

# **AP Art History Review: Unit 7**

From Simple Studies, <https://simplestudies.edublogs.org> & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram

## **West and Central Asia, 500 B.C.E-1980 C.E (11 works)**

~4% of exam score

*\*\*\*Disclaimer: the material provided has been compiled from two main sources, including the College Board AP Art History Course Description and Khan Academy's AP Art History course resources. The material provided is not claimed by Simple Studies as original content. All images have been provided courtesy of The College Board.*

### **West and Central Asia: Cross-Cultural Interactions**

- “The cultures of West and Central Asia are located across vast areas, which include the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant, Anatolia, Greater Iran, Central Asia, Inner Asia, and Himalayan Asia” (College Board).
  - These cultures were shaped and influenced by social and political interactions that were established as a result of trade routes and linkages, systems that were essential to the development of the ancient world.
  - Linked with parts of Europe and East Asia, which displayed cross-cultural interactions

### **Regional Cultures**

- West Asian art and society can be characterized by primarily Islamic ideals and philosophy.
  - Contains both secular and religious works
- The prominence of Buddhist architecture and art is much more evident in Central Asia in regions such as Tibet or Mongolia
- Pilgrimage is a common theme in both Islamic and Buddhist tradition and art/architecture
- Figural representation is common in the art of West and Central Asia

### **Characteristics of West Asian Art**

- Two-dimensional designs with geometric motifs and patterns

- Ceramics
- Metal-working techniques
- Textiles
- Wall/Manuscript painting
- Calligraphy

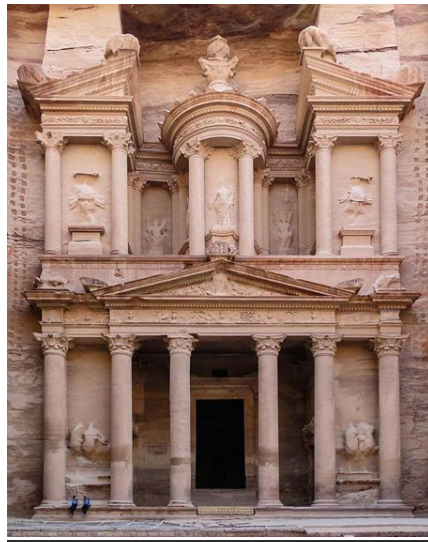
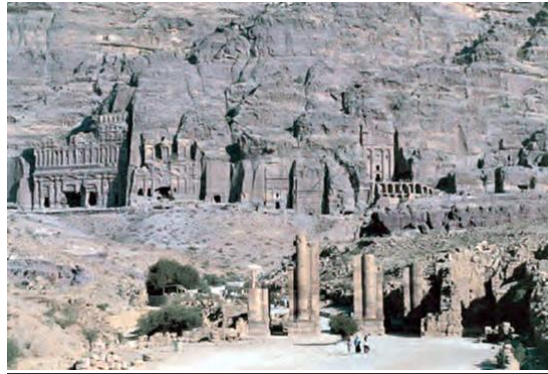
### **Characteristics of Central Asian Art**

- Textiles
- Wall/Manuscript painting
- Calligraphy
- Idealized figures
- Metal-working techniques

### **Key Vocabulary**

- **Aniconism:** the absence of depictions or representations of living or religious figures
- **Circumambulate:** to walk around something as part of a religious practice or ritual
- **Cella:** the inner chamber or enclosure within a temple or shrine
- **Facade:** the “face” or front of a building
- **Folio:** a page from a manuscript or book
- **Gilt:** (of an object) having a thinly applied a layer of gold
- **Hellenistic:** referring to the period of Mediterranean history from 323 B.C.E to 31 C.E
- **Iconoclast:** a person who destroys religious images and icons
- **Iwan:** vaulted space that opens to a courtyard
- **Metropolis:** a central city or urban area
- **Mudra:** symbolic gesture in Buddhism
- **Muqarna:** (in Iranian architecture) decorative niches

**181. Petra, Jordan: Treasury and Great Temple. Nabataean Ptolemaic and Roman. c. 400 B.C.E.–100 C.E. Cut rock.**



## **Content**

- The city of Petra and the Great Temple
  - Metropolis included a large theater, a triple colonnade street, a paved courtyard, shrines, markets, domestic residences, water-catchment and storage systems, and a garden-pool complex
- The Treasury
  - Rock-cut facade monument
  - Sculptures--Symbolic imagery
  - Behind facade was large cella with dining area

## **Context**

- Petra was a capital city inhabited by the Nabataeans, who lived in areas spanning northern Arabia to southern Syria
  - Annexed by Rome in 106 B.C.E
- Petra was located at a strategic trading location, in which they received cultural influences from Hellenistic Greece

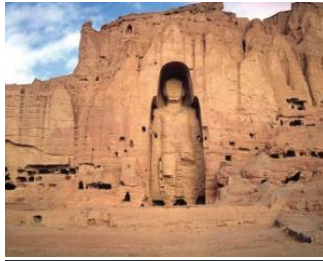
## **Form**

- The Treasury
  - Stylistic influences from Hellenistic Greek style of Alexandria--acroteria, Corinthian columns, obelisk, broken pediment, tholos
  - Ornate, great attention to detail
  - Carved out of sandstone

## **Function**

- City originally functioned as an accommodation for Nabataean nomads before 200 B.C.E

**182. Buddha. Bamiyan, Afghanistan. Gandharan. c. 400–800 C.E. (destroyed in 2001). Cut rock with plaster and polychrome paint.**



**Content**

- Monumental sculpture of a Shakyamuni (teacher) Buddha, a central figure of Mahayana Buddhism
- Was once adorned with gems and other precious items

**Context**

- Influences from Central Asia, India, Ancient Greece
  - Located near central point of the Silk Route, Buddhism spread along route
- Destroyed by Taliban forces in 2001 as a part of their iconoclast campaign
- Essential part of surrounding religious community

**Form**

- 120-feet tall
- Carved from a niche in a cliff in high relief
- Flowing drapery (ancient Greek attempt at naturalism) and wavy hair--early Gandaran Buddha imagery

**Function**

- Circumambulated by worshippers, part of Buddhist practice

**183. The Kaaba. Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Islamic. Pre-Islamic monument;**

rededicated by Muhammad in 631–632 C.E.; multiple renovations. Granite masonry, covered with silk curtain and calligraphy in gold and silver-wrapped thread



## Content

- Cubular shrine covered in black silk curtain
  - Kiswa: the cloth that covers the Kaaba
- Kaaba stone embedded in bottom east end of the building, believed to be given to Ismail by the angel Gabriel

## Context

- Extensive modifications
  - Set on fire in 683 C.E, rebuilt in wood and stone
  - Covered in kiswa by 7th cen.
  - Renovated and expanded; surrounding mosque rebuilt under early Abbasid dynasty
  - Complex expanded again in 1950s to accommodate pilgrims
- According to Islamic beliefs, was constructed by Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail (Isaac)

- Aniconism is a fundamental concept in the practice Islam
- Re-draped in new kiswa every year

### **Form**

- Corners align with cardinal directions
- Calligraphy and arabesque designs on exterior
- Located in the center of a mosque

### **Function**

- Functioned as a sanctuary in pre-Islamic Arabia, built by Quraysh tribe in 608 C.E.
  - Housed pagan gods
- Sacred Islamic monument: focal point of Islamic worship and pilgrimage (hajj) after Muhammad's return c. 629/630 C.E.
  - Circumambulated seven times

**184. Jowo Rinpoche, enshrined in the Jokhang Temple. Lhasa, Tibet. Yarlung Dynasty. Believed to have been brought to Tibet in 641 C.E. Gilt metals with semiprecious stones, pearls, and paint; various offerings.**



**Content**

- Large Shakyamuni (historical) Buddha housed in a temple in Tibet
  - In enlightened state--left hand in mudra of meditation, right hand in bhumisparsha mudra
  - Wearing monk's robes, bejeweled crown
  - Seated in a golden throne in lotus position (padmasana)

**Context**

- Reconstructed after Cultural Revolution
- Believed to be brought to Tibet as a dowry gift to Emperor Songsten Gampo by his Chinese wife Empress Wencheng in 641 C.E.
  - Coincided with the foundation of Buddhism in Tibet in the 7th century. C.E

**Form**

- Made from gilt metal

**Function**

- Most sacred Buddha image in Tibet
- Carved by Viswakarma in India during the Buddha's lifetime (6th-5th cen. B.C.E)
- Meant to act as Buddha's proxy after departure from world
- Dressed and fed occasionally

**185. Dome of the Rock. Jerusalem. Islamic, Umayyad. 691–692 C.E., with**



**multiple renovations. Stone masonry and wooden roof decorated with glazed ceramic tile, mosaics, and gilt aluminum and bronze dome.**



### **Content**

- Octagonal building with circular gold dome located atop the highest point in Jerusalem
- At the center of the building is a large rock, the point where Abraham prepared his sacrifice of Isaac, his son, according to Judeo-Christian beliefs
  - Muslims believe the rock commemorates Muhammad's night journey

### **Context**

- One of the first and greatest works of Islamic architecture created
- Constructed upon Muhammad's death in 7th century B.C.E upon request of rulers

## **Form**

- Two ambulatories surrounding the rock, Corinthian columns, colonnades w/ golden mosaics from the Byzantines
- Designs follow tradition of aniconism--no figures of humans/animals
- Building resembles the Roman mausolea
- 240-ft long inscription from the Quran

## **Function**

- Sacred space; focus of pilgrimage for Muslims, Christians, and Jews

**186. Great Mosque (Masjid-e Jameh). Isfahan, Iran. Islamic, Persian: Seljuk, Il-Khanid, Timurid and Safavid Dynasties. c. 700 C.E.; additions and restorations in the 14th, 18th, and 20th centuries C.E. Stone, brick, wood, plaster, and glazed ceramic tile.**



**Content**

- South Iwan; houses the qiblah, qibla wall, mihrab, and muqarnas; commissioned by vizier Nizam al-Mulk
- North Dome: built in 1088, larger than South dome, taller w/ deep halls; commissioned by Taj al-Mulk

## **Context**

- Located at a cultural hub in the center of the city of Isfahan, which was made capital by the Seljuk Turks
- Four-Iwan plan designed under Malik Shah I (1072 C.E-1092 C.E)
- Shah Abbas I appointed Isfahan as the capital of his empire, moving it from Qazvin and renewing the prestige of the Isfahan mosque
- This mosque is a culmination of various designs by architects and patrons who rivaled each other from the 8th-20th centuries

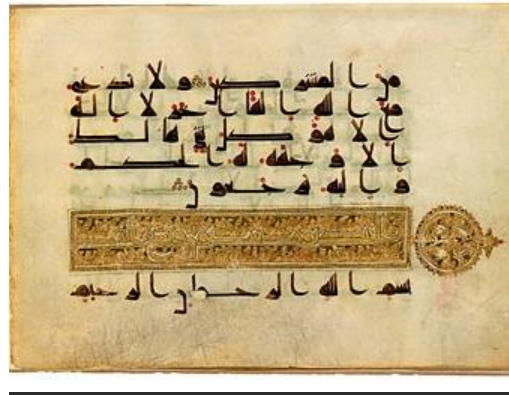
## **Form**

- Has all the traditional features of a mosque; mihrab, qiblah, qibla wall, courtyard, hypostyle hall, minarets
- Interior and domes composed of complex geometric design
- Oculus, ribbed vaulting, tile decorations
- North dome is considered a proportional masterpiece
- Four-iwan plan

## **Function**

- Has links to social, political, commercial, and religious activities

**187. Folio from a Qur'an. Arab, North Africa, or Near East. Abbasid. c. eighth to ninth century C.E. Ink, color, and gold on parchment.**



**Content**

- Bigfolim (two-page spread) contains “The Spider” (Surat Al-'Ankabu)
  - Includes an inscription with the information of donor
- Mushaf (main text) written in brown ink in Arabic, read from right to left
- Title of each sura is in gold ink
- Written in Kufic script, a calligraphic style developed around the 7th century. Used for Qur'an transcriptions

**Context**

- The Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam
  - Contains 114 suras (chapters) in text format

**Form**

- Decorated geometric motifs
- Vowel dots in red ink
- Written on vellum (prepared animal skin)
- Text has 2:3 height-to-width ratio

**Function**

- Vellum was an expensive material reserved for the wealthy elite, who would have probably commissioned this work

**188. Basin (Baptistère de St. Louis). Muhammad ibn al-Zain. c. 1320–1340**

## C.E. Brass inlaid with gold and silver.



### **Content**

- Fleur de lis was a symbol of the French royal family, but also associated with a Mamluk sultan
- Depiction of a variety of animals--unicorn, antelope, elephant, camel, etc.
  - Some of these animals are sitting while others appear to be in a procession of some sort
  - Medallions, figures, coat of arms

### **Context**

- The Mamluks were medieval slave soldiers from Central Asia

### **Form**

- Lack of free space; most of the basin is covered in complex iconography
- Abstract, interconnected designs
- Brass with areas of silver and gold

### **Function**

- Used to baptize the children of the French royal family
- Supposedly originally produced for export due to lack of Islamic inscriptions
- Signed Arabic inscription with the name of the creator

**189. Bahram Gur Fights the Karg, folio from the Great Il-Khanid Shahnama.**  
**Islamic; Persian, Il’Khanid. c. 1330–1340 C.E. Ink and opaque watercolor,**  
**gold, and silver on paper.**



## **Content**

- Sasanian King Bahram Gur is chosen to defeat a Karg beast
  - Karg: a horned wolf; a confusion of words like Garg wolf and unicorn or rhino
- The illustrations in this manuscript reveals a convergence of artistic styles from across Asia
  - Trees: painted in ink in Chinese Style
  - Hero: Bahram Gur is depicted as a rugged Central Asian with a full beard and custom and boots. However, his silk brocade tunic reflects Chinese influence. He wears a crown and a halo, which underscores his regal and divine status
  - Shahnama itself is associated with national pride, cultural heritage and Persian identity
  - Stories were original oral stories
  - Quick brushstrokes in the faces draw from Japanese influences

## **Context**

- Shahnama (Book of Kings) is a long epic poem written by a Persian poet between 977 and 1010 C.E.
  - Tells mythical and historical past of the Persian empire in the 7th century

## **Form**

- Chinese style--Ink
- Quick brushstrokes on face, which shows Japanese influence

## **Function**

- Patrons wanted to emulate the virtues of historical/mythical kinds in the past
- This folio belongs to the first great imperial Persian manuscript. The foreign Mongol rulers commissioned this royal manuscript,
  - The patron's commission ties them to the history and the cultural memory of their kingdom
  - The grandness of the manuscript, the number of folios, their large size and the luxurious materials, are fitting for a royal commission



**The Court of Gayumars. Folio from. Shah Tamasp's Shahnama (the "Houghton" Shahnama). Sultan Muhammad c 1522-1525 C.E. Ink and opaque watercolor and gold on paper**



**Content**

- Gayumars is enthroned at the top and the members of his court, wearing leopard skins, surround him. Mountain throne surrounded by the light of the golden sky;
  - Circular compositions
  - Son (Siyamak)
  - Grandson (Tlushang)
- The figures are wrapped in a colorful, undulating landscape filled with animals, trees, and craggy mountains, concealing grotesque human and animal faces.
- Chinese landscape style - Rocky landscape, gnarled trees, flat swirling trees
- Costumes and beards are reference to Central Asian style

**Context**

- Sultan Muhammad was an artist and promoted art and painting
  - He also trained Tamasp in his style
- Gayumars was the first (mythic) king of Iran
  - A Lamb constellation shone down onto the people and rejuvenates them. It was then when Gayumars became King of the World (Shah).

**Form**

- Broke away from the conventions of traditional manuscripts because the images are

breaking out of its frame

- Dense detail meant to enchant the viewer
- Figures are more stylized and refined than Bahram Gur from the Mongol Period Shahnama. This more refined style exemplifies the elegance of new Safavid style composition, which deviates from traditional conventions of text and image
- Hanging text - nasta'liq

### **Function**

- Originally commissioned by Shah Tamasp's father, but was finished by Shah Tamasp

## The Ardabil Carpet. Maqsud of Kashan. 1539-1540 C.E. Silk and Wood.



### **Content**

- Carpet is one of a pair, made for shrine of the Sufi saint when it was enlarged in the 1530s
  - Cartouche: oval-shaped section with text
- Medallion possibly represents the inside of a dome with 16 pendants
- Inscriptions reveals patron and date: Maqsud Kashani, 946 in Muslim calendar

### **Context**

- Carpet name comes from town of Ardabil in Iran
  - Ardabil was home to shrine of Sufi saint, Safi al-Din Adabili
  - After his death, his descendants seized power, established Shi'a Islam an official religion, and founded the Safavid dynasty
- One of the world's oldest carpets

### **Form**

- Woven by ten men, used natural dyes
- Highly detailed, 340 knots per square inch
- Layout of designs possibly mirrors the layout of a mosque

### **Function**

- Sort of a pilgrimage site, functioned as a prayer mat

## **Sources**

- [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-art-history-ced-content-area-7-west-and-central-asia.pdf&sa=D&ust=1597889747719000&usg=AFQjCNHywZXxkcUK6uLXFk4OIFGT3W91\\_A](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-art-history-ced-content-area-7-west-and-central-asia.pdf&sa=D&ust=1597889747719000&usg=AFQjCNHywZXxkcUK6uLXFk4OIFGT3W91_A)
- College Board website
- Khan Academy