



EMORY

MICHAEL C.
CARLOS
MUSEUM

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**CARLOS MUSEUM'S FALL EXHIBITION CELEBRATES MASTERWORKS OF
ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY AND THE QUR'AN**

ATLANTA, GA (August 3, 2010)—Michael C. Carlos Museum will host first-of-their-kind exhibitions in the Southeast highlighting Islamic calligraphy and the Qur'an, *Traces of the Calligrapher: Islamic Calligraphy in Practice, c. 1600–1900* and *Writing the Word of God: Calligraphy and the Qur'an*. These exhibitions explore Islamic art's quintessential art form, calligraphy, from August 28 through December 5, 2010. These stunning works of art will demonstrate the breadth and beauty of Islamic calligraphy and the traditions of its practice across several centuries and two continents.

Traces of the Calligrapher and *Writing the Word of God* examine the artistry of the tools used to create masterful works; highlight examples of calligraphy, such as practice exercises, manuscripts, and folios from the Qur'an; and explore the social prestige associated with calligraphy. Approximately 150 objects convey the elegance of the esteemed art form and reveal the skills of the many artisans—calligraphers, paper makers, gold beaters, illuminators, bookbinders, and metalworkers, to name a few—involved in the creation of the tools, the calligraphies, and the manuscript folios.

Traces of the Calligrapher maps the practice of the calligrapher from the 17th through the 19th centuries both through examples of calligraphy, as well as through tools of the trade. The objects in the exhibition come from Iran, Turkey, and India, and include reed pens, penknives (used to cut the nib of the pen), and *maktas* (used to hold the pen during this process), in addition to inkwells, scissors, burnishers, storage boxes, and writing tables.

The fine craftsmanship of these objects is revealed in the exquisite and detailed designs, which often employ precious materials such as jade, agate, ivory, ebony, silver, and gold. Calligraphic practice exercises and fair copies are displayed alongside these implements, and a video shows a master calligrapher at work. The objects and their output present a comprehensive overview of the intimate world of the calligrapher and the environment in which he worked. Dr. Gordon Newby, Emory's Professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, notes, "For Muslims, the writing of God's words, the Qur'an, is an act of worship in which devotion and beauty join in praise of God. In many biographies of Muslims, the number of Qur'an copies they made or had made are listed among their life's accomplishments."

Writing the Word of God is devoted to key developments of the Islamic scripts of distinct cultural areas, spanning from Spain and North Africa to greater Iran from the seventh to the 15th centuries. A selection of approximately 20 folios from now dispersed Qur'ans from the regions will illustrate the rich variety and system of scripts. *Traces of the Calligrapher: Islamic Calligraphy in Practice, c. 1600-1900* and *Writing the Word of God: Calligraphy and the Qur'an* were organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Harvard Art Museum. Support for the exhibitions in Atlanta has been provided by Emory University, The Ansary Foundation and The Honorable and Mrs. Hushang Ansary, Mr. and Mrs. Vahid Kooros, His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council for the Southeastern United States, Malani Jewelers, and Imperial Fez.

The Carlos Museum will develop a series of public and university educational programs to accompany the exhibitions, including lectures by visiting scholars and Emory faculty in the field of Islamic Studies and an artist in residency by calligrapher Aishah Elinor Holland. Bonnie Speed, Director of the Carlos Museum, said, "The Southeast has an unprecedented opportunity to experience rare artistic masterpieces through this exhibition and related programming. Islamic calligraphy, rich in its exquisite aesthetic and powerful in its social and religious significance, will be on view for our visitor's enjoyment, inspiration, and education."

About the Michael C. Carlos Museum

The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University collects, preserves, exhibits, and interprets art and artifacts from antiquity to the present in order to provide unique opportunities for education and enrichment in the community, and to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research at Emory University. The Carlos Museum has grown to become one of the Southeast's premier museums with major collections of Greek and Roman, Ancient Egyptian, Near Eastern, Nubian, Ancient American, African, and Asian art, as well as a collection of works on paper from the Renaissance to the present.

Location: 571 South Kilgo Circle, Atlanta, Georgia 30322, U.S.A. **Telephone:** 404-727-4282 **Fax:** 404-727-4292 **Hours:** Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday 12 noon - 4 p.m. (Closed on Mondays and university holidays)

Admission: \$8. Free for Carlos Museum members and Emory University faculty, students, and staff. Students, seniors, and children ages 6—17: \$6 (Children ages 5 and under: Free). **Public Tours:** Advanced booking required for weekday or weekend groups of ten or more. For reservations call 404-727-0519. Docent-led tours of the Museum depart from the Rotunda on Level One every Sunday at 2:30 p.m. during the Emory academic year (call 404-727-4282 to confirm).

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