Islamic Art and Florence from the Medici to the 20th Century

The exhibition Islamic Art and Florence from the Medici to the 20th Century is being held in two venues: the Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Museo del Bargello. At the Uffizi the exhibition illustrates the historic contacts between the Orient and the Occident, reflected in works by artists such as Gentile da Fabriano, displaying precious members, collected already by Lorenzo the Magnificent, masulls, fabrics and carpet, glasswork and manuscripts. At the Bargello, which possesses a priceless core of Islamic art objects, the exhibition presents the best of its rich collections, mainly due to the donations of Count Cammi and Carlino, between the 9th and 20th centuries. Beside these appear works belonging to the collections of other connoisseurs of Islamic art, such as Frederick Stiebel, and art dealers such as Stefano Bardini, whose legacy to Florence is displayed in the museums that bear their names. Part of the Bardini Legacy is housed in the Villa Medici at Cerreto Guidi. Contemporaneously, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze offers, in the exhibition Immagini d’Oriente (Images from the Orient), a fascinating display of publications on Islamic Art from the 18th to the early 20th century. An ideal replica of the library used by collectors, scholars, and connoisseurs of Middle Eastern Art.

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi
Tuesday – Sunday 8:30 am – 6:30 pm
Tickets: www.uffizi.it/en
Phone: +39 055 294803

Museo del Bargello
via dei Provinciali 4 - 50122 Firenze - Phone: +39 055 2386004
Daily 8.15 am – 7 pm, closed on 24th and 31st December, 1st, 6th and 9th Monday and Wednesday
www.bargellemusei.beniculturali.it - www.barbenculturali.it

Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale
plaza del Cavaletto 1 - 50122 Firenze - Phone: +39 055 289300
Monday-Friday 8:15 am – 7 pm, Saturday 8:15 am – 7 pm, www.bnc.firenze.it/en - info@bncfirenze.it

Museo Stibbert
Via F. Stibbert 26 - 50134 Firenze - Phone: +39 055 47520
Monday-Wednesday 9 am – 2 pm, Friday-Sunday 9 am – 6 pm
www.museostibbert.it - biglietteria@museostibbert.it

Museo Stefano Bardini
Via dei Renai, 37 - 50123 Firenze - Phone: +39 055 354417
Friday-Monday 10 am – 5 pm, closed Tuesday-Thursday
museoildifiorinti.com/en/bardini

Villa Medica di Cerreto Guidi
via dei PortiMedici 7 - 50044 Cerreto Guidi, Florence
Mon. Sat 10 am – 6 pm (Oct-May), 9 am – 6 pm (Apr-Sep), Sun 10 am – 7 pm throughout the year
Phone: +39 055 575079
www.villamedicedicerretoguidi.it

Islamic Art at the Gallerie degli Uffizi
The beauty of Islamic art was highly esteemed by the Medici, who collected splendid objects at the Uffizi, most notably magnificent arms studied with gems and semi-precious stones. Remaining today from these Medici collections are some fascinating objects in Palazzo Pitti, today part of the Gallerie degli Uffizi, found mainly in the collection of the Tesoro dei Granduchi (Grand Ducal Treasure), such as the Safavid ewer that belonged to Piero de’ Medici and his son Lorenzo the Magnificent, an ancient Fatimid bottle in rock crystal, probably also from their collection. Other precious vessels of Islamic make in jade, agate, mother-of-pearl and tortoise-shell, coming from Central Asia, India and Indonesia, are also found in the Tesoro dei Granduchi. In addition to semi-precious stones, carpets are the most splendid pieces of the Medici Oriental collections, among them the rare ‘Ratti Mamluk’.
The Islamic World at the Museo Stibbert

Islamic genius strongly appealed to the sensibility of such a passionate collector as Frederick Stibbert. This is clearly evident in the Museum that enriched Florence, his adopted city, where he not only displayed the thousands of objects he had acquired, but also tried to recreate the atmospheres of the places encountered in his voyages from Africa to the Far East. In the museum’s Islamic Room, as the background for superbly fashioned armour and weapons, the decorations of the fantastic Alhambra in Granada are replicated. In his collections, abounding in furnishings, costumes and artworks, Stibbert intended to record the customs, usages and traditions of distant peoples, demonstrating an ethnographic interest that went far beyond the pure pleasure of collecting.

Islamic art at the Museo Bardini

In the late 19th and early 20th century Stefano Bardini, the ‘prince of antiquarians’ procured for collectors and great museums unrivalled masterpieces not only of the Italian Renaissance but also of Middle Eastern art, chosen with rare competence and discernment. In the permanent collection of the Museum that bears his name, precious Turkish, Persian and Mamluk carpets dating from the 16th and 17th centuries are displayed on the Monumental Staircase and in the Room of the Terrace. Especially precious are two ceramic tiles from Damascus and from Iznik, in Turkey, a basin and a Persian candleabra from the 18th century and a Turkish saddle-cloth from the 18th century.

The Orient in the Villa Medicea di Cerreto Guidi

A world heritage site, the historic 16th-century villa, built for Cesare I de’Medici and attributed to Bernardo Buontalenti, is now partially used to house a selection of the antiquarian Stefano Bardini’s private collections, acquired by the Italian State in 1948. One room in the villa is entirely devoted to the Orient. It displays metal artifacts, weapons, majolicas and other rare testimonials that, along with the objects preserved in the two venues of the exhibition and at the Museo Bardini, demonstrate the famous antiquarian’s special interest in Islamic art.