

## Year 1 Report – Specialist Support Scheme

During 2015/2016 the Subject Specialist Network for Islamic Art and Material Culture (SSN IAMC) opened its specialist support scheme to museums in the South East and West Midlands. Successful applications were received from the Powell Cotton Museum in Kent, Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery in Warwickshire and Sandwell Museum Service in the West Midlands.

Each museum was visited by a specialist curator who identified IAMC collections, discussed collections with staff and produced a significance framework. A professional photographer worked with each museum and photographed between 15-30 objects. This was followed by support from engagement specialists who gave advice on engagement activities for schools and the general public in the form of a 'tool kit', which can continue to be used in the future.

### Breakdown of support for the three individual museums

#### The Powell Cotton Museum

- 1600 IAMC objects from Somalia viewed, including wooden spoons, combs and headrests
- 30 objects photographed
- Engagement event supported for Families – 'Divine Decorations'
- An engagement 'tool kit' produced identifying potential audiences the museum could engage using its IAMC collection, including suggestions for projects, resources and events
- A Key Stage 2 'tool kit' produced detailing how the museum could use the collection to engage local primary school children
- A number of objects purchased for the Learning Team to use in handling sessions
- Materials purchased to help with the re-display of the Somali collection



A selection of Somali hair combs and wooden spoons, Powell Cotton Museum

*The Islamic SSN funding has allowed the Powell-Cotton Museum to breathe new life into our Somali collections and how we use them. Going forward our displays will now be more reflective of the quality and variety of this vast collection and our educational activities will have stronger links to our objects and the stories they tell. This project has also been a great pilot for thinking about how to 'blitz' our many large and under-researched collections – we hope to build on this way of working across the museum in the future.*

Inbal Livne, Head of Collections, Powell Cotton Museum

### Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery

- 120 IAMC objects identified, largely from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries
- 15 objects photographed. High quality postcards made of the images to promote the IAMC collection
- 'Islamic Treasures' public engagement event planned and delivered
- An engagement 'tool kit' produced identifying potential audiences the museum could engage using its IAMC collection, including suggestions for projects, resources and community curated exhibitions
- A Key Stage 2 'tool kit' produced detailing how the museum could use the collection to engage local primary school children



Bath shoe and kalam (pen case), Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery

*This project has raised the profile of Islamic collections at the Museum. It has enthused and inspired us to explore the different ways these objects can be used. The project has enabled us to make long term improvements to documentation as well as immediately creating improved access through funding the 'Islamic Treasures' engagement event.*

Becky Harvey, Assistant Museum Officer, Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery

## Sandwell Museum Service – Wednesbury Museum and Oak House

- 100 IAMC objects identified, including textiles and metalwork from the Middle East and South Asia. These objects had been collected by Helen Caddick, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century traveller
- 15 objects photographed. High quality postcards made of the images to promote the IAMC collection
- Support for a Family event as part of Oak House's 'Spice Festival'
- An engagement 'tool kit' produced identifying potential audiences the museum could engage using its IAMC collection.
- Support and advice from an object conservator
- A Key Stage 2 'tool kit' produced detailing how the museum could use the collection to engage local primary school children
- Pop-up banners purchased to highlight the IAMC collection. To be used in the galleries at Oak House during learning sessions and public engagement events



Islamic Ceramic, Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery