

Paper Matters – Abstracts

Panel 1: Objects in Motion: Anthologies and *Alba Amicorum*
(1 October, 9:30-11:30), Chair R. B. Davidson MacLaren

Unravelling an Enigma: A Collaborative Analysis of the Composition, Creation, and Current Condition of Metropolitan Museum of Art 1997.71

Yana van Dyke (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Dr Jake Benson (John Rylands Research Institute, Manchester)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds an oblong *safina* (boat) manuscript probably originally completed in Herat, located in Afghanistan today, by Sulṭān Muḥammad Nūr (fl. ca. 1472–1536) in 905 AH (1499–1500 CE), during the twilight of the Timurid dynasty (1370–1507). It contains selections of *ghazal* (lyric) poems from well-known poets such as Amīr Khusrau (1253–1325), Ḥāfiẓ (ca. 1325–1390), and Jāmī (1414–1492), as well as Timurid prince Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur (b. 1426, r. Mughal Emperor 1526–1530), who famously failed to lay siege to and hold Samarkand the following year. Hence, this manuscript offers readers a glimpse into Timurid literary culture during its final moments, shortly before it fell to invading Uzbek forces.

The folios within comprise a wide range of tinted and decorated papers in contrasting colours. For example, several central bifolia present delicately sprayed, mirrored filigree paper-cut stencilled designs executed on tinted backgrounds that feature birds, animals, and angels. Other richly hued, erratic ‘proto-marbled’ designs that feature distinctive ‘trickled’ or ‘drizzled’ rivulets await systematic study. Therefore, this interdisciplinary investigation aims to clarify and accurately describe all of the physical elements of this remarkable manuscript. While non-destructive, non-invasive spectroscopic, chromatographic, and polarizing light microscopy provides empirical evidence for materials and techniques that produced the decorated papers, closely scrutinizing the textual content reveals alterations and gaps reflecting missing and displaced folios. Therefore, these analytical tools reveal the full story of this small but remarkable manuscript, from its original construction—including the creation of the papers that form its folios—to its subsequent history, provenance, and current incomplete condition, insofar as can be ascertained.

Collated Paper: The Material Construction of *Alba Amicorum*

Prof Dr Marika Keblusek (Leiden University)

Decorated papers can often be found as part of the make-up of early modern *alba amicorum* or friendship albums. Turkish paper and/or marbled paper were included in the collation of such manuscripts, as a way to embellish the album with visual materials. A closer look at the composition of such volumes reveals much about the practice of album making, as well as about the particular role of decorated papers in this process. Why - and when - were such papers included? What can their position in the album possibly tell us about the owner's intentions?

In this talk, I will discuss the material and bibliographical composition of friendship albums with decorated paper, specifically the extensive *album amicorum* of the Dutch physician-collector Bernardus Paludanus (1550-1633). In this album, we find a number of marbled papers at the front and the back of the manuscript, which collation tells us much about the way the manuscript was put together, and how it functioned. I will contextualize this with other examples of decorated paper inclusion in *alba amicorum*.

The Consumption of Eurasian Decorated Papers in Sixteenth-Century Central European *Alba Amicorum*

Prof Dr Robyn Radway (Central European University, Vienna)

Central Europeans first engaged with Asian decorated papers inside the Habsburg diplomatic outpost known as the “German House” in Ottoman Constantinople. These initial interactions in the late 1560s led to dynamic material exchanges within the House through the 1590s. This paper explores the extension of these engagements into Europe by examining how men and women who never travelled to the Ottoman Empire themselves acquired, adapted, and used marbled, silhouetted, and sprinkled papers in *alba amicorum* (friendship albums) in the 1570s to 1590s. In doing so, it traces connections between decorated papers and the people using them in courts and cities such as Bratislava, Prague, Regensburg, and Vienna. I argue that the earliest Asian decorated papers circulated within Central Europe among a group of well-connected elites associated with the imperial court and were particularly favoured by women. Within a decade, a larger volume of Eurasian decorated papers, many experimental, supplied increasingly wider circles of consumption.

The Technical Construction of Decorated Papers in the Albums of Qalandar Pāshā

Dr Nil Baydar (Conservation and Archive Department, Manuscripts Institution of Türkiye, Istanbul)

Ottoman albums (*muraqqa'āt*) are generally studied for their calligraphy, paintings, and literary content, while the technical construction of their pages has received far less attention. This paper examines the Album of Sultan Aḥmad I (Topkapı Palace Museum Library [TPML], B.408), compiled by Qalandar Pāshā in the early seventeenth century, with particular emphasis on the role of decorated papers in the design and production of the manuscript.

Known to his contemporaries as a *vaşşāl* (paper joiner), Qalandar Pāshā was responsible not only for compiling albums but also for designing and constructing their pages. This study examines how coloured papers, paper joining (*vaşl*), cut-paper decoration (*qıṭ'a/kat'ı*), stencilling, gilding, framing, and border designs were combined to produce individual folios. Particular attention is given to the methods of joining papers, concealing seams, constructing borders, and integrating calligraphy and paintings into a single composition.

The research is based on a codicological examination of the album using conservation documentation methods and close visual observation. Since sampling was not permitted, all technical observations were made through non-invasive examinations. The Album of Sultan Ahmed I is compared with Qalandar Pāshā other albums and *Fālnāma* (Book of Omens; TPML, H. 1703), together with contemporary Ottoman albums preserved in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Harvard University collection and the Chester Beatty.

The comparison reveals a consistent approach to *vaşl* throughout Qalandar Pāshā's work. Similar methods of joining coloured papers, constructing borders, arranging pictorial and calligraphic panels, and disguising joins appear repeatedly across the albums. These recurring technical solutions make it possible to reconstruct Qalandar Pāshā's methods of page construction and offer new evidence for understanding how decorated papers were designed and assembled in the production of Ottoman court albums during the early seventeenth century.

The Vanished Patterns: Song Dynasty Embossed Decorated Paper and the Culture of Writing

Dr Yan-chiu He (National Palace Museum, Taiwan)

Extant embossed decorated paper (*yahua jianzhi*) survives predominantly from the Ming and Qing dynasties; only a handful of Song-dynasty examples had previously been discussed, leading scholars to assume that Northern Song decorated paper was exceedingly rare. The subtle, refined patterns on Huang Tingjian's Poem on the Hall of Pines and Wind first drew scholarly attention to Song decorated paper in 2006. Subsequent examination of high-resolution digital images identified more than twenty further examples in the National Palace Museum collection, though the full extent of their patterns remained difficult to discern. Only by replacing conventional frontal photography with oblique, side-angle photography and digital post-processing was it possible to recover clear, complete images of these motifs. This methodological breakthrough culminated in the 2018 exhibition and catalogue, *A Special Exhibition of Paintings and Calligraphy on Song Dynasty Decorated Paper*. Their disappearance is attributable not only to changing calligraphic conventions, but also to processing by the literati themselves and remounting by later generations. Following the Museum's comprehensive publication of these images, several previously unrecognized examples have since come to light in other collections. Su Shi (style name Su Dongpo) produced seven calligraphic works on decorated paper—one-quarter of the twenty-seven extant examples—while works associated with his circle account for twenty-four pieces, or 85.7 percent of the corpus. This type of decorated paper was evidently in considerable favour within the literary circle centred on Su Shi, a phenomenon that warrants further investigation. Future research in material and visual culture is invited to engage with this rich decorative repertoire, contributing to a fuller understanding of Northern Song writing culture.

The Chinese version can be found on the following page.

消失的花紋－宋代硃花箋紙與書寫文化

何炎泉 (國立故宮博物院書畫文獻處處長)

傳世硃花箋紙實物多集中於明清兩代，僅有零星幾件宋代作品被介紹過，致使過去學界認為北宋硃花箋數量稀少。黃庭堅《松風閣詩》上的隱晦且精美的裝飾圖案（2006年），開始引起對於宋代裝飾紙的研究興趣，陸續又透過高清數位圖像的檢查，發現了國立故宮博物院所收藏的二十多張宋代花箋作品，不過始終無法看清圖案的全貌。後來採用有別於從正面拍攝的傳統發法，改從側面拍攝的方式，搭配影像後製處理，才獲得清晰完整的裝飾紋樣，順利於2018年推出「北宋花箋特展」展覽與圖錄。推測造成隱晦硃花箋紙消失的原因，除了書寫風尚的改變，文人親自加工與後代裝裱工序都是關鍵。隨著故宮對花箋圖像的全面公開，其他博物館陸續又發現幾件原先不為人知的作品。整體而言，蘇軾留下7件寫於裝飾紙上的書跡，占傳世27件的四分之一，與其相關的作品則有24件（85.7%），幾乎高達八成五的比例。顯然，以蘇東坡為中心的交友圈，相當流行這類花箋紙，值得進一步探索。紙上豐富的裝飾圖案，也期待有相關物質與視覺文化研究的加入，才能更全面理解北宋書寫文化。

Mosaics in Paper: Marginal Adornment in 1570s-80s Bukhara

Dr Jaimee Comstock-Skipp (University of Oxford)

The talk focuses on illustrated Persian manuscripts of *Yūsuf and Zulaykhā*, a mystical love story composed by the poet Jami with Qur’anic origins, that were made in the Abu’l-Khayrid realm (present-day Uzbekistan) in the final quarter of the 16th century. The manuscripts are connected to an extraordinary period of commercial productivity in Bukhara in the absence of royal patronage, and to spiritual and economic networks spanning Central and South Asia. Many of the manuscripts are theorised to have journeyed from their creation site in Central Asia to India for sale in the country ca. late 16th century and early in the 17th.

The components of their creation will be scrutinised, covering the transcription of the text and the backgrounds of scribes when they are named; image cycles and the preference for certain scenes in the narrative to repeat across versions; marginal decoration incorporating coloured papers, stencils, and appliqués to heighten aesthetic and economic values. The presented case studies will add to the ongoing discussion of the “commercial” in deluxe arts of the books as advanced by Lâle Uluç in her analysis of standardised *Shāhnāma* manuscript production in Safavid Shiraz. I will suggest that artisans explicitly perpetuated a site-specific provenance of Bukhara for the Jami manuscripts based on local pride for the spiritual and cultural importance of the centre. The cultivation of a certain look to these objects both standardised their production but was also a means to heighten their marketability and collectability when exported. I suggest that early-modern audiences, the earliest buyers of these objects, were acutely aware of regional styles employed in the creation of Persian-language manuscripts. This sophistication did not always equate to venerating a manuscript in its original state and desiring its preservation; some appear to have been over-painted and modified upon receipt.

A Survey of the GLOBAL DECO PAPER Project

Prof Dr Ilse Sturkenboom, Hanieh Arjomand-Fard, Lily Baumeister, Yih-chuen Liao, Negar Kazemipourleilabadi, Theresa Zischkin (LMU Munich)

This survey introduces the conception of the GLOBAL DECO PAPER project, its principal research questions, and the methods through which the team studies decorated papers and their materials, techniques, and patterns.

The first case study considers Chinese decorated papers and explores hypotheses concerning their incorporation into fifteenth-century Persianate manuscripts and their subsequent adaptation and imitation across the Islamicate world. The second compares two visually similar but technically distinct methods of paper decoration: stencilling, practised across Greater Iran, Central Asia, and South Asia, and silhouetting, associated primarily with the Ottoman Empire. The lecture then demonstrates how these decorative patterns are traced using Affinity Photo. It discusses the technical process, the value of tracing for identifying, reconstructing, and comparing designs, and the method's possibilities and limitations.

The project's IT specialist will subsequently introduce the database and accompanying website, explaining their conceptual development, structure, and organisation. Finally, the project's exploration of AI-assisted approaches will be discussed, which laid the foundation for a further doctoral dissertation within GLOBAL DECO PAPER. This research investigates decorated paper, particularly stencilling, through a human-in-the-loop workflow comprising folio selection, segmentation, annotation, layout analysis, network analysis, and final review. Together, the project's findings and the continuing development of AI-assisted tools open new avenues of research and broaden the methodological scope of decorated-paper and Islamicate manuscript studies.

Around the World in 80 Cuts: A Brief Review of the Technical and Aesthetic Aspects of “Kaati”, the Art of Turkish Paper-Leather Cutting, Through the Observation of Historical and Contemporary Examples

Esma N. Akoğlu (Saray Sanat, Istanbul)

Museum archives, manuscript libraries and private collections around the world hold numerous examples of *kaatı* (*kat'ı*), the decorative art of Turkish paper-leather cutting. From cut leather bookbinding decorations to exquisite examples of calligraphic, floral and figurative cut paper compositions found in manuscripts, it attained prominence among book arts in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. Kaatı faced extinction at the beginning of the 20th century, however a revival was witnessed through the efforts of Ord. Prof. Dr. A Süheyl Ünver and a small number of dedicated artists. Today the art form continues to live on through the practices of classically trained artists. Therefore, understanding the concepts behind these artworks and the techniques employed in their making is of importance for artists as well as art historians, conservators, curators and collectors.

This paper will present a selection of past and present cut paper and leather works, with a focus on Ottoman era masterpieces. While some of these artworks have been previously studied in detail, a large number of others have yet to be the subject of research. A number of artworks featured in auction catalogues and previously unidentified cut-out work will also be discussed. Examined through the lens of a modern-day practitioner, each cut artwork will be used to highlight a different aspect of the art, ranging from materials and techniques used, to the characteristic principles of composition. The aim of this paper is to provide a maker's perspective on *kaatı*, and present artworks and ideas that will hopefully lead to new research and collaborative efforts in the future.

Decorated Papers of the Shah Tahmasp Album and Directions for Research

Paul Hepworth (Independent Conservator, Istanbul)

This presentation will focus first on the decorated papers in the Shah Tahmasp Album. The album was made at the behest of that eponymous Safavid ruler in the late 1550s under the patronage of his courtier Shah Quli Khalifa. An inscription shows that the album was in the Ottoman Royal Treasury by the 17th century; it is generally thought that it was gifted to the Ottomans by Tahmasp himself on the accession of Sultan Murat III to the throne. So, this particular album was a significant object of reference in two Islamic royal milieus: it was created by the Safavid dynasty at an important moment in the development of the Persian album, and it served as a precedent for the Ottomans when they developed their own albums.

The techniques used in the production of the decorated papers in the albums—dyeing, marbling, stencilling and gold sprinkling—will be characterized with reference to color and distribution in the manuscript. The codicological information about the production of the album that can be gleaned from the decorated papers will be explored. Comparisons will be drawn between the aesthetic preferences it embodies and their expression in the Ottoman world, especially under the influence of the Ottoman album-maker Kalender Pasha.

An attempt to recreate a leaf in the album using gold sprinkling will be discussed in detail. This experience clearly demonstrated the limits to modern knowledge of the standards of craftsmanship attained by the album's makers. It underlies a new initiative to recreate other aspects of album making which remain poorly understood from the viewpoint of actual practice. For example, how do all the different pieces of paper get mounted and joined into various composite leaf structures? What skills and methods must have been used by the craftsman to achieve the observed final results?

Finally, the necessity for both more and different kinds of research will be discussed against the backdrop of our understanding of Islamic paper decoration and album making as it has developed over the past quarter century. The current interest in decoration techniques and related areas of inquiry is tied to three inter-related approaches: knowledge of historical recipes and information; reconstruction of these recipes and craft techniques; and scientific analysis of materials. The efficacy of combining these approaches will be discussed and a case study on pigments will be presented to show how they provide a direction and opportunity for future research.

Strange Creatures in the Margins: Looking at Gold-painted Margins in Persian Manuscripts

Anita Chowdry (City Literary Institute, London)

This talk will involve looking closely at decorative marginal painting in 15th and 16th century Persian manuscripts, from casual doodles to formal compositions, and attempting to recreate some of the painting techniques employed. It will also consider practical reconstructions of selected techniques, drawing on the presenter's previous experiments with Persianate marginal designs, fine brushwork, pigments and gold.

Panel 4: Techniques of Repetition and Surface Transformation
(2 October, 13:00-15:00), Chair Prof Dr Nuria de Castilla (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris)

Gold-Decorated Paper (*Jinhuaqian*) from a Conservation Perspective: Toward a Classification of East Asian Decorated Processed Paper

Prof Huan-shen Lin (National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan)

This paper examines the techniques used to produce gold-decorated paper (*jinhuaqian*) and the contexts in which it was used, from the perspective of a conservator of East Asian painting and calligraphy and raises questions that existing classificatory frameworks have left unresolved. The study draws on secondary sources and technical observations made onsite at National Palace Museum exhibitions.

In terms of material classification, gold-decorated paper and embossed decorated paper (*yahua jianzhi*), though both sized and coated processed papers, represent distinct technical lineages: the former has a smooth surface decorated with gold ink (*nijin*, ground gold suspended in a glue medium) or gold leaf; the latter derives its hidden patterns from block-pressing—an optical rather than pigment-based mode of decoration. This bears on the paper-beating process (*dazhi*, which compacts fibres and imparts sheen) and on criteria for distinguishing gold ink from gold leaf.

The bond between decoration layer and substrate leaves gold-decorated paper intolerant of folding: the irreversible cracking a fold produces is a symptom of delamination, compromising the object's appeal as a tribute item or trade good. Conservation practice cannot avoid water and alum-glue sizing, though moisture may loosen paper-beaten compactness and sheen, while sizing risks introducing plant-, fish-, or rabbit-skin glue absent from the original binding medium.

The paper also raises questions on Yongle-era embassy travel routes—whether the Yuan-dynasty postal relay system (*yam*) persisted into the early Ming—and proposes Tibetan gold tracery on indigo-dyed paper as a comparative case. For non-invasive analysis, it advocates XRF and FTIR: XRF confirms gold and mercury content, distinguishing mercury amalgam from non-amalgam gilding; FTIR analyses the coating's functional groups to identify animal- versus plant-based binding media.

The Chinese version can be found on the following page.

修復視野下的金花箋：東亞裝飾加工紙的分類芻議

林煥盛 (國立雲林科技大學文化資產維護系副教授)

本文以東亞書畫修復視角，重新檢視金花箋製作工藝與使用脈絡，於既有分類框架未及釐清之處提出研究問題。材料以二手文獻與故宮觀展所得之技術性觀察為主。

就物質分類而言，金花箋與研花箋雖同屬施膠塗佈之加工紙，然工藝譜系有別：前者表面平整光滑，裝飾層以泥金（膠結金粉）或金箔施作；後者則以雕版研壓形成暗紋凹凸，屬光學性裝飾而非顏料層裝飾。此區分涉及打紙（搗鍊、研光以緊實纖維並增益光澤）工序，以及泥金與金箔施金材料層之辨識標準。

金花箋顏料層與紙基結合方式使其不耐折疊，折痕造成之不可逆龜裂，屬材料層剝離之外顯徵狀，直接影響貢品或貿易品之外觀評價。就修復倫理而言，傳統修復難以避免使用水與礬水：水分可能鬆弛打紙質感並減損光澤；礬水雖穩定顏料層，卻可能引入植物膠、魚膠、兔皮膠等非原始結合劑。

本文亦提出永樂年間使節團移動路線問題，涉及元代驛站系統（站赤）於明初之延續性、紙張產地、包裝與運輸環節；西藏磁青紙描金傳統可作比較參照。就非破壞性分析而言，本文主張以XRF與FTIR為核心手段：XRF進行元素分析，確認金與汞之存在，區辨汞齊貼金與非汞齊施金工藝；FTIR分析塗佈層官能基，辨識結合劑屬動物膠或植物膠。

A Spray-Stencilled Yemeni Manuscript Under the Microscope

Rita Capitani (Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence)

The conservation treatment of the composite Yemeni manuscript ICRCPAL 770 highlighted a paper decoration process preserved in its second codicological unit, copied in 1123 AH/1711 CE. Previously uncatalogued and exhibited as a conservation example of heavy surface grime, the manuscript preserves several noteworthy features.

Among these are writing areas sprinkled with various pigments and enclosed within ruled frames. Microscopic examination revealed larger pigment droplets applied before the text was copied, followed, on the final sheets, by a finer sprinkled decoration applied after writing and accompanied by a progressively simplified frame design.

The study of the manuscript combined codicological analysis with the characterisation of the constituent materials (paper, pigments, adhesives, sewing threads, and inks), carried out by the ICRCPAL diagnostic laboratories in Rome. A range of analytical methods was employed, including multispectral imaging, Raman spectroscopy, X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, fibre optic reflectance spectroscopy, scanning electron microscopy, and microscopic fibre examination.

The paper decoration can be related to the *afshān* and stencilling tradition, widely documented in Iran, Turkey and India, and displays features consistent with an Ottoman artistic presence. Experimental reconstructions using natural sponges, brushes, and a mouth atomiser were undertaken to test different application techniques.

By focusing on the materiality of composite Yemeni manuscripts, this contribution offers insights into the circulation of decorative techniques during the eighteenth century, particularly in the so far understudied region of Yemen.

Collecting and exchanging knowledge of marbled paper in 17th century Europe – A reconstruction based on manuscript sources

Elena Laura Jakobi (University of Vienna)

Until the 1660s, knowledge of the paper marbling technique was scarce in Europe. Only a few printed publications contained, often vague, information or instructions on marbled paper. However, manuscript sources indicate a different set of facts: A newly discovered manuscript (Glasgow, University Library) shows, together with other contemporary recipe manuscripts of artists and curious people of various social backgrounds, that knowledge of marbled paper was already collected and shared. This also demonstrates a growing interest in the topic and shows how the technique was recorded in a different, more private medium. Since these handwritten recipes are mostly innovative texts rather than copies of the few printed instructions available at the time, they reveal a previously unknown diversity of circulating knowledge and fascination regarding marbled paper. Such sources open up new contextual approaches and complement the perspectives from previous research, which has tended to focus more on printed texts.

Historical discussions on theories regarding the natural formation of marble varieties, the element of chance, and the imitation of natural (stone) surfaces may have contributed to this curiosity about marbled paper and its dissemination in early modern Europe. Furthermore, such aspects probably shaped the perception of marbled paper not just as a decorative artisanal product but rather as both a (scientific) object of interest and a technique for imitating natural processes.

This talk addresses two questions: Why did particularly artists and people connected to the arts and sciences become interested in marbled paper in the mid-17th century? Moreover, how can discourses on the relation between art, imitation and nature offer explanations regarding this interest? As case studies, these manuscripts allow us attempts to reconstruct the contemporary motivation and the ways in which people acquired and shared knowledge of marbled paper before printed texts became commonly available.

Paper Matters, or How to Make New Ones: Persian Folios in the Jean Pozzi Collection

Prof Dr Negar Habibi (University of Geneva)

In the autumn of 2025, I had the opportunity to examine an old cardboard box that had belonged to a Parisian dealer active in the early twentieth century. Besides at least fifty text folios from a dispersed fifteenth-century *Shāhnāma* now in part in Geneva's Museum of Art and History, the box contained several hundred detached fragments cut from the margins of various album pages. Handling these fragments was a deeply unsettling experience; their irregular shapes and carefully trimmed edges testified to a deliberate process of dismantling rather than accidental damage. Many richly illuminated folios had been systematically perforated, with decorative borders, illuminated panels, or calligraphic elements removed from their original settings. These extracted pieces were then reused to fabricate seemingly complete—and supposedly “new”—album pages intended for the flourishing European art market of the early twentieth century. The surviving fragments preserve the physical traces of this practice and reveal the extent to which manuscripts were disassembled in order to satisfy changing collecting tastes.

Drawing on examples from the collection of Jean Pozzi, now partly preserved in Geneva, this paper examines a group of Persian album and manuscript folios that were assembled or substantially reworked in Europe during the early twentieth century. By closely analysing their materials, construction techniques, and visual strategies, it explores both the remarkable craftsmanship involved in producing these composite objects and the aesthetic ideals that guided their creation. At the same time, the paper considers what these reconstructed folios reveal about the European market for Persian manuscripts, the shifting perceptions of authenticity, and the complex afterlives of Islamic works on paper in the twentieth century.

Carl Beitel (1866–1917) and the Decorated Papers of the Wiener Werkstätte

Marjana Uhde (University of Vienna)

At the beginning of the 20th century, designers and artisans at the Wiener Werkstätte increasingly produced decorated papers. With this, a distinct formal language and intention developed. They were signed—thus emphasizing their artistic authorship—and exhibited. Carl Beitel, head of the Wiener Werkstätte's bookbinding workshop, also created a diverse range of decorated papers and exhibited his works alongside those of renowned artists such as Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser. Despite Beitel's central position within the Wiener Werkstätte's bookbinding workshop, his decorated papers have not yet been the subject of scholarly research. This study systematically examines Beitel's works for the first time. The goal is to reassess his role in the design of decorated papers at the Wiener Werkstätte. The study combines a formal analysis of selected decorated papers by Carl Beitel with a comparative examination of the works of Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, as well as a contextualization within the production and exhibition framework of the Wiener Werkstätte. The results demonstrate that Beitel made a significant, yet previously underestimated, contribution to the field of decorated paper design around 1900. A formal analysis reveals that Beitel's decorated papers exhibit key characteristics of an artistic approach, such as heterogeneous form distribution, deliberate compositional use of cut-outs, and a close relationship between format and pictorial quality. A comparison with the works of Josef Hoffmann also points to Beitel's influence. Overall, the findings enable a reassessment of Beitel's contribution to the artistic production of decorated paper within the Wiener Werkstätte and suggest that he should be regarded as a significant figure. The lecture thus contributes to the art-historical classification of decorated paper at the intersection of arts and crafts and autonomous works of art.

Borders Without Borders: Reimagining the Persian *Muraqqa* ' with European Decorated Papers in the So-Called Nasir al-Din Shah Decoupage Album (c. 1888)

Amélie Couvrat Desvergnès (Independent Conservator and Researcher, France)

The so-called *Nasir al-Din Shah Decoupage Album*, believed to have been produced in 1888 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Qajar ruler's accession to the throne, represents one of the most remarkable yet little-studied examples of decorated paper in late nineteenth-century Iran. Originally bound as a single volume, its folios are now dispersed among public and private collections.

Each folio is a composite construction in which earlier Persian miniature paintings and calligraphic panels were remounted within newly created borders composed of decoupage elements meticulously cut from imported European decorated papers. Although the artists responsible for the album remain unknown, the borders reveal an extraordinary sense of artistic freedom and inventive composition. While recurring motifs—including arabesques, floral ornaments, and ornamental scrollwork—create visual coherence, no two borders are identical, demonstrating a highly individual approach to design.

Close material examination reveals a remarkable diversity of European decorated papers, including marbled, chromolithographed, embossed, stamped, and gilt papers. These papers were not manufactured in Iran during the Qajar period and were almost certainly imported from Europe, particularly Germany and Austria. Some specimens closely resemble products of manufacturers such as the *Aschaffenburg Buntpapierfabrik*, whose richly decorated papers became widely distributed during the nineteenth century and were associated with the growing popularity of bourgeois paper crafts, including scrapbooking and the use of ornamental stationery.

By analysing the materials, manufacturing techniques, and compositional strategies of the album's borders, this paper investigates how imported European decorated papers were appropriated and transformed within an Iranian artistic context. Rather than viewing the album solely as evidence of Qajar fascination with European decorative arts, it argues that these materials were consciously integrated into the established tradition of the Persian *muraqqa* ', where painting, calligraphy, and ornament were brought together in a unified aesthetic programme. The album thus emerges as a unique hybrid object, demonstrating how the global circulation of decorated papers stimulated new forms of artistic experimentation while simultaneously renewing a long-standing Persian artistic tradition.