

Dallas Museum of Art Mounts a New Installation of One of the World's Leading Islamic Art Collections

Installation Comprises More than 100 Works of Art in New Dedicated Gallery



Dallas, TX — April 10, 2017 — One of the world's most important private collections of Islamic art will receive the largest public presentation in its history when the Dallas Museum of Art inaugurates The Keir Collection of Islamic Art Gallery. Opening on April 18, 2017, the long-term installation will showcase over 100 works from the Keir Collection, including a substantial number of works that have never previously been exhibited.

Assembled over the course of five decades by the noted art collector Edmund de Unger (1918–2011), the Keir Collection of Islamic Art is recognized by scholars as one of the most geographically and historically comprehensive of its kind, encompassing almost 2,000 works spanning three continents and 13 centuries of Islamic cultural production—from rock crystal to metalwork, ceramics, textiles, carpets and works on paper. The Keir Collection came to the DMA on a long-term loan agreement with the trustees of the Keir Collection that was finalized in 2014, transforming the Museum into the third largest repository of Islamic art in the United States.

The Keir Collection's first ever North American presentation, *Spirit and Matter: Masterpieces from the Keir Collection of Islamic Art*, opened at the DMA in September 2015. The new installation will increase the number of works on view from the collection, which will henceforth be presented in a new purpose-designed gallery space off the Museum's Concourse dedicated to Islamic art. The new Keir Collection of Islamic Art Gallery will retain several important masterworks that were on view in *Spirit and Matter*.

"As an internationally engaged institution with a legacy of fostering cross-cultural understanding, the DMA is proud to inaugurate the first ever dedicated gallery space for the Keir Collection, which will illuminate the artistic traditions of the Islamic world for our local and national audiences," said Agustín Arteaga, The Eugene McDermott Director of the Dallas Museum of Art. "We are grateful to have been entrusted with the stewardship of this magnificent collection, which we look forward to presenting in a dynamic new space that will showcase its unique strengths like never before."

"Now that *Spirit and Matter* has introduced North American audiences to the Keir Collection for the first time in its history, the dedicated Keir Collection Gallery will deepen and enrich visitors' appreciation for the 13 centuries of vibrant Islamic artistic traditions that the collection encompasses," said Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, the DMA's Senior Advisor for Islamic art, who was integral to bringing the Keir Collection to Dallas. "By situating the gallery of this important collection of masterworks in a prime location on the Museum's first level, the DMA is affirming the vitality of Islamic art to its exhibition program and to the art historical canon."

The Keir Collection of Islamic Art Gallery will highlight particular strengths within the collection, which encompasses one of the most important holdings of luster pottery and rock crystals in the world. The gallery space will display a series of rare manuscripts and painted miniatures of exquisite beauty, including a 16th-century Indian Khamsa of Nizami manuscript, and pages from the 1330 Shahnama known as "The Demotte Shahnama." The celebrated rock crystal ewer, one of only seven in the world of its caliber and the only one of its type in the United States, will also be included in this installation.

Different works from the Keir Collection will be displayed in this gallery over the course of its loan to the DMA. As part of its loan agreement with the trustees of the Keir Collection, the Museum is also creating the first ever digital archive of the collection to enhance its accessibility for scholarship and public engagement.

The installation is presented by Kosmos Energy, which is the sponsor of the inaugural years of exhibitions and installations of the Keir Collection of Islamic Art at the Dallas Museum of Art. The partnership between the Museum and the Dallas-based international oil and gas exploration and production company provides \$800,000 of support for the Museum's series of special exhibitions, installations in its collection galleries, and a prospective touring exhibition over an initial multi-year period. The sponsorship also includes resources to facilitate loans of items from the Keir Collection to other domestic and international institutions for related exhibitions and installations.

"The preservation of historic artifacts is integral to helping communities understand and appreciate all cultures. Kosmos supports the DMA's commitment to protecting and celebrating these great artistic treasures of the past and is proud to be a part of the Museum's efforts," said Andrew G. Inglis, Kosmos Energy's Chief Executive Officer.

[Images: Ewer, Egypt, late 10th–early 11th century, rock crystal with a 19th-century gold mount by Jean-Valentin Morel, The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.1.a–b; Large bowl with luster-painted decoration, 10th century, ceramic, The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.220; Khamsa of Nizami, c. 1585–90, Mughal, work on paper, The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.18]

About the Keir Collection

Named after the 18th-century British mansion where it was once housed, the Keir Collection includes textiles, carpets, ceramics, rock crystal, metalwork and works on paper. Reflecting the tastes of Edmund de Unger—a Hungarian-born lawyer who began collecting Islamic art in the 1950s—the Keir Collection is particularly strong in the fields of early luster ceramic ware, while the rock crystal—including the currently exhibited Fatimid Ewer—is perhaps the most important collection of its type outside the treasury of San Marco in Venice. Other highlights include the sumptuous silk textiles with their intricately drawn designs from the imperial workshops of 16th- and 17th-century Safavid Iran, and there are distinctive examples of illuminated figurative manuscripts from the 14th to 17th century. With the exception of an exhibition of some 100 works at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin in 2007–08, most of the collection has never been exhibited in a museum setting prior to its presentation at the DMA.

About the Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) is among the 10 largest art museums in the country and is distinguished by its commitment to research, innovation and public engagement. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 23,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the nation's largest arts district, the Museum 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. Since the Museum's return to free general admission in 2013, the DMA has welcomed more than two and a half million visitors. For more information, visit www.DMA.org.

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