

News from the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin

1/2010

Dear Friends of the Museum of Islamic Art,

A review of the first six months of 2010 can hardly turn out short. The variety of events, activities and tasks was such that it is difficult to sum them up in few pages. Nevertheless, in this newsletter I shall again to give you a glimpse into the daily work at our museum. After great labour and time-consuming preparation, executed, above all, by Ms. Franke and Mr. Tunsch, our digital documentation centre (MDS) is finally ready and its ten thousands of entries are now waiting to be corrected and brought up to date. The building of the Competence Centre across the Pergamon Museum is quickly taking shape – meaning also, the transfer of holdings into new depots. After the reunification of holdings from east and west at the turn of the year, above all Ms. Helmecke has started to rearrange particular groups of objects. Despite manifold backstage activities, occurrences in the exhibition rooms were quite lively, too. There I should like to mention in particular Ms. Gonnella's fine exhibition about the Swiss collector Antoine-Louis Henri Polier (1741-95), to whom we owe many of our precious Indian albums.

The response to our events was very positive, and the interest in our museum is extraordinarily great. With 538,417 visitors last year, we set a new record (+8.1%). These figures are all the more impressive compared to the numbers of visitors in all of the Pergamon Museum: after the record in 2008 with the Babylon exhibition, those figures decreased in 2009 by 15.8% (going back to normal).

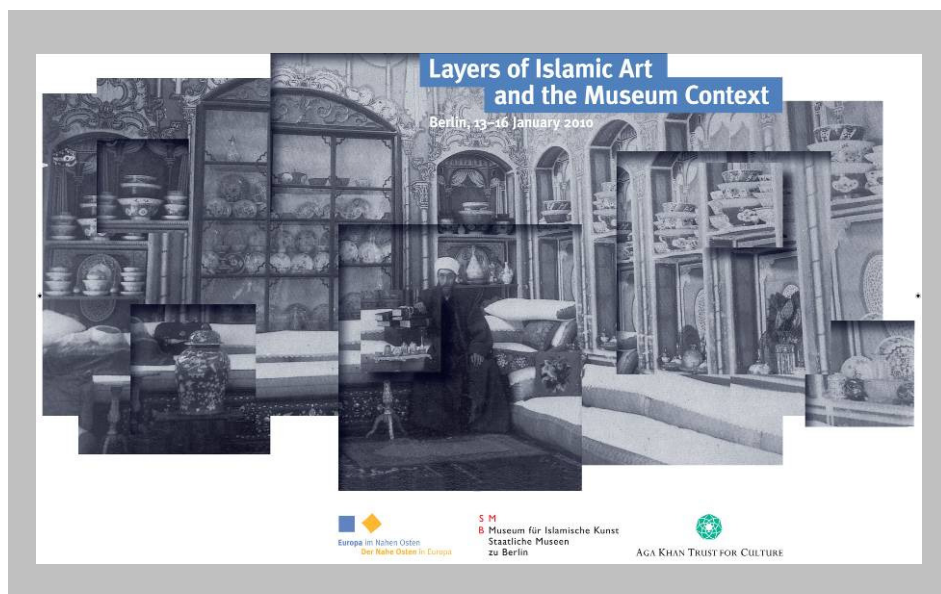
These first six months were characterized by two important events: the re-opening of the exhibition "Sammlerglück" [A Collector's Fortune] on March 17, when the Keir Collection was incorporated into our permanent exhibition; and the conference 'Layers of Islamic Art' featuring a panel of international experts who discussed the new conception of our museum – thoroughly revised in 2009 – in preparation for the move to the north wing. Let us begin with this latter event, which initiated the year in January.

Layers of Islamic Art

By ca. 2019, the Pergamon Museum with its archaeological collections from the eastern Mediterranean and from ancient Mesopotamia is scheduled to shine forth in new splendour. In the course of that process, the Museum of Islamic Art will be newly arranged and, as an integral part, conclude

the circuit through the civilizations of this cultural region. The respective planning has been going on since the 1990s; especially for the large architectural structures it has taken form under the direction of Claus-Peter Haase, who built on preparatory work by Michael Meinecke and Volkmar Enderlein. I am grateful to the planners, who, on my first taking office, granted me a year to plan the arrangement of the future exhibition with regard to its contents. At the conference the results of the new conception were presented to international top-notch academics from various disciplines, to museum directors and curators. The conference, a cooperation with Benoit Junod from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture – their new museum in Toronto addresses similar questions – and with Georges Khalil from the research programme "Europa im Nahen Osten - Der Nahe Osten in Europa" [Europe in the Middle East – the Middle East in Europe] (see Museum newsletter 2/09 and <http://www.eume-berlin.de/>), was particularly fruitful.

Besides the new conception, the conference treated questions that are of essential importance today: should we still look upon Muslim cultures as isolated entities to be investigated as closed societies and presented in a museum? Islamic art history has often pondered questions relating to material ordered by dynasties, considering developments linear and taking place in a closed cultural space. In recent years research has focussed on new topics and new conceptions in accordance with the social and geographic variety of Muslim cultures. Individual periods are understood as parts of global history in the complexity of supra-regional networks. Approaches in research to a cultural-historical understanding of Muslim civilizations have a direct impact on their presentation in museums and the public conception of history. Our discussions were very intense, bringing forth widely varying views on treating objects of cultural heritage of Muslim societies.





Introduction to the opening lecture of Oleg Grabar by Michael Eisenhauer, general director Staatlichen Museen and Wolf Lepenies.

The new concept of the Museum of Islamic Art was presented and discussed in a press conference in the course of the meeting as well as in a nightly discussion panel with 30 representatives of the discipline. The comments coming from colleagues went from a matter-of-fact "consider it quite promising" to "exactly what I wanted to do" to "congenial" and "the 21st-century Museum of Islamic Art." The plans were also very well received in the Berlin press. I think

the reason for this appreciation was having an important Berlin museum discuss its new conception in public. Concerning social and cultural as well as domestic and foreign policy, the Museum of Islamic Art is a special meeting-place for art and archaeology, science and society: collected identities are being negotiated here, cultures brought together, bridges built. We have plenty of reasons to discuss new conceptions.

In preparing the new conception we aimed particularly at a more thorough consideration of the needs of the many thousands of visitors. As art historians, we are well acquainted with the history of our objects, but have only a limited knowledge of our partner, the visitor. Therefore we decided to consider that problem and its solution from a scientific basis as well. In cooperation with the project "Experimentierfeld Museologie" [Experiments in Museology], an empirical visitors' poll was carried out in the autumn of 2009, by Christine Gerbich, an empirical sociologist, with the active support of Katharina Müller and Daniel Smith from our house. The plans were then submitted to experts in museum pedagogy. The focus was on the conduct of visitors and on the routes they took – especially against the background of the very complex entrance situation of the future exhibition. The poll was evaluated in early 2010: below you find a résumé of the results. It did not come as a surprise that the arrangement by dynasties is hardly adequate to provide the visitor with a quick grasp of the essential contexts. As briefly mentioned in the previous Museum newsletter, we make use of other systems in order to facilitate the access to Islamic art and archaeology, namely: simplified chronological order, geographic localization, attribution to real-life situations, thematic emphases. This thoroughly considered, multi-layered system will help the future visitor at any time to make the rounds of the collection in a meaningful way. Further details will be presented in future. A short explanation of the chronological order is attached.

Opening of the Keir Collection

In June 2009 the contract about the long-term loan of the Keir Collection was signed; on March 17, 2010 the first objects – that had already been on exhibit in 2008 in the special show "Sammlerglück" [A Collector's Fortune] – were integrated, in three separate rooms, into the permanent exhibition. The basic ideas, brought to life in the title of that special show, were taken up and further developed. However, the Keir Collection ought not be shown as a crowded assembly of objects without clear references, briefly glanced at by visitors as they leave. Besides a well-spaced, aesthetically attractive presentation we should like to make the visitor discover meaningful connections between the objects and understand the respective contexts; we would like to emphasize that Islamic art is no secret cult for select connoisseurs. In the case of the Keir Collection, the connecting link is obvious: the collector himself, Edmund de Unger. The collector and his world are presented on several levels: his biography, questions about the collecting of Islamic art, the importance of the collectors' activities for the birth of the discipline "Islamic Art", and the value and the purchase of objects as well as the inner logic in putting together a collection. We have spread those topics over three rooms:

Room A takes us into the collector's world. Edmund de Unger lives with his objects. Walking around in his house we meet exquisite furniture from 15th-century Florence, European textiles, Renaissance paintings, a magnificent carpet, fine ceramics. Each room is a gallery: one tries not to step on the precious carpets and is grateful that some of them are hung on the walls, like the sumptuous brocades. Bronzes from the early Middle Ages and hundreds of



William Robinson, Head Islamic Department, Christie's London at the opening of the exhibition "Sammlerglück - Meisterwerke der islamischen Kunst aus der Keir Collection."



Room A of the exhibition "Sammlerglück - Keir Collection": the salon, visit Edmund de Unger at home.

beautiful ceramic vessels fill shelves and crowd coffee-tables, book-art decorates the walls. The Keir Collection, named after his first house in London, is, through and through, a work of art in symbiosis with the collector. Room A is an invitation to visit Edmund de Unger at home. Sitting on a couch one can view short interactive films about the collector, the collection, the house, an auction, the value of an object.

Room B follows the lives of objects of Islamic art, many of them intended to be traded and used far from the places of their production. Most objects have 'travelled' and, over the centuries, have sometimes received new meanings in secondary contexts of use. Such a *biography of objects* is highlighted by the unique collection of precious rock crystals of the Keir Collection, the manufacture of which flourished under the Fatimids in Egypt (969–1171) and which, since a very early date, were part of European church treasuries. Such a biography brings objects, on a journey of 1000 years, from Cairo to London and Berlin.



Room C of the exhibition "Sammlerglück - Keir Collection": A small selection of the collection according to its inner logic.



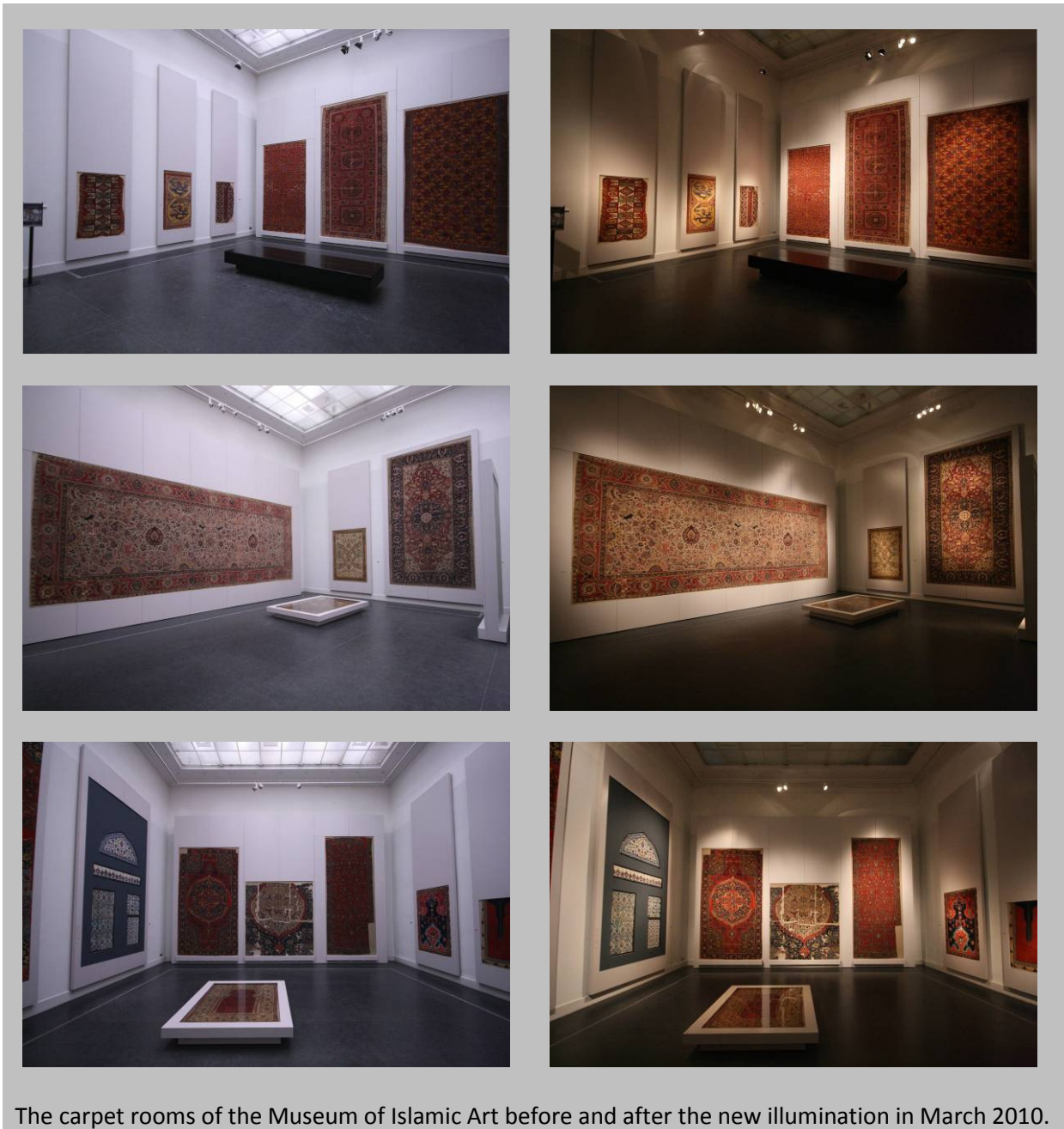
Room B of the exhibition "Sammlerglück - Keir Collection": Rock crystals and their journey from Cairo to London and Berlin.

Room C shows a selection of objects according to Edmund de Unger's logic in collecting and arranging. Five groups of objects (carpets, textiles, book-art, metalwork and ceramics – besides the rock crystals shown in Room B) are presented in light of their meaning for the collector as well as for Islamic art history. Objects that will come to Berlin in the future may be viewed on little media stations. Much work went into an interactive media station showing an important copy of Nizami's *Khamza*, whose 35 miniatures and six titles have been digitized. The user may zoom into every page and follow up the history of the five epics, or learn something about the artists who painted the miniatures at the court of Great Mughal Sultan Akbar.

Although the exhibition is not yet part of the audio guide, it is already very well attended. We have experimented again and are very happy with the results of our attempt to make the

exhibition more colourful: Before, the grey show-cases absorbed the colours, but now a colourful background supports the objects, thus emphasizing their respective colours - Edmund de Unger's own principal access to Islamic art. However, we will be making another change, this to the interactive media station next to the clumsy monitor, the original manuscript tends to disappear completely. But come and see for yourselves, before we make further changes in the exhibition. More information may be found in the next Museum newsletter.

News from the Museum rooms: The Carpets



Along with the incorporation of the Keir Collection into our permanent exhibition we have also upgraded the carpet rooms. Islamic art objects come alive by their colours; but in organic material that may only be illuminated with 100 lucas maximum and the colours can only be brought forth by contrast. Textiles and objects of book-art stand only in 50 lucas. The new illumination of these galleries since March of this year has definitely enhanced the both the hues and the saturations of the carpets. Visitors who used to pay just fleeting attention to these top objects of the museum are now fascinated and pause to discover the beauty of carpets. The needs of our visitors will be further met by more seating and more information. Our colourful world of carpets and textiles was enriched by another beautiful bright spot: David and Cindy Sofer (London) provided us temporarily with a Shakhrysbaz-Suzani, for which I would like to express my sincere thanks.

In the last Museum newsletter we presented the reading aid at the 'Mosul basin': meanwhile it has been installed by Roland Kutz, commercial artist, with the didactic care of Karin Schmidl.

Staff news

The fine programme of grants between the State Museums Berlin and the Institute of Art History in Florence / Max-Planck-Institute has been started. In "*Connecting Art Histories in the Museum: The Mediterranean, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent 400 – 1650*" the processes of artistic and cultural interaction in the Mediterranean and Asia are investigated. The programme has brought very good junior art historians to our house. Under the title "Grundsteine Islamischer Kunst: Mschatta in Berlin" [Cornerstones of Islamic Art: Mshatta in Berlin] Eva-Maria Troelenberg from Munich looks at the early reception of the palace façade. Amanda Phillips from Oxford is concerned with textiles from the Ottoman period, using as her methodological approach 'Consumption Studies', only recently developed. Friederike Weis, Berlin, does not have her office in our house, but works from the "Kunstabibliothek" on the topic "Themes of biblical origin in Iranian and Mughal miniature paintings." More information at:

<http://www.khi.fi.it/forschung/projekte/projekte/projekt102/index.html>

Family matters have taken the conservator Sara Beuster to Hamburg. Her position will be filled again, but there can not be a real substitute for Sara: always in a good mood she engaged herself constructively in the conservation of glass, the rock crystals and metal objects. We shall miss her and wish her all the best!

Miscellanea

Noble visitors! We were very honoured to receive in our museum HRH Prince Hamzah ibn al-Hussein, brother of the King of Jordan, and HRH Prince Salman ibn Abdalaziz, Governor of Riad and brother of the King of Saudi Arabia. Both extended their sincere thanks for the guided tour; they were quite enthusiastic about the collection and the great number of visitors marvelling at Islamic art in Berlin.

Our sponsoring association, the "Freunde des Museums Islamischer Kunst" [Friends of the Museum of Islamic Art], has almost overcome all bureaucratic obstacles at the district court and is about to develop the necessary dynamics. We have 103 members by now, and we hope that many more lovers of Islamic art and archaeology will join the association and thus make this museum into their own museum. With the work in the collections, with the Museum newsletters and with the many events we intend to show that we highly value participation and that we enjoy step by step opening our museum for you. The membership fees have enabled us to print the first professional flyers about our museum and the individual exhibitions, a representative leaflet where we introduce our work will follow. If you like our work, please help us convince more members to join: the membership card gives free access to the permanent exhibitions of the 17 State Museums in Berlin for one year. More information on our website: www.fmik.de or write to us.

Of course, you may make a direct contribution: donations are a concrete help, and you may determine where your donation should go: to special exhibitions like "Vorsicht Glas" [Glass, Handle with Care!] or "1000 Jahre Shahname", or to the didactic improvement of particular rooms, for example the carpet rooms or the Samarra Corner, that is planned to be refurbished for the jubilee '100 years of Islamic archaeology – the excavations at Samarra 1911'. Donations are tax-deductible up to 10 % of your annual income. Ask your tax adviser.

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| To: | Bundeskasse Kiel |
| Bank: | Bundesbank, Filiale Kiel |
| Bank code no.: | 210 000 00 |
| Account no.: | 210 010 30 |
| Purpose: | STPK-068728279 ISL |

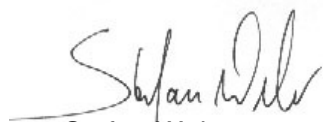
This applies also abroad: whoever donates from the US or from Great Britain via a so-called Charity Fund, will receive a receipt valid for tax-deduction in his/her country. All further information at: <http://www.ukfundforcharities.org/index.html> Membership in our sponsoring association is also tax-deductible.

The second half of 2010 will be busy again. There are not only the many meetings concerned with the various building measures (new plans for our museum, new depots, the James Simon

Gallery with the new entrance situation of the Pergamon Museum) but especially the Nights of the Ramadan (generously supported by the German Foreign Office and the Berlin Senate), the Volkmann meeting and the exhibitions 'Vorsicht Glas' and 'Heroic Times. 1000 Years of the Persian Book of Kings' make themselves felt. That brings my rather longish third Museum newsletter to an end. To work!

We are looking forward to your visit!

Yours



Stefan Weber

Museum of Islamic Art: Exhibitions 2010

Vorsicht Glas! Zerbrechliche Kunst 700-2010.

[Glass, Handle with Care! Fragile Art 700-2010]
10.09.2010 - 09.01.2011

Heroische Zeiten. Tausend Jahre persisches Buch der Könige.

[Heroic Times. 1000 Years of the Persian Book of Kings]
December 10, 2010 – March 20, 2011

Sammlerglück. Meisterwerke aus der islamischen Welt in der Keir Collection.

[A Collector's Fortune. Islamic Art Masterpieces of the Keir Collection]
from March 18, 2010 until further notice.

Book art section

Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Hatim. Miniaturen aus einem Roman.

[The Adventures of Prince Hatim. Illustrations from a Novel.]
September 03, 2010 – November 28, 2011

Lectures and events

Find a schedule of our lectures at:

<http://freunde-islamische-kunst-pergamonmuseum.de/aktuelles-1/termine/>

| Date | Time | Topic | Venue | Organiser |
|------------|-------|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 09.09.2010 | 19.00 | Opening "Vorsicht Glas" | Mshatta-Hall | ISL |
| 15.09.2010 | 09.00 | Tasfir - The Evolution of a Genre | Brugsch-Pascha-Hall | Berlin-Brandenb.Akademie |
| 23.09.2010 | 19.00 | Scott Chaseling - Vorsicht Glas | Brugsch-Pascha-Hall | Freundeskreis ISL |
| 30.09.2010 | 19.00 | Julian Henderson - Vorsicht Glas | Mshatta-Hall | ISL |
| 07.10.2010 | 19.00 | Bee Kingdom - Vorsicht Glas | Mshatta-Hall | Freundeskreis ISL |
| 14.10.2010 | 19.00 | Andrea Becker - Vorsicht Glas | Mshatta-Hall | ISL |
| 22.10.2010 | 19.00 | Volkman-Treffen | Mshatta-Hall | Gesellsch.Teppichfreunde |
| 23.10.2010 | 10.00 | Volkman-Treffen | Theodor Wiegand Hall | Gesellsch.Teppichfreunde |
| 24.10.2010 | 10.00 | Volkman-Treffen | Theodor Wiegand Hall | Gesellsch.Teppichfreunde |
| 28.10.2010 | 18.00 | Barbara Schellewald, Bildpraxis und Bilderverbot | Mshatta-Hall | FU Berlin |
| 04.11.2010 | 19.00 | Hanna Sotkiewicz, Kunst der Tuareg | Brugsch-Pascha-Hall | Freundeskreis ISL |
| 11.11.2010 | 18.00 | Stefen Fine, Bildpraxis und Bilderverbot | Mshatta-Hall | FU Berlin |
| 26.11.2010 | 19.30 | Ibn Rushd Award | Mshatta-Hall | Ibn-Rushd - Org. |
| 02.12.2010 | 18.00 | Barry Flood, Rethinking Representation | Mshatta-Hall | FU Berlin |
| 09.12.2010 | 19.00 | Opening "Heroische Zeiten." | Mshatta-Hall | ISL |
| 16.12.2010 | 18.00 | Thomas Lentes, Wer Bilder stürmt, tötet Religion | Mshatta-Hall | FU Berlin |

Nights of Ramadan

The programme of Nights of Ramadan will be available at:

<http://www.naehtedesramadan.de/>

die nachte des ramadan im überblick

kulturfest 13.08. — 12.09.2010

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|---|--|
| FR 13.8. → 19:30 → Konzert MUSEUMSINSEL/OPEN AIR Eintritt frei | THE SYRIAN BIG BAND & SOLISTEN → SYRIEN feat. Nour Erksousi Vocal, Rebal Alkhoudari Arabic Vocal, Khaled Omran Rap |
| SA 14.8. → 19:30 → Konzert MUSEUMSINSEL/OPEN AIR Eintritt frei | FATOUMATA DIAWARA → FRANKREICH/MALI Singer-Songwriter-Sound aus Mali |
| FR 20.8. → 21:30 → Performance MUSEUMSINSEL 7 Euro | SEYAHAT – EINE REISE → DEUTSCHLAND/TÜRKEI urbaner Tanz, performatives Zeichnen und musikalische Improvisationen |
| SA 21.8. → 21:30 → Konzert HEIMATHAFEN 7 Euro | VON DER LIEBE UND ANDEREN BLUMEN Ensemble des Konservatoriums für Türkische Musik und Solisten des Rundfunkchors Berlin → Sephardische und islamische Musik |
| DO 26.8. → 21:00 → Film HEIMATHAFEN Eintritt frei | CAPICHAUTA 2002 , OmU R: Hichem Ben Ammar → TUNESIEN UYGHUR ROCK 2010, OmU R: Mukaddas Mijit → XINJIANG-VR CHINA/FRANKREICH |
| FR 27.8. → 21:00 → Konzert MUSEUMSINSEL 7 Euro | QETIQ → XINJIANG-VR CHINA Uigurische Rockmusik |
| SA 28.8. → 20:30/21:30/ 22:30 → Konzerte MUSEUMSINSEL 15/10 Euro ** | LANGE NACHT DER MUSEEN LEVENT YLDIRIM ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC FUSION → TÜRKIE/DEUTSCHLAND Levent Yldirim <i>Darbuka</i> , DJ Ipek, Senol Ustaoglu <i>Klarinette</i> |
| DO 2.9. → 21:00 → Film MUSEUMSINSEL Eintritt frei | LES MILLE ET UNE VOIX — TAUSEND UND EINE STIMME 2003, OmU → TUNESIEN/BELGIEN R: Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud |
| FR 3.9. → 21:00 → Konzert MUSEUMSINSEL 7 Euro | MELLOW MAROC → DEUTSCHLAND/ALGERIEN/MAROKKO Akustisch, Oriental Roots |
| SA 4.9. → 20:30 → Lesung MUSEUMSINSEL Eintritt frei | NATHALIE HANDAL → USA/PALÄSTINA Die preisgekrönte Autorin spricht über ihr Werk und stellt einige Ihrer Gedichte vor |
| FR 10.9. → ab 21:00 → Konzert-Nacht KULTURBRAUEREI 9 Euro | DIE NACHT NACH RAMADAN → Kobra 36 → TR/D → Speed Caravan → FR/ALG → DJ Pasha → TR/D → Sahra Halgan → SOMALIA → Mario Rispo → TR/D → Terakaft → MALI |
| SO 12.9. → 12:00 bis 18:00 → Familienfest HEIMATHAFEN Eintritt frei | Musik, Workshops, Märchen, Theater-Performance, Hen- namalerei u.v.m. beim FAMILIENFEST ZUM ENDE DES RAMADAN auf der Karl-Marx-Straße |

im VVK 5 Euro + VVK-Gebühren ** im VVK 7 Euro + Gebühren *** nur mit Lange-Nacht-Ticket

www.naehtedesramadan.de

die nachte des ramadan

kulturfest
13.08. — 12.09.2010

konzerte
filme
tanz
literatur
familienfest

museumsinsel
heimathafen neukölln
kulturbrauerei

Wooden rooms and palace façades: And what did you like best? – A short résumé of the results of the visitors' poll at the Museum of Islamic Art.

The new permanent exhibition of the Museum of Islamic Art is under preparation. The museums team aims at a stronger emphasis of the museum's function as a place of education and mediation. In this context there arose a number of questions with view to the public: Who are our visitors? What do they expect from the exhibition? What are the top ten on the visitors' chart of highlights? And finally: Are the exhibitions by dynasty that now form the structure of the present exhibition able to give orientation to the visitors in the exhibition?

By a lucky coincidence it was possible to attend to these questions: The plans for the new permanent exhibition begin at the same time as the research project "Experimentierfeld Museologie" [Experiments in Museology] (www.experimentierfeld-museologie.org), supported by Mr. Haase and by Mr. Graf, director of the Institute for Museology, and that, since November 2009, is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The research project is a cooperation between Bénédicte Savoy, Department of Art History and Historical Urban Studies, TU Berlin, and is directed by three interdisciplinary scientists, namely Susan Kamel (Museology, Religious Studies), Susanne Lanwerd (Cultural Studies, Aesthetics) and myself as empirically working sociologist. In cooperation with the Kreuzberg Museum and the Museum of Islamic Art we will, over the next three years, study the processes of mediation in museums and exhibitions and, together with the museum teams, find strategies for the presentation and mediation of "foreign" art and cultures.

There follows an overview of the most important results of a poll that the project carried out on ten days in September and October 2009. 462 randomly selected persons were interviewed. The questionnaire, available in six languages, had been developed in cooperation with the museum team and Mr. Richartz, director of the Visitor Service. Even if some of the results are not surprising, they give rise to discussions about the concept of the new permanent exhibition and about the possible role of the visitors therein.

To our minds, a first interesting if not surprising result consists in the fact that the Museum of Islamic Art as part of the Pergamon Museum is mainly frequented by tourists. Somewhat more than half the interviewed had their residence abroad, another 40 percent came from other parts of Germany. There were only few Berliners among the interviewed. The second result does not surprise either: for the majority of the visitors the visit of the museum is a social event, to be shared with partners, friends or colleagues. Families with children were the exception. Only every sixth person visited the exhibition alone. The results also confirm the assumption that most of the people visiting the Museum of Islamic Art have a high level of formal education. There are people of all age groups, though from our point of view it is remarkable that the youngest and the oldest age groups are relatively small.

In accordance with the great number of tourists it cannot be surprising that the vast majority of the interviewed visited the Museum of Islamic Art for the first time, as part of a more extended tour of the Pergamon Museum. Considering the wealth of information awaiting those 'newcomers' in the Pergamon Museum, a good orientation within the exhibition is as important as a clearly and attractively arranged mediation of the exhibition's contents. For the planning of the future permanent exhibition two items are of particular interest: only 15 percent of the participants in our poll had come expressly in order to view the collection of the Museum of

Islamic Art; and about a third of the persons interviewed were not aware that the exhibition rooms in the upper storeys are a museum in its own right. It must be assumed that for the majority of the visitors the exhibition of the Museum of Islamic Art constitutes only a fraction of all they see in the course of their visit. It should therefore be born in mind that their power of attention is not endless. It will also be necessary to make clearer the transitions to other exhibitions so that the exhibition of the Museum of Islamic Art becomes distinguishable in place and time.

It is gratifying that for 90 percent of the interviewed the overall impression of the museum is positive. Criticism is addressed to the services of the museum, for example the availability of toilets and of seating accommodations but also the information offered: 90% of the visitors do make use of the texts and the object descriptions, but see them rather critically: Only 50% are (rather) satisfied with this service. The audio-guided tours by Antenna Audio do much better: they are praised by more than 90% of the users. One reason may lie in the fact that the audio-guided tours offer additional information: the question after topics of interest shows that the visitors want above all more contextual information about geographical, historical, political, social and religious conditions, but there is also the wish to learn more about particular objects. With a view to the planning of the future exhibition, the Museum team was especially interested in the question about the most popular objects. The Aleppo room, Mshatta façade, prayer niches and carpets are the objects that figured most prominently among the visitors' favourites. There is no doubt that these objects are impressive; nevertheless, the question arises whether the visibility of smaller objects is diminished by the lack of distinction between the Museum of Islamic Art from the exhibitions of the Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology and of the collection of Classical Antiquities. Finally, the results show the exhibition's arrangement by dynasties is not helpful for the visitors' orientation. Only about a third of the interviewed remembered any dynasties, which are at present provide the structure of the exhibition.

How many of these results could be of use in the planning of the new permanent exhibition? A first step was presenting the results to the Museum team as well as to the participants of the conference "Layers of Islamic Art"; thus the discussion about the contents was supplemented by the discussion about mediation. The main focus was on two questions: first, how will the Museum of Islamic Art be better able in the future to fulfil its function as cultural mediator; second, how can the accessibility of the exhibition be improved for those groups of visitors who are at present underrepresented. There are especially the inhabitants of Berlin whose identities are partially defined by the very cultures that are presented in the museum. In the future the "Experimentierfeld Museologie" will also be concerned with the question which formats of exhibitions might be useful in reaching that aim.

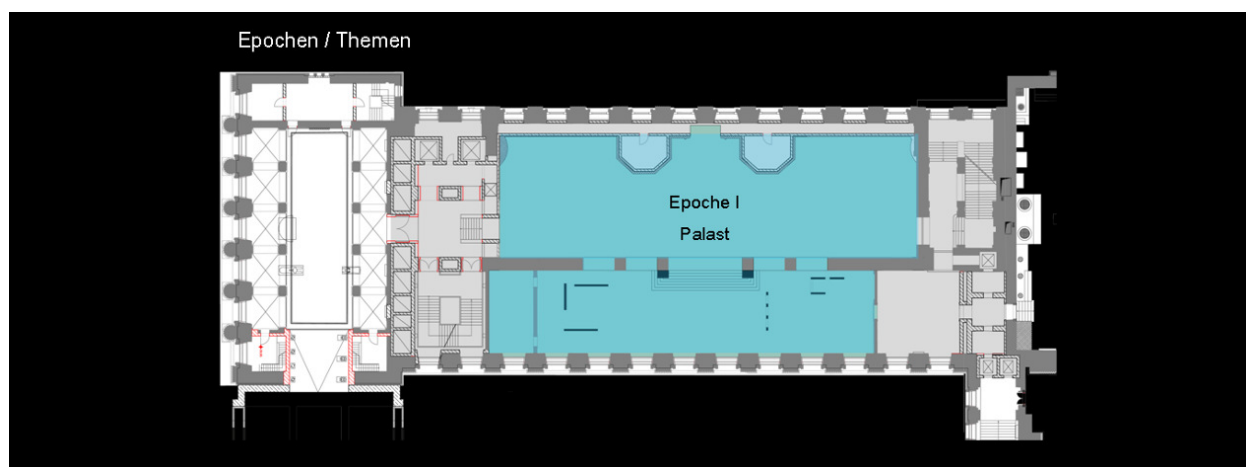
Christine Gerbich, Experimentierfeld Museologie

The Chronological Order for the New Museum of Islamic Art

The chronology that is here presented does not apply to or include all Muslim societies but is dictated by the holdings of our museum. It would be more difficult to decide upon epochs, if sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia (where Islamization started in the 14th century) were also considered. The boundaries between the epochs are fluent, they concern different geographical areas, their chronology varies according to the locality. They can not be sharply delimited but instead overlap. They are not even homogeneous in one region – especially not in the Middle Times. But we believe that we have developed a structure that is useful for the expert but also clear enough to be accessible to visitors who do not have any previous knowledge.

Epoch I: Late Antiquity – the empires of the caliphs

From ancient Iran and the eastern Mediterranean to Damascus, Bagdad and Samarra, 6th/7th – 10th/11th c.



Level 2 Themes and epochs

The first epoch comprises the period of early Islam: it is a part of Late Antiquity and extends, by the present state of research, from the 6th and 7th centuries to the 10th / early 11th centuries. Early Islam is one of the main periods represented in the holdings of the Museum of Islamic Art and the foundation of its world-wide renown. It will get a special place in the main circuit of the permanent exhibition, last but not least because a large portion of our holdings covers those centuries. Politically, the epoch is characterized by the great empires of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, where the heritage of Mediterranean Antiquity was taken up and continued and where Old Mesopotamian and Iranian traditions lived on and were brought together. The caliphates of the Spanish Umayyads (929-1031) and of the Egyptian Fatimids (909/969-1171) preserved Late Antiquity in many areas of the arts and crafts and of building decoration; they are a bridge to the second epoch.

Epoch II: Middle Times - sultans between the Mediterranean and China

From the Mediterranean, including Cairo, Palermo and Granada, to the east including Kashan, Konya and Nishapur, 10th – 15th c.

Epoch II comprises the Middle Times, which are characterized by political fragmentation, the growth of distinct regional forms, great diversity, crises such as the Crusades and the Mongolian conquests. India, Anatolia, the Balkans and also Southeast Asia see increasing Islamization through conquest, trade and assimilation. While on level 2 the Umayyad and Abbasid empires are presented in spacious rooms, the fragmentation of the second epoch is

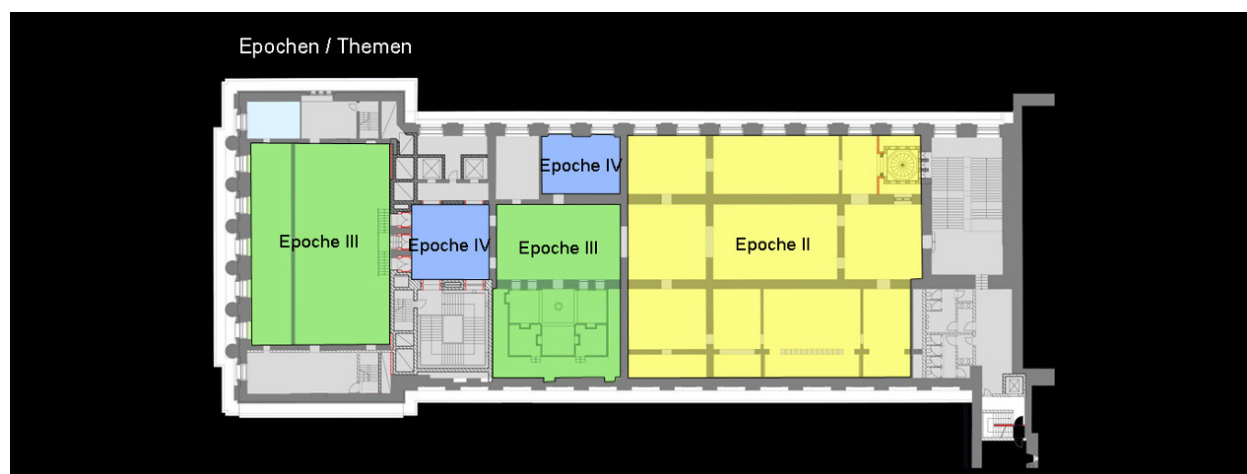
expressed by a grid of small rooms on level 3 (see below). The Middle Ages are decidedly varied so that the term can only be taken as a collective name. Using a European periodization, those centuries are often designated as Middle Ages – a term eliciting wrong associations with European contexts. The neutral expression "Middle Times" tries to avoid that.

Some developments from Late Antiquity continue into this period, while other forms hark back to pre-Islamic times – without necessarily being a continuation. This is particularly true for Persia from the 10th century on, and for the wider Mediterranean in the 12th and 13th centuries. At this moment, the corpus of classical Persian literature, comprising Ferdouzi, Khayyam, Saadi, Nizami, Rumi and Hafez develops, as well as new literary forms such as Ghazwini's cosmography; the classification of calligraphic ducti comes into existence, and all of this abounds in our depots. Muqarnas appear almost simultaneously in the east and in the west, in the course of the Sunni revival; the iwan prevails in many regions, while the faience mosaic develops from the 11th to the 15th century. The extremely varied ceramic production from Kashan as well as the most delicate Damascening work on metallic vessels belong to the 13th century – the century of crisis. The destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 and the conquest of Cordoba in the course of the Reconquista in 1236 are symbols of a change of times. As a result of the Mongolian conquest, eastern Islamic art is strongly influenced by East Asia, while at the same time the ruling elites—Nasrids in Spain, the Marinids in Morocco, the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria—discover their love of kaleidoscopic decoration.

Epoch III: Early Modern Times - shah, sultan and great mughal:

Ottomans, Safavids and Great Mughals from Istanbul via Isfahan to Delhi and Agra, 16th– 18th c.

Also in European historiography, the period from the 16th to the 18th century corresponds to Early Modern Period, a term that may be adopted for Muslim cultures. In the Middle East and South Asia, Early Modern Times are characterized by the rise of three empires, the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Great Moguls; they introduce new weaponry (gunpowder) and central state structures. Based on Timurid developments in decoration and on court workshops, there arise "national" shapes, that are not obligatory but bond-forming in the provinces of the empires. At the latest, the epoch begins with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the shift of trade routes consequent upon the circumnavigation of Africa in 1488, and the end of 700 years of Islamic Spain in 1492; it comes to an end with colonization and cultural change beginning in the 18th century.



Level 3, epochs

Epoch IV: Entering Modern Times - Europe and the Middle East

New forms of global modernity via Teheran, Istanbul and Lucknow, 18th – early 20th c.

Our holdings do not permit us to present this last historical epoch in its entirety. What should be shown is the growth of individual styles within the three empires of the Islamic world in the course of a modernity dominated by Europe but not in a normative way, which over-emphasizes this dominance while forgetting the agency of the individual artists and consumers living in these diverse regions. Usually, Modern Times are seen as equivalent to the "long 19th century". But the entrance into a new epoch is already heralded by the tulip style and especially by the Ottoman Rococo, beginning as early as the 1720s or the Nawabi style in Awadh / India. Besides Iran and the Qajar dynasty since the late 18th century, the Ottoman Empire will be in the foreground because the history of the Berlin holdings and because the development of Islamic art history and archaeology are closely connected with developments in the Ottoman Empire. At the end of the chronological circuit stand the beginnings of our museum, and doors open up to a multiple modernity.

What is missing?

Epoch V: Our times

Due to our holdings but also because of other reasons we should like to draw the line in the early 20th century, when new art forms based on European examples established themselves in the various empires, which themselves would shortly bring forth national states. Except for calligraphy and architecture, almost all forms of artistic design – also in the arts and crafts – either break off in the 19th and 20th centuries or they suffer a rapid decline. New forms of art come into being, standing in connection and lively exchange with European and North American metropolises. Alternately, since the last decades of the 20th century, much of this internationalist art can not be ascribed to a certain location at all. This development should be presented in our museum as the fifth epoch, but here we lack the material. At the same time, this epoch does not belong in an archaeological collection, but in a collection focusing on international modernity. This problem is not yet solved and remains under discussion. At any rate, it is paramount that the extremely interesting art scene of the Islamic world, which has become very much alive over the last few years, is represented in the museums of Berlin. The present must also make its appearance in the Museum of Islamic Art – a field of activity to be addressed in the future.