



DMA is the U.S. Exclusive Venue of a Major International Traveling Exhibition of Islamic Art and Culture, Organized by Focus-Abengoa Foundation

- *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**



Shield Boss, India or Persia, 17th Century, Steel and gold,
Furusiyya Art Foundation, Liechtenstein

Dallas, TX, March 2014 – From March 30 through June 29, 2014, the Dallas Museum of Art will host *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World*, an exhibition organized by Focus-Abengoa Foundation. The DMA is the U.S. exclusive venue for this international touring exhibition of Islamic art and culture. Critically acclaimed by such publications as *The Financial Times* and the *International New York Times* when it premiered in Seville, Spain, in October, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* spans more than ten centuries and features 150 works of art and objects from public and private collections in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the United States. The exhibition explores the use and meaning of light as a unifying motif in Islamic art and science worldwide. Organized and developed by Islamic art and culture expert and the DMA's Senior Advisor for Islamic Art Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, *Nur* will include a significant number of objects that have never before been presented to the public, from artworks to rare manuscripts and scientific objects.

“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.”

“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.”

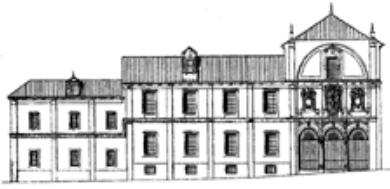
Deriving its title from the Arabic word for light in both the physical and metaphysical sense, *Nur* is organized thematically into two major sections: an art section showcasing innovations in artistic technique that enhance the effect of light, and a section focusing on scientific fields which are related 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 includes 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.

“*Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* allows visitors 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 for 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 begins 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 also explores the idea of light as a shared metaphor, with pieces representing Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures. Screens throughout the exhibition 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 includes 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;



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- A 19th-century work on paper, two meters long, from Iran, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which has never before been exhibited;
- 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.

Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World requires a special exhibition ticket of \$8 for adults, with discounts for students, military personnel, and seniors; DMA Partners and children 11 and under are free.

Dr. Khemir will discuss *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* during a special exhibition lecture on Thursday, April 3. The Museum will also celebrate the exhibition during the April 18 Late Night with an evening of performances, talks, tours, and more. Dr. George Saliba, professor of Arabic and Islamic science at Columbia University will examine the ritual of Islamic prayer and how light and shadow play a crucial role in this ritual on May 8. Additional programs, including lectures and gallery talks, will be scheduled throughout the run of the exhibition. For dates, prices, and details, visit DMA.org.

To mark the exhibition, the Focus-Abengoa Foundation has produced a 304-page full-color scientific publication, written by Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir and published by Ediciones El Viso America. *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* is organized by the Dallas Museum of Art and the Focus-Abengoa Foundation. Air transport is provided by American Airlines.

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, since the acquisition of Velázquez's *Santa Rufina* by the Foundation in 2007. The focus on this crucial era of the Golden Age is complemented with the legacy from Professor Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, bequeathed to the Foundation in 2011. It comprises his library, photo library, personal archive and art collection and is being catalogued to help create a library specialising in the art and culture of the Baroque period.

Past exhibitions organized by Focus-Abengoa include *Recovering Antiquity in Andalusia*, *Three Centuries of Drawing in Seville*, and *El Greco: Known and Rediscovered*. *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* marks the first time the Focus-Abengoa Foundation is organizing an internationally traveling exhibition. <http://focus.abengoa.es/>

The Dallas Museum of Art



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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.

The Dallas Museum of Art is supported, in part, by the generosity of DMA Partners and donors, the citizens of Dallas through the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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