



Kjeld von Folsach and Joachim Meyer

The Human Figure in Islamic Art

Holy Men, Princes, and
Commoners

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A richly illustrated book on a subject that is rarely elucidated: *The Human Figure in Islamic Art*.

The Human Figure in Islamic Art is the book behind the exhibition of the same name that will open at the David Collection on November 24, 2017. The book — like the exhibition — focuses on an unusually and rarely elucidated subject in the world of Islamic art: human depictions. *The Human Figure in Islamic Art* presents 75 important works from the David Collection, all of them focused on the human figure.

Depictions of man were considered objectionable from an orthodox Muslim point of view since only God can create life, and man should not try to emulate God's work. There was concern that depictions or those who were depicted could be worshipped, something that went against the dogma that only God, Allah, should be the object of worship.

The book describes how, despite this reluctance, portraying human figures has nonetheless always played an important role in Islamic art. The human figure is found on many kinds of utility ware, but the motif also has a long and rich tradition especially in miniature painting. The paintings in the book largely feature princes, but also holy men and quite ordinary people in the form of illustrations for works of fiction, depictions of real-life events, and true portraits.

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This richly illustrated book covers the use of the human figure in many of the forms of Islamic art and describes some of the historical conditions and theological discussions behind it. Light is also shed on the mutual influence of Islamic and European art. This is followed by a presentation of the 75 works of international importance that the David Collection will present at the upcoming exhibition.

The works are divided into nine themes, including Women, The Religious Sphere, Everyday Life, Love, the Prince and the Court, and Exotic Beings. Each subject is introduced by an essay, and the 75 unique works of art are dealt with in detail.

About the authors

The authors are Dr. Kjeld von Folsach, Director, and Joachim Meyer, Ph.D., Curator, from the David Collection. The book also includes an article by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, professor at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, who considers the human figure in the Islamic world from a modern perspective.

Information and contacts

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