Geometric Decoration | Geometric Decoration in Textiles

‘Figurative representations such as heraldic animals were often used.’

The decoration used on textiles, fabrics and rugs is dominated by plain bands, zigzags and boxes, with figurative representations such as heraldic animals, appearing at an early stage. Although these representations are schematic and flat, it is nonetheless possible to identify the ancient images from which they originate. The prevailing colours are different shades of blue, yellow and red, and gold and silver wire was often used to create stunning contrasts. The principal innovation in rug-making was the use of figurative representations so schematic that they became almost completely unrecognisable. The decorative field was often divided into polygonal medallions.



Name:
Textile fragment with cockerel medallions

Dynasty:
Hegira 4th–5th century / AD 11th–12th century Abbasid

Details:
National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:
Silk fragment from a shirt or blouse. The octagons contain the representation of a bird, possibly a peacock or cockerel.



Name:
Marby Rug

Dynasty:
Hegira 700–823 / AD 1300–1420 Ottoman

Details:
Museum of National Antiquities
Stockholm, Sweden

Justification:
The motif used inside the medallions on this rug, stylised birds arranged symmetrically around a tree, is of Mesopotamian origin.



Name:
Carpet with dragon and phoenix

Dynasty:
Hegira mid-9th / mid-15th century Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
The two octagons contain depictions of a fight between two stylised animals: the dragon and the phoenix.
