

On the Properties of Things – Contemplating the Shifting Meanings and Identities of Islamic Art Objects in a Museum Context

Aga Khan Museum, Toronto
26 October, 2018, 2-6 pm

The afternoon workshops at the Aga Khan Museum invite participants to explore the shifting and multiple properties of things, and to discuss collaboratively issues and challenges in museumship and material culture studies.

While the workshops will involve close engagements with Aga Khan Museum objects and temporary exhibitions, participants are encouraged to make connections that derive from their own institutional and disciplinary contexts. The central question for each workshop will be: how do we access, recover, and communicate the various meanings of an object, in the broader context of democratizing the narratives of things?

With this in mind, each participant will have the opportunity to choose one of the following four themes to explore, in conversation with the Museum's experts and collections:

- From Private Collection to Museum Display - Shifting Object Identities
- Beyond Materiality: Recovering the Intangible Dimensions of an Object
- Artefacts as Markers of Human Identities and Ideologies
- Tradition and Transformation

From Private Collection to Museum Display - Shifting Object Identities

In a private collection, collectors select and imbue their objects with very subjective, personal, taste-based motivations and meanings. Inevitably, the meanings of objects shift when they leave a private collection for a public museum display. In this workshop, we will explore what is lost, and what is created, when the meanings of an object move from 'subjective' and 'personal,' to 'objective' and 'public.'
Location: Bellerive Room.

Beyond Materiality: Recovering the Intangible Dimensions of an Object

The intangible significance of objects is often ignored in displays, and conventional interpretation may focus exclusively on their materiality. How can we reconstruct the original, 'complete' identity of an object, using its material presence as a departure point to explore its inherent intangible dimensions and meaning?
Location: Permanent Collection.

Artefacts as Markers of Human Identities and Ideologies

Many objects were created to project the identities/ideologies of their patrons (in this, particular case male identity, wealth and power). How can such objects help us contemplate the same human instincts today? Workshop location: Emperors & Jewels (temporary exhibition).

Tradition and Transformation

The material culture of societies faced with unprecedented change may react by: revitalising and reinvigorating traditions, thus placing them at the heart of 'contemporary' discourse; embracing change and thus abandoning tradition; or navigating and fusing aspects of tradition and the newest artistic / cultural departures. What is traditional and what is contemporary in art and who decides? Workshop location: Arts of 19th-century Iran (temporary exhibition).

Schedule:

2:00PM – Welcome & Introduction to the Museum

2:10 – 3:15 – Museum Tour (2 groups)

3:15 – 3:45 – Break (Refreshments and Free Exploration)

3:45 – 4:45 – Breakout Workshops

4:45 – 5:15 – Group Share

5:15 – 6:00 – Wrap-up (and Further Free Exploration)

6:00 – Coach Departs for Ryerson