

ISLAMICHERITAGE
LEADS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE UMMAH

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Editors

Hasan Bahrom
S. Salahudin Suyurno
Abdul Qayyum Abdul Razak

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Prakata

Sejarah warisan Islam telah memberikan impak yang cukup besar kepada perkembangan dunia hari ini. Ia bukan sahaja memberi sumbangan kepada aspek kerohanian malah turut menyumbang kepada aspek ekonomi, politik, pendidikan, sosial, kesenian, kebudayaan, sains dan teknologi. Perkembangan ini memperlihatkan bahawa pentingnya ketamadunan ilmu kepada ketamadunan dunia. Perkara ini selaras dengan tuntutan al-Quran yang menyatakan dengan jelas bahawa Allah SWT memuji sesiapa yang berusaha menuntut ilmu dan juga bertaqwa kepadaNya. Namun sejak akhir-akhir ini, sumbangan hasil pensejarahan Islam sering dipandang sepi oleh generasi muda. Sejarah warisan Islam tidak lagi dijadikan panduan dan iktibar dalam melebarkan ketamadunan ilmu Islam. Mereka lebih tertumpu kepada ketamadunan Barat yang dikatakan ‘kaya’ dengan khazanah ilmu. Sedangkan kemajuan hari ini seharusnya berlandaskan kepada ketamadunan Islam.

Penelitian atau pengkajian mengenai warisan Islam perlu direncanakan sebagai ketamadunan dunia. Idea-idea baru mengenai sejarah warisan Islam perlu diketengahkan, Oleh yang demikian, menerusi *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015)* dilihat akan dapat membantu kepada perkembangan produksi seterusnya menjana idea-idea baru khususnya untuk memperkayakan kajian dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam kepada masyarakat. Dengan penganjuran seminar ini secara tidak langsung membantu untuk menjalinkan hubungan antara para sarjana dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam. Ini adalah satu cabaran dan membuka peluang baru untuk membina satu perpaduan intelektual merentas sempadan dunia.

Buku ini merupakan kompilasi diskusi ilmu antara para ilmuwan yang terlibat secara langsung dalam pembentangan kertas kerja mereka dalam *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015)* daripada pelbagai platform ilmu Islam antaranya Kesenian, Ketamadunan, Komunikasi, Pendidikan, Kewangan, Sains dan Teknologi dan lain-lain lagi. Semoga curahan ilmu melalui penulisan ini mampu memberi sumbangan dalam menambah khazanah ilmu Islam kepada masyarakat.

Editor,

1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015),

Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari,

UiTM Melaka.

Kata Aluan Rektor UiTM Melaka

Dengan Nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah Lagi Maha Pengasih
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Segala puji bagi Allah, Tuhan seru sekalian alam, dengan limpah kurniaNya serta keizinanNya, kejayaan penganjuran *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference 2015* yang berlangsung di Hotel Mahkota Melaka pada 11-12 November 2015, telah menghasilkan banyak kertas kerja yang amat bermutu. Justeru, buku ini mengumpulkan puluhan penulisan para ilmuan dan cendekiawan dari dalam dan luar negara untuk bacaan semua.

Pelbagai isu telah dikupas termasuklah perihal seni Islam, budaya, politik, gendar, pendidikan, sejarah, kemasyarakatan, sains dan teknologi, ekonomi, kewangan, falsafah, bahasa dan komunikasi, kedermawanan dan pengurusan. Pembaca juga akan mendapati buku ini memuatkan kajian-kajian yang komited melaksanakan usaha mengintegrasikan antara ilmu duniawi dan ukhrawi. Ini membuktikan kesegaran keilmuan tamadun Islam itu sendiri.

Semoga perkongsian ilmu ini dapat meningkatkan komitmen umat dalam memartabatkan perintah Ilahi dalam kehidupan duniawi sebagai jambatan ukhrawi. Sekaligus ia bakal memberi manfaat pada alam sejagat.

Pihak UiTM Melaka merakamkan setinggi-tinggi tahniah dan ucapan terima kasih atas segala sokongan dalam bentuk material, tenaga dan sebagainya dalam merialisasikan seminar ini. Buat semua penaja yang telah memberikan sumbangan kepada wacana ini, sekalung penghargaan diucapkan. Semoga seminar dwi tahunan ini akan terus diperkasakan demi mengangkat martabat umat melalui kecemerlangan tamadun Islam yang diakui telah terbukti diseluruh jagat.

Sekian, terima kasih. Wassalam

PROF. MADYA DR MOHD ADNAN BIN HASHIM

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SUSTAINABLE AND DIVERSE ISLAMIC ART: A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Abdul Attamimi¹
Majdi Faleh²

ABSTRACT

The legacy of Art in Islam is seen as an integral component of a whole civilization that extended from the far East to the far West. The Art of Islam largely contributed to both the spiritual and the material life of the artists and that of the citizens in the Islamic world. The intricate and complex Art of Islam, or what is called as Arabesque, is a representation of the apogee of a civilization that was once prosperous and creative. These same symbols also have a spiritual connotation as they symbolize the infinite creation of the universe. Added together, these initially simple, geometric patterns can be produced continuously to illustrate an unlimited image of the universe. Today, art continues to be produced freely in a global world dominated by universal values of environmental protection that Islam, among other schools of thought, came to promote. In the Quran, for instance, it is clearly stated that the excess of waste is not loved by Allah, and that each component of our environment is there for a specific reason. This paper discusses a cultural and social experiment that was started by Muslim students of the University of Western Australia (UWA). The inspiration is about creating Islamic art patterns and sculptures out of recyclable materials. This initiative revisits Islamic art in a contemporary one that transcends the classical ways of constructing art and engages with human values of environmental protection. Here our approach is to define how art can be historically reshaped engaging in a sustainable dialogue with religious values and cultural education.

Keywords: *Islamic art, sustainability, recycled, human global values.*

LEGACY OF SUSTAINABILITY IN ISLAM

Islam promotes a sustainable lifestyle (Uddin, 2003), one which is modest and non wasteful. Even those who are fortunate enough to be wealthy are discouraged from excessive spending on material goods and food that may end up as wasted resources. In line with this, the teachings of Islam heavily encourage humanity, being created with intelligence and reason, to take care of the Earth and maintain its natural beauty and purity.

A hadith mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) states: “Wherever you may be at the time of prayer, you may pray, for it (the Earth) is all a mosque.” As the mosque is regarded as a highly respectable and sacred place, then so should be the Earth. We are expected to treat it with love, respect and utmost care (Abdul-Matin & Ellison, 2010), as all things on Earth is part of the perfect creation made by Allah SWT (Matali, 2015). We believe that as Muslims who have “surrendered” ourselves to our faith, we have a responsibility and obligation to protect what Allah SWT has granted to us so generously.

The natural environment is highly regarded in Islam and people are urged to take proper care of it so as to preserve what God has given us (Abdul-Matin & Ellison, 2010). Not surprisingly, many people disregard or forget this and are too taken in by other aspects of life to realise the impact that they are making on our environment through everyday actions.

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Every living thing is able to contribute to the ecosystem in its own way, yet human beings consume that of which is given to us by nature almost instinctively and we turn it into waste regardless of whether we use it or not (ISRAA, 2013). In regards to waste minimization, there is a surah in the Qur'an that reads "...And do not be wasteful; indeed He (God) does not love the wasteful." (Qur'an, 6:141). According to the teachings of Islam, wasting excessively leads to a sense of arrogance and a lack of gratitude for what he or she has been given by Allah SWT. Using our resources wisely can bring about a renewed sense of appreciation for those that we do have, either in abundance or scarcity. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived a minimalist lifestyle, often repairing his clothes and shoes as needed, without wasting any materials (ISRAA, 2013).

Another example of how sustainability is encouraged in Islam is through water. It is an important element and often referred to in the Qur'an as a means to purify the self before prayers (wudhu) and how every living being is physically made from water, along with other elements of the Earth (Farooq & Ansari, 1983; Faruqui, 2003). Being such a highly precious element, we are encouraged not to waste it.

With the current state of our environment all around the world, the economic system is partially the reason as to how this came to be. People are so driven by financial gains and furthering their careers and status, that they tend to overlook or completely disregard the impact that their businesses are having on our Earth. The world has been seen as a gold mine of resources, to be used to our heart's content (even though in recent years we have realized that this is quite obviously untrue). In the Qur'an it states "Corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea because of what the hands of humans have wrought. This is in order that we give them a taste of the consequences of their misdeeds that perhaps they will return to the path of right guidance" (Qur'an 30:41). An Islamic scholar Imam Zaid Shakir goes on to interpret this verse as the environmental issues we have had over the past decades with harsh droughts, disappearing lands and intense natural disasters (Abdul-Matin & Ellison, 2010).

a) What are the guidelines to lead a life of sustainability in accordance to Islam?

Outlined in the Qur'an are some guidelines in regards to sustainability in Islam. The eight principles include Adl (Justice), Mizan (Balance), Wasat (Middleness), Rahmah (Mercy), Amanah (Trustworthiness), Tahara (Spiritual purity and physical cleanliness), Haq (Truthfulness and Rights), and Ilm Nafi (Significance of knowledge and science).

Adl (justice): As previously mentioned, the Qur'an implies that the Earth acts as a Mosque, and thus we should treat it with respect in such a way that is just and fair (adl). We have a responsibility as stewards of this planet, to maintain its natural beauty and function especially when human activities are making a harmful impact. The Earth is more commonly seen as a collection of resources for people to use for their own needs, without any consideration about polluting the air and water bodies. In recent decades, humanity has realized that the consequences of harming the environment can be catastrophic if it continues to go down the path that it is currently on. It is only when our existence and comfort is at risk do we begin to take responsibility for our actions, while others around the world (including animals and plantations) have felt the impact of this change.

Mizan (balance): This refers to how everything created by Allah in this universe exists in a harmonious state of balance. For example, the balance of night and day, which guides our crop growth, praying schedules and lifestyle. It is mentioned in the Qur'an, "And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up Balance of (Justice), in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall short not in the balance. It is He who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures..." (Ar-Rahman: 3:10). Appreciating this balance and working with it rather than against is a form of worship to the creations of Allah SWT.

Wasat (middleness): Refers to an optimal choice, whereby we choose to live and consume in moderation. Over consumption can be addictive, especially in the present world whereby we are constantly striving for more material goods and luxury items and foods. However, this excessive consumption more often than not, leads to more waste production, which is not always disposed of in the appropriate way. It can end up increasing the toxicity of our air, water bodies and eventually would partially end up inside our bodies. The extreme contrast is also discouraged, where by people live in a very primal state and do not make any use of their resources in an attempt to save it. Allah SWT has granted us resources which would make our lives easier and healthier, and we should not deny this opportunity. Therefore, being somewhere in the middle, living in moderation would be the optimal choice (wasat).

Rahmah (mercy): practising compassion (sensitivity towards other people's suffering) and mercifulness as humanely possible, not just to other human beings but to all creatures on this Earth (Engineer, 2001). This is one of the qualities that separate humankind from the rest of Allah SWT creations. We are encouraged to be sympathetic and empathetic in our actions, to give aid to those who are less fortunate, sick, widowed or mentally handicapped (Faruqui, 2003). Those most affected by economical and political conflicts are usually the ones who are less likely to make a living wage from the resources available to them. However, this also includes compassion and sympathy for nature and our environment. If it has been damaged by human activity or even by natural causes, those who are able to should act upon it to improve its condition and maintain the beauty of our world as given by Allah SWT. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would plant a new tree in place of one that has been cut down for whatever purpose, and so we should take this principle and apply it where we can, in order to act in an environmentally sustainable way (Abdul-Matin & Ellison, 2010).

Amanah (trustworthiness): Humanity has been entrusted (amanah) this Earth, which we are to protect, by Allah SWT. They are also given the ability to make ideal decisions to do this through their free thinking, knowledge, speech and wisdom. These decisions include that of which deal with the land and animals. Whether we choose the right decisions or the wrong ones, it is stated that we will be held accountable for the outcomes. Humankind is created by Allah SWT as the most highest and dignified beings in the universe, and we have all been entrusted to act as vicegerents who protect this Earth and treat it well. Unfortunately, the mass majorities of humans do not act in this regard and undermine the importance of themselves in this world as well as the importance of the environment. Many misunderstand this privilege as an opportunity to freely do as they please on this Earth that has been given to them. The pursuit of material and economical gains have caused humankind to push the environment to its limits, ultimately disrespecting the privilege given to them. It is heavily encouraged that we take care of not just one another, but the whole world around us.

Taharah (spiritual purity and physical cleanliness): Cleanliness is a major aspect of living life as a dedicated Muslim. The faith and belief (called the iman) of a person is to be based on cleanliness, whereby most spiritual acts first require a ritual cleansing of the body using water beforehand, so that the practicing people are in a state of purity, free from any contamination. This is how Muslims face and present themselves to Allah SWT, in their most presentable and clean conditions. Therefore humanity indeed has a special relationship with water, as it is an element that represents purity and cleanliness. Water is one of the essences of life in this universe, and yet humankind tends to overlook this significance and waste it excessively (Faruqui, 2003). The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) practices wudhu (the ablution ritual before prayers) in such a way that he minimizes wasting water. Fresh water scarcity is a real threat to humanity in the near future and so it is more important than ever to be cautious of how much water we use in our everyday lives.

Haq (truthfulness and rights): the maintenance of honesty in all dealings that gives full respect to the rights of other people, animal or plant. This is a major part of Islam that

discerns how we act towards each other and or environment. Animals and plants have the right to a healthy and happy life just as much as we do, therefore we are not to interfere with that unless there is some situation in which we require them as resources (as Allah SWT has granted to us), for example, for food or housing. All organisms in nature are not to be suffered for other reasons; it is not our right to inflict that on to them.

Ilm Nafi (significance of knowledge and science): this principle implies that all kinds of knowledge should be beneficial to others and passed on to future generations in order to aid them and guide their lives, especially in ever changing societies. This knowledge can include ways to live a life of sustainability.

All of the above forms the basis for our project and what it represents. Islam promotes the idea of preserving the environment and our available resources to the best of our ability, which is an idea that does not seem to be of primary concern in today's artistic production. However, our direction comes to suggest a new approach for conceiving responsible art that uses the least resources possible, utilizing recyclable materials that we would usually throw away without thinking twice.

In regards to existing Islamic artwork that has an intentional green and sustainable approach; it is yet to be considered a common field. An example from Indonesia is traditional artist Wahyudi Susanto, who uses pieces of egg shells to create a variety of artwork, some of which is in the form of Islamic calligraphy (Rueters, 2012).

THE ART OF ISLAM

With the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the Muslim civilization and its heritage started to spread out from Mecca, the birth place of the Muslim faith to the far west (*Al-Andalus*) and then to the far east (Indonesia and China). Throughout centuries of cultural and scientific production and prosperity, the civilization of Islam maintained strong roots and justified its presence in the world through cultural prosperity and creativity. The arts of Islam testify the cultural achievements and the breadth of Islam as a universal way of thinking. Architecture, a science and an art, continues to testify and reveal the power and breadth of Islam (Grube & Michell, 1978). Grube and Michell (1978) also suggested that the varied culture of Islam was expressed through a variety of architectural styles, thus reflecting different disciplines including theology, commerce, mysticism, and technology among other fields.

The art of Islam is an expression of the evolving culture, religion, and the technological progress that societies have reached. Islamic art is not only a two-dimensional form of artistic expression but also an encompassing art form revealed through architecture. The diverse art expressions and forms are a revelation of the unity of the religion as well as the diversity of its followers and its historical and diverse roots and inspirations. Unity and diversity are at the heart of the tradition of the art of Islam.

The History of Islamic art in the context of Islamic civilization

Historically, the art of Islam reflects the image of diversity both in space and time. This diversity somehow reveals the various roots of the religion and the civilization of Islam. The religion of Islam, for instance, is a concept or a way of life that includes a variety of political, social, and religious organisms, and it covers wide geographical areas and historical periods (Gibb, 1962). To define the wide geographical scope of Islamic art and culture, Blair and Bloom (2003) explain Islamic art as follows: "Therefore encompasses much, if not most, of the art produced over fourteen centuries in the "Islamic lands," usually defined as the arid belt covering much of West Asia but stretching from the Atlantic coast of North Africa and Spain on the west to the steppes of Central Asia and the Indian Ocean on the east. These were the lands where Islam spread during the initial conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. Other regions where Islam flourished in later centuries, such as tropical Africa, eastern Europe, southern Russia, western China, northern India, and southeast Asia, are marginalized

by this definition and thereby treated as peripheral to the main story, even though they have huge, and some majority, Muslim populations. Indonesia, for example, now has more Muslims (almost 200 million) than all the traditional Arab countries combined” (p. 152). One might think that the art of Islam evolved as a purely hegemonic art form to connect all the nations where the religion expanded. However, this vision does not take into account the diverse contexts and places where Islam evolved.

On Islam, Gibb (1962) also explains that “in different regions and epochs it has presented differing features under the impact of and in response to local geographical, social and political forces” (p. 3). Islam was closely evolving as a unifying yet diverse faith. It was even considered as a way of life that helps to organize people’s lives. A common and “easily recognizable Islamic stamp” (Gibb, 1962, p. 3) was unifying the nations where the religion evolved. The progress of Islamic culture, as a spiritually oriented culture, was reflected in many aspects of the lives of its people including the arts. One might attempt to discover how uniting but diverse this form of art is. In a way, the art of Islam came to accommodate different groups of people who were spiritually following the same religious pattern of the one and only God, but whose cultural differences would stand out.

What is the art of Islam?

The concept of Islamic art is contentious among scholars and researchers on the Middle East and the Islamic world. While the historic and geographic evolution of this art has been expanding quickly both in time and space, this form of art remained constantly open to preceding cultures. Ruiz (2010) explains that in the nineteenth century the new way of life and religion of Islam generated a new name for the art of the Muslim world known as Islamic art. Historically, as the Arab armies conquered different lands, a “cultural melting pot nourished a newly emerging society that had not yet defined an art of its own. In the genesis of Islamic art, the influences were Byzantine as well as Persian and even Greco-Roman, but they were readjusted and even reinvented by the artists of the Arab-Muslim world, to fit the transformations of society” (Ruiz, 2010, p. 178). As the artistic creations were developing, the civilization of Islam chose to understand, analyze, interpret and create its specific art inspired from previous models. Somehow, it chose to understand and interpret its surrounding environments without compromising on creativity and originality.

The Art of Islam conveys a broad and a more inclusive geographical and historical scope. In a way, this appellation helps us to avoid the somehow voided debate over the Islamic and the non-Islamic that is encountered in the global and biased world. Islamic art is an exteriorization of the civilization of Islam reflecting the inner dimensions of such a civilization (Burckhardt, 2009). Burckhardt (2009) explains that beauty is at the heart of this art, as in every art, though this same beautification has a double dimension in Islamic art as it is related to the worldly and material beauty as well as to the divine quality of the universe. Nasr (1987) as cited in Oweis (2002) suggests that Islamic art is the result of unity in the plane of multiplication. Therefore, there is a strong connection between this form of art and the spirituality generated by this religion (Oweis, 2002). Several visual elements connect the art of Islam from East to West making it a visually distinctive art form. That includes Arabic calligraphy, arabesque, spiraling tendrils, floral and vegetal patterns, and geometric patterns (Oweis, 2002; Sutton, 2007). The art of Islam is not necessarily a religious art only as it covers different types of buildings and surfaces ranging from religious institutions to secular institutions. The abstraction of forms, shapes, and natural elements is a recurring and constituent element of this art form. For the purpose of this research, we will primarily focus on the Arabesque as a form of diverse yet unifying art.

The Arabesque as an expression of a diverse yet unifying art

“The use of geometric patterns has been another unifying factor in Islamic art and architecture. Despite the large geographic area that makes up the Islamic world, with its various ethnicities, cultures, environments, languages, and artistic traditions, Islamic art remains united in its use of geometrical patterns. A number of visual features, principles, or characteristic elements are contributing factors to the unity of Islamic art. These principles govern the elements in decorations and ornaments in Islamic art and architecture and are found especially in the use of geometrical patterns” (Oweis, 2002, p. 22). The use of geometric patterns, even differently, remained as the unifying factor between artists and people across this culture. Geometry played a role of a unifying factor as it connects diverse Muslim groups and others under similar rules and ways of life.

El-Said and Parman (1976) as cited in Oweis (2002) emphasize on the principle of unity in Islamic geometry by explaining that geometry is used in the art and architecture of Islam as a unifying element despite the variety of materials, shapes, and used vocabulary. The geometric patterns are essentially based on abstract shapes and forms, which evolve gradually from a basic form to a more complex unit. The complex unit, then, gradually evolves into a much more complex and infinite addition of identical patterns. This unlimited patterning is a reflection on the infinite universe created by an infinite creator, Allah. The gradual construction of an Islamic pattern is an image of the gradual evolution or construction of the universe, a very material process yet more spiritual than any other process.

Sutton (2007) explains that the structure of Islamic geometry is harmonious as it seeks to diversify its meanings while remaining unified. It is an art that focuses on “the harmonic and symmetrical subdivision of the plane giving rise to intricately interwoven designs that speak of infinity and the omnipresent center; and idealized plant form or arabesque, spiraling tendrils, leaves, buds and flowers embodying organic life and rhythm” (Sutton, 2007, p. 1). The variety of forms and shapes are added to the ensemble forming a dynamic shape that attenuates the abstraction of the overall element. This abstraction of the shapes is based on the process of evolution, whereby geometric forms evolve gradually. Sutton (2007) explains the process of unfolding a form from a point. A point is a dimensionless element in space, that can be extend into a line, and the line becomes a circle by turning its span; the circle then intercepts another circle passing through its center, and other circles are place at each intersection to form a complex geometric and infinite shape. Basic elements are then at the heart of the construction of more complex and infinite shapes (Oweis, 2002; Sutton, 2007). This idea of the evolution and progression is again at the heart of the evolution of the universe. The process happens gradually and unites many complex elements to form the infinite geometry and to connect people. Spirituality is at the heart of the complexity and the repetition of patterns.

The spiritual dimension of sacred Art in Islam

Despite all the variations of Arabesque’s patterns across the Islamic world, one might notice that there is a unifying factor that links all these art forms. Whether in the mosque of Cordoba or in the Blue Mosque of Istanbul, one might notice that this art form is a spiritual and unifying art. Nasr (1987) explains that “one feels oneself within the same artistic and spiritual universe despite all the local variations in materials, structural techniques, and the like” (p. 3). There is a one and unifying factor that spiritually connects people and worshippers to this universe of variations, thus creating a sense of strong unity within the diversity.

Both the sacred art of Islam and Islamic art in general, secular or sacred, is a result of the interaction between the worshiping of the only and one God, Allah, as explained in the Quran and the spiritual contemplation that this art generates (Nasr, 1987). This interaction between the sacred and the geometric is a very strong relationship that seeks to connect the interiority of spirituality with that of the actual shape. Nasr (1987) explains that “the causal

relation between the Islamic revelation and Islamic art, moreover, is borne out by the organic rapport between this art and Islamic worship, between the contemplation nature of God as recommended in the Quran and the contemplative nature of this art, between the remembrance of God (*dhikrallah*) which is the final goal of all Islamic worship, and the role played by Islamic art of both a plastic and sonoral nature in the life of individual Muslims and the community or *al-ummah* as a whole” (p. 4). This art is very connected with shaping the form as well as with the sacred revelation, thus enhancing its spiritual dimension. Islamic art is an art that is made to express a spiritual message rather than a personal message. It is in a way a creative form of remembrance and enhancing the relationship with God. Traditionally, artist detach themselves from their artwork and aim for a much more holistic approach conveying a global and holistic dimension of the artistic expression. The Quran itself reflects the idea of the divine presence through natural elements including trees, plants, flowers, nature’s beauty, and the book itself was decorated with similar elements to emphasize on Allah’s divine and beautiful creation (Oweis, 2002).

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The concept of the project and the social experiment: ethnic and religious diversity inclusion, gender collaboration, generational interaction, and learning experiment



Figure 3: *Workshop Logo*, 2015, Graphic Design, © Majdi Faleh.



Figure 4: *Waste collection*, 2015, Digital Photography, © Majdi Faleh.

This project started as a collaboration between *MAJ_Art*, Majdi Faleh’s art practice, and *Faith Inspired*, presided by Alim Abdullahi, an active member in the Perth Muslim

community. *Faith Inspired* is a not-for profit campaign that aims to assist the communal development of young west-Australian Muslims. Islamic art, in general, can potentially convey spiritual and interactive messages about how to connect with the universe, as many forms of art can hope to achieve. Islam, as explained previously, is a faith or way of life that promotes the idea of preserving the environment and protecting its natural resources. This workshop introduces a new way of conceiving and perceiving Islamic art through waste recyclability and youth engagement. This approach is a relatively new approach in the field of Islamic art and it strongly connects with the peaceful, spiritual, and creative message of Islam. Beyond how the biased media describes Islam post 9/11 atrocities, this project comes to encourage a new way of thinking the environment, society, as well as art. This is especially relevant to the present time, where hundreds of organizations and millions of people around the world are choosing to go ‘green’, and invest in a lifestyle that uses clean energy and is non wasteful. This has been brought about by the growing concern that the harm we have done to our Earth (carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide emissions, chlorofluorocarbon emissions, oil spills, waste accumulation on land as well as in water, and much more) which has caused harm to animal species and their habitats, depleted our resources, rising sea levels (a part of the controversial phenomenon known as global warming) and difficult natural disaster control. By bringing forth this project into the public and initiating discussions, we will be able to show a less explored and less well known side of Islam, whereby it teaches and encourages actions which are very relevant to our environmental issues today.

Green+Diverse Islamic Art is a potential project that is helping to explore Islamic patterns using recyclable materials. The project started in June 2015 and is planned to be running for at least 6 months or for one year. The team members are from different fields of study, age groups, genders, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and mostly Muslims but involved are also those who are from other diverse communities and faiths. Young children have also been volunteering to help design these different artworks. To date, one exhibition has been held at the *University of Western Australia (UWA)* during an Iftar event with over 400 attendants. Group members Abdul Attamimi, Indonesian Australian, and Majdi Faleh are currently working on documenting the whole process of the workshop through writing and publications. Later on, and at a more advanced stage, the art works will be exhibited and auctioned and the revenues will support humanitarian and educational causes in countries such as Palestine, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Somalia, and Pakistan, among other countries as well.



Figure 5: *Islamic Art and Passion*, 2015, Digital Photography, © Mohsen Chaudhry.

The methods of fabricating “*Green Islamic Art*”: the approach and the artworks description: collect, save, reuse, create, publish, exhibit [RE]cycle

As technology and consumption become standards of modern life, waste management is a growing challenge that faces different communities around the world. “Waste management is a worldwide problem in poor and rich cities alike. Managing waste in a socially and environmentally acceptable manner is one of the key challenges of the 21st century. We are all aware of the growing waste problem that is literally choking the world we live in today. While the growing waste problem is a popular subject in the media, which regularly reports on “garbage crises”, “environmental pollution” and “landfills”, many people

do not think about waste after disposing of it from their homes. Thus, individuals have very little awareness of where their waste ends up” (Jayasinghe, 2013, p. 1). The global political status of waste management is alarming as waste is increasingly invading the urban and rural areas. The number of people is also increasing around the globe as it is reaching its peak in the next decades. Waste management and art is a holistic approach to how art can serve the society, bridge the gap between people, and create a new attitude of waste management.

The ultimate goals of the creative project: conferences and publications (expanding the scholarly writings on Islamic art), workshops, traveling exhibitions, public performances, interactivity in the Islamic context



Figure 6: *Artworks Exhibition 1*, 2015, Digital Photography, © Majdi Faleh

The workshop earned extensive feedback and appreciation from the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Perth, Western Australia; as well as from students at the university of Western Australia. We are pleased to continue this project with students, professionals, and children from Muslim backgrounds and non-Muslim backgrounds. Workshops, traveling exhibitions, public installations, and most importantly publications are the methods currently being used to develop this entrepreneurial and not for profit creative idea. These workshops could be held several times a year, open to anyone who would like to participate and contribute to this project. One of the reasons we allow an openness to this project is that it breaks down any barriers and walls that could hinder collaborations and discussions, especially between people of different backgrounds and faiths. A potential side result could be the mutual understanding between people of different backgrounds, and an appreciation of each other. In Islam, the legitimacy of other spiritual beliefs are recognized and respected, and it is encouraged for us to focus on each other’s similarities as a means to bring communities together, rather than focusing and on the differences and pushing each other away (Abdul-Matin & Ellison, 2010). This is well represented by this project, as many backgrounds have worked together for a similar goal and cause. It is for this reason, among others, why we encourage those of different religious backgrounds to participate, as the true essence of the project, though projected from an Islamic point of view originally, can be understood and appreciated by everyone; that is, to not be wasteful with our resources and to take care of our environment.

The artwork from this project could be expanded beyond what we have started with. As we collect more recyclable material and extend our options, we will be able to create more diverse artwork that can instigate more awareness and discussion, especially if the pieces have a large impact. Collaborations with prominent organizations are a possible venture, whereby we could create pieces for institutes such as Greenpeace Australia Pacific, exhibiting or even making a presentation at their events and fundraisers. The potential for partnerships is vast, as the *Green+Diverse Islamic Art* project has two points of attraction, which is from the cultural perspective and from the environmental perspective.

The project helped the participants to gain more knowledge about the structure and essence of Islamic art. It also helped to raise awareness about the reuse of waste to design art. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon Him, said in hadith Bukhari & Muslim that “All Muslims are like the component part of a foundation, each strengthening the other; in such a way they support each other” (Suhrawardy, 2010). In the long run, *Green+Diverse Islamic Art* is a project that aims to continue running and expanding in Australia and the world to promote a global idea of conceiving art while responding to the global needs of people, communities and the environment. This project has the potential to function as a prominent not for profit enterprise in an effort to reduce waste around Perth and to enhance creative thinking while embracing cultural diversity and heritage differently.

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