

Patterns and Arabesques:
East-West Debates in the Decorative Arts Since 1700

Intermediate/Topic Course (lecture with discussion component)

Taught at Binghamton University, SUNY in Spring 2009

Instructor: Hala Auji

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Islamic and Asian visual culture and design have inspired European and American design principles since the eighteenth century, serving as the templates for the patterns of wallpaper, carpets, textiles, decorative objects and architectural structures. This course begins with the cultural encounters between Europe, the Ottoman world and Asia during the 1700s, resulting from territorial expansion, exploration, commercial exchange and pilgrimage, which shaped the image of the “east” in Europe and Britain via their consumption of Orientalist paintings, travel literature and non-western material objects. This period laid the groundwork for the nineteenth-century views of Islamic and Asian artistic conventions espoused by Arts and Crafts propagators in Victorian Britain. Individuals like Owen Jones, Christopher Dresser and William Morris, belonged to a group of artists and design reforms who introduced Islamic and Asian ornaments and patterns as a response to the industrialization of art (i.e. the mechanical production of textiles, wallpaper and carpets). They categorized these motifs, and their graphic simplicity, as non-industrial, "ahistorical" elements that related to nature and a universal instinctual language. By the late 19th and early 20th century, theories on the non-industrial, stylistic aspects of design gave way to discussions of functionality, modernity and abstraction. In this course, we will trace the various themes that engaged these theoretical dialogues as well as the shifting approaches to the study and analysis of Islamic and Asian ornaments and patterns in the west. We will explore this range of ideas through the writings of John Ruskin, Adolf Loos, and Alois Riegl, as well the more recent perspectives of Oleg Grabar, Yasser Tabbaa and Eva Baer that move beyond previous discussions of taxonomy, functionalism and modernity by emphasizing issues of cross-cultural exchange, perception, utilization and cultural significance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements include participation in classroom/online discussions, one in-class examination, one short paper (5 pages) and one long paper (10 pages) due at the semester’s end. There will be a 45 min in-class review session before the midterm exam. For the examination students will be expected to identify, compare and write short essays using objects and terms addressed in lectures and course materials. The paper assignments will be descriptive analytical essays comparing the visual conventions and formats of two artworks (to be assigned at a later date). Students will be provided with guidelines and a discussion session on how to write a cogent interpretive art history paper. Each student will give a 15-minute presentation of his or her final paper to the class during the last two-three days of the course.

COURSE THEMES & READINGS

Introduction to Orientalism & the Decorative Arts

- MacKenzie, John. "Orientalism in Arts and Crafts Revisited: The Modern and Anti-Modern: the lessons from the Orient." *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*. Ed. Ian Netton. New York: Routledge, 2013. 117-127.
- MacKenzie, John. "Orientalism in Design." *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. 135-137.
- Said, Edward. "Knowing the Oriental." *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. 31-49.
- Sweetman, John. "1500-1600: The Growing Impetus." *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspirations in British and American Art and Architecture*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 10-43.

Constructing Fantasies of Asia, 1700s-1800s

- Jackson, Anna. "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture." *Journal of Design History*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1992: 245-256.
- Jasanoff, Maya. "Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning." *Past & Present* 184.1 (2004): 109-135.
- Mallet, J.V.G. "European Ceramics and the Influence of Japan." *Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe, 1650-1750*. London: Oriental Ceramic Society, 1990. 36-55.
- Markley, Robert. "The Far East, the East India Company, and the English Imagination." *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1730*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2009. 30-69.
- Pagani, Catherine. "Chinese material culture and British perceptions of China in the mid-nineteenth century." *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum*. Eds. T. Barringer and T. Flynn. London: Routledge, 1998. 28-40.
- Reed, Marcia. "A Perfume is Best from Afar: Publishing China for Europe." *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*. Ed. M. Reed and P. Dematte. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007. 29-52.

Islamic Ornament and Design Reform, 1800s

- Benjamin, Roger. "Andalusia in the Time of the Moors: Regret and Colonial Presence in Paris, 1900." *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*. Eds. J. Hackforth-Jones and M. Roberts. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 181-205.
- Ferry, Kathryn, "Printing the Alhambra: Owen Jones and Chromolithography." *Architectural History*, vol. 46, 2003: 175-188.
- Jones, Owen. "Principles of Ornamentation." *The Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace [1854]*. London: Elibron Classics, 2005. 35-48.

- Jones, Owen. *The Grammar of Ornament*. London: Day and Son, 1856.
- Pvesner, Nikolas. "From 1851 to Morris and the Arts & Crafts Movement." *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005. 37-57.
- Ruskin, John. "The Nature of Gothic." *The Stones of Venice, Vol 2*. London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1867. 151-175.
- Schafter, Debra. "The Order of Ornament in 19th Century Theories of Style." *The Order of Ornament, the Structure of Style: Theoretical Foundations of Modern Art and Architecture*. Cambridge (England); New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 15-32.
- Sloboda, Stacey. "The Grammar of Ornament: Cosmopolitanism and Reform in British Design." *Journal of Design History* 21.3 (2008): 223-236.

Modernism and Ornament in Fin de siècle Europe, 1900s

- Denny, Walter. "Quotations In and Out of Context: Ottoman Turkish Art and European Orientalist Painting." *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 219-230.
- Gombrich, E.H. "Ornament as Art." *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979. 33-62.
- Loos, Adolf. "Ornament and Crime." *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays* [1908] Riverside, Calif.: Ariadne Press, 1998.
- Minor, Vernon. "Alois Riegl." *Art History's History*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2001. 102-108.
- Nochlin, Linda. "The Imaginary Orient." *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989. 33-59.
- Reigl, Alois. *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*. Trans. J. E. Jung. Zone Books, 2004: 67-78 + 241-257.
- Schafter, Debra. "The Order of Ornament in 19th Century Theories of Style." *The Order of Ornament, the Structure of Style: Theoretical Foundations of Modern Art and Architecture*. Cambridge (UK); New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 44-59.

Exploring Meaning and Symbolism in Islamic Ornament, late 1900s

- Baer, Eva. "The Meaning of Ornament." *Islamic Ornament*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. 89-129.
- Blair, Sheila and Jonathan Bloom. "Ornament and Islamic Art." *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen*. Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2006. 9-30.
- Grabar, Oleg. "A Theory of Intermediaries of Art." *The Mediation of Ornament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. 9-36.
- Grabar, Oleg. "Geometry and Ideology: The Festival of Islam and the Study of Islamic Art." *Islamic Art and Beyond, Vol 3. Constructing the History of Islamic Art*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006. 145-152.

- Grabar, Oleg. "What Makes Islamic Art Islamic?" *Islamic Art and Beyond, Vol 3. Constructing the History of Islamic Art*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006. 247-251.
- Tabbaa, Yasser. "The Girih Mode: Vegetal and Geometric Arabesque." *The Transformation of Islamic Art During Sunni Revival*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2001. 73-102.

Views of Ornament and the "East" in Contemporary Art

- Beaulieu, Jill and Mary Roberts. "Orientalism's Interlocutors." *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2002. 1-18.
- Bennett, Tony. "Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture." *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Eds. Ivan Karp et al. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2007. 46-69.
- Çelik, Zeynep. "Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon." *Art Bulletin*, 78.2 (June 1996): 202-205.
- Coles, Alex. "On Art's Romance with Design." *Design Issues* 21.3 (2005): 17-24.
- Flamini, Roland. "Orientalist art's reversal of fortune: Arab collectors now buying works once shunned." *The Washington Times*, 1 Nov 2012.
- Foster, Hal. "Design and Crime." *Design and Crime, and Other Diatribes*. London; New York: Verso, 2003. 13-26.
- Salhi, Zahia Smail. "The Maghreb and the Occident: Towards the construction of Occidental discourse." *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*. Ed. Netton, Ian R. New York: Routledge, 2013. 255-280.