



FROM THE PRESIDENT

HIAA President, Emine Fetvacı, shares news about the organization as well as upcoming initiatives and events.

Dear Colleagues,

Summer greetings from all the members of the HIAA Board, new and returning! Seven out of the nine members of the HIAA Board are new this cycle, and we are very happy to be working together. I am grateful to all the board members for their energy and enthusiasm, and their willingness to serve our association.

The HIAA Majlis took place on February 16 in New York City, generously hosted by our colleagues at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, where we had the pleasure of hearing excellent papers by Janet Purdy, Sarah Sabban, Saarthak Singh, Courtney Stewart, and Selin Ünlüönen, and enjoyed a wonderful reception afterwards. The HIAA sponsored CAA panel was scheduled the next morning, and we had a robust conversation about the teaching of Islamic art and the different challenges it poses. We are grateful to the panelists Aparna Kumar, Gül Kale, and Jennifer Pruitt for sharing their experience and expertise, and to Kishwar Rizvi for chairing the session. At the HIAA Business meeting on February 17, the new board was officially announced and began its term immediately after the meeting. At the Business Meeting itself we discussed the financial health of HIAA, discussed challenges such as the loss of our tax-exempt status, and shared details about the process of the reinstatement of our tax-exempt status. We answered questions about the efforts to incorporate HIAA and outlined next steps. We also took suggestions from members about goals for the next year.

In its February 2023 Board Meeting, the HIAA Board decided to ask Kishwar Rizvi and Simon Rettig to serve on a special committee to advise us on further transitional matters as we look ahead to becoming a not-for-profit corporation, a change from our current (continues on page 2).

About HIAA

The Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIAA) is a non-profit scholarly organization dedicated to the study and teaching of the art, architecture, and archaeology of Islamic cultures. We facilitate communication and cooperation among scholars, students, and other professionals in these fields.

HIAA Membership Benefits

Members have access to the Member Directory and recordings of virtual HIAA events, as well as the opportunity to participate in symposia and workshops sponsored by HIAA, and to compete for travel and research grants. Your generous support helps fund the latter, which have proven essential for junior scholars doing exciting new research in the field.

Join or renew your membership here.

Current HIAA Board

- Emine Fetvacı, President
Nancy Um, President-Elect
Kishwar Rizvi, Past President
Jennifer Pruitt, Treasurer
Emily Neumeier, Secretary
Murad Khan Mumtaz, Webmaster and News Editor
Zohreh Soltani, H-ISLAMART Editor
Heba Abdelnaby, International Representative
Gül Kale, Social Media Manager
Srinanda Ganguly, Graduate Student Representative

Submissions (Winter 2024)

Share your news here

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(continued from page 1) status of not-for profit unincorporated association. We are grateful to them for continuing to serve HIAA in this advisory capacity. This past year we retained a lawyer on pro-bono basis. Jeffrey P. Cunard, long-term counsel to CAA and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, is kindly advising us on incorporation matters. Kishwar, Simon and I have been meeting with him to go over the current HIAA Articles of Association in preparation for our eventual incorporation. The Board will be regularly updating you about the steps towards incorporation, and will host a town hall Zoom meeting to discuss new bylaws, which will be drawn up based on the current articles of association, and be put to a vote by the membership in due course.

This past spring was busy with other transitional activities as the new board began its term. Probably the most important development in terms of organizational matters is that we filed our application to the IRS to have our tax-exempt status reinstated. I am grateful to the past HIAA Board members President Kishwar Rizvi, Treasurer Simon Rettig and Secretary Fatima Quraishi for their help with that important process, even after their terms ended.

The 2023 HIAA Biennial Symposium Expanding Contexts organized by Aimée Froom and Farshid Emami, with Texas-based committee members, Stephennie Mulder, Nada Shabout, Abbey Stockstill, and Heather Ecker, took place March 2-4 in Houston at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Rice University. We are grateful to Drs. Froom and Emami, and to Julie Timte who assisted them so ably, for the impeccable organization. The committee's careful work in selecting papers and panels was evident in the quality and variety of papers presented, and the lively discussions that ensued. Symposium attendants also had the opportunity to visit the fantastic new galleries of Art of the Islamic Worlds at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. The next symposium will be in Boston, April 3-5, 2025, hosted by Boston College and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Please mark your calendars!

These joyful and productive gatherings were followed by some sad news as the HIAA community lost four dear colleagues in April 2023. Catherine M. Asher, Jere L. Bacharach, Cornell H. Fleischer and Robert G. Ousterhout all passed away within weeks of each other. You will find their obituaries in this Newsletter as we remember them fondly and with gratitude.

As you are probably all aware, in 2022 HIAA began an exciting new series of online workshops (they can be

found [here](#) on our website). While in the past the ideas for the workshops were generated by the members of the HIAA Board (and especially our student representative—a special shout out to Courtney Lessoon here!), in its June 2023 board meeting, the HIAA Board decided to change the way we organize the workshops, and turn to you, our members, for ideas. We want to hear from you about your needs and interests. You have all received in your inboxes a Call for Workshops sent by HIAA Secretary Emily Neumeier—please think about pitching a workshop to be hosted by HIAA on topics or issues of interest to you. Please tell us how HIAA can support your research and scholarship.

One final note—please remember that applications for the Grabar Travel Grants are due August 15. The second round of applications can be submitted by December 15, which is also the deadline for the Grabar Post-Doctoral Awards, and the Ševčenko Prize. Details for all are on the HIAA Website, and HIAA Secretary Emily Neumeier will be emailing all members with a reminder before the deadlines.

With thanks for your continued support of HIAA, I wish you and your loved ones a healthy and restorative summer.

Emine Fetvacı, *President*

*Norma Jean Calderwood University Professor of Islamic and Asian Art
Art, Art History and Film Department
Boston College*

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OBITUARIES

Robert Ousterhout (1950 – 2023)

Robert Ousterhout passed away at his home in Philadelphia on April 23, 2023, after a long battle with cancer. Bob, as he preferred to be called, will be remembered as one of the world's eminent scholars of Byzantine architecture and urbanism. He served for many years as professor of architectural history at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and then at the University of Pennsylvania, where he retired in 2017. A prolific writer with a signature style that is equally elegant and accessible, Bob produced several pathbreaking studies including *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii* in Istanbul (1987), *Master Builders of Byzantium* (1999), and his long-awaited textbook *Eastern Medieval Architecture* (2019). In addition to these works, he also penned two novels and even a hagiography, the life of St. Ismail of Vordonos. A beloved colleague and friend to many in the HIAA community, Bob strove in his work to investigate the connections between the built environments of Byzantium and the Islamic world, publishing multiple articles in *Muqarnas* and co-editing a thematic volume of *Gesta* on "Encounters with Islam" with D.F. Ruggles. In recent years, he also developed a keen interest and expertise on the history of archaeology and cultural heritage in the late Ottoman Empire, with projects examining the intersecting lives of American archaeologists and Osman Hamdi Bey as well as the emergence of Hagia Sophia as a modern monument. As a mentor, Bob was incredibly generous with his time and advocacy for junior scholars, and several of his students came together in 2020 to organize a festschrift in his honor (*Architecture and Visual Culture in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean*). He loved spending time in both Greece and Turkey, especially Cappadocia, where he had been co-leading a summer field school for over a decade. Bob was a fantastic storyteller with an infectious laugh and love for terrible puns—his accounts of swimming across the Bosphorus and riding hot-air balloons with Martha Stewart were always the highlight of any dinner party he attended. Bob is survived by his husband Brian, siblings, and all the friends and colleagues who will always cherish his memory.

Written by Emily Neumeier

Jere Bacharach (1938 – 2023)

Our Islamic art community lost a great friend and colleague with the death of Jere Bacharach on April 9, 2023. A distinguished scholar with wide ranging interests, particularly in medieval Islamic history and numismatics, Jere was a whirlwind in person, always hurrying from one place to another but always able to stop for a quick chat or a coffee, especially with students. He had a shocking collection of mostly dreadful neckties, a source of much teasing among his students and colleagues, who nonetheless happily accepted them as gifts when Jere distributed them at one memorable meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) around the time of his retirement in 2004.

Jere was a prolific scholar, an accomplishment particularly impressive considering the staggering record of his service to the field, both at the University of Washington, his home institution, and further afield. His many contributions to our fields, detailed in other remembrances, were recognized by MESA in 2004 when their annual service award was renamed the Jere L. Bacharach Service Award, and given to him.

Among his many board positions was a four-year stint on HIAA's board (it was then called North American Historians of Islamic Art and Architecture) from 1993-1997, where we overlapped for the three years of my presidency of HIAA. Jere was one of the relatively few historians I have encountered who not only recognized the importance of material culture but actively engaged with it, through his work with coins, but also textiles and the built environment. He was an influential supporter and booster of our field at a time when art history had not yet begun its shift towards a more global perspective.

May his memory be for a blessing.

Written by Nancy Micklewright

Catherine B. Asher (1946 – 2023)

Prof. Emerita Catherine B. Asher, University of Minnesota, passed away on 14 April 2023. A pioneer in medieval and early modern Indo-Islamic Art History, "Cathy" had exceptionally wide-ranging research and teaching interests, as testified by the expertise of her students who, among other topics, work on South Indian, Ottoman, Safavid, Marinid, and contemporary Spanish-Islamic and Iranian art. From 1991 to 1994 she served as the President of the

North American Historians of Islamic Art (HIAA's predecessor organization).

Her meticulously researched and elegantly written publications include her ground-breaking 1984 thesis on the patronage of Sher Shah Sur, who overthrew Mughal Emperor Humayun; *Architecture of Mughal India* (New Cambridge Series on the History of India, 1992); co-edited with Thomas Metcalf, *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past* (1994); co-authored with Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (2006, 2022); and *Delhi's Qutb Complex: The Minar, Mosque and Mehrauli* (2017). A final publication, on which she worked until the day of her passing, "New Policies, Changed Attitudes: Temple Construction under the Mughals," will appear in *Muqarnas*. Her scholarship drew on extensive fieldwork, and her documentation now forms the Frederick and Catherine Asher Archive at the American Institute of Indian Studies (Gurgaon, India), which she chaired twice. Motivated by extraordinary curiosity and eager to push the field's temporal and geographic boundaries beyond facile cultural and religious identifications, she always looked outside the core of Indo-Islamic art.

Although towering in intellect, she was down-to-earth, warm, and welcoming. Her response to arrogance, pretense, and inconsiderate behavior was at once sharp and witty. At a CAA Annual Meeting, when a speaker nattered on past the time limit, she impatiently arranged her beautiful Indian scarf and jokingly whispered to one of these authors: "Of course, they aren't able to conclude, because they don't have a point to conclude with!" As "Doktormutter" ("doctoral mother," German for doctoral advisor), she built a sizeable family of past students throughout North America, the Middle East, and the Indian Subcontinent – an empathic family that will continue to offer a tight network of support to each other and their own students, and an intellectual family that will continue to carry on the legacy she established as a consummate teacher and scholar of Islamic Art History.

Written by Sinem Casale and Nina Macaraig

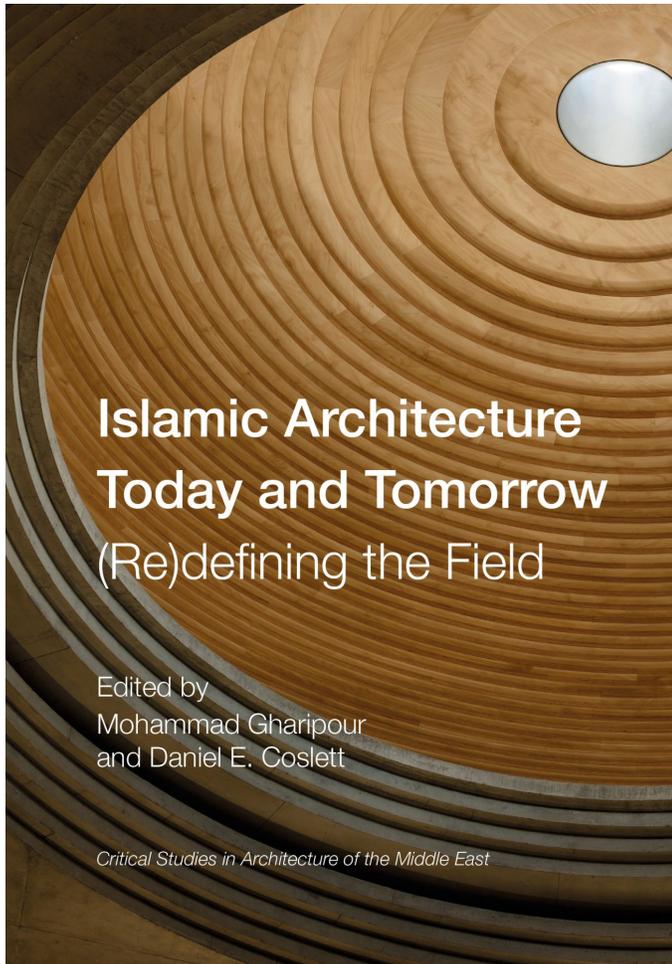
Cornell Fleischer (1950 – 2023)

Prof. Cornell H. Fleischer, a renowned historian of the Ottoman Empire and the greater Islamic world, and the Kanuni Süleyman Professor at the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and History at the University of Chicago passed away on April 21, 2023. He spent part of his childhood in Cairo and Baghdad, and later lived in Istanbul for a few years, developing a deep love of the region. After teaching at Ohio State University and Washington University in St. Louis, Fleischer joined the University of Chicago faculty in 1993. Following the publication of his groundbreaking, field-changing book *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the Historian Mustafa Âli* (1986) he received a MacArthur Fellowship in 1988. His use of narrative sources and his humanistic approach which brought Âli to life for his readers changed the field of Ottoman studies. His innovative articles on apocalyptic anxieties, messianism, and the occult in the Ottoman Empire and early modern Islamic world, and in particular, his work on Abd al Rahman al Bistami have opened entirely new frontiers in the study of early modern history. His collaborations with historians of Islamic art resulted in important publications. He worked closely with Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı on the 2009 *Falnama: The Book of Omens* exhibition and catalogue, and co-edited the 2019 volume *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4)* with Gülru Necipoğlu and Cemal Kafadar. Professor Fleischer was a generous and dedicated teacher and mentor to many, not only to his own PhD students, but also to others who worked on adjacent fields and in other institutions. He gave freely of his time, was generous with his thoughts, and encouraged younger scholars. His legacy will live on in the work of his many accomplished students who continue to enrich our understanding of the Islamic world. He is survived by his daughter Daria, his godson Christopher Markiewicz, associate professor of Ottoman and Islamic history at the University of Birmingham, and his many students, friends and colleagues. Cornell Fleischer was a friend, colleague, and mentor to many HIAA members, and is already deeply missed.

Written by Emine Fetvacı

NEW BOOKS IN ISLAMIC ART

Mohammad Gharipour and Daniel Coslett (eds), *Islamic Architecture Today and Tomorrow: (Re)Defining the Field* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2022).



A conversation between Zohreh Soltani (Ithaca College) and the editors Mohammad Gharipour (University of Maryland) and Daniel E. Coslett (Drexel University)

Zohreh Soltani [ZS]: As you note in the volume's introduction, this book emerged from a special anniversary edition of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture (IJIA)*. The journal has been a prominent platform for scholarly research on the built environment of the Islamic world since 2012. What motivated you to create this comprehensive edited volume on contemporary and future Islamic architecture?

Mohammad Gharipour [MG]: Every June we publish special issues on critical topics relevant within the Islamic world. In celebration of the journal's tenth anniversary, we wanted to reflect upon our achievements and contemplate on what lies ahead. Now that we had extensively explored Islamic architecture over the past decade, what's the future of Islamic architecture? How will the field of Islamic architecture evolve during the next ten years? This helped us design an outline and send out a series of invitations to scholars and practitioners asking them to write on certain topics that we found relevant to this introspective theme. We wanted this book to be easy to read and accessible. That's why we used the commentary format that we often use in the journal, rather than the conventional article style. We asked colleagues to share their own personal stories and narratives and tell us what they think about the state of the field through specific lenses.

Daniel Coslett [DC]: Yes, the *IJIA* issue was a success but was in ways incomplete. We decided to refashion the essays—with some specially commissioned additions—into a more comprehensive collection. Ultimately these essays are not about the architectures themselves, but about the way in which architecture is conceived, designed, experienced, analyzed, and taught. These commentaries are short. Many of them are personal in a way that would be unacceptable in a traditional academic article format. Anyone concerned with Islamic architecture will hopefully find things to think about differently, or ways to change their teaching or research habits.

ZS: What do you think this volume has to say in regard to the unavoidable changes that we are witnessing in research and scholarship with the new technologies that impact the production of knowledge (both the process and medium)?

MG: These are very strange days! There's a new generation of scholars out there and research is changing rapidly with social media and AI, among many other things. And we have to be receptive to change. While I'm a strong believer in traditional scholarship, I think we need to encourage a wide range of scholarship. We need all kinds of scholars! We need to work together to expand our field, but at the same time, it's important to be visionary and creative, to keep coming up with new questions. That's what our hope was when we asked people to write about the state of current and future Islamic architecture. We crafted questions that were hopefully a bit different from those raised before, even

challenging the “Islamic architecture” label. We admit that it’s still a controversial title, and we question this terminology in our introduction.

DC: Mohammad and I are very different scholars working in different areas, but the complementary nature of our work and shared concerns helped us conceive of this book in a particularly inclusive way. I study nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial North Africa, not “traditional Islamic architecture.” Most of what I work on was built by and for the French there. As a staff member at the journal, I keep saying that we publish work on “Islamic architecture, broadly conceived.” Turning the special issue into a book provided an opportunity to fill in some gaps and expand our scope to make that idea extra clear, to draw on different people who might have been unfamiliar with the journal or do not consider themselves scholars of architecture.

MG: The notions of media and medium are really important. Not only are the generations changing, but our ways of communication are changing, and I think we need to change. Our goal is that people read the commentaries here, and suddenly they think about the way that they are doing their own work, conducting fieldwork, writing essays, and teaching.

ZS: Exciting! The volume moves beyond traditional categorizations such as chronological, geographical, and functional (secular/religious). Could you shed light on the process of selecting contributors and the book’s structure?

DC: The traditional categorizations do not work when you’re coming at it from this more nuanced, inclusive perspective. As we started compiling things we noticed that some areas were less covered, that we had just one really great essay on historic preservation, for example. We can’t have a whole section with one piece on that or just push that article into another section. So, we needed to find more related content. This led us to tourism as a connected field that clearly relates to architecture and conservation, and then to our pair of political scientist authors. Some people were very resistant—initially—to speaking more candidly and to inserting their identity and experience into their writing, and we had to explain that we want to know what drives them, what they have thought about, and the challenges they have encountered. Some people embraced that and others preferred to be more conventional in their approaches and documentation.

ZS: The volume calls for the future of Islamic architecture to be transdisciplinary, inclusive, responsive to contemporary events, historically aware, and forward-looking. In which areas do you see potential for expansion beyond what is discussed in the volume?

DC: I think there are obvious areas like including more practitioners that are thinking of, and designing within, Islamic contexts. More writing on tourism, the vernacular, and on digital realms would be exciting. When we asked people to write about the preservation of Islamic architecture, most only wanted to talk about preserving medinas and mosques. What about preserving colonial-era buildings, as they have been doing in Tunis? Undoubtedly many will say “well, it’s not really Islamic!” But isn’t it? These historic buildings constitute an essential built environment in a Muslim-majority country. I think getting people to think beyond that label and to further acknowledge intersections is a major area to expand our thinking.

MG: It’s mind-boggling how thousands of buildings are being designed and constructed every day in every part of the Islamic world. Yet, it’s disheartening to see that a significant majority of these structures lack even the most basic amenities and qualities. As architects and scholars, we may contribute to the betterment of the built environment in the Islamic world and addressing the pressing issue of preserving historic cities and buildings, which has become a paramount concern in recent times. Another captivating aspect we have encountered is the exploration of Islamic architecture in often overlooked geographies. During my time as a Fulbright fellow in Singapore a few years ago, I visited several East Asian countries. It was during these trips that I came to the realization of my own limited knowledge regarding Islamic architecture in the region. There is an abundance of knowledge waiting to be uncovered and studied within the rich contexts of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. We try to keep the question of expanding the geography at the center of this volume as well as *JIA*.

ZS: I appreciate your dedication to bringing practitioners and scholars together and to thinking about all forms of architecture. When catastrophe strikes, like the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, we notice how much of the built environment is being ignored by scholars. What is our responsibility as scholars of the built environment of Muslim-majority contexts on such ignored topics and how could we better bridge the gap between theory and practice?

MG: When these crises happen, it is our moral responsibility to get involved. In the case of *JJA* and this volume, we have tried to be proactive by bringing a wide range of topics that are not normally discussed in one single manuscript. This book, which would work well both in classrooms and design offices, should inform and provoke. We hope it inspires readers who may or may not be familiar with Islamic architecture.

DC: Absolutely. We put the volume together with an eye on accessibility and a broad scope, but there is still plenty more to be done. It's great to talk about museums and mosques, but airports, highways, and gas stations are important buildings that people in Islamic contexts also use. They should be considered too!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zohreh Soltani is Assistant Professor of Architectural Studies, Ithaca College, NY. She is an architect and architectural historian specializing in modern and contemporary architecture and urbanism of the Islamic World. She is committed to studying it through the analytic lenses of buildings and cities, using a careful, critically informed, and layered approach to understanding historical change, the accretion of memory, and the impact of radical political changes, trauma, and war on modern Middle Eastern landscapes. Her current book manuscript is titled *Building the Revolution: Public Architecture in Post-Revolutionary Tehran – 1979-2019*.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Ana Silkatcheva, a DPhil candidate at the University of Oxford, examines the Late-Antiquity mosaics of the recently re-opened site of Khirbat al-Majfar, a palace complex near Jericho on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

In the opening months of 2008, as a young student of Classical archaeology in Australia, my interest in Islamic art was awakened during my first field training on a site in Jordan. As our shovels and trowels freed brilliantly colored and patterned sherds of Islamic pottery from the soil on the way to the target Byzantine and Roman levels, I resolved to make the Islamic Levant the focus of my anticipated entrance into academic research. A hindrance to this plan, however, was a total absence of expertise in Islamic material culture in Australian universities, whose scope in art and archaeology ended at Late Antiquity, if even proceeding that far beyond the Classical world.

When I later applied to a Master's program at the University of Sydney, as a sort of consolation prize, my supervisor suggested I look at mosaic pavements. Mosaics had a suitably Classical base: in the Levant, most pavements were laid in Byzantine churches at the end of Antiquity (from the 4th century), in a culmination of craft practice that had begun in the Hellenistic world and spread over the Roman Empire. Mosaics continued to be laid in Christian contexts even after the Islamic conquest of Greater Syria, with the final flourish under the Umayyad dynasty (7th to 8th century) constituting a major part of the evidence for what Oleg Grabar described as the 'formation of Islamic art'. This seemed the ideal topic for a transition out of Classics into Islamic art and archaeology. I sought to determine how much of the Classical paradigm was carried through to Islamic times? What was wholly new, and could be described as demonstrably 'Islamic'? And was anything from this formative period continued in later Islamic art, despite the abandonment of mosaics as an artform with the fall of the Umayyads?

Now at the end of a doctoral program at the University of Oxford, I am at last approaching the answers to these questions. In the intervening fifteen years, I have developed expertise in the mosaics of the Byzantine period, making it possible to understand Islamic mosaics within their Late Antique context. A major contribution to the puzzle was furnished by a visit to the site of Khirbat al-Majfar in March 2022.



Ana Silkatcheva measuring the central medallion of the mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar.
Photograph by Elvira Miceli.

Khirbat al-Mafjar, a palace complex near Jericho on the West Bank of the Jordan River, has long been considered one of the earliest attempts of Muslim leaders to establish a distinctly Islamic artistic idiom. Excavated in the 1930s-40s by Palestinian archaeologist, Dimitri Baramki, and published by Robert Hamilton in 1959, Mafjar's bath and audience hall presents the largest mosaic known from Antiquity, the most representative example of Islamic mosaic pavements. To my great fortune, the site was re-opened to visitors late in 2021, following several seasons of renewed excavations in a collaboration between the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage and the University of Chicago. Thanks to funding from the Japanese Government, Mafjar's mosaic is now fully and permanently uncovered and protected by a purpose-built shelter. My visit was made possible by a residency in Jerusalem at the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research as the Marcia and Oded Borowski Fellow, the Professor Samuel Lieu travel grant from the Council for British Research in the Levant, and

with the permission and assistance of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine.

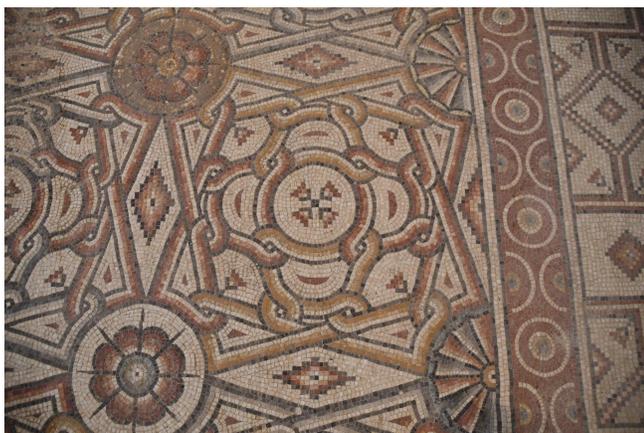
Despite its early discovery, the mosaic remains poorly understood. In studies of the earliest Islamic visual culture, a focus on figural imagery has dictated interpretative approaches. This poses a problem for understanding Mafjar's mosaics: the figural imagery is only a minor aspect of the pavement, while geometric patterns dominate its visual program. An understanding of Mafjar's mosaics continues to elude us because geometric patterns are dismissed in the field of mosaic studies across the Roman world. In contrast to the aniconism of much of Islamic art, Classical mosaics feature a multitude of figural images. Scholars have made these the focus of their iconographic analyses, while dismissing the mosaics' geometric patterns as subsidiary decoration. However, in Late Antiquity, geometric patterns on mosaics are far from secondary. As at Mafjar, they constitute the majority of the decoration on the floor. Patterns, therefore, are a significant, untapped



The mosaic pavement of Khirbat al-Mafjar as seen from the viewing platform.
Photograph by Ana Silkatcheva.

resource in research not only for Islamic art but for Late Antique studies more broadly.

In my MA and now PhD dissertations, I have sought to resolve the methodological and theoretical hurdles that stand in the way of analysis of patterns in mosaic. My aim is to understand geometric patterns not as carriers of meaning but as evidence of craft practice. Increasingly, scholars have recognised that visual culture may more closely represent a continuation of long-held artistic norms preserved and transmitted through craft practice rather than reflecting the intentions of patrons. As Umayyad mosaics were laid in a Late Antique context, an understanding of early Islamic art hinges on an understanding of the norms and practices of late Antique



Geometric patterns in the mosaic of Khirbat al-Mafjar.
Photograph by Ana Silkatcheva.

craftsmen. Only a methodical and comprehensive examination of all extant mosaics in the region, pattern by

pattern, could establish what these norms were and permit an investigation into how and which of these norms were carried through to Islamic architectural decorative programs. This has entailed the collation of a corpus of over 550 individual pavements from the Byzantine to the Islamic periods, incorporating data from existing country-specific syntheses as well as many new discoveries that have appeared since their publication. As a by-product of

my earliest research questions about Islamic art, I have charted the development of the mosaic industry in this region through five centuries of craft practice and artistic output (quite a lot more than I first set out to do).



A detail of a geometric pattern in the mosaic of Khirbat al-Mafjar.
Photograph by Ana Silkatcheva.

Of particular interest are the specific aspects of the treatment of patterns, from their internal detailing to their metric attributes. These specificities enable patterns to stand as a proxy for signatures of mosaicists, allowing us to trace their activities across the region and through time. Significant documentary and archival work in the field has been necessary to obtain this granular data. With Khirbat al-Mafjar, the jewel in the crown of early Islamic mosaics, fieldwork at the site allowed me to examine, document, and measure this pavement. Now, with the key evidence in place, mosaic patterns are finally revealing their secrets, and we are able to make a significant leap towards understanding the production of the earliest Islamic art.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ana Silkatcheva is the HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Scholar in Islamic Art and Architecture at the Khalili Research Centre, University of Oxford, and a graduate of the University of Adelaide (BA) and Sydney (MA by Research in Archaeology, MA in Museum and Heritage Studies). Outside of her work on the earliest Islamic art, she is broadly interested in the development of Islamic visual and material culture. She is also a critical commentator of the emerging field of Islamic art in Australia.

Updates under Member News, Exhibitions Curated, Recent Publications, and Dissertations in Progress were submitted by their respective authors for inclusion in this issue.

If you want us to include details about your accomplishments in the Winter 2024 issue, please fill out [this form](#).

Entries have been edited for clarity and brevity according to the newsletter's design guidelines.

MEMBER NEWS

Read about new appointments, awards, and other achievements by some of our members for 2022-2023.

Heba Abdelnaby is a Visiting scholar at Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (July–October 2023).

Nisa Ari was appointed Associate Professor of Art History at Montserrat College of Art, Massachusetts.

Hala Auji was appointed the Hamad bin Khalifa Endowed Chair for Islamic Art and Associate Professor of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts, Richmond.

Olga Bush was awarded a Garden and Landscape Studies Fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks (Harvard University), 2023-2024, in support of her project "Extraction and Construction: The Ecology and Landscape Architecture of Madīnat

al-Zahrā' (Córdoba) in the Pan-Mediterranean Medieval Context".

Haris Dervišević was appointed Associate Professor of Islamic and Ottoman Art at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo. He also served as a visiting professor at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz (Austria) in May 2023 with the support of the ERASMUS+ European Union University Exchanges Program.

Emine Fetvacı was elected President of the Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIAA).

Negar Habibi organized the international colloquium, "Studies in Indo-Persian Cultural Exchanges and The Pozzi Collection" at the University of Geneva and the Museum of Art and History, Geneva. On June 29, 2023.

Lydia Harrington was appointed Senior Curator of The Syria Museum through the Syrian American Council.

Cailah Jackson won the 2022 Article Prize, given by the Comité International d'Études Pré-ottomanes et Ottomanes (CIÉPO), for the article, "The Illuminations of Mukhlis ibn 'Abdallah al-Hindi: Identifying Manuscripts from Late Medieval Konya," *Muqarnas* 36 (2019): 41–60.

Leslee Michelsen was promoted to Senior Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at the Doris Duke Foundation.

Mikael Muehlbauer is an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Islamic Art Department, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 2023–2024.

Nazanin Hedayat Munroe was invited by the City University of New York Graduate Center to join the Board of the CUNY Academy of Humanities and Sciences as their new Chair of Interdisciplinary Research.

Emily Neumeier was appointed the 2023 Edilia and François-Auguste de Montêquin Senior Fellow, Society of Architectural Historians and received publication grants from the Barakat Trust and the New Foundation for Art History.

D. Fairchild Ruggles was a guest on the podcast *The Medieval Podcast* hosted by Danièle Cybulskie, in an episode titled "Islamic gardens in the Middle Ages with D. Fairchild Ruggles." December 2022. <https://www.medievalists.net/2022/12/islamic-gardens-middle-ages-ruggles/>

Alex Dika Seggerman was promoted to Associate Professor with Tenure at Rutgers University-Newark; and received the Patricia and Phillip Frost Senior Fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2023–2024.

Zeren Tanındı was honored with the festschrift, *Zeren Tanındı Armağanı: İslam Sanatında Kitap Sanatı ve Kültürü/Zeren Tanındı Festschrift: Art and Culture of Books in the Islamic World*, ed. Aslıhan Erkmen and Şebnem Tamcan Parlador. İstanbul: Lale Yayıncılık, 2022.

Deniz Turker (with Flavia Ravaioli) was awarded a Barakat Trust Grant (A3) for the project entitled "Alhambra in Britain: Collaborative Conservation of the Fitzwilliam Cast Collection."

Rachel Winter received an exhibition grant from Terra Foundation for American Art in

support of "Blind Spot: Stephanie Syjuco" at the Michigan State University Broad Art Museum (February–July 2023); and a collections grant from Terra Foundation for American Art in support of "The Center for Object Research and Engagement (The CORE): Rethinking Global Entanglements in American Art" at the MSU Broad Art Museum, opening November 2023; and The Salwa Mikdadi Research Award, Association for Modern + Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran + Turkey in support of "Lebanon: Nabil Kanso" (working title) at the MSU Broad Art Museum, opening February 2025.

Özlem Yıldız received The Sylvan C. Coleman and Pam Coleman Memorial Fund Fellowship in History of Art and Visual Culture (2023–2024), Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Ayşin Yoltar-Yıldırım was appointed Norma Jean Calderwood Curator of Islamic and Later Indian Art at Harvard Art Museums.

EXHIBITIONS CURATED

The following exhibitions were curated by HIAA members in 2023.

Haris Dervišević co-curated "40 Bosnian and Herzegovinian Mushafs (Qur'ans)" at Bosniak Institute–Adil Zulfikarpašić's Foundation, Sarajevo (December 2022).

Ashley Dimmig curated "Across Asia: Arts of Asia and the Islamic World," The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (permanent galleries, opened April 2023).

Julia Gonnella curated with Mounia Chekhab Abudaya, Tara Desjardins, Nicoletta Fazio and Simone Struth "Bagdad: Eye's Delight" at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar (25 October 2022–25 February 2023).

Lydia Harrington curated "Wandering Boston's Little Syria," at the Massachusetts Historical Society (April 2023).

Sumru Krody curated "Prayer and Transcendence" at The Textile Museum at The George Washington University Museum, Washington, D.C. (18 February–1 July 2023).

Leslee Michelsen curated "A'aru/Field of Reeds: Sherin Guirguis" at Honolulu Museum of Art (March–October 2023).

Nazanin Hedayat Munroe curated "Fate, Love and Divinity: Silks for the Sufi" at Ursula C. Schwerin Library, New York City College of Technology.

Deniz Turker curated "Mediterranean Embroideries" at Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK (April–October 2023).

Rachel Winter curated "Blind Spot: Stephanie Syjuco", Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (4 February–23 July 2023); and the 2023 Masters of Fine Arts Exhibition, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (Mar. 11–May 21, 2023).

Ayşin Yoltar-Yıldırım reinstalled the Permanent Gallery of Arts of the Islamic World at Brooklyn Museum.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The following articles, books and book chapters on Islamic Art and Architecture were published in 2023.

Abdelnaby, Heba. "Treating with Birds: The Insights of Two Mamluk Sources about the Medical Benefits of Birds." *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. XXV, (2022), 161–197.

Auji, Hala. "Outside Looking in: On Teaching Art History from the 'Margins.'" In *The Humanities in the 21st Century: Perspectives from the Arab World and Germany. Dossiers*, vol. 2, edited by Nuha Alshaar, Beate La Sala, Jenny Oesterle, and Barbara Winckler, 124–133. Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, 2023.

Auji, Hala. "Rupture and Response: Addressing Disaster, Conflict, and Change." Special Issue: Rupture and Response. *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, edited by Hala Auji. 12.2 (2023): 275–285.

Auji, Hala, ed. Special Issue: Rupture and Response. *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12.2 (2023).

Cummins, Joan and **Ayşin Yoltar-Yıldırım.** "New Galleries for South Asian and Islamic Art at the Brooklyn Museum." *Arts of Asia*, (Spring 2023): 58–71.

Emil, Mina, Heba Abdelnaby, and Sahar Abd Al-Aziz. "The Political and Social Importance of al-Rawda Island during the Mamluk Period." *The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels- Alexandria University (JFTH)*, vol. 19, issue 1 (2022): 66–98. (Arabic)

Esener, Bihter. "Précis of the Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture, the Ninth Biennial Hamad Bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art, Qatar, Doha, November 8–15, 2021." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12, no. 1 (2023): 257-59.

Farrokhfar, Farzaneh and Sara Parangi. "The status of Iranian painters in the international festivals and arts." *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies* 23 (1): 195-207.

Fetvacı, Emine. "La Jetée and the Illustrated Ottoman History: an Inquiry into Word, Image, and Audience." In *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar*, edited by İlham Khuri-Makdisi, Rachel Goshgarian and Ali Yaycıoğlu. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023.

Fetvacı, Emine. "The Album of Mehmed III: An Inquiry into Genre." In *Zeren Tanındı Armağanı: İslam Dünyasında Kitap Sanatı ve Kültürü / Zeren Tanındı Festschrift: Art and Culture of Books in the Islamic World*, edited by Aslıhan Erkmen and Şebnem Tamcan Parlador, 299-309. İstanbul: Lale Yayıncılık, 2022.

Gallinari, Luciano and Heba Abdelnaby, eds. *Identities in Touch between East and West: 11th to 21st Century*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2022.

Gonnella, Julia et al, eds. *Museum of Islamic Art: The Collection*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2022.

Gonnella, Julia et al, eds. *Museum of Islamic Art: The Guide*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2022.

Gonnella, Julia et al, eds. *Baghdad: Eye's Delight*. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2022 (English and Arabic).

Habibi, Negar. "Jean Pozzi, A Diplomat Collector." In *Re-Orientations. Europe and Islamic art, from 1851 to Today*, edited by Sandra Gianfreda, 194-211. Kunsthaus Zürich (March 2023).

Habibi, Negar and S. Mohsen Habibi. "İspahan safavide: une école d'urbanisme." In *Histoire et archéologie d'une ville jardin*, edited by Désire de Paradis and Philippe Revault, 215-234. Paris: CNRS Editions 2022, pp. 215-234.

Harrington, Lydia. "Conference précis: Shifting the Paradigm: New Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Professor Gülrü Necipoğlu, Conference, Boston College and Harvard University, Boston, September 8–9, 2022." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12, Issue Rupture and Response (Jul 2023): 447-449.

Hedayat, Nazanin Munroe. *Sufi Lovers, Safavid Silks and Early Modern Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023.

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Jackson, Cailah. "Illuminated Qur'an Manuscripts of Late Medieval Rum (Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries)." In *The Word Illuminated: Form and Function of Qur'anic Manuscripts from the Seventh to Seventeenth Centuries*, edited by Simon Rettig and Sana Mirza, 55-80. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Scholarly Press, 2023.

Jackson, Cailah. "Unraveling a Medical Mystery: The Identity of 'Geredeli' İshak b. Murad, a Physician of Late Fourteenth-Century Rum."

Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association 9, no. 1 (2022): 125-50.

Jackson, Cailah. "The Arts of the Book in the Aydinid Realm: Exploring a Neglected Medical Manuscript from Late Fourteenth-Century Western Rum." *Muqarnas* 39 (2022): 61-77.

Kanda, Yui. "If I Circumambulate Around Him, I Will Be Burnt: A Brass Candlestick Endowed to the Mausoleum of Imam Musa al-Kazim, Kazimayn." *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* (2 February 2023): 1-19.

Krody, Sumru. "West and Central Asia." In *Global İkat: Roots and Routes of a Textile Technique*, edited by Rosemary Crill, 2-30. London: HALI Publications, 2023.

Krody, Sumru. "Gateways to God." *HALI* 215 (2023): 68-77. Hali Publications.

Mumtaz, Murad Khan. "Kabir in the Visual and Literary Culture of Muslim South Asia." In *Devotional Visualities: Histories of Bhakti Material Culture*, edited by Karen Pechilis and Amy-Ruth Holt, 177-212. London: Bloomsbury Publishers, 2023.

Neumeier, Emily. "On Pedagogy: Islamic Art and Architecture in the Classroom." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12.1 (2023): 15-30.

O'Brien, Janet. "Dismembering the Corporate: The Single Portraits of Nādir Shāh and the Changing Body Politic in Post-Safavid Iran." In *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran: The Idea of Iran Vol. 11*, edited by Charles Melville, 27-56. London: I.B. Tauris, 2022.

O'Brien, Janet, and Simon Rettig. "Noblesse Oblige". In *Global Lives of*

Objects, edited by Massumeh Farhad and Sana Mirza, 95-101. Washington, DC: National Museum of Asian Art, 2023.

O’Kane, Bernard. “The Development of Early Islamic Architecture and Decoration in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Nusantara).” In *Muslim Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Diversity and Pluralism, Past and Present*, edited by Stéphane Pradines and Farouk Topan, 318-45. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

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Rice, Yael. “Kitabkhana.” *Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online*. Published September 20, 2022. <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2022/kitabkhana/>.

Rice, Yael. “Art History Beyond Objects.” *Art Journal Open*. Published January 26, 2023. <<http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=17688#>>

Rice, Yael. “Books that Bind: The Persianate Album and Its Widespread Circulation.” In *Old Stacks, New Leaves: The Arts of the Book in South Asia*, edited by Sonal Khullar, 129-54. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023.

Rice, Yael. *The Brush of Insight: Artists and Agency at the Mughal Court*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023.

Ruggles, D. Fairchild. “Ein Gespräch über die Blume als Symbol in Mythologie, Religion, Literatur und Politik mit Isabel Kranz, Randy

Malamud und D. Fairchild Ruggles, modiert von Franziska Stöhr.” In *Flowers Forever: Blumen in Kunst und Kultur*, organized by Franziska Stöhr; Prestel Verlag, 2023. Published following the exhibition “Flowers Forever;” Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich.

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Sabban, Sarah. “Imagining Lebanon with Islamic Art: The 1974 Exhibition at the Nicolas Sursock Museum.” *Regards – Revue Des Arts Du Spectacle*, no. 28 (December 2022): 51-87. <<https://journals.usj.edu.lb/regards/article/view/782>>

Samir, Doaa, Heba Abdelnaby, Hanan al-Assar and Amany Nabil. “Developing Heritage Presentation through the Concept of Creative Industries- An Application on Islamic Heritage Residential Buildings in Cairo.” *The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels- Alexandria University (JFTH)*, vol. 19, issue 2 (2022): 62-79. (Written in Arabic)

Seggerman, Alex Dika. “Modern Islamicate Painting, 1940–1970.” In *Historical Narratives of Global Modern Art*, edited by Irina D. Costache and

Clare Kunny. New York: Routledge, 2023.

Tabbal, Sarah. *Das Gelb Marokkos: Auf den Spuren der Orientaler Fortuny und Regnault*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023.

Tanırdı, Zeren. “Bezmiâlem Valide Sultan’ın Kitap Hazinesi’nden Musavver ve Müzehhep Bir Mesnevî.” In *Bir Ömür Tarih. Yusuf Oğuzoğlu’na Armağan*, edited by İsmail Yaşayanlar, 235-67. Bursa: Osmangazi Belediyesi, 2022.

Tanırdı, Zeren. “Hacı Selim Ağa’nın Kitaplarından 1386 Tarihli Bir Mesnevî: Kitap Sever Bürokratlar ve Aileler.” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 31 (2022): 455-88.

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Tanpınar, Ahmet Hamdi, Shah Mathew, and Selin Ünlüönen. “Letter to a Young Girl from Antalya.” *PMLA* 138, no. 2 (2023), 356-61.

Turker, Deniz. *The Accidental Palace: The Making of Yıldız in Nineteenth-Century Istanbul, 1795–1909*. Penn State University Press, 2023.

Turker, Deniz. “Angels of the Angels”: Abdülatif Subhi’s Coins, Egypt, and History.” *Muqarnas* 39 (October 2022): 193-225.

Turker, Deniz. “The Surveyor’s Gaze: Reconsidering Nineteenth-Century Modalities in Ottoman Painting.” In *Survey Practices and Landscape Photography across the Globe*, edited

by Erin Hyde Nolan and Sophie Junge, 259-281. London: Routledge, 2023.

Ünlüönen, Selin. "Painted Inscriptions; or, How the Khamsa of Shah Tahmāsb Talks About Itself." In *Inscriptions of the Medieval Islamic World*, edited by Bernard O'Kane, A.C.S. Peacock, and Mark Muehlhaeusler, 535-555. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

Winter, Rachel, ed. *Blind Spot: Stephanie Syjuco*. Published following the exhibition "Blind Spot: Stephanie Syjuco" at the Broad Art Museum. East Lansing: MSU Broad Art Museum, 2023.

Winter, Rachel. "From Palestine with Art": Dreams of Sovereignty and Acts of Resistance at the 2022 Venice Biennale." *react/review: a responsive journal for art & architecture* 3 (2023): 214-223.

Yıldız, Özlem. "On Collecting, Conserving, and Care: Penn Libraries will Be New Home to South Asian Collection." *Al-Bustan News Service*, April 18, 2023. <<https://www.albustanseeds.org/news/on-collecting-conserving-and-care-penn-libraries-will-be-new-home-to-south-asian-collection>>

Yıldız, Özlem. "A Wise Enemy: The Seventeenth Century Ottoman Portrayal of the Polish Commander Stanisław Żółkiewski." *IKON Journal of Iconographic Studies* v.15 (July 2022): 227-234.

Yoltar-Yıldırım, Ayşin. "The Question of Well-Rounded Artists of the Book at the Ottoman Court in the Early 16th Century." In *Zeren Tanındı Armağanı: İslam Dünyasında Kitap Sanatı ve Kültürü / Zeren Tanındı Festschrift: Art and Culture of Books in the Islamic World*, edited by Aslıhan Erkmen and Şebnem Tamcan

Parladır, 659-668. İstanbul: Lale Yayıncılık, 2022.

Yoltar-Yıldırım, Ayşin. "Remembering Refugees of Syria." In *Dark Water, Burning World, Issam Kourbaj*, edited by Louisa Macmillan. Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2023.

DISSERTATIONS COMPLETED

The following doctoral dissertations in Islamic Art and Architecture are currently in progress.

Esener, Bihter. "A Reflection of One's Own: Seljuk-Period Mirrors in Medieval Anatolia (1081–1308)" (Koç University, Suzan Yalman), 2022.

Fathi, Samira. "Re-Imagining the Royal City: Architectural Patronage and Urban Memory of Isfahan, 1694–1834" (University of California Santa Barbara, Nuha N.N. Khoury), 2023.

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