

The Umayyads | The Formation of Islamic Art

‘An opportunity arose to mix the resources of two distinct civilisations.’

The remarkably rapid Arab-Muslim conquests removed the political barriers between Iran and Mesopotamia on the one hand, and the Mediterranean world on the other. In this way an opportunity arose to mix the resources of two distinct civilisations. The establishment of the Umayyad Dynasty in Syria, a province that had been thoroughly Hellenised over the previous millennium, meant that the predominant artistic influences were classical or, more precisely, classical transformed under the influence of an orientalised provincial tradition.



Name:

Section of a marble frieze

Dynasty:

About hegira 72 / AD 691 Umayyad

Details:

Islamic Museum, al-Aqsa Mosque / al-Haram al-Sharif
Jerusalem

Justification:

Arched niches containing stylised plants developed into a common motif in the arts and architecture of Islam.



Name:

Dome of the Rock

Dynasty:

Hegira 72 / AD 691 Umayyad

Details:

Jerusalem

Justification:

The Dome of the Rock with its Byzantine architecture and ornamental mosaics – artistic details which pertain to Sassanian influence – together with the earliest surviving calligraphic texts from the Qur'an in kufic script is a model for the formative period.



Name:

Decorative wooden panel

Dynasty:

Hegira 1st century / AD 8th century Umayyad

Details:

Islamic Museum, al-Aqsa Mosque / al-Haram al-Sharif
Jerusalem

Justification:

The wooden panels of the Aqsa Mosque can be seen as a highlight of the non-figurative repertoire of Umayyad art.



Name:

Decorative stone with stylised scrollwork and pomegranates

Dynasty:

Around Hegira 86–96 / AD 705–15 Umayyad, period of Caliph al-Walid I (r. c. AH 86–96 / AD 705–15)

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:

Designs that incorporate stylised plants play an important role in the ornamental repertoire of Umayyad art.

**Name:**

Wooden panel

Dynasty:

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

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

Decorated with high relief composed of two thick branches, the panel displays a number of characteristics of the Hellenic period, the characteristics of which distinguish the decorative style of the Umayyad period.
