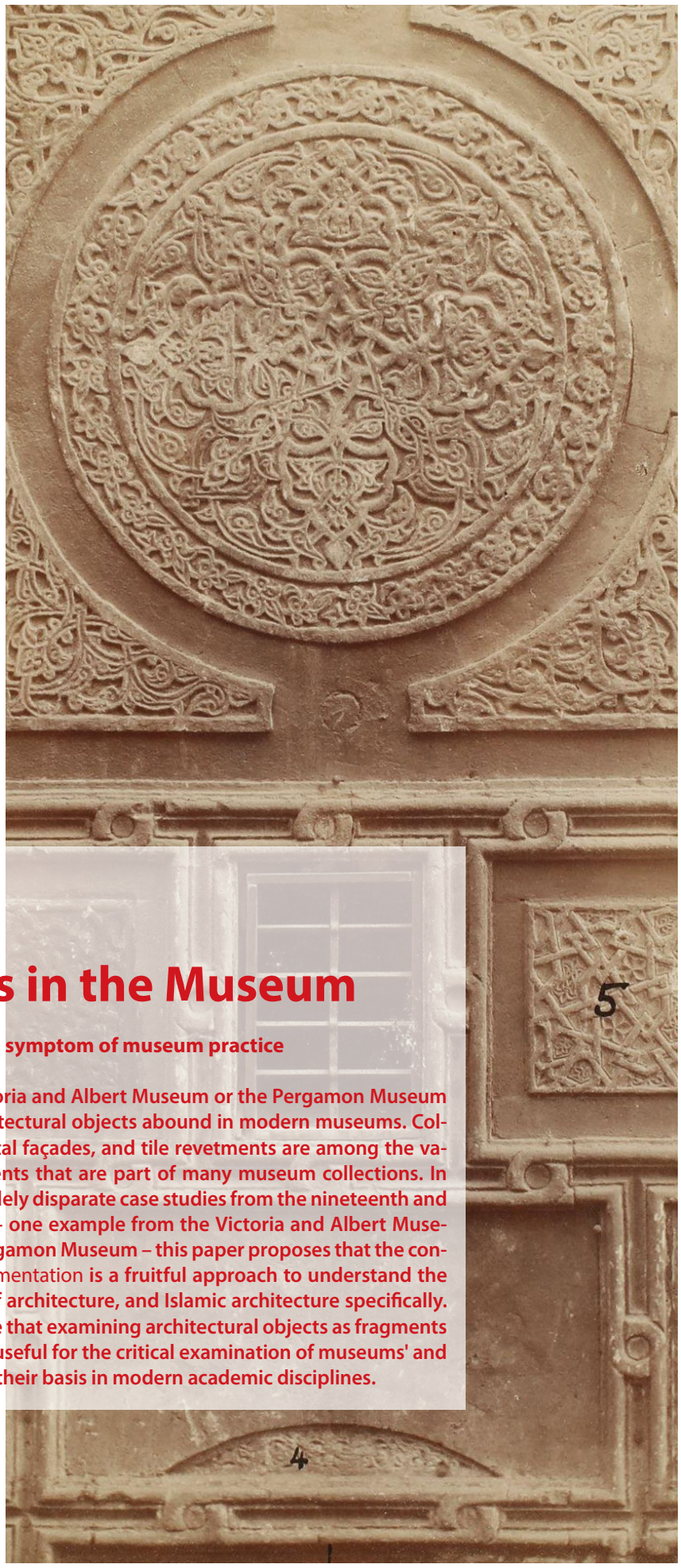


archimaera
architektur.kultur.kontext.online

Johann Spillner
(London)

Fragments in the Museum

Islamic architecture as a symptom of museum practice

As any visitor to the Victoria and Albert Museum or the Pergamon Museum in Berlin can attest, architectural objects abound in modern museums. Column capitals, monumental façades, and tile revetments are among the various architectural elements that are part of many museum collections. In concentrating on two widely disparate case studies from the nineteenth and early twentieth century – one example from the Victoria and Albert Museum and one from the Pergamon Museum – this paper proposes that the concept of fragment, or fragmentation is a fruitful approach to understand the museal representation of architecture, and Islamic architecture specifically. The case studies illustrate that examining architectural objects as fragments implies issues which are useful for the critical examination of museums' and collecting practices, and their basis in modern academic disciplines.

http://www.archimaera.de
ISSN: 1865-7001
urn:nbn:de:0009-21-56942
März 2023
#10 "Fragment"
S. 114-128

Introduction

It smacks of truism to state that architecture translates only with difficulty into the limited space of a museum. To exhibit architecture within such a space by way of drawings, mock-ups, models, or architectural parts always entails a displacement of some sort, a referral to something, someplace, outside the gallery walls. This aspect of architecture, and the museum's consequent need rather to refer than to represent, has been noted since the foundation of architectural museums: James Fergusson notes in 1857 on the incorporation of the Architectural Museum into the South Kensington Museum that while "*pictures and statues are things complete in themselves, easily removed, and made to be placed in galleries;* […] *buildings are made to remain fixed on the spot where they are originally erected, and are of such a scale that they cannot be collected together in any gallery, however large.*"[1] Thus to be placed in a gallery buildings first must be dissembled, Fergusson argues, and compares the collection of fragments, capitals and cornices, tellingly to "*a collection of fingers and toes of sculpture, or eyes and ears out of paintings* […]".[2]

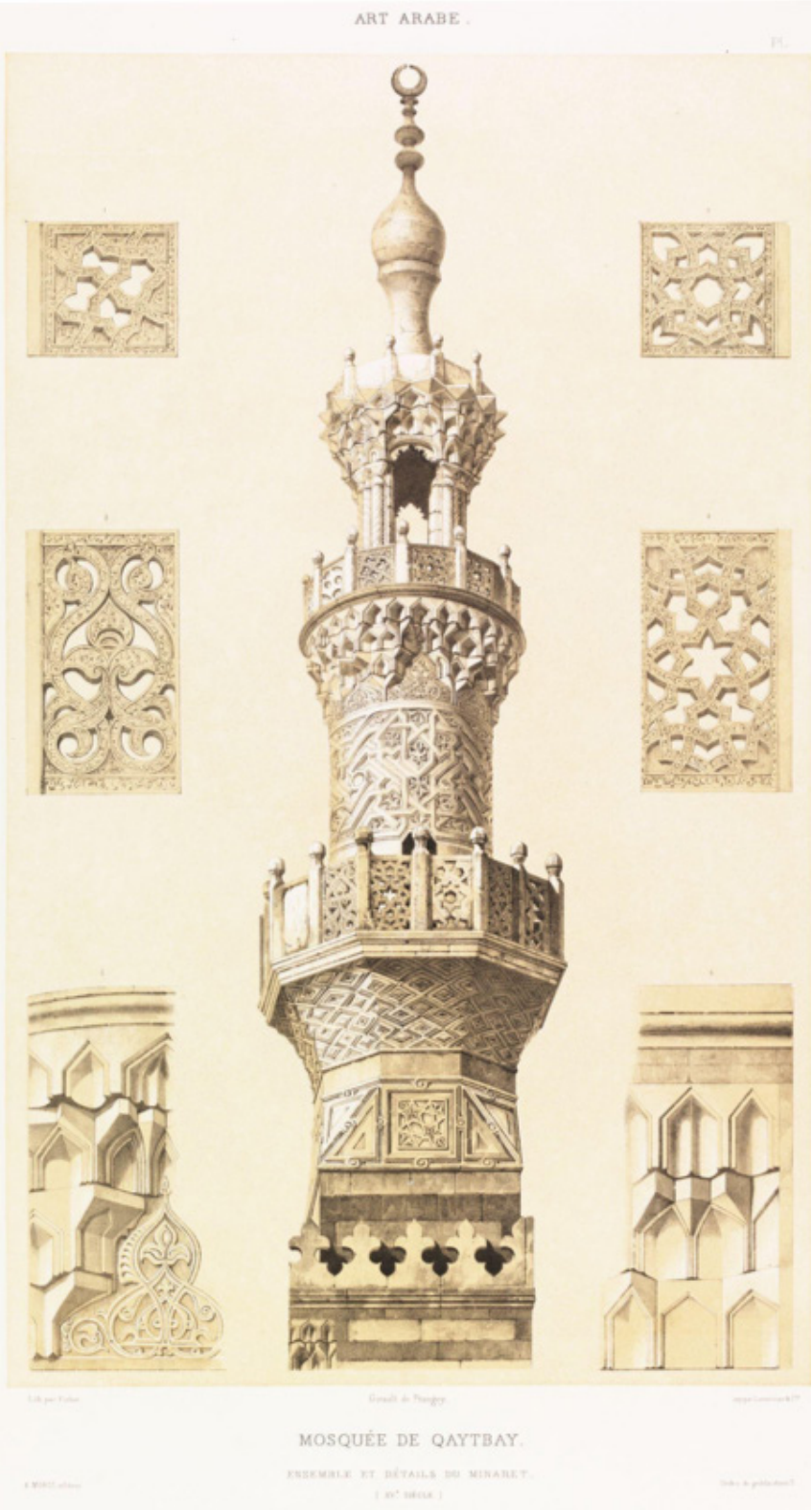
Fergusson was not the only one who shared this idea, and there was, to be sure, nothing new about the museal display of architectural fragments. Early examples included, for instance, the Musée des Monuments français (1795-1816), the collection at the Musée Cluny by Alexandre du Sommerard (1779-1842), both in post-revolutionary Paris, and the Museum at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields in London which was based on the private collection of neo-classical architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837). All three featured large repositories of fragments from European architectural monuments which had been salvaged or reproduced in plaster. Thus, when Fergusson made his tongue-in-cheek statement about the Morellian assortment of fingers and toes, the fragmenting of architecture had been a prevailing practice for displaying the material remains of buildings for quite some time. However, at the time of Fergusson's lecture Islamic[3] architecture had not been seriously collected and largely was excluded from any museal representation. This would come to change in the course of the century, and Islamic architectural fragments would join the ranks of Greek, Roman, Gothic and Renaissance architecture which were already on display in major museums around Europe.

In the following pages I will try to answer the question how this inclusion was realized. The case studies discussed illustrate widely varying forms of fragmentation and highlight common attributes that become obvious when the musealization of Islamic architecture is examined through the lens of fragmentation.

Fragmented Discourse

"[…] *l'art national est perdu sans retour: l'Orient n'est plus l'Orient.* | *Pendant qu'il l'est encore, admirons-le. Recueillons pieusement le dépôt des secrets de l'art antique qu'il a religieusement conservé, formons des collections de tous se produits pour nous en servir comme de modèles* […] *les Orientaux viendront à Paris; il est bon qu'ils trouvent dans nos musées l'art que nous aurons tué dans leur mains, et qui aura prospéré dans les nôtres.*"[4]

"*The Orient is no longer the Orient.*" The pessimistic statement by a French archaeologist encapsulates many sentiments that were commonly shared by nineteenth-century Europeans: the compulsion to salvage the vanishing past, the matter-of-course appropriation of others' cultures, and the faith in the institution of the museum.[5] These musings on decay and the spoils of modernity therefore say more about the author's specific European anxieties than about the reality of an Other that it pretends to describe. Any discussion about the architectural or museal representation of Islamic art is hard pressed not to acknowledge the shadow of imperialism that looms over every area of study, and which forced everything into its own particular "exhibitionary order".[6] It thus seems advisable to address the peculiar position Islamic architecture took up in Western architectural discourse, and whether this affected the entry of Islamic architectural fragments into Western museums. Indeed, its po-



Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, Mosque De Qaytbay. Ensemble Et Détails Du Minaret, a Lithograph plate from A.C. Prisse d'Avennes: L'art Arabed'aprèslesmonumentsdu Kaire…, **1869-1877, vol. 1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Acc. No. SP:464.**
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

sition was couched from beginning in acts of fragmentation. In her article titled "The Cultural Burden of Architecture" Gülsüm Baydar (2004) marks the colonial encounters as a watershed moment in which, for the first time, the completeness and coherence of Western architectural history and theory were threatened.[7] An unprecedented shift in which the discipline had "*to attend to cultural particularity as a sign of architectural difference*".[8] With regards to Islamic architecture, this shift can be observed most succinctly in the increasing number of publications concerning Islamic architecture in the course of the nineteenth century.[9] Baydar's remarks are important here as they underline the European vantage point from which Islamic architecture, or non-Western architecture for that matter, was ex-

amined. As posited, fragmentation was deeply enmeshed in the encounter with Islamic architecture. Browsing through the flurry of nineteenth-century publications one is struck by the multitude of illustrations that decompose Islamic buildings into fragments – and decontextualize the architectural elements presented. The dissecting eye of the artists and the reader are implicitly needed to make sense of the buildings decorative schemes. As Gülru Necipoğlu (1995) notes,

"*Most books that dealt with Islamic architecture in those years,* […] *featured plates of decontextualized architectural ornaments […] Broken down into their decorated components such as façades, domes, minarets, portals, mihrabs, lattices, and calligraphic or ornamental panels, Islamic buildings were fragmented in these publications into reusable parts, displayed as neutral objects of 'consumption'*"[10]

This fragmentation of Islamic architecture into objects of consumption was spurred on by a prevalent European concern about ornament in the nineteenth century. While continuously new commodities were produced in large numbers for a growing market, many contemporaries felt that the well-worn eclecticism of styles betrayed a directionless confusion and relativism which prompted a number of architects, theorists, and artists to examine the relationship between ornament, craft, and pre-industrial artisanship.[11] In order to revitalise European design and crafts many critics looked to the past and to non-Western cultures in search for a set of universal rules which might restore true artistic creativity.[12] This debate was predominantly concerned with matters of ornamentation which became something like a generic term to describe categories of identity such as nationality, history, and ethnicity.[13] Especially Islamic ornament was judged as something superior to the contemporary manufactures of the West. It was seen as essentially decorative and devoid of meaning, and thus eminently suited to industrial needs.[14] While this somewhat positive connotation of Islamic ornament heightened an appreciation for certain aspects of Islamic crafts and architecture, it also spelled a disregard for other facets of the Islamic built environment. Nineteenth-century architectural histories share the recurring trope that Islamic architecture is marked by a deficit and lacks certain characteristics that Western architecture epitomizes. As the German art historian Franz Kugler (1859) remarks:

"*Eine organische Gliederung, eine Bildung der Einzelteile* […] *erstrebt die muhammedanische Architektur nicht. Was sie an solcher Gliederung hat, beruht teils auf der baulichen Überlieferung, in welche sie eintrat* […] *gehört teils - und in sehr überwiegendem Maße - der Willkür des Dekorativen an.*"[15]

"*We would be impetuous to look for a rule or a law in the development of Arabic architecture; it does not exist. The Orient lacks this ordering spirit that our Occident has brought to everything it has created since the Germanic invasion; in its place, the arbitrary and the capricious reign. Therefore, we are not trying to describe the architectonic system of Arabs; they don't have anything like it; and just as the diverse elements of their buildings are disconnected, the history of their art is also disjointed*",[16] another commentator remarks, and herein voices a racially-charged judgement that presumably many of his contemporaries shared.[17] More importantly, these comments exemplify a common conception about Islamic architecture: its lack of an architectural order which negatively set it apart from other architectural "styles". The structure-ornament-divide that is encapsulated therein is, as Anne-Marie Sankovitch has shown, not only an enduring feature of European architectural historiography but also regularly invoked architectural histories to denote the geographically marginal, stylistically liminal, or historically transitional.[18] Islamic architecture was seen to fit all these categories, and most studies of Islamic architecture concentrated predominately on ornamental elements and architectural surface decoration, relegating structural observations to the side-lines.[19] Evidently, Islamic architecture was seen and judged through the lens of European preconceptions, thus expressing – to

The Architectural Museum at the South Kensington Museum. The Museum contained casts of medieval architecture. Photograph, ca. 1857. Victoria and Albert Museum, Acc. No. 1948-1938.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

appropriate a comment by T. McEvilley – the "*need to co-opt difference into* [the European's] *own dream of order, in which* [he] *reigns supreme*".[20] The focus on particular surface-level aspects of Islamic buildings, their visual dismemberment into constituent parts in contemporary publications, and the general discourse generated by the aesthetic revival arguably cleared the way in which Islamic architecture was to be staged as an object in the museum.

Fragments in London

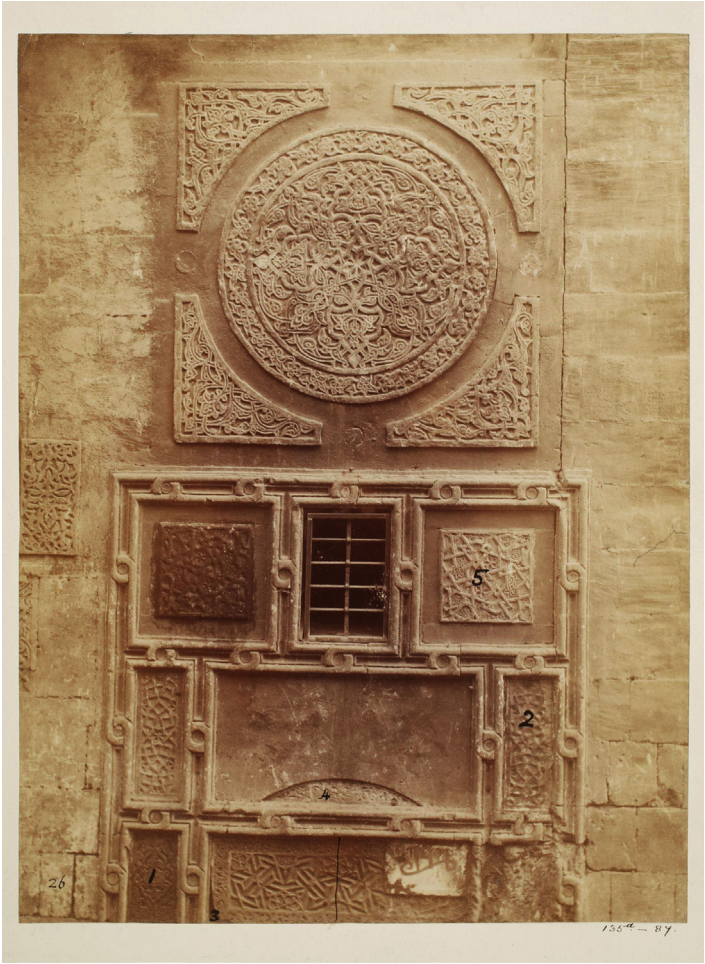
"*We have come to regard certain architectural features, such as cornices, as essential, which an eastern would regard as superfluous, and our eye is biased by what it has been accustomed to see in Europe. The main criticism, however, stands good, that the beauty of the mosques of Cairo is not so much architectural as decorative, and no prejudice can be accounted a sufficient reason for disregarding this defect.*"[21]

This quote by the British Arabist Stanley Lane-Poole (1854-1931) from his 1886 publication *The Art of the Saracens* contains the tropes one might expect from a nineteenth-century scholar of Islamic architecture. It matches the positions of his contemporaries, and one finds the prevalent orientalist tropes about the qualities and short-comings of Islamic architecture mentioned above. Yet, Stanley Lane-Poole's publication also can be read as a link between nineteenth-century discourse and the physical fragmentation of architecture for the museal display at the South Kensington Museum in London.

The South Kensington Museum (officially opened by Queen Victoria in 1857, and later renamed Victoria and Albert Museum), was conceived at the height of the debate on the revitalisation of European design. It was established as a reference collection of well-made examples of decorative design. Architecture was naturally seen as an integral part in this mission. Thus, in the introductory lecture cited in the beginning of this paper, James Fergusson made his case for an architectural museum at South Ken-

sington which would allow all visitors to make themselves familiar with the "*secrets of the architectural craft*" and, repeating the concerns of his time, revitalize the stagnant architectural habitus of his contemporaries.[22] Fergusson was keenly aware of the fact that tangible architecture could only be displayed in fragments, thus he envisioned a museum of plaster casts taken from a selection of the "best" and the "most typical" examples of the respective style to reach a "*complete illustration of architectural art*" in chronological arrangement.[23] Casts from Islamic monuments were deemed important to showcase the historical trajectory of architectural art.[24] In the decades following Fergusson's lecture the Museum engaged in the concerted effort to acquire examples for display in the dedicated Cast Courts (inaugurated in 1873).[25] With regards to Islamic architecture the "best" and "most typical" was exemplified by two sites: the monuments of Granada, and the Cairene buildings built under the patronage of the Mamluk dynasty (1250-1517). Both sites were well known to the British public at the time, and well documented in nineteenth-century publications.[26] The museum was able to collect casts of ornamental details on several occasions, in the case of Cairo most notably in 1884, through the wholesale acquisition of the collection of Cairo-resident Comte Gaston de St. Maurice (1831-1905) and through the mission of Stanley Lane-Poole who had been consulted on multiple occasions on museum matters and who went to Cairo in 1883 to acquire artefacts and architectural casts.[27] Both collections overlapped in some ways. Both men were fascinated by the Mamluk monuments of Cairo and especially those built under the patronage of Sultan Qaytbay (r. 1468-1496), a phenomenon that testifies the rather limited scope or canon early Western scholars had of Islamic architecture.[28] Many examples of the latter acquisition were subsequently reproduced in the Lane-Poole's *The Art of the Saracens* (1886),[29] which was a direct outcome of his 1883 mission in service of the museum.[30] In his book, Lane-Poole attempted to outline a history of Saracenic i.e. Islamic art and architecture with the aid of Cairene monuments which he divided into material-based categories similar to the system of order used at the South Kensington Museum.[31] Most of the illustrations accompanying Lane-Poole's text showed plaster casts and single woodwork panels, and it is with these decontextualized fragments that Lane-Poole furnished his account blurring the line between the fragment and the architectural monument in the process. As one might suspect, this fragmented view of Cairo's built heritage was indirectly rationalized by what the author identified as the essential characteristic of Saracenic architecture: its lack of an coherent architectural vision. Quoting Franz Pasha (1831-1915), the architect of Khedive Ismail Pasha in Cairo, Lane-Poole characterised Saracenic architecture as something missing a coherent plan, failing "to give entire aesthetic satisfaction" and marred by "incongruous mingling of wood and stone."[32] Thus, unsurprisingly, decorative details were separated from their architectural context both in Lane-Poole's narrative and in the illustrations of the book.

One of the few selected monuments that Lane-Poole discussed at length is the "Wekāla" [urban merchant hostel] of the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay. "*When I was in Cairo in 1883, I took casts of the ornament of this* [the Wekāla's] *front, and was fortunately able to bring back paper squeezes, fortified with layers of gipsum, of every distinct ornament on the whole façade.* […] *a set of these are exhibited in the gallery over the architectural court of the South Kensington Museum*".[33] A contemporary visitor to the South Kensington Museum would have had the opportunity to see most of these casts in the museum galleries, experiencing the spatial re-enactment of Lane-Poole's text, where the casts were presented both as fragments of historic buildings as well as models of design for western artists. In a telling later remark that highlights the meaning attached to this example Lane-Poole described the building as a veritable "*text book of Saracenic decoration*".[34] In the book the meaning of an individual fragment was produced by the text and its position in the sequence of pages. In the museum, however, the "*text book of Saracenic de-*



"Wekāla of the Sultan Kāït Bey, part of wall, 15th cent." The numbers on the print probably indicate casts taken from the ornamentation. Cairo, Egypt. Albumen print, ca. 1870s, unknown photographer. Victoria and Albert Museum, Acc. No. PH.135A-1887.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

coration" was more difficult to read. A contributor to *The Times* remarked:

"*Unfortunately the crowded condition of the Museum* […] *renders it exceedingly difficult for a casual visitor to gain any idea of the wealth of this particular branch of the collection. The Saracenic objects are scattered about in various parts of the Museum* […] *At present we have to search for them in holes and corners, and the general public does not like to have the trouble of finding as well as merely looking.*"[35]

It stands to reason that under these circumstances an individual fragment did not offer much meaning to the general public. The items on exposition had been selected in accordance to particular preconceived Western ideas about Islamic architecture and signified very little beyond these boundaries. Taken out of their architectural context and taken out of site the fragments that Lane-Poole had provided illustrated just the narrative that the author had imparted on them. Unlike their monumental pendants at display at the South Kensington Museum


FIG. 25.—ROSETTE OF THE WEKALA OF KAIT BEY.
Fifteenth Century.

Engraving after a plaster cast in the South Kensington in Stanley Lane-Poole's The Art of the Saracens. "Rosette of the Wekala of Kait Bey. Fifteenth Century". The cast was taken from the rosette in the photograph on top of this page. Lane Poole 1886, fig. 25, p. 111.

such as the casts of Trajan's column the fragments of Islamic architecture had little enduring appeal.[36] Eventually, a general disregard for cast collections in the twentieth century marked the fate of many of the ornamental casts which were consequently destroyed or sent to other museums.

Fragments in Berlin

Inaugurated in October 1904 almost half a century later than the South Kensington Museum, the Department of Islamic Art of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin, quickly managed to acquire a collection of Islamic artefacts that rivalled the British institution. The department later was moved to its current residence, the Pergamon Museum.

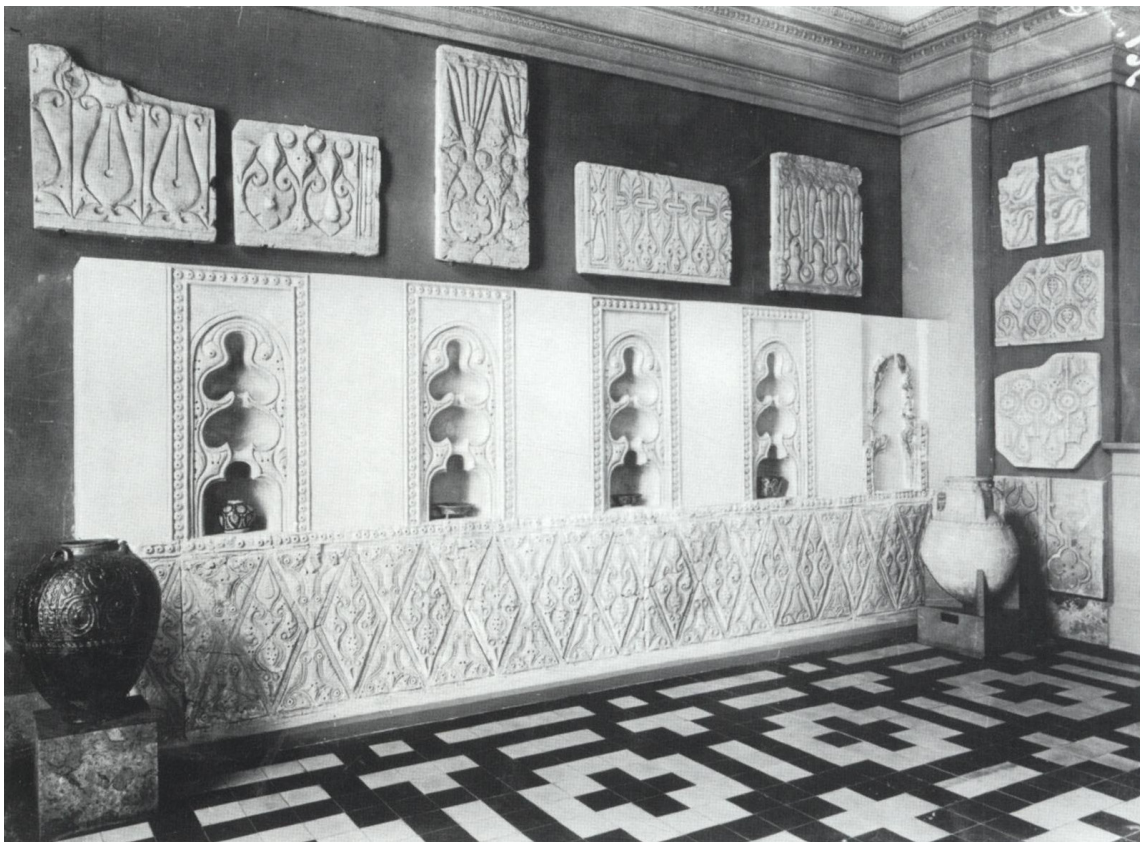
Within its first few years and by the efforts of – among others – Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929) the department managed to acquire a series of architectural fragments which soon came to be regarded as most important for the historiography of Islamic architecture. Among them are two series of architectural fragments: the remains of the Abbasid palaces of Samarra, and the façade of the so called desert palace of Mshatta.

The palaces of Samarra, founded on the banks of the Tigris by the Abbasid dynasty of Iraq (750-1258) in 836 were made known to the Western world by several archaeological surveys and excavations in the early decades of the twentieth century. The first major excavation in 1911-1913 led by the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948) unearthed, among other things, a series of carved stucco wall panels. About ninety panels were taken into the Berlin collection.[37] These architectural fragments are undoubtedly the most well-known finds from Samarra. Herzfeld established their canonical importance with the first volume of his publication series *Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra*.[38] His analysis of the stucco ornamentation organized the corpus of fragments into three style-based groups avoiding a chronological series. His description of the three styles had an enduring legacy as it established the Berlin fragments as a precursor to the Islamic ornament tradition that had fascinated Western observers since half a century earlier in the times of design reform. The display of the fragments in the Samarra-gallery at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum included 86 stucco panels,[39] and followed Herzfeld's tripartite division of styles. Emphasis was put on the so-called Bevelled Style (later labelled Samarra C) to which two walls of the gallery were dedicated.[40] In a sense, the gallery gave a material expression to Herzfeld's arguments that had not existed *in situ*. Stucco ornamentation attributed to different styles were often used side by side within domestic and palatial buildings at Samarra. Herzfeld's art historical analysis was based on the fragmentation of the architectural context.

Apart from some generalized description of the site Herzfeld did not publish a report on his archaeological excavations, and later much of the archaeological record was inadvertently destroyed during the First World War, leaving the fragments in a museal limbo. The large corpus of dispersed fragments continued to attract scholarly interest but the disregard towards the architectural context still haunts their appreciation. As Matthew D. Saba notes:

"*One problem* […] *is that the fragments of doors, walls, and ceilings excavated from the site are usually studied as individual pieces, with little reference to their original context as parts of buildings. In both museum displays and scholarly articles, single examples tend to stand alone as masterpieces or serve as indicative examples of a style or other artistic phenomenon*."[41]

While subsequent scholarship has relied heavily on the Samarran stucco fragments to link historical developments in ornament, their architectural context has largely been ignored. In a sense, the fragmentation of Samarra and its display in the Berlin Museum have produced a long-lasting legacy. Western history of art and its historical perspectives have effected this fragmentation in the first place. Thus, the fixation on singular architectural fragments has its reverberations into the present as can be seen also in another case of fragments: the Mshatta Façade at the Berlin Museum.



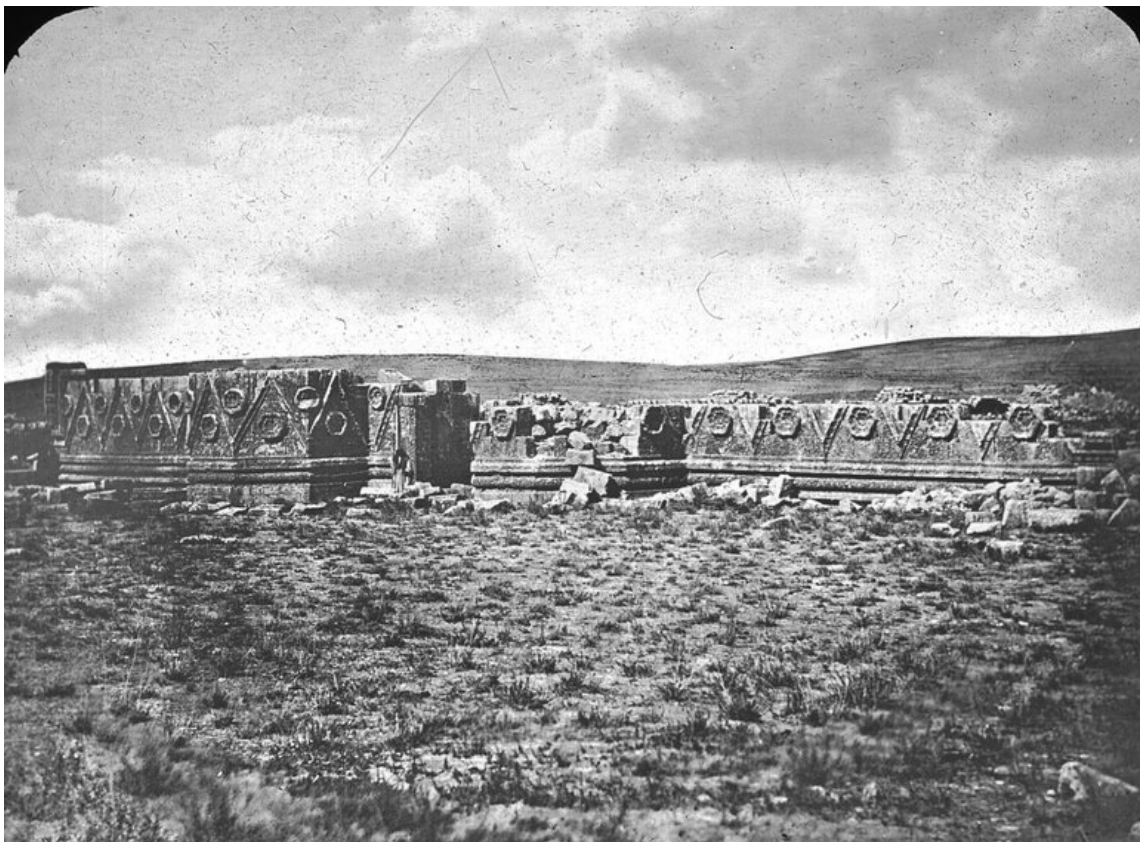
View of the installation of stucco fragments from Samarra at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, ca. 1922. Zentralarchiv, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ident. Nr. ZA 2.11/03224.

"*This marvellous work, which has remained for 1.300 years, untouched by weather, unmutilated by man, of which when I first saw it not a chip was missing, has now, we are told, been given by the Sultan to the German Emperor, and, under the auspices of German savants, the figures of the façade have been sawn off and conveyed to Haifa for transport to Berlin. Thus the solitary relic of a great historical era is mutilated, while in the Berlin Museum the detached fragments can be nothing more than mere curiosities.*"[42]

Thus remarks a British commentator acerbically on the removal of the Mshatta Façade to Berlin, on the eve of its musealization. The decorative façade of the eight century Umayyad palace of Mshatta was removed from its site near Amman, Jordan, and transferred to the newly completed Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin in 1903. After a tentative installation in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, the façade was brought to its current location on the upper floor of the Pergamonmuseum in 1932 where it now occupies a large museum gallery.

The partial dismantling of the site left the unfinished palace devoid of its most remarkable feature. Yet, in the museum it did not devolve into a mere curiosity as the British commentator suspected. While the fragments in South Kensington were primarily chosen for their didactic purposes and in order to to fill a lacunae in the larger collection, the Mshatta Façade in the Islamic Art Museum in Berlin represents a different case: it is a key monument in the history of the discipline whose status within the history of Islamic art and architecture helped to establish the Berlin Museum as a preeminent collection of Islamic art.[43] Even before the removal of the decorative façade from its site, it had already sparked several debates about the dating and origins of its floral and figural decoration.[44]

As noted by the commentator, the façade had been a gift from the Ottoman Sultan to the German Emperor following a protracted diplomatic engagement.[45] Although all of the façade was included in the diplomatic gift, large parts of the monumental stone carvings remained *in situ*. The eastern part of the façade, being unfinished by the eighth-century stonemasons and non-figural in its design, for many of the parties involved did not justify its transfer to Berlin.[46] Not all contemporaries agreed with that decision.



"Mashita [Mshatta], Moab, Jordan" before its removal to Berlin in 1903. Latern slide, unknown photographer. Brooklyn Museum, Goodyear Archival Collection.
Brooklyn Museum, New York.

In a letter archaeologist Hermann Thiersch implored Wilhelm Bode to retrieve the remaining fragments of the façade:

"[…]*As Dr Schumacher in Haifa informed me, he has been commissioned to take down only the left side of the gateway façade, but only isolated sample pieces from the right. That would be a terrible shame! For the purely ornamental right side is perhaps of greater artistic value than the left, even if the latter might be more remarkable on account of the animal figures. It is hard for me to tell you how it grieved me to hear that isolated pieces are to be removed 'as samples' from this wonderful tendril work, perhaps the finest and most imaginative that exists anywhere in the Orient* […] *Thus, please, save Mshatta, the whole Mshatta, for Berlin, i.e., both halves of the gate, or the other will have to be sought out in a hundred scattered fragments on this and the far side of the ocean.*"[47]

While Wilhelm Bode did agree with Thiersch's assessment, the removal of the façade had progressed too far and the majority of the right side of the façade remained *in situ*.[48] Today, it is considered largely lost. It is not hard to draw parallels between the removal of the Mshatta Façade and Lane-Poole's casts in the South Kensington Museum. The selective removal, or reproduction of architectural elements, in both cases, anticipates and predetermines the discursive value of the resulting fragments. In the case of Mshatta, most of the scholarship about the Umayyad site had centred on the façade, more specifically on its figural, western section. It was deemed the most noteworthy and historically valuable section of the whole architectural complex as it was thought to resemble late-antique models.[49] The decision to remove the façade and to leave parts of the eastern section behind can thus be seen as a direct result of western scholarship at the time. Following its removal to Berlin scholarly interest quickly waned after the Islamic origin of the façade had been established sufficiently. Research on the original architectural context of the façade was abandoned, and concerns regarding the proper display of the façade tended to become more important.[50] While the South Kensington examples illustrate the fragility of architectural fragments within the museum (as something easily overlooked by the average visitor), the Berlin fragment/s illustrate rather the opposite: the persistence and persuasiveness of

certain fragments. The examples from Berlin illustrate the repercussions of architectural fragmentation. Separating the noteworthy from the negligible also sets architectural history-writing at danger to be "*merely a history of what happens so far to have been collected.*"[51]

Conclusion

The point I want to make is simple: Although the fragments in the cases discussed seem to represent essential aspects of Islamic architecture, they are in fact the result of highly selective European interventions. This is most succinctly illustrated in the case of the Mshatta Façade. Here, the extent of fragmentation directly correlates with the contemporary interests of Western scholarship. In all three examples fragments were chosen to represent extraordinary specimens of Islamic architectural decoration – thereby transcending the category of fragment – functioning as self-contained, aestheticized objects. In that regard, the fragmentation of Islamic architecture for museal display seems to be less about the spatial and logistic restraints of the museum as institution but rather about pre-existing notions of what constitutes the essence of Islamic architecture. Thus, Lane-Poole's and Herzfeld's plaster casts were displayed not to represent some holistic view of a monument, but to exemplify a particular style within the larger narrative of art history, incidentally obfuscating the architectural context from which the casts originated. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper it stands to reason that similar observations could be made for all kinds of materials collected by museums, beyond the category of Islamic architecture. As Wolfgang Ernst puts it: "[Within the museum] *dismembered fragments are abused for the sake of historical imagination by subjecting them to a narrative frame,* […] *reassembling the fragments into monstrous configurations, turning them into prosopopeia– the museum as a world of potential ghosts.*"[52] For Ernst, the museum is a haunted place whose singular function is the framing of fragments. It utilises its fragments towards an end that does not reside in the fragments themselves but in the separate system of the narrative frame. Just as Lane-Poole's casts or the facade of the Mshatta Palace fragments become meaningful only through the discourse which enabled the fragmentation in the first place. As such, any representation within the museum is both based on fragmentation and reproduces it. A similar view is expressed by Eugenio Donate, who states: "*The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe* [...] *Should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left of the museum but 'bric-a-brac', a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments.*"[53] Eugenio Donate, just as Ernst, attributes no independent, intrinsic meaning to the fragment or the museum. The fragment and the narrative are held together by a fiction that claims that a particular fragment is the material expression of the narrative, that either substantiates the other. Yet, what neither Ernst nor Donate address, is that this fiction leaves its marks. The removal of the

View of the Mshatta façade in its current installation in the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin. 2007.
Public domain.

Mshatta Façade and the excavations at Samarra altered both sites irreversibly. While its fragments unquestionably enriched the collection in Berlin, their removal forever changed the experience of subsequent visitors at the original site.[54]

As the case studies illustrate, while architecture is a category very much present in museum collections the issue of fragmentation is an unavoidable part in collection practice, and often has not been addressed sufficiently. The enduring legacy of such processes of selection is both a product and a source of scholarship and for the public perception regarding architecture. The term fragment/ fragmentation calls for attention to this inherited bias and may prove useful in addressing the complicated nature of museal displays in future studies. It highlights that the collecting of "fingers and toes", "eyes and ears" has, if nothing else, enabled the codification of particular, historical decisions which in turn prompts the question: what can we actually learn from the fragments within the museum?

Anmerkungen:

1 James Fergusson: *On a National Collection of Architectural Art* [Introductory Addresses on the Science and Art Department and the South Kensington Museum, 6]. London 1857, p. 4.

2 Ibid.

3 I will use the term Islamic despite the varying nomenclature in the nineteenth and early twentieth century; see e.g. S.S. Blairand / J.M. Bloom: "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the study of an unwieldy field:" In: *Art Bulletin*, 85/1 (2003), pp. 152-184.

4 Léon de Laborde: *De l'union des arts et de l'industrie*. Paris 1856, p. 268.

5 On the concept of salvage anthropology, see James Clifford: "The others: Beyond the 'salvage' paradigm." In: *Third Text*, 3/6 (1989), pp. 73-78.

6 See Timothy Mitchell: "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order". In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1989), pp. 217-236.

7 Gülsüm Baydar: "The Cultural Burden of Architecture". In: *Journal of Architectural Education* 57/4 (2004), pp. 19-27, here: p. 19.

8 Ibid.: p. 22.

9 In regards to the French imperial agenda in Egypt, the encyclopaedic mammoth project *Description de l'Égypte* (1809-1829), Pascal-Xavier Coste: *Architecture arabe ou monuments du Caire*. Paris 1847-9; and Prisse d'Avennes: *L'art arabe d'après les monuments du Kaire, depuis le VIIe siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIe siècle*. Paris 1869-1877. About the publishing process of these works, see Paulina Banas: "From Picturesque Cairo to Abstract Islamic Designs: L'Art arabe and the Economy of Nineteenth-Century Book Publishing." In: *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 17/1 (2018); see also Maire-Noëlle Bourguet: "De la Méditerranée." In: Maire-Noëlle Bourguet/ Bernard Lepetit/ Daniel Nordmann (eds.). *L'invention scientifique de la Méditerranée, Égypte, Morée, Algérie.* Paris 1998, pp. 7-28; Mercedes Volait: "History or Theory? French Antiquarianism, Cairene Architecture and Enlightenment Thinking." In: *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010), pp. 231-254.

10 See Gülru Necipoğlu: *The Topkapı scroll. Geometry and ornament in Islamic architecture.* Topkapı Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956. Santa Monica 1995, p. 63.

11 See Remi Labrusse, "Une traversée du malheur occidental." In: id. (ed.). *Purs décors? Arts de l'Islam, regards du XIXe siècle. Collections des Arts Décoratifs*. Exhibition catalogue. Paris 2007, pp. 32-53; A. Varela Braga: "Les enjeux de la préférence pour les arts extra-européens dans le discours sur l'ornement en Grande-Bretagne au milieu du XIXe siècle." In: *Images Revues* 10 (2012), <http://imagesrevues.revues.org/2141>.

12 See e.g. Rémi Labrusse: "Grammars of Ornament: Dematerialization and Embodiment from Owen Jones to Paul Klee." In: Gülru Necipoğlu/ Alina Payne (eds.): *Histories of Ornament. From Global to Local*. Princeton and Oxford 2016, pp. 320-333.

13 As Alina Payne has shown, the minute, the ornament and the detail became the focal point of much art historical research See Alina Payne: *From Ornament to Object: Genealogies of Architectural Modernism*. New Haven and London 2012.

14 See e.g. John Sweetman: *The Oriental Obsession. Islamic Inspiration in the British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920*. Cambridge 1988.; Gülru Necipoğlu 1995 (see note 10).

15 Franz Kugler: *Geschichte der orientalischen und antiken Baukunst*. Stuttgart 1859, vol. I,

pp. 491-492.

16 Edmond: *L'Egypte á l'Exposition universelle de 1867*. Paris 1867, pp. 190-191; quoted in Zeynep Çelik: *Displaying the Orient. Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*. Berkeley, Los Angeles 1992, p. 111. "Arab" or "Muhammedan", among other terms, were often used interchangeably to describe a vaguely defined style.

17 See Gülru Necipoğlu: "The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches." In: Benoît Junod et al. (eds.): *Islamic Art and the Museum. Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*. London 2012, pp. 57-75.

18 See Anne-Marie Sankovitch: "Structure/Ornament and the Modern Figuration of Architecture." In: *The Art Bulletin* 80/4 (1998), pp. 687-717.

19 In a similar vein, both the German art historians Karl Schnaase (1798-1875) and Franz Kugler (1808-1858) had previously degraded the structural aspect of Islamic architecture as subservient to ornamental adornment; see Frank-Lothar Kroll: *Das Ornament in der Kunsttheorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Zurich, New York 1987, pp. 44-45. Even Viollet-le-Duc voiced his opinion on this matter: "*The Arabs* [. . .] *did not change the Roman structure, but contented themselves with modifying its envelope;* [. . .] *In the Arabic monument, geometry supplied the vestment; in the western medieval structure, it gave the body.*", Id.: *Discourses on Architecture*. Trans. by Henry van Brunt. Boston 1875, pp. 457.

20 T. McEvilley: "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: 'primitivism' in 20th century art' at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984." In: *Artforum* 23/3 (1984), p. 59 – a remark by McEvilley's concerning African art in Western collections.

21 Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Art of the Saracens in Egyp*t. London 1886, p. 90.

22 Fergusson 1857 (see note 1), p. 13.

23 Ibid., p. 17; the keeper of the cast collection and professor of ornament at Marlborough House, the predecessor of the South Kensington Museum, Ralph Wornum, lamented the lack of "Saracenic", i.e. Islamic, Ornament in the collection. See *First Report of the Deparment of Practical Art*. London 1853, p. 289.

24 See e.g. Anthony Burton: *Vision and Accident. The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London 1999.

25 See Angus Patterson/ Marjorie Trusted (eds.): *The Cast Courts*. London 2018.

26 See e.g. A. Varela Braga: "'How to Visit the Alhambra and 'Be Home in Time for Tea'. Owen Jones's Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace of Sydenham." In: F. Giese/ A. V. Braga (eds.): *A Fashionable Style. Carl von Diebitsch und das Maurische Revival*. Bern 2017, pp. 71–83; J. Sweetman 1988 (see note 14); Mark Crinson: *Empire Building. Orientalism & Victorian Architecture*. London 1996; Lara Eggleton: "The ornament of the Alhambra and the past-facing present." In: *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (2012), pp. 1-29.

27 See Victoria and Albert Museum Archive (VAM), Nominal File S. Lane-Poole, MA/1/L257.

28 Comparison between Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt*. London 1886, and Inventory List from Oct. 1882, VAM Archive, Nominal File G. de St. Maurice, MA/1/S180, suggest that at least some of the casts of either collection, from, for instance, the Wikala of Sultan Qaytbay, Cairo, reproduced the same ornamental details.

29 Ibid.

30 Lane-Poole had informed the Museum that his travel to Cairo was in order to gather material "*for a history of Arabian art and architecture*" which he had long contemplated; see letter from Jan. 10, 1883, S. Lane-Poole Nominal File MA/1/ L257.

31 The South Kensington Museum divided its collection into different based-material departments. Thus most of the Islamic collection was divided among the metalwork, woodwork, sculpture etc., and it was only in 1950 that a gallery was allocated specifically to "Islamic art"; see Tim Stanley: *Palace and Mosque. Islamic Art from the Middle East*. London 2006, p. 21.

32 Lane-Poole 1886 (see note 28), p. 89.

33 Ibid., pp. 104-105.

34 Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Story of Cairo*. London 1971 [1902], p. 121.

35 "Saracenic Art at the South Kensington Museum." In: *The Times*, Oct. 23, 1884.

36 The number of casts from Islamic monuments pale in comparison to the number of casts acquired from European monuments, further highlighting the marginal position of these casts within the larger collection. See e.g. Malcom Baker: *The Cast Courts*. London 1982.

37 Most of extant fragments are cast made from moulds taken at Samarra. The fragile state of the original stucco panels made it difficult for the

excavators to remove them safely; see e.g. Alastair Northedge: " Creswell, Herzfeld, and Samarra." In: *Muqarnas* 8 (1991), pp. 74-93. About the importance of Herzfeld's work for the study of Islamic architecture, see e.g. Ann C. Gunter/Stefan R. Hauser (eds.): *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies, 1900–1950*. Leiden, Boston 2005.

38 See Ernst Herzfeld: *Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik* [Ausgrabungen von Samarra 1]. Berlin 1923.

39 Friedrich Sarre: "Die Aufstellung der Ergebnisse der Ausgrabung von Samarra im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum." In: *Berliner Museeen* 43/5-6 (1922), pp. 49-60.

40 See ibid.

41 Matthew D. Saba: "A Restricted Gaze. The Ornament of the Main Caliphal Palace of Samarra." In: *Muqarnas* 32 (2015), pp. 155-195, here: p. 155.

42 Henry Baker Tristram: "An Act of Vandalism." In: *The Times* 12 Nov. 1903.

43 See e.g. Eva-Maria Troelenberg: *Mshatta in Berlin. Keystones of Islamic Art*. Dortmund 2016; Johannes Cramer et al. (eds.): *Qasr al-Mschatta. Ein frühislamischer Palast in Jordanien und Berlin*. Petersberg 2016.

44 See See Volkmar Enderlein/ Michael Meinecke: "Graben, Forschen, Präsentieren. Probleme der Darstellung vergangener Kulturen am Beispiel der Mschatta-Fassade." In: *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 34 (1992), pp. 137-172.

45 See e.g. Troelenberg 2016 (see note 43).

46 See Enderlein / Meinecke 1992 (see note 43).

47 Thiersch to Bode, Sept. 5, 1903, IM 7/12-13, I 3474/03, Zentralarchive, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; quoted and translated in: Volkmar Enderlein/ Michael Meinecke / Jonathan Blower: "Excavation-Investigation-Presentation: Problems of Representing Past Cultures in the Example of the Mshatta Façade." In: *Art in Translation*, 2/3 (2010), pp. 309-372, here: pp. 338-339.

48 See ibid. Pp. 339-340.

49 See Troelenberg 2016; Cramer et al. 2016 (see note 43).

50 See Stefan Weber / Eva-Maria Troelenberg: "Mschatta im Museum. Zur Geschichte eines besonderen Monuments frühislamischer Kunst." In: *Jahrbuch Preußischer Kulturbesitz* 46 (2010), pp. 104-132.

51 As Oliver Watson noted about the history of Islamic pottery, see id.: "Museums, Collecting, Art-History and Archaeology." In: Sonderdruck aus *Damszener Mitteilungen* 11 (1999), pp. 421-32, here: pp. 431-432.

52 Wolfgang Ernst: "Framing the Fragment: Archaeology, Art, Museum." In: Paul Duro (ed.). *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundary of the Artwork*. Cambridge 1996, pp. 111-135, here: p. 118.

53 Eugenio Donate: "The Museum's Furnace. Notes towards a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet." In: Josue V. Harari (ed.). *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ithaca 1979, pp. 213-239, here: p. 223.

54 Similarly, writing about Ilkhanid architecture, Ana Marija Grbanovic notes that the greatest obstacle towards its appreciation "*is the dispersal of the majority of Ilkhanid tile revetments across countless Western collections, while the rest of the stucco and wall painting revetments still remain in situ*." Id.: "Ilkhanid Architectural Heritage in Iran. History, Challenges and Perspectives." In: Joaquim Rodrigues (ed.). *Preserving Transcultural Heritage. Your Way or My Way?* Casal de Cambra 2017, pp. 799-810, here: p. 801.