

# Architecture And Design

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## Islamic Art

- Islamic art was a result of the accumulated knowledge of local environments and societies, incorporating Arabic, Persian, Mesopotamian and African traditions, in addition to Byzantine inspirations.
- Islam built on this knowledge and developed its own unique style, inspired by three main elements:
  - a. *“when the verses of the Beneficent are recited unto them, they fall down prostrate in adoration and tears”* (Qur'an 19:58). Allah
  - b. *“As for the poets, the erring follow them. Have you not seen how they wander distracted in every valley? And how they say what they practice not?”* (Qur'an 26:224-26). Bad deeds vs good deeds
  - c. No Divine / God, no human, no animal, no jinn / devil, no angel form



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## Islamic Art

- *“Say, who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for his servants, and the good things from among the means of sustenance” (Qur’an 7:32).*
- *“Allah is beautiful and loves beauty.” Bukhariy*
- The great scholar Al-Ghazali (1058-1128) considered it to be based on two main criteria involving the perfect proportion and the luminosity, encompassing both outer and inner parts of things, animals and humans.
- Western scholars often relate Islamic art to Greek and Byzantine origins, claiming that the artists of the Muslim world only imitated or borrowed from these two cultures their art and reproduced it in a Muslim “dress” of Arabesque and calligraphy. Byzantine inspiration started in the early stages of the Muslim Caliphate when the Umayyad Caliphs Abd-al-Malik and Al-Walid I sent for Byzantine artists to decorate the Dome of the Rock (691-92) and the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (705-714).



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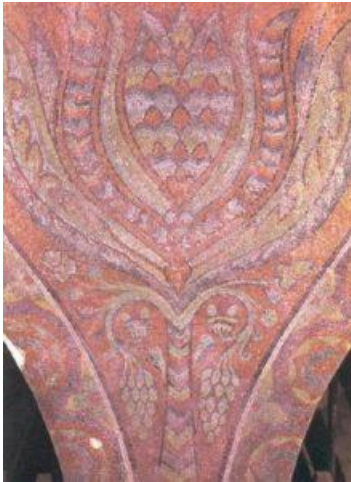
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## Forms in Islamic Art

### 1. Floral:

- plant branches, leaves, and flowers. No imitation of human or animal figures.
- By the 13<sup>th</sup> century a more realistic approach gradually gained ground in Muslim Persia and Turkey, influenced by the Chinese and the Mongols.
- The Muslims used foliage with great delicacy especially around the arches and windows.

Dome of the Rock.



Umayyad Mosque of Damascus



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## Forms in Islamic Art

### 2. Geometrical:

Abstract geometrical forms were particularly favoured in mosques because they encourage spiritual contemplation, in contrast to portrayals of living creatures, which divert attention to the desires of creatures rather than the will of God.

The second reason for the evolution of geometrical art was the sophistication and popularity of the science of geometry in the Muslim world.

The most common use of arabesque is decorative, consisting mainly of a two dimensional pattern, covering surfaces such as ceilings, walls, carpets, furniture, and textiles.



Masjid-i Shah Mosque, Isfahan



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## Forms in Islamic Art

### 3. Calligraphy

use of artistic lettering, sometimes combined with geometrical and natural forms.

the importance which Muslims attach to their Holy Book, the Qur'an

the aim of Islamic calligraphy was not merely to provide decoration but also to worship and remember Allah.

2 scripts: The first is the Kufic script, whose name is derived from the city of Kufa, where it was invented by scribes engaged in the transcription of the Qur'an who set up a famous school of writing.

The other script of Arabic calligraphy is known as Naskhi. This style of Arabic writing is older than Kufic, yet it resembles the characters used by modern Arabic writing and printing.



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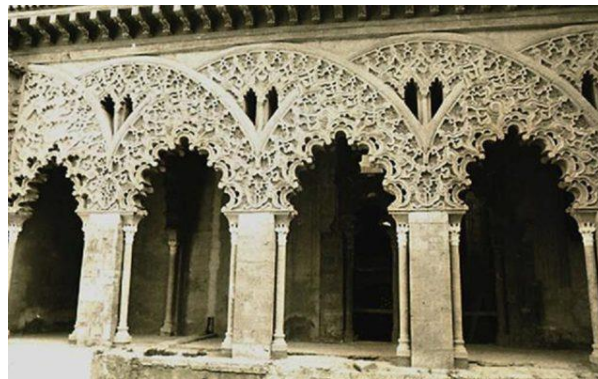
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Influences

The first of these was direct imitation through the reproduction of the same theme in the same type of medium. For example, an artistic theme (or themes) in an Islamic ceramic could have been reproduced 1 in a European ceramic.

The second way Islamic art motifs were transferred to Europe was through the transposition of source or media. In this case, an Islamic theme in a particular medium was reproduced in a European work of art in a different type of medium. For example, a theme in an Islamic ceramic work could have been reproduced in European furniture, textile, sculpture and so on.

The third way of transfer is the most difficult to explain. Here, the motif was not copied or reproduced but gradually inspired the development of a particular style or fashion of art. There is increasing 2 evidence that Islamic art, and the arabesque in particular, was the inspiration for both the European Rococo and Baroque styles



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## Mosque's Architecture

**Sahn (courtyard):** There must have a large prayer hall. In many mosques this is adjoined to an open courtyard, called a sahn. Within the courtyard one often finds a fountain, its waters both a welcome respite in hot lands, and important for the ablutions (ritual cleansing) done before prayer.

**Mihrab (niche):** Another essential element of a mosque's architecture is a mihrab—a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which all Muslims pray.

**Minaret (tower):** One of the most visible aspects of mosque architecture is the minaret, a tower adjacent or attached to a mosque, from which the call to prayer is announced.

**Qubba (dome):** Most mosques also feature one or more domes, called qubba in Arabic. While not a ritual requirement like the mihrab, a dome does possess significance within the mosque—as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven.

**Furnishings:** There are other decorative elements common to most mosques. For instance, a large calligraphic frieze or a cartouche with a prominent inscription often appears above the mihrab.

**Mosque patronage:** Most historical mosques are not stand-alone buildings. Many incorporated charitable institutions like soup kitchens, hospitals, and schools. Some mosque patrons also chose to include their own mausoleum as part of their mosque complex.



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## Islamic Art

- Orthodox Islam early decried the use of symbol or the representation of the human or animal form in art and architecture.
- Artistic deism and humanism were almost completely eclipsed, if not entirely so, during the Mecca to Baghdad period.
- The expression of beauty at last found its more perfect channels through calligraphy, and thence to well-defined types of art and architecture. One cannot doubt but that the high development of mathematics as pure science enlisted the aid of artistry for a wider application to art and architecture.
- Love for and devotion to the golden words of Allah - the Koran - must have been responsible for the splendid specimens of handwritten text



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## Islamic Art

- In orthodox Islam the very framework of a building, it seems, must needs be supported by the words of Allah.
- We find, amongst the Persians for example, considerable liberty in the use of artistic representation. A Persian carpet is full of interesting thought.
- Islamic art and artists have made use of a flowing ornamentation, along the border of carpets for example, containing various shapes such as vases and flowers, animals, or even men, which may be quite life-like but which are usually grotesque and conventional. We call it arabesque. It represents moving, comprehensive life, a pattern of all things, and furnishes place for the idiosyncrasies of the artist.



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## Islamic Art

- The use of the circle pattern is said to represent eternity. The zigzag may represent lightning or the waves of the sea. An hour-glass is conventionalized into two triangles to represent, it is said, fire and water, basic elements of life. Often the triangles are so arranged as to be almost superimposed in a so-called “star of David pattern. The pointed arch is an emblem of the faith. It is said to have been first introduced into the Mosque of Ibn Tiiliin at Cairo in A.D. 870. In Islamic art the most frequently used conventionalized flower is the lotus. The bud of the lotus is said to represent birth; the flower, maturity.



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## Islamic Art

Color plays considerable influence in telling us about the great truths of Islamic thought-life. For example, green is the sacred color of immortality. It has become the most important color symbol of Islam. Blue is said to represent air, eternity, and sky. Black is said to indicate sorrow, evil, and vice. Red stands for joy, happiness, life, truth, virtue, and sincerity. Yellow indicates royalty and opulence ; orange, sorrow. Rose is said to mean the divine wisdom. In a study of historic ornament one may, to some extent, determine the type of art by the use of color. The ground color in Arabian art is usually a light blue, a creamy yellow, with a bit of red and green. In Turkey the ground colors are usually green and black. In Persia there is much more liberty and variety in the use of color. The orthodox artist will carefully date his product in terms of the Hegira. He will frequently include quotations from the Koran, whether he be weaver, sculptor, architect, or calligrapher.



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## Islamic Art

- Symbolism in architecture is also significant. The elliptical dome resting on pendentives which occupy the angles of a square base is said variously to represent the dome of heaven over the earth, or eternity and time. The best indicative of the determinism of all things is the dome. Its monotony shows no change of line. It fails to reveal the aspiration of the human spirit such as the pointed arch. It stands for death. I have heard the Turks describe the dome as feminine and symbolic of the universal love of **God**, and the column, minaret and tower as masculine, **symbol** of aspiration. The national flags, coins, stamps, and other insignia are important sources of symbol. The crescent is a symbol of Islam, but certainly not an original designation peculiar to the Mohammedan. It is universal. The star also is a universal emblem of hope and promise. These are **symbols** only, but from them one may read the history of the race. The evolution of art and architecture is but the rug of time woven on the pattern of transience / briefness. **God** remains, and God is symbol of the only hope of the changing race.



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