



MAIMONIDES
INTERFAITH
FOUNDATION

PROFESSOR SIR NASSER D. KHALILI & THE KHALILI COLLECTIONS

Professor Sir Nasser D Khalili PhD KSS KCSS is a world-renowned scholar, collector, and philanthropist, who has often been called the ‘cultural ambassador of Islam’ by Muslim leaders worldwide. He was born in Iran in 1945, and after completing his schooling and national service there, moved to the United States in 1967, where he continued his education. He graduated in 1974 from Queens College, City University of New York, with a BA degree in Computer Science. Thereafter, in 1978 he moved to the United Kingdom, where he completed his PhD on Islamic Lacquer from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in 1988.

Since 1970, Sir David has assembled, eight of the world’s finest and most comprehensive art collections in their field: Islamic Art (700–2000); Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage (700–2000); Aramaic Documents (353–324 bc); Japanese Art of the Meiji Period (1868–1912); Japanese Kimono (1700–2000); Swedish Textiles (1700–1900); Spanish Damascene Metalwork (1850–1900); and Enamels of the World (1700–2000). Together, these eight collections comprise some 35,000 works, and each collection is on its own merit the largest and most comprehensive in the world. Eventually, the Khalili Collections will be fully represented in more than 100 books, including exhibition catalogues, of which 80 have already been published.

These eight collections have been shown in more than 44 major museums worldwide. Furthermore, the Khalili Collections have been major contributors to more than 70 international exhibitions. Selections from the eight collections have been exhibited in museums such as the British Museum, London (1994), the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1997), Somerset House, London (2004), the Alhambra Palace, Granada (2001), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2003), the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, dc (2005), the Portland Art Museum, Portland, or (2002), and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (2006), among many others. Also, The Arts of Islam, Treasures from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection was shown in 2007 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, in 2008 at the Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, in 2009 at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, and in 2010 at De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam. In addition, in 2009, Enamels of the World 1700–2000 opened at the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, while the Japanese Meiji collection was exhibited at the Kremlin Museums, Moscow, in 2017.

Sir David is also a frequent lecturer and has made notable contributions to the scholarship of Islamic art. In 1989, he founded the Nasser D. Khalili Chair of Islamic Art and Archaeology at SOAS, the first of its kind in the world devoted to the decorative arts of Islam. He has supported a research fellowship in Islamic art at the University of Oxford, and in 2005, thanks to the significant endowment of the Khalili Family Trust, whose sustaining support continues to the present day, The Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East at the University of Oxford was opened by its Chancellor, Lord Patten.

Furthermore, in early 2011, the Khalili Family Trust endowed The Nasser D. Khalili Visiting Professorship in Islamic Studies at Queens College, City University of New York, where he had earlier graduated in 1974.

In addition to his cultural and educational interests, Sir David is also a leading voice in the global movement to advance mutual respect and understanding among the nations of the world. Building bridges has been a consistent theme throughout his life's work and he has been recognized globally for his contributions in this field.

Sir David's mission to connect people through the power of art, culture, education and the natural environment over the past three decades has resulted in his active involvement in a number of ambitious and innovative projects. One of the most purposeful of these is 'Faith in the Commonwealth', a unique collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat to support religious literacy among young people in the Commonwealth countries and beyond so that they are empowered to address the challenges that face the world today.

Sir David is a co-founder and member of the Global Leadership Council of 'The Global Hope Coalition'. It is a global platform which seeks to empower courageous individuals who stand up to terror and violence, preserve heritage and build bridges across cultures.

Other projects delivered through the Khalili Foundation include the House of Peace, Maimonides Interfaith Foundation and Maimonides Interfaith Explorers. It has always been Sir David's dream to see peace and harmony between the three great monotheistic faiths become reality, and the House of Peace painting series, specially commissioned in the 1990s exemplified his belief in the power of combining art with interfaith understanding.

Comprising of five large-scale works by the renowned British artist Ben Johnson, the House of Peace offers a powerful vision of the Holy City of Jerusalem in all its magnificent diversity. The Maimonides Interfaith Foundation, which launched in 1995, has since become a pioneer in the field of interfaith and is at the forefront of interreligious dialogue, with projects involving sports, arts and education. Finally, Maimonides Interfaith Explorers, an ambitious educational project supported by UNESCO, offers all primary schools in England and Wales a Web-based educational curriculum to enhance religious literacy, while also helping children respect and embrace religious and cultural diversity. Solely funded by the Nasser D. Khalili Charitable Settlement, Maimonides Interfaith Explorers was launched at the Central London Mosque to coincide with the celebrations of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Sir David also has long-standing connections with several of the world's most respected centres of learning. He is a graduate, Associate Research Professor and Honorary Fellow of the University of London, and he was the longest serving governor in the history of SOAS. He is also an Honorary Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Oxford, and a Member of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors, also University of Oxford, while in May 2005 he received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of the Arts London. In the United States, he was appointed to the International Board of Overseers at Tufts University in 1997, and in 2003 received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Boston University, where he also served as a member of the Board of Governors.

Numerous awards and honours have been bestowed on Sir David. In 1996 he became a Trustee of the City of Jerusalem, and in 2003 he was conferred as a Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Francis I (KCFO) for his services to charity and interreligious

understanding, while in 2007 he received the High Sheriff of Greater London Award for his cultural contribution to London. Sir David is exceptional in having received knighthoods from two pontiffs, Pope John Paul II honouring him as a Knight of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St Sylvester (KSS) in 2004 and Pope Benedict XVI further elevating him to Knight Commander in the said order (KCSS) in 2009 for his work in the pursuit of peace, education and culture among nations. Other honours have included, in 2012, being conferred with the title of Goodwill Ambassador by Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, while in 2014 he was the recipient of the Laureate of the Dialogue of Cultures Award at the French National Assembly, and in early 2016 he was awarded the rank of officier in the National Order of the Legion of Honour by the French president, François Hollande, at the Elysée Palace, Paris. In 2018 he was appointed as a member of the Honorary Board at the INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World. In 2019 he was elected to the prestigious Eurasian Academy and honoured with the Eurasian Legend Award for his contribution to art, culture and education. In 2020, his years of dedication have resulted in being invested with a knighthood from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and he was included in the Queen's Birthday Honours "for services to interfaith relations and charity".

HONOURS AND AWARDS

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| 2020 | Knight Bachelor for services to Interfaith Relations and charity |
| 2019 | Eurasian Legend Award, Eurasia Academy, Baku, Azerbaijan |
| 2018 – 2019 | Member of the Honorary Board, INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World |
| 2016 | Rank of officier in the Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur by French president François Hollande |
| 2015 | Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humanities, Honoris Causa, Franklin University, Lugano, Switzerland |
| 2014 | Laureate of the Dialogue of Cultures Award at the French Assembly |
| 2013 | Queens College president's Medal in Recognition of His Outstanding Service to Humanity |
| 2012 | UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador |
| 2010 | Queens College president's award |
| 2009 | Knight Commander of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St Sylvester (KCSS) |

- 2007** High Sheriff of Greater London Award
- 2006** Member of Chancellor's Court of Benefactors, Oxford
- 2005** Honorary Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford
- 2005** Honorary Doctor of the University of the Arts, London
- 2004** Knight of the Equestrian Order of Pope St Sylvester (KSS)
- 2003** Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Francis I (KCFO)
- 2003** Honorary Degree Doctor of Humane Letters, Boston University
- 1996** Trustee of the City of Jerusalem
- 1991** Honorary Fellow, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London