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Islamic Ceramics, Indelible Creations: Assessing and Preserving the Scripps Collection

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INTRODUCTION

Underneath the Humanities building at Scripps College in Claremont, California lies a huge treasure trove of antiquities—a precious lair which to this day remains unknown to the vast majority of students at Scripps and the rest of the Claremont Colleges. In fact, there exists a total of five locations throughout the Scripps campus where its art collections are stored: two basements under the Edward Humanities building, and three spaces within the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery. The Williamson Gallery, which is housed and funded by Scripps, takes care of an extensive collection of around 11,000 objects. Aside from being exhibited and loaned to outside institutions, this collection also serves as an educational resource in the arts and humanities throughout the Claremont Colleges. However, few courses and professors at the school utilize this valuable resource, and students who do get to pay a visit to this darkly-lit, concrete-walled storage basement become in awe of the variety and number of cultural objects.

The gallery has strong collections of Asian prints and contemporary ceramics. After all, the Williamson is notable for having the longest-running show in the nation dedicated toward contemporary ceramics, the “Ceramic Annual.” One particular and interesting category of artwork, which has not been previously studied, is the college’s collection of Islamic ceramics. Islamic ceramics undoubtedly plays an important role within the rich history of ceramics, and has had a long-lasting impact on the rest of the world. Islamic pottery provides great insight into an overview of Islamic art history, and the existence of this collection becomes further beneficial with the current inclusion of Islamic art history courses at the Claremont Colleges. Thus, this thesis aims to survey and

study all of Scripps' Islamic ceramics from a conservation perspective. These objects also become educationally useful for the study of ceramics conservation in the context of courses in art conservation, and the related major. This project provides documentation and examination for these artworks and discusses the accuracy of categorization and identification for every artwork. The need of preventive conservation and collections care methods will also be highlighted. Ultimately, my thesis proposes which objects reflect a more immediate need of conservation and significant educational value, while examining past restoration techniques, preventive measures, contexts, authenticity, and ethics.

This small collection is located within one of the aforementioned basement areas, which houses a wide array of antiquities and diverse examples of cultural heritage. Around 1970, a large collection of ethnographic ceramics was donated to Scripps by collector Edward M. Nagel. Nagel collected many objects, and donated large numbers of art and antiquities to various museums and institutions throughout Southern California.¹ His donations include a notable gift of many Spanish ceramics to Scripps. Among this collection are a few Hispano-Moresque wares, as well as several Islamic ceramics. Nagel donated five out of the seven objects which will be studied for this thesis project.

However, because the Nagel collection was donated so long ago, there currently exists no known records of provenance for the Nagel objects covered in this thesis. The gallery has archival documents, although not many, and maintains its collection through a widely used collections management software, the EmbARK database system. Through the Williamson's online electronic catalog, the Islamic ceramics can be found by

¹ "The Story of Edward M. Nagel."

searching under “Collections,” and then category domain “Middle Eastern.” Six objects come up, and are all ceramics aside from one work on paper. Another collection under the domain “Middle Eastern Textiles” conjures up sixty-eight records; however, one of these objects, a ceramic tile mis-labeled as a square textile, overlaps with one of the records under the domain “Middle Eastern.” Two more objects outside of these e-catalog domains have been found during an examination of the antiquities basement and identified as Islamic pottery: one is mis-categorized as “Hispano-Moresque,” and the other has not been categorized. Possibilities to establish provenance for all of these Islamic wares remain limited, and almost impossible for a few of these works. The gallery also does not have a biography for Mr. Nagel. Lacking information surrounding provenance for older artworks and antiquities, such as this case, is a common problem throughout numerous institutions and collections.

Ceramics of the Islamic world encompass a chronological span of over one thousand years, sequences of technical and decorative innovations, and a wide range of regional styles. Iraq can be cited as the birthplace of a taste for fine ceramic objects in the eighth and ninth centuries. The Abbasid caliphate (750-1258) ruled from North Africa to Central Asia, and under them ensued a surge in international trade across land and sea, connecting Iraq to most of the medieval Islamic world from Spain to Central Asia.² Later on, medieval Islamic pottery was significantly developed by being geographically situated between the Byzantine empire, Europe, and China. The subsequent increase of Islamic pottery production between the 9th and 13th centuries and its elevation to “finer”

² Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory*, 15.

art is commonly attributed to the great influence of Chinese ceramics.³ Starting in the 9th century, the Chinese produced and exported expensive, high-art porcelains into the Islamic world mainly by sea. By the late 14th century, Chinese porcelains were depicted as prized possessions of Islamic rulers and courts, and the Chinese continued to feed an increased demand for fine blue and white ceramics.⁴ Collecting has also been a large factor in transforming this field of study, as museum and private collections pushed for more comprehensive frameworks and scholarship for the subject.⁵ The periods of Islamic pottery which have been identified so far via the cataloged Scripps ceramics can be broadly categorized under early pottery (7th-10th centuries), early medieval pottery (10th-13th c), late medieval pottery (13th-16th c.), and late/post-medieval pottery (16th-19th c.).⁶

For the purpose of this thesis project, the contextual overviews of different types of Islamic pottery production will be covered throughout this paper. The wares in the Scripps collection have been generally categorized under a few regional, temporal, and artistic periods, yet not completely accurately. Brief explanations of these production categories will provide historical and cultural context for the examined objects, and allow me to affirm or debunk their placements within certain cultural pottery types. An understanding of geographical, political, and cross-cultural interchanges is crucial in order to appropriately pave way for further analyses of each object—especially in regards to their conservation and preservation.

³ *ibid.*, 17.

⁴ Denny, *Iznik*, 44.

⁵ Watson, *Ceramics*, 11.

⁶ Jenkins, “Islamic Pottery,” 2.

Chapter 1 consists of conservation condition reports for each object. Condition reports are written documentation completed for artistic and historic works upon initial examination, and are commonly the first step taken by conservation and collections professionals when an artwork is acquired. These informational reports can be updated periodically as objects undergo any changes, and can help a variety of museum professionals identify appropriate actions for an artwork. Conservators are required to complete condition reports for an object before executing treatment, since it is important to track what changes are made during conservation. Condition reports also assist conservators in deciding what objects in a collection should be prioritized in regard to treatment interventions, identifying what works are more at risk for exhibition and travel, and knowing what precautions to take when handling an object. The condition reports within the first chapter will include sections on object record, object descriptions, background, and state of conservation. These will be accompanied by photo-documentation for each object.

Drawing upon information detailed in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will describe which artworks out of Scripps' collection of Islamic pottery require the most prioritization. The chapter will preface the current overall state of the Antiquities storage where these pieces are located, and analyze what recommendations and steps should be considered in conserving these artworks. Sections will explain the needs of two selected objects, why they should be prioritized, their current conservation challenges, and the significant educational value which arises from their complications. Recommendations and proposals for these particular objects will also be provided. Additionally, the second

chapter touches on the overall importance of general collections care and preventive conservation, and how the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, along with the majority of institutions and collections, are lacking in this area. Following this chapter, a Conclusion section will briefly describe the limitations faced during this overall thesis project, and reflect on my future expectations as a student pursuing a career as a professional art conservator.

CHAPTER 1: Surveying the Scripps Islamic Ceramics

Condition Reports, Formal Analyses, and Contextual Backgrounds

1. Ceramic Bowl with Monkey and Lion Decor (71.1.96)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 1997 by registrar Kirk Delman, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. The gallery has dated it to the 9th century, yet it is more likely to be from a later date.

II. Description:

This earthenware bowl is medium-sized and of a deep, round shape with a three-quarter inch tall foot (Figs. 1a-c). The object's dimensions are 7 ¼ by 7 ¼ by 4 inches. The interior surface of the bowl show imagery and designs in raised-relief decoration. Its circular center of the interior depicts a monkey figure on the proper left, brawling with a lion on the proper right. Both animals are on their hind-legs, with their arms raised in active combat and in contact with each other's faces. On the proper right side of the lion, there are two dog-like figures climbing up a slim, barren tree. A depiction of such figures and scenes have not previously been found on medieval Egyptian-Byzantine wares.

Bordering the scene are designs which circle around the inner sides of the bowl; the predominant pattern is a line of overlapping, trefoil-like shapes filled with cross-hatching.

This raised relief imagery is painted with a yellow-beige underglaze, and the rest of the background is of a light umber color. The bowl's exterior is colored with a sea-green

glaze over a line pattern of Chinese-style clouds, which is incised using the sgraffito technique and outlined in black. The lower section and foot of the bowl are unglazed.

III. Context

The Williamson Gallery at Scripps has cataloged published this object online as a “Byzantine-Egyptian” bowl. In order to discuss why this is unlikely to be accurate, a broad historical context will be provided for Byzantine pottery. Very few examples from the era and region of classification can be found; thus, there is not much basis for comparison. The Byzantine Empire can be considered the extension of the late Roman Empire, and lasted from 330 to 1453. As ruler Constantine the Great took power, the city of Constantinople, located on the easternmost part of Europe, became the capital and center of the empire. During the 6th century, the empire reached its height and spread over the previously Roman Mediterranean coast, Rome, Italy, Egypt and North Africa. Egypt and North Africa remained under Byzantine power until Arab conquest in the 7th century; thus, if this bowl were “Egyptian” it could only come from this time window.

Until roughly the 7th century, most Byzantine pottery and bowls remained simpler in decoration and unglazed. The Metropolitan Museum of Art contains many examples of Coptic earthenware bowls which were produced between the 4th and 7th centuries in Byzantine Egypt (Fig. 2). All of them are unglazed, and either have some faded remnants of slip decoration or no decoration at all. These wares are very distinctive in comparison to the example in the Scripps collection. However, a separate grouping of Byzantine polychrome pottery did exist from as early as the 9th century, in addition to and separate

from sgraffito wares similar to those from Egypt and Persia.⁷ Byzantine polychrome pottery included decorations which were painted onto the body, then covered with a thin, transparent glaze. Examples of these were excavated more within regions of Eastern Europe, specifically Constantinople and Bulgaria. Another large group of ceramics at Dumbarton Oaks was excavated from Corinth, and was discussed in correlation to other excavations within Eastern Europe in order to categorize and study Byzantine pottery.⁸

Byzantine sgraffito wares, where designs are thinly incised and enhanced with green or brown glazes, first appeared during the late 11th century. Such designs soon became a popular form of ceramic adornment, and continued to be widely manufactured during the 13th century and later. Manufacture of bowls and vessels of this type can be traced back to parts of the Eastern Mediterranean world and throughout the whole Byzantine territory; however, no Persian originals were discovered in Corinth. Unglazed and glazed sgraffito wares after the 12th century commonly depicted animals, floral and vegetal designs, and geometric patterns. Although lions did not exist in the wild throughout most of the Byzantine world, they were commonly depicted in artworks, including sgraffito ceramics. A fragmentary example of a bowl from Corinth at Dumbarton Oaks exhibits a lion, and is possibly from the 13th century.⁹ In another study of 12th century polychrome pottery from Corinth, one green and brown painted bowl in an excavated group depicted the stylized head of a lion.¹⁰ The combination of sgraffito and monochrome green, brown, or dark yellow glazes originated from the import of wares

⁷ Talbot Rice, "Byzantine Polychrome Pottery," 281.

⁸ Talbot Rice, "Late Byzantine Pottery," 213.

⁹ *ibid.*, 213.

¹⁰ Robson Sanders, "Byzantine Glazed Pottery," 73.

from China's Tang dynasty (618-907); the translation of this technique to ceramics of Middle Eastern lands occurred throughout Iran, Mesopotamia, and possibly to Egypt.¹¹ Wares of this kind were more prevalent throughout Iran and Mesopotamia, and were not as widely circulated until the 12th and 13th centuries, despite the earlier existence of Islamic examples. Most unglazed sgraffito wares within the Byzantine regions did not appear until the 12th century, and color glazed sgraffito wares did not arise until the 13th and 14th centuries. Within the representational study group excavated in Corinth, sgraffito green and brown painted style bowls of this style were also extremely rare. Thus, it is doubtful that the Scripps "Byzantine-Egyptian" glazed sgraffito bowl could truly date back to the 9th century, as the production of such wares essentially did not exist yet. Although the study of Dumbarton Oaks collection of pottery from Corinth and other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean and Byzantine territory reveals descriptive similarities to the Scripps example, the Scripps bowl does not match or resemble the medieval pottery from Corinth or other regions from the Byzantine era, as it employs completely different production techniques, imagery, and aesthetics (Figs. 3-5).

Most Egyptian pottery which resemble the Scripps example belong to Islamic pottery traditions, with the earliest era being the Fatimid dynasty. The Fatimids (969-1171) established control over present-day Tunisia, Egypt, and partially annexed Syria. The dynasty ruled from Cairo, which became a major production center for ceramic. Lusterware painting, where the outer glazes of ceramics contain a glittering, metallic finish, became very prevalent and noteworthy. However, a specific point when

¹¹ Talbot Rice, "Late Byzantine Pottery," 215.

luster-painting began in Egypt has not been determined. The shapes of Egyptian wares remained very simple, and mostly consisted of jars or convex and straight-sided bowls (Fig. 6).¹²

Some common imagery and motifs included animals and spiraling foliage with long coiling leaves (Fig. 7).¹³ These designs were often very similar to those exhibited by Persian pottery. More complex subject matter involving human figures appear very rarely. As the Fatimid dynasty collapsed in 1171, their line of ceramic production also declined. Under the Mamluks in the 13th century, Egyptian potters began employing the sgraffito technique, where designs were engraved into a white slip on lead-glazed earthenware. Sometimes brown slips were applied instead, along with monochrome glazes of green or a sort of yellow (Fig. 8).

In reference to the Scripps “Egyptian” bowl, it is important to note where some early green-glazing originated in Islamic ceramics. Simple, functional earthenware with such monochrome glazes had been produced early on in the Middle East, and continue to be made today. Many early 9th to 10th century Egyptian wares also featured a celebrated technique called opaque white glazing. Examples of these included white backgrounds featuring splashes or in-glaze painted inscriptions in green.¹⁴ However, these descriptions do not match the early Egyptian bowl in the Scripps collection, yet do reflect some aforementioned elements of Fatimid ceramics. Ultimately, the Scripps example does not quite resemble any of the pottery from Fatimids, Mamluks, Corinth, or other parts of the

¹² Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, 21.

¹³ *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴ Watson, *Ceramics*, 171.

Eastern Mediterranean during the Byzantine era. The depicted scene, along with its animal motifs, do not look like any previous known works. It is possible that the Scripps bowl was produced at a much later date, and used techniques which resembled some of these earlier styles.

IV. State of Conservation:

The earthenware bowl with lion and monkey decor is stable and overall in fair condition. There are losses and chips dispersed all along the rim of the bowl; the rim has lost a little over half of its glazing. A large fragment is missing from the rim, which extends about one-fifth into the body of the ceramic. This fragment is presumed to be lost. The inner design and glazing of the bowl also exhibit some losses and abrasions throughout its surface. There are glaze losses throughout the figures, and other sections of the raised sgraffito design. On the outer sides of the bowl, there are very minor, dot-sized losses throughout the glazing, in slight resemblance of pitting. The underside of the foot has some remaining paper substrates and adhesive in the center, possibly left behind from a previous, peeled-off sticker label. The object's accession number has been applied on the underside of the foot in red acrylic paint and Paraloid B-72, alongside the original placement of the sticker. There is minor soiling throughout the entire surface of the object.

2. Iznik Ceramic Tankard (71.1.55)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 2002 by former Project Manager Krista Coquia, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. The gallery has dated it to the 16th century; it could be dated to the 16th or 17th century.

II. Description:

This Iznik fritware tankard has a cylindrical body which truncates very slightly starting from the upper rim toward the middle, and then extends back outward toward the base (Figs. 9a-c). The object's dimensions are 8 ¼ by 5 ¼ by 5 ½ inches. There is a flat, angular handle attached to the side. The object is predominantly decorated with successions of large floral and vegetal motifs against a white ground. There are tall flowers with round, linear petals underglaze painted in red bole; these resemble Iznik-style carnations or roses, albeit more simplified or abstracted. The leaves of these floral motifs are colored with emerald-green underglaze, which some slight gradations of yellow-green on the edges. Alternating with these flowers are long, serrated leaves in the "saz" style and painted with cobalt blue and similar shades of green.¹⁵ Additionally, there are alternating floral buds on the lower half section of the body in cobalt blue and red bole flora, as well as emerald-yellow green leaves. All of these motifs are outlined in black. There are decorative bands along the upper rim and the bottom toward the base,

¹⁵ Denny, *Iznik*, 33.

with a sort of scalloped pattern outlined in black and colored with cobalt blue. The handle is also decorated with abstracted, curvilinear forms in what presumably should be black, but appears to have faded to a very dark, sap green color. A dead insect, which appears to be a common webbing clothes moth, was found inside of the tankard upon inspection, along with an older catalog card handwritten in graphite (reads “P3087 - Iznick - Turkey - 16th cent”).

III. Context:

During the 16th century, the Ottoman Turkish Empire became a significant, cross-cultural hub of artistic commerce and ideas. With imperial ateliers and wealthy patronage power, the growth of an imperial Ottoman style from the 16th century and onward became symbolic of the empire itself. Iznik wares refer to the rural town of Iznik located in northwest Anatolia of modern-day Turkey, which became the seat of production for the aforementioned line of decorative ceramics and tiles throughout the late 15th to the late 17th centuries. This period saw an extensive amount of production, and today many examples of Iznik pottery comprise museum and private collections, and elicit high prices within the art market. In addition to their beauty, technical mastery, and stylistic decorations, Iznik wares reflect the Ottoman court’s emergence and command in Istanbul during the 16th century.¹⁶ They also denote the heavy influence of Chinese ceramics and motifs; however, such influence is less evident in the Scripps examples. As a result of hybridized Turkish and Chinese production techniques, Iznik ceramics acquired a unique

¹⁶ Denny, *Iznik*, 43.

form of Ottoman expression. Iznik became a town frequented by travelers and merchants in transit between Istanbul, Eastern Anatolia, and the Syrian provinces.¹⁷ Despite being a smaller city, the position of Iznik as a junction of several crucial travel routes helped maintain its facilitation of marketing and trade.

Fritware represented a distinct break between Byzantine and Ottoman earthenware, and was developed during the 15th century in response to the Islamic world's significant interest in Chinese ceramics—most notably porcelain, a paste containing a high percentage of kaolin which allowed this “china clay” to be fired at temperatures of over 1300 degrees. Kaolin was not available to Ottoman potters. Although they couldn't achieve the technical production of porcelain, frit proved to be more than sufficient. The white, heavy-bodied clay was mixed with a high percentage of silica—in other words, quartz or sand. A main drawback of fritware was the lack of ductility; however, this challenge was overcome by using molds to work objects in. To make the ceramic body as white as possible, Iznik potters developed a pure white coating which would act as a slip. Painted decoration was applied over the slip after initial firing, and sealed in by a clear, colorless glaze which used lead as a flux.¹⁸

During the last quarter of the 15th century, the Ottoman court became increasingly involved in the development of Iznik ceramic industry. The town reached a peak of ceramic production during the 16th century; Iznik tiles which reflected the Ottoman court style appeared in many monuments, and ceramics became representative of the chronological progression of the royal ateliers. The technique of decorative underglaze

¹⁷ Atasoy, Raby, and Petsopoulos, *Iznik*, 20.

¹⁸ Denny, *Iznik*, 59.

painting is cited as one of the most important technical innovations and defining characteristics for Iznik wares. During the late 15th century to early 16th century, more colors were added to what were originally just blue and white wares—called the Baba Nakkaş style. Earlier, only cobalt blue was used to decorate wares. These new colors included turquoise, black, sage green, and purple. The introduction of a new turquoise blue around the 1520s, distinct from the former shade of cobalt, marked the shift away from monochromatic schemes and Baba Nakkaş wares. Thus, a period of experimentation ensued with the creation of new designs, motifs, compositions, colors, and painting styles. There were also Western influences during this time, such as the *Tondino* shape from Italian maiolica.¹⁹ Around 1550-60s, there was an abrupt change to this palette: earlier, subtler colors were replaced by black, emerald green, blue, and a relief-red (which replaced the color purple). The introduction of this raised red was a major technical triumph and factor in the arrival of a new dominant aesthetic, as it is one of the most intractable underglaze ceramic colors. By the late 1560s, a translucent emerald green was perfected; this was the most difficult color to formulate and apply due to its material composition.²⁰ These brighter colors predominate from this date onward, and were more effective in creating vivid, higher-quality designs.²¹

Painted decorations which reflected the Ottoman court style include spirals, arabesques, floral scrolls, palmettes, rosettes, leaves, other vegetal and floral motifs, and other naturalistic designs. Execution of coloring and glazing achieved in Iznik ceramics

¹⁹ Atasoy, Raby, and Petsopoulos, *Iznik: The Pottery*, 104.

²⁰ Denny, *Iznik*, 52.

²¹ Watson, *Ceramics*, 65.

was extremely difficult. The “saz” style refers to a mythical Turkic enchanted forest, and is composed of thin-stemmed plants with long feather-like leaves and elaborate floral palmettes derived from Chinese artistic forms; sometimes this foliage is populated with flaming birds and antelopes. A similar, related style called “Hatayi,” which literally means “Chinese” style, is sometimes used interchangeably with “saz”. “Hatayi” is another term for arabesques of lotus palmettes, feathered leaves, and curving vines—sometimes occupied by fairy or angel-like creatures and dragons²².

With the oncoming of the 17th century, the city of Iznik began to decline severely. The Ottoman court lost much of its wealth and power starting from the 17th century; thus, their wavering economic stability began to permeate into the town of Iznik. During the late 16th century, the Ottoman Court began to experience inflation due to a market economy dependent on silver coinage, which spread over from Europe.²³ Iznik manufacturers had contracts with the Ottoman Court, and prices for the production of high-quality goods were not adjusted. Tiles and wares were still produced toward the 17th century, yet their quality became extremely poor.²⁴ Higher pricing for raw materials became unsustainable, so Iznik manufacturers lowered the quality in order to meet production demands. Eventually, Iznik production stopped completely in the 19th century.

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There is evidence that during the 16th century, other workshops in Anatolia, such as the city of Kütahya, had produced wares similar to those of Iznik. It is interesting to

²² Denny. *Iznik*, 33.

²³ *ibid.*, 108.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 113.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 221.

note that in the 19th century, Kütahya would revive efforts of reproducing classic 16th-century Iznik ceramics—an enterprise which became very successful and still continues today.²⁶ The phenomenon of Iznik wares certainly left a lasting legacy which would continue to permeate and influence later Ottoman eras and cultures of the East and West. As for the Scripps tankard, it can certainly be attributed to 17th-century Iznik production and closely resembles a number of other existing examples (Figs. 10-11). The Scripps example is of lower quality in comparison to other pieces, which can be gauged from its runny glazes, simplification or abstraction of flowers and designs, and the presence of a ceramic protrusion in the ceramic fabric (Figs. 12-13).

IV. State of Conservation:

The Iznik fritware tankard is stable and overall in fair condition. This object has been previously subjected to a heavy restoration: formerly, the object was broken into several fragments and pieces. These sections were re-assembled and adhered using an unidentified, strongly-bonded adhesive. It is unknown when this restoration was completed, and by whom. On some areas of the re-adhered cracks, adhesive residue is visible on the object's exterior, and has yellowed. A tiny fragment is missing from the rim of the tankard. There are also several chips and losses along the rim. A large section along the tankard's handle contains significant losses in its underglaze design and overglaze. Similarly, the circular edge of the base has experienced significant losses. There are a few areas of loss in a similar fashion throughout the body of the ceramic. On

²⁶ Watson, *Ceramics*, 66.

the upper section of the body and right next to the handle, there are two same-sized, side-by-side holes drilled through; these holes were mechanically made. An area of glaze loss extends from around one of these holes. The interior of the artwork contains significant losses and flaking dispersed throughout, particularly on the base. Discolored adhesive residue can clearly be seen around the cracks throughout the interior.

Additionally, right below the rim, a small sticker label with the inscription “P3087” written in black ink has been stuck to the interior. In the center of the body’s exterior, directly across from the handle, is a small, oval-shaped ceramic protrusion. This piece is unglazed and darkened, and could have resulted from a firing mistake. Overall, the object’s surface is heavily soiled and contains various abrasions.

3. Iznik Tile (T1212)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 2005 by former Project Manager Krista Coquia, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. It is most likely from the 17th century.

II. Description:

The object is a square ceramic tile featuring Iznik floral and vegetal designs against a white background, and its dimensions are 8 ¼ by 8 inches (Fig. 14). There are vines painted in a black-purple underglaze, interweaving with carnation-like floral bunches and

“Saz”-style serrated leaves. The flowers exhibit some bright yellow pigment, an uncommon color in Iznik wares. A composite floral design or motif occupies the center of the tile. All of the flowers are colored mainly in a dark cobalt blue, a lighter blue, and red bole color, while the leaves are filled with a light sap green. The way in which the color glazes run past the lines of their sections indicate a lower-quality Iznik ware and thus, a later dating when Iznik production began to decline.

III. Context:

The emergence of Iznik tiles as architectural decoration was slow, and few Ottoman buildings had tile decoration. Earliest examples of tilework date to the 15th century, and the first part of the 16th century only saw small amounts of underglaze painted, blue and white tiles on buildings. Tile decoration was comprised of color-glaze ceramics produced by the “cuerda seca” technique, meaning “dry-cord” in Spanish, where lines of greasy pigment acted as borders for different color glazes.²⁷ This allowed for tiles to maintain their separate colors under firing conditions. Throughout the 16th century, as blue and white underglaze painting gained popularity and Iznik became known as the pinnacle of ceramic production, tiles employing this technique began to make its way more predominantly throughout different buildings.²⁸ Iznik tiles also followed suit with artistic and technical developments throughout the 16th century. Gradually, these colorful “saz” and “Hatayi” underglaze painted tiles were employed pervasively throughout buildings such as mosques and tombs. The first Ottoman buildings to utilize polychrome Iznik tiles

²⁷ Denny, *Iznik*, 68.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 71.

was the Süleymaniye Mosque of 1559.²⁹ Throughout the 16th century, various grand mosques, palatial structures, monuments, and other buildings would come to exhibit vast panels of elaborate, polychrome tiled patterns and decorations.

As for the Scripps object, which is currently cataloged and published online under the title “square” and as an “Islamic textile,” it can certainly be identified as Iznik tilework production. It is likely to be of later 17th century production due to its lower quality, especially in comparison to other examples of Iznik tilework (Figs. 15-18). Evidence of lower quality is exhibited through underglaze colorants running outside of their lines, use of colors not typically seen including a bright yellow, uncommon motifs and design, and overall much less refinement.

IV. State of Conservation:

Overall, the tile is in good and stable condition. There are a couple small areas of loss along the proper right edge, the bottom edge near the proper left corner, and toward the middle of the top edge. Right along its lower proper left corner and bottom edges, the tile has experienced some discoloration and yellowing, possibly due to wearing off of overglaze and some underglaze throughout these areas. There is some minor soiling throughout the surface.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 86.

4. Persian Roundel with Gazelle Motif (71.1.356)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 2002 by former Project Manager Krista Coquia, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. It is could likely be dated to the 19th or 20th centuries.

II. Description:

This roundel features an underglaze painted, low-relief black design of winding vines and foliage, oriented in a circular direction, along with a large gazelle depicted mid-movement in the center of the roundel (Figs. 19a-b). The object's dimensions are 14 ½ by 14 ½ inches. The foliage exhibits flowers and both serrated and non-serrated leaves, which come together to resemble arabesque designs. This roundel comes in a pair, and the gazelle faces toward its left as if to face the animal in its accompanying roundel. The imagery is bordered with a black outlined circle near the edges.

III. Context:

In the 11th century, Persia's revolutionary development of fritware provided a very fine-quality pottery and would continue to be extensively produced until the 14th century. The introduction of fritware was possibly inspired by technology developed in Fatimid Egypt, when some potters emigrated after the collapse of the Fatimid dynasty.³⁰

³⁰ Grube, "CERAMICS xiv. The Islamic Period."

Fritware allowed the glaze and ceramic body to be fused completely together, in contrast to the lead-fluxed tin glazes and earthenware bodies used in Mesopotamia and Egypt during the 9th century.³¹

An important technique employed by the Iranians was slip-painting, which occurred during the 9th and 10th centuries. This method was used to imitate Iraqi prototypes of luster-painted vessels, and consisted of diluted solutions of clay and mineral pigments of white, red, brown, and black. These colors were fixed under a transparent, colorless glaze, thus making it an underglaze painting technique. Under the Samanids (819-999), the city of Nishapur produced a very significant type of polychromatic underglaze painting during the 10th century. Using slips and pigments containing tin, tin plus lead alloy, manganese, chromic oxide, and iron oxide, colors of white, yellow, brown and black, green, and red were achieved, respectively.³² From the 11th century and onward, incised and carved decorations, a technique called sgraffito or intaglio, were added to underglaze painting. The capacity for these complex techniques allowed a series of experimentations in these ceramics, along with great artistic creativity and variations. The combination of black and turquoise is another notable decorative method, and somewhat applies to the Scripps Persian roundels.

From the 12th to the 14th centuries, further developments in artistic inventiveness and experimentations with decorative techniques included the use of cobalt-blue radial stripes. Another characteristic is the use of quadrupeds, such as the motif of the gazelle,

³¹ Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, 32.

³² Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory*, 23.

which can be attributed to the Sultanabad style.³³ Quadrupeds appear in the Scripps examples, yet these roundels are not from Sultanabad. Starting from the 12th century, there was an increased application of glazed tiles and bricks to both interiors and exteriors of buildings, which added more vibrant color.³⁴ This development in ceramic building decoration is applicable to the two Scripps Persian roundels, since their large size and weight indicate that they could have possibly been architectural decorations.

Later Iranian pottery during the 15th to 19th centuries again transitioned, and potters became transfixed with producing wares in the Chinese blue and white porcelain styles. Some remnants of earlier traditions still existed throughout, such as the black and turquoise technique used since the 12th century, whose invention is independent from the Chinese. Under the rule of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722), a large volume of excellent Persian ceramics and tiles were produced. Safavid potters continued to rely heavily on early Chinese pottery, and the quality of white stonepaste and overglaze improved greatly. Potters based many of their decorations on Chinese models, and saw the introduction of pale red, yellow, and green colors. Naturalistic motifs such as gazelles, peacocks, flowers, trees, and river banks appeared in many pieces.

As previously mentioned, the lusterware technique experienced a significant revival during the 17th century after a few centuries of decline. Another technique appearing from the 16th until the 17th centuries was polychrome underglaze painting.³⁵ Numerous later examples of this era combine Chinese and Islamic elements, and Persian

³³Curatola, *Persian Ceramics*, 21.

³⁴Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*, 25.

³⁵Watson, *Ceramics*, 449.

ceramics continued to be widely produced and marketed. One characteristic of 19th century Persian wares is a certain type of signature placed on the undersides of ceramics, as many pieces of the time were signed and dated. Another attribute is that the ceramic body becomes looser, and develops a higher tendency to crack.³⁶

The pair of Scripps roundels reflect many elements of Persian ceramics, as described above. However, due to their quality and format, they are probably more modern and could be attributed to a date after the 19th century. It is difficult to confirm the dating of these two plaques, since there is not much scholarship and study on post-Safavid ceramics. The Scripps pieces resemble a couple motifs and designs, but do not closely resemble any other known, existing artifacts (Figs. 21-22). The unidentified, cheetah-like creature is especially indicative and has not been seen before. There are some 14th century-examples Persian tiles which show spotted gazelles in the center, yet these pieces look very different to the Scripps roundels (Figs. 23-24).

IV. State of Conservation:

Overall, the object is in good and stable condition. The entire surface is slightly cloudy and exhibits some minor pitting throughout; however, this may be due to the quality of the original production. The cloudiness may also be attributed to some soiling throughout the surface. Due to lower quality of glaze production, the black underglaze appears slightly runny in its contact with the turquoise blue coloring. Toward the proper left side, around the lower-middle section and close to the edge, there is a mid-sized spot of loss on

³⁶ Watson, *Ceramics*, 481.

the surface: layers of overglaze, underglaze paint, and some of the body are missing, revealing the substrate underneath. Similarly, there are a few tiny areas of losses throughout the surface. The edges of the roundel are unglazed and not painted. On the reverse of the piece, there are two inscriptions which both say “Made in Persia”. There is a smaller black-inked stamp of this inscription, alongside a larger handwritten inscription in black ink or paint. The handwritten section says “MADE IN PERSIA”, and the black ink used has smeared or run throughout the ceramic material. The entire reverse surface is of a yellowed color, and has large areas of uneven discoloration and spotting, possibly due to exposure or contact with foreign materials and harmful conditions such as fluctuating temperatures plus relative humidity levels, and improper storage. This backside material is visibly pitted and porous.

5. Persian Roundel with Spotted Quadruped Motif (71.1.357)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 2002 by former Project Manager Krista Coquia, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. It could likely be dated to the 19th-20th centuries.

II. Description:

This roundel features an underglaze painted, low-relief black design of winding vines and foliage, oriented in a circular direction, along with a large cheetah-like creature

mid-movement in the center (Figs. 20a-b). The object's dimensions are $14 \frac{3}{8}$ by $14 \frac{3}{8}$ inches. The foliage exhibits flowers and both serrated and non-serrated leaves, come together to resemble arabesque designs. It is unclear what exactly the quadruped is; facing toward its right as if to face the gazelle in the other roundel, the creature's body is painted white with a uniform pattern of black spots across it. The animal may be a leopard or a cheetah. Similar to a wildcat, the animal possesses paws, small rounded ears, and a tail with a hairy tuft at the end. The imagery is bordered with a black outlined circle near the edges. Visually, this ceramic roundel (circular plaque) is remotely reminiscent of Kashan black on turquoise wares (12th - 14th c.).

III. State of Conservation:

Overall, the object is in good and stable condition. The entire surface is very slightly cloudy and exhibits some minor pitting throughout; however, this may be due to the quality of the original production. The cloudiness may also be attributed to some soiling throughout the surface, and is less significant compared to the cloudiness on the Gazelle roundel. In comparison to the other roundel, the black underglaze painting is not as runny. Toward the upper middle section above the cheetah figure, there are two different-sized areas of loss on the surface. There are another two smaller spots of loss in the same fashion toward the lower section near the proper right and bottom edges. Within these areas of loss, layers of overglaze, underglaze paint, and some ceramic are missing, revealing the substrate underneath. Similarly, there are a few tiny areas of losses throughout the surface. The edges of the roundel are unglazed and not painted. On the

reverse of the piece, there is a handwritten inscription toward the upper proper left side which says “MADE IN PERSIA” in black ink or paint, similarly to that on the reverse of the other roundel. The entire reverse surface is of a significantly yellowed color, and more so than the Gazelle roundel. Additionally, this backside material is even more visibly pitted and porous.

6. Islamic (Persian?) Turquoise, Black, and White Bowl (71.1.359)

I. Object Record:

This object, recorded in 2002 by former Project Manager Krista Coquia, belongs to the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College in Claremont, California. It was gifted by Edward M. Nagel, and is part of the Nagel ceramics collection. The gallery has dated it to the 16th century; however, it was most likely produced during the 19th or 20th centuries.

II. Description:

This ceramic bowl exhibits a shallow base, a wide flat rim, and a short foot; its dimensions are 10 ³/₄ by 10 ³/₄ by 2 ¹/₂ inches (Figs. 25a-c). Due to deterioration of its transparent overglaze, the ceramic exhibits various degrees of iridescence. The object features painted geometric designs in turquoise and black against a white background. The center of the bowl’s interior contains an abstract, floral motif and design in black underglaze painting, with some areas colored with turquoise blue staining. The circular center design is scalloped along its edges, is filled with a pattern of trefoil foliage, and

has a turquoise circle in the very center. The interior of the bowl is painted with a panel of alternating, radial line patterns in white, black, and turquoise; these line patterns are of different thicknesses, and feature different geometric designs such as a lattice pattern. On the flattened rim are geometric, abstract designs in blue and black against white, including triangles filled with turquoise glazing. Additionally, there are black designs which imitate Arabic script; however, these designs are not legible. The underside of the bowl is predominantly white, with the exterior walls of the bowl uniformly painted with thin black radial lines. The bowl's foot has a small hole in its side, where there is a small, short tan cord looped and tied through it to create a sort of hanging mechanism.

III. Context:

This piece was initially catalogued as a Hispano-Moresque bowl. However, the bowl's designs are only remotely reminiscent of Hispano-Moresque wares, and the object appears closer to Islamic pottery. Hispano-Moresque pottery is a type of lusterware derived from Spain, and draws heavy influences from Islamic pottery and Gothic Spain styles.³⁷ The designs on the Scripps bowl do not resemble the 13th to 17th century Spanish lusterware ceramics which come from Malaga, Valencia, or Seville. Most examples of Hispano-Moresque ware contain more elaborate designs with scrolls, dots, clusters of dots, stylized foliage, parallel lines, Kufic inscriptions, and more. Some examples show larger central imagery of scenes, animal figures (commonly birds), or other motifs, surrounded by the previously described detailed, more intricate patterns and decorations.

³⁷ Randall, "Lusterware of Spain," 221.

Certain phases of Spanish lusterware during the 15th to 17th centuries used simpler motifs, such as later wares from Valencia which employed thicker lines, repetitive compositions around birds, and flowers.³⁸ In terms of its blue, black, and white color palette, the Scripps example may most closely resemble blue and purple Morisco wares from Seville; perhaps a comparison to these wares led to the erroneous attribution. However, Morisco wares are typically tin-glazed and employ very different aesthetics, which include concentric bands, birds and foliage, alternating patterns of oblique, undulated, or crossed dashes, and decoration resembling Valencian ferns and Gothic writing.³⁹ Overall, the aesthetics, designs, and colors used do not match known various known examples of Spanish lusterware (Figs. 26-29). The Scripps collection has around three pieces of Hispano-Moresque ceramics, as well as one example of lustreware; these look very different from the current object in question (Fig. 30). Firstly, the Scripps bowl is not an example of lusterware. Aesthetically, the bowl does not resemble examples of Hispano-Moresque wares in its use of patterns, figural subject matter, and color schemes. The size, shape, and structural form of the bowl are also not common to Hispano-Moresque pottery.

This piece may resemble Persian lusterware more closely, despite the fact that it does not employ luster glazing. In Iran during the 12th and 13th centuries, the innovative rise and production of lusterware flourished on an unprecedented scale, with the city of Kashan emerging as a major production center.⁴⁰ Luster glazes had been applied to

³⁸ Gutierrez, "A Guide to the Identification of Spanish Medieval and Later Ceramics."

³⁹ *ibid.*, 14

⁴⁰ Curatola. *Persian Ceramics*, 23.

pottery as early as the 9th century, yet Persian lusterware became further developed and experienced another resurgence under the Safavids from the 17th to 18th centuries.

Executed properly, the overglazes of lusterware contained metallic oxides and were fired in reductive conditions, giving the outer glaze a metallic sheen and iridescent quality.

This remains one of the greatest inventions of Islamic ceramics, and had lasting effects in both the East and West.⁴¹

There are various existing examples in other collections which contain certain elements that sort of resemble those of the Scripps bowl, including shape, color scheme, and designs such as the radial lines. Most of these pieces are from Iran, and one fragment is from Egypt (Figs. 31-34). However, these images also reflect the disparities between them and the Scripps example. It may be concluded that the Scripps object is probably Persian, or produced in a somewhat Persian style.

IV. State of Conservation:

Overall, this object is in fair and stable condition. The clear overglaze has significantly deteriorated, as many areas of the transparent overglaze have become highly iridescent and cloudy. This closely resembles and can be attributed to glass decay, or more specifically a process called devitrification. Devitrification is a naturally-occurring process throughout siliceous material, and happens when glass surfaces become hydrated over time and partially crystalline.⁴² One of the main ingredients of transparent glazes is

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 19.

⁴² Newton and Logan. "Care of Ceramics and Glass"

silica, and an effect of surface-weathered glass and crystallization is a loss of transparency, a cloudy appearance, and formation of iridescent layers. Areas which majorly exhibit such iridescence include a third of the interior panel surface, several areas along the wide flattened rim, and about half of the surface area of the bowl's underside. A few areas on the flat rim of the bowl exhibit the most severe iridescence and almost complete loss of transparency. Throughout some areas of the bowl, particularly along the flat rim, the overglaze has developed a matte finish and has visibly yellowed and darkened. Such overall darkening could be a result of heavy soiling. There is also some slight crazing throughout the overglaze of the object, which is another result of the devitrification of siliceous material. The iridescent areas are also powdering and flaking from the object's surface; a bit of the deterioration powdered off during handling of the object.

In one section of the rim, a fragment from the original object is presumably missing. Two ceramic fragments have been inserted into this missing gap, and the cracks between were filled with a white material resembling ceramic or plaster. The fragments closely resemble the original object, yet are evidently from a different object, and have been selected and manipulated to fit into the missing area as much as possible. This practice has been observed in many cases of "fakes" throughout Islamic ceramics, where similar, genuine sherds are inlaid into missing areas of pieces in order to repair or reconstruct an object. This was commonly done since complete pieces had higher commercial value.⁴³ Their surrounding fills were painted with similar designs in black in

⁴³ Watson, "Fakes and Forgeries," 522.

order to visually blend the insertions into the rest of the artwork. The fills have darkened and yellowed more severely than the rest of the object, which demonstrates that the material used is disingenuous to the original. This intervention was done as part of a previous restoration, yet the exact time and purpose are unknown. A small sticker label with “F 378” written on it has been adhered to the rim, near the inserted fragments. On the underside of the bowl, “51.9” has been written in large text along the body and directly below the rim. Within the foot, the accession number paper label (71.1.359) has been applied using a translucent matte liquid—possibly a white fluid acrylic paint.

7. Calligraphic Roundel

I. Object Record:

There is no existing record of this object.

II. Description:

This large ceramic roundel contains an underglaze-painted design of mainly Islamic calligraphic script (Figs. 35a-d). The object’s dimensions are 25 by 25 ½ inches with the width of the frame, and 18 ⅞ by 18 3/16 inches without the frame. In the outer half portion of the roundel, there is large Arabic script in a circular orientation which reads: “He is God the One, God the Unique, He does not beget nor was He begotten, and He has no equal,” as from surah 112 of the Qur’an (al-Tawhid).⁴⁴ Some smaller Arabic script at the outermost edge, applied in similar manner, partially says “Mahdi...wrote this.” These

⁴⁴ Conversation with Patricia Blessing, 19 Feb. 2019.

texts are applied in raised relief decoration and painted in white against a dark cobalt blue background. There is also a small white cartouche at the outermost edge, bearing an inscription in black which says “In the workshop of the calligrapher Mahdi” in Farsi. Additionally, there is a date in this cartouche which says “134_”, where the last digit is illegible due to a slight surface loss in the inscription. If according to the Islamic calendar (*hijri qamari*), this dating would place the roundel sometime during the 1920s.⁴⁵ In the middle section is an eight-pointed star, outlined in white, raised decoration intersecting with the outer, larger inscriptions. The triangular legs of the star are painted yellow. In the very center of the star is an Arabic inscription painted in white against dark blue, similarly to the outer inscriptions. This central inscription says: “In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate.” The wooden frame surrounding the artwork is inlaid with a pattern of light and darker blue tiling, and has been painted with a metallic gold colorant in order to resemble gilding. The back of the frame has a wire piece screwed into it to form a hanging mechanism. Attribution for this piece remains undetermined, and only one artwork, a 20th century textile, was found that resembles the artwork.

III. State of Conservation:

Overall, this object is in fair and stable condition. Currently the artwork itself is housed within a wooden, tiled frame which is presumed to be disingenuous to the original. There are many areas of loss, ranging in size, throughout the glazed decoration of the piece and

⁴⁵ “CALENDARS.” Note: This dating may also indicate the 1960s instead, if the inscription refers to a different Iranian calendar (*hijri shamsi*). We are not able to determine which calendar was initially used for this cartouche.

particularly throughout the raised relief decorations. The entire surface of the decorated face exhibits soiling. On the back of the piece, what seems to be a previous accession number (1.74.4.38) has been applied in black paint or ink, and overpainted with some sort of resinous substance which has become very darkened and brown. There are some losses, chipping, flaking, and pitting throughout the backside of the roundel. A line has been drawn across the diameter of the backside using a black material resembling crayon, charcoal, graphite, or the like. The frame exhibits a severe amount of damage both in itself and in its effects on the artwork. From the obverse, the wooden frame is severely soiled, causing the gold paint to become dark, blackened, and void of its sheen. The inlaid tilework is also dirty and contains some losses. There are many cracks throughout the inner collar of the frame, and a few on the outer edges. From the backside, there is severe, consistent cracking following the circular shape of the roundel throughout where its plastered edges meet the frame. It is evident that the wooden frame has been attached to the ceramic roundel in multiple sections. Some sections contain plaster fills, and areas between the frame and the edges of the ceramic roundel have been overlaid and sealed with plaster. The backside of the frame, where some areas are plastered, has been painted with a dark brown colorant in order to resemble the matte quality of wood. These painted and plastered layers extend onto the backside of the ceramic roundel itself. There are several spots where nails have been driven into the roundel and plastered sections of the frame in order to secure the frame to the ceramic. There is severe cracking and flaking in both the ceramic object and the frame around these areas, as the nails are beginning to detach and pull away from the roundel. There is a large area of loss in the topmost,

backside section of the frame, which is made of plaster. Additionally, there are various areas of loss, flaking, and cracking throughout the backside of the frame.

APPENDIX 1: Figures

“Egyptian-Byzantine” Ceramic Bowl with Lion and Monkey Decor (71.1.96)



Figure 1a: Ceramic Bowl with Lion and Monkey Decor, Interior view. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 1b: Ceramic Bowl with Lion and Monkey Decor, Side view. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 1c: Ceramic Bowl with Lion and Monkey Decor, Underside. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

Objects for Reference and Comparison to Ceramic Bowl with Lion and Monkey Decor (71.1.96)

Example of Egypt-produced bowl during Byzantine time period:



Figure 2. Coptic Bowl, 4th-7th century. Kharga Oasis, Byzantine Egypt. Earthenware with slip decoration. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Polychrome examples:

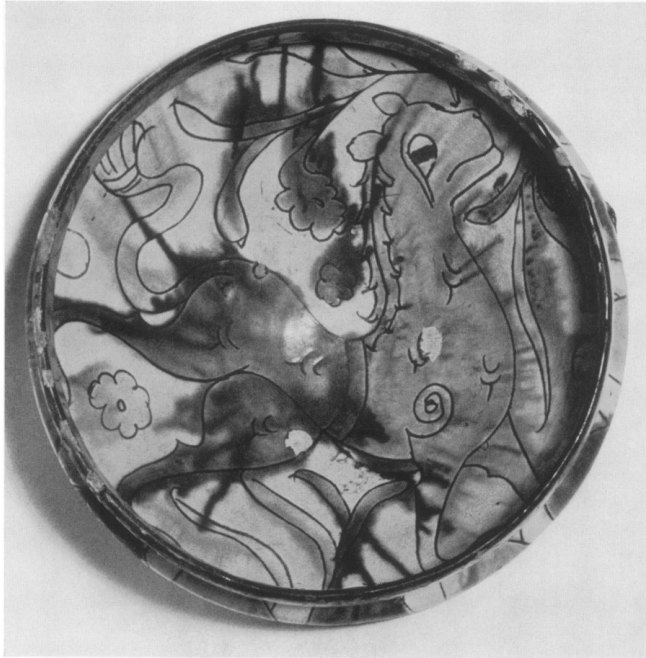


Figure 3. Deep Bowl with Incised Lion, 13th-14th centuries, Eastern Mediterranean. Thin graffito and green and brown glazes over white slip. Dumbarton Oaks.



Figure 4. Deep Bowl, 13th-14th centuries, Eastern Mediterranean. Thin graffito and green and pale brown glazes over white slip. Dumbarton Oaks.

Byzantine green glaze and Egypt shape comparisons:



Figure 5. Fluted Bowl, 10th century, Byzantine. Glazed earthenware. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 6. Bowl, 12th century, Egypt. Fritware with incised and streaked decoration and glazed. Victoria & Albert Museum.

Examples of Egyptian sgraffito ware:



Figure 7. Bowl Depicting a Running Hare, first quarter 11th century, Fatimid Egypt. Earthenware with luster painted on opaque white glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 8. Sgraffito-ware bowl, 14th-15th centuries, Egypt. Red earthenware, white-slip covered with incised and brown slip decoration under polychrome transparent glazes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Iznik Tankard (71.1.55)



Figure 9a: Iznik Tankard. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 9b: Iznik Tankard. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 9c: Iznik Tankard. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze, Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

Objects for Comparison: Similar Iznik tankards from other collections



Figure 10. Tankard, mid-late 16th century, Iznik, Turkey. Stonepaste (fritware) with underglaze and overglaze. Royal Museum, National Museums of Scotland.



Figure 11. Iznik Pottery Tankard, 17th century, Iznik, Turkey. Glazed pottery. Ref. #LU164423582242. Source: 1stdibs.com.



Figure 12. Tankard, 16th century, Iznik, Turkey. Polychrome glazed pottery. British Museum.



Figure 13. Iznik Pottery Tankard, ca. 1580, Iznik, Turkey. Christie's Lot 237. Source: Christies.com.

Iznik Tile (T1212)



Figure 14. Iznik Tile. Earthenware with underglaze and overglaze. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

Objects for Comparison to Iznik Tile (T1212): Iznik tiles from other collections



Figure 15. Tile with Floral and Cloud-band Design, ca. 1578, Iznik, Turkey. Stonepaste and polychrome painted under transparent glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 16. Tile, Second half of 16th century, Iznik, Turkey. Polychrome underpainted glazed fritware. Victoria & Albert Museum.

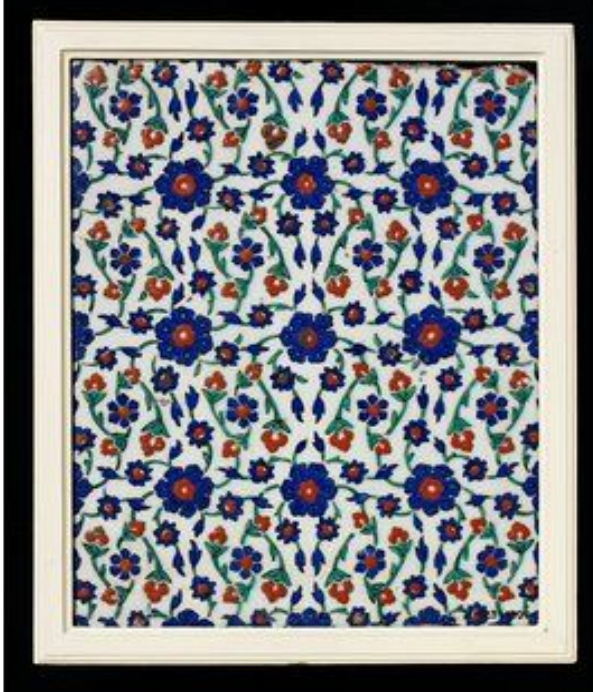


Figure 17. Tile, Second half of 16th century, Iznik, Turkey. Polychrome underpainted glazed fritware. Victoria & Albert Museum.



Figure 18. Tile, Second half of 16th century, Iznik, Turkey. Polychrome underpainted glazed fritware. Victoria & Albert Museum.

Persian Roundel with Gazelle Motif (71.1.356)



Figure 19a. Persian Roundel with Gazelle Motif, Obverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 19b. Persian Roundel with Gazelle Motif, Reverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

Persian Roundel with Spotted Quadruped Motif (71.1.357)



Figure 20a. Persian Roundel with Spotted Quadruped Motif, Obverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 20b. Persian Roundel with Spotted Quadruped Motif, Reverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

**Objects for Reference and Comparison to Persian Roundels with Gazelle and Spotted
Quadruped Motifs (71.1.356, 71.1.357):**

Other example of Persian ceramic roundel from another collection:



Figure 21a. Tile roundel (front view), 19th century, Isfahan, Iran. Armenian Museum in Isfahan.
Source: Patricia Blessing.



Figure 21b. Tile roundel (side view), 19th century, Isfahan, Iran. Armenian Museum in Isfahan.
Source: Patricia Blessing.

Examples of Iranian wares showcasing gazelle motifs:



Figure 22. Imitation Porcelain, mid 17th century, Isfahan or Mashhad, Iran. Stonepaste with cobalt decoration. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Source: Milena Carothers.



Figure 23. Star-shaped Tile with Gazelle, ca. 1250-1300, Iran, probably Kashan. Glazed fritware with underglaze painting. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco.



Figure 24. Star-shaped Tile, 14th century, Iran. Stonepaste, inglaze painting, and luster painting on opaque white glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Islamic (Persian?) Turquoise, Black, and White Bowl (71.1.359)



Figure 25a. Islamic Bowl, Interior view. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 25b. Islamic Bowl, Side view. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

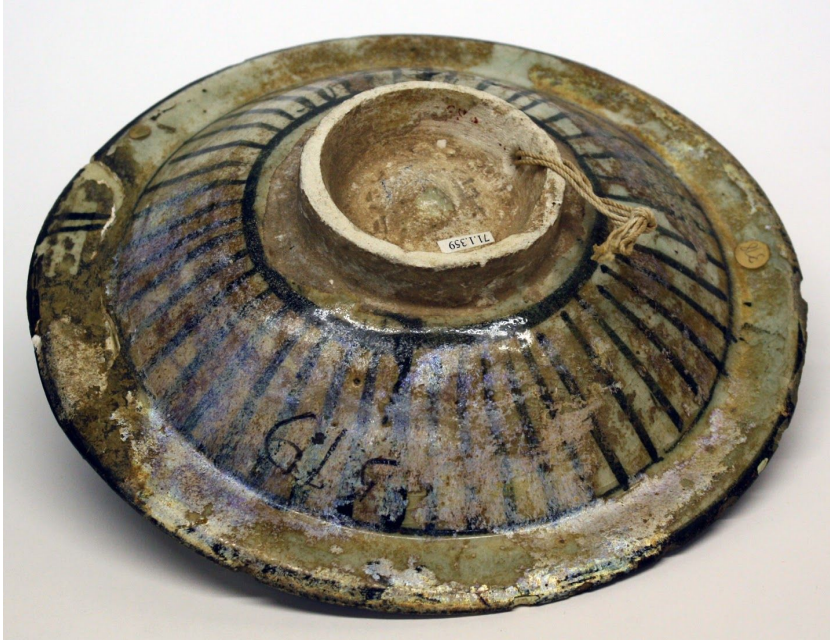


Figure 25c. Islamic Bowl, Underside. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic. Scripps College. Source: Kirk Delman.

Objects for Reference and Comparison to Islamic Turquoise, Black, and White Bowl (71.1.359):

Examples of Hispano-Moresque Wares:



Figure 26. Dish (Spanish lusterware), 15th century. Earthenware with tin-glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 27. Dish (Spanish lusterware), late 15th century, Valencia (Manises). Tin-glazed and luster-painted earthenware. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 28. Hispano-Moresque Dish, late 16th-early 17th century, possibly Valencia. Tin-glazed and luster-painted earthenware. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 29. Hispano-Moresque Dish, 17th century, Valencia. Tin-glazed and luster-painted earthenware. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 30. Hispano-Moresque Bowl. Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College.

Examples containing similar elements to object 71.1.359 in shape, design, and color:



Figure 31. Bowl, 14th or 15th century, Iran. Earthenware painted in green and manganese purple under clear glaze. Victoria & Albert Museum. Note: Exhibits similar shape and somewhat similar design.



Figure 32. Ilkhanid Bowl, 1260-1350, Iran. Fritware with underglaze painting. Victoria & Albert Museum. Note: Exhibits similar color and design schemes.



Figure 33. Fragment, 13th-16th century, attributed to Egypt. Stonepaste painted under clear glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Note: Exhibits very similar color and design schemes.



Figures 34a-b. Bowl with Persian Inscription, 1377, attributed to Iran. Stonepaste with clear glaze. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Note: Exhibits very similar color scheme, designs, and shape.

Calligraphic Roundel



Figure 35a. Calligraphic Roundel, Obverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic, wood, plaster, and paint. Scripps college. Source: Josephine Ren.

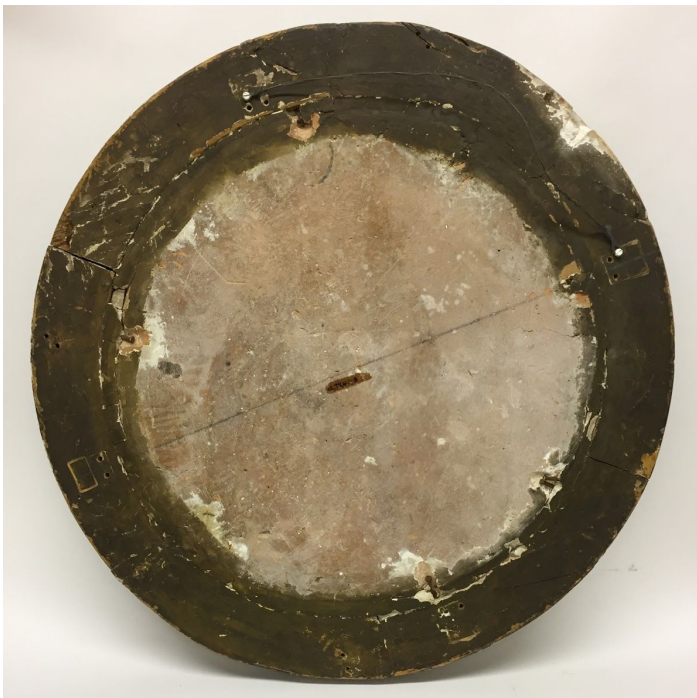


Figure 35b. Calligraphic Roundel, Reverse. Underglaze painted and overglazed ceramic, wood, plaster, and paint. Scripps college. Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 35c. Calligraphic Roundel, Detail of cartouche with date. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 35d. Calligraphic Roundel, Detail of tilework in the frame. Source: Josephine Ren.

Object for Comparison to Calligraphic Roundel:



Figure 36. Large Gold and Silver-Embroidered Calligraphic Roundel, 20th century, Near East. Textile. Lot 520. Source: Christies.com

CHAPTER 2: Ethics, Problems, and Proposals for Future Collections Care

Preventive Conservation and Prioritization of Certain Wares

I. Collections Care at Scripps

The current problems facing the Scripps College collections at Scripps College, cared for by the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, are not uncommon to the majority of other small galleries, university collections, and even larger-scale institutions. Reasons for such neglect stem from commonplace problems—the main one being a lack of funding. Lack of financial support segues into other existing issues, such as how less priority is given to art collections at university institutions, the lack of adequately trained staff, absence of storage space and facilities, the need for equipment and archival materials, and a want in overall interest from students, faculty, administration, and staff at universities. Many issues remain out of institutions' control, such as a lack of pre-existing records or information due to when objects were acquired. The existing problems in the Scripps collection are not unique, and overall the collection is not in alarming conditions. However, as a developing professional and advocate for the long-term preservation of artistic and historic works, I will be providing my observations on some of the current problems within the Scripps collection at the Williamson Gallery.

This overview will focus mainly on what is informally dubbed the “antiquities” collection, currently located in the basement under one side of the Edwards Humanities Building, and how preventive measures are currently executed for this collection. The American Conservation Institute's current Guidelines for Practice and Code of Ethics designate the importance of preventive conservation and collections care:

“VIII. The conservation professional shall recognize a responsibility for preventive conservation by endeavoring to limit damage or deterioration to cultural property, providing guidelines for continuing use and care, recommending appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encouraging proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport.”⁴⁶

In reference to this published guideline, the current state of the collections storage where the Islamic pottery is housed will be laid out. The basement section houses thousands of artworks, including objects, paintings, and textiles. There are four rows of shelves as well as a mesh wall panel for hanging and storage of paintings. It has been previously noted that one of the Islamic objects this thesis covers is currently stored using this mesh panel. All of the other Islamic wares are stored on a section in one of the shelves. These shelves are lined with Ethafoam bases, and housings are customized to each artwork. The Islamic ceramics currently have custom nesting locations on their shelves, where sections are cut out of the Ethafoam bases in shapes and systems tailored to each specific piece. Some problems facing the antiquities collection is the lack of space, attention to collections care, and storage methods used. Many paintings remain stacked against each other and on the floor; other objects also sit on the floor, which is not adequate housing. The majority of artworks lay on Ethafoam bases on shelves, as previously described, and are not in enclosures. There is a lack of integrated pest management, as well as cleaning and

⁴⁶ “Core Documents: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.”

housekeeping. Dust and debris can damage surfaces in the long run, especially those of delicate materials, and may contribute to attracting pests.⁴⁷

Another problem this storage section faces is its location, as it has previously experienced flooding, and remains susceptible to it. The Humanities Building is structured around three different decorative pools of water. In the fall semester of 2018, these pools overflowed and risked extending into the basement. In 1993, the basements under the Humanities Building unfortunately experienced major flooding. The water level reached about several inches, and mostly affected larger-scale framed Chinese paintings on silk that were propped and stacked against the walls. Unless it is ensured that the pools above the basements will not overflow again, the location of these storage basements becomes precarious. Another consideration is that moving the entire collections in the basement is not quite feasible, appropriate, or really worth it. Overall, there should be a larger attention to preventive care since preventing damage is more cost-effective in the long run for preserving collections, and is necessary toward slowing rates of deterioration.

⁴⁷ “Preventive Conservation.”

II. Proposals for Future Preservation and Prioritization of Certain Objects: Calligraphic Roundel

The next sections will explore what steps should be taken in approaching this Islamic collection from an art conservation perspective. Under the hypothetical premise of receiving limited, preservation-oriented funding dedicated toward Islamic pottery, I would argue that the gallery administration should focus potential conservation efforts on the non-accessioned Calligraphic roundel, as well as the unidentified, presumably Persian black, turquoise, and white bowl. It would be particularly interesting to conduct research on the Calligraphic roundel, as looking into this object requires further time, resources, and efforts. As of now, information about this roundel is virtually unknown. It is unclear how long the roundel has been hanging there in that basement, and where the number placed on it, which resembles an accession number but does not match to any records, came from. Thus, it would be useful to discover and learn about where, when, and how this roundel was produced, and conduct a deeper search for possible works which resemble it or any potential inspirations for its production.

Main reasons for why this roundel should receive immediate attention refer to its current state of conservation and importance of preventive conservation. The roundel, given its weight and indication that it may have formerly been an architectural element, should not be stored hanging on a mesh wall panel. It should be removed from this panel, and stored in a manner similar to all the other ceramics in the collection: laid down flatly upon supports made from Ethafoam, and nested in a custom housing devised to accommodate the object. Furthermore, the wooden frame that encases the roundel is not original to the artwork; thus, this makes hanging it even more of a concern. This wooden

frame proves to be one of the most glaring issues facing the condition and conservation of this piece, because it is an apparent later addition to the original work. As previously described, nails have been inserted through the sides and back edges of the roundel in order to attach this frame. This a major intervention, and this heavy ceramic roundel cannot be supported by the frame if it is hung in its present manner.

Over time, the frame has begun to loosen and there are signs that it along with the nails are detaching from the ceramic artwork itself (Figs. 1-4). On the backside, along the seamed edges of the frame that meet the edges of the roundel, the entire circular frame is completely and heavily cracking. As the nails securing the frame to the artwork begin to pull away from the ceramic, the physical damages and deterioration become expounded as these areas cause more cracking, losses, and lessened stability (Fig. 5). Essentially, the entire artwork is resisting the frame since it does not adequately support it. Thus, it is clear that the work cannot be hung on the mesh panel that way for long-term sustainability, as the roundel will eventually detach completely from the frame and experience further breakage. The nature of the roundel makes the ceramic itself the artwork's entire support. If the inserted nails continue to cause interior damage within the support, this will lead to damage of the surface decoration or glazed paint layer, which can be considered the main artwork. For ceramic objects and most general artworks, structural damage is inherently linked to subsequent damage of the artistic aspect of an object, usually a decorative or paint layer.

It has been noted that the roundel was most likely a former architectural element or decoration due to its size and weight. Overall, the frame is of low quality and not

really historically or materially valuable. Although the frame has some decorative tiles added to match the painted decoration on the roundel, this frame is most likely not an original attachment. Its design and manufacture are not common throughout Islamic artistic production, and the simple tilework does not reveal much or relate to any sort of Islamic style. The roundel may have been taken from its original site for a number of unknown reasons; perhaps it was looted, which is a common practice in the acquisition and circulation of cultural objects. The frame and hanging mechanism were perhaps added to increase marketability, and in order to sell it as a decorative wall hanging. Or, it may have been repurposed as a table-top and then had its crude hanging mechanism added later. It remains unknown what potential process of repurposing and market circulation this mysterious calligraphic roundel has been subjected to. As a result, the piece has become completely removed from its context and inserted into an unethically fabricated one. Thus, the addition of the frame proves not only extremely interventive and threatening toward the material conservation of the artwork, but also highly unethical toward preserving the original context of the ceramic roundel.

One of the most widely contested and addressed points within art history and conservation revolve around historical contexts of artworks, as well as the question of authenticity. Describing and researching original contexts of artistic and historic works is important to know before properly formulating theses and interventions for cultural property. Contextual background informs an artwork's essence, production, purpose, function, and overall existence. From removing an artwork from its site of historical context to a minor inpainting of a small decorative area, all interventions with an artwork

alter its history. The authenticity and contexts are what inform our societies on how to accurately interpret pieces of cultural heritage and thus, human histories. Because we are limited to existing pieces of evidence, artworks such as these Islamic ceramics must retain and reflect as much historical and contextual accuracy as possible so that we may disseminate adequate information. If any changes or additions are made to such cultural works, proper documentation is necessary in order to allow for continuous academic research and study.

In conclusion, this calligraphic roundel requires conservation prioritization because it must be removed from its current state of storage, and be removed from its frame. Because it is not authentic to the artwork and does not add much historical significance or value to the original piece, the frame should not be preserved in attachment to the artwork. It should be kept, because it may be useful in terms of educational purposes, and must be documented regardless. However, further art historical research and consultation with conservators are required in order to firmly gauge whether or not the frame is worth keeping or not. The main concern right now is that the frame is a huge threat to the long-term care of this artwork. For now, the most immediately helpful solution is that the roundel and frame be taken off the mesh wall and laid down horizontally on some support, such as Ethafoam. Overall the object also merits further research into figuring out what it even exactly is, and hopefully some sort of record of its entry into the collection may be discovered. Although the majority of its text can be deciphered, it bears style and design which have not been seen anywhere else. It would be useful to date its production and confirm that it is a more recent artwork, as well as its

place of production or other geographic locations, time periods, artistic styles, and techniques which may have inspired its creation.

III. Proposals for Future Preservation and Prioritization of Certain Objects: Islamic Turquoise, Black, and White Bowl

After the calligraphic roundel, the next piece which should be prioritized is the formerly presumed “Hispano-Moresque” bowl. An initial point of immediate concern is that the object has been miscategorized, and incorrectly identified as a “Hispano-Moresque” ware. This bowl should be properly distinguished as an Islamic object and its catalog should be corrected, given that it is a free and accessible online resource. It is important to avoid misinformation and continue serving the aims of academia, higher education, and respect for cultural heritage.

In terms of current state of conservation, this ware is not as severe need as the roundel—although it has suffered significant amount of deterioration and requires stabilization. What makes this bowl significant is its exhibition of a former restorative technique of faking. The problem of fakes and forgeries has been a phenomenon throughout Islamic pottery which has not been observed throughout other ceramic histories.⁴⁸ Much of Islamic medieval pottery survives mainly in broken fragments. There was also less extensive trade and exchange of Islamic pottery to Europe, unlike Chinese ceramics, which resulted in a smaller circulation of good-condition ceramics throughout the West. Within the history of collecting Islamic pottery, the earliest known examples of existing fakes and forgeries can be cited from The Victoria and Albert Museum from as early as 1876.

To preface the discussion around the Scripps bowl, it is important to distinguish fakes from forgeries. The main distinction lies in what the intent behind an object is.

⁴⁸ Watson, *Ceramics*, 68.

Fakes are innocent objects which are original for the most part, yet have been altered in some way in order to “enhance” it, most likely to increase interest and its market value. Typically, some methods include repainting, inpainting, adding dates and signatures, replacing missing parts, and adding in pieces which at first glance seem like they belong, but actually do not. Forgeries, on the other hand, are meant to deceive and pass off as an authentic object when they are quite the opposite. Unlike fakes, forgeries are produced entirely from scratch.⁴⁹ It is also important to note that the methods involved in faking are all common techniques in restoration, which is separate from conservation. Restoration is meant to bring an object back to a known or assumed original state, and often involves reconstructions and additions not always suitable for the livelihood of an artwork. Conservation is dedicated to the long-term preservation of cultural property, strives to be less interventive, and can become more of an umbrella term to encompass other actions, such as restoration.

In the case of the Scripps ceramic bowl, two non-original fragments were added to a missing area in the rim (Figs. 6-7). The areas between the lost fragments and the rest of the object were filled with plaster or another similar material, and then painted in order to mimic and blend in with the painted designs along the rest of the original. Since this object exhibits an additive, restorative techniques, it is useful to refer to previous case studies which shed light onto the history of restoration and faking of Islamic ceramics. Kirsty Norman has written such case histories on objects selected from the prestigious al-Sabah collection at the Kuwait National Museum, one of the most comprehensive

⁴⁹ Watson, “Fakes and Forgeries,” 517.

Islamic art collections in the world.⁵⁰ A range of 11 ceramic vessels were carefully chosen as some of the most interesting and telling examples of restoration and faking from the collection. Most of these case studies reflect the same techniques used for the Scripps bowl. It was common practice to replace missing areas with compiled fragments from similar objects. Since plaster does not imitate true ceramic as closely, using found or compiled fragments was preferred over fabricating and molding plaster fills—especially when there was some intent to deceive. Commercially, complete ceramics are much higher in value and made painstaking efforts to reconstruct areas worth it.⁵¹ Many things had to be considered when assembling sherds to fill missing spaces, such as color, wall thickness, curvature, and similarity of pattern or design. A number of Norman’s case studies demonstrate how some non-original sherds used had no designs at all, and were employed as sort of “blank canvases” in order to overpaint in designs and imagery to connect to the original (LNS307C, LNS108C). This was more common in wares with painted figural or scenic depictions. One lusterware example (LNS111C) uses two large sherds from a similar dish to make up for a missing area of the rim, similarly to the Scripps ceramic, before being over-painted to match the original design and then completely re-fired. Some case studies even use composites of inserted fragments from more than one object, and utilize a marriage of already patterned sherds with further inpainting or overpainting of designs (LNS767C, LNS308C, LNS98C, LNS205C).

⁵⁰ Watson, *Ceramics*, 69.

⁵¹ Watson, “Fakes and Forgeries,” 522.

Conservators' considerations and decisions regarding these cases at the Kuwait National Museum can inform how the Scripps ceramic may be approached. In all of these case studies, conservators initially removed any existing overpainting, inpainting, or foreign coatings (such as resin in one case) mechanically with acetone, a chemical solvent, and cotton swabs. Acetone is typically used in the initial cleaning of archaeological and ancient ceramics, due to its neutral pH, volatility, and abilities to loosen foreign matter accretions. Cleaning would remove the overpainting on the fill as well as its yellow discoloration; however, overall surface cleaning of the Scripps bowl requires further consideration and consultation because the overglaze deterioration is powdering off in some areas (Fig. 8). In the Scripps case, the fragments encompass a small missing gap of the object in comparison to the al-Sabah examples. This makes it easier to remove the alien fragments, and if they are not numerous, such fragments will sometimes be removed and the object restored. However, each artwork necessitates individual judgment.⁵²

I would argue that the inserted sherds in the Scripps example are not in dire need of removal, since their level of deception and manipulation of the entire object is not as major as the case histories from the al-Sabah collection. The inserted fragments have not been overpainted, and are clearly distinctive from the rest of the ceramic when examined. Another verdict in one of Norman's case studies uses this same reasoning, where if the true condition can be easily established and the foreign fragments do not disrupt overall integrity, it is not worth detaching them.⁵³ In some of her case studies, the ceramics are

⁵² Watson, *Ceramics*, 76.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 87.

more visually deceptive than the Scripps example, and can only be distinguished upon closer inspection and looking at the undersides. Because the inserted sherds within the Scripps ware are clearly of a different underglaze painted pattern and overglaze, as indicated by outstanding discoloration, it is easier to immediately distinguish the true nature of the original piece.

Additionally, it would be educationally useful if the inserted fragments in the Scripps bowl were kept intact. Although the Scripps antiquities collection is not formally a study collection, it should continue to serve as a resource for students. The alien fragments are not detrimental to the future preservation of the “Persian” bowl, and not overly deceptive or harmful to the artwork’s integrity. This object should undergo treatment in order to clean and stabilize the overglaze and prevent further devitrification. This bowl needs its own custom housing and possibly an enclosure, and most importantly requires controlled environments and monitoring, since previous glaze deterioration is caused by environmental factors such as temperature, light, and relative humidity.⁵⁴ If the bowl is kept intact, this ceramic can be used as a hands-on, visual example which addresses some important topics within art history and conservation curriculums. Some valuable points of departure include questions surrounding authenticity of artworks, how to decide what interventions are ethical or unethical, historical techniques in the production of originals, fakes, and forgeries, the ingenuity of some receptive techniques, influences on the art market including domestic and transnational commercialization, and how to study ancient and modern materials. Inquiries surrounding historical context and

⁵⁴ Charlotte Newton and Judy Logan, “Care of Ceramics.”

how to treat cultural property necessitate further scholarship, along with how scientific and technical analyses are necessary to conclude heritage preservation.

IV. Conclusion

It consistently remains difficult to maintain art collections, especially given the severe limitations of support and funding bestowed upon institutions. No matter how much staff may be performing their duties to the best of their abilities, artworks will always face inherent precarity and risks of deteriorating; some objects are evidently more fragile than others. Despite the problems and limitations which do currently face the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College, there are continued efforts to improve collections care. The potential for increased interest and financial support is always growing, as the Scripps collection continues to be utilized as what it is meant to be: an educational resource. Continuing study of the collection will always contribute toward the dissemination of information about what exists underneath inside the Scripps basements, public and administrative fascination with these objects, and furthered investment in the exhibition and necessary preservation of these artistic and historic works.

When it comes to conservation and awareness of problems within the collection, one must face the decision of choosing what to focus on, since it is impossible to encompass everything. This study promotes a potential category within the collection which displays great educational value and applicable use in regards to the current art history and conservation departments. Scripps is the only collection which contains a known set of Islamic ceramics, and provides a range of different time periods, geographical regions, artistic styles, and methods of production. Ceramics are also the most ideal form of showcasing and representing an overview of Islamic art history, making the small collection at Scripps quite significant. These works also prove useful to

the art history department at the Claremont Colleges given the current availability of Islamic art history courses; thus, it is valuable to possess and maintain the physical study collection on-hand.

In consideration of the current art conservation seminars offered, I have shown how certain pieces from this category of Islamic pottery require more prioritization and immediate attention from conservation professionals as opposed to other pieces. This was done by conducting examinations and written condition reports for each piece within this category. Of course, it is most beneficial if all works may be conserved. However, conservation is an extremely costly and complicated endeavor, and not always accessible especially to small galleries like the Williamson. Thus, if the gallery were to hypothetically receive an undetermined, limited amount of monetary funding focused on the Islamic ceramics, I have argued which pieces should be prioritized. The mis-categorized Islamic turquoise, black, and white bowl and the un-categorized calligraphic roundel prove to be in most immediate need of attention regarding their current conditions, and are rich in educational value since they raise important points of departure and discussions surrounding ceramics conservation, authenticity, and ethics.

APPENDIX 2: Figures

Images for Calligraphic Roundel



Figure 1: Calligraphic Roundel, Detail of nails between the frame and ceramic roundel, Reverse.
Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 2: Calligraphic Roundel, Nails between the frame and ceramic roundel, Reverse. Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 3: Calligraphic Roundel, Detail of nail between the frame and ceramic roundel, Reverse. Exhibited plaster layer cracking and flaking. Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 4: Calligraphic Roundel, Detail of nail between the frame and ceramic roundel, Reverse. Exhibited plaster layer cracking and flaking. Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 5: Calligraphic Roundel, Large section of plaster loss in the frame, Reverse. Source: Josephine Ren.

Images for Islamic Turquoise, Black, and White Bowl



Figure 6: Islamic Bowl, possibly Persian. Detail of severe overglaze vitrification and inserted fragment. Source: Kirk Delman.



Figure 7: Islamic Bowl, possibly Persian. Detail of inserted fragments. Source: Josephine Ren.



Figure 8: Islamic Bowl, possibly Persian. Detail of underside and overall vitrification of overglaze. Source: Kirk Delman.

CONCLUSION

Undertaking this thesis project has been an interesting experience, and certainly no easy task. I chose this topic because my previous coursework in Islamic art history fostered an ongoing fascination with the subject, and a curiosity as to whether or not the vast Scripps collection even contained examples of what I studied. Additionally, the subject became very fitting since my current interests as a pre-program art conservation student lie in an objects specialization—specifically conservation of ethnographic objects and materials from non-Eurocentric cultures. Ceramics conservation itself is a fascinating field, and I have been privileged to receive exposure to conserving archaeological ceramics.

Furthermore, given all the complexities that the presumably Persian bowl with the inserted fragments exhibit, I was reminded of my previous coursework on fakes and forgeries among the art world. Upon initial examination, the cases of the Persian bowl and the Calligraphic roundel already seemed worthy of further investigation. I was fortunate to be able to study these objects, along with the rest of this small but enriching collection, and conclude that they do raise valuable points of departure on authenticity and conservation ethics.

There were a number of limitations facing this thesis project. The largest one, which affected the entirety of the project, was that none of the objects had any existing provenance records. This absence of information and previous documentation on all seven objects meant that I had to begin my research from scratch. It was a huge challenge trying to devise some sort of provenance for this range of objects. Typically, artworks that will undergo conservation treatments in other collections should ideally have

pre-existing provenance. For this thesis, a lot of time went into researching the historical contexts of these works—a couple which still cannot be entirely confirmed in their attributions. Although art history is crucial to the field of art conservation and the two subjects are inherently correlated, it is not my main objective and position to fully address questions of connoisseurship. Nevertheless, I put forth my best efforts to provide backgrounds for these objects, which are necessary to conservation.

In art conservation, theses and projects will typically focus on one or more specific artworks. A conservation project and publication would involve further technical analysis of artworks, as well as the execution of treatment procedures. These types of projects are more commonly completed in conservation labs, either in an institution or a private studio, or generally under the direction of conservation professionals. A conservation lab or studio, along with a conservator, may adequately provide the resources, tools, facilities, and direction required to perform thorough conservation procedures or applied research. The induction of scientific analysis for the Scripps objects was not feasible, due to limited access to adequate scientific instruments for technical examinations and analysis. Methods such as thermoluminescence and more up-to-date X-Ray Fluorescence testing would be useful in determining the materials used for these artworks, and more accurate dating. However, the department does not have the resources necessary for carrying out such technical analyses. As for performing treatment, doing so would only be possible under the guidance of a professionally trained conservator. Pre-program students should not be executing treatment or any sort of interventive procedures without consulting a conservator. Unfortunately, the art

conservation undergraduate program at Scripps has not been provided with the resources to allow students to complete this sort of project. Unlike other programs in conservation, the department does not have conservation professionals on hand to oversee a project in benchwork conservation. Without the supervision of a trained conservator, pre-program students do not have the authority to provide many concrete suggestions, let alone treatment proposals, for the conservation of artworks.

In the future, I hope to continue my pursuits as an aspiring conservator and gain the types of experience I described above. Nevertheless, I do not believe that this project was unproductive and unfruitful. Given the challenges and limitations I faced, I was still able to complete a lot of meaningful research for these important, previously unstudied artworks. Hopefully, the documentation provided for these pieces of cultural heritage will continue to serve educational purpose. Through this project, I hope to provide further visibility to the field of art conservation in general and in the U.S. context under the American Institute for Conservation. Professionals undergo extensive, painstaking training through graduate programs and countless work hours in order to adequately preserve artistic and historic works. This field is unique in how interdisciplinary it is, as it combines art history, studio art, chemistry, materials science, applied research, problem-solving, and so much more. The work is not easy, but it is never difficult to remember why we must keep ensuring the long-term preservation of cultural heritage and artistic works—things which define the entire scope of humanity, promulgate our histories, and sustain educational endeavors.

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