

# Islamic and Indian Arts of the Book

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Los Angeles County Museum of Art | Brown Auditorium

## Sunday, August 21, 2011

7–9 pm

### *The Art of Writing in Islamic Art*—Sheila Blair

Writing in Arabic script is one of the hallmarks of Islamic art, found on all sorts of objects from the humblest to the fanciest made in a wide range of materials from earliest times to the present across the lands where Islam was a major religion. This lecture surveys some of the ways that artists used and embellished script to decorate buildings and objects for both religious and secular purposes. Wherever possible, examples will be drawn from the splendid range of works in the ongoing exhibition *Gifts of the Sultan*.

## Monday, August 22, 2011

9–10 am

### *Paper and the Islamic Book*—Jonathan Bloom

Although paper had been invented in China before the Common Era and carried by Buddhist monks and missionaries throughout East Asia, it was introduced to the Islamic lands when Muslims conquered Central Asia in the eighth century. This lecture will show how paper quickly replaced parchment and papyrus as the principal support for writing in the Islamic lands and spurred a burst of literary and artistic activity in the region. It will discuss different techniques of making paper, different types of paper, decorated papers, regional and chronological differences, and how European papers eventually replaced the local product.

10–10:30

Break

10:30–11:30

### *Pen and Ink: the Development of Islamic Calligraphy*—Shelia Blair

Over the course of 1400 years, calligraphers in the Islamic lands naturally exploited different materials to make the most of different supports. This lecture will survey the range of these materials. It begins with the tannin-based inks used to pen early manuscripts of the Koran written in the angular scripts. This was followed by carbon-based inks used on the fine papers developed in later times for a variety of rounded scripts used for both Arabic and other languages written in Arabic script. The talk concludes with a brief look at some of the most imaginative pictorial scripts that developed in later times.

11:30–12:30

### *Decorating the Book:*

#### *Illumination and Painting in the Islamic Tradition*—Francesca Leoni

While conceived as repositories of different sorts of knowledge, Islamic manuscripts often enhanced the reading experience by means of a wide range of decorative and pictorial solutions. Depending on the nature of the text – religious vs. secular, scientific vs. literary, etc. – and on the format – codices, albums, scrolls, etc. – books could contain diagrams, illuminated titles and frontispieces, images and multi-page compositions, or a combination thereof. By referring to the various genres and book formats available in the *Gifts of the Sultan* exhibition, this presentation will discuss the various forms of illumination and painting that characterize the Islamic manuscript tradition and consider their different functions.

**Monday, August 22, 2011**

12:30–2:30 pm Break

2:30–3 pm ***The Art of Book Painting in Iran—Linda Komaroff***  
Perhaps the most profound impact of the Mongol invasions on the arts of Iran was the new role of manuscript illustration, which became a significant and influential forum for courtly patronage. This lecture will summarize some of the most important developments in this art form, popularly known as Persian miniature painting, from the fourteenth through the seventeenth century including many of the spectacular examples presented in *Gifts of the Sultan*.

3:30–4 ***Mughal Painting and Courtly Styles in Northern India—Tushara Bindu Gude***  
Soon after Mughal rule was established in northern India in the late sixteenth century, an imperial painting tradition emerged that reflected a synthesis of Persian and indigenous north Indian courtly styles. This lecture will address the development of Mughal painting from the late sixteenth through the early eighteenth century as well as its relationship to, and impact upon, the painting traditions associated with north India's Rajput courts.

4–4:30 Break

4:30–5 ***Imaging Techniques—Yosi Pozeilov***  
Close observation of a work of art is the first and most important part of starting a conservation treatment or scientific examination. Visual observations are supplemented and, in many cases enhanced by the acquisition of images under very controlled lighting conditions, known as technical or forensic imaging. These techniques range from the most common use of light for photography to more specialized use of specific wavelength light sources and filters. The goal is to bring forth aspects of the artwork regarding its condition, restoration state and artist techniques that are not evident with the naked eye. Under this imaging umbrella, we cover magnification ranges from overall to small details, from the Macro to the Micro, highlighting specific features of the artwork that are of interest. Technical imaging is complementary to the analytical methods use in the characterization of materials. It provides the scientist with a better understanding of the work of art and the areas of interest in which to conduct analysis, which will be discussed in the following presentation.

5–5:30 ***Non-destructive Methods of Analysis—Charlotte Eng***  
A non-invasive approach to the examination of art objects combines two complementary methodologies: technical imaging and analytical methods. The technical imaging methods (e.g. infrared reflectography, digital microscopy) provide spatial information that can help elucidate an object's condition, areas of restoration and artist technique, but have limited uses for materials identification. Analytical techniques (e.g. X-ray Fluorescence, Fiber-Optics Reflectance, and Fourier Transform Infrared spectroscopy) can provide materials identification, but they are spot-analysis methods and lack full-field spatial information. By incorporating technical imaging into the analytical workflow, we can make use of the strengths of both methodologies. To illustrate the examination process, a selection of results from the studies of Islamic, Indian and Tibetan manuscript pages are presented.

**Tuesday, August 23, 2011**

9–10 am

***Structure of the Islamic Book*—Jonathan Bloom**

Part 1

This talk will introduce students to various types of Islamic book structures and methods for studying them. Examples will be taken, wherever possible, from the *Gifts of the Sultans* exhibition.

***A Close Look at the Artists' Workshop*—Francesca Leoni**

Part 2

Prefaced by a discussion on the development of artistic workshops in the medieval and early modern Islamic world, this presentation will focus on the stages articulating the production of illuminated and illustrated manuscripts. Specific attention will be devoted to the preparation of the materials; the layout and structure of the illuminations and illustrations; the stages of their execution, and their final placement in the book. While examples will be taken from the larger Islamic tradition, parallels will be drawn with the objects available in the exhibition.

10–10:30

Break

10:30–12:30

***Method and Meaning in Ottoman Calligraphy*—Mohamed Zakariya**

The theory and techniques of Ottoman Islamic calligraphy rest on a rich tradition, beginning with the early Arabic sources and evolving over the centuries. This illustrated presentation will trace this development via the lives and works of the great calligraphers, especially from the Ottoman sphere, and will discuss the “technology” of calligraphy – ink, pens and other equipment, paper, and other media. There will be an on-screen demonstration of calligraphy in progress, showing various surface tonalities and ink types.

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This lecture series is being presented in conjunction with a Professional Development Workshop for conservators. It is sponsored by The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation & the Art of the Middle East Council

## Presenters

**Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom** share the Norma Jean Calderwood University Professorship of Islamic and Asian Art at Boston College and the Hamad bin Khalifa Endowed Chair in Islamic Art at Virginia Commonwealth University. They have written and edited, either individually or together, many books and hundreds of articles on all aspects of Islamic art. Sheila's special interests are the uses of writing and the arts of the Mongol period. Her first book, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama*, coauthored with Oleg Grabar was published in 1980; her eleventh book, *Islamic Calligraphy* (2006), won the World Book of the Year Prize in 2008 from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Jonathan's special interests include the history of paper and the Islamic arts of the medieval Mediterranean region. His 2001 book, *Paper Before Print: the History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic Lands*, won the Charles Rufus Morey Award for a notable book in the history of art from the College Art Association in 2003. His latest book, *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt* (2007) was published to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Aga Khan. The three-volume *Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture*, which they edited together, won the 2010 World Book of the Year Prize. Together, they also convene the biennial Hamid bin Khalifa Symposia on Islamic art, whose proceedings are published by Yale University Press.

**Charlotte Eng** has been an Associate Conservation Scientist in the Conservation Center at LACMA for five years. Charlotte Eng graduated with a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering from State University of New York at Stony Brook in 2005. Her expertise is in surface characterization of works of art using spectroscopic techniques. She presently is involved in collaboration with LACMA's Paintings Conservation and the Curator for Dutch and Flemish Art on the technical examination of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings for an upcoming catalogue. Other major collaboration highlights include materials identification of objects for an upcoming major exhibition (*California Design 1930-65: Living in a Modern Way*), inks used by Vincent van Gogh in his drawings, manufacturing methods of imitation pearls available in the nineteenth century and the technical examination of an early eleventh century

Tibetan illuminated manuscript. In addition to examining works of art, she also tests all exhibition materials to establish if they are appropriate for museum use and plays an active role in the environmental monitoring of the museum.

**Tushara Bindu Gude** has served as Associate Curator in the South and Southeast Asian Art department at LACMA since 2006. She co-curated LACMA's recent exhibition *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*. Gude received her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to her appointment at LACMA she served for six years as Assistant Curator of South Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. Apart from the publication accompanying *India's Fabled City*, Gude has contributed to the exhibition catalogues for *Kingdom of the Sun: Indian Court and Village Art from the Princely State of Mewar* (2007), *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas* (2006), and *The Kingdom of Siam: The Art of Central Thailand, 1350–1800* (2005). Her particular areas of research and expertise include early Indian Buddhist art, South Asian courtly paintings, and art of the colonial period.

**Linda Komaroff** is a specialist in Islamic art, with a Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; she has served as LACMA's curator of Islamic art since 1995. She is the author or editor of several books, and has written numerous articles and book chapters on various aspects of Islamic art, with a special focus on Iran and Central Asia. Her exhibitions at LACMA include *Letters in Gold: Ottoman Calligraphy from the Sakıp Sabancı Collection, Istanbul* (1999); *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (2003); *A Tale of Two Persian Carpets* (2009). She is the recipient of a number of grants for scholarly research, including two Fulbright fellowships, and Metropolitan Museum of Art and Getty Grant fellowships, while the *Legacy of Genghis Khan* exhibition catalogue received the prestigious Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Award from the College Art Association. She has taught at Hamilton College, New York University, Princeton University, and UCLA. She is the curator of the major international loan exhibition entitled *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* scheduled at LACMA June 5 – September 5, 2011.

**Francesca Leoni** is currently curator of the Arts of the Islamic World at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She received her PhD from Princeton in 2008 with a dissertation entitled “The Revenge of Ahriman: Images of Divs in the Shahnama, 1300–1600,” which was awarded the prize of Best Dissertation in Iranian Studies from the Foundation for Iranian Studies in 2009. Before joining the MFAH full time, Francesca was a postdoctoral scholar in Islamic art and architecture at Rice University, Houston, where she taught undergraduate and graduate lectures and seminars. Her interests include the Islamic arts of the book in the pre-modern and early modern times; cross-cultural exchanges between the Islamic world, the Western world and Asia; and the history and circulation of technologies. Among her recent publications are the exhibition catalogue *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam*, Ladan Akbarnia with Francesca Leoni published in 2010, “Picturing Evil: Images of Divs and the Reception of the Shahnama,” in *Shahnama Studies II*, eds. Charles Melville and Gabrielle Van den Berg (2010), and the article “On the Monstrous in the Islamic Visual Tradition,” in *Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, eds. Asa Mittman and Peter Dendle (2011).

**Yosi Pozeilov** joined the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Conservation Center as the Senior Conservation Photographer in 2003. He was in charge of converting the conservation photographic studio from film to digital capture; this digital implementation has encompassed all aspects of imaging and documentation at the center. In 2004 he was invited by the American Institute of Conservation (AIC) to teach his first workshop on digital photography for conservation at their annual meeting, since then, Yosi continues to teach his workshop at several venues across the country, on-line and internationally. Most recently at LACMA, Yosi has been implementing computational imaging techniques like Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and established protocols to streamline condition reporting with the use of technology and imaging base systems such as the iPad.

**Mohamed Zakariya** is widely recognized as the foremost practitioner of Islamic calligraphy in the United States and a specialist in Ottoman, North African, and Andalusian calligraphy. In 1984, he was offered the chance to study under the world-renowned master calligrapher Hasan Celebi in Istanbul. In 1988 he was awarded the traditional diploma, the *icazet*, in *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts, the first Westerner to receive this distinction. In 1997, he received the *icazet* in *talik* script from the late Turkish master calligrapher Dr. Ali Alparslan. His work has been exhibited worldwide and featured in the films *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, *Islam: Empire of Faith*, and *Mohamed Zakariya, Calligrapher*.

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FAIC (The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation) was incorporated in 1972 to support charitable, scientific and education activities of the AIC (The American Institute for Conservation) providing funds for education and professional development for the betterment of the conservation profession.

The Art of the Middle East Council supports acquisitions and public programs for the Art of the Middle East Department at LACMA.