



The Focus-Abengoa Foundation opens the exhibition “Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World” at the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville, Spain

- Organized by the Focus-Abengoa Foundation in collaboration with the Dallas Museum of Art, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* brings together 150 rarely seen objects in order to explore the importance of light in Islamic aesthetics and knowledge between the 9th and 20th centuries
- The exhibition will travel to Dallas in Spring 2014 following its debut in Seville

24 October 2013. – The Focus-Abengoa Foundation today presented the most important travelling exhibition of Islamic art and culture, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World*, spanning more than ten centuries and including ancient artworks and objects from throughout the Islamic world. The exhibition will be on display in Seville from October before travelling to the Dallas Museum of Art (USA) in Spring 2014.

Featuring 150 objects from public and private collections in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the United States, *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* explores the use and meaning of light in Islamic art and science, and demonstrates how light is a unifying motif in Islamic civilizations worldwide. The exhibition, directed and curated by Islamic art and culture expert Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, includes numerous unprecedented objects that have never been displayed in public, from gold and silver inlaid metalwork through to anatomical illustrations.

The *Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World* exhibition will be housed at the Focus-Abengoa Foundation’s headquarters in the historic 17th century building, the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes, from 25 October 2013 to 9 February 2014. It will subsequently travel to the United States and be on view at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas, from 30 March 2014 to 29 June 2014.

Deriving its title from the Arabic word for light in both the physical and metaphysical sense, *Nur* is organized thematically into two major sections: one showcasing innovations in artistic technique that enhance the effect of light, and the other focusing on scientific fields which are related to light or contributed to enlightenment. Encompassing works dating from the 9th through to the early 20th century, and originating from a wide geographical area, from Spain to Central Asia, the exhibition includes manuscripts illuminated with gold and color pigments, ceramics painted with luster, inlay metalwork decorated in silver and gold, and objects made from precious and semi-precious stones. Scientific objects featured in the exhibition include equatorial sundials,



astrolabes, and anatomical instruments, all of which are examples of the Islamic world's influence on the Renaissance and scientific thought.

In addition to showcasing the use of light in Islamic art and science, *Nur* demonstrates how Spain has bridged the Islamic world and Europe, serving as an entry point for Islamic discoveries in fields such as medicine, geometry, and astronomy, as well as specific inventions such as the luster technique.

“For centuries, Spain has served as a bridge between Islamic and Western civilizations. The Focus-Abengoa Foundation's organization of this traveling exhibition continues this tradition by allowing visitors to Seville and Dallas to discover new themes and see works from throughout the Islamic world, some of which have never been exhibited before,” said Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir. “The eleven centuries and fourteen countries represented in *Nur* demonstrate not only the tradition of skill and craftsmanship across the Islamic world, but also the sheer beauty that Islamic culture has produced and Islamic civilization's contribution to humanity's pool of knowledge. The exhibition therefore provides a unique opportunity to encounter Islamic culture in its artistic and scientific manifestations, inviting reflection on the subject within the framework of light”, concludes the exhibition's scientific director and curator.

The exhibition begins with a selection of objects that visually express the idea of light in their design, including a bowl from late 13th century Iran and a ceremonial shield from 17th century India or Persia, both of which feature suns at their centers emanating stylized rays of light.

It also explores the idea of light as a shared metaphor, with pieces representing Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures. Screens throughout the exhibition present the rich details of the objects on view, highlighting the visual language and vocabulary of Islamic art and its multi-layered nature, with ornate flourishes and calligraphic writing. The screens also bring to the fore the synthesis of the exhibition's themes, adding to the didactic dimension.

The exhibition includes artworks and scientific objects from institutional and private collections, including a significant number of objects from Spanish collections that will travel to the United States for the first time for the Dallas Museum of Art's presentation of *Nur*. Exhibition highlights include:

- A series of 11th century crystal chess pieces from Ourense's cathedral museum, Spain, which have never before left the cathedral;
- 19th century anatomical illustrations from Iran, which have never before been exhibited to the public;



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- Pieces from the 13th century renowned Jazira, Mosul, and Khorasan schools of metalwork, inlaid with gold and silver;
- Four pages, displayed together for the first time, from the “Blue Koran” of 9th-10th century Tunisia, the only existing Koran manuscript on blue parchment;
- A 19th century work on paper, two meters long, from Iran, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which has never before been exhibited;
- The oldest surviving illustrated manuscript written in Arabic on any subject, a manuscript on paper of Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi’s “Treatise on the Fixed Stars,” dating from 1009-1010;
- A ceramic bowl from 9th century Iraq created using luster technique that produces a glowing metallic sheen on its surface design of a stylized bird;
- And 10th century architectural elements from Madina al-Zahra, the palace city near Cordoba.

A global leader in developing renewable energies, Abengoa, along with the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, chose to organize their first traveling exhibition about the subject of light to raise awareness about its importance in science, art and culture.

“Abengoa’s leadership in solar energy and the Islamic history of the city of Seville and Andalusia are the fundamental elements that led us to create this exhibition. Under Dr. Al Khemir’s curatorial direction, Nur encourages us to explore the universality and the constancy of light in Islamic art and culture and reflect upon this great aesthetic, cultural, and scientific heritage,” says Anabel Morillo León, director general of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation. “This exhibition marks an important institutional milestone for the Foundation as we are increasing our presence in the United States and extending our cultural reach. We are delighted to partner the Dallas Museum of Art with the presentation of Nur, marking the first time that a cultural initiative of the Foundation has travelled to this country.”

“*Nur* is the first exhibition of the Dallas Museum of Art’s new DMX program, which seeks to promote cultural collaborations and exchanges with art institutions around the world”, said Dr. Maxwell L. Anderson, the DMA’s Eugene McDermott Director. “We are proud to be working with the Focus-Abengoa Foundation and Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, one of the world’s most prestigious experts on Islamic art, in launching this program.”

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation was created in 1982 as a result of the cultural work begun in 1972 by Abengoa with the publication of the works *Temas Sevillanos* (Themes of Seville) and



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Iconografía de Sevilla (Iconography of Seville). A collection of documents, books and engravings on the Kingdom of Seville and by Sevillian authors was created during the same period. This initial cultural work showed Abengoa's directors the importance of the company's involvement in activities that directly benefit society, beyond the firm's core technology work, which led to the creation of the Seville Cultural Fund Foundation. The Hospital de los Venerables, a 17th century monument and the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation in Seville, has housed the Diego Velázquez Research Centre, a leading institution for studying and disseminating the Baroque era and the Sevillian period of this universally renowned artist, since the acquisition of Velázquez's Santa Rufina by the Foundation in 2007.

The Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) ranks among the leading art institutions in the country and is distinguished by its innovative exhibitions and groundbreaking educational programs. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 22,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures.

Located in the vibrant Arts District of downtown Dallas, the Museum welcomes more than half a million visitors annually and acts as a catalyst for community creativity, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse spectrum of programming, from exhibitions and lectures to concerts, literary events, and dramatic and dance presentations. In January 2013, the DMA returned to a free general admission policy and launched DMA Friends, the first free museum membership program in the country. The Dallas Museum of Art is supported, in part, by the generosity of DMA Partners and donors, the citizens of Dallas through the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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Additional information about the exhibition

Exhibition catalogue and public programs

Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World is accompanied by major monograph published by the Focus-Abengoa Foundation. Written by Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, the 304-page, full-color catalogue includes essays on the exhibition's overarching concept and thematic sections, as well a forward by Anabel Morillo León, Director General of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, and Maxwell L. Anderson, Director of the Dallas Museum of Art.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Focus-Abengoa Foundation is hosting a number of public programs, such as various activities for school children and the general public that will run in parallel to the exhibition to enable these groups to discover some of the hidden aspects of the objects in the exhibition in a fun and educational way. The Foundation is also organizing weekend workshops during the year for families interested in different techniques of working with ceramics.

Exhibition organization and tour

Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World has been organized by the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, Seville, Spain, in collaboration with the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, USA, with Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir as the scientific director and curator.

The exhibition can be visited from 26 October 2013, to 9 February 2014 at the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, and from 30 March 2014 to 29 June 2014 at the Dallas Museum of Art.

The texts in the exhibition hall and the visitors' brochure are published in Spanish, English and Arabic.

Location of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation

Hospital de los Venerables
Plaza de los Venerables, 8
41004 Seville, Spain

Opening times

Nur can be visited from 29 October 2013 until 9 February 2014
Monday–Sunday: 10 am – 2 pm and 4pm – 8pm
Closed on 1 January

Admission

Normal price €5.50
Concessions €2.75