

**Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte WS 2023/24**

**Vortrag von Dorothee Kreuzer**

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**“The Guidance of the Goose:  
On Beauty in the Cairo Bustan”**

**Montag, 20.11.2023, Beginn: 18.15 Uhr**

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte, Adenauerallee 10, ÜR (EG) und via Zoom:

<https://uni-bonn.zoom-x.de/j/64582974925?pwd=Z05Dbmo10XFNK25jMU1yL1pQT3BYdz09>

The spate of recent publications on late 15th century Timurid book art opens up critical space for reconsidering the conventional text-image relationship approach. A close reading of the sumptuous three double page opening sequence of the Cairo Bustan reveals the illumination program of the manuscript not only as meta-commentary to Sa’di’s text but emerges as literally *pre-* and *pro-scriptive*: showing what precedes words and a guidance to how to read the following text. Taking my cue from the unpublished double-page spread placed between the famous frontispiece and the gateway to the written text or incipit, the issue of beauty appears as the non-trivial steppingstone *en route* to the ineffable. Very much like the Platonic *agalma* as launch pad to the higher good, the intricate montage of the figures of goose and phoenix draws the reader’s attention to processes of understanding.

Key to unlock the edifice is a familiarity with the connotational valences of the goose as a marker of transition in the sinosphere and Buddhism in particular as well as the *vahana* of the Hindu creator god Brahma. The articulation of a cosmopolitan and ecumenical imaginary firmly rooted in Mongol self-identification serves a more serious political purpose than the ultimately frivolous “taste for the intricate.”

