A single folio of Nizami Khamseh

Calligrapher: Unknown
Date: c. 16th century
Style: Nasta’iq
Size: 17.6 x 10.1 cm
Accession number: 1996.2.121

Description

This single folio of the famed poetic/epic story of Layla and Majnun, composed by Nizami, is rendered in four rows of fine Nasta’iq script. The text is placed within cloud-shaped compartments against a gold ground, with the title of the poems at the centre finely decorated with thin arabesque scrolls.

Nizami’s Khamseh is a well-known quintet which comprises five Masnavi poems, Layla and Majnun is one of them. Throughout the subtle arrangement of the verses, the continuous journey of Layla is described and the agonies of Majnun in his search for his beloved escalates, mystically awaiting their spiritual union.

Text

لیلی بمن نن
گرچه زندان است بر صحب دلادن
هر کجا ذکری ز وصل یار نیست
هیچ زندان عاشق مشفق را
نتذكر از صحب اغیر نیست
A double page of poetry from the Divan of Hafiz

Calligrapher: Unknown
Date: 16th / 17th century
Style: Nasta'liq
Size: 12 x 6.5 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.39-40

Description

In two columns with two title headings inserted within the text, the folio displays the classical arrangement of the poems of the Divan of Hafiz. This folio may not have been intended as a single folio by its calligrapher. The album compiler accordingly refurbished it with an outstanding mount, which indicates a late 10th century master illuminator. Judging from its exquisite decoration, this folio may have been part of a royal Muraqqa'.

Text

Dear, who told you not to be friendly with me
To become a stranger and not inquire about me
Since you are such a kind soul
Forgive the act that was not criminal, and do not ask why
I know the depth of suffering of your love, not the pretension
Ask the candle about the story, not the wind
He who said not to ask the dervish
Did not know about the dervish's world
Do not ask the monks about money
This means do not ask the poor about wealth
In the books of the Knowledgeable person there is nothing about 'Love'

Oh heart, better get acquainted with pain and do not ask about medicine
We have not read the story of Alexander and 'Dara'
Do not expect anything from us except kindness and loyalty

Hafez, it is the Springtime, do not talk about Knowledge
Seize the moment and do not ask 'this' and 'that'
**Catalogue no. 45 & 46**

**A double folio of poetry**

Calligrapher: Unknown

Date: c. 17th century

Style: Nasta'liq

Size: 15.2 x 8.6 cm - 15.2 x 8.6 cm

Accession number: 1998.2.43 - 44

**Description**

The text box is divided into four elegant compartments, each holding one of the four verses of the quadruple Ruba'i style of poetry. The black Nasta'liq is placed within cloud-shaped compartments against a floral background. Both folios represent an early style of Nasta'liq which is reminiscent of the calligraphy of the famed Mir 'Imad. The double folios were mounted at a later stage on cream-coloured board, delicately decorated with a golden floral motif of continuous scrolls of feathery leaves and flowers.

The poem recalls "the agony of the lover suffered due to his separation from his beloved," in a begging state, he "pleads for mercy so that his pain and suffering would come to an end."

Sufi Ruba'i form of poetry is known to express mystical ideas and sentiments in a simplified manner. Here a classical depiction of a romance would be interpreted as the agony of a soul in quest of the love of God.

**Text**

یک شب نیود که چشم گروتان نیست
روزی که نباید دل بپرینم نیست
القصه مرا است بی تو حال عجبی
رحمی که دنگ طاقت هجراتم نیست

گر کسی وصف او زمین پرست
بی دل از بی نشان چه گوید بایز
عائشان کشتگان مشوق
بر نیایید ز کشتگان آواز
A decorative folio of Murqaqa’

Calligrapher: Malik al Deylami
Date: 950-969 AH / 1544-1562 AD
Style: Nasta’līq
Size: 16.8 x 7.7 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.15

Description

The decorative folio consists of three units, a central double couplet of poetry against a decorative ground with the signature of the calligrapher, an empty head piece, and a decorative border. The calligraphic unit is the product of the Safavid royal atelier with exquisite decoration and a beautiful powerful black Nasta’līq. The border is composed of an interwoven scroll of flowers reminiscent of margin decorations in royal manuscripts of the 16th / 17th century AD. The empty head piece is placed off the centre of the folio indicating an amateur patch worker.

The content of this poem reflects on love and the entrapment it inevitably brings to the lover. All the advice and words of wisdom act like a wind that enflames the fire of desire.

Malik al Daylami assembled an album for Amir Husayn Beg in which he said: "Nasta’līq was the freshest herb of the garden of calligraphy" (Thackston 2001, p.19)

Text

زین گون چه عزمه آن دل آویز کرد
عاشق زیلا چگونه پرهیز کرد
فیاد است نصیحت کسان در گوتم
اما بادی که آتش نز تز کرد
Catalogue no. 48

A single folio of Persian Muraqqa'

Calligrapher: Mir Imad
Date: 16th century
Style: Nasta‘liq
Size: 8.8 x 15.2 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.207

Description

A folio that consists of plain bands of calligraphy patched together in a simple manner. This folio represents the stages in which a Muraqqa' is composed, with the compiler leaving empty boxes and border spaces for illumination. The illumination was not executed, and at a much later period a dark brown pigment filled the border. The pigment was not the professional illuminator’s work and soon began to crack and flake off the folio. The back of the folio attributes it to Mir Imad.

Catalogue no. 49

A couplet within a Muraqqa'

Calligrapher: Compilation
Date: 16th century
Style: Nasta‘liq
Size: 7.2 x 12.5 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.52

Description

This folio displays a simple and balanced arrangement of Nasta‘liq couplets, placed within a Muraqqa' composition. The border includes 10 couplets in Turkic in small Nasta‘liq script. The centrepiece refers to fate, the play of time and man's fortune.
Couplet of poetry

Calligrapher: Imad al Husayni
Date: 17th century
Style: Nasta’liq
Size: 14.2 x 6.8 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.216

Description

The folio depicts two couplets in a diagonal arrangement, signed by the famous Imad al Husayni. The principles of the rubā’ī form of Persian poetry mandate the rhyming of the first, second and fourth hemistich. Here each couplet has the same ending, creating a new melody for each pair of verses. The decoration of the folio must have been added later, during the 19th century, by album compilers.

Text

Who darkened my beloved's eyes
has darkened my life-time
I shall be weeping till the West wind takes the dust
from her lane no more.

كه سيه كرم پير مرا
كه سيه كرد روزگار مرا
يمکن گر یه تا میا نبید
از سر گوی او غبار
An Arabic Murqqa'

Calligrapher: Unknown
Date: 17th / 18th century
Style: Nastā'īq
Size: 10.9 x 18.4 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.16

Description

A single folio that comprises a central quartet of Arabic poetry is framed by a border of Persian poems and decorative floral units. The composition of the Murqqa' is conventional and the decorative repertoire shows perhaps 19th-century motifs. The Arabic text is written in a Persian manner and some additional dots are placed to balance the composition aesthetically.

Text

Oh God, I seek your protection from all human beings
In the world where there is conspiracy and everlasting evil
I seek your triumph (victory), you are the victorious
Support (leading to triumph) with your grace every good deed.
A rectangular Muraqqa'

Catalogue no. 52

Description

A patch-work of beautiful poetic phrases are pasted together to create a well-balanced decorative unit. The calligraphy in most cases is written within a decorative background, with triangular borders in blue and gold, and border cartouches. The combination between the decorative repertoire and the calligraphy results in an attractive decorative panel.

The text: "The oil lamp hanging in the mihrab is like the heart framed inside the arch of her eyebrows". As the poem includes two symbolic words, Qandil and Mihrab, it recalls the Qur'an verse: 24:35

"God is the light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) Kindled from a Blessed Tree, an Olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil well high would shine, even if no fire touches it, Light upon Light."

The Holy Qur'an
24:35
Catalogue no. 53

A folio of Muraqqa’

Calligrapher: Numerous calligraphers
Date: 16th/17th century
Style: Nasta’liq
Size: 18.9 x 10.7 cm
Accession number: 1998.2.112

Description

The folio is divided horizontally into three main sections with two bands in between each section. All the sections contain calligraphy and decorative panels. The central section displays a quartet in chalipa composition which refers to the state of spiritual selflessness, a condition resulting from excess drinking of wine, the wine of divine passion. The poem further elaborates on that state, indicating that it pushes the lover to loneliness and leads him to have a bad reputation.