 Years After the Exhibition 'Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art' in Munich*, and other articles in that volume.

4   For Islamic art collections in Germany, see: Gierlichs, Joachim and Annette Hagedorn eds, *Islamische Kunst in Deutschland*, Mainz 2004; Hagedorn, Annette, "The Development of Islamic Art History in Germany in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century", in Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*, pp. 117–127; Helmecke, Gisela, "Historisches zu Sammlern und Vermittlern islamischer Kunst in Berlin", in Kröger and Heiden, *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen,* pp. 18–26. See also Kröger, Jens, "Vom Sammeln islamischer Kunst zum Museum für Islamische Kunst", in Kröger and Heiden, *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen*, pp. 32–55. An overview is also given by some exhibitions that have focused on Islamic art in Germany, cf. Gesellschaft der Freunde Islamischer Kunst und Kultur ed, *Islamische Kunst aus privaten Sammlungen in Deutschland*, Munich 2000; Haase, Claus-Peter, Jens Kröger and Ursula Lienert eds, *Oriental Splendour: Islamic Art from German Private Collections*, Hamburg 1993. About the beginning of German museums in general, see Grote, Andreas ed., *Macrocosmos in Microcosmo. Die Welt in der Stube. Zur Geschichte des Sammelns 1450 bis 1800*, Opladen 1994; Savoy, Bénédicte ed., *Tempel der Kunst. Die Entstehung des öffentlichen Museums in Deutschland 1701–1815*, Mainz 2006, and Joachimides, Alexis*, Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940*, Dresden 2001. Many Islamic art collections and museums have published beautiful catalogues that I do not intend to present here. For an overview of Islamic art collections see Ådahl, Karin and Mikael Ahlund, *Islamic Art Collections: An International Survey*, Richmond, VA 1999.

5   Cf. Mason, R., "Cultural Theory and Museum Studies", in: S. MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Oxford 2006.

6   Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean, "Culture and Meaning in the Museum", in *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London 2000, p. 5. My additions [in brackets]. Cf. also Baxandall, Michael, "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects", in: I. Karp and S. D. Lavine eds, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington, DC 1991, p. 36.

7   For almost a century now Samarra has been held up as a key complex for the discussion on stylistic developments in Islamic art history; this is since the first report by Ernst Herzfeld, *Erster vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen von Samarra*, Berlin 1912, p. 16ff, and in more detail, see Herzfeld, Ernst, *Der Wandschmuck von Samarra und seine Ornamentik, Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra I*, Forschungen zur islamischen Kunst 2, 1, Berlin 1923; also Dimand, Maurice S., "Studies in Islamic Ornament. II: The Origin of the Second Style of Samarra Decoration", in George C. Miles ed., *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, New York, 1952, p. 62ff.

8   The connection of the Islamic Art Museum in Berlin to classical antiquities and the ancient Middle East goes back to an emotional discussion of the early twentieth century and is closely connected to the definition of the Mshatta façade as a monument of Islamic art. Wilhelm von Bode was not satisfied with the temporary exhibition of the façade in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum and thus initiated a Museum for Asian Art in the suburb of Dahlem where the building afforded ample space for the large façade. Due to the First World War, the building was never finished. After 1918, Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933), an innovative scholar of Islam and Prussian Minister of Culture, argued strongly against a Museum for Asian Art being situated far away from the centre and called for the Museum of Islamic Art to be placed in the Pergamon Museum due to its direct connection to antiquities and its position as their heir. Becker based his arguments about material culture in early Islam directly on the studies of Herzfeld; cf. Becker, Carl Heinrich, "Das Problem Islam", *Der Islam* 1 (1910), p. 17ff. (in the same issue Herzfeld published his groundbreaking research on Mshatta, while Kühnel reports on

the 1910 exhibition in Munich); cf. on the argument with Bode: Otto, Sigrid, "W. v. Bode-Journal eines tätigen Lebens", in *W. v. Bode, Museumsdirektor und Mäzen. Wilhelm Bode zum 150. Geburtstag*. Der Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein, Berlin, 1995, p. 43. For the history of the presentation of the Mshatta façade see Volkmar Enderlein and Michael Meinecke, "Graben – Forschen – Präsentieren. Probleme der Darstellung vergangener Kulturen am Beispiel der Mschatta-Fassade", in *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin N.F.* 34 (1992), p. 161ff.

9   Nicely summarised by Adel T. Adamova, "Permanent Exhibitions: A Variety of Approaches", *Museum International* (Islamic Collections), 203, 51 (1999), pp. 4–10. The case of the Hermitage with its outstanding collection of Islamic art is an interesting exception; without dedicated galleries of Islamic art, the collection is arranged into medieval art of cultural regions, or cultural areas such as "the culture and art of central Asia".

10   Cf. Minges, Klaus, *Das Sammlungswesen der frühen Neuzeit. Kriterien der Ordnung und Spezialisierung*, Münster 1998.

11   "Crossroads of Art and Culture" is the storyline of the newly reopened Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford (2009). Not so much the room on Islamic art, but Room 28 "Asian Crossroads" or the room on the Mediterranean develops the theme extensively. The recently opened ceramic galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum develop the theme whenever it becomes a topic to show the flow of technique and taste for the Islamic material. Some museums have developed attributed showcases or dedicated areas on this topic. The British Museum, for example, dedicated a showcase to themes of crosscultural China, lustre ware and other themes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, to name another, presents in its interims exhibition on the balcony a large showcase the Islamic relationship with China in their interim display (closed since 2003; the new galleries, just opened in October 2011, are not yet referred to here). The Brooklyn Museum's "Arts of the Islamic World" galleries have an entire room dedicated to the Silk Road at the intersection link to Asian Art. See Ladan Akbarnia in this volume.

12   See our proposed chronological system in this volume. In a slightly different way, the chronological order of grouping different dynasties into a system of periods will form the basis for the chronological approach of the Islamic art galleries at the Louvre.

13   Brilliant work is done by different museums in the Anglo-Saxon world. Very good examples are the Education and Interpretation units at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. See for example: Fakatseli, Olga and Julia Sachs, *The Jameel Gallery of the Islamic Middle East – Summative Evaluation Report*, London 2008 (available at http://www.vam.ac.uk/files/file_upload/47897_file.pdf [accessed 24/3/2011]). See also Moussouri, Theano and Juliette Fritsch, *Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art Front-end Evaluation Report*, London, 2004 (available at http://www.vam.ac.uk/files/file_upload/17175_file.pdf [accessed 24/3/2011]), and Yousuf, Nighat, "Gallery Interpretation", in Crill and Stanley, *The Making of the Jameel Gallery*, pp. 124–139; cf. Hartmut, John and Anja Dauschek, *Museen neu denken. Perspektiven der Kulturvermittlung und Zielgruppenarbeit*, Bielefeld 2008.

14   See Baker, Malcolm, "Bode and Museum Display: The Arrangement of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum and the South Kensington Response", *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 38 (1996), pp. 143–155.

15   This was also due to the fact that in 2001 an interim exhibition was arranged in the gallery while building work was in progress. For a period of about ten years, therefore, the gallery showed a collection united by their shared status as "objects of primary importance". For the change of approaches – also towards Samarra – see also Jens Kröger, "The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst', its Protagonists and its Consequences for the Display of Islamic Art in Berlin", in Andrea Lermer and Avinoam Shalem eds, *One Hundred Years After: The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' Reconsidered*, Leiden 2010, pp. 65–116; cf. also Kröger in this volume. In the recent discussion on the impact of concepts and modernistic aesthetics of the 1910 exhibition, I would argue that the minimising concept with the isolation of the object from any contextual setting started in 1910 in the light of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, was behind the concept of the new installations of the Berlin Islamic Art galleries in 1932, but was largely an outcome of the post-war aesthetics of the 1950s and, especially, the 1960s. For the 1910 exhibition compare Ernst Kühnel, "Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München" *Der Islam*, 1 (1910), p. 15; pp. 182–194; pp. 369–384, and the

recent scholarship by Jens Kröger, "The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst'", in Lermer and Shalem, *One Hundred Years After*, pp. 65–116; Roxburgh, David J., "Au Bonheur des Amateurs: Collecting and Exhibiting Islamic Art, *c.*1880–1910", *Ars Orientalis*, 30 (2000), pp. 9–38; Roxburgh, David J., "Against Fairytale Splendour: The Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' in Historical Perspective", in Lermer and Shalem, *One Hundred Years After*, pp. 359–386; Troelenberg, Eva-Maria, *Eine Ausstellung wird besichtigt, Die Münchener "Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst" 1910 in kultur und wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Frankfurt am Main 2011, p. 336ff. For the different approaches applied since 1904 see Désirée Heiden, "Ausstellungskonzeptionen zur Präsentation islamischer Kunst. Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum – Pergamonmuseum – Museum Dahlem", in Jens Kröger and Désirée Heiden eds, *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen – 100 Jahre Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin,* Berlin 2004, pp. 123–36; cf. footnotes 30 and 31 also.

16   Among others, Oleg Grabar's introduction to the *Dictionary of Art* article on Islamic art, vol. 16, 1996, pp. 99–102; Grabar, Oleg, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art", *Muqarnas,* vol. 1, 1983, pp. 1–14; Grabar, Oleg, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven/London, 1975 and 1987, p. 72ff; Blair, Sheila and Jonathan Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field", *The Art Bulletin*, 85, 1 (2003), pp. 152–184 (mainly pp. 152–153); Hees, Syrinx von, "Ist die islamische kunst eine oberflächliche Ornamentkunst?", *Plurale. Zeitschrift für Denkversionen. Nullnummer: Oberflächen*, 2002, pp. 71–86; Necipoğlu, Gülru, "L'idée de décor dans les régimes de visualité islamiques", in Rémi Labrusse ed, *Purs décors? Arts de l'Islam, regards du XIXe siècle. Collections des Arts Décoratifs*, exh. cat., Paris 2007, pp. 10–23; Vernoit, Stephen, "The Rise of Islamic Archaeology", *Muqarnas*, 14, (1997), pp. 1–10.

17   Interesting exceptions are – by nature – the recently opened galleries like the Gallery of Islamic Art, Cinquantenaire, at the Royal Museums of Art And History in Brussels, with brilliant short films; the precious "jewel box" of the David Collection in Copenhagen with interactive applications for coinage and an interactive information board, as well as very helpful contextual films at the Jameel Gallery of the Islamic Middle East at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. There are probably many more in the United States, that I have not visited yet. In Berlin, the process was begun with the excellent application of the Aleppo Room by Thomas Bremer, Julia Gonnella and Karin Schmidl in 1997, and recently by our audio-visual supported "living room" at the Keir Collection (2010).

18   Given the character of the collection, some museums work with architectural elements directly as contextual framing. Presenting objects as part of an architectural/archaeological setting is much appreciated by visitors, and is applied quite differently among the different institutions. Next to the Pergamon Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art is the strongest in presenting cultures in architectural settings. The Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon is similar in its approach to the Islamic galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Islamic Art Museum, Cairo, the Gallery of Islamic Art in Brussels, or the Jameel Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Benaki Museum in Athens, all present single architectural elements. Most museums follow an object-based presentation due to the nature of their collection or spatial constraints. The renovated Islamic galleries of the Detroit Institute of Arts recreated architectural elements to provide context. The Islamic galleries at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, as well as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, stand out by way of their focus on the single object as a monument (which they certainly are), and which in Doha is especially enhanced by a very strong design concept.

19   Grabar, Oleg, "The Implications of Collecting Islamic Art", in Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*, p. 197. See also Komaroff, *Exhibiting the Middle East*; Rogers, Michael, *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection*, Alexandria, VA 1995, pp. 15–23; Roxburgh, *Au Bonheur des Amateurs*, especially footnote 20.

20   See Mestyan, Adam, "Arabic Lexicography and European Aesthetics: The Origin of *Fann*", *Muqarnas* 28 (2011), pp. 69-100.

21   On calligraphers and theory see Qadi Aḥmad Qumi, *Calligraphers and Painters/A Treatise by Qāḍī Ahmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī (c.b.1015/d.1606)*, translated and published by V. Minorsky, Washington, DC 1959, and Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Callig-*

raphers and Painters, Leiden 2001. For theories on ornament in history (with the relevant literature) see Necipoğlu, *L'idée de décor*, p. 12ff, and also by her, *The Topkapı Scroll – Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture*, Santa Monica, CA 1995, p. 91ff; p. 217ff.

22   See for the Masters of Kashan lustre pottery I have mentioned, the various publications by Blair and Watson: summarising and with further references, Blair, "A Brief Biography of Abu Zayd", *Muqarnas*, 25 (2008), pp. 155–176; Watson, Oliver, *Persian Lustre Ware*, London 1985, p. 178 f.n; 197ff.

23   One example of this very common definition: Korn, Lorenz, *Geschichte der islamischen Kunst*, Munich, 2008, p. 8.

24   Compare the articles of Gudrun Krämer, Beshara Doumani and Christian Sassmannshausen in this volume.

25   Ettinghausen, Richard, "The Flowering of Seljuq Art", *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970), pp. 113–131. A relatively simple, but to my eye effective, way to show geographical diversity, are the media stations at the Jameel Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

26   For Orientalist approaches see: Vernoit, Stephen ed, *Discovering Islamic Art. Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, London/New York, 2000, and in the same volume, especially, Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, c.1850–1950", pp. 1–61; Hackforth-Jones, Jocelyn and Mary Roberts eds, *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*, Malden/Oxford, 2005; Çelik, Zeynep, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs,* Berkeley, CA 1992.

27   Sarre, Friedrich and Fredrik Martin eds, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910*, 3 vols, Munich, 1912.

28   Kühnel, "Ausstellung von Meisterwerken", p. 183f., emphasis added, my translation. Here after Troelenberg, *Eine Ausstellung wird besichtigt*, p. 123.

29   Cf. Klonk, Charlotte, *Spaces of Experience, Art Gallery Interiors from 1800–2000*, New Haven, CT/London 2009, pp. 120–125; Grasskamp, Walter, "Die weiße Ausstellungswand: zur Vorgeschichte des 'White Cube'", in Wolfgang Ullrich and Juliane Vogel eds, *Weiß*, Frankfurt am Main 2003, pp. 29–63.

30   Butz, Herbert, *Wege und Wandel. 100 Jahre Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst* (with contributions by Wolfgang Klose and Hartmut Walravens), Berlin 2006. Otto Kümmel, "Die Abteilung für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berliner Museen", in *Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 45, 3 (1924), pp. 50–58.

31   On the development of that period cf. footnote 15 and Komaroff, *Exhibiting the Middle East*; for New York, see Jenkins-Madina, Marilyn, "Collecting the 'Orient' at the Met: Early Tastemakers in America", *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000), pp. 69–89. As Kröger argues in his contribution to this volume, it was Ernst Kühnel's 17 rooms of Islamic Art, with its roots in 1932, that allowed for the first time a systematic chronological walk through the cultural history of Muslim societies, presented in a neutral setting with white walls "… and numerous larger architectural elements that transmitted to the public an idea of the monumentality of Islamic art". The international reputation of the Pergamon Museum is based mainly on the concept of "museum architecture in service for the museum's architectural pieces" with its theatrical presentation of its major monuments; cf. Bernau, Nikolaus, *Die Berliner Museumsinsel*, Berlin 2006 and Bernau, "Die Architektursäle des Pergamonmuseums. Ein Denkmal deutscher Architekturgeschichte", in Stefan Altekamp, Mathias René Hofter, Michael Krumme eds, *Posthumanistische klassische Archäologie. Historizität und Wissenschaftlichkeit von Interessen und Methoden*, Munich 2001, pp. 461–472. This inspired numerous other museum installations such as, most significantly, the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Yuka Kadoi is currently working on the legacy of Arthur Pope in Chicago, who is especially influential in the American context; cf. so far, Wood, Barry D, "'A Great Symphony of Pure Form': The 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art and its Influence", in *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000), pp. 113–131. See also Rabbat in this volume.

32   See Mary McWilliams' article in this volume. At the moment this is changing rapidly with increasingly individual installation concepts ranging between pure aestheticising design, such as the breathtaking Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, to the mixed concepts of the primarily very aesthetically designed Jameel Gallery of the Islamic Middle East at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the very strong design of the Islamic Art Gallery in Brussels with its many integrated museological tools.

Many architectural elements are presented beautifully at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, which reopened in 2010, as well as the 2011 reopened Islamic galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (based on the prominent architectural elements from Nishapour, the Damascus Room and a modern Moroccan-style room, which presents the excellent and still flourishing craftsmanship of the Maghreb; my thanks to Sheila Canby and Nevina Haidar for sharing their plans with me). All of these galleries apply different colour codes and design elements. The recently reopened Islamic galleries of the Detroit Institute of Arts applied a new colour scheme based on those from the Muslim world. Design is in many cases not used as "communication design" but beautifying design. An entirely new and strong communication design was applied at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and on a level of its own, at the Madinat al-Zahra Museum in Cordoba, Spain. The new Louvre galleries scheduled for 2012, based on an extravagant design at the Cour Visconti, certainly will add a new highlight to the new and refurbished museums I have briefly sketched here.

33   This applies in full consequence and overwhelming success at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, where the barriers for traditional non-museum audiences – often in the middle and lower income strata – have been lowered by application of different aesthetics that match the visual language of wider social groups; cf. O'Neill, Mark, "The Good Enough Visitor", in Richard Sandell ed, *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London, 2002, pp. 24–40. In contrast, the abovementioned Musée du Quai Branly focuses on traditional Museum audiences through their gallery aesthetics very successfully (stripped of its cultural and colonial context). Regarding the section of society that visits our galleries in Berlin, see Christine Gerbich, *Experimentierfeld Museologie: Ergebnisse der Besucherbefragung am Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin im September–Oktober 2009*, Berlin 2010, p. 8ff; p. 13f available at http://freunde-islamische-kunst-pergamonmuseum.de/das-museum [accessed 23/02/2011].

34   Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford 1998, p. 3ff; Rampley, Matthew, "Art History and Cultural Difference: Alfred Gell's Anthropology of Art", *Art History* 28, 4 (2005), p. 526. Even the seemingly objective presentation of an object's aesthetic through the "white cube" concept is an active communication of certain aesthetics, as Kamel argues in her critique; cf. Kamel, Susan, *Wege zur Vermittlung von Religionen in Berliner Museen. Black Kaaba meets White Cube*, Wiesbaden, 2004.

35   Cf. for the development of the new designs in nineteenth-century Damascus: Weber, Stefan, "Damascus, Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918)", *Aarhus,* 1 (2009), p. 259ff; p. 276ff; p. 321ff; p. 415.

36   It is commendable that Valerie Gonzales was one of the first to incorporate these theoretical writings into modern theory, but she applied them ahistorically to different contexts. Before this, Doris Behrens-Abouseif had developed this in a more complex range of fields of beauty in Arab culture on the basis of different authors and disciplines of art. For this approach of a historical cross-referenced reading of theoretical thinking see Gülru Necipoğlu, who, based on her deep understanding of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, incorporates the different sources of that time into fields of practice, combining literary sources and expressions in physical objects of art and architecture, to illustrate *Zeitgeist* and elements of social interaction. This approach avoids the traps of culturalistic essentialism. Cf. Gonzalez, Valerie, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture*, London, 2001, p. 14ff; Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, Munich, 1998; Necipoğlu, Gülru, *L'idée de décor*, p. 11ff; cf. footnote 54 and her *The Topkapı Scroll*, p. 131ff; for a case study see her, "From International Timurid to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth-Century Ceramic Tiles", *Muqarnas,* 7 (1990), pp. 136–170. See also Grabar, Oleg, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton, NJ 1992; Kermani, Navid, *Gott ist schön. Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran*, Munich, 2007; for lack of proper art doctrines, compare Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven, CT/London 1975 and 1987, p. 72ff, and especially, p. 78ff.

37   See as a much welcomed introduction: Irwin, Robert, *Islamic Art in Context*, New York, 1997.

38   Blair and Bloom, *The Mirage of Islamic Art*, p. 158ff.

39   After Hooper-Greenhill, *Culture and Meaning*, p. 11.

40   A very helpful sourcebook is Annemarie Schimmel, *Stern und Blume – die Bilderwelt der persischen Poesie,* Wiesbaden, 1984.

41   I develop this more extensively elsewhere; cf. Weber, *Damascus*, vol. I, p. 468ff.

42   Svašek, Maruška, *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production*, London, 2007, p. 15.

43   Gell, *Art and Agency*, Chapter 6; see also "Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps", *Journal of Material Culture*, 1 (1996), pp. 15–39; Kuechler, Susanne, *Anthropology of Art: Aesthetics and Agency, Key Theoretical Debates,* London 2008; and Rampley, *Art History and Cultural Difference*; Osborne, Robin and Jeremy Tanner eds, *Art's Agency and Art History*, Malden/Oxford, 2007.

44   Gell, *Art and* Agency, see especially Chapter 7.

45   Hoskins, Janet, "Agency, Biography and Objects", in Chris Tilley, Webb Kane, Susan Kuechler, Mike Rowlands, Patricia Spyer, *Handbook of Material Culture*, London 2006, p. 75ff; compare Hoskins, Janet, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*, New York 1998.

46   Rampley, *Art History and Cultural Difference,* p. 538.

47   This is one focus of research at our museum, for example, in the Tripoli project from the point of view of the historian Christian Sassmannshausen in this volume; from an art historical perspective, so far: Philipps, Amanda, "Little-Known Ottoman Block-printed Textiles in the Oxford Ashmolean Museum", in Geza David and Ibolya Gerelyes, *13th Annual International Congress of Turkish Art*, Budapest 2010, pp. 593–608, and through the questions of an apologist: Abou-Hodeib, Toufoul, "Taste and Class in Late Ottoman Beirut", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 2 (2011), forthcoming. See also Bodenstein, Ralph*, Domestizierter Wandel. Wohnhaus und bürgerliche Wohnkultur in Beirut zwischen Osmanisierung, Europäisierung und sozialem Wandel, 1860–1930,* (Berliner Beiträge zur Bauforschung und Denkmalpflege), Petersberg 2011.

48   Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, New York/London 1986, p. 173.

49   See Leach, Neil, "Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space", in Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: a Sense of Place*, Hants 2005, pp. 297–311, and in the same volume, Dovey, Kim, "The Silent Complicity of Architecture", pp. 283–296. For our context, I would exchange "places of belonging" with "taste of belonging".

50   On the concept: Bourdieu, Pierre, "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital", in Reinhard Kreckel, *Soziale Ungleichheiten* (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2), Göttingen 1983, pp. 183–198.

51   Barthes, Roland, *Elements of Semiology*, London, 1967, p. 9.

52   Weber, *Damascus,* vol. I, p. 399ff.

53   A well-studied example is the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when taste and manners distinguished the old elite from the new upcoming middle class in England. See Styles, John and Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, Yale 2006. For the social change of the long nineteenth century, Bryden, Inga and Janet Floyd eds, *Domestic Space: Reading the Interior in Nineteenth-Century Britain and America*, Manchester 1999; for Beirut see Ralph Bodenstein who followed the process in nineteenth-century Beirut in detail, *Domestizierter Wandel,* and see Weber, *Damascus,* vol. I, p. 399ff.

54   Gülru Necipoğlu demonstrates impressively the formulation of the Ottoman sixteenth-century style in *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, London 2005 especially from p. 103ff; see also her *From International Timurid to Ottoman.*

55   Tietze, Andreas, "Mustafā ʿĀlī on Luxury and the Status Symbols of Ottoman Gentlemen", Aldo Galotta and Ugo Marazzi eds, *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexii Bombaci Dicata*, Naples 1982, p. 579; cf. for further reading, Tietze, Andreas, *Transcription and Annotated Translation of Description of Cairo by Mustafa Ali, 1599*, Vienna 1975. On Mustafa ʿAli, see Fleischer, Cornell, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)*, Princeton, NJ 1986. Gülru Necipoğlu discusses this in her chapter "Codes of Decorum" in *Age of Sinan*, p. 115ff, and may I thank her for this reference.

56   Tietze, "Mustafā ʿĀlī", p. 579; p. 581.

57   "Nevertheless, in the time of the Ottoman state, these concepts are not valid and the distinction of the materials of high and low classes does not have an effect on the tongues of the merchants." Tietze, "Mustafā ʿĀlī", p. 581.

58   Rampley, *Art History and Cultural Difference*, p. 531.

59   Quataert, Donald, *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922*, New York

2000; Russell, Mona, "Modernity, National Identity, and Consumerism: Visions of the Egyptian Home, 1805–1922", in Relli Shechter ed., *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East: Houses in Motion*, New York 2003, pp. 37–62, and Exertzoglou, Haris, "The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th Century", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 35 (2003), pp. 77–101; Faroqhi, Suraiya and Christoph K. Neumann eds, *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity,* Istanbul 2004.

60 Gonnella, Julia, *Ein christlich-orientalisches Wohnhaus des 17. Jahrhunderts aus Aleppo (Syrien). Das "Aleppo-Zimmer" im Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, Mainz 1996, and the many interesting articles in Julia Gonnella and Jens Kröger eds, *Angels, Peonies, and Fabulous Creatures: The Aleppo Room in Berlin*, Münster, 2008.

61 Karin Rührdanz demonstrates nicely how the deer qilin can be seen as Sirenia and the lion qilin as the mystical creature Sannaja, living in Tibet. The interpretation of the cosmographic world reception is based on Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini's *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt* (Marvels of Creatures and Strange Things Existing); Rührdanz, Karin, "Fabeltiere des Aleppo-Zimmers vor dem Hintergrund der Illustration naturhistorischer Kompendien", in Gonnella and Kröger, *Angels, Peonies, and Fabulous Creatures*, pp. 47–51. For al-Qazwini, *Die Wunder des Himmels und der Erde*, (trans. Alma Giese). For an in-depth study: Hees, Syrinx von, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des Weltbildes. Qazwinis Wunder der Schöpfung – eine Naturkunde des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden, 2002. See as well for its dimension in the visual language of our setting: Berlekamp, Persis, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, Yale 2011.

62 The architectural setting itself was a concert of elements of which some parts, like the water fountain, were "must haves". For shapes and the development of *qaʿa*s, see: David, Jean-Claude, "La *qaʿa* de la maison Wakil à Alep: origine d'un nouveau modèle d'espace domestique", in Gonnella and Kröger eds, *Angels, Peonies, and Fabulous Creatures,* pp. 55–69; Weber, Stefan, "The Making of an Ottoman Harbor Town, Sidon/Saida from the 16th to the 18th Centuries", in P. Sluglett and S. Weber eds, *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule: Essays in Honor of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, Leiden/Boston, MA 2010, p. 210ff; p. 232ff; Weber, Stefan, "An Egyptian *Qaʿa* in 16th-Century Damascus: Representative Halls in Late Mamluk and Early Ottoman Residential Architecture in Syria and Lebanon", in Kjeld von Folsach, Henrik Thrane and Ingolf Thuesen eds, *From Handaxe to Khan: Essays Presented to Peder Mortensen on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday,* Aarhus 2004, pp. 265–296.

63 The incense burners probably belonged in a reception hall. *Qaʿa*s, as I argue elsewhere, were often constructed to maximise the positive sensual experience. Weber, "An Egyptian *Qaʿa*", p. 247ff; Weber, "Making of an Ottoman Harbor Town", p. 235f. The sensual experience was intended. For another field of architecture – here Ottoman mosques – Ergin demonstrates how this is planned into the overall function of space. The salary and employment of perfumers was frequently part of the endowment, and the tools of incense burners were part of the endowed equipment. Cf. Ergin, Nina, "The Fragrance of the Divine: Olfactory Aspects of Ottoman Mosque Architecture", Lecture given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, 2010 (forthcoming). For a beautifully damascened incense burner commissioned and endowed by the mother of Sultan Murad IV to Haram of Medina (dated 1059/1649), Ali I. Al-Ghabban, Béatrice André-Salvini, Françoise Demange, Carine Juvine and Marianne Cotty eds, *Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia*, Paris 2010, p. 542f.

64 Russell, Alexander, *The Natural History of Aleppo and Parts Adjacent: Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in its Neighbourhood, Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants and Diseases: Particularly of the Plague, with the Methods used by the Europeans for their Preservation*, London 1794, p. 31, here after Anne Mollenhauer, "Private in Public or Public in Private: Representation Rooms in Courtyard Houses in Aleppo", in Gonnella and Kröger eds, *Angels, Peonies, and Fabulous Creatures*, p. 75ff. For houses of the general public see also Weber, *Damascus*, p. 397f., and the literature above about the research in Sayda. Certainly the houses and palaces of notables and rulers have the same public function. This applies as well to interlinked cultural settings: in the documents of Roger II of 1143, Cappella Palatina in Palermo is called *al-majlis as-sāmī* as, a

reception place for audiences, hearings and court sessions. See Johns, Jeremy, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Dīwān*, Cambridge 2002, p. 133f.

65   Notables as discussed briefly by Gudrun Krämer, *Geschichte Palästinas. Von der osmanischen Eroberung bis zur Gründung des Staates Israel*, Munich, 2002, p. 113. See here in relation to taste: Weber, *Damascus*, vol. 1, p. 397ff.

66   For books and their meaning as possessions in a literate society see the wonderful guide to a small exhibition edited by Verena Klemm, *Ein Garten im Ärmel. Islamische Buchkultur, Katalog zur Ausstellung in der Bibliotheca Albertina*, Leipzig, 2008. On the role of books for the cultural self-consciousness in the Arab-Ottoman world, Hanna, Nelly, *In the Praise of Books: A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,* New York 2003. On court records: following the pioneering work of Jean-Paul Pascual and Colette Establet research on property through heritage records became an important field of study for the material heritage of Ottoman societies: cf. Pascual, Jean-Paul, "Les inventaires après Décès: une source pour l'histoire économique et sociale de Damas au XVIIᵉ siècle", in D. Panzac ed., *Les villes dans l'Empire Ottoman: activités et sociétés.* IREMAM-CNRS, Aix-en-Provence 1991, vol. I, pp. 41–47; Pascual, Jean-Paul, "Aspects de la vie matérielle à Damas à la fin du XVIIᵉ siècle d'après les inventaires après décès", in Thomas Philipp ed., *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century: The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience*, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 165–178 and Establet, C. and Pascual, J.P., *Ultime voyage pour la Mecque: les inventaires après décès de pèlerins morts à Damas vers 1700*, Damascus 1998.

67   *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf)*, translated and published by Ghada al-Hijjawi al-Qaddumi, Cambridge 1996. The two recent exhibitions in Washington and Istanbul focused on gifts from the Ottoman world and Iran to the Kremlin. For their catalogues: *The Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin*, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Inst., Washington, DC 2009, and several objects in *Treasures of the Moscow Kremlin at the Topkapı Palace,* Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul 2009. More as a kind of survey the topic of gifts was recently the topic of an impressive exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum, see Linda Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts*, Los Angeles 2011. See also Necipoğlu in this volume. Some gifts (and their refusal) are small monuments of interesting historical moments, such as the Ottoman crown (*c.*1605) presented as a gift to the short-lived "Ottoman" Prince of Transylvania, Stephan Bocskai, by Sultan Ahmed I in the Imperial Treasury *Schatzkammer* in Vienna (inv. no. of crown and box: SK Inv.-Nr. XIV 25 and SK Inv.-Nr. XIV 184), cf. Molnár, Andrea, *Fürst Stefan Bocskay als Staatsmann und Persönlichkeit im Spiegel seiner Briefe 1598–1606*, Munich 1982.

68   Gell, *Wrapping in Images*, p. 39 after Rampley, *Art History and Cultural Difference,* p. 538.

69   Hoskins, *Agency*, p. 76.

70   Cf. Appadurai, Arjun ed, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge 1986, here in Hoskins, *Agency*, p. 75.

71   Cf. Weber, Stefan, "Ein Objekt aus Stein und Licht. Der tausendjährige Bergkristallkrug aus der Sammlung Edmund de Unger", in *MuseumsJournal* 25,3, 2011, pp. 34–36.

72   Cf. Shalem, Avinoam, "Islamische Objekte in Kirchenschätzen der lateinischen Christenheit. Ästhetische Stufen des Umgangs mit dem Anderen und dem Hybriden", in Christine and Klaus van Eickels eds, *Das Bistum Bamberg in der Welt des Mittelalters*, Bamberg, 2007, pp. 163–175; and his *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West,* Frankfurt, 1998.

73   For the ewer: Christie's, London, *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds*, auc. cat., Tuesday 7 October 2008, Lot 50, p. 63ff; cf. also Bock, Franz, *Karls des Grossen Pfalzkapelle und ihre Kunstschätze. Kunstgeschichtliche Beschreibung des karolingischen Octogons zu Aachen, etc.*, Cöln–Neuß, 1866, p. 73ff; Lamm, C. J., *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnittarbeiten aus dem Nahen Osten*, Berlin, 1929–30; Shalem, Avinoam, "Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West", *Ars Faciendi*, Bd. 7, Frankfurt, 1998; Contadini, Anna, *Fatimid Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum***,** London, 1998, pp. 16–39; Bloom, Jonathan M., *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt*, London, 2007.

74   Baxandall, Michael, *Die Kunst der Bildschnitzer. Tilman Riemenschneider, Veit Stoß und ihre Zeitgenossen*, Munich 1984.

3. The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches

1　This paper is an adapted version of a keynote lecture delivered on 14 January, 2010, at the workshop "Layers of Islamic Art and the Museum Context", organised by Stefan Weber and held at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. It is partly based on another keynote address delivered at the First Biennial Symposium of the Historians of Islamic Art Association, presented on 17 October, 2008, at the University of Pennsylvania and titled, "Reflections on the Birth and Growth of the Field Called Islamic Art". The current essay reframes some of those reflections by taking into consideration the added dimension of museology.

2　Vernoit, Stephen, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, *c.*1850–*c.*1950", in Stephen Vernoit ed., *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, London 2000, pp. 1–61; Bozdoğan, Sibel and Necipoğlu, Gülru, "Entangled Discourses: Scrutinizing Orientalist and Nationalist Legacies in the Architectural Historiography of the 'Lands of Rum'", *Muqarnas* 24 (2007), pp. 1–6. Also see other articles in the same volume edited by myself and Bozdoğan, a special issue on the proceedings of our symposium "Historiography and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the 'Lands of Rum'", conceptualised in 2002 and held in 2006 at Harvard University with a generous grant from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Geneva.

3　Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York 1978. For a recent critique of Said's book, see Irwin, Robert, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents*, Woodstock/New York 2006.

4　Cited from Fletcher, Sir Banister, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman, and Amateur*, 9th edn, New York/London 1924, vol. III, p. 784. The Tree appeared in numerous editions of this popular work between 1896 and 1961: see Nalbantoğlu, Gülsüm Baydar, "Toward Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*", *Assemblage,* 35 (1998), pp. 6–17.

5　The medievalisation of Islam in surveys of world art is discussed in Necipoğlu, Gülru, "Creation of a National Genius: Sinan and the Historiography of 'Classical' Ottoman Architecture", *Muqarnas*, 24 (2007), pp. 141–142.

6　Nelson, Robert, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin*, 79, 1, pp. 28–40; and "Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art, *Gesta*, 35, 1, pp. 3–11.

7　Necipoğlu, "Historiography of 'Classical' Ottoman Architecture," pp. 141–142. Noting that Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire were conflated in the European imagination, Nelson writes: "On the one hand Byzantium and Islam are seen as relevant chapters in the rise of the West; on the other hand they function as foils for that history and thus must be isolated from the principal story" of world art, "written from the vantage point of Western Europe and America". See his "Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art", pp. 5, 8. The medievalisation of Cairo is analysed in Sanders, Paula, *Creating Medieval Cairo: Empire, Religion, and Architectural Preservation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Cairo/New York 2008; and Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman, Nasser Rabbat eds, *Making Cairo Medieval*, Lanham, MD 2005.

8　Jones, Owen, *The Grammar of Ornament*, London 1856.

9　Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*, pp. 6–7, 19, 22, 101–104; Rémi Labrusse ed., *Purs Décors? Arts de l'Islam, regards du XIXe siècle: Collections des arts décoratifs*, Paris 2007, 234–236, 276–293.

10　Cited in Rizvi, Kishwar, "Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse of 'Persian Art'" *Muqarnas*, 24 (2007), p. 56; Pope, Arthur Upham and Ackerman, Phyllis eds, *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, London/New York 1938–1939.

11　For Arseven and Diez, see Necipoğlu, "Historiography of 'Classical' Ottoman Architecture", pp. 161–163, 167–173. Pope's book is cited in no 10 above.

12　An Egyptian national perspective is presented in Creswell, K.A.C., *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt,* 2 vols, Oxford 1952–1960. This false dichotomy is analysed in Bozdoğan and Necipoğlu, "Entangled Discourses", p. 1.

13　The milieu of dilettantes, amateurs and "Islamophiles" is brilliantly contextualised in Labrusse, *Purs Décors?* and Volait, Mercedes, *Fous du Caire: excentriques, architectes & amateurs d'art en Égypte, 1867–1914*, Guarnizo 2009.