

V&A Academy

ARTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Tuesday

29 September – 1 December 2026





Introduction

What is Islamic Art? This course seeks answers to that question, from the past to the present, through the visual arts of calligraphy, illustrated books and manuscripts and across a diverse range of media including ceramics, metalwork, glass and textiles.

This course follows the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula to its swift expansion eastward towards Iran and to the Mediterranean in the West. The arts of the region rapidly evolved displaying distinctive new styles and forms; ceramics, metalwork, glass and textiles developed a new visual language embodying a diverse range of regional characteristics. Illustrated manuscripts and books reached unprecedented levels of technical skill and refinement and architecture of the palace and mosque provided the backdrop to court life and religious practice.

Archaeologists, curators, collectors and artists discuss their relationship to art, architecture and artefacts across the region. V&A Speakers include Mariam Rosser-Owen and Rachel Dedman.

Information

Tuesdays, 29 September – 1 December, 2026. in person

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 09 February, 2027.

Your course leader

Dr Helen Glaister is an art historian specialising in Chinese Ceramics and Decorative Arts. She worked at the British Museum and Birkbeck before joining the V&A as Course Director, Arts of Asia. Helen was awarded her MA and PhD from SOAS, University of London where she regularly teaches.

Your course series

This course is part of the Arts of Asia course series, which spans 3 terms running from September through June. To find out more about the other courses in this series, [take a look at our course listings](#) or speak to your course leader.

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice.

Week 1 – 29 September

Introduction

- 10.45 Course Introduction, **Helen Glaister**
- 11.00 What is Islamic Art? , **Natasha Morris**
- 12.30 Themes in the arts of the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods,
Marcus Milwright
- 14.30 Decoration of an early Islamic Qur'an found in Sanaa, Yemen,
Marcus Milwright
- 15.30 Online Live discussion, **Helen Glaister**

Week 2 – 6 October

Iraq and Egypt: 9th – 11th Centuries

- 10.00 Conservation at the V&A – Behind the scenes tour
In Person learners only
- 11.00 Fatimid Cairo, **Edward Shawe Taylor**
- 12.30 Early Ceramics and the Development of Lustreware,
Richard McClary
- 14.30 Fatimid Lustreware, **Richard McClary**

Week 3 – 13 October

The Islamic West

- 10.00 The Islamic West - Gallery Talk (Group A),
Mariam Rosser-Owen - *In Person learners only*
- 11.00 The Art and Architecture of Umayyad Cordoba,
Umberto Bongianino
- 12.30 The Almoravids and Almohads in North Africa,
Umberto Bongianino
- 14.30 The Alhambra, **Umberto Bongianino**
- 15.30 The Islamic West - Gallery Talk (Group B),
Mariam Rosser-Owen - *In Person learners only*

Week 4 – 20 October

Medieval Egypt and Syria

- 11.00 The Minbars of Mamluk Cairo, **Omniya Abdel Barr**
(Prerecorded Session)
- 12.30 Astrolabes and other Scientific Instruments, **Federica Gigante**
- 14.30 Gilded and Enamelled Glass, **Melanie Gibson**

Week 5 – 27 October

Medieval Iran and Iraq

- 11.00 Architecture in the Iranian World during the Medieval Period,
George Manginis (Presenting Remotely)
- 12.30 Inlaid metalwork of medieval Islam, **James Allan**
- 14.30 The beginnings of Manuscript Illustration, **Vivek Gupta**
- 13.30 Online Live discussion, **Helen Glaister**

Week 6 – 3 November

The Mongol Dynasties

- 10.00 Ceramics – Gallery Talk (Group A), **Melanie Gibson**
In Person learners only
- 11.00 Overview, **Sussan Babaie**
- 12.30 Ceramics from Kashan in the 12th and 13th centuries,
Melanie Gibson
- 14.30 Timurid and Safavid Ceramics, **Melanie Gibson**
- 15.30 Ceramics – Gallery Talk (Group B), **Melanie Gibson**
In Person learners only

Week 7 – 10 November

The Safavid Empire

- 10.00 Islamic Book Binding Study Session - Gallery Talk (Group A),
Chiara Nicolais - *In Person learners only*
- 11.00 The Architecture and Tiles of Safavid Isfahan, **Reza Daftarian**
(Prerecorded Session)
- 12.30 Carpets and Silks from the Safavid Empire, **Margaret Squires**
- 14.30 Timurid and Safavid Manuscript and Book Production,
Emily Shovelton
- 15.30 Islamic Book Binding Study Session - Gallery Talk (Group B),
Chiara Nicolais - *In Person learners only*

Week 8 – 17 November

The Ottoman Empire

- 10.00 Art in the Ottoman Empire - Gallery Talk (Group A),
George Manginis - *In Person learners only*
- 11.00 Ottoman Architecture, **George Manginis**
- 12.30 Ceramics from Ottoman Turkey, **Melanie Gibson**
- 14.30 Ottoman Arts and its Representational Traditions,
Gizem Tongo
- 15.30 Art in the Ottoman Empire - Gallery Talk (Group B),
George Manginis - *In Person learners only*

Week 9 – 24 November

The Nineteenth Century

- 10.00 Gallery Talk (Group A), **Melanie Gibson**
In Person learners only
- 11.00 The Art of Qajar Iran, **Natasha Morris**
- 12.30 The Photographic Turn, **Natasha Morris**
- 14.30 The Arab Hall at Leighton House, **Melanie Gibson**
- 15.30 Gallery Talk (Group B), **Melanie Gibson**
In Person learners only

Week 10 – 1 December

The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

- 11.00 Uzbek artist installation, **Aziza Kadyri**
- 12.30 Contemporary Craft, **Mariam Rosser-Owen**
- 14.30 The V&A Jameel Prize: Contemporary art, Islamic Society and the Digital, **Rachel Dedman**