

# The Umayyads | The Formation of Islamic Art

‘The juxtaposition and combination of decorative styles drawn from different artistic traditions.’

In this formative phase one cannot speak strictly of a full-blown Islamic art as it is the juxtaposition and innovative combination of various decorative styles and motifs drawn from different artistic traditions that produced such striking results and made them appear different. The eclectic art of this early period is different from that which developed in later centuries; it lacks the predilection for abstract and infinite designs which became characteristic of later Islamic art. Islamic Art in this early phase might be considered as a continuation of Late Antique art of the AD 4th–6th centuries.



**Name:**

Storage jar

**Dynasty:**

Hegira, second half of the 1st century / AD 2nd half of the 7th century Early Umayyad

**Details:**

Umm Qays Archaeological Museum  
Umm Qays, Jordan

**Justification:**

A vessel used for storage and decorated with swirling lines, a pattern typical of the Umayyad period.

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**Name:**

Ewer

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

The vessel, decorated with arched niches and a rooster demonstrates a mixture of both Iranian and Syrian elements, typical of Islamic art in the early period.

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**Name:**

Steatite base

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

Jordan Archaeological Museum  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

A steatite base for a candlestick carved to resemble an architectural monument; it is a perfect example of a small object being treated like built architecture.

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**Name:**

Pyxis (container with lid)

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 1st–2nd centuries/ AD 7th-8th centuries Umayyad

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum  
Berlin, Germany

**Justification:**

From the earliest period in Islamic art both small objects and architectural monuments were covered by ornamental surface decoration; the ivory pyxis seen here is covered with vine-tendrils.

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**Name:**

Ivory container (pyxis)

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century Umayyad

**Details:**

Jordan Archaeological Museum  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

Simple geometrical designs, such as that seen on this pyxis, or intricate architectural and geometric patterns are common features seen in all periods of Islamic art.

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