

Science Museum: Muslim Heritage Exhibition displays 1001 inventions in London

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The Science Museum in London has launched a landmark exhibition highlighting the scientific heritage the world has inherited from Muslim civilisation. 1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World, which is sponsored by Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, traces the forgotten story of a thousand years of science from the Muslim world, from the 7th century onwards.

The free exhibition, which runs from the 21 January to 25 April 2010, will look at the social, scientific and technical achievements that are credited to the Muslim world, whilst celebrating the shared scientific heritage of other cultures. It features a diverse range of exhibits, interactive displays and dramatisation, all of which acknowledge the Muslim world's contribution to many modern inventions, spanning fields such as engineering, medicine and architecture, and can trace their roots back to Muslim civilisation.

The launch of the exhibition marks the beginning of a global tour that will visit the world's most respected museums and centres of learning over the next four years.

Professor Chris Rapley, Director of the Science Museum, commented: "The thousand year period from the 7th century onwards was a time of exceptional scientific and technological advancement in the Islamic World, spanning China, India, Persia, Africa and Arabia. This is the period in history that gave us huge advances in engineering, mathematics, chemistry and physics. With over 15,000 objects in our collection spanning many different cultures, the Science Museum provides the perfect platform for this exhibition, as a place which encourages innovation and learning amongst visitors of all ages."

One of the iconic focal features of this exhibition is a six-metre high replica of the 'Elephant Clock' - a visually striking early 13th century water clock, the body of which contains symbols referring different cultures and is featured alongside a short feature film starring Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley as Al-Jazari, inventor of the fabled clock.

Professor Salim T S Al-Hassani, Chairman of 1001 Inventions, explained: "The Elephant Clock is an early 13th century machine which gives physical form to the concept of multi-culturalism. This engineering marvel featured an Indian Elephant, Chinese Dragons, a Greek water mechanism, an Egyptian Phoenix, and wooden robots in traditional Arabian attire. It embodies cultural and scientific convergence of civilisations and is an appropriate centre-piece for an exhibition about the roots of science and technology."

Other striking exhibits featured in this interactive exhibition include:

- Model of an energy efficient and environmentally-friendly Baghdad courtyard house.
- A large 3 metre reproduction Al-Idrisi's 12th-century world map.
- Model of Zheng He's Chinese junk ship - originally a 15th century wooden super structure over 100 metres long.
- Medical instruments from a thousand year ago, many of which are still used today.
- Model of a 9th-century dark room, later called Camera Obscura, which Ibn al-Haytham used to change our understanding of vision and optics.

Fady Jameel speaking on behalf of the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, said: "One of the most important aims of our foundation is to promote global education projects and this 1001 Inventions exhibition at one of Europe's most prestigious museums will help achieve just that through increasing understanding about a fascinating period of history and discovering how it impacts us in today's modern world".