



Major traveling exhibition of islamic art and culture organized by Focus-Abengoa Foundation premieres in Seville, Spain, this October

- *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World.*
- Unites 150 rarely seen objects from around the world to explore importance of light.
- In islamic aesthetics and knowledge from the 9th – 20th centuries.
- Exhibition will travel to Dallas Museum of Art in Spring 2014 following its debut in Seville.

June 27, 2013 – The Focus-Abengoa Foundation today announced the organization of a major traveling exhibition of Islamic art and culture, spanning more than ten centuries and including artworks and secular objects from throughout the Islamic world, which will open in Seville this October, and travel to the Dallas Museum of Art, USA in spring 2014. Featuring 150 objects from public and private collections in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the United States, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* will explore the use and meaning of light in Islamic art and science, and demonstrate how light is a unifying motif in Islamic civilizations worldwide. The exhibition, organized and developed by Islamic art and culture expert Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, will include a significant number of objects that have never before been presented to the public, from artworks to rare manuscripts and scientific objects. Following the exhibition's debut in Seville at the Focus-Abengoa Foundation's historic 17th-century building, the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes, from October 25, 2013, to February 9, 2014, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* will be on view at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas from March 30, 2014, to June 29, 2014.

Deriving its title from the Arabic word for light in both the physical and metaphysical sense, *Nur* will be organized thematically into two major sections: an art section showcasing innovations in artistic technique that enhance the effect of light, and a section focusing on scientific fields which are related to light or contributed to enlightenment. Encompassing works dating from the 9th through early 20th centuries, and originating from a wide geographical area, from Spain to Central Asia, the exhibition will include manuscripts illuminated with gold and color pigments, ceramics painted with lustre, inlay metalwork decorated in silver and gold, and objects made from precious and semi-precious stones. Scientific objects featured in the exhibition include equatorial sundials, astrolabes, and anatomical instruments, all of which are examples of the Islamic world's influence on the Renaissance and scientific thought. In addition to showcasing the use of light in Islamic art



and science, *Nur* will demonstrate how Spain has bridged the Islamic world and Europe, serving as an entry point for Islamic discoveries in fields such as medicine, geometry, and astronomy, as well as specific inventions such as the lustre technique.

“For centuries, Spain has served as a bridge between Islamic and Western civilizations. The Focus-Abengoa Foundation’s organization of this traveling exhibition continues this tradition by allowing visitors to Seville and Dallas to discover themes and see works from the Islamic world, some of which have never been exhibited before,” said Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, the exhibition’s project director and Senior Advisor of Islamic Art at the Dallas Museum of Art. “The eleven centuries and seventeen countries represented in *Nur* demonstrate not only the tradition of skill and craftsmanship across the Islamic world, but also the sheer beauty that Islamic culture has produced and Islamic civilization’s contribution to humanity’s pool of knowledge.”

The exhibition will begin with a selection of objects that visually express the idea of light in their design, including a bowl from late 13th-century Iran and a ceremonial shield from 17th century India or Persia, both of which feature suns at their centers emanating stylized rays of light. It will also explore the idea of light as a shared metaphor, with pieces representing Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures. Screens throughout the exhibition will present the rich details of the objects on view, highlighting the visual language and vocabulary of Islamic art and its multi-layered nature, with ornate flourishes and calligraphic writing. The screens also bring to the fore the synthesis of the exhibition’s themes, adding to the didactic dimension.

The exhibition will include artworks and secular objects from institutional and private collections, including a significant number of objects from Spanish collections that will be traveling to the United States for the first time for the Dallas Museum of Art’s presentation of *Nur*. Exhibition highlights include:

- A series of 11th-century crystal chess pieces from the Museo da Catedral in Ourense, Spain, which have never before left the cathedral;
- 19th-century anatomical illustrations from Iran, which have never before been exhibited to the public;
- Pieces from the 13th-century renowned Jazira, Mosul, and Khorasan schools of metalwork, inlaid with gold and silver;
- Four pages, displayed together for the first time, from the “Blue Koran” of 9th-10th-century Tunisia, the only existing Koran manuscript on blue parchment;
- A 19th-century work on paper, two meters long, from Iran, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which has never before been exhibited;



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- The oldest surviving illustrated manuscript written in Arabic on any subject, a manuscript on paper of Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi's "Treatise on the Fixed Stars," dating from 1009-1010; and
- 10th-century architectural elements from Madina al-Zahra, the palace city near Cordoba.

A global leader in developing renewable energies, Abengoa, along with the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, chose to organize their first traveling exhibition about the subject of light to raise awareness about its importance in science, art, and culture.

"Abengoa's leadership in solar energy and the Islamic history of the city of Seville and Andalusia are the fundamental elements that led us to create this exhibition. Sabiha's vision in *Nur* explores the universality and the constancy of light in Islamic art and culture, while delving into our conscience and strengthening our ability to appreciate beauty and the aesthetic inherent in these pieces", says Anabel Morillo León, director general of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation. "As we increase our presence in the United States and extend our cultural reach, we are delighted to partner with the Dallas Museum of Art with the forthcoming presentation of *Nur*."

"We are pleased to be partnering with the Focus-Abengoa Foundation to bring *Nur* to Dallas and to share with our audiences the tremendous breadth, innovative quality, and artistry of Islamic material culture," said Maxwell L. Anderson, the DMA's Eugene McDermott Director. "*Nur* exemplifies the DMA's commitment to broadening and enriching the experiences we offer our community. We look forward to continuing to enhance the presence of Islamic art in our exhibitions and collections through our international collaborations and cultural exchange program, DMX, led by Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir."

Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir

Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir is a writer, artist, and expert in Islamic art whose work is concerned with bridging cultural divides and spurring international dialogue. Over the past four years, Dr. Al Khemir has been working with the Focus-Abengoa Foundation on the development of *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World*. In 2012, Dr. Al Khemir was appointed as the first Senior Advisor of Islamic Art at the Dallas Museum of Art, where she is serving a three-year term supporting the museum in building partnerships with art institutions around the globe. Prior to her appointment at the Dallas Museum of Art, she was the project director and catalogue author for the exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*, the largest traveling survey of Islamic art ever assembled in the United States (2012). Dr. Al Khemir previously served as the first Director of the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar, from 2006-2008, and as its Chief Curator from 2003-2006. She also organized and wrote the catalogue (in French, Arabic, and English) for the Louvre exhibition *From Córdoba to Samarkand*:



Masterpieces from the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (2006), the first museum presentation of some of the pieces that would become the core of the museum's permanent collection.

Dr. Al Khemir has taught courses in Islamic art at the British Museum and has consulted for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in the same field. She lectures worldwide on Islamic art and various cultural topics. She has produced television documentaries broadcast on Channel 4, U.K., published two novels, and illustrated books, including a book jacket for Nobel Prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz. In 2008 she was honored in Washington, D.C., by the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities. A native of Tunis, she received her B.A. in English literature from the University of Tunis and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Islamic art and archaeology from London University.

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation was created in 1982 as a result of the cultural work begun in 1972 by Abengoa with the publication of the works *Temas Sevillanos* (Themes of Seville) and *Iconografía de Sevilla* (Iconography of Seville). A collection of documents, books and engravings on the Kingdom of Seville and by Sevillian authors was created during the same period. This initial cultural work showed Abengoa's directors the importance of the company's involvement in activities that directly benefit society, beyond the firm's core technology work, which led to the creation of the Seville Cultural Fund Foundation. The Hospital de los Venerables, a 17th century monument and the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation in Seville, has housed the Diego Velázquez Research Centre, a leading institution for studying and disseminating the Baroque era and the Sevillian period of this universally renowned artist, following the acquisition of Velázquez's *Santa Rufina* by the Foundation in 2007.

The Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) ranks among the leading art institutions in the country and is distinguished by its innovative exhibitions and groundbreaking educational programs. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 22,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the vibrant Arts District of downtown Dallas, the Museum welcomes more than half a million visitors annually and acts as a catalyst for community creativity, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse spectrum of programming, from exhibitions and lectures to concerts, literary events, and dramatic and dance presentations. In January 2013, the DMA returned to a free general admission policy and launched DMA Friends, the first free museum membership program in the country.



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