Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture

ed. Stephan Conermann

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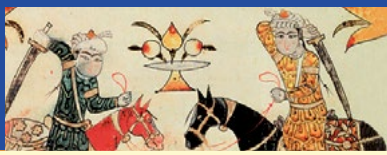

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Ellen Kenney

Power and Patronage on Display: Mamluk Art in the New Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum

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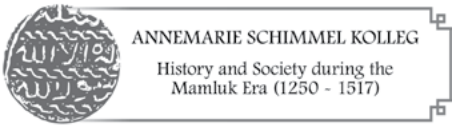

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The New Galleries Project: An Overview

In November 2011, the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened a newly renovated suite of galleries dedicated to the display of Islamic Art, after a nearly eight-year closure.[1] This renovation was part of a long-term, museum-wide reconstruction campaign that involved the transformation of the restaurant and cafeteria immediately below the Islamic wing into an exhibition court dedicated to Roman sculpture. The new galleries replace the installation overseen in 1975 by Richard Ettinghausen, then head curator of Islamic art at the museum and professor at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. In earlier years, the collection had been displayed in several different iterations as part of the Near Eastern department, and before that in galleries organized by medium or by donor.[2]

At the time of the closure of the Islamic wing in 2003, New York Times art critic Holland Cotter described Ettinghausen's installation as representative of the Metropolitan Museum's "encyclopedic museum-

1 I would like to take this opportunity to thank Stephan Conermann for his kind invitation to present in the Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture Series and Mohammad Gharaibeh for his seamless logistical support. Thanks are due to the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, especially to Sheila Canby, Marika Sardar and Walter Denny for their timely assistance. I am also very grateful to Julie Zeftel and Jeri Wagner at the Met, Liz Kurtulik at Art Resource, Claudia Zacharaie at TU Berlin Architekturmuseum, and Thomas Lisanti at NYPL for their help obtaining images and permissions.

2 A survey of the display of the Islamic art collection is published in the department's new catalogue: Rebecca Meriwether Lindsey, "A Century of Installations: A Photo Essay," in Maryam D. Ekhtiar, et al., eds., *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York and London, 2011), 2–17.

within-a-museum model," in which selected objects were "arranged chronologically and geographically… encompass[ing] work from the seventh through the eighteenth centuries, from Morocco to Central Asia to India."[3] The conception of the new installation of Islamic art can be described in much the same terms.[4] The most salient changes between the old and new installations are the additional space gained; a different layout and design concept; state-of-the-art lighting, infrastructure and display cases; and the inclusion of themed vitrines highlighting specific media, technical developments or iconographic content that spanned across the traditional dynastic and regional boundaries according to which most of the displays are organized.

The new galleries take up 19,000 square feet (1,800 square meters), an increase over the former "real estate" of about 5,000 square feet (464.5 square meters).[5] This additional space was gained by converting former offices and storage facilities west of the courtyard well into display space.[6] The former suite stretched along a linear axis, from which several galleries branched to one side or the other. Now, the galleries surround the entire periphery of the courtyard below, allowing for a full circuit around the courtyard well.

The former installation was assertively Modern. It was conceived around hexagonal modules of space, the geometry of which museum staff designer at the time, Stuart Silver, described as "a subtle reference

3 Holland Cotter, "Renovation Project Will Close Islamic Galleries at the Met." *New York Times*, May 27, 2003. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/27/arts/renovation-project-will-close-islamic-galleries-at-the-met.html (accessed April 2013).

4 For an overview of the curatorial concept and process for the reinstallation, see Navina Najat Haidar, "The New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia," in *Masterpieces*, 10-19.

5 http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/general-information/2010/islamic-art (accessed April 2013).

6 Incidentally, the press release announcing the opening of the New Galleries counts 1,200 objects on display at any one time (http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/news/2011/metropolitan-museum-to-open-renovated-galleries-for-the-art-of-the-arab-lands-turkey-iran-central-asia-and-later-south-asia, [accessed April 2013]), while the former galleries boasted 1,600 objects on view (Grace Glueck, "Met Devoting 10 Galleries to Opulent Art of Islam," *New York Times*, September 12, 1975 [http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F10714FB3D5B157493C0A81782D85F418785F9 (accessed April 2013)]).

to the design theme that, next to the arabesque and the calligraphic line is the most prevalent in Islamic art."[7] The new gallery design also draws inspiration from Islamic artistic traditions, but with a decidedly Post-Modern bent and a more literal approach to its points of reference. Now, distributed throughout galleries, one finds a variety of architectural re-creations meant to evoke the contexts of the art displayed near them.[8] For the most part, these embellishments are to be found at transition points between galleries.

The large scale and breadth of the Islamic collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art justifies its classification as a museum-within-a-museum. Such an encyclopedic array of works as is found in this Islamic art "museum" defies the creation of a single, over-arching exhibition narrative;[9] but the curation and interpretation within each of the individual galleries of the suite are meant to convey narratives specific to each gallery. These narratives weave together the stories of individual pieces and link them to their original contexts. Context, for the purpose of gallery narrative, encompasses more than the chronological date of an object or the geographical location of its manufacture; it relates to the object's function, its relationship to contemporaneous aesthetic and technical developments, and its connection to the men and women who commissioned, made, used and appreciated it.[10]

This paper will consider The Metropolitan Museum's exhibition of Mamluk art in the new galleries. During my employment on the New Galleries Project from 2008 to 2011, I had the opportunity to provide research support for the department curators in a number of areas, including preparations for this gallery. Here, I will discuss some issues

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7 Grace Glueck, "Met Devoting 10 Galleries to Opulent Art of Islam," *New York Times*, September 12, 1975 [http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F10714FB3D5B157493C0A81782D85F418785F9 (accessed April 2013)].

8 For examples of scholarly reviews of the new galleries, see: Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, "The Scholars' View," *Hali* 170 (Winter 2011): 51-59; Nasser Rabbat, "What's in a Name," *Artforum* January 2012 (http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201201&id=29813).

9 Curator Navina Haidar addresses this issue in Louise Nicholson, "A New Context," *Apollo* (November 2011): 36–40.

10 Note 3.

of interpreting this material for the general museum audience and then will illustrate the potential value of the display to specialists in Mamluk studies. The first part will summarize the general themes behind the interpretation of the objects and address how they fit within the over-all layout of the enlarged and newly organized space, how they are distributed throughout the suite, how they are represented in themed settings, and what narratives are told through their interpretation. The second part will profile three objects in the Mamluk collection to explore their individual stories and contexts.

Interpreting the Mamluk Collection

Formerly, the arts of the Mamluks were displayed in a large hall, designated as Gallery 5 on the former floorplan, which it shared with the arts of Andalusia and North Africa (Figs. 1 and 2). Today, the Andalusian and North African material occupies a separate space near the introductory gallery designated as Gallery 450 on the new plan (Fig. 3). Most of the Mamluk art is displayed in an L-shaped hall (Gallery 454) at the southwest corner of the inner ring, the circuit surrounding the Roman courtyard on the main level below. The Mamluk period material shares this space with objects attributed to earlier periods in Egypt and Syria, as well as art attributed to centers in Iraq, the Jazira, eastern Anatolia and Yemen.

This gallery is one of only three in the new suite that also function as entry-points from other parts of the museum. According to the chronological-geographical organization of the new galleries, one approaches this space from the north, following the circuit that conducts the visitor through time and space from Umayyad Syria to Seljuq Iran. Another way into Gallery 454 is directly from outside the suite of Islamic art galleries, through a small vestibule communicating with the galleries of European painting (Fig. 4). Coincidentally, the gallery connected to this vestibule is largely dedicated to the theme of Orientalism in European art – a thought-provoking juxtaposition, especially given that much of

the encounter represented there relates geographically to Egypt and Syria.

On axis with this vestibule, a third doorway leads into a gallery featuring art of contemporaries of the Mamluks in Iran and Central Asia, the Ilkhanid and Timurid dynasties, through a pointed arch designed to echo the form of the ceramic mihrab on the far wall of that gallery. This axis is emphasized by two rows of pendant mosque-lamp-inspired light fixtures, which signal the "Mamluk" area of the L-shaped space (Fig. 5). A fourth door off the "Egypt and Syria" gallery leads to "The Hagop Kevorkian Fund Special Exhibitions Gallery" – a space dedicated to small, temporary exhibitions. Between exhibitions, this gallery is closed with a newly-made pair of carved and inlaid doors, meant to evoke the Mamluk woodworking tradition, executed by a design company in Cairo.

The narrative of the Mamluk exhibition revolves around three overlapping themes: aesthetic developments, exchange and patronage. A short text panel introduces visitors to the historical background of the period. It sketches the unique political system of the Mamluks, describing the process by which military slave recruits ascended into the ruling elite. It then outlines the regime's historical context, beginning with the territorial consolidation under Sultan Baybars, highlighting the "golden age" of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's third reign, recounting the setbacks encountered in the late fourteenth century and celebrating the re-fluorescence of the sultanate under Qaytbay. The two hundred and fifty years of Mamluk hegemony in Egypt and Bilad al-Sham witnessed a tremendous proliferation in the construction of monumental buildings. By sponsoring such building works, the Mamluk elite gained legitimacy in the eyes of their local subjects, some whom in turn undertook similar architectural commissions. This building boom spurred on new developments in architectural decoration. Furthermore, the need to furnish all of these new mosques, madrasas, khanqahs, and palaces with magnificent accoutrements boosted regional metalwork, ceramic, glass, textile, carpet and book-making workshops.

For example, the corner between the European gallery entrance and the Kevorkian gallery displays a group of large objects that hint at the

magnificence of the architectural contexts in which the numerous portable objects on display would once have been housed. There, a fragment of polychrome marble mosaic paneling is installed on the wall, next to an enormous marble jar for water storage. A Mamluk carpet is mounted on the wall next to it.[11] Opposite this, next to the introductory text, a panel of ceramic tiles attributed to Damascus and thought to have once adorned the walls of the fifteenth-century Tawrizi Mosque in that city illustrates the interrelationship between decorative arts and architectural patronage. The vitrine to the right highlights some of the other kinds of furnishings that sponsors provided their new religious foundations, accompanied by a text explaining the Islamic system of religious endowment (*waqf*), which allowed patrons to establish sources of income to staff and maintain their foundations in perpetuity. The display contains a group of lamps together with fragments from assorted Cairene *minbar*s (Fig. 6). This evocative juxtaposition, in which the sparkling and ebulliently colored glass with its painterly enamel decoration contrasts with the subtle tones of the wood elements, crisply carved with tight arabesques within inlaid geometric frames, suggests the sensually rich and textured environment of a prayer hall or mausoleum in the Mamluk period. Label texts explain aspects of the manufacture of these pieces, developments in ornamental style that they reflect and the iconography of the salient motifs and emblems represented on them.

Two nearby floor cases pick up a thread of the narrative explored in the "mosque furnishings" case, but focus exclusively on the technique of gilded and enameled glass, as practiced during the Mamluk period. A large vitrine contains three objects, which are complemented by a fourth piece of the same material and technique in a solo case nearby. As in the preceding vitrine, the object labels focus on specific features of the individual vessels, while the case texts address their medium and context: one briefly explains the technique of gilded and enameled glassmaking and its development, and another provides a translation of the

[11] It should be pointed out that while most objects in the galleries are slated for more-or-less permanent display, works on paper and textiles are switched out on three-month rotations and wool carpets are scheduled on one- to two-year rotations.

Qur'anic *Surat al-Nur*, so often found on mosque lamps. The gilded and enameled glass in these vitrines also provides the opportunity to introduce the theme of exchange: especially after the Ilkhanid-Mamluk peace agreement of 1323, Chinese-inspired motifs that had already become popular in Ilkhanid art began to appear in the art and architecture of the Mamluks – as evidenced in the bottle highlighted in the solo display case. There, a Chinese-style cloud-collar design provides the framework of four medallions, each decorated with a bird-of-prey attacking a goose, surrounded by a floral ground of Chinese-inspired lotus and peony blossoms.

A large wall vitrine nearby, showcasing mainly ceramics and metalwork, further explores the theme of exchange in the development of Mamluk art, which is traced there more broadly (Fig. 7). Building on traditions inherited from the Ayyubid period, workshops of Cairo and Damascus thrived under the Mamluks, providing presentation gifts, investiture trophies, and luxury house-wares for the new elite. The emergent popularity of Ilkhanid motifs is connected with the third reign of al-Nasir Muhammad (r. 1310–1341), whose tastes also seem to have inspired a shift from figural imagery to calligraphic designs.[12] The same trends traced in objects produced for the Mamluk elite, are found in works produced in Cairene workshops for foreign patrons – as two examples of inlaid metalwork in the case attest, both ordered for members of the Rasulid dynasty, which ruled in Yemen for over two hundred years. These pieces belong to a larger group of inlaid metalwork and enameled glass objects, some of which were ordered by the Rasulids and others of which were custom-made as diplomatic gifts from Mamluk sultans. In the following free-standing vitrine, this exchange features even more explicitly: Here, a metalwork brazier made for a Rasulid sultan is exhibited side-by-side with a tray stand made for a Mamluk governor. Stylistically, there is only a slight difference between the two – and it probably

12 Rachel Ward, "Brass, Gold and Silver from Mamluk Egypt: Metal Vessels Made for Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (3rd ser.) 14, 1 (2004): 59–73.

relates more to the fifty or so years that separate the two objects than to the "nationality" of their patrons.

Several Mamluk period objects are displayed in other spaces within the new galleries. The centerpiece of the former installation of Mamluk art was the magnificent Simonetti carpet, a fairly recent acquisition at the time.[13] In its new installation, the Simonetti carpet is still displayed as a focal piece, but not within the context of Mamluk art. Rather, it is to be found in a separate gallery dedicated to carpets and textiles accessible from the Ilkhanid Iran hall, east of gallery 454. Two particularly famous Mamluk pieces at the museum – the pair of inlaid wooden *minbar* doors attributed to the Cairo mosque of Amir Qawsun and a gilded and enameled glass bottle – are included in the introductory gallery (Gallery 450) to the Islamic suite (Figs. 8 and 9).[14] This gallery represents one of the continuities with the 1970s format and conception – providing a transitional space showcasing a selection of highlights of the collection, outlining fundamentals of the religion of Islam, and introducing some of the basic themes of Islamic art. Arguably, the absence of Qawsun's *minbar* doors from the gallery of Mamluk art detracts from the visual and interpretive narrative of aesthetics, exchange and patronage pursued there, as it separates them from another displayed work commissioned by the same patron, the mosque lamp probably donated to the same mosque.[15] Furthermore, the *minbar* inlay fragments exhibited in the Mamluk space would have been more legible within view of these relatively intact inlaid doors. On the other hand, the presence of *minbar* doors in the introductory gallery provides a striking example of the strong tradition of geometric ornamentation so central to Islamic art and the important contribution of Mamluk patrons to the development of that tradition.

The contextualization of the gilded and enameled bottle also suffers some from its exalted position in the highlights gallery. Given the recent speculation suggesting a significantly later date for this piece than has

13 MMA no. 1970.105.
14 MMA nos. 91.1.2064 and 41.150.
15 MMA no. 17.190.99.

been generally accepted, it would have been interesting to see it side-by-side with the dated mosque lamps. Rachel Ward's recent studies on the chronology of Mamluk gilded and enameled glass demonstrate that such juxtaposition can produce very suggestive results.[16] The placement of the bottle in the introductory gallery also means that there are very few objects with figural imagery left in the Mamluk zone of the Egypt and Syria gallery – thereby exaggerating the sense of the Mamluk proclivity for non-figural imagery. Of course, part of the rationale for including the bottle in the introductory gallery may have been to dispel – at the outset of the general visitor experience – the erroneous notion that Islamic art is necessarily non-figural.

Mamluk objects also figure in two of the theme cases located in Gallery 453. One, exploring the role of astronomy and astrology in Islamic Art with objects ranging in date from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, and in provenance from Cairo to India, includes two trays attributed to early Mamluk Syria or Egypt and links these works with similarly-themed examples from neighboring regions. However, it also deprives the Mamluk vitrines of two fine examples of figural ornamentation.[17] The same could be said of the inclusion of a handled incense burner in a nearby theme case that traces the development of inlaid metalwork.[18] Here, the early Mamluk piece is presented as one of the culminating points of this technique, its links to the "Mosul" school and distant roots in the Khurasani tradition demonstrated by examples of each. The absence of figural imagery in the objects on display in the Mamluk section of Gallery 454 is especially striking in juxtaposition to the highly figural objects in the Seljuq collection of the preceding room (Fig. 10), the Fatimid pieces in the same gallery, and the Ilkhanid material in the following room. This contrast perhaps exaggerates the actual trend towards calligraphic decoration. Since most of the figu-

16 Rachel Ward, "Glass and Brass: Parallels and Puzzles," in R. Ward, ed., *Gilded and Enamelled Glass from the Middle East* (London, 1998), 30–34; "Mosque Lamps and Enamelled Glass: Getting the Dates Right," in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ed., *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria – Evolution and Impact* (Goettingen, 2012), 55–75.

17 MMA nos. 91.1.553 and 17.190.1717.

18 MMA no. 17.190.1716.

ral examples on display from the Mamluk period are not shown in the Mamluk gallery, the transition is not clearly illustrated and the chronological narrative of that transition is difficult to convey. In other words, a visitor might come away with the impression that figural representation stopped with the Mamluks, when in fact it continued to be popular well into the fourteenth century; the definitive shift towards calligraphic imagery takes place at a fairly well-defined moment – the third reign of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, and some patrons still preferred figural decoration after that time.

Most announcements and reviews of the New Galleries celebrate the large number of objects on view – about 1,200 pieces in all – but many also note that this number represents only one-tenth of the Islamic department's collection. This ratio prompted at least one reviewer to regret that more "treasures" from the museum's storerooms were not brought out for display.[19] The entire collection is now online and is searchable using either key terms or accession numbers.[20] A perusal of this database demonstrates that much of the storeroom treasure belongs to a humbler order than the curated selection now on view– including potsherds, individual beads, textile and manuscript fragments, not all of which are of exhibition caliber. Out of the 12,000 pieces in the collection, 1038 are designated as "Mamluk" – of which many are very fragmentary. Of the 1,200 objects displayed in the New Galleries, approximately sixty Mamluk pieces are on view at any one time in the New Galleries.[21]

To a "Mamlukist," this statistic might seem incommensurate with two and a half centuries of Mamluk patronage and unequal to the centrality in the medieval Near East of Mamluk Cairo and its empire.[22] One explanation for this apparent disproportion has to do with the manner

19 Julia Baily, "Entrancing Particulars," *Hali* 170 (Winter 2011): 66.

20 http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections.

21 Eighteen of these are the *minbar* fragments grouped together in the "Mosque" case.

22 See, for example, Doris Behrens-Abouseif's assessment of two of the period's most prolific patrons: "Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad Ibn Qalawun and Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay are widely acknowledged as the greatest patrons of art and architecture of medieval Egypt and perhaps also of the entire Muslim world" ("Al-Nasir Muhammad and al-Ashraf Qaytbay – Patrons of Urbanism," in U. Vermuelen and D. De Smet, eds., *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods* (Leuven, 1995), 267.

in which the collection developed. A substantial portion of the Islamic collection came in through the museum's excavations at Nishapur;[23] much else was supplied by bequests or donations of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century collectors whose tastes sometimes favored "Persian" art.[24] Furthermore, collectors generally gravitated towards figural Islamic art over non-figural or abstract objects, and narrative imagery over genre imagery, whereas – as discussed above – Mamluk art increasingly emphasized calligraphic, geometric and vegetal motives over figures and the art of the illustrated book was not a Mamluk forte.

Thus, partly as a consequence of past fashions in collecting, the "real estate" provided for Mamluk period is limited relative to some of the other cultures represented in the Islamic suite. Furthermore, the gallery's position as a transit zone along the "inner ring" means that much of its wall space was demanded for doors and windows and that freestanding floor vitrines had to be small enough not to impede the movement of visitors through the space. Although the Islamic suite gained 5000 square feet (465 square meters) of exhibition space in the new design, the curation of Mamluk objects is currently more selective than in the previous gallery. The only Mamluk objects now on view that were not shown in the previous gallery are the gilded and enameled glass bottle in the solo case, and two pieces newly acquired since the gallery closure.[25] On the other hand, around a dozen pieces formerly on display are now in storage. In museum practice, this kind of demotion sometimes indicates authenticity or conservation concerns, but this does not appear to be the case for any of the objects no longer on view.[26] On the contrary, this group includes a number of noteworthy and historically significant

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23 Haidar mentions this point in connection to the wealth of the Iran galleries in, "The New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia," in *Masterpieces*, 19 note 85.

24 On fashions and biases in collecting, see Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands* (New York, 2004), 18–19; on the reception of Persian art in the last century, see Kishwar Rizvi, "Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on 'Persian Art' in the Early Twentieth Century," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 45–65.

25 MMA nos. 2011.156a, b and 2006.212.

26 At present, I am not aware of any such concerns.

works, although some represent types that are on view and their inclusion might have been redundant given space constraints.

The fact that certain media and types of object dominate the museum's Mamluk collection in disproportion to the variety of types produced in the period, is also largely due to the interests of a few major collectors. Over 400 pieces in the Islamic collection were part of a huge bequest from the 19th century Tiffany company metalwork designer, Edward C. Moore (Fig. 11).[27] Around fifty objects came into the museum in 1917, as a donation from J. P. Morgan. It was only from 1923 onward that the museum had a specialized curator on staff to guide the acquisition process. Nevertheless, the early bequests of Moore and Morgan make up the backbone of the Mamluk collection. A sense of the importance of their contributions comes from these figures: setting aside the group of *minbar* fragments, almost half of the Mamluk material comes from Moore's collection and about one-fifth comes from the Morgan collection.

Patronage and Provenance:

Most of the makers – i.e. the potters, glass enamellers, metalworkers, etc. – of the Mamluk objects displayed in the gallery are anonymous. This situation is not unique to the Mamluk sphere, but rather is the case with much of the portable art from the medieval Islamic world. The way in which the Mamluk period stands out from many other phases in the history of medieval Islamic art is in the large number of works that bear the name of the person by whom they were commissioned or for whom they were made – the patrons and recipients. This contrast is borne out by comparison with the Fatimid and Ayyubid objects in the same gallery, as well as with the Seljuq period objects in the adjacent gallery. On the latter, epigraphic ornamentation tends to be used for Qur'anic passages, poetry excerpts, or standardized well-wishing phrases. The

[27] On the growth of the collection, see: Priscilla P. Soucek, "Building a Collection of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, 1870–2011," in *Masterpieces,* 2–9 and Deniz Bayazit, "The Making of a Collection," *Hali* 170 (Winter 2011): 60–62.

The renovations of the galleries of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art completed in 2011 brought about changes to the way the museum's Mamluk collection is displayed. While employed on the New Galleries Project from 2008–2011, Dr. Kenney conducted research and developed interpretative materials connected with the Mamluk art reinstallation. Here, she analyses how the new Mamluk display relates to the surrounding exhibits and how its narratives are presented for the general museum audience. Following this, she profiles three objects from the collection – elements from a wooden minbar, an inlaid metalwork ewer, and a large marble jar – as examples of the aesthetic and documentary interest that the museum's collection holds for Mamluk studies specialists.

THE AUTHOR

Ellen Kenney is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at the American University in Cairo. Before joining the department in 2011, Kenney was a Research Associate in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At the museum, she researched the collection and worked on preparations for the new galleries of Islamic art that re-opened in November 2011. Previously, she has taught courses in Islamic art and architecture at New York University, Fordham University and the State University of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

Kenney earned her MA and PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. In 2009, she published *Power and Patronage in Medieval Syria: The Architecture and Urban Works of Tankiz al-Nasiri,* a book that grew out of her doctoral dissertation. This study examines the building program of Tankiz during his long term as governor of Bilad al-Sham in the first half of the fourteenth century, a period coinciding with the sultanate of al-Nasir Muhammad. It identifies the patron's works, explores the nature of his participation in them, and situates them within the contexts of architectural developments in the region and patronage in the Mamluk period. Kenney received several fellowships to conduct dissertation research and to carry out fieldwork in Damascus, Jerusalem, Amman and Cairo. In addition to doctoral fieldwork, she has participated in archaeological projects in Aqaba and Northern Jordan.

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