

## London Exhibit Showcases Inventions from Islamic Civilizations

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BUSHRA BURNEY | Feb. 18, 2010 | 10:21 PM

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ONE PARTICULAR INVENTION THAT IS GETTING A LOT OF ATTENTION IS AN ELEPHANT CLOCK INVENTED BY AN IRAQI ENGINEER FROM THE 13TH CENTURY NAMED AL-JAZARI.

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The London Science Museum recently opened an interactive exhibition titled *1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World* that is proving to be quite popular, educating people about the technological achievements originating from Muslim civilizations. Funded by the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, this exhibition presents inventions over a period of 1,000 years beginning from the 7th century, providing visitors with a glimpse as to how the modern world has been impacted by a group of people whose religion conjures up mostly negative images in present-day. The exhibition opened on January 21st and has been deemed a "blockbuster" by the Director of the Science Museum, Professor Chris Rapley as thousands have already descended upon the exhibit, with 15,000 visitors in its first week alone.

Taking its name from the popular tales of Arabian Nights, *1001 Inventions* features contributions that have been verified by the experts of the London Science Museum. The inventors themselves consist of both men and women from many countries. While not all of them are actually Muslim, they had all been living in a Muslim civilization that had fostered their ideas.



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One particular invention that is getting a lot of attention is an elephant clock invented by an Iraqi engineer from the 13th century named Al-Jazari. Towering at over 16 feet, the replica of this dock portrays a variety of cultures within its construction, from an Egyptian phoenix to Chinese dragons, while illustrating how the clock had used robotics and the flow of water to tell time. The elephant clock display is accompanied by a short film with Oscar-winner Sir Ben Kingsley playing Al-Jazari.

Muhammad Ayish of the Sharjah publication *The National* points out that the exhibit exemplifies the notion that Islam does not make one choose between faith and science. In his article about *1001 Inventions* he writes, "The fact that a culture of scientific and intellectual innovation was initiated and encouraged by a religious society may appear intriguing for those who have described Islam, and religious faith in general, as antithetical to scientific inquiry. But once we know how Islamic traditions encouraged scientists to observe the natural world and make sense of it, we would realise the constructive role of religion as a driver of scientific development."

This is not the first time that someone has called attention to Muslim contributions to society. San Francisco Chronicle journalist Jonathon Curiel wrote about Arab and Muslim influences to America in his book *Al' America* and author Michael Hamilton Morgan provides a high level understanding of some of the biggest contributions by Muslims in his book *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Thinkers*.

The London Science Museum is hosting *1001 Inventions* until April 25. Over the next four years, the sponsors hope to take this exhibition around the world.

Last Updated: Feb. 18, 2010 | 10:21 PM