

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Family  
Guide

# Dazzling Details

Zoom in for a close look  
at art from the **Islamic world!**



**HIDDEN FEATURES AND CREATURES  
ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER!**

KEEPSAKE  
CARDS  
INSIDE !



**To learn more** about the art of the Islamic world, visit Nolen Library on the ground floor of the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education, near the 81st Street entrance.

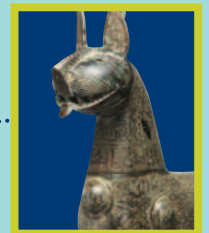
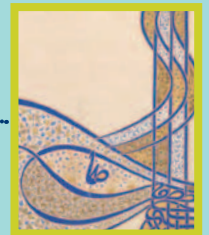
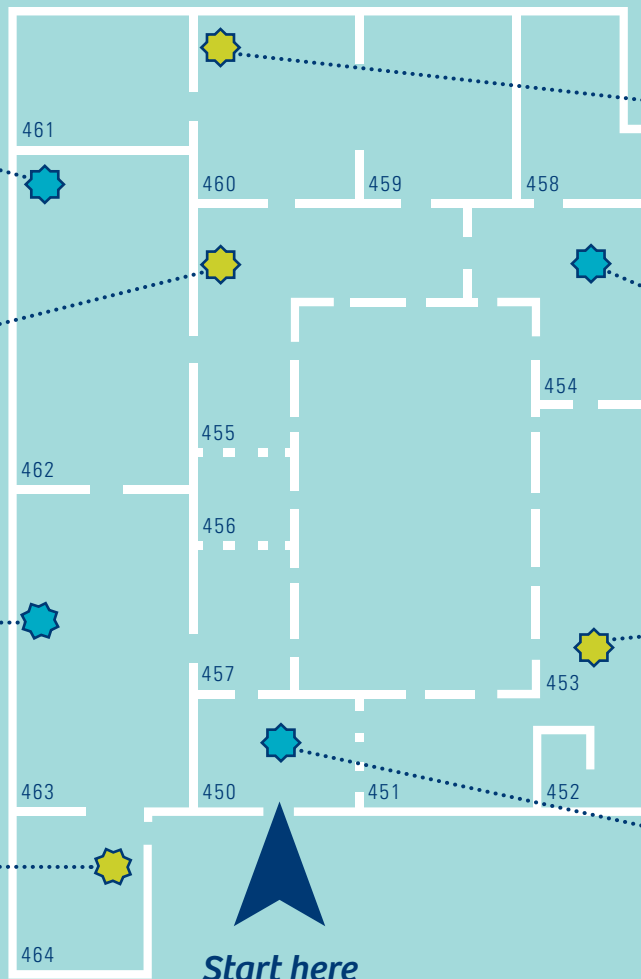
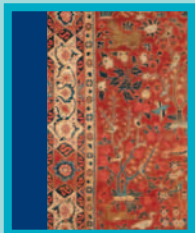
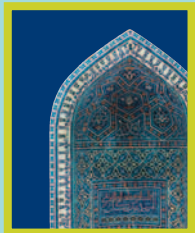
**Details offer clues about art—  
what it means, how it was made or used,  
and even who owned it.**

**Use this map and the details on each card** to find amazing artworks in the Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia. Look closely to learn about some of the many cultures that make up the Islamic world.

Tear off the cards along the dotted lines. Read the questions and then turn over to find out about the works of art and for fun activities!

**Bonus**

*Look carefully and you'll also find me in Gallery 462!*



**Education**  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1000 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10028-0198  
www.metmuseum.org

**On the cover:** *Mihrab* (detail), 1354–55; Iran; stonepaste, polychrome-glazed tiles, plaster; Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1939 (39.20)  
*Figure of a Mouse*, 19th century; Iran; glass, applied decoration; Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.1556)

**This family guide is made possible by the Lavori Sterling Foundation, Inc.**

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Gallery 450

**Look closely  
at this bowl—  
are you  
getting the  
message?**



*Bowl with Arabic inscription* (detail), 10th century, Nishapur, Iran; earthenware, slip, transparent glaze; Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.106.2)

Gallery 453

**What is  
this smiling lion  
hiding?**



*Incense burner of Amir Saif Al-Din Muhammad Al-Mawardi* (detail), dated 1181–82; Iran; bronze; Rogers Fund, 1951 (51.56)

Gallery 462

**Eyes wide open!  
What creatures  
are lurking?**

We change the pages every few months to protect them.



*The Book of Kings* (Shahnama) of *Shah Tahmasp* (detail), about 1530–35; Iran; opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper; Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 (1970.301.73)

Gallery 455

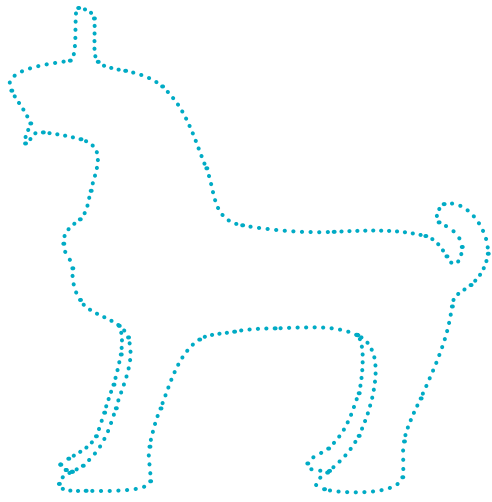
**Can you show  
me the  
way to  
the holy  
city?**



*Mihrab* (detail), 1354–55; Iran; stonepaste, polychrome-glazed tiles, plaster; Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1939 (39.20)

This sculpture of a lion was made for a prince. It once held burning incense that could fill an entire room with scented smoke.

**Did you know?** The head of this lion is also a lid that you could lift to add more incense.

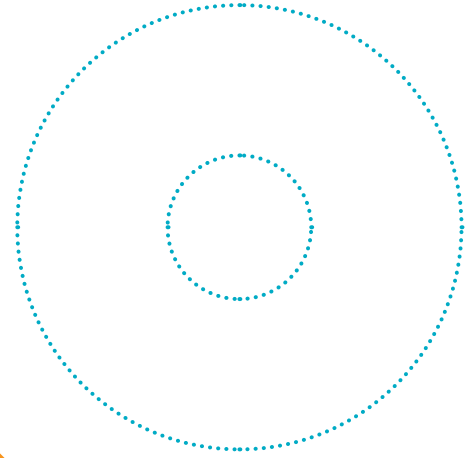


**Activity**

Look closely. At home, draw the places where the smoke might have escaped this smiling beast.

This bowl has a message written in beautiful handwriting called “calligraphy.” The message says, “Planning before work protects you from regret. Prosperity and peace.”

**Did you know?** Whenever you see Arabic letters on a work of art, it’s probably trying to send you a message. Look for other examples in the galleries.



**Activity**

At home, write your own message in a circle like the artist did on the bowl. *Plan ahead* to make sure it fits!

Muslims pray facing the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. A decorated niche—or small curved space set into the wall—shows the direction of Mecca and is called a *mihrab* [mih-RAAB]. The combination of words from the holy books of Islam and beautiful patterns draws the worshiper’s attention.

**Did you know?** Craftsmen cut the tiles on site to make sure the shapes fit properly in the *mihrab*.



**Activity**

At home, complete the design by drawing your own pattern in the blank space.

Tiny details tell the story of *The Book of Kings (Shahnama)* [shah-nah-MEH]—a famous Iranian legend featuring battles between good and evil, heroic warriors, and mythical beasts.

**What is happening in the scene on this page?**

**Did you know?** Some of the details in a painting like this were so small the artist used a brush with only a few hairs from a squirrel’s tail to create them.



**Activity**

In the galleries, pick a detail from a scene in *The Book of Kings*—the smaller the better! Without telling your family or friends which one you chose, describe its color, shape, and location to help them find it. Switch roles.

Gallery 454

**Did you see  
that flicker?  
It came from  
over here!**



*Lamp for the mausoleum of Amir Aydakin Al-'Ala'i Al-Bunduqdar* (detail), about 1285; Egypt; glass, enamel, and gilding; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.985)

Gallery 460

**Can a signature be  
a work of art?**



*Tughra of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* (detail), about 1555; Turkey; ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; Rogers Fund, 1938 (38.149.1)

Gallery 463

**Whoa!  
Are we  
seeing  
double?**



We change the carpets  
in this gallery every few  
years to protect them.



*Carpet with palm trees, ibexes, and birds* (detail), late 16th–early 17th century; present-day Pakistan; cotton, wool; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.858)

Gallery 464

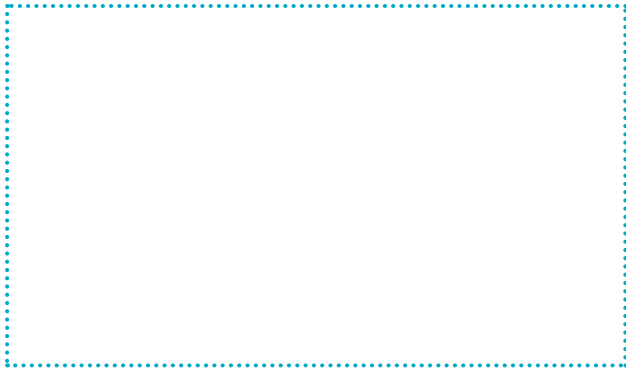
**Beware!  
Are you friend  
or foe?**



*Dagger with zoomorphic hilt* (detail), 2nd half of the 16th century; India; hilt: gilt copper, ruby; blade: steel, gilt, copper; Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2011 (2011.236)

This is the official emblem, or *tughra* [TUHG-rah], of a powerful Turkish ruler known as Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. It is like a signature that includes his title, name, and the name of his father.

**Did you know?** To help prevent fakes or forgeries, *tughras* deliberately included elaborate, swirling letters that were hard to copy.



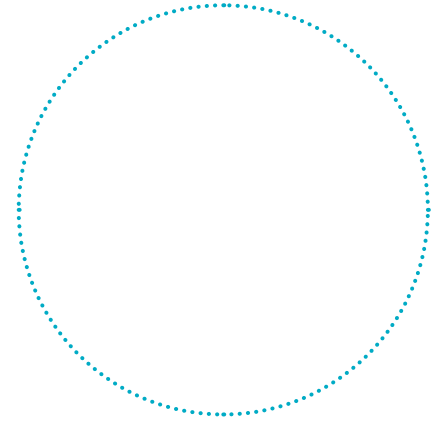
**Activity**

At home, write your initials above in fancy letters fit for a king. Fill the open spaces of the letters with designs.

The writing on this lamp tells us it once lit the tomb of a court official who lived in Egypt over 700 years ago. He was the Keeper of the sultan's bow.

**Where do you see pairs of bows on this lamp?**

**Did you know?** The stone pellets shot from bows like the ones on this lamp were called *bunduq* [BUHN-duk]. The word means both "hazelnut" and "bullet" in Arabic.



**Activity**

Look closely at the other lamps in this gallery. Choose a symbol and draw it here when you get home. What does it tell you?

Investigate the handle of this impressive royal dagger made over 400 years ago. Images of animals in combat represented a ruler's power and military might.

**What creatures do you see fighting here? Who do you think will win?**

**Did you know?** A ruby-studded dagger like this one was probably used for ceremonies and not in battle.

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**Activity**

Imagine you are a reporter. At home, write a headline above for a news report about what may have caused this fierce fight.

Look at a carpet from a distance and notice the repeated colors and shapes. Get closer and look for individual details.

**Which details do you find most interesting?**

**Did you know?** If you looked at any of these carpets under a microscope, you would find row upon row of tiny knots.



**Activity**

Pick a carpet and choose one detail that repeats to form a pattern. At home, draw the detail you chose.