

## Shedding light on Islam's glory



Ben Kingsley as Al-Jazari in the short film "1001 Inventions and the Library of Secrets".

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**Spread the word, this was the Golden Age," said Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley in the short feature film shown at an exhibition on Muslim heritage at the Science Museum in London.**

The short film is just one of the attractions at the "1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World" exhibition, which features different scientific and cultural achievements from the Muslim world over 600 square meters. The exhibition, which attracted more than 15,000 visitors in its first week alone, reopened on March 12.

Elements of the exhibition have been translated into different languages including English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Arabic and Turkish.

A few of the visitors were asking, "Why hold such an exhibition now?" Well, why not?

It is about time someone took a step forward and introduced, in a fresh and modern way, how Muslims richly combined their cultures from the seventh century onward.

As Muslims generally agree, that era was when their brilliance first saw the light and made them reach for the top of the world. They were traveling, trading and socializing with many cultures. Hence, their inventions were beautifully influenced and enhanced by the knowledge they received from both the ancient and contemporary societies around them, such as: the Greek, Chinese, Indian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian civilizations. It was always about getting out there and thinking outside the box.

As you move from one zone to another, you can almost feel the tangible presence of our ancestors through the multimedia displays, which the exhibition uses to convey its message.

It is apparent that our ancestors have been doing us proud for centuries. How can we contribute to that and leave something for the following generations to remember us by is now the question.

The exhibition is beyond any other Muslims exhibitions I have already seen.

It attracted the youth and elderly and brought Muslims and non-Muslims together, fascinated by the heritage of what the West referred to for many years as the Dark Ages, but is now being viewed in a different light.

The information on display at the exhibition is well presented and easy to absorb. It is a state-of-the-art exhibition as demonstrated by the actors on the multimedia screens who present Muslim scientists in a very eloquent, inviting and, sometimes, humorous light.

For example, even though the Muslim scholar Ibn Al-Haitham was placed under house arrest, he never kept his great mind from thinking outside that cell. He produced fruitful ideas and inventions for his community and the world at large, including giving the first clear description and correct analysis of the camera obscura, which made him the father of modern optics.

Visitors will sense immediately, especially as they spot the statues of Abbas Ibn Firnas — the inventor most well known for his attempts at aviation — that Muslims were responsible for tremendous inventions. Let us have faith that the best is yet to come.

The exhibition is running at the Science Museum in London until June 30, 2010 and will then be moving to North America. It will subsequently be held in 30 cities spanning five continents over the next four years.

The exhibition is being held in association with the Jameel Foundation, a British charity chaired by its patron, Mohammed Abdul Latif Jameel, a Saudi Arabian businessman who was also responsible for establishing the Jameel Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

For more information please visit: [www.1001inventions.com](http://www.1001inventions.com)