

Islamic Art

Learning Objectives

Following the conclusion of the chapter, the student will be able to:

- recount the founding of Islam.
- list reasons why Islamic art and architecture are so diverse.
- understand why Islamic art discourages figurative images.
- contrast Shi'ite Muslims with the Sunni Muslims.
- assess the architectural developments of the Umayyad caliphs.
- recognize the *Dome of the Rock* as the first great monument of Islamic art.
- examine the *Mshatta Palace* as a Umayyad hunting retreat.
- define architectural elements of the mosque, specifically the *Great Mosque of Kairouan*.
- identify the Great Mosque in Cordoba as one of the finest surviving examples of Umayyad architecture.
- appraise Cordoba as a major commercial and intellectual hub and flourishing center for the arts during the final century of Umayyad rule.
- recognize variations of the horseshoe arch and the pointed arch as well as the unique *mugarnas*.
- describe the importance of calligraphy and the calligraphers to the Islamic world.
- recall the roles of the written word to the Islamic culture.
- recognize the roll of calligraphy on objects made of ceramics, textiles, and the like.
- examine the reasons why textiles were an important means of disseminating artistic styles and techniques.
- explain the disintegration of the Islamic world.
- describe the additions to the *Great Mosque of Isfahan* which made it more complex.
- recognize the *Mamluk Glass Oil Lamps* as a common fixture in mosques.
- describe the *Madrassa-mausoleum-mosque* in Cairo as a display of personal wealth, status, and piety.
- recall the five Pillars of Islam.
- recognize the *Alhambra* as a beautifully refined Islamic palace.
- describe different types of Islamic portable arts.
- recognize the glaze technique used to create lusterware.
- describe the Muslim tradition of silk weaving.
- discuss different works produced by the Herat School.
- recount the history of the founding of the Ottoman Empire.
- appraise Sinan as a great Muslim architect.
- recognize the *tugras* as a specialized art form.
- discuss the Islamic world of the modern era.

Key Terms

- al-Amin
- Allah
- Muhammad
- Islam
- Muslims
- *surahs*
- Qur'an
- Medina
- hijira
- caliph
- aniconism
- arabesques
- Shi'ites
- mosque
- Umayyad dynasty
- Abbasid dynasty

- Mecca
- The Dome of the Rock
- Haram al-Sharif
- martyria
- mosaics
- drum
- arcades
- piers
- columns
- aisles
- ambulatories
- frieze
- Mshatta
- rosette
- hypostyle
- minaret
- *qibla*
- *mihrab*
- four-iwan mosque
- centrally planned mosque
- maqsura
- minbar
- *emir*
- horseshoe arches
- voussoirs
- Abd al-Rahman III
- al-Hakam II
- tesserae
- *muqarnas*
- calligraphy
- Kufic
- *surah*
- Ibn Muqla
- parchment
- vellum
- *naskhi*
- Khurasan
- Samarkand
- Saljuqs
- Genghiz Khan
- Mamluk
- *madradas*
- *iwans*
- *muqarnas*
- joggled voussoirs
- Alhambra in Granada
- *chahar bagh*
- Five Pillars of Islam
- *shahadah*
- *salat*
- *zukah*
- *sawm*
- *haji*
- Kaaba
- squinches
- lusterware
- infinite arabesque
- tapestry
- slit tapestry
- warp
- weft
- Kamal al-Din Bihzad
- Ottomans
- Osman
- centrally planned mosque
- Suleyman “the Magnificent”
- Saljuqs
- *tugras*

Major Works

- **Dome of the Rock**, Jerusalem, begun 691-2, Interior (fig. 8-4)
- **Prayer Hall, Great Mosque, Cordoba**, Spain, begun 785-86 (fig. 8-8)
- **Mamluk Glass Oil Lamp**, Syria or Egypt, c. 1355, Glass, polychrome enamel, and gold; height 12” (30.5 cm), Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York (page 296)
- **Courtyard, Masjid-I Jami**, Isfahan, Iran, 11th – 18th century, 14th century iwan vault, 17th century minarets (fig. 8-14)
- **Court of the Lions, Alhambra**, Granada, Spain, 1354-91 (fig. 8-17)
- **Griffin**, Islamic Mediterranean, probably Fatimid Egypt, 11th century, Bronze; height 42 1/8” (107 cm), Museo dell Opera del Duomo, Pisa (fig. 8-19)
- **The Macy Jug**, Iran, 1215-16, Composite body glazed, painted fritware and incised with pierced outer shell: 6 5/8 x 7 3/4” (16.8 x 19.7 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 8-21)
- **Banner of Las Navas de Tolosa**, Detail of center panel, from southern Spain, 1212-50, Silk tapestry weave with gilt parchment, 10’ 9 7/8 x 7’ 2 5/8” (3.3 x 2.2 m), Museo de Telas Medievales, Monasterio de Santa Maria la Real de Las Huelgas, Burgos, Spain (fig. 8-22)

- **Qur'an Frontispiece** (right half of two-page spread), Cairo, Egypt, c. 1368, Ink, pigments, and gold on paper; 24 x 18" (61 x 45.7 cm), National Library, Cairo (fig. 8-24)
- **The Caliph Harun Al-Rashid Visits the Turkish Bath**, From a copy of the 12th century *Khamisa* of Nizami, Herat, Afghanistan, c. 1494, Ink and pigments on paper; approx. 7 x 6" (17.8 x 15.3), The British Library, London (fig. 8-25)
- **Mosque of Sultan Selim**, Edirne, Turkey, 1568-75 (fig. 8-27)
- **Illuminated Tugra of Sultan Suleyman**, Istanbul, Turkey, c. 1555-60, Ink, paint, and gold on paper, removed from a *firman* and trimmed to 20 1/2 x 25 3/8" (52 x 64.5 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 8-29)

Discussion Topics

1. What were the circumstances of the founding of Islam?
2. Why was early Islamic art and architecture so diverse? Why is Islamic art devoid of figurative images?
3. What is the difference between a Shi'ite Muslim and a Sunni Muslim? Do these two sects exist today?
4. What were the roles of the written word in the Islamic culture?
5. How did Spanish textile designs mirror architectural ornamentation?
6. How do Muslim manuscript pages resemble carpets and why?
7. How was the Ottoman Empire formed?