The theatre of script: Material culture and magical practices in medieval Islam

Zahra Kazani

Thursday, November 22
5:00-6:00 p.m.
Clearihue, Room C112

The Arabic script plays a prominent role in material culture of magic. Several treatises are devoted to the science of letters (ʿIlm al-Ḥurūf), and the script adorns objects such as amulets and talismans. Magic, in the medieval period, intersects closely with medicine, mysticism, religion, and technology. With a focus on the visual nature of script, this talk examines the various ways that script is dramatized to enhance its visual effect, and the magical ideas embedded within such script patterns. Looking at aspects of material culture from late antiquity to the pre-Mongol era, I treat the Arabic script as an image and examine the socio-cultural contexts of its consumption.

Zahra Kazani is a doctoral candidate in the Dept of Art History and Visual Studies at UVic. She has an MA in History of Islamic Art and an MA in Muslim Cultures. Zahra has worked extensively in museums, including the British Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Aga Khan Museum.

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