

To a question I was recently asked by an Indian journalist from *Delhi Time Out* magazine about the specific place that Islamic art has in art history, I answered immediately, and without further thought: «Islamic art is art history.»<sup>1</sup> Of course, my answer was no less provocative than her question. But both her question and my answer touch upon the broad and complicated issue of making Islamic art a foreign field within the realm of art history, namely the «Othering» of Islamic art history. Both, art historians and historians of Islamic art are trapped in this setting, which has its roots in the Eurocentric history of the discipline called art history.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the emergence of a new paradigmatic model for global art history in the last decade has sharpened the question posed by the Indian journalist and brought about a crisis for both art historians and those who specialize in Islamic alike.<sup>3</sup>

«Anxious» Islamic art historians are in fear that the recent developments in the field of art history and the wish to make it global might both inflict and weaken the hegemony that they (historians of Islamic art) to this day have enjoyed as the sole authoritative voices in their specific field.<sup>4</sup> Trying vehemently to distinguish themselves from the numerous new «Globalists,» who write, publish, and talk about subjects that were just a few years ago in their (the Islamists') domain, they accuse these newcomers of being essentialists, even neocolonialists.<sup>5</sup> And, in order to demarcate borders of different identities, namely to tell apart the Islamic art historians from the «new» global ones, the field of Islamic art history rapidly and vigorously excretes essentialist terminologies such as «Islam» and «the Orient» from its own academic jargon. The result is a constant search for new subtle and ancillary terms of differentiation, such as «Islamicate,» or the attempt to break up the field of «Islam» into subfields, of which the debate on the new definition for the Islamic Art Gallery in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in academic journals and media reports bears witness.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the «Against-Essentialism» position taken today by scholars in the field of Islam, has forced those who see themselves as art historians of «Islam» to abandon their common operating model of «Diversity in Unity.» Since the idea of unity can no longer be taken for granted, they are left with only the notion of diversity. This means that the whole field of Islamic art history has now been deconstructed, as if in a post-modern manner, and that its present fragmentary character poses crucial questions about how to deal with these bits and pieces of the, for example, medieval «Islamic» arts, which stretch from Cordoba to Karakorum.<sup>7</sup>

The «other» art historians, who till yesterday were occupied with the so-called Eurocentric and Western art history, appear as hungry, devouring animals seeking to conquer these new territories in the East. Like the colonial powers of the

nineteenth century, they see in this moment of globalization an opportunity to widen their horizons, to revise and reframe the borders of their scholarly interests. Art history expands. It re-conquers South America, Asia, and South Asia, reaches beyond North Africa into the center of the 'Black Continent' and even casts its gaze in the direction of the Far East, towards Japan and Australia. But beyond geographical expansion across the globe the Western art historian remains, as always, armed with classical canons and aesthetic judgments secured by Western methodologies and norms. Like an Orientalist, he collects during his journeys in these new academic territories souvenirs and trophies, namely new monuments of art, which in fact tell the most private story of his psyche rather than mirror the visual cultures of the other in non-Western spaces. Back at his desk, he immediately and often in an undigested manner incorporates these artifacts into his reframed research agenda, a process somewhat reminiscent of the display of exotic Oriental objects on the mantelpiece of a nineteenth-century European drawing room.

The picture I draw seems bleak. But why and how did it reach this state? In fact, what went wrong? And why should the widening of scholarly horizons and the—we must admit—positive tendency to look globally at artistic and aesthetic issues result in a crisis? I deliberately use the verb 'result' here in order to accentuate the notion of a process that stems from a specific foundation and therefore produces particular consequences. In this article I will try to illuminate the query 'what went wrong,' and, to this end, in the first part of this article I will try to investigate the particular attitude that developed in German art historian circles toward Islamic art before World War I and that, to my mind, prepared the foundation for the reception of Islamic art within the field of art history in the twentieth century. The second part of this article focuses on 'dangerous claims.' These comprise the aims and aspirations that global art history declares as part of its new agenda.<sup>8</sup> However, I would like to clarify that by dubbing these claims as dangerous I am not adopting a patronizing attitude and presuming that I am able to distinguish between right and wrong. My use of the adjective 'dangerous' in this context refers to the critical thought embraced by positions which speak for 'the world': my aim is not to define or impose, rather to disclose.

It is well known, and several recent articles on the history of Islamic art have drawn our attention to the issue, that the art of the Other, and especially that of Islamic production, appears to have been accepted into the *longue durée* of the history of art, usually from the Eurocentric point of view, where it surfaces at intervals. This means that Islamic art and Islamic objects were chosen to illustrate a specific era or were integrated into the discussion about the development of Western art history only at specific moments in history. These objects of Islamic manufacture, usually defined at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by art historians as masterpieces and artworks of high quality, then appeared in and disappeared from the history of European art. They were used to explain in a more intricate and, one might say today, global context the production of art in the West. For example, objects of cast metal from the Fatimid period, like the famous griffin of Pisa,<sup>9</sup> were used to explain the interest in casting monumental and 'minor' metalwork in the second half of the eleventh century in Europe; and I mainly refer to the emergence of the production of bronze doors and aquamaniles in the Romanesque period.<sup>10</sup> The enameled works from Al-Andalus were

then considered as forerunners to the famous enamels of Limoges.<sup>11</sup> Fatimid carved rock crystals demonstrating the highest level of crystal carving technique were a source of fascination and provided an impulse for the founding of a western center of carved rock crystal, be it in Paris or in Burgundy, in the High Middle Ages, and were thus integrated, so to speak, into the history of carving rock crystals in the West.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Islamic and Byzantine textiles, which were widely traded all over the Mediterranean Basin during the Middle Ages, are usually accepted as the main agents for fostering the appearance of secular motifs, mainly of combatant, intertwined animals and other fantastic creatures within the aesthetic language of the medieval Latin West.<sup>13</sup>

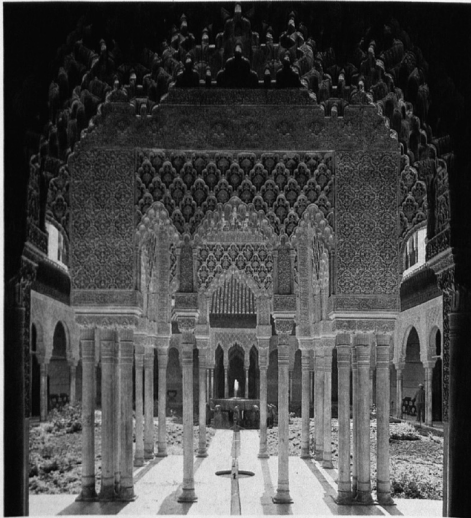
In the first place, these exotic objects appeared in moments that Goethe clearly defined in his *West-östlichen Divan* as moments in which «Wer sich selbst und andere kennt wird auch hier erkennen: Orient und Okzident sind nicht mehr zu trennen» (Those who know themselves and others will recognize here, too, that the Orient and the Occident can no longer be separated).<sup>14</sup> These moments were, to mention a few examples: the era of the world under the global hegemony of Alexander the Great, who ruled the universe from one end to the other, hence his title in Arabic Dhu al-Karnain («the holder of the two horns,» namely the two extreme ends of the world); the Golden Age, so to speak, of Mediterranean trade around the year 1000, in which port cities like Amalfi and Salerno played a major role in connecting the histories of the eastern and western, as well as northern and southern, shores of the Mediterranean Basin; the era of the Crusades which, beyond the animosity that spread in Europe and Asia to mobilize human forces to fight each other for the sake of the right religion and god, in fact enjoyed moments of fruitful interaction between Eastern and Western cultures; and of course the Renaissance, in which the transmission of lost classical knowledge in the West found its way back through the translated writings of mainly Arab scholars and the migration of luxury goods, all of which promoted the birth of new techniques and aesthetics. Modern Times in Europe, and I mainly refer to the century that follows the French conquest of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, namely the nineteenth century—the age of Orientalism—witnessed a continuing interest in the art of the Near Eastern Orient and especially of that of North Africa and the Levant and prompted the rediscovery of Islamic art.

And yet, as I mentioned before, these moments were and are seen as short intervals in the history of European art. The artistic interest in the high art products of the Orient, admirable as this art was regarded and as seriously as it was reflected upon, always appears as a temporary vector that found its end as soon as a new aesthetic era was seen to emerge in the West.<sup>15</sup>

This notion is clearly illustrated in many handbooks on the history of art. But let me focus on just one of them, which is considered the Bible of the history of art: Ernst Gombrich's *The Story of Art* (1950). Besides the fact that Gombrich chronologically and stylistically situated Islamic art in the medieval past—it appears in the section on the Middle Ages (between the chapters on «Early Middle Ages» and «High Middle Ages,» between Byzantine and Romanesque art—he explicitly presented Islamic art in this book as a short interval. After explaining to the reader the art of Byzantium, Gombrich turns back, and I explicitly say (turns back,) to the art of the East and the Far East, which includes the arts of Islam, China, and Japan. He calls this chapter, which consists of ten fully illustrated

## 7 Looking eastwards

*Islam, China, second to thirteenth century AD*



91. An Islamic palace: the Court of Lions in the Alhambra of Granada (Spain). Built in 1377

BEFORE WE RETURN to the Western world and take up the story of art in Europe, we must at least cast a glance at what happened in other parts of the world during these centuries of turmoil. It is interesting to see how two other great religions reacted to the question of images, which so engaged the mind of the Western world. The religion of the Middle East, which swept everything before it in the seventh and eighth centuries AD, the religion of the Mohammedan conquerors of Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, North Africa and Spain, was even more rigorous in this matter

1 Looking eastwards, erste Seite von Kap. 7 in: Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 1968, S. 99

pages, «Looking Eastwards.»<sup>16</sup> His discussion of Islamic art does not go beyond the year 1500 and the specific image that was chosen to illustrate the art of Islam at the very start of this chapter is the famous image of the Court of the Lions in the Nasrid palace of Alhambra in Granada (fig. 1);<sup>17</sup> it is an image that, more than any other, came to stand for Islamic art in Europe and that was stamped in the collective memory in the West as the icon of Islamic aesthetic for numerous reasons, which, for obvious reasons of space, cannot be elaborated on here.<sup>18</sup> The opening sentence of Gombrich's short chapter on the arts of Islam, China and, Japan is particularly illustrative of the notion of the intervals in which Eastern art makes an appearance in histories of the West. He says:

Before we return to the Western world and take up the story of art in Europe, we must at least cast a glance at what happened in other parts of the world during these centuries of turmoil.<sup>19</sup>

A glance is cast in the direction of the East, before resuming the journey along the highway of art history, speeding towards «The Story of Art» in Europe.

It is not only Gombrich, however, who proposes this model of historical thinking. Jacob Burckhardt, the father of art history as a scientific discipline, pro-

vides an equally illustrative example through his specific vision of the art of Islam and its particular intersection with the art of the West. As a historian and art historian who mainly studied the age of the Renaissance in Europe, he comments on Islam and especially on the art of Al-Andalus, namely the art of Muslim Spain, and describes its fate in the following words:

This aridity, this dreary uniformity of Islam, which is so terribly limited on the religious side, probably did more harm than good to culture, if only because it rendered the peoples affected by it quite incapable of going over to another culture. Its simplicity much facilitated its expansion, but was marked by that extreme exclusiveness which is a feature of all rigid monotheism, while the wretched Koran stood, and still stands, in the way of any political and legal growth. Law remained half priestly.<sup>20</sup>

As for the art of Islam, he adds:

In the visual arts, architecture alone developed, firstly through Persian builders and subsequently with the help of Byzantine and any other styles which lay to hand. Sculpture and painting were practically non-existent, because the decree of the Koran was not only observed but carried far beyond its letter. What the intellect forfeited in these circumstances may be left to the imagination.<sup>21</sup>

On the specific Islamic art in Spain, he provides us with the following remarks: Side by side with this picture, there exists, of course, another—that fiction of flourishing, populous, busy Islamic cities and states with poet-princes, noble-minded grandees and so on, as for instance in *Spain* under and after the *Umayyads*. Yet it was not possible to pass beyond those barriers to the totality of intellectual life, and as a result it was beyond the power of Islam to change, to merge into another, higher culture, and the situation was aggravated by its political and military weakness in face of the Almoravides, Almohades, and Christians.<sup>22</sup>

Burckhardt clearly sees the end of the great days of the caliphate in Spain as an outcome of the rigidity of Islam and the totality of its *Geistigen*, which do not permit it to flow into other, ‘high culture.’ Here, it is quite clear that Burckhardt refers to the Renaissance as the high culture, the pinnacle of the linear development of civilization, into which all cultural streams of medieval origin should flow.

In fact Burckhardt follows the common and usual assessment of Islamic art that prevailed in the German-speaking academic sphere of the nineteenth century. It is possible that the famous book of Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, first published in 1842, inspired or at least had an impact on the thoughts expressed by Burckhardt on Islamic art and architecture. Kugler, it must be noted, was the first scholar to ever discuss the «außer-europäische» within art history (*Kunstgeschichte*). Moreover, it appears as if Kugler uses the objective academic gaze while integrating Islamic art into the history of art.<sup>23</sup> Although Kugler offers the reader of his book twenty full pages on Islamic art, his knowledge and views on the artistic abilities of the art of Islam and especially of the Arabs are very restricted. He defines the Arabs as a people with no artistic tradition, an opinion that unfortunately prevails even today, and evaluates their arts within Western parameters such as mimesis und *Naturwiedergabe* (rendering of nature) or by drawing upon Classical rules of architecture. Kugler declares that Islamic art has no organic unity.<sup>24</sup> His ideas on Islamic architecture, which he refers to as «muhammedanisch», can be found in his book *Geschichte der orientalischen und antiken Baukunst*, where he writes:

Mohammedan architecture does not aspire towards an organic formation or towards the fusion of individual elements into a single whole, which would serve to anchor a living process, or to express the inner, mobile force that could manifest itself in relation to the collective mass of an architectural edifice. Those few elements of such a holistic structure that it may possess, derive from architectural remnants of the past or else—in a few fortunate though stray examples and often not without having been influenced by more ambitious Western art—make up an incomplete dimension of a logical development, or else—and in large part—are subject to the arbitrary norms of the decorative.<sup>25</sup>

This paragraph clearly illustrates the reception of Islamic architecture in the nineteenth century and its evaluation within Western art-historical parameters. Kugler's remark on the «Willkür des Dekorativen» (the arbitrary norms of the decorative) casts ornament, a characteristic feature of Islamic art, as a counter aesthetic—let alone inferior—feature vis-à-vis the rational and logical structure of Western architecture.

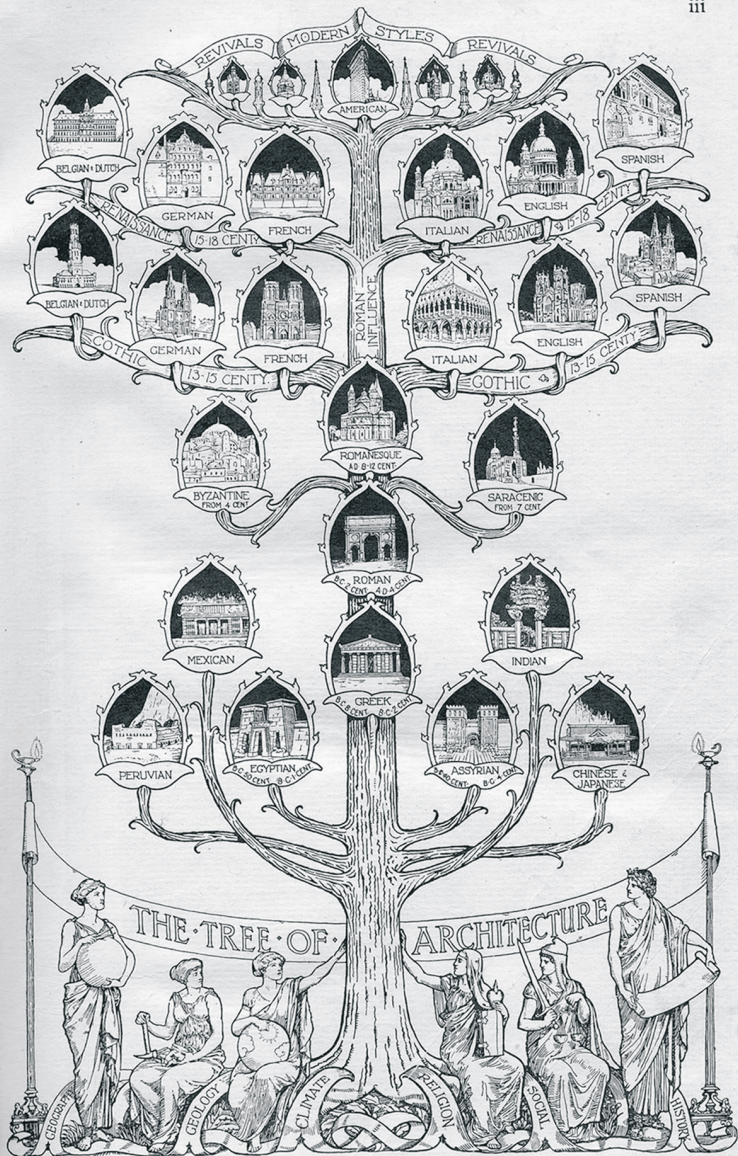
As Annette Hagedorn has suggested, other main figures in German thought and art historical circles who worked the Western model of ideal art further contributed to a distorted image of Islamic art. She even argues that these thinkers were mainly influenced by the aesthetic principles of the pioneer art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768).<sup>26</sup> She includes other major figures like Carl Schnaase (1798–1875) and Heinrich Springer (1825–1891) in her discussion, also worth citing here.<sup>27</sup>

Carl Schnaase expresses his reflections on Islamic art in his book *Geschichte der bildenden Künste im Mittelalter*, which was published in 1869. He says:

These are the peoples in whose world a deep chasm separates the sensuous from the intellectual, where imagination, instead of shaping and refining the sensuous, takes hold of intellectual life ... Such peoples are not made for the visual arts, the static image is not capable of expressing marvels of the glowing imagination, in the face of which it appears cold and lifeless.<sup>28</sup>

It seems clear that the articulations of Schnaase as well as those of Anton Heinrich Springer drew upon a large number of ideas circulating at the time within other academic spheres, such as those from ethnographic and folklore studies (Völkerkunde) including racial theories. Springer defines the Arabs as wild nomads who lacked the patience and calm necessary for artistic creation. He comments on Moorish, namely Islamic, art: «From a people whose ancestors were nomads ... we cannot simply expect massive constructions or superb edifices with impressive dimensions and materials.»<sup>29</sup>

Such statements were still to be heard at the beginning of the twentieth century. Johannes Emmer in his *Illustrierte Kunstgeschichte* (1906) defines Islamic architecture as «Mixing of available trends and forms» («Vermischung von verschiedenen, bereits vorhandenen gewesenen Richtungen und Formen»).<sup>30</sup> This suggests that Emmer's idea that Islamic art is an assemblage art created by available artisans and architects was in full accord with his contemporaneous colleague Burckhardt. In an underlying sense Emmer's formulation ascribes a «false» character to Islamic architecture. At any rate, he also emphasized Islamic art's stagnation and inability to develop in tune with modern times and postulated that the stagnation in art mirrored the stagnation of the spirit of the Oriental (probably Arab) race. He says:



BANISTER FLETCHER. INV.

*This Tree of Architecture shows the main growth or evolution of the various styles, but must be taken as suggestive only, for minor influences cannot be indicated on a diagram of this kind.*

Islamic art within the regions of Orient has remained unchanged well into our present times and is likely to adhere for long to its essential qualities which correspond to the spirit of its people.<sup>31</sup>

It would appear then that art historians in the nineteenth-century German-speaking world created the particular context in which Islamic art would be examined and evaluated. Drawing upon Western parameters, Islamic art was regarded on the one hand as a deformation, a distortion of classical art, and on the other specific characteristics—such as the epithets imaginative and irrational—were conferred upon it. The latter adjectives were associated with this art in order to exclude it from logical or rational discourse, a discourse which was regarded as exclusively European and which proudly linked European art history and culture to the Age of Enlightenment and modernism. The drawing of the «Tree of Architecture» in Sir Banister Fletcher's famous *History of Architecture* (1896) clearly illustrates how Islamic architecture is doomed to be kept in the past, developing no further branches and having no access to the age of modernity (fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> Of course, one cannot and should not suggest that all these nineteenth-century German scholars spoke in the same voice and tone. There were, for a variety of reasons, different approaches and attitudes towards Islamic art in the German-speaking lands before 1900.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, around 1910, in Berlin and in Munich, new voices could be heard, like those of Wilhelm Bode, Friedrich Sarre, and Ernst Herzfeld, who fostered a new image for Islamic art.<sup>34</sup> But the niche that Islamic art was given within art history was clear. Islamic art, and even during its heyday in 1910, at the very birth of modern abstract art, was again able to supply the appropriate and necessary injection of new blood to modernity and, as usual, to later fade away.<sup>35</sup> The niche it once received in the medieval past of Europe was, and still is today, re-activated, if needed, especially in the German art-historical landscape. And here I turn again to an anecdote, which will also open the second part of this article.

In the spring of 2002, as I first took up the position of professor for the history of Islamic art in the department of art history at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, one of the first problems I was faced with were resources. In the first place, the main concern of the art history department was the acquisition of books that would cover this new field within the curriculum.<sup>36</sup> The euphoria created by the prospect of establishing for the first time in the history of German art history a professorship for the study of Islamic art in an art history department—in Germany Islamic art has been always an adjunct branch linked to Oriental or Islamic studies departments—died away as soon as I was told that the newly acquired books on Islamic arts would be placed in the institute library in a specific space, in fact in one of the corners of the so-called Italia Room. A niche was made for Islamic art, I thought. After several discussions and much planning, my request for integrating the books on Islamic art within the entire library system was accepted. This anecdote illustrates the major problem that art history departments still face vis-à-vis the field of Islamic art history. Like Chinese or Japanese arts, this field is regarded as a sort of extra, bonus area that students, whose main interest is clearly anchored in European art, can explore. It seems that, from a Eurocentric point of view, Islamic art has clear geographical borders that define its history as wholly detached and fully independent from the rest of world art history. Misconceptions of this kind are common in departments of art



history elsewhere. It could be argued that this bibliographical organization makes life easier for students. Students taking courses on Islamic art can find books on the subject with little difficulty. But the importance of integrating books on Islamic art within the whole system is, to me, ideological in nature, and equally serves those students whose focus is in fact Western art. For example, while searching for books on medieval European textiles, glass, or ivory, students are also confronted with the medieval Islamic objects in these materials. The possibility of encountering these artifacts also enables students to broaden their knowledge, to encourage comparative thinking and studies which seek to trace processes of artistic interaction. Integrating Islamic art books in the library system also avoids the absurd situation in which books on Islamic art are both secluded and, in geographical areas like Norman Sicily, also included on the shelves of the Italia Room. The same could be said for the shelves designed for Spain, Malta, Cyprus, Sicily, Anatolia, Armenia, etc. The specific books on Islamic art that were chosen to make the «move» from their Islamic «ghetto» to these intercultural spaces might then have been regarded as privileged. In fact, the integration of these selected books into the narratives of European or Christian art illustrates the Eurocentric approach towards the arts of Islam and the use of this art in selected intervals that, from a European point of view, are useful for the narrative of European civilization. Mistakes such as these should be avoided. And again, by using the word «mistake» I would like to avoid any judgment that simplifies or acts as an evaluative parameter for right or wrong. My understanding here of the word «mistake» involves an act that might be made unconsciously or due to a lack of knowledge, or that might involve the inadvertent exploitation of a subject that is completely new.

At the same time, I would like to put this anecdote in its art historical context. Early in 2002, art history departments in Germany were less concerned with placing art history in a global frame. At this specific moment the main discourse was centered on the «Iconic Turn.» Digital images and their dissemination through new digital media were at the core of the scholarly discussion and posed innumerable questions about the future of «old» art history. But soon after, the «Global Turn» entered the art-historical space, or rather conquered it, and, as in any battle, both produced casualties and celebrated triumphs. There were martyrs and heroes. Islamic art appears as one of the great heroes of global art history in pre-modern times, the age that precedes the discovery of the Americas. In medieval and late medieval times civilizations were formed in large part through cultural interactions between Asia and Europe, and to some extent with several parts of Africa, the history of which begs further research and scholarship. However, the axis Asia-Europe, namely the old thesis that claims that ancient and medieval interactions kept going between East and West, again sheds new light on the intermediating areas of the Near East and Central Asia. These areas appear as the zones of activity for the East-West dialogues, and one could detect in them a plethora of migrating ideas and motifs. Islam, which occupied these zones of contact from very early in the seventh century AD, becomes visible and emerges as an important field of research for any art historian. Islamic art acquires then a central position in the global history of art in the pre-modern age and enters the story of art. But—and here lies the «mistake» previously alluded to—it is no more the extra, adjunct field—the enrichment course—of art history. Moreover, one

cannot merely «cast a glance» eastwards. Islamic art grew beyond the «niche.» It should be noted, however, that another field of art history, namely Byzantine art, has witnessed a similar change in art historians' attitude and should also be considered as part of the global narrative of art, as well as receive a reframing within departments of art history.<sup>37</sup>

The newly discovered phenomenon of Islamic art as *the* crucial sphere for writing global history actually engenders a further «mistake.» As a matter of fact, this tendency is the cryptic Orientalist approach, because it still looks at the Muslim Near East and Central Asia as the sole ambassadors of global art. Similar to Orientalist artists and travelers of the nineteenth century that wished to find in the Orient the particular space that would provide them with the missing impulse for new ideas and fantasies and rescue them from the decadence of the West, here the art historians are again searching to revitalize their field of research by looking at these Muslim geographies. The Renaissance is reframed. European masterpieces, like the works of Pisanello, the Bellinis, Dürer, and Titian, just to name a few, are revisited, and the depicted Islamic designs, motifs, and artifacts are now being addressed. The Globalists, or perhaps better yet Neo-Orientalists, of art history concentrate in their comparative studies on the known Orient, the Orient that lies next to the European border, mainly North Africa and the Levant, and which became familiar to us today through the expeditions of artists like Delacroix and Gérôme and writers like Nerval and Flaubert.

Another current outcome of the Neo-Orientalist approach, with their strong focus on the visual world of Islam, involves the excessive interest in the Mediterranean Basin as a cultural phenomenon and as a paradigmatic model for global art. It is true that the Mediterranean Sea delimits a specific zone capable of binding together different religions and cultures and, at a given moment, impelled a new *ultra maris* aesthetic dubbed the medieval international Mediterranean style.<sup>38</sup> Part of the Mediterranean success is undoubtedly deeply rooted in the idea of collective time shared by the citizens of the whole Mediterranean zone. As Émile Durkheim says in his famous book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912): «Without the creation of a concept for a collective time there is no possibility for common social lives.»<sup>39</sup> The inhabitants of the Mediterranean region, regardless of religious identity, all share the same monotheistic sense of time. This time was based on the Biblical knowledge of man. It has its genesis in the story of the Creation of Adam and Eve, and ends in the eschatological conviction of Heaven and Hell and even, to some extent, in the idea of Resurrection. This systematization of time creates a similar framed structure of time for understanding each other.

But the Mediterranean Sea is not the only active cross-cultural space. There are many other seas that tell similar stories. Moreover, as far as global history is concerned, the Mediterranean Sea is not located in the center of all terrae, as its name alludes. The «shifting» of its location, or rather importance, into the very center of European cultural geography is a historical product of the nineteenth-century desire to write history with a clear Eurocentric agenda, in which this sea takes the role of the connecting and mediating factor between the rise and fall of cultures, all of which narrate the story of European civilization.<sup>40</sup> No less revealing is the history of the Indian Ocean, mediating between the Swahili and Gujarati coasts and binding, economically and culturally, East Africa and Western

India. Or the Arabian and Red Seas in the classical medieval age with their specific seaports like Basra, Siraf, Aden, and Ayla (Eilat/Aqaba), which were the maritime playgrounds for transferring merchandise to the Near East and the Mediterranean from places as far as China, Central Asia, and Africa. And, again, by comparing these other «Mediterranean» spheres to the Mediterranean Basin, I do not mean to transfer the same model of thinking about and interpretations applied to the study of Mediterranean cultures, such as that of Fernand Braudel, who proclaimed the unity of cultural and geographical spheres by the movements of people across water.<sup>41</sup> But breaking the homogeneity or unity of these spaces and trying to define diversities and distinctions between maritime and land cultures might be very useful, especially for drawing up a more complex picture and defining varied appearances of «glocals» within the study of global art history.<sup>42</sup> It should be emphasized that the term «glocal» as used here does not limit complexity, as between the classification of Global and Local there is a wide spectrum of cultural spheres. Thus, the glocal should be further differentiated.

The next point that I would like to discuss involves the view or belief that global art history stands for world art history (Weltkunstgeschichte). This false belief must be explained. Art historians and museum curators today are proud to present the specific curricula of their departments or the wide range of their museums' collections as global. It is true that the first step toward creating an educational program for global art should involve the hiring of experts in the art histories of the varied cultures of the globe. This need is understandable. Only through filling new positions in the field of what one calls non-European art (Außereuropäische Kunst) can one hope to have a complete, global extension. Museums that proclaim their global character should convince the audience that their collections aim at covering as much of as many different visual cultures as possible, temporally and geographically speaking. And yet, global art cannot be reduced and simplified to an encyclopedic system. The overall coverage of art productions of the universe, or one should rather say polyverse, does not make the collection global. The same should be said about art history departments. The inclusion of experts of Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, African, and Latin American art does not assure that the students will be educated as global art historians. The accumulation of knowledge is only the first step of the scholarly process. It is rather its organization and presentation that is the crucial point, because here the systematization of knowledge is addressed and hierarchies assigned. The bestselling book by Neil MacGregor illustrates this delicate problem.<sup>43</sup> It is true that the one hundred objects, as MacGregor says, were carefully chosen and researched in order to tell a universal story of art.<sup>44</sup> Their extensive coverage of areas and eras ensure that the book is as comprehensive as possible. But the main point, as MacGregor also emphasizes, is that each of these objects will be able to tell only the global history that contributed to its production.<sup>45</sup> This point, which could be termed as the global connectivity component, lies at the core of the idea of global art and global art history. There is no reason to offer students courses in Islamic art if this field is not taught in a manner that binds and connects this aesthetic phenomenon with the arts of other cultures, such as, for example, China and the Latin West. If the story of Islamic or Chinese art is taught as a closed art-historical narrative and the focus of investigation is on creating autonomous and independent identities that produce self-supporting

works of art, then the study of global art will fall again into the trap that European art history, like the ‘Gombrich art history,’ fell into, and therefore only «brief glances,» to use Gombrich’s phrase, will be directed westward. Moreover, this rather accumulative tendency of global art today recalls the nature and spirit of the *Kunstkammern* and *Wunderkammern* of the late Renaissance and Baroque. Thus, the universal art-historical curriculum will be no more than a *Sammelsurium*. In fact, in several papers delivered at conferences and workshops I have recently attended, a specific encyclopedic trend can be detected. Scholars aiming at writing global art history find comparative iconographies an attractive method. Lectures on the long history of the image of the dragon in West and East or the image of Madonna and Child or that of Alexander the Great in a global context present manifold similar images collected from all over the world, without any chronological system or order that could point to or, at least, suggest connectivity. This methodology can be termed as the encyclopedic album of images. Of course, one is reminded of Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*. But it should be emphasized that in comparison to the aforementioned papers on the global aspects of images, Warburg’s *Atlas* was a tool and not regarded as the final aim or goal of research.

The principal effort should be in defining new cross sections and linkages between aesthetic notions and motifs in different spaces rather than accumulating similar motifs. The artistic network should be revealed and, like routes of trade, be explored in order to shed new light on the linkages in the history of art. One also speaks of parallel narratives and corresponding artistic innovations, or, more importantly, on looking at artworks from different times and spaces from the same eye level (*Augenhöhe*).<sup>46</sup> These tendencies will force us, art historians, to rethink the writing of art history and to look for other aspects and themes through which specific eras in the history of the world could be presented and discussed. Similarly, curators will be asked to reorganize their permanent collections in the future and exhibit artifacts in a different order of things.

The reassessment and reconsideration of the Eurocentric vision of the world that art history occupied with should prepare art historians to change views and methods of examination. It is true that many art historians and museum directors follow the steps of Dipesh Chakrabarty in his famous book *Provincializing Europe*.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, it seems that this notion of changing one’s point of view, and the wish to look at the story of art from other angles, impels new ideas and novel interpretations for art historians’ narrative traditions. Books such as *Mighty Opposites* by Zhang Longxi and *Global History: A View from the South* by Samir Amin illustrate this positive notion and present historians and art historians with new modes of thinking.<sup>48</sup> But the counter-research theme of Occidentalism, which aims at creating a balanced and critical voice for East-West histories and directly addresses the issue of Orientalism, is no less important. It should be noted, however, that Occidentalism, if not critically addressed, could also be regarded as another Eurocentric approach.<sup>49</sup> The obsessive interest of art historians in the image of Europe in non-European spheres could again lead us to a strong Eurocentric and self-interested art history. Another danger awaiting an insufficiently critical or careful study of global art stems from the circumstance that some art historians who have joined this discourse and teach global art studies still apply Western paradigms and criteria for evaluating global art. This

is a crucial error. For example, terms such as iconoclasm and *Bilderverbot* are still employed by art historians when discussing Islamic art. This tendency derives from the Western canon of art of the rendering of nature and mimesis, a canon that dictates the evolution of art in the West. One should be careful in applying it to the arts of Asia, in which parameters other than mimesis were used for defining high art.<sup>50</sup> The same could apply to art historians' discussions of the relationship between 'Word' and 'Image' in art. When applying this Western model of examination, the ancient Orient just might be profoundly mistreated, as it developed another approach for understanding and reading word-and-image compositions.<sup>51</sup>

The last point is not critical but rather seeks to open a door for further possibilities for understanding and working within the frame of global art today. It focuses on the idea of contact zones and spaces of interaction. As mentioned above, these sites play a major role in the new global approach. They are bound to specific geographical regions, like the Silk Road, public urban spaces, or specific architectural buildings that serve these cultural interactive occurrences. But the digital revolution creates another, virtual, yet no less important space. Facebook and Twitter shape another space of communication that has tremendous impact on the transmission of knowledge and accelerates the transfer and migration of ideas and ideology. It is true that real space—be it Tahrir Square in Cairo or the public spaces in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia where the Jasmine Revolution started—is stamped in our collective memory as the space in which the impact of cultural globalization and global politics become visible.<sup>52</sup> But the virtual space that exists through digital media and the computerization of our world is no less important than the gathering of thousands of people in these places. We face then the process of the immaterialization of the real and tangible spaces. The virtual spaces are additional connective spaces of important cognitive merit. They create another form of network that runs and intersects with the old veins, through which art became a global phenomenon—a complexity.

In sum, this article has assumed a provocative perspective in discussing the ramifications of the global turn in the context of art history and especially as related to the field of Islamic art history. As a historian of art who has been occupied for the last twenty odd years in the study of art production in the *worlds of Islam*, I have confronted, every now and then, the specific conjunctures in time in which the history of Islamic art met with other histories of art. I was astonished to discover, time and again, a repeating pattern within the response of art historians when explaining these moments in history. The global turn we witness in the last ten or so years has formed and shaped politics, social structures, and art practices, it has also affected the academic sphere. It forces us, art historians, *nolens volens*, to revise our interpretive models and modify our structures of thinking while discussing major turning points in the great narrative of 'European,' or rather Eurocentric, art history; crucial moments such as: the birth of the concept, and I emphasize the word 'concept,' of medieval time; the Renaissance; the Age of Enlightenment; and even modernity. In the present era, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, in a period that I would like to label as 'Changing Times,' politicians, intellectuals, and the general populace are all well aware of the need to include within the history of the West the immediate 'Other,' namely the world of Islam. Of course this notion is part of globalization,

a new model of connectivity that aims in the first place to create a larger, world-wide network for capitalism, namely free trade, investment, and marketing. The birth of this global notion, has come in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the departure from ideology of the Communist social utopia. But the global turn was no less inflicted by another eclipse: the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11—a traumatic experience that the Western world is still trying to ‘digest’ and recover from. It is therefore a complex and intricate affair, and art historians should be aware of all the subtleties of this global concern. While my intention to address this issue by pointing towards several ‘dangerous errors,’ or I should rather say ‘failures of notice,’ might be considered too harsh or aggressive, I should again stress that I have chosen provocation as a method of encouraging, I hope, critical thinking. Let me end this article with another provocative citation of Latour, who stimulates us with his new suggested paradigm for questioning cultures:

Let us suppose that anthropology, having come home from the tropics, sets out to retool itself by occupying a triply symmetrical position. It uses the same terms to explain truths and errors (this is the first principle of symmetry); it studies the production of humans and nonhumans simultaneously (this is the principle of generalized symmetry); finally, it refrains from making any *a priori* declarations as to what might distinguish Westerners from Others. To be sure, it loses exoticism, but it gains new fields of study that allow it to analyze the central mechanism of all collectives, including the ones to which Westerners belong. It loses its exclusive attachment to cultures alone—or to cultural dimensions alone—but it gains a priceless acquisition, natures.<sup>53</sup>

## Anmerkungen

- 1 See «Finding the Lost Century,» *Time Out Delhi*, March 4–17 (2011), p. 58.
- 2 On this subject see mainly, Robert S. Nelson, «The Map of Art History,» *The Art Bulletin* 79, 1 (March 1997), 28–40 (in which Islamic art is also discussed); Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, «The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field,» *The Art Bulletin* 85, 1 (March 2003), p. 152–184; Finbarr Barry Flood, «From the Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the end of Islamic Art,» in: Elizabeth Mansfield, ed. *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions*, London 2007, p. 31–53; Avinoam Shalem, «Über die Notwendigkeit, zeitgenössisch zu sein: Die islamische Kunst im Schatten der europäischen Kunstgeschichte,» in: *Orient – Orientalistik – Orientalismus*, (2010), p. 245–264.
- 3 See mainly: Irene Below and Beatrice von Bismarck (eds.), *Globalisierung Hierarchisierung: kulturelle Dominanzen in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte*, Marburg 2005; James Elkins (ed.), *Is Art History Global?*, New York, London 2007; Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (eds.) *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam 2008.
- 4 The use of the word «anxious» refers to the workshop *Anxious Histories* of «Islamic» Art held at the Getty Research Institute on March 11, 2009 and in which Sussan Babaie, Nancy Micklewright, and Avinoam Shalem presented the GRI with particular problematic issues concerning the field of Islamic art today. The discussion of this workshop was moderated by Talin Grigor and Ali Behdad. See Sussan Babaie, «Voices of Authority: Locating the «Modern» in «Islamic» Arts,» *Getty Research Journal* 3 (2011), p. 144 (notes).
- 5 On the issue of Essentialism, see mainly Armando Salvatore, «Beyond Orientalism? Max Weber and the Displacement of «Essentialism» in the Study of Islam,» *Arabica* 43 (1996), p. 457–485; Touraj Atabaki, *Beyond Essentialism: Who Writes Whose Past in the Middle East and Central Asia?*, Amsterdam 2003, Inaugural Lecture by Dr. Touraj Atabaki, Extraordinary Professor of the Social History of the Middle East and Central Asia in the University of Amsterdam, delivered on Friday, December 13, 2002. See <http://atabaki.nl/upload/Beyond%20Essentialism.pdf>.
- 6 See Nasser Rabbat, «What's in a Name,» *Artforum*, January 2012. Michael J. Lewis, «Islam by Any Other Name,» *The New Criterion* 30 (December 2011), p. 13, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Islam-by-any-other-name-7225>. Jörg Häntzschel, «Nicht jede Glaskaraffe hat religiöse Bedeutung: Umbenannt, umgebaut: Die «islamische» Kunst im Metropolitan Mu-

seum in New York in völlig neuer Präsentation,» *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Monday, November 21, 2011, p. 12.

7 Indeed it is rather interesting to trace the appearance of the concept «Diversity in Unity» in the field of Islamic art. The Library of Congress provides us with approximately 360 book titles using this phrase and its variations. It must be emphasized that the craze for this idiom when titling books appeared in the 1950s. It was mainly used in books discussing social issues of contemporary Western societies at that time. However, to the best of my knowledge, this idiom firstly appeared in 1955 in the context of Islamic studies in G.E. von Gruenebaum's *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, Chicago 1955. But it is likely that the title gained its popularity in 1986 at the 26th International Congress of the History of Art in Washington, D. C., appropriately called «World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity.» It is no wonder that only a year later the phrase appeared for an exhibition on Islamic art: the exhibition *Variety in Unity* was held between January 26 and February 26, 1987 in the Bayan Palace in Kuwait, for which a catalogue was published: Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi, *Variety in Unity: A Special Exhibition on the Occasion of the Fifth Islamic Summit in Kuwait*, Kuwait 1987.

8 For a discussion about the varied ways of using and interpreting global art today and the complications that this causes, see the article by Monica Juneja in this volume.

9 For this piece see mainly, A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, «Le Griffon iranien de Pise,» *Kunst der Orients* 5 (1968), p. 68–86; M. Jenkins, «New evidence for the history and provenance of the so-called Pisa Griffin,» *Islamic Archaeological Studies* 5 (1978), p. 79–81; Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, cat. no. 263 (with extensive literature); Anna Contadini, Richard Camber and Peter Northover, «Beasts that Roared: The Pisa Griffin and the New York Lion,» in: Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow (eds.), *Cairo to Kabul, Afghan and Islamic Studies presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson* (London: Melisende, 2002), p. 65–83.

10 See mainly the exhibition catalogue *Lions, Dragons and other Beasts: Aquamanilia of the Middle Ages*, exh. cat. Bard Graduate Center in New York, New Haven 2006.

11 See mainly: W.L. Hildburgh, «Concerning a Questionable Identification of Medieval Catalan Champlévé Enamels,» *Art Bulletin* 27 (1945), p. 247–259; Hugo Buchthal, «A Note on Islamic Enamelled Metalwork and Its Influence in the Latin West,» *Ars Islamica* 11–12 (1946), p. 195–198; Marie-Madeleine Gauthier, *Émaux du moyen âge*, Fribourg 1972; David Buckton, «Byzantine Enamel and the West,» *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988), p. 235–244; Valérie Gon-

zalez, *Émaux d'al-Andalus et du Maghreb*, La Cadade 1994; *Enamels of Limoges 1100–1350*, exh. cat. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1996.

12 See mainly Carl J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnittarbeiten aus dem Kahen Osten*, Berlin 1929; and Kurt Erdmann, «Die fatimidischen Bergkristallkannen,» in: *Wandlungen christlicher Kunst im Mittelalter*, Baden Baden, 1953, p. 189–205.

13 See mainly Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Le Moyen-Age fantastique. Antiquités et Exotismes dans l'art gothique*, Paris, 1955; R.A. Jairazbhoy, *Oriental Influences in Western Art*, Bombay 1965; Götz Pochat, *Das Fremde im Mittelalter: Darstellung in Kunst und Literatur*, Würzburg 1997.

14 These verses are taken from Goethe's literary remainders (Aus dem Nachlass); see Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Epen, West-östlicher Divan, Theatergedichte*, Zurich 1948, p. 402.

15 See my recent publication on this issue, Avinoam Shalem, «Über die Notwendigkeit, zeitgenössisch zu sein: Die islamische Kunst im Schatten der europäischen Kunstgeschichte», in: *Orient—Orientalistik—Orientalismus*, p. 245–264. In this article I suggest that the major moments or turning points in the history of Western culture, namely the Renaissance and the age of modernism, cast a shadow on the history of Islamic art.

16 Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, Oxford 1984, p. 102–112.

17 *Ibid.*, ill. 91.

18 Avinoam Shalem, «The «Golden Age» in Al-Andalus as Remembered, or How Nostalgia Forged History?», in: *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence*, ed. Jaynie Anderson, published in the proceedings of the CIAH, Melbourne 2007, Melbourne 2009, p. 154–158.

19 Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, p. 102. Gombrich refers here to the specific centuries that follow the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of the so-called Classical World.

20 «Der Islam, der eine so furchtbar kurze Religion ist, ist mit dieser seiner Trockenheit und trostlosen Einfachheit der Kultur wohl vorwiegend eher schädlich als nützlich gewesen, und wäre es auch nur, weil er die betreffenden Völker gänzlich unfähig macht, zu einer andern Kultur überzugehen. Die Einfachheit erleichterte sehr seine Verbreitung, war aber mit derjenigen höchsten Einseitigkeit verbunden, welche der starre Monotheismus bedingt, und aller politischen und Rechtentwicklung stand und steht der elende Koran entgegen; das Recht bleibt halbgeistlich.» Jacob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen*, Stuttgart 1978, p. 100. The book was first originally published approximately eight years after Burckhardt's death in 1905. English translation from Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on His-*

*tory*, trans. James Hastings Nichols, New York 1964, p. 187.

21 «In der bildenden Kunst ist nur die Architektur ausgebildet, zuerst durch persische Baumeister, dann mit Benützung des byzantinischen Stiles und Materials. Skulptur und Malerei existieren so gut wie gar nicht, weil man die Vorschrift des Korans nicht nur innehielt, sondern weit über den Wortlaut übertrieb. Was dabei der Geist überhaupt einbüßte, läßt sich denken.» Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen*, p. 101–102; English translation: Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom*, p. 189.

22 «Daneben besteht freilich das täuschende Bild von Blühenden, volkreichen, gewerblichen islamitischen Städten und Ländern mit Dichtfürsten, edelgesinnten Großen usw., wie z.B. in Spanien unter und nach den Omajaden. Aber über jene Schranken hinaus, zur Totalität des Geistigen, drang man auch hier nicht durch, und Unfähigkeit zur Wandelung, zur Einmündung in eine andere, höhere Kultur war auch hier das Ende, wozu dann noch die politisch-militärische Schwäche gegen Al-moraviden, Almohaden und Christen kam.» Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen*, p. 102; English translation: Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom*, p. 189.

23 Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, Stuttgart 1842. See also Hubert Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst 1750-1950*, Munich 2001, p. 208–266; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, «Eurocentrism and Art History? Universal History and the Historiography of the Arts before Winckelmann», in: Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (eds.), *Memory and Oblivion*, Boston 1999, p. 35–42; Ulrich Pfisterer, «Origins and Principles of World Art History—1900 (and 2000)», in: Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (eds.), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 69–89.

24 Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, 2. Auflage 1856, p. 339.

25 Franz Kugler, *Geschichte der orientalischen und antiken Baukunst*, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1859, p. 491–492, dt. Originaltext: «Eine organische Gliederung, eine Bildung der Einzelteile, welche sich als die Fixierung eines Lebensprozesses, als der Ausdruck einer bewegten und bewegenden Kraft im Verhältnis zu größeren Teilen des architektonischen Werkes und zur Gesamtmasse desselben bekundete, erstrebt die muhammedanischer Architektur nicht. Was sie als solche Gliederung hat, beruht teils auf der baulichen Überlieferungen, in welcher sie eintrat, bildet teils – in wenigen günstigen Fällen und durchaus nicht ohne den Einfluss der weiterstrebenden occidentalen Kunst – nur einen unvollkommenen Ansatz zu einer derar-



tigen Entwicklung, gehört teils – und in sehr überwiegendem Maße – der Willkür des dekorativen an.»

**26** Annette Hagedorn, «The Development of Islamic Art History in Germany in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries», in: Stephen Vernoit (ed.), *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950* (London/New York 2000), p. 120.

**27** *Ibid.*, p. 119–120.

**28** Carl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst im Mittelalter*, Düsseldorf 1869, S. 375, dt. Originaltext: «Es sind dies die Völker, bei denen sinnliches und geistiges Leben sich wie durch eine scharfe Kluft trennen, wo dann die Fantasie, statt die Sinnlichkeit zu gestalten und veredeln, sich des geistigen Lebens bemächtigt ... Für die bildenden Künste sind diese Völker weniger geschaffen, das ruhige Bild ist dieser Wunder nicht fähig, und erscheint der heissglühenden Phantasie matt und kalt.»

**29** Anton Heinrich Springer, *Kunsthistorische Briefe: Die bildenden Künste in ihrer weltgeschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Prague 1857, S. 432, dt. Originaltext: «Von einem Volke, welches seine Vorfahren unter den Nomaden zählte ... kann man billiger Weise massive Anlagen, auch in den Dimensionen und im Materiale großartige Bauten nicht verlangen.» See also the discussion of Hagedorn on Anton Heinrich Springer in Hagedorn, «The Development of Islamic Art History in Germany,» p. 117–127, esp. 119; see also Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit (eds.), *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century: Tradition, Innovation, and Eclecticism*, Leiden 2006.

**30** Johannes Emmer, *Illustrierte Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin 1906, p. 215.

**31** *Ibid.*, p. 219, dt. Originaltext «Die islamische Kunst ist auf den bezeichneten Gebieten des Morgenlandes bis in unsere Zeit ziemlich unverändert geblieben und wird sich wohl noch länger Zeit in ihren wesentlichen Eigenheiten erhalten, da sie dem Volksgeiste entspricht.»

**32** Banister Fletcher, *History of Architecture*, London/New York 1896. See also the discussion on Banister Fletcher's, «Tree of Architecture», in: Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi (eds.), *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, Seattle/London 2008, p. 11–13, fig. 1. 3.

**33** See Hagedorn, «The Development of Islamic Art History in Germany,» p. 117–127.

**34** Andrea Lerner and Avinoam Shalem, *After One Hundred Years: The 1910 Exhibition «Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst» Reconsidered*, Leiden 2010.

**35** Avinoam Shalem, «The 1910 Exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* Revisited», in: *ibid.*, p. 3–15.

**36** Avinoam Shalem and Hubertus Kohle, «Erwerb der Bibliothek Brisch für das Institut für Kunstgeschichte», *Gesellschaft von Freunden und Förderern der Universität München* 81 (2002), p. 28–29.

**37** See Anthony Cutler, «The Pathos of Distance: Byzantium in the Gaze of Renaissance Europe and Modern Scholarship», in: Claire Farago (ed.), *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, New Haven/London 1995, p. 23–45; Rob Nelson, «Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art», *Gesta* 3, 1 (1996), p. 3–11; Nelson, «The Map of Art History», p. 28–40.

**38** On the Mediterranean as a united space, see mainly Salomon David Goitein, «The Unity of the Mediterranean World in the Middle Ages», *Studia Islamica* 11 (1959), p. 29–42; Salomon David Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols., Berkeley 1967–93; Gaston Cahen, «Commercial Relations Between the Near East and Western Europe from the VIIth to the XIth Century», in: *Islam and the Medieval West: Aspects of Intercultural Relations*, ed. Khalil I. Semaan, Albany 1980, p. 1–25; David Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt, and Italy*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, vol. 836, London 2005; Eva Hoffman (ed.), *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, Blackwell Anthologies in Art History, vol. 5, Oxford 2007; Gerhard Wolf, «Alexandria aus Athen zurückerobern? Perspektiven einer mediterranen Kunstgeschichte mit einem Seitenblick auf das mittelalterliche Sizilien», in: *Lateinisch-griechisch-arabische-Begegnungen. Kulturelle Diversität im Mittelmeerraum des Spätmittelalters*, Europa im Mittelalter, vol. 15, ed. Margit Mersch and Ulrike Ritzerfeld, Berlin 2009, p. 39–62; for the unity of the Mediterranean in ancient times, see Irad Malkin, «Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization», *Modern Language Quarterly* 65:3 (2004), p. 341–364.

**39** Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, London 1964, esp. p. 148–156.

**40** See the interview with Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum in London, in «Das Mittelmeer liegt nicht in der Mitte: Ein Gespräch mit Neil MacGregor, dem Direktor des Britischen Museums, über sein Buch *Eine Geschichte der Welt in 100 Objekten*», *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Tuesday, October 11, 2011.

**41** Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., trans. Siân Reynolds, London 1972; the French original was first published in 1948.

**42** See for example, K.N. Chadhuri, *From the Atlantic to the Arabian Sea: A Polyphonic Essay on History*, Verona 1995; A.H.J. Prins, *Sailing from*

*Lamu: A Study of Maritime Culture in Islamic East Africa*, Assen 1965. For a critical approach, see the excellent article of Kai Kresse and Edward Simpson, «Between Africa and India: Thinking Comparatively Across the Western Indian Ocean», ZMO (Zentrum für Modernen Orient), Working Papers 5 (2011), p. 1–15.

43 Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, London/New York 2010.

44 See MacGregor, «Das Mittelmeer liegt nicht in der Mitte.»

45 Ibid.

46 I mainly refer to Hans Belting's book, *Flora und Bagdad: Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks*, Munich 2008, see esp. p. 23–66. This book aims to discuss Islamic art in the context of the transfer of knowledge on optics and mathematics, the invention of perspective and its global history.

47 For a critical approach to Eurocentrism, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000; Vassilis Lambropoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism: Anatomy of Interpretation*, Princeton 1993; Samir Amin, *L'Eurocentrisme: Critique d'une idéologie*, Paris 1988; and Samir Amin, *Global History: A View from the South*, Bangalore 2011; Rémi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, trans. S. Lester, South Bend, Ind. 2002; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, «Eurocentrism and Art History? Universal History and the Historiography of the Arts before Winckelmann», in: Reinink and Stumpel, *Memory and Oblivion*, p. 35–42. See also Rashed Araeen, «Eurocentricity, Canonization of the White/European Subject in Art History, and the Marginalisation of the Other», in: Irene Below and Beatrice von Bismarck (eds.), *Globalisierung/Hierarchisierung. Kulturellen Dominanzen in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte*, Marburg 2005, p. 54–61, in which the author criticizes the 'Third Space' idea in Documenta 11 curated by Okwui Enwezor. See also *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, exh. cat. Museum Villa Stuck, Munich 2001.

48 Zhang Longxi, *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China*, Stanford 1998; Amin, *Global History: A View from the South*. See also the excellent article of Zhang Longxi, «The Myth of the Other: China in the Eyes of the West», *Critical Inquiry* 15, 1 (1988), p. 108–131.

49 For a critical approach to the culturalist idea of Occidentalism, see Akeel Bilgrami, «Occidentalism, the Very Idea: An Essay on Enlightenment and Enchantment», *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006), p. 381–411; Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, London 2004. See also Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism,*

*Occidentalism and Historiography*, New York 2001; my thanks to Sussan Babie who called my attention to this book.

50 On this and other parameters of Western art and their use for writing the history of Islamic art, see Avinoam Shalem, «What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam» (forthcoming; this article is in press and due to be published in a special volume on Islamic art historiographies edited by M. Graves and M. Cory in the *Journal of Art Historiography*).

51 See Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, Philadelphia 2003, see especially the discussions in chapter 3.

52 See Nasser Rabbat, «The Arab Revolution Takes Back the Public Space», *Critical Inquiry* (forthcoming), see [http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/nasser\\_rabbat\\_the\\_arab\\_revolution\\_takes\\_back\\_the\\_public\\_space](http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/nasser_rabbat_the_arab_revolution_takes_back_the_public_space).

53 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge 1993, p. 103–104.