

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.



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.



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.
