Shifting the Paradigm: New Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture
in Honor of Prof. Gülru Necipoğlu

September 8-9 2022

Program

Thursday September 8
Boston College
Hill Family Conference Room
McMullen Museum of Art
2101 Commonwealth Avenue, room 111
Boston, MA 02135

9:20 am-9:30 am Welcoming Remarks
Emine Fetvacı, Chanchal Dadlani, Jennifer Pruitt, Ladan Akbarnia

9:30 am-1:00 pm Panel 1: In a New Light: Geometry, Color, and Ornament

Panel Chairs: Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay and Ladan Akbarnia

Embodying the Prophetic Flame: The Use of *Iḥmarra* in al-Andalus & the Maghrib
Abbey Stockstill

Medieval Arabic descriptions of the color red (*iḥmarra*) take a variety of forms, applying the descriptor to media as diverse as architecture, natural landscapes, textiles, and wildlife. The word's etymological associations with burning, a process integral to many of its applied artistic forms, have traditionally meant the avoidance of its usage in broad swaths of the Islamic world. And yet, highly powerful narratives associated with the Prophet highlight the color red as a particularly favored one, and its appearance in monikers across the Islamic west hint at a more complex role the color has to play.

This paper examines the role of red in the medieval Maghrib and al-Andalus as a particularly powerful allusion to a constructed prophetic past. Moreover, it explores the ways in which red mediates between the constructed and natural environments, grounding these associations in a sense of atmospheric place.

Material Geometries: Craft & Design in Medieval Iran
Meredyth Winter

Gülru Necipoğlu's contributions to Islamic design history have been many, each more influential than the next, and the impact on mapping the transfer of artistic ideas has been profound. Drawing upon this vast body of scholarship, most notably *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and*

Ornament in Islamic Architecture (Getty, 1995), I present just one application of Necipoğlu's work: brick and woven ornament in medieval Iran. The two distinct crafts, I argue, rely on parallel modes of mental shorthand and optimized geometric calculation that brought the two crafts into dialogue and spurred intermedial design transmission.

The abstracted geometric notation systems Necipoğlu has elaborated for later ornament serve here as the teleological counterpoint from which to work backwards, allowing for deduction of earlier craft practices, while demonstrating creative processes at work long before paper substrates were used and preserved in design transmission.

10:30 am-10:45 am coffee break

Geometry, Ornament and Female Patronage in the Medieval Islamic Architecture of Eastern Anatolia
Suzan Yalman and Peter Lu

Around the year 1200 CE in eastern Anatolia, new buildings with complex geometrical designs began to appear. These patterns, particularly star-and-polygon "girih" patterns with decagonal symmetry, were thought to derive from straightedge and compass-based techniques based on ancient Greek mathematics. However, Lu and Steinhardt (2007) have demonstrated how these patterns are tessellations of a set of decorated equilateral polygons, the "girih tiles." The origins of these girih tiles are not known, though the earliest extant examples are from the diyār al-Rūm in this period. Remarkably, a large fraction of the earliest monuments with girih-tile patterns had female patrons, which the authors explore in this paper.

References:
Lu, Peter J. and Paul J. Steinhardt. "Decagonal and Quasi-crystalline Tilings in Medieval Islamic Architecture." Science 315 (2007): 1106–1110.

The King's Throne and the Queen's Window: Cautionary Signs of Sovereignty at Divriği
Oya Pancaroğlu

There is a generally accepted idea that the Mosque and Hospital Complex in Divriği (1228-29) with its exceptionally designed portals has no forerunners. It is often presented, bizarrely, as a monument supposedly fed from deep roots but having no peers in its own time or before. In the absence of obvious comparanda, conventional methodologies have fallen short and interpretive strategies have gone unchecked. This paper aims to reconsider the designs of the portals afresh and to analyze the visual hierarchy in their ornamentation in conjunction with their inscriptions and the functional placement of the portals. A new reading will be suggested linking three of the portals in a semantic framework informed by a multifaceted conceptualization of sovereignty.

1:00 pm-2:30 pm Lunch for participants and guests

2:30 pm-5:00 pm Panel 2: Across Space and time
Panel Chair: Melis Taner

Connectivity, Mobility, and Metallurgic Geography: Astrologers from Khurasan and Sistan as Cultural Influencers for Medieval Anatolian Bronze
Persis Berlekamp

Among the inspirational aspects of Gülru Necipoğlu's scholarship is her dedication to interpreting monuments and objects in richly textured socio-historical context. Frequently, her work reveals the art historical relevance of how specific individuals navigated the pressures of their world. Since secure attributions for medieval Islamic portable arts are rare, they may seem to resist a similar approach. However, some portable bronzes may fruitfully be analyzed in relation to the lives of late medieval Islamic court astrologers. Mapping the astrologers' movements onto specific geographies of metallurgy casts both the objects' uncertain provenances, and their formal features, in new light.

In the Shadow of Gothic: Ottoman Mosque Architecture in Cyprus
Ünver Rüstem

Constructed during the rule of the French Lusignan dynasty (1192–1489), the Gothic churches of Cyprus are famous for bringing a pronouncedly Westernizing aesthetic into their Levantine setting. Less well known, however, is the defining role these monuments played in Cypriot architectural history after the Ottoman conquest of the island in 1571, when most of them were converted into mosques. My talk will examine not only how the Lusignan structures were adapted and perceived by their Muslim users, but also their impact on the island's many purpose-built Ottoman mosques, which eschewed the domed model in favor of gabled rectangular arrangements that resonated spatially, stylistically, and symbolically with the converted Gothic churches.

Rethinking Byzantium in early modern Istanbul
Çiğdem Kafescioğlu

This paper will address the presence and the absence of the Roman and Byzantine past in early modern Istanbul through considerations of structures of the longue duree, acts of translation, and notions of antiquarianism. It will consider historical imaginaries as reflected in Byzantine and Ottoman textual traditions, architectural imagination pertaining to Byzantium as reflected in Ottoman design, and material sensibilities as reflected in continuities between practices of the two eras. As I seek to highlight the multiple ways in which Byzantium was present in and bore on the lives and imaginations of early modern Istanbulites of different standing, I hope to address a further aspect of historical experience, that is, structures of erasure: the time and context bound ways in which the legacy of Byzantium was silenced, and erased in the post-Byzantine times.

5:00 pm-7:00 pm: Reception for participants and guests

Friday September 9

Harvard University
485 Broadway
Basement Lecture Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138

9:30 am-9:45 am Welcoming Remarks

David Roxburgh and Emine Fetvacı

9:45 am-12:30 pm Panel 1: Concepts of Architecture

Panel Chairs: Yasmine al-Saleh and Jennifer Pruitt

The Architects who Made Safavid Isfahan

Farshid Emami

According to a mid-seventeenth-century text, the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) decreed, in 1610 CE, that three individuals—the calligrapher Alireza Abbasi, the polymath and cleric Shaykh Baha'i, and the court astronomer Jalal al-Din Yazdi—"travel to the city of Maragha, discern the observatory edifice (*'imārat-i rasadkhāna*), and draw its design (*tarh*) for the perusal of his royal highness." This terse statement hints at the role of designs in the transmission and production of architecture in the Islamic domains, a phenomenon thoroughly explored in the pioneering scholarship of Gülru Necipoğlu. Yet this passage is noteworthy for another reason as well: none of the three named individuals was an architect.

Drawing on primary sources, this paper explores the framework and culture of architectural production in Safavid Isfahan. Although references to architecture and architects are few and between in literary sources, a holistic study of textual evidence enables us to draw a relatively more refined picture of the processes and mechanisms that undergirded the design and execution of building projects in early modern Iran. The archival sources, moreover, reveal a more intimate understanding of Safavid architects, especially those who made Isfahan's architectural monuments.

Envisioning Mughal Architecture

Chanchal Dadlani

In 1815, the Mughal emperor Akbar II (r. 1806-1837) commissioned a lavishly illustrated manuscript of the *'Amal-i Sālih*. This classic historical work narrated the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1627-58), Akbar II's illustrious ancestor and the patron of the Taj Mahal. The 1815 manuscript was also one of the first Mughal manuscripts to include folios exclusively dedicated to the representation of architecture. In this paper, I argue that in portraying these buildings, the manuscript creators not only consciously drew on the political achievements of the Mughal past, they also constructed a historical canon of Mughal architecture in the process. I situate this important manuscript in relation to architectural histories that soon circulated in Mughal north India (Sangin Beg, *Sair al-Manāzil, A Tour of Sites*, 1836, and Sayyid Ahmad

Khan, *Asār al- Sanādīd*, *Vestiges of the Past*, 1847). In evaluating these narratives collectively, I explore Mughal modes of conceptualizing architecture and its history.

The "Frankish Style" of Hüdavendigar Mosque
Zeynep Oğuz Kursar

Hüdavedigar Mosque, located in a suburb of Bursa, was originally commissioned by Murad I (r. 1362-89) as a *zawiya* (Sufi convent or lodge). Ottoman buildings of this time are typically considered products of a cultural milieu where Islamic forms and functions dominated but where the workmanship—mostly at the hands of indigenous masters—was rooted in local Bithynian techniques. Multifarious and experimental as it was, however, this architectural repertoire still falls short of accounting for the unusual form and exterior articulation of Murad I's *zawiya*, which are reminiscent more of Latin architecture, or, as the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi keenly observes, of a "Frankish (*Frenk pesend*)" style. This paper will discuss the Italianate elements of the building's exterior and assess the speculations—past as well as present—that have surrounded the identity of its architect.

12:30 pm-2:00 pm lunch for speakers and panel chairs

2:00 pm-5:00 pm Panel 2: Presence: Inscriptions, Portraits, and Publics
Panel Chair: Deniz Türker

Inscriptions and the embodiment of imperial authority in Mughal India
Bronwen Gulkis

Art created for the Mughal emperor Shahjahan (r. 1628-58) is perhaps best known for its opulence, which conveyed messages of imperial power, ceremony, and world-spanning ambitions. Yet elite members of the Mughal court communicated power not only with visual grandeur, but through more intimate practices as well. The visual language of marks made by and for members of Shahjahan's inner circle reveal the centrality of the emperor's body in the Mughal imperial order. These range from standardized forms of recordkeeping such as inscriptions and seal impressions, to dramatic interventions such as erasure and handprints. This largely overlooked body of evidence indicates that inscriptions were not just a form of documentation, but tangible signs of imperial sight and touch. Drawing upon examples from across Mughal painting, calligraphy, and precious objects, I present a reevaluation of these inscriptions as a form of embodied authority in Mughal India.

Royal Portraiture in the Age of Revolution: The Likenesses of Muhammad 'Ali Shah
Mira Xenia Schwerda

Although considerable attention has been paid to royal painted portraiture of the Safavid and early Qajar period and the influence of photography on royal painted portraiture in the period of Nasir al-Din Shah has also been carefully examined, the portraiture of the Iranian Constitutional

Revolution (1905-11) has so far attracted less attention. This paper will examine the portraiture of Muhammad 'Ali Shah (r. 1907-1909), a controversial figure of modern Iranian history. When his father Muzaffar al-Din Shah passed away after ratifying the constitution, the son first declared his support of the parliament and the new laws. Yet, soon afterwards, he had the parliament bombarded, imprisoned many of the leading politicians, and abolished the Constitution. After the so-called periods of the 'Greater and Lesser Tyranny,' pro-Constitutional forces marched to Tehran in 1909 and deposed Muhammad 'Ali Shah and re-established the Constitution. While Muhammad 'Ali Shah portrayed himself as a strong and pious ruler in his own time, he is now mainly remembered as a symbol of tyranny. Yet, even during his own time alternative interpretations of the king's image circulated and an analysis of the combined visual material can inform us about contemporary image politics, support or criticism of the ruler through visual means, and changes in the interpretation of just rule and good kingship.

This paper will examine portraiture that was commissioned by the king as well as commercial and popular imagery produced in Iran and abroad during the same period. It will also pay attention to drawings and caricatures of the king published in Constitutionalist journals. By analyzing and contextualizing the portraiture commissioned by the court, Muhammad 'Ali Shah's image politics will be illuminated and the differences between this portraiture and earlier royal portraiture will become apparent. Examining the popular and Constitutionalist imagery will illustrate different understandings of his kingship and his role as a leader. These new kinds of imagery, e.g. lithographed caricatures and photographic picture postcards, will also point to larger changes and developments in the society and economy.

Mobile Portraits and Lacquer Spaces of Diplomatic Encounter: The "İran Risalesi" of Mehmed Münif Pasha
Gwendolyn Collaço

During the 1870s, the Ottoman statesman Mehmed Münif Pasha (d. 1910) commissioned several manuscripts of his "İran Risalesi" (Iranian Treatise) during his ambassadorial tenure in Tehran. This illustrated account narrates the tumultuous embassies to Fath Ali Shah's Qajar court in 1811 through the deeds of Ottoman officials. The manuscripts loosely adapt the types of portraiture found in later costume albums, while adapting models and stylistic inspiration from Qajar diplomatic murals and commemorative objects. The painted lacquer covers of the copy at University of Michigan further situates the Ottoman reader at the gates of Tehran, materially enacting a visual procession of Iranian officials through the city as the viewer progresses through the text. The İran Risalesi thus merges the efforts of Qajar artists with the vision of the Ottoman author to create a vividly transcultural (and fittingly archaicizing) product of diplomatic encounter to memorialize this period of exchange.

"The Sweetest Invention:" Technical Manuals and the Rise of the Ottoman Photography Public
Ahmet A. Ersoy

The earliest technical manual on photography in the Ottoman Empire, *A Treatise on Photography* (*Risâle-i Fotoğraf*), was published in Armeno-Turkish by Sarkis Torosyan in 1866. In the subsequent decades, Torosyan's pioneering work was followed by a flurry of popular

photography manuals, published in different Ottoman languages as booklets or in serialized form in illustrated journals. This study offers critical and comparative insights into the body of Ottoman technical literature on photography published both in Ottoman Turkish and in western Armenian from the 1860s into the 1910s. Rather than embarking on a content-based analysis of the photograph as an aesthetic end-product, the study proposes to highlight the social and techno-material dimensions of the process of making photography. Defined by Ottoman authors as "the sweetest invention," photography became visible as a performative act that was conceived as a distinctive sign and agent of middle-class modernity, similar to, and often coupled with train excursions or bicycling. The transmission of technical knowledge on photography through popular manuals is investigated as a key factor informing the emergence of an Ottoman photography public.