

Symposium on the Care and Conservation of Middle Eastern Manuscripts

Overview

The Symposium on the Care and Conservation of Middle Eastern Manuscripts will explore the materials and techniques of Middle Eastern manuscripts and address cultural sensitivities related to the display, handling, storage, conservation treatment and use of Middle Eastern manuscript collections. The event will have the tangible outcomes of fostering an active transfer of knowledge between conservators, educators and collection managers nationally and internationally. The symposium will disseminate expertise to preserve Middle Eastern manuscripts (including the University's own significant collection), and in doing so increase understanding of the vast cultural legacy of Middle Eastern history and traditions.

The Symposium will be held at the University of Melbourne 26th - 30th November 2007.

History of Middle Eastern Manuscripts

The origin of Middle Eastern manuscripts stems from a time when Muslims wanted to transmit the Qur'an via the written word rather than through an oral tradition as had been the case for centuries. Muslim devotion was expressed in fine binding, beautiful calligraphy and exquisite illumination. Indeed, these crafts were elevated to such a level so as to be worthy of the divine revelation. Particular attention was paid to calligraphy, which was an attempt to make a spiritual connection to Allah via the

written word. According to Al-Mu'izz ibn Badis, the Prophet Muhammad said:

'Beautiful writing gives to truth more clarity. It demonstrates that when the pens are good, the books smile'.

Levey, M. (1962) 'Mediaeval Arabic Bookmaking and its Relation to Early Chemistry and Pharmacology', in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge, New Series-Volume 52, Part 4. page 13*

Middle Eastern Manuscripts at the University of Melbourne

The University's collection of Middle Eastern manuscripts contains approximately 200 items dating from the 14th to 19th centuries. Various cultures including Arabic, Persian, Syriac, and Turkish are represented in this world-class collection of significant cultural and historical value.



**Extracts from the Qur'an, written on sheets of gold-beaters skin with paper borders.
(Arabic, early 13th century AH, early 19th century CE)**

Programme outline

The programme is tailored so delegates can choose to attend for all or part of the Symposium depending on their areas of specialisation and interest. Please note that this programme is not yet finalised and may be subject to change.

Click on the heading for more detailed programme information.

Day 1 (Monday 26th November) is a lecture series aimed at a general audience, including school groups.

Days 2 - 3 (Tuesday 27th - Wed 28th November) are targeted at a broad specialist audience of collection managers, librarians, curators, scholars and conservators.

Days 4 - 5 (Thursday 29th - Fri 30th November) are structured as a 'master class' for conservators and bookbinders. This practical session is restricted to 15 delegates.

Indo-Persian Paintings Workshop (Monday 3rd – Friday 7th December)

This workshop is aimed at curators, conservators, artists, craftspeople, art historians and academics. It will be run by artist and illustrator Anita Chowdry. The workshop is limited to 15 participants.



**MUL 86 Hadiqua of Sana I (a Sufi poem).
Persian, Copied by Ali Husaini Imad, 922 AH, 1544 CE.**



**Dastur-i Himmat: qissh-'i Kamrup va Kamlata. [Dastur-i Himmat: the love story of Kamrup and Kamlata]
(Northern India, 12th century AH, 18th century CE)**

Presenters

The Cultural Context of Middle Eastern Manuscripts (Topic TBA)

Dr Abdul-Samad Abdulla, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

Traditional Preventive Measures used in Persian Manuscripts and Miniature Paintings using Henna and Saffron as Case Studies.

Differences between 'Sacred Art' and 'Religious Art' in Islamic art collections.

Historical and Scientific Analysis of Iranian Illuminated Manuscripts and Miniature Paintings

Dr Mandana Barkeshli, Coordinator Conservation sub-committee, The Islamic Manuscript Association

Use of Certain Plants for Deacidification of Manuscripts

Mehrnaz Azadi Boyaghchi, PhD student in Conservation, Isfahan

Handling Middle Eastern manuscripts

Professor Ibrahim Chabbouh, President of Aal al-Bayt Foundation of Islamic Thought, Amman, Jordan

History and Conservation of Syriac Manuscripts

Caroline Checkley-Scott, Senior Conservator, The Wellcome Trust, London.

Materials and Techniques of Indo-Persian Manuscript Painting.

Indo-Persian Paintings Workshop

Anita Chowdry, Painter and Illustrator, London

The Conservation and Restoration of 19th Century Ottoman Calligraphy of Baha'I Writing in Haifa, Israel

Shingo Ishikawa, Paper Conservator, Baha'I World Centre, Haifa, Israel

The Structure of Middle Eastern Bindings and the approach to Their Conservation at the British Library.

The Materials and Techniques of Middle Eastern Bindings
David Jacobs, Senior Conservation Officer, British Library, London.

Characterization and Analysis of Early Qur'an Fragments at the Library of Congress

Sophie Lewincamp, Australian War Memorial and Yasmien R. Khan, Library of Congress

Organic Colours used in Armenian and Egyptian Manuscripts with Special Reference to Red Pigments

Cheryl Porter, Director Montefiascone Project, London

Professor John Bowman and the University of Melbourne's Middle Eastern Manuscript Collection

Pam Pryde, Special Collections, University of Melbourne

The Cultural Context of Middle Eastern Manuscripts (Topic TBA)

Professor Abdullah Saeed, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

A conservation assessment survey of Arabic manuscripts and some treatment methods

Karin Scheper, University Library Leiden

RAMAN Analysis of Pigments found in Middle Eastern Manuscripts in the University of Melbourne Collection

Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett, Director, Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne

The History of Islamic Art and the Materials and Techniques of Islamic Calligraphy

Dr Amir Zekrgoo Professor of Islamic Arts, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, (ISTAC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Care and Conservation of Middle Eastern Manuscripts

Further information and contact details

To register interest, please contact:

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Further details are available at:

<http://www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au/events/manuscript.html>



Tales in the style of The Arabian nights,
Persian, 13th century AH, 19th century CE.



Coptic prayer book

All images courtesy of Special Collections, The University of Melbourne.



Coptic prayer book,
Special Collections,
The University of Melbourne



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