

the
GLOBAL RESEARCH
PAST INITIATIVE

WORKSHOP 1, TORONTO



EXTERIOR, CENTRAL MOSQUE OF ISFAHAN
Photograph by ivstiv, courtesy of Getty Images

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, FEB 4-5, 2023

Collaborative Digital Research Space
Maanjiwe nendamowinan (MN) building
University of Toronto Mississauga

MISSION STATEMENT



What should humanistic research look like in the post-pandemic world?

The Global Past Research Initiative (GPRI) seeks answers to this question by developing a new model of post-disciplinary knowledge production — one that promotes equity in the present by exploring the diversity of the past.

The modern disciplines of social science and humanities are by-products of empire. As these disciplines became professionalized enterprises of knowledge production from ca. 1850 to 1914, the non-West figured as essentially non-historical: institutionalized disciplines positioned societies and cultures outside of Europe and its settler colonies as either “precontact” cultures examined through ethnography, or textual artefacts of “high” civilizations studied in isolation from diachronic processes and the present. In lieu of these developments, after 1945, the Cold War brought a proliferation of area studies programs; these endeavours, while interdisciplinary, were also framed by colonial/imperial organizations of power and knowledge that prioritized empirical study of bounded regions rather than questions of global relevance. We at the Global Past Research Initiative see this disciplinary legacy as a global challenge.

Based at the University of Toronto Mississauga, our multidisciplinary, multiyear project — led by principal investigators, Ajay Rao and Jill Caskey — is a call-to-action for scholars of the premodern world (before ca. 1500) to begin building a productive framework for research, teaching, and graduate training focused on the connectedness of cultures and of archives in ways that push against the legacy of area studies modality of studying the global pasts. By conceptualizing the study of global pasts away from the dominant disciplinary perspectives of our day, we aim to revitalize the global humanities and provide a more expansive understanding of the humanities' core question – what does it mean to be human?

Our goal is to build a network of collaboration between scholars and students at the University of Toronto, American University in Cairo, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Institut Français de Pondichéry, and National University of Singapore. With this wide-ranging collaboration with our international partners and a dynamic team of scholars, we aim to prepare the way for a truly global university, where humanities programs will break free of hegemonic disciplinary boundaries, and embrace non-Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and seeing the world by moving beyond disciplinary boundaries. Our hope is to produce knowledge that is transformative, emancipatory, and plural.



Photograph by ivstiv, courtesy of Getty Images.

EXTERIOR, CENTRAL MOSQUE OF ISFAHAN

WHAT WE DO

Composed of three interlocking research clusters, the initiative will involve three, week-long, international workshops aimed at sparking dialogue and building research capacity for graduate students and scholars of the premodern world.

These workshops will focus on major methodological and theoretical problems and their implications for our individual research areas, as collaborators bring newfound insights and conceptual frameworks to bear on specific settings, sources, and collections.

OUR CLUSTERS

MOBILITY

Focusing on the movement of peoples, goods and ideas in the premodern world as they are reflected in a wide range of sources such as travel narratives, diplomatic accounts, memoirs of pilgrimage, commercial documents or graffiti left by roamers of trade routes and seasonal pastures.

ART & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Focusing on art and architecture in premodern Eurasia to consider how various groups responded to the diversity of their world and the concomitant circulation of works of art, artists, techniques, media, and ideas.

STORYTELLING, NARRATIVE & TEXTUALITY

Focusing on the science of texts as a theoretical problem in the global humanities. We will examine diverse practices of lexicography, grammar, rhetoric, metrics, hermeneutics, and commentary, as well as the modes of cultural encounter involved in translation and oral and written story traditions.

OUR CORE TEAM

The GPRI is a multidisciplinary, international research initiative. We call upon researchers from several areas of expertise, both chronological and geopolitical, to collaborate on this global challenge. Our core team comprises four dynamic people, two principal investigators and two project managers, who supervise the execution of our research activities.



AJAY RAO
Co-Principal Investigator
Historical Studies

My fascination with global pasts grows from my passion for Sanskrit, a language that I fell in love with in my early twenties. As an undergraduate, I studied Sanskrit in Puna (India) with traditional scholars and was captivated by the language's beauty. These classes were Sanskrit-medium, and by hearing and speaking the language I felt my study of the past coming alive in the present, rather than remaining buried in a dead past. The inherent complexity of its aesthetics and how it structured perspectives on the world resonated with me deeply and I was hooked on it. This engagement with the present animates my work as a scholar, and I have always sought to connect my research with contemporary political and social realities. The Global Past Research Initiative offers powerful possibilities for scholars like me, who are focused on highly technical and specialized fields, to bring our work into dialogue with researchers working with different religious, cultural, and intellectual archives.



JILL CASKEY
Co-Principal Investigator
Visual Studies

Well before I became a historian of art and architecture, I was fascinated by the remains of the distant past and how they can tell stories about their makers and original users. My interests in medieval art emerged gradually and through other endeavors—writing, music, curiosity about places beyond my hometown in Illinois, studying cities as an undergraduate. For me, the appeal of medieval art lies in its strangeness and in the relative sparseness of its documentation; this combination of features sparks my creativity. I also relish the range of legibility and expressiveness in medieval art. Some works seem unforthcoming, offering few hints to the historian eager to uncover their stories; others loudly proclaim their significance in multiple ways—through form, inscriptions, images, and materials. In my work on the medieval Mediterranean, I have looked outside of canonical contexts to examine works of art, people, and ideas that are indicative of fluidity rather than fixity, contact rather than constraint. I look forward to exploring with Global Past participants these dynamics on a larger scale.



AQSA IJAZ
Co-Project Manager
Language Studies

I am a self-professed lover of words (philologist) at the time when philology seems to have lost its conceptual currency in modern humanities. With a long history of various border crossings, I was born and raised in Lahore, Pakistan where I was trained as a pilot and a classical musician before joining academia. I studied English Literature, Philosophy, and French in Lahore, and went on to discover the fields of South Asian and Religious Studies in Germany and the United States before pursuing my doctoral studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. As a medievalist, I am fascinated by the temporality of the past and diverse ways in which it elicits our scholarly and poetic attention. The drive to listen to and communicate the multilingual voices of the dead is at the heart of my academic and artistic work. It is this drive that has led me to write my doctoral dissertation on the 12th-century Persian poet, Nizami Ganjavi and the multilingual reception of his most celebrated love-poem *Khusrau u Shirin* in Persianate India. My research is geared toward challenging the methodological frameworks of European historiography and re-conceptualising the history of ideas from within the philological density of Islamicate India.



ALISHA STRANGES
Co-Project Manager
Women & Gender Studies

I am a queer, community-based, public humanities scholar with deep ties to the performing and visual arts. While Historical Studies proper has not been a central focus for me as an academic, public history, and particularly those projects that focus on preserving underheard or less visible histories, has always captivated my attention. As a theatre artist, I spent a decade devising original, collectively created performances drawn from the lived experiences of the queer, trans, and non-binary creators I worked alongside. As an undergraduate, student group facilitator at U of T, I spearheaded the [anti-Archive Project](#), documenting the ephemeral evidence of the [Qu\(e\)rying Religion](#) program's 10+ years of supportive programming for QTBIPOC students of faith. Most recently, as a project oral historian and a research manager for the [LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory](#) (PI Elspeth Brown), I've refined and further mobilized this passion in a more formal, scholarly-grounded, yet still creative way. I am intrigued by The Global Past's desire to build a framework for the research, study, and education of premodernity that de-centres Europe and privileges a decolonial and anti-imperial lens. As a scholar of gender and sexual diversity studies, it is always compelling to support work that explores the value of "leaked boundaries," so to speak.

OUR GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Our graduate research assistants collaborate with the core team to support the planning and execution of our workshop series and the amplification of our research outcomes via social media and digital media creation projects, such as blogs, vlogs, and podcasts.



SARA AMERI
English

My interest in literature was sparked when I read Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for the first time as a teenager; my fascination with medieval literature particularly was shaped by reading heaps of Arthurian romances (sometimes instead of attending classes!). I have since moved to study a wholly different kind of medieval literature: mystical and visionary writing. I am interested in the local contexts that produced these texts as well as the resonances they share across cultures. The other side of my scholarly, and sometimes leisurely, pursuits involves plagues and pestilences, especially the Black Death — a topic I started thinking about coincidentally a few months before the Covid-19 pandemic. I am fascinated by the different stories people tell themselves in different parts of the world to make sense of global crises and new diseases. How these stories vary, travel, and transform is what drew me to the *Books and the Silk Roads* project; it is also what I hope to explore further in the collaborative and multidisciplinary environment of the Global Past.



KATERINA BONG
Architecture, Landscape & Design

I am an architectural historian with a special interest in building technology, infrastructure, engineering, and architectural manuals of the early modern Italy. I come from a family of engineers, my father studied civil engineering and my grandfather worked as a construction manager building dams, bridges, and highways in South Korea. Though unconsciously, this background slipped into my research which melded with my studies in art and architectural history. As a historian of the built environment, I am fascinated by the impulse towards sturdy buildings, stable cities, and a robust society (specifically the aversion towards failure, collapses, and defects) which functioned as a common driver for many civilizations across geographical and temporal scales. Many of these building knowledges were passed down as building manuals which recorded and illustrated building procedures, materials, and techniques. My doctoral dissertation examines building manuals in general, and European and Asian architectural knowledge in particular, to insert the artisanal, practical, and infrastructural knowledge as key tools of methodological enquiry in the study of the built environment.



FAHIMEH GHORBANI
Art History

Growing up in Iran, I have always been surrounded by marvelous artifacts and splendid architectural monuments, palaces, mosques, bridges, and traditional bazaars. The magnificence and mystery of historic objects and ancient sites intrigued me from an early age and fascinated me with a language that I could not understand. My desire for deciphering that language and penetrating that enigmatic world of beauty and meaning led me to study traditional Iranian arts and crafts. My study examines the agency of objects and craft-making practices within the current discourses in the field of Islamic art and architecture. My research contextualizes the notion of craftsmanship within the intellectual landscape of the premodern Islamic world, in which making was often recognized as a form of contemplating and thinking. By connecting the manual processes of making with the intellectual realms, I trace a craft-oriented worldview that has its origin in medieval Islamic theology and philosophy. Methodologically speaking, my critical approach explores the need for developing a theory rooted in the culture-specific frameworks applicable to the study of Islamic art and architecture.

OUR TORONTO TEAM

Our University of Toronto Team Members constitute the Toronto-centred base of the GPRI, and support the work of our three research clusters.



SULEYMAN DOST
Historical & Cultural Studies

I thought I was going to become a political scientist or an international relations specialist. I don't know exactly what happened along the way but here I am, working on early Islam and the Qur'an. I believe I was intrigued by the challenges posed by some scholars of early Islamic history who argued that we know way less than we thought we knew about the beginnings of Islam. Heeding their provocative siren call, I turned my attention to whatever scraps of material evidence we could have on pre-Islamic Arabia and eventually I got fascinated by the source-critical questions that fuel the study of other religions as well, especially in their formative periods. That's why I believe the Global Past project is the kind of place where I can air some of my comparative questions and learn from scholars having similar challenges in their fields.



AMANDA GOODMAN
Religion / East Asian Studies

Amanda is an Assistant Professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the transmission and spread of Buddhist tantra in the 'borderland' regions between China and Tibet during the 8th-12th centuries. Taking the Dunhuang manuscript cache as her primary archive, her work explores the ways in which tantric forms of Buddhist ritual were appropriated and altered along the Sino-Tibetan frontier, as well as in central China. Her work employs historiographical and text-critical methods, along with insights gleaned from ritual studies and the archaeology of the book, to discuss the production of Buddhist specialist knowledge related to techniques of personal cultivation in the pre-modern period, and the various formats used to disseminate that knowledge in the age of the Buddhist manuscript.



MARIA HUPFIELD
Visual Studies / English & Drama

I seek a genuine, placeful connection with the local Nishinaabeg cultural knowledge and land on which I live and work. This connection begins by looking back at oral tradition and storytelling to provide an enduring, relevant, and continuous relationship in the present. By our nature Nishinaabeg Peoples are transdisciplinary, anticolonial, matrilineal, nonhierarchical, and grounded to "L"and, language and ceremony. Indigenous work does not conform to modernist western understandings of art as a depersonalized commercial product but rather argues for a deeper awareness of artistic creation existing as living culture by makers in an ongoing series of relations with community, places, ideas, and materials, that change contexts and intent in meaning-making. I am a member of the Nishinaabeg People and belong to Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario, Canada. As an Assistant Professor in Indigenous Performance and Media Art, Department of Visual Studies / English & Drama, and a Canadian Research Chair in Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts, at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) where I run the Indigenous Creation Studio, I work to move traditional and digital art from the land to the classroom, into virtual space, both now and into the future.



ALEXANDRA GILLESPIE
English & Drama

I'm Vice-President of the University of Toronto and Principal of U of T Mississauga, where I've had the privilege to work as a professor of English and global book history for the past twenty years. I believe in the power of academic collaboration and community — and I love working with colleagues on big projects that make connections across different times, places, and research methods. So, my research and teaching range widely: from the poetics of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* to the history of text technologies, from scientific approaches to book history to literary theory and philosophy. On these topics I have published about fifty articles and six co-edited volumes, plus an original monograph, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*. I have also had the opportunity to join several international research networks, including as co-primary investigator of a Mellon-funded project, *The Book and the Silk Roads*, which culminated in 2021-22 in a public exhibit at the Aga Kahn Museum. My current research project — also supported by the Mellon foundation — is Hidden Stories, which brings together more than 130 collaborators from 60 institutions to develop new understandings of premodern books through their local and global relations.



TIMOTHY HARRISON
Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations

Timothy is a Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. He has conducted over thirty-five years of archaeological field research in the Middle East, primarily around the Eastern Mediterranean littoral (the Levant), in the countries of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. He has directed excavations at the Bronze and Iron Age site of Tall Madaba in Jordan, and he is currently directing the Tayinat Archaeological Project on the Plain of Antioch in southeastern Turkey. These projects form part of a regional research effort that seeks to shed light on the rise of early complex societies in the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2012, he launched the CRANE Project, an international consortium of researchers and projects conducting research in the Orontes Watershed and Eastern Mediterranean.



NYASHA JUNIOR
Religion

I'm an amateur and professional bookworm. I'm a Black woman who was born and raised in the Deep South of the USA. I'm a biblical scholar and an associate professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. My teaching and research address issues of gender, race, ethnicity and their intersections. At the heart of my work is a commitment to critical reflection and cross-disciplinary engagement regarding ancient Christian and Jewish texts and traditions and their reception. I combine my academic scholarship with public-facing work that helps me to reach a broader audience and contribute to public discourse.

OUR TORONTO TEAM

Our University of Toronto Team Members constitute the Toronto-centred base of the GPRI, and support the work of our three research clusters.



RUBA KANA'AN
Visual Studies

Growing up in Jordan was an immersive experience of a global past. I was surrounded by histories and cultures that were rooted there but always linked to elsewhere — other times, places, people, ideas, materials, and styles. I took mobility and intersectionality for granted and they stayed with me throughout my academic and professional career. Becoming a specialist in Islamic art and architecture is also an exercise in inhabiting multitudes. As an academic, I teach medieval and early modern art and architecture of vast regions in Asia, Africa, and Europe. As a museum professional I focused on the power of storytelling through objects as the connective tissue of human understanding and exchange. And as a researcher I work with artefacts, monuments, and texts to explore medieval artists and how they envisioned and created their work, patrons and the stories behind their grand gestures, and materials and how they were experienced and moved across time and space.



SEUNGJUNG KIM
Art History

Seungjung is an Associate Professor of Greek art and archaeology in the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto. Her research involves concepts of time and temporality in the visual culture of Archaic and Classical Greece — in sculpture, vase painting, and monumental painting — which she contextualizes to the larger cultural history, bridging philosophical, social, literary and scientific understandings in ancient Greece. Moreover, her interest in the phenomenology of visual perception has engaged her actively with film theory, and more broadly with philosophy of history and theory of art history.



JESSICA LOCKHART
English & Drama

Jessica is the Head of Research for the Old Books New Science lab including The Book and the Silk Roads. Her research investigates the affect of wonder within medieval fictional writing, using “everyday marvels” such as a sports competition, a pillow, a lost puppy, a corpse, a puddle, and a field of sand to study how wonder is theorized and pressed into service in medieval texts. Her primary sources are texts from three imaginative genres — riddle, romance, and dream vision — from late antiquity in North Africa through to late medieval Britain. She is currently writing her first monograph titled, *A Covered Quality: Medieval Riddles and Chaucer's Fiction*.



HEBA MOSTAFA
Art History

Heba is Assistant Professor of Islamic art and architecture at the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto, St. George and Senior Fellow at Massey College. She received her doctorate from Cambridge University's Department of Architecture in 2012 and holds degrees in architecture and the history of Islamic architecture from Cairo University and the American University in Cairo. Her research explores the formation of Islamic architecture through the lens of early Islamic sectarianism and governance, addressing the mediation of political conflict and confessional division through architecture at the intersection of politics and the sacred. She focuses on Islam's interface with late antiquity, Christianity and Judaism through commemorative architecture, pilgrimage and ritual practice, with a particular focus on Jerusalem and Cairo. Her current project explores nature veneration practices in Medieval Cairo, with a focus on the Nilometer at al-Rawda Island, bringing into conversation the mediatory role of nature in reconciling the religious, spiritual, and scientific contexts in Medieval Islam.



WALID SALEH
Religion / Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations

Walid is a Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. He is a specialist on the Qur'an, the history of its interpretation (Tafsir), the Arabic manuscript tradition, Islamic apocalyptic literature, and the Muslim reception of the Bible. His first book, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition* (2004), was the first monograph length study of al-Thalabi (d. 1035) and his influence on the history of Qur'an commentary tradition. His second monograph, *In Defense of the Bible* (2008), is a detailed study and an edition of al-Biqā'ī's (d. 1480) Bible treatise, “The Just Verdict on the Permissibility of Quoting from Old Scriptures,” which is the most extensive discussion of the place of the Bible in the Islamic religious tradition. He is also a specialist on Arabic paleography and teaches advanced courses on the manuscript tradition of Arabic written literatures.



KAREN RUFFLE
Historical Studies

Karen is a Professor of History of Religions at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She specializes in the study of South Asian Shi'ism with a focus on devotional texts, ritual practices, and Shi'i material practices in South Asia. She has conducted field research in India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Her publications include *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi'ism* (2011) and *Everyday Shi'ism in South Asia* (2021).

OUR INTERNATIONAL TEAM

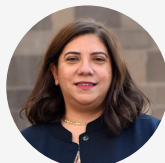
Our international collaborators and partners at the American University in Cairo, the National University of Singapore, the Institut Français de Pondichéry, and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay help us expand the scope of our central research questions beyond the contours of the North American academy.



HUGO DAVID

Indology

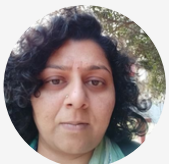
Hugo is the Head of the Department of Indology, Institut français de Pondichéry. His main area of research is the history of Indian philosophical systems and traditions of linguistic analysis, with a focus on Sanskrit grammar, poetics and Vedic exegesis. His doctoral thesis, submitted in 2012 at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Paris), consisted of a critical edition, French translation, and study of the Śābdanirṇaya ("An Inquiry into Verbal Knowledge") by the 10th-century Advaitin Prakāśātman. Before joining IFP, he was active at the University of Cambridge (2013-14) and at the Institute for the Intellectual and Cultural History of Asia in Vienna (2015).



AMINA ELBENDARY

Arab & Islamic Civilizations

Amina is an Associate professor of Middle East history and Chair at the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Her research interests include Mamluk social and cultural history, Arabic historiography, and Islamic political thought. Her publications include the monograph *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (2015). This book explores reports of urban protest and dissent in the cities of Egypt and Syria under the late Mamluk and early Ottoman regimes and analyzes both the historiography of protest and the intricacies of urban politics in the late medieval period. She is currently working on a research project on popularization and late medieval historiography.



SMRITI HARICHARAN

Humanities & Social Sciences

Smriti is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Her research areas include Iron Age-early historic archaeology, popular perceptions and relationships with the past, landscape archaeology, contemporary archaeology, and experimental archaeology. She has conducted field work in Chennai, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh. She is also the author of *Siruthavoor: An Iron Age-Early Historical Burial Site* (2016).



MRINAL KAUL

Humanities & Social Sciences

The variegated and dynamic 'lives of thinking patterns' intrigue me; the camouflaged life of these robust and challenging ideas hides itself from our naked eye and we develop methods and insights — an eagle eye—to penetrate deep into their complex lives. I am interested in uncovering the concealed lives of these ideas in the history of South Asian thought. Being born and raised in Srinagar (Kashmir), somehow I got interested in the lives of these ideas in Sanskrit sources and thus became preoccupied with the Kashmirian Abhinavagupta (10th-11th CE) and his philosophical tradition. I began as a philologist and believe that philology shares an inherent relationship with philosophy. In the recent past my interests have grown to investigate how to think creatively using the South Asian sources of thinking. Situated in the South Asian context, why is it that we read ancient philosophy as a mummified category today? Does it have a contemporary creative life? My guide to thinking through these ideas is Abhinavagupta and his non-dual Śaiva philosophy.



ELLEN KENNEY

Arab & Islamic Civilizations

Ellen is an associate professor and chair of Islamic art and architecture in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at The American University in Cairo (AUC). Before joining the department in 2011, Kenney was a research associate in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she researched collections and worked on preparations for the new galleries of Islamic art that re-opened in November 2011. Previously, she taught courses in Islamic art and architecture at New York University, Fordham University and the State University of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

WORKSHOP RATIONALE

The framing of the term **global** is hardly ever questioned in much of what passes as global history, global literatures, and global humanities. More often than not, the term is understood as a concept that's by and large padded by the Anglo-Saxon academic discourse of the 90s. Within this framing of the global – connections, voices from the margins, and autonomous histories are emphasized with a hope that some kind of renewed understanding of global experience can be extracted from these diverse perspectives.

However, the problem with this kind of multipolar perspective is that it assumes that conflicting histories can be presented side by side without ever questioning the legitimacy of their larger discursive legacies. Such liberal-pluralist approaches to the global flatten the differences and reduce political projects to mere commodities while making their own politics of framing the discourse invisible. Too often, the structures of so-called global knowledge contribute more to our ignorance of non-western societies, Indigenous, and premodern pasts than to a meaningful understanding of their differences.

One can see such a framing of the global in almost any handbook of global history, global literature (etcetera) wherein these structures of thought and language that are expressed remain largely Eurocentric. Historians continue to frame the experience of time in the temporal markers of European historiography, and literary scholars are rarely able to provide a glimpse into literary imagination of a non-western past without referring to the genres that have come to be theorized from within the western literary tradition. Essentially translating the differences into a more familiar vocabulary of imperial discourse, most of modern humanities and social sciences continue to be outside of the philological density that informs the thick forest of non-western pasts.

With our first Global Past Research Initiative (GPRI) workshop in Toronto, we would like to work towards promoting a radical shift in how we conceptualize the global, how perspectives are hierarchized, and the language through which we come to engage the global pasts. We propose to think together and discover opportunities for re-theorization. Only through a diversely collaborative thinking project like the GPRI can we hope not just to provincialize Europe, but to think outside of its given epistemologies.



SCHEDULE

DAY 1

Saturday, February 4, 8-15am-12-30pm EST

8:15AM - 8:45AM

Arrival and Morning Refreshments

8:45AM - 9:30AM

Opening Remarks

9:30AM - 10:45AM

Session 1

Bridges into the Past: Genres of Looking Back

This panel invites a conversation about how various disciplinary lenses inform, contract, or expand our sense of the past from the vantage point of the present.

"Mapping the Global through Microhistories: A Preliminary Inquiry"

Heba Mostafa, Department of Art History, U of T

"Dangers of the Past: The Politics of Historiographic Epistemology"

Ajay Rao, Department of Historical Studies, U of T

"Saints and their Lives: History, Hagiography, Literature"

Amina Elbendary, Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations, AUC

DISCUSSANT

Karen Ruffle, Department of Historical Studies, U of T

10:45AM - 11:00AM

Coffee Break

11:00AM - 12:15PM

Session 2

The Order of Time: Archiving the Past

This panel invites a conversation about main currents and challenges in the processes of conservation and other issues in archiving the past.

"An Open Archive for Palm-leaf Manuscripts? A Few Reflections Based on Two South Indian Collections"

Hugo David, Indology Department, EFEO

"Finding Time in the History of Art"

SeungJung Kim, Department of Art History, U of T

"A Living Archive"

Maria Hupfield, Department of Visual Studies, U of T

DISCUSSANT

Walid Saleh, Department for the Study of Religion, U of T

12:15PM - 12:30PM

Concluding Remarks

Co-Principal Investigator, Jill Caskey

12:30PM - 1:30PM

Lunch at CDRS

SCHEDULE

DAY 2

Sunday, February 5, 9:00am-12:30pm EST

9:00AM - 9:30AM

Arrival and Morning Refreshments

9:30AM - 10:45AM

Session 3

Going Global: Philosophy, History and Material Culture

This panel invites a conversation about the challenges of thinking with and through the global in philosophy, history, and material culture.

"Writing on the Wall: Reflections on the Uses of Material Culture as Historical Sources"

Sulyeman Dost, Department of Historical and Cultural Studies, U of T

"Shaping the Past of Philosophy While Nurturing its Present: Challenges in South Asian Context"

Mrinal Kaul, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay

"A South Italian Pilgrimage Shrine as Global Hub"

Jill Caskey, Department of Visual Studies, U of T

DISCUSSANT

Alexandra Gillespie, Department of English and Drama, U of T

10:45AM - 11:00AM

Coffee Break

11:00AM - 12:15PM

Session 4

Futures of our Pasts: Possible New Directions in Humanistic Inquiry

This moderated, roundtable discussion invites us to synthesize the panel discussions in order to address questions such as:

What have we learned from the work of others in this workshop?

Is a truly global dialogue possible?

How can we meaningfully engage the diversity of the global pasts to inform the teachings of the modern humanities?

MODERATORS

Jill Caskey and Ajay Rao, Co-Principal Investigators, GPRI

12:15PM - 12:30PM

Concluding Remarks

Co-Principal Investigator, Ajay Rao

Group Walk over to The Principal's Residence: Lislehurst for lunch at 1:00PM

3369 Principal's Road, Building Number 301

THE MUQARNAS



The entrance to the Abbas Great Mosque (Shah Mosque) in Isfahan features a muqarnas, a complex faceted structure that melds the rectilinear walls of the iwan portal with the curved vault above. Composed of myriad interlocking pieces of diverse shapes and sizes, such intricate muqarnas vaults and domes appear across the medieval and early modern Islamic world, in secular settings as well as religious ones. Each piece of a muqarnas has a distinct role in the structure's design, however difficult it may be to discern; the interlocking forms work together to support the whole. We hope that The Global Past comes to resemble a muqarnas, with participants working together from their diverse disciplinary, methodological, and institutional vantage points, to explore the overarching problem of the global.

*– Jill Caskey
Co-Principal Investigator, GPRI*

CREDITS

Program conceptualized and designed by

AQSA IJAZ & ALISHA STRANGES

Co-Project Managers, GPRI



"If you want light, you must light a fire."

- Mawlana Rumi

Original Calligraphy by Stewart J. Thomas