

Exploring the
Art of the Islamic World
with the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**





Freedom View is an American non-profit organization that supports and encourages the protection and the preservation of global cultural heritage through the creation of multimedia and audiovisual content.

We educate people to better understand the importance of making their contribution to preserve such an incredible patrimony for future generations.

[Freedom View](#) is a New York City based 501(c)(3) tax exempt, not-for-profit corporation.

Project Proposal

We seek to educate patrons and viewers on Islamic history through a multimedia project centered around the art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic Galleries.

Utilizing creative video content and interactive mapping, we can explore histories of Islamic history thematically and chronologically by highlighting artists and artistic creations of various historical periods and locations.

We propose an ongoing anthology series of short-format educational episodes, to be individually distributed online and/or within the museum and incorporated into an interactive map for high-touch user engagement.

These videos will then be repackaged to produce a long form documentary for eventual television distribution and/or event screenings.

As Islamic history is immeasurably vast in terms of both chronology and geography – spanning 13 centuries from Indonesia to Spain – the episodes will follow thematic explorations of topics represented in Islamic Art.

Episode Elements

Thematic explorations of topics represented in Islamic Art, including:

- A review of major artworks and artists from the Metropolitan Museum's collection
- Experts discussing the history of the moment, the region, and providing historical context for each theme.
- Integration of modern Islamic art, showing both the impact and evolution of the medium to reveal how classic style and technique is being revived today, thanks to artists and scholars who appreciate the value of the past and renew their traditions.

Each episode thus underlines the Met's continued support of the multitudinous history of the Islamic world, and offers us an opportunity to showcase intangible cultural heritage that is often challenging to capture in traditional museum settings.

Example Episode | *The Feast and The Fight*



"Zal Slays Khazarvan", Folio 104r from the Shahnameh (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp (ca. 1525–30)



Dagger (Jambiya) with Scabbard and Fitted Storage (1876–1909)



Goblet, 11th-early 12th century

For centuries, Persian kingship was epitomized by two complementary pursuits: *bazm* (feast) and *razm* (fight). The ruler's success as both a reveler and hunter/warrior distinguished him as a worthy and legitimate sovereign. The pairing of *bazm* and *razm* as the ultimate royal activities is an ancient concept with roots in pre-Islamic Iran.

Over time, this pairing emerged from a strictly royal, or princely, context and became more widespread. This episode will explore notions of war and revelry in the Islamic World, specifically within Persian culture. We will draw from the Metropolitan Museum's vast collection of arms and armor, and depictions of battle from the *Shahnameh*. In addition, we will look at representations of revelry, as well as the dishware, glassware, carafes, and musical instruments of the time. This pairing will allow deeper exploration of the past and present liberal-conservative spectrum with regards to warfare and alcohol.

Example Episode | *The Female*

With the spread of Islam outward from the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, the figurative artistic traditions of the newly conquered lands profoundly influenced the development of Islamic Art Ornamentation in Islamic art came to include figural representations in its decorative vocabulary, drawn from a variety of sources. Although the often cited opposition in Islam to the depiction of human and animal forms holds true for religious art and architecture, in the secular sphere such representations have flourished in nearly all Islamic cultures. The Islamic resistance to the representation of living beings ultimately stems from the belief that the creation of living forms is unique to God, and it is for this reason that the role of images and image makers has been controversial.



Furniture Plaque Showing
Female Musician in an
Architectural Framework, India



“Women of Allah” Shirin Neshat

We explore forms of Islamic ornamentation, where artists freely adapt and stylize basic human forms, with focus on depictions of the female form. In doing so, we discuss understandings and misunderstandings of iconography in Islamic Art across various regions and of femininity within various Islamic cultures – challenging the singular understanding of Islam within Western psyche. We highlight contemporary female Islamic Artists, and hear from them directly about self-representation and how they draw from their artistic and cultural heritage.

Example Episode | *The First Coders*

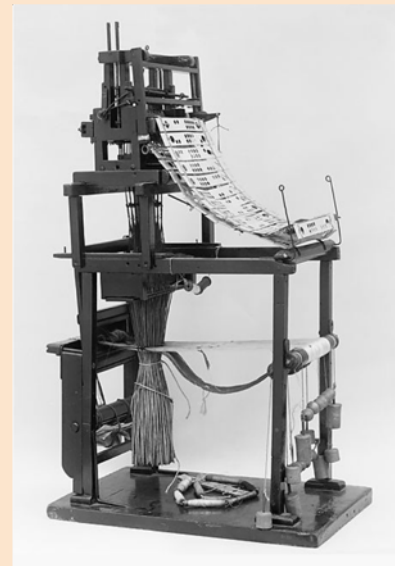
Constant innovation in both materials and techniques characterizes the art of the Islamic world. Artisans from these regions were internationally renowned for their ingenuity in developing increasingly fine materials and experimenting with new and complex techniques to create works of art, from ceramics and metalwork to carpets and textiles. The influence of trade, diplomacy, and cultural interconnections is another element reflected in the art of these regions.

Textiles were readily one of the most valued of arts, due in large part to their portability and rapid global dissemination via Islamic merchants who spread Islam through the trade of art, images, and craft technologies. Damascus served as a center of textile trade and manufacturing, hence ‘damask’ fabrics. The Jacquard loom, developed in the 19th century through a punchcard technology that stores and automatically reproduces complex operations, made weaving faster and cheaper.

In this episode, weaving serves as a case study for cross-cultural knowledge sharing. We look at weaving as a technology very similar to modern coding and examine how information was disseminated and reproduced between Islamic and non-Islamic centers. From textiles we can consider mathematics, early chemistry, philosophy, and the power of procedural production.



Fragmentary Loom Width with
Ogival Pattern (ca.1570-80)



Model of a Jacquard loom
(20th century)



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