



**Museum für
Islamische Kunst**
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Research
Restoration
Cultural Education
Presenting Muslim Cultures



The Museum für Islamische Kunst at the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin



*Cover: Incense burner, Syria,
2nd half of the 13th century,
brass, inlaid with gold
and silver, 15 cm diameter
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: J. Liepe*

*Left: Prayer Niche from the Maydan,
Mosque in Kashan Iran (Kashan)
623 H. /1226,
stonepaste ceramic, underglaze
and lustre painted, 2.8 m high
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*

The Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of Islamic Art) at the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin is the only institution of its kind in Germany. It is the oldest museum dedicated to Islamic art outside Muslim Countries, and with ca 93,000 pieces, it is one of the leading collections of Islamic art, representing many regions of the Islamic world.

Its holdings are especially rich in monumental objects, including the impressive façade of the 8th century Caliphal palace of Mshatta (Jordan), which is the largest artefact of Islamic art in any museum. Other highlights include the unique dome from the Alhambra Palace in Granada and the 13th century prayer niches from Kashan (Iran) and Konya (Turkey). And most loved by our visitors is the finely painted wooden panelling of a 17th century upper-class house from Aleppo (Syria) – the oldest and finest surviving wooden interior from the Ottoman World.

The museum has also undertaken major excavations which are represented in a number of outstanding and unique artefacts on display, including the fixtures and fittings of the 9th century Caliphal capital of Samarra (Iraq). The collection also houses a large number of important Ottoman and Persian carpets, fine pottery and architectural ceramics and many arts of the book, including numerous miniatures from the Mughal empire.



Top: The world famous Mshatta Façade, Jordan, mid 8th century, Limestone, 5.07 m high, 33 m long
© Museum für Islamische Kunst / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: Marcus Bleyl

Bottom left: The ruins of the Umayyad palace of Mshatta, photographed in 1903, 30 km south of the Jordanian capital Amman
© Museum für Islamische Kunst / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Bottom right: The first installation of the Mshatta Façade in the Bode Museum (Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum) in 1904
© Museum für Islamische Kunst / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



Mission and Objectives

LOCATION: Berlin represents the cultural legacy of Muslim cultures in a prime location: the Pergamonmuseum on the Museumsinsel (Museum Island) is the most visited museum in Berlin. It is home of world famous architectural masterpieces from Hellenistic, Roman, Ancient Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures. The Pergamonmuseum is under reconstruction as part of the Museumsinsel master plan – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and unique ensemble of 5 major museums in the heart of Berlin.

PARTNERSHIPS: The museum operates within an extensive global network of museums, heritage institutions, artists, and both institutional and private researchers, and it also collaborates closely with museums in the Muslim world.

PRESERVING MUSLIM CULTURES: The museum preserves, studies, restores and communicates the cultural memory of Muslim societies from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, from Antiquity to the Modern Age. Its restoration workshops, with their four permanent restorers, are internationally renowned. The museum also trains restorers working in the Muslim world, and organises restoration work on site, including the al-Haram al-Sharif Museum in Jerusalem and the Herat National Museum in Afghanistan.

OUTREACH: As a repository of culture, we not only preserve and restore objects, but also perform functions for the wider society. Every year up to 900,000 visitors come to the Museum für Islamische Kunst and over 600 schools work with our educational material. Exhibitions are well received in the media and many hundreds register for our education programs.

PRESENTING MUSLIM CULTURES: The museum reaches a wide ambit of vistors from specialists to those who have neither studied nor travelled to the Middle East, as well as heritage visitors who come to connect with their home countries and cultures. With the Middle East’s heightened profile and the current global attention to its political events, we play a vital role as a site of cross-cultural exploration for building understanding and cultural awareness.

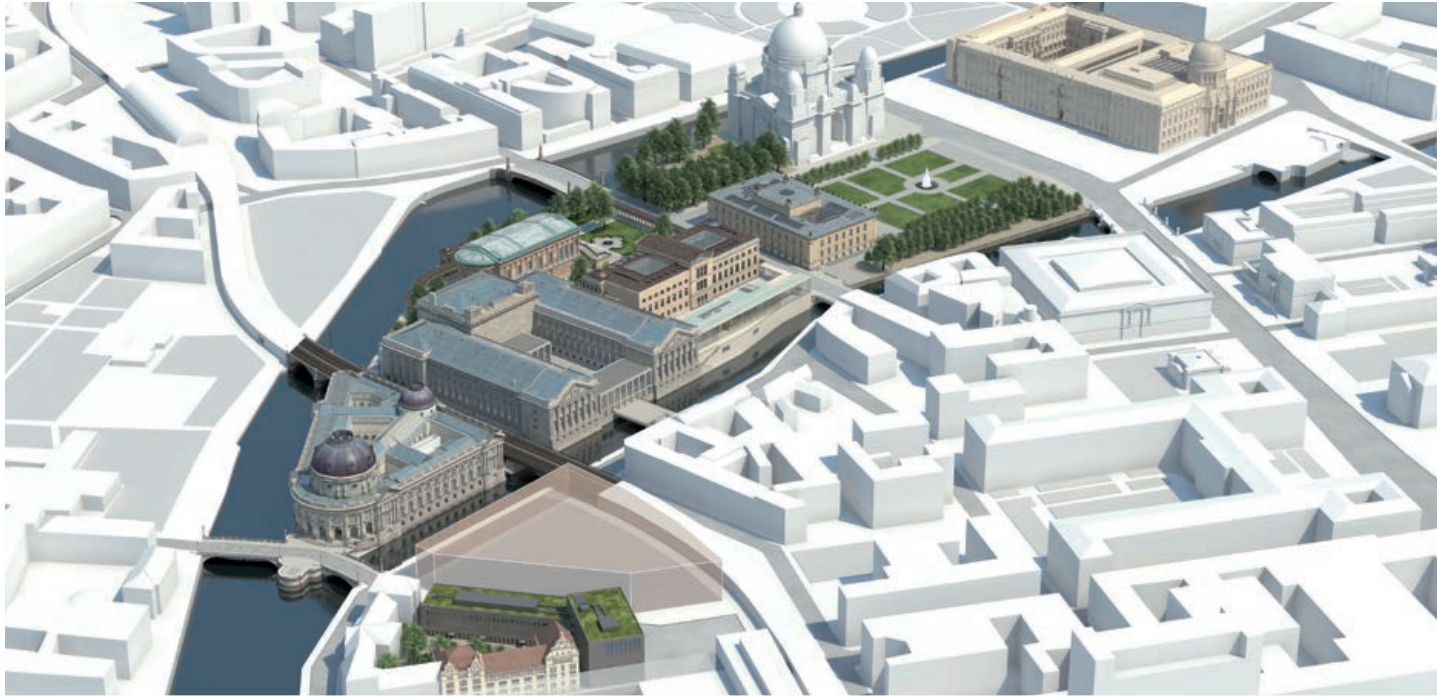
Top: The world famous Pergamonmuseum before its refurbishment 2010
© Museum für Islamische Kunst / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Middle left: Top: The Pergamon Altar, the monumental masterpiece from ancient Pergamon in Turkey

Middle right: The Ishtar Gate, Icon from the city of Babylon, 2600 years ago

Bottom: Museum für Islamische Kunst after 2001, gallery of Indian and Persian Carpets
© Stefan Weber, SMB



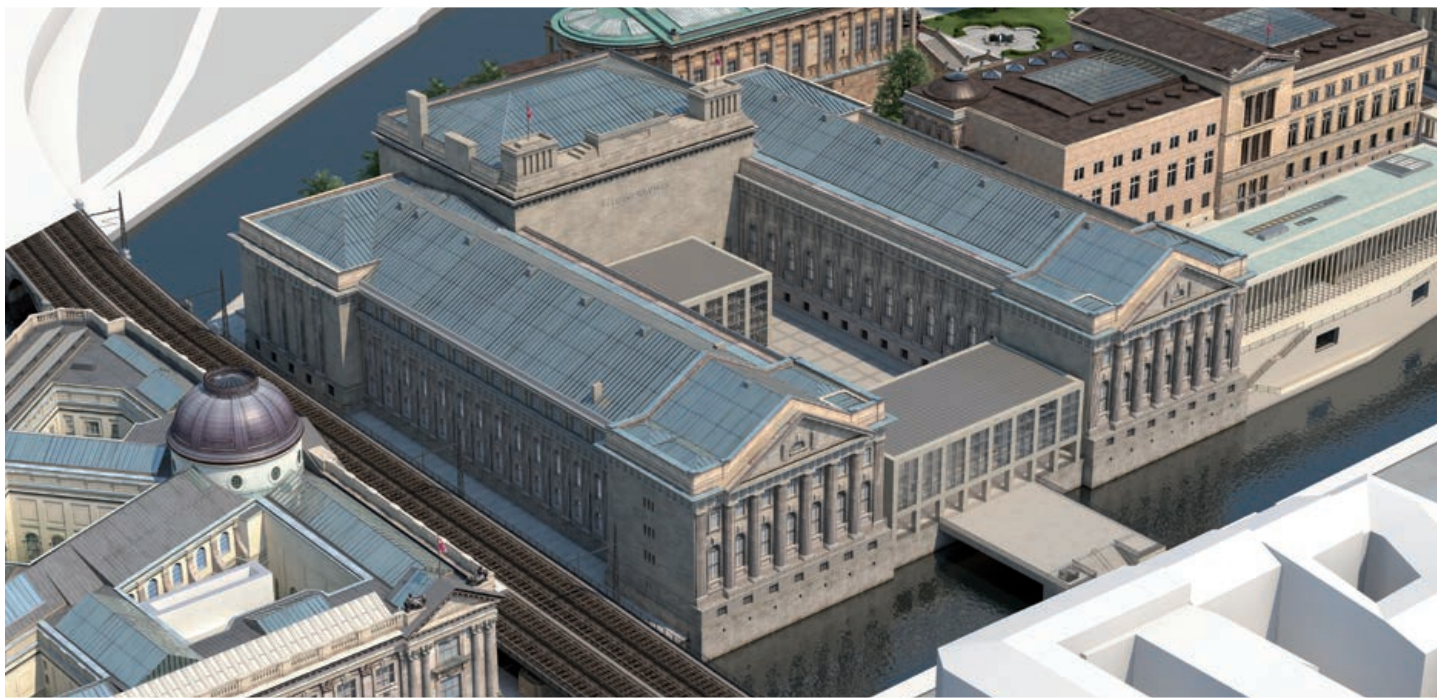


THE MUSEUM IN THE FUTURE

Top: The Museumsinsel forms in conjunction with the opening of new museum spaces at the Humboldt Forum and the rebuilt Prussian Place a world leading cluster of art and culture.

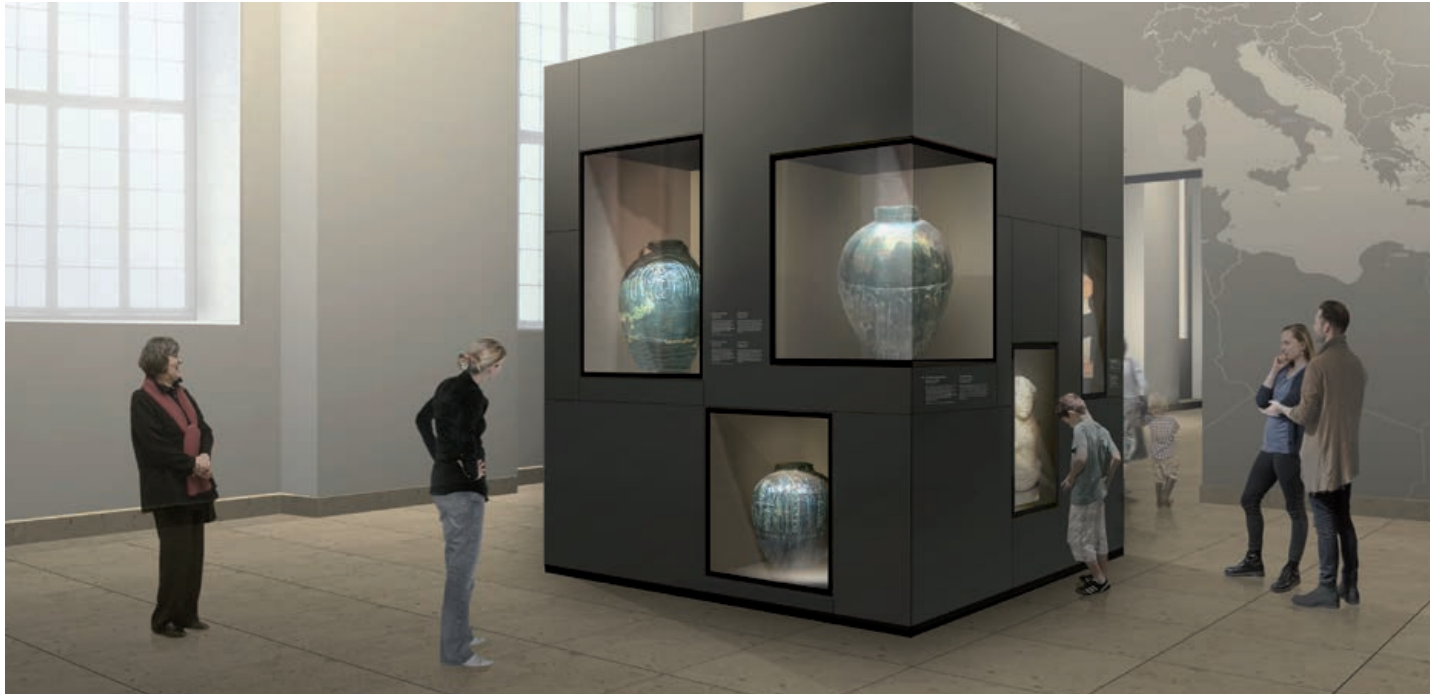
Middle: Vision of the future – the Pergamonmuseum with its forth wing and new entrance building.

Bottom: A glimpse into the new Islamic galleries 2020 – the Ottoman World. (NEO Studio Berlin, BBR)



Berlin, the birthplace of Islamic archaeology and carpet studies, was until 1933 the most important centre for the academic study of Islamic art history and archaeology. After destruction, exile and deportation, the collections in East Germany endured decades of relative neglect while a West German Museum of Islamic Art developed in Dahlem. Germany's reunification opened up new horizons for Islamic art and archaeology in Berlin by reuniting the Eastern and Western collections in an interim exhibition gallery that opened to the public in 2001, but the aim has always been to prepare grand new museum.

The new Museum für Islamische Kunst will move inside the Pergamonmuseum – the most visited museum in Berlin – by 2020. The new exhibition space will be approximately 3,000 m² – likely the largest dedicated space for Islamic art in Europe and America. The layout and concept will discover new and innovative ways to present the cultural legacy of Muslim societies to an international audience – to the 4 million annual visitors of the Museumsinsel and the general media. The German state will invest € 385 million for the refurbishment of the Pergamonmuseum; the interior design of the 24 Islamic galleries will be about € 6 million. With its space tripling in size and its ambition to communicate the complex cultural history of the Muslim peoples in a novel way, the Museum für Islamische Kunst will apply a uniquely innovative approach. >>



THE MUSEUM IN THE FUTURE

Top: 2020 – early Islamic Art and its connection to antiquities (NEO Studio Berlin, BBR)

Middle: 2020 – the great hall of Early Islamic Empires (NEO Studio Berlin, BBR)

Bottom: 2020 – a presentation to aspire the senses, picnic in the garden of art (NEO Studio Berlin, BBR)



The grand re-opening of the newly conceived collections will comprise three floors:

GROUND FLOOR: a very large special entrance hall will welcome school classes and private visitors to explore and learn. What are Muslim cultures? How do they connect to us today? How are our histories connected? What is our shared heritage? Multimedia applications and an interactive exhibition space will provide ample opportunity to explore these important questions through art, culture and history.

FIRST (MAIN) FLOOR: the Mshatta Façade will become part of the main narrative of 6,000 years of artistic legacy of the Middle East. This is a spectacular architectural promenade through ancient Egypt, ancient Mesopotamia (with the Ishtar Gate), the Hellenistic and Roman Middle East (with the Great Altar of Pergamon) to the heritage of early Islamic Caliphal residences. The Umayyad castles of Mshatta, Qusair Amra, Khirbat al-Minya and the Abbasid cities of Samarra and Raqqa will provide a tour into the world of the early Caliphate and the cultural achievements of classical Islam – a display that is only possible thanks to Berlin's unique holdings. A permanent display of the world famous collection of early Qurans from the State Library will also be presented here.

SECOND FLOOR: 18 large galleries will uncover the history and art of the emirs, shahs and sultans who ruled the Muslim world over the last millennium. Every hall has its own approach: the poems of Alhambra can be heard as one virtually looks down to the paradisiac gardens of Granada; the visitor will be able to sense the feeling of strolling through the alleys of Cairo with its intricate Mashrabiya windows; the city of Konya can be explored too, and our visitors will be invited into the reconstructed reception hall from Aleppo. A new highlight will be the Garden Hall with the knotweed flower on carpets and a real water fountain – an atmospheric setting to indulge in beauty.

We will undertake intensive research as to how to convey aesthetics in Islam, the trans-regional connectedness of art and culture, and to reflect on our joint cultural legacy of Late Antiquity. Audience research is part of our approach to reach large parts of our society. We will engage with the public to access the complex culture historical connections. Special care will be taken to present Christian and Jewish legacies in Islamic art, the cultural role of women and the place of children in our stories. Our display will open onto the broadest, most inclusive horizons.

The Museum as a Research Institution – the Centre of Competence in Germany

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RESEARCH: With its rich art and archaeological collection, the Museum für Islamische Kunst is one of the world’s leading research institutions dedicated to the material culture of the Muslim World. Our manifold research, conservation, and exhibition projects enable the profound and scholarly investigation of the urban legacies of the Near and Middle East. The excavation of the famous caliphate capital of Samarra in Iraq (undertaken in 1911 and 1913) is considered the birth of Islamic archaeology, and was further supplemented by finds from the Sasanian capital Ctesiphon in Iraq, the Abbasid capital of Raqqa in Syria and the Mongol summer palace Takht-e Soleyman in Iran.

More than twenty external scholars and research assistants are currently collaborating with our own staff of six permanent scholars on various projects associated with the Museum’s collections. The institution houses one of Germany’s most important collections of archival photographs on Islamic art and architecture as well as an internationally outstanding library focused on art, architecture and archaeology of the Muslim world.

THE MUSEUM FÜR ISLAMISCHE KUNST IS A MEMBER OF:

- > The DFG-run Excellence Cluster Topoi (Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations), specifically: ‘Ctesiphon – mediation of archaeological research in the museum, based on the architectural traditions in the Sasanian and Islamic period’, project C-3-1.
- > ‘Europe in the Middle East – the Middle East in Europe’, a research programme run by the Forum Transregionale Studien formally by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Fritz Thyssen Foundation and Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.
- > ‘Connecting Art Histories in the Museum: The Mediterranean and Asia 400 – 1650’, a research programme run by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the Max-Planck Gesellschaft and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- > ‘Episteme in Motion’ (Objects of transfer – approaches to raising awareness in the museum context of transfer processes that occurred between the Middle East and Europe in the pre-modern era) run by the DFG/Freie Universität, Berlin.
- > The Forum Transregionale Studien ‘Art Histories and Aesthetic Practices’; a research and fellowship programme initiated by the KHI Florenz (Max-Planck-Institute) in cooperation with the art history departments and the museums in Berlin.

*Top: The Citadel of Aleppo
Excavations (project Gonnella)
© US National Archives*

*Middle left:
Restorer Mrs. Schwed at work*

*Middle right:
Areia Antiqua – Ancient Herat
Roots of an Ancient City
Heart National Museum (Franke)
© Ute Franke*

*Bottom:
Waterwheels of Hama
(urban water system –
project Weber)
© Stefan Weber*





Top: Aleppo Room, Syria (Aleppo),
dated 1600–1601, 1603
Painting on wood,
2.6 m high, 35 m long in total
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: Georg Niedermeier

Bottom left: Historical photograph of
the Aleppo Room in the Bode Museum
(Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum) in 1920
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Bottom right: Aleppo Room, detail
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: Georg Niedermeier

Mediating Cultural Memory — the Role of the Museum in our Society

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*Top: Museum educator and a
school group in the Early
Ottoman Gallery*

*Middle left:
Visitors in the Seljuk Gallery*

*Middle right:
The Seljuks of Rum Gallery and
Antatolian Prayer Niche*

*Bottom: Cultural event
in the Mshatta Hall
© Stefan Weber*

As cultural repositories, museums are mediators of culture capable of addressing visitor groups of all kinds. Each year, hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world come to Berlin's Museumsinsel, where they experience the diversity and splendour of the cultural heritage of Muslim civilisations. The museum serves as key resource, helping formulate answers for today's questions: what are Muslim cultures? Where do they come from? Which cultural experiences constitute this rich artistic heritage? Our visitors experience modes of the Muslim world that breathe tolerance, internationality, and cosmopolitanism — just as we counterbalance simplified notions of a single culture in the public discourse by providing a diverse experience supported by academic authority.

While addressing the general public, the museum also provides a symbolic space for citizens of Near and Middle Eastern background and, as a public institution, it offers a cultural home. The presentation of extraordinary cultural achievements in the fields of science, philosophy, medicine, architecture, and the arts provides a positive reaffirmation of Muslim cultures for groups which may find themselves in a defensive position because of negative stereotyping in some popular public discourses. Diverse and positive images of Muslim cultural identity are crucial for collective self-esteem as is the greater public acknowledgment of this collective cultural identity.

We welcome all visitors; our museum is the most important educational institution in Germany dedicated to the history of Muslim cultures and civilizations. Educational work at the Museum für Islamische Kunst is of the utmost importance. Now, the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst invites you to become part of this partnership. Come and help us develop the Museum into a meaningful locus for cultural training and for communication to all members of our shared society.



Seven Reasons to Support the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst

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- > The museum unites the art, architecture and culture of Muslim societies with science and research on the formal and historical contexts of works of art. This unique perspective and the ability of the museum to encompass diverse perspectives, makes it a modern, dynamic and forward looking institution.
- > The Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin is part of the historical Pergamonmuseum complex, located on the Museumsinsel, which was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 1999.

*This page:
Garden carpet, wool,
North Western Iran,
end of the 18th century (detail)
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: Reinhard Friedrich*

*Rear page:
Persian Miniature from the
“Great Book of Kings” (Shahname)
depicting the story of King Sam,
Zal and the mythical bird
Simurgh. Detail from the manuscript of
Shah Tahmasp, Iran ca. 1530
© Museum für Islamische Kunst /
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photography: Jürgen Liepe*

- > The Museum für Islamische Kunst is part of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, a cluster forming a unique universal museum. It is also member of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), one of the chief representatives of all of Germany’s commitment to culture.
- > The Museumsinsel and the Pergamonmuseum – both as architectural monument and internationally renowned collection – are one of the crown jewels of German culture. The ensemble connects more than 6000 years of art and cultural history with over 180 years of museum history.
- > Starting in 1999, the Museumsinsel has been part of an on-going modernisation and renovation project, which will significantly expand exhibition space. This has led to increased numbers of visitors, now standing at more than 3 million annually, coming from all over the world.
- > Engagement with the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst is an investment in an exciting site of cultural and cross-cultural education. With its hundreds of thousands of visitors and nationwide school outreach the museum has decisive public impact.
- > At the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst the vibrant development of art, culture, education, science and research are vital elements for a free, enlightened, and above all, tolerant social interaction.





**Museum für
Islamische Kunst**
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

www.buerohuss.de

Museum für Islamische Kunst
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

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