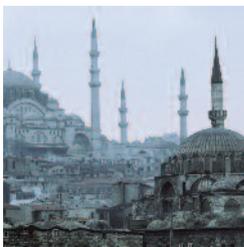


Islam – the religion seen through art

If we look at the art of the Islamic world from the viewpoint of cultural history or the history of religions, we can trace authentic narratives about the origins of Islam, about how the Koran came into being, and – not least – about how Muslims from Spain to China lived up to the obligations of the Five Pillars of Islam for over 1000 years. The David Collection can consequently be experienced not only as a treasure trove of an impressive Middle Eastern artistic tradition from the 8th to the 19th century, but also as a visual approach to the religion and history of the Muslims.



The origins of Islam

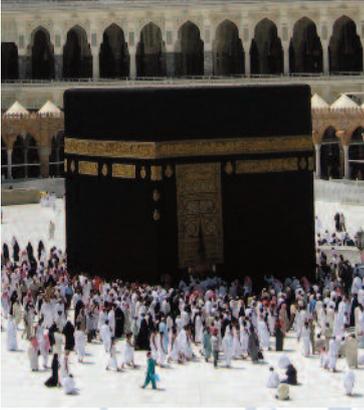
Islam originated on the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. This is where the Prophet Muhammad preached his faith in the cities of Mecca and Medina. According to Muslims, Islam is a newer and purer version of the same monotheistic religion that is also manifest in Judaism and Christianity. Among the holy men found in the Koran are Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus, as well as a large number of other figures familiar from the Old and the New Testament.

The Koran

The words of the Koran are understood by Muslims to be God's words to Muhammad and mankind conveyed through the Archangel Gabriel. An essential Muslim belief is that this text is immutable. In contrast to the Bible, the Koran has remained unchanged since Islam's birth. Quotations from the Koran provide an eternal source for embellishing Islamic works of art.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Devout Muslims respect the precepts conveyed by the Koran and Muhammad and endeavor to fulfill a number of basic obligations both to God and to their fellow man. These obligations, called the Five Pillars of Islam, are as follows: ● Pronouncing the profession of faith: "I witness that there is no god but God and I witness that Muhammad is His messenger." ● Reciting the five daily prayers. ● Paying annual alms to the needy. ● Keeping the fast during the ninth month of the Muslim lunar year, Ramadan. ● Making a pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mecca during one's lifetime, if health and finances allow.



Good questions – and answers

Who was the prophet Muhammad?

Muhammad, whose full name was Muhammad ibn Abd Allah, was born in the year 570 in the city of Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula. Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be the last in a long line of prophets. He is never seen as the son of God – in contrast to Christianity's view of Jesus – but solely as a messenger.

Are there pictures in the Koran?

There are abstract decorations in many Korans, but no images of living creatures. The reason for this special phenomenon is that from its very beginning, Islam wanted to keep believers from being tempted to worship idols in the form of pictures or figures.

What is the Kaaba?

The Kaaba, in the city of Mecca, is a cubic building of dressed grayish-black stones. Since the time of Muhammad, it has been a place of pilgrimage and the direction of prayer for Muslims all over the world. The Koran describes the Kaaba as the house of God and Abraham, built by Abraham and his son Ishmael.

Are there Muslim churches?

No, Muslims have mosques and not churches. A mosque is a house of worship – the place where the faithful congregate for prayer and hear the *khutba* (the imam's lecture) on Fridays. The typical image of a mosque in the West is a large building with domes and minarets. There are, however, many types of mosques all over the world designed in local architectural styles.

DURING THE GUIDED TOUR OF THE MUSEUM:

When pupils are shown around the museum, we will use the art of the Islamic world to tell them about Islam's origins, the Koran, the Five Pillars of Islam, the "prohibition against images," and other subjects related to Islam. Parallels will also be drawn to Christianity and Judaism, and relevant aspects of cultural and religious history will be discussed, based on the individual works of art.