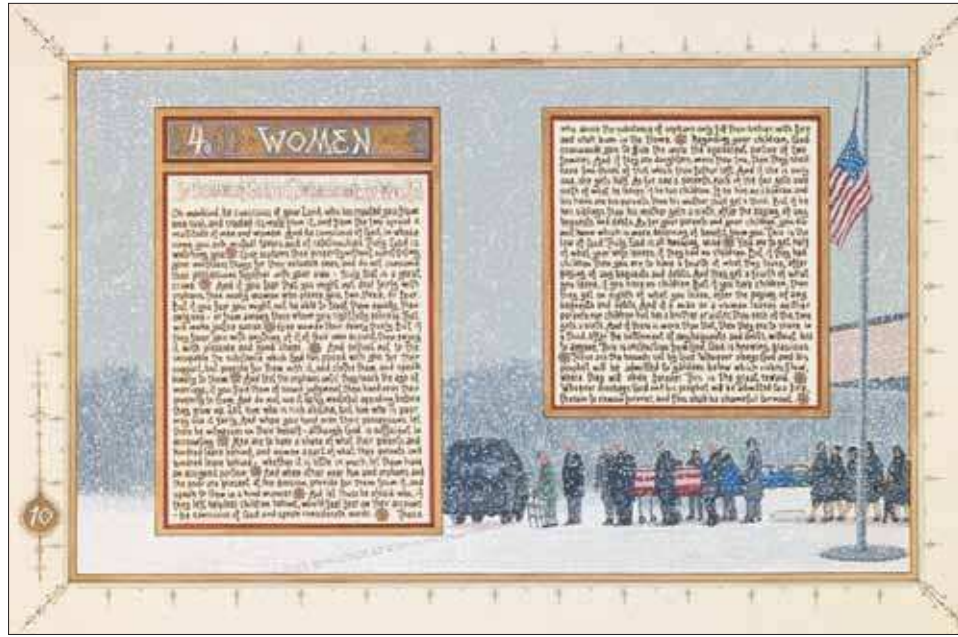


“Sandow Birk: American Qur’an” now on display in Eugene

“Sandow Birk: American Qur’an,” an exhibit of approximately 200 individual ink-and-gouache paintings of the text of the Qur’an rendered in elaborate script by artist Sandow Birk, is currently on display at the University of Oregon’s Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. The exhibit was organized by and presented at the Orange County Museum of Art in 2015-2016 and this is the first time the show is being viewed in an academic museum.

The idea for the exhibit came about when Birk, a California-based social-practice artist, wanted to learn more about Islam, like many Americans after the September 11 terrorist attacks. He read the Qur’an and studied Islamic art, literature, and culture, and he travelled to countries around the world with significant Muslim populations. He became convinced that despite the U.S. having recently engaged in wars with Muslim nations as well as stateless organizations, the text of the Qur’an offers universal principles intended for all nations. Taking that precept as a given, he asked how the Qur’an might be more meaningful to Americans in the second decade of the 21st century.

With “American Qur’an,” Birk introduces Islam’s holy book to non-Muslim



AMERICAN QUR’AN. “Sandow Birk: American Qur’an,” an exhibit of approximately 200 individual ink-and-gouache paintings of the text of the Qur’an rendered in elaborate script based on Los Angeles graffiti tags and scenes from contemporary American life, is on view through March 19 at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, Oregon. Pictured is “American Qur’an, Sura 4 A,” by Sandow Birk, ink and gouache on paper, 16” x 24”, 2008-2009. (Photo courtesy of Robert Maier Anderson and Nicole, Miner, San Francisco, California)

audiences and also affirms both the richness of Islamic culture and religion and Islam’s place in an America founded by immigrants whose varied cultures have enriched our society and been united in their respect for America’s constitutional values.

Birk created individual gouache paintings of the text of the Qur’an rendered in elaborate script based on Los Angeles graffiti tags and scenes from

contemporary American life using a copyright-free English translation. His positioning of the text over the images resulted in a blocking of parts of the contemporary scenes, with the specifics of place, character, and event partially and intentionally obscured. In addition to the ink-and-gouache-on-paper paintings, the exhibit also features two large-scale paintings not related directly to the Qur’an as well as ceramics.

Adjacent to the display are examples of hand-scribed, religious and secular texts representing world religions and cultures, including a Qur’an. Accompanying the exhibit is a 400-page book published by the Catherine Clark Gallery and W.W. Norton & Company, with essays by Zareena Grewal and Iftikhar Dadi and a preface by Reza Aslan.

In today’s polarized America, the exhibit aims to offer a timely opportunity to remember why the United States was founded and to appreciate and support the diversity that makes it worth preserving.

“Sandow Birk: American Qur’an” is on view through March 19 at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, located at 1430 Johnson Lane in Eugene, Oregon. To learn more, call (541) 346-3027 or visit <jsma.uoregon.edu>.

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2016 Exemplary Community Volunteer Award Recipient: Vietnamese Community of Oregon



The Vietnamese Community of Oregon (VNCO) was established in 1995 to unite and support the voices of Vietnamese people in Oregon. The organization, which seeks to represent the more than 29,000 Vietnamese living in the state, advocates for community members, supports youth, and preserves and nourishes the traditions of Vietnamese culture. Among its many activities, VNCO has offered free tax service for low-income Vietnamese families; served meals to the homeless at Potluck in the Park and breakfast to senior citizens at the Hollywood Senior Center; entered floats in the Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade; organized the Memorial of the Fall of Sai Gon event; sent members to Washington, D.C. to advocate for human rights in Vietnam with U.S congresspersons; and hosted its two annual cultural events — the Mid-Autumn Festival and *Tet*, the Vietnamese New Year. In addition, the organization reaches out to Sunday Vietnamese schools to encourage volunteer teachers and to advocate for academic support for students. To learn more, visit <www.vnco.org>.

The Asian Reporter Foundation is accepting nominations for its 2017 “Exemplary Community Volunteer” awards.

The recognition banquet will be held Thursday, April 20, 2017 at northeast Portland’s TAO Event Center. Nomination forms and award guidelines are available for download at <www.ARFoundation.net>.

The nomination deadline is Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 5:00pm.

The Asian Reporter Foundation’s 19th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet features:

- Most Honored Elder Awards
- Exemplary Community Volunteer Awards
- College Scholarship Awards
- Cultural entertainment
- Ethnic dinner
- Silent auction