

A new Vision for Enriching Islamic Manuscripts of the Arab School in the Age of Digital Arts

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Abstract

Islamic manuscripts represent the plethora of Islamic Cultural heritage, written by hand, that have reached us, and constitute a part of world art.

Muslims down the ages took great care to preserve such legacy in an endeavor to perpetuate the intellectual property of Arab, and Muslim minds in various disciplines.

Manuscripts of the Glorious Quran – the word of Allah – have been a top priority for artists to embellish as masterpieces of Arabic Calligraphy with decorations, and eye pleasing colours.

Thus creating an artistic legacy of great importance to add to world art, and craftsmanship.

The magnitude of this Islamic legacy is quite striking being preserved in libraries and museums across the world.

The city of Istanbul alone hosts one hundred and twenty four thousand rare manuscripts.

Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, India, Iran, as well as other hubs of civilization around the world host such incredible manuscripts in museums, and libraries.

The art of creating Islamic manuscripts evolved, and progressed in an unparalleled manner compared to other arts from the pre-Islamic era. Muslim artists enjoyed such skilled craftsmanship that produced gilded, and colourful decorations to integrate with elegant Arabic calligraphy in a harmonious blend of distinctive minute mosaic – like units.

Elegant calligraphy raked high in Islamic culture, as calligraphers enjoyed a respectable social status, especially in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey, because they took as a profession writing by hand the Quran - the Word of The Creator – in magnificent manuscripts.

They also wrote popular

Manuscripts of literature, and poetry.

As such, the art of calligraphy, and manuscripts embellishment started to take shape, and evolve into an art form.

Princes, and sultans of the time, took a keen interest in this art form: commissioning, and buying complete manuscripts, or even samples of those. Tablets displaying Quranic verses, prayers, and lines of poetry became widely popular in art – loving circles.

The Arab school of illustration drawing flourished in Iraq, its styles, and special aesthetics and features reached Syria, Egypt, and even crossed the Gibraltar strait to reach Morocco, and beyond.

Colourful, decorated manuscripts became a genre on their own right.

Historical sources indicate that Caliphate Al Mustansier bi Allah (302- 366 Hijra, 915 – 976 Common Era) sent delegates to the East to buy such manuscripts, and founded a

Compound of buildings as a work-place hosting calligraphers, scribes, artists, artisans, and gold craftsmen, thus inducing an unprecedented boom of activity in the art of manuscript making.

The Arabic school of this trend of art form was characterized by portraying Realistic scenes, and drawings to adorn the elegantly hand – written manuscripts. Our current age, it is note worthy to mention, is characterized by employment of abstract entities in art, as well as dynamic interaction between artist and spectators in order to give art receivers the opportunity to take part in the creative process of art – making. Works of art these days are no longer mere passive objects of passion for connoisseurs, Or the subjective interpretations, or even the emotional stirrups of art lovers. The much sought after objective of digital art of the age is to communicate various messages of humanitarian value to the public, that blend, and mix various artistic trends together to create bridges across distant cultures, and to activate the human imagination beyond our physical world. Digital art has become a genre on its own right. It is part of a trend of visual art forms that is relevant to design making and plastic arts. It communicates its messages through the medium of graphic design technologies of the age, as well as illustration software of two, and three-dimensional features that the information technology revolution made accessible to us. The research project at hand derives from the rich cultural heritage of Islamic manuscripts created by the Arabic school for drawing, and picturing. We will suggest ways, and means to benefit from this legacy in the time, and age of digital art technology. We have our eye on enriching graphic design prints of various types with the culture specific aesthetics of Islamic manuscripts with an innovative visual perspective. The problem of the project stems from the fact of working with a vast cultural legacy that is distant from us in time. Muslim artists produced creative art forms that constitute a distinctive intellectual property so rich, complex, and multidisciplinary that words cannot do justice to. Such wonderous legacy remained hidden in museum warehouses, or library show – cases beyond the reach of the generation of digital art technologies. We will – through this research project – draw the attention of designers to tap on this rich heritage, and create embellishments, and various design units from plant decorations, Arabic calligraphy, and geometric shape- units to produce art through the medium of digital technology in service of modern graphic art design of the world.

Objectives of the Research

1. To reach an innovative perspective to enrich Islamic manuscripts related to Arab school of drawing, and illustration in the age of digital art technology.
2. To derive artistic units from Islamic manuscripts, and reformulate those using the innovative perspective of digital graphic design methods.

Limits of this Research Project

1. Islamic Manuscripts
2. Arab school of Arts
3. Digital art technology using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator.

Hypothesis of The Research

The key Question raised is as follows:

Is it possible to produce Islamic manuscripts using an innovative perspective of digital art as in various graphic design prints?

Methodology of this Research

Our methodology is descriptive, then analytical, and then experimental.

Axes of the Research

This research project includes

1. A review of previous studies.
2. Manuscripts of Arab school of drawing and Illustrations (a short historical review of literature on the subject).
3. Digital Art from the perspective of the researcher, reaching results to be followed by an analysis.

Keywords

1. A new (innovative) vision
2. Islamic Manuscripts

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