

Science Museum to host Muslim Heritage exhibition

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The Science Museum announced that it will host a new exhibition, 1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World, which 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. The exhibition is a British based project, produced in association with the Jameel Foundation.

Featuring a diverse range of exhibits, interactive displays and dramatisation, the exhibition shows how many modern inventions, spanning fields such as engineering, medicine and design, can trace their roots back to Muslim civilisation.

Prof. 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 China, India, Persia, Africa and the Arab world. This is the period in history that gave us huge advances in engineering, the development of robotics and the foundations of modern mathematics, chemistry and physics. With over 15,000 objects in our collection spanning many different cultures, the Science Museum provides the perfect context for this exhibition, as a place which encourages innovation and learning amongst visitors of all ages."

One of the focal points of the exhibition is a six-metre high replica of the 'Elephant Clock' - a visually striking early 13th century clock whose design fuses together elements from many 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 exhibits featured in this interactive exhibition include:

- Model of an energy efficient and environmentally-friendly Baghdad 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 revolutionise our understanding of optics.

Visitors can also learn about parallel stories of invention from other cultures and civilisations, illustrated through a display of rare and beautiful objects from the Science Museum's collections, many of which have never been on public display before. These include devices used for weighing and measuring, surgical instruments, astronomical devices, intricately crafted ceramic pots and textiles.

1001 Inventions was created by the Manchester-based Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation (FSTC). The exhibition will run from 21st January until 25th April 2010 (with a short closure between 25th Feb and 12th March 2010 inclusive). Further information about the exhibition is available at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk and www.1001inventions.com

About the Science Museum

From June 2009 the Science Museum is celebrating its hundredth birthday and a century of science with a year-long centenary programme to take the renowned institution into the future. For 100 years the Science Museum has been world-renowned for its historic collection, remarkable galleries and inspirational exhibitions. With around 15,000 objects on public display, the Science Museum's collections form an enduring record of scientific, technological and medical change from the past few centuries. Aiming to be the best place in the world for people to enjoy science, the Science Museum makes sense of the science that shapes our lives, sparking curiosity, releasing creativity and changing the future by engaging people of all generations and backgrounds in science engineering, medicine, technology, design and enterprise. In 2008/09 the Science Museum was proud to have been awarded the Gold Award for Visitor Attraction of the Year by Visit London and a Silver Award for Large Visitor Attraction of the Year by Enjoy England.