

Echoes of Paradise: the Garden and Flora in Islamic Art | The Role of Individual Plants and Flowers

'Not all flowers and plants had their origins within the cultural context of the Islamic world.'

Alongside the tulip, the carnation was another flower employed to poetically recall Divine beauty and evoke spiritual contemplation. Consequently, it, too, occurs frequently in Islamic and particularly Ottoman art. Not all flowers and plants, however, had their origins within the cultural context of the Islamic world. The image of the vine stock abundant in grapes and with the associations of fertility and eternal life, represent a survival from Hellenistic times, while the lotus, an Eastern symbol of spiritual purity, was introduced to Islamic art by the Mongols in the 7th / 13th century.



Name:

Wall hanging

Dynasty:

Hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Ottoman

Details:

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:

This Ottoman embroidery is decorated with a profusion of vibrant carnations, evoking the beauty of nature and that of its Creator.



Name:

Dish with carnations

Dynasty:

Hegira 12th century / AD 18th century Production linked to Mudéjar art

Details:

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

Justification:

Although this plate was made in 12th- / 18th-century Valencia, its decoration of carnation sprays shows the influence of Ottoman Turkey.



Name:

Carved wood fragment

Dynasty:

Hegira 242–9 / AD 856–63 Aghlabid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:

This wooden panel shows a vine scroll with clusters of juicy grapes; the imagery is a legacy of the Hellenistic world.



Name:
Kaftan fragment

Dynasty:
Hegira, late 10th–early 11th century / AD late 16th– early 17th century Ottoman

Details:
National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:
On this textile, fantastic vine-like leaves have been integrated into a complex floral design arranged along sinuous, scrolling stalks.



Name:
Mosque lamp

Dynasty:
About hegira 750–61 / AD 1350–60 Mamluk

Details:
The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:
The use of the lotus flower on this mosque lamp suggests that even in an Islamic context this flower had spiritual overtones.
