



## Islamic Innovation

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Mindful of the ground-zero mosque controversy, the New York Hall of Science is hosting a tribute to Islamic innovation, reports Clyde Haberman in the *New York Times* (12/7/10). The exhibit, called [1001 Inventions](#), is not, in fact, a response to the mosque controversy; it has been in the works for some 20 years, well before Nine-Eleven. But there's no denying that shining a light on the Muslim world as "an incubator for scientific ideas"

might stir controversy, particularly in New York City.

The exhibit's creator, [Salim T.S. al-Hassani](#), says he understands this. "We can't be isolated from the sociopolitical environment," he says. But at the same time, "some of history's finest scientists and scholars once emerged from predominantly Muslim societies, extending from Spain to China across a long stretch of time that began in the seventh century." This was a period known in the West as the [Dark Ages](#), "after the heydays of Greece and Rome." Most people think nothing happened until the [Renaissance](#), but that isn't so.

For example, the exhibit features "innovations in surgery around AD 1000 by an Arab physician .. the founding of a university in the ninth century by a woman ... an attempt at flight with a set of wings by a ninth-century thinker ... and insights into how vision works by a 10th century polymath." It includes "long ago advances by Islamic thinkers" in a wide range of areas. As Dr. Hassani notes, these discoveries by Islamic societies led the way to the Renaissance by providing "the continuity, the smooth graph, of how ideas travel in humanity." [1001 Inventions](#) runs through April 24th, 2011 ([link](#)).