



Center for Global Islamic Studies

The Praiseworthy One: Devotional Images of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Traditions

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This talk explores a number of paintings of the Prophet Muhammad produced in Persian and Turkish lands from the fourteenth century to the modern day. Ranging from veristic to abstract, these images represent Muhammad's individual traits, primordial luminosity, and veiled essence. Their pictorial motifs reveal that artists engaged in abstract thought and turned to symbolic motifs in order to imagine Muhammad's primordial origins and prophetic standing. In creating and gazing upon such images, artists and viewers also were inspired by various mystical beliefs and practices, in the process seeking to express their piety through both verbal and pictorial language. Within a variety of Islamic expressive cultures, paintings thus have functioned as a powerful means for devotional engagement with Muhammad, the "praiseworthy" Prophet and Messenger of Islam.

Christiane Gruber is Chair and Professor of Islamic Art in the History of Art Department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research interests span medieval Islamic art to contemporary visual culture. She has authored three books and has edited a dozen volumes on Islamic book arts, ascension texts and paintings, images of the Prophet Muhammad, and modern visual and material culture. Today's talk is related to her latest book, *The Praiseworthy One: The Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Texts and Images*.



IMAGE: *The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension over Three Sufis, from Sa'di's Bustan (Fruit Orchard), text dated 920/1514 and painting added ca. 1550 in Bukhara. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1974.294.2.*

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