

SHANGRI LA

PRESS RELEASE
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**KEELAN OVERTON APPOINTED CURATOR AT SHANGRI LA,
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART**



Honolulu, Hawai'i, July 6, 2011 —The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art announced today that Keelan Overton has been appointed to the position of Curator of Islamic Art at Shangri La effective June 27, following an international search. Shangri La is the Foundation's center for Islamic arts and cultures, housed in the former

Honolulu residence of philanthropist and collector Doris Duke (1912 – 1993) with its late 1930s architecture, extensive collections of Islamic art and 5 acres of tropical gardens.

Overton holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles (2011) and a Masters Degree in Art History from Williams College in Massachusetts (2004). Overton first came to Shangri La as an intern in 2003 and returned as Assistant Curator in 2004-2005. She has since worked as a Research Assistant in the Art of the Middle East Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and as an Instructor and Teaching Assistant at UCLA. She is the recipient of a University of California President's Fellowship and a Theodore Rousseau Fellowship from the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which supported extensive travel and research in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and India.

“We're delighted to have Keelan join our staff. She is a very thoughtful and well-regarded young scholar who is passionate about the educational importance of museums in today's society,” said Deborah Pope, Executive Director of Shangri La. “At a time when we all need to have a better understanding of the Muslim world, Keelan's expertise will strengthen Shangri La as a center for Islamic art with programs for artists, scholars, students and the general public.”

At Shangri La, Overton will be responsible for the research, interpretation and display of Shangri La's collection, which includes more than 3,500 pieces of Islamic art. She will also develop

programs to enhance Shangri La's role as a place for education, scholarly research and exchange including exhibitions, residencies for scholars and artists, and occasional symposia and publications.

Overton's interests include nineteenth and twentieth century Islamic art; the collecting of Islamic art; Indo-Persian painting; Sufi shrine architecture; and intersections between conservation and art history. Her dissertation explored collecting, patronage, portraiture, diplomacy, and kingship at an Islamic court in Bijapur, a city in the Deccan region of India, c. 1580-1627. Recent publications include an essay on the Bijapuri painter 'Ali Riza in *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100-1900 (Artibus Asiae)* and contributions to *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Yale University Press). Overton has conducted extensive research on Doris Duke's commissions of ceramic tiles from an Iranian workshop in 1938, which is part of a forthcoming article on cross-cultural encounter between Iran and the United States during the early twentieth century. She has presented at numerous international conferences, including those at the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the University of Oxford.

Shangri La is a five-acre site with three historic buildings designed by architect Marion Sims Wyeth (1889–1992) and built between 1936–1938 as a seasonal home for philanthropist and collector Doris Duke (1912–1993). Shangri La borrows architectural elements and artistic sensibilities from regions of the Islamic world and blends them with a distinctly Hawaiian landscape that features sweeping ocean views and exotic gardens. The collection ranges from pre-Islamic material to early 20th century commissions, in a wide variety of media. The collection is particularly strong in material from the 17th through 20th centuries, and in ceramic tiles and vessels. A significant portion of the collection is integrated into the historic architecture.

First opened to the public in November 2002, Shangri La offers guided tours, lectures and performances as well as residencies for artists and scholars and periodic symposia. It is owned and supported by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, which Doris Duke created in her will to promote the study, understanding and preservation of Islamic art and culture. For more information, visit www.shangrilahawaii.org and follow Shangri La on Facebook at Shangri La, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art.

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