

ABOUT THE ART

Islamic Art

Gallery 2

ACKLAND

QUESTIONS?

Contact us at acklandlearn@unc.edu

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM

The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill
101 S. Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: 919-966-5736

MUSEUM HOURS

Wed - Sat 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sun 1 - 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.

Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve,
Christmas Day, & New Year's Day.



Unidentified artist

Indian, Sri Lankan

**Openwork Panels with Inhabited
Arabesque, 17th century CE?**

ivory with color and gold

Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J.

Yager, 88.42.1-3

About the Art

- Lions and horned animals adorn the left and right panels. Gilding and traces of red and green paint are visible on their manes and the horns. The central panel is decorated with birds.
- These ivory panels may once have decorated a small box.
- They were acquired as objects from Sri Lanka or south India; one scholar has pointed out similarities between these panels and others in an eighteenth-century ivory casket in the Srirangam Temple Museum in Tamil Nadu.



Unidentified artist
Iranian, Safavid dynasty (1501 – 1722)
Mounted Standard (Alam), 16th century
steel

Gift of the William E. Shipp Estate, by exchange, 2019.31.2

About the Art

- This teardrop-shaped, cut-steel object made of two panels riveted together with steel bars was once half of the main decorative element of an alam, an ornamental standard. It was carried on the battlefield and in processions of mourners on Ashura, the Shi'a holiday commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in the battle of Karbala, on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim calendar. The alam was believed to have protective talismanic power.
- Complete, this tour-de-force example of metalwork would have included another pair of similar drop-shaped panels so that each panel pointed towards one of the four compass points.
- The finely cut calligraphy around the outline says, down the right side:

“Indeed, we sent the Qur’an down during the Night of Decree” (Surah al-Qadr (97), verse 2) and up the left side, in reverse, “The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months” (Surah al-Qadr (7), verse 3).



Unidentified artist
Mughal, Jahangir reign (1605 – 1627)
Perforated Screen, 1605-27
sandstone
Special Acquisition Fund, 2019.16.3

About the Art

- Mughal Indian windows in all types of buildings were filled with carved stone jalis, perforated to allow for ventilation and control of the light, heat, and glare of the sun. Most importantly, due to the depth and complexity of the pattern carved into the stone, they could be seen through only from the inside, ensuring privacy from the world outside.
- Jalis differ greatly – some vertical, others horizontal, and others square. Some of their designs are floral, and some are geometric and curvilinear, as in this case.
- The design here is especially complex, featuring rectangles rotating around a central square with two circles organizing the pattern. The square format of this jali reinforces the power of its geometry.



Unidentified artist
Iranian, Fars region
Candlestick Base, 14th century
metal with traces of silver inlay
Gift of the William E. Shipp Estate, by
exchange, 2019.31.1

About the Art

- Medieval Muslim metalwork is known for exquisite finesse of design and execution. The utterly arresting passage of the design on this candlestick base is the flowing calligraphy in a thick encircling band.
- This loose-jointed script called *thuluth* has a low center of gravity, with soaring uprights all across a measured but exuberant pattern of repeating circular vine scrolls. The surface retains bits of the silver inlay that originally filled interstices. They are visible in some places in the vegetal pattern behind the letters.
- The inscription indicates that it was made for the use of a wealthy private patron in Fars in northeastern Iran. It says, "Redeemer, exalted of the world, the just, the conquering, the victorious, glory to our lord the king, the most mighty Sultan."



Unidentified artist
Ethiopian, late 19th/early 20th century
Qur'an Board, c. 1900
olive wood with ink inscriptions
Gift of Dr. J. B. Friedland, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Friedland,
Mr. Morris Stirling, and Dr. Harold J. Luria, all by exchange,
2021.1

About the Art

- This board, with the single handle and string hole at the top and a single foot, is typical of boards from Ethiopia. It has a strikingly sculptural shape.
- Qur'an boards like this one were used both for prayer and for education.
- The text could be washed off after use, with the water then sometimes being used for religious or healing purposes.
- The text on the displayed side quotes several surahs (chapters) from the Qur'an, with some passages from the first and the 79th surah repeated more than once. Although difficult to decipher, at the end there appear to be some instructions for prayer or meditation exercises. The side visible in the mirror may have been the main one, given the geometric border decoration.