

NEWSLETTER



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As never happened before, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) for the first time had to close its doors: what a sad time for all of us. Our main intention is to keep everyone including our staff and visitors safe and to help our country in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are suspending all our activities as well as postponing all our scheduled events and exhibitions until further notice. We appreciate all the support that we have received through our website and social media channels. It remains important for us to rely on your support and understanding during this unprecedented period. Meanwhile, we will try to keep our social media posts active to engage and reach out to our friends and continue in celebrating Islamic cultural achievements together.

What we can assure you is that we are working hard to make our comeback worthwhile. New programmes, workshops, lectures and exhibitions are being currently prepared. The coming phase will be rewarding and very soon the pulse of the museum will return.

I hope this e-newsletter will reach all of you safely and that you will enjoy reading about our activities in the past quarter.

With this I offer you and your families safe and warmest wishes. To our Muslim readers, I wish you none but patience and perseverance in welcoming the blessed month. *Ramadan Mubarak.*

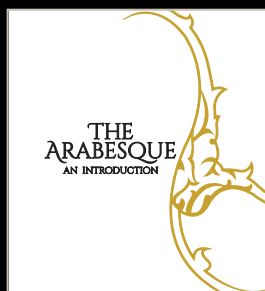
Syed Mohamad Albukhary



'Huwa II', cast bronze sculpture by Nassar Mansour, collection of Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

EVENTS CALENDAR

18th OCT 2019 – TBC



Exhibition:
The Arabesque: An Introduction
The British Museum

21st JAN 2020 – TBC

Exhibition:
An Introduction to Islamic Calligraphy
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



16th FEB 2020 – TBC



Exhibition:
The Coin Chronicles: Numismatics of the Islamic World
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

TBC

Exhibition:
Inspired by the East: How the Islamic world influenced Western Art
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



AN INTRODUCTION TO CALLIGRAPHY



Kufic, Naskh, Thuluth, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tawqi, Riqā', Nasta'liq, Diwani and Maghribi scripts are among the multitudes of calligraphic style that visitors get to enjoy at the **An Introduction**

to Islamic Calligraphy exhibition which had opened its doors to the public on 21st January 2020 at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM).

The various scripts were developed over the years by prominent exponents and were used as ornaments in works of art to glorifying the Word of God. Calligraphy plays a vital role in the design of both religious and everyday arts and crafts while at the same time developing itself as a distinctive visual culture inspired by Islam.

Islamic calligraphy not only reflects visual aesthetics but it is also a reflection of the myriad cultures of various Muslim communities. The exhibition showcases various artefacts of different regions and periods throughout Islamic civilisation. Among the masterpieces on display is the *sitarah*, a curtain which was commissioned by the Ottoman ruler, Sultan Abdul Majid (r. 1839-1861 AD), as a gift for the Prophet's tomb in Medina. The exhibition gallery is divided into four sections: Word of God, The Art of Calligraphy, Beauty in Diversity and Contemporary Calligraphy.

THE COIN CHRONICLES: NUMISMATICS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD



With bitcoins, e-wallets and other online transactions, people might think coins are fast becoming irrelevant and perhaps its usage is only confined to vending machines. However, the coins and other items in *The Coin Chronicles: Numismatics of the Islamic World* photography exhibition, showcases stunning coins as well as an amazing amount of information about the history of Islamic art and civilisation.

The exhibition explores the history of coins from Muslim dynasties in relation to the expansion of political influence, power, religion and the significance of Islamic art.

In the early centuries of the Islamic coinage, coins were struck with texts that often mention names, providing a hint of the hierarchy of power, which sometimes include the names of the local governor up to the caliph. The inclusion of the ruler's name onto the coin and in the Friday prayer sermons (*khutbah*) served in their time as proof of who the actual ruler was. The reference to the hierarchy of rulers in the Friday prayers served as a verbal tool, whereas the names on the coins served as a visual tool that was frequently reproduced to remind who the present rulers were.

The people in the Arab regions mainly accepted and used Byzantine and Sassanian coins prior to the arrival of Islam. The

first truly recognised Islamic coin was introduced during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the fifth ruler of the Umayyad dynasty, who inscribed the *shahadah* (proclamation of faith) in his coins. Along with the *shahadah*, generally, the early coins would have Quranic verses and the names of the first four Caliphs inscribed upon it. Alongside these inscriptions there would also be a prominent marking of the name of the ruler, his titles, date in the Hijra era, regal year of the ruler and the name of the mint from which the coin was struck.

As Islam spread beyond the Arab world, the design of Islamic coins was no longer confined to the Arabic design as it embraced the diverse cultures of the people who accepted Islam.

From the Kufic script in the early Islamic coins to the Mughal flexibility of the Persian *nastaliq* script with geometrical designs and floral arabesques, from the Ottoman *tughra* to the lion and sun symbol to the Malay world's *kijang* iconography, the exhibition showcases the development and adoption of various forms and symbols associated to the Islamic faith through the design of coins, as can be seen in the various types of calligraphy and iconography.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE CURRENCY NAMES IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD



Commodities with intrinsic value such as gold and silver are considered as currency in Islam. When Islam came, the Prophet did not change the preexisting currency in Mecca. He approved the use of dinar and dirham, the units of weight mentioned in the Qur'an. In this article, a brief etymological description of the most common currencies of the Islamic world is given based on different regions.

Central Asia

Manat: It is derived from the Latin *Monēta*, which refers to the goddess of memory in Roman mythology. *Monēta* is also the source of words *money* and *mint* in English and Roman languages. Manat is the currency of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

So'm/Som: It implies *pure gold* in Turkic languages. So'm/Som is the currency of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Somoni: It is the currency of Tajikistan. Somoni is named after the Samanid Amir of Transoxiana and Khorasan, Ismail Samani.

Tenge: It means a *set of scales* in the Kazakh language and is derived from the Turkic *teŋ-* which means *being equal* and/or *balance*. Tenge is the currency of Kazakhstan.

The Middle East and North Africa

Dinar: It is derived from the silver denarius coin of ancient Rome. The first dinar was minted by the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan

in 77 AH/696 AD. Dinar is the currency in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya and Tunisia.

Dirham: It derives from *drachma* (δραχμή), the name of the ancient Greek currency. Dirham is the currency of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates.

Lira: The word comes from the *Libra*, the basis of the monetary system of the Roman Empire. Lira is the currency of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

Rial: It is derived from the Latin *Regalis*, which means royal. Rial is the currency of Iran, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

South Asia and Southeast Asia

Ringgit: It is an outdated equivalent for the term *jagged* in the Malay language. Ringgit is the currency of Malaysia.

Rupee: It is originally a Sanskrit word derived from *rūpya*, which implies *wrought silver*, *a coin of silver*. The rupee is the currency of India, Indonesia, the Maldives and Pakistan.

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IAMM HIGHLIGHTS

A GIFT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF UZBEKISTAN THE FIRST STEPS IN THE UPCOMING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE MUSEUM AND THE EMBASSY OF UZBEKISTAN, KUALA LUMPUR



The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia was honored to receive H. E. Ambassador Ravshan Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Malaysia. His visit expresses and confirms the longstanding and sincere friendship between the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia and the Government of Uzbekistan.

During the visit, the IAMM's Scholar's Library received a set of large, limited edition publications printed and published in Uzbekistan to be shared with the scholarly community in Malaysia. Among the outstanding publications is a facsimile copy of the Tashkent Quran. The Tashkent Qur'an is among the oldest known Qur'anic folios inscribed following the codex of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan in the late 8th to early 9th centuries. It is inscribed in the Hijazi style on vellum.

This facsimile copy produced today carefully depicts each folio in its original size and form and all folios are placed in a magnificent box. This publication will not only give the researchers a chance to attempt to read through the verses and *surahs* which has no diacritical marks, but also to study the calligraphic script style and the few traces of illumination.

Today the original *mushaf* is safeguarded in the library of Hast-Imam in Tashkent. It is placed in a glass masterpiece case. The library houses over 3,000 manuscripts inscribed within the past 1,000 years and reflects the glory of Uzbek scientific achievements.

BE INSPIRED MODULAR PROGRAMME: MALAY WORLD TEXTILE HERITAGE

Date : From 1st May 2020
Venue : Wet Workshop, IAMM

The Malay World has been blessed with unique cultural traditions and heritage. Among the precious creations we are proud of is our extensive textile collections. Despite being in a small region, our ancestors have produced different styles and techniques in their textile productions. This workshop will highlight the rich history behind *tekat* embroidery and the hidden messages in batik sarong styles.

In this workshop, students will have the opportunity to study different types of Malay world textiles such as *songket*, *kelingan*, *telepuk* and *limar* in terms of their techniques, motifs and imagery. Adapting the 'Object-Based Learning' methodology, students will observe, analyse and communicate their findings with their group members before presenting in front of the class.

Students will be guided throughout the process of inquiry and interpretation of heritage in order for them to make conclusions from their own understanding. This session will challenge students to be inquisitive, creative and resourceful.



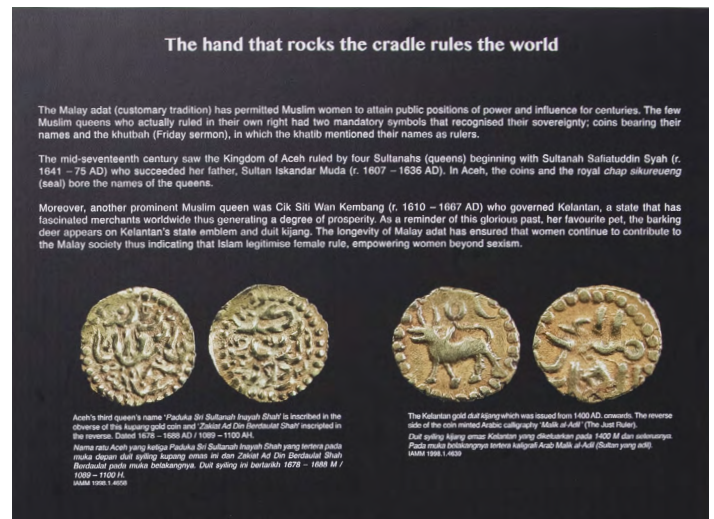
BE INSPIRED MODULAR PROGRAMME: CURRENCY MAKING

Date : From 1st May 2020
Venue : Wet Workshop, IAMM

Did you know that you could buy a cow with a single gold coin in the past? This is hard to imagine as the largest coin denomination nowadays cannot even buy us a litre of milk. This shows how the value of coins have changed throughout the ages. The change is related to the evolution of technology in creating 'relevant' currencies in different periods of time.

In this workshop, students will analyse the evolution of currency from the bartering system to cryptocurrency. They will have the chance to explore the geographical, economic and social factors that influence the types and appearances of currency making and later, tap into their creative thinking to develop and create their own currency.

Students will be divided into small groups of five. They will be given an assignment that challenges their analytical skills, team work effort and financial budgeting. Students will be asked to present their findings at the end of the workshop.



HIGHLIGHTS TOUR: IN ARABIC LANGUAGE

Date : From 1st June 2020

Venue : Quran and Manuscript and Malay World Gallery, IAMM

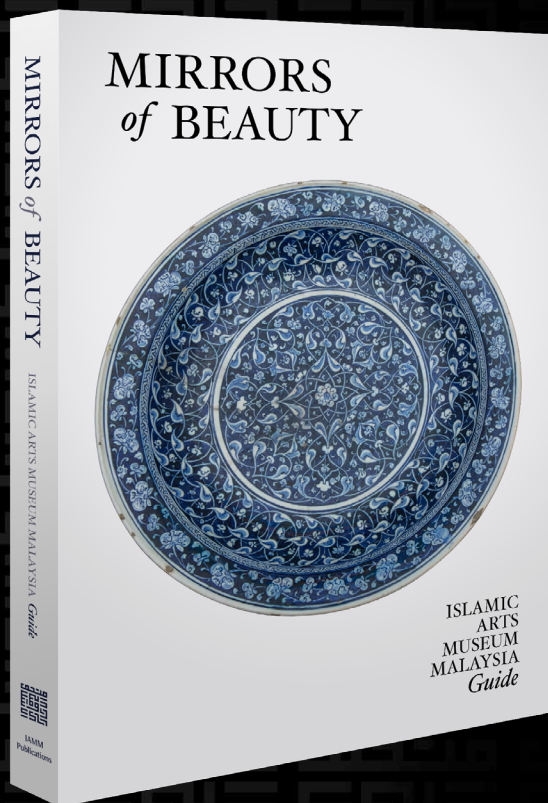
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia will be offering a highlight tour for the Qur'an and Manuscript and Malay World Gallery in the Arabic language starting from June 2020. The tour will be beneficial to learners of the language, ranging from the kindergarten, school to university levels.

In this highlight tour, the museum guide will provide the background story of the gallery and in-depth sharing session on some of the remarkable artefacts exhibited. This tour also aspires to attract students of Arabic Civilizations as the museum possesses remarkable collections from that region as well. This will be an educational experience for visitors to learn about historical terminologies, narratives and artistic value of the artefacts.

This tour can be requested by appointment. Each gallery will span about 20 minutes.



MIRRORS OF BEAUTY



The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia's upcoming publication, *Mirrors of Beauty: The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia Guide* offers a new lens as well as a luminous starting point to approach, enjoy and contemplate the wide-ranging collection of the museum. The book contains an illustrious selection of up to 150 outstanding objects from the IAMM collection, extensively covering works of calligraphy, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, architectural elements and many others. Totalling more than 200 pages, the approach offered through the book invites the reader to draw together an enticing close up of the continually diverse and interconnected cultures of Islamic societies across time, place and media. Elucidated across seven chapters of distinct yet interdependent themes, the lived spectrum of artistic practice, technical fluency and creative vision in various traditions of Islamic art are presented and contextualised through a range of introductory essays and full colour images, supplemented by comprehensive timelines and maps. This upcoming publication makes for an inviting and accessible accompaniment for any visitor to the riches of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia's collection.

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