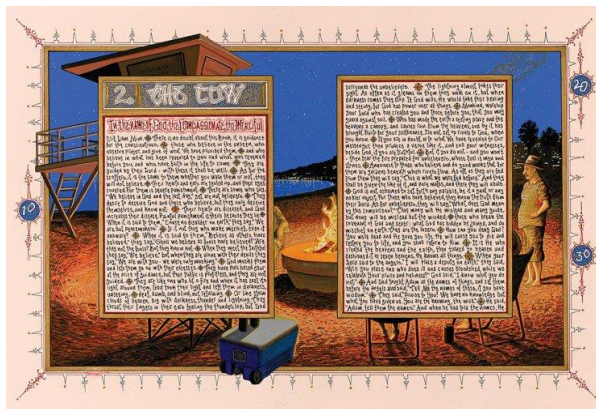


Sandow Birk

**OrangeCoast**  
MAGAZINE

Sandow Birk's "American Qur'an"



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**The Otis/Parson's grad studied historic illuminated Qur'ans before making his own**  
By Liz Goldner  
November 4, 2015

Raised in Seal Beach, the avid surfer and self-described news junkie was making woodblock prints about the Iraq War in 2006 when inspiration struck for his latest artistic series, "American Qur'an."

"I followed the war every day for hours, listening to National Public Radio. I kept hearing about the Islamic religion being at odds with Western culture. But I had been to many Islamic places and had the best experiences there and met the best people."

He wanted to introduce a U.S. audience to the ancient tome and help people understand its universal message. The 53-year-old artist transcribed the entire holy book (in English), using some Islamic traditions, but in a graffiti lettering style. Each of the 427 pages has a painted background showing a contemporary American scene—a metaphorical image that relates to the text. In "American Qur'an Sura 2 A," above, Birk depicts a fire pit at a typical Southern California beach; the text says, in part, "They are like one who lit a fire ..." The Orange County Museum of Art is the site for the premiere of the complete set of ink and gouache works; they also have been published as a book.

See It! "Sandow Birk: American Qur'an," Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach, 949-759-1122, ocma.net, Nov. 7 through Feb. 28