

## Participation of Samarkand State Museum-Reserve in International Exhibitions (1991-2023)

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### ABSTRACT

In this article we analyze the participation of Samarkand State Museum-Reserve in international exhibitions and international exhibitions organized by Samarkand State Museum-Reserve in foreign countries after 1991.

**KEYWORDS:** The Treasure of Afrasiab, Samarkand ceramics, applied art, the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, the Timurids, Samarkand, carpets, fabrics, the Great Silk Road, Zoroastrianism.

### Introduction

A museum is a specialized institution that collects, studies, preserves and exhibits artifacts from natural history, spiritual and material culture, and conducts educational and promotional activities.

Currently, museums around the world play the role of an important cultural institution and function as full-fledged subjects of international relations. They are actively involved in creating the ideological context for bilateral and multilateral relations, and their activities form a worthy image of the State abroad. The Government of Uzbekistan therefore pays great attention to the development of the international activities of museums, particularly major museums.

Active international activity of museums in the world began to develop in the era of globalization. Today the implementation of museum activity in the international space is one of the most important forms of scientific, professional and artistic cooperation. The international activity of museums not only makes an invaluable contribution to the development of the cultural sphere, but also contributes to the development of relations between peoples and to peace processes.

Thanks to the work of museum workers in the world, strong ties are being established between countries, and international relations in the field of culture are being developed. As practice shows, international activities of museums are often related to interstate diplomatic relations, and museum projects accompany various international events and meetings. In addition, we should not forget that the educational and exhibition activities of museums have a significant impact on public opinion in terms of international relations.

The role of museums as objects in the system of international relations is increasing. Today, museums are increasingly seen as a special space in the world. They do have a special power that allows the global community to have an informational and emotional impact. In addition to ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage and making it accessible, museums are also taking on more ambitious and responsible social tasks. The informational and educational

messages they convey to the public as part of their activities are equally important for both domestic and foreign audiences.

Today's modern museums address a variety of tasks. One of them is to promote the cultural policy of the state and popularize it internationally. To perform this task successfully, museums actively participate in the activities of the International Museum Community, in particular the International Council of Museums (ICOM). They regularly create interesting and useful spaces for all categories of citizens and develop, maintain and promote their corporate identity and brand. In this way, museums find points of contact with their audiences, can reflect museum collections, a museum attribute system, museum cafés and shops, educational programs that everyone can understand, etc.

### **International exhibition activities of museums.**

The exhibition activities of museums serve as the main link between museums and their visitors. Exhibitions ensure the rapid introduction of museums' scientific achievements into circulation and enable them to respond to the changing interests and needs of the population.

At the same time, museum exhibitions play the role of a special media outlet. Their organisation and staging, especially at the international level, allows not only to disseminate knowledge about certain events and phenomena in a particular form, but also to update the past by adapting it to the present. In addition, the organization of international exhibition activities by museums promotes the integration of peoples and the development of intercultural cooperation.

Modern museum exhibitions are an important cultural event and have not only regional or national, but also international significance. Most museums have two main types of exhibitions. These are permanent exhibitions and temporary exhibitions. Many museums have permanent exhibitions. They reflect the main concept of a museum and form its unique image. Museums also organise temporary exhibitions.

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At the same time, museums participate in international exhibitions in order to attract foreign tourists, as well as to create a positive image of the state in the international community. Of course, not every museum can participate in international exhibitions. To do so, the museum's collection must have rich and unique exhibits. The success of an international exhibition is due to the international interest in the history of the city or region where the museum is located, at least to the fact that the people of the world have heard about the same city before.

Over the years of independence Uzbekistan's cultural heritage has been exhibited several times in foreign countries. Until 2022 782 exhibits of the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve were shown at 13 international exhibitions organized abroad. It is noteworthy that 4 of these exhibitions were dedicated to Samarkand. In other words, the city of Samarkand has been popular among the world's rings since the very beginning. This is a key factor in the success of international exhibitions to be organized.

The first international exhibitions organized by the Samarqand state museum-reserve were held in Paris, the French capital, in 1992-93, and featured 367 exhibits from Samarqand [4; 52].

These exhibitions were organized in accordance with the Order of the Chief Scientific Production Department for Storage and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects at the Ministry of Culture No. 20 dated February 20, 1992, and were titled "The Treasure of Afrosiab" and "Samarkand Potters". It displayed archeological objects found mainly in the Afrasiab archaeological site and other parts of Samarkand (ossuaries, architectural coverings, a lamp, and children's toys made of ceramics, trays with images of sphinxes, bowls, jugs, pots and other metal and ceramic objects).

The second exhibition, in which the Samarkand State Museum Reserve participated, was opened in Altdorf, Switzerland, on January 25, 1995, and lasted until March 25 of this year. The exhibition was called "Decorative and Applied Art. Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan". 27 exhibits from Samarkand Museum were taken and exhibited. Ten of them consisted of metal articles, and 17 items of clothing (kaltacha, men's and women's gowns, children's gowns, headdress and etc.). The exhibition was organized in accordance with Order No. 01/01-3548 of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 6 December 1994 [4; 11].

The third international exhibition was organized in the French city of Paris, in accordance with Resolution No 110-F of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 16 March 1996, as part of the celebration of the 660th anniversary of the birth of Amir Temur, at which eight items (a bronze cauldron, a cup, a plate, a spoon and other archaeological artefacts) were exhibited [3; 34]. The exhibition was called "Timur and the Timurid Period".

In July 1998, a ten-day exhibition in Lyon, France, was also entitled "Legends of Ancient Samarkand", and 98 exhibits from the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve were displayed on ethnography. The exhibition was organised in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 10, 1998 [1; 160].

In October 1999, 155 exhibits (archaeological metal and ceramic objects) were taken from the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve and displayed to the public at an exhibition organized as part of Uzbekistan's cultural week in Philadelphia, USA. These objects were also displayed at the Expo 2000 World Exhibition later held in Hanover, Germany. The exhibition was organized in accordance with Resolution No. 464 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 15 January 1999 [7; 93-95].

In Washington, D.C., April 17-21, 2003, the international exhibition showcased 26 objects (suzana, carpet and gown) from the Samarqand state museum-reserve [2; 70].

The international exhibition "Bright Flowers - Central Asian Textiles and Ceramics" opened in Sydney, Australia, in 2004. This exhibition, which was organized according to the order of the Uzbek Ministry of Culture No. 137 dated May 31, 2004, displayed 53 items from the Samarqand state museum-reserve (ceramics and their fragments, a jug, suzana, carpet, fan, women's and men's clothing) [2; 94].

The international exhibition organized in Japan in 2005 was called "The Great Silk Julius and his heritage". In it, under the order of the Ministry of culture and sports affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 01-11-33, dated February 2, 2005, 30 exhibits (including 21 pieces of a bowl, a jug, a lamp, a fragment of architectural decoration, 9 coins of Sogdian ikhshids) were collected from Samarkand state museum-preserve and put on display [2; 166].

The international exhibition, which was inaugurated in 2009 at the National Museum of Korea, Seoul, South Korea, was titled "The Ancient History of Samarqand". 11 items from the Samarqand State Museum-Reserve (a petroglyph, a terracotta pot, ossuary, a fragment of carved terracotta, and a fragment of architectural decoration) and was displayed in accordance with the Order No. 496-F of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 17th September, 2009.

The international exhibition, which opened on 18 December 2010 in the Groningen Museum in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, ran until 8 May 2011. The exhibition was called "Russia and Orientalism" and includes 1 painting by Leon Bure "Sherdor" from the funds of the Samarkand State Museum-Preserve [5; 144].

The international exhibition "Eternal Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination", held from October 10 to December 14, 2013, was organized in the UK capital London, where 1 exhibit from the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve (a 4th century mullakurgan ossuary, Samarkand Province) was presented [6; 49].

After this, not only Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, but also other museums in Uzbekistan stopped participating in international exhibitions for almost 10 years. In order to revive the participation of Uzbekistan's museums in international exhibitions, the Fund for the Development of Culture and Art was established under the Cabinet of Ministers, one of the main objectives of which is to popularize Uzbek museums abroad.

In 2022, after a long break in the middle of the year, two exhibitions featuring Uzbek museum pieces were held in Paris. The first of these was set up in the Louvre and was entitled "An oasis of Uzbek treasures". It presented 169 exhibits covering ancient and medieval periods of Uzbek history, in particular, 133 museum exhibits selected from 13 museums of Uzbekistan. These are archaeological and numismatic objects from antiquity and the middle Ages, and samples of fine and applied arts. Fifty-one items were taken from the funds of Samarkand State Museum-Reserve. Fifteen of them were artifacts of VII-XII centuries, found in Afrosiab. They include wall paintings of the hall of ambassadors, glassware, household items such as plates, bowls, fragments of architectural decorations and coatings, and ivory chess pieces. There is also an architectural ornament of VII-VIII centuries found in the Bukhara city of Varakhsha, an heater of III-IV centuries found in the Kashkadarya city of Erkurgan, an assoir of VI-VII centuries and a wooden panel found in Kafirkala fortress. Bronze helmets of Saxons, coins of Sogdian and Samanid rulers and silver bowls belonging to Sogdian, Sassanid and Ephtalite states were the unique exhibits of the century.

The second exhibition was organized at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and was entitled "The Road to Samarkand. Wonders of Silk and Gold". The exhibition presented 300 exhibits from nine museums of Uzbekistan, 49 of which were brought from Samarkand State Museum-Reserve.

Both exhibitions were organized by the Foundation for Development of Culture and Art under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan". On the organization of an exhibition of museum objects from Uzbekistan to the Louvre Museum (Paris) and on measures to create conditions for the effective display of Uzbek museum holdings abroad".

On December 15, 2022 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Protocol No.284 and received four exhibits from Samarkand State Museum-Reserve for display at the first exhibition "Biennial of Islamic Art", which opens on April 23, 2023 in Jeddah city, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the above, the following conclusions can be made:

- From the first years of Uzbekistan's independence until 2010, regulations and orders concerning the display of museum objects from Uzbekistan at international exhibitions have been issued by various structures. These include the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, the Main Scientific and Production Department for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects under the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others. Only in 2010 was an international exhibition at the Groningen Museum in the Kingdom of the Netherlands released by the Ministry of Culture and Sport. We believe this was due to the fact that no law "On Museums" had been adopted before 2008.
- Organization and conduct of international exhibitions by various structures is not regulated by law, which led to damage to objects removed from the holdings of Uzbekistan's museums. For example, of the 155 items belonging to the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, which were on display during Uzbekistan Culture Week in Philadelphia, USA, and then at the Expo-2000 World Exhibition in Hanover, Germany, one item, a bronze seal found at the Sopolitepa monument (2nd millennium B.C.), was lost. Another 4 items - a conical vessel, a ceramic water pipe, an architectural veneer and a teapot - were damaged during an international exhibition. Although the exhibition was organized in accordance with the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the export and return of the items abroad was carried out by Expocentre. That is, the museum exhibits were taken out and brought in by an organization unrelated to the museum.
- Uzbekistan's climate is relatively dry and warm. In this respect, participation in international exhibitions held in countries with high relative humidity is not always harmless. For example, during an international exhibition in Sydney, Australia, in 2004, 53 items were taken from the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, of which nine items - a bowl, johnamoz, dressing gown, suzani, a dress and a sash - were damaged.
- The international exhibitions organized in 2022 and early 2023 directly involved the chief curators of the museums, researchers and restorers. A protocol of the Cabinet of Ministers was also announced for the exhibition, and orders were issued by the Agency for Cultural Heritage. State of conservation certificates were drawn up for each of the objects. In general, the last 3 international exhibitions in which the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve has participated have been organized at a high level, in compliance with all safety requirements.

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