



NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PERSONAL ADORNMENT TELLS TALES IN NEW SILVER JEWELRY EXHIBITION AT AANM

Dearborn, MI (October 2, 2007) –Marjorie Ransom was a graduate student at Columbia University in 1960 when she bought her first piece of silver jewelry in Damascus, Syria – a large silver cuff.

Nine years later, while living with her husband David in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the couple developed an interest in silver jewelry that went beyond simple objects to wear. They found themselves collecting and displaying the pieces on the walls of their home to the delight of their Arab and American visitors.

“Everywhere I went I was fascinated by its beauty and its enormous range of styles and designs,” Ransom recalls. “It opened an immediate and powerful window into the life and culture of the Middle East. My husband, David, and I began to seek it out in souks and silver shops wherever we went in the region.”

The couple, who both went on to become career U.S. diplomats in the Middle East, developed a strong desire to investigate the origins of their discoveries and understand the women who wore them and the men who made them. In the process, they became amateur preservationists dedicated to sharing their knowledge.

Now, selections from the Ransoms’ 1,000-piece collection are revealing their secrets to audiences through an exhibition entitled *Silver Speaks: Traditional Jewelry of the Middle East*. The exhibition makes its first Midwestern stop at the Arab American National Museum **November 15, 2007 through March 30, 2008** in the Main Floor Gallery.

Marjorie Ransom, who has lectured widely and spent a year in Yemen researching their traditional silver jewelry, will speak about her collection during a **November 15 opening**

reception at the AANM. The event, which begins at 5:30 p.m. with refreshments and live entertainment in the Museum's Community Courtyard, features **a demonstration by silversmith Kamal Rubaih of the World Friend shop in the silver souk of Old Sana'a, Yemen**, and a live showing of silver and costumes by young women of Dearborn.

With their shimmering intricacy and fine craftsmanship, the silver necklaces, bracelets, earrings and other pieces in the exhibition are far more than personal decoration. An Arab woman's jewelry told you who she was, which tribe and region she belonged to, and her social and marital status.

Once an integral part of Arab women's lives, indigenous silver jewelry traditions in the Middle East have fallen away in recent decades due to social, economic and cultural change. Domestic and imported gold jewelry is now the style, rather than a valued custom.

Originally organized and shown in 2002-03 by The Bead Museum in Washington, D.C., the *Silver Speaks* exhibition has been shown in only two New York State galleries. It comes to the Arab American National Museum with the support of The Wallace Foundation.

The Arab American National Museum documents, preserves, celebrates, and educates the public on the history, life, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans. We serve as a resource to enhance knowledge and understanding about Arab Americans and their presence in this country. The Arab American National Museum is a project of ACCESS, a Dearborn, Michigan-based nonprofit human services and cultural organization. Learn more at www.arabamericanmuseum.org and www.accesscommunity.org.

The Museum is located at 13624 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI, 48126. Museum hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday, Tuesday; Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students, seniors and children 6-12; ages 5 and under, free. Call 313-582-2266 for further information.

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