

**PRESS RELEASE**

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(more photos available)



**Bellevue Arts Museum Presents  
Mohamed Zakariya, Islamic Calligrapher  
September 21, 2006 - February 18, 2007**

**Bellevue, WA--** Bellevue Arts Museum presents the exhibition *Mohamed Zakariya, Islamic Calligrapher* from September 21, 2006 to February 18, 2007. Zakariya is a noted practitioner, scholar, and teacher of the art who resides in Arlington, Virginia. The exhibition consists eighteen examples of his work in a variety of traditional and experimental scripts, in most cases surrounded by exquisite illumination or marbling. The texts include excerpts from the Koran, sayings of the Prophet, and secular poetry and prose.

Calligraphy is the premier art form of the Islamic world and is often thought to possess a divine power through its relationship to sacred texts. "Calligraphers honor words through their focused attention and sentient touch." writes Guest curator Vicki Halper "Theirs is a rigorous and demanding art form, and words are worthy subjects. In Islamic calligraphy, where the texts are sacred, writing can become an act

of prayer. Letters meticulously crafted on special papers are often embellished with gold. One need not be a Muslim or understand Arabic to be stirred by the veneration for holy words.”

In her catalogue essay, “A Calligrapher and his Art,” Dr. Esin Atil, former curator of Islamic art at the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, notes that “Islamic calligraphy is not only an aesthetic and spiritual expression but also one of mathematical knowledge, with an indisputable logic of styles and formulas that were developed through the ages. A specific example of calligraphy is judged on its adherence to the codified style of writing and on its flow, the combination of vertical and horizontal letters with swooping ones. The total effect of the calligraphy is also considered: how the text is placed on the sheet and enhanced with illuminated or marbled borders. It is the perfection of all these features that makes a work of calligraphy a work of art.”

Zakariya is a native Californian born in 1942 who converted to Islam in the 1960s. He served a lengthy apprenticeship with two revered Turkish calligraphers and received coveted diplomas in two ancient scripts in 1988 and 1997. Zakariya has also mastered several additional scripts, and is adept at both marbling and illumination, skills rarely combined in one person. He has written extensively about Islamic calligraphy, most notably in *Music for the Eyes* (1998), published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This and other writings are available on <http://zakariya.net>. Each piece in the exhibition is accompanied by full translation of the text. The artist writes: “Words are the raw material of calligraphy, which is never divorced from meaning. But like music, true calligraphy also works on a wordless level, the level on which all great art functions.”

This exhibition has been organized by Bellevue Arts Museum and is accompanied by a full color exhibition catalog, for sale in the Museum Store. The artist will present a lecture and demonstration on Saturday, October 21 at 11:00am in the Museum Auditorium.

## **Saturday, October 21**

Lecture and Demonstration by Mohamed Zakariya

Join us for an informative lecture with nationally acclaimed calligraphy artist Mohamed Zakariya, who will discuss his work with slides and samples, providing a rare insight into this exotic and beautiful writing and a window into the culture and history of words as art form.

\$7.00 Non-Members/\$5.00 Members

Museum Auditorium

11:00am

## **Bellevue Arts Museum**

Bellevue Arts Museum is the Pacific Northwest's center for the exploration of the fine art of craft and design. An emphasis is placed on regional craft artists as part of the national and international conversation on fine craft and design. Bellevue Arts Museum is located at 510 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA 98004. The Museum's main information line is 425.519.0770 and website is [www.bellevuearts.org](http://www.bellevuearts.org)

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