

36th CIHA World Congress in Lyon
Matter Materiality | Matière Matérialité
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Panel organisers:

Alya Karame (Collège De France) alya.karame@college-de-france.fr
Umberto Bongianino (University of Oxford) umberto.bongianino@ames.ox.ac.uk

Panel title:

The Materiality of Pious Texts: The Qur'an and Devotional Manuscripts

Both the Qur'an and Islamic devotional manuscripts have traditionally been studied as texts and artistic achievements, but rarely as material objects. Concerns about how to handle and dispose of Qur'anic matter – how to use the manuscript, where to place it, when to touch it – or whether it is permissible to perfume it, ingest it or sell it, were among the anxieties of the first centuries of Islam. Formative to the Qur'an's physical manifestation as codices, scrolls or inscribed artefacts, these debates shaped its sacrality in the material realm and affected the use of Islamic devotional manuscripts in which passages of the Qur'an appear next to other pious texts, prayers, or illustrations of holy places. Art history has been rarely concerned with such phenomena, or with the corporeality of sacred and pious texts in general.

This session aims to interrogate the materiality of pious texts and the roles they played in shaping artistic forms embedded in a diverse range of practices, at the time of their production or in their afterlives: Qur'anic calligraphy, calligrams, and emblematic inscriptions in books and scrolls, but also on tablets and panels of various materials, interspersed or combined with devotional texts and images presented in diagrammatic or iconified forms. By moving away from archaeological taxonomies and the study of styles and repertoires, we hope to create space for approaching pious texts through their materiality, their use, and the range of physical reactions they elicited. Meanings – whether religious, political, or aesthetic – can be found not just in how texts looked, but also in how they functioned, and it is through the lens of materiality that previously neglected ideas and behaviours can be examined.

With that in mind, we call for papers that explore the materiality of pious texts of any kind, focusing on how they were shaped, what aesthetic ideas were embedded in them, and what kind of engagement their forms triggered, be it at the time of their making, consumption, alteration, or reuse. As their meanings shifted throughout their spatial and temporal circulation, within and beyond Muslim communities, these texts projected multifaceted statements of faith and efficacy that are yet to be unpacked. Later interventions such as manipulations of their constitutive elements, amendments to their illustrations, or smudging and erasures, also reflect practices and beliefs, often echoing ideologies. In no way limited to these aspects, this session seeks papers that re-instate the role of makers, beholders, and users of texts within art history. As such, it encourages cross-disciplinary research – bridging religious studies, anthropology, and visual culture – to re-establish the relation between art history, material culture, and religion.

Submission:

Please submit the following by **15 September 2023** via this link:
<https://livebyglevents.key4register.com/key4register/AbstractList.aspx?e=148>

- Title of the proposed paper (concise and reflecting the contents of the paper).
- Paper Proposal: An abstract of 350 to 500 words, in English or French, including 4 to 6 key words and a possible short bibliography.
- CV of 500 characters with first name, last name, title, status, institution of affiliation and a link to the personal or professional page.

Funding:

Applicants are responsible for securing their own funding. Please consult this page regularly:
<https://www.cihalyon2024.fr/en/call-for-grants>