The Ottomans | Art in the Spaces of Prayer

‘The dome symbolises the eternal universe and the mihrab the presence of the Prophet as leader of the prayers.’

There are two distinct features of Ottoman mosques, which were generally designed by the imperial architects pertaining to a particular architectural philosophy of the single space, single dome, where everybody prays equally. The dome symbolises the eternal universe, and the mihrab the presence of the Prophet as leader of the prayers. In order that these two concepts are more distinctive, to underline and to make use of Islamic aesthetics, verses from the Qur’an were written on the dome and on its drum, and the mihrab was richly decorated. The walls were embellished with tiles, or painted with geometric designs symbolising the eternity of God and / or with floral designs resembling the Gardens of Paradise.



Name:
Pair of mihrab candlesticks

Dynasty:
Around hegira 894 / AD 1488 Early Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

Justification:
As well as being a source of light, these candlesticks served to point out the location of the mihrab.

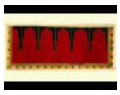


Name:
Prayer rug with a row of niches

Dynasty:
Hegira 9th century / AD 15th century Early Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

Justification:
An elaborate prayer rug woven specifically for use in the mosque of a sheikh; the niches ensure that worshippers prayed in straight lines.



Name:
Prayer rug with multiple prayer niches (fragment)

Dynasty:
Hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Ottoman

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

Justification:
A prayer rug woven specifically for use in a mosque; the layout was devised to ensure that worshippers prayed in straight lines.
