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**EXCEPTIONAL GROUP OF ILLUMINATED ISLAMIC
MANUSCRIPTS AND HANDWRITTEN QUR'ANS TO BE
SHOWN AT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM**

*EXHIBITION IS THE FIRST TIME THE MORGAN HAS GATHERED THESE
WORKS TOGETHER FOR A SINGLE SHOW AND INCLUDES A RARE
MANUSCRIPT OF THE LIFE OF THE PERSIAN POET AND MYSTIC RUMI*

Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan

October 21, 2011 – January 29, 2012

★★Press Preview: Thursday, October 20, 10 a.m. until noon★★

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A Vision of Muhammad Reading Rumi's *Masnavi* (Couplets)
From "A Translation of Stars of the Legends," mostly about the life of Rumi,
in Turkish
Baghdad, 1590s
MS M.466, fol. 156. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1911
Photography: Graham S. Haber

New York, NY, September 8, 2011—The Morgan Library & Museum is internationally acclaimed for its collection of medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, but it may come as a surprise that it also possesses a number of important Islamic manuscripts dating from the late middle ages to the nineteenth century. They include such treasures as a thirteenth-century treatise on animals and their uses, regarded by some experts as one of the greatest of all Islamic manuscripts, and a rare, illustrated translation of the life of the celebrated Persian poet and mystic, Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Beginning October 21, 2011 and running through January 29, 2012, these works, along with almost ninety additional manuscripts, single illuminated pages, and beautifully handwritten Qur'ans, will go on view in *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan*. It is the first time the

Morgan has gathered these spectacular volumes together in a single exhibition, and several are disbound, permitting visitors to view a selection of miniatures from them.

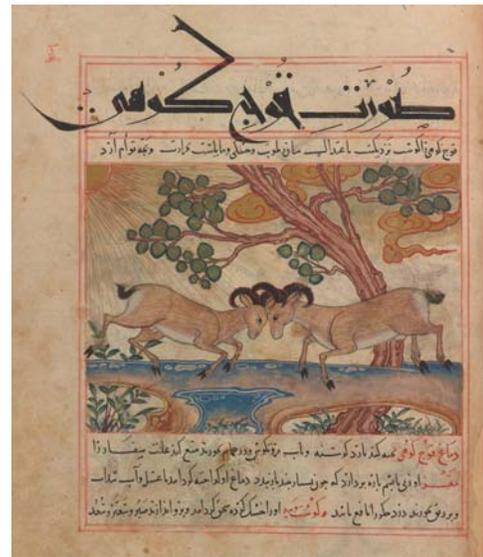
“Pierpont Morgan, the museum’s founder, was interested in art of the Middle East,” said William M. Griswold, director of the Morgan. “He collected ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals and tablets, which are now exhibited in the recently restored McKim building, and later began to acquire manuscripts from the Islamic period. The works on view in this exhibition are extraordinary examples of illumination and calligraphic expertise and demonstrate an artistic sophistication of the highest order.”

Islamic Manuscripts

The earliest illustrated manuscript in the exhibition is a late-thirteenth century treatise on animals and their uses, Ibn Bakhtishu’s *Manafi -i hayavan* (*Uses of Animals*) that was regarded by scholar Richard Ettinghausen as one of the ten greatest Islamic manuscripts. The amazing miniatures reflect the new naturalistic Chinese style that was introduced as a consequence of the Mongol invasion.

Another especially notable manuscript because it is one of only two known copies is a Turkish translation of Aflaki’s life of Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, the great Persian poet and mystic, who today continues to be among the most widely read poets in the world. The translation, by Darvish Mahmud Mesnevi Khan, was made in Baghdad in 1590 and was commissioned by Sultan Murad III. It includes material not found in the Persian original and is the most richly illustrated copy (the other is in the Topkapi Museum in Baghdad). Because it is disbound, visitors will be able to see for the first time a wide selection of its fascinating miniatures—one even depicts the Prophet Muhammad, his face veiled, reading the poetry of Rumi. The work was purchased by Pierpont Morgan in 1911, and is considered the masterpiece of the Baghdad school of painting, which flourished under the Ottoman rule of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.

Another richly illustrated Turkish manuscript with stunning miniatures is a treatise on astrology, wonders of the world, demonology, and divination made about 1582 for Ayisha Sultan, the daughter of the same Ottoman Sultan Murad III who commissioned the translation of the Aflaki life of Rumi.



Two Mountain Rams Fighting
From Ibn Bakhtishu's "Uses of Animals"
Persia, Maragha, 1297-1300
MS M.500, fol. 37. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1912
Photography: Graham S. Haber

Nearly two dozen individual miniatures come from two disassembled albums once owned by Sir Charles Hercules Read, who was keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum from 1896–1921. The Persian Album was assembled by Husain Khan Shamlu, governor of Herat (r. 1598–1618), who, after Shah Abbas, was the most powerful man in Persia. Many of its miniatures were made in Herat itself. Especially remarkable are paintings of secular subjects, including a young lady



A Young Lady Reclining After a Bath
 Leaf from the Read Persian Album
 Herat (Afghanistan), 1590s
 By Muhammad Mu'min
 MS M.386.5. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1911
 Photography: Graham S. Haber

reclining after her bath. The Mughal Album is particularly rich in depictions of Mughal rulers, such as Babur (1526–1530), founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, and some of his successors, such as Akbar (1556–1605), Jahangir (1605–1627), and Shah Jahan (1628–1658), builder of the Taj Mahal. Belle da Costa Greene, Pierpont Morgan’s librarian, was instrumental in acquiring the miniatures in 1911, some of which she first saw, with Bernard Berenson, at the great exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910. The exhibition convinced Belle Greene (and through her, Morgan) that Islamic art should also be represented in the collection.

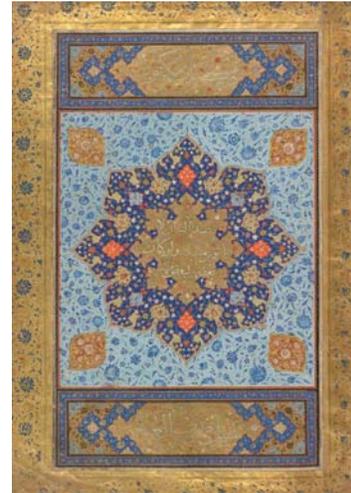
Poetry was an extremely important aspect of Persian culture, and a special section of the exhibition is devoted to six illustrated manuscripts (from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries) of Nizami’s *Khamsa* (“The Quintet”), which include depictions of the ill-fated lovers Laila and Majnun, the Persian Romeo and Juliet, as well as Iskander (Alexander the Great), and Bahrun Gur and the Seven Princesses. Two of the manuscripts are disbound, making it possible to show several miniatures from them. Other poets included are Hafiz (*Divan* – “Poems”), Jami (*Haft aurang* – “Seven Thrones”), Firdausi (*Shahnama* – “Book of Kings”), and Saadi Shirazi (*Kulliyat* – “Collected Works”), who was recently quoted by President Barack Obama in a New Year’s greeting to the Iranian people emphasizing tolerance and the inter-connectedness of mankind.

The Qur'an

Just as the Qur'an is central to Islamic life, a gigantic luxury Qur'an takes center stage at the beginning of the exhibition. The work, originally in one volume, was made in Shiraz about 1580. Although its historical first destination is unknown, it was later, in 1719–20, presented by Sultan Ahmed III to the mosque of Jerrah Pasha in Dikili Tash in Istanbul.

In addition to this work, there are two other cases with Qur'ans or Qur'anic leaves. One case contains the earliest Qur'ans, all on vellum and in an oblong format, reflecting the expansive character of Kufic script (spanning ninth to eleventh centuries). The other case contains Qur'ans in a vertical format and more upright script that became the rule from the fourteen to the nineteenth centuries with the advent of paper.

After Pierpont Morgan died in 1913, due to Belle Greene's influence, Morgan's son, J.P. Morgan, Jr., also purchased some early Qur'ans. Greene, herself, was to make important additions to the collection, and in 1950 bequeathed a number of Qur'anic leaves and manuscripts to the Morgan.



Mosque Qur'an
Shiraz, ca. 1580
MS M.532 (I), fol. 2r. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, before 1913
Photography: Graham S. Haber

Organization and Sponsorship

Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan is organized by William Voelkle, curator and head of the Department of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts. He would like to express his gratitude to Barbara Schmitz, who wrote the definitive catalogue of the Morgan's collection of Islamic manuscripts. The exhibition is a tribute to her work.

This exhibition is supported in part by a generous grant from The Hagop Kevorkian Fund and by the Janine Luke and Melvin R. Seiden Fund for Exhibitions and Publications.



The Morgan exhibition program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Programs

Concert

A Rumi Night of Music and Poetry Amir Vahab & Ensemble with The Daf Caravan

To coincide with the exhibition *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan*, Amir Vahab will perform songs selected from the poetry of the great Sufi Masters: Rumi and Hafez. The ensemble will also perform lively folk and traditional music from Persian and Turkish traditions using authentic musical instruments of the region, featuring the ethereal sounding Ney (mystical reed flute), Tanbur (ancient three-stringed long-necked lute), Saz (seven-stringed long neck lute), Daf (large frame drum associated with Sufi rituals), Dohol (double-headed folk drum used most often in celebrations) and Tombak (Persian goblet drum). Presented in cooperation with Asia Society & Museum.

Friday, November 4, 7:30 pm*

Tickets: \$20 for Non-Members; \$15 for Morgan and Asia Society Members

*The exhibition *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan* will be open at 6:30 pm for concert attendees.

Lecture

Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam Ziauddin Sardar

In his new book *Reading the Qur'an*, Ziauddin Sardar, one of Britain's leading cultural critics, provides an illuminating and highly personal look at the Qur'an and its role in Islam today. Sardar speaks out for a more open, less doctrinaire approach to reading the Qur'an, arguing that it is not fixed in stone for all time, but rather a dynamic text which every generation must encounter anew. Presented in cooperation with Asia Society & Museum.

Thursday, November 17, 6:30 pm*

Tickets: \$15 for Non-Members, \$10 for Morgan and Asia Society Members

*The exhibition *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan* will be open at 5:30 pm especially for program attendees.

Films

The Poet and the Architect

Rumi: Poet of the Heart

(1998, 58 minutes)

Director: Haydn Reiss

This film features Coleman Barks, a prolific Rumi translator, in live performance and intimate conversation with Robert Bly, Deepak Chopra, Michael Meade, Huston Smith, and others, to celebrate the joyous and spiritual passion of Rumi's poetry. Musical performances with oud virtuoso Hamza El Din and singer Jai Uttal add to this inspiring and compelling film, which will be introduced by Hadyn Reiss.

followed by:

Sinan, A Divine Architect

(2008, 52 minutes)

Director: Remmelt Lukkien

This film explores the fascinating life and work of Mimar Sinan (1489–1588), Turkish cultural hero and the foremost architect in Islamic history. Follow his story from his birth as a Christian through his conversion to Islam and appointment as Chief Architect of the vast Ottoman Empire, a position which he held until the age of ninety-eight. Sinan’s impressive domed structures have defined the famous skyline of Istanbul for centuries and his Selim Mosque at Edirne is regarded as the apogee of classical dome architecture.

Friday, October 28, 7 pm

Exhibition-related films are free with museum admission. Tickets are available at the Admission Desk on the day of the screening. Advance reservations for Morgan Members only: 212.685.0008, ext. 560, or tickets@themorgan.org.

Family Programs

Qalam for Kids: Penning the Arabic Script

This workshop led by calligrapher Elinor Aishah Holland will introduce children to Arabic script calligraphy. Following a brief tour of the exhibition *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan*, children will explore the traditional tools used by calligraphers for over a thousand years by writing a word in the Arabic script. They will then decorate that word based on both their imagination and traditional motifs, using historical techniques and art supplies, including gold. Appropriate for ages 6–12. This workshop is limited to families with children. There is a limit of two adult tickets per family.

Saturday, October 29, 2–4 pm

Tickets: Adults: \$6 for Non-Members; \$4 for Members; Children \$2

Family Concert

Amir Vahab & Ensemble

In this engaging concert, Amir Vahab and his ensemble will introduce families to traditional Persian and Turkish music and song, including demonstrations of authentic musical instruments and vocal music based on Sufi poetry. Some of the instruments include: Ney (mystical reed flute), Tanbur (ancient three-stringed long-necked lute), Saz (seven-stringed long neck lute), Daf (large frame drum associated with Sufi rituals), Dohol (double-headed folk drum used most often in celebrations) and Tombak (Persian goblet drum).

Saturday, January 21, 2–3 pm

Adult Workshop

An Art of Measure and Harmony: The Arabic Letterform

After a brief tour of the exhibition *Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan*, calligrapher Elinor Aishah Holland will demonstrate the method of preparing paper, cutting a *qalam* (pen), and writing Arabic letters. Participants will then be invited to carefully observe the twenty-eight independent Arabic letter forms in the style called *Thuluth*. Using traditional tools and materials, they will experiment with and draw the letters themselves. In keeping with tradition, they will learn the ancient system of proportional measurement governing Arabic letterform to create harmonious and meaningful lines.

Friday, December 9, 6:30–8:30 pm

Tickets: \$20 for Non-Members; \$15 for Members

Gallery Talk

Treasures of Islamic Manuscript Painting from the Morgan

William M. Voelkle, Curator and Department Head, Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, with Zahra Partovi, Rumi translator.

Friday, November 18, 7 pm

Free with museum admission

The Morgan Library & Museum

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding in 1906, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. In October 2010, the Morgan completed the first-ever restoration of its original McKim building, Pierpont Morgan's private library, and the core of the institution. In tandem with the 2006 expansion project by architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan now provides visitors unprecedented access to its world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, and ancient Near Eastern seals and tablets.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405

212.685.0008

www.themorgan.org

Hours

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Admission

\$15 for adults; \$10 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.