

Contemporary Art and Sufi Aesthetics in European Context

Contemporary Art and Sufi Aesthetics in European Context, 2021-2022 | In the framework of Sara Kuehn's Research Fellowship of the Academy for Islam in Science and Society (AIWG) and hosted by the Goethe University in Frankfurt, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Stiftung Mercator (Project 3309010003) | Outcome: 1 peer-reviewed journal article, 1 journal article, 1 edited volume: Art, Aesthetics and Islamic Mysticism: Contemporary Perspectives (preliminary title)



During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, spread extensively throughout Western society, with Sufi teachings permeating all spheres of society. The increasingly powerful and pervasive presence of Sufi popular religiosity and aesthetic traditions in the West has also engendered new cultural forms. Contemporary art has not only vastly extended the traditional boundaries of aesthetic material culture; it is also drawing upon a far more variegated range of bodily and sensory experiences. Traditionally, Sufis have often been the guardians of the arts within Islamic societies, whether it be music, poetry, painting, or calligraphy. Today's Sufis, whilst still practicing these traditional arts, also express themselves through plastic and visual arts, performing arts, architecture, music (e.g. hip hop/rap music) and other forms of artistic conceptualizations (e.g. photography, theatre performances, multimedia, new media). Drawing on recent methodological tendencies inspired by the 'aesthetic turn', this interdisciplinary project focuses on the aesthetic engagement of contemporary artists with Sufi practices, rituals, and discourses.