

Columbia University, GSAPP – Fall 2016 Seminar A6806

BUILDING ISLAM, an incomplete history of the Mosque architecture.

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DESTROYING ISLAM, the case of ISIS

In July 2014, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria announced itself as a new Islamic Caliphate. The day after, its ruthless members proceeded to demolish religious shrines and mosques of other Islamic sects. The group's brutal crime propaganda videos are usually set either against a bare desert (recalling the Arabian landscape of Prophet Muhammad's era), or a religious structure, like the neo-classical Grand Mosque of Mosul. The architecture of the neo-classical Mosque and the optic of the demolished historical mosques are critical parts of this extremist group's visual construct.

Architecturally, at every historical turn, the mosque proved itself to be one of the most hybrid, ever evolving religious building that still stands as a living witness to the historical multiplicity of Islam—a threat to ISIS' flawed, nihilistic regime of intolerance. Here, reading and writing an alternative mosque architecture history become an integral part of a cultural war against an autonomous and reactionary discourse that wants us to believe (not unlike its Orientalist counterpart) in the pre-determinism of the Islamic cultural landscape.

BUILDING ISLAM, an incomplete history of the Mosque architecture

Building Islam, is not about Islamic buildings; nor is it an attempt at forming a comprehensive history of the built environment of the Islamic world. Instead the class will aim at critically re-formulating (re-building) the field of inquiry of the history of the architecture of the mosque - the most 'Islamic' archetype.

We will pursue this objective through two parallel and simultaneous methods:

1) The class will start by surveying the established (academic) historiographic narrative dealing with the now problematic notion of 'Islamic Architecture'*. We will critically unpack the Orientalist roots (western centrist) of this field of thoughts. Characterized by a deterministic framework, this meta-narrative (pioneered by Oleg Grabar, Robert Hillenbrand, etc.) understands the architecture of the mosque either stylistically, through dynastic periodization abruptly ending in the 18th c (Umayyad, Abbasid, Ottoman, etc.) or through a purely religious lens.

2) In parallel, the class will adopt, study and analyze (using the architecture representation tools that we are most familiar with), a series of mosques across geography and time – transitioning into modern period. The objective is to gather and graphically organize and represent the wealth of knowledge collected about those case studies through an illustrated paper. The hope would be to re-contextualize and re-learn those buildings in the light of the gaps and contradictions that are uncovered through the research. This would neatly feed into contemporary academic pursuits in the field of 'Islamic architecture' (post Edward Said 'Orientalism' text), that aim at breaking free from the old fixed single model of understanding the mosque typology, in favor of a dynamic intercultural theoretical framework.

To complement our familiarity with those buildings and their contexts, we will also read original documents and material produced by and about Muslim and non-Muslims travelers across what was once a more free and fluid geography, erasing along the way the East-West divide, or the 'Islamic' 'non-Islamic' world.

Building, is also the opposite and the complementary act of *destroying*. Because dynasties are also built on the destruction of their predecessors, we will seek to learn about the monuments that have been altered, transformed or erased, in the name of God.

* See Nasser Rabbat, *'Islamic Architecture as a field of Historical Enquiry'*

Schedule:

Week 1 – 9/12: Overview / seminar structure

Week 2 – 9/19: Orientalism - The Islamic City?

X Nader Naderi, “Max Weber and the Study of the Middle East: A Critical Analysis,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 35, (Regents of the University of California, 1990), (p71-88)

X Edward Said, "*Orientalism*", (New York: Random House Inc., 1979), (p1-28)

X Janet Abu-Lughod, "*The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance*," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, May 1987), (p155-176)

X Stefano Bianca, "*Urban Form in the Arab World*" *Past and Present* (UK: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2000), Chapter 2

X Additional Reading: Diana K. Davis “Imperialism, Orientalism and the Environment in the Middle East” in *Environmental imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, Eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011)

Week 3 – 9/26: The History of the Mosque (textual overview)

X Robert Hillenbrand, "*Islamic Architecture*". (Columbia University Press, New York, 1994) CH II The Mosque (p64-128)

X Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan, "*The Mosque*" (Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1994). Ch1: Islam and the Form of the Mosque. (p17-41)

X Oleg Grabar, "*The Formation of Islamic Art*", (Yale University Press;1987). Ch 5: Islamic Religious Art: The Mosque (p104-139)

X Kishwar Rizvi, "*The Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East*" (University of North Carolina, 2015). Intro: Agency of History (p1-32)

Additional Reading: Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan, "*The Mosque*" (Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1994).Mohamad Arkoun, The metamorphosis of the Mosque p 268

Week 4 – 10/3: What is Islamic Art and Architecture? (1) Who: collectors and Scholars

X Stephen Vernoit, "*Discovering Islamic Art: Scholars, Collectors and Collections*" ch1: Islamic Art and Architecture An overview of scholarship and collecting 1850-1950 (p1-53)

X Zeynep Simavi, "*Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu and the formation of the field of Islamic art in the United States*".*Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

X Robert Hillenbrand, “*Oleg Grabar: The Scholarly Legacy*”. *Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

Week 5 – 10/10: What is Islamic Art and Architecture? (2) Where: ‘At the Exhibit’

X Eva Troelenberg, “*Regarding the exhibition: the Munich exhibition Masterpieces of Muhammadan Art(1910)*”. *Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

X Rabbat, Nasser. “*What’s in a Name? The New ‘Islamic Art’ Galleries at the Met*” *Artforum* 50, no. 8 (2012): 75–8.

X Timothy Mitchell, “*Colonizing Egypt*”, Chapter 1: Egypt at the Exhibit, (p1-34)

X Farhat, Maymanah “*Rethinking Islamic Art*”. *Jadaliyya*, November 16, 2011.

Week 6 – 10/17: What is Islamic Art and Architecture? (3) How: Methods and Theories

X Oleg Grabar, “*Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art*”. *Muqarnas* 1, 1983, (P 1-14)

X Nasser Rabbat, “*What is Islamic Architecture Anyway?*”. *Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

X Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, “*The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field*”. *The Art Bulletin* 85, no.1, 2003 (p 152-84)

X Robert Hillenbrand, “*Studying Islamic Architecture: Challenges and Perspectives*”. *Architectural History* 46, 2003 (p 1-18)

Week 7 – 10/24: What is Islamic Art and Architecture? (4) – Alternative Narratives

X Gulsum Baydar and Nalbantoglu, “*Toward Postcolonial Openings Rereading Sir Banister Flecther’s ‘History of Architecture’*”. *Assemblage*, no.35, 1998 (p 6-17)

X Gulru Necipoglu, “*The concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches*”. *Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

X Avinoam Shalem, “*What do we mean when we say ‘Islamic art’? A plea for a critical rewriting of the history of Islam*”. *Journal of Art Historiography*. No. 6, 2012

X Finbarr Barry Flood, “*From the Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the end of Islamic Art*” *IN Making Art History*” *A changing Discipline and Its Institutions*. Elizabeth Mansfield. Routledge, 2007 (p 31-53)

X Additional Reading: Mariam Rosser-Owen, “*Mediterraneanism: how to incorporate Islamic art into an emerging field*”

Week 8 – 10/31: The Early Travelers

The Travels of Ibn Battuta - tbd

X Ibn Khaldun “*muquadimah*” – Ch 4: Countries and Cities, and all other forms of Sedentary Civilizations (432-478)

Week 9 – 11/7: No class - (ELECTION DAY)

Week 10 – 11/14: Case Studies Presentations

Week 11 – 11/21: Case Studies Presentations

Week 12 – 11/28: Case Studies Presentations

CASE STUDIES (DRAFT):

Hagia Sophia. Istanbul. 537

Bayt al-Nabi (Prophet's House). Medina. 624

Aqsa Mosque. Jerusalem. 705 - Dome of the Rock. Jerusalem. 688

Mosque of Córdoba. Cordoba. 784

Mosque of Uqba. Kairouan. 670

Umayyad Mosque. Damascus. 715

Al-Zaytuna Mosque. Tunis. 698

Great Mosque of Samarra. Samarra. 851

Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun. Cairo. 876

Jami' Al-Qarawiyyin. Fes. 859

Great Mosque of Xi'an. Xi'an. 742

Great Mosque of Isfahan. Isfahan. 1072

Zavareh Grand Mosque. Zavareh. 1136

Qutub Mosque. Dehli. 1193

Great Mosque of Seville. Seville. 1198

Divriği Great Mosque and Hospital. Divriği. 1128

Khirki Mosque. New Delhi. 1351

Jame Mosque of Yazd. Yazd. 1324

Sultan Hassan Mosque. Cairo. 1359

Haseki Sultan Mosque. Istanbul. 1539

Djingareyber Mosque. Timbuktu. 1325

Rustem Pasha Mosque. Istanbul. 1561

Takiyya Mosque. Damascus. 1555

Suleymaniye Mosque. Istanbul. 1559

Eski Mosque. Ederne. 1402
Semi Pasha Mosque. Istanbul. 1581
Selimiya Mosque. Ederne. 1574
Badshahi Mosque. Lahore. 1673
Uyghur Mosque. Turfan. 1779
Aga Bozorg Mosque. Kashan. Late 18c
Hassan Fathy Mosque. Kurna. 1929
Dalmabahce Mosque. Istanbul. 1855
Great Mosque of Djenne. Djenne. 1907
National Assembly Building of Bangladesh. Dhaka. 1963
National Mosque of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur. 1965
Mosque in University of Baghdad. Baghdad. 1957
Tooba Mosque. Karachi. 1969
Namaz-Khaneh Mosque. Tehrān. 1978
Sherefudin's White Mosque. Visoko. 1980
Faisal Mosque. Islamabad. 1987
King Khalid International Airport. Riyadh. 1983
Assem Salam Khashokgi Mosque. Beirut. 1981
Sheikh Zayed Mosque. Abu Dhabi. 2007
Grand National Assembly. Ankara. 1989