

Katie Krocheski  
University Scholars Program Proposal  
Fall 2020

### Overall Statement of Interests

My research project will explore the influence of Ottoman visual culture on the Tudor-era English Renaissance (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century). The idea of a distinctly “Islamic Art” developed in Europe as materials, such as costume books and textiles, depicting Ottoman culture circulated throughout the continent. Such materials influenced what was perceived as “Islamic.” Focusing in the circulation of material culture between Ottoman and English rulers of the time period, my aim is to examine the impact of Islamic art and design motifs on English artistic production through the work of Hans Holbein the Younger. Within this artistic context, I endeavor to elucidate Ottoman-English diplomatic relations during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. I believe this aspect of English art history has largely been overlooked. As such, I intend to answer how might England’s artistic engagement with the Ottomans reflect a larger political culture of the time, and the role of religion, literature, and travel logs of the Ottoman Empire within this political context.

I developed an interest in this topic after taking classes in Renaissance art and Islamic art. Through these classes, it was apparent that extensive research has been done on Ottoman-European interactions. The significance of the connection between European artistic production and the larger political and cultural context, however, has not been properly emphasized. I aspire to go beyond an assignment in one class to investigate this question. Art history can illuminate interactions between cultures, such as in this instance, the circulation of luxury goods, role of religion, and the perception of the elite of the other culture.

I have been preparing for this project since the beginning of my sophomore year and have built my classes around it. I started with taking a class on Islamic art in the spring 2020 semester. For the fall 2020 semester, I selected classes that would help me gain a broader knowledge to start my project, choosing to take Italian Renaissance art history, History of Italy from 1200-1700, History of the Early Middle Ages, and Italian language 1001. As an honors student, the research paper I will write for Italian Renaissance Art will serve as the basis for the larger project I am proposing here. In preparation, I conducted preliminary research this summer under the supervision of Prof. Kathryn Moore.

My long-term goal is to earn a PhD in art history, specializing in the intersection of Renaissance art and Islamic culture. My proposed project will not only enable me to develop the research and writing skills needed to pursue an advanced degree but, with Professor Moore's guidance, provide a critical introduction to methodological and historical issues around European interactions and perception of the Middle East.

As an honors student, the majority of classes will require research papers exploring in-depth themes that will support my larger body of work. This will ensure my progress with my project each semester and further my learning of the course material. It will also help me gain a broader understanding of the topic to better guide my thinking for applying interdisciplinary studies.

## Learning Plan

For the remainder of my time as an undergraduate, I strive to hone my writing, analytical research, and critical thinking skills through the research essays I will write as my honors credit and project. This will strengthen all aspects of my final scholarly essay.

For the Spring 2021 semester I have selected the Early Illustrated Book Art History course, which will give me the greater context in which the costume books I will be investigating are situated, and The Renaissance History course which will allow me to investigate the broader literary production and writers of the period. In the fall 2021 semester, British Literature will further my investigation into England's literary production during the English Renaissance and History of Islamic Civilization, 1200-1700, will also contribute to my broader understanding of Islamic history.

To gain better insight into research, the summer of my senior year I will apply for research-based internships in the arts, most likely the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the New Britain Museum of American Art (as I have interned with both institutions before), and any other local museum accepting applications. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of my senior year, I plan to attend the Umbra Institute in Perugia, Italy (through UConn's Study Abroad program). The Umbra Institute offers an Independent Scholars Program which allows students to complete an independent research project. The program involves students working closely with faculty and a weekly class that teaches research and writing skills. Umbria also offers a service learning program to give students the opportunity to have hands-on experience in a museum alongside a museum studies class. I also intend to apply for various grants so I can travel to London to visit the museums that have the art I will be using for my research. I believe these experiences will enhance my undergraduate experience and contribute to my overall project. I would like to note that if travel is not possible, it will *not* prevent me from being able to complete my project. There are plenty of digitized courses that will suffice and UConn has a variety of classes that I can supplement for study abroad and allow me to complete my project.

## Project Plan

The circulation of materials, such as costume books, travel logs, and textiles, depicting Ottoman Empire culture led to the development of the idea of a distinctly “Islamic Art” in Europe. Such materials influenced England’s relationship with the arabesque, a design motif, and perceptions of what is “Islamic.” In order to explore the significance of this motif and the wider influence of Islamic art on English visual culture, I will focus on the work of Hans Holbein the Younger, such as portraits of King Henry VIII and *Jewelry Book*. Within this artistic context, I intend to illuminate the diplomatic context of the English monarchy with the Ottoman Empire, drawing on the role of material goods, Ottoman portrayal in English literature, and the impact of Protestantism.

Extensive trade through Italian city states such as Venice and Genoa ushered in luxury goods from the Middle East for a growing European elite. As many of the products, such as ceramics, textiles, and other domestic goods, were easily portable, they were readily circulated throughout Europe (Howard: Mack). As Deborah Howard’s research demonstrates, Venetians enjoyed vibrant trade with Islamic empires such as the Mamluks (beginning in 1099 through 14thc). They took advantage of the First Crusade (1099) to establish trading posts and colonies in Syria, Alexandria, and other parts of the Middle East (Howard, 60). In 1442, the Venetians and Mamluks signed a treaty establishing them as trade partners and allowing Venetians special treatment in Mamluk territory (Howard, 77). The Venetians established a system of consuls and diplomats in their colonies to help with Mamluk relations and started a rich gift giving culture between Venice and the Mamluks (Howard, 82). Venetian colonies attracted a wide range of European travelers, with merchants being sent as teenagers to learn the trade, specifically Arabic and bookkeeping (Howard, 60). Venetians imported a wide range of goods including spices,



dyes, aromatics, silks, carpets, glass, gems, cotton, and sugar which would then be traded to European merchants, such as Germany, to send to the rest of Europe (Howard, 64). After the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453, Europe and the Ottomans took a greater interest in each other's cultures, beginning a period of cultural exchange (Howard, 67). Sultan Mehmet Fatih began importing Italian artists such as Gentile Bellini, who painted a portrait of the sultan in the Italian Renaissance art style. Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, according to the research of Gülru Necipoglu, purchased Western made riches, such as a three-tiered, bejeweled crown, to advertise his power to the European elite and compete with the Holy Roman Emperor and Papacy. It is in this setting that we see the emergence of costume books.

Often those who traveled to the Middle East published books documenting their travels upon their return to Europe. Regardless of accuracy, these books informed Europeans of Ottoman culture, as researched by Bronwen Wilson. Two such travelers are Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), whose published books recounting their travels included engravings documenting the dress and culture of the Ottomans. Both portray (male, elite) Ottoman figures attired in robes and coats, layered strategically so that each robe can be displayed, with buttons purposefully placed down the front. Research conducted by Charlotte Jirousek into European and Ottoman clothing confirms van Aelst and de Nicolay's layering of robes as distinctly of Ottoman origin. The layers of robes allowed one to display their wealth; the more expensive the cloth and the more layers one wore, the higher their status (Jirousek). Jirousek draws a comparison between a portrait of King Henry VIII (a 1542 portrait by an unknown artist) and its striking resemblance of clothing to a portrait of Sultan Mehmed III.

My investigation begins with an analysis of Hans Holbein's 1540 portrait of King Henry VIII and its comparison to costume books, specifically de Nicolay's engraving (see appendices,

figures 1 and 2). In both images, the men are dressed in robes, buttoned down the front and belted, with the sleeves showing underneath the fur-lined coat overtop. If the style of coats worn by Henry VIII is not enough to connect to the Ottoman sultans, we see that the rich, embroidered, designs of luxury textiles he wears are, in fact arabesques. ‘Arabesque’ is the term used to describe a vegetal motif that looks as though it could extend into infinity, and originates in Islamic art. It is important to note that this is an extremely general term *not* given by Islamic artists, but by Europeans describing Islamic art. Nonetheless, arabesques are distinctly associated with Islamic culture and their depiction in Holbein’s portrait of Henry VIII is significant in the very fact that it suggests some political role. Moreover, Holbein’s use of the arabesque here is not an isolated incident. He frequently incorporated arabesques throughout his *Jewelry Book*, a collection of ink and watercolor drawings of jewelry and other decorative objects for Henry VIII’s court.

Through an analysis of Holbein’s work, I will research the wider English monarchy’s engagement with the Ottoman Empire as well as the portrayal of Turks in English literature to gain insight into Ottoman-English diplomatic relations. Of specific interest is the relationship between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad of the Ottoman Empire, both of whom invoked the religious commonality of iconoclasm in their diplomatic letters to each other and using their hostility with the Catholic Church as gateway to unity (Hawkes 152). I also intend to further explore Queen Elizabeth’s gift of rich clothing from Sultan Murad and his sultana Safiye (Wilson 108) as I believe it is of great significance in understanding Ottoman-English relations.

I aim to contribute to the broader understanding of English involvement with Ottoman culture. My work will expand our understanding of Ottoman-English relations and the role of

religion and material goods in diplomacy. I will use visual analysis of artworks to explore the interdisciplinary geographical scope of larger material culture.

In order to advance this project forward, I will be taking a course in The Early Illustrated Book (Art History) and The Renaissance (History) in spring 2021 as honors credit. I believe the content of both will address important aspects of my project and, as part of my honors credit, both will require research papers. My research in both classes will enable me to incrementally work on a different aspect of my overall project. I will continue in this fashion for the remainder of my undergraduate semesters, taking honors courses and writing research papers. This will allow me to build my research and prepare me to analyze the material for my final scholarly essay. In addition, many museum and library websites (eg. National Gallery (London); Victoria and Albert Museum) have a wealth of digitized material, such as catalogs and both primary and secondary sources, which I will be using in my research, especially if I am unable to see specific artwork in person. I will use visual analysis of artworks to explore the interdisciplinary geographical scope of larger material culture. I will utilize artworks, history, documents such as costume books, circulated knowledge, printed books, travel literature, and English theater

I will produce a scholarly essay analyzing Hans Holbein's works to expound the larger cultural influence of Islamic culture and its significance. I believe a scholarly essay will be the best form to address my guiding questions and I will model it after scholarly publications.

Images



Figure 1: Henry VIII, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1540,



Figure 2: Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), *Emir a kinseman of Mahomet*, Yale University Library

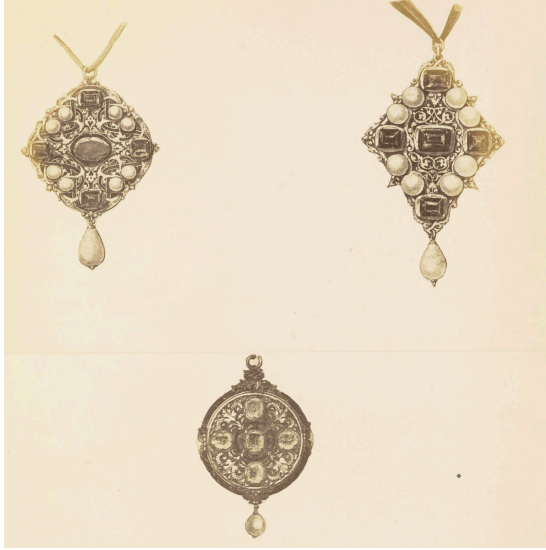


Figure 3: *Jewelry book*, Hans Holbein the Younger, Forbes Library, Northampton, MA



Figure 4: Ottoman gold brocade, 16<sup>th</sup> c, (Necipoğlu, *Aesthetics of Islamic Ornament in the Sixteenth Century: Ottoman-Safavid visual conversations* 16)





Figure 5: Queen Elizabeth I, Nicholas Hillard, ca. 1575, National Portrait Gallery, London



Figure 6: Queen Elizabeth I, unknown continental artist, ca. 1575, National Portrait Gallery, London



Figure 7: Portrait of a Young Woman, 1540-1545, Hans Holbein the Younger

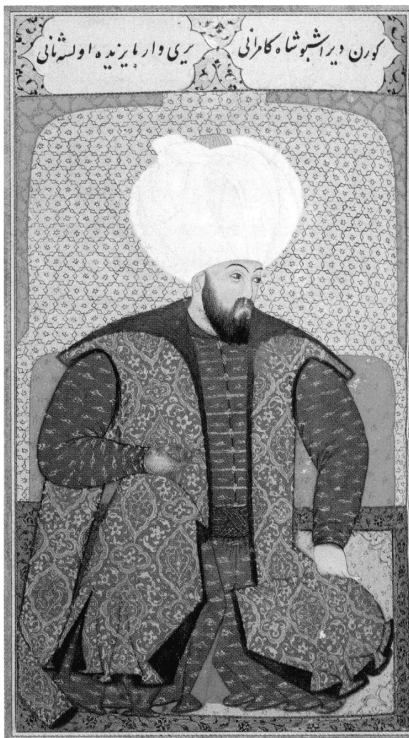


Figure 8: Bayazid II. Nakkas Osman and atelier, Kiyafet el-Insaniye fi Semail el-Osmaniye (1579). Istanbul, Topkapi Palace. Wilson.





Figure 9: Pieter Coecke van Aels, Netherlandish, Ces Moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz (Customs and Fashions of the Turks) 16th century, Metropolitan Museum, NY



Figure 10: Pieter Coecke van Aels, Netherlandish, Ces Moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz (Customs and Fashions of the Turks) 16th century, Metropolitan Museum, NY



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## Learning and Project Plan

Student Name: Kathryn Krocheski

Spring 2021

### Courses

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>
ARTH 3060W	The Early Illustrated Book (honors credit conversion)	3
HIST 3361	The Renaissance (honors credit conversion)	3
ILCS1002	Elementary Italian II	4
ART 3360	Aqua Media II	3

### Other Learning Opportunities

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>

### Project Milestones

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Complete close investigation of my project topic through research paper required for honors conversion of ARTH 3060W and HIST 3361

Summer 2021 (optional)

### Courses

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>

### Other Learning Opportunities

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>
Will apply for summer internship at museum	TBD

**Project Milestones**

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Will continue to independently conduct research i.e. reading scholarly articles, analyzing primary sources

**Fall 2021****Courses**

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>
HIST 3704	Medieval Islamic Civilization to 1700	3
ARTH 4010	Capstone Course (required)	3
ARTH 4099	Independent Study (honors conversion)	3
ILCS 1003	Intermediate Italian I	4
ENGL 2100	British Literature I (honors conversion)	3
ARTH 2610	Basic Sculpture	3

**Other Learning Opportunities**

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>

**Project Milestones**

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Complete close investigation of my project topic through research paper required for honor conversion
Use Independent Study to begin analysis of honors course research papers to formulate later project

**Winter Intercession \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)****Courses**

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>
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	Studio art class for minor, depends on courses offered	3

### ***Other Learning Opportunities***

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>

### ***Project Milestones***

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Continue analysis and research for project (not connected with class)

## **Spring 2022**

### ***Courses***

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>
ARTH 4099	Independent study (honors credit)	3
ART 3605	Ceramic Art: Materials and Methods	3
ILCS 1004	Intermediate Italian II	4
ARTH 3991	Field Studies Internship in Art History	3

### ***Other Learning Opportunities***

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>
Study abroad at Umbra Institute in Perugia (course numbers above will require conversion)	Spring 2022 semester, Perugia, Italy

### ***Project Milestones***

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Use Independent Study to continue to research and finalize scholarly essay
Essay revisions
See if I can access any primary sources, i.e. paintings in museums, while in Europe

## **Spring 2022- Alternative Plan if Unable to Study Abroad**



**Courses**

<i>Dept &amp; Course#</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>
ARTH 4099	Independent study (honors credit)	3
ART 3605	Ceramic Art: Materials and Methods	3
ILCS 1004	Intermediate Italian II	4
ART 3310	Intermediate painting	3

**Other Learning Opportunities**

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Location/Date</i>

**Project Milestones**

<i>Key Tasks</i>
Use Independent Study to continue to research and finalize scholarly essay
Essay revisions