

# Figurative Art | Animal Representation

'Both real and mythical animals held an important place in Islamic art.'

The virtual preclusion of human and animal representations in the religious context was systematic and deliberate, but in all other spheres both real and mythical animals held an important place in Islamic art. Birds and horned animals, dragons and griffons are predominant, while beasts of burden, animals of the land, appear only occasionally, often reflecting local popular culture.



**Name:**  
Wooden panel

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Tulunid

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
A wooden panel carved with rounded pigeons. The spaces left in between the birds are filled with decorative motifs.



**Name:**  
Ewer

**Dynasty:**  
About hegira 391–452 / AD 1000–1060 Fatimid

**Details:**  
Victoria and Albert Museum  
London, England, United Kingdom

**Justification:**  
An exquisite rock-crystal ewer that shows a bird attacking an animal (possibly a gazelle), and perhaps symbolic of the owner's power.



**Name:**  
Ivory box

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 6th century / AD late 12th century Siculo-Norman (Siculo-Arab)

**Details:**  
Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums  
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**  
The animals and birds seen decorating this casket are a good example of the figurative style in Islamic Sicily.



**Name:**  
Plaster graffito

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira, second half of the 4th–first half of the 5th centuries / AD 10th–11th centuries Fatimid–Zirid

**Details:**

Bardo Museum  
Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**

An engraving of a stylised horse with a majestic demeanour, by the shape of its head and the gracefulness of its neck and legs the horse is typically Arab. The work represents an unique example of Islamic art from the Maghreb.

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**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 attacking a bull and representing blatantly the power of the owner; such scenes were known in the art of the Byzantine period in Jordan and Syria.

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**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Hunting Scene'

**Dynasty:**

Hegira first third of the 2nd century / AD first half of the 8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

A fresco at Qusayr 'Amra depicting a group of hunters; scenes such as these were characteristic of court life in the Umayyad period.

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