

Shaikh Nasser al-Sabah was an astonishing phenomenon. As a collector he possessed an enviable constellation of qualities - piercing historical insight, an unerring eye for quality, a sixth sense of what mattered and a sleepless determination to track it down. But he was very much more than a collector. He understood the wider implications of works of art as vehicles and mirrors of culture and civilisation, and he did all he could to make these treasures known to the widest possible public both in Kuwait itself and abroad. His imaginative sympathy extended across the entire Islamic world, and also embraced the art of the preceding civilisations so that the Islamic objects themselves could be fully contextualised. For the global community of scholars dedicated to the study of Islamic art he has left a wonderful legacy – not only a collection whose scope, range and depth no private collector in the Arab world could match, but also a complementary administrative organisation of unique effectiveness and prestige. It is a tribute to the far-reaching vision of Shaikh Nasser and Shaikha Hussah that the wonderful objects in their constantly growing collection, with an expanding scholarly library and database to match, are made available for research by scholars from all over the world. Exhibitions, annual lecture programmes and publications galore have delighted many thousands of lovers of Islamic art across the globe for several decades and the multiple activities of his finest creation, the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, have conferred worldwide renown on Kuwait. May his memory be a blessing.

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