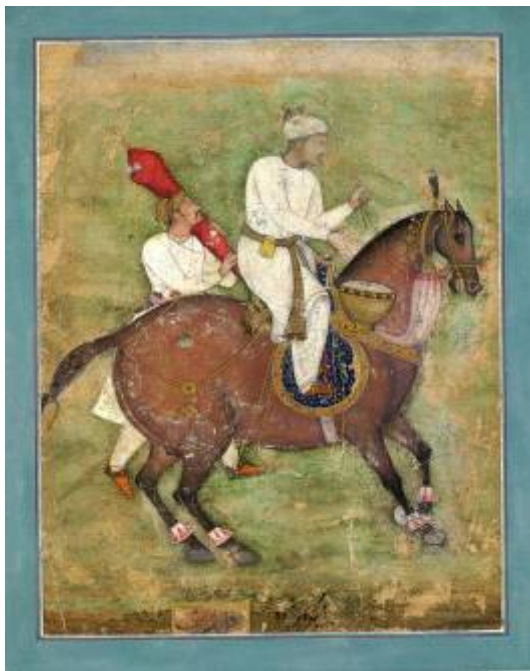


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**INTERNATIONAL BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITION OF
ARABIAN ART OPENS IN MAY**
Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation Presents "A Gift from the Desert"

LEXINGTON, KY (March 9, 2010) The largest and most comprehensive collection of exotic Near Eastern and Arabian equine art and artifacts ever assembled will soon be on view when *A Gift from the Desert: The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse* is presented May 29-October 15 in the Kentucky Horse Park's International Museum of the Horse - a Smithsonian Affiliate.



A Gift from the Desert will be the first major exhibition to explore the impact of the horse on Near Eastern civilization, with particular emphasis on the Arabian, the first true breed of horse. It will concentrate on the Near East, covering the modern states of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, India and Iran. It will begin with the arrival of the first horses in the Near East and culminate in the spread of the Arabian breed throughout the world and the renaissance of purebred breeding in its ancestral homelands today.

This breathtaking exhibition, presented by the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation, will feature nearly 400 artifacts and works of art from 25 museums and private lenders including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the

British Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oxford University, Ashmolean Museum, Carnegie Museum of Art, National Museum of Warsaw, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, American Museum of Natural History, and many others.

John Nicholson, executive director of the Kentucky Horse Park, observed, "Throughout history, horses have had a unique ability to dismantle the walls that exist between people and nations, particularly when those horses are possessed of extraordinary beauty, as are Arabians. Those who love and admire horses share a deep connection with each other regardless of age, class, race or religion. So we are very proud that the Kentucky Horse Park has developed this exhibition as a way to honor and celebrate the Arabian horse."



Among the priceless works of art and artifacts in *A Gift from the Desert* are the Standard of Ur (circa 2,600 BCE), the first depiction of equine driving, and the Kikkuli tablet, the world's earliest known treatise on horse care and training from the Hittite civilization.

Some items are expected to be particularly popular with equine enthusiasts, including an outstanding collection of Orientalist paintings by Delacroix, Schreyer and Fromentin; early depictions of the earliest Arabian-type horses from Egypt's New Kingdom, and a stunning selection of saddles, tack, armor and arms (many bejeweled), from the Ottoman Empire. Other pieces of interest include:



- Faience horse trappings from a Nubian horse grave dating to 700 BC;
- Egyptian 18th dynasty bas-reliefs depicting horses during the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaten (1353-1336 BC), who was married to Nefertiti and was believed to be the father of King Tutankhamen;
- Rock drawings from Jordan with early depictions of Arabian horses; as well as rare depictions of horses on rock art from Arabia;
- The Mleiha golden bridle excavated from a horse burial in Sharjah, UAE;
- The Abbas Pasha Manuscript, a legendary 19th century document prepared by the emissaries of the Viceroy of Egypt relating the history and strains of Arabian horses;
- Original sketches by the famed cartoonist and early Arabian horse breeder Homer Davenport, as well as original documents relating to his historic importation of horses;
- A large selection of the 19th century equestrian works of Polish painter Juliusz Kossak;
- Rare lithographs from the collection of Dr. Karin Thieme, including the work of Gericault, Adams and Vernet as well as eight images from the famed Caroussel, originally given as a wedding gift for the future King of Germany upon his marriage to the daughter of the Russian czar;
- A rare book of original watercolors from the Emile Hermes collection, depicting the famous horses of the stud of the King of Wurttemberg in Germany.



"These rare artifacts will be united for the first and only time in one location," said Bill Cooke, director of the International Museum of the Horse. "The story of the Arabian breed is a thread of continuity throughout the exhibition, but our art and artifacts also explore the rich and varied cultures of the peoples that treasured them and the vast contributions the ancient Near East and Arab world have made to civilization."

This will be the third international blockbuster exhibition at the International Museum of the Horse* and is expected to draw 300,000 visitors. It will be on exhibit during the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games at the park - the largest sporting event in the United States in 2010, to attend as the cultural heart of the games for hundreds of thousands of national and international visitors.

A Gift from the Desert is one of Kentucky's two biggest events in 2010, alongside the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, and one of the most prestigious art events in North America.

Nicholson concluded, "Considering the inexpressible beauty of the Arabian horse, the rich and ancient culture surrounding it, its impact on nearly every modern breed of horse and its continued popularity around the world, it's easy to understand why we are so excited and extremely pleased and proud to offer this exhibition to the world."

Tickets are \$21 for adults and \$11 for children. For information on the exhibition or the museum, contact the International Museum of the Horse, 859-259-4232 or go to www.agiftfromthedesert.com. For group tour information, contact Ali Mihankhah, 859-259-4225 or ali.mihankhah@ky.gov.

EDITOR'S NOTE: High resolution photos of pieces in this exhibition are available for use with this release in your publication by emailing Cindy.Rullman@ky.gov.



*Other blockbuster exhibitions in the International Museum of the Horse were *Imperial China: The Art of the Horse in Chinese History* in 2000 and *All the Queen's Horses: The Role of the Horse in British History* in 2003.

