



LIANG YI MUSEUM

HONG KONG

### The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia



Lamp

China, 19th century

Bronze with cloisonné enamel decoration

Height 55.5cm (including chain and top ring)

Height 25cm, Diameter 23cm (lamp)

© The David Collection, Copenhagen

**Hong Kong** – Liang Yi Museum is delighted to announce the exhibition *The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia*, opening on 20th March and running until 24th June, 2018. This timely exhibition coincides with the sixth edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong, which will see the first-ever gallery from Iran participating in the art fair.

Curated by Dr. Yuka Kadoi, *The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia* is not only the first, but also the most dedicated and comprehensive exhibition surveying different aspects of the colour blue in Persian art and history in Hong Kong. Collaborating with eleven major institutions worldwide including the Victoria & Albert Museum in the United Kingdom; the David Collection in Denmark; the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore; and the Freer and Sackler Gallery Archives in the United States of America, the exhibition draws from an unparalleled scale of collaboration between a Hong Kong private museum and public international institutions with a united purpose in showcasing Persian decorative art to Asian audiences. Complementing these are also objects generously loaned from private collectors in Hong Kong.

With materials and categories ranging from glass, ceramic, textiles, painting and manuscripts, this showcase of 94 carefully selected artefacts illuminates the significant role of blue in the visual and



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material culture of Iran. The colour personifies a timeless quality in Persian history and the impact made on the shaping of other artistic traditions in Asia and beyond.

## The origins

The story of Persian blue commences with the history of lapis lazuli and indigo, two of the major sources for blue pigments and textile dyes. With the best lapis lazuli originating in the Badakhshan region in modern-day Afghanistan and indigo being cultivated in India and different regions of the Middle East, Iran found itself situated within the “blue road” network. Subsequently, this has allowed Iranian craftsmen to exploit the vast potential of the colour, arguably more than any others throughout the ages.

Iran was also the major source of cobalt ore until the late Middle Ages, where it was widely used in ceramic glazes and glass as an imitation of the more costly and precious lapis lazuli to some extent. Eventually known as *rang-i Kirman* (colour of Kirman), a southern Iranian town that produced quality indigo, blue gradually became a symbol of life and nature (e.g. water and sky). This calming and steadfast hue played a continuous role in the shaping of a distinctive Persian artistic identity.

In response to the popularised use of blue glazing in Middle Eastern ceramics between the 9th and 10th centuries, this colour concept consequently spread eastwards into China through mutual trading activities. This culminated in the ultimate refinement of cobalt-blue glaze decoration in Chinese blue-and-white porcelain under the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Yet this colour, known as *hui hui qing* (“Mohammadan blue”), remained intrinsically alien to Han Chinese taste and was closely associated with the western part of the Eurasian continent.

## The exhibition

Across different media and time spans, *The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia* is divided into six thematic sections, each dedicated to showcasing and examining how blue became an essential element in the arts of pre-contemporary West Asia.

### 1. Blue in Ancient Near Eastern and Islamic Traditions

This introductory section provides background information of the blue culture in the Persian world and its neighbouring cultural lands from ancient to modern times. Highlights include: mineralogy of lapis lazuli and cobalt, history of indigo dye and blue symbolism in Persian culture.



Flask  
Iran, 17th century  
Fritware with underglaze decoration  
Height 31cm, Width 20cm

© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, Gift of Gerald Reitlinger, 1978



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## 2. Blue in Ceramics

This section surveys the use of blue glaze in Persian ceramic arts, with special reference to the cross-technological relations between West Asia and East Asia. Highlights include: chronological development of “Persian” blue-and-white wares and Chinese blue-and-white ceramics.



**Brush-rest**

China, early 16th century (Zhengde reign, 1506-21)  
Porcelain with underglaze decoration  
Height 11cm, Length 22.8cm, Width 5.3cm  
© Hong Kong Museum of Art Collection

## 3. Blue in Architectural Decoration

This section overviews the development of blue-glazed tilework and blue-coloured decoration in Persian architecture. Highlights include: fresco painting, glazed tilework, mosaic tilework and *cuerda seca* tileworks.



**Tile**

Iran, 17th century  
Fritware with underglaze decoration  
Height 24cm, Width 24cm, Depth 4cm (including frame)  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



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## 4. Blue in Textiles and Carpets

This section showcases the use of indigo dye in the woven arts of Persia, including silk, cotton textiles, as well as carpets. Highlights include: fragments from medieval Persian textile arts, masterpieces of Safavid silk textiles and carpets, cotton textiles and Indo-Persian connections.



**Textile Fragment**

India, first half of the 19th century  
Silk, cotton; twill weave, brocaded  
Length 54cm, Width 30cm

© Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Collection Seidenwebschule Zürich

## 5. Blue in Glass and Other Portable Objects

This section examines the diversity of blue decoration in Persian art. Highlights include: Qajar glass pieces and blue enamelled objects.



**Bottle**

Iran, 18th-19th century  
Coloured glass  
Height 33cm, Diameter 10.2cm

© Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design  
Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art (Honolulu, HI, USA)



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## 6. Blue in Manuscript Illumination and Painting

This section demonstrates the integral use of blue within the core of Persian book traditions, such as book illustrations and illuminations. Highlights include: illustrated pages from the Persian art of the book, such as the *Shahnama* (Book of the Kings), and illumination from religious manuscripts, such as the Qur'an.



Calligraphic Composition

Mohamed Zakariya  
USA, 2005

Ink, colour and gold on paper  
Height 27.6cm, Width 25.8cm (page)

© Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board, Singapore

### Supplementary programming

A series of talks, tours, short courses and lectures will take place throughout the exhibition duration. An opening lecture will be given by Dr. Yuka Kadoi on 20th March, 2018 (Tuesday) at 7-8pm. Liang Yi Museum has also partnered with the Centre for the Study of Islamic Culture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong to offer a workshop by Dr. James Frankel: *An Introduction to Chinese Islamic Art*. The workshop will take place on 21st March, 2018 (Wednesday) from 3-5pm. Both opening lecture and workshop will be held at Liang Yi Museum and are open to the public free of charge. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis with limited space, and starts on **20th February, 2018**. For enquiries, please email [visitors@liangyimuseum.com](mailto:visitors@liangyimuseum.com).

Taking place on the second floor of the museum, the exhibition *The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia* can be visited in two different ways:

1. Individual visits: for the first time ever, this will be free of charge; but will not include docent services; and will be limited to the 2/F only.
2. Guided tours: A docent will accompany guests on guided tours (in English, Mandarin or Cantonese), and it will also include the 3/F, which will showcase a selection from the museum's permanent furniture collection with themes echoing the Blue Road, underlying the similarities in the design patterns on Persian and Chinese artefacts. A final gallery featuring the museum's permanent collection of European vanities will also demonstrate a wide range of vanities made in the same colour spectrum, using materials such as turquoise, sapphires, lapis lazuli and enamel. This guided tour will be HK\$200 for admission only, or HK\$450 including the price of admission and a copy of the exhibition catalogue.

The appointment system will continue to be practised for both types of visits.



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## Major supporting and loaning institutions

Liang Yi Museum gratefully acknowledges the support it received from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Hong Kong SAR Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Hong Kong SAR Government. Major loaning institutions for this exhibition include: Ashmolean Museum, United Kingdom; Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore; David Collection, Copenhagen; Doris Duke Foundation of Islamic Art, United States of America; Freer and Sackler Gallery Archives, United States of America; Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong; Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Hong Kong; Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong; Textile Museum St. Gallen, Switzerland; Victoria & Albert Museum, United Kingdom; Wellcome Trust, United Kingdom.

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## Notes to Editors

### Exhibition Dates

20th March to 24th June, 2018

### Press Preview

2:30 – 4:30pm, Tuesday, 20th March 2018

\*RSVP Essential\*

### Media Interviews

Lynn Fung (Director, Liang Yi Museum) and Dr. Yuka Kadoi (Guest Curator) can be interviewed about *The Blue Road: Mastercrafts from Persia* upon request.

### Liang Yi Museum

By appointment only

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm; Closed on Sundays, Mondays and Public Holidays

Tel: +852 2806 8280

Location: 181-199 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

[www.liangyimuseum.com](http://www.liangyimuseum.com)

[www.facebook.com/LiangYiMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/LiangYiMuseum)

[Instagram: liangyimuseum](https://www.instagram.com/liangyimuseum)

[WeChat: liangyi](https://www.wechat.com/qrcode?scene=scene_qr)



### About Liang Yi Museum

Opened in March 2014, Liang Yi Museum is Hong Kong's largest private museum, located on Hollywood Road, in the heart of the historic district. Housing a world-class collection of Chinese antique furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as the world's most extensive collection of European vanities, Liang Yi Museum is a significant addition to the arts, heritage and cultural landscape of the city.



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Visits to the Liang Yi Museum is by appointment only, and bookings are now available by calling +852 2806 8280. Admission for the exhibition without a guided tour is free of charge; admission for a guided tour is HK\$200 per person; or HK\$450 including a guided tour and a catalogue of the current exhibition.

**For media enquiries and high-res images with full captions, please contact:**

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