

Dallas Museum of Art to Present First North American Exhibition of One of the World's Leading Islamic Art Collections

***Spirit and Matter* Exhibition Will Include More Than
50 Masterworks from Rarely Exhibited Keir Collection**



Dallas, TX—August 6, 2015— This fall, the Dallas Museum of Art will mount *Spirit and Matter: Masterpieces from the Keir Collection*, the first North American exhibition from one of the world's most significant and rarely exhibited private collections of Islamic art. Opening on September 18, this unprecedented exhibition will showcase more than 50 of the most historically important masterworks from the Keir Collection, which is arriving in Dallas this year on a 15-year loan to the DMA.

Assembled over the course of five decades by the noted art collector Edmund de Unger (1918–2011), the Keir Collection is recognized by scholars as one of the most geographically and historically comprehensive of its kind, encompassing almost 2,000 works spanning three continents and 13 centuries of Islamic cultural production—from rock crystal to metalwork, ceramics, textiles, carpets, and works on paper. *Spirit and Matter* marks the first of multiple exhibitions that will present different areas of the collection over the course of its loan to the Museum.

Following the announcement last year that the Keir Collection would arrive at the DMA on a long-term loan, the Museum opened in May 2014 a focused exhibition of one of the collection's most notable works: a rock crystal ewer from Egypt's Fatimid Caliphate (969–1171), one of only seven of its kind in existence. The ewer will remain on view at the DMA as part of the new exhibition.

"We are deeply grateful to the Keir Collection's Trustees for entrusting us with this unparalleled treasure, which will enhance the DMA's growing strengths in the area of Islamic art," said Maxwell L. Anderson, the Museum's Eugene McDermott Director. "It's a great privilege to introduce these works to a North American audience for the first time in the collection's history, offering our visitors a unique opportunity to gain greater insight into the artistic heritage of the Islamic world."

On view through July 31, 2016, *Spirit and Matter* has been organized and developed by Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir, the DMA's Senior Advisor for Islamic Art, who was integral in bringing the Keir Collection to Dallas. The arrival of the Keir Collection at the DMA has transformed the Museum's Islamic art holdings into the third largest in North America.

"With distinctive strengths across nearly every major period of Islamic cultural production, the Keir Collection is one of the most important collections of Islamic art ever assembled," said Sabiha Al Khemir. "We are thrilled by the opportunity to display this remarkable collection with new scholarship and interpretive strategies that will illuminate the 13-century history of Islamic art for audiences locally and globally."

Over the course of the loan, the DMA is establishing a new gallery space dedicated to exhibiting works from the Keir Collection, and will also create the first-ever digital archive of the collection to enhance its accessibility for scholarship and public engagement. The loan and exhibition of the Keir Collection affirms the DMA's commitment to expanding its collections through long-term loans and cultural exchanges, as a complement to its robust acquisitions program.

The Keir Collection's exhibition at the DMA exemplifies the Museum's DMX program, which was launched in 2012 and facilitates loans of cultural objects from international organizations in exchange for the Museum sharing its expertise in conservation, exhibitions, education and new media. Texas has the fifth largest Muslim population in the United States, and until now Dallas has been the only one of the four largest metropolitan areas in the nation lacking a significant public display of the art of the Islamic world. None of the projects of DMX, including the Keir loan, involve fees, but instead are intended to foster scholarship, relationship-building and lifelong learning.

Images (left to right): Pendant, Egypt, probably Cairo, late 11th century, gold, with cloisonné enamel, The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.90; Textile panel with a pictorial scene, Iran, c. 1600, silk velvet, brocaded with gold and silver thread, The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.44; Ewer, Egypt, late 10th–early 11th century, rock crystal, 19th-century gold mount by Jean-Valentin Morel (Sèvres, France, 1854), The Keir Collection of Islamic Art on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, K.1.2014.1.a–b

About the Keir Collection

Named after the 18th-century British mansion where it was once housed, the Keir Collection includes textiles, carpets, ceramics, rock crystal, metalwork and works on paper. Reflecting the tastes of Edmund de Unger—a Hungarian-born lawyer who began collecting Islamic art in the 1950s—the Keir Collection is particularly strong in the fields of early luster ceramic ware, while the rock crystal—including the currently exhibited Fatimid Ewer—is perhaps the most important collection of its type outside the treasury of San Marco in Venice. Other highlights include the sumptuous silk textiles with their intricately drawn designs from the imperial workshops of 16th- and 17th-century Safavid Iran, and then there are distinctive examples of illuminated figurative manuscripts from the 14th to 17th century. With the exception of an exhibition of some 100 works at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin in 2007–08, most of the collection has never been exhibited in a museum setting prior to its presentation at the DMA.

About the Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) is among the 10 largest art museums in the country and is distinguished by its commitment to research, innovation and public engagement. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 23,000

works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the nation's largest arts district, the Museum 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. Since the Museum's return to free general admission in 2013, the DMA has welcomed more than two million visitors, and enrolled more than 100,000 people in DMA Friends, the nation's first free museum membership program. For more information, visit DMA.org.

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