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Geometry and Color

Decoding the Arts of Islam in the West

Edited by Sandra Gianfreda,
Francine Giese, Axel Langer
and Ariane Varela Braga

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Journal

Journal of the Swiss Platform for the Study of Visual Arts,
Architecture and Heritage in the MENA Region

Issue 3
2021

Geometry and Color. Decoding the Arts of Islam in the West from the Mid-19th to the Early 20th Century

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Impressum

Manazir Journal is a peer-reviewed academic Platinum Open Access journal dedicated to visual arts, architecture and cultural heritage in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Created in 2019, the journal is linked to *Manazir – Swiss Platform for the Study of Visual Arts, Architecture and Heritage in the MENA Region*, a platform of exchange that aims to connect researchers interested in these themes. The term "Manazir" refers to landscapes, perspectives and points of view in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian. Thus, *Manazir Journal* is oriented towards a diversity of transcultural and transdisciplinary "landscapes" and "points of views" and open to a multiplicity of themes, epochs and geographical areas.

BOP - Bern Open Publishing
ISSN 2673-4354

Production, design & layout: Joan Grandjean
Copy editing: Hannah Jung
Cover image: "Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra" in: Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, London 1856, pl. XLIII (detail).

This issue was made possible with the support of the Rietberg-Gesellschaft.

Table of Contents

Re-Orientations

Sandra Gianfreda, Francine Giese, Axel Langer and Ariane Varela Braga[1]

Revisiting the Reception of Islamic Ornament and Color in the West

This volume is dedicated to geometry and color, two basic elements that lie on the threshold between art and science, while the contributions presented here are about transfer across cultural, historical and medial boundaries. Our previous research projects and exhibitions on Islamic art and architecture and their reception in the West, have brought to the fore the complexity and multi-layered nature of the studied phenomena. This demanded an equally multifaceted approach, in which experiences from the academic world and the museum had to be considered jointly. These exchanges between scholars and curators opened up a new level of discussion in which object-related and contextualizing research allowed for different ways of interpretation. Guided by the notion of Islamophilia coined by Rémi Labrusse, a concept that implies a serious engagement with the arts of Islam considered as a model for the union of art and science, we decided to tackle the crucial role played by geometry and color as a key to apprehend and interpret Islamic arts in the West.

Ornament and color are indeed two aspects of Islamic art and architecture that have been at the center of many nineteenth-century publications that deal with its material culture and ornamentation (Girault de Prangey; Racinet; Bourgoin; Parvillée). Among them, the chromolithography *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra* by Welsh architect Owen Jones (1809-1874) and his French travel companion Jules Goury (1803-1834), explicitly addressed the geometry and color of the Nasrid architecture and ornamentation of the Alhambra. Issued in two volumes in 1842 and 1845 but available in parts as of 1836, the publication became the uncontested reference work for artists, architects, and scholars dealing with the topic (Darby 42-55; Galera Andreu 180-207; Ferry).

Jones deepened his examination of non-Western ornamentation and polychromy in his 1856 *The Grammar of Ornament*. In this crucial publication for nineteenth-century theory of ornament and decorative arts, he discussed the symbolic use of colors as a transcultural element, suggesting a deep relationship between the state of a culture and its use of polychromy. He noted that the "primitive colours" had been employed "during the early periods of art; whilst, during the decadence, the secondary colours became of more importance" (25). No surprise, according to Jones, that the polychromy of the Alhambra represented one of the best examples of such a genuine use of color. Drawing from his observations of Nasrid ornament, combined with the optical theories of British chemist George Field (1777-1854) and the laws of simultaneous contrast established by French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul (1786-1889), he took a scientific approach to the argument. Emphasizing the abstract qualities governing color, he strove to consider it as a quantifiable element that could be treated in a regular and objective manner. Through a set of rules or propositions, Jones not only demonstrated a tentative to control and order color but also a

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desire to define and map its several hues—according to primaries, secondaries, and tertiaries—at a precise time when this order was breaking down, as the result of the invention of artificial pigments.

Due to the relevance of Jones' seminal work, a plate from his *Grammar* was the obvious choice for the cover of the present issue, which includes a selection of the contributions presented on 11-12 September 2020 at the international conference "Geometry and Colour: Decoding the Arts of Islam in the West 1880-1945", co-organized by the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Museum Rietberg in Zürich, and the Vitrocentre Romont (Switzerland). The aim of the conference was to renew the intense debates on geometry and color in Western art and architecture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to emphasize the outstanding role played by the visual and material culture of the Islamic world as a source of inspiration for the West.

Besides a few recent initiatives, such as the "Third Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art", held in Córdoba in 2009 and dedicated to color in Islamic art and culture (Blair and Bloom) or the workshop "Colour in Islam: Understanding Textual and Visual Historiographies of Colour in Inter-Disciplinary Perspective" (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 22-23 October 2021), co-organized by Teresa Bernheimer and Eva-Maria Troelenberg, the use of color in Islamic art and architecture and its reception in the West have not yet received the scholarly attention it had in the nineteenth century, starting with the debate on polychromy, instigated by the German architect Jakob Ignaz Hittorff (1792-1867) (Hittorff and Zanth; Middleton; Van Zanten, *Architectural Polychromy*; Van Zanten, "Life in Architecture"; Kiene, Lazzarini and Marconi; Giese and Varela Braga esp. 38-43). Theories of ornament, on the other hand, have come under the scrutiny of art historians in the last thirty years, with an number of publications on the subject (Snodin and Howard; Payne, *The Architectural Treatise*; Carboni; Trilling; Schafter; Buci-Glucksmann; Payne, *From Ornament to Object*; Dekoninck, Heering and Lefftz; Varela Braga; Frommel and Leuschner; Payne and Necipoğlu; Fléjou and Decrossas; Labrusse; Vandi).

With the present issue, we would like to join this burgeoning interest and contribute to diversifying the debate on ornament and color by introducing genres that have received little attention until now, such as furniture or glass art, as well as lesser-studied regions, among them Poland, Latvia, and the historical Punjab region. Divided into three thematical parts, this issue starts by considering the role played by prototypes. The second half of the nineteenth century saw an ever-growing output of publications on Islamic architecture and design, which provided a large variety of information, analysis as well as plans, elevations, and detailed line drawings or colored plates. They were accompanied by numerous articles, travelogues, and descriptions, which contained more specific material. At the same time, the World´s Fairs, especially those in London (1851) and Paris (1867 and 1878), offered the opportunity to directly study architectural specimens, interiors, furniture, and other artifacts from the Islamic world. Both the printed sources as well as the exhibitions made models available for patrons, architects, and designers. Which of these sources were used and how they were exploited is demonstrated by three case studies, included in the first part of this issue. They show the different strategies of appropriation and transformation that designers and/or patrons used; ranging from thoroughly informed imitation to imaginative transformation and superficial application, while a look into traditional crafts in India complements this section.

Following prototypes

In her article, Olga Bush concentrates on Owen Jones´ analysis of the aesthetics of the Alhambra. She retraces the path from "derivation to deviation" that can be observed in Jones´ own *Alhambra Court* for the Crystal Palace (1854) on the one hand, and the *Salón árabe* (1847-1851) in the Royal Palace of Aranjuez (Spain), the *Salotto Turco* in the Villa Mimbelli (1865-1870) in Livorno (Italy), and the *Moorish Bath* in Schloss Albrechtsberg in Dresden (Germany) (1850-1854) on the other. Bush shows that Jones' own observations of the subtle interplay of geometry and color in the Alhambra

echo the definition of beauty as expressed by Ibn al-Haytham (ca. 965-1040) in his groundbreaking *Book of Optics*. While remaining faithful to his findings, Jones could successfully recreate the beauty of the Alhambra in another surrounding with differing spatial dimensions. In comparison, the three other interiors reveal a visual disharmony due to the emphasis on broad colors while ignoring the other relevant factors, a characteristic that can be generally attributed to the "Alhambresque".

While focusing on the stucco glass window or *qamarīya,* Sarah Keller recounts the story of the so-called "Moroccan House" and the transformation of its windows. Originally constructed in Tangier for the World´s Fair in Vienna (1873), it was also shown in Philadelphia (1876) and finally in Paris in 1878. There, the wooden structure was bought on behalf of King Ludwig II of Bavaria (r. 1864-1886). The interior was repainted, gilded, and newly furnished and the colorless windows replaced with multicolored ones in *qamarīya*-style, produced in Munich. Designed after a Cairene prototype, the window grid was then executed in metal instead of plaster. This transformation is all the more interesting as Munich was one of the centers where the tradition of Gothic stained-glass windows was revived.

Contrary to this technical adaptation of an Egyptian window to other climatic conditions, the "Turkish cabinet" of Dittmar´s furniture factory is a telling example of the use of stylistic set pieces in the context of industrial design. Elke Katharina Wittich sheds light on the furniture industry in Berlin around 1900. The German capital was rapidly growing and the demand for furniture was increasing. It was met by mass-produced furniture whose exteriors were then decorated in up to thirty different styles, as was the case with Dittmar´s cabinet. Wittich´s contribution highlights the reception and exploitation of Islamic art beyond the artistic trailblazers.

Nadhra Shabaz Khan´s article offers a completely different perspective: In contrast to the European fascination for Islamic arts and their endeavors to recreate them, the traditional knowledge of local artisans in India under the British Raj were rapidly lost. In his attempt to keep knowledge alive, the attention given by John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) to the traditional names given to geometric patterns used in contemporary woodwork is a case in point. By analyzing these terms in different vernacular languages, Khan makes clear that they are more than mere denominators; they convey a cultural heritage and a meaning that reaches beyond pure geometric composition.

Creating imaginaries

The romantic interest for the Middle Ages that favored the appreciation for medieval Spain and its Islamic heritage was in great part responsible for the wide and international fortune of the Moorish Revival. The study of the Nasrid decorative system, pioneered by Goury and Jones, was deeply connected with the more general revival of architectural polychromy. This interest in color cannot be dissociated from the rich polymateriality of nineteenth-century interiors, which—through the integration of colored glass, ceramics, marble, and textiles—constituted a perfect field of experimentation for architects. The second part of this issue explores the multilayered imaginary dimensions derived from the encounters with the arts of Islam, from aesthetic exploration to identity constructions.

Considering the parallels between David Brewster's kaleidoscope and Nasrid ornament, Ariane Varela Braga examines the fruitful dialogue between art and science that involved the appreciation of Ibero-Islamic ornament, color theories, and optical experiments. She discusses two different cases of creative interpretation, exemplified by the decorative use of colored glasses by Owen Jones and Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona, whose villa of Sammezzano in Tuscany owes much to the British architect's publications. Although Jones and Panciatichi clearly departed from the original prototypes, their use of colored glass can be paralleled with the general admiration for Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) that was shared by many European travelers, who appreciated the delicacy and particular intimate atmosphere that their presence gave to interiors.

Because of its fragility, much of this colored glass has not been preserved, but is known through the drawings and testimonies of architects and designers of the time.

One of those was British architect James William Wild (1814-1892), brother-in-law of Owen Jones, who spent many years in Cairo and carefully recorded several such examples. In her essay, Francine Giese discusses his contribution together with those of the American artist and decorator Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) and the less known art collector Karl von Urach (1865-1925), analyzing the artistic and cultural significance of *qamarīyāt* as expressions of an imagined East.

While in many of these examples Islamic art belongs to the sphere of the 'Other', the lines are more blurred for Eastern Europe, as in the case of Poland, where Oriental elements were present in Polish culture since the Middle Ages, in the form of "*sarmatism*". This entangled heritage was recuperated and transformed by the wave of interest in Islamic art that reached the country at the end of the nineteenth century. It provided the background for the successful mixture between European, Oriental, and popular models that became representative of the Polish applied art revival movement. Discussing this inherent tension in Polish culture, Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik explores the contribution of the artists from the Cracow workshops (Warsztaty Krakowskie) founded in 1913 and whose products attracted international attention at the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris.

Cultural hybridization is also at the center of the essay by Mireia Freixa and Marta Saliné, who analyze the tile work of Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and his original use of ceramic *trencadís* at the Park Güell in Barcelona. Inspired by the Islamic and Mudéjar tradition of ceramic wall decoration, Gaudí transformed it into a specific element of his art. He did so by breaking colored ceramics into pieces and incrusting them in the walls, an ingenious procedure that contributed to bringing his architecture to life.

Re-orientations

The third and final part of this issue focuses on the visual arts of the modern era. At the beginning of the twentieth century, numerous artists were inspired by objects from non-European cultures, namely from Japan, Africa, and the Islamic world. By their preoccupation with objects that were unfamiliar to them, European artists aimed at overcoming entrenched conventions and at developing new forms of expression—thereby initiating a transcultural process. The curiosity and admiration for these objects were usually of a purely formal and aesthetic nature, without the artists having developed a deeper interest in the respective culture or the people of these countries. Moreover, very few of them knew the countries of origin of the artifacts that had come to Europe from their own experience but discovered them—detached from their context—in exhibitions, collections, and publications in their immediate surroundings. Seen from this perspective, there is something superficial but also appropriative about their preoccupation, and it subliminally reflects the imperialist and colonialist attitudes of the time.

As diverse as the Islamic arts are, so are the approaches of the artists in Europe towards them. In this section, three painters are treated in the three essays presented here as case studies: Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and Jāzeps Grosvalds (1891-1920). Rémi Labrusse's analysis of the impact of Matisse's 1906 trip to Algeria and the artist's interpretation of Islamic arts gives a new perspective on Orientalism and modern production of visual images, which the author examines from the point of view of a "state of crisis". In both—Orientalism and the modern production of visual images—, he demonstrates a self-deconstructing system that keeps reaffirming itself without ever finding resolution: Self-criticism and a destructive action are thereby the two sides of this "state of crisis". By analyzing some representative works by Matisse, which the

artist created after his stay in Algeria, Labrusse shows how these two poles are interrelated within Orientalism and modern image-making.

In 1910, Wassily Kandinsky visited the groundbreaking exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art) in Munich and wrote a review of it for the Russian literary journal *Apollon*. On the basis of this text, which deals almost exclusively with Persian miniatures, his understanding of this art becomes clear. Kandinsky described the three elements that he valued most highly in these works: their approach to composition, their use of color, and the manner in which they provoked a sense of revelation in him. In her contribution, Emily Christensen focuses on the importance of this sense of revelation, which Kandinsky skillfully manages to transfer to his own compositions created from the end of 1910 onwards.

And finally, Ieva Kalnača's article examines the journeys that the Latvian painter and draftsman Jāzeps Grosvalds made to Andalusia in 1913 and to Iran in 1918, and their relevance to his work. She argues that the architecture experienced on site was an important impulse for a formal and aesthetic turning point in his work.

The contributions compiled in this third issue of *Manazir Journal* represent only a few facets of the large and challenging topic that deserves further exploration. Although interest and scholarship in the arts of the Islamic world has increased noticeably since the early 2000s, in many respects we are still only at the beginning of a process of reassessment that is continuously reshaped by changing social and political attitudes. Hopefully, this publication will contribute to the reevaluation of the arts of Islam as a significant source for Western visual and applied arts.

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Biographies

Sandra Gianfreda studied art history, history of architecture and psychology in Bern and Rome. She completed her PhD in 2001 with a thesis on half-length figures in history painting of the Seicento and worked as an assistant to the chair of Renaissance to Modern Art History in Bern from 1998 to 2002. Subsequently, she undertook a traineeship at the Kunstmuseum Basel in the department for the Nineteenth Century and Modern Art. She was a curator at Kunstmuseum

Winterthur from 2005 to 2009, a project manager and curator of special exhibitions at Museum Folkwang in Essen from 2009 until spring 2015 and has been a curator at Kunsthaus Zürich since summer 2015. She has published and organized exhibitions on Impressionism, modern art, and American, German and Italian art from the post-war period.

Francine Giese is director of the Vitrocentre and the Vitromusée Romont, Switzerland. From 2014 to 2019 she held a SNSF professorship at the Institute of Art History of the University of Zurich, where she led the research project "Mudejarismo and Moorish Revival in Europe." Her PhD thesis, dealing with the Islamic ribbed vault, was published in 2007 (Gebr. Mann), and her habilitation (second book) on building and restoration practices in the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba was issued in 2016 (Peter Lang). In her current research project "Luminosity of the East" (SNSF, 2020-2024), she investigates the typology, materiality, and provenance of Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) within Western museum collections. Her research focuses on transfer and exchange processes between the Islamic world and the West, architectural Orientalism, provenance research, and the arts of glass.

Axel Langer is curator of the arts of the Islamic Near and Middle East at the Rietberg Museum in Zürich, Switzerland. He has organized a number of exhibitions whose recurrent theme has been the cultural transfer between the East and West, including, for instance, Chinese blue and white porcelain as a source of inspiration for Persian, Ottoman, and European ceramics, but also the cross-cultural exchange between Persia and Europe in the seventeenth century. In spring 2022, his exhibition *In the Name of the Image. Imagery between Cult and Prohibition in Islam and Christianity* is on show at the Rietberg Museum.

Ariane Varela Braga is a historian of art and architecture. She is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Milan. In 2021, she was a Chastel Fellow at the French Academy and a Fellow at the Bibliotheca Herziana in Rome, where she worked on a book manuscript titled "Crafting the Moresco: Orientalism, Architecture and Material Culture in 19th and Early 20th-Century Italy" (Habitation project, University of Zurich). Her research is located at the intersections between visual and material culture, and architecture and cultural history in the late modern period. Her first book was about Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* (Campisano, 2017). She has published volumes and articles on the history and theory of decorative arts and architecture, polychrome marble, and the European appropriation of non-Western art, and curated exhibitions on nineteenth-century art and architecture, as well as on contemporary art.

Olga Bush[1]

Color and Geometry in the Alhambra

and What Got Lost in the Alhambresque

Abstract

The dissemination of Owen Jones' studies of the Alhambra and his color theory has been increasingly well understood as a cornerstone of the later Alhambresque style. And yet, curiously, Jones offers at once an accurate appreciation of the Alhambra and a basis for a striking divergence from Nasrid design in Alhambresque interiors. This article examines that discrepancy. It begins with a review of the aesthetics of the Alhambra in view of the eleventh-century optics of Ibn al-Haytham, supported by conservation work that has confirmed Jones' vibrant colors. The aesthetic key to the Alhambra is not color alone, however, but a principle of visual harmony integrating color and geometry. The Nasrid builders applied color in conjunction with principles of proportionate geometric relationships and measurable visual properties—height, distance, size, depth—in the architectural and decorative design. They also manipulated color through their consideration of the materiality of the polychromed surfaces, whose reflective and refractive potentials allowed for differing optical effects. By balancing attention between color, as transmitted through the innovative technique of chromolithography, and the drawings of plans and elevations, this article strengthens the understanding of Jones' grasp of the visual harmony of the Alhambra. Second, it demonstrates the ways in which Jones' plates of various ornament were often privileged over, or simply divorced from, his architectural drawings in Alhambresque interiors: e.g., the *Salón árabe* (1847-1851) in the Royal Palace of Aranjuez (Spain), the *Salotto Turco* in the Villa Mimbelli (1865-1870) in Livorno (Italy), and the Moorish Bath (1850-1854) at Schloss Albrechtsberg in Dresden (Germany). In conclusion, this article proposes that, in contrast to the Alhambra, a loss of visual harmony is a significant characteristic of the Alhambresque, or, otherwise stated, that the Alhambresque interiors feature a disproportionate emphasis on color, consistent with the ideological burden of Orientalism.

Keywords: Alhambresque; *Salón árabe* (Aranjuez); color; Owen Jones; Rafael Contreras Muñoz

Design principles in the Alhambra and Owen Jones' studies

It has long been recognized that the pivot between the Alhambra and the Alhambresque with regard to architectural forms and, even more so, color, was the work of Owen Jones (1809-1874) in his architectural projects and publications. The present study starts by looking back to the aesthetic principles embodied in the Alhambra, and then examines the distance in the nineteenth century between Jones' cogent understanding and the subsequent adaptations of the Alhambresque. The *Salón árabe* (Arab Room) in the Royal Palace at Aranjuez offers a case study of the path from

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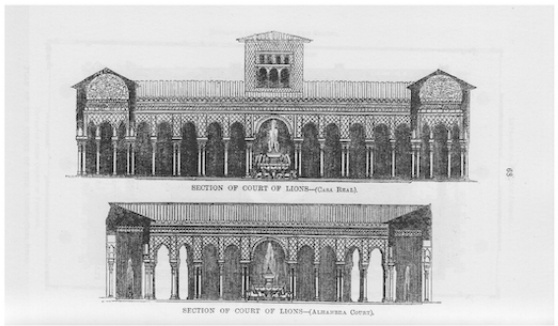
derivation to deviation in a design, which although initiated by Rafael Contreras Muñoz (1824-1890), restorer-decorator of the Alhambra, was overtaken by other forces. This case enables the analysis of the interrelationship between color and geometry, which I take to be the crux of the use of color in medieval Islamic architecture, a principle that was mismanaged at Aranjuez.

Although the Alhambra was built over the course of three centuries, the Nasrid palatial city is remarkably unified, architecturally and aesthetically. The nineteenth-century Orientalist imaginary singled out the Court of the Lions and its adjacent two precincts, the Hall of Two Sisters and the Hall of the Abencerrajes, with their soaring *muqarnas* vaults, as the paradigm for Alhambresque courtyards and interiors. Jones was the main resource for those projects, both as a theorist and a practitioner. His text, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra*, was first available in installments in 1836, and then as a two-volume edition, illustrated with Jones' pioneering chromolithographic plates, between 1842 and 1845 (Goury and Jones). Jones put his studies of Nasrid architectural design and his articulation of its corresponding color theory to the test in his construction of the Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham in London in 1854 (Varela Braga, "How to Visit" 71-83; Ferry; Frankel). Together with his publications, this project supplemented or substituted for on-site study of the Alhambra for architects and the general public, newly interested in so-called "Oriental art". Jones' painstaking, scientific approach to measurement, his skills as a draughtsman, his invention of chromolithography, and his talent for commercial diffusion were all factors in his wide-spread influence (fig. 1a-c).

a



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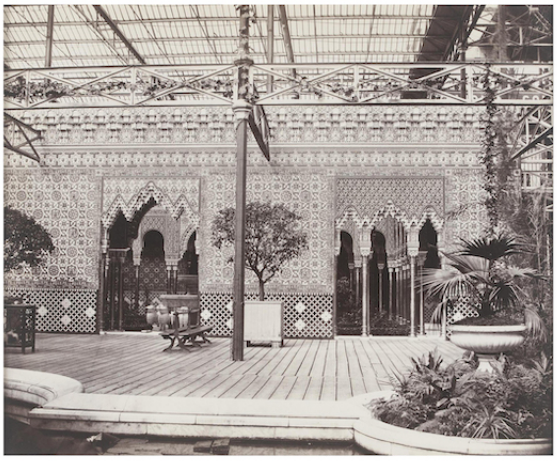

c

Figure 1a: *Court of the Lions, Alhambra*. Image courtesy of Olga Bush, photographed by Olga Bush; 1b: *The Alhambra Court, Crystal Palace, Sydenham, London*. 1854. Taken from Jones, *The Alhambra Court*; 1c: *The Alhambra Court, Crystal Palace, Sydenham, London*. 1859. Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Jones' careful study of Nasrid design and his understanding that it was based on geometric principles was crucial. Plane crystallographic group theory was made possible only with the aid of X-rays in the 1990s; and yet mathematicians who have undertaken the analysis of geometric design in the Alhambra have found that the Nasrids had discovered and employed all of the seventeen possible two-dimensional symmetry groups in their tile mosaics (Makovicky and Fenoll Hach-Ali; Pérez Gómez et al.; López Rodríguez et al.; fig. 2a-b).

a b

Figure 2a and 2b: *Dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics, Hall of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra*. Images courtesy of Olga Bush, photographed by Olga Bush.

The use of a single geometric ratio, the square-root of 2, as the basis for all calculations enabled Nasrid designers to endow all elements of a building's elevation and plan, as well as the decoration of its interiors, with a unity that encompassed the splendid variety of decorative bands and the different motifs within them (Fernández-Puertas 19-79; Bush, *Reframing the Alhambra* 166-201; fig. 3a-b).

Jones recognized that the overwhelming impression of decorative abundance in the Alhambra was the result of such scientific principles, becoming the first European architect to accurately analyze the construction of *muqarnas* arches and vaults and to produce geometric drawings of individual *muqarnas* elements and of complete compositions (Gámiz Gordo and Ferrer Pérez-Blanco 57-87). He published his findings in *Plans, Elevations* and in his 1854 guidebook to the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace (Jones, *The Alhambra Court* 61-62; fig. 4a-c).

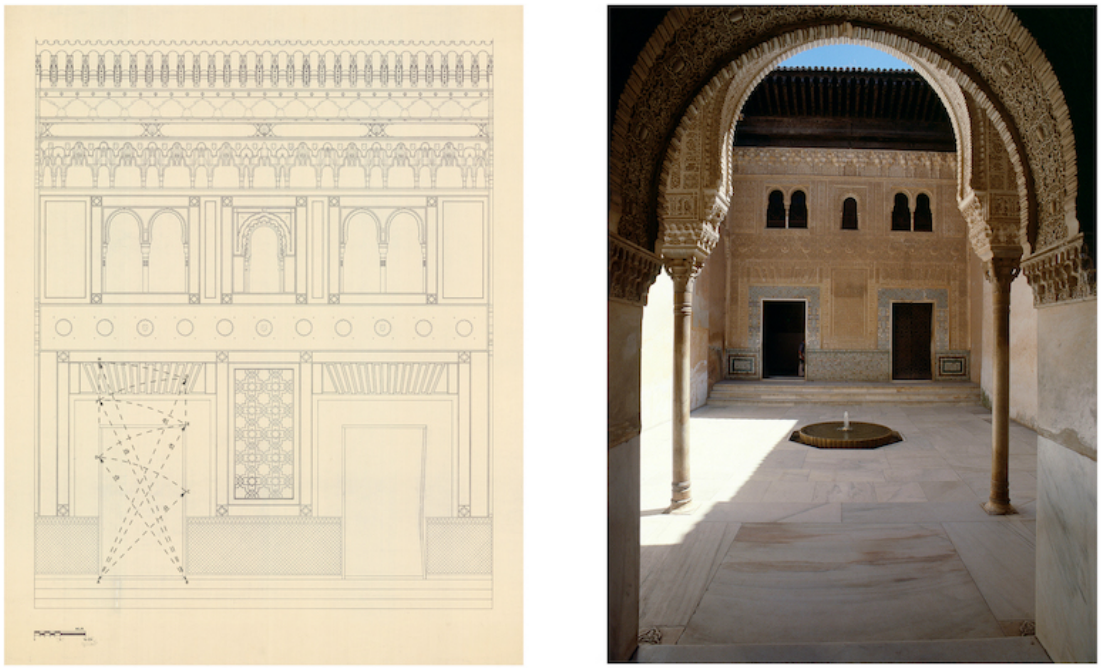

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Figure 3a: *Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra* (after a drawing by M. López Reche, added construction of geometric measurements by Olga Bush); 3b: *Façade of Comares, Palace of Comares, Alhambra*. Image courtesy of Olga Bush, photographed by Olga Bush.

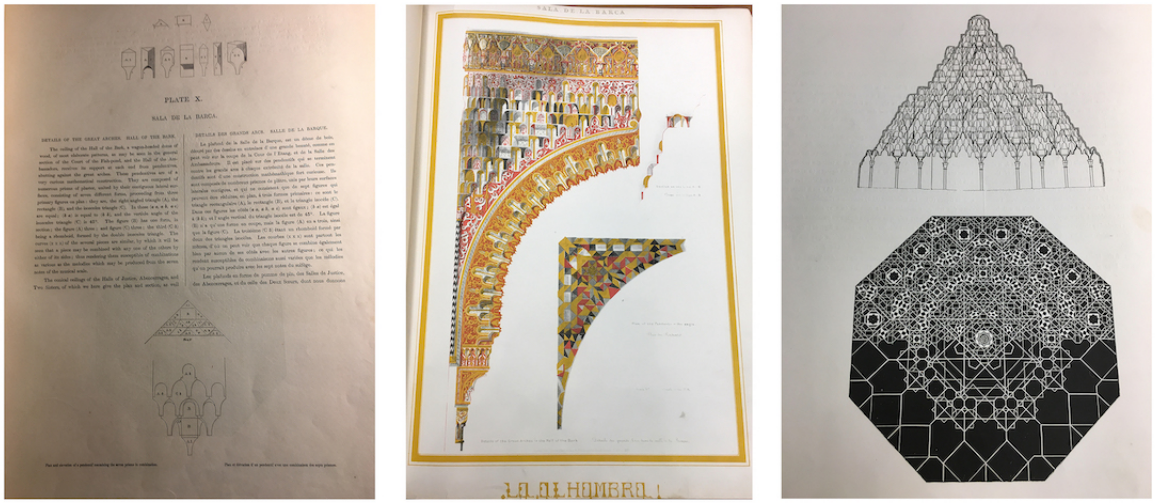

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Figure 4: *Muqarnas* elements and constructions, 4a: *Muqarnas elements*. 1842-1845. Taken from Goury and Jones text to pl. X, vol. 1; 4b: *The muqarnas arch of the Sala de la Barca* 1842-1845. Taken from Goury and Jones pl. XII, vol. 1; 4c: *The muqarnas dome of the Sala de las Dos Hermanas* 1842-1845. Taken from Goury and Jones pl. X, vol. 1.

Jones also understood that the interrelationship between geometry and color was the key to Nasrid design. In the lesser-known guidebook of 1854, he comments that the ornaments "always fit the places they occupy; the pattern never is interrupted or broken by any other than a natural division" (*The Alhambra Court* 33). Taking "fit" literally as a spatial term, the observation suggests geometric proportionality. But that "fitness" here has a broader meaning in the aesthetics of the Alhambra, whose traditional term in Western aesthetics is "harmony", and whose spokesperson in medieval Islamic art is the eleventh-century experimental scientist Ibn al-Haytham (ca. 965-1040). In his groundbreaking treatise, the "Book of Optics",[2] he underlined the role of light and color as the foundations of perception and distinguished between the perception of individual properties—such as shape, size, distance, and position—and paired properties, like separation and continuity, smoothness and roughness, and motion and rest (Ibn al-Haytham 126-206; bk. I). Many of those properties, both individual and paired, are measurable quantities, and therefore relate to proportionality. Of special pertinence to Jones' sense of "fitness", however, Ibn al-Haytham argued that aesthetic judgment also depended upon the more elusive principle of harmony. Thus, he stated that beauty's "completion and perfection is due only to the proportionality and harmony that may obtain between the particular properties" (Ibn al-Haytham 205; bok. I).

Jones is vaguer, but no less apt in capturing the fundamental role of harmony in Nasrid aesthetics when he emphasizes that colors were chosen for the surfaces in the Alhambra with an eye to what would "…add most to the general effect". (Jones, *Decorative Ornament* 165). He is more concrete in relating proportionality to harmony and geometry to color, however, when he remarks, "every transition of form is accompanied by a modification of colour, so disposed as to assist in producing distinctness of expression", and "in more visibly bringing out the form" (165). Here, he echoes Ibn al-Haytham's analysis of continuity and separation made perceptible by the use of color. Jones illustrates the point when he explains the distribution of primary colors in the parietal decoration in the Alhambra: "*On moulded surfaces they placed red, the strongest colour of the three, in the depths*, where it might be softened by shadow, never on the surface; *blue in the shade*, and *gold on all surfaces exposed to light*: for it is evident that by this arrangement alone could their true value be obtained" (Jones, *Decorative Ornament* 167; his emphasis). Contemporary work in conservation corroborates that analysis of highly textured surfaces carved at varying depths and painted (Fernández-Puertas 92).

As I have discussed elsewhere, the *muqarnas* vaults of the Hall of the Two Sisters and of the Hall of the Abencerrajes present astonishing examples of harmony. Illuminated by the windows in the drums, the visual impact of the vaults' vibrant polychromy—the remains of which are visible to this day—would have been heightened by the way in which the complex proportionality of the geometric design was qualified by the application of color to vary the perception of the visible properties enumerated by Ibn al-Haytham: the distance between the observer's eyes and the vaults' receding depth; the highly textured surfaces of the *muqarnas* elements (that is, smoothness and roughness); and the continuity and discontinuity in the *muqarnas*' volumes and shapes. In accordance with Jones' propositions, it is demonstrable that a change in color in two identical designs in the dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics leads the eye to perceive them as two distinct compositions, as can be seen, for instance, in the Alhambra's Court of the Myrtles (Bush, *Reframing the Alhambra* 40-48; fig. 5).

[2] For a sustained study of Ibn al-Haytham's optics in the context of design in the Alhambra, and especially on the interrelationship between geometry and color, see Bush, *Reframing the Alhambra* 17-71. On extending this analysis to the work of Op artist François Morellet (1926-2016), see Bush, "Designs" 53-75; Ibn al-Haytham; Smith 184-231.

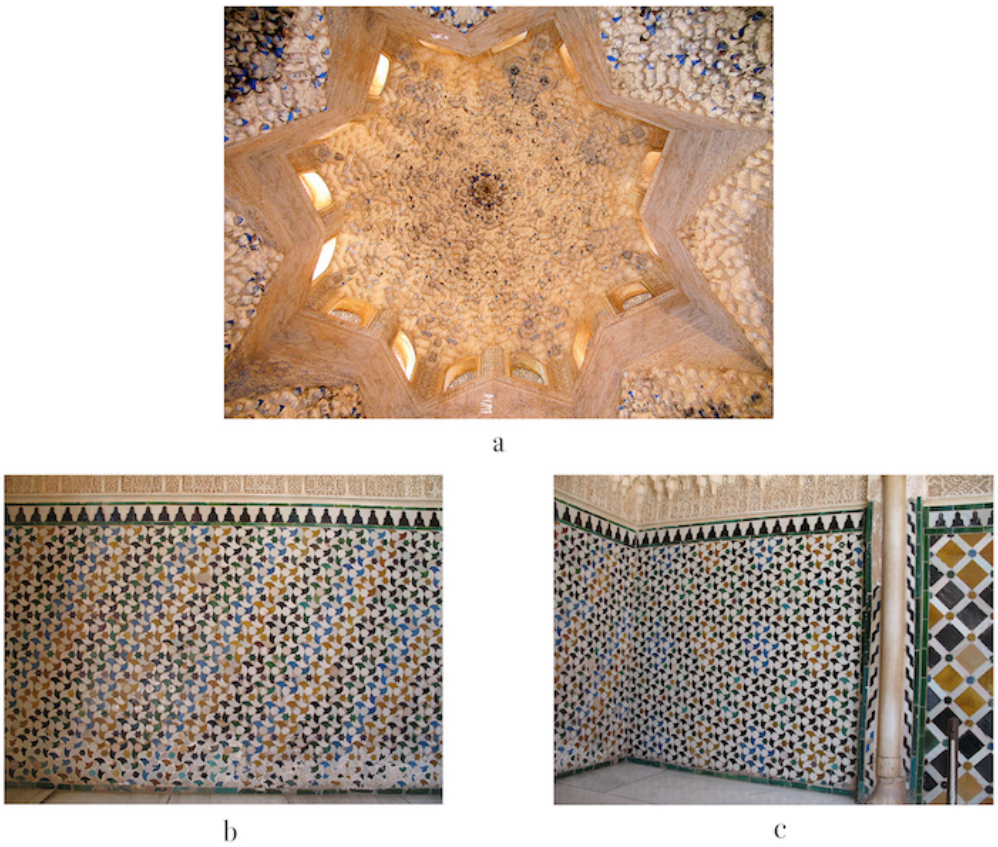

Figure 5a: *Muqarnas vault, Hall of the Abencerrajes. Palace of the Lions, Alhambra*; 5b and 5c: *Dadoes of ceramic tile mosaics, west and north walls, north-west niche, Court of Myrtles, Palace of Comares, Alhambra*. All images courtesy of Olga Bush, photographed by Olga Bush.

Rafael Contreras Muñoz and his dissemination of the Alhambresque style

There is no doubt that Jones had a direct impact on Rafael Contreras Muñoz. Young Rafael was apprenticed to his father, José Contreras Osorio (1794-1874), who was in charge of work in the Alhambra at the time of Jones' on-site studies. Thus, while Rafael Contreras' restoration of the Sala de las Camas in the baths of the Palace of Comares has proven greatly controversial with respect to its vibrant polychromy (Rubio Domene, "La Sala" 152-171; Rubio Domene, *Yeserías de la Alhambra* 83-93; Barrios Rozúa, "Antes de Viollet-le-Duc" 231-275), careful examination shows that he was familiar with Jones' publications. It is likely that Contreras was acquainted with Jones' *Plans, Elevations* through his connections with two renowned Spanish historians and Arabists: Pasqual de Gayangos y Arce (1809-1897), who wrote the history of the Nasrids and translated the Alhambra's epigraphy for the *Plans, Elevations*; and Gayangos' student and later son-in-law, Juan Facundo Riaño y Montero (1829-1901), a professor of Arabic at the University of Madrid and a member of the Real Academia de la Historia. Riaño helped Contreras to promote his plaster models in Europe between 1850 and 1883, including the acquisition by the South Kensington Museum in London of fifty-eight examples made in Contreras' workshop (Rosser-Owen 118-119). It is also possible that Contreras consulted a copy of the *Plans, Elevations* owned by Salvador Amador (1813-1849), who subscribed to the publication, and who held the post of the architect-director of the Alhambra from 1847 until 1849 (Panadero Peropadre, "Madrid frente a Granada" 88, fn. 38).

Contreras' numerous small-scale, brightly painted plaster models of partial elevations of Nasrid interiors made in casting molds in his workshop, closely followed Jones' chromolithographs and color theory and were exhibited and collected in Europe (Giese and Varela Braga, "The Alhambra *en miniature*" 97-112; González Pérez, "Reconstructing the Alhambra" 29-49; "Rafael Contreras" 165-178). His three-dimensional model of the Hall of Two Sisters, executed between 1842 and 1846, brought him especial success and notoriety. In 1847, he presented the model to Isabel II of Spain (r. 1833-1868), who purchased it for display at the Prado,[3] appointed him as "restaurador-adornista" (restorer-decorator) of the Alhambra,[4] and commissioned the *Salón árabe* for the Royal Palace in Madrid. When the project was realized, not in Madrid but at the royal palace in Aranjuez, it became the first and only nineteenth-century royal commission of an Alhambresque interior in Spain.

Isabel II was not simply importing the exotic from afar, as her European counterparts did. In the context of mid-nineteenth-century European nation-building, this commission reflected the ongoing debate on the creation of a *national* architectural style that would signal Spain's distinctiveness and originality vis-à-vis its European neighbors. I have discussed the history of architectural debate over national style in Spain in another study (Bush, "The 'Orient' Express"); here, I wish to emphasize that Rafael Contreras played a major role in the debate, both as the designer of Alhambresque interiors in the residencies of the Spanish nobility in Madrid (Panadero Peropadre, *Los estilos medievales* 867-923; "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 33-40; Serrano Espinosa 2014; Ordieres Díez, 179-201) and in exporting neo-Moorish design through the exhibition of his prize-winning plaster models (Panadero Peropadre, "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 37). In this study, I will limit myself to the particular case of the *Salón árabe* at Aranjuez, concentrating on aesthetic rather than political aspects.

A plaster model of a complete elevation of the Hall of Two Sisters made in Contreras' workshop and signed by Tomás Pérez reproduces accurately the *muqarnas* vault of that room. The model, measuring 4.38 m x 2.08 m x 1.35 m, has been dated between 1850 and 1855, but Contreras' mastery of the *muqarnas* construction is attested by the *muqarnas* vault in the *Salón árabe* at Aranjuez completed in 1851. It should be noted that although Jones included his drawings of the geometric construction of a *muqarnas* vault in *Plans, Elevations*, he did not build one until three years later, in 1854, in the Hall of the Abencerrajes in the Crystal Palace in London (fig. 6).

Given the importance ascribed to *muqarnas* in European Orientalism, this pioneering work bears emphasis. I note, for example, that although Karl Ludwig Wilhelm Zanth (1796-1857) was familiar with Jones' publications, he did not attempt to build a *muqarnas* vault in the main hall of the Moorish Villa of the Wilhelma (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt), erected between 1842 and 1846 (Koppelkamm, 64-75; Giese, "An Inclination" 225-229; "Maurische Architekturzitate" 49-55). Carl von Diebitsch (1819-1869) made several drawings of a segment of the *muqarnas* vault of the Hall of Two Sisters on site in the late 1840s (Giese and Varela Braga, "Architecture, Ornament" 37, figs. A2-5 and A2-6), but it was not until after Jones' successful construction and Contreras' accurate models that he proposed his own way of reproducing them, building two small *muqarnas* ceilings in the Moorish Bath at Schloss Albrechtsberg in Dresden (1850-1854) (Heller, "Die Alhambra-Rezeption" 245-255, esp. 249; "Carl von Diebitschs Debüt" 153-162). It was more than a decade later that von Diebitsch executed a *muqarnas* vault for the Moorish Kiosk built for the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867.[5]

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[3] The model is preserved in the collection of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, (Inv. O2758).

[4] Contreras held this position until his death in 1890. On the opposition to the appointment of Contreras on the part of Narciso Pascual y Colomer, the royal architect, see Barrios Rozúa, "Una polémica" 46.

[5] I note that this vault rests on a drum with windows, and its transition zone is reminiscent of that of Zanth's design for a glass cupola in the Fountain Courtyard at Villa of the Wilhelma. The Moorish Kiosk was purchased by Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1876 for his Linderhof Palace, where it still stands. See Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz 73-77; Keller 185-195.

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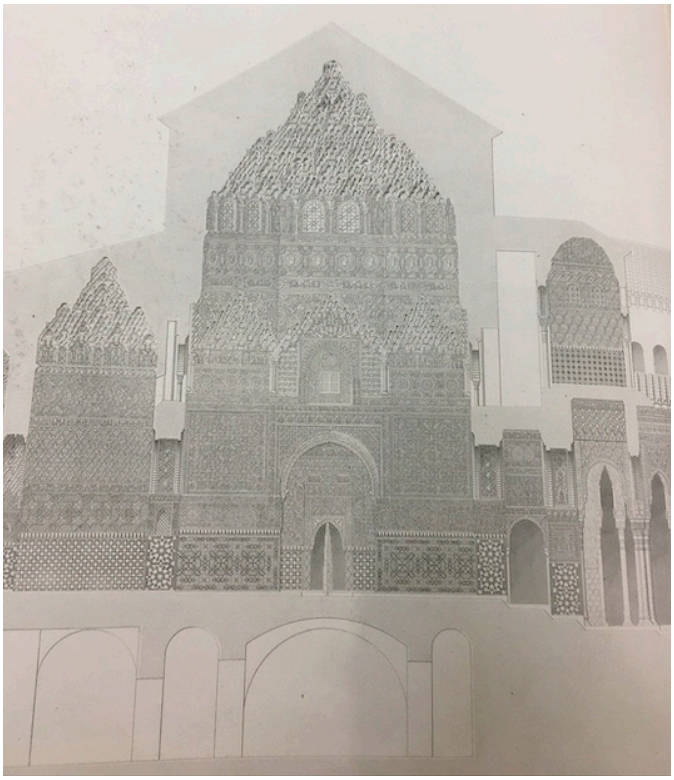

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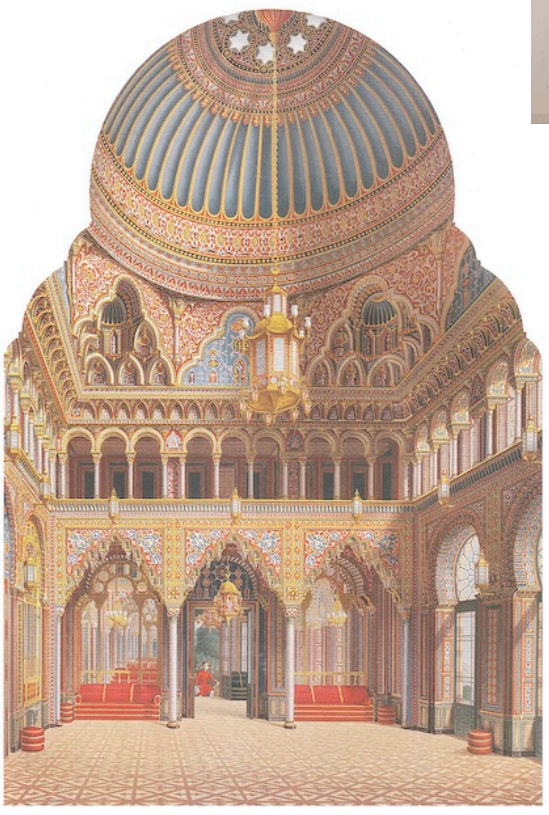

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Figure 6a: *Hall of Two Sisters.* Ca. 1850-1855, plaster cast (partial view). Image courtesy of Museo de la Alhambra, inv. no. 6601;

Figure 6b: *Hall of Two Sisters, section of the elevation* (detail). 1842-1845. Taken from Goury and Jones pl. XV; vol. 1;

Figure 6c. *Main Hall, Villa of the Wilhelma, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt*. 1842-1846. Taken from Ludwig von Zanth. *Die Wilhelma, Maurische Villa Seiner Majestät des Königes Wilhelm von Württemberg*. 1855.

In that comparative context, the *Salón árabe* at Aranjuez, much praised in Madrid periodicals when it opened in 1851 (Panadero Peropadre, "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 36-37), calls for closer study. In addition to his successful construction of *muqarnas*, Contreras had demonstrated his understanding of proportion in his plaster model of the Hall of Two Sisters, executed with meticulous accuracy on a scale 1:9 and, moreover, painted in keeping with the vibrant colors of Jones' chromolithographs.[6] But he was faced with an important constraint at Aranjuez (fig. 7).

The *Salón árabe* was to be built in an existing room within the palace, whose plan was significantly smaller than the Hall of Two Sisters (6.60 m x 6.60 m vs. 8.45 m x 8.45 m, respectively), and its elevation even more so (10.4 m at Aranjuez vs. 16 m in the Alhambra).[7]

Building a Muqarnas vault: challenges and solutions

Confronting a similar problem in his Hall of the Abencerrajes for the Crystal Palace in London, Jones explained that his "reproduction" of the room in the Alhambra was the "full size of the original on plan, but diminished in height by omitting a band marked *A* on the diagram." (Jones, *The Alhambra Court* 34). By reducing the height of the walls, he preserved the height of the transition zone, the cupola's drum and the cupola itself, rendering a syntactically coherent elevation that closely follows its model in the proportional relations of its parts (fig. 8).

Contreras' elevation drawings, if he made any, have not been preserved,[8] but his plaster models of the Hall of Two Sisters show an elevation that speaks to his profound knowledge. The extant *Salón árabe*, however, is the result of other interventions, further complicated by professional jealousy. The project was begun under the supervision of Narciso Pascual y Colomer (1808-1870), chief architect of the Royal Sites (Panadero Peropadre, "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 34). Colomer not only questioned Contreras' qualifications, but also accused him of profiteering by planning for carved stucco panels instead of casts, as well as the use of mineral pigments and gold leaf for painting (Panadero Peropadre, "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 35; Serrano Espinosa, *Arquitectura y Restauración* 303-306; vol. IA). The cost-cutting also led to the replacement of the mosaic dadoes of ceramic tile in Contreras' plan with painted geometric designs.

In 1849, the supervision of the project passed from Colomer to Domingo Gómez de la Fuente (1809-1856), an architect, whose objective was to expedite the project's completion. He dismissed Contreras' accurately scaled models and casts as "curiosity objects" without any artistic merit (Panadero Peropadre, "Madrid frente a Granada" 103-104). It was most likely under de la Fuente's direction that the upper elevation of the walls was eliminated and the transition zone, articulated by the large, tri-lobed *muqarnas* squinches that brace the corners of the room, was placed directly above the painted dadoes.[9] The reduced elevation at Aranjuez required a cupola of shallow, circular shape, altogether different from the tall conical form of its model in the Alhambra.

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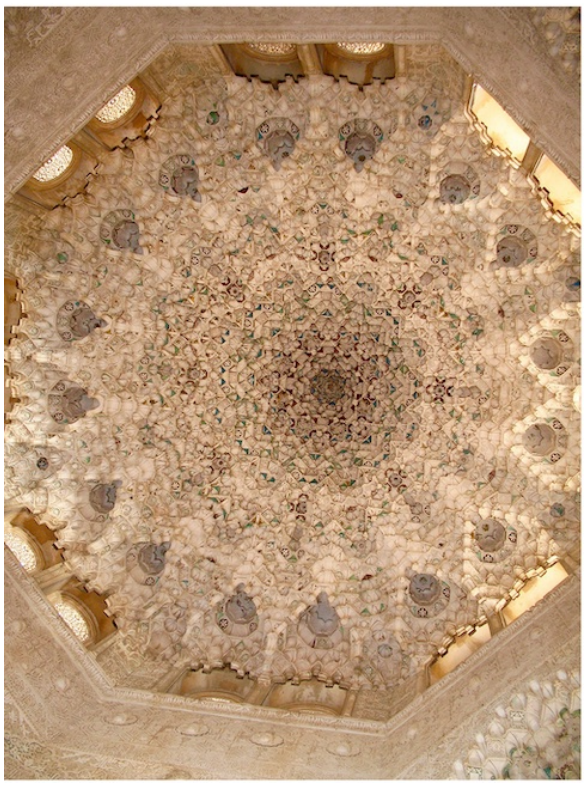
[6] Scholars continue to debate whether Contreras' plaster models replicated original Nasrid decoration or that of the later alterations in the Alhambra, including his own. Among them, see Kondratenko and Saviona 325; Serrano Espinosa, "La familia Contreras" 91-109.

[7] I wish to thank Irene Doménech Coullaut, the Head of the Área de Planificación, Dirección de Inmuebles y Medio Natural, Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid, Spain and her technical team for providing me with the room's dimensions and plan, and for producing, upon my request, a digital image in color of the section of the interior's elevation, seen here as figure 8b.

[8] In a private communication, Irene Doménech Coullaut confirmed that drawings for this project have not been preserved in the Archivo del Departamento de Arquitectura y Jardines, Archivo General del Palacio, Madrid.

[9] Panadero Peropadre suggests that Gómez de la Fuente's solution speaks of his limited knowledge of Nasrid architecture ("Recuerdos de la Alhambra" 36 and fn. 18; see also Serrano Espinosa, *Arquitectura y Restauración* 302-312; vol. IA).



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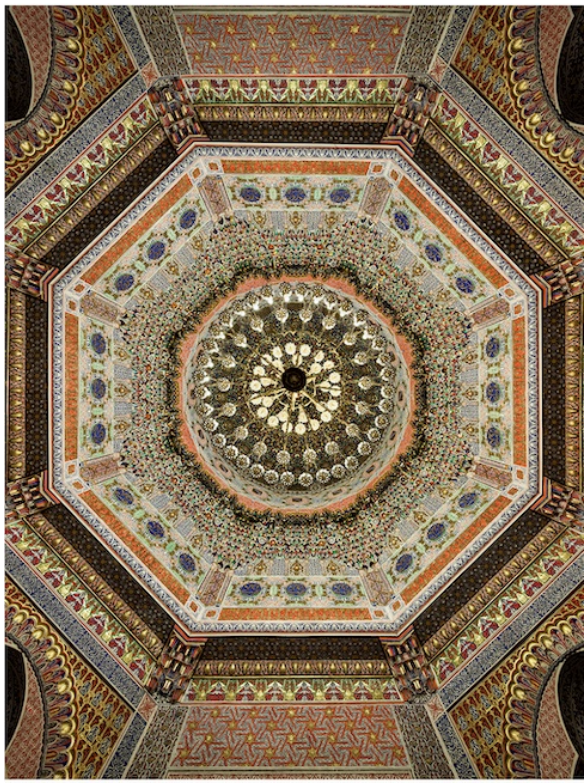

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Figure 7a and 7b: *Hall of Two Sisters, muqarnas vault and interior, Palace of the Lions, Alhambra*. Images courtesy of Olga Bush, photographed by Olga Bush; 7c and 7d: *Salón árabe*, *Aranjuez*, *muqarnas vault and interior*. 1848-1851. Images courtesy of Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio Real de Aranjuez, RAP122P.

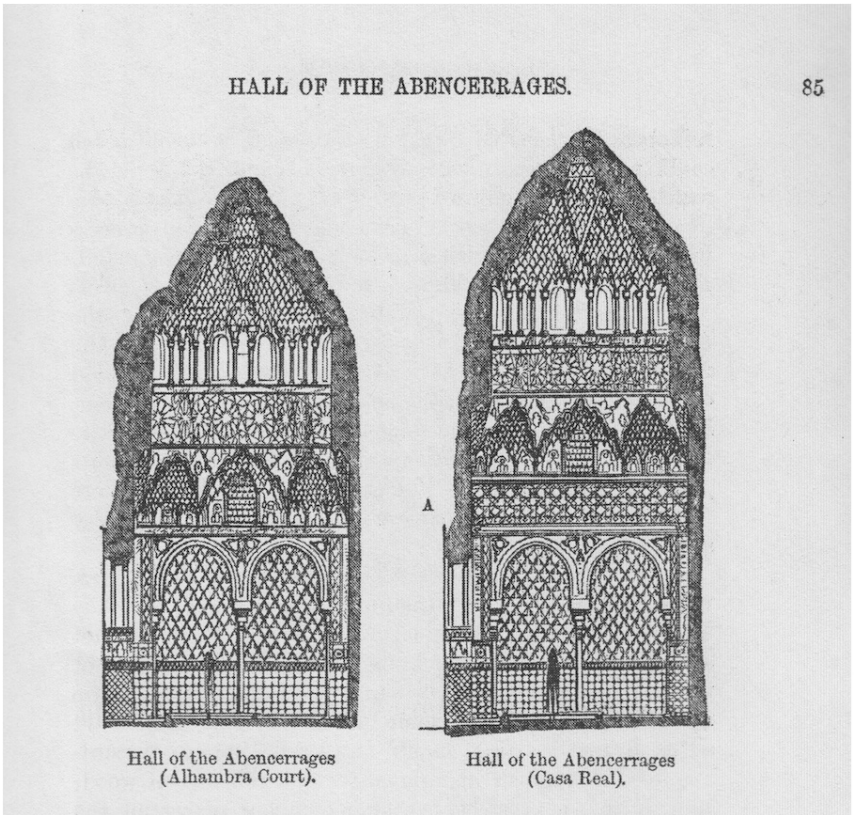

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Figure 8a: Comparison of the elevations of the Hall of the Abencerrajes in the Alhambra Court, Crystal Palace and in the Palace of the Lions, Alhambra. 1854. Taken from Jones, The Alhambra Court.

b

Figure 8b: Salón árabe, Aranjuez, elevation section. Image courtesy of Archivo del Departamento de Arquitectura y Jardines, AGP, Patrimonio Nacional.

Yet, still aiming for the visual impact of the soaring dome of the Hall of Two Sisters, the height of the drum was significantly expanded with two bands decorated with medallions and the area between them filled with row upon row of *muqarnas* in the drum's upper register. This design allows for the articulation of a sixteen-sided polygon, upon which rests the *muqarnas*-filled cupola.

Even if the *muqarnas* cupola reflects Contreras' original design, other elements of the elevation—the reduced height of the walls, the transition zone of enormous *muqarnas* squinches disproportionate to the other architectural elements, and a cornice above it to delineate the cupola's octagonal drum—reveal de la Fuente's incomprehension of the Nasrid compositional syntax in the Alhambra. The resulting visual effect is one of utter *disharmony*, exacerbated by the use of poorer decorative materials and synthetic pigments, further changes that took place under de la Fuente's direction (Serrano Espinosa, *Arquitectura y Restauración* 316; vol. IA). Then in 1851, literally adding insult to injury, when the finished *Salón árabe* was presented to the public, Gómez de la Fuente criticized it harshly, laying the blame on Contreras.[10] Colomer and Gómez de la Fuente's mistreatment of their colleague is, perhaps, only a footnote to architectural history, but their misunderstanding of Nasrid geometric proportionality and its relationship to color, grasped so well by Jones and Contreras, is an important, even paradigmatic instance of the skewing of the aesthetic principles of the Alhambra in the production of the Alhambresque.

Scale matters: from the Alhambra to the Alhambresque

A remark by Jones concerning the scale of original motifs and their adaptation provides a key to the broader applicability of this analysis of the *Salón árabe* at Aranjuez. Jones states that in the Crystal Palace he modeled the mosaic dados for the court and its façade on the dadoes in the Court of the Myrtles, but, as he explains, "we have been obliged to change the colours somewhat, as the pattern given by them in the original was too large for our space" (Jones, *The Alhambra Court* 63-64). In other words, in keeping with the aesthetics of the Alhambra, and for optical reasons that Ibn al-Haytham could have explained, color and geometry are perceived in interrelationship. Here as well, however, the soundness of theory is belied by deviations in practice. Later designers had effectively turned Jones' chromolithographs of details of architectural decoration into a pattern book. Despite Jones' indication of scale, which they missed, they also overlooked the relation of color to proportion and hence the "fit" into the original setting, as can be seen, for instance, in the room known alternatively as the *Salotto Moresco* and *Salotto Turco* in the Villa Mimbelli (now Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori) in Livorno (Talini, 10-13). The villa was built between 1865 and 1875 for Francesco Mimbelli (1842-1930), a wealthy Livornian merchant, under the direction of architect Vincenzo Micheli (1833-1905) and painter Annibale Gatti (1827-1909). It is not clear who was responsible for the design of the *Salotto*, which, most likely, served as a smoking room. The cupola of the room, executed in wood, presents a stylistic hybrid: its flattened form is reminiscent in its decoration, not in its profile, of a Mamluk dome, as seen in Jones' design for the khedive's garden pavilion in al-Gezira palace in Cairo, while its drum is embellished with an Alhambresque *muqarnas* colonnade. The architectural decoration of the room, and especially of its walls, is greatly simplified and stylized Alhambresque, whose striking chromatic scheme of saturated, primary colors was theorized by Jones (fig. 9).

[10] AGP, Administraciones Patrimoniales, Granada, Ca. 12016/6, discussed in Panadero Peropadre, "Madrid frente a Granada 102-104.

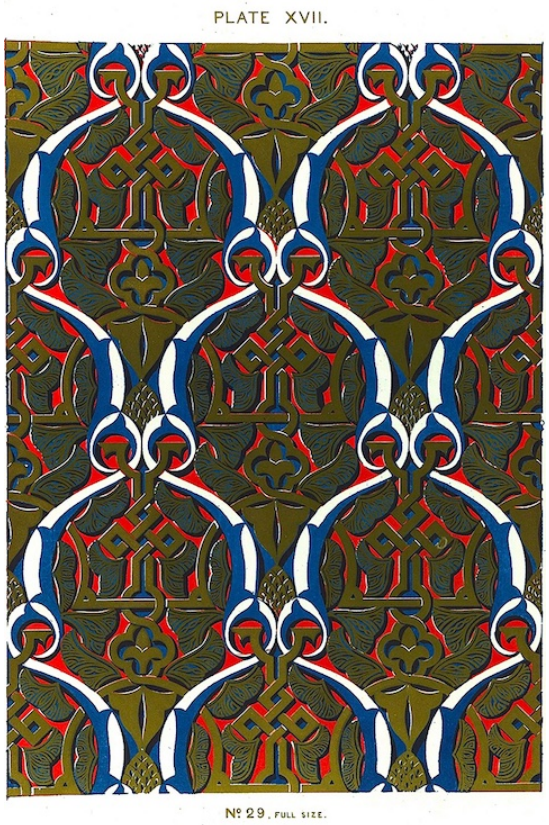

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Figure 9a: *Decorative ornament, Plate XVII, no. 29, full size. 1842-1845, chromolithograph. Taken from Goury and Jones pl. XVII, vol. 2.* Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, photographed by Rose Haidu.

b

Figure 9b: *Salotto Turco, Villa Mimbelli, Livorno*. 1865-1875. © Villa Mimbelli. Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, photographed by Rose Haidu.

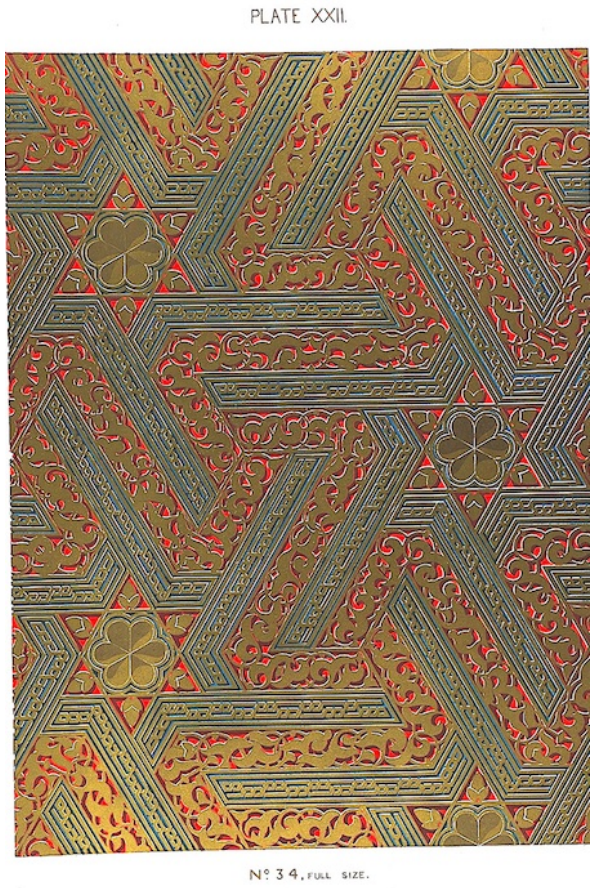

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Figure 9c: *Decorative ornament*, *Plate XXII, no. 34, full size.* 1842-1845, chromolithograph. Taken from Goury and Jones pl. XXII, vol. 2. Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, photographed by Rose Haidu.

d

Figure 9d: *Moorish Bath, Schloss Albrechtsberg Dresden*. 1850-1854. Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, photographed by Rose Haidu.

In its treatment of parietal decoration, the *Salotto Turco* is similar to an interior more familiar to scholars: von Diebitsch's Moorish Bath at Schloss Albrechtsberg in Dresden. Both interiors present examples in which the large-scale decorative motifs, executed in wood in the *Salotto Turco* and in cast plaster panels in the Moorish Bath, may well follow models in the original setting of the Alhambra, but they are *disproportionate* to the dimensions of their Alhambresque interiors. In consequence, the colors in these interiors appear too profuse and at times so indiscriminate as to result in flattened, monotonous surfaces. In other words, the disproportion in scale creates a disharmony in color, in contrast to the acute understanding of Jones and Contreras (in the latter's models, if not at Aranjuez). Thus, to recall Ibn al-Haytham's insight, beauty might be inherent in a single visual property, but complete and perfect beauty is achieved in the combination of visual properties: not color alone, nor geometry, but the relationship between them.

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Biography

Olga Bush (Ph.D. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University) is a scholar of Islamic art and architecture, whose research interests engage interdisciplinary methods and theoretical issues on topics ranging from the relationship of poetry to architecture in medieval Muslim aesthetics to nineteenth-twentieth century European and American Orientalism, to *matronage* of the arts in collecting practices. Currently a Visiting Scholar at Vassar College and Reviews Editor of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, she has taught Islamic art and architecture at Bard College, SUNY-New Paltz and Vassar College. Bush has received international research grants and held fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the American Academy in Rome, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, among others. She has published widely in such journals as *Muqarnas*, the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Artibus Asiae*, *Gesta* and the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, as well as in edited volumes, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and the catalogue of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has co-edited a volume of essays titled *Gazing Otherwise: Modalities of Seeing in and beyond the Lands of Islam (*Brill, 2015). Bush's book, *Reframing the Alhambra: Architecture, Poetry, Textiles and Court Ceremonial* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018) was a finalist for the 2019 Charles Rufus Morey Book Award (College Art Association), and the recipient of an honorable mention for the 2019 *Eleanor Tufts Book Award (American Society for Hispanic Art Historical Studies).*

Sarah Keller[1]

Islamic Geometry Reinterpreted
The Neo-Mamluk Windows of the Morrocan House

Abstract

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in Western countries for Islamic stucco glass windows, which were known from descriptions in books and as imported artifacts. Among the oldest publications is Émile Prisse d'Avennes' (1807-1879) *L'art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe.* One year after its publication in 1877, its illustrations inspired the geometrical patterns of the windows of the Moroccan House, a neo-Moorish pavilion in the park of Linderhof Palace (Ettal, Germany).

Keywords: stained glass; world exhibition; Émile Prisse d'Avennes; neo-Islamic; Cairo

Blue and red light pours over gilded stucco work, oriental textiles, and painted wood panels: nineteen windows and a large skylight adorn the so-called Moroccan House in the park of Linderhof Palace (fig. 1). The stained glass of the small lancet windows forms a star pattern of red, blue, and green glass, held together by a gilded metal grid. They were made in Munich and inspired by the Mamluk architecture of Cairo. The eclectic manner of their design and manufacture is exemplary and founded in the deep interest in the design vocabulary of the Islamic world at that time. In the course of the nineteenth century, this interest led to an increasingly precise study of Islamic art and architecture, the import of countless artifacts and even whole interiors, as well as to more or less authentic imitations of architectural elements. Although some aspects of this cultural appropriation, such as the neo-Islamic style rooms, the history of displaying Islamic artifacts, as well as the Moorish Revival, have been analyzed in several publications (Giese, Volait and Varela Braga; Volait, *Fous du Caire*; Giese, *Mudejarismo*), the importance given to Islamic stucco glass windows in historic times has not yet found its response in today's academic research.

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Figure 1: *Interior of the Moroccan House, park of Linderhof Castle*. Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Marburg, photographed by Rose Hajdu.

The discovery of Islamic stucco glass windows by Europeans

The oldest known textual descriptions of stucco glass windows—or *qamarīyāt*—are those from Egypt of the British orientalist Edward William Lane (1801-1876) and the French glass painter Étienne Thevenot (1797-1862). Lane had traveled to Egypt from 1825 to 1828, and in his book *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) he described in detail the windows with their colored glass and their flower motifs as well as their materiality: glass, plaster, and wood (Lane 19-20; vol. 1). In 1837, Thevenot quoted the French painter Prosper Marilhat (1811-1847), who had traveled to Egypt in 1831-1833 and described how he saw the making of:

> des panneaux de mosaïque en verres colorés d'une manière fort neuve pour un Européen. L'ouvrier après avoir découpé les verres d'une rosace, par exemple, lie les différents morceaux entr'eux par du plâtre presque liquide, et contenu dans une espèce de sabot, d'où il découle par une petite ouverture. On promène rapidement ce sabot sur les interstices des verres, et par ce moyen souvent répété, on les enchâsse dans les ouvertures de la rose ; on la met ensuite en place d'une seule pièce, après avoir sculpté les reliefs des nervures en plâtre (Thevenot 462, note 6).[2]

The manufacturing is outlined in detail and the glass painter Thevenot draws a comparison with the technique he knows: "Le plâtre fait ici à peu près l'office des plombs et des meneaux sans nombre des rosaces qui encadrent les vitraux en Occident" (Thevenot 462, note 6).[3] Unlike European stained-glass windows, which use lead cames to assemble the cut glass pieces, Islamic windows use stucco. Lane and Thevenot had very different audiences: while Lane wrote his book about Egypt in general, Thevenot wrote a history of stained glass, where his account on Islamic stucco glass windows is only a footnote. But this shows how the experiences and the knowledge gained directly in Egypt by travelers such as Marilhat was received in the European countries not only by orientalists.

Also in 1837, Pascal Coste (1787-1879) published his *Architecture arabe ou monuments du Kaire*. The French architect only made a short mention of *qamarīyāt* in his book, without going into detail, but one of his plates shows a façade of a Cairo house with eighteen stucco glass windows with their typical flower motifs (Coste pl. XLVII). Edward Lane had also written about Egypt and made many sketches, some showing Islamic windows. In the 1840s, both the British architect James William Wild (1814-1892) and the Bernese architect Theodor Zeerleder (1820-1868) followed this example and produced elaborate drawings and watercolors of Cairene interiors with *qamarīyāt.* Both architects used their studies for the making of replicas in their homelands.[4]

Some years later, the first Islamic stucco glass windows were imported to Europe and displayed at the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, incorporated into buildings in the Ottoman national section. Three buildings represented the empire: a mosque, a residence, and a bath. They were designed by the French architect Léon Parvillée (1830-1885) in collaboration with the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Barborini (1820-1891) and made in Istanbul. The residential building, named *Pavillon du Bosphore*, as well as the mosque, displayed several stained-glass windows (Çelik 103;

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[2] "[C]olored glass mosaic panels in a very new way for a European. The worker, after having cut the glasses for a rosette, for example, binds the different pieces together with almost liquid plaster, and contained in a kind of shoe, from which it emerges through a small opening. This shoe is moved rapidly over the interstices of the glasses, and by this often-repeated means, they are embedded in the openings of the rose; it is then put in place as a single piece, after having sculpted the reliefs of the plaster ribs." All translations are by the author of this article.

[3] "The plaster here serves more or less as the lead cames and the countless mullions of the rosettes which frame the stained-glass windows in the West."

[4] For James Wild's drawings see the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.3763-1938, E.3774-1938, E.3771-1938, E.3795-1938; Thomas 41-68, 55-58. For Zeerleder's drawings see Giese et al. 54-55 and the collection of the Burgerbibliothek Bern, Gr. B. 1039 and Gr. C. 897. See also Francine Giese's contribution in this issue.

Catalogue 8). Exactly how they looked is not known, however, the Ottoman official and exhibition organizer, Victor Marie de Launay (1822/1823-1890), described their technique in detail: "Ils ne sont pas, comme les anciens vitraux d'Europe, montés sur une armature de plomb, mais sur une plaque de plâtre coulé dans des bâtis percés à jour" (Bey 32).[5] If these windows from Istanbul were especially made for the exhibit or if existing windows were re-used is uncertain.

In 1858, the *qamarīyāt* of Istanbul, more precisely those of the Süleymaniye Mosque (AH 957-964 / AD 1550-1557), had received praising words in the journal *Organ für christliche Kunst* of the German painter Friedrich Baudri (1808-1874), quoting an account of the British architect William Burges (1827-1881): "Von der Wirkung der farbigen Fenster der Moscheen macht man sich schwerlich einen Begriff; hat man dieselben gesehen, so überzeugt man sich, dass die aus Edelsteinen geformten Fenster des Aladdin keine Fabel, nur eine Uebertreibung sind" (198).[6]

The fragility of the stucco glass windows complicated the task of importing them from the Islamic lands to the *Exposition Universelle*. While the creators of the *Pavillon du Bosphore* were able to import such artifacts, the architects of the Egyptian section were less successful. As far as it is known, there were no stained-glass windows integrated in the *Selamlik* nor in the *Okel* (caravanserai) (Çelik 112; Volait, "Égypte représentée" 430). But from a report of the French archaeologist Émile Prisse d'Avennes, member of the commission of the Egyptian section, we are informed about the intention to insert Islamic stucco glass windows there. The scholar, who had spent several years in Egypt, had been given the opportunity to buy in Paris three boxes with fragments of six *qamarīyāt* from a mosque in Cairo. These had been sent from Egypt to the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris but had not survived the transport and arrived there in pieces (Prisse d'Avennes 154; vol. 1).[7] In one of the archaeologist's portfolios from Cairo, a photo of these fragments can be found (fig. 2). Prisse d'Avennes managed to reconstruct two windows out of the fragments: several reconstruction drawings are preserved, which show the floral and geometrical motifs of the fragments in different compositions (fig. 3). In the end, the scholar published one reconstructed window (fig. 4) in his seminal 1877 publication *L'art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe*, the plates of which had previously appeared in 1869. In 1877, the finished work was published in association with the upcoming *Exposition Universelle* of 1878 in an augmented version of one text volume and three volumes of plates. The book seems to have attracted a lot of attention at the fair (Prisse d'Avennes (son) 53; Volait, "Émile Prisse d'Avennes" 107-108). Apart from the reconstructed *qamarīya*, a window from another Cairene mosque was published as well as two views with *qamarīyāt* of a private house (Prisse d'Avennes pl. CXLIV, pl. CXXXIX, pl. CXL; vol. 3).[8]

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[5] "They are not, like the old stained-glass windows in Europe, mounted on a lead frame, but on a plasterboard cast in open-drilled frames." For a similar description see *Coup d'oeil* 2-3. For the question of Victor Marie de Launay's authorship see Ersoy 274, fn. 64.

[6] "It is difficult to get an idea of the effect of the colored windows of the mosques; if one has seen them, one is convinced that the windows of Aladdin made of precious stones are not a fable, just an exaggeration."

[7] According to the merchant M. Maynard, the windows were taken out of the Cairene mosque Al-Ashraf ("Gama El-Achrafieh" begun in AH 826 /1424 AD).

[8] The *qamarīya* of plate CXLV had a direct impact on the *Villa di Sammezzano* (1853-1889), built by Ferdinando Panciatichi di Ximenes d'Aragona (1813-1897). Although Prisse d'Avennes declared the illustration to be a stained-glass window ("*chemsah* ou vitrail"), Panciatichi had it transferred onto the walls for a mural painting in the *Sala dei Gigli*. The *Sala degli Amanti* in the same building has a wooden ceiling which is also based on a plate by Prisse d'Avennes (Keller, "Les vitraux du fumoir arabe" 33; Varela Braga 176-179.

Figure 2: Émile Prisse d'Avennes. *Photograph of qamarīya fragments from Cairo*. Album *Art Arabe. Dessins : Arabesques 5*. Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France. gallica.bnf.fr.

Figure 3: Émile Prisse d'Avennes. *Reconstructing drawing by Émile Prisse d'Avennes.* Album *Art Arabe. Dessins : Arabesques 5*. Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France. gallica.bnf.fr.

Figure 4: Émile Prisse d'Avennes. *Reconstructed qamarīya.* Taken from Prisse d'Avennes pl. CXLV. Image courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections.

New colorful windows for the Moroccan house

At the same fair of 1878, the Moroccan House was exhibited as a contribution of Morocco on the Trocadero (*Les Merveilles* 374). The wooden pavilion partitioned into several smaller rooms was originally commissioned by the Austro-Hungarian consul, Maximilian Schmidl, in Tangier for the Vienna World's Fair of 1873 (Weyer 8). Probably after a stopover at the World's Fair of Philadelphia in 1876, it was shown in Paris. There, the neo-Moorish 'Tangier house' caught the attention of the German architect Georg von Dollmann (1830-1895). He was the court architect of the Bavarian King Ludwig II (r. 1864-1886) and had been sent to the *Exposition Universelle* to study and describe the different Orientalizing exhibition pavilions there. Already in 1874, Ludwig II had commissioned an *Arabian Pavilion* for the park of his palace Linderhof near Munich, built between 1870 and 1886 in neo-Rococo style (Petzet 220). This building was not executed, but two years later the so-called Moorish Kiosk was bought. This was also a former World's Fair pavilion, made in 1867 by Carl von Diebitsch (1819-1869). The German architect had made his neo-Moorish Kiosk at his own expense and presented it in the Prussian section at the 1867 *Exposition Universelle*. Only nine years later, Ludwig II was able to purchase the building and had it, with some modifications, re-erected in the palace park (Fehle; Keller, "Maurischer Kiosk" 189-191).

But the king's desire for Orientalizing pavilions was not yet satisfied. At the 1878 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, he wanted to acquire the most beautiful building and on the basis of von Dollmann's description he chose the Moroccan House (Weyer 8). With its Ibero-Islamic elements such as *muqarnas* (stalactite vaults), *sebka*-like ornaments (interlacing arches) and the wooden ceilings with star motifs, the pavilion was built in the Alhambra style (fig. 1).

After its purchase, Ludwig II had it placed on the woodland Stockalpe near the Linderhof, where its façade received the conspicuous banding in red and white as well as the blind horseshoe arches. The interior had been repainted, gilded, and newly furnished. The colorless glazing of the window openings was replaced with stained glass panels. In addition to the repainting of the walls, it was the king's wish to insert colorful windows: "bei allen Fenstern sollen die unteren vergitterten Scheiben farbig gemacht werden."[9]

So far, the building had nothing to do with Prisse d'Avennes and his aforementioned publication *L'art arabe*, but when von Dollmann had to design new, colored windows for the Moroccan House, he found his inspiration in this book. In the documents of the court secretary of Ludwig II, two loose sheets with illustrations of window grilles are preserved (fig. 5): They are tracings of plates from *L'art arabe* (fig. 6).[10]

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[9] "[T]he lower latticed panes of all windows are to be made in color." Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Hausarchiv, Nachlass Ludwig II. Bauakt 1869-1981, no. 108/2.1; see Kriewitz 20.

[10] Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Hausarchiv, Nachlass Ludwig II, Hofsekretariat 1884; Prisse d'Avennes pl. XLV (bottom right), pl. XLVI (top left) and text 264; vol. 1.

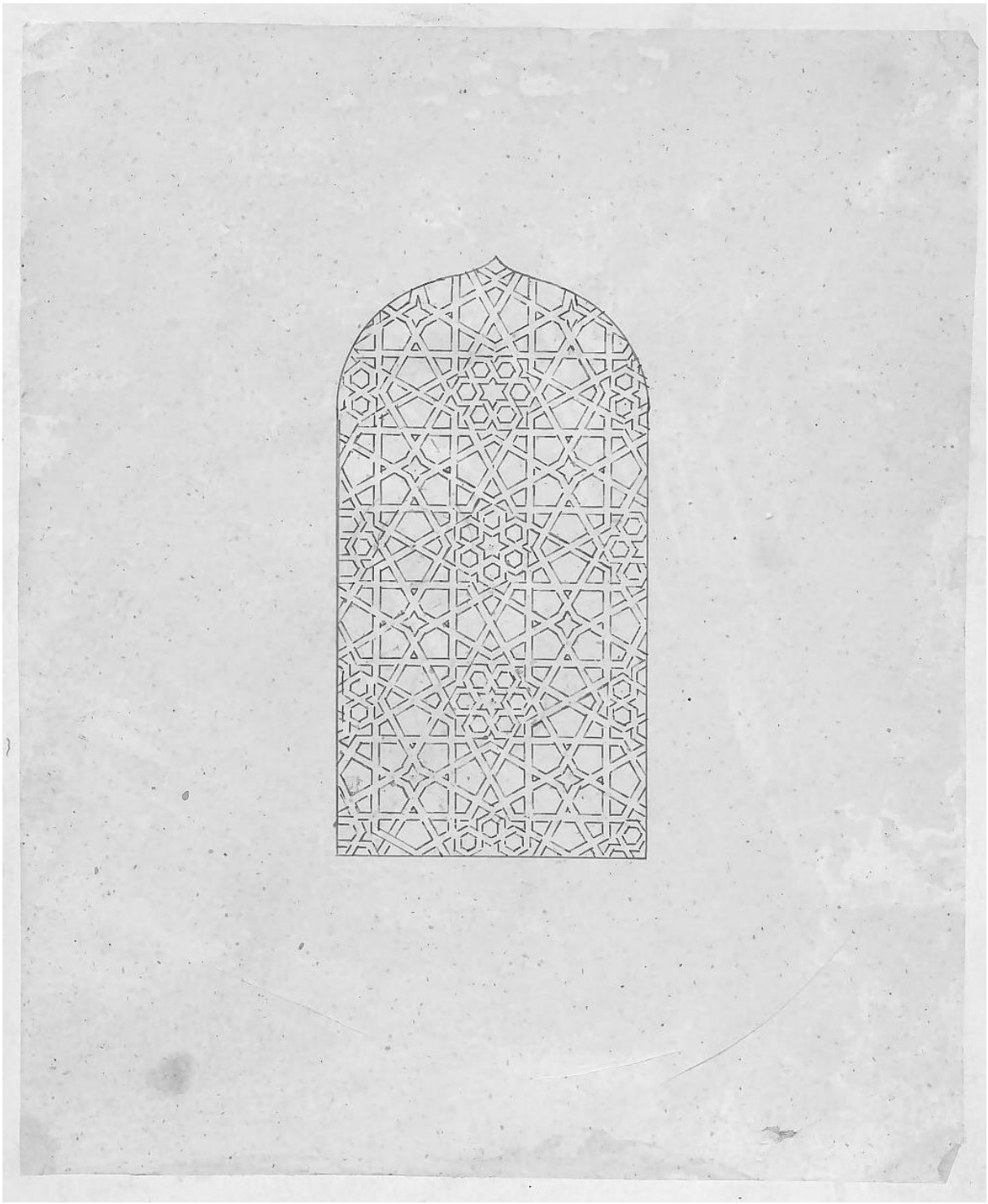

Figure 5: *Trace copy from Prisse d'Avennes' plate XLVI.* 1884. Geheimes Hausarchiv, Hofsekretariat, München. Image courtesy of Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.

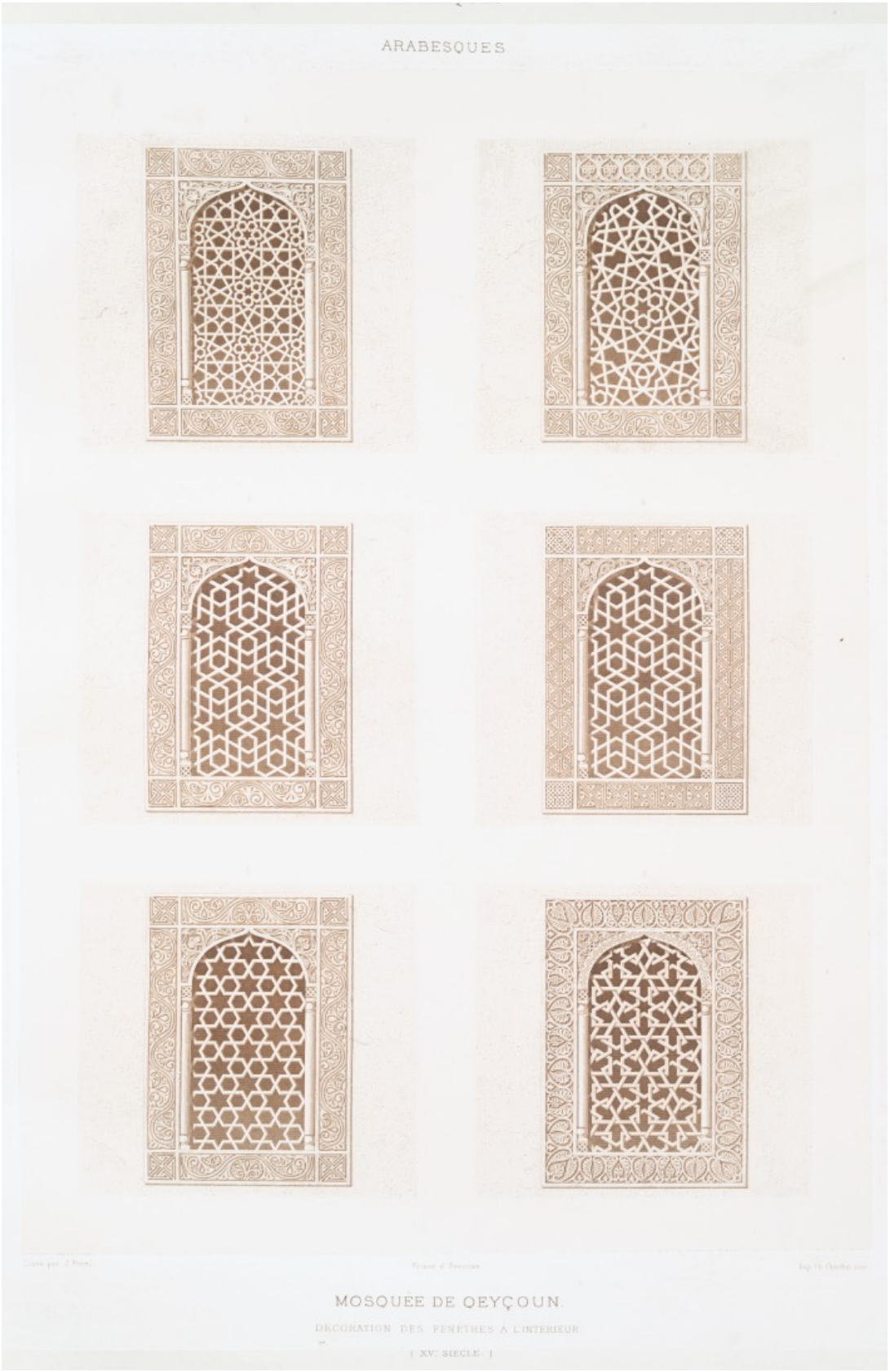

Figure 6: Émile Prisse d'Avennes. *Window grilles from the mosque of al-Amir Qawsun, Cairo (AH 730 / 1329/1330 AD).* Taken from Prisse d'Avennes pl. XLVI. Image courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections.

The copying process is reflected in the perforation of the sheets as well as in auxiliary lines in ink and pencil. The stone window grilles depicted belong to the mausoleum of Hasan Sadaqah (AH 715-721 / AD 1315-1321) and the mosque of al-Amir Qawsun (AH 730 / AD 1329/1330), both dating to the Mamluk period and with the latter being mostly destroyed today. Prisse d'Avennes published a second illustration of the cupola of the mausoleum, which shows the window grilles in their architectural context (pl. XLV). They do not include glass but are unpainted openwork. The nineteen newly manufactured windows for the Moroccan House are exact copies of these illustrations (fig. 7), and its large skylight is based on the same patterns. For the windows' colors, von Dollmann drew on the stained glass of the Moorish Kiosk, made one year before in 1877. When the Moorish Kiosk arrived at Linderhof, it had been extended with a new niche, repainted, and also refurnished with new stained-glass windows (Keller, "Maurischer Kiosk" 189-191). Apart from the designs for the windows that were executed, six further preliminary studies are preserved, which document the design process for the stained glass. Von Dollmann elaborated different color concepts, as one of these studies shows (fig. 8). In all likelihood, the court architect would have presented his designs to his commissioner, King Ludwig II, and let him choose.

Figure 7: *Window in the Moroccan House.* 1878. Image courtesy of Bildarchiv Marburg, photographed by Rose Hajdu.

Figure 8: Georg von Dollmann. *Preliminary study for the windows of the Moorish Kiosk. 1876*, watercolor, pen and ink, 59.3 × 37.5 cm, Ludwig II.-Archiv, inv. no. 2165s. Image courtesy of Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung.

The same glass painter who had executed the windows of the Moorish Kiosk was assigned to create the stained-glass panels of the Moroccan House: the Munich glass painter Franz Jäger (1842-after 1895; Staschull 55). He used the tracings of the window grilles after Prisse d'Avennes' plates mentioned above as a template. His colorful glazings were made at a time, when, due to a reappraisal of the Middle Ages, the art of stained glass in Europe was being rediscovered. After it had gone out of fashion in the eighteenth century, it was Ludwig's II grandfather, the Bavarian King Ludwig I (1786-1868), who had made the first commission for monumental church windows in 1827, founding the very influential Königliche Glasmalereianstalt in Munich which inspired much neo-Gothic enthusiasm. By the 1870s, when the windows of the Paris exhibition pavilions were made, the movement was flourishing: the new stained-glass workshops in Germany, especially in Munich, were almost uncountable (Vaassen 19, 23). It was therefore only natural that Ludwig did not try to import fragile original windows from Morocco or Egypt, as it was attempted for the World's Fairs, but made use of the local, prosperous production. In this way the king could even more directly implement his wishes and ideas.

Still, Georg von Dollmann did not simply apply the already existing pattern of the stained-glass windows of the Moorish Kiosk but sought a new Islamic model: not Prisse d'Avennes' colorful plates of Islamic stucco glass windows but the glassless window grilles were chosen as models. The original materiality did not matter, important was the adequate form. On the basis of the window grilles, Franz Jäger produced purely geometrical stained-glass windows, in which the plain colored glass pieces play the decisive role. The artist chose a technique for these glazings, which was unusual for its time. Instead of setting the glass pieces into slim lead cames, Jäger clamped the colored-glass pieces between two gilded openwork sheets already cut into the desired patterns, and then fixed them with small screws (Pohle and Thom 7). In contrast to the lead technique, the resulting window grilles were wider and their outlines even more pronounced due to the gilding. Their overall appearance therefore resembled more that of the window grilles.

Stained glass windows were an essential feature of many neo-Islamic buildings. They were constitutive for the ambiance of the interiors and therefore received equal attention from both nineteenth-century architects and designers. While towards the end of the century dozens of *qamarīyāt* were imported to Europe and also integrated into neo-Islamic style rooms, many architects opted for the creation of new stained-glass windows, especially when they were more oriented towards Ibero-Islamic architecture with the Alhambra as the main model. Although they were never entirely true copies, neither were the windows random designs, but carefully developed reinterpretations of Islamic architecture, as imparted by contemporary publications. In this same way, the architect Georg von Dollmann, the glass painter Franz Jäger and King Ludwig II created together neo-Islamic windows, in which the sophisticated geometrical patterns of Mamluk architecture are illuminated with striking colors.

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Biography

Sarah Keller is a senior researcher at Vitrocentre Romont, Switzerland, where she deals with Swiss stained glass of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. As a specialist for the glazing, she was collaborating with the research project "Mudéjarismo and Moorish Revival in Europe" from 2014 to 2019. Since 2020 she is a project partner in the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)-project "Luminosity of the East. Materiality, Provenance and Reception of Islamic Coloured Glass Windows in the West". She holds a PhD in Art History from the University of Bern. Her dissertation thesis analyzed the transfer of Islamic elements to Romanesque architecture in Northern Spain.

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Persian-Punjabi/Urdu Identities of Traditional Geometrical Patterns Lost During the Colonial Rule of the Punjab (1849–1947)[2]

Abstract

Annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849 brought about major modifications to the local visual culture. Expecting Indian crafts to remain frozen in time (for several reasons), the colonial administrators and art critics disapproved the changes employed by the craftsmen in their wares to cater to the new ruling class. Among the corrective measures adopted by the government to revive the 'dying' Indian art and craft, art schools were set up and surveys were conducted to publish illustrated monographs on individual crafts bringing once strictly guarded trade secrets out in the public. By the late nineteenth century, the 'native craftsmen' or *mistrī*s themselves emerged as authors of illustrated craft manuals carrying instructions in all three important vernaculars, Gurmukhi, Urdu and Sanskrit mixed with some English terms and designs. The most interesting among these publications are a few woodcarver's manuals that laboriously enumerate a wide range of geometric designs for both architecture and furniture. Each shape, its construction methods and titles are given in an interesting mix of the three vernaculars. These terms were also mentioned by John Lockwood Kipling, the first Principal of the Mayo School of Industrial Art (1876-1893) in his essay on wood carving but abandoned by the time Percy Brown (1897-1909) took over. Except for some, today most of these terms and construction methods are unknown even to the traditional craftsmen of the Punjab. This paper aims to trace the history of traditional geometrical patterns going as far back as Mughal times (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), their references in manuals published by local craftsmen during the colonial rule and the role of British art educators on social memory.

Keywords: Lahore; *mistrī*; craftsmen; illustrated manuals; colonial rule

Little known today are the illustrated instruction manuals on architecture and crafts including (but not restricted to) woodwork, jewelry making, metal polishing, and fabric dyeing published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in northwest India. Authored by hereditary craftsmen, they appeared in different cities of colonial Punjab—Lahore, Amritsar, Jallundhar,

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[2] Acknowledgements: I am grateful to the organizing committee of the "Geometry and Colour: Decoding the Arts of Islam in the West 1880-1945" conference for accepting my paper. The acceptance was accompanied by an invitation to present in person, but the Covid-19 disruptions did not allow me to do so. My special thanks are due to Dr. Axel Langer, one of the organizers, who constantly stayed in touch during times of uncertainty and managed my online presentation with great skill and patience. I would like to acknowledge the support of my research assistants Aisha Ali and Amen Imran during the preparation of the conference paper, Khurram Farrukh for a copy of Percy Brown's book from the NCA Archives and to Susan Stronge, Senior Curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for a high-resolution image of Kipling's plate 5 (this article's figure 1).

Patiala, and Rawalpindi—and most of them carry instructions in all three important vernacular languages, Gurmukhi, Urdu, and Sanskrit, mixed with some English terminology and designs. These manuals communicated ideas of modernity to the Punjabis, who in 1849 were the last Indian group to submit to the British rule and had initially shown considerable resistance to foreign ideas. The text of these manuals carries a marked impression of colonial intervention that included craft documentation, categorization, and art and craft education. The use of the three vernaculars indicates the religious divide introduced and exploited by the British for political gains. It also sheds light on the missionary agenda of the state where each religious entity was assigned a language and approached accordingly: Sikhs through Gurmukhi, Muslims through Urdu, and Hindus through Sanskrit (Mir).

This paper aims to introduce craft manuals carrying instructions for creating geometric patterns meant for decorating a variety of architectural surfaces and movable objects. A few examples of the former could be wooden, terracotta or stone lattice work (*jālī*), and stone or tilework especially on dados and floors as well as doors. Objects in the latter category included but were not limited to furniture, carpets, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and so on. What makes the information given in these manuals fascinating and different from modern publications is that patterns are neither listed by their serial numbers, nor always by the number of geometric divisions denoting their method of construction. Interestingly, in most cases, they have a title in one or a mix of vernacular terms, both descriptive and symbolic in nature. Meant to distinguish one type of geometric design from the other, more than the descriptive part, it is their symbolic aspect that offers insight into social and cultural leanings of people who used them. Moreover, they carry traces of adaptations made in these titles while they moved from one region to another or one language system to the next.

As mentioned above, these craft manuals were written by native craftsmen who started sharing their hereditary secrets with the general public around the late nineteenth century. Since most of these authors refer to themselves as *mistrī*s or *kārī-gar*s (master masons and craftsmen), let me explain this term before moving forward as it will shed light on the context and authenticity of information offered in these booklets.[3] An 1888 publication, *Art Manufactures of India,* refers to *mistrī*s as skilled workmen or foremen (Mukharji 53). Volume I dedicated to *The Art of Erecting and Adorning Buildings* (*Fann-e Ta'mīr-o Tahẕīb-e 'Imārāt*), of a 1939 Urdu series, *A Glossary of Technical Terms Used in Indian Arts & Crafts* (*Farhang-e Iṣṭilāḥāt-e Peshawarān: Hindustān ke Muḳẖtalif Funūn aur Ṣan'atoṅ ke Iṣṭilāḥī Alfāz-o Maḥāvarāt kā Jāmĕ' Majmū'a*), describes the term in some detail. It first lists *mistar* (spelt as *misṯar* in Platts) and then *mistrī*. According to this, "*mistar* is the tool used to smoothen the plastered surface, usually a long, flat wooden plank; also, the architectural measuring rod or yard". And "*mistrī* is the head of the construction team that includes labourers and craftsmen" (Zafar-ur-Rahman 154-155). The reason for understanding the context and usage of the term *mistrī* is important as it gives authenticity and legitimacy to someone who claimed to be a hereditary craftsman. Manuals authored by *mistrī*s, therefore, reflect a knowledge system that had been in circulation for centuries. These men belonged to occupational castes and were members of families that had been practicing their respective crafts generation after generation. For them, the handing down of skills was no less than passing on a sacred secret and its reception was a great familial honor.

The association of geometric patterns with decorative arts of the Islamic world is well established but it is difficult to trace the earliest instances of the use of geometric patterns in India. We can nevertheless attribute this introduction to craftsmen hailing from Central Asia and Persia, at the latest, after the Ghaznavid control of northern India in 1030 (Anjum 234). It is not surprising then that

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[3] John T. Platts provides the terms "*mistarī*", translating it as "A head officer, a master mason, or bricklayer, [et]c." (1031). He defines the *kārī-gar*s as "A workman, craftsman, an operative; a skillful workman, an artificer, artisan, a manufacturer" (800).

the names of most geometric patterns carry hints of Persian whenever they are not in pure Persian, such as *nau-bārah ḵhurd* and *hasht-panchaḵ* (Naqqash 95). While *Nau* or *nav* is "nine" (from Sanskrit *navan*) and *bārah* is "twelve" in Hindi, *ḵhurd* is "small", "little" or "young" in Persian. Similarly, the second compound has *hasht* ("eight" in Persian), while *panchaḵ* appears to be a distorted form of *pañć-ḵoṇ* or *pañć-ḵhāna*, a "pentagon" in Sanskrit (Platts 272). Dedicated to exploring the semantic etymology of some of the titles of geometric pattern used in these manuals, this paper is an attempt to shed some light both on their circulation and termination. This is with the hope that future scholarship may pick them up to connect us to meaningful information about their development and usage in different cultures.

The ebb and flow of craft practices at Lahore

Owing to its strategic location and political significance, Lahore flourished as a center of economic activities whenever there was peace and stability. This naturally resulted in an influx of people of all trades, many of whom became permanent residents. Names of lanes and localities in the old part of the city, where hereditary craftsmen resided, offer evidence of their presence in the city in large communities. As I have explained elsewhere:

> Historically, clusters of artisans practicing specialized crafts inhabited different sections whose names reflect the wares made and traded within them: "Mahalla Musavvaran" (artists' quarters), "Sooha Bazar" (gold market), "Mahalla Teer-garan" (arrow makers' quarters), "Mahalla Kaman-garan" (bow makers' quarters), and the "Kinari-Bazar" where the *ḵinari-baf* (metallic-lace makers) sold their goods (Khan 469).

Annexation of the Punjab brought about major changes on all fronts for the local population and the region in general. The most impactful were replacing Persian with Urdu as the official language (craft manuals, therefore, use Urdu and not Persian), introduction of new education systems (briefly discussed below) and mechanical methods of production and communication (such as the printing press and railway). The political change not only uprooted the upper echelons of society, it terminated several age-old traditional knowledge systems and severely disrupted hereditary art and craft practices. The new set up was accompanied by an inflow of European aesthetics introduced into the local visual culture that brought about a rapid decline in the local art and visual culture. In his efforts to adapt to the tastes of the new patron, aesthetic sensibilities and techniques of the hereditary craftsman underwent major modifications. The laborious miniature painting technique earlier used to capture court scenes and life of luxury was replaced with quick sketches in gouache-cum-watercolor mainly used for drawing or painting local occupations and sent back home to Britain as images of 'exotic India'. These were sets of paintings and drawings of the castes, traders, and occupations depicted with their spouses or tools of trade, "usually the more bizarre, the better" (Cohn 100). Countless other crafts faced similar consequences especially hand-woven fabric, clay and metal pottery, jewelry, and all fields related to the building profession. These attempts for survival were seen as a careless copying of Western designs by the British authorities, and the Indian craftsmen were censured for bringing about a decline to traditional craft practices.

The Indian Pavilion at *The Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* in 1851 in London was a huge success and was lauded by both critics and the general public for the art and craft it showcased. Most of this collection had come from the coffers of the Mughals or other rajas usurped by the East India Company, including the Lahore Darbār's *toshaḵhāna* (Maharaja Ranjit Singh's treasury in the Lahore Fort).[4] In Guha-Thakurta's words, "India was laid out as an exotic pre-industrial entity, against which the modern industrial nations defined their inadequacies and their

[4] Platts (343) explains: "(prop. *toshaḵ-ḵẖāna*), s.m. A place where furniture is kept, a wardrobe; store-house, store-room."

advances" (Guha-Thakurta 49). The admiration lavished on these artifacts was nevertheless heavily laced with what Rémi Labrusse (1199) calls "an insistent rhetoric of decay." The British authorities reproached contemporary Indians for decadence in their craft production due to the mindless copying of traditional art forms as well as despoiling it with European aesthetics as if "enacting and bemoaning its acts of cultural devastation at the same time" (Labrusse 1196). Assigning themselves the task of rescuing Indian arts and crafts from this "dying" state, the government set up schools of art in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and then at Lahore. Meant for reviving traditional practices, ironically, these institutions were under the supervision of European instructors. Not stopping here, a widespread program of documenting Indian crafts was initiated around the same time. Paying no heed to traditions followed by local communities for centuries (if not millennia) of transmitting their knowledge to the next generation under oaths of discretion, these findings started to appear in publications such as the *Journal of Indian Art and Industries*. Information extracted from hereditary craftsmen was shared with the general public laying bare all possible details of material and method.[5]

There is no room for details of the consequences of these intrusions in the local visual culture and aesthetics, but comments by two British officers who watched these closely can help us understand their impact before we discuss the efforts of a British art educator who tried to reverse some of these damages. George Birdwood, an authority on Indian industrial arts and cultural affairs, acknowledged the consequences of the British strategies in his *Handbook to the British Indian Section* for the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1878. He noted that, "presently we shall see what the effect of the teaching of our Schools of Art has been on Indian pottery, the noblest pottery in the world until we began to meddle with it" (57-58). Birdwood's declaration that "[t]he spell of the tradition thus broken, one innovation after another was introduced into the manufacture" (117), sums up the damage art and craft practices of the subcontinent faced at the hands of its colonial masters. Writing in the same vein, J. L. Maffey, a British civil servant who also served as private secretary (1916-1920) to Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, openly accepted the fact that "'Western Ideas' are the bane of Indian art" in his 1903 publication *A Monograph on Wood Carving in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (3).

By the late nineteenth century, the wheels of destruction set into motion by the British policies, including art education to sons of hereditary craftsmen by European instructors, had wiped out an immeasurable body of information crucial for transmitting to the next generation both form and meaning and procedures and their significance. The first formal art institution established in Lahore was the Mayo School of Industrial Art in 1875 and John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911), who served until 1893, was appointed as its first principal. Before we go forward, the term "industrial art" is important to consider. We must note that art education in British India was listed under technical education and was administered by the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) in tandem with the Department of Agriculture and Industries, which of course explains the objectives of such institutions.

John Lockwood Kipling's attempts to keep traditional crafts alive

By the time the Mayo School came into being, the general dissatisfaction with art schools had already set in and the credibility of European methods to revive the "dying local crafts" was contested. Proven to be ineffective, a small number of British officials began to realize that it was further distorting whatever had survived in terms of indigenous methods. One of the main voices raising these pertinent questions was John Lockwood Kipling who, along with running the school,

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[5] For a detailed discussion of British art education and its role on the future of Indian visual culture, see Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*; Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*; Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art*.

was also serving as the curator of the Lahore Museum. In his efforts to reverse the damage already done and to preserve this fast-fading knowledge, he tried repeatedly to convince both the authorities and the locals of the value of traditional art and architectural practices in his annual reports for the two institutions and his essays published in the *Journal of Indian Art & Industry*. He believed architecture to be the mother of all crafts, therefore, the first step towards re-establishing severed links with traditional crafts, in his opinion, was a revival of indigenous architectural practices. This, he believed, was the duty not only of the official but also public circles, especially the Indian princes. We thus find him urging the PWD (Public Works Department) and Indian men of means to patronize Indian styles instead of blindly following the European architectural vocabulary.

Parallel to promoting indigenous architectural concepts and designs, Kipling was equally interested in helping the *mistrī*s and *kārī-gar*s polish their craft and make it relevant to contemporary times. He had the opportunity to work closely with them as—in addition to his responsibilities as the Mayo School's principal and curator of the Lahore Museum—he was also given charge of overseeing the Punjab crafts sent to industrial exhibitions at home and abroad. His writings show that he saw this relationship as that of both a teacher and a learner. As a teacher, instead of attempting to erase their inherited knowledge, he tried his best to keep it alive; as a learner, he used this opportunity to absorb the wisdom of tradition so he could pass it on to his pupils at the school. Even before this close interaction, Kipling had from the outset preferred sons of *mistrī*s for admission to the Mayo School as he genuinely wanted to help them usher in the new milieu by helping them build on their existing knowledge. Commenting on Kipling's role in supporting the local craftsmen, Tahir Kamran (452) rightly notes that he believed in "engaging every student to his ancestral profession."

With his close interaction with the Punjab craftsmen, it is not surprising that we find Kipling mentioning thirteen names of geometric patterns along with their illustrations in his article "Punjab Wood-Carving" published in 1884 in the *Journal of Indian Art & Industry*. His reference to them as "names of the figures given as known to the native workmen" testifies their utility and circulation in the craft community ("Punjab Wood-Carving" 3). Moreover, these names shed light on this community as they offer some very interesting mutations from Persian to Punjabi on the one hand and modification of a few to suit religious affiliations of their Hindu or Sikh clients on the other (fig. 1):

> No. 1, *Kunja rati mauj* or *pinjra*, the pattern proceeding from the corners; No. 2, *Ath-bárah*, composed of figures of eight and twelve; No. 3 is known as *Akbari* [in all probability this refers to the third Mughal emperor, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar], and No. 4 as *Sar*, which is inexplicable to the writer; No. 5 is *Katár i dar*, because it includes a triangular form resembling the Hindu dagger, or *katár*; No. 6, *Chhe-barah*, composed of figures of six and twelve; No. 7, *Asht panjik*, vulg. for eight and five; No. 8, *Barah túl*, an oblong of twelve; No. 9, *Deh túl*, an oblong of ten; No. 10, *Lolidar*, sash-bar section, because the bars are moulded, and not flat on the face; No. 11, *Gulandar kunja rati*, a hint of flowers proceeding from the corners; No. 12, *Deh túl*, another oblong of ten; No. 13, *Shesh tota*, a pattern of six pieces ("Punjab Wood-Carving" 3).

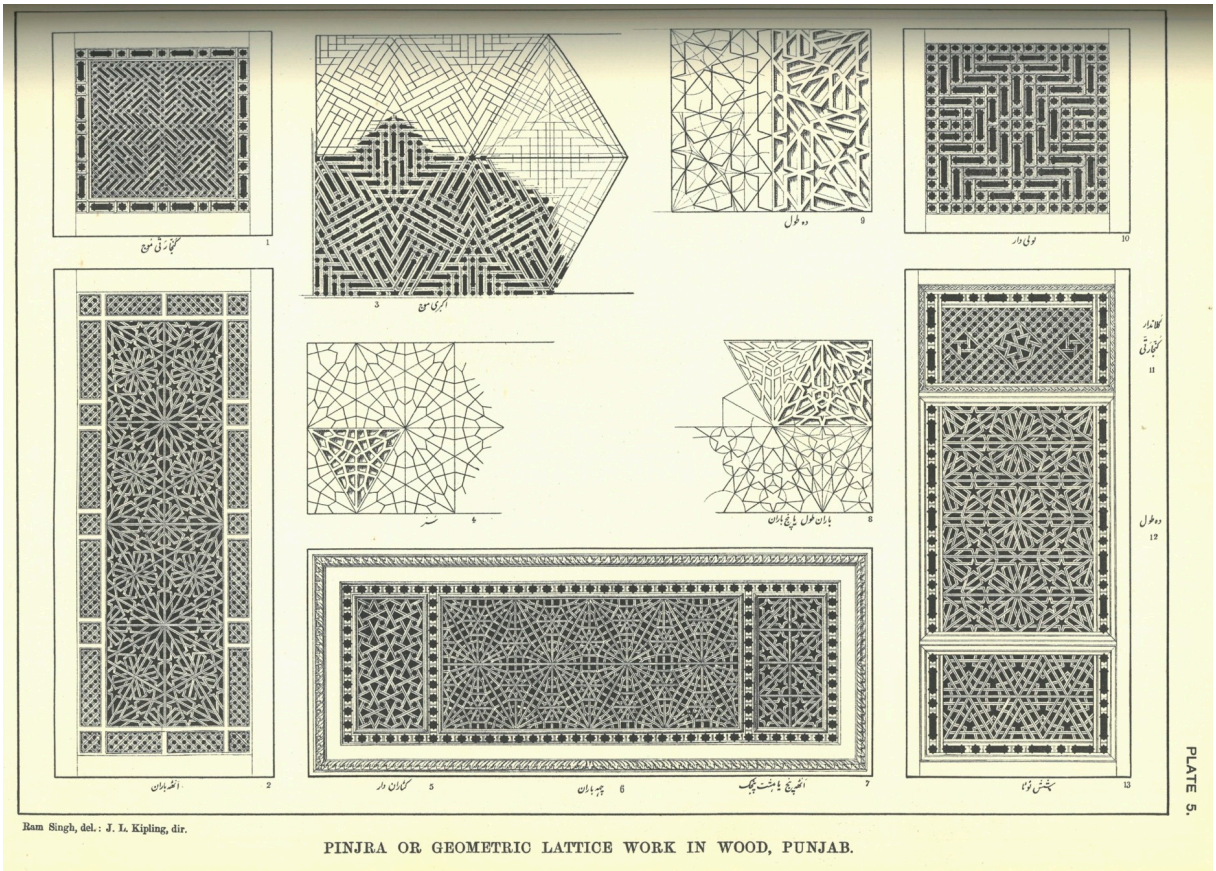


Figure 1: Ram Singh and John Lockwood Kipling. *Pinjra or Geometric Lattice Work in Wood, Punjab*. 1884. Taken from Kipling, "Punjab Wood-Carving" plate 5.

As seen here, Kipling offers English translations of these names to facilitate his readers. We must remember that the basic aim of such publications was to attract international buyers for Indian crafts and these terms would have been difficult to understand for such readers and also almost impossible for them to articulate. Keeping the commercial aspect of his publication in view, he explained that these titles did not seem "scientific" especially if used for "ordering panels of tracery" as they only "indicate generally the kind of figure required". Explaining *Kunja rati mauj* or *pinjra*, Kipling notes that "the Punjab *mauj* or *pinjra* work is similar to the lattice-work seen in Cairene *mouscharabiehs*, while the geometric framed work in relief made for ceilings is almost identical with the ceilings at Cairo" ("Punjab Wood-Carving" 3). The first part of this sentence points out that the nineteenth century Punjabi craftsmen used the two Persian terms *mauj* and *pinjara* interchangeably. *Mauj* (spelt as "*mowj*" by Sulayman Hayyim) means "A wave, surge, billow. An undulation. A wavy or undulating surface" (Hayyim 1017). Steingass (1341), in addition to the above mentioned, also defines it as "Undulating lines with which mats and carpets are interwoven." The second word *pinjrā* or *pinjarā* refers to a window that is latticed or made with perforations meant to allow air and some light into the interior space but not unwanted gaze from outside. Describing the *pinjrā* technique, Maffey (17) states that, "It is a kind of geometric lattice-work in which each piece of the wooden frame-work is held in place by a neat system of dowelling and without the aid of glue. This class of work is more common in the Panjáb than in these [Agra and Oudh] Provinces."

Lost identities of geometrical patterns and people

Tracing the antiquity or origins of the term *pinjrā* may be difficult, but its usage in the subcontinent during the sixteenth century can be easily ascertained through its reference in *Ain-e Akbari,* the third volume of *Akbarnama*, court chronicles of the third Mughal ruler Akbar (r. 1556-1605). Written by his close associate Abul Fazl Allami, it was completed around 1590. Having been in circulation for centuries, the term *pinjrā* (sometimes spelt as *pinjarā*) for lattice work is still in use in the Pakistani Punjab and has been spelt and pronounced incorrectly in both Urdu/Hindustani and English for a long time. One source contributing to this may have been Henry Blochmann's English translation of the Persian *Ain-e Akbari* published in 1873. In the section "On the Wages of Labourers," Abul Fazl (in the original Persian version) mentions the lattice maker using the word "*panjaray-sāz*" (1872: 170). Blochmann chose to wrote it as "*pinjara-saz*" (lattice work and wicker work)" in his English translation (1873: 225). According to Steingass (257), the Persian word for "a cage; a window; a lattice," is *panjaray* and not *pinjara*, and that "latticed" means *panjara-dar*. *Pinjar* or *panjar*, on the other hand, is a Sanskrit word translated as "a cage; a skeleton; the rib, the thorax; the human frame, the body; a rib" by Platts (271). In light of this, I would like to suggest that instead of *pinjarā*, the word referring to lattice-work be spelt and pronounced as *panjara or panjaray*, and as "*panjaray-sāz*" in the *Ain*.

We must return to Kipling and the nineteenth century now to see other sources offering names of geometrical or floral patterns. A few years before Kipling's article on woodcarving, George Birdwood in his 1878 *Handbook to the British Indian Section* for the Paris *Exposition Universelle*, also mentions some names while discussing inlaid work for decorating furniture practiced at Bombay. Explaining their Persian origins, he notes that "[t]he work was introduced into Scinde from Shiraz, about 100 years ago, by three Multanis" (Birdwood 78). Multan is and has been an important city of Punjab, at a distance of almost 300 km from Lahore and one that has maintained its Persian connections for millennia. The titles of some notable patterns Birdwood offers are:

> *chukur-gul*, or "round bloom"; *kutki-gul*, "hexagonal bloom"; *tinkonia-gul*, "three-cornered bloom"; *adh dhar-gul*, "rhombus bloom"; *tiki*, a small round pattern; and *gundirio*, "plump," compounded of all the materials used; *ek dana*, "one grain"; having the appearance of a row of silver beads set in ebony; and *pori lihur*, *jafran marapech*, *jeri*, *baelmutana*, *sankru hansio*, and *poro hansio*, these eight last being bordering patterns (78).

Once in circulation, these and several similar terms are difficult to trace today as by 1878, local terms and designs had started to fade away. Birdwood bemoaned the fact that the Indian collections, with every succeeding exhibition, were becoming

> more and more overcrowded with mongrel articles, the result of the influences on Indian art of English society, missionary schools, schools of art, and international exhibitions, and, above all, of the irresistible energy of the mechanical productiveness of Manchester and Birmingham, and Paris and Vienna (56).

By the time Kipling gave his young students a chance to employ their traditional skills handed down to them from their fathers or *ustād*s (lit. teachers), Indian craftsmen had faced discouragement for almost two generations—enough for losing important links in transmitting their knowledge to posterity.

Last attempts lost after Kipling's departure

Although Kipling admitted that his students at the Mayo School belonging to the carpenter class, had a "rule of thumb knowledge of Geometry," he nevertheless regretfully stated that due to insufficient understanding and practice, it usually failed where it began "to be useful" (Kipling

"Report on the Mayo School" xv). The difficulties encountered to recall traditional methods of learning and teaching geometry to sons of hereditary craftsmen finally gave way to South Kensington's recommended E. S. Burchett's *Practical Geometry* (Khan 478), first published in 1855 with later editions in 1861, 1876 and the fourteenth in 1872 (*A List of Books and Pamphlets* 56). After Kipling's departure in 1893, the attempts at recording and translating existing vernacular terms appear to have been abandoned by his successors. Therefore, the *Industrial Art Pattern Book* by Percy Brown, who served as the Principal of the Mayo School between 1897 and 1909, was an important publication that was also intended to receive orders. It only uses three broad classificatory vernacular terms to showcase woodwork decorative styles: "Pinjra Work" translated as "*Pinjrā ke kām kā istĕ'māl*,"; "Geometrical Patterns in Relief" translated as "*Munbbatī-girih*"; and "Perforated Work" as "*Shabka ke kām kā istĕ'māl"* (figs. 2a, 2b, 2c).[6]

[6] The date of *Industrial Art Pattern Book's* first publication has not been ascertained so far but it must have been sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century.

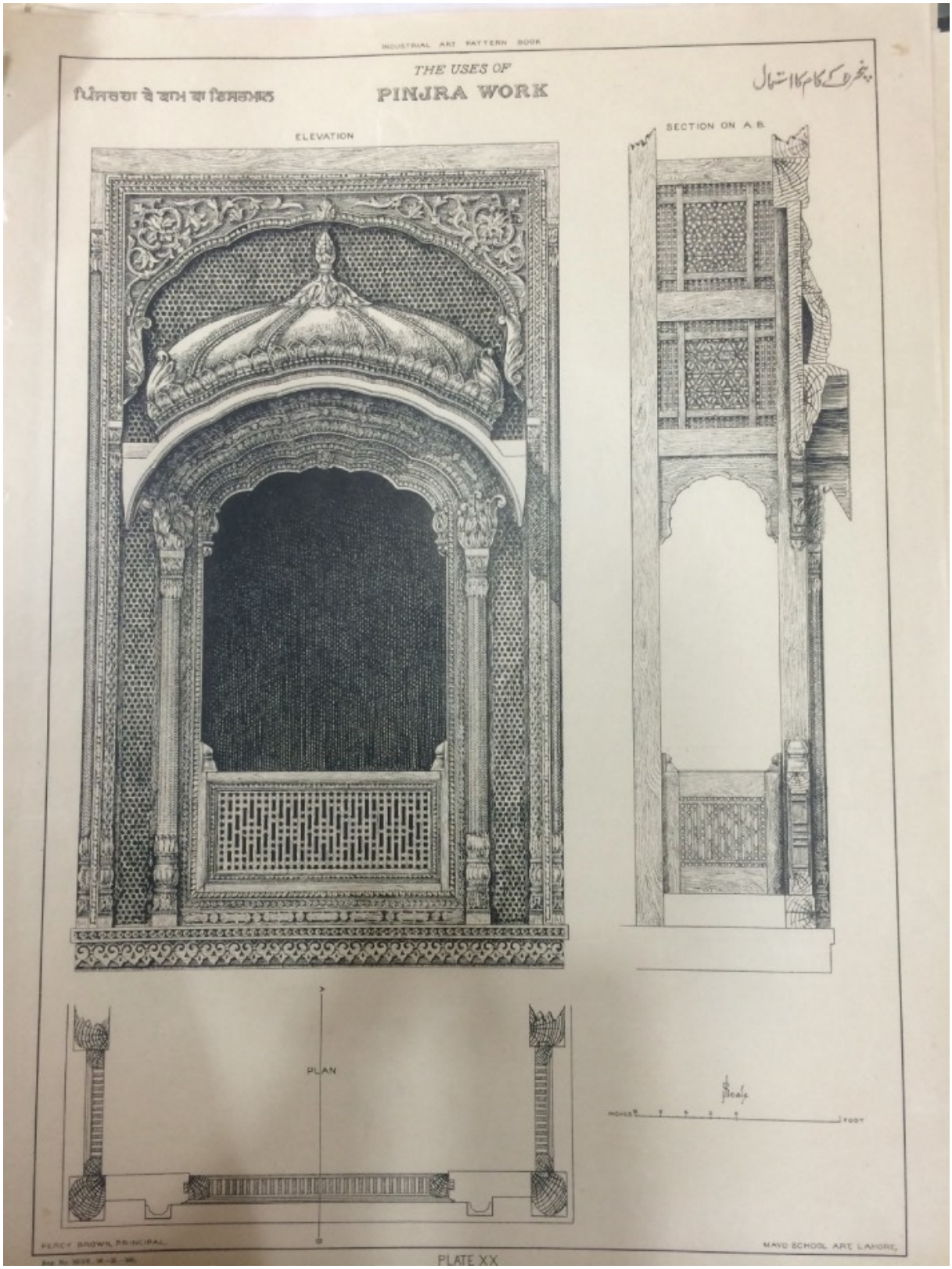


Figure 2a: *The Uses of Pinjra Work*. Ca. 1900-1910. Taken from Brown, *Industrial Art Pattern Book* plate XX.

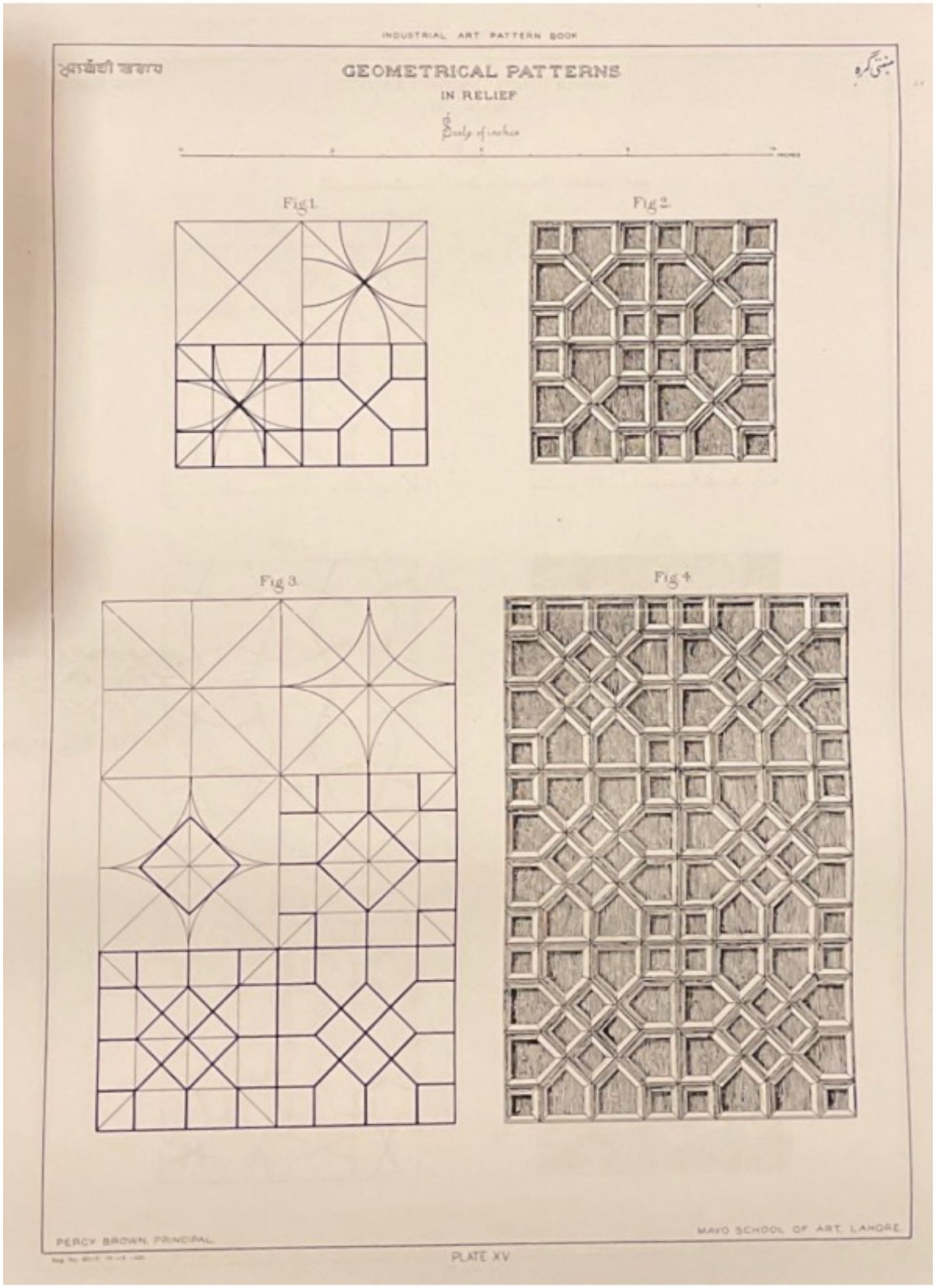


Figure 2b: *Geometrical Patterns in Relief*. Ca. 1900-1910. Taken from Brown, *Industrial Art Pattern Book* plate XV.

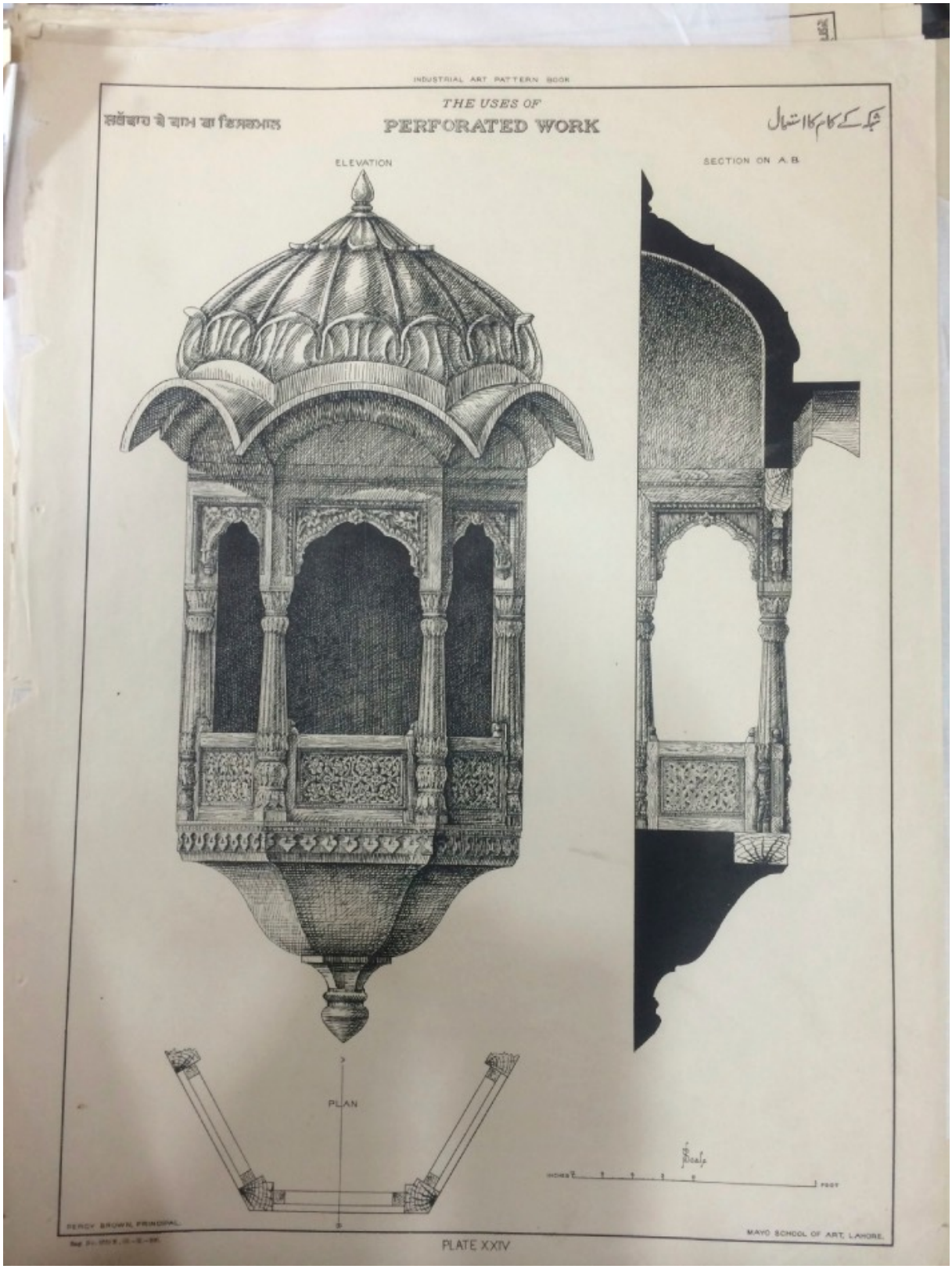


Figure 2c: *The Uses of Perforated Work*. Ca. 1900-1910. Taken from Brown, *Industrial Art Pattern Book* plate XXIV.

Listed under the *pinjrā*-work are a variety of geometric designs for latticework and methods of creating and joining wooden scantlings of different sizes. Talib Hussain, author of *Traditional Architectural Crafts of Pakistan*, explains that the *pinjrā*-work "generally has square or oblong perforations and is made like chess-board design with small size wooden scantlings" (168).[7] Since the term *munabbat* denotes relief work, *munabbatī-girih* are star-and polygon geometric patterns carved in wood.[8] The last term is in Urdu/Hindustani and means the work of *shabka* (lit. *kā* is "of", and *kām* is "work"). The word *shabka* is a vulgar form of the Arabic work *shabaka* from *shabak* which means to make reticulated. Synonymous with *jālī* (Platts 721), it is spelt variously as *shabakeh* (Hayyim 172) and *shabakat/shabaka* (Steingass 731). All three dictionaries translate it as latticework and trelliswork while Steingass also adds "a fishing net" to these meanings (731). Percy Brown uses the section on *shabka* to feature stylized vegetal patterns in latticework.[9] This appears to be the beginning of an end of each pattern's name and identity as subsequent publications continued in the same vein. It is no surprise then that Talib Hussain offers several details of traditional methods of craft production, but when it comes to geometric patterns, he refers to them only as six or nine cornered stars (Hussain 168-169). That each of these patterns, given by both Brown and Hussain as well as countless other publications, used to have a meaningful name has already been proven by Kipling's article on wood carving.

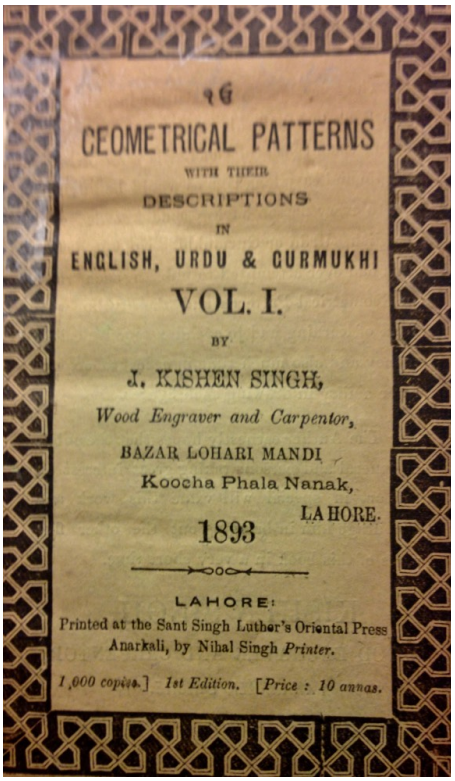
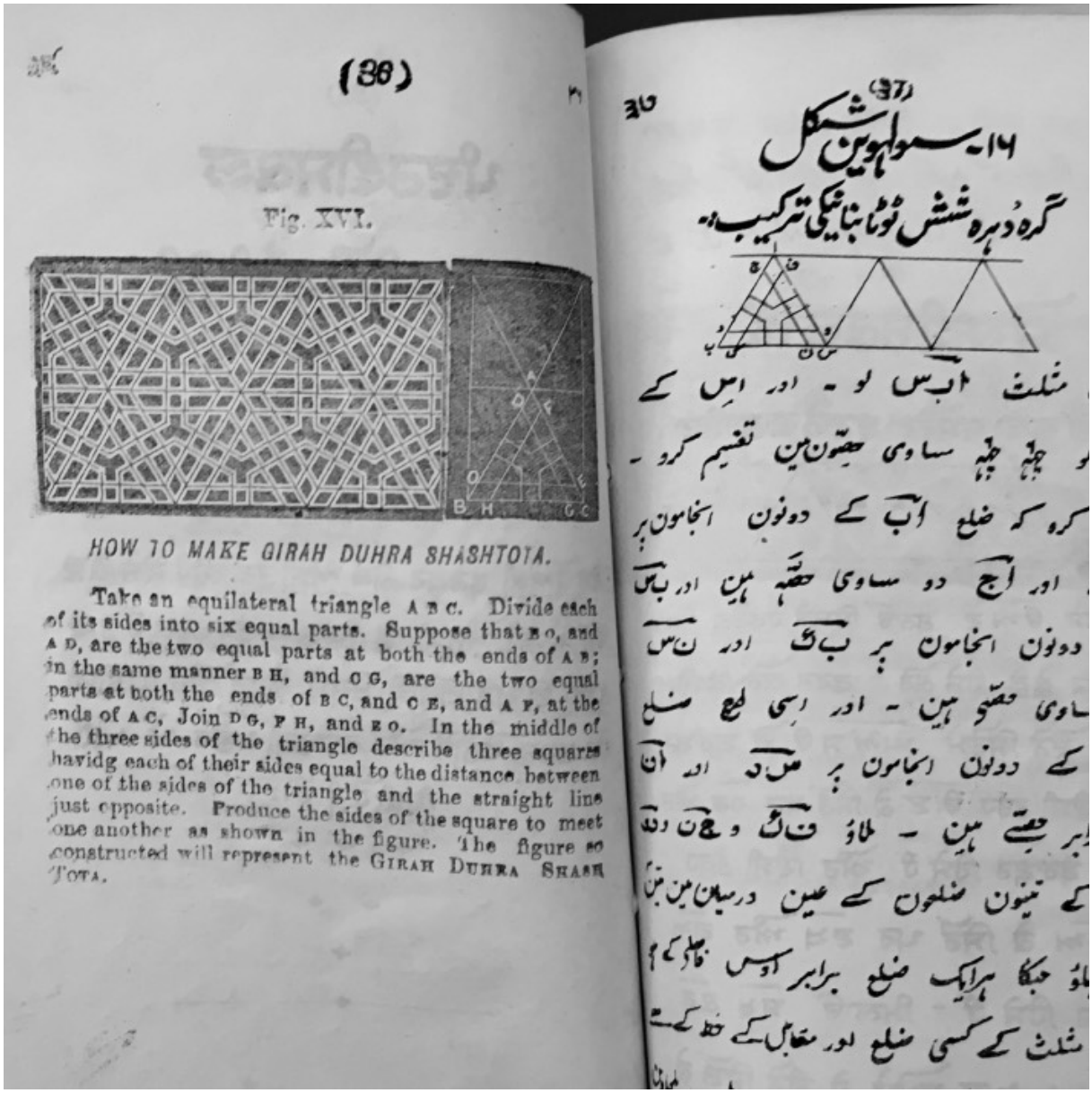


Figure 3a: Book cover of Singh, *Geometrical Patterns with Their Descriptions in English, Urdu and Gurmukhi*. 1893. Collection of The British Library Board, Asia, Pacific & Africa, 14117.a.33. Image courtesy of Mehmil Zia.

[7] Written as an essence of his experience spread over four decades of serving the Department (now the Directorate General) of Archaeology, Lahore, in key positions, Hussain bridges several gaps between current practices and their historical contexts in this important publication.

[8] *Munabbat,* according to Platts, derives from the Arabic root word *nabbat* or *nabat* "to cause to grow, or to grow out," and "to grow" respectively. The dictionary also gives it as "part. adj. & s.m. Caused to grow out or to be raised"; "ornamented in relief, embossed" (Platts 1070). The Persian word *girih* is translated as "A knot; knob; node; a joint, knuckle" (906). Explaining the use of the word *girih* for geometric patterns, Gülru Necipoğlu (ix) states that the "mode of geometric design, dominated by interlocking star-and-polygon patterns in two and three dimensions, came to be known generically in the Iranian world as *girih* (Persian, 'knot')."

[9] The difference between *pinjrā* and *shabka* is that the former is made by joining small pieces of wood while for the latter, vegetal or geometric patterns are executed on a solid plank of wood using a fretsaw or similar tools.



(36)

Fig. XVI.

HOW TO MAKE GIRAH DUHRA SHASHTOTA.

Take an equilateral triangle A B C. Divide each of its sides into six equal parts. Suppose that B O, and A D, are the two equal parts at both the ends of A B; in the same manner B H, and C G, are the two equal parts at both the ends of B C, and C E, and A F, at the ends of A C, Join D G, F H, and E O. In the middle of the three sides of the triangle describe three squares having each of their sides equal to the distance between one of the sides of the triangle and the straight line just opposite. Produce the sides of the square to meet one another as shown in the figure. The figure so constructed will represent the GIRAH DUHRA SHASHTOTA.

(37)

۱۶ سولھوین شکل

گرہ دوہرہ شش ٹوٹا بنانیکی ترکیب

مثلث اب س لو - اور اس کے

چھ چھ مساوی حصّون مین تقسیم کرو -

کرہ کہ ضلع اب کے دونون انجامون پر

اور اج دو مساوی حصّہ ہین اور ب س

دونون انجامون پر ب ک اور ن س

ساوی حصّے ہین - اور اسی طرح ضلع

کے دونون انجامون پر ص د اور ان

ابر حصّے ہین - ملاؤ ف ک و ح ن د

کے تینون ضلعون کے عین درمیان مین تن

لاؤ جبکہ ہرایک ضلع برابر اوس

مثلث کے کسی ضلع اور مقابل کے خط کے

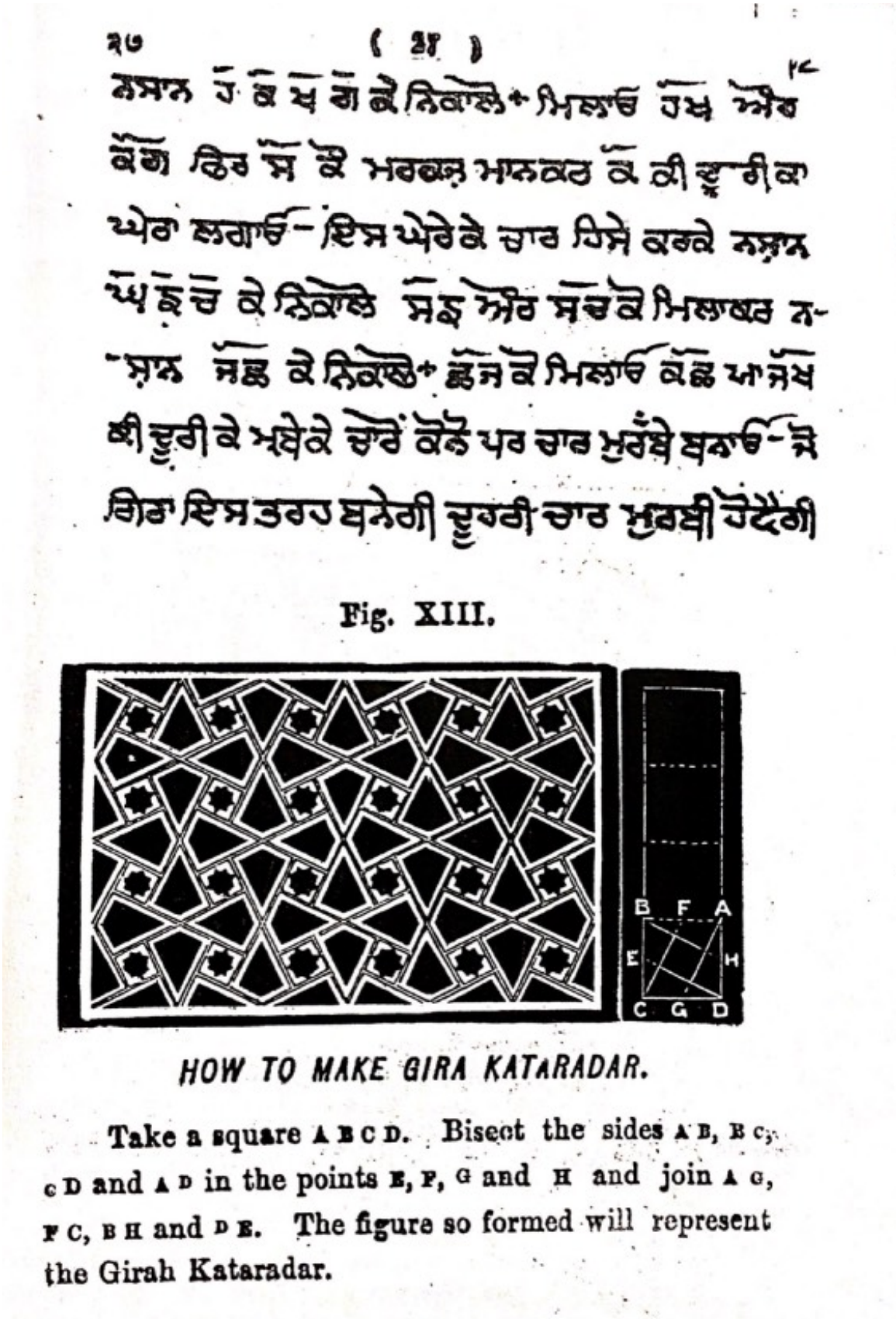
Figure 3b: *Girah* [*girih*] *Duhra Shashtota*. 1893. Pattern illustration. Taken from Singh, *Geometrical Patterns with Their Descriptions in English, Urdu and Gurmukhi*, figure XVI. Collection of The British Library Board, Asia, Pacific & Africa, 14117.a.33.

Lost somewhere in between the British official voices and our contemporary times are the bi- or tri-lingual illustrated craft manuals of a wide variety, authored by hereditary craftsmen, mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Of these, the ones connected to the art of construction carry instructions for creating geometric patterns that could be used for decorating a variety of architectural surfaces and movable objects. These publications reaffirm the fact that titles of patterns played important roles not only in identifying their unique features but also in disseminating their cultural semantics. So far, I have come across three such manuals published between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One is by J. Kishen Singh (1893; see fig. 3a),[10] another one that is undated and misses its title page (Untitled pattern manual),[11] and the third by Gian Singh Naqqash (1926). In all three manuals, most patterns carry a distinct title that does allude to their structural formation, but this information is not the only term of reference. In contrast, the eight drawings of geometric patterns in Talib Hussain's publication are nameless except for three referred to as six, nine, and twelve cornered stars (Hussain 168-171). Patterns in the three aforementioned manuals have meaningful names such as "*Girah* [*girih*] *Duhra Shashtota*" (Singh fig. XVI; see fig. 3b); "*Gira* [*girih*] *Kataradar*," "*Kunja Ratti Mauj,*" and "*Wadhwin Mauj Pakki Piri*" (Untitled pattern manuscript, figs. 4a, 4b);[12] as well as "*Kabutrī Chār Murabbi*" and "*Ganesh-Chāl Tund Girih*" (Naqqash 126).

[10] For more details see Khan, 479-481.

[11] This is an almost fifty-page long geometric pattern manual in Urdu, Gurmukhi and English with its title pages and front matter missing. Its diagrams in English and Gurmukhi start from the left side while the right side offers Urdu text which is completed with diagrams. The English/Gurmukhi side carries 61 figures mostly with details of their construction and the Urdu side has instruction for 25 patterns. The first fifteen patterns on the English/Gurmukhi side closely follow the sequence we find in J. Kishen Singh's manual but changes from this point onwards. This similarity suggests that the two manuals may have been published around the same time and one may have influenced the other.

[12] Compare the pattern of fig. 4a with number 5 and that of fig. 4b ("*Kunja Ratti Mauj*") with number 1 in Kipling's illustrated page (fig. 1 of this article).



३७ (३१)

ਨਸਾਨ ਹੋ ਕ ਖ ਗ ਕੇ ਨਿਕੋਲੇ+ ਮਿਲਾਓ ਹੋਖ ਔਰ
ਕੋਗ ਫਿਰ ਸ ਕੋ ਮਰਕਜ਼ ਮਾਨਕਰ ਕ ਕੀ ਫ੍ਰਾਂਗੀ ਕਾ
ਘੇਰਾ ਲਗਾਓ- ਇਸ ਘੇਰੇ ਕੇ ਚਾਰ ਹਿਸੇ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਸ਼ਾਨ
ਘ ਙ ਚ ਕੇ ਨਿਕੋਲੇ ਸ ਙ ਔਰ ਸ ਚ ਕੋ ਮਿਲਾਕਰ ਨ-
ਸ਼ਾਨ ਜ ਛ ਕੇ ਨਿਕੋਲੇ+ ਛ ਜ ਕੋ ਮਿਲਾਓ ਕ ਛ ਆ ਜ ਖ
ਕੀ ਚੂੜੀ ਕੇ ਮੁਥੇ ਕੇ ਚੋਰੇ ਕੋਨੋ ਪਰ ਚਾਰ ਮੁਰੱਬੇ ਬਨਾਓ- ਜੋ
ਸ਼ੀਸ਼ਾ ਇਸ ਤਰਹ ਬਨੇਗੀ ਚੂੜੀ ਚਾਰ ਮੁਰਬੀ ਹੋਦੇਗੀ

Fig. XIII.

HOW TO MAKE GIRA KATARADAR.

Take a square A B C D. Bisect the sides A B, B C, C D and A D in the points E, F, G and H and join A G, F C, B H and D E. The figure so formed will represent the Girah Kataradar.

Figure 4a: *Gira* [*girih*] *Kataradar*. Undated. Untitled pattern manual, figure XIII.

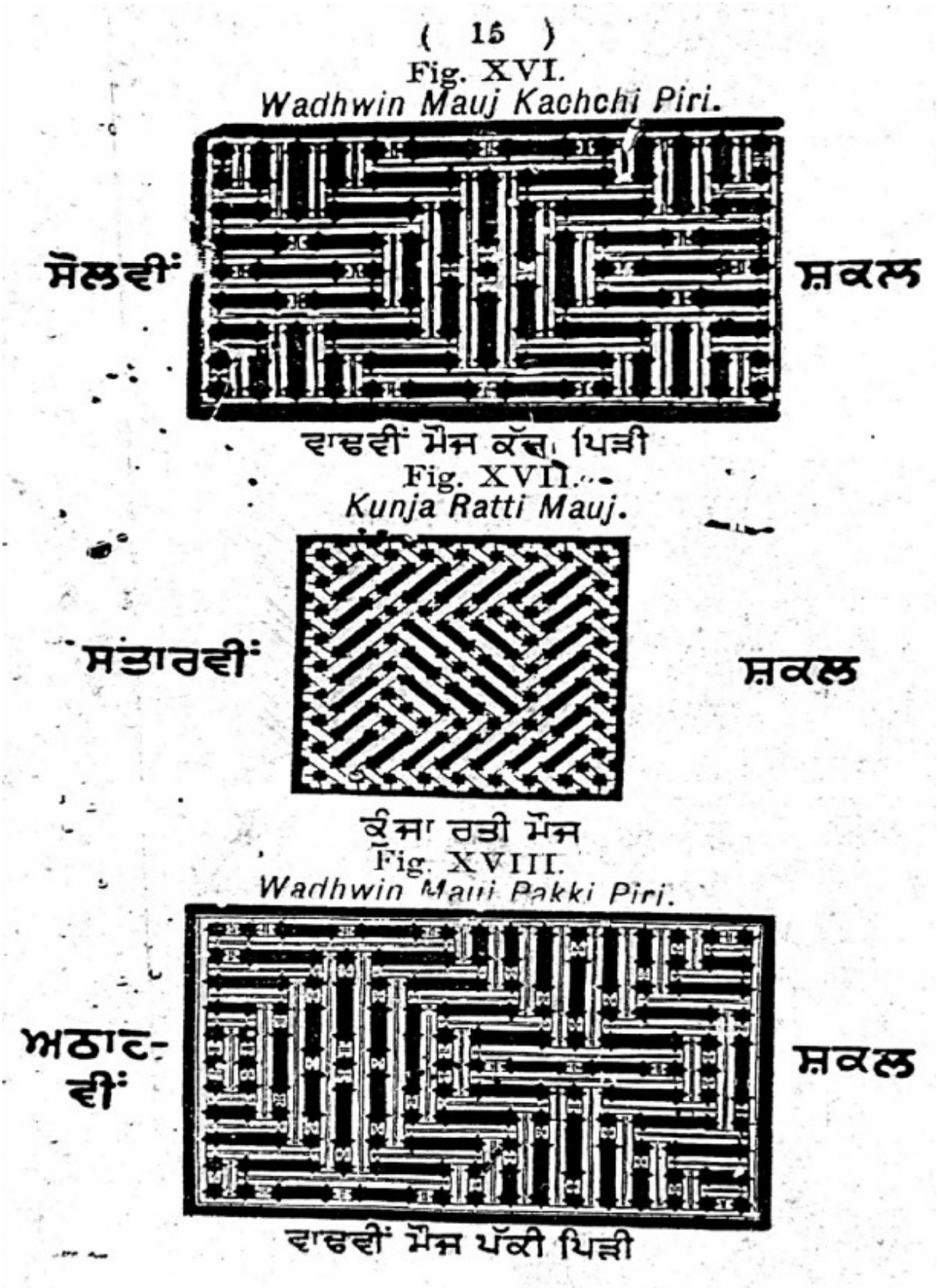


Figure 4b: *Kunja Ratti Mauj and Wadhwin Mauj Pakki Piri*. Undated. Untitled pattern manual, figure XVII and figure XVIII.

The dismissal of a mix of Persian, Urdu or Punjabi titles for being unscientific is another important point to consider while we investigate the significance of each title and its semantic value for its respective pattern. I would like to argue that the science or rationale behind the names of geometric patterns had already been lost to a large extent by the time Kipling and his contemporaries came into contact with them. Whatever had survived by then was not included in the official discourse as they must have been unintelligible for the British officers dealing with them and would have held no meanings for foreign buyers in the international market. With nothing but fleeting references in Kipling and Birdwood's writings, these and similar other terminologies were ignored and eventually forgotten. Their usage by native craftsmen is a testament to their cogency in professional circles and their loss an attestation of colonial meddling with countless longstanding traditions and practices that eventually pushed them into oblivion.

With these forgotten titles, we have abandoned countless forms of knowledge and a wealth of information about people who were familiar with them. Having lost their names and identities, these patterns have been reduced to mere numbers. Most modern scholars, therefore, refer to them by the number of points each star formation has or some other descriptive feature explaining their methods of construction. Yet another way employed is to club the pattern with the name of the historical monument it has been used in. A search for more illustrated craft manuals or manuscripts and a close study of each geometric pattern and its vernacular title will reveal more lost identities. Each combination of Persian-Punjabi or Urdu of these pattern names will yield a wealth of information about people who coined and used them, especially the hereditary *mistrīs* and *kārī-gars* of the undivided Punjab whose publications have inspired this paper.

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Biography

Nadhra Shahbaz Khan is associate professor of art history and director of the Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature at the Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan. A specialist in the history of art and architecture of the Punjab from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, her research covers the visual and material culture of this region during the Mughal, Sikh, and colonial periods. Her interest lies in investigating levels of human agency behind artefacts and architectural spaces, both as creators and consumers, to understand their political, religious and socio-economic ambitions at different historical

intersections. She is the author of *The Samādhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore: A Summation of Sikh Architectural and Decorative Practices*, a monograph published as the University of Bonn's SAAC series in 2018 and several articles published in peer-reviewed international journals.

Khan has held research fellowships at SOAS, London (Charles Wallace 2010/11), INHA Paris (2015), Princeton University (Fulbright 2014/15), and Oxford University (Barakat Trust 2014/15). She has been awarded CAA-Getty International Program travel grants thrice (2012, 2019 and 2022). She has been working with the Aga Khan Cultural Service-Pakistan (AKCS-P) as Consultant Historian for their Lahore Fort project since 2016. She is currently working on documenting the Sikh collections of the Lahore Fort Museum and the Lahore Museum's Sikh Gallery for an exclusively designed website and an accompanying catalogue.

Elke Katharina Wittich[1]

Dittmar's Turkish Ornamental Cabinet

A "Furniture Style Comparison" around 1900

Abstract

One of the most formative narratives of the reform movements around 1900 was a departure from earlier creative principles of imitation, now defamed as an inadequate approach. Thus, artists, architects, and designers were called upon to formulate freer approaches to artistic design. Precisely because this narrative of the new and the free, which had become a myth, excluded art of the later nineteenth century—which supposedly only imitated older styles—little attention was paid to how exactly the ornamentation of Islamic art was taken up and artistically exploited in the decorative arts around 1900. Yet, what else can be classified as stylistic imitation and what as freer abstraction? After all, the geometric derivation of Islamic ornamentation offered rich material for abstractions in the sense intended by the reform movements, before it was radically, and very lastingly, banned from the discourse a short time later along with all other ornament. It will be shown that the abstraction of Islamic ornamentation around 1900 was not only triggered by the objects that were increasingly accessible in exhibitions and as holdings of ethnological or applied arts museums at the turn of the century but was already influenced by scientific research and by the textbooks with historical models as they appeared in the course of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: design principles; nineteenth-century art; non-European objects; textbooks; political iconography

A furniture factory in Berlin around 1900

At the turn of the twentieth century, Berlin had a population of almost 1,900,000. In the course of industrialization, its population had doubled in twenty-five years and a further influx of rural population seemed unbroken.[2] In order to satisfy the demand for living space, more and more housing complexes were built in new suburbs for the newcomers; apartments in which furniture was needed (Haeder).[3] Thus, Dittmar's furniture factory, founded in 1836 in Berlin and located on Molkenmarkt in the center of the city, could probably not complain about orders. The "Meubleur" Dittmar regularly appeared in contemporary advertisements in the daily press (Stiegel 232, 272, 467, 570), a circumstance that undoubtedly promoted the success of the company.[4] The marketing concept of the furniture factory foresaw various media with references to brochures on the subject of furniture and interior design.

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[2] On December 1, 1900, 1,888,848 residents were registered (*Statistisches Jahrbuch* 1).

[3] On furniture production for the general public in Germany around 1900 (Scheiffele 56-63).

[4] On the relationship between design and marketing around 1900 (Schuldenfrei).

Figure 1: Advertisement for Dittmar's furniture factory. 1907. Taken from *Adreßbuch der Fabrik- und Handelsstadt Forst*. Image courtesy of DOK, Digital Repositorium of Potsdam City and State Library.

In 1907, for example, an announcement of Dittmar's furniture factory appeared in the directory for the town of Forst in the region of Lausitz, south-east of Berlin (*Adreßbuch*; fig. 1), with a reference to the company's location in Berlin, Molkenmarkt 6 and the product range of gentlemen's and ladies' rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms, and so on. Next, the price segment—"*einfache und reiche, preiswürdig*" (simple and rich, worthy of a prize)—is appointed and finally a brochure entitled, *Wie richte ich meine Wohnung ein?* (How do I furnish my flat?), is announced (*Adreßbuch*). The size and typography of the letters particularly emphasize the company name and its products, namely "*vornehme Möbel*" (distinguished furniture). The advertisement is adorned with a cartouche in the form of a transverse oval that provides a look into a contemporary interior.

Figure 2: *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*. Ca. 1900. Taken from the eponymous furniture factory brochure by Dittmar. Image courtesy of private collection.

Dittmar's furniture factory also published an advertising brochure with the title *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* (Furniture Style Comparison; figs. 2-4), a publication of particular interest for this essay due to its praise of "Turkish" and "Moorish" furniture. From a methodological perspective, the advertising brochure of Dittmar's furniture factory, widely distributed for marketing purposes, can take on the role of a stamp, as Aby Warburg explained in his lecture *The Function of the Stamp Image in the Intellectual Intercourse of the World* of 13 August 1927: the stamp image, not primarily created for artistic purposes, spreads in visual form ideas that can sometimes condense almost into symbols (Zöllner). At the same time, stamps or such outline drawings in an advertising brochure, unwittingly reveal time-bound notions such as the variability of styles. Precisely because the furniture from Dittmar's furniture factory was, despite good workmanship, a mass-market commodity, and precisely because the *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* brochure is not an art-scientific

study but follows the laws of advertising, one can expect meaningful, if perhaps surprising, findings. The analysis of a piece of furniture with Ottoman or Moorish elements from Dittmar's furniture factory can help to show principles, but also contradictions of the reception of the arts of Islam in the West around 1900.

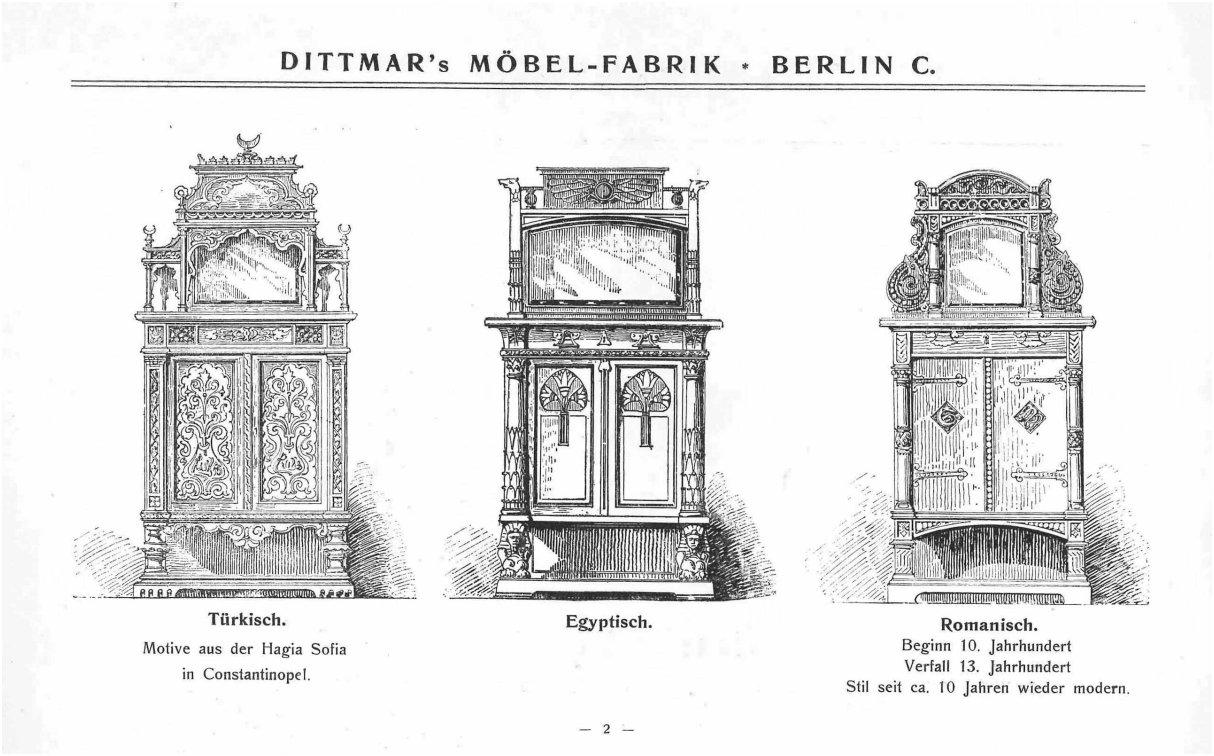

Figure 3: *Dittmar's "Turkish Cabinet"*. Ca. 1900. Taken from the brochure *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*. Image courtesy of private collection.

Dittmar's brochure (figs. 2-4) is only one of a whole series of instructional works on the subject of interior design and furnishings, as they had been on the market since the 1880s (Manske), including the 1886 best seller *Das Deutsche Zimmer* (The German Room) by Georg Hirth. Around 1900, they were supplemented by numerous magazines such as *Innendekoration* and *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*. On the back of this advertising brochure the Dittmar's furniture factory proudly refers to its deliveries by presenting the customer distribution in Germany in form of a map (fig. 4). There seems to be an additional marketing message associated with this brochure, namely that of spreading sales far beyond Berlin. For this reason, the map with the entries of the sales shows no borders. In Berlin and the surrounding area alone, 43,298 pieces of furniture had been delivered from Dittmar's furniture factory since 1888, forty other pieces of furniture were shipped to Leipzig and forty-four to Greifswald and so on (*Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*).

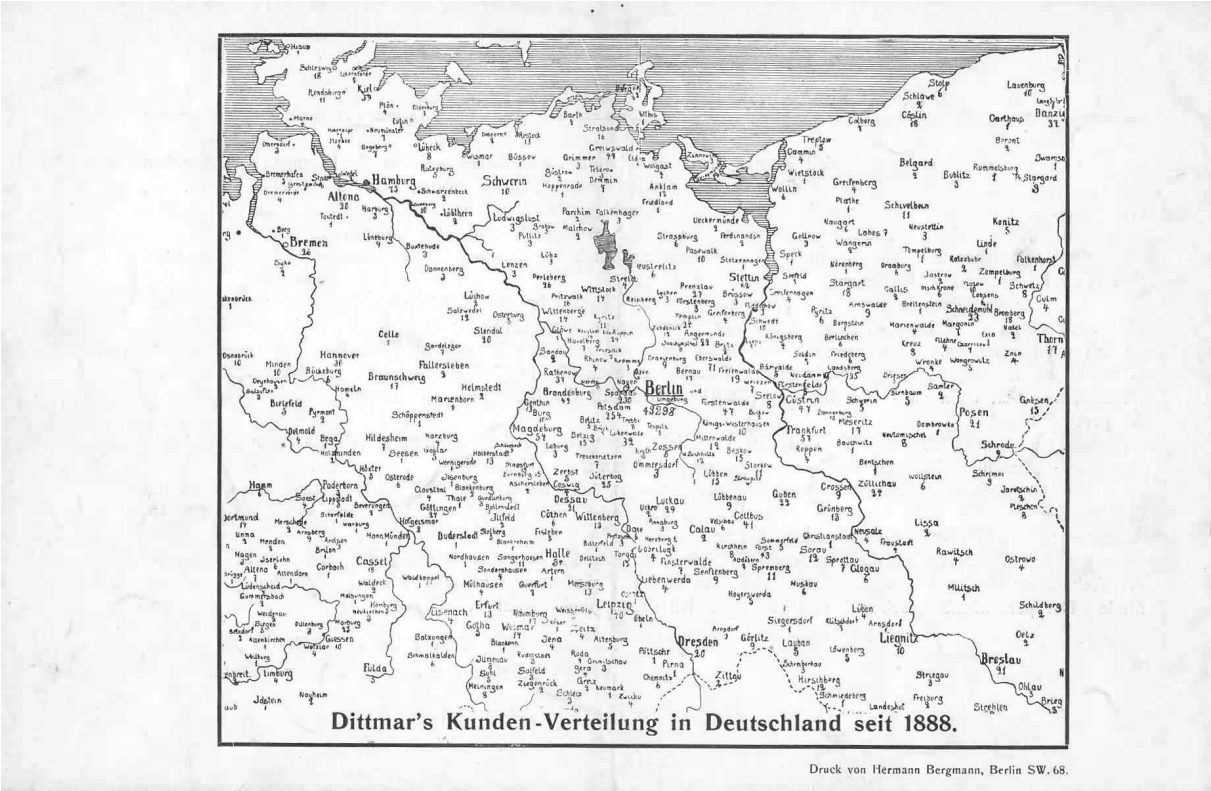

Figure 4: Back cover of the brochure *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* presenting the customer distribution of Dittmar's furniture factory. Ca. 1900. Image courtesy of private collection.

"Motifs from the Hagia Sophia": Exploitation of cultural-historical knowledge

The front page of Dittmar's *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* announces the presentation of an "ornamental cabinet shape… in 30 styles" (fig. 2), as they are "common in the furniture industry today"; these styles are "designed in the drawing room of Dittmar's furniture factory." Among them, in addition to an example in "rural style" on the front page, there is also a cabinet marked "Turkish. Motifs from the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople" (fig. 3, left). Surprisingly, this cabinet leads the visually mediated list of the thirty historical styles. On page ten of the brochure, the "Turkish cabinet" is followed by an example with the designation "Spanish-Moorish after Alhambra Motifs" (*Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*).

In view of the thirty announced styles, the interested reader must soon also notice a contradiction: surprised, one takes note that in Dittmar's advertising brochure thirty different versions of the one, in the core form always the same furniture, are available. This core form is that of box furniture in proportional systems: golden sections and ratios of 1:2 or 2:3 are placed over the underlying ratio of 1:2. This system is inherent in all thirty versions of cabinet furniture shown.[5] According to the text on the second page, this core form enables industrial pre-production; the parts characterizing the styles were only supplemented as production on demand when a piece of furniture was ordered (*Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* 2). There is a clear derivation from the architectural theory of form, as it was taught throughout the entire nineteenth century at polytechnic and arts and crafts schools.[6] With the help of the brochure, citizens of Berlin and Leipzig could decide whether their living room

[5] Theories of proportion are derived from architectural theory and, like a canonically defined repertoire of forms, were an integral part of the curricula in arts and crafts schools throughout the 19th century (Wittich, "Muster" 29-42).
[6] Proportion studies were usually taught as part of drawing lessons (Preussisches Ministerium).

should contain a cabinet in the style of early German Gothic, French Late Renaissance, Modernism, or a Turkish cabinet.

The advertising brochure, which at first appears to be of little importance, is greatly expressive in answering the question of how Islamic art was handled in the design of the period around 1900. Contrary to all reform attempts in Germany to use industrial principles in the sense of a contemporary modification and increase in expression of the applied arts (Campbell), the brochure of Dittmar's furniture factory reveals a radical exploitation of forms as set pieces of industrial production. In the design-theoretical writings of the time around 1900, often one-sided and polemical, such an industrial exploitation of forms is railed against, and examples worthy of rejection are presented (Preussisches Ministerium; see Lux, *Kunstgewerbe*). The ornamentation on the cabinets from Dittmar's furniture factory corresponds to the criticism of such "masking" of products in the period around 1900, which was regarded as decay (Lux, *Der Geschmack* preface). In the design theory of the time, freer approaches to form development were favored, especially through the drawing of natural forms (Manske 11-20). New impulses were also expected from non-European decorative art objects; they were used as examples of forms based on the traditional methods of production in arts and crafts schools at that time (Pralle).[7] However, exhibitions such as the *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst* shown in Munich in 1910 were not the first to make the art of the Islamic world known (Troelenberg). On the contrary, this assumption must of course be rejected as a gross simplification of far more differentiated facts.

The role of collections and publications for an artistic use of Islamic art and architecture

Throughout the nineteenth century, Islamic decorative arts were collected and exhibited on a grand scale in European ethnographic and decorative arts museums (Iselin). In addition, from the mid-nineteenth century and increasingly around 1900, period-themed rooms were popular, which included Islamic style rooms (Giese and Varela Braga, *Myth*; *Fashionable Style*). Originally courtly rooms, such as the so-called "Turkish", actually "Moorish" bath in Albrechtsburg Castle by Carl von Diebitsch (1819-1869; Heller), they were all the more readily accepted by the upper middle classes, as shown, for example in the Moorish house in Berlin, a large apartment building, by the same architect (Kaufmann). It is striking that such interiors were mostly executed in the Moorish style but described as Turkish; recourse was made to topoi in travel literature that paid particular attention to this type of room (Büttner). An interior by the architect August de Meuron (1813-1898) in an early volume of photographs on Hamburg architecture in the 1880s (fig. 5) represents the transition to an upper-middle-class use with simultaneous use of the latest technical possibilities of pictorial reproduction (*Hamburger Privatbauten* pl. XXXVIII). The furniture of such rooms, like the fabric of the sofas here, quotes Islamic models, but the furniture types as such are derived from European forms.[8]

Nevertheless, the *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst* was demonstrably of great importance for the further development of the arts in Europe, especially with regard to the use of color and the principle of abstraction. However, this applies less to interior design and furniture than to painting (Hagedorn). Thus, the achievement of the polytechnical and arts and crafts school's teaching, as well as publications of scientific research on Islam architecture, should be stressed to show how Islamic forms were constructed by using abstractions to geometrically generate shapes of well-known Turkish or Moorish motifs.

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[7] Heinrich Pralle was a teacher at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Hamburg.

[8] The surviving furniture based on designs by Carl von Diebitsch also show these characteristics (Fischer 113-123).

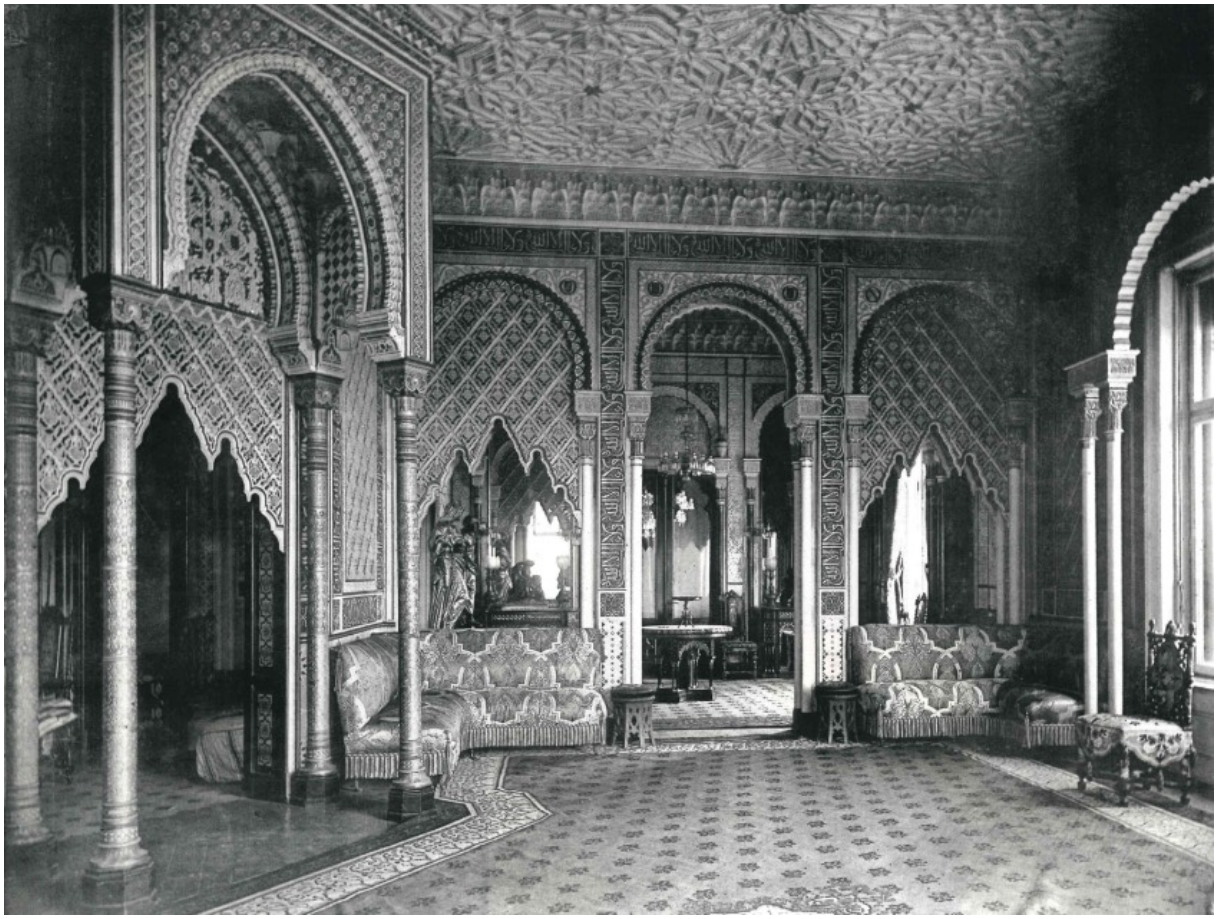

Figure 5: Auguste de Meuron. *Moorish Salon in a Villa at the Alster*. 1883. Taken from *Hamburger Privatbauten*, pl. XXXVIII. Image courtesy of the Library of the Hamburg Authority for Urban Development.

A good approach is offered by the textbook *Das Geometrische Ornament* for the elementary drawing classes of the Austrian arts and crafts schools in the 1870s (Andel pl. XLII). While one could easily assume that geometric ornament of Islamic arts could have given new impulses to the European arts and crafts around 1900 in terms of abstraction, for example to create wall and surface design, the textbook shows that these forms of concrete Islamic ornament had already been sorted into the canon of teaching material twenty-five years earlier, for example in plate XLII for the "division and decoration of the square" (fig. 6); the basis for this were engraving publications like *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra* of 1842-1845 as well as the analysis and exploitation of the forms of the Alhambra in Owen Jones' famous *Grammar of Ornament* of 1856 (Varela Braga).

This decidedly inductive approach to ornamentation in dealing with Islamic art was by no means new but owed to the reception of antiquity since the eighteenth century. Ancient ornamentation, too, had first been made accessible in the archaeological travel literature and subsequently incorporated into ornamentation teachings. This process enabled further use independent of the carrier medium as well as the original material and size (Wittich 65-76). Thus, for the draftsmen of Dittmar's furniture factory, the templates of a textbook with the details of the ornamentation played a much greater role than the personal knowledge of the concrete building or a complex like the Alhambra. For this reason, special attention must be paid to the principles of the textbooks—isolation and limitation of ornaments, exemption from the carrier medium or the concrete place in a room, visualization as an outline drawing, and so on.

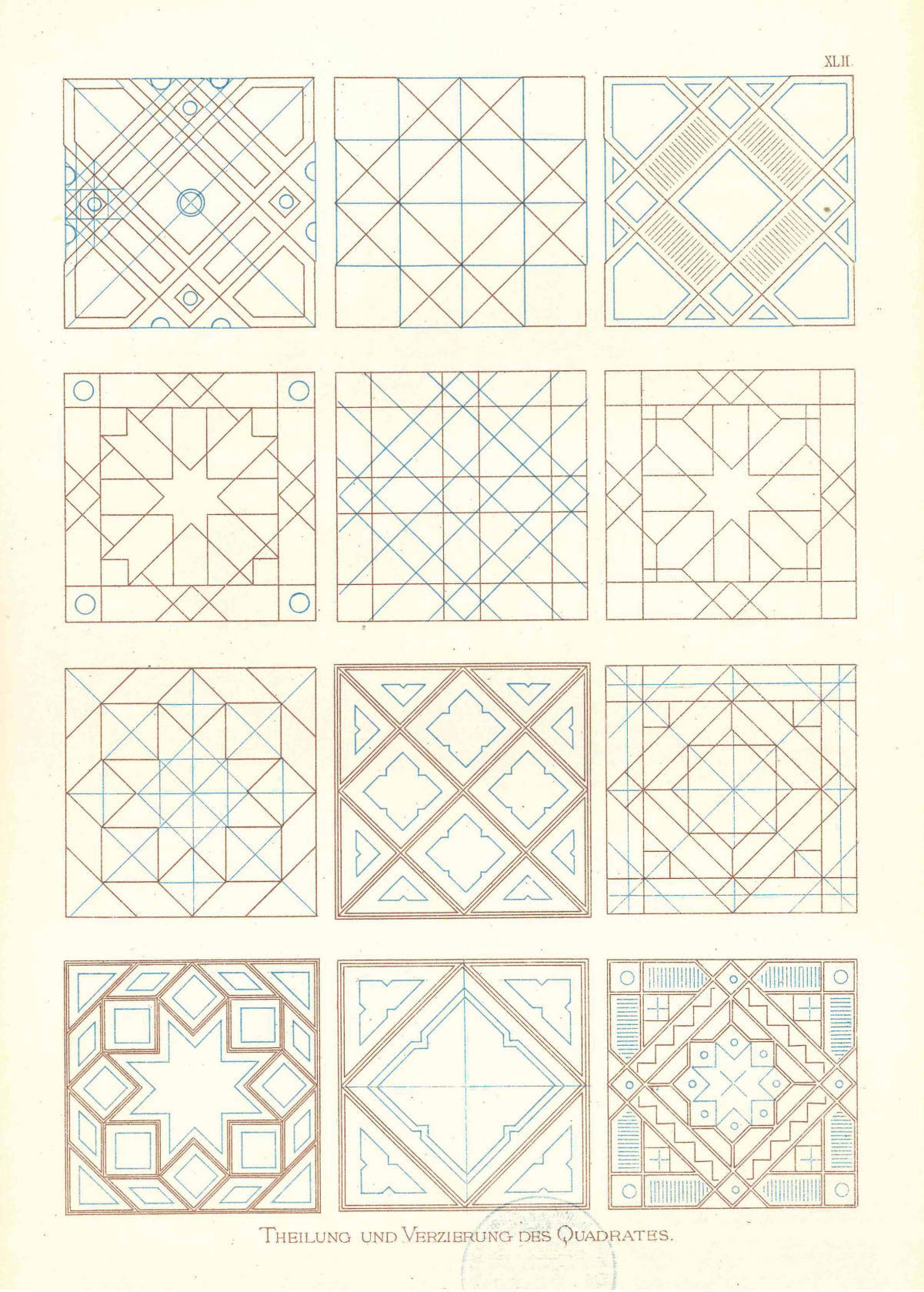

Figure 6: Anton Andel. *Theilung und Verzierung des Quadrates*. 1877. Taken from *Das Geometrische Ornament. Ein Lehrmittel für den Elementaren Zeichen-Unterricht*, pl. XLII. Image courtesy of the Library of the Hamburg University of Fine Arts.

Defining characteristic and recognizable Ottoman forms

In order to analyze what was considered characteristic of a cabinet in Turkish style by the draftsmen at Dittmar's furniture factory, we are looking for characteristic features for this cabinet shape and can first of all find the crowning with the stepped trim and the crescent on the Turkish cabinet (fig. 3). Secondly, irregularly curved openings in the center and on the sides of the top can be counted among the characteristics. And thirdly, the doors show a floral planar ornamentation as it is depicted in the contemporary model works. The French as well as the German edition of Auguste Racinets *L'ornement polychrome* with "2000 motifs of all styles," which were published in 1871-1873 and 1874 respectively, were still very useful for the draughtsman at Dittmar's furniture factory, especially since the technically new "gold, silver and colour printing" reproduced the ornaments far more vividly than the previously used outline drawing. Furthermore, Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* from 1856 was well used, too, a publication that had also been available in German since 1865. After 1900, the large-format publication *Das farbige Ornament aller historischen Stile* by Alexander Speltz came on the market in three volumes; it was published in German, French and English and was considered a new standard work. These publications draw their material from buildings and vessels, from weapons and carpets or other textiles.

The top of the Turkish ornamental cabinet (fig. 3) shows geometrically shaped openings on the sides, which can easily be recognized as characteristic motifs from the fund of what were known as Turkish (actually Ottoman) forms. They can also be founded on one of the panels in Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* (Jones pl. XXXVI; fig. 7). Now it is less important that a motif is adopted exactly, but rather that a characteristic and recognizable motif is presented. Based on their drawing studies, students at arts and crafts schools could easily analyze the construction of such ornaments and transfer them into their own works, for example to construct a characteristic Turkish opening. However, such ornaments are comparable because of their characteristic design. And then there are the art-historical reappraisals from the second half of the nineteenth century, for example Julius Franz Pasha's *Baukunst des Islam* from 1887, in which the author presents outline drawings of minarets with the crowning by a crescent moon (Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz). Skilled draftsmen such as those at Dittmar's furniture factory could easily deduce the crowning for the Turkish cabinet from such outline drawings—all regardless of the fact that the minarets shown by Franz Pasha were not to be found in Constantinople but in Cairo. Much more important was the iconic effect of the crescent as a form classified as characteristic, which was also known as part of the imperial flag of the Ottoman Empire.

Figure 7: Owen Jones. *Turkish No. 1*. 1856. Taken from *The Grammar of Ornament*, pl. XXXVI.
Image courtesy of the digital holdings of the Heidelberg University Library.

Political iconography of Ottoman heritage around 1900

One last question we should clarify: why does the Turkish ornamental cabinet head up the other cabinets in thirty styles in the *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*? The cabinet probably owes this position not to artistic or art historical considerations, but rather to the journey of the German imperial couple to Constantinople and Jerusalem in 1898, and to the impressive propaganda around this state tour (Alkan). The emperor brought gifts such as the German Fountain to Constantinople—that is he brought a German interpretation of Ottoman architecture to the Ottoman capital. In addition, a flood of pictorial material such as postcards and scientific as well as popular publications appeared in this context, including a text volume and two large-format panel volumes on *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels* (The architecture of Constantinople) by Cornelius Gurlitt, published some years later in 1907-1912. Among the numerous drawings and photographs is the "Loge des Sultan" (fig. 8), which was added to the early Christian building from the sixth century after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The lodge features rich ornamentation on the grilles; they could have been the models for characteristic ornamentation on the door panels on Dittmar's Turkish Cabinet and justify the reference to the Hagia Sophia in the caption of Dittmar's *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung*.

However, the sequence of styles for furniture in the *Möbel-Stil-Vergleichung* does not seriously address questions of style, as contemporary critics already pointed out (Schmidkunz 20), and among the Islamic styles, references to Mamluk architecture and ornamentation are missing although there was significant literature on the subject (Coste; Franz Pasha; see Giese and Varela Braga, *Myth section* II). Accordingly, the furniture itself lacks an examination of the stylistic elements, they are merely borrowed from available teaching and research works. Nor is there any engagement with the materials of Islamic interiors. The Turkish cabinet from Dittmar's furniture factory would not even have fitted into one of the Islamic period rooms customary at the time (fig. 5). All in all, Islamic art was probably less interesting for the manager of Dittmar's furniture factory than a sales-promoting idea of what was feasible at that time.

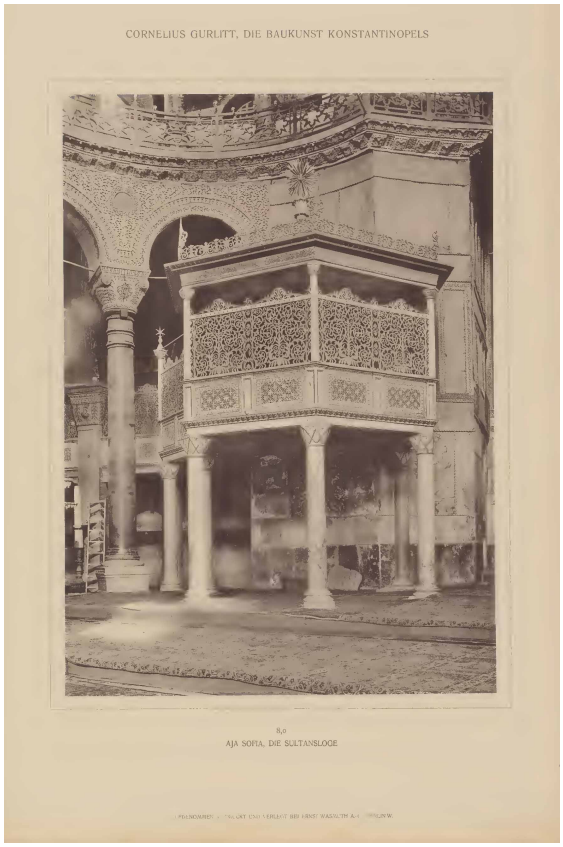

Figure 8: Cornelius Gurlitt. *Aja Sofia, the Sultan's Lodge*. 1910. Taken from *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels*, pl. 8.0; vol. 1.
Image courtesy of the Getty Research Center, Internet Archive.

Conclusion: Negative evidence of engagement with Islamic art

Taken as negative evidence, this marketing strategy of Dittmar's furniture factory proves how wide the range of engagement with Islamic art was around 1900: from profound, research-based insights into the formal repertoire of Islamic architecture to mere quotations without any meaning, as in the case of the Turkish ornamental cabinet, everything can be found. It remains to be said, however, that every form of adaptation is based on a construction against the background of European forms of thought. From a methodological point of view, this example must also lead to a warning against taking stock of the phenomenon exclusively on the basis of monographic analyses, because the contexts are obviously complex, and the principles of reception that transcend genre and time are affected. To work through these contexts, especially the role of art and crafts schools, appears to be just as important as uncovering the political iconography of the imperial activities of the Germans, the English, and the French in the Near East in that time.

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Biography

Elke Katharina Wittich is professor and head of the Center of further scientific education at the Leibniz University in Hannover, Germany. She studied history of art, archaeology, German literature and history of music at the University of Hamburg, and was a member of the "Political Iconography" postgraduate research group of the German Research Foundation (DFG). Her PhD thesis examined the knowledge about architecture and the methodology of architectural writings in the early nineteenth century by taking Schinkel and his educational training at the Berlin Building Academy as an example. She has published books and articles on the history of architecture and design as well as on the history of science in the seventeenth to twentieth century.

Ariane Varela Braga[1]

Through the Looking Glass of the Orient

Color, Geometry and the Kaleidoscope

Abstract

Traditionally related to concepts of luxury, fancy, and uncontrolled sensuality, color has in Western culture long been considered an unsteady component. On the contrary, and as often noted by travelers, Eastern cultures frequently demonstrate a particular talent for the harmony of color and ornament. In the nineteenth century, a number of architects and artists tried to rationalize the properties and use of color, ornament, and the Islamic arts in various ways, relating them to contemporary experiments in optics. This article examines the relationship between color theory, Islamic arts, and architecture, taking as a starting point the invention of the kaleidoscope by David Brewster and its relationship to Nasrid ornament. It then considers how Islamic arts and color theory dialogued in the work of British architect and decorator Owen Jones and Tuscan amateur architect Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona.

Keywords: color; kaleidoscope; ornament; architecture; Alhambra

Both material and optical, the result of cultural constructions, color has long been considered as an unstable element. Since Antiquity, color, ornament and the East have all been related to the idea of luxury, decadence and unrestrained imagination. In the nineteenth century, various attempts were made to rationalize color, ornament and Islamic arts. In search for an aesthetic renewal, several Western artists, architects and designers looked back to the East for guidance, following the *topos* that 'Orientals' possessed a special 'instinct' for color harmony (Ball; Gage, *Color in Art*; Gage, *Color and Culture*). While architects like Pascal Coste, Owen Jones or Jules Bourgoin highlighted the geometrical and mathematical principles of Islamic architecture and ornamentation, scientists such as Michel Eugène Chevreul, James Clerk Maxwell or Hermann von Helmholtz investigated the scientific properties and general laws of color harmony. In this article, I propose to follow the thread uniting the Alhambra and neo-Moorish ornament to nineteenth-century color theory and architecture, taking as a guide the kaleidoscope. I will examine two different ways in which the Alhambra and contemporary color theory intersected by considering the work of two men who shared a common fascination for Nasrid ornament, color theory and optics. I will consider firstly the case of the British architect and designer reformer Owen 'Alhambra' Jones, and secondly that of the marquis Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona, an amateur architect fascinated with the Orient and active in Italy.

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The kaleidoscope and the Alhambra

From the Greek *kalos* (beauty), *eidos* (form) and *scope* (to see), the kaleidoscope was (re)discovered around 1815 by Scottish writer and scientist David Brewster, who was then investigating color theory and the polarization of light by crystals. Patented in 1817, Brewster's kaleidoscope became immediately extremely popular, provoking an authentic "kaleidoscomania" around Europe and even beyond, as recalled by media archeologist Erkki Huhtamo ("All the World" 142). Through the lenses of this optical instrument, the observer was provided with a new and stimulating visual experience (fig.1). Thus, for the poet Charles Baudelaire, it demonstrated a new kind of perception, epitomizing modernity itself. As Jonathan Crary has argued, the kaleidoscope materialized and echoed the perception of frenetic life in modern cities, characterized by constant movement and urban renewal (113-114).

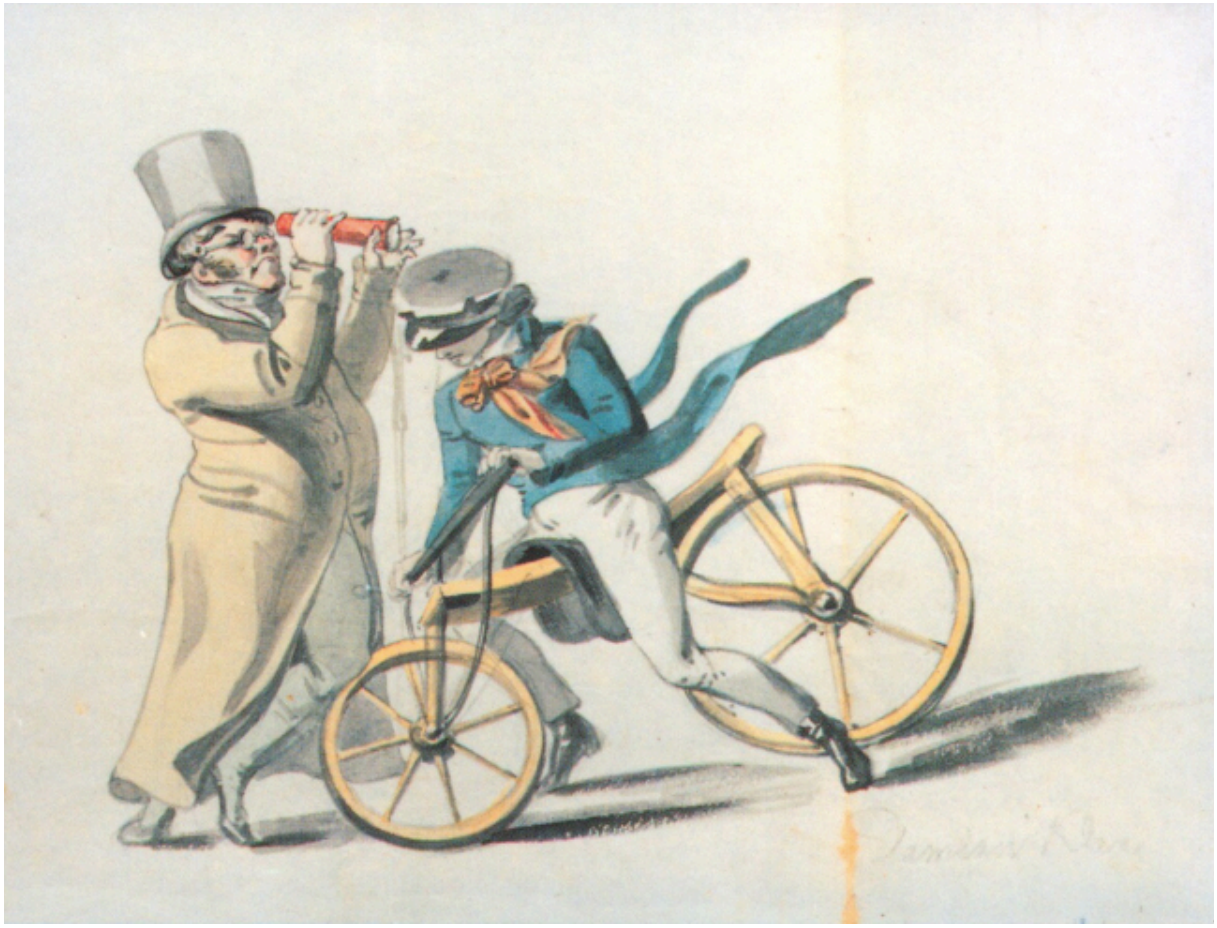
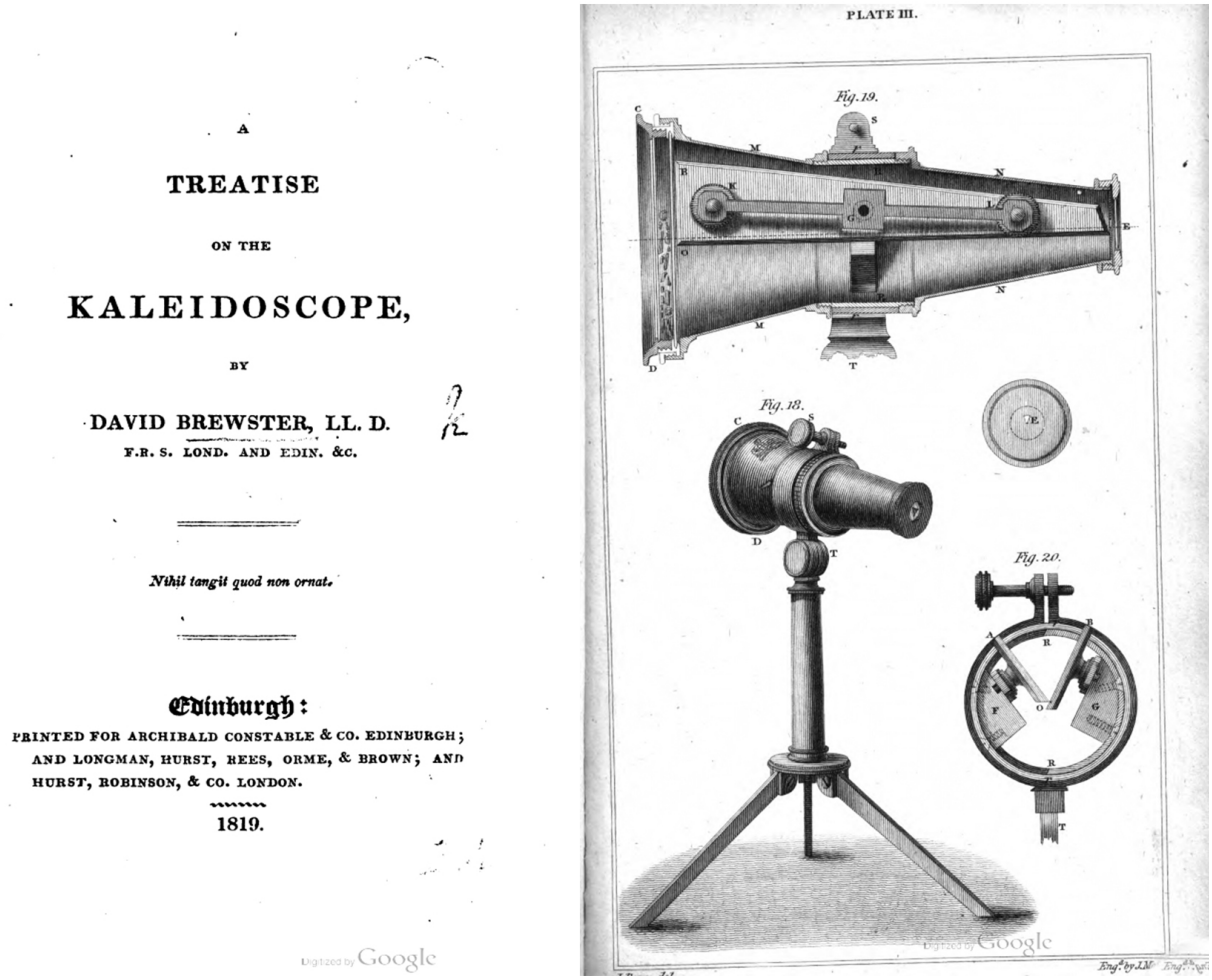


Figure 1 : Leopold Kupelwieser. *Schubertiade* (detail). 1818. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Consisting of a tube that holds mirrors or other reflecting surfaces placed at a certain angle, the kaleidoscope can contain pieces of colored glass or other elements, which, by rotating the tube, create a multitude of symmetrical patterns, in constant evolution (fig. 2). As Brewster explained in his 1819 *Treatise on the Kaleidoscope,* the decorative effects produced by this optical instrument offer evident practical applications, especially for architectural and painted ornament, as well as for carpet design. This utilitarian role was further emphasized in the second edition of his book, published in 1858 and purposely entitled: *The Kaleidoscope, its History, Theory, and Construction, with its Application to the Fine and Useful Arts.* Brewster remarked:

> When we consider the immense variety of professions connected both with the fine and useful arts, … [t]he Kaleidoscope will assume the character of the highest class of machinery … [i]t will create, in a single hour, what a thousand artists could not invent in the course of a year; and while it works with such unexampled rapidity, it works also with a corresponding beauty and precision (136).



A

TREATISE

ON THE

KALEIDOSCOPE,

BY

DAVID BREWSTER, LL. D.

F.R. S. LOND. AND EDIN. &c.

Nihil tangit quod non ornat.

Edinburgh:

PRINTED FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO. EDINBURGH; AND LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, & BROWN; AND HURST, ROBINSON, & CO. LONDON.

1819.

PLATE III.

Fig. 19.

Fig. 18.

Fig. 20.

Figure 2 : David Brewster. *Treatise on the Kaleidoscope.* 1819. Title page and pl. III. Image courtesy of Google Books.

Producing symmetrical effects of contrasts through the combinations and variations of a few simple elements, the kaleidoscope performs the basic principles of abstract ornamentation that would become the object of so much attention in the many grammars of ornament that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, a parallel that has well been noted by Arnaud Maillet. As the historian of ornament Ralph Nicholson Wornum explained in his *Analysis of Ornament* (1856):

> The whole grammar of ornament consists in contrast, repetition, and series. …Perhaps the best illustration of the value of series is the kaleidoscope. All the beautiful figures represented by that instrument are repetitions in circular series; and often the rudest materials will generate extremely beautiful effects (24).

Brewster's invention certainly attracted the attention of designers as well. In Paris in 1841, a certain M. Rouget de Lisle adapted the kaleidoscope for the design of tapestries (Calla 371). A few years later, Scottish decorator and color theorist David R. Hay referred to Brewster's invention in his book of 1844, *Original Geometrical Diaper Designs* (fig. 3).

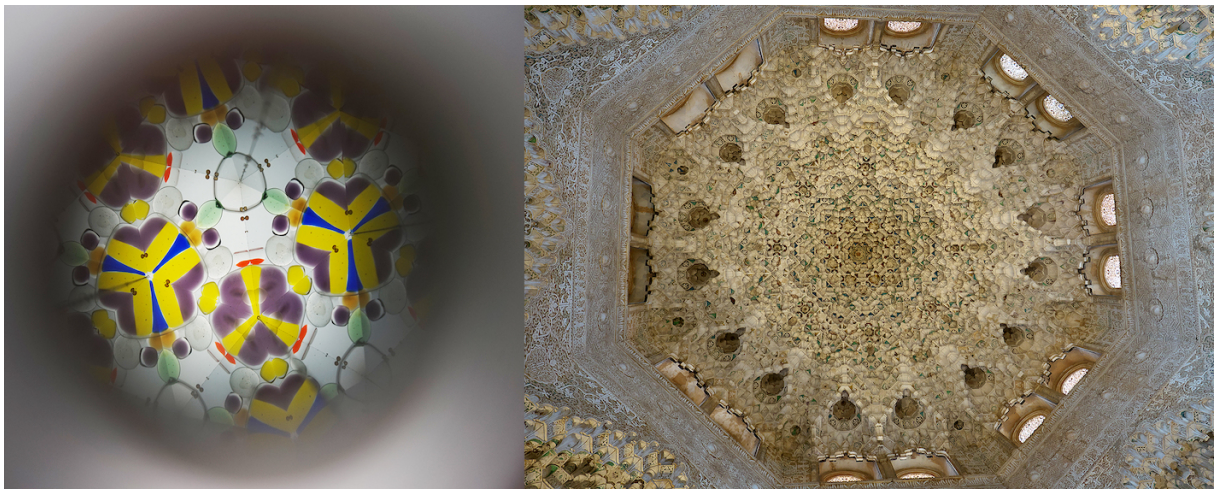


Figure 3 : A view inside the kaleidoscope (on the left) and detail of the ceiling of the Hall of the Two Sisters (on the right). Image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons, photographed by Tiia Monto (left) and Jebulon (right).

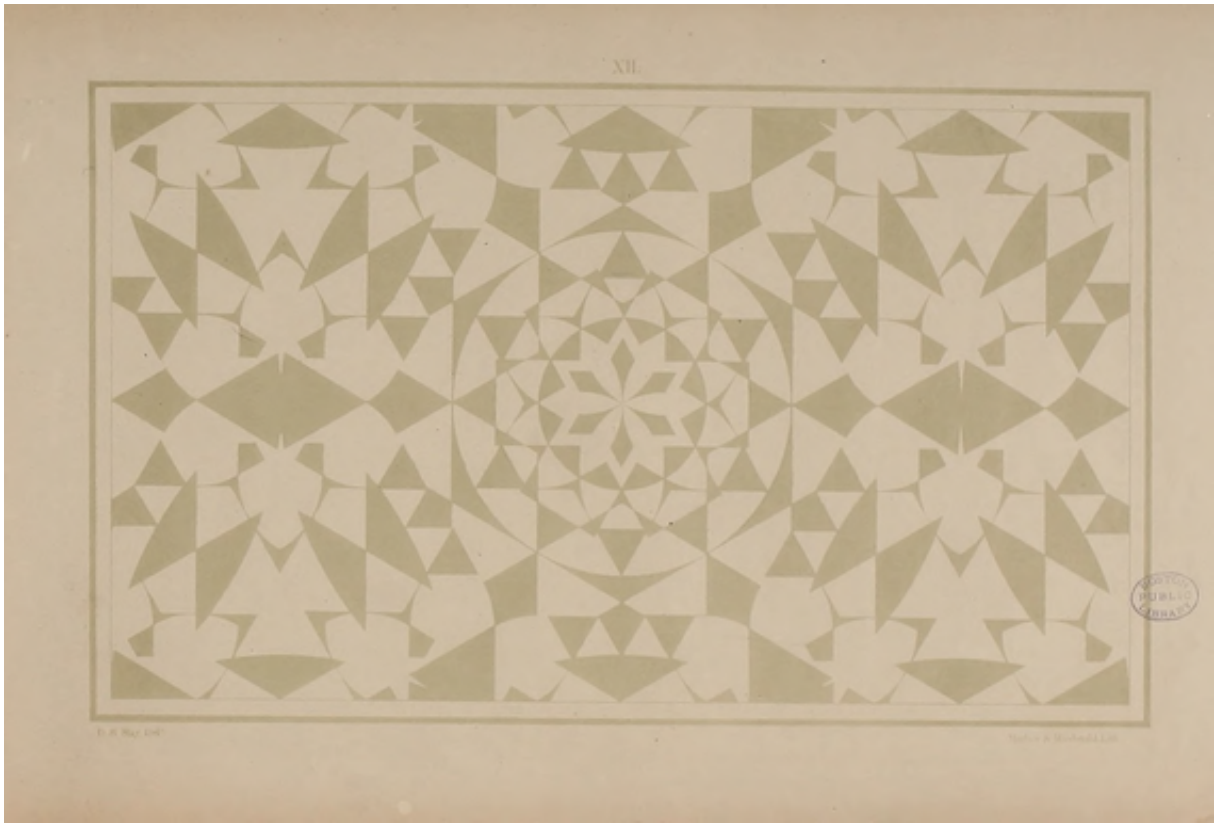


Figure 4: David R. Hay. *Geometric ornament*. 1844. Taken from Hay pl. 12. Image courtesy of Boston Public Library and www.archive.org.

In the volume's introductory "Essay on Ornamental Design", he argued for the need to renew the ornament of the Alhambra, which according to him had been "used, in various manufactures, for so long a period, that [it is] now exhausted … [and that] something new in this style of ornament is, therefore, required" (1). His comment coincided with the height of the fashion for the so-called neo-Moorish style that had become widespread in the 1830s and 1840s, following the Romantics' interest in Spain and the publications of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey and Owen Jones. Comparing the ornament of the Alhambra to the patterns produced by the kaleidoscope was not infrequent, as already pointed out by Maillet (fig. 4). The multiplicity of Moorish ornament, its symmetrical variations and the pleasure deriving from its contemplation could recall "les grains de verre d'un kaléidoscope" (*Monuments* 21) or the Alhambra itself could be described as a "kaleidoscope of delight" (Thornbury 226). On the other hand, for John Ruskin, who considered "detestable [the] ornamentation of the Alhambra" (Ruskin 1851-53, 1: 429), and who despised the notion of formal symmetry for the decorative arts, the mechanical device of the kaleidoscope was only a brainless way to produce ornaments (Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*; Ruskin, "Lecture III" 92) and the instrument was indeed sometimes criticized for the "stiffness of the designs" it produced ("Exposition" 98). Ruskin had, however, never seen the actual Alhambra. His knowledge of the monument was mediated by Owen Jones' and Jules Goury's plates in their seminal publication on the Nasrid citadel, *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra*, a work in which the Alhambra's geometrical ornamentation had been translated into brightly colored, flattened patterns thanks to the recent technique of chromolithography, the development of which Jones contributed to (Ferry, "Printing the Alhambra").

Owen Jones, the "Paxtonian Kaleidoscope" and the science of color

Although there is no evidence of Jones's use of the kaleidoscope, Brewster's invention certainly coincided with a period of growing interest on the part of architects and designers for geometrical patterns, the study of Islamic ornamentation, and the popularity of the neo-Moorish style. In 1815, James Canavah Murphy's *Arabian Antiquities of Spain* appeared, with several decorative patterns from the Alhambra, soon to be followed by the publications of Girault de Prangey, and Jules Goury and Owen Jones in the mid-1830s. At that time, Jones was mainly known for his work as a color printer and designer of mosaics. Collaborating with ceramics producer John Blashfield, he published in 1842, *Designs for Mosaic and Tessellated Pavements* and several of his drawings produced in the 1830s recall the crystalline compositions produced by the kaleidoscope (fig. 5).

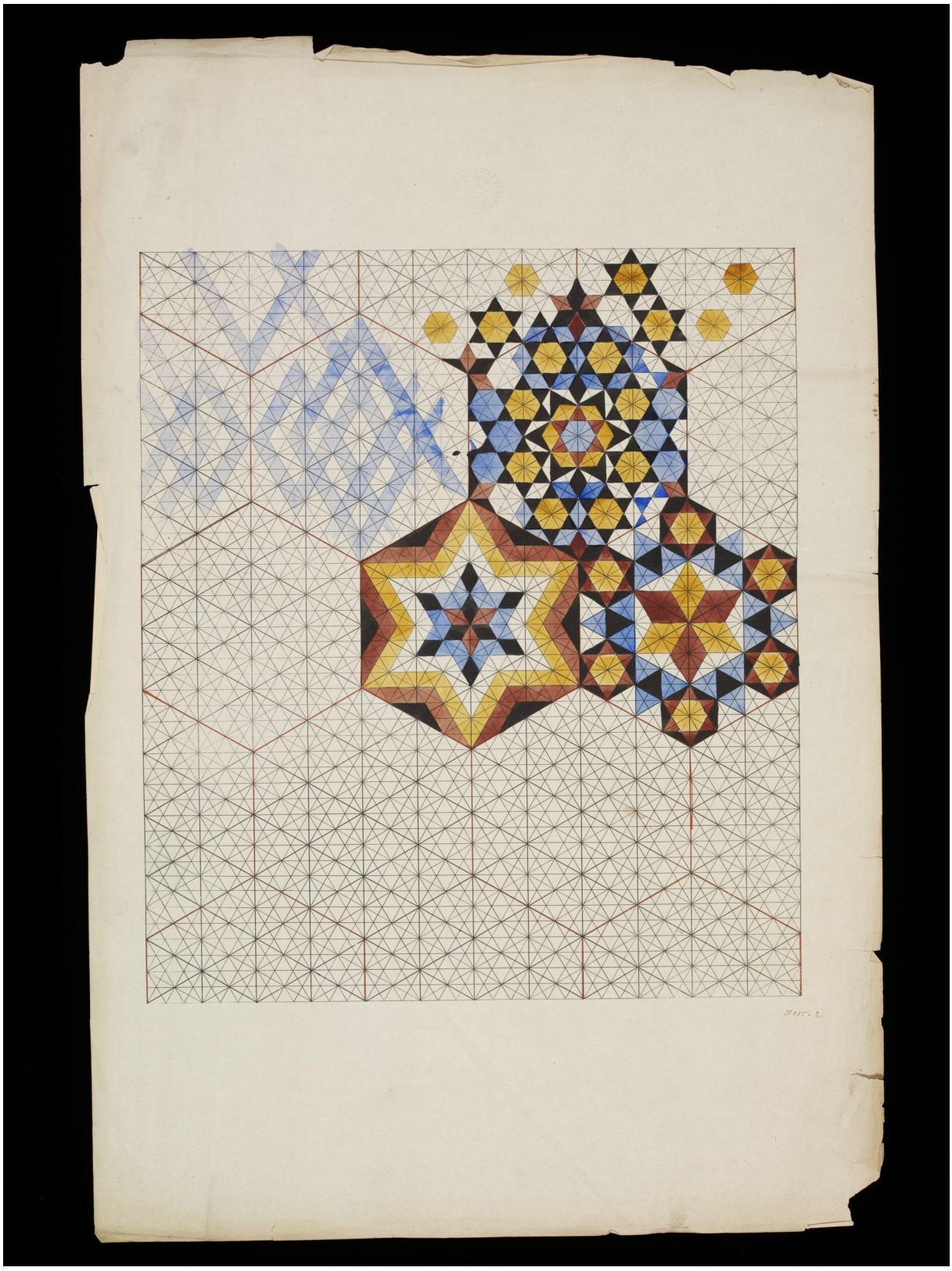


Figure 5 : Owen Jones. *Design for a tiled pavement in Islamic style*. Ca. 1840-1850. Pencil and watercolour. 54.7 cm x 39 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints, Drawings & Paintings Collection, 8115:12 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Jones certainly shared Brewster's interest in the reconciliation of art and science and he would combine his knowledge of the Alhambra with contemporary color theories to promote the revival of polychromy. While studying the decorative system of the Alhambra, Jones had found confirmation of the importance of the use of the three primaries—red, yellow and blue—which, according to him, characterized the "early periods of art" (Goury and Jones, vol. 1: 1842, plate 28). He would later diffuse his ideas in the fine arts courts of the second Crystal Palace, rebuilt between 1852-1854 at Sydenham, which constituted a *manifesto* for the importance of polychromy throughout history (Moser 121-139; Varela Braga, *Une théorie universelle* 33-55). This culminated in the Alhambra Court and its accompanying guidebooks, in which Jones detailed his theories on color and ornament (Ferry, "Owen Jones; Varela Braga, "How to Visit"). Seen by millions of visitors, this reinvented and condensed version of the Alhambra not only contributed to the popular knowledge of the monument but more importantly transformed the actual perception of the original Alhambra as a highly colored architecture, saturated with blue, red, and gold.

As could be expected, the Court's colored ornamentation attracted comparison with the kaleidoscope. A visitor to the Hall of the Tribunal in the court commented on the "the diapered patterns in lines and curves running into and crossing each other, so as to form an endless variety of floral and geometrical shapes, like those of the kaleidoscope" (Adams 306), whereas the French writer Alphonse Esquiros admired the patterns on the ceiling and the multiplicity of colors that recalled "*toutes les teintes du kaléidoscope*" (658). The kaleidoscopic effect of the court was further enhanced in the section inspired by the Hall of the Abencerages, where Jones had used colored glasses to decorate a *muqarnas* dome, probably inspired, as noted by Sarah Keller, by the stained glasses of the Mirador del Lindajara (317).

However, "Alhambra Jones" was no revivalist. On the contrary, he advocated for the creation of a totally new architectural and ornamental language, that would be the expression of his age, and in which color would play a central role, as demonstrated in his color scheme for the Crystal Palace at the London Great Exhibition in 1851 (Darby 262-290; Van Zanten 235-241; Flores 79-88; Moser 44-58). In the well-known decoration of the "Paxtonian kaleidoscope", as the Crystal Palace was also referred to ("Introductory Address" 169), Jones combined his ideas about the polychromy of the Alhambra with contemporary theories of color and optics. The interior of the iron structure was painted with the three primaries red, yellow, and blue, scientifically applied in accordance with the proportions and notions developed by two contemporary chemists and color specialists (fig. 6).

The first was George Field, a British producer of pigments, who counted Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites among his clients and was the author of several treatises on color harmony (Gage, *George Field*). The second was Michel Eugène Chevreul, director of the Manufactures des Gobelins, who had established in 1828 his *Laws of Simultaneous Contrasts*, proving that colors were perceived differently when seen isolated or juxtaposed (Roque). The primaries were therefore applied in narrow stripes, separated by white, so that they did not blend, following Chevreul's theory, and in the ratio of three parts yellow to five parts red to eight parts blue, according to Field's experiment with the light spectrum. With this system, Jones believed the three primaries would be blended in the eye of the viewer, thus producing what he called a "neutralised bloom" and an artificial atmospheric perspective that provoked the admiration of viewers (Merrifield ii). However, contrary to Chevreul, Jones was not aiming at the harmony of complementary colors. Instead, he turned to an ideal and symbolical unification of the three primaries into light, which owed much to Field's analogical system of musical harmony, as Michael Darby and David Van Zanten have shown.

At this point it might be useful to consider briefly the question of primary or primitive colors. When Isaac Newton had realized his experiment with the prism, he had stated that the primitive colors were seven, in analogy with the musical notes. This, however, appeared to be in contradiction with

Figure 6 : William Simpson. *Interior of the Crystal Palace decorated by Owen Jones*. Ca. 1851. Watercolour on paper. 71 cm x 99 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints, Drawings & Paintings Collection, 546-1897 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the practical experience of artists who believed the primitive colors to be three, a fact that was established in the early seventeenth century by engraver Jakob Christoph Le Blon and his trichromic color engraving process. Consequently, several theorists would later try to reconcile Newton's theories with the idea of the three primaries. One of them would be David Brewster, who developed the theory of the three spectral primaries: using light filters, he argued that the light was made up of a mixture of red, yellow, and blue. David Ramsay Hay or George Field also shared his view. Field even elaborated an apparatus called the "Metrochrome", to prove that light was composed of three parts of yellow, five parts of red, eight parts of blue, an idea that would later prove to be totally arbitrary but which illustrated the efforts to unite art and science.

Jones' color system was further exposed in his 1856 *Grammar of Ornament* and put into practice in his other ferro-vitreous decorations, like the 1858 shopping hall of the Crystal Palace Bazaar (fig. 7) and the show room for glass producers Follet & Osler in Oxford Street (fig. 8). For the first, Jones created a polychrome ceiling composed of transparent glass panels framed by a band of yellow, red, and blue glass, whereas for the second, he not only decorated the ceiling with colored glasses in the three primaries, but also took advantage of the optical effects of mirrors placed along the walls to produce, as in a gigantic kaleidoscope, a specular effect of depth. Combining his knowledge of the Alhambra and contemporary color theory and applying them to modern building techniques, Jones demonstrated how art and science could renew contemporary architecture.

Figure 7: Owen Jones. *Osler's Gallery, Oxford Street, London.* Ca.1858-1860. Pen, ink and watercolour. 147.3 cm x 102 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints, Drawings & Paintings Collection, P.29-1976 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

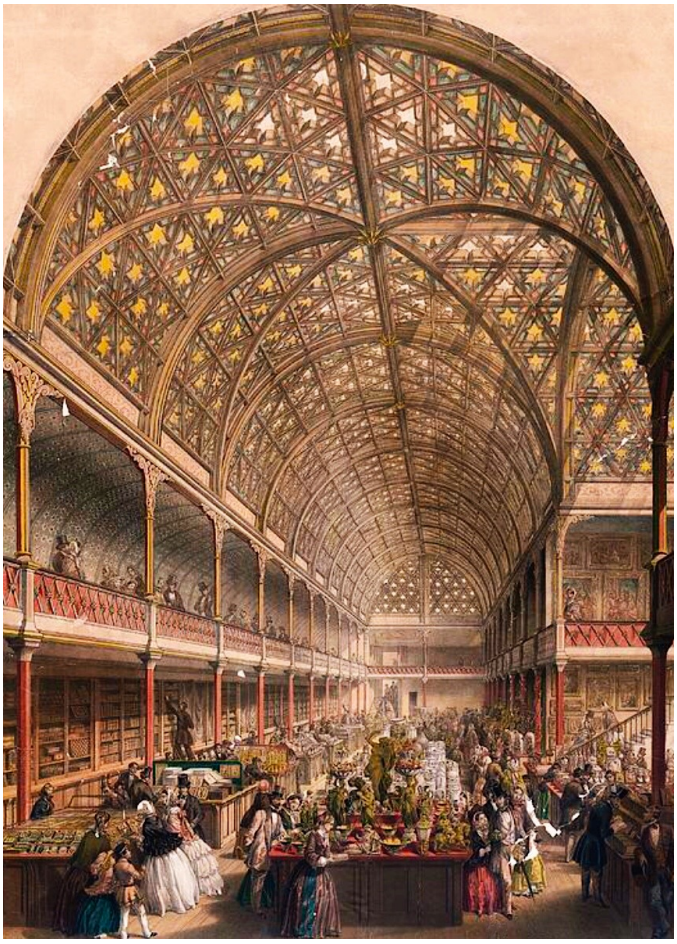


Figure 8: Owen Jones. *Interior of the London Crystal Palace Bazaar*. Ca. 1858. Lithography, hand-colored. Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington D. C.

A Tuscan kaleidoscope: The villa of Sammezzano

Goury and Jones' volume became one of the main visual sources for documenting the architecture and ornamentation of the Alhambra, thus contributing greatly to the international diffusion of the neo-Moorish taste. The interest for Islamic ornament that developed in several parts of Europe found in Tuscany a fertile ground too, as the spectacular orientalizing interiors in the Villa of Sammezzano in Regello demonstrate. Realized between the early 1840s and the late 1880s, Sammezzano was a product of the Marquis Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona's imagination, who acted both as patron and amateur architect. The result was a blend of western and eastern styles that owed much to the gothico-Moorish romantic spirit, and a *horror vacui* decoration that is yet another example of the fertile interaction between orientalizing decoration, optics, and color theory in the nineteenth century.

Panciatichi never visited Spain nor traveled outside Europe. His knowledge of Islamic architecture stemmed from contemporary architectural publications and was mediated through Paris and London. Two men were particularly relevant for his ideas about ornament. One was the French painter and ceramist Jules Ziegler, known in the 1840s for his production of Alhambresque vases and who authored a treatise on ceramics and aesthetics based on universal analogy, *Études céramiques: recherches des principes du beau dans l'architecture, l'art céramique et la forme en général*, published in 1850 (Labrusse 38-41). A second important figure was Owen Jones, whose Alhambra Court in the reconstructed Crystal Palace at Sydenham he had seen in 1864. Soon afterwards, Panciatichi acquired his first copy of Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*, the pattern on the cover of the book appears in stucco in one of the villa's rooms (Varela Braga, "Building a Dream" 301-302).

Like Ziegler and Jones, Panciatichi believed in the union of art and science. A true amateur, he made experiments in several fields, including optics. Participating in the microscope mania of the second half of the nineteenth century, Panciatichi not only rejoiced in the use of the instrument but was also engaged in the creation of his own models. He was a friend of Giovanni Battista Amici (1786-1863), one of the inventors of the achromatic microscope, and was especially interested, as was David Brewster, in the use of jewels as optical lenses. With the help of Parisian optician Charles Chevalier, he created several microscopes, some of which were exhibited at the National Exhibition in Florence in 1861 (*Esposizione Italiana* 389-390).

This knowledge of optics and color theory was put into practice in his orientalizing experimentation in Sammezzano, in the painting of the rooms, and through the use of colored glasses. A striking example is the villa's dining room, the so-called "Peacock Room", characterized by its multicolored gothic fan-vaulting (fig. 9). This is perhaps the most "psychedelic" space in the villa, but it actually displays a precise polychromatic scheme, which corresponds to the division of the light spectrum in seven colors, as theorized since Newton's experiment with the prism. At a closer look, we remark that colors are separated by more—or less—largely depicted dark lines, which demonstrated striking similarities with the experiment on the spectrum made by Joseph von Frauenhofer, popularized through volumes such as Ernest Brücke's *Les couleurs au point de vue physique, physiologique, artistique et industriel* (1866), which was present in Panciatichi's library.

Figure 9: Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona. *Peackock Room*. Villa of Sammezzano, Regello.

In other instances, color is introduced by the means of glass, such as in the Hall of Stars, where pieces of colored glass contrast with the whiteness of the walls and vault (fig. 10). Sarah Keller has shown that stained glass constituted an essential feature of many neo-Moorish buildings (Keller 303). However, Panciatichi's decoration is unusual: instead of having stained-glass windows, the glass elements have been inserted directly in the stucco paneling of the walls. In the upper portions of the walls, which turn their back to the gallery above the ingress hall, light passes through the glass, transforming the walls into so many colored *transannea*, echoing Jones' metropolitan experiments in a room in which the cover pattern of the *Grammar of Ornament* was displayed.

Figure 10: Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona. *Hall of Stars*. Villa of Sammezzano, Regello.

However, while Jones believed that his "neutralised bloom" (7) would be created by a precise combination of red-yellow-blue according to the mathematical proportions exposed by Field, Panciatichi follows another system, replacing yellow with green. Would green and red refer to Chevreul's theory of the complementaries? While no written information on Panciatichi's motivation survives, the choice of the triad red-green-blue might more probably reflect contemporary changes in color theory. The theory of trichromatic color advanced by Thomas Young in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and further developed by Hermann von Helmholtz in 1850 (thus known as the Young-Helmholtz theory) had stated that the eye's retina consists of three different kinds of light receptors for red, green, and blue (Millington). In 1857, James Maxwell had proved the validity of the Young-Helmholtz's theory, which was diffused through popular scientific journals or publications such as Brücke's volume. In the 1860s (when Panciatichi decorated this room), the primaries were therefore no longer considered to be red-yellow-blue but red-green-blue. Despite the lack of archival information regarding his intentions, we may assume that Panciatichi, as a passionate amateur of optics, would have been aware of such scientific discoveries and that he would have attempted to put them into practice in his visual experiments in Sammezzano.

In the nineteenth century, the study of the ornamentation of the Alhambra, color theory, and optics dialogued closely. As demonstrated by the examples of Owen Jones in Great Britain and Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona in Tuscany, it could result in concrete architectural and decorative realizations ranging from contemporary interpretations to eclectic experimentations. In both cases, the model of the Islamic arts played a crucial role. Islamic arts would continue to inspire many twentieth-century color theories, as demonstrated by the Bauhaus and Johannes Itten's spiritual and metaphysical interpretations. That, however, is another story.

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Biography

Ariane Varela Braga is a historian of art and architecture. She is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Milan. In 2021, she was a Chastel Fellow at the French Academy and a Fellow at the Bibliotheca Herziana in Rome, where she worked on a book manuscript titled "Crafting the Moresco: Orientalism, Architecture and Material Culture in 19th and Early 20th-Century Italy" (Habitation project, University of Zurich). Her research is located at the intersections between visual and material culture, and architecture and cultural history in the late modern period. Her first book was about Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* (Campisano, 2017). She has published volumes and articles on the history and theory of decorative arts and architecture, polychrome marble, and the European appropriation of non-Western art, and curated exhibitions on nineteenth-century art and architecture, as well as on contemporary art.

Francine Giese[1]

Eastern Light

Western Fascination for Islamic Colored Glass Windows

Abstract

Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) have long been disregarded by scholarship despite their popularity with nineteenth-century travelers. Their vibrant light and bright colors have sparked the enthusiasm of artists, architects, and collectors who depicted, recreated, and displayed this fragile art form. By focusing on the British architect James William Wild, the eccentric traveler and art collector Karl von Urach, and the iconic American artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, this contribution will highlight the artistic and cultural significance of *qamarīyāt* as an expression of the intense colors of the East.

Keywords: glass art; James William Wild; Karl von Urach; Louis Comfort Tiffany; Cairo

During the colonial age, Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) witnessed a growing popularity with artists, art dealers, and collectors. Made of plaster grilles with glass pieces attached to their reverse by means of a thin layer of plaster (Flood xi), they create colorful light effects, which were described and depicted by many nineteenth-century travelers and artists. By presenting the first results of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) project "Luminosity of the East" (Vitrocentre Romont 2020-2024),[2] this contribution will address the many facets of the Western fascination for *qamarīyāt*, while focusing on three key figures within nineteenth-century orientalism and decorative arts: the British architect James William Wild (1814-1892), who developed a predilection for traditional Cairene houses; the eccentric collector Karl von Urach (1865-1925), who bought original *qamarīyāt* in Cairo and reinstalled them in his neo-Mamluk exhibition halls; and the artist Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), who had experienced the intense colors of the East during his travels and contributed to the renewal of American stained glass.

James William Wild: Documenting Cairo's domestic architecture

In 1842, the British architect James William Wild, brother-in-law of Owen Jones (1809-1874), joined the Prussian expedition to Egypt and Nubia, led by the Egyptologist Carl Richard Lepsius. In 1844, Wild left the expedition and took up residence in Cairo, where he stayed until 1847 (Llewellyn,

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[2] The abovementioned SNSF project focuses on Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries within Western museum collections and at World's Fairs, their popularity with artists, art dealers, and collectors during the colonial age, as well as their reception in Western art and architecture. Moreover, the availability and commercialization of Islamic colored glass windows on the art market are critically examined and strategies for dealing with artworks from a colonial context are being developed.

"Islamic Inspiration"; Llewellyn, "Two Interpretations"; Weeks 39-59). Here, he frequented the British orientalist Edward William Lane (1801-1876), who was member of a network of Western scientists, artists, and architects that regularly gathered in Lane's house (Crinson 101-102). Known for his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, first published in 1836, Lane portrayed contemporary life in nineteenth-century Egypt and left detailed descriptions of traditional Mamluk and Ottoman houses, making special mention of their use, architectural composition, and interior design (Lane 6-23).[3] As attested by the following quotation, the often-overlooked *qamarīyāt* had particularly aroused Lane's interest:

> In several of the upper rooms, in the houses of the wealthy, there are, besides the windows of lattice-work, others of coloured glass, representing bunches of flowers, peacocks, and other gay and gaudy objects, or merely fanciful patterns, which have a pleasing effect. These coloured glass windows, which are termed *ckum'aree'yehs*, are mostly from a foot and a half to two feet and a half in height, and from one to two feet in width; and are generally placed along the upper part of the projecting lattice-window, in a row; or above that kind of window, disposed in a group, so as to form a large square; or elsewhere in the upper parts of the walls, usually singly, or in pairs, side by side. They are composed of small pieces of glass of various colours, set in rims of fine plaster, and enclosed in a frame of wood (19-20).

According to Abraham Thomas, the gatherings at Lane's house might have awakened Wild's interest in the domestic architecture of the city (Thomas 43). Wild was especially interested in the interior decoration of the houses, of which he produced an impressive number of sketches showing traditional woodwork, *opus sectile* incrustations, *muqarnas* vaulting, as well as colored glass windows (Thomas; Weeks 40-42). Most noteworthy in the context of this contribution is a series of drawings by Wild, dating to the 1840s and entitled "Mr Lewis House". Held today at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the partly colored pencil drawings give us a precise idea of the traditional Cairene house, inhabited by the painter John Frederick Lewis (1805-1876). We therefore can conclude that Wild not only frequented Edward William Lane, but was also acquainted with the Victorian artist, who arrived in Cairo in 1841. Living *à la turque* in a traditional quarter for the following nine years, Lewis would develop the same predilection for the city's domestic architecture. Just as Wild, Lewis depicted the men's reception hall on the ground floor (*manḍara*) of his house and showed a special interest in its *qamarīyāt* and the vibrant effects produced by the light falling through the colored glass pieces, as attested in his watercolor and oil paintings, among them *The Hareem* (1849/50), *An Intercepted Correspondence* (1869), or *A Lady Receiving Visitors The Apartment is the Mandarah, the Lower Floor of the House, Cairo (The Reception)* (1873; fig. 1; Weeks 107-127). Compared to the representation of that same room by Wild, the architect's drawing reveals a different approach. Whereas the *mašrabiyāt* and stucco glass windows enhance the enchanted atmosphere of Lewis' Orientalist paintings, Wild reconstructs the overall design of the hall without showing its current state of preservation (fig. 2).[4] The same interest in architectural and ornamental details can also be seen in the Swiss architect Theodor Zeerleder (1820-1868), who spent several months in Cairo to study and depict the domestic architecture of the city in the winter of 1848 (Bäbler and Bätschmann; Giese et al., *Mythos Orient*). Even though the two architects never met, Zeerleder's sketches and watercolors show surprising similarities with Wild's analytical way of representation.

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[3] While Lane and his *Manners* have been discredited in Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* (Rodenbeck), his detailed descriptions of Cairo's domestic architecture remain a valid source.

[4] In contrast, John Frederick Lewis added these "picturesque imperfections" (Weeks 41), to his sketch *Mendurah in my House in Cairo*. Ca. 1843. Watercolor on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 717-1877.

Figure 1: John Frederick Lewis. *A Lady Receiving Visitors: The Apartment is the Mandarah, the Lower Floor of the House, Cairo* (The Reception). 1873. Oil on panel. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1981.25.417. © Public Domain.

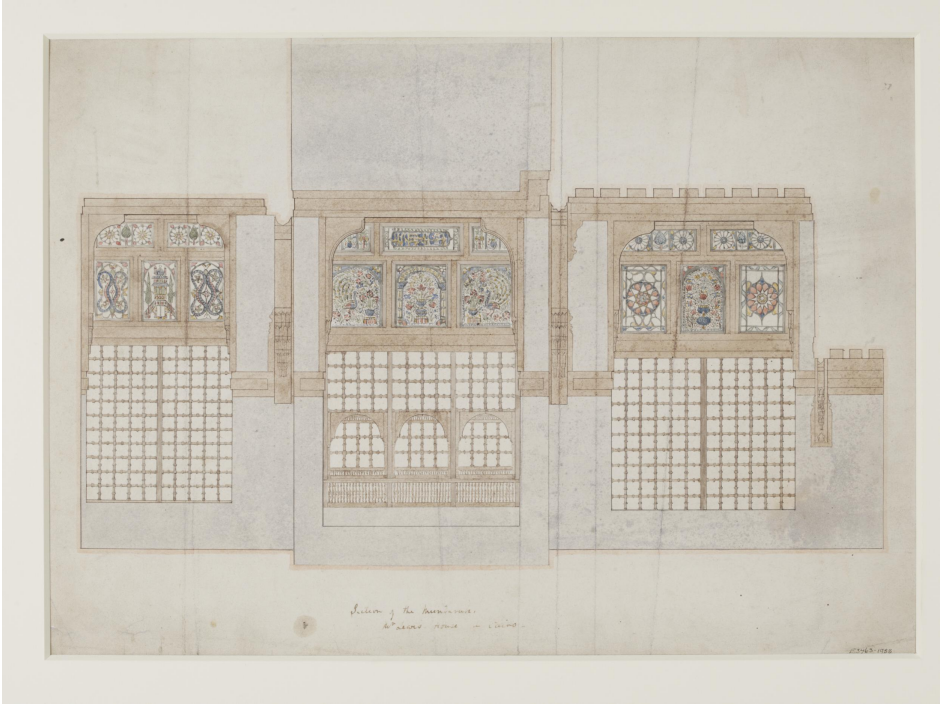

Figure 2: James William Wild. *Section of the Mundarah. Mr Lewis House in Cairo*. 1840s. Pencil, pen and ink, and watercolor on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Engraving, E.3763-1938. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 3: Theodor Zeerleder. *Cairo. Interieur eines Divans*. January - March 1848. Pencil and watercolor on paper. Burgerbibliothek Bern, Gr. C. 897. © Burgerbibliothek Bern.

Likewise, the Swiss architect was fascinated by the *qamarīyāt* he observed and depicted in various Cairene houses (fig. 3), and which he described in his travel diary, where special mention is made of the "magic light" (*magisches Licht*) reflected, transmitted, and dispersed by the colored glass windows (Zeerleder 114-115).

Just like Zeerleder, James William Wild would get the opportunity to create his own colored glass windows. Already one year after his arrival in Cairo, he won the commission for the Anglican church of St. Mark in Alexandria (1845-1854). The church was executed in an eclectic Early Christian style with strong Islamic references and completed in 1854 after important delays and periods of inactivity (Crinson 111-123). According to Reginald Stuart Poole's obituary written in 1892, Wild was given the opportunity to create five replicas of traditional *qamarīyāt* "in the old Arab style, perforated plaster with the stained glass backing" for the windows of the apse of St. Mark's in the 1870s. The iconography of the windows, however, followed the Western tradition, with figures of Our Savior and the Four Evangelists. It is possible that the borders with floral decoration and "jewel-like ornaments at the base" were taken from Islamic prototypes (Stuart Poole 489). Like other Western architects working in Cairo at the time, James Wild did not have the windows made locally, but had commissioned Powell & Sons, an internationally recognized studio based in London, to create the windows. The firm had established a stained glass department in 1844 with designers such as Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) early on in his career (Galicki 5, 29-34).

A second assignment to produce several stucco glass windows, approved by Henry Cole in October 1866, came from the South Kensington Museum, where Wild acted as an expert adviser in Islamic art and architecture from 1863 to 1871 (Stuart Poole 489; Thomas 54-56). Installed in the upper galleries of the museum's Oriental Courts,[5] which the late Owen Jones was commissioned to decorate in 1863, the stucco glass windows adopted the widespread Islamic motif of a flower bouquet in a vase within a medallion, as documented by Wild's draft from 1875-1877 and one of the windows preserved (figs. 4a, 4b).

When looking at Wild's Cairo sketches (fig. 5, left), and the V&A's Islamic colored glass window (inv. 1200-1883) with similar design, coming from the lot of Cairene *qamarīyāt* bought for the South Kensington Museum in London in 1883 by Edward William Lane's nephew Stanley Lane-Poole (1854-1931), it becomes obvious that the British architect followed the Islamic prototypes closely (Lane-Poole 265-267).

Again, it was James Powell & Sons, who executed the window after Wild's draft. The adherence to the Islamic technique of inserting the colored glass pieces into stucco grilles, described by Zeerleder and Wild, is surprising. In contrast, Zeerleder's replicas of traditional *qamarīyāt* follow a different technical approach: here, the Islamic technique has been translated into the Western stained-glass tradition, where instead of plaster lead cames are used to hold the colored glass in place. Most probably executed by the studio of Ludwig Stantz in Bern (Keller 205), Zeerleder's replicas were completed in 1854 and integrated in the neo-Mamluk Selamlik for Count Albert Alexandre de Pourtalès (1812-1861) at Oberhofen Castle (Giese, "Studie"; Giese, "Oberhofen Selamlik", Giese, "Fumoirs").

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[5] In an 1884 report on the Islamic collections held at the South Kensington Museum, the windows are described as being placed "at the opposite side of the South Court," i.e. the mentioned Oriental Courts ("Saracenic Art" 4). On the Oriental Courts and their localization within the South Kensington Museum, see Conway 39 (ground plan), 43; Barringer 15-17, with further references.

Figure 4a: James William Wild. *Colored Glass Window for the Oriental Courts in the South Kensington Museum; a Design*. 1874-1875. Watercolor on tracing paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, E.3705-1938. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, photographed by Adriana Francescutto.

Figure 4b: James William Wild. *Colored Glass Window for the Oriental Courts in the South Kensington Museum.* Window made after Wild's design by James Powell & Sons. 1870s. Plaster and colored glass. Victoria and Albert Museum. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, photographed by Adriana Francescutto.

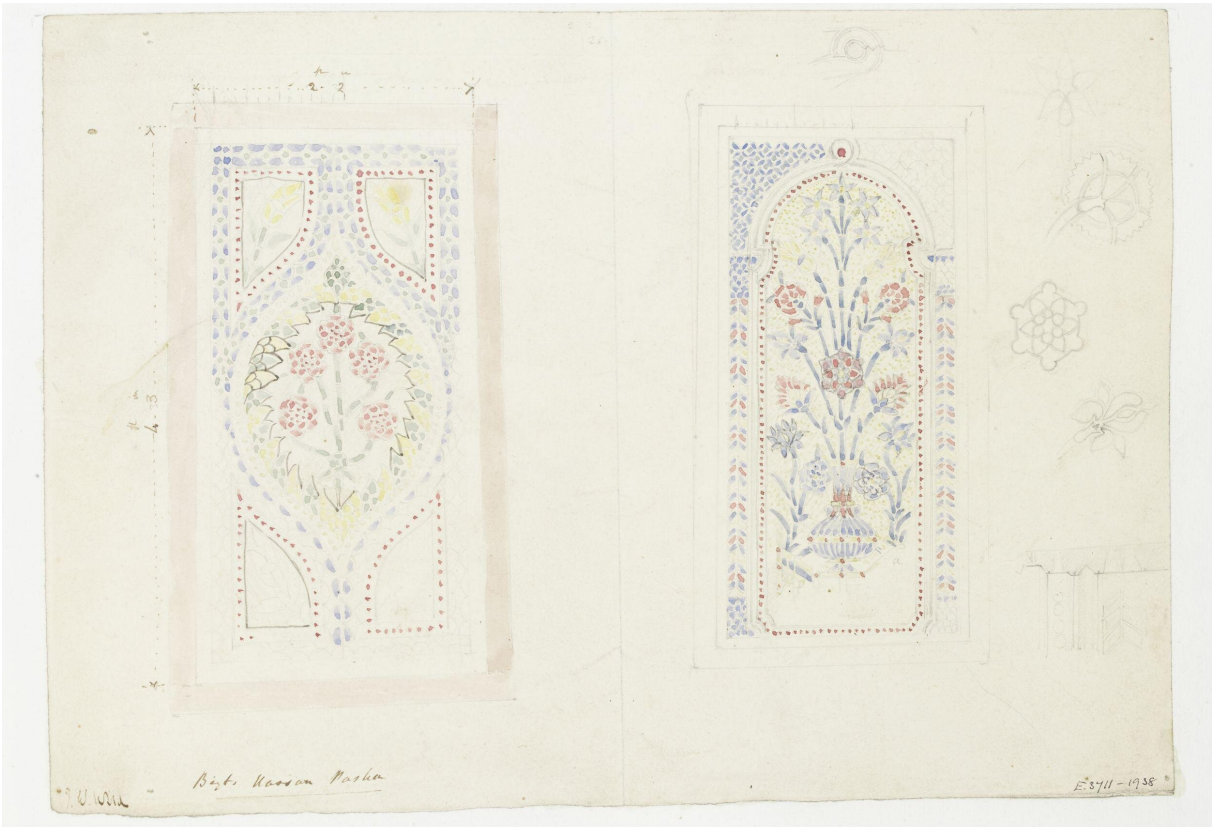

Figure 5: James William Wild. *Colored Glass Windows from Cairo*. 1840s. Pencil and watercolor. Victoria and Albert Museum, E.3711-1938. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Karl von Urach: Collecting and displaying Islamic colored glass windows in the West

Another way of bringing the colors of Islamic windows to the West, is exemplified through the life and activities of our second protagonist, the eccentric amateur, traveler, and art collector Karl, Prince of Urach, Count of Wurttemberg. After having traveled the world, including large parts of North Africa, Egypt, and the Near East, and after having assembled a remarkable Islamic art collection, Karl von Urach decided to install several neo-Islamic style rooms at Palais Urach, the family residence at Neckarstrasse 68 in Stuttgart. By doing so, he followed display strategies, which were introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century by Alexandre Du Sommerard (1779-1842) with his outstanding period room ensemble at Hôtel de Cluny in Paris.[6]

According to documents preserved at the city archive of Stuttgart, Karl's mother Florestine, Duchess of Urach and Countess of Wurttemberg, submitted a project to connect the initially detached annex building with the main residence at first floor level. For the interior decoration of this newly built wing, Karl von Urach commissioned the local architect Karl Mayer (dates unknown) who created a series of Orientalizing interiors inspired by neo-Moorish and neo-Mamluk architecture, the so-called Arab Rooms (*Arabische Räume*). Even though the spectacular rooms built between 1893 and 1925 have since been destroyed, they are considered today as one of the most important historicist ensembles in Germany. The Islamic prototypes and artistic tendencies observable in the Arab Rooms were important references in Karl's life. He not only knew Ibero-Islamic architecture from his travels, he also grew up in close proximity to one of the most

[6] On the significance of Alexandre Du Sommerard for the introduction of period and style rooms in private and public museums during the nineteenth century, see the contributions in Costa, Poulot and Volait with further references.

important neo-Moorish buildings of the nineteenth century—Karl Ludwig Wilhelm von Zanth's Wilhelma. Due to his longer stays in Egypt, where he owned a house, he was furthermore familiar with Mamluk architecture.

Although neo-Moorish and neo-Mamluk are two of the most widely received Islamic architectural styles, their implementation was quite different. While in the Moorish Revival, plaster casts were used almost exclusively, the Mamluk Revival is characterized by the assemblage of original architectural fragments, contemporary replicas, and plaster casts.

This practice of reusing original furniture in historicist interiors, has been transferred by the architect Ambroise Baudry (1838-1906) from France to Egypt.[7] Telling examples are the Maison de Delort de Gléon (1872), the Hôtel Saint-Maurice (1875-1879), and his own residence (1875-1876), studied by Mercedes Volait. After his return to Paris, affluent collectors of Islamic art commissioned Baudry to create several neo-Mamluk style rooms, amongst which we find Edmond de Rothschild's influential *fumoir arabe* at 41 Faubourg Saint-Honoré.

The prerequisite of this international trend was the availability of original pieces from Cairo's historic monuments. This was a direct consequence of Ismail Pasha's (r. 1863-1879) controversial urban remodeling that led to the destruction of large areas of the historic city of Cairo (Volait, *Maisons* 39).[8] The involvement of a local aristocrat from Stuttgart in this meanwhile contested sell-out of the city's cultural heritage may surprise at first. By taking a closer look at the biography of Karl von Urach, however, it becomes clear that he frequented the cultural centers of the time—Paris and Cairo in particular (Giese, "International Fashion"). He therefore was able to get directly in contact with important players involved in the art market, in the case of Cairo, the French entrepreneurs Jean Jaladon and the chief architect of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* Max Herz (1856-1919), an authority of the Mamluk Revival.[9]

According to the existing archival documentation, on 4 May 1898, Karl von Urach, who used to travel under his pseudonym of Baron Charles de Neuffen, bought nineteen items from L. Almendary & J. Jaladon in Cairo, including two original colored glass windows (*Note des Moulages)*. All items were sent to Stuttgart by ship via Trieste in June 1898, as attested by a handwritten letter from Jean Jaladon, dated 13 June 1898 (Handwritten letter). According to a typed description of the Arab Rooms, most probably written after Karl's death on the occasion of the public inauguration of the rooms, the acquired original windows were installed in the first two neo-Mamluk rooms, executed in 1899 and 1902 (*Merkblatt*).[10] They have been described in 1926 as being "sawn out of plaster and fitted with differently colored glass pieces."[11]

As historical photographs from Karl's *Nachlass* (personal archive) attest, Islamic colored glass windows were also installed in the Marble Hall (*Marmorsaal*). According to the abovementioned source, the windows there showed the same characteristics as the windows in the earlier neo-Mamluk rooms (fig. 6).[12]

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[7] Mercedes Volait has worked extensively on the French architect Ambroise Baudry, see for instance, Crosnier Leconte and Volait 56-133; Volait, "Passions" 98-103; Volait, *Maisons* 49-51; Volait, "Intérieurs" 103-114; Volait, "Usage" 53-55; Volait, "Remploi".

[8] On Cairo's urban development and its nineteenth-century modernization, see Williams 457-475; AlSayyad, Bierman and Rabbat; Sanders.

[9] Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Abteilung Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS) GU 120 Bü. 316. On the various activities of Max Herz, see Ormos. "Max Herz"; Ormos, *Max Herz Pasha*; Volait, *Fous du Caire*, 193-196.

[10] In his 1926 report on the Arab Rooms, Klaus Rohr erroneously described the aforementioned windows as being part of the first hall (*Blauer Saal*), built in 1893 in neo-Moorish style.

[11] "Die Fenster sind in Gips ausgesägt und mit verschiedenfarbigen Gläsern versehen" (Rohr 6; Kast 155).

[12] "Die Fenster, des mit Marmor ausgelegten Saales sind ebenfalls in Gips ausgesägt und mit farbigen Gläsern besetzt" (Rohr 6; Kast 155).

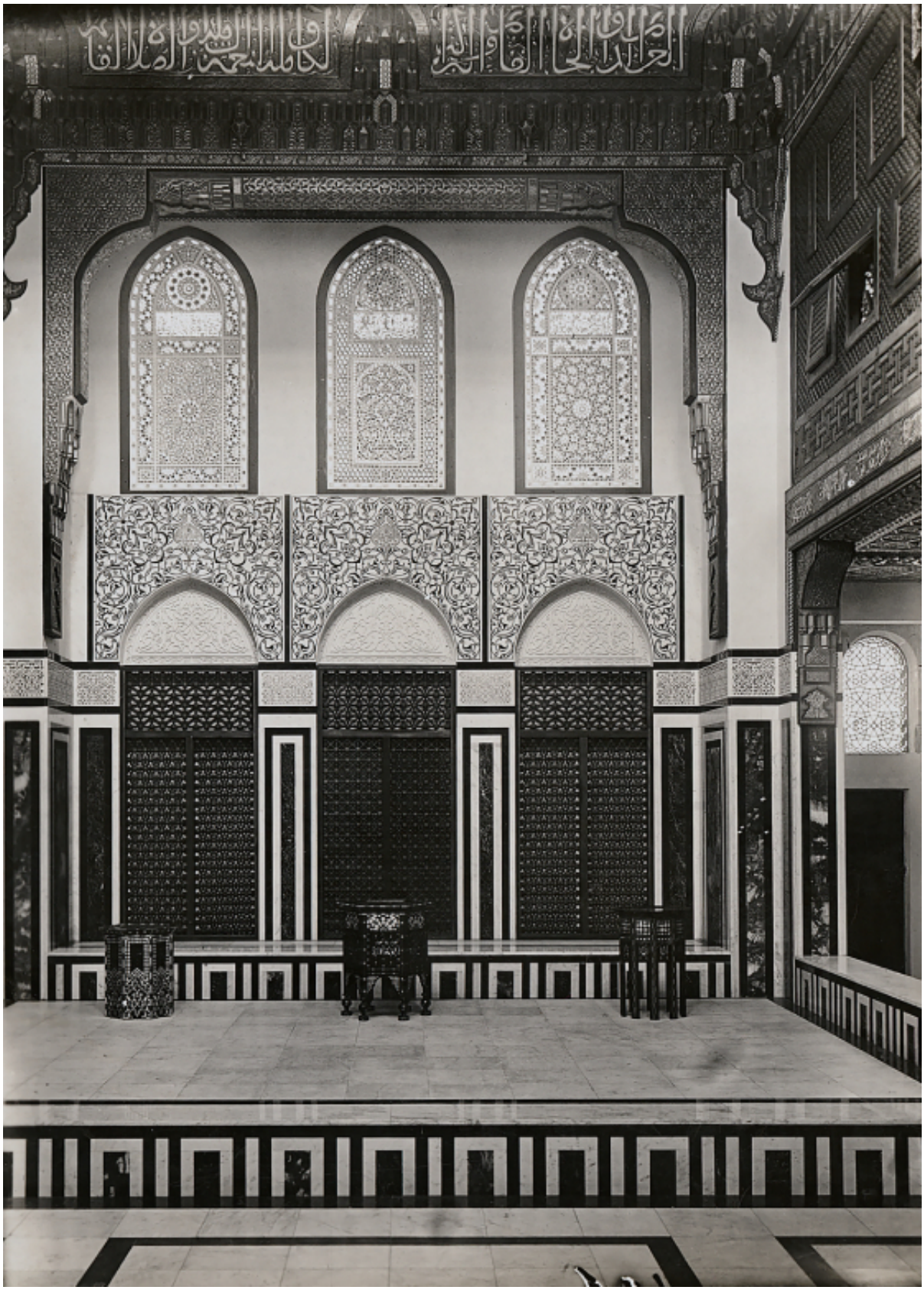

Figure 6: Karl Mayer, architect. *Stuttgart, Palais Urach, Marble Hall*. 1907-1909. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Abteilung Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, GU 99 Bü. 557a. © Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart.

Whether these were original pieces from Cairo or contemporary replicas as in the South Kensington Museum's Oriental Courts, could not be determined, as the property was destroyed during World War II and corresponding invoice documents have not been found so far. Either way, with their intricate stucco grille and intensive color effects, the colored glass windows contributed to the overall impression of an exotic getaway in the middle of Stuttgart (Rohr 6; Kast 155).

Louis Comfort Tiffany: Reinterpreting the colors of the East

Just as James William Wild and Karl von Urach, Louis Comfort Tiffany knew Islamic architecture and decorative arts firsthand. His father's close friend and chief designer Edward C. Moore (1827-1891) introduced Tiffany to Islamic art already at a young age (Koch 9; Paul 12-14), and as an emerging artist he experienced the East on an extended journey through Spain, North Africa, and Egypt in the 1870s.[13] Trained as a landscape and genre painter, he was fascinated by the rich artistic vocabulary and intense colors of the East, which he captured in his paintings and watercolors.

Although his pictorial oeuvre was recognized by his contemporaries, Tiffany's glass creations were to bring him international renown.[14] As one of the key figures of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century American glass art, he contributed—together with French-born artist and decorator John La Farge (1835-1910)—to the artistic and technical renewal of the art of stained glass during the so-called Opalescent Era (1880-1920) (Raguin, "Verre américain"). Just as his New York competitor La Farge, Tiffany looked for ways to expand the color palette and luminosity of traditional stained glass by resorting to opalescent glass.

This milky translucent glass was initially used as a porcelain substitute and introduced in the late 1870s by John La Farge to the art of stained glass.[15] What Henry B. Adams described as "a new medium of artistic expression" (Adams 41), was to become a field of experimentation for the two artists, shaped by the art of the past and driven by the search for innovation.

In 1893, the year of his international breakthrough with the celebrated exhibition of Tiffany Studios at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Tiffany published an essay on the latest technical inventions in American stained glass. Entitled "American Art Supreme in Colored Glass," Tiffany retraces the evolution of the art of stained glass from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, when color only played a secondary role. This began to change in the nineteenth century, when "Color, and color only, was the end sought." (Tiffany 623). American artists started to produce new material, which according to Tiffany, "…rivalled the painter's palette in its range of tones and eclipsed the iridescence and brilliancy found in the Roman and Egyptian glass" (623). Tiffany and his New York fellows went even farther by adopting opalescent, iridescent, rolled, and textured glass, applied in various layers to produce new and unexpected shades of color.

In his 1899 commission for the James May Memorial Window at Temple Emanu-El in New York, Tiffany got the opportunity to combine the exotic light of his opalescent windows with an equally exotic iconography (Deitsch). Partially preserved at the Beth-El Chapel of Tempel Emanu-El at Fifth Avenue and 65th Street, the Tiffany window was originally made for the community's previous temple dedicated on 11 September 1868 at Fifth Avenue and 43rd street (fig. 7).

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[13] Tiffany undertook his North African journey in company of the American painter and future associate Samuel Coleman, whom he had met in Spain in the spring of 1869 (Koch 7; Paul 19-20).

[14] On the life and artistic production of Louis Comfort Tiffany, see Koch; Duncan; Duncan, Eidelberg and Harris; Raguin, *Glory in Glass*; Raguin, "Verre américain"; Raguin, *Style*; Pongracz, *Louis C. Tiffany*.

[15] John La Farge's significance for the renewal of American stained glass in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been treated extensively, see for instance Weinberg, "Early Stained Glass"; Adams; Weinberg, *Decorative Works*; La Farge; Sloan and Yarnall; Raguin, *Glory in Glass*; Raguin, "Verre américain"; Raguin, *Style*; Yarnall; Luneau; Raguin, "Opulent Interiors".

Figure 7: *Dedication of the Hebrew Temple Emanu-El, corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Third Street, New York City, 11 September 1868*. Taken from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 3 October 1868, p. 41. Temple Emanu-El, CEE 84–21. Image courtesy of Temple Emanu-El, New York.

Placed at the eastern end of the temple, above the ark holding the Torah scrolls, the window adopted parts of the original decorative scheme consisting of a series of twelve polylobed arches, crowned by two wooden pavilions and the Ten Commandments at the center of the tympanum.

As in many nineteenth-century synagogues following Semper's 1840 Dresden temple (Giese and Varela Braga, *Power of Symbols* 125-162), the interior design of the 1868 Emanu-El Temple followed Ibero-Islamic prototypes. Little surprise then that Tiffany choose the same style for his window. Based on his on-site experience during his Spanish journey, he made reference to the epitome of *andalusí* architecture—the Alhambra's Court of the Lions. Executed in the aforementioned technique, the use of opalescent and iridescent glass and their application in up to six superimposed layers contribute to the unexpected color effect and the three-dimensionality of the window (fig. 8). The background showing the Temple of Solomon within a bucolic landscape reminds us of watercolors, thereby sharply contrasting with the intense colors and the detailed representation of the court arcade with its characteristic columns and the meticulously reproduced stucco decoration.

Figure 8: Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company. *James May Memorial Window*. 1899. New York, Tempel Emanu-El, Beth-El Chapel. Image courtesy of Temple Emanu-El, New York.

The Alhambra remained an important source in Tiffany's artistic oeuvre, as attested by the neo-Moorish bronze doors of the ark just below the abovementioned window, which was commissioned in 1910 by Jacob H. Schiff (1847-1920) and is preserved today at the Beth-El Chapel (Pongracz, "American Synagogues" 153-155), or Tiffany's 1911 watercolor *The Alhambra*.[16] However, it was his neo-Nasrid stained glass composition that was to outshine his other neo-Moorish works by its colorfulness and luminosity.

Valorizing a fragile art form

Traditional *qamarīyāt* made of plaster and glass were important artistic manifestations across the centuries that have attracted the interest of nineteenth-century travelers, artists, and architects, who looked for artistic and technical renewal. Although we are dealing here with architectural elements that are far less mobile than other works of art such as paintings and sculptures, they found their way into Western private and public collections or were integrated in neo-Mamluk interiors. After more than a century of misappraisal of historicist architecture and waves of destruction caused by World War II as well as the building boom of the 1970s, the artistic and cultural significance of Islamic revival-style architecture and interior design, including the fragile stucco glass windows seems now to be undisputed. As a hitherto largely neglected component of Islamic material culture, *qamarīyāt* have to be studied and valorized as such.

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[16] Louis Comfort Tiffany. *The Alhambra*. 1911. Collection of Eric Streiner (Cooney Frelinghuysen 4, fig. 3).

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Biography

Francine Giese is director of the Vitrocentre and the Vitromusée Romont, Switzerland. From 2014-2019 she held a Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) professorship at the Institute of Art History of the University of Zurich, where she led the research project "Mudejarismo and Moorish Revival in Europe." Her PhD thesis, dealing with the Islamic ribbed vault, was published in 2007 (Gebr. Mann), and her habilitation (second book) on building and restoration practices in the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba was issued in 2016 (Peter Lang). In her current research project "Luminosity of the East" (SNSF, 2020-2024), she focuses on the typology, materiality and provenance of Islamic colored glass windows (*qamarīyāt*) within Western museum collections. Her research focuses on transfer and exchange processes between the Islamic World and the West, architectural Orientalism, provenance research, and the arts of glass.

Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik[1]

La modernité « orientale »

Les arts décoratifs polonais face aux arts de l'Islam au début du XXe siècle

Abstract

Oriental influences present in Polish culture since the Middle Ages and incarnated by the idea of "sarmatisme" were re-evaluated or outright rejected by the young modernist generation. In fact, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century the traditional Polish "Orientality" was replaced by a wave of interest for the aesthetics of Islamic art, a reflection of the European "Oriental renaissance". The Polish *imaginarium* had long associated the art and culture of Islam uniquely to the Middle East and its craft. The romantic epoch brought with it a new interest for medieval Spain, Granada in particular, its history and monuments, reflected in the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz and the museographic realisations of Izabela Czartoryska at Puławy or Tytus Działyński at Kórnik. If architectural projects, principally of "Moorish" synagogues and internal decorations for aristocratic and bourgeois palaces still belong to a nineteenth century oriental current, they do however already reveal a will typical of pre-war decades by virtue of granting significance to Islamic decorative principles. In the first decades of the twentieth century, "à l'orientale" motifs recurrent in fashion and the visual universe, as witnessed by contemporary novels, found a sort of counterpoint in propositions made by representatives of the Polish applied art revival movement, successful hybridization of European, oriental and popular models: fabrics, carpets, metal and leather objects of artists from the *Warsztaty Krakowskie* (Cracow workshops, founded 1913) such as Józef Czajkowski, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Bonawentura Lenart, and Karol Tichy, "javano-cracovian" batiks of young workshop apprentices or even the glazed ceramics of Stanisław Jagmin. Displayed at the 1925 Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris, the Cracow Workshop adherent's productions draw the attention of the European public and critics on this peculiar breed of national "primitivist" style tainted with Orientalism.

Keywords: Cracow workshops; national style; Moorish architecture; orientalism; decorative arts

Dans les premières décennies du XXe siècle, les artistes originaires de Pologne marquent pour la première fois dans l'histoire d'une manière distincte leur présence sur la scène culturelle internationale. Des peintres tels que Władysław Ślewiński, Louis Marcoussis ou Moïse Kisling, qui lient leurs carrières à la France, ou les élèves de Kazimir Malewicz, qui débutent en Russie, font partie intégrante des cercles avant-gardistes européens. Des artistes décorateurs, tels que Józef Czajkowski, Wojciech Jastrzębowski ou Zofia Stryjeńska, primés à l'Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes de Paris en 1925, représentent le versant "interne" national de la révolution moderniste polonaise.

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En effet, autour de 1900, en Pologne, la conception de la création décorative change radicalement, stimulant de vifs débats esthétiques et sociaux. Pivot de la réflexion des tenants de la première avant-garde, les arts « appliqués » constituent alors de véritables champs d'expérimentation et soulèvent de nombreuses questions : statut des arts « mineurs », détour par l'art populaire, relation aux traditions artistiques non-occidentales. Cracovie, ville qui est le centre de ce mouvement, rassemble autour des *Warsztaty Krakowskie* (Ateliers de Cracovie) une nouvelle génération d'artistes qui cherchent un language formel pour l'avenir. Ce foisonnement de réflexions et d'inventions aboutira en définitive à une synthèse de modèles européens, populaires et orientaux. C'est justement cette version particulière du style national "primitivisant", teinté d'orientalisme qui, en 1925, attirera l'attention de la critique et du public européens (fig. 1).

Figure 1 : *Kiosque, Section polonaise, Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, Paris 1925. Photographie, Musée national de Varsovie.

Edward Said décrit l'orientalisme comme un système binaire de géographie imaginaire par lequel l'Europe s'est définie comme distincte de l'Orient (Said). Selon lui, le discours orientaliste, dépeignant l'Orient comme « l'Autre inférieur », sert finalement à subordonner l'Orient à l'Occident, justifiant ainsi la colonisation. L'une des principales objections soulevées par les opposants à cette théorie est celle de traiter l'Occident comme un tout monolithique (Clarke). Des recherches récentes sur l'orientalisme centre-européen et les processus de réception des influences orientales en Europe centrale prouvent que cette critique est justifiée et que le modèle saïdien ne correspond pas à la description de la situation dans cette partie du continent. De fait, ni la monarchie danubienne ni aucune nation faisant partie de l'empire n'ont jamais possédé de colonies d'outre-mer ou poursuivi un plan d'expansion coloniale[2]. Par conséquent, l'image de l'Orient dans l'esprit de ses habitants n'a jamais été le résultat d'une relation similaire à la dépendance entre un colonisateur et un colonisé, mais a été façonnée par des contacts constants avec l'Orient, impliquant à la fois des conflits militaires et des relations commerciales.

André Gingrich, reprenant les thèses générales de Said, souligne que l'orientalisme « classique » ne couvre pas tous les modèles de la perception occidentale de l'Orient. Afin de caractériser une variété spécifique d'orientalisme, façonnée sur la « frontière étroite » entre les deux cercles culturels, il propose un concept d'« orientalisme frontalier ». Contrairement à l'orientalisme « classique », celui-ci ne fait pas référence aux territoires d'outre-mer et aux subalternes coloniaux, mais à « notre » frontière et aux rivaux menaçants mais égaux qui l'attaquent (« *Frontier Myths of Orientalism* » ; « La frontière proche »). Il ne s'agit donc pas d'un discours formé dans le cercle des élites métropolitaines, justifiant l'expansion coloniale et se reflétant dans la science et la culture « supérieure », mais d'un ensemble de mythes et d'images présents dans la culture populaire des peuples vivant à la frontière de deux civilisations.

L'analyse de Gingrich porte sur les relations entre l'Empire des Habsbourg et l'Empire ottoman du point de vue de Vienne, le Turc incarnant l'« Oriental dangereux » et le Bosniaque figurant le « bon Oriental ». La situation des Polonais, avec leur longue tradition nationale et étatique (interrompue à la fin du XIXe siècle par les partages de la Pologne par la Russie, la Prusse et l'Autriche), est quelque peu différente. Appartenant à la culture occidentale, la Pologne est située à l'est des centres les plus importants de cette culture. La proximité et les relations politiques et commerciales avec l'Orient, ainsi que la présence d'intermédiaires naturels (Arméniens, Tatars, Karaïtes), contribuent à une intégration des éléments orientaux dans sa tradition artistique. Déterminée par la situation géographique et politique, cette « orientalité » – selon la définition de Jan Kieniewicz – devient ainsi l'un des facteurs majeurs façonnant l'identité polonaise depuis le Moyen Âge jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle. Elle se manifeste dans la culture populaire, qui adapte des motifs décoratifs et des tissus d'origine orientale, mais aussi à travers des figures telles que Lajkonik, symbole de Cracovie[3] (fig. 2).

Mais, contrairement à l'analyse de Gingrich, elle concerne principalement la noblesse – couche dominante de la République des Deux Nations (polono-lituanienne). L'idée du « sarmatisme » et l'adaptation de l'habit d'inspiration levantine en constituent les exemples les plus évocateurs. Conquis par l'esthétique orientale, les Polonais se considèrent néanmoins toujours comme des Occidentaux, car « l'Orient a influencé les arts décoratifs, les vêtements et les armes polonais, mais jamais l'idéologie, la mentalité, le système politique du pays » comme le souligne avec justesse Maria Bogucka. Incarnées dans l'idée du « sarmatisme », ces influences, très présentes encore à la fin du XIXe siècle aussi bien dans la culture populaire que dans la vie des élites

[2] Une seule exception est l'occupation et l'annexion de la Bosnie-Herzégovine, limitrophe de la monarchie Austro-Hongroise, en 1908.

[3] Lajkonik est un cavalier barbu, portant un costume d'inspiration turco-tatare, qui dans la tradition populaire rappelle le siège de Cracovie par les Tatars au XIIIe siècle. En 1904, Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907) a dessiné un costume de Lajkonik, en combinant des éléments des habits polonais anciens et orientaux.

polonaises – comme le prouvent notamment les portraits officiels des personnalités du monde politique – seront fortement réévaluées, voire rejetées, par la jeune génération moderniste. C'est à ce moment-là que la traditionnelle « orientalité » polonaise sera remplacée par une vague d'intérêt pour l'esthétique des arts de l'Islam, reflet de la « renaissance orientale » européenne.

Figure 2 : *Młodnicki, Le cortège de Lajkonik*. 1880, terre cuite. Musée National de Cracovie, domaine public.

Dans l'imaginaire polonais la culture et les arts de l'Islam sont longtemps associés uniquement au Proche-Orient et à son artisanat. Le début du XIXe siècle apporte l'intérêt nouveau pour l'Espagne médiévale, et plus exactement pour Grenade, son histoire et ses monuments[4]. C'est un écrivain polonais de langue française, le comte Jan Potocki (1761-1815), qui est l'auteur du premier roman fantastique européen inspiré par les traditions mauresques : *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (écritsen trois versions : de 1794, 1804-1805 et 1810), publié en 1805 à Saint-Pétersbourg et en 1814-1815 à Paris avant *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage* de François-René de Chateaubriand (1827) ou les *Orientales* de Victor Hugo (1829)[5]. Potocki n'est pourtant pas le seul en Pologne à s'intéresser aux Maures. À la cour de Stanislas August Poniatowski et autour de la famille Czartoryski, le goût de l'Alhambra s'associe aux modes orientales, surtout aux *turqueries*, venues de l'Europe de l'Ouest, mais enrichies par la présence d'authentiques accessoires, certains d'une grande valeur artistique, comme ceux provenant du butin de la bataille de Vienne de 1683.

Éprise de la culture du royaume de Grenade, Izabela, née Flemming Czartoryska (1746-1835) – fondatrice en 1801 du premier musée en terre polonaise (à Puławy, partition russe) –, rédige entre 1815 et 1820 un long article sur l'art mauresque pour le *Catalogue de la Maison Gothique*, et plus particulièrement la partie de sa collection consacrée aux grands héros du monde. Stanisław Kostka Potocki, l'auteur du *Winckelmann polonais,* première monographie de l'histoire de l'art

[4] Sur la réception des motifs mauresques en Pologne voir Żygulski, *Sztuka mauretańska* 255-270.
[5] Édition critique du *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (version de 1801 et 1804) voir Potocki. À propos de Jan Potocki, voir Rosset et Triare.

mondiale en langue polonaise, en fait également l'éloge (*O sztuce u dawnych* 365-366). À l'époque, comme le remarque Czartoryska,

> rares sont ceux qui n'ont pas entendu parler de la victoire des Maures en Espagne, de la splendeur, de l'opulence et du goût raffiné de cette nation. Ayant conquis une partie de l'Espagne… ils ont apporté au pays qu'ils avaient dominé des sciences, de l'artisanat, un savoir-faire exquis, un goût délicat en tout…

Et, en finissant ses réflexions, elle ajoute : « à Généralife…, il ne restait que ce que la main de l'homme ne pouvait emporter (ceci éveille de tristes souvenirs en Pologne !)[6] ».

En rapprochant l'histoire des Maures à celle des Polonais, Izabela Czartoryska crée un mythe fonctionnant en Pologne à l'époque romantique, repris et popularisé par Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) dans son roman en vers *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828). De fait, la ballade « Alpuhara », sur le chef maure Almanzor qui, vaincu, gagne la confiance des chevaliers espagnols pour s'en venger ensuite en les infectant de la peste, non seulement résume le destin tragique du héros du poème mais aussi constitue le credo de cette « brochure politique » – au dire de l'auteur – véritable appel à l'insurrection (Mickiewicz 137)[7].

Avec la faveur romantique pour Grenade, nourrie par les souvenirs des vétérans des guerres napoléoniennes en Espagne, s'instaure sur les terres polonaises l'intérêt pour l'architecture mauresque, comme en témoignent les traités de Henryk Marconi (1792-1863) *Ordres architecturaux* de 1828 (*O porządkach architektonicznych*) et d'Adam Idźkowski (1798-1879) *Les différentes formes de l'architecture considérées comme des objets de beauté* de 1832 (*Kroje architektury*)[8]. Idźkowski, l'auteur du bâtiment orientalisant (détruit) de la gare de Skierniewice (ville située sur l'importante ligne ferroviaire Varsovie-Vienne, appartenant aux tsars), considère le « style arabe » comme style architectural à part entière[9]. Marconi, partisan du classicisme, s'y oppose, mais introduit des éléments mauresques dans ses projets d'intérieurs pour les palais du général Ludwik Michał Pac (1824-1825) à Dowspuda (1823-1827) et à Varsovie (1824-1828), ainsi que celui d'Anna Dunin-Wąsowicz à Jabłonna, près de Varsovie (1841, détruit) (Bartczakowa)[10]. Les ensembles orientalisants les mieux conservés sont ceux du palais de Karol Józef Larisch à Osiek (Galicie autrichienne), attribué à Franciszek Maria Lanci, construit entre 1840 et 1885 (Śledzikowski), et du palais de Tytus Działyński à Kórnik (près de Poznań, Grande-Pologne, partition prussienne), le plus intéressant exemple de ce genre en Pologne pour des raisons tant architecturales qu'idéologiques.

Datant du Moyen Âge, le palais de Kórnik est entièrement reconstruit dans les années 1843-1860, selon les plans de Tytus comte Działyński (1796-1861) lui-même, en coopération avec Marian Cybulski, sur la base des projets de Henryk Marconi, Antonio Corazzi (1892-1877) et Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) (Kąsinowska). Le nouveau « costume » néo-gothique correspond à la vocation

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[6] Izabela Czartoryska. « Gałązki z Alhambry i Generalifa » 1815-1820, manuscrit, Bibliothèque Czartoryski, rkps 2917 I : 116 ; cité par Żygulski, *Sztuka mauretańska* 258-259, 260. Sur les collections orientales à Puławy voir Żygulski, *Dzieje zbiorów puławskich* 236-239.

[7] Parmi des nombreuses interprétations de la ballade « Alpuhara » voir Kleiner 120-125. Encore aujourd'hui, on définit en polonais de « Wallenrodisme » l'attitude et la méthode d'action d'une personne qui, pour atteindre de nobles idéaux, n'hésite pas à agir de manière contraire à l'éthique, à recourir à la tromperie et à la trahison.

[8] Sur l'orientalisme dans l'architecture polonaise du XIXe siècle voir Jaroszewski, « Orient w architekturze polskiej » ; *Od klasycyzmu do nowoczesności*.

[9] Idźkowski conçut et publia plusieurs projets de bâtiments inspirés par l'architecture « arabe » (*Plany budowli obejmujące)*.

[10] Marconi, d'origine italienne, représentant du néo-classicisme, fut un des plus éminents architectes de la première moitié du XIXe siècle sur les terres polonaises. Dans la deuxième édition de son traité (1837), il reconsidéra la question de l'architecture médiévale, gothique et mauresque, et fut l'auteur de nombreuses réalisations néo-gothiques. Le palais à Dowspuda (1823-1827) est son premier projet pour le général Pac, vétéran des guerres en Espagne. Il réalisa aussi les petits bâtiments du jardin de style mauresques pour Anna Dunin-Wąsowicz (1824-1825) et Aleksander comte Potocki pour le palais de Natolin, près de Varsovie (1834-1838).

patriotique de la résidence, conçue comme le cadre pour les collections familiales, dédiées à l'histoire et la gloire de la nation. Il est enrichi, dans la partie centrale du palais, par des éléments mauresques. En effet, l'intérieur de la Grande Salle, destinée à la bibliothèque, est fidèlement calqué sur le schéma architectural et les décorations de la Cour des Lions et de la Cour de Myrtes de l'Alhambra (Whelan ; fig. 3). Les seules exceptions à cette règle, les parties supérieures des murs, sont décorées des armoiries de l'ancienne République de Deux Nations (polono-lituanienne).

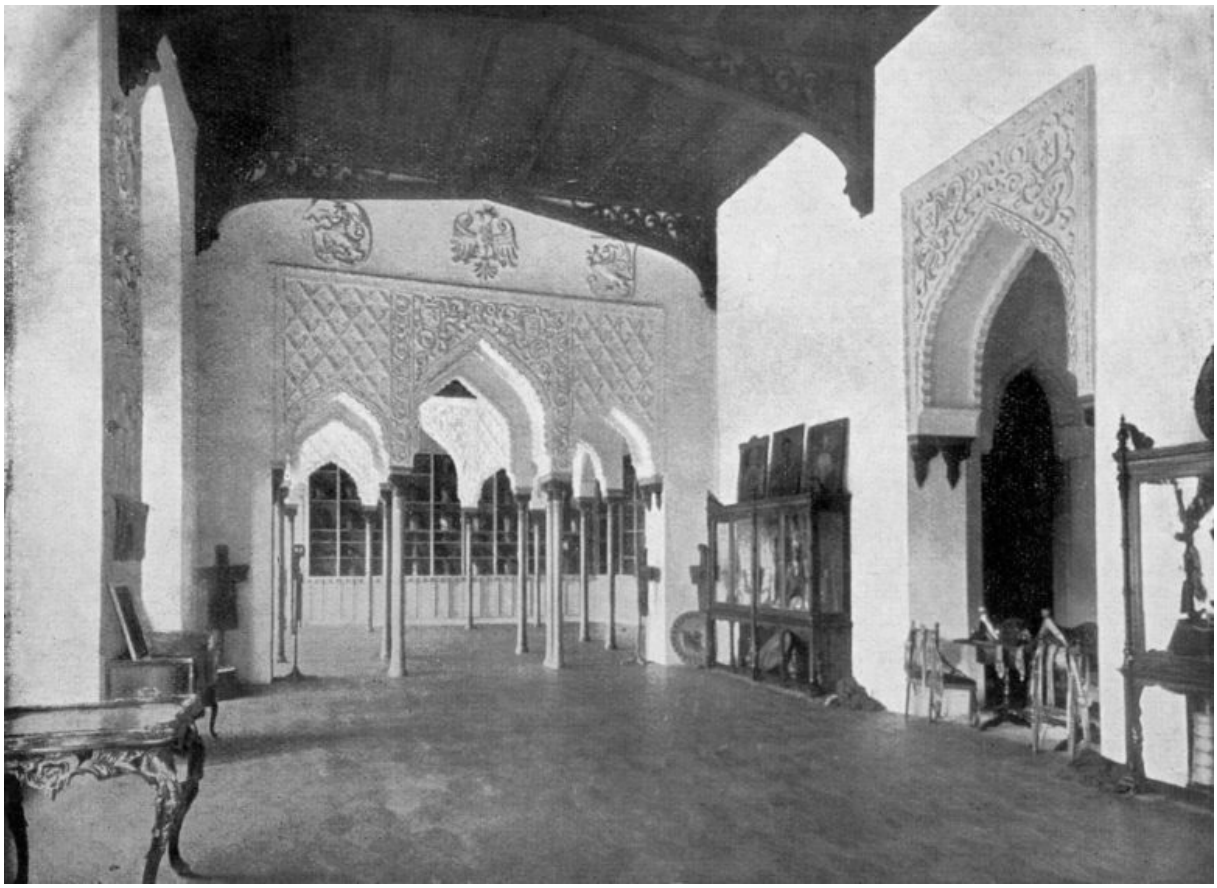

Figure 3 : *Château de Działyński à Kórnik, Salle mauresque*,1861. *Kazimierz Ruciński, Dwory i pałace wielkopolskie*, Poznań 1913. Domaine public.

Faute de sources écrites, cette association d'éléments provenant des univers historiques et culturels si éloignés est longtemps restée une énigme. Działyński ne connaissait pas les monuments de Grenade, mais uniquement leurs « copies » réalisées par Owen Jones pour le Palais de Cristal de Sydenham en 1854, et leurs reproductions ; surtout celles publiées dans *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain* de James Cavanah Murphy (1815) et *Choix d'ornements moresques de l'Alhambra* de Girault de Prangay (1841), deux ouvrages de sa bibliothèque. Il s'en est servi pour renforcer le programme iconographique du palais par le message contenu dans le poème de Mickiewicz[11]. La combinaison unique de motifs mauresques et d'éléments héraldiques polonais se traduisait donc en termes symboliques : la décoration mauresque devait protéger la mémoire du

[11] Działyński fut l'instigateur de la publication des *Œuvres* de Mickiewicz, à Poznań, quatre mois après leur première publication à Saint-Petersbourg en 1928, dans laquelle le poème *Konrad Wallenrod* fut spécialement mis en valeur. Sur Działyński voir Potocki et Wysocka.

passé glorieux, rappelé par les armoiries de l'ancien *Commonwealth*, tout comme les murs de l'Alhambra protègent le souvenir de la présence arabe sur la péninsule ibérique, en attendant la renaissance de la Pologne (Whelan 31). Après la mort de Tytus, son fils Jan (1829-1880) change le caractère de la « Salle Mauresque ». Au lieu d'une bibliothèque, elle doit désormais contenir uniquement des collections artistiques et historiques – à celle de son père, il ajoute ses propres collections numismatiques et archéologiques – en devenant ainsi « le musée de Kórnik », comme l'appelle Działyński dans sa correspondance (Kłudkiewicz 33-64).

Au courant mauresque – ou « néo-mauresque » selon la terminologie de l'époque – appartiennent aussi de nombreuses synagogues d'Europe centrale et orientale, construites tout au long de la deuxième moitié du XIX^e^ et au début du XX^e^ siècle[12]. Parmi les exemples polonais les plus connus on peut citer les synagogues de Łódź, ville de la grande bourgeoisie juive : la grande synagogue (« réformée »), bâtie entre 1880 et 1887 par Adolf Wollf, architecte des temples de Stuttgart et Carlsbad, dont les plans furent officiellement signés par Hilary Majewski, l'architecte de la ville, et la vieille synagogue, rénovée par Adolf Zeligson dans les années 1897-1899 – toutes les deux détruites[13]. La décoration intérieure la plus spectaculaire, et la mieux conservée, est celle de la synagogue Tempel de Cracovie (synagogue « réformée » construite par Ignacy Hercock en 1860-1862), réalisée par Beniamin Torbe dans les années 1893-1894, avec un ensemble des vitraux aux motifs géométriques orientalisants, unique dans leur genre (Rejduch-Samkowa et Lewicka-Depta 27-31 ; fig. 4)[14]. Au même groupe appartiennent aussi des tombeaux de personnalités juives, comme Levi Lesser (1884) ou Jakub Eiger (1888) au cimetière de Varsovie. Parmi les synagogues érigées dans les années 1900, conçues par les architectes qui n'étaient pas liés aux milieux juifs, on peut rappeler ici la nouvelle synagogue de Tarnów de Władysław Ekielski, érigée entre 1900 et 1908, et la synagogue de Kielce de Stanisław Szpakowski, bâtie entre 1901 et 1909 (toutes deux détruites), ou encore l'hôpital juif de la Fondation de Maurycy Lazarus, de Kazimierz Mokłowski à Lwów, qui date des années 1898-1903, les trois bâtiments combinant des éléments mauresques et turcs.

La plupart des synagogues orientalisantes en Pologne s'inspirent directement d'exemples occidentaux, surtout la synagogue de Vienne de Ludwig Förster (1853-1858) (Bergman, *Nurt mauretański* 194-195). Les plus originaux, bien que non-réalisés, sont les premiers projets d'Henryk Marconi pour les synagogues de Łomża (vers 1831) et Varsovie (rue Franciszkańska et rue Daniłowiczowska, 1838-1842), ainsi que la synagogue de Franciszek Tournelle à Włocławek (1854). Pour la conception de la synagogue de la rue Franciszkańska, Marconi utilise un répertoire de formes orientales de provenance principalement turque, codifié par Idźkowski. Cependant, la synagogue de la rue Daniłowiczowska devait être intégralement mauresque[15]. Dans quelques réalisations apparaissent également des éléments orientalisants de genre byzantin-russe (Konin, 1829-1844), considéré pourtant comme plus approprié aux églises orthodoxes. Comme le souligne Eleonora Bergman, il est difficile de dire quelle était l'influence des autorités juives sur le choix de la forme des synagogues et dans quelle mesure celle-ci dépendait de la décision de l'architecte, dictée par la mode européenne[16]. Dans ce contexte, les exemples les plus frappants semblent être les réalisations d'Ekielski, Szpakowski et Mokłowski mentionnées plus haut, qui s'inspirent librement des modèles mauresques et turcs.

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[12] Dans ce qui suit, je me réfère plus spécialement à la monographie des synagogues « mauresques » d'Eleonora Bergman (*Nurt mauretański*).

[13] Sur les synagogues de Łódź voir Walicki 2000 ; article « Łódź » sur le site web *Wirtualny Sztetl*, https://www.sztetl.org.pl.

[14] Documentation photographique de la « Synagoga Tempel, Kraków », sur le site web *Wirtualny Sztetl*, https://www.sztetl.org.pl.

[15] Selon Eleonora Bergman (« Architektura synagog warszawskich »), dans ce cas l'influence de la synagogue de Dresde de Gottfried Semper ne peut être exclue.

[16] Eleonora Bergman remarque seulement que le style mauresque était le seul promu par le magazine progressiste « Izraelita » (publié entre 1866 et 1915), dont la portée était cependant assez limitée (*Nurt mauretański* 195).

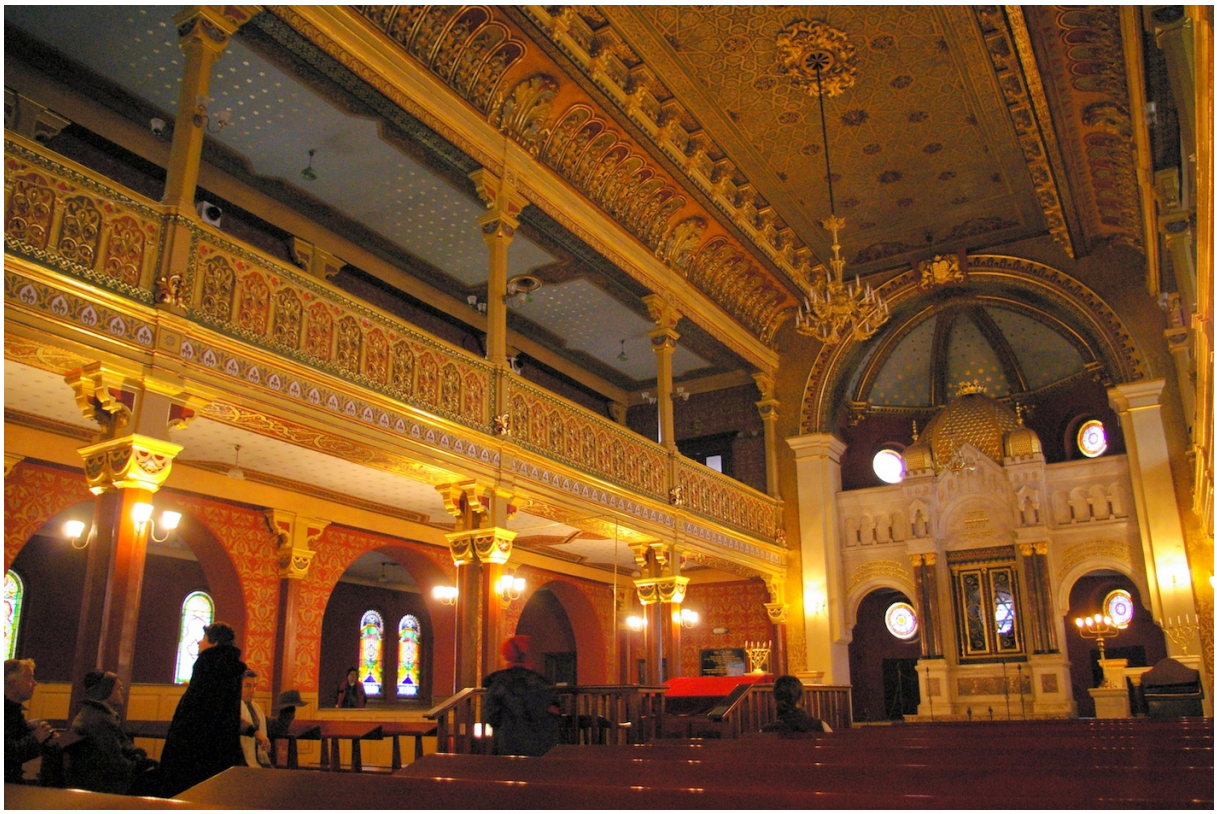

Figure 4 : Beniamin Torbe. *Intérieur de la synagogue Tempel*. Cracovie, 1893-1894. Domaine public, photographié par Jakub Hałun.

Au tournant du siècle, les motifs « à l'orientale » deviennent récurrents dans la mode et l'univers visuel, comme en témoignent les romans de l'époque, parmi lesquels *La Terre promise* (1899) de Władysław Reymont, un grand succès littéraire qui décrit la naissance du capitalisme à Łódź, ou *Nouvelle Athènes. Satire sur la Grande Cracovie* (1913) d'Adolf Nowaczyński[17]. Dans les descriptions d'intérieurs mondains, se trouvent des références aux décorations des résidences de l'aristocratie et la grande bourgeoisie des dernières décennies du XIX^e^ siècle, telles que « l'Appartement Turc » du palais des Potocki à Łańcut, avec la galerie des portraits de dignitaires turcs (par l'imitateur de Pierre Paul Sevin), ou les fumoirs dits « salles mauresques » des hôtels particuliers de Karol Scheibler et d'Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański à Łódź, avec leurs arcs polylobés, ornements arabesques en stuc et en mosaïque, les mieux conservés parmi les ensembles de ce genre (Popławska et Szyburska ; *Pałac Poznańskich w Łodzi* ; Stefański).

À Varsovie, « le costume » oriental, bien que moins prisé, est aussi présent. La façade « mauresque » de l'immeuble au 18 rue Dzielna, érigé dans les années 1880 et détruit pendant la guerre (Zieliński 62), est un cas d'école. Deux immeubles au 72 rue Marszałkowska et au 22 avenue Ujazdowskie, conçus par Józef Pius Dziekoński (1844-1927) vers 1890-1900, généralement décrits comme néo-gothiques, ne sont pas sans rappeler les mêmes références stylistiques introduites à Varsovie par Marconi (Bergman, « Architektura synagog warszawskich »).

La seule réalisation orientalisante à Cracovie est la « Maison turque », au 31 rue Długa, réaménagée pour Artur Teodor Rayski par Henryk Lamensdorf (1876-1928) en 1910. Insurgé de 1863, puis officier de l'armée turque, Rayski opte pour l'introduction de trois minarets comme couronnement de la façade et des mosaïques aux motifs d'arabesque comme décoration des sols

[17] Première édition en feuilletons parus de 1897 à 1898 dans les colonnes de *Kurier Codzienny* (Nowaczyński).

– Lamensdorf les utilise aussi dans ses autres réalisations, notamment au 6 rue Bonerowska (1906)[18]. Excepté pour la « Maison turque », les influences orientales sont perceptibles dans les mosaïques au sol et les revêtements muraux, comme ceux des décors de glaçures colorées de type *cuerda seca*, dans le vestibule de l'immeuble au 8 rue Paulińska, réalisé vers 1914 par Jozue Oberleder (1883-1962). Les carreaux de céramiques, aux couleurs chatoyantes, les compositions décoratives et technologiques complexes, proviennent surtout des manufactures étrangères, telles que Villeroy & Bosch ou Rako à Rakovnik (en Bohême), mais parfois aussi locales, comme Skawina (près de Cracovie).

Si les projets architecturaux des synagogues et la décoration intérieure des palais de l'aristocratie et la grande bourgeoisie s'inscrivent encore dans le courant orientaliste de la fin du XIXe siècle, ils révèlent déjà d'une volonté typique des décennies qui précèdent la Grande Guerre par la place accordée aux principes décoratifs puisés dans l'univers islamique. Ils trouveront en quelque sorte le contrepoint dans les propositions des représentants du mouvement de renouveau des arts appliqués polonais : céramiques, tissus, kilims, influencés par l'art populaire polonais d'une part, et les traditions artistiques orientales de l'autre.

En fait, au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles, une vague d'intérêt renouvelé pour l'art du Proche-Orient atteint l'Europe centrale. En Pologne, cette « nouvelle renaissance orientale » – comme la définit Suzanne Marchand[19] – coïncide avec l'émergence du japonisme : les deux courants se développent presque simultanément, en se fondant sur des principes similaires et en utilisant le même réseau d'institutions et d'échanges d'informations (Kluczewska-Wójcik, « Go East »). L'introduction de nouveaux modèles, hétérogènes par rapport aux traditions artistiques européennes, sera un agent stimulateur de la transformation du système esthétique dans lequel les formes orientales deviendront la clé d'expression de la modernité dans les arts décoratifs. Grâce à l'engagement personnel de quelques amateurs, tels que Feliks Jasieński (1861-1929) ou Włodzimierz Kulczycki (1862-1936), la connaissance des arts décoratifs islamiques s'approfondit, les catalogues et publications spécialisées forment les bases de la future recherche scientifique et réflexion artistique (Kluczewska-Wójcik, « Orientalisme versus orientalité »). Jasieński, collectionneur et mécène, donateur du Musée national de Cracovie, féru de tapis orientaux, mais aussi d'art japonais, représente le mieux voire incarne ce mouvement.

Cette révolution ne serait pas possible sans l'introduction dans l'espace public d'œuvres en provenance du Proche et de l'Extrême-Orient, ces dernières récemment découvertes, les premières redécouvertes ou réévaluées. En Europe, leur visibilité augmente considérablement grâce aux Expositions universelles. À l'Est, c'est la *Weltausstellung* de Vienne de 1873 qui joue un rôle majeur, l'un de ses objectifs étant de promouvoir les relations « privilégiées » de l'Empire austro-hongrois avec l'Empire ottoman et la Perse, ouvrant ainsi la voie à de nouveaux marchés aux investisseurs occidentaux. Par la suite, les arts islamique et japonais entrent dans les collections publiques, ou privées mais ouvertes au public. Dans un premier temps, il s'agit de musées des arts appliqués, réunissant des modèles pour l'artisanat en développement. La plupart des premiers collectionneurs et mécènes d'arts orientaux sont d'ailleurs liés au commerce et à l'industrie. Ils s'inspirent en général du South Kensington Museum de Londres, comme le Musée technologique et industriel du docteur Adrian Baraniecki (1828-1891) à Cracovie (Beiersdorf ; Więcek et Dolińska ; Hapanowicz).

Fondé en 1868, le Musée Baraniecki réunit des collections industrielles, d'artisanat et d'arts décoratifs, avec une forte présence d'art oriental. Faute de locaux convenables, il fonctionne principalement comme une école d'art, organisant des ateliers et des cours pour les artisans, ainsi

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[18] Sur la mosaïque architecturale à Cracovie voir Patridge.

[19] Suzanne Marchand (17-34) utilise le terme « deuxième renaissance orientale » pour décrire la nouvelle vague d'intérêt pour l'Orient en Allemagne au cours de la première décennie du XXe siècle.

que des cours supérieurs pour femmes (le « Baraneum »), les premiers de ce type en Pologne. En 1901, le musée reçoit en dépôt la collection de la société de l'Art appliqué polonais (*Polska sztuka stosowana*) nouvellement créée (Huml, *Polska sztuka stosowana*). Après la réorganisation postulée par les membres de la Société, le musée s'installe dans son nouveau siège, construit en 1910-1913 d'après les projets de Tadeusz Stryjeński et Franciszek Mączyński. Le bâtiment, dont la construction en béton armé est cachée derrière une façade monumentale de Józef Czajkowski, avec des intérieurs conçus par Czajkowski, Karol Homolacs, Wojciech Jastrzębowski et Henryk Uziembło, devient une vitrine du mouvement. Les publications et les expositions organisées par la société de l'Art appliqué polonais préparent le terrain pour les activités des artisans et des artistes associés dans les Ateliers de Cracovie (*Warsztaty Krakowskie*), qui fonctionnent à partir de 1913 auprès du musée (Huml, *Warsztaty Krakowskie ;* « Warsztaty Krakowskie »).

L'objectif premier des artistes groupés autour des Ateliers de Cracovie est de développer un style national fondé sur l'art populaire polonais. Ils rejettent toutefois l'imitation directe de motifs folkloriques, se concentrant plutôt sur l'application des règles de traitement des formes inhérent à cet art. Cette leçon est enrichie par la lecture des principes régissant les arts décoratifs orientaux : « capacité d'extraire des effets intéressants par une combinaison appropriée de formes contrastantes », « sens de la décoration ornementale, très développée et raffinée au fil des siècles de travail, même lorsqu'elle est basée sur des formes dérivées de la nature », mais surtout « composition mûre, strictement ornementale, logiquement liée à la forme et à la fonction » de l'objet (*Przewodnik* 69, 36-37).

Le peintre et théoricien de l'art Karol Homolacs (1874-1965), l'un des fondateurs des Ateliers, préconise l'accord parfait de la forme et de l'ornement. Selon lui, l'ornementation ne consiste pas à imiter la nature mais à grouper les éléments suivant un certain rythme :

> Ces éléments de forme sont toujours en rapport avec la matière dans laquelle l'ornement a été travaillé, et avec l'outil qui a servi à l'exécuter, de sorte qu'ils trahissent régulièrement leur origine matérielle, autrement dit technique ; par contre, le rythme qui décide de leur groupement émane d'une source immatérielle (*L'Ornementation* 3).

C'est pourquoi, ce n'est pas l'étude de la nature mais les exercices (« procédés ») techniques qui forment la base de sa méthode pédagogique qui

> appliquée aux éléments concrets de la forme…développe chez l'élève le sens du rythme en général et permet en même temps au maître de corriger ses travaux avec toute l'objectivité nécessaire qui ne met aucune entrave au développement de l'intuition artistique (*L'Ornementation* 8 ; voir aussi *Podstawowe zasady budowy* et *Budowa ornamentu*).

Dans son œuvre décorative multiforme – meubles, kilims, objets en métal, reliures de livres, pochoirs – Homolacs met toujours en valeur les propriétés du matériau et la « vérité » technologique de la méthode de fabrication, en les associant aux nouvelles règles d'ornementation (fig. 5). Cette tendance est lisible aussi dans les réalisations des autres adhérents des Ateliers : meubles de Wojciech Jastrzębowski (1884-1963), reliures de Bonawentura Lenart (1881-1973), vases et autres objets en métal de Kazimierz Młodzianowski (1880-1928) (Kluczewska-Wójcik, « Les années 1910 » ; fig. 6, 7).

Figure 5 : Karol Homolacs, *Verres décoratifs*. 1911, verre acidifié. Atelier de Cracovie, Musée national de Cracovie, collection Muzeum Przemysłowe.

Figure 6 : *Plat, laiton, forgé et gravé*. 1918, Ateliers de Cracovie, sous la direction de Kazimierz Młodzianowski, Musée national de Cracovie, collection Muzeum Przemysłowe, domaine public.

Figure 7 : Tadeusz Rychter. *Exlibris August Teodorowicz*. 1903, zincographie en couleurs. Musée national de Cracovie, domaine public.

Mais c'est dans les kilims qu'elle trouve sa meilleure expression. La grande échelle de l'ornement, le nombre restraint des couleurs soigneusement sélectionnées et une composition compacte : telles sont les traits caractéristiques des kilims de Kazimierz Brzozowski (1871-1945), Karol Tichy (1871-1939) ou Józef Czajkowski (1872-1947 ; fig. 8). Mais leur qualité visuelle la plus frappante est une certaine « logique » décorative qui permet d'intégrer des éléments nouveaux dans une structure – un schéma de composition – traditionnelle. Hybridation réussie des modèles orientaux et des productions traditionnelles polono-ukrainiennes, ils deviendront d'une certaine façon la marque distinctive de la nouvelle école décorative polonaise (Warchałowski 32).

Les batiks « javano-cracoviens » sont un autre produit phare des Ateliers (*Niezwykłe spotkania*). Fabriqués par des jeunes apprentis de l'atelier de batik, fondé par Antoni Buszek (1883-1954) sur le modèle de l'Atelier Martine de Paul Poiret, ils puisent dans le répertoire des motifs organiques, d'origine orientale ou indigène, en simplifiant la composition, régie toujours par les lois de la symétrie, appropriée à l'art naïf (fig. 9). Leur forme et leur popularité sont dues à la conjonction de plusieurs facteurs : l'intérêt pour les tissus javanais et la présence de batiks dans la collection de Jasieński et celle du Musée technologique et industriel, la tradition des costumes polonais avec leurs ceintures décoratives, devenues à leurs tours l'objet de collection, et enfin, la mode de l'exotisme et le coût très abordable des châles et autres tissus ou objets en bois décorés à l'aide de cette technique.

Dans le cadre du mouvement décoratif orientalisant s'inscrivent aussi les activités des artistes tels que le céramiste Stanisław Jagmin (1875-1961), qui n'appartient ni au groupe d'avant-garde cracovien ni aux cercles académiques officiels. À la fois sculpteur et potier, c'est en créateur solitaire qu'il pousse les possibilités de la matière à leurs limites en bousculant les barrières entres les arts. Autodidacte, dans ses mémoires rédigés à la fin de sa vie, il décrit ses années formatrices à Paris entre 1904 et 1905 :

> À l'époque, à Paris, toute une série d'artistes se consacraient à la céramique : Jean Carriès, Chaplet, Müller, Metthey, Mougin, et plusieurs autres, comme Clément Massie de Golf Juan qui se vendait très bien et qui avait sa propre boutique sur l'avenue de l'Opéra. On se passionnait pour un grès cérame ou un grès flammé… Mise à part Sèvres, où j'allais, tout comme au musée de Versailles et aux anciens palais royaux de Saint-Germain et Fontainebleau, il m'était difficile de gérer mon temps. À cela s'ajoutait encore le travail pour les frères Mougin. Artistes-céramistes, ils avaient un atelier où ils fabriquaient et cuisaient tout de leurs propres mains. Je les aidais gratuitement et nous sommes devenus amis[20].

De retour à Nieborów (près de Varsovie), influencé par la céramique orientale et orientalisante, il commence à expérimenter de nouvelles formes et matériaux, et surtout de nouveaux types de glaçures (fig. 10). Remarquées à la première exposition de l'artiste à Varsovie – la première de ce genre en Pologne – ses productions constituent, selon la critique de l'époque, un vrai tournant dans les arts décoratifs polonais. De fait, contribuant à la diffusion des nouvelles techniques et formes de céramique, puis en transférant ses découvertes technologiques à son œuvre sculpturale, Jagmin mérite pleinement le titre de précurseur de la céramique moderne polonaise.

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[20] Stanisław Jagmin. « Pamiętniki ». Dactylographié, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa, mf 45106 ; cité dans Kluczewska-Wójcik, « *Chińska technika flambé* » 63. Sur Stanisław Jagmin voir Wiszniewska.

Figure 8 : Józef Czajkowski. *Kilim*. Avant 1925, laine. Atelier Kilim, Cracovie, collections nationales du château de Wawel, Cracovie.

Figure 9 : Janina Stanek. *Chemin de table*. 1924, coton, batik. Warsztaty Krakowskie, Musée national de Cracovie, collection Muzeum Przemysłowe, domaine public.

Figure 10 : Stanisław Jagmin. *Vases*. 1903-1907, grès flammé, grès à lustre métallique. Musée national de Cracovie, collection Jasieński.

La voie qu'il ouvre sera suivie par des représentants de générations et formations stylistiques différentes, tels que Rudolf Krzywiec (1895-1982), responsable de l'atelier de céramique de la société Ład (L'Ordre) fondée en 1926 à Varsovie ; Julian et Mika Mickun, ou les artistes et artisans associées à l'École nationale de poterie de Kołomyja (créée en 1876). Les influences de la céramique islamique seront perceptibles dans les projets d'artistes issus d'horizons si éloignés que Kazimierz Stabrowski (1869-1929), peintre orientalisant académique et premier directeur de l'École des beaux-arts de Varsovie (1904) ou l'architecte Tadeusz (Tadé) Sikorski (1852-1940), directeur de l'École de Kołomyja entre 1881-1882, puis designer et directeur artistique de la Manufacture de porcelaine Zsolnay à Pécs, marié à Julia, fille de Vilmos Zsolnay, le fondateur de la manufacture et auteur notamment de la décoration du Musée d'arts décoratifs de Budapest (Hagedorn, *Auf der Suche nach dem neuen Stil* 56-63 ; Strasz; Gałusek).

Avec la renaissance de l'État polonais, les années qui suivent la Grande Guerre sont marquées par la recherche du caractère national dans l'art. Cette recherche se nourrit des idées et des expériences des décennies précédentes, surtout liées au mouvement général d'intérêt pour les arts décoratifs des artistes et artisans regroupés autour des Ateliers de Cracovie. Une image cohérente de leurs réalisations ne sera présentée qu'à l'Exposition de 1925 à Paris, en confirmant leur rôle dans la formation du style national en Pologne et en leur apportant un succès sur la scène culturelle internationale (fig. 11).

Figure 11 : Józef Czajkowski. *Intérieur du Pavillon de la République Polonaise, Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, Paris 1925. Photograhie. Musée national de Varsovie.

« Tant dans ses grandes lignes que dans ses moindres détails, [le pavillon polonais] offre une unité parfaite et est aussi polonais qu'il est possible de l'être, et aussi moderne et aussi traditionnel, dans le meilleur sens du mot », écrit Gabriel Mourey (310). La section polonaise de l'Exposition des arts décoratifs parviendra à créer ainsi une image de la modernité sophistiquée, ancrée dans la tradition et la culture populaire vivante et nourrie du concept renouvelé de l'art oriental, conçu comme l'une des expressions de cette modernité.

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Biography

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Mireia Freixa & Marta Saliné[1]

The Starting Point of the Arabic-Andalusi Influence in Gaudi's Ornamental Ceramic

The Pavilions Güell (1884-1887)

Abstract

Between 1884 and 1887, Antoni Gaudí built two rather modest constructions for his patron, Eusebi Güell: a stable for the horses and a porterhouse for his country house in Les Corts. In these constructions, he makes an important step in relation to his previous works, *El Capricho* (Comillas, Santander) and the Casa Vicenç (Barcelona). The tiles used in both, featuring lines of color that contrast with the brick and stone, derive from an original system of using ceramic, the *trencadís*. He takes as a reference point the Arabic or Mudejar building system to embed ceramic pieces in the walls and in the coronation railings of the buildings, but adds a brilliant contribution by converting it into "broken" ceramics. We call this ornamental resource *trencadís*, since *trencar* means broken in Catalan. This technique is one of Gaudí's more significant decorative choices with brilliant examples of this being the façade of Casa Batlló and the dragon and banc-balustrade in Park Güell.

Keywords: Antoni Gaudí; Trencadís; ceramic mosaic; Catalan *Modernisme*

The *trencadís* ceramic and Gaudí

The *trencadís* mosaic is one of the images that best identifies the architecture of Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). It is one of his more significant decorative choices, with brilliant examples such as the façade of Casa Batlló and the dragon and banc-balustrade in Park Güell (fig. 1). Thanks to the proper use of ornamentation, architecture represented the synthesis of all the arts, creating a rich combination of shapes, volumes, textures, and colors. Gaudí followed the decorative styles practiced by architects of eclectic taste, who justified ornamentation by considering it to be the element that gave architecture character and style.

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Figure 1: Antoni Gaudí and Josep Ma. Jujol. *Banc-balustrade from the Park Güell.* 1911-1914. Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Pere Vivas.

Gaudí experimented with ceramic material replacing the popular look of traditional mosaic tiles with fragments resulting from irregular cutting. The cutting "breaks up" ("trenca" in Catalan) the tiles into fragments—hence the name *trencadís*. A large number of artisans, industrialists and bricklayers emerged around Gaudí, with the architect Josep M. Jujol (1879-1949) outstanding among them. They all shared creative wealth and a love for recycling materials. The durability of ceramics makes them the ideal medium for the application of color to architecture.

We can provide some answers that justify the great success of *trencadís* during the *Modernisme* (the Catalan Art Nouveau). Firstly, the local tradition of covering walls with colored tiles: a hygienic and cost-effective resource that had been used in Catalonia and Valencia since the Middle Ages. But we should also mention the fact that the architects, designers, and manufacturers were perfectly in tune and created top-quality designs that were mass-produced for an enthusiastic public.

The context in which this research is carried out is our interest in the Güell Pavilions (1884-1887), the gatehouses to the summer home of his patron Eusebi Güell, that are now integrated into the campus of the Universitat de Barcelona (fig. 2). The World Monuments Fund included this work in its 2014 Watch List with the aim of collaborating in its restoration and knowledge. From this moment on, the contacts with this institution have been constant to the point that it has sponsored, in 2018, the edition of a book *Gaudí and the Trencadís Mosaic* (Freixa and Saliné) and an exhibition at the Museu Nacional de Cerámica i de les Arts Sumptuàries González Martí de Valencia from October 2020 to January 2021.

Figure 2: Antoni Gaudí. *Güell Pavilions*. 1884-1887. Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Pere Vivas.

Antoni Gaudí: The architect of color

In his early works—Casa Vicens and El Capricho (both between 1883-1885), the Güell Pavilions, and his main residence, Palau Güell (1886-1889)—the architect combines the use of historic styles with elements of great decorative originality using hitherto unseen building techniques. By the early twentieth century, he had built a series of houses, which showcased the abstract and organic forms of the Art Nouveau movement, as seen in the Casa Calvet (1898-1900), the Casa Batlló (1905-1906) and the Casa Milà-Segimon (1905-1911), also known as *La Pedrera*. In the Park Güell (1900-1914), he designed a beautiful urban park for the most affluent members of Barcelona's bourgeoisie. Finally, the church at the Colònia Güell (1898-1915) was approached as a small-scale trial run for what was to become his masterpiece, the Sagrada Família (from 1883). From 1914, Gaudí devoted himself solely to the Sagrada Família till his death.[2]

Likewise, Gaudí understands that beauty can be found in the color that emerges simply from imitating natural forms: "Ornamentation has been, is and will be colored; nature doesn't give us any monotonously uniform objects. Everything in the plant and animal kingdom, geology, and topography, the colour contrast is more or less vivid, and this means we have to colour part or all of an architectural feature. This colour may disappear but the passage of time will ensure it has its own beautiful colour of antiquity" (Gaudí 46). *Trencadís* created the desired variations of tone that stemmed from imitating nature and the refraction of light also lends a sense of movement. Even when the color is less perceptible, in the evening or on dull days, light is captured and reflected, as if the glazed ceramic simulated shards of mirror. Another major contribution was the creation of textures stemming from the contrast between materials.

[2] Among the large bibliography on Gaudí and the applied arts see *Gaudí. Art and Design*; Martínez; Bracons et al.

Mosaic and its offshoot, *trencadís*: The art of fragmenting to create an undivided whole

The art of mosaic in *Modernisme* was truly unique and incomparable in relation to European mosaics created in the series of styles epitomized by Art nouveau. It is a compendium of ancient techniques that could be applied to modern architecture. Gaudí used all the types of mosaic available at the time: Roman, Venetian and ceramic. But the ceramic one is the most representative type and gave rise to its offshoot *trencadís* (fig. 3). It is important to point out, however, that, initially, the most common mosaics were Roman ones for flooring, Venetian mosaics for covering walls, but, in the end, ceramic mosaics took precedence over the Venetian ones because they gave the same results as Italian glass and were much cheaper.

Figure 3: Lluís Bru. *Ceramic mosaic from Antiga Farmàcia Viladot*. 1905. Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Ricard Pla.

For its part, *trencadís* differs from ceramic mosaics for a purely technical reason: the way the pieces are cut. This means we refer to ceramic mosaics when the tesserae are cut into regular shapes and sizes, a technique that required a mosaicist's knowledge and skill. However, *trencadís*, which was irregular in shape, didn't require a professional's skill or knowledge. Nevertheless, we must accept that the frontier between one technique and the other is often hard to define. It must be recognized that *trencadís*, as part of the mosaic family, was considered a minor technique and this means that the name does not feature in any advertising of the period. The mosaicist Lluís Bru called it "mosaico irregular," as can be seen among his papers.[3]

There were countless ways of cutting ceramics and many mosaicists invented their own tools and systems to make them easier to cut. The slowest method involved scoring the glazed side of the

[3] C.31, V 12. AMEL Arxiu del Museu d'Esplugues de Llobregat (Barcelona).

tile with a glass cutter and then breaking it with a hammer and chisel and polishing the edges. The fastest system, used in *trencadís*, involved breaking the tile at random by hitting the unglazed side with a plant pot. Although this method of cutting was fast and the pieces could be applied easily, the production technique was really "low tech" as the pieces all had to be cut and put in place methodically by hand. We are reminded of the anecdote related by Lluís Bru when Gaudí broke a tile with a plant pot and threw the pieces onto the counter exclaiming: "by the handful, they have to be used by the handful, otherwise we'll never be finished!" (Saliné 163). Although this method of cutting was fast and the pieces could be applied easily, the production technique was really "low tech" as the pieces all had to be cut and put in place methodically by hand.

Once the pieces had been shaped, there were two ways of creating the motif on top of the surface. The direct method, which was the system used in antiquity, consisted of applying the tesserae one by one onto wet cement following a design on paper. The indirect method was the most frequently used method in Italy and was adopted by the mosaicists in the vast workshops at the Vatican in the Renaissance and baroque eras. The mosaic pieces were stuck on to a life-size drawing on paper. Once the glue had dried, the paper with the tesserae attached was applied to the wall onto a layer of cement (a current comparison would be a sheet of modern mosaic bathroom tiles). When the cement had dried, water was applied to the paper, which was peeled off to reveal the mosaic. The joints were then filled in with grout.

Classical influence and Arabic models

The Roman mosaic technique used as flooring was reintroduced to Catalonia in the late nineteenth century by Italian mosaicists as a logical consequence of the development of neo-Gothic architecture in the building of churches (Voccoli). Religious fervor at the time went hand in hand with the idealized Gothic style and the search for new patterns in liturgical art. The furniture, vestments, gold-, and silverware, and, of course, mosaics, were the perfect companion pieces. In the 1880s, beautiful mosaic floors began to be used in newly built churches. Luigi Pellerin (dates unknown) was the first Italian master mosaicist based in Catalonia. He was responsible for the floors in the church of the Salesas (1884), designed by Joan Martorell, Gaudí's master. However, Catalan mosaicists considered Mario Maragliano Navone (1864-1944) to be the true maestro. Maragliano hailed from a long dynasty of Genoese mosaicists and had settled in Barcelona in 1884.

Gaudí wasn't directly involved in the project for the church of the Saleses, but he designed the mosaic floor—made between 1879 and 1881 by Luigi Pellerin—for the church of Sant Pacià, in Sant Andreu del Palomar (Bassegoda Nonell 155-157), and the floor of the crypt of the Sagrada Família (ca. 1883), also made by Luigi Pellerin.[4] Both are large-scale projects, as one would expect of such important commissions.

But the *modernistes*, and Gaudí in particular, were particularly knowledgeable about the Hispano-Arabic mosaic technique. The beauty of its geometric shapes astonished architects and industrialists who used a great freedom of composition to achieve a milestone in the art of mosaic. Gaudí's main source of inspiration was the tiling alicatados from the Hispano-Arabic tradition, the tiles that used to cover the walls of buildings. They consisted of small regular or irregular ceramic pieces arranged in a decorative pattern to achieve a broad color palette giving a wonderful contrast between textures and colors.

Like other architects of his generation who had been trained in the Eclectic tradition, Gaudí was well versed in Moorish decorative techniques. In a notebook from his youth, he lists the plates

[4] There are doubts about whether the current floor is the same one or the result of a restoration carried out after the Spanish Civil War. In this case, it was made or restored by Mario Maragliano (Saliné 169).

featuring Arabic and Moorish architecture in the collection of photographs published by Laurent y Cia (fig. 4), that he had consulted at the School of Architecture library (Gaudí 117-120). He would also have seen pictures in color in the books of chromolithographs, including M. A. Racinet's famous work, *L'Ornement polychrome* (pl. XXIX), and the studies of the Alhambra from Jules Goury and Owen Jones (45), both documented in Barcelona libraries.

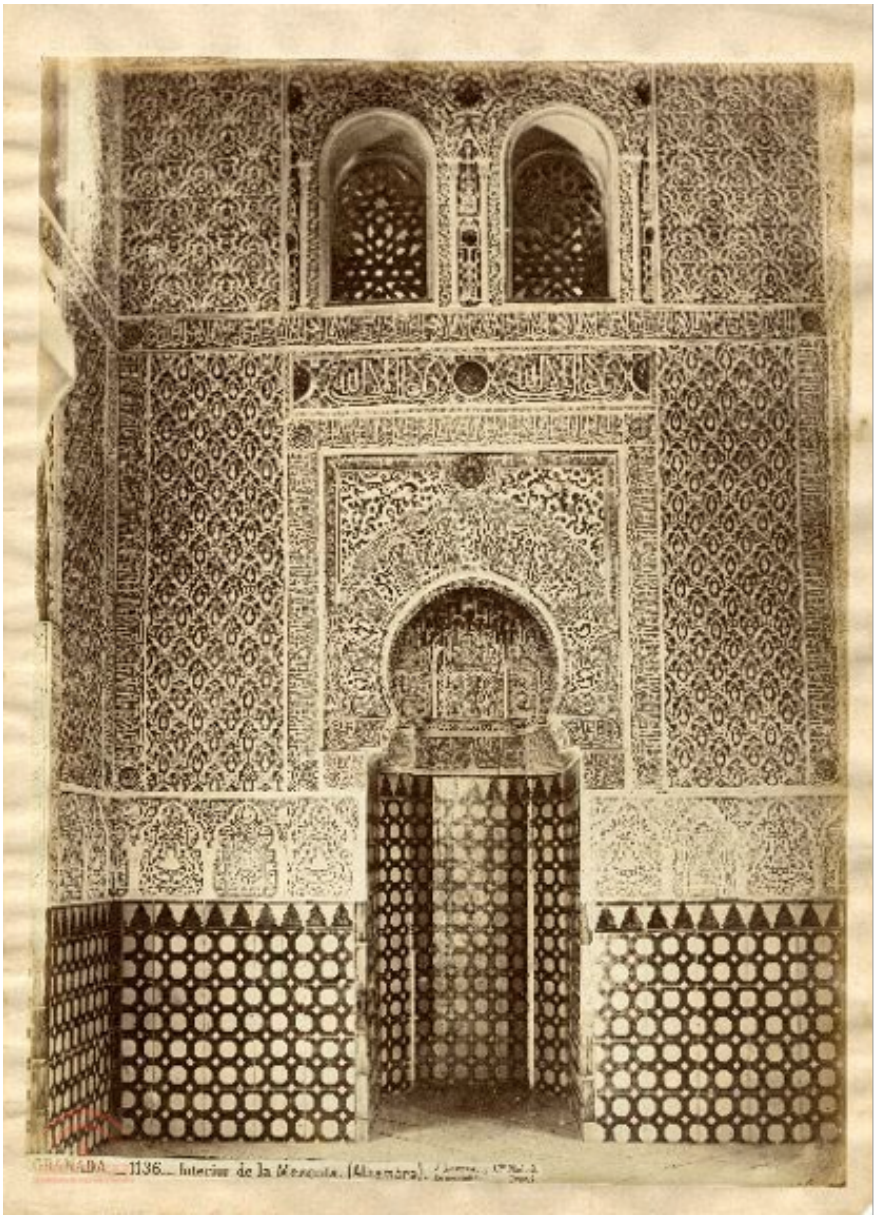

Figure 4: Jean Laurent. *Granada 1136. Interior de la Mezquita (Alhambra).* 1871, Albumin copy sepia toned, 33.5 x 25 cm, F-05192. Image courtesy of Archivo del Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife (APAG)/Colección de Fotografías: https://www.alhambra-patronato.es/ria/handle/10514/10363..

Likewise, in his student years, his interest prompted him to visit the studios of one of the last craftsmen versed in the ancestral secrets of glazed ceramics, Joan Baptista Cassany Folgado, who was based in Manises on the outskirts of Valencia. The trip, which Gaudí undertook in 1887 with the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1850-1923), is described by the latter in 1903, in an article written to mark the untimely death of his colleague, the architect Antoni M. Gallissà (1861-1903; Domènech i Montaner 3-4; Casanova 156-157, 166).

But we argue that his most direct models were the tiled panels on the floor of the main cloister at Poblet Monastery (fig. 5). Gaudí may have visited it in his student days as a result of his friendship with Josep Ribera i Sans, a fellow student at the school in Reus who became a prestigious professor in Madrid. Ribera's father was a teacher in L'Espluga de Francolí, a town near Reus and Poblet (Fort i Cogul 10-11).

Figure 5: *Cloister's pavement drawing of the Monastir de Poblet*.
Image courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias González Martí.

The old pavement dated from the late fifteenth century and was still in situ at the time (González Martí 119-128; vol. III). They were in such a poor state of repair that they were replaced by the flooring we see today, but some original examples remain at several museums. The panels were set into a base of brick tile and were the work of groups of itinerant Arabic artisans who worked on commissions (Altisent 248-249). The earliest reference to these panels is by Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos y Villalta (1849-1917) and date from 1915, although he discovered some of them in Tarragona: "certain very curious framings of tiles that have lost their colour and primitive glaze and can be found on the floor of the main cloisters" and after he saw still some samples there (Amador de los Ríos 174). In 1835, the monks were exclaustrated, the monastery abandoned and plundered. It was not until 1930 that the restoration works began, so we can deduce that Gaudí could still have seen remains of the pavement.

Another possible contact with Arab culture would date from 1891, when Gaudí was commissioned to carry out a Franciscan mission project in Tangier, promoted by Claudio López, the brother-in-law of his patron Eusebi Güell and by his wife, María Luisa Andrés, but which was never built. He made a splendid design that he had hanging in his workshop in the Sagrada Família (Ràfols and Folguera i Grassi 85, 267). There has been speculation about whether he made a trip to North Africa, but this has not been proven (Torii 32; Nasser 27-35). However, this would have been after to the Güell Pavilion's project, the work that according to us is crucial in defining the *trencadís* technique.

Beyond the knowledge of Hispano-Arab art, Gaudí was also very familiar with Mudejar architecture —the art made by Muslims in territories located under the Kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. The use of embedding small ceramic fragments into the brick façades characterizes Mudejar architecture: a beautiful application, usually playing between white and green. The description of the Mudejar as a style proper to the Hispanic lands, was a recurring theme in nineteenth-century Spanish historiography (Rodríguez Domingo 1999). There are no Mudejar samples in Catalonia, but they were being rediscovered and studied at the time and Gaudí must have known it.

The Güell's summer home and garden

In 1859, Eusebi Güell's father, Joan Güell, had purchased a property in Les Corts (now a borough of Barcelona) and had it totally refurbished by his architect, Joan Martorell, Gaudí's master. The renovations undertaken by Eusebi after he had inherited the estate included a new drive providing faster access from the newly laid out Sarrià road and he commissioned Gaudí to design a new gate and gatehouses. The estate was reached along a private path flanked by twin rows of trees that passed a series of properties and led to the dragon gate. The entrance to the estate was set back from the street so that passers-by would not notice it. This may go some way to explaining the unusual appearance of these buildings.

The wrought-iron gate in the form of a dragon is the best-known and most iconic feature of the Güell gatehouses. It connects two small buildings that had different functions, two very humble constructions—the gatekeeper's house and the stables—but decisive to understanding the passage from the Mudejar language to the free and absolutely original use of ceramic *trencadís*. The porter's lod: the stalls for the horses and a second space designed to be used as a lunging ring, covered by dome with a lantern.

The exterior: Color, ceramics, and *trencadís*

In the Güell Pavilions, Gaudí used for the first time the *trencadís*. It is the "magic moment," in which ceramic began to be applied in a different and innovative way.

Until then his façades were ordered, like a grid, with colored tiles placed directly onto the wall surface. The decoration was obtained directly from these tiles which were manufactured on purpose and featured specific decorative motifs: carnations painted using a stencil at the Casa Vicens or sunflowers in relief in the case of El Capricho. The Güell gatehouses mark a break with this strict aesthetic using new resources. Gaudí put into practice his ideas about multicolored architecture by highlighting the contrast between exposed brick and the color of the ceramics—following Mudéjar models—and also introducing *trencadís*, and using low-cost, and even recycled, materials. This change in approach marks a shift from an "ornate" architecture to more practical building techniques using simpler materials.

The walls of the stables and porter's lodge are capped with a brick balustrade in the form of interlocking equilateral triangles (fig. 6). Small ceramic pieces have been embedded into their apexes forming a central point, lending the composition a great sense of color and order that evokes the Mudejar decorative technique and geometry. The small pieces have been cut by a diamond wheel to ensure a clean cut and creating straight, well-finished edges. Moreover, on both sides of the dragon gate—the brick pillar that supports the huge grille and a small entrance for pedestrians—we can see the new resources Gaudí used to apply the ceramic shards (fig. 7). The joints between the bricks are colored in a unique way by embedding small pieces of ceramic into soft cement using the direct method. The aim is to imbue the entire structure with color, even the simplest element of all, cement.

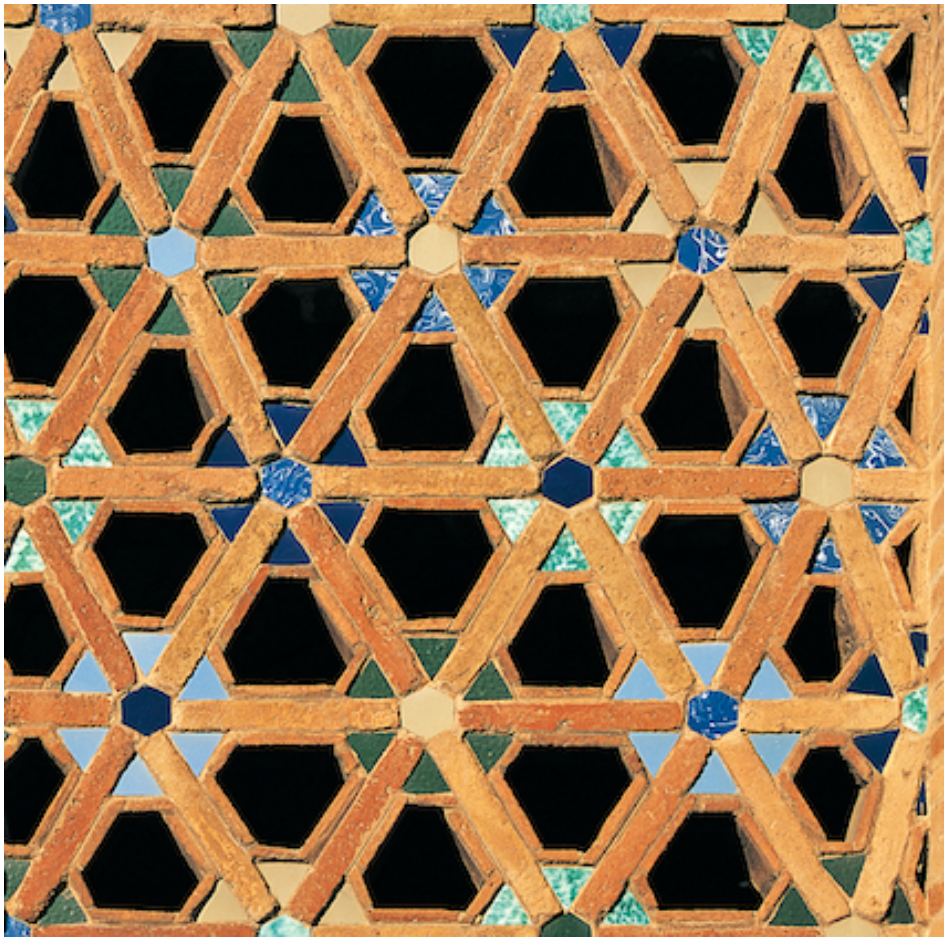

Figure 6: Antoni Gaudi. *Güell Pavilions: Balustrade made according to the Mudejar technique*.
Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Pere Vivas.

Figure 7: Antoni Gaudí. *Güell Pavilions: Pillar with small pieces of ceramic embedded into soft cement.* Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Pere Vivas.

And Gaudí takes a step further in the decoration of the dome over the lunging ring and the three ventilation chimneys—and to a lesser extent in the air-circulation vent—in the porter's lodge, where *trencadís* is much in evidence. The tile fragments are monochrome and, in some cases, interspersed with splashes of color, known as *fregalls*; named so, because the pigment was applied directly onto the tile with a wet Esparto grass scourer, "*fregall*" in Catalan, or marbling, an effect that imitated top-quality marble with veins created by mixing watered-down pigments (fig. 8). These three types of tiles were made at potteries that manufactured everyday materials, such as ceramic skirting, and tiles for kitchens, bathrooms, and toilets. These tiles measured 13 x 13 cm or 15 x 15 cm. A new size, measuring 20 x 20 cm, became popular later and was based on the decimal system introduced by the Valencian potteries.

Figure 8 and 9: Antoni Gaudí. *Güell Pavilions: Ventilation chimney*. Images courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Pere Vivas.

It is highly likely that the uptake in the use of these tiles was the result of their lower cost and different available sizes and reflected a change in the tastes of the time. The jambs of the lantern windows in the dome above the lunging ring are clad in tiles of different shades of green, while the dome itself features triangular motifs filled in with rectangular or triangular mosaics. However, we can conclude that there is always a dominant regular, ordered geometrical pattern. The monochrome, *fregall*, or marbled rectangular and triangular pieces on the ventilation chimneys in the porter's lodge also define the forms and the small shards fill in the gaps (fig. 9).

The Güell gatehouses represent a change of direction in Gaudí's concept of decoration. He moves beyond the Arabic and Moorish technique of embedding walls and banister finials with ceramic pieces, to come up with an ingenious solution in the ventilation chimneys and the dome above the lunging ring: breaking tiles into shards and creating *trencadís* mosaics.

Conclusion

Fragmented ceramics have become an identifying element of Gaudí's work. The historical itinerary of this architectural "skin" began in the Les Corts Pavilions, where pottery was used in fragments for the first time. From these roofs to the final construction, the Sagrada Familia (1926; fig. 10) the *trencadís* was transformed by incorporating different materials that were either unusual or made from recycled rubble. This became the color of the undulating forms in Gaudí's architecture.

Figure 10: Antoni Gaudí. *Bell towers from the Sagrada Família*. Image courtesy of Triangle Books, photographed by Ricard Pla.

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Biography

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Rémi Labrusse[1]

Deconstructing Orientalism

Islamic Lessons in European Arts at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Abstract

This article has no intention to deconstruct the now classical Saidian idea that Western Orientalism was a global system of misrepresentation and control of non-Western cultures, particularly in the nineteenth century, when the colonial expansion spread over most of the regions marked by the cultures of Islam. Instead, It intends to reflect upon the fact that during this period, the Orientalist system established itself in the broader context of a modern condition which was (and still is) felt and conceived as a general "state of crisis." This critical dimension of modern Western culture explains both the extreme degree of violence of the Orientalist enterprise of capture and its internal criticism by its own perpetrators.

The same duality characterizes the modern production of visual images: the crisis of the Western mode of mimetic representation is responsible for both the paroxysmal multiplication of images, in the nascent "society of the spectacle," and their implosion, in the experiments of the so-called artistic avant-gardes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some decades earlier, such a radical critique of representation had been developed at the crossroads of applied arts and architecture, in debates on the nature and function of ornaments. We know how central the reference to the arts of Islam and their aesthetics, which were conceived in opposition to the contemporary Orientalist fancies, was for these debates. How did these two positions—the critique of Orientalism and of visual representation—interact? To what extent did they reinforce each other? In order to illustrate this question, This article will conjure up a most revealing episode: Henri Matisse's trip to Algeria in 1906 and the works that immediately followed this early "Oriental" encounter for the artist.

Keywords: Orientalism; crisis; melancholy; ornament; Matisse

The purpose of this article is to weave together the notion of critique and that of crisis and to explore their interdependence in the Orientalist system of representation, which I will describe as the quintessence of our modern relation to images. For this purpose, I will allude to the well-known debates on ornament in the nineteenth century, in which the critique of Orientalism and the critique of figurative images were closely associated, and I will eventually link it to Matisse's early work and thought as a case study.

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What is a crisis?

By the title of this article, I do not mean to deconstruct Edward Said's definition of "Orientalism", his idea of a Western system of misrepresentation, control and violent exploitation of non-Western cultures, from the late eighteenth century onwards, when the colonial expansion spread over most of the regions marked by the cultures of Islam. On the contrary, I would like to take this view for granted and to use it as a starting point, from which to investigate its intellectual roots in the collective mind of our modern societies. My assumption is that, in the context of what can be called a modern condition of mind, Orientalism appears as a self-deconstructing system, emblematic of a *state of crisis* which also characterizes our contemporary relation to visual images in general.

The "Orient" can be considered as an image-world *par excellence*, aspiring to substitute itself to reality. As we shall see, the inner contradictions of such a process of derealization endows it with a critical dimension which, therefore, affects the notion of representation as much as the Western relation to cultures and people identified as "Oriental". But self-deconstruction does not necessarily lead to a practical dismantling of the system in question. Although it seems paradoxical at first sight, I will also suggest that a self-critical structure, in the case of Orientalism as well as in the case of modern image-making in general, implies an intensification of the effects of the system, in a headlong rush where a higher level of concrete destructive actions immediately follows a deeper knowledge of their internal conflicts. I believe that this is best illustrated by the critique of the notion of representation developed in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century through a reconsideration of the arts of Islam, be it within the context of the applied arts or the so-called fine arts.

There is no place here to go back to the material and intellectual origins of this modern state of crisis, especially as it is not properly the topic of this issue. If we accept *a priori*, as a historical fact, the idea that the relation to the Other, the relation to images and, furthermore, modernity in itself were (and still are) in such a state in the modern age, we would rather focus on the inner characteristics of this notion. In other words, what does it mean to say that during this period, the Orientalist system established itself in the broader context of a modern condition which was (and still is) felt and conceived as a self-perpetuating crisis?

Etymologically, be it in French, English, or German, speaking of something "critical" (*critique*, *kritisch*) has two meanings, related to the two substantives "crisis" and "critique" (*crise/critique*, *Krise/Kritik*). One refers to a phase of disorder, threatening the perpetuation of a collective or individual stability and resulting in violence. The other suggests a movement of inquisitive introspection, leading on to an analysis and a judgment on oneself (as the ancient Greek radical *kritein* says). If something is at a "critical" stage, it means that it is both threatening and revealing. The path is then open to a process of analytical elucidation *and* to a burst of actual violence, in a ceaseless dialectical interrelation between these two poles. From this situation a continuous *state of crisis* emerges, which is to crisis alone (in the usual sense of a brief explosion of violence) what melancholy is to mourning as described in Freud's celebrated 1915-1917 article "Mourning and Melancholy." As we know, Freudian melancholy perpetuates itself without an end, nurtured by its own impetus and ignorant of the nature of the loss which lays at its core, whereas, in mourning, the grief work leads to a recovery from the loss which has been endured, thanks to its proper recognition. Similarly, a *state* of crisis (or of deconstruction), caught into the dialectics of destruction and criticism, opens up onto nothing but its own continuation and deepening, without any prospect of a resolution, as it would be expected after a specific *moment* of crisis.

Orientalist violence as a paradoxical consequence of European self-criticism

These two faces—self-inquisitive and violent—are inextricably linked in the case of Orientalism. The process of intellectual self-criticism, which can be considered as a cornerstone of Europe's modern relation to other cultures, cannot be separated from an escalated degree of concrete violence acted upon these cultures and their representatives (be they objects, environments, or human beings).

In the case of Orientalism, as it was defined and explored by Edward Said more than forty years ago, a structural need for political expansion and economic growth in the Western industrial nations created a cultural collapse of unprecedented speed and thoroughness in the colonized countries from the early nineteenth century onwards. As we know, this process of destruction was legitimized by the ideology of progress—i.e., by the belief that the command of scientific and technical development befell to the West and would lead the world to the best possible state. Together with the pride taken in techno-industrial accomplishments, however, what also came to the fore was the instability of any human system of representations and Europe's own relative, maybe even peripheral position in history. Evolutionism (the intellectual framework within which Western nations affirmed their superiority over the rest of the world) threatened in return the firmness of their position in history and their sheer identity. The belief in "progress" was constantly counterbalanced by a crying inconsistency between the certitude of a better future and the anxiety of an insuperable relativity of all historical situations, that is between eschatology and historicism.

The results were—and still are nowadays—a self-criticism tinged with a sense of melancholy, a fear of decadence and cultural disaster, lurking beneath the glowing aspects of techno-scientific progress. The speed and violence with which the process of colonization was expanding was as much a matter of anxiety as of satisfaction. Conversely, a "preference for the primitive", as Ernst Gombrich coined it, manifested itself ever more insistently, and it encompassed the fascination for the "Orient" as a conservatory of supposedly authentic, unchanging sets of meaning.

It may be tempting to separate these two trends and identify a dual system of opposite forces, some working for the complete eradication of the so-called "traditional" cultures for the sake of progress, some bemoaning and resisting this radical erasure by various means of promotion and protection of foreign people and things. But it is not that simple: in fact, the extreme brutality of the Orientalist enterprise of capture has been criticized from the inside, by its own supporters, without being alleviated for all that. Let us take just one example: that of the conservative art critic and French government official Léon de Laborde. In his report on the London Great Exhibition of 1851, Laborde was the first who decried the miserable quality of European applied arts, in comparison to that of "the Orient", and then bluntly called for a final but—he hoped—profitable "killing" of the latter: "The Orient is no longer the Orient. While it still exists, let us admire it...and form collections of its products which we will use as models. ...Oriental people will come to Paris. Hopefully, they will find in our museums the art which we will have killed in their hands and which will have thrived in ours" (268).[2]

Briefly speaking, self-criticism was and still is an integral part of the Orientalist system of domination and destruction. It prompts the thrust for appropriation to reach a heightened degree of radicalness. It results in a melancholy which itself ends up in hubris, that is, practically, a headlong rush to exacerbated destructive actions: slaughter, plunder, alteration, eradication pure and simple. A kind of disenchanted lucidity that, as it is verging on depression, nurtures a destructive impulse, in such a way that Orientalism can be considered concurrently as a self-critical and self-enhancing violence. It is self-enhancing because it is self-critical, not *despite* this

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author of this article.

self-criticism. Insofar as it criticizes the relationship to the non-Western as intrinsically destructive, it contaminates this relationship with a ruthlessness inflamed by something like an inner panic.

Orientalist representations echo faithfully this complex dynamic of critique and crisis. The image-world they create is almost systematically diagnosed by its own creators as the result of a process of derealization, substituting the imaginary to the real: its own inconsistency is conjured up by the intentional exaggeration of its unreality, like in the final reworking by Prosper Marilhat of his first accurate architectural studies of the ruins of the Cairene mosque El-Hakim (990-1013), in the late 1830s (fig.1).

Figure 1: Prosper Marilhat. *Mosque in Lower Egypt* (*Mosquée dans la Basse-Égypte*). 1835–45, oil on canvas, 109 x 179 cm. Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. Author's archive.

This fundamental disbelief that the Orientalist artist implicitly shares with his viewers is an essential component of the kitsch, with its mixture of cynicism and melancholy, as it was defined by Walter Benjamin (234) in relation to nineteenth century historicism. Hence, the spectacular flowering of fancy paradises and fairytales deprived of any faith but full of unbounded expressions of basic instincts—be they of violence or desire. These are twofold images: at a surface level, they set up a ravishing (or thrilling) "Oriental" spectacle; and more or less implicitly, they uncover its fallaciousness as well as the brutality and meaninglessness of its real background in colonial obsessions. In one single movement, they show what they say they want to hide. This is particularly obvious in the Orientalist academic paintings all over the Western world in the nineteenth century, when this kind of artistic production was systematically implemented and institutionalized. As a matter of fact, such a system of representation was bound to raise the stakes to survive its own skepticism: it developed itself all the more avidly as it was disillusioned, as it is epitomized in Jean-Léon Gérôme's abundant Orientalist production of paintings and sculptures, in the late nineteenth century (fig. 2).

Figure 2: Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Snake Charmer* (*Charmeur de serpents*). 1880, oil on canvas, 84 x 122 cm. The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The "society of the spectacle" as an equally paradoxical consequence of the critique of representation

Can we apply the same type of interpretation to the modern relation to images in general? I already mentioned the "Orient" constructed by the West in the modern age as the image-world *par excellence*. What does this mean? In the Western visual tradition since the Renaissance, an "image" can be defined as a constructed unit of visual forms which provides its viewers with a discursive meaning. Mimesis was the name for such a vision, which was characterized by the assumption of an intrinsic link between language and vision, thus exceeding by far the simple notion of realism. Mimetic images speak. They abide by the antique principle of the "*ut pictura poesis*", for the application of which the faithful imitation of reality is just one instrument among others. This discursive quality of mimetic representation allows its products to establish themselves as substitutes for the real world and its lively interrelations. Beyond all their particular narratives, what these substitutes say is that the representation of things and living beings is richer and worthier than their direct presence. In the process of image-making, the world is not reduced to an image, it is raised to the higher level of image-worlds, replacing the actual experience of the living world.

In the history of modern art, it is a commonplace to suggest that an increasing criticism has been addressed to the universal validity of this aesthetics of representation. A process of deconstruction followed, which challenged the academic rules governing the arts and appealed to the lessons of non-Western visual traditions—among them the arts of Islam—, where the relations between the imaginary and the real seemed to have been negotiated on different bases.

While the Western culture of mimetic images was gradually collapsing, undermined by a lasting and powerful self-criticism, a disbelief in the possibility for images to become worlds by themselves (an inner criticism which culminated in the shattering of the perspectival space), the actual production of images was expanding dramatically, up to the paroxysmal multiplication of images of all sorts produced by the ever-growing digital technologies. In other words, the more the mimetic imaginary is identified as fallacious, the more it proliferates, in a race into wonder-worlds where a self-diagnosed addiction has replaced the former belief in the ontological legitimacy of representation.

Therefore, it would be misleading to see these two historical trends—the internal critique of images and the accelerated engulfment into virtual worlds—as simply opposed to each other, and to interpret the self-critical dimension of image-making in modern art as a univocal resistance to the vertiginous proliferation of industrial images. In fact, the two phenomena are not only contemporary but interlinked: criticism undermines the faith in images, sets off a sense of loss of reality and consequently provokes a headlong rush in the quantitative increase and technical efficiency of ever-more devalued images. Briefly speaking, the critical undermining of the iconicity of images finds its paradoxical aftermath in the indomitable empire of representations, by all possible means and in all possible contexts, and a heightened *state of crisis* of our direct relation to the real.

As I suggested, this is exactly what characterizes the Orientalist system of representation, which, therefore, can be considered as the most perfect embodiment of this global process of derealization, a sort of stem cell of this loss of reality which lies at the roots of the modern Western mind. The critique of images and the critique of Orientalism are part of one and the same cultural system, characterized as a self-sustaining crisis, paradoxically rooted into self-criticism.

The modern aesthetics of ornament as a critique of both representation and Orientalism

Let us now go back to the field where this global criticism expressed itself most acutely in the nineteenth century: the debates on ornament and ornamentation. This was by no means just a superficial question of taste in decoration. More fundamentally, what was at stake was the capacity of a techno-scientific industrial culture to produce its own symbolic order. While in the nineteenth century, new rational processes of material production were continuously coming to light, the concord of artistic creation with technical production became a central problem. The question of ornamentation stood at the core of the related debates. At the crossroads of art and industry, ornament was expected to be the means whereby a rejuvenated synthesis between these two pillars of civilization would be created.

However, this first required to free ornamental creation from the domination of the fine arts and to endow it with a higher, autonomous intellectual status. This was the task pursued by an active community of amateurs, art critics, and designers (even if the word itself was fixed only gradually), which emerged in Europe in the 1830s and grew until the end of the century. With this situation in view, they combined a critique of mimetic representation as an aesthetics of illusion, and of Orientalism as the quintessence of this doctrine. Conversely, they promoted the full artistic value of two-dimensional non-figurative patterns in ornamentation and used to refer with predilection to the formal principles of Islamic arts. The traditional notion of the image in the Western world was thus called into question, as the paradigm of visual creation was no longer discursive iconicity but formal architecturality, following a shift from narration to structure—what the Germans would call "tectonics" from the 1830s onwards (Bötticher). As architecture, rather than painting or sculpture, became a model for this new vision, ornament could no longer be seen as a sort of lower image or the by-product of pre-existing images. It could and would cast away not only any narrative propensity but any iconic status whatsoever, without being relegated to the margins of human

invention for all that (Labrusse, "Islamic Arts" 1204). The final goal was to revolutionize not only our visual environment but the way we all were dealing with it in everyday life. In the viewer's eye, fantasy had to be replaced by rationality, and a passive contemplation by an active understanding of the surrounding visual structures, in order to solve the spiritual and material crisis undergone by contemporary societies.

Consequently, the nineteenth century defenders of an autonomous aesthetics of ornament suggested that the latter, away from any submission to the imaginary, be productive rather than conclusive, centrifugal rather than centripetal, present—and future—rather than past-oriented. It should engender action rather than contemplation, continuous invention as opposed to the passive fascination provoked by a representational imagery (all the more so if the latter was overloaded with exotic fancies).

Geometry was directly responsible for this shared productivity of ornamentation, in so far as it implied the idea that the greatest simplicities could lead to the greatest complexities and prompted the viewer's gaze to shape its own combinations of forms by itself. It is with this in mind that Owen Jones' friend Richard Redgrave, in accordance with the famous promoter of "moresque" ornamentation (fig. 3), provocatively challenged the universal validity of Western mimesis, in his address to the students and teachers of the London Government School of Design in 1853: "It may unhesitatingly be said that imitation, when relied upon itself, is but a very low merit in the artist" (15).

During the same period, the young curator of the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin, Julius Lessing, expressed a similar feeling by giving a positive value to the concept of "lack of meaning" (*Bedeutungslosigkeit*) when applied to "Oriental floor decorations and carpets" (7; fig. 4). If Islamic arts served as a model in this programmatic deconstruction of the principles of mimesis, it was because of their mathematical basis, as opposed to literary discursivity. Culturally and visually, what can be called an "Oriental" paradigm—which was in fact an Islamic one—led to consider these arts as the perfect embodiment of Neoplatonic aesthetics, revealing a purely formal rationale beyond the confused muddle of visual appearances.

Figure 3: Owen Jones and Jules Goury. *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra*, vol. II, 1845, pl. XLIX.

Figure 4: Julius Lessing. *Ancient Oriental Carpet Patterns after Pictures and Originals of the XV^th^-XVI^th^ Centuries* (*Altorientalische Teppichmuster nach Bildern und Originalen des XV.-XVI. Jahrhunderts*). Berlin, 1877, pl. 4.

Thus, it was believed that the critique of the ontological inconsistency of Western mimetic images could be positively enriched by the celebration of a fundamental logic at work in Islamic non-iconic ornaments. Aniconicity no longer meant a low level of reality but the true uncovering of the invisible structure of Being, an ideal order of things that went beyond historical, geographical, or ethnic singularities. There are innumerable examples of this early recognition of the mathematical, geometrical side of Islamic arts, endowed with higher artistic and philosophical meaning. Among them the French connoisseur, writer, and photographer Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, who, as early as 1841, *à propos* the Nasrid architectural ornamentation of the Alhambra, extolled a "skilfully calculated art" (191; fig. 5), thus contradicting most of the Orientalist pronouncements regarding the unbridled fantasy of these ornamental grids.

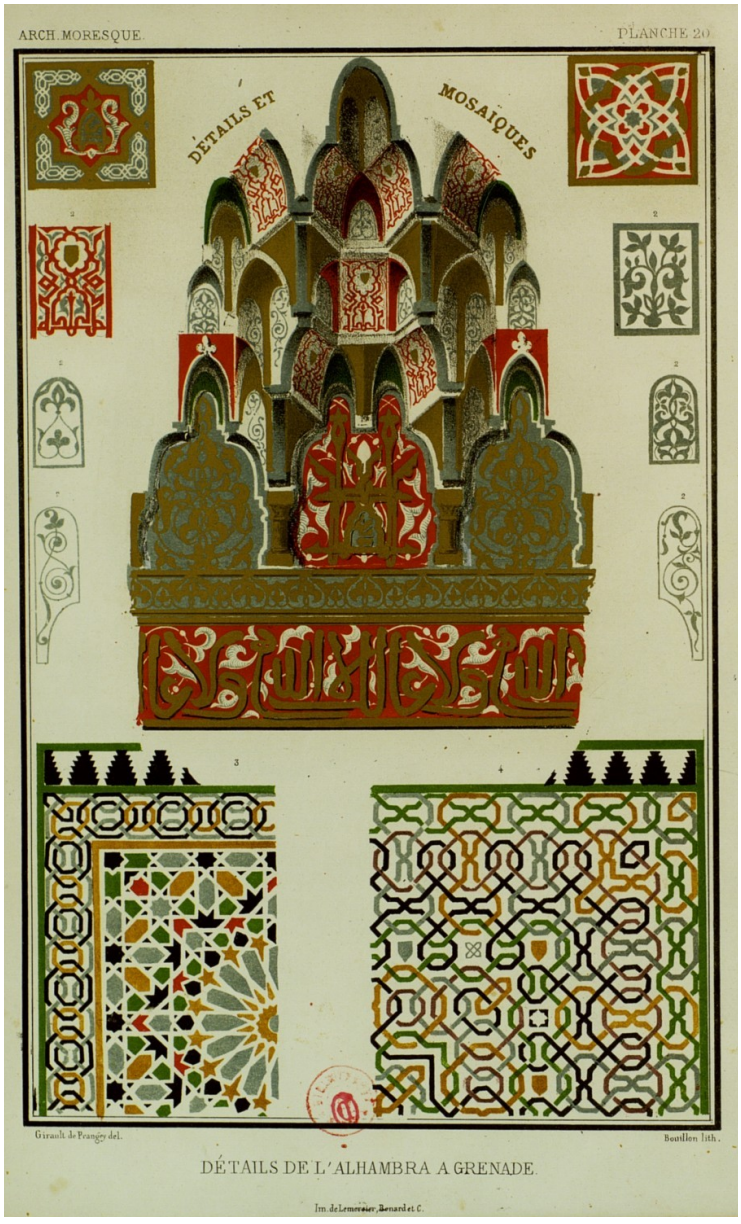

Figure 5: Joseph Philibert Girault de Prangey. "Details of the Alhambra in Granada" (Détails de l'Alhambra à Grenade). *Essai sur l'architecture, des arabes et de mores en Espagne, en Sicile et en Barbarie.* Hauser, Brockhaus et Avenarius, 1841, pl. 20. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Such a scientific, anti-narrative approach of Islamic ornamentation implied a radical rejection of all the literary and theatrical elements of the Orientalist imagery. The picturesque perspective—though favored by an audience fascinated with the myth of the "Orient"—was thought at best insufficient and at worst prejudicial, insofar as it gave precedence to the narrative horizon of dreams and was not overly concerned with accuracy. Among many examples, this is obvious in the preface that the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc wrote for Léon Parvillée's book on early Ottoman architecture and decoration in 1874 (fig. 6), decrying the "promoters of fantasy in everything", as opposed to the discoverers of the role of "cold science" in "Arab" arts (iii-iv). Thus, evolving from a belief in the reconciliation of art and science, a modern, architectural and musical aesthetics of ornament, specific to Islam, had been set in contrast to a historicist, imitational and discursive aesthetics of pictorial illustration typical of the Western tradition since the Renaissance.

Figure 6: Léon Parvillée. "Yeşil Camii, Mosque in Bursa. Background of the Mihrab" (Yéchil Djami, mosquée à Brousse. Fond du mirhab). *Architecture et décoration turques au XVe siècle*. 1874, pl. 17. ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Alte und Seltene Drucke.

However, this sort of "Islamophilia" (Labrusse, *Islamophilies*) cannot be radically separated from the Orientalist system in general; it should rather be considered as the culmination of its self-deconstructive dimension, which, to some extent, contributed to perpetuate its external destructive effects. Indeed, promoting the scientific formal lessons of Islamic arts led their defenders to *exploit* Islamic patterns and transform them into "modern" systems of forms not necessarily recognizable as "Oriental" by essence. No matter if objects and ornamental details belonged to different periods and had diverse geographical origins; what was at stake were the purely formal, transhistorical and transcultural principles they could convey to the modern European designers. The process of uncovering the scientific applications of geometry and color in the arts of Islam ended up in an appropriation of the Other for the sake of an allegedly universal but in fact Western-centered reformation of our modern visual culture. The final result was not a distorted representation of the "Orient", like in the Orientalist imagery, but a pure and simple obliteration. As aesthetically opposed as they were, both positions shared the belief that the insuperable laws of evolutionism would lead to a disintegration of Islamic cultures, as we saw in Léon de Laborde's opinions after his examination of the 1851 Great Exhibition. It legitimized a common consent to annihilation, be it through the progressive invention of an Islam-influenced ornamentation in the so-called "grammar of ornament" (Jones), or through the melancholy evocation of an Oriental paradise in Orientalist paintings.

Practically, the notion of Islamic lessons coming from an irretrievable medieval past prompted the transfer of innumerable artefacts, extolled as material bearers of these allegedly doomed cultures, in Western museums—first among them the recently invented museums of decorative arts, like the South Kensington Museum in London—and private collections of all sorts, thus actively collaborating to the overall colonial plunder and contributing to the accelerated collapse of local cultures under a system of imperial control. In doing so, a self-critical theory of visual creation, crying out for a new Islam-influenced ornamental aesthetics, did not counteract but rather intensified colonial violence. Willingly or not, this reformative relation to the present, typical of an avant-garde commitment to the foundation of a new cultural and social order, was strengthening the continuation of a state of crisis, as much as the disillusioned multiplication of empty images did in the context of Orientalist narratives. In both cases, a self-conscious internal critique of modern Western culture was conceptually deconstructing but concretely nurturing a thrust for violent domination and global destruction. Critique led to no other outcome than this ever-increasing state of crisis. If one adds that the numerous late nineteenth century calls for a true reformation of ornament consistently failed to reinvent a new society based on the symbolic union between art and science, it will be clear that, in this most strategic field of the applied arts, critique and crisis were indeed inextricably associated.

The radical experiments of European artistic avant-gardes as a perpetuation of the debates on representation and the Orient: Matisse as a case study

Let us now transpose these views to the field of painting, through the evocation of a case study, that of Henri Matisse's early work. This should enable us, as a conclusion, to verify firstly, that avant-garde artists and ornament reformers were sharing the same questions at the turn of the twentieth century, even if they answered them differently; secondly, that the reference to Islamic arts greatly helped to dialectize our Western notion of the image; and, finally, that the self-critical position which stands at the roots of modern culture in general applies to our relation to images, of which visual Orientalism is a supreme embodiment. When they named "decorative" the new gaze they were seeking to establish at the heart of the Western tradition of representation, the artistic avant-gardes of the turn of the twentieth century were recognizing more or less consciously the impact

of the revolution which the notion of ornament and decoration had undergone in the previous decades, with the lesson of Islam at their core.

Matisse was certainly not the only one to explore and conceptualize this "decorative" quality of modern art: from Gauguin to Signac and their followers, the word "decorative" was meant by many young painters and critics as the opposite of "academic", i.e., mimetic representation. Let us just recall Albert Aurier (38) celebrating Gauguin's "decorative painting" in 1891 as akin to the "first pictorial experiments" of "primitive societies", and rejecting in turn "easel painting" as a manifestation of "decadent civilizations". In 1903, Maurice Denis, one of the founding members of the Nabis, noted that "the word 'decorative'" had even become "a pet thing *tarte à la crème* of the discussions among artists" (170). On this shared ground, Matisse, however, went farther and was more consistent than anyone, as shown in this late statement of 1945: "The decorative for a work of art is an extremely precious thing. It is an essential quality. It is not pejorative to say that the paintings of an artist are decorative" (165). Affirming for himself that this new "decorative" art he was trying to establish was anti-mimetic, architecturally structured, and musical by essence, he had no difficulty accepting that the same qualities—granted for a long time to Islamic artefacts such as carpets, ceramics, etc.—recommended these objects to his admiration and could reinforce him in his own intuitive views. This was when he discovered them in landmark exhibitions in Paris in 1903 and in Munich in 1910, and, to a lesser extent, on site in Algeria in 1906, in Andalusia in 1911, or in Morocco in 1912-1913.

Matisse uses two words in order to characterize his responsiveness to the arts of the Orient, by which he mixed together Islamic and, slightly later, Byzantine cultures: he speaks of a "revelation" and of a "confirmation". For instance, in a 1947 interview, recalling the early experiences of his youth, he explained: "*Revelation* came to me from the Orient. It was later, before the icons in Moscow, that that art touched me and that I understood Byzantine painting. You surrender yourself that much better when you see your efforts *confirmed* by such an ancient tradition. It helps you jump over the ditch. I had to get away from imitation, even of light. One can provoke light by the invention of flat planes, as one uses harmonies in music" (178; italics in the original). Visually, these arts were a *revelation* when he first discovered their unsuspected riches; intellectually, they acted as *comforting* testimonies that what he was already aiming at encountered echoes at least in foreign cultures, if not in the Western visual traditions of the past five centuries.

But before being able to make something of the attraction he felt for these objects, Matisse had first to get rid of the burden of Orientalism, since the contemporary relation to these cultures, for a painter at least, had been integrated into a powerful system of production of Orientalist fictions. Thanks to his nascent decorative aesthetics, he knew he had to distinguish himself radically from these mimetic phantasmagorias. A "study trip" ("*déplacement d'étude*"), as he later described it (Matisse and Courthion 116, 315), to the nearest "Oriental" country for a French man at that time, Algeria, offered him such an opportunity in May 1906. It preceded his more traditional Italian tour of 1907 and predetermined it. It was actually Matisse's first visit outside of France, if we except a short honeymoon in London in 1898. This Algerian fortnight took place in a highly colonial context. Spectacular Oriental settings had been displayed at the Parisian 1900 Universal Exhibition, which Matisse had visited. In 1906, the same type of Oriental decors was shown at the Colonial Exhibition in Marseille, when the artist was encouraged to travel to Algeria by an art collector, Gustave Fayet, who conducted wine business in Algiers, and he was introduced there to members of the colonial troops like Maurice Le Glay. As it was often the case, however, these keepers of the official and economic colonial order used to express critical views on the destructive impact—particularly intense in Algeria—of the whole apparatus they were consciously serving.

In such a context, it is commonplace to say that Matisse's first personal "Orientalist" experience proved to be severely disappointing. But it should rather be said that this disillusion was

intentionally pursued by the artist, in order to deconstruct the Orientalist system of representation and to remove the obstacle it formed against a free inspiration taken from the arts of Islam. This deconstruction had to be internalized, experienced from the inside, not just intellectually formulated. And this is exactly what happened when Matisse discovered himself almost completely unable to paint from nature in Algeria, except for a single small and not particularly exotic landscape, *Street in Biskra*,[3] and when he told his friend Manguin, he had been repelled by the "picturesque", the "belly-dancers", and the nauseous colonial eroticism. Conversely, back in France, the small Southern village of Collioure prompted again his "ferocious desire to paint", he wrote again (letter quoted in Labrusse et al. 112).

What he painted, however, was *The Red Carpets* (fig. 7), a painting inspired by the lesson of the Berberian carpets he had brought back from Algeria, and, therefore, his first explicit act of allegiance to the decorativeness he had been discovering for a few years in these arts of Islam, displayed in Parisian museums and exhibitions. It expresses the artist's leanings not only towards the colors but also the geometrical forms of Islamic design. With an almost aggressive lack of picturesqueness, it gives a concrete embodiment of the idea that the meaning of a visual composition does not rely on its narrative quality but on its ability to transmit a stream of vital energy through the spectator's eye. Similarly, a year later, in *Tableau no. III*, also known as *Blue Nude: Memory of Biskra* (fig. 8), the "Oriental" setting is rendered almost illegible—"abstract", following Louis Vauxcelles' telling criticism—and the female body challenges all the expectations of "Orientalist" eroticism. By so doing, the deconstruction of the Orientalist rhetorical clichés instantly opens the way on to a deconstruction of the fundamental bases of a representational image. From then on, the shackles of literal exoticism had been broken. Matisse knew for certain that the academic representation of an imaginary Orient was alien to his nature, so much so that his theatrical "Odalisques" of the 1920s cannot but be seen as a regressive, if not depressive despondency, in the context of the post-war "*retour à l'ordre*", even if some of them still display a complex, somehow dialectical quality.

[3] Henri Matisse, *Street in Biskra* (*Rue à Biskra*). 1906, oil on canvas, 34 x 41 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Figure 7: Henri Matisse. *The Red Carpets* (*Les Tapis rouges*). 1906, oil on canvas, 89 x 116 cm. © Succession H. Matisse / 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich. Photo: Ville de Grenoble / Musée de Grenoble-J.L. Lacroix.

Figure 8: Henri Matisse. *Blue Nude (Souvenir de Biskra)*. 1907, oil on canvas, 92.1 x 140.3 cm. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.228. © Succession H. Matisse / 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich. Photo: Mitro Hood.

By contrast with this transitory and rather questionable body of works of the 1920s, some of Matisse's most significant works of the 1910s are, consciously or not, attuned to an interpretation of Islamic arts according to which the logic of form and color should be radically emancipated from the duty of describing the outside world objectively. In many cases, he makes direct allegiance to the example of Islamic works of art, like in the 1915 drawing *Still Life with Iznik Tile*.[4] The same act of allegiance distinguishes one of his most programmatic works, the *Red Studio* (fig. 9) painted towards the end of 1911, just before he left Paris for Morocco. Right at the center of the composition, he placed "the warm blacks of the border of a piece of Persian embroidery placed above the chest of drawers", as he put it in a letter to his patron Sergei Shchukin from Tangiers in February 1912, hoping in this way to encourage him to accept "the most musical of all [his] paintings" (Labrusse et al. 240, 364). This piece of Islamic fabric (most probably a "scrap" of Ottoman velvet, then commonly identified as "Persian") is unrecognizable as such but is used purely to provide propulsion for the forms, a nucleus of colored energy, closely associated with the artist's paintings and with the flowers in the Persian Qajar vase in the foreground. This simultaneous celebration and obliteration of an Islamic ornamental pattern as forerunner of a modern non-representational decorative aesthetics closely recalls the instrumental use of Islamic lessons by ornament theoreticians and reformers of the previous century. Hinting at a new universal language of forms, the inspirational work of art is deprived of its cultural identity in the moment when it exerts its formative action.

Figure 9: Henri Matisse. *The Red Studio. Issy-les Moulineaux*. Fall 1911, oil on canvas, 181 x 219, 1 cm. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, acc. no. 8.1949. © Succession H. Matisse / 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich. Foto: The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

[4] Henri Matisse, *Still Life with Iznik Tile* (*Nature morte au carreau d'Iznik*). 1915, charcoal on paper, 74 x 54 cm. Private collection. See figure in Labrusse, *Islamophilies* 300.

In parallel, another recurrent feature characterizes Matisse's experimental works of the same period: namely the display of this experimental dimension as such, through intentional marks of gestures and chance (stains, overlappings, interruptions, etc.), which all contribute to a strong sense of incompletion. Clearly, the tension between exactitude and intentional accidents, carefully designed structure and undefined patches of medium is what has retained the artist fundamentally.
This aspect of his work must be situated in a vitalist aesthetics which positions itself not only against the tradition of representation but also against the Neoplatonic ontology underlying all geometry. Gestures are more meaningful than forms, real life is more important than the contemplation of a perfect composition: this is what his paintings eventually tend to render manifest to the eye. Matisse's experience of art is not *ontological* in nature (relating to the image's ability to give an account of the structure of being) but instead *phenomenological* (pertaining to the image's ability to give life to the space of perception). That is why, when he refers to Islamic art again in 1947, he does not mention formal or stylistic characteristics as such (flatness, for example, as has often been asserted) but instead talks of a general *sense* of space: "By its properties [*accessoires*], this [Oriental] art suggests a larger and truly plastic space. That helped me to get away from intimate painting" (178). The lesson to be learnt from Islamic art, as he saw it in its triumph in the exhibition of Muslim Art in Munich in 1910, was not about a new *style*, it was about a new *existential behavior*, that is a new *way of life*: the work of art did not aim to captivate but instead to liberate the being-in-the-world of the spectator, not absorbing the viewer by adopting a centripetal logic, but referring the viewer back to real space, in keeping with a centrifugal logic, and endowing this space with a new energetic quality. This principle of defocalization implies that the viewer is required not so much to meditate on what he sees, as to experience an all-over visual effect which draws the eye away from the picture surface to the total environment.[5]

There is another reason for this anti-geometric aesthetics of chance gestures and incompletion: the critical questioning of the image through the image. The painting does not only produce a new kind of expansive ornamental effect; it also provides the eye with a self-critical questioning about the making of images. Such a self-criticism often reveals itself through systematic discrepancies, which fracture the global overall harmony of the composition with an aggressive juxtaposition of form against form. In *The Red Carpets*, for example, following a diagonal line from the lower right to the top left corners, some zones verge on chaos while others thrive with intense light and color contrasts, in such a way that the suggested meaning of the image is a critical question about the process of image making, starting in erratic gestures and emerging into a clear structure of geometry and colors, before dissolving themselves outside the frame, in the effectiveness of real life. In other words, with reference to the arts of Islam, deconstruction allows the mimetic image to transform itself in a "decorative" structure, but it also leaves the question open, of how this process occurs and, more generally, what for a visual creation has to be done *and* undone in a modern culture.

In the second version of the *Sevilla Still-Lifes* (fig. 10), the powerful two-dimensional expanse of a white and blue Spanish carpet, reinvented as if it were an Islamic tilework, covers only half of the sofa; the other half is painted in perspective, according to the traditional rules that govern the creation of an illusion of depth. Similarly, the rhythmical repetition of pattern does not inhabit an unequivocal decorative universe; motifs and patterns are displayed in such a way that, once again, the ambiguous relationship between the referential value of the pattern as such and the formal rhythms that emerge from the spaces between the patterns is *deliberate*. The systematic intertwining of the plants and the textile designs based on plant forms is a patent illustration of this ambiguity. Confronted with such a juxtaposition, the spectator is inevitably challenged on the nature of the figurative impulse and the way it is overstepped or not in a representational image.

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[5] The general idea and some sentences of this paragraph are taken from my article "Islamic Arts and the Crisis of Representation in Modern Europe" (Labrusse 1213)

Figure 10: Henri Matisse. *Spanish Still Life*. Ca. 1910/1911, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 116.3 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Inv. no. GE-9043. © Succession H. Matisse / 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich.

Finally, in the case of *The Red Studio*, the subject of the painting is precisely what is and should be the role of objects and works of art in an inhabited space: therefore, the Venetian red of the ground is both decorative and conceptual, insofar as it embodies *and* represents the energetic effect a "decorative" painting should have on the spectator's mind and body. In short, the paradoxical strength of this image lies in a sort of critical decoration, inseparable from a never-ending reflection on the condition of its own existence. Geometrical formalism is immersed in this ceaseless critical process, which will pervade Matisse's work up to the monumental paper cut-out compositions of his last years, like *The Snail*[6] of 1953, in which some edges of large regular geometrical blocks of color are simply and somewhat randomly torn.

Let us now go back to our starting point. In Matisse's case, we are confronted with an experimental artistic endeavor which criticizes its own conditions of possibility, culturally, through the visceral rejection of the visual embodiment of imperial Orientalism, and aesthetically, through the calling into question of the Western tradition of representation. This criticism is also a self-critical analysis; it includes the artist's work itself in its questioning, going as far as to threaten the very possibility of painting (in Algeria in 1906) or to accept the menace of an impending chaos (through incompletion and randomness). Matisse's work is intrinsically modern because it is intrinsically critical: the artist

[6] Henri Matisse. *The Snail* (*L'escargot*). 1953, gouache on paper, cut and pasted on paper mounted on canvas, 286 x 287 cm. Tate Gallery, London.

refuses to build up a definitely "decorative" work of art but infuses it with a sense of inquisitive anxiety about its own being.

That is why, in his best works, the clear geometrical and colorful legacy of Islamic art is systematically accompanied by discrepancies and self-referential devices. The vitalist aesthetics which he longed for is put under the permanent pressure of a critical stand that the artist has to share with his viewers. He himself was absolutely conscious of this modernist fate, as he wrote in his *Notes of a Painter* in December 1908: "Whether we like it or not,...we belong to our time and we share in its opinions, its feelings, even its delusions" (43). It implies that the explicit deconstruction of Orientalism can only open onto a void: the formal lesson taken from the arts of Islam is shaped in such a way that their own identity is effaced and that they are engulfed in the same critical inconclusiveness about the legitimacy of image-making.

Is this critical stand a way to counterbalance the monstrous overgrowth of fictional images all over the world? Or, on the contrary, are critique and crisis, once again, inseparable? Is the contemporary proliferation of fancy images (including Orientalist ones) hindered or spurred on by the subtle critical anxiety which modern works of art such as Matisse's entrust to their viewers, beyond their brilliant decorativeness? Should we definitely oppose, on the one hand, the melancholy self-distrust of kitsch images in the Orientalist vision and, on the other, the revolutionary enquiries about the condition of images, in applied as well as fine arts? Or are these two trends, each in its own way, nihilistic or utopian, nurturing a rush to the worse, in order to obliterate a distressing, maybe unbearable sense of disillusion? These are questions that ought to be left open, at an obviously critical turn of our contemporary societies and their endangered relation to the reality of life.

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Biography

Rémi Labrusse teaches art history at the University Paris Nanterre. A large part of his research is focused on the imagined sources of the Western modern condition from the late eighteenth century onwards—among them the notion of the Orient, in connection with the reception of the arts of Islam and the debates on the reform of ornament. On these subjects, he co-curated with Salima Hellal the exhibition *Islamophilies. L'Europe moderne et les arts de l'Islam* (Lyon, Musée des beaux-arts, 2011) and published *Face au chaos. Pensées de l'ornement à l'âge de l'industrie* (2018).

Emily Christensen[1]

Wassily Kandinsky at the Exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* in Munich, 1910

A Modernist Artist's Interpretation of Persian Art

Abstract

In 1910, Wassily Kandinsky attended the Munich exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* and subsequently wrote a review of it for the Russian literary journal *Apollon.* His review, which almost exclusively discussed the Persian paintings on display, provides insights into Kandinsky's way of seeing and understanding these objects at a significant moment in his artistic development. The most compelling aspect of his review is his repeated articulation of the sense of revelation that he experienced in front of these works. Conveying a sense of revelation through his own paintings was Kandinsky's primary goal in this period, and was a concept he struggled to formulate in his art. I argue that Kandinsky developed one of his primary artistic strategies in response to a specific practice that he had first encountered at the *Meisterwerke* exhibition: the Persian artist's practice of painting hidden forms within a composition. This article looks closely at a work from the exhibition, *Sleeping Rustam* (attributed to Sultan Muhammad, 1515-1522), which incorporates hidden figures in its rock formations, a practice described as demanding careful and sustained scrutiny by the viewer before the faces and forms reveal themselves. Kandinsky himself wrote later that his works from 1910, "dissolved objects to a greater or lesser extent within the same picture, so that they might not all be recognized at once and so that these emotional overtones might thus be experienced gradually by the spectator, one after another"; a process that the author believes he may have adapted from Persian paintings.

Keywords: Kandinsky; abstraction; hidden forms; Orientalism; Persian art

Wassily Kandinsky began his description of a Persian painting that he saw at the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (Masterpieces of Muhammedan Art) in 1910 as follows: "its simplicity is almost barbaric, its complexity bewildering. Its elegance is that of a highly refined people lost in sensuous dreams" (Kandinsky, "Letters" 74). Kandinsky was one of many avant-garde artists at the turn of the twentieth century who referenced non-European sources in order to forge a new path for their art. In Kandinsky's case, the references were numerous and diverse and included the subject of my broader research, his complex and often problematic references to a homogenized "Orient." In addition to the exhibitions he visited in Europe, Kandinsky had spent three months living and painting in Tunisia in 1904-1905, a body of work he revisited while developing his challenging, abstracted artistic responses to "the Orient" in the years 1909-1913 (Benjamin and

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Ashjian). While my broader research investigates the implications of Kandinsky's "Oriental" references in their entirety, in this paper, I will focus on one component of this engagement: Kandinsky's passionate response to Persian paintings and the intriguing possibility that he adapted a specific technique seen in these paintings for his own artistic purposes.

Figure 1: Wassily Kandinsky. *Composition IV (Fragment)*. 1910-1911. Oil on canvas, 95 x 130 cm, Tate, London. Image courtesy of Tate. Photo © Tate.

In late 1910 through to early 1911, Kandinsky's paintings took on a new level of complexity. To take one example from this period, his *Composition IV (Fragment)* is a work without a recognizable geographic or narrative source (fig. 1). Both scale and orientation seem awry. A brief look at the painting provides little certainty of subject besides the rainbow in the center. This was a period of intense creative development and productivity for Kandinsky. A number of canvases followed immediately after this one with related iconography, similarly varied degrees of abstraction, and equally confounding spatial distribution. In this paper, I propose a new source for Kandinsky's artistic developments in this period from late 1910 through 1911: his exposure to and interpretation of Persian paintings at an exhibition in Munich. Although a few scholars have previously referenced his interest in Persian art, with the exception of a study of comparative iconography that proposes a narrow borrowing of specific forms and compositions by Kandinsky, the references have been relatively brief, touching in general terms on the broad visual evidence of Kandinsky's flatter planes and "carpet-like structures" of representation (Daftari; Hagedorn; Mühling; Troelenberg).

My proposal is more conceptual than the iconographic study and more specific than the generalized references and suggests that there might have been a causal link between Persian art and Kandinsky's early experiments with abstraction. In order to understand the connection, I examine a network of overlapping material: his paintings, of course, but also his writings and the Persian paintings that he saw. Although I will be looking closely at one particular work that Kandinsky saw at the *Meisterwerke* exhibition, I would like to make clear that the focus of this paper is not an examination of Persian art in the complex historical context of its production, function, and circulation in sixteenth-century Persia; this is, rather, a study of what a European artist saw when he looked at this painting, and how he internalized and interpreted it—and the others on show—in his own work.

***Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst*, Munich**

The starting point for this analysis is the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* that took place in Munich from May to October 1910. The exhibition was unprecedented in terms of its scope and its ambition: 3600 objects of every conceivable type were displayed across eighty rooms, and its bold intention, highlighted in the introductory essay in the official guidebook for the exhibition, was to change the perception of Islamic art in Europe (Troelenberg). In particular, the essay concluded, it sought, "to show that the creations of Islamic art deserve a place equal to those of other cultural periods, and above all, that their color harmony and ornamental magnitude are capable of stimulating the creation of modern art, and perhaps forging new directions" (*Amtlicher Katalog* 13).[2]

We know that Kandinsky visited the exhibition some time that summer because his fervent response to it is recorded in a review he wrote for the St Petersburg literary journal *Apollon*, published in October 1910 (Kandinsky, "Letters" 73-75). It is worth noting that Kandinsky was only one of a number of avant-garde artists who visited the exhibition: among others, Henri Matisse, Franz Marc, and Auguste Macke all visited the exhibition (Troelenberg 380-398). While both Matisse and Marc made subsequent references to the exhibition, theirs were fairly brief and generalized responses; neither left a detailed written response to the conceptual issues raised by Persian paintings that could be considered comparable to Kandinsky's review (Hagedorn 298).

The first thing to note about his review is that despite the breadth of the exhibition, Kandinsky focused almost entirely on the Persian paintings on show. His writing follows its usual meandering and unpredictable path from beginning to conclusion, but in summary it conveys with passion the elements that he valued most highly in these paintings: their approach to composition and color (which is something he may have been predisposed to look for, given the stated intention of the curators); and the manner in which they produced in him a sense of revelation.

The focus here is on how Kandinsky described the Persian paintings as evoking in him a sense of revelation. He conveyed this in the review's opening paragraph, in which he described standing in front of Persian paintings for the first time:

> And suddenly, I seemed to see before my eyes the embodiment of that dream, that reverie I had long carried around with me, unknowing… It seemed unbelievable that this could have been created by human hands. Standing before it, I felt it had come into being of its own accord, as if it had come down from heaven, like a revelation. This was one of those occasions when the spirit partakes of spiritual refreshment for which it has been waiting, searching,

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author of this paper.

> without knowing where to find it. It was as if a curtain had parted before one, revealing new depths of happiness ("Letters" 73-74).

Kandinsky's choice of language leaves the reader in no doubt of his desire to convey his experience of revelation: the sudden embodiment before his eyes; the simile of a curtain parting to reveal new depths; the use of the term "like a revelation." The most striking point about his description of this moment is the strength of Kandinsky's association of these Persian paintings with a mystical otherworldliness: the painting was more like a dream than reality; he bestowed extrasensory qualities on it with the idea that it was something he had been carrying around with him without knowing; he gave it mystical origins with the suggestion that it might have been created by a being other than a human, perhaps a deity in heaven; and he declared that the image provided him with spiritual nourishment.

In addition to his vocabulary, Kandinsky's review reveals a binary structure of East and West which underpinned his articulation of what was for him a new way of describing art as having a spiritual impact. He wrote about the Persian artist in contrast to "we Europeans," and in a subsequent section of his *Meisterwerke* review, he wrote:

> I stood and looked, and as I did so, everything that had previously seemed true in our own "decadent" art, everything to which the soul responded with such joy that it felt like pain: "This is truth; this, beauty!" – everything else was eclipsed, obscured, forgotten. And again, on this later occasion, the same thought awakened within me, and I began to compare this art of the past with that of our own times. It became clear to me how great was the power of this mature art, with its roots deep in the soil, the fruit of centuries of inner life, by comparison with our own, beneath which the soil has scarcely begun to form, growing in an atmosphere that in its uppermost strata is only gradually beginning to free itself from the stifling accretions of the materialism of "yesterday" ("Letters" 73-74).

What emerges from this passage is the concept that it was only upon exposure to Persian art that he was able to understand "our own" European art. The binaries Kandinsky employs in this passage (strange/familiar; theirs/ours; timeless/changing; spiritual/material) are the familiar binaries of Orientalism, but they are unsettled by a partial inversion relating to assumptions around superiority and inferiority. It is the art of "we Europeans" that was ascribed negative attributes in the passage: "decadent"; with a tendency towards "decoration"; and burdened with "the stifling accretions of the materialism of 'yesterday.'" The derogatory connotations of the words "stifling" and "accretions" sharpen the contrast with his positive, aspirational attitude towards the Persian paintings. It is the Persian paintings that represent truth and beauty and that were repeatedly associated with an engagement with the spiritual world. These include the references mentioned earlier to their having a heavenly origin, reiterated here with the repeated use of the word "miracle" and "miraculous".

The work of Rémi Labrusse is relevant as we consider this passage of Kandinsky's writing, particularly Labrusse's distinction between Orientalism and Islamophilia (Labrusse, *Islamophilies* 19-20). He argues "the 'Orient' was an object of political control for the Orientalist conqueror, of knowledge for the Orientalist scholar, of representation for the Orientalist artist" (Labrusse, "Islamic Arts" 1208-1209). He defines Islamophilia, meanwhile, as originating from an entirely different process. It is, he argues:

> the attitude by means of which, in the context of industrial Western culture, a formative dialogue was engaged with visual cultures marked by what we still call 'Islam', with little or no reference to its religious dimension. An affective desire of identification with the Other was the starting point for such a dialogue, but its end was the Western foundation of a new universal culture (1210).

This was undoubtedly true of Kandinsky: his response to the Persian paintings lacked both understanding and interest in the cultural specificities of the works; his panegyric to the paintings was colored throughout by a simple and self-serving desire to understand their technique for inducing a spiritual revelation.

Kandinsky did undoubtedly enter into a "formative dialogue" with Persian visual culture in his review: having articulated his moment of spiritual revelation, he immediately began an interrogation of how the artists were able to imbue the paintings with spiritual content. He wrote in the review:

> And then, as the eye became accustomed, as it immersed itself and began to comprehend these treasures, the eternal question in art, "How?" – as one sees the combination of such priceless dreams, the unification of the irreconcilable ("Letters" 74).

This is significant, because it suggests that it was in the context of his exposure to Persian paintings that Kandinsky began identifying and exploring different painting techniques that might, in turn, help him to produce paintings that conveyed spiritual content.

There is no doubt that the question of how to produce paintings that conveyed spiritual content and inspired a sense of revelation in the viewer was one that preoccupied Kandinsky in the years 1909 and 1910. It was the central concern of his first major theoretical work, *On the Spiritual in Art,* which he was drafting throughout this period and finally published in late 1911 (Kandinsky, "Spiritual"). The book is premised on a recognition of the potential power that paintings can exert on their viewers on a profound and metaphysical level. The question of "how" is one that he probed continuously in his work and is reflected in his various publications and in his experimental and constantly evolving artistic techniques.

Kandinsky's rhetorical question within the *Meisterwerke* review, then, suggests a concrete point of origin for this process; it demonstrates that he was actively interrogating the artistic approaches used in Persian paintings, and he was doing so because of the spiritual revelation they evoked in him. There is one particular aspect of Persian paintings that I propose Kandinsky would have identified as contributing to his sense of revelation in the exhibition, to which I will now turn. This was an aspect which I believe he internalized and developed into one of his primary technical solutions to the question of how to induce a sense of revelation through his own paintings, a compositional technique that contributed to a process of slow looking and gradual, sequential comprehension: hidden forms.

Sleeping Rustam

The Persian artistic practice of hidden forms is evident in a significant folio displayed at the exhibition: *Sleeping Rustam* (fig. 2) attributed to Sultan Muhammad (1515-1522), a single-page painting from the unfinished *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Firdawsi.

The folio shows the hero Rustam asleep in a dangerous forest. Rustam reclines on a red-striped quadrilateral rug that appears projected on a vertical plane in front of the tree and bushes behind. In the foreground, his horse, Rakhsh, fights a lion that has returned to the forest as Rustam slept. Rakhsh ultimately prevails by trampling the lion. Surrounding the human and animal characters are trees, bushes, plants, and rocks in a rich palette of colors all set against a sky of densely applied gold paint. The natural forms are highly detailed, but without any attempt at illusionary mimesis: modeling is minimal and much like Rustam's rug, perspective is flattened on a vertical plane. Set into the painting are three small areas containing script, unadorned, on a white background. Their apparently random placement, supplemented by four columns of text at the bottom-right of the page reinforces Kandinsky's statement later in his review that Persian paintings "do not attempt to

Figure 2: Sultan Muhammad (attr.). *Sleeping Rustam*. 1515-1522. Paint on paper, 31.5 x 20.7 cm, The British Museum, London. Image courtesy of The British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 3: (Detail) Sultan Muhammad (attr.). *Sleeping Rustam*. 1515-1522. Paint on paper, 31.5 x 20.7 cm, The British Museum, London. Image courtesy of The British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

go 'beyond the frame', but remain confined to the flat surface upon which their life is conceived" ("Letters" 75). This is a clear reflection of his understanding of an alternative form of artistic intent, one very different from that promoted in the European academies of art.

This painting, therefore, had several aspects that may have appealed to Kandinsky's desire to experiment with non-academic techniques. However, in the context of his search for how to evoke a sense of revelation in the viewer, I believe that he may have recognized the specific artistic practice of hidden forms as a technique worthy of closer attention.

Sleeping Rustam abounds with hidden faces incorporated into the rock formations. In at least nine places, faces can be observed in the stylized landscape. Although small (some of the faces are less than ten millimeters across) they are clearly observable to the human eye, even from a distance of about fifty centimeters away. The grey rock towards the left-hand-side, halfway up the page shows the face of a snarling lion above that of a horse, references perhaps to the scene being enacted below and its mythical status (fig. 3). These two heads are particularly apparent when looking at the original object because of the effect of the opaque blue paint on this section of paper: it has bulged outwards slightly, giving the two heads a rounded, almost three-dimensional appearance.

In this same rock, a human face appears to the right of the horse, the outline of its eyes, nose, and chin visible behind a stalk of flower. Further to the right again, a more detailed face materializes, in profile, looking down. In the green rock formation below these, two small faces emerge at the top, their eye sockets clearly visible. To the left of these, a larger face appears, on an oblique angle, perhaps a demon with its oversized, distorted features. The pink rocks in the center of the image display more faces. Another, somewhat cruder, face can be seen in the rocks in the lower left corner of the page.

Although they are technically visible to the naked eye, several aspects make them challenging to discover for the viewer: their small size; the unexpectedness of their presence, largely divorced from the subject of the narrative; their varying scale, not just relative to one another, but relative to the size of the central protagonists in the painting; and their orientation, with each face at slightly different orientations within the picture plane. In order to find them, the viewer is required to concentrate fully on the painting and interrogate every part of it.

My suggestion is that *Sleeping Rustam*, as one of the most significant paintings in the exhibition (as reflected by its inclusion as an illustration in the commemorative catalogue), would have attracted Kandinsky's close attention. And in any case, this was one of several paintings in the exhibition that featured hidden faces; this was not an uncommon practice in Persian art.[3]

The hidden faces in these paintings provide the suggestion of a compositional solution to Kandinsky's problem of how to produce spiritual art. In Bernard O'Kane's article on rock faces in Persian paintings, he argued that the purpose of these hidden faces was "to demand careful scrutiny before the concealed faces and figures reveal themselves to the observer" (O'Kane 220). The viewer, in other words, must allow their eyes to scan the full extent of the painting; he or she must not focus simply on the main protagonists, but must look patiently and with an open, enquiring mind at all the individual elements within the painting. This process of slow looking and gradual revelation mirrors Kandinsky's description of his engagement with these paintings. It requires us to revisit the rhetorical question he posed in his review:

> And then, as the eye became accustomed, as it immersed itself and began to comprehend these treasures, the eternal question in art, "How?"—as one sees the combination of such priceless dreams, the unification of the irreconcilable ("Letters" 74).

His process of artistic enquiry emerges from this sentence: at first, he found these objects difficult to understand; then, as he engaged with a process of closer looking (immersing himself and allowing his eye to become accustomed), he began to understand them; and finally, he achieved a spiritual revelation. This process of slow looking in order to achieve a spiritual response from a painting finds a direct parallel in the process Kandinsky subsequently adopted in his own paintings.

The impact of Persian art on Kandinsky's paintings from 1910-1911

I am not suggesting that Kandinsky introduced hidden faces into his paintings, but that he adopted a parallel concept for similar ends. The parallel concept was his abstraction of form: during this period, Kandinsky did not abstract all the forms in his paintings, nor did he abstract them all to an equal degree. In January 1914, he recounted his developments over the preceding few years ("Cologne" 392, notes). Among other things, he explained why some of his works from 1910 exhibited varying degrees of abstraction within the same canvas:

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[3] See, for example, another work reproduced in the catalogue for the exhibition: *Two Sheiks in a Landscape* (first half of the sixteenth century) by the artist Hashim.

> I dissolved objects to a greater or lesser extent within the same picture, so that they might not all be recognised at once and so that these emotional overtones might thus be experienced gradually by the spectator, one after another ("Cologne" 396).

This quotation describes an almost identical process to that associated with the Persian rock faces: Kandinsky articulated a strategic approach to abstraction that demanded slow, careful scrutiny from the viewer and rewarded him or her with the identification of forms hidden from more cursory viewers.

Returning to *Composition IV (Fragment),* it exhibits several elements that I believe reflect Kandinsky's interpretation of and internalization of Persian art. Most noticeably, the teeming composition with forms in varying stages of abstraction require the viewer to look carefully from one section of his painting to another before they reveal themselves.

To the right of the rainbow, in front of what might be a blue mountain, there appear to be figures that are almost abstracted by their white cloaks, but not entirely. We can recognize a face with eyes on one, red hats on their heads, and yellow hands, which hold what turn out to be nearly vertical black lances. Once we have identified the tall black lines as lances, we can identify the other parallel black lines in the canvas as lances, apparently ranged for battle. Above the rainbow in the upper left quadrant, black outlines resolve themselves into participants from the battle: two white horses, identifiable only by the merest outline of their straining heads and rearing forelegs are mounted by riders in red hats, their contorted bodies brandishing curved swords. To their right, a white fortress emerges at the top of the blue mountain, its form difficult to discern because of its tilted orientation. A flock of birds circles in the sky above the chaotic scene. Some of the forms, particularly the two rearing horsemen, seem almost hidden within the painting because of the "greater extent" of their abstraction. The scale, orientation, and degrees of abstraction of forms force us as viewers to examine the painting slowly.

Orientalist language

This new analysis demonstrates, I believe, Kandinsky's internalization of the lessons he drew from Persian paintings, and the impact they had on his search for a way of conveying a sense of revelation to his viewers. But it is important to recognize that despite his idealized and aspirational descriptions of Persian art, Kandinsky's Islamophilia did not preclude him from simultaneously exhibiting imperialist, Orientalist tendencies. On the contrary, my research has identified a significant tension between Kandinsky's eulogizing of Persian art and artists, and his culturally loaded vocabulary that hints at a different underlying ideology.

Three times in his *Meisterwerke* review, Kandinsky used the word "primitive" ("the primitive use of colour"; "this primitive ornament"; and "primitively expressed impression"). I am aware of the fact that the word was commonly used at the time, by the theorist Wilhelm Worringer among others, to refer to non-Western art, including Persian Safavid paintings, as well as early European Gothic art (Worringer 55). My view, however, is that this does not negate the fact that the word "primitive" suggests an earlier stage of human development, which by definition confers an inferiority on the people described as "primitive" and a corresponding superiority on those who are using the term. This subtle assertion of assumed cultural superiority of the West was reinforced by Kandinsky's use of other value-laden terms in the review: the Persian paintings and the artists who created them are variously described as "barbaric", "sensuous," and "cunning," all words with established connotations in Orientalist literature. "Barbaric" suggests an uncivilized people, in implied contrast with the person using the term; "sensuous" taps into associations of sexual licentiousness that reach back to *Arabian Nights* and Gustave Flaubert's sexual fantasies in his popular novel

Salammbô (1862); while "cunning" implies an untrustworthiness and a morality that differs from supposedly straightforward and honest European standards of behavior.

The tension that emerges between Kandinsky's overt eulogizing of the Persian paintings on the one hand, and the tone of inferiority implied by his descriptive vocabulary on the other is typical of his approach to the "Oriental" subject elsewhere (Benjamin and Ashjian 29), and appears to be an example of what Edward Said meant when he described the essentializing impact of Orientalism on mental processes:

> My point … is to emphasise the truth that the Orientalist, as much as anyone in the European West who thought about or experienced the Orient, performed this kind of mental operation. But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a consequence (Said 60).

Kandinsky's use of essentializing language in his descriptive vocabulary seems almost unconscious, what Said would describe as "latent." It reinforces the conclusion we can draw from Labrusse's definition of Islamophilia. As he explained in relation to a superficial interest in Islamic culture on the part of artists: "there can be no doubt that the 'Islam', which was celebrated as a model was a partially constructed reality; besides, the final goal was to obliterate it by founding a global modern (i.e., Western-dominated) visual culture" (Labrusse, "Islamic Arts" 1210). This certainly appears to be true for Kandinsky who called repeatedly for a new era, which he named "the epoch of the great spiritual" (Kandinsky, "Spiritual" 219). In this context, then, it seems that the Persian paintings were relevant to Kandinsky only in insofar as they inspired him and facilitated his objectives for a new visual culture.

Kandinsky's response to the Persian paintings in the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* suggests that the impact of the exhibition succeeded beyond its stated intention of stimulating modern artists with the "colour harmony and ornamental magnitude" of its art. To conclude on a note of caution, however: I do not want to overstate the significance of Persian art in the context of Kandinsky's overall artistic development, nor do I want to reduce his interest in Persian art to only this single element. He was an artist with a voracious intellectual appetite who constantly drew on multiple different sources of inspiration. And he was notably and deliberately opaque in his attempts to provide an explanation for his artworks.

Kandinsky's passionate and inquisitive response to the Persian paintings show him willing to engage with the works on a conceptual level and reminds us that at this moment in his artistic career, his objective was to produce art that evoked a revelation in his viewers and provide them with spiritual nourishment. It is in this context that I believe his exposure to and interpretation of Persian paintings—and in particular the practice of slow looking produced using hidden forms—should be reassessed as a contributing element in Kandinsky's evolving artistic techniques.

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Biography

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Ieva Kalnača[1]

An Encounter with the Architecture of the Islamic World as Turning Point in the Transformation of Artistic Expression

The Case of the Latvian Modernist Jāzeps Grosvalds

Abstract

One of the most important Latvian artists of the early twentieth century, Jāzeps Grosvalds (1891-1920), was interested in the "Oriental" world since his adolescence. His first real meeting with the imagined Oriental atmosphere took place in 1913, when he traveled to Spain and visited Toledo, Córdoba, Seville, and Granada. The trip impressed him by the versatility of colors, light, ambience, and architectural forms, and was depicted in a sketch book. Nevertheless, the real transformation of Grosvalds' artistic expression occurred during his travels through (then) Persia. Due to the circumstances of World War I, at the end of 1917 he joined the Mesopotamian Front under the English Command. The campaign took place in 1918, and he crossed Iran and Iraq. Despite at times very difficult conditions, throughout his travel Grosvalds captured his impressions in sketch albums and watercolors, being interested in architectural, scenic, and anthropological studies. His oeuvre from this period shows a certain level of abstraction, and almost nothing of the idyllic and luscious depiction, characteristic for many Orientalist painters. One of the most interesting evaluations of his Persian artworks was provided by the famous French artist Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966) in 1940, when he published an article on Grosvalds' art. Among other things Ozenfant emphasizes that Grosvalds had not depicted picturesque scenes, had not copied what he saw in front of his eyes as many others have done. Grosvalds' watercolors have a special effect and power; they are fruits of creativity, being not superficially loaded with exotic charm, but synthesizing and transforming its magic.

Keywords: Latvian Modernism; Jāzeps Grosvalds; diaries; watercolors; Persia

Jāzeps Grosvalds (1891-1920) was a Latvian artist, considered to be a pioneer of the Classical Modernism in Latvian art. In the social hierarchy of the time, his parents belonged to the upper class of Latvian society. His father Frīdrihs Grosvalds (1850-1924) was a wealthy lawyer and an important figure in Riga's official and political scene, and thus, Jāzeps grew up in a prosperity incomparable to the living conditions of other Latvian contemporary artists. The Grosvalds family occupied a large, perfectly designed and furnished flat in their five-story house at the very center of Riga. This apartment was a gathering place for many Latvian intellectuals of the time. Jāzeps learned languages, played piano, took physical exercise, became acquainted with the fine arts (drawing and painting), and in due time was sent to a privileged grammar school of the classical type, where he excelled in all branches of humanities. His linguistic skills were particularly evident,

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he spoke, read, and wrote in Latvian, German, Russian, French, and English, had some knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin, and finally also a bit of Persian. All that, no doubt, helped him to become a well-educated artist who could quickly obtain the information he needed from art books and periodicals published all around Europe. He could easily make contacts with teachers, colleagues, and art lovers in different circles and countries.

Although there is a considerable number of early works, as well as many written sources, revealing Grosvalds' thoughts from 1908 onwards, his artistic growth remains partly a mystery. The jump from childish naivety to a surprisingly early, even premature ability to master the modern styles of the particular time is difficult to explain (Kļaviņš 312). He missed the usual phase of Academic Realism that was almost inevitable for every beginner at that time; he never attended art school, where he would have had to engage systematically over a long period in drawing plaster casts and painting models. But, through self-study he mastered the formal language of the *new art* of the time.

After graduating from grammar school in 1909, his parents made the decision to send him to Munich for the winter and, overall, he spent some four years abroad. In Germany he met his older brother Oļģerds Grosvalds (1884-1962), who together with his friends began to guide Grosvalds into European cultural and social life. During that time, the artist made a lot of sketches, attended private art studios, and travelled (highlighting Venice). Afterwards, in the autumn of 1910, he travelled west again, this time to Paris, where, besides other activities, he attended various private art academies, for example, the Vitti Academy, where his professor was the famous Spanish artist Hermenegildo Anglada Camarasa (1871-1959). Grosvalds enjoyed his artworks and liked his Spanish motifs, but did not become a follower of him, because the younger artist's style was much more modern. From Paris he also travelled to Belgium, to London, to the Netherlands, to the island of Jersey, and to Switzerland.

After this period, Grosvalds needed to complete the obligatory one-year military service of the Russian empire (as Latvia was then a part of it), during which he was unable to maintain a regular artistic practice, although he tried to find time for sketching. In the autumn of 1912, he returned to Paris, where he again attended art academies and immersed himself in the flourishing art scene of the time, inspired by the Parisian artistic and intellectual environment. He remained in Paris till the outbreak of World War I.

It is worth mentioning that Grosvalds kept diaries over a period of more than ten years (1908-1918), beginning already in his adolescence. His unpublished diaries, today in the holdings of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, provide one of the most valuable sources for this investigation. Sometimes very detailed and sometimes just in a form of short, specific remarks, they are invaluable in helping to understand his artistic inquiries, versatile interests, and also his daily lifestyle. Regarding Grosvalds' attitude towards (and interest in) the Oriental world and its attractiveness, it is worth mentioning that the artist brings it up from time to time in his diary. For example, in 1908 he writes: "I indeed want to go to Bukhara. As soon as possible. Silk fabrics, fruits, women, old sheikhs, and flowering trees!" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1098, 8.1908*)*.[2] Also at least one early drawing, depicting such motifs, is preserved. It is called *In the East*[3] and dates to a time when he had not seen anything really Oriental with his own eyes.

[2] All translations are by the author of this article.

[3] Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Austrumos*. 1904-1909, Indian ink on paper, 18,1 x 13,3 cm. Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM JGM-411.

Moorish Spain in 1913: Finding a new expression

The first real encounter with the imagined "Orient" occurred in 1913, when Grosvalds together with his aforementioned older brother, the art historian and diplomat Oļģerds, travelled to Spain and visited important cities with Islamic past such as Toledo, Córdoba, Seville, and Granada (fig. 1).

Figure 1: *Jāzeps Grosvalds in Spain.* 1913, photograph. Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM JGM-2057. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

For Grosvalds, meeting a culture with a strong element of eastern traditions and decorative wealth, as well as a distinctly southern landscape in which harsh deserts alternate with tropical splendor, strengthened his neo-romantic will for eastern and southern exotics (Kļaviņš 115). Although the trip was not very long (it lasted about a month, starting at the end of August), and in some cities the brothers stayed for only one day, the range of impressions was clearly very wide

and varied. Both from the Spanish travel sketchbook and watercolors, as well as from the diary entries, it becomes clear that the artist was fascinated by the changing landscapes, the gorgeous gardens, as well as the types of people, their clothing, city views, and specific architectural objects and details. The landscape and its color palette seem of particular interest: for example, as he approaches Madrid, he writes "dry, African fields, burnt vegetation, hard, sharp mountains" (Grosvalds, *Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 19.9.1913), and later in La Mancha, "dry, hot, and incredibly lonely land, ...with bright colors—all pink, the earth red" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 19.9.1913; fig. 2).

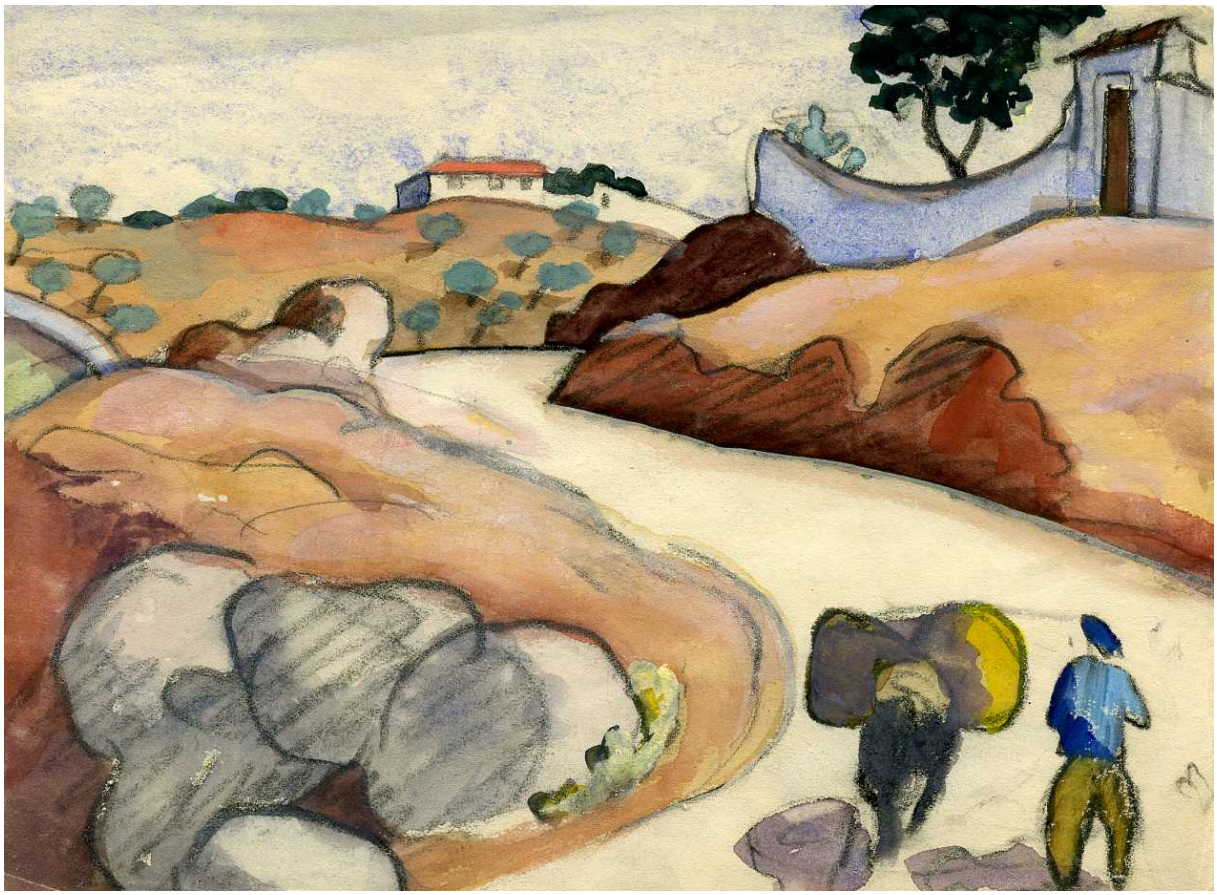

Figure 2: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Sketch book [Spain].* 1913, watercolor and gouache on paper, 21.5 x 17.4 cm. Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM JGM-93. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

Grosvalds experienced the true encounter with Oriental architecture in Toledo, where he was impressed by the city's exotic atmosphere. He writes in his diary that Toledo is a place "where Moorish arch shines in half light at every step, ...behind latticed windows one hears cadences belonging to the east, then appears the cathedral's tower, and again you find yourself in an Arabic city street" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 15.9.1913). Entering Andalusia, Grosvalds observes that "browns become redder, softer, colors are indescribable" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 19.9.1913). Córdoba made an even bigger impression and is recorded in his remarks, revealing: "Behind the wrought-iron, flowery door, you see a cool, green patio with a fountain and armchairs, Moorish *azulejos* on the walls, and I notice a pair of dark eyes in the dark" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 19.9.1913). Special attention was paid to the Mosque of the city: "Then through the *Patio de Naranjos* a truly African view can be seen; a cathedral is one of the biggest surprises ever. Flat

ceilings, a never-ending forest of pillars, delicate arches, and mysterious light (I had imagined a dome and minarets). Rich amazing mihrab with delicate mosaics and complex, crossed vaults. And in this miracle, which in the caliphs' times was like a fairy tale from 1001 nights, an annoying renaissance choir has been placed—I would like to hit it with my fists!" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 20.9.1913; italics in the original).

The artist's feelings are also characterized by a diary entry full of references to the imagined eastern world that revived during his visit to Seville: "…*die hängenden Gärten des Orients*—a book I dreamed of creating, where I wanted to print in words and pictures everything that a giant fantasy can find—strong colors, heavy, resounding words, strong perfumes. *Scheherazade*, Castle of Baghdad, Dervishes, Wonder Cities. I am like the old thousand-and-one-night sheikh who enters the city of copper, opens the gate after the gate, reads verses everywhere which talk about the volatility of happiness" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 22.09.1913; italics in the original; fig. 3).

Both brothers went to Granada as well, and although, strangely enough, there are no sketches or watercolors preserved, the diary reveals Grosvalds' impressions, especially in the Alhambra, where he was affected by the decorative versatility and splendor. He observes: "Balanced, harmonious shapes of myrtle backyard and fine *azulejos* roof; the wonderful yellow-red tone in the lion's yard; fabulous gilded and blue cupolas in the side halls—as if the bees had built a hive of blue wax and the vault had been cut with a knife; richness of ornaments" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 26.9.1913; italics in the original). The brothers saw the Alhambra during the day, but they came to the *Generalife*, when twilight had begun, thus the atmosphere was astonishing: "…through the variegated garden and the mighty cypress alley to *Generalife*, to a dreamy corner of paradise, which was the culmination of all that was seen before. …a view over small gardens under spruce branches to the Alhambra Mountain and the blue lines of the *Sierra Nevada*. On the shady stairs—along both sides of the walls runs a cool spring, up—the view from the *Mirador*, could cry" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1109, 26.9.1913; italics in original).

Grosvalds' watercolors from Spain are like visual travel notes, which show a new expression, a new attitude towards color and the representation of the light. The artist himself said that his sketchbook was like a drawn diary, to which memories add value and, besides, he could hardly have left this place without noticing and fixing in his mind that great and nowhere-else-seen color combination. Evaluating the works from Spain within the context of Grosvalds' oeuvre, it has been written that it was the freedom from the requirements of representation, academic readiness, or idealization on which he always depended internally and externally that allowed him to achieve a new quality in these quick studies, showing his search for synthesis (Kļaviņš 119), which manifested itself fully some years later in his artworks from Persia. In connection with the Grosvalds brothers' trip to Spain, it is important to mention the fact that after returning, Grosvalds' brother, who had a PhD, gave a lecture on art and architecture in Southern Spain (which was later published in a local newspaper).[4] This shows that they studied architectural monuments and art seriously enough in the cities visited.

[4] "Priekšlasījumi. Oļģerts Grosvalds par Dienvidspānijas mākslu." *Dzimtenes Vēstnesis*, no. 38, 1914, annex. 4.

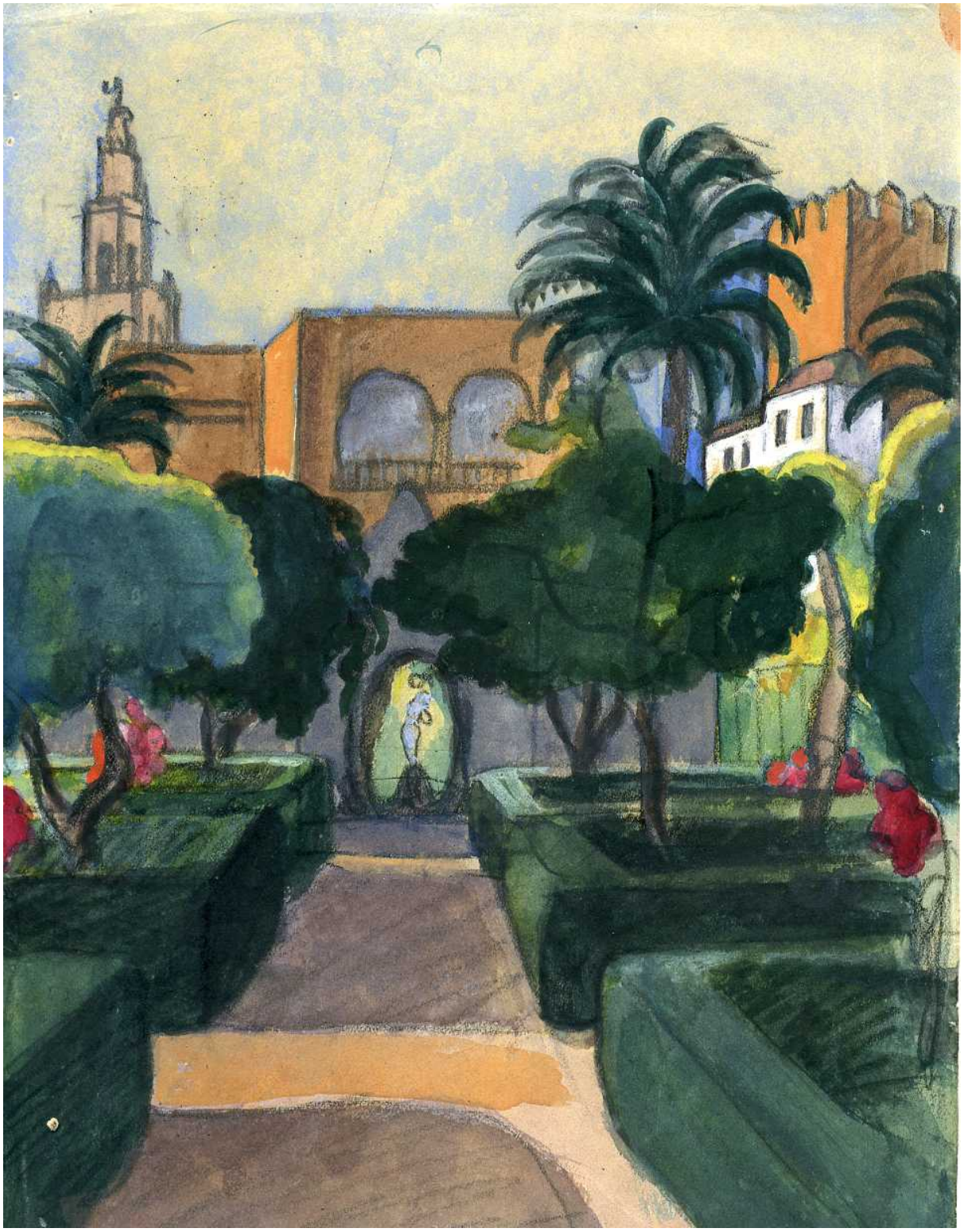

Figure 3: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Sketch book [Spain].* 1913, watercolor and gouache on paper, 21.5 x 17.4 cm. Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM JGM-93. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

Persia in 1918: Finding a certain level of abstraction

A new period in Grosvalds' life was marked by the outbreak of World War I. In 1915, he was mobilized, as a cavalry officer, in the army of the Russian Empire, and joined the sixth Tukums Latvian Rifle Regiment. During this time, he painted scenes from the lives of refugees and riflemen. In 1917, he was sent to help the French at the Western Front; due to different circumstances at the end of that year, he joined the so-called Mesopotamian Front under the English Command. In his diary he wrote: "I don't have any other choice now. I must remain in the service. I cannot go to Russia; there I should serve as a soldier with all the possible intricacy. Going to Mesopotamia [under English Command], I am not in conflict with governments, and I have a possibility to travel to a place where I couldn't go in any other way" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1118, 31.12.1917). The campaign/expedition took place in 1918 and took him to the territories of present-day Egypt, Iraq, and Iran (previously Persia), Turkey, as well as the Caucasus at the end. The longest and most important time, both artistically and psychologically, was spent in Iran.

Despite the at times very difficult conditions (they travelled on foot, by mule, donkey, or camel), Grosvalds captured his impressions in sketch albums and watercolors throughout all his journey, being interested in architectural, scenic, and anthropological studies. He describes the similarities between landscape features and architecture, paying a lot of attention to the geometrical simplicity of forms in combination with decorative wealth, and the refined use of color.

Grosvalds arrived in the eastern world when his unit was transported by steamer from the Italian coast to Alexandria. While there, the artist immediately appreciated its exotic qualities and put in his notes that Alexandria was a fantastic place with its colorful bazaar, and there he saw the real east for the first time, something he had dreamed of since his adolescence, as previously mentioned. After leaving Alexandria, the unit spent two weeks on a steamer, while sailing across the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, finally arriving at the city of Basra. During the maritime voyage, Grosvalds was enjoying himself with other soldiers, he was drawing a bit and had begun to learn Persian, as he wanted to have opportunities to communicate with the local people once he would enter Iran.

The watercolors from Basra show a quite idyllic atmosphere, which could even perhaps be called a little too perfect, in a way closer to traditional Orientalist painting. In those works, Grosvalds tried to put in and summarize everything characteristic of Basra—the river full of boats with people dressed in colorful clothes, the Oriental city in the background, where both residential buildings and the mosque's massive minaret and dome can be seen, palm trees rising over the buildings, describing Basra's famous palm forests—all that depicted in bright, soft colors. Nevertheless, his artistic expression and the way of depicting all the motifs he experienced changed significantly during the rest of the trip. The next waypoint, where the army remained for three weeks, was Baghdad, preparing for the campaign proper through Iran. While there Grosvalds wrote: "I am not very satisfied—everything [I draw] seems very pale and non-original, comparing with what I have seen, but I hope to make something later. Only on the last day I composed something nice—three rosy women in a narrow street of Baghdad" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1119, 18.4.1918; fig. 4). This motif is represented in various sketches and watercolors, and, after his return, was also elaborated as an oil painting.[5]

[5] Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Three Women in the Streets of Baghdad*. 1919, oil on canvas, 100 x 82 cm. Latvian National Museum of Art, VMM GL-350.

Figure 4: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Three Women.* 1918, watercolor on paper, 27.5 x 22.7 cm. Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM Z-8666. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

Arriving in Iran, travel and weather conditions were difficult and distances long, but the artist did not stop either making sketches or writing notes in a diary [and apart], describing what was visible around him. Thus, it is possible to get an impression about their caravan as well. Grosvalds writes: "In this country, where the railway is unknown, all journeys are made in caravans—by horse, mule or camel. Our caravan—about a hundred mules, adorned with blankets and colored ribbons, with blue stone necklaces, which, according to the stories, provide a powerful talisman against all misfortunes and 'djinns'—arrives with a jingle of countless small bells" (Grosvalds, *Persijas ainas* 12). In the diary, his narrative talent appears as he describes different situations with a dose of humor. One can imagine the scene not only visually, but also hear and smell it. Observing the traditional habits, he writes: "In order to be able to load luggage, the camels are stimulated with a growl, something like 'khkhkhkh'. The huge animals then fall to their knees and the bundles can be tied to the saddles they carry on their humpbacked backs. Compared to the hellish roar of mules and donkeys, camels seem to be very calm and make only a funny grunt in the form of a protest" (40).

Oriental bazaars, characteristic of all the cities and villages they visited, attracted the artist's eye; he depicted them on many occasions from different points of view and described those places in his diary from time to time, paying a lot of attention to their architectonical forms, chiaroscuros, and the richness of colors. He emphasizes that "in the center of each Oriental city there is a bazaar, a labyrinth of wide, vaulted corridors that provide shelter from the sun and where shops and craftsmen's workshops are lined up on both sides in niches with pointed arches" (*Persijas ainas* 21; fig. 5).

Figure 5: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Bazaar's Corridor.* 1918, watercolor on paper, 23 x 28 cm. Värmlands Museum, Karlstad. Image courtesy of the Värmlands Museum, Karlstad.

He saw and appreciated the architectural elements in conjunction with interior decoration, with fabrics and with the visual appearance of the locals: "Daylight shines only slightly through the gaps in the pointed arches. These wide, white beams of the light in the shimmering dust, where the bluish smoke of cigarettes swirls, create theatrical spotlights on the colored fabrics of the shops, on the dark carpets, where the serious merchants have huddled, smoking the hookah, and on the white turbans of mullahs, with their red henna-painted beards" (*Persijas ainas* 21).

Grosvalds also depicts interiors, showing the richness of carpets, different Persian traditions, for example, water pipes, musical instruments, and—naturally—also the dressing habits of men and women. He notices that in the rural areas and smaller villages women wear colorful costumes and cover only the head, while nearer the city, all women are "carefully veiled in their black chadors, and with a black mask with a gold border on the face" (*Persijas ainas* 20; fig. 6).

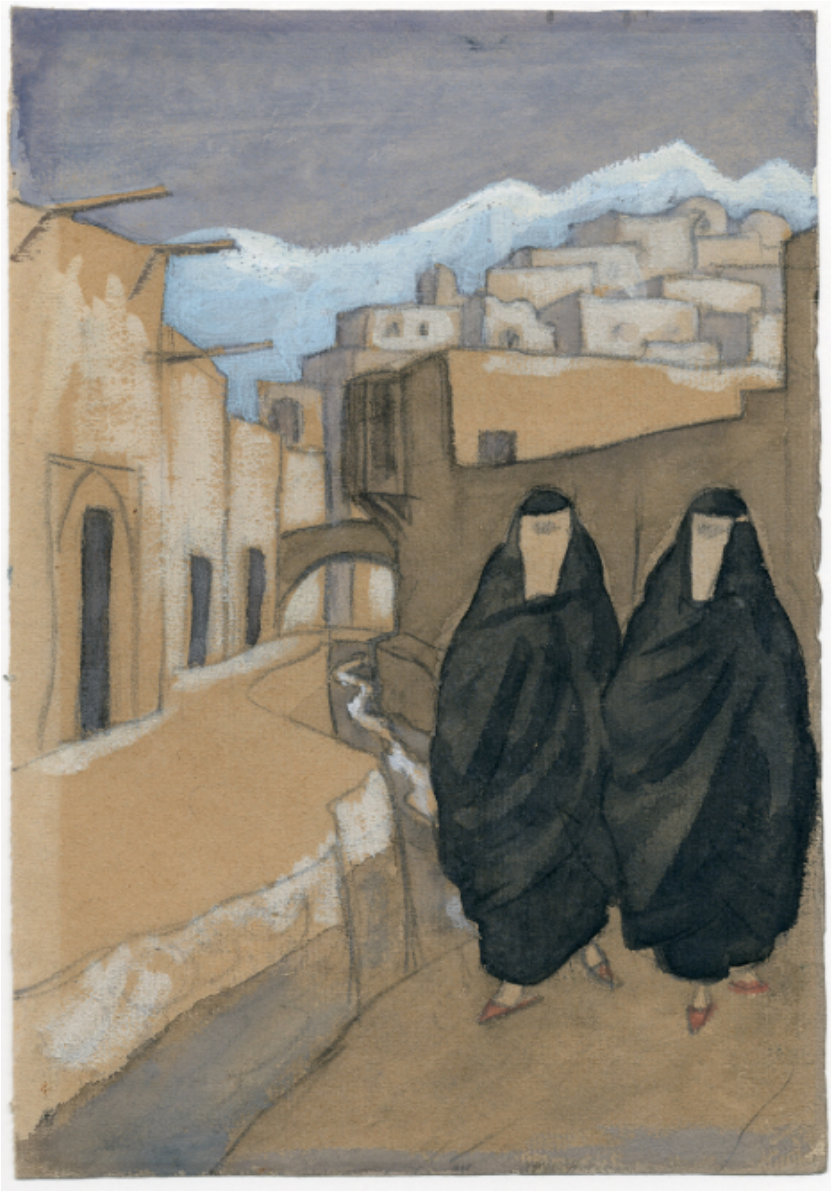

Figure 6: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *Women in a Street of Hamadan.* 1918, watercolor on paper, 23 x 16 cm, Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, VMM Z-8659. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

Landscapes and natural forms were just as important for him, and, interestingly, reminded him at times of his earlier trip to Spain: "Landscapes—reddish-brown mountains with ruins and a blue range in the background, at first reminiscent of Spain, but then very strange, grotesque and Persian, very sharp or very round mountains without vegetation, only with black dots, small bushes" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1119, 30.4.1918). As it has been seen on many occasions already, Grosvalds pays a lot of attention to the color scale and different tones.

In many of Grosvalds' watercolors the local architecture can be appreciated—he was interested in the appearance of whole villages, in simple residential houses, in tombs, caravanserais, city gates, mosques, and so on. Describing them, he always emphasizes the colors, captured in the surroundings. About the so-called "red villages," he writes: "A plain full of rosy clay villages that rise up here and there like molehills. Due to the red clay surface, everything here is incredibly red, and the river flows in the color of crayfish soup. Bright red clay houses, with the same red shadows" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1119, 22.4.1918). While the sky and mountains are represented as follows: "Round, dilapidated towers, light yellow evening sky…indescribable pink purple colors on the wrinkled mountains and light blue snow peaks in the distance…the road continues, climbing the wavy hills, behind which the majestic mountain silhouettes with snow-capped peaks stand closer and closer" (*Persijas ainas* 42).

The most beautiful and astonishing place they visited, in terms of architectural treasures, was Qazvin. Grosvalds depicted its city wall, various gates, and mosques, as well as lavishing praise upon them in his travel notes, writing that "Qazvin is surrounded by a sandstone wall with several magnificent blue gates, real gems of Oriental art, which a Persian poet compares to turquoise embedded in a copper bracelet" (*Persijas ainas* 44; fig. 7).

Figure 7: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *English Soldiers in Qazvin*. 1918, watercolor on paper, 22 x 25 cm. Värmlands Museum, Karlstad. Image courtesy of the Värmlands Museum, Karlstad.

The Blue Gate seemed to him as "the most beautiful piece of architecture I have seen till now" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1119, 4.6.1918). He paid attention to the decorative richness of mosaics which appeared on the gates, domes, and minarets, and the exquisite color combinations with "turquoise blue, joined by ultramarine tones, yellow and light pink" (*Dienasgrāmata* VMM JGM-1119, 4.6.1918). Once inside the city, the artist admired its main architectural objects, for example, the Imamzadeh Hosseins mosque with the "yellow-blue-green dome and a magnificent portal with six tall and graceful towers, between which are rounded niches, all decorated with arabesques and ornaments" (*Persijas ainas* 46).

Grosvalds elaborated a large number of drawings, watercolors (altogether around two hundred), as well as some oil paintings made after his return to Europe, depicting motifs of the Middle East. During the months spent in the east, a considerable amount of work was done, especially given the fact that this was not a leisure trip like other previous sojourns abroad but took place under difficult conditions and under the watchful eye of his superior officers. To sum up, his oeuvre from the travel through Persia shows a certain level of abstraction, and almost nothing of the idyllic and luscious depiction, characteristic of many Orientalist painters and also noticeable in his first attempts to visualize the Oriental world. Grosvalds' works are laconic, they focus on the main features, each of the objects is very specific, but at the same time not hyper-realistically drawn down to the smallest detail; his approach can be perceived as a generalization of the respective motif.

When the artist finally returned to Europe in February of 1919, he lived in London and then in Paris for some months, enrolling in the diplomatic service of the newly established state of Latvia. Alongside that, he continued to work with his Oriental experience. He wrote a book, *Tableaux persans* (Persian Pictures), in French and complemented it with his own illustrations (fig. 8).

It was a description of his roughly nine-hundred-kilometer-long expedition through Persia, which he wanted to publish as soon as possible. Due to various obstacles, the book was published for the first time only posthumously in 1978, in Sweden. Grosvalds also started to work with several large-scale oil paintings depicting Oriental motifs. He finished three of them and certainly would have created more if he had not been surprised by the Spanish flu less than a year later. Grosvalds died at the age of twenty-eight, leaving a huge footprint on the development of Latvian art, as an introducer of modernism, and also as a Latvian Orientalist, whose artistic expression changed because of his direct experience of the east, while seeing its color scale, light, landscape, and Islamic architecture.

This opinion is shared by Latvian and foreign art critics and art historians, who have described his artworks exhibited in various posthumous exhibitions. Thus, the Latvian art historian Jānis Siliņš wrote in 1924: "The highest peak of Grosvalds' art is his paintings and drawings from his eastern journey. Amazing energy, love of work was needed to create about two hundred artworks in unfavorable conditions, performing difficult duties of the service, while also collecting materials on the history and literature of Eastern nations" (1119-1120). The art critic Uga Skulme stated that "Grosvalds' Oriental watercolors are finer and more special than his earlier works, they show the clarity of the composition, simplicity of forms and a certain restraint of colors" (694-696).

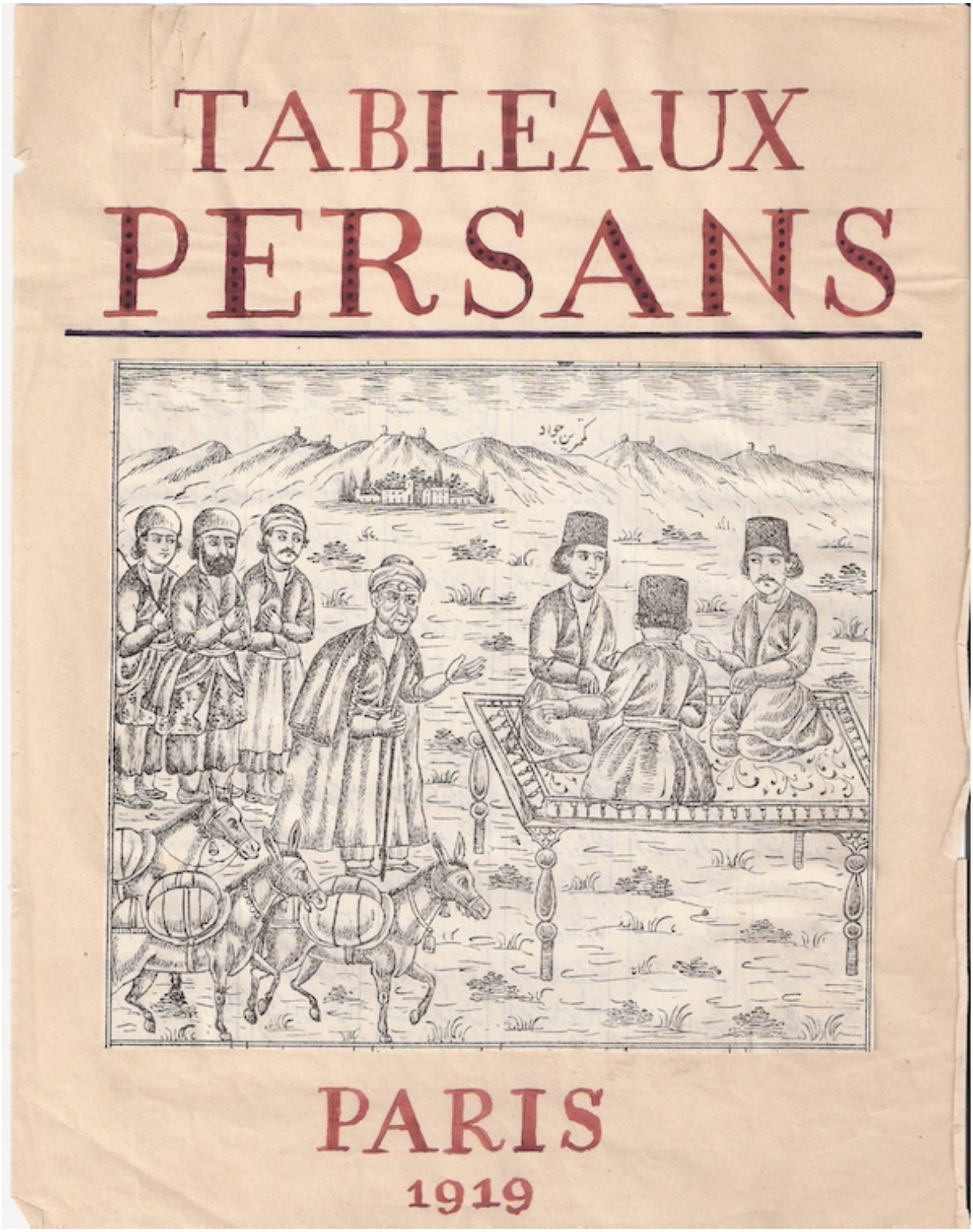

Figure 8: Jāzeps Grosvalds. *The Cover of Grosvalds's Book "Tableaux persans" with a Persian Miniature*. 1919, VMM JGM-1090. Image courtesy of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.

One of the most interesting and important evaluations of Grosvalds' Persian artworks was provided by the French artist Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966) in 1940, when he published an article on his art. Among other things, Ozenfant emphasized that the death of the artist was a great loss to art, and that his trip through Persia is to our advantage, for Grosvalds had not depicted picturesque scenes, had not copied what he saw in front of his eyes as many others have done; his artworks were realistic enough but without unnecessary details or idealization. Grosvalds' watercolors, in his opinion, have a special effect and power; they are fruits of creativity, being not superficially loaded with exotic charm, but synthesizing and transforming its magic. Ozenfant stressed that Grosvalds understood that the art of being a painter is something totally different from copying what one sees in external life. It is instead a complex search for shape and color, a constant work with our own inner world (Ozenfant).

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Biography

Ieva Kalnača is the Head of the Project Management Department at the Latvian National Museum of Art, exhibition curator and a doctoral student at the Latvian Academy of Art. Her research interests are related to Islamic art and architecture, to Mudéjar style and especially to influences of those styles and their neo-styles in Latvian and Baltic architecture, interior design and visual arts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She has the experience of working with the collections of Islamic and Mudéjar art at various museums in Spain and she also studied at the University of Castilla-La Mancha. She has participated in international conferences (in Riga, Visby, Wismar, Zürich, Leipzig, Tbilisi, Madrid, Granada) and published articles on her field of research since 2013.