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The Frick Pittsburgh to Host Series of Public Programs Alongside Islamic Art Exhibition

The ‘Treasured Ornament: 10 Centuries of Islamic Art’ exhibition will provide visitors with collected artifacts to appreciate authentic Islamic culture and traditions.

PITTSBURGH – Visitors to The Frick Pittsburgh will have the opportunity to participate in a series of public programs when a new exhibition opens next month, featuring exquisite, ornate objects that anchored everyday life in Muslim civilizations from antiquity to the 20th century in Southwest Asia, Northern Africa, and the Middle East, including present-day Iran, Syria, and Turkey.

The planned programs are part of the exhibition “**Treasured Ornament: 10 Centuries of Islamic Art**,” opening on August 17. Programs include a concert featuring the fusion of jazz and melodies of Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and the Balkans; a screening of the silent film “Grass: A Nation's Battle”, guided exhibition tours, and family-friendly artmaking opportunities. *A full description of each program is below.*

“This significant exhibition, featuring remarkable objects from the distinguished collection of Drs. Joseph B. and Omayma Touma, highlights the richness and diversity of Islamic art,” **said Elizabeth E. Barker, executive director of The Frick Pittsburgh.** “We are honored to share selections from their important collection with our visitors here in Pittsburgh.”

Composed of works of fine glassware, ceramics, metalwork, painting, weaving, and much more, “Treasured Ornament” shares 43 timeless treasures from a region where everyday life, history, and culture offer many parallels to our own. This ambitious collection offers us a rare opportunity for artistic exchange—a living bridge between cultures.

As **Dr. Joseph Touma**, who alongside his wife **Omayma** donated the pieces featured in the exhibition, wrote in the introduction to the exhibition’s catalog: “I can trace my interest in Islamic art to my childhood in Damascus, Syria, considered the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. The cultural and historic presences that surrounded me during childhood made me unconsciously aware of the beauty and diversity of Islamic art, history, and architecture. After years attending medical school and training in the United States, I rediscovered the uniqueness of the art of my youth, and it became my mission to develop a way to share it with others. As art is generally non-threatening and universal, *Treasured Ornament* has come to promote goodwill and peace in a time of upheaval.”

The Toumas’ collection traces the development and dissemination of styles and the borrowing and adaptation of motifs across cultures and centuries. The textiles, metalwork and ceramics exhibited in Pittsburgh demonstrate different techniques and media as well as a shared visual vocabulary emphasizing elaborate floral and geometric decoration, elegant calligraphy, and vibrant colors.

“Each object speaks to the culture in which it was produced as well as the universal values of creative expression, technical innovation, and the power of beauty—even in everyday objects—to uplift us,” said **Dawn Brean, Chief Curator & Director of Collections**.

This exhibition features works from the Touma Near Eastern Collection at the Huntington Museum of Art in West Virginia. Between 1991 and 2004, the Toumas donated more than 400 objects, ranging from antiquity to the 20th century and originating from the Middle East, Ottoman Turkey, Central Asian Republics, the Indian subcontinent, North Africa, and Moorish Spain to the Huntington Museum of Art. The collection highlights the multifaceted cultures of the region, encompassing pre-Roman, Roman, Greek, pre-Islamic, Islamic, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish civilizations.

Visitors will also find a learning and resource area within the exhibition. This space includes books on Islamic art, an interactive map of the region highlighting various dynasties and timelines, and opportunities to create art inspired by Islamic patterns found throughout the displays.

Library card holders in Allegheny County can visit “Treasured Ornament” for free with a RAD Pass. Sign up for a RAD pass and learn more at radpass.org.

“Treasured Ornament: 10 Centuries of Islamic Art” Public Programs

Friday, August 2 at 5:30 p.m.
Summer Fridays: Building Bridges Initiative

The Pittsburgh Builds Bridges initiative fosters diversity, inclusivity, and community connections through art, conversation, and awareness. Join artist Ebtehal Badawi, creator of the Pittsburgh Builds Bridges Initiative, for a community mural project at the Frick's Summer Friday event. The collaborative artwork will be displayed in the rotunda of the Frick Art Museum from August 17 through March 2025. Visitors can contribute their artistic expressions and reflect on the question, 'How do you build bridges?'

Thursdays and Saturdays starting August 22 at 2:00 p.m.
Guided Exhibition Tours

Guided tours of "Treasured Ornament" will offer visitors the chance to explore diverse objects celebrating the everyday life, history and culture of the Islamic world. Exhibition tours are free with exhibition admission and will be offered weekly on Thursdays and Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. starting August 22.

Friday, August 23
Summer Fridays: Middle Eastern Melodious Fusion

Enjoy an evening of dynamic elements and instrumental classics from the Middle East. Ishtar Vintage Bellydance Band brings you an organic fusion of jazz with the captivating melodies of Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and the Balkans. A donation of \$5 per adult is suggested.

Thursday, September 19 at 6:30 p.m.
Writing Workshop: Creative Expressions

Join artist, educator, and community organizer Luqmon Abdus-Salaam for a special writing workshop in the exhibition, "Treasured Ornament: 10 Centuries of Islamic Art". The objects and themes of the exhibition will serve as inspiration for a series of writing activities meant to spark creativity. No prior writing experience is necessary to participate! \$20 members; \$25 non-members and guests; \$10 students. Advance registration required.

Saturday, September 21 at 1:00 p.m.
Calligraphy Workshop

Turkish calligraphy artist Benjamin Aysan leads this workshop that teaches participants the basics of calligraphy and explores the history and traditions behind the centuries-old art form. Workbook and calligraphy pen included. \$35 members; \$45 non-members and guests; \$15 students.

Saturday, September 28 at 1:00 p.m.
Calligraphy Workshop

Turkish calligraphy artist Benjamin Aysan leads this workshop that teaches participants the basics of calligraphy and explores the history and traditions behind the centuries-old art form. Workbook and calligraphy pen included. \$35 members; \$45 non-members and guests; \$15 students.

Saturday, October 5 at 10:00 a.m.
Treasured Ornament Discovery Day

Art lovers of all ages are invited to experience, appreciate, and create art inspired by “Treasured Ornament”! Visitors will enjoy family-friendly artmaking opportunities and meet local artists who will help to bring the exhibition to life.

Activities run from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm; Free admission to the “Treasured Ornament” exhibition is available through RAD Pass at radpass.org. No pre-registration required to participate in artmaking activities.

Saturday, October 5 at 2:00 p.m.
Film Screening: *Grass: A Nation’s Battle*

Join us for a unique experience as we pair the intricate beauty of objects in the “Treasured Ornament” exhibition with the captivating drama of the silent film “Grass: A Nation's Battle”, a classic adventure film by the makers of King Kong. This heart-stopping cinematic journey, filmed in 1924, chronicles the excitement and unparalleled drama in the migration of the Bakhtiari tribe of Persia (now Iran), and includes live musical accompaniment by Iranian santur player Mahtab Nadalian. This film is presented as part of the 2024 Pittsburgh Silent Film Festival with commentary by PSFS founder Chad Hunter. pittsburghsilentfilmsociety.org

Runtime 82 minutes, followed by Q&A. Advance program registration and pre-payment required. \$15 members; \$20 non-members and guests, \$5 students. Ticket purchase does not include admission to the “Treasured Ornament” exhibition – Free admission to the “Treasured Ornament” exhibition is available through RAD Pass at radpass.org.

Saturday, October 19 at 7:00 p.m.
Resonance of Tradition: A Fusion of Islamic Art and Music Across the Ages

Ten centuries of Islamic art meet the shimmering melodies of traditional Persian and Turkish music in this collaborative event inspired by our current special exhibition, “Treasured Ornament”. The Carpe Diem String Quartet and Persian santur master Dr. Dariush Saghafi will perform selections by celebrated composers including Shahab Pâranj, Reza Vali, and Erberk Eryilmaz, accompanied by beautiful animation of Persian calligraphy by designer Omid

Nemalhabib. A pre-performance discussion will be led by WQED Artistic Director Jim Cunningham.

\$35 members; \$50 non-members and guests, \$15 students. Ticket price includes exhibition admission, a glass of wine (21+), and after the performance meet-and-greet with the musicians. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are available at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

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About The Frick Pittsburgh

The Frick Pittsburgh offers authentic experiences with art, history and nature that inspire and delight. Visitors of all ages and backgrounds are warmly welcomed to explore collections of fine and decorative arts, vehicles, historic objects, and buildings — including Clayton, the Frick family home and only intact Gilded Age mansion remaining from Pittsburgh's Millionaire's Row — left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Helen Clay Frick, daughter of noted industrialist and art collector Henry Clay Frick. Alongside these treasures, the Frick offers an active schedule of temporary exhibitions and programs on its 10-acre garden campus in the heart of Pittsburgh's East End. Information about The Frick Pittsburgh is available online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.