

Carpet Studies, 1300–1600. Marco Spallanzani.

Textile Studies 3. Genova: Sagep Editori, 2016. 236 pp. \$130.28.

Relations between Europe and the Islamic world in the time of the Renaissance are today among the most promising frontiers for discoveries about the history of art in the Islamic world. Art created in court workshops apart, a major focus of artistic and economic effort under the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals consisted of commodities—textiles, carpets, ceramics, metalware, glass, and other materials—that were often produced specifically for export to Europe. Europe's monetary resources and its taste for luxury goods from the Islamic world led Italian merchants and markets, commerce and consumption, to emerge as major targets for Mamluk, Safavid, and, especially, Ottoman artistic export.

By consequence, Italian documentation—in the form of works of art discovered in Italy and oil paintings depicting Islamic carpets and textiles, and in inheritance, taxation, and collection documents as well as records of gifts to princely courts and church foundations—has become a major source of information on Islamic art itself. Scholars such as Alberto Boralevi, Stefano Carboni, Giovanni Curatola, Elisa Gagliardi-Mangilli, Rosamond Mack, and John Mills have unearthed both documentation and objects of immense significance. In this effort the published research of Professor Marco Spallanzani, of the University of Florence, is among the most substantial and important, including articles and books on the collection and consumption of Islamic art in Italy, especially in Florence and Tuscany. Spallanzani's wide-ranging contributions on Florentine merchants and collectors, on Florentine connections to Portuguese and Spanish commerce, and on a spectrum of otherwise-neglected media (glass, metalwork, ceramics) are an important part of this effort.

The thirteen essays in Spallanzani's *Carpet Studies 1300–1600* present a wide range of material, including documentation of Islamic carpets in Renaissance London and Lyons, and the mention of carpets in four important late fifteenth-century inventories. Spallanzani relates the terminology in these inventories to actual carpet design types, including prayer rugs (*moschea*) and what we read as octagonal medallions (*cum rotis*) or “wheels.” Among the specific carpets discussed in other essays are those in Florentine museums and palazzi (Pitti and Argenti museums, Strozzi and Salviati residences). Discussions of carpet commerce include Alexandria, Florence, and Avignon, and carpets as princely gifts figure in essays on Swedish-Tuscan interchange during the Thirty Years' War and Safavid gifts to the Ottoman sultans. An Italian regulation requiring that a carpet cover the workshop counter in a goldsmith establishment is the subject of yet another fascinating essay.

The study entitled “Production of Carpet under Medici Patronage in the Sixteenth Century” deals with attempts to produce carpets at the Ospedale degli Innocenti, in Florence, beginning in the 1570s. The project is documented in an extraordinary

codex compiled by Ulivieri Vincenti, who took charge after 1581. A list of six carpets produced in a first phase at the Ospedale includes two listed as *caerino*, which are specifically described as being woven with “one and a half knots”—that is, with asymmetrical knot technique—“as is done at Gran Cairo.” A second phase of production, beginning in 1581, is listed and described, individual carpet by carpet, by Ulivieri. Despite information both on size and design, to this point we cannot identify a single surviving carpet from this production. Indeed, the totality of Spallanzani’s extensive scholarly oeuvre serves to remind us that carpets have a very low rate of survival over time, being produced to be used underfoot, worn out, and, ultimately, to be discarded.

Finally, Spallanzani presents the reader with five appendixes, most dealing with problematic taxonomic and provenance terminology that is very much the center of current research and argument, including the terms *alla damaschina*, *cairino*, and *alessandrino*, along with the less controversial *turchesco* and *persiano*. These also constitute an important contribution to the scholarly dialogue, as over time the meaning of such terms becomes better and better understood.

In sum, Marco Spallanzani’s object and documentary studies have for some time been groundbreaking contributions to carpet studies. This latest volume of essays continues a remarkable and productive career in carpet research, and presents a wide spectrum of revelatory, thought-provoking, and well-written studies on an important subject.

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Maria Sibylla Merian zwischen Malerei und Naturforschung: Pflanzen- und Schmetterlingsbilder neu entdeckt. Carin Grabowski.
Berlin: Reimer, 2017. 480 pp. €79.

If we look to the past for women in science whose accomplishments have not always been properly appreciated, one person who stands out as a prime example is Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717). The youngest daughter of the renowned printmaker-publisher Matthäus Merian the Elder, she received early artistic training, lived at various times of her life in centers of printmaking—Frankfurt am Main, Nuremberg, and Amsterdam—and became in her lifetime one of the most important observers of the natural world. Keenly interested in the insects and plants around her, she was the first naturalist to combine a solid scientific investigation of the natural world with true artistic ability. The intaglio prints she made after her detailed drawings are unsurpassed in their beauty, but it is the combination of her art with her observational skill that sets her apart.