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Yale University

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The Atmospheric of Leighton House

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The Resistant Materiality of Frederic Leighton's Arab Hall

Article by **Mary Roberts**

WORD COUNT:7,200



Abstract

Frederic Leighton's Holland Park home, a collaboration with George Aitchison, William De Morgan, and Walter Crane, was one of London's most famous nineteenth-century orientalist interiors. Built between 1877 and 1879, Leighton's Arab Hall houses historic tiles of exceptional quality from İznik, Damascus, and Persia, distinguishing his orientalist project from the homes of his peers. The Arab Hall was conceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a secular aestheticist fantasy of suspended time in which historic Near Eastern craft production was synthesized into an harmonious aesthetic present tense. De Morgan undertook the challenge of replicating tile fragments to repair some of these historic panels. In doing so, he submitted to an apprenticeship across time, as the products of his kiln were answerable to the superb precedents of Near Eastern master craftsmen. But the dislocation of these historic tiles is often legible in their fragmentary remnants and scarred surfaces. In this article, Roberts addresses the ways in which this obdurate materiality posed an impediment to an aesthetics of synthesis.

A Door to Nowhere

Upstairs at Leighton House, in the artist's studio, is a door to nowhere (fig. 1). This oversized aperture was created in 1868 to facilitate the passage of large canvases out of the studio—the processional paintings on which Frederic Leighton (1830–1896) staked his reputation as an ambitious artist. More than ten years earlier, in Rome, Leighton had finished the first of these large works, *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna* (fig. 2), which was later characterized by his peers as “the first result of a cosmopolitan education”.¹ It thematizes art in transit. Leighton rendered a procession through the streets of Florence as Cimabue's painting is carried from the artist's studio to Santa Maria Novella.² It is a worldly painting about art history's generational inheritance with the young Giotto walking across the centre of the work, hand in hand with his teacher Cimabue. The radically foreshortened rendition of Cimabue's painting two-thirds of the way across this canvas, a bravura performance of Leighton's skill, was a bold claim for the young British artist's place within this august art-historical lineage.³ Leighton created a geography of art practice firmly rooted in Western Europe, and this metapainting secured his

claim as an ambitious history painter at a time when the efficacy of that genre of art was unsteady.



Figure 1

Frederic Leighton's Studio (detail of west wall), Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.



Figure 2

Frederic Leighton, *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna is Carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence*, 1855, oil on canvas, 231.7 × 520.9 cm. The Royal Collection (RCIN 401478). Digital image courtesy of The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

A photograph of Leighton from the early 1880s (fig. 3) shows him at work on another of his metapaintings, *Cymon and Iphigenia* (fig. 4). In execution and theme, it conveys the transformative power of beauty, the motivating impulse of Aestheticism. In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the brutish Cymon is reformed by his encounter with the beautiful, sleeping Iphigenia.⁴ Here transformation occurs at a moment of human passivity. In this otherworldly space, movement is impelled by art, nature, and the inanimate. The painting shifts from the glassy surface of Iphigenia's face and arms—an astonishing transformation of paint into soft flesh—to the painterly texture of the landscape. The drapery of the recumbent Iphigenia radiates as a force field establishing a directional flow into the pool of water that opens into our space, to the lyricism of a drapery in watery suspension at the canvas's bottom edge. The lunar metaphor for awakening, evoked by that ellipsis on the horizon touching the night sky, is accompanied by a mysterious light radiating from Iphigenia onto the base of the tree trunks behind her. The subject of this work is beauty as transformation, and it is elaborated across this painting through poetic effects of colour and light.

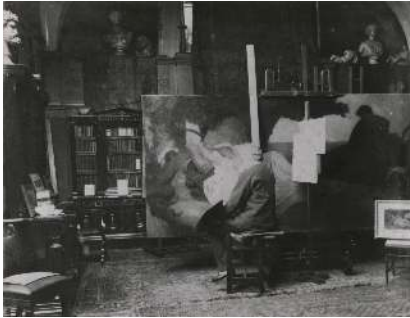


Figure 3

Unknown photographer, *Frederic Leighton in his studio working on Cymon and Iphigenia*, Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 4

Frederic Leighton, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1884, oil on canvas, 163 × 328 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (210.1976). Digital image courtesy of Art Gallery of New South Wales.



Figure 5

George Aitchison, *The Arab Hall exterior, street view*, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Four years before Leighton created *Cymon and Iphigenia* in his Holland Park studio, the function of the door in its west wall had been obviated by the construction of his orientalist interior, the Arab Hall, between 1877 and 1879 (figs 5 and 6). The protrusion of this domed structure, sited to the west of the studio, blocked the transit of artworks through the opening. Later, when prints of Leighton's paintings *Solitude* (exhibition 1890, fig. 7) and *The Bath of Psyche* (1890, fig. 8) were hung on that door frame, it became an aestheticized threshold. The resolute interiority of *Solitude*, and the concern with verticality and painterly surface in his *Bath of Psyche*, exemplify Leighton's increasing preoccupation with art for art's sake. The contrast between these smaller aestheticist works and his ambitious history paintings is dramatic, but the distinction is by no means absolute. Indeed, as Elizabeth Prettejohn has argued, even Leighton's first processional painting, his *Cimabue*, may be said to aestheticize history painting. This is achieved by reconciling the new historicism of period specificity with the universal claims of a history painting that celebrates the aesthetic realm.⁵



Figure 6

The Arab Hall west wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.



Figure 7

Frederic Leighton, *Solitude*, 1890, oil on canvas, 182.8 × 91.4 cm. Collection of Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, Washington (1965.02.001). Digital image courtesy of Maryhill Museum of Art.



Figure 8

Frederic Leighton, *Bath of Psyche*, exhibited 1890, oil on canvas, 189.2 × 62.2 cm. Collection of Tate, London (N01574). Digital image courtesy of Tate, London.

To date, the Arab Hall, an orientalist room whose walls are encased in underglazed tiles from the Near East, complemented by windows shrouded in *mashrabiya* (lattice screens) and capped with a gilded dome, has had a minor place in the study of Leighton's concerns as a painter. With a few notable exceptions, it has been marginal within histories of Islamic art and studies of Orientalism.⁶ In the analysis that follows, I suggest that this interior is one of Leighton's most important aestheticist works in which some of his most pressing concerns are played out. The Arab Hall was an experiment in synthesising disparate impulses: between art for art's sake as a withdrawal from the world and cosmopolitan worldliness; between interiority and exteriority; between the collector's historicist impulse towards Islamic art and its synthesis into contemporary British practice. This interior proves compelling precisely at the points where that project of synthesis falters—where historicism strains against the creative ambitions of this space—and we begin to see its disruptive fragments in the work of its British craftsmen. Throughout this article, I will put Leighton's Arab Hall into dialogue with the other sites of art networking and creation in his home in order to understand the fluid geography of his Orientalism. It is an approach seeking to inventory the historic dynamism of the artist's studio-house and its changing relationship to cultural politics within the British imperial capital and well beyond. Leighton's house was a site of habitation and creative practice as well as an evolving work of art, a place into and out of which objects, artworks, and persons travelled. In this spirit, I read the remnant door frame in Leighton's studio as a marker of the spatio-temporal changes wrought upon this interior through construction of the Arab Hall, and as a reminder that

this interpretation of his orientalist addition is attuned to the changing lines of flight within his networked interior.

During his lifetime, visiting Leighton's house became a codified experience through many published accounts. After completion of the Arab Hall, a clear trajectory establishes three zones within the space, each with a distinctive spatio-temporal logic. First, there was the grand studio upstairs at the back of the house, where the work of artistic genius promised to reveal itself through the present tense of artistic production. Given the contingency of the painter's output, this was the most changeable of the spaces during his lifetime. Second were those rooms upstairs and down, including the stairwell (fig. 9), whose walls were adorned with the artworks of others; these spaces situated a worldly Leighton within his local and international professional art networks and staked a claim for his studio-based practice within contemporary debates about painting *en plein air*.⁷ Third, there were the Arab and Narcissus Halls (fig. 10), rooms whose purpose was aesthetic experience. Paintings could not be hung on these walls because they were encased with historic tiles from the Near East. These were otherworldly dream spaces that could transport the visitor out of London.



Figure 9

Photograph of staircase in Leighton House showing where the portraits of Richard Burton and Frederic Leighton were hung during Leighton's lifetime, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.



Figure 10

The Narcissus Hall, Leighton House (view of the east wall and staircase), Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Leighton performed his interior, like a maestro, conducting his visitors through the space, weaving stories of the objects and travels that fuelled his creative practice. In some of these accounts, his affect and sartorial choices were as worthy of artistic note as the interior itself.⁸ But I resist a narrative that unifies this interior under the authorial sign of Frederic Leighton. The creation of this space was a collaboration between Leighton, his architect George Aitchison (fig. 11), ceramicist William De Morgan (fig. 12), and Walter Crane, among others.⁹ The inclusion of more than 1,000 tiles from İznik, Damascus, and Persia made by unknown master craftsmen begs the question as to what role their creative practice plays in this space. This article assays the contribution and commitments of this range of practitioners within this creative matrix by

exploring the processes of making the Arab Hall. In part, it is an art-historical experiment in looking as a craftsman looks.¹⁰



Figure 11

Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *George Aitchison, R.A., P.R.I.B.A.*, 1900, oil on canvas, 151 × 125 cm. RIBA Collections (PCF4). Digital image courtesy of RIBA Collections.

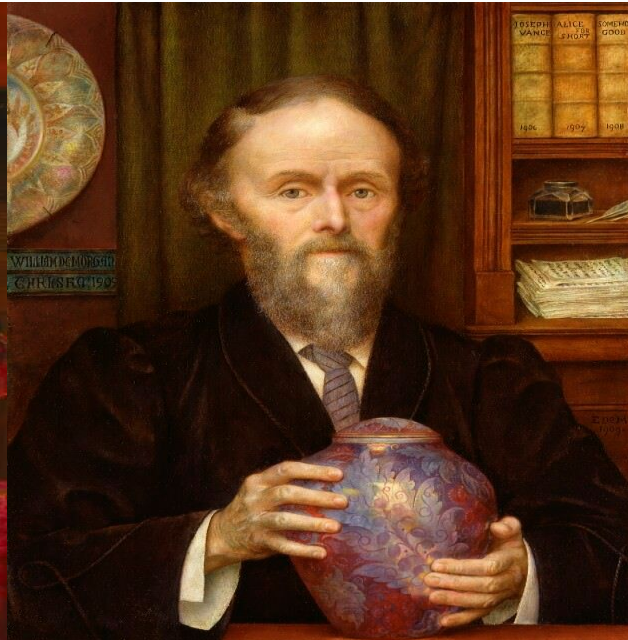


Figure 12

Evelyn De Morgan, *William De Morgan*, oil on canvas, 1909, 68.8 × 54.8 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG6358). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.

Collecting and Painting



Figure 13

Frederic Leighton, *Portrait of Sir Richard Francis Burton*, 1872–1875, oil on canvas, 61 × 51 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 1070). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.

Consider the decade before the Arab Hall's construction, when Leighton was amassing the historic Islamic art that he used to create these rooms. This was also the period in which he worked on a portrait of the renowned Orientalist Richard Burton (fig. 13). Both became central to Leighton's orientalist Aestheticism. Among the many pieces of Islamic art that Leighton amassed, including stained-glass windows and the *mashrabiya*, I conjecture that it was the historic wall tiles that placed the greatest demands on these British artists.¹¹

Sourcing, restoring, and resolving the placement of these tiles within the interior proved most challenging for Leighton and his collaborators. The majority are polychromatic underglaze Damascus tiles, with a smaller number of blue and white underglaze sixteenth- and seventeenth-century İznik pieces. There are two Persian lustreware tiles (fig. 14), four Persian figurative tiles (fig. 15), and one Mamluk underglaze tile. They came from domestic and sacred contexts and were mostly sourced from within the Ottoman Empire. Leighton saw

spectacular examples of Ottoman tile panelling during his first trip to Istanbul and Bursa in 1867. In the former Ottoman capital of Bursa he created an oil sketch of the *madrasa* within the Muradiye mosque complex (figs 16 and 17). The intimacy of this enclosed courtyard setting and the recessed tiled walls resonates with his Arab Hall project. Within the grounds of the Muradiye mosque complex, Leighton probably saw İznik tile panels such as those within the tomb of Sultan Süleyman's son Şehzade Mustafa, some of the most refined Ottoman İznik tile production (figs 18 and 19).



Figure 14

The Arab Hall, Kashan tile, west wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.



Figure 15

The Arab Hall, four Kubachi tiles, west wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

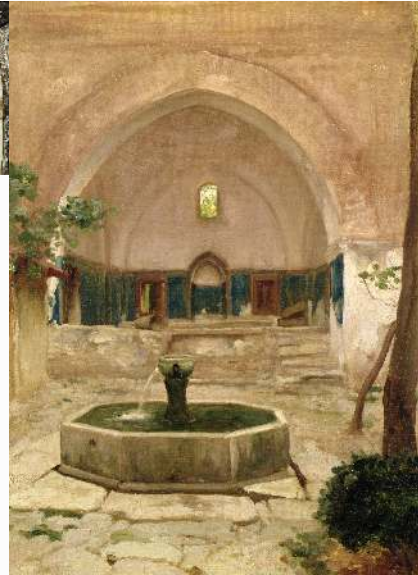


Figure 16

Frederic Leighton, Muradiye madrasa courtyard (erroneously titled Courtyard of a Mosque at Broussa), 1867, oil on canvas, 36.3 x 26.4 cm. The Higgins Bedford (P.632). Digital image courtesy of The Higgins Bedford / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 17

View of madrasa courtyard with fountain in the centre, looking towards the domed classroom to the south, Muradiye complex, Bursa, Turkey, 1426-28. Digital image courtesy of Aga Khan Visual Archive, MIT / Photo: Beatrice St. Laurent.



Figure 18

Interior of Tomb of Sultan Süleyman's son Şehzade Mustafa, Bursa, Turkey, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Mary Roberts.



Figure 19

Exterior of Tomb of Sultan Süleyman's son Şehzade Mustafa, Bursa, Turkey, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Mary Roberts.

Leighton admired the interiors he saw during his travels in the Near East and even purchased some tiles while abroad. But he quickly realized that in order to get sufficient historic pieces for his interior, he needed access to better local networks.¹² He came to rely on: William Wright (fig. 20), a missionary and amateur antiquarian based in Damascus from 1865 to 1875; Richard Burton, a diplomat, explorer, and scholar of Arabic culture; and Caspar Purdon Clarke (fig. 21), a scholar, later keeper and then Director of the South Kensington Museum.¹³ The precise locations and transactions for the acquisition of the tiles that fill Leighton House are difficult to determine. This relatively inchoate period for the history of collecting Islamic art compels the art historian to become a travelling detective piecing together dispersed clues. In this context, the question of who valued what and when is both urgent and often elusive.

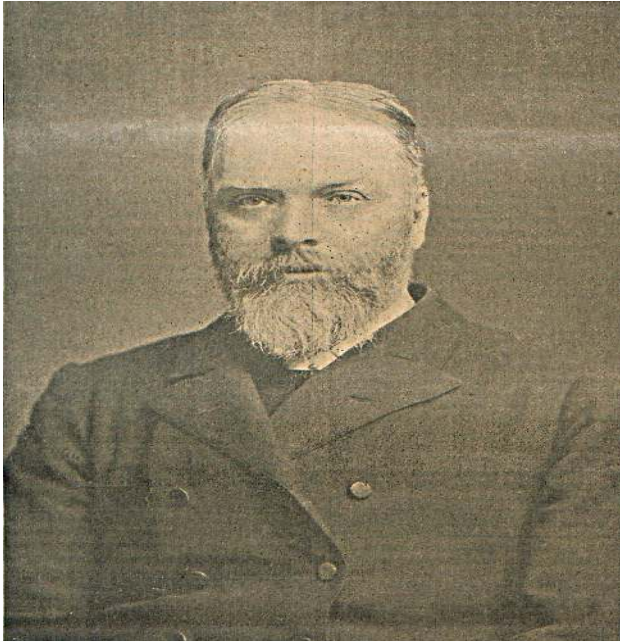


Figure 20

Unknown photographer, *Portrait of William Wright*, in *Missionary Herald of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland*, 2 October 1899.



Figure 21

Benjamin Stone, *Caspar Purdon Clarke*, platinum print, 7 August 1901, 20.3 mm × 15.6 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG x44613). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.

The wall tiles that came from religious structures, of which there are quite a few in the Arab Hall, are the most contentious. Local dealers, officials, and caretakers of such sites sometimes facilitated the dislodgement and sale of tiles. But there was often local opposition to their removal. Although Ottoman legislation during this period was concerned primarily with the unauthorized removal of antiquities from within its domain, objects removed from Islamic religious buildings were not allowed to pass through Ottoman customs.¹⁴ Burton's letter to Leighton discloses the role of local custodians when he writes that his friends, Charles Drake and Edward Palmer, "were lucky enough when at Jerusalem to nobble a score or so from the so-called Mosque of Omar. Large stores are there found, but unhappily under charge of the Wakf and I fancy that long payments would be required."¹⁵ He was referring to the surplus İznik tiles created during Sultan Süleyman's restoration of the Dome of the Rock (fig. 22) in the mid-sixteenth century and in the care of its religious foundation. This important Ottoman imperial project was an impetus for expansion in both the ceramic workshops in İznik and tile making in Syria.¹⁶ What Burton elides here in this assessment of local profiteering is the Ottoman Empire's role in the restoration of this historic religious site in the nineteenth century. During this period, a restoration, commenced under Sultan Abdülmecid in 1853, was completed by Sultan Abdülaziz between 1873 and 1875. Restoration of this pre-eminent site was part of Ottoman statecraft and the Empire's increasing administrative centralization of its provinces during the Tanzimat.¹⁷ In fact, Leighton's collecting in the 1870s occurred in the context of a growing recognition of the historic and aesthetic value of Ottoman revetment tiles by Ottoman authorities and intellectuals, a change exemplified by the publication of *L'Architecture Ottomane* in 1873 (figs 23 and 24).¹⁸



Figure 22

The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Maureen Ruddy Burkhart Photography.



Figure 23

Victor-Marie de Launay *et al.*, *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani [The Fundamentals of Ottoman Architecture] / L'architecture ottomane / Die ottomanische Baukunst*, (Istanbul: Imprimerie et lithographie centrales, 1873), Fayences murales, Planche 22. Collection of Fine Arts Library, Harvard University. Digital image courtesy of Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.



Figure 24

Victor-Marie de Launay *et al.*, *Usul-i Mi'mari-i 'Osmani [The Fundamentals of Ottoman Architecture] / L'architecture ottomane / Die ottomanische Baukunst*, (Istanbul: Imprimerie et lithographie centrales, 1873), Fayences murales, Planche 2. Collection of Fine Arts Library, Harvard University. Digital image courtesy of Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

The majority of Leighton's panels came from Damascus at a time when many historic domestic interiors were dismantled in part to satisfy demand by European collectors (fig. 25). Burton wrote to Leighton from Damascus on 22 March 1871 offering to "have a house pulled down". Burton also reveals how competitive this market for tiles was because "The bric a brac sellers have quite learned their value and demand extravagant sums for poor articles. Of course you want good old specimens and these are waxing very rare."¹⁹ Burton had been recalled from Damascus by the time Leighton visited the city in 1873, so Leighton reciprocated his friend's efforts to procure these rare tiles with the gift of an oil sketch of the diplomat's former home in Damascus (fig. 26). In 1873, his local host was instead the long-standing Damascus resident, William Wright. At this time, the city was still reeling from the effects of the political upheavals of the 1860s.²⁰ Wright recognized that these tumultuous political circumstances conditioned the supply side of this local market for historic items, noting that: "the spoils of the late massacre were still in concealment ... Through friends, however, [Leighton and I] got access to several stores of gold-embroidered fabrics and costly oriental robes". Wright's knowledge "of the ancient pottery kilns at Damascus, where the inimitable *kishani* wares had been baked" gave Leighton access to "tiles and plates and long-necked jars with blue ground and white flowers,

and during the spare hours of a few weeks Leighton was able to lay the foundation of his fine collection.”²¹

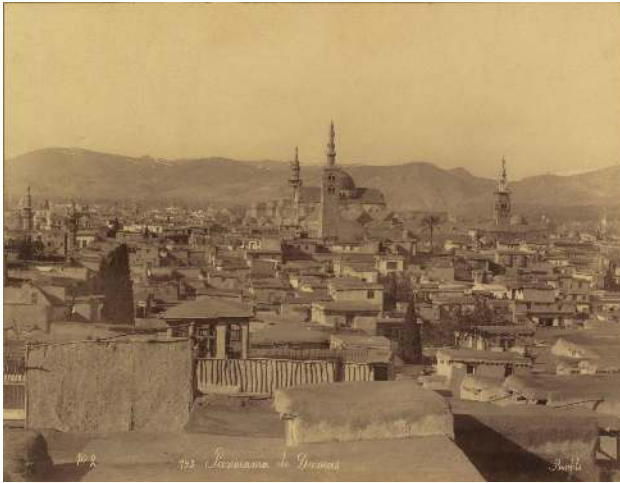


Figure 25

Maison Bonfils, *Panorama of Damascus*, circa 1867–1899, albumen print. Collection of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington (LOT 13550, no. 252 [P&P]). Digital image courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 26

Frederic Leighton, *Richard and Isabel Burton's House at Damascus*, 1873, oil on canvas, 20 × 23 cm. Richmond Upon Thames Borough Art Collection (LDORL: 00553L). Digital image courtesy of Richmond Upon Thames Borough Art Collection.

These documentary fragments reveal the destruction that was part of this collecting process when it involved wall tiles. It is not the disrupted integrity of the local structures that concerned these men, but rather that the damaged fragments would not suit Leighton's purpose.²² Burton reported from Trieste on 13 July 1876 that: “the tiles are packed, and will be sent by the first London steamer—opportunities are rare here. Some are perfect, many are broken, but they will make a bit of mosaic after a little trimming.”²³

When this letter arrived in London, Leighton was basking in the critical success at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition of his portrait of Burton. Rendering the battle-scarred face of this Orientalist adventurer took many years to complete, over which time Burton's scar, resulting from a Somali attack in Berbera in 1855, became crucial to Leighton's aesthetics. Comparing Burton's photographic (fig. 27) and painterly scar reveals the painter's editorial process, as one rather than three scars are visible.²⁴ Leighton's isolated painted scar maintains a sinuous line that elegantly contours the left cheek, widening and softening as it joins the dark shadow of Burton's cheekbone. It is an aestheticized wound. The red skin pleats time and space; it is an affective intensification in paint that compels the viewer's gaze through visceral proximity to adventure and risk.

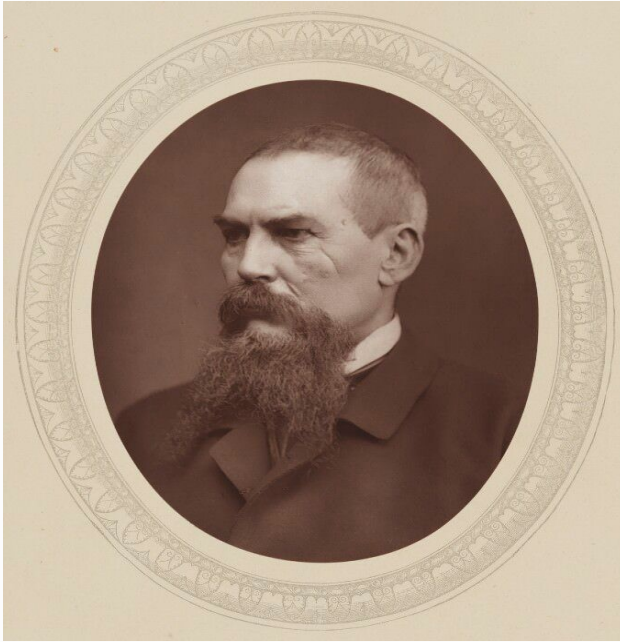


Figure 27

Lock and Whitfield, published by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, *Sir Richard Francis Burton*, published 1876, woodburytype, 11.2 × 9 cm. Collection National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG Ax17479). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 28

Peter Lely, *Portrait of Oliver Cromwell*, 1650, oil on canvas, 73.5 × 61 cm. Collection of Palazzo Pitti, Florence (Inv. No. 408). Digital image courtesy of DeAgostini Picture Library / Scala, Florence © 2018.

Burton's skin is a bravura demonstration of Leighton's impasto brushwork and subtle colouring that invokes skin marked by age and adventure. Some saw an historic precedent in Lely's portrait of Cromwell with its dermal anomalies (fig. 28).²⁵ Others asserted that the portrait's "strength of character" injected vigour into Leighton's practice. *The Saturday Review* wrote that: "To gain power, he exchanges his usually smooth surface for a rough texture loaded with pigments which stand out in absolute relief; thus extremes meet."²⁶ Even the critic, who found fault with "a certain shininess of superficial effect", subscribed to a notion of the painting's living skin, conjecturing that this defect in the work "will perhaps wear off in time".²⁷ Such entanglements of paintings and bodies anticipate Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). The portrait was even said to have had a redeeming effect on Leighton's much criticized large processional painting, *Daphnephoria* that he also exhibited in 1876 (fig. 29). *The Graphic* wrote that it was: *one of the most vigorous and masculine portraits of the year. Something may be due to the strength of the subject, but the painter should have his share of the credit, all the more that the "Daphnephoria", gracefully decorative as it is, shows exclusively the less manly ... side of Mr. Leighton's art.*²⁸

The Burton portrait lends our cosmopolitan painter a stern worldliness. Risk has become red paint, in layered substrata on canvas that are now the rugged beauty of both Burton and Leighton. No wonder Leighton continued to hold this portrait close, hanging it in his stairway near a portrait of himself by George Frederic Watts (fig. 30). Visitors encountered it as they moved between the artist's Arab Hall and his studio. During Leighton's lifetime, the portrait

remained in his possession; it was understood by the Burtons that this important work would eventually be left to the nation.



Figure 29

Frederic Leighton, *The Daphnephoria*, 1874–1876, oil on canvas, 231 × 525 cm. Collection of Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool (LL 3632). Digital image courtesy of Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 30

George Frederic Watts, *Portrait of Frederic Leighton*, 1871, 64.5 × 52 cm. Collection of Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

An illustration of the Burton portrait on an easel in Leighton's studio published in the *Building News* of December 1876 (fig. 31) is a provoking condensation of ideas about the aesthetic work of this portrait. Here the painting has picked up speed through its dramatically foreshortened incarnation cutting its way through the left side of the image, converging at the edge of the door used to remove large paintings, as if poised to leave the studio through this aperture. The portrait seems to have taken the place of his large canvases in its ambitions and its effects in the world.



Figure 31

'The Studio of Fredk Leighton Esqre R.A.', in *The Building News*, 22 December 1876. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board.

In the same month that this illustration was published, Caspar Purdon Clarke set out on a purchasing trip to the Near East.²⁹ He augmented the South Kensington Museum's holdings of what was becoming the most significant collection of Damascus tiles outside Syria. He also purchased the two late sixteenth-century Syrian tile panels that were used to establish symmetry on the west wall of the Arab Hall (figs 32 and 33). By this time, Leighton had what was needed to create his orientalist interior, and so building commenced in 1877.



Figure 32

The Arab Hall (left face), Syrian tile panel, west wall. Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Figure 33

The Arab Hall (right face), Syrian tile panel, west wall. Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Fictional Histories and Failures in Translation

Numerous visitors to Leighton's house assumed the famous Nasrid Alhambra Palace in Granada was the inspiration for the Arab Hall. Others, who were better informed, understood that La Zisa, the twelfth-century Arabo-Norman summer palace in Palermo, was the main prototype.³⁰

Leighton's artistic centre of gravity was Italy, so it is not surprising that medieval Palermo was the template for his orientalist interior.³¹ Palermo was a port city, a long-standing site of cultural traffic across the Mediterranean. Its hybrid aesthetic forms were rendered part of Sicily's picturesque history in nineteenth-century British illustrated travelogues. But La Zisa was an unsteady historical referent, for its cultural attribution had been a matter of academic dispute since the late eighteenth century. Its historiography has elements of yet another academic detective story with counterfeited documents, fictional histories, and failures in translation.



Figure 34

Fratelli d'Alessandri, *Michele Amari*, 1882, photograph. Collection of Bibliothèque nationale de France BnF (SG PORTRAIT-709). Digital image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France BnF.

Knight's rendition of the site in 1838, they understood that they were looking at the villa of a Moorish prince (fig. 35).³⁵ Within a few decades, however, it became a legacy of the Norman conquest, thus bringing the structure a little closer to home through links to Britain's own Norman history.

Disagreements hinged on whether this structure was built during the period of Islamic or Norman rule in Sicily. In 1795, the prevailing opinion that it was a Muslim palace was unsteadied and Professor Giuseppe Vella was convicted of counterfeiting the Arabic documents on which his attribution was based.³² From then on, debates focused on the damaged kufic inscriptions—untranslated, they self-evidently declared it an Arab building. In 1827, however, Salvatore Morso threw the Muslim origins into doubt, convinced he had deciphered the name of the Norman King Roger in the kufic, though his translation later proved incorrect.³³ The puzzle was finally solved by Michele Amari (fig. 34), whose accurate translation established that the building was erected under the patronage of the Norman King William I and completed by his son William II. Amari's findings were disseminated in his book *The Arabic Epigraphs of Sicily* published in 1875, two years before the Arab Hall was built.³⁴ When British readers encountered Gally



Figure 35

The Hall in the Palace of La Zisa Palermo, in *Saracenic and Norman Remains to illustrate The Normans in Sicily* by Henry Gally Knight (London: John Murray, 1840). Digital image courtesy of MIT Libraries.

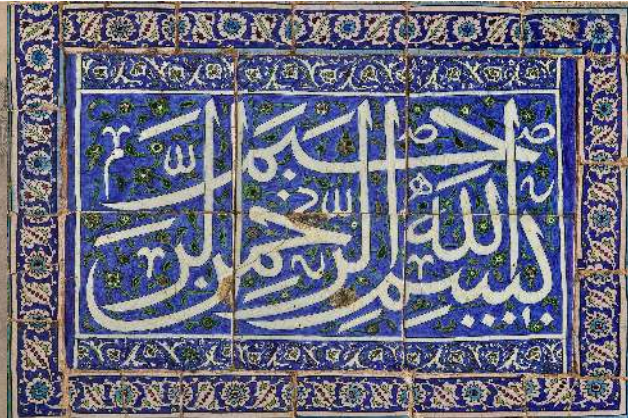


Figure 36

The Arab Hall, north wall (left face), Panel of six calligraphic tiles, the bismillah, Damascus mid-sixteenth century, with a border of seventeenth-century tiles. Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Just as classical Ottoman architecture and its tiled ornament were embraced by the Ottoman Imperial authorities in the 1870s—part of a new historicism that bolstered the Ottoman Imperial self-image—so too La Zisa was being remade for the project of Sicilian patriotism by Michele Amari. He was a man of the barricades as well as a scholar, an Italian nationalist who worked in exile in Paris after his involvement in the 1848 uprisings. Amari supported Sicilian resistance to Bourbon occupation. La Zisa and other Arabo-Norman structures were entangled in these nationalist aspirations that evolved as the political events of the Risorgimento unfolded. In Amari's writings, they stood for Sicily's unique character due to its variegated Mediterranean history.

Today, La Zisa is understood to have been made by Muslim craftsmen working under Norman patronage.³⁶ Recently, divergent academic interpretations of the building have pivoted around patterns of cross-cultural transfer. Within histories of Islamic art, the prevailing view that Muslim influence was evidence of a unidirectional cultural transfer to Sicily from centres of the Islamic world is being challenged by the notion that these patterns of translation were multidirectional, as ornamental forms in Palermo appeared in later buildings in Damascus and Cairo.³⁷

By the time building commenced on Leighton's Arab Hall in 1877, the attribution puzzle had been solved, but the rich narrative of the interpretive instabilities of this transcultural architecture pertains to our thinking about the imaginative geography of Leighton's hall. In particular, the Arabic inscriptions (fig. 36) hover between decoration and legibility, depending upon the visitor's linguistic skills.

While drawing on the geometry of La Zisa's Fountain Hall, Aitchison created an interior with a more internally focused logic. The self-contained pool in the Arab Hall retreats from its urban context, whereas La Zisa's water channels flowed into a garden (figs 37, 38 and 39). So too the complex geometry of the *muqarnas* that finesses the transitions between wall and ceiling in La Zisa has been reduced to truncated horizontal fragments.³⁸ Aitchison disdained slavishly copying past styles, and so the interior is a synthesis derived from multiple Mediterranean sources.³⁹

Leighton distanced himself from realist Orientalism, insisting he did not intend to become “a painter of Bedouins”.⁴⁰ As Leighton saw it, in his Arab Hall, historic fragments were put into service: “for the sake of something beautiful to look at”.⁴¹ An historicist impulse of admiring collected treasures is ideally subsumed within aesthetic experience.



Figure 37
Main Reception Hall, La Zisa, Palermo, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Catherine Blake.



Figure 38
Giuseppe Incorpora, *La Zisa Castello Saracen, Palermo*, circa 1860–1879, photograph. Collection of Canadian Institute of Photography, National Gallery of Canada. Digital image courtesy of Canadian Institute of Photography, National Gallery of Canada.



Figure 39
View of the central hall of La Zisa, in *Meisterwerke saracenischnormannischer Kunst in Sicilien und Unteritalien* by T. Kutschmann, Berlin, 1900, plate 21. Digital image courtesy of The Medieval Kingdom of Sicily Image Database, Duke University, <http://kos.aahvs.duke.edu/> (CC-BY-NC 4.0 license).

An Aesthetics of Synthesis

Published accounts by visitors disclose the experiential poetics of this Orientalism. For them, the Arab Hall functioned as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that existed under the impulse of the beautiful. In 1882, Mary Eliza Haweis offered an aestheticist reading of this space, not dissecting the interior but instead evoking its points of interest. Beginning in the Narcissus Hall, she declared it a compelling affective interpretation of the classical theme that eschews narrative in favour of dispersed colour and light. Haweis praised its poetic originality: it is not:

*repeating point-blank the hackneyed tale, or showing the fair boy adoring his mirror'd self in the “lily-paven lake”, but just recalling it piecemeal—the lilies in the pavement, the shining lake above [in the gilded ceiling], and all the joy and sorrow, the luxury and pain of his loneliness and aberration, told by the colours, the purple and the gloom, and by the boy's own attitude.*⁴²

Architecture becomes an experience of pure colour. She continues:

*The deep shades of the corners are filled with tarsia work and porcelain; but, as in a well-coloured picture, these are absolutely subservient; and the impression given is purple, like a Greek midnight, circling round a point of softest green (the bronze boy), and falling into a warm grey on the floor.*⁴³

This reading of a narcissistically absorbing interior, where abstracted effects of light and colour are more compelling than narrative, accords with the aesthetic experience Leighton evoked in his odalisque painting, *Light of the Harem* (1880, fig. 40), which was created in the studio upstairs after the construction of his Arab Hall. This painting withholds the mirrored image of our

absorbed odalisque and instead shows us the fascinating colour and pattern of the fabric she holds; our eye is drawn downwards to the exquisitely embroidered sleeve of her gown and onwards to the back of the beautiful gold embroidered cloak of her young assistant. Fields of patterned paint are the subject of this work. This painting was on the easel in Leighton's studio when the American writer Julian Hawthorne visited, and for him the painting anticipated a luxurious aestheticist interior (as if it were incomplete without it). He expressed a desire "to own that picture, with a house suitable to put it in" and later speculated that "perhaps it hangs in the smoking-room of some American millionaire".⁴⁴



Figure 40
Frederic Leighton, *Light of the Harem*, 1880, oil on canvas, 152.4 × 83.8 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of Julian Hartnoll / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 41
Frederic Leighton, *Sun Gleams (Arab Hall)*, 1884, oil on canvas, 83.82 × 40.64 cm. in *The Art-Journal*, 1891, 139. Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board.



Figure 42
The Arab Hall, west wall, niche Left side, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Sun Gleams (Arab Hall) of 1884 is the only painting in which Leighton directly rendered his Arab Hall as a site for his aestheticist experiments (fig. 41). At some stage in its creation, Leighton must have moved from his studio down into the Arab Hall to render the tile panel in the north wall alcove (fig. 42). Unlike other realist renditions of tiled interiors by Orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, John Frederick Lewis, or Frank Dillon, Leighton renders his tiles in thick impasto.⁴⁵ In doing so, he repairs the tiles on canvas and harmonizes a panel that had been assembled in the Arab Hall from disparate tiles. The cascading fabric that flows from the recess of the alcove past the odalisque's foot and out of the picture on the lower left, binds persons and things in a dreamy, painterly ambience that has parallels with Julian Hawthorne's evocation of the state of reverie experienced by his female companion, Eustacia, in the Arab Hall. She longed to recline with her guitar in one of its alcoves. This absorption in a timeless and placeless orientalist dream space was interrupted by colonial economic realities in the British imperial

capital: fellow visitor M.P. George Otto Trevelyan broke the spell by inviting Julian Hawthorne and Eustacia to that evening's parliamentary debate about the costs of the Afghan War.⁴⁶ In his account of the Arab Hall in 1881, Wilfrid Meynell imagines a Persian man of taste; like Leighton's odalisques, he is an abstracted person from a mythical Near East. The figurative tiles prompt him to reflect on their origin in another interior commissioned by this "long dead and gone Moslem, who owned a stately pleasure-dome like this of Sir Frederic Leighton's, who had cultivated tastes and was a patron of the arts."⁴⁷ This ghostly "Persian patron", vague and timeless, forms a counterpoint to Persian art patronage under the Qajars, a contemporaneous modernizing project accompanied by texts that position its rulers within a historically specific lineage. So too does this unnamed Persian contrast with the visceral immediacy of Burton's portrait in the nearby stairwell.

In the Arab Hall, abstract effects of colour are staged through an orchestration of light. The gilded dome dissolves the weight of architecture as stained-glass windows transform light into coloured gems (fig. 43). In 1892, Harry How conveyed the visual and aural dimensions of this experience:

*I stand beneath the great gilt dome, and the sun which is shining causes it to sparkle with a thousand gems. On looking up the dome seems to lose itself far away, so delicate and ingenious is the construction and colouring of it. It is a place in which to sit down and dream, for there is not a sound except the gentle splashing of the spray from the fountain.*⁴⁸

There are numerous precedents for the poetics of light in Islamic religious structures, where architectural effects of radiance were often accompanied by images of the hanging lamp in a niche and calligraphic inscriptions of the "Light Verse" from the Qur'an (Sura 24:35) linking luminosity, Allah, and paradise. Leighton saw mosques and tombs where such messages were architecturally encoded. After visiting Damascus in 1873, he celebrated the effects of light and colour in that city's Great Umayyad Mosque in his painting of its *qibla* wall, *Portions of the Interior of the Grand Mosque of Damascus* (1873–1875, fig. 44).⁴⁹



Figure 43

The Arab Hall, dome, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.



Figure 44

Frederic Leighton, *Portions of the Interior of the Grand Mosque of Damascus*, 1873–1875, oil on canvas, 158.1 × 122 cm. Collection of Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, Lancashire (PRSMG: P366). Digital image courtesy of Harris Museum and Art Gallery / Bridgeman Images.



Figure 45

The Arab Hall, Mosque lamp panel, east wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

The mosque lamp panel on the east wall brings this Islamic iconography into the Arab Hall, while displacing its numinous connotations in favour of secular Aestheticism (fig. 45). Close scrutiny shows that it is an amalgam formed from a larger series of panels. The disjointed candle on the right, the discontinuous chain suspending the lamp in the middle, and the disrupted left curve of the arch speak to the ruptures of this transposition. But those inclined towards an aestheticist reading of the Arab Hall saw no such disjunctions. For them, synthesis in this interior created a harmony that dissolves temporal distance between the historic tiles and the contemporary British interior. The French architect Auguste Choisy expressed this effect of collapsed time, writing that: “the harmony is so perfect that one asks oneself if the architecture has been conceived for the enamels or the enamels for the hall.”⁵⁰

The Craftsman and the Scar

While the reception hall at La Zisa provided a regular geometric template for harmonizing the historic tiles that were transposed into this modern interior, the tile panels have an ontology of stasis that is to be reckoned with. Ceramic vases, jugs, and other products of the Damascus and İznik potters kilns were designed to be on the move, whereas wall tiles created for specific sites have a greater resistance to mobility. The Arab Hall’s tile panels were contrived for other interiors, and there are many partial panels in this room. Their history of dislocation from other walls is legible in their fragmentary remnants and scarred surfaces. This obdurate materiality posed an impediment to an aesthetics of synthesis.

Meynell understood this challenge when he wrote that:

the task of adapting separate pieces to the walls without breaking the design, after the chances and hazards of collection and transportation, was no easy matter ... Often, of course, a tile necessary to the continuity of the pattern was wanting, and there was then nothing for it but to call in modern Occidental skill. This has been supplied by Mr. William de Morgan (son of the late famous mathematician), whose labours and successes in the arts of pottery and porcelain are well known, and who has produced imitations of the Cairene tiles which for lustre and colour are scarcely to be distinguished from the originals.⁵¹ De Morgan, however, was not convinced that his work on this project was an unmitigated success.⁵² In order to understand the craftsman's misgivings, we need to look closely at the imperfections on the east wall.

The visitor initially experiences the coherence of tile panels because those on the west wall, first encountered upon entering the Arab Hall, are the most intact. Aesthetic synthesis is a harder ask from the vantage point of the east wall (fig. 46), where the signs of the struggle to craft the Arab Hall are barely concealed. Aitchison's drawing shows he distilled his own version of this east wall, changing the configuration of panels and restoring multi-tiled panels back to a unified design (fig. 47). The panel on the right-hand pillar in Leighton House, for example, appears on the left wall in Aitchison's drawing; he added two more rows of the ogival blue lattice and replaced the misfit tile, second from the bottom, that interrupts the flow of this pattern. The panel on the inner right in Aitchison's drawing has no equivalent in the Arab Hall. The uniformity in his delicate illustration suggests that Aitchison might have preferred to have the interior made of entirely new tiles by De Morgan.



Figure 46
The Arab Hall, east wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.



Figure 47
George Aitchison, *Presentation drawing of the East elevation of the Arab Hall interior*, watercolour on paper, 1879–1880. RIBA Collections (SC124/4(3)). Digital image courtesy of RIBA Collections.

Leighton, however, valued the quality of this period of Islamic art and wrote to his father of the “intense and fantastic gorgeousness” of the old interiors he saw in Damascus in 1873.⁵³ For him,

this collaboration to harmonize old and new tiles could well have resonated with his own struggles with painterly process upstairs in the studio in which the meticulous labour of the multi-stages of making his paintings was ideally subsumed by the apparent effortlessness of the finished work.

De Morgan's work in the Arab Hall was undertaken at a relatively early stage of a career that is notable for an experimental working process. He submitted to the task of replicating glaze effects of historic ceramics with the goal of eventually creating new designs. His greatest challenge was Persian lustreware. In 1892, he delivered a lecture on this topic. The first part is a history of lustre glaze, the second advice to other ceramicists, recounting failed experiments to replicate the finest Persian techniques. In this essay, there is a marked shift in tone from the certainty of the historian to the provisional present tense of the experimental craftworker.⁵⁴ There is plenty of evidence of this experimental mode in the Arab Hall and his results are there to be tested against their historic precedents.

In Leighton's interior, De Morgan embarked upon a number of quite different tasks. He created all of the new peacock-blue tiles that harmonise the diverse historic tiles (fig. 48). He also undertook the task of creating a synthesis from disparate borders, repeating modules, and unified-field tile panels as, for example, with the mosque lamp panel. Some of the other panels that had arrived in the British capital in a ruinous state necessitated that De Morgan engage in the more difficult task of replicating tile parts and their glazes in order to repair them. Replicating existing work is no easy task, even for an experienced ceramicist, and the results in the Arab Hall demonstrate varying degrees of success. By undertaking this work at a relatively early stage in his career, De Morgan submitted to an apprenticeship across time, as the products of his kiln are answerable to the superb precedents of the absent master craftsmen.



Figure 48

The Stairwell, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

De Morgan achieved some impressive results. With the lunette on the south wall (fig. 49), for example, he created the two central blue tiles that are hard to distinguish from the originals. With others, he took creative licence. As Venetia Porter observes, the lions attacking onegers at the base of the Syrian tile panel on the South wall of the Arab Hall—unlikely inclusions in Syrian tilework—are probably transposed from Persian sources (fig. 50).⁵⁵



Figure 49

The Arab Hall, lunette made in Damascus, south wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.



Figure 50

The Arab Hall, Syrian tile panel, south wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Although it does not have the polychromatic range of the Damascus panel that we have just been considering, the large İznik tile pair on the east wall (fig. 51) presented a more exacting challenge. De Morgan created the triangular fragment for the upper right corner of the left tile in an effort to complete the pair. He made a pretty good approximation, one that only an experienced ceramicist could produce; from a distance, in the muted light of the Arab Hall, it harmonises. But if we look more closely, we see the shortcomings of his response to this technical challenge.



Figure 51

The Arab Hall, İznik tile (pair), east wall, Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Digital image courtesy of Matthew Hollow Photography.

Considering the material evidence allows us to reconstruct De Morgan's process of creating the repair fragments. The initial challenge was to create the shape of this tile insert, to judge the correct size allowing for shrinkage of the base in the first firing. The shortcomings at this stage

are evident in the band of grouting that De Morgan overpainted after the panel was attached to the wall. It was an intervention to minimize the visual impact of this scar, one that has deteriorated over time. The next challenge was to match the creamy white glaze by modifying the stark white of a tin glaze base. Next, De Morgan made the continuous pattern across the fragment, diluting his cobalt glaze to varying strengths to create the pattern of spiralling vines and flower heads. It probably involved multiple glaze firings. De Morgan would have had no way of knowing how many firings the İznik potters had undertaken to achieve their delicate patterns. His is not a bad effort, but close inspection of the results suggests it was a humbling process. Judgements had to be made as to how much to dilute the cobalt blue to match the colour range in the İznik original. On the top left of the fragment, there are patches where the cobalt is too concentrated. At this stage, the potter is working intuitively, working blind, because the layers of glaze colour that he lays down prior to the firing bear no relation to the colour that will appear from the kiln. Despite his best efforts, and perhaps notwithstanding preliminary glaze tests, the effects of the firing were hard to predict: the bleeding of some of De Morgan's lines are likely the result of firing at a temperature that is slightly too high. As a result, he failed to achieve the crisp edges of the İznik ceramicists. The tips of the leaves on these tiles reveal most clearly the sure hand of the İznik glaziers, something that De Morgan has not executed with the same finesse.

De Morgan experimented over an extended period to create the replacement pieces for the Hall and discarded many of his failed attempts. When he looked at these walls, with the eyes of a maker, the shortcomings would have been as obvious to him as the seamless repairs he had created working with this fine collection of historic tiles by Near Eastern master craftsmen—even more so for the man who would eventually become one of Britain's most successful ceramicists, renowned for his spectacular glazes. The aestheticist fantasy of synthesis, of rendering the distant historic time of production into a harmonious aesthetic present tense, is harder to sustain when reading these surfaces from the perspective of the craftsman. For De Morgan, it seems such imagined harmony could only really be achieved through his drawings. The Victoria and Albert Museum holds one of De Morgan's few surviving working drawings related to the Arab Hall commission (fig. 52).⁵⁶ Here he has worked with the İznik tile fragments, distilling them into a continuous pattern unbroken by the original tile segments and later fractures. He has replicated the tile pair and extended beyond them to conjure the larger pattern, thus gesturing towards the wall of the tomb of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari in Eyüp, Istanbul (fig. 53), in which other panels of the same tiles are still to be found. These tile panels are on the interior and exterior of that tomb, one of the city's most venerated religious sites.⁵⁷ Two further İznik tiles from the series are in the Victoria and Albert Museum and three are in the British Museum.⁵⁸

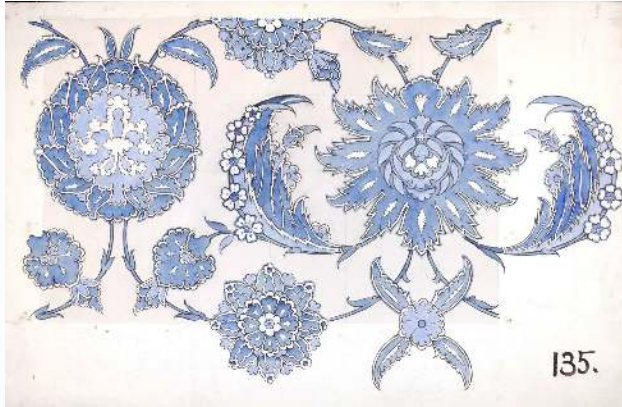


Figure 52

William De Morgan, *Design for tilework*, date and dimensions unknown. Collection of Victoria & Albert Museum, London (E.1383-1917). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



Figure 53

Exterior wall of the Mausoleum of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, in the Courtyard of the Eyüp Sultan Mosque. Digital image courtesy of Mary Roberts.

De Morgan's drawing shows that he has discovered that in order for the pattern to be continuous, there has to be a reversal of the tiles in every second row. He went on to replicate this pattern in a tile series now in the collection of the De Morgan Foundation (fig. 54). Like Aitchison's drawings of the Arab Hall, De Morgan's work on paper aspires to distil wholeness, but De Morgan's drawing does so by imagining another wall in Istanbul into being, of which the Arab Hall pair is but a metonymic fragment.



Figure 54

William De Morgan, *Composite image of tiles forming part of a panel*, a design copied by William De Morgan from the İznik tile pair on the East Wall of the Arab Hall, Sands End Pottery, Fulham, 1888–1897, glazed earthenware, each tile 15.2 cm. Collection of the De Morgan Foundation (WDM_TO353 to WDM_TO358). Digital image courtesy of De Morgan Foundation.

Like Burton's portrait, scarring was part of an aesthetics of beauty in the Arab Hall. But these are different scars in paint and grout with their own material and aesthetic logic. Where Burton's scar signified orientalist agency, De Morgan's ceramic scars are more equivocal, marking the effort to repair and its failure. The scars within the Arab Hall signal a desire to resolve an aesthetic distance between past and present, as these British artists collaborated to equal and surpass their historic sources by synthesizing early modern Eastern material culture into contemporary British Aestheticism. But the brokenness opens a wound that cannot be healed. In failed synthesis, there is an irruption of the past into the present. Early modern Islamic art is not locked out of modernity and predictably, chronologically, consigned to the past of art's history; instead, through aesthetic judgement, agency is on the side of the early modern and decline on that of contemporary British craft. Here is early modern Islamic art's resistant materiality.

Melancholy Time and the Orientalist Interior

Throughout this essay, I have been moving between paintings created upstairs and the Arab Hall downstairs at Leighton House. So let's ascend the stairs once more in 1896, just after Leighton's death, when artworks were placed around his coffin in the studio (fig. 55). Moving up the staircase, we pass the portrait of Burton, whose heroic imperfections were a mark of Leighton's cosmopolitanism. In the studio itself, on the right of Leighton's encased body is *Clytie*, his great allegory of the pain of lost love (fig. 56). It was incomplete at the time of Leighton's death. Earthbound on her knees, Clytie is an embodied evocation of imminent metamorphosis, on the verge of transforming into a rooted sunflower. She would be cursed to forever follow the sun god Apollo, but severed from actual union. The sadness of desire is embodied in the deathly green on the underside of those arms whose top edges are still momentarily warmed by that sky's compelling radiant impasto. Apollo in paint, human longing for art's enduring beauty, moving towards sunset. At that moment, in that place, this unfinished painting painfully encapsulates Leighton's aesthetics. Perhaps more optimistic is the work facing his coffin, not a classical narrative but one from an imagination cast further east. The open radiant beauty of his *Fair Persian* holds illusive promise (fig. 57).



Figure 55

Lance Calvin, *The Late Lord Leighton Lying in State in his Studio in Holland Park Road*, sketch in *The Graphic*, 1 February 1896, 129.



Figure 56

Frederic Leighton, *Clytie*, 1895, oil on canvas, 156 × 137 cm. Collection of Leighton House Museum, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (LH3015). Digital image courtesy of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.



Figure 57

Frederic Leighton, *The Fair Persian*, unfinished, 1896, in *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton* by Emilie Barrington, Vol. 2, between page 324 and 325 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1906).

This was a temporary installation, a halted work in progress. Leighton's body and artworks left this space. Burton's portrait entered the National Portrait Gallery, where it still hangs, enshrining the now ambivalent heroism of the man that, since the publication of Edward Said's book in 1978, has come to stand for the most exploitative impulses of European Orientalism.⁵⁹ *Clytie* restlessly travelled the world, including a journey to Australia in the early 2000s, where I first felt her consuming sadness, returning eventually to the walls of Leighton House, where she now rests. And in what seems like a fitting twist of fate, the *Fair Persian's* whereabouts are unknown. But what of those tiles and the Arab Hall downstairs? Most of the contents of the home were dispersed in the sale of 1896. The fate of Leighton's house was uncertain upon his death. The tiles remained *in situ* due to the efforts of loyal supporters, who championed the preservation of his home as a museum on the basis of its aesthetic merits and national value. The most hyperbolic claim for Leighton's Arab Hall as the high point of his Aestheticism came from Purdon Clarke, who wrote that the Arab Hall is "the most beautiful structure which has been raised since the sixteenth century". In her pitch for preservation of the artist's home, Emilie Barrington added, "[the Arab Hall] would alone make the preservation of the house as an effective medium for education in the beautiful a necessity to any truly art-loving people."⁶⁰ These comments dramatize how far Leighton's reputation fell in the twentieth century. His particular version of Aestheticist formalism didn't meet the criteria of modernist art histories. It was Edward Burne-Jones—the most serious contender among the British Aestheticists for a place within this modernist canon—who articulated unease at the configuration of historic tiles in the Arab Hall; as he put it: "all those splendid things from the East built up in such a silly way."⁶¹

Burne-Jones expressed what Leighton, Aitchison, and De Morgan would have seen as the most troubling potential consequence of their Arab Hall—that the displaced and damaged tiles might exceed the aesthetic value of this modern British interior. Like these historic tiles and, for some, because of them, aestheticist synthesis in Leighton’s Arab Hall proves to be a fragile proposition.

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About the author

Mary Roberts, Professor of Art History at the University of Sydney, is a specialist in Ottoman art and European Orientalism, who has written extensively about patterns of transcultural exchange in the nineteenth century. Her most recent book, *Istanbul Exchanges: Ottomans, Orientalists and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015), received the 2016 Best Book prize from the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand and was translated into Turkish by Türkiye İşbankası Kültür Yayınları that year. She is also the author of *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007) and has co-edited four books: *Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried*; *Orientalism’s Interlocutors*; *Edges of Empire*; and *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism*. She is currently writing a book on artists as collectors of Islamic art.

Footnotes

1. Philip Gilbert Hamerton (ed.), “Etchings from Pictures by Contemporary Artists. XII. Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton, P.R.A., Portrait of Captain Burton Etched by Leopold Flameng”, *The Portfolio: An Artistic Periodical* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1879), 2.
2. The painting on which this is based is now understood to be *Rucellai Madonna* (Florence, Uffizi Gallery) by Duccio, not Cimabue. Elizabeth Prettejohn proposes that the anomalies in Leighton’s rendition of the work may suggest that he was aware of the uncertain attribution and deliberately represented a generic Madonna and Child; see Elizabeth Prettejohn, “Aestheticising History Painting”, in Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (eds.), *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 107, note 6.
3. Emilie Barrington, *The Life Letters and Work of Frederic Leighton*, Vol. 1, (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 128–196. See Elizabeth Prettejohn’s subtle analysis of the foreshortening in Leighton’s modern history painting, a “tour de force of the modern painter’s artistry” that prioritizes the altarpiece’s aesthetic power, as a “crafted object”, over its devotional content. This is matched, it is argued, by the subordination of the bishop to the artist in the procession. Prettejohn, “Aestheticising History Painting”, 89–110.

4. Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Day 5, Story 1, trans. Wayne A. Rebhorn (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2013), 390–393. For an analysis of this painting in relation to the themes of sleep and death in Leighton’s art, see Keren Hammerschlag, “The Deathly Sleep of Frederic Leighton’s Painted Women”, *Women: A Cultural Review* 23, no. 2 (2012): 201–215.
5. Elizabeth Prettejohn, “Aestheticising History Painting”, 92–95.
6. The literature on Leighton House is extensive including key scholarship on the house that has emerged from the museum itself. See, for example, Stephen Jones, *Leighton House Museum* (London: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, n.d.); Daniel Robbins and Reena Suleman, *Leighton House: Holland Park Road, Kensington* (London: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2005), and *Closer to Home: The Restoration of Leighton House and Catalogue of the Reopening Displays 2010* (London: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2010). Other important writings in this extensive corpus are: Louise Campbell, “Decoration, Display, Disguise: Leighton House Reconsidered”, in Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (eds.), *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 267–293; and Martina Droth, “Leighton’s House: Art in and Beyond the Studio”, *Journal of Design History* 24, no. 4 (2011): 339–358. On Leighton’s Arab Hall in the context of his Orientalism and Aestheticism, see Tim Barringer, “Orientalism and Aestheticism”, in Zeynep İnankur, Reina Lewis, and Mary Roberts (eds.), *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism* (Istanbul: Pera Museum [University of Washington Press], 2011), 251–252.
7. Droth, “Leighton’s House”, 355. On this issue of artistic labour, see also Tim Barringer, “Leighton in Albertopolis: Monumental Art and Objects of Desire,” in Barringer and Prettejohn (eds.), *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 135–168.
8. In 1881, Wilfrid Meynell unified the distinct spaces of studio and Arab Hall under the persona of Leighton: ‘If the studio is interesting as containing the *genius loci*, the divan is, as we have said, a treasury of research and taste’, Wilfrid Meynell, “The Homes of Our Artists: Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton’s House in Holland Park Road,” *The Magazine of Art* 4 (1881): 172. See also Julian Hawthorne, *Shapes that Pass: Memories of Old Days* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 175. On Leighton’s self-presentation, see Andrew Stephenson, “Leighton and the Shifting Repertoires of ‘Masculine’ Artistic Identity in the Late Victorian Period”, in Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (eds.), *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 221–246.
9. The sculptor Joseph Edgar Boehm created the capitals for the columns in the Arab Hall. It is uncertain whether or not Leighton visited La Zisa, in Palermo, although his sketches of the capitals in La Zisa’s Fountain Hall suggest that he did. The Royal Academy holds Frederic Leighton, Sketchbook, 06/1139, which has two drawings of capitals from La Zisa’s Fountain Hall (06/1140 and 06/1142) and an initial sketch for design of the Arab Hall (06/1145).
10. So too the hundreds of objects in this space from many cultures made their own demands on artists and viewers. They were dispersed in the posthumous sale of 1896, see *Catalogue of the Collection of Old Rhodian, Persian, Anatolian and Hispano-Mauro Pottery, Bronzes and Oriental China, Inlaid Furniture, Persian Prayer Rugs and Costumes, Also the Contents of the Studio of The Right Hon. Lord Leighton of Stretton, P.R.A., D.C.L., L.L.D.*, Christie, Manson and Woods, London, Wednesday 8 July and two following days, 1896. There were further sales of his paintings and library.

11. The stained-glass windows, which William Wright acquired “from a mosque in Damascus” for Leighton were, “supplemented and matched by coloured glass made in London”. William Wright, “Lord Leighton at Damascus and After”, *The Bookman*, March 1896, 184. The *mashrabiya* is thought to have come from a Cairo mosque. Although Aitchison suggests it came from Damascus: George Aitchison, “Lord Leighton, P.R.A. Some Reminiscences”, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 3 (1896): 265.
12. The catalogue of the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition of 1885 reveals that Leighton purchased a considerable number of ceramic vessels in Rhodes (items 341, 400, 434, 435, 440, 441, 442, 448, 452, 453, 454, 458, 459, 460, 461, and 463). Other pieces were purchased by Leighton in Damascus (item 524) with one (item 540) listed as “obtained by Sir F. Leighton from a family at Baalbec” and others are listed as “Obtained through Rev. Wright” (items 532 and 559). *Burlington Fine Arts Club: Catalogue of Specimens Illustrative of Persian and Arab Art Exhibited in 1885* (London: Metchim and Son, 1885). Leighton did not exhibit any wall tiles at this event but George Aitchison exhibited a number of them from Damascus and Persia. In Istanbul, Leighton could have obtained individual pieces through antique dealers in the Grand Bazaar, and in Pera and through other commercial sources on his travels, but obtaining large multi-tile panels was a greater challenge. Correspondence and reports in the Victoria and Albert Museum archives reveal that Caspar Purdon Clarke had extensive knowledge of the private collectors and dealers in Istanbul and elsewhere across the region. Leighton’s collecting by proxy was initiated in conversation with Richard Burton when the two men met in the spa town of Vichy in 1869. See Letter from Richard Francis Burton to Frederic Leighton, Damascus, 22 March 1871, Leighton House Archives, Acc No. 2000/31 (L.H. 1/1/5/B30).
13. In the 1870s, Caspar Purdon Clarke was undertaking purchasing missions for the South Kensington Museum and was later appointed a junior Keeper. He rose through the ranks from Assistant Director to Director.
14. By the 1890s (and probably earlier), Caspar Purdon Clarke was well aware that the Ottoman Customs authorities would not permit tiles or other items from historic religious sites to be taken out of the Ottoman Empire. Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, SF516 Purchases by Officers on Visits Abroad, Part III 1896–1898, MA/2/P7/3. In 1896, Clarke circumvented these Ottoman customs requirements by removing Ottoman tiles on a British naval ship. Mary Roberts, “Artists, *Amateurs* and the Pleated Time of Ottoman Modernity”, in Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey (eds.), *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology, and Anachrony* (London: Routledge, 2018), 79–100.
15. Letter from Richard Francis Burton to Frederic Leighton, Damascus, 22 March 1871, Leighton House Museum archives, Acc No. 2000/31 (L.H.1/1/5/B30).
16. Julian Raby, “From Pottery to Tiles: Süleyman the Builder,” in Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby (eds.), *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989), 218–221; and Walter B. Denny, *Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005).
17. The Tanzimat is the period of westernizing reforms from 1839-1876 and is characterized by a range of state-sponsored modernizing initiatives ranging from administrative organization to fashion reform. The Dome of the Rock’s nineteenth-century restoration is part of a longer history of changes to the building; see Beatrice St Laurent, “Restorations of Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock and Their Political Significance, 1537–1928”, *Muqarnas* 10, Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar (1993), 76–84; Beatrice St Laurent, “The Dome of the Rock and the

- Politics of Restoration”, *Bridgewater Review* 17, no. 2 (December 1998): 14–20; Beatrice St Laurent, “From Bursa to Jerusalem: From Yeşil Türbe to the Dome of the Rock”, in Selim Karahasanoğlu and Deniz Cenk Demir (eds.), *History from Below: A Tribute in Memory of Donald Quataert* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2016), 335–357; Gülru Necipoğlu, “The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: Abd al-Malik’s Grand Narrative and Sultan Süleyman’s Glosses”, *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 17–105.
18. Victor-Marie de Launay et al. *Usul-i Mi’ mari-i ‘Osmani [The Fundamentals of Ottoman Architecture]/ L’architecture ottomane/ Die ottomanische Baukunst* (Istanbul: Imprimerie et lithographie centrales, 1873). See Ahmet Ersoy’s study of this book and its significance for the rise of the “Ottoman Renaissance” during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz: Ahmet A. Ersoy, *Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary: Reconfiguring the Architectural Past in a Modernizing Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015). On the collection and display of Islamic art in Istanbul in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, see Wendy Shaw, “Islamic Arts in the Ottoman Imperial Museum, 1889–1923”, *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 55–68.
 19. Letter from Richard Francis Burton to Frederic Leighton, Damascus, 22 March 1871, Leighton House Museum archives, Acc No. 2000/31. (L.H.1/1/5/B30).
 20. Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994) and Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”, *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 768–796.
 21. Wright, “Lord Leighton at Damascus and After”, 184. For a study of the changing urban fabric of Damascus in this period, see Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918)*, Proceedings of the Danish Institute in Damascus V, Damascus, 2009, 2 vols; Stefan Weber, “Images of Imagined Worlds: Self-Image and Worldview in Late Ottoman Wall Paintings of Damascus”, in Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (eds.), *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002), 145–171.
 22. Richard Burton to Frederic Leighton, Damascus, 22 March 1871, Leighton House Museum archives, Acc No. 2000/31. (L.H.1/1/5/B30).
 23. Burton continues that these tiles: “illustrate the difference between Syria’s and Sind’s. They are taken from the tomb (Moslem) of Sakhar on the Indus. I can give you analysis of glaze if you want it—but I fancy you don’t care for analyses. The yellow colour is by far the rarest and the least durable apparently. The blues are the favourites and the best.” Letter from Richard Francis Burton to Frederic Leighton, Trieste, 13 July 1876, Leighton House Archives, Acc. No. 2000/32 (LH/1/1/5/31). This letter indicates Burton’s perception that there is a difference between his own historical and technical interest in the tiles and Leighton’s Aestheticist disposition towards them. As well as creating the oil sketch of the Burton’s house, while in Damascus, Leighton created his poetic rendition of the city’s intense colours at dusk in his oil sketch *Damascus: Night*, also known as *Eastern Scene with a Minaret*, 1873.
 24. For an analysis of Richard Burton’s numerous photographic portraits, see Julie Codell, “The Conceit of Burton’s Scar: Orientalism as Identity and Transgression”, in Joan DelPlato and Julie F. Codell (eds.), *Orientalism, Eroticism and Modern Visuality in Global Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 115–140.
 25. Applauding the portrait, the critic for the *London Daily News* invoked an historic precedent by suggesting that Burton had “taken a hint from Cromwell and insisted on having that side of his face painted which shows a deep gash. It is a face full of determination.” “Royal Academy

Exhibition, Third Notice”, *London Daily News*, 6 May 1876. The critic is referencing a well-rehearsed anecdote in which Oliver Cromwell is reputed to have insisted to his portraitist Peter Lely: “Mr Lely, I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me, otherwise I never will pay a farthing for it.” Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (London: Alexander Murray, 1871 [1786]), 226. It was an economical reference for the Victorian critic, where Burton’s dermal anomalies simultaneously become an index of mimetic veracity and heroic character. But Cromwell’s sitting was an imperfect analogy. Leighton may have been working under the opposite instruction from his notoriously irascible sitter. According to his wife Isabel, Burton was anxious that the painter not render him ugly. “Richard was so anxious that he should paint his necktie and his pin, and kept saying to him every now and then, ‘Don’t make me ugly, don’t, there’s a good fellow’.” Isabel Burton, *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton, K.C.M.G., F.R.G.S.*, Vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1893), 596. At this precarious moment in Burton’s rocky career, it was a plea to Leighton, the darling of the art establishment, to ennoble him in paint. By his own admission, Burton was an unlikely candidate for Leighton’s brush, which dwelled in the realm of the beautiful. Yet the transaction turned out to be mutually beneficial. William Wright narrates a similar story about the transaction in Leighton’s studio, but in his version, while uttering these words, Burton deliberately made a series of horrendous grimaces, thus parodying the process where the sitter is conventionally required to perform their most flattering self. “Leighton wished to do justice to the great rugged head, but Burton would look up with a face contorted almost beyond recognition, and with mock gravity, implore the artist to make him nice.” Wright, “Lord Leighton at Damascus and After”, 184–185. This version is equally viable given Burton’s studied posturing as an institutional outsider. Between the two accounts Burton emerges as a characteristically unreliable historical subject.

26. *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 41, 3 June 1876, 713.
27. *The Daily News*, 6 May 1876.
28. *The Graphic*, Saturday 13 May 1876, 471.
29. Clarke was authorized to spend up to £250 during this trip for purchases on behalf of the museum. Purchases by Officers on Visits Abroad, Part I 1863–1894, MA/2/P7/1, SF516, December 1876.
30. Monkhouse, for example, writes that the dome recalls the Alhambra Palace, Cosmo Monkhouse, “Some English Artists and their Studios”, *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 24 (1882): 555. George Aitchison notes the influence of La Zisa in his article, Aitchison, “Lord Leighton, P.R.A. Some Reminiscences”, 265.
31. Leighton writes to his sister from Algiers in 1857: “I shall spend my next winter in my dear, dear old Rome, to which I am attached beyond measure; indeed, Italy altogether has a hold on my heart that no other country ever can have (except, of course, my own).” Barrington, *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton*, Vol. 1, 19, Note 1.
32. For a study of shifting approaches to the Islamic legacy in Sicily and its relationship to evolving notions of a shared Italian identity, see Silvia Armando, “The Role and Perception of Islamic Art and History in the Construction of a Shared Identity in Sicily (1780–1900 ca.)”, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome LXII*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 5-40. For an account of Vella’s forgery and its implications for Sicilian historiography, see Karla Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward*

- a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 65–73.
33. Salvatore Morso, *Descrizione di Palermo antico ricavata sugli autori sincroni e i monumenti de' tempi*, (Palermo: Lorenzo Dato, 1827), 163–208.
 34. Michele Amari, *Le epigrafi arabiche di Sicilia: Trascritte, tradotte e illustrate* (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1971 [1875–1883]), 66–83.
 35. Gally Knight understood it was a Saracenic structure, the villa of a Moorish prince, but that the marble pillars and figural mosaics in the reception hall were the work of the Normans. Henry Gally Knight, *The Normans in Sicily: Being a Sequel to 'An Architectural Tour in Normandy'* (London: John Murray, 1838), 269–275. William Henry Bartlett also understood it to be an Arab structure, modified by Norman King Roger, *Pictures from Sicily by the Author of Forty Days in the Desert* (London: Arthur Hall, 1853), 160–162.
 36. Wolfgang Krönig, “Il Palazzo reale normanno della Zisa a Palermo: Nuove osservazioni”, *Commentari* 26 (1975): 229–247; and Giuseppe Bellafiore, *La Zisa di Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1994).
 37. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “Sicily, the Missing Link in the Evolution of Cairene Architecture”, in U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (eds.), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1992, 1993, and 1994*, Vol. 1, (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1995), 285–312. For analysis of Sicily’s Islamicized Norman court, see Lev A. Kapitaikin, “Sicily and the Staging of Multiculturalism”, in Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (eds.), *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017).
 38. George Aitchison was among a group of British architects who were very interested in the *muqarnas* (stalactite) architectural form but were unable to fully understand or construct it. They were humbled by the complexity of a form that master craftsmen in Persia and other parts of the East were still able to execute. See Moya Carey’s analysis of British architects’ status anxiety and the RIBA meeting records of 1881, where George Aitchison recounted Purdon Clarke’s first-hand description of craftsmen working to create a *muqarnas* vault in Persia. Moya Carey, *Persian Art: Collecting the Arts of Iran for the V&A* (London: V&A Publishing, 2017), 58.
 39. George Aitchison, “The Advancement of Architecture”, *The Builder*, 2 February 1895, 79.
 40. Letter from Frederic Leighton to Eduard von Steinle, 3 September 1857, see Barrington, *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton*, Vol. 1, 296.
 41. Hawthorne, *Shapes that Pass*, 138. In 1888, Leighton spoke about the ennobling beauty of the interior. In the same lecture, he wrote in praise of Persian culture: “Whosoever, for instance, has wondered at the work of Persian looms, or felt the fascination of the manuscripts illuminated by the artists of Iran, or noted the unfailing grace of subtle line revealed in their metal work, will feel that for this race also the merit of a work of art did not reside in its category, but in the degree to which it manifested the spirit which alone could ennoble it, the spirit of beauty.” published in “Art Congress in Liverpool. Presidential Address by Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton”, *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 December 1888. See Moya Carey’s important recent study of British attitudes to Persian culture in the nineteenth century. Carey, *Persian Art*.
 42. Mary Eliza Haweis, “Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton’s House”, *Beautiful Houses; Being a Description of Certain Well-Known Artistic Houses* (London: Sampson Low, 1882), 4.

43. Haweis, "Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton's House", 4–5.
44. Hawthorne, *Shapes that Pass*, 177. It should be noted that many smoking rooms in this period were Eastern themed, with tiles that were thought appropriate because they did not absorb the smell of smoke. In the context of this entanglement of odalisque paintings and the interior, it is worth remembering, as Wilfred Meynell records, that Leighton owned "An engraving of Ingres 'Harem' ... some sketches for which are in Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton's library—hang[ing] near the door." Meynell, "The Homes of our Artists," 170.
45. This painting adorned the walls of the back drawing room in the home of engineer and M.P. John Aird and is illustrated in his interior. See J.F. Boyes, "The Private Art Collections of London. Mr. John Aird's, in Hyde Park Terrace," *Art Journal*, May 1891, 139.
46. "The place was magnificent; the glory and delicacy of Moorish Spain were in it. "Oh, for a guitar in one of these alcoves!" murmured Eustacia. There were many alcoves round the walls, each with abundant silken cushions, on which to recline and gaze up at the Moorish arch overhead, and be dreamily aware of an impassioned girl beside you! But January London was on the other side of the wall, and just then in popped a visitor – none other than George Otto Trevelyan ... "I'm on my way to the House; a debate on who should pay for the Afghan War ..." He urged us all to come with him ... I felt that romance and beauty were ended for the day." Hawthorne, *Shapes that Pass*, 178–179.
47. Meynell, "The Homes of our Artists," 174.
48. Harry How, "Illustrated Interviews: No. XIV.—Sir Frederick [sic] Leighton, P.R.A", *Strand Magazine*, 1892, 128–129. Mrs Haweis also waxed lyrically about being in the Arab Hall. Hers is another poetic aestheticist reading of the aural and visual effects of this space.
49. Among his many sources of inspiration in the Near East, Leighton was impressed by the effects of light in domestic interiors in Algiers in 1857: "The rooms ... open on the corridors and have no windows (except little peeping holes) on to the street; they are consequently always wrapped in a sort of clear, cool, reflected twilight that is inexpressibly delightful and soothing in hot, glaring weather ... You would have laughed to see your son lolling on a Turkey carpet and puffing away at a long pipe." Leighton letter to his mother, Algiers, Monday 29 [sic] 1857, Barrington, *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton*, Vol. 1, 301–302; Leighton dates this letter as "Monday 29 1857"—he was in Algiers in September that year, so it may in fact have been Tuesday that month.
50. Auguste Choisy, "The Late Lord Leighton's House", *The Times*, 27 April 1896, 12. Emilie Barrington quotes Choisy's interpretation of the house in her article in defence of its preservation, Mrs Russell [Emilie] Barrington, "Lord Leighton's House and What It Contains," *The Magazine of Art*, January 1899, 529, and reprints this article in her biography of Leighton, quoting Choisy again in Chapter 4, Barrington, *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton*, Vol. 2, 221 and 362–363.
51. Meynell, "The Homes of our Artists," 174.
52. William De Morgan is understood to have been frustrated by this job. It cost £500 more than he was paid. It seems that these frustrations stemmed not just from the financial loss incurred (De Morgan was not a man to curtail himself by cost). He was a perfectionist in his working process, so this frustration is as likely to have been caused by the challenge of replicating the historic tiles and some of the technical deficiencies of his repairs. Unfortunately, De Morgan left no account of the processes involved in production of these tiles. In her biography of William and Evelyn De Morgan, Anna Marie Diana Wilhelmina Stirling (Evelyn's sister) writes about the Arab Hall project. It was his wife Evelyn's capital that continued to prop up

- the business financially: “she devoted unhesitatingly to the support of the fluctuating business”, A.M.W. Stirling, *William de Morgan and his Wife* (London, Thornton Butterworth, 1922), 204.
53. Frederic Leighton, Letter to his father, Damascus, 18 October 1873, transcribed in Barrington, *The Life, Letters and Work of Frederic Baron Leighton of Stretton*, Vol. 2, 208.
 54. William De Morgan, “Lustre Ware”, Paper delivered to the Society of Arts, 31 May 1892, published in *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 24 June 1892. Reprinted in Mark Hamilton, *Rare Spirit. A Life of William De Morgan, 1839–1911* (London: Constable, 1997), 194–205.
 55. Onegers are a feature of pre-Islamic iconography in Iran that was revived in the nineteenth century. Venetia Porter, “William De Morgan and the Islamic Tiles of Leighton House”, *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850—the Present* 16 (1992): 77.
 56. It may have been made at the time De Morgan was working on the Arab Hall or later, when he created his own version of this tile pattern.
 57. It is likely that these tiles were moved to the walls of this tomb from another monument; see Walter Denny, “Dispersed Ottoman Unified-Field Tile Panels”, *Museo Benaki 4 2004* (2005): 149. On the significance of this religious site for Ottoman statecraft in the imperial capital, see Gülru Necipoğlu, “Dynastic Imprints on the Cityscape: The Collective Message of Imperial Funerary Mosque Complexes in Istanbul,” *Colloque Internationale: Cimetières et traditions funéraires dans le monde islamique, Institut Français d’études Anatoliennes, Istanbul, September 29–30, 1991*, Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont (ed.) (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1996), 23–36.
 58. Three of the same tiles were bequeathed by John Henderson to the British Museum, object number 1878,1230.534. Two of the same tiles were acquired in 1892 for the South Kensington Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum number 1684:1892. Necipoğlu, “Dynastic Imprints on the Cityscape”, 23–36.
 59. “What we read in his [Burton’s] prose is the history of a consciousness negotiating its way through an alien culture by virtue of having successfully absorbed its systems of information and behavior ... the voice of the highly idiosyncratic master of Oriental knowledge informs, feeds into the voice of European ambition for rule over the Orient.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 196.
 60. Barrington, “Lord Leighton’s House, and What It Contains”, 531.
 61. “And they could not be moved without endangering them. It’s a great shame,” Edward Coley Burne-Jones, *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895–1898 Preserved by His Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke*, Mary Lago (ed.) (London: John Murray, 1982), 102.

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