

NEWSLETTER

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'A Journey through Islamic Art'



Front cover: An Iznik pottery Makkah tile from Ottoman Turkey, 17th century, collection of Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

Foreword

Recently, we celebrated Mawlid Nabi, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad which is an event celebrated all around the Muslim world with du'a, remembrance and different types of celebrations. All of these highlight the importance of the Prophet in delivering the Muslim faith and enlightening Muslims during his stay in Madinah.

On this occasion, we have selected the tile that represents the holy sites of Makkah and Madinah. This tile depicts two separate sites: the Mosque of the Prophet in Madinah and the Masjid al-Haram in Makkah.

This last quarter of 2023 we have been very busy redesigning parts of our museum, namely the Children's Library and the Museum Shop. It is important to give a new look to the former, in order to encourage the children to develop an interest in reading and attending the activities that take place there.

Over the past quarter we have relooked at all our galleries to redesign and refurbish them in the most appropriate manner to suit the number of visitors that we are getting. We are very happy to see that the volume has been steadily increasing to the levels of before the Covid lockdown.

In the international arena, we have had a lot of success working with the Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan (CISC), delivering expertise through our experienced staff who visited Uzbekistan and shared their knowledge. It is our mission and vision to spread the history, art and culture of the Muslim world. Also, to help museums build up their galleries and their story lines. Accordingly, we are happy to see more interest from different institutions seeking our help and advice to develop their own museums and galleries.

In this newsletter we have also identified a few of our important new additions to the collection; artefacts that represent different regions of the Muslim world. We are happy to share with you more insights into these objects of significance.

Syed Mohamad Albukhary
Director
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



International Museum Training Programme 2.0 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan



Director of the Center for Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan, Shoazim Minovarov delivering his closing remarks

From 11 to 14 September 2023, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) successfully organised and conducted the International Museum Training Programme 2.0 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The programme was included as part of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). This initiative, under the Malaysian Foreign Affairs Ministry, was established in 1980 as Malaysia's commitment to South-South Cooperation through the sharing of this nation's development experience and expertise with other developing countries.

The training programme was attended by 25 participants from the Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan (CISC) with an additional ten participants from other institutions in Uzbekistan attending the training online. The framework of this programme was aimed to contribute to the development of Uzbekistan's museum professionals, specifically from CISC. The programme was held to emphasise and expose critical skills to the participants on the three core departments of a museum: curatorial affairs, conservation and education.



Group photo of the participants and the guests of honour, together with the trainers

The training is part of CISC's aspiration to be a centre for education and research in the near future. The CISC building is currently being built on a 7.5-hectare area in the famous Hazrat Imam complex of Tashkent. The multidisciplinary centre will include a museum, a library, a research centre in the field of Islamic studies, and a conference hall. The training is part of CISC's preparation for the opening of their imposing museum, which will have nine galleries, covering about 15,000 square metres of exhibition space.

The training programme in Tashkent was also an extension of an earlier training conducted at the IAMM from 11-14 July 2023. The initial course, Curatorial & Museum Management, was a tailor-made International Training Programme by IAMM for three members of

staff from CISC, which allowed them a hands-on and *in-situ* experience at IAMM. The success of this training led to the International Training Programme 2.0 in Tashkent.

The International Museum Training Programme 2.0 was a four-day course that covered a diverse range of topics, introducing tools and knowledge required for participants to perform their duties more effectively. Among the topics covered within a curatorial capacity were: museum display, text, exhibitions and gallery management. After introducing the participants to the standards and guidelines of the museum field, they were also presented with a session on chemistry in conservation, in order to understand the deterioration and agents of deterioration in object care.



Curatorial presentation



Conservation session on the second day of the programme



Participant, Azimjon Gofurov addressing his question during the session



Group activity during the conservation session

The preventive-conservation sessions emphasised a more participatory approach. These provided exposure to the participants through a working group session on understanding the elements that affect the environment. The participants underwent practical activities specifically covering the relationship between objects and packaging, the working process involved in handling, and documenting objects.

The last session of the training focused on the importance of museums as a venue for informal learning. Key issues involved museum-based learning and identifying potential frameworks for museum learning. Throughout the programme, all participants gave their full engagement in sharing their thoughts and actively participated in group discussions.

The programme concluded with a closing ceremony with His Excellency Ilham Tuah Illias, the Malaysian Ambassador to Uzbekistan, and the Director of the Center for Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan, Shoazim Minovarov, presenting certificates to the participants.

The fruitful relations between the CISC and IAMM result from the memorandum of understanding, signed in July 2022, which paved the way for various areas of collaboration between the two parties. The first major project within the framework of the partnership was a photo exhibition entitled 'Uzbekistan – A centre for Islamic civilization', displayed from 1 March to 27 April 2023 in the Open Space Gallery of IAMM.



His Excellency Ilham Tuah Illias, the Malaysian Ambassador to Uzbekistan presenting a certificate to a participant



The Centre of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan (CISC) due to open soon

Çatma cushion covers:

New acquisition of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Turkish society held finely handcrafted woven and embroidered fabrics in high regard. Turkish fabrics were produced in homes as well as in commercial workshops, although the best examples mainly came from the royal ateliers. In the 15th century, Sultan Mehmed II built the Grand Bazaar (known locally as the 'Covered Bazaar'), which became the heart of commercial life in Istanbul. Goods from all over the empire were traded, including woven and embroidered works, and these handcrafted works included wall hangings, floor coverings, quilt facings, napkins and towels, wrappings, turban covers and many more. Weaving workshops were well established by the 15th century in Bursa, where the production of Ottoman textiles took place, especially to meet the demand of these fabrics for domestics and export markets. Among them were *kemha* (multi coloured silk cloth brocaded with metal threads), and *çatma* (voiled velvet woven with gold and silver thread).

This pair of 17th-century cushion covers is made from a voided and brocaded silk velvet which has been referred to as *çatma* in Ottoman Turkish. Both covers have a similar design: a crimson red voided silk velvet ground is woven with a large cusped central medallion flanked by two pairs of leaves within spandrels, which give this cushion cover an ogival design. The medallion contains a cartouche and sprays of prunus and hyacinth blossoms, while the spandrels contain a tendril of carnation and tulip blossoms. Six floral lappets are placed on both ends of each cushion covers, which is a distinctive feature of Ottoman *çatma* cushions and referred to as *niş* in Turkish.

Luxurious fabrics like *çatma* were valued in court circles, tailored into caftans and ceremonial apparel worn by the Ottoman sultans and their courtiers. The smooth, soft texture of the fabric made it a prime choice for upholstery, especially as cushion covers. Cushion covers like this example would adorn the interior of Ottoman houses, specifically on a raised bench-like couch. They would cover the back cushion of the couch, while the seat cushion, referred to as a *minder*, would also be covered, albeit with fabric of similar design and material. In order to complement the couch, other decoration, such as rugs and hanging panels, would also be of similar design. While most households would strive to have such conspicuous interior design, only the most affluent could afford *çatma* cushions. Silk velvet is the most expensive type, renowned for its lustrous sheen.

Motifs such as carnations, large-scale ogival layouts in latticework and *cintamani* (triple roundels) were popular and became a mainstay design of the luxurious Ottoman fabrics in the 16th century. The preferred decorative motifs often reflect the taste of the Ottoman rulers as well, later adopted by their subjects. Flowers such as roses, tulips, carnations and hyacinths were in vogue. At the same time, architectural variety was also abundant with the portrayal of houses, mosques and pavilions.



The Children's Library:

Renovation and Re-Opening of the Library to the Public

Not many visitors to the museum realise that the Children's Library exists. Tucked away in a small corner far from the lobby, behind the shop, the Children's Library isn't immediately obvious. This is one of the museum's true hidden gems, a beautiful new room full of stories and storytelling.

After being renovated for four months, the Children's Library is finally open again. A fresh coat of paint has made the library much brighter and more attractive, and now it truly feels like a comfortable and welcoming space. New technology has also been installed, in the form of a projection screen with a dual function. One function acts as the screen for the occasional wayang kulit (shadow puppet) live performances and another for projecting pre-recorded ones on Sundays. On one side of the room sit several benches with chairs, where arts and crafts sessions take place, with a wall of previously created projects showing the creativity of the children.

Everything about the new library has been designed to make the space as open and inviting as possible. Even the arrangement of the shelves into open niches makes browsing titles and selecting them easy and appealing for parents and their children. The goal of the library is not just to entertain, but also to educate young children and inspire a love of reading and discovering the fascinations that lie within the world of books.





Storytelling and Art and Craft

On Saturdays, there are storytelling sessions at which a member of the Education Department takes it in turn each week to read a few books from the collection. These are followed by art and craft sessions to make an object, with a different theme each month. The aim is to teach children to create something new and useful, away from the ordinary and the everyday.

Active participation is always encouraged, helping children to develop an appreciation for traditions and cultural values globally. In the stories that are told, as well as the books within the library, one of the aims is moral instruction; the content draws on Islamic teachings and history giving children valuable moral lessons in life.

Wayang Kulit / Shadow Puppet Screening

On Sundays at 3 pm there are screenings of stories in the form of wayang kulit, comprising folktales, legends, myths and history, all adapted by our storytellers for a young audience. The Children's Library has a long tradition of being a space for wayang kulit performances, many of which can now be found recorded online for posterity.

The new interactive screen lets performances be captured live in great detail, and then played back using a projector. It's a friendly, welcoming and comfortable environment for visitors to sit and enjoy educational programmes. Local artists from Terengganu and Kelantan were contracted to create the puppets that we use, ensuring the museum supports the preservation of local art and crafts.

IAMM CLIP

Young readers are encouraged to develop their reading abilities with a reading passport system, which enables them to record the books that they read and make progress towards personal reading goals. This readership programme encourages children between four and 12 years old to read and write a short review about the books they have selected. After collecting stamps to reach each level, members of our CLIP programme will be awarded Bronze, Silver and Gold Achievement certificates respectively.

Over 100 new books have been added to the collection since the Children's Library closed for renovation. The newest books come with stories from around the Islamic world, as well as a wide collection of general fiction and educational titles. Titles which have been donated to the museum are carefully selected by our library management team for quality of content and value to readers, as well as the actual physical condition of the books themselves.

The library is always open to visitors to the museum. Even without purchasing a full admission entry, visitors are encouraged to take advantage of a museum pass to access the Children's Library.

To learn more about the Children's Library and what it offers, do send your inquiries to aimiamira@iamm.org.my



Calendar 2024 'A Journey through Islamic Art'

The 2024 calendar features selected artefacts from the museum's exquisite collection. To mention a few of these masterpieces, there are the illuminated Qur'an mushafs, such as those from the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula; an Ottoman metal-thread silk textile (Çatma); a large 15th-century ceramic serving dish produced in the royal workshops of Baba Nakkash; the opulent necklace that once belonged to the Nizam of Hyderabad; and the silver-inlaid brass bowl that once adorned the dining table of the Mamluk sultans. These magnificent artefacts testify to the journey of the museum through 25 years of its establishment in Malaysia.

The IAMM Museum Shop is open from 10 am to 6 pm, Monday to Sunday, including most public holidays, and entrance is free. Follow our Instagram page @islamicartsmuseumshop for the latest updates and ordering. Alternatively, you can contact us at: museumshop@iamm.org.my
Tel: 603 2092 7140 / 7142
Fax: 603 2274 0084

Calendar 2024
Price MYR 22.00





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