

## ENHANCING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY BY USING ISLAMIC ORNAMENT IN CONTEMPORARY INTERIOR DESIGN

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### Abstract

Islamic buildings have their unique Islamic architectural style that distinguishes its identity. These buildings show habits, traditions, and Islamic ideology. Buildings have been affected by Western art because of technological development in different parts of culture, economic, arts, and sciences. Thus, they have not any cultural identity. Islamic ornament is full of aesthetic and artistic values. It has different designs can be used whether inside or outside buildings. The study aims to investigate why designers do not use this art in contemporary buildings. The study concludes that the causes, contributed to the decline to use ornament in buildings, are lack of knowledge of this art, high financial cost, and people want modern designs. The study suggests solutions to enhance the cultural identity as follows: teaching this art in schools and universities, awareness and educational campaigns, and reformulation of this art with a modern vision.

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**Keywords:** Islamic Ornament; Cultural Identity; Contemporary Interior Design.

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### Introduction

Islamic art is one of the richest aspects of human civilization. It is also viewed as one of the most widespread arts geographically and historically. Artistic models and patterns have been evolving in the Islamic state over time and are affected by political, social, and religious events. The differences between artistic styles in architecture are evident. Islamic art is not necessarily the art that speaks about Islam, but it draws the image of existence from the perspective of Islamic perception. It combines beauty and truthfulness. Beauty is the reality of the universe. Truthfulness is the peak of beauty (Al Saqer, 2003). This art is manifested in many types such as architecture, painting, sculpture, metal and glass artifacts, Arabic calligraphy, and various types of ornament (Hadi, 2010).

Ornament is considered one of the most important elements that have been employed in Islamic architecture since Muslim artists used plants, animals, and geometrical and scriptural ornaments in most of religious and civil buildings, in addition to the applied products. Burckhardt stresses that Muslim artists try constantly to confer beauty on everything he does in his works because beauty is one of the attributes of Almighty Creator, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty" and the true beauty is the one that is inherited in matter, and the spiritual beauty that a Muslim artist has helps him to trans form all his/her surroundings into art (Burckhardt, 2009).

Muslim artists benefited from all elements around them including plants, animals, or geometric forms to achieve their ornamental and aesthetic objectives. Moreover, Muslim artists used

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Arabic calligraphy in ornaments. They combined all elements and ornamental units in their work which eventually produced artistic works that are technically and aesthetically integrated (Ali,2000).

Generally, Interior architecture is part of the concept of architecture. Interior architecture was viewed as a decoration of interior space. This art began to evolve gradually until it had its own concept and became known (interior design), which generally means the interior spaces of the buildings like walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, accessories, and lighting. People began to design their internal architecture since they used to live in caves and old houses. They also sought to develop that architecture and its space functionally and aesthetically alike (Akbar, 2006).

Interior designers contribute to the role played by others such architectures and artists in their own fields of specialization. In the most prominent cultural heritage, interior design means the interior spaces of buildings of various kinds and shapes. One of the main reasons for the absence of cultural identity from the interior spaces is that most designers went through a process of separation from their cultural roots. Historical, cultural, religious and spiritual heritage was associated with poverty, as the current designs were borrowed from other places in general and from the West in particular. This created a great challenge between the internal design and society due to the lack of a clear identity for the internal spaces in these day (Farran, 2019).

Judy says “We feel painful about the actual transformation of the contemporary Arabic, and Islamic art, influenced by the Western oriented arts and styles. This is because of the changing nature of civilization and ideology. However, this will reflect in the future in our society where the decay in the Arabic art, history and knowledge are replaced by Western values” (Joody, 2007, p10). Abas and Salman (1992, p.52) also state that "Islamic patterns provide a rich source for artists, designers as well as scientists."

Joody, Abas and Salman admit that the Western influences on our arts, which we observe in the Arab city and our buildings, the disappearance of cultural identity in buildings, and the fear of the decay of artistic heritage due to Western influences and multiple reasons, and this is what prompts us to think about solutions for the sake of preserving On our artistic heritage, and that we work to revive the artistic heritage in a way that suits the requirements of the current era, by working on the vocabulary and elements of Islamic art to reformulate it in a way that is consistent with contemporary artistic styles, Abbas emphasizes the richness of Islamic ornament in artistic and aesthetic values, which can be used in various types of arts.

Through the foregoing, the researcher was able to reach a set of conclusions related to the research problem, as it is prepared Islamic art is one of the richest arts in terms of artistic and aesthetic values that characterized it from other arts in general, and in ornamental art that the Islamic art invented and exploited in various areas of life in particular. However, the researcher noticed that there is a shift of contemporary interior design from Islamic arts in general. This may lead to the lack of Islamic identity associated with our cultural and artistic heritage. It also reflects the cultural and artistic heritage and social history of Islamic and Arab civilization, From this we conclude that the lack of clarity and confusion of many designers of the relationship between the designer’s cultural identity with the modern concepts of interior design led to the designers’ inability to express his/her cultural identity in his/her modern designs. The appearance of artistic trends filled with modern international styles. This led to the appearance of buildings with elements and characteristics that have nothing to do with our Islamic artistic heritage. It also led to the appearance of some buildings that reflect the personal emotions regardless of the cultural values of the region. Thus, architecture may lose its connection with the nature and history of Islamic culture and may become an expression of the economic and cultural chaos resulting from the lack of familiarity with the elements and characteristics of Islamic art, Islamic ornamental art specifically. The lack of familiarity with the elements and

characteristics of Islamic art also led to the absence of creativity and artistic sense, and to the obliteration of people's identity. The lack and scarcity of studies in this field, especially concerning the relationship between interior design and Islamic ornament. As we have seen above, the connection between the aesthetic values of Islamic ornament and the internal and external Islamic architecture is close. This leads to the need to take advantage of the aesthetic values in Islamic ornament and to employ these values in the interior spaces of residential houses to enrich the aesthetic aspects of design to emphasize the cultural identity of place, and to find the most important motives and reasons that pose a barrier between designers, design companies, and artistic heritage rich in aesthetic, artistic and spiritual values. Moreover, it will lead to putting forward suggestions to maintain this art and activate its role in various artistic fields to suit today's requirements, and contemporary artistic styles.

### **The objectives of the study**

- Identifying the most important causes and providing solutions for not using Islamic ornament in the contemporary interior design.
- The disappearance of cultural identity in contemporary buildings because there is not a clear style.
- What are the most important causes and solutions for not using Islamic ornament in the contemporary interior design?

### **Literature Review**

Hussein (2016, p. 56) stresses the importance of using Arabic calligraphy in producing new design methodologies for contemporary interior design models. Selected forms of Arabic calligraphy have been converted into 3D models through the experimental approach where she was able to come up with creative ideas that reflect Arab history and culture. Regarding the role of Islamic decoration in designing modern furniture. Abidin et al (2018) provide models for modern furniture designs by using clear elements in Islamic art such as Arabesque, geometric decoration, and calligraphy using types of design thought to emphasize that Islamic art consists of interesting aesthetic values and creative designs in line with modern industry designs.

Fatihaddin et al (2018, pp.137-147) seeks to understand spiritual aesthetics and its relation to Islamic art and its use in interior design by proposing a strategy that would enhance spiritual aesthetics by using Islamic decoration in interior design as a main objective of study. Islamic decorations not only serve as a platform for the transfer of Islamic values but also provide aesthetic sensations and beauty in the interior spaces.

Mahmoud emphasizes the role of geometric patterns in Egyptian architecture, interior architecture, and art through selected examples of ancient and contemporary Egyptian history to highlight the effective role of geometric patterns as architectural and artistic possibilities and to clarify the degree of flexibility and functional effectiveness ranging from fine works such as jewelry to huge large surfaces to show different styles and materials such as wood, marble, stone, glass, metal, and textile. This correlation between geometric patterns and different Egyptian arts is explained by the religious, residential, and cultural characteristics of people (Mahmoud, 2017, pp.8-10)

As we have seen throughout history, Islamic art has been recognized and appreciated by Muslims and non-Muslims. Islamic decorations were used in architecture, mosques, gardens, and various Islamic buildings. In light of this, Ghasemzadeh et al (2013, pp.62-78) carried out a study to make readers appreciate Islamic decoration and to highlight the qualities and

characteristics that make it unique and distinct from other forms of architecture. The study concluded that the most common methods are geometric, scriptural, and botanical decoration. These types also had a clear effect on building and decorating buildings in other cultures during antiquity and the present time.s

## **Methods**

This study is a qualitative research. The strength of the qualitative methodology comes from its ability to provide complex descriptions of the way people experience certain research issues. It gives us information concerning the “human” part of the issue in terms of the conflicting beliefs, behaviors, emotions, opinions, and relationships of humans. Qualitative research may also be effective in changing the complicated reality of a certain condition (Mack & Wood song Brothers, 2005). Qualitative research depends on interpretation which means that researchers study things in natural settings in a bid to understand or interpret phenomena through meaning that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The interview requires notation (date, place, interviewee and Interviewer) and gaining confidence through some questions that can remove the barriers between them. The record of these interviews must be kept in the form of documents, photographs, notes and audio or video recordings (Creswell, 2014). The interview is important for collecting qualitative data to understand phenomena. The purpose of the interview is to gather ideas, not just data. A variety of interviews will be conducted to collect data. The study includes interviews with participants from companies specialized in the field of interior design including designers, and architectures. These interviews will be organized to serve the objective of the study and include the most famous eight interior design companies in Amman, the capital city of Jordan, as a case study. these companies are chosen according to the years of experience and the number of projects.

In this paper, semi-structured and open-ended questions allow interviewees the freedom needed to express their information with the possibility of delving into the precise details that serve the subject of the study. They reveal more information and enrich data (Legard, Keegan& Ward, 2003). Thematic analysis will be used to identify important topics within the content of the interview that provide a rich and deep description of text and visual data. The researcher then interprets the data and subjects to derive the intended meaning of the presented data to obtain a deep understanding of texts and visual data (Braun, Clarke, 2006).

## **Results and Discussion**

This paper discusses the causes that prevent the designers for not using Islamic ornament in the contemporary interior design. it also sheds the light on the suggested solutions to use this art to enhance the cultural identity in the contemporary interior design. The researcher has interviewed 5 interior designers and 3 architectures for this purpose. The data of study is classified into two tables: causes and solutions. Table (1) shows the main four causes: High financial cost, lack of knowledge of Islamic ornament, people want western designs, and lack of specialized craftsmen. Table (2) shows the suggested four solutions: teaching this art in schools and universities, establishing centers to train the craftsmen to do this kind of ornament, reformulation this art with a modern vision, and searching for low-cost alternative materials to do the ornament.

Table (1) contains the main four causes for not using Islamic ornament in the contemporary interior design. It also shows the agreement extent of the interviewees for these causes.

**Table 1: Four Causes for Not Using Islamic Ornament**

Interviewees causes	Interviewee							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
High financial cost	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Lack of knowledge of Islamic ornament	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
People want western designs		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Lack of specialized craftsmen		√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Source: Analysis Data, (2020).

The first cause is high financial cost of Islamic ornament materials as well as the high wages of craftsmen. The second cause is lack of comprehensive knowledge of Islamic ornament because people are not aware of this art importance and its aesthetic and artistic values. The third cause is lack of craftsmen who are doing this kind of art. People want western and contemporary design because they watch many announcements of contemporary and western designs, but they do not watch Islamic ornament designs announcements at the same time.

Table (2) contains the suggested solutions to use Islamic ornament more in the contemporary interior design. It also shows the agreement extent of the interviewees for these solutions.

**Table 02: Suggested Solutions to Use Islamic Ornament**

Interviewees solutions	Interviewee							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Teaching Islamic ornament		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Training centers for craftsmen	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
Finding low-cost materials	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Modern vision		√	√	√	√		√	√

Source: Analysis Data, (2020).

The interviewees agree the following suggested main solutions:

Focusing on teaching Islamic ornament art in schools and universities intensively. The interviewees insist that school curricula do not have information about this art as well as university syllabus lack the theoretical and practical courses that help students to have a knowledge of Islamic ornament.

Preparing centers for training for specialized craftsmen to implement this art because it needs specialized craftsmen that have a command knowledge of this art rules. These centers help to reduce the wages of craftsmen.

Finding low-cost materials to implement ornament works to reduce the financial cost. Not relying on high-cost wood to implement ornament works.

Reformulation this art with a modern vision. the interviewees insist the necessity of studying aesthetic and artistic values of Islamic ornament to reformulate the main elements of contemporary interior design (shapes, lines, colors, and textures) to have a contemporary outcome that reflects the cultural identity.

The interviewees insist that the Islamic ornament is able to enhance the cultural identity in the contemporary interior design by using the various ornament elements i.e. geometric, planet, and geographic. They also recommend using the elements in the contemporary designs (walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, accessories).

## **Conclusion**

This paper concludes a group of results that are divided into three main section. Firstly, confirming that Islamic ornament enriches and enhances the cultural identity in the contemporary interior design. Secondly, the causes contribute to the decline to use ornament in the contemporary design are lack of knowledge of Islamic ornament art, high financial cost, lack of specialized craftsmen, and people want western design. Thirdly, the suggested solutions to use the ornament in the contemporary design are Focusing on teaching Islamic ornament in schools and universities, preparing centers for training craftsmen to implement the ornament, recruiting low-cost materials to implement the ornamental works, and reformulate the Islamic ornament with a modern vision.

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