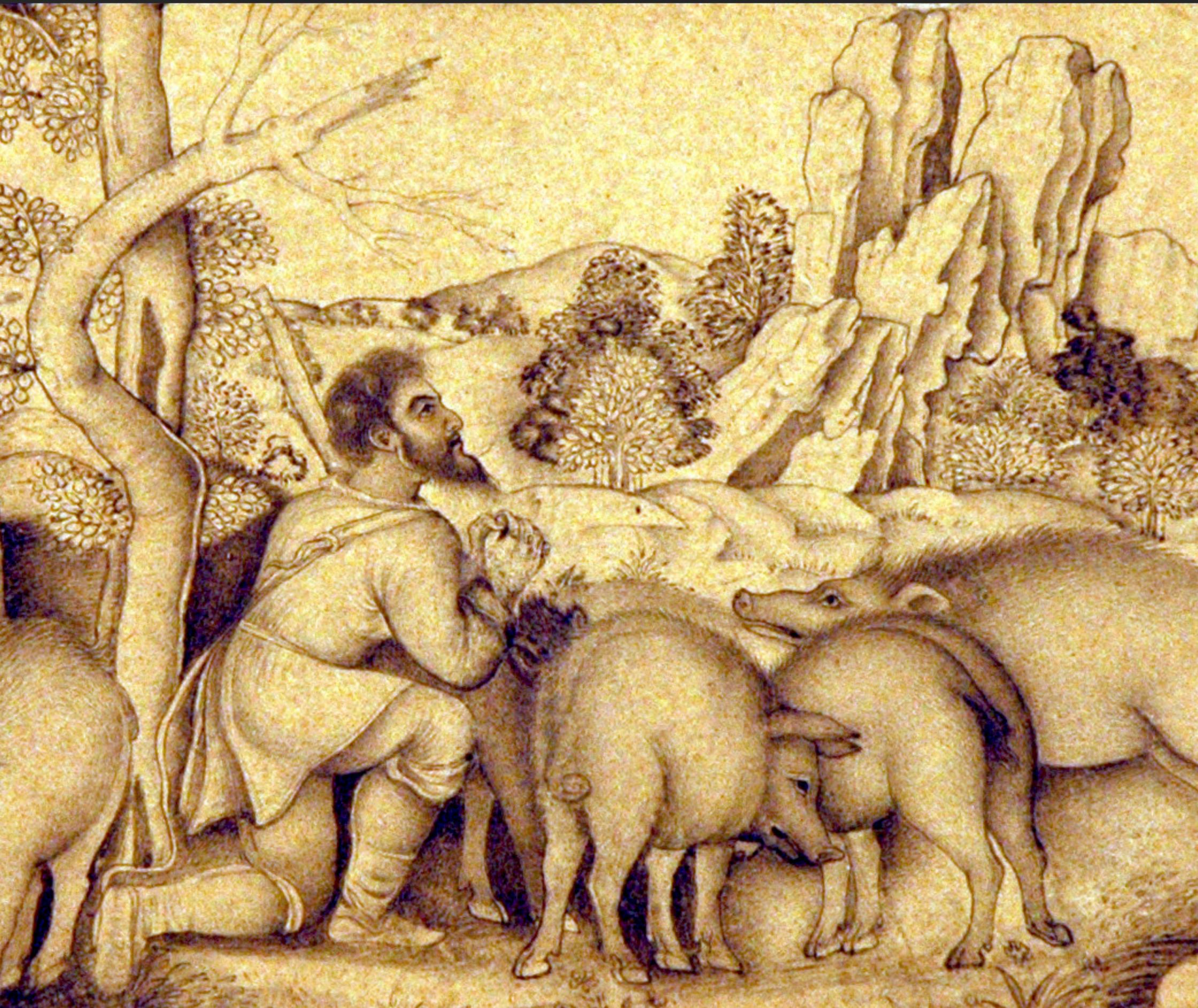
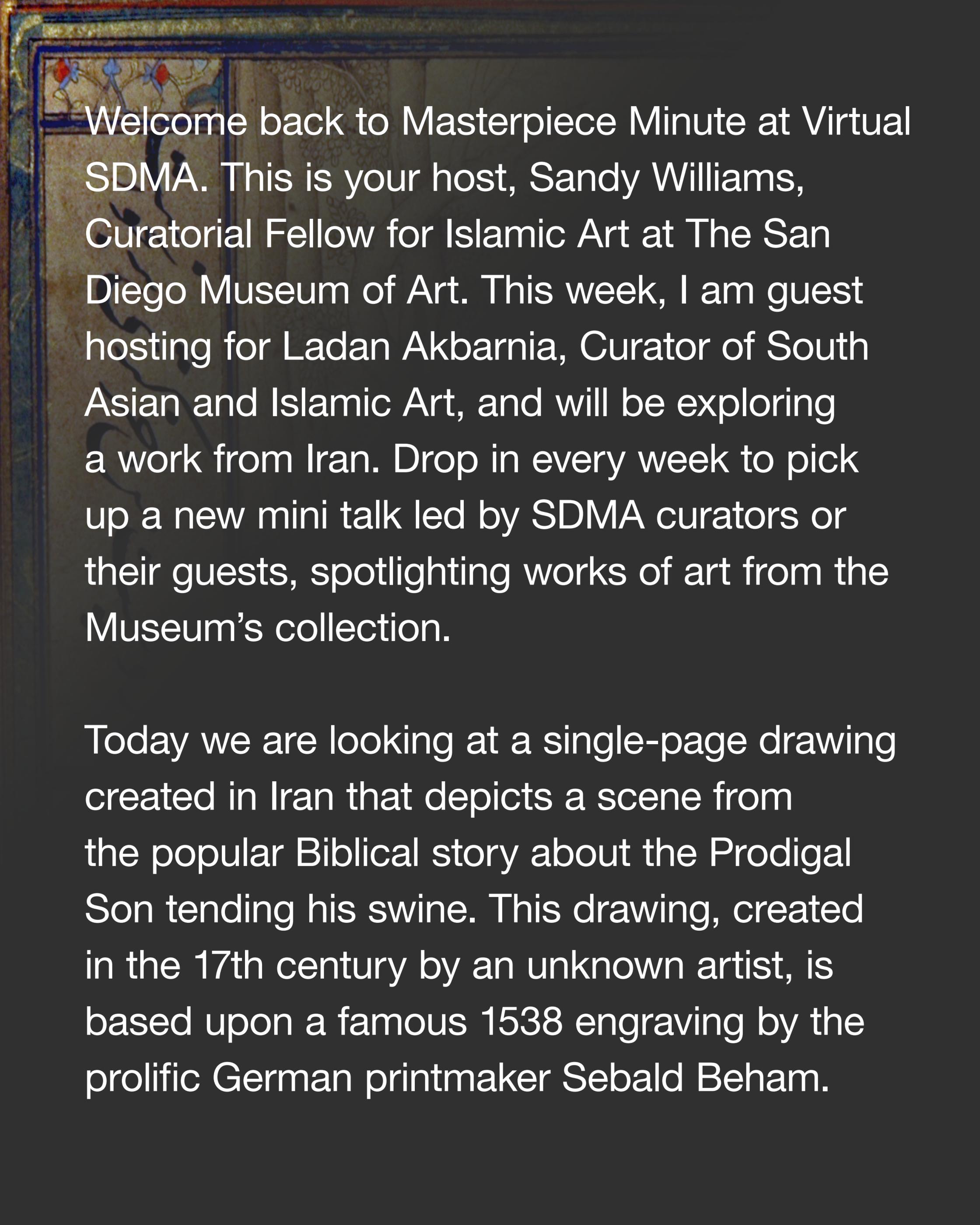


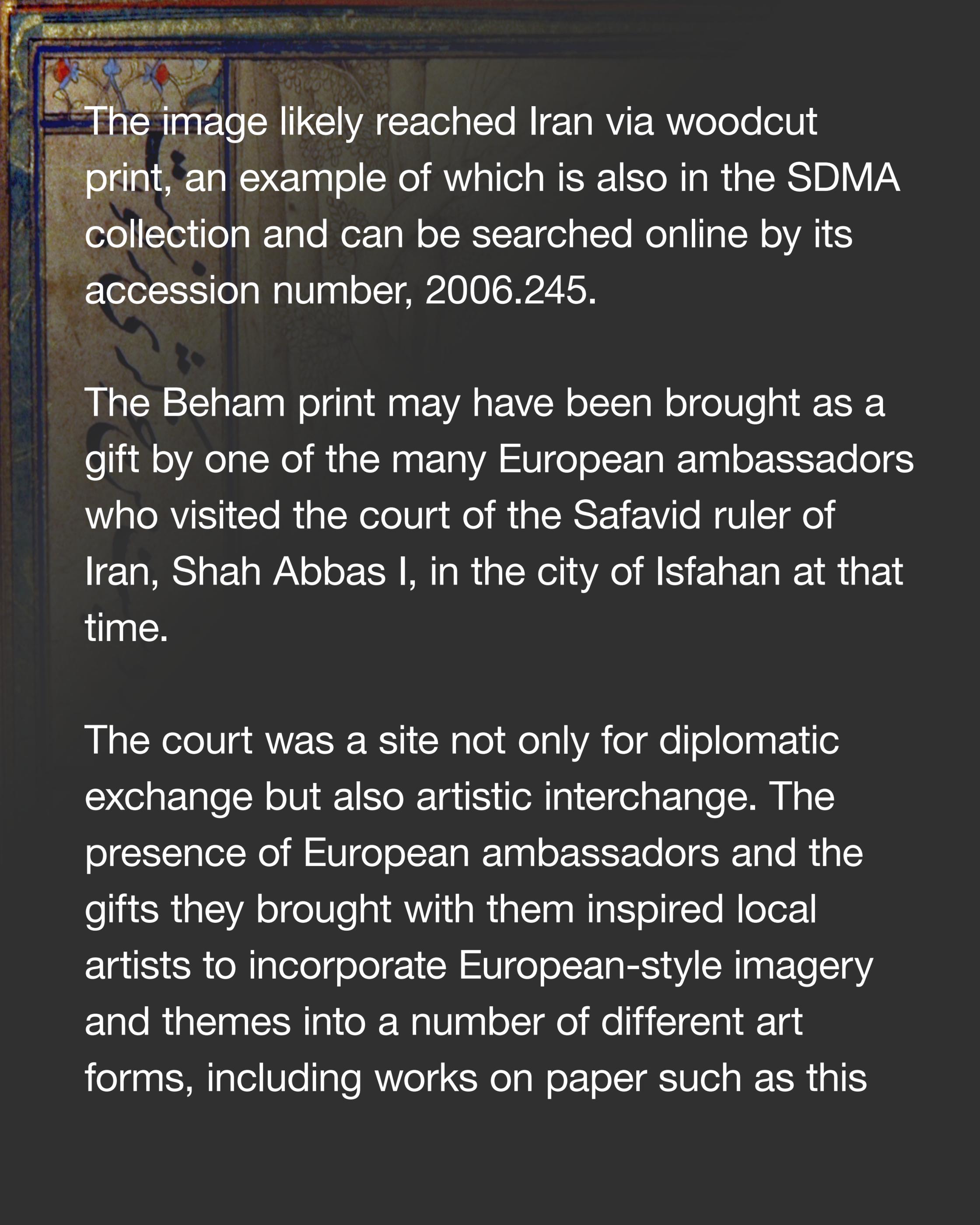
MASTERPIECE  
MINUTE





Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA. This is your host, Sandy Williams, Curatorial Fellow for Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. This week, I am guest hosting for Ladan Akbarnia, Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art, and will be exploring a work from Iran. Drop in every week to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators or their guests, spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

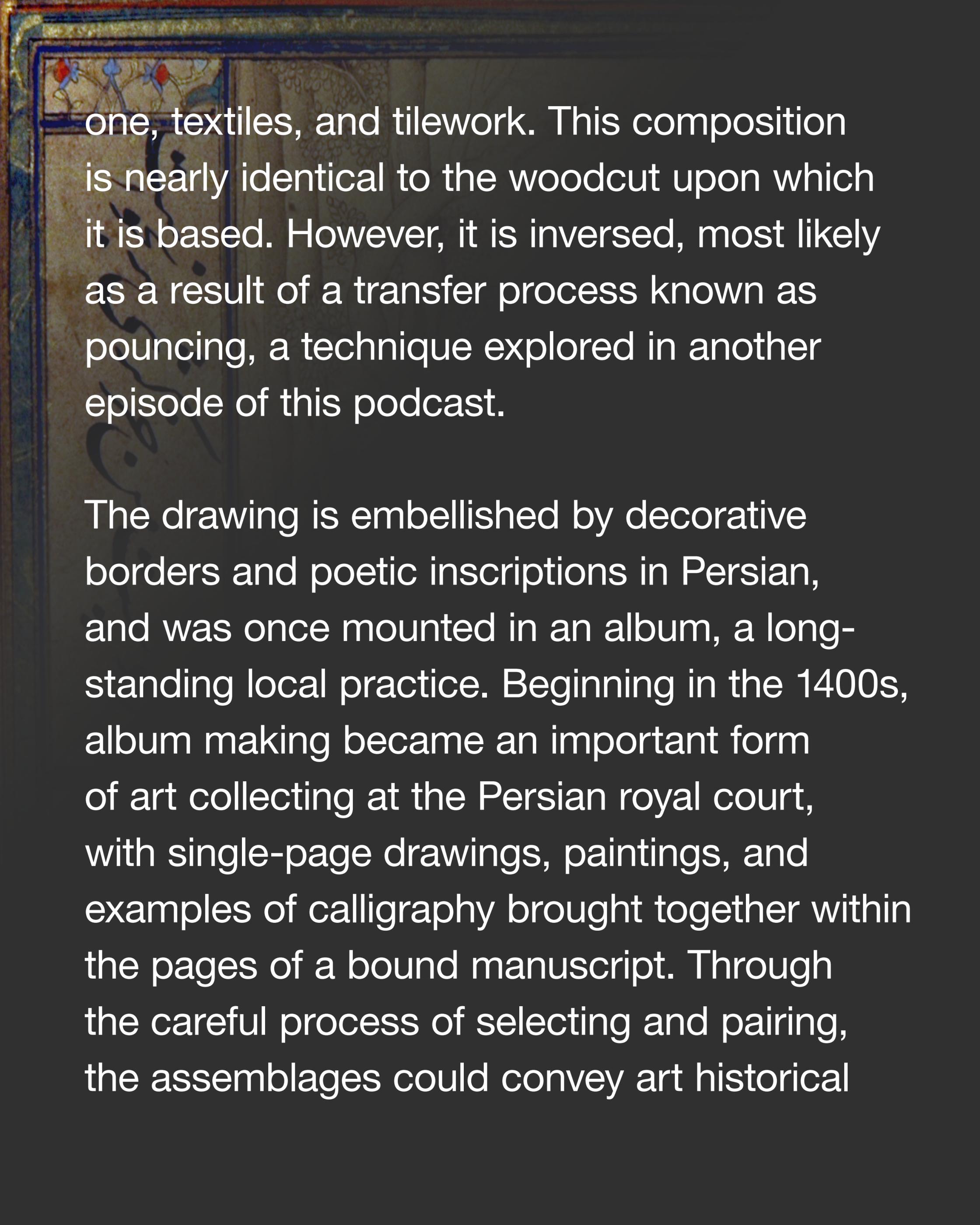
Today we are looking at a single-page drawing created in Iran that depicts a scene from the popular Biblical story about the Prodigal Son tending his swine. This drawing, created in the 17th century by an unknown artist, is based upon a famous 1538 engraving by the prolific German printmaker Sebald Beham.



The image likely reached Iran via woodcut print, an example of which is also in the SDMA collection and can be searched online by its accession number, 2006.245.

The Beham print may have been brought as a gift by one of the many European ambassadors who visited the court of the Safavid ruler of Iran, Shah Abbas I, in the city of Isfahan at that time.

The court was a site not only for diplomatic exchange but also artistic interchange. The presence of European ambassadors and the gifts they brought with them inspired local artists to incorporate European-style imagery and themes into a number of different art forms, including works on paper such as this



one, textiles, and tilework. This composition is nearly identical to the woodcut upon which it is based. However, it is inversed, most likely as a result of a transfer process known as pouncing, a technique explored in another episode of this podcast.

The drawing is embellished by decorative borders and poetic inscriptions in Persian, and was once mounted in an album, a long-standing local practice. Beginning in the 1400s, album making became an important form of art collecting at the Persian royal court, with single-page drawings, paintings, and examples of calligraphy brought together within the pages of a bound manuscript. Through the careful process of selecting and pairing, the assemblages could convey art historical

narratives, visual metaphors, or aesthetic comparisons. Here two literary themes are brought together in the drawing of the Prodigal Son, as the Persian verses framing the work come from the *Bustan* (or “Orchard”), a collection of poems by the celebrated 13th-century Iranian poet Sa‘di.

Thank you for listening. This has been Sandy on Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA!

BALBOA PARK

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