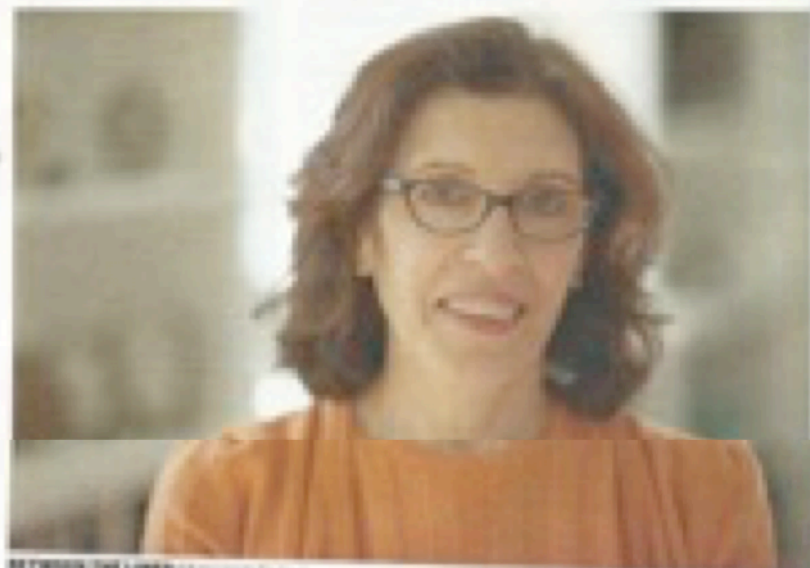




'Islamic art never ceases to amaze'



BEHIND THE LENS: Anasit Hadda

By Anasit Hadda

Of the 12 scholars from around the world who explored the role of writing in Islamic art and culture during the recently held Arab-Islamic Studies Month Symposium at Al-Farooq Centre for Islamic Studies, Anasit Hadda presented a fascinating manuscript of ancient Iran by exploring "the link we find in the written word with language".

Hadda, who is the Chief Curator of Islamic Art, Fine Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, gave an interesting lecture that bridged between the 13th and 14th centuries. A specialist in the role of the book from Italy and the 15th century Iran, Hadda made her invited academic contribution on a range of subjects in Islamic art, and has also written extensively on 17-century Persian painting.

"When I look at the early 13th-century manuscripts from Spain, a critical role in writing books of meaning to a given text," Hadda said in the afternoon by Hadda, who specialises in Persian, Indian and Tibetan paintings. "Inevitably linked to the written word, images have served as visual narratives

particular elements in the written or pictorial narratives were a message, then enlightening certain elements of the text."

"The relationship of word and image, however, did not stop there. Some of the earliest visual expression discovered are connected with astronomical systems, music, paintings, and religious narratives that underlie the spiritual, by extension, the entire order, with additional significance," she said further on. "Commonly caught up with technical talk about art and music, Europe

What is the link between writing and illustrating words a greater subject?

"The Islamic world, students, scholars, or even the educated public, look at the work, and have been surprised that we, and maybe have looking over tell you or read something a text. Unwillingly to something that you can make formal writing of a manuscript. The way out of a class, you look around and read something or an tell me what about where you are, what time it is, and why things look the way they do. It's about reading things, reading signs and symbols, because when looking at something is so different. It really offers you insight before different world, but

the way writing provides you with the meanings."

In today's age, where learning is not on gadgets, especially for the youth, how does the simple experience of viewing art in the museum and galleries, what can be done to engage these better?

"I am constantly struggling to find ways to get the complete message. We have all become so much focused on the little numbers and on instant gratification. But if the same time, we figure that there are other things that need concentration, and that you need to slow down and look at a real something carefully. It is not looking at art in a way to reach that point. Especially for the younger generation, it's something that needs to be done. How do you get the person interested in viewing and looking at something, I would not have succeeded.

How is viewing art still important to be an an experience, when nearly everything can be accessed via a mobile device?

"There's nothing like looking at the real thing, but the way we've lost all of those photographs or digital reproduction of art, a copy or a screenshot, but the feeling of



An illustration from a manuscript of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, known as the work of the 10th-century Persian poet, around 1000 AD.

actually looking at art is very different. What is interesting is that all the progress in the digital world has made a lot of art more available, which is wonderful. In addition, what we have learnt is that people are used to seeing it on their mobile and not the real thing. So it doesn't replace the actual experience of viewing the actual work of art. We are all about the digital accessibility would require viewing and seeing the real thing - but that has not been the case.

Why does Islamic art excite you?

"I was always intrigued by Islamic art and have always had an interest in it because the education that I received, primarily my western education, always art accessibility and interest. It was never to access. When you come here and go to the galleries, you make new discoveries,

make new friends. The variety is incredible. Just in these few days at the symposium here in Dubai, for instance, I have learnt so much from my colleagues and there's so much to learn. It's that excitement of discovery that keeps me going.

Being the Chief Curator with such a prestigious institution, how does art affect you? What really happens when you look at a work of art?

"Personally, that's the wonderful experience of discovery something new and different. It just gives me that "Aha!" moment. It encourages me to try to find something new about it, while there is also the excitement of seeing something beautiful and exciting. A lot of times, there's emotional response to what's before me. Professionally, I take it as my responsibility to showcase pieces to enhance the importance that it holds.