



Antiquarian Book Fair returns with a greater selection of Arabic Manuscripts



A reproduction of the Holy Quran in gold is among this year's most notable pieces

The Antiquarian Book Fair returns to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair for the second time, following a successful stint last year. "We had a fantastic experience last year, with so many visitors coming in and out of the exhibition stands that we decided to come back this year bringing with us a bigger number of Arabic manuscripts, which was highly requested by our guests last year," said Detlef Thursch of abooks.de, organisers of the Antiquarian Book Fair of the ADIBF.

And while the highlight of last year's fair was the display of the third largest Quran in the world – measuring 80cm by 120 cm – the spotlight this year is on a prototype of a reproduction of Sultan Baybars' Quran, whose original manuscript was lavishly written in gold and first published in 1304 in Cairo.

The original manuscript is currently part of the British Library's collection. Each of its seven volumes is written in gold, and has a superb front piece combining intricate geometric patterns with ornamental script.

The reproduction is being made by Facsimile Editions, a London based publisher that specialises in reproducing important ancient manuscripts. Owned by Michael and Linda Falter, Facsimile Editions is participating in the ADIBF for the first time, and brought the prototype of the "golden book" as part of its impressive display of reproductions of old manuscripts. "We also have a reproduction of the Dead Sea Scroll, believed to be more than 2000 years old; as well as the Holy Bible in Spanish," said Linda.

The one on display at ADIBF is just one of a planned 7-volume set. "Each of the 2,188 pages of this fantastic reproduction is written in gold," added Michael. During the opening ceremonies, His Highness Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court, visited the booth and commended Facsimile Editions for bringing the book to the fair for display. Bernard Quaritch Ltd has one of the biggest collections of Islamic manuscripts currently on display at the Antiquarian Book Fair. "I was told there was a lot of requests last year to have more Islamic manuscripts, so I was encouraged to join this year's fair," said Dr. Meis Al-Kaisi, whose publishing house in London boasts one of the most extensive collections of Islamic manuscripts. "We have Qurans from different parts of the Islamic world, and from different eras," she added. Dr. Al-Kaisi hopes that the fair will open up doors for her to network with libraries and other institutions in this part of the world. "The kinds of books that I have will be great additions to libraries and museums so they can be made more accessible to a larger number of people," she ended.

Other interesting books open for public viewing at the Antiquarian Book Fair include maps of the ancient Arab world as well as old photographs of Mecca and its earliest pilgrims.