

Seminar SAW

History of Science, History of Text, 2011-2016

April 16th, 2015

Meeting on the "Collections used in The History of Science Scholarly value, market value, patrimonial value"

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Intersecting Narratives, Interpolating Collections: the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin

Abstract – This lecture uses schematic graphs to examine the narrative functions of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin. Arguing that the field of Islamic Art History postulates an imaginary "ideal collection" that is like an ideal line to which each museum aspires, it considers how the real history of collection renders this aim impossible. Rather, it argues that museums would provide a more accurate rendition of history if they reflected the history of their own process of collection. Rather than making the museum narrative into a window into the past and onto another culture, such an exhibitionary strategy would allow for multiple vantage points on distant histories in the context of their relationship with European modernity.