

Press Release



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Newark Museum Exhibition Showcases Extraordinary Holdings of Islamic Art

Wondrous Worlds: Art & Islam Through Time & Place February 12 – May 15, 2016

NEWARK: Bringing together both historic and contemporary objects from its diverse collections—Asian, African, American and the decorative arts of Europe—the Newark Museum’s winter 2016 feature exhibition will showcase the history and breadth of Islamic art.

More than 100 works on display in *Wondrous Worlds: Art & Islam Through Time & Place* reflect aspects of faith, culture and everyday life of Muslims across the world and throughout the ages. The exhibition opens February 12 and runs through May 15, 2016.

The exhibition features works in nearly all media, including carpets, costumes, jewelry, ceramics, glassware, metalworks, prints, paintings and photographs. Contemporary works from artists such as Rachid Koraichi and Victor Ekpuk, and modern day calligraphy by Hassan Massoudy will be shown with pieces dating back to the 9th-century. Highlights range from dazzling lustrewares of Iran and Spain to delicate prayer rugs from Turkey and India, as well as *Harem #1* from the bi-national Moroccan-American photographer Lalla Essaydi and a majestic pair of early-20th-century Egyptian applique tent hangings—measuring 10 feet high and 6 feet wide—that were acquired in Egypt in 1929 by John Cotton Dana, the Newark Museum’s founding director and museum education pioneer.

“John Cotton Dana focused on making relevant connections between objects and people’s lives, while providing inspiration to artists, artisans and makers across disciplines,” said Steven Kern, Museum Director and CEO. “Through this exhibition, our audiences will gain a more nuanced understanding and appreciation for Islamic art along with other multi-cultural art forms they may encounter in the future.”

The exhibition opens with a world map populated with select items that demonstrate the intercontinental reach of the *Dar al-Islam* or Islamic World—touching all continents except Antarctica.

“Most Islamic art exhibitions focus on works from the Middle East, North Africa or South Asia, but this exhibition includes a much larger scope. We will showcase works from Southeast Asia, the Americas as well as East and West Africa,” said Dr. Katherine Anne Paul, Curator of the Arts of Asia and lead curator of the exhibition. Kimberli Gant, Arts of Global Africa Mellon Foundation Curatorial Fellow, an assistant curator on the exhibition, as well as curators from other departments all have worked together to expand the scope of the project geographically and materially.

Wondrous Worlds opens with an introduction to the Five Pillars of Islam—Declaration of Faith, Daily Prayers, Charity, Fasting for Ramadan and the *Hajj* Pilgrimage—to provide context and a distinctive view into the function, artistry and cultural histories of the objects. The exhibition then expands upon five themes:

Internationalisms—Then and Now, highlights the long history of inter-continental trade and the role that the Hajj pilgrimage plays in promoting international interconnections. The trade of Turkish textiles to Morocco, English and Dutch textiles inspired by Indonesian prints that were exported to Africa, as well as a ceramics traded between China, Iran and Turkey are featured in this section.

Quran, Calligraphy and Book Arts delves into the power of the written word, not only through the Quran but also through histories and poetry written in diverse scripts representing different languages including Arabic, Farsi, Nsibidi, Turkish, and Urdu.

Hospitality: Fasting, Feasting and Fun, celebrates the domesticated arts. A *mise-en-scene* installation of a Moroccan feast will showcase a Rabat carpet, leather cushions, wooden screen and metal table settings. Glorious ceramics, paintings and musical instruments from other regions will also be highlighted.

Architecture and Its’ Offspring, glories in architectural legacies displayed in carpets, printed textiles, furniture, tile-works, and historic and contemporary photographs of India and Morocco.

Body Beautiful: Costumes, Fashion and Faith positions silk, velvet and sequined costumes and textiles alongside fabulous jewelry fashioned from diamonds, pearls, emeralds, jade, gold and silver.

The exhibition is supported in part by the Coby Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the NJ Council on the Humanities.

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