

Preface

Francine Giese and Sophie Wolf

The proceedings of the 19th Colloquium of the Ernst Herzfeld Society for Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology – held in 2024 in Romont, Switzerland – explore the history, production, and uses of glass in the Islamic world, with a particular emphasis on flat glass. Neither the theme nor the venue was chosen by chance. On the one hand, the conference highlighted a field that has often been treated rather marginally within art-historical scholarship. On the other, Romont is home to the Swiss Research Centre for Stained Glass and Glass Art, the Vitrocentre Romont, which organised and hosted the event together with the Swiss Asia Society. As the Swiss branch of the Corpus Vitrearum International, the Vitrocentre has dedicated nearly four decades to the study of stained glass, reverse glass painting, and glass art, and since 2020 has expanded its research to include architectural glass in the Islamic world. This longstanding commitment decisively shaped the colloquium's thematic focus.

Glass is an extraordinarily versatile material, uniting seemingly contradictory qualities – malleability and rigidity, translucency and opacity, durability and fragility. It has therefore served as a valued artistic medium across cultures and eras. Whereas Islamic vessel glass has been the subject of extensive research and numerous exhibitions – as Stefano Carboni's contribution vividly demonstrates – the many forms and functions of flat glass in Islamic lands, whether used for windows, mirrors, or mosaics, have received far less attention. The scope and significance of this field have long been underestimated. The colloquium therefore sought to bring together specialists from a wide array of academic and practical backgrounds and, through their contributions, to showcase recent advances in this understudied domain, encompassing art-historical, archaeological, and scientific approaches. The program also included four presentations on current research extending beyond the theme of glass.

The present volume begins with Stefano Carboni's comprehensive overview of the current state of research on glass from Islamic lands, developing the topic around the questions of where, when, by whom, how, and why glass was produced. The subsequent contributions are organised into four thematic sections:

The first section brings together studies that – each from markedly different perspectives – address *Different Approaches to the Study of Early Islamic Glass*. Liz James and Nadine Schibille present the results of their investigations into the mosaics and glass finds from the Umayyad mosques of Damascus and Córdoba, demonstrating the potential of archaeometric methods for determining the chronology and provenance of glass. Hagit Nol highlights new strategies for documenting and mapping glass production in the early Islamic glassmaking quarter of Ramla. Almudena Velo-Gala and Márcia Vilarigues examine a distinctive form of vessel-glass decoration from the capital of the Andalusí Caliphate. Matthew Gillman concludes the section with a discussion of the methodological challenges involved in attributing early Abbasid glass.

The section *Glass in Courtly Contexts* is dedicated to the use of architectural glass in palatial settings. Markus Ritter provides an overview of descriptions of glass in the palace of Solomon/Sulaymān and its reception in Islamic literary sources, while Vanessa Rose re-evaluates Ernst Herzfeld's observations on architectural glass from Samarra. Víctor Rabasco

García then draws attention to a triple arcade with glass incrustations from the Taifa period that once adorned the eleventh-century Andalusi Alcázar of Toledo.

Under the heading *Utilitarian and Elite Production*, Nada Kallas surveys the abundance and diversity of glassware recovered from domestic and production-related contexts in Lebanon dating from the seventh to the fourteenth century. Andrea Umberto Gritti examines the Ottoman state's efforts to establish a filigree-glass industry in the Bosphorus district of Beykoz in the nineteenth century to meet the demands of elite consumers.

The chapter *Coloured Light* is devoted entirely to stucco and glass windows. The contributions by Giese et al. and Tabbal investigate the typology, materiality, and provenance of these windows in European and North American collections, as well as their reception in the West. Valentina Laviola's article then turns to the stucco and glass windows of the late Ottoman port city of Hodeida (Yemen). The significance of this type of windows in Islamic architecture and nineteenth-century Orientalism also inspired the 2024 exhibition *Luminosité de l'Orient* at the Vitromusée Romont, which coincided with the colloquium.

The section *Ongoing Research* features Ana Marija Grbanovic's study of the polychromy of mosques and *tekiyyas* in the Balkans during the so-called Ottoman Baroque period. The volume concludes with the work of Edward Shawe-Taylor, winner of the Ernst Herzfeld Award 2023 for his MA thesis "The *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* in the Ambrosiana Library: Traces of a Lost Mamluk Atelier" (University of Oxford). In his contribution, he underscores the high intellectual training and social standing of the scribe of the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* as a prerequisite for executing luxury commissions for prominent Mamluk patrons.

With the publication of these fifteen peer-reviewed contributions, we believe that the aims and expectations for this volume have been fully met. We hope it stimulates further interest in this rich and promising field of research and wish you an engaging and inspiring read.

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