

## 1: Cities | Islamic Arts and Architecture

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Visual arts In order to answer whether there is an aesthetic , iconographic, or stylistic unity to the visually perceptible arts of Islamic peoples, it is first essential to realize that no ethnic or geographical entity was Muslim from the beginning. There is no Islamic art, therefore, in the way there is a Chinese art or a French art. Nor is it simply a period art, like Gothic art or Baroque art, for once a land or an ethnic entity became Muslim, it remained Muslim, a small number of exceptions such as Spain or Sicily notwithstanding. Political and social events transformed a number of lands with a variety of earlier histories into Muslim lands. But because early Islam as such did not possess or propagate an art of its own, each area could continue, in fact often did continue, whatever modes of creativity it had acquired. It may then not be appropriate at all to talk about the visual arts of Islamic peoples, and one should instead consider separately each of the areas that became Muslim: Such, in fact, has been the direction taken by some scholarship. Even though tainted at times with parochial nationalism , that approach has been useful in that it has focused attention on a number of permanent features in different regions of Islamic lands that are older than and independent from the faith itself and from the political entity created by it. Iranian art , in particular, exhibits a number of features certain themes such as the representation of birds or an epic tradition in painting that owe little to its Islamic character since the 7th century. Ottoman art shares a Mediterranean tradition of architectural conception with Italy rather than with the rest of the Muslim world. Such examples can easily be multiplied, but it is probably wrong to overstate their importance. For if one looks at the art of Islamic lands from a different perspective, a totally different picture emerges. The perspective is that of the lands that surround the Muslim world or of the times that preceded its formation. For even if there are ambiguous examples, most observers can recognize a flavour, a mood in Islamic visual arts that is distinguishable from what is known in East Asia China, Korea, and Japan or in the Christian West. This mood or flavour has been called decorative, for it seems at first glance to emphasize an immense complexity of surface effects without apparent meanings attached to the visible motifs. But it has other characteristics as well: The problem is whether these uniquenesses of Islamic art, when compared with other artistic traditions, are the result of the nature of Islam or of some other factor or series of factors. These preliminary remarks suggest at the very outset the main epistemological peculiarity of Islamic art: The key question is how this was possible, but no answer can be given before the tradition itself has been properly defined. Such a definition can be provided only in history, through an examination of the formation and development of the arts through the centuries, for a static sudden phenomenon is not being dealt with, but rather a slow building up of a visual language of forms with many dialects and with many changes. Whether these complexities of growth and development subsumed a common structure is the challenging question facing the historian of this artistic tradition. What makes the question particularly difficult to answer is that the study of Islamic art is still so new. Many monuments are unpublished or at least insufficiently known, and only a handful of scientific excavations have investigated the physical setting of the culture and of its art. Much, therefore, remains tentative in the knowledge and appreciation of works of Islamic art, and what follows is primarily an outline of what is known, with a number of suggestions for further work into insufficiently investigated areas. Each artistic tradition has tended to develop its own favourite mediums and techniques. Some, of course, such as architecture, are automatic needs of every culture; and, for reasons to be developed later, it is in the medium of architecture that some of the most characteristically Islamic works of art are found. Other techniques, on the other hand, acquire varying forms and emphases. Wall painting existed but has generally been poorly preserved; the great Islamic art of painting was limited to the illustration of books. The unique feature of Islamic techniques is the astounding development taken by the so-called decorative arts . New techniques were invented and spread throughout the Muslim world—at times even beyond its frontiers. The kind of conclusion that can be reached about Islamic civilization through its visual arts thus extends far deeper than is usual in the study of an artistic tradition, and it requires a combination of

archaeological, art-historical, and textual information. An example may suffice to demonstrate the point. Among all the techniques of Islamic visual arts, the most important one was the art of textiles. Textiles, of course, were used for daily wear at all social levels and for all occasions. But clothes were also the main indicators of rank, and they were given as rewards or as souvenirs by princes, high and low. Major events were at times celebrated by being depicted on silks. Many texts have been identified that describe the hundreds of different kinds of textiles that existed. Because textiles could easily be moved, they became a vehicle for the transmission of artistic themes within the Muslim world and beyond its frontiers. The more unfortunate point is that the thousands of fragments that have remained have not yet been studied in a sufficiently systematic way, and in only a handful of instances has it been possible to relate individual fragments to known texts. When more work has been completed, however, a study of this one medium should contribute significantly to the commercial, social, and aesthetic history of Islam, as well as explain much of the impact that Islamic art had beyond the frontiers of the Muslim world. The following survey of Islamic visual arts, therefore, will be primarily a historical one, for it is in development through time that the main achievements of Islamic art can best be understood. At the same time, other features peculiar to this tradition will be kept in mind: Origins Earlier artistic traditions Islamic visual arts were created by the confluence of two entirely separate kinds of phenomena: The arts inherited by Islam were of extraordinary technical virtuosity and stylistic or iconographic variety. All the developments of arcuated and vaulted architecture that had taken place in Iran and in the Roman Empire were available in their countless local variants. Stone, baked brick, mud brick, and wood existed as mediums of construction, and all the complicated engineering systems developed particularly in the Roman Empire were still utilized from Spain to the Euphrates. All the major techniques of decoration were still used, except for monumental sculpture. In secular and in religious art, a more or less formally accepted equivalence between representation and represented subject had been established. Technically, therefore, as well as ideologically, the Muslim world took over an extremely sophisticated system of visual forms; and, because the Muslim conquest was accompanied by a minimum of destruction, all the monuments, and especially the attitudes attached to them, were passed on to the new culture. The second point about the pre-Islamic traditions is the almost total absence of anything from Arabia itself. While archaeological work in the peninsula may modify this conclusion in part, it does seem that Islamic art formed itself entirely in some sort of relationship to non-Arab traditions. The pre-Islamic sources of Islamic art are thus entirely extraneous to the milieu in which the new faith was created. In this respect the visual arts differ considerably from most other aspects of Islamic culture. This is not to say that there was no impact of the new faith on the arts, but to a large extent it was an incidental impact, the result of the existence of a new social and political entity rather than of a doctrine. In the simple, practical, and puritanical milieu of early Islam, aesthetic or visual questions simply did not arise. The mosque The impact of the faith on the arts occurred rather as the fledgling culture encountered the earlier non-Islamic world and sought to justify its own acceptance or rejection of new ways and attitudes. The discussion of two examples of particular significance illustrates the point. One is the case of the mosque. There was no need in earliest times for a uniquely Muslim building, for any place could be used for private prayer as long as the correct direction qiblah, originally Jerusalem but very soon Mecca was observed and the proper sequence of gestures and pious statements was followed. One was his private house, whose descriptions have been preserved; it was a large open space with private rooms on one side and rows of palm trunks making a colonnade on two other sides, the deeper colonnade being on the side of the qiblah. Far less is known about the second place of gathering for the Muslim community. It was used primarily on major feast days, such as the end of the fasting period or the feast of sacrifice. To be complete, one should add two additional features. It became, fairly rapidly, a formal moment preceding the gathering of the faithful. One man would climb on the roof and proclaim that God is great and that men must congregate to pray. There was no formal monument attached to the ceremony, though it led eventually to the ubiquitous minaret. The other early feature was an actual structure. It was the minbar, a chair with several steps on which the Prophet would climb in order to preach. The monument itself had a pre-Islamic origin, but Muhammad transformed it into a characteristically Muslim form. With the exception of the minbar, only a series of actions were formulated in early Islamic times. There were no forms attached to

them, nor were any needed. But, as the Muslim world grew in size, the contact with many other cultures brought about two developments. On the one hand, there were thousands of examples of beautiful religious buildings that impressed the conquering Arabs. But, more important, the need arose to preserve the restricted uniqueness of the community of faithful and to express its separateness from other groups. Islamic religious architecture began with this need and, in ways to be described later, created a formal setting for the activities, ceremonies, and ideas that had been formless at the outset. The prohibition against images A second and closely parallel development of the impact of the Islamic religion on the visual arts is the celebrated question of a Muslim iconoclasm. It is equally true that from about the middle of the 8th century a prohibition had been formally stated, and thenceforth it would be a standard feature of Islamic thought, even though the form in which it is expressed has varied from absolute to partial and even though it has never been totally followed. The justification for the prohibition tended to be that any representation of a living thing was an act of competition with God, for he alone can create something that is alive. It is striking that this theological explanation reflects the state of the arts in the Christian world at the time of the Muslim conquest—a period of iconoclastic controversy. It may thus be suggested that Islam developed an attitude toward images as it came into contact with other cultures and that its attitude was negative because the arts of the time appeared to lead easily to dreaded idolatry. While it is only by the middle of the 8th century that there is actual proof of the existence of a Muslim doctrine, it is likely that, more or less intuitively, the Muslims felt a certain reluctance toward representations from the very beginning. For all monuments of religious art are devoid of any representations; even a number of attempts at representational symbolism in the official art of coinage were soon abandoned. This rapid crystallization of Islamic attitudes toward images has considerable significance. For practical purposes, representations are not found in religious art, although matters are quite different in secular art. Instead there occurred very soon a replacement of imagery with calligraphy and the concomitant transformation of calligraphy into a major artistic medium. Furthermore, the world of Islam tended to seek means of representing the holy other than by images of human beings, and one of the main problems of interpretation of Islamic art is that of the degree of means it achieved in this search. But there is a deeper aspect to this rejection of holy images. Although the generally Semitic or specifically Jewish sources that have been given to Islamic iconoclasm have probably been exaggerated, the reluctance imposed by the circumstances of the 7th century transformed into a major key of artistic creativity the magical fear of visual imagery that exists in all cultures but that is usually relegated to a secondary level. This uniqueness is certainly one of the main causes of the abstract tendencies that are among the great glories of the tradition. Both in the case of the religious building and in that of the representations, therefore, it was the contact with pre-Islamic cultures in Muslim-conquered areas that compelled Islam to transform its practical and unique needs into monuments and to seek within itself for intellectual and theological justifications for its own instincts. The great strength of early Islam was that it possessed within itself the ideological means to put together a visual expression of its own, even though it did not develop at the very beginning a need for such an expression. One last point can be made about the origins of Islamic art. It concerns the degree of importance taken by the various artistic and cultural entities conquered by the Arabs in the 7th and 8th centuries, for the early empire had gathered in regions that had not been politically or even ideologically related for centuries. During the first century or two of Islam, the main models and the main sources of inspiration were certainly the Christian centres around the Mediterranean. But the failure to capture Constantinople now Istanbul and to destroy the Byzantine Empire also made those Christian centres inimical competitors, whereas the whole world of Iran became an integral part of the empire, even though the conquering Arabs were far less familiar with the latter than with the former. A much more complex problem is posed by conversions, for it is through the success of the militant Muslim religious mission that the culture expanded so rapidly. Insofar as one can judge, it is the common folk, primarily in cities, who took over the new faith most rapidly; and there thus was added in early Islamic culture a folk element whose impact may have been larger than has hitherto been imagined. Those preliminary considerations on the origins of Islamic art have made it possible to outline several of the themes and problems that remained constant features of the tradition: None of those features remained constant, not even those aspects of the faith that affected the arts.

## 2: Introduction to Islamic Art | Muslim Heritage

*In this article, we use the phrase "Arts of the Islamic World" to emphasize that the art discussed was created in a world where Islam was a dominant religion or a major cultural force but was not necessarily religious art.*

The Abbasids claimed to be the true successors of Prophet Muhammad in replacing the Umayyad descendants of Banu Umayya by virtue of their closer bloodline to Muhammad. The Abbasids also distinguished themselves from the Umayyads by attacking their moral character and administration in general. According to Ira Lapidus, "The Abbasid revolt was supported largely by Arabs, mainly the aggrieved settlers of Merv with the addition of the Yemeni faction and their Mawali". During the reign of Marwan II, this opposition culminated in the rebellion of Ibrahim the Imam, the fourth in descent from Abbas. On 9 June 15 Ramadan AH, Abu Muslim, rising from Khorasan, successfully initiated an open revolt against Umayyad rule, which was carried out under the sign of the Black Standard. The remainder of his family, barring one male, were also eliminated. As-Saffah focused on putting down numerous rebellions in Syria and Mesopotamia. The Byzantines conducted raids during these early distractions. The round plan reflects pre-Islamic Persian urban design. This was to both appease as well to be closer to the Persian mawali support base that existed in this region more influenced by Persian history and culture, and part of the Persian mawali demand for less Arab dominance in the empire. Baghdad was established on the Tigris River in a new position, that of the vizier, was also established to delegate central authority, and even greater authority was delegated to local emirs. While this helped integrate Arab and Persian cultures, it alienated many of their Arab supporters, particularly the Khorasanian Arabs who had supported them in their battles against the Umayyads. These fissures in their support led to immediate problems. The Umayyads, while out of power, were not destroyed. The only surviving member of the Umayyad royal family, which had been all but annihilated, ultimately made his way to Spain where he established himself as an independent Emir Abd ar-Rahman I, Abbasid Golden Age [edit] Harun al-Rashid receiving a delegation sent by Charlemagne at his court in Baghdad. The Abbasid leadership had to work hard in the last half of the 8th century, under several competent caliphs and their viziers to overcome the political challenges created by the far flung nature of the empire, and the limited communication across it and usher in the administrative changes needed to keep order. These attacks pushed into the Taurus Mountains culminating with a victory at the Battle of Krasos and the massive invasion of, led by Rashid himself. Eventually, the momentum turned and much of the land gained was lost. Rashid decided to focus on the rebellion of Rafi ibn al-Layth in Khorasan and died while there. Harun al-Rashid turned on the Barmakids, a Persian family that had grown significantly in power within the administration of the state and killed most of the family. The reign of al-Rashid and his sons were considered to be the apex of the Abbasids. This war ended with a two-year siege of Baghdad and the eventual death of al-Amin in He strengthened his personal army with Turkish mercenaries and promptly restarted the war with the Byzantines. His military excursions were generally successful culminating with a resounding victory in the Sack of Amorium. His attempt at seizing Constantinople failed when his fleet was destroyed by a storm. Al-Mutawakkil responded by sending his troops into Anatolia again, sacking and marauding until they were eventually annihilated in The Saffarids, from Khorasan, nearly seized Baghdad in, and the Tulunids took control of most of Syria. The trend of weakening of the central power and strengthening of the minor caliphates on the periphery continued. By the early 10th century, the Abbasids almost lost control of Iraq to various amirs, and the caliph al-Radi was forced to acknowledge their power by creating the position of "Prince of Princes" amir al-umara. According to the history of Miskawayh, they began distributing iqtas fiefs in the form of tax farms to their supporters. This period of localized secular control was to last nearly years. Also during this period officers started assassinating superiors with whom they disagreed, in particular the caliphs. In the East as well, governors decreased their ties to the center. The Saffarids of Herat and the Samanids of Bukhara had broken away from the s, cultivating a much more Persianate culture and statecraft. By this time only the central lands of Mesopotamia were under direct Abbasid control, with Palestine and the Hijaz often managed by the Tulunids. Byzantium, for its part, had begun to push Arab Muslims farther east in Anatolia. By the s, the

situation had changed further, as North Africa was lost to the Abbasids. By they had become the chief political and ideological challenge to Sunni Islam in the form of the Abbasids. By this time the latter state had fragmented into several governorships that, while recognizing caliphal authority from Baghdad, did mostly as they wanted, fighting with each other. Outside Iraq, all the autonomous provinces slowly took on the characteristic of de facto states with hereditary rulers, armies, and revenues and operated under only nominal caliph suzerainty, which may not necessarily be reflected by any contribution to the treasury, such as the Soomro Emirs that had gained control of Sindh and ruled the entire province from their capital of Mansura. They commanded some support in the Shia sections of Baghdad such as Karkh , although Baghdad was the city most closely connected to the caliphate, even in the Buyid and Seljuq eras. The caliph al-Qadir , for example, led the ideological struggle against the Shia with writings such as the Baghdad Manifesto. By , the Seljuqs had wrested control from the Buyids and Abbasids, and took any remaining temporal power. Once again, the Abbasids were forced to deal with a military power that they could not match, though the Abbasid caliph remained the titular head of the Islamic community. The succeeding sultans Alp Arslan and Malikshah , as well as their vizier Nizam al-Mulk , took up residence in Persia, but held power over the Abbasids in Baghdad. When the dynasty began to weaken in the 12th century, the Abbasids gained greater independence once again. Revival of military strength” [ edit ] Coin of the Abbasids, Baghdad, While the Caliph al-Mustarshid was the first caliph to build an army capable of meeting a Seljuk army in battle, he was nonetheless defeated in and assassinated. The Caliph al-Muqtafi was the first Abbasid Caliph to regain the full military independence of the Caliphate, with the help of his vizier Ibn Hubayra. After nearly years of subjection to foreign dynasties, he successfully defended Baghdad against the Seljuqs in the siege of Baghdad , thus securing Iraq for the Abbasids. The reign of al-Nasir d. Mamluk Sultanate Cairo In the 9th century, the Abbasids created an army loyal only to their caliphate, composed of non-Arab origin people, known as Mamluks. The Mamluk army, though often viewed negatively, both helped and hurt the caliphate. Early on, it provided the government with a stable force to address domestic and foreign problems. In , following the devastation of Baghdad by the Mongols, the Mamluk rulers of Egypt re-established the Abbasid caliphate in Cairo. The first Abbasid caliph of Cairo was Al-Mustansir. The Abbasid caliphs in Egypt continued to maintain the presence of authority, but it was confined to religious matters. He died in , following his return to Cairo.

### 3: Abbasid Caliphate - Wikipedia

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They brought an important tradition of both figurative and non-figurative design from Eastern to Western Asia, creating an unmistakable Turkish iconography. The importance of the Turkish element in Islamic culture can perhaps best be appreciated if one realizes that the larger part of the Islamic World was ruled by Turkish peoples from the 10th to the 19th century. The Art of the Islamic World owes a great deal to the rule of these Turkish Dynasties, and the influence of Turkish thought, taste and tradition on the Art of Islam in general can hardly be overestimated.

**Persian Influence** The Persian element in Islamic Art is perhaps most difficult to define; it seems to consist of a peculiarly lyrical poetical attitude, a metaphysical tendency which in the realm of emotional and religious experience leads to an extraordinary flowering of mysticism. The major schools of Muslim painting developed in Iran on the basis of Persian literature. The same attitude that creates in the field of painting an art form of the greatest beauty but of complete fantasy and unreality enters into architecture, creating forms of decoration that seem to negate the very nature of architecture and the basic principles of weight and stress, of relief and support, fusing all elements into a unity of fantastic unreality, a floating world of imagination. Even though these three elements of Islamic culture are at times clearly definable and separate and each contributes more or less equally to the development of Islamic Art, in most periods they are so closely interwoven and integrated that one cannot often clearly distinguish between them. All the regions of the Muslim World share a great many fundamental artistic features that draw the whole vast territory together in a super-national, super-ethnic and super-geographical unity which is paralleled in the history of human culture only by the similar domination of the Ancient World by Rome. The multitude of small empires and kingdoms that had adopted Islam felt - in spite of racial prides and jealousies - first and foremost Muslim and not Arab, Turkish or Persian. They all assembled in the Mosque the religious building that, with minor alternations, was of the same design throughout the Muslim World, and they all faced Mecca, the centre of Islam, symbolized by The Kaaba Quabba , a pre-Muslim sanctuary adopted by Muhammad as the point towards which each Muslim should turn in prayer. In every prayer hall there was a focal or Kibla wall, which faced Mecca with a central niche, the Mihrab.

**The Infinite Pattern in Islamic Art** The experience of the infinite on the one hand, with the worthlessness of the transient earthly existence of man on the other is known to all Muslims and forms part of all Muslim Art. It finds different but basically related expression. The most fundamental is the creation of the infinite pattern that appears in a fully developed form very early on and is a major element of Islamic Art in all periods. The infinite continuation of a given pattern, whether abstract, semi-abstract or even partly figurative, is on the one hand the expression of a profound belief in the eternity of all true being and on the other a disregard for temporary existence. In making visible only part of a pattern that exists in its complete form only in infinity, the Islam Artist related the static, limited, seemingly definite object to infinity itself. An Arabesque design, based on an infinite leaf-scroll pattern that, by division of elements stem, leaf, blossom generates new variations of the same original elements, is in itself the perfect application of the principle of Islam design and can be applied to any given surface, the cover of a small metal box or the glazed curve of a monumental dome. Both the small box and the huge dome of a Mosque are regarded in the same way, differing only in form, not in quality. With this possibility of giving equal value to everything that exists or bringing to one level of existence everything within the realm of the visual arts, a basis for a unity of style is provided that transcends the limits of period or country.

**Ornamentation of Surfaces Dissolves Matter** One of the most fundamental principles of the Islamic style deriving from the same basic idea is the dissolution of matter. The idea of transformation, therefore, is of utmost importance. The result is a world which is not a reflection of the actual object, but that of the superimposed element that serves to transcend the momentary and limited individual appearance of a work of art drawing it into the greater and solely valid realm of infinite and continuous being. This idea is emphasized by the way in which architectural decoration is

used. Solid walls are disguised behind plaster and tile decoration, vaults and arches are covered with floral and epigraphic ornament that dissolve their structural strength and function and domes are filled with radiating designs of infinite patterns, bursting suns or fantastic floating canopies of multitude of mukarnas, that banish the solidity of stone and masonry and give them a peculiarly ephemeral quality as if the crystallization of the design is their only reality. It is perhaps in this element, which has no true parallel in the history of art, that Islamic Art joins in the religious experience of Islam and it is in this sense, that it can be called a religious art. Characteristically, very little actual, religious iconography in the ordinary sense exists in Islam. Although a great many fundamental forms and concepts remained more or less stable and unchanged throughout Islamic Art - especially in architecture - the variety of individual forms is astonishing and can again be called exceptional. Almost every country at every period created forms of art that had no parallel in another, and the variations on a common theme, that are carried through from one period to another, are even more remarkable.

**Islamic Decoration** Two important elements in Islamic decorative art are: Floral Patterns and Calligraphy.

**Floral Patterns in Islamic Decoration** Islamic artists habitually employed flowers and trees as decorative motifs for the embellishment of cloth, objects, personal items and buildings. Their designs were inspired by international as well as local techniques. For instance, Mughal architectural decoration was inspired by European botanical artists, as well as by traditional Persian and Indian flora. A highly ornate as well as intricate art form, floral designs were often used as the basis for "infinite pattern" type decoration, using arabesque geometrized vegetal patterns and covering an entire surface. The infinite rhythms conveyed by the repetition of curved lines, produces a relaxing, calming effect, which can be modified and enhanced by variations of line, colour and texture. Sometimes the ornate would be emphasized, and floral designs would be applied to tablets or panels of white marble, in the form of rows of plants finely carved in low relief, along with multi-coloured inlays of precious stones. Thus, almost all Islamic buildings exhibit some type of inscription in their stone, stucco, marble or mosaic surfaces. Or single words like "Allah" or "Mohammed" might be repeated many times over the entire surface of the walls. Calligraphic inscriptions are closely associated with the geometry of the building and are frequently employed as a frame around the main architectural elements such as portals and cornices. Sometimes a religious text is confined to a single panel or carved tablet cartouche which might be pierced thus creating a specific pattern of light.

**Calligraphic Scripts** There are two main scripts in traditional Islamic Calligraphy, the angular Kufic and the cursive Naskhi. Kufic, the earliest form, which is alleged to have been invented at Kufa, south of Baghdad, accentuates the vertical strokes of the characters. There are eight different types of Kufic script out of which only three are mentioned here: From the 11th century onward the Naskhi script gradually replaced Kufic. Ibn Muqala lived in Baghdad during the 10th century and is also responsible for the development of another type of cursive writing; the thuluth, or thulth. This closely follows Naskhi, but certain elements, like vertical strokes or horizontal lines are exaggerated. In Iran several cursive styles were invented and developed among which taliq was important. Out of taliq developed nastaliq, which is a more beautiful, elegant and cursive form of writing. Nastaliq became the predominate style of Persian Calligraphy during the 15th and 16th centuries. The misconception that Islam was an iconoclastic or anti-image culture and that the representation of human beings or living creatures in general was prohibited, is still deeply rooted although the existence of figurative painting in Iran has been recognized now for almost half a century. Certain pronouncements attributed to the Prophet and carried in the Hadith the collection of traditional sayings of the Prophet have perhaps been interpreted as prohibition against artistic activity, although they are of purely religious significance. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that in practically no period of Islamic culture were figurative representation and painting suppressed, with the singular exception of the strictly religious sphere where idolatry was feared. Mosques and mausoleums are therefore without figurative representation. Elsewhere, imagery forms one of the most important elements and a multitude of other pictorial traditions were also assimilated during the long and complex history of Islamic Art. That said, it is fair to say that other experts in Islamic art take a slightly narrower view. According to this view, because the creation of living things like humans and animals is regarded as being the role of God, Islam rightly discourages Islamic painters and sculptors from producing such figures. Although it is true that some figurative art can be seen in the Islamic world, it is mostly confined to the decoration of objects and secular

buildings and the creation of miniature paintings. See also Mosaic Art. Abbasid Art The Abbasid dynasty shifted the capital from Damascus to Baghdad - founded by al-Mansur in , the first major city entirely built by Muslims. The city became the new Islamic hub and symbolized the convergence of Eastern and Western art forms: Later, Samarra took over as the capital. Abbasid architecture was noted for the desert Fortress of Al-Ukhaidir c. Other arts developed under the Abbasids included, textile silk art, wall painting and ancient pottery , notably the invention of lustre-ware painting on the surface of the glaze with a metallic pigment or lustre. The latter technique was unique to Baghdad potters and ceramicists. Also, calligraphic decorations first began to appear on pottery during this period. Umayyad Art in Spain Parallel with the Abbasids in Iraq, descendants of the earlier Umayyad dynasty ruled Spain, with Cordoba becoming the second most important cultural centre of the Muslim world after Bagdad. Umayyad art and architecture in Spain was exemplified by the creation of the Great mosque of Cordoba. In particular, this region was noted for its fusion of classical Roman and Islamic architectural designs, and the general development of a Hispano-Islamic idiom in painting , relief sculpture , metal sculpture in the round, and decorative arts like ceramics. In the arts, this dynasty was noted for architectural structures like the al-Azhar Mosque and the al-Hakim Mosque of Cairo; ceramic art in the form of pottery decorated with figurative painting and ivory carving as well as relief sculpture and the emergence of the "infinite pattern" of abstract ornamentation. Fatimid art is particularly famous for applying designs to every kind of surface. In Islamic art, this dynasty was noted above all for its architecture and building designs, exemplified by the Masjid-i Jami in Isfahan, built by Malik Shah. Fundamental forms of architectural design are developed and permanently formulated for later periods. The most important were the court mosque and the madrasah, as well as forms for tomb towers and mausoleums. Figurative representation, along the lines of a Central Asian iconography, was also greatly expanded across the visual arts. The Seljuks also excelled at stone-carving, used in architectural ornamentation, as well as painted tiles and faience mosaics. Notable works of Islamic architecture which have survived from this period include the tomb of Oljeitu in Soltaniyeh, and Masjid-i Jami Mosque of Taj al-din Ali Shah, in Tabriz, the Mongol capital. New techniques appeared in ceramic pottery, like the lajvardina a variant of lustre-ware. Chinese influence is evident in all forms of visual arts. The Mongol period provided a lasting repertoire of decorative forms and ideas to the Islamic artists of the Timurid and Safavid periods in Iran, and to Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria and Egypt. Exteriors as well as interiors became richly decorated in a variety of media - plaster, relief carving, and decorative painting. Enameled glass and metalwork were also greatly developed c. For example, the superb metal basin of Mamluk silver metalwork known as the "Baptistere de Saint Louis" Syria, , is one of the greatest masterpieces of its type in Islamic art. Decorated on the outside with a central frieze of figures and two corresponding friezes of animals, it is also ornamented with elaborate hunting scenes on the inside. In general the Mamluk era is remembered as the golden age of medieval near Eastern Islamic culture. Nasrid Art in Spain The Nasrid dynasty, centred on their court in Granada, created a culture that attained a level of magnificence without parallel in Muslim Spain, recreating the glories of the first great Islamic period under Umayyad rule. Nasrid architecture led the way, exemplified by the Alhambra Palace in Granada c. In this building the fundamental elements of Islamic architecture and architectural design found their highest expression: In decorative art, lustre-painting was greatly developed, as was textile weaving in gold brocade and embroidery. Timurid architecture is exemplified by the mosques of Kernan c. Architectural decoration employed polychrome faience to the greatest effect. In the other visual arts, Timurid painting introduced the concept of using the entire pictorial area, while illuminated manuscripts were produced in the "Imperial Timurid style". Notable schools of Timurid painting sprang up in Shiraz, Herat and elsewhere. Herat produced a series of magnificent painted manuscripts, as well as a corresponding set of developments in the Islamic arts of calligraphy and book-binding. Stained glass art was also developed. In general, Timurid art may be seen as a refinement, even sublimation, of the basic ideals of eastern Islamic art. Ottoman architecture is noted above all for the domed mosque. An early form was the Ulu Cami mosque, Bursa c. Advances in architectural decoration included a new style of floral polychrome designs in ceramic tilework and pottery plus the discovery of the bright red pigment used in ceramics, known as Iznik red , while in painting, Ottoman artists developed a new canon of colour, composition and iconography. One of the most famous of Ottoman crafts

was the knotted rug, which - in its use, form and decoration - embodied most of the salient elements of Muslim culture.

### 4: Key Places: Islam - explorefaith

*The first city belonging to the Islamic civilization was Medina, where the prophet Mohammed moved to in AD, known as Year One in the Islamic calendar (Anno Hegira). But the settlements associated with the Islamic empire range from trade centers to desert castles to fortified cities.*

Tiled exterior of the Friday Mosque of Herat , Afghanistan The earliest grand Islamic buildings, like the Dome of the Rock , in Jerusalem had interior walls decorated with mosaics in the Byzantine style, but without human figures. From the 9th century onwards the distinctive Islamic tradition of glazed and brightly coloured tiling for interior and exterior walls and domes developed. Some earlier schemes create designs using mixtures of tiles each of a single colour that are either cut to shape or are small and of a few shapes, used to create abstract geometric patterns. Later large painted schemes use tiles painted before firing with a part of the scheme "a technique requiring confidence in the consistent results of firing. Some elements, especially the letters of inscriptions, may be moulded in three-dimensional relief , and in especially in Persia certain tiles in a design may have figurative painting of animals or single human figures. These were often part of designs mostly made up of tiles in plain colours but with larger fully painted tiles at intervals. The larger tiles are often shaped as eight-pointed stars, and may show animals or a human head or bust, or plant or other motifs. The geometric patterns, such as modern North African zellige work, made of small tiles each of a single colour but different and regular shapes, are often referred to as " mosaic ", which is not strictly correct. The Mughals made much less use of tiling, preferring and being able to afford "parchin kari", a type of pietra dura decoration from inlaid panels of semi-precious stones, with jewels in some cases. This can be seen at the Taj Mahal , Agra Fort and other imperial commissions. The motifs are usually floral, in a simpler and more realistic style than Persian or Turkish work, relating to plants in Mughal miniatures. Islam took over much of the traditional glass-producing territory of Sassanian and Ancient Roman glass , and since figurative decoration played a small part in pre-Islamic glass, the change in style is not abrupt, except that the whole area initially formed a political whole, and, for example, Persian innovations were now almost immediately taken up in Egypt. For this reason it is often impossible to distinguish between the various centres of production, of which Egypt, Syria and Persia were the most important, except by scientific analysis of the material, which itself has difficulties. Lustre painting, by techniques similar to lustreware in pottery, dates back to the 8th century in Egypt, and became widespread in the 12th century. Another technique was decoration with threads of glass of a different colour, worked into the main surface, and sometimes manipulated by combing and other effects. Gilded , painted and enamelled glass were added to the repertoire, and shapes and motifs borrowed from other media, such as pottery and metalwork. Some of the finest work was in mosque lamps donated by a ruler or wealthy man. As decoration grew more elaborate, the quality of the basic glass decreased, and it "often has a brownish-yellow tinge, and is rarely free from bubbles". By about the Venetians were receiving large orders for mosque lamps. In contrast surviving Islamic metalwork consists of practical objects mostly in brass , bronze, and steel, with simple, but often monumental, shapes, and surfaces highly decorated with dense decoration in a variety of techniques, but colour mostly restricted to inlays of gold, silver, copper or black niello. The most abundant survivals from medieval periods are fine brass objects, handsome enough to preserve, but not valuable enough to be melted down. The abundant local sources of zinc compared to tin explains the rarity of bronze. Household items, such as ewers or water pitchers, were made of one or more pieces of sheet brass soldered together and subsequently worked and inlaid. Islamic work includes some three-dimensional animal figures as fountainheads or aquamaniles , but only one significant enamelled object is known, using Byzantine cloisonne techniques. More common objects given elaborate decoration include massive low candlesticks and lamp-stands, lantern lights, bowls, dishes, basins, buckets these probably for the bath , [44] and ewers , as well as caskets, pen-cases and plaques. Ewers and basins were brought for hand-washing before and after each meal, so are often lavishly treated display pieces. A typical 13th century ewer from Khorasan is decorated with foliage, animals and the Signs of the Zodiac in silver and copper, and carries a blessing. Decoration is typically densely packed and very often includes arabesques and calligraphy,

sometimes naming an owner and giving a date. Blade of damascened steel inlaid with gold. High levels of achievement were reached in other materials, including hardstone carvings and jewellery, ivory carving, textiles and leatherwork. During the Middle Ages, Islamic work in these fields was highly valued in other parts of the world and often traded outside the Islamic zone. Materials include coloured, tooled and stamped leather and lacquer over paint. There are a number of these vessels in the West, which apparently came on the market after the Cairo palace of the Fatimid Caliph was looted by his mercenaries in , and were snapped up by European buyers, mostly ending up in church treasuries. Such objects may have been made in earlier periods, but few have survived. These are often in wood, sometimes painted on the wood but often plastered over before painting; the examples at the Alhambra in Granada, Spain are among the best known. Traditional Islamic furniture, except for chests, tended to be covered with cushions, with cupboards rather than cabinets for storage, but there are some pieces, including a low round strictly twelve-sided table of about from the Ottoman court, with marquetry inlays in light wood, and a single huge ceramic tile or plaque on the tabletop. A spectacular and famous and far from flat roof was one of the Islamic components of the 12th century Norman Cappella Palatina in Palermo , which picked from the finest elements of Catholic, Byzantine and Islamic art. Other famous wooden roofs are in the Alhambra in Granada. Ivory[ edit ] Ivory with traces of paint, 11th–12th century, Egypt Ivory carving centred on the Mediterranean , spreading from Egypt, where a thriving Coptic industry had been inherited; Persian ivory is rare. The normal style was a deep relief with an even surface; some pieces were painted. Spain specialized in caskets and round boxes, which were probably used to keep jewels and perfumes. They were produced mainly in the approximate period , and widely exported. Many pieces are signed and dated, and on court pieces the name of the owner is often inscribed; they were typically gifts from a ruler. As well as a court workshop, Cordoba had commercial workshops producing goods of slightly lower quality. In the 12th and 13th century workshops in Norman Sicily produced caskets, apparently then migrating to Granada and elsewhere after persecution. Egyptian work tended to be in flat panels and friezes, for insertion into woodwork and probably furniture – most are now detached from their settings. Many were calligraphic, and others continued Byzantine traditions of hunting scenes, with backgrounds of arabesques and foliage in both cases. Some designs are calligraphic, especially when made for palls to cover a tomb, but more are surprisingly conservative versions of the earlier traditions, with many large figures of animals, especially majestic symbols of power like the lion and eagle. These are often enclosed in roundels, as found in the pre-Islamic traditions. The majority of early silks have been recovered from tombs, and in Europe reliquaries , where the relics were often wrapped in silk. European clergy and nobility were keen buyers of Islamic silk from an early date and, for example, the body of an early bishop of Toul in France was wrapped in a silk from the Bukhara area in modern Uzbekistan , probably when the body was reburied in Javanese court batik Ottoman silks were less exported, and the many surviving royal kaftans have simpler geometric patterns, many featuring stylized "tiger-stripes" below three balls or circles. Other silks have foliage designs comparable to those on Iznik pottery or carpets, with bands forming ogival compartments a popular motif. Some designs begin to show Italian influence. By the 16th century Persian silk was using smaller patterns, many of which showed relaxed garden scenes of beautiful boys and girls from the same world as those in contemporary album miniatures, and sometimes identifiable scenes from Persian poetry. Mughal silks incorporate many Indian elements, and often feature relatively realistic "portraits" of plants, as found in other media. Batik The development and refinement of Indonesian batik cloth was closely linked to Islam. The Islamic prohibition on certain images encouraged batik design to become more abstract and intricate. Realistic depictions of animals and humans are rare on traditional batik. However, mythical serpents, humans with exaggerated features and the Garuda of pre-Islamic mythology are common motifs. Although its existence pre-dates Islam, batik reached its zenith in royal Muslim courts such as Mataram and Yogyakarta , whose sultans encouraged and patronised batik production. Today, batik is undergoing a revival, and cloths are used for additional purposes such as wrapping the Quran.

## 5: The Art of Islamic Spain

*The contribution of the Muslim World to a wide range of arts, sciences and academic disciplines is often overlooked or taken for granted. This site provides a glimpse of the rich cultural heritage within the Muslim World and the significant role that Muslims have played in the advancement of knowledge.*

The Art of Islamic Spain," has been an Orientalist fantasy since.. Washington Irving rediscovered it for the Western world in his delightful Tales of the Alhambra, written in 1829. The displays were a feat of installation: Nothing was permitted to touch the exquisite tiled and stuccoed walls, all cases and lighting standing discreetly free. Some say the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula began with an invitation: According to one account, the Umayyad governor of North Africa, Musa ibn Nusayr, was asked to aid the opponents of a Visigoth king. True or not, it is a fact that Ibn Nusayr sent his general Tariq ibn Ziyad with a Amazigh Berber army into Spain in 711, following himself in 712. Toledo lured Tariq to its conquest, and within seven years the whole of the peninsula, except for Galicia and Asturias, was under Muslim control, remaining so throughout the Umayyad period, from 711 to 756. The dynasty of the Andalusian Umayyads marked the zenith of Arab civilization in Spain. But that dynasty collapsed after the death of the formidable dictator-chamberlain al-Mansur in 756 and the civil war of 761-769, and local governors proclaimed themselves taifas, or petty monarchs, with Seville, Toledo and Saragossa the most powerful of the independent kingdoms. Their internecine wars cost territory: Muslim control had receded to only half of Spain by 1000. With the fall of Toledo to Christian armies in 1085, the taifas sought support from the North African Amazigh Berber Almoravid dynasty -- but the Almoravid leader, Yusuf ibn Tashufin, believed that the rule of the taifas had to be ended if Islamic Spain was to be rescued. In 1091, Ibn Tashufin decided to land his army in Al-Andalus. The Almohad rulers adopted the title of caliph and introduced a series of religious measures seeking to strengthen their territories. But in 1147, at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the Christian armies avenged their previous defeats, a turning point in the history of the peninsula. Only one-third of Spain was left under Muslim control and Al-Andalus was once again fragmented into tribute-paying principalities -- Granada excepted. The final dynasty, the Nasrid Kingdom, ruled only Granada and three tribute-paying cities: As pressure eased on Granada, the kingdom reached its greatest splendor during the reign of Muhammad V and Muhammad VI, when he added considerably to the Alhambra Palace. His ministers included some of the most learned men of the epoch: The royal court also extended its protection to Tunis-born Ibn Khaldun, the great philosopher of history. But by the end of the next century, the power of Christian Castile and Aragon, unified by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella -- both pledged to the reconquista -- forced the last ruling Nasrid, Muhammad XII, known to the Spaniards as King Boabdil, into exile on January 2, 1492. Of 21 medallions on the casket, one outstanding one may show the reigning Caliph Hisham II -- a bearded, bareheaded figure seated on a lion throne, a flower or fruit in his hand and a signet ring on his left ring finger. Flanking him are two attendants, one holding a fly whisk, the other a perfume bottle or sprinkler and a woven fan. Two carved ivory pyxides -- containers for precious aromatics -- have the domed cover unique to 10th-century Spanish containers, and are designed to resemble a pavilion, with its palatial and paradisiacal connotations, suggesting the richness of the gifts within. One pyxis, made in 975, features within its overall carving large medallions of such vividness that they have been included in virtually all discussions of early Islamic art: One of two 10th-century textile fragments on display, of silk, linen and gold thread, is thought to be part of an almaizar -- a cloth which served as both veil and turban -- of Hisham II, to whom there is a dedication in Kufic, while its embroidered medallions of people, lions, birds and other animals show Egyptian Coptic influence. The body of the stag has an overall pattern of leaves within circles, a common textile design of the period. Medical philosophies of the time maintained that health followed from the freshness of flowing water and perfumed air. Islamic literature in Spain attained its peak. In architecture, buildings took on new forms and decoration. The relief still bears some of the red and blue color of the paints once used on all such stuccoes. By the end of the 11th century, Al-Andalus was at the forefront of European sciences. The Andalusians excelled in astronomy, both theoretical and practical, perfecting their tables and the precision of their astronomical instruments. Toledo astronomer Al-Zarqali, who died in 1030, simplified the

astrolabe; his version, known as the *saphea azarchelis*, remained in use until the 16th century. He also anticipated 17th-century German astronomer Johannes Kepler by suggesting that the orbits of the planets are not circular but oval. The true origins of the controversial 11th-century bronze "Pisa Griffin," which once sat atop the cathedral in that Italian city, are unknown, but local legend calls it booty taken from conquest of the Balearic Islands east of Spain. Monumental and fearsome, the griffin stands rigid, its rounded chest and body, curled-back wings and beaked head covered in zones of textile-like feathering, scales and bands of Kufic lettering, with a tear-drop design on the legs portraying birds and animals in a scrolling surround, reminiscent of Sassanian Persia. But the puzzling meter-tall sculpture exhibits characteristics of many other regional styles as well, and it has been variously attributed to Fatimid Egypt, Fatimid North Africa, Spain, Sicily and Iran. Conserved in startling freshness is the lining of the Reliquary of San Mi-Han, in brilliant crimson silk with alternating friezes of confronting winged lions and paired griffins flanking the stylized "tree of life," or *hom*, in green outlined in yellow. An altar panel, called "the Witches Pallium," is an extraordinary design on crimson silk with a central frieze of half-sphinx, half-harpy composites of lions and eagles beneath arches of serpents with feline heads under attack by ibises; above and below are friezes of the *hom* between confronting peacocks. The Almoravid silks that stand out above all others are often referred to as "the Baghdad group," but should more accurately be termed "the Baghdad imitations. A special technique in these textiles "favored fine woven lines between two juxtaposed colors and accentuated outlines in preference to massed color -- a technique Spanish weavers developed with such skill that their delicate and intricate textiles are more like a painted miniature," according to the catalogue. Their decorative style is based on large rondels, pearl-banded surrounds, and pairs of animals, face-to-face or back-to-back -- lions, griffins, sphinxes, harpies, heraldic eagles, peacocks and others - Sassanian themes widely used since ancient times. The best example is a 12th-century fragment showing "the Lion Strangler," an ancient Middle Eastern motif: These textiles were equally prized by Spanish Catholics: Another fine example is a 12th-century silk chasuble, badly worn but very beautiful, from the Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. There are also gazelles and dogs within each roundel, all standing on a pedestal on which Kufic lettering repeats the Arabic phrase "perfect blessing. Simplicity and piety were enjoined upon them by their more austere religious beliefs, so the Almohad rulers initially had no royal textile and embroidery workshops, and prohibitions were issued against wearing luxurious silks. However, like the Almoravids, they finally succumbed to the attraction of rich textiles and resumed their production. Rondels containing animals gradually disappeared and circles were substituted with rosettes, lozenges, polygons and stars inspired by caliphal marbles, together with bands of script. Christians made use of such textiles as well, associating the fabrics with power and wealth, just as the caliphal rulers had. The central piece consists of silk and gold thread in overall geometric patterns, and a band of blue cursive Arabic script reads "happiness and prosperity. From the Vatican Library, the exhibition features one of the very few illustrated manuscripts to have survived from Islamic Spain, a version of the peerless love story of Bayad and Riyad. Two immense mosque lamps, a generous loan from the Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fez, document Muslim-Christian wars. Constructed around Spanish church bells taken as booty, of these lamps once lit the Qarawiyyin Mosque; now only 10 remain. The two lent to the exhibition are made of copper alloy; one is from the late 12th or early 13th century and the other from the North African Marinid era of the 14th century. From the Nasrid period, along with a spectacular display of ceremonial arms and armor, comes the large, gold-lustered Alhambra Vase from the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, an early 14th-century storage jar of a kind first mentioned by Washington Irving. Part of a glazed mosaic tile dado, or pedestal element, from the Mexuar council chamber of the Alhambra "bears an interlaced design forming alternating stars of eight and 16 points" and half-stars of 10 points in a design of black, buff, green, and blue motifs on a white ground, the catalogue notes. The superb cabinet doors from the Palacio de los Infantes in Granada have their entire surfaces, inside and out, inlaid with silver, precious woods and green- and natural-colored bone in an intricate design of stars and wheels framed by hexagons, all within rectangular double guilloches, or twisted bands. A dazzling constellation in silver, they are a final accolade to the astonishing art of Islamic Spain. She has lived in Beirut, Washington, Brussels and Baghdad.

*Islamic art encompasses the visual arts produced from the 7th century onward by people who lived within the territory that was inhabited by or ruled by culturally Islamic populations.*

Most of the conquered people accepted the Islamic religion. As Islam spread, a distinctive style of Islamic art gradually developed. It was used mainly for religious architecture, book illustrations, and the decoration of pottery, metalware, and other useful objects. Islamic art was influenced by the artistic styles of the conquered regions. These styles included late Roman, Byzantine, and Persian art. The development of Islamic art was also influenced by two religious restrictions. Mohammed warned artists not to imitate God, the creator of all life, by making images of living things. Most religious art therefore consisted of ornamental designs that did not represent people or animals. The second restriction discouraged the use of costly materials. Islamic artists, therefore, worked mainly with brass, clay, and wood. They learned to decorate objects made of these less expensive materials so skillfully that they looked as beautiful as silver or gold.

**Design Characteristics** The restriction on making images led to the development of one of the most outstanding features of Islamic art. Artists avoided depicting lifelike forms. Instead, they developed a special kind of decoration, called arabesque. An arabesque is a very complicated design. It can consist of twisting patterns of vines, leaves, and flowers. It can be made up of geometric shapes and patterns of straight lines, or it can have curving lines that twist and turn over each other. Sometimes animal shapes were used, but they were always highly stylized and not lifelike. Another important characteristic of Islamic art is the use of calligraphy, or beautiful handwriting. Arabic, the language of most Islamic texts, can be beautifully written in several different kinds of script. These include the straight, geometric Kufic script and the rounded, flowing Naskhi. Islamic artists used Arabic script which is read from right to left as part of their designs for religious books, wall decorations, and art objects. Especially beautiful calligraphy and decoration were used for copies of the Koran, the holy book of the Islamic faith.

**Architecture** The religious buildings known as mosques, where Muslims worship, are among the most important examples of Islamic architecture. Other kinds of buildings include madrasahs, or religious schools; tombs; and palaces.

**Mosques** The first mosques were simple buildings made of wood and clay. Then, as the world of Islam grew in size and power, large mosques of cut stone and brick were built. Because no Islamic building tradition yet existed, these early mosques were modeled after Christian churches. The oldest existing mosque, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, was built in 691. It has many features of Byzantine Christian churches, including Grecian-style columns and mosaic decorations. Muslim architects soon began to develop a new type of religious building, designed specifically for Islamic worship. An early example of the new design is the Great Mosque in Damascus, begun about 706. It is entered through a rectangular court with covered passageways on three sides. In the court is a fountain for washing before prayer. The fourth wall of the court is closest to Mecca, the holy city of Islam. All Muslims face in the direction of Mecca when they pray. The wall is marked by a small, arched prayer niche. Over the aisle leading to this niche is a dome. A tower, or minaret, is used to call the faithful to prayer. Other architects developed variations on this basic style. Some mosques have domes over each end of the aisle leading to the prayer niche. Other mosques have a large central dome. Some domes are ridged on the outside and resemble large melons. Inside, the ceilings of domes are often covered with decorative forms that resemble honeycombs, scales, or stalactites icicle-like formations found in caves. Many mosques, especially those in Spain, North Africa, and Persia, are covered with tiles.

**Madrasahs and Tombs** Madrasahs, or religious schools, were often built next to mosques. They are four-sided structures built around a central court. Each side has a large arched hall that opens onto the courtyard. Students attended lectures in the large halls and lived in smaller rooms within the structure. Sometimes the tomb of a ruler was part of a complex of buildings that also included a mosque and a madrasah. It is laid out like a cross, with four halls opening off a large square court. Another well-known tomb is that of the Tatar warrior Tamerlane, which was built in the city of Samarkand about 1405. Today Samarkand is part of Uzbekistan. This building has a melon-shaped dome covered with brilliant blue and gold tiles. The tiles are made of glazed earthenware cut into various sizes and arranged in elaborate patterns. The Taj Mahal is so renowned that its very name calls up

images of almost unreal splendor and beauty. An article on the Taj Mahal can be found in this encyclopedia.

**Palaces** The early Muslim rulers, or caliphs, were used to desert life; they did not like living in crowded cities. They built palaces in the desert where they could go to relax and hunt. The palaces looked like Roman fortresses, for they were built of stone and surrounded by walls with big towers. The throne rooms, prayer rooms, baths, and living quarters were decorated with murals and mosaics. The architecture of palaces changed as a result of the move. Domed palaces were built of brick covered with thick layers of stucco, and the interiors were decorated with stucco reliefs. In the Jawsaq Palace, built about in Samarra, Mesopotamia, the stucco ornament was of three distinct styles. One type showed deeply carved vine forms, and another added patterns to the surface of the main design. The third style used more abstract patterns, as in the metalwork of Central Asian nomads. These three styles contributed to the development of arabesque decoration, which became typical of Muslim art all over the world. Its many rooms are built around three open courts. The Court of the Myrtles features a long rectangular pool flanked by hedges. In the center of the inner Court of the Lions stands a fountain supported by twelve lions. The lower part of the palace walls are decorated with colored tiles set in geometric patterns. Painted and gilded plaster designs cover the upper part of the walls. Arabic inscriptions in the midst of the ornament say that there is "no conqueror but Allah. Islamic artists produced many beautiful illuminated manuscripts handwritten books decorated with painted pictures and designs. These paintings were created to help explain a scientific text or to add to the pleasure of reading a work of history or literature. Because of the restrictions on making images, illustrations for the Koran and other religious manuscripts often consisted of intricate ornamental designs. Nonreligious manuscripts sometimes contained images of human and animal figures. Figures in early illustrations were simple and painted to look flat or two-dimensional. These qualities can be seen in the illustrations for a famous book of fables, *Kalilah and Dimnah*. Later illustrators painted more detailed and realistic works. One of the best-known Persian painters was Kamal ad-Din Bihzad. This artist combined the ornamental style of Persian illustration with realistic observation of people and animals. From this time on, the influence of Chinese ink paintings, especially landscapes, can be seen in Islamic painting. The last of the great invaders from central Asia was Tamerlane. He and his followers ignored the dictates of their new religion and encouraged artists to paint pictures of people. These pictures still appeared mainly in nonreligious books, however. Most Islamic illustration remained essentially ornamental, uniting many design elements into an intricate pattern. The Muslims greatly respected the knowledge contained in books, especially in the Koran. Their book covers nearly always include a flap to cover and protect the page edges. The covers were made of beautifully tooled leather, often with added decorations of gold and bright colors.

**Decorative Arts** Many different arts were used in the decoration of Islamic mosques and palaces. Arabesque carvings in stone, wood, and plaster adorn the doorways, prayer niches, and pulpits of mosques. The borders of the decorations were often inscribed with quotations from the Koran. Both mosques and palaces were decorated with mosaics--pictures made by pressing tiny pieces of colored glass into wet cement. Painted and glazed tiles covered interior and exterior wall surfaces. Glass lamps decorated with arabesques and Arabic letters hung by long chains from ceilings. They traded ceramics, leather goods, metalware, and textiles as far east as India and China and as far west as Europe. The tastes and spending power of the merchants, as well as the increased contact with other cultures, led to new developments in the decorative arts. Scenes of everyday and popular stories were realistically portrayed on all kinds of objects.

### 7: Islamic art - Wikipedia

*NJ25 X. Browse Shelf. Subjects.*

As the empire grew, large cities emerged as centers for trade and government. Some of these cities held religious importance including Mecca and Medina. Other cities served as capital cities for the government called the Caliphate that ruled the empire. Mecca is where Muhammad was born and where he founded the religion of Islam. The city is still the most important city in Islam today. When Muslims pray each day they pray toward the city of Mecca. Also, each Muslim, if able, is required to make a pilgrimage called the Hajj to Mecca at least once in their life. For nearly years, it was the political center of the Islamic Empire. They founded the city of Baghdad in CE and made it the new capital. For most of the next years, Baghdad was the center of political power in the Middle East. Its location was chosen because it was located in the center of Mesopotamia on the Tigris River. Cairo Egypt In , the Mongols arrived at Baghdad and sacked the city. Much of the city was destroyed. The Abbasid Caliphate re-established its position as the religious leader of the Muslim world in Cairo, Egypt. However, the real political power was held by the Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo. For the next several hundred years, Cairo became the center of the Muslim world. When the Ottoman Empire captured the city of Cairo in , they assumed the role of the Islamic Caliphate. Constantinople was one of the largest cities in the world and a major trade center. At first it was part of the Umayyad Caliphate, but it broke away when the Abbasids took control. Cordoba became the major city and sometimes capital of the Islamic presence in Spain called Al-Andalus. For a period of time, the Umayyads rose to power and claimed the Caliphate of Cordoba. Any non-Muslim caught within the city will be deported from the country. At its peak, Cordoba was one of the most advanced cities in Europe, featuring wide paved streets, running water, hospitals, and technology that other European cities did not have during the Middle Ages. Baghdad was a planned city. The center of the city was a large circular construction called the Round City of Baghdad. By the 9th century, over , people lived in Baghdad making it one of the largest cities in the world. Cordoba returned to Christian rule in as part of the Reconquista. Medina is known as the "City of the Prophet. Listen to a recorded reading of this page: Your browser does not support the audio element. More on the Early Islamic World:

*The David Collection of Applied Arts in Copenhagen includes a section on objects/images of Islamic Medical Science and on Islamic hospitals. They noted that the advent of Islam did not cause any disruption in the evolution of medical science.*

Then,â€ General considerations It is difficult to establish a common denominator for all of the artistic expressions of the Islamic peoples. Such a common denominator would have to be meaningful for miniature painting and historiography, for a musical mode and the form of a poem. The relationship between the art of the Islamic peoples and its religious basis is anything but direct. Like most prophetic religions, Islam is not conducive to fine arts. Thus, the centre of the Islamic artistic tradition lies in calligraphy , a distinguishing feature of this culture , in which the word as the medium of divine revelation plays such an important role. After the 13th century a highly refined art of miniature developed, primarily in the non-Arab countries; it dwells, however, only rarely upon religious subjects. The typical expression of Muslim art is the arabesque , both in its geometric and in its organic formâ€one leaf, one flower growing out of the other, without beginning and end and capable of almost innumerable variations, only gradually detected by the eye, which never lose their charm. An aversion to empty spaces distinguishes that art; neither the tile-covered walls of a mosque nor the rich imagery of a poem allows an unembellished area, and the decoration of a carpet can be extended almost without limit. A system of double intersecting arabesque bands covers the field. Harry Payne Bingham, ; photograph, Otto E. The centre of Islamic religion is the clean place for prayer, enlarged into the mosque , which comprises the community and all its needs. The essential structure is similar throughout the Muslim world. There are, of course, period and regional differencesâ€large, wide court mosques of early times; the court mosques with big halls of Iran and adjacent countries; central buildings with the wonderfully shaped domes of the Ottoman Empire. The implements , however, are the same: If any decoration was needed, it was the words of God, beautifully written or carved in the walls or around the domes. At first connected with the mosques and later independent of them are schools, mausoleums, rooms for the students, and cells for the religious masters. Worshipper in front of the mihrab in the Blue Mosque, Cairo. The minbar is to the right of the mihrab. Mathias Oppersdorff The poetry of the Arabs consisted in the beginning of praise and satirical poems thought to be full of magical qualities. The strict rules of the outward form of the poems monorhyme, complicated metre even in pre-Islamic times led to a certain formalism and encouraged imitation. For many pious Muslims, poetry was something suspect, opposed to the divine law, especially since it sang mostly of forbidden wine and of free love. The combination of music and poetry, as practiced in court circles and among the mystics, has always aroused the wrath of the lawyer divines who wield so much authority in Islamic communities. This opposition may partly explain why Islamic poetry and fine arts took refuge in a kind of unreal world, using fixed images that could be correctly interpreted only by those who were knowledgeable in the art. The ambiguity of Persian poetry, which oscillates between the worldly, the divine, and often the political level, is typical of Islamic writings. Especially in Iran and the countries under its cultural influence, this kind of poetry formed the most important part of literature. Epic poetry of all kinds developed exclusively outside the Arabic-speaking countries; Western readers look in vain for an epic structure in such long poems as in the case of the prose-romances of the Arabs and find instead a rather aimless representation of facts and fictions. A similar characteristic even conditions innumerable historical works in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which, especially in classical times, contain much valuable information, put together without being shaped into a real work of art; only rarely does the historian or philosopher reach a comprehensive view. The accumulation of large amounts of material, which is carefully organized up to the present, seems typical of all branches of Islamic scholarship, from theology to natural sciences. There are many minute observations and descriptions but rarely a full view of the whole process. Later, especially in the Persian, Turkish, and Indo-Muslim areas, a tendency to overstress the decorative elements of prose is evident, and the contents even of official chronicles are hidden behind a network of rhymed prose, which is often difficult to disentangle. This tendency is illustrated in all branches of Islamic art: Instead, there is a kind of carpetlike pattern; the

Arabic and Persian poem is, in general, judged not as a closed unity but rather according to the perfection of its individual verses. Its main object is not to convey a deep personal feeling but to perfect to the utmost the traditional rules and inherited metaphors, to which a new image may sometimes be added. Thus, the personality of the poet becomes visible only through the minimal changes of expression and rhythm and the application of certain preferred metaphors, just as the personality of the miniature painter can be detected by a careful observation of details, of his way of colouring a rock or deepening the shade of a turban. His immortal mystical poems comprise thousands of variations on the central theme of love. Thus, the tile work of a Persian mosque, which combines different levels of arabesque work with different styles of writing, is reminiscent of the way Persian poetry combines at least two levels of reality. And a perfect harmony is reached in some of the miniature manuscripts of Iran, Muslim India, or Ottoman Turkey, which, in their lucid colours and fine details of execution, recall both the perfection of the calligraphy that surrounds them on delicate paper and the subtlety of the stories or poems that they accompany or illustrate. Courtesy of the trustees of the British Library Those accustomed to the Western ideals of plasticity or form in the fine arts and literature or to the polyphonic interweaving of melodic lines in music have some difficulties in appreciating this art. The palaces seem to be without a fixed architectural plan; rooms and gardens are simply laid out according to daily needs. The historian offers an astounding amount of detailed reports and facts but with no unifying concept. The Muslim writer prefers this carpetlike form and adds colour to colour, motif to motif, so that the reader only understands the meaning and end of the whole web from a certain distance. Music, differentiated as it may be in the countries between Morocco and India, follows the same model: Drama and opera in the Western sense did not develop in the Islamic countries until the 19th century, and the art of the novel is also a comparatively recent development. There was no reason for drama: Humans are, at best, puppets on a string, behind whose movements those with insight detect the hand of the play master. Neither is the problem of personal guilt and absolution posed as it is in the West, nor is a catharsis, or purging of emotion, needed through drama. It is true that certain other forms are found in the more folkloristic arts of Islam. Every region has produced poetry, in regional languages, that is livelier and more realistic than the classical court poetry, but poetry limited to one region tends to become restricted to certain fixed forms that can be easily imitated. Thus, strangely hybrid forms emerge in the Islamic arts, highly interesting for the historian of religion and the student of literature but not typical of the classic Islamic ideals. In modern times, of course, there have been imitations of all forms of Western literary and visual arts: A theory of aesthetics comprising the various artistic expressions of the Muslim peoples has yet to be written. Although there have been a number of studies in literary criticism, the formal indebtedness of some of the best modern poets and painters to the Islamic heritage has yet to be fully articulated. It is notable that the arts of the Islamic peoples have had relatively little impact on other cultures, certainly far less than their artistic merit would appear to warrant. Europe has known art objects of Islamic origin since the early Middle Ages, when they were brought home by the Crusaders or manufactured by the Arabs in Sicily and Spain. Much admired and even imitated, they formed part of the material culture in those times, so much so that even the coronation robes of the German emperor were decorated with an Arabic inscription. At the same time, Islamic motives wandered into the belles lettres of Europe, and Islamic scientific books formed a basis for the development of Western science. Islamic culture as such, however, was rather an object of hatred than of admiration; a more objective appreciation of both the works of art and of literature did not start until the mid-18th century, when travelers told of the magnificent buildings in Iran and Mughal India and the first works from Persian literature were translated, influencing German classical literature. Indian miniatures inspired Rembrandt, just as European paintings were imitated by Islamic, especially Mughal, artists. Persian carpets were among the most-coveted gifts for princes and princesses. A bias against the cultures of the East persisted, however, until after the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment. The indefatigable work of the British scholars at Fort William at Calcutta now Kolkata brought new literary treasures to Europe, where they were studied carefully by specialists in the emerging field of Islamic studies. Poets such as Goethe in Germany in the early 19th century paved the way for a deeper understanding of Islamic poetry. Even experts who were aware of the immense wealth of the literatures in the different Islamic languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu until the 20th century rarely appreciated the literatures

from an aesthetic viewpoint; rather, they used them as a source for lexicography and for philological and historical research. The situation in Islamic fine arts and architecture was similar. Although the beauty of the Alhambra, for example, had already inspired European scholars and artists in the early 19th century, a thorough study of Islamic art as an independent field began only in the 20th century. Interest in the music of Islamic peoples, the arabesque-like uniformity of which seems strange to Western ideals of harmony, was also slow to develop.

Islamic literatures Nature and scope It would be almost impossible to make an exhaustive survey of Islamic literatures. There are so many works, of which hundreds of thousands are available only in manuscript, that even a very large team of scholars could scarcely master a single branch of the subject. Islamic literatures, moreover, exist over a vast geographical and linguistic area, for they were produced wherever the Muslims went, pushing out from their heartland in Arabia through the countries of the Middle East as far as Spain, North Africa, and, eventually, West Africa. Iran Persia is a major centre of Islam, along with the neighbouring areas that came under Persian influence, including Turkey and the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia. Many Indian vernaculars contain almost exclusively Islamic literary subjects. There is an Islamic content in the literature of Malaysia and in that of some East African languages, including Swahili. In many cases, however, the Islamic content proper is restricted to religious works—mystical treatises, books on Islamic law and its implementation, historical works praising the heroic deeds and miraculous adventures of earlier Muslim rulers and saints, or devotional works in honour of the Prophet Muhammad. The vast majority of Arabic writings are scholarly; the same, indeed, is true of the other languages under discussion. There are superb historically important translations made by medieval scholars from Greek into Arabic; historical works, both general and particular; a range of religiously inspired works; books on grammar and on stylistics, on ethics and on philosophy. Even a strictly theological commentary can bring about a deeper understanding of some problem of aesthetics. Other categories of writing will be dealt with briefly if these shed light on some particular aspect of literature.

The range of Islamic literatures Although Islamic literatures appear in such a wide range of languages and in so many different cultural environments, their unity is safeguarded by the identity of the basic existential experience, by the identity of the fundamental intellectual interests, by the authoritativeness of certain principles of form and presentation, not to mention the kindred political and social organization within which those peoples aspire to live. The Arabic poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia was regarded for centuries afterward as the standard model for all Islamic poetic achievement, and it directly influenced literary forms in many non-Arab literatures. Arabic script was used by all those peoples who followed Islam, however much their own languages might differ in structure from Arabic. Its imagery not unexpectedly permeates all Islamic poetry and prose. Between the coming of Islam in the 7th century and the 11th, a great deal of poetry and prose in Arabic was produced. One branch of literature in Spain and North Africa matured in perfect harmony with the classical ideals of the Muslim East, although its masters, during the 11th and 12th centuries, invented a few strophic forms unknown to classical Arabic poetry. In modern times North African Muslim literature—mainly from Algeria and Morocco—often uses French as a means of expression, because the tradition of Arabic writing was interrupted by the French occupation in the 19th century and has had to be built up afresh.

Persian In the Muslims entered Iran, and Persian influence on literary taste is apparent in Arabic literature from the mid-8th century onward. Many stories and tales were transmitted from, or through, Iran to the Arab world and often from there to western Europe. Soon Iran could boast a large literature in its own tongue. Persian literature was more varied in its forms and content than that written in classical Arabic. Although Persian adopted many of the formal rules of the Arabic language including prosody and rhyme patterns, new genres, including epic poetry, were introduced from Iran. The lyric, elegant and supple, also reached its finest expression in the Persian language. South Asian Persian culture was by no means restricted to Iran itself. Northwestern India and what is now Pakistan became a centre of Islamic literature as early as the 11th century, with Delhi and Agra being of special importance. It was to remain a stronghold of Muslim cultural life, which soon also extended to the east Bengal and south Deccan. Persian remained the official language of Muslim India until, and not only its poetry but even its historiography was written in the high-flown manner that exemplified the Persian concept of fine style. Muslim India can further boast a fine heritage of Arabic poetry and prose theological, philosophical, and

mystical works. The princes surrounded themselves with a military aristocracy of mainly Turkish extraction, and a few poetical and prose works in Turkish were thus written at some Indian courts. In various regions of the subcontinent an extremely pleasing folk literature has flourished throughout the ages: Sindhi in the lower Indus Valley , for example, and Punjabi in the Punjab are languages rich in an emotional poetry that uses popular metres and forms. At the Indo-Iranian border the oldest fragments of the powerful Pashto poetry date from the Middle Ages.

### 9: Arts of the Islamic World (article) | Khan Academy

*In recent years, new museums devoted to Islamic art have opened, and some of the world's major museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, which debuted a new Islamic wing in.*

The history, art history and architecture of Britain and its Empire, Europe, the Mediterranean and North America, Medieval hospitals in Christian Europe were typically represented as places of misery and squalor, over-crowded reservoirs of infection that had no medical role. Rather they were places in which sick people waited for death. My own notion of medieval health care, at least as offered to Christian pilgrims, was a place where the sick and dying lay on the floor in a cathedral crypt, and the slanted floor was sluiced down once a week. Care of the soul was more important than care of the body. They noted that the advent of Islam did not cause any disruption in the evolution of medical science. In fact the Classical Greek and Roman tradition for treatment and medication was positively enhanced in the Islamic world, where it was gradually enriched with new scientific thinking from the East. By the early C9th, the famous medical works of Hippocrates and Galen were translated at schools and libraries in Damascus, Baghdad and other major Islamic cities. And inspired by Dioscorides, new Arabic texts showed scientific research and progress in the medieval world see photo below. Herbs and other medicines were categorised according to their effectiveness. The Book on Smallpox and Measles. This volume, which was translated many times into Latin from the late C15th on, was the first to carefully analyse the two diseases. *Bimaristan Nur al-Din, 2.* When the pool was filled with water, patients could enjoy the fountains. The first true hospitals were found in C9th Baghdad, with special departments for eye problems, internal medicine, orthopaedic complaints, mental illnesses and infectious diseases. In Syria only 4 medieval hospitals that were built during C12th-C14th have survived. Historians of Syrian architecture have naturally taken great interest in all four. He agreed that the first bimaristans were built in the C9th in Baghdad, and spread to other Islamic urban centres within years. Perhaps those early Muslim pilgrims understood that bimaristans were hospitals AND that they also functioned as a site of charitable care and support, essential for the sick and for long distance travellers. From Baghdad to Cairo to Edirne, hospitals were major and integral components of medieval and early modern Islamic populations. But what role did they play in these societies? Were they sites noted largely for the development of medical knowledge? Ragab examined the history and significance of hospitals in Mamluk Egypt and Syria. He argued that we must view these medieval hospitals as charitable institutions that provided needed services and drugs to the urban poor, rather than as the early progenitors of our modern medical institutions. He explored how these hospitals functioned as charitable institutions, what type of medical theories and treatments they employed, why medieval rulers regarded them as so important, and why their importance decreased after the end of the medieval era. In mid-C12th Damascus, each hospital was beautifully designed and built. And not just hospitals. Bimaristans had become part of the politico-architectural landscape, part of a complex system of institutions that defined urban Islam! By the C12th, hospitals serving the sick and the poor could be found in nearly every Islamic city. The book *Medieval Islamic Hospital* explored the medical networks surrounding early hospitals and examined the particular brand of scientific, practice-oriented medicine they helped to develop. And since he focused on Muslim institutions in particular, Ragab analysed the effect of the Muslim religion on medieval medicine. Ragab reiterated that European hospitals were religious and charitable institution in which healing the soul took precedence over healing the body. How different this was from Baghdad and other centres in the Islamic world! Ahmed Ragab explained the Islamic bimaristan by relating it to the medieval history of patronage, medicine, law and the economy. As part of a philanthropic and religious complex that included a mausoleum and madrasa, the al-Mansur foundation was examined against the background of its predecessors, in Islamic Egypt and the Levant, and in Crusader Jerusalem.

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