

## THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN AND ISLAMIC ART COLLECTION

The Seattle Art Museum's Ancient Mediterranean and Islamic collection are beautifully reinstalled in the Norman Davis Gallery of the museum expansion. The Ancient Mediterranean art collection features nearly 1,000 objects from Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Near East. The Islamic art collection includes nearly 300 historic and modern works from across the Muslim world.

For the first time, these collections are displayed together, showcasing 5000 years of artistic production. Also for the first time, Ancient Mediterranean and Islamic art connects the European and African galleries.

A highlight is a *Qur'an page* (late 9<sup>th</sup>-early 10<sup>th</sup> c.), featuring matte gold script on blue vellum, which dances across the page to convey the precious subject of the word of Allah.

Also on view is the richly colored *Funerary stele of the house-mistress Udjarnenes*, which dates to the Egyptian 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (712-332 B.C.) and features an inscription beseeching the gods for blessings. The stele, found in Udjarnenes' tomb, provides a patterned, striated "stage" for scenes of the house-mistress worshipping two deities.

A small Sumerian *Votive figure* (ca. 2900-2500 B.C.) depicts a man commemorated as a mortal being, and not a god. A wealthy patron probably placed the alabaster votive figure within a temple—for the exclusive admiration of the gods—to trick the gods into thinking that it was he who dwelt in the temple in perpetuity, and to favor him for his constant piety.

The softly modeled, realistic Roman *Posthumous portrait head of the Emperor Claudius* (48-54 A.D.), features another approach to depicting the human form. Claudius was deified upon his death, when this portrait was most likely created – this is not the face of just a man, but of a god, a figure comprehensible and accessible to the Romans who would have originally viewed this sculpture.

Curated by Sarah Berman, Collections Coordinator and Research Associate.