Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, whose friendship Carole and I have enjoyed for many years, have both contributed very generously over the years to the Festschriften of other scholars, including my own, so it is a particular pleasure to be able to return the compliment, and moreover to welcome its appearance in the series *Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art* which I have edited for over a decade, and to which both of them have also contributed a title. The range and depth of the contributions to this volume offer another kind of compliment, this time to the wide horizons which these two scholars have opened for their colleagues in the course of their spectacularly productive careers as researchers. It is quite plain that their example has been inspirational. It is a tribute to them that every one of these chapters reflects some aspect or other of their own interests as expressed in their publications. Hence the frequent references to ‘B&B’ in the footnotes and bibliographies of the chapters in this book.

A special word of thanks goes to the contributors. It is they who have made this book. Many are based in the United States and Britain, but Denmark, Egypt, Germany and Italy are also represented. Some of them have generously devoted time that they did not have to prepare their chapters, as a gesture of friendship and respect to Sheila and Jonathan; others have chosen to build on work done by the very scholars whom they honour, and yet others, responding to the challenge set by these two eminent scholars that their Festschrift should celebrate what they themselves have termed ‘thinginess’, have dug deep to unearth something appropriate that they would not otherwise have explored. That word ‘thinginess’ is not in the lexicon just yet, but its meaning is clear. The field of Islamic art these days has no shortage of theorists, and there have been many attempts – not always happy ones – to make research into the world of Islamic art fit the Procrustean bed of theories generated by Western scholars for Western culture in its many expressions. Sheila and Jonathan
have not followed that path, and their work is blessedly free of that technical jargon which this series – *Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art* – consistently seeks to avoid. Hence ‘thinginess’ – practical hands-on engagement with Islamic art, whether in the form of architecture, painting, ceramics, metalwork, carpets or other media, including dates, provenance, patronage and measurements – is their preferred point of departure for the complexities that they then explore. The contributors to this book, I am pleased to say, have in general taken the same approach.

Edinburgh University Press readily accepted this title for their list, and its staff have taken a more than usual interest in this book, which is not surprising given that EUP has published one book after another by these two scholars, and given too Jonathan’s long service on the editorial board of *Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art*. Nicola Ramsey has kept the book on track despite long delays, Eddie Clark has handled efficiently the issues connected with its many illustrations, and Caitlin Murphy has taken on the cover design and rendered editorial assistance. Kirsty Woods deserves a particular vote of thanks for the many, many ways in which she has walked the extra mile to bring it to fruition. My old but still young friend Lel Gillingwater has copy-edited the text with her usual combination of lynx-eyed concentration and delicately attuned ear for how language should sound. And I am, as always, truly grateful to my wife, Carole, for her readiness to be a sounding board, a wise counsellor, a listening ear and a comfort in times of stress and frustration. She has travelled every mile of the road to publication with me; her companionship, her support, her unfailing love, have made all the difference.

Robert Hillenbrand
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