

The City as Anthology: Visualizing Cultures of Literacy in Early Modern Isfahan

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2:00 PM

6275 Bunche Hall

The City as Anthology will encapsulate the story of Isfahan through private collections assembled in the domestic sphere of urban households. Thousands of anthologies were produced in seventeenth century family libraries, shaping tastes and aesthetics as they participated in the making of a graphic culture. Paintings and drawings were commissioned and purchased; private letters, verses of poetry, and talismans, along with all sorts of fragments were arranged and recorded on paper. Folio by folio they were collectively bound by an owner into a codex. It is thanks to these habits of collecting referred to in Persian as a *majmu'a*, literally "a gathering together," that anthologies have been passed on to us. The act of collecting did not simply involve the "gathering" of material objects, however. It entailed a choice, a discrete act of curating from among a repository of texts circulating in the city, to select and discriminate between what would be compiled and preserved in a personal library. This talk will serve as a guide to my reading of these anthologies as an account of households and communities of literacy before print.

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