

Museum für Islamische Kunst SMB Bodestraße 1-3 –D– 10178 Berlin

News from the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin

Latter Half of 2009

Dear Friends of the Museum of Islamic Art,

The first Museum Newsletter was met with a very positive response, and we here at the museum were quite pleased to hear it. The Newsletter was first created shortly after the agreement was signed between the museum and the Keir Collection, but active interest in our “house” encouraged us to continue to report about future events. 2009 was a thrilling year, marked by new colleagues in our house and interesting events. The second Museum Newsletter will give you just a small impression of our activities and a short recap of the last two quarters of 2009.

Personnel

While the larger staff transitions took place in the first half of 2009, there are yet new changes to

report. First, we were fortified primarily by the Excellence Cluster Topoi (www.topoi.org). Since May, we are now members of the Cross Sectional Group IV (“Museums”) of Research Area E, which concerns itself with the questions of how and with which influences are Antique Rooms, spatial perception, and spatial conception constructed, transformed and received in the museum and exhibition. These questions—which will be further



Nights of Ramadan: Galata Mevlevi Ensemble – the twirling dervishes from Istanbul in the Mshatta Room on 5 September 2009.

elaborated on below—are quite important to us. Ms. Désirée Heiden was awarded one year as a Fellow here in the museum. Ms. Heiden’s task is objects; objects, which will go in the new permanent exhibition, in rooms which will present spheres of life (House, Palace, Mosque) as well as in a spatial-temporal framework regarding the interconnection between late Antiquity and the later developments. She is supported by Ms. Filiz Çakir Philipp, who is researching cultural-spatial-historical patterns for six months, taking the traditions of the museum and knowledge of Muslim societies under her microscope. We thank Topoi for these excellent additions to our staff. In autumn 2009, Ms. Katharina Mueller came to us deeply committed for a “Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr” (Volunteer Social Year) after graduating from high school (Abitur). Last, Daniel Scott Smith became integrated into our team since August as part of the Stanford Krupp Internship Program to do a six month internship—a joy to see both energy and enthusiasm, and we are very thankful for his help!

In the future, we next want to build research networks. Our house has become a member of Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe (EUME), a collective research program of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Study) (www.eume-berlin.de). We hope that with EUME, another Fellow will come to the museum to research at this gateway into the other Near Eastern Studies. There is now already a concrete program between the National Museums in Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) and the Art History Institute in Florence / Max Planck Institute. In “Connecting Art Histories in the Museum: The Mediterranean, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent 400-1650,” the processes of transfer and interaction between the Mediterranean region, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent are taken into view, and their historical and historiographical dimensions scientifically developed. The Fellows have already been selected, we are just waiting on the responses. There will be more on Connecting Art Histories in the next Museum Newsletter.



Nights of Ramadan: Conservatory of Turkish Music Berlin in the Mshatta Room on 10 September 2009.

Ramadan Nights

An especially high point of 2009 was the Nights of Ramadan, which we organized with the Visitor's Service, the Piranha Culture and the Culture Brewery (Kultur-Brauerei). This event was the first of its type at the museum here in Berlin, maybe even in Germany, and was a great success. In all the spaciousness of the Museum of Islamic Art, Museum Island, the Lustgarten,



Nights of Ramadan: Live screening of the Turkish cult film »Kilink Istanbul'da« (1967) by Alexander Hacke, Khan of Finland & N.U. Unruh on 13 September 2009.

and even on the steps of the Altes Museum, almost 9,000 visitors over two weeks tuned into many presentations by international artists from more than 15 countries. Interested people of all backgrounds were amazed, listening to and enjoying music, high-classical dance mimicry skills, lectures about culture and evenings of contemporary poetry from the many Muslim cultures. There was even opportunity for modern interpretations. Both children and adults learned—through the themed tours and workshops—important aspects of Muslim traditions one should be familiar with and understand. The series of events with numerous highlights, culminating in the “Night of Ramadan” can be found here: www.naehtedesramadan.de

Especially welcomed was the daily evening breaking of the fast (Iftar), an important social event, which we organized together with the Turkish Radio Broadcaster, Metropol FM/Berlin, and with the Conservatory of Turkish Music Berlin. In the Turkish press (Sabah) on 12.09.09, the event was described: “In the German capital city of Berlin, one of the important Iftar was found in the Pergamon Museum.” This pleases us so much! Whether an expert museum visitor or a curious Muslim teenager, everyone was enthusiastic and encouraged us to continue. “I am as happy as a cookie to see that things like this can still exist in Berlin,” relates a young Berliner in a headscarf. Everybody knows that the time is ripe for such a festival, although for us, it has been much more than an event.

National public forums as symbolic and public space for the approximate four million Germans with Muslim backgrounds and non-naturalised Muslims are immensely important but do not yet exist. It is still too unfamiliar; the “High Culture” of a German establishment and Islamic culture are exclusive in the perception of many: even more gratifying that the responses to the Nights of

Ramadan 2009 at Museum were all positive. With events like this, comes the museum as a social-political public institution with a special role in Germany: where, if not here, can Muslims and non-Muslims understand the High Culture of Muslim countries? A hundred-thousand visitors from all over the world stroll through the museum annually, yet there are too few from Berlin and with Muslim backgrounds who experience the grand cultural heritage of the many Muslim cultures in their own city. We hope it was a first step for change, and that others will follow.

Circle of Friends

It is accomplished! With the help of new and old friends, the inaugural meeting was held, and the Friends of the Museum of Islamic Art in the Pergamon Museum e.V. was founded on 23.10.2009. As the board directors, the following were elected: Professor Barbara Kellner-Heinkele as chairperson, Nadania Iriss as vice-chairperson, Dr. Susan Kamel as treasurer and Hanna Sotkiewicz as secretary. The director of the Museum is a member ex officio. As an extended board in an advisory role, we were able to get Professor Barbara Finster as a representative of Ernst Herzfeld Society, Mr. Max Leonard, representing the Friends of Islamic Art and Mr. Christian Erber as representative of the Volkmanntreffen. Dr. Johannes Wolff



Inaugural meeting of the Friends of the Museum of Islamic Art in the Pergamon Museum on 23 October 2009.

Dipenbrock will give the collectors a voice, Tobias Rütenik the students, and as webmaster, Thomas Krüppner will oversee the webpage.

Our museum is now 105 years old and has reached a venerable age to begin assuming its duties here in

Germany. In addition to our primary areas of research and exhibition of art and architecture, or material culture in the broadest sense, and of preservation and care of artefacts as cultural memory of Muslim societies in all their plurality (including other religious groups), it is also our task of cultural mediation for a national and international audience in the middle of Berlin. As a public institution, we should give not only the specialists and professionals a home, but everyone who identifies with or is interested in it. And precisely because we are a public

institution, we also have structural problems. The museological improvement of the objects or, even—I dare only to dream—the expansion of our 19th and 20th century collection are our tasks, but we can hardly keep up. Even the development of new exhibitions is becoming increasingly difficult with the budget freeze. An example:



Draft of the reading aid for the Mosul Basin (Inv.-Nr. I. C. 1061).

Already in March 2009, we developed with our former interns Gisela Fock and Emine Küçükbey a reading aid for the so-called Mosul Basin—a magnificent piece that came to Berlin in 1845 from an art market (Inv.-nr. I.C. 1061). Through its Seljuk and Chinese motifs, it can be dated to the last decades of the 13th century. Silver inlaid brass vessels, often simply called Mosul-

Ware, were produced mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, and were particularly finely crafted in northern Iraq by artisans from Mosul who were employed elsewhere, as well. Our basin is not likely to come from Mosul: its jagged edge points to the Western Iran as its origin. The entire inside of the basin is worked with wonderful hunting, fighting, festival and throne scenes—a princely eye-catcher to lead visitors into the courtly imagery of the time. However, one can no longer see the motifs in many places because the silver eroded from its use probably as a sink. Consequently, in Spring 2009, we created the reading aids, which are to be placed as tracings around the basin. Templates were provided to us by the research of Friedrich Sarre and later, Volkmar Enderlein, and drawings by Uta Tyroller. With the annual contributions of 15 members of the Friends of the Museum, we could have had attached these many months before. But we had to wait almost a year because of the budget freeze. This possibility is owed entirely to the commitment from Ms. Schmidl with visitor services.

There are such small things that can fail, which sometimes does happen, that assistance by a circle of friends is urgently needed. Despite the unavailable structures, the museum still has great possibilities. It is not actually difficult to implement new approaches or even long floating ideas, as Ramadan Nights has demonstrated. However, it is often too much (or too little, in monetary terms) for a small, already over its capacity team. We need your involvement—either financially or through participation in the circle of friends. It is worthwhile in all aspects: our membership card can be considered as an annual pass to the National Museums in Berlin and guarantees free entry to the permanent exhibition of the 16 museums. Find out more information on our website www.fmik.de or write to us. We are still waiting for a response from the district court, but we will still be able to take action in January.



Phoenix hunts Qilin - drawing of a medallion of Mosul basin: It is exciting at the Museum of Islamic Art.

New Conception Plan

Professor Haase and Dr. Kröger had worked several years with the architectural firm O.M. Ungers and with the cooperation of Professors Sack and Cramer in the planning of the relocation of the Museum of Islamic Art in the Pergamon Museum to the north wing around 2019, where there will be double the current space there is now across three floors. The major architectural pieces, such as the Mshatta Façade, the Aleppo Room and the Alhambra Dome have found spectacular new exhibition sites in the museum. Currently, we are working under high pressure to complete the plans of the gallery code. We have opted against dynasties as the governors of organization, since these give no immediate system of classification of the objects to the visitor. We know the dynasties, not the visitors. Even if one remembers a name, he or she often really does not know what it means. Can you describe all of the Islamic Dynasties? Instead, we will follow a division of periods, geography, spheres of life, and relevant thematic topics. The roots of Islamic culture stand at the beginning, and the focus on Antiquity and late Antiquity is especially important for our collection, which is known worldwide as

probably the best collection from the early Islamic period. The majority of collection comes from this era (Ctesiphon 5-7 c., Khirbet al-Minya 705-15, Qusayr Amra ca. 711, Mshatta ca.744, Samarra 9 c., Afrasiyab/Samarqand 9 c.), and here in the museum there are direct links to the other collections. Late Antiquity, as previously discussed, does not stop with Islam but goes throughout the Middle East in 9-10th

Anlässlich der Ausstellung
**Großmedaillon-Suzani
Stickereien aus Mittelasien**

Gründung der
**Freunde des Museums für Islamische
Kunst im Pergamonmuseum**

Eröffnung des
Volkmanntreffens

Freitag, 23. Oktober 2009
Museum für Islamische Kunst
Mshatta-Saal / Pergamonmuseum
Am Kupfergraben 5, 10178 Berlin-Mitte

18:30 Uhr
Dr. Stefan Weber
Direktor des Museums für Islamische Kunst
Zur Freude und zu Freunden der Islamischen
Kunst
Vorstellung des Vorstands des Freundeskreises

19:00 Uhr
Dr. Dietmar Peis, Gelsenkirchen
Zentralasiatische Suzani und die Methoden ihrer
Einordnung

20:00 Uhr
Empfang
Abendbesuch der Ausstellung

Musikalische Begleitung:
SIDARE - Traditionelle Maqam-Musik aus
Bagdad

Mit Unterstützung der
- Botschaft der Republik Usbekistan
- Gerda Henkel Stiftung
- Mitglieder des Volkmanntreffens

S M
B Museum für Islamische Kunst
Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin

Freunde
des
Museum
für
Islamische
Kunst

Ausstellung

Museum für Islamische Kunst

WOHNWELTEN
Gewebe Gärten und gemalte Blumen –
paradiesische Innenansichten syrischer
Hofhäuser

18. DEZEMBER 2009 BIS 14. FEBRUAR 2010

Pergamonmuseum
museumsinsel berlin

Invitations to the exhibitions of Large-Medaillon Suzani with connection to the Volkmanntreffen on 23.10.2009 und to the Wohnwelten (Spaces of Daily Life) on 17.12.2009.

centuries. Some things go right up until the modern period (i.e. water supply, the Basar as heir to Decumani). Alois Riegl (1858-1905), who coined the concept of late antiquity, understood in "Questions of style: foundations for a history of ornament" (1883), the 'arabesque' as the culmination of the Antique ornamental vine. It is therefore, necessary to develop models of

museum mediation and to provide the survival of ancient rooms (Mshatta: Audience Basilica with triconch) and architectural ornaments (acanthus, glass mosaics or the ornamental vine). Our collection comes from the same geographical area as the collections of the museum's Ancient Near Eastern and Classical Antiquities Collections in the Pergamon Museum. Connections and differences can be pointed directly through museological techniques. Antiquity and the Ancient Orient continued to live in the Middle East, and accordingly, we will incorporate late Antiquity with pre-Islamic Iran in our new exhibition.

Muslim cultures are heirs to the ancient traditions of the *mare nostrum*, and Mesopotamia - in science, philosophy, art, architecture and interior design. This fact is not rooted in the cultural memory of contemporary societies - not even among Muslims. This topic will define the area around the Mshatta Facade on the main tour, while the Middle Period (10.-15. Centuries), the early Modern period (16. - 18th century) and Modern (19. and 20 century) are dedicated to the upper floor: whether the legacy of antiquity or the challenges of modernity, whether 'global trade' in the 9th century or bourgeois taste as supraregional patterns that permeate the living room of the premodern world. There are many stories to tell. But I will not yet tell you everything about further plans, but will share them in the next Museum Newsletters!

Miscellaneous

Daily business has been characterized by the allocation and furniture planning of the depots of the new Excellence Center (Kompetenzzentrum), which is under construction next to our Administrative Wing. With the relocation of the depots from Dahlem to Museum Island, we have completed the unification (we only miss—a lot—our carpet workshop, which will remain for the next 3 years in Dahlem)! Almost all of the objects of the former Eastern and Western collections are now orderly kept together - a big thanks to the depot manager, Yelka Kant, and the four restorers standing by her side for quick execution of this mammoth task. Impressive, how many thousands of objects and broken glass can be organized again by effective, fast planning - Dr. Franke also helped with this.

Gisela Helmecke has curated an exhibition on the occasion of the Volkmantreffen about Suzanis—large-size embroideries from Central Asia: the visitors past through mesmerized by their color. The Volkmantreffen was again well attended and we were able to welcome an unusually high number of guests from abroad this time. Coupled with the Suzani exhibition, we held a strategy meeting about carpets in museums.

Dr. Karin Pütt offered her photo exhibition on Syrian houses and we used this as an opportunity to design on a very short notice the experimental "Wohnenwelten" (Spaces of Daily Life) Exhibition of the "Daily," playing with the idea of objects from Islamic art and their primary use. It is received very well - despite the extra long labels. Visitors read if texts appeal to them and provide content. This is one of the techniques that we tested here - a comparison with modern design products - however, we do not yet know if it works. Empiricist Christine Gerbrich completed a preliminary survey of visitors despite the scarcity of funds for us. The evaluation will be discussed this January. If we want to communicate the content, which is important to us, we must know our audience. Research and communication should hand in hand in the Museum for Islamic Art.

Even if only individual names are mentioned here, excellent teamwork always stood behind them, far beyond the end of workday – a great team, whom I heartily thank. Thanks also goes to the lenders of both exhibitions, who have given us their objects free of charge. Without these generous gestures, we could not have created the exhibitions. We are also excited that Professor Eugen Wirth has bequeathed his library of Islamic cities and cultural history to the museum. He has been a friend of the house for decades and collects Islamic art himself.

Everyone can be involved. Our last call for donations, however, has only found a modest response. 110 euros were donated by two friends of mine. You can help us do our work professionally. On my trip in the USA, I was just astonished at a culture of social engagement in the museums. We are your museum!

For tax-deductible donations:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Empfänger: | Bundeskasse Kiel |
| Bankverbindung: | Bundesbank, Filiale Kiel |
| BLZ: | 210 000 00 |
| Kontonummer: | 210 010 30 |
| Verwendungszweck: | STPK-068728279 ISL |

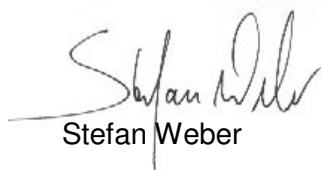
Membership fees are also tax-deductible.

So this was the second half of 2009. 2010 promises important events in the house: In January, we will organize in cooperation with EUME and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture a workshop on Islamic art and museums (see www.fmik.de - Aktuelles), a summer academy on "The Value of Things" by EUME is planned for autumn, and in March, the exhibition on the Keir Collection will be opened. Also in autumn of 2010, you will be welcomed to a special exhibition "Vorsicht

Glas!" (Caution Glass!). In early December, shortly afterwards, follows our "Shah-Nameh" exhibition, just in time for its millennial anniversary, in which we will show for the first time exceptional miniatures and manuscripts of the Persian national epic from the Berlin collections. Other exhibitions await you in our Book Art Collection: in March, one about Swiss Antoine-Louis Henri Polier (1741-95), to whom we owe a lot to show our precious Indian scrapbooks, in June, calligraphy masterpieces from our collection and in September, a rare and historic exhibition of watercolours of Islamic monuments from around 1900.

We look forward to your visit!

Yours,



Stefan Weber

Museum of Islamic Art Exhibition Calendar 2010

Spaces of Daily Life. Woven and painted flower gardens - a paradise of Syrian Interior courtyards.

Date: 18.12.2009 – 14.02.2010

Collector's Luck. Masterpieces from the Islamic world in the Keir Collection.

Date: 18. 03.

Caution Glass!

Date: 09. 09. 2010 – 09. 01. 2011

Thousand Year Shah-Nameh. Masterworks of the Persian National Epic.

Date: 03. 12. 2010 – 28. 02. 2011

Book Art Collection

An Indian Aristocrat: Antoine Louis Henri Polier and his Albums.

Date: 05. 03. – 30. 05. 2010

Written Pictures. Calligraphy Highlights from the Museum of Islamic Art.

Date: 04. 06. – 29. 08. 2010

Faience Mosaics and Other Details – Watercolors of Islamic Architecture by Georg Kreyer and Bruno Schulz from ca. 1900.

Date: 03. 09. – 28. 11. 2010