

BROTHERHOOD

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2010

1001 Inventions Exhibit - Review

Well, it's the post you've all been waiting for (at least I have! I've been trying to think of how to present it to you all in a nice fashion ever since I returned from London). Again, this exhibit took place at the London Science Museum, which is located in the South Kensington area of Central London. The exhibit was located on one floor and the admission was free.

Here is the entrance to the exhibit:

The exhibit itself was consisted of 8 or 9 interactive stations that had several faces where visitors could discover more about that particular facet of Muslim Inventions, as each station was dedicated to a specific area of life, such as Home, Medicine, Space, etc. In the picture above, you can see the 'Home' station that greeted me after entering. Each station had text, telling the background of the inventions in the given area of life and details about the individual Muslim personalities' lives. Also, each station also had a screen with one of the noted inventors or contributors in that area, with two hand sets from a phone attached, so we could listen to them explain what they had invented. I managed to listen/watch all of these, as I am very meticulous when it comes to museum visits - I enjoy reading every bit of text there is to read!

I will not review each station, as that would take much time, but will point out some of the main features or what particularly interested me. As I just mentioned, the first station consisted of the home life and the central invention in this area was the famous Elephant Clock of al-Jazari. At this station, in the center of the display, was a large replica of the clock, of which I took this photograph:

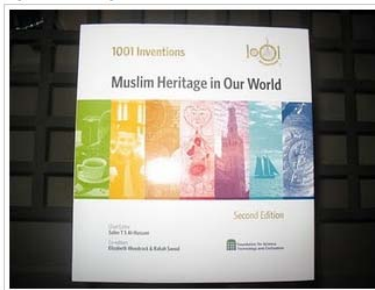


While I'm not going to explain the details of how the clock worked (you'll have to read up on that for yourself!), it was truly a marvel at how al-Jazari used mathematics, hydraulics and other physical movements to put together this beautiful and amazing clock together. There was a nice computerized animation of how the clock worked and it made me really appreciate what we have today, as well as being in awe of the genius ideas that our ancestors in Faith possessed.

Another fascinating and very cool contribution that we as Muslim made to modern society, were in the words that we know and use today. Part of this station, was a list of the Arabic words and on the opposite side of the lighted display, the modern day words and we could then press buttons that would say the given words in both languages;

I think you will be able to "match up" the pairs looking at the photo. On a funny note, while I was adjacent to this portion of the station, a small boy, as you might expect in such an exhibit (more on this later), came and was just randomly but slowly pressing each of the buttons and listening what resulted and when he got to "candy" and heard the female voice say it, he responded, "Candy?" To me, it sounded as if he was asking if he was about to get candy - or I guess he was surprised an Arabic word was the root for this most beloved of words! :-)

As you might imagine, the section I was most interested in seeing was the medicine area and what contributions Muslim doctors made to the field that I am in and planning to make a career out of. This is what the medical station looked like:



Here, I learned that the man who first discovered or explained the mechanism of the pulmonary circulation was in fact a Muslim by the name of Ibn Nafis, though the credit had long been given to another European man named William Harvey, in all textbooks and references. Additionally, another Muslim physician, named Ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna) was the first to suggest that it was better to delay the splinting of a bone fracture, until the fifth day afterwards. This is still used today, but the theory is accredited to another European physician in texts. One beautiful feature of one of the books that Ibn Sina wrote, called *The Canon of Medicine* that Ibn Sina produced, on its opening page, he starts with a prayer to Allah along with salutations to the Prophet and his companions - how cool is that?

Furthermore, a type of fracture, now known as Bennet's Fracture, was also first described by Ibn Sina. According to the volume which was a companion to the exhibit (see bottom of post for images) there was an old European saying that stated,

"Anyone who wants to be a good doctor must be an Avicennist."

I guess that should be one of my future goals then!

I also learned that several ophthalmologists, or eye doctors, made great contributions in eye treatment and surgery with their treatises that were later translated by Greeks and others. This was another portion of the medicine station, seen here: