

# MIDDLE EASTERN

## Manuscripts, Ceramics, & Textiles

### About the Exhibition Curators

**Sarah Mirza** has been a member of the College's faculty since 2010. She received her BA from William Paterson University, and MA and PhD from the University of Michigan. Some of the courses that Sarah teaches include *Islam*, *Comparative Religious Traditions: Near East, Arabic, and Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. Sarah's research interests include early Islam, manuscript culture, orality and literacy, and the history of the book.

**Kara Morrow** has been a member of the College's faculty since 2009. She received her BFA from Auburn University, MA from the University of Alabama, and PhD from Florida State University. Some of the courses that Kara teaches include: *Introduction to Art History I: Prehistoric through Medieval Art*; *Greek Archaeology and Art*; *Roman Archaeology and Art*; *Early Medieval Art*; *Late Medieval Art*; *African Art*; and *Islamic Art*. Kara's research interests focus on visual narrative in Romanesque and Gothic architectural sculpture, and Africanisms in African-American visual culture.

Organized by The College of Wooster Art Museum (CWAM) in support of the *2012 Wooster Forum: The Middle East*, guest curators for *Middle Eastern Manuscripts, Ceramics, & Textiles* are Sarah Mirza, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, and Kara Morrow, Assistant Professor of Art History. The objects are from the CWAM's Permanent Collections, which are used for teaching, exhibitions, loans, and research.

Twelve of the seventeen ancient Iranian ceramics selected by Kara Morrow for this exhibition are associated with the Bronze Age (c. 3100–1200 BCE), and come from northern and northwestern Iran. Five additional ceramic vessels (located in the last case in the gallery to your right) were also produced in Northern Iran but date to the later Parthian period (c. 250 BCE to CE 224). From elegantly burnished vases to droll animal effigies, viewed together this collection demonstrates the extraordinary flexibility and ingenuity of the artists of ancient Iran according to Morrow. Moreover, this collection offers unique glimpses into the funerary rites and rituals of little studied communities, and—due to clandestine excavations—represents lost opportunities for archaeological discovery and historical understanding.

The objects in the other half of the exhibition were selected by Sarah Mirza, and feature luxury objects created between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries: an Ottoman Qur'an, six Persian and Indian illuminated manuscripts, and four Iranian and Pakistani carpets. Through these objects, Mirza explores historical context as well as methods of artistic production in the creation of illuminated manuscripts, styles of Arabic calligraphy, components of the Qur'an, and comparisons between bookbinding and carpet design. These juxtapositions testify to the close relationships between seemingly disparate Islamic art forms, linking artistic inspiration through weaving, metalwork, painting, tile-work, and even architecture.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank Sarah Mirza and Kara Morrow for going above and beyond in not just sharing their scholarship and knowledge, but for being excellent colleagues and superb examples for their students. Additionally, the curators and I owe Doug McGlumphy, Museum Preparator, a huge debt of gratitude for his conception and execution of a beautiful installation design that more than does justice to these exquisite objects and the themes the curators put forth. Also, we thank Vince Discipio, Director of Digital Infrastructure/IT, for his technical assistance with the installation of Shirin Neshat's *Tooba*.

Finally, the CWAM acknowledges and thanks the donors—Mrs. Ruth Oenslager, Mrs. Halsey S. Wilbur, Class of 1933, and Mrs. Esther Boyer—for their gifts of the objects in *Middle Eastern Manuscripts, Ceramics, & Textiles*.

Kitty McManus Zurko  
Director/Curator  
The College of Wooster Art Museum