

Inventions from the dark ages exhibition

by Khyam Butt

Amongst the other exhibitions at the British Science museum, the first floor held the 1,001 inventions from the Muslim world.

It unveiled the connection between the modern world and its Muslim heritage, dating back to the 7th century.

Al-Jazari's invention called the elephant clock was the main attraction and a model of it stood at the front of the exhibition.

The model brings together different cultures and is works by combining a Chinese dragon, falcon, elephant, the elephant rider, a sultan and one ball!

Invented in 1206, it was the first water clock to tell the time and was used for things like time of pilgrimage and daily prayer.

It's fascinating to see how many everyday items we use today are inherited from the dark ages.

The fountain pen was invented in the 10th century by Caliph of Egypt, he wanted a pen that wouldn't stain his hands or clothes. And could carry its own ink supply.

The interactive part of the exhibition included a small screen were a gear-stick was used as a controller to move a small cartoon around a house full of inventions, once you've found an item, a box would appear on the screen explaining how it connects to the Muslim world and who invented it, the only downside was that there was a timer.

Another object found was a chess board, it's interesting that the word 'checkmate' derives from the Arabic word 'shahmat' and refers to when the Persian king was defeated.

There's stands scattered around each, one covering a different aspect of how the Muslim world invented things that many people still use today, this ranged from science to technology.

Other enjoyable part of the exhibition - actors play the roles of inventors which appeared on small screens on each of the stands, you then pick up the phone and get lost in the tales of their inventions.

Towards the end of the exhibition, there's a video projected on a big screen, where people could sit down and watch what looked like an interpretation of one of the Harry Potter films.

Al-Jazari and the librarian were played by actor Ben Kingsley, famously known for his Academy award winning performance in 1982 film Gandhi.

Although the video was more comical than educational, it was nonetheless entertaining and did provide a short insight into some of the inventors and their work.

For those who want to find out more about this period and the inventions themselves, have the chance of purchasing the book 1001 inventions: Muslim heritage in our world.

At the end of the exhibition there's a vending machine, but it's not full of junk food instead it contains all sorts of affordable souvenirs including; fountain pens, puzzles, 1001 invention trump cards and a small model of the elephant clock.

This exhibition is a must see for anyone looking to discover the dark ages, it provides information in so many different forms.

It will leave you stunned at just how much the modern world is connected and influenced by inventions created thousands of years ago.

Admission is free, and the exhibition runs until 30th June, 10am to 5.30pm.

For more information, visit **the website**.



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