

City in the Desert, Revisited

Oleg Grabar at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, 1964-71

by Christiane Gruber and Michelle Al-Ferzly, foreword by Renata Holod

DESCRIPTION:

Between 1964 and 1971, renowned Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar directed a large-scale archaeological excavation at the site of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi. Drawn to the remote eighth-century complex in the hopes of uncovering a princely Umayyad palace, Grabar and his team instead stumbled upon a new type of urban settlement in the Syrian steppe. A rich lifeworld emerged in the midst of their discoveries, and over the course of the excavation's six seasons, close relationships formed between the American and Syrian archaeologists, historians, and workers who labored and lived at the site. Featuring previously unpublished documents and illustrating over fifty photographs from the Qasr al-Hayr dig, *City in the Desert, Revisited* recounts the personal experiences and professional endeavors that shaped the fields of Islamic archaeology, art, and architectural history during their rise in the US academy.

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Michelle Al-Ferzly is a doctoral candidate in Islamic art history working under the direction of Professor Christiane Gruber. Her dissertation examines medieval Islamic tableware and dining culture between the 9th and 15th centuries. In 2018, she worked as a curatorial assistant for the Aga Khan Museum's exhibition *The Moon: A Voyage Through Time* as well as contributor to the show's catalogue.

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