

## **Press Release**

**18 July 2018**

### **Four Corners of One Cloth Textiles from the Islamic World**

The Whitworth, University of Manchester  
until June 2019

Cloth was, and continues to be, a unifier across the Islamic world. This exhibition showcases textiles from the Whitworth's collection, selected from across cultures and countries. Two display cases will be symbolically empty until November 2018.

The title of this exhibition refers to the Prophet Muhammad bringing together four leaders who all wanted to raise the sacred Black Stone from the ground up to the Ka'ba in Mecca. They placed the stone in the centre of a cloth so that each could take a corner and lift together.

At the heart of this exhibition is a nearly 100-year-old fragment of kiswa cloth. The kiswa covers the Ka'ba and is replaced annually during Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca); each year sections are cut and distributed across the world. This is the first time this piece has ever been on display in Manchester. This is a textile of religious significance but not all of the works on display are connected to worship. Socks, rugs, bedding and tablecloths are included; objects made in beautiful and careful ways for everyday use.

Many of the textiles offer protection. A Dervish hat stitched with a poem to recite, a Malian hat that is said to contain passages of the Qur'an and a talismanic shirt with a magic formulae of letters and numbers. These, and many other textiles, have influenced non-Muslim artists and craftspeople across the world. Pieces by designers such as William Morris, Thomas Wardle and Lucienne Day, clearly inspired by Islamic culture, are on display.

Numerous voices have come together to make this exhibition: people of the Islamic faith, teachers, religious leaders, academics, project co-ordinators and museum professionals. They were invited to the Whitworth to form a focus group to view and discuss textiles from the exhibition. It was acknowledged that no collection can

represent a full picture, and with this exhibition the Whitworth can only offer a series of glimpses into the long and international history of Islamic culture. All agreed that Manchester today is as much part of the Islamic world as places where Islam has long been the dominant religion.

This conversation isn't finished. In June 2018 the exhibition opened with two empty cases, painted green. This points to the gaps in the gallery's collection and offers an opportunity, at the Come and Share event on 9 August, to borrow and display textiles from the most local Islamic communities in the North West.

#fourcornersofonecloth

### **Notes to editors**

#### **Come and Share**

Thursday 9 August 2018

Free. Drop-in 2-4pm, the gallery will be open until 9pm

An opportunity for the public and local communities to bring textiles from their Islamic world including home-made items, clothes, souvenirs, special religious items or everyday objects to help the gallery complete the exhibition. A selection will be displayed in the currently empty cases.

#### **About the Whitworth**

The Whitworth is part of The University of Manchester. It is home to internationally renowned collections of modern art, wallpaper, textiles, watercolours, prints, drawings and sculpture. Created in 1889 as the first English gallery in a park, the Whitworth has developed a new vision for the role of a university gallery. A creative laboratory within an ambitious university, the Whitworth is a place where good, unusual things happen. The Whitworth re-opened to the public on 14 February 2015 after a major £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA. The Whitworth has welcomed over one million visitors since re-opening, and more than doubled its previous annual records. The redevelopment has doubled public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities including expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. The gallery was crowned Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe. [www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

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