

Islamic Art

Islamic art includes all religious and secular artwork created over the last 1400 years in the Islamic world and countries that used to be part of the Islamic Empire.

Islamic art includes:



calligraphy



glasswork



ceramics



metalwork



textiles



architecture

Islamic art seeks to make objects beautiful and help people to reflect and think about the world, rather than recreate physical forms and real objects. Depicting people is not a part of the Islamic faith, so Muslim artists concentrate on the use of abstract forms, patterns and shapes in their work.

Aspects of Islamic art

Three main aspects of Islamic art are calligraphy, arabesque and geometric patterns. Artists have used these aspects to decorate the surface of many objects and buildings.

Calligraphy is the art of producing beautiful and decorative handwriting. Islamic calligraphy is used in art forms to reproduce the words of the Qur'an.



Arabesque is a floral pattern based on the bindweed plant, which is made up of entwined flowers, leaves and stems.



Geometric patterns are made by repeating, interlacing and tessellating motifs and geometric shapes, such as stars, squares and triangles.



Motifs

When creating a pattern to use in Islamic art, an artist can begin by creating a motif. A motif is a decorative image or design that can be repeated to form a pattern. Motifs can be different styles. Figurative motifs are realistic representations of living things or objects. Vegetal motifs represent plants. Geometric and abstract motifs consist of shapes.



Stars in Islamic art

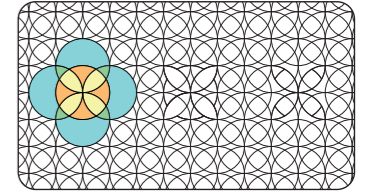
Islamic art often features geometric star motifs because the star is believed to symbolise the light and perfection of Allah. Regular stars in Islamic art have 6, 8, 10, 12 or 16 points.



Islamic tile

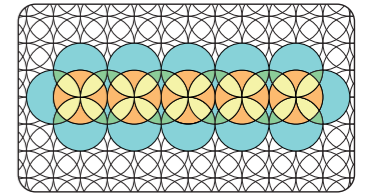
Designing patterns on a grid

Geometric motifs and patterns can be made on a grid. This motif has been made by colouring in shapes on a grid made from circles.



motif

A pattern is created when a motif is repeated. Grids can be made from shapes, including circles, squares and triangles.



pattern

Relief sculpture

Relief sculpture is any work where an image or pattern is raised from a surface. If only slightly raised, the sculpture is called low relief or 'bas-relief'. If the image or pattern is almost three dimensional but is still attached to the background, the sculpture is called high relief or 'alto-relief'. Islamic architectural surfaces are often decorated with low and high relief sculptures.



relief wall decoration

Glossary

secular Not connected to religion.

tessellate To fit shapes together in a pattern with no spaces in between.