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

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The arabesque is certainly the most popular alternative to naturalistic floral compositions. Formed from a combination of stalks, scrolls, leaves and palmettes that grow from each other and develop in an endless, symmetrical arrangement, the arabesque became universally popular in Islamic art from the 5th / 11th century. The arabesque’s adaptability and versatility lends itself to the decoration of artefacts and architectural structures alike, inviting contemplation of the unfathomable interconnections and interdependencies of God.

**Name:**
**Qur’an**

**Dynasty:**
Hegira 842–57 / AD 1438–53 Mamluk

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

**Justification:**
The arabesque is a very popular decorative motif used in the illumination of pages of many precious Qur’ans.

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**Name:**
**Qur’an stand**

**Dynasty:**
Hegira mid-7th century / AD mid-13th century Seljuqs of Rum (Anatolian Seljuq)

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

**Justification:**
The arabesque designs and scrolls on this stand echo those found in Qur’anic manuscripts.

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**Name:**
**Dish**

**Dynasty:**
Second half of hegira 9th century / AD 15th century Mamluk

**Details:**
The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

**Justification:**
Here an astonishingly complex overall design combines arabesque motifs with scrolls and tiny floral details.
Name: Basin

Dynasty: About hegira 676 / AD 1277–8 Ayyubid

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

Justification: On this basin the harmonious, large-scale arabesque frieze counterbalances the monumental quality of the marble.

Name: Decorative panel

Dynasty: Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century, perhaps around AH 550 / AD 1155 Fatimid

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

Justification: The versatility of arabesque compositions made them perfect for the decoration of Islamic interiors.