

The Muslim World League Dedicates International Museum to the Prophet's Life

Embracing Evolution in Islamic Art

A Short History of Islamic Art

Islamic Cultures Opening to Western Influences

Islamic Art:

AN ENDURING LEGACY, A MODERN ATTITUDE



One of the pavilions in the Museum of the Life of the Prophet showcases the history of women in Islam and highlights the important role women played in the early days of Islam by spreading a message of truth and virtue. ”

About the MWL

The Muslim World League is a non-governmental international organization based in Makkah. Its goal is to clarify the true message of Islam.

Crown Prince Faisal, the third son of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, founded the Muslim World League during the meeting of the general Islamic Conference on May 18, 1962, in order to fulfill his dream for an Islamic Ummah. The establishment of the MWL continued the vision of the Crown Prince to enlighten and educate the international Muslim community, which began with the founding of the Islamic University of Madinah in 1961. The Muslim World League has grown into a worldwide charity to which the Saudi Royal Family remain active donors.

Ascending to the throne as King Faisal in November 1964, the Saudi leader remained steadfast in his faith, proclaiming: "I beg of you, brothers, to look upon me as both brother and servant. 'Majesty' is reserved to God alone and 'the throne' is the throne of the Heavens and Earth."



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Each year, the Muslim World League sponsors a robust international food basket program during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a time of spiritual purification, renewal of the individual, and heightened devotion and worship for Muslims around the world. One of the ways Muslims exemplify their heightened devotion is through charitable acts of service to the poor and needy.

So far, Muslim World League employees have distributed food baskets to thousands of families who have celebrated nightly break fasts throughout 30-day observance and might otherwise not have enough food to get through the month. These baskets are distributed to communities in need and include rice, sugar, oil, and other cooking essentials. In the last three years, the MWL has distributed more than 500,000 Ramadan food baskets in more than 30 countries.



Sudan



Jordan





Somalia



Niger



Benin



Nigeria



South Africa



Chad





Senegal



Mauritania



Uganda





Sure, it's art. But is it Islamic?

Muslim artists around the world are producing works drawing from their life experiences, their sense of the world and humanity, and the Islamic visual aesthetic that has surrounded them and spoken to them all their lives. Some of these artists produce works that are not immediately recognizable as Islamic, and yet the influence is clear.

We understand Islamic art as characterized by the absence of figures and the use instead of calligraphic, geometric and abstract floral patterns. Indeed, there is a tradition of aniconism in Islam that derives from the prohibition of idolatry and the belief that only God can create living forms. While there has been significant discussion among Muslim scholars over the centuries about what this means in practical terms, for those same centuries human and animal forms have been absent from Islamic buildings, ceramics, weavings, paintings and drawings.

In this issue, you will read about Muslim artists who are fusing the Islamic aesthetic with other influences to produce works that are unique. Are they Islamic? Yes and no. But they certainly are the product of the Islamic mind and spirit.

These works are the product of the increasing cultural interpenetration occurring in the world.

It is not a globalization of art; it is an openness and appreciation of the traditions and aesthetics of other cultures. This is not new in art, but it is accelerating.

You will also read about efforts of governments and the Muslim World League to bring worlds together through art. The United Arab Emirates, already home to the Louvre Abu Dhabi, will break ground soon on a new Guggenheim Museum on Saadiyat Island designed by Frank Gehry. The government of Saudi Arabia has put itself fully behind an explosion of popular culture in the country, including film, live performances and other attractions from overseas.

Amid all this energy and movement, there is still room for what is traditional in Islam, and we see it with the Muslim World League's launch of the Museum of the Life of the Prophet and Islamic Civilization in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, and its exhibition on Islam held in Taiwan, now home to more than a quarter million Muslims. And we cannot talk about contemporary Islamic art without discussing its roots and traditions, which we have done through a brief history of Islam art and an article on the venerable art of rug making.

- The Editors





Opening of the new International Museum of the Life of the Prophet and Islamic Civilization in Madinah.

The Muslim World League Dedicates International Museum to the Prophet's Life

The Museum of the Life of the Prophet was founded by the Muslim World League in early February to spread the message of Islam among people by using state-of-the-art technologies and displays and innovative programs. It is located next to the Prophet's Mosque in the Al Madinah Province of Saudi Arabia and will introduce visitors to all the prophets, to the study of the Holy Qu'ran and the Prophet's Sunnah, and to important recent authoritative documents in Islam, such as the Madinah Charter and the Makkah Document.

It will also support one of the goals of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030: to enrich the experience of visitors and residents through opportunities to visit and appreciate rich cultural and heritage sites. Saudi Arabia is creating a host of projects as part of these efforts as it diversifies the economy, creates more cultural and entertainment opportunities and reduces the country's reliance on oil.

The Muslim World League has said that the museum aims to instill the spirit of love and



The Museum of the Life of the Prophet is the beginning of a series of Islamic museums that will be constructed and operated by the Muslim World League in capitals around the world. "

- Prince Faisal Bin Salman

goodness and the meanings of mercy, humanity, moderation, tolerance and coexistence, as well as to spread the message of Islam.

Prince Faisal Bin Salman, emir of Madinah region and chairman of the Madinah Region

Development Authority, opened the exhibition and museum with the support of the Madinah Region Development Authority.

The exhibits use the latest technology to take viewers on a historic and spiritual journey of the Prophet's life. It is dedicated to the history of the Islamic world and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and open 24 hours a day.

The modern exhibit includes educational panoramas and theatres, the first of their kind, dedicated to portraying the life of the Prophet through a series of documentaries, virtual and augmented reality and 3D displays. Many of the Prophet's personal possessions, including details of his furniture, clothing, footwear and even his comb, have been recreated from the historical record and bought back to life. The museum also showcases holographic technology, physical models supported by interactive technology, which take viewers on a spiritual and historical journey. Visitors can enjoy the exhibition in



Museum opening.

Arabic, English, French, Turkish, Indonesian, Urdu and Spanish.

During the opening, Prince Faisal said the Museum of the Life of the Prophet is the beginning of a series of Islamic museums that will be constructed and operated by the Muslim World League in capitals around the world.

The contents and collections of the exhibition and museum exemplify a historical legacy from which to spread understanding of the Prophet's message and his rich and fruitful life to all parts of the world to demonstrate the Prophet's exhortation to tolerance and moderation.

The integrated scientific and technical exhibition offers comprehensive and modern displays of the Islamic message and laws, as well as Islam's message of humanitarianism and faith.

Visitors can walk through 25 pavilions, view dozens of paintings and interactive displays, go through 350 educational and teaching methods that highlights the greatness of Islam and preserves the rights of non-Muslims, and appreciate more than 500 artifacts as they go through the museum that narrates the history of the Prophet's life in Makkah and Madinah. Moreover, visitors can also enter the Prophet's Mosque.

One of the pavilions in the Museum of the Life of the Prophet showcases the history of women in Islam and highlights the important role women played in the early days of Islam by spreading a message of truth and virtue. Women played a vital role in the life of the Prophet. The pavilion also promotes the importance of children in the life of the Prophet, giving accounts of how he played with them and the advice he gave on how to raise them.



Malaysian PM Muhyiddin Yassin, fourth from left, visits the International Museum of the Life of the Prophet Biography and Islamic Civilization in Madinah.



Jameel Art Prize Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London

Embracing Evolution in Islamic Art

Art plays a crucial role in promoting and expressing culture. It has a power to engage and inspire people whether it is from their native culture or not. For younger generations, art can inspire a deeper connection with their roots and cultural identity. As in many parts of the world, art in Islamic societies has seen notable change over recent years as societies evolve, merge, and interact as never before. This is led to a new era in Islamic art.

Islamic art has always followed a different tradition from the artwork produced in the West. It is rooted in a desire to honor and show deference to Allah. It eschews images of animals

and people, favoring recurrent motifs and patterns to symbolize the infinite nature of Allah. Some artists would even introduce small errors in their repetitions purely to show humbly that only Allah can produce perfection.

In the contemporary period, the boundaries of Islamic art have expanded to include works both from artists in the Middle East and those with roots in the region who form part of the global Islamic diaspora. This new generation of artists draws inspiration from their own cultural traditions. They incorporate imagery, techniques and ideas from earlier periods, repurposing Islamic art into a platform for their own personal

expression. In this way contemporary Islamic art is less constrained by traditional intentions.

In the series “How Iraqi Are You?” artist Hayv Kahraman tells an autobiographical story of her own experience growing up in an Islamic family, intertwined with her journey to re-learn her mother tongue as she seeks to impart her Arabic heritage to her daughter. The painting *The Translator* forms part of this series and tells the story of her mother attempting to translate between some Swedish aid workers and a group of Iraqi refugees. The exchange became heated, and her mother was asked to choose a side. This alludes to contemporary political dialogue, where all too often people are pressured to take absolutist positions, a sensitive issue in post-Saddam Iraqi society.



Islamic art has always followed a different tradition from the artwork produced in the West. It is rooted in a desire to honor and show deference to Allah.”

The Naqsh Collective was founded in 2010 to exhibit art and furniture inspired by contemporary and traditional Arabic aesthetics. Created by sisters Nisreen and Nermeen Abu-Dail, the Collective merges the art, architecture, and cal-



Naqsh Collective (Nisreen and Nermeen Abudail), *Shawl*, 2015, Solid walnut wood with brass and brass inlay.

ligraphy of a rich cultural heritage with a minimalist modern look that appears at home in a modern environment. Their work is dominated by traditional patterns more commonly seen in embroidery, but in their work these patterns are carved into wood, creating beautiful wall panels that respect the Islamic traditions behind them in a sleek, modern design.

Efforts to support the evolution of Islamic art have been present across Islamic society. Based out of Dubai and Jeddah, the organization Art Jameel supports artists and creative communi



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ties, running education programs and initiatives that connect artists of all ages with their heritage, inspiring new creations.

In partnership with Art Jameel, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London supports the biennial Jameel Art Prize exhibition. The Prize is one of the most prestigious awards for contemporary artists and focuses on work inspired by Islamic art and design, one of the few global art awards focused on Islamic culture.

These sorts of organizations and partnerships are important for the continued development of Islamic artistic life. As young Muslims become more connected with the wider world than previous generations ever could have imagined, new influences are flowing into Islamic society. Modern Islamic artists are embracing this exposure to distant cultures, blending new ideas with their own traditions to create a wave of innovative works. Grounded in admiration for their heritage, this new perspective is driving a beautiful new era in Islamic artwork.



Kamrooz Aram, Ephesian Fog, 2016

RIYADH FASHION WEEK AND THE SPREAD OF ARAB FASHION

Clothing has long been a defining aspect of Islamic culture. Style of dress signifies rank, status or profession, and historically fabric was a common gift to reward loyal service. While modern Muslim fashion is deeply steeped in traditional textiles and cultural values, within the past decade a new league of modern designers has begun to revolutionize the industry.

Though these designs are inspired by traditional conservative dress, the modernized clothing features bright colors and new silhouettes, giving them a vibrant, chic feel. In the past decade, this modest style has swept through the Western fashion industry. In 2016, Anniesa Hasibuan became the first designer to present a New York Fashion Week collection with Hijabs. At the end of her show, Hasibuan received a standing ovation from the crowd. Since then, labels such as Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Chanel, and Nike have introduced head coverings to their collections, and Muslim designers are often featured at the world's largest fashion shows.

In 2018, Riyadh hosted its first-ever Fashion Week, featuring local designers as well as popular high-end brands from around the world. The event had an all-female audience and instituted a social media ban to prevent leaked photos of women without head coverings. Regardless of these precautions, most of the models wore abayas and floor-length gowns or jumpsuits.

The event was put on by the Dubai-based Arab Fashion Council, which also launched the Saudi Top Emerging Designers' Initiative, a program that provides six up-and-coming designers with support and mentorship annually. The initiative is intended to encourage local designers in their efforts to be embraced by the international fashion community.

Muslim officials see the spread of Muslim fashion as an opportunity to share their culture and values while demonstrating the creative strides their countries have made. "It's not just about women buying clothes," said honorary president of Riyadh Fashion Week Princess Noura bint Faisal Al-Saud, "It's about the knowledge they can gain by being creative, challenging people to think outside the box and bolstering creative industries across the board."



A model poses in fashionable conservative dress



Women sit on their mats before prayer.

Weaving A Masterpiece: The Cultural Significance of Rug Making in Islam

As you read this, mentally picture what “art” is to you. Truly take a moment to allow yourself to conceptualize examples of art and how it moves you. The first few images to flash through your mind may be of a painting, a song, a sculpture, a photograph, or even an article of clothing. Art consists of creative skill and imagination and can come in almost any form imaginable.

Most art is hung on walls, towering above us, so it is easy to take for granted the art below

our very own feet. Fiber art is a style of fine art that uses textiles; the manual labor involved in its creation adds to its significance. Carpeting has not only become one of the most essential household items in today’s modern world, but rugs are also some of the most valuable art items cherished by collectors and museums. Today’s textile art has been heavily influenced by the Muslim world. Beyond their decorative and utilitarian purposes, these rugs can also serve as a vessel for religious practice.



Ornate designs and rich colors are used in rug making.

Back to the Beginning

The Islamic carpet tradition is a very old custom that was practiced by early civilizations. It has been recorded that centuries ago, traditional Bedouin tribes, like the ones of Arabia, Persia and Anatolia, made use of the wool produced by their herds to create carpets that were useful in many aspects of their daily lives. Ancient weaving techniques created rugs that were then used as shelter by forming tents. These antique creations also served as protection from sandstorms, curtains for privacy and floor coverings for comfort, and were even formed into satchels for the transportation of objects.

Although it was in Central Asia that carpet weaving originated, Islamic culture truly transformed the craft into an art form that has cap-

tivated the attention of the Western World for centuries. It was under the Seljuks, a medieval Turko-Persian Sunni Muslim empire, that the Muslim carpet reached a high standard of technique and quality of design. Muslim carpets can be known as Oriental rugs, Turkish rugs or Persian rugs depending on the region and design. Sometimes using expensive materials such as silk and threads wrapped in metals, carpets were commissioned by the royal courts of the Islamic world. The intricacies of the design and quality and rarity of the materials made carpets a symbol of status and wealth for the owners. This art form eventually caught the eye of the Western world through trade and exploration. In fact, the Muslim majority regions during this time were sometimes branded as “the rug belt.”

A Global Reach

Before Europe knew of Muslim carpets, historians believe households used rushes as floor covering. Muslim textile products did not begin to captivate Europeans until the Middle Ages. During this time, contact with the Muslim world became more abundant, and through trade, Muslim carpets began to be seen as an item of luxury. It was under the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal dynasties that the craft thrived.

Textile art was so coveted that it was at first only possessed by the monarchy, the rich, or religious leaders. Carpets were considered national treasures, and those fortunate enough to own Muslim carpets often would hang them on walls like paintings, not wanting them to be stepped on.

Textile art eventually became an industry that empowered female artisans. Women created carpets not only for personal use, but also for sale. The tradition of weaving and looming has been passed down for centuries by females in Middle East villages and nomadic tribes. The craft not only financially befitted communities through sales and trade, it also served as a creative outlet whereby artisans transformed and perfected the craft.

A rug or carpet is now commonplace in most homes today. Thanks to the craft now becoming wildly popularized, appreciated and mechanized, many can enjoy the comforts and beauty of carpets at a modest cost. Despite the ready availability and affordability of machine-made rugs, however, many people still seek elegant rugs of many different styles and regional



Prayer mats being used at mosque.

patterns for their homes. While it is easy to take for granted the efforts that went into these beautiful utilitarian pieces, many still deem certain carpets as invaluable pieces of art and history. Some of the world's most impressive art museums have expansive exhibits dedicated to collections of antique Muslim rugs.

Religious Impact

Beyond their beauty, rugs play an integral role in how many Muslims practice their faith. The Prophet ﷺ—Mohammed prayed on a mat that was made of palm fronds, also known as a *khumrah*. For Muslims, the act of prayer, practiced five times a day, must be conducted on a clean surface. Purity is extremely important in this daily ritual, which is why washing is performed

before prayer. Prayer mats, or *sajjadat salat*, provide a protective layer between the ground and those worshipping.

These religious pieces of art typically have a specific design. This design is referred to as a *mihrab* and represents a mosque that helps the worshipper pray in the direction of Makkah. Whatever the design may be, and no matter its material or age, a prayer rug remains one of the most precious and valued items in a Muslim home.

The Qu'ran says, "And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet." Muslims can appreciate the religious importance of rugs, as it is mentioned several times in the Qu'ran. Carpets are included as a furniture element of Paradise and promised to believers of Islam who enter the heavens.



A beautiful array of prayer mats.



Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem.

A Short History of Islamic Art

Islamic art is one of the few styles that has remained constant since its earliest days. Spanning more than a millennium, Islamic art is found from Andalusia, in southern Spain, to the eastern shores of China, boasting an almost unrivaled geographic diversity, and much Islamic art that is centuries old can appear quite contemporary. But how and when did this unique art style find itself in these various cultures?

Beginnings

Most scholars point to Islamic art as starting around the end of the seventh century, when it proliferated in various forms such as ceramics, mosaics, wood and ivory carvings, textiles and calligraphy. The most notable elements it shared in its roots lie within Persian and Byzantine art (textiles and mosaics) moving into



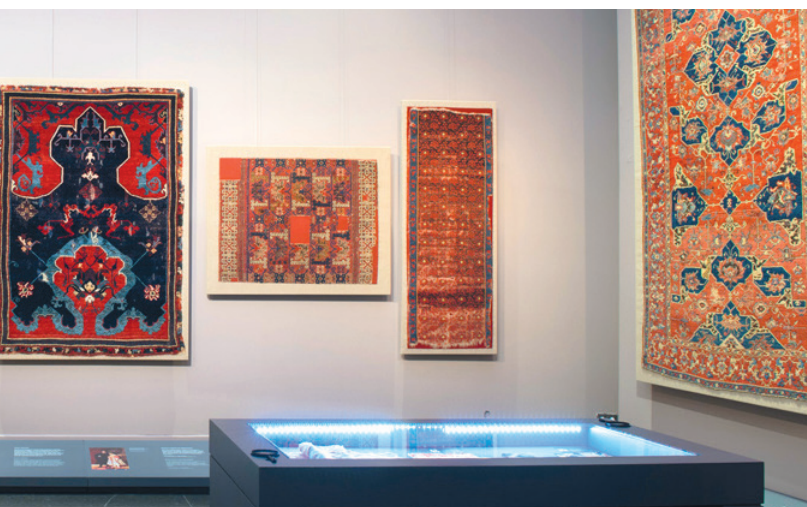
Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Greek and early Christian art (carvings and visual mediums), which were the primary art styles in the territories of the Islamic empires. However, Islamic art has always centered itself around Islamic ideals.

The Umayyad Caliphates (661-750) were the first overarching Islamic empire to institute Islamic art into practice. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is one of the best examples of the Umayyad's use of Islamic art motifs with a notable Byzantine presence in the mosaics. The

inscriptions and the prominent multicolored arabesques on the mosque's friezes and walls laid a foundation for the art style as a whole, especially in architecture.

The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus is one of the most notable pieces of Islamic art, and would serve as a foundation for future mosque construction. The Umayyads reconstructed an original Roman tower to create one of the first minarets, the oldest minaret in Islam. The marble window grilles are arranged in dazzling



- Great Mosque of Isfahan.

- The Taj Mahal.

- A wide array of carpets with Islamic-style patterns featured in Berlin, Germany.

shapes. Scholars point to this arrangement as the precursor to arabesques, one of the central identifiers of Islamic art.

The Abbasids (750-1258) largely cemented the foundation the Umayyads built, but transferred much of the style to small-scale arts, such as ceramics. With the invention of glazed ceramics and lusterware, the Abbasids transferred many of the Arabic inscriptions, the new arabesque style and the bright colors popular at the time to pottery. The popularization of the new art style also led to interest in calligraphy, with Qu'rans beginning to be decorated with more complex forms.

Medieval Period

The end of the Abbasids led to the breakup of the empire and the flourishing of regional interpretations to Islamic art. Al-Andalus in the south of Spain, widely known for being a great cultural center during the Middle Ages, also became a notable center for art. Artists fused the foundations learned from the Umayyads and the Abbasids with input from Berber tribes and Magrebi influence to create masterpieces. Ivory became a medium for the art style, with the pyxis of Al-Mughira widely accepted as the pinnacle of the genre. This carved cylindrical box, designed for cosmetics, contained silver containers of perfume. Left open, it would fill the air with fragrance. It is now in the Louvre.

In Turkey, Iran and the north of India, various groups struggled for power, constructing vast cities that boasted various artworks that demonstrated the rulers' power, wealth and sophistication. Kaleidoscopic arabesques decorated the marble of several mosques, notably the Great Mosque of Isfahan. Coinage for these various groups also displayed Arabic epigraphs that featured several images, including astrological and animalistic figures.

Large Empires Flourish

The end of the Islamic medieval period is largely marked by the creation of The Three Great Empires, the Ottomans, the Mughals and the Safavids and Qajars of Persia.

Ottomans:

The Ottomans cultivated a flourishing art industry, with the mass production of ceramics and tiles that cemented the empire as a major producer of Islamic art. Arabesques and patterns featured on mosques are found in metalwork, carpets and tapestries. By the 16th century, the Ottoman art style saw influences from China, mainly with the production of ceramics and the use of florals.

Mughals:

The Mughal Empire is most notable for the construction of the most famous piece of Islamic art: the Taj Mahal. Built to host the tomb of his favorite wife, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan is a masterpiece that boasts all the best motifs of the art style, encompassed all in white. The Mughals were also well known for their manuscripts, which saw influences from the Indian population and some aspects of Western pictorial description.



Safavids and Qajars:

The empires in Iran were also most notable in mosaics and painting. The 17th century saw the invention of the muraqqa, which saw the patterns used in mosques printed onto the pages into books, seen in drawings and calligraphy. Gardens also proliferated in an arabesque style.

Modern World

Perhaps the most marketable production of Islamic art is now found in the weaving and textiles industry, with carpets and tapestries sporting patterns shared by the mosaics and walls of mosques around the Islamic world. These artworks can be found in homes worldwide.



The Pyxis of Al-Mughira



Hassan Massoudy

Contemporary Artists and Islamic Tradition

Many famous Muslim artists have made a name for themselves using their faith and community as inspirations for their work. Here we spotlight a few Islamic artists who have been inspired by traditional art and are bringing a modern perspective to creative mediums.

Hassan Massoudy is an Iraqi artist renowned for his interpretation of traditional Arabic calligraphy. Massoudy applies a modern twist as he inscribes oversized letters in vibrant colors on

paper or canvas. His compositions are based on popular proverbs, and texts from poets, authors and philosophers from both the Arab European cultures, that promote a message of peace and tolerance — two themes that are central in much of his work.

"Despite the fact that the codes of beauty differ from one civilization to another, everyone can take something from them and enrich their soul or their art," he has said.

Born in 1944 in Najaf, Iraq, Massoudy studied calligraphy in Baghdad in his late teens. As an apprentice, he spent hours with Hashem Al-Baghdadi, considered the last of the classical calligraphers. A few years later, he relocated to Paris and enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts, where he studied traditional western techniques. Upon receiving his degree, Massoudy traveled through Europe with the French actor Guy Jacquet and the Iraqi multi-instrumentalist Fawzy Al-Aiedy. The trio toured for 13 years in the Seventies and early Eighties with *Arabesque*, a work incorporating performance, music, poetry and calligraphy. A later collaboration with the choreographer Carolyn Carlson and the Turkish musician Kudsi Erguner led to the creation of *Metaphore*.

Massoudy's work has become an important influence on a generation of calligraffiti artists. The artist lives in Paris, where he continues to create art that breaks with tradition yet conveys the beauty of Arabic calligraphy.

Lalla Essaydi is a contemporary Moroccan photographer and painter, known for depicting the multifaceted identity of Muslim women. In photographs, paintings, installations and films, Essaydi creates a juxtaposition of past and present, fantasy and reality, while challenging tropes found in Orientalist art. She has stated that her work is autobiographical, and she explores a wide range of perspectives, including issues of diaspora and identity.

Essaydi grew up in Marrakesh as part of a privileged, traditionally Muslim household. Following schooling in Paris, she married and moved to Saudi Arabia, where she lived until her children left for school in the United States. She then studied painting at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, before continuing her education in Boston.

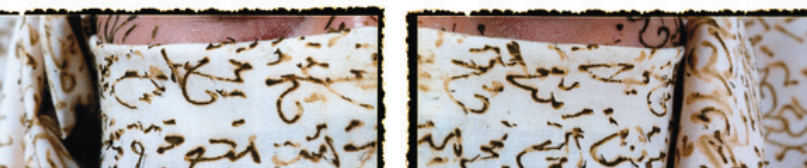
"I invite viewers to resist stereotypes, Lalla Essaydi"

As she references art history, and contemporary cultural, social, and political realities, Essaydi uses art to reveal stereotypes and question assumptions maintained by Western and Eastern societies about the veil, the harem, and the. She carefully stages her subjects to mimic works by French neoclassical painters and superimposes Islamic tile patterns and Islamic calligraphy in henna on different surfaces, such as fabric, bodies, and walls, to project self-assuredness, and reclaim female empowerment.

Essaydi's work has gained worldwide critical acclaim and is held and exhibited at institutions such as the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C., the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Fries Museum in the Netherlands. She currently lives in New York City and works between Boston and Morocco.



"Be the change you wish to see in the world" (Ghandi) by Hassan Massoudy.



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- Converging Territories #24 by Lalla Essaydi.
 - Nadia Janjua.
 - "Love Is A Give & Take", Acrylic, Spray Paint & Mixed Media on Canvas, 20x24 in. 2015.

Nadia Janjua is a Muslim-American artist, architect and entrepreneur, whose bright and vivid paintings combine with religious inspiration. Much of her artwork is inspired by the concept of celebrating everyday objects and moments as works of art in themselves, and she is best known for her entrepreneurial and social activist spirit.

With parents from Pakistan & Kashmir, traveling to other parts of the world brought Janjua a deep appreciation for culture, religion, history and art. Her work is inspired by her deeply spiritual and emotional connection to her faith as well as the experiences of her life's journey. She went on to major in fine arts in college, and with the support of her family, she combined her passion for art and science by obtaining a master's degree in architecture. Her architectural design portfolio includes designs for homes, educational facilities and a mosque.

In addition to the work she produces at her own architectural design firm, she creates in a wide range of media, including photography, painting and sketching. She has been professionally exhibiting her abstract and mixed-media paintings for the past ten years, appearing at exhibitions and conferences in the United States, England and Malaysia. In 2011, she became the coordinator for the group Muslim Women In the Arts, leading a local group of approximately 30 Muslim women artists and managing more than 800 artists globally through social networks.

Janjua has contributed her expertise to relief work as well and worked as an art educator for upper level students at Tarbiyah Academy, a K-6 International Baccalaureate-authorized Islamic private school in Maryland. She was named one of Washington DC's Best Up-and-Coming Artists. She believes creativity can catalyze change and continues to use extremely vibrant, lively and colorful art to move individuals to see the world from a different perspective.



MUSLIM ART IN TAIWAN PROMOTES CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Dr. Al-Issa spoke at the opening of the exhibition promoting Muslim art in Taipei.

On April 9-18, Taipei's attention shifted to Islamic culture, thanks to an Islamic Cultural Exhibition at National Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. The initiative, which welcomed the month of Ramadan, contributed to the promotion of a broader understanding of Muslim culture in Taiwan.

With the main focus on calligraphy and architecture, the exhibition was divided into four main thematic sections: "Arabic Calligraphy," Islamic Cultural Relics," "Islamic Architecture" and "Islam in Taiwan." The displayed art pieces were loaned from several prominent art institutions in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Oman, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. They served to demonstrate the peaceful character of Islamic religion while exploring other spheres of Muslim heritage, notably Islam's contribution to human achievements in mathematics, astronomy, navigation, medicine and philosophy.

During the opening event, Dr. Al-Issa spoke to the visitors from a video and expressed his hope that the exhibit would contribute to a mutual understanding of both civilizations and strengthen ties between these cultures.

To further nourish ethnic understanding, visitors got a chance to personally get to know the customs and traditions of Muslim culture, art and cuisine through workshops and events. The most popular activities were live Arabic calligraphy presentations and Eid al-Fitr traditions with a halal food-tasting at sunset.

In recent years, the number of Muslims living and working in Taiwan has been increasing, and currently stands at 250,000. Islamic Cultural Exhibition wasn't the first initiative led by Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall that contributed to cultural understanding and recognized the presence of Muslims in Taiwan. To emphasize religious freedom, last year, the museum built a prayer room for its Muslim visitors.



During the exhibition, the visitors enjoyed the presentation of Arabic calligraphy.

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