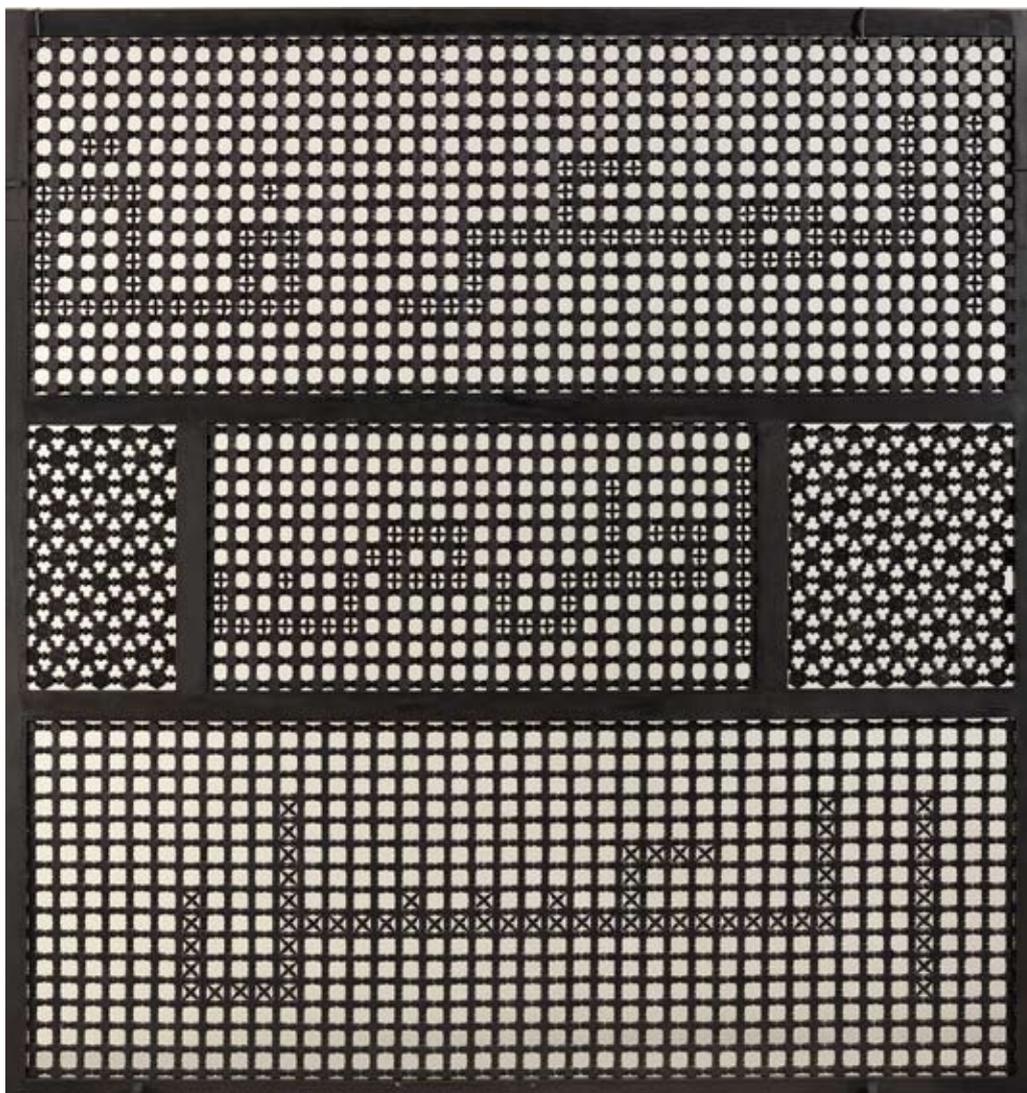


THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Word into Art: artists of the modern Middle East

A TOURING EXHIBITION FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Word into Art: artists of the modern Middle East

Word into Art celebrates the creativity of Middle Eastern artists by focusing on the way writing has been used in modern art.

From traditional Arabic scripts to present day graffiti, the artists represented in this exhibition have found innovative ways of using script. For some this resonates with the sacred tradition of Islam and the Qur'an. For other artists the Arabic script is an undeniable part of their cultural inheritance that influences their creativity – they may use the script to illustrate poetry, to reinforce Arab or Muslim identity, or to make political points. It is this rich diversity of approaches to the WORD that this exhibition seeks to show. These contemporary artists are inventing exciting new genres that are still unmistakably informed by their own artistic traditions.

The exhibition not only testifies to the strong calligraphic tradition of the Middle East, but also demonstrates the powerful and imaginative ways in which artists are using writing today. The collection of works in the touring exhibition is entirely drawn from the British Museum which has been acquiring works by Middle Eastern artists since the mid-1980s. The exhibition was first shown at the British Museum in May 2006. It was a first of its kind exhibition devoted to the modern artists of the Middle East. In 2008, the exhibition was displayed in Dubai.

Content

The exhibition is divided into four sections:

- Sacred script
- Literature and art
- Deconstructing the Word
- Identity, history and politics



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1. Jila Peacock, a peacock made from calligraphy in the nasta'liq script of a poem by Hafez. Silkscreen on Japanese paper. Glasgow Print Studio, 2004. © Jila Peacock. 2. Calligraphy by Hassan Massoudy illustrating the poetry of Ibn al-Arabi, 2003. © Hassan Massoudy. 3. Khaled al-Saai, *About Paradise*. Watercolour and coloured inks on white wove machine-made paper with textured surface, 2006. © Khaled al-Saai. 4. Bassam Geitani, *Cuneiform II*. Mixed media on canvas, 2004. © Bassam Geitani. 5. Laila Shawa, *Children of War, Children of Peace*. Silkscreen on canvas, 1995. © Laila Shawa.

Further information

Curator

Venetia Porter is a curator in the British Museum's Department of the Middle East. She is responsible for the collection of Islamic art, in particular of the Arab World and Turkey as well as the collection of the modern and contemporary art of the Middle East. She studied Arabic and Islamic art at the University of Oxford and obtained her PhD from the University of Durham on the medieval history and architecture of the Yemen. Her particular areas of research and interest are Arabic inscriptions, amulets and seals, ceramics, and contemporary Middle Eastern art which are the focus of her lectures and publications.

For further details of this exhibition

Email internationaltours@britishmuseum.org
or visit www.britishmuseum.org/internationaltours

Note: A confirmed exhibition object list will be provided at a later date.



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COVER: Window-screen sculpture designed by Susan Hefuna.
Wood stained with black ink featuring words in Arabic script (translation:
Knowledge is sweeter than honey). From Cairo, Egypt, 2007. © Susan Hefuna.
ABOVE: Shirin Neshat, *Innocent Memories*. Black and white RC print and ink
(photo by Cynthia Preston), 1995. © Shirin Neshat.