



البيئة وعلمها في الفن \

THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY IN ISLAMIC ART AND CULTURE

\ والثقافة الإسلامية



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THE ENVIRONMENT AND

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The Ninth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa
Symposium on Islamic Art

November 8–15, 2021
Online

An eco-conscious ethos has traditionally characterized Islamic scripture and culture. This sensitivity has profoundly influenced the relationships between human beings, deputized as stewards of nature by Allah, and the environments they inhabit. Historical and contemporary Islamic visual traditions have demonstrated this consciousness in urban planning, landscape architecture, water management, and a host of other art forms throughout the central Islamic lands and beyond into the Muslim diaspora. Despite this awareness, in the present epoch of the Anthropocene, human intervention has caused irreparable damage to the planet's biodiversity and ecosystems instigating changes on an unprecedented scale.

As art history shifts its disciplinary attention to address this unfolding global crisis, this symposium considers how an ecological art history can examine objects, materials, and the built environment through the dual lenses of Islamic culture and climatic change. So too, it seeks to push beyond easy binaries of human/non-human and culture/nature in which the human and the cultural are privileged over other species and the natural world at large. Within this ontological framework, humans take their place as part of the environment yet also find themselves in possession of unique capacities which might address climate change, sustainability, and environmental conservation. As co-chairs, we set out to ask how the study of the visual and material, rooted in the art history, anthropology, and archaeology of an expanding Islamic world, can engage with these concerns philosophically, methodologically, and, above all, practically.

Building upon the success of an open call for papers, first instituted for the 2019 symposium, we asked potential speakers to consider anthropogenic transformations of land and water, conceptualization and representations of the changing natural world, artistic responses to recent and historical climatic events, and the intersections of such shifting environments with human experiences of gender, race, and socioeconomic status around the globe. We were pleased (and not a little overwhelmed) by the volume, enthusiasm, and quality of proposals we received. This final program represents a range of invited speakers and submissions touching on topics from the advent of Islam to contemporary artistic and curatorial practices.

Our international slate of architects, art historians, curators, and archaeologists explore case studies from the Gulf, Iraq, Syria, the Indian Subcontinent, North Africa, and even outer space. Their topics include optimistic, sustainable, and innovative responses adopted by artists and builders but also acknowledgment of the often irreversible and escalating damage that necessitates such ingenuity. So too, this range of speakers reflects our decision to invite world experts in the intersections between the environment and the humanities whose study lies outside of the field of Islamic art. In doing so, we hope to spark conversations that break traditional disciplinary boundaries and that bring the perspectives of an increasingly diverse set of practitioners and scholars to bear on this increasingly urgent problem.

–As for the earth, We spread it out... and caused everything to grow there in perfect balance – Surah 15:19

والأرض مَدَدْنَاهَا وَالْأَشْيَاءَ فِيهَا رَوَّاسِي وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَقُورُونِ - ١٥:١٩



Radha
Dalal

Interim Director of Art
History and Associate
Professor of Islamic Art
VCUarts Qatar



Radha Dalal is Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture and Interim Director of Art History at VCUarts Qatar. She researches visual cultures of mobility and urbanism with a particular emphasis on the Ottoman Empire and its socio-political interactions with other European and Asian polities during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Her research projects have received funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Kress Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Qatar National Research Fund, and VCUarts Qatar. She continues to work on a VCU Presidential Research Quest Fund supported monograph project titled The Khilafat Movement and Print Media in British India and Ottoman Turkey, 1919–1924. Currently, she serves as the vice-president (2021–2023) of the Society for Global Nineteenth-Century Studies, a geographically and disciplinarily diverse network of scholars who share an interest in the world’s connectedness between 1780 and 1914.

Jochen
Sokoly

Associate Professor of
Islamic Art
VCUarts Qatar



Jochen Sokoly is Associate Professor of Art History of the Islamic World at VCUarts Qatar where he also served as Gallery Director between 2004–2011. He has curated exhibitions on contemporary art of the Middle East and lectures on the art of the Islamic World. He has been a research fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Aga Khan Program at Harvard. Sokoly’s research focuses on the culture of the Early Islamic caliphates, in particular on inscribed textiles within the context of court, administration and manufacture. He is co-editor with Mary McWilliams of *Social Fabrics: Inscribed Textiles from Medieval Egyptian Tombs* published by Harvard Art Museums. He has also worked on 18th century British India, particularly the botanical paintings by the Indian painter Zayn al-Din from the collection of Sanskrit scholar Sir William Jones at the Royal Asiatic Society, and plans a study of the drawings of travelers Thomas and William Daniell. Sokoly serves on the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

Sean Roberts is a Lecturer in Early Modern Art at the University of Tennessee and Affiliated Associate Professor at VCUarts Qatar. His research is concerned with the interactions between Italy and the Islamic lands, the cultural history of maps, and with the place of prints in the histories of art and technology. He is the author of *Printing a Mediterranean World: Florence, Constantinople and the Renaissance of Geography* (Harvard University Press, 2013) and is the co-editor of *Visual Cultures of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Truman State University Press, 2013) and *The Seas and the Mobility of Islamic Art* (Yale University Press, 2021). His essays have appeared in numerous journals including *Imago Mundi*, *Print Quarterly*, *Renaissance Studies*, and the *Journal of Early Modern History*. He has been awarded research fellowships from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), the Huntington Library, and Villa I Tatti. From 2017 to 2019, Roberts served as President of the Italian Art Society, an international non-profit organization dedicated to the study of Italian art and architecture from pre-history to the present day.

Sean
Roberts

Lecturer in Early Modern Art
University of Tennessee

Affiliate Associate Professor
VCUarts Qatar





Amir
Berbić
Dean
VCUarts Qatar

I am delighted to welcome you to the Ninth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art, The Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture.

The Hamad bin Khalifa Symposia on Islamic Art address significant themes and issues in understanding the visual arts of the Islamic lands. They seek to make the latest and most compelling scholarship in the expansive field of Islamic Art available and accessible to a wide audience, ranging from students and scholars to artists, architects, designers and the interested public.

Therefore, it is fitting that this year's theme centers on the environment and ecology. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we are all inextricably intertwined with the natural world. Islamic art and architecture, design and culture throughout the world have always reflected a deep understanding, appreciation, and dependence on the environment and ecology. I have no doubt that the extraordinary scholarship, impressive research, and engaging presentations given by the world-class speakers assembled for this symposium will open up new insights for audiences here in Qatar and around the world on the global challenges of environmental impact and sustainability.

The symposium is a highly successful collaboration between VCUarts Qatar faculty members Dr. Radha Dalal, Interim Director of Art History and Associate Professor of Islamic Art; Dr. Jochen Sokoly, Associate Professor of Islamic Art; and Dr. Sean Roberts, Lecturer in Early Modern Art (University of Tennessee) and Affiliated Associate Professor (VCUarts Qatar). A special note of thanks to Dr. Marisa Brown, the symposium Program Manager, for her commitment to the organization of another successful event.

Established in 1998, VCUarts Qatar is the Qatar campus of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, and when it took its place as the first university in Education City, it immediately embraced the principles of sustainability and respect for the environment that are at the heart of Qatar Foundation. We strive to be a dynamic and experimental learning environment, a lab for innovative ideas that emerge out of the research and creative practice of our faculty and students, and a stage for contemporary dialogue in the arts. In addition to the Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art, which was established in 2004, VCUarts Qatar hosts the biennial international conference Tasmeem Doha, attracting globally recognized designers, artists and scholars to support sustainable university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of Qatar.

We offer you the warmest of welcomes, and we are looking forward to enjoying the exchange of ideas and the tide of discourse at the symposium.



Carmenita
Higginbotham
Dean
VCUarts

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the preeminent international conference on Islamic art and culture, the Ninth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art.

The symposium is a central tenet of the deep relationship between Virginia Commonwealth University and Qatar Foundation, and our shared commitment to curiosity, exploration and scholarship in the arts.

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, led by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, has been a transformative partner in realizing our collective vision of international innovation and excellence. Today, VCUarts Qatar is the premier design program in the Middle East, matching the quality and distinction that we have nurtured in Richmond.

Since its inception in 2004, the symposium has brought together thousands of leading scholars, curators, thought leaders, artists, and academics from around the world. This year, we will discover how eco-consciousness is at the heart of Islamic culture and how it has been expressed in a number of art forms throughout history and in contemporary society. We will engage in necessary conversations about climate justice, environmental conservation, and the human influence in the natural world.

I would like to extend a very special thank you to our symposium Co-chairs, Dr. Radha Dalal, Interim Director of Art History and Associate Professor of Islamic Art at VCUarts Qatar; Dr. Jochen Sokoly, Associate Professor of Islamic Art at VCUarts Qatar; and Dr. Sean Roberts, Lecturer in Early Modern Art (University of Tennessee) and Affiliated Associate Professor (VCUarts Qatar). Thanks to their expertise, the symposium brings together some of the world's leading experts on Islamic Art who will share their knowledge and engage in critical discussions. I would also like to thank Marisa Brown, symposium Program Manager, whose efforts continue to make this a successful event. It has been an honor to partner with them, our campus in Qatar, and Qatar Foundation in exploration of The Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture.

On behalf of VCU School of the Arts and VCUarts Qatar, I thank you for your participation in this inspiring event.



The Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture is the Ninth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art and Culture. Sponsored by VCU School of the Arts, VCUarts Qatar and Qatar Foundation, the symposia seek to explore broad issues in the visual arts of the Islamic world.

At the first symposium, *Expanded Frontiers* (Richmond, 2004), eight scholars addressed a range of topics from the history of Islamic art to its relationships with the arts of Christian Europe. The second symposium, *Rivers of Paradise: Water in Islamic Art and Culture* (Doha, 2007) approached the many meanings and roles of water in Islamic art and society from religious, literary, archeological, architectural and functional perspectives. And *Diverse Are Their Hues: Color in Islamic Art and Culture* (Córdoba, 2009), the third symposium, tackled some of the many aspects of color, from ways to make yellow and uses of red to mystical and metaphoric associations of blue and green. At the fourth symposium, *God Is Beautiful; He Loves Beauty: The Object in Islamic Art and Culture* (Doha, 2011), 12 speakers spoke about objects from the superb collection in the new Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, spanning the centuries from Umayyad Qur'an manuscripts to Safavid oil paintings. Paul Goldberger's keynote talk explored the new museum, designed by I. M. Pei, as a work of contemporary Islamic architecture.

The fifth symposium, *God Is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth: Light in Islamic Art and Culture* (Palermo, 2013), investigated the role of light in Islamic civilization, from the metaphoric light in the Qur'an and the literatures of the Islamic lands to the practical role of light in buildings, paintings, performances, photography and other works of art produced over the past 14 centuries. By the Pen and What They Write: *Writing in Islamic Art and Culture* (Doha, 2017), the sixth symposium, focused on the role of writing, from the birth of Arabic writing on stone to contemporary visual art in neon. The seventh symposium, titled

Islamic Art: Past, Present and Future, was held in Richmond at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and featured some of the leading scholars, curators and artists in the field of contemporary Islamic art, and the eighth symposium, *The Seas and the Mobility of Islamic Art* (Doha, 2019), examined the ways in which the seas have long served as both connective tissue for and barriers between intellectual, social, and artistic traditions, as seen through the visual and material cultures of the Islamic world.

For those not able to attend the symposia, the presentations are available through podcasts at <https://islamicart.qatar.vcu.edu>, The proceedings of all but the first symposium have been edited by the organizers and published by Yale University Press in extraordinarily handsome volumes of the same name. Through the symposia, podcasts, and published proceedings, we seek to make the latest and most interesting scholarship in the growing field of Islamic art available and accessible to a wide audience, ranging from students and scholars to artists, architects, designers and the interested public.

From 2007 through 2017, the Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art was chaired by the esteemed Islamic art scholars Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom. The Co-chairs of the 2019 and 2021 Symposia include Dr. Radha Dalal, Interim Director of Art History and Associate Professor of Islamic Art (VCUarts Qatar); Dr. Jochen Sokoly, Associate Professor of Islamic Art (VCUarts Qatar); and Dr. Sean Roberts, Lecturer in Early Modern Art (University of Tennessee) and Affiliated Associate Professor (VCUarts Qatar).

Keynote

Nasser Rabbat

Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)



The Quest for Thermal Delight

In a fascinating small book, Lisa Heschong reminds us that the primary function of architecture has always been environmental responsiveness. In traditional historic architecture, this function often metamorphoses over time into sensory, sentimental, symbolic, cultural, or spiritual qualities that Heschong gathers under the expressive title *Thermal Delight in Architecture*.

Borrowing Heschong's term, this presentation argues that Islamic architecture has long understood thermal delight to be the true essence of all environmentally responsive architecture. Inspired by simple religious rules to respect all God's creation and enjoy all God's licit bounties, architecture regularly went the extra step beyond coping with environmental constraints toward engendering thermal delight in its actual spaces as well as in the furnishing and representations of those spaces. To that end, it enlisted the climatic conditions of the various areas in which Islam spread—arid deserts, temperate mountains, tropical forests, and riverine marshlands—to develop sensitive, mostly passive, design strategies. It also broadened its repertoire beyond the usual elements of building—space, surface, material, color—to employ sight, sound, and the tactile qualities of warmth, moist, and “coolth” in the pursuit of a multi-sensory thermal bliss. This quest pervaded all scales of architecture from the territory, to the city, the house, the garden, and the single architectural or ornamental component.

Examining select examples across time, climate, and scale, this presentation explores the various techniques deployed in Islamic architecture to harmonize with the environmental constrictions. It pays special attention to the design subtleties aimed at transcending mechanical environmental responsiveness by incorporating the sensory qualities that are sometimes erroneously considered extra-architectural. The presentation also shows that, despite the absence of architectural treatises, other forms of literary expressions—Qur'anic commentaries, adab, and even poetry—are replete with commentaries on the integral relation between space and thermal delight. In fact, despite the layers of legal, cultural, symbolic, spiritual, and memorial dimensions that evolved over time to embody, enhance, modify, or even obscure the original environmental responses, thermal delight remained a constant objective of architecture well into the early modern period. Encouragingly, it is nowadays coming back to reclaim its rightful status anew.

Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. His research interests include Islamic architecture, urban history, heritage studies, Arab history, contemporary Islamic art, and post-colonial criticism. He has published numerous articles and several books. His most recent books are *Imarat al-Mudun al-Mayyita* (The Architecture of the Dead Cities, 2018), and an online book, *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoléon to ISIS*, co-edited with Pamela Karimi (2016). His book on the 15th century Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi will come out in 2022. He is currently editing a book on the cultural history of Syria, and co-editing another on heritage conservation, destruction, and reconstruction.

He has previously published: *al-Naqd Iltizaman* (Criticism as Commitment), *Mamluk History Through Architecture: Building, Culture, and Politics in Mamluk Egypt and Syria*, *Thaqafat al Bina' wa Bina' al-Thaqafa* (The Culture of Building and Building Culture), and *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture*. He edited *The Courtyard House between Cultural Reference and Universal Relevance*, co-edited *Making Cairo Medieval*, and co-authored *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*.

Prof. Rabbat worked as an architect in Los Angeles and Damascus and held several academic and research appointments in Cambridge MA, Princeton, Los Angeles, Cairo, Granada, Rome, Paris, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Munich, and Bonn. He regularly contributes to several Arabic newspapers, serves on the boards of various cultural and educational organizations, and consults with international design firms on projects in the Islamic world. In recent years, he began researching and publishing on immigration, refugees, heritage conservation, and destruction and reconstruction.



**Nisa
Ari**

Beinecke Postdoctoral Fellow
Center for Advanced Study in the
Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art,
Washington DC

Presentation
Wasteland, Promised Land, Homeland:
Painting "Flora Palaestina" Before
the Nakba



**Michelle Moore
Apotsos**

Associate Professor of Art
Williams College

Presentation
"The Earth Is a Masjid": Tanzania's
First Eco-Mosque as Environmental
Advocate



**Alexander
Brey**

Assistant Professor, Department of Art
Wellesley College

Presentation
Gushing Pools and Verdant Meadows:
Rural Estates and the Reshaping of
Umayyad Rural Landscapes



**Amanda
Boetzkes**

**Professor of Contemporary Art
History and Theory**
University of Guelph

Presentation
Behind the Sun: The Theater of
Oil Expenditure



**T.J.
Demos**

**Professor, Department of the History
of Art and Visual Culture**
University of California, Santa Cruz

Presentation
Climate Justice Now! Art and
Environment in the Middle East



**Farid
Esmaeil**

Founding Partner of X Architects
Dubai, U.A.E.

Presentation
Context as a 'Form' Generator



**Anna M.
Gade**

**Vilas Distinguished Achievement
Professor, Gaylord Nelson Institute
for Environmental Studies**
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Presentation
Truth of Consequences: The Floating
Mosque and Material Ethics



**Tarek
Al-Ghoussein**

**Professor of Visual Art and Director
of the MFA Program**
NYU Abu Dhabi

Exhibition
Landscapes of Arabia: Camille Zakharia
and Tarek Al-Ghoussein



**Huma
Gupta**

Lecturer
Aga Khan Program for Islamic
Architecture, MIT

Presentation
Visualizing Ma'dan in Mayzara:
The Hidden History of Urban 'Wetlands'
in Baghdad



**Pamela
Karimi**

**Associate Professor, Art Education,
Art History and Media Studies**
University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

Presentation
Survival by Design: Oil Crisis, the
Middle East, and the US Quest for
Lunar Settlements



**Stephane
Pradines**

**Professor of Islamic Art and
Architecture**
Aga Khan University, Institute for the
Study of Muslim Civilisations, London

Presentation
Coral Mosques and Indian Ocean
Maritime Resources, from the Maldives
to the Swahili Coast



**D. Fairchild
Ruggles**

**Debra Mitchell Endowed Chair in
Landscape Architecture**
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Presentation
Cultivars and Calamities in al-Andalus:
On Nature and Human Will



**Elizabeth
Rauh**

**Assistant Professor of Modern Art and
Visual Cultures**
American University in Cairo

Presentation
Iridescent Modernism: The Troubling
Artistic Legacy of Pearl Diving in the
Persian Gulf



**Nada
Shabout**

**Regent Professor of Art History and
Coordinator of Arab and Muslim
Cultural Studies Initiative**
University of North Texas

Presentation
A Threatened Imaginary: Environmental
Interventions in Iraqi Art



**Rachel
Winter**

Ph.D. Candidate
University of California, Santa Barbara

Presentation
Aestheticizing the Ecologies of the
Syrian Refugee Crisis



**Yusen
Yu**

Lecturer in Iranian Islamic Art History
University of St Andrews

Presentation
Flora and Fauna in Timurid Painting



**Rebecca
Zorach**

**Mary Jane Crowe Professor of Art and
Art History**
Northwestern University

Presentation
"A luminous golden spirit owns us":
Legal Sculpting and the Rights of Nature



**Camille
Zakharia**

Photographer

Exhibition
Landscapes of Arabia: Camille Zakharia
and Tarek Al-Ghoussein

Nisa Ari

Wasteland, Promised Land, Homeland: Painting “Flora Palestina” Before the Nakba

Unlike Palestinian poets from the early 20th century, who evoked im- ages of inhospitable lands as metaphors for the impacts of colonial and settler-colonial forces during the British Mandate, Palestinian paint- ers from the same period, such as Nicola Saig, Sophie Halaby, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, presented Palestine’s botanical bounty—its flora palaesti- na—as untouched, serene, and intact. I investigate their canvases within a history of representations of Palestine’s natural flora, from the rise of the scriptural-scientific field of “Biblical botany” in the late 18th century to institutionalized forms of “botanical nationalism” taught in government, missionary, and Zionist schools in the early 20th century. I argue that, prior to the nakba, Palestinian artists operated within this context to produce pristine, unharmed visions of flora palestina as forms of anticolonial ecology—before such images were supplanted by postcolonial represen- tations of deserted wastelands and ‘wretched earths’ in the second half of the 20th century.

Nisa Ari is the 2021-23 Beinecke Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. She studies late-19th and 20th century visual practices, with a focus on the artwork and cultural politics of Palestine. Her current book proj- ect, *Cultural Mandates, Artistic Missions, and “The Welfare of Palestine,” 1876-1948*, explores how radical political transformations from the last decades of Ottoman rule until the establishment of the State of Israel changed the nature of artistic production in Palestine. Her research has been published in *Third Text*, *Arab Studies Journal*, and *Thresholds*, and has been supported by numerous fellowships, including the Mellon Foundation/American Council for Learned Societies, the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Palestinian American Research Center, and the Darat al Funun Center for Arab Art in Amman. She is a Junior Fellow of the Mellon-Rare Book School Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography and is the recipient of the 2017 Rhonda A. Saad Prize for Best Paper in Modern and Contemporary Arab Art from the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran and Turkey (AMCA). She has also served as a book reviews editor for *AMCA* since 2018. Ari previously held positions as a Lecturer in Art History and faculty affiliate with the Center for Arab Studies at the University of Houston, as well as Associate Director of the Studio Program at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts in New York City. She received her Ph.D. from the History, Theory, and Criticism of Art and Architecture program at MIT.

Michelle Moore Apotsos

“The Earth Is a Masjid” : Tanzania’s First Eco-Mosque as Environmental Advocate

In Hadith 1057, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) states: “Wherever you may be at the time of prayer, you may pray, for (the Earth) is all a mosque.” This paper takes this statement as a starting point in examining the sig- nificance of Tanzania’s first Eco-mosque, built in 2010, as a prototype for the application of ecologically, spiritually, and socially engaged architec- tural principles within economically emergent areas. As a collaboration between architecture, spirituality, and environmental technology, this structure has the potential to not only address how sustainability writ large can be applied to mosque design in a substantive way, but also how innovative built environments based on faith and eco-sensitivity can support the claim made by urban strategist Ibrahim Abdul-Martin (2010) that “The Earth is a mosque, the mosque is sacred; therefore, the Earth is sacred.”

Michelle Moore Apotsos is an Associate Professor of Art at Williams College. She received her M.A. from Tufts University and her Ph.D. from Stanford University where she specialized in the arts and visual cul- tures of Africa with a focus on the Islamic built environment. She is also a former Research Associate at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.) and is an active contributor to various academic publications including the *Journal of Architectural Education*, *African Arts*, *International Journal and Islamic Architecture*, and *Material Culture Review*. Her two volumes – *Architecture, Islam, and Identity in West Africa: Lessons from Larabanga* (Routledge, 2016) and *The Masjid in Contemporary Islamic Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) – each respectively address how the built environment functions as a mode of crafting Muslim identity through spatial practice. These interests also inform recent / forthcoming works on the intersection of architecture, race, and Islam during the Malian Empire (The *Routledge Handbook of Islam and Race*, ed. Zain Abdullah, New York: Routledge, forthcoming), the resilience of colonial imaginaries in the context of con- temporary East African Islamic heritage sites (Decolonizing Islamic Art in Africa, ed. Ashley Miller, Chicago: Intellect and the University of Chicago Press, forthcoming), and the advent of eco-vernacular architecture and post-natural building in South Africa (with Anita Venter, *The Sustainability Handbook – Vol. 13 South Africa*, ed. Llewelyn van Wyk, Johannesburg: Alive2Green, 2020). Her interests in these topics have been supported by grants from the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the Graham Foundation, and the Global Architectural History Teaching Collaborative (GAHTC) at MIT.

Alexander Brey

Gushing Pools and Verdant Meadows: Rural Estates and the Reshaping of Umayyad Rural Landscapes

Medieval geographers of the 10th century like Ibn Hawqal extolled the beau- ty of uninterrupted vistas and vast panoramas that unfolded from elevated belvederes. For them, the landscape was best appreciated by a stationary viewer from a distance. But a letter on hunting attributed to the Umayyad court secretary Abd al-Hamid, active in the first half of the eighth century, approaches the landscape instead as the dynamic terrain through which people, animals, and water actively moved. Following Abd al-Hamid’s hunt- ers, this paper argues that rural estates constructed during the Umayyad

era (661-750 CE) should be understood in dialog with both unmanaged and managed flows of water and wildlife. Umayyad patrons throughout greater Syria altered the steppes that surrounded their estates through a variety of hydraulic systems. These projects also provided new emphases for the iconog- raphy of architectural decoration, attested at sites like Qusayr ‘Amra, the Azraq oasis, and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi.

Alexander Brey (Ph.D., Bryn Mawr College 2018) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at Wellesley College. His research focuses on the cross-cul- tural adaptation of images and ideas in early Islamic visual cultures, and digital methods for art history. Alexander has worked on archaeological excavations in Jordan and Israel, and received fellowships from the Dumbarton Oaks program in Garden and Landscape Studies, the American Center of Research in Amman, and the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. His cur- rent research project, tentatively titled *The Caliph’s Prey: Hunting in the Visual Cultures of the Umayyad Empire* (661-750 CE), analyzes depictions of hunting and constructed landscapes for hunting. Looking at monuments in the capitals, provinces, and frontiers of the Umayyad caliphate, i reconstructs the cultural and imperial associations of different types of hunting imagery, as well as the rhetorical frameworks that guided patrons and craftsmen in the reuse and adaption of hunting imagery for new political contexts.

Amanda Boetzkes

Behind the Sun: The Theater of Oil Expenditure

This talk will consider the wasting of oil, one of the foremost global energy resources, as a paradoxical means of capital accumulation. I consider the burning of the Kuwait oil fields during the Gulf War as a case of conspicuous and aesthetically-charged energy expenditure. Drawing from the theories of Georges Bataille and Achille Mbembe, and through an analysis of the video *Behind the Sun* by Kuwaiti artist Monira Al Qadiri and its context in the exhi- bition *Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1999-2011* at MOMA PS1, I consider how the necropolitical logic of oil wasting conjoins with an aesthetics of eco- logical disaster. I chart a movement from the concept of energy expenditure as a form of systemic balance, to the tragic negligence of the need to waste well that results from the global oil economy’s instrumentalization of oil wasting.

Amanda Boetzkes is Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Guelph. Her research focuses on the aesthetics and ethics of art as these intersect with climate change, global ecologies of waste, the visu- al imaginary of petrocultures and the concept of ecological perception. She is the author of *Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste* (MIT Press, 2019), *The Ethics of Earth Art* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), and co-editor of *Heidegger and the Work of Art History* (Ashgate, 2014). She has pub- lished in the journals *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Afterimage*, *Postmodern Culture*, *E-flux*, *The Large Glass*, *Art Journal*, *Art History*, *Photograph*, and *Antennae*; *The Journal of Nature and Visual Culture* among others. Recent book chapters ap- pear in *Nervous Systems: Art, Systems, and Politics Since the 1960s* (Duke, 2021); *Climate Realism* (Routledge, 2020); *Materialism and the Critique of Energy* (MCM, 2018); *Fueling Culture: 101 Words for Energy and Environment* (Fordham University Press, 2018); *The Edinburgh Companion for Animal Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017); and *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Politics, Aesthetics, Environments and Epistemologies* (Open Humanities Press, 2015). Her current research considers modes of visualizing environments with a special focus on contemporary Inuit art and the environments of the circumpolar North. This re- search theorizes the interplay between artistic propositions for inhabiting the planet and the readjusted parameters of perception demanded by climate change.

T.J. Demos

Climate Justice Now! Art and Environment in the Middle East

Arguing for the prioritization of climate justice as the most compelling ecocritical framework of analysis and methodology today, this presenta- tion will outline its key operating principles and provide a discussion of select case studies in contemporary aesthetic practice that bring it into focus—including such practices as those of Forensic Architecture, Gulf Labor, Vivien Sansour, and Jumana Mana. Informing my research is the ac- knowledgment of the fundamentally entangled socio-environmental con- ditions of the racial Capitalocene, which prevents such terms as ecology and climate from being considered, and aestheticized, according to the narrow definitions of atmospheric carbon or more-than-human natures, as well as resists the Anthropocene’s neo-humanist generalizations. In joining climate to justice, politics to ecology, this complex analysis considers inextricably intersecting systems of social life and politics stemming from the colonial conditions of dominant economic arrangements and their militarized defense, which has long shaped the socio-environmental terms of life in the Middle East.

T.J. Demos is an award-winning writer on contemporary art, global politics, and ecology. He is Professor in the Department of the History of Art and Visual Culture, at University of California, Santa Cruz, and founding Director of its Center for Creative Ecologies. He researches the intersection of visual culture, radical politics, and political ecology—particularly where they oppose racial and colonial capitalism—and is the author of several books, including *Beyond the World’s End: Arts of Living at the Crossing* (Duke, 2020), *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and Political Ecology* (Sternberg, 2016); and *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Sternberg, 2017). He co-edited *The Routledge Companion on Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change* (2021), was a Getty Research Institute Fellow (Spring 2020), and directed the Mellon-funded Sawyer Seminar research project *Beyond the End of the World* (2019-21). Demos is also Chair and Chief Curator of the Climate Collective, providing public programming related to the 2021 Climate Emergency > Emergence program at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Maat) in Lisbon. He is presently working on a new book on radical futurisms.

Farid Esmaeil

Context as a ‘Form’ Generator

In a context that is continuously changing, designers should spend a lot of effort to understand what values are constant and rooted and what is evolving. This may lead the designer to go to extremes when weighing one value over the other. Rooting in a “place” and utilizing its environmental uniqueness to strengthen the evolving programmatic needs may create a beautiful contra- diction between the “spirit of place” or “genius loci” and the shock of the new as a result. What should designers draw their inspirations from when the con- text seems forever evolving? Successful designers have the ability to design buildings or objects that capture the “spirit of the age” of the surrounding environment. Some designs creatively embed connotations or reflect “truth” about the environment that we live in. Only then and in a contradictory way, does the designer succeed in developing a timeless and organic creation, ele- vating the work from an object to an ecological symbol in the collective mind of the society or nation.

Farid Esmaeil is an architect, researcher, and entrepreneur; he graduated from the American University of Sharjah with a degree in Architecture and he founded the award-winning design firm, X Architects, in 2003. His design work addresses issues of contemporary society, urban identity and architec- ture. Farid’s work has been widely recognized internationally through various awards, exhibitions, publications, and venues. He has lectured and addressed sustainable design and various other topics specific to the climate and en- vironment at worldwide universities and institutions. In August 2019, Farid received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture for his design of the Wasit Wetland Centre.

Anna M. Gade

Truth of Consequences: The Floating Mosque and Material Ethics

This presentation brings Environmental Studies into conversation with the study of Islam, pointing to a shared ground of ethics in material expression. Case studies about the interaction of mosques and water flow from the float- ing mosque (masjid terapung, Malay/BI) to natural and anthropogenic change in the landscape that affects such structures in unanticipated ways. This shows the inherently ethical material of environmentalty in Muslim religious arts of the past and present through relations of consequence in a manner that, once apprehended, cannot be un-seen.

Anna M. Gade is Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor and Associate Dean for Research and Education in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, where she teaches courses in Islam and Environmental Humanities. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in the History of Religions, specializing in Islam. She has previously held positions in Islamic Studies, Asian Studies and Religious Studies in the US and overseas (Aotearoa, New Zealand). Her work has been grounded in ethnographic fieldwork in the region of Southeast Asia, espe- cially Indonesia, for over 25 years, beginning with research on the aesthetics of sound and performance in Qur’an recitation (Perfection Makes Practice, 2004). Her areas of interest are theory and method in the academic study of religion and ethics in the environmental humanities. Her books include *The Qur’an: An Introduction* (Oneworld Publications 2010), and *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations* (Columbia University Press, 2019).

Huma Gupta

Visualizing Ma’dan in Mayzara: The Hidden History of Urban “Wetlands” in Baghdad

Contemporary scholarship on Iraq’s wetland ecosystems has primarily focused on the marshes of southeastern Iraq. This paper, however, uses visual archives to broaden the historical notion of what types of landscapes constituted a wetland in Iraq. This paper supports this claim through multi-sited archival research, which includes photography, film, architectural drawings, and paint- ings that depicted a different type of urban landscape co-created by migrant families engaged in buffalo-breeding. It examines representations of ‘wetland’ ecosystems in Mayzara, a neighborhood located beyond the eastern Nazim Pasha flood dyke and railway embankment in mid-century Baghdad. Migrant families used flood plains, water channels, and excavated ditches to repro- duce the environmental features of the wetlands they left behind to support their buffalo-centered livelihoods in the capital. However, the capital’s author- ities viewed this landscape, marked by reed mat shelters, earth architecture, and wading pools for buffaloes, as one that mandated drastic environmental intervention and architectural transformation.

Huma Gupta is a Lecturer in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. Her 2020 dissertation, *Migrant Sarifa Settlements and State-Building in Iraq*, historicizes the dialectical relationship between Baghdad’s reed-mat and mudbrick settlements populated by rural migrants and the development of state institutions in Iraq. Previously, Gupta was an International Dissertation Research Fellow at the Social Science Research Council, MIT Presidential Fellow, and a Humanities Research Fellow at New York University – Abu Dhabi. Her work has been published in the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, *Thresholds*, and *Journal of Contemporary Iraq and the Arab World*. Gupta is also an Environment Page editor at Jadaliyya.com and hosts the Environment in Context statushour.com podcast.

Tarek Al-Ghoussein

Tarek Al-Ghoussein is a Professor of Visual Art and Director of the new MFA program at NYU Abu Dhabi. His solo shows include *Odysseus*, *The Third Line Dubai* (2021) and warehouse 421, Abu Dhabi (2019); *Al Sawaber*, *The Third Line, Dubai* (2017); *K Files*, *CAP Kuwait* (2017); *K Files* and *Sawaber Series*, Nevada Museum of Art (2016); *K Files*, *The Third Line, Dubai* (2014); *E Series*, Kalfayan Galleries, Athens(2011); and *A Retrospective: Works from 2003-2010*, Sharjah Art Museum (2010). His work has been shown in group shows including *Theatre of Operations*, MoMA PS1(2019-2020); *Negotiating The Future: 6th Asian Art Biennial*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (2017); *The Creative Act: Performance*,

Process, Presence, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (2017); *The 15th International Biennial of Photography and Photo-related Art*, Houston (2014); *Lost in Landscape*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy (2014); *Photouai*, Photography Biennial, Paris (2013); *From Palestine with Hope*, Art Space, London (2013); *Safar/Voyage*, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver (2013) and *The National Pavilion of Kuwait 55th Venice Biennale*, Venice, Italy (2013). Al-Ghoussein’s works are collected by museums worldwide including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Freer Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian, the Nevada Museum of Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Royal Museum of Photography in Copenhagen; the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo; the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha; the Sharjah Biennial Collection, and the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation.

Pamela Karimi

Survival by Design: Oil Crisis, the Middle East, and the US Quest for Lunar Settlements

Invoked by astrophysicists, environmentalists, architects, and sci-fi writers, the desert-friendly architectural heritage of the Middle East was critical to research and experimental studies of lunar outposts across the oil crisis de- cades, which later came to be named the “Environmental Age” (1960s–1980s). While there is a substantial body of literature on space settlements and their correlation with science-fictional, architectural, ecological, and astrophysical writings, there is hardly a coherent study on the significance of survival strat- egies manifested in building cultures of the Middle East and North Africa. This presentation features USs imaginary, architectural, and scientific proposals for self-sustained space settlements, informed by Middle Eastern desert archite- cture. In particular, it will focus on the contributions of the Iranian American Nader Khalili (1936–2008) who explored the frontiers of space settlements through his decade-long survey of Iran’s self-sustained desert architecture, cul- minating in a number of studies, including the book, *Sidewalks on the Moon*, as well as a proposed project for NASA.

Pamela Karimi is an architect and an architectural historian. She holds a Ph.D. from the Aga Khan Program at MIT. Her primary field of specialization is art, architecture, and visual culture of the modern Middle East. Her second area of research is design and sustainability in North America. She is the author of *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran* (2013) and co-editor of *Images of the Child and Childhood in Modern Muslim Contexts* (2012), *Reinventing the American Post-Industrial City* (2015) and *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Middle East*: From Napoleon to ISIS (2016). Karimi’s forthcoming book, *Alternative Iran: Contemporary Art & Critical Spatial Practice*, will be published by Stanford University Press in 2022. Her major forthcoming curatorial proj- ects include *Urban Renewal and Creative Economy in Massachusetts*, *Gateway Cities*, *Stateless: Artists Respond to the Refugee Crisis*, *Black Spaces Matter: Exploring the Aesthetics and Architectonics of an Abolitionist Neighborhood*; and *Contemporary Iranian Art and the Historical Imagination*. Karimi has held fellowships from the Iran Heritage Foundation at SOAS University of London, American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Association of University Women. In 2018 Karimi received the Manning Prize for Excellence in Teaching. More recently Karimi was the co-recipient of a major grant from the Connecting Art Histories Initiative at the Getty Foundation, which will undertake extensive research on courses, pro- grams, and alternative educational platforms in the fields of art history and architectural studies throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Co-founder of Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative and a former member of the editorial team of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, Karimi cur- rently serves on the editorial and scholarly boards of *Thresholds Journal* (MIT Press) and the Association of Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey, respectively.

Stephane Pradines

Coral Mosques and Indian Ocean Maritime Resources, from the Maldives to the Swahili Coast

This paper presents the author’s experiences, over the past 20 years, in coral stone mosques’ architecture. The use of marine porite coral is a technology that unites different cultures around the Indian Ocean, from the Swahili coast in Africa to the Maldives. The presentation will focus on the use of local resources and environmental constraints for the construction of maritime mosques. The origin of coral architecture is located between India and Indonesia. Its diffu- sion by the Abbasid travellers in the Western Indian Ocean, and in Africa in the 9th century, as well as its globalisation under the Buwayhids and the Fatimids in the 11th century is very closely linked to the international Muslim maritime trade. This paper investigates shared identities and how Muslim diaspora, traders, and refugees disseminate a unique technology and how local populations assimilate material cultures, new technologies and new building materials.

Stephane Pradines is an archaeologist and Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) in London. He was the director of the excavations of the Fatimid and Ayyubid Walls of Cairo and many other excavations in the Indian Ocean (Maldives) and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros). He is a specialist of Islamic architecture in Egypt and Sub-Saharan Africa, medieval trade in the Indian Ocean and material culture of war in Muslim Africa (arms and military architecture). Dr. Pradines worked with different NGOs on heri- tage and conservation of monuments and sites such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Cairo, UNESCO and the World Monument Fund in Kiwa, Kua and the Maldives. He is the founding editor of the *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* (MCNW), an academic journal in full open access published by Brill in partnership with the Aga Khan university and the Aga Khan Museum. His last book in press is entitled *Historic Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa*, from Timbuktu to Zanzibar.

D. Fairchild Ruggles

Cultivars and Calamities in al-Andalus: On Nature and Human Will

The built landscape is both a cultural and natural production. Most plants cultivated in contemporary and historic landscapes have become cultivars, domesticated through adaptation, pruned to concentrate growth, irrigated, fertilized, the seeds of the best specimens selected for future planting. The agricultural manuals and calendars made in al-Andalus recorded the effort of domesticating both native and imported plants and adapting the environment. Yet it was a world that could not be fully controlled. In Córdoba in the 9th and 10th centuries, the records of natural disasters that caused famine reveal the tension between humans as engineers of environmental transformation and humans as subjects of that same environment. As good trustees (Qur’an 2:30, 45:13), humans work to make the environment to suit our needs, yet at the same time the environment shapes us.

D. Fairchild Ruggles holds the Debra Mitchell Endowed Chair in Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with additional appointments as Professor in Art History, Architecture, Medieval Studies, Spanish and Portuguese Studies, and the Center for South Asian and Middle East Studies. She is the art and architecture field editor for the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and is the author of two award-winning books on Islamic landscape history: *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (2008; 2012 Japanese translation; 2017 Turkish translation) and *Gardens, Landscape and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (2000), as well as numerous other authored, edited and co-edited volumes on Islamic art, cultural heritage, landscape history and theory, and the arts patronage of women in the Islamic world and South Asia. Her most recent book, *Tree of Pearls* (2020) looks at the architectural patronage of the Egyptian sultan-queen, Shajar al-Durr, and the development of public space in 13th-century Cairo.

Elizabeth Rauh

Iridescent Modernism: The Troubling Artistic Legacy of Pearl Diving in the Persian Gulf

The discovery of crude oil in the early 20th century precipitated a fundamen- tal shift in the Persian Gulf’s cultural, economic, and religious life. One of the most prominent effects was the near total collapse of the region’s historic pearl diving industry, and the aftershocks in coastal dwelling communities at the loss of this pre-industrial way of life. As modernist art practices and new me- dia bloomed across the Gulf waters (fueled in part by expanding oil industry), artists looked to the pearl diver’s disappearing way of life and lasting heritage of their precarious fishing practices as an analogy to petro-driven modernity. Through modern and contemporary artistic examinations of Persian Gulf aquatic ecologies, the destruction and enduring heritage of the Gulf’s historic maritime pearl trade can be understood as one of the chief propellers of the region’s technological progress, environmental devastation, and ongoing (trou- bling) artistic legacy.

Elizabeth Rauh (University of Michigan, 2020) is Assistant Professor of Modern Art and Visual Cultures at the American University in Cairo. Specializing in modern art history of Iran, Iraq, and Western Asia, her work examines artist engagements with Islamic heritage, popular image practices and technolo- gies in Shi’i Islam, and arts of the 20th-century “Shi’i Left.” She also purses research in ecological art practices in the history of the Persian Gulf, such as in her forthcoming study: *Experiments in Eden: Midcentury Artist Voyages into the Mesopotamian Marshlands (Journal of Contemporary Iraq and the Arab World)*, short video lecture, *A Hot Wind Blows: Ecocritical Art in the Middle East* for Khamseen Islamic Art History Online, and exhibition project *Iraq En Route: A Photographic Journey, 1852-1953* with the Cranbrook Institute’s Center for Collections and Research (Detroit, Summer 2021). Her research has been fund- ed by The Academic Research Institute in Iraq, the Darat al Funun Center for Modern and Contemporary Arab Art, the Max Weber Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. She is the Social Media Coordinator for the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey (AMCA), and co-founder and co-organizer with Dr. Pamela Karimi of *Noqtah: Art Points Conversation Series on Modern and Contemporary Arts of the Middle East* (AMCA, 2020-).

Nada Shabout

A Threatened Imaginary: Environmental Interventions in Iraqi Art

The legendary modern Iraqi artist Jawad Selim (1919-1961) and his contem- porary, artist Rashad Salim (b. 1957), both sought to understand the country of Iraq through exploring its cultures and environment. Explorations of Jewads’ generation of what the new borders of the new state contained was an act of surveying to assert existence. Jawad often presented the tension between modernity and tradition through architectural and urban juxtaposition and a palpable absence of landscape. Following years in exile, Rashad returned to an Iraq he no longer recognized. Through his *Safina Project*, he performs a similar exploration to that of his uncle. This time, through trying to reconstruct the imaginary his uncle’s generation erected while navigating the new destruction of both environment and heritage, Rashad delves into mythical, religious and historical narratives of events while questioning their current problematic representations. Physically building the different vessels and undertaking the journey himself offers empirical negotiations of such narratives.

Nada Shabout is a Regent Professor of Art History and the Coordinator of the Contemporary Arab and Muslim Cultural Studies Initiative (CAMCSI) at the University of North Texas. She is the founding president of the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Iran and Turkey (AMCA). She is the author of *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (University of Florida Press, 2007) co-editor with S. Mikdadi, *New Vision: Arab Art in the 21st Century* (Thames & Hudson, 2009); and co-editor with S. Rogers and A. Lenssen, *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018). She is also founding director of Modern Art Iraq Archive. She has written extensively on Arab art historiography and Iraqi modern and contemporary art. Notable among exhibitions she has curated: *Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art* (2010); *Dafatir: Contemporary Iraqi Book Art* (2005-2009); and

co-curator, *Modernism and Iraq* (2009). Major awards of her research include: Getty Foundation (2019); Writers Grant, Andy Warhol Foundation (2018); The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) Fellow (2006-2007), and Fulbright Senior Scholar Program (2008). Shabout was the Project Advisor for the Saudi National Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2019. Shabout is on the Board of Directors, Visual Art Commission, Ministry of Culture, Saudi Arabia; the Board of The Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TARI), and the College Art Association (CAA) Board of Directors (2020–2024). Her current projects include leading an AMCA team, as part of the Getty Foundation Connecting Art Histories initia- tive, in support of Mapping Art Histories from the Arab World, Iran and Turkey, coediting with Sarah Rogers and Suheyla Takesh, *Modern Art in the Arabian Peninsula*, and working on a new book project, *Demarcating Modernism in Iraqi Art: The Dialectics of the Decorative* (1951-1979), both under contract with the American University in Cairo Press.

Rachel Winter

Aestheticizing the Ecologies of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Through the work of Issam Kourbaj (b. 1963, Syria) and Halil Altindere (b. 1971, Turkey), this paper explores the way ecological elements of Islamic art, such as fire and water, act as conduits for contemporary artists from Islamic lands now in diaspora to interrogate the ongoing Syrian Refugee Crisis. I examine the way their works draw attention to the socio-political dimensions of displacement, and the environmental shifts impacting the way refugees migrate and engage with the land while in transit. Kourbaj and Altindere’s installations reveal the way the eco-conscious ethos of Islamic art is transformed by the challenges of modernity and climate change to take on new meanings in contemporary artistic forms. This paper promotes questions about migrant interactions with the environment, the way climate change impacts migration, and the role of artists like Kourbaj and Altindere in the amorphous field of contemporary Islamic art.

Rachel Winter is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Santa Barbara, researching contemporary artists from the Middle East. Her disser- tation, *A Spectacle of Inclusion: The Rise of Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey in the United States and England, 1970-2020*, recovers the early history of museums in the US and UK collecting and curating contem- porary Middle Eastern art beginning in the 1970s. Rachel’s research articulates the way competing modes of knowledge production across festivals, galleries, non-profit cultural centers, and museums acted as interlocutors for the grow- ing interest in and subsequent proliferation of contemporary Middle Eastern art throughout American and British art institutions in a tumultuous sociopo- litical moment shaped by cultural diplomacy, globalization, immigration, war, and diaspora. Artists featured include Madiha Omar, Ahmed Moustafa, Ali Omar Ermes, Osman Waqialla, and Dia al-Azzawi, as well as cultural institutions like the Iraqi Cultural Centre (London) and the Alif Gallery (Washington, D.C.). This project globalizes traditional histories of modern and contemporary art to decenter Western narratives, as well as contributes to the evolving field of contemporary Middle Eastern art history. Her research has received funding from the Center for Craft, as well as the Center for Middle East Studies and the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She recently presented her doctoral research at the Getty Graduate Symposium, the Middle East Studies Association, and the College Art Association. Rachel graduated with her M.A. from the University of Iowa in Interdisciplinary Studies: Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies in 2017 where she was named Outstanding Graduate Student in Islamic Studies, as well as her B.A. in art history with hon- ors in 2015.

Yusen Yu

Flora and Fauna in Timurid Painting

Scholars have long been interested in Mughal representations of flora and fauna, which have been explained as the result of the impact of European nature drawings. A challenge to this narrative would suggest that the Mughal as well as Safavid tradition was equally the continuation of the Timurid realism of vi- sual practice in this very genre, exemplified through naturalistic depiction, di- agnostic coloring, precise anatomical and morphological description. Focusing on the arguably earliest surviving corpus of such works from the Istanbul and Berlin albums, my paper will investigate how Timurid and Turkmén painters utilized this genre to pursue unprecedented botanical and, especially, zoolo- gical projects, and how their extraordinary minuteness met the attentive eye of the intended viewer who sought beauty in nature.

Yusen Yu is a Lecturer in Iranian Islamic Art History at the University of St Andrews. Prior to that, he was the Junior Research Fellow in Comparative Aesthetics and Art History at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He received his Ph.D. from Heidelberg University, Germany, in 2019. He specializes in Islamic art from a transregional perspective. His forthcoming book, *Chinese Scrolls and the Persianate Audience in the Long Fifteenth Century*, examines the ways in which the scrolls were viewed, understood, and used in Iran and Central Asia during 1350s and 1550s. Continuing this line of inquiry, his current project ex- plores the contemporaneous and later receptions of European prints, printed books, and printing technologies in the Islamic world. Other interests include medieval aesthetics, technology and craftsmanship, and the interrelationship between ecologies (animal, vegetable, and mineral) and aesthetic practices.

Rebecca Zorach

“A luminous golden spirit owns us” : Legal Sculpting and the Rights of Nature

In this talk, I consider contemporary art works and practices that engage with the legal system, primarily in the domain of ecological art, along- side creative practices undertaken by legal theorists and practitioners that overlap with them, seeking to complicate our understanding of the potential ‘effectiveness’ of these practices. I suggest connections with the notion of “legislative art” formulated by artist-activists engaging with the criminal justice system and projects at the intersection of the abolition and ecological justice movements, but my primary focus is on the Compass Groups Monsanto Hearings and Aviva Rahman’s *Blued Trees* Symphony along with the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund’s “Community Bill of Rights” and environmentally-focused people’s tribunals. Though these projects often rely upon the very structures of western cap- italism that they critique, I will also gesture toward openings (as in the quote from legal scholar Patricia Williams that appears in my title) onto systems of value other than western and capitalist ones.

Rebecca Zorach teaches in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University, with affiliations in programs in American Studies and Environmental Policy and Culture. She writes on early modern European art, contemporary activist art, and art of the 1960s and 1970s. Particular interests include print media, feminist and queer theory, theory of rep- resentation, the Black Arts Movement, art and ecology, and the multiple intersections of art and politics. Her books include *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago, 2005), *The Passionate Triangle* (Chicago, 2011), and *Art for People’s Sake: Artists and Community in Black Chicago 1965-1975* (Duke, 2019). She co-edited *The Wall of Respect: Public Art and Black Liberation in 1960s Chicago* (Northwestern, 2017) with Abdul Alkalimat and Romi Crawford and *Ecologies, Agents, Terrains* (Yale, 2018) with Christopher P. Heuer. She cu- rated the exhibition *The Time Is Now! Art Worlds of Chicago’s South Side, 1960-1980* at the Smart Museum (catalogue published 2018, co-edited with Marissa Baker). She is a board member of the South Side Community Art Center, where she chairs the Archives and Collections Committee, and South Side Projections. In 2021-22 she will be a Faculty Fellow at the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern, where will be work- ing on two book projects, one entitled *The Designs of Nature* which deals with early modern European ideas about Nature as maker, in particular as a maker of images, art objects, and artifacts, and the other tentatively entitled *Place Holding*, in which she takes an experimental approach to writing about land, ecology, race and indigeneity, and art and its institu- tions in the United States.

Camille Zakharia

Camille Zakharia graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from NSCAD University, Halifax, Canada in 1997 and a Bachelor of Engineering from the American University of Beirut in 1995. Using photography, photomon- tage and collage, Zakharia makes work about identity and displacement, reflecting his own life journey. His work has been shown at the Venice Art and Architecture Biennales in 2010 and 2013, winning the Gold Lion with Bahrain in 2010. He has also exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Canadian Museum of Civilization, FotoFest 2014, Musée du Quai Branly, Albert Kahn Museum, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Florida National Museum, Wichita Center for the Arts, Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, Chobi Mela, Sharjah Biennale, Ithra Cultural Center and National Museum of Bahrain. Zakharia’s works are part of the public collections at LACMA, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Victoria and Albert Museum, Musée Suisse de l’Appareil Photographique, Clarinda Carnegie Museum, Wichita Center for the Arts, Ithra Cultural Center, National Museum of Bahrain, Barjeel Art Foundation, Jameel Foundation, Dubai International Financial Center, Sh. Ebrahim Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa Center of Culture & Research, and Art Gallery at Saint Mary’s University.



Camille Zakharia, Urban Landscape Industrial Area 9, Sharjah UAE, Sharjah History Images, 2008.



Camille Zakharia, Hut 9 Samaheej, Muharraq Bahrain, Coastal Promenade, 2010.

The exhibition Landscapes of Arabia takes its title from a seemingly romantic notion of a landscape that was shaped by European scholars and travelers as far back as the 18th century up to the mid-20th century. To mind come the literary work of Carsten Niebuhr, a German cartographer in the service of the Royal Danish Arabia expedition (1761-67), the works of Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), and the memoirs of Wilfred Thesiger (1910-2003). Aesthetically the views of landscapes in paintings and prints of David Roberts (1796-1864) and Edward Lear (1812-88) brought views of Arabia to a European audience hitherto more acquainted with Italy and Greece, or even India. The notions of a serene overbearing landscape inhabited by noble Bedouins have persisted to the present day, albeit in altered form. Today it is the utopian cityscapes of the Arab countries of the Gulf and their riches gained from oil exploration that spur the global mind. Images of gigantic construction and the lure of ever-flowing luxury perpetuated by the media have brought these tiny countries to global attention, while much of the rest of the Arab world is embroiled in social, religious and economic struggle and several wars have devastated century-old communities and their livelihoods. Yet, the gleaming images of Arabia perpetuated in popular media today are only part of the story. It is here that the works of Camille Zakharia and Tarek Al-Ghoussein provide a counterbalance, documenting a side of the modern Gulf states with a sense of realism rarely seen.

Camille Zakharia, a Canadian-Lebanese photographer whose work has documented his life's migration from his Lebanese homeland across Europe, North America and his present home in Bahrain, looks at the landscapes of his journey, sometimes reconstructing them as spaces of his own memory and longing for a home, often reflecting on the people that accompanied him along the way. Most of the works in the current exhibition, selected from several series representing his time as an artist working in the Gulf since the 1990s, are reflections on the rapid changes in both environment and society that he has experienced in this region. They speak of massive urban development and the human response to it, the loss of traditional lifestyles and the quest to redefine belonging amidst massive change.



Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Abu Dhabi Archipelago (Hami Rohah Gassar), 2015, Digital Print, 60 x 80 cm Edition of 6 + 1AP. Courtesy of the Artist and The Third Line, Dubai.



Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Abu Dhabi Archipelago (Jubabibat), 2015, Digital Print, 60 x 80 cm Edition of 6 + 1AP. Courtesy of the Artist and The Third Line, Dubai.

Tarek Al-Ghoussein, born in Kuwait to Palestinian exiles, spent part of his youth in the United States, Morocco, and Japan and has worked in the United Arab Emirates for the last 20 years where he has recorded and reflected on the massive changes taking place there. His photographs depict abandoned spaces and deteriorating buildings and objects that are often in the process of decay and near extinction. Al-Ghoussein examines traces of human presences, preserving narratives of the spaces and their former inhabitants, but at the same time looks at his own place within these spaces and the processes of fleetingness that they represent, exploring how identity is shaped within a context of inaccessibility and loss. The works chosen for the exhibition are selected from the series Odysseus, named after the hero of Homer's epic poem of the Odyssey, where Al-Ghoussein sets out to document the 215 islands off the coast of Abu Dhabi. In his photographs the artist is often seen interacting with the landscapes he records, sometimes creating situations full of absurdity. As the process of recording the islands has been marred by bureaucracy to visit these often remote places, Al-Ghoussein has persistently tried to return and continue documenting them, and the story of his journey is much like that of Odysseus' about his homecoming as much as his journey.

Both artists reflect on the sense of loss and belonging through their works through a discourse with the environments with which they interact. They are both chroniclers of massive human interventions in these environments, while neither make value judgements about them. They exhibit a bizarre beauty far removed from the romanticism with which the idea of Arabia still exists in the minds of those who only know the region from the global media or from fleeting visits as tourists. Within the symposium the exhibition will create a space of discourse on the larger issues of environmental change from the perspective of two photographers who have been witnesses to monumental change in the Arabian nations of the Gulf.

Radha
Dalal

Interim Director of Art
History and Associate
Professor of Islamic Art
VCUarts Qatar



In this tenth year of the Art History program at VCUarts Qatar, we cannot help but look back with great pride at a decade of truly impressive achievements. We've developed a unique and robust global art curriculum with the Islamic world at its center and attracted an outstanding complement of faculty. We produced three valedictorians from six graduating classes; enrolled over 150 local and international students in the major and minor; led multiple field trips to parts of Asia, Europe, and the United States; collaborated with art institutions in Doha and abroad; and hosted several distinguished scholarly events including the Eighth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art in 2019. As the youngest program at VCUarts Qatar, our phenomenal growth in such a short time is a testament to the dedication of the art history faculty, the enthusiasm and perseverance of our students, and the unwavering support of VCUarts Qatar, VCUarts, and Qatar Foundation.

While these accomplishments are immensely gratifying, the program's real impact is driven by our students and alumni who actively engage and promote the visual arts and the humanities in Qatar and elsewhere. VCUarts Qatar art history graduates have left an indelible mark across museums and art galleries in Doha from the Museum of Islamic Art to Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art to Msheireb Museums to the Qatar National Museum. Many have pursued graduate studies in various fields and in different countries. Still others are transforming the art world through creative practice and an entrepreneurial vision. One of our recent alumni observed that the study of art history helps us explore the astonishing breadth of human experience and in the process become more human. We couldn't agree more. It is to these dynamic individuals, and their peers around the globe, that we'll ultimately turn for leadership as our planet's climate crisis continues to unfold. And it is with these next generations in mind that this symposium's focus on the sobering theme of the environment comes at a critical time.

Since its inception in 2004, the Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art has served as an intellectual beacon, its name synonymous with cutting-edge research on Islamic visual culture. In its 17-year history, over 100 of the most venerable thinkers in Islamic art and architecture have presented on timely topics and have inspired global audiences, drawing attention to the ever-expanding frontiers of the discipline. For our students at VCUarts Qatar and VCUarts, these symposia have presented opportunities to interact with the world's most eminent artists, scholars, and curators in the field. The Ninth Biennial Symposium, The Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture, will strengthen this tradition of student involvement beyond our institution with the hope of nurturing a more inclusive, empathetic, compassionate, and intellectually nimble global citizenry poised to solve the formidable problems facing an interlocked and interdependent humanity today.



Carolyn
Porter
Phinizy

Chair and Assistant
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VCUarts

The Department of Art History at VCUarts is delighted to participate in the Ninth Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art. Since the inaugural symposium in Richmond in 2004, the event has advanced significant production and dissemination of knowledge in a dynamic and important field of inquiry. Simultaneously, it has fostered educational opportunities for students from the Richmond campus who attend the symposium and are inspired by research from leading scholars in the field.

Art history students have benefited greatly from the past 17 years of dedicated interest in the study of Islamic art in a global context. For instance, VCUarts faculty led a group of undergraduate art history majors in a seminar on the Islamic art and architecture of Spain. At the end of the seminar, they traveled to Spain and spent a week visiting sites in Córdoba and Seville, including Madinat al-Zahra, the Cathedral/Mosque of Córdoba, the Alhambra, the Giralda, and the Alcázar. The students were joined by faculty from VCUarts Qatar and the University of Córdoba, one of VCU's International Partnership Universities, thus sustaining collaborations that align with the department's global approach to research and teaching, and with its commitment to studying the permeability of geographic, temporal, and theoretical boundaries.

Our cross-campus partnership has also inspired shared learning opportunities for undergraduate students interested in the study of Islamic art. On the Richmond campus, Professor Babatunde Lawal, who has served as a visiting faculty member at VCUarts Qatar, teaches an upper division undergraduate course on Islamic architecture in Africa that remains a favorite among students interested in expanding their knowledge of global Islamic art. Students from both campuses have enrolled in online Islamic art history courses offered synchronously in Richmond and Doha. The virtual meetings across continents and cultures have inspired Richmond students to spend a semester at VCUarts Qatar, continuing the pursuit of study in Islamic art history and building important connections between our campuses.

As we reflect upon the scholarly and pedagogical accomplishments initiated by the Doha-Richmond partnership, the biennial symposium, and the endowed chair, we look forward to similarly inspired future endeavors.



Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, research and development, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development. QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, please visit: www.qf.org.qa
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