Western Influence in Ottoman Lands | Egypt

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Ottoman interest in European art, especially the Baroque and Rococo, began in the 17th century. Ottoman sultans were keen to introduce European elements into the decorative and minor arts and into architectural edifices, such as mosques and palaces. Adoption of the Western style increased in Egypt and elsewhere during the 18th and 19th centuries, as the Ottomans tended to commission European architects, builders and decorators whose constructions and the ornamentation of them was splendidly inspired by the Baroque and Rococo, and which are characterised by spiral and curving lines rather than straight edges. Protruding cornices formed of acanthus leaves replaced the Islamic muqarnas in some mosques, palaces and sabils (water fountains). The known principles of Baroque and Rococo came into practice in Egypt, which was at that time one of the provinces under the Ottoman Empire. The French Expedition to Egypt in 1798–1801 contributed further to the diffusion of European influences evident mainly in the capital city of Cairo.



Name:
Mosque of Muhammad Ali Pasha

Dynasty:
Hegira 1265 / AD 1848 Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
This mosque, located inside Cairo Citadel, boasts a profusion of gilt vegetal decorations. The minbar in particular – the largest in Egypt – is covered with gilt-vegetal decorations against a green background in the Rococo style. The construction above Muhammad 'Ali's tomb is also rich in Ottoman decorations with European influences.



Name:
Ras al-Teen Palace

Dynasty:
1834-1847 Ottoman

Details:
Alexandria, Egypt

Justification:
This palace, built in Alexandria the main port of Egypt, was designed by European architects commissioned by the ruling Muhammad 'Ali dynasty. It is a rare example of a palace from this period in Egypt. Its architectural and decorative elements demonstrate the European influences in Islamic art.



Name:
Ewer

Dynasty:
17th–18th century Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A glass ewer with incised and gilt enamel decorations showing the influence of the European Baroque/Rococo styles in both the execution and distribution of motifs.



Name:
Prayer rug

Dynasty:
19th century Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
A rug produced using the Gordes knot known in Egypt as Majidi displaying European influences in the distribution of quasi-naturalistic and high relief motifs.
