



Museum für
Islamische Kunst
Berlin

mission &
objectives



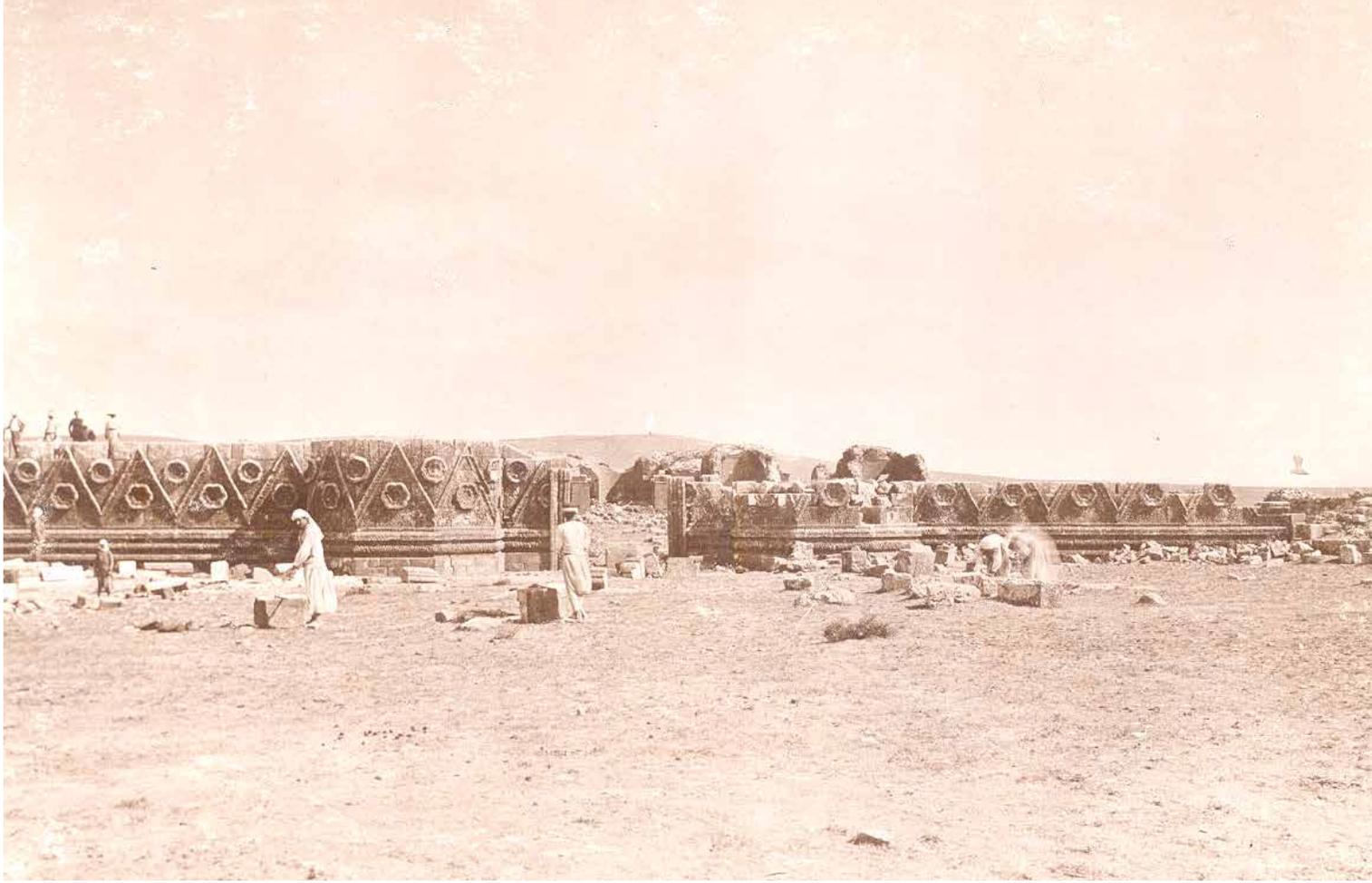
Museum für
Islamische Kunst
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

cover photo:
Detail of the painted wood panelling
in the Aleppo Room, Syria 1601



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Museum für mission
Islamische Kunst & objectives
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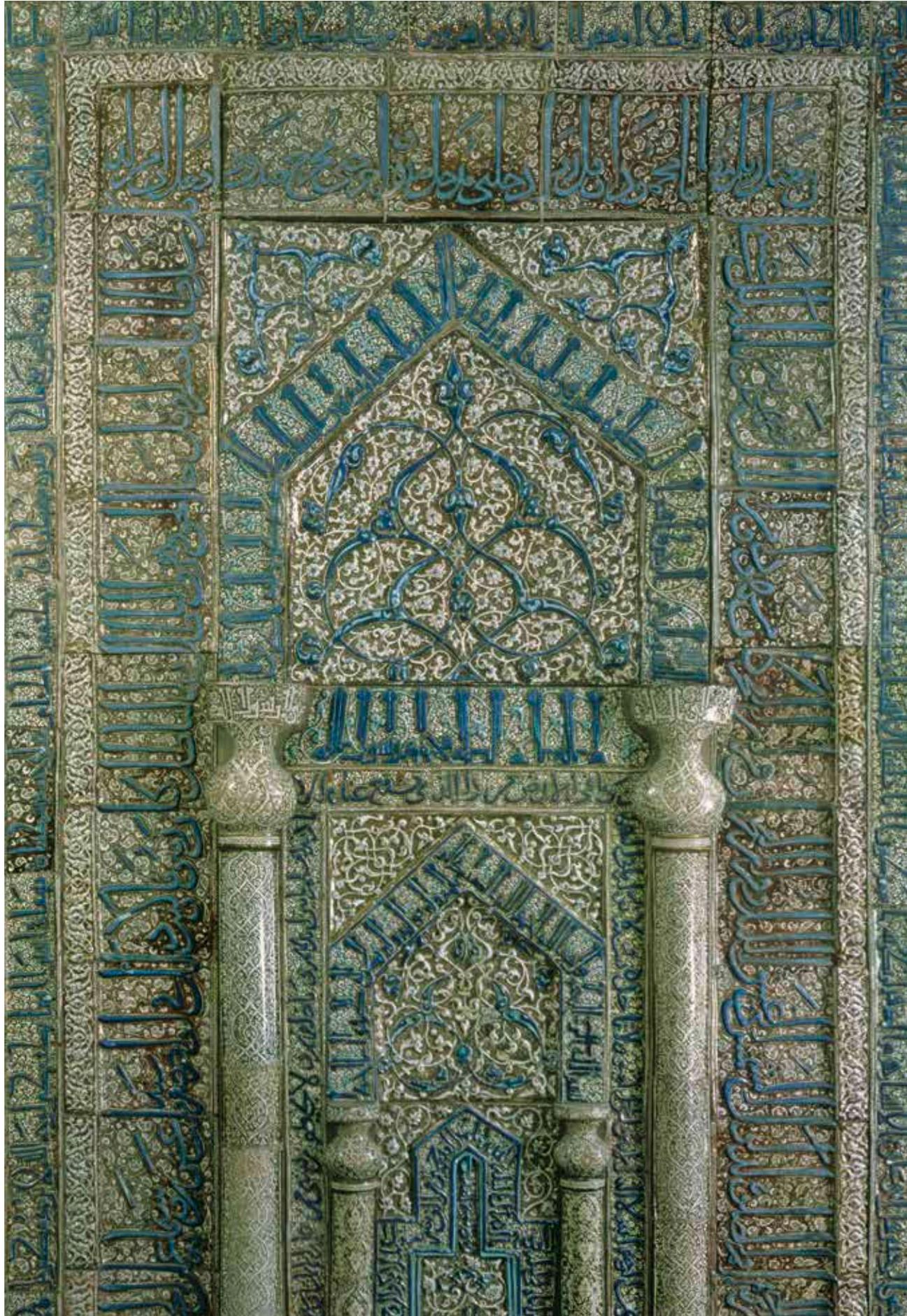
Research—Restoration— Cultural Education— Presenting Muslim Cultures

The Museum für Islamische Kunst at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin is the only institution of its kind in Germany. It is the oldest museum dedicated to Islamic Art in the West, and with about 100,000 pieces, it is one of the leading collections of Islamic Art.

Its holdings are especially rich in monumental objects, including the impressive façade of the 8th century Caliphal palace of Mshatta [Jordan], which is the largest and one of the most important artefacts of Islamic Art in any museum. Other highlights include the unique dome from the Alhambra Palace in Granada and 13th century prayer niches from Kashan [Iran] and Konya [Turkey]. The most loved by our visitors is the magnificently painted wooden panelling of a 17th century merchant house from Aleppo [Syria] – the oldest and finest surviving wooden interior from the Ottoman World. The museum has also undertaken

major excavations which are represented in a number of outstanding and unique artefacts on display, including the fixtures and fittings of the 9th Century Caliphal capital of Samarra [Iraq]. The collection also houses a large number of important Ottoman and Persian carpets, fine pottery and architectural ceramics, and many fine calligraphies and paintings of the art of the book including numerous miniatures from the Mughal Empire.

The payer niche [mihrab] from Kahsan, Iran 1226



Mission and Objectives

Location

Berlin represents the cultural legacy of Muslim cultures in its prime location in the Pergamon Museum on Museum Island which is the most visited museum in Berlin located in the very heart of the city. The museum is subsequently a part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Partnerships

The museum operates within a larger and more extensive global network of museums, heritage institutions, artists, and both institutional and private researchers, and it also collaborates closely with museums in the Muslim world. The Museum is co-founder of the prize-winning [SAWA](#) Museums Academy for young museum professionals in the [MENA](#) region and Germany.

on-site, in places like the Haram al-Sharif Museum in Jerusalem, Yazd Province Museum or the Herat National Museum in Afghanistan. The Syrian Heritage Archive Project – a major project initiated by the museum and the German Archaeological Institute – focuses on the tangible and intangible heritage for the reconstruction of Aleppo. It received special recognition at the Museums&Heritage Awards in London.

Preserving Muslim Cultures

The Museum preserves, studies, restores and communicates the cultural memory of Muslim societies from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, from Antiquity to the Modern Age. Its restoration workshops, with four permanent restorers, are internationally renowned. The Museum also trains restorers working in the Muslim world and organises restoration work

Outreach

As a repository of culture, we not only preserve and restore objects, but also perform functions for the wider society. Every year, up to 900,000 visitors come to the Museum für Islamische Kunst and over 600 schools work with our educational material. Large parts of the holdings are digital accessible

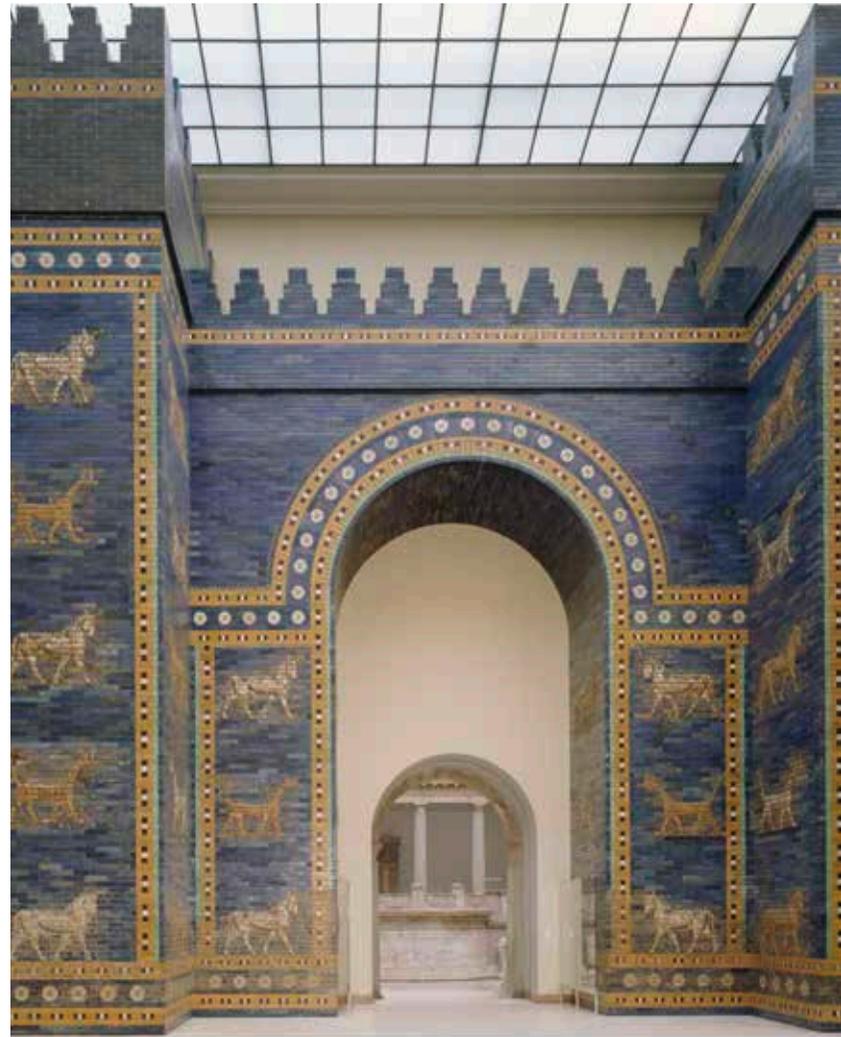
from anywhere. Exhibitions are well received in the media and many hundreds register for our educational programs. The digital workshops for schools, many short films, an online-platform, and cooperation with school book publishers aim for nationwide outreach. With its education projects in schools, clubs, mosque communities, and social organisation the museum takes a leading role on cultural education of art and architecture of Islamic societies. The program, “Multaka”, with refugees as guides in Berlin museums won several awards and inspired many similar projects internationally. With our projects we work for an open and plural society.

Presenting Muslim Cultures

The museum reaches a wide ambit of visitors from specialists to those who have neither studied or travelled to the Middle East, as well as people of the diaspora who come to connect with their proximate countries and cultures. With the Middle East’s heightened profile and the current global attention to political events, we play a vital role as a site of cross-cultural exploration for building an understanding and a heightened cultural awareness—in our local settings and global connections.

The reconstruction of the Babylonian Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum (Vorderasiatisches Museum)

Entrance to the Pergamon Museum







Carpet room in the Pergamon Museum [Museum für Islamische Kunst]

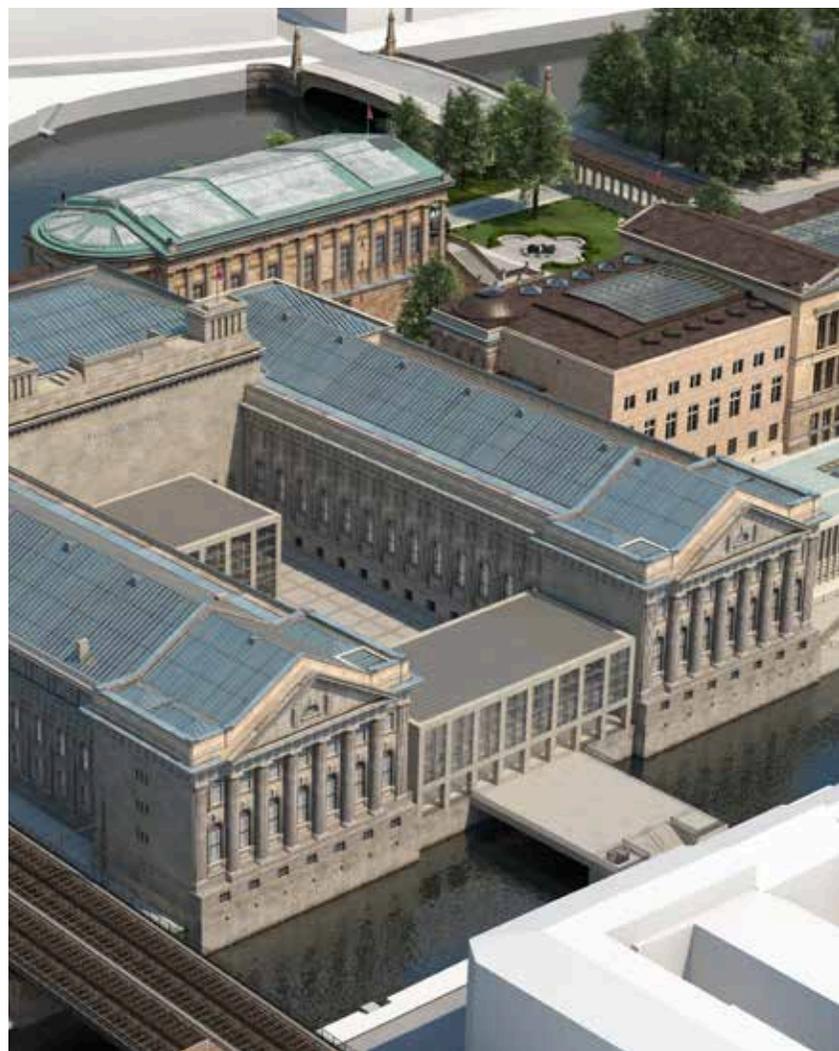
The ancient Greek Pergamon Altar reconstructed in the Pergamon Museum [Antikensammlung]

Past and Future

Berlin, the birthplace of Islamic archaeology and carpet studies, was [until 1933] arguably the most important centre for the academic study of Islamic art history and archaeology.

After destruction, exile and deportation, the collections in East Germany were restored and most objects from the Soviet Union returned while a new West German Museum of Islamic Art developed in Berlin-Dahlem. Germany's reunification opened promising horizons for Islamic art and archaeology in

Berlin by reuniting the Eastern and Western collections in an interim exhibition gallery that opened to the public in 2001, but the aim has always been to prepare for a more large-scale museum.



The new Museum für Islamische Kunst will move inside the Pergamon Museum—the most visited museum in Berlin—by 2026. The new exhibition space will be approximately 3,300 metres squared—likely the largest dedicated space for Islamic Art in the western world. The layout and concept will discover new and innovative ways to present the cultural legacy of Muslim societies to an international audience—to the 4 million annual visitors of Museum Island and the general media. With its space tripling in size with 25 new galleries and its ambition to communicate the complex cultural history of the Muslim peoples in a novel way, the Museum für Islamische Kunst will apply a uniquely innovative approach.

2. First [main floor]: the Mshatta Façade will become part of the main narrative of the 6,000-year artistic legacy of the Middle East presented in Berlin. This spectacular architectural promenade represents the early Islamic Caliphal residences alongside monuments from ancient Egypt, ancient Mesopotamia [with the Ishtar Gate], and the Hellenistic and Roman Middle East [with the Great Altar of Pergamon]. The Umayyad castles of Mshatta, Qusair Amra, and Khirbat al-Minya, as well as the Abbasid cities of Samarra and Raqqa will provide a tour into the world of the early caliphates and the cultural achievements of classical Islam—a display that is only possible thanks to Berlin’s unique holdings. A permanent presentation of the world-famous collection of early Qurans from the State Library will also be presented here.

3. Second floor: 18 large galleries will uncover the history and art in the Muslim world over the last millennium. It will tell stories of mobility, cultural migrations, inspiration, and the plurality of societies through change, transformation, trans-religious and trans-ethnic networks, and trans-regional entanglement as a continuum. Every hall has its own approach: the poems of Alhambra can be heard as one virtually looks down to the paradisiac gardens of Granada; the visitor will almost stroll through the alleys of Cairo with its intricate mashrabiya windows; the city of Konya can be explored too, and our visitors will be invited into the reconstructed reception hall from Aleppo. A new highlight will be the Garden Hall with the knotweed flower on carpets and a real water fountain—an atmospheric setting to indulge in beauty. We plan our galleries as art4all and a multi-sensual experience for our visitor audience.

The grand re-opening of the newly conceived collections will comprise of three floors:

1. Ground Floor: a very large special entrance hall will welcome school classes and private visitors to explore and learn. What are Muslim cultures? How does it connect with us today? How are our histories connected? What is our shared heritage? Multimedia applications and an interactive exhibition space will provide ample opportunity to explore these important questions through art, culture, and history.

3D model of the future layout of the Museumsinsel Berlin, view from north-west



We have undertaken intensive research as to how to convey aesthetics in Islam, the trans-regional connectedness of art and culture by reflecting on the joint cultural legacy of Late Antiquity. Audience research is huge part of our approach to reach large parts of our society. We will engage with the public to access the complex culture historical connections. Special care will be taken to present Christian and Jewish legacies in Islamic art, the cultural role of women and the place of children in our stories. Our display will open onto the broadest and most inclusive horizons and invite everyone from all backgrounds into our galleries.





Previews of the future exhibition design in the
Museum für Islamische Kunst

The Museum as a research institution—the centre of competence in Germany

Research

With its rich art and archaeological collection, the Museum für Islamische Kunst is one of the world's leading research institutions dedicated to the material culture of the Muslim World.

Our manifold research, conservation, and exhibition projects enable the profound and scholarly investigation of the urban legacies of the Near and Middle East. The excavation of the famous caliphate capital of Samarra in Iraq [undertaken in 1911 and 1913] is considered the birth of Islamic archaeology and was further supplemented by finds from the Sasanian capital Ctesiphon in Iraq, the Abbasid capital of Raqqa in Syria and the Mongolian summer palace Takht-e Soleyman in Iran. One focus is the biography of the objects: how were they acquired and under what political circumstances? What role did German-Jewish collectors play in the early days of the museum and what happened to their families and collections in Nazi Germany?

More than twenty external scholars and research assistants are currently collaborating with our own staff of six permanent scholars on a variety of different projects associated with the museum's collections and their histories. The institution houses one of Germany's most important collections of archival photographs on Islamic art and architecture as well as an internationally outstanding library focused on art, architecture, and archaeology of the Muslim world.

The Museum für Islamische Kunst is currently a member of

[Europe in the Middle East – the Middle East in Europe \(EUME\)](#), a research programme run by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Since September 2011, [EUME](#) has been continued as a program at the Forum for Transregional Studies .

The [research and fellowship program, A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics](#), at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.

Previous memberships

The [DFG-run Cluster of Excellence Topoi](#) [Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations], specifically: ‘Ctesiphon – mediation of archaeological research in the museum, based on the architectural traditions in the Sasanian and Islamic period’.

The [research program, Connecting Art Histories in the Museum: The Mediterranean and Asia 400–1650](#), run by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the Max-Planck Gesellschaft, and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

[Episteme in Motion](#) [Objects of transfer – approaches to raising awareness in the museum context of transfer processes that occurred between the Middle East and Europe in the pre-modern era], run by the DFG/Freie Universität Berlin.

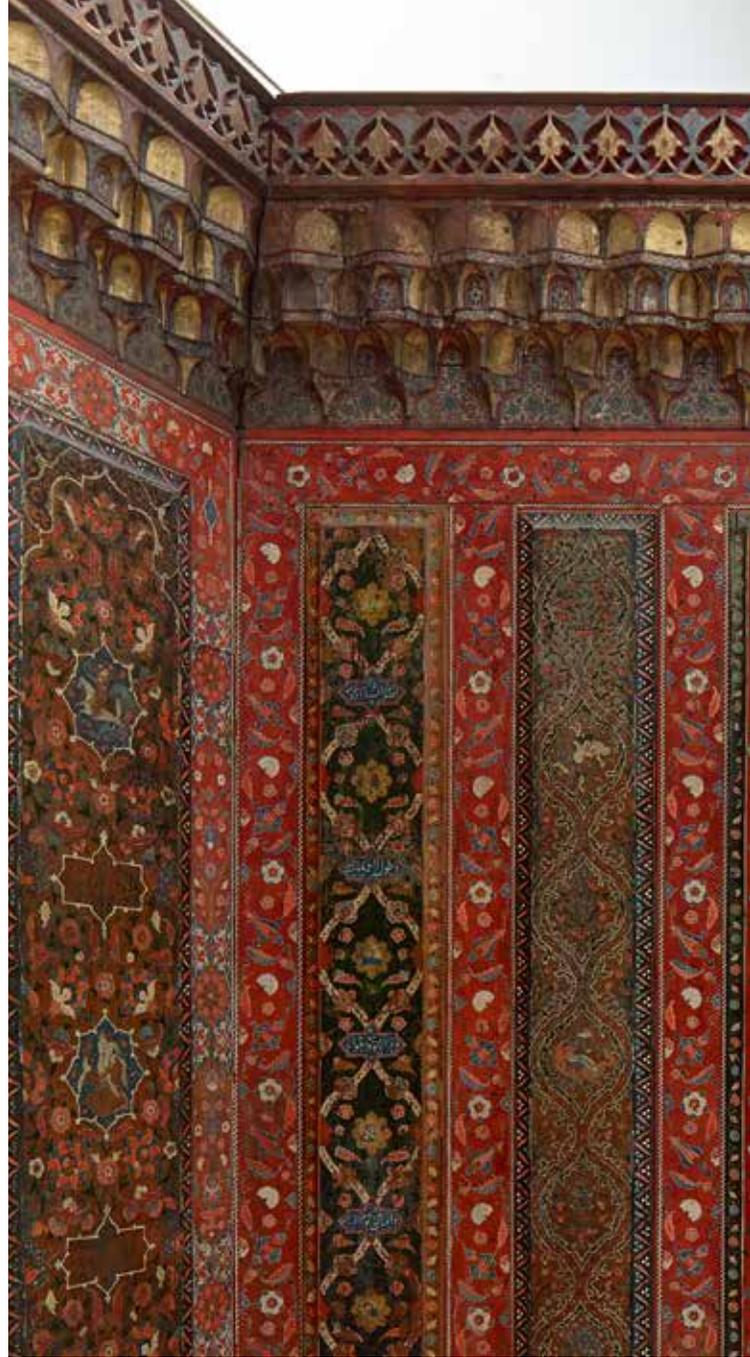
The Center of Transcultural Studies group ‘[Art Histories – history of art and aesthetic practices](#)’ – a research and fellowship program at the Forum for Transregional Studies.

View of the museum insite Iktyaruddin-Citadel, Herat/Afghanistan



The fortified entrance to the citadel of Aleppo from the 13th century





Islamic Book Art exhibition in 1938





Impressions and details of the Aleppo Room, a Syrian interior of the Ottoman period

Mediating cultural memory— the role of the Museum in our society

As cultural repositories, museums are mediators of culture capable of addressing visitor groups of all kinds.

Engaging with the youth



Each year, millions of visitors from all over the world come to Berlin's Museum Island, where they can experience the diversity and splendour of the cultural heritage of Muslim civilisations. The museum serves as key resource, helping formulate answers for today's questions: what are Muslim cultures? How did they develop in global history? Which cultural experiences constitute this rich artistic heritage? Our visitors experience modes of the Muslim world that breathes tolerance, internationality, and cosmopolitanism – just as we counterbalance simplified notions of a single culture in the public discourse by providing a diverse experience supported by academic expertise.

While addressing the general public, the museum also provides a symbolic space for citizens of Near and Middle Eastern background and, as a public institution, it offers a cultural home. The presentation of extraordinary cultural achievements in the fields of music, science, philosophy, medicine, architecture, and the arts provides a positive reaffirmation of Muslim cultures for groups which may find themselves in a defensive position because of negative stereotypes in some popular public discourses. Diverse and positive images of Muslim cultural identity are crucial for collective self-esteem as is the greater public acknowledgment of this collective cultural identity.

We welcome all visitors; our museum is the most important educational institution in Germany dedicated to the history of Muslim cultures and civilizations. Educational work at the Museum für Islamische Kunst is of utmost importance. Now, the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst invites you to become part of this partnership. Please join us in developing the museum into a meaningful locus for cultural training and communication to all members in our shared society.



Contemplative moments in front of masterpieces

Seven reasons to support the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst



Left: The famous Dragon Phoenix Carpet,
Turkey 15th Century

Right: Abstract garden, carpet,
Iran 18th Century



Detail of the painted wood panelling in the Aleppo
Room, Syria 1601



The museum unites the art, architecture, and culture of Muslim societies through science and research on the formal and historical contexts of works of art. This unique perspective and the museum's ability to encompass diverse perspectives make it a modern, dynamic, and forward-thinking institution. Awarded several times nationally and internationally, the museum is a leader in the field of cultural heritage and intercultural education.

The Museum für Islamische Kunst of the State Museums of Berlin is part of the historical Pergamon Museum complex, located on the Museum Island, which was awarded a UNESCO World Heritage title in 2000.

The Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst is part of the State Museums of Berlin, a cluster forming a unique universal museum. It is also member of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, one of the chief representatives of all of Germany's commitment to culture.

The Museum Island and the Pergamon Museum — both architectural monuments with internationally renowned collections — are the crown jewels of German culture. The ensemble connects more than 6000 years of art and cultural history over the span of 180 years in museum history. Starting in 1999, the Museum Island has been part of an ongoing modernisation and renovation project, which will significantly expand exhibition space.

The Museum für Islamische Kunst is part of a strong international network with many partners in the Middle East and beyond. As member of many relevant associations, the museum joined the network of the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation and is supported by Alwaleed Philanthropies.

Engagement with the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst is an investment for an exciting site of cultural and cross-cultural education. With its hundreds of thousands of visitors and nationwide school and outreach programs, the museum has decisive public impact.

The Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin unfettered development of art, culture, education, science, and research are vital elements for a free, enlightened, and above all, tolerant social interaction.

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The Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin

Museum für Islamische Kunst

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