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Front: "Golden Horn" Tondino, Turkish, Iznik, 1535–1540, fritware, with blue underglaze painting, the MFAH, gift of His Highness the Aga Khan Shia Ismaili Community of Houston, The Levant Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Akbar Ladjevardian, The Francis L. Lederer Foundation, Marathon Oil Company, Mr. and Mrs. Omar Rehmatulla, Strategic Real Estate Advisors, London, Monsour Taghdisi, His Excellency Sheikh Sultan bin Suhaim Al Thani, and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, with additional funds provided by the 2007 Art of the Islamic World Gala and museum purchase.

Inside, left to right:  
*Lustre bowl*, Tell Minis, Syria, late 11th–early 12th century.  
© Aga Khan Trust for Culture

Miniature painting from the *Shahnameh (Book of Kings)* of Firdawsi, Tabriz, Iran, 1522–35. © Aga Khan Trust for Culture

*Incense Burner in the shape of a Lion*, Islamic, Seljuk Dynasty, Persian, 13th century, bronze, the MFAH, gift of the Honorable and Mrs. Hushang Ansary, and museum purchase.

MFAH

Special Lecture

**Outstanding Patrons,  
Beautiful Objects: Metaphors for  
Humanism and Enlightenment**

*Sunday, February 15, 2009, 3:00 p.m.*





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3:00 p.m.**

Brown Auditorium Theater  
The Caroline Wiess Law  
Building  
The Museum of Fine Arts,  
Houston  
1001 Bissonnet Street  
713-639-7300  
lectures@mfah.org  
www.mfah.org

Admission to the  
lecture is free and  
open to the public.

A reception to meet  
the speaker follows  
the lecture.



**Special Lecture  
Outstanding Patrons, Beautiful Objects:  
Metaphors for Humanism and Enlightenment**

*Presented by Alnoor Merchant  
Acting Head Librarian and Keeper of  
the Manuscript Collections at the Library  
of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London*

Throughout history, a most significant impetus for the development of artistic culture has been patronage. Patronage of art and architecture has been an integral element in Muslim civilizations, also. Alnoor Merchant will discuss how patrons, by attracting celebrated artists to create vibrant and unique styles and themes, promoted an exuberant and dynamic artistic environment extending from Indonesia to Spain.

Over the past decade, Alnoor Merchant has played a central role in identifying and acquiring important manuscripts and artworks for the Aga Khan Museum. He has curated numerous exhibitions from the collections of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, as well as assisted with the exhibitions of the Aga Khan Museum's collection hosted in Lisbon, London, Paris, Parma, and Toledo. In this richly illustrated lecture, Merchant will show how works of art spanning over a thousand years of history and originating from different parts of the Muslim world have a context in the faith and history of Islam and serve as metaphors for humanism and enlightenment.

*This lecture is made possible through the generous support of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council for the Southwestern United States.*