



BRILL



BENEDICT CUDDON

A FIELD PIONEERED BY AMATEURS: THE COLLECTING AND DISPLAY OF ISLAMIC ART IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BOSTON

In March 1958, the scholar Florence Day was commissioned to produce a survey of all the materials available for the research and teaching of Islamic art in the Greater Boston area. She was asked to carry out this task by John Coolidge (d. 1995), then director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, at the recommendation of Sir Hamilton A.R. Gibb (d. 1971), director of the newly established Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University.¹ For several years prior to this, Coolidge had been interested in setting up a program of research and teaching in the field of Islamic art; the survey was intended to develop his thinking in the area and help get the project started. Coolidge outlined the task in a letter he wrote with his offer of employment to Day: "I am anxious to have you survey the material available in Greater Boston: books, slides, photographs and, where relevant, original works of art, so that we can get some idea of what would be needed to establish a program of study in this field." He went on to outline his longer-term aims: "Broadly speaking, I dream of the Fogg doing for the whole field of Near Eastern art during the next generation what we have been able to do in the Far Eastern field during the last."²

Up to that time, Day had not had any affiliation with Harvard. She had studied at the University of Michigan under Mehmet Aga-Oglu (d. 1949), and was principally an authority on Islamic ceramics and textiles.³ During the early 1950s she worked in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as an assistant under the curator of Near Eastern Art, Maurice Dimand (d. 1986). When she began work at the Fogg, she had not published any research for several years, but was planning various publications, including a survey of early Islamic art to be used for teaching purposes in colleges.⁴

Day spent the next two years working on the project and submitted her completed survey in June 1960. It consisted of descriptions and assessments of all the materials relating to Islamic art in the Boston area. In compiling her report, she visited the Fogg Museum (opened 1895), the Semitic Museum (1899 [in its present location at 6 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, since 1903]), and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (1866), all at Harvard University, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts (1876 [in its present location on Huntington Avenue since 1909]) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (1903), both in Boston.⁵

While the report was comprehensively researched and meticulously produced, it did not meet with the approval of the authorities at Harvard. In a letter to his wife, Agnes Mongan, Coolidge expressed uncertainty about its worth. "I confess I have no judgement to its value," he wrote, "and I will not decide on whether it should be typed or not until Eric, Cary, or both have come through with a recommendation."⁶ The Eric to whom he referred was Eric Schroeder (d. 1971), curator of the Islamic collection at the Fogg and a specialist in Persian miniature painting. Cary was Stuart Cary Welch (d. 2008), assistant curator at the Fogg and a collector and connoisseur of Persian and Indian drawings, miniatures, and manuscripts.

Schroeder's reaction to the report was rather less equivocal than Coolidge's. "The peculiar focus upon the early Islamic period and its meagre remains," he wrote, "characterizes the report so strongly that it is an archaeologist's document." He observed that there was "no attention to the great artists where they emerge in history (16th century)," which gave "a grotesque disproportion to her report as it stands." By "great artists,"

Schroeder meant Persian miniature painters such as Bihzad (d. ca. 1535), who emerged from the late Timurid period (ca. 1469–1506) onwards. He believed, along with many others in the field at that time, that Persian miniature painting represented the zenith of Islamic art history. In summarizing his findings, Schroeder decided that the report was “sweepingly and sublimely injudicious,” and that as an attempt to show “the region’s capacity to illustrate Islamic art with worthy representatives of its most beautiful achievements, the survey is just not a survey.”⁷

The dismissal of Day’s report does not indicate a failing on her part. She was a highly qualified and experienced scholar with numerous publications to her name. How, then, should we understand the reaction of the authorities in the Fogg? Rather than pointing up any incompetence of Day’s, this incident highlights something of greater significance, namely, the different conceptions of the field of Islamic art that existed at that time. Coolidge and Schroeder’s dismissal of the report did not derive from any greater knowledge of the field. Rather, they were critical because the report did not reflect what they understood to be the true definition of Islamic art.

Day’s focus on the archaeological holdings in the Boston-area museums was a reflection of her particular understanding of what the study of Islamic art involved. Coolidge and Schroeder, in turn, each held their own very distinct perspectives on what the study of the subject entailed. The disagreement was not just a small tiff among competing scholars but a dispute that went to the very heart of what it meant to study Islamic art. And to understand its significance it is necessary to go back to the start of the twentieth century, when collections of Islamic art in Boston were beginning to be formed.

THE FORMATION OF ISLAMIC ART COLLECTIONS

In recent years, there has been considerable scholarly interest in the formation, study, and display of collections of Islamic art.⁸ In Europe, Islamic art collections were assembled from the mid-nineteenth century onwards,⁹ while in the United States the process started somewhat later, with the first collections being organized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰ The

academic study of Islamic art began in the wake of the formation of such collections. In the United States, the scholar and dealer Arthur Upham Pope (d. 1969) was one of the first to hold a formal post in the field, with an advisory curatorial position in “Muhammadan Art” at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1919.¹¹ However, the first official academic post in Islamic art was created in 1933, at the University of Michigan, with an endowment from the American railroad-car manufacturer Charles Lang Freer (d. 1919); its first holder was Mehmet Aga-Oglu (d. 1949).¹²

In Boston, the first collections of Islamic art were formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and were centered on three main institutions: the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. At the MFA it is not clear when exactly the acquisition of Islamic art began, but by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century there were already some Islamic materials in the collection.¹³ The Fogg began to assemble its Islamic collection around the same period, after the end of World War I.¹⁴ Similarly, Isabella Stewart Gardner (d. 1924) began to collect Islamic material around the turn of the century.¹⁵

In the early days, the collections of these institutions were formed through the efforts of a small group of pioneer collectors. The most important of these figures was Denman Waldo Ross (d. 1935) (fig. 1).¹⁶ Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, he graduated from Harvard in 1875. After completing a doctoral degree in economic history, he developed an additional interest in art. He became a trustee of the MFA in 1895, and in 1899 was appointed as a special lecturer on design at the Architectural School at Harvard. In 1904 he began to travel extensively to India, Cambodia, China, Japan, Mexico, and Peru, during which time he bought a considerable amount of art. Ross acquired his enthusiasm for Islamic art late in life and it was principally Persian art that intrigued him. It might at first seem curious that he should have cultivated such a pursuit; although he travelled to the Islamic world, he seems not to have liked much of the art he saw there.¹⁷ However, over the course of his lifetime he built up a sizable collection of Persian material, in particular miniature paintings, drawings, luster tiles, and rugs. He gave many of his purchases to the Boston

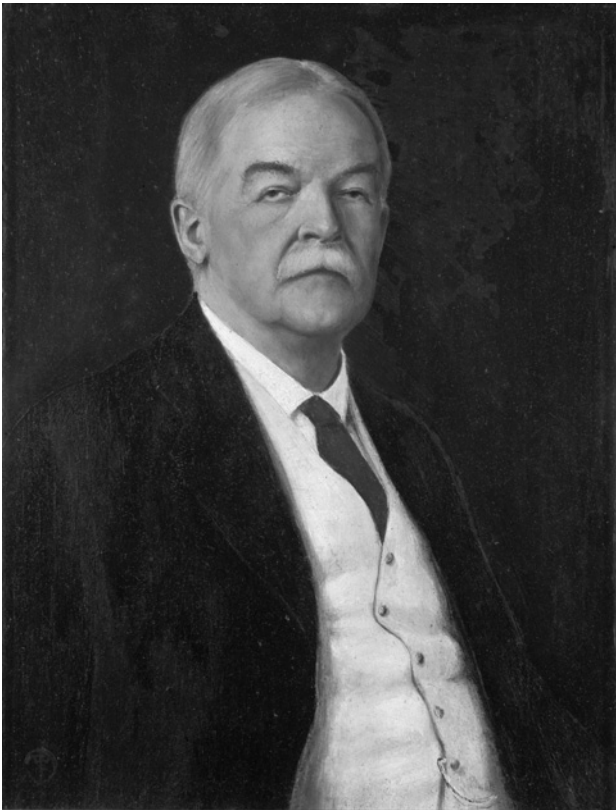


Fig. 1. Kanji Nakamura, Denman Waldo Ross (1853–1935), 1928. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Paul J. Sachs, 1938.125. (Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)



Fig. 2. Martin Mower, Hervey Wetzel (1888–1918), ca. 1917. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Joseph W. Valentine, 1975.63. (Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)

museums; in total, around 1,500 objects to the Fogg, and perhaps 11,000 to the MFA.¹⁸ He was also involved in one of the most important acquisitions for the MFA, when, in 1914, he helped to broker the purchase of the Goloubew Collection, which consisted mainly of Persian and Indian paintings and drawings.¹⁹

Another important figure was Hervey Wetzel (d. 1918), also a graduate of Harvard College (class of 1911) (fig. 2). Wetzel was an only child and after his parents died while he was a student he was left with considerable means. He shared many of Ross's interests in art and collecting, and in 1912 they travelled together to Asia. Later, in 1914, Wetzel became an associate of the MFA covering Persian and Indian art. After further travel in Asia, in 1916 he enrolled as a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School at Harvard, choosing

“Persian and Mohammedan Art” as his special field. He learned Arabic and was able to catalogue the manuscripts of his own collection (which he had begun to assemble after his travels with Ross) and those of the MFA. He was offered a position as curator of the Islamic collection there, but because he had already enrolled in military training he declined the offer. Like Ross, Wetzel gave generously to the museums in Boston. He died of pneumonia in 1918, while working for the Red Cross in France, and left half of his collection to the Fogg and the other half to the MFA. He also bequeathed \$100,000 to the Fogg for the purchase of new objects.²⁰

Besides Ross and Wetzel, another active collector was Isabella Stewart Gardner (fig. 3). She first visited the Middle East in 1874, at the age of thirty four, on a tour of Egypt. However, it was not until the 1890s that she



Fig. 3. Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924), 1888. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. (Photo: courtesy of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum)

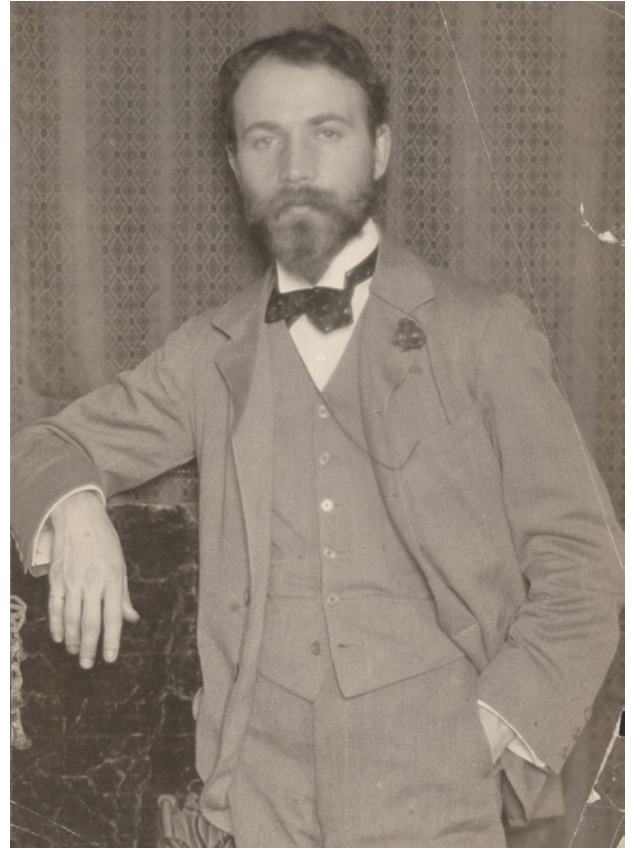


Fig. 4. Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), ca. 1900. Biblioteca Berenson, Villa I Tatti—The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. (Photo: courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College)

started buying Islamic art. Over the next twenty years she steadily built up a small collection of objects, purchasing pieces through dealers or through friends, though her Islamic material was never anywhere near as extensive as that of either Ross or Wetzel.²¹

For their collecting, these figures depended partly upon dealers of Islamic art who were just beginning to establish themselves in the United States. These dealer/collectors included Armenians such as Dikran Kelekian (d. 1951) and Hagop Kevorkian (d. 1962), who both played very active roles in selling and lending material to museums as well as to collectors in the United States, including Ross and Gardner. In addition, in 1903 Kelekian donated materials to the textile gallery in the MFA, and in 1910 he lent even more items to the

museum, while Kevorkian also donated objects that year.²²

Beyond this circle of collectors and the dealers who supplied them there were other influential figures who helped to shape this early period of collecting. Foremost among them was the scholar, collector, and art connoisseur Bernard Berenson (d. 1959), who had a strong predilection for Islamic art and, although not based in Boston himself, exerted an important influence upon the art world there (fig. 4).²³ Berenson was a student of Oriental languages, learning Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Aramaic when he was at Harvard (1884–87). In the middle of his career he developed an interest in Asian art and started purchasing Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan painting, sculpture, and ceramics. During the same

period, he also bought Persian art, forming a collection of miniatures and manuscripts between 1910 and 1913.²⁴ Berenson also played an active role in encouraging others to buy and collect in the field, including Gardner, who bought her Islamic miniatures through him.²⁵ He also strongly promoted the academic study of Islamic art. At different points he encouraged Harvard to take on someone in an academic position, promoting both Rudolf Riefstahl, a scholar/dealer based in Europe, and then Mehmet Aga-Oglu; he also pressed Harvard to publish more academic research in the field.²⁶

CURATORS AND EARLY MODES OF DISPLAY

These, then, were some of the key figures involved in the acquisition and collecting of Islamic art in the United States. But who were the people looking after the collections at this time? At the Fogg, there was no one curating the Islamic collection until the 1930s. At the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Gardner herself decided how the materials should be displayed and arranged. However, at the MFA there were particular individuals working in connection with the Islamic material. The principal curator of the Islamic collection was Frank Gair Macomber (d. 1941), who ran a fire insurance business (the MFA was one of his customers) and supervised the Islamic material in his spare time. He also collected in the field, specializing in Middle Eastern arms and armor.²⁷ Another figure was Garrick Borden (d. 1912), who was mainly involved in teaching on the subject. Originally from Pennsylvania, he had taught in England (in London, Oxford, and Cambridge) and also in the United States, at the University of California.²⁸ He worked as a docent in the MFA, lecturing on a range of subjects, including Islamic art, and also at the Harvard Extension School (est. 1910), where he delivered a series of forty illustrated lectures on Islamic art in the 1911–12 academic year.²⁹

In this early period there was a well-established sense of an overarching category of “Islamic” art, though it was more often referred to as “Saracenic” or “Mohammedan.” Within this framework, the first three centuries of the Islamic era were seen as the crucial formative phase. As Macomber reportedly explained in a lecture: “Saracenic art is supposed to have had its origin during the

Sessanianian [*sic*] dynasty of Persia...[I]n 650 the Arabs conquered Persia and their restless fancy and taste for color and ornament added the final element to the product we now call Mohammedan or Saracenic art.”³⁰ Macomber’s ideas were echoed by Borden: the “study of Moslem history,” he wrote in a pamphlet entitled “Reasons why teachers of history should study Moslem History, Civilization and Art,” is “the *study of the formative period* of a great living civilization which is daily becoming of more importance to us [*italics mine*].”³¹

The conception of Islamic art as a tradition that was formed in the first centuries of the Islamic era had a long pedigree dating back to the nineteenth century and was based on the Hegelian meta-narrative of history that saw the rise and fall of civilizations as the key force in shaping human history. Within this framework, all civilizations passed through an initial formative phase, remained for a certain period of time, and then ultimately declined. This conception of history was passed on through generations of Western scholars like Edward Gibbon and Arnold Toynbee, and onto Orientalists such as Hamilton A.R. Gibb.³² When applied to Islamic history, the early centuries of the Islamic era were seen as the most important phase, since it was in this period that the key features of Islamic civilization were believed to have been forged. According to this paradigm, the “essence” of Islamic art emerged in the first three centuries after the Prophet Muhammad. After this, the rest of Islamic history consisted of various derivations that could never approach the cultural accomplishments of this critical early period.³³

But while this overarching view of the field did exist, in this period the notion of Islamic art as a distinct category had not yet acquired the rigid parameters that would define it in later years. In the early twentieth century, “Islamic art” often held an ambiguous position in conventional classification, defying any kind of neat categorization. At the MFA, for the first decade of the twentieth century, Islamic material was actually housed in the department of Western art. As the museum explained, “by western art is meant that developed in Europe (and the nearer orient), or under European influence, since classical times.”³⁴ There was some degree of separation given to art from the Islamic world, with most of the Islamic objects displayed in a gallery

called the Nearer Orient Room. However, it did not have a purely Islamic focus, as Peruvian and Coptic textiles were displayed alongside. And indeed, not all the Islamic objects were held in the Nearer Orient Room; since the collection was by and large arranged by material, Persian ceramics were housed in the part of the museum devoted to glass and ceramics.³⁵

There was a similarly nebulous situation at the Fogg. Here, early exhibitions often included both Islamic material and European works of art. A show in 1914 of loan material from the J. Pierpont Morgan Collection in New York consisted of Persian and Indo-Persian miniatures and Koran leaves, along with English, French, and Italian paintings and manuscripts.³⁶ Likewise, in the room at the Fogg that housed the Wetzel Collection, a whole range of different art forms were clustered together, with Persian miniatures and Arabic calligraphy displayed together with Chinese and Italian art.³⁷

At the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, this tendency was even more pronounced. The entire museum was laid out in a highly idiosyncratic fashion, as prescribed by the founder herself. Gardner's Islamic objects were dispersed all over the museum, with little regard for grouping them according to region or period. She displayed a Persian carpet in the "Titian Room," along with Titian's *Rape of Europa* and a miscellany of European (mainly Italian) art. The "Tapestry Room" contained the majority of her Islamic material: a Persian silk, a Hafiz manuscript, a Persian lacquered box and a Persian Koran stand, an Arabic treatise on automatic devices, a thirteenth-century Arabic manuscript, and two Mongol ones. But all this sat together with a Velázquez painting of Pope Innocent X, a tapestry depicting scenes from the life of Cyrus the Great, and a host of other objects including Italian writing desks, German brass plates, and other European works of art in a variety of media.³⁸

The custom of displaying very disparate objects together, a common practice in the United States at this time, derived from the influence of the Aesthetic Movement, which flourished in America in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Drawing on the ideas of John Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain, it encouraged looking abroad for

designs that could be used to reinvigorate the American arts industry.³⁹ Above all, it promoted the idea that the search for beauty in art would inspire a new generation of American designers and artists. With this emphasis on foreign art forms and beauty, the Aesthetic Movement stressed the accessibility of styles of decoration from the past and the belief that art did not have to be viewed within its historical context in order to be appreciated. When the main objective was to find beauty in a work of art, it was not necessary to know about the culture and society that had produced that object; cross-cultural transcendent beauty could be appreciated by anyone in any context. It was partly because of the proliferation of these ideas that much art at this time was displayed divorced from its specific historical context.⁴⁰

The Aesthetic Movement influenced some of the key figures in Boston in this period, and Ross was clearly a disciple. As one of his obituarists noted, "his contempt for the historical and archaeological point of view—as a trained historian—was a curious contradiction."⁴¹ He acknowledged as much himself. In recalling his travels in Asia with Wetzel, he wrote, "We were not archaeologists. We were not historians. We were simply lovers of order and the beautiful as they come to pass in the works of man supplementing the works of Nature."⁴² This outlook was also promoted by Berenson, who strongly believed in connoisseurship and aesthetic appreciation. He saw art objects as individual works of beauty and genius, not as products of a particular historical environment. It was this sort of formalist approach that enabled Berenson to juxtapose Persian miniatures with Chinese artifacts at *Villa I Tatti*.⁴³

Another noteworthy feature of this early era of display was the attention devoted to Persian art, which, within the broad conception of the field at this time, was regarded as the highest form of Islamic art, above that of the Turks and the Arabs. This ethnically defined hierarchy was the product of a viewpoint that saw inherent racial characteristics as a central force in the evolution of human societies and the belief that race was the main determinant of artistic expression. According to this perspective, because Persians were of Indo-European racial stock they were inherently superior to the Semites

and the Turks. These ethno-racial discourses originated from Orientalist paradigms about the ethnic composition of the Middle East. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth century they also provided the framework for emerging nationalist interpretations of history. It was under the influence of these two forces that the discourse about the racial features of Islamic art flourished.⁴⁴

In this milieu, Persian art was often favorably compared with European art. For example, on the occasion of a display of Persian and Indian manuscripts, drawings, and paintings at the MFA, the museum bulletin drew a direct comparison between these works and Renaissance art, remarking that “the drawings are some of them worthy of Clouet in minute and exact rendering of character.”⁴⁵ Elsewhere, Bihzad was described as “the Raphael of the East.”⁴⁶ Such attitudes were also being expressed in emerging scholarship, with academics studying Persian art for the first time borrowing ideas and frames of reference from Renaissance art and applying them to their new field of study.⁴⁷

Aside from the Aesthetic Movement and ethno-racial discourses, early collecting habits were also shaped by emerging trends within American society, including a rapid increase in consumerism in the United States. With the growth of a consumer culture there developed a sort of commodity fetishism, as wealthy individuals built up collections of material objects with which to surround themselves in a flattering manner and establish their status in society.⁴⁸ At the same time, new public institutions were being founded that often became sites where social status was enacted. In this era, museums rapidly became prime venues for articulating social identities. Often this was the expression of individual and family status. But it could also be an expression of municipal pride: donors to museums were often motivated by the desire to boost the position of their city, and the collecting of art became one arena in which the rivalry among American cities in this period was played out.⁴⁹

An evocative appraisal of the MFA in its early days by Matthew Prichard (d. 1936), assistant director of the Museum from 1903 to 1906, gives an idea of the forces that shaped the institution:

A few families had a special cult for it, regarded it as their appanage, practised their influence on it, discussed together their activity in its past, their aspirations for its future; on Sundays it was visited by loquacious Italians, but on week days the temple was closed to all save the initiated who appeared to bully the director and oversee their family tombs. For it was recognized that one room belonged to this family and another to that...To understand the Museum of the moment it would be necessary to study savage customs, for it was the last sanctuary of the Boston aborigines, and totem and taboo, animism and magic, custom, rite, precedent and mystery were imprinted all over it....It had its House of Levi, its inherited priesthood; and frightened tradesmen endowed it with their millions that their descendants might be smiled upon by its popes and hierarchs.⁵⁰

Within this intensely competitive context, the desire for social status was probably an important impulse behind the collecting and display of Islamic art. Macomber on one occasion had his collection of “Mohammedan Arms and Armor” put on display in the Forecourt Room of the Museum.⁵¹ This was also where Wetzel exhibited his collection after his round-the-world trip with Ross in 1914.⁵² And there is clear evidence that Ross’s collecting and donating were motivated by a concern for his status in local society. In 1912, he wrote in a letter to Morris Gray, a trustee of the MFA at that time (who would later be president):

Speaking of the Ross collection, I observe an unwillingness, on the part of those in charge of installation, to mark the objects which I have given to the museum with the words ‘Ross collection’. I have repeatedly asked to have this done, but it is not done...I want the words Ross collection attached to every object or group of objects which has been given or loaned by me. By that means I shall be able to speak to the people of Boston long after I am dead, as in a book written or a picture painted.⁵³

Thus, in this early period of the twentieth century, the collecting and display of Islamic art were shaped by a variety of forces. The Aesthetic Movement, the influence of ethno-racial discourses about Islamic art, the rise of consumerism, and the pursuit of social status all influenced the activities of collectors and the exhibitions that they organized.

ETHNO-RACIAL INTERPRETATIONS

After the first decade of the twentieth century, gradual changes took place in the Islamic art scene in Boston. At the MFA, Islamic art steadily moved out of its ambiguous position in the Department of Western Art. In 1909, after the museum moved from its original location in Copley Square to Huntington Avenue, the Nearer Orient Room had more of an exclusively Islamic focus. And from 1910 onwards, "Muhammedan art" started to be listed in a separate category in the museum bulletin.⁵⁴ In this period there were also changes in personnel. In 1917, Ananda Coomaraswamy (d. 1947) arrived at the museum and founded the Department of Indian Art, which subsequently absorbed the Islamic material.⁵⁵

However, from this point on, far fewer displays of Islamic art were assembled and relatively less attention was devoted to the Islamic collection. Material continued to be acquired steadily in the 1920s and early 1930s, but, compared to the previous two decades, this was a quiet period.⁵⁶ After Ross died in 1935, activity decreased even further. From this point on, with the exception of steady donations of Persian art from Edward Jackson Holmes (president of the museum from 1934 until his death in 1950), acquisitions declined.⁵⁷

As activity at the MFA decreased, the Fogg Museum stepped in to take its place. From the 1930s onwards, it became the most important venue for Islamic art, particularly Persian art. In 1930, the Fogg held an exhibition of Persian paintings from the thirteenth century to the seventeenth, again consisting of loans from the Morgan Library in New York.⁵⁸ Displays continued through the 1930s; in the spring of 1934, photographs of Persian architecture from the collection of Arthur Upham Pope were exhibited, followed in the winter by a display of Persian miniatures, pottery, and textiles.⁵⁹ After this, Persian miniatures from the Ross Collection were shown in 1935, Persian pottery in 1936, and Persian miniatures, pottery, and sculpture in 1937.⁶⁰

The surge of interest in Persian art in this period was heavily influenced by the contemporary political climate and the emerging discourse on Iranian nationalism, which emphasized the existence of a single Persian national identity and saw the Persians as a pure race that had existed undiluted since the era of the Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550–330 B.C.). This conception

of Persian identity was articulated simultaneously in different centers around the world. In Iran, it was being promoted by members of the Pahlavi regime, who were trying to establish their new conception of Iranian national identity based on its mythic Persian origins. In the West, it was being voiced by academics and scholars such as Arthur Upham Pope, who were promoting the study of Persian art and culture. Often these forces came to work in tandem, as can be seen, for example, in the founding of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology, an academic organization set up in 1930 by Pope and others, with strong support from the Iranian government.⁶¹

Nationalist ideology based on the idea of a pure Persian racial identity played an important role in shaping how the Fogg's exhibitions in this period were interpreted. In his reviews in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, Henry S. Francis, an assistant to the directors at the Fogg, interpreted all the displays through an ethno-racial mode. Concerning the 1930 show, he discussed the supposed aversion of Muslims to figural representation, noting that this did not always apply in Persia, where "the time-honored inherent culture of their venerable race broke through."⁶² He adopted a similar focus in his review of the 1934 winter show, in which he remarked that "we are immediately aware of an intriguing racial character that runs through it all," and went on to say (rather distastefully) that "one is tempted to guess that the Persians must be a race of large-lens like eyes and thin nervous fingers to create, or enjoy, such minute workmanship."⁶³

Although the ethno-racial mode of interpretation was more marked in this period, it is important to keep in mind that a notion of "Islamic" art still existed and Persian art was usually viewed through an Islamic "lens." From this perspective, Islamic art existed within a clearly definable time frame from the 600s to the 1600s. As Francis wrote in his review of the 1930 show, "the 17th century onward showed a rapid decline. The knowledge of European models wholly supplanted native, and the character completely changed. Persian painting ceased to exist."⁶⁴ This statement expressed the persistent idea that the Islamic world constituted a "pure," self-contained artistic tradition that was disrupted and irrevocably altered by the arrival of European

modernity. Within this framework, truly “Islamic” art disappeared under the impact of the West and during the era of modernity.⁶⁵ From this point on, the narrative went, artists struggled to assimilate Western approaches toward artistic production and were forever engaged in a process of passive imitation; trapped in a cultural void between “tradition” and “modernity,” their efforts to emulate Western styles effectively corrupted and polluted their own indigenous traditions. These ideas owed their origins to colonial narratives of Islamic history that emphasized the “decay” of Islamic civilization and the cultural bankruptcy of the Islamic world. The decline of indigenous tradition and the failure to assimilate exterior practices signified a lack of cultural self-confidence and the incapacity of the Islamic world to confront modernity.⁶⁶

THE SEARCH FOR A CURATOR

The 1930s were thus a busy time at the Fogg. But despite all of this activity there was one persistent problem: the lack of a curator to supervise the collections and exhibitions. As noted, in this period the only full-time Islamic specialist in America was Mehmet Aga-Oglu, who was based at the University of Michigan and the Detroit Museum of Fine Arts (fig. 5). Aga-Oglu had grown up in Turkey and studied in Russia, Germany, and Austria before becoming director of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul in 1928. Then, in 1929, he left Turkey for America. At the time of his departure, he was connected with a move to Harvard, when he was recommended for a position by Bernard Berenson, who wrote about him to Paul Sachs, associate director of the Fogg:

I don't see him at Detroit...My ideal for him and for Harvard would be that he profess Islamitic [*sic*] art in my beloved Alma Mater. It is a far more important field than I could have imagined before going to Turkey. Aga Oglu has more-over material up his sleeve, and ideas which will make him an ornament to any institution that can claim him. I should wish it to be Harvard.⁶⁷

In the end, Aga-Oglu did go to Detroit. In the early 1930s he had occasional employment in the Museum of Anthropology at Michigan. Then, in 1933, he was invited by the University of Michigan to organize a department



Fig. 5. Mehmet Aga-Oglu (1896–1949), n.d. University of Michigan Faculty and Staff Portrait Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. (Photo: courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library)

of Islamic art and was appointed Research Fellow in the History of Islamic Art and Culture before going on to become, by 1935, Freer Fellow and Lecturer on Oriental Art and then Associate Professor of the History of Islamic Art. He also presided over the research seminar on Islamic art and was editor of the journal *Ars Islamica*.

However, throughout the 1930s Berenson continued to promote the idea of Aga-Oglu joining the Fogg Museum or the MFA in some capacity. In 1932, this possibility was met with suspicion by the authorities at the former, who were concerned that his motives might be suspect. Edward Waldo Forbes (d. 1969), then director of the Fogg, contacted various people to request information about Aga-Oglu, including Howland Shaw, a former Harvard student then working at the United States embassy in Istanbul. In his letter, Forbes outlined what he understood as the problem:

There is a Turkish scholar named Aga-Oglu...he has been recommended to the Boston Museum and the Fogg Museum as a possible scholar whom we might use as an authority on Near Eastern art...[W]e have heard it inti-

mated that this man is a camouflaged dealer and hence an undesirable person as a museum man. Would it be too much trouble for you to drop me a line telling me whether you believe that he is a man of first-rate integrity or simply one of those people who tries to make use of a position in a museum to feather his own nest. The man who made the attack on Dr. Aga-Oglu is a man who is also a camouflaged dealer and for whom I have little respect; so I do not necessarily take the attack seriously.⁶⁸

Shaw's response made it clear that Aga-Oglu was trustworthy. In his letter, he told Forbes, "I have spoken with Halil Bey, former director of the Museum of Antiquities in Istanbul, and Halil Bey had a high opinion of Aga-Oglu as a scholar."⁶⁹

The other person Forbes contacted was Joseph Upton, assistant curator in the Department of Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In his response, Upton expressed concerns about nationalist sentiments in Aga-Oglu's work: "I believe he has a broad knowledge of Muhammedan art and of the cultural background but I believe his historical and stylistic opinions are colored and biased by an attempt to make every source of inspiration and development in the field Turkish."⁷⁰ He also expressed concern over giving such positions to non-Americans.⁷¹ In the end, however, both these issues were moot, since neither the Fogg nor the MFA was in a position to hire anyone. As Forbes explained to Upton: "There is no immediate question of either the Boston Museum or the Fogg Museum employing him at the present time because the money does not seem to be forthcoming just now."⁷²

The issue arose again in 1937, when Aga-Oglu approached the Fogg directly. This time he enquired about continuing the publication of *Ars Islamica*; he was leaving Michigan and anxious to find a new home for the journal.⁷³ Again Harvard was unable to pursue the issue. It may have been because of lingering suspicions about his motives, but there is no definite evidence to suggest this was the case.

However, soon after this the Fogg did find a curator for the Islamic collection—Eric Schroeder (fig. 6), husband of Forbes's niece. Born in Britain, Schroeder had studied at Oxford, where he read literary greats and modern history.⁷⁴ After Oxford, a chance opportunity to dig in Mesopotamia sparked an interest in the Middle East. Then, in 1931, he encountered Arthur Upham Pope

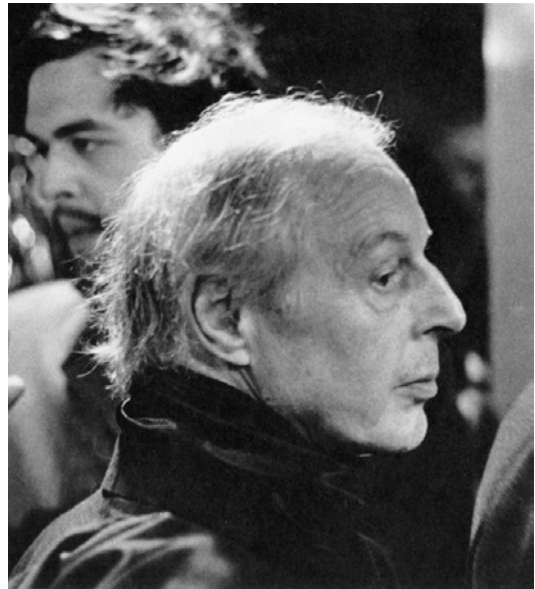


Fig. 6. Eric Schroeder (1904–71), May 1970. From Stuart Cary Welch, "Eric Schroeder" [obituary], *Acquisitions (Fogg Art Museum) 1969/1970*: 11. (Photo: courtesy of the Harvard Art Museum and the President and Fellows of Harvard College)

at the exhibition of Persian art at Burlington House in London and soon after joined him in Iran to survey the Masjid-i Jami' in Isfahan. Pope subsequently invited Schroeder to contribute to the *Survey of Persian Art*, for which he wrote the sections on early Islamic architecture and the architecture of the Seljuk period.⁷⁵ In the winter of 1935–36, Schroeder came to America and began working at the MFA as a volunteer assistant to Ananda Coomaraswamy.

When he joined the Fogg in 1938, Schroeder was given the title of "Keeper of Persian Art"; his principal duty was to write a catalogue of the Persian paintings in the collection.⁷⁶ During his first ten years at the Fogg, Schroeder did much to promote the display of the Islamic collection. The presentation of material continued in the same vein as before, focusing on Persian art and its ethno-racial qualities. In many ways, Schroeder can be seen as a direct intellectual descendent of Pope.⁷⁷ The London exhibition of 1931, which Pope had masterminded, and his subsequent working relationship with Pope made a huge impression upon Schroeder and shaped his future approach toward Islamic and Persian

art. Like Pope, he saw Persian art as an expression of the inherent racial characteristics of the Persian people, and in his writing he celebrated the timeless features of Persian artistic achievement. "As a race," he wrote, "it seems evident that the Persians have been the greatest decorators which the world has ever produced."⁷⁸ He was particularly interested in the aesthetic features of Persian art, writing in the news release for an exhibition of Persian miniatures: "those who are interested in decoration will find the unique brilliance of Persian colour-harmonies fascinating."⁷⁹

But it is important to note that Schroeder's interest in aesthetics was not limited to Persian art but applied to the wider sphere of *all* Islamic art. As he explained in an entry on Islamic art in the *Encyclopedia of the Arts*, "Muslims...have never looked to artists for special insights or meanings. They regarded the arts as we regard the decorative arts."⁸⁰ Schroeder's statement was typical of the thinking of the time. His approach was part of a tradition of studying the Orient that celebrated what was perceived as the uniquely sensual character of that part of the world and the notion that Islamic art was "pure decoration."⁸¹ Within this approach little effort was made to interpret or situate objects in a historical context, or to ask how objects were informed by that context.

While in the 1930s displays at the Fogg focused on Persian art and its ethno-racial character, in the 1940s there was a shift. In 1942, the museum exhibited Persian calligraphy, paintings, bronzes, pottery, and sculpture dating from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Although this show consisted of works of Persian art, the exhibition was actually billed as a display of "Islamic" art (as opposed to the formerly current terms "Saracenic" or "Mohammedan").⁸² Until then, the term "Islamic" had largely been absent from exhibitions at the Fogg. But from this point onwards, its use became increasingly common. In 1945, another exhibition was held, this time described as "Treasures from the Islamic Collection."⁸³ By the end of the decade, this trend was well established. The starkest illustration of it can be found in "an exhibition expository of the Islamic style" organized by Schroeder in 1949. The news release explained that the display would "emphasize the essential unity of the Islamic style...[C]onsisting of a limited

number of objects, the show will call attention to certain easily observed qualities common to all. Thus, instead of merely sensing the unity of Islamic style, the visitor will come to know in what that unity exists."⁸⁴

A central element of this notion of Islamic art was the idea that this tradition was essentially different from that of the West. As the news release stated: "All Islamic buildings from the Alhambra to the Taj Mahal share qualities of repose and refinement which differentiate them from those on the opposite side of the Mediterranean."⁸⁵ Here the essential "otherness" of Islamic art was emphasized through the carving up of world geography into fundamentally distinct artistic zones. This otherness was directly attributed to the religion of Islam which, as the theory went, had developed an artistic outlook that permeated every aspect of artistic endeavor: "[S]ince water vessels, plates and bronzes display these same traits, there may well be some connection between the artistic forms which Mohammedanism inspired and the religion itself."⁸⁶ This conception of Islamic art thus carried with it a set of associated ideas: that all Islamic art held certain features in common and that these traits signified such art to be fundamentally different from that of other traditions.

This shift toward an Islamic mode of interpretation, as manifested in the Fogg displays of the 1940s, was almost certainly inspired by a recently published book chapter on "The Character of Islamic Art," by Richard Ettinghausen, in which he outlined the essential features of "the peculiar character of Islamic art."⁸⁷ Although he acknowledged regional differences within the Islamic world, he argued these were "only variations of the general Islamic aspect."⁸⁸ Schroeder knew Ettinghausen and in this period they also collaborated on a book about Islamic art designed as a college manual for teaching undergraduates.⁸⁹

These ideas about Islamic art did not replace pre-existing notions about racial hierarchies but were rather grafted onto that tradition of thinking. The news release for the 1949 exhibition at the Fogg explained that in Persia the ethno-racial and Islamic influences came together in a combination of the Islamic style and the distinct character of the Persian people: "[I]n Persia, with its artistically gifted people, the idea that art is a more serious kind of endeavor than politics finds

support in the beauty of surviving monuments. It was this view of life that gave the energy necessary for the triumphs of the Islamic style."⁹⁰ The ethno-racial discourse and the universalist religious discourse had always coexisted as two sides of the same intellectual tradition. What occurred in this period was not one being eclipsed by the other, but rather the strengthening of the religious discourse within the framework of the ethno-racial one.

JOHN COOLIDGE AND NEW CONCERNS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As the century progressed into the 1950s, further developments had an impact on the study of Islamic art in Boston. In 1948, John Coolidge was appointed director of the Fogg Museum (fig. 7). From a well-established Cambridge family, Coolidge studied at Harvard, graduating in 1935, as well as at New York University (1936–43). During World War II, he worked in the U.S. navy, and after the war taught briefly at the University of Pennsylvania, before joining Harvard in 1947 as assistant professor in the Department of Fine Arts.⁹¹

Coolidge arrived at the Fogg with a clear ambition to begin a new era in the study and teaching of art history at Harvard. In recent years Harvard had lost its lofty place in the field of fine arts as Yale and the Institute of Fine Arts (part of New York University) came to the fore.⁹² Coolidge was anxious to restore Harvard to its position of preeminence, and one of the areas he identified where it could build up its position was Near Eastern and Islamic art. As he wrote to McGeorge Bundy (d. 1996), then dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences: "as far as I can make out, nowhere in this country does anybody teach Islamic art. Personally I should like this to be Harvard's specialty."⁹³

To do this he brought in key new personnel. Among the first was Joseph McMullan (d. 1973), who held the position of Honorary Research Fellow in Islamic Art from 1950 to 1951. A businessman who made a fortune from steel-pipe manufacturing, McMullan had a lifelong passion for rugs, particularly those from the Islamic world, and became a high-profile collector and connoisseur. In addition to collecting, he was an important vehicle for the wider dissemination of knowledge about



Fig. 7. Portrait of John Coolidge, n.d. Papers of John Coolidge (HC15), file 134. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. (Photo: courtesy of the Harvard Art Museums Archives)

Islamic art, and was often invited to give lectures and talks on his subject to local intellectual groups. He also donated generously to Harvard to support the study of Islamic art.⁹⁴

Another key person was Stuart Cary Welch (fig. 8). From 1952 to 1954 he pursued graduate studies in Islamic art at Harvard (though without gaining a doctoral degree), and in 1957 was appointed assistant curator at the Fogg. He would later become a lecturer in the Department of Fine Arts.⁹⁵ Welch's presence helped to spur on activity related to the study of Islamic art, mainly because of his contributions to the Fogg's collections. He spent much of the 1950s travelling in the Middle East and Asia, acquiring material for the museum. Most of the items he purchased were Persian and Indian paintings, manuscripts, and drawings, reflecting his particular interests and taste. With his involvement, John Coolidge's enthusiasm for the field rapidly developed. As Coolidge wrote to Welch in the summer of 1957: "Eric Schroeder soon converted me to



Fig. 8. Stuart Cary Welch (1928–2008), Hyderabad, India, 2007. (Photo: Bill Wood, courtesy of Thomas Welch)

Islamic art and anything that furthers the study of this subject at Harvard gives me keen personal happiness. Your coming here has done more to further this cause than anything since I've been around."⁹⁶

These developments coincided with a period in which the United States was undergoing fundamental changes in its relationship with the Middle East. After World War II, just as the United States emerged as a global superpower, the Middle East, with its enormous oil reserves, began to play a critical role in the Cold War. There was widespread fear that states in the region were at risk of falling to Communism. As a result of these strategic concerns, the U.S. government had much at stake in the Middle East, and the desire to control the region's oil resources and impose a degree of hegemony upon it became central to U.S. foreign policy.⁹⁷ As part of this endeavour, a number of strategic studies centers were established, with the aim of generating policy-relevant knowledge about the region. Much of the money for these centers came from foreign policy foundations

whose interests were connected with those of the U.S. government. At Harvard, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) was set up in 1954.⁹⁸

From the outset, the focus of the Center was on the modern Middle East. It aimed to address contemporary issues through the multidisciplinary study of the region, covering fields such as language, history, politics, economics, and culture.⁹⁹ In 1955, Sir Hamilton Gibb left his position as professor of Arabic at Oxford to become director of CMES. He brought with him a particular vision of how the Middle East should be studied and promoted the idea of "academic amphibians," a species of scholar who would be able to cross easily between different disciplines.¹⁰⁰ As part of this vision, he took a keen interest in art history. In 1958, he wrote to Coolidge:

We at this center have been thinking for some time about the ways and means in which the art of the Middle East could be activated as a subject of study. I need hardly emphasise to you the importance of the aesthetic and practical arts as one of the fundamentals by which a culture can be assessed and analysed, and while the art of the Middle East has its importance for students in many fields, the arts of the Islamic civilisation are of special significance to students working in or associated with this center.¹⁰¹

CMES undoubtedly had a marked and early influence upon the study of Islamic art at Harvard, as can be seen from an exhibition of Turkish art held at the Fogg in 1954. This display, put together by Schroeder and McMullan as part of a new course on the Turks in history, entitled "The Ottoman Empire and the Near East Since the End of the 13th Century,"¹⁰² consisted of a wide range of materials and was meant to "identify visually the characteristics of the Turks themselves."¹⁰³ In some respects the show continued pre-existing trends. The ethno-racial paradigm was strongly apparent in the press release, which explained that "a contrast between Turkish and non-Turkish art in the medieval Islamic style will be the basis of an attempt to connect formal differences with national characteristics."¹⁰⁴ But in other respects this display marked a shift in the way the material was interpreted. Rather than treating the decorative aspects of Turkish art, or the characteristics of a supposed "Islamic" style, the explicit aim of the show, in keeping with the Center's interest in current affairs, was to demonstrate the development of the Turks

through history in order to understand their position in the contemporary world. By attempting to consider objects through their function and meaning in their original historical context, the show signified a moment where the study of Islamic art began to move away from a purely aesthetic approach toward situating objects in the wider sphere of socio-political history.¹⁰⁵

Thus, in the 1950s a combination of factors—the arrival of new personnel, America’s changing relationship with the Middle East, the creation of CMES—came together to act as a spur towards the increased study of Islamic art. While these changes were taking place, Coolidge took an ever-keener interest in the field and began to articulate his own vision of why it was important to study Islamic art. As he explained in a memorandum entitled “A Teaching Curatorship of Near Eastern Art”:

There is no need to emphasize the rapidly increasing importance of the Near East in the world today. This situation imposes new responsibilities on the United States. Our country’s role is to promote peace in a part of the world peculiarly riven by national, racial, and religious hatreds. We can only begin to succeed in this role if future generations of Americans gain some understanding of the area’s full range of cultures: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greco-Roman, Muslim, and Jewish.¹⁰⁶

Elsewhere he wrote:

The events of the past year have forced the United States to assume new, serious and permanent commitments in the Near East. Policy in a democracy is determined by public opinion, and over the long run sound policy depends upon sound public understanding. To promote such understanding Harvard should encourage the study of all Near Eastern cultures....[n]o approach is more accessible, no method more revealing than the study of Near Eastern art.¹⁰⁷

While Coolidge was clearly devoted to developing the study of Islamic art for its own sake, his ambitions were also shaped by underlying geopolitical concerns such as oil, hegemony, and American power in the Middle East. And, crucially, Coolidge was an outsider to the field. Although interested in Islamic art, he was not a specialist, and many of the things he expected it to deliver were unrealistic. In relating the field of Islamic art history to contemporary political affairs, Coolidge was implicitly searching for overarching generalizations

that could be extracted from an abstract and timeless conception of “Islamic” culture and applied to a seemingly unfathomable part of the world in order to render it more understandable. Coolidge’s statements are an articulation of a problem that has hung over the study of Islamic art for several decades, namely, the expectation that as an academic discipline it should be able to provide relevant knowledge about the current affairs of the Middle East.¹⁰⁸

With his growing interest in Islamic art, Coolidge began to devise schemes to expand its study. One of his main concerns was how to convert Harvard’s Semitic Museum into a center for teaching Islamic art, an idea first proposed in the early 1950s by McMullan and himself. At that stage, before CMES had been established, they had envisaged overhauling the entire building and converting it into a center for research and teaching about the Middle East.¹⁰⁹ Later, after CMES had been founded, Coolidge focused his efforts on raising money so that the museum could house a department devoted to Near Eastern art.¹¹⁰ In the end, however, these plans were not realized. Funding was a problem and Coolidge also suspected that there might be strong personal feelings attached to the disbanding of the museum. In the summer of 1957 he concluded that “for the time being at least I visualise the Fogg providing the headquarters for the study of Near Eastern Art.”¹¹¹

Thus, in 1958, Coolidge was keen to press ahead with his plans, having decided that the Fogg Museum would be the best place to house a center for Islamic art. But now he needed to know what materials were available to teach the subject. He therefore commissioned Florence Day, who had originally been brought to his attention by Sir Hamilton Gibb, to produce her survey assessing all the resources in Boston that could be used to develop the field.¹¹² Coolidge thought that once armed with this knowledge, they would be equipped to launch a program in Islamic art.

However, as noted earlier, the report was not met with enthusiasm. But what was so problematic about it? Why were Coolidge and Schroeder unimpressed by it? The answer lies in the nature of the report Day produced. She saw the study of Islamic art as an archaeological pursuit, believing that the true essence of the subject was to be found in the early centuries of the Islamic era. As she wrote in her introduction:

It must be pointed out that the early Islamic period, especially the first three hundred years up to about 900 AD, is the most important, because it was then that artistic traditions and criteria were established, and thus it is essential to everything else that follows...But the period after 1500 AD is to all intents the modern period, so its material is simply summarized in groups—for it would be an expense of spirit to list it one by one...¹¹³

Throughout the report Day continued in the same vein, only ever giving scant attention to later Islamic art. It was thus a perfect encapsulation of the normative view expressed by Frank Macomber and Garrick Borden half a century previously. Neither Coolidge nor Schroeder shared this perspective. Coolidge expected Islamic art to offer insights into the contemporary Middle East, and a survey of archaeological holdings offered no prospect of this. Schroeder, meanwhile, thought the report useless because of its heavy focus on early Islamic art, to the exclusion of the later periods in its development. Operating within an ethno-racial paradigm that saw sensual decoration and the Persian miniatures of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries as the *ne plus ultra* of Islamic art, he felt the report grossly skewed the entire field and neglected what he regarded as the most distinguished period in the Islamic artistic tradition.¹¹⁴ Denman Ross had also adhered to this point of view, though to a lesser extent.

In this way the Day report represented the convergence of several different discourses on the study of Islamic art that had been circulating continuously around Boston throughout the first half of the twentieth century, resurfacing and reemerging at different moments, depending on particular circumstances.¹¹⁵

CONCLUSION

During the first half of the twentieth century, the study of Islamic art in Boston moved through a succession of phases. In the first two decades, when the MFA was the most important center of activity, the influence of the Aesthetic Movement encouraged the de-contextualized and de-historicized viewing of art objects. Amateurs driven by a connoisseurial interest in beauty and the pursuit of social status began to form and display collections of Islamic art.

In the 1930s, activity shifted from the MFA to the Fogg Art Museum. In this period, attention was focused on Persian art, which was interpreted in terms of its racial and decorative qualities. These activities were heavily shaped by emerging discourses about Iranian nationalism that were being articulated simultaneously by scholars in the West and by nationalists in Iran.

In the 1940s and 1950s, activity continued to be focused on the Fogg. In this period, the study of Islamic art was more closely subjected to academic and intellectual agendas. Some of these were positive: as Islamic art was connected with other fields, the interpretative framework in which objects were displayed was broadened. Others, however, were problematic: with the changing position of the United States in global politics and the rise of the Middle East as an area of major strategic interest, the exigencies of contemporary politics led outsiders to the field to make demands upon it that it could not meet.

During this period, the study of Islamic art remained a field dominated by figures from Europe and America. The one scholar from the Middle East who was active at this time, Mehmet Aga-Oglu, was marginalized within the discipline.¹¹⁶ Between the different figures who did play a role in shaping the subject and the outlooks they represented, the study of Islamic art was pulled in different directions, influenced by a variety of factors, some international, others unique to the United States and the social and political life of the East Coast. The legacy of this period can still be felt strongly in the field today.

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NOTES

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1. Letter from John Coolidge to Florence Day, March 27, 1958. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 501. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
2. Ibid.
3. In her capacity as a ceramics specialist, Day had reviewed the chapters on ceramics in Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, 6 vols. (London, 1938). She also had some publications on textiles and had been at the center of a controversial debate over the dating of a collection of Buyid silks, some of which she had correctly exposed as forgeries. See Florence E. Day, untitled review of *Soieries Persanes* by Gaston Wiet, *Ars Islamica* 15–16 (1951): 231–44. For a later overview of the whole debate, see Sheila S. Blair, Jonathan M. Bloom, and Anne E. Wardwell, “Reevaluating the Date of the ‘Buyid’ Silks by Epigraphic and Radiocarbon Analysis,” *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 1–41. Mehmet Aga-Oglu is discussed in greater detail later in this article.
4. Florence E. Day, “Plans for Research.” John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 501. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
5. Day Report on Islamic Art. Archives Department, Box 127. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
6. Letter from John Coolidge to Agnes Mongan, July 22, 1960. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 501. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
7. Letter from Eric Schroeder to John Coolidge, undated. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 501. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
8. For overviews of the development of the field, see Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan Bloom, “The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field,” *Art Bulletin* 85, 1 (March 2003): 152–84; Stephen Vernoit, “Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview of Scholarship and Collecting, c. 1850–c. 1950,” in *Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, ed. Stephen Vernoit (London, 2000), 1–62; Sibel Bozdoğan and Gülru Necipoğlu, “Entangled Discourses: Scrutinizing Orientalist and Nationalist Legacies in the Architectural Historiography of the ‘Lands of Rum,’” in “Historiography and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the ‘Lands of Rum,’” ed. Gülru Necipoğlu and Sibel Bozdoğan, special issue, *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 1–7; Oleg Grabar, “Islamic Art and Archaeology,” in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York, 1976), 229–63; Oleg Grabar, “Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art,” *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 1–14; and Gülru Necipoğlu, “Ornamentalism and Orientalism: The Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century European Literature,” in *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture; Topkapı Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956* (Santa Monica, Calif., 1995), 61–109. For a survey of the development of Islamic archaeology, see Stephen Vernoit, “The Rise of Islamic Archaeology,” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 1–10, and John M. Rogers, “From Antiquarianism to Islamic Archaeology,” *Quaderni dell’Istituto Italiano di Cultura per la R.A.E.*, n.s. 2 (1974): 9–65.
9. See essays in Vernoit, *Discovering Islamic Art*, and Rémi Labrusse, *Purs décor?: Arts de l’Islam, regards du XIXe siècle: Collection des Arts Décoratifs*, exh. cat. (Paris, 2007). For a discussion of early collections in Europe, see David J. Roxburgh, “Au Bonheur des Amateurs: Collecting and Exhibiting Islamic Art, ca. 1880–1910,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 9–38.
10. See Marylin Jenkins-Madina, “Collecting the ‘Orient’ at the Met: Early Tastemakers in America,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 69–89; Marianna Shreve Simpson, “‘A Gallant Era’: Henry Walters, Islamic Art, and the Kelekian Collection,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 91–112; Stuart Cary Welch, “Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book,” in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk, exh. cat. (London, 1985), 25–31; and Julia Bailey, “Early Rug Collectors of New England,” in *Through the Collector’s Eye: Oriental Rugs from New England Private Collections*, ed. Susan Anderson Hay (Providence, R.I., 1991), 12–21.
11. Kishwar Rizvi, “Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on ‘Persian Art’ in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 47.
12. For a brief obituary of Mehmet Aga-Oglu, see Maurice Dimand, “Mehmet Aga-Oglu,” *College Art Journal* 9, 2 (Winter 1949–50): 208–9. For his full biography, see Semavi Eyice, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1988–), s.v. “Mehmet Ağaoglu,” esp. 466. In 1938, Richard Ettinghausen, who had previously taught at New York University, took over this position and the editing of *Ars Islamica*. After a successful business career, Freer devoted his life and fortune to collecting art—at first American and European, but ultimately focusing on Japan, Korea, and China. In 1920, he gave a \$50,000 gift of stock to the University of Michigan to promote the study of “Oriental art.” It is not clear how or why this broadly defined endowment was eventually allocated to a specific endeavor to support the study of Islamic art.
13. For a history of the museum, see Walter Muir Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: A Centennial History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).
14. For an overview of Islamic art collecting at Harvard, see Stuart Cary Welch, “From Currant Cake to Shahnamehs, and Beyond,” in *Harvard’s Art Museums: 100 Years of Collecting*, ed. James B. Cuno (Cambridge, Mass., and New York, 1996), 122–27.
15. For full details of the Islamic material in the Gardner collection, see Yasuko Horioka, Marylin Rhie, and Walter B. Denny, *Oriental and Islamic Art in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston, 1975). Also see Alan Chong, Richard Lingner, and Carl Zahn, eds., *Eye of the Beholder: Masterpieces from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston, 2003), 161–71, for selected highlights from this material.

16. For an intellectual and cultural biography of Ross, see Marie Ann Frank, *Denman Ross and American Design Theory* (Hanover, N.H., 2011).
17. When travelling in India he noted that he was “doing this Mohammedan part of India rather rapidly, because it does not interest us so very much. The buildings and the sculpture are too late to be good. Even the Taj Mahal leaves me cold and unmoved. It is the India of Buddhism and of Brahmanism that really interests me.” Later he had a similarly underwhelmed response in Morocco; although the country was “intensely interesting,” he complained that there were “very few important buildings, buildings that count as works of art.” See Denman Ross to Isabella Stewart Gardner, February 11, 1913, and April 6, 1921. Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Isabella Stewart Gardner Papers, 1760–1956.
18. See the obituary for Ross in *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 33, 200 (December 1935): 18.
19. Its acquisition also depended on the brokering of Rudolf Riefstahl, a scholar/dealer based in Europe. Victor Goloubew, Russian by birth, was a scholar and collector based in Paris. His collection, one of the most extensive at that time, had been on display for several years at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. He sold these works to the MFA in order to start collecting Chinese art. See the *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 13, 74 (February 1915). For details of the background to its acquisition, see Erin Bauer, “The Goloubew Collection: A Transatlantic History” (PhD qualifying paper, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University, 2005). For further details on the collection, see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Les miniatures orientales de la collection Goloubew au Museum of Fine Arts de Boston* (Paris, 1929).
20. For a brief summary of Wetzel’s life, see *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 16, 93 (February 1918): 88. For information on the half of his collection that he donated to the Fogg, see “Gems of Eastern Art Reach Harvard,” *Boston Daily Globe*, November 2, 1919. His collection was diverse, and included Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Persian art.
21. For information specifically about Gardner’s engagement with Asian art and her travels in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East, see Alan Chong, ed., *Journeys East: Isabella Stewart Gardner and Asia* (Boston, 2009).
22. See *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 1, 1 (March 1903): 8; and *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 13, 45 (June 1910): 23. The role of dealers in the formation of these collections is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is certainly a subject that deserves further research. For more information about Kelekian and his relationship with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, see Jenkins-Madina, “Collecting the ‘Orient,’” 73–76, and Simpson, “‘A Gallant Era.’”
23. On Berenson’s engagement with Islamic art, see Priscilla Soucek, “Walter Pater, Bernard Berenson, and the Reception of Persian Manuscript Illustration,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 40 (2001): 113–28; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, “The Bernard Berenson Collection of Islamic Painting at Villa I Tatti: Mamluk, Ilkhanid, and Early Timurid Miniatures. Part I,” *Oriental Art* 47, 4 (2001): 53–62; and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, “The Bernard Berenson Collection of Islamic Painting at Villa I Tatti: Turkman, Uzbek, and Safavid Miniatures. Part II,” *Oriental Art* 48, 1 (2002): 2–16.
24. For a short overview of this collection, see Richard Ettinghausen, *Persian Miniatures in the Bernard Berenson Collection* (Milan, 1961).
25. Chong, *Journeys East*, 36.
26. Letters from Bernard Berenson to Paul Sachs, October 13, 1928; March 17, 1929; and January 15, 1930. Paul J. Sachs Papers (HC 3), file 138. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
27. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 14, 83 (June 1916): 19.
28. “Harvard Art Instructor,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 25, 1912.
29. *Annual Report of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (1911): 123. Unfortunately the content of this course could not be found.
30. “Opens Series,” *Boston Daily Globe*, January 6, 1911.
31. “Reasons why teachers of history should study Moslem History, Civilization and Art,” undated document, Fine Arts, Harvard Depository.
32. See, for example, H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey* (London, 1949). For a critique of the Islamic civilization model, see Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York, 2004), 75–77.
33. The umbrella term “Islamic” has proved hard to shake and continues to be used as a framing device for the discipline, particularly in surveys of the field (though with declining frequency). It also continues to be used as a framing device for exhibition programming: see Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen* (Chestnut Hill, Mass., and Chicago, 2006).
34. “Leaflet Guide to the New Museum Building” (addendum to *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 7, 39 [June 1909]).
35. Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 240.
36. Exhibition Records (HC 6), files 1832–1833. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
37. Called “Gems of Eastern Art.”
38. See Gilbert W. Longstreet, comp., *The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum General Catalogue* (Boston, 1935), 149–70, and 212–30. The Gardner Museum remained unchanged in its layout from its foundation, as stipulated by Gardner herself.
39. The Arts and Crafts Movement emerged in Britain and lasted from roughly 1860 to 1910. Led by the artist William Morris, it was a reaction against the effects of industrialization and promoted the practice of traditional craftsmanship using simple forms and a return to medieval and folk styles of decoration.
40. For an overview of the Aesthetic Movement in America, see Roger B. Stein, “Artifact as Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement in Its American Cultural Context,” in *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke et al. (New York, 1986), 22–51; and

- Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870–1930* (Princeton, N.J., 2000), 182–85.
41. Theodore Sizer, "Draft Article for the Dictionary of American Biography." Denman Waldo Ross Papers. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 42. "The Wetzel Exhibition," *Bulletin of the Fogg Art Museum* 1, 1 (November 1931): 2.
 43. For more discussion of Berenson's influence on early scholarship on Islamic art, see G.A. Bailey, "Bernard Berenson Collection of Islamic Painting at Villa I Tatti: Turkman, Uzbek, and Safavid Miniatures," 16.
 44. For a discussion of issues connected with these discourses, the way they have intersected, and the implications for scholarship past and present, see Bozdoğan and Necipoğlu, "Entangled Discourses"; Gülru Necipoğlu, "Creation of a National Genius: Sinan and the Historiography of 'Classical' Ottoman Architecture," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 141–83; Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, "An Uneasy Historiography: The Legacy of Ottoman Architecture in the Former Arab Provinces," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 29; and Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview," 6–7. While the categories of "Arab" and "Turkish" have largely been deconstructed and abandoned, the idea of "Persian" art still holds strong. See, for example, *Studies in Honor of Arthur Upham Pope, Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 18, ed. Abbas Daneshvari (Costa Mesa, Calif., 2005.)
 45. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 12, 68 (February 1914): 5.
 46. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 13, 74 (February 1915): 3.
 47. See Soucek, "Walter Pater, Bernard Berenson." The interest in Persian art was also related to the Art Nouveau Movement (ca. 1890–1910), which inspired a growing interest in non-Western art and encouraged appreciation of a wider range of arts, including textiles, furniture, glassware, book design, and jewelry. Iranian glassware in particular was a source of inspiration for Art Nouveau artists. See Vernoit, "Islamic Art and Architecture: An Overview," 29.
 48. The archetypal example of this is Frederic Church and the art collection that he built up at his home, Olana. See Edwards, *Noble Dreams*, 30.
 49. Neil Harris, "Collective Possession: J. Pierpont Morgan and the American Imagination," in *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America*, ed. Neil Harris (Chicago, 1990), 267–68.
 50. Quoted in Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 212–13. Prichard was actually writing about a slightly earlier period in the museum's history, the 1890s. However, there is no reason to believe that these aspects of museum life should not have continued into the early twentieth century.
 51. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 14, 83 (June 1916): 19.
 52. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 12, 71 (August 1914): 41–42.
 53. Denman Waldo Ross to Morris Gray, August 15, 1912. Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Directors' Correspondence, 1901–1954.
 54. See Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 240. This was part of a broader trend at the museum away from classification by medium toward arranging materials by region and period.
 55. Coomaraswamy brought with him to the MFA his collection of Rajput and Jaina paintings and small Indian bronzes. For a biography of Coomaraswamy, along with a select bibliography and the reproduction of some of his essays, see Roger Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, Bollingen Series, 3 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1977).
 56. The one significant venture of this period was the excavation of Rayy undertaken by the MFA together with the Iranian government and the University of Pennsylvania. However, the MFA withdrew in 1937 after it became clear that most of the finds were of archaeological rather than artistic interest. See Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts*, 530.
 57. After Coomaraswamy died in 1947, there was no Islamic art curator until Milo Cleveland Beach arrived in 1964.
 58. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 2011. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 59. Exhibition Records (HC 6), files 2009–2010. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 60. Exhibition Records (HC 6), files 2002–2008, 2478–2479. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. It is not clear who curated these shows. After Ananda Coomaraswamy arrived at the MFA, he occasionally lent his expertise in putting together catalogues, publicity material, and wall postings, so he might have helped with these exhibitions. Letter from Edward Waldo Forbes to Ananda Coomaraswamy, December 10, 1932. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 249. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 61. See Rizvi, "Art History and the Nation."
 62. *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 29, 1930. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 2011. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 63. *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 1, 1934. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 2009. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 64. See n. 62 above.
 65. See Finbarr Barry Flood, "From the Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art," in *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions*, ed. Elizabeth C. Mansfield (New York, 2007), 31–39. This idea has been very influential in the field and remains so to this day. In a recent appraisal of the field, Blair and Bloom, "Mirage of Islamic Art," 175, assert that twentieth-century art from the Islamic world should best be left to scholars of the contemporary arts, since it is altogether different from the true artistic traditions of the Islamic world. Although these remarks were meant as a corrective to the idea of the "unchanging East," such notions actually perpetuate the enforced dichotomy between an Islamic, "pre-modern" tradition and art produced under the era of Western-induced modernity. There is no reason why such subjects should not be of interest to both scholars of classical Islamic art and those of contemporary art.
 66. For a standard example of the disparaging way in which such art has been viewed, see Basil Robinson, "Persian Painting under the Zand and Qajar Dynasties," in *The Cam-*

- bridge *History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge, 1991), 870–89.
67. Letter from Bernard Berenson to Paul Sachs, March 17, 1929. Paul J. Sachs Papers (HC 3), file 138. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 68. Letter from Edward Waldo Forbes to Howland Shaw, April 29, 1932. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 16. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. It is not clear who the other “camouflaged dealer” was to whom Forbes refers. However, it is worth noting that many scholars at that time were also dealers, notably Arthur Upham Pope and Rudolf Riefstahl.
 69. Letter from Howland Shaw to Edward Waldo Forbes, May 19, 1932. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 16. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Halil Bey had sent Aga-Oglu to study in Europe, grooming him to become director of the Islamic art collection in Istanbul. See Necipoğlu, “Creation of a National Genius,” 159.
 70. Letter from Joseph Upton to Edward Waldo Forbes, May 16, 1932. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 16. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Concern over the influence of scholars from the Islamic world persists even now, though in a slightly different form. Today, rather than being informed by a fear of nationalist sentiment, the concern is often voiced that scholars from the Islamic world may be driven by a search for identity rather than an “objective” scholarly interest. See Blair and Bloom, “Mirage of Islamic Art,” 176.
 71. *Ibid.* As Upton explained in his letter: “I do feel very strongly, Mr Forbes, on the matter of American museums hiring Europeans for their staff. I am not one to try to always make the American eagle scream...but I do believe that there is no reason why, with patience and opportunity, we cannot develop American archaeologists and museum curators every bit as capable as those in Europe.”
 72. Letter from Edward Waldo Forbes to Joseph Upton, May 20, 1932. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 16. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 73. Letters from Mehmet Aga-Oglu to Paul Sachs, October 11, 1937, and January 18, 1938. Paul J. Sachs Papers (HC 3), file 17. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. It is not clear from these letters whether Aga-Oglu was just searching for a home for the journal *Ars Islamica* or was also looking for a teaching position for himself.
 74. For an account of Schroeder, memories of his contributions to life at Harvard, and his full bibliography, see the tribute to him by Stuart Cary Welch, “Eric Schroeder” [obituary], in *Acquisitions (Fogg Art Museum) 1969/1970*, 9–30.
 75. Pope and Ackerman, *Survey of Persian Art*.
 76. Letter from Edward Waldo Forbes to Eric Schroeder, March 26, 1938. Edward Waldo Forbes Papers (HC 2), file 1898. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. As Forbes explained in his letter, on account of the temporary absence of Langdon Warner (a specialist in Chinese and Japanese art), the Fogg had \$500 to spare with which they could employ Schroeder on a part-time basis. Initially he was only employed for a year, with no guarantee of renewal after that. For the catalogue, see Eric Schroeder, *Persian Miniatures in the Fogg Museum of Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942). Schroeder remained at the Fogg until his death in 1971. Although he organized many exhibitions during his time at Harvard, he did not engage in any teaching. In his letter offering him work, Forbes explained to Schroeder that: “[w]e are unable just now to invite you to give a course at Harvard but it will be perfectly possible we are sure to arrange to have you give a small course of 3 or 4 or 6 public lectures on Persian art. The decision to invite you to give this course of public lectures rather than a regular university course is the result of a difficult situation which involves various people and in no way is a reflection on your capacity to give such a course.” Stuart Cary Welch believed that Schroeder was barred from teaching because there were concerns about his pro-German sentiment (telephone interview, December 2, 2006). See also Welch, “Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book,” 29. Schroeder’s private papers contain outlines for courses he taught on Persian painting, so it is quite possible that he did some teaching privately.
 77. For a discussion of Pope’s approach to Persian art, see Barry D. Wood, “‘A Great Symphony of Pure Form’: The 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art and Its Influence,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 17–19; and Rizvi, “Art History and the Nation.”
 78. Eric Schroeder, “6000 Years of Persian Art,” *Parnassus* 12, 5 (1940): 20.
 79. News Release, undated. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 2011. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 80. Eric Schroeder, *Encyclopedia of the Arts*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Schrikel (New York, 1946), s.v. “Islamic Art.” For a similar viewpoint expressed more recently, see Blair and Bloom, *Cosmophilia*.
 81. See the essays in Labrusse, *Purs décors?*, in particular Gülru Necipoğlu, “L’idée de décor dans les régimes de visualité islamiques,” 10–23. See also Necipoğlu, *Topkapı Scroll*, 61–71.
 82. See n. 79 above.
 83. “Hand-List of the Exhibition,” 1945. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 1490. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 84. News Release, June 1, 1949. Exhibition Records (HC 6), file 1492. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 85. *Ibid.*
 86. *Ibid.*
 87. Richard Ettinghausen, “The Character of Islamic Art,” in *The Arab Heritage*, ed. Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton, N.J., 1944), 251. For a corrective to Ettinghausen’s analysis, see

- Mehmet Aga-Oglu, "Remarks on the Character of Islamic Art," *Art Bulletin* 36, 3 (September 1954): 175–202.
88. Ettinghausen, "Character of Islamic Art," 260. Ettinghausen concluded his analysis by observing that "Islamic art usually consists of a humble base; this is often covered with some sparkling or evanescent surface decoration which purports to be of precious material and presents forms divested of corporeal substance."
 89. Richard Ettinghausen and Eric Schroeder, eds., *Iranian and Islamic Art* (Newton, Mass., 1941).
 90. News release, June 1, 1949 (see above n. 84).
 91. Coolidge's initial aim was to become an architect, but he instead pursued an academic path, writing a dissertation at New York University on the sixteenth-century architect Giacomo Barozzi Il Vignola. For his biography, see www.dictionarofarthistorians.org/coolidgej.htm.
 92. This was part of a wider decline in the humanities at Harvard in the post-war period. See Morton and Phyllis Keller, *Making Harvard Modern: The Rise of America's University* (New York, 2007), 241–47.
 93. Letter from John Coolidge to McGeorge Bundy, July 1, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 924. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 94. Throughout the 1950s, McMullan gave considerable sums to support the study of Islamic art at Harvard. In 1956, the money was transferred into a special fund for "the encouragement of the study of the art and culture of the Islamic world": Letter from Joseph McMullan to Nathan Pusey, March 5, 1956. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 1643. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. It was named the Damon-Dilley Fund, after the two eminent rug collectors Arthur Dilley and Theron Johnson Damon, and is still being used to support travel and research related to Islamic art and architecture for Harvard students.
 95. For an overview of the time Welch spent at Harvard and his contribution to life there, see Stuart Cary Welch and Kimberly Masteller, *From Mind, Heart, and Hand: Persian, Turkish, and Indian Drawings from the Stuart Cary Welch Collection*, with essays by Mary McWilliams and Craigen W. Bowen (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).
 96. Letter from John Coolidge to Stuart Cary Welch, July 26, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 3099. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 97. See Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 115–30.
 98. For a history of CMES, see *Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future*, ed. Don Babai (Cambridge, Mass., 2004). In this period Harvard also established the Russian Research Center (est. 1948; renamed in 1996 as the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies) and the Center for East Asian Research (est. 1955; now the John K. Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, after its founder).
 99. Some of these areas, particularly the teaching of languages, were already covered by the Department of Semitic Languages and History. See *ibid.*, 5–6.
 100. H. A. R. Gibb, *Area Studies Reconsidered* (London, 1963), 14.
 101. Letter from Hamilton A. R. Gibb to John Coolidge, October 3, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 925. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The long-term influence of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies upon the study of Islamic art is beyond the scope of this article. However, we should not doubt that it had a strong impact upon the field, particularly by bringing the study of Islamic art and architecture much closer to the field of area studies: see Grabar, "Islamic Art and Archaeology." It almost certainly also had an important formative influence upon many future scholars of Islamic art who earned their doctorates at Harvard and who probably took courses at CMES during their graduate studies. Indeed, Oleg Grabar, who taught at Harvard from 1969 to 1990, encouraged his students to take courses at the Center before embarking on their doctoral research (telephone interview, December 5, 2006).
 102. Letter from John Coolidge to Erwin Nathaniel Griswold, December 23, 1953. Registrar's Exhibition Files, file: 1954 Exhibition: The Turks in History, February 1st–March 15th. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 103. News Release, undated. Registrar's Exhibition Files, file: 1954 Exhibition: The Turks in History, February 1st–March 15th. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 104. *Ibid.*
 105. The display was nonetheless problematic in other ways. Even though some of the older preconceptions about Islamic art may have been shed, the objects in the show were basically being deployed to demonstrate political narratives. The entire exhibition was organized to celebrate the emergence of the modern nation-state of Turkey from the Ottoman Empire. A rigid distinction between the pre-modern Islamic empire and the modern Turkish nation-state was articulated through the layout of the exhibition, where, as the press release described, "One section...will be devoted to the Islamic background of the Turkish empire; another will deal with modern Turkey and the influence of the West." The connections with contemporary politics can be seen even more clearly in the involvement of officials from the Turkish consulate, who were requested to provide material to cover the "modern" part of the display. As McMullan wrote to the education attaché at the Turkish consulate in New York, "The University has excellent resources for the first and second areas [covering the Seljuk and Ottoman periods], but is happy indeed to rely upon your office and the Turkish information office in NY for material which applies specifically to the remarkable results which have been achieved by modern Turkey": Letter from Joseph McMullan to Ermin Hemingil, October 30, 1953. Registrar's Exhibition Files, file: 1954 Exhibition: The Turks in History, February 1st–March 15th. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The Fogg itself did not actually have much Seljuk or

- Ottoman material; for this exhibition it had been borrowed from the Peabody Museum, the MFA, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
106. "A Teaching Curatorship in Near Eastern Art." John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 913. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 107. Undated document, John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 913. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. This document is undated but presumably he is writing in 1956, in response to the Suez crisis.
 108. For a discussion of these issues and the strains it has placed on the discipline, see Flood, "From the Prophet to Postmodernism?" 42–44. One of the resulting problems has been a tendency to see Islamic art as a potential "bridge" between two hopelessly divided civilizations. This viewpoint, which has been especially pronounced since the events of September 11, 2001, has promoted the idea that through Islamic art one can discover the "true," peaceful spirit of Islam, which can be used as a foundation for building better mutual understanding amid current political conflict. See Faye S. Oweis, "Islamic Art as an Educational Tool about the Teaching of Islam," *Art Education* 55, 2 (March 2002): 18–24.
 109. Letter from John Coolidge to Paul Buck, April 21, 1952. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 1644. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 110. Letter from John Coolidge to Edward Warburg, May 27, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 924. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The Semitic Museum opened in 1903, courtesy of a gift from Jacob Schiff, "to Promote the Sound Knowledge of Semitic History and Literature." Its sizable collections included ancient Near Eastern and early Islamic objects, and a collection of Arabic, Syriac, and Greek papyri manuscripts. The collections were curated first by Henry Lyon and then by Robert Pfeiffer. By the early 1950s, the museum was suffering financially because the original endowment had run out after the end of World War I. Although there were still endowments attached to the museum, there was no funding available to pay for the basic maintenance of the building. By the late 1950s it had declined even further; in 1957, it was reckoned that the museum had "virtually no impact of any sort. It is not only useless, it is worse than useless, for its continued existence creates a deficit. Meeting this is a drain every year on Harvard's educational resources.": "The Problem of the Semitic Museum," July 24, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 924. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. In 1958, the Semitic Museum was converted into the Harvard Center for International Affairs, under the leadership of Henry Kissinger. It remained so until 1974, when it became the headquarters of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. I am grateful to Joseph Greene, assistant director of the Semitic Museum, for this information about the museum's history.
 111. "The Semitic Museum and Some Related Problems," August 14, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 924. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. By "Near Eastern" he means the entire course of Near Eastern art, both pre-Islamic and Islamic.
 112. Letter from John Coolidge to McGeorge Bundy, December 23, 1957. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 925. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 113. See n. 5 above.
 114. It ought to be noted that by this time Eric Schroeder was fading into the background at Harvard. In 1955, Coolidge approached him about putting together a series of lectures on Islamic art, but he turned down the offer saying that he wanted to concentrate on new areas of research. Coolidge was shocked and disappointed, and could not understand why he did not want to take up such an opportunity. It seems that Schroeder had gradually moved away from his interest in Islamic art and withdrawn into his own work on astrology. Letter from John Coolidge to Joseph McMullan, May 5, 1955. Letter from Joseph McMullan to Nathan Pusey, March 5, 1956. John Coolidge and Agnes Mongan Papers (HC 5), file 1643. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 115. More recently, there has been renewed debate regarding what exactly the field should and should not encompass. Indeed, this has become one of the most actively discussed aspects of the discipline and has been a critical issue in recent appraisals of the state of the field. See Flood, "From the Prophet to Postmodernism?" 31–34.
 116. It is important to note that the challenges Aga-Oglu made to some of the prevailing ideas about Islamic art also went unheeded: see Aga-Oglu, "Remarks on the Character of Islamic Art."