

**Press kit**  
**February 2014**

# **Terres d'Islam**

## **The Ariana selects from its storerooms II**

MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA, FEBRUARY 28 TO AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> 2014

**Press conference**

Thursday, February 27 at 4 pm

**ariana**



musée  
suisse  
de la céramique  
et  
du verre

10, avenue de la Paix  
1202 Genève

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## The Ariana selects from its storerooms II

MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA, FROM FEBRUARY 28 TO AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> 2014

### PRESS RELEASE

Geneva, February 2014 - **The Musée Ariana has a collection of over 700 ceramic objects spanning twelve centuries of history (from 9th to 20th centuries) and originating from an extensive geographical area stretching from Transoxiana, Persia, Turkey, Syria and Egypt as far as Spain. This significant ensemble comes from a series of purchases and donations from the late 19th century to the present day. The nucleus of the collection was compiled by the Musée Ariana's founder, Gustave Revilliod. In 1934, following the decision to house at the Ariana all the ceramic items in the City of Geneva's public holdings (with the exception of antique ceramics), the Middle-Eastern ceramics formerly held at the Museum of Art and History also joined our collections, which were continually enriched over the course of the 20th century. This substantial collection had never previously been studied in depth. The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue intend to fill this gap.**

### Key technical innovations

The arrival of Chinese porcelain in the Middle East (as later in Europe) provoked a reaction among the local potters who, unable to reproduce the white porcelain, used all their imaginative powers to develop substitute products.

The first of these, faience, simple terracotta covered with a lead glaze opacified by tin oxide, was perfected in Mesopotamia in the 9th century. This new technique, which provided the ceramic painter with a white surface, enabled the development of "grand feu" and "petit feu" decoration (firing at high and low temperatures respectively), which would see in Europe the further advances that we well know. In the early 12th century, Arabic potters produced an "artificial" porous white paste, with low flexibility, that contained a high proportion of silica mixed with a small amount of white earth. The fritware was the basis for highly refined ware goods, both in Persia and in Ottoman Turkey, but this complex technique was not imported into European countries.

### **Wealth of decoration**

The variety, opulence and originality of the decoration on Middle Eastern ceramics is infinite. The influence of products from China (porcelain initially, but also textiles and silverware) prevailed for centuries. It is evident in the green-glazed celadons, the cobalt blue painted ornamentation, the objects imitating sancai ware with sgraffito decoration covered with dripped and splashed green and ochre glazes, or the vases with "rice grain" perforated motifs filled with translucent glaze. All these models derive directly from Middle Kingdom prototypes and iconography, even if interpreted with great freedom and spontaneity.

Some designs are more closely linked to the iconography of the Islamic world: among these, we find geometric, symmetric and radial decoration. This typology reflects the Arab people's taste for mathematic rigour. The eloquent Arabic calligraphy is also well-represented, ranging from the angular and precise kufic style to the cursive, vigorous nashki characters. The Islamic principle whereby the representation of the human figure is not permitted is relative; many designs, including the most delicate, leave ample room for horsemen, soldiers, animals and birds of all kinds. Finally, we should not forget the luxuriant vegetal motifs, with their arabesques and scrolling forms, flowers and trees, which flourished particularly on Ottoman Iznik ware. The different types of decoration were freely combined on a single piece, in a desire to cover the entire surface.

The bright and lively colours are characteristic of Eastern ceramics: the hot colour range, the subtle radiance of brown, red and ochre metallic lustres, the brilliance of the turquoise, green or blue glazes: the wealth of colours corresponds to the diversity of nature.

### **Forms and functions**

Although the most common utensil in the Islamic world is undisputedly the bowl, in all its variants, ranging from the mug to the dish, closed forms are not neglected: ewers, vases, tankards and jugs in a wide variety of shapes are also found. Islamic ceramics were made to be used, even if certain sophisticated decorations as on minai and lajvardena ware prohibit any everyday usage.

The second category of forms is closely related to Islamic architecture. The wall tiles, the sumptuous embossed mihrabs blend harmoniously into the walls of mosques and palaces. Square or rectangular, star-shaped or in the form of a cross, these tiles sparkle with a myriad of colours, among which the lustre and sky blue dominate.

### **Strongpoints**

Every collection has its specific characteristics, its strongpoints and weaknesses. Even though the Musée Ariana's holdings offer a coherent overview of the entire history of Islamic ceramics, its two main core collections concern Persia and Turkey: on the one hand, the ceramic centres of medieval Iran, from the 9th century to the Mongol invasion and, on the other, 16th to 18th century Ottoman ware from Iznik and Kütahya. Thanks to recent donations, we now possess two exceptional ensembles. The first comprises blue and white decorated siliceous ceramics from the Safavid Empire (1501-1722) and the second, early 20th century objects produced by a village of potters in Meybod, Iran. However, there are few Egyptian examples in the collection. It could still be enhanced with some important pieces.

### **Specific conservation problems**

Out of the 700 or so pieces in the Islamic ceramics collection of the Musée Ariana, around two thirds of them have evidence of previous restoration work carried out over 50 years ago. These earlier treatments are of different kinds: extensive repainting, sometimes covering the entire surface, to mask alterations; structural restoration to fill in missing areas or to reassemble a piece (generally worked in plaster, it is sometimes reinforced with inserted metallic elements. In many cases, the addition of these materials has resulted in damage to the object – sawing, filing –); restoration work to falsify objects (this type of intervention, particular to Middle and Near-Eastern ware, implies the assembly of fragments from different broken ceramic pieces to create a readily marketable intact item). In a museum context, the presence of former restoration treatments of this type modifies the cultural values of the objects concerned, which are what justify their presentation to the public: aesthetic value (surfaces yellowed, ill-proportioned); historical value (original surfaces masked by repainting); authenticity value (falsification of objects — forms and decoration — through restoration work).

The stated goal of the Musée Ariana's conservation department is to offer a clearer insight into such pieces. However, its aim is also to preserve the material memory of the objects, through systematic, extensive documentation of the elements previously added to them.

The conservation of the Islamic collection is an important moment in terms of object documentation, as it is during treatment that much technological information becomes accessible. Examination of previous restoration treatments also sheds light on their date of entry into the collection and thus provides information about their history.

### **An exhibition concept**

The exhibition concept consists in an overall approach to a collection, highlighting not only the key objects and masterpieces, but also more everyday specimens, dubious attributions and fakes, all of which possess their own significance and history. A small section will be devoted to 19th century orientalism, that is, copies and interpretations of Islamic ware made by European ceramists.

It is an opportunity for visitors to discover an entire section of the collection and to gain an understanding of a museum's fundamental missions: to preserve, to study and to promote our heritage. The programme of cultural events and activities organised to accompany this exhibition will encourage a wide range of visitors and enable them to learn more about the Islamic collections through a colloquium, public tours (in French or English), thematic tours (notably concerning calligraphy), tours in sign language, descriptive tours for the visually-impaired, storytelling tours, lectures, as well as tours in other languages (English, Arabic).

Summer workshops will also be on offer for children, adults and families, to allow them to familiarise themselves with Islamic tiles. These workshops will begin with a look at the decorative motifs visible in the exhibition, followed by practical work leading to the production of a ceramic panel. We will also be taking visitors on a night-time journey of discovery of Persian literature through a spectacle of tales and music on the theme of "A Thousand and One Nights". Round tables will provide opportunities to discuss contemporary issues.

This is the second time that the Musée Ariana is engaging in this challenging and fascinating exercise, bringing out from its storerooms an entire section of its collections. The first occasion, in 2006, dealt with Italian faience. The next stage, planned provisionally for 2017, will focus on Swiss pottery.

### **A publication**

The publication accompanying the exhibition is not intended as an exhaustive annotated catalogue; each chapter, written by a specialist in the field, will be followed by a catalogue section illustrating the main individual pieces or groups with associated descriptive entries.

Terres d'Islam. Les collections de céramique moyen-orientale du Musée Ariana à Genève, 5 Continents, Milan, 2014 [ISBN 579-88-7439-534-7] CHF 60.-

### **This exhibition is financially supported by :**

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Fondation Ahmed & Mehkameh Vahabzadeh

Fondation Max van Berchem

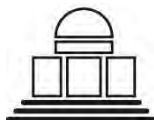
Fondation Leenaards

Sandoz - Fondation de Famille

Ceramica Stiftung



FONDATION  
AHMED &  
MEHKAMEH  
VAHABZADEH



Ceramica-Stiftung

### **Partnerships :**

Librairie arabe L'Olivier

Festival international du film oriental de Genève



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MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA, FROM FEBRUARY 28 TO AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> 2014

### RENDEZ-VOUS AU MUSÉE

#### Colloque : « Céramique en terres musulmanes »

Vendredi 28 février de 10 à 16 heures

Sur inscription

80 CHF, AVS/chômeurs 50 CHF, étudiants 30 CHF (repas compris)

Organisation : Fondation Amaverunt, dans le cadre du cycle à la mémoire de Marie-Thérèse Coullery

#### Visites commentées

Dimanches 2 mars, 6 avril, 4 et 18 mai, 1<sup>er</sup> juin et 31 août à 11 heures

#### Visites thématiques

Les dimanches à 15 heures

6 avril : « Le carreau céramique, module à l'usage de l'architecture »

4 mai : « La diffusion du décor au lustre métallique »

1<sup>er</sup> juin : « Le Moyen-Orient, entre la Chine et l'Europe »

#### Visits in English

Sundays March 2<sup>nd</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> at 3 pm

#### Visites contées

Dimanche 16 mars à 15 heures, dimanche 1<sup>er</sup> juin à 16 h 30

#### Visites en langue des signes

Dimanche 9 mars à 11 heures, samedi 5 avril à 14 heures, dimanche 11 mai à 11 heures et samedi 14 juin à 14 heures

#### Visite suivie d'une démonstration de calligraphie arabe

par Abderrazak Hamouda

Samedi 15 mars à 11 et à 14 heures

#### Table ronde

Jeudi 3 avril à 20 heures : « Image et religions » (modératrice : Isabelle Graesslé)

Entrée libre dans la limite des places disponibles

#### La Mille et Deuxième nuit

Contes orientaux par Jihad et Layla Darwiche, percussions Ali Merghache

Samedi 19 juillet de 21 heures au lever du jour

Plein tarif 40 CHF, AVS/étudiants/chômeurs 30 CHF

**Déjeuner participatif et convivial « Cuisine d'ailleurs »**

Dimanche 23 mars dès 11 heures

**Ateliers d'été pour enfants / adultes / familles, autour du carreau céramique**

par Charlotte Nordin, céramiste

De 9 à 17 heures

**Enfants** : mardi 1<sup>er</sup> juillet (8-10 ans) et mercredi 2 juillet (10 – 13 ans)  
plein tarif 60 CHF, tarif réduit 50 CHF (à partir du 2<sup>e</sup> enfant de la même famille)

**Familles** : vendredi 4 juillet - 70 CHF

**Adultes** : samedi 5 juillet - plein tarif 60 CHF, tarif réduit 50 CHF

**Ateliers pour adultes d'initiation à la calligraphie arabe**

par Abderrazak Hamouda

Samedi 10 mai de 10 à 13 heures ou de 14 à 17 heures

Plein tarif 40 CHF - tarif réduit 30 CHF

**Renseignements et inscriptions**

Accueil des publics

Du lundi au vendredi

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# Terres d'Islam

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### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

#### Musée Ariana

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Avenue de la Paix 10 | 1202 Genève  
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Open 10 am – 6 pm  
Closed Mondays

Entrance fee (CHF 8.-/CHF 6.-), entrance free till 18 and each first Sunday of each month

**Press conference** on Thursday February 27 at 4 pm

**Exhibition opening** on Thursday February 27 at 6.30 pm

#### Exhibition organisation :

Isabelle Naef Galuba : director

#### Curatorship :

Anne-Claire Schumacher, curator  
[anne-claire.schumacher@ville-ge.ch](mailto:anne-claire.schumacher@ville-ge.ch)

#### Publication :

Terres d'Islam. Les collections de céramique moyen-orientale du Musée Ariana à Genève, 5 Continents, Milan, 2014 [ISBN 579-88-7439-534-7] 60 CHF.

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MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA | 28 FEBRUARY TO 31 AUGUST 2014

### VISUALS FOR THE PRESS

#### 01 Dish

Eastern Iran or Transoxiana, 10th century  
Earthenware, underglaze slip decoration  
D 20.8 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Vernes, 1993 – Inv. AR 12745

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



#### 02 Dish

Region of Nishapur (Iran), 10th century  
Earthenware, underglaze slip decoration  
D 20 cm  
Parvine Meylan Legacy, 2012 – Inv. AR 2012-128

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



#### 03 Dish

Eastern Iran or Transoxiana, late 10th or 11th century  
Earthenware, underglaze painted and sgraffito decoration  
D 31.5 cm  
Purchased 1978 - Inv. AR 5833

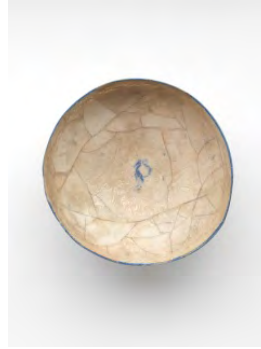
Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**04 Footed dish**

Central Iran, 11th–12th century  
Siliceous paste, underglaze “rice grain” openwork  
decoration  
D 21 cm  
Purchased 1985 – Inv. AR 8413

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**05 Dish**

Iran, 1180-1219  
Siliceous paste, *mina'i* “petit feu” decoration, gilding  
D 22.2 cm  
Gift of Patricia Fize-Palmer 1999 – Inv. AR 1999-212

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**06 Dish**

Kashan, (Iran), 13<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, painted metallic lustre decoration, sgraffito,  
overglaze  
D 15.5 cm  
Anciens fonds - Inv. AR 4211

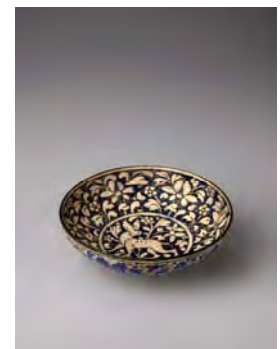
Collection Musée Ariana  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**07 Bowl**

Iran, late 13th or early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, underglaze painted decoration  
D 14.5 cm, H 5.8 cm  
Parvine Meylan Legacy, 2012 – Inv. AR 2012-109

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Nathalie Sabato



**08 Tile**

Kashan (Iran), late 13<sup>th</sup> – early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, moulded, blue-painted and metallic lustre  
decoration  
H 29.2 cm  
Gift of Mme Hotz, 1930 – Inv. 13272

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**09 Platter**

Iznik (Turkey), c.1575  
Siliceous paste, polychrome underglaze painted decoration  
D 34.6 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Vernes, 1991 – Inv. AR 12192

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**10 Tankard, or *masrapa***

Iznik (Turkey), c. 1570-80  
Siliceous paste, polychrome underglaze decoration  
H 16.8 cm, D 10.2 cm, W 13.5 cm  
Gift of Walther Fol, 1871 – Inv. MF 3966

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**11 Platter**

Iran, 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous clay, underglaze painted decoration  
D 37.5 cm, H 8.5 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Verne, 1994 – Inv. AR 12804

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Nathalie Sabato



**12 Vase with multiple necks**

Iran, 3<sup>rd</sup> ¼ of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, blue underglaze decoration  
H 23 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Vernes, 1997 – Inv. AR 1997-162

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**13 Bowl, or *kâse***

Meybod (Iran), 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, underglaze painted decoration  
D 24.6 cm, H 9.4 cm  
Gift of the Amaverunt Foundation, Inv. AR 2011-180

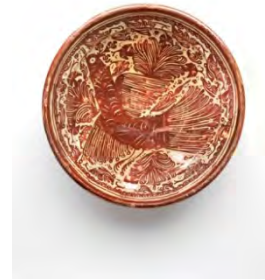
Collection Musée Ariana  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**14 Dish**

Manises, (Spain), 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Faïence, metallic lustre decoration  
D 39 cm  
Purchased 1876 – Inv. N 188

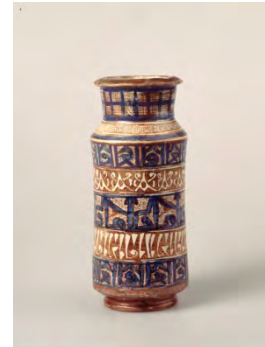
Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**15 Medicinal jar or Albarello**

Malaga (Spain), 14<sup>th</sup> century  
Faïence, "grand feu" blue-painted and metallic lustre decoration  
H 28 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Verne, 1992 – Inv. AR 12375

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**16 Tile**

Teheran (Iran), mid-19<sup>th</sup> century  
Siliceous paste, moulded and polychrome underglaze painted decoration  
H 25.2 cm  
Gift of Yolande Crowe-Vernes, 2005 – Inv. AR 2005-316

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Mauro Magliani & Barbara Piovan



**17 Basin**

Théodore Deck's studio, Paris (France), c. 1863  
Fine faïence, underglaze raised decoration  
D 41 cm  
Purchased 2013 – Inv. AR 2013-145

Collection Musée Ariana, City of Geneva  
Photo Nicolas Amiache Apicella



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With our thanks

Christine Azconegui Suter  
Press officer

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