

## RESOURCES

# Suggested Resources about Art of the Islamic World and Glossary

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### Books

- Al-Hassani, Salim T. S., ed. *1001 Inventions: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Civilization*. 3d ed. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2012.
- Arberry, Arthur J., trans. *The Koran*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Blair, Sheila S., and Jonathan M. Bloom. *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250–1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Bloom, Jonathan M., and Sheila S. Blair. *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. Handbook to the PBS video *Islam: Empire of Faith*.
- . *Islamic Arts*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.
- Brend, Barbara. *Islamic Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Canby, Sheila R. *Islamic Art in Detail*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Ekhtiar, Maryam D., Priscilla P. Soucek, Sheila R. Canby, and Navina Najat Haidar, eds. *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011.
- Espósito, John L. *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Ettinghausen, Richard, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina. *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Hagedorn, Annette. *Islamic Art (Taschen Basic Genre Series)*. Cologne: Taschen, 2009.
- Stanley, Tim. *Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East*. London: Victoria & Albert Publications, 2004.

### Videos

- Islam: Empire of Faith*. DVD. 163 min. Arlington, Va.: PBS Home Video, 2000.
- New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands—Behind-the-Scenes Curator's Commentary*. Video. 11 min. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011. <http://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/video/collections/isl/new-galleries-2011?chanID=dd142067-04e9-423c-8754-baecfc56a0ec>

### Websites

- Islamic Art Network. <http://www.islamic-art.org/>. Cairo: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2006. Includes an extensive technical glossary as well as a database of articles and a photograph archive.
- Islamic Arts and Architecture. <http://islamic-arts.org/>. Islamic Arts and Architecture, 2012. This user-friendly website features an interactive walking tour of the Alhambra Palace as well as a large range of articles and videos on Islamic art and architecture.
- Victoria & Albert Museum. "Style in Islamic Art." [http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1342\\_islamic\\_middle\\_east/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1342_islamic_middle_east/).

## Glossary

- al-Andalus / Andalusia – the region of southern Spain under Muslim rule from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Today this region is still known as Andalusia.
- Anatolia – the region also known as Asia Minor, comprising most of present-day Turkey.
- arabesque – an Islamic decoration employing abstract intertwining vine, leaf, and plant motifs.
- assemblage – a collection of objects grouped together.
- Berbers – the indigenous people of North Africa living west of the Nile valley.
- bismillah* – the phrase, “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,” repeated before all but one chapter in the *Qur’an* (also sometimes spelled *basmala*).
- blazon – an emblem similar to a coat of arms; in Mamluk art a blazon indicates an individual’s status in the court hierarchy.
- boss – an ornamental projection on both decorative objects and architectural surfaces.
- Buraq – the celestial steed that carried the Prophet Muhammad on his miraculous night journey (*mi’raj*).
- caliph – the title of the Prophet Muhammad’s immediate successors who were the political and spiritual leaders of the Muslim community. Many subsequent Islamic dynasties continued to use this title. The term “caliphate” refers to the dominion of a caliph.
- calligraphy (adj. calligraphic) – decorative writing prized for its aesthetic qualities. (See examples of Arabic calligraphy and descriptions of key scripts in Unit 2.)
- Caucasus – the region to the east of the Black Sea, generally acknowledged to include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and parts of Russia.
- Central Asia – the region between Iran and China comprising present-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and sometimes Afghanistan.
- chasing – a decorative technique in which the front of a metal surface is indented with a tool (usually a hammer) to create depressed patterns. This technique is most often used in conjunction with repoussé, in which the same metal surface is hammered from the other side.
- cloud bands – stylized scrolling bands representing clouds. Derived from Chinese art, cloud bands were used extensively in Persian, Ottoman, and Mughal art after the fourteenth century.
- dado* – the lower part of an interior wall, often decorated.
- div* – a Persian term for a demon.
- enameling – a decorative technique in which melted and fused glass (often multicolored) is applied to the surface of an object.
- folio – a page belonging to (or formerly a part of) a manuscript.
- gesso – a white plasterlike substance used to prepare a surface for painting.
- Greater Iran – the region historically within the Persian cultural sphere, comprising present-day Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and parts of Central Asia.
- hadith – a pronouncement on a religious topic ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad.
- hijri* – the Islamic calendar (*al hijri*, abbreviated A.H.). The first year of the *hijri* calendar corresponds to the year 622 A.D. in the Christian calendar and marks the Prophet Muhammad’s *hijra*, or emigration, from Mecca to Medina (in present-day Saudi Arabia).
- illumination (adj. illuminated) – the practice of embellishing manuscript pages with gold. In Islamic art the term illumination refers to the gold decoration applied to paintings, calligraphy pages, and manuscripts of the *Qur’an*.
- imam – a Muslim prayer leader.
- incised – in an artistic context, incised decoration consists of shallow lines cut into the surface of ceramics or metalwork.
- Indian subcontinent – the region comprising present-day Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- juz’* – a section comprising one-thirtieth of the *Qur’an*.
- Ka’ba – Islam’s most sacred building; the cubical structure at the center of the Haram Mosque in Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia) used as the focus of prayer.
- Levant – the region along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, generally considered to include present-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.
- madrasa* – a school in the Islamic world, especially one offering instruction in Islamic law and theology.
- Maghrib – the northernmost region of North Africa comprising the countries bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, including present-day Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia.

- mausoleum – a tomb with an above-ground architectural structure, built for a family or individual for the purpose of burial and remembrance.
- mihrab* – a niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca and of prayer.
- mina’i* – the modern term, derived from the Persian word for enamel (*mina*), used to describe ceramics with multicolored underglaze and in-glaze painted decoration produced through several firings in a kiln.
- minaret – one of the integral architectural elements of a mosque; the tall tower attached or adjacent to a mosque from which the call to prayer is announced.
- minbar* – a raised platform reached by a set of steps, usually situated in a mosque to the right of a *mihrab*; speakers address an assembled group from the *minbar*.
- mi’raj* – the Prophet Muhammad’s night journey to the heavens.
- Mongol – a nomadic people of Central Asian origin who swept through Asia and the Islamic world in the thirteenth century, conquering and establishing rule over a vast territory (see map, page 206).
- motif – a design or shape, often repeated, used decoratively in a work of art.
- muqarnas* – honeycomblike and stalactitelike architectural decoration, often used in portals, cornices, and domes in the Islamic world (see, for example, the *muqarnas* in the Damascus Room, page 187).
- palmette – a decorative motif used extensively in Islamic art, as well as in many other artistic traditions; it usually features broad leaves fanning out from a central stem.
- parchment – a writing surface derived from animal skin. Paper replaced parchment in most parts of the Islamic world by the tenth century, though parchment continued to be used in Spain and North Africa until much later.
- qibla* – the direction Muslims face when performing ritual prayers, toward the Ka’ba in Mecca.
- Qur’an – the holiest book in Islam, believed to contain God’s revelations to the Prophet Muhammad.
- rahla* – a stand used to hold a Qur’an; usually made of wood or stone.
- Ramadan – the holy month during which Muslims abstain from food and drink during daylight hours. It is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, and marks God’s first revelations to Muhammad.
- saz* – an artistic style, popular in Ottoman Turkey and developed by the court artist Shah Qulu; it is characterized by blossoms and serrated leaves.
- shah* – the title given to rulers in several regions of the Islamic world, most notably Iran and Central Asia. *Shah* means “king” in Persian (the Iranian language).
- Shahnama* – literally, “Book of Kings”; an epic poem recounting the history of Persian kingship from legendary times to the advent of the Arab conquests of Iran. It was compiled and versified in the eleventh century by the poet Firdausi.
- Silk Road – the name given to the interconnected trade routes that reached from China to the Middle East; the Silk Road was the major route of cultural and mercantile exchange in Asia for almost 2,000 years.
- Sinai Peninsula – a peninsula in Egypt that geographically unites the Asian and African continents.
- slip – semifluid clay used to decorate a ceramic vessel or to cover its surface with a solid (usually white) background to which further decoration can be applied.
- stonepaste – a white ceramic material that combines clay, quartz, and ground glass, and approximates the qualities of porcelain; also known as frit.
- stucco – a durable plasterlike coating applied to architectural surfaces that can be decoratively carved.
- sultan – a title for a ruler used widely in the Islamic world, including in Nasrid Spain, Mamluk Egypt, and Ottoman Turkey. The term “sultanate” refers to a dynasty or kingdom established by a sultan.
- sura* – a chapter of the Qur’an; the Qur’an contains a total of 114 *suras*.
- talisman – an object thought by its owner to possess supernatural or magical powers, including, typically, the ability to protect the owner against bad luck or malevolent forces.
- tiraz* – literally “embroidery” in Arabic; describes both inscribed textiles and the royal textile workshops where they were produced.
- tughra* – a stylized royal insignia containing the name of the Ottoman ruler, names associated with his lineage, and the phrase “May he reign forever”.
- umma* – the Muslim community.
- vizier – a high-ranking political advisor, usually serving a sultan or shah.
- zilij* – architectural tilework used primarily in Morocco and Southern Spain.