
Making Art History

A changing discipline and
its institutions

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- 27 Marlite Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die Deutsche Kunstgeschichte* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992).
- 28 Alois Riegl, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1931). On Riegl see also Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1993); Andrea Reichenberger, *Riegl's "Kunstwollen": Versuch einer Neubetrachtung* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003).
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Chapter 2

From the Prophet to postmodernism?

New world orders and the end of Islamic art

Finbarr Barry Flood

When I read of Islam in the papers these days, I often feel I am reading of museuminized peoples. I feel I am reading of people who are said not to make culture, except at the beginning of creation, as some extraordinary, prophetic, act.

Mahmood Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim—an African Perspective”

The breach between two kinds of art history, which treat either historical or modern art, and do this under different paradigms, no longer makes sense. We are just as poorly served by a rigid hermeneutic framework perpetuating a dogmatic strategy of interpretation. It is perhaps more appropriate to regard the interrogation of the medium of art, of historical man and his images of the world, as a permanent experiment.

Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?*

Ever since its inception as a sub-field of art history, no one has been quite sure of where to locate Islamic art and architecture within its master narratives. In Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture* (first published in 1896) “Saracenic” architecture belongs with the non-historical styles, branching (along with Byzantium) from the trunk of a decidedly Eurocentric family tree somewhere between Rome and Romanesque.¹ While (generally speaking) the century since Fletcher's tree was drafted has seen Islamic art admitted into the exclusive club of historical styles, the problem of where to house it is no less current, a point reflected in its treatment within universal surveys of art. In the eleventh edition of *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (2001), for example, the chapter on Islamic art is located between Byzantium and Ancient America, whereas the subject is entirely absent from the sixth edition of H.W. Janson's magisterial *History of Art* published in the same year.² The enquiring reader who, seeking even a trace of Islamic culture in Janson's narrative, turns to the index will find only two entries there under the

heading *Islam*: "art of" and "threat to Europe from."³ The juxtaposition has a disquietingly contemporary resonance, although the Europe in question turns out to be that of the ninth-century Carolingians. Nevertheless, the clear distinction between Europe/not Europe within which this single reference to Islam occurs reflects the frisson of alterity upon which the reception and accommodation of Islamic art has been predicated historically.

The problem of where to locate Islamic art stems, at least in part, from the peculiarities of the term itself, an invented rubric that must accommodate a vast array of artistic production stemming almost 1,400 years and spanning every continent.⁴ If artistic appreciation fulfills some of the cultural functions of religious adulation, then the position of Islamic art is particularly fraught, with the qualifying adjective caught between a religious identity and cultural identification. The resulting ambivalence is reflected not only in the lengthy apologies that accompany its use, but also in the tendency to oscillate between media-based and dynamic taxonomies, and in the appearance of ethnically or regionally based surveys.⁵

Many of these qualities were manifest in a myriad of new survey books on Islamic art and architecture published in the United States and Europe in the decade between 1991 and 2001.⁶ In addition to offering a chronological overview of Islamic art to the general reader, these texts were intended for use in undergraduate courses. The artifacts, manuscripts, and monuments represented within them show a remarkable coherence in terms of their chronological and geographic range, a coherence manifest in the repetitious appearance of both specific works and the object types that they represent. Through such consistencies in their inclusions and exclusions, the new surveys may be seen as constituting and consolidating a canon, an 'imagined community' of select artifacts and monuments that define the appropriate objects of this relatively new sub-field of art history.

To this extent, they provide a representative impression of the field as currently constituted, over a century after its emergence at the intersection of text-based Oriental studies, archaeology, connoisseurship, and museology.⁷ There is for example a relative balance among architecture, painting, and the 'minor' arts, an emphasis on elite artistic production rather than material culture, and on the central Islamic lands at the expense of the Maghrib, East Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Objects in London, Paris, and New York (and other US cities) are well represented, with occasional inclusions from Istanbul, St Petersburg, and the new collections of Islamic art in the Gulf States. Conversely, objects in Tehran, Cairo, Delhi, or the Central Asian Republics may be referred to in passing but are generally not illustrated. In other words, the works illustrated are those most readily accessible to European and American scholars, reminding us of Michael Camille's observation that the selection of valorized objects is less important to the formation of a canon than the possibilities of their reproduction.⁸

Each of these facets of the canon and their implications merits consideration, but my concern here is with what is arguably the most striking commonality among these surveys: their unanimity in excluding any art produced in the Islamic world after about 1800.

With some minor variations, most of the expository narratives in the survey texts follow a linear trajectory, tracing the history of Islamic art from the birth of Islam in the seventh century, through the rise of the first Islamic dynasties with their capitals in Damascus and Baghdad, to the breakdown of centralized authority and the emergence of regional artistic centers in the tenth. After a brief digression entailing Shi'i-Sunni rivalry and the Crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the advent of the Mongols and their sack of Baghdad in 1258 marks a watershed in the narrative of Islamic art: most survey courses (and some texts) break at this point. After the narrative resumes in the wake of the Mongol devastations, the focus shifts to the emergence of regional and trans-regional polities in Iran and Central Asia. From around 1500 (give or take a few decades), three regionally based polities—the Ottomans of Turkey, the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India—dominate. Then things get rather vague.

Although the Mughal state endured until 1857, when its last emperor was exiled to Burma in the wake of the Sepoy Revolt, and the Ottoman sultanate until 1922, when it was dissolved in the wake of the First World War, the later history of Mughal and Ottoman artistic production is ignored. Indeed, the narrative of Islamic art generally ends much earlier—usually in the seventeenth century, occasionally in the eighteenth. As Nasser Rabbat has observed, Islamic art history relates the development of a more or less insular tradition of art-making "that began with the building of the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina around AD 620, and inexplicably fizzled out with the dawn of the colonial age in the late eighteenth century."⁹

Frequently commented upon by my undergraduate students (the very audience for whom such texts were presumably intended), the phenomenon of art history *interruptus* is either completely ignored or only obliquely addressed by the authors of these surveys. Although there have been a number of important recent studies on nineteenth-century artistic production in the Islamic lands and the collecting practices through which the objects of Islamic art came to rest in European and American collections, these have yet to exert a major impact on the canon.¹⁰ The impact of Islamic art on nineteenth-century Europe or the persistence of calligraphy in the Islamic world might be briefly mentioned in concluding, but most authors seem to take it for granted that no art worthy of comment was produced in the Islamic world after 1800. This bias for the historical is reflected in the absence of contemporary artifacts and monuments from the (predominantly American and European) collections, exhibitions and texts that shaped the nascent field of Islamic art history.¹¹ More than two decades ago, Oleg Grabar noted that the peculiarity

"suggests that Islamic creativity may have meaning for Westerners only if it dates from before 1700."¹²

The location of Islamic art in a valorized past from which "living tradition" is excluded, amounts to a denial of coevalness with the art of European modernity. The point was underlined by a 2001 exhibition at the Fondation Beyler in Basel, which juxtaposed modern European art with examples of "non-Western" art, including pre-modern (rather than contemporary) art from the Islamic world in order to demonstrate common aesthetic values of abstraction. The endeavor was curiously reminiscent of the MoMA's much criticized 1984–1985 exhibit '*Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, although the parallels seem to have gone unremarked.¹³

The precedent for exclusion was set by nineteenth-century European scholars and travelers, who consistently heralded the death of Islamic art from Morocco to India. The sentiment is typified by Maxime du Camp's observation, made in 1854: "Egyptian art is not even in decadence, it simply no longer exists."¹⁴ Among the more ironic consequences of such attitudes, one might cite the reception of the work of Muhammad Racim (1896–1975). Racim was an Algerian artist whose "revival" of a Persianate miniature idiom previously unknown in Algeria and inflected by experiments with linear perspective was rapturously received by French critics, including Georges Marcais, the pre-eminent scholar of Islamic art and architecture in the region. Coining a striking metaphor, the critic Edmond Gojon avowed that Racim's work gave the lie to assertions that art died in Muslim lands "just as the blackened rose loses its leaves in the deadly hands of the leprous."¹⁵

It should be emphasized that these obsequies for Islamic art were coterminal with the inception of its disciplinary study. One consequence is that unlike surveys of European art, which proceed in linear (and more or less teleological) fashion from cave painting to minimalism and beyond, in surveys of Islamic art it is axiomatic that the advent of modernity heralds the end of art. Marking a tension between aesthetic, ethnographic, and historical value that has inflected the disciplinary study of Islamic art since its inception, this privileging of the pre- or early modern is something more than a reflection of the fact that historically, most Islamicists have been trained as medievalists.¹⁶ It is directly related to the rise of European colonialism and the new "global" patterns of circulation and consumption that it engendered.¹⁷

The vagaries of "Iranian" art in the recently published *Dictionary of Art* are a case in point. While artistic production between 1000 BC and AD 651 in the region broadly coterminal with the modern state of Iran is accommodated in volume 15 within various subheadings under the rubric of "Iran, ancient," with the advent of Islam in AD 651 the arts of "Iran" suddenly achieve trans-regional status, and are consequently to be found under the relevant subsections of the extensive entry "Islamic art" in volume 16. Once again, however, the period around 1800 marks

a taxonomic watershed, and readers keen to inform themselves about art and its institutions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iran need to revert to a further entry entitled "Iran, Islamic Republic of" in volume 15.¹⁸

In trying to understand the logic underlying these divisions, the reception of the art produced under the Qajar dynasty that ruled Iran from the late eighteenth century until 1925 is instructive. Caught between the threat of British and Russian colonialism, the strictures of traditionalism, and the exigencies of modernity, the Qajars initiated a process of cultural and social reform whose ramifications arguably extend until the present day. In contrast to the pre-eminence afforded Persian art from earlier periods, however, it is only in the past two decades that tentative attempts have been made to include Qajar works in the narrative of Islamic art. Largely the result of two groundbreaking exhibitions in New York and London and the catalogs that accompanied them, this development is manifest in the inclusion of Qajar art as an epilogue in at least one of the survey texts referred to above, thereby postponing the demise of Islamic art for several decades.¹⁹

The art of the Qajar period is characterized both by an engagement with the artistic legacies of the distant Iranian past and the artistic practices of contemporary Europe. Diverging from earlier painting traditions in the Islamic world, many of the works produced by Qajar artists were large-scale paintings executed in oil paints on a canvas ground. In addition, Qajar artists (some of whom studied in Europe) were quite capable of mining European royal portraiture for inspiration, adapting details, poses, and iconographic conventions. After the advent of photography in the 1840s, the new technology was enthusiastically taken up, not only as a medium in its own right, but also as a technical aid to the production of painted images.²⁰

This receptivity to European art was nothing new. On the contrary, the artistic production of Iran has been historically marked by the reception, appropriation, and adaptation of non-indigenous iconographies, media, and techniques, especially when conditions were favorable to the circulation of artists and materials. In the fourteenth century, for example, the *Pax Mongolica* established by the trans-regional hegemony of various Mongol khanates fostered the rapid emergence of an Iranian aesthetic characterized by the adoption of Chinese stalwarts such as peonies and lotus motifs for ceramics, textiles, book painting, and architectural decoration. These developments have been consistently hailed by Islamicists as evidence for the emergence of a new visual language shaped by contemporary "global" circulations and characterized by innovation and vibrancy.²¹

If the hybridity of the art produced in Iran under Mongol rule has been traditionally seen as a breakthrough for Iranian artists, the reception of Qajar art has been less enthusiastic, as the entry on Qajar painting in the *Cambridge History of Iran* makes plain:

Just as in the Mongol period of the fourteenth century Persian artists were busy absorbing Chinese ideas and conventions, so in our period they were

struggling to accommodate themselves to the artistic canons of Europe. We cannot blame them, however deplorable the tendency may seem; increasing contact made such a development inevitable.²²

While engagement with a non-indigenous Asian tradition is a sign of artistic inventiveness, the faltering reception of European artistic conventions is a sign of aesthetic decadence characterized by a loss of artistic autonomy.

The location of artistic greatness in a pre-colonial past is deeply rooted in a nostalgia that is elsewhere manifest in Orientalist painting, whose relationship to nineteenth-century colonial scholarship merits more attention than it has received. The emphasis on artistic autonomy and authenticity as anterior to contact with European culture is common to the reception of other forms of "non-Western" art (a category that is necessarily exclusionary); the phenomenon has been especially well explored in relation to the disciplinary study of African art, whose exclusions and omissions are in many ways familiar.²³ Equally relevant is the location of cultural and market value in singularity, a quality guaranteed not only by geographic distance but also by temporal remoteness; as Steiner notes, canonicity is dependent on the (literal) death of the author/artist.²⁴

The negative evaluations of Qajar art contrasts with the generally more positive assessments of art produced under the Ottomans of Turkey, the Mughals of India, or the Safavids of Iran during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries that also drew upon European artistic conventions and forms.²⁵ While earlier Iranian artists might mine Chinese painting or even European prints and drawings with impunity (even adulation), the closer one gets to the time of the European narrator, the more negative the aesthetic evaluation of "hybrid" art-making traditions. This curious distinction between the distant past and recent memory reflects the status afforded the contemporary (as opposed to earlier) European images mined in Qajar art as not only anterior in a temporal sense, but culturally prior.

The phenomenon is by no means specific to histories of nineteenth-century Iran, on the contrary it is a generalized characteristic of Islamic (and other fields of "non-Western") art history. During the same period, for example, the aesthetic tastes of the Nawabs, the Muslim rulers of the nominally independent state of Avadh in northern India, were excoriated by European travelers and colonial officials, their striking combination of European neoclassicism and indigenous forms read as vulgar signs not only of cultural but also of moral and political decadence. Writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the British architectural historian James Fergusson described the "pseudo-Italian" palaces of Lucknow as resembling Napoleon III's remodeled Palais du Louvre and Tuileries Gardens in Paris, "but instead of the beautiful stone of Paris, all was brick and plaster; and instead of the appropriate details of that palace, the buildings surrounding the great court at Lucknow are generally two storeys in height and singularly various in design." In

his description of the Begum Kotli, one of the component pavilions of the Lucknow palaces, Fergusson developed the theme:

Like all the other specimens of Oriental Italian Architecture, it offends painfully, though less than most others, from the misapplication of the details of the Classical Orders. Of course no native of India can well understand either the origin or motive of the various parts of our Orders . . . It is, in fact, like a man trying to copy an inscription in a language he does not understand, and of which he does not know the alphabet . . . fashion supplies the Indian with those incentives to copying which we derive from association and education; and in the vain attempt to imitate his superiors, he has abandoned his own beautiful art to produce the strange jumble of vulgarity and bad taste we find at Lucknow and elsewhere.²⁶

The sense of physical revulsion conveyed by this passage is reminiscent of an assessment of Qajar painting made by the Comte de Rochecouart in the 1860s: "as for the paintings that the Persians themselves produce, they make one gnash one's teeth."²⁷ The count locates the production of this sensation in the hybrid style of the *farangi* (i.e. Europeanizing) paintings then popular in Iran, which he sees as incompetent copies of second-rate European prints and engravings such as might adorn the shopfronts of provincial wig-makers:

Having no idea of design, ignorant of the most simple laws of perspective, not understanding art in the way that we do and, consequently, lacking any critical faculty with which to focus their judgment and illuminate their taste, they copy the most flat and absurd compositions with minute care, and exert themselves to extinguish the brightness of their colors in order to approximate as closely as possible the gloomy and false color of polychromatic lithographs.²⁸

For the count, as for other nineteenth-century commentators, a perceived absence of linear perspective, chiaroscuro, and verisimilitude in Qajar art obviated its classification as fine art, its interest lying primarily in a documentary value for the ethnographer.²⁹

Caught between tradition and modernity (categories that are interdependent but generally assumed to be incommensurate), nineteenth-century Indian and Middle Eastern artists were condemned to perform derivative and reiterative parodies of European norms that they could only aspire to.³⁰ Consequently, both the absence and presence of forms, idioms, media, and techniques seen to have their origins in Europe constituted an aesthetic affront that simultaneously reaffirmed while undermining the privileged status afforded contemporary European artistic production. To borrow Homi Bhabha's term, as they oscillated between alterity

and mimesis, the “inappropriate” objects of Qajar or Avadhi art manifested their perceived mimicry as both resemblance and menace.³¹

The attribution of the death of Islamic art (and the cultures that it represents metonymically) to the inappropriate or incompetent reception of European “influence” follows a trajectory from the narratives of nineteenth-century colonial historians down to their present-day successors. With the rise of neoconservative discourses emphasizing the failure of Muslims to make the transition to Euro-American modernity, this paradigm has once again gained currency. It appears for example in *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, a recent work by the Princeton Islamicist and White House advisor Bernard Lewis, which purports to explain why Middle Eastern civilizations lag behind the West. Discussing the Nuruosmaniye Mosque in Istanbul, built in 1755, Lewis notes its “Italian Baroque” exterior decoration, concluding in familiar vein: “When a foreign influence appears in something as central to a culture as an imperial foundation and a cathedral-mosque, there is clearly some faltering of cultural self-confidence.”³²

The reductive absurdity of this analysis is apparent when one considers that just six decades later, on the eve of his rule over a burgeoning mercantile empire, the Prince Regent and future British monarch George IV commissioned the Royal Pavilion at Brighton (1815–1823), a palace that manifests an eclectic blend of Indian and Islamic forms.³³ However, the *Western* of Lewis’s title emphasizes a unidirectional flow of “influence” rather than an active engagement with its objects, the passive reception of superficial signs of a modernity located elsewhere. Consequently, the resulting “hybrid” works constitute signs of a cultural bankruptcy that merits censure and, ultimately, amelioration.

Lewis’s work highlights the utility of cultural history (including art history) in the ideological struggles that have gained in ferocity and pace since the atrocities of September 11, 2001. In the past five years, historians of Islamic art have come under increasing pressure to provide a cogent perspective on these struggles. In particular, the idea that Islamic art and art history can “bridge the cultural divide” between the Islamic world and “the West” has been mooted with increasing frequency.³⁴ Although it is upon the museum in particular that this burden has fallen, it is no less relevant to the classroom. Indeed a renewed interest in Islamic cultures after 2001 has been manifest in the funding of several new academic positions and in burgeoning student enrollment in survey classes on Islamic art, a phenomenon that has come under attack from neoconservative activists bemoaning the demise of the Western canon.³⁵

Although utopian, the idea that Islamic art holds the potential to answer the many questions raised by the horrors witnessed nightly on our laptops and television screens is entirely understandable, especially given the paucity of critical analysis and reliable information in the media. However, the sunsetting of the pre-modern from the modern (and even postmodern) that is such a hallmark of the canon as

currently constructed means that historians of Islamic Art are peculiarly ill-situated to address contemporary issues. Where we have attempted to do so, we have inevitably fallen back on the kind of reactionary nostalgia that is so marked in the reception of Qajar art. The problem is illustrated by an oddly equivocal statement attributed to Oliver Watson, then chief curator of the new Museum of Islamic Art in Doha: “People say that at this moment it is more important to recognize that the Middle East and the Islamic world was in its day as advanced culturally, as well as economically and militarily, as any country or empire in the world.”³⁶ Like some recent international exhibitions of Islamic art, the qualification “in its day” begs a question that it cannot answer, but that provides an opening for the increasingly vocal purveyors of the “what went wrong” paradigm of Islamic history. To this extent, the peculiar end of Islamic art facilitates and reinforces narratives of fallen greatness that are central to the recuperative projects of contemporary neo-imperialism.

The ideological implications of the production of Islamic art as a closed system, a finished story, were highlighted by Donald Preziosi even before the events of 2001:

Art-historical objects have thus always been object-lessons of documentary import insofar as they might be deployed or staged as cogent ‘evidence’ of the past’s causal relationship to the present, enabling us to thereby articulate certain kinds of desirable (and undesirable) relations between ourselves and others. No longer overtly discussed in art-historical discourse in this regard is the (silent) contrast between European ‘progress’ in the arts in contradistinction to the coincident ‘decline’ of Europe’s principal Other in early modern times, the (comparably multinational and multiethnic) world of Islam.³⁷

As noted above, in art-historical narratives from the nineteenth century onwards, the decline of the arts in the Islamic world has been directly correlated to the rise of Europe and its “influence.” The notion of a pre-lapsarian “golden age” corrupted through the inappropriate reception of European cultural forms is of course common to the ideologies of both Islamists and their neoconservative opponents, as is a tendency to mine the past for models of appropriate behavior that can be deployed in the present. In the terminal paragraph of *What Went Wrong?*, Bernard Lewis warns of the likelihood that the Middle East will be subject to “alien domination” should its peoples continue on their present path of a “grievance and victimhood,” a prescient threat counterposed to the possibility that the inhabitants of the region “can once again make the Middle East, in modern times as it was in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, a major center of civilization.”³⁸

The threat and promise conveyed by this passage are predicated upon an implicit suggestion that the answers to the problems posed by “current events” can be found by careful contemplation of the past. Occluding the awkward verities that have

helped shape the development of living Islamic cultures—colonialism and its legacy, modernity, postmodernity, and globalization—this displacement permits the espousal of a paradoxical “back-to-the-future” model of Islamic modernity. As Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum, put it recently:

The new interim government in Iraq will have to consider how it defines Iraq's identity. And it will be surprising if it does not turn, as every other government in the Middle East has turned, to historical precedents to define the wished-for future. There is nowhere better to survey those precedents than the British Museum.³⁹

Even in a world where museum directors are under constant pressure to demonstrate the relevance of their collections, this is a remarkable claim. Championing the utility of the instantiated past as a resource to be deployed in the present, it recalls Preziosi's suggestion that the utility of art history since its emergence as a discipline has lain in its production of a past:

*that could be effectively placed under systematic observation for use in staging and politically transforming—that is, performing—the present. A past that could be imagined as bearing a causative relation to the present, yet at the same time a pre-modernity that could be imagined to be a detached object, ‘independent’ of the analytic gaze of the present.*⁴⁰

James Clifford has noted that the museum often possesses the qualities of a contact zone between cultures, a quality manifest in “an ongoing historical, political, moral, *relationship*—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull.”⁴¹ This push and pull engages the unstable social identities of material culture, a dialectic of reification and consumption that produces “truths of seduction rather than presence.”⁴² Over the past five years, these phenomena have been increasingly manifest in the economic and institutional entanglements of Islamic art history with contemporary global politics, and in the instrumental deployment of museological archives to bolster specific representations of Islam and Islamic cultures.

The former point is illustrated by *Palace and Mosque*, an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC between 2004 and 2005.⁴³ This was a traveling exhibition of select objects from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, one of the most significant European collections of Islamic art, whose galleries were undergoing a \$9.7 million renovation funded by the president of a Saudi Arabian automobile conglomerate. The chronological range of the exhibition conformed to the canon, although accompanying publicity material put the end of Islamic art as 1918, in the wake of the First World War and the subsequent emergence of secular regimes in Iran and Turkey. The cost of the

exhibition was underwritten by Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi ambassador to Washington (and now Secretary General of the National Security Council of Saudi Arabia). The prince is a controversial figure whose relationship with the Bush family reflects the historical entanglements of American oil corporations and conservative Islamic movements.⁴⁴ At a time when the Saudi star had fallen to an all-time low in the United States (with the notable exception of the White House), Prince Bandar's sponsorship of the exhibition was part of an extended public relations exercise designed to improve his own standing and that of the regime that he represented. To that end, it manifested an eclectic and ecumenical vision of historical Islam rather than the considerably more circumscribed contemporary variant promulgated in the Saudi kingdom.

The exigencies of contemporary global politics also framed the conception and reception of *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600*, a major exhibition held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2005. The objects comprising *Turks* illustrated the migrations of Turkic peoples from Central Asia with a range of objects dating from the seventh to the seventeenth century. Despite the pre-modern focus in the choice of artifacts, this was a trajectory that led inexorably westwards, toward the project of European modernity. As the British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in a foreword to the catalog:

the long and complex journey [of the Turkic peoples] through Central Asia, the Middle East and, of course, Europe is something we should understand and reflect upon. It demonstrates that the interaction of different cultures in our world is crucial if we are to survive.

Writing alongside the British premier, the prime minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was less coy:

Cultural diversity is a source of richness for all nations. This exhibition comes at a most propitious time, as Turkey's aspirations toward membership of the European family of nations in the European Union are centre stage. I am confident that this fascinating exhibition will further enhance mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.⁴⁵

Such projects do not always obscure the ideological crucible of their own making. Announcing the elevation of the Islamic art section of the Louvre into a new department of Islamic art in 2002, the French Minister of Culture and Communications Jean-Jacques Aillagon explained:

Obviously, this has a political dimension It's a way of saying we believe in the equality of civilizations Many immigrant youths do not fully adhere

to our culture, nor do they know their own culture of origin. It's good to show that the republic respects, displays and studies this culture.⁴⁶

Three years later, his successor Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres elaborated:

In a world where violence expresses itself individually and collectively . . . where hate erupts and imposes its expression of terror, you dare to affirm the conviction that is yours—that is ours—that the dialog of peoples and cultures, the richness of patrimonies, the values of sharing are the responses of intelligence to the bitter experience of conflicts.⁴⁷

A common trope in these attempts to press the objects of Islamic art into the service of the state or super-regional ideological projects is an emphasis (manifest or latent) on the ability of medieval artifacts to bolster or construct a “true” notion of Islamic faith and culture. In the recent heated controversy over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in Danish (and later other European) newspapers, museum holdings from Washington to Edinburgh, London to Istanbul functioned as an archive which could be deployed to confront protesting Muslims with the fact that pre-modern Muslims had in fact created images of the Prophet. The contemporary geopolitical context against which the global controversy unfolded and which was central to its meaning was largely displaced by a retrospective emphasis on a past age when images were apparently less contentious.⁴⁸ According to a statement issued by the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, DC and widely quoted in the media:

Contrary to widespread assumptions today, the traditional arts of Islam, whether Sunni or Shiite, often did reverently depict the prophet, as abundantly attested by manuscript illuminations ranging in time from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, and in space from Turkey to Bengal. Pictorial representations of the prophet remain accepted by many Shiites today, although they have been generally frowned upon by most Sunnis since about the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

Although not specified, this *terminus post quem* coincides with the rise of European colonialism and the culturally conservative strain of Sunni Islam favored in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, events that are not unrelated. The point was not lost on at least one commentator, who connected this angst about figuration to a decline in cultural confidence and a concomitant recourse to more retrogressive modes of Islamic belief: “What their paintings show is this: Once upon a time—in the era of the caliphs and the sultans and the shahs, when the faithful felt triumphant, and courtly learning blossomed—the prophet *did* appear in great Islamic art.”⁵⁰

The implicit contrast between “modern” (intolerant) interpretations and manifestations of Islam and their more tolerant (and better informed) predecessors figures the objects of Islamic art as valorized repositories of an ordinary Islam corrupted through time, accepting the premise of “fundamentalist” Muslims, but inverting its meaning. Critiques of the latter often reiterate European criticisms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art-making practices in the Islamic lands for their lack of authenticity in blending “tradition” and “modernity,” two states of being usually spatialized as the local and the (Euro-American) global, or temporalized as past and present. In a recent critique of this position, the anthropologist Talal Asad observed:

This kind of description paints Islamic movements as being somehow inauthentically traditional on the assumption that ‘real tradition’ is unchanging, repetitive, and non-rational. In this way, these movements cannot be understood on their own terms as being at once modern and traditional, both authentic and creative at the same time.⁵¹

The cartoon controversy highlights the potential utility of Islamic art in attempts to locate prescriptive models for the ideal Muslim citizen. In keeping with the retrospective tendencies discussed above, these models are found in a valorized past rather than a turbulent present marked by new patterns of engagement with both tradition and modernity. Donating \$20 million for the construction of the new Islamic art gallery at the Louvre in July 2005, the Saudi prince Walid bin Talal predicted that the gallery would “assist in the true meaning of Islam, a religion of humanity, forgiveness and acceptance of other cultures.”⁵² The prince’s words mirror those of President George W. Bush in the wake of the September 11th attacks: “The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That’s not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don’t represent peace. They represent evil and war.”⁵³ As the author of the passage cited above put it: “though museums often seem distant from the news, this isn’t always so.”⁵⁴

The engagement of the field with wealthy patrons seeking political capital from the association has a long history—a particularly influential exhibition of Persian Art held in London in 1931 was, for example, co-sponsored by the British monarch George V and Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran, an ambitious army officer who had deposed the last of the Qajar rulers six years previously.⁵⁵ What is new and particularly disturbing is the way in which the objects of Islamic art are increasingly co-opted into an emergent (if embryonic) exhibitionary regime that not only aims to project a model of peaceful coexistence but to locate and provide an appropriate model of Islam itself. The increasing pressures on secular institutions to bolster and promote the right kind of Islam (as defined by such neutral observers as President Bush and Prime Minister Blair) are comparable to and stem from the same sources as

contemporary pressures on Muslim communities to produce the right kind of Muslim, or universities in the United States to produce the right sort of Islamicist.⁵⁶

The deployment of Islamic art and its (primarily Euro-American) histories to this end engages a performative quality that Donald Preziosi has noted as a general characteristic of art history, whose objects are “legible as object-lessons; as ‘illustrating’ (or ‘representing’) desirable and undesirable social relations in the (perpetually) modernizing nation.”⁵⁷ The slippage between categories of religious identity and cultural identification referred to at the outset is directly relevant to the utility of Islamic art in the high-stakes public relations game that is integral to the war on a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of abstractions (evil, fundamentalism, terror, etc.). Equally relevant is a canonical (and often awkward) emphasis on Islamic art as a predominantly “secular” art produced for and patronized by temporal rulers whose piety was nominal and (with rare exceptions) confined to appropriate domains.⁵⁸

We are confronted here with a series of major paradoxes: a sub-field of art history marked by the eschewal of any engagement with the problems of modernity and their political ramifications is increasingly situated within contemporary Euro-American debates about the nature of Islam; with the collaboration of avowedly secularist governments and Saudi princes, the museum—an institution founded on the secularization of religious fetishes—assumes a pedagogical role in providing models not only of cultural understanding, but also of authentic religious belief; in a global conflict in which the opponents of the New World Order are often said to be characterized by a medieval mindset, the antique objects of the museum point the way toward a brighter future in which the right kind of Islam will prevail, modernized, and rejuvenated under the aegis of Euro-American tutelage.

For those of us uncomfortable with these developments, there is a pressing need to imbue the narrative of Islamic art with a degree of reflexivity that is currently lacking. Challenging “the fictitious creed of immaculate classification” that facilitates the co-option of the materialized past in service of a “New World Order,” we need to adumbrate synchronic histories of intention and origin with diachronic accounts of circulation, consumption, and reception.⁵⁹ Instead of occluding the entangled histories of colonialism, capitalism, and the canon, it is essential to explore the ways in which these imbrications are manifest in the practices of collecting and representation through which the field was constituted, and the contentions that currently shape it.

The most obvious way of doing this is to broaden the canon, including artists and works that problematize the history and reception of Islamic art since the nineteenth century. The nostalgia that is central to the latter might, for example, be explored through the work of Osman Hamdi (d. 1910) who trained as an Orientalist painter in Paris, practiced in the late Ottoman state, founded the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul in 1883, and helped shape a nascent Ottoman museological practice that

he also drew upon in his work.⁶⁰ Hamdi’s variant of Orientalist nostalgia is ambiguous in its engagements with modernity: claimed as a site of resistance to the more *outré* conventions of the genre within which it operated, it might equally be read as a form of self-Orientalization. In a similar vein, the complex intersection between Orientalist scholarship on Islamic art and medieval revivalism in Islamic architecture might productively be investigated.⁶¹

Among the very many *contemporary* artists whose work engages the binary disjunctions between the historical and the contemporary, the local and the global is Shadafarin Ghadrian, a young Tehran-based photographer. Ghadrian stages photographic tableaux based on Qajar-era studio photographs of women but marked by the intrusive signs of a global modernity (Coke cans, for example, or mountain bikes) that draw attention to their status as meta-images of a contemporary cosmopolitanism.⁶² This deployment of strategic anachronism offers a paradigm that opens the potential for academics, curators, and scholars to treat the objects of “Islamic” art not as teleological markers in a master narrative that occludes the circumstances of its own production (and ongoing reproduction), but as contested objects within a disjunctive and tendentious discourse.

Paradoxically perhaps for an institution deeply implicated in the history of European colonial adventures, the British Museum offers another model for rethinking the traditional canon. One of the very few institutions whose Islamic collections include both pre-modern and modern art from the Islamic world, since the 1980s the museum has been acquiring contemporary works on paper. Some of these were seen in the recent exhibition *Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East*. Reflecting a widespread focus on calligraphy (generally seen as the most “Islamic” of arts) as a medium for negotiating “tradition” and “modernity,” the exhibition problematized the term Islamic, using the ambiguities and ambivalences associated with it to explore the way in which contemporary global and local politics have inflected artistic production in the Middle East over the past three or four decades.⁶³

In its frank engagements with contemporary politics, the London exhibition stood in marked contrast to *Without Boundaries: Seventeen Ways of Looking*, an exhibition held at MoMA in New York earlier in 2006. The exhibition was a curiously apolitical attempt to explore contemporary artistic engagements with “Islamic” tradition. Despite director Glenn Lowry’s rather oblique reference to “the tension between old and new,” any reference to contemporary politics or the ongoing wars on Afghanistan and Iraq (a potential source of controversy and thus financial sanction) were fastidiously avoided in both exhibition and catalog.⁶⁴ Originally subtitled *Fifteen Ways of Looking*, the exhibition focused on questions of identity, tradition, and modernity. It included work by fifteen artists of varied Middle Eastern backgrounds and two American artists whose heritage was not Middle Eastern and who were not influenced by artists from the Islamic world, but were said to “share interests, references, and strategies with them.”⁶⁵ Among the latter were Bill Viola and Mike

Kelley, whose contribution consisted of *Untitled* (1996–1997), a silk-rug handwoven to the artist's specifications in the Iranian city of Ghom. The accompanying wall label informed the viewer the green background and the central shamrock was an allusion to his Irish heritage, and that although "this is the one object in the exhibition that most closely follows an Islamic prototype," in its "impurity" it subverted binary notions of identity. In common with their colonialist predecessors, such evaluations emphasize questions of hybridity, but invert its meaning: formerly excoriated as decadent, the blending of "traditional" and "modern" forms, iconographies and idioms is now valorized as subversive. Aware of the dangers of privileging the claims of global modernity, in her accompanying essay Ferehshteh Daffari emphasized not only the disjunctive relations to works produced in the pre-modern Islamic world, but the fact that many of these "traditional" works were themselves "hybrid," a term that would bear more interrogation than it generally receives.⁶⁶

As these attempts to grapple with questions of identity, modernity, and the nature of "Islamic" art suggest, the problems discussed above can be addressed neither merely by expanding the chronological range of the canon nor by introducing more material and qualifying adjectives. Although the term "modern Islamic art" has entered circulation, it is if anything more fraught than its generally accepted predecessor.⁶⁷

If the expansion or reconfiguration of the canon promises an amelioration rather than a solution, fantasies about abolishing, exploding, or transcending it are not only utopian but have the potential to lead us back to where we started.⁶⁸ I am not, for example, in agreement with James Elkins when he suggests that the aporias of the canon might be addressed by a "decisive break" with the "western" institutions and paradigms that have historically structured the discipline of art history, and that now have a global reach.⁶⁹ Indeed, Elkins's critiques of post-colonial theorists for their embrace of "western" epistemologies and academic institutions and their concomitant failure to recuperate some authentically nativist model of art criticism is not only curiously immune to questions of knowledge/power but comes perilously close to the essentialist demands for authenticity critiqued above.⁷⁰

A more productive approach is suggested by James D. Herbert in an essay that notes the impossibility of situating an art-historical practice within the elusive "post" of post-colonial:

We can instead abandon this fantasy of escape. What if, rather than collapsing hopelessly back into colonialism at the end of our argument, we concede from the start that scholarly discourse necessarily and productively operates from a base within the colonial? The ironic turn of postcolonialism then occurs inside the ideological space of the colonial. It thereby opens up the complexities and ambiguities of that ideology; it recognizes a multivocality that allows for the possibility of resistance and disruption from within—both in the past and in the present.⁷¹

Herbert's suggestion resonates with the post-colonial project of "provincializing Europe," a rethinking of modernity and its epistemologies through local histories of "translation" and transformation, and the fresh perspectives that they offer on modernity from what is usually thought of as its fringes.⁷² The undertaking holds the potential to undermine the identity of temporal anteriority and cultural priority that is central to reductive histories of reception.

A similar scenario has been envisaged by Ikem Okoye, who imagines the "possibility of framing art history simultaneously from a multiplicity of positions and locations" rather than privileging a single Euro-American perspective.⁷³ Oleg Grabar has noted the potential utility of Islamic art history for understanding pre-modern European art, and its particular abilities to contribute to contemporary theoretical concerns within the discipline.⁷⁴ Following Okoye's lead, there is no reason that such contributions should be restricted to additive inclusion rather than occasioning a more radical reorientation, one that might see a history or historical critique of Italian Renaissance art from the perspective of an Ottomanist, for example, or a course on modernism (including its American European variants) offered from the perspective of a specialist in Iranian modernism.⁷⁵

Any response to the challenges posed by the pressures exerted on the field of Islamic art history by contemporary geopolitics will inevitably require the development of new skill sets. It may even lead to the fragmentation of the field as it is currently constituted. This is an eventuality that many would find unappealing within an academy subjugated to market forces and fierce competition for an intra-disciplinary division of spoils.⁷⁶ However, what has been aptly dubbed the "unwieldy" sub-field of Islamic art history is in many ways a fractal of the "unruly" discipline as a whole.⁷⁷ Its ultimate fate may be therefore inseparable from that of the universal narratives in which it is currently imbedded, narratives whose imminent demise has been repeatedly predicted over the past decades, however prematurely.⁷⁸

Notes

- 1 Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 16th edn (London, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1954) pp. iii, 934–964. For similar points made in relation to the study of Byzantine Art see Robert Nelson: "Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art," *Gesta* 35(1), (1996): 3–11. See also Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Archaeology," in Leonard Binder, ed., *The Study of the Middle East, Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976) p. 242.
- 2 Fred S. Kleiner, Christian J. Mammiya, and Richard J. Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (Orlando: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001) pp. 359–384. H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art* (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 2001).
- 3 Janson, *History of Art*, p. 982.
- 4 For a range of perspectives on this problem see Mehmet Aga-Oglu, "Remarks on the Character of Islamic Art," *The Art Bulletin* 36(3) (1954): 175–202; Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art 1.1: Definitions," *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 16 (New York: Grove's Dictionaries,

- 1996) pp. 99–101; Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Coco Ferguson, "Islamic Arts at a Crossroads," *Bidoun: Arts and Culture from the Middle East* (Fall, 2004): 52; Judith Ernst, "The Problem of Islamic Art," in Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds., *Muslim Networks from Hajj to HipHop* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) pp. 107–131.
- 5 See, for example, Oktay Asanapa, *Turkish Art and Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971); Wijdan Ali, *The Arab Contribution to Islamic Art from the Seventh to the Fourteenth Century* (Cairo: American University Press, 1999). For a discussion of these issues see J. M. Rogers, *The Uses of Anachronism: on Cultural and Methodological Diversity in Islamic Art* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1994) pp. 8–9; Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field," *The Art Bulletin* 85(1) (2003): 152–184.
- 6 Barbara Brend, *Islamic Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair, *Islamic Arts* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997); Robert Irwin, *Islamic Art in Context: Art, Architecture, and the Literary World* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1997); Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). Arabic survey books on Islamic art appeared as early as the 1930s; see, for example, Zaki Muhammad Hasan, *Fuṣūḥ al-Islām* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1948).
- 7 Stephen Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, c.1850–c.1950," in Vernoit, ed., *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2000) pp. 1–61.
- 8 Michael Camille, "Prophets, Canons and Promising Monsters," *The Art Bulletin* 78(2) (1996): 200.
- 9 Nasser Rabbat, "Islamic Architecture as a Field of Historical Enquiry," *Architectural Design* 74(6) (2004): 19.
- 10 Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*; Stephen Vernoit, *Occidentalism: Islamic Art in the 19th Century* (New York: Nour Foundation, 1997); Stephen Vernoit and Doris Behrens-Abouseif, eds., *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century: Tradition, Innovation and Eclecticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
- 11 Vernoit, *Occidentalism*, pp. 13–14.
- 12 Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art," *Mqanas* 1 (1983): 5.
- 13 Markus Bröckel, ed., *Ornament and Abstraction: the Dialogue between Non-Western, Modern and Contemporary Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988): 189–214.
- 14 Cited in Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture of Islam*, p. 311.
- 15 "Une oeuvre . . . qui . . . fera mentir avec éclat ceux qui prétendent que l'art se meurt au pays musulman, comme la rose desséchée noircit et s'effeuille aux mains fatales des lépreux," Mustapha Orif, "De l'art indigène à l'art algérien," *Actes de la recherche en science sociales* 75 (1988): 37; Roger Benjamin, "Colonial Tutelage to Nationalist Affirmation: Mammeri and Racim Painters of the Maghrib" in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) pp. 45, 60–68.
- 16 Vernoit, *Occidentalism*, p. 12.
- 17 In colonial Algiers of the 1930s, for example, the decline of Islamic art was attributed to 'foreign' imports and their corrupting influence on the purity of local forms: Zeynep Çelik, "Islamic Art and Architecture in French Colonial Discourse: Algeria, 1930," in Irene A. Bierman, ed., *The Experience of Islamic Art on the Margins of Islam* (Reading: Ithaca, 2005) p. 106.
- 18 *The Dictionary of Art* (New York: Grove Dictionaries, 1996), Vol. 15, pp. 896–923; Vol. 16, pp. 94–561. For a discussion of this arrangement see Oleg Grabar, "On the Study of Islamic Art," *Journal of the David Collection* 1 (2003): 21.
- 19 Layla S. Diba with Maryam Ekhtiar, *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785–1925* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Julian Raby, *Qajar Portraits* (London: Azimuth Editions, 1999); Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, pp. 417–419.
- 20 This subject was explored by David Roxburgh in a paper entitled "Intersections between painting and photography in Qajar Iran" in the panel *Islamic Art: Between 'Western' and 'Non-Western'*, College Art Association annual meeting, New York, February 22, 2003.
- 21 Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, eds., *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 168–225.
- 22 Basil Robinson, "Persian Painting under the Zand and Qajar Dynasties," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7: *From Nader Shah to the Islamic Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p. 870. See also Oliver Watson, "Almost Hilariously Bad: Iranian Pottery in the Nineteenth Century," in Behrens-Abouseif and Vernoit, *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 333–362, especially p. 339.
- 23 Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," in Phillips and Steiner, eds., *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999) pp. 9–10; Christopher B. Steiner, "The Taste of Angels in the Art of Darkness: Fashioning the Canon of African Art," in Elizabeth Mansfield, ed., *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 134.
- 24 Christopher B. Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst," *The Art Bulletin* 78(2) (1996): 215. See also Ruth B. Phillips, "Why not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations," in Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) p. 115; Fred R. Myers, "Introduction: The Empire of Things," in Myers, ed., *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2001) p. 10.
- 25 Milo C. Beach, "The Gulshan Album and its European Sources," *Bulletin Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 63 (1965): 63–89; Ebba Koch, "The Influence of the Jesuit Missions on Symbolic Representation of the Mughal Emperors," in *The Akbar Mission and Miscellaneous Studies*, C. W. Troll, ed., *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, 1 (New Delhi, 1982) pp. 14–29; Gauvin Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580–1630* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1998); Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Portrait Medal," in J. G. Pollard, ed., *Italian Medals* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987) pp. 171–194; Sheila Canby, "Farangi Saz: the Impact of Europe on Safavid Painting," *Silk and Stone: The Art of Asia*, Jill Tilden, ed. (London: HALL Publications, 1996) pp. 46–59.
- 26 James Fergusson, *A History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1910) Vol. 2, pp. 326–328; Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: the Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 235–240.

- 27 "Quant aux peintures que les Persans produisent eux-mêmes, c'est à faire grimacer les dents," Julien M. de Rochechouart, *Souvenir d'un voyage en Perse* (Paris, Chalmel Aîné, 1867) p. 261.
- 28 "N'ayant aucune notion de dessin, ignorant les lois les plus simples de la perspective et ne comprenant pas l'art à notre manière, et par conséquent, n'ayant aucune critique pour fixer leur jugement et éclairer leur goût, ils copient avec un soin minutieux les compositions les plus plates et les plus absurdes, et s'efforcent d'éteindre l'éclat de leur coloris afin de se rapprocher le plus possible de la couleur morte et fausse des lithographies colorées," Rochechouart, *Souvenir*, pp. 264–265.
- 29 Vernot, *Occidentalism*, p. 12.
- 30 Shiva Balaghi, "Iranian Visual Arts in 'The Century of Machinery, Speed, and the Atom': Rethinking Modernity," in Shiva Balaghi and Lynn Gumpert, eds, *Picturing Iran: Art, Society and Revolution* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002) pp. 23–24. On the interrelationships between modernity and tradition see Nicholas B. Dirks, "History as a Sign of the Modern," *Public Culture* 2(2) (1980): 27.
- 31 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 86.
- 32 Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 137, 148–149. See also Edward Said's response: "Impossible Histories: Why the Many Muslims Cannot Be Simplified," *Harper's Magazine*, July 1, 2002.
- 33 Stefan Koppelkamm, *Der imaginäre Orient. Exotische Bauten des achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in Europa* (Berlin: Wilhelm Ernst und Sohn, 1987) pp. 40–57.
- 34 Alan Riding, "An Essay: Islamic Art as Mediator for Cultures in Confrontation," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2004.
- 35 "Ironically, instead of ensuring that students understand the unique contributions of American and Western civilizations—the civilization under attack—universities are rushing to add courses on Islamic and Asian cultures," Jerry L. Martin and Anne D. Neal, eds, *Defending Civilization: How our Universities are Failing America and What Can Be Done about It?* (Washington, DC: Defense of Civilization Fund, November 2001) p. 7.
- 36 Riding, "Islamic Art as a Mediator."
- 37 Donald Preziosi, "Performing Modernity: The Art of Art History," in Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, eds, *Performing the Body/Performing the Text* (New York: Routledge, 1999) p. 37.
- 38 Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*, pp. 159–160.
- 39 Neil MacGregor, "In the Shadow of Babylon," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2004, p. 12.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 31, emphasis original. As if to underline this insistence upon a critical distance that is not merely geographic and temporal but also cultural, a recent survey of Islamic art history by two leading scholars in the field notes the declining role of "white non-Muslims," warning that "The interests and opinions of those seeking to understand their own heritage can be very different from those who are seeking to understand and explain something they consider distant in time and place." Blair and Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art," p. 176.
- 41 James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) p. 192.
- 42 Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) p. 176.
- 43 Tim Stanley, *Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004).
- 44 Timothy Mitchell, "McJihad: Islam in the U.S. Global Order," *Social Text* 20(4) (2002): 1–3.
- 45 David J. Roxburgh, ed., *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005) p. 9. A similar theme informed an exhibition held at the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart in 2003–2004, which traced the 'long way of the Turks' from their status as warriors of the Central Asian steppe to that of *gastarbeiter* in modern Germany: Johannes Kelter, *Der lange Weg der Türken: 1500 Jahre türkische Kultur* (Stuttgart: Irene Schönberger, 2003).
- 46 Riding, "Islamic Art as a Mediator."
- 47 John Taghlabue, "Louvre Gets \$20 Million for New Islamic Wing," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2005.
- 48 Tariq Ramadan, "Cartoon Conflicts," *The Guardian*, Monday February 6, 2006. For an exception noting the difference between representation and caricature see Holland Cotter, "What Does Islam Look Like?" *The New York Times*, February 26, 2006.
- 49 Paul Richard, "In Art Museums, Portraits Illuminate a Religious Taboo," *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, February 14, 2006. See also Stephen Bates, "An Internalized Image," *The Guardian*, February 2, 2006.
- 50 Richard, "In Art Museums."
- 51 Talal Asad, "Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions," *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review*, special issue, *Contested Politics: Religious Disciplines and Structures of Modernity* 5(1) (1996): <http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/asad.html> (consulted August 6, 2006).
- 52 Taghlabue, "Louvre Gets \$20 Million." On the ambiguities associated with the co-option of Islamic art in this way see Holland Cotter, "Beauty in the Shadow of Violence," *The New York Times*, October 17, 2001.
- 53 Remarks by the President at Islamic Center of Washington, DC, September 17, 2001: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html> (consulted August 6, 2006).
- 54 Richard, "In Art Museums."
- 55 Blair and Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art," p. 155.
- 56 Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004).
- 57 Preziosi, "Performing Modernity," p. 32.
- 58 Richard Ettinghausen, "Interaction and Integration in Islamic art," in Gustave E. von Grunnebaum, ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1955) p. 109.
- 59 Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst?" p. 217. See also Zainab Bahrami, *The Given Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) pp. 40–49.
- 60 Zeynep Celik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse," in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds, *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) pp. 19–42; Wendy M.K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
- 61 Robert Ilbert and Mercedes Volait, "Neo-Arabic Renaissance in Egypt, 1870–1930," *Minar* 13 (1984): 26–34; Donald Malcolm Reid, "Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism: the Struggle to Define and Control the Heritage of Arab Art in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 57–76; Nasser Rabhat, "The Formation of the

- Neo-Mamluk Style in Modern Egypt," in Martha Pollock, ed., *The Education of the Architect: Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997) pp. 363–386.
- 62 Rose Issa, Ruyin Pakbaz, and Daryush Shayegan, eds., *Iranian Contemporary Art* (London: Barbican Art, Booth-Clibborn, 2001) pp. 106–109, 130.
- 63 Venetia Porter, *Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East* (London: British Museum Press, 2006). See also, Silvia Naeef, "Reexploring Islamic Art: Modern and Contemporary Creation in the Arab World and its Relation to the Artistic Past," *Res* 43 (2003): 163–174.
- 64 Glenn D. Lowry, "Gained in Translation," *ARTnews*, March (2006): 122. This led to public criticisms by Shirin Neshat and Emily Jacir, two of the artists whose work appeared in the exhibition, that any political content had been "whitewashed": Tyler Green, "MoMA Keeps the Walls Clean; Islamic Show Sans Politics," *New York Observer*, April 3, 2006.
- 65 Fereshteh Daftari, "Islamic or Not," in *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* (New York: MoMA, 2006) p. 10. See also Daftari, "Beyond Islamic Roots—Beyond Modernism," *Res* 43 (2003): 175–186.
- 66 Daftari, "Islamic or Not?," pp. 14, 18. See also Homi Bhabha's essay "Another Country" in the *Without Boundary* catalog, pp. 30–35. For some of the problems associated with the term see Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Tony K. Stewart and Carl W. Ernst, "Syncretism," in Peter J. Claus and Margaret Mills, eds., *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2003) pp. 586–588.
- 67 Wijdan Ali, "The Status of Islamic Art in the Twentieth Century," *Magarnas* 9 (1992): 186–188; Ali, *Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).
- 68 For differing perspectives on the question of enlarging canons of 'non-Western' art see Zeynep Celik, "Colonialism, Orientalism, and the Canon," *The Art Bulletin* 78(2) (1996): 202–205 and Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst." At least two eminent scholars of Islamic art have stated their opposition to any such expansion: Blair and Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art," p. 175.
- 69 James Elkins, "Why It Is Not Possible to Write Art Histories of Non-Western Cultures," in *The Past in the Present: Contemporary Art and Art History's Myths* (Bratislava: Nadácia—Centrum Súčasného Umenia, 2002) p. 255; Elkins, *Stories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
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- 71 James D. Herbert, "Passing between Art History and Postcolonial Theory," in Mark A. Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds., *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 219.
- 72 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).
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- 74 Grabar, "Islamic Art and Archaeology," p. 255.

- 75 See, for example, Talinn Grigor, "Of Metamorphosis: Meaning on Iranian Terms," *Third Text* 17(3) (2003): 207–225.
- 76 On possible futures for the field see Oleg Grabar in *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 16, p. 101; Grabar, "What Should One Know About Islamic Art," *Res* 43 (2003): 9. See also Rogers, *Uses of Anachronism*, pp. 6–7, and Souren Melikian's plea for a disaggregation of the field into regionally based art histories: "Toward a Clearer Vision of 'Islamic Art,'" *International Herald Tribune*, April 24, 2004.
- 77 Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham, *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) pp. 7–8; Blair and Bloom, "Mirage of Islamic Art."
- 78 Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?*, translated by Christopher S. Wood (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 57. See also James Elkins's review of *Real Spaces*, pp. 377–378.