

**TACOMA ART MUSEUM**  
1701 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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### **Tacoma Art Museum Presents *Oasis: Western Dreams of the Ottoman Empire from the Dahesh Museum of Art***

Partnered with Sister Exhibition at the Frye Art Museum

(Tacoma, WA) – Tacoma Art Museum’s exhibition *Oasis: Western Dreams of the Ottoman Empire from the Dahesh Museum of Art* features a survey of nineteenth-century Western artists’ responses to the diverse cultures of the former Ottoman Empire. The exhibition is on view Saturday, September 20, 2008 through Sunday, January 4, 2009.

Napoleon’s military campaign in Egypt (1798–1801) sparked Western interest in the East, particularly the countries of the Ottoman Empire, an area extending from Turkey and Greece through the Middle East and North Africa. European and American artists became fascinated with what was then known as “the Orient” and the art movement known as Orientalism grew out of this preoccupation.

“Reality and fantasy blend in the works on view in this exhibition,” said Margaret Bullock, Curator of Collections and Special Exhibitions. “Orientalist works are full of rich detail and lush colors based on fact but often romanticized or recombined to suit the artist’s fancy.”

*Oasis*, organized by the Dahesh Museum of Art in New York, includes more than sixty Orientalist paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, drawings, and books. The exhibition provides important historic and cultural perspectives on the ways in which Western artists depicted, and sometimes distorted, the many cultures of the Ottoman Empire. It also highlights the power these images had, and continue to have, on the Western imagination.

“The Dahesh Museum of Art is delighted to send works from its collections to Tacoma Art Museum for *Oasis*,” said Dr. Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan, Director of Dahesh Museum of Art. “European and American painters, photographers, and sculptors of this movement represented others in Eastern settings. Their dreams, fancy, and fascination with accuracy would later be seen as ‘Orientalism,’ a relatively crude criticism for complex and unequal relationships between artists and their subjects everywhere.”

*Oasis* is paired with *What Is a Trade? Donald Fels and Signboard Painters of South India* (September 13, 2008 through January 18, 2009), which raises questions about cultural exchanges between the East and West in today’s society and the modern legacy of Vasco da Gama’s to India expedition in 1498.

“Both these exhibitions highlight the important role imagery plays in cultural encounters and the power it has to mold opinion and affect societies down to the level of the everyday, both positively and negatively,” said Bullock.

In 1809, the French government published the first installment of the twenty-four-volume *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1822), illustrating the topography, architecture, monuments, natural life, and population of Egypt. The publication aimed to document the culture of this region. It had a profound effect on French architecture and decorative arts of the period, with Egyptian motifs dominant in Empire style. Throughout the nineteenth century, the taste for “the Orient” further manifested itself in furniture and textiles, which were increasingly sought after by elite Westerners.

Many Europeans relied on published travelogues for information, but many also traveled to the region. Genre paintings, the prevalent form of Orientalist art in the nineteenth century, were greatly influenced by these artists' direct experience of everyday life in the region.

Some of the first Orientalist paintings were intended as propaganda in support of French imperialism, depicting the East as a barbaric place enlightened by the French. Others were created as ethnographic records of the clothing and customs of the region. As the movement spread, subjects broadened to include scenes of domestic life and religious piety, re-created historical events, or works that used the region as a backdrop for Christian religious scenes. The potency of Orientalism remained undiminished into the twentieth century. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky all created work inspired by Orientalist themes.

*Oasis: Western Dreams of the Ottoman Empire from the Dahesh Museum of Art* was organized by the Dahesh Museum of Art, New York. Local exhibition support provided by Key Foundation - a foundation funded by KeyBank.

The Dahesh Museum of Art also organized *Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt*, which is on view at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle August 30, 2008 through January 4, 2009 and focuses specifically on the artistic legacy of Napoleon's military campaign in Egypt.

“The current fall shows at Tacoma Art Museum and the simultaneous exhibition at the Frye Art Museum offer new insights, revising history, and proving once again that visual pleasure in art and artifice have much to teach us about reality,” said Kaplan.

Tacoma Art Museum connects people and builds community through art. The museum serves the diverse communities of the region through its collection, exhibitions, and learning programs, emphasizing art and artists from the Northwest. The museum's five galleries display an array of major national shows, the best of Northwest art, creatively themed exhibitions, and historical retrospectives. In addition, there is an Education Wing for children, adults, and seniors with an art resource center, classroom, and studio for art making. Tacoma Art Museum is located in Tacoma's Museum District, near the Museum of Glass, the Washington State History Museum, and historic Union Station.

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**HOURS** – Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm, Third Thursdays 10am – 8pm, Sunday 12 – 5pm. Open Mondays Memorial Day through Labor Day.

**ADMISSION** – Adult \$7.50, Student/Military/Senior (65+) \$6.50, Family \$25 (2 adults and up to 4 children under 18). Children 5 and under free. Third Thursdays free. Members always free.

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