Pride of place is given to the famous brass astrolabe made by the astronomer Ahmad ibn al-Sarraj in Syria in AH 729 [1329/30] for Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Tamulti (fig. 14). This is the only known example of a universal astrolabe, a development of the ancient Diokleia type invented by Muslim astronomers. Ahmad ibn al-Sarraj was the author of a treatise on astronomical instruments, including universal astrolabes, while a later owner, the Egyptian astronomer Izz al-Din al-Wafa, devoted a whole work to the complex functions of this particular instrument.

Below the wooden panels are ceramic bowls and sherds from Spain, dating from the 14th-15th century. The production of lustre-painted ceramics flourished in Spain at this time, notably around Malaga. Popular with both Muslims and Christians, they often bear European heraldic emblems. After the departure of the Arabs in the late 15th century they were produced in other Spanish cities and exported to Italy, where they were known as majolica ware.

Next to these are glass objects. A 13th-century beaker with benedictory inscriptions and figures of courtiers sitting cross-legged comes from Syria (fig. 103). Vessels intended for secular use often contain images relating to court life. The decoration was made by covering the surface of the glass with polychrome enamel and gold leaf, a technique common in the Near East in the 13th and 14th centuries, which later influenced Venetian glass-making. The inscribed mosque lamp (fig. 128) and the spherical hanging ornament on the left (fig. 129) were made in Egypt in mid-14th century. The lamp records the name of Sultan Kajuk, who reigned for a few months in 1341/2, and it comes from his mausoleum, which was erected in Cairo in 1367, while the ornament may have been commissioned by Sultan Hasan, Kajuk's younger brother. Spherical ornaments such as this kept the lamp's suspension chains from becoming entangled.
Among the small ivory objects is a 14th-century Egyptian bottle for kohl (eye make-up) with foliate ornaments and inscriptions in cursive script (fig. 130). The inscription on the stopper reads "O Lord, grant me forgiveness", and that on the base "The foundation of this world and of the earth is the rule of justice".

The ivory caskets were used for jewellery and other precious objects, and three bear the characteristic painted and gilded ornamentation of 12th-13th-century Norman Sicily (fig. 131). Sicily remained under Muslim rule for almost two centuries — until the end of the 11th century — and was the crossroads where Islamic art met the Christian art of Italy and Byzantium. The casket with elaborate pierced decoration is a typical example of the bone caskets produced in 14th-century Egypt (fig. 132).

The centre of the case contains jewellery from Syria, Egypt and Iran: gold rings set with semi-precious stones (12th-14th century) (fig. 133); cloisonné rings made entirely of sardonyx, jasper and other hard stones (10th-13th century); an Egyptian or Syrian gold bracelet with dragon-head finials and an inscribed box-shaped clasp (12th-13th century) (fig. 134); cast and gilded fittings from a belt which belonged to the ruler of Hama, Abu al-Fida (1273-1331), a renowned historian and geographer, who was granted the honorary title of Sultan (fig. 135). The belt was made in Syria around 1320. The inscribed buckle and other fittings are now in the L. A. Mayer Memorial Institute for Islamic Art in Jerusalem.

130. Ivory kohl bottle for eye make-up.
Egypt, 14th c.
H. 4.5 cm. (160 cm)

131. Pierced ivory casket with Arabic script.
Egypt, 12th-13th c.
H. 7 cm. (160 cm)

132. Ivory casket with pierced geometric decoration.
Egypt, 14th c.
H. 8 cm. (160 cm)

133. Ring with turquoise stone and carved geometric decoration edged with malas.
Iran, 12th c.
D. 2 cm. (160 cm)

134. Bracelet with dragon-head finials and a clasp with the inscription "Prosperity".
Egypt or Syria, 12th-13th c.
D. 8 cm. (160 cm)

135. Gilded belt fittings belonging to the ruler of Hama, Abu al-Fida (1273-1331).
Syria, circa 1220
A. of discus 3.5 cm. (160 cm)
tour of room II

On either side of the mihrab are early 14th-century Persian wall tiles with lustre and cobalt blue decoration (fig. 136). Typical examples of later Kashan ceramics, they bear Qur'anic inscriptions in relief, a foliate design and representations of birds. Although they depict living creatures, the tiles were intended for a religious building, like those from a mausoleum at Natanz, Iran (130758).

136 Ceramic tile with a relief Qur'anic inscription and lustre-painted decoration
Iran, Kashan, early 14th c. H. 46.3 cm. (182c)

137 Brass basin with the emblem of the Rashidun Caliphate of Yemen. Syria or Egypt, late 13th–early 14th c. D. at rim 34 cm. (130759)

138 Drawing of the enthroned ruler and his courtiers from a metal censer in a pen case with the name of the Ayyubid Sultan al-Adil Abu Bakr (1196–1238) (1196 Syria, 1200–1218 Egypt), brother and successor of Saladin (fig. 138).

139 Brass vessel with inlaid decoration and inscribed Kufic inscriptions. Syria, Damascus, 15th c. H. of rim 27 cm. (130760)

140 Brass spherical censer with pierced decoration. Northern Mesopotamia or Anatolia, second half of 13th c. H. 19.5 cm. (130744)

On the rear wall are 14th-15th century-carved wooden panels from Egypt, and in the centre objects made of transparent, undecorated glass, including 14th-15th century Egyptian mosque lamps. On the left are sections of stucco architectural ornamentation, one of which bears the word "king" in thuluth script, which was widely used during the Mamluk era. A metalwork group on the left includes a brass pen case, the inlaid ornamentation of which is badly worn. It is inscribed with the date 1218 and mentions the name of Sultan al-Adil Abu Bakr (1196 Syria, 1200–1218 Egypt), brother and successor of Saladin (fig. 138).

To its right is a brass vessel with inlaid decoration in silver and black organic material, a typical product of 15th-century Damascus metalwork intended for the Italian market (fig. 139). The pierced spherical censer made of cast brass, with cruciform openings, may come from northern Mesopotamia or Anatolia and date from the second half of the 13th century (fig. 140). Spherical censers, derived from Chinese models of the Tang dynasty (618–907), became popular in the Near East during the 13th and 14th centuries, but the present specimens known to us are made of sheet brass and inlaid with precious metals.
tour of room II

Towards the right of the case are three brass candlesticks, ornamented with inlaid silver; one, depicting musicians playing the lute, the flute and the tambourine, was made in northern Iraq or Syria around the mid-13th century (fig. 141). The other two, which bear medallions enclosing whirling birds, come from 14th-century Syria. A statuette of a camel with an epigraphic emblem was probably made in Egypt in the late 15th–early 16th century (fig. 142). It seems to have been an ornamental section of a piece of furniture or a railing, to which it was attached by a metal rod inserted in the hole in the camel’s back.

Also in the case are a number of fragments of 13th–14th-century ceramic vessels, probably from the city of Raqqa in northern Syria. The pottery produced there is notable for the use of red colour under the glaze, and for representations of animals in motion (fig. 143, fish and human figures (fig. 144). After the destruction of the city by the Mongols in 1259 ceramic production moved to Damascus, the provenance of the intact specimens exhibited here, which are decorated with lustre painting and turquoise or blue glaze.

On the right are wooden and ivory decorative plaquettes, part of the geometric ornamentation of wooden panels. A curious 14th-century plaque depicts a human or animal mask amid tendrils (fig. 17).

141 Brass candlesticks with musicians
Northern Iraq or Syria, mid-13th c.
H. 19 cm. (7 1/2 in.)

142 Brass statuette of a camel with an epigraphic emblem
Egypt, late 15th–early 16th c.
H. 14 cm. (5 1/2 in.)
GIFT OF Laskeriana Bower

143 Ceramic fragment with a running animal
Syria, Raqqa, 13th c.
D. 14.5 cm. (5 5/8 in.)

144 Ceramic bowl with black slip and turquoise glaze
Syria, Raqqa, 13th c.
D. 11 cm. (4 3/8 in.)
GIFT OF MARINA LAPPIS-DRAGMENOV

Nearby are early 13th-century vessels from Kashan with underglaze black and blue painted decoration (fig. 145). The technique of painting under the glaze allows for complex decorative motifs, and the outer surfaces here depict a typical Kashan design of aquatic plants. The group also contains two 13th-century Syrian vessels from Raqqa, a bowl and a “chamber pot”, so-called because it resembles modern such objects, though its actual purpose is not known (fig. 147).

145 Ceramic bowl with spout and animal-shaped handles
Iran, Kashan, early 13th c.
H. 15.5 cm. (6 1/8 in.)
GIFT OF MARINA LAPPIS-DRAGMENOV

146 Vessel in the shape of a chamber pot
Syria, Raqqa, 13th c.
H. 17 cm. (6 3/4 in.)
The right-hand side of the case contains ceramics dating mainly from after the 13th-century Mongol invasions and the unification of Central Asia with China. During this period the Iranian craftsmen created a new decorative vocabulary which reflected the tastes of the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers and was influenced by the iconography of the sumptuous artefacts, notably fabrics, imported from China. Dated vessels show that production in the Kashan workshops was interrupted for nearly four decades, from around 1220 to 1260.

Iranian ceramics with black and blue painted decoration were common in the late 13th-first half of the 14th century. They depict typically Chinese motifs—lotus flowers and peonies, and mythical creatures such as a dragon and a phoenix (a bird with a long tail) which bring good luck and are also symbols of power [fig. 101].

Rewis with radially disposed panels and dense dotted foliage were especially popular [fig. 148]. This decorative style, which is a feature of Iranian ceramics of the Mongol era, is known as Sultanabad, after the modern city where numerous specimens were found. Its wide diffusion is demonstrated by the Sultanabad-type foliate decoration on the 14th-century dish from Syria in the centre of the case [fig. 149]. It is attributed to Syria because of the horizontal rim typical of Syrian ceramics, while the cruciform design suggests that it was commissioned by a local Christian.

148
Sultanabad-type ceramic bowl with a radial design
Ht. 149 c.
D. 22 cm. (77/8)
(111) Of Maria Luppe-Deimundo

149
Ceramic dish incising
Sultanabad-type decoration
Syria, 14th c.
D. 18.5 cm. (7/8)

150
Brass water jug belonging to an official of Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun
Egypt, 1230-1300
H. 44.6 cm. (173/4)

151
Two-handled brass vessel, possibly the lower part of a pitcher
Eastern Iran,
c. 13th-early 14th c.
H. 20.5 cm. (8)
In front is a cast candlestick decorated with inlaid silver showing seated figures playing the harp, drinking and relaxing (Konya, second half of 13th century) fig. 180. The standing figure holding double rods derives from the personified representations of the labours of the months, a common motif of late antiquity.

Next is a series of five Mamluk basins, two of which are particularly interesting. One depicts a procession of Mamluk amirs and was produced in Syria in the late 13th-early 14th century (fig. 152). The officials are shown walking towards the Sultan in two groups of five, each holding the attribute of his office: an axe, a cup, a sceptre, a polo stick, a sword, a goose (perhaps the symbol of the official in charge of the royal hunt) and a square piece of cloth held by the Master of the Wardrobe.

The second basin is attributed to a late 13th-century Syrian workshop and contains representations of mounted polo players, an equestrian sport included in the Mamluks' military training programme (fig. 153). The original owner of the basin was the amir Sarqar al-A'zam, superintendent of the chanceries, who was an enthusiastic polo player. After his death the basin passed into the ownership of his daughter Fatima.

Three other 14th-century inscribed basins come from Shiraz in western Iran. They bear representations of horsemen and Arabic inscriptions glorifying an unnamed ruler, 'Lord and Sultan of the Arabs and the non-Arabs' (fig. 131). Of the same period and provenance is the small casket with inlaid silver depicting animals and a figure holding a sceptre (fig. 154). These tall, slender figures are typical of Iranian iconography during the Mongol era.
One of the three cylindrical Mamluk boxes of the period is ornamented with musicians seated cross-legged and the tripartite emblem of the Mamluk office of the Messenger (fig. 155). The miniature casket made by Isma'il ibn Ward al-Mawsili in 1220 is the earliest dated evidence of Mawsil's position as a centre of inlaid metalwork (fig. 156). The section of a Mamluk brass lampstand (figs. 158 and 159), with the emblem of the office of Sword-bearer, dates from the second quarter of the 14th century.

On the right are two large brass Mamluk candlesticks. One of them bears the epigraphic emblem of the Sultan and radial inscriptions, which were regarded as solar symbols and were particularly popular during the last decades of the reign of Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun (1294–1341) (fig. 104). The other candlestick is inlaid with black organic material and was presented by Sultan Qaytbay to the mosque of the Prophet at Medina in 1482/3 (fig. 28). Qaytbay restored the mosque in 1488 and donated at least five candlesticks similar to this one.

On the left are late 13th–14th-century Egyptian ceramic bowls with incised decoration. They are distinguished by their brownish-yellow glaze, and by the epigraphic ornamentation and Mamluk emblems which are found in contemporary metalwork. The large number of surviving examples and their standardised inscriptions indicate that these objects were mass-produced for low-ranking officials. The vessels depict an eagle (fig. 158), a lion (fig. 111), a fleur-de-lis and a biclour tripartite blazon (fig. 159), all of which were distinctive emblems of office at the Mamluk court.

The group of incised wares also comprises two footed bowls, which recall in shape contemporary Byzantine and Cypriot incised ceramics, and an inscribed base on which was placed a tray for serving food, in imitation of similar brass objects (fig. 160). Two 14th-century Egyptian bowls display varying styles and techniques: one is slip-painted and the other, with relief pseudo-eiptographic ornamentation and a green glaze, imitates Chinese celadon ware.
On the right is a group of ceramic vessels with geometric and foliate decoration, painted in blue and black under a transparent glaze, which were intended for a wealthy clientele (fig. 161). Damascus in Syria and Fustat (Old Cairo) in Egypt were important centres of production for such ware, typical of which is a bowl with a blue radial design dating from the late 14th-15th century (fig. 162). Radial decoration is common in Islamic ceramics, but the blue colour and the foliate motifs reveal the influence of imported Chinese porcelain.

Of particular interest is the dish decorated with the emblem of the Cup-bearer of the Mamluk court, painted in blue and brownish red (fig. 110). This colour combination is found in late 13th–early 14th-century Syria, but no other examples of Syrian ceramics with Mamluk emblems are known. The case also contains three curious Egyptian oil lamps in the shape of a rat.

Chinese porcelain painted in cobalt blue on white was imported into Syria and Egypt in the second half of the 14th century. This colour scheme was a recent innovation in Chinese pottery which gained immense popularity throughout the Islamic world. From the late 14th, and especially in the 15th century, Muslim potters adopted the blue and white chromatic palette and reproduced or adapted the Chinese motifs to their own taste. The exhibits include a dish and bowls with black and blue painted decoration from 14th-century Egypt. The three marks on the inside indicate the use of small tripods (kīn-spurs), which allowed the pots to be stacked on top of each other in the kīn (fig. 163).

The centre of the case contains two large dishes, one of which dates from the 15th century and is decorated with Chinese-style blue floral ornamentation (fig. 164), while the other, with a relief lotus flower under a green glaze, imitates Chinese celadon. Excavations at Hama and Fustat have shown that a large number of celadon ceramics were imported into Syria and Egypt in the late 14th and throughout the 15th century.
tour of room II

A rare example of an Islamic ceramic decorated with a Christian motif is the plate fragment depicting the Deposition, made in Syria in the late 13th-first half of the 14th century (fig. 165). The iconography follows Byzantine models, but the underglaze painting and the relief design of dotted leaves on the ground recall Sultanabad-type ware. It probably served as a paten in a church of the then-flourishing Christian communities in Syria. A complementary fragment, showing the Virgin holding the body of Christ, is in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.

On the right of the scene is a group of fragments of 14th-century Sultanabad-type pottery. It is extremely difficult to distinguish between this type of Iranian ware and its Egyptian or Syrian copies. One sherd shows a warrior brandishing a sword and wearing an outfit with epigraphic bands on the sleeves and Mongol-type headgear (fig. 166).

165 Fragment of a ceramic plate with the Deposition
Syria, late 13th-first half of 14th c.
D. 27 cm. (2025)
The fragment with the Virgin is in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.

166 Pottery fragment with a warrior brandishing a sword
Syria or Egypt, 13th c.
Ht. 37 cm. (12957)

167 Stone niche with
Decorative inscription
and a hanging mosque lamp
Min. 13th c.
Ht. 174 cm. (13837/1)