To whom it may concern,

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Fahimeh Ghorbani’s application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship for 2025-26. Fahimeh is in the final year of her PhD in Art History at the University of Toronto with a focus on Islamic art history. The expected date of her dissertation completion is summer of 2026. I am a member of her supervision committee and have known her in this capacity since she joined the UofT in 2020.

*Relevance of Research Topic*: Fahimeh’s project addresses the relationship between the ethics of *futuwwa* and material culture in Iran. Her research uniquely allows us to think about pre-modern material culture in Iran through the lens of the textual evidence of craft *futuwwatnames*, especially in the fields of ceramics and textiles. By so doing, she highlights a lesser known or used textual source and explores its potential to shed more light on the making of an object in its social and economic context. Her research aligns with the rise of interest in the manual aspects of craft and art making in the fields of art history, visual studies, and cultural anthropology. This focus on the maker and the making goes beyond the traditional description of crafts and craftmaking techniques exemplified as the pioneering works of Willem Floor amongst others. It rather explores the ethical and moral context within which the crafts were organized and how this framework influenced the production and, in some cases, the style of the final art object.

In addition to its important historical and art historical merit, Ghorbani’s project raises questions that are of interest for broader current areas of research including: crafts and their intergenerational transmission, the ‘heritagization’ of crafts, and the impact of modernization and secularization on traditional arts and crafts. Thus, her research will have broader implications and applications as she engages with peers in these areas and provide an excellent case study on crafts in pre-modern Iran.

*Timeline and financial needs*: The timeline suggested by Ghorbani for the completion of her dissertation is realistic and I trust that she will use the EOMI Fellowship to achieve her goal. She has already carried out most of her research and has one remaining chapter to write in addition to editing and revision. As you can see from her CV, she has received various awards and fellowships in recognition of her abilities, including a Connaught, that supported her studies until now. I strongly believe that taking away the pressure to find extra financial sources for this final year will enable her to focus on finishing on time. I believe that the EOMI Fellowship is one of the best (and few) available funding options for her.

Like all our Iranian PhD students, Fahimeh’s academic work and her ability to present her research in academic conferences was interrupted by war and visa issues. As a doctoral student, she should be able (at least in theory) to transmit her research through various academic circles including conferences and publications in art history, Iranian studies, Islamic studies, Middle Eastern studies, craft studies, museum studies, and the social and political roles of heritage. Over the last few years, Fahimeh has combined her research and writing with attempts to present her work at various peer-reviewed conferences. While she was successful at getting her proposals accepted, in a few cases she faced visa issues that sometimes resulted in her having to withdraw when conferences did not offer an online option (for example, the Historians of Islamic Art, 2025).

*Excellence in Research and Writing*: Fahimeh’s research is both exciting and innovative. It also bridges the use of textuality in art history beyond ‘reading the inscriptions.’ She is uniquely suitable to undertake this project and has the required academic background (MA in Art History), the language skills to carry out this research (Persian and Arabic), as well as the intimate knowledge of the art and craft through her curatorial museum experience. She is a committed and driven researcher intent on doing the best and using each inquiry as a learning opportunity. Her research is coupled with a clear writing style that has evolved over the past few years. I have no doubt that she will complete her PhD, will do that within the assigned time, and produce excellent research. I wholeheartedly recommend her to you and hope that her application will meet your approval.

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