

***“Layered Traditions: South Asia and the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World” with Ladan Akbarnia, Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art, The San Diego Museum of Art***

**Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm HG 1030**



This talk will explore the making of the British Museum's Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World from a curatorial perspective, examining its transformation from the previous 30-year installation to a complete reconception of Islamic art and material culture. Through an illustrated overview of the gallery and its conceptual structure, the talk will address the changing definition of the "museum" and the continuing pressure to address the question "What is Islam?" while simultaneously taking into account the expressions of diverse faiths, political systems, and ethnicities falling under the broad umbrella of Islamic visual culture. Within this context, it will end with a focus on the representation of South Asia in the Albukhary Gallery and the thinking behind the selections of works ultimately put on display.

Dr. Ladan Akbarnia is the newly appointed Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art (SDMA) and a specialist on the art of medieval Iran and Central Asia. Her research projects and interests include cross-cultural transmissions between Iran and East Asia; Persianate drawings from Iran and India; the relationship between oral tradition and visual culture; and contemporary Middle Eastern art. She recently left the British Museum, where she was Curator and Assistant Keeper of the Islamic Collections for almost 10 years, and one of the lead curators for the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World, which opened in October 2018. She was a contributor to its two accompanying publications and is now writing a book about Persianate drawings at the British Museum (Ginkgo Library, forthcoming 2022). At SDMA, she has just organized the small exhibition *The Elephant in the Room: Indian Paintings from the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection* (29 February–30 August 2020) and is preparing two future large-scale exhibitions on contemporary South Asian Art (2023) and Islamic art and science (2024).

Before going to the British Museum in 2010, she was Hagop Kevorkian Associate Curator of Islamic Art at the Brooklyn Museum, where she organized a reinstallation of the Islamic collection and the exhibition *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam* with its accompanying catalogue (2009); and acquired the collection's first works of Middle Eastern contemporary art. Previously, she served as Executive Director of the Iran Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit charity dedicated to the preservation of Iran's culture and languages, and as Consulting Curator for the Aga Khan Museum Collection. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University.