

Rare ancient copies of the Quran on display

Farjam collection offers unique glimpse of the various phases of the development of Islamic art over centuries

By FATMA SALEM
Staff Reporter

Dubai A glimpse into the fascinating world of Islamic art was recently showcased at the Farjam collection, where rare copies of the Quran were on display. The copies reflected various historic periods in the Islamic era.

They branch into four categories. One group reflects the origins and establishment of Islamic art that dates back to the early age of Islam 1st to 7th century AH.

The second category mirrors new styles and techniques that trace the development of Islamic art after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, from 7th to 10th century AH. The third accompanies the spectator from the 10th to 13th centuries and elucidates the expansion under imperial rule — the Mughals of India, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia.

The final category highlights Islamic art in the 13th century AH, the period of sustaining tradition in modern times.

Emilie Faure, Manager at the Farjam Collection, explained more about the ancient masterpieces.

Bridging the barrier

Each piece identifies itself by talking in a spectator's language, which enables them to pick the language to gain details on their favourite ancient pieces from the Islamic era.

"It is informative and user-friendly. Those who do not have time to do the full tour, which takes 30 minutes, usually come back to finish it later. One of the advantages of the tour is that you can use it even if you have just a few



Stimulating young minds

Faure gives a short introduction to children on their arrival at the exhibition.

the context in which the artworks were produced."

She continued that art lovers are happy with the updated facility, which enables them to pick the language to gain details on their favourite ancient pieces from the Islamic era.

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There are more than 150 works on display. The exhibition is organised chronologically and spans almost the entire history of Islam.

Faure said the works on view are testimony to the legacy of Islam and to the

importance of its contribution to the history of art. Sharing these works with the public has been a long-cherished ambition of Dr Farjam, the owner of Farjam Collection.

"A marriage contract from Qajar Iran invariably elicits comments from couples; children engage with the horse saddle that has a lion's head in ivory as a pommel; artists and designers are drawn to the Quran folios, which look strikingly modern despite their age, and the vivid colour of the miniatures that make even the grizzliest scenes look beautiful. The exhibition is satisfying for a wide range of audiences, because each piece has a different story to narrate," Faure said.

Artists involved in the collection include Mohammad Siyah Galam, a prominent artist of the 9th century AH



Supplied picture

Joy of learning

School children enjoy tailor-made activity sheets created in collaboration with START, which offer the chance for children to answer questions as well as draw calligraphic shapes.



(15th century AD). There are rare examples of his work in private collections.

A calligraphy piece by Seyyed Ahmad Mashhadi from the 10th century AH (16th century AD) as well as a Quran written by Omm-e-Salameh, a very talented calligrapher and the daughter of the Qajar king, Fathali Shah are also on display. "A complete Quran written by Omm-e-Salameh is rare and shows female artists and calligraphers of talent played a role in the history of Islamic arts," she said.

EDUCATION

Special gallery tours

On the first Wednesday of each month, a guided tour is held from 1:00-1:30pm. Each event is led by a different expert, offering the public the opportunity to rediscover the exhibition from a different perspective each time. Complimentary educational materials in English and Arabic are offered to all visitors and a luncheon is served following the guided tour.

—F.S.