Echoes of Paradise: the Garden and Flora in Islamic Art | Flora and Arabesques: Visions of Eternity and Divine Unity

‘When flowers are not depicted naturalistically they are often used in fantastic arrangements.’

When flowers are not depicted naturalistically in Islamic art, they are often used in more or less fantastic arrangements intended to enhance the surface of a building or an artefact to their best advantage. Such floral compositions are often so intricate that they completely distract the eye from the physical characteristics of the object they decorate or, indeed, obscure them. Buildings and artefacts may appear as if draped with carved, painted or applied floral arrangements. Primarily decorative, such floral schemes still offer spiritual minds the opportunity to contemplate the eternal complexity of the Universe, which emanates and culminates in its Creator, Allah.



Name:
Great Mosque and Hospital of Divri#i

Dynasty:
Hegira 626/ AD 1228–9 Mengücekli Emirate

Details:
Divri#i, Sivas, Turkey

Justification:
The entire façade of this imposing structure is enhanced with fantastic floral designs, suggesting that a higher world can be found beyond its gate.



Name:
Chest from Palencia Cathedral

Dynasty:
Hegira 441 / AD 1049–50 Taifa kingdom of Banu Dhu'l-Nun

Details:
National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:
The intricate floral openwork seen on this casket suggests a delicate layer of lace rather than solid ivory plaques on a wooden core.



Name:
Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira Safar 1259 / AD March 1843 Ottoman

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

Justification:
The Word of Allah in the Qur'an is enclosed by a floral frame, the design of which is inspired by European Baroque and Rococo patterns.
