Overcoming the Dichotomy of Text and Image

The Safavid Album Prefaces (1500–1700)

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The opinion that the relationship of Islam to imagery can hardly be called "aniconic" and even less so "iconoclastic"[1], has recently been illustrated once more by the volume *The Image Debate. Figural Representation in Islam and across the World*[2], published in advance of an exhibition on figural art from the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the dichotomy of "image" versus "text" still seems to shape our thinking in such a way that almost all attempts to explain the subject, formerly discussed under the general term "Bilderverbot/prohibition of images," operate along this medial divide. The present paper aims to question this rigid categorization of "text" and "image" by examining the terminology used in Safavid album prefaces from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Overcoming the Traditional Text-Image Dichotomy

The explanations for the part figurative representation played in Islamic art through the ages seem to be as varied as the representations themselves. It can be considered common knowledge that neither the Qurʾān[3] nor the Hadith literature[4] give indications for a religiously legitimized "Bilderverbot/prohibition of

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[1] Lamia Balafrej points out that historical iconoclastic acts involve not so much a destruction than a transformation of the pictorial, and that both historical and contemporary "iconoclasts" must deal intensively with the materiality of the image in their actions, cf. Balafrej, Lamia: "Islamic Iconoclasm, Visual Communication and the Persistence of the Image". *Interiors: Design/Architecture/Culture* 6.3 (2015), pp. 351–366. Finbarr Barry Flood underlines that there are no Arabic or Persian equivalents for the term "iconoclasm" and that in many cases it was not the figural image per se but its content that was the stumbling block, cf. "Iconoclasm". In: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Eds. Kate Fleet – Gudrun Krämer – Denis Matringe – John Nawas – Everett Rowson http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_32363 (last viewed 22. 10. 2020).

[2] Cf. Gruber, Christiane (ed.): *The Image Debate. Figural Representation in Islam and across the World*. London: Gingko Library, 2019.

[3] The Qurʾān says almost nothing about the legitimacy of pictures, but instead admonishes believers not to adore beings or their figural representations besides God (*shirk*), cf. Naef, Silvia: *Bilder und Bilderverbot im Islam. Vom Koran bis zum Karikaturenstreit*. München: Beck, 2007, p. 12.

[4] Hadith literature is similarly meagre concerning the issue of figurative representation, with the exception of a few very famous hadith sayings like "Calligraphers are destined for Paradise

images," as earlier orientalists had claimed[5].

A theological argument to be considered here is the doctrine that the act of Creation is God's privilege, who is often attributed names of creative acts (e. g. *al-khāliq, al-bāri', al-muṣavvir*). However, many Muslim artists viewed their God-likeness as reason for their creativity and took their observation and imitation of God's creation for their worship[6], culminating in the famous saying that the *qalam*, the reed pen, was God's first creature, by which everything else was created.[7]

But what is it then, that prevented Muslim people from creating more figural representations? To this day, Islamic art history continues to search for answers to the special relationship of Islam to imagery: Is it a politically motivated instrument to distance oneself from other religious communities and to unite the own religious group, as can be seen in the contemporaneous conflicts of the Byzantine iconoclasm?[8]

Is it the awareness of the power of images, as is reflected in the Qur'ānic thematization of this issue, as well as in ancient visual practices like the "evil eye," which could have led to a kind of iconophobia?[9] Or as Wendy M. K. Shaw postu-

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for copying the Koran, while painters will most probably go to hell.", cf. Schimmel, Annemarie: "Islamic Art, §III, 2: Calligraphy". In: *The Dictionary of Art*. Ed. Jane Turner. Oxford: Grove, 1996, vol. 16, pp. 273–277, here p. 276. According to some early legal texts of Sunni and Shī'ī Islam, idolatry could be avoided for example by the position of the particular picture. Most agree that legitimate figurative representations are those that do not cause the viewer to raise their eyes (as it is laying on the ground for example), cf. Paret, Rudi: "Textbelege zum islamischen Bilderverbot". In: *Das Werk des Künstlers. Studien zur Ikonographie und Formgeschichte. Hubert Schrade zum 60.* Ed. Hans Fegers. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960, pp. 36–48, here pp. 45–46; Other mechanisms to avoid idolatry would be avoiding paintings of living creatures and the headlessness of creatures, pp. 43–44 and 46–48.

[5] Prior orientalists indeed considered a prohibition of images which was based on the Qur'ān to be the reason for the lack of figural representations, cf. Huart, Clément: *Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l'Orient musulman.* Osnabrück: Zeller, 1972 (reprint Paris 1908), p. 2 and Rosenthal, Franz: "Significant Uses of Arabic Writing". *Ars Orientalis 4* (1961), pp. 15–23, here p. 20. Cf. Qur'ān, Surah 6:74: "And when Abraham said unto his father, Azar, "'Do you take idols for gods? Truly I see you and your people in manifest error.'" (Nasr, Seyyed Hossein: *The Study Quran. A New Translation and Commentary.* New York: HarperOne, 2015.)

[6] Cf. Leaman, Oliver: *Islamic Aesthetics. An Introduction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 16.

[7] Cf. Thackston, Wheeler M.: *Album Prefaces and other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters.* Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 5.

[8] Cf. Knysh, Alexandr D.: *Islam in Historical Perspective.* New York/London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, p. 310. A major difference between Islamic and Byzantine forms of iconoclasm is the fact, often overlooked, that Byzantine iconoclasm was directed towards the representation of holy men and women, while Islamic iconoclasm would have been directed towards representations of all living creatures, cf. Allen, Terry: *Five Essays on Islamic Art.* Sebastopol (Cal.): Solipsist Press, 1988, p. 19. Finbarr Barry Flood furthermore distinguishes between an active, "expressive" iconoclasm and a pragmatic, "instrumental" iconoclasm, cf. Noyes, James: *The Politics of Iconoclasm. Religion, Violence and the Culture of Image-Breaking in Christianity and Islam.* London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013, p. 168.

[9] Cf. Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics*, pp. 16–17.

lates: "Yet Islam might be considered iconoclastic not so much in forbidding the image as in recognizing the image as powerful, less in and of itself than in emphasizing the role of the viewer as the performer of meaning."[10]

Is it the lack of prominent symbols in Islam, which could have taken the position of the cross in Christianity and which could have led to the decision to choose the lack of images and pure monotheism as the marker of Islam, i. e. aniconism,[11] or more deliberately formulated, anti-iconism[12]?

Or is it the special role of writing in Islam[13], the significance of the Arabic script, which gained a holy status and, as model for the art of calligraphy, surpassed all other types of artistic expression? As Leaman states: "So the writing is indeed a symbol of Islam, the writing and not necessarily the meaning of the words which were used so decoratively."[14]

Apart from the likelihood that most of these explanations mentioned contain a true core (and it is precisely those that point to the importance of script that have convincing arguments), they all suffer from a basic assumption. What all these explanations have in common is an inherent dichotomy between text and image, which is not questioned by the authors. This dichotomy has been common since

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[10] Shaw, Wendy M. K.: "Performing Vision: Re-representation in Islam". In: *Islam and the Politics of Culture in Europe: Memory, Aesthetics, Art*. Ed. Frank Peter. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013, pp. 203–218, here p. 203. Cf. also Bürgel, Johann Christoph: "Mightiness, Ecstasy and Control: Some General Features of Islamic Arts". In: *Image and Meaning in Islamic Art*. Ed. Robert Hillenbrand. London: Altajir Trust, 2005, pp. 61–72, here p. 62.

[11] Allen in particular uses this term and puts to the question whether Muslims could have decided on aniconism in contrast to the Byzantine churches but at the same time in the style of imageless churches in their Christian neighbourhood, cf. *Five Essays*, p. 22. T.D.N. Mettinger differentiates further between material aniconism and empty-space aniconism, cf. Shenkar, Michael: "Aniconism in the Religious Art of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia". *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series* 22 (2008), pp. 239–256, here p. 239. Cf. also Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane: "Visual Arts as Ways of Being Religious". In: *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*. Ed. Frank Burch Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 220–237, here p. 227.

[12] Harvey defines anti-iconism as "a mode of active resistance to representation derived from religion's advocacy of spiritual prohibitions on image-making and image worship" and declares iconoclasm as its severest form, cf. Harvey, John: "Visual Culture". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Eds. Michael Stausberg – Steven Engler. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 502–522, here p. 504. One prominent example would be the reformation of coins under the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, who while competing with the Byzantine ruler Justinian began in 698–699 to mint a fully aniconic coin, replacing images with Qurʾānic texts, cf. Elsner, Jaś: "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium". *The Art Bulletin* 94.3 (September 2012), pp. 368–394, here p.374.

[13] There are several researchers who view writing, or the Arabic script, as a central narrative and as the reason for the lack of figural representations, cf. Schick, Irvin Cemil: "Text". In: *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*. Ed. Jamal J. Elias, Oxford: Oneworld, 2015, pp. 321–335, here p. 333; cf. also Rosenthal 1961, p. 21. Otherwise, the centrality of writing in Islam leads some researchers to a strict categorization of text-based religions vs. image-based religions, cf. Apostolos-Cappadona 2014, p. 220.

[14] Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics*, p. 21.

Plato's times[15] and continues to dominate our experience and thinking. It is this dichotomy which led former Orientalists to misconceptions about the nature of Islamic Art, describing Islamic art by using derogatory terms like "horror vacui," "contentless art," "bigotry" or "non-creative."[16] To this day, Islam is still associated with and stereotyped by the absence of images.[17] This has mainly to do with the fact that the art of calligraphy, which has shaped Islamic art like no other craft, is first and foremost connected with textual, content-related, rather than with pictorial and visual aspects.

Underlying these discussions are semiotic debates of the 20th century. The prominent linguistic turn in the 1960s, according to which there is no reality beyond language, was soon opposed by art historians, who feared that images would be hegemonized by texts.[18] One of those art historians is Gottfried Boehm, who defends the autonomy of the image, claiming that images have their own luminosity and should never be considered as mere reflections of external meanings.[19] New branches of art history have developed, above all "Bildwissenschaft" in Germany and "Visual Culture Studies"[20] in the USA.[21] Visual Culture Studies address the problem of text and image as being two entangled modes of visual culture, but have failed to develop a coherent methodology. Instead, they raise

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[15] Cf. Gil, Isabel Capeloa: "Von der Semiologie zur 'visuellen Literalität'?". In: *Literatur & Visuelle Kultur.* Eds. Claudia Benthien – Brigitte Weingart. Berlin: de Gruyter 2014, pp. 193–211, here p. 194. Cf. further Bräunlein, Peter J.: "Bildakte. Religionswissenschaft im Dialog". In: *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs/Religion in Cultural Discourse. Festschrift für Hans G. Kippenberg zu seinem 65. Geburtstag.* Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004, pp. 195–231, here p. 197.

[16] Cf. al-Faruqi, Isma'il R.: "Misconceptions of the Nature of Islamic Art." *Islam and the Modern Age 1* (1970), pp. 29–49, here p. 30–31.

[17] Cf. Belting, Hans: *Das echte Bild. Bilderfragen als Glaubensfragen.* München: Beck, 2005, p. 84. Oya Pancaroğlu has recently repeated this criticism, stressing that Islam is always accused of what it does not have, cf. "Figural Ornament in Medieval Islamic Art". In: *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture.* Eds. Finbarr Barry Flood – Gülru Necipoğlu. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2017, pp. 501–520, here p. 517.

[18] Cf. Frank, Gustav: "Literaturtheorie und visuelle Kultur". In: *Bildtheorien. Anthropologische und kulturelle Grundlagen des Visualistic Turn.* Ed. Klaus Sachs-Hombach. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009, pp. 354–392, here p. 356.

[19] Cf. Boehm, Gottfried: "Iconic Turn. Ein Brief". In: *Bilderfragen. Die Bildwissenschaften im Aufbruch.* Ed. Hans Belting. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2007, p. 27–36, here p. 35. Original quote: "So ist deutlich geworden, dass Bilder selbst schon über ein eigenes 'Licht' verfügen, nicht als bloße Spiegel externer Bedeutungen funktionieren, die sie reflektieren."

[20] The research of Charles Sanders Peirce, Nelson Goodman, John Langshaw Austin, Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Cassirer need to be mentioned as forerunners, but the actual godfathers of this new approach were Gottfried Boehm, Horst Bredekamp and Hans Belting (for "Bildwissenschaft") and especially William John Thomas Mitchell (for "Visual Culture Studies").

[21] These new schools have criticized earlier approaches of art history for preferring "high art" to "popular art," for having a colonialist perspective on the arts of other cultures, for elevating the status of the (male) artist, and finally for continuing to think in categories of styles and periods while being unable to react to the development of new media. Cf. von Falkenhausen, Susanne: *Jenseits des Spiegels. Das Sehen in Kunstgeschichte und Visual Culture Studies.* Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015, pp. 11–12.

more questions than they formulate answers.[22] There is a group of scholars (among them Gottfried Boehm and William John Thomas Mitchell) who deny the possibility of describing images in text-based terms. Instead, they are trying to imbue images with an extra-textual language, and to deprive semiotics of having any significance for the analysis of pictures. Other scholars do not see any contradiction between semiotics and art history, but view non-textual manifestations as already included in semiotics. Among these are Gustav Frank, who introduced the term of the "inter-field"[23] between text and image, and James Elkins, who denies the possibility of a pure image, but views explanations, which stress the "visual language" of a picture, simply as "an interpretation that lists only some of the qualities of the image."[24]

A popular definition of Visual Culture Studies by David Morgan reads as follows: "The study of visual culture is the analysis and interpretation of images and the ways of seeing (or gazes) that configure the agents, practices, conceptualities, and institutions that put images to work."[25] Despite their wide range of approaches, there are two aspects which almost all Visual Culture Studies have in common: first their contemporary perspective, triggered by the modern flood of pictures, and second their limitation to phenomena from the Western hemisphere. These are among the reasons why Visual Culture Studies have been applied to Islamic art history only recently.[26]

Thus the approach of Visual Culture Studies, which was the starting point for this study, tries to overcome the sharp categorization of "text" and "image"[27] and to see diverse forms of art production as parts of a joint visual culture, influenced by various factors, but building a continuum. As Elkins postulates: "This is the way I would prefer to understand the relation, if it has to be put this way, between pictures and writing: not as a duality with some imbrication, but as an articulated

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[22] This phenomenon is addressed by William J. T. Mitchell. He writes "that pictures form a point of peculiar friction and discomfort across a broad range of intellectual inquiry."; Mitchell, William J. T.: *Picture Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 13.

[23] Cf. Frank 2009, pp.363–364.

[24] Elkins, James: *On Pictures and the Words that Fail them*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 161.

[25] Morgan, David: *The Sacred Gaze. Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, p. 33.

[26] Among the prominent representatives of Islamic art history who have explicitly been inspired by the Visual Culture Studies approach are Olga Bush, Wendy M. K. Shaw and Gülru Necipoğlu. Among Visual Culture researchers there are a few who use examples of Islamic art, such as James Elkins (cf. bibliography).

[27] Cf. Elias, Jamal J.: *Aisha's Cushion. Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 283: "Whether or not it constitutes a form of visual meditative practice, the multiple uses of text in Islamic religious art and formal as well as informal religious life push the limits of our understanding of representational art in Islamic society, lending themselves most readily to an iconological explanation rather than one that distinguishes between text and art, or word and image."

continuum of signs, so that every marked surface will have a measure of pictoriality and a measure of writing."[28]

Terminological Investigations in Visual Arts of Safavid Times

Coming from the side of textual studies, my approach to visual arts in Islamic cultures is terminological.[29] The most important representative of terminological studies of Islamic text culture in diverse fields is, of course, Manfred Ullmann, who, for his part, has always pointed out the pitfalls of this approach.[30] It is important to be aware of some factors which could cloud the results of the investigation. These include, firstly, the fact that our own previous understanding of the language and the modern colouring of terms could mask historical connotations and thus connotations and ambiguities of meaning can only be guessed at; secondly, the awareness that written concepts of visual arts are concepts of elite cultures that can differ greatly from visual concepts of everyday life; thirdly, the sensitivity to the fact that there is a gap between the meaning of words and word usage or, respectively, language and practice[31] that grows with the historical distance to the source texts. For this reason I do not analyse the character of visual arts in Islam, but, aligned with Beinhauer-Köhler, only their terminology in texts of a distinct area of Islamic culture ("Binnenkultur"[32]). Ullmann also points out the big difference between the lexical meaning and the actual meaning of a certain term. Apart from the relatively small amount of lexicographic works from the period under study, the lack of a context of use also speaks against the inclusion of lexicographic data in the present study.[33]

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[28] Elkins, *On Pictures*, p. 158.

[29] The already great wealth of methods in Islamic art history was enriched by the editions and terminological analysis of texts by some scholars of whom Dede Fairchild Ruggles should be mentioned for her edition, titled "Islamic Art and Visual Culture" as well as, for the specific context of the Safavid Album Prefaces, David J. Roxburgh, Vladimir F. Minorskij and Wheeler M. Thackston (cf. bibliography).

[30] Cf. Ullmann, Manfred: *Theorie und Praxis der arabischen Lexikographie*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016, pp. 49–51.

[31] Cf. Koselleck, Reinhart: *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006, p. 67.

[32] Cf. Beinhauer-Köhler, Bärbel: *Gelenkte Blicke. Visuelle Kulturen im Islam*. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2011, p. 16.

[33] A look into the much later *Loghatnameh* of Dihkhudā (Teheran 1946–73, edited by Muḥammad Muʿīn) for the various terms examined here suggests a close semantic connection of the terms in the sense of a common semantic field, but also shows clearly that due to the lack of comparable weighting in basic and secondary meanings, the concrete connections between the individual terms are hardly to be determined. Although Dihkhudā lists a lot of concise quotations from classical Persian literature in which the terms are used, this creates a range of variants of connotations that raises the suspicion of arbitrariness (the term *raqm*, for example, is explained by the terms *khaṭṭ*, *kitābat*, *nivishtan*, *taḥrīr* and *naqsh*; *naqsh* is explained by *nigār kardan, rang kardan, ṣūrat, taṣvīr, rasm, khaṭṭ, kitābat, shakl*, etc.). In a particular text, however, the author must commit himself to certain meanings and their mutual semantic relationship, which can therefore be better analysed and put together to an overall picture of meanings.

The cultural area that I have chosen for this analysis is that of the Safavid book production in the 16th and 17th centuries. There are three reasons for this choice: the great importance of book art among the Safavids, the comparatively rich sources on the theoretical aspects of this art, and finally the fact that the Safavid albums stood out precisely because of the equally important roles of both calligraphy and miniature painting. Furthermore, the language in which the prefaces under study are written, Persian, with its both indigenous and borrowed, i. e. primarily Arabic, character, encourages intensive studies on word fields of writing and painting.[34]

The main sources of this analysis stem from album prefaces of the 16th and 17th century of Safavid provenance, when the art of calligraphy reached its heyday, rulers and princes established famous workshops and patrons themselves were taught calligraphy. The album prefaces themselves are interwoven with literary motifs of book production: The day is a metaphor for the bright paper, the night for the black ink[35] and the string of pearls for the compilation of the Album[36]. My text selection for this paper is based on Wheeler M. Thackstons bilingual edition *Album Prefaces and other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters*[37] as well as the Persian *Gulistān-i hunar* by Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī[38] and its English translation[39] and parts of the Persian compilation of prefaces *Kitāb ārā'ī dar tamaddun-i islāmī*[40]. Unlike the Timurid period, for which separate artists' biographies have been preserved[41], the sources mentioned are also the most relevant for biographical information. A classical Safavid album preface contains a eulogy of greater or lesser length of the ruler for whom the album was compiled, praises to God as the predecessor and inspiration for all creative artisans, a legitimation of calligraphy or miniature painting as divinely inspired art, a mythically enhanced history of the origins of the scripts or painting styles, lists

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[34] The influence of Arabic on Persian began with the first cultural contacts in the context of the Islamic conquests, but reached its first peak in the 12th century, with Arabic forming about 50% of the lexemes in theological and literary prose texts. The grammatical change in Persian due to the adoption of Arabic language structures has been studied in detail by Mohammad Ali Jazayeri, but a more detailed investigation of semantic shifts apart from statistical surveys, which would also benefit the present study, is still outstanding, cf. Jazayeri, Mohammad: "The Arabic Element in Persian Grammar". *Iran* 8 (1970), pp. 115–124.

[35] Cf. Roxburgh, David J.: *Prefacing the Image. The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran.* Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 100.

[36] Cf. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, p. 112.

[37] Cf. Thackston, *Album Prefaces*.

[38] Cf. Qāżī Ahmad Qummī: *Gulistān-i hunar*. Ed. Aḥmad Suhailī Khvānsārī. Teheran: Kitābkhāna-i Manūchihrī, 1987.

[39] Cf. Minorskij, Vladimir Fjodorowitsch – Minorsky, T. (transl.): *Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qāḍī Aḥmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī (ca. A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606).* Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1959.

[40] Cf. Māyil Haravī, Najīb: *Kitāb ārā'ī dar tamaddun-i islāmī.* Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī: Mashhad, 1993.

[41] For example Daulatshāh Samarqandī's *Tadhkirat ash-shu'arā'*, Khvāndamīr's *Ḥabīb as-siyar* or 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī's *Majālis an-nafā'is*.

on teacher-student relationships (*silsila*) or the composition of the respective book atelier and finally a chronogram. I have examined and grouped into four categories these sources with regard to concepts of visual arts, the results of which I will now present: 1) The terminology of the artwork, 2) The terminology of the artistic activity, 3) The terminology of the artistic profession, 4) The terminology of perception.

This terminological approach can contribute a further aspect to the fact that the Safavid prefaces, as noted by Roxburgh, should not only be used to reconstruct the history of events, but should also be taken seriously for their very own literacy and artistry. Quoting the American historian and literary scholar Hayden White,

> "[i]t is now possible to recognize that in realistic, no less than imaginary, discourse, language is both a form and a content and that this linguistic content must be counted among the other kinds of content (factual, conceptual, and generic) that make up the total content of the discourse as a whole. This recognition liberates historiographical criticism from fidelity to an impossible literalism and permits the analyst of historical discourse to perceive the extent to which it constructs its subject matter in the very process of speaking about it. The notion of the content of linguistic form scrumbles *[sic]* the distinction between literal and figurative discourses and authorizes a search for and analysis of the function of the figurative elements in historiographical, no less than fictional, prose."[42]

This statement underlines how complex the various levels of investigation are interrelated: the artistry of the text is closely interwoven with the artistry of the writing and painting mentioned in the text. The researcher can sort and discuss the diverse indications on the different medial levels, but the intention of the authors will only be approximately fathomable.

The Terminology of Writing and Painting in Safavid Album Prefaces

1) The terminology of the artwork

To distinguish the semantics of the visual arts according to nominal and verbal use is, of course, not easy with regard to the Persian language, since it has inherited the root semantics of Arabic. As there are, however, subtle differences with respect to word use, we will first of all list the nominal use of the meaning. As one might expect, the prefaces of Safavid albums examined here do not contain any philosophical discussion of the terms text-image: "text," Arabic/Persian *naṣṣ*, occurs only in one place and is used to introduce a Qurʾānic verse, thus focusing on the content aspect. There are many words for the term "picture" or "image," depending on whether it is a form, a painted work of art or a metaphor. However,

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[42] White, Hayden: *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*. Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 4. Cf. also Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, p. 12–15.

these terms are never mentioned in contrast to "text", but have diverse synonyms and antonyms, as will be shown below.

khaṭṭ is the term for the art of writing per se. When it comes to an attribution to any kind of writing in the prefaces, this root is used, be it the writing of a certain person, a certain style or a certain colour. Less frequently the term *kitāba* (also of Arabic origin) appears, which is used synonymously in most places. The differentiation between *ktb* and *khṭṭ* in the prefaces is not particularly distinct. We find the expression *uslūb-i kitābat* next to the term *uslūb-i khaṭṭ* (meaning "the methods of calligraphy"). Only in Qāżī Aḥmads *Gulistān* the specific meaning of an epigraphic inscription is reserved for the term *kitāba*. Thus, among the authors examined here, Mālik Daylamī and Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī are said to have excelled in the field of epigraphic inscription (*kitāba*).[43] Two further terms stand out in regard to the art of writing: One is *mashq* as a writing exercise, the other *taḥrīr* as the perfected calligraphy:

بهر تعلیم او دلم خون شد تا خطش یافت صورت تحریر

For teaching him I let my heart bleed until his handwriting (*khaṭṭ*) acquired the form of calligraphy (*taḥrīr*).[44]

However, the following quotation about the writing practice also shows the interchangeability of terms for calligraphy:

كثرت كتابت و مشق تجربه كرده

He had often engaged in practical writing exercises [here: *mashq* and *kitāba*].[45]

The assignment of the terms *naqsh* to (non-figural) painting and *taṣvīr* to (figural) portraiture seems to be more distinct in the texts. Although no concrete definitions can be found, this unambiguous assignment can be deduced from the context. Furthermore, both terms are usually mentioned together in a complementary way, i. e., to designate illustration *and* portrait painting, both terms must be used.

In the following example the legitimacy of portraiture (*taṣvīr*) is explicitly pointed out:

پس تصویر نیز بی اصلی نباشد وخاطرِ مصوّررا بخارِ نومیدی نخراشد.

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[43] Cf. Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 97/119; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 144/165–166.

[44] Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 84; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 132.

[45] Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī: "Ādāb-i Mashq". In: *Kitāb ārā'ī dar tamaddun-i islāmī*. Ed. Haravi, p. 148; translation: Berenike Metzler.

Therefore, portraiture is not without justification, and the portraitist's conscience need not be pricked by the thorn of despair.[46]

A few lines later it is clearly reported in metaphorical language, how a portrait artist "lifted the veil from the face of depiction"[47]. The term *ṣūra* is also used less frequently, but synonymously with *taṣvīr*.

While the nominal terms and distinctions between writing and painting seem clear, there are already two terms in the nominal area that share both word fields: *ṣūra* and *raqm*. In the Qur'ān the root *ṣwr/ṣvr* in its verbal form denotes creating or fashioning in a certain form and is mostly attributed to God. In the use of this term in the prefaces, the connotation of creating and fashioning continues to resonate. Thus, for example, the proximity of the meaning of creation to that of portrait painting is achieved, when the question of the possibility of portraiture rises with respect to the perfection of God's creation:

چه جای تصویر قلم وقلم تصویرست

What room is there for the depiction of the pen or the pen of depiction?[48]

The awareness of the ambiguity of this root becomes even clearer in the following example, in which the root occurs in several derivatives:

ای ز همه صورتِ خوبِ تو بِهْ صَوَّرَكَ الله على صُورتِهْ

You are better than any beautiful form: God fashioned you after his own image.[49]

The term *ṣūra* is thus not only given in in the meaning of "portrait," but also in the meaning of "created form." Furthermore in many places the form of the individual letters is called *ṣūra*. The shape (*ṣūra*) of calligraphy is compared with the beauty of portrait painting:

در صورتِ خطّ وحسنِ تصویر زینسان ورقی نیافت تحریر

With such calligraphic forms and beautiful depiction no page has ever been filled.[50]

همچنین بصر اهلِ فهم وبصیرت از ملاحظه لطفِ صورتِ خطی ومشاهده حسنِ صورت حظی شامل یابد

Likewise people of understanding and insight might take full pleasure in seeing the subtlety of calligraphic specimens and viewing the beauty of pictures.[51]

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[46] Dūst Muḥammad: "The Bahram Mirza Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 12.
[47] Dūst Muḥammad, p. 12.
[48] Dūst Muḥammad, pp. 4–5.
[49] Dūst Muḥammad, p. 11.
[50] Khvāndamīr: "An Album made by Kamaluddin Bihzad". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 42.
[51] Mālik Daylamī: "Amir Husayn Beg Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p 20. There appears a small inaccuracy in Thackston's translation: In both cases it is about the beauty of the

Another link between writing and painting is the term *raqm*. This root firstly denotes the meaning "line" and is used as well with regard to writing (in connection with *qalam* and *lawḥ*) as with regard to painting (here in combination with *naqsh*). Since both visual arts have their basis in artistic strokes, an overlap of both word fields seems to be self-evident. In the following two passages, it is even left in the dark which art is meant, as writing (*khaṭṭ*) and painting (*naqsh*) are equally alluded to:

نقاش ازل کان خطِ مشکین رقمِ اوست یا رب چه رقمهای عجب در قلمِ اوست

The eternal painter who drew that black line, O Lord, what marvelous shapes are in his pen![52]

کلکِ الهی چو رقم زد صور مظهر فضل وهنر آمد بشر

When the divine pen drew shapes, humankind came forth as the locus of knowledge and skill.[53]

It is exactly in this metaphorical use that the categories of writing and pictorial art begin to blur. Thus, within a few lines in his preface, Dūst Muḥammad mentions five different terms for the image in the figurative sense (*mithāl, naqsh, ṣūra, taṣvīr* and *khayālāt*). For images in a figurative sense Muḥammad Waṣfī even uses the term for calligraphy, *khaṭṭ*, in addition to *ṣuvar*:

صور پاکیزه ایشان که خط روح وروانست بمثابه ایست که

Their pure images, which are drawn by the spirit and the soul, are of such a degree that [...][54]

2) The terminology of the artistic activity

Summarising my terminological findings so far I can state that there is a good indication that the approach can overcome the old dichotomy between text and image with regard to Islamic calligraphy. While Visual Culture Studies try to push a new perspective on this issue with regard to our modern and western approach to text-image-relations, the eastern terminology already shows that a strict dichotomy of text versus image never was endogenous. We do not find a contrast between "writing" as expressed by *ktb* and "painting" as expressed by *ṣwr/ṣvr*, but

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form of calligraphy, not, as translated here in the second part of the sentence, about the beauty of the form of images.

[52] Dūst Muḥammad, p. 5.

[53] Khvāndamīr, p. 41. In his essay on the *Ādāb-i mashq* by Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī, Ernst translated the word *raqm* in the proem of this work several times with "writing". In view of the ambiguity of the term shown here, I would argue that we should stick to the basic meaning of line or stroke. Cf. Ernst, Carl W.: "The Spirit of Islamic Calligraphy. Bābā Shāh Iṣfahānī's Ādāb al-mashq". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112.2 (Apr.–Jun. 1992), pp. 279–286, here p. 282.

[54] Muḥammad Vaṣfī, "Shah Isma'il II Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 34.

instead a caleidoscopic range of terminological constellations which build a continuum between text and image, mediated by the diverse notions of writing. The verbal concepts of artistic activity will be discussed here, as well as the writing instrument, the *qalam*.

   The usual terms for writing calligraphy, which of course are closely related to the nominal terms mentioned above, are *khaṭṭ nivishtan, nivishtan*, more rarely *raqm kardan* or *khūsh nivishtan*. The verbal forms of illustration and portrait painting are mostly compositions of *naqsh* or *taṣvīr* and an auxiliary verb, such as *kardan*. The manifold possibilities of expression in regard to calligraphy in both the nominal and verbal sense[55] are well summarized in the following quotation:

شناسای رقوم هفت خط مولی نظام الدّین که مانند خطش در عرصه افاق کم باشد

نویسد از سر انگشت خط ثلث را یا رب که دیدست اینچنین کاتب که انگشتش قلم باشد

> The expert of writing in seven styles is Mullā Niẓām al-dīn, He whose writing has few parallels on the tablets of the universe. He writes in *thulth* with the tip of his finger, O Lord! Who has seen a scribe whose *qalam* is his finger?[56]

The *qalam*, the reedpen, is used for writing as well as for painting processes, famously expressed in the well-known "theory of the two qalams,"[57] i. e. the imagination that both, pen and brush, stem from the same instrument, the *qalam*:

کلیدِ خرد را هنر شد علم کلیدِ هنر چیست؟ نوك قلم

قلم نقش بندست وچهره گشای قلم بر دو نوع آفریده خدای

یکی از نبات آمده دلپذیر نی قند گشته ز بهر دبیر

دگر نوع ازو نوعِ حیوانی است کش از آبِ حیوان دُر افشانی است

نگار نده نقشِ مانی فریب ازو کارگاهِ هنر دیده زیب

> Art is known as the key to wisdom. What is the key to art? The nib of the pen.
> The pen is a designer of patterns, an 'unveiler of faces.' Two types of pen were created by God: One comes from vegetal matter: the reed turns agreeable for the writer. The other type is animal: it scatters pearly from the Fountain of Life. By the painter of a picture that would fool Mani is the workshop of art adorned.[58]

This "theory of the two qalams" is the clearest statement on the equal status of writing and pictorial art. In fact, when using the term *qalam*, it is hardly ever clear

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[55] The activity of writing is expressed in the following quotation by the Arabic loan roots "*rqm*", "*khṭṭ*" and "*ktb*", but also by the Persian word "*nivishtan*".

[56] Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 34; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 75.

[57] Cf. for instance Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad: "Amir Ghayb Beg Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 24. Cf. further Yves Porter's discussion of the various, but not in all points consistent links between painting and writing: Porter, Yves: "From 'The Theory of the Two Qalams' to 'The Seven Principles of Painting'. Theory, Terminology, and Practice in Persian Classical Painting". *Muqarnas* 17 (2000), pp. 109–118.

[58] Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad, p. 24. Cf. further Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 9; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 49–50.

whether it is a brush or a reed pen. Sheila Canby once asked in an article whether the reed pen was also used for painting.[59] Only at one point in the evaluated sources the *qalam* is more closely specified as a brush:

<div dir="rtl">اما از قلم آنچه حیوانیست قلم موست</div>

Now, the pen that mimics life is the hair brush.[60]

In a few cases the term *kilk* is used instead of *qalam*. This seems to be author-dependent. In almost every preface, the *qalam* is mentioned in reference to a hadith as the first creature of God with whom everything else was created. The meaning of the *qalam* goes so far that it itself becomes a subject:

<div dir="rtl">اگر كلك تصویرت بر لوح وجود قدم ننهد قلم وجود قدم از حیز عدم بر ندارد</div>

If your portrait-painting brush does not place its foot on the canvas of existence, the pen of existence does not step out from the realm of nonexistence.[61]

It also addresses a variety of senses that are not impressed by a possible distinction between written and visual art:

<div dir="rtl">حبَّذا ای قلم طرفه رقم که زدی در ره اقبال قدم رقم ظل برخ نور زدی مشك بر صفحه کافور زدی</div>

Bravo, O marvel-writing pen, for you have placed your foot on the road of success. You have drawn a shadowy line across the cheek of light; you have cast musk on a page of camphor.[62]

3) The terminology of the artistic profession

There are few detailed sources about the technical processes of album production.[63] Professions involved in the *kitābkhāna*, the book atelier, were "*katiban* (calligraphers or scribes), *naqqashan* (painters), *muzahhiban* (limners or illuminators), *jadwal-kishan* (line drawers or rulers), *hall-karan* (gold-fleckers), and *sah-hafan* (binders), along with others who prepared materials, including *zarkuban* (gold-leaf makers) and *lajvardi-shuyan* (lapis lazuli washers)."[64] With re-

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[59] Cf. Canby, Sheila R.: "The Pen or the Brush? An inquiry into the technique of late Safavid drawings". In: *Persian Painting. From the Mongols to the Qajars. Studies in Honour of Basil W. Robinson*. Ed. Robert Hillenbrand. London: Tauris, 2000, pp. 75–82.

[60] Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad, p. 25.

[61] Shāhqulī Muhrdār: "Shah Tahmasp Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 1.

[62] Shāhqulī Muhrdār, p. 2.

[63] Cf. Shreve Simpson, Marianna: "The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-khana in Safavid Iran". *Studies in the History of Art* 38 (1993), pp. 104–121, here p. 110–111: "Unfortunately, no single source contains an actual description of a *kitab-khana* as workshop, and any attempt to define this aspect of the *kitab-khana* from the available records involves the compilation of disparate, and sometimes inconsistent, bits of information. In addition, the type of information varies widely: in general, the sources for the first half of the Safavid period (that is, the early sixteenth through the first quarter of the seventeenth century) focus on individuals (patrons and artists), whereas the later sources emphasize Safavid governmental bureaucracy."

[64] Shreve Simpson 1993, p. 112.

gard to our question on text-image-differentiations we can observe that the art of writing and the art of painting have some common aspects: similar terms for the various styles created by the two[65], similar artist signatures[66], similar ruling systems (*mastar*)[67] or similar origin myths.[68] Akimushkin and Ivanov point out that until the second half of the 15th century such a division into different professions did not exist at all.[69] This diversification must therefore have occurred just before the time of the compilation of the albums examined here. There are some differences with respect to the various artistic activities in the book workshop as well. Mostly it was the head calligrapher, who was the master of the workshop and decided the illustrative program.[70] Usually the calligrapher had the comparatively higher rank.[71] In reference to the mentioned Album prefaces we find several *silsilas* of the various art workers, but calligraphers and painters/illustrators in separate chains. Sometimes we read that an artist knew both crafts quite well and was counted among the painter-scribes.[72] But in general, the Album authors distinguish between both crafts. This distinction does not automatically stand for a general differentiation between nonfigural and figural artworks: While listing the workers of the actual Royal Library, the author Dūst Muḥammad places the calligraphers on one side and the portraitists and painters on the other[73], not differentiating between figural portraiture, book illumination or ornamentation. The defining factor seems to have been the instrument (the vegetal or the animal pen) rather than the representation which made the difference.

If we take a look at the exact profession titles of the visual artists of the Safavid book workshops, the following picture emerges: Similar to the discussion of the designations for particular artworks and the artistic activities, the profession of the calligrapher is represented by a variety of terms, while that of the illustrator always remains *naqqāsh* and that of the portraitist always remains *muṣavvir*, at one point also in the plural *arbāb-i taṣvīr*. The distinction between these two types of painting becomes particularly clear in the following example:

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[65] Cf. Porter 2000, p. 113.

[66] Cf. Porter 2000, p. 112.

[67] The calligraphic ruling (*mastar*) was fundamental for the beginning of book painting, cf. Porter 2000, p. 109.

[68] There is an oft-repeated narrative that for writing it is ʿAlī who led Kūfī to perfection, for picture making it was ʿAlī who was the first painter – the transition is liminal, cf. e. g. Dūst Muḥammad: "The Bahram Mirza Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, pp. 7 and 11.

[69] Cf. Akimushkin, Oleg Fedorovich – Anatol A. Ivanov: "The Art of Illumination". In: *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia, 14.–16. Centuries*. Ed. Basil Gray and Oleg F. Akimushkin. Paris/London: Unesco/Serindia Publications, 1979, pp. 35–57, here p. 50.

[70] Cf. Porter 2000, p. 112.

[71] Cf. Blair, Sheila: *Islamic Calligraphy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 418.

[72] Cf. Bağçı, Serpil: "Presenting *Vaṣṣāl* Kalender's Works: The Prefaces of Three Ottoman Albums". *Muqarnas 30* (2013), pp. 255–313, here p. 262.

[73] Cf. Dūst Muḥammad, pp. 15–16.

ونسخه شکر وسپاس مصوّری که اوراقِ جریده امکان بصورتِ نبات وحیوان ونقوشِ نفوس انسان پرداخت

> And the manuscript of thanks and gratitude to the Illustrator who filled the pages of the
> rescript of possibility with pictures of plants and animals and designs of humans.[74]

In accordance with the above mentioned complementary, clearly assignable use of *naqqāsh* and *muṣavvir* as well as the illustrations' figurativeness, which becomes clear at the end of the quotation, I would translate the term *muṣavvir* here with "portraitist," in contrast to Thackston who favours "illustrator."[75]

Among the calligraphers, on the other hand, are the *khaṭṭāṭ*, the *kātib* (Arabic plural *kuttāb* or Persian plural *kātibān*), the Persian *khūshnevīs* and the *muḥarrir*. What unites visual artists is that they all practise a craft (*kār*), that there are true masters among them (*ustādān*) and that they all belong to the realm of book production:

از استادان وخوشنویسان ونقاشان وافشانگران وسایر هنروران که باین طبقه منیفه منوطند واز اهل کتب وکتابخانه اند

> Each of the masters, artists and all men of talent who are connected with this glorious
> company and excellent class, or with books and libraries[...][76]

The terms for the calligraphers can vary even with one author, there are no significant differences in meaning.

4) The terminology of perception[77]

Although the significance of writing and calligraphy in Islamic cultures is well known, the study of the gaze, which is important for *Visual Culture Studies*, is a quite new field of research for Islamic studies. Inspired by the prominent monograph of the *Bildwissenschaftler* Hans Belting, titled "Florenz und Bagdad: Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks," which was soon criticised for its culturalist approach[78], studies on the field of visual perception have emerged in Islamic art history: one studying the concrete cultural role of the gaze[79], the other more generally on the research perspective of perception ("perceptual culture")[80].

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[74] Mālik Daylamī, p 18.

[75] At the end of the sentence also the term *nuqūsh* stands in connection with the portraiture of humans, grammatically remains however its dependence on the before mentioned term *ṣūra*, which is introduced by the preposition *bi-*.

[76] Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 6; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 44.

[77] Another article on performative aspects in Safavid Album prefaces is in preparation.

[78] Cf. Necipoğlu, Gülru: "The Scrutinizing Gaze in the Aesthetics of Islamic Visual Cultures: Sight, Insight, and Desire". In: *Gazing Otherwise. Modalities of Seeing in and beyond the Lands of Islam*. Eds. Olga Bush – Avinoam Shalem. *Muqarnas* 32 (2015). Leiden/Boston: Brill, p. 23–61, here p. 23–28.

[79] Cf. Bush, Olga: "Prosopopeia: Performing the Reciprocal Gaze". *Muqarnas* 32 (2015), pp. 13–19.; Necipoğlu 2015; Shaw 2013 (cf. bibliography).

[80] Cf. Shaw, Wendy M. K.: *What is "Islamic Art"? Between Religion and Perception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. From this perspective, Shaw concludes for the term

It is a matter of record that the gaze plays an important role in Islamic culture, not least in its performative function: The viewing direction (*qibla*) is indispensable for the ritual prayer and is very often materialized by the niche (*miḥrāb*).[81] Even the question of *shirk* (idolatry) finds its crucial point in the direction of the gaze, as we find it in legal texts about the legitimacy of painting.[82] The idea of visual manifestations of God in his creature (*āya*), which exists already in the Qurʾān, is repeated and even intensified in the Albums. The term *āya* inherently shimmers between image and text: On the one hand it is God's visual manifestation on earth, on the other hand it is the name for the Qurʾān's written verses. In regard to the Album prefaces, there is no differentiation in how the observer witnesses God the creator in visual art: "Everywhere I look, you are seen; every direction I turn, you are visible. Everywhere a beauty is manifested, you are seen by the witnessing eye."[83] The prefaces are naturally full of the imagined effects which visual art could have on their observers and make a strong connection between the impact on the eye and the impact on the heart: "There are four things from which the eye and heart derive delight: beautiful calligraphy, beautiful faces, greenery, and running water."[84] These verses might be elaborations of a certain courtly elite, but especially their focus on the impact on the observer possibly expresses a common experience, as Elias put it: "In vernacular (as distinct from elite) cultural circles, issues of mimetic representation — of what religious images 'look like' — are almost irrelevant in comparison to concerns with what an image can 'do,' in the sense that efficacy, power, and threat are the primary determinants of the accuracy of an image in representing its prototype."[85]

The authors of these prefaces use a wide variety of terms for the act of seeing, comparable to terms which are applied by scholars of *Visual Culture Studies* (e. g. to gaze, to look, to observe, to focus[86], to see). In the extant Persian sources the semantic field of seeing and gazing covers above all the terms *dīdan*[87], *nigāh kardan*[88] as well as *lāḥaẓa*[89], *ta'ammala*[90], *naẓara*[91] and *baṣura*[92], which are Arabic loan words. According to an initial check of the examined material I can claim

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"Bilderverbot/prohibition of images" that it reflects more the perception of Islam in the West than the various attitudes of Islam towards the pictorial, cf. p. 33.

[81] Cf. Beinhauer-Köhler, *Gelenkte Blicke*, pp. 33–36.

[82] Beinhauer-Köhler states that the situation of seeing is crucial for the whole Islamic discussion of images, cf. p. 32.

[83] Shāhqulī Muhrdār, p. 1.

[84] Mālik Daylamī, p 20.

[85] Elias, *Aisha's Cushion*, p. 42.

[86] Cf. Beinhauer-Köhler, *Gelenkte Blicke*, p. 36.

[87] Cf. Khvāndamīr, p. 41. Cf. further Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī, p. 151 and Ernst 1992, p. 284.

[88] Cf. Khvāndamīr, p. 42.

[89] Cf. Mālik Daylamī, p 19.

[90] Cf. Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī, p. 153; Fatḥ Allāh Sabzavārī: "Uṣūl va-qavāʾid-i khuṭṭūṭ-i sitta". In: *Kitāb ārāʾī dar tamaddun-i islāmī*. Ed. Haravi, p. 107.

[91] Cf. Bābā Shāh al-Iṣfahānī, pp. 148 and 151; Ernst 1992, pp. 282 and 284.

[92] Cf. Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 13; Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 53.

that the verbs *dīdan* und *nigāh kardan* are applied to contexts about pure visual perception, while the Arabic loan words *naẓar* and *baṣar* are used to describe a deeper dimension of seeing. This basic differentiation is most clearly expressed in the following quote, which again does not differentiate between writing and painting:

بهر جانبش که نگه میکنی پری پیکر صورتی جلوه گرست
وبهر طرف که نظر می افکنی مدّ نظر نوخطی در کمال حسن وجمال

> [...] in every direction you look there is a beautiful image, and every direction in which you gaze at the end of your sight there is, in perfect beauty, the lovely cheek with traces of down/script (*khatt*)[...].[93]

While the relationship between writing and painting appeared ambiguous from the perspective of the first three sections under study, showing both connecting and separating elements, with regard to the perception of the various visual arts, as described in detail in the prefaces, no distinction is made between the diverse outcomes of visual art production. After all, the perspective of perception is not only a category which was pushed forward by the *Visual Culture Studies*, but is also decisive for the prefaces themselves, which were very concerned about the effect of their words and the effect of the Album on the observer.

The importance of perception is dealt with in the calligraphic training when looking closely at the calligraphies of previous masters. Sayyid Aḥmad Mashhadī, an important Timurid calligrapher, who is also frequently quoted in Safavid albums, divided the calligraphic exercise into two aspects: the aforementioned meditation on previous calligraphies *naẓarī* and the subsequent writing practice *qalamī*:

بر دو نوعست مشق وننهفتم با تو ای خوبر وجوان گفتم
قلمی خوان یکی دگر نظری نبود این سخن منی ومری
قلم مشق کردن نقلی روز مشق خفی وشام جلی
نظری دان نگاه کردن خط بودن آگه ز لفظ حرف نقط

> Exercise is of two kinds, as I have told you, O handsome youth, without reservation: Call the one *qalamī*, and the other *naẓarī*. These words cannot be contested. *Qalamī* is the exercise in reproduction, exercising small (writing) during the day and large (writing) in the evening. *Naẓarī* is to gaze at a writing and to become aware of words, letters, and dots.[94]

While the above quotation is mainly related to the practice of calligraphers, the following example does not make it clear which kind of visual art is meant. Here,

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[93] Muḥammad Muḥsin: "Preface to a Safavid Album". In: *Album Prefaces*. Ed. Thackston, p. 35. A similarly dense stringing together of verbs of seeing also occurs in Dūst Muḥammads Preface at a eulogy on calligraphy: بنگر - بهزار دیده نظاره کنان حیران جمالِ میرزا بهرام اند "Gaze with a thousand eyes. Onlookers are dazzled by the beauty of Mirza Bahram," Dūst Muḥammad, p 16.
[94] Qāżī Aḥmad Qummī, *Gulistān*, p. 73 Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 117.

moreover, we find the motif alluded to above, namely that the contemplation of creation does not involve an illegitimate imitation of the Creator, but rather a form of worship and service:

<div dir="rtl">

سوی آفرینش نظر داشته سوادی ز هر اصل برداشته

</div>

> With their gazes fixed on creation, they take an image from every prototype.[95]

But also the recipients of the artistically produced albums — whether the patron himself or other members of the court elite — are encouraged to view the albums as a perfect artwork and to let them have an effect on themselves:

<div dir="rtl">

تا هست مرقع سپهر از مه ومهر منظور نظر مرقعت باد مدام

</div>

> As long as the patched cloak (*muraqqa'*) of the celestial sphere contains the sun and moon, may this album (*muraqqa'*) be the object of your perpetual gaze.[96]

Finally, in visual enjoyment, no explicit distinction is made between writing and painting. Instead, the observer is invited to take a close look at the visual artworks:

<div dir="rtl">

خطوط وصور همیشه منظر نظر دقیق

</div>

> Calligraphy and pictures always to gaze intently[...][97]

Summary and Contextualisation of the Study Results

My terminological findings in the various fields of Safavid book production all head in the same direction: Mediality in Islamic art is not a binary choice between figurality and non-figurality or painting vs writing, but knows many ways in which all visual expressions are entangled. From the prefaces of Safavid albums, both differences and similarities in the relationship between writing and painting can be found. Thus a wide variety of vocabulary for calligraphy and the calligraphers contrasts with more distinct terms for illustration and portrait painting. On the other hand, both visual arts touch each other in the concept of *ṣūra*, the created, divine prototype, and in the concept of *raqm*, the line, which is the basic structure of both. The instrument, the *qalam*, cannot be clearly assigned to the art of writing or painting either. Both visual arts share similar designations for styles, signatures, comparable ruling systems and similar origin myths - but the *silsilas* of teachers and students are strictly separated into calligraphers on the one hand and illustrators and portrait painters on the other. In the field of art perception, the prefaces contain many Arabic and Persian terms for various ways of seeing. Both in terms of practical artistic exercises, i. e. meditation on

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[95] Cf. Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad, p. 27.
[96] Shāhqulī Muhrdār, p. 2.
[97] Mālik Daylamī, p 21.

calligraphic/pictorial models, and the perception of the finished works of art, the borders of both visual arts begin to blur.

In the introduction, I had listed various explanatory models for the specific relationship of Islam to the image- from the thesis of iconoclasm and iconophobia to anti-iconism and the significance of writing (as a substitute for images). I have shown that all the explanations listed are based on an implicit dichotomy of text and image. The previous explanations for the Islamic prohibition of images can only answer single aspects of this complex subject, but through their inherent dichotomy and the reduction of calligraphy to its content-related aspect, failed to open a much broader view. I do not claim that there have been no restrictions in the history of Islamic art with respect to figural art; nor that there is no difference between the various visual art forms. In regard to the Safavid prefaces examined here, I posit that there is such a wealth of terminological detail that it is worth taking the perspective of the Visual Culture Studies and to examine the various forms of Islamic calligraphy and (miniature) painting under the auspices of a joint visual culture. It is only through such a perspective that the terminological differences and similarities in the areas of art production, self-designation and art perception become clear. The latter area in particular has shown how close writing and painting can be.

Obviously the context of the Safavid album production represents only a small part of Islamic art history. But both the richness of the Persian language (enriched by Arabic and concepts of Qurʾānic-Arabic terminology) and the genre of the Album preface in its self-reflection and own artistry contribute a great deal to making this cultural area a rich object of research relating to text-image relationships. This example already makes clear the multidimensionality of the complex of text, writing and image. Not only for the Safavid, but far beyond greater attention is needed in all areas of Islamic culture in which literature, calligraphy and (miniature) painting are intertwined. In the words of Aziz al-Azmeh:

> "What needs to be mapped, on reflection, is not only the gaze and the frames it freezes, but also the glance, the visual or visible index, visual practices overall, metaphors and figures of visual practice and of its organ which has a greater involvement with the body and with its surroundings … and, finally to gesture towards the outward and inward eyes, two eyes, one located on the visible face and the other, according to Arabic usage, in the 'heart', veiled by the visible body. Both of these are equally organs of perception whose relationship goes beyond the contrast of the ordinary and the extraordinary or uncanny, and reaches into the very structure [of] being, in which the visible and the invisible are both equally present."[98]

[98] al-Azmeh, Aziz: "Preamble". In: "le Regard dans la Civilisation Arabe Classique/mapping the Gaze: Considerations from the history of Arab Civilization". Eds. Nadia al-Bagdadi – Aziz al-Azmeh, special issue, *Medieval History Journal* 9, 1 (2006), p. 20.

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It is precisely through a more close analysis of mechanisms of seeing and perception that detailed terminological studies can be used not only to determine their semantic field in the respective texts, but also to make statements about ways of seeing that point far beyond the textual context into a "visual culture" and thus recombine text, image, writing and language in their close, organic context.