Between Figuration and Abstraction: Persianate Painting (14th -17th centuries)

Course Description
Fundamental questions are sidestepped in the study of Persian "miniature" painting (style; authorship; figuration; changing functions of painting within the shifting context of the book), in favor of taxonomic approaches. Seminar examines scholarly definitions of the visual tradition's salient features and explores tensions between these and ones contemporary to production.

Readings
Books are on open and closed reserve in the Fine Arts Library, Fogg Museum of Art (all articles are placed in two bindings under the author’s name). A bibliography, arranged according to broad categories and subjects, is appended to the syllabus. It is intended to facilitate study for the research paper.

Requirements / Assignments
Readings and participation in the seminar’s weekly meetings; presentation to seminar of chosen research project; research paper (c. 30 pp. max; with notes, illustrations and bibliography; due 20 May).

SYNOPSIS OF COURSE MEETINGS

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CLASS READINGS

M 8 February  Introduction: Persianate Painting 14th-17th Centuries

M 15 February  No meeting

Readings (background):
Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture of Islam*, chaps. 3, 5, 12 (pp. 165-175)
Gray ed., *Arts of the Book in Central Asia*, chaps. 4-8
Lentz, "Pictures for the Islamic Book"
Robinson, “Survey of Persian Painting”

Optional:

M 22 February  Early Scholars, Exhibitions and their Legacies

Readings:
Martin, *Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, [browse]
Lowry and Nemazee, *Jeweler’s Eye*, pp. 41-57
Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, intro. and chap. 1
Simpson, “Islamic Painting and History”

M 1 March  Book Structure and Aesthetics

Readings:
Blair, “The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran”
Golombek, “Toward a Classification of Islamic Painting”
Grabar, “Toward an Aesthetic of Persian Painting”
Soucek, “The Manuscripts of Iskandar Sultan: Structure and Content”

M 8 March  Workshop and Production

Readings:
Blair, *Compendium of Chronicles*, intro., chaps. 1-4, app. 1
Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, chaps. 8-10
Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitabkhana in Safavid Iran”

M 15 March  Image-Text: Two Shahnamas
Readings:
Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, 1: pt. 1, chaps. 1-4
Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*
Hillenbrand, “The Iconography of the Shah-nama-yi Shahi”
Soudavar, “The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahador Khan. The Abu-Sa'idname”

**M 22 March**
**The Painter’s Practice: Authorship and Style: Bihzad**
Readings:
Lentz, “Changing Worlds: Bihzad and the New Painting”
Adamova, “Repetition of Compositions”
Yarshater, "Some Common Characteristics of Persian Poetry and Art”
Optional:
Sims, “Prince Baysunghur’s Chahar Maqaleh”

**27 March- 4 April**
Spring recess

**M 5 April**
**Representation**
Readings:
Soucek, “Nizami on Painters and Painting”
Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, chap. 1

**M 12 April**
**Textual Sources**
Readings:
Dust Muhammad, “Preface to the Bahram Mirza Album,” in *Century of Princes*, trans. Thackston, pp. 335-350
Khwandamir, “Preface to an album compiled by Bihzad,” trans. Roxburgh
Farhad and Simpson, “Sources for the Study of Safavid Painting”
Optional:
Qadi Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, trans. Minorsky

**M 19 April**
**Student Presentations**

**M 26 April**
**Student Presentations**

**M 3 May**
**Student Presentations**

**M 10 May**
**Student presentations**

**8-19 May**
Reading Period (research paper due 20 May)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

CATALOGUES AND REFERENCE WORKS


Encyclopaedia of Islam. 1st and 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill. (FAL READING ROOM)


________. *Topkapı Sarayf Müzesi Kütüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar KataloΔu.* 4 vols. Istanbul:


**POETRY**


Subtelny, Maria E. "The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan Husain Bayqara and its Political Significance." Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 1979.


**PRIMARY TEXTS ON PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY**


SECONDARY SOURCES

A. GENERAL WORKS ON THE ARTS OF THE BOOK AND PERSIANATE PAINTING


B. MONOGRAPHS/ARTICLES: MANUSCRIPTS AND ARTISTS


________. "Fourteenth-Century Illustrations of the Kalilah and Dimnah." Ars Islamica 7 (1940): 134-40.


C. INTERPRETIVE ESSAYS


Sims, Eleanor. "The Timurid Imperial Style: Its Origins and Diffusion." *Art and Archaeology*


D. WORKSHOP


E. VISUAL IDIOMS


F. CHINA


