

Figurative Art | Animal Representation

'Ivory jewellery boxes covered with carving that illustrated typical themes of court life and pleasure.'

Animals appeared more frequently in the art and architecture of the Umayyad period, especially in mosaics and frescoes, not just in palaces but also in the churches of local Christians. In the later period, ivory jewellery boxes of various shapes and sizes were made in Spain (AD late 10th–early 11th century) their surfaces covered with carvings that illustrated typical themes of pleasure and court life, including hunting scenes. The carved wooden panels of the Fatimid period in Egypt contain a number of animal themes. The facades of some buildings in Anatolia, and the towers of the Ayyubid–Mamluk periods in Egypt, were often decorated with naturalistic and heraldic-style animal motifs.



Name:

Tower of al-Zahir Baybars

Dynasty:

Hegira 658–76 / AD 1260–77 Mamluk

Details:

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A lion, the blazon of Sultan Baybars (r. 658–76 / 1260–77). The motif is repeated all around the façade of the tower that was built on his orders and named after him.



Name:

Tile with stork

Dynasty:

Hegira 9th century / AD 15th century Mamluk

Details:

Museum of Civilisations | Museum of Oriental Art "Giuseppe Tucci"
Rome, Italy

Justification:

A well-preserved example of figurative art in the Mamluk context, this tile has a central motif of a stork which is placed on a background of budding serrated foliage and palm fronds.



Name:

Ewer

Dynasty:

Hegira 872–901 / AD 1468–96 Mamluk

Details:

Victoria and Albert Museum
London, United Kingdom

Justification:

A large inscription around the top section of the body says that the ewer was made for Fatima, the wife of Sultan Qaytbay. The ewer displays motifs of animals among trees.



Name:
Lion from the Palace of Mushatta

Dynasty:
Hegira 125–6 / AD 743–4 Umayyad

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

Justification:
This statue represents a seated lion that was found in the Mushatta Palace.



Name:
Small gazelle in bronze

Dynasty:
Hegira late 4th and 8th centuries / AD late 10th and 14th centuries Umayyad;
Marinid

Details:
Archeological Museum
Rabat, Morocco

Justification:
A small gazelle with an arched neck; the tops of its legs decorated with geometrical knotwork. The small sphere upon which the gazelle sits, surrounded by a four-petal corolla, is probably a later addition to facilitate its use as an aquamanile.



Name:
Fountain spout

Dynasty:
Hegira 339–90 / AD 950–1000 Umayyads of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:
National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:
A bronze spout from a fountain in the shape of a hind; a motif that appears often on Fatimid Ceramics



Name:
Ram mould

Dynasty:
Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century Umayyad

Details:
Jordan Archaeological Museum
Amman, Jordan

Justification:
