

EXHIBITION

TREASURES OF ISLAM IN AFRICA FROM TIMBUKTU TO ZANZIBAR

14 April – 30 July 2017

Press exhibition preview on Thursday 13 April: 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



James Morris, Friday mosque, Djenné, Mali
© James Morris

*An unprecedented exhibition dedicated to the close links, past and present, forged between the Arab-Muslim world and sub-Saharan Africa. **Treasures of Islam in Africa** explores the processes by which Islam was appropriated and transmitted by African peoples.*

Covering Morocco, Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and other nations, the exhibition traces thirteen centuries of history through art, architecture, and rituals attested in more than 300 traditional and contemporary works, loaned from collections that are rarely exhibited in public



Koran, Somalia, 1793, manuscript,
23,5 x 17 x 5 cm, Constant Hamès Collection
© Photo Cateley - IMA

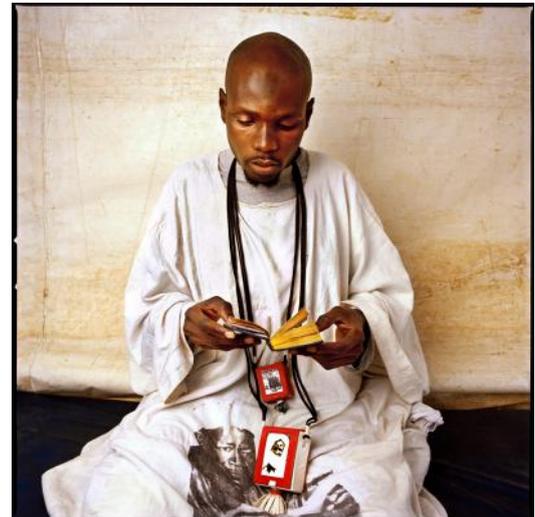
TRANSMISSION: FROM COMMERCE TO JIHAD

As of the 8th century, Islam spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa *via* trading networks. Three distinct geographical regions developed in this zone in which peoples and goods circulated: initially, the Horn of Africa and the Nile valley, followed by the Swahili area, and lastly West Africa. Presented chronologically, each of these regions adopted Islam differently as they came into contact with Arab traders and subsequently Muslim scholars. Contradicting the idea of a continent in which oral transmission is believed to prevail, 'Treasures of Islam in Africa' focuses in particular on the city of Timbuktu, the famous centre for the diffusion and preservation of knowledge that was recently under threat. A dozen manuscripts from Timbuktu's Mamma Haidara Library will be exhibited for the first time. Lastly, exploring the history of the jihads carried out in the 19th century, the exhibition focuses on contemporary African jihad movements.

PRACTICES: ARCHITECTURES, RELIGION, AND MAGIC

The highly diverse Islamic practices in sub-Saharan Africa have been integrated into the architectural edifices that are part of local traditions, and which are very different from the familiar buildings of the Arab-Muslim world. The places of worship are as varied as the types of building, from madrasas and zawiyas to mausoleums. They are often built by the Sufi brotherhoods that organise the religious life within societies.

These varied rituals are very often borrowed from pre-Islamic traditions. Hence, masks from Ghana and the Ivory Coast will also be displayed. As intermediaries between man and gods, these masks were also used in the Muslim religion. Exhibited for the very first time will be royal objects from the mid 19th century, loaned from a private collection and attesting to the synthesis between Islam and animist rituals. The exploration of these diverse practices will be complemented by the study of the dances and songs of the Moroccan Gnaouas and the making of talismans.



Baye Fall, Dakar, 2013 ©Laurent Gudin



Aida Muluneh, *City Life*, 2016, Archival Digital Print,
80 x 80 cm, Edition of 7, Courtesy of the Artist and David
Krut Projects New York Johannesburg

APPROPRIATIONS: EVERYDAY AND LOCAL OBJECTS

Religion aside, the Muslim culture is also evident in the art and crafts associated with daily life. Islam expanded through the work of Muslim artists and craftsmen—painters, smiths, goldsmiths and silversmiths, weavers, and so on—, whose priceless know-how also spread across the continent. In fact, forms spread more easily and fluidly than ideas. Regional specificities subsequently emerged. The *boubou* tradition was therefore interpreted according to the couturiers and their region: ‘riga’ and ‘agbada’ *boubous* in Nigeria and ‘tilbi’ and ‘lomasa’ *boubous* in Mali. Likewise, calligraphy and alphabets have created specific forms that inspire contemporary artists. Artists such as Ibrahim Al-Salahi, Abdulaye Konaté, Rachid Koraïchi, and Babacar Diouf, explore their Muslim heritage in the monumental installations set up in ‘Treasures of Islam in Africa’ exhibition, forming a complement to the traditional works on display.

As part of ‘**Treasures of Islam in Africa: From Timbuktu to Zanzibar**’, The Arab World Institute (IMA) will give the writer **Alain Mabanckou** carte blanche on five Sundays (16 and 23 April, and 4, 11, and 18 June 2017). A music and film season will also be devoted to the theme of Africa from April to June 2017, with, in particular, concerts by **Inna Modja** and **Manu Dibango**. Lastly, in May 2017, two ‘IMA Thursdays’ will be devoted to the exhibition themes.

Treasures of Islam in Africa From Timbuktu to Zanzibar

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Floors 1 and 2

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Opening hours:

From Tuesday to Friday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Admission:

Full price: €12; reduced rate: €10; under 26s: €6

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