

Sandow Birk

# Around the O

## Museum programs to mark “American Qur’an” exhibition

January 11, 2017

**SF**

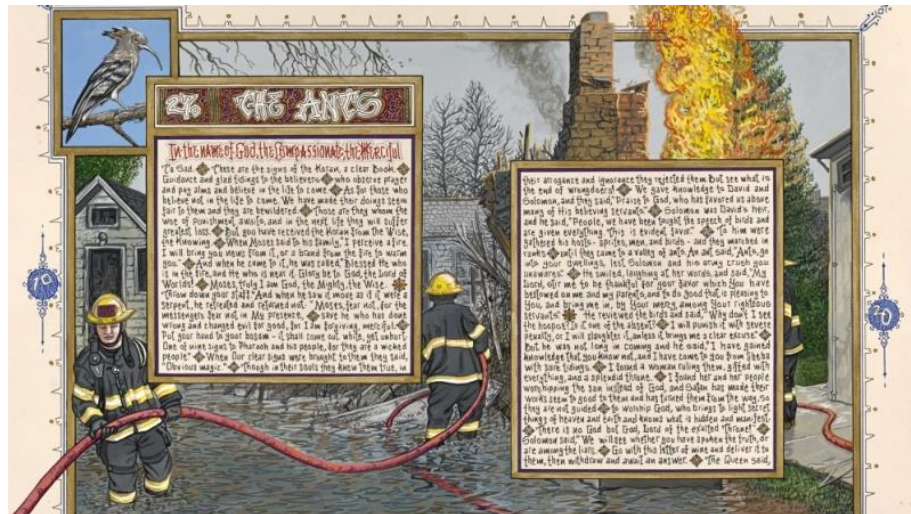
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A decade-long project to transcribe and illustrate by hand every verse from the holy book of Islam will be the centerpiece of a new exhibit at the UO’s Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.

“American Qur’an” by Southern California-based artist Sandow Birk uses the calligraphy of the individual verses to frame scenes of contemporary American life. This is the first time the show will be seen in an academic museum.

It will be on view Jan. 21 to March 19 and will open with a free reception Friday, Jan. 20, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Two talks and a gallery tour are scheduled for the opening week. At noon Thursday, Jan. 19, Birk and his Los Angeles gallerist, Catherine Clark, will discuss “The Gallery-Artist Relationship” in a conversation moderated by Jill Hartz, the museum’s executive director and exhibition curator.

At 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 21, Birk will lead a gallery tour of the exhibition followed at 2 p.m. by a panel discussion with Birk; religious studies professor Rick Colby, UO student Awab A Al-rawe and international studies professor Angela Joya called “Whose Qur’an?”

All events take place at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art unless otherwise noted.

Families can learn about clay and glazes in a workshop taught by California-based artist Elyse Pignolet, who is married to Sandow Birk, on Saturday, Jan. 21, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Pignolet, whose ceramic work is on view in “American Qur’an,” will lead a demonstration on tile-making and hand-building techniques, after which participants will glaze ceramic tiles. For the cost of \$10, all materials are provided. Call 541-346-6410 to register.

In February, Duke University Professor Emeritus of Islamic studies Bruce B. Lawrence, who also is an adjunct professor at Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakf University in Istanbul, gives two talks: “Sandow Birk’s American Qur’an: A New Dawn for the Koran” on Thursday, Feb. 2, at 5:30 p.m. and “Who is Allah?” on Monday, Feb. 6, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 175 Lillis Hall.

On Friday, Feb. 3, at 3:30 p.m., Miriam Cooke, Braxton Craven Professor of Arab Cultures at Duke University, will discuss “Dancing in Damascus: Creativity, Resilience, and the Syrian Revolution.” A book signing for both Cooke and Lawrence precedes the talk at 3 p.m.

In a program sponsored by the Oregon Humanities Center’s Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, Cornell University history professor Iftikhar Dadi discusses the aesthetic dimensions of “American Qur’an” on Friday, Feb. 10, at 5:30 p.m.

“Arab Refugees in Our Midst: Terrorism, Bigotry, and Freedom” is the topic of an Oregon Humanities Conversation with Portland State University humanities professor Yasmeen Hanoosh on Saturday, Feb. 11, at 2 p.m. This program is co-sponsored by Watershed Arts and made possible by the Oregon Humanities Conversation Project.

On Wednesday, March 1, at 5:30 p.m., a panel discussion on “Whose America?” moderated by UO advertising professor Chris Chavez explores stories of immigration, citizenship and religion. Birk returns for an artist talk on Thursday, March 9, at 6 p.m. in Room 177 Lawrence Hall, co-sponsored by the Department of Art’s visiting artist lecture series.

The public programs conclude with a lecture by Yale University professor of American and religious studies Zareena Grewal on Friday, March 10, at 5:30 p.m. It will be followed by a discussion between Grewal and Birk.

Accompanying the exhibition is a 400-page book, published by Catherine Clark Gallery and W. W. Norton and Company, with essays by Grewal and Dadi and a preface by Reza Aslan.

The exhibition and its programs are made possible by the Coeta and Donald Barker Changing Exhibitions Endowment; the Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation; the University of Oregon Office of Academic Affairs; the Oregon Humanities Center; and museum members.

A full schedule of programs can be found at <http://jsma.uoregon.edu/BirkPrograms>.