

Islamic art history

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Islamic art history Islamic art history entails the visual arts produced as early as 7th century by the people who lived within the territories that were ruled and inhabited by culturally Islamic population. The Islamic artwork was initially supported the legitimization of various themes in the society such as leadership, religion and peace, however, the impression of most of the Islamic artwork took a dynamic twist during the nineteenth century when it advocated for decolonization and addresses issues of violence that marred the Islamic territory. Understanding the Islamic history would necessitate understanding the various dynasties and the time when various classes of artwork were presented as it signifies the intent of the artists and the nature of the social structure at the time the art was developed (Lapidus & Grabar, 2010).

The early Islamic artwork was majorly used for the legitimization of themes in Islam especially those of religion and the need to have faith in one God. The Islamic calligraphy entailing sections of the Quran or inscriptions of the holy books in the Islamic religion are examples with which the use of artwork was employed in the legitimization of the theme of religion in the society. However, during the nineteenth century and the wake of colonialism, the artwork of Islam was used for opposite purposes. The artwork was developed to sensitize people against the evils of colonialism and violence among the Islamic communities. Islamic painting in the 19th century often portrayed colonialism as an evil act in the community thus calling upon people of the Islamic world to rise against the colonizers as a liberation effort for the Muslims.

The shift in the nature Islamic artwork was used in the representation of themes in the society emanated from the change in the mood of the society

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following colonialism and the perceived erosion of the Islamic culture.

Historically, the changes in the representation of the themes by the Islamic artwork was equally influenced by the interactions and influence the form of artwork acquired from other regions and civilizations of the world like the Chinese who at that period were advocating for the disbandment of dynasty rules, thus this forms of movements influenced the Islamic artwork (Schimmel & Rivolta, 2012).

In a way that can be seen to be a reinforcement of the theme of religion, the Islamic art in the dynasty of Umayyad represents some of the outstanding pieces of artwork. During this dynasty (661-750), new concepts and new plans were put in place to reform the nature of governance and religion. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is one architectural work that represents the gravity of the theme of religion during this dynasty. The dome of the rock demonstrated the acculturation during the dynasty of Umayyad. During the Abbasid dynasty (750AD-1258AD), the capital of the Islamic world was moved from Damascus to Baghdad. The shift of the capital influenced culture, politics and art. According to Robert (1999), an art historian, the movement of the capital could be likened to the foundation of the “ Islamic Rome”. This is because other forms of art from Greco-Roman and Byzantine Europe sources influenced the Islamic art during this dynasty.

The first Islamic dynasty to establish in Spain was that of Spanish Umayyad. In this dynasty, many techniques were used in the production of artistic objects. An example is the use of ivory that was used in the manufacture of boxes and caskets. Additionally silk was a core material that was used in the representation of art during this period. In Iran and India, the Islamic communities in the regions struggled for power, and art was a vital element

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in the competition. The architecture was developed in its extreme forms during the time leading to the development of great cities like Ghazini and construction of mosques like the great mosque of Isfahan. In 1048, the Seijuqs seized Baghdad. During this era, architectural inscriptions tend to focus on the patrons of the piece. Example like sultans and low ranking officials would often be mentioned in the inscriptions in the mosque (Rabbat, 2012).

Another dynasty that saw the development of the Islamic art is the iikhanids. These people were originally the sub servients of the Yuan Empire. During this dynasty, new techniques in ceramics such as lajvardina developed as well as the Chinese influence in perceptible arts. During the period of the timurids dynasty, there developed a golden age in the manuscript painting by the Prussians. These paintings were done by great renowned painters like Kamul ud-din Behzad. The Ottoman Empire is one empire that saw the growth of Islamic art. The empire lasted from the 14th century and existed up to the beginning of the First World War. The longevity of the reign of the empire and its geographical coverage resulted in mass production of artwork resulting from interactions. Examples of artwork like iznik ware, metalwork and decorative were developed during the dynasty (Lapidus & Grabar, 2010).

During the modern times that began around 15th century, smaller Islamic courts fell paving way to the Ottoman Empire and the European Powers. The Islamic art has been greatly influenced by the European style. However, the carpet industry has remained the most-used design in the representation of the Islamic artwork.

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