

# **The Aesthetic of the Geometrical Shapes for the Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an at the Walters Arts Museum**

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## **Abstract**

The manuscript is of great importance, every nation and civilization has a written history and this history is called the manuscript, but the Qur'anic manuscripts are spiritual codes of the word of God, the holy one. The need and importance of these manuscripts will not end as they are a treasure, relic and heritage that peoples and nations are proud of. In this study, an attempt to delve deep into the Walters Museum's art library, to investigate the aesthetics of Qur'anic manuscripts, and to stop on a rare manuscript cut from a Qur'an from the 12th century AH (18th century A.D.) as a model for these manuscripts by identifying this rare manuscript and stopping on the concept of beauty in Islamic thought and the symbolism of geometric forms in Islamic art, finished study by analyzing some geometric forms in this rare manuscript. The study concluded that decorative compositions acquire aesthetic values through reduction. Moreover, the relationships between geometric shapes and plant vocabulary are encouraged. In addition to, geometric shapes give strength and stability to the scene through framing and selection.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic, Manuscript, Geometrical shape, Walters Arts Museum.

## **Introduction**

Islamic decorative arts are a creative product of the aesthetic thought of the Islamic spiritual complex, which has been translated into decorative systems with a special aesthetic dimension, in particular, in the light of its historical and cognitive significance, which has made it particularly relevant and unique to the art produced by human civilizations. The Muslim artists have sought to employ these decorative innovations in various productions of their civilization from various Islamic manuscripts in their subjects between the manuscripts of the Holy Quran and scientific, social, historical and geographical manuscripts etc.

## **Study Problem**

The art associated with these spiritual manuscripts is an achievement that reflects the social and historical influences that human societies have, and it is linked to the various activities of the human being, and therefore religion has an original and important relationship with art that extends to the human body. Therefore, the art has varied from one to the other and from one environment to another, and the relationship between art and religion has always been a way of interacting and developing civilization, and here we see that art in the Islamic concept, although it takes the functional aspect of the adornment, it is necessary to hope for the aesthetics of this decorative art.

The term beauty and aesthetic have a clear effect on Islamic art through the abstract and geometric features of Islamic art through a vision that goes beyond the visual to delve deeper into the forms of the invisible in those arts. On this basis when analyzing Islamic arts and specifically decorative arts, we have to reveal the intellectual and philosophical images contained in the decorative units, in particular what is contained in the manuscripts of the Qur'an because of its association with the spiritual faith. The art of the decoration of the Qur'anic manuscript carries the aesthetic contents because of its geometric compositions that

mimic the essence and the invisible at the expense of the visual. Therefore, the study is based on the following question:

"What are the aesthetics of the geometric shapes of the decorative units executed in the Qur'anic manuscript, which is cut from the Qur'an belonging to the Walters Art Museum and classified as Walters W?"

### **Study Significance**

To recognize the aesthetic values of Islamic engineering decoration and to stop at the symbolism of the geometric forms of Islamic manuscripts manifested in the spiritual manuscripts.

### **Aims of the Study**

To identify the aesthetics of geometric shapes in the pages cut from the Holy Qur'an belonging to the Walters Art Museum and classified as Walters W.

### **Study Limitations**

The research is determined by the study of the decorations and geometric shapes found in the pages cut from the Qur'an belonging to the Walters Art Museum and classified as Walters W.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **1. Aesthetic in the Islamic Ideology**

*"Beauty is not a negative value just for decorations, but in the true sense a complex reality in its entrances, its elements, its physical effects, spiritual and its apparent and hidden waves, and its reflections on the living being, because its effect is mixed with the soul, the mind, the reactions of different reactions, some of which appear clear, and others do it internally, but the result of all that is achieved for the human being happiness and pleasure, and the benefit that emerges from that"*

(Al-Kilani, 1987: 3)

And the beauty of the Islamic system, through its effects and on this basis divided into two parts: external and internal, i.e. perceptible and perceivable. This distinction is shown on various occasions in the sayings of Ahl Al-Bayit (PBUT), such as the saying of Imam Ali ibn Abi-Talib "What uglier than an internally ill and externally beautiful" (Al-Amdi, 1992: 379), and the saying of Imam Al-Hassan Al-Askary "The beauty of the body is an external one, while the beauty of the mind is an internal one." (Al-Majlisi, nd: 67).

Although Arabs before Islam had an emotional knowledge of beauty within the sensory and material concept limited to sensory images such as the beauty of women, horses and the desert... Beauty was characterized by sensuality in aesthetic taste, and this trend was not only in the Islamic times, but extended to the later times, so the Arabs were characterized by that innate sensuality away from the Greek dialectic depth. (Ezzedine, 1974: 131-135) the aesthetic view has become more evident among Arabs with the emergence of Islam, as the new religion has changed the mentality and lifestyle of man.

If we want to delve into the aesthetic values of Islamic thought, we will find that it is based on a system of values and spiritual concepts characterized by symbolic connotations that take the abstraction with a spiritual dimension, as well as horizontal, vertical, physical and spiritual relationships, with a special simulation that excludes the actual formal proportionality of immigrants towards symbolism and abstraction (Murad, 2002: 124).

*"The Arab arts, in their entirety, are not based on simulations, because they are related to the Arab perception of the place environmentally and spiritually, because the Arab looks at things that directly touch them, which shakes the conscience, and does not stray from*

*these things by analysis, which is one of the functions of the purely logical mind, it looks at existence is overwhelmed by a sense of the existence of the subconscious and not content with the phenomena of things ... And then the distinctive character of Arab art, was absolute abstraction down to elements that had no likeness” (Husnni, 2005: 63)*

## **2. Geometric Decorative Form in Islamic Art**

The importance of these forms is highlighted in highlighting the subjects with frames and footnotes that enter these formations in their composition, which led to the Muslim artist's creation of geometric compositions with polygonal star shapes in a continuous way for geometric entanglements, Arab entanglements containing geometric complexities and rhythmic patterns lacking in their Roman likeness, and the filled space and empty spaces i.e. design and floor in Arab entanglements have a value equal to the other and balanced. The continuity of the entanglements calls on the eye to follow and then turn the vision into a rhythmic experience accompanied by mental satisfaction through geometric regularity (Qacha, 2000: 113). These geometric forms and formations that overlap with the Arabic calligraphy have evolved until the art of Arab and Arabesque has clearly shown us, this art reached its peak in the Seljuk and Fatimid periods and in the era of the Al-Moravids and Al-Mohads in Morocco and Andalusia (Behnsei, 1980: 29). With these advantages, we can see the definition of so-called Islamic art, and its basic principles.

The basis for drawing geometric decoration is the square, circle, rectangle, and triangle, as it is innumerable in drawing and generating many forms of it, and this type of decoration has been used in Qur'anic manuscripts, and written copies of other books in various fields of science, as used in Islamic buildings of mosques, schools, domes, palaces and castles. There were also many decorative elements and came out of the main elements in which other elements such as the pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal and others came out. There were overlaps and overlaps between the use of floral decoration within the geometric decoration, and the largest share of this decoration was the decorative and gilded embroidery, the balconies inside the Qur'ans, especially in the first pages of them, and then used in the footnotes of the Qur'an in the form of an oval, circular, semi-circular, and others.

By studying the complex geometric motifs in general and analyzing them to the simplest of their forms, the ingenuity of Muslims in geometric decoration has been created, brilliant, and developed, as the basis of their talent was based on a wealth of knowledge of applied geometry (Khalaf and Samarah, nd: 13-15).

## **3. Symbolism of Geometric Forms in Islamic Art**

The decoration and throughout the Islamic times we find it has been characterized by the forms of the natural, visual towards the cultural and through the symbolism of the abstract... Considering that the decoration does not seek visual models but mimics the mind and vision, and therefore the forms of decoration to the geometrical, full of abstraction give symbolic connotations celebrating the ideal and ideal, whether in the process of choosing color, shape or calligraphy to produce interpretable compositions (Al-Musawi, 2013: 165).

Islamic art in all its projections there is a structure that is crowded with semantics and symbols associated with the concept and spiritual vision, in Tawhidi's saying that decoration is a style and an expression of what also invents the soul, which represents a language, and creates a relationship of identification with the holy self, so the phrase and reference share in bringing the divine truth closer to people, no crime and no reference except to the face of metaphor and lending (Tawhidi, 1973: 203).

If we try to decipher the decoration with its various elements and expressive and plastic vocabulary, it requires a reading in the body of the structure and its internal characteristics on the basis of the so-called esoteric interpretation, the expression in it is consistent with the decoration in its instability and its gradual communication from one form to another and from one line to another and this is reflected in the Arabic calligraphy, the talk of the calligraphy is

difficult and delicious, as we think about it by the language it depicts, and it is nice to realize this idea between the relationship and the language that formed this thought and the line that depicts it and its images and the line that it embodies and This hadith can only be aesthetically poetic, because the genesis and evolution of the line has been an awareness of the transcendence of the sense and the attachment to reason, since it was not easy to strip of things in formative manners, and to organize in complex, organized and composed signs to perform the apparent and hidden meanings of the thought of integration and language became difficult to separate them (Baidah, 1998: 92).

From this shows the relationship between the subconscious and the apparent through absence and visible and invisible presence, from that the same Arab-Muslim artist interconnects to the world in terms of the creator in the behavior and practical achievement within the Islamic decoration based on the mathematical method based on mathematics and the science of number until the Islamic decoration was associated with engineering and its mathematical characteristics of the point, line, square shape, triangle and circle and how they are interlinked with the great world represented by God the creator, which translates into the small world, a world divided between the soul, mind and the human matter of the human being. On the consistency in its composition and in its action (Al-Safa, 1928:145).

This is clear in the words of Mohieddin ben Arabi in his book "The Creation of Circles": "The meaning is that if it is introduced in the form of the image and the form, it loves the sense and has a watch to watch it and walk in it, which leads to the realization of what was set for him and embodied that image, which is why we have entered in photography and composition" (ibn Arabi, 1999: 5).

### **Previous Studies**

Al-Musawi's study (The Cartography, Decoration and Gilding the Holy Qura'an until Ibn Al-Bawab era) this book was devoted to the study of the calligraphy, gilding and decoration of the Qur'an until the era of Ibn al-Bawab, the era of qualitative transformation in this art, and a transition station towards a new stage with its distinctive features and characteristics. According to this concept, the research focused on the Qur'an line from the beginning of the revelation on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his beginning by writing his verses until the end of the 4th century AH, and also aimed at pursuing the development of the Qur'an line during those periods and the accompanying artistic development in its gilding and decoration.

A Study by Al-Musawi in 2013 that investigated the Dean's Journal, Diwan al-Waqf Shi'a No. 5, p. 157-228 aesthetic values of geometric forms in Qur'anic manuscripts. The study aimed to reveal the mechanisms of abstraction in the decoration of manuscripts within the temporal limits (1110-1269) e/ 13th century AH, the theoretical framework of the study included three investigations, the first topic dealt with the aesthetics of the decorative form in thought and philosophy while the second topic dealt with the systems of decorative form and the foundations of the third research edited concerned the geometric character in the decoration of manuscripts. The researcher analyzed the content for one page of five archive manuscripts in public libraries inside Iraq.

From the studies above it is concluded that the aesthetic values of Islamic-Qur'anic manuscripts in particular with geometric shapes evoke the act of meditation and deliberation in favor of idealism and idealism in large spaces approaching the law (abstraction) towards the true times of the forms. The illuminating artist granted full sovereignty to the Qur'anic text in the decoration of the Islamic manuscript, and considered it an essential center of art as the basic sacred word of God and the law while the decoration becomes the mosaic side of the Qur'anic text.

Study (Al-Awadi), 2018 (Journal of the Faculty of Education for Girls of Humanities, Kufa University No. 21, p. 375-416 ) () Decorative design methods for the Fatih al-Mushaf al-Sharif). The study aimed to reveal the methods of decorative designs of the Qur'an within the temporal limits (1999-2002), the theoretical framework of the study included three

investigations, the first topic addressed the genesis and evolution of the decorations of the Qur'an while the second topic dealt with the types of decorations of the Qur'an and gilding the Qur'an, while the third topic was interested in reviewing the main rules of the decorations of the Qur'an. The researcher analyzed the research sample through the descriptive method through the analysis tool (analysis form). From this study, it is concluded that the mismatch of duplicate decorative units is due to the use of manual skill by decorators to repeat vocabulary. The use of the black-colored decoration for the non-integration of decorative unit shapes.

There are indicators of this intellectual system that have been monitored to determine the basis for analyzing the content of the research sample models:

1. The geometric shape possesses a continuous aesthetic principle that achieves diversity and gives the artwork the dynamic of continuous eye movement.
2. Diversity and variation in decorative geometric units is the spiritual purpose of monotheism.
3. Diversity and contrast affect the dynamics of the geometric shape within the decorative unit component.
4. The illusion of movement within the space of the geometric shape leads to a kind of vitality within the painting space.
5. Geometric abstraction is an attempt to purify the image from all sensory impurities.
6. There is a spiritual and metaphysical dimension that embodies the human depth of the mechanism of unity in the holy self in search of substance.
7. The relationship of decoration to the Qur'anic text, an aesthetic relationship with intuitive dimensions that leads to reflection and unity with higher values.

## **Methodology**

### **1. Study Society**

The research community consists of many miniatures in the pages cut out of the Qur'an manuscript in question that frame and determine the order of the verses in the Qur'an, and to prevent repetition will be determined the sample models of the search without repetition.

### **2. Study Sample**

The manuscript, which was identified by the researcher in the current research community, contains many miniatures and these miniatures represent floral decorative themes such as frames and arrangement points of the verses, and in order to extract the models of the current research sample, the researcher counted the models containing the subject of geometric shapes (according to the conclusion in the theoretical framework) the sample models of the research (3) are miniatures.

### **3. Study Tools**

Observing the manuscript, the researchers have adopted the system of indicators that the theoretical framework concluded with as guides and anchors for the analysis of sample models. Relying on the intellectual and analytical data of plant abstraction and its applications in the Qur'an to be used in the analysis of research sample models.

### **4. Methodology**

The researchers have adopted content analysis for sample models, in line with the goal of research.

## 5. The Analysis of the Study Sample



Figure 1.

Title: Writing Within a Botanical and Geometric Framework

The name of the craftsman: Anonymous

Place of Publication: Not Assigned

Date of Production: 13th Century Hijri,

Possession: Walters Art Museum and Classified as Walters W. 568,

Material: colored inks on paper

### General Description

A decorative unit that combines all the elements of Islamic art from the kufic line and its botanical decoration, which was in gold color in addition to the circular chain, which was a half circles in blue defined in gold and white on a red floor interspersed with gold floral abstractions with some blue.

### Analysis

The scene contains a harmonious marriage between the plant elements and the geometric elements and the biblical elements, manifested in the Moroccan script of the Qur'anic text. In this model, the Muslim artist tries to establish the concept of meditation in the invisible absolute through tangible visual forms.

This manuscript is decorated with decorative units with geometric and botanical elements, consisting of decorative strips within which a dynamic movement of other floral motifs refers to the idea of praise through the number and dynamics of the forms surrounding the scene with geometric compositions that resemble hugging braids.

As for the relationship of the Qur'anic text to the Moroccan script influenced by kufic script, which is widespread in the Maghreb, it has to do with the overlap of geometric shapes among them, suggesting movement, and the visual text as a whole, moving away from simulation, according to a intuitive approach that adopts an exclusive vision that mimics the vocabulary of the absolute symbol, in an effort to unite with the higher values (truth, goodness, virtue, transcendence, mysticism, asceticism ...etc.

Title: Writing Inside a Geometric shape

The Name of the Craftsman: Anonymous

Place of Publishing: Not Assigned



Date of Publishing: 13<sup>th</sup> Century Hijri

Possession: Walters Arts Museum Classified as Walters W. 568

Material: Colored Inks over Paper

Figure 2.

### General Description

The miniature represents a conical geometric shape that contains geometric shapes (circle, triangle) defined by a double-colored frame that ends with a green and red-colored brush and contains harmonious decorative elements (floral and written).

### Analysis

This model has formed an independent composition filled with geometric vocabulary overlapping with each other, surrounded by the circular composition positioned in the center of the decorative landscape with forms of lines interspersed with dots colored in contrast colors. The background of the circular composition is a red floor interspersed with a white vegetation, which is consistent with the contrast mechanism of the Muslim decorator in the depiction of his visual texts. The nature of the decorative compositions with geometric, botanical and biblical elements that seek to unite in the center produced by the Muslim artist in this decorative model, provided a clearly defined idea of the unity of existence.

The Muslim artist in this sample sought to develop formative solutions that achieve the principle of balance between decorative units with geometric elements, which confirm the simplicity of the simulation of the visual and the approaching simulation of the essence. As for the triangle and the circle that cover the area of the cone compose an aesthetic composition, and the vocabulary moves away from the nature of the physical visuals to raise the mind of the receiver upwards from the levels of the visual limited to the levels of the absolute invisible infinite and infinite, considering that the Muslim artist has been certain that the sensory perception is not enough to give us an integrated picture of existence, which we found has sought to strip his compositions and plastic vocabulary from the remnants of the visual recipes of the visual.

Title: Writings inside Circular Frame

Name of the Craftsman: Anonymous

Place of Publishing: Not Assigned

Date of Publishing: 13<sup>th</sup> Century Hijri

Possession: Walters Arts Museum Classified as Walters W. 568

Materials: Colored Inks over Paper



### General Description

The miniature represents a circular shape containing many curved lines and in the middle of the shape in writing in Moroccan script influenced by coffee surrounds the circle of heads with a green and red color.

### Analysis

Like all the miniatures of the manuscript, the model tends to move from the limited visual to the infinitely invisible through a dialectic relationship between religion and art of the Muslim artist, it was and is still a radical old relationship, represented as a relationship visual to the invisible, both of which touch the spirit, emanate from it and lead to it and seek each time to refine it and raise it to the absolute ranges. Through the circle and what it reflects from

the concept of Tawaf, the Muslim artist tries to raise the sensuality to a world of spirituality associated with the faith, not oblivious to the color contrast and its reflection of ideological concepts also linked to the dualities such as punishment, reward, night and darkness, the Muslim artist tries to drop this concept on color and after the semantic.

If we look at it, we will see that the last circle of a white-colored wall reflects that purity and serenity represented by decorative arts and geometric shapes that transport the recipient to the world of essence, devoid of sensuality and the materialism of life, seeking asceticism.

## **Results**

The current study reached a set of results based on the above analysis of sample models, in order to achieve the objective of the current research ( revealing the aesthetics of the geometric shapes of the decorative units executed in the Qur'anic manuscript cut from the Qur'an belonging to the Walters Art Museum and classified as Walters W. 568 (namely:

1. Decorative elements with both plant and geometric elements in the Qur'anic manuscript space through the simplistic, shorthand and composition processes performed by the decorator on his vocabulary, his decorative compositions gained aesthetic values, as in the models (1, 2, 3).
2. The appearance of geometric shapes (point-circle-triangle), in the embrace of decorative formations with biblical elements to give the general composition of miniatures a sense of stability in search of aesthetic values, as in models (1,2,3).
3. The artist adopted the ornate decoration of miniatures the principle of contrast in color, depending on the principle of duets such as (night and day, punishment and reward).
4. Some miniatures in the Qur'anic manuscript are free of the overcrowding of plant elements and are limited to geometric and biblical forms only to demonstrate their aesthetic values and rely on simplification and reduction as in models (2,3).
5. Use the golden color to give the decorative composition aesthetic values in the models (1, 2, 3).

## **Conclusions**

1. Decorative compositions acquire aesthetic values through reduction.
2. The relationships between geometric shapes and plant vocabulary are encouraged.
3. Geometric shapes give strength and stability to the scene through framing and selection.
4. The aesthetic values of decorative vocabulary are increased by defining them in geometric shapes.
5. Repetition in geometric shapes gave a dynamic to the decorative vocabulary.
6. Geometric shapes express the essence of things and their differences, the principle of dualities (reward and punishment, night and day).

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that showing more interest in Arabic manuscripts. Revealing the aesthetic aspects of Islamic miniatures.

## **Suggestions**

In order to complete the requirements of the current research and to achieve the benefit, it is suggested to conduct the following study (the aesthetic dimensions of the symbol in the Qur'anic manuscripts).

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