

## Harvard / News Release Art Museums

# Harvard Art Museums present exhibition of Norma Jean Calderwood's collection of Islamic Art

*Includes Persian ceramics, illustrated manuscripts, drawings, and lacquerware*



Cambridge, MA

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The Harvard Art Museums present [In Harmony: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art](#), a special exhibition that showcases some 150 objects from the Persian cultural sphere, including luxury glazed ceramics of the early and medieval Islamic era, illustrated manuscripts of medieval epic poems, and lacquerware of the early modern era. The works in this little-known and largely unpublished collection represent 30 years of committed collecting by Mrs. Calderwood. [In Harmony](#) is on display January 31–June 1, 2013 at the Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA.

The exhibition is curated by Mary McWilliams, Norma Jean Calderwood Curator of Islamic and Later Indian Art, Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art, Harvard Art Museums. An accompanying catalogue, edited by McWilliams, offers illustrated entries and nine essays written by distinguished scholars and conservation scientists from a broad range of specialties.

[Bowl inscribed with sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib](#), Uzbekistan, Samarkand, Samanid period, 10th century. Reddish earthenware covered in white slip and painted with black and red under clear lead glaze. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art, 2002.50.88.

[Afrasiyab and Siyavush Embrace](#) (detail), folio from a manuscript of the [Shahnama](#) by Firdawsi, Iran, Tabriz, Safavid period, 1520–40. Black ink, opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on off-white paper, with underdrawing in black ink. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art, 2002.50.13.

“In the decade since the Harvard Art Museums received the Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art, our gratitude has only increased for this magnificent gift,” said McWilliams. “Our research on the collection has inspired an even greater admiration and respect for Norma Jean’s knowledge and achievement. With this exhibition and catalogue, we hope to share with a broader audience the understanding we have gained of this beautiful and thoughtfully formed collection.”

“There has been exponential growth in the study of Islamic art in recent decades,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art

Museums, “and Harvard University and the Harvard Art Museums have been at the forefront of this movement, with faculty, curators, students, and celebrated collections providing fertile ground for the field. The Calderwood Collection is a lasting contribution from a collector who understood the heart of our educational mission.”

### The Calderwoods

Norma Jean Calderwood devoted much of her life to studying and teaching Islamic art and the complex of cultures in which it arose. She pursued graduate study in Islamic art at Harvard University, where she specialized in Persian

manuscripts, and taught for many years at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and at Boston College. A gifted lecturer, she was also an intrepid traveler, crossing North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia to study the art and architecture of Islamic lands. For three decades beginning in 1968, she systematically acquired examples of the artistic tradition that captivated her.

Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood were energetic and generous philanthropists in their adopted city of Boston. Institutions that have benefited directly from the Calderwoods' generosity include the Boston Athenaeum, Boston College, the Cambridge Art Association, the Harvard Art Museums, the Huntington Theatre, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the MacDowell Colony (Peterborough, NH), the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and public broadcaster WGBH. Their private art collection was the most tangible and personal expression of the Calderwoods' lifelong involvement in the arts, but also the one least known to the public.

### The Calderwood Collection

The Calderwood Collection covers more than a thousand years of artistic achievement in the Persianate world during the Islamic era, principally through the media of ceramics, works on paper, and lacquer. The majority of objects were produced between the 9th and 19th centuries in Iran, Iraq, and parts of Central Asia. Initially attracted to luxury ceramics, Norma Jean Calderwood amassed 57 examples within a decade before shifting her attention to works on paper—illuminated and illustrated manuscript folios as well as single-page compositions. A handful of lacquer objects rounds out the collection. The collection was gifted to the Harvard Art Museums in 2002, and a subsequent exhibition of 46 objects, titled Closely Focused, Intensely Felt: Selections from the Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art, was held August 7, 2004–January 2, 2005 at the Sackler Museum. That exhibition marked the first public showing of a major portion of the collection.

### In Harmony

To convey to her students the effect of a Persian painting, Norma Jean Calderwood said that its many visual elements “united to form a harmony.” The theme is eloquently expressed in some of the finest works in the Calderwood Collection, as well as in the total assembly, with objects resonating through contrasts and connections. This exhibition celebrates the scope of Calderwood's achievement and the harmony of purposes that led to the gifting of the collection to the Harvard Art Museums.

To reflect the collection's breadth and variety, the exhibition is ordered along a flexible chronology, beginning with earthenware from the 9th and 10th centuries, and closing with lacquerware from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Interspersed are several thematic clusters, as well as groupings of folios from four illustrated manuscripts that Mrs. Calderwood endeavored to reassemble when they were dispersed on the art market.

Highlights of the ceramics on view: Bowl with rooster and fish (Iraq, Basra, 10th century), is decorated with luster painting, the greatest contribution of Islamic potters to the history of ceramics. Bowl inscribed with sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (Uzbekistan, Samarkand, 10th century), a superb example of epigraphic wares, bears Arabic inscriptions attributed to two of the most important figures in the history of Islam. The decoration of arabesques and interlaced lines on Bowl with radial interlace design (Iran, Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century), is created in the polychrome *mīnā'ī* technique—a costly and complex overglaze process that required multiple firings. The colorful decoration on Bowl with inscription and birds (Iran, Nishapur, 10th century) is carefully composed and laid out in three registers: an Arabic word meaning “harmony” (*al-wifāq*) occupies the middle, and above and below it are long-necked birds with outstretched wings.

The works on paper include illustrated manuscripts of medieval Persian poems, most notably the Shāhnāma (Book of Kings) by Firdawsi, and the Khamsa (Quintet) by Nizami. A painting of great importance is Afrasiyab and Siyavush Embrace, from one of the most celebrated illustrated manuscripts in Islamic art—a large-scale and lavish copy of the Shāhnāma that was created in Tabriz, Iran, c. 1520–40 for Shah Tahmasp I, the second ruler of the Safavid dynasty in Iran. This brilliant painting illustrates a rare moment of harmony between the warring peoples of Iran and Turan. From another manuscript of the Shāhnāma comes Solomon Enthroned (c. 1575–90), one of the Calderwood Collection’s finest examples of painting from the Iranian city of Shiraz, which for three centuries was a major center for the production of illuminated and illustrated manuscripts. This painting depicts the famously multilingual King Solomon presiding wisely over an incongruous retinue of humans, demons, angels, and animals. The rising importance of single-page compositions is reflected in Young Dervish (Iran, Isfahan, c. 1630) which shows a comely youth sporting the domical wool hat and staff of a dervish. Signed by Riza `Abbasi, the most influential artist of 17th-century Iran, the painting demonstrates his calligraphic draftsmanship and subtle sense of color. Midway through the exhibition several of the works on paper will be rotated. Those works will be on view beginning Tuesday, April 9, 2013.

### Layar Technology

In Harmony marks the first time the Harvard Art Museums are exploring the use of augmented reality technology. After downloading an app called Layar on to an iPhone, iPad, or Android mobile device, visitors to the exhibition can point their device at any of the six designated objects in the gallery, and additional content will appear. Content may include photomicrographs from the object’s conservation treatment, comparative images in other collections, or video showing the recreation of a vessel’s construction. The free app can be downloaded at the Apple App Store, the Android Apps section of the Google Play store, and on the Layar website at [www.layar.com/download](http://www.layar.com/download). A small number of devices may be borrowed at the admissions desk on the first floor of the Sackler Museum.

### Catalogue

A fully illustrated hardcover catalogue, edited by Mary McWilliams, accompanies the exhibition. Nine essays by diverse experts explore issues of conservation as well as the cultural and historical significance of various objects in this largely unpublished collection. Topics include the vestiges of pre-Islamic cultural traditions in Iranian ceramic decoration, artistic practice and process in Shiraz manuscript painting, strategies of imperial self-representation in Safavid Iran and Mughal India, and conservation issues in Islamic ceramics. Illustrated entries are divided into three categories: three-dimensional objects, works on paper, and the study collection. Published by the Harvard Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press. Price: \$75, comes with slipcase. Available mid-January 2013 at the Harvard Art Museums shop in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum lobby, or order via our website at: [www.harvardartmuseums.org/shop](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/shop). For more information about ordering, call 617-495-1440 or email [am\\_shop@harvard.edu](mailto:am_shop@harvard.edu).

### Credits

This exhibition and its accompanying catalogue have been made possible through the generous support of the late Stanford Calderwood.

### Press preview

A preview of the exhibition will be held for members of the press on Monday, January 28, 2013, at 9:30am (rescheduled from Tuesday, January 29). Kindly RSVP by Thursday, January 24 to [jennifer\\_aubin@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu). Parking is available, by permit, at the nearby Broadway Garage, 7 Felton Street. To reserve a permit, please indicate the need for parking in your email.

## Exhibition Programming

Below is a list of the public events connected to the exhibition In Harmony: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art. All events are held at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA. Detailed information is available on the Harvard Art Museums' website at [www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar).

- Wednesday, January 30, 2013, 6–8pm  
Opening Lecture and Reception: In Harmony: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art  
Oya Pancaroglu, Boğaziçi University, will present the lecture Tables and Other Social Settings in 9th–11th Century Eastern Iran at 6pm. A reception and open galleries will follow. Free admission.
- Wednesday, February 6, 2013, 3:30–4:30pm  
Gallery Talk: “With Quite Different Eyes”: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art, with Mary McWilliams, Mika Natif, and Aysin Yoltar-Yıldırım, Harvard Art Museums. Free with the price of admission.
- Tuesday, March 5, 2013, 6pm  
Storytelling Performance: Stories from the Shāhnāma: The Persian Book of Kings  
Xanthe Gresham, storyteller, delves deep into the rich culture and epic mythology of Persia. For ages 12 and above. Free admission.
- Wednesday, March 27, 2013, 3:30–4:30pm  
Gallery Talk: From the Laboratory to the Gallery: The Conservation and Technical Study of Islamic Art, with Katherine Eremin, Anthony Sigel, and Penley Knipe, Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard Art Museums. Free with the price of admission.

### Programming for Educators

- Tuesday, January 15 and Tuesday, January 22, 2013, 7–8pm  
Islamic Art: Technology, Visual Culture, and Power is a two-part webinar series for K–12 teachers. The sessions present live discussion with scholars, artists, and educators exploring visual culture and art technologies in Persian history and contemporary Iran. Co-sponsored by the Outreach Center at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, and the Harvard Art Museums. Register online at [www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/calendar).
- Saturday, February 2, 2013, 9am–1pm  
Professional Development Workshop for Middle School and High School Educators  
This workshop will provide an overview of exhibition themes and gallery activities designed to promote active learning and critical thinking. Free admission, register by January 23, 2013 to [erin\\_loeb@harvard.edu](mailto:erin_loeb@harvard.edu) or 617-496-8576.

## About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler) and four research centers (Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. The collections include approximately 250,000

objects in all media, ranging in date from antiquity to the present and originating in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the art museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and other visitors. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in this country. [www.harvardartmuseums.org](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org).

In June 2008 the building at 32 Quincy Street, formerly the home of the Fogg and Busch-Reisinger museums, closed for a major renovation. During this renovation, the Sackler Museum at 485 Broadway remains open and has been reinstalled with some of the finest works representing the collections of all three museums. When complete, the renovated historic building on Quincy Street will unite the three museums in a single state-of-the-art facility designed by architect Renzo Piano. [www.harvardartmuseums.org/renovation](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/renovation).

#### Hours and Admission

Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–5pm. Closed on major holidays. Admission: \$9 adults, \$7 seniors (65 and over), \$6 college students with valid ID. Free for children under 18, members of the Harvard Art Museums, and Cambridge Public Library cardholders. Free plus one guest for Harvard University students and affiliates. For Massachusetts residents with valid ID, free on Saturday, 10am–noon. Paid admission includes entrance to the museum, guided tours, and gallery talks. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or [www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit](http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit).

The Harvard Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

#### For more information, please contact:

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