

### **Art 956: Seminar in Islamic Art: Expanding the villa discourse**

In this seminar we will examine art historical discourses on “the villa,” tracing a historiographical construction initially based on the idea of its disappearance in the “Middle Ages.” This conception of villa history, until recently, been largely focused on the binary construction of Roman antiquity and the Italian Renaissance as the normative geographic and chronological parameters for the study of the topic. A parallel but separate discourse, on “palaces” and “gardens,” has evolved in Islamic art history. Building on James Ackerman’s foundational statement that the villa is above all “the intense, programmatic investment of ideological goals,” and recent interdisciplinary studies on villas and villa cultures we will consider these narratives in tandem, and ask whether it is time to revisit the story of the villa and its medieval “disappearance” from a perspective that looks beyond the Italian Peninsula and European Christendom to the Islamic lands. Is it possible to speak of the palaces and aristocratic estates of Islamdom as “villas”? What are the problems with such an approach? What are the possibilities? The seminar will focus on creating a common intellectual framework for individual research, rooted in critical reading, discussion, reflection and writing.

Readings will include selections from the following texts, among others:

James S. Ackerman. *The villa: form and ideology of country houses* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c1990).

Mirka Benes and Diane Harris, eds. *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France* (Cambridge/NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Reinhard Bentmann and Michael Müller, *The villa as hegemonic architecture* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Humanities Press, 1992 transl. and ed.)

Michel Conan, ed., *Middle East garden traditions: unity and diversity: questions, methods and resources in a multicultural perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection , 2007).

Denis Cosgrove, *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and Its Cultural Representations In Sixteenth-Century Italy* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

Garth Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Grazia Gobbi, *The Florentine Villa: architecture, history, society* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007 transl. and ed.).

Andrew G. McKay, Houses, *Villas and Palaces in the Roman World* (London, 1975; 1988 ed.).

D.F. Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).