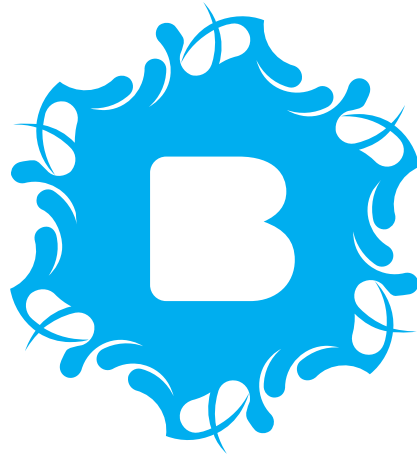


Press Release



April 2009

Brooklyn Museum Celebrates Sufism with an Islamic Art Installation Featuring Objects Ranging from the Medieval Period to the Present Day

On View at the Brooklyn Museum from June 5 through September 6, 2009

Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam features twenty-four objects from the Brooklyn Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and private collections that are related to a mystical form of Islam known as Sufism. This special installation will be on view in the Brooklyn Museum's Islamic galleries from June 5 through September 6, 2009.

While diverse Muslim sects and Islamic cultures do not necessarily share a singular view or practice of Islam, the mystical and romantic nature of Sufism tends to have a more universal appeal to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This exhibition focuses on some of the most important Sufi ideas and practices that found expression through the arts of the Islamic world, beginning with light, which symbolizes both God and enlightenment. The works displayed represent both literal and figural reflections of important mystical themes, including furnishings used for lighting; representations and attributes of Sufi mystics; illustrated, illuminated, and laser-etched manuscripts of Sufi poetry; and traditional and contemporary works inspired by Sufi principles. The range of chronology, cultures, and media of the works exhibited reflects the wide appeal and impact of Sufism on the arts from the early period to the present day.

Highlights include a gilded and enameled glass lamp inscribed with the famous "Light Verse" (*Ayat al-Nūr*) from the Qur'an, a gilded and jewel-encrusted silver beggar's bowl meant for collecting alms, and two inlaid brass candlestick bases from the eastern Islamic world made in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively. Two contemporary artworks will be featured in this installation: one is a modern interpretation of the mystical verses of the renowned poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), translated by Zahra Partovi and inscribed in a glass book by Brooklyn artist Kelly Driscoll, and the other is a composition of charcoal prayer-stone rubbings by Iranian-American artist Pouran Jinchi. The exhibition will also present several portraits of Sufi dervishes, some identified through inscriptions and others through costumes representing a particular Sufi order. A vintage photograph depicts a dervish family from the early twentieth century in modest attire, while an album page shows a mystic resembling a Chinese *luohan* in meditation accompanied by his flute and alms bowl. Some works, such as large Qajar painting and illustrated manuscript pages, illustrate narratives recounted in well-known Sufi literature. Poetry also appears on a beautiful medieval Iranian ceramic dish

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painted in light-reflecting luster, including verses by Rumi's master, Shams al-Tabrizi (d. 1248), whom Rumi compared to a sun shining the light of God upon him.

The exhibition has been organized by Ladan Akbarnia, Hagop Kevorkian Associate Curator of Islamic Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam will be presented in conjunction with *Muslim Voices: Arts and Ideas*, an unprecedented ten-day festival and conference in New York City celebrating Islamic culture of which the Brooklyn Museum is a supporting partner.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$10; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$6. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.