Turkish Artists Inaugurate Special IU Exhibition: *Turkish Traditional Art Today*

The Indiana Art Museum’s fall exhibition, *Turkish Traditional Art Today*, offers visitors a unique introduction to Turkish art and culture. The exhibition, based on the fieldwork and analysis of guest curator and professor of Folklore Henry Glassie, is composed of over 500 objects collected over Glassie’s twelve years of research on Turkish art. This special collection has been selected as representative of what Glassie, co-director of IU’s Turkish Studies program, found to be the three styles of Turkish art—restraint, spirited abandon, and controlled mastery—rooted in Islamic precepts and expressed in each of the three major Islamic arts of calligraphy, ceramics, and carpets.

Curators of the exhibition are Henry Glassie, Kathleen Foster, IU Art Museum Curator of 19th and 20th century art, and Karen Duffy, IUB graduate student in Folklore and former Asian and Middle Eastern curator of the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) in Santa Fe. *Turkish Traditional Art Today* was first presented by co-curators Glassie and Duffy at MOIFA from 1991-94. The IU Bloomington exhibition, with major funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities, has been updated with more recent acquisitions.

In keeping with Glassie’s emphasis on an interpretive approach that provides the viewer with a feeling for the individual makers of the works on display, eight of the Turkish artists featured in the exhibition were in residence in Bloomington October 28 to November 5, demonstrating their arts in the special exhibition gallery and the museum’s second floor atrium. Accompanying the artists were Prof. Dr. Emre Kongar, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, and Mr. Yahya Aksoy, Director of Research and Development of Folk Cultures—representatives of Turkey’s coalition government that has given increasing support for Turkish traditional arts.

The Turkish artists-in-residence included calligraphers Yusuf Sezer, creator of many calligraphies for mosques and public displays, and Muhittin Serin, a professor of calligraphy and religious studies at Marmara University. The four master potters were from Turkey’s pottery-making center of Kuthaya: Ibrahim Erdeyer, the young master of one of the...
city's oldest ceramic workshops; Mehmet Gürsoy, a member of a newer atelier developed by Küthaya's younger generation; and the husband and wife team, Ahmet Hürriyet Şahin and Nurten Şahin, representing the youngest generation of the city's most influential family of ceramic artists. The village weaving tradition of northwestern Turkey was represented by Ahmet Balci, an expert in natural dyeing, and his wife, Hasine Balci, an expert weaver and embroiderer, who supervised the installation of a traditional loom in the museum gallery, and demonstrated hand spinning, natural dyeing, and piled carpet weaving.

Opening ceremonies officially welcoming the visiting artists were hosted by IU Art Museum Director Adelheid Gealt and guest curator Henry Glassie. Speaking on behalf of the university and local communities were IU Vice President and IUB Chancellor Kenneth Gros Louis and Bloomington mayor Tomilea Allison. Daniel Newberry, retired American consul general at Istanbul, offered greetings from the American-Turkish Council and the American Friends of Turkey. Responding on behalf of the Turkish government was Undersecretary Emre Kongar. Glassie then introduced the artists through a brief slide presentation showing their work in context. A reception followed at which guests could view the exhibition, meet the artists, and enjoy a Turkish buffet.

During the week following the opening, the artists presented daily demonstrations of their work techniques. On Saturday, a special educators' workshop was held for teachers of world cultures and religions that included a tour of the exhibit by Glassie, a visit with the Turkish artists, and the introduction of slide sets and teaching materials relating to Turkish and Islamic art. On October 30, a symposium on Turkish culture was hosted by Glassie and İlhan Başgöz, IUB professor of Central Eurasian Studies and co-director of Turkish Studies, with Başgöz speaking on “Themes in Nasreddin Hoca Stories from Sixteenth-Century Manuscripts.” Undersecretary Emre Kongar commented on the role of government policy in the maintenance of traditional culture, and Glassie spoke from the perspective of an individual fieldworker conducting research in Turkey. On November 3, the Art Museum presented a slide lecture on oriental rugs by Turkish rug producer George Jevremović, followed by a collector’s workshop in which Jevremović and Glassie discussed the care, study, and collecting of Oriental carpets and kilims. The week’s festivities concluded with the Art Museum’s family day, “A Celebration of Turkish Art and Culture,” featuring activities for children and adults such as artmaking workshops, storytelling, folkdancing, film showings, tours of the exhibit, and samples of Turkish foods.

Other special events related to the exhibit included a film showing and talk by İlhan Basgöz on Turkish shadow puppets, an Arts Connection Concert by medieval musical ensemble Altramar in a performance of “Epic Folktales of Medieval Turkey: The Episode of Seljen Hatun and Kan Turali,” a gallery tour by Karen Duffy on “Individual Creativity in Turkish Traditional Art,” and an Arts Insight talk by Kathleen Foster on “Women’s Art and Women Artists in Contemporary Turkey.”

On December 2, Prof. Talat Halman—poet, scholar, and former Turkish Minister of Culture—will deliver a slide lecture on “Love in Turkish Arts,” in Fine Arts Room 102 at 5:00 pm. A December 8 guest lecture by anthropologist Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmann—“Anyos Muchos i Buenos (Good Years and Many More): Turkey’s Sephardim, 1492-1992,” with photographs by Laurence Salzmann—will explore the survival of Turkey’s Jewish community that was established by Jewish immigrants who left Spain during the Inquisition.