

Islamic Art And Architecture

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Historical Scope and Cultural Diversity of Islamic Art

Islamic art entails visual techniques dating back to the 7th century, henceforth, from individuals who dwelled within regions that were dominated by or under the social rule of Islamic society. This makes it hard to define or describe Islamic art since it encompasses many regions and a wide range of populations over a period of 1400 years. It cannot be interpreted as a religious art of time or a place or only a medium such as painting. The broad field of Islamic architecture entails areas such as painting, pottery, calligraphy, glass as well as textile arts, for example, embroidery and carpets.

Islamic art has a distinct character as it is not limited to religious art. Instead, it also involves all the art depicted by the rich and varied cultures within the Islamic communities as well. It often includes the secular traits and elements that are ignored or frowned upon, if allowed, by some Islamic theologians. Other than the ever-present inscriptions done by calligraphy, religious art is, in reality, less known in the Islamic technique than Western medieval art. However, there is an exception in this case in that the Islamic architecture used in building mosques and other complexes of the surrounding infrastructure is the most prominent remains. Religious scenes may be covered by figurative paintings, but this art is usually used in secular contexts such as illuminated poetic books or the walls of palaces. A notably significant aspect is the decoration and calligraphy of the Quran manuscript. However, other religiously attributed forms of art, such as the mosque fittings like tiles, i.e., Girih tiles, carpets and woodwork, and mosque lamps, usually contain similar motifs and styles as is the case with contemporary secular art.^[1] However, this is more prominent with religious inscriptions.

There are many factors and people who influenced Islamic art and architecture. These include early Christian art and Roman and Byzantine styles, which were incorporated into early Islamic art and architecture. One of the most significant influences on Islamic art is Sassanian art. Other influences included styles from Central Asia, which were adopted with a variety of nomadic incursions, and Chinese art, which had a formative impact on Islamic pottery, painting, and textiles. Though there have been critics by some set of modern art historians on the entire concept of Islamic art and architecture, referring to it as a mirage or a figment of imagination, similarities are observed between the art created at widely differing periods and locations in the Islamic world, particularly in the Islamic Golden Age, are abundant enough to keep the inferences in the broad application by scholars.^[2]

There are recurrent aspects of Islamic art, such as the application of geometrical vegetal or floral designs in a repetition referred to as the arabesque. In Islamic art, the arabesque is typically applied

to symbolize the indivisible, transcendent, and infinite attribute of God. Errors in the recurrence can be introduced deliberately as an indication of humility portrayed by artists whose belief is that only God is capable of perfection. However, there are arguments and debates regarding this theory.^[3]

Geometric Pattern, Floral Design, and Arabic Calligraphy

Consequently, though not commonly, Islamic art's primary area of focus is the portrayal of patterns, whether floral or purely geometrical as well as the Arabic calligraphy instead of figures since many Muslims fear it. The fear is due to the notion that it is attributed to human forms of worship and, hence, a sin prohibited by the Qur'an against God. All eras of Islamic art contain human portrayals, commonly in more private types of miniatures, where it is rare to find them absent. The human attribute of the objectives of worship is regarded as idolatry and is strictly forbidden in some interpretations of the Islamic rule of law referred to as the Sharia law. Consequently, there are other numerous depictions of Muhammad, who is renowned as the chief prophet of the Muslims, in Islamic art. Tiny decorative portrayals of humans and animals, mainly if they are on the hunt for animals, are notably seen on secular pieces in a variety of media from many eras. However, the portraits were developed slowly.^[4]

The outstanding restrictions on making images primarily characterize Islamic art and architecture. Rather than depicting graphic arts, the artists instead ventured into a unique form of decoration known as arabesque. The style is quite complicated, as it can include twisting patterns of leaves, vines, and flowers. It can be developed using geometric patterns of straight lines and shapes. However, it can also consist of curved lines twisting and turning over one another. There is also the use of highly stylized animal shapes that do not appear lifelike.^[5]

The use of calligraphy, or beautiful handwriting, is also another crucial feature of Islamic art. Arabic, which is the commonly used language in Islamic texts, is beautifully inscribed in various forms of script. They include the geometric Kufic script, straight as well as the rounded, flowing Naskhi. Arabic writing, which is read from right to left, was also used by Islamic artists as part of their art for wall decorations, religious books, and art objects as well. Decorations and particularly beautiful calligraphy were applied for copies of the Qur'an, the holy book used in the Islamic faith. Consequently, Islamic art and architecture are not associated with particular people or nations. Instead, it is an art of civilization developed through the combination of historical instances such as the enforced binding of broad states under Islamic rule, the Arabian conquest of the Ancient World, and the later invasion of the territories under the Islamic banner by foreigners and immigrants. Islamic art and architecture were, from the start, significantly influenced and determined by the political structures cutting across the sociological and geographical boundaries.

Persian, Arab, and Turkish Influences on Islamic Architecture

The complex attributes of Islamic art and architecture were established on the grounds of pre-Islamic beliefs in the various nations conquered, and the tightly integrated blend of Turkish, Arab, and Persian cultures was incorporated into all parts of the modern Moslem/Muslim Territory.

The most prominent examples of Islamic art include paintings, calligraphy, ceramics and tiling, rugs and carpets, metalwork as well as glass art. Most of this form of technique is referred to as decorative art due to its aesthetic nature and quality, which makes it more applicable for beauty purposes.^[6] Examples of Islamic architecture include palaces, mosques, and surrounding buildings constructed around the mosques. The buildings had unique decorations and were specially planned, structured, and built. Other examples of Islamic art are the Dome of the Rock found in Jerusalem, the Alhambra located in Spain, the Friday Mosque found in Esfahan, the city typically regarded to be full of architectural treasures, and the Great Mosque of Samarra established in Iraq.

Conclusively, it is notable that Islamic art and architecture are unique in their depictions and figurative nature. They are governed by Islamic law and Sharia Law and avoid idolatry depictions that are restricted by their holy book. Consequently, the art and nature of architecture are unique in that they are not associated with any particular group of people, society, or nation; instead, it is a result of influence by various groups, countries, and circumstances.

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