FROM TRANSCULTURAL ENTANGLEMENTS TO INTEGRATED LEARNING EXPERIENCES? TRANSCULTURAL MUSEUM EDUCATION AT BERLIN'S MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART

ANNETTE LÖSEKE

New York University (NYU); Berlin & University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, UK

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR/KORESPONDENČNI AVTOR
annetteloeseke@gmail.com

Abstract/Izvleček Taking three educational initiatives at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin as case studies, this paper explores how the museum engages in transcultural museum education. While the exhibition parcours 'Objects in Transfer' highlights the transcultural entanglements of objects, 'Multaka' is a traineeship project preparing refugees from Syria and Iraq to become museum tour guides for Arabic-speaking visitors. 'Tamam', a joint initiative with mosque communities and Muslim associations across Germany, develops collection-centred educational material for young Muslims. The paper explores key findings from an evaluation of the interactive exhibition parcours 'Objects in Transfer' within the context of collaborative initiatives such as 'Multaka' and 'Tamam'.

Od transkulturnih prepletenosti do integriranih učnih izkušenj? Transkulturno muzejsko izobraževanje v berlinskem Muzeju islamske umetnosti.
Prispevek obravnava dejavnosti v muzeju, namenjene transkulturnemu muzejskemu izobraževanju, in sicer na primeru treh izobraževalnih pobud v obliki študij primera v Muzeju islamske umetnosti v Berlinu. Medtem ko razstavni parkur "Objects in Transfer" poudarja transkulturno prepletenost predmetov, je "Multaka" projekt pripravništva, ki begunce iz Sirije in Iraka usposablja za delo muzejskih vodnikov za arabsko govoreče obiskovalce. 'Tamam' predstavlja skupno pobudo skupnosti mošej in muslimanskih združenj v Nemčiji, ki razvija izobraževalno gradivo za mlade muslimane in temelji na zbirkah. V prispevku predstavljamo ključne izsledke vrednotenja interaktivnega razstavnega parkurja "Objects in Transfer" v okviru sodelovalnih projektov, kot sta "Multaka" in "Tamam".

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Introduction

Forming part of the National Museums in Berlin, the Museum of Islamic Art is located on the second floor of the Pergamon Museum on Museum Island in Berlin's historic centre. The museum's collection covers areas ranging from the Mediterranean region and Spain, across Anatolia and the Middle East, to Central Asia and India. According to the museum's website, "the collection contains works of art, cultural artefacts, and archaeological finds from Islamic peoples and societies that range in date from late antiquity to the last century" (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum of Islamic Art). The collection originates from the (disputed) donation, in 1903, of the so-called Mshatta Façade, a reconstruction of the fragments of what is assumed to be the façade of a Jordanian palace building dating from the 8th century CE (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, *Mshatta in Focus: The Jordanian desert palace in historical photographs*).

Founded in 1904 and originally presented in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum (renamed Bode Museum in 1956), the collection of the Museum of Islamic Art has been on display in the upper galleries of the Pergamon Museum since the opening of the current building in 1930. The museum claims to be the oldest museum of Islamic art outside Islamicate countries. Its collection consists of about 100,000 objects originating from Southern Europe, North Africa and West Asia as well as Central and South Asia, and dating from the 7th through the 19th centuries (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Objectives of the Museum für Islamische Kunst). Exhibits include architectural features such as prayer niches, one of the Alhambra cupolas, monumental architectural reconstructions such as the Mshatta Façade, jewellery, manuscripts, calligraphic works and miniatures, and objects of applied arts and crafts, such as ceramics, carvings, metalwork, glasses, textiles and carpets (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, *Art of Islamic Cultures*). With the Pergamon Museum currently undergoing major renovations, the Museum of Islamic Art is about to relocate from its current South wing into the North wing of the Pergamon Museum (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, *Mshatta in Focus*).

This paper takes the exhibition *Objects in Transfer* and the collaborative initiatives Multaka and Tamam as case studies to explore how the Museum of Islamic Art engages in transcultural museum education and outreach in the context of Berlin's increasingly diverse society.

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The three projects are explored against the backdrop of recent debates in art history and cultural heritage studies, which challenge established notions of "Islamic art" from a historical and systematic perspective. I particularly draw on Shalem's (2012) "plea for a critical rewriting of the history of the arts of Islam", in which he traces how primarily Western scholars have produced a simplistic and overly homogenous narrative of "Islam" and art from Islamicate countries. Grinell (2016), examining how museums in Europe perpetuate stereotypical misrepresentations of Muslim cultural heritage in Europe, questions notions of "Islamic art" as distinct from, as opposed to entangled with, art from Europe. John Reeve (2018) emphasises the need for museums housing art from Islamicate countries to overcome historical narratives of Islam as "monolithic and unchanging", suggesting instead presentation of the arts from Islamicate countries as embedded in ever shifting contemporary practices, both historically and in the present. To understand how the gallery space shapes learning experiences and contextualises visitor response to interactive devices provided in exhibitions, I finally draw on Falk's (2009) empirical research about the procedural nature of learning and his framework for the museum visitor experience in informal learning environments such as museums.

The three projects Multaka, Tamam and *Objects in Transfer* are embedded in the museum's mission to act as a mediator of art from Islamicate countries in the context of public debates about migration and the "difficult climate currently surrounding the public discourse on Islam" (Weber 2016, 5; El-Menouar et al 2017, 10, 17; Reeve 2018, 55) (Museum für Islamische Kunst. The collection of the Museum für Islamische Kunst). Not only does the museum explore the "historical and cultural connections between the Mediterranean region […], Central Asia and South Asia", but it also sheds light on the "social diversity of Islamicate regions". One of its major educational aims is the exploration of art from Islamicate countries and regions from a cultural studies perspective, rather than a solely religious perspective (Weber 2012, 299; 318). Emphasising their "social responsibility", the museum regularly reaches out to "local actors" in order to create an open place in Berlin's increasingly diverse society. Through a range of collaborative projects, such as Multaka and Tamam, designed to connect with local Muslim communities in particular, the museum aims to "develop new content" and explore "different perspectives and narratives". Through "multisensory experiences", the museum aims to "heighten curiosity, raise questions and provide spaces for […] discussion".

Through their education and outreach programme, the museum seeks to enable the public as well as "specific target groups" to "see the familiar with different eyes" (Museum für Islamische Kunst. *Objectives of the Museum für Islamische Kunst*). By highlighting how historical objects from the collection might help visitors explore and reflect on transcultural entanglements, initiatives such as Tamam or *Objects in Transfer*, aim at providing inclusive "models for cultural identities" considered entangled rather than exclusive (Weber 2012, 302; Weber 2016, 7; Grinell 2016, 7; El-Menouar et al 2017, 61-2).

Multaka

Multaka is a joint initiative of the Museum of Islamic Art and several partner institutions in Berlin, such as the Ancient Near Eastern Collection in the Pergamon Museum and the Bode Museum of the National Museums in Berlin, and the German Historical Museum. Called 'meeting point' in Arabic, Multaka has offered training to refugees from Syria and Iraq that have settled in Berlin since 2015. Through the Multaka project, they have been trained as tour guides, providing guided museum tours to Arabic-speaking visitors who fled Syria or Iraq, with Syrian and Iraqi teenagers and young adults as their primary target audiences (Museum für Islamische Kunst. *Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point*). All partner museums house exhibits from Islamicate countries. At the German Historical Museum, participants in the guided Multaka tours learn about German history in their first language, Arabic. In all guided tours, the tour guides explore German history with the participants in the tour. "We talk about how the Germans have rebuilt their country after the Second World War. For visitors from Syria, this is of particular importance. It might give them hope for rebuilding their country, Syria, after the war," as one of the trained tour guides, an artist from Syria, explains in a short feature film about the Multaka project aired on German television (Titel Thesen Temperamente 2016). Building on its own, in part disputable, institutional history as both a public museum and a research institution involved in the excavation and reconstruction of cultural heritage in West Asia and beyond, the museum sees their mission as civic engagement. Not only does the museum website claim the museum's collection to represent the "history of humanity", but it also claims its historical acquisition of cultural heritage as an act of "appreciation" that is effective in strengthening their target audience's self-esteem and confidence in integrating "into our society"

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in Germany (Museum für Islamische Kunst. *Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point*). The museum director, Stefan Weber, in an interview for the feature film, highlights how their mission is connected to their collection and expertise in the conservation and reconstruction of cultural heritage. The participants in the tours "come here and learn a lot about their own culture and how much it is appreciated here. It is incredibly important that refugees say, I am accepted and valued here in Germany. You can see how our appreciation of their culture impacts on their body language, it makes them hold their head up high again. And for democracy in Syria, we need people who appreciate their own culture and themselves through culture, in order to respect others, too" (Titel Thesen Temperamente 2016) Through the embedding of "historical and cultural connections between Germany, Syria and Iraq" into an "epoch-transcending narrative", the museum claims to provide refugees in Berlin with a "connecting link" between their "countries of origin and their new host country" and "a context of meaning for their lives here" (Museum für Islamische Kunst. *Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point*). Through the Syrian Heritage Archive Project, jointly initiated by the German Archaeological Institute in 2013, the Multaka initiative is being embedded in the museum's overall approach to cultural heritage management (Museum für Islamische Kunst. *Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point*). Through the Syrian Heritage Archive Project, archaeologists seek to digitise recent and historical photographs of now damaged or destroyed cultural heritage in West Asia. "It is important that Syrians understand that their cultural heritage was essentially built through an enormous religious and ethnic diversity. In order to overcome the divisions caused by the war, it is important for Syrians to be proud of this cultural diversity rather than a Sunni, Shia or Armenian background. This is crucial for rebuilding and reuniting the country," as Stefan Weber emphasises (Titel Thesen Temperamente 2016).

While the museum director highlights the museum's collection and its significance for civic engagement in the twenty-first century, some of the participants in the guided Multaka tours filmed in the TV feature point to the darker side of the collection's history. When the guided tour reaches the reconstructed historical Mshatta Façade that, after intervention by German attachés, was given to the German Emperor William II as a gift by the Ottoman Sultan, two participants in the guided tour explore different perspectives on the collection's acquisition history.

While one of them points out that "they have taken away everything, the Ishtar Gate, everything," the other one replies that "that's actually a good thing, that they brought it here, because this is how they preserved our cultural heritage." While he then critically embeds German acquisition politics during imperial times in broader colonial contexts, musing that "there used to be many excavations at the time, they had the power, but it wasn't only the Germans," the first participant describes his emotional response to the displays in the Pergamon Museum: "When I saw the Ishtar Gate here for the first time, I almost cried." While this featured conversation between participants of the guided tour certainly gives us a glimpse into the educational outcome of the Multaka project, more research is certainly needed to shed light on the various interpretive and emotive layers within visitor experience, particularly for visitors that fled Syria or Iraq. Originally, the Multaka project aimed at providing refugees from Syria and Iraq with access to museums using "peer-to-peer communication" to facilitate "their participation in the public sphere". In an attempt to broaden the museum's outreach, Multaka tours by Syrian and Iraqi Berliners have also been offered in German and English since 2018 (Titel Thesen Temperamente, 2016). Thorough research is necessary to produce a more nuanced understanding of how key target clients of the Museum of Islamic Art – i.e., visitors from West Asia with a particular focus on refugees from Syria and Iraq as well as domestic and international tourists – respond to both the museum's reconstruction and presentation of cultural heritage, albeit partly contested, and its initiatives in civic engagement, social inclusion and public participation.

Tamam

Tamam is an educational project in collaboration with more than fifteen mosque communities and Muslim associations in Berlin and across Germany. Over the course of three years, from 2015 through 2018, Tamam developed educational material for young Muslim communities across the country. Claiming to provide no more than the "institutional framework and its collection", the museum frames Tamam as a collaborative project "by Muslims for Muslims". Cooperation partners include the Central Association of Muslims in Germany, the Liberal Islamic Association, Ditib Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Bosnians in Berlin. Another cooperation partner was the Institute of Islamic Theology at the University of Osnabrück in Germany.

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Candidates enrolled in higher education training for Imams at Osnabrück were involved in the development of educational material for the project. Through a range of exercises related to objects from the museum's collection, Tamam aims to encourage their target audience to explore their identity as young Muslims in Germany through the museum's collections of art from Islamicate countries: "Discover the art of Islamicate countries – and your connection with it!", as the project website puts it (Tamam Project).

Tamam – 'Ok' or 'that's all right' in Arabic and Turkish – aims to strengthen the self-esteem of young German Muslims that are encouraged to share their experiences growing up in Germany's increasingly diverse society. Topics covered include the transcultural entanglement of objects, religious diversity in Islamicate countries across the globe, or entangled worlds and hybrid identities, among others. (Tamam Project. Übungen). In 2018 the Tamam team began training volunteers from mosque communities across Germany in setting up their own Tamam classes. Through Tamam, the Museum of Islamic Art and its cooperation partners seek to diversify their audiences, enhance the participation of Muslims in cultural activities and foster social cohesion within German society (Tamam Project. How TAMAM developed). In collaborating with a wide range of religious and culture-centred Muslim cooperation partners, Tamam reaches out to a carefully defined target audience. Young Muslims from mosque communities across the country are encouraged to explore their complex Muslim-German identities, considered as hybrid by the project, and to share with the group, their experience of growing up Muslim in Germany. While the museum claims to further civic engagement through collaborative initiatives such as Tamam, collaboration partners and the precisely targeted participants remain, for the time being, within their own communities. It remains to be seen whether or how the collaboration partners seek to broaden their approach, diversify their target audiences, and reach out to young non-Muslim stakeholders too.

Objects in Transfer

Objects in Transfer, the third project this section explores addresses an audience slightly distinct from the ones targeted by Multaka or Tamam. In broad terms, one of the curators identifies as their target audience the "individual adult visitor", as opposed to members of a guided tour (Vassilopoupou 2016, 39).

Objects in Transfer is the title of an exhibition that has been on display at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin since 2016. The curators, calling their exhibition a "parcours" or trail through the exhibits of the permanent collection, aim at tracing how various objects in the collection explore shared motifs, shapes, and techniques across cultures around the globe (Dolezalek 2016, 26-8). The aim of the exhibition parcours is to highlight the interconnections among various objects across cultures, objects that visitors might not immediately associate with what is called Islamic art. Against the backdrop of increasingly ideological debates on Islam, the exhibition aims to question and challenge existing notions of "cultural boundaries" (Dolezalek, Beyer and Vassilopoulou 2016, 11). (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Museum of Islamic Art). The exhibition *Objects in Transfer* can be seen as one of several experimental projects the museum has been developing in preparation for the new permanent exhibition and its planned inclusive education and outreach programme. *Objects in Transfer* was set up in the context of a postdoctoral research project associated with the research cluster "Episteme in Motion" at Free University Berlin and the Museum of Islamic Art of the National Museums in Berlin. The exhibition parcours has been on display since 2016. Fifteen installations are placed throughout the galleries of the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Islamic Art. Two of the installations are hands-on stations that encourage visitors to sit down and play chess according to historically and geographically shifting rules explained at the installation. Three installations consist of touchscreens built into benches, enabling visitors to explore selected exhibits in more depth and in a "relaxed atmosphere" (Vassilopoulou 2016, 42). On the touchscreens, visitors can browse through videos, audios, photographs, drawings, maps, and short texts (Vassilopoulou 2016, 42). Turquoise museum labels and QR codes provided on the gallery walls indicate which exhibits are related to the exhibition trail. Turquoise arrows on the gallery floor in front of selected installations indicate other museums in Berlin and beyond that have related objects in their collections or on display. Related museums include the Bode Museum, the Museum of Asian Art, the Arts and Crafts Museum and the Picture Gallery, all forming part of the National Museums in Berlin, or the German Historical Museum, located in the immediate vicinity of Museum Island (Beyer 2016, 21). While some installations trace the object journey of selected exhibits in the collection, others highlight the multicultural context in which the exhibits were created and originally used.

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By encouraging the visitor to explore selected exhibits through interactive and playful devices, the project challenges conventional notions of art from Islamicate countries and instead highlights the entangled nature of "cultural realities […] [on] both sides of the Mediterranean", as Stefan Weber, the museum director, points out in the exhibition brochure (Weber 2016, 5). Because of the fragmented nature of the project, comprising fifteen installations sprinkled throughout the galleries, the exhibition can be described as a parcours or trail through the permanent exhibition. From a content-centred point of view, these objects in transfer can be seen as interventions in the permanent collection, ones which seek to challenge narratives about Islamic art that the museum has been producing since its foundation in 1904 (Dolezalek 2016, 28).

Visitor Study

To understand how visitors engage with the innovative exhibition format and the interactive devices, a visitor study was carried out in the spring of 2016. On five weekdays and weekends over the course of four weeks, over one hundred face-to-face interviews and over one hundred tracking studies were carried out. Interviews were based on structured questionnaires in German or English and conducted in the exit area of the Museum of Islamic Art on the upper floor of the Pergamon Museum building. Interviewees were selected on a strictly random basis and approached after they had left the gallery space. In addition, visitors were tracked on their paths through the gallery space. Because of the temporary closure of the second half of the gallery space, tracking studies were carried out in the galleries housing the majority of the installations, from the entrance gallery through the Mshatta gallery. Owing to the small sample size of the study, findings are not representative. They nonetheless allow valuable insight, we believe, into how visitors engage with an innovative educational approach to addressing complex, transcultural issues.

Survey

Key findings of the study suggest that over half of interviewees were younger than 45 years. While neither children, nor young teenagers were included in the study, a fifth of interviewees were younger than 25 years. Sixty percent of interviewees in our sample were women, and almost 40% were men.

The median time spent in the gallery space was 18½ minutes, indicating that half the tracked visitors spent less than 18½ minutes in the gallery space, while the other half spent more than 18½ minutes.

The study indicates a high number of international visitors to the museum, with over two-thirds of interviewees visiting from abroad. Only a small minority (4% of interviewees) were local residents. Given the international profile of visitors to the museum, it is not surprising that a vast majority of interviewees were first-time visitors to the museum. More than that, the majority of interviewees (80%) stated that they wandered into the Museum of Islamic Art by chance during their overall visit to the Pergamon Museum or Museum Island. Over 90% visited the museum with friends, their partner or family. While more than half the interviewees had limited or no prior knowledge of art from Islamicate countries, roughly three-quarters indicated a certain interest in art from Islamicate countries. Almost two-thirds found that their visit to the Museum of Islamic Art had a positive impact on their interest in art from Islamicate countries. Overall, the information provided in the galleries was perceived as sufficient or excellent. While three-quarters of visitors used an audio guide, a quarter of visitors wanted more information in English or other foreign languages.

Our study further indicates that a considerable number of interviewees were unaware of the interactive installations of the exhibition parcours through the gallery space. An even higher number of visitors did not use the interactive devices. While only a minority ignored the benches with the multimedia touchscreens, two-fifths were unaware of the hands-on Oliphant installation, and roughly a third did not see the hands-on chess game station. More than a third of visitors said that they did not use the interactive devices, even if they had seen them in the galleries. It is worth noting that during data collection, some of the multimedia touchscreens were broken and unavailable for visitor use. Likely to be overlooked or ignored, the arrows on the floor, the QR codes and Apps provided in the gallery space were the least visible or favourite devices provided. These findings correspond with most visitors' struggle to identify the exhibition parcours as a coherent exhibition format. However, more than half of interviewees welcomed interactive devices in the gallery and generally appreciated a more interactive educational approach in museums. For example, interviewees acknowledged the positive educational effect of interactive devices on the learning experience of children and younger audiences in informal learning environments such as museums.

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Others highlighted that a more interactive curatorial and educational approach generated more options for visitors to choose from and enhance their learning experience.

Tracking Studies

Visitors' favourite objects in the collection included architectural features from mosques and textiles, as our survey revealed. Nearly a quarter of interviewees nominated the prayer niches as their favourite, and almost a fifth best liked tapestry. Further objects of interest were the wooden decoration of the Aleppo Room and the Mshatta Façade from eighth-century Jordan. The tracking studies enabled us to further identify popular exhibits and reveal both highly frequented gallery space as well as cold spots in the gallery space. While tapestry and the Aleppo room, both popular among interviewees, were on display in the second section of the gallery space, which was partly closed on the days of our study, the benches, all placed in the first section of the gallery, were the areas where most visitors stayed longest. Since the benches not only offered visitors a place to rest and relax, but also provided built-in multimedia touchscreens encouraging visitors to delve deeper into the history of selected objects from the collection, these findings are hardly surprising. Indeed, findings from the survey indicated that the interactive devices of the exhibition parcours proved popular among interviewees. These findings are supported by our observations from the tracking studies.

Our findings about interviewees' favourite pieces from the survey correspond with findings from the tracking studies. Apart from the benches, highly frequented hot spots include the prayer niches from the Kashan mosques of the Isfahan region in Iran and from Konya in Anatolia, Turkey; the historical Oliphant and the corresponding interactive installation; and the gallery housing the Alhambra cupola. Parts of the monumental Mshatta Façade of the seemingly abandoned royal palace in the Jordanian desert, dating from the 8th century CE, are among those hot spots that visitors explored frequently but at which they only glanced.

Another frequently, albeit not intensely explored hot spot is an architectural decoration in the style of a prayer niche from a Samaritan, i.e., Jewish, private house in Damascus, Syria. Dating from the 15th or 16th century, the decorative niche is one of the indicative transcultural "objects in transfer" included in the exhibition parcours.

Praised on the museum label as an "outstanding example of a shared decorative design language", the decorative niche indeed reflects "cultural diversity in Damascus" in an exemplary way. Under Mamluk rule, from 1250 through 1517, such a design was commonly applied to decorate pieces created and used in Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities alike. Since the Damascene niche reflects a shared sense of style, it is labelled as a key object in the *Objects in Transfer* exhibition parcours. Least frequently explored cold spots include the showcases along the walls stretching over the three main galleries in the first section of the exhibition space. Other cold areas include large areas of the Mshatta gallery, a central area of the exhibition space, and a smaller gallery adjacent to the Mshatta gallery, tucked away behind the monumental façade and often housing small special exhibitions.

Overall, findings from the tracking studies support our main conclusions from the survey. Neither the interviewees, nor the visitors tracked on their path through the gallery space seemed to fully acknowledge the specific format of the exhibition parcours of the "Objects in Transfer" developed to produce alternative narratives to existing notions of Islam, and closely aligned with the museum's mission to question cultural boundaries and address transcultural diversity. However, both interviewees and visitors engaged, to varying degrees, with some of the objects in transfer, particularly the multimedia touch screens built into benches. In conclusion, while the exhibition parcours was not fully effective in engaging visitors, both interviewees and visitors generally appreciated the interactive devices provided in the gallery.

Conclusion – The Museum as Multaka / Meeting Point?

Given the innovative, yet multi-faceted educational approaches of all three projects explored here, how to reconsider key findings from our evaluation of *Objects in Transfer* in the context of collaborative initiatives such as Multaka and Tamam?

Reconsidering Target Audiences
While the Multaka and Tamam projects address clearly defined target audiences, i.e., refugees from Syria and Iraq settling in Berlin and young Muslim Germans from mosque communities across the country, respectively, the curators of *Objects in Transfer* had an imprecise idea of the audiences they attempted to reach.

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However, while Multaka and Tamam have been effective in engaging with their narrowly defined target audiences through peer-to-peer communication, participants in the two projects have predominantly remained within their respective predefined segments. By contrast, *Objects in Transfer* was less effective in defining a meaningful target audience to be addressed by their interactive curatorial and educational approach, although having a mission as clearly defined as Multaka or Tamam. In broadly targeting individual adult visitors, as opposed to young visitors or guided tour members, *Objects in Transfer* still wants a clear definition of its target audience. Given the museum's mission of civic engagement and social cohesion, a nuanced reconsideration and clarification of their target audiences would be necessary for each of the three projects.

Learning in the Gallery Space
A second area deserving further attention includes the reconsideration of how gallery space might shape learning experiences. Key findings from our survey as well as tracking studies suggest further enhancing identified hotspots across the galleries. Most likely frequented and intensely explored areas such as the benches with built-in multimedia touchscreens and architectural features such as the prayer niches might be further highlighted to help visitors structure their learning experience. Not only can visually enhanced hot spots draw visitor attention, but they also highlight in-focus areas for visitors to sit down and engage more deeply with interactive devices that enable self-directed learning. The Damascene decorative feature in the style of a prayer niche, for example, needed visual enhancement, since it was a key feature of the exhibition parcours and seemed particularly well-suited to explore the transcultural complexities the exhibition aims at highlighting. However, despite its placement next to one of the popular built-in benches, the Damascene decorative niche remained a relatively cold spot.

In addition, the areas in the Mshatta gallery identified as cold spots might be reconsidered conceptually and more effectively used as enhanced learning spaces where visitors could sit down and engage more deeply with a range of interactive devices and other learning material or relax and exchange their experiences with accompanying family or friends.

Given that many visitors, while welcoming interactive learning tools, didn't acknowledge the interventionist format of the parcours aimed at providing alternative narratives, more research is needed to clarify to what extent enhanced learning areas, designed in an attractive, yet conventional or familiar style, might be better suited than the parcours format to enhance visitor engagement with the collection and question existing notions of Islam, as suggested by the curators.

Integrating Audiences and Learning: The Museum as Multaka/Meeting Point

In conclusion, how can our findings be contextualised further within the museum's educational outreach programme and collaborative initiatives as discussed in this paper? How might art from Islamicate countries be understood as entangled with, rather than distinct from art in European countries (Dolezalek et al 2016; Grinell 2016)? How can the arts from Islamicate countries be explored as contemporary "living cultures", rather than historical exhibits in museum collections representing a bygone past (Reeve 2018)?

A more nuanced approach to segmenting target audiences, such as offering Multaka guided tours in English and German, certainly points in the right direction. However, to fully exploit the transformative potential of each project explored here, the museum's innovative educational initiatives should become better integrated with one another and with the museum's permanent exhibition and programming. The identified cold spots, transformed into enhanced learning areas as outlined, might well be used to host more, and more diversified learning projects such as Tamam inside the gallery space. Multaka guided tours could be expanded into workshops or other dialogical exchange formats for Arabic, English or German-speaking participants and could take place in the enhanced learning areas open to all museum visitors to just drop in. Integration of innovative, yet highly distinct initiatives such as Multaka, Tamam and *Objects in Transfer* into the permanent exhibition and daily routine of the museum would certainly help foreground the museum's educational ambitions, making the programmes more accessible to an even wider range of audiences. Moreover, such an integrated approach might further highlight and enable museum visitors to not just read about, but experience, and ideally participate in the entangled nature of transcultural collections in the gallery space.

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Rather than training themselves to appreciate historical collections of Islamic Art, museum visitors and drop-in participants might actively take part in an exchange of experiences with transcultural heritage and engage in entangled art practices from Islamicate countries, in a Berlin museum and beyond.

Not only would such an integrated effort across educational initiatives and the permanent exhibition enhance the visitor learning experience, but it would also transform the museum galleries into a more engaging and inclusive *multaka*, a public meeting space.

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Author

Dr. Annette Löseke
Lecturer in Cultural and Creative Industries, Sheffield University Management School, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Sheffield, Conduit Road, Sheffield S10 1FL, United Kingdom, and Honorary Visiting Fellow, School of Museum Studies, The University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH, United Kingdom, e-mail: a.loeseke@sheffield.ac.uk.
Predavateljica v Cultural and Creative Industries, Sheffield University Management School, Fakulteta za družbene vede. Univeza v Sheffieldu, Conduiz Road, Sheffield S10 1FL, Velika Britanija in častna gostujoča sodelavka, Šola za muzejske študije, Univerza v Leicestru, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH Velika Britanija, e-pošta: a.loeseke@sheffield.ac.uk