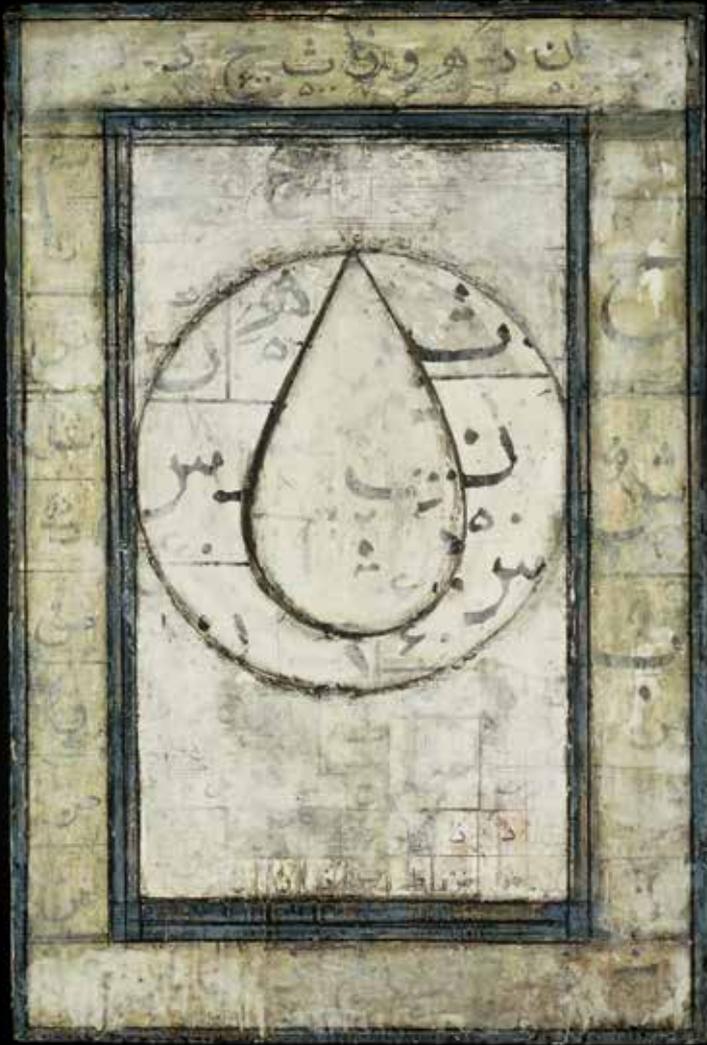


Teaching Art of the Middle East and the Islamic World

An Art Education Conference



Taraneh Hemami, *Alphabet of Silence* (2000)



Mixed Group Discussions (Sunday morning)

Teaching Art of the Middle East and the Islamic World

An Art Education Conference

What do you want to know more about?

What kind of inquiry came up that could be brought into your learning environment?



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I. Introduction

On November 4 and 5, 2017, educators, artists and curators met in San Francisco to discuss new approaches to teaching the art of the Middle East and Islamic World.¹ This teaching conference was co-sponsored by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and San Francisco State University with outreach from the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, and important support from the Spencer Foundation.

Our basic project was to bring new critical approaches to teaching art of the Middle East and Islamic world, recognizing that the history of this discipline has long been impacted by a deeply embedded colonial mindset, and acknowledging that this art history is now set against an urgent contemporary moment of violence and bigotry. We hoped to brainstorm both specific and more general recommendations about how art history education can help bridge understanding, and refresh and renew teaching this topic.

The conference was deeply collaborative and its participants included teachers from K12, higher education, museum curators and educators, artists, and scholar/specialists. The first day at the de Young Museum introduced topics of historical architecture, contemporary art and fashion with presentations, discussions and Q&A. The second day at San Francisco State University hosted further discussions focused on making recommendations.

This report provides a glimpse of some of the presentations and discussions from both the first day of the conference, summarized in an essay by Dr. Kathy Zarur, and with notes that document recommendations from the second.



figure A: **Monir Farnamfarmaian**, *Decagon*, 2011, diameter 120 cm.,
mirror mosaic, plaster and glue on wood.

II. Essay:

Summary of Presentations and Discussions from November 4, 2017

Dr. Kathy Zarur

Now well into her 90s, the Iranian artist Monir Farmanfarmaian produces sculptures covered in mirrors arranged in geometric patterns. The artist is inspired by the use of mirrors in Iranian shrine architecture, such as the awe-inspiring Shah Cheragh in Shiraz (see figures A and B). Linking Farmanfarmaian's work to architectural traditions from the land where she grew into her artistic own makes sense. However, as Dr. Shiva Balaghi wittily suggested during her keynote speech at "Teaching Art of the Middle East and Islamic World," we should also think about Farmanfarmaian's work in relationship to disco balls, under which the artist enjoyed dancing in her life. Balaghi's re-reading of Farmanfarmaian's work signals that there are unexpected paths to take in understanding the work of an artist from the Middle East. On the other hand, it reveals the narrow lens through which art from the Middle East and Islamic world is often understood by audiences in the West. And while Balaghi's levity was welcome during a day of discussions that were sure to be serious, it also reminded audiences that it is only when we push aside our preconceived ideas about the region that we may begin to access its richness and depth. This anecdote about shrines and discos points to some major goals of "Teaching Art of the Middle East and Islamic World." How do schools, universities and museums present this material, if at all? What tools might we wield to gain an honest understanding of historical, 20th century modern and contemporary visual culture in the Middle East? The two-day conference and pedagogy workshop sponsored by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and San Francisco State University (SFSU) and hosted at the de Young Museum and on the SFSU campus in November of 2017 was convened to address the question of how educators in schools, universities and museums, may approach this material with greater awareness of the issues at stake.²

That Farmanfarmaian is on the western art world's radar is indicative of a shift. There is greater awareness of art from the Middle East, Islamic worlds and its diasporas, signaling an art world that seems to be getting smaller and smaller. Major museums, such as LACMA, the New Museum in New York,

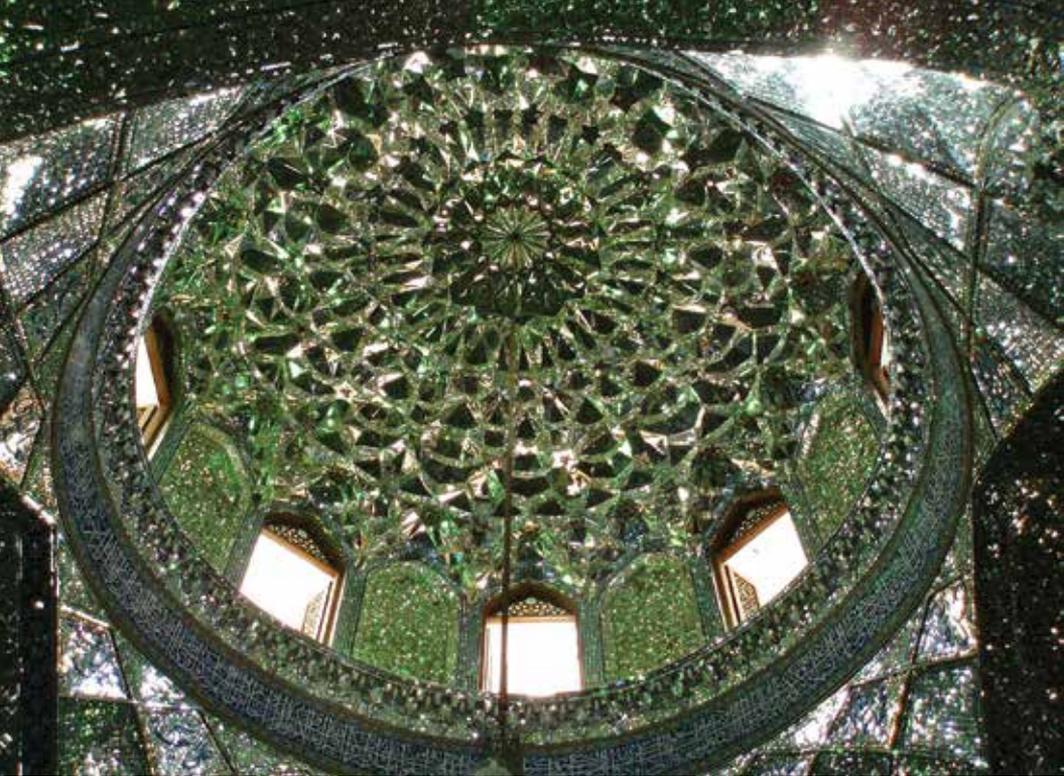


figure B: Shah Cheragh, Shiraz, Iran.

and the Tate in London have responded by producing large exhibitions that showcase recent art from the region. Museums with collections of historical art such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art have also responded. Heeding the call from scholars about inadequacies of the long-used moniker “Islamic art,” the Met recently changed the name of these galleries to “Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and later South Asia.” Thomas M. Campbell, former Director and CEO of the Met, wrote that the “revised perspective” on the material is a result of the recognition that “the monumentality of Islam did not create a single, monolithic artistic expression, but instead connected a vast cultural expanse through centuries of change and influence.”³ Furthermore, the term “Islamic” suggests that the art that falls into this category, that which was produced in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of South Asia from the 7th century to the 19th century, was produced for religious contexts, which is inaccurate. In higher education, art history departments increasingly seek scholars specializing in “non-western contemporary art.” Some of these scholars have organized professional associations, such as the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran and Turkey (AMCA), which brings together scholarship, organizes conferences and

provides access to book reviews and primary resources.⁴ Such efforts are sure to redefine our understanding of the perimeters and contours of the visual culture from these regions.

“Teaching Art of the Middle East and Islamic World” (from here on referred to as TAMEIW) took place over two days. The first was comprised of presentations and discussions involving educators, artists and curators followed by a second day, during which educators in museums, universities, and K-12 schools participated in pedagogy workshops centering on the issues that emerged. The presentations focused on three subjects: contemporary art, historical architecture, and fashion, and presenters were asked to specifically address the question of teaching these subjects. The discussions yielded a diverse set of interrelated ideas, approaches and issues that were expanded even further by the cross-disciplinary make up of workshop attendees on the second day. Designed by Art Education Professor Julia Marshall and Program Designer for Alameda County Office of Education Integrated Learning Trena Noval, the workshops specifically grouped educators from different teaching contexts together, which yielded rich and productive engagements. The goals of the conference were:

1. To identify the embedded problems and issues; and
2. To offer tools to educators who teach the material.

Problems and Issues

As the introduction outlined, there has been an uptick in exhibitions of art from the Middle East in U.S. and European museums. The titles of a sampling of such exhibitions offer a clue about organizers’ goals: *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking*, *Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East, Here and Elsewhere*.⁵ The titles suggest an interest in interrogating geographic and temporal boundaries as well as art historical categories.⁶ The texts that accompany these exhibitions insist on a rejection of essentialist identity categories. For example, in *Here and Elsewhere*, which focused exclusively on the Arab world, we read that “the exhibition does not propose a fixed definition of Arab art or a distinctive regional style.”⁷ Yet as art critic Ismail Fayed wrote in his review of the exhibition catalog, “the actual organization of the exhibition was entirely based on geographical regions and territories.”⁸ In other words, despite the organizers’ desire to present art from the Middle East and Muslim world without creating facile categories and links, by organizing

the exhibition according to geography, they do just that. In the case of *Islamic Art Now*, the basis – Islamic art – is inaccurate and problematic.⁹ As early as the mid-1990s, art historians like Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom recognized that the “concept of a unified ‘Islamic’ art or culture is largely a creation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the West.”¹⁰ Yet the use of this category continues unabated, particularly in art history survey texts. The urgency of this misrepresentation, which glosses over the cultural, political, social and religious diversity of the Middle East and Muslim-majority countries, is heightened by popular misconceptions about these very categories. By limiting audience’s access to artist practice in the region and its diasporas to thematic constructs based on identity, geography and religion, such exhibitions deny the diversity of the cultures in these vast regions. In other words, while museums may intend to transform our understanding, we are left standing in the same place.

The Tools

This section will summarize findings and important points identified by presenters during the symposium. Three panels were organized around the topics of contemporary art, historical architecture and fashion. Critical theory helps us understand the embedded problems that continue to impact the study of these topics.

Because discussions about the Middle East, its cultures, histories, and people can be fraught with misunderstanding, it is important to understand the nature and history of that misunderstanding. The Palestinian scholar Edward Said has written that the region has long been portrayed through a distorted lens, and that many representations were not consistent with lived realities. At different turns, the Middle East is understood to be exotic or dangerous. While Said’s 1978 book *Orientalism* focused on European literature from the 18th and 19th century, which coincides with the colonial period, such attitudes persist. From literature to film and television, representations of Middle Eastern cultures suggest that there could be no people more different from those in the west.¹¹ Representations have varied throughout history. Decades ago, Middle Eastern women were understood to be sexually available belly dancers. Today they are seen as oppressed and forcibly veiled. Their male counterparts are oversexed and oil-rich or terrorists. Such oversimplified representations preclude understanding of Middle Eastern cultures as heterogeneous, fluid and subject to historical changes. Therefore, when educators take on the project of teaching Middle Eastern visual culture, whether historic or contemporary,

Said's book is an indispensable resource because the analysis outlines the ways in which representations make meaning. Said's work prompts us to rethink what we might take for granted as truth and to trace such depictions to their origins. In this case, as Said argues, the representations are more accurately described as European fantasies than lived Middle Eastern realities. Whether his book is taught to students, or studied by the educators who engage this work, Edward Said's insights are essential for anyone undergoing the work of teaching the Middle East.

As one of the presenters, this writer demonstrated the pitfalls of Orientalism in an analysis of a photographic series by the Moroccan artist Lalla Essaydi called *Les Femmes Du Maroc* (2005-2007). Essaydi's project is multi-layered: it attempts to interrogate the artist's own history alongside the ways in which women are depicted in Orientalist paintings from the 19th century. Essaydi appropriates aspects of these paintings, for example, Ingres' famous oil painting *Grand Odalisque 1814*, (see figures C and D). The term "odalisque" refers to an erotic artistic genre of the 18th and 19th centuries, which depicts a sexually available woman from the Muslim world on display for the viewer.¹² This idea is perpetuated in Ingres' painting - surrounded by sumptuous and silky textiles, the nude woman reclines on a couch in an imagined harem. Essaydi's series is meant to challenge such representations by including text from the artist's journal on the faces, bodies and spaces in the photos. Because her texts are autobiographical, one could argue that this strategy both gives the otherwise silent woman voice, while transforming the sensual harem in Ingres' painting into a metaphorical space where the artist's thoughts and ideas reign. Yet the work does not go far enough to disrupt the meanings that Orientalist paintings create. In the end, the women remain passive, a status that the writing on their bodies enhances. For non-Arabic-reading audiences, the significance of the text is lost. It can easily be seen as decorative, or, as is often the case, thought to be religious. Artists like Essaydi, whose work interrogates gender inequalities, are in a bind. The problem resides in what literary scholar Anastasia Valassopolous calls "the persistence of the Orientalist fantasy."¹³ This persistence stymies the capacity for audiences to understand and appreciate Essaydi's photographs on her own terms. Essaydi grew up in a gender-segregated household. Her project attempts to highlight injustices committed against women in multiple historical and cultural contexts. Because of Orientalist views about the cultures in the Middle East and Islamic world, the series can easily be read confirmation of these attitudes or suggest that gender-based oppression is unique to the region.



figure C: Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814

As anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod warns, it is “dangerous to accept [the] cultural opposition between Islam and the West, between fundamentalism and feminism, because those many people within Muslim countries who are trying to find alternatives to present injustices . . . who do not accept that being feminist means being Western, will be under pressure to choose, just as we are: Are you with us or against us?”¹⁴ While Abu-Lughod reminds us of our responsibility as viewers and consumers of art and culture from the region, this case study also identifies the pitfalls that artists like Essaydi face.

If we apply the theoretical framework of Orientalism to the discipline of art history, we can begin to understand how scholars have long designated modern art from non-European contexts as derivative and mimetic of what have been considered “masterpieces” of modern art. In the introduction to an edited volume about Iranian modern art, Dr. Balaghi writes that “the notion of a monolithic modernity rooted in post-Enlightenment Europe with unilinear flows of influence and exchange obfuscates the imperial implications of modernity for the non-Western world and can inhibit a serious examination of the actual content and context of local histories of the modern outside of Europe.”¹⁵ Balaghi highlights several interrelated issues: the colonial and imperial history of Europe, during which the modern discipline of art history developed, has thus far prevented an honest consideration of non-European art from the modern period. In other words, if we do not recognize the intersections of power and historiography, our understanding of modern art will be limited to a history written from one perspective. By looking at the



figure D: Lalla Essaydi, *Les Femmes Du Maroc*, 2005-2007

discipline of art history through a framework based in critical theory, such as Orientalism, transnational feminism and critical race theory, the possibility that the discipline of art history has painted an incomplete or inaccurate picture of world art history emerges. In this way, Orientalism allows us to identify the problem, which can be described as a project of representation.

In her TAMEIW presentation, Deena Chalabi, Barbara and Stephan Vermut Associate Curator of Public Dialogue at SFMOMA, discussed the pitfalls of the use of cultural identity as a curatorial framework in exhibitions of art. Chalabi illustrated her discussion with a written exchange from the years following the Second World War between Syrian-born Iraqi artist Madiha Omar (1908-2005) and SFMOMA founding director, Grace McCann Morley (1900-1985). Omar's work (see figure E) was presented in a solo exhibition at SFMOMA in 1950 – perhaps the first for an Iraqi artist in America – doubly notable because the artist was a woman, and Omar wrote to ask if this exhibition might travel to other museum venues. In response, Morley suggested a group exhibition of artists from the region instead. Chalabi's more historical example resonates with contemporary curatorial practices, whereby artists



figure E: Madiha Omar, *Untitled*, ND, oil on paper. 49 x 59cm (19 5/16 x 23 1/4in)

of non-European backgrounds are most often given space in the museum within group exhibitions based on identity. This foregrounding of identity in exhibitions continues to be a popular approach, even though some artists refuse to participate.¹⁶ Anthropologist Jessica Winegar writes that such exhibitions reproduce, “as Orientalist representations do, a one-to-one homogenizing correlation between region, culture, history, and religion.”¹⁷ When cultural identity is the unifying theme, important histories, formal concerns and issues that could generate deeper appreciation for the art is lost. As art historian Nada M. Shabout indicates, Omar was working in the western tradition when she began to use the Arabic letter in modern art. Citing the French painter Georges Braque’s early use of writing in his 1911 painting *Le Portugais*, Shabout suggests that Omar’s investigation into the “graphic possibilities of the Arabic letter” cannot be fully understood without this history.¹⁸ Situating work like Omar’s within a transnational framework could open lines of inquiry that would expand how we define modern art, rather than suggest it is strictly a Euro-American project.

Thus far, this essay has considered the project of representation in art historical and curatorial practice. Artist and New York University doctoral

candidate Dena Al-Adeeb linked ideology with its material ramifications on contemporary and historical architecture in her discussion of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, focusing on what she identified as targeted and deliberate destruction and looting of cultural patrimony. Not only were its cultural institutions, such as the National Museum in Baghdad, destroyed and pillaged, so were ancient archeological sites. For example, the US built military bases on sites in the Mesopotamian/ancient Iraqi capitals of Babylon, Kish, Samarra and Ur. The renowned Milwiya Minaret, a spiral tower from 852AD that looks out over the ancient city of Samarra was commandeered by U.S. snipers, and its brickwork was heavily damaged during the shooting and ensuing retaliation (see figure F). Al-Adeeb describes the destruction of Iraq's ancient history and violent occupation of the literal seats of kings from these ancient civilizations as "ideologically-driven and proto-genocidal."¹⁹ Together, these reveal the material relationship between representation and power, reminding us that since their founding, museums have served the nation-state both ideologically and materially.²⁰ Furthermore, curator of ancient art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Renée Dreyfus, who moderated the architecture panel, called on Al-Adeeb in her role as artist to suggest that museums could interrogate the often fraught subject of object provenance in collaborations with artists.

Art historian Santhi Kavuri-Bauer proposed what she described as "a visual and spatial learning method" to introduce historical architecture in the region. Kavuri-Bauer started from an idea proposed by art historian Kishwar Rizvi, who wrote, "studying the architecture and culture of a society allows us to recognize the essential humanity in each other, even in those far removed by time and geography."²¹ One idea that Kavuri-Bauer proposed was based

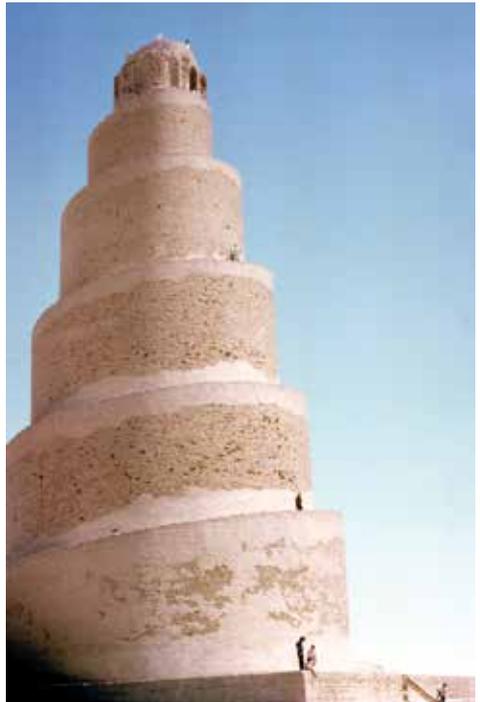


figure F: *Milwiya Minaret*, The Great Mosque of Samarra, Samarra, Iraq, 852AD



figure G: *Naqsh-e Jahan Square*, Isfahan, Iran. 1598–1629AD

on one of the first challenges that Muslims faced, how to establish themselves as a community and construct a place of worship that would accommodate the growing population. The assignment would also introduce students to the tenets of Islam.²² Students would also need to research the environment of Medina, in present-day Saudi Arabia, where the Prophet Muhammad and the early believers were exiled to in 622 CE. In this exercise, students would also learn about historical building techniques. Upon completion of their research and design, teachers would present real mosque designs for students to compare and contrast with their designs. As Kavuri-Bauer indicated, “The mosque no longer seems strange and foreboding but a space that responds to universal needs for shelter, forging a relationship with the natural environmental, and community building and prayer. They will see that Muslims in their towns and cities are also problem solvers and develop a kinship with them through the practice of architectural design.”²³ Kavuri-Bauer also suggested that students be asked to think about the differing architectural requirements of public squares. She cited the cosmopolitan and multicultural nature of Isfahan’s Naqsh-e Jahan Square, built between 1598 and 1629 AD (see figure G). With a market situated alongside the square, it is an important site that brings people together, thereby creating opportunities for engagement amongst members of its diverse population as well as with international traders. Furthermore, widely popular festivals and polo matches are regularly hosted there, ensuring that the square is used by all. By focusing on architectural design in relation to the needs of a community, Kavuri-Bauer’s lecture and the assignments exemplify an approach to teaching architecture in the region that creates familiarity and forges connections.

Visual artists Ala Ebtekar and Taraneh Hemami made important contributions to the symposium. Their presentations illustrated how their individual

artistic practices incorporate education, community building and research. As part of the architecture panel, Hemami discussed the metaphoric and formal ways architecture functions in her often collectively produced work. Her project *Hall of Reflections* (2000–ongoing, see figure H), a collaboration with the Persian Center in Berkeley, California, told stories about immigration, which she collected in visits with Iranian residents in the Bay Area.²⁴ By overlaying photographs of people in the community onto mirrored tiles that reference the traditional use of mirrors in Persian architecture, Hemami highlights the ways in which members of Iranian diaspora maintain a sense of community in the Bay Area. Ala Ebtekar also contends with the diasporic experience through collaboration. In a project that forged links between the US and Iran, Ebtekar invited GhalamDAR to produce a community mural in Oakland (see figure I).²⁵ GhalamDAR is well known for his street art in Tehran and has developed a fine art practice that incorporates abstraction, miniature painting and calligraphy. The mural incorporates calligraphy, reflecting a historical interest in the formal properties of text. When Executive Director of the International House Davis Rijin Sahakian questioned the validity of focusing on diasporic artists when studying the contemporary art of the Middle East,



figure H: Taraneh Hemami, *Hall of Reflections*, 2000–ongoing.



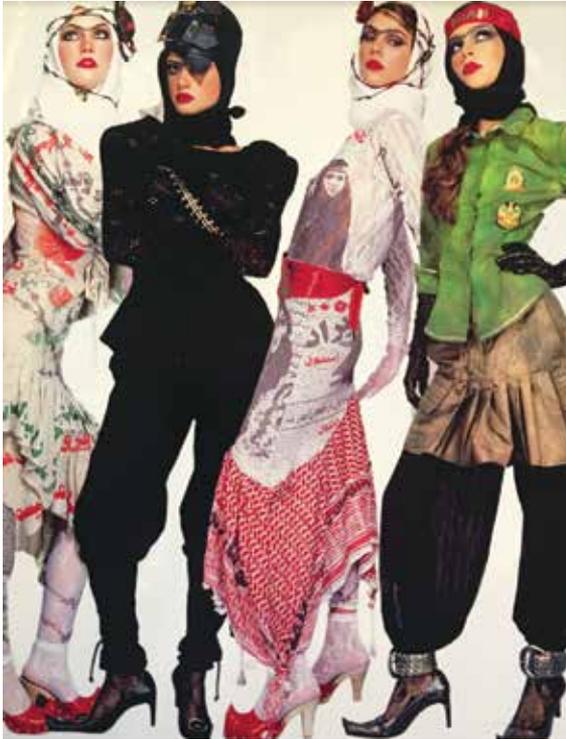
figure 1: GhalamDAR and Mike “Bam” Tyau, community mural in Oakland, 2017

several responded, endorsing the importance of such voices as emblematic of regional migrations and transnational exchanges. Ebtekar illustrated this through reference to Iranian music made in “Tehrangles” (Little Tehran in Los Angeles), which became very popular among listeners in Iran. In divergent ways, both Hemami and Ebtekar maintain strong connections with Iran through serious investment in diasporic communities.

In discussions about fashion and Islam, the focus on modesty helped audiences understand what might otherwise seem unfamiliar. Shereen Sabet, owner and president of Splashgear, a full cover modest swimwear company, set the stage by describing the “Muslim dress code,” which is generally outlined in the holy book of Islam, the Qur’an. It indicates that Muslims should avoid revealing, skin-tight and transparent clothing. The emphasis here is on modesty, and it is expected of both men and women. Sabet outlined the process and challenges of abiding by these rules as she designed swimwear appropriate for Muslim women who comply with the dress code. She uses attractive and colorful textiles that do not cling to the body yet allow for comfort and hydrodynamics. Professor of Cultural Studies at London College of Fashion Reina Lewis also considered market trends, but shifted the focus to fashion trends. Her presentation reminded viewers that many consumers look for modest clothing, whether for religious reasons (it is also relevant in Judaism), or personal taste. By framing the discussion of fashion and Islam in

this way, the “Muslim dress code” became more relatable. Fashion stylist Saba Ali rounded off the day with insights that revealed common concerns among women, whether they abide by religious dictates or not. Curator of costume and textile arts at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Jill D’Alessandro moderated a conversation that highlighted the personal stakes in fashion choices. Through a focus on practicalities, conversations about fashion and Islam demystified an otherwise contentious topic.

With the diversity of perspectives featured during TAMEIW, it was inevitable that discussions would lead to unexpected directions. One such idea was that contemporary art, fashion and architecture could provide an entry into the region’s histories and visual cultures. Fashion designer and artist Hushidar Mortezaie exemplifies this. Since the 1990s, Mortezaie, better known as “Hushi,” has long drawn on material culture from the region for his designs. His models sport



continuous eyebrows, an especially popular trend during the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925) that remains a sign of beauty in Gulf countries like Oman. Hushi also integrates traditional styles, the hijab, and politically charged textiles like the black and white keffiyeh, which is associated with Palestinian resistance, into his designs (see figure J). With a keen awareness of Orientalism, Hushi shares a commonly expressed concern about the misappropriation of cultural, religious and political objects for a market context. Yet he is committed to highlighting

figure J: Hushidar Mortezaie, *We Will Not Submit* (2001), Mixed Media, Fashion: Michael and Hushi, Art direction, concept, and styling: Hushidar Mortezaie, Makeup design: Niki Mnray, Photo: Maki Kawakita

social and political struggles, particularly for a younger audience. This was apt in the 1990s, when problematic films like “Not Without My Daughter” asserted a view of Iranians as oppressive and violent.²⁶ His political and social commitment was especially highlighted in his installation for the 2018 exhibition *The Third Muslim: Queer and Trans* Muslim Narratives of Resistance and Resilience*.²⁷ The complex work featured gender nonconforming mannequins enrobed in Hushi’s designs, thereby situating homophobia and Islamophobia within a transnational context of resistance (see reference to the Ku Klux Klan in figure K). Through the language of art and fashion, Hushi, along with the teachers, scholars, artists and designers who participated in TAMEIW challenges us to delve beyond the surface.



figure K: **Hushidar Mortezaie**, Installation for *The Third Muslim: Queer and Trans* Muslim Narratives of Resistance and Resilience*.



figure 1: **Ibrahim El-Salahi**, *The Mosque* (1964), oil on canvas, 12 1/8 x 18 1/8" (30.7 x 46 cm).

III. Teaching Workshop Summary

November 5, 2017

Presentations and discussions about historical architecture and design, contemporary art and fashion dominated the first day at the de Young – and into the evening. Conversations about teaching dominated the second day. That day was structured by SFSU Art Education professor Julia Marshall and Program Designer for Alameda County Office of Education Integrated Learning Trena Noval who together approached the topic from a perspective of the Teaching for Understanding Framework, developed at Harvard. This process included ‘concept mapping’ of generative topics, developing understanding goals, related activities and assessments.

Morning and afternoon forums were scheduled. First, unlike professionals were grouped together—putting K12 teachers, higher education faculty and museum curators, educators and artists in conversation during the morning session. After lunch, the participants were re-grouped by similar professional orientations and/or grade level of teaching. One unexpected outcome was how deeply the higher education faculty felt inspired by the K12 teachers’ embedded strategies and knowledge. For instance, several Alameda County School District teachers reminded everyone a significant percentage of the

Africans forcibly brought to the United States during the transatlantic slave trade were Muslim. While the religion did not survive in its original form, Muslim customs were absorbed into some cultural practices of music and dance. This history illuminates the fraught and intertwined relationship between Islam and America.²⁸ The friendship that developed in 1964 between Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930) and acclaimed African American artists including Romare Bearden (1911-1988), Richard Hunt (born 1935) and Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) during El-Salahi's American sojourn further points to the rich possibilities of embracing the American contributions from artists representing the region's diasporic communities within the disciplines of American ethnic and multicultural studies; El-Salahi's painting *The Mosque* (1964) was acquired by MoMA in that same year (see figure L). Another important point that emerged was subject of labor and manufacturing in the fashion industry. Some teachers already encourage their students to look at the labels on their clothing to query the location of countries like Bangladesh, and its relationship to the United States, for example.

In retrospect, we could see that our project goals were:

1. To bring together varied participants from diverse educational platforms, including museum curators and educators, K-12 teachers, faculty from higher education, specialist scholars and artists, to foster more interdisciplinary and holistic thought about the key issues embedded in new scholarship about art from this region;
2. To interrogate key problems using critical thinking, including the legacy of European framings of non-European cultures that continue to reflect a kind of imperialism in art history and generates stereotypes that fuel political turmoil; to recognize that we see through lenses that we don't even realize distort and color our vision;
3. To offer curricular tools reflective of the multiple new academic vocabularies and new approaches to museum curating - including the lenses of orientalist and transnational feminist critique to rethink the peoples, culture and history of the region; as well as to provide both contemporary and historical examples that reflect such alternative perspectives that root discussions in history and understandings of multiple modernisms;

4. To ground objects in a complex understanding of global history, including the interrelated studies of museum object provenance and human migration due to war and conflict; to envision ways to interject these histories into museum labels and curriculum in areas for objects and architecture, as well as the relationship of contemporary to historical art and fashion.
5. To build empathy and appreciation for the multiplicities of the world to foster and facilitate human interaction, perhaps this is the central goal, especially for younger learners.

Practical approaches included recommendations in multiple areas, including:

6. To create opportunities to explore student autobiography and identity generally, especially in cases where immigrant students are present, promoting awareness of multiple value systems and ways of living in the world, and the value of uncovering hidden or little known histories;
7. To introduce topics that demonstrate the global presence of art from the region - from the ubiquity of Islamic design in our lives to foregrounding a focus on Middle Eastern diasporic artists within our communities and their ongoing engagement with the culture of their home country; validating both - thereby demonstrating the impact of specific historical forces on communities; to embrace diasporic artists within both American and international contexts;
8. To consider how 'naming' can wrongly imply a rigid identity of difference -including in museum permanent galleries, and in regional group exhibitions, and to imagine how museum curators and educators can promote richer understanding of the region's layers of histories through expanded labeling and programming;
9. To engage learners' emotional connections with incorporating stories about how violence has impacted architecture, or the value of foregrounding the voices of living artists, using resources such as Art21, introducing historical and cultural themes with contemporary art, but also teaching the work of artists whose work does not display heavy stylistic 'markers' of regional identity such as Walid Raad;
10. To teach art history in its historical and social context.

Some specific curricular methods and practice recommendations included:

1. To explore the rich diversity of Muslim fashion internationally. Fashion trends seamlessly bring together the need for a modest dress code (common among many, such as Jewish women) communities, as well as local styles.
2. To create a digital archive of artists' work from the Middle East and its Diasporas; artists whose work was discussed in the program included both contemporary and 20th century Modernist artists:

Etel Adnan (b. 1925, Lebanon)

Ala Ebtekar (Iranian, b. 1978, U.S.)

Lalla Essaydi (b. 1956, Morocco)

GhلامDAR (b. 1994, Iran)

Taraneh Hemami (b. 1960, Iran)

Shirin Neshat (b. 1957, Iran)

Madiha Omar (Iraqi, b. 1908, Syria)

Kour Pour (Iranian, b. 1987, England)

Monira Al Qadiri (Kuwaiti, b. 1983 in Senegal)

Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan)

Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937, Iran)

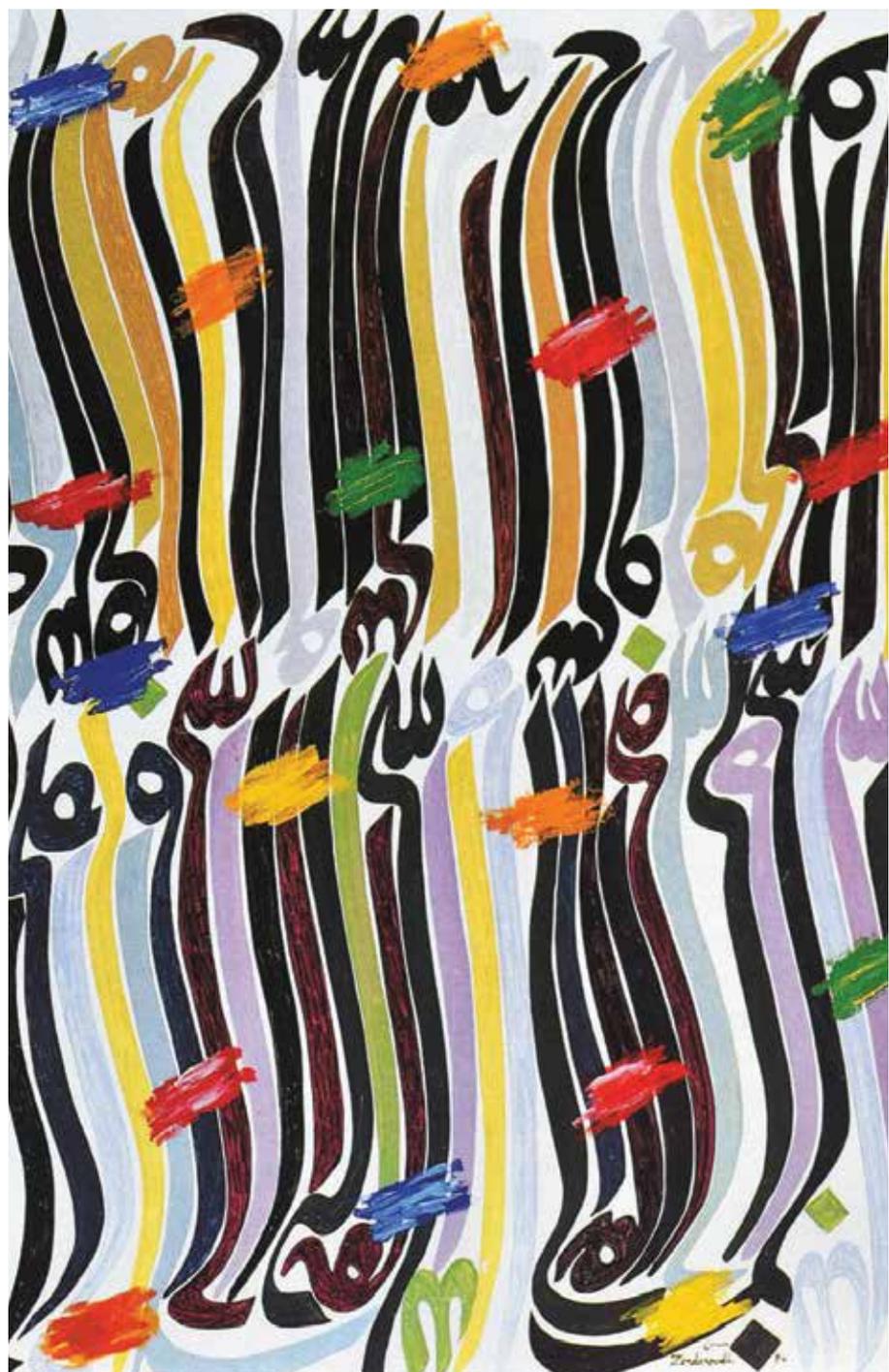
Samira Yamin (Iranian, b. 1983, U.S.)

Charles Hossein-Zenderoudi (b. 1937, Iran)

3. To design artist-led performance-based interventions in museums that interrogate the provenance of objects; author new labels that begin to illuminate the histories of objects and peoples in museums;
4. To develop curriculum that highlights the formal properties of Arabic and Farsi text, which formed the basis of a modern art movement in the Arabic-speaking world called *Hurufiyeh* (see discussion of Madiha Omar in this publication's essay);
5. To demonstrate how orientalist attitudes have shaped historic European art, particularly 19th century Orientalist painting; identify European modern artists' uses of historic art from the region;

6. To use architecture and public spaces as a way to relate to the cultures of the region in visual and spatial exercises based in research and design; use the space of the classroom to demonstrate how cities, buildings and public spaces organize societies (one suggestion is outlined in detail within the publication's essay);
7. To build intimacy with artists abroad using video conferencing in the classroom. Inviting guest speakers into the classroom using technology not only addresses perceived cultural gaps, it bridges physical distance. It also teaches students how diasporic communities stay in touch with family and friends in other parts of the world;
8. To develop cultural literacy via field trips to cultural spaces, such as mosques, ethnic markets, community centers and museums.
9. To incorporate updated vocabularies that connote new approaches. For example, the "Middle East," a term popularized by the American Naval Strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, situates the region east of Europe, suggesting a center-periphery relationship. In lieu of this term, scholars have insisted on highlighting cultural difference, as in "Arab World, Iran and Turkey." Others, like "Southwest Asia and North Africa," identify regional locations in the continents of Asia and Africa.
10. To develop awareness of Islamic art and architecture in the U.S. in everyday life. While appropriated styles and aesthetics are rarely traced back to their origins ("bohemian" or "ethnic" are often used to describe the styles), geometric pattern and Persian rugs, for example, are ubiquitous in home furnishings.

By spanning a vast historical and cultural expanse that includes visual culture, fine art, and the everyday practice of dressing up, these recommendations should be seen as a start in expanding the ways the cultures of the Middle East and Islamic world are understood.



Conclusion

TAMEIW was initiated in effort to equip teachers and students with the tools needed to better understand historical and contemporary visual culture from the Middle East and Islamic world. Informed by a Eurocentric and colonial mindset, misunderstandings about the region are pervasive. Tragically, the need to justify continued wars and occupations of the region have done little to change such views. With the latest influx of refugees from Syria and Yemen into the United States and Europe, Islamophobia has seemed to increase. Yet a project as rich in diversity and commitment by participants, can take a life of its own. In retrospect, we outlined several goals of the project, which we hope to pursue in future iterations. By bringing together varied makers, scholars and educators from diverse educational platforms, the conference sought to initiate and make public wide-ranging conversations. We sought to interrogate key problems using critical thinking, much of which was outlined early in this publication's essay. The collaborations yielded curricular tools that reflect new academic vocabularies and approaches to museum education and curating. This is only possible when conversations are grounded in a complex understanding of global history, including the interrelated studies of museum object provenance and human migration. Finally, and perhaps most important, we sought to build empathy and appreciation for the multiplicities of the world. As the workshop day came to a close, the room was filled with the excitement of hope and possibility. We are already aware of collaborations that have emerged from the weekend. It is our hope to continue this work.

IV. Bibliography And Resources

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Online Resources:

Association for Modern and Contemporary art of the Arab World, Iran and Turkey.

<http://amcainternational.org/>

The Chicago Architecture Foundation

<http://www.architecture.org/teach-learn/educators/>

DiscoverDesign.org is an online platform where students, teachers, and mentors come together to design solutions for real-world challenges.

<https://www.discoverdesign.org/getting-started/welcome-students>

Khan Academy Sinan, Süleymaniye Mosque

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-islam/islamic-art-late-period/v/sinan-sleymaniye-mosque>

Architecture in Schools

<https://youngarchitect.com/>

Denver Architectural Foundation

<http://denverarchitecture.org/programs/education-in-the-schools>

Metropolitan Museum of Art educators' resources:

Art of the Islamic World: A Resource for Educators, Edited by Maryam D. Ekhtiar and Claire Moore

<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/curriculum-resources/art-of-the-islamic-world>

Lesson Plan: Court Arts of Islamic Spain

<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/lesson-plans/court-arts-of-islamic-spain>

Lesson Plan: Geometric Design in Islamic Art

<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/lesson-plans/islam-and-religious-art>

Lesson Plan: Islam and Religious Art

<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/lesson-plans/islam-and-religious-art>

V. Participants

Lecture Presenters

Keynote address

Shiva Balaghi, Project Director, Berggruen Institute in Los Angeles

Contemporary Art

Deena Chalabi, Barbara and Stephan Vermut Associate Curator of Public Dialogue, SFMOMA

Ala Ebtekar, Artist, researcher, educator, Stanford University

Kathy Zarur, Independent curator, arts organizer and lecturer at San Francisco State University and California College of the Arts

Rijin Sahakian, Executive Director, International House Davis (moderator)

Historical Architecture and Design

Santhi Kavuri-Bauer, Associate Professor, School of Art, San Francisco State University

Dena Al-Adeeb, Artist and doctoral candidate in the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department, New York University

Taraneh Hemami, Artist, arts organizer and Senior Adjunct Professor, California College of the Arts

Renée Dreyfus, Curator of Ancient Art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (moderator)

Fashion

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Reina Lewis, Professor of Cultural Studies, London College of Fashion

Saba Ali, Stylist and Owner, Style By Design

Jill D'Alessandro, Curator of costume and textile arts, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (moderator)

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Asya Abdrahman, Artist

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Ahou Alagha, Graduate student, School of Cinema, San Francisco State University

Footnotes

- ¹ The conference and workshop had initially been scheduled for March 2017, but was postponed to enable greater participation by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's team that was developing a special focus on Muslim fashion for 2018.
- ² An example is the issue of naming. Owing to the colonial origins of the term "Middle East" and the challenge of identifying a suitable alternative, many presenters at TAMEIW preferred to the use the non-descript term "the region." Other ways the region is referred to include Southwest Asia North Africa (SWANA). The difficulty of settling on a name suggests the pitfalls of attempts to speak generally about such a geographically vast and culturally diverse region.
- ³ Thomas M. Campbell, "New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and later South Asia," accessed on 28 January 2018, <https://metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/from-the-director/2011/new-galleries>.
- ⁴ Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran and Turkey, accessed 3 February 2018, <http://amcainternational.org/>.
- ⁵ *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* was presented by the MoMA in 2006. *Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East* was hosted by LACMA in 2015. *Here and Elsewhere* was on view at the New Museum in 2014.
- ⁶ For example, curator of *Without Boundary* Fereshteh Daftari sought to interrogate the category Islamic art. One strategy she employed was to include non-Muslim artists whose work could fit within thematic and formal categories associated with the art historical category, thereby suggesting the failures of those categories.
- ⁷ New Museum, "Here and Elsewhere," accessed February 3, 2018, <https://archive.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/1860>.
- ⁸ Ismail Fayed, "Catalogue and Exhibition review: Here and Elsewhere," accessed on February 3, 2018, <http://amcainternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Catalogue-and-Exhibition-review-Here-and-Elsewhere.pdf>.
- ⁹ This was the subject of Dr. Shiva Balaghi's keynote address, titled "What is Islamic Art?"
- ¹⁰ Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, "Preface," in *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, vii. While Blair and Bloom identify the problem, they write that they cannot address it in the volume.
- ¹¹ Art historian Linda Nochlin was the first to apply Said's theory to visual art. See Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* 71, no. 5 (May 1983): 118-131, 187-191. For an analysis of representations of Arabs in Hollywood film, see Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, directed by Sut Jhally, Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2006.
- ¹² Joan DelPlato, *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures: Representing the Harem, 1800-1875*, Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002, 9.
- ¹³ Anastasia Valassopoulos, "The Legacy of Orientalism in Middle Eastern Feminism," in *After Orientalism: Critical Engagements, Productive Looks*, Inge E. Boer, ed., Leiden: Brill, 2003, 183.
- ¹⁴ Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism," *American Anthropologist* (September 2002): 788.
- ¹⁵ Shiva Balaghi, "Iranian Visual Arts in 'The Century of Machinery, Speed, and the Atom': Rethinking Modernity" in *Picturing Iran: Art, Society and Revolution*, eds., Lynn Gumpert and Shiva Balaghi (New York; London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 23-24.

- ¹⁶ Recently, artists Ahlam Shibli and Basem Magdy declined an invitation to participate in the New Museum's 2016 exhibition *Here and Elsewhere*. Their comments were included in the exhibition catalog, where Shibli and Magdy suggested that in such exhibitions, audiences use identity as an entry point to understand the work, even if the art may have nothing to do with their identity. This is an especially precarious starting point for cultures who have long been misunderstood. See New Museum of Contemporary Art, *Here and Elsewhere*, New York: New Museum, 2014.
- ¹⁷ Jessica Winegar, "The Humanity Game: Art, Islam and the War on Terror," *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 655.
- ¹⁸ Shabout writes that Madiha Omar and Jamil Hamoudi (b. 1924) were the first artists to use the Arabic letter in modern Arab art. Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007, 71.
- ¹⁹ Dena Al-Adeeb, "The Architecture of War: Destruction, Dislocation and Collection Practices," lecture presented at *Teaching Art of the Middle East and Islamic World*, de Young Museum, San Francisco, November 4, 2017.
- ²⁰ For a discussion of this relationship, see Carol Duncan, "Art /museums and the Ritual of Citizenship" in Karp & Lavine eds., *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). Sharon J. McDonald, "Museums, National, Postnational, and transcultural identities," in *Museum and Society* 1, no. 1 (2003): 1-16.
- ²¹ Kishwar Rizvi, "It's harder than ever to teach Islamic Art - but never more important," *Washington Post*, January 6, 2017, accessed February 23, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/06/its-harder-than-ever-to-teach-islamic-art-but-never-more-important/?utm_term=.5ac1187fb353.
- ²² The five tenets of Islam are: believers must declare that there is only one God and that Muhammad is God's prophet; pray five times a day; practice charitable giving; fast during the month of Ramadan; make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca once in their lives if they are able-bodied.
- ²³ Santhi Kavuri-Bauer, "Teaching Islamic Architecture: A Window into Visual and Spatial Thinking," lecture presented at *Teaching Art of the Middle East and Islamic World*, de Young Museum, San Francisco, November 4, 2017.
- ²⁴ Hemami discusses this project in KQED Spark*, "Taraneh Hemami," accessed on February 23, 2018, <https://ww2.kqed.org/spark/taraneh-hemami/>.
- ²⁵ Ebtekar initiated "Art, Social Space and Public Discourse in Iran," a three-year initiative including a symposium, lecture performances and art projects at Stanford University. See <https://artandsocialspace.org/>, accessed on February 23, 2018.
- ²⁶ Mortezaei discusses the import of his work considering the social and political climate of the US in 1990s. See Joobin Bekhrad, "Reorient Radio—Hushi," October 25, 2016, accessed February 24, 2018, <http://www.reorientmag.com/2016/10/hushi/>. "Not Without My Daughter" was poorly received and widely criticized for its reliance on racist stereotypes. See Caryn James, "Embrace the Stereotype, Kiss the Movie Goodbye," *The New York Times*, accessed February 24, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/27/movies/embrace-the-stereotype-kiss-the-movie-goodbye.html>.
- ²⁷ This groundbreaking exhibition of art by queer and trans Muslim artists was co-curated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Yas Ahmed (SOMArts, January - February 2018).
- ²⁸ The precise percentage of African Muslims brought on the slave ships is unknown. See Ayla Amon, "African Muslims in Early America," *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, accessed on February 18, 2018, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/african-muslims-early-america>; Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, New York: New York University Press, 2003; Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*, New York: Routledge, 1997.



VI. RELATED VIDEO

An extended video of **Teaching Art of the Middle East and the Islamic World** speakers and workshops is available at:
<https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/schoolofart>

Images from the day of discussion at the de Young Museum





Images from the day of discussion at San Francisco State University



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