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Building Bridges: “The Arts of Islam” Exhibition, Nasser Khalili Collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia, 2007

This paper examines contemporary museum practice and the representation of culture, identity, and belonging in a display of Islamic artefacts. The exhibition attracted over 7, 5000 visitors and was trans-national with its inclusion of works from Spain, Turkey, North Africa, India, Syria, Iran and China spanning the 7th-20th centuries. This on-going investigation includes an in-depth description of the case study in question, surrounding socio-cultural issues and contemporary approaches to debates over conceptual concerns and theoretical issues that involve museum displays and their capacity to foster citizenship and promote cross-cultural understanding. The paper also suggests issues and implications for further exploration, both empirically and theoretically, that would continue to identify the degree to which the selection and discourse regarding artworks on display are influenced by global and local political situations and are indicative of geo-political contexts and shifting community values.