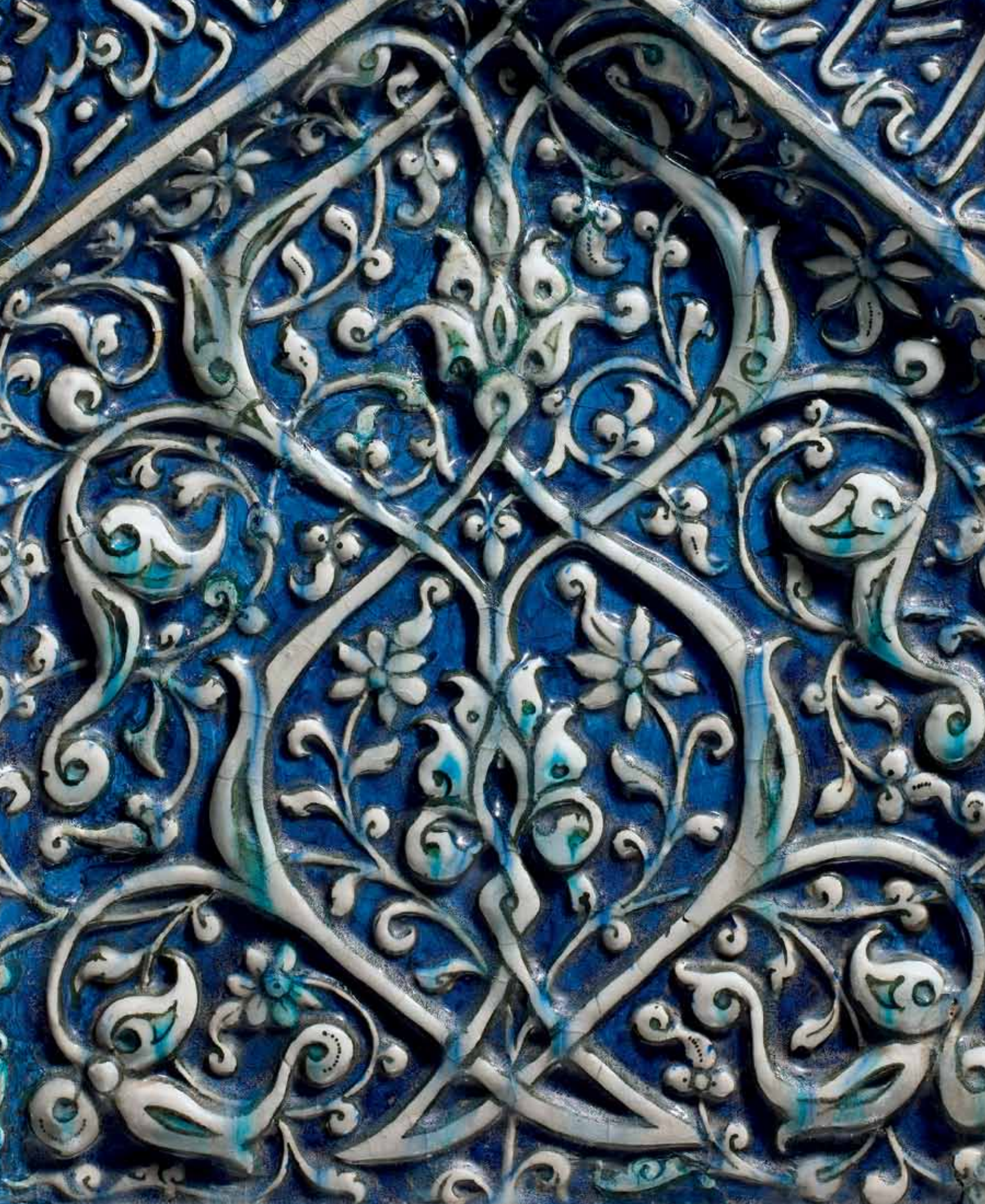


MASTERPIECES

*from the Department of Islamic Art
in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



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EDITED BY

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Since the closure of the galleries of the Department of Islamic Art for renovation in 2003, Museum staff and outside researchers have been engaged in a thorough reassessment of the collection. This work has taken the form of art-historical and scientific research. Often the results have led to discoveries about the makers, patrons, or materials of objects in the collection. This handbook, published in conjunction with the opening of the refurbished, renamed Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia, presents the latest findings on the finest works of art from these regions in the Metropolitan Museum's collection. In addition, many objects acquired since 2003 are presented here for the first time.

The publication of this book is generously supported by Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani. It has involved numerous editors, curators, and conservators and contains contributions from more than twenty-five authors. During the long evolution of this handbook, Maryam Ekhtiar, Senior Research Associate, Professor Priscilla Soucek, and Navina Haidar, Curator and Coordinator of the Gallery Project, have guided authors and have edited its content. Sheila Canby, Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge of the Department of Islamic Art, contributed to the effort in its later stages.

While no experience can replace that of seeing the actual works of art, this handbook will enhance and deepen the reader's understanding of the interconnections and particularities of the art produced from Spain to India between the seventh and late nineteenth centuries. Books such as this volume represent one of the core activities of a universal museum. Departmental curators, researchers, and consultants as well as a number of the Metropolitan's conservators have analyzed the most significant objects in the Museum's permanent collection in light of recent scholarship and have presented their findings in a manner that is of scholarly interest to experts, but is also accessible to nonspecialists. In the several decades that have elapsed since the Metropolitan Museum published a book dealing with the whole range of objects in the Department of Islamic Art, the study of Islamic art has expanded, as has global awareness of the regions from which the collection comes. What has remained constant is the beauty and importance of the finest works of art from the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia, many of which are presented here.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

PREFACE

From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, from Rabat to Dhaka, as populations adopted Islam from the seventh century onward they adapted local artistic idioms to the new forms and requirements associated with the new faith. Alongside the official symbols of Islam—the mosque, Qur’an manuscripts, and coinage—new art forms evolved in part due to the changing political realities in western Asia and North Africa. The Arab conquest of Egypt and Iran brought religion, a new language and alphabet, and a realignment of trade between the recently Islamized regions that resulted in creative artistic cross-fertilization. Yet, as strong an example as the Umayyads at Damascus or the Abbasids at Baghdad, Raqqa, or Samarra set, slavish copies of their art in other regions of the Islamic world are the exception rather than the rule.

Thanks to over a century of scholarship on Islamic art, the specific character of the art from different regions with large Muslim populations has come increasingly into focus. As a result, the new galleries of the Metropolitan Museum’s Department of Islamic Art have been given a geographical name: Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia. This name reflects the shift away from the perception of Islamic art as a unicum to the recognition of the variety of forms and meanings that characterize each period and locale. In addition, Islam today is practiced by large numbers of people in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. As the new galleries do not contain the art of either region, the new name more precisely defines what the visitor can expect to find in them. The nomenclature and organization of galleries along geographical lines in no way negate the existence of what is commonly called “Islamic art.” Works of Islamic art have been identified as such because of the unique combination of their properties—such as Arabic calligraphy, geometric ornament, and the use of the vine scroll—from Spain to South Asia, from the seventh to the end of the nineteenth century. While most of the regions represented in the Department of Islamic Art were once dominated by ancient empires, a new era accompanied the advent of Islam, and with it came the distinctive approaches to ornament that characterize Islamic art.

This book treats a number of objects that have entered the Museum’s collection since 1975. While some have been exhibited at the Museum, others acquired since the Islamic Department’s galleries closed in 2003 have not been published or seen by the

public. The team of authors who have written entries and chapter introductions have presented the collection within the context of modern scholarship, drawing on a body of literature that has expanded in the past thirty years. Moreover, advances in scientific research have enabled conservators and researchers to pinpoint dates of production and aspects of technique that were previously elusive.

While the question of where and when an object was made continues to concern historians of Islamic art, increasingly these scholars are asking why a particular piece was produced, even when the patron is known. With the understanding of the complexity of the societies in which these objects were conceived has come the question of the extent to which non-Muslims created and used the same objects as Muslims. Along with the luxurious works that originated in court ateliers for royalty and nobility, large numbers of fine ceramics, glassware, metalwork, textiles, and carpets of very high quality were the property of anonymous people who represent the population at large of the lands from Spain to India. What is remarkable is how appealing and fresh so many of these objects appear hundreds of years after they were made.

In today’s world, attention to the areas represented in the Met’s new galleries mostly concerns dynamic political events, such as the Arab Spring or the conflicts occurring in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Meanwhile, interest has grown in the burgeoning contemporary art scene and the position of Dubai as a center for artists from across North Africa and the Middle East to show their art. The originality and depth of work produced by contemporary artists, who invariably refer to themselves by the region from which they come or in which they live, not by their religion, does have some parallels with the art of the past. Then as now, artists were not deterred by times of strife and weak leadership. Their work almost always continued in spite of political instability. While the subject matter and forms of art in contemporary North Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia have changed, the human spirit has continued to find expression in works of art, both humble and grand, sacred and profane.

Sheila R. Canby

Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge, Department of Islamic Art

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present volume is the first major publication in this century devoted to the collection of the Department of Islamic Art, appearing in celebration of the reopening of the permanent galleries in 2011. The reinstallation of the new Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia and this accompanying publication are the result of several years of planning and execution representing the dedicated efforts of numerous individuals within and outside the Metropolitan Museum. We would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to all those whose invaluable roles contributed to the vision and the making of the new galleries and this book.

Our Director, Thomas P. Campbell, has provided unwavering institutional backing for this endeavor at every turn. We are also grateful for the support of Emily Rafferty, President; Jennifer Russell, Associate Director for Exhibitions; Carrie Reborá Barratt, Associate Director for Collections and Administration; and Nina Diefenbach, Vice President for Development and Membership, and her team. The gallery reinstallation project was initiated under Philippe de Montebello, Director Emeritus, who oversaw its early development along with Mahrukh Tarapor, former Associate Director for Exhibitions and Director for International Affairs; J. Nicholas Cameron, former Vice President for Construction; Jeffrey Daly, former Senior Design Advisor to the Director; and Doralynn Pines, former Associate Director for Administration. We also express thanks to Sharon Cott, Senior Vice President, Secretary, and General Counsel; and Jeffrey Blair, Senior Associate Counsel.

In the course of preparing the works of art for display and publication the Museum's conservators and scientists have undertaken important research on the collection leading to a deeper scholarly and technical understanding and many new discoveries. The conservators involved in objects conservation under Lawrence Becker, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, included Mechthild Baumeister, Jean-François de Lapérouse, Lisa Piloni, Karen Stamm, Vicki Parry, Beth Edelstein, Sarah McGregor, Amy Jones, Daniel Hausdorf, Rudolph Colban, Sarah Barack, Janis Mandrus, Drew Anderson, Nancy Britton, Pascale Patris, and Marijn Manuels. Textile conservation under Florica Zaharia, Conservator in Charge, included Janina Poskrobko, Kisook Suh, Yael Rosenfield, Midori Sato, Giulia Chiostrini, Julia Carlson, Olha Yarema-Wynar, Emilia Cortes, Kristine Kamiya, Kathrin

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In the Department of Islamic Art many present and former members have contributed to the reinstallation of the new galleries and to this volume. Navina Najat Haidar has coordinated the curatorial side of the gallery project from its inception. In addition, department contributors include Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Ellen Kenney, Marika Sardar, Denise-Marie Teece, Professor Walter B. Denny, Professor Priscilla P. Soucek, Stefan Heidemann, Deniz Beyazit, Annick Des Roches, Timothy Caster, Kent Henriksen, Warren Bennett, Ria Breed, Melody Lawrence, Courtney Stewart, Michelle Ridgely, Julia Rooney, Rina Indictor, and Patricia Sclater-Booth, with special thanks to Marie Lukens Swietochowski. For research and other assistance we thank Elena Chardakliyska, Kendra Weisbin, Ayşe Pinar Gokpinar, Karin Zonis, Rashmi Viswanathan, Mariam Otkhmezuri, Eda Aksoy, Madeleine Cassella, Ariana Muessel, and Paola Chadwick. Special thanks are due to our former senior colleagues Daniel Walker, Michael Barry, and Stefano Carboni. Among our many supporters we thank our Visiting Committee, the Friends of Islamic Art, volunteers, docents, and walking-tour guides.

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Throughout the course of this historic enterprise, the assistance of our many friends and colleagues has been an inspiration to every member of the Department of Islamic Art.

Sheila R. Canby

Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge, Department of Islamic Art

CONSERVATION WORK FOR THE NEW GALLERIES

The renovation of the Department of Islamic Art galleries provided curators, conservators, and conservation scientists with an extraordinary opportunity to examine the collection in its entirety and to assess its conservation needs. Artworks from Islamic lands were among the earliest acquisitions by the Museum, and well over four-fifths of the present holdings were obtained before the 1970s, when the technical examination of works of art prior to their entering the collection became standard practice. As a result, the condition of many objects, textiles, and works of art on paper and parchment had never been fully ascertained, and their technical descriptions were often unverified or incorrect. Some treatment work had taken place before the opening of the previous galleries in 1975 and in the succeeding years, but these efforts were not as comprehensive in scope as the project that has accompanied the current reinstallation. In addition, past treatments often involved the use of materials that we now know to be unstable as well as outdated mounting methods that did not adequately protect the art. Finally, recent advances in scientific analysis and expertise in the Museum have allowed

us to glean more information than ever before about the materials and production methods used by Islamic artists and craftsmen.

Many discoveries, both minor and major, have been made during this project. For example, among the smaller objects in this volume, it was found that dark layers of tarnish on the surface of a silver cup with *kufic* inscriptions (cat. 83) since its acquisition had concealed the fact that the interior was gilded by the amalgam process while the exterior was not. Now that it has been cleaned, the intended coloristic contrast between both sides can be fully appreciated. On a much larger scale, a thorough examination of the Damascus Room (cat. 238) revealed that in the previous installation the wall panels had been rearranged from their original configuration to suit the available gallery space. Now that the entrance door and windows have been returned to their correct location along the same wall, a sense of the sun-filled courtyard this audience chamber once overlooked has been restored. In addition, the proper sequence of the calligraphic text that runs from right to left in the upper part of the wall panels has been reestablished.

At the same time, some less felicitous discoveries were made in the course of this project. Examinations revealed the incorporation of extraneous fragments and/or excessive restoration in some cases, while the decorative program of others had been over-embellished by past restorers. Such restorations often cast a discolored veil that partially obscured original compositions. In other instances, the restorations themselves—some executed over a century ago—have acquired historic value. Working together, conservators and curators discussed how to deal with these modern interventions on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the integrity of the original fabric and artistic conception. Understandably, this process influenced final decisions about which art works were selected for exhibition.

Textile conservators identified twenty-seven of the most important textiles and carpets in the collection that required comprehensive treatment, including the removal of previous restorations, cleaning, stabilization, and in-depth fiber and structure analysis. Within this group, the Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181) was the focus of an intensive three-year project. Over one hundred textiles also required extensive consolidation and protection in enclosed mounts to ensure adequate structural support and a microclimate with a stable relative humidity. Many of these textiles were lined on the reverse and/or stitched onto a fabric that had been specifically dyed to a compatible color. Mounting systems for an additional two hundred fifty textiles and carpets were designed and implemented by conservators so that they could be safely displayed.

For paper conservators the closing of the galleries provided a rare opportunity to examine the bound manuscripts in the collection that had regularly been on view and to address any needed stabilization to their miniature paintings and bindings. Over three hundred folios, including those from the incomparable *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp (cat. 138 A–G), were also thoroughly examined, treated as needed, and rehoused in archival mounts. Given their light-sensitive nature, these folios cannot be exhibited for more than a few weeks at a time. As a result, over seven hundred works of art on paper and parchment will be displayed on a rotating basis each year in the new galleries.

In 2008 object conservators were awarded an Institute of Museum and Library Services matching grant to treat the more than four hundred glass, ceramic, and stucco finds from the Museum's archaeological excavations at Nishapur, many of which had been restored with unstable adhesives and could not be safely handled. Over five hundred additional objects of various media from the collection were examined and treated to

assure their stability and improve their appearance with the removal of old adhesives, discolored restorations, and deteriorated metal coatings. Hundreds of ingeniously supportive but unobtrusive mounts were made by preparators and metalworking staff, often in consultation with conservators.

With the de-installation of the former galleries, the long-standing need for the structural stabilization, cleaning, and consolidation of actively flaking paint layers and metal-leaf decoration in the Damascus Room and Spanish Ceiling could finally be addressed. These architectural projects presented considerable challenges given their size and complexity, calling on the collaboration of conservators, construction staff, architects, and specialists for the installation of historic architecture. After the conservation work was completed, wall and ceiling panels were remounted using more appropriate supporting frameworks and fastening systems, with full access provided for monitoring and maintenance.

Less visible but crucially important to the long-term preservation of the collection is the considerable attention that has been devoted to case design, environmental systems, and climate monitoring for the new galleries. In the decades since the former galleries were installed, the deleterious effects of unstable wood products, fabrics, and adhesives on works of art have been noted and investigated. While in some cases this damage can be acute and readily apparent, in others the alterations can occur at an insidiously slow rate and may not be noticeable in the short term. Consequently, all of the materials proposed for use in the casework for these galleries were tested by conservation scientists, and only those approved have been incorporated. In addition, all case designs were reviewed and modified when necessary by conservators and conservation scientists.

Before and during conservation treatments, analytical information was obtained by nondestructive means or by sampling at break edges or other inconspicuous locations. The results of these analyses were used to determine appropriate treatment strategies and to provide material identifications for object records and gallery labels. Dissemination of the significant technical discoveries and related studies conducted during the course of this project has begun and will continue in lectures and scholarly publications. It is hoped that this knowledge will increase appreciation of the technical skill and artistic mastery evident in this extraordinary collection.

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Conservator, Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation

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- JFL Jean-François de Lapérouse, Conservator, Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- FL Francesca Leoni, Assistant Curator of Islamic Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
- EGM Elisa Gagliardi Mangili, 2006–2007 Sylvan C. Coleman and Pamela Coleman Memorial Fund Fellow, Department of Textile Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- JP Janina Poskrobko, Associate Conservator, Department of Textile Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- SWP Stuart W. Pyhrr, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Curator in Charge, Department of Arms and Armor, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- MS Marika Sardar, Research Associate, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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| JS | Jochen Sokoly, Gallery Director and Assistant Professor, Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts in Qatar, Doha | JCYW | James C. Y. Watt, Curator Emeritus, Department of Asian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York |
| PS | Priscilla P. Soucek, John L. Loeb Professor, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York | KW | Kendra Weisbin, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York |
| DMT | Denise-Marie Teece, Research Associate, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York | KrW | Kristina Werner, Intern, Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York |
| RV | Rashmi Viswanathan, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York | FZ | Florica Zaharia, Conservator in Charge, Department of Textile Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York |
| DW | Daniel Walker, Pritzker Chair and Curator of Asian Art, Chair and Christa C. Mayer Thurman Curator of Textiles, Art Institute of Chicago | KZ | Karin Zonis, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York |

NOTE TO THE READER

For the transliteration of Arabic, Persian, and some Turkish words, we are using a simplified version of the *IJMES* (*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*) system. *Ayn* and *hamza*, letters of the alphabet, are marked, but other diacritical signs are not used. We have attempted to retain the phonetic integrity of the individual languages. For example, the name *Sulaiman* is used in an Arabic or Persian context, but *Süleyman* in a Turkish one. In most instances, we use the modern Turkish spelling for Turkish words. In addition, the Persian silent *h* (ه) is transliterated as *a*, as in *Shahnama*, as is the Arabic *ta marbuta* (ة), as in *mashraba*. When an Arabic, Persian, or Turkish word is found in *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* with a standard English spelling, this form is used. We have chosen to keep the names of cities untransliterated.

Dates are given in the Gregorian calendar unless an object carries a precise Hegira date. In that case, dates are given in both eras. References to the Qur'an follow the numbering used in the Egyptian standard edition of 1924, which has been widely used in the Muslim world. English translations of the Qur'an are taken from Arthur J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, 1966). It is worth noting that the verse numbering in Arberry's translation often differs from that in the Cairo volume, which was based on an edition of the Qur'an first published by Gustav Flügel in 1834 (*Corani textus arabicus*; Leipzig, 1834).

Throughout the catalogue, dimensions are given in the following sequence: height precedes width precedes depth. When necessary, the abbreviations H. (height), L. (length), W. (width), and Diam. (diameter) are used for clarity.



The Islamic World

● City

○ Modern capital



Robinson projection, centered on 55°E



MASTERPIECES

*from the Department of Islamic Art
in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*