From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

Foreword: Kunststiftung NRW

The Folkwang concept developed by Karl Ernst Osthaus never saw art as a closed system, but rather as the expression of cultural relationships between epochs, regions, and diverse forms of artistic creation. The exhibition *Following Damascus …* strikingly demonstrates the continuing relevance of this idea.

With scholarly precision and curatorial care, the exhibition explores a little-known chapter in the collection history of the Museum Folkwang. The reconstruction of the former “Department of Islamic Art” opens up new perspectives on the founding of the museum and presents a new view of the multifaceted relationship between European modernism and the artistic traditions of Islamic culture. By bringing together architecture, decorative arts, painting, photography, and design, the exhibition offers a new experience of a fundamental idea of the Folkwang: that art develops its meaning in exchange.

Research, artistic and curatorial excellence, and social relevance come together here in exceptional measure – a key reason for the Kunststiftung NRW to support this project. The exhibition also expands art-historical perspectives, reveals reciprocal cultural influences, and shows that the importance of collecting museums also lies in their re-examination of historical holdings.

The location itself gives special significance to this approach: as a city whose history has been shaped by immigration, cultural diversity, and international ways of life for decades, Essen offers a uniquely resonant setting for the exhibition. The show reminds us that the artistic traditions of Islamic culture do not stand apart from European history, but have interacted with it for centuries, and that these interconnections continue to shape our cultural realities to this day.

I am grateful to all those whose years of extraordinary commitment and professional expertise have made this exhibition and the accompanying publication possible. Their collaboration enriches both art-historical scholarship and public understanding of our cultural heritage.

Andrea Firmenich

Secretary General, Kunststiftung NRW

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

Foreword: Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung

Some masterpieces are so deeply inscribed in public awareness that their titles need no explanation. From 2019 to 2022, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, in cooperation with other supporters, helped make possible the restoration of one such exceptional work: the Damascus Room, on view since 2022 as a place of encounter in the Japanisches Palais in Dresden. With its masterful and fascinating wooden panelling, this former reception room from Syria dates to the years 1810–1811 CE. Worldwide, only a small number of similarly artful interiors from the Islamic world exist in museums today, and even rarer are Damascene rooms that – like the one in Dresden – have survived in essentially complete, virtually unaltered form.

The Damascus Room was acquired by a collector who is now known primarily for his interest in modern art: Karl Ernst Osthaus, founder of the Museum Folkwang, who had the room sent from Damascus to Hagen in 1899. In conjunction with the exhibition *Following Damascus …*, this volume tells of the growing collection of Islamic art at the Museum Folkwang, which opened in 1902 and of which the Damascus Room formed a part. As in early 20th-century Hagen, and for reasons of conservation and logistics, the room as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* will not be on view in Essen. Yet it remains central to the project. By sponsoring this exhibition catalogue, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung is delighted to contribute to the further contextualisation of the Damascus Room and support the research of the Museum Folkwang. We hope all our visitors will gain fascinating insights into this surprising chapter of the Folkwang story.

Martin Hoernes

Secretary General, Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Collections are born from the desire to understand the world and preserve it, and to make it one’s own to some extent. In a figurative sense, museums collect not just objects, but evidence of human experience and ideas. They preserve these as much as possible from the ravages of time. They research because each new generation poses new questions about the past, not least in order to understand its own present and future. They exhibit, in order to make visible precisely those questions and the insights gained from research, And they disseminate, because culture unfolds its social significance only in the exchange between people. Our present exhibition combines these core tasks of museum work in exemplary fashion.

Following Damascus … is dedicated to a chapter of the collection history of the Museum Folkwang that until now has been familiar to only a few, yet belongs among its defining moments: the formation of a collection of objects from the Islamicate world in the years between 1898 and 1919. Most of the works now in Essen thus belong to one of the earliest museum collections of Islamic art in the German-speaking world. As the exhibition and the following pages will explain, the “Islamic Department” influenced the architecture, visual arts, photography, craft, and design that arose around the museum in the interdisciplinary dialogue espoused by the Museum Folkwang and in turn entered the collection.

Knowledge of the collection had, admittedly, faded since the museum’s holdings were transferred from Hagen to Essen in 1922. For this reason, our efforts to once again integrate this area of the collection and to explore its context have been all the more extensive. Behind what *Following Damascus* … displays are six years of networking, research, and conservation. We are grateful that the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, the Karin and Uwe Hollweg Stiftung, the Kulturstiftung der Länder, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, the Kunststiftung NRW and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia have acknowledged our efforts and generously supported them. Their support will not only

lastingly affect our museum and – we hope – the institutions linked together through the project, but also grant the general public and researchers access to a case study of German museum history.

The exhibition and the catalogue are the result of no fewer than four research grants and the same number of conservation campaigns. Alfonso Pleguezuelo, Carsten Plätzer and Ángel Sánchez-Cabezudo, Dorina Michaelis, Friederike Weis, Christiane Heiser, Marina Westkamp and Stefanie Römer, Viola Beier and Anke Freund, Peter Bux, Rainer Geschke and Vanessa Schmitt are the people behind these endeavours. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of them for contributing their expertise, for sharing our enthusiasm, and for helping in very different ways to restore the objects' lustre.

The research projects could not have been carried out without the cooperative and untiring support of our valued colleagues at the Osthaus Museum Hagen. Thanks to Rainer Stamm, Birgit Schulte and Bettina Sarnes, it was possible to a greater extent than ever before to match the archival documentation regarding the history of the Folkwang in Hagen with the objects in Essen. The findings of this project are as much their achievement as ours. The other two institutional heirs of the Osthaus collections, the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg (Photo Archive Marburg) and the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, likewise offered their support without hesitation. We are grateful to all of the colleagues involved just as much as to all the lenders to the exhibition. Many of them have sent works to Essen that very rarely travel or go on display. We appreciate this very much.

In Eva-Maria Troelenberg we found a cooperation partner who supported the project from the academic world. She helped open doors to the international community of scholars – a privilege reflected in the roster of renowned lecturers at our symposium "Revisiting Islamicate Worlds" in 2025. The conference was conceived and directed by Eva-Maria Troelenberg together with Mathilde Heitmann-Taillefer, curator for research, scientific cooperations, and provenance research at the Museum Folkwang. The latter also oversaw the research project on the provenance of the collection of Islamic art, thereby laying the foundations for further study at the Museum Folkwang.

The productive collaboration between Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf and our museum is once again reflected in this catalogue with its many articles. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of the authors, just as much as to the team at Hirmer Verlag under the direction of Verena Hüttner and to Judith Csiki, Deniz Erduman-Çalış, Sandra

Gianfreda, Julia Hegewald, Gisela Helmecke, Anahita Mittertrainer, Lorenz Korn, and Tobias Mörike, who made decisive contributions at the beginning of the project.
One distinctive feature of this exhibition is the large number of three-dimensional objects to be displayed. It is the first time in the history of the Museum Folkwang that the large exhibition hall of 1,400 square metres has been given over almost entirely to applied arts. Our colleagues from museum and exhibition services, led by Friederike Külpmann, Janna Leonards, and Tobias Burg, have turned the vision of our curators into reality. Frank Sternberg, Till Wellner, Susan Schmidt, and Susanne Vornweg-Bahrenberg in particular contributed their expertise and great commitment to the demands of the project. With the support of Nicole Kober and the colleagues from the Grundstücksverwaltung Stadt Essen (Property Management Office), the objects were suitably displayed in the wall cabinets designed by Friederike Külpmann.
None of this would have been possible without the crucial involvement of our conservator, Silke Zeich, who has been caring for the archaeological, applied-art, and ethnological works in our collection with great passion for many years. She established the necessary contacts with experts, co-ordinated the complex and long-term restoration projects, and navigated the requisite bureaucracy, always with an eye for detail and care for every single piece. Together with our photographer Jens Nober, she also oversaw the making of numerous new photographs of the works.
Beyond the various scholarly and largely rational forms of expertise, emotional access to the exhibited works was a particular priority for us in this project – an approach that seeks to allow the obligatory glass of the display cases to become invisible in the face of the beauty of the objects, their materiality and also their spirituality. This is foreshadowed even before visitors enter the building, in Daniel Arab's evocative brushstrokes on the glass panes facing Alfredstraße. As visitors make their way through the exhibition, a delicate textile work by Dana Awartani evokes grief at the loss of art and culture, while allowing strength and hope to emerge from them. We would like to extend our thanks to the Lisson and Sfeir-Semler galleries for their collaboration.
During the preparations for the exhibition we also had the great privilege of being supported by a group of inspiring people in Essen: Lena Alekuseiduranie, Ayşenur Aydın, Abdurrahman Derin, Anne Khayat, Judy Sabbagh, Lana Sabbagh, Medina Sağlam, Alara Şimşek, Eleni Tolidou, Harun Üfrük, Amelia and Mitra Wilke, Mostafa Yosef, and Eda Nur

Yücel broadened our conceptions and rendered them in scent, taste, sound, and touch. We are grateful to them for the opportunity to learn and grow together. The path to this cooperation was aided on behalf of the Folkwang team by the thoughtful guidance and wealth of ideas provided by Nicole Trzeja, Peter Daners and Sarah Bockting.

The design of the exhibition and of the catalogue responds to the displayed artworks from the collection and its Eurocentric perspective in a manner that is as sensitive as it is considered. Using a typeface they developed themselves, Huda AbiFarès – one of the foremost experts on Arabic typography – and Andrea Hayek, whose work bridges Arabic and Latin scripts, explore themes of inspiration, appropriation, and overlap. They challenge European visual habits and encourage a closer examination of the objects.

We owe the coming together of all those involved to the curator and head of collections, Nadine Engel, who conceived this project, developed it both curatorially and organisationally, and led it with the utmost scholarly rigour, conceptual clarity, and great personal commitment and empathy. She was supported in this by Anna Grosche, whose digital visualisations opened up new perspectives for the project, and Dorina Michaelis, who, through her intensive research in the archives, has become one of the most knowledgeable experts on the history of the Folkwang.

Following Damascus … is not intended as a definitive narrative, but as an invitation to see and think together. The works on display speak of cultural interconnections, exchange, and mutual inspiration. They remind us that art history never consists solely of separate traditions, but rather of encounters, translations, and appropriations. Its contemporary relevance lies precisely in this. If museums are places of open-minded thinking, then they must thrive on a willingness to continually re-examine their own history, and on the visitors who do so alongside and within them. In this spirit, I wish you all meaningful encounters on our shared journey *Following Damascus* … and beyond.

Peter Gorschlüter

Director of the Museum Folkwang

From: Exhibition catalogue 'Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World' (Hirmer, February 2027)

Chronicles of Collecting. Islamic Artefacts in Europe

Avinoam Shalem (Columbia University, New York)

"If you like beautiful things," Henri Matisse (1869–1954) says, "go to the Louvre instead of indulging your feel for ownership. You like Persian fabrics? All right, but the sky is full of marvelous clouds, and it changes all the time." Matisse concludes this line of thought by stating: "And that's how I cured myself of the idea of collecting."[1] The history of Europe's collecting of Islamic artefacts is long. In fact, it goes back to the very rise of Islam as a world religion in the seventh century in Arabia and is entangled, as Matisse suggested, with Europe's enduring desire to possess and control the "Orient" – its natural sources and artistic productions, its cultures and histories. Europe was never cured of the idea of collecting Islamic artefacts because, beyond collecting as a manifestation of its political and economic power, Islamic artefacts were, and still are, collected in the West, especially in Europe, as part of the West's constant need to redefine and reinvent itself in response to specific socio-religious, political, and even demographic changes. The artefact of "The Other" has always challenged Europe's understanding of itself. It functions like a magic mirror in which one can see a suppressed image of oneself and, through that reflection, redefine one's identity. As Walter Benjamin once noted: "Alexandria aus Athen zurückerobern" (Reconquering Alexandria from Athens)[2], reflecting on the recurring tension between Alexandria and Athens as two different cultural centres.

Yet why collect at all?

[1] *Chatting with Matisse. The Lost 1941 Interview. Henri Matisse with Pierre Courthion*, ed. Serge Guilbaut, trans. Chris Miller, Los Angeles 2013, p. 77.

[2] See the discussion by Gerhard Wolf, "Alexandria aus Athen zurückerobern? Perspektiven einer mediterranen Kunstgeschichte mit einem Seitenblick auf das mittelalterliche Sizilien", in: *Lateinisch-griechisch-arabische Begegnungen*, ed. M. Mersch and U. Ritzerfeld, Berlin 2009, pp. 39–62.

The human urge to collect is typically rooted in one's desire to select from the plethora of things that surround us objects deemed valuable – whether economically or emotionally. These "things" (*Dinge*)[3] are objects, which, in addition to possibly being made of precious materials, are usually scarce, unusual, curious, or even bizarre. Walking down a street, along a seashore, on a country path, or on a mountain trail, our eyes are immediately drawn to what is unusual or strange. Such an object promptly captures our gaze because, when we encounter something extraordinary, it evokes a sense of wonder. This moment of discovery elevates us above the mundane and the unremarkable. It frees us from the ordinary and the common, and transports us into the realm of the exceptional and the unique. Collecting such objects – removing them from the specific context in which they were found and incorporating them into our possession – bestows upon us a sensation of uniqueness as well. It is as though the distinctive value emanating from each of these "different" objects reflects back onto us. Collecting personalises us and provides us with a sense of identity.

Pathways of portability

With the spread of Islam from the mid-seventh century onward, and especially on its arrival in the Mediterranean basin around the beginning of the eighth century – reaching regions in southern Europe such as the Iberian Peninsula and parts of southern France and Italy – artefacts of exquisite craftsmanship and composed of unusual and rare materials began to make their way into Europe. Although the specific routes these travelling artefacts took – from production centres in various cultural hubs of the new Muslim empire (caliphate) to sites of storage in Europe – do not reveal precisely why they were collected, it is important to outline the principal pathways of portability. It is likely that the earliest Islamic artefacts to arrive in Europe were associated with the transfer of Christian relics and sanctified substances from the Holy Land (*loca sancta*), that is, from biblical sites connected to the Old and New Testaments,

[3] The literature on Thing and Object Theory is too vast to mention here. Yet, the fundamental article is Bill Brown, "Thing Theory", in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1–22. As far as the medieval Muslim and Byzantine worlds are concerned, see: Avinoam Shalem, "The Discovery and Re-Discovery of the Medieval Islamic Object", in: *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, 2 vols., ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, Hoboken, NJ 2017, vol. 1, pp. 558–578; Charles Barber, "Thingliness", in: *Byzantine Things in the World*, exh. cat. Menil Collection, Houston, ed. Glenn Peers, New Haven 2013, pp. 98–105.

located between Persia and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and between Anatolia and Arabia. Islamic artefacts often functioned as precious containers for securing and enshrining holy relics and were brought to Europe by pilgrims as eulogias (blessed objects). These small portable objects likely also functioned as amulets and charms – protective objects that safeguarded pilgrims on their long journeys home. Such containers were made of decorated metal, carved wood, or ivory. The majority, however, consisted of small cylindrical vials of fine glass, carved rock crystals, or pieces of fine woven textiles used to wrap sanctified mementoes. Numerous vessels of this kind are still preserved in church treasuries across Europe. It is difficult, however, to determine precisely when they arrived.

If we consider the mountings added to some of these containers – adapted to their new function in church treasuries – as an indication of their date of presence in Europe, the so-called Cross of Theophanu from the cathedral of Essen (Fig. 1), dated to around 1050, can serve as a terminus ante quem, as it incorporates a Fatimid carved rock-crystal vial at its base. But as noted above, it is likely that such souvenirs from Islamic lands arrived even earlier.

Another route of transmission involved diplomacy. The exchange of diplomatic gifts between Muslim rulers and European potentates helped secure treaties and establish new alliances, whether to preserve, support, or disrupt the existing Mediterranean order. These were lavish, exceptionally crafted objects. Medieval paintings of the biblical scene of the Adoration of the Magi – in which gold, frankincense, and myrrh are presented to the infant Jesus in costly vessels – may offer a visual indication of the luxury and extravagance associated with such diplomatic gifts, at least as they were imagined.

According to medieval Latin sources, the earliest accounts of diplomatic gifts arriving in Europe through reciprocal delegations between Muslims and Christians describe objects sent from Abbasid Baghdad under Hārūn ar-Rashīd (around 800) to the Carolingian court in Aachen. Einhard (770–840) and Notker the Stammerer (c. 840–912) record the exchange of costly gifts between the two courts, including fine Islamic robes (likely silk), spices, rare scents and unguents, monkeys, and even an elephant (the famous Abul-Abbas). Later, in 806, a delegation arriving in Treviso in northern Italy reportedly brought an Islamic black tent of exceptional craftsmanship and a water clock. These diplomatic objects were highly regarded and likely

preserved not only for their economic value but also for their symbolic importance as tokens of alliance. Unfortunately, no specific surviving object in Europe can be definitively linked to these historical accounts. Nevertheless, numerous Islamic objects in medieval church treasuries in the Latin West have been recorded as associated with Charlemagne (c. 748–814) or Hārūn ar-Rashīd. Among the most famous are the ivory horn (the so-called oliphant of Charlemagne; Fig. 2) in Aachen; various carved rock-crystal or ivory chess pieces linked to these rulers, such as the chessmen of Charlemagne in Osnabrück and the ivory chess pieces in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, and the Bargello Museum in Florence.

Objects also arrived in Europe as booty. These were typically precious Islamic items looted during wars, particularly around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Many looted objects, such as gold and silver jewellery and even large bronze objects, were likely melted down as their material value provided immediate revenue to pay soldiers and secure profit. Indeed, sources from the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus) during the long Christian re-conquest (primarily from the eleventh century until the fall of Granada in 1492) attest to this practice. Many Islamic bronze objects were also melted down to provide metal for the production of arms. Other objects, however, were preserved and displayed as war trophies commemorating specific battles. The famous Almohad banner captured at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 by Alfonso VIII of Castile (Fig. 3) is one such example. Another is the emerald-glass hexagonal bowl known as the *sacro catino*, preserved in the treasury of the cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa, which may have been brought to Italy after the sack of Caesarea during the Crusades around 1100. The ideal war trophy was an object that conveyed the fall of Islamic power, particularly insignia used in the Muslim public sphere or objects bearing Arabic inscriptions and the names of powerful Muslim rulers. Donating such items to a medieval church treasury ensured the eternal commemoration of Christian victories over Islam.

The main route for the transfer of Islamic artefacts, however, was trade. This was the most common and widespread means by which Islamic artefacts reached Europe. The trade networks included the movement of numerous objects made from non-precious materials, such as pottery, glazed ceramics (the so-called *bacini*), and textiles woven from cotton, wool, and linen. Islamic objects of luxury also found their way to Europe through trade, particularly during

the High Middle Ages (late twelfth through fourteenth centuries), when changes in European lifestyle fostered a growing taste for opulence and luxury.

Hundreds of painted ivory caskets appear to have reached Europe, many originating from workshops in Sicily and along the eastern Mediterranean. Precious bronze objects with silver inlay – produced mainly in Syria and Egypt during the late Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods (c. 1200–1400) – were also traded extensively. A major expansion in commerce with the Muslim world occurred following the establishment of European strongholds in the Levant, as Crusader power became institutionalised in these regions.

It is noteworthy how European demand began to shape Islamic artistic production to meet the needs of a Christian clientele. European desires for exotic luxury influenced production processes and technologies, particularly in accelerating manufacture and expediting modes of transfer. This situation appears to have encouraged forms of serial production in Islamic workshops, affecting artistic methods, aesthetic qualities, technological adaptations, and shipping practices. These developments also necessitated modifications in form and design to facilitate rapid export and delivery.

The varied approaches in the Latin West toward incorporating Islamic artefacts into church treasuries likely stemmed from region-specific historical experiences and attitudes toward Islam. For example, in times of hostilities between Islam and Christianity invigorated by wars, like the Crusades in the Iberian Peninsula or in the Levant, or in moments of European fear of Ottoman expansion to the west, Islamic objects might have been collected, mutilated, and displayed as symbols of the vanishing military power of Islam and Christian supremacy. In other moments of “Convivencia” and of cultural-religious interactions, Islamic objects gained a high rank and even influenced European aesthetics; see, for example, the art of al-Andalus between the ninth and eleventh centuries or the “hybrid aesthetic” of Norman Sicily. More broadly, however, the collected Islamic objects illuminate significant processes related to the evolution of European aesthetics and attitudes toward luxury objects. For example, they help identify when a shift occurred in which appreciation of craftsmanship began to influence the assessment of an artefact’s aesthetic value. This shift marked a move beyond the traditional appraisal of material worth, introducing an additional criterion for evaluating beauty. Abbot

Suger (1081–1151), describing objects in the treasury of the church of Saint Denis in Paris, among which several Islamic objects were also reworked, famously declared, "Materiam superabat opus" (the workmanship surpassed the material) while citing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 2, line 5.[4] It is likely that the twelfth century marked a turning point in defining aesthetic pleasure and beauty in the Mediterranean cultural sphere.

The Islamic object was thus redefined, elevated, and appreciated according to more "objective" aesthetic principles beyond rarity and material value. A significant issue concerns the moment when Islamic objects were collected not for the aesthetic wonder they evoked but for the historical memory they embodied. Many Islamic objects were indeed collected because of their associations with specific times and events, whether real or constructed. Typically, however, these associations were biblical or mythical, linking the objects to events and figures from the Old and New Testaments or to legendary personalities such as Alexander III of Macedon, commonly known in the West as Alexander the Great, (356–326 BCE) or Harun al-Rashid. What deserves emphasis here is the search for the turning point at which Islamic objects were situated within "real" historical time. This inquiry may reveal when Islamic art came to be regarded as a memento – tangible historical evidence – rather than merely as an aesthetically pleasing object. It may also mark the moment when such objects were evaluated for their historical significance, beyond monetary value or exotic distinction. Although many Islamic artefacts lost their original Muslim identity upon arriving in the West, the moment at which they were once again recognised as Islamic is crucial for understanding the evolution of collecting Islamic art in Europe.

The historic or scientific gaze

Interest in technology, especially military technology, has long been embedded in the tensions of the East-West arms race. Islamic objects looted on battlefields, particularly arms, armour, and mechanical war devices, were collected and carefully studied. With the advent of the Renaissance, however, and a deepened commitment to reviving the classical past within the

[4] Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, Princeton, NJ (1946) 1975, pp. 62–63.

present, historical time itself became an object of systematic inquiry. The past was measured, chronologically ordered, and organised within an evolutionary framework. Islamic objects, too, were assigned a specific place within history.

In early Renaissance painting, Islamic textiles and carpets continued to adorn sacred spaces and were integrated into holy scenes as exotic and precious elements (Fig. 4). At the same time, however, Islamic objects were rendered with unprecedented precision. They were painted in meticulous detail, almost in a proto-hyperrealist manner. One might speak of the "portraiture" of Islamic objects in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This quasi-photographic approach reveals the emergence of an indirect scientific gaze – an epistemological shift that privileged close observation and empirical scrutiny.

As the world expanded – most notably with the European discovery of the Americas at the end of the fifteenth century and the establishment of maritime empires such as those of Spain and Portugal, which opened sea trade routes to Africa and South Asia – objects from remote, newly colonized territories and trading posts were collected. In the palaces of learned European elites during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, collections of natural and artificial marvels, known as Wunderkammern or cabinets of mirabilia, were assembled and displayed. These spaces organised and classified marvels of the natural and artificial worlds alike.

This was a transformative moment in the history of knowledge production in the West. Within these antiquarian collections, reliance on ancient texts as the sole source for investigating the past gave way to the inclusion of tangible material remains – especially human-made artefacts from archaeological excavations. Objects were now treated as historical "relics." Islamic astrolabes provide a compelling example (Fig. 5). As technological marvels, they were collected in several European cabinets of curiosities, such as the astrolabe from the collection of Ludovico Moscardo (1611–1681) of Verona, or the one depicted in Filippino Lippi's *Adoration of the Magi* (completed in 1496, Fig. 6), which features an astrolabe likely from the collection of Pierfrancesco (the Elder) de' Medici (1430–1476).

Ottoman objects – arms and armour, tents, garments, fine tableware, and even musical instruments – were likewise amassed by European rulers. Notable examples include the

Habsburg Wunderkammer of Emperor Rudolph II (1552–1612) in Prague; the Türckische Cammer of the Electors of Saxony and Kings of Poland in the Residenzschloss in Dresden; the *Türkenbeute* (Turkish Booty) of Margrave Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden in Karlsruhe (Fig. 7); and the collection of artefacts at Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków associated with the Polish King John III Sobieski (1629–1696). The crafted Islamic object was thus collected and admired. Marked by geography, faith, and culture, it was incorporated into encyclopaedic collections representing the arts of newly conquered worlds.

This classificatory impulse continued into the great imperial-colonial museums of Europe, such as the Pergamon Museum, the Louvre, and the British Museum. A significant distinction emerged, however. Unlike the mirabilia collections of learned antiquarians and rulers, in which art and nature coexisted, nineteenth-century institutions separated naturalia and scientific objects into newly established natural history and science museums. At the same time, high art was elevated within imperial collections, positioned at the apex of the aesthetic hierarchy, and the artist was venerated as genius. As a result, the Islamic object, once displayed alongside other art from newly "discovered" lands as well as naturalia and scientific instruments, became increasingly marginalised. The age of imperialism, while fostering remarkable encyclopaedic curiosity and new systems for classifying world art, also solidified the concept of the artistic "canon." This canon was European in origin and established the norms and rules for aesthetic judgment within a newly constructed Eurocentric civilisational-historical narrative. Islamic objects were effectively provincialised. Even when praised for technical innovation or exceptional craftsmanship, they were frequently relegated to the category of the "ornamental" or the "decorative" – a paradoxical and bittersweet status.

Modernity: Or how Islamic art was "waved" through abstraction

At the same time that empires amassed vast collections of global art, European society underwent profound transformations during the Industrial Revolution. Museums dedicated to applied arts, craft, and design in the West – such as the Victoria and Albert Museum (founded in 1852 as the South Kensington Museum) – were established to preserve what were perceived as the "relics" of the pre-industrial, handcrafted era. Within these institutions, Islamic objects

took pride of place, as Muslim artisans demonstrated exceptional mastery across numerous media, from carpets and textile weaving to hammered metalwork, glazed ceramics, blown and enamelled glass, and the carving of wood, ivory, and semi-precious stone. Yet, as noted earlier, Islamic objects were confined to the category of applied and decorative arts. Their floral, geometric, and calligraphic patterns were reduced to the status of mere ornament. Islamic art was studied systematically by designers, architects, and artists such as Pascal Coste (1787–1879), Owen Jones (1809–1874) (Fig. 8), William Morris (1834–1896), Pascal Sébah (1823–1886), Auguste Racinet (1825–1893), and Eugène-Victor Collinot (1836–1882). Nevertheless, it remained ensnared in the reductive label of the ornamental.

This characterisation resonated with prevailing European clichés about "the Orient", particularly those concerning iconoclasm and a supposedly lavish, excessive lifestyle associated with decadence and corruption. Paradoxically, however, the ornamental quality of Islamic art captivated Western taste. Islamic patterns became objects of desire, and an "Oriental" lifestyle was consumed and commercialised. The popularisation of the arts of Islam was evident in major international exhibitions from the mid-nineteenth century onward, where Islamic artefacts of daily use were displayed in ways resembling grand department stores.

Orientalism was certainly, as argued by Edward Said in 1978, a perspective and mode of representation shaped by dominance and imperial economic interests. It also functioned as a system of acquiring scholarly knowledge, albeit one that was deeply embedded in nineteenth-century historicism – its passion for periodisation and stylistic classification. In this sense, Orientalism was another contemporary artistic style that participated in the broader project of modernising European society during the Industrial Revolution.

As portable commodities, Islamic artefacts entered European homes and artists' studios . Large, glazed vases, bowls, and plates adorned mantelpieces; textiles and carpets covered floors, hung on walls, or were draped over divans. The Orient became the object of widespread fascination – a space of longing. The Orient was domesticated and materialised through portable objects, and Europeans immersed themselves in constructed "Oriental" interiors.

Around 1910, however, a shift in the perception of Islamic objects occurred, particularly with the opening of the exhibition *Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst* in Munich, the

largest ever presentation of Islamic art in Europe. The term "decorative" was supplanted by the designation "masterpieces" (*Meisterwerke*), and Islamic art was elevated to a status comparable to that accorded to European art, specifically that of the Renaissance.

The reasons for this elevation are numerous and too complex to outline in this short chronicle of collecting the arts of Islam in Europe. It is likely, however, that specific characteristics of Islamic art were newly identified – characteristics that were no longer understood solely in terms of ornamentalism, exoticism, or even erotic appeal. At the dawn of the twentieth century, European artists felt an urgent need to revitalise artistic practice and to break decisively with the canon. A disruption was called for. The sense of impending change in global politics and the anticipation of the fall of old empires likely nurtured aspirations for the creation of a new visual language. At the same time, discussions of the subconscious and unconscious as dynamic scientific concepts for understanding the self opened new ways of thinking about abstract art.

Islamic art – especially the concept of the arabesque as the result of an abstract visual perception of nature – came to occupy the minds of numerous modern artists. At the 1910 exhibition in Munich, Wassily Kandinsky studied the abstract compositional matrix of a South Asian miniature painting. Matisse, who also visited this exhibition, later remarked that it was there that he "found in them a new confirmation" for his art.[5] The modern psychological concept of the unconscious, most closely associated with Sigmund Freud, and the new possibilities of abstraction in the visual arts profoundly influenced twentieth-century modes of thought and artistic production.

Modern artists – and no less importantly, collectors of modern art, like Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874–1921) – were eager to include works from the Muslim world in their studios and collections. The aesthetics of Islamic art seemed to confirm for them that the experiments of Paul Gauguin, with his flattened perspective; Vincent van Gogh, with his bold colour compositions and visible brushstrokes; Kandinsky, in his abstract constructions; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner; Max Beckmann; Max Pechstein; Emil Nolde; and many other expressionists – along with Matisse, Picasso, Paul Klee, and August Macke – had precedents in the arts of Islam. Thus,

[5] Jack Flam (ed.), *Matisse on Art*, revised ed., Berkeley/Los Angeles 1995, p. 178.

modern artists and collectors discerned in Islamic art abstract templates for the avant-garde visual language they were striving to articulate.

From: Exhibition catalogue 'Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World' (Hirmer, February 2027)

Arts in Search of Museums.

Islamic Arts and the Crisis of the Museum System in 19th-Century Europe

Rémi Labrusse

Two major phenomena characterised the Western idea of artistic heritage in the 19th century: the extension and increasing complexity of the museum system and the desire to integrate objects from non-Western cultures into this heritage, as well as the difficulty of achieving this.

In both cases, conflicting forces were at play, signalling an enduring state of crisis in modern culture. The symbolic importance of the idea of the universal museum, emblem of progress, power, and global knowledge, went hand in hand with its fragmentation, a symptom of the frustration that the institution itself never ceased to provoke. Within it, the material appropriation of non-Western artefacts or human remains served as a manifestation of self-satisfaction with regard to the capacity to comprehend, assimilate, and exercise dominion over foreign domains, while the allure of – even the fascination with – cultures beyond the confines of the Western world was clearly indicative of a state of self-dissatisfaction.

In other words, a structural crisis of identity appears to be a constituent element of modernity itself.[1] It can be described as a double bind, where self-pride and self-criticism, simultaneous love and rejection of oneself, are systematically intertwined. The collection and exhibition of Islamic art have particularly highlighted this situation, owing to their long-standing ties with Western cultures, in a unique relationship that combines both distance and proximity.

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The concept of a universal museum, encompassing works of art, technical instruments, natural science objects and historical documents, emerged as a pivotal tenet within the ideology of the French Revolution, in line with Enlightenment philosophies concerning the education of the people by the people.[2] This notion was expressed repeatedly in parliamentary debates from 1790 onwards, reaching its zenith in the summer of 1793, a period also known as "The Terror", under the Convention, a moment of extreme destruction affecting both individuals and monuments. Iconoclasm, as a ritual of destroying the old world, went hand in hand with the integration of artefacts from the past into an entirely new ideological framework: that of the revolutionary museum.[3] Even if museum structures, the result of large-scale collecting practices, had certainly existed since the 16th century, as

[1] Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise. Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*, Frankfurt am Main (1959) 1973. Myriam Revault d'Allonnes, *La Crise sans fin. Essai sur l'expérience moderne du temps*, Paris 2012.

[2] Dominique Poulot, *Musée, nation, patrimoine. 1789–1815*, Paris 1997 (Bibliothèque des histoires), p. 18.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 136ff.

Krzysztof Pomian has shown,[4] never before had the idea of the museum been imbued with such political and symbolic value, becoming the central means of a comprehensive re-founding of knowledge, which was now to be made accessible to all citizens without mediation. This link between destruction and re-foundation extended beyond the French Revolutionary period, becoming a recurring phenomenon throughout the history of Western museums, right up to the present day. In the 20th century, in particular, the desire for a clean slate – and thus museophobia – went hand in hand with the desire to invent ever more ambitious forms of universal museums.[5] In 1920, for example, the architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887–1965), better known as Le Corbusier, in his journal *L'Esprit nouveau*, launched a survey on the necessity of "burning down the Louvre";[6] but he also envisaged a Temple of Universal Knowledge or *Mundaneum* in Geneva in 1928–1929[7], and a Museum of Unlimited Growth between 1930 and 1939;[8] finally, he went on to build a Museum of Knowledge, whose very title signals its universal vocation, in Chandigarh, in the Punjab, in the early 1950s.[9]

Indeed, the reality of the museum system has systematically developed in the opposite direction of the idea – or the dream – of a universal museum. Since the end of the 18th century, it has always tended to substitute fragmentation for universality and confusion for rationality. In France, as early as the French Revolution, the fine arts, technology, and natural history were divided into separate museums: the Muséum central des arts, the Musée des monuments français (which became part of the former at the end of the Empire), the Conservatoire des arts et métiers and the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle. Later, the divisions continued to multiply,[10] whether in the form of history or archaeology museums, military museums, ethnographic museums, museums of decorative arts, or folk arts and traditions, with their countless variations depending on location, political regime, and cultural, historical and technical traditions. Even at the British Museum, which ranks among the museums that have upheld the ideal of universality for the longest time, natural history eventually became separated from archaeology and human artefacts in general from 1881 onwards.[11]

Despite the fact that the new distinctions were inspired by a desire to perfect a comprehensive taxonomic logic, they actually led to increasing disorder, and became a source of confusion more than of rationalisation, given the competition between institutions to acquire the most attractive collections of any kind and the difficulty of drawing clear boundaries between categories. This was particularly true of the division between works of

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[4] Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln*, Berlin 1988.

[5] Rémi Labrusse, "Muséophobies. Pour une histoire du musée du point de vue de ses contempteurs", in: *Romantisme*, no. 173 (*Musée, musées*), Autumn 2016, pp. 68–78.

[6] Le Corbusier *et al*., "Faut-il brûler le Louvre?", in: *L'Esprit nouveau*, no. 6, 1920, pp. 1–8.

[7] Le Corbusier, *Villa Savoye and Other Buildings and Projects 1929–1930*, New York/Paris, pp. 141ff.

[8] Le Corbusier, "Pour la création à Paris d'un musée des artistes vivants (II). Réponse et projet d'aménagement et d'organisation", in: *Cahiers d'art*, no. 1, 1931, pp. 5–9.

[9] Olivier Cinqualbre, "Les projets de musée de Le Corbusier", in: *Les Cahiers du Mnam*, special issue no. 5 (Histoire(s) d'une collection), 2018, pp. 35–39. Catherine de Smet, "Les Musées imaginés de Le Corbusier", in: *Les Cahiers du Mnam*, no. 146, 2019, pp. 24–43.

[10] Krzysztof Pomian, *Le Musée, une histoire mondiale*, vol. 2: *L'ancrage européen, 1789–1850*, Paris 2021.

[11] Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet. A History of the British Museum*, London 1973, pp. 224ff.

the so-called fine arts and applied or decorative arts, archaeological remains, and non-Western art objects.

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During the 19th century, two new museum categories, ethnography and the decorative arts, revealed better than any others the identity contradictions specific to Western modernity in its relations with foreign cultures. As regards ethnographic museums, a need for theoretical and institutional independence – gradually distancing their collections from the tradition of cabinets of curiosities and from those of archaeological museums – coincided with the emergence of ethnography as a specific academic discipline from the 1820s onwards. As we know, this knowledge, based materially on systematic looting, came into its own in the second half of the 19th century, in conjunction with European colonial or para-colonial expansion. While the ambition continued to take on an encyclopaedic character, aiming to cover all the world's cultures, more or less arbitrary internal divisions followed, depending on pre-existing collections and scholarly traditions, or the people involved. These distinctions could be regional (Japan in the Netherlands through the early travels and work of Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866);[12] the Indian subcontinent in the United Kingdom;[13] Central Africa in Belgium;[14] Algeria in France;[15] and so on). They could also derive from methodological orientations, depending, in particular, on whether one opted for a transcultural anthropological rationalism or for a geographical and ethnographic pragmatism. Consequently, the nomenclature of the museums underwent constant fluctuation: museums of anthropology, ethnology, sociology, history of religions, etc.

Similar developments can be observed with regard to museums of decorative arts. Museums specialising in particular materials or techniques, in accordance with the leading industries of the place, have proliferated: textiles in Lyons from 1890[16] or in Leeds from 1868[17] and 1892; ceramics in Sèvres from 1805[18] or in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, from 1917;[19] porcelain in Limoges from 1867;[20] and so on. Generalist museums, meanwhile, have been given a variety

[12] Shûzô Kure, *Philipp Franz von Siebold. Leben und Werk*, Munich 1996.

[13] Arthur MacGregor, *The India Museum Revisited*, London 2023.

[14] D. F. E. Thys van den Audenaerde (ed.), *Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, Tervuren*, Ghent 1994. Sarah Van Beurden, *Authentically African. Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture*, Athens, OH 2015, pp. 61ff.

[15] Nabila Oulebsir, *Les Usages du patrimoine. Monuments, musées et politique coloniale en Algérie (1830–1930)*, Paris 2004.

[16] Raymond Cox, *Le Musée historique des tissus de la Chambre de commerce de Lyon. Précis historique de l'art de décorer les étoffes et catalogue sommaire*, Lyons 1902.

[17] *National Exhibition of Works of Art at Leeds, 1868. Official Catalogue*, Leeds 1868, section 9. *The Museum of Ornamental Art, consisting of works from the earliest period to the present century, arranged in the Chapel and adjoining rooms*.

[18] Alexandre Brongniart and Denis Riocreux, *Description méthodique du Musée céramique de la Manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres*, Paris 1845.

[19] Karin Gaillard (ed.), *Made in Holland. The Global Success of Dutch Ceramics*, Leeuwarden 2018.

[20] Paul Gasnault, *Ville de Limoges. Musée céramique Adrien Dubouché. Catalogue de la collection Jacquemart, publié d'après le manuscrit original laissé par Albert Jacquemart…,* Paris 1879.

of names, again depending on the countries' academic and methodological traditions: decorative arts, applied arts, industrial arts, folk arts, arts and crafts, and so on.

These phenomena of semantic and material fragmentation were swiftly compounded by a feeling of disorientation. Ethnography and the decorative arts have continually encroached upon other categories, such as museums of so-called "prehistory", military museums, or museums of archaeology and fine arts. Consider the Louvre, with the Musée d'ethnographie et de marine between 1827 and 1878,[21] or the British Museum, where ethnography and the "Oriental" arts, present from the outset, were placed under the administration of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities from 1866[22] (renamed Department of Ethnography in 1946).

More fundamentally, as I have already suggested, museums of ethnography and of decorative arts themselves have been impacted by internal contradictions of a comparable nature. In both cases, a progressive optimism was fuelled by the conviction not only of the hierarchical domination of the fine arts over any other form of creation but also of global Western superiority over all other cultures. Consequently, the aim of collecting non-Western artefacts, often considered "decorative", was to provide tools of knowledge to promote and celebrate Western imperial expansion, and the collections were thus akin to weapons or spoils of war. Incidentally, whilst this discourse has today been seemingly reversed, it remains nonetheless active in practice, insofar as the national pride these museums still inspire constitutes a lasting obstacle to restitution, and thus to the dismantling of collections largely derived from colonial plunder.

A sense of melancholic decline, however, immediately attached itself to this triumphant pragmatism. It was, and still is, characterised by the idea that the constant ruptures inherent in modernity constitute irreparable losses and that they compel us to view every cultural identity and every historical situation as relative, destined to disappear, in accordance with the laws of social Darwinism. The gathering of ethnographic collections, in particular, has always been underpinned by the idea that it is appropriate to preserve artefacts from disappearing societies: their objects are perceived as remains, ruins, crumbs of endangered cultures. This is also the case for the non-Western collections in museums of decorative arts: in this case, the lure provoked by their exotic origins was reinforced by the almost obsessive notion that vernacular craft traditions possessed an authenticity and, therefore, an overwhelming aesthetic superiority over contemporary European products, marked by industrial modes of production.[23] Whilst now doomed to disappear,[24] all these modes of material creation pointed to ways of life *spared* by progress rather than *deprived* of it.

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[21] Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, Guillaume Fonkenell and Françoise Markus (eds), *Histoire du Louvre*, vol. 2, *De la Restauration à nos jours*, Paris 2016. Géraldine Barron, "Le musée de Marine du Louvre: un musée des techniques?", in: *Artefact. Techniques, histoire et sciences humaines*, no. 5, 2017, pp. 143–162.

[22] Marjorie L. Caygill and John F. Cherry (eds), *A.W. Franks, Nineteenth-century Collecting and the British Museum*, London 1997.

[23] See, for example, Léon de Laborde, *De l'union des arts et de l'industrie*, Paris 1856, vol. 1: *Le Passé*, p. 243: "Comment concilier cette contradiction de nations barbares, ignorantes et misérables, exposant dans le grand concours des peuples un art si perfectionné qu'il témoigne de notions réservées aux peuples les plus avancés dans la civilisation, un art si magnifique qu'il porte en toutes choses une splendeur royale?".

[24] Ibid., p. 268: "L'Orient n'est plus l'Orient. Pendant qu'il l'est encore, admirons-le. Recueillons pieusement le dépôt des secrets de l'art antique qu'il a religieusement conservé, formons des collections de tous ses produits

In line with this belief, the two categories of museums competed for similar collections. When the India Museum in London, for example, closed in 1879, its collections were largely transferred to the South Kensington Museum, which focused on the decorative arts. In Vienna, the Handelsmuseum (formerly the Orientalisches Museum) was finally incorporated into the Museum für Kunst und Industrie in 1897.[25] In Paris, the remnants of the Exposition permanente des produits de l'Algérie, which were ethnographically oriented, were eventually incorporated into the new Museum of Algerian Antiquities and Muslim Art in Algiers in 1892. The same can be said of the modes of display. Whilst ethnographic or anthropological museums have always stated their intention to prioritise the scientific study of typological series over the spectacularisation of individual objects,[26] in practice, their modes of presentation have often been characterised by principles of spectacular or "decorative" arrangement, encouraging exotic wonder and aesthetic admiration (Fig. 1). At times, this approach was explicitly embraced, as evidenced by the so-called Congo Museum in Tervuren, Belgium, in the wake of the 1897 Brussels World's Fair. Reciprocally, the museums of decorative arts, often derived from World's Fairs (Fig. 2), set about developing a global history of arts, techniques, and cultures that brought them closer to the analytical approach championed in ethnography. Even if they showed a more marked preference for remarkable, spectacular works, either individually or within *period rooms*, they also chose to display systematic series, thanks to the unrivalled scope of their non-Western collections within the museum system, at the beginning of the period (Fig. 3).

This was particularly the case for the arts of Islam, whatever name was given to them: "Muslim", "Islamic", or "Oriental" arts, the latter term encompassing cultural areas ranging from China and Japan to the Islamic West, via South Asia, Iran, Central Asia, and the Middle East, over several centuries.

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As is well documented, artefacts from these cultural areas have been present in most major European collections since the Renaissance. From this origin, mostly drawn from former aristocratic, royal, or religious collections of precious objects or curiosities, they entered the collections of modern museums with a universal vocation, where they occupied a position at the intersection of ethnography and art. Owing to their cultural difference and geographical origins, they fell under the category of exotic curiosities. Conversely, the intense and long-standing relations between Europe and Islam encouraged a reduction in the impression of exoticism and a predominance of aesthetic admiration, based on the mastery of exceptional craft techniques (from Iranian silks to Mamluk enamelled glass or Ottoman Iznik ceramics, to name but a few examples) and the use of precious materials (from ivory to silk or rock crystal).

Moreover, what prompted the interest, if not the admiration, was an aesthetic based on the embellishment of the everyday environment (clothing, furnishings, architectural elements)

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pour nous en servir comme de modèles, pour les conserver à côté des restes magnifiques de tant de civilisations éteintes, de tant de peuples disparus. […] Les Orientaux viendront à Paris : il est bon qu'ils trouvent dans nos musées l'art que nous aurons tué dans leurs mains, et qui aura prospéré dans les nôtres."

[25] Peter Noever (ed.), *Kunst und Industrie. Die Anfänge des Museums für angewandte Kunst in Wien*, Vienna 2000.

[26] B. A. L. Cranstone and Steven Seidenberg (eds), *The General's Gift: A Celebration of Pitt Rivers Museum Centenary 1884–1984,* Oxford 1984.

rather than on the creation of imaginary worlds. This is what modern Europe would soon come to call "decoration", with a mixture of desire and condescension, in contrast to the "fine arts".[27] The prevailing notion was that the ornament in this context was antithetical to the image in the other. In summary, two sets of oppositions overlapped in the Western view of Islam: between the familiar and the exotic, on the one hand; between ornament and image, on the other.

What were the consequences of this complex interplay of otherness and identity, exclusion and appropriation, in the modern museum system, from the 19th century onwards? Once the constitution of public collections had been clearly established (and setting aside, therefore, for reasons of space, the fact that private collections played a pioneering and long-standing predominant role in this field), the key issue was the ongoing uncertainty over the museum categories to which these works and collections of objects belonged, to the extent that it gave rise to rivalries and competitive practices between the institutions concerned, above all the museums of ethnology and of decorative arts.

In France, objects from Central Asia and Syria from the Ujfalvy and Lansberg collections were found in the Ethnographic Museum of Scientific Missions in February 1878, and, during the summer of the same year, more extensive bodies of works were organised systematically in the Oriental Gallery of the Palais du Trocadéro, one of the origins of the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum, which finally opened in 1882.[28] At the same time, however, it was within the Museum of Decorative Arts that the most significant collections of Islamic art were built up, as early as 1864, within the Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie, and even more so from 1882 onwards, when the Union centrale des arts décoratifs was founded, and 1905, when it was installed in the Louvre's Pavillon de Marsan. Thanks to an active network of private collectors, these collections were gradually incorporated into the museum's permanent collections and exhibited temporarily at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1893, during the first "Exposition d'art musulman",[29] or at the Pavillon de Marsan in 1903,[30] in anticipation of the museum's permanent installation there.

We find a similar situation in Berlin, where Islamic artworks were initially divided between the Kunstgewerbemuseum (i.e. applied arts), under the direction of Julius Lessing (1843–1908) – a specialist in Ottoman and Safavid carpets and Iznik ceramics – on the one hand, and the Völkerkundemuseum (i.e. ethnography) on the other, which held a small collection of contemporary crafts, notably from the Maghreb. Then, between 1904 and 1908, Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), a specialist in carpets like Lessing, established a specific *Islamische Kunstabteilung* within the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (Fig. 4), together with Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945), himself an expert in Islamic and pre-Islamic architecture.[31]

Other cases of rivalry would include Vienna, between the Museum für Kunst und Industrie (applied arts), established in 1863, and the Orientalisches Museum (ethnography), founded

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[27] Rémi Labrusse (ed.), *Purs Décors? Arts de l'Islam, regards du XIXe siècle*, Paris 2007.

[28] Ernest-Théodore Hamy, *Les Origines du musée d'ethnographie. Histoire et documents*, intr. Nélia Dias, Paris (1889) 1988.

[29] Georges Marye and Léonce Bénédite (eds), *Exposition d'art musulman. Catalogue officiel*, Paris 1893.

[30] Gaston Migeon (ed.), *Exposition des arts musulmans au musée des Arts décoratifs,* Paris 1903.

[31] Glenn H. Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill 2002.

in 1875, which became the Handelsmuseum in 1886 and was finally merged into the Museum für Kunst und Industrie in 1897; or London, between the South Kensington Museum (later renamed Victoria & Albert Museum), whose *"oriental* bias"[32] dated back to its founding in 1857 by Henry Cole (1808–1882), Owen Jones (1809–1874), Richard Redgrave (1804–1888), and others, and the British Museum, under the impetus of Augustus W. Franks (1826–1897), which focused the collection on dated objects and thus on historical study, whilst excluding furniture and textiles, deemed too close to craftsmanship and too far removed from "high" art.

In this context, opposing museographic choices gave rise to fierce controversies, concerning the superiority of presentations of a more ethnographic nature (with an Orientalist character) and those of a more aesthetic nature (with a formalist character). This was the case, among other examples, between the *Exposition d'art musulman* organised in Algiers in 1905 on the occasion of the Congrès des orientalistes et des Sociétés savantes,[33] and the *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst* in Munich in 1910.[34] In the first case, the emphasis on artefacts as documents of culture highlighted otherness in relation to the West (Fig. 5). Conversely, in the second case, the focus on masterpieces underscored identity with pure artistic creation, as it was conceptualised in Europe.

Added to this dichotomy was the development of colonial museums, in which the two objectives of scientific ethnographic study and aesthetic admiration were merged as parts of the same colonial propaganda. This was the case in the United Kingdom, with the Indian Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta in 1814, which had its counterpart in the India Museum in London between 1801 and 1879; in France, with the museum-library in Algiers from 1835–1838, the Permanent Exhibition of Algerian Products in Paris from 1834 to 1889 and then in Algiers in 1889, and, finally, the Museum of Algerian Antiquities and Muslim Art created in Algiers in 1892 and opened in 1897; or in Cairo, where the British and the French competed for soft power and where a Musée d'art arabe was established in 1883 under the auspices of a Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe, fostering collaboration and competition among European connoisseurs of German (Julius Franz, Max Herz), French (Ambroise Baudry), and English (Edward T. Rogers) origins[35] (Fig. 6).

The result of this diversity of the museums involved and constant hesitation over nomenclature was that Islamic art defied, in the 19th century, the rationalist taxonomy inherent in the modern concept of the museum, more than any other body of artworks. However, even though ambivalence persisted over the course of the century, the ethnographic documentary approach tended to give way to decorative aesthetic displays, whether in museums of decorative arts in the strict sense or in fine art museums like the Louvre, following the creation in 1905 of a room dedicated to Islamic art within the Département des Arts Décoratifs (itself established in 1893). The driving force behind it was Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), director of the Department since 1902, who was also closely associated with the Union centrale des arts décoratifs, a staunch Islamophile, and curator of

[32] Barbara Morris, *Inspiration for Design: The Influence of the Victoria & Albert Museum*, London 1986, p. 27.

[33] Georges Marçais, *L'Exposition d'art musulman à Alger, avril 1905*, Paris 1906.

[34] Andrea Lermer and Avinoam Shalem (eds), *After One Hundred Years: The 1910 Exhibition Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst Reconsidered*, Leiden 2010.

[35] Mercedes Volait, *Fous du Caire*, Paris 2009.

the 1903 exhibition of Muslim art in the Pavillon de Marsan.[36] In this context, as we have seen, the ambivalence between identity and otherness was not attributed to culture in general as much as to the visual arts specifically, where the category of ornament, in Islamic lands, was presented as standing in contrast to the representational image, in the West.

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To conclude, three brief observations may be drawn from the modern history of collecting, museums, and displays.

Firstly, when the museum system sought to identify and incorporate Islamic art, it was confronted, with particular intensity, with its own contradictions: between conservation and invention, the desire for objectification and for inspiration, the tendency towards analytical detachment and towards emotional internalization; in short, between a retrospective view of a remote vanishing world and a prospective view of the Western modern world in the making. Islamic artworks were perceived both as objects of knowledge and as sources of inspiration, as providers of "lessons". Regarded as objects of the past, they seemed to confirm the West's capacity to master other times and other spaces; but regarded as testimonies to an aesthetic system that was both coherent and admirable, they challenged the belief in its imperial superiority.

Secondly, and more broadly, the arts of Islam proposed an alternative to the hierarchy between the higher and lesser arts established in the West since the Renaissance and helped to relativise and undermine the European notion of the image. This upheaval concerned not only the mode of creation – between the collective production of ornamental compositions and the solitary invention of a singular work – but also the mode of reception, that is, the relationship between image and life: should visual creation be seen as offering the possibility of escaping into a substitute world through the imaginary, or, on the contrary, of exalting the real world through its ornamentation? These debates were particularly intense in the second half of the 19th century and led to the establishment of Islamic art as a critical force against the Western theory of mimetic representation.

Thirdly, these tensions introduced by the Islamic arts contributed to revealing the internal conflicts of modern Western culture as a whole, torn between self-satisfaction and self-criticism, self-love and self-hatred, the exaltation of its own identity and a fascination with otherness. They accentuated this dual constraint through the simultaneous impression of otherness and continuity they conveyed in relation to Western culture. More intensely than any other art form, they encouraged us to view "ourselves as another", to borrow the philosopher Paul Ricœur's expression.[37] In other words, they enabled modern culture to achieve a self-understanding of the state of structural crisis that renders it distinctive, entrapped within its contradictions, at once fiercely destructive, melancholically conservative, and anxiously appropriative.

It will be for the reader to decide whether or not – or to what extent – these ideas apply to later periods of museum collections of Islamic artefacts in the West, up to the present day.

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[36] Raymond Koechlin, *Gaston Migeon et le Louvre,* Paris 1931.

[37] Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago/London (1990) 1992.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

From the “Oriental Question” to Islamic Art: Karl Ernst Osthaus’s Travels in French North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, 1898–1899

Arndt Neumann

The “Oriental Question” sparked the political imagination of the German Empire in the late 19th century.[1] The question of how German influence could be secured in the territory of the Ottoman Empire after its expected collapse shaped public debate. In view of France’s forcible subjugation of Algeria and Tunisia in multiple wars and the success of Great Britain in reducing Egypt to financial and political dependency, Germany no longer wished to lag behind.[2] Against this colonial-political backdrop, Karl Ernst Osthaus, a student of art history and heir to millions as the son of an industrial family in Hagen, embarked upon two extended journeys through French North Africa and the Ottoman Empire in 1898–1899.[3] During this highly formative period of his life, he began collecting rugs, weapons, wooden panelling, and manuscripts (Cats. ##–##).[4] Drawing on contemporaneous publications and personal correspondence, the following essay seeks to reconstruct the ways in which his aesthetic interest in Islamic art was defined by the colonial aspirations of the imperial age as well as by his own travels in the region.

The young Osthaus’s passionate allegiance to the nationalist-colonialist Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*) became apparent already in the period leading up to his first journey.[5] At the founding assembly of the Hagen chapter of the Pan-German

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[1] Cf. Malte Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient. Zwei deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich 1851–1918*, Frankfurt/New York 2006; Gregor Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht. Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage 1871–1914*, Munich 1984.

[2] Cf. Wolfgang Reinhard, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt. Globalgeschichte der europäischen Expansion 1415–2015*, 4th rev. edn, Munich 2018, pp. 907–915, 1047–1062.

[3] Cf. Rainer Stamm and Gloria Köpnick, *Karl Ernst und Gertrud Osthaus. Die Gründer des Folkwang-Museums und ihre Welt*, Munich 2022.

[4] Cf. Rainer Stamm, “Schlüssel zu jedem Schatz”, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 August 2022, p. N3.

[5] On the Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*), cf. Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation – Volk – Rasse. Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914*, Göttingen 2007; Rainer Hering, *Konstruierte Nation. Der Alldeutsche Verband 1890 bis 1939*, Hamburg 2003.

League on 15 March 1898, Osthaus served as keynote speaker,[6] and according to the newspaper *Westfälisches Tageblatt* his "enthusiastic statements" were repeatedly interrupted by "expressions of agreement" from the audience.[7] Immediately following his speech, one of his closest confidants, the retired secondary school teacher, classical philologist and naturalist Johann Hermann Heinrich Schmidt (1834–1918), was elected as the first chairman (Fig. 1). Just eight days later, Osthaus and Schmidt would embark on a journey of several weeks through French North Africa, visiting Algiers and Tunis as well as many other cities (cf. p. ##).

The extent to which the travellers' experience was influenced by pre-existing colonial attitudes is revealed by two accounts published shortly after their return. The first is a series of articles by Schmidt entitled "Reisebilder aus Nord-Afrika" (Travel Images from North Africa), which appeared in the *Westfälisches Tageblatt* in the early summer of 1898. They include not only detailed descriptions of the natural environment, but also brief characterisations of various ethnic groups. First, the author commends the French: "They may have some national faults, but they are and remain a true European civilised people. One need only travel by rail through the country to grant full respect to their cultural activities." Then, full of racist contempt, he turns to the Arabs and the Kabyles: since their alleged lethargy hinders the "cultivation of the land", it is for him incontrovertible "that all peoples belonging to Mohammedan society are morally degenerate and must ultimately perish".[8]

The second account – Osthaus's *Tagebuch meiner in Gesellschaft des Herrn Prof. Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt unternommenen Reise durch Algerien und Tunis* (Diary of My Journey through Algeria and Tunis, undertaken in the company of Prof. Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt; Cat. ##), issued at almost the same time by a publisher in Hagen – bears witness to a similar point of view.[9] The colonial attitudes of Osthaus, while hardly less pronounced than those of Schmidt, were marked by different emphases. A frequent refrain for him was that France was too weak to save North Africa from the "curse of unfruitfulness" and that only Germany, destined to "world domination", could

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[6] Cf. "Die vorgestrige Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Hagen des Alldeutschen", in: *Westfälisches Tageblatt*, no. 64, 17 March 1898, p. 3.
[7] "Die vorgestrige Versammlung" (see n. 6), p. 3.
[8] Johann Hermann Heinrich Schmidt, "Reisebilder aus Nord-Afrika III", in: *Westfälisches Tageblatt*, 4 July 1898, pp. 2f.
[9] Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Tagebuch meiner in Gesellschaft des Herrn Prof. Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt unternommenen Reise durch Algerien und Tunis. Als Beitrag zur Kenntnis Nord-Afrikas veröffentlicht*, Hagen 1898.

accomplish this task.[10] The same was true of the Arabs' "declarations of friendship":[11] for Osthaus, it was beyond question that "the Arab would gladly exchange the Frenchman's rule for that of the German".[12] The final entry in his travel diary returns to these same two thoughts. Gazing back at the coast of North Africa from the rail of the steamship, Osthaus pondered the impressions he had received over the preceding weeks: "Once again I let the images of this beautiful journey to the land of palm trees wash over me, with all their scents and sunlit glory, all their beauty and wild passion."[13] How these marvellous regions could be ruled over by feeble France was a mystery to him; moreover, the rising nation of Germany enjoyed great respect all the way to the Persian Gulf: "Not only in Africa do hearts beat for you, but Smyrna and Beirut rejoice at your name, and on the Euphrates are untilled fields!" Thus there could only be one demand: "Germany to the Mediterranean!"[14]

In the autumn of 1898, Osthaus embarked on a second journey which, over the course of several months, took him to places such as Constantinople (now Istanbul), Jerusalem, Damascus, and Cairo. Although no similarly detailed travel reports have survived from this trip, a number of letters and short newspaper articles suggest that his colonial-political ambitions had by then assumed even greater importance. Immediately before his departure, he approached the administration of the Pan-German League with a request for help, in response to which the League's business manager Adolf Lehr (1839–1901) sent him a list of Pan-German contact persons in Ottoman cities (Fig. 2).[15] As the accompanying letter makes clear, he was also given a political assignment: "I am persuaded that your efforts will help the Pan-German League gain access to new circles."[16]

Among the persons on the list whom Osthaus contacted during his second journey to the Ottoman Empire was the German architect Johann Adam Rennebaum (1858–1937), who resided in Cairo. A note published in the journal *Alldeutsche Blätter* in early March 1899 mentions their encounter: "A gratifying report comes from Cairo. There, following a lecture by Herr Osthaus (Hagen in Westphalia) at a meeting

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[10] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), pp. 16, 26.
[11] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 25.
[12] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 38.
[13] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 43.
[14] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 43.
[15] [Adolf Lehr], *Verzeichnis von Mitgliedern des Alldeutschen Verbandes* (Directory of Members of the Pan-German League), KEO-Archiv, V 106/87.
[16] Adolf Lehr to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 13 September 1898, KEO-A NAC 2 20/2.

presided over by our representative Herr Rennebaum, a local chapter of the Pan-German League was founded and was immediately joined by forty members."[17] Meanwhile – as evidenced by entries in his travel diary and the invoices of antiquities dealers still preserved in Hagen – the art history student with pan-German ideas had begun to develop an interest in Islamic art. Soon after the beginning of his first journey, Osthaus took part in a "tour for foreigners through the Moorish city" of Algiers, where he saw a "carpet manufactory" and purchased "a few of the most beautiful pieces".[18] The acquisitions continued a few weeks later at a bazaar in Tunis (Fig. 3), where he purchased various "weapons, silver pieces, glasses, and fabrics" from the "Boccara gentlemen".[19] The addition of significantly more valuable pieces to the collection is documented for the second journey, in particular the richly decorated wooden panelling of the Damascus Room (Cat. ##)[20] and a lavishly illustrated early 17th-century Persian manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*, which Osthaus acquired in Cairo in 1899 under uncertain circumstances (Cat. ##).[21]

Various passages in Osthaus's travel diary reveal that he perceived no contradiction whatsoever between the aesthetic appreciation of Islamic art and Germany's claim to colonial-political power. For him, the works he collected – the "magnificent testimony of a dying art" – embodied only the former greatness of the "Orient".[22] Yet in the face of this "splendour of antiquity", the "decaying life" of the present should not be forgotten.[23] Osthaus admitted no possibility of ongoing independent development amidst this sweeping decline. Rather, the potential of Islamic art lay in its ability to provide impulses for European innovation. He had already developed this idea in Algiers while viewing the pilgrimage church of Notre-Dame d'Afrique (Fig. 4). For him, the mere effort "to blend Christian architectural ideas with Moorish decoration",[24] despite its unsatisfactory execution, could provide attentive beholders with food for

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[17] "Aus den Ortsgruppen", in: *Alldeutsche Blätter*, 5 March 1899, p. 82.
[18] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 12.
[19] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), pp. 40f.
[20] Cf. Ernst Lütticke to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 23 February 1899, Archiv des Museums für Völkerkunde Dresden, Osthaus files; Anke Scharrahs, "Das Dresdener Damaskuszimmer. Einblicke in die authentische Welt des Orients", in: *Dresdener Kunstblätter*, 1, 2015, pp. 56–65.
[21] Cf. Karl Ernst Osthaus to Emil Waldmann, 5 June 1917, KEO-A F2/232/4; Volkmar Enderlein and Werner Sundermann (eds.), *Schāhnāme. Das persische Königsbuch. Miniaturen und Texte der Berliner Handschrift von 1605 (Firdausī)*, Leipzig/Weimar 1988.
[22] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 41.
[23] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 3.
[24] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 11.

thought: “In Europe we are once again building through all the styles of art history; what an abundance of projects faces the master who confronts the needs of new territories!”[25]

Osthaus would return to this concept again and again over the course of his life. He invoked it once more in a biographical sketch written in 1918, long after he had already become one of the most important pioneers of modernism in art. Only the encounter with Islamic art, he said, had enabled him to break free from the wearying repetitions of historicism: “The Orient honed my architectural judgement, and neither German building as a whole nor my own museum, then under construction, could withstand my newly sensitive eye. I formed very definite conceptions of a modern style and was surprised enough to find the same ambition living in some artists.”[26] Thus, he explained, after returning from his second journey he had commissioned the Flemish architect Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) to design the interior of his museum in Hagen as a “programmatic work of the modern style in Germany”.[27]

The close association between global collecting activities and the late 19th-century colonial imagination finds particularly striking expression in the early travels of Karl Ernst Osthaus. As a staunch adherent of the Pan-German League, the future art patron’s self-understanding was defined above all by three patterns of political-cultural interpretation. The first was the fundamental political stance that as an aspiring “global power”, it was incumbent upon Germany to colonise North Africa and West Asia. This framework also shaped his interpretation of the declarations of friendship he encountered among the North African people. For him, there was no question that the native population would be willing to recognise the superiority of Germany and submit to its benevolent rule. Secondly, Osthaus’s turn towards Islamic art falls precisely into the peak phase of his colonial-political involvement. This seamless transition alone is enough to indicate clearly that, from his perspective, no divide existed between aesthetic appreciation and the colonial claim to power. Equally decisive was the fact that he conceived of the rugs, wooden panelling, and manuscripts he acquired as remnants of a declining art that needed to be rescued. Although they represented, in his view, the final expression of a once magnificent culture, the “decaying life” of the present justified the intervention of external forces.

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[25] Osthaus 1898 (see n. 9), p. 11.
[26] Karl Ernst Osthaus, “Lebenslauf”, in: Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung*, 2nd edn, Hagen 1919, pp. I–VI, here p. II.
[27] Osthaus 1919 (see n. 26), p. II.

Finally, for Osthaus the enduring significance of Islamic art consisted in its contribution to the creative renewal of Europe. Accordingly, he interpreted his own two journeys through French North Africa and the Ottoman Empire as a crucial turning point in his life: only his experiences there had made it possible for him to establish the Museum Folkwang with its focus on modernity.

From: Exhibition catalogue 'Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World' (Hirmer, February 2027)

The Damascus Room: An Early Acquisition of Karl Ernst Osthaus

Anke Scharrahs

In the spring of 1899, a few weeks after the return from his second journey to North Africa and western Asia, Karl Ernst Osthaus succeeded in purchasing an especially large object. Through his contacts in Damascus, he acquired the wooden interior of a splendidly decorated room from a house in the city. The sumptuously painted wall and ceiling panelling had adorned a space measuring 4.20 × 5.50 m with a ceiling height of 5.40 m (Fig. 1).[1]

While visiting Damascus in November 1898, Osthaus had met the German consul Ernst Lütticke (1843–1904), who had been living there for years, and his local business partner, the art and antiquities dealer Bishara Asfar (active 1877–1910). With their assistance he was able to visit some of the magnificent historic houses in the old city.[2] Evidently, he was so taken with what he saw that he decided to exhibit such a wood-panelled interior in his museum.

The interior decoration of the stateliest rooms in the houses of Syria underwent frequent change in accord with their inhabitants' taste and as a subtle demonstration of wealth. Therefore, it was customary for decorations to be altered or renovated after several decades of use. In the nineteenth century, the interest in works of art from the Islamic world began to increase in the West, and from the 1870s onwards examples of panelling from Damascus found their way to public and private collections worldwide, i.a. in places such as London (1880–1882), Budapest (1885), Düsseldorf (1890; Fig. 2), Chicago (World's Columbian Exposition, 1893), Dublin/Melbourne/Edinburgh (1894), and Rochefort (1895–1897).[3] Osthaus's acquisition of the wall and ceiling panelling from Damascus thus corresponded to the spirit of his time.

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[1] Cf. the correspondence and invoice in the archives of the Museum Folkwang Essen (MF), MF 00650/59–67.

[2] According to an entry in his travel diary of 18 November 1898, Osthaus visited the Jewish quarter to look at houses. Cf. the handwritten transcript from Osthaus's travel diary, Osthaus files, archives of the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.

[3] Cf. Anke Scharrahs, "Damaszener Zimmer in Europa. Authentische und orientalisierende Raumkreationen zwischen 1880 und 1930", in: *Gezimmertes Morgenland. Orientalische und*

Apparently, however, the young, enthusiastic collector underestimated the dimensions of the room, even though its measurements were provided in the correspondence between him and Lütticke.[4] His museum, which was under construction at the time of purchase, did not have adequate space, and so the room was not reconstructed.[5] Disassembled into individual pieces, it remained in storage for almost thirty years. After Osthaus's death, the panelling was donated to the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden (Dresden Museum of Ethnology) in 1930, through the mediation and advocacy of one of his heirs, the young art historian Hellmuth Allwill Fritzsche (1901–1942). Yet the plans to exhibit the room still remained unrealised. In the spring of 1997, Annegret Nippa, then director of the Dresden museum, brought the individual pieces out of storage – still wrapped from their war evacuation in 1942 – and initiated a project for their restoration and reconstruction (Fig. 3). Due to the length of time needed to obtain the necessary financial support, this major undertaking took twenty-five years to complete. Since October 2022, the so-called Damascus Room has been on view at the Japanisches Palais in Dresden – though the reconstruction of the panelling still does not reflect the original size, since the ceiling of the current exhibition hall is 10 cm too low.

More than 120 years after the acquisition by Karl Ernst Osthaus, the restored panels, with their painted, relief, and metal-leaf decorations, are finally able to offer insight into the world that so profoundly impressed and fascinated their purchaser. The panelling was produced in the early nineteenth century as wall decoration for the most important room in the home of a wealthy family in Damascus: the reception room for guests. The date of completion is documented in a panel inscribed with Arabic calligraphy, which gives the year 1225 in Islamic reckoning, which corresponds to 1810–1811 of the Christian calendar. The decoration of the panelling combines influences of widely

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orientalisierende Holzinterieurs in Mitteleuropa im späten 19. Jahrhundert. Phänomenalität, Materialität, Historizität, ed. Maximilian Hartmuth and Julia Rüdiger, Vienna 2021, pp. 61–78; Anke Scharrahs, *Damascene* 'Ajami *Rooms: Forgotten Jewels of Interior Design*, London 2013, pp. 239–279.

[4] Cf. Ernst Lütticke to Osthaus, 23 February 1899, MF 00650/60.

[5] In a letter to Albert Janus of 6 August 1927, Adalbert Colsman, the brother of Osthaus's wife Gertrud, mentions "wooden panelling from a Moorish room, purchased by Osthaus in Damascus and never reassembled due to its large dimensions" ("Holztäfelung eines maurischen Zimmers, von Osthaus in Damaskus gekauft und wegen der grossen Abmessungen bisher niemals zusammengesetzt"); MF 00678/184–185. A similar statement is found in a typewritten note in the archives of the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden: "In his zeal for collecting on his journey, Osthaus had overlooked the limited space that awaited him at home in his private museum. There was no effective place to assemble the room" ("Der Sammeleifer von Osthaus hatte auf der Reise die beschränkten Räumlichkeiten übersehen, die seiner im Privatmuseum daheim warteten. Das Zimmer fand keinen wirkungsvollen Platz für die Aufstellung"); Osthaus files, archives of the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.

varying origin and thus reflects the geographical location of Damascus as a crossroads for major long-distance trade routes. The patterns on the panels recall splendid South Asian and Iranian silks or Ottoman brocades, luxury goods that were coveted worldwide. In its basic structure, the ceiling of the room echoes fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Egyptian carpets, while gilded carvings in a Baroque formal language show the influence of Europe. The stylised landscapes, called *stambuli* in Syria, are inspired by the Bosporus and allude to Istanbul (Stambul), at that time the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Small metal vases with painted flower bouquets are inspired by metal vessels from South Asia. The high point of the wall decoration is the gilded calligraphic inscriptions with poetic verses in Arabic, whose beauty and message were intended to delight visitors (Fig. 4). Every detail in the reception room was chosen and designed to enhance the pleasure of the guests. Valuable objects belonging to the family could be displayed in open shelf niches, while wall cabinets with double doors could be used to store other possessions. The large central niche on the main wall provided space for stacked bedding, an item of enormous importance for showing hospitality to guests. Today, the Damascus Room acquired by Karl Ernst Osthaus is one of the few of its kind that still possesses its original decoration. Furthermore, it is one of the few Damascene interiors in museum collections worldwide whose elements were not taken from multiple original sources and recombined for sale as an “Oriental Room”, but are still integrated into their original architectural context.

From: Exhibition catalogue 'Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World' (Hirmer, February 2027)

Manuscript Travails.
Why were Persian manuscripts so sought after and so mistreated?[1]

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The Courtauld Institute, University of London

Luxury copies of Persian manuscripts were produced with stunning illuminations and paintings, framed with rulings and graphic devices to appear as insertions into text-rich folios, or as full-page paintings on one side of a manuscript folio (Fig. 1). Such an approach to the addition of painting was intended to complement and expand on the narratives they illustrate rather than as addenda to a venerable text, as might be deduced from the common designation as "illustrated manuscript". Logocentric approaches in scholarship may have subjugated image to text and earlier art historical analysis tended to focus on the picture as an adjunct to the text and ignored its role as an element on a par with the "text" yet one that illuminates the historical context of the time when the manuscript was made.[2] Manuscripts with paintings in the Persian language seem to appear immediately after the Mongols had settled in present-day Iran and Iraq and established a new dominion, known as the Ilkhanate (1256–1335).[3] While the format, a manuscript with illustrations, was already in vogue in pre-Mongol Arab-language manuscripts, which were produced mainly for the Muslim rulers in the region of Jazira, present-day Iraq and Syria, in the 12th and 13th centuries, the post-Mongol manuscripts introduced an innovative style, often called miniature painting.[4] This astonishingly distinctive category in the art of painting developed into a sophisticated style and was highly sought after from the 15th century onwards across the early modern Persianate world, from present-day Turkey to India. This new style was associated principally with literary genres in the Persian language, which became the favoured language of texts and paintings within the high Persianate culture and inspired, as Italian painting did in Europe, other new styles, across the Ottoman (1299–1922), Mughal (1526–1857), and Shaybanid (1428–1599) dominions.

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[1] Writing at a time of grave concern for the very lives of people of Iran, its cities and infrastructural support for human habitation, and the survival of its millennia of civilisational contributions including its UNESCO-designated World Heritage sites, it seems out of place to be focusing on the fate of manuscripts. But this is precisely why the work of the historian and cultural critic must press on.

[2] A substantial body of scholarship exists on Persian manuscript and painting, including Basil Gray, *Persian Painting*, Geneva 1961; Sheila Canby, *Persian Painting*, London 1993; Robert Hillenbrand (ed.), *Persian Paintings: From Mongols to the Qajars*, London 2001 (Pembroke Persian Papers, vol. 3); Oleg Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures: An Introduction to Persian Painting*, Princeton 2002; Eleanor Sims, B. I. Marshak and Ernst J. Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources*, New Haven 2002; Adel T. Adamova, *Mediaeval Persian Painting: The Evolution of an Artistic Vision*, New York 2008; Sheila Blair, *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art*, Edinburgh 2019.

[3] Sussan Babaie (ed.), *Iran after the Mongols*, London 2019 (The Idea of Iran); Sheila S. Blair, "The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran", in: *Muqarnas*, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 266–274.

[4] Anna Contadini (ed.), *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, Leiden 2010 (Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 1: The Near and Middle East, vol. 90).

Hundreds of manuscripts with varying degrees of refinement or high artistic value emerged from centres of production, the *kītābkhāna* (atelier/scriptorium/library) of courts on the Iranianate side of the Islamicate world after the Mongols.[5] The manuscripts derived from the voluminous literary outputs in the Persian language that served profoundly diverse cultural functions, from the epic-historical to romance and advice, from philosophical to mystical: from the *Shāhnāma* of Firdausī (d. 1019/25), to the *Khamsa* of Niẓāmī (d. 1209), *Dīvān* (collected poems) of Sa'dī (d. 1291/92), Hāfiẓ (d. 1390), Khwajū Kermānī (d. 1349), 'Attār (d. 1221), and Jāmī (d. 1492), to name a few. These are principally literary genres composed between the 10th and 15th centuries, and copied, illuminated, painted, and bound into luxury copies from around 1300 onwards for the erudite, royal, and sub-imperial patrons in the Iranianate world. Those painted Persian manuscripts also became the exemplars of the art of painting for the aspirants to high culture in the Persian-language world in the early modern period.[6]

What happened to these extraordinary manuscripts? Most are housed outside their original sites of production and repositories; libraries in present-day Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Uzbekistan hold a fraction of the luxury manuscripts that were produced in their artistic centres of Tabriz, Baghdad, Herat, Shiraz, Isfahan, Samarqand, and Mashhad, to name only the most important. An important but rarely highlighted observation, furthermore, is that from among the massive number of books, in a wide range of genres and linguistic categories produced in various regions of Islam, the most disturbed, dismantled, dispersed, and damaged books are the painted Persian manuscripts of these literary genres. This is a shocking observation when compared to Mughal or Ottoman painted manuscripts, which have survived whole, for the most part. Historical vicissitudes affected the fate of Persian manuscripts more than any others in the region: invasions and looting, including those by Ottomans, Afghans, and Russians, contributed to the loss and dispersal of many book collections of high value. In comparison, Ottoman and Mughal libraries remained mostly intact until modern times in the case of the former, and until the British colonisation of India in the mid-19th century, after which they were mostly looted or collected by the British and transferred to libraries in Britain.[7]

Given that luxury painted Persian manuscripts were treasured, collected, moved from one library to another, or looted and relocated outside their "home", the point to highlight here is that the preservation and maintenance of the manuscripts' integrity depended on where they journeyed: whether they went to Mughal and Ottoman collections, where such books were considered treasures or, notwithstanding some 19th-century bibliophile European

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[5] On *kītābkhāna*, see Abolala Soudavar, "The Han Lin Academy and the Persian Royal Library-Atelier", in: *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh Alysia Quinn, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 467–484; and Marianna Shreve Simpson, "The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-khana in Safavid Iran", in: *The Artist's Workshop*, ed. Peter M. Lukehart, Washington, DC 1993 (Studies in the History of Art, vol. 38), pp. 104–121.

[6] Lâle Uluç, "Selling to the Court: Late Sixteenth-Century Manuscript Production in Shiraz", in: *Muqarnas*, vol. 17, 2000, pp. 73–96; and Uluç, *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors: Sixteenth-Century Shiraz Manuscripts*, Istanbul 2007.

[7] The foundations of major libraries holding Persian manuscripts in Britain rest on the treasures assembled by the British officers and administrators in India and preserved in the collections of the India Office library, now absorbed into the British Library, and at many university libraries.

collectors, ended up in western markets and were eventually dispersed in pieces into European and American museum collections.

Valuation of books in Islam

Books have historically been, and remain, of the highest value within the cultures of Islam. The Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, lends its form, gathered into a book, to this truly extraordinary commitment to the making and collecting of books in all the cultural worlds of Islam. Some of the highest achievements in artistic and technological innovation, and the cultural diversities of Islam, emerge in the arts of the book, not only with copies of the Quran but also and importantly in genres ranging from scientific and *adab* literature on norms of conduct to historical chronicles, and literary texts, both in prose and poetry, among others. The "invention" of the kind of paper as we know it, which contributed to the rise of printing in Europe; the astonishing developments in the arts of writing, calligraphy in the Arabic script and in styles for which a full art historical account from at least before 800 CE to the present day can be written; critical writings about techniques and styles of generations of calligraphers and their genealogies; the myriad ways diacritical notations and illuminated framing and marking devices have been cleverly incorporated to make reading easier and pleasing to the eye; the development of technologies of paper making and decorating, and binding; and the development of representational styles in painting with distinctive cultural trajectories; these constitute the parameters of a broadly understood transcultural and transhistorical narrative of the significant features of the arts of the book in the Islamicate world.[8]

Given that manuscripts were among the most important and prestigious productions of high culture across the histories and geographies of Islam, it is worth asking, especially in this catalogue that examines and re-evaluates collections of "Islamic arts" in art museums, why painted manuscripts are so routinely excluded from most museum displays of the arts of Islam.[9] Instead, as is the case for the Folkwang, museums tend to focus on categories of objects with a utilitarian function: ceramic and metalwork vessels, textile fragments and carpets, architectural fragments of tiles, carved wood or stone, to give just a few examples of the prevailing displays under the banner of Islam, the arts inspired by the teachings and practices of Islam that were, and are, made for Muslims – be it by Muslims or non-Muslims.[10]

Books as books, a tome that is bound and retains its covers, are rarely on view for reasons that may be mostly related to their preservation: paper is sensitive to light, and books, unless dismantled as is often the case, do not lend themselves to display. Unlike European parchment manuscripts, and later paintings on panels, canvas, and other materials, which

[8] On paper and its impact, see Jonathan M. Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*, New Haven 2001.

[9] See the contribution by Christoph Rauch in the present catalogue on the transfer to Berlin's Staatsbibliothek of the illustrated *Shāhnāma* that used to belong to the original collection that is now on display at Museum Folkwang in Essen.

[10] For classic discussions on the classification and valuation of Islamic arts, see Oleg Grabar, *The Art of the Object: Islamic Art in the Service of Religion*, Aldershot 2006; for a brilliant re-evaluation of the object in Islamic art, see Margaret S. Graves, *Arts of Allusion: Object, Ornament, and Architecture in Medieval Islam*, Oxford 2018.

can be displayed with greater ease – opened on to illuminated pages or hung on a wall – bound manuscripts in paper are difficult to open wide and hence difficult to display. Consequently, bound Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts remain out of sight, preserved in libraries such as the British Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, among others, across Europe. Except for an occasional sample on view in a special display at a library, examining them requires a special request. They are there, cared for and protected for posterity, but not seen as an integral part of the cultural worlds of Islam by most general publics who are unaware of the crucial significance of books in Islam.

While the museological issue has been explored through analytical discussions on definitions of "Islamic arts" and its historiography, questions are rarely raised about whether collecting practices had something to do with the ways in which the modern museum makes decisions on display from "Islamic" categories of art. Even a cursory survey – observation-based knowledge of what one sees in museums in Europe and North America – reveals that while museums do present the arts of the book, they do so in a way that speaks to the state of preservation of the book paintings and illuminations. In the majority of cases, Persian manuscripts are displayed through detached folios, while Mughal or Ottoman examples tend to be from album (*muraqqa*) folios, which by their structural nature are a detachable format.[11]

Style matters

The Persian style of painting appeared in Greater Iran after the Mongol invasions of West Asia in the mid-13th century. It emerged in a flurry of manuscript production for the Mongol rulers and elite of the Ilkhanate in Iran and Iraq of today. Among the Ilkhanid manuscripts were such extraordinary texts as the *Compendium of Histories*, a first truly universal history, composed, copied, and illustrated to situate a narrative of belonging and legitimacy for the new rulers of Muslim West Asia as heirs to a lineage of Iranian and Islamic authority and kingship.[12] This was composed by the Ilkhanid statesman, physician, and historian Rashīd ad-Dīn (1247–1318), who established the first *kītābkhāna*, in Tabriz around 1300, to provide the artistic and material means for the production of painted copies.[13] That same *kītābkhāna* inspired the production of a number of manuscripts of Firdausī's *Shāhnāma* (book of kings), as well as in the 1330s the *Great Mongol Shāhnāma* (Fig. 2), the most famous of its age and ever since.[14]

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[11] It should also be noted that most museum collections of manuscript painting in the west have substantially more Persian examples in storage than Mughal or Ottoman ones.

[12] Sheila Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Din's Illustrated History of the World*, London 1995.

[13] On Rashīd ad-Dīn and his *kītābkhāna*, see Sheila Blair, "Calligraphers, Illuminators, and Painters in the Ilkhanid Scriptorium", in: *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff, Leiden 2006, pp. 165–182; Sheila Blair, "Patterns of Patronage and Production in Ilkhanid Iran: The Case of Rashid al-Din", in: *The Court of the Ilkhans 1290–1340*, ed. Julian Raby and Teresa Fitzherbert, Oxford 1996, pp. 39–62; Sheila Blair, "Illustrating History: Rashid al-Din and His Compendium of Chronicles", in: *Iranian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 6, 2017, pp. 819–842.

[14] Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shah-Nama*, Chicago 1980; Robert Hillenbrand, *The Great Mongol Shahnama*, New Haven 2022.

The Ilkhanid *kītābkhāna* produced a fresh approach to painting: dynamic compositions, bold colours, observed and imagined natural world depicted as encompassing human-centred activities – battles, enthronements, funerals, and heroics of the protagonists in the stories of the manuscripts. While scholarship has tended to attribute the new style to a network of received ideas and models, framed as an admixture of the Arab style with "influences" from China and Europe, the significant point is the very innovative representational strategies deployed by the Ilkhanid artist, regardless of their origins, since the Mongols facilitated circulation across Asia and patronised arts in transculturally rich environments. What emerged from those ingenious experiments in painted Persian manuscripts developed in a matter of a few short decades into a style we recognise as Persian miniature painting.

While the designation "miniature" for this style of painting originates from European taxonomies of medieval Christian illuminated manuscripts, the term underscores the philosophical predilection in Persian aesthetics of poetry and painting for the extreme mastery of the delicate rendition of motifs, the intricacy of patterns and colour schemes, and the wondrous intensity of surface quality of the painting.[15] The inventiveness of the new style is especially compelling when compared to the principally graphic nature of design and page layout of Arab-language manuscripts (Fig. 3). They preceded and indeed inspired facets of the new Persian style of painting, but they never developed beyond a representational approach that placed motifs (figural, architectural, floral, and animal) mostly without framing devices or compositional intentionality to illustrate the content of the text page.

In contrast, the internal stylistic characteristics and distinctions of Persian miniature painting presented themselves fully after the Ilkhanid experiments and through the Timurid and Safavid periods, between the 15th and 17th centuries, of cultural consolidation and effervescence. Furthermore, in the early modern period that style inspired artistic gestations in the Ottoman, Mughal, and Shaybanid worlds, each adopting it into their own local artistic networks.

Given that these painted manuscripts served as indicators of erudition, taste, and a claim to prestigious high culture, and that they were afforded high value by societies who made and collected them, including collectors from among Ottoman and Mughal cultural imperial elites, it seems obvious, though never probed, to ask why so many Persian manuscripts have survived in pristine condition in imperial collections in centres of Islam, while most others that have made their way into western collections have been dispersed, dismantled, and damaged. What befell these glorious works of art once they arrived in the west?

Manuscript travails

To be sure, thousands of manuscripts were collected by Europeans – travellers and Orientalists, from the 17th through to the 19th and early 20th centuries – and found their way safely into public libraries in Europe and North America. But a great number of painted manuscripts became entangled in vicious circles of profiteering, mainly in Europe, albeit also

[15] A recently completed dissertation by Rachel Alban at The Courtauld Institute of Art lays out the argument most persuasively; see Rachel Alban, "Miniaturisation in Persian Painting, 1396–1556", PhD diss., The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2026.

implicating local dealers in Iran, Turkey, and India.[16] Many were dismantled and scattered folio by folio across European collections. In comparison, luxury Persian manuscripts remained intact in Ottoman and Mughal royal libraries, to which many of them were gifted or for which they were purposefully acquired.

The object histories of two of these manuscripts are well documented, and the appalling treatment, especially of the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts, is retold in an excellent essay by Sheila Blair, "Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the *Shahnama*".[17] The criminality of how the folios of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* were sliced to produce two pages out of a single folio, hence increasing what could be fetched for each; the dismantlement of one of the greatest masterpieces of world art, the *Shāhnāma* of Shāh Tahmāsb (1514–1576; Fig. 4), at first for it to be exhibited, but then scattered across the world with a good portion now held at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, its transfer a story befitting a Bond movie; these two are especially dramatic, but other literary Persian manuscripts have also been subjected to such mutilations. It is instructive to take the *Shāhnāma* as the special target of mistreatment: while copies were dismantled for their "pictures" for western sale and consumption, the text and its luxury copies were revered in their linguistic homeland, the Persianate context. What is so special about the *Shāhnāma*?

Composed in 1010 by Firdausī, the poet of Khurasan, it is a versified account of the epic histories and legends of Iranian kingship from its mythological beginnings through histories of kingship up to the Arab-Muslim invasions in the 7th century CE. To anyone who read and wrote in Persian, the *Shāhnāma* was a pinnacle of epic poetry in the Persianate world in the same way Homer has been to the Greco-Roman traditions. Firdausī's poem became a seminal source for articulating legitimacy for every king in the Islamic West, Central, and South Asia, who drew from its stories their own genealogy of kingship.[18] So inspiring was the *Shāhnāma* that texts were freshly composed retelling the reigns of Ottoman sultans or Mughal emperors, adopting the rhythms and conceptual armature of the *Shāhnāma*. In other words, the *Shāhnāma* held a special place in contemporary courts across the region.

While painted copies of the *Shāhnāma* and other texts from Iran constitute the largest number of dismantled and partially surviving manuscripts in museums and libraries in Europe and North America, no comparable luxury tomes from Ottoman and Mughal royal libraries faced the same fate. Some explanation may be offered by noting that Mughal libraries remained largely intact until the arrival of the British in the 19th century. Notwithstanding Nader Shah's attack on and looting of Delhi in 1739, which included principally carting off masses of precious jewels and skilled craftsmen, Mughal royal manuscripts (*Akbarnāma*, *Pādshāhnāma*, and imperial albums) remained whole, and if found in large numbers in British collections, they were mainly the treasures of British

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[16] Isabelle Gadoin, *Private Collectors of Islamic Art in Late Nineteenth-Century London: The Persian Ideal*, London 2021; Patricia Blessing, "Presenting Islamic Art: Reflections on Old and New Museum Displays", in: *Review of Middle East Studies*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2018, pp. 147–152; Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf, *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, London 2013.

[17] Sheila Blair, "Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the *Shahnama", in: Smarthistory*, 27 July 2020, last accessed: 16 March 2026, https://smarthistory.org/making-mutilating-shahnama/.

[18] Dick Davis, "Introduction", in: *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, New York 2006, pp. 13–37.

colonialism, the India Office Library collections now housed within the British Library, or as in the case of the magnificent *Pādshāhnāma* in the Royal Collections in Windsor.[19] Ottoman treasures remained largely intact and preserved in the royal library, now the Topkapı in Istanbul, as the city was never pillaged.

Those manuscripts that remained in the Iranianate world, in royal libraries that were handed over from one dynasty to another, and not often peacefully, as for instance when *Shāh Ismā'īl (*1487–1524) swept the books and the artists of Herat and brought them to Tabriz, were nevertheless highly prized and constituted the foundations for a new age of manuscript production. Another indication of the high valuation of the manuscripts is the fact that many were updated in later periods: the famous *Mantiq al-Tayr* (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Fig. 5) was made in late 15th-century Herat and refurbished and "completed" in early 17th-century Isfahan. In other words, it was held as a valuable cultural treasure, a heritage to which adding a fresh layer or completing it with paintings on blank folios was considered a cultural norm. Another example to note is the famous Baysunghur *Shāhnāma* in the Golestan Palace library in Tehran; it took a journey that cannot be documented in detail but must have been through movement of libraries as intact collections from one dynasty and centre to another, from Herat probably to Tabriz, Qazvin, and Isfahan of the Safavids, and eventually Tehran of the Qajars. The rise and fall of those dynasties, spanning nearly five hundred years and across a vast region and many changes in models of rule could not have been easy on those luxury manuscripts, but they survived without being dismembered.

The extraordinary *Shāhnāma* of Sh*ā*h Tahm*ā*sb, which was produced in the Safavid *kītābkhāna* in Tabriz in the 1520s–30s, and has been scattered across the world, survived intact until it left its cultural homes. About thirty years after its completion, it was gifted to the Ottoman Sultan Selim II in 1568.[20] Along with a Quran purportedly in the handwriting of 'Ali, the first Shi'i Imam, and a number of other precious objects, the gift was most likely politically charged, with a not-so-subtle message of sectarian and cultural superiority from a Safavid king whose grandstanding could only be in cultural terms, as he knew full well of his rival's military superiority. The gifting of this extraordinary manuscript has been puzzled over and often rationalised as a sign of Sh*ā*h Tahm*ā*sb having tired of the art of painting! More likely, the explanation lies in the quality of the gifts, and especially the incomparable mastery of this *Shāhnāma* manuscript, which was attested by all contemporaries and preserved first in the Ottoman library and then in an unknown Persian library until it reached European markets.

In the end, it is worth underscoring the fact that in Tabriz, Isfahan, Istanbul, Delhi, and Agra, the high valuation and collecting practices with regard to such luxury manuscripts were culturally bound and sophisticated enough to preserve copies intact or allow for their refreshing and updating, but it was rarely considered acceptable practice to dismember a

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[19] Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution), and Windsor Castle Royal Library, *The King of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, London 1997.

[20] Ünver Rüstem, "The Afterlife of a Royal Gift: The Ottoman Inserts of the *Shāhnāma-i Shāhī*", in: *Muqarnas*, vol. 29, 2012, pp. 245–337; Sheila R. Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of Kings*, New York 2011.

copy. Notwithstanding genuine bibliophile and collecting interests among Europeans, and regardless of whether the books were acquired through legitimate means or through colonial looting, especially out of British India, the significance of this point is rarely acknowledged: painted Persian manuscripts were treasured in their varied locations across West, Central, and South Asia. The book was considered a single integral object, a whole. Its paintings were not like panel or canvas paintings, to be displayed separately; they were to be seen within an integrated whole: text, paper, binding, illuminations, paintings; everything! In sharp contrast, the manuscripts that were taken – looted – or offered in marketplaces, mostly in Europe and later America, and from the 19th century to our time, have often survived after being subjected to slicing, dicing, discarding, and dismantling of the membranes and ultimately the body of the book.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

The Osthaus *Shāhnāma* in the Berlin State Library

Christoph Rauch

The Persian *Shāhnāma* (*Book of Kings*) is a poetic work comprising almost 60,000 verses that recounts the history of the rulers of Iran from its mythical origins to the period immediately preceding the Islamic conquest (Fig. 1). It is the Iranian national epic *par excellence* and continues to enjoy immense popularity in Iran and other Persian-speaking regions of Central Asia. Many of its stories, such as those of the hero Rustam, are set against the backdrop of the struggle between the kingdoms of Iran and Turan – two Central Asian realms rooted in mythology that cannot be equated with present-day states. Numerous dynasties promoted the dissemination of the *Shāhnāma*, as their rulers identified with the ideals of power, heroism, piety, and virtue conveyed in the work. Above all, however, it is a unique monument of the Persian language. Following the spread of Islam in the seventh century, regional written languages were displaced in favour of Arabic. Iranian idioms nevertheless continued to flourish in the spoken language, giving rise to (New) Persian. The author of the *Shāhnāma* is Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Firdausī (940–1019/25), who was able to draw on earlier traditions in composing his poem. His work is associated with the emergence of Persian as a major literary language during this period.

The Osthaus Manuscript

Artistic representations inspired by the *Shāhnāma* survive on ceramics and textiles dating from as early as the twelfth century. Over many centuries, rulers and patrons across West and South Asia ensured its dissemination through lavishly produced and illuminated manuscripts. One particularly exquisite example is the illustrated manuscript that Karl Ernst Osthaus acquired in Cairo in 1899 during his second journey through the Mediterranean regions of the Islamic world. He regarded it as one of the finest objects in his collection[1] and displayed it in the Museum Folkwang in

[1] See Rainer Stamm and Gloria Köpnick, *Karl Ernst und Gertrud Osthaus. Die Gründer des Folkwang-Museums und ihre Welt*, Munich 2022, p. 24.

Hagen (Fig. 2). Since 1938, it has been part of the Oriental manuscript collection of the Berlin Staatsbibliothek under the shelfmark Ms. or. fol. 4251.[2]

This sumptuous volume, comprising 764 folios (more than 1,500 pages), contains 67 miniatures, almost all of them full-page, of exceptionally high artistic quality. Elegantly integrated into the text, they are carefully composed and, in some cases, extend into the page margins (Fig. 3). The copying of this manuscript was completed in the second third of the month of Ṣafar 1014 AH (corresponding to 27 June–6 July 1605). Unfortunately, neither the scribe, the painters of the miniatures, nor the patron is identified by name. On the basis of the exquisitely executed illustrations, it has been suggested that the manuscript was produced for a member of the Safavid ruling house in Isfahan, perhaps even for Shāh ʿAbbās I (r. 1587–1629) himself.[3]

A distinctive feature of the Osthaus manuscript is that it incorporates, within the text, passages from another, related heroic epic, the *Garshāspnāma* (*Book of Garshāsp*).[4] During the age of manuscript transmission – which in the Islamic world ultimately continued into the early twentieth century – there were no authoritative editions of the text. Oral transmission and regional traditions influenced the form of the text, with the result that no two *Shāhnāma* manuscripts are exactly alike.

The Provenance of the Manuscript

Little is known about the manuscript's earlier owners. The gold medallions intended for dedicatory inscriptions on the illuminated opening pages (Fig. 4) were left blank, while later ownership inscriptions on the flyleaf have been erased. Only a faint seal impression refers to Muʿtamid al-Daula Munshī al-Mamālik (d. 1244 AH / 1828/29 CE), an Iranian owner.[5] He served as an official, scholar, and calligrapher at the court of the Qajar dynasty in Tehran. How the *Shāhnāma* reached Egypt remains unknown. Cairo had long been a centre for the trade in Islamic manuscripts, and not only for European or American collectors. This is attested by the large number of Persian

[2] A detailed description of the manuscript, together with descriptions of the individual miniatures and further bibliographical references, can be found in the relevant entry in the Qalamos portal, URL: https://www.qalamos.net/receive/DE1Book_manuscript_00013799 [last accessed: 23 June 2026].

[3] The art historian Kishwar Rizvi identifies a clear connection between the selection and composition of the illustrations and the political and religious vision of Shāh ʿAbbās I; see Kishwar Rizvi, "The Suggestive Portrait of Shah ʿAbbas: Prayer and Likeness in a Safavid 'Shahnama'", in: *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2012, pp. 226–250.

[4] The miniatures on fols. 33a–93b relate to the *Garshāspnāma*.

[5] The seal impression was deciphered by Will Kwiatkowski (e-mail correspondence, 24 April 2025).

manuscripts held in what is now the Egyptian National Library in Cairo, many of which originate from Egyptian private collections.

Shāhnāma manuscripts were highly sought after by European art enthusiasts and bibliophiles. Whereas the majority of Oriental manuscripts in the Berlin collection were acquired through scholars, the illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts entered the collection largely as a result of bibliophilic collecting. As a traveller unable to read the script, Osthaus must have relied on the assistance of local dealers in Cairo; he was certainly also advised by Germans living there. It is possible that he met Bernhard Moritz (1859–1939) in Cairo. Since 1896, the Prussian Orientalist had served as director of the Khedivial Library (later the National Library) and facilitated the sale of rare manuscripts to Europe and the United States. Max von Oppenheim (1860–1946), diplomat, archaeologist, and dedicated collector of Islamic art, was attached to the German Consulate in Cairo at that time.

In 1910, Osthaus lent the manuscript to Munich, where it was exhibited in the celebrated exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (*Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art*).[6] In 1931, it was shown at the *International Exhibition of Persian Art* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. By this time, Osthaus's heirs were already attempting to sell the magnificent volume for a substantial sum. In the hope that it would complete the Folkwang Collection, by then based in Essen, they had offered it unsuccessfully to the Folkwang Museum in 1927 for between 40,000 and 50,000 Reichsmarks and were considering a sale on the American market.[7] The manuscript was not sold until 1938, when the Berlin State Library acquired it for 12,000 Reichsmarks from the Berlin art dealer Hanns Krenz (active 1920–1953). A surviving memorandum records that the Reich Chamber of Culture instructed Krenz to offer the manuscript first to German institutions before a decision could be taken on his application to sell it abroad. Today, it ranks among the Berlin State Library's most precious illuminated manuscripts and is frequently requested for research and exhibition purposes.

[6] See *Schāhnāme. Das persische Königsbuch. Miniaturen und Texte der Berliner Handschrift von 1605*, ed. Volkmar Enderlein and Werner Sundermann, Leipzig/Weimar 1988, pp. 53–54. See also p. ### in the present catalogue.

[7] See Adalbert Colsman to Albert Janus, 6 August 1927, Museum Folkwang Archive, Essen (MF), MF 00678.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

A King and a Madman. Two Drawings from the Folkwang Collection
Possibly Northern India
late 19th century CE
Ink and watercolour on paper
12.5 × 10.5 cm and 12.5 × 10.7 cm

Nicoletta Fazio

Compared to other early 20th-century Western collectors of historical objects from Islamic lands, Karl Ernst Osthaus did not specifically focus his collecting efforts on the art of the book, nor did he seem to have taken a particularly keen interest in it, perhaps with the exception of one especially cherished manuscript that later entered the collection of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. This approach is reflected in the nature of the few examples of manuscripts and paintings that he gathered between 1898 and, presumably, 1910, at the latest. This collection of works on paper from the Islamic world included the above-mentioned early 17th-century Safavid copy of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings) with lavishly illuminated frontispieces and furnished with 67 full-page spirited illustrations (Ms. or. fol. 4251, Cat. #); a late 19th-century manuscript copy of the Qur’ān, written on paper and attributed to Morocco (Cat. ##); a volume with two astrological treatises in Persian, possibly dated to the first half of the 19th century (Cat. ##); and two 18th-century Indian paintings featuring popular subjects (a prince celebrating Holi with the ladies of his harem (Cat. ##); and an ascetic – a *sādhu* – seated outside what seems to be a rural temple), no longer in the collection.

Also part of this collection are these small drawings, traced in black ink with light-coloured washes. They possibly replicate two illustrations from a much earlier manuscript, most likely an illustrated copy of Niẓāmī Ganjavī’s (1141–1209) *Khamsa* (Quintet), probably made

in Shiraz in the first half of the 16th century. Living all his life in Ganjah (in present-day Azerbaijan), Niẓāmī is one of the most celebrated poets of Persian literature, admired and emulated by authors of later generations. The *Khamsa* is his best-known poetic work, comprising five long narrative poems transmitted and disseminated across the Islamic world, often in the form of richly illuminated and illustrated manuscripts. If we assume these drawings to be one-to-one copies of illustrations from a now lost manuscript of the *Khamsa*, this must have been a rather compact volume, produced to feed the thriving book market of 16th-century Shiraz.[1] Both drawings feature a series of stock motifs such as the man attacked by the lion, the decorated tent, the enthroned figure, the royal attendant bearing a wrapped sword standing behind the throne, which can be arranged in different configurations to create similar yet not identical illustrations of the same subject.[2]

One folio (Cat. ##) depicts a highly recognisable subject, at least to a Persian-speaking audience: Layla and Majnun fainting upon seeing each other. Composed in Classical Persian, *Layla va Majnūn* (Layla and Majnun) is the third *masnavi* (romantic epic poem in rhyming couplets) of Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*. Stemming from the pre-Islamic Arabian poetic tradition, the poem tells the tragic story of the ill-starred lovers Layla and Qays, in which love, desire, chastity, lovesickness, and death are tightly and masterfully interwoven. Madly in love with Layla, Qays is prevented from marrying her and goes mad, retreating to a secluded life in the desert with wild animals as his sole company and reciting wondrous poetry that celebrates his love. People begin calling him Majnūn (lit. the madman in Arabic) for his erratic behaviour, the name by which he has been remembered. Extensively copied and read across the Islamic world, from the Mediterranean basin to South Asia, Niẓāmī's

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[1] See Lâle Uluç, *Turkman Governors. Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors. Sixteenth-Century Shiraz Manuscripts*, Istanbul 2006, esp. pp. 37–44, 63–67, and 85–181. For the development of the arts of the book in Shiraz, starting from the 14th century CE, see Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303–1452*, Washington, D.C. 2012, esp. pp. 153–222.

[2] This is a centuries-long phenomenon; see, for instance, some of the earliest occurrences of some of these iconographic tropes, as in *The Last Meeting of Layla and Majnūn*, from the *Anthology* prepared for Iskandar ibn 'Umar Shaykh in 1410–1411 CE, now British Library, London, Add.27261, fol. 131v; or the painting of the same subject from the illustrated *Khamsa* manuscript made for Shāh Rukh in Herat in 1431 CE, in the collections of the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, VR-1000, fol. 225v.

Layla va Majnūn is one of the most famous and popular works of Persian poetry up to the present day.[3] Capturing the extreme passion and pain characterising the love between Layla and Majnūn, the scene figures prominently in illustrated manuscripts of the *Khamsa*. As they finally meet after years of separation, the two lovers are overwhelmed by their emotions and faint. Wild beasts accompanying Majnūn guard the lovers as they lie unconscious; an elderly man is shown pouring an ointment into Layla's ear to revive her. The two small text boxes at the bottom corners include a verse taken from this episode.[4]

The subject of the drawing on the second folio is more difficult to identify (Cat. ##). It shows a generic scene of a royal outdoor gathering with an enthroned ruler and a series of court attendants. The ruler addresses two bearded men, one sporting a full white beard. Without any text attached, one can only speculate on possible identifications. Both folios display the same dimensions (with almost imperceptible differences), indicating they might have been drawn from the same manuscript. Niẓāmī's *Khamsa* showcases a variety of royal figures holding audiences at various stages of the narrative. Except for the first *masnavi Makhzan al-asrār* (Casket of Secrets), which usually features illustrations of very specific subjects,[5] enthroned kings in audience appear in *Khusrau va Shīrīn* (Khusrau and Shirin), on the adventures of the Sasanian king Khusrau Parviz and the Christian princess Shīrīn; in the *Haft Paykar* (The Seven Beauties), on the hunter-king Bahram Gur, his heroic feats and romantic escapades; and, finally, in the two-part *Iskandarnāma* (The Book of Alexander) on the life and deeds of Iskandar (Alexander III of Macedon, commonly known in the West as

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[3] For a brief overview, see Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Longing for Love: The Romance of Layla and Majnun", in: *A Companion to World Literature*, ed. Ken Seigneurie, Hoboken 2020, vol. 2, 601 to 1450, pp. 861–872, and, by the same author, the online post "Layla, you got me on my knees, Layla…", URL: https://www.leidenmedievalistsblog.nl/articles/layla-you-got-me-on-my-knees-layla [last accessed: 3 June 2026].

[4] See Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Leyli o Majnun*, ed. Barāt Zanjāni, Tehran 1385/2006, p. 203, v. 3892:
چون باز دمید هر دو را هوش / ماندند چو نقش خامه خاموش
"At last they woke, exchanging wondering looks / as silent as the pictures are in books", *Layli and Majnun by Niẓāmī Ganjavī*, trans. Dick Davis, London 2021, p. 224.

[5] For a detailed analysis of the themes portrayed and discussed by Niẓāmī in his *Makhzan al-asrār*, see Matthew R. Hotham, *Seeing God with Both Eyes: Asceticism, Ascension and Poetry in the Makhzan al-asrār of Niẓāmī Ganjavī (d. 1209)*, PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016.

Alexander the Great, 356–326 BCE).[6] It is also possible, of course, that this drawing portrays a scene from the *Shāhnāma*, whose text contains numerous descriptions of royal audiences, but since the drawings seem to have been penned by the same hand, a manuscript of Niẓāmī's *Khamsa* appears the more likely source.

Clothing details, facial features, and elements of furniture and landscape suggest that the model for both drawings originated in the commercial workshops of Shiraz in the first decades of the 16th century, a period of intense artistic activity in the city (Fig. 1). Some idiosyncratic details, however, seem to place these drawings further east, possibly in Northern India; for example, the cross-eyed lady behind the tent, or the bulbous tree in the background of the folio from *Layla va Majnūn*, transformed into a giant artichoke-like plant. This hypothesis seems already to have been advanced by Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945), who most likely chose to display these drawings in the landmark 1910 Munich exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst*. The exhibition catalogue lists the two folios under the numbers 1032 and 1035 (indicated as property of the Museum Folkwang in Hagen), which Sarre briefly describes as brush sketches from India (close inspection does indeed suggest the use of a brush), proposing a date of around 1800, with a cautious question mark next to it.[7]

As well as Iranian painters, illustrated manuscripts produced in Iran found their way to Northern India from the Delhi Sultanate period (1206–1526) onwards, and more consistently from the 1540s. Coveted objects of art as well as status symbols, they entered

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[6] See, for instance, an illustration depicting *Bahram Gur Enthroned after Killing the Lions* from a Turkmen copy of a *Dīwān* (collected works) of Hāfiz dated around 1490 CE, The National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, D.C., S1986.220; a folio from a dispersed Shirazi copy of the *Shāhnāma* dated to the 1540s CE in the collections of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1983.94.18; and a painting of the same subject from an early 17th-century Safavid copy of the *Shāhnāma* made in Herat, now in The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, W.602.499B; a painting of *Iskandar at a Banquet* from an illustrated Herati manuscript of Niẓāmī's *Khamsa* dated 1524/25 CE, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 13.228.7.16; and, finally, a textless Abu'l-Kharid painting depicting a *Prince in a Garden* from Bukhara, dated around 1525–1535 CE, sold at Christie's in 2022, *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds including Oriental Rugs and Carpets*, London, 27 October 2022, lot 41.

[7] For the reference in the exhibition checklist, see *Ausstellung München 1910, amtlicher Katalog: Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst*, vol. 2, Munich 1910, p. 100.

both royal collections and less affluent households and workshops,[8] making it possible for an artist based in South Asia to stumble upon a *Shirazi* manuscript and copy its illustrations centuries later. The verse copied in the text boxes shows not only a command of writing in *nasta'liq* script, a calligraphic style used especially in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian and adopted mostly in Indo-Iranian written cultures, but also an understanding of its content consistent with the scene depicted.

How and when exactly these folios came into Osthaus's collection is difficult to assess, since no specific documentation of their acquisition survives. Considering that Osthaus bought the early parts of his collection of Islamic art personally and through intermediaries in North Africa and West Asia (eastern Mediterranean) and later through art dealers in Europe, one can imagine these folios passing through a number of hands before reaching Museum Folkwang. Given the possible origin of the drawings, it seems more likely that he acquired them in Europe via one of his dealers.

The two drawings are now mounted on cream-coloured paper: analysis in transmitted light has yielded no significant results. Only a few very faint signs of paper structure can be spotted, and no watermark is visible that could have given at least some indication of the origin of the paper support. Their presence in Essen today highlights, on the one hand, the high mobility that has always characterised works on paper, manuscripts, illustrated poetry, and single-folio paintings across the Islamic world long before Western art connoisseurs and collectors entered the picture. On the other hand, they add another small piece to the complex history of the Islamic art craze in Europe at the turn of the 20th

[8] See Keelan Overton, "Introduction to Iranian Mobilities and Persianate Mediations in the Deccan", in: *Iran and the Deccan. Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, 1400–1700*, ed. Keelan Overton, Bloomington 2020, pp. 3–76. For a slightly later emergence of this phenomenon and the adaptation of Persian *Shirazi* artistic conventions to the Indic visual codes in use in the Deccan, specifically the Golconda kingdom, see Laura Weinstein, "Variations on a Persian Theme: The *Dīwān* of Muhammad-Quli Qutb Shah and the Birth of the Illustrated Urdu *Dīwān*", in: *The Visual World of Muslim India. The Art, Culture and Society of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Laura E. Parodi, London 2014, pp. 179–204.

century, with its by-products of commercial exploitation and forgery, and the troubling legacy that this cultural phenomenon carries to the present day.

From: Exhibition catalogue 'Following Damascus... Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World' (Hirmer, February 2027)

"The essence of these patterns is endless sequencing"
Karl Ernst Osthaus's Enthusiasm for Islamic Flat Ornament

Friederike Weis

When the millionaire heir Karl Ernst Osthaus travelled to North Africa in spring 1898, he became interested – to his own surprise – in Islamic art. He undertook the trip to Algiers and Tunis together with his former secondary school teacher, the now retired Johann H. H. Schmidt (1834–1918), with the original aim of studying natural history. The declared goal was to establish a natural history museum thereafter.[1] But as his travel diary reveals, Osthaus began to purchase artefacts in Tunis. First he bought "pottery and coins" that had been found during excavations in Carthage.[2] Among these were five ancient sling projectiles made of dried clay that Osthaus associated with the Punic Wars between the Romans and the Phoenicians, whom he called "Jewish huckster people" (*jüdisches Krämervolk*).[3] At the end of his trip, he purchased "carpets and embroideries" and "weapons, silverware, glasses, and textiles" in the souks.[4] As he commented, "it is only a pity that the magnificent testimonies of a dying art, which have perhaps been the treasures of a wealthy clan for hundreds of years, are today carried piece by piece to the dealers, due to the general impoverishment brought about by French rule".[5]
Osthaus's acquisition of such objects corresponded to the bourgeoisie's urge to preserve the "non-European" from what was perceived as its impending doom. Rebekka Habermas sees a specifically German "preservation fetish" at work in the collecting hype

[1] On the change in the focus of Osthaus's interests see Christoph Dorsz, "Karl Ernst Osthaus und der Folkwang Impuls. Das Museum von 1902 bis heute", in: *Der Folkwang Impuls. Das Museum von 1902 bis heute*, ed. Tayfun Belgin and Christoph Dorsz, exh. cat. Osthaus Museum Hagen, Hagen 2012, pp. 10–129, here pp. 20–21.

[2] Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Tagebuch meiner in Gesellschaft des Herrn Prof. Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt unternommenen Reise durch Algerien und Tunis*, Hagen 1898, p. 39.

[3] Museum Folkwang, inv. A 70–74; quoted in Osthaus 1898 (see n. 2), p. 38.

[4] Ibid., pp. 40–41.

[5] Ibid.

of the German Empire around 1900. This was also evident in the fact that nostalgically inclined people sought to protect local flora and fauna and collected old traditional costumes, household objects, and similar items.[6] At the same time, a desire for a way of life closer to nature was growing. Habermas thus regards the "salvage" of ethnographica – together with the *Heimatschutz* (homeland protection) and *Lebensreform* (life reform) movements – as a response to the crisis of modernity, triggered by urbanisation and industrialisation in the context of the formation of nation states.[7] Karl Ernst Osthaus fitted seamlessly into this *Zeitgeist*. He saw himself as an ethno-nationalist[8] and as a committed citizen of his hometown of Hagen. Yet he styled himself at the same time as a leading collector of "world art", advocating for the socially renewing potential of a union of art, nature, and life.

In the very same year that he returned from North Africa, Osthaus set out on a second journey. He visited Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, and Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), among other cities, in order to collect artefacts from Antiquity as well as Islamic objects. At the same time, he strove to "acquire a deeper understanding of the great cultures of the East", as he noted later in his autobiographical *Lebenslauf*.[9] The "lively encounter with Islamic culture" not only motivated him to again take up the studies of art history he had pursued at various German universities between 1893 and 1896, but also to present his collection in his own museum.[10] The drive for Osthaus's collecting activity soon crystallised into the goal of "reintegrating art into life".[11] For him, the "Oriental bazaar" exemplified the close integration of artistic production, commerce, and everyday

[6] See Rebekka Habermas, "Rettungsparadigma und Bewahrungsfetischismus. Oder was die Restitutionsdebatte mit der europäischen Moderne zu tun hat", in: *Geschichtskultur durch Restitution? Ein Kunst-Historikerstreit*, ed. Thomas Sandkühler, Angelika Epple and Jürgen Zimmerer, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2021, pp. 79–99.

[7] See ibid., pp. 91–97.

[8] Osthaus was a member of the *Alldeutscher Verband* (Pan-German League) until his death, a group defined by pan-Germanic expansionist and antisemitic ideologies, see Dorsz 2012 (see n. 1), p. 33.

[9] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Lebenslauf [1918]", in: *Karl Ernst Osthaus. Reden und Schriften. Folkwang, Werkbund, Arbeitsrat*, ed. Rainer Stamm, Cologne 2002, pp. 23–26, here p. 23.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 24.

life, which he perceived as lacking in industrial production.[12] But why did he value Islamic aesthetics so highly?

Islamic art as part of "world art history"

Insight into this can be gained from Osthaus's dissertation *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung* (Outlines of Stylistic Development), published in 1918. In it, he traces the development from the surface-oriented works of ancient Egypt, through the Greek flowering of corporeality, to the nature-transcending "master style of the Baroque", as a series of successive styles, each corresponding to a "unified sense of the world" (*einheitliches Weltgefühl*).[13] For this Osthaus draws on the genre of "world art history" in the form of German handbooks, whose best-known authors were Franz Kugler, Carl Schnaase, and Anton Springer.[14] He interweaves the "Oriental styles" of the three chapters on "Early Islamic Art", "The Alhambra" and "The Byzantine Renaissance" each with the chronologically parallel "Occidental" styles in the chapters "Alexandria, Rome, Byzantium", "The Gothic" and "The Renaissance in Italy". Unlike the handbook authors, however, who located Islamic aesthetics chiefly in three-dimensional architectural forms such as arch motifs and *muqarnas* constructions (stalactite-like projections in domes and gateways),[15] Osthaus directs his attention to flat ornamental patterns. Previously, in 1911, he had described the "idea of the endless *rapport*" (repeat pattern) in his article on Spanish tiles with reference to Moorish (Ibero-Islamic) tiles.[16] In his dissertation he draws

[12] For more information on this see Arndt Neumann, "Vom Basar von Tunis zum modernen Industriebau. Die 'Orientreisen' des Hagener Mäzens Karl Ernst Osthaus und der von ihm geförderten Architekten", in: *Nordrhein-Westfalen und der Imperialismus*, ed. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Fabian Fechner and Stefanie Michels, Berlin 2022, pp. 332–351, especially pp. 342–343.

[13] Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung*, Hagen 1918, p. 69.

[14] For an overview of this topic see Monica Juneja, *Can Art History be Made Global?*, Berlin 2023, pp. 41–78.

[15] On Islamic aesthetics in the German handbooks see Eva-Maria Troelenberg, *Eine Ausstellung wird besichtigt. Die Münchner "Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst" 1910 in kultur- und wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Frankfurt am Main 2011, pp. 215–224.

[16] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Spanische Fliesenkeramik [1911]", in: Stamm 2002 (see n. 9), pp. 191–196, here p. 195.

a line from the "repetitive arrangement (*rapport*) of flat patterns", as the expression of the Byzantine "will to art" (*Kunstwillen*),[17] to the "flat ornament of the Turks"[18] by linking the principle of multiplication to Islamic architecture as well: "The forests of columns in the mosques",[19] "the endless repetition […] of open shops" in the bazaar,[20] the "rhythm of deep and transversely laid-out spaces" of the Alhambra,[21] and the "axial attachment of courtyards to the mosque"[22] in 16th-century Istanbul. In contrast to the illusionistic painting of the Italian Renaissance – according to Osthaus embedded in the surrounding architecture as if within a stage frame –[23] the "flowers and fruits of the Turkish garden" operated as a pure surface decoration without any delimiting framing system.[24] The highpoint of the ceramic arts, claimed Osthaus, was "the white tile overlaid with blue, green and red tendrils".[25] His own example of such an Iznik tile (Cat. ##) supports his thesis of the framelessness of Turkish ceramics, since the blossoms and tendrils, cut off on all four sides, suggest endless continued growth.

Osthaus's avoidance of the "arabesque"

Osthaus's emphasis on the "creative drives" (*schaffende Triebe*) and the "will to art" (*Kunstwollen*) shows him to be a disciple of Alois Riegl (1858–1905), the leading theorist of formalist art history at the time, whose lectures Osthaus had attended in the winter of 1895/96 in Vienna.[26] In his *Stilfragen* (Problems of Style) of 1893, Riegl devoted an entire chapter to the "arabesque" as the expression of the Islamic *Kunstwollen* (an innate

[17] Osthaus 1918 (see n. 13), p. 18.

[18] Ibid., p. 62.

[19] Ibid., p. 24.

[20] Ibid., p. 25.

[21] Ibid., p. 41.

[22] Ibid., p. 62.

[23] Ibid., pp. 57–58.

[24] Ibid., p. 62.

[25] Ibid., p. 61.

[26] Ibid., pp. 7, 18 and 53.

aesthetic drive in competition with nature). Osthaus, in contrast, hardly employed the term.[27] He apparently did not want to unreservedly follow Riegl's stylistic derivation of the arabesque from the geometricisation of the naturalistic Hellenistic and Roman acanthus leaf,[28] even though Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948) advanced similar arguments in 1913.[29] It is also possible that Osthaus avoided the popular term "arabesque" because for him its Arabic connotation did not seem appropriate for Turkish and Persian works. As Eva-Maria Troelenberg has demonstrated, this term was employed for the first time for the decoration of the applied arts – independently of architecture – in the *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Handbook of Art History) by Anton Springer, in its 1909 edition, revised by Joseph Neuwirth. [30]Through this development, and thanks to Riegl's understanding of ornament as the collective, creative "will to art", the canon of Islamic art was expanded to include objects of applied arts, such as the enamelled glass mosque lamps that were selected for the exhibition *Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art* held in Munich in 1910.[31] Osthaus, too, contributed several objects to the show, including his collection of Ibero-Islamic tiles and an Egyptian textile (Cat. ##).[32]

Although he largely avoided using the term "arabesque" in his writings, Osthaus did acknowledge the persistence of forms from Antiquity in Islamic ornament: "Islam,

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[27] See Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*, Berlin 1893, pp. 259–346. On a comprehensive definition of Riegl's concept of "Kunstwollen" (will to art) see Wojciech Bałus, "Schraube und Eidos. Versuch eines *close reading* des Begriffs 'Kunstwollen' bei Riegl und Panofsky", in*: Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte,* vol. 88, no. 4, 2025, pp. 519–539, especially pp. 521–525. Osthaus's dissertation only mentions "an arabesque that plays with tendrils and animal forms" once, in reference to Byzantine architecture; see Osthaus 1918 (see n. 13), p. 17. In 1911 Osthaus applied the term to the decoration of Moorish pointed amphorae; see Osthaus 2002 (see n. 16), p. 193.

[28] See Riegl 1893 (see n. 27), pp. 264–267.

[29] See Ernst Herzfeld, "Arabesque", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam I*, vol. 1, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., Leiden 1913, pp. 363–367, especially pp. 363–364.

[30] See Troelenberg 2011 (see n. 15), p. 224.

[31] See ibid., p. 227. Six Syrian mosque lamps ("glass hanging lamps") from the 14th century were displayed at the Munich exhibition; see *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910*, ed. Friedrich Sarre and Fredrik Robert Martin, vol. 2: *Die Keramik, die Metallarbeiten, Glas und Kristall*, Munich 1912, pls. 174–176.

[32] See ibid., vol. 2, p. VI and vol. 3: *Die Stoffe, die Waffen, Holz und Elfenbein*, Munich 1912, pl. 178.

however, was more deeply concerned with the development of the abstract arts – and herein lies its greatness. Its motifs are taken from Hellenistic and Central Asian cultures: they are the tendril and the geometric flat ornament. It made free use of both, developing both to perfection in the sense of the pure surface decoration".[33] Here Osthaus appears to be consciously juxtaposing, in complementary fashion, the opposing positions of Riegl, who died in 1905, and of the Austrian art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941). While Riegl saw the origin of the "arabesque" exclusively in the classical acanthus, Strzygowski, in his *Orient oder Rom* (Orient or Rome, 1901) and *Kleinasien: Ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte* (Asia Minor: A New Land of Art History, 1903), completely called into question the "Orient's" dependence on antique forms. For Strzygowski, the origin of the "Oriental" ornament lay instead in Asia. He exemplified this with the "Tiefendunkel" (darkness within the depths) of the relief structure of the Mshatta façade (from present-day Jordan) – an effect he derived stylistically from Persia.[34] Osthaus similarly relativised the exemplary role of Antiquity by integrating the geometric flat ornament from Central Asia, while at the same time accepting the continued use of the Hellenistic tendril in Islamic art as a fact.

Islamic flat ornament in examples from Osthaus's collection

Osthaus may have had the enduring influence of Antiquity before his eyes by juxtaposing old and more recent materials, since he possessed an impressive collection of "Coptic" textile fragments from the Hellenistic tradition. According to Annette Paetz, these originated from the discovery in tombs of tunics and other fabrics in which the deceased had been wrapped. Theodor Graf and Franz Bock had removed such fabrics from the Akhmim-Panopolis necropolis in Middle Egypt and, after cutting up most of them, sold them to European museums and collectors.[35] A fragment from Osthaus's collection

[33] Osthaus 1918 (see n. 13), p. 24.

[34] See Eva-Maria Troelenberg, *Mschatta in Berlin. Grundsteine islamischer Kunst*, Dortmund 2014, pp. 109–110.

[35] See Annette Paetz gen. Schieck, "Gaben für das Jenseits. Koptische Textilien. Ägypten 3.–8. Jahrhundert n. Chr.", in: *"Das schönste Museum der Welt". Museum Folkwang bis 1933*, ed. Hartwig Fischer and Uwe M. Schneede, exh. cat. Museum Folkwang, Essen, Göttingen 2010, pp. 263–271, here p. 263. According to

features a tapestry-woven decorative scroll with flowers, animals, and human figures (Fig. 1). If one compares the medallion-like outlined leaf in the Hellenistic scroll with the carnation fans on an Ottoman silk fabric (Cat. ##), one notes that both are enclosed by an ogival form and each incorporates small flowers as an embedded "picture within a picture". From the 16th century onwards, the staggered ogival lattice developed into one of the five most common layouts in Ottoman textiles.[36] Given Osthaus's understanding of "world art" as stylistic developments unfolding over extended periods of time, a formal comparison of such textiles – which differ considerably in both date and geographic origin – would not be out of place.

As for the second source of Islamic motifs, which Osthaus traces to Central Asia, a hexagonal tile with a black pattern beneath a turquoise glaze might serve as an illustration (Cat. ##). The tile presumably once adorned a decorative wall panel in Damascus. At its centre are three black circles, each containing an off-centre recessed circle. Black dots and pairs of wavy stripes are arranged around these circles. The circles at the six corners and the pairs of wavy stripes, truncated at both sides, indicate that the pattern would have continued up onto the adjacent tiles (Fig. 2). This pattern, known as "Chintamani" (from Sanskrit: "thought jewel", that is, the wish-fulfilling jewel), was inspired by the "three jewels" motif of West and Central Asia. It alludes to the three symbolic jewels (*triratna*) of early Buddhism – the Buddha, the teaching, and the community (*sangha*) – which are usually depicted surrounded by a flame. Ottoman artists eventually combined this motif with the visual appearance of leopard and tiger skins.[37] The rhythmic effect of the tile panel (Fig. 2) is reminiscent of the "forests of columns" that Osthaus illustrated in his doctoral thesis with an interior view of the Mosque of Córdoba (Fig. 3). It is possible that contact with the German consul Julius Harry Löytved-Hardegg (1874–1917; died in Damascus) led to the tile's entry into the Folkwang

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Christoph Dorsz, "Karl Ernst Osthaus und die Bedeutung des Textilen für die Sammlungen des Museum Folkwang", https://www.museum-folkwang.de/sites/default/files/document/Dorsz_Textilsammlung.pdf [last accessed: 2 March 2026], Osthaus acquired a collection of late-Antiquity Egyptian textiles in 1906 through Max Creutz, director of the Cologne Museum of Applied Arts.

[36] See *İpek. Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets*, ed. Julian Raby et al., London 2001, fig. 90.B, p. 204.

[37] See Yuka Kadoi, "Çintamani: Notes on the Formation of the Turco-Iranian Style", in: *Persica*, vol. 21, 2006/2007, pp. 33–49.

collection. Löytved himself owned a similar piece, today in the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of Islamic Art) in Berlin.[38] Osthaus solicited assistance from him in acquiring objects from "Persia, Asia Minor, and Arabia" in 1906.[39] Whether any objects actually reached Hagen through Löytved's mediation cannot be conclusively proven, however, due to a lack of sources.

Two late-Fatimid textile fragments from the 11th/12th centuries (Cat. ## and ##) similarly raise the question of whether they might have inspired Osthaus to make the following statement: "Islam also develops the principle of the interpenetration of conflicting patterns. Drawings of animals were cut through by coloured stripes that appear to negate their contours."[40] While the tapestry-woven bands of tendrils against a dark blue background in one of the textile fragments alternately contain white and yellow birds (Fig. 4), in the other fragment the guilloche on the bright linen cloth features birds and running hares in the medallions (Fig. 5). The birds in the first textile, whose wings are separated from their bodies by a strip of background, just as much as the hares, whose long ears and legs become visible only through openings in the red background, are thus both depicted *ex negativo* – indeed without any delineated outline of their own.

For Osthaus, however, the most important principle remained sequential repetition: "The essence of these patterns is endless sequencing. It corresponds to the disorganised arrangement of the forests of columns in the mosques. The technique of weaving was most in keeping with their spirit. It was through its textiles that Islam had its greatest impact on the world. It was also in the woven patterns that the move away from ancient tradition was most clearly recognisable."[41] For Osthaus, the departure from Antiquity was certainly most tangible in those fabrics in which Arabic script functions as ornament. His fragment of an Ottoman cenotaph cover made of red silk (Cat. ##) is divided into

[38] Inv. I. 1996.4 was donated to the museum by Löytved's daughter in 1996. Further tiles of this kind are held in the British Museum (inv. 1887, 0617.28) and Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. 478-1900, 396-1898, 1138A-C-1893, 908 to F-1894 and 894-189), among other places.

[39] Karl Ernst Osthaus to Julius Harry Löytved-Hardegg, 2 March 1906, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, N 1581/123, no page, quoted in Sebastian Willert, *Kulturbesitz. Konflikte um archäologische Objekte in der deutsch-osmanischen Politik 1898–1918*, Göttingen 2024, p. 288, note 101.

[40] Osthaus 1918 (see n. 13), p. 24.

[41] Ibid.

three zigzag bands filled with beige-coloured Arabic thuluth script. The wide central chevron contains the profession of faith (*shahāda*), the narrower one above it features a verse from the Quran (2:144) on the direction of prayer, and the lower narrow chevron contains the invocation: "Glory be to God and praise be to Him, glory be to God, the Exalted".[42] Above and below these repeating units of script are lamp-like shapes with further script, which can be seen intact on larger fragments of the same fabric.[43] In this case too, Osthaus therefore had a relatively small piece with only two reiterating units that suggested "endless sequencing".

Osthaus's textiles as an inspiring sample collection

Thanks to their compact size, Osthaus's textile fragments were excellently suited to serve as a sample collection. An anonymous article in the *Hagener Zeitung* on the occasion of the special exhibition of textiles from the Folkwang Museum in 1904 makes this clear. It argues that the key sources of inspiration for contemporary handicrafts should not be utilitarian industrial designs, but artistically created textile patterns:

> There are countless factories today that hope to make an impression by boasting of having "their own pattern designers". In reality, this merely proves that they produce tasteless goods. For it is just as clear that only a brilliant mind can devise a good pattern as it is that brilliant people do not take up positions as pattern designers. The industrial history of recent years has shown that those manufactories that were clever enough to obtain their patterns from the primary source – that is, from artists capable of creating new styles – have done the best business.[44]

Osthaus was undoubtedly proud of having salvaged a large number of Islamic "patterns from the primary source" into the present. In an age of mechanical mass production, the

[42] On the production and function of such cenotaph covers see Selin Ipek, "Dressing the Prophet. Textiles from the Haramayn", in: *Hali*, vol. 168, 2011, pp. 59–61.

[43] For example, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 32.100.460, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448680 [last accessed: 2 March 2026].

[44] Anonymous [Karl Ernst Osthaus?], "Folkwang", in: *Hagener Zeitung*, 11 June 1904, p. 1.

desire to return to handicrafts, in particular to textile products, and to intervene in the formation of taste by means of museum objects was not new, nor was it a concern of Osthaus alone.[45] Before him, the Arts and Crafts movement under the leadership of William Morris (1834–1896) had arisen in Great Britain in the second half of the 19th century. It had been preceded by the founding of the South Kensington Museum (the present-day Victoria and Albert Museum) in London in 1857. In order to renew ornament and refine fabric patterns, designers deliberately drew on non-European patterns. A striking example of this is the appropriation of the Persian *boteh* pattern, a stylised flowering cypress with a downward-curving tip, by British designers in the Scottish town of Paisley. The "new" pattern was named after this town.[46] Osthaus, too, was fascinated by the *boteh* pattern, as attested by various textiles from Persia and Kashmir in his collection (Fig. 6).[47]

The wealth of forms found in Islamic textiles in particular clearly suited Karl Ernst Osthaus's ideal – an ideal shared with others – of influencing and inspiring taste in the decorative arts of that era. The cultural and historical contexts and original functions of these textiles, however, hardly interested him at all.

[45] Justus Brinckmann, the director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Hamburg, was an important model for Osthaus; see Rainer Stamm and Gloria Köpnick, *Karl Ernst und Gertrud Osthaus. Die Gründer des Folkwang-Museums und ihre Welt*, Munich 2022, pp. 25–26.

[46] See Sheilagh Quaile, "Imitation and Piracy in Paisley Shawl Design, 1805–1870", in: *Journal of Design History*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–16.

[47] Museum Folkwang, inv. TS 06 194 (Cat. ##), TS 06 192 a-b, TS 06 255 and TS 06 275.

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Garden Flowers on Walls and Plates

Deniz Erduman-Çalış

The collection of the Museum Folkwang includes a small group of fine Ottoman ceramics from the workshops of Iznik, created between 1580 and 1600. The ceramic centre of Iznik (ancient Nicaea) was located about 140 kilometres south-east of present-day Istanbul, at that time Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire. Active since the Byzantine period, the workshops had provided high-quality ceramic vessels for the sultan’s court since the 1480s.[1] While in the early decades the primary focus was on the imitation of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, underglazes in turquoise, purple, and green were soon added to the colour palette. From 1550 onwards, the famous bole red came into use and once again fundamentally changed the appearance of the ceramics.[2] At the same time, a new court style was created in the capital city.

Along with traditional Islamic motifs such as forked-leaf tendrils and composite flowers borrowed from Chinese art, a characteristic Ottoman preference for naturalistically depicted garden flowers emerged. Ceramics in particular, but also textiles, were now decorated with tulips, carnations, roses, and hyacinths. Iznik wares were no longer made exclusively for the court, but also for a wealthy class of buyers, and ceramic vessels from Iznik were traded through Venice to Europe.[3]

During this period, tiles painted with garden flowers came into fashion, and in the second half of the 16th century the walls of palaces, mosques, and mausolea in the capital city were decorated with tiles from Iznik. The sultans, their mothers, and even high-ranking government officials made pious endowments and commissioned the famous architect Sinan (c. 1490–1588) to erect monumental buildings that can still be

[1] The brilliance of the Iznik clay body is due to the high proportion of quartz in the ceramic mass. On the material and technique of Iznik ceramics, see Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey*, London 1989, pp. 50–62.
[2] On the colours and decorative motifs used in Iznik ceramics, see Walter B. Denny, *Osmanische Keramik aus Iznik*, Munich 2005, pp. 59–62.
[3] Atasoy/Raby 1989 (see n. 1), pp. 264ff.

admired in Istanbul today. Sinan favoured the use of Iznik tiles to accentuate the interior decoration of his architecture.[4]

The high demand for tiles and elaborate tile images, commissioned by the court for fixed prices, put pressure on the ceramicists. By decree of the sultan, they were prohibited from making ceramic vessels for the open market so as not to interfere with the production of tiles.[5] Ultimately, this resulted in the decline of ceramic production in Iznik. After a short heyday, a massive deterioration in quality occurred from the early 17th century onwards, and towards the end of the century the production of ceramics came to a complete halt.

In the second half of the 19th century, Iznik ceramics began to be collected on a large scale in Europe, both by private individuals and by museums. During this time, Iznik ceramics were acquired above all by newly founded museums of decorative arts, since the high quality of the works made them useful as models for local arts and crafts and for the aesthetic education of museum visitors.[6] Likewise, Karl Ernst Osthaus followed this trend and acquired his first Iznik plate in 1906.

The plate, created around 1570 (Cat. ##), was made at the height of Iznik ceramic production and shows all the characteristic colours and decorative elements. Typical features include the wavy edge with stylised cloud bands on the rim of the plate, which are based on Chinese models. The well of the plate shows a composite flower in the centre, framed by two large forked-leaf tendrils ending in trefoil motifs above and below. The upper trefoil motif is flanked by two red roses. The quality and the execution of the plate are remarkable. Only the rendering of the trefoil motifs and the slight asymmetry of the forked-leaf tendrils reveal a somewhat uncertain hand and suggest the absence of a stencil, which was otherwise normally used.[7]

The second Iznik plate in the Essen collection (Cat. ##) can be dated to a later date on account of the very flat application of the bole red and the somewhat less refined drawing. However, since the technical and artistic quality is still high and the colours do not run, the plate can be assigned to the late 16th to early 17th century.

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[4] Cf. Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, London 2005, p. 106.
[5] see Atasoy/Raby 1989 (see n. 1), p. 274.
[6] On the founding of museums of decorative arts and their Iznik collections, see Deniz Erduman-Çalış, *Faszination Lüsterglanz und Kobaltblau. Die Geschichte Islamischer Keramik in Museen Deutschlands*, Munich 2020, pp. 56–62.
[7] On the use of stencils in the production of Iznik ceramics, see Atasoy/Raby 1989 (see n. 1), pp. 57f.

In addition to these plates, the museum's collection includes two tiles that were also created during the heyday of Iznik production (Cat. ## and ##): a tile and an accompanying border from the interior of the mausoleum of Prince Mustafa, son of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). The mausoleum is located in the Muradiye complex in Bursa (western Türkiye) and was completed in 1573. The interior walls are decorated with continuous patterned tiles and surrounding borders.[8] The tiles show a sophisticated system of vertical vines from which red and blue tulips, carnations, and hyacinths grow. The refinement of the contour drawing and the skilful application of red and blue tones are remarkable.

In the late 19th and the 20th century, numerous tiles from this mausoleum were removed and sold on the art market, and are now found in many European museum collections. To this day, the removal of tiles from publicly accessible religious buildings remains a major problem.

[8] see Hakkı Önkal, *Osmanlı Hanedan Türbeleri*, Ankara 2017, pp. 285–293, fig. 456.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

Luminous Glances – Two Persian Vessels

Yuka Kadoi

Karl Ernst Osthaus played an instrumental role in the avant-garde movement in Europe. As a patron, he encouraged artists, designers, and architects to challenge traditional norms; as a collector, he developed his own perspectives through experimentation. Seeking inspiration beyond Europe, Osthaus acquired a small number of objects that were then classified as “Persian” – one of the sub-categories of pre-modern Middle Eastern arts, alongside those described as Arab or Turkish.[1] Among those that he purchased between 1898 and 1921, a glass flask (Cat. No. ##) and a ceramic ewer (Cat. No. ##), both datable to the medieval period, exemplify the Persian contribution to the so-called *Hagener Impuls* (“Hagen Impulse” – the renewal of art, design, and everyday life that Osthaus set in motion from Hagen), especially the concept of “light”.[2] While it was not a strictly modern invention, light was nonetheless central to modern design schemes for creating airy, spacious interiors.

The flask, currently attributed to modern-day Iran or Iraq and datable to the early medieval period (ca. 9th–10th centuries). Documented as part of the Folkwang collection before 1921, this nearly cylindrical, slightly flared vessel has a long, tapering neck with a large splayed opening and a flat base with an angular shoulder (Fig. 1). Blown from colourless glass but given an overlay of opaque glass, the vessel conveys an overall sense of lightness. Simply ornamented with facets on the neck and horizontal grooves on the base, its surface is neither opaque nor transparent, but translucent, capturing the subtle play of light.

Although it is not dated, the ceramic ewer is currently attributed to the late medieval period, around 1300. In contrast to an elaborately sculptured cock-headed neck, as seen in its metalwork prototype of the early medieval period (ca. 7th–9th centuries), the main body of this object is plain in form and decoration. Unlike lustrewares, which were widely produced in the Persian cultural lands at that time, the porcelain-like surface of the ewer, made of stonepaste (known as fritware), is devoid of polychromy. Yet the concept of “light” is manifest in this object through the subtle use of a jade-green glaze.

The glass flask and the ceramic ewer are perfect embodiments of Osthaus’s practice of collecting arts from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean through a modernist lens, which fundamentally rejected ornamental details of historical objects yet paradoxically valued their functionality. They would have been just as well suited to the designed interior of Osthaus’s *Herrenzimmer* (“Gentleman’s Study”) at Villa

[1] For an in-depth study of the discourse surrounding “Persian art” during the first half of the 20th century, see Yuka Kadoi, *Aesthetica Persica: The History and Historiography of Persian Art, 1900–1950*, Edinburgh, forthcoming.

[2] See Katherine Kuenzli, “The Birth of the Modernist Art Museum: The Folkwang as *Gesamtkunstwerk*”, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 72, no. 4, 2013, pp. 503–529.

Hohenhof as in the museum. Their slightly lustrous surfaces would have contrasted with the elaborate yet tonally restrained decoration of the ceiling and upper walls – inspired by arabesque designs, painted in dark red and deep blue, with hints of green. Even without sunlight, both objects could function as enchanting lighting devices.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

Karl Ernst Osthaus’s Collection of Islamic Glass

Miriam Kühn

The Museum Folkwang followed a collecting approach that blurred conventional lines between cultures and periods. Its interest in the Mediterranean and the Middle East extended beyond classical antiquity to encompass Islamic art, and it strategically looked for connections that would allow a broader view of artistic developments.[1]

This strategy is especially reflected in its collection of glass. Today, the Museum Folkwang in Essen holds some forty glass vessels from the Middle East, most of which were acquired by Karl Ernst Osthaus from the Danish diplomat Peter Julius Løytved (1836–1911) in Beirut around 1900.[2] Although glassware was not the primary emphasis of his collection, Osthaus’s acquisition of these holdings along with additional pieces demonstrates his fine instinct for typologically important glass vessels.

While only five of the pieces are stylistically datable to the Islamic period, the forms and decorations reveal tendencies that also occur in other, more extensive collections, in particular that of the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum for Islamic Art) in Berlin. These parallels are not coincidental, but rather bear witness to a conscious interest in Islamic glasswork.

The glass collection in Essen consists essentially not of fragmentary finds, but of intact, exhibitable vessels, indicating a collection strategy that focused on aesthetics and presentation. The core of the collection is formed by small bowls and bottles primarily from the Mediterranean, augmented by singular but representative pieces from Iran and India. This selection emphasises the artistic and aesthetic quality of the

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[1] Cf. Annette Hagedorn, “Walter Gropius, Karl Ernst Osthaus und Hans Wendland. Die Ankäufe maurischer Keramik für das Deutsche Folkwang Museum Hagen im Jahr 1908”, in: *Al-Andalus und Europa. Zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Martina Müller-Wiener and Christiane Kothe, Petersberg 2004, pp. 387–398; Nadine Engel, “Folkwang als ‘Pforte zum Orient’, Karl Ernst Osthaus als Sammler Islamischer Künste”, in: *Re-Orientations. Europa und die islamischen Künste. 1851 bis heute*, exh. cat. Kunsthaus Zürich, ed. Sandra Gianfreda and Martina Ciardelli, Munich 2023, pp. 96–109.

[2] Cf. the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Archiv at the Osthaus Museum Hagen (KEO-Archiv), F1/59.

pieces, thus prioritising design, technical mastery, and typological relevance over mere archaeological completeness.

The Continuity of Antique Glass Production in the Early Islamic Period

Many of the glass vessels from the eastern Mediterranean in the collection of the Museum Folkwang date back to Late Antiquity, that is, the period from the fourth to the seventh century. Many early Islamic glass objects show a striking formal and technical resemblance to the antique traditions of this region.

Unguentaria – small vessels for costly perfumes or balms (e.g. Cat. ##) – as well as small pilgrim's flasks (Cat. ##)[3] from the third to the seventh century anticipate later Islamic forms. An especially striking example is a bottle (Cat. ##) whose size, capacity, and slender cylindrical form with funnel-shaped neck resemble an example from Egypt now preserved in Berlin (ninth to twelfth century; Fig. 1). Both vessels are adorned with three-dimensional ribs that spiral from top to bottom, created by blowing into a mould.

Iran: An Independent Current of Islamic Glass Production

Glass vessels from ninth- and tenth-century Iran represent an independent current in the history of Islamic glass production. They differ significantly from Mediterranean traditions both technically and stylistically and are characterised by extremely thin vessel walls and cut or bevelled geometric decoration. One example of this type is a bottle, now strongly iridescent, that can be dated to the tenth century (Cat. ##).[4] Produced by free-blowing, it shows reduced cut and bevelled decoration on the body as well as faceted elements on the neck. In 1910, it was shown at the pioneering exhibition *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst* (Exhibition of

[3] Cf. pilgrim's flask, transparent green and light green free-blown glass with appliqué, pinched, Egypt, 4th–9th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Inv. I. 4049, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1522472 [last accessed: 3 June 2026]; Jens Kröger and Klaus Brisch, eds., *Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst: Glas* (Islamische Kunst: Loseblattkatalog unpublizierter Werke aus deutschen Museen 1), Mainz 1984, cat. 129.

[4] Cf. Kurt Erdmann, "Die fatimidischen Bergkristallkannen", in: Johannes Hempel, ed., *Wandlungen christlicher Kunst im Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte und christlichen Archäologie 2), Baden-Baden 1953, pp. 189–205, 195 fig. 58.

Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art) in Munich – a testament to the early recognition of, and esteem for, Iranian glasswork. Not until 1959 was a comparable example acquired for the museum in Berlin through the Frankfurt art market (Inv. 3/59).[5]

Two other vessels produced in nineteenth-century Iran are no longer present in the collection, but are documented in historic photographs. One is a mould-blown sprinkler with a spherical body and a long, curving neck, used for sprinkling rosewater or other perfumes (cf. p. ##).[6] The second piece, a mould-blown pitcher, is notable for the wing-nut-shaped appliqué elements on its spout (cf. p. ##).[7]

Transregional Connections

Glass production and design in Europe, especially in Venice, is closely connected to exchange with the Middle East. From the thirteenth century, the artistically and technically demanding practice of painting on glass with enamel and gold developed in Egypt and Syria, and from there spread via Venice to all of Europe. The Folkwang collection includes two examples of stemmed glasses painted in enamel (Cat. ##, ##).

Another example of transcultural connections is a bottle fashioned of opaque turquoise-coloured glass (Cat. ##) dating to the first half of the seventeenth century. Opaque turquoise-coloured glass already occurs in the oldest glass objects, produced 3,500 years ago in the form of beads and miniature vessels. It is known from tenth- and eleventh-century Iran[8] and was also produced and exported in fifteenth-century Venice. Examples are now preserved in London, among other

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[5] Bottle, transparent green free-blown glass, cut, bevelled, Iran, 9th–10th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 3/59, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1525544 [last accessed: 3 June 2026]. For other examples, cf. Jens Kröger, *Nishapur: Glass of the Early Islamic Period*, New York 1995, nos. 171–172.

[6] Cf. e.g. sprinkler, transparent blue mould-blown glass, Iran, 18th–19th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. KGM 1883,385, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1521106 [last accessed: 18 May 2026].

[7] Cf. e.g. pitchers, transparent green or dark blue free-blown glass, with appliqué, pinched, Iran, 18th–19th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. KGM 1883,1963 a, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1521424 [last accessed: 18 May 2026]; KGM 1883,38, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1530613 [last accessed: 18 May 2026].

[8] Cf. e.g. pitcher, opaque turquoise-coloured glass, free-blown, with appliqué, Iran, 8th–10th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 4331, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1523154 [last accessed: 6 March 2026]; Kröger/Brisch 1984 (see n. 3), cat. 2.

places.[9] Opaque turquoise-coloured glass vessels, however, were also widespread in eighteenth-century China[10] and India.[11] The shape of the bottle resembles comparable eighteenth-century examples manufactured in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany for export to India and adorned with gold or enamel painting.[12] Thus it is clear that, as an export commodity, glass was part of a worldwide trade network facilitating the constant exchange of new artistic impulses between regions.

Collecting and Trade Networks in the Twentieth Century

Two stemmed glasses (Cat. ##, ##)[13] also serve to illustrate the complex networks that existed between collectors, dealers, and museums in the early twentieth century. These objects initially belonged to what is now the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin, which acquired them from Alexandre Merle de Massonneau in 1908 along with around fifty other glass beakers. Massonneau had collected the pieces – which were originally produced in Syria – in Crimea and the Caucasus.[14]

In 1909, Karl Ernst Osthaus purchased the two glasses for the Museum Folkwang. Since they closely resembled objects already present in the Berlin museum, they

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[9] Cf. URL: https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1008/footed-bowl-obizzo-giovanni-maria/ [last accessed: 6 March 2026].
[10] Cf. URL: https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5876011 [last accessed: 6 March 2026].
[11] Cf. Tara Desjardins, *Mughal Glass: A History of Glassmaking in India*, Delhi 2024, cat. 165, 169, 170.
[12] Cf. e.g. bottle, transparent colourless glass, mould-blown, painted in white enamel and gold, Netherlands or Great Britain and India, second half of the 18th–early 19th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 3/72 a-d, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1522725 [last accessed: 6 March 2026]; cf. also bottle, transparent dark blue glass, mould-blown, painted in white enamel and gold, India, first half of the 18th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 1/75 a-b, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1521094 [last accessed: 6 March 2026]; Kröger/Brisch 1984 (see n. 3), cat. 204–209.
[13] Cf. the very similar stemmed glass, transparent colourless mould-blown glass, with appliqué, Syria, second half of the 13th–first half of the 14th century, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I. 736, URL: https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1522056 [last accessed: 6 March 2026]; Kröger/Brisch 1984 (see n. 3), cat. 133.
[14] Cf. Gisela Helmecke, “Vom Sammeln des Glases. Emaillierte Glasbecher und die Sammlung de Massonneau”, in: exh. cat. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin 2010, pp. 54–60; Sujatha Chandrasekaran, “The Merle de Massonneau Collection – Antiquities of Southern Russia in Western Museums”, in: *Ancient and Medieval Cultures of the Caucasus: Findings, Hypotheses, Interpretations*, proceedings of the XXXII “Krupnovskie chteniya” International Conference on the Archaeology of the Northern Caucasus, Maykop 2022, ed. M. S. Gadjiev and V. R. Erlikh, pp. 193–196; Sujatha Chandrasekaran, “Western Collectors in the Caucasus and Northern Black Sea Region before the Russian Revolution”, in: *Antiquities of the Northern Black Sea Region, the Caucasus and Central Asia: from Nikolay I. Veselovsky’s Discoveries to Current Studies*, proceedings of the international conference dedicated to the 175th anniversary of Nikolay I. Veselovsky (1848–1918), ed. Maya T. Kashuba, Maria V. Medvedeva and Evgeniy O. Stoyanov, Saint Petersburg 2024, pp. 177–180.

were sold as duplicates, and the proceeds were used strategically to expand the Berlin collection.

Collection as Creative Source

The selected objects, which originated in the Mediterranean, Iran, and India, show key developments in Islamic glasswork from Late Antiquity to the eighteenth century. The Museum Folkwang's goal in collecting glass was not to achieve archaeological or historical completeness, but to search for types that could serve as models for modern art and craft.[15]

For Osthaus, Islamic art was not a thing of the past, but a living source of inspiration for the present. The surface of the tenth-century bottle with its clear forms and cut and bevelled geometric decoration, the curvilinear shape of the sprinkler formerly in the collection, and the form and material of the bottle of uncertain date and origin all show parallels to contemporary European glass art from around 1900 (Fig. 2). The glassware in the Osthaus collection thus not only bears witness to the history of Islamic art, but also constitutes part of the modern art and cultural history of the early twentieth century.

[15] Cf. Hagedorn 2004 (see n. 1).

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In the Weave of Tradition - Four Textiles from the Islamic World

Gisela Helmecke

Textiles played an important role in the Islamic world. From simple nomadic tents to the finest palaces, they served as adornment for dwellings that had few other furnishings. Articles of clothing displayed social status, and the custom of bestowing robes of honour on official occasions was integral to the political system. Official workshops were dedicated to the production of textiles for the exclusive use of a particular ruling house. Textiles were part of tax collection in the provinces and sometimes served as payment. Their patterns reflect the multifaceted connections between social groups as well as the traditions of the many peoples who inhabited the Islamic world, along with influences reaching it from other civilisations.
The following four works offer an insight into the holdings of Islamic textiles in the Museum Folkwang.

An endless network of rhombuses with round medallions, bordered on three sides by a narrow strip, fills the ground of a shawl-like cloth (Cat. ##). The frame consists of an interlaced band with bird medallions in two different colour combinations. The same interlaced band recurs in the borders of the network of rhombuses. Squares with bird medallions mark the intersections, from which corner fields with trefoils or star fields with birds emerge. In the round medallions, an interwoven band forms four star fields with the same birds as in the network of rhombuses, as well as smaller fields with little crosses.
Although its patterning is characteristic of the Fatimid period in Egypt (969–1171), this woven fragment is extraordinary for its composition. The colour scheme of the pattern, the interwoven band forming the medallions, and the design of the birds are all typically Fatimid. At that time, this weaving technique, which had long been practised in Egypt, was often executed in silk thread, as is the case with this fragment. It most likely comes from a *ṭirāz* workshop in the Nile Delta or the capital city of Cairo. The term *ṭirāz* refers to both a specialised textile workshop and the articles produced there. *Ṭirāz* workshops were common throughout the Islamic world and primarily manufactured luxurious fabrics and garments for use by the caliph and

his court. Accordingly, such workshops were under strict control and taxation, and their supervisors were considered important officials. The appearance of the caliph's name on *ṭirāz* fabrics was considered an insignia of rulership, like the mention of his name in the Friday prayers and its inscription on coins.[1]

This embroidered clothing fragment from a tomb (Cat. ##) is covered in closely spaced zigzag bands with finials on their points. The bands consist of horizontal S-motifs arranged symmetrically, with two mirrored in each triangular form. The small finials consist of a double hook with a little cross. At the bottom, the pattern begins as a row of zigzags. Needle holes on the narrow, unembroidered strip at the edge suggest that an additional piece of fabric was sewn on there.
The material, embroidery technique, and style point to Mamluk Egypt (1250–1517). A comparable fragment in Berlin shows two rows of zigzags with finials, embroidered in the so-called Holbein stitch.[2] The pattern also adorns an entire series of printed cotton fabrics from medieval India (Gujarat) that were exported to Egypt and found in tombs there.[3]

The central field of this hanging or covering (Cat. ##) shows a multi-lobed star medallion with floral infilling; in the corners, cypress motifs emerge from a kind of vase. The ground of the central field is covered with an endless pattern of branching floral vines, two of which repeat. In the middle of the frame are six different flowers, which also occur in the central field. Around the edge is a striped fabric that is also attached to the fabric on the reverse, which is likewise printed. An example in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 1) shows strong parallels to the textile in

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[1] Cf. *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst. Musikfeste – Muster-Ausstellung von Musik-Instrumenten. Amtlicher Katalog*, Munich 1910, no. 2929; Max Dreger, "Die Stoffe", in: *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910*, ed. F. Sarre and F. R. Martin, vol. 3, Munich 1912, pp. I–XIII, pl. 177–224, 178; Leonie von Wilckens, "Fatimidische Gewebe mit gewirktem Dekor im Vergleich mit spanischen und sizilischen", in: *Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters. Aktuelle Probleme* (Riggisberger Berichte 5), Riggisberg 1997, pp. 157–171, here pp. 160–161, fig. 89; Annette Hagedorn, "Ornament als Bild – Islamische Schalen, Töpfe und Fliesen", in: *"Das schönste Museum der Welt". Museum Folkwang bis 1933*, Göttingen 2010, pp. 273–286, here pp. 274, 368, no. A148, fig. p. 268.
[2] Inv. I. 3179; cf. *Islamische Stoffe aus ägyptischen Gräbern in der islamischen Kunstabteilung und in der Stoffsammlung des Schlossmuseums*, ed. Ernst Kühnel, Berlin 1927, p. 57, pl. 33.
[3] The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford holds a particularly extensive collection of such fabrics; cf. Ruth Barnes, *Indian Block-Printed Textiles in Egypt: The Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum*, 2 vols., Oxford 1997.

Essen.[4] The origin of the latter has not yet been conclusively determined. It may have come from India or Iran; works from those two regions are often scarcely distinguishable. These cloths, known as *qalamkār*, served as curtains and hangings and were often arranged in pairs. They covered seating areas, beds, or small tables, and served as prayer "rugs", but were also used as religious banners.[5] They were produced using an elaborate technique that originated in India, with its ancient tradition and wealth of experience in working and decorating cotton. The production process involved many steps, each of which was performed by a specialist. Close decorative parallels are found on painted cloths from what is now the region of Andhra Pradesh in south-eastern India. There, in the Quṭb Shāhī sultanate (the sultanate of Golconda), fine painted fabrics were produced in the 17th century for the Muslim upper class and for export to Safavid Persia. Towards the end of the 18th century, painting began to be combined with block printing in goods that were likewise intended for the Persian market. Persia itself developed its own independent production, primarily in Isfahan.

On this fragment, a large inscription with the Muslim profession of faith appears between two zigzag bands (Cat. ##). The upper band repeats the first part of Surah 2, verse 144 of the Quran, instructing the faithful as to the direction of prayer (*qibla*) towards Mecca. The lower band repeats the praises of God ("Glory to God and praise to Him, glory to God, the Exalted"), while curved cartouches with invocations of God ("O All-Merciful, O Benefactor") also appear. More complete examples also show round medallions with other invocations on either side of the cartouches.

This design was produced in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century to c. 1922 on models from the main court atelier or *nakkaşhane*. It existed in different variants. It belongs to a late group produced in Istanbul from the mid-19th century onwards. The fragment comes from one of the large silks (*kiswa*) that adorned the interior of the central Muslim shrine, the Kaaba in Mecca. Such fabrics were commissioned by the Ottoman sultans, who had controlled the region of Mecca and Medina since 1517.

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[4] Inv. 91-1889; cf. Jennifer Wearden and Patricia L. Baker, *Iranian Textiles*, London 2010, pl. 91.

[5] One such example with Muslim Persian inscriptions and an Arabic prayer is found in the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich, inv. 10-330 005; cf. *Die Aura des Alif. Schriftkunst im Islam*, ed. Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, Munich 2010, p. 23, fig. 9.

Their use in holy places was believed to imbue them with special powers of blessing (*baraka*). When they were replaced, the old cloths were sent to Istanbul and added to the store of venerable relics in the sultan’s palace. They were also used to cover the sarcophagi and cenotaphs of sultans and other high-ranking persons and were sent to mosques and mausolea throughout the empire. Many were cut apart in those locations and sold or presented as gifts to dignitaries and pilgrims. Such pieces were also used to produce articles of clothing that promised special protection to their wearers.

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Restoration is Appreciation

Silke Odda Zeich, Museum Folkwang, Essen

The term “restoration” is commonly associated with museums and their precious objects. In everyday life, however, the restoration of an object is more likely to be described as a repair. Such a repair, besides being a necessity, can also be an expression of appreciation: a cherished or special object that has been damaged is darned, stapled, or glued. This has always been the case. Those traces therefore reveal much about the value an object held for its owner. When restoring utilitarian objects, the aim is therefore to make both the history of an object and the traces of its use visible, while ensuring that it remains as legible as possible for the viewer.
In 2006, thanks to the generous support of the Folkwang-Museumsverein (Folkwang Museum Association), the objects of approximately 1,700 inventory numbers in our collection of “Archaeology, World Art, and Decorative Arts” were systematically recorded, their condition documented, and the information entered into the database. When it became clear in 2023 that the Islamic collection would be presented in a major exhibition, the objects were reassessed by specialists – this time in order to determine the sometimes considerable extent of the conservation measures required. Most of these objects, which until then had received only provisional conservation treatment or were too fragile to display, had long remained hidden away in museum storage. Thanks to the generous support of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, a total of 372 works were conserved and restored between 2020 and 2026.
Working on such a large group of objects is always both a rewarding and a challenging task for museum conservators, especially when the objects are made of widely different materials. Every material has its own particular properties and characteristic forms of deterioration. Recognising these, preventing further damage, and preparing the objects for exhibition require conservators and restorers who specialise in the respective materials. There are specialists for every material, many of whom work on a freelance basis.
Wood, plaster, glass, ceramics, metal, and textiles all possess very different properties, and even within a single group of materials, particular characteristics must be taken into account. A woollen textile, for example, presents different conservation challenges from one made of silk. The manufacture and processing of the raw material also play an important role. Thread thickness, weave, colours, and many other factors determine not only the appearance of a textile but also its preservation. Is the fabric patterned or plain, smooth or crinkled, interwoven

with metal threads or embroidered? The list of questions could go on and on. External factors must also be considered. Was the object intended for a single use, for example as a funerary item, or was it used every day (Cat. ##; Fig. 1)? How did it survive the centuries – or even millennia? Was it kept in darkness, in damp or dry conditions? Was it stored hanging, lying flat, or folded? From this, conservator and restorers can read the history of an object and take appropriate "life-extending" measures, establishing guidelines for its future care. "Yes, it may be exhibited, but only at 30 lux and under strictly controlled climatic conditions!" (Cat. ##) "Please display only lying flat or, if wall-mounted, at a slight angle so that the textile is not placed under unnecessary strain." (Cat. ## or ##) Such conservation requirements must be taken into account in every exhibition concept. We naturally wish to display our treasures – especially after their successful restoration – but at the same time preserve them in good condition for as long as possible.

Similar questions arise with more robust materials such as ceramics, metal, or stone. Before conservator and restorers begin work on conserving an object and preparing it for exhibition, they examine its constituent material, technique, manufacture, use, and condition. More in-depth research may range from studying historical photographs and written sources to conducting chemical or radiological analyses. Once treatment begins, each object requires careful consideration: How far should we go? May – or indeed should – we replace missing parts, adjust colours, or carry out complete retouching? How can we respect the object's history, make it accessible, and at the same time ensure that it is readily understandable for visitors? Sometimes the results are contradictory. For example, traces of previous restoration work – such as holes left by metal clips in ceramic bowls – may be considered a distraction in one object, but not in another. Accordingly, they are treated differently. Whereas the holes in one bowl were filled and retouched, those in the other were left untouched (Figs. 2 and 3). Traces of earlier interventions nevertheless remain identifiable through careful documentation. This records the progress of the restoration: the condition before treatment, the principal stages of the work, and the final condition, as well as the materials used and the methods applied. Such documentation is essential for every restoration.

Traces of earlier interventions on objects can also be puzzling. Our wood conservator, for example, discovered tiny, black, almost perfectly spherical pellets deep within a wooden relief, for which there was initially no explanation – they were far too uniformly round to be "ordinary" dirt particles (Fig. 4). Following discussions with the conservator Anke Scharrahs, an expert in Damascene interiors who also restored the Damascus Room in Dresden, the two came to a conclusion: the originally golden-yellow resin beads had created a sparkling effect in the recesses.

Each of the objects presented here is unique: in its manufacture, its artistic intention, its technological secrets, its use, and its history.
Today, the restored objects radiate an aged beauty and material diversity. It gives me particular pleasure to be able to share the results of these successful restorations with you in this exhibition.

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Collecting for the "Spanish Cellar" at the Folkwang: The 1908 Trip to Spain

Birgit Schulte

In his *Lebenslauf* (Curriculum Vitae), Karl Ernst Osthaus emphasised a significant phase of his personal development that took place after he founded the Museum Folkwang in 1902: "Numerous travels contributed to my training from then on […]. I sought to expand my knowledge of art history, to shed light on problems that had occupied me, and to augment my collection everywhere." Particularly important for him was his engagement with Iberian-Islamic tiles and their ornamental design in connection with his trip to Spain in 1908. Osthaus explicitly mentioned the research and publishing consequences of this journey: "My reflections on Spanish tiles, the scholarly results of this trip, have been published in the *Orientalisches Archiv* (I 1910/11 74)."[1]
Osthaus travelled to Spain together with his wife Gertrud Osthaus, née Colsmann (1880–1975), but dated the journey incorrectly in his *Lebenslauf* to 1907. In fact, the couple set off on 26 March 1908, first for Paris, and from there to Spain; the return was planned for the beginning of May.[2] The "lively encounter with Islamic culture" during his travels in 1898 and 1899 had inspired a focus in the Folkwang's collecting activities that the couple wanted to expand.[3]
In Madrid, the Osthauses met the young architecture student and later founder of the Bauhaus Walter Gropius (1883–1969).[4] He was introduced to them by the art historian Hans Wendland (1880–1972), who had corresponded with Osthaus since 1907.[5] On 16 March 1908, Wendland wrote to Osthaus from Madrid that he had been dealing with "a young architect, Gropius, from the well-known Berlin

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1 Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Lebenslauf" (Curriculum Vitae), in: idem, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung. Inaugural-Dissertation verfasst und der hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Kgl. Bayerischen Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde vorgelegt am 19. Juli 1918*, Hagen 1918, pp. I–VI, esp. p. III. Hagedorn notes that Hans Wendland drew Osthaus's attention to Spanish ceramics and supplied him with information to prepare his trip. See Annette Hagedorn, "Walter Gropius, Karl Ernst Osthaus und Hans Wendland. Die Ankäufe maurischer Keramik für das Deutsche Folkwang Museum Hagen im Jahr 1908", in: *Al-Andalus und Europa. Zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Martina Müller-Wiener and Christiane Kothe, Petersberg 2004, pp. 387–398, here p. 391.

2 See Gertrud Osthaus's letter to Ada Nolde, 26 March 1908, in: *Emil und Ada Nolde – Karl Ernst und Gertrud Osthaus. Briefwechsel*, ed. Herta Hesse-Frielinghaus, Bonn 1985, p. 46.

3 Osthaus 1918 (see n. 1), p. II.

4 On the relationship between Osthaus and Gropius see *Karl Ernst Osthaus – Walter Gropius. Der Briefwechsel 1908–1920*, ed. Reinhold Happel and Birgit Schulte, Essen 2019. Hagedorn suspects that Gropius could have had previous knowledge of Spanish and Islamic ceramics; see Hagedorn 2004 (see n. 1), p. 389. On Gropius's interest in ceramics see also Reginald R. Isaacs, *Walter Gropius. Der Mensch und sein Werk*, vol. 1, Frankfurt/Berlin/Vienna 1985, p. 88.

5 The correspondence between Osthaus and Wendland is preserved at the Karl Ernst Osthaus-Archiv in the Osthaus Museum Hagen (hereafter cited as KEO-A) under Kü 78, Kü 477a to 477c and NAC 2/68 and ranges from 1907 to 1911. It revolves mainly around purchases, in particular of Spanish or Islamic ceramics and other objects.

family of architects for the last few weeks; he is a competent expert on Spanish tiles". On account of Gropius's knowledge, he wanted to "keep" him in Madrid until Osthaus arrived.[6] Gropius had been exploring Spain's culture since September 1907, thanks to a small inheritance. He had paid special attention to Iberian-Islamic ceramics, knowledge about which he had gained through his acquaintance with the scholar José Gestoso y Pérez (1852–1917) and by visiting important collections, such as that of Guillermo de Osma y Scull (1853–1922) or that of the architect Josep Font i Gumà (1859–1922).[7] Wendland, furthermore, encouraged Gropius to get involved in the art trade, taking trips with him through Spain and Portugal in search of antiquities.[8]

The intensive engagement with Spanish ceramics inspired the idea in Gropius "of reviving the old, wonderful practice for modern purposes", reported Wendland to Osthaus with a view to the latter's ideas of artistic reform. "At the moment he is making tiles himself at the largest factory in Triana [Seville], where he is learning traditional factory secrets. I have often thought that this must be interesting for you and your endeavours."[9] Gropius impressed the Osthauses with his expertise.[10] This led, among other activities, to a trip together to Granada, where Gertrud Osthaus documented the Alhambra in numerous photographs,[11] pictures that Osthaus used to illustrate his dissertation in 1918.[12]

Osthaus ultimately charged Gropius, in addition to Wendland, with purchasing suitable pieces of Spanish – above all Andalusian – ceramics for his museum collection (Fig. 2). Gropius did this successfully, for Osthaus acquired large lots of such objects that were transported by ship to Amsterdam and then on to Germany.[13] Even after his return to Berlin in May 1908, Gropius

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6 Wendland to Osthaus, 16 March 1908, KEO-A Kü 477c/19.

7 His visits to the collections of José Gestoso y Pérez, Guillermo de Osma and Josep Font i Gumà are mentioned by Gropius in a letter to his mother of 6 November 1907, as well as in a conversation with Reginald Isaacs on 24 August 1965. See Isaacs 1985 (see n. 4), p. 88 and note 99, p. 445. In a letter to Osthaus of 23 May 1908, Gropius mentions Font i Gumà's book on Valencia ceramics, KEO-A NAC 2 127/1–2. The Bauhaus Archiv in Berlin preserves Gropius's copy of José Gestoso y Pérez's publication, *Historia de los barros vidriados sevillanos*, Seville 1903, with numerous marginal annotations by Gropius; see Isaacs 1985 (see n. 4), note 99, p. 445.

8 See Wendland to Osthaus, 21 March 1908, in which he mentions the trips taken with Gropius, KEO-A Kü 477c/20; see also Gropius to Osthaus, 23 May 1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/1–2.

9 Wendland to Osthaus, 16 March 1908, KEO-A Kü 477c/19.

10 See "Mein Fries hat ihn sehr beeindruckt", an undated letter from Gropius to his mother, quoted in Isaacs 1985 (see n. 4), p. 90.

11 See the remark by Gropius to Osthaus, 10 January 1909: "that she said something similar to me in the Garden of the Generalife", KEO-A NAC 2 127/9–11.

12 See Osthaus 1918 (see n. 1).

13 See Gropius to Osthaus, 23 May 1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/1–2; Gropius mentions the price paid for 64 tiles and 21 large ceiling tiles and is prepared, in case Osthaus was not satisfied with the quality, to keep the wares himself. See also Gropius to Osthaus, 20 October 1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/7, in which Gropius confirms receipt of a payment from Osthaus. In a letter from Gropius to Osthaus, 9 February 1909, KEO-A V 187/1, the purchase is mentioned again in connection with the exact list of objects. That not all the objects entered the Hagen museum is confirmed by Gropius's request to send on all the rejected pieces to the Berlin auctioneer Lepke; see Gropius to Osthaus, 10 January 1909, KEO-

occasionally acted as an art agent for Osthaus. Gropius visited Berlin arts and crafts dealers, recommended objects that Osthaus should purchase, "which have been missing in your collection until now",[14] and was pleased that "now all of them have entered your collection, where they help to round it out and I can see each piece again".[15] After visiting the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art) held in Munich in 1910, Gropius praised the loans from Hagen displayed there: "How beautiful your collection looked in Munich".[16] Osthaus's article *Spanische Fliesenkeramik* (Spanish Tiles)[17] appeared with photographs by Gertrud Osthaus in 1911 (Fig. 3) and provoked a scholarly debate between Osthaus and Gropius. The former understood his collection of tiles in the Museum Folkwang as a sample collection, interpreting the ornamental artistic principles of Iberian-Islamic ceramics as setting a standard for decoration in general. Gropius valued Osthaus's publication as the "first German résumé"[18] on the topic. But he disagreed regarding several technical descriptions and with Osthaus's explanations on the stylistic evolution of the ornamentation. Having learned the manufacturing process through his own practice, Gropius felt challenged to explain the details of different glazing techniques at length, and wished to continue the dialogue on the question of stylistic evolution.[19]

Their discourse led to a friendship lasting many years and to various joint projects. This relationship was extremely helpful for Gropius's career, in particular Osthaus's recommendation for the post of director of the Weimar School of Arts and Crafts. In connection with this position, Gropius revealed to his benefactor in 1918 plans for a "builder's hut" that had not yet been announced.[20] Whereas the friendship with Gropius endured, Osthaus's business dealings with Wendland, who like Gropius had been active for Osthaus as an art dealer for some time,[21] ended in "hostile conflicts"[22] and mutual threats of legal action. Apparently there were different opinions regarding orders and invoices.

A NAC 2 127/9–11. Osthaus's purchase of the group of Spanish tiles amassed by Gropius made the rounds among museums in Germany; in a letter of 27 March 1909 the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt asks Hagen if it can acquire any unwanted pieces not kept by the Hagen museum; see KEO-A P 109/1.

14 Gropius to Osthaus, 12 June 1908.

15 Gropius to Osthaus, 20 October 1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/7.

16 Gropius to Osthaus, 22 December 1910, KEO-A Kü 318/9.

17 Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Spanische Fliesenkeramik", *Orientalisches Archiv. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Kunst, Kulturgeschichte und Völkerkunde der Länder des Ostens*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1910/11, pp. 74–79, pl. XXII.

18 Gropius to Osthaus, 8 February 1911, KEO-A NAC 2 127/15.

19 Ibid.

20 Gropius to Osthaus, 23 December 1918, KEO-A Kü 346/3–4.

21 Wendland, for example, was in Hagen between 12 and 21 October 1908; see letters from Wendland to Osthaus, KEO-A Kü 477c 16 and 105, and NAC 2 68/2, two of them with Folkwang Museum letterheads, dated 12 and 21 October 1908. See also KEO-A NAC 2 182/3.

22 Wendland to Osthaus from Granada, 1 March 1909, KEO-A Kü 477a/2.

By June 1909 "the azulejos […] were all mounted and arranged" in the staircase and presented in the cellar of the Museum Folkwang in Hagen (Fig. 4).[23] Some of these building ceramics are of doubtful provenance. Gropius reported that the ceiling tiles from Valencia, which Osthaus had purchased, had probably come on the art market as a result of theft (Cat. ##). In the context of a lack of laws protecting cultural treasures, there were few scruples against removing tiles from an intact architectural context, such as a tondo from the portal to a convent or an entire ceiling from a villa, decoration from a chapel or a tile from the famous Torre de las Damas in the Alhambra.[24] Osthaus referred rather euphemistically to these diverse sources in his publication: "Acquisitions from the Madrid and southern Spanish art market found a desired addition by the removal of wall decorations in Andalusian monasteries, by excavations in the Alkazar [sic] in Niebla and by the purchase of the Gestoso collection in Seville".[25]

Osthaus was convinced that "with the products of Spanish ceramics from the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance" he was able to display at the Museum Folkwang "one of the outstanding documents of Islamic art".[26] He believed, moreover, he recognised the "nomadic spirit" in the ornamentation of Iberian-Islamic tiles.[27] In contrast to his scholarly work on the topic, this assessment implied a romantic, idealising, Orientalist viewpoint. The interior of the Museum Folkwang in Hagen, a "programmatic work of the modern style",[28] testifies to Osthaus's enthusiasm for the art of the Islamic world. The integration of the tile decoration in this ambience marked by columns, arches, flowing lines, and glazed tiles created a fabulous atmosphere that even Walter Gropius could not resist, being transported by "the Spanish cellar […] to romantic dreams".[29]

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23 Gropius to Osthaus, 10 June 1909, KEO-A NAC 2 120/8. *Offizieller Führer durch Hagen i. W.*, May 1911, pp. 171–172; KEO-A Z 100/8.

24 See Gropius to Osthaus, 23.05.1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/1–2; Gropius to Osthaus, presumably February 1911, KEO-A Kü 318/21–22; Wendland to Osthaus, 1 March 1909, KEO-A Kü 477a/6. We are grateful to Alfonso Pleguezuelo for explaining the legal situation up to 1931.

25 Osthaus, "Spanische Fliesenkeramik" (see n. 17), p. 74, figs. 4 and 5.

26 Ibid., p. 74.

27 Osthaus 1918 (see n. 1), p. 24.

28 Ibid., p. III.

29 Gropius to Osthaus, 20 October 1908, KEO-A NAC 2 127/7.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

The Lingering Shadow of Islam: The Spanish Tiles of the Museum Folkwang

Alfonso Pleguezuelo, Carsten Plätzer and Ángel Sánchez-Cabezudo

Karl Ernst Osthaus’s enthusiasm for avant-garde art in particular is well known, but he was also curious about ancient Islamic art.[1] In this latter field he amassed an excellent collection of Spanish tiles, so-called *azulejos*, although it was very difficult for him – or anyone else – to collect Islamic tiles made during the eight centuries of Islamic presence on the Iberian Peninsula. As far as we know today, there was no notable production of tiles in al-Andalus until the Nasrid dynasty in Granada (1238–1492). For this reason, the Folkwang collection only features Islamic tiles from the 14th and 15th centuries and, above all, tiles from the following period of re-Christianisation, many of them heirs to the Islamic style. When he began to put together his collection around 1907, the discipline of medieval Islamic archaeology was still nascent in Spain. Prior to the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* (Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art), held in Munich in 1910, Osthaus was already aware that this field of collecting had hardly been developed in Germany, as he noted in his article *Spanische Fliesenkeramik* (Spanish Ceramic Tiles), published in 1911.[2] In his essay on ceramics for the exhibition’s catalogue, Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) lamented that the Spanish tiles were scarcely represented (Fig. 1).[3] Works had been solicited from Spanish collections but never arrived – not

[1] Nadine Engel, “Folkwang als ‘Pforte zum Orient’, Karl Ernst Osthaus als Sammler islamischer Künste”, in: *Re-Orientations. Europa und die islamischen Künste. 1851 bis heute*, ed. Sandra Gianfreda and Martina Ciardelli, Munich 2023, pp. 96–109.

[2] Karl Ernst Osthaus, “Spanische Fliesenkeramik”, in: *Orientalisches Archiv: illustrierte Zeitschrift für Kunst, Kulturgeschichte u. Völkerkunde der Länder des Ostens*, 1910–1911, pp. 74–79.

[3] Friedrich Sarre, “Keramik”, in: F. Sarre and F. R. Martin, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst in München*, vol. 2, Munich 1912, pp. I–VI.

because the owners did not want to lend them, according to Stephen Vernoit,[4] but for political reasons beyond their control. He particularly regretted the absence of the loans requested from Guillermo de Osma (1853–1922), a learned, wealthy, and polyglot Spanish collector, whose collection of Islamic art was the most important one in Spain at the time. It would subsequently become the basis for the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid.[5] A partial solution for this lacuna was to ask Arthur von Gwinner (1856–1931) in Berlin to lend a panel of tiles from the Alhambra, as well as to display Ibero-Islamic tiles from two other German collections, those of Museum Folkwang in Hagen and Princess Therese of Bavaria (1850–1925) in Munich.[6] Unfortunately, these ceramic works were not included in the catalogue. However, Sarre, just as much as Osthaus, admired the quality of Osma's collection, as well as its owner's erudition.[7] We know that Osma visited the exhibition on 8 September 1910 because he mentioned this in his small travel journal for that year.[8] He also noted the number of some of the exhibited pieces and the name of their lenders. Strangely, his notes mention neither Osthaus nor the Folkwang tiles displayed in the exhibition.

The Folkwang collection

We cannot be sure of the original total number of tiles that belonged to the Folkwang's collection, since inventories of the applied arts collection have never been found. Only the tiles that have been preserved and today belong to the Museum Folkwang in Essen are known to us. It is documented that Osthaus sold

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[4] Stephen Vernoit, "Hispano-moresque Art in European Collections, c. 1910" quoted in Eva-Maria Troelenberg, "Regarding the Exhibition: the Munich Exhibition Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art (1910) and its Scholarly Position", in: *Journal of Art Historiography,* no. 6, June 2012, pp. 18–19**,** note 77.

[5] Sarre 1912 (see note 3), vol. 2, p. V. Further information on Osma and his Islamic collection can be found in the source cited in note 26.

[6] Sarre 1912 (see note 3), vol. 2, p. VI.

[7] Osthaus 1910–1911 (see note 2), p. 74.

[8] Guillermo de Osma, Travel journal 1910, Archive of the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

or gave tiles to the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in Halle in 1913 and that the Landesmuseum in Darmstadt was interested in purchasing some.[9] Today the collection numbers 95 items, of which 83 are Spanish tiles and 12 come from other countries. These numbers do not correspond, naturally, to the total number of tiles, which is much higher, since almost all of the inventoried items comprise several pieces.[10]

The Spanish tiles in the collection of Museum Folkwang are pieces manufactured in the most important centres of Ibero-Islamic ceramic production, both for *azulejos mudéjares* and *azulejos moriscos*: Seville (78), Valencia (14 glazed and 36 unglazed), Toledo (7), Granada (7), Niebla (3) and Barcelona (1).

The provenance of the pieces

Up to now, published information on the acquisition of the pieces that make up the collection has been scarce. Only the information supplied by Osthaus in his article, some details published by Annette Hagedorn, and very few references culled from the archive of the Osthaus Museum in Hagen were available.[11] In his article, Osthaus writes that the objects were acquired in Spain with the assistance of the art dealer Hans Wendland (1880–1972) and the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969). According to Birgit Schulte and Dorina Michaelis, the principal period of purchases was between 1907 and 1911.[12]

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[9] Details about these sales are found in the archive of the Museum Folkwang. On this see the contribution by Birgit Schulte in the present catalogue, pp. ##–##.

[10] We do not know why Hagedorn asserts that Osthaus's collection was made up of seventy-five pieces of this kind. See Annette Hagedorn, "Privatsammler islamischer Kunst in Deutschland und ihre Bedeutung für das Verstehen islamischer Kunst von 1890 bis 1930", XXX. *Deutscher Orientalistentag*, Freiburg, 24–28 September 2007, March 2008, pp. 9–10, URL: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:5-92554.

[11] Annette Hagedorn, "Walter Gropius, Karl Ernst Osthaus und Hans Wendland: Die Anfänge maurischer Keramik für das Deutsche Folkwang Museum Hagen im Jahr 1908", in: *Al-Andalus und Europa zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Martina Müller-Wiener et al., Petersberg 2004, pp. 132–179.

[12] See the contributions by Birgit Schulte and Dorina Michaelis in the present catalogue, pp. ##–##.

Osthaus also mentions that the pieces were acquired through four channels. The first one he refers to is the art market in Madrid and in southern Spain, without detailing specific places or the names of art dealers. He claims that the purchases were complemented by the acquisition of panels from monasteries in Andalusia, again without mentioning any more details. As his third and fourth sources, he refers to the excavations in the castle at Niebla (Huelva) and to the purchase of the Sevillian collection of José Gestoso y Pérez (1852–1917). We cannot offer any new information on the art dealers or the monasteries, but we can provide new details on the Niebla tiles and on those of Gestoso.

As regards the former, we do not know when and from whom the three tile compositions identified as from Niebla were purchased (Cat. ##). Osthaus wrote that they came from “the excavations” carried out in its castle, and this suggests that he acquired them from the archaeologist Ellen Mary Whishaw (1857–1937), the wife of the British consul in Seville, Bernhardt Whishaw (1857–1914). The couple lived in Seville from 1902 onwards and there founded an “Escuela de Arqueología” (School of Archaeology) that was renamed the Anglo-Spanish School of Archaeology in 1914. In 1912 they published in London their book *Arabic Spain. Sidelights on Her History and Art*; in 1913 they inaugurated their museum in Seville, the Museum of Andalusian Pottery and Lace, and in 1917 Ellen Whishaw opened the doors of her Museo de Niebla (Museum of Niebla), with ethnographic and archaeological objects. Her museum was visited by important figures such as Hugo Obermaier (1877–1946), the prehistorian and palaeontologist of German origin who became a Spanish citizen and was president of the *Sociedad Española de Antropología* (Spanish Society of Anthropology) and the teacher of leading Spanish archaeologists.[13] The contact with the Whishaws was possibly facilitated by Gestoso, since he was in touch with Ellen Whishaw, as is confirmed by the letters they exchanged.[14]

[13] Juan María Acosta Ferrero, *Elena Whishaw: Entre la leyenda y la realidad*, Huelva 2003, p. 130.

[14] Nuria Casquete de Prado, *El epistolario de José Gestoso y Pérez (1875–1917)*. PhD diss., University of Seville, 2023, supervised by Jesús Palomero Páramo and Alfonso Pleguezuelo Hernández, p. 540.

We can also add a few details concerning the purchase of tiles by Wendland from José Gestoso. The manuscript inventory of the latter's collection lists various pieces whose heraldic motifs coincide with those of several pieces in the Osthaus collection (Cats. ##–##).[15] The descriptions in the inventory, however, cannot be matched to individual objects.

José Gestoso and his German visitors

Gestoso's correspondence does not contain letters from either Osthaus or Wendland, whom he probably met personally through Gropius. He might have briefly met Gertrud and Karl Ernst Osthaus when they passed through Seville in 1908. The relationship with Wendland must have

been somewhat more intense on account of the sale of Gestoso's collection, a sale that likewise has not left any traces in Gestoso's extensive personal archive, which is generally very scant on information of the type that Gestoso probably regarded as confidential. The contact between the two is only documented in sources from Seville in two handwritten annotations made by Gestoso. The first one is found in the margin of page ninety of the copy that he customarily used of his work *Los barros vidriados sevillanos* (Glazed Earthenware of Seville, 1903).[16] In it he comments on and reproduces an interesting ceramic relief glazed in white depicting the Coronation of the Virgin Mary (Fig. 2 and 3). In the margin Gestoso noted: "Today (1912) it is in the Museum Folkwang-Hagen-Westphalia, for which it was acquired by Dr Philip Hans Wendland (Klosterstr. 73, Berlin)".[17]

The second written reference is found in another photograph inserted between the pages of the same book, this time of the Almohad vase today preserved in

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[15] Alfonso Pleguezuelo and Carmen de Tena (eds), *José Gestoso (1852–1917) y Sevilla. Erudición y patrimonio*, Seville 2020, final appendix.

[16] This copy of the book was used by Gestoso from 1903 to 1917, the year of his death. Today it belongs to the library of the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

[17] Original quote: "Hoy (1912) para [se encuentra] en el Museum Folkwang-Hagen-Westfalia para donde fue adquirido por el Dr. Philip Hans Wendland (Klosterstr. 73, Berlín)". At present, this piece is not part of the collection of the Museum Folkwang and its present-day whereabouts is unknown.

the Museum Folkwang (Cat. ##). The annotation below the image reads: “Arab or Mudéjar jar found in a house on Alfarería Street in Triana in 1899, property of Don Manuel Corbato, who sold it to Dr. Phil. Hans Weddland [*sic*] of Berlin in 1908”.[18] The collection of jars that Corbato amassed appears in another photograph included in the *Catálogo Monumental de Sevilla* (Monumental Catalogue of Seville) compiled by the architect Adolfo Fernández Casanova between 1907 and 1909.[19] Manuel Corbato was the owner of one of the most important factories in Triana from 1906 to 1920. This neighbourhood of Seville is situated on the opposite side of the Guadalquivir River and, consequently, outside the perimeter of the former medieval walls; it is the site where the pottery industry has been concentrated from the 12th to the 21st centuries.[20]

For his part, Gropius might have heard of Gestoso when he saw Wendland in Madrid, who introduced him to Joseph Weissberger (1878–1954), who in turn introduced Gropius to Guillermo de Osma.[21] It was surely the latter, a friend of Gestoso’s, who urged Gropius to pay a visit to Gestoso when he went to Seville.

Gropius visited the Andalusian city twice, and it was during the first stay, in 1907, that he met the Sevillian scholar, who gave him a copy of his book, the aforementioned *Los barros vidriados sevillanos*, which the young architect read and annotated with fervour (Cat. ##).[22] Once again in Seville, Gropius wrote to

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[18] Original quote: “Tinaja árabe ó mudéjar encontrada en una casa de la calle alfarería, en Triana, el año 1899, propia de Dn. Manuel Corbato quien la vendió al Dr. Phil. Hans Weddland [sic], de Berlín en 1908”.

[19] Adolfo Fernández Casanova, *Catálogo Monumental de España. Provincia de Sevilla*, vol. 1, 1907, p. 115, plate 105. I am grateful to my fellow archaeologist Fernando Amores Carredano for drawing my attention to this photograph.

[20] Alfonso Pleguezuelo, *Centro Cerámica Triana*, Seville 2017 (Colección Patrimonium Hispalense, vol. 8), pp. 26–29.

[21] Klaus Grisebach, “Dos hombres distinguidos. El viaje por España de Walter Gropius y Helmut Grisebach (1917–1918)”, in: *Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabel de Hungría*, 2nd series, no. XLV–XLVI, 2017–2018, p. 26.

[22] The copy is preserved at the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin (see cat. ##). On Gropius’s trip see Joaquin Medina Warmburg, “Voluntad, función, arquitectura: Walter Gropius en España”, in: Salvador Guerrero (ed.), *Maestros de la Arquitectura Moderna en la Residencia de Estudiantes*, Madrid 2010, pp. 132–179.

Gestoso on 5 February 1908 to arrange a further encounter with him. This meeting was to have several objectives: Gropius wanted to visit the most important sites with tiles in the city that were mentioned in the book, to discuss the questions that had arisen while reading it, and to ask Gestoso to accompany him while visiting the best factories in Triana.[23] Gropius informed him that during his stay in Madrid he had met and conversed with Osma, who showed him his magnificent collection of ceramics and who sent his warm regards to Gestoso.[24] Gropius wrote to Gestoso again on 8 February, thanking him for being available to meet him. He also mentioned that in the previous days he had visited almost all the monuments with ceramics in the city and that he had many questions for him.[25]

Particularities of the Folkwang collection

Around 1900 there was no single dominant tendency in ceramics collecting, although two eras were especially favoured: the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Osthaus, like Osma, was solely interested in the medieval Islamic world and its influence on Christian, *mudéjar* and *morisco* art. Only one private collection in Spain is comparable to that of the Folkwang, that of Guillermo de Osma, today housed in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid, which he founded in 1916 (Fig. 4).[26] Although the Osthaus's collection never achieved the exceptional level of the Spanish collection, nor reached its sheer number of works, it shared with it a common focus and an objective dedicated to research

[23] We are not certain in which factory in Triana Gropius made the mural of tiles that he mentions in letters to his mother and whose whereabouts is today unknown. Only a comment by Wendland to Osthaus, when he writes that Gropius "is personally working in the biggest factory in Triana", indicates that it must have been Mensaque. This was the largest and most important manufacturer, for which Gestoso was the artistic advisor, and where he himself painted the ceramic works that he gave to his friends as gifts.

[24] Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina, Legado Gestoso. Correspondencia, vol. 11 (1907–1908), letter no. 148.

[25] Ibid., letter no. 151.

[26] Alfonso Pleguezuelo, "Para que se nos conozca como fuimos de verdad. La colección de azulejos del Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan", in: *Revista de Museología*, no. 87, 2023, pp. 87–96.

and teaching. In other respects, the objectives of the two collectors varied. Osma, in contrast to Osthaus and Gestoso, never expected his collection to be of any use for the contemporary ceramics industry.

When reading Osthaus's article it is surprising to note how many ideas coincided literally with those of Osma, ideas that at the time were unheard of, but which he could have known through his contact with the Spanish collector or perhaps via Gropius, who helped Osthaus substantially in preparing the article.[27] Osthaus, however, does not list a bibliography nor mention the advice of experts. He writes with astounding confidence about ideas as though they were his own, even if his curriculum vitae makes it quite improbable that he could have acquired the necessary experience to develop so many theories of his own, especially given the number of concepts he addresses in his article.[28]

Until 2019, nothing was known in Spain about the existence of Spanish tiles in German museums. That year the authors of this article initiated a first review by collecting information from leading museums in Germany.[29] Thanks to the collaboration of the great majority of them, today we at least have an idea of the quantity and quality of these collections. It has been surprising to ascertain the quantity of pieces and also the quality of many of them, despite the losses suffered during the armed conflicts of the 20th century.

The collection of the Museum Folkwang displays certain particularities that will be examined below. Other German collections are richer in their number of pieces and also in the variety of manufacturing centres represented, but the Folkwang collection stands out on account of its quality, its coherence, its high

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[27] Hagedorn 2004 (see note 11), p. 394.

[28] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Lebenslauf (1918)", in: *Reden und Schriften. Folkwang – Werkbund – Arbeitsrat*, ed. Rainer Stamm, Cologne 2002, pp. 23–26.

[29] In addition to the Museum Folkwang in Essen, we have been able to study the collections of Spanish tiles of ten other museums in Germany: the Kunstgewerbemuseum and Museum für Islamische Kunst, both in Berlin, the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in Halle (Saale), the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Cologne, the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich, the Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Dortmund, the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe and the Kunstgewerbemuseum der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden at Schloss Pillnitz.

number of pieces from Seville, the good state of conservation of the pieces, and the speed with which it was amassed. As Osthaus himself remarked, it is also notable because of the variety of ornamental patterns and the large dimensions of several of its panels.[30]

The collection is surprising in that the most important ornamentation patterns in *cuerda seca* and *cuenca y arista* techniques are represented and, above all, it is admirable that less frequent patterns are also present. This last detail suggests that whoever assembled the selection of pieces was very familiar with the entire repertoire and knew which models had special value on account of their rarity, something that in the collecting world is one of the most sought-after objectives, as is well known.

Exceptional pieces

The value that Osthaus attached to Spanish ceramics as evidence of Spain's Islamic past is clear from the very first sentence of his article.[31] It is very revealing to compare the text with the pieces in his collection, because they reflect his interests, his curiosities, and his preferences. The limits of this essay do not allow for a critical edition of his article, nor for compiling a catalogue raisonné of his collection. It is only possible in the following pages to briefly look at the most exceptional pieces.

His preference for architectural ceramics over the better-known pieces of tableware is obvious.[32] Yet one free-standing object of considerable size fascinated him especially: a large vase glazed in green belonging to the Almohad tradition (Cat. ##). Islamic tiles are represented by a single tile

[30] Osthaus 1910–1911 (see note 2), p. 74. The first characteristic is useful for corroborating the ornamental richness of the art medium and the second for appreciating the overall aesthetic impact of the patterns, impossible to perceive in the small groups of four tiles that were habitually available on the market and in more modest collections.

[31] Osthaus 1910–1911 (see note 2), p. I.

[32] Osthaus 1910–1911 (see note 2), p. 74.

decorated in blue with gold lustre, which originally could have formed the pavement of the Comares Hall at the Alhambra in Granada (Cat. ##).

Osthaus was also able to obtain a sample of the geometric panels of tiles that decorated the walls of the Alhambra (Cat. ##). The attention and detail that his article dedicates to this technique, and its various compositional principles, are noteworthy.[33]

The collection also features a modest sample of the earliest gothic-*mudéjar* tiles from Valencia decorated in blue on white, as well as of non-glazed tiles known as "*socarrats*" in Valencian (Cats. ##–##).

The simple heraldic tiles made for the tombs of Christian military knights, manufactured in Seville, are represented by three identical tiles that portray the arms of the Pérez de Ayala family, patrons of the church of San Andrés in Seville since 1483 (Cats. ##–##). Yet the overwhelming majority of the Sevillian pieces belong to tiles from the second half of the 15th and the first half of the 16th century (that is, a period under Christian rule), which he generically calls "tiles with coloured lead glazes". He brought together a considerable number of tiles of this type manufactured in the four centres of production that had been identified around 1900: Toledo, Granada, Niebla and Seville. Osthaus was interested in the different architectural uses of these Spanish tiles and in his article noted that they were used to decorate walls, ceilings, and floors, including in his collection pieces with these three functions.

The *cuerda seca* technique was practised from the late 15th century onwards in these four centres. It consists of drawing outlines on the surface of tiles with a greasy substance coloured with manganese, allowing glazes of several colours to be applied without intermingling.[34] Osthaus describes it clearly and admires in particular the quality of the tiles produced in Niebla, praising their technical precision and original colour scheme (Cats. ##–##).

Strangely, he does not dwell on the exceptional collection of sixteen tile patterns in *cuerda seca* technique from Seville that he managed to assemble, which is today one of the most comprehensive outside the Osma collection. Three large

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[33] Osthaus 1910–1911 (see note 2), pp. 76–78.

[34] http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300053916.

panels stand out on account of their size (Cats. ##–##), and a set of eight patterns, each comprising four tiles, is also particularly noteworthy, today on display in one of the collection's three large frames (Cat. ##). Some of the latter tiles are difficult to find today *in situ* in Spain. He also added to his collection two tiles originally intended for ceilings, decorated using the same technique, depicting a hare and a unicorn (Cats. ##–##).

With regard to the tiles made with the *arista* technique, which involved impressing the pattern on tiles to form ridges which prevented the glazes from intermingling,[35] Osthaus makes incisive comments on their manufacture, on the differences in colours between the various manufacturing centres and on the importance of those exported from Seville. From this centre came six large tile panels (Cats. ##–##) and a noteworthy and rare pattern (Cat. ##) that features an unusual purple colour, which he considers to be from Toledo and of which no known example *in situ* is documented.

The collection of tiles made with the *arista* technique intended for installation on ceilings with wooden beams that he managed to assemble is extraordinary. Specifically, in one of the three large sets, he brought together several of the rarest motifs (Cat. ##). Another of these three frames contains several pairs of tiles decorated with golden lustre, which are similarly quite infrequent. The square *arista* tiles for wall cladding, included in these same sets – both polychrome and gilded – are especially notable. Of great interest are the *arista* tiles featuring heraldic motifs from Toledo (Fig. 5) and Seville (Fig. 6), which were used on the cladding of large aristocratic palaces to indicate the family to which the residence belonged. Osthaus also collected a number of small *arista* tiles intended for paving floors, manufactured in Toledo (Cats. ##–##) as well as in Seville (Cats. ##–##), where they were produced with a wide variety of motifs.

Finally, it is worth noting that he was not particularly interested in Renaissance tiles, as he considered that Spanish ornamentation from this period – with few exceptions – lacked the refinement of Italian art. It is highly likely that among

[35] http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300053915.

these exceptions were the three tile panels he managed to purchase from the Cenador de la Alcoba, also known as the Pavilion of Charles V, which was built in the gardens of the Real Alcázar in Seville in 1542 (Fig. 7). One of these pieces is a horizontal frieze of *grotteschi* (Cat. ##), the second is a vertical pilaster with decoration *a candelieri* (Cat. ##), and the third is a large set of tiles featuring a motif known as the “Charles V” design, a pattern that adorns the interior walls of this refined Renaissance pavilion, whose design is heavily influenced by its Islamic heritage (Cat. ##).

Osthaus believed that this rich cultural *métissage* was cut short by the arrival from Italy of Niculoso Francisco el Pisano (active between 1502 and 1529), although in reality it continued until well into the 16th century, as we now know from later works. He acquired a piece from this artist’s workshop that has remained unpublished until now (Cat. ##). It is a panel depicting the Lamentation over the Dead Christ. It does not seem to be a work made by Niculoso himself, but rather perhaps by his son Juan Bautista Pisano or his workshop.

Osthaus was convinced that the delicate Italian and Flemish style of Niculoso subsequently degenerated. In order to prove this in his museum, he acquired a large panel attributed to the workshop of Hernando Valladares and dated to around 1600. It probably derives from the former Dominican monastery of San Pablo in Seville, whose patrons, the dukes of Medina Sidonia, bore the surname Pérez de Guzmán; their coat of arms decorates the panel (Cat. ##).

The influence of Islam persisted in Spain until the 18th century, although mixed with Western aesthetic traits. Perhaps for this reason, almost no ceramic piece from that century found its way into the collection of Karl Ernst Osthaus, one of those Europeans who around 1900 were gripped by a true fascination for Islamic culture.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)



Almohad vase for domestic ritual use (fragments)

Third quarter of the 12th century – first half of the 13th century

Seville

Fired clay, green glaze, embossed stamp decoration in relief

H. 129 × 60 cm

Inv. K 634

These vases with oval bodies, flat wing handles and curved necks, traditionally categorised as *tinajas* (large jars), are in reality *jarrones*: “vases” used for the ritual ablutions before praying in the home. They stand out on account of their size and decoration, which can cover the vessel entirely or partially, with or without glaze. Such vases are found all over the Almohad caliphate territory (1147–1269), in the Maghreb and particularly on the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus). The model might have been invented in the palatial setting of Seville, where such vases are especially numerous and varied. This example is one of the most precious known today.

The decoration and the colour green refer formulaically to the paradise garden described in the Qur’an, its vegetation, pavilions, etc. being associated with attributes of Allah. The design is a precursor of the Nasrid vases (14th–15th centuries), such as the famous *Vase of the Gazelles* at the Alhambra (Fig. 1).

Fernando Amores

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)



Garden fountain basin (fragment)

Early 11th century

Cordoba

Marble carved in bas-relief

39 × 37.4 × 3.8 cm

Inv. K 667

This fragment corresponds to one of the four sides of a rectangular marble basin. The surviving decoration depicts an arcade of horseshoe arches, with the spandrels adorned with arabesques. The surfaces inside the arches depict two different vegetal motifs arranged symmetrically with plants, leaves, and fruits.

The piece must have belonged to a water fountain that was part of a palatial garden, an allusion to the pavilions mentioned in the garden of the Qur’an. The bas-relief is very refined, similar to the work found on the ivory caskets made in the workshops of Madīnat az-Zahrāʾ. The profuse and dense appearance of the vegetal decoration is related to the final years of the Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba (929 – 1031) or,

more specifically, to the subsequent rule of al-Manṣūr (936–1002) and his rival city Madīnat al-Zāhira.

These prestigious basins were looted from Cordoba and its surroundings by later rulers of al-Andalus and the Maghreb to decorate their palaces in cities such as Seville, Granada, and Marrakech.

Fernando Amores

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)



- Plate
- Last quarter of the 16th century – beginning of 17th century
- Muel (Zaragoza) – Aragon
- Thrown clay, glazed and decorated with gold lustre
- H. 3.7 cm, Ø 18.4 cm
- Inv. K 162

This small plate is decorated in negative painting: its centre shows a broad diagonal strip with an undulating line sprouting leaves, a traditional motif of the Caliphate period. The strip is flanked by a decoration with vegetal motifs painted in white and gold reserve.
Muel is a small town in the region of Aragon, where the manufacture of lustreware is documented from at least 1517, the year in which one of its inhabitants is referred to as “almalaguero”, that is, a potter producing gilt “Maliqa [Málaga] earthenware”. Initially, the production at Muel copied the designs from Manises (Valencia) that were so successful on the art market, yet over the course of the century a style of its own was developed, of which this plate is representative. These models continued to be made until at least 1609–1610, when Philip III of Spain expelled the former Muslim population who had been forced to convert to Christianity, many of whom were potters, from his kingdoms.

Ángel Sánchez-Cabezudo

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)





- Large heraldic plate
- Last third of the 15th century
- Manises – Valencia
- Thrown clay, glazed and decorated with gold lustre
- H. 6.1 cm, Ø 43.7 cm
- Inv. K 170

This large plate with a heraldic central escutcheon is encircled by concentric rows of tiny decorative motifs. In Spanish, this decoration is known as *solfas* (musical-note motifs), because of their resemblance to musical notes. The reverse is entirely covered with a spiral gilt line. The central heraldic emblem seems to belong to the Aguilar family, lords of Alacuás. In this town close to Valencia, the Aguilars had a castle-palace adorned with a large number of Gothic tiles from Manises and decorated with their coat of arms. The dating of this plate is confirmed by comparing it to a plate in the Hispanic Society of America, New York, that features the coat of arms of the abbot of the Poblet monastery, Juan Payo Coello (1480–1499) and employs a design and decoration of very similar motifs.

Ángel Sánchez-Cabezudo

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

Between Production and Musealisation: Conserving and Restoring the Museum Folkwang’s Collection of Spanish Tiles

Stefanie Römer and Marina Westkamp

What can centuries-old ceramic tiles produced using different techniques tell us about their manufacture, their use, and their journey into the museum? This question lies at the heart of the largest conservation and restoration project ever undertaken at the Museum Folkwang. Between April 2022 and the end of 2025, the museum’s collection of approximately 300 *azulejos* – that is, Spanish and Ibero-Islamic ceramic tiles – was comprehensively examined and treated. The project was made possible through the “Visual Arts” conservation funding programme of the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Museum Folkwang’s collection is among the largest of its kind in the world.

The principal aim of the project was to identify and preserve the traces of history borne by the objects as historical evidence. These traces bear witness to traditional manufacturing techniques, the tiles’ original use, and the changes they have undergone over time. The task of conservation and restoration was therefore to preserve the authenticity of the objects and to ensure that their history remains accessible to future generations without distorting it.

The size and diversity of the collection presented a particular challenge. During the conservation and restoration process, the individual tiles and tile panels were not regarded as independent objects but, in light of their shared collecting history, were understood and treated as a coherent whole. Their impact derives above all from the architectural contexts in which they were originally used – for example, as wall cladding or floor coverings – and from the uniform wooden frames added later in the course of their musealisation. On the one hand, an individual conservation approach was developed for each object according to its specific needs. On the other, all conservation measures, including the filling of losses and their visual integration, were coordinated across the collection as a whole. Particular emphasis was placed on the use of consistent, age-resistant materials.

The conservation work provided new insights into the technological structure, historical methods of manufacture, and restoration history of the tiles. Typical production flaws became visible alongside numerous signs of wear, such as the abrasion and scratching of raised areas of the surface caused by foot traffic over the course of their use. Other changes, including craquelure (fine networks of cracks in the glaze) and accumulations of dirt, testify to the objects’ age. Damage to the edges of the glazed ceramic bodies and the loss of historical joints indicate that the tiles were removed from their original settings. Only a few remnants of the original grout and mortar – used as either thin-set or thick-set mortar beds – have

survived. From a conservation perspective, it was not clear whether the large tile panels, with repeating patterns or partly mosaic-like compositions, once removed from their original context, had subsequently been installed in the same arrangements in which they survive today within their frames.[1] Since it must be assumed that some tiles were destroyed during their removal, it is likely that the compositions on display in the museum show only enhanced sections – and thus possibly *pasticcios*[2] – of the original architectural surfaces (Cat. ##).

The most serious damage identified on the tiles, however, occurred only after they became museum exhibits. Wood responds sensitively to changes in humidity, whereas ceramic is considerably less flexible. Combined with fluctuations in humidity and other environmental factors, these differing material properties created stresses that resulted in cracks in the joints and, in some cases, even in the ceramic body itself. Some of the existing jointing materials were insufficiently elastic to accommodate the movement of the wood. Iron nails, used as additional fastening elements within the frames, also led to some corrosion on the objects.

From a present-day perspective, both the mounting and the re-jointing of the tiles were carried out improperly and with materials unsuited to the objects. The jointing materials included gypsum and a very hard-set grey mortar that closely resembled cement. In many places these materials extended well beyond the joints themselves, obscuring the originally visible tile surfaces. When the tiles were framed in the early 20th century, the focus was evidently on presenting the ensemble in a museum context, whereas an awareness of conservation practice, and of authenticity and the value of historical artefacts – attitudes shaped by contemporary taste – was still lacking at that time. In the absence of any surviving documentation of the work carried out, it must be assumed that some of the objects underwent further intervention in the 1990s because of pre-existing structural instabilities. Acrylic or silicone sealants found between the tiles and their wooden frames, for example, are no longer regarded as stable in the long term.

Alongside this age-related and anthropogenic damage resulting from the removal and musealisation of the objects, the tiles also display features that originated in their manufacture. These include blistered areas in the glaze, running glaze colours, shrinkage cracks caused by firing, and glaze losses where stacking supports were used.[3] The latter were a consequence of production methods designed to make large-scale manufacture more

[1] Further insights were provided by the research of Alfonso Pleguezuelo, Carsten Plätzer, and Ángel Sánchez-Cabezudo; see their contribution in the present catalogue, pp. ##–##.

[2] A *pasticcio* is an object assembled from different fragments that were often not originally associated with one another.

[3] The tiles were generally stacked one on top of another at three contact points and fired and glazed in this configuration. This meant that when the tiles were subsequently separated, a small loss appeared in the glaze and, at the same time, a chipped edge formed at the contact points, exposing the ceramic body.

economically profitable. Naturally, all such traces of manufacture were left untouched during the current conservation treatment.
The entire conservation campaign was preceded by preliminary investigations into the newly introduced materials and combinations of materials. All work carried out was documented in writing and through photography. Maps and drawings were produced in some cases to visualise stratigraphies,[4] specific features or possible reconstructions.
Following localised deep structural consolidation, many of the tile panels could be treated by removing the unstable joints introduced during earlier interventions and replacing them with a mineral mortar based on dispersed white hydrated lime (Fig. 1).

Put simply, this is a modified lime whose properties as a conservation material are enhanced by physically altering the agglomerates of calcium hydroxide through dispersion.[5] Following this modification, the material offers particular advantages in terms of workability and durability, especially as the historic jointing material used for Spanish tiles consisted of locally available lime-bound sands.[6] A reddish colouring of the joints through the addition of brick dust to improve hydraulic properties – a practice also known in Central Europe since the Middle Ages – cannot be ruled out for some tiles in the collection (Fig. 2).
All joints between the ceramic and the wooden frames were replaced with synthetic felt. This serves not only as protection against dust but, above all, relieves stress on the rigid ceramic. It was also important to remove the corroded iron nails and, once the frames had been opened, to replace the old, unsuitable cushioning materials so that they would no longer pose a risk to people or to the objects.
Overfilled and overpainted original surfaces were freed of these later additions so that they could once again be appreciated after treatment. Only losses and areas of damage that were particularly visually disruptive were filled in order to restore the legibility of the forms and the objects' original purpose as decorative items. Areas liable to further material loss were stabilised by preventive filling. At the same time, the treatment sought neither to suggest intact original surfaces nor to obscure evidence of the objects' history or their characteristic appearance in their original condition. The fills were colour-matched as neutrally as possible to the original surfaces. Careful observers will therefore still be able to identify them by their deliberately muted tonal variations or generally absent surface gloss (see Fig. 1). In rare

4 In conservation, stratigraphy refers to the study of the sequence of layers in works of art. These may include, for example, paint layers as well as layers composed of different materials.
5 See Rochus Strotmann, "Das neue Bindemittel Dispergiertes Weißkalkhydrat. Entwicklung, Herstellung, Mechanismus", in: *Dispergiertes Weißkalkhydrat. Altes Bindemittel – Neue Möglichkeiten*, ed. Elisabeth Jägers, Petersberg 2000, pp. 25–27.
6 Apart from clay, gypsum, and lime, no other binding materials were available. Of these three, air lime or lime putty is the most suitable as a joint mortar. It was based on lime that had first been burnt and then matured under water for several months. It hardens extremely slowly by absorbing CO_2 from the air but remains elastic and breathable. Gypsum was sometimes added to accelerate the setting process.

cases, and only where surfaces were highly reflective, a complete retouch was used to soften the overall appearance. Missing areas and areas that could not be reconstructed were likewise coloured in neutral shades. At the conclusion of the treatment, only lines that could be reconstructed were visually completed. In accordance with the Venice Charter, any hypothetical reconstruction was avoided.[7]

The wooden framing of the tiles, which had originally been set fairly rigidly in mortar as part of wall or floor installations, created a further conservation problem in some cases. It resulted in complex large-format assemblies of immense weight, in which even slight intrinsic movements can generate stresses throughout the structure. These are manifested primarily as cracks in the joints. In addition to inserting a flexible polyester felt between the wooden frame and the ceramic, a further key objective of the conservation treatment was therefore to optimise the joint mortar of these large-format assemblies with regard to their elasticity and load-bearing capacity (Fig. 3). Suitability tests using various additives in a mortar based on dispersed white hydrated lime – including calf hair and acrylic resin dispersions – showed that a multilayer jointing method using reinforcing fabric, an acrylic resin dispersion, and Dralon fibres best withstands the stresses generated by the weight of the objects. On closer examination, the fine Dralon fibres are even visible within the mortar.

Part of the project was devoted to the conservation of a substantial group of so-called *socarrats*. These revealed a wide range of characteristics inherent to their manufacture, as well as numerous traces of use. One clay tile, for example, depicts an animal surrounded by foliage that fills the entire surface (Fig. 4). Particularly striking is the heavy abrasion on both the upper and lower edges, which attests to the object's original installation. The tile was probably set, along with many others of its kind, into a wooden lattice as decorative trim for eaves, a ceiling, or a balcony, similar to a coffered ceiling. This method of construction led, in places, to the paint and the underlying white ground being worn away at the edges. Such signs of wear also provide insights into the manufacturing process, since heavily worn areas of the surface reveal the partly polychrome layer structure. Calcium carbonate-based pigments were first applied to the ceramic body, followed by a lime engobe, which was then painted with iron oxides and, presumably, manganese oxides.[8] The abraded surface thus offers a glimpse into the aged, layered structure of the object. Although the condition may initially appear disconcerting to the observer, it vividly documents the object's history and should therefore be preserved in its current state. Analyses of the paint layers have shown that most *socarrats* were fired after production to increase their durability, although some

[7] "The process of restoration […] must stop at the point where conjecture begins." Article 9, *Venice Charter*, 1964.
[8] See Luís Pinho et al., "Characterization and Alteration Studies of Valencian *Socarrats*", *Arché. Publicación del Instituto Universitario de Restauración del Patrimonio de la UPV*, no. 3, 2008, pp. 197–204.

were also used unfired. The surfaces of the latter are correspondingly more vulnerable and exhibit greater wear.

Through the use of innovative display and mounting systems, the project made it possible to relieve these large-format assemblies of mechanical stress and to protect them from material loss over the long term. Since the Museum Folkwang acquired the objects, the wooden frames have been an integral part of the collection’s original identity and presentation. Despite all the challenges they presented, they have been preserved. The project has demonstrated that these tiles are far more than decorative ceramics: they should be understood as material witnesses to their own histories of manufacture, use, and conservation, and they continue to tell their story to this day.

From: Exhibition catalogue ‘Following Damascus… Karl Ernst Osthaus and the Arts of the Islamicate World’ (Hirmer, February 2027)

The Hohenhof: A Model of Domestic Architecture and Culture

Christin Ruppio

The importance Karl Ernst Osthaus attached to architecture as a force capable of shaping society is evident in the fact that he regarded the buildings he commissioned in Hagen as part of the Folkwang Collection and singled them out as its most important objects.[1] Since architecture requires habitation and spatial experience in order to take full effect, Osthaus conceived the garden suburb of Hohenhagen as an “experimental laboratory for modern architecture”.[2] He invited renowned architects such as Peter Behrens (1868–1940), as well as emerging talents such as Johannes L. M. Lauweriks (1864–1932), to Hagen in order to realise his vision of an ideal urban ensemble.

Between 1906 and 1908, Osthaus commissioned Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) to design his family residence, the Hohenhof, as a total work of art (Fig. 1). Together with his wife Gertrud and their four children, he moved from the living quarters in the Museum Folkwang to the villa on the outskirts of Hagen. There, the family sought to put into practice in everyday life the aesthetic ideals presented in the museum. Like the museum's exhibitions, the Hohenhof brought together fine art and the decorative arts from both European and non-Western contexts.

Osthaus and other exponents of the Arts and Crafts movement considered the uncritical adoption of non-Western motifs and forms just as problematic as historicism, with its recourse to styles of the past. Both movements, however, shared a concern with architecture and architectural ornament.[3] The Hohenhof incorporates elements drawing on Islamic models, yet without resorting to the exoticising imitations characteristic of Orientalism.

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[1] See Birgit Schulte, “Auf dem Weg zu einer ‘handgreiflichen Utopie’. Karl Ernst Osthaus und der ‘Hagener Impuls’”, in: *ICOMOS – Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees*, vol. 64, 2018, pp. 121–132, here p. 123.

[2] Peter Stressig, “Hohenhagen – Experimentierfeld modernen Bauens”, in: Herta Hesse-Frielinghaus, *Karl Ernst Osthaus. Leben und Werk*, Recklinghausen 1971, pp. 385–510.

[3] See Markus Ritter, “‘Eine neue Richtung geben’. Islamische Kunst in der Rezeption des Historismus in Mitteleuropa”, in: Maximilian Hartmuth and Julia Rüdiger (eds.), *Gezimmertes Morgenland*, Vienna 2021, pp. 15–44, here p. 16.

The sunken fountain courtyard between the south-west-facing wings of the Hohenhof (Fig. 2) refers to architectural ensembles of the Islamic world, such as the Alhambra (Fig. 3), while developing a distinct formal language of its own. The design adopts the principle of a central fountain surrounded by arcades, but instead of slender columns, massive basalt piers support the terrace above, emphasising their structural function. Similarly, the ornament designed by Johan Thorn Prikker (1868–1932) for the study around 1911 appears Orientalist only at first glance. In fact, it draws on the formal principles of Islamic ornamentation while translating them into a design specific to its own time and place.[4]

Around 1900, the late medieval palace complex of the Alhambra in Granada was a major source of inspiration for the Arts and Crafts movement, which looked to impulses from non-Western cultures as a means of stimulating innovation in European design. At the same time, it fostered romanticised notions of the "Orient". Both attitudes are evident in Osthaus. As a driving force behind the movement, he engaged professionally with the art of the Islamic world, yet he was also prone to romantic enthusiasm. Thus, he began a lecture on exemplary Islamic domestic architecture and culture with the words: "The morning glow that shimmered on the domes of Oriental mosques spread down into the dwellings below."[5]

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[4] See Christin Ruppio, *Karl Ernst Osthaus und der Hohenhof in Hagen. Ein Modell kultureller Vermittlung*, Berlin 2021, pp. 164–173.

[5] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Der Wert des Hauses", in: *Die künstlerische Gestaltung des Arbeiter-Wohnhauses. 14. Konferenz der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen am 5. und 6. Juni 1905 in Hagen i. W.*, Berlin 1906, pp. 1–6, quoted in Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Reden und Schriften. Folkwang, Werkbund, Arbeitsrat*, ed. Rainer Stamm, Cologne 2002, pp. 113–116, here pp. 113–114.

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"Expressions of a Common Spirit and a Common Will":[1] Johan Thorn Prikker in Hagen

Christiane Heiser

In March 1911, the Dutch artist Johan Thorn Prikker (1868–1932) painted all-over ornamental patterns in brilliant, contrasting colours on the walls and ceiling of Karl Ernst Osthaus's study at Hohenhof (Fig. 1).[2] The art critic Bram Hammacher described the decoration as a "rich Byzantine labyrinth" – probably due to the reflections of gold – but considered it an "Asiatic aberration" that conflicted with the overall plan of the villa.[3] Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), the architect of Hohenhof, likewise disapproved, but the patron was satisfied and included photographic documentation of the room and its wall decoration in his biography of Van de Velde many years later.[4] Did Osthaus view the decoration as a reminiscence of his museum concept? Was it a reference to the "Islamic Department" at the Museum Folkwang? The present essay will explore these questions.

Thorn Prikker and Osthaus

Osthaus had probably heard of Thorn Prikker through Van de Velde and his wife Maria Sèthe (1867–1943). The Dutch artist, who since 1898 had served as head designer for an art gallery in The Hague modelled on the Salon de l'Art Nouveau in Paris, was a friend of the Van de Veldes. He procured the architect's first residential commission: the Villa De Zeemeeuw (The Seagull) in Scheveningen, built for the dermatologist Willem Leuring (1864–1936). While visiting there, German museum director Friedrich Deneken (1857–1927) was immediately taken with Thorn Prikker's work, which ranged from Neo-Impressionist watercolours and Jugendstil textiles in Indonesian batik technique to modern furniture and lamps. Thorn Prikker had also added colourful wall ornaments to various rooms, including borders and stencil paintings covering entire surfaces, as well as the monumental mural *Spiel des Lebens* (The Game of Life) with a motif taken from the first book of the *Panchatantra*, a third- to sixth-century collection of ancient Indian moral tales, fables, and animal stories. Deneken invited the artist to Krefeld and arranged museum commissions for him, including work on the *Niederländisch-Indische Kunstausstellung* (Dutch-Indian Art Exhibition) at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Museum in 1906 (Fig. 2). He also helped Thorn Prikker secure a teaching post in

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[1] Karl With, "Das Museum Folkwang und die ägyptischen Neuerwerbungen", in: *Die Rheinlande*, vol. 29, 1919, pp. 97–107, here p. 98.

[2] Cf. Osthaus to Gottfried Heinersdorff, 7 March 1911, KEO-Archiv: A 653, quoted in Herta Hesse-Frielinghaus (ed.), *Jan Thorn Prikker. Eine Dokumentation zum Leben und Werk des Künstlers in den Jahren 1904–1921 vorzüglich nach den Beständen des Osthaus-Archivs im Karl-Ernst-Osthaus Museum Hagen*, Hagen 1967, p. 10.

[3] Abraham (Bram) Hammacher, *De wereld van Henry van de Velde*, The Hague 1967, p. 278.

[4] Cf. Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Henry van de Velde. Leben und Schaffen des Künstlers*, Hagen (1920) 1988, p. 75. On Van de Velde's disapproval, cf. Herta Hesse-Frielinghaus, *Karl Ernst Osthaus. Leben und Werk*, Recklinghausen 1971, p. 407.

decorative painting at the school of applied arts and initiated his collaboration with the local textile industry.[5]

Deneken's museum activities in Krefeld, which combined historical and modern art, applied arts, industry, and architecture, were as important for the development of the Museum Folkwang as the collaboration with Van de Velde – though a member of Osthaus's extended family warned against this influence: "Please, dear cousin […]. Don't get excited about everything our good Deneken gets excited about […]. Don't let your taste be spoiled."[6]

In 1909 at the latest, Osthaus and Thorn Prikker met personally in conjunction with the *Ausstellung für christliche Kunst* (Exhibition of Christian Art) in Düsseldorf, where both of them served on the planning committee. In the late summer, they joined Van de Velde at the meeting of the Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen) in Frankfurt am Main.[7]

Although Thorn Prikker dressed like a simple labourer and used colloquial language, according to a Dutch art critic he was "multifaceted, with a fine intellect" and repeatedly touched on "very difficult social questions […], alternately praising the art of Van Eyck, Vermeer [and others, C. H.] to the heavens, then lapsing into a passionate description of a football game or the miserable conditions in our society or becoming engrossed in the chemical composition of pigments and processes he was studying for his various works – and finally gushing over the purity of Chinese and Indian philosophy."[8]

His art – innovative wall paintings, unusual Christian motifs and surfaces designed in a linear, south(east)-Asian-influenced style – prompted Osthaus to describe him as "one of the most outstanding decorative talents of the present day".[9] "Herr Osthaus gave me hope that I could come to Hagen. How happy I would be if that were possible," Thorn Prikker wrote shortly thereafter to August Kuth (1887–1911), the research assistant at the Museum Folkwang.[10] In November 1910, Thorn Prikker and his family moved into their own artist's house, one of those Osthaus had built for artists on Stirnband, near the Osthaus family.[11] He would remain there until 1918.

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[5] Cf. Christiane Heiser, *Kunst – Religion – Gesellschaft. Johan Thorn Prikker 1890–1912. Vom niederländischen Symbolismus zum Deutschen Werkbund*, PhD diss., Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2008, pp. 109–121, 137–153.

[6] Theodor Rocholl to Osthaus, 10 April 1900, KEO-Archiv: Nac2 48, quoted in Rainer Stamm and Gloria Köpnick, *Karl Ernst und Gertrud Osthaus. Die Gründer des Folkwang-Museums und ihre Welt*, Munich 2022, p. 39.

[7] Cf. Thorn Prikker to Van de Velde, 8 October 1909, Archives Henry van de Velde, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, Van de Velde correspondence, no. X/758 (14).

[8] Philippe Zilcken, "Schilder van de maand. Johan Thorn Prikker", in: *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift*, vol. 12, no. 9, 1902, quoted in Christiane Heiser, "Johan Thorn Prikker. Ein Kunstarbeiter auf der Suche nach Gerechtigkeit und religiöser Erfahrung", in: *Johan Thorn Prikker. Mit allen Regeln der Kunst. Vom Jugendstil zur Abstraktion*, exh. cat. Museum Kunstpalast, ed. Christiane Heiser et al., Düsseldorf 2010, pp. 8–36, here p. 8.

[9] Osthaus in 1909 in an advertising leaflet for the Deutsches Museum, KEO-Archiv: A 425 (2), quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1971 (see n. 4), p. 318.

[10] Thorn Prikker to Kuth, 7 October 1909, KEO-Archiv: F1 769, quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1967 (see n. 2), p. 4.

[11] Cf. Osthaus to Gottfried Heinersdorff, 7 November 1910, KEO-Archiv: Kü 392, quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1967 (see n. 2), p. 8.

Commissions in Hagen

In order to support the new arrival with projects and income, Osthaus committed to purchasing works by Thorn Prikker and secured private and municipal commissions for him in Hagen.[12] Among them were the programmatic stained-glass window *Der Künstler als Lehrer von Handel und Gewerbe* (The Artist as Teacher of Trade and Industry) for the main railway station (1911), wall mosaics (1914) and staircase windows (1922) for the new civic hall, ornamental painted decoration for the city hall (1914), and ornamental windows for the commercial college (1919; Fig. 3). In their own home, as well, the Osthauses felt the need for "richer adornment".[13] In 1911, Thorn Prikker painted a watercolour of fighting owls which, protected by glass, was integrated into the wall panelling behind the desk in the study at Hohenhof. He also designed a window depicting the *Kampf von Lichtgeistern gegen das Dunkel* (Battle of the Spirits of Light against Darkness) for the stairwell and a wall hanging with fauns and mermaids for the bedroom.[14]

The most striking enhancement was the painted decoration of the study, which fundamentally altered the impression of the room. Osthaus trusted Thorn Prikker's experience with designs of this sort and was probably familiar with his works in Scheveningen and Krefeld. As the artist himself emphasised, "large surfaces really do suit me."[15] Both men appreciated architectural art and shared the conviction – inspired by historical and non-Western examples and in accord with the vision of the Deutscher Werkbund – that the decoration of a space should harmonise with its architecture. Since the mid-1890s, Thorn Prikker had increasingly distanced himself from the notion of the autonomous work of art and had asserted that

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[12] "Ich bekomme von Herrn Osthaus einige kleine Aufträge, das Glasfenster in seinem Wohnhaus, und dann ein paar kleine Wandmalereien in der Diele des Hauses eines Vetters von Herrn Osthaus. Außerdem versprach mir Herr Osthaus jährlich Arbeiten im Wert von um die 1000 Mark abzukaufen" ("I'm getting a few small commissions from Herr Osthaus, the glass window in his home and then a couple of small wall paintings in the parlour of the house of a cousin of Herr Osthaus. He also promised to buy works from me annually in the amount of around 1,000 marks"); Thorn Prikker to Van de Velde, n.d. [prob. October 1909], Archives Henry van de Velde, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, Van de Velde correspondence, no. X/758 (9) [English based on German translation by the author].

[13] Osthaus to Van de Velde, 20 July 1911, KEO-Archiv: HH 25, quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1967 (see n. 2), p. 11.

[14] "Thorn Prikker hat bereits gestern einen Entwurf für den Bettvorhang an die Wand geheftet, der in der Linie ausgezeichnet wäre" ("Thorn Prikker already tacked a design for the bed curtain to the wall yesterday, which would be outstanding in its line"); Osthaus to Van de Velde, 24 July 1911, KEO-Archiv: HH 25. The work, now probably lost, was executed in appliqué with embroidery. The design mentioned here is still preserved in the museum in Hagen, but is mistakenly attributed to the civic centre. The dimensions of 96 × 206 cm and the line work adapted to the medium of textile suggest a 1:1 design for a wall hanging over a double bed rather than a cartoon for a monumental mosaic.

[15] Thorn Prikker to August Hoff, 7 January 1916, Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln, Nachlass Hoff, no. 1402/52. Cf. also Christiane Heiser, "'Wirklich, große Flächen liegen mir so gut'. Johan Thorn Prikker, Josef Albers und die Klasse für Monumentalmalerei 1913–1917", in: *Lehre und Lehrer an der Folkwangschule für Gestaltung in Essen. Von den Anfängen bis 1972. Publikation zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Folkwangschule Essen*, ed. Gerda Breuer, Tübingen 2012, pp. 66–75.

painting must begin "where the architect can go no further", for only painting could "complete the meaning of a building".[16]

Modern Surface Ornamentation as Interior Design

In Osthaus's study, the paintings by Thorn Prikker covered every surface, even behind the built-in furniture and the wooden panelling; only the door and window openings remained unadorned (Cat. ##). He applied an abstract pattern of organic-geometric ornaments in contrasting, complementary orange and blue to the pastel green wall, with additional areas of light olive green and gold heightening. In this way he harmonised the colour scheme with the original tonality of the room: the greyish-green wood glaze of the ash wood panelling and furniture, the originally light grey flooring with narrow blue stripes and the blue ribbed woollen velvet of the upholstery along with curtains of blue patterned silk from the Liberty company.[17]

Apparently Osthaus was not the only one pleased with the remodelling. Between 1911 and 1916, Thorn Prikker painted walls and ceilings in other artists' houses in the colony on Stirnband, using slightly altered, more or less geometric ornaments in colour schemes that suited the owners' furnishings and preferences. He used bold orange, red, dark green, and black for the parlour of his own home (Fig. 4); he also painted the dining room and staircase in Haus Bockskopf II[18] and decorated the Haus Grave-Lorenzen in white, violet, and ochre.[19] At the Villa Theodor Springmann on Am Waldhang in Hagen, designed by Van de Velde in 1915, Thorn Prikker ornamented the walls of the great hall, staircase, and garden room. As Ruth Springmann recalled: "The walls were painted in the brownish-red tone of the cherry-wood doors and built-in cabinets, with stencilling in black with turquoise-coloured foliage and a hint of gold. The effect was very festive."[20]

Thorn Prikker adapted the ornamental approach of his wall decorations with their endless repeating patterns and bold colours to the modern fabric designs he created shortly thereafter

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[16] Thorn Prikker to Henri Borel, February 1895, quoted in Joop Joosten (ed.), *Brieven van Johan Thorn Prikker aan Henri Borel en anderen 1892–1904 met ter inleiding fragmenten uit het dagboek van Henri Borel 1890–1892*, Nieuwkoop 1980, p. 212 [English based on German translation by the author].

[17] The appearance of the floor, walls and wood is described in the "Bericht über das sog. Osthauszimmer" (Report on the So-Called Osthaus Room) by the restorer Christoph Hellbrügge, 12 May 2021; I am grateful to Mr Hellbrügge for making it available. The colour scheme of the fabrics is mentioned in Rouven Lotz, *Der Hagener Hohenhof. Das Landhaus für Karl Ernst Osthaus von Henry van de Velde*, Hagen 2009, p. 78.

[18] According to information provided by the former owner Eva Pieper-Rapp-Frick in February 2007, traces survive on the dining room ceiling and in the staircase. Portions of the wall ornamentation in Thorn Prikker's own house have been preserved and restored; a photo documentation with additional information was produced by Stefan Fuhrmann, who was kind enough to share it with me.

[19] Cf. Nicolaus Tummers, *Der Hagener Impuls. Das Werk von J. L. M. Lauweriks und sein Einfluß auf Architektur und Formgebung um 1910*, Hagen 1972, p. 69.

[20] Unpublished letter from Ruth Springmann to Klaus-Jürgen Sembach, 3 February 1960, copy from the Van de Velde Gesellschaft, quoted in Rainer Stamm, "Die Villa für Theodor Springmann (1915/16) mit dem nicht mehr erhaltenen Haupthaus und dem Tor- oder Gärtnerhaus", in: *Henry van de Velde in Hagen*, ed. Birgit Schulte, Hagen 1992, pp. 251–255, here p. 253.

for Hagener Textilindustrie, a company that operated internationally (Cats. ##–##).[21] The Osthauses had family connections to this old, well-established firm, which was owned by the Elbers brothers. After 1890, when the German cotton industry became the second-largest in the world through its use of then cutting-edge technology, the company was able to significantly increase its revenue and diversify its products. Beginning in 1904, it issued a special edition based on designs by contemporary artists from the Folkwang milieu, including Henry van de Velde, Peter Behrens (1868–1940), and Emanuel Josef Margold (1888–1962).[22] The so-called *cretonne* or *calico*, a heavy, plain-weave cotton fabric, was industrially woven, printed and finished. In the spirit of the Deutscher Werkbund, it was modern and cheap to produce and honest in its use of materials, while the lightfast aniline dyes and finish made it robust and durable. In 1913, Thorn Prikker designed at least two different ornamental pattern variations using four to seven hues out of a total of twelve technically possible colours. Each motif was produced in varying colour combinations. This approach echoes the Ibero-Islamic ornamental fields from the collection of the Museum Folkwang, and the geometric design of the fabrics was a stylistic elaboration of the wall decorations at Hohenhof.
Osthaus, who collected fabrics, first showed "Javanese, Japanese, oriental and Indian" textiles along with Hagener Textilindustrie calicos designed by Peter Behrens (Cat. ##) at the Museum Folkwang in June 1904.[23] Hardly any other branch of material culture was better suited for establishing a direct connection between local industry and the applied arts of other cultures through museum collections and exhibitions. Significantly, the cover of a photo album on the historical applied arts collection at the Museum Folkwang, which illustrated both Western and non-Western artefacts, was made of Hagener Textilindustrie calico designed by Thorn Prikker (Cat. ##). At Osthaus's initiative, the same fabric in a different colour scheme was used as wall covering in two exhibition contexts: the Hagen room at the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne and the city planning exhibition at the 1913 world's fair in Ghent.[24] There, large photographs of Egyptian and Greek temples, mosques, cathedrals, and Renaissance palaces were shown in an "octagonal room with an ambulatory and bays" lined with "Thorn Prikker's red and brown-patterned calico from the Hagener Textilindustrie"

[21] "Lieber Herr Osthaus, ich bin soweit mit den Zeichnungen für 'Cretonne' fertig. Wollen Sie bitte so freundlich sein, mir zu melden, wann wir mal zu Dr. Elbers gehen sollen" ("Dear Herr Osthaus, I am now finished with the drawings for 'Cretonne'. Would you be so kind as to let me know when we should go to Dr. Elbers"); Thorn Prikker to Osthaus, 22 January 1913, KEO-Archiv: F2 306 (6).
[22] Cf. *Das Museum Folkwang, Offizieller Führer durch Hagen und Umgebung*, Hagener Verkehrsverein, Hagen 1911, pp. 161f., and Wilhelm Elbers, *Hundert Jahre Baumwolltextilindustrie, hg. aus Anlaß des hundertjährigen Bestehens der Firma Gebrüder Elbers A.-G. Hagen (Westf.)*, Braunschweig 1922, p. 121 and pl. 3.
[23] In 1909, "javanische Batiks, orientalische Gewebe, Teppiche und Kattune, kleinasiatische, persische und türkische Seiden und Batikstoffe aus dem 16.–18. Jh. sowie persische handgedruckte Baumwollstoffe" ("Javanese batiks, oriental textiles, carpets and calicos, Anatolian, Persian and Turkish silks and batik fabrics from the 16th to the 18th century as well as Persian hand-printed cotton fabrics") were once again shown. Travelling exhibitions of Spanish and modern textiles are also documented for the Deutsches Museum für Kunst in Handel und Gewerbe in 1910 and 1911; cf. the exhibition overviews in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1971 (see n. 4), pp. 264, 270, 284.
[24] Portions of these fabrics are preserved in the Clemens Sels Museum in Neuss.

(Fig. 5).[25] This integration of modern art, applied arts, and architecture was constitutive for the Museum Folkwang. As Karl With (1891–1980) summarised: "Every spatial and temporal separation is overcome and the things confront us as expressions of a common spirit and a common will."[26] With's expertise in the applied arts, especially those of East Asia, had played a key role in the development of the collections, and from 1919 onwards he served as director of the Museum Folkwang.

Thorn Prikker and the Ibero-Islamic Ceramic Tiles

"Who were the Moors, the gentlemen who built the Alhambra and the monuments in Spain, those strange fellows. Did you know that all of that was only stucco […]."[27] As these words indicate, Thorn Prikker was thinking about the Alhambra as early as 1895, though we have no other handwritten sources documenting a more intensive exploration of Islamic art. He had been exposed to the motif of the "arabesque", however, since his studies at the art academy in The Hague. In the late 19th century, questions of ornamentation played an important role in the Netherlands, as evidenced by the Dutch version of Jugendstil and the modern curriculum in the applied arts. Around 1900, Thorn Prikker also developed his first Jugendstil ornaments inspired by Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*.[28] The basic motif, area division, and contours of the star-shaped *Moresque No. 4* illustrated in Plate XLII of Jones's book (Fig. 6) certainly show clear parallels to Thorn Prikker's wall design for the study at Hohenhof.
Other formal and technical similarities suggest that the artist was interested in Ibero-Islamic ceramic tiles. During his first visit to Hagen in October 1909, Thorn Prikker had helped with the installation of the Dutch art exhibition at the museum;[29] during that time, Iberian architectural ceramics and vessels acquired by the Osthauses following a journey to Spain were on display in the basement of the Museum Folkwang.[30] For the purposes of the exhibition, many of the square wall and floor tiles were combined into ornamental fields in emulation of the architectural decoration of palaces and mosques. Three in particular show clear parallels to Thorn Prikker's decorative patterns (Cat. ##–##), indicating that he must have seen and studied them.
Osthaus was also preparing the major *Ausstellung von Meisterwerken muhammedanischer Kunst* (Exhibition of Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art) in Munich and was writing an essay on Iberian ceramic tiles. He especially admired "the astonishing art of combination" and the breadth of variation: the same surfaces showed "very different patterns, depending on how one looks at the forms, colours, or tonal values".[31] In his dissertation, Osthaus later introduced

[25] According to a manuscript written by Osthaus in the KEO-Archiv: KÜ 471, quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1967 (see n. 2), p. 308.
[26] With 1919 (see n. 1), p. 98.
[27] Thorn Prikker to Borel, 11 June 1895, quoted in Joosten 1980 (see n. 16), p. 217 [English based on German translation by the author].
[28] Cf. Heiser 2008 (see n. 5), pp. 67–84.
[29] Cf. KEO-Archiv: F1 334, quoted in Hesse-Frielinghaus 1967 (see n. 2), p. 4.
[30] Cf. the contributions by Birgit Schulte and Alfonso Pleguezuelo Hernández in the present catalogue.
[31] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Spanische Fliesenkeramik", in: *Orientalisches Archiv. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Kunst, Kulturgeschichte und Völkerkunde der Länder des Ostens*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1910/11, pp. 74–79, here p. 77.

the idea of the "endless series" as a fundamental principle of Islamic ornamentation, using it to exemplify the "basic features of stylistic development".[32]
The tile patterns of the Alhambra, which had also been studied by Owen Jones, are based on periodic geometric repetitions developed from circular, star-shaped, and polygonal ornamental systems. A characteristic feature is the reversible figure-ground relationship, in which the ornaments and the spaces between them can be perceived as independent motifs. The sunken lines separating the coloured areas in the Iberian *cuerda seca* technique are only slightly recessed, while in the cuenca (arista) technique they are formed by mould-pressed ridges that remain largely free of glaze and so read as white – as do the joints developed as interlacing patterns *(lacería)*. "To the eye accustomed to pure flat pattern, it represents itself as an emphasising of the line."[33]
The wall ornaments created by Thorn Prikker at Hohenhof show a similar repeating pattern based on a primary figure and broad white contours. However, his endless repeating pattern is designed on the basis of a square only in the horizontals and on the basis of a rectangle in the verticals – as seen in the direction of the light-coloured interlacing and its use as a frame for a quatrefoil as an individual ornament (Fig. 7). He thus followed the basic abstract structure of Ibero-Islamic architectural ceramics without embracing their figure-ground relationship. The adaptation of the pattern to the room and the technique of painting was accomplished through repetition and the dimensions and colour scheme of the ornaments: while no interlacing band appears above the panelling and openings, it occurs on the ceiling projections and coving, helping to articulate the spatial elements (Cat. ##). Thorn Prikker also placed the basic ornament and interlacing along the door openings in such a way that they are framed without offset (Cat. ##). This close connection between decoration and architecture is also characteristic of Islamic structures such as the Alhambra.
Another parallel is the method of production: the *cuerda seca* process likewise uses stencils to transfer the design, making it possible to cover large areas and vary the colours; in the cuenca technique a carved mould serves the same purpose.

Ornaments for Differing Uses

Thorn Prikker had developed the basic process of ornament design and stencilling for his two-toned batiks in the late 1890s and adapted it for his wall paintings at the Villa De Zeemeeuw (Cat. ##) and for industrial textile production in Krefeld; he later developed it further in his designs for stained-glass windows and mosaics. He designed the ornaments on a square field, drawing construction lines on thin paper, generating a basic motif, mirroring the shapes on all sides to form a continuous repeating pattern and filling in the areas with colour (Cat. ##, ##).[34] Tracing produced a stencil for transfer to other supports, which the artist first tested on heavy

[32] Karl Ernst Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung*, PhD diss., Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Hagen 1918, p. 24.
[33] Osthaus 1910/11 (see n. 31), p. 78.
[34] The stencilled wall ornaments in the De Zeemeeuw villa are only partially preserved. The Clemens Sels Museum in Neuss now holds a small group of designs; inv. Ma 1966, 89 (2–4), in particular, show parallels to the Hohenhof study.

paper. For architectural decoration, he applied tempera or casein paint to the prepared wall surface.

While the dimensions of ornaments and repeating patterns in Thorn Prikker's wall paintings varied with the size and shape of the room, with industrially produced fabrics the width was limited by technical considerations while the length was theoretically endless. His experience designing for textile manufacturers in Krefeld enabled him to adequately account for mechanical weaving and printing processes in the design of the Hagen calicos. The endless patterns typical of the material could have been more intricate, but the repeating motifs and ornaments were designed for large areas and gauged to the maximum fabric width of 140 cm in such a way that the patterns repeat regularly lengthwise and are complementary on the sides (Cat. ##). In this way, lengths of fabric can be seamlessly juxtaposed.[35] In the Hagen calicos, the absence of interlacing borders causes figure and ground to inseparably interpenetrate; the individual motifs are more strongly integrated and the influence of the ceramic tiles manifests itself above all in the forms and colours of the abstract geometric ornaments.

Conclusion

Thorn Prikker's interest in architectural decoration reached a high point during his years in Hagen. Many of his designs – not only the painting in the Hohenhof study and other houses in Hagen, but also the calicos of the Hagener Textilindustrie – echo motifs from Ibero-Islamic ceramic tiles. Other works in this vein include an unrealised design with a striking star motif in red and beige for the civic hall in Hagen (Cat. ##); the now destroyed, large-scale ornamental mosaics in the chamber music hall there, executed in blue, white, red, and black (Cat. ##); six lost ornamental windows in the assembly hall of the commercial college in Hagen (cf. Fig. 3); and the monumental and well-preserved gold and black apse mosaic in the Altkatholische Friedenskirche in Essen (Cat. ##–## and Fig. 8).

As all these works show, Thorn Prikker now designed ornaments and patterns that were more strongly abstract and geometric rather than floral and organic. In addition, he continually found better ways to adapt his decorations and designs to a variety of materials, functions, and production processes while at the same time developing his own style. His expertise was valued by Osthaus, who believed that modern ornamental wall decoration should reinforce the meaning of the site – as in the study at Hohenhof – and serve as what Christin Ruppio calls a model of cultural communication. For Osthaus, the point was not so much the exemplary status of particular areas of the collection, such as Islamic art, but rather the manifestation and communication of universal principles of design. These were what he wished to see realised in his museum, and it was these that found modern, contemporary expression in the work of Thorn Prikker.[36]

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[35] Regarding the technical requirements, cf. Birgitt Borkopp-Restle, "Die Grammatik des Ornaments und andere Perspektiven. Begegnungen mit der Kunst des Orients", in: *"Eines der wichtigsten Monumente unserer Zeit überhaupt". Das Krematorium von Peter Behrens in Hagen*, ed. Birgitt Borkopp-Restle and Barbara Welzel, Essen 2014, pp. 97–121, here p. 112.

[36] Cf. Christin Ruppio, *Karl Ernst Osthaus und der Hohenhof in Hagen. Ein Modell kultureller Vermittlung*, Berlin 2021, pp. 170, 141.

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A “Sense of Form Honed in the Orient”
Karl Ernst Osthaus, Le Corbusier, and the Fascination with Islamic Architecture at the Museum Folkwang

Rainer Stamm

Experiencing the countries of the Islamic world not only left its mark on the collections of the Museum Folkwang but also, and more immediately, on Karl Ernst Osthaus’s understanding of architecture. In his curriculum vitae, written in June 1918, almost twenty years after his first journeys to North Africa, Türkiye, Syria, and Egypt, the collector and patron acknowledged: “The Orient had sharpened my judgement of architecture, and neither German architecture as a whole nor my own museum [then] under construction could withstand the scrutiny of my newly sensitised eye.”[1]
Osthaus had commissioned the construction of his museum as early as 1898, before travelling to Constantinople, Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo (p. #*MAP*#). He had chosen the Berlin architect and government building official Carl Gérard (1848–1912) for the project. In Hagen, Gérard had already designed the Villa Elfriedenhöhe for Osthaus’s parents in 1890. Initially, a design in the Neo-Renaissance style appeared well suited to a project conceived in the spirit of idealism and humanism.
When Osthaus returned from his journey in 1899, a shell structure was already taking shape, embodying the stylistic eclecticism of the turn of the century. Fritz Meyer-Schönbrunn, a close friend and collaborator, later recalled that Osthaus’s travels to the Ottoman Empire had made him realise that the imitation of historical styles was no longer compatible with his aspiration to create an architecture of his own time. As Meyer-Schönbrunn noted: “His sense of form, honed in the Orient, soon brought him into conflict with his architect […]. He demanded from him nothing more and nothing less than the new style. Gérard, however, could offer only the Renaissance.”[2]
The rest of the story has been told many times. While Osthaus was struggling with Gérard’s historicist designs, he became aware of the work of the Flemish reformist artist and architect Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), whom he visited at his home

[1] Karl Ernst Osthaus, “Lebenslauf”, in: Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung*, PhD diss., Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, 1918, p. II.
[2] Fritz Meyer-Schönbrunn, “Karl Ernst Osthaus und sein Werk”, in: *Westermanns Monatshefte*, vol. 61, no. 6, 1917, pp. 797–810, here pp. 798–799.

near Brussels in May 1900 and immediately entrusted with the remainder of the construction work.

Osthaus's encounters with Byzantine and Islamic architecture had prepared him to appreciate the elegant, flowing formal language of Van de Velde's work. In the Hagia Sophia he had discovered an architecture that combined structural clarity with solemn dignity: "Byzantine architecture shapes all its members, masses, and ornaments according to the requirements of space."[3] The articulation of the walls through openings and columns creates a "rhythm that surges through the space".[4]

In examples of early Islamic architecture such as the Great Mosque of Kairouan (begun in the early 8th century), the Mezquita of Córdoba (see Weis Fig. 3; begun in 784), or the bazaars of Tunis (from the 13th century onwards), Osthaus recognised the ongoing development of the Byzantine style, which – in contrast to the Christian architecture of the West – had endured through its renunciation of representational sculpture and figurative painting in favour of pure architectural forms and a concentration on the geometric organisation of space: "Islam […] placed greater value on the development of the abstract arts, and therein lies its greatness."[5]

In Van de Velde's work, Osthaus recognised a closely related conception (Fig. 1). The Flemish architect rejected not only all stylistic imitation but also all ornament, superfluous decoration, and figurative architectural sculpture. Osthaus therefore saw in his architecture a similarly consistent progression "from the figurative, through stylisation, to the linear",[6] just as he had described the development from Antiquity through Byzantine to early Islamic architecture in his doctoral dissertation *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung* (Outlines of Stylistic Development). For Osthaus, the historicist revivals of the late 19th century henceforth came to represent the "disintegration of art"[7] and the absence of a genuinely contemporary mode of expression.

Osthaus was not alone in adopting Islamic architecture as a model for Western architecture and the applied arts during the so-called stylistic renewal in Europe around 1900. The art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), in his 1907 book *Die bildende Kunst der Gegenwart* (The Visual Arts of the Present), likewise urged the artists and architects of his day to orient themselves towards the clear forms of

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[3] Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung*, Hagen 1918, p. 17.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 24.
[6] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Das Folkwang-Gebäude und sein Schöpfer" (1905), quoted in Osthaus, *Reden und Schriften. Folkwang, Werkbund, Arbeitsrat*, ed. Rainer Stamm, Cologne 2002, pp. 157–161, here p. 159.
[7] Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung* (see n. 3), p. 69.

Islamic architecture: “Our modern architecture will […] find its richest inspiration in Western Asia.”[8]

Among the architects who shortly afterwards set out to see the Islamic world with their own eyes was the young Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887–1965), who in 1920 would adopt the name Le Corbusier. Towards the end of his studies, he planned to travel to Constantinople and Greece together with his friend August Klipstein (1885–1951). When he visited Karl Ernst Osthaus in May 1911 – whom he had met in 1910 – in Hagen to see the Museum Folkwang and Villa Hohenhof, designed by Van de Velde, the twenty-three-year-old must have told the Hagen-based collector about the forthcoming journey. Osthaus encouraged the aspiring architect to visit not only the ancient sites of classical antiquity but, above all, the monuments of Byzantine and Islamic architecture. “Throughout my journey I recalled the advice you gave me when I visited you in Hagen,” Le Corbusier wrote gratefully after his return. “You said to me: ‘Leave the ruins aside; do not try to unravel the mystery of all those beautiful names over there in Greece. Go where the great things are: see Constantinople [Fig. 2], see Athens, see Egypt.’”[9]

For Le Corbusier’s biographers, this journey marks the beginning of his self-discovery as an architect. Like Osthaus, he was fascinated by the architecture of mosques, at once lucid and imbued with spirituality, in which he recognised a modernity that he had searched for in vain in Western architecture: “An elementary geometry governs the masses: the square, the cube, the sphere,”[10] he noted in his travel diary (Fig. 3).

Osthaus’s fascination with Islamic architecture continued unabated in the years that followed. In an article published in early 1914, he enthused: “A single glance into the Hagia Sophia [Fig. 4] suffices to sense that architecture seeks nothing other than to *create a form modelled from a void*. It was the Orient that carried this conception of

[8] Josef Strzygowski, *Die bildende Kunst der Gegenwart*, Leipzig 1907, p. 21.

[9] “Vous m’aviez dit: ‘Laissez donc tous ces ruines tranquilles, ne cherchez pas à percer le mystère de beaucoup de si beaux noms, là-bas en Grèce. Allez où il y a de grandes choses: Voyez Constantinople, voyez Athènes, voyez l’Egypte.’” Charles-Édouard Jeanneret to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 27 March 1912, Karl Ernst Osthaus-Archiv at the Osthaus Museum Hagen, DM/A 854.

[10] Le Corbusier, “Reise nach dem Orient”, in: Giuliano Gresleri, *Le Corbusier. Reise nach dem Orient. Unpublizierte Briefe und zum Teil noch nicht publizierte Texte und Photographien von Edouard Jeanneret*, Zurich 1991, pp. 88–392, here p. 210.

architecture forward into later centuries. Its mosques are seldom more than enclosed space."[11]

Following the outbreak of the First World War and the signing of the military alliance between the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the Museum Folkwang in Hagen mounted an exhibition of Islamic architecture and Islamic decorative arts from December 1914 onwards.[12] At the same time, Osthaus launched a lecture series in which he spoke, among other subjects, on the architecture of Syria and Egypt, "Moorish Spain", Persia, Konya, Brussa (Bursa), and Constantinople, and Islamic architecture in India.

"We have moved beyond urban, national, and European culture; the culture to come will be a world culture,"[13] Osthaus declared in 1918, the final year of the war. He took an important step towards realising this programme by bringing the art historian Karl With (1891–1980) to the Museum Folkwang and appointing him its director in 1919. In 1918, With had completed his doctorate in Vienna under Josef Strzygowski, who held the leading professorship for the study of non-Western art in the German-speaking world. In the summer of 1921, With also brought Otto Höver (1889–1963) to Hagen. Inspired by the Folkwang collections and working as a member of the museum staff, Höver published *Kultbauten des Islam* (Cult Buildings of Islam) in 1922, a volume whose more than sixty plates illustrated Osthaus's views on Islamic architecture. With almost certainly put Osthaus in contact with the art historian Ernst Diez (1878–1961), whose equally richly illustrated volume *Persien. Islamische Baukunst in Churâsân* (Persia: Islamic Architecture in Khurāsān) was published in 1923 by Folkwang-Verlag, the publishing house With had co-founded.

From the early travels of the future museum founder until well beyond his death, fascination with the art and architecture of Islam thus runs like a common thread through the Folkwang network.

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[11] Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Die Entwicklung des künstlerischen Sehens im Städtebau" (1914), quoted in Osthaus, *Reden und Schriften* (see n. 6), pp. 142–144, here p. 143 (italics in the original).

[12] See Guido E. Neumann, "Museum Folkwang", in: *Hagener Zeitung,* 28 December 1914.

[13] Osthaus, *Grundzüge der Stilentwicklung* (see n. 3), p. 7.

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Else Lasker-Schüler under the Sign of an Imagined “Orient”[1]

Melina Woitaschek

At the invitation of Karl Ernst Osthaus, Else Lasker-Schüler (1869–1945) gave a reading of her own texts at the Museum Folkwang in Hagen on 13 March 1913.[2] In the spring of 1916, the museum presented a selection from her visual work.[3] Among the works exhibited then and today are four drawings that served as models for the illustrations in Lasker-Schüler’s story collection *Der Prinz von Theben* (The Prince of Thebes, 1914; Cats. ##–##).[4] The collection comprises nine largely self-contained fairy-tale-like narratives whose settings range from Baghdad and Cairo to Thebes. In her depictions of characters such as Abigail and Jussuf (Yussuf), the future Prince of Thebes, Lasker-Schüler developed an Orientalising visual world (Fig. 1).

Conceived as portraits, the figures are usually shown in cropped profile and “stylised into emblems”.[5] Against a largely empty background, they appear two-dimensional and only vaguely outlined. This graphic reduction continues in the sparing application of colour. Nevertheless, a contemporary critic attributed a suggestive power to the works when they were exhibited in 1916: “All the sensuous delight of the Orient, all its dreamlike Bacchanalian quality, is expressed here with only a few, yet perfectly telling, lines.”[6]

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[1] The term “Orient” does not denote a clearly definable geographical region but rather a Eurocentric and colonial construct; the quotation marks indicate both its constructed nature and a critical distance from the term.
[2] See *Else Lasker-Schüler, Werke und Briefe. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Norbert Oellers, Heinz Rölleke, and Itta Shedletzky, vol. 6: *Briefe. 1893–1913*, ed. Ulrike Marquardt, Frankfurt am Main 2003, p. 667, n. 486.
[3] See Astrid Schmetterling, “‘Das ist direkt ein Diebstahl an den Kunsthistorikern’. Else Lasker-Schülers bildnerisches Werk im kunsthistorischen Kontext”, in: *Else Lasker-Schüler. Die Bilder*, exh. cat., Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt, ed. Ricarda Dick, Berlin 2010, pp. 128–129.
[4] Ibid., pp. 198–200.
[5] Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Ästhetik der Differenz. Postkoloniale Perspektiven vom 16. bis 21. Jahrhundert. 15 Fallstudien*, Marburg 2010, p. 188.
[6] Anonymous, *Westfälisches Tageblatt*, 27 April 1916, quoted in *Else Lasker-Schüler, Werke und Briefe*, vol. 7: *Briefe. 1914–1924*, ed. Karl Jürgen Skrodzki, Frankfurt am Main 2004, pp. 413–414, n. 173.

In Lasker-Schüler's *Abigail dichtet die Mondsichel an* (Abigail Addresses the Crescent Moon in Verse, 1913; Cat. ##), Abigail – a figure from the Theban line of rulers – occupies the centre of the composition, gazing pensively into the distance. Following her gaze, a cityscape emerges, composed of only a few geometric elements, including a building with a pointed arch. Above it hovers a crescent moon, echoed below in mirrored form. A third crescent, together with a six-pointed star, appears on the figure's cheek like a tattoo. Beneath the head, a kaftan-like garment flares out, and around the neck hangs a necklace with a star pendant recalling an amulet. The inserted text adds a narrative layer to Lasker-Schüler's visual world and situates the figures linguistically. It is only the title that makes the figure's turning towards the crescent moon legible as an action – or, more precisely, as a poetic address. Furthermore, names such as Jussuf and Abigail evoke Jewish, Christian, and Islamic associations,[7] while the figures' physiognomies draw on the formal language of ancient Egyptian art.[8]

The repeated incorporation of symbols and motifs with cultural and religious connotations – such as the crescent moon – into the figures and pictorial space gives rise to a fantastical constellation, an "Orient" imagined by Lasker-Schüler. As a space onto which her own ideas and longings are projected, this pictorial world can certainly be read as orientalising; taken on its own, however, such an interpretation falls short. It is precisely the sketch-like openness of the drawings and the aesthetic distance of their visual language that demonstrate that Lasker-Schüler does not fix this space of the imagination but continually brings it into being.[9]

The fact that Lasker-Schüler, as a German-Jewish artist, is presented within the context of Karl Ernst Osthaus's collection should not pass without comment in view of his nationalist, colonialist, and antisemitic attitudes.[10] Within this context of tension, her visual world – which continued to evolve until 1944 – acquires a critical potential

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[7] See Schmetterling 2010 (see n. 3), pp. 128–129.
[8] See Ricarda Dick, "Else Lasker-Schüler als Künstlerin", in: *Else Lasker-Schüler. Die Bilder* (see n. 3), pp. 117–158, here pp. 129–132.
[9] See Sylke Kirschnick, *Tausend und ein Zeichen. Else Lasker-Schülers Orient und die Berliner Alltags- und Populärkultur um 1900* (Epistemata. Würzburger Wissenschaftliche Schriften, Reihe Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 555), Würzburg 2007, p. 20.
[10] See Katrin Heinemann, *Karl Ernst Osthaus in Hagen. Ein Mäzen und seine Vision, seine Heimat zur Schönheit zu erziehen*, Saarbrücken 2008, pp. 30–38, 87.

when Lasker-Schüler appropriates exoticising notions of otherness while playfully and performatively challenging their claims to authenticity[11] in her drawings.

[11] See Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Ästhetik der Differenz* (see n. 5), pp. 186–187.