The Umayyads | The Formation of Islamic Art

‘Luxurious palaces decorated with coloured mosaics, fresco paintings, carved stucco and marble veneer.’

In the early 2nd / first half of the 8th century, the Umayyads dotted the Syrian steppes with luxurious, lavishly decorated palaces. It is these, rather than the urban palaces that provide us with an insight into Islamic art in its formative stages.



Name:
Floor painting

Dynasty:
Hegira 109 / AD 727 Umayyad

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The subject of the panel illustrates the influence of Roman Myths on early Islamic Art.



Name:
Khirbat al-Mafjar

Dynasty:
The end of hegira the 1st century / AD the first half of the eighth century Umayyad

Details:
Jericho, Palestine*

Justification:
A figurative mosaic from a secluded palace room. There are numerous interpretations as to its 'meaning', such as an allegory of Umayyad power.



Name:
Floor mosaic

Dynasty:
Hegira 101–5 / AD 720–4 or AH 125–6 / AD 743–4 Umayyad

Details:
In situ at al-Qastal, Jordan

Justification:
A floor mosaic depicting a lion conquering a bull. The image can be seen as the continuation of an age-old motif.



Name:
Four basalt reliefs

Dynasty:
Thought to be hegira 2nd century / AD first half of the 8th century Thought to be Umayyad

Details:
Museum of Jordanian Heritage, Yarmouk University
Irbid, Jordan

Justification:
Stone relief work such as these found in the reservoir at Azraq, depicting animals and plants taken from the periods prior to the Islamic conquest, are representative of the formative years of Islamic art.



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Name:
Ivory panel

Dynasty:
Hegira, first half of the 2nd century / AD first half of 8th century Umayyad

Details:
Aqaba Archaeological Museum
Aqaba, Jordan

Justification:
An ivory plaque found at al-Humayma, depicting a soldier in military gear in a hitherto unknown Islamic style. It stands as an example of the diversity of early Islamic art.