

Curating & Creating A Practical Approach for Contemporary Islamic Design Pedagogy and Practice

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



In the name of Allah, most merciful & gracious.



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ABSTRACT

Faith and art practice in traditional Islam once had a profound cultural rapport within Islamic society that is lost today; art was used as an expressive tool for Islamic religious revelation, worship, and the contemplative remembrance of God. While some scholars acknowledge philosophical, cosmological and metaphysical dimensions forming the legacy of Islamic art, others argue that such “mystical” ideas do not have historical evidence. This polarity resulted in a wide spectrum of thoughts in contemporary Islamic pedagogies and practices, reflecting a continuous discourse between tradition and modernity.

This practice-led research investigates an alternative reading for traditional Islamic aesthetics that can respond to contemporary thoughts and practices, by reviewing literature that focuses on two main points:- a) the traditional Islamic philosophy that underpinned the creative decisions, and b) the contemporary practice and pedagogy of Islamic art. This was achieved by revisiting the concept of creativity in Islamic context; emphasising the ‘why’ instead of the ‘how’ and addressing how current artistic practice reflects religious and spiritual thoughts. The literature finding proposes an alternative approach in Islamic art pedagogy by adopting ‘design culture’ as a field that can help in broadening the understanding of Islamic aesthetics.

The methodological approach emphasises the notion of art-making as “thinking made visible”, by adopting multi-faceted artistic practice and processes including aspects such as “studio thinking”, “visual thinking”, and “tacit knowledge”. This was achieved through two case studies; one was in Tetouan, Morocco where the cultural context was more focused on skill-based knowledge. The other was in Bahrain; where the context was more oriented towards theoretical knowledge. With these various modes of knowing/thinking, the methodological approach adopts curatorial practice as a mode of assemblage and an enactment of research thinking/creating. It demonstrates a new understanding of curatorial practice as a disruptive form of knowledge that challenge and inform the practice and pedagogy of Islamic artistic expression. The research structure also aims at contributing to academic knowledge by using visuals and design language to expand the general understanding of how knowledge can be understood and communicated.

The research outcomes were demonstrated through different mediums such as reflective mind maps and visual explorations. This will be documented in the written thesis and an accompanying exhibition that will showcase the researcher’s creative process as a way to disseminate research knowledge.



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لوٹھرس
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	III
CONTENTS	V
LIST OF DIAGRAMS	IX
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
BAB 01: TAMHEED: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH	2
1.0 INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND, QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESIS)	3
1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	6
1.2 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS	8
1.3 RESEARCH MOTIVATION/ RESEARCHER’S POSITION	10
1.4 VISUAL NATURE OF RESEARCH	13
1.5 MORPHOLOGY OF THESIS	14
1.6 NAVIGATING THROUGH THE THESIS	19
1.7 ARABIC TERMINOLOGIES AND KEY CONCEPTS	21
BARZAKH 01: MY MIND IS AN UNDERGROUND MAP	26
BAB 02: TAJREED: AESTHETIC READING IN TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC ART	30
2.0 INTRODUCTION	31
<u>PART A: PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND</u>	34
2.1 COSMOLOGY AS A FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE	34
2.2 COSMOLOGICAL THEMES IN ISLAMIC THOUGHTS	36
2.3 ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN THE EMBODIED AND THE IMMATERIAL	39
2.4 DIVINE ART, RELIGIOUS ART, SACRED ART	44
2.5 IN DEFINING ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE	47
<u>PART B: MAIN AESTHETIC THEMES IN ISLAMIC CONTEXT</u>	49
2.6 DESIGN ELEMENTS	54
2.7 DESIGN PRINCIPLES	77
2.8 SPATIAL SENSIBILITY	91
2.9 REFLECTIONS AND KEY FINDINGS	106
BARZAKH 02: WHAT’S HAPPENING/ NOT-HAPPENING	110

BAB 03: TAQREEB: CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ART: PROCESS, PRACTICE AND PEDAGOGY	116
3.0 INTRODUCTION	117
<u>PART A:</u> PROCESS AND PRACTICE	121
3.1 ISLAMIC ARTISTIC PROCESS: SPIRITUAL THEMES	121
3.2 ISLAMIC ARTISTIC PRACTICE: SELECTED CASE STUDIES	136
3.3 PART A: GENERAL REFLECTIONS	153
<u>PART B:</u> PEDAGOGY AND DESIGN EDUCATION	156
3.4 INTRODUCTION	156
3.5 ART AND DESIGN: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	158
3.6 ISLAMIC ART IN ACADEMIC CONTEXT: CRITICAL OVERVIEW	160
3.7'DESIGN CULTURE' AS AN ALTERNATIVE EXPRESSION FOR ISLAMIC ARTISTIC CONTEXT	171
3.8 TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH IN ISLAMIC ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION	173
 BARZAKH 03: FROM ONE CIRCLE TO ANOTHER	 180
 BAB 04: TAJMEE': METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW	 184
4.0 INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY	185
<u>PART A:</u> IN SEARCH FOR A METHODOLOGY	187
4.1 RELEVANT METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES	191
4.2 SELECTED RESEARCH METHODS	193
4.3 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF SELECTED METHODS	196
<u>PART B:</u> RESEARCH IN THE ARTS	199
4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE	201
4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH	203
4.6 MANIFESTATION OF PRACTICE IN RESEARCH	205
4.7 COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH	210
4.8 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY	213
 BARZAKH 04: MY MIND IS A GALLERY SPACE	 218
 BAB 05: TAQYEEM (CURATING): REFINING METHODOLOGY	 222
5.0 INTRODUCTION	223
5.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE	226
5.2 CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE	229
5.3 CURATORIAL PRACTICE AS ENACTMENT OF RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE	231

5.4 RESEARCHER'S CURATORIAL PRACTICE: CASE STUDIES	234
5.5 DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CURATORIAL PRACTICE	247
5.6 REFLECTIONS ON CURATORIAL PRACTICE	250
BARZAKH 05: ME, THEM AND EVERYONE ELSE	254
BAB 06: TAJREEB (EXPERIMENTING): DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS	258
6.0 INTRODUCTION TO DATA ANALYSIS	259
6.1 RATIONALE FOR THE SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES	261
PART A: ART RESIDENCY IN MOROCCO PILOT STUDY	264
6.2 REVISITING TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP	266
6.3 ARTISTS FOCUS GROUP	277
6.4 COLLABORATIVE AND CURATORIAL PRACTICE	285
6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE MOROCCO EXPERIENCE	289
PART B: STUDIO SESSIONS IN BAHRAIN DESIGN PROJECTS	291
6.6 INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERIOR DESIGN CURRICULUM IN UOB	293
6.7 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDIO SESSION WITHIN THE COURSE MODULE	295
6.8 INTRODUCTORY TOOLS	297
6.9 DESIGNING A JEWELLERY PIECE (AS MICRO REPRESENTATION)	299
6.10 DESIGNING A SPIRITUAL SPACE (AS MACRO REPRESENTATION)	305
6.11 REFLECTIONS ON BAHRAIN'S DESIGN STUDIO	314
BAB 07: TATMEEM: RESEARCH CONCLUSION	318
7.0 RESEARCH OVERVIEW	319
7.1 CHAPTERS FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES	320
7.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	323
7.3 RESEARCH ORIGINALITY AND NEW KNOWLEDGE	324
7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	327
7.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	328
GLOSSARY	329
BIBLIOGRAPHY	333
APPENDICES	342
Appendix I. Artists' Analysis	343
Appendix II. Framing the Knowledge of Islamic Art and Architecture	349
Appendix III. Enlarged Versions of Timetables and Schedules	351
Appendix IV. Sample of Consent Form	355
Appendix V. University of Bahrain – Full Program and Curriculum	358
Appendix VI. Full Project's Sheets for examples in Bab 6, Part B.	367

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1.0 Diagram showing the different areas included in the research scope. Bringing these areas together in the context of Islamic art and design is what forms the research contribution to knowledge [author's notes]

Diagram 1.1 Diagram showing the different roles of the researcher. This relates to the researcher's background and position as well as the interchangeable role undertaken throughout the research process. The researcher-as-curator is what combines the different aspects of the research process [author's notes]

Diagram 2.0 Summary of Akkach's overview on the cosmological modes of thinking in traditional Islam [author's notes]

Diagram 2.1 Summary of Akkach's overview on Sufism; the main scholars who established Sufi's school of thoughts and other influential historians and philosophers [author's notes]

Diagram 2.2 Interpretation of Ikhwan al-Safa for the act of knowing, which demonstrates the relationship between thinking and creating, knowledge and imagination [Author's notes].

Diagram 2.3 Summary of the philosophical thoughts of Ikhwan Al-Safa regarding the act of making, which is based on Ibn Arabi's articulations of inward and outward forms of the imagining (upper row). This also goes in parallel to the Ikhwan's thoughts on designed objects and what do they require (lower row), as they make no distinction between making and designing (Source: Akkach, 2012) [Author's notes].

Diagram 2.4 Analysis of Ibn Arabi for the formal correspondence between the letter nun (ن) and the world (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.137)

Diagram 2.5 Symbolism of the circle in Islamic thoughts, particularly of the Sufi doctrines. (left) The world as divine business (sha'n) according to Ibn Arabi. (right) The geometric representation of the divine creative command according to Ibn Arabi. (Source: Akkach, 2012).

Diagram 2.6 Symbolism of the circle and its centre in relation to the Divine names al-Zahir (The Manifest) and al-Batin (The Hidden) (Source: Ardalan, N. and Bakhtiar, 1973).

Diagram 2.6 Symbolism of the circle and its centre in relation to the Divine names al-Zahir (The Manifest) and al-Batin (The Hidden) (Source: Ardalan, N. and Bakhtiar, 1973).

Diagram 2.7 The centralized open courtyard model in Islamic places such as dwellings and mosques, the courtyard serves as a central space that shifts the horizontal orientation of the place into a vertical orientation towards the sky (the Heavens) (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.155-156).

Diagram 3.0 Summary of the alternative approach of Necipo lu in periodisation of Islamic art as a field of historical inquiry. The approach encompasses temporal with spatial, socio-cultural and artistic dimensions (2012) [author's notes]

Diagram 4.0 The different methodologies used in each chapter of the thesis and how they are related to the research areas. This shows how methodology is embedded throughout the research, also the changing role of the researcher demonstrated in the pink central arrows [Author's Notes].

Diagram 6.0 Mapping of chapter six and the relevant research methods used for every section [author's notes]

Diagram 6.1 The various aspects of the residency in accordance to the time schedule. See enlarged version in the appendix III [author's notes]

Diagram 6.2 The standard operation procedures (SOP) for conducting the pilot focus group in Tetouan, Morocco [author's notes]

Diagram 7.0 The interviewed scholars and their position in relation to the traditionalists and modernists views [Author's notes].

Diagram 7.1 The artists selected as case studies in bab 3 and the significance of their work in relation to Islamic aesthetics [Author's notes].

Diagram 7.2 The educational background of the artists (bab 3) which influence their contemporary approach to Islamic art. Juxtaposing this with findings of bab 6 offers insights on how craftsmanship can be an integral part of Islamic design pedagogy [Author's notes].

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.0 Summary of the points explained by Akkach (2012) for al-Ghazali's analogy of the two actions of the creative process, in the divine and human sense [Author's notes].

Table 2.1 Comparison between definitions of 'Islamic art' by various scholars (Source: Alsamman, 2002; Blair and Bloom, 2003; Nasr, 1997; Rabbat, 2012; Saeed, 2011)

Table 2.2 The main aesthetic themes discussed in this section, which are based on the general map in figure (2.0). The Arabic translation of the titles are based on contextual analysis of the researcher rather than the literal translation of the English word [author's notes]

Table 2.3. Summary of the microcosm and macrocosm representations of numbers in Islamic cosmology and their mathematical attributes. Ardalan and Bakhtiar based this table on Nasr's translation of the cosmology of Ikhwan al-Safa in his book *Cosmological Doctrines*. Text in italics is an addition from Kazimee and Rahmani which was found suitable to include in this context (Source: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003).

Table 2.4 Summary of the significance and the symbolism behind each colour in Islamic spirituality along with their Quranic context (Source: The Quran; Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003)

Table 3.0. The main aesthetic themes in Islamic context, categorized based on contemporary design theory basis. The intangible aspects of creative process are added and addressed in this section. Remembrance is repeated in the last column, as it can be considered both as implicit and explicit aspect. [Author's note]

Table 3.1 The different methods which will be considered in conducting the case studies of the artists [Author's note]

Table 4.0 Research's Logic of Inquiry, excerpts from (Potter, 2006)

Table 4.1 Comparison between basic and applied types of research in terms of purposes, contexts, and methods (Source: Hedrick, Bickman, and Rog, 1993. P.4-9)

Table 4.2 Summary of the methods used in this research, their advantages and disadvantages, and the context in which they are applied [Author's notes]

Table 6.0 Summary of the pilot approach and its following stages proposed for each site. This is also a comparison of the unique points and benefits of each context. This relates also to multiple case studies approach, which allows for cross-case synthesis that can evaluate research findings in different settings [Author's Note].

Table 6.1 Profile for the participants of the pilot focus group [Author's Note]

Table 6.2 Excerpt from the Interior Design 4-year Bachelor program description. The selected courses are related to Islamic Art and Design, and offered in the third and fourth year (Source: UOB, 2016)

Table 6.3 An excerpt from the course syllabus that was distributed to the student in the academic year 2016-2017 in the second semester. This shows the distribution of Project 1 and 2 in relation to the syllabus timetable. (Almerbati, 2017).

Table 6.4 Analysis of the student's inspirational images for project O1. The table shows the main occurring themes that correlates with their brainstorming, which in turn summarises the students' interpretations on what makes products Islamic (image sources are student's design boards) [Author's notes].

Table 6.5. Analysis of the student's inspirational images for project O2. The table shows five main themes that can summarise the students' interpretations of what makes a spiritual space [Author's notes].

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.0 Map showing how literature, as well as methodology, are immersed through the different stages – or chapters- of the research rather than being in separated chapters. This is how the curatorial practice also informs the structure of the thesis [author's notes].

Figure 1.1 Sketches demonstrating the initial thoughts regarding the conceptual structure of the thesis, the in-between-ness, and the interconnection of its various sections [author's notes].

Figure 1.2 Initial sketches demonstrating the visual narratives of the thesis, and how the graphic design of the thesis can help the reader navigate through the materials [author's notes].

Figure 2.0 Map of the main aesthetic themes discussed in this section, which are based on the general map). The categorization of these themes into design elements and principles is following the renowned Francis D.K. Ching's book, which is widely adapted in design fundamental studies. While the addition of creative process aspects is the author's efforts to include spiritual/intangible aspects of the creative process [author's notes]

Figure 2.1 The natural qualities of the Arabic alphabet and their correlation with the human body (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.100,101)

Figure 2.2 Numerical values of the Arabic letters (Source: Nasr, 1993)

Figure 2.3 Proportional geometric analysis of the ground plan and arches of the main iwan (doorway) of the Taj Mahal mausoleum in Agra, India. The analysis shows the use of the golden proportion in architectural elements (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.4 The Kaaba, Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Symbolism of the geometric form of the Kaaba, the cube, inspired the architectural heritage of the Muslim world (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.5 Light filtering through the traditional architectural elements adding a unique quality to Muslim spaces (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.6 Drawings that shows the different types of minarets across the Islamic land; different in style however the proportion of the main architectural element to the mosque is the same (Source: Hillenbrand, 2004).

Figure 2.7 Sketch for one the illustrations in Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) that demonstrates the four colours system and its relation to inherent energy of nature (or the active qualities of nature; hot, wet, dry, and cold) and the passive qualities of matter (fire, water, air and earth).

Figure 2.8 From nature to geometry to ornamentation. Islamic art derived from contemplating the Divine work in nature to application in surfaces through geometric and arabesque compositions (Source: Moustafa, 2008)

Figure 2.9 Kamal al-Din Bihzad. The Seduction of Yusuf, from a manuscript of Saadi's Bustan, Herat (Afghanistan), 1488. Cairo, National Library (Source: Blair and Bloom, 2003)

Figure 2.10 The central dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran. An example of how unity through multiplicity is applied in interior ornamentation, where lemon-shaped units draw the visitor's eye towards the centre (Source: Myatt, 2013)

Figure 2.11 Courtyard in Bou Inania Medresa in Fez, Morocco. The contrast between the elaborate spaces and the emptiness of the courtyard amplifies the importance of the void; the presence of absence [author's note] (Source: Morris, 2009)

Figure 2.12 An example for a direct application of remembrance, documenting prayers or words from the Quran. Tiles written in Arabic and Farsi, 1334, Iran. From the IAMM collection. (Source: Moustafa, 2008)

Figure 2.13 (Left) Mystical symbolism of the "Breath of the Compassionate" applied to the 8-pointed star and cross pattern (source: Bakhtiar, 1976, p.16). (right) Tiles from Iran in the Breath of the Compassionate pattern (Source: Medliej, 2014).

Figure 2.14 Indoor spaces versus outdoor architecture of Bayt Al-Suhaymi in Cairo, Egypt. The use of Mashrabiya allows the women of the house "to see and not be seen", and to protect the privacy of the household yet penetrating natural light (Source: Wikipedia, 2018).

Figure 2.15 Muqarnas arches surrounding the courtyard in al-Hambra Palace in Granada, Spain. The intercity of the muqarnas reflects the nature inspired by it (Source: Flickr Hive Mind, 2018).

Figure 2.16 Plan of the Royal Square (Imam Square) in Isfaha, Iran showing Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque in relation to the square, the palace and surrounding public spaces (Source: Takeo Kamiya, 2004)

Figure 2.17 (left) plan of Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque showing the indirect entrance from the terrace of the Royal square (Source: Takeo Kamiya, 2004) (right) Interior view of the dome (Source: Shivar, 2004). The indirect corridor from the public terrace to the private worship hall contribute in loosing physical orientation in favour of immaterial and cosmic order.

Figure 2.18 Interior view of the muqarnas dome in Shrine of Shaykh Abd al-Samad in Natanz, Iran. The elements of the muqarnas are utilised to eliminate the boundaries of the physical space to allow for immaterial transition (Source: University of Michigan, 2018)

Figure 2.19 Generation of tile pattern. The micro-scale of the geometric stars run into, or emerge from, one another (source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.20 The underlying geometry of Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo, Egypt, showing how centrality is manifested through architectural spaces (source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.21 (left) The formal components of the centralised enclosed space model for Islamic buildings (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.155-156). (right) Plan and axonometric view of Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul as an example of the concentric composition (Source: Bahiahostels, 2018)

Figure 2.22 Sketches showing the manifestation of the macrocosm (zahir), and the microcosm (batin) in relation to the courtyard and the garden as two elements complementing the aspects of "place" (Source: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

Figure 2.23 Sketches determining the height of the windows to preserve the privacy in Islamic cities. Dimension shows are interpretation of the author (Source: Hakim, 1986)

Figure 2.24 Main salamlék and haramlek mashrabiyyah, Bayt al-Suhaymi, Cairo, Egypt. As an architectural element, Mashrabiyya is a metaphorical sanctuary resembles the veil, creating a sacred place where the Muslim woman can freely express herself (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 3.0 Temporary mapping for the third Bab [author's note] .

Figure 3.1 (A) Designer and artist Ahmad Angawi in his Jeddah studio (B) Installation by Ahmad Angawi (Source: The Maine Arts Journal, 2017).

Figure 3.2 (A) Artist Dana Awartani in front of her fabric installation “Love is My Law, Love is My Faith” which features a set of eight embroidered cloth panels inspired by the verses of 12th Century Sufi poet Ibn Arabi about his experience in the holy city of Mecca (Source: MOA, 2017). (B) The embroidery/making process of the installation (Source: Saudi Gazette, 2018).

Figure 3.3 (A) Two-pages spread for online research of Basmah Felemban’s artwork titled “The Journey from Creatures to God” showcasing the literature background and the coding of her visual elements in the piece (Source: Felemban, 2017). (B) The final result of the making process of “The Journey from Creatures to God” (Source: Athr, 2018).

Figure 3.4 Work by Lulwah al-Hamoud, Two mixed media work, part of The Language of Existence Series. Each artwork represents one of the 99 names of God, (Left) ‘The Ever Lasting’ (Al Baqi), (Right) ‘The Originator’ (Al Mubdi) (Source: Islamic Art Magazine, 2015).

Figure 3.5 Artist Nasser AlSalem producing his work “Generation in Waiting” for ‘Rhizoma’ exhibition in 2013 (Source: Edge of Arabia).

Figure 3.6 (A) “They Will Be Seen Competing in Constructing Lofty Buildings”, 2014. Concrete work by Nasser al-Salem representing the Quranic verse about lofty buildings in a material form. The work is constructed in a way that the verse can be read from the top (Source: Athr, 2018). (B) “And Whoever Obeys Allah, He Will Make for Him a Way Out”, 2012. Corian sculpture by Nasser al-Salem in which the verse, written in Kufic script is forming a miniature maze. Another example in which the meaning of the verse leads to the materiality of the artwork (Source: Athr, 2018).

Figure 3.7 Last seen by Basmah Felemban, 2014. The artist used coding system to create a language formed by dissecting geometric star. According to Felemban, the work represents encoded conversations between two characters from classic Arabic literature to provoke conversations on censorship and prohibition by those who misinterpret religion (Source: Athr, 2018).

Figure 3.8 The Journey from Creatures to God by Basmah Felemban, 2017. Felemban use graphical language, laser engraved on coppered plywood, to represent the knowledge of the Divine realities and attributes realized by Ibn Arabi’s book *Fusus Al-Hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom)

Figure 3.9 The Journey in God by God by Basmah Felemban, 2017. The artist represents the second of the four journeys through the astronomical text written by Sufi scholar in the 10th journey about the fixed stars (Source: Athr, 2017).

Figure 3.10 Pages of the uploaded research by the artist showing the making process of the first piece. The first two from the left explains the divisions in the piece based on the ontological levels of the Universal Man by Ibn Arabi, while the two on the right explains the artist's graphical system in encoding Ibn Arabi's "Bezels of Wisdom" (Source: Felemban, 2017).

Figure 3.11 Pages of the uploaded research by the artist to show the making process of the second piece. The first two from the left showcases the artist's analogy of the 'Book of the Fixed Stars' while the two on the right shows her proportional system that is based on the celestial stars as portrayed in Al-Sufi's book (Source: Felemban, 2017).

Figure 3.12 Sijada (Prayer Mat) by Ahmad Angawi. The design of the prayer mat folds into a messenger bag allows for user's mobility (Source: Design, 2016).

Figure 3.13 Simplicity in Multiplicity by Ahmad Angawi, 2016. The artist developed throughout his work a modular system for more experimental projects. He observed the collective behaviour of the bees in building their colony for days and documented it in order to dissect and learn about the structural element of natural design and harmony through his own representation (Source: Art Paris, 2018).

Figure 3.14 Jameel House of Traditional Arts housed in a historical building of the old city Al-Balad. Run by Angawi, it hosts varied and accessible educational activities that integrate PSTA's teaching methodology with skills and experiences of local master craftsmen (Source: Prince's School of Traditional Arts, 2018).

Figure 3.15 (A) Angawi during the opening of his solo exhibition Al Mangour: Loved and Beloved, which was set in a traditional house next to the School of Traditional Arts in Al-Balad. The artist explains the wooden structure of Mangour in an installation piece. (B) Part of the installation pieces that document the making process of the Mangour, dissecting the geometrical proportions and the hidden structure of the Mangour (Source: Athr, 2016).

Figure 3.16 Abjad Hawaz by Dana Awartani, 2016. Awartani delves into the ancient scholarly tradition called Ilm al-Huruf (the science of letters) to evolve it into a visual language encoded by her knowledge in geometry and illumination. The work allows for comprehension of linguistics, semantics and spiritual engagement in contemporary spaces. The work also resulted later in various other works using her distinctive system of coding letters (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).

Figure 3.17 Dana Awartani during the making process of Jali, 2018. The work is inspired by Classical Poems, a book by Arab Women and Mugal era. In collaboration with artisans from India to create a nostalgic series of silk embroidered panels as a reminiscent of the royal era (Source: Nihal, 2018).

Figure 3.18 I was dreaming, single-channel video by Dana Awartani, 2017. The artist appears in frame and starts sweeping what appear at first glance as traditional Islamic tiled floor (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).

Figure 3.19 Details of the work “I Was Dreaming” by Dana Awartani, 2017. The choice of medium in Awartani’s work conveys part of the message of temporality when it comes to the subject of urban development, as well as humility when it comes to the spiritual aspect in artistic process [Author’s note] (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).

Figure 3.20 “The Tree of Architecture” (After Banister Fletcher, A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method, New York and London 1924, p. iii) (Source: Necipo lu, 2012)

Figure 4.0 Characteristics of naturalistic inquiry, interpretation by Bunnell (Source: Gray and Malins, 2016, p.97)

Figure 4.1 The different forms of image-based research as described by Jon Prosser), which he calls the four Rs of visual research. The transformative nature of the intended process of this research will be adapting the four Rs of visual research in sequential form, so it will start as researcher-found, to researcher created and through the collaborative case studies respondent-generated visual data will be created. All will be documented through exhibitions and the final thesis (Representation and visual research). [Summarised information] (Source: Spencer, 2011, p.4)

Figure 5.0 The three prescriptive points of reference for thinking about how exhibitions are constructed according to O’Neill [Summarized information] (Source: O’Neill, 2012, p.92.93)

Figure 5.1 Part of By the Book exhibition (2017), which was located in the International Projects Space in BCUs School of Arts [Author’s notes]

Figure 5.2 Entrance to By the Book, 2017 in BCU’s School of art. The school’s gallery, International Projects Space, follows a white-cube gallery’s set-up in contrast to the authentic foyer space. The exhibition was divided between the two spaces [Author’s notes]

Figure 5.3 The researcher-curator during the curator’s talk of By the Book exhibition, photographed by Ahmad Hayat. The initiative developed an exhibition model, that positions the public talks and social interaction at the heart of their exhibitions [Author’s notes].

Figure 5.4 In the name of... (sculpture), work by Ebrahim Obaid which was exhibited in the foyer. The work was reproduced by the curator, following general instructions given by the artist himself [Author’s notes]

Figure 5.5 Visitors and students interacting with the artworks in By the Book exhibition. The initiative developed an exhibition model, that positions the public talks and social interaction at the heart of their exhibitions [Author's notes]

Figure 5.6 Official Arabic invitation of Dwell | Sakan, 2013 (left), family visiting the exhibition (right) [Author's notes]

Figure 5.7 The architecture of the courtyard house, Bait Akbar, which hosted Dwell | Sakan couple of weeks before getting demolished [Author's notes]

Figure 5.8 The courtyard of Bait Akbar house during the opening of Dwell | Sakan, 2013 (left). Untitled installation piece by Yaser al-Hassan, which is a homage to the women of the house, each "abaya" have a different scent reflecting the social life of the local community [Author's notes]

Figure 5.9 Live performance during the opening of Dwell | Sakan, playing nostalgic old songs in the middle of the courtyard where it was turned to a social space, and a space of memory [Author's notes]

Figure 5.10 Visitors engaging with the work in Dwell | Sakan, photography by Hussain al-Kumaish. The artwork is an installation by the researcher-curator, Finding Grandma Blue, which narrates personal memories that connects to the collective memory of the local community [Author's notes]

Figure 6.0 Page from the researcher's visual diary recording the work of the craftsmen, the craftsmen used his hands to express and communicate his thoughts and feelings [Author's notes].

Figure 6.1 (left) Mu'allim Idris in his wood workshop, surrounded by his students. (right) Mu'allim Idris while working on the collaborative work with the researcher [Author's notes].

Figure 6.2 Hands of the mu'allims (master artisans), each with its own distinctive embodied knowledge and body language [Author's notes].

Figure 6.3 Pictures from the training sessions where the researcher was learning with the master artisans of different types of crafts. The Mu'allim either start on the same surface dedicated for the researcher or work next to her on another surface while the researcher is practicing on hers. [Author's notes].

Figure 6.4 Pictures for the collaborative work, which happened after few sessions of learning with the artisans. The researcher provided designs, then collaborated with the artisans for the execution of the work [Author's notes].

Figure 6.5 The final result of the leatherwork showing the designer's inspiration and paper prototype, then the leather prototype along with collaborative work of local footwear with mu'allim Al-Ayashi [Author's notes].

Figure 6.6 Mapping the brainstorming session with the focus group in GOA, the question "what makes things Islamic?" started with direct answers then moved towards abstract answers that correlate with the literature review of this research [author's notes]

Figure 6.7 Mapping the brainstorming session with the group regarding the question "how can you create a spiritual space?", which was answered interchangeably with the first question. The question has helped the focus group participants in visualising spatial details such as colour and light [author's notes]

Figure 6.8 Part of the second session that happened in the GOA studios in Tetouan, where the participants explored their ideas through sketching based on their previous brainstorming [author's notes]

Figure 6.9 Some of the results of the ideas and concept development. On the left is a story board for a short film, and on the right is a navigation for a mobile application. This reflects the lifestyle, interests, and skills of the participants [author's notes]

Figure 6.10 Part of the third session that happened at the GOA studios in Tetouan, the participants further developed their sketches into prototyping small sculptural pieces or envisioning installations [author's notes]

Figure 6.11 Pictures from the focused group sessions where the participant on the left was introduced to different medium, and participant on the right used her own tools for expression [Author's notes].

Figure 6.12 The studio of the researcher-curator during Convergence exhibition opening. The researcher welcomed visitors in her studio which narrated the process of work from the teaching hands (artisans), the thinking hands (the focus group participants), and the learning hands (researcher-designer) [Author's notes].

Figure 6.13 Narrative boards about the teaching hands (artisans), and the collaborative pieces done with each one of them. The boards were given to the mu'allims as a token of gratitude after the end of residency [Author's notes].

Figure 6.14 The learning hands (researcher-designer): table showing the researcher's own work and prototypes that feeds into her practice as a designer ([Author's notes].

Figure 6.15 Snapshots showing how the experience in Morocco has been shared virtually through Skype calls and Snapchat stories for students to get a glimpse of another cultural context and the skill-based narrative [Author's notes]

Figure 6.16 Selected page spreads from IDEO's Design Toolkit (CC copyright available online at ideo.com), the workbook was developed to aid in design process, and help participants during creative problem solving. In this research the workbook was adopted then tailored to fit the course syllabus for the students in an attempt to record their creative process [Author's notes]

Figure 6.17 Example of the concept development stage; inspired by the story of Virgin Mary, the student developed a brooch design using the element of palm tree as a symbolic reference (Source: student's course work).

Figure 6.18 Example of the concept development stage; the student was inspired by Ibn Arabi's interpretations of the cosmos and linked it to nature through the use of vegetal elements in the necklace design Source: student's course work)

Figure 6.19 Example of the final submitted sheets which included details such as the dominant design principle, concept articulation and technical specs (Source: student's course work).

Figure 6.20 Few examples of the final outcome of designing a jewellery piece, showing the diversity of the functions as well as the quality of the finished product. The rendered visual images show more creativity than the physical prototype (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]

Figure 6.21 Samples of mind maps of Exercise 02 showcasing the development of students' thoughts when asked the initial questions (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]

Figure 6.22 Design sketches from student (A), communicating initial ideas about the spiritual/study space, configuration of seating, and the use of light in the space (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]

Figure 6.23 Student (B) ideation and visual articulation of her initial idea for creating a contemplative space using audio capsules (Source: student's course work)

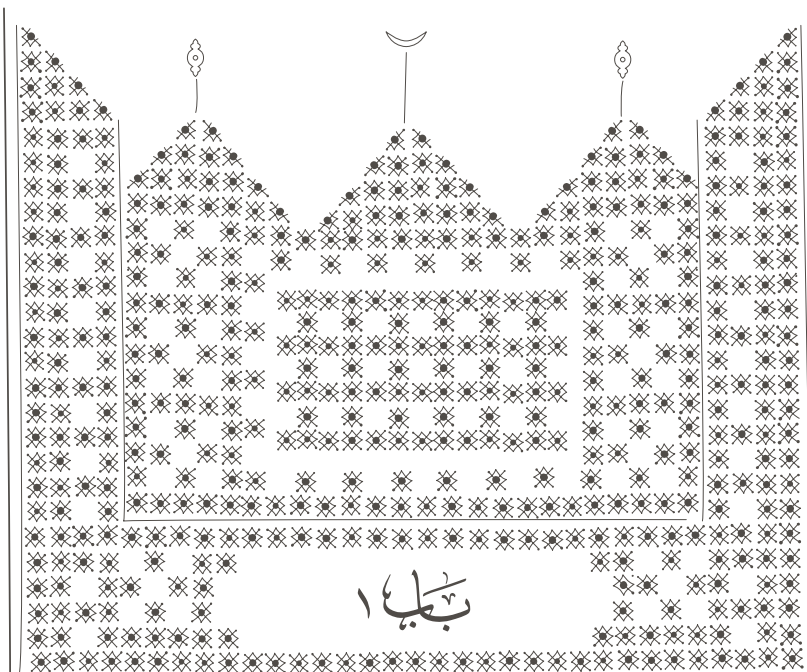
Figure 6.24 Design sketches for Student (C), showing the initial ideas for a spiritual space that relates to the notion of reading and how knowledge can “elevate” oneself using the application of rhythm as a principle (Source: student’s course work)

Figure 6.25 Final rendering for student (A)’s ideas about the spiritual/study space. The render shows design decisions that emerged after developing the sketches. Analysis on the rendered image is author’s notes (Source: student’s course work).

Figure 6.26 Final rendering for student (B) showing her interpretation of a meditation space. Repetitive pattern with direct application of a traditional motif, is repeated through the floor, audio element and the ceiling (Source: student’s course work)

Figure 6.27 Final rendering for student (C) showing her interpretation of a reading/ meditation space (Source: student’s course work)





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

تَمَهِّيدٌ

Bab 01 | "Tamheed" - Introduction

مُفَكِّرَةٌ

1.0 Introduction

(background, questions, and hypothesis)

Traditional Islamic art has been used as an expressive tool to convey religious beliefs throughout everyday life. Muslims adapted their belief system not as a mere set of religious practices, but as a general guideline for personal and social conduct. It is also believed that art offered a spiritual function in traditional Islam due to the intimacy found between the form and the content of the Islamic Revelation (Nasr, 1987; Akkach, 2012). This belief has been the subject of debate in artistic practice in contemporary Islam: while some of the renowned contemporary artists of the Muslim world refer to spiritual and metaphysical ideas in their work, some scholars assert that these ideas have not been validated by historical evidence. This forms part of the contemporary discourse of Islamic art which consists of a wide spectrum of movements and falls between two extremes: traditionalists (or perennials) who advocate the principle of "Unity of Being" as a basis for artistic expression, and therefore reproduce the same old geometric methods and applications in order not to be absorbed in a globalised identity (El-Said and Parman, 1976). The other extreme, the modernists, nurture a conflicted attitude towards Western ideas of modernity. Thus, they either imitate a foreign perspective without any relation to the religious identity or compensate with insubstantial "Islamization" of modern attempts (Ramadan, 2008).

Today, the diversity of thought in Islamic artistic and architectural practice is a result of a continuous dilemma and major debate defining it within the historical field of art and architecture. As opposed to other artistic heritage such as Western art, Islamic art has not been taught as a subject to time, and it also underwent a lack of documentation on how it responded and interacted with movements such as modernism and post-modernism. Needless to say, that since art education has a profound impact on the artistic expression of any age, the non- homogenous definition of Islamic art and architecture as a subject in art history has contributed to its current discourse of accommodating its epistemological features in a globalised world (Rabbat, 2012).

This has set stage for developing the hypothesis of this research, which consists of two parts; first reviewing the philosophical dimensions of traditional Islamic artistic expression to examine its contribution in contemporary practice, and second is investigating an alternative approach in the pedagogy of Islamic art and design that is able to accommodate the different views within its context. In doing so, the research attempts

to explore ways of regenerating creativity in the contemporary pedagogy and practice of Islamic artistic expression. Having said that, formulating the research hypothesis does not mean that there is an existing 'research problem', on the contrary, it ought to raise new questions and possibilities that can help in expanding the field (Runco, 2014). In the context of Islamic arts, this research intends to address the formation of artistic expression from a new angle by raising the following questions:

- What forms of historical (philosophical, spiritual and embodied) knowledge has been the source of Islamic artistic expression? In other words, what makes an artistic work "Islamic"? Whether the artistic work is an artefact (fine arts), or a space (Interior or architecture).
- What forms of historical knowledge within Islamic artistic expression can be traced in contemporary practice?
- How to broaden the understanding and pedagogy of Islamic art and design in relation to time?

By attempting to inform these questions, the research will connect Islamic philosophy with contemporary practice. Hence, the research title 'curating and creating' refers to the multi-faceted practical approach in informing the Islamic artistic expression in the context of 'pedagogy and practice'¹.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

While art and design are generally taught as interrelated subjects, artistic knowledge in an Islamic context took a different form, which influenced the way it has been communicated as a field of study and applied as creative practice. The research will shed light on the philosophical ideas and historical knowledge that shaped the legacy of Islamic art and design, as well as investigating how this legacy was transmitted as a field of knowledge. Having said that, the paradox in Islamic artistic expression investigated here consists of two areas; one is the relationship between the religious and artistic practice, and the other is the relationship between pedagogy and practice.

Before highlighting the aims and objectives of the research, it is important to note the two categories for understanding creative practices in research: practice as transformative, and practice as conceptual (Sullivan, 2005). This research integrates these two categories within its practice-led approach in various ways. As to practice being transformative, the research theoretical/practical framework constantly undergoes changes as new experiences are added to the reflective process. As for the conceptual aspects of the research, the knowledge obtained in research is grounded in its curatorial approach and its creative outputs. The thesis framework therefore intends to approach the research questions by aiming to:

- First, search for alternative means to connect the applications of contemporary design theories with Islamic design and artistic practice.
- Secondly, investigate the pedagogical dilemma of Islamic art and design in order to create appropriate models that fosters creativity in the context of Islamic design practice.

The research intends to explore these aims through the following objectives, each relates to the research questions respectively:

1. Critical review of the spiritual, metaphysical and symbolic dimensions of Islamic art and design, which – according to Nasr (1987) – is often ignored or understated, in order to allow potential for an alternative reading of Islamic design history [The Past].
2. Critical analysis of the work and the process of contemporary artists in the Muslim world, in relation to the outcomes of literature review. This will examine the artistic interpretation and existing production of the cultural values. This can potentially help in synthesizing practical tools that are grounded in current practice [The Present].
3. Explore the historical methods used to classify the knowledge of Islamic artistic expression, as well as current design curriculums that convey the history of Islamic art. This will eventually contribute in developing an epistemological framework that will communicate Islamic values within contemporary design context [The Future].

1.2 Scope and Limitations

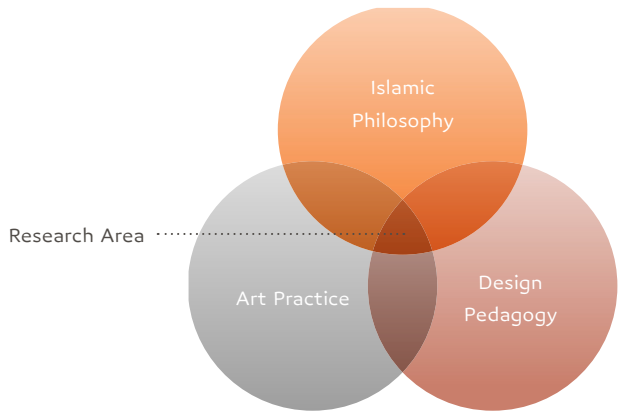


Diagram 1.0 The different areas included in the research scope. Bringing these areas together in the context of Islamic art and design is what forms the research contribution to knowledge [author's notes]

(Diagram 1.0) shows how the research area brings together different subjects that were rarely investigated in one context. Firstly, Islamic philosophy which includes cosmological, metaphysical and spiritual knowledge interpreted through the traditional views of Islam. These aspects which influenced the aesthetic directions of traditional Islamic art, has been addressed in a historical context but rarely in parallel to the contemporary aesthetic movements.

Second, existing art practice of the Muslim world contributes to Islamic cultural production, however its contribution in informing traditional and cultural values has been overlooked. The work of contemporary Muslim artists has rarely been reviewed academically without being influenced or dominated by the socio-political issues of the Arab region. Furthermore, Islamic aesthetics has been addressed in academic context within the fields of philosophy and theology, yet it has not been explored through practical methodology let alone a curatorial approach.

Third, pedagogy of Islamic aesthetics has been limited to either a category in art history or discussed in general architectural theory as a cultural category. Hence, it has not been explored within the current holistic understanding of 'design'. Thus, the research looks at the possibility of an alternative reading for Islamic aesthetics that can accommodate a holistic interpretation within the overall context of 'design culture'.

Following this scope for the research, there are certain limitations that might be problematic in both the theory and the practice of the research. These limitations will be considered while conducting the research and are summarised as follows:

A. THEORY

1. Accessibility to primary sources: Arabic references that address the traditional philosophy of Islam, and its cosmological and metaphysical dimensions, are not accessible to the public, as they are mostly archived in museums outside the Muslim world. Even if they were accessible in digital format, the written language of these sources is classical Arabic, some of which are not visually complete. What is accessible, however, is the interpretations of these sources. Therefore, besides the Quran, the research refers to secondary sources for these topics.

2. Linguistic support for Arabic terms: There are many linguistic and conceptual distinctions between the Arabic and English language, and only a limited range of translations available for some of the Arabic terms used. In some of these translations, particularly in chapters 2 and 3, there may not be an equivalent to describe the exact meaning of the terms, or their historical or philosophical arguments. Therefore, the terms and their translations are quoted here exactly as they appear in their sources. Other terms used in the research are translated according to the context of the text rather than literal translations.

B. PRACTICE

1. Sampling of the case studies: Throughout the thesis, several case studies have been selected to support both theory and practice of the research. A possible challenge is the amount of cases may be too small to generalise key findings in relation to the research problem (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). Thus, it must be realised that key findings from case studies are not based on statistical but analytical grounds (Yin, 2003).

2. Temporary state of case studies: The selected case studies, particularly in the third chapter, are of contemporary artistic practices in the Muslim world. However, considering that the aesthetic values of any culture are always subject to time, the artistic practice changes accordingly. Thus, the selected case studies are being investigated within a timeframe which could potentially change in the future, making them insufficient to create radical change in the research context but perhaps informing the understanding of the research practice (Back and Puwar, 2012).

1.3 Research Motivation/ Researcher's Position

Kandinsky (Tomas, 1964) articulates the main drive behind any work of art as "Inner Necessity" through which he explains:

"Inner necessity originates from three elements: (1) Every artist, as a creator, has something in him which demands expression (this is the element of personality). (2) Every artist, as the child of his time, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (this is the element of style) – dictated by the period and particular country to which the artist belongs (it is doubtful how long the latter distinction will continue). (3) Every artist, as a servant of art, has to help the cause of art (this is the quintessence of art, which is constant in all ages and among all nationalities)." (Kandinsky, cited in Tomas, 1964, p.51)

With this in mind, the **research motives** can be framed within the following points:

1. As a Muslim Artist/Designer:

The first motive derives from the Islamic concept of *ijtihad*; an Arabic noun derived from the verb *jahada*, which means to fight, or to strive. Thus, *ijtihad* means to struggle with oneself, to endeavour, or to interpret (Marks, 2012). This self-reflective concept resonates with the researcher's passion to question the religious and cultural values of her artistic practice. As an artist, her work focuses on the intersection of art and religion, and the relationship between spirituality and the creative process. In other words, this research is merely a personal *ijtihad* and an intellectual journey that feed into the passion and the values of the researcher as a Muslim designer. Thus, the journey of the researcher starts from being an artist in order to deconstruct what makes a creative work "Islamic" in a reflective manner. For any creative individual, if he/she cannot experience the intrinsic qualities of forms and compositions, the compositions will be, as Kandinsky puts it, "meaningless and arbitrary" and free from the "principle of inner necessity" (Tomas, 1964). This concept is similar to what Gray and Malins (2004) refer to as being reflective and responsive as a researcher in the arts.



2. As a Design Educator:

The research also performs on educational levels; in a broad sense, researchers have been seeking an understanding of the pedagogical dimensions of creativity in design (Williams, Ostwald, Askland, 2011). These pedagogical dimensions can be challenged through a dynamic approach that combines both the active and the reflective; the practice and the research (Gray and Malins, 2004). Being a design educator in the Arab Gulf in particular, it is essential to integrate the social and cultural context into the formation of designer's identity. The current dilemma within Islamic art and design is that it is being disseminated through a Western perspective, which has created a lack of appropriate models and tools to support and assess creative work in the field (Rabbat, 2004; Ramadan, 2008). As a design educator, the researcher asserts on the need for a holistic approach taking into consideration the creative process of the designer/artist. This allows the potential to inform the pedagogy of Islamic art and design in a generative way.

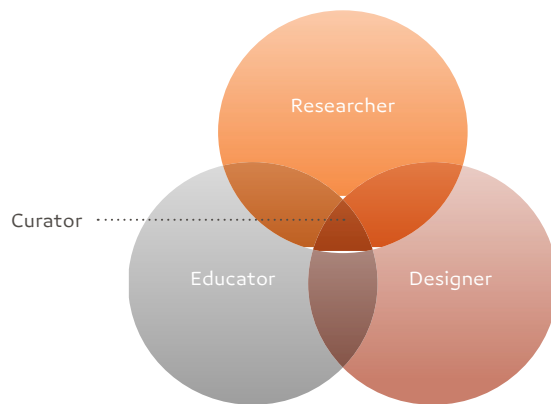
Another aspect of this practice-led research is the interchangeable **role of the researcher**, which can be categorised as follows:


1. Designer as Researcher:

The reflective process of the designer during the research forms an integral part of the research material. For example, the artistic experimentations of the researcher will unfold from the literature review as a way to understand the gained knowledge. Sullivan (2005) asserts that the importance of the artist's experience as a core element in creating new knowledge; he explains that the projects conducted throughout the research create the potential for new understanding. These projects could take various forms such as performances and exhibitions. Thus, the researcher, as designer, can create the forms through which the research knowledge can be visualised and shared. Another aspect of this role manifests itself in disseminating the knowledge of the research in a visual language, creating an alternative way of reading the research materials, which can increase the research readability. This will be further elaborated later in this chapter.

2. Researcher as Curator:

The visual and textual materials produced during the research process can be overwhelming; they start from literature findings and observing the creative process of renowned Muslim artists, to participatory projects and reflexive journeys. The researcher's role as a curator entails processing and weaving all this material together into one entity. Therefore, all methodological aspects of the research will be constantly challenged, filtered, and confirmed through a collective lens (Sullivan, 2005; Gray and Malins, 2004). This 'curatorial act' of the researcher will position the personal findings, and the other outcomes of the research methodology on a unified platform (diagram 1.1). Adapting 'curating' as a mode of assembly will be further elaborated upon in chapter five.



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Diagram 1.1 The different roles of the researcher. This relates to the researcher's background and position as well as the interchangeable role undertaken throughout the research process. The researcher-as-curator is what combines the different aspects of the research process [author's notes]

1.4 Visual Nature of Research

Referring back to the research questions, the research is positioned in the relationship between art and design. In order to explore the potential of re-defining Islamic artistic expression **within** the context of design, it is necessary to highlight the theories of defining what 'design' entails in contemporary practice. In addition, by being positioned between art and design the research led by practice, is also based on literature that highlights the reflective role of the artist-researcher. This practice-led research is progressive and innovative in its approach as it can contribute to the knowledge of Islamic design, which has often been diluted either in the field of art history or Islamic architectural practice. Furthermore, this practice-led approach to the research is in itself a contribution to the knowledge of the design field; because while current academic research in the **art** has been constantly informed by practice, the research in the field of **design** usually follows the linear and theoretical structure of scientific research.

By adapting a practice-led approach to the research, the reflective nature of the research means that the research questions are changing reflecting the new findings and insights. Having said that, and in order to reflect on the artistic practice within the research, the thesis communicates through two languages: textual and visual. Using visual language as an integral part of the research can express experiences and thoughts that cannot be comprehended in words as indicated in this research (Spencer, 2011; Martinon, 2013). Thus, the integrating visuals in this research become a communicative tool forming an integral part of its contribution to the academic field of design and expressing the complexity of the research/creative process. Thus, demonstrating an approach that increases the readability and accessibility of Islamic philosophical thoughts in the context of design, which are often not easily accessible in Arabic or English texts.

Besides using visual language parallel to the written text of the thesis, the practice involves individual and collaborative (or reflective and participatory) methods that are used to support the theoretical findings of this research. These various research methods are tied together by adapting 'curatorial practice' as a holistic definition for the research methodology, which in itself forms a bridge between the academic context and the creative applications of art and design. In this research, the 'curatorial' performs – according to Rogoff- as a “staging ground” for ideas, insights, and processes to draw a new set of relationships. In other words, it provides a mode of assemblage for the different aspects of research; art, design and education and enacts the “event of knowledge” rather than illustrate these knowledges (Martinon, 2013).

1.5 Morphology of Thesis

Morphology is defined as the form and structure of an organism or any of its parts. It can also be defined as a system of word-forming processes in a language (Dictionaries, 2009). From this point, it becomes necessary to highlight the morphology of the thesis in two aspects. First, the structure of the thesis as a curated object, thus, breaking away from the conventional structure of academic research. Second, the formation of the concepts and elements of the research using words from the Arabic language to convey conceptual and philosophical meanings. These two aspects are explained in the following points:

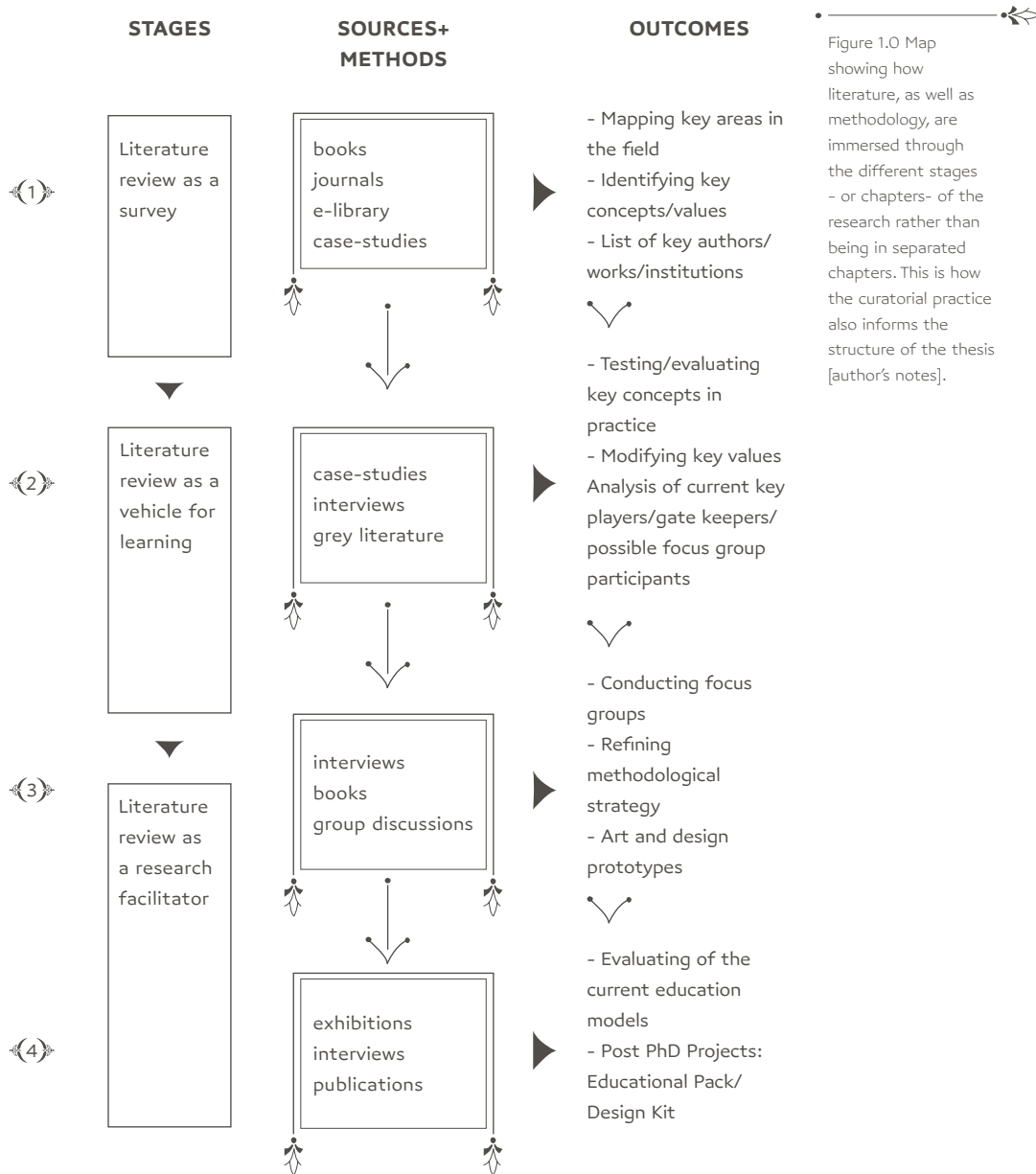
1.5.1 THESIS AS A CURATORIAL ACT

There is no doubt that in research in the arts, visual evidences play an important “poetic” part in informing the research process, whether these visuals are found or created as a response to theory. In describing the unique contribution of visuals in research, Spencer (2011) elaborates that visuals deliver an immediate and explicit impact that can be at times multi-sensorial. Several researchers and writers noted that the visuals affect the reader or the viewer in a profound and indefinable way, at the same time they are grounded in material reality. The immediate form of the visuals provide authenticity to the research that verbal or written words are unable to communicate or encompass. Sullivan (2005), Gray and Malins (2004) support this notion by asserting on the “artistic” quality in art-based research; which strategically employs the use of metaphor, analogy, and imagery to emphasise on narrative storytelling and critical interpretation as basis for research methodology. Consequently, research in arts and design have started to explore the materiality of thesis, not only in the sense that visuals complement the textual materials but also form an integral part of the intellectual debate.

This brings to light the realisation that the relationship between knowledge and research is similar to the one between understanding and writing. Consequently, new modes of understanding or knowledge require new modes of research or writing. Daichendt (2011) describes the different modes of writing as experience, as inquiry, as interrogating work, as documentation and writing as art. Having said that, and while this research is being morphed, structured and hammered out of theory as well as practice, different modes of writing are needed.

Since the lack of accessible material for Islamic aesthetic in design context is one of the challenging areas addressed here, the research needs to embody design language and perform it. This approach makes the thesis an object that becomes closer to the research process rather than a mere written output of the final outcome. Therefore, it is crucial for the logical structure of the thesis-design to be reformed in a way that informs the research readability. It is more rigorous to address the research topic in a non-conventional way, embodying the research materials from theory to practice to methodology. This way the thesis becomes a physical embodiment; defining the argument of the research as a whole and becoming closer to the research's contribution to knowledge.

The adaptation of thesis as an object or a product that can be aligned with other artistic productions is also in itself an act of curation. On the one hand, it homogeneously incorporates all the reflective and participatory practices of the designer-researcher embodied in the thesis-object. On the other, it informs the understanding of curatorial practice encompassing the structure and the form of the written word. This is evident in how 'literature' and 'methodology' is manifested in every chapter of the thesis, rather than being separated chapters as is generally customary in academic research (figure 1.0). This is made explicit in the introduction of each chapter, where general ideas are given about the methods used in the chapter.



1.5.2 USE AND TRANSLATION OF ARABIC TERMS

The study of words, their meaning and definition has taken place since the existence of language. Philosophers, thinkers, and etymologists have always searched for meanings to define and comprehend the world around us. The use of terminologies, especially in research, has always been challenged and informed. Words such as knowledge and practice have been understood in expansive terms, and today, the etymological boundaries have been broadened, crossed and interconnected.

As previously mentioned, this research aims at bridging the gap between traditional Islamic philosophies with contemporary design theories. And since traditional philosophy was only available in classical Arabic language, this will need to be deciphered by experts, making it inaccessible to the general public and specifically to individuals in the field of design. Therefore, it is important in this research when synthesizing the main principles of Islamic aesthetics from literature to include both accurate Arabic and English terminology. The necessity for these concepts to be bilingual in this research is directly related to the dilemma within Islamic aesthetics, which has been confusingly defined in English and mostly undefined in Arabic. Hence, they have not been fully comprehended in the creative context.

For the Arabic reader, this research is an attempt to bring philosophical concepts and meanings that were unavailable before, as well as to offer an aesthetic reading and adequate translation of these concepts. Bearing in mind the rich complexity of the Arabic language, a literal translation can easily rip away part of the meaning or conceal part of its depth. Thus, the translation of terms from English to Arabic in this research will not be literal, rather it will be **contextual**. An Arabic reader may find the Arabic equivalent of the English terms are inaccurate, however they are the researcher's personal efforts (ijtihad) to find satisfactory expressive terms, that are parallel and not literal, and can be subject for further interpretation.

The use of equivalent Arabic terms is not only embedded in the content of the thesis, but also in articulating the structure of the thesis itself; some of the academic terms of research titles are changed to (or substituted with) Arabic terminologies, which occur in three places:

1. The chapters' titles: with words derived from the same syllables' tone or 'Seeghah' indicate similar forms of act (Probably the closest equivalent of this in English language are gerunds, nouns formed from a verb that end with -ing). This research looks into several 'taf-eel' terms, which are nouns (gerunds) derived from the verb 'fa'a'la'. The selection of this syllable as a source to derive the titles of each chapter in this research comes from the mere reason that 'taf-eel' always indicates constant acts of assertion, exaggeration and growth (Alshurouq, 2004). And each chapter is, metaphorically, an ongoing act; can be taken further at any point, and always 'in-the-making'.

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2. The alternative word for the word 'chapter': is substituted in the research with the word 'Bab'. The word 'Bab' in Arabic refers both to a chapter in a book, or one section of a particular category, as well as a gate or door (Alshurouq, 2004). This duality of meaning fits perfectly within the context of research as it opens 'doors' for expanding and informing each portion of the research.

• ————— ﴿

بَاب

3. Titles of the visual intermissions: The third substitute relates to the supplement of an experimental body of work as a visual bridge between the written chapters of the thesis. These series of visuals are integrated in the structure of the thesis. They are experiments, thoughts, and social exercises representing the reflective process of research, and the back-and-forth movement between theories and practice, between what happened, what is happening and what could happen (Fallan, 2010). This in-between-ness found in the research landscape and among the different contexts embedded in research is essential; it is considered the manifestation of what could be the contribution to the field of Islamic design studies. It is the reconciliation between theory and practice, and the ambiguous area in which uncertainties, experimentations, and wanderings come to life. Thus, the conceptual adaptation of the word Barzakh is proposed here, as it means, in the Arabic dictionary, the barrier between two things/entities. Interestingly, it has a geographical meaning; an isthmus, a narrow piece of land "in-between" two seas, or "inter-connection" between two lands (Alshurouq, 2004). Barzakh is mentioned briefly in the Quran and understood in Islamic imagination as the time between individual death and resurrection, the barrier between deceased and realm of living (Alsa'di, 2002; Oxford Islamic Studies, 2016). Not to mention its significance in Islamic ontology as being a "mediator" between the two levels of beings, or the intermediary domain of archetypes of all possible existents as Akkach (2012) explains.

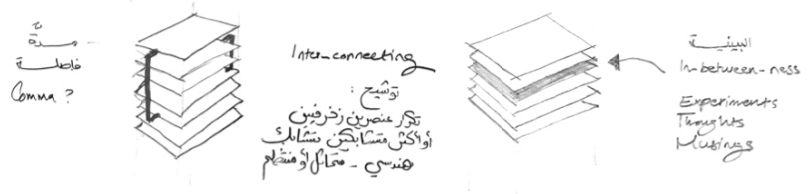
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بَرْزَخ

1.6 Navigating Through the Thesis

Following on from the previous points, the structure of the thesis has been reformed in the sense that it celebrates the visual intermissions (barzakh), as an alternative way of reading the research. Each barzakh can be read as an individual entity, or as a part of a sequence in relation to the other ones (figure 1.1). The barzakh(s) also represent platforms of possibilities, similar to art and design practice where activities take many forms, and where the most interesting work often happens in the gaps and in the 'in-between'. Navigating between them is similar to the movement between things and thoughts, mind and matter. In their curatorial act, they perform an exposition rather than an exhibition; exposing more of the research and the researcher, the complexity, and the wanderings.

Figure 1.1 Sketches demonstrating the initial thoughts regarding the conceptual structure of the thesis, the in-between-ness, and the interconnection of its various sections [author's notes].



The thesis is thus 'curated' to be read in multiple ways; for scholars, the chapters offer a linear and textual way for reading the research, which is the conventional academic structure. As for designers or public readers, the visual intermissions can give a visual shortcut to the research, making it more engaging and interactive without going through the whole text. This complementary approach helps in informing the research readability and making it more accessible.

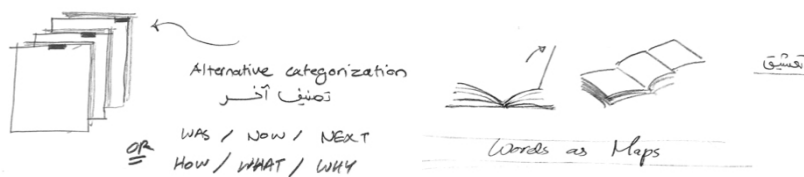


Figure 1.2
Initial sketches
demonstrating the
visual narratives of
the thesis, and how
the graphic design of
the thesis can help
the reader navigate
through the materials
[author's notes].

Ideally, reading both the chapters and the visual narratives gives a holistic idea of the research. In that sense, the visual narrative (barzakh) becomes the bridge, linking one chapter to the other. Understanding the knowledge takes a slightly different mode in each barzakh, the first is formed into a series of maps, mapping the full framework and landscape of the research. The next ones took the forms of dialogues and stories, while the last couple of barzakh were more of a self-reflection process. The graphic design of the thesis is also made in a way that it informs its readability and makes it easier to navigate through the chapters and the visuals, adding another layer that represents how designers can articulate materials realised through their research process (figure 1.2).

*Guidelines for the Electronic Version



Click to go to relevant page: Inspired by “hizb” (an indication in the Quran marking fractions of a chapter, dividing it into four sections), this icon indicates another relevant text, providing an alternative approach to the navigation of the thesis (This icon is interactive on EPUB version only).



Click the QR codes to take you to video materials that are relevant to the text, or a documentation of the research practice related to the context. This can also be scanned through another device using camera.

1.7 Arabic Terminologies and Key Concepts

<u>Terminology</u>	<u>Arabic word</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Adab	أَدَب	Arabic term for “customary practice.” In early usage, adab denoted a civility or proper conduct. In later usage, the term expanded to include a sense of intellectual sophistication.
Adhan	أَذَانٌ	The Muslim call to ritual prayer, typically made by a muezzin from the minaret of a mosque.
Al-Ghazali	الغزالي	11th century's influential Muslim theologian and philosopher
Aniconism	N/A	The opposition to the use of idols or images. In this research the term is adapted from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who refers to the absence of figures (or figurative arts) in traditional Islamic art.
Avicenna	ابن سينا	(980–1037), Islamic philosopher and physician, born in Persia. His philosophical system was the major influence on the development of scholasticism.
Averrose	ابن رشد	(c.1126–98), Spanish-born Islamic philosopher, judge, and physician. His highly influential commentaries on Aristotle sought to reconcile Aristotle with Plato and the Greek philosophical tradition with the Arabic.
Ijad	إِيجَادٌ	Creation by bringing into existence, second mode of creation according to Ibn Arabi.

<u>Terminology</u>	<u>Arabic word</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Batin	بَاطِنٌ	Inner, interior, inward, hidden, secret. In Shii, Ismaili, and Sufi thought, the Quran is held to contain two aspects: an outer or apparent meaning (zahir) and an inner or secret meaning, often allegorical or symbolic (batin). the batin of the Quran is made known only through the hermeneutical process known as tawil (interpretation).
Fiqh	فِقْهٌ	The human attempt to understand divine law (shariah). Whereas shariah is immutable and infallible, fiqh is fallible and changeable. Fiqh is the product of application of usul al-fiqh, the total product of human efforts at understanding the divine will.
Hadith	حَدِيثٌ	Report of the words and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims; considered an authoritative source of revelation, second only to the Quran (sometimes referred to as sayings of the Prophet). Hadith (pl. ahadith) were collected, transmitted, and taught orally for two centuries after Muhammad's death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. They serve as a source of biographical material for Muhammad, contextualization of Quranic revelations, and Islamic law.
Taqdir	تَقْدِيرٌ	Creation by designing, first mode of creation according to Ibn Arabi
Qibla	قِبْلَةٌ	The direction of the Kaaba (the sacred building at Mecca), to which Muslims turn at prayer.
Ikhwan Al-Safa	إِخْوَانُ الصِّفَاءِ	(Brethren of Purity) 8th or 10th century group of Muslim philosophers and scholars who are wrote epistles that consists of 52 treatises in mathematics, natural sciences, psychology (psychical sciences) and theology.

Terminology	Arabic word	Meaning
Ibn Arabi	ابن عربي	Among the most influential and controversial 12th century Sufi thinkers, also known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar , “the greatest shaykh.” Best known for views on the unity of being (wahdat al-wujud) and knowledge, the theory of microcosmic return through mystical love, and the notion of the perfect person (al-insan al-kamil). His philosophy has been criticised as pantheistic, making all religions equal, and interpreting the Quran in an unconventional and dangerous manner.
Muqarnas	مُقَرَّنَص	Three-dimensional architectural ornamentation, composed of superimposed ranks of small geometric niches, often interposed with pendant elements. Originally a structural form used in niches and in squinches under domes, the muqarnas later evolved into a highly characteristic form of architectural decoration in the Islamic world.
Niyyah	نِيَّة	Arabic word for intentions, in Islamic law texts it is considered a requirement in the “heart” during ritual duties such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. Western scholars treat niyyah as a spiritual component of Islamic rituals, while Muslim jurists treat it as formal mental focus that makes a given act into specific religious duty.
Rumi	رُومِي	(1207–1273) is the most famous exponent of the mystical tradition in Islam and venerated as ‘Mevlana’, ‘our master’. The still flourishing Mevlevi order of dervishes, famous for their ecstatic music and dance, was organized by his eldest son on the basis of Rumi’s teaching and practice.
Sufism	صُوفِيَّة	Sufism is the esoteric dimension of the Islamic faith, the spiritual path to mystical union with God. It is influenced by other faiths, such as Buddhism, and reached its peak in the 13th century.

<u>Terminology</u>	<u>Arabic word</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Suhrawardi	سَهْرَاوَرْدِي	12th century Persian Sufi and philosopher who is considered the master of illumination (Shaikh al-Ishraq) as he developed the theosophy of Light and hence he set the foundations of the Islamic school of philosophy "School of Ishraq" (illumination).
Takwin	تَكْوِين	Derived from the word "Kawwana" which means to "to synthesise," the imperative of which kun (Be!) is the divine creative word.
Taswir	تَصْوِير	The act of form giving (taswir), which includes drawing, painting, and modeling, as a participation in the divine name "Musawwir"
Zahir	ظَاهِر	Apparent, external, manifest. In esoteric interpretations of Islam, contrasted with the inner or hidden (batin) aspects of reality. The outer or apparent meaning of the Quran is made known traditionally through the discipline of tafsir (exegesis)
Sunnah	سُنَّة	Literally means 'trodden path', and therefore, the sunnah of the prophet means 'the way of the prophet'. Terminologically, the word 'sunnah' in islam means those religious actions that were instituted by the Prophet Muhammad during his 23 years of his ministry.
Tafsir	تَفْسِير	Quranic exegesis. Elucidation, explanation, interpretation, and commentary carried out in order to understand the Quran and its commandments. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is considered the most authoritative interpreter of the Quran, but Quranic interpretation through reports from acknowledged Companions of the Prophet or by their successors is also considered authoritative. Tafsir is carried out in linguistic, juristic, and theological fields.



w r i t i n g a s m a p s

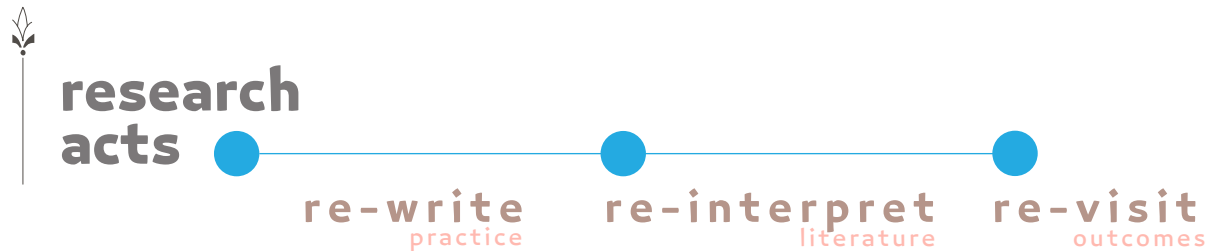
Barzakh 01



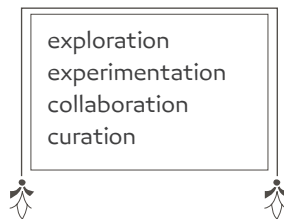
My Mind is an Underground Map

- ﴿1﴾ Anatomy of Research
- ﴿2﴾ Processs of Thinking
- ﴿3﴾ Research Landscape

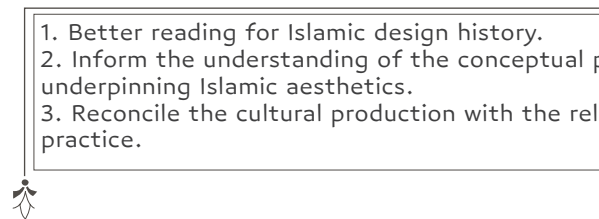
anatomy of research



how?
methodology



what?
research aims



gners , educators

Practice

1. Islamic art was documented through Western approach.
2. Design as a contemporary field is diluted in the context of Islamic art and architecture
3. Islamic art/design/architecture as a field of knowledge is categorised within art history rather than being integrated within design practice

why?

research problem

knowledge

tacit

theoretical

spiritual

conceptual

Islamic
art and design

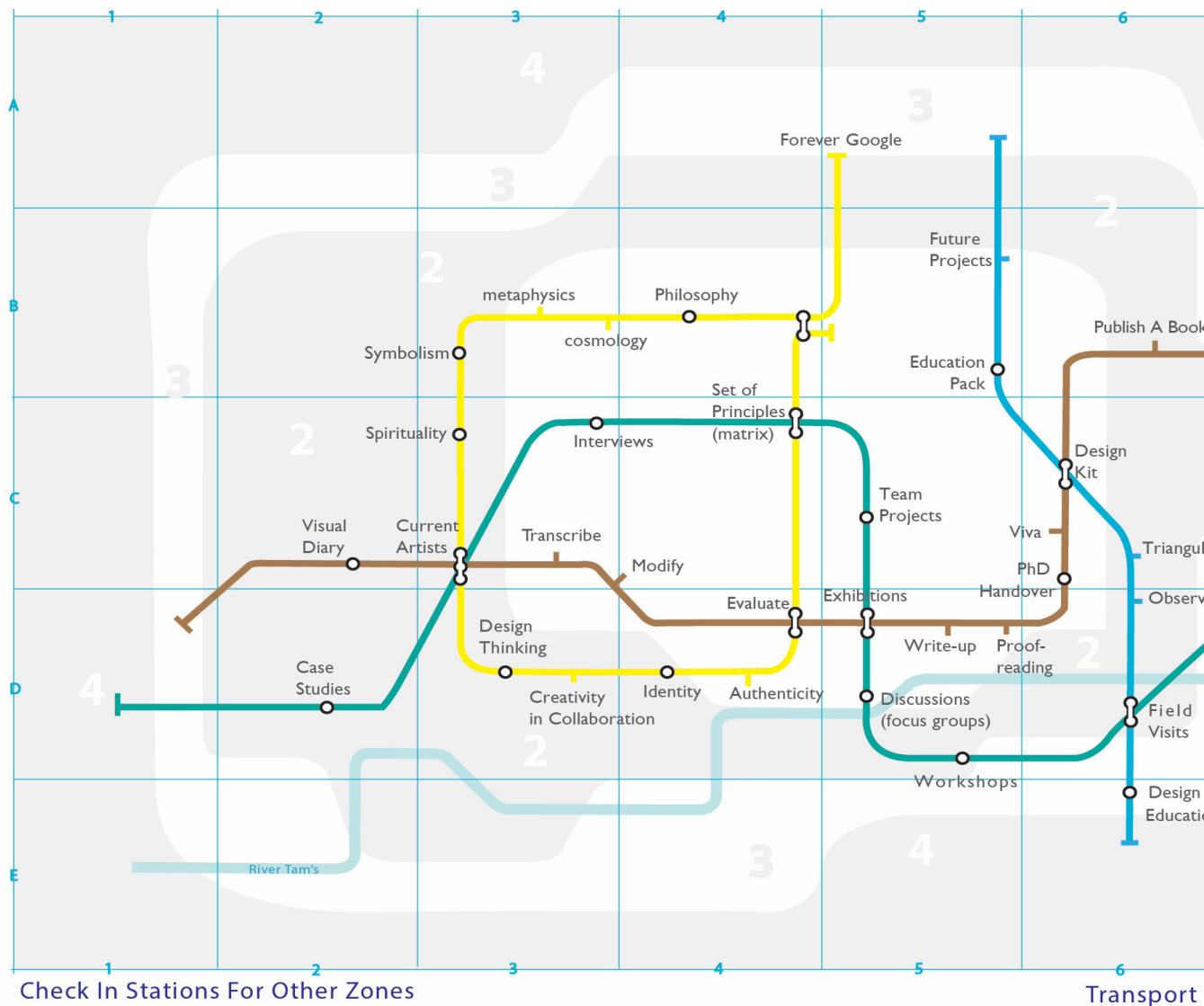
what for?

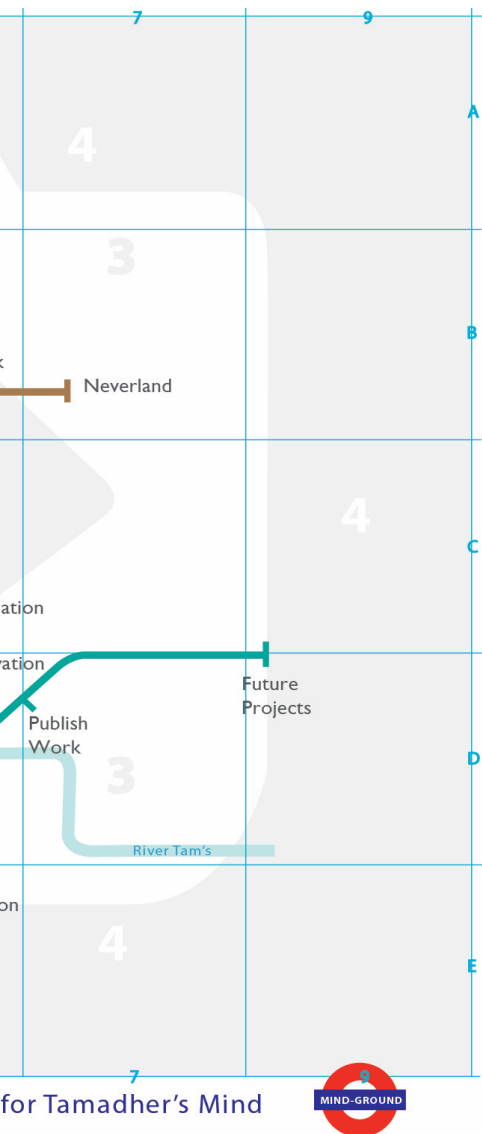
contribution to knowledge

principles
religious

1. Alternative approach to the pedagogy of Islamic designs.
2. Creative/ practical reading and collaborative approach to a context where academia and practice are separated.

process of thinking





Thinking about how do I communicate my thinking process, It is only when I was in the trembling fast London tube that I realised: I am in it!

Research, similar to creative process is more about wandering, getting lost, experimenting and stumbling through things. This altered underground map pays tribute to the flexible, dynamic process in research in arts and design. It recognises revisiting a step, or going back and forth on a thought, and the inter-connectedness of things that can be "here and there" at the same time.

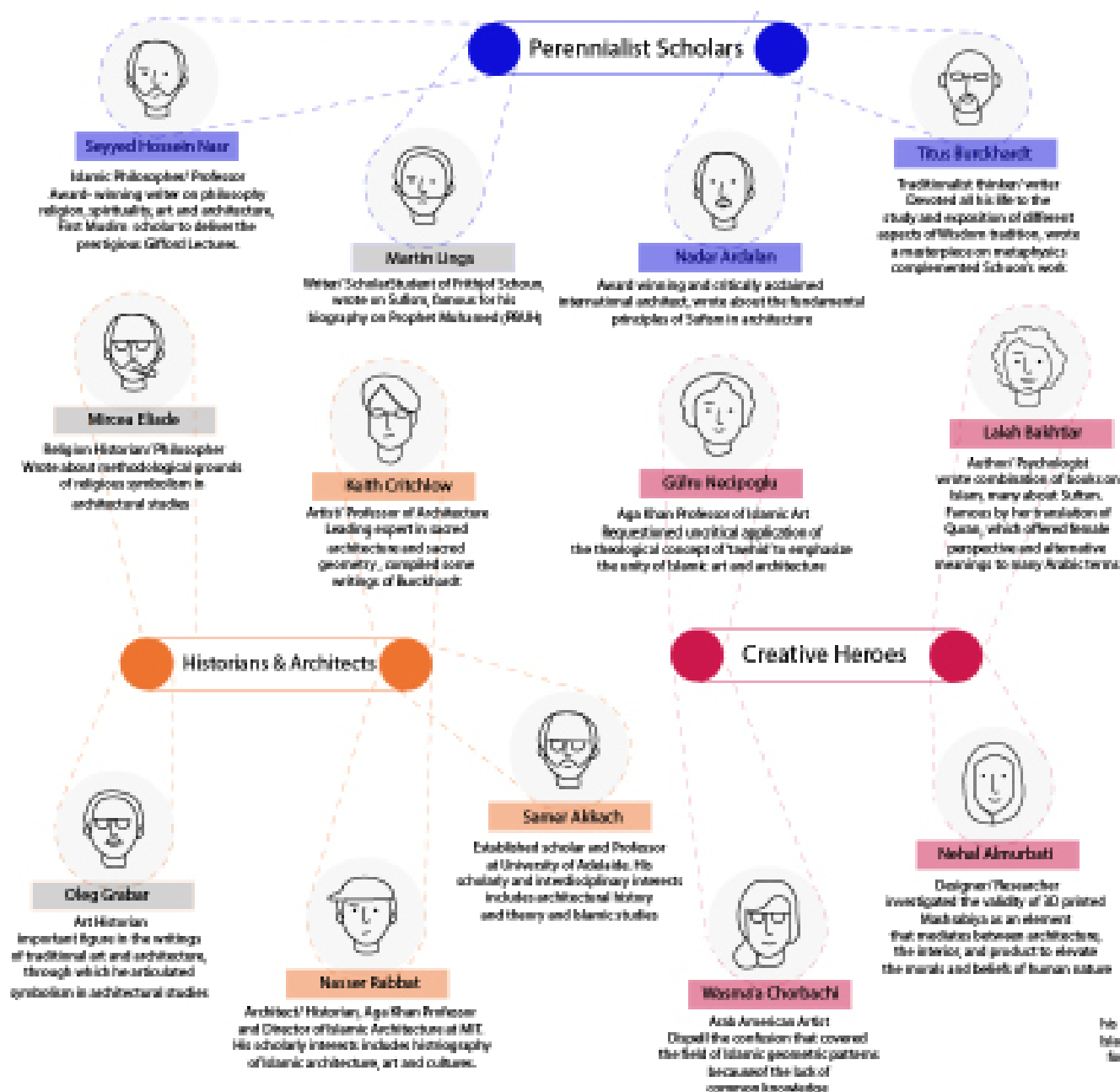
- Thesis District**
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- Subconscious-ally Line**

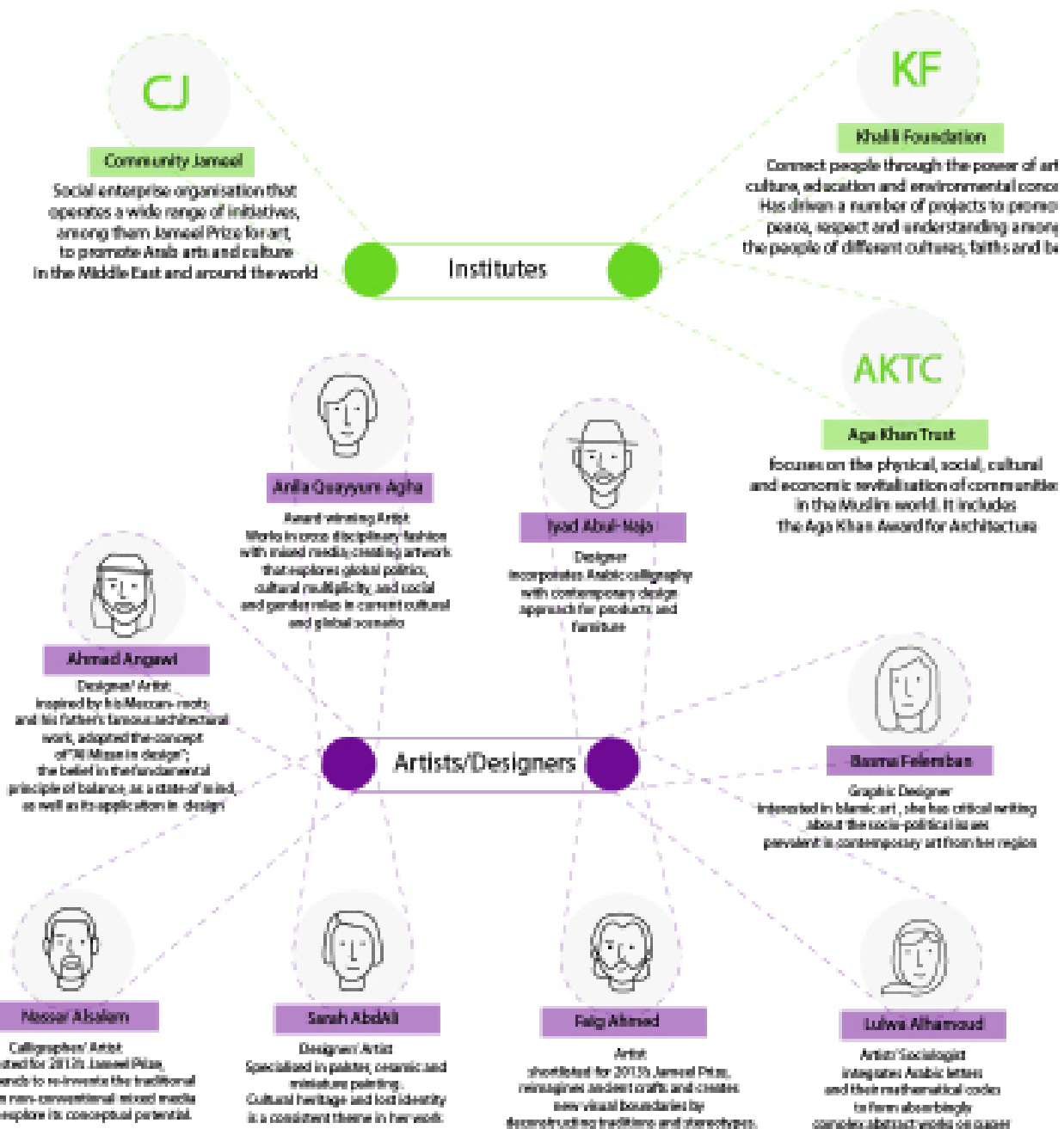


The following map (Research landscape) helped in understanding the dynamics and the relationships between individuals influencing the research terrain; scholars, architects, designers and artists who challenge and inform the landscape of Islamic production of knowledge.

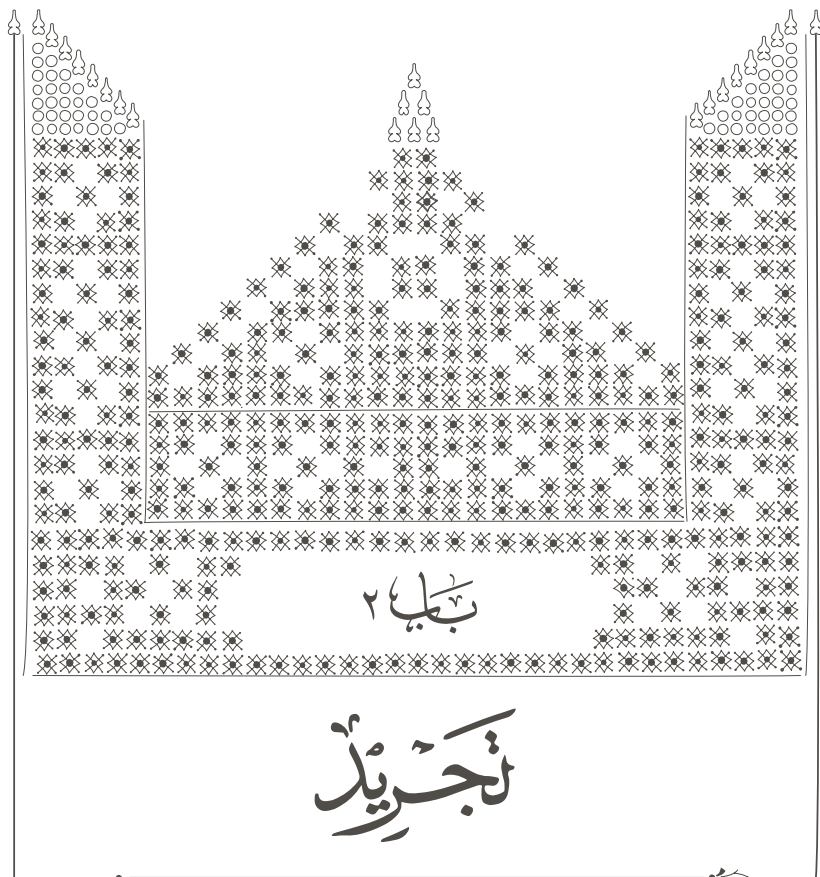
In some ways, it helped put faces to the literature sources I explore...

research landscape









Bab 02 | "Tajreed" - Aesthetic Reading in Traditional
Islamic Art

مُفَلِّحَةٌ

2.0 Introduction

In relation to the first and second research questions, this chapter offers an overview on the philosophical thoughts in traditional Islamic art, which has rarely been discussed in the creative fields of art and design. The overview aims to connect a series of texts and visuals of mystical ideas referring to the understanding of Islamic aesthetics, as well as providing an alternative reading of the Islamic artistic legacy through the current understanding of art and design aesthetics.

The current discourse on Islamic art, architecture and design is influenced by the diverse spectrum of the current Islamic artistic expression in which there are two prominent sides; on the one hand scholars from the Islamic traditional (or perennial) philosophy¹, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, believe that spirituality provides the basis for a powerful, intellectual artistic expression. In the traditional understanding of Islamic art, the totality of the universe forms the basis of aesthetic expression. Spirituality is manifested through the language of alphabets, numbers and geometry, which reflects the knowledge of cosmology and metaphysics as fundamental scientific fields (Nasr, 1987). Traditionalists also believe that cosmological and metaphysical dimensions that are at the core of creative practice have been diminished and neglected, hence, lost their relevance in Muslims' lives (Nasr, 1987, p.9). The other side of the spectrum represents scholars from art and architecture history, such as Nasser Rabbat, who argue that there is lack of historical evidence that proves metaphysical and cosmological knowledge was considered a basis for artistic expression. In addition, this school of thought accepts the influences of globalisation and modernism on Islamic artistic expression as part of its progression in time, and hence, this view considers the traditional aesthetics as rigid and restrictive (Rabbat, 2004).

The current debate about the application of spiritual and metaphysical aspects in the spatial and creative practice of both traditional and contemporary Islamic culture highlights two issues: a) interpreting the knowledge of traditional scientific fields (philosophy, cosmology, and metaphysics) in the artistic expression of Islam, and b) continuation of knowledge from the traditional to the contemporary Islamic thoughts on aesthetics and creative practice. These issues will be addressed in this chapter and will be carried further on in chapter three.

1 Also referred to as "universal" philosophy, is a consistent doctrine that emerged from the Latin tradition "philosophia perennis", which is concerned with the primordial truth that is shared by the different religious expression. It does not concern with historicized realities, and its primary mode of expression is traditional symbolism. And so, perennialists argue that European modernism has shifted the focus from God to man breaking the continuity of tradition, and consequently leading to the decline of human civilisation (Akkach, 2012).





Refer to barzakh
3 for his interview

The first section of this chapter discusses thoughts within a philosophical framework, while the second part aims to understand and interpret these thoughts within an aesthetic or design frame. The artistic framework of the second part consists of: design elements, design principles, and spatial sensibilities as sub-categories, in which each category is supported by examples of traditional Islamic art and design. This approach brings together the philosophical and the artistic readings of traditional thoughts into one chapter informing the lack of connection between these two fields.

The challenges that occur in this chapter resides mainly in finding an adequate number of sources that offer critical juxtapositions of the metaphysics, cosmology and mysticism in contemporary artistic language. Therefore, this section relies heavily on current interpretations drawing upon primary sources such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. Particularly from the writing of Samer Akkach, which has been influential in providing a closer understanding of mystical thoughts, and the critical exploration that frames them within architectural reading. Akkach has been used as a primary reference in this chapter due to his neutral stance on Islamic art; for he is neither completely encourages the mystical dimensions of Islamic arts or denies its relation to historical artistic expression. Rather, he considers the study of Islamic art as a cosmological inquiry an intellectual inquest and a philosophical journey within the world of universal ideas. A few western references are also added when appropriate and relevant to the context, supporting such thoughts can be valid in other artistic contexts.

PART A: PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Cosmology as a Field of Knowledge

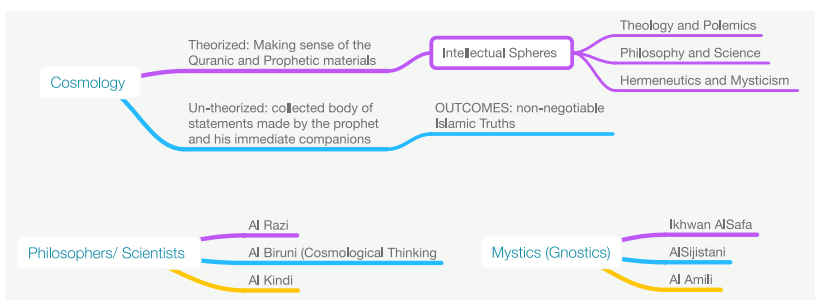


Diagram 2.0 Summary of Akkach's overview on the cosmological modes of thinking in traditional Islam [author's notes]

Although the current understanding of the universe is boundless and infinitely expanding, the traditional Islamic thought described it being finite, bounded and with measurable limits. Muslims grasped the totality of the universe by using the language of alphabets, numbers and geometry to provide detailed textual descriptions and diagrams of the cosmos (cosmograms). The traditional cosmograms were created in the form of concentric circles in which the centre is human centric and the outer limit at which the Divine Throne stood, while space and time terminated: "Nothing stood in isolation or ambiguity; everything was carefully positioned", Akkach (2012) explains. The traditional view about the universe gave a holistic conception encompassing cosmic entities that were extracted from the Quran as a main source¹. This concept has become fragmented,

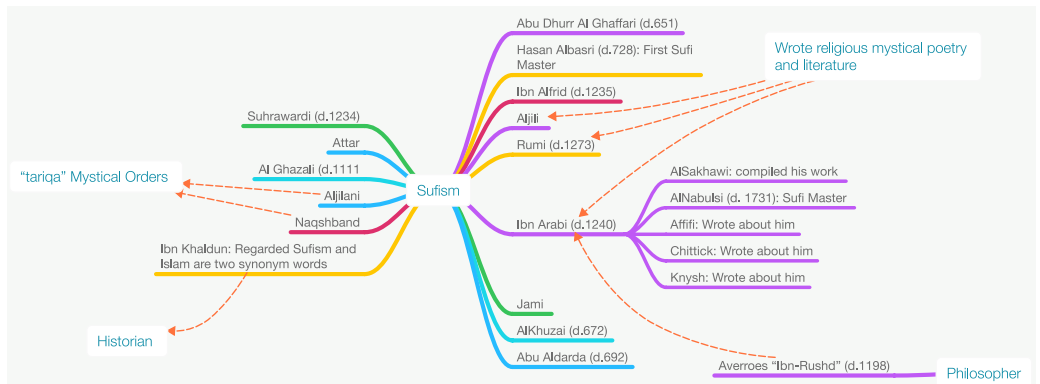
¹ Entities such as the Divine Throne "arsh", the celestial Gardens, the Footstool "kursi", and the Pen "qalam" which are mentioned in the Quran are considered cosmic features that represents the world of creation and have metaphysical significance in Sufi thoughts.

because the current view of the universe is too complex to be represented in geometrical diagrams, and perhaps this is the reason why it has lost its relevance in people's lives today according to the traditionalists.

While the Quran gives an abstract idea for these cosmic entities, the hadith (prophetic narration) weaved these elements into a complete and coherent picture of the cosmos. Akkach explains that from these two sources, the Quran and hadith, came two modes of cosmological thinking; theorized and untheorized (diagram 2.0). According to Akkach, the theorized mode focused on making sense and cultivating the Quran and hadith in three intellectual spheres: philosophy and science, theology and polemics, and hermeneutics and mysticism. While the untheorized mode was concerned with the non-negotiable religious truths, and the necessary foundations for reflecting and speculating through cosmology. This mode was supported by a collective body of statements made by the Prophet and his immediate companions (Akkach, 2012, p.2).

From the intellectual spheres demonstrated in (diagram 2.0), Muslims achieved remarkable developments in the fields of astronomy, geometry, alchemy and others. Even though other cultures such as the Persian and Indian has been absorbed in Muslim worldview, it was the Greek knowledge of Plato and Aristotle that had a strong relationship with Islamic cosmological thinking. However, in an attempt to achieve spiritual fulfilment, mystics such as Ikhwan Al-Safa, and Sufis such as Rumi and al-Ghazali compiled all aspects of knowledge into a comprehensive whole (diagram 2.1). Most importantly, Ibn Arabi provided in many of his volumes a multi-layered and complex view on cosmology. Sufi's mode of cosmological thinking elaborated the model of Quran and hadith and integrated it with layers of hermeneutical² interpretations that extended to all aspects of everyday life (Akkach, 2012).

Diagram 2.1 Summary of Akkach's overview on Sufism; the main scholars who established Sufi's school of thoughts and other influential historians and philosophers [author's notes]



² Even though this term is used here outside its cultural coherence, it is used here in reference to the source in text and to describe the branch of theology that relates to Quranic interpretations and "exegesis".

After the development in aspects of the humanities and social sciences, came a group of contemporary scholars who focused mainly on traditional metaphysics and symbolism. Founded by Rene Guenon, this approach aimed at reintroducing the forgotten “spiritual essence” and the “traditional wisdom” into the modern Western society (Akkach, 2012). The scholars who contributed to the perennialist (or traditionalist) approach were Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr who has had a significant influence in the literature background of this research. In the perennialist’s school, Sufism offers various modes of spiritual expression; it is considered a way of life (Nasr, 1987; Akkach, 2012). Consequently, other scholars were inspired by the perennial approach and produced various studies on Islamic traditional art and architecture, among them were Critchlow, Ardalan and Bakhtiar. These studies articulated the notion of symbolism as the core element for spirituality and the fundamental language of artistic expression³.

2.2 Cosmological Themes in Islamic Thoughts

The perennial approach advocated the cosmological and metaphysical ideas as a basis to understand the reality of the world around them. Among the main themes that were occurring in Sufi’s interpretation of traditional Islamic art are the following:

2.2.1 Unity of Being

“Being is me, while a being is other than me, because beings are by me and I am by my Self.” (al-Nabulusi, cited in Akkach, 2012, p.58)

The relationship between God and creatures has always been the subject of debate in religious thought. Throughout history, religious imagination and debate on how God created the world often leads to two modalities of being; one belongs to God, and the other to the world. According to the Sufi doctrine, however, there is only one modality of Being (wujud), and that Being is none other than God in his most transcendental state (Akkach, 2012). This being is externalized in many manifestations, and therefore, the existence of everything else depends on it. This understanding is known in Sufi doctrine as Unity of Being, or Wahdat al-Wujud, and is often misunderstood as blurring the boundary between God and the world.



³ Many of the symbolic references in these studies relate back to Ibn Arabi’s book “futuhat” in which he describes themes that represent different aspects of the esoteric knowledge mentioned earlier, such as the Divine Throne, the celestial gardens, and the four rivers (Akkach, 2012).



There is also an important issue regarding the linguistics of dealing with the English translations of (Wahdat al-wujud). As Akkach elaborates, the polarity between “being” and “existence”, or “Being” and “being” has no linguistic support in Arabic. Hence, in the Western based languages, such as English, the distinction between these meanings has historical and philosophical depths that make the notion of (wahdat al-wujud) rather confusing which leads to losing much of its immediacy. This resulted in the availability of a range of translations that does not reflect the Sufi’s concept of “the oneness of both”. Thus, Unity of Being can be better understood as seeing God as the inner reality of all beings, which can be traced in several verses of the Quran:

“Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God” (Al-Baqarah:115)

“We are nearer unto him than his jugular vein” (Qaaf:16)

“We are nearer unto him than you are, but you cannot see” (al-Waaqia:85)

(Wahdat al-wujud) or Unity of Being, commonly attributed to and articulated by Ibn Arabi in his writings and teachings, became the foundational concept in Sufi metaphysics. It can be said that, similar to the affirmation of the absolute unity of God that it is the keystone of the Islamic religion, so is the concept of wahdat al-wujud as being its mystical expression. The notion of wahdat al-wujud is connected to the paradox of unity and multiplicity, upon which the fundamentals of traditional Islamic art was built and formed. The Sufis teach that the paradox is of one becoming many and at the same time remaining one, and the key to understand this paradox is “to think of external beings as neither God himself nor other than himself” (Akkach, 2012, p.67). Akkach also relates it to the analogy of looking in a mirror and seeing one’s image: standing away from the mirror, the image is neither oneself, nor other than oneself since it belongs to no one else’s⁴. The manifestation of the paradox of unity and multiplicity in Islamic art will be elaborated in the next section.

2.2.2 The 99 Names of God

“To God belongs the names most beautiful; so call Him by them” (Quran, Al-A’raaf:180)

The Quran lists ninety-nine divine names on which exists a rich genre in religious thoughts. Supported by a few prophetic narrations, they are considered divine characters and parameters for human morality and aspirations (Akkach, 2012). To Sufis, human achievements are at their best when they are in the likeness of the divine names. According to Akkach, they are categorised in pre-modern Islamic theology into three main types:



⁴ This relates to a central thought in Sufi tradition, that man is the mirror image of God. This has been boldly stated by al-Hallaj when he cried “I am the Truth”, which led to his prosecution (Akkach, 2012).

1. Names of actions (asma alafal): which concern God's relation to the created world, such as Form Giver (al-musawwir), and the Creator (al-khaliq).
2. Names of essence: which concern God along and without regard to the created world, such as the One (al-ahad), the Truth (al-haqq).
3. Names of attributes (asma al-sifat): which concern the qualities of the essence that mediated between the other two categories, such as the Generous (al-karim), the Living (al-hayy), and the Powerful (al-qadir).

• ————— ﴿﴾
أَسْمَاءُ الْأَفْعَالِ

• ————— ﴿﴾
أَسْمَاءُ الْمَوْضُوعَاتِ

• ————— ﴿﴾
الْمَخْلُوقِ
الْبَارِي
الْمُصَوِّرِ

Among these 99 names are also divine names that have been associated with the act of making such as: The Creator (al-khaliq), the Producer (al-bari')⁵, and the Artist or the Form Giver (al-musawwir) (Akkach, 2012; Saeed, 2011). Parallel to the notion of names being divine parameters, Ikhwan Al-safa articulate them as guidelines for human activities and their pursuit of perfection. Supporting their writings with the hadith that says: "God loves the artisan who seeks perfection in his art", they assert that perfection and diligence in any kind of art, whether intellectual or practical, is to be "in the likeness of the wise artificer, who is God" (Ikhwan al-Safa, 1984). Thus, by imitating God's work, one could be attempting to draw nearer to God, they add. Perfection's relation to the act of making is further explained later in this section.

Furthermore, the analogy offered by al-Ghazali states that divine names are directly relevant to the making of architecture and its role in illustrating Islamic theological concepts. Supported by the writing of both al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi, Sufis identify two creative modalities: one is the creative modality in which God is attached to the world, and the self-sufficient modality in which "God is independent of all creatures". Each type of modality is manifested in a set of divine names; the first creative modality consists of the Living (al-hayy), the knowing, the Willing and the Powerful. The self-sufficient set consists of the Living, the Speaking, the Hearing and the Seeing. All the seven divine names, known as "mothers of all names" (ummahat al-asma'a), are accepted in the traditional Islamic schools as the principle names from which all other names derive. Particularly in Sufi's school, they constitute the fundamental order of divine presence and consequently they determine the six directions of architectural formations (Akkach, 2012).

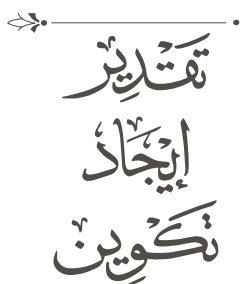
• ————— ﴿﴾
أُمُّهُنَّ الْأَسْمَاءُ

• ————— ﴿﴾
5 In Akkach book, the name (al-bari') occurred with two translations, the producer and the animator. This is one of the examples where the literal translations from Arabic to English fails to articulate the exact meaning of the word as mentioned in the introduction chapter. Because literal translation of (al-bari') would be closer to (the Creator), however in this context, it refers to another mode of creation or manifestation. Therefore, the translation of the word here is kept as it is written in the source.

2.3 Islamic Knowledge Between the Embodied and the Immaterial

2.3.1 Creativity and the Act of Making

The core of the Islamic religion is based on the belief that God is the Creator and the Originator of all beings. By a sheer act of His will, (kun) or Be!, He creates things, matter as well as form, out of nothing. And since He is the creator of everything, God is the Epitome of Beauty (Saeed, 2011). Believing that God is the Greatest Musawwir (Artist), puts the creative act as divine faculty that belongs only to God, a similar notion to the Christian and Jewish theologies.



Ibn Arabi interprets this belief by distinguishing two modes of creation: Taqdir, and Ijad or Takwin (Form giving). While al-Ghazali identifies them as three necessary actions that bring an object from nonexistence to existence, separating (form giving) into a third action which is Taswir, thus:

1. **Taqdir:** as in creation by designing, involves determination and measure, and relates to the Divine name; The Creator (al-Khaliq). Taqdir “coexists with God’s knowing of the non-existent world in its potential state.”
2. **Ijad or Takwin:** as in creation by bringing into existence, involves production, and relates to the Divine name; The Producer (al-Bari’). Takwin is derived from the word “Kawwana”¹ which means to “to synthesise,” the imperative of which kun (Be!) is the divine creative word. Thus, Takwin is a physically productive act, coexists with the bringing of the world from nonexistence into existence, from potentiality into actuality.
3. **Taswir:** as in form giving, which involves forming the imagined object according to its design, relates to the Divine name; The Form Giver (al-Musawwir).

Akkach (2012) suggests that these three actions can be seen as the core human activities of the creative process. He traces the distinction between the first two which can be summarised in the following table:



¹ Akkach also refers to kawna, which derives from the same triliteral root k.w.n., and it is the Arabic noun for “world”. The verb kawwana derived from the same root, which means “to create”, resonate with the Arabic verb for hadath, that is literally, “something new,” “a novelty,” “an unprecedented thing,” “occurrence,”. Hadath is a noun from which comes the terms muhdath and huduth, which in Islamic mystic readings mean “ephemeral existence” and “newness,” as opposed to qadim and qidam, “primordial” and “eternity.” (Akkach, 2012)

Taqdir (referred to The Creator “al-Khaliq”)	Ijad or Takwin (referred to The Producer/ Animator al–Bari’)
Involves creating in the imagination without being brought to existence physically.	Involves bringing something into physical existence
An eternal creative act (of knowing) that does not necessarily involve physical production	Creative act that ends with physical production
Humans limitations: humans have no access to the names al-Khaliq (Creator) except in a metaphorical sense.	Humans limitations: humans have no access to the name al-Bari’ (Animator) except in a metaphorical sense.

Table 2.0 Summary of the points explained by Akkach (2012) for al-Ghazali’s analogy of the two actions of the creative process, in the divine and human sense [Author’s notes].

Based on this analogy, human beings do not share the Divine attributes of Taqdir and Takwin except in the metaphorical sense, however, humans can claim a considerable share in the third creative act; Taswir (Form Giving). Akkach clarifies the human limitations of this creative act by giving the example of a finished building, which is made by humans and therefore can exist independently of its maker. In contrast to the world which is always dependent on its creator. Having said that, both analogies of al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi bring to light the commonly known absence of figurative representations in Islamic art and architecture. Akkach explains:

“Viewing the act of form giving (taswir), which includes drawing, painting, and modelling, as a participation in the divine name Form Giver leads naturally to considering other aspects of the creative act, like life giving. To depict the form of a living creature, such as humans and animals, is to make it incumbent upon the depicter to reproduce the living qualities of the creatures they depiction. Being incapable of doing so, they would fall short of completing and perfecting their work.” (Akkach, 2012, p.52)

2.3.2 Theoretical vs. Practical Art

To demonstrate the relationship between thinking and creating, knowledge and imagination within Islamic mystical dimensions, Akkach (2012) refers to Ibn Arabi's conviction of knowledge, meaning, and form. Ibn Arabi believes that knowledge is "not the knower imagining the form of the known, rather it brings forth something original and unprecedented into form". Ibn Arabi supports his view by referring to the Quranic verse that speaks about God being "the Originator of the heavens and earth" (Quran, Al-Baqara:117). The Divine name Badi' (Originator or innovator) derived from ibda', which means "to bring forth something original, novel, unprecedented, [unorthodox]". This relates strongly to Ikhwan Al-Safa's attribution of knowledge to the artificer's "act of knowing" in their epistle on practical arts:

"[Knowing is nothing but] the soul imagining the form of the known [and] knowledge is nothing but the form of the known [retained] in the soul of the knower [...] whereas "san'a" [art] is nothing but the bringing out of this form, which is in the soul of the artificer, the knower, and placing it in matter." (Ikhwan al-Safa, 1984,1:399)

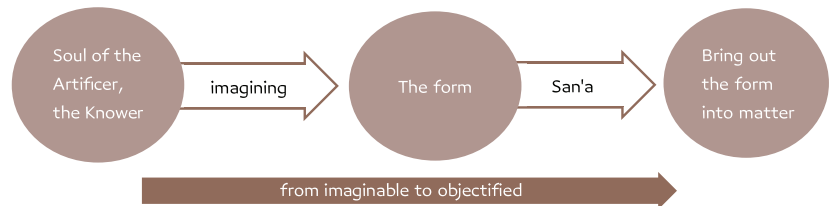
الْبَدِيعِ
إِبْدَاءِ



الصَّانِعِ الْعَالِمِ

Ikhwan Al-Safa refer to the one who brings out the form from his mind and places it in matter as "al-Sani al-A'lim" or (The artificer, the knower). Thus, the act of knowing and making, according to Ikhwan al-Safa can be summarised in (diagram 2.2):

Diagram 2.2
Interpretation of Ikhwan al-Safa for the act of knowing, which demonstrates the relationship between thinking and creating, knowledge and imagination [Author's notes].



It is important to note that the Arabic term "san'a" literally translates into "craft" and "craftsmanship". It is also derived from the verbal root "sana'a", which includes several meanings: "to do," "to work," "to make," and "to manufacture," (Dar Ihyaa' AlTurath AlArabi, 1972; Akkach, 2012). Furthermore, the Arabic term "san'a" has also significant presence in the Quranic script; the use of the verb to associate it with the Divine act of making:

صَنَعْنَا
صَنَعَ

“And you see the mountains, and imagine them fixed, yet they pass, as the passing of the clouds—the making of God, who has perfected everything.”
(The Quran, An-Naml. 27:88)

Hence, God is “Sani’”, the artificer of the world, and hence, it not strange having two of the 99 names of Allah paired together are: “Al-Sani’, Al’Alim” (The Artificer, the Knower), similarly to the ones that have been discussed earlier. Another mention of the same term of “san’a” or making was used in the verses that tells the story of the Prophet Dawoud or David (AS):

“And We taught him the making of shields for you, to protect you from your violence. Are you, then, appreciative?” (The Quran, Al-Anbiya. 21:79, 80)

By associating art (san’a) with knowledge (ilm), Ikhwan al-Safa bestows knowledge as an essential role in the artistic practice; and therefore, the artificer (or the artist) retains the form created from his/her mind through the act of knowing. Akkach elaborates:



“Such a view makes art and knowledge an indissoluble whole. It also assigns to imagination an essential role in the human act of knowing, whereby the known becomes identical with the imagined forms of information imprinted in the knower’s soul” (Akkach, 2012, p.45)

This concludes that Ikhwan al-Safa’s notion makes no distinction between the different forms of making. They view “art” and “craftsmanship”, or “artist” and “craftsman” as the same, hence, “fine arts” or “applied arts” as known today are integrated in Islamic context as part of general artistic work. This resonates with Nasr’s argument, in which he states the lack of distinction between arts and crafts, as well as the absence of any opposition or tension between beauty and utility (or function).

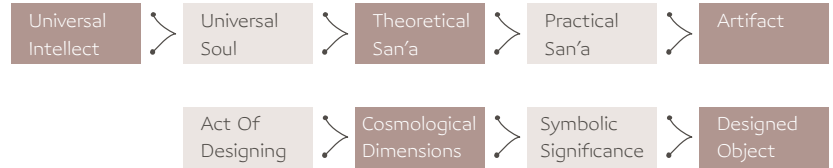


Although in philosophical terms, Ikhwan al-Safa made no distinction between the different kind of “san’a” or making, they have however explained that there are two kinds of art necessary for the process of making (Akkach, 2012). They divide art into practical (san’a amaliyya) and theoretical (san’a ilmiyya) following on the same division of the practical and intellectual faculties of the soul. While the practical art refers to the sensible, functional production of an object or a product, the theoretical art refers to the knowledge that leads to that production. Even if both, as Akkach explains, are subject to external forces that drive the process of making, the final product is a complete whole made of the form and the matter together (diagram 2.3).





Diagram 2.3 Summary of the philosophical thoughts of Ikhwan Al-Safa regarding the act of making, which is based on Ibn Arabi's articulations of inward and outward forms of the imagining (upper row). This also goes in parallel to the Ikhwan's thoughts on designed objects and what do they require (lower row), as they make no distinction between making and designing (Source: Akkach, 2012) [Author's notes].



It can be concluded from the diagram that there are similarities between the universal process of existence of any being, and the human act of making. The diagram also shows that there are similarities between the Islamic process of art-making, as well as the process of designing as we know it today. This perhaps relates to the views of Al-Ghazali, who gave a similar explanation in his treatise that addresses the nature of the esoteric knowledge (Akkach, 2012). While Al-Ghazali defines the act of knowing as imagining, Ibn Arabi makes a clear distinction between them, as the former would lead to the latter. Akkach argues, however, that even with this distinction there are common grounds when it comes to the notion of making, especially in their meanings in the Arabic language. Because the words of 'form', 'imagining', and the act of 'drawing/painting/forming', all derive from one verbal root (sawwara). The verbal root itself means "to form", "to configure", "to fashion", and "to draw" (Akkach, 2012, p.46).

The absence of a clear distinction between the different forms of making in Islamic context brings to light the notion that art-making and designing (for utilitarian purposes) as two separate fields did not exist in Islam. A question provoked here is; if there was no distinction between making and designing, nor tension between beauty and function, could there have been a convergence instead? If such an interpretation of the traditional text is adapted, then this argument can set the basis for addressing the research question whether 'design' can offer the same holistic understanding of aesthetic and function. This shall be carried further in the following chapters of the thesis.

2.4 Divine Art, Religious Art, Sacred Art

The discussion of divine art has been addressed in depth in the field of art history in earlier Western thoughts. While similar discussion of early texts about Islamic art, mainly in Islamic mystic and Sufi writings, provoked similar discussion but arguably rarely under the realm of artistic inquiry (Rabbat, 1998).

Christianity, Judaism, and Islamic theologies share the common belief that creativity, coming from creation, belongs to God alone, and hence, they often speak of God as the Supreme Artist and that divine art is God's creations (Tomas, 1964). To clarify this, Etienne Gilson (cited in Tomas, 1964, p.61) identifies 'divine art' as something that is different from art made by humankind. In the sense that it does not create its matter, nor its form. And If God, is the supreme artist, then nothing can possibly be new or novel in the eyes of God, yet it was the beginning of all new things within the created world itself. Gilson explains that in Christian theology, similar to Judaism, creative faculty belongs to God alone, as for human-made art, it can be novel in relation to humans but does not involve a divine power. Thus, divine art is completely distinguished from art made by human.

From the perennial's perspective¹, the distinction between religious, traditional and sacred art seems to be invalid to a certain extent. Supporting this argument with a hadith that demonstrates beauty as a central element reflected in human's life, Nasr (2006) argues while the definition of art may have been imported from the modern West, the reality of it lies as a central core to all traditional civilisations including the Islamic civilisation. Nasr suggests that there is no novelty in introducing the notion of religious art in Islamic context, however, the traditional understanding of *al-fann al-dini* (or religious art as an English literal translation of the term), is preserved and explained with intellectual sensibility:

¹ Definition of "perennial" is mentioned in footnote page 28.



الفن الدّيني

“for religious art, if it is understood in the traditional sense of al-fann al-dini or hunar-i dini and not in the modern Western sense [...], then as far as Islam is concerned, it was there with the first psalmody of the Noble Quran during the life of the Blessed Prophet. When Bilal called the adhan in the mosque of Madinah, his chanting was something which would today be called “religious art” in the English language as ordinarily used while traditionalists like myself who distinguish religious art from traditional and sacred art would call Quranic psalmody and the chanting of the adhan sacred art.” (Nasr, 2006, p.176)

Nasr asserts that the term “religious art” as understood in modern English is an inappropriate description of traditional Islamic art. This relates to the use of “religious art” in the Western context of artistic expression to describe art that is devoted to religious themes and functions. Even if the methods and language used are non-traditional, hence it is based on individual expression rather than universal order. Nasr insists on the importance of labelling traditional art, including Islamic art, as “sacred art”. He argues that traditional art, from mosque architecture to the making of cookware, was produced as a necessity of life and as a spiritual need by its user, therefore all art carries a symbolic and spiritual significance. Thus, art is sacred not only because its subject is religious, but also its form, language and its methods of execution originate from a sacred source (Nasr, 2006).

This brings to light the current understanding of the sacred, which according to Akkach (2012), is mostly influenced by the writings of two scholars; Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade. Eliade articulated the notion of the sacred, based on the conflict between the rational and non-rational aspects of religion, as being the opposite of the profane. Developing it from Otto’s perspective, Eliade’s polarized notion of the sacred, being a manifestation of divine ‘otherness’ at the human level of existence faced a significant challenge when attempting to appropriate it in Islamic tradition. Because, as seen in Nasr’s argument, there is a lack of polarity in the Islamic traditional stance when it comes to defining the sacred, therefore there is no antonym reference proposed, nor a challenged view to rationality. In support of this argument, Akkach (2012) explains that there was a conception of the sacred and/or sacred sites. However, the understanding and the construction of “sacred” was different in traditional Islam, as there is no



Refer to barzakh
2 for his interview



مفتدّش

distinction of “sacred” and “profane” in describing sites, or landscapes, or cities in medieval Arabic sources. Also, there is no spatial interpretation of real and unreal, of structured or formless aspects in buildings or landscapes. Interestingly, he argues that there was no Quranic use of the term “sacred” – or “muqaddas”- not even for the most sacred places, for example Mecca, except for the reference to the sacred land of the Jews, and the sacred valley of “Tuwa”.



Table 2.1 Comparison between definitions of ‘Islamic art’ by various scholars (Source: Alsamman, 2002; Blair and Bloom, 2003; Nasr, 1997; Rabbat, 2012; Saeed, 2011)

Scholar	Definition
Anwar Alriffai	Islamic art has one personality even though that this personality has different centres and different diameters and characteristics that are influenced by locality
Bloom and Blair	The art made by artists or artisans whose religion was Islam, for patrons who lived in predominantly Muslim lands, or for purposes that are restricted or peculiar to a Muslim population or a Muslim setting.
Grabar	Art and architecture made and built by Muslims, for Muslims, or in an Islamic country, or in places where Muslims have an opportunity to express their cultural independence.
Nasr	An Art that is issued from the inner reality (al-haqiqah) of the Quran forming an integral aspect of Islamic revelation and playing a basic role in the beautification of everyday life, as well as the remembrance of God.
Qutub	Islamic art is not necessarily the art that talks about Islam, but it is also the art that represent the notion of reality and existence from Islamic point of view.
Rabbat	The art and architecture of those cultures, regions, or societies that have directly or via some intermediary processes accepted Islam as an integral component of their epistemological and socio-cultural makeup.
Sudqy	Islamic art functions as a message that transmit moral values and emotions without losing the aesthetics, in a way that influences people’s behaviors
Saeed	“Generally speaking, Islamic art is the art of the civilization based on the Islamic religion [or] artist, stimulated by religion”



2.5 In Defining Islamic Art and Architecture

“Art is not for art’s sake but for the sake of life itself. Art in fact is none other than life, integrated into the very rhythm of daily existence and not confined to the segregated space of museums or rare moments of the annual calendar.” (Nasr, 2006, p.178)

While the previous definitions are arguably adequate for the question: what does Islamic art mean? it can be concluded that the term ‘Islamic art’ has always been in a state of flux. Hence, there is always a possibility for it to be informed, evaluated, and reasserted embracing the diverse and complex understanding of the artistic expression over time. Consequently some scholars focus more on the general characteristics of Islam in art, design and architecture instead of limiting to a precise definition. These characteristics can be summarised as follows:

1. Functionality: The involvement and engagement of art in everyday life, the more it is part of - and not isolated from- everyday life, the more “Islamic” it is in its meaning. Thahabiyya (2013) explains that in uniting aesthetics and function in Islamic art there is an independent philosophical and creative purpose. Thus, there is no differentiation between art for the sake of aesthetic enhancement, and art for the sake of function (design) (Alsamman, 2002; Nasr, 1987).

This also resonates with the analysis of form and meaning behind Islamic art by Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), by relating it to two consequent Divine names of God; the Hidden (Zahir) and the Manifest (Batin):

“Each thing has an outer as well as an inner meaning. Every external form is complemented by an inner reality which is its hidden, internal essence. The Zahir is the sensible form, that which emphasises the quantitative aspect which is most readily comprehensible [...] The Batin is the essential or the qualitative aspects which all things possess. In order to know a thing in its completeness, one must not only seek its outward ephemeral reality but also its essential and inward reality, that in which the eternal beauty of every object resides.” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.5)



2. Composition: which involves a process of deconstruction and reconnection. For Islam encouraged people to contemplate the world, analyse it, make sense of it, and express it using one's intellect and action, and that action in itself is constructive. As for using one's intellect, it was heavily mentioned in the Quran (around sixteen times) as to always wonder, question, and contemplate (Alsamman, 2002). This point is strongly advocated by Nasr, as he argues that having the main source of the Divine Law which gives instructions for the Muslim way of living does not mean that there are set rules for creativity in Islam. Creativity is left without borders, and that is to let the imagination wanders. What is seen as evident in Islamic art is not necessarily the message on how to make things, but things are made because of a certain context; The Divine Law (Nasr, 1987).

Having said that, worship as a form of action is therefore included at this point because Islam as a religion is seen as a philosophy and guideline for life. Any form of work that is facilitated through, or for, religion is a kind of worship. Creativity is a part that is allowed and available to everyone, for the artist is the artificer, the producer of work and every work he/ she produces ought to be perfected (Alsamman, 2002; Saeed, 2011). This act of perfection in turn is considered as being sincere to God and therefore, an act of devotion to God (Moustafa, 2008) which will be further explained in the next section.

3. Symbolism: which, according to Sufi and perennialist thoughts are considered as the language in which spiritual engagement and metaphysical thoughts are manifested in Islamic artistic expression. This argument is supported by the notion that material objects are capable of embodying abstract concepts beyond their materiality (Akkach, 2012). Muslim scholars developed this philosophical understanding from Greek philosophy, particularly of the Platonic distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, the divide between al-hissi and al-aqli. In addition, the distinction between the sensible and intelligible, the material and immaterial was legitimised by the polarity found in the Quran between the seen and the unseen. Thus, symbolism is comprehended to be based on the correspondence between the two domains of reality, and therefore, it aids the visible to materialize the invisible, and the physical to represent the spiritual. Akkach elaborates that symbolism becomes an intellectual journey and an ontological inquiry into the hierarchy of being and the inner worlds of universal realities. Thereby, based on the perennialist perspective, it is a pursuit of esoteric knowledge that extends beyond the visual representation of religious values.

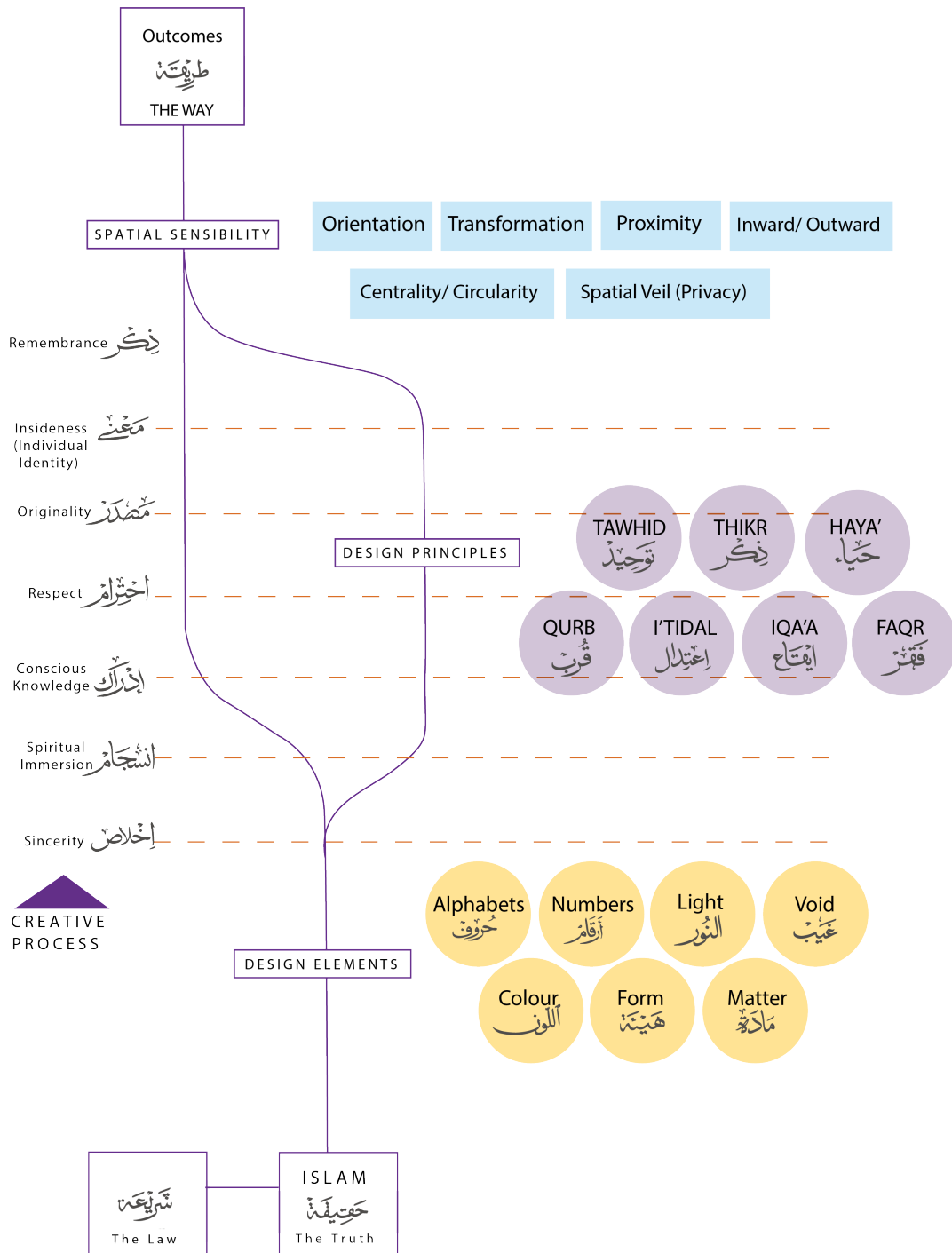


While Akkach refers to symbolism as an intellectual journey that extends further than the visual representation (or objectification) of Islamic philosophical or cosmological thoughts, Alsamman (2002) argues that symbolism can be considered a vital element in the artistic decision by the act of abstraction. For example, the stripping out of the detail of the existing forms in nature into simple minimal lines, or the use of the colour Gold in miniature paintings to refer to the existence of metaphysical elements in the composition. Further artistic examples of the application of traditional Islamic philosophy will be elaborated in the next section.

PART B MAIN AESTHETIC THEMES IN ISLAMIC CONTEXT



Figure 2.0 Map of the main aesthetic themes discussed in this section, which are based on the general map). The categorisation of these themes into design elements and principles is following the renowned Francis D.K. Ching's book, which is widely adapted in design fundamental studies. While the addition of creative process aspects is the author's efforts to include spiritual/intangible aspects of the creative process which are not necessarily sequential [author's notes]



The Islamic perception of art is not limited to the criteria of Halal (permitted) and Haram (forbidden), nor of non-figurative representation and geometry as an alternative approach. Despite the lack of references that address the aesthetic guidelines outside the mystic writings of the Sufi and perennial schools, there are certain values that underline the artistic process and set out the reasoning behind Islamic art or design. While the first section of this chapter highlighted some of the important cosmological and metaphysical aspects that set the basis of Islamic understanding of creativity, this section will elaborate further on how they are applied in art and design fields. Through a design-reading approach, it will revisit philosophical dimensions and demonstrate how they are reflected in Islamic artistic heritage. This approach will bring aspects of Islamic traditional philosophy closer to the contemporary artistic practice, in an effort to inform the research question.



Figure 2.1 Page spreads from the book of Francis D.K. Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space and Order*. Which has dissected elements and principles of design and spatial attributes in relation to design and architecture fundamentals. Ching's books became essential reading for design studios for its articulate and simplified analysis of design foundations (Source: Ching, 2014)

As the prime generator of form, the

Point Indicates a position in space. •

A point extended becomes a
Line with properties of:

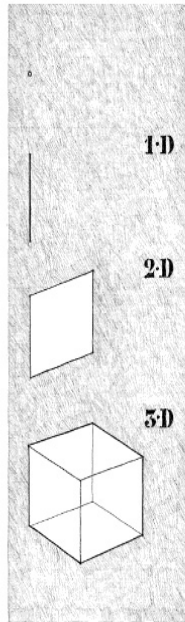
- length
- direction
- position

A line extended becomes a
Plane with properties of:

- length and width
- shape
- surface
- orientation
- position

A plane extended becomes a
Volume with properties of:

- length, width, and depth
- form and space
- surface
- orientation
- position



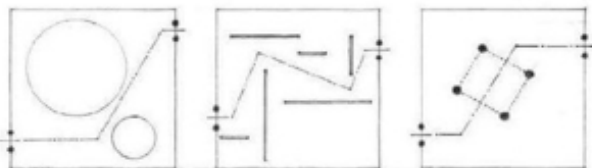
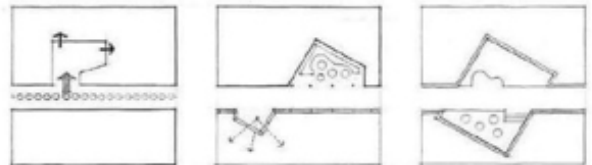
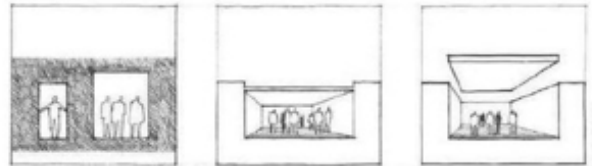
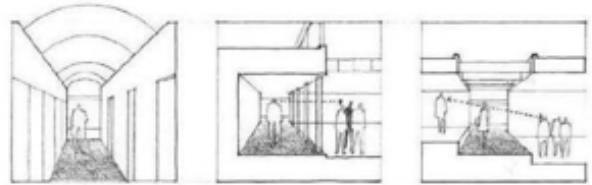
Point

Line

Plane

Volume

FORM OF THE CIRCULATION SPACE



VIA ARCHITECT

In order to offer an artistic/design reading of philosophical concepts in Islam, the following sections are adopting Ching's book (2014) by dissecting the fundamentals of design (figure 2.1). The reason for adopting Ching's framework is that it offers the possibility of looking at it through the lens of design studies. Categorizing themes into; design elements, design principles and spatial attributes that have been the basis for design studies until today. This is due to the Bauhaus influence on design education that is applied even in a cultural context where Islam is a dominant religion (i.e. Arab Gulf). The transition of knowledge of design in general and Islamic design in particular is addressed in chapter 3.

Moustafa (2008) proposes seven keys of religious beliefs that are considered the core of Divine principles in Islamic art. In her book she lists: Tawhid (unity), Ihtiram (Respect), Ikhlas (Sincerity), 'Ilm (knowledge), Iqtisad (moderation/ balance), Haya' (modesty), Dhikr (remembrance). They are, however, modified and re-categorized in consideration to other references and arguments to allow for a holistic perspective of the research context. These are not to be considered as rules or strict guidelines to be followed. Rather they are religious beliefs that are found to be manifest in one form or another throughout the rich history of Islamic art and architecture. Here, they are stripped down to abstract beliefs that could be interpreted differently from one person to another or from one creative process to another (figure 2.0).

This resonates with Nasr's description about the Islamic revelation (2010), which consists of three dimensions: Sacred Law "Shariah", the Path "Tariqah" and the Truth "Haqiqah" (figure 2.0). Nasr argues that these dimensions of Islamic revelation can also correspond, from another perspective, to Surrender "Islam", faith "iman" and virtue "ihsan" respectively. While the Sacred Law refers to the doctrines by which Muslims are expected to maintain certain religious principles and rituals, the Path refers to "a way of living" (Nasr, 2007; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003). And since the Path connects each human being to God, the number of paths (turuq) is equal to the number of people on earth as long as they follow the Divine law. This can be seen by the depiction by traditional Sufi masters of this notion through the use of the geometric symbol of a circle portraying the different forms one can take to get closer to the Truth, the Centre. Hence this research approach represents, conceptually, one radius that leads to the Centre (Nasr, 1977), or in other words, one path (tariqah) of many to approach one truth (haqiqah). Viewing these abstract beliefs as design elements aims to bring better understanding of how these beliefs shaped the traditional individual's reality and consequently his/her artistic production.

استلام
ایمان
احسان



1 The idea of having certain guidelines for art is a subject that is frowned upon in contemporary practice, however demonstrating them here in a design context offers a loose approach that can be adopted, partially or fully in communicating the cultural production of a certain context.

2.6 Design Elements	2.7 Design Principles	2.8 Spatial Attributes
Huruf- Alphabets	Tawhid – Unity	Orientation
Arqam - Numbers	Faqr – Absence	Transformation
Hay’ah- Form	Thikr – Remembrance	Proximity
Noor - Light	Iqa’a - Rhythm	Centrality/ Circularity
Lawn- Color	Qurb - Intimacy	Inward/ Outward
Maadah- Matter	Haya’ - Modesty	Spatial Veil (Privacy)
Ghayb- Void	I’tidal - Balance	

Table 2.2 The main aesthetic themes discussed in this section, which are based on the general map in figure (2.0). The Arabic translation of the titles are based on contextual analysis of the researcher rather than the literal translation of the English word [author’s notes]

An important consideration is the polarity of naming each aspect or belief the way it will demonstrated in this section; due to the linguistic differences between English and Arabic language the design elements and principles are not translated literally to English, rather they are the researcher’s personal effort to select the most adequate terms to describe the literature context. There is also another polarity that is intentionally adopted here which is the selection of images and figures to describe each element or principle (Table 2.2). Although the researcher initially refrained from following the conventional approach in Islamic art and architecture books in imposing a deeply rooted impression of Islamic artistic heritage, it is thought important to include evidence on how these themes are manifested in artistic practice for the readers who do not have a background knowledge about the topic.

2.6 Design Elements

From the findings of the previous section, it can be realised that these beliefs came from viewing and contemplating the universal order, and therefore they became more like codes that allow the inner essence and the beauty of the universe to be understood and expressed (Dabbour, 2012). As Ikhwan al-Safa (Brethren of Purity) wrote at the beginning of their epistles:

“One of our aims... consists of demonstrating clearly that the whole world is composed in conformity with arithmetical, geometrical, and musical relations. There, we have explained in detail the reality of universal harmony” (Ikhwan Al-Safa, cited in Nasr, 1978).

The arithmetical and geometrical relations that Ikhwan al-Safa refer to are directly related to the first couple of design elements which are explained here.



2.6.1 Alphabets and Numbers “Huruf wa Arqam”

In many of the Sufi-related references about Islamic art and design, mathematical expressions, from which numbers and geometry are derived, are considered “models” that lead from the sensible to the comprehensible world. They are not only considered the abstract language of the intellectual and intelligible world, but also a basic guide to the properties of the Divine Essence (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

In Islamic philosophy, numbers were not only identified with simple mathematical equations, on the contrary, it has been argued that numbers contain within themselves both quantitative and qualitative qualities (Nasr, 1987). This finding was based on the Pythagorean system¹, which deals with the qualities of numbers as being both quantitative and qualitative (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Moustafa, 2008). And hence, it is believed that numbers have inner meanings, essence, or “batin”². This essence is manifested in the sensible world with correspondent shapes that integrates numbers into a sense of Unity (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Consequently, the qualitative and quantitative nature of mathematics is reflected in geometry, where the quantitative dimension controls the order and construction of design forms, and the qualitative nature represents as expression of the order of the universe visually representing the truth (Dabbour, 2012). Such interpretation was sought as a way of transforming architecture or a place from quantitative reality into a qualitative reality.

A. Alphabets “Huruf”

It can be concluded that these mathematical findings were not the discovery of Muslim philosophers or mathematicians, however they were adapted for self-expression that best serves their particular beliefs and religious practices. El-said and Parman (1976) explains that numbers – around the 8th century- were symbolised by a mark or a sign to indicate their qualitative value. Only at a later stage these marks were substituted by alphabets as a system for counting (Figure 2.1) (e.g. the ancient Greek, Roman, Hebrew or Arabic (Abjad Hawaz) alphabet). El-said and Parman also argue that these alphabets were used for basic calculation and did not have huge mathematical operational value.



¹ It is interesting to note that Pythagoras, a philosopher and mathematician who through his mathematical study of nature believed that there could only be ‘one single originator/creator’, a belief that is mathematically translated in this theorem (Moustafa, 2008).

² The batin (The hidden) is one of God’s 99 names in Islam, usually mentioned in the Quran consecutively with the Zahir (The Manifest). These are previously mentioned in the conclusion of Part A of this chapter.

Fire hot and dry	Earth cold and dry	Air hot and moist	Water cold and moist
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>h</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>f</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>l</i>
<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ṣ</i>	<i>ʿ</i>
<i>f</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>s</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>kh</i>
<i>dh</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>sh</i>

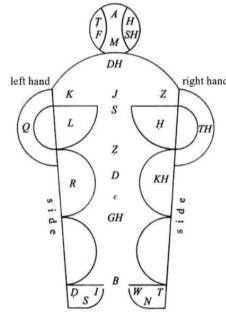


Fig. 2.13 The correlation of the Arabic alphabet and the human body ("Jawāhir," MS. 7127).

Figure 2.1 The natural qualities of the Arabic alphabet and their correlation with the human body (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.100,101)

Therefore, there is no doubt that the qualitative value of these alphabets became a powerful tool for Islamic symbolism. There have been numerous Sufi essays dedicated to the science of letters (or ilm al-huruf), whose origins, as Akkach (2012) argues, is often credited to Ali bin Abi Talib (the 4th caliph and the Prophet's son-in-law). The basis for alphabetical symbolism in Islam was mainly derived from Quranic imageries and analogies that are often supported by prophetic narration and traditions (Akkach, 2012; Puerta Vilchez, 2011). Interestingly, at the beginning of several Quranic surahs (or chapters), appears fourteen mysterious "disjointed" letters. These letters received great attention in pre-modern Islam, Akkach argues contributed considerably to the science of alphabetical symbolism³. In addition, the Quranic imageries and analogies are varied; among the most prominent ones are the 'Preserved Tablet' (or al-lawh al-mahfuz), the analogy of the word as a tree, of the trees as pens and the seas as inks (akkach, 2012). Here, the significance of the letter nun is discussed as it has been strongly mentioned in various references.

عِلْمُ الْحُرُوفِ

سُورَةُ

الْوَحِ الْمَحْفُوظِ

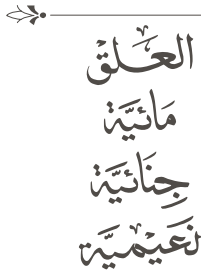
Significance of the letter nun:

"Nun! By the Pen and what they write down." (The Quran, Al-Qalam: 1)

The above Quranic verse is the opening of a chapter (surah) entitled 'The Pen' (or al-qalam). Such emphasis on the importance of 'ilm' (knowledge) and qalam (the Pen) has

نُونُ
الْقَلَمِ

3 "Forming exactly half of the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, these fourteen disjointed letters are seen as representing the spiritual dimension of the alphabet, corresponding to the world of spirits. They are called the "luminous letters" (huruf nuraniyya), in contrast to the other fourteen that are taken to represent the corporeal dimension and are, therefore, called the "tenebrous letters" (huruf zalmaniyya). The science of the letters, Ibn Arabi explains, concerns both the "length" and the "breadth" of the world. The "length of the world" (tul al alam) refers to the spiritual world, the world of meanings, whereas the "breadth of the world" (ard al-alam) refers to the physical world, the world of bodies. This resonates with his interpretations of the spatiality of the human body" (Akkach, 2012, p.96)

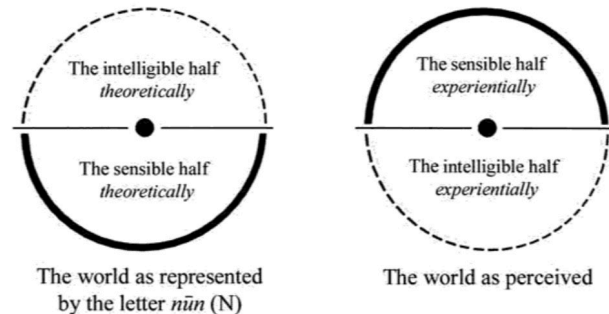


also been mentioned in the first verses that have ever been presented to the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The verses of the chapter 'The Clot' (or al-'Alaq), were encouraging him to "read" and make use of "the pen" (Saeed, 2011). In Sufism, this letter was linked to the Divine Knowledge, not to mention that according to Ibn Arabi's analogy⁴, the "watery, celestial condition (ma'iyya jinaniyya na'imiyya) and the generative nature of the letter nun" are also linked to Divine generosity (jud) and compassion (rahma) (Puerta Vilchez, 2011).

In Ibn Arabi's analogy, the way the letter nun is written in Arabic (ن) relates to an inkpot from which the Divine (or Supreme) Pen has recorded the spiritual mysteries and written the archetypes of all beings on the Preserved -or Guarded- Tablet (al-lawh al-mahfouz). Nasr (1987) believes that the letter nun resembles a ship that carries "the possibilities of a particular cycle of manifestation upon the 'ocean of non-existence'". While other scholars such as Kashifi and Guenon, interpret the dot that the letter bears in its centre as the "seed of the immortality of the soul" (Puerta Vilchez, 2011).

In Addition, Ibn Arabi suggests that the nun was originally a complete circle, however and similarly to the world which is divided into the sensible and the intelligible halves, it is divided into two corresponding halves; inscribed (visible), and implied (invisible) (Akkach, 2012). Inverted as a mirror image (figure 2.2), the analogy suggests that the lower half is the inscribed (visible) part while the upper half represents the implied (invisible) part of the world⁵.

Figure 2.2 Diagram showing analysis of Ibn Arabi for the formal correspondence between the letter nun (ن) and the world (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.137)



⁴ These are selective points about the significance of the letter. For more info on the analogy of the letter nun and others check (Ibn Arabi, Kitab al-mim wa-l-waw- wa-l-nun, in Rasa'il Ibn Arabi, Beirut, 1997, p. 111-112)

⁵ In highlighting the spiritual basis of calligraphy as sacred medium, Nasr also explains that 'nun', being the initial letter for nur (meaning light) was the first reality created by God (according to tradition), as well as it being the last letter of al-rahman, by virtue of which all creation was brought forth, stands for Divine Mercy (Saeed, 2011).

Another reference to the letter nun is connected to the Prophet Yunus (Jonah), who is also called “Du-I-Nun” (or He of the fish), who as mentioned in the Quran cried out through the darkness (fi l-zulumat) “in the belly of the fish, glorifying God”. This connection with Jonah’s story has been argued symbolises the cosmic birth of man, or his physical or spiritual “rebirth” (Puerta Vilchez, 2011). Interestingly, Puerta Vilchez also relates this connection to pre-Islamic linguistic interpretations; he argues that the Arabic letter refers to the same Hebrew noun that means “fish” which usually associated with the whale (or huut)^{6 7}.



B. Numbers “Arqam”

أ	ب/ب	ج/ج	د	ه	و	ز/ز	ح	ط
<i>alef</i>	<i>be/pe</i>	<i>jim/če</i>	<i>dāl</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>vāv</i>	<i>ze/že</i>	<i>ḥā</i>	<i>ṭā</i>
'	<i>b/p</i>	<i>j/č</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>z/ž</i>	<i>ḥ</i>	<i>ṭ</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

ي	ك/ك	ل	م	ن	س	ع	ف	ص
<i>y</i>	<i>k/g</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>‘</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ṣ</i>
<i>yā</i>	<i>kāf/gāf</i>	<i>lām</i>	<i>mīm</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>sin</i>	<i>‘ayn</i>	<i>fe</i>	<i>ṣād</i>
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90

ق	ر	ش	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ظ	ض	غ
<i>q</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>ẓ</i>	<i>ẓ</i>	<i>ḡ</i>
<i>qāf</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>šin</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ṭe</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>dāl</i>	<i>ẓād</i>	<i>ẓā</i>	<i>ḡeyn</i>
100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000



Figure 2.2 Numerical values of the Arabic letters (Source: Nasr, 1993)

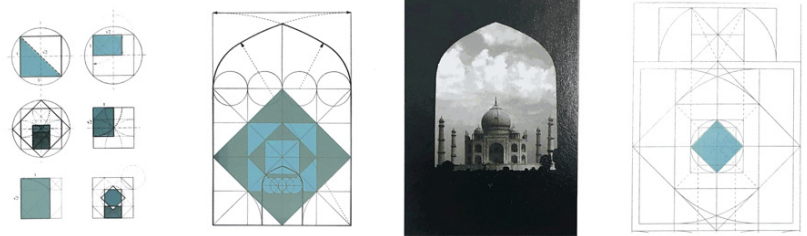


⁶ “Later, the earth spread over the back of this fish and Creation, which springs as in other beliefs from the primeval waters, ended when God set his Throne upon the back of the great fish; for this reason, there are those link the word hut (fish, whale) with the root of the word hayat (life), as [...] also the case with the Arabic name of Eve (Hawa).” (Puerta Vilchez, 2011, p.15-16)

⁷ Puerta Vilchez also argues that it is related to the name of the ancient Egyptian god Nun, who is the Primordial Ocean, The Waters of Life, the Chaos of the Beginning or the Father of the Gods.

Being inspired by nature is not novel in the history of art and design; mathematical findings in natural phenomena, such as the golden ration or harmonious ratio of Phi, were considered visible ties that are linked to the language of the Creator (Dabbour, 2012; Moustafa, 2008). The geometric knowledge goes back to Pre-Islamic civilizations of Ancient Greek and Rome and existed in many buildings and design forms across centuries⁸. Consequently, for many traditional civilizations, 'sacred geometry' was adopted as a visual representation of the unseen form that resides beneath the surface of all visible things. Due to the intelligible aspects of geometry, the mystical readings of its mathematical harmony and its relevance to universal beliefs⁹, Islamic art favoured geometry for its capacity to reveal and express immutable and spiritual truths. The golden ration for example, was evident in the design of Islamic buildings, infusing and unifying the various elements of the manifested world to the overall whole (figure 2.3) (Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.3 Proportional geometric analysis of the ground plan and arches of the main iwan (doorway) of the Taj Mahal mausoleum in Agra, India. The analysis shows the use of the golden proportion in architectural elements (Source: Moustafa, 2008).



Referring back to the Pythagorean aspects in numbers; numbers not only have inner meanings, essence (or batin), they also have corresponding shapes that create a sense of Unity in the material world (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Other scholars briefly address the symbolic significance of numbers in Islamic philosophy, for example, number six is considered the first complete number, for it not only expresses the proportional height of man's body (jism), but also represents the basic directions of motion (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Number four also has a strong significance as it is argued that all the living beings and the objects in this world fall into four categories:

⁸ The first confirmed record of geometric knowledge and its relationship to astronomy, human and music can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, in particular, Pythagoras and Plato. However, prior to the Greeks, many old civilizations have left clear geometric footprints by applying sacred geometry in their constructions. Hence, the notion of sacred geometry is not considered "pure" Islamic thoughts and it can be traced in other contexts such as Buddhism (Moustafa, 2008).

⁹ Symbolic impacts of shapes were also a strong basis for other beliefs. The geometry of circle to be more exact reinforced the idea of cosmograms or mandala (cosmic wheels) (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

“In the fifth epistle of Ikhwan al-Safa, it has been explained at length that ‘God has created in his wisdom this universe engendered with mortality in squares (or fours) consisting of compatible and opposing (or incompatible) pairs. The secrets of which are only known to their Creator. The statement ‘and of everything we have created pairs’ was also quoted by them from the Quran (L I, 49) in support of this theory.” (El-Said and Parman, 1976, p. 125)

El-Said and Parman (1976) carry the significance of the number four further; the four seasons, the four quarters of the lunar month, of the zodiac signs, the four directions of the wind, the four elements and other aspects.






2.6.2 Form “Hay’ah”

Following from the previous point, in Islamic thinking numbers have corresponding shapes and cosmic significance and mathematical attributes. This is particularly evident in the Sufi writings of Nasr, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), and Elsaid and Parman (1976) which is summarised in (Table 2.3).





Table 2.3. Summary of the microcosm and macrocosm representations of numbers in Islamic cosmology and their mathematical attributes. Ardalan and Bakhtiar based this table on Nasr's translation of the cosmology of Ikhwan al-Safa in his book *Cosmological Doctrines*. Text in italics is an addition from Kazimee and Rahmani which was found suitable to include in this context (Source: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003).

#	Geometry	Macrocosm		Microcosm		Mathematical Attributes
0		Divine Essence		Divine Essence		The most irreducible of all entities
1	•	Creator	One Primordial Permanent Eternal	Creator	One Primordial Permanent Eternal	The point The principle and origin of all numbers
2	—	Intellect	Innate Acquired	Body divided into 2 parts	Left Right	One half of all numbers are counted by it
3		Soul	Vegitative Animal Rational	Constitution of animals	Two extremities and a middle	Harmony First odd number One-third of all numbers are counted by it
4		Matter	Original Physical Universal Artifacts	Four Humors	Phlegm Blood Yellow bile Black bile	Stability First square number
5		Nature	Ether Fire Air Water Earth	Five Senses	Sight Hearing Touch Taste Smell	First circular number
6		Body	Above Below Front Back Right Left	6 powers of motion in 6 directions	Up Down Front Back Right Left	First complete number The number of surfaces/ directions of a cube. The most appropriate proportional system to define or extend in space
7		Universe	7 visible planets and 7 days of the week	Active Powers	Attraction Sustenance Digestion Repulsion Nutrition Growth Formation	First perfect number



The table shows how the essence of numbers is embodied through two- and three-dimensional corresponding forms (geometry). The Islamic understanding of geometry¹⁰ refers back to Plato's idea that God created the universe according to a geometric plan (Lawlor, 1989), and that all forms in life emerge out of timeless geometric codes. Hence geometry, being derived from the basic laws of the universe underpins the cosmos. In other words, geometry is considered to be the generator of all form and the blueprint of the Creation. Dabbour (2012) describes geometry as a science that deals with numbers in space on four main levels: an arithmetic level which reflects pure numbers and geometrical measurement, proportional level which reflects meanings and "Ideas", the numbers in a time level which is the foundation of music, and the level of numbers in time and space which represents the cosmology of the universe.

Significantly in an Islamic context, many scholars mention how the circle and its relationship to the centre is the source of the artistic expressions, whether in two-dimensional or in three-dimensional form. In Sufi teachings, the symbolism of the point or nuqta (literally means drop or dot) being the centre of the circle is a recurring theme as demonstrated in (table 2.3). Al-Jili offers a complex description of the meaning of the point and its significant in being the symbol of the ultimate Reality in his book *Kitab al-Nuqta* (The Book of the Point) (Akkach, 2012). His exposition demonstrates how this geometric principle is capable of revealing the relationship to the Divine Essence. Nasr (1987) elaborates on the significance of the point being the centre or the ultimate Reality (The Truth or al-Haqiqah) in relation to the other fundamental dimensions of reality; the circle being al-Shari'ah (The Law), and the radius being al-Tariqah (The Way):



"The circumference is the Sharī'ah whose totality comprises the whole of the Muslim community. Every Muslim by virtue of accepting the Divine Law is as a point standing on this circle. The radii symbolize the Turuq (plural of Tarīqah). Each radius is a path from the circumference to the Centre. [...]. The Tarīqah, which exists in many different forms corresponding to different spiritual temperaments and needs of men, is the radius which connects each point to the Centre [...] Finally at the Centre there is the Haqīqah or Truth which is the source of both the Tarīqah and the Sharī'ah. Just as geometrically the point generates both the radii and the circumference, so does metaphysically the Haqīqah create both the Tarīqah and the Sharī'ah" (Nasr, 1977)

¹⁰ Interestingly the word 'geometry' is based on two Greek words "geo", meaning the earth, and "metry", which means to measure. So geometry literally means "the measurable earth" or "earthly measurements". Geometry, according to Plato, can also refer to "spatial measurements". The very laws of how things are allowed to be by the "Divine will" are the laws of "Harmony of Being" (Dabbour, 2012).

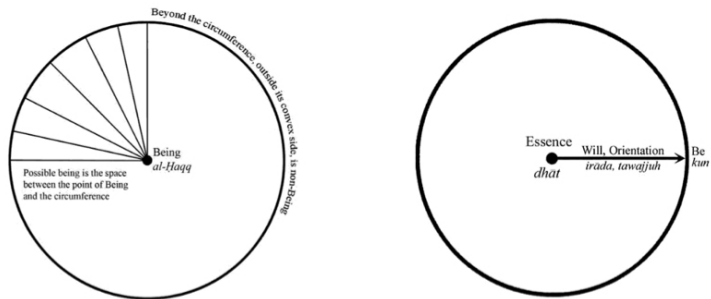
طريقته
شريعته
حقيقته

Nasr's analysis of the circular visualisation of the Truth, and its relationship with the way (tariqah, or the radius), and the totality of Muslims' community (shariah or circumference), brings to light his analysis about having the Divine Presence as being 'everywhere and nowhere'. Having this strong significance for the circle in Islamic context, it could be argued that it is the main geometric shape from which all compositions can be derived. The following point explains how the circle relates to the principle of unity in Islamic artistic expression.

A. Circle of Unity:

Being the most common shape in nature, the circle has been considered the most significant form that symbolically reflects the sign of the Creation. Hence, it was adapted universally as a Divine symbol of unity (Dabbour, 2012). And therefore, traditional Muslim artists created geometric proportions derived from the circle of unity, which is clearly evident in traditional architecture.

Diagram 2.5
Symbolism of the circle in Islamic thoughts, particularly of the Sufi doctrines. (left) The world as divine business (sha'n) according to Ibn Arabi. (right) The geometric representation of the divine creative command according to Ibn Arabi. (Source: Akkach, 2012).



Taking a closer look at the construction of the circle; it could be described merely as a circumference revolving around a fixed centre. Mathematically, all other geometric shapes can be determined from a circle and series of mathematical roots and proportions¹¹ (Dabbour, 2012). On the other hand, the symbolic significance and the Islamic interpretation of the circle (or the centre) (diagram 2.5) has been transferred to the three-dimensional form of the sphere, and architectural dome:

"A paramount association that received great emphasis is the idea of the Spirit, which at once surrounds and pervades all being, much as a dome encompasses its enclosed space, and the vault of the sky embraces all creation. The passage of this Spirit from the vault apex, symbolizing Unity, is viewed as being downward and expansive; or as upward and contractive, toward Unity" (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.74)

¹¹ Dabbour also mentions the symbolic relationship between the absolute and the relative manifested in two-overlapped circles. This particular overlapping of circles is usually referred to as the Vesica Pisces, which has references in various religions (Dabbour, 2012).

B. Symbolism of the cube:

When discussing the symbolism found in Islamic geometry, it has always been referred back to the idea of the cube. Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) for example, argue that the symbolism behind the cubic form can be viewed as man or earth, symbolising immobility, representing the most externalized manifestation of the Creator. They elaborate by referring to the cube as a representation of the most stable aspect of temporal life; that its four pillars serve as a representation of the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons and the four colours, the stable aspects of worldly life.

While Ardalan and Bakhtiar refers to the four sides of the cubic form, Moustafa (2008) links the significance of the cube with the idea of the centre, similar to the sanctuary of Solomon. Moustafa argues that the geometry of the cube, manifested in the Sacred House, the Ka'bah (which means cube in Arabic) which is considered the symbol of mankind is the "underlying point of convergence" between the cosmic codes and the sacred architecture in the world (figure 2.4). This resonates with Sufi interpretations of the Ka'bah as an outward symbol of the Divine Presence in the material world; the world seen by the eye, for this Presence resides in the world of the heart, the world of the unseen (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). And therefore, the geometry of the Ka'bah has inspired mosque architecture throughout the Muslim world through its symbolism, harmony and geometry.



Figure 2.4 The Kaaba, Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Symbolism of the geometric form of the Kaaba, the cube, inspired the architectural heritage of the Muslim world (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

Although there is no apparent mention of the proportion and the scale of any form or structure in Islamic designs, neither a basic plan, or guidelines, or preferences that determine the spatial relationships between one form or another (El-Said and Parman, 1976), there has been an emphasis on proportion and harmony. While describing Amin Mosque in Turfan, China, Moustafa (2004) refers to both the circle as the origin of life, and the square as the embodiment of the universal polarities. In Moustafa's analysis, the abstract forms provide a unifying balanced relationship between man as the mediator and the metaphysical world of the Divine.

To conclude, it is palpable that whenever the subject of geometry as an artistic canon is brought to light, the European argument of the mathematical formulae or ‘restrictions’ as an obstacle of creativity is always addressed. The counter-argument on this aspect is that traditional art used geometric models as a guiding method, which arguably does not relate to a rational classification of art, it is ‘creative’ because it speaks through a non-quantitative language that resides directly in the mind (El-Said and Parman, 1976).



• 2.6.3 Light “al-noor”

“Allah is the Light, Of the Heavens and the Earth. The parable of His Light, Is as if there were a Niche, And within it a Lamp: The Lamp, enclosed in Glass; The Glass as it were, A Brilliant Star: Lit from a blessed Tree, An olive, Neither of the East Nor of the West ...” (Quran, al-Noor: 35)

Perhaps the most significant reference of light in Islam is the famous Quranic verse – from Surat al-Noor that directly associates light with God, even defines God as light. From this point onwards, the phenomenon of light was considered a perfect symbol of the Divine Unity (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003; Nasr, 1987). Suhrawardi, the 12th century philosopher, spoke in his thesis about “noor” or light and the spiritual essence as being one thing, Kazimee and Rahmani elaborate:

“Noor, has various forms: anything that comes out of the Divine essence resembles noor, most bright and clear upon trajectory but soon gradually loses its perfection as it gets closer to material reality.” (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003, p.57)

Consequently, light found its way in Muslims’ creative expression, both directly or and symbolically, manifesting as an essential quality in spatial design and decorative arts:

A. Light as a spatial quality

The significance of light in Islamic architecture was not only limited to its association with God, but also in its metaphysical strength created a unique sensorial experience (figure 2.5). This strength is derived from the quality of light and shadow which is illustrated by the philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) as he draws a parallel between light and the soul:

“The soul is closely similar to light: light is divided by the division of illuminated bodies, and is unified when the bodies are annihilated, and this same relation holds between soul and bodies.” (Ibn Rushd, cited in Moustafa, 2008, p.86)

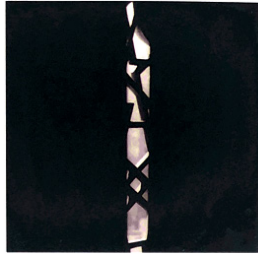
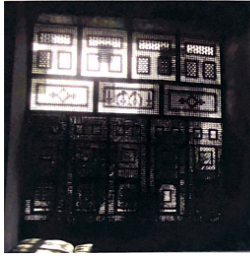


Figure 2.5 Light filtering through the traditional architectural elements adding a unique quality to Muslim spaces (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

The evidence of light being used as a unique spatial quality in Islamic architectural spaces is through the playful effect it creates in the element of Muqarnas¹² found in al-Hambra for example; It is a series of 5000 prisms forming a three-dimensional pattern that dissolve corners and spatial boundaries. These prisms are configured in a way that creates a luminous quality by catching and filtering light (Moustafa, 2008). Through the balance and harmony achieved in the element of muqarnas, light represents unity; it connects nature with the architectural element inspired by it.

مُقَرْنَص

B. Light as symbolic reference

Another aspect of light in Islamic architecture is the symbolic manifestations in some of the architectural forms. For that Kazimee and Rahmani (2003) use the example of the "minaret"; the "pencil-like" towers from which the "Muezzin" announce the call for prayer (figure 2.6). They argue that the term itself is a derivative of the word "Manarah" which means an element that sheds light onto an entity, and thus the architectural element of space and the space of worship are intimately linked through the use of light (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003; Nasr, 1987).

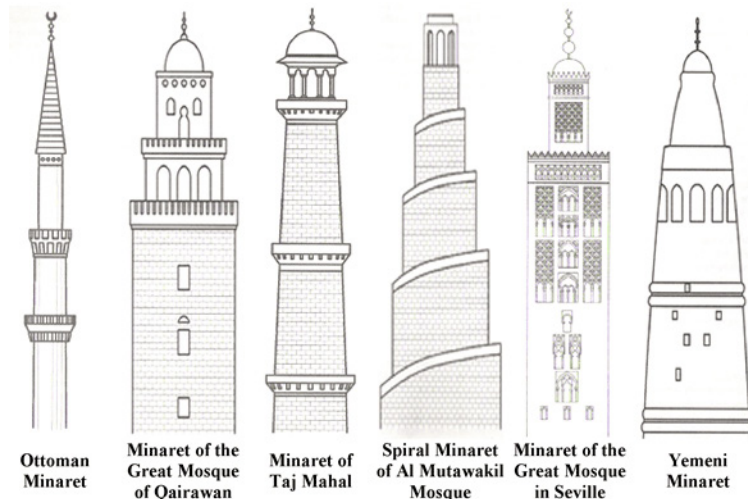


Figure 2.6 Drawings that shows the different types of minarets across the Islamic land; different in style however the proportion of the main architectural element to the mosque remains the same (Source: Hillenbrand, 2004).

12 Refer to terminologies listed in the first chapter.

Another example brought to our attention by Kazimee and Rahmani is the mihrab; the carved niche in the Qibla wall inside the prayer hall, which denotes the direction of Ka'bah (or Makkah). This carved niche, is expressed by a profile image of a lantern, which signifies light (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003). The significance of light was also celebrated through the emergence of the philosophical "School of Ishraq" (illumination) of Suhrawardi, which was established in Persia where the pre-Islamic religions such as Zoroastrianism also used the symbolism of light to illustrate their religious teachings (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Nasr, 1987).



2.6.4. Colour "al-lawn" as derivative of light

"The world of colour cannot be devoid of opposition. The marvel is that colour sprang from that which is without colour. That which is without colour, or Pure Light, is the realm of Pure Being and Absolute Unity, in which there is no individualization. Once determined, light becomes the source of existence." (Rumi, 2013)

Being derived from Pure Light or Pure Being (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973), colours also play an important role in Islamic art and design. In Islamic philosophy the notion of colour has been found in a metaphysical sense to describe the transition from the formless (or colourless) to the world of forms (or of colours). This analogy is evident in the writing of the Sufi poet, Rumi when he compares colour to a cloud and the moon, being colourless and temporarily covered by that cloud. For that Nasr elaborates:

"The Noble Quran first descended vertically from the World of Divine Command (Álam al-amr) into the heart of the Prophet, or from the Formless in the metaphysical sense through a series of descents to the world of form, and then manifested itself horizontally from sound to writing, a process which traced on the horizontal plane the transition from the formless to the world of forms, according to established metaphysical principles. This transition from the formless to the world of form has also been interpreted by certain Muslim sages as the transition from colourlessness to colour, here colourlessness referring to the unconditioned and formless truth and colour to the truth conditioned by formal constraints." (Nasr, 2010, p.110-111)

From this description, Nasr gives examples of how this metaphysical image is reflected in traditional art and architecture of the Muslim or Islamic world; in the architecture of the earliest mosques, for instance, he argues that the walls are completely white symbolizing the colourless. Hence, the abundant presence of the Divine Word can be experienced without relating it to a particular form, or a particular colour (Nasr, 2010). Another manifestation of this transition is in the domestic architecture of in the traditional cities, where the houses appear monotonous from the exterior contrasting with the inner courtyards that burst with colours. This is also evident, in Nasr's view, in the calligraphy as a manifestation of the Divine Word from the invisible to the visible, from the audible to the visible, and when viewing it as a two-dimensional white plane, from the colourless to colours (Nasr, 2010).

In addition, and with consideration of colours being the world of existence, Nasr visualizes other symbolic levels: white lies above colours and unites them, symbolising Being and cosmic reality, whilst black lies below them, symbolising nothingness (Nasr, cited in Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Nasr states that black signifies "non-being", which is the Divine essence that lies above the plane of existence and is only dark because of the intensity of its light.

Furthermore, there are various references that analyse the symbolic significance of each colour individually in the Islamic traditions. Some scholars synthesise the personality attributes of each colour with its symbolic reference in Islam (Table 2.4). They are demonstrated here in addition to their occurrence in the Quran.



Table 2.4 Summary of the significance and the symbolism behind each colour in Islamic spirituality along with their Quranic context (Source: The Quran; Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003)

Colour	Personality Attributes	Symbolic Reference	Quranic Context
White	Unity, Veracity, Virginity, and Beauty	Pure Light/ Pure Being	Metaphorically refers to the faces of people in Heaven (mentioned 12 times)
Black	Grieve, Sorrow, Spiritual Nostalgia (e.g. in Kaaba the black cloth that covers it dissolve scale and generate mystery)	Black Light/ Hidden aspects of the Divine	Describing the colours of mountains (mentioned 7 times)
Green	Gift, Charity, hope, fertility, eternity and Peace	The supreme plenitude and formation of the celestial world Embodies all others: red, yellow and blue	Refers to the description of the clothes of people in Heaven, usually refers to nature (mentioned 8 times)
Red	Fire, Energy, Potency, Youth, and Extreme Excitements	The dynamics of original times, the birth of the heaven and earth by the Creator Person seen opposite to eternity	Describing the colours of mountains (mentioned once)
Blue	Satisfaction, Fulfilment, Placeness, and Fertility	Depth of the ocean of Divine knowledge (maarifah) Eternity's inherent dimension of past	Describing the people of hell (mentioned once)
Yellow/ Sandalwood	Maturity, and Old Age	In microscale is the man, earth in the macroscale, and the time of the fall season Eternity's inherent dimension of future	Various descriptions of God's creations (mentioned 5 times)



On the other hand, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) further analyse the use of colour using more design-oriented language; they have divided their analysis according to warm and cool colours, and the harmonious effects of the adjacent and opposite colours. Not to mention they have also divided colours according to systems including; single-level colour system, multi-level colour system, the system of three colours, seven colours, and the system of four colours (Figure 2.7).

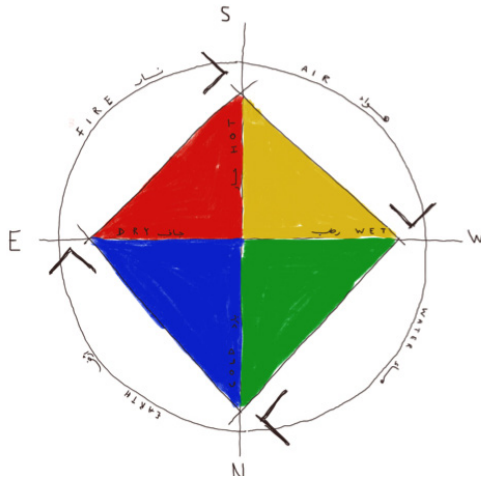


Figure 2.7 Sketch for one the illustrations in Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) that demonstrates the four colours system and its relation to inherent energy of nature (or the active qualities of nature; hot, wet, dry, and cold) and the passive qualities of matter (fire, water, air and earth).

Significance of the colour green:

Even though each colour has a symbolic significance in Islamic traditions, there is an overriding emphasis on the colour green. Culturally, green has been considered a synonym of beauty, purity and visual delight (Puerta Vilchez, 2011). Besides associating this colour with plant life, fertility and eternity, it has been strongly linked to an admired figure called Al-Khidr (meaning the Green One), which some ascribed to immortality (abu Bakar, n.d). There are several mentions in the Quran where paradise is portrayed, giving clear descriptions of "green cushions and fine carpets". Hence the colour has been associated with the notion of "the perfect place, of divine creation, of the promised Paradise and of Islam itself." (Puerta Vilchez, 2011).

On the other hand, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) demonstrate how the use of the colour green, and its different analogous colours in spaces can arguably be a metaphorical aesthetic for heavenly spaces:

الخضر

“...Islamic domes preserve and exalt the memory of the heavenly vault. Its colours then prototypically become white, green, blue-green, turquoise, gold, or a neutral tone of tilework, brickwork, plaster, and muted combinations of these. Archetypically, the dome in all its manifestations is the locus of the Divine Throne, passive to the intellect, maternal in gender, and sublimely timeless in form.” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.75)



• 2.6.5 Matter “Maadah”

Another intriguing literature finding has been a rare mention of “matter” as an abstract element, at least in the references that focus on surveying traditional Islamic art and architecture, mentioning specific materials that were preferred in the Islamic artistic practice (El-Said and Parman, 1976). Matter, as an element of design, has been mentioned in traditional sciences such as alchemy, which brings to our attention how some of the architects in the Islamic world were also scholars that have a knowledge of alchemy, philosophy and cosmology. Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) argue that a traditional man participates in the creative process through a process of “transmutation of matter”, which denotes taking back matter to its state as “hidden gold”. They elaborate further by giving the example of the miniaturist or tile-glazer; who participates physically and spiritually in the alchemical process, as well as state of consciousness that is evident in his choice of a particular colour.

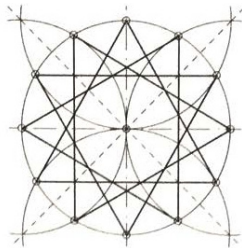
In Sufi writing, for example, words and forms are materials of existence that help in perceiving and grasping matter of the intellect. It is believed that matter, possessing an inward essence, takes shape, and becomes a body through materialistic entities that connect to “Vertical Cause”:

“The traditional sciences seek to understand and realize the inner essence of all things. Those traditional sciences such as alchemy, which are concerned with the corporeal world, make use of the knowledge of a material order in order to gain the inner knowledge of all things.” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.57- 58)

However even though matter has not been mentioned in an abstract manner in references of Islamic arts, there has been an elaborate analysis of the surfaces and textures of two-dimensional planes. It has been argued that in traditional Islam, materials were considered for their emotional, and psychological influences on the state of mind. Ardalan and Bakhtiar give a couple of examples for materials like the iron and the marble. For example; a material such as iron can be “transfigured” in a way that pays

respect to the material itself without altering its natural characteristic but to enhance its visual influence, like applying texture and patterns as trans-figural enhancements. Texture and patterns on surfaces are celebrated here through their altering effects on materials, and how they can help to visually lighten a surface, and give it an ability to catch light, creating shade and casting shadows (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Below is a brief mention on the aesthetic approach in an Islamic context for elements that are considered as vital effect in adding intricate quality for matter:

A. Pattern and Texture



• ————— ➤
Figure 2.8 From nature to geometry to ornamentation. Islamic art derived from contemplating the Divine work in nature to application in surfaces through geometric and arabesque compositions (Source: Moustafa, 2008)

The perception of surfaces in Islamic ideology has arguably focused on the symbolism of the Quran and Divine Revelation, manifested in the geometry or calligraphy incorporated into the surface or the composition as a whole:

“The concept of surface, whether it be wall, roof, or carpeted floor, often combines the profusion plant of life with the crystalline unity of geometry. When the Word expressed through calligraphy is incorporated into the total composition, the result can be viewed as a symbolic expression of the Quran. It is appropriate to conclude the study of surface with a reference to the Quran, because the latter exhibits the total harmony of unity and multiplicity, coalesced through the Breath of the Compassionate. It thus contains within its very structure the balanced and the sacred formula of the creative optimum and stands as the symbolic guide par excellence to traditional architecture and its decoration.” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.45)

While Ardalan, Bakhtiar and Moustafa refer this symbolism to the notion of Unity, Nasr (1987) adds another layer of pattern-analysis that relates to the centrality or going back to the Centre. He argues that the elaborate exterior surfaces of the mosques, for

example, was intentionally created, carefully selected and allocated to draw attention to the Centre, which is 'everywhere and nowhere'. Nasr believes that the geometric patterns represent matter as understood in general terms, or as "the interior structure of corporeal existence". Nasr (1987) supports his argument with scientific findings (achieved through electronic microscopes and other modern techniques) that reveal similarities between the configuration of the geometric figures, and the 'inner structure' of material objects (Nasr, 1987).

To conclude, Islamic geometry and consequently Islamic patterns serves not only aesthetic and symbolic functions, but they can be considered as a tool for autonomous or "self-guided process" in spatial design, for they are "inner laws" in constructing both spaces and two-dimensional compositions (Dabbour, 2012).

B. Surface

The definition of surface in Islamic creative expression encompasses both two-dimensional such as miniature art, and planes of three-dimensional spaces such as walls and ceilings. In addition, surfaces perform a two-fold function; physical and intellectual. For the physical, they define the corporeal space and form the earthly world. As for the intellectual function, surfaces extend beyond the physical space to speak on an intellectual level to the soul in order to guide it to a higher state of being or consciousness.

An essential point in the aesthetic approach of Islam is the honesty that filters through the surfaces. Unlike the "artificial perspective" approach in the European Renaissance, the law of perspective in Islamic context is one that is based on natural perspectives, which respects the two-dimensional surface without making it "appear" like three dimensional (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Also, the use of shade and shadow as a technique in planar surface avoids the gradation that manipulates the reality of that surface; each surface is filled with one colour with no gradation from light to dark (Thahabiyya, 2013). In Persian miniatures, for example, the realistic conformity of the Islamic view and the geometric laws developed from nature was maintained and therefore it remained faithful to the reality of the two-dimensional surface, yet still depicted within the layers of representations of reality a transcendent quality that links to the imaginal world (alam-il-khayal):



"By conforming strictly to the heterogeneous and qualitative conception of space, the Persian miniature succeeded in transforming the plane surface of the miniature to a canvas depicting grades of reality, and was able to guide man from the horizon of material existence and also profane and

mundane consciousness to a higher state of being and of consciousness, an intermediate world with its own space, time, movement, colours and forms where events occur in a real but not necessarily in physical manner” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.33)

It could be concluded that the multi-layered depiction in miniature paintings has been considered - in a way - a spiritual consciousness of the unseen world. The miniature artist portrays happenings and incidents in the tangible world and in the “imaginal world” at the same time (figure 2.9). In the contemporary language of art, the miniature can arguably be considered as visual diary or record that speaks about intangible aspects of the belief. This detailed analysis of the aesthetic decisions in Persian miniature art were not only discussed by Ardalan and Bakhtiar. Nasr (1987) also elaborates on the selection of colours, planes, layouts, and painting techniques as not being mere artistic whims, but the result of a well-studied vision of reality. The technique and the creative selection for producing such work, he argues, creates a contemplative dimension and spiritual “joy” through the sense of movement. The movement in miniature that Nasr refers to is the eye movement from one plane to another in a way that does not allow the eye to ‘fall’ into the three-dimensional thereby maintaining the depiction of the malakut (the imaginal realm).

مَلَكُوت



Figure 2.9 Kamal al-Din Bihzad. **The Seduction of Yusuf**, from a manuscript of Saadi's *Bustan*, Herat (Afghanistan), 1488. Cairo, National Library (Source: Blair and Bloom, 2003)



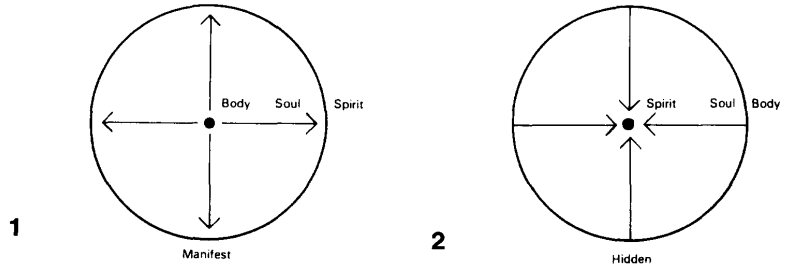
غائب

2.6.6 Void -“Ghayb”

“The shahadah was identified with the formal world and on the level of art, with objects, lines, colours, etc. with which the artist expresses certain intelligible forms or ideas, while ghayb was identified with the void. Hence the central significance of the void in Islamic art, which also symbolises the reality of the non-manifested.” (Nasr, 2010, p.115) Acknowledging the void as an essential design element in Islamic aesthetic refers to the traditional Islamic cosmological and metaphysical thoughts of reality. Traditionally, cosmology and metaphysics provided the general framework for Islamic art, and consequently, the awareness of the reality of the world, which consists of the manifested and the hidden dimensions. While the Manifest (al-zahir) is artistically expressed with forms, lines and colours, the Hidden (al-Batin) is tangible through the presence of the void (Akkach, 2012) (diagram 2.6).



Diagram 2.6
Symbolism of the circle and its centre in relation to the Divine names al-Zahir (The Manifest) and al-Batin (The Hidden) (Source: Ardalan, N. and Bakhtiar, 1973).



حضور

In Sufi concepts, the manifest and the hidden dimensions is understood through the Quranic polarity of presence (Hudur) and absence (ghayb) (Akkach, 2012). The notion of “emptiness”, according to perennial scholars¹³ is manifested as a spatial quality through the element of void, which can offer the element of surprise for a non-Muslim who enters a traditional mosque for the first time for example. Reflectively, it can also be seen in traditional homes where the central void is at the heart of the courtyard house (Akkach, 2012; Nasr, 1987, 2010). The effect of the void relies in creating a space for the manifestation of the Divine Presence. For the traditional Islamic mind, as Akkach describes it, void is not a mere nothing, but a tangible symbol of the ghayb; the “presence of the absent”.



¹³ Definition of “perennial” is mentioned in footnote page 19.

In addition, the concept of emptiness is not only portrayed in architecture or interior spaces but also in the decorative art of geometry, arabesque¹⁴ and calligraphy. This awareness of the Divine Presence is closely related – as Nasr argues – to the notion of faqr or ‘spiritual poverty’. Poverty in Islamic spirituality refers to the Quranic verse ‘Allah is the rich and ye are the poor (fuqara)’¹⁵, something that is evident in the materials objects of Islamic arts such as miniature painting all the way to architecture (Nasr, 1987).

The element of the void brings to light an often-neglected area in the subject of traditional Islamic architecture; especially in analysing the spatial quality of the interior spaces that are often diluted in the context of architecture. The lack of mention of “interior design” as understood in contemporary language shall be explored further in the next chapter. Also in this point, the notion of nothing-ness or emptiness is manifested through the design element of the void, however it can also be considered arguably - within design principles- as absence. This will be further explored in the coming section, where absence can be articulated through different elements and forms other than the void as a spatial element.

14 The arabesque is a form of artistic surface decoration based on rhythmic linear patterns of scrolling and interlacing foliage or tendrils. Arabesque is considered a long tradition, but it developed significantly by the coming of Islam (Canby, 2005). It is considered one of the three main cannons of Islamic decorative art (the other two are calligraphy and geometry)

15 This point will be further elaborated in the coming section



2.7 Design Principles¹



تَوْحِيدٌ

2.7.1 “Tawhid”: Unity within multiplicity

“And your Allah is One Allah: there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.”

(Quran, Al-Baqarah: 163)

The notion of unity (or tawhid) is one of the most profound doctrines in the formation of Islamic art and architecture. In Islamic philosophy, particularly in Sufism, the act of manifestation has always been questioned and explored to comprehend the cosmic reality of the world. Divine Unity has been articulated as being achieved through a plane of multiplicity. This notion is realised through the Divine Revelation of the Quran and expressed through the contemplative applications of art and architecture (Moustafa, 2008). Nasr (1987) interprets the notion through God’s assertion in the Quran that all multiplicity, the temporality of the world, and the positive qualities of cosmic creation are dependent upon the One.

This notion of unity within multiplicity, as Akkach (2012) elaborates, forms the basis of a paradoxical discourse in Islamic philosophy: How can a simple unity produce complex multiplicity? He also refers to the tradition that says: “God was and nothing with him; and he is now even as he was”, shedding the light on another related question: “How could God, the one, when there was nothing with him, remains the same one [after creating the world and] when the multitude of existence is associated with him?” In other words, the One is becoming many yet at the same time remaining one, is what creates the paradox of unity and multiplicity, implicit in the act of manifestation. Other references describe the notion of Unity as being achieved through a state of “wholeness”, Kazimee and Rahmani elaborate:

“Tawhid [...] a term predicated on the ability to return fragments back to their original state of wholeness. Which means that not any two or more disparate pieces can be brought together and consolidated to form a unit, but rather a unit can only be formed between one fragment and its missing other. (...) In seeking unity again and again, the Muslim in effect seeks a perfect correspondence between one object and its referent.” (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003, p.27)



¹ The principles demonstrated here are bilingual; the necessity to provide them in both Arabic and English terms refers to the issue of linguistic limitations which was mentioned in the introduction chapter. Unless otherwise mentioned, the principles are translated to English according to context and not necessarily the literal meaning of the Arabic word.



This brings to attention the use of the Arabic term “tawhid” instead of “wehdah”² or other synonyms that refers to the meaning of unity. This is arguably because it is the closest representation of the paradox of “unity within multiplicity” which was discussed in the first part of this chapter.

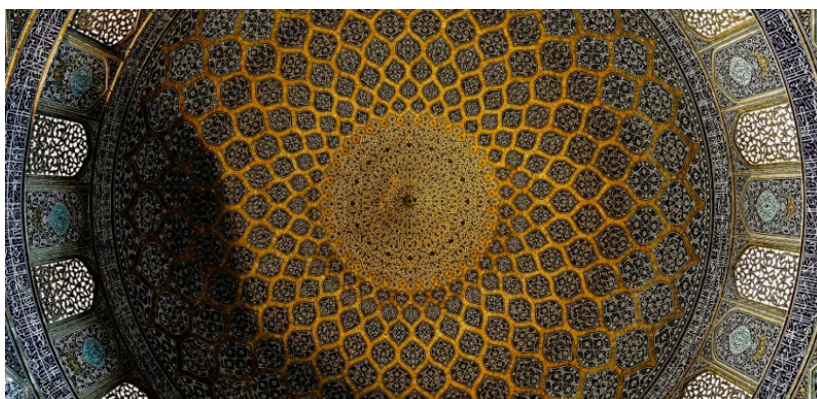


Figure 2.10 The central dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran. An example of how unity through multiplicity is applied in interior ornamentation, where lemon-shaped units draw the visitor's eye towards the centre. The ornamented surface dematerialises the space in order to allow for cosmic order. (Source: Myatt, 2013)

Supporting the analysis of “Tawhid”, Burckhardt also states that Unity, as an aesthetic or creative principle, is derived from the metaphysical doctrine of Divine Unity; which is the source as well as the culmination of all multiplicity (El-Said and Parman, 1976). Therefore, the circle, with its harmonious divisions and its symbolic strength in representing the Divine, is considered a “method” by which the geometric patterns and the proportions of buildings are derived. Burckhardt also asserts that the concept of unity reveals itself in the Quran as sudden flashes (or inspirations) that strike the imagination and crystallize into forms that in their turn establish the essence of Islamic art. In his opinion, the concept of Unity or “tawhid” is beyond words, these flashes are not necessarily derived from literal meaning of the Quran but rather from its “formless essence” (Burckhardt, 1987).

In aesthetic language, the notion of unity through multiplicity has been interpreted not only by deriving geometric patterns and building proportions, but also through the inter-relationship between the different parts of the artistic composition and the composition as a whole. In fact, El-Said and Parman (1976) argue that this aspect is what gives the geometric patterns in Islamic art its universal quality. They elaborate that this perfect inter-connectedness, irrespective of mode, or form, or scale of the artistic expression is not what restricts the artists in rigid mathematical system but what arguably enables the freedom in creating.

² The choice of the word ‘tawhid’ strongly relates to the syllabus tone or ‘seeghah’, the equivalent of gerunds in English language which indicates constant acts of assertion, please refer to page 18.

The notion of unity is represented architecturally first and foremost in the presence of the Ka'bah, towards which Muslims all around the world face in their five daily prayers. The very act of ordering and orienting Muslims, through the nature of space in Islamic architecture and towards one direction is considered a pure manifestation of the Divine Unity (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003; Moustafa, 2008). Moustafa describes that through this orientation, architecture is positioned in a unifying role for Muslim's social life and their everyday behaviour. Consequently, the structure of an Islamic city responds to these functional requirements yet maintains a spiritual character without separating the city's urban order from a higher cosmic order.



• 2.7.2 "Faqr": Absence



'Allah is the rich and ye are the poor (fuqara')' (Quran, Muhammad: 38)

The notion of faqr, or spiritual poverty, had never been widely addressed while describing traditional Islamic art, or architecture. It was mainly articulated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr; a perennial scholar who interpreted it as a spiritual attitude in the creative process. Although the literal translation (poverty) usually refers to meanings of hardship or starvation, the meaning of "faqr" in this particular context refers to the notion of yearning or longing. This is another example where the literal translation of the word "faqr" does not have the adequate linguistic support in English. Thus, it is adapted here exactly how Nasr translated it.

"Faqr" is adopted as one of the main principles that is unique in Islamic art, and particularly its eminence as a spatial quality of interiors; an area which is often overlooked when it comes to the analysis of Islamic spaces. Nasr (1987) supports his analysis not only by the Quranic verse 'Allah is the rich and ye are the poor', but also by the prophetic narration "Poverty (al-faqr) is my glory". Consequently, the notion of faqr, becoming a spiritual attitude centred in Islamic beliefs and particularly in Sufi traditions, so much so that it was adapted as a second name for Sufism (Muhammadan Poverty, or "al-faqr al-Muhammady").

Nasr (2010) ascertains philosophical meaning behind the notion of spiritual poverty to include a Muslim's interaction with the world as well as their understanding of material objects. This occurs on two levels; the first entails decluttering the mind and the heart from idols, or diverse ideas and images instead of the Divine Reality that presides within the believer's own being. This relates to the forbidden use of figures (or Islamic aniconism) removing the possibility of representing the Divine, or His presence "hudur" in an icon

or image. This dates back to the Quranic reference and the prophetic narration about warning the believers of man-made images and sculptures that might be worshipped as idols. Islamic aniconism was evident in the early Islamic civilisations rather than the later empires, where many of the artefacts included figures of human beings and animals as an adaptation to the cultural context then¹. On another level, it also entails the physical and environmental decluttering of the Muslim's surrounding from excessive or exaggerated elements.

It is important to note that the Sufi conceptions of physical and metaphysical reality differ from our understanding that is arguably shaped by Desecrates school of thoughts². It is argued that the "subject-object polarity" does not have a support in Arabic linguistically or conceptually (Akkach, 2012), rather there is the polarity of presence (hudhur) and absence (ghiyab) as an understanding of the world:

"Every existent has a presence that matches its mode of being. Even nonexistence has a notional presence. The Quranic polarity of the seen (shahada) and the unseen (ghayb) is but an expression of presence and absence." (Akkach, 2012, p.55)



In particular, Nasr discusses the significance of void (or negative space) throughout the surface of patterns, or as a spatial element, as the physical evidence of the notion of absence. He argues that the Divine Presence is celebrated through emptiness, or in non-existence:

"Islamic aniconism, which removes the possibility of concretization of the Divine Presence (hudur) in an icon or an image, is a powerful factor in intensifying the spiritual significance of the void in the Muslim mind. Through it as well as the metaphysical principle of Unity the void has been made into a sacred element of Islamic art. God and His revelation are not identified with any particular place, time, or object." (Nasr, 1987, p.187)

1 Grabar (1987) offers elaborate details about the history of this discourse and how it evolved within the traditional Islamic creative expression.

2 The Cartesian view (Desecrates school of thought), see the world through the polarity of subject and object, mind and extension, conscious soul and extended body (Akkach, 2012, p.55)



Figure 2.11 Courtyard in Bou Inania Medresa in Fez, Morocco. The contrast between the elaborate spaces and the emptiness of the courtyard amplifies the importance of the void; the presence of absence [author's note] (Source: Morris, 2009)



The notion of absence in Islam extends beyond the mere idea of forbidding figures; it is represented by the spatial quality of traditional Islamic interiors through the dominant element of the void at the heart of houses, mosques and schools. This reflects the understanding of the world in the traditional Muslim mind, which had been conditioned to the notion of the unseen. The notion of absence or emptiness is also reflected in the two-dimensional manipulation of patterns in the surface treatments of the mosque, where the sense of the sacred and the Divine Presence is evoked. This is achieved through the infinite visual movements within the patterns; the eye can start at any point and never ends, hence, God is “everywhere and nowhere” (Nasr, 1987)³.

Another important aspect related to the spiritual attitude of poverty is the act of modesty represented by traditional Muslim artists and artisans. It had been argued that some of the traditional artisans leave parts of their work incomplete to convey the idea of imperfection, which is linked to the profound belief that perfection, can only belong to God. By leaving their work incomplete, they declare their spiritual poverty and their continuous aspiration to Divine perfection (The Met Islamic Art Exhibit, 2011). This shall be further elaborated in (2.7.6 Modesty).



³ Nasr (2010) also relates this sense of infinity in the artistic plane to the structure of the Quran, arguing that it reflects the reality of the Quranic verses.

2.7.3 “Thikr”: Remembrance

“Therefore remember Me, and I will remember you” (Quran, Al-Baqarah: 152)

“Everything has a polish, and the polish of the hearts is the remembrance of God.” (Prophetic narration, cited in Moustafa, 2008, p. 144)

Perhaps the most recognised principle of Islamic arts and design is remembrance (or Thikr/ Dhikrallah), which also refers to the invocation or quintessential prayer. Nasr (2007) explains that the notion of remembrance in Islamic thoughts refers to having God at the centre of a Muslim heart; a form of meditation to feel God’s presence in every action. This relates strongly to the Sufi teachings of Ibn Arabi, through which it is essential to integrate meditation (fikir) with remembrance (thikr). Ibn Arabi’s association between meditation and remembrance brings to light how the presence of God is viewed symbolically and psychologically in Islamic theology (Miner, Ghobary, Dowson and Proctor, 2014). If God is projected in the cosmos and everything is created by God, therefore all creation can be considered a sign or a symbol of God (Qur’an, al-Baqarah:156, 210, al-An’aam:62).

Remembrance manifests itself in Islamic aesthetics in various ways, some are direct, and others can be indirect. In a direct approach; it was considered an aesthetic expression to recall the words of God through calligraphy. Thus, calligraphy was adopted and flourished as one of the main decorative canons in Islamic art initially for the need to preserve and document Quran. Consequently, Muslim writers and calligraphers perfected the different scripts of the written word over time, and therefore calligraphy was viewed in the Sufi teachings as an act of respect or (adab)⁴ towards the words of God (Nasr, 2007).

The indirect manifestation of remembrance was represented through the application of symbolism in creative decisions. For example, the use of water and greenery in Islamic dwellings was a tangible reminder of Paradise. Being inspired by pictorial Quranic terms that describes concepts of paradise “Janna” or “Jannat” or gardens of Paradise or immortality “jannat al-khuld”, the use of courtyard gardens, and the presence of water is considered a symbolic reminder of God’s rewards” (Puerta Vilchez, 2011). Interestingly, the Quran also refers to architectural and artistic details of paradise such as guraḥ (lofty chambers), furush marfu’a (raised couches), masakin tayyiba (pleasant dwellings) from which many Arabic and Andalusí traditions were inspired to create monumental architecture and even fictional poetry.

• ————— ﴿﴾
ذِكْرٌ

• ————— ﴿﴾
فِكْرٌ

• ————— ﴿﴾
أَدَبٌ

• ————— ﴿﴾
جَنَّةُ (جَنَّاتٍ)
جَنَّاتُ الْخُلْدِ
عُرُوفٌ
فُرُشٌ مَرْفُوعَةٌ
مَسَاكِنُ طَيِّبَةٌ

4 Refer to terminologies list in the first chapter.

It is simple to highlight the direct and the symbolic representations of remembrance as an aesthetic principle, but it is also essential to acknowledge remembrance as an intangible aspect that guides the creative process. This is strongly related to being aware of God's presence in a Muslim's mind while performing religious rituals or social behaviours throughout daily life (Moustafa, 2008). This conscious remembrance of the Divine became an integral part of a Muslims' psyche, and hence it forms a spiritual attitude at the heart of the artistic process that may be visually represented but not necessarily spoken of in the production of art.

Nasr addresses in his writings the rapport between the Divine Revelation and Islamic art, with remembrance as being in the heart of producing art as a medium of expression: "The causal relation between the Islamic revelation and Islamic art, moreover, is borne out by the organic rapport between this art and Islamic worship, between the contemplation of God as recommended in the Quran and the contemplative nature of this art, between the remembrance of God (dhikrallah) which is the final goal of all Islamic worship, and the role played by Islamic art of both plastic and sonoral nature in the life of individual Muslims and the community or al-ummah as a whole. This art could not perform such a spiritual function if it were not related in the most intimate manner to both the form and content of Islamic revelation." (Nasr, 1987, p.4)

Figure 2.12 An example for a direct application of remembrance, documenting prayers or words from the Quran. Tiles written in Arabic and Farsi, 1334, Iran. From the IAMM collection. (Source: Moustafa, 2008)



2.7.4 "Iqa'a": Rhythm

"It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course."
(Quran, Al-Anbiyaa: 33)

In reference to rhythm in Islamic life; Nasr (1987) brings to light the five daily prayers that divide the day and night and create pauses in daily routine, to reconnect with, and to pray to God. Being integrated throughout the day, this repetition of the Quran in daily prayers functions, as he describes it, as a series of spiritual attitudes and mindfulness. In the act of repetition⁵, Nasr argues, lies an inner discipline, which can not only be seen in prayers but also in the creative or the productive process of Muslim artists and artisans.

This awareness of the rhythmic relationship between man and the world around was demonstrated further in Ardalan's and Bakhtiar's analysis (1973). They refer to Ibn Arabi on his discourse about the initial creation and the following manifestation usually referred to as "Breath of the Compassionate" (figure 2.13):

"Here, the Universe is annihilated at every moment and re-created at the next, without there being a temporal separation between the two phases [...] Creation is renewed at every instant, and its apparent 'horizontal' continuity is pierced by the 'Vertical Cause' which integrates every moment of existence into its transcendent Origin." (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.19)

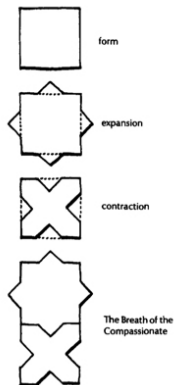


Figure 2.13 (Left) Mystical symbolism of the "Breath of the Compassionate" applied to the 8-pointed star and cross pattern (source: Bakhtiar, 1976, p.16). (right) Tiles from Iran in the Breath of the Compassionate pattern (Source: Medliej, 2014).

⁵ Following on the same structure of D.K. Ching's book in defining the design elements, repetition here is considered one type of rhythm.



أَذَانٌ

Referring back to the five daily prayers as a punctuation mark in a Muslim's daily life, it has been argued that the very act of Athan (or the call of prayers) is a repetitive rhythm in time; this symbolic reference has been linked to a man's acts of speech and song (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). Relating to Ibn Arabi's "Breath of the Compassionate" analysis, the act of breathing into an instrument such as reed to create music, for example, is considered participation of this symbolism. Interestingly, Ardalan and Bakhtiar consider this example as a parallel to creating positive architectural space and thus demonstrating an essential quality of creativity in traditional Muslim societies (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

The notion of rhythm is filtered through the various mediums of Islamic arts creating unique visual experiences; within the arabesque and geometric patterns that have been developed into an infinite variety of forms, is a balance between an "intellectual satisfaction" and the visual regularity of the whole composition (Moustafa, 2008, p. 130). In addition, Moustafa refers to the visual quality of Islamic patterns as being either woven from a single band or radiating from multiple identical centres, each centre is "a cosmos of its own". This endless reflection of centres and the constant intertwining of geometric or floral units which develop out of each other is, as she describes, one the purest symbolisation of the Divine Reality (haqiqa) (Moustafa, 2008). This infinite repetition of patterns not only echoes a symbolic remembrance of God, but also, its quality of capturing the eye, creates an experience of movement. This echoes the previously explained in point about absence; as these patterns manipulate the surfaces of walls to disseminate attention to "everywhere and no-where" (Nasr, 1987).

The rhythmic repetitions found in traditional Islamic art are viewed as serving a different aesthetics purpose from that of figurative art; instead of capturing the eye to lead into an imaginary world, it is perceived as a visual liberation from the preoccupations of the mind. Framing it as a true sense of abstract art, Moustafa (2008) describes rhythm as a factor that transmits a state of being, without being subjective but pure conscious rules. Similar to the repetitive mystical chanting, rhythm realised through the infinite arabesque can achieve tranquillity.

2.7.5 “Qurb”: Intimacy

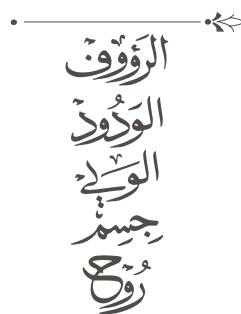
“for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” (Quran, Qaf: 16)



A Muslims’ sense of intimacy is initiated through the direct personal dialogue with God through their supplications and/ or prayers (Qumi, 2005). Intimacy with God has been evoked in the Quran in various locations; demonstrating the closeness and proximity of the believers to God. This notion of intimacy has been symbolically represented in the art and architecture of Islam, however it has rarely been explicitly investigated as an aesthetic direction. Therefore, it is brought to light in this section to examine its symbolic notion and how it was reflected in Islamic creative expression.

It is essential to note the philosophical concepts of Divine manifestation; which Ibn Arabi states two modes; transcendence and immanence (Landau, 2013), that refer to how Muslims perceive and relate to the Divine. With regards to the transcendent mode, the Divine is beyond human comprehension, while the immanent mode he is manifest to the believers and closer to them than their jugular vein (Quran, Qaf: 16), as well as manifested to the world by His Divine names⁶. Thus, Muslims call on God who is close to them by His Divine names, while knowing that His essence is far beyond their comprehension (Miner, Ghobary, Dowson and Proctor, 2014).

Some of the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah penetrate the compassionate and transcendent quality of God, such as: Al-Wadood (The Loving), Ar-Ra’uf (The Compassionate), and Al-Waliyy (The Supporter) (Miner, Ghobary, Dowson and Proctor, 2014). It can be concluded that intimacy (or Qurb) is a principle that is strongly associated with Remembrance (Thikr), so much that they can be considered as one. In Islamic aesthetics, intimacy can be filtered through the symbolic representation of body (jism) and soul (ruh) as the container and the contained. This is reflected in the concept of “place” in Islam, through which a Muslim is consciousness of their position in the cosmos, and their interaction that creates a sense of place. The intimacy of the “place” (or the container), and its boundaries serves as intangible conscious proximity to God (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.13).



⁶ The concept of transcendence and immanence in relation to the Divine names have been discussed earlier in this chapter, as for the idea of the Hidden and the Manifest is also mentioned in later parts of this chapter.



Further elaboration on the notion of intimacy through architecture, Kazimee and Rahmani (2003) associate the idea of the container 'body or jism', and the contained 'spirit or ruh' through the juxtaposition of solid and void, and inside versus outside to represent a state of flux:

"This flux between self and God, soul and body, ultimately finds an echo in the architectural expression of inside and outside, container and contained, solid and void from which a greater empathy with place, as an architectural network of spaces and objects is finally established. Not unlike the temple or the Mosque, the human body "jism" is both kind of place, and a kind of an antenna, from which the divine is first received and then allowed to dwell." (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003, p.34)

• 2.7.6 "Haya": Modesty⁷

حَيَاءٌ

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster" (Quran, Luqman: 18)

- Following the teachings of the Quran and sunnah⁸, Muslims embraced the modest behaviour of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) as a religious code for personal and social conduct. And since the lifestyle of the traditional Muslim has been reflected in their creative work, the principle of modesty has also been reflected in their creativity. In fact, it has been argued that the common anonymity of the traditional artists and artisans in the Muslim world was an intentional result of their modest attitude in the production of art (El-Said and Parman, 1976). As it was believed that the identity of the artist or the artisan is expressed in an abstract way, through the intellectual beauty, the depth of knowledge and the perfection of the skill. However, the concept of perfection has also been obscured through the modest attitude towards creativity. In the intricate walls of Alhambra palace, for example, plaster carvers left in some of the main spaces, small corners that were "undone", as a statement to reflect that perfection belongs to God alone (The Met Islamic Art Exhibit, 2011).

سُنَّة

Other evidence of modesty as an attitude embedded in the production process of traditional Muslim's work can be traced in manuscripts. In her archival research into

- 7 Moustafa (2008) explains that there are three words in Arabic language that encompass the meaning of modesty: tawadho' (humility), ihtisham (decency), and istehya'h (awareness). These words contain an inner meaning; to be modest to self, to others, and to God.

8 Refer to terminologies list in the first chapter.

Islamic geometry, Chorbachi (1989) notes that authors of the manuscripts usually add at the end of the given text: "...and Allah knows best". This has not only been written but also often uttered by Muslim scientists reflecting their prominent belief of their humility before the knowledge of their Creator:

"Although the scientist is sure that his construction methods are correct [...], even in this case of certainty, he [or she] humbly refrains from saying this is certain truth, but rather that true knowledge lies only with his God: Allah, the all-knowing." This humble attitude of the scientist conforms to the general attitude or norm of Muslim beliefs." (Chorbachi, 1989, p.771)

Another application of modesty is the architectural element of Mashrabiyya (wooden lattice screen) which also maintains the privacy of Muslim dwellings: it creates a space of freedom where women can work, live and socialize without being exposed to the outer world. Hence, modesty relies in the concealment of Muslim dwellings rather than having windows that reveal the inner lives of the household. "To see and not be seen" has been the manifesto that morphed the private life of Muslims in the traditional cities inside out (Moustafa, 2008), which is further elaborated in the coming section.



Figure 2.14 Indoor spaces versus outdoor architecture of Bayt Al-Suhaymi in Cairo, Egypt. The use of Mashrabiyya allows the women of the house "to see and not be seen", and to protect the privacy of the household yet penetrating natural light (Source: Wikipedia, 2018)

This connection between architecture and belief extends on a macro scale in the notion of unifying the architecture of the Islamic world without any geographical constraints. There might be a counter-argument to this statement from the point of view that every culture has affected the general features of the Islamic world from region to region, but in the sense of adapting modesty as a religious code Al-Bukhary explains:

“...a mosque in Poland is as capable of expressing the architect’s depth of feeling as a grand monument such as Al-Azhar in Cairo. Domestic space can equally be a prime manifestation of the religious code by which Muslims live. Modesty is just one of the many Islamic precepts, apparent in the way that privacy has been achieved.” (AlBukhary, cited in Moustafa, 2008, p.10)



• 2.7.7 “I’tidal”: Balance

إعتدال

“the best way is the middle way... do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately... and always adopt a middle, moderate regular course whereby you will reach your target (paradise).” Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) (cited in al-Bayhaqi, 2003)

In contemporary design language, balance is referred to the visual, or sometimes the physical, symmetry/ asymmetry between objects whether in two-dimensional or three-dimensional field. In the traditional Islamic context, however, balance refers to the more intangible aspect of the creative experience. In its very essence, traditional Islamic art or architecture achieves balance between its functional and spiritual elements, the corporeal and the imaginable, the tangible and the immaterial (Nasr, 1987; Moustafa, 2008).

Echoing this understanding of the polarities of the universe, the traditional Muslim found in the prophetic teachings, and in contemplating the harmony of nature around them a way to maintain balance between the soul and the matter (Moustafa, 2008). In some ways, balance, or “the middle way” is interpreted as code of conduct for Muslims’ everyday practice and existence, therefore reflected through their creative expressions. Alsamman (2002) argues that, the traditional Muslim artist has complete awareness that ultimate beauty belongs to God, knowing that their work is a mere reflection of that beauty, yet fully dedicated to fulfil the work process. Moustafa elaborates on the notion of balance in another spiritual level:

“On looking up at these sublime achievements, the viewer senses the presence of a cosmic structure, allowing the contemplation of the soul and the creation of symmetry between the knower and the object known.” (Moustafa, 2008, p. 136)

Spiritual balance can also be evident in the domestic spaces of the traditional Islamic cities; the plain exterior contains within its walls an elaborate attention to detail and a private sky, away from the public eye, thus the outside simplicity balances the inward complexity (Moustafa, 2008). Moustafa also brings an architectural example of al-Hambra and the use of muqarnas as a spatial element that creates balance and harmony between both the external nature and the architectural structure inspired by it. She also refers to the construction and the environment of the Muslim world as being considerate to the aesthetic understanding that God is strongly associated with 'beauty'. This understanding is reflected in mathematical considerations of proportion and scale, and in the spatial tension between indoor and outdoor.



Figure 2.15 Muqarnas arches surrounding the courtyard in al-Hambra Palace in Granada, Spain. The intercity of the muqarnas reflects the nature inspired by it (Source: Flickr Hive Mind, 2018).

2.8 Spatial Sensibility

Following (figure 2.0) demonstrated earlier in this chapter, this section highlights the aesthetic concepts evident in Islamic spaces. As previously mentioned, traditional Muslims used art and design as an expressive tool or a facilitator for their religious practices. Hence, their creativity from micro scale expressions such as products (or as usually known as decorative arts), to macro scale such as interior and architectural spaces serve their everyday life. The micro and macro applications of Islamic aesthetics will be practically explored in chapter six.



Meanwhile, the notion of space as cultural product relates strongly to Lefebvre's thought (1991), who argues that space is both a medium and a social production through which social life is produced and reproduced. Thus, in a culture that perceives space as a social production of their everyday religious practice, it is no wonder that the architectural disposition within the Islamic context has been included within Islamic law (fiqh) as a fundamental element of urban and social life. **The Book of Walls** provides access to regulating cultural thoughts regarding walls, as it identifies them as a system covering the private, public, religious and political life (O'Meara, 2007). It also encompasses **fiqh Al-Bunyan** or building law, which pertains to the upkeep and regulations of walls within an Islamic city. The formation of the building law as a branch from the Islamic law is arguably built upon known juridical basis that is inspired by the values of Sunnah (Bin and Rasdi, 2008). Many scholars have portrayed this notion as the guiding moral anchor for Muslims architects in the configuration of space¹.

This section addresses two issues relating to the research question; first:- the spatial qualities that are usually framed within the field of architecture, without relating it to abstract themes that governs other artistic practices in more holistic framework. The main use of the word space rather than architecture is therefore deliberate in this section to shed the light on the spatial qualities of interiors that are often diluted within architectural debates. Secondly:- bringing the Islamic law (fiqh) as a field of study, particularly the segments focusing on formation of buildings and spaces, closer to the field of artistic practices as well as philosophical thoughts that relates to Islamic aesthetics.



¹ Even though it was mentioned in few other references, Rasdi has been criticised for suggesting the moral values of the Prophet (PBUH) contain lessons that could be applied in architecture. The argument was that the Prophet was an example of a "Pure Man" and that architecture is considered a technology that is beyond the Prophet's skills and mission (Bin and Rasdi, 2008)

When it comes to the spiritual aspects of spatial qualities, architecture has been defined (within Islamic context) by the efficient and comprehensive experience of individuals in a space, and that individuals as complete, embodied, and spiritual beings can engage in this experience through their senses (Moustafa, 2008). The Andalusian philosopher, Ibn Arabi, claims “places affect subtle hearts [...] just as spiritual dwellings differ in excellence so, too, do bodily ones.” (Ibn Arabi, cited in O’Meara, 2007). Therefore, space has been perceived and created as a total sensory experience. Akkach (2012) traces the spatial quality through different modes of organization and order. In his book, he describes traditional Muslim’s understanding of space and its relation to the awareness of the universe through mathematics and cosmology as “spatial sensibility”². Determined by predominant scientific understanding and technological capacities, Akkach explains that spatial sensibility is based on the conception and the description of the cosmos, the geography, the human body and their structure and interconnectedness. His term was adopted here as an adequate description that ties together the spiritual, philosophical and spatial aspects of Islamic places. Bearing in mind that due to the five hundred years of scientific and technological developments, today’s understanding of pre-modern Islamic spatiality would be limited to traditional form as currently understood from the pre-modern notion of spatial sensibility.

2.8.1 Orientation

“we have seen the turning of your face to heaven, We shall therefore make you turn toward a qibla that pleases you. So turn your face toward the Holy Mosque, and you (O Muslims), wheresoever you may be, turn your faces toward it” (The Quran, Al-Baqarah:144).



The importance of orientation in Islamic context refers mainly to qibla as a direction towards which all Muslims turn five times every day to pray. This sensibility about orientation originated from the Prophet’s inner desire to have a sacred centre to pray toward. Thus, allowing an orientation in a land where there is no orientation. Ever since, all mosques have been directed towards the Ka’bah, this has been reflected not only in the orientation of the mosques anywhere in the world, but also other buildings in which prayer spaces are provided. The result is an urban layout that is sometimes laid out entirely to face the direction of Makkah; an urban fabric that is weaved into the community’s religious practice (Akkach, 2012). Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) describe this notion of oriented space as a “microscale orders of social conduct” and a “super-conscious design basis that served as a point of departure for the individuals themselves”.

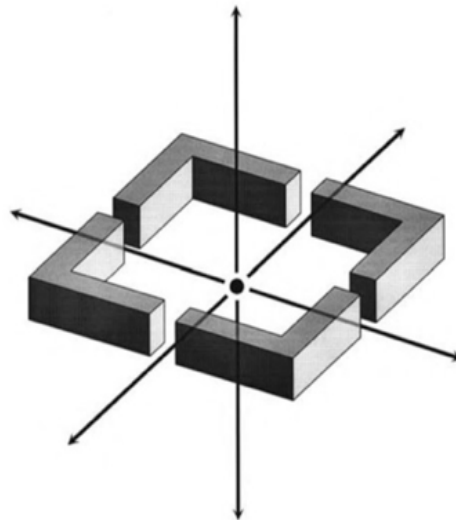
² In this chapter Akkach’s interpretations of the spatial sensibility, as well as Moustafa’s summary of the divine aesthetic principles in Islam are integrated within the different spatial attributes mentioned here



As a result, the way scholars define the architecture of the mosque is strongly bound to the spatial sensibility of orientation. As a respond to the question “What makes a mosque a mosque?” Hillenbrand states: “The answer is forbiddingly simple: a wall correctly orientated towards the qibla, namely the Ka’ba within the Masjid al-Haram, Mecca” (Hillenbrand, 1999). Another architectural element that has been associated with orientation is the minaret, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) define it as space markers or (indicators for orientation)³. Interestingly, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) also refer to the analogy of the word as being more profound than its common interpretation as “light house”; if the minaret is viewed as number 1 which is similar (and relates to) the first letter of the Arabic script alif, it can be interpreted in a macro-scale to the Creator and in the micro-scale to God’s reflection, human⁴.



Diagram 2.7 The centralised open courtyard model in Islamic places such as dwellings and mosques, the courtyard serves as a central space that shifts the horizontal orientation of the place into a vertical orientation towards the sky (the Heavens) (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.155-156).



³ Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) also indicate that the minaret can be considered as symbolic reminiscent and conceptual continuation of the ancient Zoroastrian fire towers. The very meaning of the word “minaret”, according to them, is “the place where fire burns”, or “light shines”, while other references simply referred to the “light house” as a similar definition.

⁴ The affiliation of the minaret with number 1 and the letter alif was not widely spoken of in scholarly references, even though it is arguably a literal representation, it relates strongly to the perennialist thoughts advocated by Nasr, Ardalan and Bakhtiar.

Another aspect of orientation relates to the Sacred House, which corresponds to the centre of Heaven through a vertical axis (Akkach, 2012). The Ka'bah, being the centre of the Earth, shifts the horizontal orientation, both visually and symbolically, towards a vertical orientation with the skies. This vertical connection echoed in the configuration of space in dwellings and in particular the courtyard (the heart of the Muslim), where a spiritual connection to Heavens is achieved through the courtyard's open model (diagram 2.7) (Akkach, 2012; Waly, 1992). In a similar manner, urban planning has contributed to shifting the physical or material orientation of the space to intangible or immaterial order, as evident in Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973) (figure 2.16, 2.17).

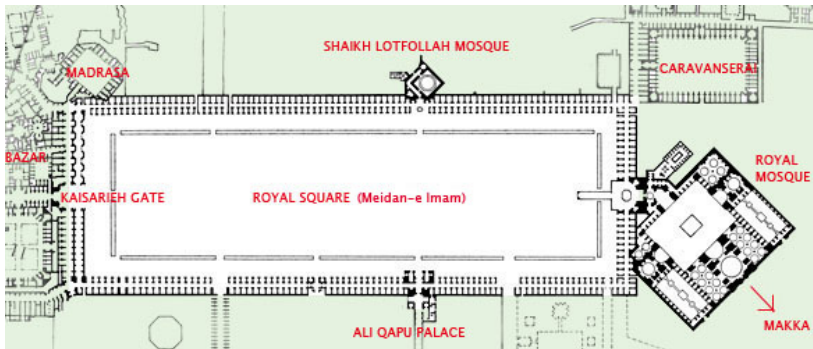


Figure 2.16 Plan of the Royal Square (Imam Square) in Isfahan, Iran showing Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque in relation to the square, the palace and surrounding public spaces (Source: Takeo Kamiya, 2004)

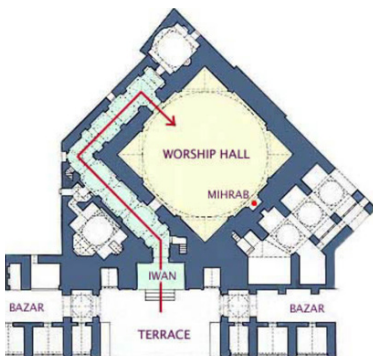


Figure 2.17 (left) plan of Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque showing the indirect entrance from the terrace of the Royal square (Source: Takeo Kamiya, 2004) (right) Interior view of the dome (Source: Shivar, 2004). The indirect corridor from the public terrace to the private worship hall contribute in losing physical orientation in favour of immaterial and cosmic order.

2.8.2 Transformation

Throughout history, architecture has been considered as a mediating instrument between the cosmos and human scale; the measureless and the measurable, the divine and the mortal (Pallasmaa, 2011). It has been stated that architecture, as an art form, can create spaces that establish a dialogue between itself and occupant's body, mind and memories. Having said that, there has been mentions on the quality of Islamic spaces as mediator between the materiality of the world and the immateriality of the universe (Nasr, 1987; Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003). Thus, the notion of transformation in the Islamic context and its role in the perception of occupied spaces can be categorised into: the physical transition between one place and another, and the metaphysical transition from the material world to the immaterial reality (Nasr, 1987; Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Akkach, 2012).

When it comes to the physical transition between spaces and architectural elements, transition manifests itself in the spatial dialogue that happens between private and public spaces, from the profane environment of the urban city to the sacred sanctuary of the private home. Kazimee and Rahmani (2003) also argue that there is another aspect of transformation in homes which echoes the same transition in mosques, not only between the rooms and the central courtyard, but also between one square to another. This transformation relies in the fluctuation between in and out, closed and opened, portraying the transformation between one reality to another, between dark and light. Similarly, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), referring to Masjid-i-Jamii as an example, elaborates on the same spatial quality in the nodal – or transitional- spaces through which a series of contrasting spaces that start initially as a dark passage and terminate into a bright light.



In terms of the metaphysical transition in space, the Islamic context usually refers to the metaphorical spiritual connection between the physical space occupied by man and the Divine. For example, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) refer to the ivan or iwan – the shaded alleyway that connects rooms to the courtyard- as the transitional space between the temporal and the terrestrial worlds. In a metaphysical sense, they argue that it can be viewed as the soul's locus that moves between the garden or the courtyards (viewed as spirit), and the room (viewed as body).

Another analysis of transformation in Islamic architectural elements is the vertical one between the rounded dome and the square walls that hold it below. It has been believed that the dome is a cosmological representation of the eternal rotating sky, and the earthly world is portrayed in the square walls below. Furthermore, the addition of the muqarnas element allows for transitional zones between primary spaces and the decoration of the domes:

"The muqarnas cells allow for the flowing ether of the sky to solidify into a firm, earthly form." [...] By transporting the relationship between dome to base, back to its cosmic model of heaven to earth, the rhythmic character of the muqarnas is articulated. Heaven is characterised by its circular movement, and earth by its polarization into four-sided contrasts. The honeycomb of muqarnas therefore it echoes the motion of heaven in the terrestrial order, expressing cosmic motion." (Moustafa, 2008. P.133)

The vaulted elements of the muqarnas serve another metaphysical aspect in the sense that they eliminate the boundary of the physical space; here geometry and mathematics are utilised to hide the materiality of the space to allow for immaterial transition (Nasr, 1987).

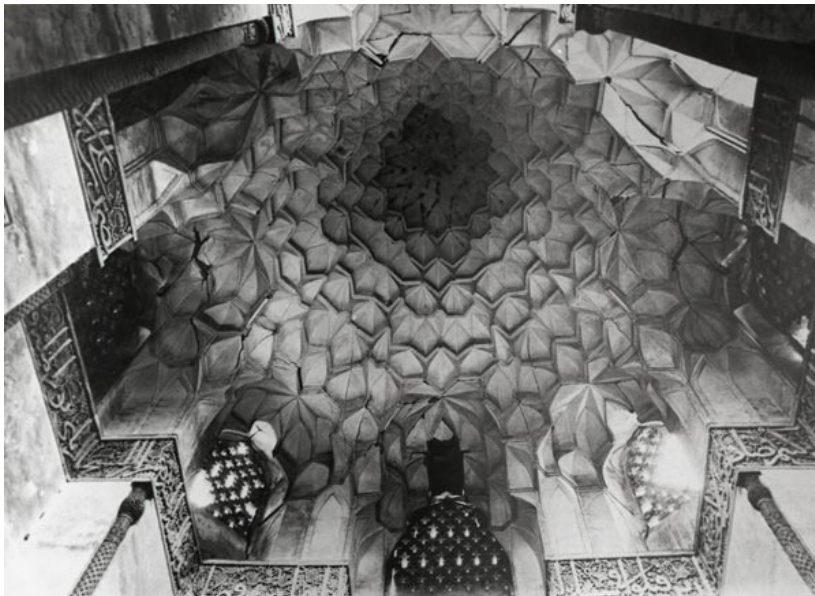


Figure 2.18 Interior view of the muqarnas dome in Shrine of Shaykh Abd al-Samad in Natanz, Iran. The elements of the muqarnas are utilised to eliminate the boundaries of the physical space to allow for immaterial transition (Source: University of Michigan, 2018)

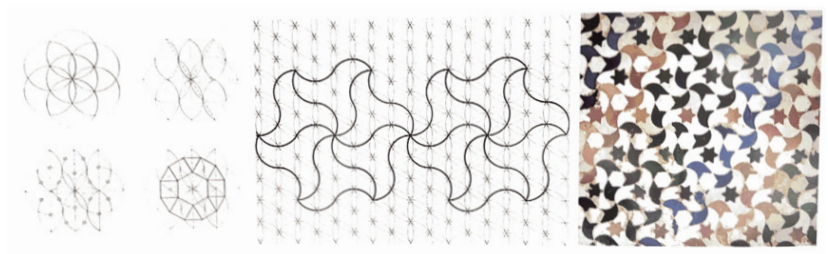
2.8.3 Proximity

Being strongly supported by the Quranic verse “for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” (Qaf: 16), Proximity is considered one of the spatial manifestations of the previously mentioned design principle; intimacy. Muslims comprehension of attachment and closeness to God, is that Allah never leaves the believers, unlike attachment to human figures. In mystic readings, the fall of Adam is considered an archetypal separation from the Divine (Rumi, 1990 cited in Miner, Ghobary, Dowson and Proctor, 2014). Hence, their intense supplication has often included an abstract seeking for divine proximity and reunion with the Divine. Thus, this notion of proximity has arguably been traced in Islamic architecture in the system of continuation between spaces. According to Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), a hierarchy of relationships is provided by the positive space continuity, which allows for a “correct coming together” of forms. Hence, the functional relationship between mosque, college, caravanserai⁴ and courtyard houses, is synthesised through similitude and rhythm.

Ardalan and Bakhtiar regard the idea of continuation in space relating to the transition between earthly materials and forms to abstracts of the imaginative world. In a planar scale, they concur that continuity is evident in the micro-scale of the geometric roses or stars that continuously intersect, “run into” one another, and emerge out of each other (figure 2.19). This continuity transfers vision into a rhythmic experience, with the regularity of geometry that is expressed either woven from a single band or radiating from many identical centres the composition as a whole is a symbolic manifestation of the Divine Reality (al-haqiqa) (Moustafa, 2008) mentioned earlier in this chapter.



Figure 2.19 Generation of tile pattern. The micro-scale of the geometric stars run into, or emerge from, one another (source: Moustafa, 2008)



⁴ A caravanserai was a roadside inn where travellers could rest and recover from the day's journey. Caravanserais supported the flow of commerce, information and people across the network of trade routes covering Asia, North Africa and Southeast Europe, most notably the Silk Road (Dictionary, 2009).

2.8.4 Centrality and Circularity

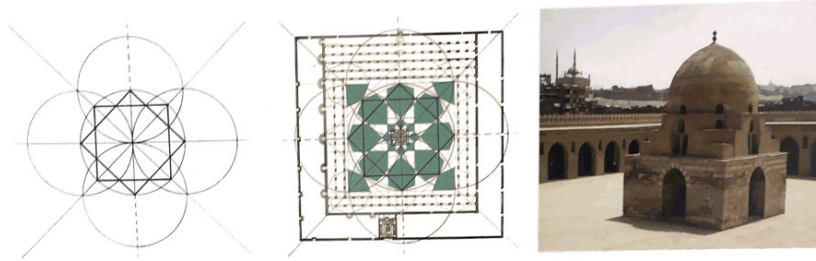


Figure 2.20 The underlying geometry of Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo, Egypt, showing how centrality is manifested through architectural spaces (source: Moustafa, 2008)

Centrality as a spatial attribute refers back to the concept of the Centre⁵ in Islam, which forms the basis of the divine manifestation in Islamic mystical themes. Many scholars such as Critchlow (1976), Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), and El-said and Parman (1976), forwarded or introduced either by Seyyed Hossein Nasr or Titus Burckhardt, was based on the main doctrine of the “the Unity of Being”, which was explained earlier in Part A. They ultimately argue “All difference in outward manifestations are inwardly united in the Centre. They are the bridge from the periphery to the Centre, from the relative to the Absolute, from the finite to the infinite, from the multiplicity to the Unity” (Nasr cited in Chorbachi, 1989, p. 757). Within Islamic mystical thoughts for example, Nasr (1978) refers to Ikhwan al-Safa’s explanation of the significance of the circular movement:

“Time is associated with the motion of the Body [...] and the Body is passively generated by the Soul. As the Soul made the Universal Body spherical in shape, which is the noblest of all shapes, it also made its motion circular, which is the noblest of all motions.”
(Ikhwan al-Safa, cited in Nasr 1978)

Other examples mentioned by Nasr such as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the mosques in Isfahan are reference to where the complicated arabesques and geometric patterns bring all lines back to the centre of the architectural vault as a visual movement leading the eye to the centre. Another interpretation of the details and the spatial quality of the dome, and its symbolic reference to unity is by Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973); they elaborate on the idea of the Spirit, which surrounds and encompasses all being.

⁵ The concept of the centre, its representation and significance are related to the point and the circle as design elements. Further elaboration on this can be found in previous section about design elements (main aesthetic themes, part 1).



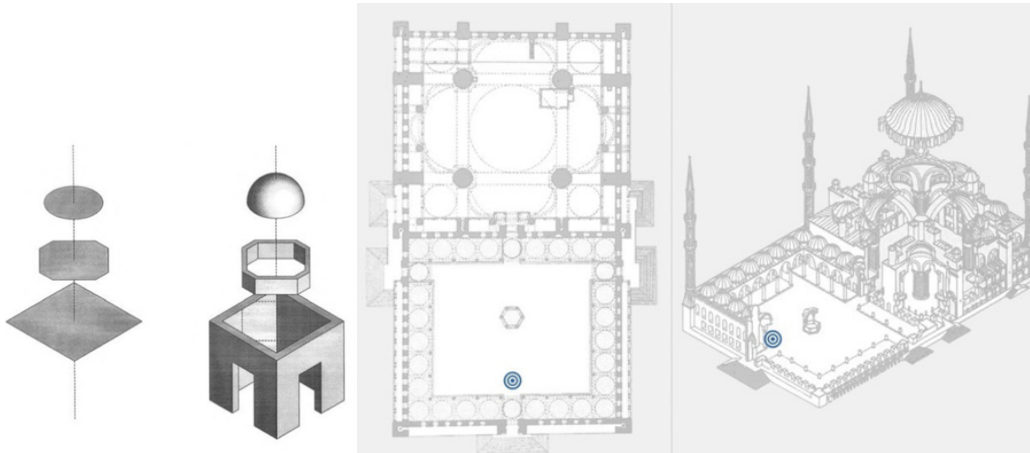
In their analysis, they argue that a passage to the dome's top symbolises either Unity being downward and expansive, or as upward and contractive toward Unity.

Although these references have been criticised by a few contemporary critics that they are purely mystical and lack historical and written evidences, the practical evidence of using geometry in order to circulate around a centre in architectural space could not be negated. An example of this is explained as follows.

As spatial attributes in Islamic thought, centrality and circularity are intertwined in macro-scale through the urban fabric and the relationship to Ka'bah from any point on the earth. The geometry of the Sacred House; the Ka'bah (meaning the cube in Arabic), similarly to the sanctuary of Solomon, is linked to the idea of the centre (Moustafa, 2008). The traditional mystic scriptures acknowledge the Ka'bah, being the centre of the Earth, has a vertical relationship or corresponds to the centre of Heavens (Akkach, 2012):

"According to Sufi interpretation, the Ka'bah corresponds to the heart at the seat of 'Divine Presence', and the encircling movement of the pilgrims around the Ka'bah recalls the movements of thoughts or meditations turning perpetually around the soul's ungraspable centre." (Moustafa, 2008. P.58)

In addition, Akkach (2012) explains that the rich variety of design and architectural expression of Islamic historical styles and time periods reveals two types of compositions; one is of concentric composition and the other is linear composition. The concentric composition relates to the idea of the circularity, and its metaphorical expression in the cosmic order. Akkach elaborates that the architectural application of circularity through concentric composition can be summarised in two main models; the first as a centralised enclosed space that includes all architectural spaces defined by a geometric regular base (such as domical or conical and other roofed shapes). The second is the centralised open courtyard, which represents all confined unroofed spaces, which are organised around a central point (Figure 2.21).



1.8.5 Inward vs. Outward

One of the main ideas that influence the mystic, or the Sufi reading of Islamic design and architecture is the notion of inner and outer meaning. Sufi – as well as perennial-thoughts are based on the belief that every external form is complemented by an inner reality or internal essence. This refers back to the two names of Allah; Al-Zahir (The Manifest) and Al-Batin (The Hidden):

“The Zahir is the sensible form, that which emphasises the quantitative aspect which is most readily comprehensible [...] The Batin is the essential or the qualitative aspects which all things possess. In order to know a thing in its completeness, one must not only seek its outward ephemeral reality but also its essential and inward reality, that in which the eternal beauty of every object resides.” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.5)

Elaborating on the general interpretation of the Al-Zahir, and Al-Batin; Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) assert that the outward manifestation of human knowledge represents

Figure 2.21 (left) The formal components of the centralised enclosed space model for Islamic buildings (Source: Akkach, 2012, p.155-156). (right) Plan and axonometric view of Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul as an example of the concentric composition (Source: Bahiahostels, 2018)

reason, while the intellect is represented through the universal that lies at the centre of reason. They argue that if reason and intellect, or the hidden and the manifest, were realised in their complementary relation, they can guide to the highest form of knowledge. As for the symbolic reference of this concept in Islamic philosophy, it is through the significance of Ka'bah; Al-Ghazali describes the Ka'bah as an outward symbol of the Presence – which is not seen by the eye- in the material world. The Presence dwells within the world of the Unseen, the Divine world, the world of the heart and the outward manifestations in the material world are considered a means of ascent to the spiritual world (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

In addition, the notion of inward and outward is also evident as a symbolic metaphor for the human body being the container of the soul (Diagram 2.6) (Nasr, 1987; Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1973). This perhaps relates to the prophetic narration: "Assuredly God does not consider your bodies, nor your appearances. Rather He considers your hearts."⁶

Therefore, the notion of the jism (body) and the ruh (soul), the container and the contained can arguably be considered the underpinning metaphor of the Islamic home. Thus, architecturally, the interior spaces of Islamic buildings are considered as the "heart" and "sacred core" in relation to their unidentified external facades. This architectural conduct can be seen not only in dwellings, but also in mosques, madrassas and the overall layout of a city (Moustafa, 2008).

It is no wonder that there is a lack of elaborate ornamental features on the outer walls of traditional Islamic dwellings, while the indoors are rich with intricate surfaces of colour and texture. The inner courtyard as a spatial element is also a representation of this notion of the contained. Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) argue that the garden is a physical form of the Manifest (the macrocosm), while the courtyard surrounding the garden is a representation of the Hidden (the microcosm), both complementing aspect of "place" (Figure 2.22). Additionally, on an urban scale, they refer to the relationship between negative and positive spaces within the city, in the sense that the borders of the three-dimensional mass of the city is merely "carved out" negative shapes resulting from the positive shapes of the domes and minarets which serve as visual landmarks. In their analogy, they recall Ibn Arabi's words "seek the interior", or the Batin, or the paradise within one's self which is represented through the spiritual transition from the outward public life towards the inward private life, the locus of the Spirit.



⁶ Prophetic narration in Malik's (Muwatta) (Cited in Moustafa 2008, p.101-102)

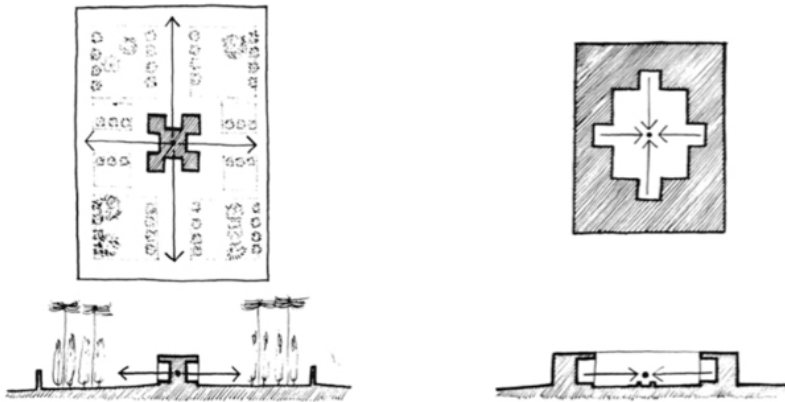


Figure 2.22 Sketches showing the manifestation of the macrocosm (zahir), and the microcosm (batin) in relation to the courtyard and the garden as two elements complementing the aspects of “place” (Source: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973).

1.8.6 Spatial Veil (Privacy)

When it comes to the architectural qualities of Islamic spaces, privacy and respect are considered the heart of the spatial configuration. Layouts and divisions within Islamic buildings are considered statements of modesty, recollecting the values of Muslims’ everyday life, and their sacred actions (Moustafa, 2008). Modesty, as it was explained earlier as a design principle, is considered one the sixty branches of faith, according to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)⁷.

The virtue of decency and modesty has been adopted by a few authoritative hadiths (Prophetic narrations) that encourages the idea of covering beautiful things and thereby preserving them. Hence, the veil was widely adopted in Muslim women’s covering as a representation of their religious way of life. This requirement of covering in some Muslim culture has been referenced and interpreted from a Quranic verse that addresses this visual preservation (O’Meara, 2007):

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and preserve (yahfazu) their genitals [from view]. That is purer for them. Truly God is well acquainted with what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and preserve their genitals [from view].” (Al-Nur: 31)

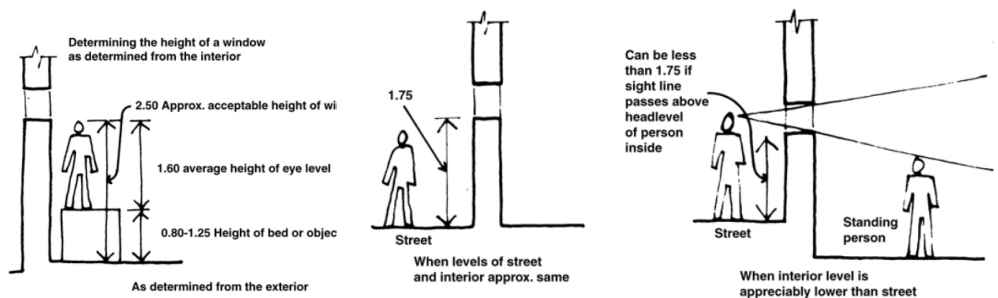
⁷ Narrated by Abu Huraira on behalf of the Prophet (Cited in Moustafa 2008)

حجاب

The notion of 'veil' has been further comprehended in spiritual and spatial terms, since it is part of a Muslims' everyday practice, thus it is no wonder that similar representations can be traced in Muslims' spatial behaviour. O'Meara (2007) argues that the word hijab in Arabic language in general, and in the Quranic context in particular, serves both as veil and a wall. Hence the wall can empirically be considered as a 'cover', a 'screen' and a 'threshold' that can dictate spatial boundaries of modesty and respect. In addition, one can clearly realise the interior quality of spaces in Islam that dictates the outer envelope (the veil), and not the opposite, in Nasr's description of Islamic spaces (cited in Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). He describes the house as a "cut-out" from the material forms it surrounds and hence defined by the inner surfaces of these forms⁸.

This relates to the analogy that Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) draw in relation to the two names of God; Al-Zahir (The Manifest) and Al-Batin (The Hidden). They argue the importance of creating one's own sphere of privacy through the idea that the movement and the communication within the sphere of privacy is reminiscent of the movement from Al-Zahir to Al-Batin. In addition, this notion perhaps can be closely related to the space hierarchy in Islamic places; the transformation from public space to the private personal sphere is evident in the urban design of the Islamic city. For example, the main alleyways of the public streets often get narrower as one moves further inside to a smaller complex of houses (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003), as well as the significant feature of the bent entrance in domestic buildings which acts as a filtering access for the sacred home (Moustafa, 2008).

Figure 2.23 Sketches determining the height of the windows to preserve privacy in Islamic cities. Dimension shown are interpretations of the author (Source: Hakim, 1986).



⁸ Similarly, in modern Western thoughts, the Danish architect Rasmussen, wrote about architecture as "carved-out" of solids, which developed into mouldings of vaults and domes and reached its peak in Hagia Sofia in Istanbul (Van Schaik, 2015).

The notion of privacy is also addressed in the Book of Walls when it comes to the discussion and the structure of buildings in traditional Islamic cities. The book includes solutions to the problems of privacy between houses, or noise in the alleyways outside domestic buildings (O'Meara, 2007) (Figure 2.23). The house in a traditional Muslim city is considered as a "hidden treasure", a private sanctuary enclosed by shape, it resembles how the body encloses the soul: "The interaction of shape and surface must create a space that is totally at rest, devoid of tensions and conducive to contemplation." (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973, p.68)

Referring back to the interpretation by O'Meara (2007) in regard to the logic of walls; being both as a cover and a screen, the idea of sacred space enclosed by walls is visible in the interactive lattice screen elements of 'haramlek' and 'salamlek' (figure 2.24). Moustafa (2008) elaborates that the veil, being described as women's sanctuary, is considered her sacred space where she can freely express herself. Moustafa compares this metaphorical sanctuary to that experienced within the architectural walls of 'haramlek', which denote cultural notions of space, respect, and identity.⁹



• حَرَمْلَك
سَلَمْلَك

Figure 2.24 Main salamlek and haramlek mashrabiyyah, Bayt al-Suhaymi, Cairo, Egypt. As an architectural element, Mashrabiyya is a metaphorical sanctuary resembles the veil, creating a sacred place where a Muslim woman can freely express herself (Source: Moustafa, 2008).

The idea of the spatial veil also manifests itself in the surfaces and the walls that divide or separate the spaces. One of the dominant features in traditional Islamic houses, for example, is the Mashrabiyya, which is mentioned earlier in the principle of Modesty (or Haya'). Another architectural feature that serve as metaphors for the veil are the lack- or in most cases- the absence of windows from the exterior walls of the Muslim's house. On the other hand, other references mention the idea of the spatial veil more symbolically related to the abstract quality of light and shadows, their experience in the

⁹ With further elaboration about the representations of al-Zahir and al-Batin; it has been suggested that women, in "spiritual economy" sense, represents Al-Batin (the hidden, inward) of the family, nurturing care for the family as mothers, and maintaining emotional stability within the family (Moustafa, 2008). Similarly, Burkhardt (2009) argues that women- with her passionate nature and "nobility of substance"- in the spiritual sense, is considered to be the image of the soul "nafs". Whereas al-Zahir (the manifest, the outward) is represented through the public life of men and their profession. However, this resemblance may raise a discourse about gender equality under the light of contemporary thoughts; a subject that is irrelevant to the context of this research, hence such interpretation is intentionally overlooked.

space, and the transformation that happens in between. Kazimee and Rahmani (2003) describe the manifestation of this symbolic reference in the way the dark shadows of openings and corners turn what was three dimensional into a flat two-dimensional condition. The result is that what is shown to be of certain material and colour becomes ambiguous and black; 'veiled' or cast under a different reality.

2.8.7 Penetration vs. Separation (Sacred Space and secular space)

This aspect is a continuation of the previous point (spatial veil); following on from O'Meara's argument describing the meaning of the "hijab" or veil as being a **wall**, a **threshold** and as a **medium** of communication. Therefore, the logic of a wall in Islamic spaces encapsulates binary meanings; as an element of separation, and as a medium of penetration.

When it comes to the understanding of walls as an element of separation, it is directly related to the interpretation of the veil, previously referred to by O'Meara. O'Meara (2007) also debates that there is a resemblance (drawn by 19th century European travellers) of the women's veil and the "silenced medina wall". In addition, Kazimee and Rahmani (2003), argue that pure geometry used in architecture of the traditional Islamic cities allows for immediate understanding of sacred spaces as oppose to social spaces like bazaars. To them, the wall is an agent that helps in forming a distinct separation and clarity in identifying places and centres in the Islamic city.

With regards to walls being a medium of penetration, this understanding relates to the argument mentioned earlier regarding the blurred boundaries between the sacred and secular spaces. On one hand, it could be argued that there are no boundaries that separates the sacred from the secular space; because Muslims can pray anywhere and not necessarily in mosques (Nasr, 1987), on the other hand, other scholars assert the opposite. Mircea Eliade, for instance, argues that taking off shoes in a Muslim space marks the discontinuity of the profane (or secular) space that is "ruptured by the manifestation of the sacred" (Akkach, 2012).



2.9 Reflections and Key Findings

To conclude, it is important to recall a few points mentioned in both parts of this chapter. Part A offered a concise overview on some of the cosmological themes that are related to traditional Islamic art. Among them is the notion of “Wihdat al-Wujud” or the Unity of Being, and the Divine names and their relation to the act of making. Several distinctions between “theoretical art” and “practical art”, and “divine art” or “religious art” were also made in order to highlight how they are understood in Islamic views. This review was mainly based on the cosmological and metaphysical thoughts advocated by Sufism (writings of Ibn Arabi), and Perennial philosophy (Interpretations of Nasr and Akkach). These traditional Islamic thoughts did not perceive the artistic expression in isolation, but as a way of life and as an integral part of traditional Muslims that complement their religious practice and cultural conduct. However, the cosmological and metaphysical ideas have only been transmitted within the fields of religion, philosophy, or theology. Today, there is still a lack of clear academic structure that integrates cosmological sources in the creative fields.

This chapter addresses the first part of the research question: “What makes art Islamic?”, particularly in part A where the various definitions of “Islamic art” demonstrate the differences of how Arab and western scholars frame it. This concludes that “Islamic art” as a definition has always been in a state of flux; constantly being informed and evaluated. In addition, the chapter is drawing from Ibn Arabi and Ikhwan al-Safa as primary philosophical sources, rather than relying on a comparison between Islamic and Western thoughts. This does not mean that Islamic art comes from one original source, on the contrary, geometric orders in Islamic art for example draw strongly from Aristotle and Plato’s school of thoughts.

The fluctuating state of defining Islamic art goes in parallel with how the term “art” itself is constantly informed by exploring new modes of understanding. Old models and methods of representing Islamic art can always be challenged without losing the qualities that distinguishes it from other cultural representations. This leads to how part B was structured in order to articulate aesthetic themes in traditional Islamic art. Reviewing these themes through design elements, design principles and spatial sensibilities brings the understanding of cosmological and metaphysical ideas in Islamic traditions closer to the context of artistic expression as understood today. It also views concepts and thoughts in an artistic or design lens, thereby enhancing the readability in the context of art and design. However, part B addresses the research aim of exploring an alternative reading for Islamic artistic heritage through two main aspects; **Methodologically**, it strips down the artistic and architectural themes into abstract aesthetic qualities that break away from the conventional categorisations of Islamic art and architecture. By not referring to chronological orders of historical periods, it demonstrates how Islamic aesthetic values were applied in objective and subjective ways. **Hermeneutically**, it positions the understanding of Quran and traditional philosophy in contemporary framework for Islamic aesthetics. For example, understanding the notion of Islamic spaces as a social and cultural phenomenon brings it closer to the contemporary understanding of ‘spatial design’ as a holistic sensory experience.

This chapter sheds the light on the current discourse of Islamic artistic expression mentioned in the introduction chapter; while the Sufi and Perennial scholars (or traditionalists) believe that the cosmological and spiritual aspects form the core of the creative practice, other scholars consider them as modern interpretations due to the lack of historical evidence that supports these “mystical” views. This discourse created a lack of coherence and consistency in addressing the characteristics and qualities of Islamic art or design; therefore there was the need to further inform the critical review of this chapter by interacting with the literature sources. This entailed conducting interviews with Seyyed Hossein, Nasser Rabbat, Samer Akkash, the scholars who are considered the main influential voices that informed the literature of this chapter. The interviews, which are summarised in the coming **barzakh** (visuals section B2), enhanced the researcher’s understanding of the traditionalists view and helped in setting the basis for the main research argument: is there a way to reconcile the two schools of thought; traditionalist and modernists?

While critically reviewing the cosmological and metaphysical thoughts of Sufism and Perennial philosophy in this chapter it does not mean that this research supports one school of thought instead of the other. Rather, it acknowledges both views, the traditionalists and modernists, as influential voices within the research landscape. Thus, the following chapters will first focus on reviewing the second part of the argument, then exploring the similarities between the traditional and the contemporary artistic approach through research practice. This will be achieved by addressing the following questions which are raised as an outcome of this chapter:

1. Can Islamic art be “timeless”?

Since traditionalists scholars acknowledge Islamic art to have the universal qualities of “timeless art”, then can the cosmological and spiritual thoughts be traced in the contemporary artistic practice? This will be achieved by exploring the work of contemporary Muslim artists. Also, by investigating how knowledge of Islamic creative expression was transmitted as a field of historical inquiry, providing the arguments built against the traditionalist school of thoughts in questioning the validity of mystic ideas in art and design.

2. What role does craftsmanship play in the act of making?

The understanding of the merging act of thinking and making explored in the first part of the chapter concluded that craftsmanship is considered as an integral part of thinking. This allows for the potential investigation on its significance in the current artistic practice of Islam. Not to mention addressing its importance as an integral part in the pedagogy of Islamic art and design.

3. Can Islamic aesthetic values find a voice within the contemporary understanding of ‘design culture’?

The lack of distinction between “fine arts” and “applied arts” in traditional Islamic thoughts resonates with the existing blurred boundaries between art and design. This lack of distinction between different modes of artistic expression offers the opportunity to reframe Islamic concepts within the context of contemporary design culture. This will be introduced theoretically in the next chapter and investigated practically in later chapters.



w r i t i n g a s n a r r a t i v e s .

Barzakh 02



What's Happening/ Not-Happening

- ﴿1﴾ Happening: Between Traditionalists and Modernists
- ﴿2﴾ Happening: In Conversation with Nasr and Rabbat
- ﴿3﴾ Not Happening: One Timeline, Two Histories

happening

TRADITIONALISTS

PRIMORDIAL

UNIVERSAL

SPIRITUAL

BELIEFS

- SACRED ART :
Exists in the perfect surrender to creative process
- ORIGINALITY:
Means going back to points of origin "belonging"
- SPACE: is "cut-out" from material form and defined by inner surfaces of these forms

Society is integrated into
TOTALITY

III
Metaphysics

III
Mathematics

III
Cosmology

FOUNDATIONS

main characteristics

- Point of origin
- Art as an expression of beliefs and performed a spiritual function
- Creative process includes spiritual awareness
- micro-macro cosmic significance/representation of realities

HISTORICAL
BACK-UPS

- Roman/ Greek
- Renaissance
- Promethean
- Pythagorean
- School of Israq (Illumination)

PERENNIAL



- "We are all part of One"

- Letters, words, and verses from Quran are beings and have personalities beyond visual form

Tradition does not mean "backward looking" and everyone needs a point of origin in order to move forward

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Unity through Multiplicity
- Harmony
- Balance (Axiality)
- Centrality
- ANICONISM (non-figurative)
- Emptiness

VIEWS

ON REALITY

- Cosmic and metacosmic

MAJOR NAMES

S.H. NASR
Scholar

A. ANGAWI
Designer

N. ARDALAN
Architect

Their art is divorced from human and religious life

OPPOSING

DON'T AGREE
WITH



Heirarchy as
Design Element

DRAWN

Rare references
of Islamic cosmology
and philosophy were
made in contemporary
language

MODERNISTS

LIBERAL/ RADICAL

EXPERIMENTAL

AVANT-GARDE

INTELLECTUAL

GLOBAL

III
Modern Science
III
Technology
III
Media
FOUNDATIONS

Society is
integrated
into
VARIETY

BELIEFS

- SACRED ART :
Only exists in religious
settings
- ORIGINALITY:
Devalues the role of the past
- SPATIAL DESIGN:
Space is defined by
contours of material

main characteristics

- No point of origin
- Art as a result of socio-cultural and political
context
- God does not necessarily exist in the creative process
- Does not relate to the cosmos and our position in it

INDIVIDUAL

- "Each Person is Different"
- Interpretations of the Quran
are subjective and open for individual
metaphorical representations

Tradition
means
conformity and
preservation
and people
should constantly
challenge and
rebel

-Realistic and subjective

VIEWS
ON REALITY

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Organic
- Futuristic
- Balance: symmetrical or
assymetrical
- Off-centered
- Provocative
- Rebellious?

MAJOR NAMES

K. MARX
Philosopher

Z. HADID
Architect

N. RABBAT
Scholar

**DON'T AGREE
WITH**


Metaphysical
Order

Cultural production
does not need to
reflect religious/
cultural practice

(Alfahal, 2016, inspired by David McCandless's infographics)

happening

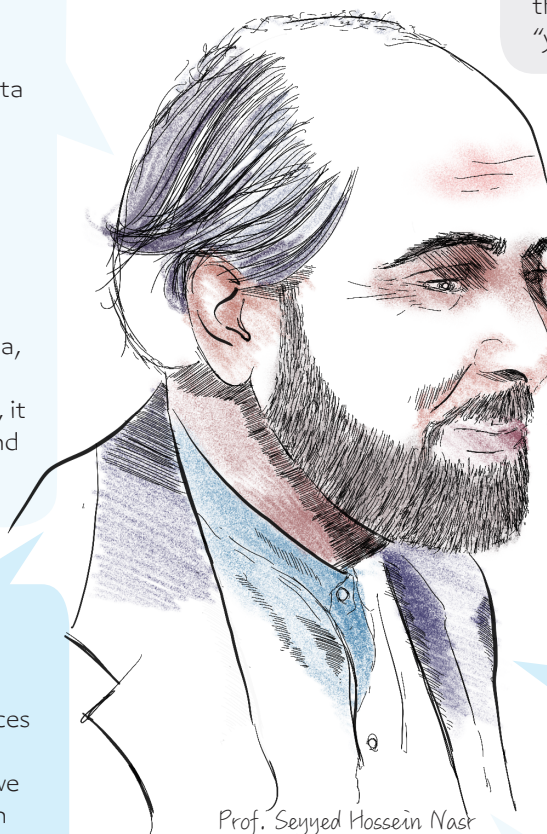
We are having in the Islamic world now all three: sacred Islamic art, traditional Islamic art and then religious Islamic art that are being produced.

Religious Islamic art are in all those ugly mosques obviously from mosques in Jakarta to Kuala Lumpur to Islamabad to Tehran; one ugly mosque after another, so this is what can be defined as religious art; it is not really Islamic in its principle, it's just taking Western art and putting couple of minarets on top of it.

Then we have traditional art which is surviving such as cloth making in Indonesia, silver works in Iran and some mosques in Morocco, and before Syria was destroyed, it was a great centre for traditional craft and arts.

And there is sacred art which is still produced in the form of traditional calligraphy in Turkey, and some architecture in Egypt and other places which are completely sacred Islamic architecture yet contemporary. So we have all three still being produced in Islamic world.

[Can there be a way to reconcile tradition and modernity?]
No! Absolutely not. A lot of people tried to modernise tradition, or to follow some traditional intake on modernism. Modernism is a philosophy, which is based on certain premises, certain foundations which are very different from tradition...



Prof. Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Unity is a word that has to be taken in a realistic way [...] And someone who speaks about unity at all". Where is the unity? Unity makes us so limited. Because, they speak about unity. They speak about interconnectedness. They speak about "you have all to work within a unity".

How about someone who lives in Baghdad who designs geometric designs? How about a person? How about a person who designed the mosque? How do you put that person in a modern context?

Tradition is God-centred, not man-centred, no matter how you look at it! And modernism is a philosophy which grew in the Renaissance and spread to other continents. It is a philosophy which in its basic difference and appeals to values for.

You could be contemporary, that's so different. So there can not only be a composition like Bach in the 21st century. It can be an accommodation, that's quite different. A traditional person can live in a modern world to some extent and adapt to a total philosophy he can't.

spoken out. Unity of who? What's the unity who designs a man and a woman in a very who actually says "I don't design figures is actually the problem. Unity is what the other living arts around the world don't about intertextuality, dness. [...]can you imagine telling artists, unified field"? No artist will accept that.

ne who doesn't believe in God, ad in the 9th century, producing ? Where do you put that t the Christian architect who que of Ibn-Tulun in Cairo? Where erson?

modernism is man- ou argue it, that's losophy, Moderna; ance in the West and s afterwards. That's basics foundation what tradition stands

omething else: You could century, that's very synthesis of them, there ite something else; a rn world but can still live a accommodate himself, but as

Contextualizing Islamic art without time is what [perennial scholars] are trying to do. No orthodox Muslim will accept [perennial] reading of Islam. Like Sufis they are outside of the fort of Islam. They are contextualizing, but not historicizing [in the sense] they are saying "All of this... is Islam"

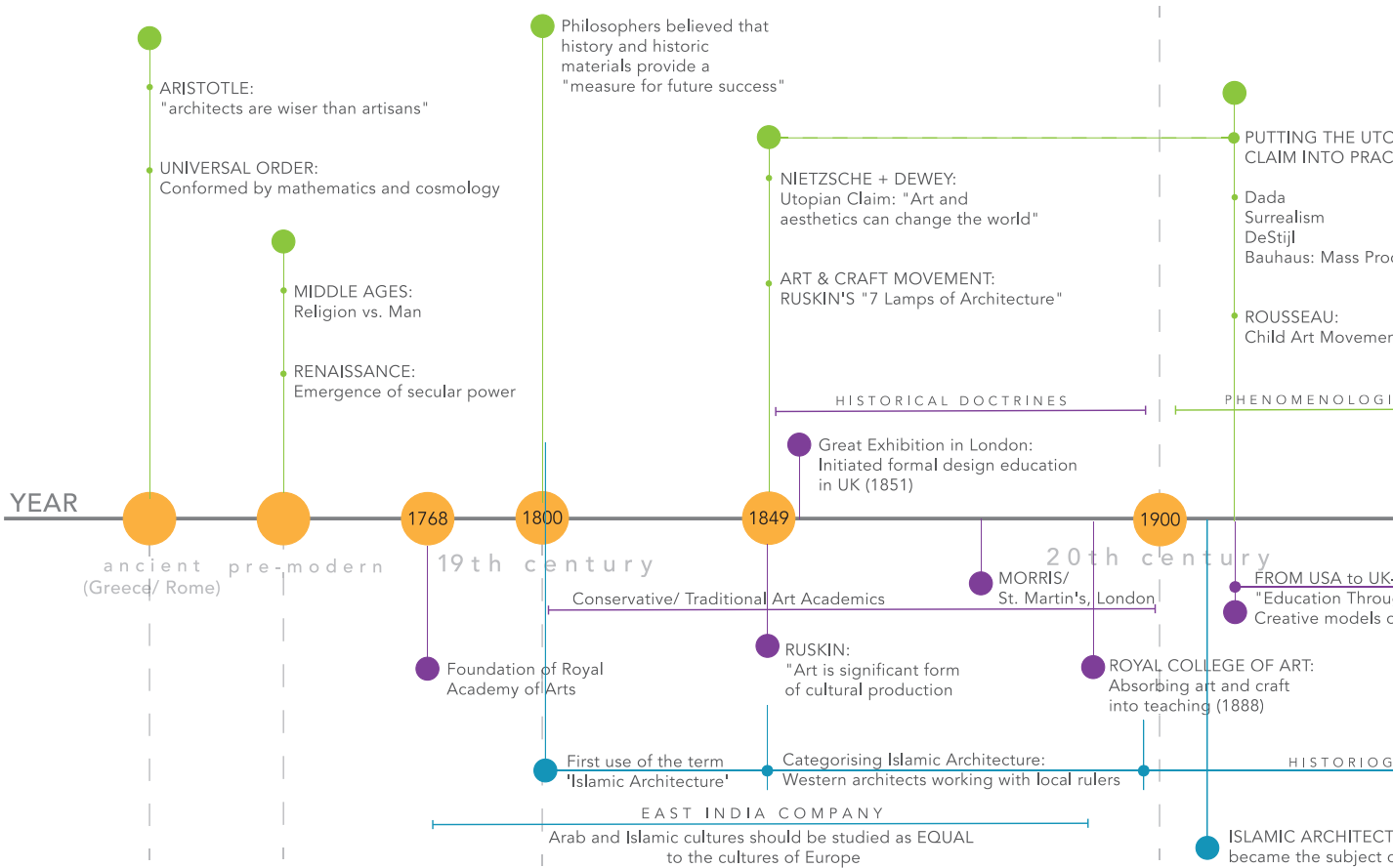
You have to historicize it because that's part of the contextualization. The moment you would say "I'm not going to look at when this phenomenon appeared and I'm going to assume that it existed from day one till today and it will exist for ever and ever and ever" then you limit your possibility of criticism.

You have a long way Tamadher... You have to really clean your mind of all of these parasitical ideas that don't lead anywhere and they just tie Islamic art down again and again, and make it more and more unable to be part of the worldly discussion. "we are special. We don't do this..." That's not true, we do everything.

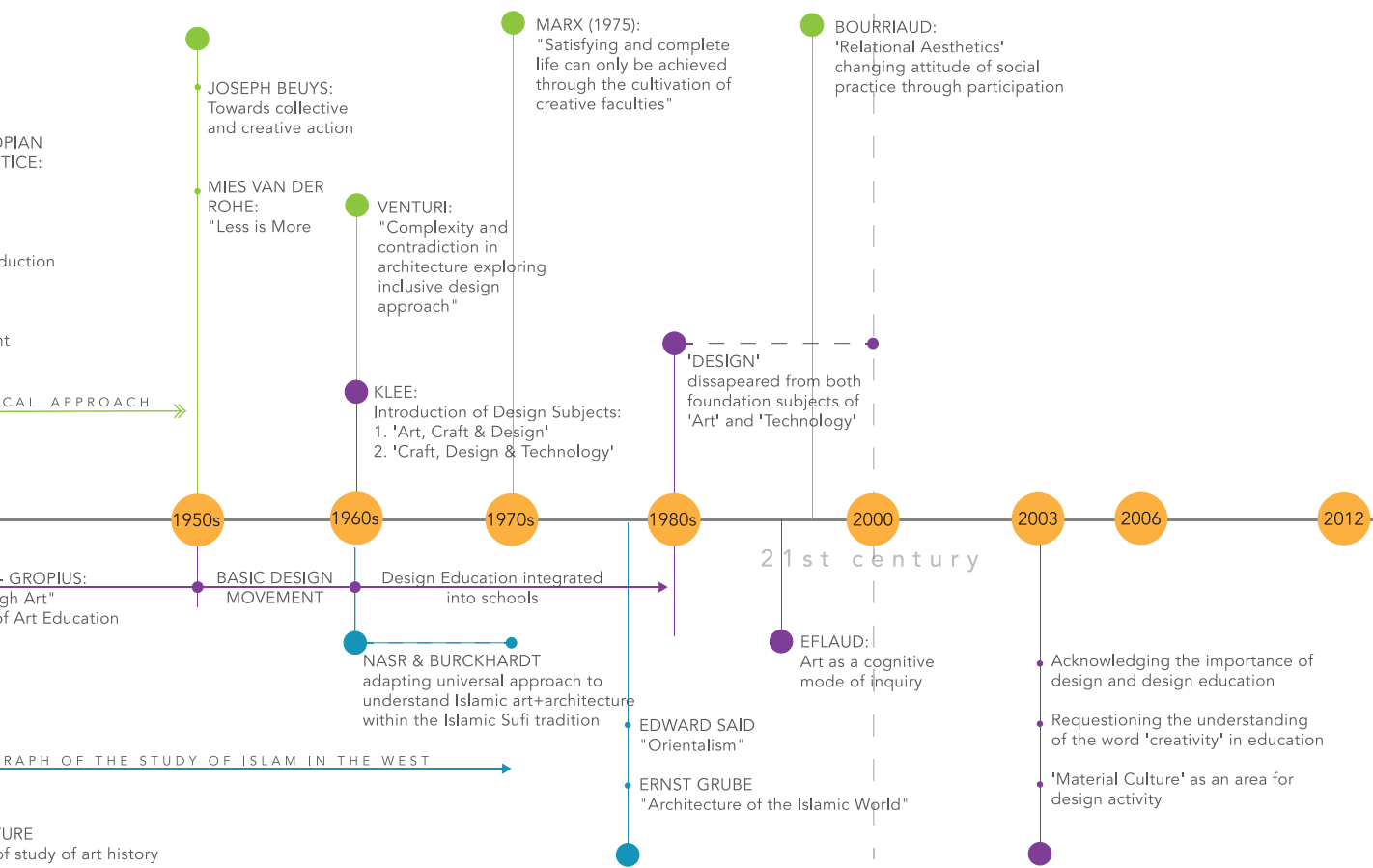
I am interested in the historicization of Islam. I want us to understand how Islam became what it is today, instead of always saying that it came that way from the beginning. [...] Islam was reacting to the conditions in which it found itself then. These are not the same conditions today so it is not timeless. How can we say it is timeless? You can't contextualize it outside of the movement of time.

Prof. Nasser Rabbat

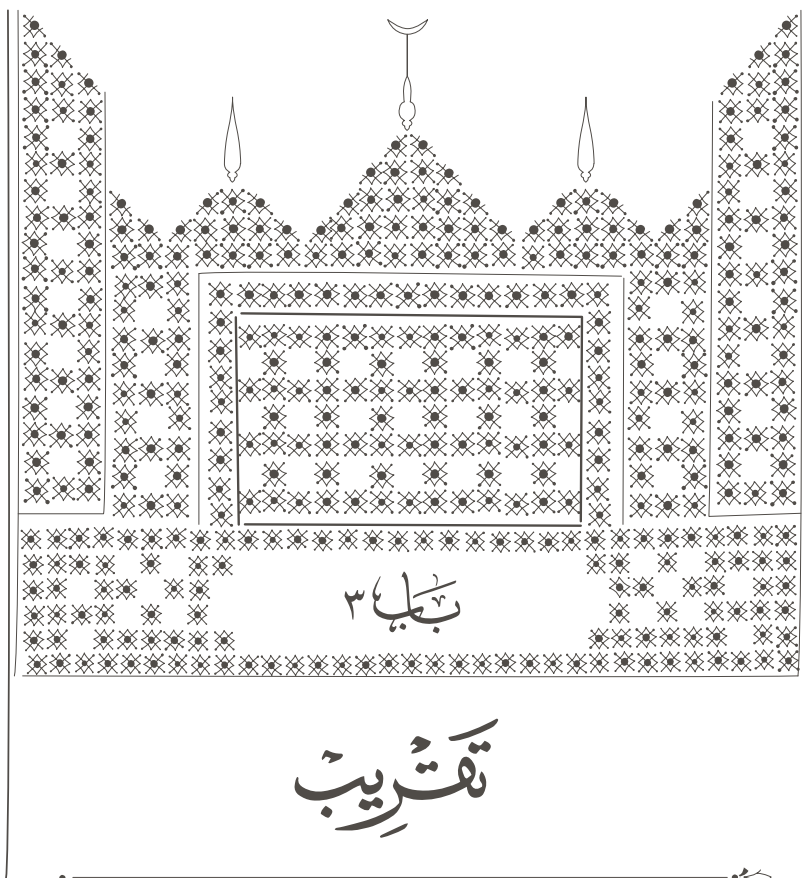
not happening



- Major Movements/ Ideas
- Art/ Design Education
- Islamic Art/Architecture as Field of Inquiry







Bab 03 | Taqreeb (Bridging)

Contemporary Islamic Art: Process, Practice and Pedagogy

مُفَلِّحَةٌ

3.0 Introduction

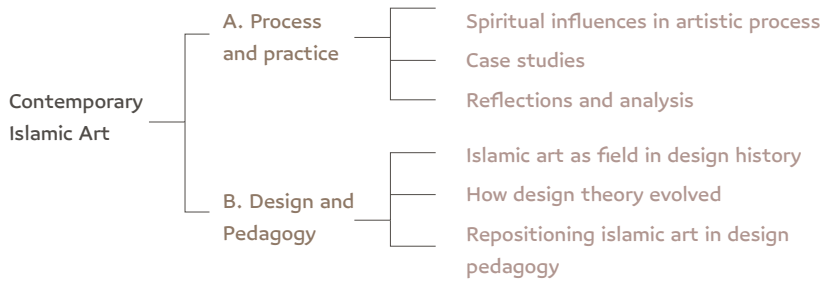


Figure 3.0 Structural mapping for the third chapter [author's note].

In the previous Bab, a critical review of traditional philosophy demonstrated the understanding of creativity and the act of making in Islamic views. The chapter also reviewed traditional artistic (subject and objective) applications through main aesthetic themes: design elements, design principles and spatial sensibilities. However, the argument between traditionalist and modernists schools of thoughts highlighted the lack of historical evidence that can explain the creative process in Islamic art, mainly because it is considered part of the hidden thinking of artistic work. Such aspects relate to a Muslim's personal conduct that is dictated by their individual religious or spiritual practice, as well as their artistic subconscious decisions.

This highlights two main issues: First, there is no historical proof of what the traditional artist was thinking when creating their work. Pinpointing intangible aspects of the creative process is challenging, as this forms part of the artist's reflexive consciousness (Tomas, 1964), let alone taking time into consideration. Second, the artistic expression not only involves the transformation of aesthetic materials, but also the transformation of cultural values and the way individuals or groups represent themselves (Negus and Pickering, 2004). Therefore, this Bab will investigate the transformation of Islamic values from the traditional to contemporary artistic practice in order to address the research question: what forms of historical knowledge can be traced in contemporary artistic practice?

This chapter will form a continuation of the aesthetic themes demonstrated in the map provided in Bab two (figure 2.0). It will address the intangible aspects in the artistic process in the context of contemporary practice to draw links between the literature explored in the previous chapter, and the current practice of Muslim artists (table 3.0).



Table 3.0. The main aesthetic themes in Islamic context are categories based on contemporary design theory. The intangible aspects of creative process are added and addressed in this section. Remembrance is repeated in both 'design principles' and 'creative process', as it is considered both as implicit and explicit

Design Elements	Design Principles	Spatial Sensibility	Creative Process
Alphabets	Tawhid – Unity	Orientation	Niyyah – Sincerity
Numbers	Faqr – Absence	Transformation	Ensijam- Spiritual Immersion
Form	Thikr – Remembrance	Proximity	Edraak- Conscious Knowledge
Light	Iqa'a – Rhythm	Centrality/ Circularity	Ihtiram- Respect
Color	Qurb – Intimacy	Inward/ Outward	Masdar- Originality
Matter	Haya' – Modesty	Spatial Veil (Privacy)	Ma'na- Inside-ness
Void	I'tidal – Balance	Axiality	Thikr- Remembrance



As previously mentioned, Bab two demonstrated these ideas not as strict or mandatory rules in Islamic artistic practice, but as one approach to a contemporary understanding of Islamic aesthetics. Although the spiritual aspects and metaphorical explanations might be dismissed or considered irrelevant in a post-modern age (Negus and Pickering, 2004), they still form one of the main arguments in the Islamic artistic context. This approach can help in informing a definition of 'Islamic art' as explored earlier in relation to time. The aim of this research is to establish a relationship between the spiritual life of Muslims, and notions of creativity through a contemporary aesthetic reading/ understanding, whether these relations should be accepted or dismissed will be questioned in the last chapter.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first section examines the spiritual aspects of the creative process (last column in table 3.0) extracted from literature, while giving examples of current artistic directions that resonates with these aspects. Following a structure similar to the previous chapter, the ideas proposed here may serve as artistic behaviours that may or may not be adapted by artists, as a whole or in part of other artistic rituals or process. The artistic examples are taken from 10 individuals from various backgrounds; most of them are artists while some are designers¹. The methods for recording their creative process include: online interviews, analysis of grey literature², such as exhibition briefs in galleries websites, and how the artists express themselves in social platforms, including their official websites. Later, three artists are selected to investigate their work in depth, and examine how it relates to their artistic direction and their religious practice/ context.

The second section will offer a concise overview of the development of design education, and then relate it to how Islamic art was/is documented as a field of inquiry in art and design. The basis for the argument that Islamic art and design as a field of inquiry should not be limited to just a category in art history but should be addressed as a subject to/ over time. This will be approached by using mixed research methods including: literature reviews, interviews with scholars and artists, and comparative analysis of design education programs. This chapter aims to question the application of Islamic philosophy as a generative basis for artistic direction linking it to the gap between Islamic artistic practice and design pedagogy.

• 1 For more insights about their work, refer to Appendix I.

2 Grey Literature² is a term describes the semi-published materials that partially go on databases, among the important examples here are unpublished research documents and exhibitions materials (Potter, 2006)



PART A: PROCESS AND PRACTICE

3.1 Islamic Artistic Process: Spiritual Themes



إخلاص

3.1.1 "Ikhlas" – Sincerity

The Arabic word "ikhlas" is derived from the root kh-l-s, which is the same root as the word khulus (meaning purity) (Dar Ihyaa' AlTurath AlArabi, 1972). In Islamic thoughts, purity or sincerity of the heart embraces the contemplative nature of mankind (Moustafa, 2008), removing doubt from the heart of the believer. This, as further explained by



نِيَّة

Moustafa, entails two modes of action: inward action of the heart (or niyyah)¹, and outward action of the physical body such as the prayer. The inward action (niyyah) relates to the hadith "Actions are defined by intentions, and to every person what he intends"², thus making (niyyah) a ritual that is expressed in the heart, formulated at the beginning of an action and maintained for the duration of that action. Powers (2004) argues that such a pervasive, subjective component of an act entails profound and spiritual aspects. Nasr and Chittick (2007) draw the connection of purifying the intention "niyyah" through the inner practices and means of Tariqah (The Way), therefore integrating the soul in every outward action, which resonates with the relationship of the inward and outward as mentioned in the previous chapter.



The aspect of sincerity (towards God) can be traced to the absence of imagery and figures (or aniconism) in Islamic art, addressed in Bab 2 (Moustafa, 2008). Portraying the



رُسُلُ
أَنْبِيَاءِ
أَوْلِيَاءِ

Divine messengers "Rusul", the prophets "Anbiya", and the saints "Awliya" did not exist for two main reasons: to prevent any possibility of them becoming objects or symbol of idolatrous worship, and to respect their individuality. Aniconism resonates with the notion of respect "ihtiram" which will be discussed further in later points.



¹ Arabic word for intentions, in Islamic law texts it is considered a requirement in the "heart" during ritual duties such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. Western scholars treat niyyah as a spiritual component of Islamic rituals, while Muslim jurists treat it as formal mental focus that makes a given act into specific religious duty (Powers, 2004).

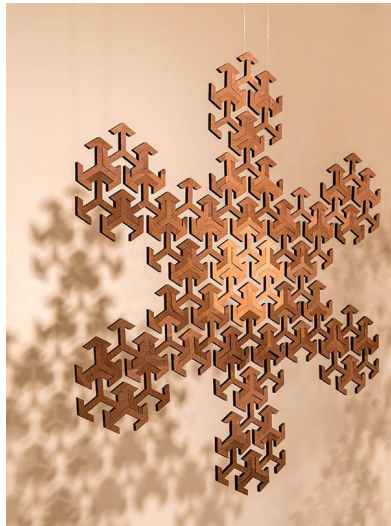
² Prophetic narration cited in Sahih Bukhari and (Powers, 2004). Another translation to the hadith is: "Actions (al- a'mal) are judged [by God] according to our inner intentions (niyyat)" (cited in Nasr and Chittick, 2007).



There are numerous references in the Quran and hadith (prophetic narrations) that urge the believer to be sincere and committed to their work as an act that brings them closer to the Divine. Moustafa (2008) mentions that in certain professional activities, such as architecture or craftsmanship, the contemplative wisdom manifested in artistic work carries a spiritual significance. For “those who have perfected their intellects, see the One who manifests in the form, not the form by itself” (Sh. Ahmad al-Alawi, cited in Moustafa, 2008, p.86). Being in synergy with the artistic activity and committed to the produced work is also a subject that occurs in western references. The artist is absorbed in the work resulting in intertwining the expressive form and the content of the work, to the extent that the artist becomes at one with the activity (Negus and Pickering, 2004).



(A)



(B)

Figure 3.1 (A) Designer and artist Ahmad Angawi in his Jeddah studio (B) **Simplicity in Repetition**, installation by Ahmad Angawi (Source: The Maine Arts Journal, 2017).

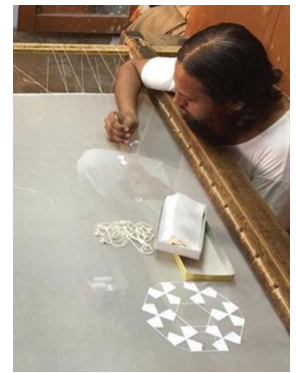
Today, some Muslim artists work hand in hand with artisans and craft professionals to produce their work. For example, Saudi artist and designer Ahmad Angawi, collaborates with traditional craftsmen and artisans from Hijaz, Cairo and Marrakech to produce his work. This has been articulated by Angawi himself as he believes that being an industrial designer is identified as the “craftsman of today” (Edge of Arabia, 2018) (Figure 3.1). Sincerity can also be manifested as an artistic attitude of perfection, this view can be found in Ikhwan Al-Safa’s explanation of the notion of art (Akkach, 2012). As described in the Hadith that says: “God loves the artisan who seeks perfection in his art”, skill and diligence in the artistic work whether intellectual or practical is associated with the Love of the Divine (Al-Safa, 1957). Female artist Dana Awartani, for example, produces

some of her installation work through the medium of textiles maintaining an impeccable finish on the final piece. Besides the absence of figures in almost all her work, her floating fabric installation reflects the artisan's wish for perfection in embroidering all the geometric intricate details (Harper's Bazaar, 2017) (figure 3.2). The artistic awareness that certain parts of the product shall be delegated to a skilful artisan to complete is a quest for perfection.

Figure 3.2 (A) Artist Dana Awartani in front of her fabric installation **"Love is My Law, Love is My Faith"** which features a set of eight embroidered cloth panels inspired by the verses of 12th Century Sufi poet Ibn Arabi about his experience in the holy city of Mecca (Source: MOA, 2017). (B) The embroidery/ making process of the installation (Source: Saudi Gazette, 2018).



(A)



(B)

This inter-disciplinary collaboration between art and craft found in both Angawi's and Awartani's work reflects their commitment to work with a team and not entirely on their own in order to produce impeccable outcomes (Pallasmaa, 2009). Their interest in working with other crafts within their practice does not mean that they should master each craft. In some ways, sincerity in seeking perfection resides in the act of engaging the artisans, who have mastered the skills that the artists need, in the production of the artists' work. Thus, artists or designers, such as Awartani and Angawi, often describe their process as stages that involve communicating their ideas to artisans or specialists in order to understand the possibilities and the limitations of the materials and crafts they are working with. This collaborative aspect creates a syntax between the artist (or the designer) and the artisan in a way that the latter becomes the former's surrogate hands (Pallasmaa, 2009). It could also be argued that the interdisciplinary approach in the contemporary artistic practice echoes the absence of categorisation in Islamic traditional artistic practice³.

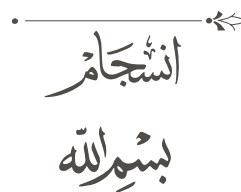
³ This relates to Ikhwan al-Safa's analysis, discussed in the previous chapter, about the integration of art in everyday life, hence, the absence of terms equivalent to "fine arts" and "applied arts" in traditional Islamic context.

3.1.2 “Ensijam” – Submission (Spiritual Immersion)

The origins of the word “Islam” comes from the Arabic verb of “submission” (Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003), and hence, the significance of this word is grounded in the spiritual life and religious worship of Muslims through the act of spiritual surrender and immersion⁴. This spiritual act is even dictated in the prayers (or pronouncing “bismilla” which means in the name of God) that precede every daily act, including the act of “making”. Some references argue that spiritual immersion in Islamic traditions is essential for a true understanding of knowledge (Azzam, 2012). In addition, the repetitive and reflexive nature found in the making of geometry, biomorphic forms, or arabesque in Islamic art are manifestations of the act of submission.

“Ensijam” in the artistic process can also be perceived as a way to give into the creative flow. Psychologists explain the experience of flow as being completely involved or immersed in an activity for its own sake, to the extent that time flies as actions, movements and thoughts follow on in an inevitable flow (Judkins, 2015). In his spiritual interpretation of the verse “The Hand of God is above their hands” (The Quran, Al-Fath. 48:10), Nasr (1987) explains how the believer, being in perfect surrender to the Divine will, becomes himself the pen in the hands of the Divine. Nasr also adds that the tool in the artist’s hand become like their own being “an instrument in the Hand of God”. Thus, this creative process involves such surrender and concentration while producing a work that is sacred. Similarly, mystical or metaphysical explanations of creative flow are found when artists express being so “caught up” in the act of making that it seems they are being taken over by some divine creative act or transcendental entity (Negus, K. and Pickering, 2004).

Spiritual immersion in aesthetics can also be viewed as the unconscious collaboration or synthesis of the eye, hand and mind. Pallasmaa (2009) explains that the mental and material flow between the maker and the work is engaging to the extent that the work seems to be producing itself. Similarly, both the action of the hand and thought when producing geometry seems to lose its independence, to turn into subliminal system of unconscious thinking-through-making. That is why, perhaps, this aspect is the most difficult aspect to trace in the artist’s making process; because it revolves around subconscious act and innate feelings.



⁴ The translation of the word “Islam” to submission is most commonly used, however due to power relations issues that come with the meanings of surrender and submission in English language, it was found more adequate to refer to it here as “Ensijam” or ‘spiritual immersion’.



1.1.3 “Edraak” - Conscious Knowledge

“Read: In the Name of your Lord who created (1) Created man from a clot (2)
Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous (3) He who taught by the pen (4)
Taught man what he never knew (5)” (The Quran, Al’alaq, 96:1 to 5)
“The acquisition of knowledge [is] incumbent upon every Muslim” (Prophet
Muhammad (PBUH), cited in Moustafa, 2008, p.83)

The first word that was communicated to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from God was to “read”, and to make use of the pen. And hence, the main doctrine of the religion was built on the importance of knowledge or ‘ilm’ in Muslims’ lives. There are other references from hadith that assert the importance of knowledge and urge Muslims to seek knowledge even from the furthest points on Earth.

In the artistic context, knowledge is considered a methodological element that is embedded in the creative process. In the sense that sciences such as mathematics and alchemy (understood as an early form of material science) are explored through the production of art, and eventually manifested in the artefacts produced (Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973). This relates to the discussion of knowledge produced by artists; in the sense that their knowledge and understanding of certain topics is demonstrated through the manipulation of materials (Daichendt, 2011). Therefore, it could be argued that knowledge, as a methodological process is embedded in making art; it is expressed through the artist’s understanding and visualisation of that knowledge.

Thus, in Islamic history artists as well as scholars are experts in various fields; Avicenna’s body of work for example includes writings on astronomy, alchemy, geography and geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics and works of poetry (Encyclopaedia Iranica, 2011). Having the knowledge of alchemy, metaphysics, or cosmology does not mean that every artist should be well informed about these fields, but consciously acknowledge and be aware that their reality is multi-dimensional. Nasr (1987) explains that reality, as understood in the traditional Islamic views of the universe, is multi-structured as it retains several levels of existence. He argues that a traditional Muslim lives in the material world while being aware of the higher levels of existence, even if the knowledge of metaphysics and cosmology is beyond his comprehension.

Even though such knowledge of metaphysical and cosmological ideas are not accessible academically in the artistic field, there is a current interest among the artistic communities to delve into such topics, among them is Basmah Felemban; one of the most established artists in the Arab region. In her line of work, she represents her own understanding of the metaphysics and philosophy within Islamic context (Nihal, 2013). While reading into the metaphysical reality of existence, Felemban relies on symbolism as a tool to create her work (Felemban, 2017). The end result is work that is minimal but with complex details (figure 3.3). With each piece, Felemban includes a document that summarises her research process and the process of coding the materials into distinctive visual alphabets (Felemban, 2017). Felemban did have any specific experience on mystic or metaphysical readings, however she utilises her artistic skills as tools to represent her own understanding of the universe and the literature interpreting it (Athr, 2018).



Figure 3.3 (A) Two-pages spread for online research of Basmah Felemban's artwork titled **"The Journey from Creatures to God"** showcasing the literature background and the coding of her visual elements in the piece (Source: Felemban, 2017).(B) The final result of the making process of **"The Journey from Creatures to God"** (Source: Athr, 2018).

It could be argued that conscious awareness at times relates to collective awareness (Nasr, 1987), one that is evident whenever a Muslim today prays in a traditional mosque or walks in the alleys of an old Islamic city may experience feelings of cosmic reality. This notion of connection, and reconnection as a part of a collective memory can also be considered an unconscious act of unity. In a similar manner, it was thought that people associate themselves with the sacred and the cosmos by being in harmony with it. This was achieved by the community members participating in the building process of the traditional Islamic cities, thereby blurring the boundaries between form, culture and

religion (Straus, cited in Kazimee and Rahmani, 2003). Kazimee and Rahmani elaborate on this idea by suggesting that Muslims seek an understanding of their everyday life and the physical interventions around them through philosophical, cosmological and symbolic means:

“The Muslim artist, by his very Islam, his ‘surrender’ to the Divine law, is always aware of the fact that it is not he who produces or invents beauty, but that a work of art is beautiful to the degree that it obeys the cosmic order and therefore reflects universal beauty” (Burckhardt, 1987, p.211)

Saudi artist Lulwah al-Hamoud while talking about her series ‘The Language of Existence’, expresses her awareness of reality and the cosmic order. She achieves this by producing work that extracted the mathematical codes behind the Arabic alphabets creating geometric compositions that represents the Devine names of God (Barjeel Art Foundation, 2018). In one way, al-Hamoud employs a specific knowledge of mathematics and coding as a generative tool for her work (figure 3.4). On the other hand, it represents her conscious understanding of the truth of existence.

Figure 3.4 Work by Lulwah al-Hamoud, Two mixed media work, part of The Language of Existence Series. Each artwork represents one of the 99 names of God, (Left) ‘The Ever Lasting’ (Al Baqi), (Right) ‘The Originator’ (Al Mubdi) (Source: Islamic Art Magazine, 2015).



When it comes to the design field, Levitt (2007) who wrote about connecting with unconscious awareness as part of a designers' thinking process, mentioned similar notions about being aware in the experience of making as a means to unify body, mind, and emotions. He views the creative process as an experience that has the potential to be an object of meditating one's own surrounding, which can bring awareness to the act of designing. Reflecting on this in the context of Islamic art and design, it can be argued that the awareness of God, and being part of a cosmic order is what governs the creative decisions of the traditional Muslim artist.

1.1.4 "Ihtiram"- Respect

"Man, in Islam, is not the measure of all things. The Muslim artist acknowledges by his Islam – his submission to the Divine will – that God is the Supreme Artist. Thus, the relationship between the Muslim and his surrounding space is one that is based on reverence and not arrogance."
(Azzam 2011)



'Respect' as a spiritual attitude can be viewed as a fluid concept between the notions of sincerity and immersion as explained earlier. Conscious awareness of the Divine Will entails the acknowledgement that God is "Al-Sani' Al-A'lim" (the artificer, the knower) (Azzam 2011, Akkach, 2012). Thus, the notion of the respect that is evident in the absence of figures is considered an act of respect to the prophets' individuality, as well as respecting it as a Divine order. Even though throughout history, Islamic art included the use of figures in later periods due to the influence of different cultures such as of Persia and India. There are still artists of contemporary Islam who still maintain that the principle of aniconism is a respectful approach in their practice. Among these artists are Dana Awartani, Ahmad Angawi, and Nasser al-Salem (Edge of Arabia, 2018).



The spiritual respect towards the Divine can also be traced when dealing with the materials provided by nature, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) argue that there are three different Islamic ways of utilising materials in surfaces; materials could be used simply for its inherent built-in qualities, or by applying decorative and configuration techniques to the materials such as carving, or by combining different materials to create certain patterns. There is an apparent attitude of respect to the natural characteristics of the



materials, an artistic honesty in utilising these materials as building surfaces. In other words, materials were not used to give the impression or the effects of other materials' qualities. Materials are seen here, not only through their physical qualities but also through the natural potential transcending the surfaces for a contemplative state of mind.

Respect also has a strong presence in a Muslims' daily life; it dictates their behaviour towards themselves, and with each other. From various Quran and hadith references, there have been clear guidelines for urban life. The prophetic narration "give the road its due"⁵, for example, entails lowering the eyes and encouraging decency and respectful manners in public spaces. Thus, following the prophetic guidelines, Muslims established (the book of walls), documenting the rules and regulations for creating buildings in their cities (O'Meara, 2007). Consequently, Muslim architects have clear guidelines for building Islamic cities, whether dwellings, mosques or public buildings.



أداب

• Another aspect of respect is found in the traditional culture of *adab*⁶ in the practice of calligraphy. It has been considered a sign of "good manners", and a discipline to the soul, to cultivate good handwriting when one writes Quranic script, out of respect towards the words of the Divine. Having Quranic inscriptions fill the walls of a Muslim space means being constantly surrounded by the word of God. Thereby, encouraging contemplation of the One and encouraging harmony of the mind and soul to constantly be aware of the Divine Presence (Moustafa, 2008).



إجازة

• Nasser al-Salem, an artist, architect and calligrapher who obtained his *Ijazah*⁷ in calligraphy, takes this contemplative aspect in calligraphy to another level. Instead of producing the conventional calligraphic scripts, he looks into the relationship between the message behind the written word and the medium, and explores forms that transform between text and play. In a conceptually refined manner, he still respects the traditional order of calligraphy but employs it through non-conventional mediums that shed the light on the profound meaning of the words he uses (figure 3.5).



5 "Avoid sitting in the roads." The people said: 'Apostle of Allah we must have meeting places in which to converse.' The Apostle of Allah (PBUH) said: 'If you insist on meeting, give the road its due.' They asked: 'What is the due of roads, Apostle of Allah?' He replied: 'Lowering the eyes, removing anything offensive, returning salutations, commanding what is reputable and forbidding what is disreputable.'" (narrated by al-Khudri, cited in Bin and Rasdi, 2008, p.309)

6 Arabic term for 'good manners'. While early usage of *adab* denoted a civility or proper conduct, later usage of the term expanded to include a sense of intellectual sophistication (Oxford Islamic Studies, 2016).

7 "Ijazah" is a license authorising its holder to transmit a certain text or subject, which is issued by someone already possessing such authority. It is particularly associated with transmission of Islamic religious knowledge (Wikipedia, 2018)



Figure 3.5 Artist Nasser al-Salem producing his work “Generation in Waiting” for ‘Rhizoma’ exhibition in 2013. His calligraphic work respects the proportional system of the classical Arabic scripts (Source: Edge of Arabia).

1.1.5 “Masdar” - Originality

When it comes to artistic process in an Islamic context, the notion of seeking originality is different. What it means to be original in Islamic context does not refer to creating new ideas or original thought, rather, to be original means going back to the point of origin, or reference. There is a sense of reaffirmation in referring to the origin, in the sense that the artist is able to locate themselves at any point in time or place, as their reference point is a constant point of departure for their process (Azzam, 2012). This does not disable diversity in artistic approach, on the contrary, it allows a sense of orientation between Truth and Beauty; each path taken by the artist is unique and individual in its nature, yet returns to one original Truth.

مصدر

Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973) argue that conforming to spiritual principles is essential when it comes to traditional art. They define originality as the realisation of an original concept, and not the ephemeral originality that mainly builds upon the personal pride of an individual. Although some of Ardalan and Bakhtiar’s thoughts might seem controversial to the contemporary context of art, they affirm the importance of an artist’s ability to follow the rules and “laws laid down by tradition” in order to be original and to avoid what is irrelevant and non-functional. This may be frowned upon by Muslim artists’ today, however the essence of it is being aware that creativity is divine, and that any form of art should be in some way devoted for the purpose of worship or expression of faith.

On the other hand, it has been argued that for the creative mind to be original it can only be on the basis of an existing tradition, this can be criticised by scholars who advocate singularity of the creative, individual mind. Yet, to be original in the creative sense against tradition requires knowledge of that tradition, and that can be viewed as a positive quality:

“The paradox of valuing creativity for its originality is that such a quality would make it incapable of being understood. If, alternatively, originality is viewed as a matter of degree, it then loses whatever makes it distinctive as an identifiable quality. [...] Evaluations of originality emphasise singularity, difference and discontinuity rather than similarity, commonality and continuity.” (Negus and Pickering, 2004, p.111)

This supports the notion that generating creativity requires going back to a point of reference or origin, this does not come out of a void. Cultural creativity is informed by the tradition that is based on; it derives its meaning from it, and it seeks to transcend it through different reflexive modes of practice and exploration. “how a changed present affects a tradition and how a tradition affects a changing present” (Negus and Pickering, 2004). Ahmed Angawi is one of the advocates of this notion of originality as he explicitly refers to Mecca as a point of reference for his artistic practice (Nuqat, 2016). He was born and raised in Mecca, so to him, it represents the point of reference of the religion itself. On the other hand, the work of the Saudi artist Sarah al-Abdali reflects originality in terms of artistic techniques and methods through the application of traditional Islamic techniques within contemporary context. To her, originality is reached through cultivating a sense of belonging and identity through her practice (Edge of Arabia, 2018).



معن

• 1.1.6 “Ma’na” - Inside-ness (Individual identity)

“Ma’na” adopted here as a term to describe the notion of inside-ness in the creative process, which has not been used before in Islamic views, as it communicates two aspects of the same context:

A. First, is the distinction between the external form (surah) and the inner meaning (ma'na), which has been addressed by many Sufi scholars who were inspired by the metaphysical teachings of Rumi. This relates to the discussion in chapter two on how the external form of language, even letters, reveal inner meaning. In other words, everything in the macrocosmic world consists of surah and ma'na, and that is also true in the essence of human language, upon which the resultant word ma'na came into being (Nasr, 1987).



In addition, the relationship between surah and ma'na, or form and meaning, has always been evident in Islamic expression in both literature and art. It is a similar notion to what is perceived today in a design language; the use of metaphors or referring to a 'concept' or 'hidden message'. In the aesthetic understandings of design, concepts could be directly articulated or reflected in an artwork, or indirectly embedded within it. To form a composition, one ought to experience the internal structure of form, whether it was abstract or natural, or else compositions will cease to be meaningless (Tomas, 1964). For example, Lulwah AlHamoud, the artist mentioned earlier, reveals the inner meaning behind Arabic letters by decoding them into mathematical squares, which eventually form a unique geometric composition for every name of the Divine:

"The first step towards enlightenment is to search for the inner. It is this inner truth that leads to the light of knowledge. My art is concerned with the inner veracity of everything. It is a deep look at creation and its hidden rules that led me to the truth of existence, to find the static equilibrium in every substance and their dynamic interaction with one another. My work carries this search by deconstructing the letters of the Arabic language by using mathematical square to compose new codes for each letter. With these codes I inscribe the 99 names of God. It is He, the Source of Light, Knowledge and The Infinite; shining through the finite." (Lulwah al-Hamoud, cited in Islamic Arts Magazine, 2016)





B. The second notion relates to the individual identity of each artist, which Kandinsky refers to as “inner necessity” that instigates from three elements: the element of personality which express personal demands, the element of style which express the spirit of the artist’s time and context, and the element of served cause, which is considered the essence of art (Tomas, 1964, p.51). The notion of individuality might contradict with the previous aspect about originality. However, the understanding of originality in an Islamic context suggests that there is a clear distinction between the spirit of Islamic art and the individual experience of the Muslim artist. Azzam (2002) asserts this distinction by referring to the current preoccupation of the degrees of artistic originality and the primary interest in the individuality of the artist. He concludes that this particular focus can be misleading resulting in the lack of understanding of the generating principles of Islamic art, which essentially transcends the human experience. Traditionally, the different canons of Islamic art such as geometry and calligraphy hardly reflect individual artistic direction, because for the traditional Muslim mind, Islamic art serves as a reminder of God (Burckhardt, 1987). Thus, Islamic art in general did not respond to subjective individual expression, rather similarly to nature, it is objective and impersonal (Azzam, 2002).

It can be said that if such a distinction exists between the understanding of originality, and the psychological state of the artist, then it is important to look closely at the artist’s experience and view it as their own individual Tariqah (The Way), or an inner necessity as Kandinsky describes it. This has been communicated clearly by artist Basmah Felemban, who believes that there are many ways for artists to reach the ultimate Truth, and her own personal approach is one way (tariqah) to reach that (TEDx Talks, 2015).



• 1.1.7 “Thikr” – Remembrance

Although the element of ‘thikr’ or remembrance has been mentioned in the previous chapter as a ‘design principle’, it is important to address it as an intangible aspect of the artistic process. For remembrance can either be exhibited in the physical adornment

of the Quranic script, or in the spiritual attitude which happens during the artistic production. Remembrance as a guiding motive or belief in the artistic process can also be realised through the way Divinity is visualised. In Christianity, for example, visualisation is induced through the agency of depiction (Akkach, 2012), and this depiction of the divine word is expressed in the unique nature of Christ's image. Whereas in Islam, visualisation is induced through the agency of invocation, and that invocation of the divine word is expressed in the direct engagement of the invoked text:

"Ibn Arabi observes that visualisation is achieved through the mediation of icons. "The Byzantines developed the art of painting to its perfection," he writes, "because for them the unique nature (fardaniyyah) of Sayyidna Isa as expressed in his image, is the foremost support of concentration on Divine Unity." In contrast, Islam prohibits the use of icons in prayer, he adds, prescribing instead to "adore God as though you do see him." (Akkach, 2012, p.197)

Hence, calligraphy which is considered in Islamic art as one of the three decorative canons (the other two are arabesque and geometry) is a direct manifestation of remembrance. Calligraphy is also considered of spiritual significance due to its metaphysical foundation; for it is a source of spiritual stimulation as well as a sacred medium of communication between man and God (Saeed, 2011). When it comes to remembrance as a spiritual attitude in the artistic process, it can be traced through the annunciation of "Bismilla" (in the name of God) upon preceding any act including the act of making⁸.

Some of the contemporary artists investigated here have clearly stated the notion of "thikr" or remembrance as basis for Islamic art, however each of the artists have their own way of demonstrating it through their work. For example, Nasser al-Salem, uses calligraphy as a main method to represent the message behind his work (figure 3.6). To him, the notion of remembrance is not only revealed when employing the traditional way of calligraphy, but it is a way of dwelling on the meaning of the written word or text chosen from Quran. Thus, he reflects on the meaning in the medium and the features of his work rather than simply repeating the exact verse or word from the Quran (Athr, 2018).

• ⁸ The first sentence for the calligraphy apprentice to learn how to write is basically a prayer to God to make his learning journey easy and rewarding. This is based on the researcher's participation in a calligraphy study group in Turkish medrasa, yet needs academic referencing.





Figure 3.6 (A) **“They Will Be Seen Competing in Constructing Lofty Buildings”**, 2014. Concrete work by Nasser al-Salem representing the Quranic verse about lofty buildings in a material form. The work is constructed in a way that the verse can be read from the top (Source: Athr, 2018). (B) **“And Whoever Obeyes Allah, He Will Make for Him a Way Out”**, 2012. Corian sculpture by Nasser al-Salem in which the verse, written in Kufic script is forming a miniature maze. Another example in which the meaning of the verse leads to the materiality of the artwork (Source: Athr, 2018).



(A)



(B)

In addition to al-Salem, another artist Dana Awartani also portrays the notion of remembrance indirectly through her work. Through the use of geometry and symbolism, she echoes the traditional act of remembrance by referencing the ancient masters of calligraphy, illumination and geometry. Ahmad Angawi, on the other hand, is more interested in the notion of remembrance as an act embedded in the making process. He investigates this by highlighting the traditional makers of *Sebha* or *misbaha*⁹ (an object that aids Muslims in the act of remembrance) by reciting the names of God and verbally repeat prayers during the process of making the beads (Nuqat, 2016). Such aspects are informing Angawi’s own process in making his work. Angawi’s work will be addressed thoroughly in the next section to get an understanding of artistic directions in contemporary Islam.



⁹ Sibha or misbaha is a string of beads which is often used by Muslims as an aid to perform *thikr*, and to keep track of counting in *tasbeih* (verbal glorification of God), often made of wood or semi-precious gemstones (Wikipedia, 2018).

3.2 Islamic Artistic Practice: Selected Case Studies

After investigating the spiritual influences in contemporary artistic practice, this section will highlight the practice of three artists selected as case studies¹. It aims at understanding the formation of their artistic direction and learning from their creative process. This shall help in tracing any commonalities between contemporary artistic understanding and traditional Islamic aesthetics realised in Bab two.

Observing the work of these contemporary artists, affirms the importance of artistic practice as a form of scholarly knowledge. Artists, whether they practice within a university system or outside it, are able to contribute innovative and profound ideas to the art world (Daichendt, 2011). In the case of Islamic art and design, there has been a lack of critical literature that explores contemporary artistic practice as a form of knowledge. This gap is addressed in this section as a contribution to the knowledge of Islamic art; how it is understood and interpreted in the contemporary context through the distinctive approach of selected artists. The selection of the three artists was based on the following aspects:

1. The relevance of their working methods or the subjects of their work with regards to the aesthetic themes concluded from the previous chapter.
2. Any implicit or explicit aspects of spirituality in their artistic process, or in the process of the making of their work. This could be either articulated directly by the artists, or via any published materials about them.
3. The level of exposure the artist has; whether established or acknowledged in the art scene, more materials will be gathered for the research to establish a basis for this analysis.

¹ For more insights about the other artists mentioned in this chapter, please refer to the appendix I.





Table 3.1 Different methods that are considered in conducting the case studies of the artists [Author's note]

Methods	Details
Grey literature	Using information published by the artists themselves in their official websites or blogs, or gallery briefs about exhibitions.
Online interviews	Can be either published in the form of an online article or a video upload through YouTube or similar Websites. These are considered qualitative visual documents that inform the case studies (Creswell, 2003).
Personal interviews	Conducted by the researcher herself either one-on-one, or through Skype (subject to artists' availability). The interview will be unstructured and will involve open-ended questions in order to stimulate personal views and sincere responses from the participants (Creswell, 2003)
Observation	Involves shadowing the artist for a day (subject to artists' availability)



(Table 3.1) demonstrates the methods used to collect and analyse data regarding the artists. Each case study will then be investigated through the following points:

- A. Artist's educational background: Is important so links can be drawn between the artist's work and the influence of education on their practice. This is related to the research scope in investigating the relationship between art practice and pedagogy.
- B. Religious disclosure: Will trace the artist's affiliation to Islamic principles or any direct influence from the Quran, hadith or Islamic philosophy.
- C. Spiritual expression: Will include any description of spiritual/ metaphysical or intangible aspect in the "process of making" their artwork
- D. Collaborative aspects: This will address the collaborative aspect of the artist as member of a specific group within the community and how it relates to his/her practice
- E. Example of work: Selected work will be used to provide a conceptual analysis of their work and their artistic process.

This approach will offer guidelines to the discussion and analysis of the artists' perceptions and allow further investigations of the principles summarised in the second chapter. It will also seek to understand how their religious practice influences their artistic process, and how they perceive the notion of Islamic art. This section highlights the need for a critical inquiry that connects the traditional philosophical understanding with contemporary artistic practice in an Islamic context. In turn, this critical inquiry shall encourage "responsive exchange", and foster a transformative discussion between creating and critiquing, leading to the pedagogical discussion in the last part of this Bab.

3.2.1 Basmah Felemban | Saudi Arabia

A. Educational Background

Basmah Felemban is a self-taught graphic designer born and based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. After graduating from high school in 2011, she worked in various fields, and made a career transition from design to contemporary art through her first work **Jeem**, which made its debut at the British Museum in 2012 as a sideshow to Journey to The Heart of Islam: Hajj Exhibition (Felemban, 2017; Athr, 2018).



From her vast portfolio and extensive research, Felemban has managed to skip the process of getting a Bachelor's degree, obtaining her Master's degree in Islamic and Traditional Art from the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, UK (Felemban, 2017). Felemban's background in graphic design seems to have a presence in her work, as she constantly develops a unique visual language communicating her understanding of topics such as philosophy, science, metaphysics, and spirituality.

B. Religious Disclosure

Although Felemban enjoys delving into Islamic geometry and architectural designs; Repetition, balance, symmetry and harmony are the four main principles that govern Islamic art in her view (TEDx Talks, 2015). However, she does not define her work as religious, or perhaps, as not limited to it (Nihal, 2013). In fact, there are few mentions of "Islamic" or "Islam" in her interviews and published articles. Rather, she identifies with the notion of "sacred art", and topics of spirituality, philosophy, and existence. When asked what inspires her Felemban answers:

“People. The way they differentiate, feel, think and constantly change. Also of course Islamic Art! Somehow, I really think of them both the same [...] Both are so complicated and infinite, yet they’re made of very simple principles. We’re such fascinating creatures with our paradoxes, flaws, strength and intellectuality. Making a physical or mental experience for people to explore themselves and see what lies underneath our flesh body.” (Felemban, In conversation with Nihal, 2013)

Even when Felemban identifies with certain principles that she has observed in Islamic art, she relates them to human behaviour. To her they are four; simplicity, necessity, separation and definition, all relating to human behaviour in the spiritual sense (TEDx Talks, 2015).

C. Spiritual Expression

Through the extensive research that Felemban puts into every work there lies a process of discovery, exploration, and understanding of intangible aspects of being, such as spirituality and emotions (Nihal, 2013). Besides the spiritual aspects of human behaviour mentioned earlier, Felemban draws references from the literature of Sufi scholars such as of Ibn Arabi, Mulla Sadra, Mulla Shirazi, and Mohammad al-Nafari as a basis for her work (Felemban, 2017). Her understanding filters out as language of alphabets, number and motifs that aids the viewer in comprehending the information and the messages behind her work (Athr, 2018) (figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 **Last seen** by Basmah Felemban, 2014. The artist used coding system to create a language formed by dissecting geometric star. According to Felemban, the work represents encoded conversations between two characters from classic Arabic literature to provoke conversations on censorship and prohibition by those who misinterpret religion (Source: Athr, 2018).



Felemban explains that exploring spiritual topics through her work is her way of connecting to people without limiting her audience to a specific social, religious or political party. This artistic approach makes Felemban's work neutral; devoid from political messages and does not reside in socially-bias opinions. In one of her public talks, she asserts that her creative process is based on the belief that "God is the ultimate Truth", and we – as human beings- have our own Tariqah (way) to approach that truth (TEDx Talks, 2015). This idea of different paths leading to one ultimate truth was previously discussed in Bab two. In some way, it relates to the notion of remembrance through contemplation. In her own words, Felemban elaborates:

"I think my work helps me find clarity because a lot of times it touches upon metaphysics and philosophy, maybe it exists or maybe not. But in a way, it is like a place of its own it does not take an opinion, it does not take a side [...] what I like about making spiritual artwork is that you can just be in a place of your own" (Felemban to Art Dubai, 2017).

D. Collaborative Aspects

Based on her experience emerging as a creative individual in Saudi Arabia, Felemban supports the local art scene as part of her career's contribution. This is based on her belief that artists, like any other member of the society, can inform the collective perspective emotionally in their own distinctive ways (Nihal, 2013). Felemban works with small start-ups and community projects, among them the Saudi Street Art Project, which is an online platform raising awareness about the graffiti walls of local cities and the distinctive street art movement (Felemban, 2017). In her opinion, she considers working 'in the streets' is an artistic act of modesty, for her not to being confined by the white cube walls of galleries that might be only accessible to the community's elite (TEDx Talks, 2015).

E. Example– "Journey from Creatures to God"

Throughout the book of al-Asfar al-Arba'a (or The Four Journeys), written by the Sufi scholar Mulla Sadra, there is an extensive elaboration about the notion of al-Insan al-Kamil (the Universal Man), and the journey of the creatures returning to the essence (Felemban, 2017). The four journeys realised in the scheme of Sadra's book match the journeys considered by Islamic mystics:

• ————— •
الاستفاد من الوجود

1. Existence and its manifestations (intended to address general issues)
2. Substances and accidents (about natural philosophy)
3. Part on proper theology
4. Part on the soul, its origin, and its resurrection

Felemban explains how she interpreted these writings by Mulla Sadra and other supporting books, including Rene Guenon, she represents these journeys in a series of four pieces of work. The first (figure 3.7), depicts the journey from creatures to God through a graphic illustration of Ibn Arabi's Bezels of Wisdom (Fusus al-Hikam). Each jewel is represented in one of the chapters of Ibn Arabi's book, to help bring the reader closer to the 'Universal Man', which in turn helps in understanding the Divinity of God. The graphic representation in her piece was explained in a research document of 18 pages spread available online allowing people to understand her thinking Process (figure 3.10).

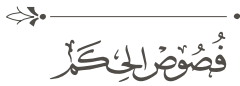
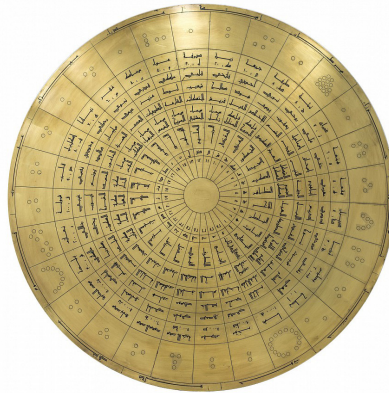


Figure 3.8 **The Journey from Creatures to God** by Basmah Felemban, 2017. Felemban uses a graphic language, laser engraved on coppered plywood, to represent the knowledge of the Divine realities and attributes realised by Ibn Arabi's book Fusos Al-Hikam (Bezels of Wisdom)

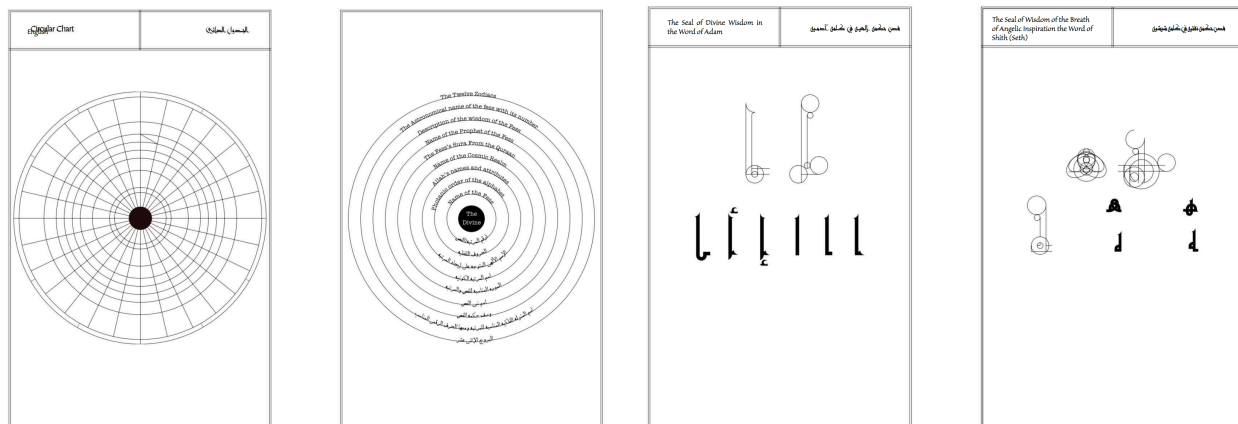
Figure 3.9 **The Journey in God** by God by Basmah Felemban, 2017. The artist represents the second of the four journeys through the astronomical text written by Sufi scholar in the 10th journey about the fixed stars (Source: Athr, 2017).



3.8



3.9



In her second piece of the series, which is ‘the journey in God by God’ (figure 3.9), Felemban represents the notion of the spiritual traveller leaving their own existence and ascribing their journey to God. Her depiction is based on another reference, the “Book of the Constellations of the Fixed stars” by Abd al-Raman al-Sufi. In the book, the spiritual traveller’s position can only be determined by measuring the celestial bodies, and hence, her piece depicts the celestial stars as portrayed in classic Arabic literature (figure 3.11).

Figure 3.10 Pages of the uploaded research by the artist showing the making process of the first piece. The first two from the left explains the divisions in the piece based on the ontological levels of the Universal Man by Ibn Arabi, while the two on the right explains the artist's graphical system in encoding Ibn Arabi's "Bezels of Wisdom" (Source: Felemban, 2017).

3.2.2 Ahmad Angawi | Saudi Arabia

A. Educational Background

Ahmad Angawi is a contemporary artist and industrial designer from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Growing up in a house of a renowned architect and an interior designer, he developed an aesthetic that relates to his belonging and upbringing. This has been constantly evident in how Angawi represents himself as an artist; citing the strong influence of his father's work in preserving local domestic architecture (Nuqat 2016; General Culture Authority Saudi, 2018).

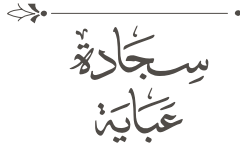
Angawi developed a style that crosses over both art and design; he earned a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, followed by a Master's degree in Traditional Arts from Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, UK (Edge of Arabia, 2018). This has given him a distinctive perspective on issues of identity and modernism, in the sense that he believes modernisation does not go against conservation and argues that globalisation did not necessarily affect identity negatively (Nuqat, 2016). Controversially, he believes that "to be modern is to conserve", a term often quoted by him, and evident in his artistic approach.

B. Religious Disclosure

When it comes to the religious relevance of Angawi's work, he frames it saying he has the distinction of having Meccan roots, as well as the colourful identity of the culture of Hejaz (Athr, 2018). The fact that he refers to Mecca as his "point of reference" is what makes his work relevant to his culture, and therefore, relevant to the religion of Islam (Nuqat, 2016). As a designer, he believes in respecting both his culture and environment by focusing on the human condition (Edge of Arabia, 2018). Angawi is also explicit in the way he bases his approach on the notion of "Al-Mizan" in design, which revolves around the fundamental principle of balance both as an applicable concept in the field of design, and as a state of mind (Athr, 2018; Nuqat, 2016).



On the research question of how an object can be defined as "Islamic", Angawi argues that an artistic work or a designed object can be Islamic in its process rather than in appearance. In a playful manner, he uses questions such as "What would a product look like if it converted to Islam?" or "If a chair wore a hijab how would it look?" as a starting



point for his creative process. He often describes these playful design experiments as “Arabizing products”. Examples of that are his modern intake on sijada (prayer mat) (figure 3.12), and abaya (women’s traditional garment) as objects that accommodate the contemporary lifestyle of Muslims. For instance, his prayer mat is a piece of fabric that can be folded and locked to form a messenger’s bag, which then can be opened to serve as a prayer mat to be carried anywhere (Nuqat, 2016).

Figure 3.12 Sijada (Prayer Mat) by Ahmad Angawi. The design of the prayer mat folds into a messenger bag allows for user’s mobility (Source: Design, 2016).



C. Spiritual Expression

When tracing the spiritual aspects in Angawi’s artistic process, it can be concluded that it resides mainly in his artistic observations and contemplations of an object or a subject, and reflecting this into his work (figure 3.13). As a creative individual, Angawi gives a high importance to the making process, relating to his design background, and emphasises in pre-design research as the first stage of his work (Nuqat, 2016). He asks in his observations on the making of traditional objects, or objects made from traditional crafts; how they are made, how do they function, and the hidden aspects of their process can be described as a form of spiritual contemplation. For example, when researching about the Subha (or tasbeih – prayer beads), he refers to the notion of remembrance as part of its making process. Angawi suggests that producing an



object that serves as a religious act or ritual such as the prayer beads, might include spiritual aspects or religious relevance in the ‘making’ of that object. He supports this interpretation by observing the making process in a traditional context where the item is produced by the manual work of local artisans. Angawi also provokes the questions whether it is important for the designer to be aware of the process of making an object in a particular cultural context, and whether it should form part of designers’ responsibility towards their socio-cultural environment (General Culture Authority Saudi, 2018).

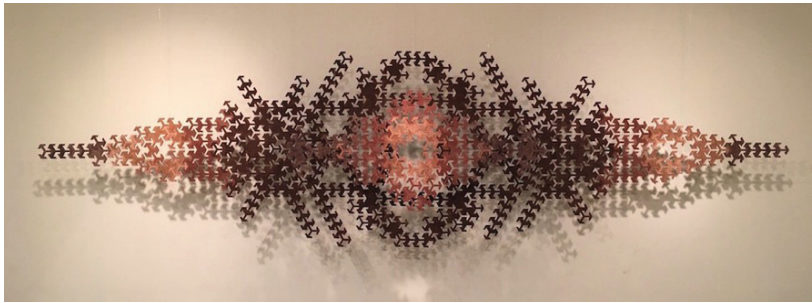


Figure 3.13 Simplicity in Multiplicity by Ahmad Angawi, 2016. The artist developed throughout his work a modular system for more experimental projects. He observed the collective behaviour of the bees in building their colony for days and documented it in order to dissect and learn about the structural element of natural design and harmony through his own representation (Source: Art Paris, 2018).

Another spiritual aspect that can be traced in Angawi’s working process is his modest act of exploring the traditional crafts by learning from master artisans in the Muslim world. Travelling extensively throughout the Middle East to cities such as Marrakech, Fez, Damascus and Cairo, he investigates the artisans’ role in today’s market (Edge of Arabia, 2018). From their experience and lifetimes expertise, he explores ways of collaborating with them rather than residing in designer-manufacturer kind of relationship. In his own words, Angawi explains that: “industrial designers are the craftsmen of today” (Edge of Arabia, 2018; Nuqat, 2016), eliminating the conformed labels between design, craftsmanship, and art.

D. Collaborative Aspects

In addition to collaborating with artisans from different Arab cities, Angawi gets to know the artisans on a personal level, not to mention that when it comes to the final product, a fair percentage of selling his work goes to the craftsmen he works with (Nuqat, 2016). This respectful relationship draws a parallel between the dictums encouraged for Muslims behaviour, and the professional ethics of a designer, it has similar issues to what is known today as fair trade. In addition, Angawi takes an active role in Saudi society through various executive positions; one as an associate director of the Al Makmad Foundation, which focuses on reviving and conserving the Hijazi heritage. Another role is

consultant and program researcher in Turquoise Mountain, a non-government non-profit organization that aims at regenerating historical cities and promoting sustainability of traditional crafts industries (Edge of Arabia, 2018).

As for the local art scene, Angawi co-founded Al-Hangar; an independent artistic initiative that offers platforms for cultural exchange and dialogue through community-based projects, exhibitions and educational programs. His educational background and affiliation with the Prince School of Traditional Arts in London enabled him to establish The House of Traditional Arts in the historical district of Jeddah; Al-Balad (Athr, 2018) (figure 3.14). The house serves as a school and an initiative by PSTA and Art Jameel, with Angawi being the program director. Such an influential role with Angawi as an educator and facilitator of a space that serves the local community of artists and artisans enables him to revive one of the neglected districts in his city, his point of reference or origin.

Figure 3.14 Jameel House of Traditional Arts housed in a historical building of the old city Al-Balad. Run by Angawi, it hosts varied and accessible educational activities that integrate PSTA's teaching methodology with skills and experiences of local master craftsmen (Source: Prince's School of Traditional Arts, 2018).



E. Example – “Mangour; loved and beloved”

Angawi presented his first solo exhibition as an artistic and research project that explores the Mangour, which is the visual composition that forms the basis of Roshan; a wooden architectural element that is related to a forgotten Hijazi craft. The Roshan, or as commonly referred to in Islamic architecture books Mashrabiyya, was selected by the artist because of its duality traced in both its design and its functionality. The duality carried in this element is through various aspects: the separation between the outside architectural structure that contains it and what is hidden behind it, its function is to conceal as well as reveal, to warm as well as to cool, and to let in light and cast shadow at the same time (Athr, 2018).

منقور
روشان

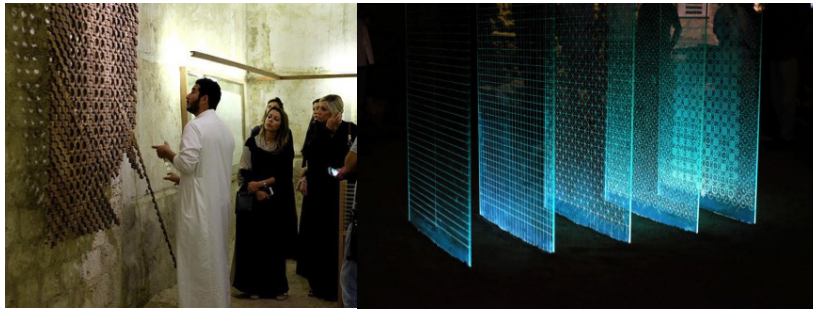


Figure 3.15 (A) Angawi during the opening of his solo exhibition *Al Mangour: Loved and Beloved*, which was set in a traditional house next to the School of Traditional Arts in Al-Balad. The artist explains the wooden structure of Mangour in an installation piece. (B) Part of the installation pieces that document the making process of the Mangour, dissecting the geometrical proportions and the hidden structure of the Mangour (Source: Athr, 2016).

Angawi was raised in an artistic environment, with his father being an influential architect, as well as his industrial design background influenced Angawi in terms of the elements he based his work on, and his process of making. The Mangour, for example, is an element that represents the notion of ‘architecture of the veil’, which protects the sacredness of the house and its inhabitants and balancing that with the outside world. Balance, as clearly stated by Angawi, is one of the main principles that he works with (Nuqat, 2016). Angawi curated a show that exposes the beauty of balance in the Mangour and the traditional process of making it, thereby documenting an architectural element within the context of an art gallery. His exhibition consists of analytical drawings revealing the hidden geometry forming the Mangour, shedding the light on the mathematical and proportional knowledge required to create it (Athr, 2018).

3.2.3 Dana Awartani | Saudi Arabia

A. Educational Background

Dana Awartani graduated with a bachelor’s degree in fine art from Central St. Martin’s in London, where she was exposed to a contemporary approach to arts, which she describes as a different experience than expected. At that time, Awartani’s teachers encouraged her to research female artists from the Middle East that addressed topics of suppression and exile, such as Shirin Neshat and Mona Hatoum. However, since her life experience was different, she could not relate to that and felt that such a direction frames the culture in which she was brought up negatively (Harper’s Bazaar, 2017). After that, Awartani became more interested in geometric art, and hence, pursued her Masters in Prince School of Traditional Arts in London. This is where she saw the other



side of the spectrum from where her art education started and was told to “forget everything she knew about contemporary art”. This is arguably an interesting shift in Awartani’s education influencing her work after she graduated; while Central St. Martin’s did not emphasise craftsmanship and tradition, PSTA was advocating that traditional art can – and must – be revived (Harper’s Bazaar, 2017). Besides learning traditional craft techniques in PSTA such as; stained glass, miniature painting, and gilding, Awartani was taught illumination by a master artisan in Istanbul Turkey. Through master-to-apprentice traditional way of learning, Awartani gained her ‘ijaza’ in Islamic illumination, which is considered the highest form of recognition giving authorisation to pass on skills in that field (Athr, 2018; Harper’s Bazaar, 2017).

B. Religious Disclosure

Awartani is considered one of the pioneering young artists in reviving the traditional Islamic crafts. Her work incorporates traditional methods into a contemporary visual language. It contains intricate and rich geometry in its detail, and is usually devoid of any figurative representations, Awartani explains:

“In Christian art, what they mastered was icon painting and representative of the human body, but as you know in Islamic art that’s one of the lowest things we do in miniature painting. What we focus on is symbolism, geometry and calligraphy. In essence, what they are is really a form of embodying the divine creation on earth.” The ancient masters of illuminations would create their works as forms of prayer or dhikr, which means remembrance. For them, the idea of creating art was entirely stripped of ego” (In conversation with Harper’s Bazaar, 2017)

When it comes to the methodology and the materiality of Awartani’s work, they can be described as deeply rooted in the traditions of Islamic art yet re-enacted in a contemporary context. She uses traditional methods including natural materials and pigments to create her pieces. This relates to her artistic intentions in sustaining traditional crafts, and exploring their potentiality in contemporary forms (Athr, 2018). Awartani is one of the artists who advocates the perennial (traditional) philosophy through her work; which is formulated on the notion of universality in the sacred arts, and Islamic geometry’s capacity of reflecting a timeless connection between beauty and the Divine. Yet, she addresses this philosophy through a contemporary framework. In some ways, she refers back to a point of origin, retraces its creative process, in order to

deconstruct contemporary systems of art (Athr, 2018). This resonates with the previous chapters findings on how Islamic geometry carries symbolic meanings, as Awartani believes that this symbolises devotion and depicts an element of the Divine on earth (Harper's Bazaar, 2017). Awartani elaborates:

"[Traditional Muslim artists] were conscious about what they were doing, in geometry to be specific there is a lot of symbolism like the use of the number eight for example [...] All shapes and numbers were used with the highest regard. Islamic art was more sacred and was practiced with spiritual rituals and preparedness" (Awartani, In conversation with Arab News, 2014).



C. Spiritual Expression

Dana Awartani spends 15 hours daily in her studio, because she believes that her artistic process is intensely spiritual. While this perhaps is very common among artists to spend long hours in their working space, but the artist's affiliation with spiritual Islamic aspects is what distinguishes Awartani's perspective. She asserts the importance of being mindful, mentally calm, prepared and not agitated as it can interfere, and perhaps even ruin her work (Harper's Bazaar, 2017). She asserts on the importance of the process more than the end result, as it involves a meditative state and creating something that is inspired by the Divine:

Figure 3.16 **Abjad**

Hawaz by Dana Awartani, 2016. Awartani delves into the ancient scholarly tradition called Ilm al-Huruf (the science of letters) to evolve it into a visual language encoded by her knowledge in geometry and illumination. The work allows for comprehension of linguistics, semantics and spiritual engagement in contemporary spaces. The work also resulted later in various other works using her distinctive system of coding letters (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).



“The way you create your art, whether it be geometry or illumination, [you] can’t be in a bad mood or not centred. You need to be focused 100 percent and spiritually centred. It is so time consuming that there is a term when producing the art as a form of “dhekir” and every brush stroke is a form of “dhekir” and the things I’m creating, sacred geometry and illuminations, are all a reflection of Allah’s creations [...] this is another element that speaks to me personally, it’s my connection. That’s the beauty of it.” (Awartani, In conversation with Arab News, 2014)

D. Collaborative Aspects

Although Awartani does have skills in various traditional crafts, she still collaborates with artisans in the production of her work, as she believes it is important to involve them in the making process (Harper’s Bazaar, 2017) (figure 3.17). Examples of her work that involved collaboration with local craftsmen is the work exhibited in Kochi-Murzuris Biennale and Marrakech Biennale which is a series of three sculptures, featuring wooden dodecahedron within a glass icosahedron.

Figure 3.17 Dana Awartani during the making process of Jali, 2018. The work is inspired by Classical Poems, a book by Arab Women and Mugal era. In collaboration with artisans from India to create a nostalgic series of silk embroidered panels as a reminiscent of the royal era (Source: Nihal, 2018).



As for participating as an artist in community, Awartani is involved in National Outreach Projects, which are part of PSTA's international community programmes. The National Outreach projects aim for further appreciation and application of the traditional arts in schools and communities. She also taught in the School of Traditional Arts in Al-Balad, along with designer and artist Ahamd Angawi.

E. Example: "I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming"

In a country where the built environment and urban development is rapidly changing, Awartani created a film, accompanied by an installation, that reflect her stance regarding her experience living in Jeddah, and the urban development shaping her social context (The Mosaic Rooms, 2017). The video shows the artist entering a room in an abandoned house and starts sweeping what appear at first glance to be a traditional Islamic tiled floor (figure 3.18). Only when Awartani starts sweeping does the traditional floor reveal its actual material; dyed sands.



Figure 3.18 I was dreaming, single-channel video by Dana Awartani, 2017. The artist appears in frame and starts sweeping what appear at first glance as traditional Islamic tiled floor (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).

In this performative piece, the artist considers her own position while being caught between "future driven by globalisation", and a past that seems to be erased (The Mosaic Rooms, 2017). This position has been represented in the materiality of the traditional motifs, manifested in hand-dyed sand, to reflect the artist's views on what is considered a social obsession with progress at the cost of losing or leaving behind part of the socio-cultural identity.

In more spiritual aspects, the piece echoes the act of Tibetan monks when they destroy their sand mandalas, in an offering to the temporality of the world and the notion that nothing is permanent (Harper's Bazaar, 2017). Just like them, Dana Awartani destroys what took her days to create, and what it seemed in its making process a type of meditation. The act of sweeping in itself carries meanings of humility and allowing space for the sublime possibility.



Figure 3.19 Details of the work "I Was Dreaming" by Dana Awartani, 2017. The choice of medium in Awartani's work conveys part of the message of temporality when it comes to the subject of urban development, as well as humility when it comes to the spiritual aspect in artistic process [Author's note] (Source: Dana Awartani, 2018).



3.3 Part A: General Reflections

To summarise this section, it is important to acknowledge that the analysis of the spiritual aspects in artistic expression is based on a few examples of artistic practice happening today. It is difficult, as well as illogical to generalise any conclusions based on this group of artists. However, observing their practice in order to address certain occurring themes that express religious or spiritual connection suggests that such themes can still generate creativity today. Once again, these aspects may or may not coincide with the ideas of other artists working in the region, however they form an integral part of the contemporary image of Islamic art.

To relate the practice of these artists to the traditionalist and modernist discourse, it can be concluded that their approach falls in a spectrum between the traditionalists and modernists views. Each artist has their own distinctive approach to the traditional knowledge of Islamic art, and each connects with a different aspect of religion as a point of reference and finding their own individual voice in expressing their connection with this particular aspect of religion. For example, while Lulwah al-Hamoud relies on mathematical codes to produce geometric work that represents the Divine names of God, Nasser al-Salem relies on Quranic verses as point of departure to create his calligraphic sculptures.

This perhaps resonates with the concept of “inner necessity” mentioned earlier and realised by Kandinsky:

“The artist must ignore distinctions between “recognised” or “unrecognised” conventions of form, the transitory knowledge and demands of his particular age. He must watch his own inner life and hearken to the demands of internal necessity. Then he may safely employ means sanctioned or forbidden by his contemporaries. This is the only way to express the mystical necessity.”
(Kandinsky, cited in Tomas, 1964, p.53)

It is also important to note that many artists today find it difficult to remove themselves from pre-set ideas on philosophies, misinformation and preconceived thoughts of religion without falling into the loop of repeating the same historical expression. Many of the artists mentioned in this section had the opportunity of being part of an educational system or training program that is far from their cultural context, which in return allowed them not to be absorbed by an historical means of expression, but to enjoy its inherent qualities through their own artistic approach. This is what Bernard Berenson refers to as “intelligent cooperation”, in the sense that artists should not only be receptive, but also responsive in their approach to the work of art (Tomas, 1964).

As for the three selected case studies, there are a few commonalities and differences between them. While Basmah Felemban creates her pieces entirely from metaphysical and philosophical **literature**, Ahmad Angawi focuses on linking his **processes** to a point of origin or reference regardless of the topic of his work. Dana Awartani on the other hand focuses on reviving the traditional **mediums** of Islamic art within contemporary production, through which she may or may not refer to traditional or Sufi literature as a point of departure for her work. Despite their differences, the three artists communicate some of the spiritual aspects throughout the process of making their work, such as remembrance. With Angawi and Felemban, the process is transparent, acknowledged by either including it as part of their exhibited work, or making it accessible in other realms for their viewers.

Thus, it can be concluded that the case studies prove to an extent that, spiritual and metaphysical aspects of religion could still have a voice in forming a contemporary approach in Islamic art. This might be contradictory to the idea that Islamic art is objective and has impersonal qualities that make it universally understood by traditional scholars such as El-Said and Parman (1976). However, each one of the three artists approached traditional philosophical ideas through an individual distinctive method,

yet arguably managed to maintain the dignity and the values embraced in Islamic art. Instead of losing their individuality completely to some of the embedded ideas of sacred geometry, they found a way to express it in contemporary context either through a medium or process. In other words, creative practice constantly draws from, transforms and reinvents traditions, in the sense that tradition is not static but simultaneously lived (Negus and Pickering, 2004).

A further issue to note is that the production of art is influenced by the power dynamics in the art world (Becker, 1984). Influential parties, galleries and other distribution channels have the ability to channel particular ideas and communicate to particular audiences. Taking for example the three selected artists in this section; they all graduated from the Prince School of Traditional Arts in London and are being represented by one of the pioneering art galleries in Jeddah. Such affiliations influence the visibility of the artists and the influence of their work on the art scene. This research is aware of the influence of other parties but intentionally excludes it because it does not influence the creative process of the artists. The dynamics that exists in the Islamic art world would require further elaboration on how these entities operate, and what kind of social, political and cultural agendas they pursue. Not to mention their position in the art world, how it influences the aesthetic values, and how art is being judged. However, it is important to acknowledge that the artist, or the creative act, operates within a society, and a chain of affiliations and experiences that influences the general perception of the art scene in a particular context (Negus and Pickering, 2004).

Furthermore, Felemban, Angawi and Awartani have participated in the community as teachers mainly through the Outreach Programmes of Prince's School of Traditional Arts. This brings to our attention the independent artists affiliated with an educational institute, who are expected to advocate and promote the institute's approach in the field (Daichendt, 2011). However, the educational background of the artists addressed in this section connects the artistic practice with pedagogy, or ways of knowing. Rather than insisting upon certain mediums of expression of a historical period, it is important to address the modes of expression in order to communicate mystical, spiritual, and philosophical thoughts of Islam. The hybridity of traditional crafts and contemporary theory traced in the artists' education provokes the question whether it is important to have a balance between the modes and mediums in education. If so, such a method can be further explored as an outcome of this research, but before addressing this, an analysis of 'Islamic arts and design' as a field of inquiry is needed. Thus, the next section will provide a critical review in order to connect the contemporary practice addressed here with the current pedagogy of Islamic art and design.

PART B: CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ART- Pedagogy and Design Education



3.4 Introduction

In the first part of this Bab, selected artists investigated as case studies have travelled from Saudi Arabia, to United States, and United Kingdom to return back to their homeland with a distinctive knowledge that fed into their practice. This notion of an artists' mobility echoes in the tradition of an often-quoted hadith that knowledge must be sought wherever it is to be found, even in China. Taken into consideration that this narration was during the seventh century (the first century of Hijra), and hence "China" in this context is identified as an important remote world; known to exist, yet it was hardly accessible (Grabar, 2011).

The relevance of this narration brings to light that knowledge is everywhere, and should not be rejected, but explored, tested, and evaluated. Needless to say, the knowledge gained by the artists exploring different cultural and geographical context, has been synthesised through their practice. This brings into question whether the current approach to knowledge of Islamic art should be re-examined or reconfigured, specifically in the geographical and cultural context where Islam is the main religion. Thus, the second part of this chapter draws links between the practice and the pedagogy of Islamic art as field of knowledge.

Figure 3.0 Structural mapping for the third chapter [author's note].

This section explores the blurring boundaries between art and design; as it aims to create a basis for exploring how to reposition Islamic artistic expression within contemporary understanding of what 'design' entails. Thus, selecting artists, and not architects, in the previous section to examine their creative process was deliberate; because of their approach to the act of creativity. To the **artist**, it is illogical to impose unified principles or rules that would work on every other artist. Rather, one can trace common qualities in their practice that resonates with an overall cultural, or religious, theme. The artist processes ideas and information in a way that may or may not have existed before. In addition, artists implicitly follow or embody rules that they put in place for themselves or try to bring into use existing rules while approaching them in a different way (Tomas, 1964). As for **designers**, they ought to deal with issues of functionality and are mainly concerned with problem solving, revolving around other people. While artists, as demonstrated earlier, are free to do what they like and follow their own goal, designers work through the needs and desires of other people. Such flexibility and freedom in expression in the artists' approach is needed to break away from the pre-set constraints noticed in current design/architecture practice in the Muslim world. In addition, contextualists' views suggest that while the creative person involves a state of mind, the creative process involves exploration, and play (Williams, Ostwald, and Askland, 2011).

Such openness into testing the boundaries is more challenging for designers than artists, yet, art and design have become equally important to social, cultural and spiritual well-being. Coles (2005) elaborates that "Design has no such hang ups about the beauty of visual form [...] Design, rather than art, is foremost now in embodying the visual spirit of the age...", which is similar to Fallan's description of design as the indicator of culture. Furthermore, when talking about the synthesis between art and design, Coles explains that every human artefact, and that can be poem, painting, or chair, evoked and invokes the "totality" of culture. These interpretations view design and art as visual embodiment of the age, and thereby eliminating the theoretical boundaries that differentiate the two as they are no longer essential to address the cultural production. This echoes ideas in Bab two regarding the non-distinction between fine arts and applied arts found in traditional Islam (Akkach, 2012). Thus, if Islamic art was an expression of a way of life in the past, and 'design' as we know it today touches everyone in some way today, an indicator of cultural identity, then there has to be an area where the two reconcile. Having said that, this research explores the boundaries where the two fields merge as a contribution to the knowledge of Islamic artistic expression. This is explored particularly in this chapter by learning from the flexible process of 'artists' (Bab 3), in order to build an educational basis for 'designers' which will be further explored in (Bab 6).



In order to do so, it is necessary to look at the progress of design education in general, and Islamic art – as subject of study- in particular. While there is a clear relationship between the development of design, and the influences of aesthetic movements and thoughts, there is hardly a similar relationship between the progress of Islamic aesthetic thought, and its influence on Islamic art or design pedagogy. Therefore, Islamic art and design as a field of historical inquiry will be addressed in this section, in correlation with the progress of design pedagogy, specifically in the 19th and 20th century. This aims to provoke the possibility of approaching Islamic art and design in a way that corresponds with the global contemporary approach of design education.

3.5 Art and Design: Historical Overview¹



The discourse of defining the relationship between art and design is not novel; in the late nineteenth century, the writings of artist and designer William Morris as well as John Ruskin created roots for modernist thought on the boundaries between art and design (Coles, 2005). For Ruskin, Art was profound, meaningful and parallel to Natural Philosophy, and therefore, Ruskin thought that students should absorb a complex subject further than a skill-based discipline. Through a newly formed Ruskin Drawing School in Oxford University, he advocated an artist education that was different from the traditional skill-based offerings (Daichendt, 2011), and sought to create a whole person through lectures, studio opportunities and writings. Ruskin's famous book **Seven Lamps of Architecture** encouraged students to explore closely the fields of philosophy, architecture and biology and understand them through art. The book provided seven guides or lamps for anyone who worked directly with material objects and was considered one of the main references for craftsmen and artisans up until today (Sennett, 2008).

However, the 19th century's modernist movement created a division of knowledge between the arts and technology; scientists were trying to construct theories to correspond with quantifiable observations of the natural world, while artists searched for aesthetic understanding of the world (Sullivan, 2005). Scientists and artists pursued ideas



¹ For a concise look into major points in design history, refer to the timeline included in Barzakh 2 "What's happening/not happening"

to see the world in new ways, and hence culture was split by the end of the 19th century into two different branches: the first was scientific, quantifiable and “hard”, and the second was aesthetic, evaluative and “soft” (Coles, 2005). The word ‘design’ emerged as a bridge between the scientific and the evaluative, between technology and art as a way to bringing them together as equals. This gave the basis and possibility of making a new form of culture (Coles, 2005).

Nevertheless, the discourse of the art and design world has continued into the twentieth century, with the rise of early avant-garde movements (Soviet Constructivism, Netherlands’ De Stijl, and Dessau’s Bauhaus). There was a shift away from art education that was based on technique, to become less craft-based and a more intellectual discipline (Daichendt, 2011). Each one of these movements responded to industrialization and its implication on politics and technology, by promoting new relationships between a self-directed approach to art, and the industrial design’s culture of mass production (Coles, 2005). For example, the Bauhaus School, which was founded by Walter Gropius, aimed at creating a highly infused and intellectual atmosphere. Gropius’s main goal was to eliminate the barriers between art and the design world (Daichendt, 2011). The Bauhaus offered a teaching style that integrated philosophy and approached art as “an intellectual exercise”, hence, changing the context of how art could be created and understood. Therefore, the method of teaching art in studios in the beginning of the twentieth century putting an emphasis on “formalists aesthetics” that gave new drive to theory and practice. This meant that art was conceptualised as a language of forms; a language that is formalised as a framework for art knowledge for everyone to learn. Contents were then defined, and curriculums were designed accordingly, and since the aesthetic and the teaching principles became explicit, the professionals, the artist-teachers and students were engaged in a studio experience of visual exploration and problem solving. Paradoxically, formalised and explicit aesthetic principles gave structure and language for individual expression (Sullivan, 2005). Adapted by many other educational institutions, this deskilling approach created a pedagogical shift from valuing the mental and intellectual work over the manual. As a result of this approach, many studio graduates were encouraged to question the relevance and validity of their degrees (Daichendt, 2011).

However, a renegotiation of the traditional boundaries between disciplines began to emerge in the late 1990s, the interface between art and design seemed to diminish. Contemporary debate started to concentrate on the terms such as **designart**, which emerged as a way of describing the work of practitioners whose installations and projects engage simultaneously with both art and design (Coles, 2005). Designart was

therefore loosely defined as any work that experiments with place, function and style by integrating it with architecture, furniture and/ or graphics design. This overview does not intend to offer comprehensive insight into the history of design, as it is not the main subject of the research. Rather, it is signposting moments in history where the definition of design has been informed, by a school of thought, or by individual influencers, thereby constantly informing and shaping the design field. Whereas the case of Islamic aesthetics took a different direction, which shall be addressed at a following point.

3.6 Islamic Art in Academic Context: Critical Overview

3.6.1 Formation of Islamic art as Field of Inquiry²

At the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), transmission of philosophical and practical knowledge was simply achieved through: a) writing, copying and reading books, b) through oral arguments that were remembered by the participants, and c) through the transmission of artisanal procedures and practice from father to son, or from master to apprentice, or from region to region (Grabar, 2011). This is only supported by few references, as there are a few rare sources that address the teaching methods of arts and crafts in Islamic regions at that particular period. This is one of the main challenges highlighted in this section; because literature sources about history of Islamic aesthetics are limited, and if they exist, they are based on individual subjectivity, or influenced by Western or Eastern ideologies (Alsamman, 2002). In addition, there is a lack of valid references regarding the Arabic terms and vocabulary used for architectural descriptions, as investigation of such terms had barely begun in the Medieval Islamic world. Initial investigations imply that architectural terminologies in Islamic lands differed from one region to another; rendering them more regional than exchanges or passed on through literary work (Bloom, 1993). There are terms that describe architectural occupation but their exact meaning are weakly supported by scholarly references³.

Interestingly, Bloom (1993) mentions that Ibn Jubayr (1184), the Andalusian geographer, traveller and poet had written extensive descriptions of mosque architecture from his first-hand observations. Ibn Jubayr wrote about the history of the buildings and their



² Can also be viewed in correlation to the historical development of design demonstrated in Barzakh 2 timeline

³ This issue can be the subject of future investigation in order to see the historical application and relevance of such terms in education, and whether or not it influenced structures adapted in colleges and schools in traditional Islamic cities.



sites and focused on creating a record of the buildings' fundamental elements such as dimensions, number of columns, windows, corners, minarets, domes and other structural details. Bloom argues that the descriptions Ibn Jubayr created communicated architectural ideas in the Medieval Islamic world. Other evidence refers to an Ottoman genre of architectural writings, dating back to the 17th and 18th century. According to Akkach (2012), **Risale-Mimariyye**, The Treatise on Architecture, opens with narration of the creation and structure of the world, then followed by a poetic reflection while another treatise includes mentions of the relationship between the buildings and the cosmos.

The significant lack of historical evidence on what and how Islamic art was documented still remains a subject of interest for many art historians. Geometric designs that were passed from masters to their apprentices, must have been created by someone who had an extensive knowledge of mathematics and practical geometry. The occurring questions regarding this period are: How designers, architects, builders, artists, and artisans learned geometry? How was it taught? And what knowledge of geometry was available to them? Also, there is the conventional argument that Muslim craftsmen were people of minimal knowledge and education (Chorbachi, 1989), and hence, they were capable of minimal creative expression that was limited to two or three patterns committed to memory. Therefore, they spent their lifetime mainly reproducing these patterns. Chorbachi suggests that these assumptions were proliferated by the anecdotal stories documented by Western scholars and earlier English travellers such as Archibald Christi. Chorbachi supports the fallacy of this argument through the historical evidence going back to the thirteenth's century, this evidence are the manuscripts of the geometric patterns of al-Buzjani, Abul-Wafa, and bin Man'a from the Shaf'i theological school.

There are few scholars who address the development of Islamic art (and architecture) as a field of historical inquiry and offer a critical analysis on how the knowledge of traditional Islamic art and architecture was communicated, documented and formalised. Among them are the Aga Khan⁴ Professors Nasser Rabbat and Gülru Necipoglu, who questioned the influence of the Western conceptual framework of art history in framing Islamic art and architecture academically. Rabbat (2004) refers to two major scholarly traditions that influenced and dominated the development of Islamic art and architecture as a study; the first was 'orientalism', which originated from the unusual historiography of the

4 Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) is an endowed centre for the history, theory and practice of Islamic architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

study of the Islamic world in the West. The second was the historiography of the art and architecture world legacy which centred around Europe as authoritative source, thus portraying the history of Western art and architecture as “par excellence”, while considering the art and architecture of other cultures as ‘ahistorical’ or anthropological categories.

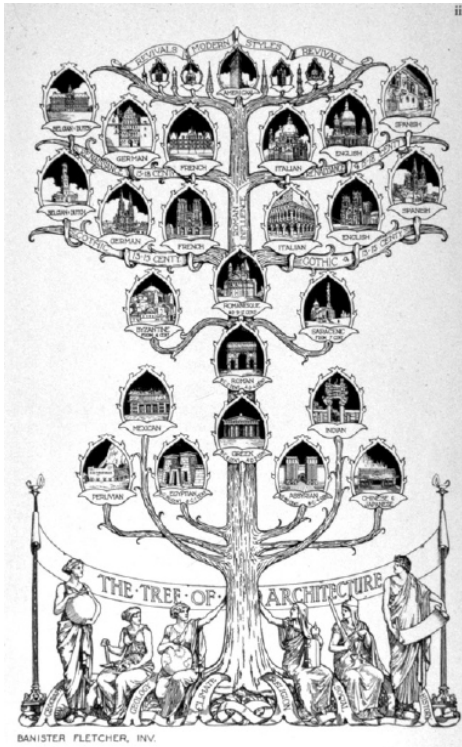


Figure 3.20 “The Tree of Architecture” (After Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, New York and London 1924, p. III) (Source: Necipoglu, 2012)

Similarly, Necipoglu (2012) refers to Banister Fletcher’s “tree of architecture” (figure 3.20) as an apparent orientalist connection. She elaborates that classifying Islamic art within “Saracenic” styles, along with other non-Western styles such as Chinese, Japanese and Central American, is grouped as a “non-historical” style in Fletcher’s family tree. The visual expression in grouping what they are is described as “decorative schemes”, according to Fletcher, portraying them as permanently fixed in medieval past. While the western architectural heritage, in contrast, is dynamic and historically evolving. Such representation, according to Necipoglu, set the basis of the discourse of modernism as being limited to Euro-American artistic tradition and excluding “others”.



In the wake of the first European military interventions in 1820s, a group of European architects, artists, and craftspeople travelled to the 'Orient' in an attempt to collect, process, and interpret data on cultural and social aspects. Rabbat (2004) argues that this included people who worked for individual patrons that sponsored expeditions or formed as part of study tours as an aristocratic recreation or for profit. With the use of all types of techniques such as freehand sketches and camera lucida projections they measured, recorded and illustrated buildings and ruins in cities such as Spain, Western Turkey, and the Holy Land. Eventually, they produced catalogues that included a series of monuments and buildings including architectural and ornamental details supported by limited written sources to verify the historical detail of the structure. The original group was then followed by generations of architects, illustrators and archaeologists who expanded the scope of the survey until it eventually reached out to the furthest Muslim regions until most of the Islamic world had been mapped out by the mid of the 20th century. Rabbat (2004) argues that due to the lack of adequate knowledge and interest by these groups, the output followed a rigid "dynastic periodisation" of styles and categories that did not communicate the conscious and constant exchange with other cultures, or the significant diverse continuity within Islamic architecture.

Therefore, when Islamic architecture finally became a study subject that is included in art history in the early 20th century, it was charted as 'ethnic' as understood then. And described as of limited tradition that started with mosque buildings, which were based on the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina (AD 620) as starting point in history, and phased out in the late 18th century with the birth of colonial age (Rabbat, 2004). This was established with the recognition of the first academic chairs for Islamic art and architectural history as a study in Western universities and research centres. This means that the route through which Islamic art and architecture was legitimised as an area of study within art history was through a conceptual framework of Western Art history. This framework was based on the late 18th century European theories of art, which outlined the epistemological and cultural conventions of the production of knowledge, controlling the scope and methods of all disciplines that fall under the arts, including Islamic architecture (Rabbat, 2004). The result is that Islamic art and architecture was reduced to a chronological, geographical, and ideological classification of historiography. Referring back to the aspects that were lost due to the western categorisations of Islamic art and architecture history, Rabbat elaborates that Islamic architecture was limited to a

set of static, sensual and ornamental characteristics. These predominant characteristics positioned Islamic architecture as static in contrast to the frequent attributes specifically given to Western architecture, such as self-conscious and historically evolving. According to Rabbat, this division did not include instances such as the shared heritage between the medieval Middle East and Europe, or their interaction during the crusades. Instead, such instances were described as “oddities” or “aberrations” provoked by singular historical circumstances.” (Rabbat, 2004, p. 19).

Moreover, the publications of the influential book of Edward Said *Orientalism* in 1978 created a scrutiny between the oriental discourse and the constitution of the field of Islamic art. Islamic visual tradition was represented as a Eurocentric orientalist perspective, and as an offshoot of the shared late antique artistic European heritage. This perspective was based on a grand East-West divide, and the classification of Islamic art as an exotic non-western tradition that is predominantly notable for its non-figurative aesthetic approach (Necipoglu, 2012).

While Rabbat summarises the influences on the study of Islamic art and architecture in two major scholarly traditions mentioned earlier, Necipoglu (2012) suggests that the birth of Islamic art and architecture as a field of historiography goes back to the inheritances of three paradigms: orientalism, nationalism, and dilettantism⁵. With regards to the orientalist paradigm, Necipoglu questions the concept of universalism, which is attributed as the common denominator of religion or religious culture. This occurred through the adaption of a holistic notion of Islamic art as a monolithic “timeless” entity that had subtle variations, yet reflected innate national traits such as Arabian, Persian, Turkish, and Indian. Necipoglu relates this tendency to the Hegelian concept of artistic styles being the “embodiments of national spirit” and refers to Owen Jones’s hierarchical classification in **The Grammar of Ornament**, as an example that ranks idioms above others that were characterised as derivative mixed styles. She asserts that privileging formative origins over the processes of historical development (as a preoccupation for Muslim identity) is rather ambiguous, problematic and had stressed artistic unity over diversity.

Both Rabbat and Necipoglu refer to orientalism as a major influence in shaping the study of Islamic art and architecture, however, Necipoglu (2012) also refers to nationalism as the second major paradigm. Nationalism emerged by taking the modern nations as a

• ⁵ These terms that describes the three paradigms are mentioned here according to how Necipoglu defines them. Should it have different understanding or meanings is a subject outside the scope of this research.





point of departure in constructing historical and geographical continuity in the arts. Examples of this paradigm are Arseven's book *Turkish Art* (1928), Creswell's *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (1952-60), and Diez's *Turkish Art from the Beginning to the Present* (1946). Interestingly, both foreign and native authors contributed to the development of orientalist and nationalist study, even though there has been a counter argument that claims the universal approach to Islamic arts was advocated by Western scholars as oppose to the narrow national approach of Muslim countries.

Another phenomenon that contributed to nationalism, according to Necipoglu, is the increase of universal museums of Islamic art, particularly in the Gulf region, adopting the Islamic artistic heritage as a proud symbol of national identity and prestige. This relates to the discourse on the timeless unity of Islamic arts, which has been adopted by Islamic traditionalist groups since the late 19th century. As for the third paradigm, by which Necipoglu refers to as "dilettantism", as an approach that consists of a purely aesthetic evaluation of Islamic art connected with the popular view that Islamic art is mainly decorative, decontextualized and devoid of meaning. This approach encompasses the enthusiasts for Islamic arts including artist, architects, collectors, and art dealers that perceive Islamic visual tradition as a neutral aesthetic model. Hence, the abstract values of Islamic art and calligraphy created an inspirational basis for modern artists, both of Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds.

While the question that was asked before 1970s was "what is Islamic about Islamic art?", preoccupations of the mystical thoughts in the field of Islamic art started to emerge. An active group of international scholars pushed Islamic mystical ideas through publications that are still renowned today. The main doctrine of this movement is based on the principle of "Unity of Being"⁶, which relates to the metaphysical notion of Divine Unity as the source and culmination of all diversity (Chorbachi, 1989). Scholars who advocate this movement are Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Titus Burckhardt, Nader Ardalan, Laleh Bakhtiar, Keith Critchlow, Issam el-Said and Ayse Parman⁷. Chorbachi, on the other hand, is one of the scholars who questioned the validity of these mystic thoughts in the field; arguing that there is lack of historical evidence, such as manuscripts, that prove these thoughts were transmitted through traditional Islamic artistic knowledge. It seems that Chorbachi does not oppose adapting mysticism as a belief and following its practices or experiencing its positive effects. However, she asserts that it is dangerous to impose



⁶ Explained in the first part of Bab two.

⁷ These scholars were the main sources of Islamic traditional philosophy, referred to in the previous Bab.

symbolic and mystical ideas as a “new set” of interpretations, let alone proliferate them as historical truths without any documented evidence. She adds that propagating such interpretations in books on Islamic geometric designs, patterns, and ornaments is based on a modern understanding of Islamic literature (Chorbachi, 1989, p.760).

After the influence of Said’s Orientalism, however, inquiries in the 1980s began to change; cultural studies have gone through critical developments, and the limitations of the dynastic periodisation of Islamic art and architecture were challenged. Students of Islamic architecture started to question the use of geographic, historic, religious and cultural boundaries as a valid parameter. Approaches to Islamic architecture began to include diversity, hybridity – or in other words multi or intra culturist- methods of inquiry such as extending the domain of study to include neglected periods and areas where Islam interacted with other cultures. Other methods investigated the contributions of the various Islamic sects and various religious orders as influential components and expression within a shared architectural language (Rabbat, 2004; Necipoglu, 2012).

3.6.2 Conception and Transfer of Knowledge of Islamic Cultural Heritage

It seems that both Rabbat (2004) and Necipoglu (2012) assert that ‘orientalism’ created injustice to the cultural complexity of the Islamic lands. It justified unity and variety of Islamic art through national characteristics, either by encouraging artistic sensibilities of particular forms or communities, or by disparaging them. European publications created “ethnised aesthetics” that were reflected in the nationalistic and geographic narratives while pan-Islamic⁸ movement advocated a timeless unity of the arts. In addition, both Rabbat and Necipoglu advocate that just like all art and architectural traditions with a living history, Islamic art and architecture share multicultural, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic qualities that cannot be reduced to a single cultural reference as a sole inspiration. Supporting this is Grabar (2011) who explains that there are different mathematical theories that had developed in Andalus (Spain), Egypt, and Central Asia, hence the difference in the practice of craftsmanship in each of these regions. And although it could be easily argued that the complex geometry dominated these regions in the tenth century due to the influence of Islam, however the designs did not reflect the same principles. According to Grabar, the motifs might be strikingly similar, but they have different social and cultural interpretations, as well as different approaches in transferring abstract thoughts to architectural forms.

• ⁸ Pan-Islamism is a political movement represents a form of internationalism and anti-nationalism, by seeing the Islamic community as the focus of adherence and mobilisation, excluding ethnicity as primary factors towards unification.



This concludes that, the Islamic cultural production resulted from a purposeful intellectual and aesthetic exchange within its environment, its boundaries, its past and its contemporary culture. This exchange process was not mimetic in nature; rather it was dialogic in the sense that it created products that were original, yet consciously and historically grounded (Rabbat, 2004). Necipoglu (2012) suggests an alternative and neutral approach for periodisation of Islamic art; by subdividing the field into



chronological slices that span over three or four centuries with each slice constituting a relatively coherent time zone (diagram 3.0).

According to Necipoglu, this approach can help in validating each period, making them equally significant, as well as normalising the field with its on-going “non-canonical” practices. Bearing in mind that these four periods forms an elastic scheme that can promote a more rigorous historicised investigation of the field, in which elements of unity and diversity can be consciously negotiated, and historically reformulated. This approach also includes the often-neglected period of Islamic history that starts from 1800 to the present and acknowledges it as an era of interrelated “isms”.

There are various references that offer analytical descriptions of Islamic art and architecture, most of which are written and documented by non-Muslims, and are currently the main sources to refer back to when it comes to the subject of Islamic art and architecture as a field of historical inquiry. Some of the influential scholars who wrote about traditional Islamic art architecture as a form of art history are Grabar, Burckhardt,

Hillenbrand, Bloom and Blair. However, there are apparent themes when it comes to framing the knowledge of Islamic art and architecture through historical factors in order to define them, or differentiate them, from other artistic or cultural expressions⁹. On the other hand, books that present the shared views of Nasr, Burkhardt, Ardalan and Bakhtiar advocate the mystical dimensions of Islamic art. Based on the need to create a unified framework to what Islamic design is. These books offer a romantic, mystical attribution which does not resonate with art historians, but perhaps more appealing to philosophers and art theorists. Scholars such as Rabbat and Chorbachi argue that the availability of these books presents modern interpretations as historical truths, and that is what makes them problematic. Perhaps the symbolic interpretations of these references can be valid, however it needs to be acknowledged as a modern understanding of old forms as long as historical evidences of such interpretations remained non-existent.

Although these references might be structurally valid, they demonstrate what Rabbat refers to as methodological, epistemological and historiographical problems. From a methodological aspect, the various approaches prove that there is a dilemma in framing the materials based on diverse considerations of geography, history, language and cultural boundaries. From an epistemological aspect, it could be argued that these books are tailored to a general audience rather than scholarly readers, in an attempt to connect art traditions with the modern world, however eventually they end up containing an evolution of one culture's production but not communicating how it interconnects with other culture. Rabbat elaborates:

"This is no fault of the books themselves. It is primarily a result of a larger, hegemonic conceptual framework, the historiography of art history, which affects the possible scope and methods of all Islamic architectural surveys, while at the same time delimiting not only the survey-able material, but the ways by which the survey itself connects with the general history of art and how, if at all, it appropriates, conforms to, diverges from, expands on, and explicitly or implicitly critiques it."(Rabbat, n.d., p.271)

• ⁹ Rabbat (n.d.) provides a concise survey of these themes or patterns, which are summarised in appendix II



To recapitulate, there are various scholarly works that evaluate the knowledge of Islamic art and design, these efforts can be summarised into three categories:

A. Transmission of Islamic Design: This has been the primary focus of scholars such as Holod and Chorbachi, who emphasised how knowledge was transmitted to artisans and architects. For example, Holod noticed that all means of transmitting architectural knowledge in the Islamic world were available due to the availability of paper in the Muslims' civilisation. Referring to a key text by al-Buzjani (940-98) entitled **al-kuttab wa l-ummal min ilm al-hisab** (Book of the things that writers and secretaries need to know about arithmetic), she suggests that a genre of written works for artisans did exist (Bloom, 1993).

Chorbachi (1989), on the other hand, focused on investigating the means of how knowledge of mathematics and geometry was transmitted to artisans in particular. Her approach depends on historical verification of knowledge while insisting on the need for a scientific language and methodology to systematically categorise and describe Islamic geometric patterns. Interestingly, both Holod and Chorbachi have used the term 'design' however only in the context of describing the visual, graphical or architectural materials

B. Framing Islamic Design: There are two opposite waves when it comes to defining the framework of Islamic art; one that entails a "fear of fragmentation" conveyed by Bloom and Blair, and the other omits generalisation and accepts the growth of Islamic art into specialised subdivisions as positive development advocated by Grabar. Besides co-authoring several books, Bloom and Blair have curated exhibitions that adopt an abstract decontextualized approach to Islamic art, and express their anxiety to protect a universal view of Islamic art. While Grabar criticises the drawbacks of survey books on Islamic art in including the last three centuries as part of the ever-expanding scope of the field of Islamic art.

C. Classification of Islamic Design: Scholars who critically investigated the shortcomings of the existing historical inquiries were Rabbat (2004) and Necipoglu (2012). Rabbat asserts the need to conceptualise and produce a new art historical knowledge which avoids the Eurocentric pull and the autonomous identity framework. He suggests moving towards a sensitive synthesis that includes “cross-cultural” condition. On the other hand, Necipoglu suggests a few things such as the reconfiguration of the chronology of Islamic art with the aim to delineate its historicity and contextuality. She also stresses the importance of foregrounding the connectivity and mobility, which contributed to the multidisciplinary discussion of the field.

The importance of connectivity and mobility suggested by Necipoglu in informing the knowledge of Islamic art brings to light the interactions, hybrids, and exchanges happening in the contemporary artistic practice. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Artists such as Angawi, Felemban and Awartani had the opportunity to make use of mobility in the sense that they were not geographically bound to a place. On the contrary, their educational experience outside their country contributed to their unique perspective and artistic approach to their own culture. Movement between places and cultures have generated and fostered “cultural creativity” (Negus and Pickering, 2004), in this case Islamic creativity. Proving that it is not bound to a specific place or a context in order to inform it. This echoes the notion of “the inner spirit of art” that changes over time (Tomas, 1964), as Kandinsky portrays it, which uses the external form of a particular period, in this case traditional Islamic Arts, as a stepping stone to further development. Hence, the artist’s inner necessity or drive to move forward is what brings a new form of expression to their cultural production. Today’s internal laws of harmony can therefore become tomorrow’s external laws.

The scholarly efforts demonstrated above have paved the way for a critical approach to Islamic art and design as a field of historical inquiry. Professors like Rabbat and Necipoglu have facilitated their scholarly role to raise awareness through their affiliation with the Aga Khan Program in Harvard and MIT schools. Collectively, this shall contribute in

avoiding biases and shortcomings of future approaches in the field, however, as much as they have raised awareness about the current situation, the practical application is arguably still in its exploration process.

Even though this chapter does not factor in the current political and religious dynamics of the Muslim world, nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the influential aspects of such dynamics on forming a contemporary understanding of the religious texts, and ultimately, artistic expression of the Islamic culture. Some of the aspects that are influencing the maintenance and the growth of a fruitful knowledge are the rise of violent Muslim extremism, countered by paranoid restrictions on travel and exchange. Not to mention the extreme – and mostly oblivious – interpretations of the religious texts that feed false beliefs and political motivations rather than invoking productive visions for the future (Grabar, 2011).

3.7 ‘Design Culture’ as an Alternative Expression for Islamic Artistic Context

The previous point gave an overview of the methods through which Islamic art was articulated as a field of historical inquiry demonstrating how the knowledge of Islamic arts was transmitted, classified and framed. The scholarly efforts, from questioning the historiography and periodisation to investigating the methods of transmitting knowledge of artistic practice, focused primarily on the current understanding of ‘art’ and ‘architecture’ as creative fields. Whilst the relatively new understanding of ‘design’ was not addressed or made explicit in these efforts. Relating this to the earlier overview of design history, it can be concluded that design history is no longer a mere history of objects. Rather it is becoming a history that involves translations, transactions and transformations that forms the basis of relationships between objects, people, and ideas

(Fallan, 2010). By juxtaposing the historical development of both 'design' and 'Islamic Art' as fields of knowledge proves that history is an ongoing process. This process involves creativity being unfolded as a response to the changing environments and settings, and at the same time it contributes to their evolution. In other words, "history is a creative process, it should be viewed as subject to time. It is creatively unfolding", as described by Runco (2014).

This also brings to the light the definition of 'design' as a field in itself has been constantly shaped and informed. The constant need to find new terminologies that correspond to current understanding of design has created different arguments about how to position it in relation to artistic practices. There is no doubt that visual culture is continuously evolving between 'art' and 'design', making the relationship between art and design interchangeable. Coles (2005, p.98) asserts that there is a need for a public understanding that design is a "means of personal and cultural expression with the potential to equal and even exceed art's reach". Furthermore, some developments in the fields of sociology and history of technology argue that design, considered as social and cultural phenomenon, has more in common with technology than with art (Fallan, 2010). It could be argued that some design historians may find that even sociology and history of technology can provide an adequate methodological basis and theoretical framework to study design.

Another factor that contributes to the changes in the use of the term 'design', its practices and its public perceptions is design research and education. While design practice has become more reflexive and design education became more grounded in theory, research in the field of design has also become more grounded in academia (Fallan, 2010). And as the term 'design' has been fluctuating, the term 'design research' or 'design studies' has also become an ambiguous field due to its interdisciplinary nature with social sciences and humanities. The idea of 'design knows no limits' has empowered the implications of design, and its role in society to the extent that it legitimised design research, and has cultivated a sense of understanding about design's nature, scope, responsibility and potentials. To relate this argument to the context of this research; finding a way to reframe the Islamic artistic expression within the current understanding of 'design', its scope and its potentials, can be a step towards bridging

the theoretical gap between practice and pedagogy of Islamic artistic culture. Adapting 'design culture' as an alternative term could be a way forward to describe the holistic philosophy of traditional Islamic aesthetics, yet, being immersed in the current social and cultural settings. Thus, in an attempt to explore the boundaries between art and design practices, the methodological approach of this chapter started by drawing from the experience of the contemporary artists. This helped in creating a basis for participatory case studies that involves design students, which will be explored in chapter six by introducing the flexibility of the artistic practice into the context of 'design culture'.

3.8 Towards a New approach in Islamic Art and Design Education

Bab two concluded with important questions: first whether cosmological and spiritual thoughts of traditional Islam can be traced in contemporary artistic practice, and thereby proving Islamic art is "timeless". Second, whether traditional craftsmanship has a significant role in the practice and pedagogy of Islamic art. With regards to the first question, this chapter offered an overview on the work of group of contemporary artists who carried the traditional knowledge in different forms; either through interpretations of Quranic verses or philosophical sources through both the subject and the process of their work. As for the second question, it can be concluded that artists such as al-Salem, Angawi and Awartani maintain the continuation and the use of traditional craftsmanship in their contemporary approach as a way to preserve it. In addition, the three selected artists obtained a master's degree in traditional crafts despite their contemporary and distinctive approaches in their practice. Thus, the first part of this chapter provided a critical analysis on how Islamic values can be traced in current artistic process as understood in contemporary terms.

It was also important to mention the educational background for the three selected artists (discussed as case studies) in order to explore the relationship between their

artistic practice and their educational experience and connect it to the way Islamic art has been communicated as a field of inquiry. Looking at Basmah Felemban's experience, who is self-educated and delved into the understanding of Islamic philosophy as base materials to create her work, raises a few questions regarding the pedagogy of Islamic arts. "How much information should be given to art/design students?" is one question that comes to mind, and perhaps an occurring question that applies across art and design curriculums, even outside the Islamic context. Because, in the context of creative thinking, excessive information can restrict originality, which is presumably simulated when students are thinking for themselves (Runco, 2014). Thus, if the literature on Islamic philosophy, metaphysics and spiritual thoughts, (similar to the one Felemban was exposed to) had been provided to art and design students, would it generate original thoughts in their work?

On the other hand, the educational experience of Dana Awartani combines both the contemporary approach to art and the traditional teachings of craft. She explains that the first thing stated in PSTA is to forget everything students know about contemporary arts. She also confirms that students are mainly trained to become artisans and craftspeople. According to Awartani, the focus on traditional skills, methods, and techniques is so grounded in the educational model that there is hardly any room for it to be connected to contemporary theories in art. Such an educational framework is based on skills, techniques and methods while dealing with different traditional materials that could be applied in different traditional styles rather than dividing the curriculum into categories based on culture, or periods, or styles.

Furthermore, there are some commonalities between the artists' approach and the ethos of the school they came from. For example, PSTA is based on the belief that traditional arts are living practices and that they convey a spiritual resonance and connect past with the present. The school explicitly promotes preserving heritage by passing it on to future generations; an aim that is evident in their outreach programme, which established education centres, community development projects and cultural heritage regeneration programmes that are spread over 20 countries. What is important in this is that artists such as Ahmad Angawi, a PSTA alumni, became the director of the school's educational Centre in Saudi Arabia, taking the responsibility of teaching or "passing on"

their knowledge as a way to maintain the revival of traditional crafts in the contemporary artistic practice. This provokes two discourses: one is the significant role of artists in shaping, informing and disseminating artistic knowledge, and two, is the importance of craftsmanship, as cultural practices in connecting the traditional process with contemporary artistic pedagogy and practice.

The second part of this chapter concluded with key points on how Islamic art was formed as a field of inquiry: since Islamic art had been reduced to a category in art history of other cultures, it remained a static field of inquiry while the western artistic and architecture heritage have gone through an evolution over time, interacted and responded to movements such as modernism and post-modernism. Meanwhile, art and architecture practice in Islam continued as forms of cultural production, however it was perceived as being in an identity crisis. Another key finding is that while 'fine art' and 'design' have been taught as close and interrelated subjects, architecture as a subject of study has been taught more or less in isolation. This has led to two types of separation occurring in Islamic artistic knowledge; one that is between art and design, and the other is between design and architecture. The two types of separation happened after Islamic art has been documented and recorded as a field of inquiry in art history. And while the discourse of defining 'what is Islamic architecture?' has been a continuous emphasis by many scholars, defining what makes "Islamic" work in the field of 'design' as we know it today has been rarely, if not ever, ventured.

Thus, in order to propose a repositioning or reconfiguration of Islamic art or design, as a field of study, there are few points need to be considered:

1. The role of contemporary artists and their practice in informing Islamic artistic expression: The artists mentioned in this chapter represents a glimpse of a wide spectrum of artistic practice that draw links to Islamic cultural and aesthetic values. Their artistic approach to traditional thoughts proposes alternative modes of expressions rather than being limited to the mediums. Not to mention that some of the artists take an active role as teachers in passing on their skills and knowledge. Thus, artistic interactions, hybrids, exchanges and movements between places have fostered "cultural

creativity” which needs to be acknowledged as an integral part in forming and understanding the contemporary Islamic expression.

2. Role of history in the disciplinary structures of academia, particularly within Islamic pedagogy: Historical components are necessary in cultural studies, however in the pedagogical context of Islamic design there is a serious need for reorganisation rather than arbitrarily treating it as segments of already applied knowledge. While there were existing means to record knowledge and communicate traditional Islamic architecture, it was not the case with other complex and new categories such as design (Grabar, 2011). Questioning the quality of historical components in Islamic art and design has already been initiated as concluded from this chapter. Critical investigations have already demonstrated that Islamic art and design are profoundly influenced by factors such as popular movements, artistic innovations, and theological and spiritual discoveries (Rabbat, 2004). This does not mean that dynastic classification has to be abandoned, but to emphasise the fact that Islamic history involves more aspects than merely dynastic change.

3. The current understanding of ‘design culture’ as everyday culture: The changes in theoretical and methodological aspects of this field reflect the shift in the focus and practice of design history. This change can possibly be seen in parallel with the Islamic traditional views of creative expression as being part of everyday life, because it has been argued that ‘design culture’ includes both material and immaterial aspects of everyday life:

“Perhaps the most interesting aspect of design as a field of historical inquiry is its many guises of inherent ambiguity, its essential tension between ideology and practice, between mind and matter, between culture and commerce, between production and consumption, between utility and symbol, between tradition and innovation, between the real and the ideal.” (Fallan, 2010, p.VIII)

This point also relates to the current discourse of positioning design, as well as architecture, in the common fountainhead of 'arts'. While this discussion has been rooted in the Western theories about distinguishing 'fine arts' from 'applied arts' (Coles, 2005), traditional Islamic thoughts have made no such distinction, because religion is deeply rooted in the cultural behaviour and everyday practice which included all forms of artistic production which has been realised in Bab two (Nasr, 1987; Akkach, 2012). In other words, 'design culture' is not only articulated through visuals, words, forms and spaces, but it also engages actions, beliefs, and discourses. It can function as a lens that offers a better expression of the modern society and culture of Islam. Consequently, every product, whether contemporary artistic practice or architectural, the ideas they shape and the meanings they carry, forms a rich material basis for a refined and fertile Islamic cultural study.

Having said that, such considerations and insights can create the potential to transform systems of knowledge that are framed by a social and cultural awareness (Sullivan, 2005). The transformation includes various descriptive, interpretive and explanatory approaches to inform a new understanding of contemporary Islamic cultural practice, which will help in addressing the third research question: how to broaden the understanding and pedagogy of Islamic art and design in relation to time? The methodological approach of this research is thereby constructed with the contribution and participation of art scholars, as well as artists and designers in order to expand ways of artistic knowing, learning and teaching in Islamic context. This methodological approach will be further explained in the next chapter.



w r i t i n g a s d i a l o g u e s .

Barzakh 03



From One Circle to Another

- ﴿1﴾ A Geometry Retreat in Fez
- ﴿2﴾ On Cultural Knowledge
- ﴿3﴾ On Sacred Art (with artists)

geometry retreat

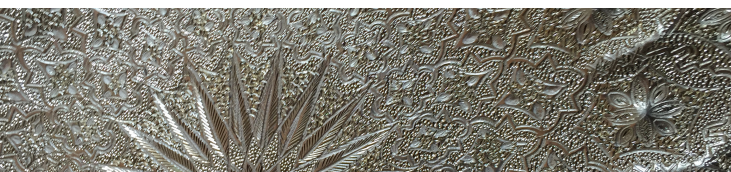


The trip allowed the observing of how Islamic geometry contributes to the everyday life of the study group; through the way the final ornament reveals itself after drawing layouts, the group related their process of drawing geometry to therapeutic art or a kind of spiritual contemplation.





The study trip included site visits, live geometry lessons and group exercises such as tessellations. The method was engaging and allowed for self-reflective process. It gave a glimpse into the local craftsmanship and hands-on explorations such as zellig making and brass embossing.

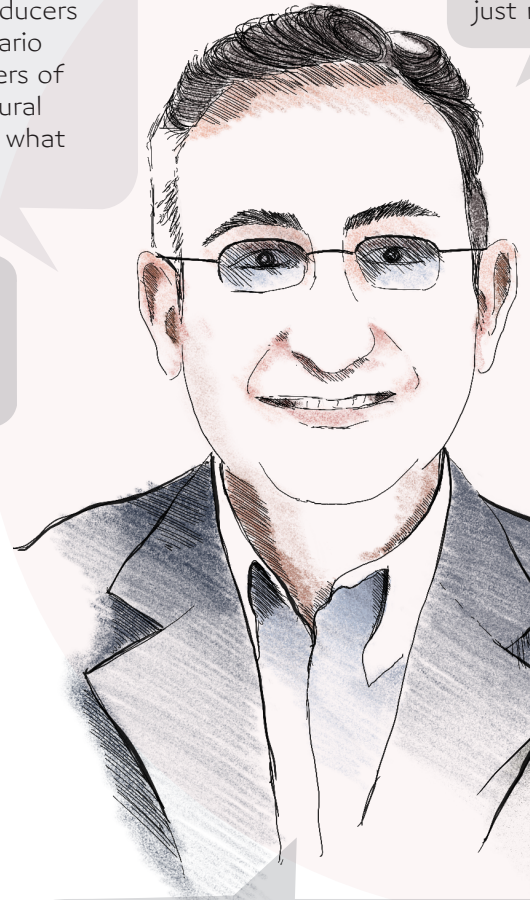


on cultural knowledge

We read everything about us, from Western discourse, because we're not really producers of knowledge. we haven't been producers of knowledge for some time. The West constructed that scenario that they are the makers of modernity and we are the followers of modernity. They established something which they called 'cultural relativism'. Cultural relativism, means that you are alright with what you do as long as you are in your cultural space.

Nasr actually proposes; that we should go and live in that little corner and keep reproducing the traditions whereas we live in a completely different world. I don't know, probably I'm a radical in that point of view..

Now I read mystical literature for a different kind of insight; literature that came out from Nasr and other theorists is highly indoctrinating and its very ideological. Even though that I reproduced it, but I grew out of it. I grew out of it because I was able to see other approaches and particularly think of that whole dilemma of being torn between tradition and modernity, and I'm trying to find a solution. So, actually after my book, I was writing intellectual history. So, that shows that we have made certain choices, there were certain things took place in terms of modern development, the only way to get out of what I call a futile binaries; because it won't lead anywhere, is to go beyond the two of them and consider there is one world, there is one modernity, and we have all contributed to it in one way or another.

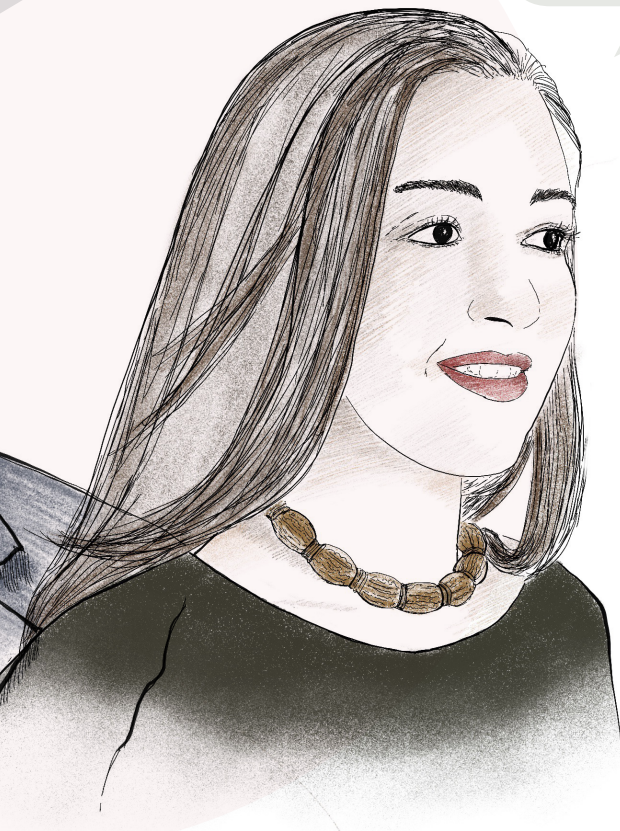


I have
that
for id
when
just r

I think it would actually make better sense by your very own constitutions, in terms of history, your way of learning, your desire for a particular way. That should make that clear without actually having to name it anything. cares? Come on! What does look Islamic

...my own theory which says
...we have that drive to search
...identity only when we lost it. And
...when we try to reclaim it, we actually
...reinforce that sense of loss.

[on outreach program of PSTA] I think there is contribution
toward making artists mindful of their cultural heritage.
The awareness is rising now in the Middle East, I still it is
in its infancy stage for us to see if it makes a difference.
They just started educating the youth, lets see what would
they do with this knowledge once they finish and go on in
their professional life.

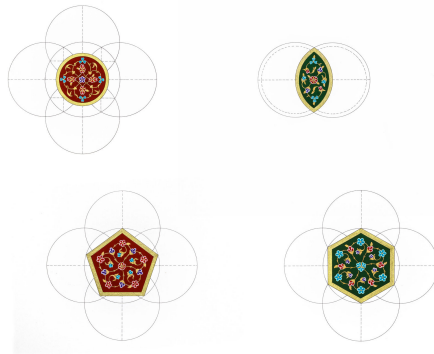


The only place to learn where I learned
was the Prince's School which was offers
the very basic and sort of introduction to
Islamic Arts and Crafts, then you kind of
have to continue on your own.
There are only a few people around the
world who can really help in traditional
crafts. The problem with places like
Prince's School is that there is no
innovation. Their methods are stuck in
the past and do not promote forward-
creativity and making it contemporary. So
that is what I am trying to do on my own
now.

...use for designers not to worry about it. You,
...of your background, your memories, your
...to select things and put them together in
...object reflects your own cultural background
...ing. I mean if it doesn't look Islamic, who
...these days?

There's a huge polarisation between the
contemporary and traditional.
It is such a crucial point: I had a kind of
polarized education so I learned about
contemporary thinking, critical theory,
and understanding of contemporary art.
In the Prince's School we are taught the
polar opposite to become less of an
artist and more of an artisan which is a
huge difference.

on sacred art

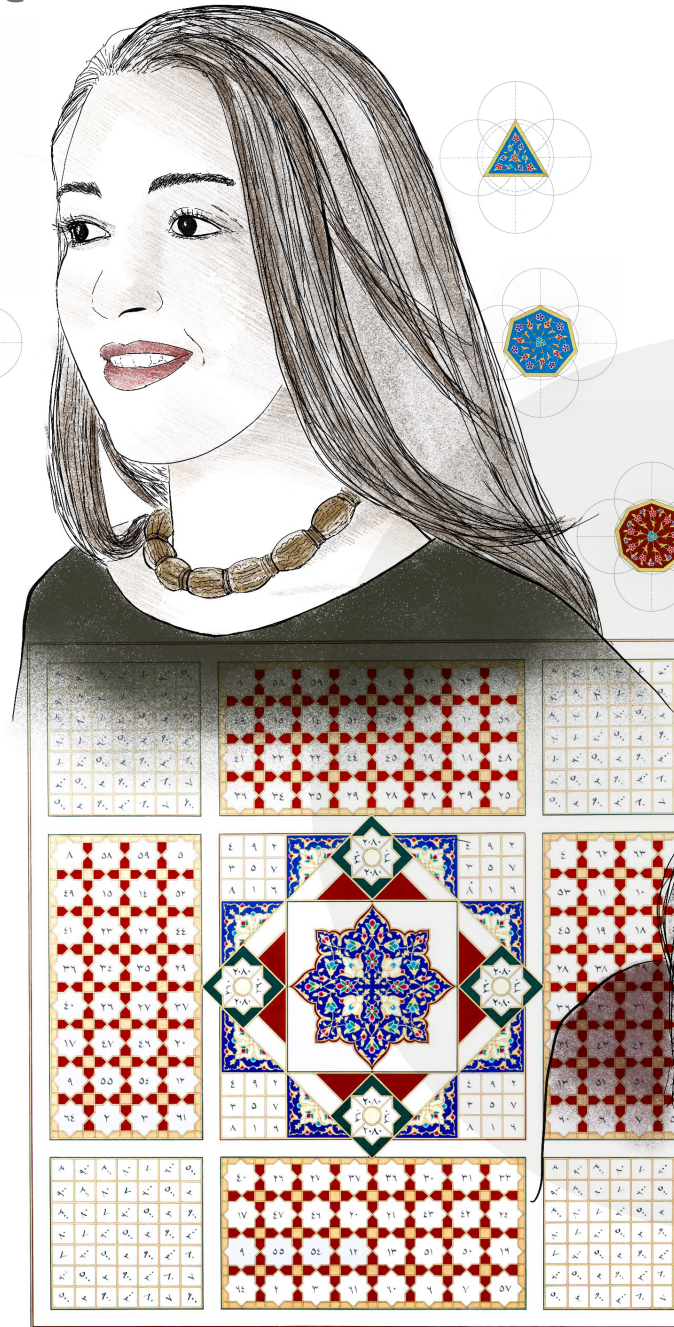


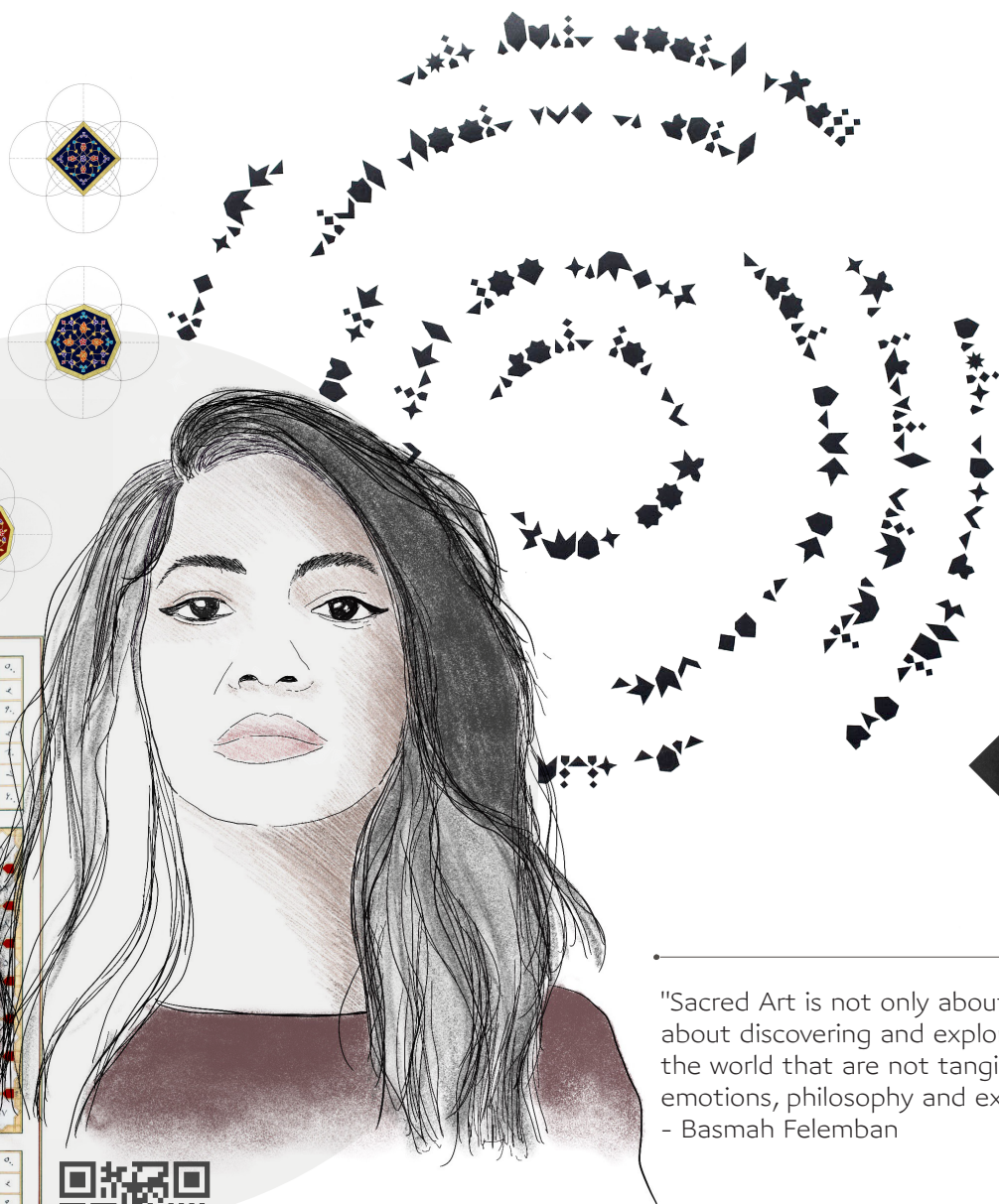
"All Islamic art is traditional craft and what I like about it, is that they say that contemporary art is made by man for man's ego, but traditional art is made by man for God. There is a huge difference between the two. Any form of Islamic art, whether it be calligraphy, Venetian or embroidery, where you do things over and over, it is similar to the idea of prayer, it is a form of expression"

- Dana Awartani



(Above) Dana Awartani, *Abjad Hawaz*, 2017, Shell gold, gouache and ink on paper
(Right) Dana Awartani *Heavenly Bodies*, 2015, Shell gold, natural pigment and ink on paper





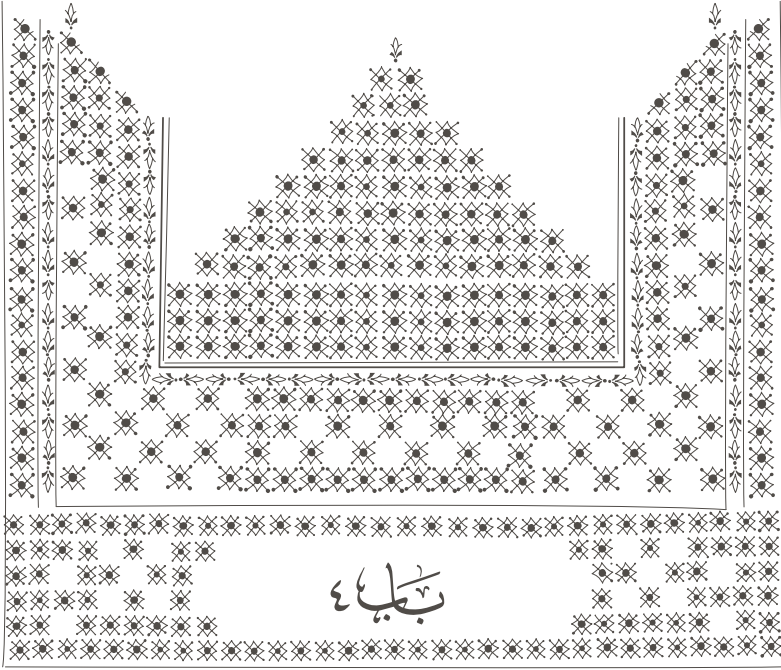
(Left) Basmah
Felemban *Qif Bil Tawaf*,
2014, Work on Paper
(Below) Basmah
Felemban, *Jeem*, 2012,
Acrylic on plywood



"Sacred Art is not only about religion, it's more about discovering and exploring all the things in the world that are not tangible like spirituality, emotions, philosophy and existence"
- Basmah Felemban







تَجْمِيعٌ



Bab 04 | Tajmee' (Assembling)

Methodological Review

مُفَادِلَةٌ

4.0 Introduction to Methodology

The first chapter mentioned briefly the methodological approach of the research and how it contributes to the knowledge of Islamic art and design. It also illustrated how 'literature' and 'methodology' are not divided into separate chapters but applied throughout the thesis in order to inform the research process (refer to figure 1.0). For example, chapter two did not rely solely on secondary sources of literature to inform the understanding of traditional Islamic philosophy, but also interacted with influential scholars in the field by conducting interviews as a method to support the main argument. Therefore, each chapter starts by highlighting the methods used to obtain the data (written or visual) that formed the chapter's findings.



Thus, bringing to light the relationship between knowledge and research similar to the one between understanding and writing, and since this research aims to explore alternative ways (or new modes) to understand historical knowledge and applications of Islamic aesthetics, then new modes of research writing are necessary (Daichendt, 2011). The mode of writing in Bab (chapter) two, for instance, is reflected in how Islamic aesthetics were demonstrated through design elements and principles rather than chronological review of traditional Islamic art. In addition, the visuals connecting one chapter with the other function as artistic interventions, making the thesis more interactive. Thus, the idea of 'methodology' in this research not only refers to the research practice, but it also encompasses the structure of the written text.

The visual intermissions also highlight how knowledge can be understood and explored through different means. These can vary from imaginative to systematic methods (or from written to visual expressions), as long as they serve the goal of describing, or interpreting, or explaining phenomena (Sullivan, 2005). In other words, the relationship between the visual and written materials of this research is thereby similar to the one between showing and telling (mimesis and diegesis) (Spencer, 2011). This relationship is essential, especially in art and design research where the creative process of expression cannot be comprehended in words yet forms an integral body of work that develops alongside the written text.

This chapter will demonstrate the rationale behind the methodological framework of research in two parts: The first reviews the relevant research methodologies in the field of humanities, their strengths and potential limitations within the context of this research. The second will demonstrate an understanding of how these methodologies operate within researches in the arts. It will also address the nature of research practice and the collaborative aspects that give a diverse voice to the research. Consequently, the chapter will combine the advantages of methods used in the humanities and social sciences with practice-led research methods. The outcomes will identify an appropriate methodological framework that better addresses the research questions.

PART A. IN SEARCH FOR A METHODOLOGY

The definitions used within research, such as 'qualitative research', 'research through the arts', 'practice-based research', 'research methodology' and 'methods' have always been in the state of flux. In 2005, the British Research Council stated that a new definition of research features three keywords: the research question, the context and the method (Daichendt, 2011), however in the case of research in the arts and design, this definition does not do justice to the artistic process. Research practices within the creative disciplines such as art, design and architecture grew to embrace complex intersections with other disciplines in the humanities and sciences (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007), not to mention acknowledging practice, or an artistic (design) process as an integral and informing part of the production of knowledge.

In order to sculpt a clear definition of research in the arts and design in a way that acknowledges the practice, it is necessary to revisit the 'purpose' of research, which has been articulated as follows:

"If a purpose of research is to create new knowledge that increases our awareness of whom we are and about the world in which we live, then it seems plausible to argue that understanding involves accessing, designing, and investigating issues of personal and public interest."

(Sullivan, 2005, p.74)

According to Sullivan, the purpose of research is to reach a kind of understanding that includes the exploration of other insights, as well as the researcher's tacit knowledge, which involves experience and reasoning. Thus, arguably both insight and personal exploration can be considered a means of a qualitative research, for it is commonly described as a process of emerging questions and procedures that aim to understand and explore how individuals or groups approach a social or a human problem (Creswell, 2003). When it comes to approaches to qualitative research, Creswell (2003) identifies different "worldviews" that sets out the philosophical direction of research; he refers to the term "worldview", which others arguably identify as paradigm, as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action". Accordingly, it could be argued that this research follows a social constructivist/ interpretivist worldview; because in the definition of social constructivists worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world they live and work in, and hence subjective meanings are being developed towards certain objects or things. These subjective meanings are valid and multiple which often leads to the researcher looking at complex views rather than ones that are narrowed down into few categories or ideas (table 4.0). Such complexity of views is formed through interaction between individuals, as well as historical and cultural means that function within their lives (Creswell, 2003). Relating this to the context of this thesis, the research aims to look at different views from individuals in the field in order to include a collective voice that informs the landscape of contemporary Islamic art and design. This entails investigating the historical means that shaped the artistic Islamic heritage and tracing their functionality in contemporary practice. Thus, identifying a basic set of beliefs (or the general worldview) for the research will help in laying out the basis for the methodological approach.



Table 4.0 Research's
Logic of Inquiry,
excerpts from (Potter,
2006)

Logic of Inquiry	Paradigm	Epistemology	Ontology	Research Aim	Data are Gathered	Method
Abductive	Construction-ism	Knowledge is constructed, multiple and a means to exercise and/or resist power	The world as we 'know' it is constructed through human meaning-making. It is a world of representations, signs and symbols	To explicate the social world – to gain insight and understanding of how it operates	... to develop hypotheses	Observe or create anomalies or surprises-examine “the residue of the unexplained”

There are various ways in which the research can be classified; for example, research types can be identified in terms of process and outcome (Brewer, 2007). With regards to the process of this research, it is qualitative in nature as it shares the following characteristics with qualitative research as indicated by Creswell (2003):

- “Researcher as a key instrument”: in the sense that the researcher will gather and synthesise multiple forms of data through various methods without relying on instruments developed by others.
- Research as a holistic picture: because it involves multiple perspectives to build a visual model for holistic complex picture.
- Research as theoretical-to-inductive process: the research aims at identifying the cultural, social, and religious contexts of the problem through a theoretical lens. It also involves collaborating with participants to build patterns and themes through inductive and interactive process.

Research can also be classified in terms of the outcomes into basic or applied research (Brewer, 2007). On reflection, this research can be considered as ‘applied research’ as it aims to apply theoretical insights in “real-world situations” (Hart, 1998). It can also be considered as applied research because the research questions are in the form of ‘how’

Criteria	Basic Research	Applied Research
Purpose	Develop universal knowledge, answer single questions, discover statistical relationships/ effects	Understand/ address problems, answer multiple questions, discover practical relationships/ effects
Contexts	Academic settings, self-initiated, single discipline, less time pressure	Industrial settings, client initiated, multidisciplinary, more time pressure
Methods	Internal validity, single level of analysis, single method, direct observations	External validity, multiple levels of analysis, multiple methods, indirect observations

Table 4.1 Comparison between basic and applied types of research in terms of purposes, contexts, and methods (Source: Hedrick, Bickman, and Rog, 1993. P.4-9)

rather than 'what'. Other characteristics of applied research resonate with this research scope which is demonstrated in (table 4.1).

It is important to identify the difference between 'methodology' and 'method' while viewing them in broader terms in order to inform the research process. A 'method' refers to a specific technique, or arrangement, or tool that is used to explore, gather and analyse information, while 'methodology' refers to the study of the system of methods and principles used in a discipline (Gray and Malins, 2016). Hart (1988), on the other hand, defines methodology as follows:

"A system of methods and rules to facilitate the collection and analysis of data. It provides the starting point for choosing an approach made up of theories, ideas, concepts and definitions of the topic; therefore, the basis of a critical activity consisting of making choices about the nature and character of the social world (assumptions). This should not be confused with techniques of research, the application of methodology." (Hart, 1998, p.28)

While other references may define methodology in broader terms:

"Methodology refers to the overall approach to the research process from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of data"
(Brewer, 2007)

"Methodology can be defined as a demonstration of theory that has

previously been articulated, or theory that is articulated by the work itself.”
(Macleod and Holdridge, 2005, P.197)

Examples of methods that are adapted for this research are: concept mapping, observation, video/audio materials, and visual diary, which will be further elaborated upon later. However, searching for a proper methodological framework to be adapted for this research was initially difficult. Being based in design discipline, which stands on the threshold between sociology and arts, there is no clear ready-set methodology from these two fields that can be adapted fully. Therefore, it was important to evaluate the various approaches in humanities and social science first, then in the field of the arts

4.1 Relevant Methodological Approaches

From the various methodologies of qualitative research in humanities, an overview of the methodologies relevant to the scope of this research are demonstrated as follows:

4.1.1 Case studies

According to Creswell (2003), case studies are a “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals”. McKernan (2013) on the other hand, defines it as a formal collection of evidence or reports on a project, or innovation, or event over a prolonged period of time by telling the story as it evolved. Case studies are arguably compelled within a timeframe or an activity, and the information collected from them can be through a variety of procedures or techniques. When conducting case studies; there are six sources of evidence that are commonly known; observation, open-ended conversations (interviews), physical artefacts, archival records, and documents such as reports, letters, and newspaper articles (Yin, 2003). When it comes to observation, it is either direct such as of human behaviour or physical environments, or participant-observation (Gray and Malins, 2016) when the researcher is participating in a “life-role”. This research will use participatory observation and open-ended interviews as two of the main methods for research inquiry¹.



¹ Interestingly, some considered that participant-observation is considered a methodology of its own which will be further elaborated in the next point as part of “participatory practice”.

Case studies can also be applied to test a hypothesis; despite that case studies can build, inform, or challenge a theoretical perspective and can potentially limit the possibility of making discoveries. However, case studies allow for alterations after conducting them as they may influence the original perspective (Yin, 2003). With reference to research in the arts, Sullivan (2005) mentions a similarity between case study research and art practice-based research, in the sense that research can include a review process that involves examining existing theories and practices as well as personal reinterpretation and evaluation. For example; artists, art writers, or theorists can provide a critical inquiry- that may not necessarily be referenced- through an interpretive lens. This is evident in Bab three where spiritual aspects were investigated through the work of various artists. Gray and Malins (2016) elaborate further about case studies happening within the context of art and design research, when the case is a practitioner, a studio/workshop, or a project.

In addition, it is important to note that case studies may only address unique examples or idyllic cases, and therefore generalisations cannot be made (Gray and Malins, 2016). Implementing multiple-case studies, however, evaluates a single inquiry through two or more cases which produces a broad range of evidence that include intense and wider range of issues and eventually lead to a stronger argument. Evaluating multiple case studies happens through “cross-case synthesis” and automatic triangulations of the data emerge from the case studies (Yin, 2003; Burton and Bartlett, 2009). The application of case study approach is evident in Bab three, investigating the spiritual aspects in artistic production and the creative processes used by contemporary Muslim artists. It informed the research through first examining criteria (spirituality) through the artist’s personal interpretations, and second in the three case studies where the artist’s work and process is the subject of investigation.

4.1.2 Participatory Research

Although some references consider participatory research as a type of ‘Action Research’² (Gray and Malins, 2016), the inclusion of a participatory approach as a separate form of inquiry here relates closely to the methodological approach of this research. Participatory “action” research refers to the research in which the people’s lived experiences are shaping and adding value to the research inquiry. This approach has been used in some cases of art and design research to explore the use of new media (Gray and Malins, 2016). Participatory study or research is recursive and argumentative in nature and is usually

² Action Research is a practice-rooted approach started initially from educational entities out of the disappointment of traditional forms of academic research (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). It has been described that it starts from professional concerns that provoke problems, issues or sets of questions. Then a plan of action is arranged to find evidences that will be monitored. The definition of action research has been varied through time, space and setting so much so that some research in the art and design have adapted its approach or interpretations of it (Gray and Malins, 2016)





focused to bring change in practice. According to Creswell (2003), participatory action aims at helping individuals in breaking away from the restrictions they may find in the media, at work, and in education. It often emerges from an important stance about the problem and ends with an action agenda for change.

This research adopts the basis of a participatory approach as a core methodology, in the sense that it adopts the practical and collaborative aspects of its nature. The advantage of adopting a participatory approach is that the research inquiry will be completed along **with** other influential individuals in the field, rather than **on or to** them (Creswell, 2003). Hence, in the context of this research, the researcher not only aims to investigate the contemporary practice of Muslim artists through secondary sources, but she also intends to interact and engage with them on a personal level. This is evident in Bab two, where influential scholars were referenced as primary sources of literature were engaged in conversations with the researcher regarding the research arguments. Eventually, the research will encompass the inputs from individuals from various backgrounds, who are seen as “active collaborators” in the exploration of the research question.

4.2 Selected Research Methods

From the overview provided about the relevant methodological approaches, this research will use the following selected methods:

4.2.1 Interviews

Following on from the social constructivist worldview discussed earlier, it could be argued that through interviews, the researcher has been able to form a comprehensive understanding of the subjective meanings reflected from the individuals who are influencing the research landscape. With topics related to art or design evaluation in particular, interviews offer the opportunity to get insights from individuals, on how they think and feel about their own work, and how they particularly think about topics without being concerned or influenced by others (Gray and Malins, 2016; Laurel, 2003). As for the structure of the interviews, Creswell (2003) argues that through open-ended questions to the participants or the individuals, one can construct the meaning of a social

or historical context. Yin (2003) supports this notion by stating that the flexible format for open-ended – or semi-structured interviews can give insights into the individuals or participants “implicit construction of reality”. In addition, Raune (2005) explains the benefits of conducting unstructured interviews in an explorative approach to research; in the sense they are efficient when it comes to providing a detailed descriptive depiction of a process or a phenomenon, when a participant’s unique experience or perspective needs to be fully understood.

Thus, the interviews considered here are a discursive method and a good way to find out about individual’s values, beliefs, and opinions regarding the research context (Gray and Malins, 2016). They offer the opportunity to reach scholars and people in the research landscape at a more personal level, by understanding their viewpoint and other aspects influencing their work. The researcher reviewed literature from influential scholars in the field, however meeting some of them in person has helped in further understanding their views, which informed the basis of this research literature. This included interviewing Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Samer Akkach (from Bab 2) and interviewing Dana Awartani and Nasser Rabbat (from Bab 3). The social harmony achieved during interviews can result in establishing a pleasant rapport with the interviewees (Raune, 2005), however subjectivity and bias could surface as some of the challenges of conducting interviews. Confidentiality and possible “distortion” in documenting response are also ethical considerations that needed to be carefully addressed (Gray and Malins, 2016).

4.2.2 Focus Groups

Although it has been argued that ‘focus groups’ could be defined as an extension of interviews (Raune, 2005), others have considered it a research method on its own. This differentiation has been articulated in the definition of focus groups as follows:

“A gathering of 10 to 12 consumers who are led in a tightly scripted discussion by a trained moderator, usually for about 2 hours.” (Ireland, C., cited in Laurel, 2003, p.24)

As for Raune (2005), he defines focus groups as a technique or a method that depends on the social interaction of a group, through a guided discussion about specific or selected topic(s). This data collection technique, as he argues as an extension of interviews, acknowledges the value of social interaction as an important source of knowledge/data. In addition, there are several types of focus groups that differ in size and sampling structure, however they all share the same qualitative characteristics and





the core research method. Focus groups are recommended as a research tool when the research aims are to generate ideas and/or expand understanding without the need to reach an agreement or a conclusion (Laurel, 2003). Another benefit of using focus groups as a research method that it offers the opportunity for visuals to be an integral part of the research process, which is suitable especially if participants are artists and designers as intended for this research. Theoretical discussions are united with personal stories and experiences that can result in fruitful outcomes (Spencer, 2011). This variety of mediums and expressions does not mean that they can be a substitute for other methods and tools in academic research; rather it enriches the research process and stimulates interests around the research subject.

A critical point that needs to be considered as a moderator of focus groups, is maintaining the social interaction between the group members in order to produce a dynamic dialogue and an inspiring exchange of thoughts. However, it is important that the moderator runs the focus group without “overly directing” or imposing their own point of view (Raune, 2005).

To summarise, the basics of focus groups as a research method is adapted here in order to utilise its social interaction and its visual outcomes to form an integral part of research knowledge. Its adaptability to include a variety of mediums and expressions makes it suitable for knowledge inquiry in the fields of art and design; therefore, its basic structure is reconfigured here to suite the artistic inquiry of the research. This will be elaborated upon in Bab six, where a pilot focus group was conducted with artists and art students in the first part of the Bab.

4.2.3 Auto-Ethnography

Ethnography can be defined as a “qualitative strategy in which the researcher studies intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational and interview data” (Creswell, 2003, p.229). In the context of art and design research, however, ethnography can be defined as a research approach that aims to produce detailed and in-depth observations of people’s behaviour, beliefs and preferences by observing or interacting with them in a natural environment (Laurel, 2003). Although it emerged first as an approach in social sciences, the term had been integrated into design discussions in the late 1980s. Similar to other research methods,

ethnography expanded to include various types such as: field ethnography, digital ethnography, ethno-futurism, and auto-ethnography.

In regard to 'auto-ethnography', the term reflects an interest in both the individual's voice and lived experience, in a sense that the researcher writes themselves into the text. Here, the researcher's culture, and their place in it is considered the ethnographic focus. Thus, the researcher's own experiences become a source of primary data, and ultimately, auto-ethnography forms part of the final research text. Such an approach in research enables the researcher to include explorations of their identity. Consequently, this approach makes the relationship between the researcher, the context, and the individuals more explicit (Crouch and Pearce, 2013). The application of auto-ethnography will be part of the basic approach of the coming Babs 5 and 6.



It can be realised, from its own definition, that observation is the key strategy in ethnographic research. However, ethnographers rarely use observation on its own, rather, they supplement it with documents, interview texts and artefacts in order to enrich and support their observations. The method of collecting data can include creative and innovative ways as the research evolves, and collectively, they can provide rich materials that enhance the research's credibility and its readability. The collected data, along with the observation notes, are usually used to create the final research text, taking many forms including performance and poetry, and will help the reader to connect with the setting, the people and the research (Crouch and Pearce, 2013).

4.3 Strengths and Limitations of Selected Methods

Although qualitative research, which includes case study approaches, is often characterised as being "soft social science" arguably because of inadequate sample sizes or evidences (Yin, 2003), it is not data-driven or outcome-oriented as quantitative research. Characteristics of such social science research methods make them adequate to be applied in research in arts and design. There is no need to dwell on the dichotomy between two types of research (research in humanities and research in the arts) instead, attributes of the differing research approaches in the fields of social science and humanities can either be adopted, modified or discarded to suite research inquiry in the art and design fields.

Other methods such as questionnaires were discarded because it is based on generalisation while the research focused on individual experiences that can spark a general approach in creative practice. As the research seeks to understand the creative process used by contemporary artists and designers, using such a quick, non-detailed method such as questionnaires often resulted in questionable and unclear responses, and rarely offers the researcher in-depth answers or useful insights (Gray and Malins, 2016). Despite that it is one of the commonly used methods in research, it can result in automated responses that “put words in the respondents’ mouths” (Raune, 2005).

‘Action research’ was also discarded as a main methodology for this research, even though it forms the basis for approaches in art and design such as ethnography and participatory methods. The reason resides in two points; firstly ‘action research’ is strongly associated with and implemented in education or in a teaching research context (Gray and Malins, 2016), while this research draws from the researcher’s practice as a designer and curator as well as an educator. Secondly, the process of conducting ‘action research’ is often described as linear (Burton and Bartlett, 2009), while the intended process of this research includes non-flattened processes between thinking and making. However, there are similarities in the scope of this research as it is a type of research that helps in understanding how social change can be influenced, and therefore people use their own practice to generate their own theories (McNiff, 2010).

With regards to the challenges in the selected research methods, the case study approach has often been criticised as being unrepresentative of the wider population, and hence the research cannot generalise findings even if the research consists of multiple case studies (Burton and Bartlett, 2009; Yin, 2003). It could be argued that perceiving case studies as being a representative sample of a wider population is what creates this misconception (Yin, 2003). Instead, case studies ought to be understood and looked at as ‘analytic’ rather than ‘statistic’ and therefore can be generalised to a certain extent especially if it was conducted as a multiple case study instead of a single case study. The benefit of multiple case studies is that it offers a broad range of evidence to explore one issue or discover insights for different issues which potentially lead to more profound research (Yin, 2003).

Another criticism against case studies is that they are not efficient enough to generate theories, or explanations that could create radical change in thinking/ re-thinking, describing/re-describing, imagining/ re-imagining cultural and social dynamics (Back and Puwar, 2012). This is perhaps the main reason why in this research, the use of case studies as a methodological approach is limited to covering part of the literature background and contemporary issues that lack academic references, and not the entire aspect and dimensions of the research. Not depending entirely on conducting case studies in this research will be a sufficient approach in order not to lose perspective on the account of the temporality of conducting the case studies.

However, adapting other methods such as focus groups can also be challenging; it has been argued that it has rather a negative effect on creativity. Nystrom (1979) argues that group communication can result in a fixed approach or limited ideas as oppose to open-ended individual thinking process. This is influenced by the group dynamics; as there is a need for participants to understand each other, and therefore they cannot freely and spontaneously express their ideas in a group setting as much as when they are on their own. Another drawback of a focus group is that it may be subject to ethical considerations when the subject matter is sensitive or related to personal or the professional status of the participants (Laurel, 2003).

On the other hand, the social interaction between participants or group members, if there are well-chosen advocates in the group, can result in a dynamic flow and insightful exchange of thoughts that could not be possible in a one-to-one conversation (Raune, 2005). The “give and take” and the flow of conversation in a focus group offers the researcher the opportunity to understand and learn about what people think, and why they think the way they do about the research topic (Raune, 2005). As previously mentioned, the group setting offers the opportunity to use visuals as a parallel medium for conversation. The visuals are unambiguous and immediate, in the sense that they engage the participants in a multi-sensorial level. They are considered immediate, authentic, and grounded in material reality more than verbal communication can fully encompass (Spencer, 2011, p. 32).



Adapting ‘focus groups’, that consist of multi/inter disciplinary members, as a method in this research enables new modes of sociology and design to be considered and developed; from structuring the group session, mind-map conversation and then prototyping while thinking of the research topic can include tools for sharing, adapting and absorbing (Back and Puwar, 2012). The result is a set of focus groups that embrace experiments and the collaborative creative practice that can generate prototypes that challenge and inform the research topic.

In this research, visuals are defined in a broad term; they can include and are not necessarily limited to mind maps, artworks, design sketches and three-dimensional design prototypes. In the search for an adequate methodological framework for this research, there is a necessity to find a balance between visual and textual materials that can ultimately create - and contribute to- knowledge. And while this section draws from research methods in the social sciences, the next part of this chapter will investigate the research methods and tools in the context of artistic research and practice. This will set the tone upon which the methodological basis of the research is built.

PART B. RESEARCH IN THE ARTS

In Bab three; it was concluded that there are academic efforts addressing Islamic art as field of inquiry, yet they are grounded in art and architectural history as forms of scholarly knowledge. However, Islamic aesthetics and artistic expression have barely been addressed in the context of ‘design culture’. These scholarly works that address the research context have been grounded in the methodological framework of research in the social sciences, away from integrating visual practice as a basis for understanding and informing research inquiries. This brings to light the three genres of visual research approaches identified by Sullivan (2005). The first one is based on discipline, which draws on sociological, anthropological and cultural areas using traditional means for interpreting data. The second is also discipline-based; however, it is also based on historical inquiry and “postmodern” critical perspectives, and it draws on the visual arts, such as art theory

and art history. The third is what he describes as “arts-based educational inquiry”, which views art as a set of practices that informs the way things are understood, gathered, and represented. To relate this to the context of this research, Islamic art has formally been approached through discipline-based and historical-based inquiries, but rarely, if not ever, through “arts-based educational inquiry”. This genre of inquiry offers a comprehensive basis that comprises multi-layered aspects of this research while respecting the inter-textuality between art, design and education.

In Part A of this chapter, it has been realised that participatory and ethnographic approaches in methodology are practical and collaborative in nature. Auto-ethnography, for example, draws from the researcher’s own experience as seen throughout this research. It also draws from the researcher’s relationship with the individuals and the Islamic culture forming the research context in order to create primary research data. And since the researcher and the research context is rooted in the artistic practice, then needless to say that this research is identified as artistic research.

Artistic research, as an expression, connects and unites the two domains of art and academia, in the sense that it opens the boundaries between them to forms of thinking and understanding that are intertwined with artistic practice:

“Embedded in artistic and academic contexts, artistic research seeks to convey and communicate contents that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic products” (Borgdorff, cited in Biggs and Karlsson, 2010, p.45).

There are similarities between artistic research and action research as mentioned earlier; part of the main aim of action research is to transform and enhance practice. Similarly, artistic research aims to enrich and understand the knowledge of artistic practice. On the other hand, artistic research can be similar to auto-ethnography as explained earlier as it engages with who we are and where we stand. Therefore, this section addresses the methodological approach in the light of artistic research, bringing together the methods that tie academic and the practice fields of Islamic art. It will also demonstrate how practice is evidenced in this research, including the collaborative nature of the research process.

4.4 Relationship Between Research and Practice

While the notion of arts practice in research has been constantly informed, terms have been developed to explain, justify, and argue the generation of knowledge by creative practitioners (Smith and Dean, 2009). It could be argued that there has been a lack of suitable models, tools, in other words adequate 'methods' that support creative practise, that goes in parallel with what is understood by academic research (Williams, Ostwald, and Askland, 2011). Therefore, it became vital to find ways in which the creative process (or the design process) informs creative education through academic research. Thus, the expression "practice-led" has been adopted as a basic term (yet with a wider scope) creating the distinction for the research practices that emerge from creative disciplines such as art and design. Rust, Mottram, and Till (2007) defines practice-led research as:

"Research in which the professional and/or creative practices of art, design or architecture play an instrumental part in an inquiry." (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007, p.11)

It is important to note that this definition does not limit the practice as either a method, or a methodology of research. On the contrary, it defines practice as an activity that can be employed in method, methodology or research as long as it contributes to the research inquiry. That contribution in itself is an explicit understanding of the role and the value of practice in research. Skinner, on the other hand, defines art-based research more elaborately:

"Arts-based research incorporates the processes, forms (or structures), and approaches of creative practices in academic scholarship. Therefore, arts-based research draws from the creative arts to inform and shape social science research in interdisciplinary ways, thus redefining methodological vehicles in the field of education." (Skinner cited in Daichendt, 2011, p.52)

In addition, Frayling (1993) describes different ways to think about research and practice, and education through art, which are often cited by practice-led researchers, and used as a benchmark to adapt its theoretical implications on research by individuals (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007; Daichendt, 2011; Biggs and Karlsson, 2010):

1. Research FOR practice: in which the research aims are compliant with practice aims. It is also called research as practice (or art) for the artist is considered to be a researcher while working in his/her studio. Here, art is treated as the subject of inquiry, but with the goal to transform art by producing art.
2. Research THROUGH practice: where practice operates to reach a research purpose. Knowledge is created through the interaction of the practice (or art) and reflection, and therefore, knowledge is floating somewhere between art production and the written work but not tied to one or the other as the main document. Here, art is treated as a method to understand the world.
3. Research INTO practice: where research is observing the working or creative process of others. It could be theoretical, historical or aesthetic investigation that positions the artist researcher in a detached stance while using methodologies such as anthropology or psychology. Here, art is identified as a subject of inquiry, and treated as an object in the world to be examined, understood and explained.

Similarly, Sullivan (2005) asserts that the practice of visual arts and its conceptualisation establish an interrelationship between creating and critiquing. He explains that interpretations and representations, which are based on well-placed art-theoretical grounds and a determined creative quest, ultimately offer the potentials of producing new understandings.

4.5 Characteristics of Practice-led Research

Figure 4.0
Characteristics of
naturalistic inquiry,
interpretation by
Bunnell (Source: Gray
and Malins, 2016, p.97)



When it comes to practice-based methodologies, there are few research strategies that address the knowledge gained by practice; one of them is the naturalistic inquiry described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) where research happens in situations rather than controlled settings. This approach has been related to practice-based research in a 'flower diagram' (Figure 4.0). The diagram acknowledges the importance of knowledge gained by doing or creating; in other words, intuitive **tacit knowledge**. To elaborate on the notion of tacit knowledge, Sennet (2008) argues two points; first that the knowledge gained from hand skills begins as a bodily practice, through the act of touch and movement. The second argument is that through imagination, one can explore a language that guides the improvised physical skill into a technically developed skill:

“...the intimate connection between hand and head. Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding.” (Sennett, R., 2008, p.9)

Pallasmaa (2011) also referred to the value gained by physical skills, by referring to Heideggerian notion that the different acts and movements of the hands, in their own silent language, are rooted in the element of thinking. Also, it has been discussed that theoretical grounds are embodied in the artwork, that the artwork itself carries the understanding of the artists and the way they envisage the world. Thus, the creative capacity or the human thinking capacity is connected directly with the hands (Heidegger, 1977; Pallasmaa, 2009), which is a notion that echoes the thoughts mentioned in Bab two regarding creativity and the act of making. Also, it is commonly observed in the traditional societies where the skill and knowledge are (innately) inhabited in the senses and muscles.





Referring back to the diagram, an essential point to this research's approach is the idea that the methodology is **emergent**, and that the approach grows and unfolds as the researcher-practitioner interacts with the research question and context (Gray and Malins, 2016). This way of inquiry resonates with Schon's exploration on 'reflective practice' (1984), especially when it comes to notion of 'tacit knowledge' being implicit in design process and acknowledged as an integral part of the research.

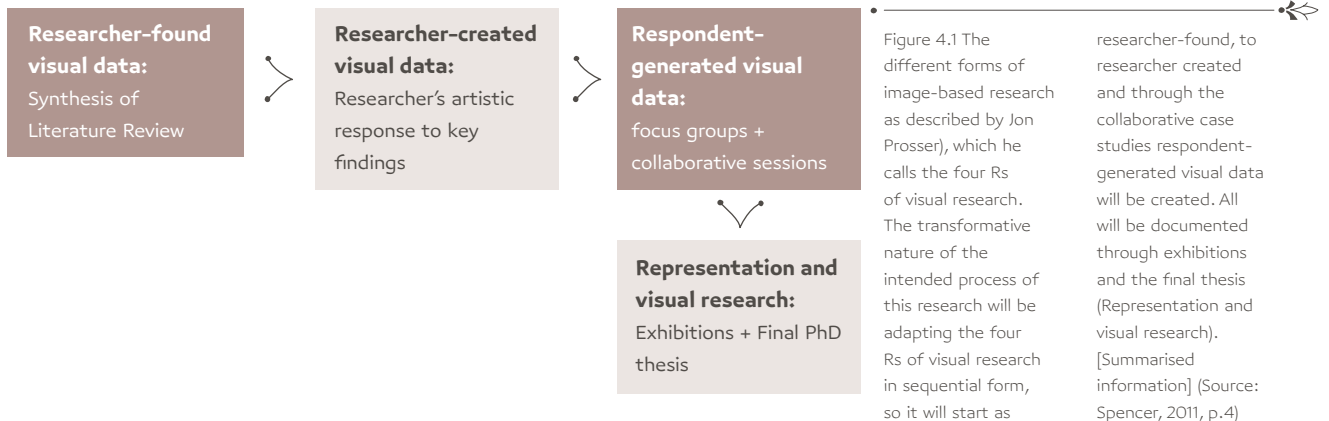
It is clear that Bunnell's diagram supports Schon's approach when it comes to emergent methodological strategies. Schon proposes that a lot of the practice is intuitive, and that it is considered personal knowledge that cannot be described. Many important concepts in art and design research emerged from Schon's approach such as; 'reflective practitioner', 'reflection-in-action', and 'knowing-in-action'. He suggests that there can be a dynamic kind of knowing in practice; which is knowing how rather than what. And that 'reflection in action' is an activity where professional practitioners think about their work and reshape their actions while doing their work (Schon, 1984; Gray and Malins, 2016).

4.6 Manifestation of Practice in Research

In order to define the nature of practice in this research, it is important to note that adopting a practice-led approach for this research incorporates various unique processes, forms, and methods of the creative practice, as well as informing what could have been a social science research in inter-disciplinary ways. In parallel, the academic research can positively impact on the creative practice and can contribute in redefining methodological mediums in the field of Islamic art and design education (Daichendt, 2011; Smith and Dean, 2009). This "bidirectional focus" on both the creative practice and the creative research allows for tracking the artist-researcher's methodology, even if the term and meaning of an 'artist's product' may remain open to interpretation, Macleod and Holdridge explain:

“The methodology determines the quality of the artist’s theoretical premise, and this is a premise that is embodied in the artwork. The artwork then bears the burden of research proof; it does this through what we have termed the enactment of thinking [...] This is thinking which is dependent on the artist’s speculations about being in the world according to her/his determining vision of it; this is thinking which is determined by understanding the visual and by the power of that understanding. It is also thinking which is acted through, the enactment of thinking.” (Macleod and Holdridge, 2005, p.206)

The “Enactment of thinking” that Macleod and Holdridge refer to seems to resonate with Sullivan’s (2005) assertion on the importance of the artist’s experience as a core element to ‘create’ new knowledge and inform the understanding of the research subject. He also explains that this experience takes various forms such as exhibitions, performances, and publications. This refers to another similarity of thoughts; one with Jon Prosser’s ‘visual knowing’ framework (Spencer, 2011), through which he suggests that the reflexive process transforms between visual and textual data in the research (Figure 4.1). Thus, the ‘enactment of thinking’ for an artist-researcher can arguably start with finding the data, responding to data, then creating the data, and last representing the data. This way of looking at the process of thinking and the dynamic between the theory and practice allow for fluid boundaries between issues and ideas, concerns and interests.



Therefore, it can be summarised that “knowledge generated from practice-based research” has some remarkable characteristics helping in the dynamic relationship between creative work and thinking process:

1. **“Generalisable”**: as the research is considered as a process that ‘generates’ knowledge rather than ‘finds’ knowledge, that “knowledge is generalisable (that is, applicable to some other process or event than that which has been studied in its production)” (Smith and Dean, 2009).
2. **Experiential**: as it is an active experience, artist or designer as researcher reaches new insights effectively by doing, creating and reflecting on that experience. Practice generates questions that can be addressed through research, and in return, research feeds back into practice (Gray and Malins, 2016).
3. **Transformative**: as knowledge created in art and design is always recursive and it is subject to constant change and this change in experience feeds back into the process and the progress of thinking/making (Sullivan, 2005).
4. **Transferable**: as knowledge – similar to artworks – can be interpreted, understood and used by others in a corresponding or similar manner with that of the original (Smith and Dean, 2009).
5. **Conceptual**: That means that it is based in the practice of making, which uses the knowledge available through “personal cognitive systems and culturally accessible domains.” (Sullivan, 2005, p.100)

Having said that, it can be concluded that the practice of this research is mainly evidenced through a transformative and conceptual series of experiments that forms the journey and the narrative of the research process in a reflective manner. To relate this to the different methodological approaches discussed earlier in this chapter, the methods selected for this research which foster its artistic nature are summarised in (table 4.2).



Table 4.2 Summary of the methods used in this research, their advantages and disadvantages, and the context in which they are applied [Author's notes]

Method	Advantage	Disadvantage	Research Context	Ethical Considerations
Visualising (mind-mapping)	Easy reading of complex materials, encourages discussion and sharing	Needs proper technical and aesthetic expertise- might need annotations when it is complex	OVERALL: Presentation of literature findings, synthesis of data and research process.	It should not intentionally be misleading
Interviews (one-on-one, video call)	Discursive, and a good method and good way to find person's values, beliefs and stance. In-depth response, knowing people in-person	Could be prone to subjectivity and bias, can be time-consuming	BAB 2 & 3: Meeting with scholars for the literature review, and artists to understand their creative process	Authority: Needs permission before recording, assure confidentiality if needed. Caution with editing as it may distort facts.
Case-studies	Affords detailed study in depth and breadth- triangulation method supports argument and validation	Specifically chosen samples which makes it hard to generalise, critical review may be difficult at time, and can be time-consuming	BAB 3, 5 & 6: Observing, meeting and analysing the work of contemporary Muslim artists and designers to investigate spirituality in their creative process	Authority: Needs permission before recording and public sharing of info



Method	Advantage	Disadvantage	Research Context	Ethical Considerations
Reflective journal (research visual diary)	Provides a comprehensive documentation of the research process	Can be idiosyncratic and at times, very personal	OVERALL: Process of thinking, drafting maps, drawing diagrams, workshops to help in improving quality of research	Should provide honest impression of development and process
‘Sweatbox’ (Studio-based video set-up, for artists and architects to reflect on their practice “reflection-in-action”)	Captures valuable samples of process that may not be usually accessible. Offers insights to observe how ideas-built up in the group settings.	Formal studio hire may be costly, and casual studio setting may provide unprofessional and “too-relaxed” atmosphere	BAB 6 and Barzakh 4: collaborative sessions that happened in different sites and settings (Morocco, Bahrain) that included multi-disciplinary members from artists, designers, students and scholars.	Authority: Needs permission before recording and public sharing of info. Moderator should refrain from directing or imposing personal opinion. Caution with editing as it may distort materials.



4.7 Collaborative Nature of the Research

4.7.1 Rationale of the Collaborative Approach

The first part of this chapter illustrated the advantages of methodological approaches that rely on group problem solving and settings rather than individual inputs.

Firstly, groups gather individuals from different skills and knowledge backgrounds, representing a broad range of experience and interests rather than limiting it to one individual's experience and expertise (Nyström, 1979). Secondly, the dynamics and the communicative experience created within the group setting foster better comparisons and confrontations between the different participants, rather than arguing different opinions through the interpretations of one individual perspective. This interactive, cross-relational, and inter-subjective experience leads to a collective process of exchange, interpretation and understanding (Negus and Pickering, 2004; Nyström, 1979). Thirdly, groups usually reach more complex solutions than individuals who might reach more fixed solutions, this perhaps relates to the fact that ideas are more clearly expressed through the communication of group members (Nyström, 1979; Boon, 2014). Having an active conversation and discussing ideas with others enables the artistic mind to view its own ideas through someone else's eyes, which in turn catalyses the creative process (Boon, 2014). This way two or more brains are synchronised to generate a creative process that is richer, more adaptive, reflective and effective. This also means that 'collaborative creativity' becomes distinctively useful in generating complex ideas that require distributed cognition, thereby, each member of the team develops and eventually contributes a unique portion to the end result.

With regards to collaboration within the context of art today, artists do not work in isolation; rather they form part of a larger network in the cultural scene of any society. This network involves curators, gallery owners, art collectors, and audience as realised in the third chapter. The capacity of artistic practice, from artists to curators to institutions, in bringing together alternative perspectives and imaginaries, brings an essential link between collective knowledge and the diverse modality within our



contemporary conditions (Rogoff, cited in Martinon, 2013). Artistic collaborations strengthen both personal and professional relationships around shared concerns and common interests (Thomas, 2002). This proves that artistic practice can be a collective hub and a melting pot for contemporary culture and knowledge. The result is a collaboration (or co-curatorship) that generates informative dialogue among curators, artists, communities and audiences.

4.7.2 Characteristics of the “artistic” Collaboration

When it comes to the collaborative settings within artistic/creative practice, it is considered a powerful mode of communication and inquiry, as the process of producing art is merely a process of thinking that is made visible (Daichendt, 2011). This collective artistic process has been defined and reflected through the use of terms such as “studio thinking”, “poetic knowledge”, “tacit knowledge”, or “visual thinking” (Daichendt, 2011). Bearing in mind that these terms may refer to concepts that have been changed and informed with time, they still refer to the complex, multifaceted process that happened in an art or design studio, or in any collaborative creative session. Gray and Malins (2016), refer to this type of setting as ‘sweat-box’; defining it as “studio-based video set-up” where practitioners reflect on their own practice in order to solve a specific problem through various means. This method is used within the context of practice-based research, and it aims at capturing reflection-in-action (or on-action) through the sharing and portrayal of process. This will be further demonstrated in Barzakh 4 as well as Bab six, where the method of ‘sweat box’ is applied in a pilot focus group conducted in Tetouan, Morocco as part of an artist-residency that informed the research practice.

Collaboration in the context of practice-led research has further aspects, including:

1. The ability to provide a balance between sustaining the strengths of the various disciplines (such as the ones addressed here) and developing of a community of inquiries (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007). Because the creative insights provided in practice-led research offer the potential to “inform and extend the various descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory systems of knowledge” (Sullivan, 2005). This collective knowledge frames the individual as well as the socio-cultural awareness.
2. The ability to stimulate the work of institutions and teaching, in the sense that it can construct new knowledge and develop new theories and ways of understanding about learning and teaching art (Sullivan, 2005; Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007). Hence, the third chapter was investigating the relationship between creative process and cultural practice as they relate to Islamic design education.

4.7.3 General Considerations of adapting the collaborative approach in methodology

Even though a series of collaborative sessions is considered an adequate method in creating practical approach for this research, there are important points that need to be considered:

1. The difficulty of postponing judgements³ in groups' brainstorming: perhaps this is the main drawback in group brainstorming, as it may be unproductive at times because group members can read each other and surmise reactions and judgements even if it is not expressed explicitly, hence affecting producing original ideas (Runco, 2014). Since the process of thinking require a divergence of thinking first, postponing judgements are useful at this point, however, when the process moves towards convergence (more focused) thinking, judgments and decisions are crucial.

Action taken: allow for individual and sole reflection interval time throughout the creative process.

2. The importance of the individual experience in feeding the creative experience of the group: even though that creativity cannot be confined to the artist alone, the lone activity of the artist is an integral part of the creative process which is complemented by communication (Negus and Pickering, 2004). There is no doubt that tensions between the individual's creative act and the collaborative forms of work do exist. However, contemporary artistic scenes consist of a complex network of interdependencies, thereby, today's creative individuals are exploring and experimenting with various forms of trans-disciplinarity (Biggs and Karlsson, 2010). Thus, forms of collaboration, as Helga Nowotny explains, do not negate the individual, on the contrary, it empowers them.

Action taken: allow for individual interpretations prior to conducting the collaborative sessions and the option of providing solo work even after the collaborative sessions have ended.

• ³ "Postpone judgment" is different from "avoiding judgment". If it is postponed, one can return to it later, which is very likely necessary. It is asserted that at some point, ideas and solutions need to be evaluated; otherwise they may be of very low quality (Runco, 2014).



3. The question of whether the collaborative group is relevant and representative of the research context: as any outcome of the collaborative session, can confirm the research hypothesis depending on the representativeness of the group (McNeill, 1990), or else any claims or conclusions from the sessions cannot be generalised on the studied context.

Action taken: selection and sampling of the collaborative sessions has to provide a group of multiple backgrounds and experience to create a diverse group that could be a micro representation of the creative contemporary Islamic scene.

4. The technicality of setting up a proper studio setting: as setting up studio for participants, if not studied well, may reflect a formal setting and therefore reflective practitioners may be too self-conscious throughout the session (Gray and Malins, 2016).

Action taken: providing a flexible space, as possible, to offer different setting preferences (casual seating and working surfaces, some art galleries offer this type of informal casual settings for creative workshops are ideal candidates)

4.8 Reflections on Methodology

Looking at the methodological review in this chapter, it can be concluded that the methodological approach of this research consists of mixed methods that involve: collaborations (or participatory practice), artistic experiments and reflexive process. Identifying a methodological framework that encompasses all of these methods needs a term that embodies its complex artistic nature. In addition, the methodological framework is embedded throughout the whole structure of the thesis in a way that it expands on literature and informs the critical arguments. This refers back to the first chapter, where diagram (1.0) showed the intertwined research areas and figure (1.0) showed the relationship between literature and methodology, which can be merged here as follows (diagram 4.0):

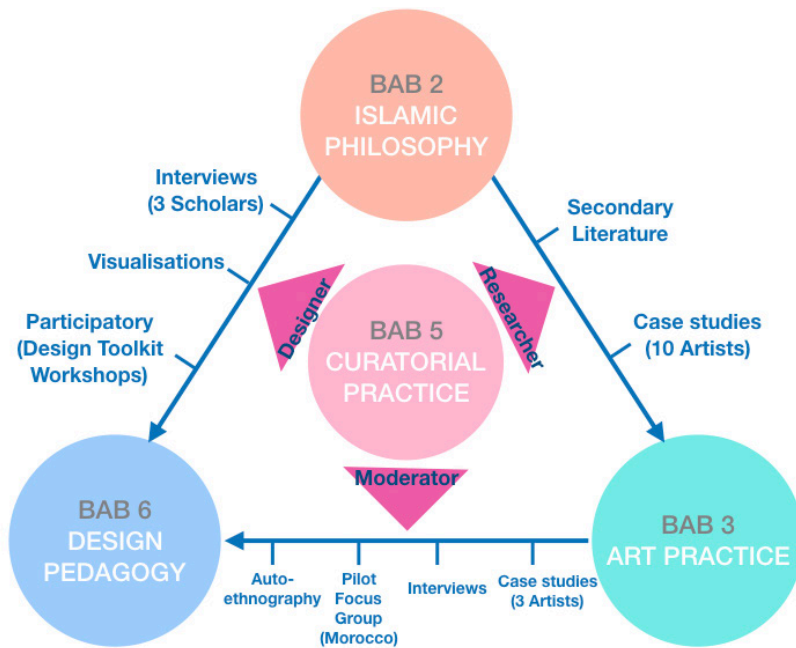


Diagram 4.0
The different methodologies used in each chapter (Bab) of the thesis and how they are related to the research areas. This shows how methodology is embedded throughout the research, also the changing role of the researcher demonstrated in the pink central arrows. This diagram also combines both (figure 1.0) and (diagram 1.0) illustrated in Bab one [Author's Notes].

The diagram introduces 'curatorial practice' as the adopted term for the research methodological framework, which is based on three main rationales: firstly, it is adequate in the sense that it allows the sharing of knowledge throughout the research process, a point that can compensate the drawbacks of using case studies and/or focus groups as sole or rigid methods to explore and collect research findings. The collaborative, multidisciplinary and practical nature of the methodology is similar in nature to curatorial practices; because curatorial practice has been defined at times as "... a method that allows for both autonomy and exchange for collaborations between academics, filmmakers, artists and musicians." (Back and Puwar, 2012, p.10-11).

Secondly, selecting curatorial practice supports the notion mentioned earlier about the enactment of thinking (Macleod and Holdridge, 2005), in the sense that curatorial practice enacts the event, or the happening of knowledge as being a field or a platform that is interacted and engaged with rather than illustrating knowledge as a final product. Similarly, Rogoff (cited in Martinon, 2013, p.45,46) describes the curatorial practice as the staging ground for developing an idea or an insight without having to choose between different definitions of art. This is vital in the context of Islamic artistic expression considering the epistemological crisis in defining its current state within the field of 'design culture'. The curatorial, as Rogoff asserts, explores ideas in the process of development, where they might be subject to a new set of demands in academic or practice context. Islamic artistic expressions can benefit from the curatorial practice, as a mode of assemblage, not only to speculate or draw a new set of relations, but also to enact the event of knowledge rather than to illustrate knowledge of philosophy, theory or history.

Thirdly, the reflective role of the researcher remains critical feeding into the understanding of research inquiries (Sullivan, 2005), as well as maintaining the strategies that keep personal information confirmed as well as challenged, which resonates with the auto-ethnography method mentioned earlier in this research. Curation (as a creative practice in research) is based on the researcher-curator's own interpretive lens, even though here it is reflecting a collective input or interpretations regarding the research question. Therefore, adopting 'curatorial practice' to describe the general methodological framework of this research encompasses the various aspects of the methodology as well as articulating the researcher's role in the research practice. The way that the curatorial practice functions as a mediator between researcher, artistic practice, the community and even education can be considered a contribution to the knowledge of Islamic creative expression.

In conclusion, this research recognises the ability of curatorial practice in informing and challenging the creative process within an Islamic cultural context. Also recognising the ability of academia in informing the current creative practices within Islam. Even though that creative practice has often been doubted and argued whether it is valid as a research activity (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007), here it has been explored as an approach that disseminates new knowledge that will eventually influence and inform the pedagogy of artistic practice. Curatorial practice as relatively new approach in investigating the context of Islamic art will be further elaborated in the next bab.



w r i t i n g a s t o o l s

Barzakh 04



My Mind is a Gallery Space

- ﴿1﴾ Structure and Method
- ﴿2﴾ Session I- Barcelona Design Conference
- ﴿3﴾ Session II- Birmingham School of Art (PhD Takeover)

structure & method

expected outcomes

- ① Understand how artists and scholars (of multiple cultural background) perceive or interpret the design principles abstracted from literature
- ② Examine the validity of the principles: do they work as generative tool for design?
- ③ Analyse the interpretations of participants who may not necessarily be attached to Islamic/cultural perceptions and view it as "clean canvas"

benefits

- ① Instant Curation: putting the methodological approach into practice.
- ② Gives the research findings a diverse voice.





tools

- ① Roundtable for max. 10 participants (can be divided in two smaller groups).
- ② Thinking wall (to display post-its, sketches and others).
- ③ Stationary Items such as ticky notes, A4 & A3 papers, pens and markers.

timeframe

- ① **15 Min**
1 verse OR 1 principle + 1 or more formats
- ② **15 Min**
1 verse OR 1 principle + 1 or more formats
- ③ **15 Min**
1 verse + 1 principle + 1 or more formats
- ④ **15 Min**
show and tell
- ⑤ **5-10 Min**
Brief on how is it related to research

session I



After sharing their ideas the participants discussed the understanding and the use of terms such as "intimacy" and "remembrance" as design principles. Discussion revolved on whether they be rephrased to be more abstract and closer to the design elements (adapted from Bauhaus School).





Video available
upon request



“A product that has rhythm and intimacy made us think of food! Like when slicing bread, the slices becomes a form of rhythm.
Food is something to consume and seems intimate as it is often shared.”
- Participant A

“We were thinking how some people cover their whole body but still have some jewellery elements around their necks, so if the concept of modesty was presented in jewellery it would probably be a form of a hidden jewellery [...] in a way that it would be non-physical or non-bodily just the expression of it” - Participant B

Workshop conducted as part of
12th International Design Conference, 2018
Barcelona, Spain

session II



Communicating design principles bilingually resulted in different interpretations between the Arabic and English reading participants; which directed the group discussion towards the necessity of having both Arabic and English terms for the design principles to contextualise them.



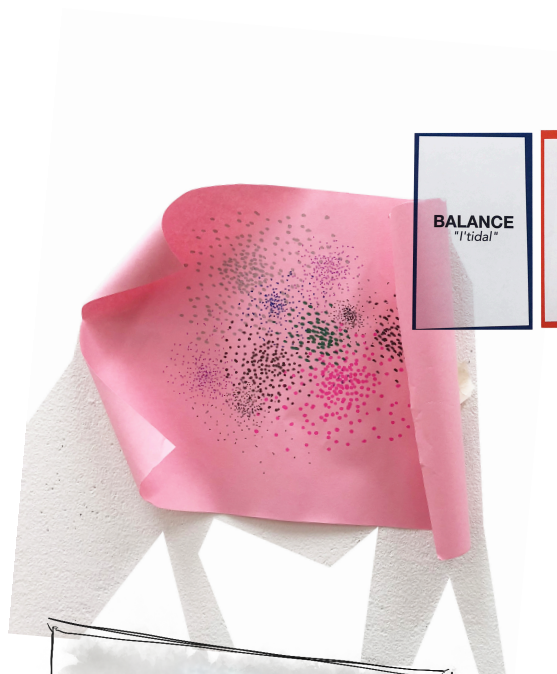
"[interpretation for:] The flux between self and god ultimately finds an echo in architecture expression of inside and outside, container and contained; solid and void."
- Participant A





"I have 'remembrance' in 'interior space' so I thought of creating a game of LEGO parts that aids in memory in relation to space, the right side is me trying to remember how I mapped the one on the left."
- Participant B

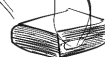
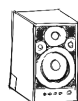
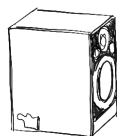
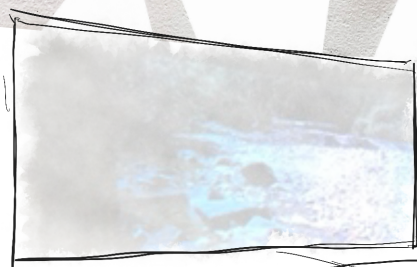
PRODUCT



BALANCE
"Itidal"

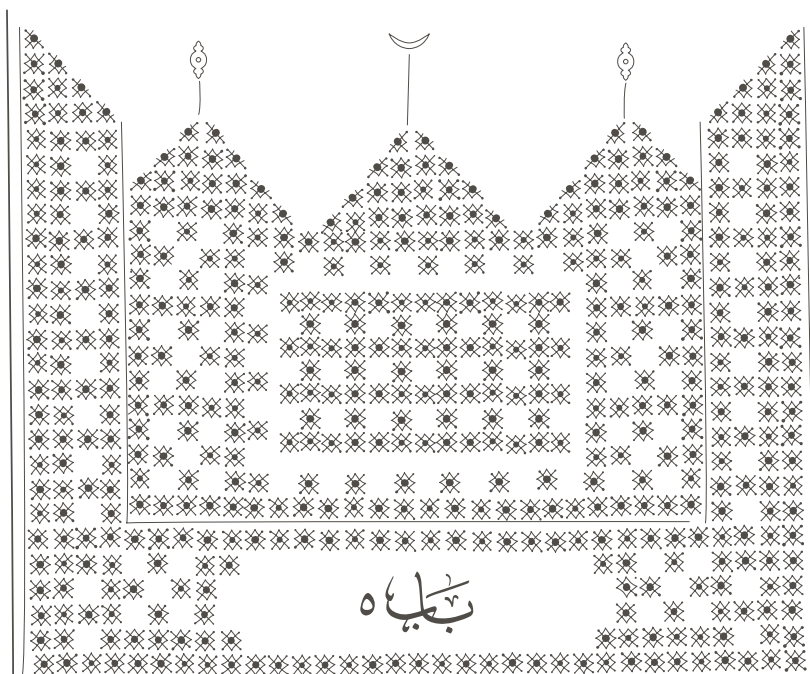
"The eye can begin anywhere and stop anywhere. Every point can be a beginning which in fact never ends"

"[interpretation for:] The eye can begin anywhere and stop anywhere. Every point can be a beginning which in fact never ends"
- Participant C



"I got 'Rhythm' and 'installation' cards, so I combined footage of water and sounds of water together in an installation of natural rhythms. So I just cut two tracks into chunks of even-sizes and spaced them so they have a rhythm but it changes as it moves along the track - they're not continuous."- Participant D

Open studio conducted as part of
School of Arts | PhD Take Over, 2018
Birmingham, United Kingdom



نقیصہ



Bab 05 | Taqyeem (Curating)
Refining Methodology

مُفَلِّحَةٌ

5.0 Introduction

Bab four demonstrated how 'practice' can be considered as: an individual creative activity of 'making', as facilitation and dissemination through activities such as exhibiting or creative writing, and as a collaborative activity that involves other practitioners (Gray and Malins, 2016). It also concluded that this collective act of researching, making, facilitating and disseminating is what makes 'curation' an adequate term to describe both the methodological approach and the practice underpinning this research. In other words, 'curatorial practice' is considered a hybrid that brings together the methods discussed in the previous chapter and the multidisciplinary research approach into a holistic structure.

This chapter is an extension of the research methodology; it expands on the understanding of 'curatorial practice' as the methodological framework for this research (refer to diagram 4.0). It also addresses the third research question on "how to broaden the understanding and pedagogy of Islamic art and design?", because curatorial practice has often been described as a quest to find new insights. It requires rigorous attention to knowledge, and the ability to be moved by intuition and imagination through a direct experience with art. It has also been described as a "public interface" and a cultural practice that summarises a unique reflective response from artists, curators, academics, educators, institutions, and communities (Sullivan, 2005). These definitions make 'curatorial practice' a mode of assemblage of the practical approach to the research argument, hence the title of the research that combines 'curating' and 'creating' as parallel acts of the thinking process. The fact that the definition of 'curation' connects between production, mediation and dissemination has a parallel within the context of contemporary Islamic design practice. It mediates between the Islamic artistic production, and the dissemination of knowledge.

Another advantage of adopting 'curatorial practice' as a methodological approach within this research is the collaborative nature it fosters as an integral part of its construct. Because it is a method for autonomy and exchange; it enables new modes and tools to be developed and shared across disciplines, allowing for collaborative experiments to

generate innovative prototypes (Back and Puwar, 2012). It also brings together a group of artists, designers and scholars who share a common goal of looking for a new view, or interpretation (Sullivan, 2005), or challenging a common cultural norm or phenomenon through critical, practical and collaborative influences such as the artistic interpretations and scholarly influences explored in Bab three.

This bab will demonstrate a concise background review on the historical development of the role of the curator. The aim is not to offer elaborate literature about the history and the formation of curatorial practice, but to signpost on moments that influence the changing role of the curator as an important factor underpinning the definition in research methodology. Another reason for demonstrating the historical development of curatorial practice is the lack of literature that addresses curatorial practices within the cultural context of Islamic artistic practice, as opposed to the elaborate resources that provides critical analysis of curatorial practice in the Western world. And whenever there is a discussion about curatorial practice in the Arab world (where Islam is considered the main religion), it is often associated with the modern political influences of the region, which is not part of the research scope. Thus, this bab also includes case studies from the researcher's own curatorial work in order to fill in the literature gap found in curatorial practice within the research context. This shall support the argument of the exhibition being the medium as well as the form of disseminating research knowledge aiming to fill in the literature gap found in a research curatorial context.

5.1 Historical Background of Curatorial Practice

This section maps some of the main historical and structural changes in curatorial practice since the 1960s, where it witnessed changes that influenced how curation is understood in relation to artistic production (Opera, 2016). From the 1920s, the curator's role working with museum collections away from the public has changed to become a more central position as an exhibition maker¹. By the late 1960s, a growth of understanding and awareness of the curatorial role encompassing a more proactive and creative part in artistic production had emerged (O'Neill, 2012). This happened through a number of exhibitions that positioned the curatorial framework, along with the exhibition space and the artworks, as essential and interdependent elements for producing a final exhibition for the public². In other words, these exhibitions brought the artistic intentions of experimenting with the exhibition space itself, alongside new artistic productions created specifically for these exhibitions. Thereby, creating a collaborative process between the artist, the curator and the display organisation of the exhibition. Among the most influential exhibitions using this approach was Harald Szeemann's in 1969, gathering artists from North America and Europe who worked in process-oriented ways with installations and happenings (Opera, 2016), thus establishing the idea of the autonomous curator-creator-mediator.

Such collaborative approaches in the making of exhibitions made it difficult to distinguish where the role of the artist ends, and the role of the curator begins. Interestingly in 1969, artist Robert Barry claimed that 'art' became less of a noun and more of a verb (O'Neill, 2012). This suggested that the notion of art was no longer limited to the materialised objects of art, but it also encompassed ideas about art. According to O'Neill (2012), arts as material practice became inseparable from art as discursive practice, and therefore art could be ideas that are "verbalised, spoken of, or written about"; they could be both the medium and the outcome of the artistic production.

• 1 The figure of curator as an independent exhibition maker started to function away from the fixed positions of the museum such as art historians or collections' keeper. An example of this is Pontus Hulten who curated exhibitions in the 1950s before becoming the director of Moderna Museet in 1958 (Opera, 2016).

2 For example: Harald Szeemann (When Attitudes become Form), Seth Siegelaub (January 5>3, 1969) and Lucy Lippard (557,087).



In the early 1970s, curatorship started to include a variety of terms that were not associated with displaying the works of art, such as the ‘production of knowledge’. Such change proposed that the curator was not only an exhibition maker, but a mediator and “proactive agent” between the artist and the viewer. In other words, the curator was a **producer** of the means and mediums through which forms of information such as artworks were mobilised. This shift led to the establishment of the term “demystification” by the gallerist Seth Siegelaub to describe the convergence of the traditional roles of artist, curator and critic (O’Neill, 2012; Rugg and Sedgwick, 2007). The term formed a curatorial discourse in the late 1970s in that it became a process in which a discussion about the values and meanings of the work in the exhibition is addressed and criticised:

“The idea of an art exhibition as a “curated” space made it apparent that there was a remit operating beyond the interests of the artists [...] This provided a space of critical contestation that extended beyond a centralised critique of works of art- which, ironically, increasingly concerned themselves with mediation and the language of mediation as already outlined- and began to address the curated exhibition as its own entity, as an object of critique.” (O’Neill, 2012, p.27)

From the late 1980s onwards, the application of the word “curator” shifted towards the use of the verb “curating”, which echoes the 1960s shift in the use of the word ‘art’ explained earlier. According to O’Neill, “To curate” became a verb that denotes the practice of composing narratives between artworks, thus, involving the curator in the generative process of artistic production. As a result, the role of the curator increased to allow opportunities for creative activity, in that the curator became some type of “meta-artist” (Rugg and Sedgwick, 2007, p.22). Consequently, many artists adopted the practice of curatorship as a medium of production which led to the convergence of artistic and curatorial practice as opposed to the exchange of roles (Opera, 2016)³.



³ This uncertainty and the elimination of the distinctive (or the merging) role of the artist and the curator created a contemporary discourse regarding the cultural production; on one hand it questions whether the curatorial taking over the artistic autonomy can be a threat to art, and on the other hand whether the individuality of the curator is ought to be celebrated, considering curating as another artistic medium (O’Neill, 2012).

In the 1990s, contemporary art debates turned towards formulating a new language and vocabulary for 'curating' as a diverse and internationalised practice. This ultimately created a centralised concept for the individual creative act that is often connected to other activities and professions. This indicates that curatorship was articulated as a constantly shifting discipline in which diverse modes of curatorial practice were reconciled. These modes ranged from the curator being the "middleman", curator as phenomenon, curator as **editor**, platform provider even curator as diviner (O'Neill, 2012).

As for the notion of 'curator as creator' or meta-artist, it gathered momentum in the mid to late 1990s, with the emergence of increasing numbers of international meetings, curatorial summits, and global biennials (Rugg and Sedgwick, 2007). Michael Brenson described this as the beginning of a new era of the curator, or "the curator's moment", where the role of the individual curator transformed from demystification to super-visibility.

In the late 1990s, the concept of "critical curating" emerged from the need to distinguish curatorial projects that aim at critical theory, research, and knowledge production from the regular curatorial models at that time (Martinon, 2013). Through a rigorous theoretical and critical set of inquiries, 'critical curating' challenged and contextualised the conventions of contemporary art curating. For those advocating this concept of curating, exhibition is no longer the final format for their practice, rather they expanded their curatorial field by reflecting on its social and philosophical significance. For that Suzana Milevska elaborates:

"As the apex of their manifestations, they [curators] place above all their own research processes and the theoretical and critical formats provided by conferences, seminars, interviews, close reading workshops, projections, public debates and other events. 'Critical curating' is essentially linked to institutional critique, art for social change, curatorial knowledge, curatorial agency, etc." (Milevska, cited in Martinon, 2013, p.69)

The changes in the 1990s led to curating being institutionalised with the appearance of curatorial study programmes, the recognition of curators working internationally and the development of curatorial discourses and models within academia and publishing industry (Opera, 2016). The act of curation, or exhibition became what Pierre Bourdieu describes as “cultural production of the value of the artist and of art”, in the sense that it converts subjective values or “new truths” – through works of art- into social and cultural capital (O’Neill, 2012).

This historical review on the constantly-changing definition of curatorial practice provokes a few ideas in relation to the research context: First, as a relatively new form of cultural production, how ‘curatorial practice’ was introduced/born in the contemporary Islamic artistic practice? Second, as a field of artistic knowledge, how can it contribute to the aesthetic and cultural values of Islamic contemporary art? Third, what is the role of the researcher-as-curator in informing the understanding of these values?

5.2 Contemporary Role of Curatorial Practice

As demonstrated earlier, the historical development of curatorial practice led to the merging of roles between the artist and the curator, essentially linked to the similarities found in the production of art practices, as Opera (2016) explains. Today, to be an art curator no longer means being an expert on a particular period or artistic medium. Instead, today’s curator is an observer, a reporter, a sociologist, an epistemologist and an anthropologist. Thus, the production area between the artist and the curator has gradually become blurred, and the curators has gained as much visibility as the artists. This merging of boundaries between the role of the artist and the curator has been seen as an opportunity to engage in an evaluation within the field of cultural production as a whole. The emergence of the artist-curator was considered a challenge to the normal divisions and dominant roles of the art world, contributing towards emergent forms of collective activity.

Today, curatorship encompasses a variety of organisational and collaborative structures within contemporary cultural artistic production. According to O'Neill, this portrays the curatorial within a durational, transformative and speculative framework, which echoes Michael Brenson's views, in **The Curator's Moment**, on what makes the new curator: "The new curator understands, and is able to articulate, the ability of art to touch and mobilise people and encourage debates about spirituality, creativity, identity, and the nation. The texture and tone of the curator's voice, the voices it welcomes or excludes, and the shape of conversation it sets in motion are essential to the texture and perception of contemporary art" (Brenson, 1998)

Framing curatorial practice as an activity that keeps things in flow, mobile, in-between, allows for freedom of ideas; Crossing over between people, identities and things in an emergent process. The contemporary debate on the role of the curator gave it an 'authorial voice' that transcends the exhibition as a medium for self-representation. Therefore, and with reference to the notion of curator as artist, curatorial practice can be a form of reflective practice. To relate this to the context of the research, if the visibility of the contemporary curator helps in gaining visibility to the topics of the exhibition, then the role of the curator can help in shedding light on the current discourse of contemporary Islamic art. The following points will draw links between curatorial practice as a form of artistic reflective practice and its methodological position in this research.

5.3 Curatorial Practice as Enactment of Research Knowledge

Looking at the historical development of curatorial practice, it is important to notice how transforming the understanding of exhibition as the medium of expression had freed the curator from the invisibility of the traditional framework of the job, which was limited to administrative and managerial roles. This means that the exhibition became a form of creative research exploration, derived from the curator's perspective on artistic positions, and their relationship with them (O'Neill, 2012). Similar to the artists reflecting on their own positions and views through their work, curators express their voice through exhibitions.

This positions the curator not only as an observer and an epistemologist as mentioned earlier, but also as a reflective practitioner which echoes Schon's notion of 'reflection-in-action' or 'knowing-in-action' that was addressed in the earlier chapter. This brings to light the following question: if curation is an activity that encompasses participation, collaboration, and transcends multiple disciplines and practices, how can one separate curatorial practice and thought? According to Martinon (2013), there is complex interdependent phenomenon between thoughts curating themselves, and the curatorial being the representational state of stepping outside of thoughts. Not to mention that 'curating' as a term encompasses many discursive meanings related to the act of thinking such as: experimenting, exploring, investigating, facilitating and others. This interdependent relationship between thoughts and curation resonates strongly with how 'methodology' is interpreted; as a way of transforming thoughts into visual interactive reality.

To understand the relationship between 'thinking' and 'curating', it is important to recall the definition of knowledge which is the condition of knowing something through



experience or association, or an acquaintance or an understanding of an art, science or technique, according to Merriam Webster. Another definition for knowledge can be the circumstance or condition apprehending truth or fact through reasoning (Daichendt, 2011). Also, knowledge can be defined as ‘a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information’ (Davenport and Prusak, 1998, p.5). According to Opera (2016), this definition embraces two aspects: first is the content, which entails motivation, information, experiences, beliefs and values. Second is the framework, which identifies the purpose of knowledge in order to enable us to evaluate new experiences. Interestingly, if knowledge is defined as knowing through experience then this definition resonates with embodied knowledge or tacit knowledge gained through practice. A notion mentioned earlier in Babs two and four is that ‘data’ as a body of knowledge is not given or found, but created and produced:

“‘Data’ means, literally, ‘things are given’, i.e. there, waiting to be found. It assumes a positivist view of the world. But if knowledge is created and constructed, then data is not ‘given’, but produced. We need a different word, which stresses how knowledge is a product, not a given. Every research method is a means of producing knowledge, not collecting it.”
(McNeill, 1990, p. 128)



Within the context of knowledge enquiry, applying curatorial practice as pedagogical intervention is not novel¹. As previously mentioned, the notion of “critical curating” emerged to describe curatorial practice that combine research, critical theory and knowledge production in one framework (Martinon, 2013). Curatorial projects started focusing on the process, using discursive and pedagogical methods, thus, placing the artistic activity in and outside the exhibition. Therefore, defining curatorial practice in relation to knowledge and education entails two main points; first is that the curatorial becomes an ‘expanded educational praxis’, which is a form dependent on art institutions as expanded educational initiatives. The second is that curatorial practice is now a body of knowledge or a field of inquiry, in the sense that the history of curating, critical curation, and curatorial cultural production is being written in order to fill gaps of knowledge (O’Neill, 2012).



• 1 In the second half of the 1990s, a variety of approaches have emerged utilising educational methods and alternative pedagogical platforms as – or in – curatorial and artistic practices. This has come with the pedagogical and social changes in education emphasis commonly described as “the educational turn” of the 1990s (Opera 2016).



Furthermore, while education has been defined as a learning process that is transformative and stimulates change, 'curatorial practice' has also been described as an advocate to challenge and inform education. In a sense that it is necessary to disrupt knowledge:

"The curatorial is an event from which nothing can be gained because, contrary to curating, which is a constitutive activity, the curatorial is a disruptive activity. It disrupts received knowledge: what we understand by art, art history, philosophy, knowledge, cultural heritage, that is all that which constitutes us, including clichés and hang-ups. In this way, the curatorial is, [...] a disruptive embodiment against received knowledge [...] The curatorial is really an unnecessary disruption of knowledge, that is, paradoxically, but necessarily, the birth of knowledge."
(Martinon, 2013, p.26).

Looking at the blurring of boundaries between the curatorial and artistic practice on one hand, and the influence of the curatorial as a form of disruptive knowledge that informs education on the other, it can be concluded that such attributes can create a setting for the methodological framework of this research. As a methodology, it breaks the barrier between the curator and the research, between the artists and participants, which is strongly related to auto-ethnography methods discussed earlier. Another important point to note – as a researcher and curator – is that taking risks in the curatorial decisions can be a liberating process (Thomas, 2002). To develop a curatorial and a conceptual framework yet be open to the possibilities of both failure and success strongly resembles the practice-led approaches in research in the arts. This can be both challenging and liberating in the sense that all the visual or material destinations that the research will lead to, with its ambiguities and contradictions, can be embraced. This makes the curatorial framework, or in this case the research process, transparent to others.



The curatorial role in this research is not only to represent an already existing set of principles or artistic concepts, but also performs as a mode of assemblage to bring Islamic art, philosophy, contemporary practice and design education together in one context. As disruptive knowledge, its contributions inform the educational models and systems (which were discussed in Bab three) as not being inclusive to what Islamic art really means and entails. In addition, the dissemination of knowledge relies on the role of the curator as an active social agent (Martinon, 2013) that contributes towards a better multi-faceted understanding of the contemporary approaches of Islamic designs within its cultural context.

5.4 Researcher's Curatorial Practice: Case Studies

Since curatorial practice is a relatively a new form of practice as well as new form of knowledge, the emergence of curatorial scene in the Arab region has slowly followed¹. Even though it is evident in the Arab region, curatorial practice as an inquiry or study is still in its early development. Essentially the cultural production of the Arab region has been associated with art as a response to socio-political movements, creating a dominant focus on politics in the curatorial debate. Consequently, the subject of philosophy and spirituality that is linked to Islamic art has rarely been articulated in reference to curatorial practice. This next section will provide two case studies from the researcher's own curatorial practice not only to support the methodological approach of this research but also as an attempt to inform the literature gap of curatorial practices in the research context.

¹ Two main points are noted here; the use of 'Arab' region instead of 'Islamic' is due to the fact that Islam as a religion is spread over the world and it would be ambiguous to refer to the religion rather than the geographical scope of this research, Middle East and North Africa in general, and the Arab Gulf in specific. The second point is the lack of secondary sources that offers a critical overview on the curatorial practice in the Arab world is one of this research limitations, hence, history of the emergence of curatorial practice in the region was not addressed in this chapter.



However, it is important to mention a few thoughts before delving into the case studies on how exhibitions are constructed as spatiotemporal phenomenon. As realised earlier, the historicising of exhibitions as installations carried critical significance regarding the ways in which meanings in art were created (O'Neill, 2012). Accordingly, an exhibition is a “temporary architectonic structure” that retains potential levels of interaction for the viewers that could be summarised in three: one, surrounding the viewer while moving through it, two, partial interaction with the viewer, and three, containing the viewer in a space of display (O'Neill, 2012). This description makes the exhibition a space where art, architecture and culture meet; a standpoint similar to the position of this research. O'Neill also refers to three terms that can be reference points to think and describe how exhibitions are constructed: the background, the middle ground and the foreground, which is explained in (figure 5.0) and will be addressed in the following case studies.

Figure 5.0 The three prescriptive points of reference for thinking about how exhibitions are constructed according to O'Neill [Summarised information] (Source: O'Neill, 2012, p.92.93)

Foreground	Middle ground	Background
A space of containment Subject-to-object relationship between the viewer and the work ----- Artwork is unchanged by curatorial intervention	A space where audience partially intended to interact Includes: furniture, installations, equipments. - Utilised as means for conditioning and mobilising ----- Adapted or commissioned in collaboration with the artist or the designer	White walls, intact, or repainted, or covered Architecture of the Exhibition space ----- Neutral effects for the “white cube” are either emphasised, reduced to a minimum, or replaced by visual background

The following two examples aim to juxtapose the researcher's practice alongside the reviewed research methods in order to support the adoption of curatorial practice as a methodological framework. The first case study which was conducted during the time of this research demonstrates how an exhibition becomes the medium. The second, which was previous work undertaken by the researcher which focuses on how an exhibition can become the form of artistic product and spatial experience.

5.4.1. EXHIBITION AS MEDIUM: I am Khaleeji, 2017, Birmingham, United Kingdom

I am Khaleeji emerged from the researcher's desire to raise awareness about the diversity of the artistic voices in the Arab world, particularly shedding light on the art scene from the Gulf as a distinctive voice in the region. The art of the Middle East has recently developed a global attention, however there is a lot more to the art of this region emerging outside of the spotlight. While a greater emphasis has been directed at the artistic productions of more dominant cultural centres such as Palestine, Egypt and Iraq other cities have been shaping and informing a distinctive cultural image within the MENA² identity. This project aimed at addressing the misconception of the contemporary art scene of the Gulf as an attempt to understand it, and to offer an alternative view to an art scene that is diverse, unique and vernacular.

The project consists of three main components; an art exhibition (*By the Book*), a curator's talk, and a panel discussion. *By the Book* (figure 5.1) showcases the work of Ulafa'a initiative, reconciliation through-the-arts program based in Bahrain³. The exhibition highlights the structures that dictate everyday issues; the written or implied rulebooks of social behaviours. It focuses on the singular subjectivity that steps out of a collective symbolic order and refuses to fit into a composed whole. The exhibited work presented how the artists critically analyse the rulebooks of their societies, and where the line is drawn between traditions and misconceptions. As for the curator's talk, it shed the light on the art scene of Bahrain, where the artists are based, and in particular the work of the initiative in reconciling the local community. The panel discussion, *As noted/unnoticed* included: a curator, a researcher-artist, and a film maker, who gave a glimpse of the various micro-alternative scenes that are contributing to the cultural production of the Gulf.

• 2 stands for Middle East and North Africa.

3 Researcher is the co-founder of this group which was established in 2012 as an artistic response to the political unrest happened in Bahrain in 2011. It is an ongoing project that creates an artistic platform to strengthen relationships of respect and understanding among the different communities in Bahrain. The group promoted the use of the arts as a tool to narrate, exchange and heal. For more information, please visit projectulafaa.com.





Figure 5.1 Part of **By the Book** exhibition (2017), which was located in the International Project Space in BCUs School of Arts [Author's notes]



In relation to some of the curatorial and methodological thoughts mentioned earlier, I **am Khaleeji** echoes how 'curating' (and exhibition as the product of curating) can disrupt knowledge, as well as becoming a form of knowledge in itself. This is manifested its self in positioning a culturally-specific project outside its cultural context; which was Birmingham School of Arts, UK.⁴ Positioning an artistic and community project in an academic context in itself created the opportunity for an artistic dialogue between international students, research scholars, and emerging artists and curators from the Arab Gulf. Thus, bringing two different cultural communities into one academic setting, helped in addressing the contemporary art scene of the Arab world, while challenging the stereotypical image that a western audience is exposed to. This brings back O'Neill's



⁴ The school's emphasis on international and global art practices is evident in its research centres such as the Centre for Chinese Visual Arts. Not to mention that there are current efforts in creating a centre for Middle Eastern Art, as there are constant events and research seminars addressing the curatorial and artistic practice of the Arab region, this project was also part of gradually introducing the importance of such research centre in the School of Arts.

(2012) analysis of describing the exhibition as the ultimate medium in the distribution and reception of art; it can be understood as the main agency of communication, or the voice from which an authoritative character emerges.

Moreover, **By the Book** was set up in two spaces in the school of arts; the International Projects Space (IPS) which has an atmosphere similar to the white-cube gallery model (figure 5.2), and the school's main foyer, which reflects the authentic architecture of a listed heritage building. Grouping together related artworks and artists who have similar concerns, once in the foyer and the other group in the IPS led to the exhibition form being treated by the curator as a medium in and of itself.



Figure 5.2 Entrance to **By the Book**, 2017 in BCU's School of art. The school's gallery, International Projects Space, follows a white-cube gallery's set-up in contrast to the authentic foyer space. The exhibition was divided between the two spaces [Author's notes]

Reflectively, the researcher-as-curator in this project had taken the role of the mediator; transforming and facilitating artistic discourse between production and dissemination. To elaborate further, while the collection of artworks exhibited in the IPS addressed the cultural differences, taboos and diaspora of the social fabric in Bahrain, the artworks exhibited in the School's foyer shed light on the artists' frustrations and responses to religion. The idea of unpacking religious conflicts related to Islam and exposing it in a space that reflects church-like atmosphere with its double-height walls and elongated columns at the heart of the school created a juxtaposition of religions, beliefs, and cultural expressions. The artistic and curatorial voices operated in a complex manner; on one hand, a dialogue was formed between the artworks themselves and the space in which they were exhibited, and on the other, between the artworks positioned in the foyer and the receptors of the work exhibited (figure 5.5).

Therefore, the exhibition became a vehicle for voicing and examining multiple discourses through which these dialogues resonate, contributing to the quality of audience engagement (Rugg and Sedgwick, 2007; Opera, 2016). Creating a platform for conversation, the project also offered a curatorial talk and the panel discussion (figure 5.3), through which the curator communicated knowledge of the Gulf art world to a culturally-diverse audience within the School, thus shifting the debate on how viewers and practitioners become a community. Having the curator's talk and panel discussion as an accompanying event to the exhibition reflects how ideas and discoveries influence the context of the exhibitions and vice versa. This relates on the hidden forces that inform curating as a practice moving from an invisible to a more visible praxis (Thomas, 2002), thus viewing curators as negotiators, collaborators, mediators and enablers.



Figure 5.3 The researcher-curator during the curator's talk of **By the Book** exhibition, photographed by Ahmad Hayat. The initiative developed an exhibition model, that positions the public talks and social interaction at the heart of their exhibitions [Author's notes].

Another important aspect of *I am Khaleeji* is the role of the curator in artistic mobility; transforming artworks from Bahrain to the United Kingdom brings to light the discourse of artistic movement in the contemporary world. Despite the absence of the artists, both in installing and launching the exhibition, the presence of the curator was essential to articulate the artist message. Between tactile and digital formats, some of the artwork took another form, and even got recreated by the curator herself (figure 5.4), blurring the boundaries between the role of the artist and the curator. This echoes yet again, the discourse of the visibility of the curator throughout the history of defining curatorial practice. In relation to the research topic, this case study demonstrates how an exhibition can be a platform for broadening the understanding of cultural values and disseminating research knowledge within society and influential participants in the field. It also brings us back to the discussion of Bab three on contemporary artistic practice; particularly the work of Ahmad Angawi who used an exhibition as his artistic medium to disseminate mathematical and cosmological knowledge of the traditional Islamic element; the Mangour.



Figure 5.4" **In the name of..."** (sculpture), work by Ebrahim Obaid which was exhibited in the foyer. The work was reproduced by the curator, following general instructions given by the artist himself [Author's notes]

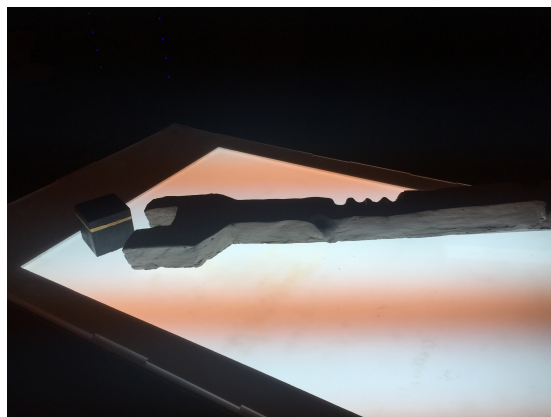


Figure 5.5 Visitors and students interacting with the artworks in **By the Book** exhibition. The social interaction between the artworks and the audience is considered an important element in the initiative's artistic direction [Author's notes]

5.4.2. EXHIBITION AS FORM: Dwell | Sakan, 2013, al-Hidd, Kingdom of Bahrain



Figure 5.6 Official Arabic invitation of **Dwell | Sakan**, 2013 (left), family visiting the exhibition (right) [Author's notes]

The second case study is 'Dwell' or 'Sakan'⁵; an exhibition that was created in a courtyard house that was to be demolished, which in itself mirrored the main topic of the exhibition. As many of the old houses in Bahrain surrender to the effect of time, more architectural evidences of people's connection with the past is lost. The title of the exhibition reflected paradoxical meanings of its own; on one hand it denotes the meaning of home and settlement, and on the other hand it also means serenity or stillness. To 'dwell' on something denotes one's pause in normative life in order to contemplate on a fixed memory or moment in time. Usually this "dwelling" on a memory, for example, allows one to experience or contemplate the thought over and over again, as if in a cycle, similar to the cycle within a home; constantly changing as if it has a lifespan of its own. The artists⁶ reflected on this notion by questioning what is sacrificed of people's heritage in order to cope with a "modern life style", and to build stronger houses that can accommodate extended families. Each artist reflected upon a personal memory related to their own family, lingering on moments and stories that they experienced in their own family homes.

⁵ Sakan, is an Arabic word that has various meanings; one denotes the meaning of something that makes one comfortable, serenity, blessings, happiness, and settlement. It also means the place where one lives or feels like home.

⁶ This was also curated by the researcher herself as part of Ulafa'a initiative projects, the artists were the team members of Ulafa'a, along with few guest artists.

Dwell | Sakan identifies two curatorial themes engaging with space: memory and remembering, experience and identity. The location of the exhibition, **Bait Akbar** (house of Akbar's family), performs as an integral part of the exhibition's identity and the curatorial concept behind it, in that it is difficult to distinguish which one came out of the other; the idea, or the place. And what identifies the exhibition as being the form of the artistic practice; because the house influenced the curatorial decisions and inspired the exhibition based on the status of the site. With regard to the notions of memory and identity, Bait Akbar was considered one of the few surviving traditional houses with a courtyard in Bahrain (figure 5.7). This resonates with O'Neill's (2012) thoughts on how exhibitions are considered spatial, phenomenological and the aesthetic form of the curatorial practice. In this case, the courtyard house echoes the discourse on architectural heritage conservation, and the challenges it faces against the local economy. As the case of many Bahraini families, the family of the house is forced to demolish it in order to build a stronger, larger house to accommodate their son's family. Thus, the exhibition was not only tackling space memory, or family connection, but also a larger issue that relates to the architectural heritage of the country.

Figure 5.7 The architecture of the courtyard house, **Bait Akbar**, which hosted **Dwell | Sakan** couple of weeks before getting demolished [Author's notes]



Being stripped of furniture, electricity and water, the house was in a state of in-between; its past life and its coming future, between tradition and modernity. Thus, the work in the exhibition reflected this notion of temporality in installing artwork that is raw, nostalgic and unfinished; providing an aesthetic coherence with the place that is containing it. From this point came another curatorial decision, which was leaving areas of the house for social interaction, particularly the courtyard and the room overlooking it, as they are traditionally where the personal and social boundaries blurs. This allowed the place itself to perform as a sensorial experience, echoing the past use of these areas by putting the viewers' interaction at the heart of these places (figure 5.8). This was also manifested in integrating talks, live performances and walls on which the visitors of the exhibition can share their own narratives. Thereby, the house, and eventually the exhibition became a social space, where visitors are interacting with the artworks on one side, and with the architectural space on the other.



Figure 5.8 (left) The courtyard of **Bait Akbar** (Akbar's house) during the opening of **Dwell | Sakan**, 2013. (right) **Untitled** installation piece by Yaser al-Hassan,

which is a homage to the women of the house, each "abaya" have a different scent reflecting the social fabric/structure of the local community [Author's notes]



Figure 5.9 Live performance during the opening of **Dwell | Sakan**, playing nostalgic old songs in the middle of the courtyard where it was turned to a social space, and a space of memory [Author's notes]



In addition, the exhibition brought back the discussion of artists-as-curators, curators-as-artists, and the blurring boundaries between their roles as it was curated by members of the initiative themselves⁷. Artistic and curatorial practices converged in a sense that challenged the modernist myth that artists work alone, or their work should not be affected by the others with whom they work (O'Neill, 2012). The collaboration between the artists and the curators has helped in creating coherency among the artworks exhibited; even though they reflected different stories of different people, they performed at the end a unified identity. Furthermore, the exhibition as a form of artistic or curatorial practice also contributes to the mobility of artist and movement of art in general. The house was located in one of the most conservative towns in Bahrain, away from the white-cube galleries and "cultural neighbourhoods" where artists and art enthusiasts usually meet. As a result, many people from the neighbourhood came to see the exhibition out of curiosity during the installation and opening, they then brought their families over the next few days. The house owners and other people from the



⁷ Both the co-curators of the show, Tamadher Alfahal and Nada Alaradi, exhibited their own pieces alongside the other work by the team.

neighbourhood kept occupying the social space during the time of the exhibition sharing their own stories, thus turning personal narratives into spatial narratives. **Dwell | Sakan** was a space of interaction and a meeting point where discourses on art, architecture and society intertwined.

Demonstrating the curatorial practice of **Dwell | Sakan** brought to attention two arguments in relation to the research context: First was the notion of an exhibition forming a paradoxical space between the past and the present, or tradition and modernity. In some ways, it brought the inherited cultural and social values to the foreground and questioned their significance in the contemporary context. The way the artists interpreted social values within a traditional architectural form provoked a discussion that was similar to the research questions: what forms of traditional values and aesthetic knowledge are still evident in contemporary settings? Second, the understanding of an exhibition as a staging ground where creative research explorations can happen; which is evident in how **Dwell | Sakan** addressed social, economic, and architectural aspects in one context. This broadens the understanding of curatorial practice as not being limited to exhibition making, but also as a mode of assemblage that is able to create a new set of connections, such as the ones between Islamic traditional philosophy, contemporary art practice and design pedagogy.



Figure 5.10
Visitors engaging
with the work in
Dwell | Sakan,
photography by
Hussain al-Kumaish.
The artwork is an
installation by the
researcher-curator,
**Finding Grandma
Blue**, which narrates
personal memories
that connects to the
collective memory of
the local community
[Author's notes]

5.5 Dissemination of Research Knowledge Through Curatorial Practice

As highlighted earlier, the curatorial practice performs a disruptive embodiment against received knowledge, but it is also a necessary disruption that informs knowledge. Using curatorial practice in this research as a methodological framework helps in disseminating knowledge of the process, practice and outcomes of the research. This happens in various ways: to begin with, the notion of curatorship (being understood as a creative semi-autonomous form of mediation as well as production) contributes within this research context to the way Islamic art is communicated. By attempting to demonstrate an alternative reading of traditional art (Bab two) along with an understanding of contemporary practice (Bab three), the researcher-as-curator mediates between the two subjects in order to make new approaches visible. This brings to light the curator's responsibility in operating above and beyond the remits of presenting the work of artists, or merely criticising their work without linking it to a theoretical framework. The idea of weaving together aspects of Islamic aesthetic philosophy, contemporary practice and design pedagogy in one plane (that is the research) is considered a curatorial act in itself. This curatorial act positions the findings of the researcher-as-curator and the outcomes of the various participatory methods in a unified scope.

In addition, the traditional modes of research have been challenged while taking into account the breadth and depth of knowing that one associates with the full scope of human understanding (Sullivan, 2005). This is because, as explained in Bab four, in many non-traditional and artistic approaches to knowledge, it is the outcome of other ways of creating knowledge within the studio context of art that offers an alternative or complementary ways of understanding things (Sullivan, 2005; Daichendt, 2011). This relates to the point mentioned earlier on how knowledge can be created, which is evident throughout this research, however the dissemination of this knowledge is not limited



to the written thesis as an end product. Rather, the researcher created a research blog to share her visual diary and reflective notes regarding the process of research. Also, Dawaer Design Sessions, a Facebook page was created to offer other scholars, designers and artists an opportunity to be involved in the research reflections and practice, and to inspire potential future collaborations. Organising an online platform for research discussion brings to light the increasingly “immaterial form of social relations” (Krysa, 2006, p.9) in suggesting new possibilities for organising curatorial process itself. By doing so, the immaterial practice of curating records the influence of collaboration, openness, community engagement and disseminated knowledge.

Furthermore, the reflective process of the knowledge production through the research emphasises how production of knowledge is grounded in theories, beliefs and values (Sullivan, 2005), and disseminating its reflections back to the people or its context feeds back into it. Exhibitions – as a product of curatorial methodology in this research – is considered as a cultural practice that connects artists, academics, educators, art writers and curators together in a reflective response to artwork. Sullivan describes the exhibition as “a public interface”, and a place of visual art inquiries and practices that take on a broad range of textual forms and content. This has been explored by curating *I am Khaleeji* during the research journey, which included installations, discussions, explorations and the documentations of a body of work within a cultural discourse that is relevant to the research context. This brings us back to the historical overview on how curators are being meta-artists; setting up contexts for artists who can provide context (Krysa, 2006). The experience of *I am Khaleeji* also helped in observing the critical perspectives that encompass the self, agency, and the politics of artistic and curatorial practice.

As for the second case study, it demonstrates how co-curatorship generated an increased dialogue (Thomas, 2002) not only among the exhibition team, but also with people in the art field, the local community and the general audience. This relates to the argument mentioned earlier that converging the artistic and the curatorial practices can be seen as an opportunity to engage in a critique within the field of cultural production as a whole. Over the past fifteen years many curators have acknowledged that the single-authored model of exhibition making can be failing. Thus, the collective form of curating

has emerged to sustain an inclusive model of exhibiting through which the benefits of the collaborative work can create “a pooling of knowledge” (O’Neill, 2012, p.120). Other curatorial activities that were also conducted throughout the research process will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter.

When it comes to the tacit knowledge whether gained and produced in this research, it forms part of the contribution to knowledge or the understanding of the individual, which relates to the constructivist worldview mentioned in the Bab four. This creates a connection between the traditional models of research involvement and the ones that emphasises implicit insights in the audience (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007). While any new knowledge in the fields of science undermines old knowledge, the artistic contribution to knowledge acknowledges the old models as an important factor in progressing to the new models (Daichendt, 2011). This progression is what Daichendt states as the reason behind the gaps between practitioners who left the cutting edge of their artistic work and the practicing artist-scholars. Therefore, the curatorial act in this research involves dissemination of the tacit knowledge, transmitted from the traditional to the contemporary practice of Islamic art and design. An example of this is the researcher’s residency in Morocco to be demonstrated in the coming chapter, in which she explored traditional craftsmanship, its potential application in contemporary practice and then sharing her journey with design students through social media. This echoes again the role of the curator as a mediator, or middleman.

5.6 Reflections on Curatorial Practice

To conclude the main findings of this chapter, the term 'curator' was created out of certain conditions in the history of art making, therefore its definition has always been expanding and changing (Tomas, 2002). This ever-changing definition of curatorial practice made it a flexible mould for this research. The curatorial model can be defined in broad and multiple ways:

"The curatorial is a jailbreak from pre-existing frames, a gift enabling one to see the world differently, a strategy for inventing new points departure, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for humanity, a process of renewing one's own subjectivity, a tactical move for reinventing life, a sensual practice of creating signification, a political tool outside of politics, a procedure to maintain a community together, a conspiracy against policies, the act of keeping a question alive, the energy of retaining a sense of fun, the device that helps to revisit history, the measures to create effects, the work of revealing ghosts, a plan to remain out-of-joint with time, an evolving method of keeping bodies and objects together, a sharing of understanding, an invitation for reflexivity, a choreographic mode of operation, a way of fighting against corporate culture, etc." (Martinon, 2013, p.4)

In other words, curation can be a tool, a medium, an artistic practice and a reflective act that questions boundaries and breaks away from cultural frames and conformities. Such characteristics are needed in offering an alternative approach in understanding and communicating Islamic art practice and pedagogy.

Furthermore, the case studies bring to attention some important findings; among them the various approaches in exhibition-making that are becoming more dominant within the artistic discourse, some of which are discursive, dialogical, collaborative and pedagogical which has the ability to create a spectrum of interrelationships between art, design, and research (O'Neill, 2012). As seen in the second case study, for example, the discourse of the relationship between art and architecture is evident in the exhibition occupying the space between the artworks exhibited and the courtyard house. This is where curatorial practice performs as a mode of assemblage in bringing together art, architecture and the cultural values that connect them. The first case study, on the other hand, showcases how curatorial practice can place the artists and their work in a social space where there can be a dialogue with the community to inform the understanding of the field. Thus, the curatorial approach in this research creates a "public interface" that helps in informing the research question on how to broaden the understanding and pedagogy of Islamic art and design.

Another finding that relates to the previous chapters is that, when applied to Islamic artistic practice, curation can reveal the hidden structures behind the making of Islamic art which is often left out of the story and that is similar to the curatorial work of Ahmad Angawi explored in the third chapter. The general narrative of contemporary Islamic artistic practice examined in Bab three was therefore destabilised, while bringing to light the process involved in the artistic production. Moreover, looking back at the previous chapter through which various and relevant methodological approaches were addressed, adopting curatorial practice as a mode of assembly for research methods – in both the arts and sciences – can be a step towards contributing to the knowledge of a research context. Thus, the methodological approach of this research resonates with what Sullivan (2005) describes as transformative process, which relies in the imaginative and critical

inquiry pursued by artists, individuals and researchers who can see traditional discipline areas within new structures, thus exploring new domains of critiquing and creating knowledge. It can be seen that the structure of the thesis also performs a part of the curatorial act; in that it follows a general style of academic research yet offering an alternative visual narrative that increases the research readability. Thus, breaking away from the conventional style of academic research, the researcher-as-curator treats the research material or the thesis as an artistic product.

As a continuation of the curatorial narrative of this research, the next chapter will connect the traditional themes realised in the second chapter with the collaborative approach in methodology through two main projects in order to address the research questions.



w r i t i n g a s i n s t a l l a t i o n .

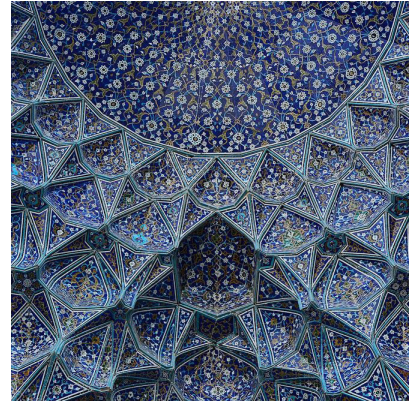
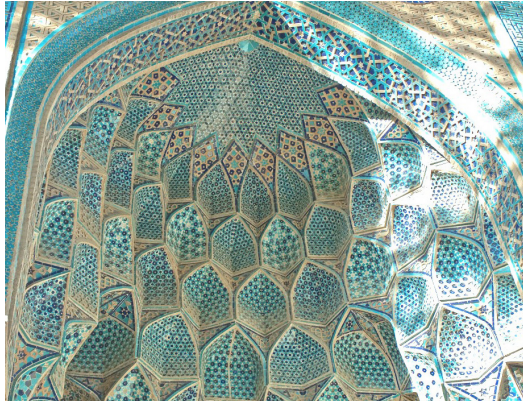
Barzakh 05

برزخ ه

Me, Them and Everyone Else

- ﴿1﴾ Concept
- ﴿2﴾ Process
- ﴿3﴾ Final Work

concept



Muqarnas - is a form of ornamented vaulting in traditional Islamic architecture; a geometric subdivision of a squinch, or cupola, into a large number of miniature squinches, producing a sort of cellular structure, sometimes also called a "honeycomb" vault.

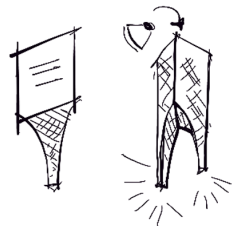
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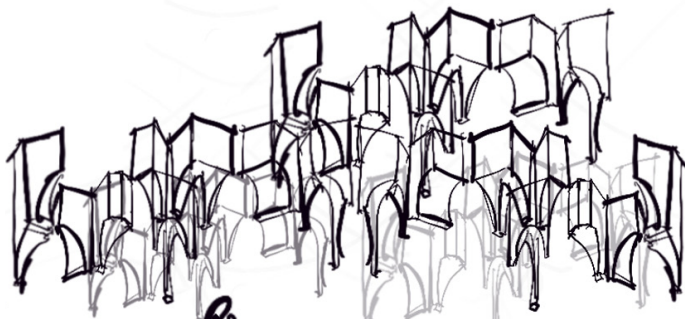
In Islamic philosophy, unity within multiplicity formed the basis of Islamic arts. In the element of **muqarnas**, individual units carved or coloured to dissolve and eliminate the boundaries of space. These units are part of one whole; altering the impression of the physical space, to transcend oneself into an intellectual higher order.

Research
Artistic
Art in
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analogy

Conceptually, research in the arts can be viewed as **muqarnas**; it one entity yet it encompasses individual, unique voices that are multifaceted and multi-structured. And as **muqarnas** can grow and multiply infinitely, the research is always emerging, multidimensional, and capable of producing complex knowledge.

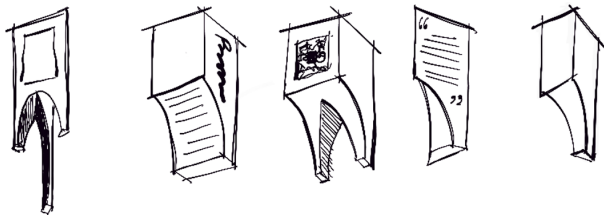




**Research(er) as
Participant**
The installation
represents
various voices
contributing in
contemporary
discourse



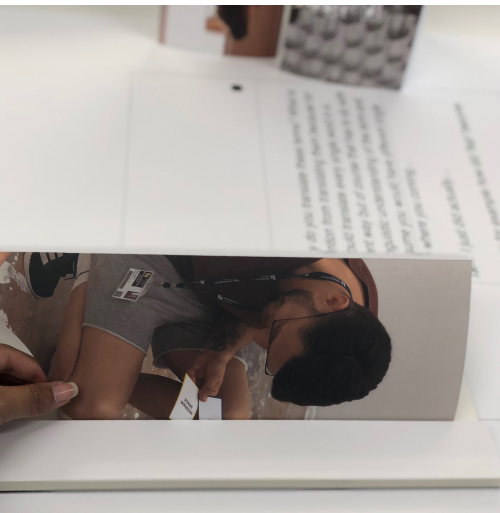
**Research(er) as
Curator**
Exhibition as a
staging ground for
the conversations,
insights and
outcomes of
research



The installation consists of
muqarnas units, some contains
snippets from literature,
QR codes for online videos,
quotes from contemporary
Muslim artists, and researcher's
findings.

process





The choice of paper as a material reflected the raw, ongoing process of research. It included QR codes to videos and research blog posts, inviting visitors to interact with it. It is a manifestation of a research's "first draft"; always changing, and constantly growing.

final work

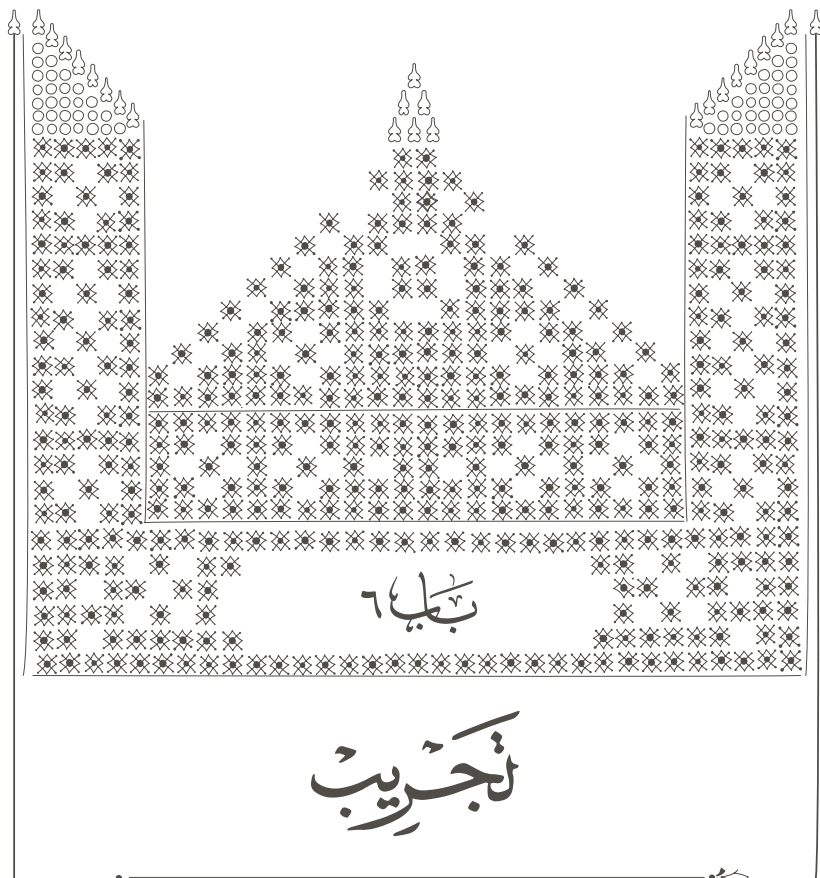


The interactive installation was an experiment testing the malleable boundaries that happens within the research process. It acknowledges the conversations with people in the field and the artistic wanderings as integral parts of forming the research experience.



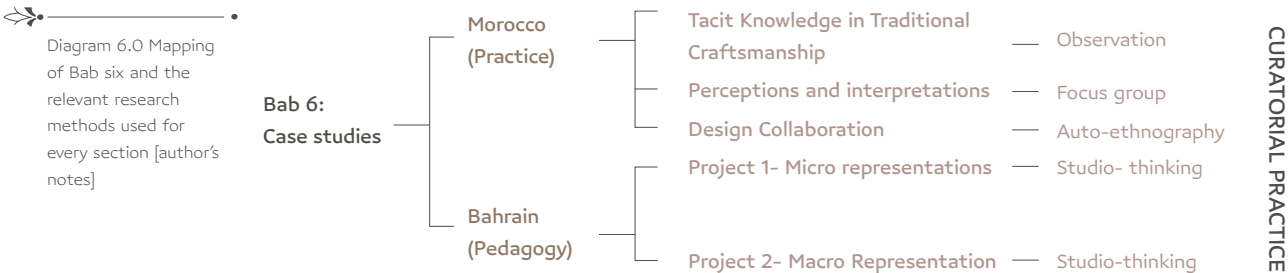
**"Part of "Research(er) Dialogue
PGR Annual Conference 2018
Birmingham, United Kingdom**





Bab 06 | Tajreeb (Experimenting)
Discussion and Analysis

6.0 Introduction to Data Analysis



Recalling the conclusions of Babs two and three, the current movements in Islamic artistic expression expands over a wide spectrum where on one hand is the traditionalist school, asserting on the necessity of reviving or maintaining the traditional means for expressing universal principles of Islamic faith. This school promotes a connection to spiritual, and metaphysical knowledge as a basis for artistic expression. Whereas on the other side the modernist school of thought negates the existence of spiritual and metaphysical aspects in traditional Islamic art. It advocates discarding the rulebook and breaking away from the limitations of mathematical and cosmological orders underpinning the perennials’ (traditionalists) views. Bab four concluded that artistic practice constructs new knowledge and develops new ways of understanding the teaching of art and design. It concluded that artistic practice within research can be defined as “thinking made visible” which led to the refinement of the methodology demonstrated in Bab five. With this in mind, Bab five justified curatorial practice as a mode of assemblage for the research methods and as a contribution to knowledge in the field.

This chapter demonstrates a synthesis of the literature and methodological findings, and how they have been applied in research practice. It will connect traditional philosophy and contemporary practice of Islamic art and design with a participatory approach and 'design studio' process. This relates to two of the main research questions which investigate the forms of historical knowledge in contemporary Islamic practice and the possible ways of broadening the pedagogical understanding of Islamic art and design. Thus, this chapter will explore the validity of the aesthetic themes abstracted from the Islamic traditional philosophy in two contexts: First, is an art residency in Tetouan, Morocco, where the researcher explored various aspects of the theoretical knowledge through practice. And second is a university design studio in Bahrain, where the main aesthetic themes realised in Bab two are being adapted as guidelines for design projects. This chapter will provide an analytical view of the creative process and the outcomes in both contexts.

In addition, this chapter will shed the light on the curatorial practices occurring whilst conducting the participatory sessions, and how it was used as a tool to disseminate knowledge throughout the research process. The gathered data in this chapter is obtained through different mediums such as; voice and camera recorders, and the researcher's visual diary. However, recording every aspect of the creative process for each individual, let alone breaking down the process of a group and what happens exactly in the design (or the creative) studio was one of the main challenges occurring in this chapter (Daichendt, 2011). Nevertheless, the reflective writing about the process which included the visual sketches and materials that came out as a product of these sessions, function as tangible evidence of the creative process. Comparing strengths, weakness and the evaluation of both contexts will result in reflections from which outcomes can be realised and situated in the research landscape.

6.1 Rationale for the Selection of Case Studies

In order to bridge the gap between artistic knowledge and design pedagogy, the case studies were conducted in two different locations (where Islam is the main practiced religion). The rationale relates to the findings of chapter three which provoked a question regarding the importance of tacit knowledge (gained through craftsmanship) as an essential element for the contemporary Islamic artistic practice. It also relates to the questioning of the current teaching methods used to transmit the knowledge of Islamic artistic expression, hence 'disrupting' the educational model used in the University of Bahrain as a practical exploration of areas where it can be further improved. Choosing two different contexts highlights the notion that artistic practice is multi-faceted, and its processes change according to various conceptions of knowing/thinking (Daichendt, 2011). Thereby, not limiting the scope of research in one context can help in finding various potentials from the artistic process.

While interviewing both Nasser Rabbat and Samer Akkach, a discussion occurred regarding the aesthetic themes realised in this research. This provoked the question whether communicating Islamic aesthetics through design elements and principles would limit the artistic representations rather than liberating it. This chapter thereby explores this question as follows:

1. In the context of Morocco, where participants have a more artistic and craftsmanship background, the pilot focus group was unstructured, in the sense that aesthetic themes realised in earlier chapters were not introduced. Instead, two questions were introduced to the focus group as a starting point: what makes art Islamic? And what makes a space spiritual? Thus framing the main issues addressed in the literature review in the form of general questions and creating keys for opening the discussions, which can lead to further visual and practical exploration by the participants. The

first question explores the preconceptions of the participants, urging them to think about further abstracting their answers into keywords that can be artistically explored. The second question included the notion of space and spatiality in Islamic creative expression, echoing the argument in the third chapter about the absence of categorisation of the traditional Islamic creative practice into fields such as “fine arts” or “applied arts”. The addition of “spiritual” in the question is an attempt to provoke intangible feelings and meanings from the participants, as well as connecting with questions framing the third chapter on what artists and designer consider as spiritual element in the creative practice, and how they articulate it.

2. Whereas in the Bahrain context, the research exploration forms part of the university’s elective course offered to design students, where design studios are more grounded in theory. The structure of this part is based in the literature review of Bab two, which demonstrated a series of aesthetic themes abstracted from the knowledge of traditional Islamic philosophy, divided into design elements and principles whilst examining their applications in artistic practice. These themes were centred on seven main principles: unity (Tawhid), remembrance (Thikr), modesty (Haya’), absence (Faqr), balance (I’tidal), rhythm (Iqa’a) and intimacy (Qurb). Working with design students means that they would already have a basic knowledge about design elements and principles, thus, the seven principles were set as design guidelines from the beginning of the studio sessions.



Table 6.0 summarises the aims, the approach and expected outcomes for each context:

Table 6.0 Summary of the pilot approach and its following stages proposed for each site. This is also a comparison of the unique points and benefits of each context. This relates also to multiple case studies approach, which allows for cross-case synthesis that can evaluate research findings in different settings. [Author's Note]¹

¹ Initially there were three contexts; the third was Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, but it was omitted due to time and availability restrictions. The reason for considering PSTA as another context is to link it to the educational background of the artists discussed in bab 3. However, it could be proposed as a future project after this research.

Site	Aim	Pilot Approach	What to find out?	Next Stages	Expected Outcomes
Green Olive Arts Space, Tetouan, Morocco (9 March- 5 April 2017)	Explore the potential collaboration between designers/ artists and artisans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open call for participation (Jan) - Skype interviews with applicants (Feb) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of philosophical background artisans have about Islamic designs? - What kind of conceptions/ interpretation artists/ designers have in the Islamic world today? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share some visual/ theoretical materials with selected participants - Prepare consent forms/ time plan/ sessions' scope for participants before travelling to Morocco - Supervise and record their creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe how skill-based artists and artisans produce work without theoretical structure to the session - Exhibition of project outcomes
University of Bahrain, Isa Town, Bahrain (April-May 2017)	Investigate the validity of the principles with senior design students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with the course director to prepare a schedule that fits within their curriculum calendar. - Introductory online sessions to students at the beginning of course module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of background information students have about Islamic designs? - How can design students interpret literature findings based on their educational background? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow-up with course instructor/ coordinator. - Propose design problems (projects) to students. - Supervise the design studios and record their creative process in sketchbooks/ diaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design prototypes/ sketches/ models. - Analysis of creative process and outcomes - Exhibition in Bahrain to show the outcomes. - Potential evaluation of course module in University of Bahrain.

PART A: ART RESIDENCY IN MOROCCO | PILOT STUDY

Green Olive Arts (GOA) is an international art studio located in the heart of Tetouan, Morocco. It is owned and operated by artists who aim to connect the international creative scene with the local culture of Morocco by offering studio facilities, programs and residencies. GOA visions include being part of the flourishing local art scene and becoming an active organisation within the Moroccan community while respecting the local culture. Believing in art as a tool to reflect and express a human endeavour, as well as to thrive in the cultural production of a local context, is one of GOA's aspirations resonating with the researcher's main motivation behind this research. Thus, GOA was found as a promising organisation to collaborate with, especially after launching their one-month residency, **Convergence**, to be conducted during March- April 2017, in which the artists collaborate with local artisans to learn, invent and create.

The interdisciplinary approach, scope and timing of the **Convergence** residency by Green Olive Arts gave it a context in which to conduct a pilot study. The opportunity to create bridges between artists and artisans was considered a positive approach to inform the research in a unique way. In many ways, the scope of **Convergence** was very similar to the methodological framework of this research, as it created bridges between designers, artists, and craftsmen (artisans), creating various opportunities for creative collaborations. It was concluded that **Convergence** residency was a necessary program to be involved in, not only for this research, but it also offered a collaborative platform that could grow beyond the research experience. The timeframe was planned according to the residency's original schedule that was prepared by GOA, bearing in mind the slots in the residency's schedule which kept free to explore further opportunities.

(Diagram 6.1) shows the schedule prepared for the residency's timeframe, as well as the various tasks undertaken besides conducting the focus group. This schedule allowed the researcher's artistic practice to inform the research findings, relating to the points addressed in Bab four about knowing-in-action (or reflection-in-action). This made the knowledge of the research experiential; where the researcher reaches new insights based on active experience (Gray and Malins, 2006). Thus, Part A will address the experience in Morocco in three sections, highlighting the role of the researcher as the apprentice, the moderator and the designer.

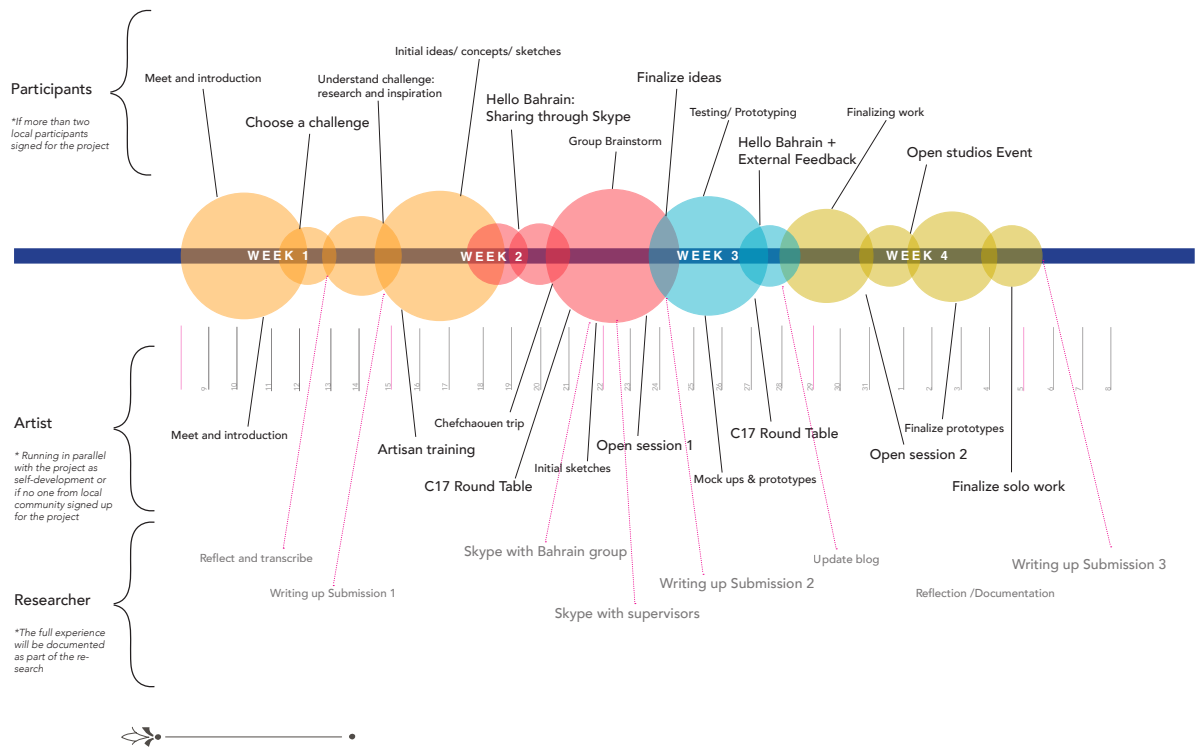


Diagram 6.1 The various aspects of the residency in accordance to the time schedule. See enlarged version in Appendix III [author's notes]

6.2 Revisiting Traditional Craftsmanship

|researcher as designer|

The scope of **Convergence** focused on the exchange between artists and artisans, planned in a way where each resident on the program would be learning directly from an artisan (or Mu'allim as they are called in Morocco). This was organised through a series of one-on-one sessions located in the gallery's studios and the artisans' workshops. Prior to the start of the residency, each resident (including the researcher) was asked to choose one craft out of the following: plaster carving, wood painting, zellige¹ making, and leather embossing. The researcher selected leather embossing as a main craft to learn, however, the timeframe of the residency allowed for engaging and learning from other master artisans as well such as the plaster and woodcarving.

The importance of this part of the residency was reliant on exploring the traditional teaching methods adopted by master-apprentice, investigating the ways in which the researcher, as an artist and designer could employ the skills learned during her time with the Mu'allim. It was also important to observe closely the embodied experience in craftsmanship during the residency. This relates to the questions concluded in Bab two regarding the importance of tacit knowledge and craftsmanship being associated with the act of making. It also explores the relationship between thinking and creating as an essential part of artistic research practice as realised in Bab four. Furthermore, this residency related to case studies of Bab three which provoked the question whether it is important to integrate craftsmanship and manual skills in the pedagogy of Islamic art and design². In addition, it investigates whether there are any spiritual aspects that can only exist in the master-apprentice mode of knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight any literature related to the significance of tacit knowledge in Islamic philosophy, and the synthesis of the mind and hands in the process of art-making.

• 1 Zellige is mosaic tilework made from individually chiselled geometric tiles set into a plaster base. This geometrically patterned mosaics were used to ornament walls, ceilings, fountains, floors and tables, and was considered the main characteristics of Moroccan and Spanish Islamic architecture.

2 When looking at the different enriching stories of the prophets, it seems that craftsmanship was a skill that is obtained as a necessity of everyday life. Each prophet, besides spreading the word God, had a skill that he was known with. With Jesus Christ and prophet Noah, it was carpentry, with prophet Dawoud "David" it was metal smith (making of shields), and with Prophet Idris and Elias it was textile weaving (Ash-Shanqiti, 2006; Ibn Kathir, 2002).



6.2.1 Tacit Knowledge in the Quranic Context

The use of 'hand' in the Arabic language has several meanings; apart from the human body part, it means generosity, kindness, and gratitude. It is also used to signify strength and ability, to represent solidarity, support and ownership (Al-Sa'dy, 2002; Dar Ihyaa' AlTurath AlArabi, 1972). For the latter, there are several verses in the Quran that refers to ownership of the Divine, some of which literally translate to "God has the universe in His hand" (The Quran; Al-Sa'dy, 2002). This is echoed in the way Muslims express their submission and faith in God, such as the expression "it's all in God's hands" (Al-Sa'dy, 2002)³. Other references to the hand in the Quran relate to earning or work:

"Who does greater wrong than he, who, when reminded of his Lord's revelations, turns away from them, and forgets what his hands have put forward?" (The Quran, Al-Kahf. 18:57)

While others signify grace and blessings:

"That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatsoever over God's grace, and that all grace is in God's hand; He gives it to whomever He wills. God is Possessor of Great Grace." (The Quran, Al-Hadid. 57:29)

Besides its symbolic significance, the hand gestures can represent different meanings in almost every culture. In Muslims prayers, for example, different hand gestures such as raised or folded hands are specifically choreographed for different stages of the prayer (Leader, 2016). Hand gestures form an integral part of language today, in the sense that it also extends to its own silent language. Pallasmaa relates this to the Heideggerian notion of the act of the hands that is rooted in thinking:

"The craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. [...] The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes – and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others. [...] But the hand's gestures run everywhere through language, in their most perfect purity precisely when man speaks by being silent. [...] Every motion of the



³ This is not strictly limited to Muslim culture; Christians equally use the expression, as if the hands represent in its meanings motivation and hope themselves (Leader, 2016).

⁴ Hands were also used in Islamic and Christian iconography; the 'Hand of Fatima' for example, is used in Islamic talismans and charms, whereas in Christianity, the First Person of the Trinity was represented in early forms as a hand emerging from the sky. Pallasmaa (2009) argues that, in the Islamic belief, the five fingers denote the five pillars of Islam; faith, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity. However, there are not enough Islamic sources that confirm this suggestion.

hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in the element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking.” (Heidegger, 1977, p.357)

During the residency, for example, one of the craftsmen in a wooden inlay workshop could not speak, but he used his hands to express his work (Figure 6.0). His hand gestures were showing his role in the workshop; with few hand movements, he communicated how laborious it is to clean and polish the new inlayed surface all day long. Although the craftsman could not speak, his hands did.

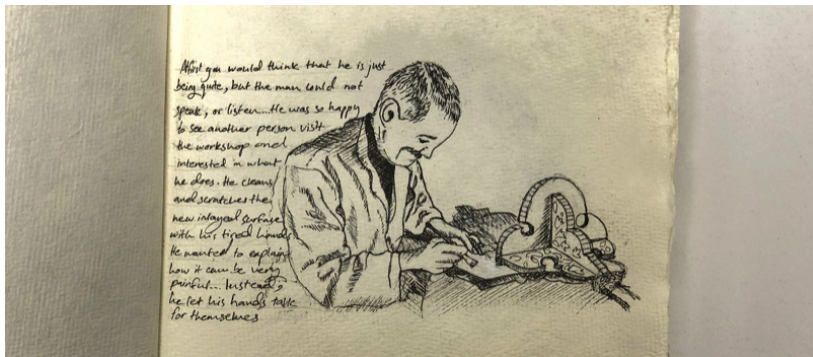


Figure 6.0 Page from the researcher's visual diary recording the work of the craftsmen, the craftsmen used his hands to express and communicate his thoughts and feelings [Author's notes].

Architects, artists and poets declare that the hand functions as a mediator; it transforms thoughts by capturing their materiality into a solid image or physical form. Associating the hands as a mediating tool between thinking and making refers to Ikhwan al-Safa's notion about "san'a" and the definition of "the artificer, the knower" discussed in Bab two. The idea of the creative capacity or the human thinking capacity also resonates with the ideas mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter about the "enactment of thinking"; where the artists' vision-through-making is an act of thinking (Macleod and Holdridge, 2005). The theoretical grounds discussed are embodied in the artwork, the artwork itself carries the understanding of the artists and the way they envision the world. To support this argument, Pallasmaa (2009) discusses the embodied wisdom and



knowledge carried out in creative work. He asserts that the human capacity to imagine and to create is carried out not only through the human brain, but also in the “bodily constitution” which has its fantasies, dreams and desires. Pallasmaa particularly draws attention to Gaston Bachelard’s writing about the imagination of the hand:

“Even the hand has its dreams and assumptions. It helps us understand the innermost essence of matter. That is why it also helps us imagine [forms of] matter.” (Bachelard, 1982, p.107)

From the verse: “Those who pledge allegiance to you are pledging allegiance to God. The Hand of God is above their hands” (The Quran, Al-Fath. 48:10), Nasr (1987) the leading scholar of the traditionalists’ school connects the act of making to the perfect surrender to the Divine Will, to the extent that the maker themselves become the tool in the hands of the Divine. Although in most of the “tafsir” books that explain this verse by relating it to the specific story of people pledging their loyalty to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Nasr suggests that the spiritual aspects in the second part of the verse. In particular, he addresses the metaphorical use of God’s Hands, which can be interpreted in artistic contexts. Nasr suggests that when the artist produces work in a state of submission and concentration, the pen in their hands, just like their own being, becomes an instrument or tool in the “hands of God”. Thus, the art produced in such process becomes sacred art.

Following on from the idea of theoretical knowledge vs. practical knowledge in Islamic philosophical context, it is important to see the process of knowing/making in contemporary context. As previously explained in Bab two, Ibn Arabi’s articulation divides forms into inward forms (intelligible sciences, insights, intentions) and outward forms (sensible, tangible bodies), while placing the production as a result of merging the intellectual and practical skills (Akkach, 2012)

6.2.2 Embodied Knowledge in Hands

“The craftsman needs to embody the tool or instrument, internalise the nature of the material, and eventually turns him/herself into his/her own product, either material or immaterial.” (Pallasmaa, 2009, p.53)

“Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding.”
(Sennett, 2008, p.9)

Interestingly, similar notions to Nasr’s analysis and Ibn Arabi’s thoughts can be found in the contemporary voices, particularly of Pallasmaa’s (2009) who believes that an artistic product looks simultaneously both outwards to the observed or envisioned world, and inwards into the maker’s mental world. Pallasmaa suggests that there is a fusion between thoughts and execution, and between the external materiality and the internal mentality. He explains that at the beginning thoughts are like guidelines, however there comes a point where the process, the product and the maker fully emerged. The philosopher Michel Serres portrays this fusion in his own words:

“The hand is no longer a hand when it has taken hold of the hammer, it is the hammer itself, it is no longer a hammer, it flies transparent, between the hammer and the nail, it disappears and dissolves, [...]. The hand and thought, like one’s tongue, disappear in their determinations [...]. (Serres, cited in Howes, 2005, p.311)

In some ways, this relates to some metaphysical thoughts in contemporary aesthetics; when describing the creative process as “being taken over” by creativity and loose oneself or being caught up “in the flow” (Negus, and Pickering, 2004). This has been discussed in earlier chapters; yet again the metaphoric description of the Quranic script draws attention to this state of “flow” and arguably, it is a mental/material flow that occurs between the maker and the work. In being completely focused with the work at hand, the artist or maker at that moment loses their independence, and becomes



immersed in a state of transcendence that the work appears to be creating itself (Judkins, 2015; Boon, 2014, Pallasmaa, 2009).

On the other hand, the artist/ maker, becoming an instrument or a tool that brings out the knowledge into a form, also transforming the tools used in their hands into an extension of the human body (Pallasmaa, 2009). One could not think of the tools as detached objects, but as hand extensions that alter their capacity and inform their complex performance. During the residency in Morocco, each time the researcher met with an artisan, the first thing they would show the researcher was their tools, as if the tools were another extension of themselves that they need to introduce.

Consequently, even in the maker's own surroundings, the workshop or the workspace, became unified as one entity. Mu'allim Idris, the carpenter from whom the researcher learned the basics of woodcarving, was a perfect example of how a craftsman's persona becomes fully integrated with his surroundings (Figure 6.1). He was surrounded by his young pupils imitating his techniques, each were in different but approximate stages of work in progress, while the mu'allim was fully focused on his piece, bathed in sawdust so much so that the material and himself were one entity.



Figure 6.1 (left) Mu'allim Idris in his wood workshop, surrounded by his students. (right) Mu'allim Idris while working on the collaborative work with the researcher [Author's notes].



Within the philosophical concept that Islamic art is polarized into an intellectual type and practical type, and the creative process happening in between thinking and making, the notion of embodied knowledge in the hands is carried further by many scholars. In his book **The Craftsman**, Sennett (2008) defines this knowledge as a series of “sustainable habits” that are born from this intimate connection between the mind and the hands. Pallasmaa (2009) portrays these habits as “existential knowledge” that can be considered as an understanding and a synthesis of lived experiences. These experiences come out through the creative individual’s hands and body as a “silent wisdom”. Other scholars, such as Merleau-Ponty and Edward Casey, suggest that it includes the whole body. When it comes to the subject of imagination, place and memory, body memory is considered rather a sensitive and natural aspect of remembrance (Casey, 2000):

“The mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such a way that our conceptual system draws largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p.6)

In support of the idea of body memory, Pallasmaa (2009) elaborates that learning and maintaining skills is mainly an embodied muscular mimesis. All skills fundamentally start with bodily practices, then technical understanding follows (Sennett, 2008). The way the master artisans in Morocco teach their skills does not rely on verbal instruction; rather they hand tools and materials to their apprentices, and work next to them. The apprentices then observe how the master’s hands handle both materials and tools, and interact with their tactility and sensuality, and that is what Pallasmaa means by “silent wisdom”. Learning a skill starts by focusing on gaining the knowledge in the hands through touch and movement, once the hands learn that language, then the imagination generates this language by creating something, and eventually the skill develops through practice (Sennett, 2008).

This highlights an important observation during the residency; the knowledge embedded in each master artisan can be traced in his hand gestures. The hands of the leather artisan gesture and move differently to the hands of the plaster artisan, as if they were mimicking their own materials and product. Each pair of hands developed rather a distinctive language through which the artisan communicates and interacts with the

world around him. Even when observing the artisans doing their work, their hands move instinctively and mechanically producing the work in way that looks like it is second nature. In some ways, it echoes Nasr's interpretation of the verse mentioned earlier "The Hand of God is above their hands", and the notion of being an instrument in the hands of God as the creative act "flow" through their hands. This physical impulse and submission in creative production forms a specific kind of reflexive attitude that may occur in crafts outside the Islamic contexts, however within the Islamic context it is strongly related to the spiritual attitude of humility.



Figure 6.2 Hands of the mu'allims (master artisans), each with its own distinctive embodied knowledge and body language [Author's notes].



6.2.3 In Collaboration with Crafts



Figure 6.3 Pictures from the training sessions where the researcher was learning with the master artisans of different types of crafts. The Mu'allim either start on the same surface dedicated for the researcher or work next to her on another surface while the researcher is practicing on hers. [Author's notes].



The idea of embodied knowledge is not only limited in the context of crafts and artistic practice, but it also has significance in the academic context. Learning-by-doing or learning-by-experiencing has been at the core of reflective practice of artists-scholars (Gray and Malins, 2016). Therefore, it is important to draw the connection here as both theory and practice intersect within an artistic mode of inquiry. The Moroccan residency included times when the researcher “undressed her educated-ness” and became an apprentice instead of playing the part of the reflective researcher. As Pallasmaa (2009) puts it: “in the act of art-making, a theoretical or intellectual consciousness has to be suppressed, if not entirely forgotten”. The training included classes that varied from plaster carving, woodcarving and inlay, to zellige making, and leather embossing (Figure 6.3). Each based in their own workshop, the Mu’allims would give a general explanation about the tools used in their craft and choose a motif (probably of a simple type) to practice the basics of the skill. This motif usually came already drawn by the Mu’allim or one of his apprentices on the surface to be worked. The Mu’allim either started on the same surface dedicated for the researcher or worked next to her on a separate surface while the researcher practiced on hers. This supports El-Said and Parman’s (1976) thoughts on traditional geometric methods: they argue that these methods were applied, developed and perfected by unknown masters in the past, but in the present day this method is no longer considered a device that generates new designs, but is limited to reproducing the old.

With regard to the philosophical discourse discussed earlier between the act of knowing/ thinking and making. The researcher’s role as apprentice helped not only in investigating the role of craftsmanship in the context of Islamic designs, but also to reflectively break down the creative process experienced by master artisans (Mu’allims). Being immersed in the artistic practice as a mode of communication has helped in gaining new insights that could not have been comprehended in theory or by interviewing. By learning from the masters, and physically engaging in the act of making, a sociable atmosphere was created between the researcher and the Mu’allims allowing ideas to be discussed.





Figure 6.4 Pictures for the collaborative work, which happened after few sessions of learning with the artisans. The researcher provided designs, then collaborated with the artisans for the execution of the work [Author's notes].



Coming from a design background, it was enriching to be fully immersed in the experience of creating, for it would have been challenging to record or write about the multi-faceted process of making, or the notion of “tacit” knowledge if the researcher was not involved in the process. Although the learning process may seem at a distance rigid and repetitive, it required a great amount of patience and control; something that resonates with the spirituality aspects in creative process explained in earlier chapters. The humility in the creative production forms a specific attitude that may occur in crafts outside the Islamic contexts, however, within the Islamic context, it is strongly related to the act of submission.

As the new role of the researcher – as designer- has been unfolding in the research, it is necessary to say that designers generally collaborate with makers from other fields. It is very rare to find designers or architects making the products they designed by themselves (Pallasmaa, 2009), instead they communicate their ideas to specialist craftsmen who are more knowledgeable about the possibilities and limitations of the materials. During the residency, the researcher collaborated with each mu’allim to make a small-scale product (figure 6.4), allowing for a fuller engagement and learning experience from other master artisans besides the leather-smith. This resonates with Pallasmaa’s writings on collaborative craftsmanship, in which he asserts the importance for designers to personally master one craft in order to grasp the different dimensions of the skill. He also emphasises its significance in creating mutual respect between the designer and the craftsman who is executing their designs.



“I wish I could have two more months to teach you more of the things I know. Imagine going back to Bahrain with all the practical knowledge you have gained for a new medium. Imagine the new possibilities of being creative” – Mu'allim Al-Ayashi, Leather artisan (in conversation with the researcher)

As a designer, learning from Mu'allim Al-Ayashi the techniques of sewing, cutting, and embossing leather offered a glimpse into his own embodied knowledge. With the researcher's conceptual ideas and design background, he added his embodied skills and instrumental knowledge to help execute the work (figure 6.5). In fact, many of Pallasmaa's thoughts have been practically realised throughout this experience; among them is the notion of “existential knowledge”, which he articulates as the knowledge moulded by the craftsman's, or the artist's, or the designer's life experiences. This existential knowledge develops from “the way the person experiences and expresses their existence,” it also integrates with one's self-identity and ethical sense.

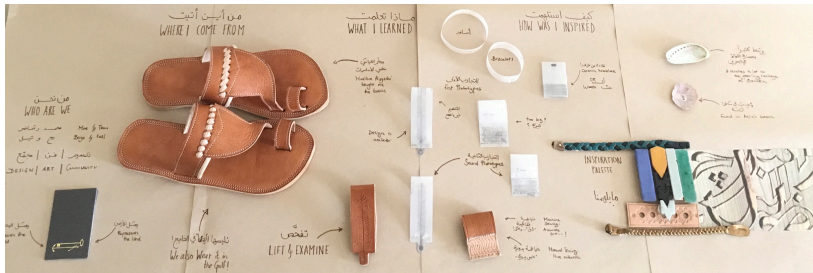


Figure 6.5 The final result of the leatherwork showing the designer's inspiration and paper prototype, then the leather prototype along with collaborative work of local footwear with mu'allim Al-Ayashi [Author's notes].

The design sketches offered to Mu'allim Al-Ayashi and other master artisans may have looked different –and somewhat odd– to them, however, as skilled craftsmen they preferred to face challenges rather than execute work that was too simple or repetitious (Pallasmaa, 2009). They relied on their existential knowledge to produce the best solution to solve the design problem at hand. Even though there was a small language barrier⁵, the sketches and the work done by both the designer-researcher and the artisan formed a unique unspoken language communicating ideas and intentions in a way that it transformed the hands of the craftsman into the “designer's surrogate hands” in the execution of the work.

⁵ Although the researcher and the artisans speak Arabic, however they have different dialects. Communication was smooth most of the time however there were local volunteers who accompanied the researcher to help in explaining few local terms.

6.3 Artists Focus Group

|researcher as moderator|

This section addresses the focus group sessions conducted during the time of the residency, bringing chapter four discussion on methodology into practice. As mentioned earlier, the methods used for this research includes reflective journals and ‘sweat box’, considered an extension of a ‘focus group’ approach. Summary and analysis of the focus group are demonstrated in the following stages.

6.3.1 Sampling

Since the residency’s planning started two months prior to its start date, the call-for-participation in the focus group was announced at an early stage. This happened in collaboration with GOA team, who helped the researcher in launching an online application and forwarding it to their local community in Tetouan. Thus, the visibility of the application was influenced by the gallery’s network and social exposure. Application was also influenced by the timeframe of the residency program during which the researcher was available.

Table 6.1 Profile for the participants of the pilot focus group
[Author’s Note]

Participant	Ayyoub	Hamza	Natalie	Hajar	Fatima
Age	20-25	20-25	30-35	20-25	30-35
Background	English Literature Student	Graphic designer/ Illustrator	Textile Artist	Fine arts student	Interior Designer-Educator
Relevance to Research Topic	Apprentice to his father, which owns wooden inlay workshop,	Strengths in digital work	Needle-point textile pieces inspired by the zellige walls	Paintings inspired by Islamic geometry	Teaching design subjects and courses related to local crafts
Artistic Experience	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High

This resulted in a diverse range of applicants responding to the call-for-participation, which included first and second year fine arts and graphic design students, established artists and young individuals of various creative backgrounds. Based on later correspondence with the researcher, the participants were then limited to five applicants (table 6.1).

6.3.2 Structure of Pilot Focus Group

Based on the analysis of the various methods in scientific and artistic research, discussed in Bab four, there are general procedures followed when conducting collaborative sessions. These procedures (Diagram 6.2) are based on the synthesis of two methods: conducting focus groups in social science research, and conducting artistic-studio session in research in the arts.



Diagram 6.2 The standard operation procedures (SOP) for conducting the pilot focus group in Tetouan, Morocco [author's notes]

6.3.3 Process of Work

- **STAGE 1- INITIAL INTRODUCTION:**

This stage can be summarised as follows:

1. Call for application was prepared and launched through the official website of the hosting gallery (Green Olive Arts) in Tetouan, two weeks before visiting Tetouan.
2. Review of the applications (total of 8 applicants has been received) to understand their background, their interests and creative experience. Some applicants did not respond further at this point, and a few attended only one of the three sessions scheduled.
3. One-on-one interviews and calls were conducted during the first couple of days in the Tetouan residency, where the researcher introduced herself to the applicants and gave a brief outline of the research. The researcher also went through the research consent form⁶, as well as the issues of copyright to make sure the applicants understood their participation in the research.
4. The researcher allowed free time for questions, doubts, and non-structural flow of conversation.

- **STAGE 2- SWEAT-BOX:**

The session started with introducing each participant in the group, followed by another short introduction about the research, receiving the signed forms from the applicants and setting up the video camera and audio recorder. The studio set-up included the following:

1. One large table was set up for the group to work around, along with a large sheet of paper stuck on walls for jotting down ideas and thoughts. Other supplies included extra sheets of different sized paper, pens, colour pencils, markers, and stationery items such as scissors, erasers and rulers.
2. On opposite walls were 2 different questions: What makes art Islamic? What makes spaces spiritual? These are formed in a way to address the research question indirectly and inform the literature findings. Participants answered either both questions together or one at a time, while the researcher/ moderator jotted down the keywords on each side of the walls accordingly.



⁶ Sample of the form provided in appendix IV

[illegible][illegible]

298

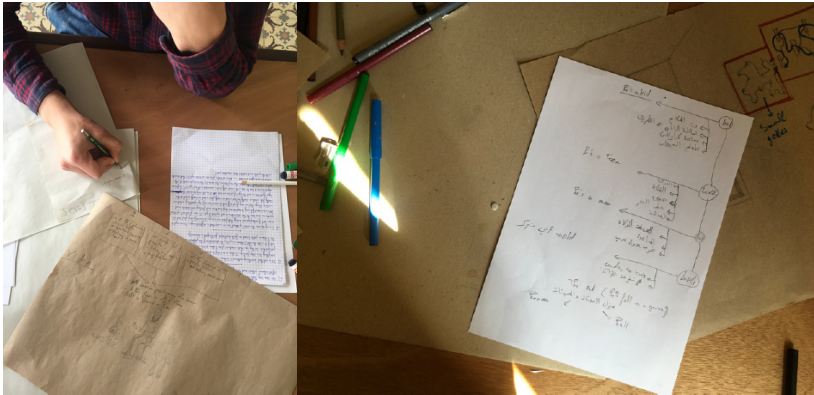
Although the group had not been given any structure or knowledge of the aesthetic principles synthesised from literature, some of the themes realised in Bab two have emerged from the group discussion, which highlighted some of the abstract points at the end of the brainstorming stage. The other aspect to be highlighted here is the challenge of maintaining the group dynamics (Nystrom, 1979), and recording what happens exactly during the brainstorming process and how to make it accessible in this research (Daichendt, 2011). The researcher took the role of moderator during the studio sessions; therefore, it was necessary to rely on the video and audio recordings of the session, in order to reflect and analyse the process after the session had ended.

• **STAGE 3: IDEATION AND CONCEPTS DEVELOPMENT**

The next session started with reflecting on their mind maps, then participants were asked to choose one or two of their individual ideas and develop them further, either into a 2D artwork, 3D prototype experiments, or raw sketches. The session then proceeded in a way similar to a design studio setting, where the researcher-moderator helped the participants to articulate and develop their ideas (figure 6.8, 6.9). Working in pairs or as group, or developing one or multiple ideas were also encouraged. The session ended by a brief group discussion, encouraging the participants to take their own work home, or come to the studio during opening times to work further on their ideas.

Figure 6.8 Part of the second session that happened in the GOA studios in Tetouan, where the participants explored their ideas through sketching based on their previous mind maps [author's notes]





• ————— •

Figure 6.9 Some of the results of the ideas and concept development. On the left is a story board for a short film, and on the right is a navigation for a mobile application. This reflects the lifestyle, interests, and skills of the participants [author's notes]

• STAGE 4: PROTOTYPING AND FINALISING

The final stage of the focus group focused on two main points; further details for the development of ideas, and finalising the existing prototypes. The results consisted of a series of raw sketches, and initial prototypes for installation pieces or visuals communicating spatial designs on paper (figure 6.10). An important observation realised at this stage was even though the sweat-box (or focus group) sessions included many potentials, the following stages moved towards the participants' "safe space". For example, Hamza, the graphic designer attempted to animate one of the decorative motif using the software that he usually uses, as he was shying away from the use of physical or tactile materials throughout the sessions. Fatima, the design educator, used physical modelling materials and tools to dissect traditional Islamic motif, without exploring it in a three-dimensional. In other words, the skills of the participants were dominating their thinking process, this was also influenced by the duration of the sessions and their availability.

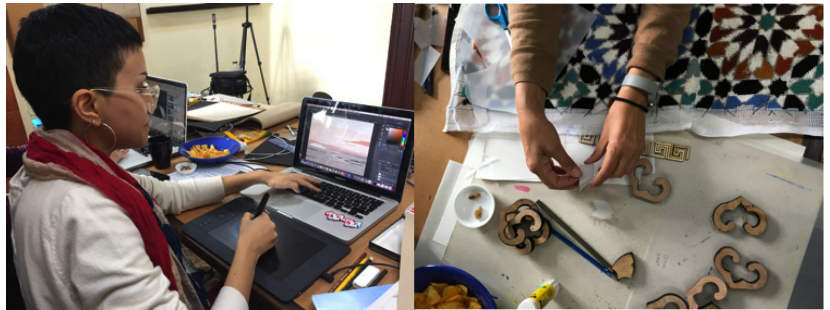


• ————— •

Figure 6.10 Part of the third session at the GOA studios in Tetouan, the participants further developed their sketches into prototyping small sculptural pieces or envisioning installations [author's notes]

The “safe space” or “comfort zone” that occurs when participants feel more comfortable working in their own material and medium specialty relates to the notion of tacit knowledge explored earlier. It has been observed that when the hands, being embodied with a unique tacit knowledge, are offered the chance to work in another medium or format, it creates a need for a time of readjustment. For example, Natalie, textile artist who work on needle-point techniques to create 2D visuals based on 3D geometrical scenes was very uncertain how to proceed when she was asked to create a 3D prototype of paper and/or wire (figure 6.13). Reema, a graphic design student, immediately took out her drawing pad, connected it to her laptop and started drawing digitally instead of manual sketching, as if she had installed an extension of her hands prior to creating work (figure 6.11). This highlights the changing use of hands in contemporary artistic practice, a subject that has been addressed by Sennett and Pallasmaa. It also brings to light the discourse of replacing manual sketching with computer-aided tools in design practice. At the end, the flexible structure of the focus group sessions was specifically tailored to allow for raw ideas; finalised concepts and prototypes were still welcomed, however, it was the thinking process that was the main focus of the sessions. Therefore, some of the participants felt more relaxed trying other mediums and tools without having the stress of producing an “end product”.

Figure 6.11 Pictures from the focus group sessions where the participant on the right was introduced to different medium, and participant on the left used her own tools for expression [Author's notes].



To conclude, the following remarks summarise the challenges and the nature of the focus group sessions:

1. The timeframe of the sessions coincided with the Moroccan Schools' spring break, hence, the limited availability of the participants which influenced the consistency of the focus group and the development of a few ideas.
2. Some of the younger participants had a modest knowledge of the topic, which was reflected in the level of their conceptual and philosophical understanding and awareness.
3. Having a flexible approach and non-structured focus group may have helped not limiting the artistic or the thinking process, however it caused two issues; the first is that thinking too widely without limiting it to specific types of products has led the participants to think about mobile applications and film making, which were not areas covered in the scope of the research. Second, the absence of general guidelines led the participants to create their own restrictions, in the sense that they either limited it to a specific tool or medium, or referred back to preconceived ideas about Islamic art. Exhibiting the outcomes of these sessions through curatorial practice will be further demonstrated in the following points.



6.4 Collaborative and Curatorial Practice

|researcher as curator|

In consideration to Babs four and five, different forms of creative research exploration took shape during **Convergence** residency (see diagram 6.0) which resulted in three areas of reflection: First, observing master artisans and practicing traditional craftsmanship allowed the artistic engagement of the researcher. This highlighted the argument in methodology regarding the importance of the artistic experience as a core element in creating new knowledge. Second, auto-ethnography as a methodological approach was achieved through the researcher collaboration with the artisan in order to produce objects based on her own designs. Thirdly, conducting the various research methods in Morocco created a series of visual materials that needed to be represented as one entity by the end of the residency. Therefore, this section demonstrates how the curatorial practice, as a form of reflective practice (and a mode of assemblage) created a “pooling of knowledge” (O’Neill, 2012) where all these explorations can be presented as one narrative. The curatorial practice was thereby demonstrated in a group exhibition which marked the end of Convergence residency program.



To showcase the visual materials resulting from the observation, focus group and artistic practice, the studio (allocated to the researcher during the time of the residency) was transformed into an exhibition space (figure 6.12). The curatorial narrative took the visitor through a journey connected by the concept of “hands”; one wall of the studio presented the observation of the artisans (the teaching hands), opposite to that was a display of the researcher’s own design through leather techniques¹ (the learning hands) (figure 6.14), while the visual materials resulting from the focus group was displayed on the desk and the surrounding walls (the thinking hands). Echoing the thoughts



1 As a designer by practice, the researcher was benefiting from learning under the supervision of master artisans (Mu’allims), and utilising the available resources of materials and crafts. This has helped in enhancing her own design approach and signature products, especially by choosing leather-smith as the main craft to be learned in the residency. This aspect of the residency, although may seem somewhat distant from the research main topic, addresses the contemporary practice of the traditional Islamic arts as one-on-one direct experiments by the researcher being a contemporary designer herself.

explored in the previous chapter, the studio was the medium and the form through which the researcher not only narrated her research process, but also linked traditional craftsmanship with contemporary practice and connected the research with the community. The exhibition resulted in creating a social space where interaction occurred between the researcher, the focus group participants, the artisans and the visitors thereby disseminating research knowledge.



Figure 6.12 The studio of the researcher-curator during **Convergence** exhibition opening. The researcher welcomed visitors in her studio which narrated the process of work from the teaching hands (artisans), the thinking hands (the focus group participants), and the learning hands (researcher-designer) [Author's notes].

To conclude, the curatorial practice demonstrated dialogical, collaborative and pedagogical aspects of **Convergence** residency. From the dialogue perspective, key points from the focus group discussions were displayed as a way to continue the conversation during the exhibition. Dialogues with master artisans and visitors included the availability of resources in Morocco and Bahrain, and the new generation's lack of interest in learning the traditional crafts (curator as observer and anthropologist). It also provoked questions such as: are there any relationships between religious practice and the teaching of crafts? Do artisans associate Islamic craftsmanship with profound philosophical interpretations, such as the thoughts realised in the literature review of this research? And is it important to have such rapport between philosophy and practice within a religious context?



From the collaborative aspect, using auto-ethnography as a research method integrated the researcher's experience as an essential part of the primary data. The researcher's learning experience from the master artisans allowed collaboration to happen, thus creating a visual dialogue between the researcher as a designer and the artisans. The results are pieces that combine the conceptual background of the designer and the embodied "existential" knowledge of the craftsman, which positions the researcher in a similar platform to the artists discussed in Bab three. This is considered self-reflected experimentation that goes in parallel with the research thinking process. Being a designer exposed to these valuable resources and opportunities offered the possibility of creating designer-artisan collaboration where the designer built her concepts on the strengths of the master artisans and their expertise (figure 6.14). In general, the curatorial narrative presented the collaborative nature of the experience, presenting the artisans and the participants of focus group as active collaborators in the research journey.

As for the pedagogical aspect, it informed the findings of Bab three, in that it questioned the understanding of Islamic art, and the preconceived ideas young participants had about what constitutes "Islamic". Analysing the participants responses proves Rabbat's argument on how knowledge of Islamic art was limited to historical categories to the extent that they found it challenging to relate to traditional craftsmanship. The experience also highlights the fact that traditional crafts were taught in a separate school to the Tetouan School of Art, which questions the necessity of integrating craftsmanship in artistic pedagogy.

Figure 6.13 The learning hands (researcher-designer): table showing the researcher's own work and prototypes that feeds into her practice as a designer ([Author's notes].

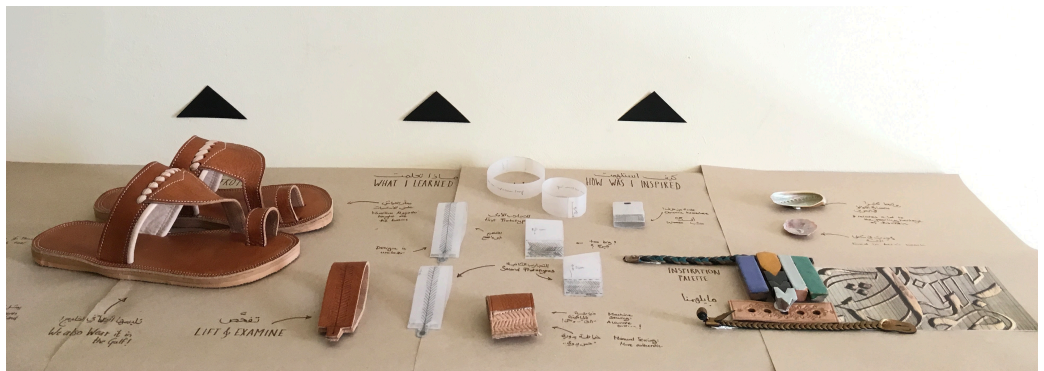




Figure 6.14 Narrative boards about the teaching hands (artisans), and the collaborative pieces done with each one of them. The boards were given to the mu'allims as a token of gratitude after the end of residency [Author's notes].

6.5 Concluding Remarks on the Morocco Experience

The various investigative methods conducted during the residency experience in Morocco addressed the following research questions: what forms of historical knowledge has been the source of Islamic artistic practice? And what forms of knowledge within Islamic aesthetics can be traced in contemporary practice?

While Bab two and three investigated the first question in terms of philosophical and spiritual knowledge, this section explored the “embodied” knowledge through the use of observation and autoethnography as research methods. The first part created links between the significance of hands in Quranic context and how it has been interpreted in Islamic philosophical thoughts. Thus, it concluded that Islamic philosophy has associated the act of making with knowledge, and eventually considered art making, imagining, and knowing as an unfathomable whole. This was followed by the observation of craftsmanship in Tetouan, Morocco which allowed the designer-researcher the opportunity to investigate intangible aspects while becoming an apprentice under the supervision of master artisans of traditional Islamic crafts.

Observing traditional craftsmanship demonstrates how an artisans’ way of working can provide “an anchor in material reality”. Throughout the history of Western philosophy, the division between mind and body, practice and theory, artisan and artist, created a solid foundation for predominant artistic pedagogies and practices that separate the mental/ intellectual from the emotional/ sensorial human capacities (Sennett, 2008; Pallasmaa, 2009). Linking this notion to Islamic philosophical thought in earlier chapters, it can be seen that this separation does not exist; for the theoretical and practical knowledge are integrated parts that leads to production of any work (Akkach, 2012). This caused two issues: first, the lack of historical evidence or scholarly inquiry that connected tacit or embodied knowledge with contemporary Islamic aesthetics. Second, the necessity of reframing contemporary Islamic artistic pedagogy with integrated embodied experience.



With regards to the second research question, this section addressed the contemporary understanding of Islamic artistic expression by conducting focus groups. This helped in grasping an idea of how creative individuals understand Islamic aesthetic in a cultural context where traditional craftsmanship is still being practiced. Being constantly affiliated with local craftsmanship in Morocco, young participants still view Islamic art as traditional practices stuck in the past. This argument is contrary to the case studies discussed in Bab three, where contemporary artists are seeking the knowledge of traditional crafts as mediums and tools to create their work. This highlights yet again the different movements falling between two extremes, traditionalists and modernists: some artists manage to balance traditional philosophy and mediums with contemporary artistic practice, others can only view traditional methods and tools as old and not innovative.



Another insight gained from the focus group included the necessity of having structured sessions and consistent availability of participants to further develop their ideas. Following on the suggestions of Rabbat and Akkach when they were interviewed by the researcher, the non-structured focus group aimed at eliminating any guidelines that can restrict the creativity of the participants. As a result, the visual materials created during the sessions were focused on producing as many ideas as possible without necessarily developing them into finalised concepts. Thus, the selection of a design studio approach with some guidelines is explored in the second part of this chapter.

To connect both the experience of Morocco and Bahrain, the curatorial practice of the research included the use of social network applications (Snapchat and Instagram) as a tool to disseminate the researcher's journey with Interior Design students in Bahrain. The researcher shared insights about craftsmanship in Tetouan, the mu'allims in their workshops explaining their crafts, and some short live clips illustrating their working process. By being the mediator in-between, the researcher allowed movement of thought and created a virtual platform through which students at the University of Bahrain gained insights of a culturally different context. Further elaboration of this part will continue in the following section.

PART B: STUDIO SESSIONS IN BAHRAIN | DESIGN PROJECTS

Bab three demonstrated an overview on how art and design theories have developed since the 20th century, and in parallel, how Islamic art and architecture have developed as a field of inquiry. It concluded that while Western art and design has evolved and interacted with socio-cultural movements, Islamic art remained static, and limited to a category in art history. In relation to the main research questions, this highlights the following argument: What kind of mode of inquiry is currently applied to communicate the values of Islamic art? And are there any references to the traditionalist (or perennial approach) that are embedded in course materials or teaching methods?

This section will offer a practical exploration of these questions by considering the Interior Design program in University of Bahrain as a case study. The program, like most design programs in the Gulf, is strongly influenced by the Bauhaus school teaching model. Students are taught design foundations in earlier years, while subjects such as Islamic architecture or design are being categorised as a historical inquiry module¹. This section will depend on secondary source material such as course curriculums and official websites of the university to offer, at first, an overview on how Islamic art and design is positioned in the course curriculum. Second, to demonstrate an analysis of the collaborative sessions commenced as part of the Interior Design Curriculum following the participatory methods discussed in Bab four. Since the sessions are integrated as part



¹ This is based on the researcher's five years of teaching experience in the same program..

of an elective design course module, the structure of this case study followed the regular setting of a design studio, referred to in the methodology chapter as a **'sweat box'** method (Gray and Malins, 2016).

The focus group sessions in Morocco concluded that the absence of clear guidelines and structure may lead to a broad range of ideas being produced by the participants in their visual materials. Thus, the studio sessions arranged in Bahrain's design course had a more focused structure drawing its guidelines from Bab two, summarising the aesthetic themes in traditional Islamic philosophy into design elements and principles. These principles were introduced to 28 interior design students in an attempt to adopt a similar approach to the general foundations of design yet maintaining the religious reference as a philosophical base. This section will discuss the different stages of the design sessions, elaborating on the creative process of the participants. It will also analyse the participants' work during the sessions in terms of conceptual understanding and their aesthetic interpretations of the research topic.

The sampling depended on the group of students who registered for the elective course 'Islamic Ornamentation', this is usually offered to senior students of the Interior Design Program. The participants were 28 senior design students of an Islamic religious background and different intellectual levels. Their conceptual awareness was average with few exceptional students who showed more conceptual maturity. All the work submitted was analysed at the beginning, but the discussions below showcase only a few examples from the larger group submission.

The reasons the University of Bahrain was chosen for the research sessions was twofold: first the researcher, as a faculty member of the university allows a potential contribution to be made in the design curriculum, and situates the researcher within her educational practice. Second, it positions the research contribution within a cultural context that is affiliated with the research aims in terms of informing the understanding of the Islamic philosophy underpinning the creative practice. The studio sessions were conducted as part of the elective course (Islamic Ornamentation) for two reasons: the flexibility of changing and introducing project-based exercises in the module helped in executing the research session in a simple manner, and the level in which the module is offered for students ensured a level of intellectual understanding of the profound ideas behind design practice.

6.6 Information about the Interior Design Curriculums in UOB

The interior Design Bachelor Program in the University of Bahrain was first launched in 2002, ever since it aimed at establishing a strong foundation for the relatively new major in the Gulf at that time. When it comes to the design curriculum, it is based on a western educational system, a Bauhaus-inspired design process. This educational model in interior design is common in Gulf universities with a few minor exceptions. A design foundation is offered in the first year, which includes basic design principles¹ and graphic practices giving students fundamental knowledge across all across design disciplines, similar to Western design schools. The program involves the design of interior spaces up until the fourth year, where students learn to design through a variety of projects from small-scale to large interior spaces of a more complex nature (University of Bahrain, 2016). The program also includes lecture-based courses that support the growth and understanding of students in subjects of construction, materials, and history. Collectively, the program aims to offer a comprehensive knowledge about the functional, social, cultural and psychological dimensions of design that are reflected through the application of forms, materials, colours, and textures (University of Bahrain, 2016)².

The design process followed in design courses starts with identifying the design problem, followed by a phase of experimentation and testing, which eventually ends in a final design solution or creative output. According to Sullivan (2005), the problem-solving design approach emphasises that the learner is both a practitioner and a researcher, and encourages a pluralistic aesthetics that results in number of possible design solutions:



¹ This relates to D.K. Ching's categorisation of the foundations of design, his books is adapted as one of the main course module books in the Program. These categories (design elements, principles, and spatial relationships) were adopted in chapter two as an alternative reading to the traditional Islamic art and design.

² See Appendix V for the full Interior Design Program.

“The cycle of inquiry involves the identification of a design problem that includes criteria for its resolution; the compilation of relevant background research about what has already been done; devising a plan of action; producing an object or prototype; and concludes with an evaluative stage where the product is tested against the problem conditions. If the result is unsatisfactory, then the cycle begins again.” (Sullivan 2005, p.76)

The students graduating from this program are expected to have developed refined skills in the design process and demonstrate a “human-centred” approach to design. In addition, they ought to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the global perspective of design yet applying their practical knowledge with consideration to the historical and cultural contexts of emerging developments (University of Bahrain, 2016). What is important in this section, however, is the investigation and position of Islamic art and design as a field of study within the design education program, particularly in the context of Bahrain. Looking closely at the Interior Design curriculum, Islamic art and design is introduced through two course modules (table 6.2); the History of Islamic Interiors, which tackles the chronological history of Islamic architecture and interior design. The second module is Islamic Ornamentation, an elective course for senior students that addresses the decorative canons of Islamic art and design, focusing on geometry, calligraphy and surface treatments.

Table 6.2 Excerpt from the Interior Design 4-years Bachelor program.

The selected courses are related to Islamic Art and Design, and offered in the third and fourth year (Source: UOB, 2016)



Course Code: INTD 311	Course Title: History of Islamic Interiors
Interiors Survey of Islamic interiors including examples from Umayyad, Abbasid, Moorish, Mogul, and Ottoman periods; emphasis on mosque and residential architectural types; Islamic ornamentation and calligraphy; influence of cultural and religious factors on Islamic interiors.	
Course Code: INTD 425	Course Title: Islamic Ornamentation
Definition and materials of ornamentation. Methods of ornamentation: carving, chiselling, embossing, engraving, painting, gilding, inlaying, marquetry, tapestry and cladding with mosaic, ceramic, brick, gypsum etc. Elements of Islamic ornamentation, motifs and patterns. Classification of motifs and patterns: Vegetal and floral patterns, geometric patterns, figural patterns, and calligraphy. Exercises in developing different motifs and patterns.	

The first module offers chronological overview of Islamic architectural and design heritage, focusing on specific building types such as mosques and domestic buildings, while the second module emphasises the materials and methods used for traditional Islamic ornamentations, giving a generic understanding of their origins. It also explores the ornamentation through three decorative categories (calligraphy, geometry and arabesque), with emphasis on the stylistic difference between one region and the other. Echoing arguments discussed in Bab three, the course module gives historical descriptions and records of motifs and patterns rather than delving in thoughts embedded in the process of making such work.

6.7 Structure of the studio session within the course module

The time frame for conducting the case study was tailored to fit within the schedule of the course, with a period extending up to one month towards the end of the second semester of the academic year 2016/2017. The following table demonstrates the schedule included in the students' syllabus, dividing the studio sessions into hour and a half periods of time, once a week¹.



¹ For the full detailed syllabus and timeframe of 'Islamic Ornamentation' course, please check appendix V

ACADEMIC WEEK	DATE	SUBJECT/ TASK	ASSESSMENT
4	14/03	• Launching project 1	• Lecture + Market visit
5	21/03	• Development and discussion of Project 1	• Studio
6	28/03	• Submission of Project 1	• Individual tutoring/ studio
7	04/04	N/A	• Quiz
8	11/04	• Launching Project 2	• Submission P1
9	18/04	• Mid-Semester Break	-
10	25/04	• N/A	• Lecture + Site visit
11	02/05	• Development and discussion of Project 2	• Individual tutoring/ studio
12	09/05	• Submission of Project 2	• Submission

Table 6.3 An excerpt from the course syllabus that was distributed to the student in the academic year 2016-2017 in the second semester. This shows the distribution of Project 1 and 2 in relation to the syllabus timetable. (Almerbati, 2017).

As noticed from (table 6.3), the research was introduced to the students through two design projects; the first was the application of design principles (abstracted from literature) to design a jewellery piece, and the second was through the design of a spiritual space. The design sessions were divided into two projects simplifying the scope of research into more manageable exercises, and helping students focus more on specific work outcomes. Even though students majored in interior design, designing a jewellery piece aimed to test their abilities to work with physical prototypes, relating to the significance of manual skills and craftsmanship which is an integral part in thinking and making. The selection of designing a jewellery piece, and an interior space of 3x3 meters also allowed the researcher to investigate how the students interpreted the principles given to them in both micro and macro scales. The idea of a contained piece and a



container space relates to the notion of inside/outside, and the analogy of body and soul in the traditional Islamic thoughts addressed in Bab two.

The two projects were introduced in a sequential way, one following the other, therefore they are discussed here according to their chronological order, elaborating on the stages of the creative process separately for better comparison of the results. The projects were launched with the help and support of the course director, Dr. Nehal Almerbati², who was in correspondence with the researcher before and during the course. Dr. Almerbati also initiated the first project as it overlapped with the end of the Moroccan residency, the researcher then joined her in following up studio sessions of the first project.

6.8 Introductory Tools

Prior to introducing the projects, the students were introduced to the researcher's experience in Morocco, promoting a better engagement with the subject and with the researcher (as guest lecturer). Creating a bridge between the two case studies (Morocco and Bahrain) was an essential step at the beginning of the course. The idea of sharing the craftsmanship experience to see how students reflected on a different context to their own, where it was focusing more towards a tacit knowledge and its relation to traditional crafts practice. This was achieved through the use of social network apps, mainly Snapchat and Instagram, to broadcast the experience virtually to the students (figure 6.15). Another part of this introductory stage was arranging two Skype conferences, through which the researcher introduced the seven principles addressed in chapter two, and how they were historically applied, or presented, in Islamic design and architecture (figure 6.15). These principles were: unity, absence, remembrance, rhythm, intimacy, balance and modesty. This opened reflective discussions back in Bahrain that were included as a part of the theoretical lectures, relating to the role of the curator as a mediator between the two contexts mentioned earlier.



² Dr. Almerbati research area focuses on bridging the gap between material and immaterial interior products in Middle Eastern dwellings. She completed her PhD in the design school at De Montfort University, through which she investigates the reproduction of Mashrabiya to be revived using new technologies like 3D printing.



Figure 6.15 Snapshots showing how the experience in Morocco has been shared virtually through Skype calls and Snapchat stories for students to get a glimpse of another cultural context and the skill-based narrative [Author's notes]

Inspired by IDEO Design Toolkit (IDEO, 2013) the students were provided with a workbook at the beginning of the course module to use as a visual diary to record their creative process. This toolkit was adapted from the original toolkit and workbook provided online by IDEO, its content was modified as an aid for the specific subject of Islamic design and the scope of the two projects (figure 6.16)¹.

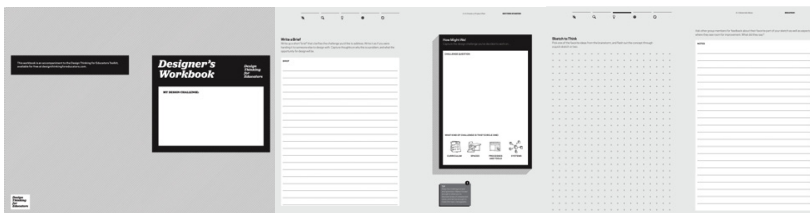


Figure 6.16 Selected page spreads from IDEO's Design Toolkit (CC copyright available online at ideo.com), the workbook was developed to aid in design process, and help participants during creative problem solving. In this research the workbook was adopted then tailored to fit the course syllabus for the students in an attempt to record their creative process [Author's notes]

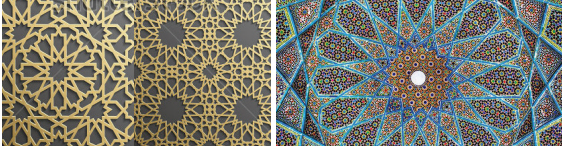




¹ Although the toolkit was provided from the beginning of the course, the students' consistency and commitment to use it were below average. Instead, they have recorded some of their work in sketchbooks, but used the toolkit as guidelines to assist them in their process. Had it been used to its full potential, then perhaps it could have revealed more, or different insights.

6.9 Designing a Jewellery Piece (as micro representation)

6.9.1 Ideation and Concepts

Similar to the case study in Morocco, students were asked two questions before starting their first project: what makes a product Islamic? In order to address this question, students were asked to develop a mind map that linked together their thoughts, and helped them abstract a more in-depth idea about what they had in mind. Before embarking on the design stage, students were asked to choose one principle out of the seven principles, previously presented and explained, alongside choosing one of the main categories of Islamic decorative art; geometry, arabesque, or calligraphy. The mind map developed by students helped in identifying patterns to their answers, and provided an understanding of how they express their pre-conceived thoughts on the characteristics of “Islamic” design. By observing the repetitive keywords in the students’ mind maps, and connecting these to the students’ inspirational images (or mood boards), themes were identified (table 6.4).

➤ Table 6.4 Analysis of the student’s inspirational images for project 01. The table shows the main occurring themes that correlates with their brainstorming, this in turn summarises the students’ interpretations on what makes products Islamic (image sources are student’s design boards) [Author’s notes].

#	Themes	Details	Examples
1	Geometry	Ready-made geometric motifs that exists in historical examples	
2	Nature	Elements of nature as a physical example God's creation	
3	Calligraphy	Quranic scripts or names of the Prophets	
4	Light	Images of lights filtering through clouds or geometry	 <p>لَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سُبُحَ سَمَاءَ بَيْتِ طَيْفَانَا * وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا * وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ مِنْ رَاجَا [نوح 15-17]</p>
5	Jewellery	Modern jewellery pieces that usually has vegetal lines and forms	

6.9.2 Design Development

Throughout this stage the students delve more into the details of their designs, emphasis was put in developing concept details, and employing technicalities to better serve their ideas. Basic details were encouraged but not required; for the main objective was not the amount of details achieved, but the concept and the recording of the creative process. The design development phase took around two more weeks for students to develop their ideas, ensuring their concepts are profound and that their designs are relevant to the projects' brief. They also needed to make sure that they relate their ideas to one dominant principle; it became clear that more than one principle was employed, as the intention was always to observe how students communicate design principles in relation to their design. Prototyping (made of papers or metals) were highly encouraged to envision the jewellery pieces, students resorted to using sketches, two and three dimensional, in order to communicate their ideas.

In relation to (table 6.4), inspirations from Quranic and prophetic stories took shape, as seen in the example shown in (figure 6.17). The student was inspired by the story of the Virgin Mary (Sayyedah Mariam bint Omran), and how she was shaking the trunk of the palm tree while in labour. The student used the element of the palm tree as a symbolic reference to the story. She also looked for examples of jewellery that included elements of palm trees, this may have unduly influenced her design process in the outcomes before having the chance to explore and develop her own ideas. This also occurred in other students' work, where modern examples of jewellery influenced the design direction. Many others used Quranic scripts or biblical stories of the Prophets, or remarkable characters as a point of departure for their inspiration. In another example (figure 6.18) a student was inspired by Ibn Arabi's visualisation of the universe and its creation. This is probably one of the rare examples where the inspiration came from something outside the Quranic script. The development of this concept was abstracted using a series of circles one inside the other to represent Ibn Arabi's levels of existence. The main observation of this stage in the process of making in the students' work was divided into direct representation of names mentioned in the Quran, or indirect representation, through symbolism, found in nature such as the moon, and palm trees, all relevant to Quranic text.

PRINCIPLE & CANON



Inspirational images of the palm tree and its dates.



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

I named my jewelry piece (Mojiza) which is the Arabic language word for (Miracle).

This is because the brooch represents the miracles that happened to Mary (Maryam bint Qumran) near the date palm tree.

I added three fruit bunches on the palm leaf representing the three miracles that happened.

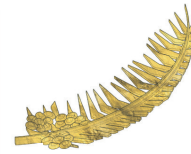
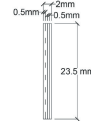
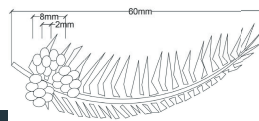


Figure 6.17. Example of the concept development stage; inspired by the story of Virgin Mary, the student developed a brooch design using the element of palm tree as a symbolic reference (Source: student's course work).

ISLAMIC DESIGN REFLECTION

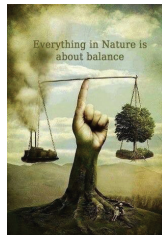
The design principle is balance it was chosen in the relation with:

This verse leads to the fact that the ecosystem is a balanced system, disturbing this balance leads to the failure of growth and survive.



Arabesque - Vegetal

PRINCIPLE & CANON



Everything in Nature is about balance



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

The inner circle represent the earth, the larger ones represent the cycles that helps to maintain balance in nature.

Also, it represent the infinite scale of the sky and how each element is moving around in the nature.

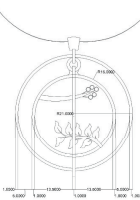
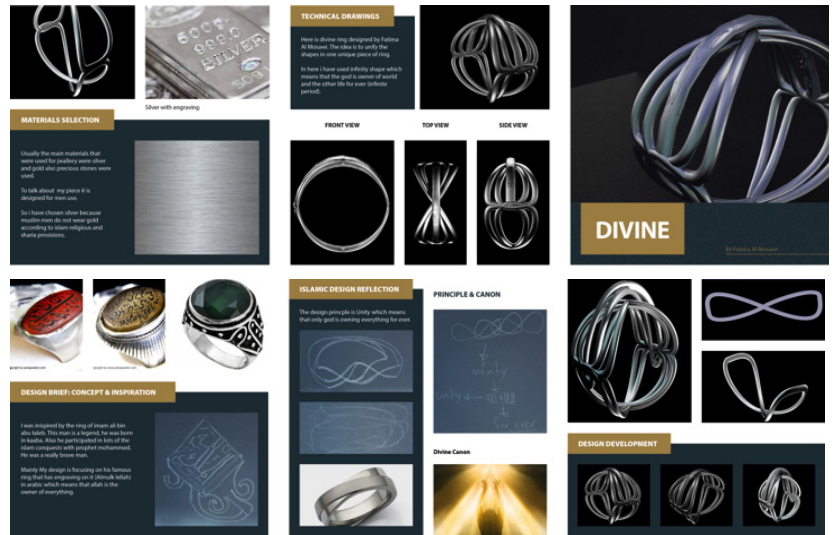


Figure 6.18 Example of the concept development stage; the student was inspired by Ibn Arabi's interpretations of the cosmos and linked it to nature through the use of vegetal elements in the necklace design (Source: student's course work).

6.9.3 Final Outcomes (project submission)

The last stage focused on the technical aspects for finalising the students' designs. For easier evaluation and assessment of the work for both the course director and the researcher, students were required to include: concept and inspiration, visualisation, materials selection, and technical specs (figure 6.19). The second project had similar requirements maintaining consistency in the output. This editorial/curatorial decision was made in an attempt that the students work would be a part of a comprehensive volume of work that could be exhibited or published as one of the school's projects.

Figure 6.19 Example of the final submitted sheets which included details such as the dominant design principle, concept articulation and technical specs (Source: student's course work).



The final outcomes resulting from the conceptual development can be analysed in a few ways; there is a clear disconnection between the initial sketch ideas and the final outcome, in that the initial ideas had more potential of design exploration. The evidence for this is seen in how some of the final forms were flat 2D rather than three-dimensional. Instead of using raw materials to prototype the pieces, students relied on the use of 3D Max software as a visualising aid to communicate their designs. Their enthusiasm in seeing how their design would take physical form using tactile materials such as gold or silver urged them to outsource their designs for manufacture to local silversmiths. This brings us back to the discourse on craftsmanship as an integral part of the thinking process in design education. Additionally, the challenge of sourcing professional silversmiths who were limited in what they do for customised designs have influenced the final manufactured piece. There was more potential in the design development than in the final pieces which demonstrated a disconnection between the conceptual idea and the functionality in some of the jewellery pieces. It also demonstrates integrating functionality that is not well considered into the piece may influence the originality and execution of initially creative ideas.

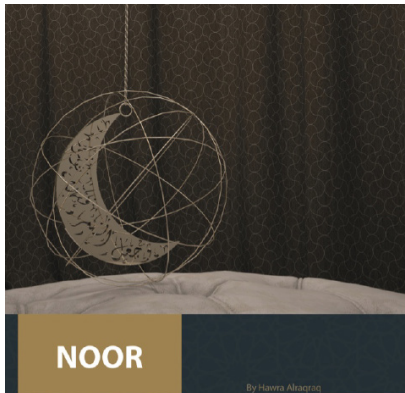


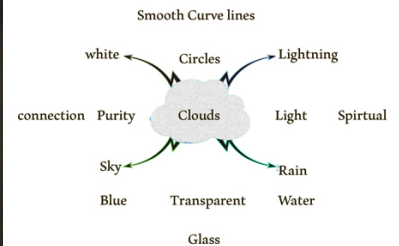
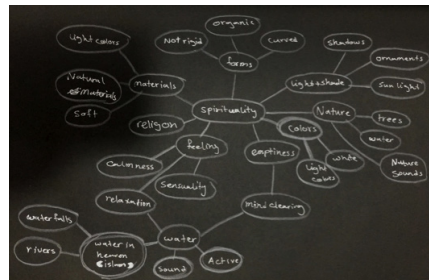
Figure 6.20 Few examples of the final outcome of designing a jewellery piece, showing the diversity of the functions as well as the quality of the finished product. The rendered visual images show more creativity than the physical prototype (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]

6.10 Designing a Spiritual Space (as macro representation)





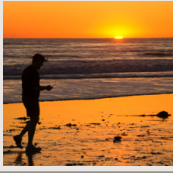
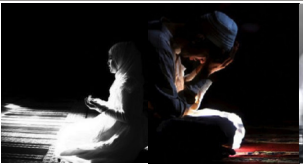

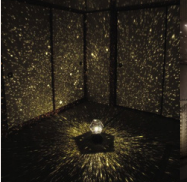





6.10.1 Ideation and Concepts

Following on from the structure of the first project, discussion and brainstorming sessions were conducted at the beginning of this project, to answer the second question; what makes spaces spiritual? As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the question was also part of the sessions conducted in Tetouan, Morocco which aimed to: a) link it to the question of the first project, and b) position it as a point of departure for their thoughts and design development, stimulating students' imagination, yet keeping them focused on one topic. (Figure 6.21) showcases some of the mind maps developed by the students which had similar patterns or sequences of thoughts to the mind maps developed in the Morocco sessions.

Figure 6.21 Samples of mind maps in Project 02 showcasing the development of students' thoughts when asked the initial questions (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]



It can be seen from the mind maps that at the start, students responded to the question in a generic manner, presenting a feeling of calmness and serenity, of being isolated in a room, or being immersed in nature. While dwelling on their own answers, the students started relating or referring to certain Quranic scripts, symbols, or metaphors. As the mind map branched further into details, students broke the keywords into spatial or natural elements such as: water, greenery, colours and forms. An approach to encouraging the students' mind maps was to ask "but how/why?" as a thinking aid to reach more abstract keywords. The transformation from direct and simple responses, intangible in their meanings, to tangible and abstract elements, helped the students to reach ideas that became a starting point for their designs. Within a period of two sessions, inspirational thoughts, initial ideas and sketches were presented in the studio. When students were encouraged to use inspirational images or visuals to communicate their initial thoughts, the results exhibited topics which could be categorised into five themes; scripts, nature, prayers, light and technology (table 6.5). Both the researcher and Dr. Almerbati discussed initial ideas with each student to help them develop their designs accordingly.

#	Themes	Examples
1	Scripts	 
2	Nature	  
3	Prayers	 
4	Light	  
5	Technology	  



The first of the themes relied on snapshots of calligraphy from the Quranic scripts, or prophetic narrations, some students adopted verses from the Quran as a basis for their conceptual development. The second theme was ‘nature’ used to convey spiritual connections, such as pictures of the sky, sunsets, and green scenery. The third and most dominant visual relied on pictures of people praying, usually in high contrast space with one light, or people praying towards light. The fourth and fifth themes related to light and how students interpret the notion of light. Some students included pictures of a lighting fixture, a sculpture, or an installation piece that at most shows a surrounding empty space. Others used light as an element in the interior space in a way to communicate certain elements of technology and interior design treatments, creating an ambience using lighting.

6.10.2 Design Development

Similar to the previous project, students were asked to identify one dominant principle out of the seven, while developing their initial ideas to refine their concept. Over a period of two weeks, students developed more of the details about their spiritual space, defining its particular function, such as: meditation, art installation, or reading room. The functionality of the space was left open for the students to determine according to what they thought a spiritual space entailed. The researcher and Dr. Almerbati had one-to-one conversations with the students about their work in progress, developed from their mind maps and initial design sketches, ensuring the relevance of the ideas to the project’s brief. Students were encouraged to keep records of their sketches to reflectively analyse their creative process. The following demonstrates the analysis of three examples in relation to this stage, emphasising the transition between conceptualisation, development, and final outcomes of each example.



Table 6.5. Analysis of the student’s inspirational images for project 02. The table shows five main themes that can summarise the students’ interpretations of what makes a spiritual space [Author’s notes].

First, student (A) chose Intimacy “Qurb” as a main principle to work with. As a start, she referred to the story of the prophet Moses in the Quran and how it resembles the intimacy between God and Moses when he was in need. When student (A) was asked about what makes a spiritual space, she explained: “when the space functions as something that touches human behaviours and emotions, then it can be called spiritual”. According to the student, the story of Moses teaches us that all complex problems shall be solved when praying to God seeking His guidance and blessings. She also concluded that with persistence, one can achieve their ambitions. The function of spiritual space was then envisioned as a study space (figure 6.22), with intimate sitting areas. Using calligraphy, the student aimed to facilitate the space as a reminder of God and that users are encouraged to study, and work hard.

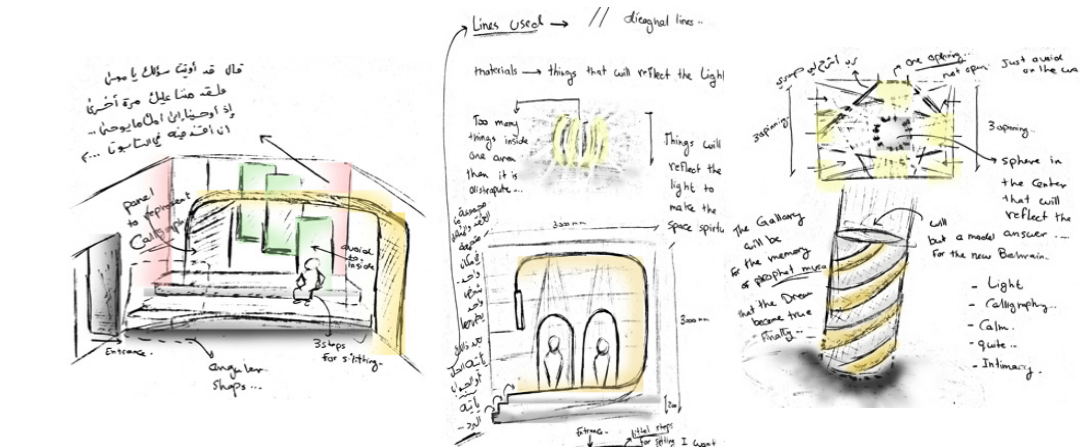


Figure 6.22 Design sketches from student (A), communicating initial ideas about the spiritual/study space, configuration of seating, and the use of light in the space (Source: student's course work) [author's notes]

Though it also started by quoting a Quranic verse, student (B) conveyed a different approach by looking into some of the elements in the Quranic script that could be aesthetically explored. From the verses that narrates the story of Prophet Yusuf, student (B) summarised the change of circumstance in the story; sickness shall be healed, sorrow shall turn into happiness, and those absent shall return. The result is a duality that could be articulated in four themes (figure 6.23). Although student (B) articulated “Thikr” or remembrance as her main principle, she puts emphasis on another principle in her work; contrast. Consequently, she envisioned the spiritual space as a space of contemplation, reminding us that life circumstances are in constant change. By using “smart capsules” suspended from the ceiling, she highlighted a corresponding pattern on the floor. These smart capsules, as she described them, serve as audio installation that recites the referenced verses.

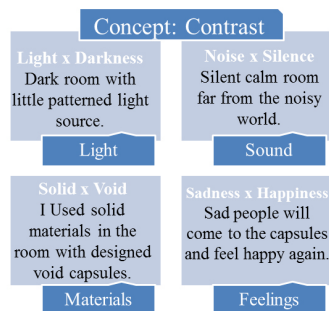


Figure 6.23 Student (B) ideation and visual articulation of her initial idea for creating a contemplative space using audio capsules (Source: student's course work)

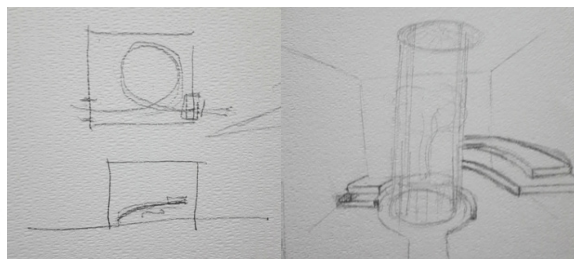


Figure 6.24 Design sketches for Student (C), showing the initial ideas for a spiritual space that relates to the notion of reading and how knowledge can “elevate” oneself using the application of rhythm as a principle (Source: student's course work)

For student (C), inspiration came from the notion of knowledge, and how it can elevate men to higher levels of intellectuality. Supporting her idea using different verses that acknowledges the importance of knowledge, she then extracted growth as one of the key elements in her mind map. Relating the idea of growth to rhythm as a principle, student aimed at creating a space of different levels; surrounding a central element of light (figure 6.24).

6.10.3 Final Outcomes (project submission)

Figure 6.25 Final rendering for student (A)'s ideas about the spiritual/study space. The render shows design decisions that emerged after developing the sketches. Analysis on the rendered image is author's notes (Source: student's course work).



The students further developed their ideas in order to finalise their designs. With regards to student (A), the final render showcasing her design developed to include further details of the surface detail and the selection of materials and finishes. The final design showed the direct application of traditional geometry (A and B in figure 6.25) as surface treatments, repeated in the surrounding walls. The overall design included the direct use of Quranic verses; written in traditional calligraphic script and applied onto the walls of the designed space (See A in figure 6.25). The function of the space was designed to provide private study corners for individuals, however the final outcome shows a space that serves as a transitional/ walking through area with little privacy. Another remark

noted that the final design was very rigid in its form, there was little similarity to the initial sketches which showed the utilisation of technology in a more organic form (see C in figure 6.25). The conclusion was that the function of the space was lost in favour of assuring the application of geometry and calligraphy within the design.

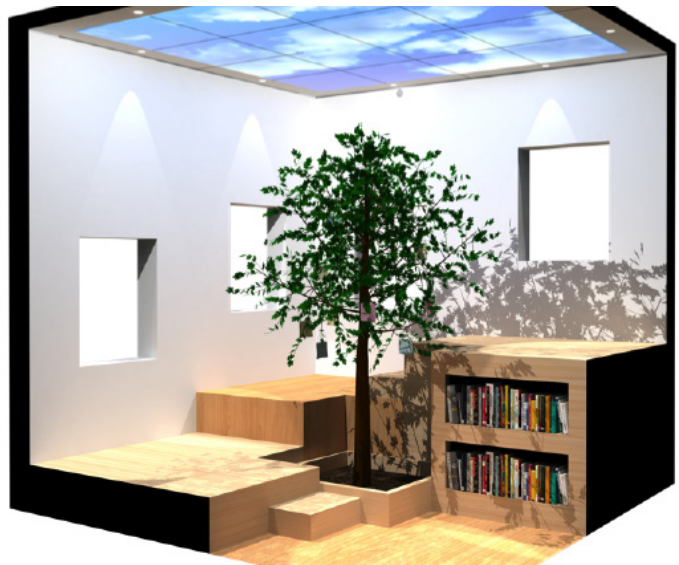
Similarly, student (B) developed final results when it came to the application of traditional, “ready-made” patterns (see A in figure 6.26), the student followed a modern design direction in the use of surface finishes as an overall impression in the space. The historical geometric motif was enlarged in its proportion to stretch over the surfaces of the space in an attempt to achieve a modernised futuristic atmosphere. Student (B) used the same geometric motif as a guideline to extrude floor platforms (B in figure 6.26) to highlight the function of the space, which include smart audio capsules. The same extruded forms were correspondingly used as a ceiling treatment that had integrated lighting fixtures. Once again, the same forms were used to create the audio capsule designs (C in figure 6.26), with a keyword applied to its outer surface hinting at the subject of the audio capsule’s contents. To conclude, this example demonstrates the direct use of a point of reference of a cultural symbol (the geometric motif), but with an indirect reference to the function of the space.



Figure 6.26 Final rendering for student (B) showing her interpretation of a meditation space. Repetitive pattern with direct application of a traditional motif, is repeated through the floor, audio element and the ceiling (Source: student’s course work)

Student (C) (figure 6.27), developed her initial sketches into indirect outcomes; the absence of any historical geometric motifs or calligraphic scripts is explicit. Rather a tree was exchanged for the initial idea of the light in the centre of the reading space to symbolise growth and a connection to nature. The tree symbolising growth and rhythm was also apparent in the use of steps, adding variation to the levels around the tree. The metaphorical presence of the tree served as a reminder of knowledge. In this design example, functionality dominates the design decisions, while direct reference to locality or cultural influence barely existed.

Figure 6.27 Final rendering for student (C) showing her interpretation of a reading/meditation space (Source: student's course work)



6.11 Reflections on Bahrain's Design Studios

Looking at the methodological approach for the experience with design students in Bahrain, it was obvious that the students (as participants for this research) were more committed and involved in the project than those in the pilot focus group in Tetouan, Morocco as it was considered part of their course module. The challenge for both design projects however was not only in the intellectual abilities of the students, but it also related to time restrictions and the positioning of the projects within the overall curriculum. The fact that the projects took place as an elective course meant spending one studio session per week, while the students were more focused on their senior projects. Had it been introduced to students in earlier years, or integrated as part of the senior project requirements, different outcomes may have been reached. To conclude the design studio experience in University of Bahrain, the reflections and insights are summarised as follows:

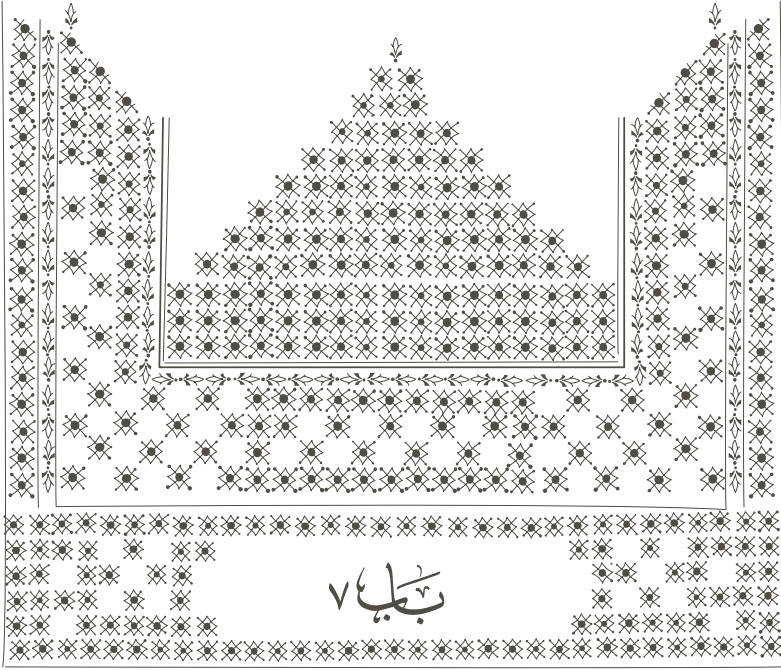
With regard to the **creative process of the students**, relying on the Quran as a reference point either through a verse, a story, or a character, made the start to the conceptual stages easy. Quoting Quranic verses, in some way, resonates with the notion of remembrance (thikr) as an element embedded in the artistic process. During the design development stage, a disconnection was noticed between the conceptualisation and finalising the product/design; even though the start showed ideas with promising potential, students tended to want “to make sure” that the final work was Islamic in appearance. Many students found it challenging to break away from the traditional design motifs and come up with new representations. Instead, they reproduce the same existing motifs and calligraphy scripts, or at best manipulate their original proportions to serve the design's function. The alternative scenario is that students envision a ‘modern’ end product first, and then force Islamic thoughts onto their final work. This resonates with the argument mentioned earlier in the research regarding traditionalist and modernists schools of thought. The conflict of attitude of the contemporary Muslim

designer is twofold; they are either eager to imitate modern designs in an attempt to fit in a globalised identity, or force the use of traditional images as a point of reference to distinguish their “Islamic” identity.

In relation to the subject of **tacit knowledge and craftsmanship**, both projects show an absence of manual 3D work during the prototyping stage. It was encouraged at the start to produce prototypes for their designs without restricting students to just use 3D rendering software, most students did not produce 3D manual models. In the first project there was only one example where a student created a prototype ring out of balsa wood. However, the implementation and the finishing skills were below average, which in itself indicates the lack of craftsmanship/ manual skills teaching in the course modules. The use of virtual software in favour of manual prototypes was also apparent in the Morocco focus group, where traditional craftsmanship had a strong presence in the cultural context. This provoked the following questions: If traditionally the act of thinking and creating goes in parallel with making (tacit knowledge), then how is this notion presented in a contemporary context? If traditional crafts were integrated in design educational models, could it help in informing a contemporary representation of Islamic aesthetics?

These questions also bring back **the pedagogical discourse** in the earlier chapters; Islamic artistic representations as course modules are only introduced in the third and fourth years of the bachelor program, which means students have already developed knowledge of design fundamentals outside their cultural context. By introducing Islamic art through a dynastic periodisation of traditional examples, the educational model proves Rabbat’s argument in chapter three regarding the limitations of Islamic art and architecture to a category of art history. The result, as witnessed in the students’ work, is uncertainty in their design decisions as they rely on a preconceived set or package of aesthetics identified by style, time-period or geographic boundaries to validate “Islamicity” of their designs.





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Bab 07 | Tatmeem: Research Conclusion

7.0 RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The research began by indicating the diversity of thoughts in Islamic artistic practice today that was a result of a major debate in its definition and accommodating its epistemological features in a globalised world. From this point the research questions emerged, investigating the forms of historical knowledge that has been the basis for traditional Islamic artistic expression, and whether they can be traced in contemporary artistic practice.

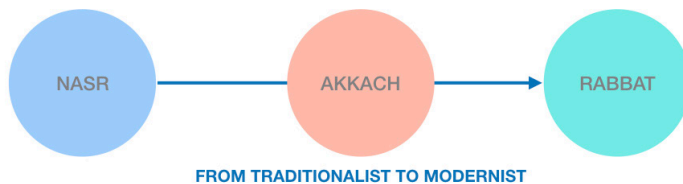
The research explores an alternative approach to broaden the understanding of Islamic aesthetics within design practice and pedagogy. It considers an aesthetic interpretation of traditional philosophy in order to find connections to contemporary Islamic artistic practice. It also examines the pedagogical dilemma of Islamic art and design and how it is documented and communicated as a field of inquiry (in Bab 3 and 6). By using practice-based research methods such as case studies, auto-ethnography and studio sessions, the research also investigated the work of artists and design students exploring the historical knowledge embedded in their working processes. The aim is to create the potential for developing a framework that allows Islamic values to be used in a contemporary design context. This has been approached by adopting curatorial practice not only as a methodological mode for assembling the various artistic research explorations, but also as a device that treats the structure of the written thesis as a curated body of work.

“Curating & Creating” refers to the multi-faceted approach and nature of the research in informing the Islamic artistic ‘pedagogy and practice’. This occurred in each chapter demonstrating how the research responded to the questions that arose. The conclusion synthesises the findings of each chapter (Bab) in relation to the research aims and objectives, and the limitations in the literature and methodology that have occurred during the research process. It also highlights the research originality and contribution to knowledge in the field, while providing recommendations and opportunities for conducting further research within the field of contemporary Islamic art and design.

7.1 Chapters Findings and Outcomes

Referring back to the use of (Bab) as an alternative to the word (chapter), each Bab within the thesis is an ongoing act which can “open” further opportunities for exploration (refer to section 1.5.2). Starting from Bab one “Tamheed”, provides general guidelines regarding the readability of the thesis, and how practice is formed and shaped throughout the thesis. Bab one gives an initial explanation of how the structure of the thesis challenges conventional research structure and performs a curatorial act; representing a narrative between the visual and textual materials that enables the reader to navigate and interact between the two (Babs as texts and Barzakhs as visuals). The Barzakh following Bab one mapped out the process and the landscape of research.

Bab two “Tajreed” established the aesthetic themes in historical knowledge (philosophical, cosmological and metaphysical) by reviewing literature through ‘design elements’, ‘design principles’ and ‘spatial sensibility’. Revealing an insight into the blurred boundaries between what is currently understood as ‘fine art’ and ‘applied art’ in the context of traditional Islam, Bab 2 sets out the basis for the following chapters arguing for the possibility of reframing Islamic aesthetics within an alternative context. Most importantly, the discourse that emerged from reviewing historical knowledge highlighted the main views in Islamic artistic expression; traditionalists approach Islamic art as universal and timeless advocating the thoughts of Sufism and perennial philosophy, modernists argue that such mystic thoughts lack historical evidences. This led to the interviewing of scholars who represent these views as a methodological approach (in Barzakh 2 and 3) informing the different voices that shape the research landscape (diagram 7.0).



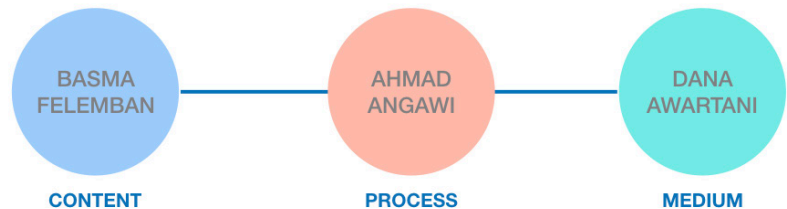
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Diagram 7.0 The interviewed scholars and their position in relation to the traditionalists and modernists views [Author's notes].

Diagram 7.0 The interviewed scholars and their position in relation to the traditionalists and modernists views [Author's notes].

Bab three "Taqreeb" further informed the traditionalist and modernists discourse by providing an overview on first the continuation of spiritual themes in Islamic artistic expression, and second the formation of Islamic art as field of knowledge. In the continuation of spiritual themes, Bab three presented case studies of contemporary artists reviewing how their process and practice reflect religious and cultural values in relation to the findings of Bab two. This has informed the second research question: what forms of historical knowledge can be traced within contemporary Islamic artistic practice, by demonstrating what similarities are found between the traditional and contemporary understanding of Islamic aesthetics. The selected case studies have shown a continuation of traditional knowledge through different modes; either in the medium the artists use, their processes, or the reference point within the work content (diagram 7.1). Regarding the formation of Islamic art as a field of inquiry, Bab three provides a literature review arguing that Islamic artistic expression as a field of knowledge has been limited to either a category in art history or discussed as a cultural category within architecture in its broadest sense. This has influenced the way it has been communicated as a field of study and applied as a creative practice.

Diagram 7.1 The artists selected as case studies in bab 3 and the significance of their work in relation to Islamic aesthetics [Author's notes].



On reflection regarding Babs two and three, the process and the practice of contemporary Islamic art does not belong entirely to traditionalists and modernists views but falls within a wide spectrum of artistic directions between the two schools of thoughts, which means there is potential for informing Islamic aesthetic values. This was supported in both Babs two and three by demonstrating how "Islamic art" as a definition has been in a state of flux, constantly being revisited and redefined. Examining cosmological, metaphysical and spiritual knowledge in this research does not mean to present perennial (traditionalist) views as historical truths or negating its influence in Islamic thoughts. Rather than validating one school of thought than the other, the research acknowledges both traditionalist and modernist views as distinctive movements/ voices informing the Islamic artistic heritage and influencing its contemporary practice. This also entails integrating the often-neglected period in Islamic art history from the

1800's to the present day and acknowledging it as a period of interrelated "isms". This way of viewing the history of Islamic art as always "in-the-making" positions notion of unity and diversity as being consciously negotiated and historically reformulated.

The emphasis on the importance of artistic process as a form of scholarly knowledge evident in Bab three was supported in Bab four "Tajmee'" by highlighting the nature of knowledge generated from practice-led research methods, and how it allowed the construction of new ways of understanding, learning, and teaching the arts. This has been complemented in Barzakh 4, in which a set of design cards was used to generate artistic explorations in two 'sweat box' sessions (taken place in Barcelona and Birmingham). Bab four also highlighted the "enactment of thinking", as a notion emphasising the importance of the researcher-artist experience as a core element to 'creating' new knowledge. Leading to the refining of the methodological framework within curatorial practice elaborated in Bab five.

Bab five "Taqyeem" presented examples from the researcher's own curatorial practice, filling a literature gap within curatorial knowledge in the context of Islamic practice. The conclusion is that discursive, dialogical, collaborative and pedagogical approaches in exhibition-making have the ability to create a spectrum of interrelationships between art, design, and research. Bab five identified curatorial practice as a mode of assemblage and a form of disruptive knowledge informing the research question on how to broaden the understanding and pedagogy of Islamic art and design. It also articulated how exhibitions can be the form or the medium through which the practice of research is expressed. Barzakh 5 complemented this notion by documenting the researcher's work *Me, Them and Everyone Else* as an interactive installation representing the various voices forming the field of Islamic art and design (exhibition as form).

Bab six "Tajreeb" connected the findings of earlier chapters by conducting participatory projects in two contexts. The first took the form of an art residency in Morocco, which included observation and auto-ethnography addressing aspects of tacit knowledge and embodied wisdom in traditional craftsmanship. It included a non-structured 'focus group', or 'sweat-box', sessions which resulted in providing valuable insights and guidelines for conducting the second participatory project which took place in Bahrain as part of an elective design course. Two projects were designed on a micro and macro scale, the studio sessions explored ways of broadening the students' understanding of Islamic aesthetics. The results demonstrated that design decisions were based on preconceived aesthetics identified by style, time-period or geographic boundaries to validate the

“Islamicity” of the designs. This reinforced the argument in Bab three regarding the educational influence which has limited Islamic art to a category in art history. The results also highlighted a disconnection with craftsmanship as there was an absence of manual prototyping during the students creative making process. This contradicts the practice of the contemporary artists explored in Bab 3 (diagram 7.2), which shows how their experience in traditional craftsmanship empowered their artistic process, raising questions on the significance of Islamic value of tacit knowledge in the contemporary understanding of the act of making/creating.



Diagram 7.2
The educational background of the artists (Bab 3) influenced their contemporary approach to Islamic art. Juxtaposing this with findings of Bab 6 offers insights on how craftsmanship can be an integral part of Islamic design pedagogy [Author’s notes].



7.2 Research Limitations

Some limitations occurred in two areas within the research; first there was a literature gap, and second in the methodological approach. The first relied on the paradox of Islamic artistic thoughts expressed in the following relationships:

A.The relationship between religious and artistic practice: primary sources of traditional Islamic philosophy were not accessible, therefore modern interpretations of these sources had to be relied upon. The Research was also challenged by the lack of primary Arabic sources that investigated any relationship between the artistic practice of the past and the present.

B.The relationship between pedagogy and practice: historical evidence that describes how Islamic art and architecture has been taught in Islamic lands has been challenging. Such information meant delving into museum archives over an extended timeframe, which could not be achieved during the research.

The limitations in methodology were hampered due to the unavailability of contemporary Muslim artists for interviews and the observation of their work in process. This lack of response from the artists resulted a reliance on sources of grey literature; exhibition brochures, online interviews and short clips (Vimeo, YouTube) to analyse the artistic process. Another challenge during the focus group sessions in Morocco, was an inconsistency in the participants' attendance. Similarly, the time restriction limited the productivity of the students in the Bahrain design studios.

7.3 Research Originality and New Knowledge

With reference to the first and the second research questions; what forms of historical knowledge been the source of Islamic artistic expression? And what forms of historical knowledge can be traced in contemporary Islamic artistic practice? The research contributed in informing these questions through the literature reviewed in Bab 2 by framing the traditional Islamic philosophy within design language and framework. This was achieved by Methodologically stripping down the artistic and architectural themes into abstract aesthetic qualities that break away from the conventional categorisations of Islamic art and architecture. By not referring to chronological orders of historical periods, it demonstrates how Islamic aesthetic values were applied in objective and subjective ways. Bab 3 followed by tracing thoughts in contemporary artistic practice contributing in bridging the literature gap found in the communicating Islamic art and design as a field of inquiry, and highlighting in particular the shortcomings of documenting and disseminating knowledge of Islamic artistic heritage.

With regards to the second research question, Bab 5 and 6 informed the ways in which the traditional Islamic thoughts are communicated through contemporary methodological means within the context of art and design pedagogy. Thus, originality resided in using artistic exploration methods that have not been explored in the context of Islamic art and design, as well as adopting curatorial practice as a mode of assembly for these explorative methods, thereby broadening the pedagogy of Islamic art and design in relation to time.

This research contributes to the knowledge of Islamic art and design in various ways; its wider significance to knowledge resides within both the scope of the research and its methodological approach can be summarised in five main points. **Firstly**, the aims of the research brought three differing areas of knowledge that had not been investigated before into one framework; traditional Islamic philosophy, contemporary artistic practice, and Islamic design pedagogy. Juxtaposing the cosmological, metaphysical and spiritual aspects that influenced the aesthetic directions of traditional Islamic art with contemporary artistic directions had not been addressed before. Research originality is realised in the argument that Islamic artistic expression has never been explored within the current understanding of what 'design' entails. The research proposes an alternative understanding of Islamic aesthetics that can accommodate holistic interpretations within the overall context of 'design culture'.

Secondly, originally Islamic aesthetics have been addressed in an academic context within the fields of philosophy and theology, yet it has not been explored through a practical research methodology, let alone a curatorial approach. Approaching the context of Islamic artistic expression through practice-led research allows for transformative and reflective qualities in the research process, in the sense that the theoretical framework constantly undergoes changes as new experiences are added. The emergent nature of the research provides a new platform to explore new modes of informing the pedagogy and practice of contemporary Islamic design.

Thirdly, the research process integrates literature as well as methodological approaches in every stage, informing the research findings instead of following conventional and linear research model (as seen in diagram 4.0). This transformative and emergent process explores new domains of critiquing and creating knowledge which reflects how artistic inquiry views traditional discipline areas within new structures.

Fourthly, curatorial practice as a methodological approach performs as a mode of assemblage bringing together art, architecture and the cultural values that connect them. It provided coherency between the different research methods and draws a new set of relationships within the context of Islamic artistic expression.

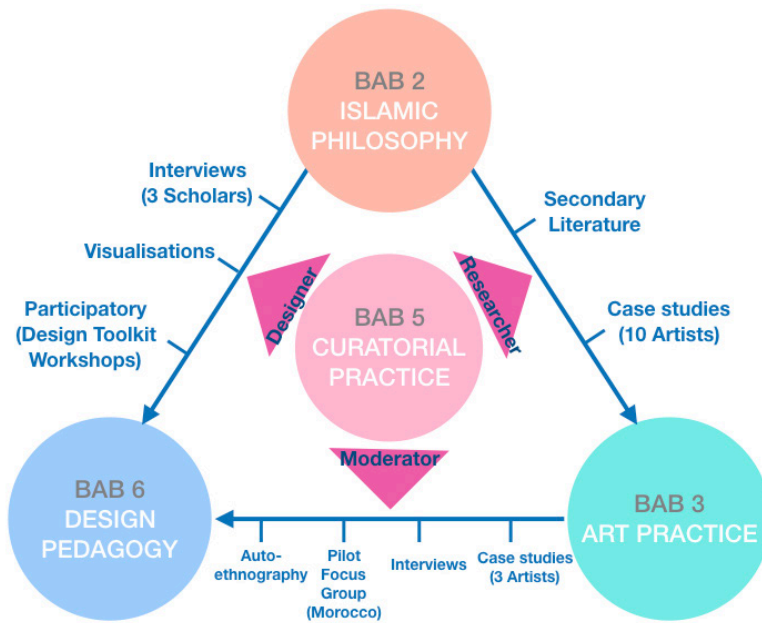


Diagram 4.0
The different methodologies used in each Bab (chapter) of the thesis and how they are related to the research areas. Research methodology is embedded throughout the research, and the changing role of the researcher (demonstrated in pink arrows). This shows how curatorial practice ties different practice-based methods into one entity [Author's Notes].

Fifthly, research originality is achieved by expanding the notion of curatorial practice to encompass the structure of the thesis. This was achieved through the curatorial decisions in presenting the knowledge of the research such as: reviewing literature on the historical applications of Islamic values without demonstrating chronological order of periods or dynasties, and offering an alternative visual narrative that increases the research readability breaking away from the conventional style of academic research. The thesis therefore performed a curatorial act, echoing the notion of an “enactment of thinking” by enacting the event of knowledge and being a platform of interaction and engagement rather than illustrating knowledge as a final product. This has also been reflected in the presence of the visual language of the thesis and the visual materials (Barzakh) as ‘interventions’ happening within the written text.

7.4 Recommendations

As discussed in Bab 6, integrating Islamic art and design as an “extra” or “side” study within a Design Curriculum demonstrates an existing pedagogical dilemma; affecting how creative individuals perceive Islamic aesthetics and how (depending on their cultural background) this aesthetic relates to them when it comes to their own artistic practice. Consequently, it marginalises the religious or the cultural values that may or may not influence their identity as designers today. Therefore, recommendations for developing a culturally specific design curriculum include:

- Integrating Islamic aesthetic themes in the design foundation year, to be presented in parallel to design elements and principles. This will help students relate to their cultural context earlier in their studies.
- The ‘History of Islamic Interiors’ should still be kept as a course module that addresses the chronological development of historical styles, however it should be restructured so that it not only narrates the past, but also includes questions of “why” these styles were developed the way they did.
- ‘Islamic Ornamentation’ as an elective course should not be limited to a theoretical overview of geometry, calligraphy and arabesque; it could be a course where students develop their craftsmanship skills, thus, engaging in aspects of tacit knowledge, and increasing the potential areas of self-reflective processes.

Following on from the idea of curatorial practice as a disruptive knowledge, new modes of understanding can be explored broadening the perception and practice of Islamic art and design. This can be achieved by considering the educator as a curator of learning experiences; integrating design studios with art galleries and crafts workshops, thereby embracing interdisciplinarity that was at the heart of the traditional modes of expression. An example of such experiences could include exhibitions showcasing students work from the ‘Islamic Ornamentation’ course, which will help in disseminating new forms of Islamic artistic knowledge to the public. Another opportunity could be created through exchange programs between Morocco and Bahrain helping artisans and mu’allims sustain their practice on one hand, and enhance students’ craftsmanship skills on the other.

7.5 Opportunities for Further Research

Echoing the conceptual articulation of the thesis, which describes each Bab as an ongoing act that is always “in the making”, there are opportunities to expand further through the interchangeable roles reflected in this research:

A. As a Researcher: Conducting case studies comparing the different design curriculums in the Arab region in order to develop design pedagogy that is culturally informed. Auto-ethnographic studies observing artisans from different Islamic cities can be conducted in order to document their working processes, recording different ways of transmitting tacit knowledge.

B. As a Curator: Expanding the scope and sampling of contemporary artistic case studies in order to fill the gap of the curatorial knowledge related to Islamic artistic practice that is not framed within the political dimensions of the region. How craftsmanship in contemporary designed products can be achieved by curating design projects in Morocco, this can happen as part of the researcher’s design practice.

C. As Design Educator: by conducting design workshops, similar to the ones done in Barcelona and Birmingham) in galleries and other community venues to compare outcomes influenced by different settings (Muslims, non-Muslims, artists, designers, emerging, established, etc.). In addition, developing workshop cards (as applied in various workshops conducted by the researcher in Barcelona and Birmingham) into design tool-kits which can generate ideas and thoughts that can be published as an on-going exploration informing Islamic design aesthetics.

To that end, “Curating & Creating” is an on-going act, a continuous exploration that acknowledges the importance of artistic practice as a parallel “happening” to academic research, an approach that is much needed in informing the practice and pedagogy of Islamic art and design.

GLOSSARY

Art: The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). In the research context, art encompasses both fine art and applied art, the distinction made between the different types of aesthetic expressions did not exist in traditional Islamic philosophy.

Conceptual Design: the act of sketching outlining and drafting key characteristics of a product, interaction, service or experience early on in the design process, with the goal of initiating creative reflection and planning subsequent phases (Atasoy and Martens, cited in Markopoulos, Martens, Malins, Coninx, and Liapis, 2016).

Design: As a noun, a construction or activity specification or plan, or the result of that plan in the form of a prototype, finished product, or process. “Design” as a verb is the process of creating such a design. In some cases, the direct construction of an object without an explicit prior plan (such as in craftwork and some engineering, coding, and graphic design) is also considered to be a design activity (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In research context, it is mostly referred to as the broad discipline of design creation, which includes applied art, furniture, product and graphic design.

Design Culture: (as field of inquiry) is an object of study that includes both the material and the immaterial aspects of everyday life. On one level it is articulated through images, words, forms and spaces. But at another it engages discourses, actions, beliefs, structures and relationships (Fallan, 2010).

Dilettanism: coming from the noun (dilettante), which refers to a person having a superficial interest in an art or a branch of knowledge (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In the research context, it refers to as a paradigm (Dilettanism) and as an approach that consists of a purely aesthetic evaluation of Islamic art connected with the popular view that Islamic art is mainly decorative, decontextualized and devoid of meaning (Necipoglu, 2012).

Epistemology: The subject concerned with the origins, nature and forms of knowledge, how it can be acquired and communicated. In Art and Design research, personal and tacit knowledge are often the starting points for inquiry (Gray and Malins, 2004).

Ethnography (in the context of art and design): a research approach that produces a detailed, in-depth observation of people's behaviour, beliefs and preferences by observing and interacting with them in a natural environment (Laurel, 2003).

Focus Groups: a gathering of 10 to 12 (or sometimes less) participants who are led in a tightly scripted discussion by a trained moderator, usually for about two hours. It is usually recommended to generate ideas or expand understanding without needing to reach consensus. Fewer participants provide the opportunity for deeper discussions and questioning that is more specifically tailored to each person in the group (Laurel, 2003).

Hermeneutics: The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). In the context of academic research, it is a research method that allows for multiple interpretations and meanings giving 'each speaker his or her own voice' (Friedman, 2002 cited in Gray and Malins, 2004).

Innovation: the intentional introduction and application within a task, work-team, or organisation of ideas, processes, products or procedures that are new to that task, work-team, or organisation that are designed to benefit the task, work-team, or organisation (Runco, 2014).

Method: specific technique, or arrangement, or tool that is used to explore, gather and analyse information (Gray and Malins, 2004). It can also be defined as the forms involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2014).

Methodology: A system of methods and rules to facilitate the collection and analysis of data. It provides the starting point for choosing an approach made up of theories, ideas, concepts and definitions of the topic; therefore, the basis of a critical activity consisting of making choices about the nature and character of the social world (assumptions) (Hart, 1998, p.28) Another definition summarizes it as the overall approach to the research process from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of data" (Brewer, 2007). It can also be defined as a demonstration of theory that has previously been articulated, or theory that is articulated by the work itself." (Macleod and Holdridge, 2005, p.197)

Mind-Mapping: A method of generating, organizing and communicating ideas and concepts using text and visual techniques (shape, colour, line, scale, symbol, and so on), which relate concepts in a 'map' (Gray and Malins, 2004).

Nationalism: Identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Another definition summarises it as advocacy of or support for the political independence of a particular nation or people (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). In the research context, it is understood as movement that emerged by taking the modern nations as a point of departure in constructing historical and geographical continuity in the arts (Necipoglu, 2012).

Orientalism: is the imitation or depiction of aspects in the Eastern world. These depictions are usually done by writers, designers, and artists from the West. Now often used with negative connotations of a colonialist bias underlying and reinforced by such scholarship especially since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Pedagogy: The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). As an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, and it considers the interactions that take place during learning. Pedagogies vary greatly, as they reflect the different social, political, cultural contexts from which they emerge (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Practice: Developing and making creative work as an explicit and intentional method for specific research purposes, for example gathering and/or generating data, evaluation, analysis synthesis, presentation communication of research findings (Gray and Malins, 2004).

Practice-based research (within the doctoral framework): 'A doctorate where the PRIMARY research is done through producing artefacts, designs, performances, films etc. It implies that the practice is an intelligent discourse in the 'language' of the medium or art form and that this is a dialogue already with the history and other contemporary work in the field. The practice or its adequate documentation will form a significant part of the submitted "thesis" ' (LeGrice, cited in Gray and Malins, 2004). Art-based research is defined as research in which the professional and/or creative practices of art, design or architecture play an instrumental part in an inquiry." (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007, p.11)

Prototyping: three-dimensional experimentation of ideas, and focus group discussions with materials and processes (3D sketching, envisioning) that may result in a range of 'approximations' (various versions of maquettes) towards a more resolved construction/

object; in some instances a scale model may be required. At certain sessions of this research, this included computer modelling rather than manual 3D sketching (Gray and Malins, 2004).

Reflection-in-action: also known as “learning by doing” suggest that we not only can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it’ (Schön, 1983).

Reflexivity: ‘a turning back of one’s experience upon oneself ... a circular process ... This looping back may ... unfold as a spiralling, if we allow for multiple perspectives, and acknowledge that “the same self” may be different as a result of its own self-pointing. Thus, included within this focus are issues of self-reference, and how issues of self-reference can inform methodologies and the research process in general’ (Steier, cited in Gray and Malins, 2004).

Research-for-practice: the research in which the aims are compliant with practice aims. It is also called research as practice (or art) for the artist is considered to be a researcher while working in his/her studio. Here, art is treated as the subject of inquiry, but with the goal to transform art by producing art. (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007; Daichendt, 2011; Biggs and Karlsson, 2010)

Research-through-practice: where practice operates to reach a research purpose. Knowledge is created through the interaction of the practice (or art) and reflection, and therefore, knowledge is floating somewhere between art production and the written work but not tied to one or the other as the main document. Here, art is treated as a method to understand the world. (Rust, Mottram, and Till, 2007; Daichendt, 2011; Biggs and Karlsson, 2010)

Sweat-box: a studio-based video set-up, used by architects and artists to capture ‘master class’ presentations, that is an eminent practitioner talking about and reflecting on their practice and/or solving a particular problem, using various visual means, for example drawing, mapping, models (Gray and Malins, 2004).

Thesis: as ‘documented argument’ – rather than the commonly held perception of a substantial text as the PhD submission itself. In Art and Design research, a thesis may comprise several elements: a body of creative work, other related/supporting/complementary artefacts, a written text contextualising and describing the argument (Gray and Malins, 2004).

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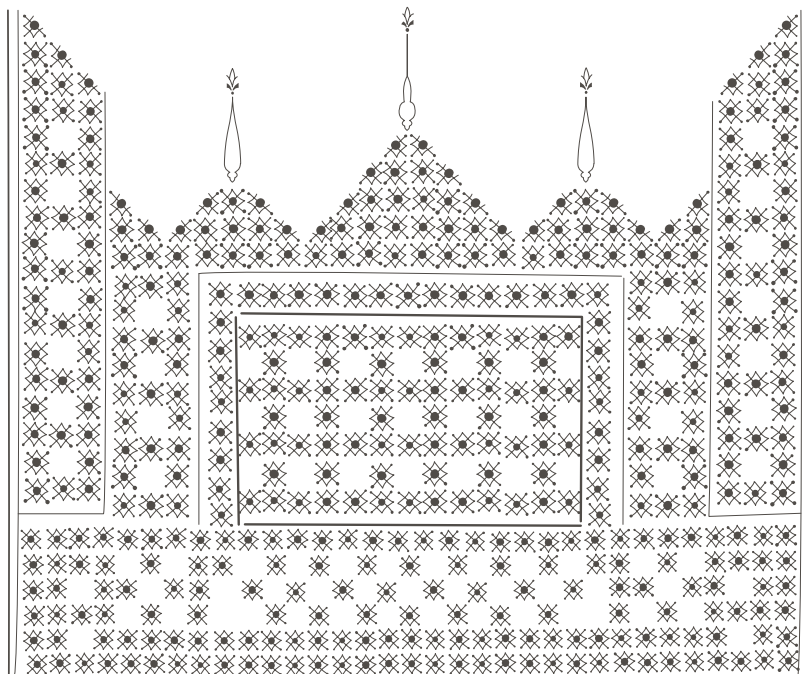
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Appendices

APPENDIX I. ARTISTS ANALYSIS

CURRENT ARTISTIC PRACTICES

IN THE ISLAMIC CREATIVE

WORLD

ARTIST'S NAME	LULWAHALHAMOUD – United Kingdom
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Sociology in King Saud University, Saudi (BA), Central St. Martin College of Art and Design, London (MA), Trained with traditional calligrapher in Turkey
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	-Her signature work involves composing new codes for the 99 names of Allah: She transforms the letters of each name into corresponding codes then abstract them into blocks through which a geometric composition is then formed.
MEDIUMS USED	- Mixed media that includes mainly: ink, paper, gilding, illuminating.
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	Lulwah clearly mentions that her choice of the subject of the Divine names that it relates to the act of remembrance (thikr), and the geometric mathematical method used in her work as an approach that draws link to the connection to universe
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	Contemplative mode in representing one name of the Divine in each work -Transparency in the geometric composition and abstracting letters into blocks as a new way of taking geometry back to basics. -Relevance to mysticism when she expresses her work
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	- Inside-ness: searching for the inner meaning (ma'na) - Remembrance: manifested in the contemplative process rather than direct - Knowledge: using mathematical coding as a process to transform alphabets to abstract compositions



ARTIST'S NAME	A H M A D A N G A W I – Saudi Arabia
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Pratt Design School, NY (BA), Prince School of Traditional Arts (PSTA), London (MA), strongly influenced by his traditional architect father, Sami Angawi
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emphasizes on pre-design research: going to the master artisans, learns their crafts, then produce a concept that they both work on > collaboration -Believes in work being Islamic in process (principles) rather than appearance (aesthetics) (example, sijjadah as the function of prayer mat) -Utilizing traditional techniques and objects as generative source of Inspiration for modern outputs > concept of “Arabizing products”: asking how would an object look like if it converted to Islam
MEDIUMS USED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not limiting himself to a specific medium, so it varies from fashion, furniture and art installation (and the use of modular system to produce work) - Materials used are hybrid of traditional objects with wood, and mixed media
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adapting the concept of Meezan (balance) as a principle that governs all his work, which relates to balance (l'tidal) as a religious attitude in life. -Design ethics that relates to religious ethics: getting to know the craftsmen in person and giving them a percentage of the work's income -“to be modern is to conserve”, believes that tradition is part of evolution.
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Dialogue with nature as a contemplative mode in the making process “elevates him in a mental space as a creative” -Journey is as important as the destination as a mantra reflected in his emphasis on the process as much as the outcome.
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	<p>Originality: relates to his belief in having a point of reference in all his work</p> <p>Inside-ness: reflecting on the concept, function, and meaning of the objects he make or he inspired from, it also relates in his interpretation of the process as a meditative state of mind</p>



ARTIST'S NAME	B A S M A H F E L E M B A N – Saudi Arabia
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Graphic Design (self-taught)- Prince School of Traditional Arts, London (MA)
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	<p>-Work shows her own understanding from topics: symbolism, poetry, philosophy and science. She learns about these topics as she goes along.</p> <p>-Once she defines the topic she codes information to create her own alphabets, or her own coding system to represent her knowledge.</p>
MEDIUMS USED	- Non- traditional mixed media, work that has a modern minimal output.
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	<p>-Clearly demonstrating that God is the Ultimate Truth, and there are different ways to reach the truth; tariqah, turuq</p> <p>-She believes the principles that governs Islamic art are: simplicity, necessity, division, definition which are also manifestation of human behavior.</p> <p>-Her work reflects philosophical/ metaphysical aspects of Islam, using symbolism as language for her work.</p>
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	<p>-Believes that spiritual or sacred art has a space of its own, which helps her find mental clarity.</p> <p>-Even though she doesn't describe her work as "Islamic" but "spiritual", it represents her own seeking of truth and her own understanding of the metaphysics and philosophy that relates to her religion.</p> <p>-As a spiritual act of humility, she includes some of her work in the streets away from the white cube spaces.</p>
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	<p>Inside-ness: in-depth meaning behind every work, even though it looks minimal in appearance</p> <p>Ilm- Knowledge: with every piece she produces comes an available portfolio to show the information, the research and the making process.</p>



ARTIST'S NAME	NASSER ALSALEM – Saudi Arabia
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Architecture in Um AlQura University, Mecca (BA)- Family trade is tent making for the pilgrimage- learned from master calligrapher in Mecca.
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	-Paying attention to the things that people don't usually notice. -Even though he works mainly on calligraphy, his subjects are far from the usual verses of "bismilla", instead he looks into the meaning behinds words and verses of the Quran in the sense that he forms a relationship between the message behind it and the medium. He follows the traditional rules of calligraphy yet his ideas are conceptually refined. He explores the different forms of meaning within text and play.
MEDIUMS USED	Paper and ink as traditional methods that he still uses, however he is exploring the potentials of calligraphy in the use of different non-conventional materials, like corian. Some installations include mixed media and materials like concrete
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	-He aims at representing messages that have spiritual or historical significance. Even though his work is inspired by his religion, his work is not directed for specific audience. His own understanding of the quranic verse or word is what creates the basis for his work.
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	-Following the traditional of calligraphy, his work is often described as devotional as it is inspired by the Quran. -Contemplating on the meaning of the chosen Quranic word by itself is considered an act of worship/ ibada or remembrance
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	Thikr- Remembrance: relies in the message behind the work (Divine word of God) Respect: relies in respecting the medium and the rules of calligraphy, as well as the absence of figures in his work.



ARTIST'S NAME	D A N A A W A R T A N I – Saudi Arabia
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, London (BA), PSTA, London (MA) -Illumination from a Master in Turkey
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	-Awartani has been known as an artist who is pioneer in reinventing the traditional crafts within contemporary context. -Her work reflects an understanding and respect of sacred geometry and the symbolism behinds it (particularly symbolism behind numbers). -Use of traditional techniques with a contemporary appearance, while respecting the craftsmanship and the role of crafts in contemporary art.
MEDIUMS USED	-Varies from Textiles, natural dyes and pigments, earthy materials like sand. -Mixed media Installations, ceramics, woodwork
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	-The use of symbolism, geometry, calligraphy, and clearly relating it to Islamic principles -The process of making and the content refers to Islamic philosophy.
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	-While forming the sand installation, she considers it a type of meditation throughout the process of dyeing the sand, the temporality of the material as reminiscent of life. -Meditative state of mind when working with geometry. -Producing a work that is stripped from ego as an act of humility (sweeping the sand away)
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	Remembrance: as she mentions it clearly in her interviews Respect: as there is apparent absence of figures in her work, she mainly works with geometry, numbers and alphabets. Another aspect of respect is the collaborative process with the crafts, gratitude towards the effort behinds it.



ARTIST'S NAME	S A R A H A L A B D A L I – Saudi Arabia
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	Graphic Design at Dar Alhekma college, KSA (BA)- Prince School of Traditional Arts, London (MA)
PROCESS DESCRIPTION	--Apply traditional techniques within contemporary mediums and current topics. Topics includes sense of land, identity and belonging -Her background in design adds a solution-driven aspects in her process
MEDIUMS USED	-Graffiti, comic illustration, painting, installation... other traditional and contemporary mediums
RELIGIOUS RELEVANCE	-Her topics are related to religion conceptually but in an indirect way, as she tackles more of local community issues (example: trilogy of refugees). -Other relation to religion is her interest in reconnecting with identity, and referring back to local heritage.
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCE	-Her topics might touch upon aspects of Islamic philosophy but her work is not necessarily of spiritual theme all the time. -example: gilded path (Islamic art festival in Sharjah)
PRINCIPLES IN COMMON (WITH CH2)	Originality: Point of reference manifest in her respect and appreciation to traditional crafts and heritage.



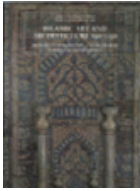

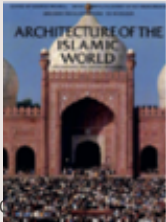


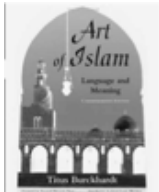

APPENDIX II. RABBAT’S SURVEY

CONCEPTION AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAMIC CULTURAL HERITAGE

There are various references that offer analytical descriptions of Islamic art and architecture, most of which are written and documented by non-Muslims, and currently being the main sources to refer back to when it comes to the subject of Islamic art and architecture as a field of historical inquiry. Some of the famous scholars who wrote about traditional Islamic art architecture as a form of art history are Grabar, Burckhardt, Hillenbrand, Bloom and Blair. However, there are apparent themes when it comes to framing the knowledge of Islamic art and architecture through historical factors in order to define them or differentiate them from other artistic or cultural expressions. Rabbat (n.d.) provides a concise survey of these themes or patterns, which are summarised in the following table.

Although these approaches might be structurally valid, however they demonstrate what Rabbat refers to methodological, epistemological and historiographical problems. From a methodological aspect, the various approaches proofs that there is a dilemma in framing the materials based on diverse considerations of geography, history, language and cultural boundaries. From an epistemological aspect, it could be argued that these books are tailored to a general audience rather than scholarly readers, in an attempt to connect art traditions with the modern world, however eventually they end up containing an evolution of one culture’s production but not communicating how it interconnects with other culture.

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Table O.1 Survey of the structural approaches in framing the knowledge of Islamic art and architecture [Author’s note]

Theme	Examples		Remarks
A. Chronological order of historic materials	 <p>Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, <i>Islamic Art and Architecture: 650- 1250</i> (2001)</p>	 <p>Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, <i>The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800</i> (1994)</p>	<p>-They start with the rise of Islam in the early 7th century and end around the middle of the 18th century</p> <p>-The end relates to the Islamic world becoming dominated by the “victorious” Western culture and stopped to be creative on its own.</p>
B. Architectural typology or functions (Breaking the chronological narrative and historical boundaries)	 <p>Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning (1984)</p>	 <p>Robert Hillenbrand, <i>Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning</i> (1994)</p>	<p>-Michell's divides Islamic architecture into broad functional categories</p> <p>-Hillenbrand's breaks it into architectural elements or typologies.</p>
C. One centralised idea or essentialist approach	 <p>Oleg Grabar, <i>The Formation of Islamic Art</i> (1987)</p>	 <p>Titus Burckhardt, <i>Art of Islam: Language and Meaning</i> (1976)</p>	<p>-Grabar's focuses on the relationship between early Islamic art and the preceding classical traditions</p> <p>-Burckhardt's explores the spiritual dimension of Islamic arts.</p>
D. Geographical or urban points of references	 <p>Luca Mozzati, <i>Islamic Art: Architecture, Painting, Calligraphy, Ceramics, Glass, Carpets</i> (2010)</p>	 <p>Nasser D. Khalili, <i>Visions of Splendour in Islamic Art and Culture</i> (2008)</p>	<p>Surveys in this category are built as independent chronological units joined together by common cultural traits</p>

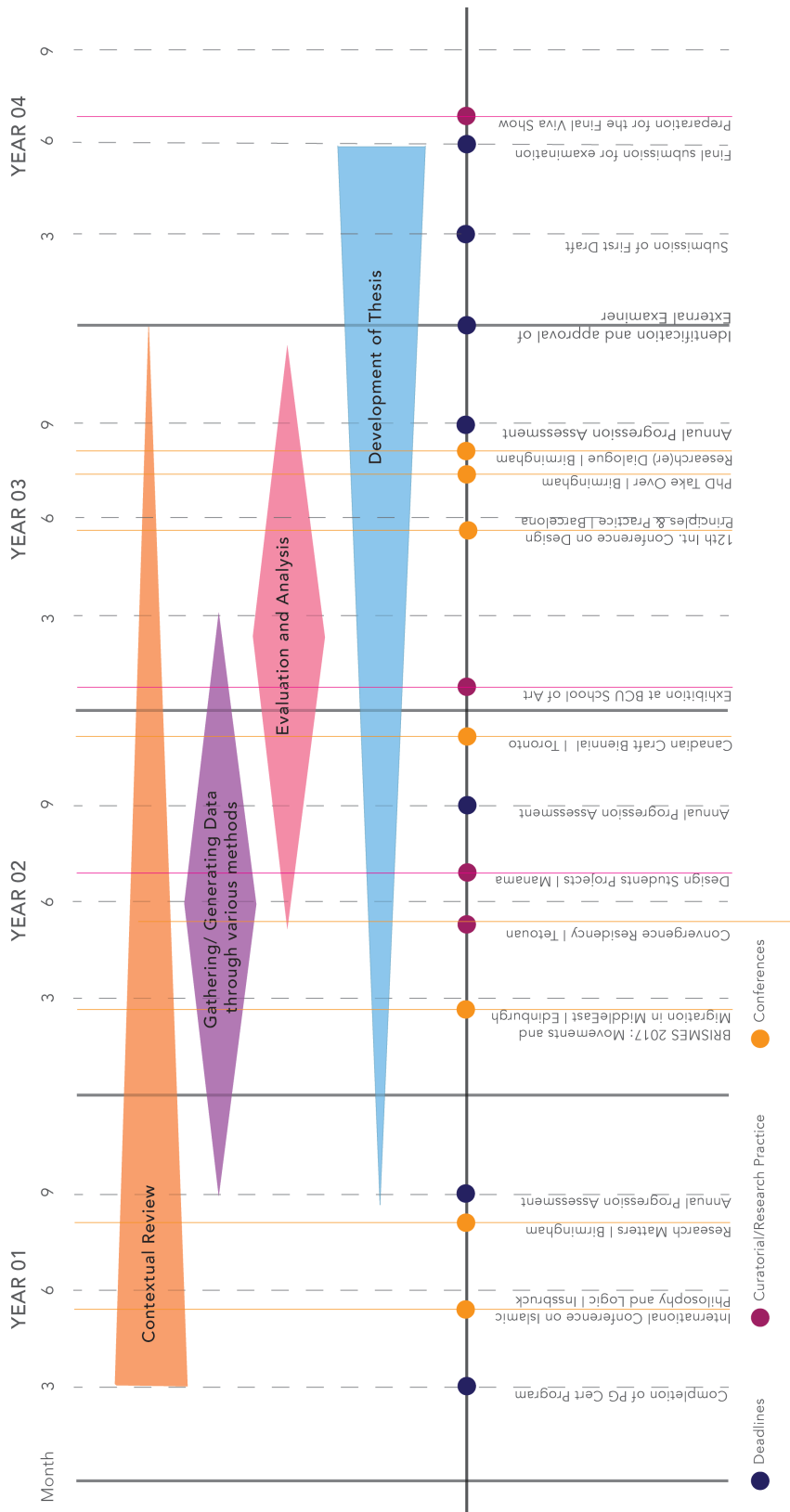
APPENDIX III. ENLARGED VERSIONS OF TIMETABLES AND SCHEDULES

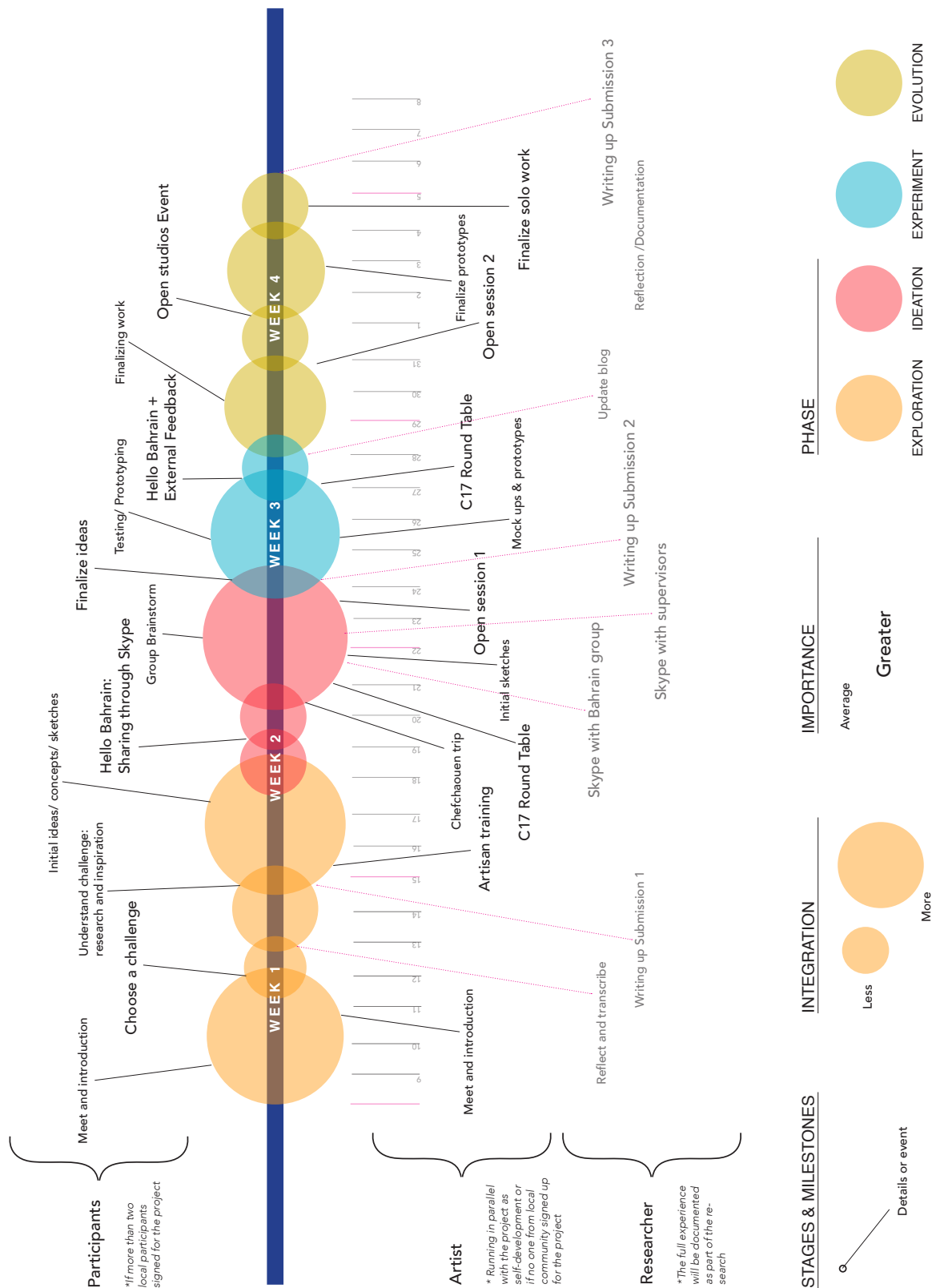
CONVERGENCE 2017 CALENDAR

MARCH 9 – APRIL 5



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighted outings/meals are suggestive, so we can agree on it or plan them together - Open sessions are for external feedback and are subject to change - Studio times highlighted with PINK are open for you to come and join (till 7PM) - Other non-highlighted plans are related to GOA art-residents only. 				9	10	11
12 INTRODUCTION	13 Artisan Tour # 4-5pm Language Lesson 6-8pm Dinner	14 Artisan Tour #2 1 PM Lunch @ dar Rehla Studio Time	15 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops Studio Time	16 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops Studio Time	17 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops 2 – 4pm LUNCH Studio Time	18 Outings – Volunteers Available Studio Time CHOOSE A CHALLENGE
19 BREAKFAST SKYPE/ OPEN DISCUSSION Studio Time	20 Chefchaouen Trip	21	22	23 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops Studio Time	24 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops 2 – 4pm LUNCH Studio Time	25 9AM - 11 AM Artisan Workshops Studio Time
26 LUNCH Studio Time	27 Studio Time 6-8pm Dinner	28 SKYPE/ OPEN DISCUSSION Studio Time	29 Studio Time	30 Studio Time	31 Studio Time	I Studio Time Open Studios Event 5 – 10 pm
2 Studio Time	3 DINNER Studio Time	4 Farewell Dinner	5 Departure Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INSPIRATION / Research / Exploration IDEATION EXPERIMENTING/ Mock ups/ Prototypes DEVELOPING / Finalizing 		





INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX IV. SAMPLE OF CONSENT FORM

(Translation to the in-country language from English will be required if the local participants do not understand English)

You are being invited to take part in a PhD candidate's research project. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Before you decide, please take time to read this information. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, please speak to the student or contact their tutor as follows:

Student Name: Tamadher Alfahal
E-mail: Tamadher.alfahal@mail.bcu.ac.uk
Supervisor Name: Prof. Mohsen Aboutorabi
E-mail: mohsen.aboutorabi@bcu.ac.uk

Address:
Birmingham School of Architecture and Design
Faculty of the Arts, Design & Media
Birmingham City University
The Parkside Building
5 Cardigan Street Birmingham, B4 7BD

This project is part of the PhD candidate's research. It has been organised by the student with support from staff at Birmingham City University. The first goal is to support the student's learning, but it is also hoped that this design research could further understanding in the field.

There are no known disadvantages or risks associated with taking part in this research.

What will happen and why?

This research investigates the possibility of creating a set of principles for contemporary Islamic art and design. By challenging the cliché image of Islamic creative expression, yet understanding and respecting the philosophy of Islam. This includes revealing the hidden dimensions such as mathematics and cosmology, and their relation to spirituality in Islamic designs. The main aim is to investigate the innovative possibilities in the creative scene of Islamic world.

With your participation as a design educator, the research will be carried through practical explorations that are considered part of the elective course you have taught in collaboration with the researcher (project 1 and 2). The outcomes of the sessions in the course as well as your input might take part in a collective exhibition that aims for a "phenomena change", giving the research rather a diverse voice.

All research will take place in a public place or work place, during normal working hours and in agreement with you.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The information gathered will inform the PhD candidate's written thesis that will be submitted to and become the property of the Birmingham City University. These theses are archived by the School of Architecture and Design and made electronically accessible to current and future students. The studies, or extracts of them, may also be exhibited in public.

You/your organisation will not be named in any reports or publications unless you give specific consent for this.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

Any written or audio recording of the answers shared with the researcher will be kept for future reference to serve the study; however, if any of the materials to be included in the published thesis you will be informed before any action taken. If your work has been selected, you will be credited, unless otherwise anonymity is requested.

Future publication may potentially be done after the research is finished, in that case, you will also be informed in every step of the way.

If you do decide to take part in this research, please complete and sign the consent form attached and keep this information sheet. You can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. All materials will be destroyed upon withdrawal and your organisational/ personal name/ identifier will not be used.

This research has been approved via Faculty Academic Ethic Committee (FAEC) of Birmingham City University

What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to raise a complaint about your treatment by the researcher or about something serious occurring during or following your/your organisation's participation in the project, please contact the project supervisor (see above). If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction by the thesis supervisor, you can contact the Director of Research for Art & Design, Dr. Lawrence Green, Tel: +44 (0) 121 331 5110, Faculty of the Arts, Design & Media, Birmingham City University, The Parkside Building, 5 Cardigan Street, Birmingham, B4 7BD, UK.

PhD in Art and Design
Faculty of Art, Design and Media

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (+20 years old)

(Translation to the in-country language from English will be required if the local participants do not understand English)

**Please put a circle
around Yes or No**

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for the student and their tutor to have access to my responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the design research material unless I expressly give my consent. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. I give my consent for my name / my organisation's name to be linked with the research materials (for example in direct quotes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. I agree to sound recordings, photographs and video being taken of me and my work for research analysis. I understand that these will be deleted/destroyed once the University assessment process is complete. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. I agree to photographs and video of me and my work appearing in the student's research study or later publications, presentations and the School of Architecture Digital Archive. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. I agree to take part in the above research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

_____ Name of participant	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of person taking consent (if different from student researcher) <i>To be signed and dated in presence of the participant</i>	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Student researcher <i>To be signed and dated in presence of the participant</i>	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Student researcher contact details: **mohsen.aboutorabi@bcu.ac.uk**

Copies: Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

APPENDIX V. Interior Design at University of Bahrain – Full Program and Curriculum

Detailed Study Plan

Year 1 - Semester 1

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
CSC 103	Computer Programming for Scientists and Engineers	3	2	3	CR	-----	No
ENGL 101	Communication Skills I	3	0	3	CR	-----	No
MATHS 101	Calculus I	3	0	3	CR	-----	No
INTD 110	Basic Design I	0	6	3	MR	-----	Yes
INTD 111	Graphics I	0	6	3	MR	-----	Yes

Year 1 - Semester 2

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
ENGL 102	Composition and Reading II	3	0	3	CR	ENGL 101	No
ISLM 101	Islamic Culture	3	0	3	UR	-----	No
MATHS 102	Calculus II	3	0	3	CR	MATHS 101	No
INTD 120	Basic Design II	0	6	3	MR	INTD 110 & INTD 111	Yes
INTD 121	Graphics II	0	6	3	MR	INTD 111	Yes

Year 2 - Semester 3

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 210	Interior Design I	0	8	4	MR	INTD 120 & INTD 121	Yes
INTD 211	History and Theory of Interiors I	3	0	3	MR	INTD 120	Yes
INTD 212	Computer Aided Drafting	1	4	3	MR	INTD 121	Yes
INTD 213	Presentation Techniques	0	4	2	MR	INTD 120 & INTD 121	Yes
INTD 216	Color in Interiors	1	2	2	MR	INTD 120	Yes
PHYCS 107	Physics for Building Design	3	0	3	MSR	-----	No

Year 2 - Semester 4

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 220	Interior Design II	0	8	4	MR	INTD 210 & ENGL 102	Yes
INTD 221	History and Theory of Interiors II	3	0	3	MR	INTD 211	Yes
INTD 222	Materials and Methods of Construction I	3	0	3	MR	INTD 121 & MATHS 101	Yes
INTD 223	Computer Aided Interior Design	1	4	3	MR	INTD 212	Yes
INTD 224	Textiles	3	0	3	MR	INTD 210	Yes
HRLC 107	Human Rights	2	0	2	UR	-----	No

Year 3 - Semester 5

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 310	Interior Design III	0	8	4	MR	INTD 220	Yes
INTD 311	History of Islamic Interiors	3	0	3	MR	INTD 221	Yes
INTD 312	Materials and Methods of Construction II	3	0	3	MR	INTD 222	Yes
INTD 313	Environmental Control Systems I	3	0	3	MR	INTD 220 & PHYCS 107	Yes
INTD 314	Computer Animations	1	4	3	MR	INTD 223	Yes
INTD 324	Furniture Design	1	2	2	MR	INTD 220	Yes

Year 3 - Semester 6

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 320	Interior Design IV	0	8	4	MR	INTD 310	Yes
INTD 322	Working Drawings	0	8	4	MR	INTD 223 & INTD 312	Yes
INTD 323	Environmental Control Systems II	3	0	3	MR	INTD 313	Yes
INTD 326	Design, Culture, and Environment	3	0	3	MR	INTD 310	Yes
PSYC 103	Introduction to Psychology	3	0	3	MSR	-----	No

Training Requirement

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 325	Interior Design Training	0	0	0	MR-Training	Completion of 85 Credits	No

Year 4 - Semester 7

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 410	Interior Design V	0	10	5	MR	INTD 320	Yes
INTD 411	Graduation Project – Programming Stage	3	0	3	MR	INTD 320	Yes
INTD 413	Management in Interior Design	3	0	3	MR	INTD 320	Yes
INTD 41X	Major Elective I from list 1	X	X	3	ME	INTD 310	Yes
INTD 424	Interior Finishes	3	0	3	MR	INTD 312	Yes

Year 4 - Semester 8

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
INTD 420	Graduation Project – Design Stage	0	12	6	MR	INTD 410 & INTD 411	Yes
INTD 422	Professional Practice and Documentation	3	0	3	MR	-----	Yes
HIST 122	Modern History of Bahrain and Citizenship	3	0	3	UR	-----	No
ARAB 110	Arabic Language Skills	3	0	3	UR	-----	No
INTD 42X	Major Elective II from list 2	X	X	3	ME	-----	Yes

Major Elective Courses¹

¹ Student must choose two elective courses from Major Elective Courses list..

Course Code	Course Title	Course Hours			Course Type	Pre requisite	Major GPA
		LEC	PRAC	CRD			
List 1							
INTD 414	Social and Cultural Factors in Design	3	0	3	ME	INTD 310	Yes
INTD 415	Interior Planting and Courtyard Design	3	0	3	ME	INTD 310	Yes
INTD 416	Architectural Design	2	2	3	ME	INTD 310	Yes
List 2							
INTD 425	Islamic Ornamentation	3	0	3	ME	INTD 320	Yes
INTD 427	Special Topics in Interior Design	2	2	3	ME	INTD 320	Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Code: INTD 110 Course Title: Basic Design I

Role of design basics in interior design context. Design elements: point, line, shape, form, space, color, texture, and light. Design principles: proportion, harmony, rhythm, emphasis, dominance, focal point, balance, and unity. Spatial relationships: space within a space, adjacent spaces, interlocking spaces, spaces linked by a common space. Types of design organizations: centralized, linear, clustered, radial, and grid. Two and three dimensional design problems emphasizing creative thinking and processing the given information.

Course Code: INTD 111 Course Title: Graphics I

Use of drafting tools and equipment, graphic symbols and lettering, drawing fundamentals, projection systems, orthographic projection, axonometric and isometric projections, application of projection techniques for the production of architectural drawing (plans, sections, elevations), dimensioning, sketching.

Course Code: INTD 120 Course Title: Design Basics II

Color systems (color wheels). Properties of color, color principles. Texture: tactile and visual. Visual perception of colors and textures. Relationships and differences between abstract and functional design. Functional definition of a space: identifying users' activities and requirements. Movement through space and /or space groups. Space requirements for activities, circulation, furniture and equipment. Functional relationships among activity areas and/or spaces. Two and three dimensional design alternatives for simple interiors and space groups. Emphasis placed on creativity, conceptual thinking and implementation of given information in both design basics courses.

Course Code: INTD 121 Course Title: Graphics

Principles of perspective drawing, representation of interiors with the aid of manual perspective drawing techniques (one and two points perspectives), shade and shadows in plans, elevations, and perspectives, conceptual drawings.

Course Code: INTD 210 Course Title: Interior Design I

Interior design of a simple space. Introduction to programming; functional analysis, anthropometrical and ergonomic requirements, area requirements, circulation requirements and furniture arrangement, treatment of interior surfaces.

Course Code: INTD 213 Course Title: Presentation Techniques

Focus on oral and visual presentation skills needed in the interior Architecture profession. Exploration of basic rendering techniques for different materials in floor plans, elevations, and perspectives. Color rendering of hand drawn and digital images.

Course Code: INTD 212 Course Title: Computer Aided Drafting

Introductory course in computer aided drafting. Use of AutoCAD software effectively to create computer-generated floor plans, elevations, and details that meet current professional standards. Use of Photoshop software to represent complete 2D CAD drawings with appropriate materials and rendering

Course Code: INTD 211 Course Title: History and Theory of Interiors I

Survey of interiors from pre-history cave settlements until the European Renaissance; emphasis is placed on the relationship between the social, economic, political, and environmental factors, and the formation of architecture, interior spaces, interior surfaces, furniture, and ornamentation.

Course Code: INTD 216 Course Title: Color in Interior

Use of color in interiors. Emphasis on color theory, psychology of color and its effects on moods. Application of color in interior environments with lighting conditions.

Course Code: INTD 220 Course Title: Interior Design II

Design principles, organization and spatial relationship patterns. Analysis of the structure (load bearing system) of given building. Study of function, ergonomics and circulation. Development of design criteria and design concept. Functional relationships among spaces, and spatial planning. Color applications. Medium size projects of medium complexity of commercial facilities.

Course Code: INTD 221 Course Title: History and Theory of Interiors II

Survey of interiors from Baroque period to present; emphasis is placed on the relationship between the social, economic, political, and environmental factors, and the formation of architecture, interior spaces, interior surfaces, furniture, and ornamentation; presentation of theoretical discourse during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, leading to contemporary interiors design directions.

Course Code: INTD 222 Course Title: Materials and Methods of Construction I

Introduction to structures as building sub-systems. Structural loads, basic states of structural stresses and forces. Structural systems and components: framed systems (columns, beams, slabs, and footings), bearing walls systems (walls, slabs, strip foundation), trussed systems, space frames, geodesic domes, arches, vaults, tents, pneumatic systems, shells and folded plates. Structural materials (reinforced concrete, metals, brick, concrete blocks, stone, and timber).

Course Code: INTD 223 Course Title: Computer Aided Interior Design

Continuation of INTA 212 with emphasis on three dimensional AutoCAD drawing and modeling techniques. 3D Max visualization software. Use of the software to think in three dimensions, creation of 3D objects, standard drafting versus 3D techniques. Presentation of interiors as picture images and design prints enhanced by advanced Photoshop rendering and lighting techniques.

Course Code: INTD 224 Course Title: Textiles

Classification of textiles according to origin of their basic materials (natural fibers, manmade fibers, yarns, etc.). Fabric structure, fabric design (motifs, textures, layout, color application), fabric selection criteria and application for different uses. Specifications, and purchase order writing.

Course Code: INTD 310 Course Title: Interior Design III

Design Project focus on: Analysis of the structure of given building. Programming. Development of design concept and criteria. Selection of interior finishes, textiles, furniture and styles. Furniture arrangements and interior surface treatments. Projects of medium size with medium complexity for hospitality and educational facilities.

Course Code: INTD 311 Course Title: History of Islamic Interiors

Survey of Islamic interiors including examples from Umayyad, Abbasid, Moorish, Mogul, and Ottoman periods; emphasis on mosque and residential architectural types; Islamic ornamentation and calligraphy; influence of cultural and religious factors on Islamic interiors.

Course Code: INTD 312 Course Title: Materials and Methods of Construction II

Introduction to non-structural building sub-systems. Types of non-structural walls and partitions, windows, doors, stairs, ramps, and suspended ceilings. Related building materials (brick, concrete blocks, reinforced concrete, timber, metal, and plastic).

Course Code: INTD 314 Course Title: Computer Animations

Introduction to digital animation. Concepts, theory, and aesthetics of digital design and animation, creating 2D elements and 3D models, applying surface materials, lighting, animation and rendering scenes. Video editing software (eg. Adobe Premier or Windows Movie Maker) may be used.

Course Code: INTD 313 Course Title: Environmental Control Systems I

Classification of environmental control systems. Passive climate control: thermal comfort conditions, heat transfer through walls and floors, selection of interior surface finishes in accordance with heat control, orientation of rooms with regard to solar radiation and wind control, air quality and natural ventilation. HVAC systems: their function, components, and system layouts. Illumination systems: visual comfort, day lighting, artificial lighting: light sources, lighting fixtures, lighting systems, lighting systems design and selection of interior finishes in accordance with required light reflectance. Integrated lighting.

Course Code: INTD 324 Course Title: Furniture Design

Emphasis on innovation and creativity in the design of functional and aesthetically pleasing pieces of furniture. Appropriate materials and forms for the construction of custom furniture for specific uses. Detailing of custom furniture considering sustainable alternatives.

Course Code: INTD 325 Course Title: Interior Design Training

Each student must participate in training program in the relevant industry where he is expected to gain practical experience.

Course Code: INTD 320 Course Title: Interior Design IV

Emphasis on technical issues such as structures (strength and stability), characteristics of finishes, lighting and air conditioning systems. With regard to functional and aesthetical satisfaction, integration of the layouts of air diffusers, absorbers and lighting fixtures with furniture arrangement, floor and wall patterns and treatments. Projects of large scale with high level complexity for corporate and institutional facilities.

Course Code: INTD 322 Course Title: Working Drawings

Production of working drawing set for small projects. Detailing: connections of external wall and floor, connections of external wall and roofs, windows, external and internal doors, stairs, cabinetry. Structural plan and sections. Furniture, fixture and equipment organization plans and sections. Floor and wall tiling plan and elevations. Electrical, HVAC and plumbing layouts. Reflected ceiling plan (integration of lighting fixtures, air diffusers and absorbers, smoke sensors and sprinklers).

Course Code: INTD 323 Course Title: Environmental Control Systems II

Room acoustics, aural comfort, reverberation time and good hearing criteria for rooms of special purposes. Noise control. Selection of finishes in accordance with sound absorption and required reverberation time. Fire control. Passive fire control: escape routes, fire exits, compartmentation. Firefighting systems and equipment. Sanitary installations.

Course Code: INTD 326 Course Title: Design, Culture and Environment

Examination of the interrelationship among culture, environment, and design; issues of sustainability, globalization, identity, culture, and human behavior are addressed as forces in the formation of contemporary interiors; issues are discussed at both local and international scales.

Course Code: INTD 410 Course Title: Interior Design V

Comprehensive design with emphasis on socio-cultural and technical issues such as build-ability, sustainability, acoustics, noise control, firefighting and plumbing systems. Projects of large scale with high level complexity for Hospitality, Socio Cultural and Health care facilities.

Course Code: INTD 411 Course Title: Graduation Project- Programming Stage

Preparation of graduation project report to include the identification of graduation project, selection of interior spaces for the project, theoretical studies related to the topic of the project, analysis of users' characteristics and needs, development of project's program and functional relationships, identifying conceptual directions for the design, discussion of spatial qualities, color schemes, furniture, materials, and surface treatments appropriate for the project.

Course Code: INTD 413 Course Title: Management in Interior Design

Planning, organizing and control of interior Architecture projects. Methods of task break-down, scheduling, cost analysis and cost estimation. Writing specifications. Types of bidding and preparation of bid documents. Facility management concerns in interior Architecture.

Course Code: INTD 424 Course Title: Interior Finishes

Criteria for selection of finishes (durability, fire resistance, humidity resistance, heat storage, easy cleaning and maintenance, sound absorption and noise control, light reflection, prevention of air pollutants and mites). Wall finishes (brick and stone veneer, precast concrete, gypsum boards, ceramics, GRC, metals, wood, glass, plaster, paint), floor finishes (stone, ceramics, plastic tiling, wood parquet, terrazzo, carpeting), ceiling (plasters, paint, wood, suspended ceiling materials).

Course Code: INTD 420 Course Title: Graduation Project II (Design Stage)

A comprehensive Interior Design project based on the design program developed in the Programming Stage; project presents a synthesis of information acquired during previous semesters; and an opportunity to exhibit student's abilities as a designer and his/her personal ideology and beliefs in relation to interior Architecture.

Course Code: INTD 422 Course Title: Professional Practice and Documentation
Basic principles, procedures of office systems of interior Architecture, types of professional practices, contracts and letters of agreement, responsibilities, professional ethics, portfolio review and development.
Electives:

Course Code: INTD 414 Course Title: Social and Cultural Factors in Design
This course is an overview of significant social, cultural and human behavioral factors related to space. Major design problems and the influences of sociocultural issues are analysed in relation to space layout of the buildings. Reading, discussions, films, and empirical case studies/ assignments will focus on understanding different arrangements of spaces that influence social and cultural behaviors of the built environment.

Course Code: INTD 415 Course Title: Interior Planting and Courtyard Design
Basic principles of garden and courtyard design. Functional, formal, and visual aspects of small open spaces. Interior planting (types, uses, care), composing with plant materials.

Course Code: INTD 416 Course Title: Architectural Design
Definition of Architectural Design. Steps in Architectural Design. Similarities and differences between design processes in Interior Architecture and Architecture. A small size Architectural design project.

Course Code: INTD 425 Course Title: Islamic Ornamentation
Definition and materials of ornamentation. Methods of ornamentation: carving, chiseling, embossing, engraving, painting, gilding, inlaying, marquetry, tapestry and cladding with mosaic, ceramic, brick, gypsum etc. Elements of Islamic ornamentation, motifs and patterns. Classification of motifs and patterns: Vegetal and floral patterns, geometric patterns, figural patterns, calligraphy. Exercises in developing different motifs and patterns.

Course Code: INTD 427 Course Title: Special Topics in Interior Design
Flexible course in terms of topics in accordance with interests of faculty and students. Structured individually by instructors to provide special opportunities to explore specific topics in interior Architecture. Course topic subject to Program Council approval.

LIBERAL ARTS COURSES

University Requirements Courses Descriptions

Course Code: ARAB 110 Course Title: Arabic Language Skills
This course focuses on basic Arabic skills including form, function, and meaning. It also helps the student to appreciate and understand structures and approach them from a critical point of view, through various genres in literature.

Course Code: HIST 122 Course Title: Modern History of Bahrain and Citizenship
Spatial identity of Bahrain: Brief history of Bahrain until the 18th century; the historical roots of the formation of the national identity of Bahrain since the 18th century; the modern state and evolution of constitutional life in Bahrain; the Arabic and Islamic dimensions of the identity of Bahrain; the core values of Bahrain's society and citizenship rights (legal, political, civil and economic); duties; responsibilities and community participation; economic change and development in Bahrain; Bahrain's Gulf, Arab and international relations.

Course Code: HRLC 107 Course Title: Human Rights

This course deals with the principles of human rights in terms of the definition of human rights, scope, sources with a focus on the International Bill of Human Rights; The Charter of the United Nations; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; The International Covenant on Economics, Social and Culture rights; Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Mechanics and the Constitutional Protection of Rights and Public Freedoms in Kingdom of Bahrain.

Course Code: ISLM 101 Course Title: Islamic Culture

An introduction to the general outline and principles of Islamic culture, its general characteristics, its relationships with other cultures, general principles of Islam in beliefs, worship, legislation and ethics.

APPENDIX VI FULL PROJECT'S SHEETS FOR EXAMPLES IN BAB 6, Part B



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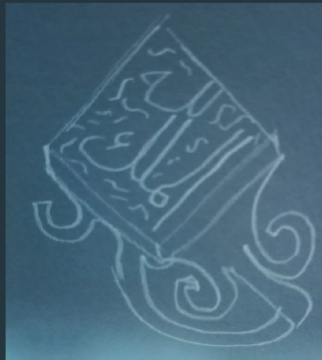
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DESIGN BRIEF: CONCEPT & INSPIRATION

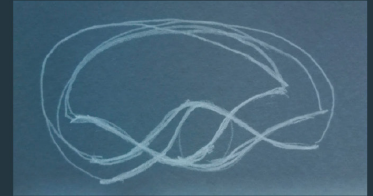
I was inspired by the ring of imam ali bin abu taleb. This man is a legend, he was born in kaaba. Also he participated in lots of the islam conquests with prophet mohammed. He was a really brave man.

Mainly My design is focusing on his famous ring that has engraving on it (Almulk lellah) in arabic which means that allah is the owner of everything.



ISLAMIC DESIGN REFLECTION

The design principle is Unity which means that only god is owning everything for ever.



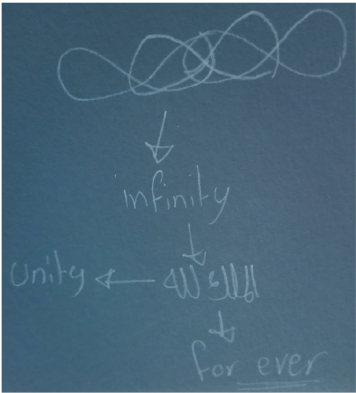
TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

Here is divine ring designed by Fatima Al Mosawi. The idea is to unify the shapes in one unique piece of ring.

In here i have used infinity shape which means that the god is owner of world and the other life for ever (infinite period).

FRONT VIEW

PRINCIPLE & CANON



Divine Canon



TOP VIEW



SIDE VIEW



PRINCIPLE & CANON



Actual Size 25

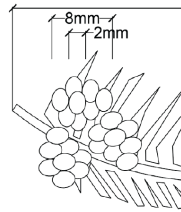


Inspirational images of the palm tree and its dates.



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Famous brands jewelry inspired by the palm tree.

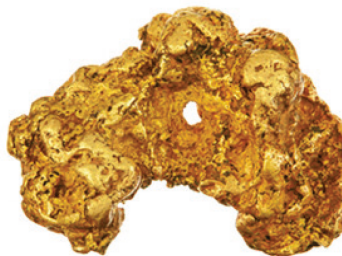


ISLAMIC DESIGN REFLECTION

Islamic Principle chosen: Intimacy

قال تعالى ﴿فَقَسَمْنَا لَها رُحْمًا يُقَسِّمُول حَسَنًا وَنَبْتِها نَسَاءً حَسَنًا وَكَلَّما زَكَّرَها زَكَّرَها وَكَلَّما كَلَّما دَخَلَ عَلَيْها زَكَرِيا الْمِعْبَرَات وَجَدَ عِنْدَها رُفقا قال يا مَرْيَمُ ااِنَّ لَكَ هَذا قالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّهِ اِنَّ اللّهُ يَزُرُّهُ مِنْ رُفقاء بِغَيْرِ حِسابٍ ﴿٢١﴾ سورة آل عمران، الآية ٢٧

This verse shows the Intimacy between Mary and god as she spent most of her life in the mosque mehrab praying for god and getting closer to him. As often as Zechariah entered Mary's prayer chamber, he found her provided with food and he would ask her where she received it from, to which she would reply that God provides to whom He wills.



Gold was highly valued by early civilizations for its scarcity, durability and characteristic color.

MATERIALS SELECTION

TECHNICAL DR

I named my jewelry which is the Arabic (Miracle).

This is because the the miracles that ha (Maryam bint Omra palm tree.

I added three fruit b leaf representing the happened.

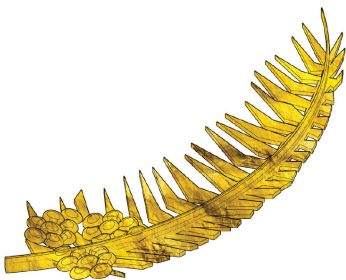


DESIGN BRIEF: C

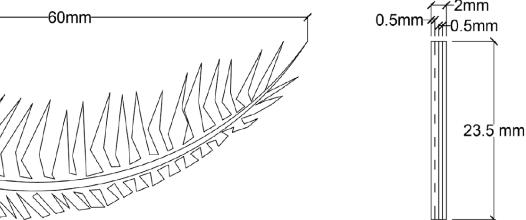
AWINGS

piece (Mojiza)
language word for

brooch represents
ppened to Mary
) near the date



unches on the palm
e three miracles that



مریم بنت عمران

فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَهُزِّي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا غَيْرَ الْمُطَرِّ غَيْرَ إِذِ الْفُكْلِي وَأَشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا ﴿٢٥﴾ فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أَكَلِمَ الْيَوْمَ أَنسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾ - آل عمران

CONCEPT & INSPIRATION



MOJIZA

By Maryam Al Doseri

Mary is the only woman who was mentioned by Allah in the Quran by name, and a whole chapter was revealed in the Quran bearing her name. The name 'Mary' appeared in the Quran 34 times, where God said about her "And when the angels said 'O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds'" (Al-Imran – 42)

More particularly my inspiration for the jewelry piece was the story of her giving birth to Jesus AS next to the trunk of a date palm and the 3 miracles that took place next to it.

1. God provided Maryam a small river stream under her for her to drink from.
2. God blessed her by letting fresh ripe dates fall upon her from the palm tree so she eats and rejoice.
3. The virgin birth of Jesus AS.

I then designed the palm leaf as a brooch to be worn to always remember God's miracles and how he is always there answering the Muslim's prayers.

ISLAMIC DESIGN REFLECTION

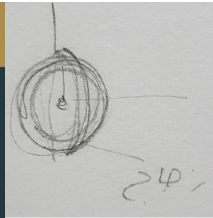
The design principle is balance it was chosen in the relation with:

(وَأَيْنَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ)

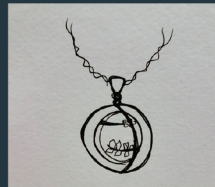
This verse leads to the fact that the ecosystem is a balanced system, disturbing this balance leads to the failure of growth and survive.



PRINCIPLE & CANON



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

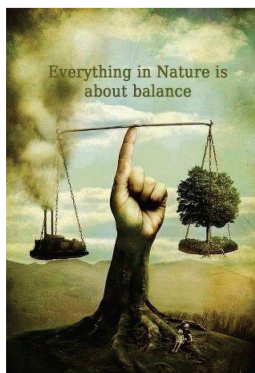
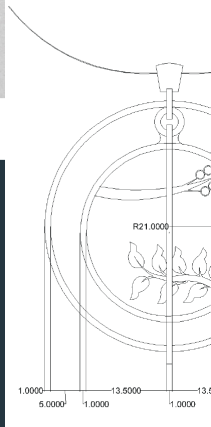


TECHNICAL DRAWING

The inner circle represents the smaller ones represent the larger ones help to maintain balance.

Also, it represents the inner sky and how each element is around in the nature.

قال تعالى: (وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ)



Everything in Nature is about balance

Design & Nature
 balance & movement
 what will create the "life"
 all things are created by Allah
 worship to him
 different kinds of elements
 to earth to plants to animals
 to different lands
 example of what is seen in nature

Mindmap

DESIGN BRIEF: CONCEPT & INSPIRATION

The concept has been inspired by a flower, asking what effect has been created? "what effect on people?" "what does it need to be growing?"

These questions represent the concept of the universe (السموات والأرض), which means that we are asked as humans to reflect on our daily life.

Each element/creature on the earth and in the sky are reflect one of the signs of Allah that makes us move closer to him by experiencing the beauty of the world. Embodied in the form of the

INGS

nt the earth, the
e cycles that
ce in nature.

inite scale of the
ent is moving



pired in the first
myself 'how it has
ts it might affects
ed to survive? 'how

ing: قل انظروا ماذا في
the "meditation"
ans to practice in

this earth and far
f the attributes
re closer and
ing 'العظمة الالهية'
these creatures.



قال تعالى: (قل انظروا ماذا في السماوات والأرض)

Then I continued searching about how
can I reach and achieve this point of view
by creating a mind map showing the
relationship between various elements.



جواهر الوجود

By Hawra Al Mutawa

ISLAMIC DESIGN PRINCIPLE

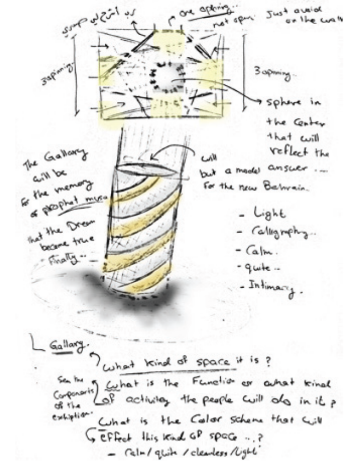
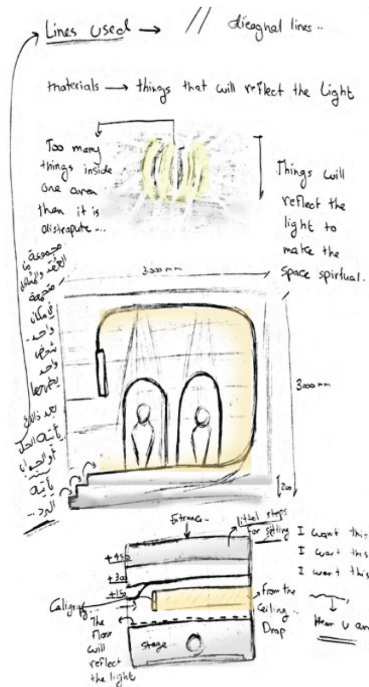
The Islamic design principle used in this small area is Intimacy means «القرب/الألفة» إذا سالك عبادي عني فإني قريب أجيب دعوة الداعي إذا دعى

With going to the interpretation of the seven verses, each one of these verses symbolizes a certain thing, but they all share the same idea, which is the achievement of the dream.

In the first verses: «My lord, open for me my chest» قال رب اشرح لي صدري «Wide the soul with lights and faith, than in terms of design, using diagonal lines in the entrance, to give the people the feeling of Wideness and to tell them that there is something to increase.

Moreover, the function of the place is for students to study in it before the exams, and tell them a message from the design that they can do it and there is nothing impossible to achieve, by looking at the Seven Verses from three main entrance and four others just an opening in the wall. However, using the canon of calligraphy to view these Verses in the opening with spot lights above each one of them.

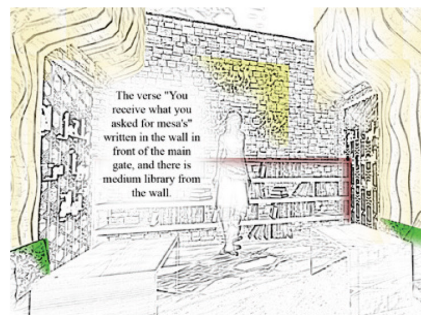
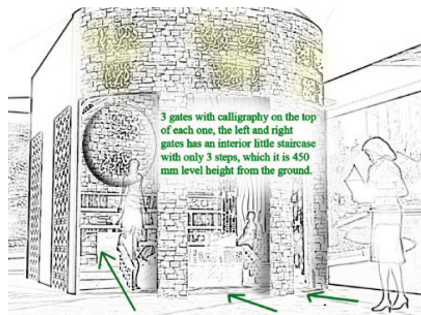
APPLICATION



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

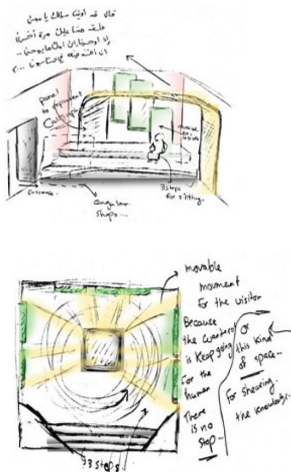
The main story of this seven verse with their answer

«You receive what you asked for mesa:s» «قد» «أوتيت سؤلک یا موسی» Is about a complex of troubles or problems collected in one place, and there is only one things can fix these problems in on move only «کن فیکون»



AMBIENCE AND

After entering the gate, then with calligraphy verse that helps in creating a comfortable, than to set in the floor with study with your friend the openings and call feel fried of the exam will achieve Wish list.



«I want this»
«I want this»
«I want this»

«Here you go»
So in terms of design this means too many things inside one area than it is distributed. Things will reflect the light to make the space spiritual.



ACHIEVE WISHLIST

By Zahraa Al-Qayem

FEEL

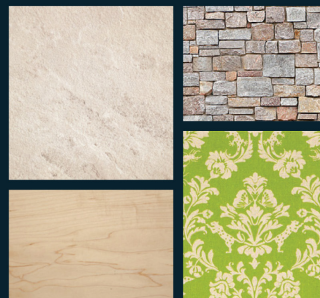
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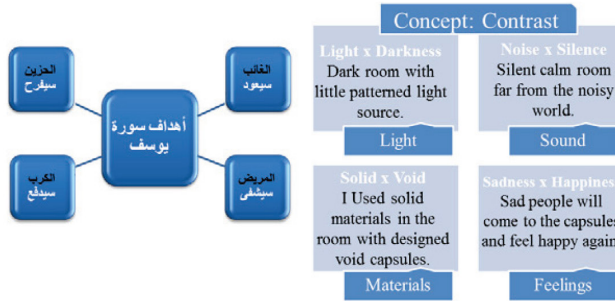


DESIGN DETAILS

وأجعل لي وريثاً من أهلي / هارون أخي
أشدد به أربي / وأشركه في أمري

From these verse taken the ideas of the materials, It is means that prophet Musa want his brother to help him, and the word (أشدد) means very hard and strong things, but at the same times, he want it his brother to make it more flexible and easier for him. Form point of view, the materials will be mixed between flexible such as plywood and rigid like stone.





Inspiration Images

AMBIENCE AND FEEL

Surat Yusuf is meant to uplift Prophet Mohammad's spirits (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) and console him and strengthen him at a time of such trials and tribulations.

Surat Yusuf is the light that will lead him out of this depressing time of pain and anguish.

This is hope for us when we are feeling down and suffering from problems of life.

This is the Surah that we can turn to for an uplifting moment and to find some solace and comfort, that is why Allah revealed it to our Prophet (sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam).

DESIGN DETAILS

I designed 4 capsules to resemble the 4 aims of Sorat Yusuf.

1. Sick people will be cured. المرضى سيشفي
2. Sad people will be happy. الحزين سيفرح
3. Agony will be over. الكرب سيدفع
4. The absent will return. الغائب سيعود

Each capsule is shaped from the pattern under it to beautify it. I extruded the floor of each portal 150mm with an interactive floor that activates and lightens when a person stands on top of it, and the top portal descends on the person standing and the verses of Sorat Yusuf that tell the story start reciting, and the person will listen to them and feel calm and forget his pain and grief.

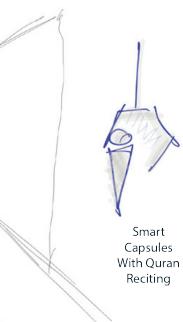
I chose an Islamic pattern and connected it through the wall and ceiling to resemble the connections between the four aims and stories I aimed for in the capsules.

The light source in the room is the pattern I designed to be lightened while the room is dark. This resembles my concept of contrast; as the room has both darkness and light. Materials: I used black marble for the flooring and white paint on the walls, the contrast in colors match my concept. The capsules are glass so the person standing under it would not feel trapped.

And never give up hope of Allah's Mercy. Certainly no one despairs of Allah's Mercy, except the people who disbelieve.

SURAT YUSUF, VERSE 87





فَاذْكُرُونِي
أَذْكُرْكُمْ
وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

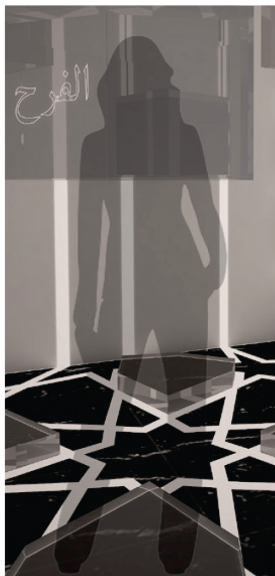
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the story of Yusuf, Allah taught the believers that a person who possesses true Islamic character can master the world with the strength of their character.

The example of Prophet Yusuf shows that a person of high and pure character can overcome severe circumstances and be successful.

This inspired me to learn the 4 main aims of the Surah and I shaped them into 4 capsules, each reciting the verses of the story it meant.

So each depressed or sad person can go to one of the capsules and listen to the verses of Quran and feel calm and happy again.



Descending capsule with Quran reciting so each person would listen to his own verses without others being disturbed

Interactive Step Floor



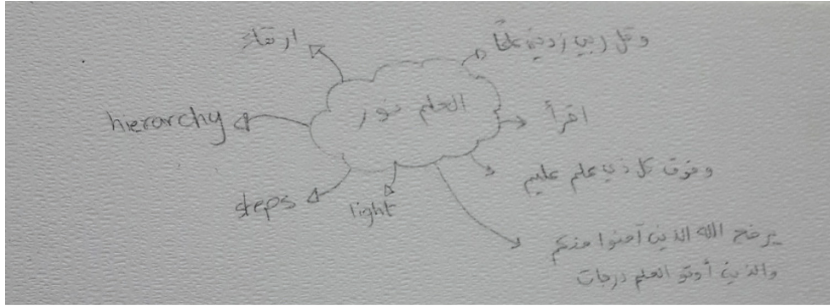
CONTRAST

By Maryam Aldoseri

CONCLUSION:

The place I designed enhances the spirituality just by the beautiful sound of Quran recitation.

Especially Sorat Yusuf for the reasons I explained above. No certain material or view can cause the same effect as Allah's words.



AMBIENCE AND FEEL

Spiritual space (reading area), with the feeling of calmness, freedom, unlimited.

ISLAMIC DESIGN PRINCIPLE

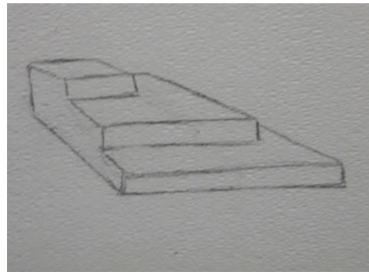
Rhythm is the Islamic design principle that will be presented in the design according to

{يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ}



APPLICATION

The design is a reading area with steps which will be used for going up and sitting, these steps represent the ascension of people by knowledge to upper levels.



DESIGN BRIEF: CONCEPT & INSPIRATION

Inspiration comes from Ayah (العلم نور), people rises (ارتقاء) because of knowledge.

و قُلْ رَبِّي زِدْنِي عِلْمًا {و} (فوق كل ذي علم عليم), يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ {أوتوا العلم درجات} and knowledge is the light in everybody's life.



ION

