



AGA KHAN MUSEUM

SLOW LOOKING

In partnership with



GreenShield™



SLOW LOOKING

Presented by GreenShield™

Welcome

Welcome to Slow Looking, an invitation to experience art meditatively through stillness and attention.

This activity guide invites you to slow down and spend time with art in your own way. There's no right or wrong way to use it. Pause, skip, or move at your own pace.

You might feel calm, curious, connected – or nothing at all. All of it is okay.

Your Reflection

We are exploring how time with art can support youth wellbeing. This booklet includes a detachable page with two short check-ins:

- **Before Your Visit (front)**
- **After Your Visit (back)**

They are based on a tool called the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and focus on positive feelings like calm, confidence, and connection. This is not a test or diagnosis and there are no right or wrong answers.

Responses are anonymous and analyzed only in aggregate.

What to Do

- Complete the **Before Your Visit** check-in on the front of the Reflection page
- Enjoy your visit and use the prompts if you wish
- Complete the **After Your Visit** check-in on the back of the Reflection page
- Submit your Reflection page (or show that you have completed it digitally on Bloomberg Connects) to the Farida & Ally Esmail & Family Guest Services Desk Staff to receive a **15% discount** at the Courtyard Café

Good to Know

Participation is optional and anonymous.
Thank you for sharing your experience.



BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Set Your Intention for Your Visit

Take a moment to reflect before you begin.

What would you like this visit to bring you today? Calm, curiosity, clarity, rest, inspiration, or something else entirely?

Before you begin your visit, please circle the number that best describes your experience **over the last two weeks**.

Scale

1 = None of the time, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Some of the time, 4 = Often, 5 = All of the time

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling useful	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling interested in other people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've had energy to spare	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been dealing with problems well	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been thinking clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling good about myself	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling close to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling confident	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling loved	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been interested in new things	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I've been feeling cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please turn the page over after your visit.

After Your Visit

Now that you have completed your visit, please circle the number that best reflects how you feel right now.

Scale

1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I feel optimistic about the future	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel useful	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel interested in other people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I have energy to spare	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I deal with problems well	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel good about myself	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel close to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel confident	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I can make up my own mind about things	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel loved	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I am interested in new things	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Objects You Engaged With

We would like to understand how people move through the galleries and which artworks they spend time with. Please tick **all that apply**. You may select as many or as few as you like.

- Fountain** (AKM960)
- Bowl** (AKM546)
- Planispheric Astrolabe** (AKM611)
- Double Door** (AKM707)
- Ablution Basin** (AKM 722)
- I did not focus on any specific object



Slow Down. Slow Look. Choose Your Way In.

These prompts are invitations, not instructions. Use these prompts however you like. Follow one, mix a few, or just pause and take in the beauty of the objects.



Fountain (AKM960)

Made in 16th century Egypt with later additions in the 19th century, this fountain reflects generations of care and continued use. Its vibrant geometric patterns transform a functional structure into an object of beauty and meaning.

When water once flowed through it, it cooled the space and fostered a sense of calm within daily life.

Use the following prompts as invitations to reflect and explore personal meaning in connection with the fountain.

1. Imagine the Flow

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine water gently moving through the fountain – flowing across the mosaic, pooling quietly, perhaps catching little glints of light. As you breathe in and out, think of your own thoughts and feelings as water: what needs to flow through you now? What might you let settle and become calm?

2. Design Your Calm Space

Look closely at the fountain's eight-pointed stars and geometric patterns and mosaic work. Imagine your own ideal "calm space" – a place where you feel safe, relaxed, and supported. Sketch it, write about it, or describe it quietly to yourself. What shapes, colours, and textures would it have? How does it make you feel? Use the fountain's design as your inspiration.

3. Pause and Reflect: Life, Water, Renewal

Think about what water means: life, refreshment, cleansing. Reflect on a time when you felt "parched," maybe tired, stressed, or overwhelmed. What would it feel like to drink from a fountain like this then? What could "renewal" look like for you now? Is it rest, kindness, connection, or a moment of silence? Consider setting an intention to return to that feeling.



Bowl (AKM546)

Made in the 10th century in Iran or Central Asia, this earthenware bowl is coated in white slip (a kind of thin clay) and decorated with bold black and red Arabic calligraphy beneath a clear glaze.

Its inscription reads "Generosity is the disposition of the dwellers of Paradise," linking generosity with a life of goodness and meaning.

Through its writing and form, the bowl invites close looking and quiet reflection on the values it expresses.

Use the dish as a tool for mindful reflection, connection to values, and inner calm.

1. Read the Inscription and Reflect

Read the sentence: "Generosity is the disposition of the dwellers of Paradise." Consider what generosity means to you today. Is it giving time? Kindness? Patience? As you reflect, ask yourself: how does generosity serve my emotional or mental wellbeing? In what ways could cultivating generosity bring more calm or connection into my life?

2. Anchor in the Present Moment

Let this dish anchor you in the here and now. Trace the edge slowly with your eyes and count eight deep breaths. With each breath, feel yourself anchored: your body, your thoughts, your day. After the 8th breath, ask: What one small, generous act can I do for myself today? Maybe a short walk, a kind thought, a moment of silence?

3. Gratitude-Cycle

The bowl's inscription honours generosity as a way of being. Think of three ways you are already generous with yourself – perhaps by resting, nourishing your body, or making time to create. Now think of three small acts of generosity you could offer someone else – a smile, a note, a shared moment. Slow your breathing as you imagine each in turn.



Planispheric Astrolabe (AKM611)

Made in 14th century Spain, likely Toledo, this astrolabe emerged from a period of close exchange among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars.

An instrument for observing the sky, it was used to measure the positions of stars, tell time, and determine the direction of prayer. Its inscriptions in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew reflect a culture of shared knowledge across communities.

Both a scientific tool and crafted object, the astrolabe invites slow looking – attending to its details, its languages, and the human curiosity it embodies.

1. Pause and Listen

Imagine yourself holding the astrolabe, feeling its weight, hearing the quiet click of plates moving. Take a moment of silence and set a timer for 60 seconds. During that time, breathe slowly and notice: what thoughts come? What feelings arise? Then ask what guides me when time feels uncertain? Let the astrolabe remind you that tools and practices can help us navigate our inner skies too.

2. Layers and Change

Notice that the astrolabe is made up of layers (plates that can rotate) and has many engraved markings. Think about how your life has layers too: the outer circles might represent your day, the inner plates your thoughts, and the pivot point your calm centre. Pause: what layer are you paying attention to right now (body, mind, feelings)? What 'plate' might you adjust to bring more clarity or ease into your day?

3. Inscriptions and Voices

The astrolabe carries words in three languages. Think of your internal voice and the voices around you. What language (internal or external) are you attending to right now? Could you let a gentle, kind voice (inner or outer) guide you for the next moment? You might say to yourself: "I am here. I am present." Repeat it quietly as you trace one of the engraved arcs on the object with your eyes.



Double Door (AKM707)

Carved in 1487–88 in North Mazandaran, Iran, this wooden double door is richly decorated with geometric patterns, vegetal motifs, and inscriptions shaped by hand.

An inscription at the top records a saying about stepping back from material life and reflecting on what truly matters. The door also bears the name of its maker, Master Rustam, son of Master Haji Najjar, connecting us to the craftsman who carved it over five centuries ago.

Created during the Timurid period, the door was more than an entryway – it was meant to be seen, read, and contemplated.

1. Pattern and Presence

Focus on one carved panel and choose a geometric shape or a floral motif. Trace it with your eyes slowly, noticing how the lines connect, overlap, and flow. What does it feel like in your body to follow that path? Can you let your shoulders relax and your jaw soften as you trace?

2. Thresholds and Transitions

A door marks a threshold, moving from one space to another. Think about a transition in your own life (big or small): maybe moving from work to rest, from stress to ease, from activity to reflection. Visualize yourself standing at this carved door: what do you carry with you into the next space? What do you leave behind?

3. Openings and Inner Space

A door opens – it invites passage. Let this object invite you inward too. Ask yourself: what inner spaces do I want to open today? Is it kindness, curiosity, connection, rest? With each gentle breath in and out, imagine the door swinging open quietly, offering you that space. With your next exhale, imagine stepping through.



Ablution Basin (AKM722)

Made in Jingdezhen, China, this blue and white porcelain basin bears Arabic inscriptions connected to ablution, the ritual washing performed by Muslims before prayer.

The Arabic word Taharat (purity) is inscribed at the centre, followed by four small panels around the rim that read: "Blessed is he who purifies his hand from wrongdoing." Produced in China, written in Arabic, and used in Muslim ritual practice, it reflects longstanding cultural exchange.

Through close looking, its structure and intention gradually unfold – inviting focused attention and deeper noticing.

1. The Quiet Centre

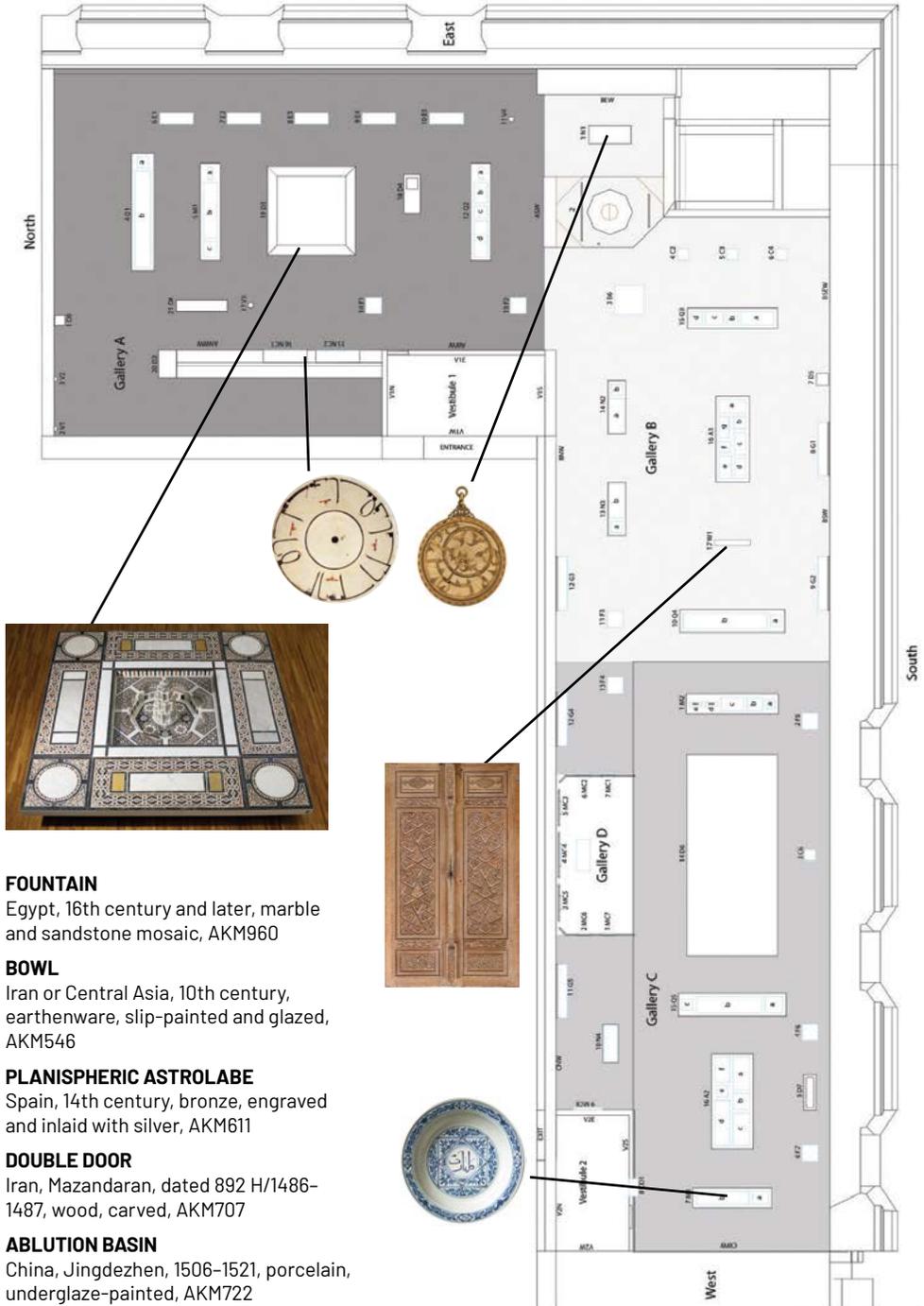
Begin at the very centre of the basin. Let your eyes rest there and notice how the blue ink holds its shape. Look at the edges of the letters. Are they perfectly smooth or do they show the touch of a hand? See how much white space surrounds the word. Nothing crowds it. It stands calmly in the middle. Take one slow breath as you look. How does the open space change the way the centre feels? If your thoughts had a "centre," what would you want to place there today?

2. Writing That Moves

Shift your gaze to the writing around the rim. You may not be able to read Arabic and that's okay. You don't need to understand the words to feel their movement. Let your eyes travel slowly along the curve. Move in a full circle, like the rim itself. If your attention wanders, gently bring it back. Notice how the letters stretch and bend. Notice small changes in the blue – darker here, lighter there. Does your breathing change as your eyes move in one steady circle? What is it like to experience language as rhythm and pattern, not just meaning?

3. From Surface to Depth

Although you can't see it from where the basin is displayed, the back of this basin is divided into six panels. Across them is an inscription that reads: "Ablution upon ablution is light upon light." Imagine the basin being turned over in someone's hands. Words hidden at first slowly revealed. Return your eyes to the surface in front of you. Notice how the blue builds in layers – darker in some places, softer in others. Nothing appears all at once. Choose one small detail like a brush mark, a curve, a slight change in colour and stay with it for 20 seconds. How does the idea of "light upon light" connect to the layers you see? What small, repeated actions in your own life slowly add up to something brighter?



FOUNTAIN

Egypt, 16th century and later, marble and sandstone mosaic, AKM960

BOWL

Iran or Central Asia, 10th century, earthenware, slip-painted and glazed, AKM546

PLANISPHERIC ASTROLABE

Spain, 14th century, bronze, engraved and inlaid with silver, AKM611

DOUBLE DOOR

Iran, Mazandaran, dated 892 H/1486-1487, wood, carved, AKM707

ABLUTION BASIN

China, Jingdezhen, 1506-1521, porcelain, underglaze-painted, AKM722

GreenShield™ Partnership

The Aga Khan Museum and GreenShield™ are partnering to expand access to art experiences and mental health and wellbeing resources for youth. Together, we aim to create meaningful, reflective encounters with art that help young people slow down, connect with themselves, and strengthen their emotional wellbeing.

This collaboration brings together the Museum's leadership in arts-based learning with the GreenShield™'s commitment to making mental health care accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate. For more information on the partnership visit agakhanmuseum.org/wellbeing.

GreenShield™ Mental Health Resources

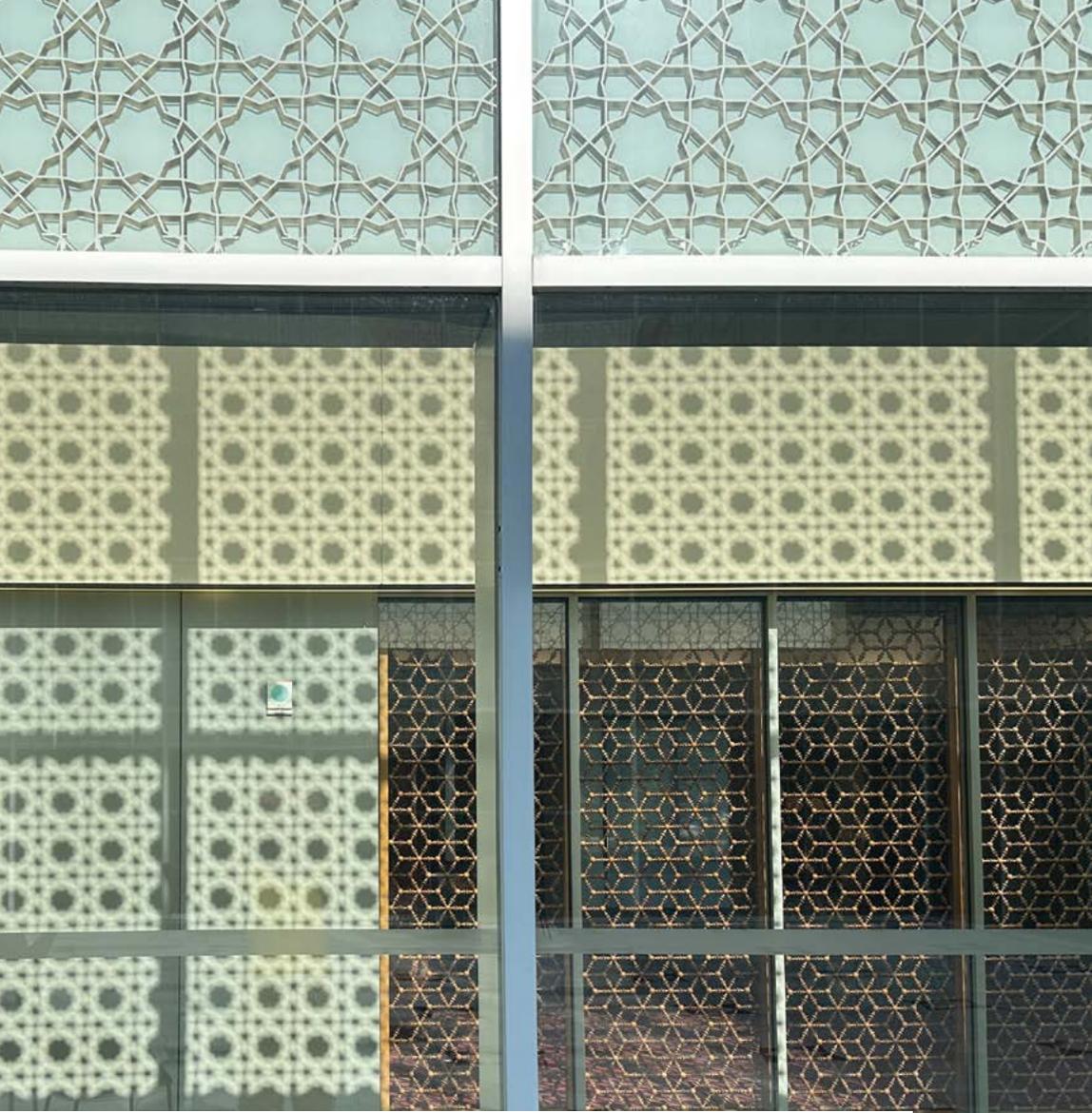
GreenShield™ offers mental health services for youth, including virtual counselling, self-guided wellbeing tools, and resources that build coping skills and resilience with a goal to deliver mental health care that's accessible, affordable and culturally appropriate.

If you're between 15 and 29 years old, you can access **two hours of virtual therapy at no cost** through GreenShield™'s Youth Mental Health program.

Find out more at GreenShield™

Scan the QR code to find out more.





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