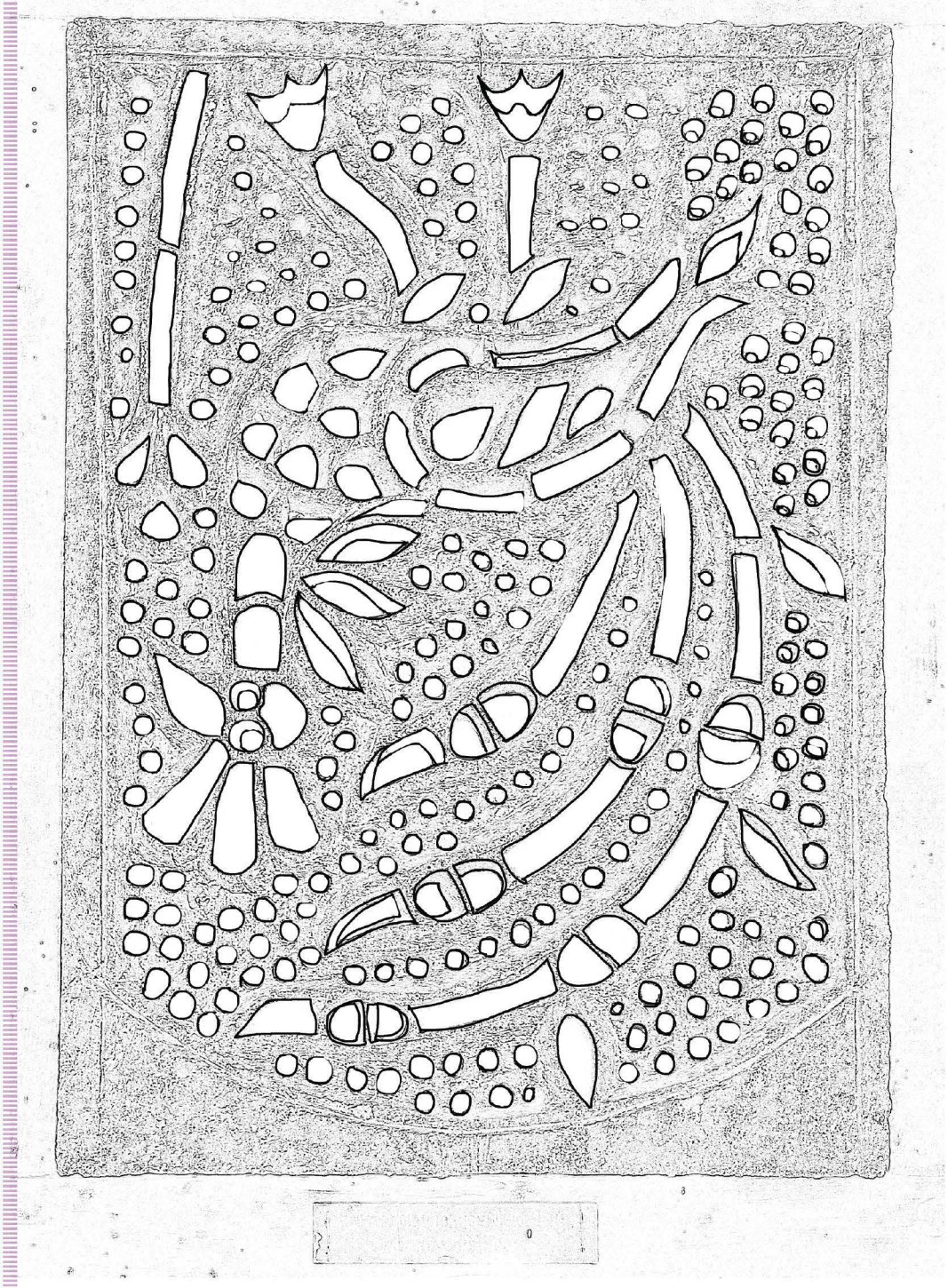

Mountain crease
Valley crease

https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/wunsch

Refracted Histories through Stained Glass:
19th c. Islamic Windows as a Prism into MIT's Past, Present, and Future

Maihaugen Gallery, Distinctive Collections
Spring 2025, Feb-June 2025
Curators: Gwendolyn Collago and Rami Alafandi

Imaging by Jenn Morris

Side A

Hidden within the Distinctive Collections at MIT reside many architectural elements from the earliest days of the Institute's architecture program, known as the Rotch Art Collection. Among these artworks is a set of striking windows of gypsum and stained-glass, likely dating to the late 18th- to 19th c. Ottoman empire.

Similar stained glass windows once graced the reception halls of elite homes, like al-Azam Palace in Damascus and Bayt al-Razzaz in Cairo. Such halls have quickly disappeared due to the ravages of time, war, and recent earthquakes. Yet even prior to these events, many Ottoman windows came to Europe and the United States decontextualized as architectural elements or as part of full Islamic rooms, which visitors still admire today at institutions like the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The preservation of the windows included collaborations with the DDC's AKDC and Wunsch Conservation Departments, MIT's Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and the Vitrocentre in Switzerland.

For this exhibition, we illuminate these historic windows. The contemporary artwork put in ialogue with this material captures the continued role of Islamic window ornament in art produced at MIT today, and beyond.

Peek inside!

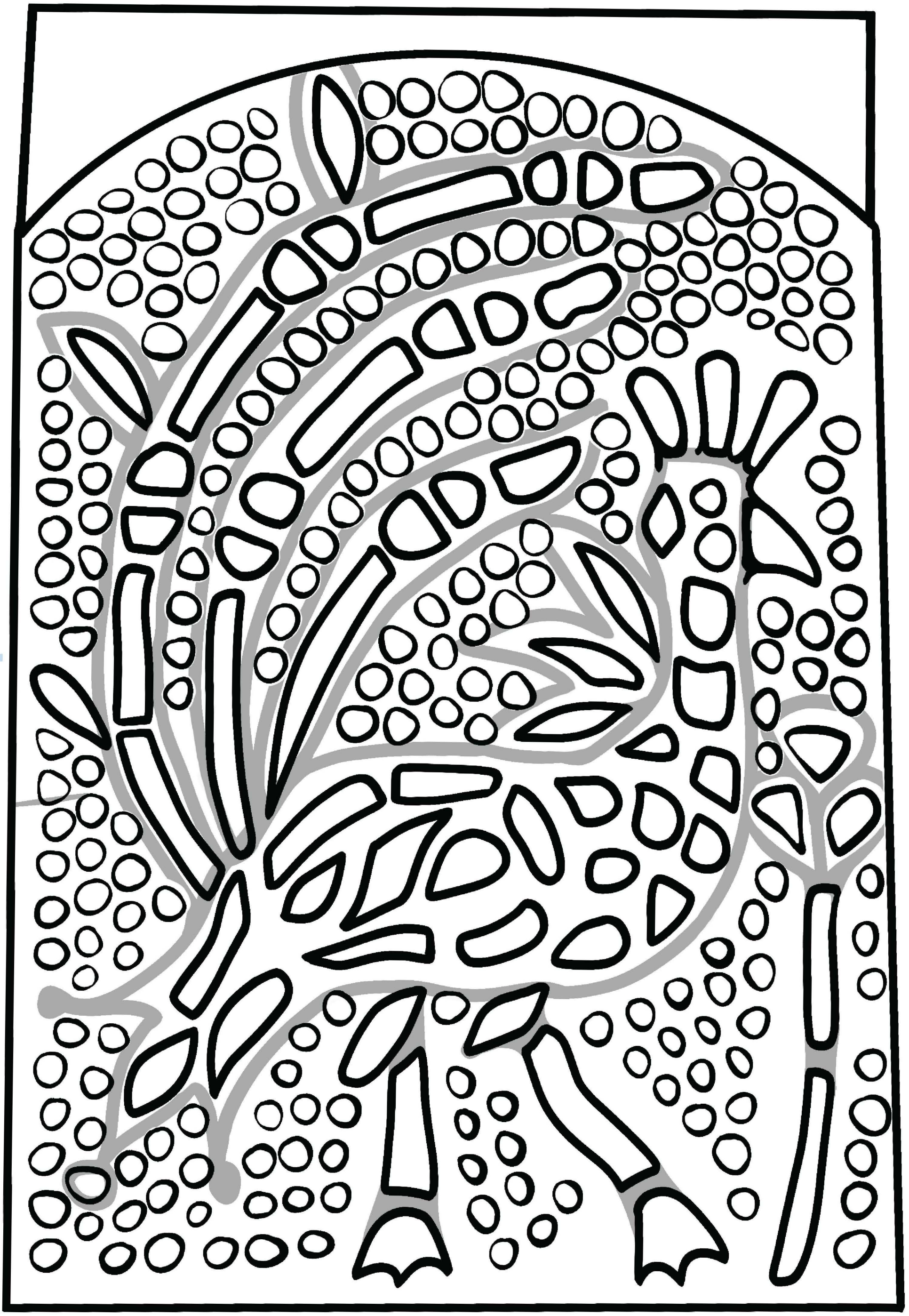

Illustration by Kai Alexis Smith

Side B