THE SPIRIT ILLUMINATED
An Exhibition of Qur’an Illumination
Prints by Editio Electum

8:30 pm, 4th July 2005
Clare College Chapel
University of Cambridge

BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE MASTER AND FELLOWS
The Spirit Illuminated
An Exhibition of Qur'an Illumination Prints

The Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation's design studio Editio Electrum presents a collection of twelve double page Tradigital Prints based on selected openings from the finest medieval Qur'an manuscripts in Cairo's Dar al-Kutub (National Library). Seven pairs of plates are of the ornamental frontispieces found at the start of Dar al Kutub Qur'an manuscripts 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 72, and 81, and the remaining five pairs of plates reproduce illuminated text page openings from these same manuscripts. The twelve pairs of Editio Electrum Tradigital plates will be available for sale in the near future as a complete boxed set in a limited edition of five hundred. Enquiries and advance orders are welcome.

The collection of Tradigital plates will accompany the International Exhibition of Qur'an Manuscripts that the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation is coordinating in association with Beir Al Quran - Kingdom of Bahrain, Dubai Chamber of Commerce - Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Dar al-Kutub (National Library) - Arab Republic of Egypt, the National Library - Islamic Republic of Iran, King Faisal Foundation - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art - Republic of Turkey. Scheduled for October 2005, and coinciding with the Holy Month of Ramadan, the exhibition is a major collaborative undertaking combining the simultaneous presentation of Qur'an manuscripts from many of the world's most important collections. The manuscripts that will be on display in each country have been carefully selected by leading experts from the host institutions and the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation. Four comprehensive volumes will be published documenting the manuscripts shown in each country with essays by prominent scholars on the history and development of the art of the Qur'an.

It is said that tradition is copying. In traditional arts throughout the world the apprentice is trained by imitating the master, in many cases by attempting to copy the master's works directly. We live in an age of mass production and mass communication, and we are more familiar than ever with copied images, but there is a further consideration to the traditional practice of copying. The traditional copy is never mindless or automated, it is essential that the copy derive from the conscious understanding of what is being copied. What qualifies
the apprentice’s attempts as successful is the degree to which they show the comprehension and reapplicability of the visual language of the masterpiece. Copies that may seem quite far from exact in places may in fact be deemed better than some that, to our eyes at least, appear more accurate, because they never the less ‘say’ the same thing as the original, rather as a poem recited by a different voice remains the same poem. Accordingly the twelve Editio Electrum prints are not photographic or automated copies that capture all the exigencies of the original manuscripts, but in being completely reconstructed by hand using digital technology they embody the idea of the designs, or the archetypal originals in a new medium. In this sense they are better thought of as Platonic copies than as facsimile reproductions.

Referring to the many fine photographic reproductions in Dr. Martin Lings’ recent publication, Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination, HRH The Prince of Wales has expressed the hope that “... these plates may help to revive the sacred art of illumination so that it may accompany once again the art of Quran calligraphy ...”. It is in this spirit that Editio Electrum aims to revivify the noble art of the ornamental arts of the Islamic book, the summit of which is the art of illuminating the Holy Qur’an. The motto of Editio Electrum is ‘Ancient Vision - Modern Technique’ and in reconstructing the twelve masterpieces of Qur’anic illumination in the collection the Editio Electrum studio team has not only deciphered and understood the visual language of the medieval originals but has also developed workshop techniques with the very latest in digital design and print technology to articulate this language in a new and exciting medium. In particular the geometric elements of the designs have benefited from being freed from the limitations of paper and brush, the tools of the medieval craftsman, and reconstructed using CAD software have an accuracy not found in the medieval manuscripts.

The plates are printed by Yon Art Printing of Korea with high grade offset litho inks and 23.5 carat gold leaf on Arches 100% cotton rag Aquarelle paper. The experience and expertise of Yon Art Printing is central to the success of the project. The uncompromising production values and patient attention to detail given to the twelve plates make them unique in the world of printing.

It is our hope that these plates will inspire all who see them and will serve as a reminder that, as the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad states,

‘God is Beautiful and He loves Beauty.’

For October 2005 exhibition information:
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1. Cairo 72 O
Contemporary Prints Based on the Opening Text Pages of Juz 1 of Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 72
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 56cm x 40 cm
Main Text: Rayhan script, Holy Qur’an 1, 1-7

2. Cairo 72 F
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of Juz 30 of Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 72
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 56cm x 40 cm
Inscription: Rayhan script, Holy Qur’an LV, 77-80

3. Cairo 08 F
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 8
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 130
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Inscription: Rayhan script, Holy Qur’an LV, 77-80

4. Cairo 07 F
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 7
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 126
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm

5. Cairo 07 T
Contemporary Prints Based on Text Pages from Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 7
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 128
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Surah Headings: Ornamental Eastern Kufic script
Main Text: Muhaqqaq script, Holy Qur’an LXXXVI, 1-suraah heading of LXXXVIII.

6. Cairo 07 C
Contemporary Prints Based on the Closing Text Pages of Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 7
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 129
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Surah Headings: Ornamental Eastern Kufic script
7. **Cairo 10 F**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 106
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 130
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm

8. **Cairo 10 O**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Opening Text Pages of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 10
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 107
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Surah Titles: Ornamental Kufic script
Main Text: Muhaqqaq script, Holy Qur’an 1, 1–7

9. **Cairo 09 F**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 9
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Inscription: Ornamental Kufic script, Holy Qur’an 161, 77–80

10. **Cairo 12 F**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 12
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 140
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Inscription: Ornamental Eastern Kufic script,
Holy Qur’an 161, 77–80

11. **Cairo 12 O**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Opening Text Pages of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 12
Splendours of Qur’an Calligraphy & Illumination Plate 141
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 76cm x 56 cm
Surah Headings: Ornamental Eastern Kufic script
Main Text: Muhaqqaq script, Holy Qur’an 1, 1–II, 5

12. **Cairo 81 F**
Contemporary Prints Based on the Frontispieces of
Cairo Dar al-Kutub Qur’an Manuscript 81
Serigraphy and Lithography on Paper, 56cm x 40 cm
Inscription: Ornamental Eastern Kufic Script