

IMAGE IN ISLAM AND ISLAMIC VISUAL ART

**A Theoretical Study with Particular Reference
To Recent Art Education in Saudi Arabia**

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**Salem Al-Gheithy
School of Education**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to highlight the attitude of Islam towards image in artwork, especially in relation to modern art education trends in Muslim societies. For it must be recognised that, even though art and image are difficult to define, and have positive and negative aspects, image representation has significant educational value for representing and explaining many complex issues and viewpoints. At the same time, there is great danger in relying on, one kind of image representation as a source of artistic truth. This has, indeed, been a problem for art educators since the time of Plato.

Without proper training in the theory of art and art traditions, it is difficult for art educators to recognize the usefulness of the image. However, in recent years, rich sources of information on all aspects of art have become available and they must be put to good use. Indeed, it must be realized that image is one of the most important issues in art education in Muslim countries, especially at a time when visual images have taken over from other traditional means of communication, such as writing and speech.

This research is motivated by the fact that there is a serious problem associated with image representation, in Muslim cultures, especially when the Western art aesthetic is introduced into art education. As a result, there arises an ideological conflict in art education. In some Muslim societies, the problem of image may become caught up in religious debate, which diverts attention away from the central issue of defining the Islamic art aesthetic and designing art education courses, which take this into account.

Most studies, so far in relation to this question, have only considered image from a theological point of view, and attempted to show the position of Islam with regard to visual figurative art, overlooking the basic fact that Islamic art operates on a different artistic premise than that of Western art.

This study attempts to explain why figurative art has never been a dominant artistic medium in Islamic culture and shows how script instead became the central art aesthetic. However, as cultural exchange took place between the West and the East, the Western aesthetic of the figure and image representation became the main focus of art education, in an education system imported from the West. This situation has created difficulties in that many Muslim countries already have a strong local art tradition, which has regrettably become sidelined in favour of Western art theories and practices in art education.

The study aims to set figurative painting in its original aesthetic and cultural context and suggest a way in which representational art could be included as one important element in the art world of Muslim countries today. Therefore, the art experience associated with figurative painting should be carefully considered for inclusion in the art curriculum of Muslim schools, especially in relation to the art education programme of Saudi Arabia, which is the central focus of this study.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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DEDICATION

To my sincere wife Seham and all my lovely daughters, Demah, Rayah , Srrah,
Sufyana.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been a common tradition for every Ph. D thesis to include a statement of acknowledgement. I did not wish to write just a formal statement but the idea encouraged me to think of my real source of support. It is very clear to me that no one can achieve any good work without the help of God. It is impossible to work when we do not have the health and not to mention the help of all nice people especially our families and important individuals in our life.

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TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE STUDY

Representation of Image or Image-making

This refers to works of art, particularly paintings that depict living creatures, especially human or animal figures.

Islamic Attitude

This refers to the laws, principles and values taught in Islam which, influence the Muslim response to visual images. In the context of this study, it is meant to indicate the content of written sources, particularly those that provide visual stimuli to artists or directly influence art practice, in general, and visual image making, in particular.

Islamic Art

The concept has a broad meaning, but here it refers specifically to a work of art of distinct visual form and function, which belongs to a particular period of Muslim culture and history. The term has been coined by Western art historians, who have also used other synonymous terms, such as Muslim, Muhammadan, Moorish and Saracenic art. (Grabar, 1973) Islamic art has been widely used even now by Muslims, but some outstanding art historians are in disagreement about the interpretation of such a term. Grabar and Ettinghausen (1987) have substantially contributed to the history of Islamic art but they have questioned the definition of the term and believe that Islamic art was not solely created by nor belonged exclusively to the Muslims. Grabar and Ettinghausen define Islamic art in terms of its visual form in relation to the art of other religions. According to Grabar (1973), Islamic art refers to an art form, which is completely different from the art of the

Christian or Buddhist religions. He distinguished Islamic art in term of Arabic script as a major element of ornamentation.

Early Muslim scholars and art historians were not in the habit of using the term Islamic whether in relation to art or to other disciplines. See the major work of the Andalusian Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who is considered the founder of sociology and modern historiography. (Hofmann, 1993). It is only in modern times that Muslim scholars have adopted the term. (Bloom and Blair, 1997).

For the purpose of this study, the term Islamic Art has been used since it is widely adopted and has become familiar to art students.

Art Education or Visual Art Education

Art education refers to all activities that endeavour to develop the artistic and creative skills of an individual, using all forms of art to enhance his/her total development. Visual art education has the same objective but it is exclusively limited to the plastic arts. (Taylor, 1992).

Hadith

The attributed proclamations of the Prophet's which are considered by Muslims to be a source of religious doctrine second to the Qur'an.

Calligraphy or Graphic form of Arabic Script

This has been defined as "the art of beautiful handwriting". In this study, the term denotes one of the primary forms of Islamic art that has influenced other visual arts. In Islamic art, calligraphy has an importance equivalent to that of painting in Western art, particularly figurative painting.

Painting

When used in an Islamic context, this term refers to the wider practice of ornamentation in Islamic art, rather than simply the practice of painting pictures.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent times in some Muslim countries, image representation has increasingly become one of the sensitive problems affecting the teaching of art especially in relation to art education programmes in schools. This state of affairs has arisen since Western art trends and Western art education was introduced into contemporary Islamic culture in the 1940's and 50's. The problem of image is complex and has arisen as a result of the dichotomy between two very different art forms and modes of expression. Indeed, the visual system of Islamic art is totally different from that of Western art.

In the world of Islam, religious and secular spheres of life are intimately connected. As a consequence of this integration of the spiritual and secular world, religion and art are closely bound up together which is not always the case in the West. The art of Islamic Culture is not necessarily perceived as being regulated by religious law, it is rather oriented by the world view of Islam and committed to serve the needs of the society and applied to everyday life. It is for this reason that the problem of image should be studied in relation to the social function of art and the organic link or, more precisely, the active relationship that often exists between Islam and visual art.

Although the problem of image has been addressed in recent times, in the recent art culture of the Muslim world, it has a different orientation in each Muslim country but it is usually addressed in the area of Modern art education literature. There is quite limited research work in such areas especially with regard to the view of Islam and the problem of painting associated with modern art trends and art education in Muslim countries. In Saudi Arabia, which is the subject of this study,

the problem of image is often discussed with other questions along with the problems of art education. The studies of the question in most Muslim countries often appear in published articles in art magazines and periodicals of art education. In Saudi Arabia in particular, the question has been mainly reviewed in some limited research theses. However none of the published studies has approached the question of image in relation to the visual language and formation of Islamic art history. This study is trying to suggest a new approach to the attitude of Islam towards art and image representation particularly in relation to the recent art trends and education. This thesis examines two separate areas; it firstly looks at the place of image in the worldview of Islamic art, then it looks at the perspective of representational art in modern art education especially in the theory of children's art.

GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The issue of the representation of the image has been a constant theme in visual art history and a subject for dispute in both secular and religious art. As a result, all cultures and civilizations have displayed different attitudes towards representing the image. In the West, Plato and Socrates, with their secular orientation and belief in rational philosophy, both expressed similar views and condemned image representation and art itself since they believed that they both misrepresented the truth and disturbed the order of the soul (Waugh, 1986; Douzinas, 1996). Even though their ideas were formulated many centuries ago and in some respects in different cultural contexts, their thoughts still exert an influence on art and art practice today, and it could be argued that, in Muslim cultures, the Qur'an has a similar role to play in attitudes towards art.

In the early 20th century, the forms of Islamic Art received a great deal of attention from Western scholars and art academics (Nasr, 1987). It is possible that this interest was promoted by the fact that the type of art produced or influenced by Islamic Culture was less concerned with figurative images. Thus the style was exotic and different in its imagery, form and function compared to the art of other cultures, particularly Western art. Indeed, the traditional art of Islamic culture is utilitarian and was not created as a purely aesthetic or expressive form of art. The aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of Islamic Art were often integrated to produce a visual form drawing on abstract elements mainly based on floral and geometrical designs. Art products were integrated into all activities and aspects of daily life in Islamic culture, yet it has maintained a distinctive character over a wide range of physical and socio-cultural environments.

In 1928, Thomas Arnold published his book, *Painting in Islam*, which was important as the first Western scholarly attempt to portray, in any great detail, the attitude of Islam towards representational painting and the use of the image specifically in artwork. For this purpose, he examined the Qur'an and the Prophet's *Hadith*, since these sources contain elements that deal with the representation of the visual image. This study is still very influential in the art world of Islam and even today is still considered a classic reference work for modern students of Islamic art.

Several decades later, two prominent critics of Islamic art, Richard Ettinghausen (1962) and Oleg Grabar (1973) further developed Arnold's outlook, placing a different emphasis on certain factors and views that were closely associated with the development of visual art in early Muslim culture. They also examined many Muslim written sources and art evidence, paying special attention to the Qur'an

and the *Hadith* texts. Ettinghausen's and Grabar's conclusions were not dissimilar to Arnold's early views. They both stated, by means of different arguments and perspectives, that Islam had no initial influence on the representation of the image in the universal visual art form often associated with the early Muslim Culture and civilization. This view is held by many students and critics of art in the modern art world. According to both Ettinghausen and Grabar, Islam only provided general views about image which have since been modified and adopted by various theologians and clerics throughout the ages. To a large extent, they felt that restrictions on the use of the image was limited to the portrayal of living creatures, particularly human beings, and the range of this restriction was limited to ritual practice and to images associated with religion and places of worship.

The Koran gives no direct support for such an assumption. Even in its most specific pronouncement it speaks out only against certain heathen practices, among them the use of images, apparently of a religious nature and hence regarded as idols (Ettinghausen, 1962, p. 12).

Both of these critics produced their own explanation for the absence of representational painting in Muslim culture, but neither of them were convinced that Islam had formative views which influenced the use of image in everyday and secular art. Not only do Ettinghausen and Grabar follow Arnold's general line of thought and viewpoint, their work represents the intellectual norms and beliefs of mainstream Western art critics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Two notable Western art critics, who have held distinct opinions about Islamic art in the West, were Herbert Read (1951) and E.H. Gombrich (1992). Both of them do not have a major interest in Islamic art but hold distinct opinions on the subject. For example, Read and Gombrich have made general comments when they have discussed Islamic art in the context of other art forms. They have remarked how Islam restricts the representation of the image, and as a result other art forms have

borrowed and developed some early abstract images largely based on geometrical design. These views are not only misleading but they also invoke controversial religious debate, which adds more complexity to the issue. They do not provide a clear aesthetic and technical approach to the question of the image.

It is noticeable that most of the current influential studies, particularly Ettinghausen and Grabar have not sufficiently explored Islamic sources to reveal the aesthetic view of early Muslims. (Gonzalez, 2001; Dagher, 1999). At the same time they have not explained the relevance of these sources to the views and attitudes of Muslim artists towards image. They have not incorporated any study of Muslim scholars, even those who have an interest in art or who are familiar with the nature of art. Ettinghausen has ignored or given little attention to the aesthetic and visual content, which is very relevant to the core of the study being investigated. It is therefore hard to base the aesthetic approach to the question of image representation with regard to the practice of art and visual expression on previous work in this field.

Image is an aesthetic and technical visual phenomenon, unlikely to unfold through the interpretation of religious sources taken out of context from the aesthetic values and function of art with respect to the spiritual and social environments. Religious views, whether they are supportive or critical, are unlikely to determine the visual form of art, since this is an aesthetic and technical business in the hands of the artist. This view has been reflected in many different recent studies in so far as they indicated a general objective approach to Islamic imagery and artistic form.

In 1982, Archibald Walls explored through fieldwork the mathematical formula underlying the geometrical design of the stone *Mumbar* in one of Cairo's medieval mosques. He demonstrated that the visual form of Islamic art follows symmetrical and mathematical logic and this reflects the intellectual interests of the artists and

craftsmen who built the Mosque.Walls, criticised those who still evaluate Islamic art according to Western art values, for he believed that Islamic visual form could be better understood by looking at it as a form of symmetry and he doubted whether Islamic art form could be approached through a limited historical and geographical perspective.

In 1961 Gombrich states in his book, *The Story of Art*, that the Islamic form of art has been deeply influenced by the Arab scientific and aesthetic approach. Art can reflect the great Arab interest in mathematics and astronomy within the context of the aesthetic content of Arab language. Gombrich does not elaborate much and has not applied the approach to image extensively, but his views seem to shed light on the question.

Ernst Grube (1967), also recognized the aesthetic features of Islamic art and mentioned Arabic script as an important element that made Islamic forms of art distinctive. He states that the written content of the Arabic language has reduced the influence of external racial and political factors.

Labelle Prussin's study in 1994 was the first fieldwork to propose a radical and aesthetic approach to the question of the representation of the image within Islam's aesthetic perspective. Based on data collected from the field, she indicated that the oral and visual content of Arabic script is the main source of all visual and aesthetic creation among the Muslim peoples in the Sahara (Bravmann, 1995). She recognized the aesthetic and intellectual value of Arabic script as the origin of many abstract forms of imagery. However, she limited her approach to an exploration of the visual expression of the architectural form of recent Islamic culture in Western Sahara.

On 25th-27th April 1996 at New York's Hofstra University, an international conference and exhibition was held entitled "*Inscription as Art in the World of Islam*". Scholars from many countries attended and contributed to the event, which indicated a growing awareness of the importance of Arabic calligraphy in the development of the visual style in Islamic art.

All of this shows a continuing interest in Arabic script as a central aesthetic form and indeed the works of contemporary Muslim artists, who have followed Western art styles, are still being influenced by the form of Arabic letters, and there are recent trends, which attempt to reconcile the Arabic visual form with contemporary Western art (Rahim, 1996).

Areas of Interest and Focus of the Research Question

The traditional art of Islamic Culture is based on a different visual system to that of the West and still has great influence in shaping the aesthetic mode and attitudes towards art and modern art education in Muslim societies. The representation of the image has increasingly become a source of interest and concern to Muslim art academics and leading figures in the teaching of art. Teachers who work in Muslim countries or where there are Muslim communities, such as in the United Kingdom, encounter some difficulty in providing art activities for their students, especially when the activities involve representation of the human figure.

We find that the children are good at design and pattern work, and they have a fine sense of colour. There are sometimes problems over drawing especially the human form (Clement, 1994, p.12).

In response to the problem as it exists in the United Kingdom, Blackburne (1995) has published an article titled, 'Access to the Arts at KS1 for Muslim pupils.' He

invited teachers from the United Kingdom who work with Muslim student to adopt a broader global approach towards art education.

However, in Saudi Arabia, the issue of the image is one of the most sensitive and delicate problems affecting the teaching of art. It has therefore been of great concern to both teachers and administrators (Al-Amoud, 1985; Bajouda, 1993; Al-Doyhi, 1994 and Alyamy, 1995). This problem has received attention in the literature specifically concerned with art education mainly doctoral theses published by those working in the field. These reports say that the idea of having to represent living creatures has created a negative attitude towards art among students and the wider public. None of these studies approached the problem systematically in an historical and aesthetic sense. This study aims to fill some part of this gap.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study has two main objectives. Firstly, to develop an aesthetic approach to the issue of the representation of the image in the light of recent work on the problem. Secondly, to investigate the current cultural attitude towards representational art as it has been reflected in contemporary art education in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER TWO

THE QUESTION OF IMAGE AND ISLAMIC ART

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the question of figurative art and painting from the aesthetic Islamic point of view and not from the usual traditional perspective of theology or within the limited context of Western art history. Islam has a special source of material and often influences the visual language of expression. This trend is not often easy to recognise in the study of modern art history. There has always been an active interaction between Islam and art, which can only be seen with an objective art lens. Otherwise the observer may be confused about the attitude of Islam towards icons. The study of this question may get more complicated since Islam has been associated with a universal culture and a very rich art tradition, where the written word and abstract forms are the major element of expression. It is very important to make clear sense of this view in order to understand the active role and influence of Islam on the art world of Muslims, especially since the art of representation has become an influential universal art trend.

For various reasons, to do with the formation of Islamic art history, the question has to be very carefully discussed based on the contribution of western art writers, who have already formulated some notions to deal with the views and attitude of Islam towards painting. The first part of the thesis focuses on some of the most current views of the mainstream writers and their works, which have been specially devoted to formulate the normative notion of Islamic painting. The second part includes different art approaches to the issue in question, and concerns the work of those radical individual art writers who focus on the source of interaction between Islam and art. This radical approach values Islamic art in its own right without

direct reference to Western art history trend, but rather as a unique art that stands individually.

The question of figurative image is very significant to answer as one of the main objectives of this study, in order to understand the aesthetic values and functions of representational painting in context to the visual language and mode of expression in Islamic art. With this approach there may be many ways of finding a practical solution to deal with the problem of image representation associated with the recent modern art trends and art education in Muslim culture.

It might be very useful in the discussion of this question, to look carefully to the history of Islamic art and studies, because the field of art history is a relatively modern area of interest. It started to take shape during the eighteen century (Brush, 1996). The first formal theory of art history was developed in Germany (Duro & Greenhalgh, 1993; Bakewell, 1988). The early theories and approach of art history were tied up with the new concept of cultural history of the eighteenth century. Visual art in particular, started to attract the attention of cultural historians with the view that painting and figurative art can provide sources of evidence and a broad window to the past, in order to reinterpret or reconstruct the history of distant societies and cultures. (Podro, 1991)

“Warburge in his published paper was concerned with precisely how images were used, what religious, political and psychological function they served...rather than giving primary concern to its overall stylistic character.”(Podro, 1991, P158)

The study of image in relation to social and cultural history is a complex issue. However, it has been very carefully analysed by Francis Haskell in his book *History and its Images*, winner of the Apollo Magazine Award, (1993). This comprehensive work is solely devoted to explaining the main interest and objective

of historians in the study of artwork, especially how figurative images and painting products are interpreted and used to visualise past cultures and their social and political histories.

Art history in academic terms is an extension of western secular intellectual thinking. Most of the major studies of art history reflect the values and views of art in Western culture (Blair and Bloom, 1994). Very recently some scholars have been aware of possible limitations with regard to the term Islamic art. Recent publications on Islamic art have raised questions about the use of the term Islamic art. The problem in using this term is that it reflects the secular art perspective of the nineteenth century (Prussin, 1986; Vernoit, 2000). In Muslim perspectives, history is a series of events which in no way affects the principle of Islam. It is for this reason that the study of Islamic art does not necessarily reflect the view of Muslims of their history and art culture. (Nasr, 1987).

From a modern academic perspective, the study of Islamic art form and work is based on certain approaches and art theories, which are basically developed with reference to the art of Western culture. There is no doubt that some of these approaches are alien to the art of Islamic world (Nasr, 1989)

“with few exceptions however, Western scholars have interpreted the material which they have dealt with in a way that is totally alien to the Islamic perspective. Art history grew up in nineteenth century Europe, especially Germany as *Kunstgeschichte*, in an ambience dominated completely by historicism and positivism where no reality existed beyond the historical, and where the sacred was denied if not ridiculed” (Nasr, 1989, Vol. 6 , No.2, P 4)

The study of Islamic art in the West was motivated by other reasons therefore, the objective of Islamic art studies and history was not always oriented to study and value the art of Islamic culture. The early study of Islamic art together with art history survey and excavation were conducted while some parts of Muslim lands were part of Western empires. In some contexts, the study of Islamic art and its

history were perhaps encouraged to project certain political views, racial and national identities. On the other hand, the study of Islamic art and cultural achievement was influenced by racial theory of the nineteenth century. The theory held that Indo-European races are considered superior to Semitic races such as Arabs who were incapable of progressing to higher level of cultural development. In some Islamic art studies, it has been suggested that Persia was the source of artistic achievement of Muslim art. (Vernoit, 2000)

Not every art approach or all the studies of Islamic art are helpful in defining and understanding Islamic interaction with art and in which sense it affects the role of image representation in artwork and visual expression. This point of departure makes it essential to try to focus on a practical approach to the question of image representation. The term Islamic painting in fact is modern and was coined with reference to Western art perspective. (Duro and Greenhalgh, 1993). Figurative image and painting representation as fine art form of expression, is new in relation to the traditional art of Muslim culture. Islamic art is based on a different visual art system. In fact, painting has created a crucial art problem in the early twentieth century, especially since Western art trends and art education have been introduced into the Muslim world.

The question of figurative art may be defined or explained in different ways in each Muslim country and subculture. Whatever the definitions of this art problem might be, it would be much better to understand and view it in the light of the fact that Western art and painting trends are alien to the aesthetic mode and art form of traditional Muslim cultures.

Islamic art in the traditional sense has been developed over thousands of years and like any traditional art is mainly oriented towards the application in daily life

Islamic art is closely associated with craft and the art produced often does not usually express and represent the personal view of an individual. In Western art there is big difference between what is considered fine art and art craft since the artists who try to produce their own original artwork are often considered higher in term of artistic values and aesthetic quality than craft art. In contrast, Muslims artists and craftsmen often worked together as team and produced art form and objects following some common convention. Muslim artists and craft men usually share some basic education and learn artistic skills by practice and through their art guild. The traditional art of Islamic culture is not necessarily produced for religious service but is the usually made for all applications of everyday life specially since the most art works of early Muslim have utility functions (Ali, 1996). The faith in Islam does not need visual images and special art materials as religious art in a Western sense. (Bahansi, 1995)

The original experience of Islamic art was not widely recorded in written sources. The limited references triggered the interest of art students trying to understand how the art was created and what the early Muslims thought of their art. The only source that can help in the study of Islamic art is the art artefact itself. However it is often analyzed with reference to Western art history trend and theories (Gray, 1968).

The term Islamic art has no precise meaning even in the most current literature and the latest art history publications. From a technical and aesthetic point of view, Islamic art refers to utilitarian art products and its visual form and design are based on geometrical pattern and the abstract form of Arabic script. The art of figurative painting is a major fine art form and very highly appreciated in Western culture

especially in a religious and secular art context. This view has great influence on the intellectual outlook of the mainstream Western art writers who usually study art forms of early Islamic culture in the context of religious and secular forms following the same art history studies and trends in the West. In the early twenties, Western art writers started to interpret the theological view of image in Islam with the objective of studying the context of representational painting in the art of early Islamic culture. Painting was not a major element in art of Islamic culture but a special style of miniature painting that developed in relation to Arabic script and the art of manuscript. Painting has different aesthetic values in relation to the practical function and visual form of Islamic art. This aspect of Islamic art still receives little attention especially with reference to the study of image in Islam and the values of painting in the art form of Muslim culture. Most mainstream studies as will be shown, mainly viewed the question of painting based on theological debate and historical context of art evolution.

Mainstream western art writers have devoted much work to the study of these theological views and pay little attention to the fact that Islam interacts with art at both the spiritual and intellectual level. There is an organic link between Islam and Arabic language since the Muslims considered the Qur'an literally the word of God and it was originally revealed in the Arabic tongue. Islam does not often influence the visual art culture of the Muslim through prescribed law and religious dogma. Rather the Qur'an's message and the Arabic language are bound together and have always played a major role in developing the qualitative geometrical form of Islamic art. This view has only been considered in a few works and studied by a minority of Western and Muslim writers who were often keen to recognize this unique aspect of Islamic art.

Image representation is a relatively new issue to be discussed in Western literature in relation to the study of Islamic art and culture. The question of representational art in Islam only started to be considered systematically in depth from the 19th century. Islamic art history was re-established first in Europe and then the United States during the last seventy years of the past century. The question of image since the early formation of Islamic art field has become a central and influential issue among art students in the West and later in the Muslim world.

The formal modern Muslim art historians and academics did not hold a special opinion about Islamic art that was different from the Western model (Ghulam, 1973; Nasr, 1989). In other words, they did not use a different approach in their outlook to the question of figurative art in Islam. (This point is brought to the attention in the recent updated scholarly collective work which was published with the title *Discovering Islamic art*, (2000). In this work, Stephen Vernoit has referred to the fact that most if not all, Muslim art academics of the previous past century were exposed to Western education and methods. In the early twentieth century and in some parts of the Muslim world like Egypt, the legitimacy of figurative representation was a central theme in the discourse of Islamic art. The question of image was raised by art historians and academics in that part of Muslim world. It was almost the same point in history when Western art trends and traditions were introduced into Egypt and other Muslims countries.

In Egypt, the late art historian Zaki Muhammad Hassan; (1908-57) studied the question of image representation. In his view there were theological restrictions that prevented the use of image since the beginning of Islam. The question was raised again by another scholar in Egypt at Fauad University, Ahmad Muhammad

Isa, who translated Maurice Dimand's "*A Handbook of Muhammadan Art*" into Arabic in 1944. Isa's detailed article on Islam and figurative image appeared in the journal of al-Azhar. In this article Isa tried to advocate the view of Muhammad Abduh, the late Arab reformer of Egypt (1849-1904). Abduh responded to many issues of his time such as the question of photography especially when the process of photographic image was invented and introduced into the Muslim world. He had argued that Islamic law allowed image representation in art work and from his view Islam did permit the making of figurative images (Vernoit, 2000). The arguments of Hassan and Isa were not based on a distinctive outlook on the question of image in the context of art tradition and history in Islamic culture. Rather both writers were following the example of Western art writers who had already focused on the theoretical debate to determine for themselves whether Islam forbade figurative art or not.

Many Western voices have contributed to the debate of image representation. Some writers attempted to find explanation in the teaching of Islam and the formation of art in Islamic culture. Only few studies have dealt with the question of image in much depth and with reference to the religious sources of Islam and the art products of Muslim culture (Grabar, 1973). One of these was Arnold who in 1920 studied the question of image from the standpoint of Islam, in his book *Painting in Islam*.

Creswell, an Islamic art historian, who spent most of his career studying Islamic art especially the architecture of the Islamic monuments of Syria and Egypt, published a paper "*The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam*" (Creswell, 1968), and the view of image in Islam appeared in *Discovering Islamic Art* (Vernoit, 2000).

The question of painting was also discussed in 1968 by the late Ettinghausen, in one of his early scholarly research papers titled "Painting in The Fatimid Period". Late in his academic career, in 1962, he again reviewed the question of image representation in his major book *Arab painting*. Furthermore, the recent academic and Islamic art historian Grabar, has contributed to the debate of image representation in Islam. In 1975, he devoted a very comprehensive chapter of his book to discuss the view of image in Islam as part of his influential work *The Formation of Islamic Art*. All these studies were of major interest in the question of image and appeared at quite different periods; however, they all seem to represent the mainstream views of Western writers. For this reason it is better to focus on the three following major studies with selective discussion of their main views. The first examined view, was of Arnold's, since his study was one of the early efforts that interpreted the question. The other two studies are Ettinghausen's book, *Arab Painting* and *The Formation of Islamic Art* by Grabar. These two authors have contributed to the studies and foundation of Islamic Art History in the United States.

Western Scholars and Islamic painting

Thomas Arnold was not an art academic nor a formal Islamic art historian but an orientalist scholar. He was a Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at London University. In his late career he started to write about the visual art of Muslim culture (Vernit, 2000). Arnold was the first western scholar of his time who accessed and examined some collections of Muslim manuscript paintings (Martinovitch, 1930; Vernoit, 2000). Arnold wrote several studies about Islamic Art but his major book, *Painting in Islam* first published in 1928, is the most influential. The study is one of the earliest and is considered the most comprehensive work of its kind, which endeavoured to reinterpret the legal view of

Islam and attitudes toward image representation, in the context of figurative art and the painting style of the manuscript.

Arnold started his study of Islamic painting with the discussion of the legal view of image representation in Islam. He did not however, consider Islam to influence visual image and language of expression at the aesthetic level. In his study Arnold overlooked the fact that image representation is an art question that is more relevantly studied with reference to the organic link and active interaction between Islam and visual art. He only made little reference to the role of Islam in developing the major Islamic art of calligraphy. In contrast, he made a concerted attempt to interpret the question of image in relation to the historical development of religious dogma and the evaluation of Islamic culture. It is for this reason, Arnold's study seems limited in the sense that he focused on the external factors. Generally it does not provide a practical explanation for the question concerned. Arnold's study is basically interested in the question of image and painting with the view that art reflects a pattern of change in the socio-religious and political history of early Islamic culture. This viewpoint will be discussed later in this work, the best point of departure is to focus on the basic argument of Arnold and his general approach to the question of image in Islam.

The main argument of Arnold is that painting art was an inferior craft in the traditional art of Muslim culture especially in relation to other artforms such as architecture and calligraphy. This view has to do with religious dogma of Islam and the influential role of economical and political factors. Islam did not rise with an original view about image representation or an explicit attitude against figurative painting and art. Later theologians formulated the view that figurative

painting art was forbidden by Islam. Early “primitive“ Muslim society did not appeal to visual art culture and there was no religious notion to regulate art. It is for these reasons figurative painting was not used in any ritual context and in religious places. Interest in art and figurative painting appeared in later stages of Islamic history with the growth of Islamic socio-religious and political culture, particularly, when Muslim rulers started to enjoy luxurious lifestyles where some of them developed a taste for figurative art and manuscript painting. Religious dogma was not always active especially in the context of secular art. Most painting was produced by sponsorship by the court and some painting works were made especially for princes who often disregarded the view of theologians. Here Arnold’s approach looks quite Orientalist, however it influenced most mainstream western writers.

There are some new efforts to review the contribution of Orientalists to the study of art in non-Western culture. The early approach of art history was associated with evolutionary theory and Marxist ideology (Chanda, 1993). However these perspectives, have been severally criticized in various literary views of the post modern art history trends, (Smith, Brett, Howell, Fisher and Araeen, 1991). For example, the notion “Primitive art” is no longer accepted as a definition of reassessment to value and study the art culture among other societies who have different beliefs such as African and native ethnic groups around the world. The title, *The Myth of Primitives: Perspectives on Art* is a collected work that represents some recent works of many art experts, who attempted to review the approach and orientation of art history studies in the West, and the motives that led some of the Orientalist writers to formulate the term “primitive art” mainly because some art traditions of other cultures did not fit in with western art criteria. In the same collection, many art writers have referred to the limitations of

Orientalists' views in relation to the art studies of non-Western civilization. The argument of Arnold is perhaps better seen in the light of Edward Said's work, (1995), which has influenced many modern art writers such as, Daniel Miller in his article on primitive art, where he touched on the way art is used by Orientalists to formulate certain images about the past culture and history of other civilizations (Pomian, 1994).

“As Said makes clear, one result of this is that in so far as the Occident actually deals with the Orient it assumes that reality to be an actual expression of the model it has constructed of it, and treats it accordingly” (Miller, 1991, p.58)

The argument of Arnold needs to be carefully examined with reference to his evidence and model of interpretation. It is important to see how strong and true his argument is when he divided Islamic manuscript painting into secular and religious work. From Arnold's viewpoint, Islam did not use painting like other religions, for example Christianity, but he referred to some selected examples of Islamic manuscript paintings, where their subject matters seemed to represent some Muslim religious views. On the other hand, he argued that private painting was art and often represents the leisure life of the Muslim court. He relied on three major sources of evidence to formulate his theory with support from the following materials:

a) The Religious Source

Arnold devoted a very comprehensive chapter discussing the attitude of Islamic theologians towards painting. In this chapter, he started with major religious sources especially the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet. He made few remarks about the universal art achievements of Muslims, which he preferred to call Muhammadan Art (Dimand, 1958). This term is not used by Muslims in the world of Islam as they do not use the Prophet's name and resent its use by others as a

term of identity or with reference to their faith and religious beliefs, (Said, 1995). By Arnold's definition the term Muhammadan Art seems to emphasize a new meaning, but still represents the same view associated with the common term Islamic art. According to him, Muhammadan Art "may well claim a place among the greatest achievements of man's artistic activity" (Arnold, 1965, p 1). At the same time, he indicated that Islam alone has refused to call in the aid of pictorial arts in support of religious view. Previous to this statement, Arnold commented on the nature of Islamic art as a point of departure to his argument. In his view, architecture is the major art form and expression of Islamic culture. On the other hand, calligraphy is the most honoured artwork that was highly developed by the creative talent of Muslim people themselves. These are the most important remarks Arnold made before he attempted to present art evidence for his original argument already outlined.

The Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet are the major source of Islamic faith teaching and legislation. Arnold looked to both views of the Qur'an and Hadith to answer whether Islam had originally forbidden image or not. He only studied the Qur'an and Hadith in terms of their normative views as a source of evidence. His model of interpretation did not focus on the role of the Qur'an in the spiritual and intellectual life of Muslims, neither did his interpretation of Islamic attitudes toward image include the influence of the Qur'an's verbal and written message on Muslim art forms and their aesthetic expression. Arnold considers the Qur'an one of the early documented sources of Islam law but to him it does not have any explicit view about art and image representation. There is no specific view in the Qur'an suggesting that the word of God forbids image representation in artwork.

"There is no specific mention of picture in the word of God, and the only verse (Qur.V. 92)—'O believer, wine and games of chance and statues and (divining) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork; avoid it!'—which theologians of a later generation

could quote in support of their condemnation of this art makes it clear that the real object of the prohibition was the avoidance of idolatry. The theological basis of condemnation of pictorial art must therefore be sought for elsewhere “ (Arnold, 1965, p 5)

On the other hand, Arnold argued that figurative image was not forbidden during the lifetime of the Prophet. He based his argument on some of the Prophet's Hadiths, but he questioned them in favor of his argument.

“There is little doubt that these utterances, placed in the mouth of the Prophet by later writers, give expression to an intolerant attitude towards figured art which Muhammad himself did not feel.” (Arnold, 1965, p.6)

On the hand he is of the view that early Islam dogma was influenced by some converted Muslim Jewish individuals. This view of Arnold has been adapted by other later art writers for example Oleg Grabar.

b) History and Literary Sources

Historical sources and literary accounts were Arnold's other sources used to support his proposition. He considered the objection of figurative art as the work of later Muslim theologians.

Arnold referred to historical narratives and accounts to view the attitude of the Prophet towards representational art after he examined the Hadith of the Prophet. He also referred to other historical references and used them as sources of evidence to define the view of Islam towards image especially in the early stages of Islamic history and before the formation of religious thought and written sources.

“..in view of the condemnation of such paintings by succeeding generations of Muslims, is the story that when, after his triumphal entry into Mecca, Muhammad went inside the Ka'bah, he ordered the pictures in it to be obliterated, but put his hand over a picture of Mary, with Jesus seated on her lap, that was painted on a pillar, and said, ‘Rub out all the pictures except these under my hands.’” (Arnold, 1965, p.7)

Other theoretical sources are Arabic and Islamic literary material such as poetry and legendary stories. In these materials Arnold referred to some art paintings that were assumed to be found and produced for Muslim rulers.

“Reference to pictures of any kind in this early period is so rare that the following description of the figured decoration of a tent is of special interest. It occurs in a panegyric which the famous poet, Mutanabbi, wrote in 947 to celebrate the victorious return of his patron ... from this description it is not clear whether the picture was painted on the canvas of the tent, or whether it had been woven into a curtain or worked in some form of embroidery” (Arnold, 1965, p.20- 21)

c) **Art Work And Excavation Evidence**

Arnold's final major source is the product of early Muslim work that had been collected and brought to the West such as the Qur'an and manuscript arts that often included very rich design and detailed painting work. The other source of art evidence is limited to some few excavated wall paintings. Only these limited sources of art evidence were available to Arnold when he formulated his ideas about the attitude of Islam and painting art.

His model of interpretation does not focus on the subject matter of painting in relation to the original art setting and cultural context. The original source of painting and aesthetic values seemed to be of secondary importance to Arnold. He was much concerned about the source of evidence in the artwork with connection to his main argument and views. He relied on the image and subject matters from selected paintings as a source of visual evidence. However, he made a few fundamental remarks about the original art context of Islamic painting since it often represents an integral part of the manuscript design and artwork. On the other hand, he was one of the early Western writers, who referred to the influence of Arabic writing on the painting technique and style. The late view is very important in understanding how Islam often interacts with art and influences the

language of expression and painting art. It is perhaps very useful to consider in some detail, the art evidence of Arnold and whether it is enough to accept his view without question.

As has been stated earlier, Arnold's argument is influenced by his own perspective of Islam, since he considered Islamic painting a product of secular art. This view not only dictated by the way he selected and interpreted art evidence but his outlook simply defined Islam into religious authority and secular state. The notion has already been adapted by Orientalists (Rice, 1971) but Arnold has used art to reconstruct a view of power conflict between the religious authority and the secular state of Islam. Perhaps he is the only Oriental scholar of his time who first attempted to formulate the notion of an Islamic religious and secular state with reference to the painting artwork of early Muslim.

Those modern writers who have ignored this stern judgment of the Shiah theologians upon the painter have also failed to notice that a Shiah government was not necessarily more favourable to the growth of a school of painting that was a Sunni one. The Umayyad prince who had his bath-house in Qusayr ' Amra painted for his delight, the Abbasid Caliph who had the walls of his palace in Sammarra similarly adorned, were both Sunnis. Show their disregard for the theological prohibition. (Arnold, 1965, p. 12)

Islam was very often interpreted in terms of political power. This has been discussed in the discourse of the *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1995).

Another problem with the art evidence is the authenticity of artwork that makes it hard to draw a conclusion based on painting artwork. For example, date of production of some manuscripts is not known. In addition, there is no information about the artist and in which part of the Muslim world the manuscripts were produced. The artists who made the paintings or produced the work usually do not sign their names. All this information is necessary to establish a profile about the

artists and their work. Without enough detailed historical data, the artwork cannot be a reliable source of valid evidence. Arnold has referred to the lack of historical information about the artwork and artists. Nevertheless, he himself used the same insufficient sources to build his own argument.

“The fact remains that the earliest examples of painting in the Muhammadan period that have survived to us are frescoes of the baths of Qusayr ‘Amra, which, as a pleasure house of one of the Umayyad princes, reflects the luxurious character of the majority of the Caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty. From the eighth century onwards the decoration of the baths appears often to have assumed this character.” (Arnold, 1965, p.85)

Most of the art evidence used by Arnold was limited to a certain type of style selected from the Islamic manuscripts and referred to a few excavated wall paintings. He managed to include plates of photographs to illustrate his argument especially to show what he considers Islamic religious painting. However, these few wall paintings may have undergone several renewal processes throughout their history.

“From the Abbasid period there are only those shattered fragments which the patient excavations of the Professor Herzfeld have recovered from the ruins of the palace of Mutawakkil (847-861) in Samarra. The stucco which covered the walls of the baths in the women’s apartments in this palace had been decorated with paintings, which appear to have been renewed whenever the dampness of the baths made a fresh coating of plaster necessary, so that as many as sixteen layers of such plaster have been found stuck together (Plate XVII). Hardly any complete pictures could be made up out the broken fragments, but the semi-nude figures of the dancing-girls and musicians suggest that the general character of the decoration must have been much like that of Qusayr ‘Amra. (Arnold, 1965, p.85)

The term painting in the Western aesthetic hardly can be applied in a practical sense to the art evidence of Arnold. This evidence is detached from its original art setting in Muslim culture. It should be emphasized that the notion of Islamic painting is new and does not reflect the art context of Muslim culture. Islamic art is

not an aesthetic or religious art in the usual sense but rather an art trend oriented toward design and to the production of useful and beautiful objects.

The value of figurative image associated with art evidence does not necessarily represent the mainstream art of early Muslim culture. In the analysis of the Muslim religion, some incorrect ideas crept in. Islam did not have “its own system of carefully guarded priesthood” no one called the *muezzin* a “priest”. Arab would have been more specific than “Mohammedan”. The idea of religious painting and secular court painting does not apply to the traditional view of Muslims art. (Honour and Fleming, 1982, p.254).

As has been discussed, the form of manuscript painting has not been studied as an integral element of many different art skills and activities. Paintings are often taken out of their original setting and almost nothing is said about the manuscript. Much of the art experience was lost because of its disassociation from its original context. In this case, would it be enough, with this limited art evidence to accept the view of Arnold without any question? And is it possible to establish the history of the Muslim state based on a few number of wall paintings?

One of the problems of an historical approach to Islamic art, is the lack of written information about artwork, artist, their training, and workshop experience. On the one hand, the style of Islamic art and technique is anonymous and it is hardly open to historical treatment (Dimand, 1958).

Generally, western art experts often have problems in evaluating Islamic art on the same level as Western art due to the lack of similar art representations in Islamic culture, making the comparison even more difficult. This was reflected in the argument of Dimand when he indicated that the root of western art has a different

orientation from Islamic art. Western art developed from the Greek representation of the athlete, while Islamic art mainly represents a different idea based on the fact that the world has no lasting form but only the ever-changing feature of God (Dimand, 1985).

Figurative painting was not a major form of expression in Islamic culture but rather it was used as a part of the design work of manuscripts. However, the artwork of painting is usually open to many interpretations especially on the subject matter of painting.

Nonetheless, even though few serious historians have ever tried to put it to the test, the idea that the earliest signs of impending changes – in politics, morals, society of religion – are to be detected in the arts has had (and continues to have) a powerful effect on the historical imagination. The origins and growth of this idea are not easy to investigate, because at different times it has embraced quite different concepts. It is, however, worth trying to separate some of these related strands and to indicate why and when they became particularly influential. (Haskell, 1993, p.394)

Richard Ettinghausen (died 1979) was an academic and art historian whose main interest was Islamic Art. He was born in Germany where he studied until he obtained his Ph.D., in 1931, on the anti-heathen polemic in the Qur'an. According to Robert Hillenbrand, Ettinghausen was one of the German Jew refugee scholars who later went to the United States and became an American citizen. In his new home, he worked at Ann Arbor University, and he was associated for 24 years with the Free Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. He became Professor of Islamic art at the Institute of Fine Art of New York University. At a later period of his life, he created the Institute of Islamic art at the L.A. Mayer Memorial Foundation. He is considered to be one of the few outstanding intellectual figures who have contributed to the development of the academic study of Islamic Art. (Ettinghausen and Grabar, 1987; Hillenrand, 2000).

His career was devoted to the study of many aspects of Islamic art, publishing many articles on manuscript painting and illustration, including one on Fatamid Painting, in 1942. This study was devoted to the issue of image in a religious and political context of the Fatamid dynasty. *Arab Painting* is one of his major works, and was one of his two published books. His other scholarly studies and major works were published in papers. After his death all his scholarly studies were collected and republished again in one volume entitled *Islamic Art and Archaeology*. *Arab Painting* was one of the last works of Ettinghausen and was first published in 1962. It represents one of his iconography works where he attempted to represent a new approach to interpreting the attitude of Islam towards painting within the context of the Arab contribution to the early Muslim culture.

The book mainly focuses on the question of painting in Islam but only with reference to the image, and in particular to the art of manuscript painting in early Islamic times. Although, the influences of Arnold are apparent in his work, Ettinghausen's study represents a new approach to the debate about image representation, as he was the first scholar to use the term "Arabs" in the context of Islamic manuscript art.

At the beginning of the book, Ettinghausen made it very clear that the term "Arab" referred to the Arab contribution to the art of Islam in very limited sense. The Arabs were the main political power that spread Islam by means of force. Arabic was the language of the new faith, the medium of administration, intellectual expression and a product of Islamic civilization. According to Ettinghausen, the art was not created by Arabs but rather was developed and modified to suit Arab taste and fit the Islamic faith (Rice, 1971).

"The word "Arab" will be used in this book (as in other historical accounts) rather in its wider meaning, to refer to the universal civilization of medieval

empire that had its origin in a new Arab religion – Islam – which first became a military and political force in Arabia, and was to a large extent held together by the medium of Arabic, the language of its divine worship, administration, scholarship, and poetry.” (Ettinghausen, 1962, p.11)

According to Ettinghausen, Arab painting could not be defined as having one particular style or as being a trend, rather it was made up of certain art forms that originally developed through the creative skills of the different races; Persian, Mongolian and Turkish that had come together under the compelling force of Islam and who had brought with them the artistic legacy of other religions, such as Judaism. Therefore, the question of painting and art style found in Islam very much reflects the political power of the Arab rulers, who were the main patrons of the arts. Indeed, he felt that Islamic political influence had managed to produce a multicultural nation of many different traditional backgrounds, but with an Arab spirit. This new nation came into existence through what he believed was the “process of Arabization”; these feelings were later expressed as Arab nationalism. Ettinghausen in this particular work represents the mainstream views. It was expected from the title of his book that Ettinghausen would refer to the role of Arabic language in the development of the major aesthetic in Islamic art. Yet, the style of most of the images and paintings used in early manuscript work, were influenced by the graphic form of the Arabic script and the subject matter of the written text.

It could be argued that Ettinghausen’s study does not address the fact that the main bulk of Islamic art, of which Arab painting could be said to be a part, is non-figurative. On the other hand he overlooked the fact that painting is a part of manuscript art which is associated with Arabic calligraphy (Burckhardt, 1976).

Like Arnold, he used manuscript paintings as a source of evidence to project certain views of early Muslim cultures, however he put more emphasis on the Arab race.

Ettinghausen has considered the attitude of Islam towards image with reference to some historical conditions. He believed that Islam may have adopted negative attitude toward image as a result of early ethnic and Semitic beliefs. Ettinghausen used two main written sources of Islam, the Qur'an and *Hadith*. Firstly, he examined the attitudes of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* towards the image and then he looked for evidence, to support his theory, in the manuscripts themselves. As far as the Qur'an was concerned, Ettinghausen stated that, as far as he could see, the Qur'an did not contain positive objections to representational images. He referred to a few verses that dealt specifically with the representation of ideals, but this did not, in his view, amount to prohibition or discouragement. The only possible source of restriction he could see was in the use of images in a spiritual context, such as religious icons. (Ettinghausen, 1962). However, he did point out that the language of the Qur'an could give some clues as to why a negative attitude towards image representation has developed in Islamic culture. For, as he explained, in the Qur'an, the Arabic word for "to fashion or form" is *sawwara* and this is synonymous with the word "to create" (*bara'a*) and God himself is not only called the creator (*al-bari'*), but also *musawwir*, which is a common word for "painter". Thus, the artist, in making something lifelike, is thought to compete, blasphemously, with God. (Ettinghausen, 1962).

"The Koran gives no direct support for such assumptions. Even in its most specific pronouncements, it speaks out only against certain heathen practices, among the use of images, apparently of religious nature and hence regarded as idols. (Sura V, 92)." (Ettinghausen, 1962, p.12).

With regard to the *Hadith*, Ettinghausen has tried to link the Hadith to the early Judaist tradition, where visual presentation was often restricted. He considered

some of the Hadith were openly hostile towards image representation and that only human and animal forms were allowed in certain circumstances. He stated that images were to be found in some everyday art forms. (Ettinghausen, 1962).

He also indicated that the Prophet is portrayed in the Qur'an as an ordinary man (Grabar and Ettinghausen, 1987; Bloom and Blair, 1997). The Prophet regarded himself as messenger of God who was selected to bring his message. For this reason, Islam did not develop iconographic art to commemorate the life of the founder of faith.

“Islam, therefore, never developed sacred iconography centered around the life of the founder of the religion. Instead the divine message itself in its written form was elevated to an exalted position, and instead of holy image, sections of its text were used in decorative schemes of buildings” (Ettinghausen, 1962, p13)

Finally, however, Ettinghausen did not accept the notion that images were prohibited only because they might be worshipped as idolatrous icons, for he believed that this attitude was also related to other external socio-political factors. He argued that restrictions on images in a religious context grew from direct political influence claiming that the leaders of the new religion wished to make their own religion different and distinct from other world religions and, therefore, shunned the worship of images, or practices connected with images, such as could be found in Christianity or Buddhism.

“They were, however, much more than mere decoration. They had to satisfy the religious and aesthetic demands of the Caliph and appeal to the Arabs and the newly converted worshippers.” (Ettinghausen, 1962, p 20)

Ettinghausen stated that from the beginning image was originally influenced by two different attitudes, the sacred and the secular. In this sense he also has the same views of Arnold. He mentioned that there were strict theological views, however, these minority opinions were expressed by certain groups who

considered image legal in a secular context. Ettinghausen made his own remark to explain this point. He stated that the late views did not gain wider acceptance outside the theological literature. Those views did not develop into positive attitude but only created the climate for figural painting to take place at certain times and at some locations.

The social nature of the Muslim is another condition and according to Ettinghausen this factor has made painting feasible in certain locations and absent in some other places. He believed there were public and private social lives, where only the master or the male lived with his wife or wives. Paintings that have a figural element were on the wall of private sections of the house or kept in books. Such decorative figural paintings were never seen by the public other than those close associates or relatives of the house owner. According to him such painting work was only seen by excavating archaeologists for the first time in modern times. Painting was also found in certain public places mainly bathhouses. These type of structures belong to a tradition that goes back to pre-Islamic times. Ettinghausen suggested that painting on the walls of the bath might have been acceptable. The place of this form of art was unlikely to make the painting of value in worship.

Ettinghausen's main point of suggested that painting was part of the luxurious life of the rulers and this artwork was found in their palaces. Ettinghausen has emphasized the above point throughout his book but before going into much detail he added the following point.

He considered that the art of painting was encouraged as a result of early Muslim interest in science and some translated literary Greek, Syrian and Coptic manuscripts, that were originally illustrated with some form of painting. Ettinghausen focused on the earliest art work as a source of visual evidence to show the first created styles of representational art in Islam. He gave an account of

the range of painting artwork, acknowledging that only a few archaeological monument paintings are found at some sites. There are also a limited number of manuscript paintings found in recent times. All are preserved in libraries in the Arabic speaking world. Some of these illustrated manuscripts survived and have been kept in Turkish and western institutions. Not all of the illustration paintings are in good condition. According to Ettinghausen these limited examples are still enough to view the historical development of regional schools of painting and their style trends.

He examined the first Islamic art monument, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and did not find any figurative art in this work. The whole internal surface of the building is decorated with a variety of vegetal motifs. He considered this work to be a significant political statement. The art work was made by contribution of many ethnic groups to satisfy the religious and aesthetic demands of the Arab ruler. The use of vegetal design was in conformity with the early sacred buildings, and animated figures are excluded. In the aesthetic sense, Ettinghausen believed that the floral design of the Dome of the Rock represents the taste of the Arabs, who recently emerged from the desert. He pointed out that richness of the design, with the addition of jewels to the art materials, was appealing to the artistic view and untrained senses of the political figures of Arab rulers. He also added that the vegetal form of the design with the trees and fruits motifs evoked pleasant feeling for Arabs who came from a desert land. To him the internal design of the Dome of the Rock represents fertile land or an oasis but such an aesthetic view developed into religious direction. Ettinghausen emphasized in his interpretation model the notion of race exploiting the fact that many Arabs came from desert regions, which were devoid of flora and fauna and consequently pictorial art was not a

highly developed form because of the lack of natural models to support what he believed was a clue to explaining the non- representational nature of Islamic art.

“The use of purely vegetal forms to the exclusion of animated figures shows a conformity, even in this early sacred building, to the newly emerging, artistically restrictive attitude of Islam. But the elaborate trees of floral arrangements must also have had a positive value so as to gratify the senses of many Arabs who had only recently emerged from the deserts. The opulent richness of design, with the addition of jewels applied in many places, must have represented the most resplendent luxury, while to others, the trees, fruits and other floral patterns may have evoked the pleasing sensation of fertile lands or of an oasis, channeling these feelings into a religious direction.” (Ettinghausen, 1962, p.20)

He believes such artwork was originally created to appeal to the new converts who knew the pre-Islamic setting. The monument with all forms of artwork was built to commemorate the rise of a new power and display the new religious message. Ettinghausen referred to some other public buildings that were constructed at the early Muslim state when Damascus was selected as a new capital. He considers the Great Mosque of Damascus one of the most important pieces of visual evidence for the history of painting. According to him most of the original work was damaged by earthquakes and fire. For him, the patches of the original mosaics design is enough to display the initial significance of the early Muslim art monuments. He did not consider the design to represent a new art form or art aesthetic trend. Neither did he consider the design with regard to the nature of worship and spiritual function of the Mosque in Islam. He only stated that such work was influenced by early civilization art work. In brief, he pointed out that the workmen who were involved and created the monument accomplished their work according to the requirement of Muslims. There is no human or animal element in the design work. For him such work was similar in nature to the art form and compositions of regional churches of that time. Ettinghausen proceeded to explain the scenes with regard to the location and natural scenes of Damascus. In brief Ettinghausen

considered the monument of the Dome of the Rock and Great mosque of Damascus to have clear a political message. Both those monuments were created in proclamation of universal Arab Empire.

“By choosing the “idyllic” iconography instead of the “realistic” symbol, as church art had done, a new and challenging message was proclaimed: the Arab empire has conquered the whole world and now with the teaching of Islam the Golden Age, the paradise on earth, has arrived. One hardly imagines a more impressive manifestation of the universal power of the new state than we find offered in these mosaics of the capital’s main mosque. (Ettinghausen, 1962, p.28)

Whilst claiming to be developing a wider and broader approach to Arab or Islamic art, Ettinghausen continued to evaluate Islamic art from a Western perspective, taking painting as the focus of his research. He says nothing about the inherent aesthetic value of the manuscript paintings, either from a western or a Muslim perspective, but looks at them as merely historical documents from which he could draw facts. Even in this, he comes to some broad conclusions. Calligraphy and art forms, in the texts he studied, were seen by him as minor art forms; expressions of craftsmanship rather than forms of high art, like painting, which had, for many centuries, elevated status in the western world (Gray, 1976).

Ettinghausen treated the style and painting materials and technique as secondary elements. He mainly focused on the image of figures and tends to identify them from a racial and social political perspective. Although he only included a limited and selected number of photographs in the reproduction of the original paintings, Arabic text still can be seen as a major element in the design of manuscript painting. However, most of the illustrations discussed were removed from their original context.

Throughout the first 98 pages of his book, he did not mention by name any groups or even one single Arab or Muslim artist. At the same time he did not give any account of the artists or their ethnic identity.

In this respect, Ettinghausen was not much different from the mainstream Western writers, who considered painting in Islamic art with reference to Western art historical perspective.

Oleg Grabar, was born in France, in 1929. He is the Aga Khan Professor of the Islamic Art programme at Harvard University and the founding Editor of the annual publication, *Mugamas*. He still continues to be an influential Islamic scholar, whose pioneering work has dealt with important issues in Islamic art. Grabar worked closely with the late Richard Ettinghausen, with whom he published a joint study, entitled *The Art and Architecture of Islam*, in 1987. His most influential individual study, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, (1987), although generally mainstream in its view, it demonstrated a different approach, in that Grabar was more interested in studying the evolution of Islamic art forms from their pre-Islamic roots. Although he debated the question of image, he considered Islam to have a minor influence on the art of painting. Indeed, he took the view that Islamic art did not rise up spontaneously, as new art, within the new culture of Islam. Instead, Islam appropriated those existing art forms and means of expression that lent themselves to adaptation for reflecting the aspirations, beliefs and creative urges of the faithful, of all classes. Thus, Grabar differed from previous scholars, like Arnold and Ettinghausen, in that he was interested in the question of image in relation to the formation of Islamic art and cultural development. In addition, he took the views of other scholars further in suspecting the validity of the Prophet's *hadith* regarding representational image. For him

Islam only theoretically objected to image, therefore the non-representational form of Islamic art developed in relation to the previous art tradition of early cultures and religions.

In the early history of Islam, the notion of objection to image was not in practice. Arabia was not a centre of art products, and visual art product of painting was not of any significance to the nomadic culture of early Arabs. According to Grabar, there are reports about the attitude and action of the Prophet towards the objection to image in certain context. However, there is no direct link between Islamic views and the formation of the abstract visual form of Islamic art.

He believes that there were some other factors that influenced the art of painting, such as the political condition and the need for different art to establish an Islamic identity measuring the victory of Islam over other early powers. As a result some of the early decorative and pattern styles were modified to produce different art forms to distinguish the visual culture of Islam from the art forms and icons of other faiths.

This concept of evolution was influential to Grabar's outlook on the question of image. This was reflected in the way he interpreted Islamic sources like the Qur'an and *hadith*. He stated that the documentation of *hadith* had taken place about two centuries after the Prophet's death, and it could have been influenced by the views of later Muslim theologians, according to Grabar, to reflect the views of the people in power, at any given time.

"Much has been written about the Islamic attitude towards the arts. Encyclopedias or general works on the history of art simply assent that, for a variety of reasons, which art rarely explored, Islam was theologically opposed to the representation of living beings...More rarely, attempts have been made to provide secure dates and even specific localization for the formation of permissive attitudes." (Grabar, 1973, p.75)

Therefore, according to him the *hadith* cannot be used as a scientific reconstruction to formulate a summary of Arab attitudes toward art. For this reason Grabar considered the *Hadith* to have little value, and to only represent the view of Muslim theologians, especially, since most of the major Islamic art was already established at earlier dates. (Grabar). On the other hand, Grabar thought that the Qur'an does not have an explicit view about visual image representation, neither does it have narrative language that could encourage visual image representation, and visual illustration. (Grabar, 1973)

Grabar examined many forms of Islamic artistic expression, for he felt that other scholars had overlooked the multiple cultural influences. What particularly fascinated him was the fact that Islam did not use imagery in the same way that previous religions and faiths had done. In Grabar's view, Islam had, in fact, no particular views on the image and art in the early years of Islam.

With this in mind, Grabar looked at the art traditions in different locations in the area before Islam came into being. He focused on Arabia, as the birthplace of Islam, and looked at the state of art prior to Islam and in the early days of Islam under wider cultural influences, for as he pointed out:

Islam also inherited an immensely complex set of collective memories, legends, and myths, some as localised as a village cult, others as wide as the heroic legends of the Iranian hero Rustam or of Solomon, the prophet-king. (Grabar, 1973,p.43)

Grabar has indicated that Arabian culture did not have a tradition of visual art or a complex art tradition, but that the Arabs took up the artistic traditions of neighbouring cultures and other religions. Grabar believed, like Arnold before him to some extent that Arabian society had been influenced before Islam by both Jewish and Christian art forms among others.

“Others have argued for the immediate impact of Judaism, and it is true that converted Jews played a very important part in the formation of many aspects of early Islamic thought.” (Grabar, 1973, p. 97)

In addition to this, from pre-Islamic times and for many centuries after the dawn of Islam, Arab culture was nomadic, and so only a few major art monuments can be found in limited urbanised locations. Artistic expression was, therefore, localised largely in the primitive or folk art found in the decoration of objects or utensils used in daily life. This low-key functional role of art might have led some scholars to the conclusion that the representation of images, in Islamic culture, was prohibited in all spheres of Islamic life and art, rather than just being socially and culturally inappropriate.

In many different ways, the views of Grabar represent evolutionary perspectives to the question of image. However, he overlooked one important fact, the close connection between language and visual imagery in the Qur'an. He acknowledged that the Qur'an had an aesthetic melodic form but he did not take his argument further into the broader debate of art aesthetics. This limitation in Grabar's perspective was perhaps brought about by the model of scientific investigation, as an art historian, used by Grabar and his colleagues at the time. (Gonzalez, 2001; Dagher, 1999).

In conclusion, the discussion has centred on the works of three main critics of Islamic or Oriental art in order to show how influential and pervasive their ideas have been, and still are upon the attitudes towards the question of image in Islamic art. However, the limitations of these critiques must be highlighted here in order to show how the writers are so inherently bound up in Western perspectives and academic traditions that they are unable to fully recognize the true and positive art

aesthetic of Islamic cultures. For example, Arnold's work is problematic in that he takes a Romantic view of Islam and his study was based on Western notions of art and beauty predicated upon classical Greek and Roman ideals. He himself was also the product of a culture in which visual art and representational painting were considered to be measures of the progressive development of socio-economic and political structure of any society. Thus, from the Western perspective of Arnold, painting was a highly-prized art form, which was produced for both religious and secular art patrons and a form to which few prohibitions or restrictions applied, except from the academic viewpoint of the high art tradition. Also Arnold belonged to the wider body of Western scholars who regarded art from an historical, anthropological viewpoint and saw artistic expression as valuable historical evidence. The error that Arnold, and such critics made was to apply this Western code to the interpretation of Islamic or Oriental manuscript painting (Gray, 1968). In the very act of concentrating on painting, Arnold missed the importance of calligraphy as the supreme art form in Islam.

In effect, Arnold's study of manuscript painting lead him to conclude that Islam avoided images for religious reasons and that representational art was much more prized as a secular art. In fact, a wealth of manuscript painting was to be found in the opulent courts of the Muslim princes and dignitaries. Thus, he drew the distinction between religious and secular art; the former having a negative attitude towards image, and the latter having a positive attitude, and from this came to the conclusion that there was conflict between the world views of religious leaders and secular political figures.

However, because of his fixation on painting as the measure of an art aesthetic, Arnold did not view the attitude of Islam towards the image from an aesthetic and practical point of view. Even though, he could detect calligraphic forms within the

manuscript paintings he studied, he failed to emphasize how deeply calligraphy informed all manuscript paintings, from its proportions and perspectives, to its lines, forms and brushstrokes. Indeed, the outlines of the bodies and motifs were made by writing techniques, not by painted processes, and were formed with the same reed pens and black ink that had been used for centuries by calligraphers. These traces of writing within the paintings were thus seen by Arnold as examples of a limited striving towards painting, rather than a unique merging of two art forms in which the graphic line is the more important element. In focusing on manuscript painting, Arnold limited his field of vision to a small corner of Islamic art. Therefore, his studies could not be said to be truly useful in helping to form a full understanding of the development of an Islamic art aesthetic, for they contain no consideration of the aesthetic value of Islamic art and painting within Islamic society itself.

Richard Ettinghausen, like Arnold focused on the theoretical debate. He concluded that painting was a secular Islamic art because although Islam did not directly forbid representation of images, the nature of the Islamic faith did not inspire artists to create representational art, such as is found in Christian cultures (Wilson, 1957). He, therefore, did not consider the spiritual aspect of the Arabic language to have had a direct impact on the creative process of making art and the product of painting.

Ettinghausen's view is essentially a political one, which arrives at the belief that the production and display of art in Arab/Islamic societies was connected mainly to the rise of power of the Arabs, who took Islam to the far corners of their expanding empire. The rich and powerful Arab conquerors became patrons of the arts in their desire to show their status and cultural refinement and they commissioned and

bought works of art from many different cultural groups, both Arab and non-Arab. It is this that Ettinghausen uses to show that Arab painting is in fact a product of artistic contribution of different races, influenced by the Arab's political power.

Like Arnold, Ettinghausen, in his study focused on mediaeval Islamic manuscript paintings, but classified them as Arab art, thus interpreting the religious aspect with reference to the Arab influence and culture. In other studies he used the term Turkish painting in reference to Islamic manuscript work. In further work he studied them in reference to political influence using a different term "Fatimids". Ettinghausen treated the art collections as sources of evidence to construct a certain image about early Arab and Muslim societies. Both Arnold and Ettinghausen based a great deal of their work on mediaeval manuscripts and drew conclusions about Islamic art from this very limited source.

In addition to the above, Oleg Grabar basically shared the same views in interpreting the influence of Islam in the issue of image. However he denied the direct organic link between Islam and art. This link is very important in understanding the perspective of image in Islamic art. His study, like those of his predecessors and contemporaries, are firmly rooted in the European tradition of historical, anthropological research and make no attempt to highlight the spiritual link between Islam and art at either an aesthetic or practical level.

The mainstream Western art historians' view is that Islam does not generally have explicit views about art and image representation and that Islam is a passive or negative force with regard to image-making in general, reserving proscription for religious areas of life. Thus the attitude of Islam towards the making of images could

not be said to represent an intellectual or aesthetic art movement or trend which makes it difficult for scholars to arrive at a definition or an understanding of Islamic art.

Current views on the issue of Islamic painting

The mainstream Western views and approach of Islamic paintings have not changed much, even in the latest work. This view can be clearly observed in the academic views and current publications of some writers, who are interested in studying Islamic art, and write about the orientation of painting in the art of Islamic culture. Space does not allow discussion of every view and inclusion of many different works, however, examples of these few studies may be enough to meet the objective and help to make out the point clear. A sample of some studies, all of them devoted a special area to the traditional debate of Islamic painting, may represent the most current views of western writers with regard to the question.

"Persian Miniatures and Painting" is one of the early studies that focus on some areas of Islamic painting. It appeared first in a catalogue of Persian Art Exhibition and published in a single book in 1971. It represents the collected papers of Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray. The original literature of this catalogue was already issued early in 1933 by Oxford University. The publication appeared almost a decade after Arnold's book *Painting in Islam*..

Persian Miniatures basically represents scholarly remarks on the study of Islamic painting in the West with reference to early documented studies of some Islamic manuscript illustration and painting. The study deals with those manuscripts that were collected and brought to the West from different parts of the Islamic world.

The publication represents an example of Western art writers early efforts who, since 1930 were trying to put together a formal theory to study Islamic painting

with an emphasis on the ethnic aspect of art within the context of the cultural achievement of the Persian people.

The publication of Persian painting with such a title may clearly show that the definition "*Islamic painting*" is not clear and can be a vague term in certain contexts. What is called Islamic painting is often used to refer to the same quality of artwork. The term is usually replaced according to the object of study. However Persian and Islamic painting refer to a certain type of painting originally produced as part of the art work and design of Islamic manuscript. The book provides one of the early sources that help to elucidate the problem of Islamic painting study from a western and historical perspective.

According to the writers, Islamic paintings were not accepted and appreciated out of the limited circle of art experts. The early-collected manuscripts were valued for their text but their painting was not admired by those who collected Islamic manuscripts and brought them to the West. There was a prejudicial attitude against Islamic painting because of its lack of the visual perspective, which is a basic aesthetic element in the Western art of painting. However, it seems here that the writers as well as art experts have highly rated Islamic painting for its incontestable ability to yield pleasure. This view was expressed in the introduction of the publication.

The catalogue highlighted another problem in that early western writers were interested in studying Islamic painting with reference to Western art principles and aesthetic values. There has been some efforts made to view painting subject matter and style within the context of the individual talent of a single artist, for example, Bihzad. However there were still controversial views about this most famous artist especially the authenticity of his collected work.

It attempted to represent Persian painting as an art example of a well-established school in Western terms where the art work is interpreted to reflect the mind of Persians. There is much emphasis on those details, which seem to highlight the skills and approach of artists especially in their visual perspective and painting representation methods. Explaining some of the qualities of Islamic painting and how it differs from Western style, the authors noted that the subject matter of painting, whether human figures or objects, are always placed in the foreground of the painting resembling a graphic image of two dimensional design. Like the case of some modern painting perspective, it is hard to separate the foreground of the painting from its background. Islamic or Persian painting does not often show an illusion of visual depth or an effect of three dimensions on the flat surface of painting material. Generally the art of painting is concerned with a heroic story.

However, unlike the European outlook, Persian painting does not attempt to show the visual world and image of human figure, in the same perspective as the classic art of western painting product. Persian painting does not represent the nude human body as a means of aesthetic expression. In general, the drawing of the human figure in Persian painting is a stylistic image made up of simple shapes and lines. The painting subject matter does not tend to create an illusion to represent the visual appearance of person based on the eyewitness observation and the image of the actual world. One important point is that there is no religious painting similar in value and quality of Christian religious painting or Buddhist religious art. This view is quite different from the view of Arnold and other mainstream writers, who usually selected some example of manuscript illustration and studied them to represent an Islamic religious art and painting trend.

“ There is, however, a side on which Persian art is admittedly lacking. Exquisitely sensuous as it is, there are largely absent from

it those spiritual conceptions with which Christianity and Buddhism alike have inspired painting in East and West. It is not true indeed as was for long the prevalent notion, that Islam has no religious art. Sir Thomas Arnold, whose death during the first preparations for the Exhibition all who have any interest in Persian studies must for ever deplore, has in his *Painting in Islam* shown that there are plenty of miniatures concerned with religious subjects. Yet there is a radical distinction to be drawn. The grand religious conception of Christian and Buddhist art were presented by painters as symbolic events or, concentrated in a single figure, as incarnations of spiritual power, wisdom, and beauty; they were, for people, objects for adoration. The religious paintings of Persia were never this. Altarpieces were unknown. The painting simply an illustration of a sacred story" (Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, 1971, p.7)

The authors pointed out that there is always some misunderstanding about the meaning of some poetry manuscripts produced by the Sufi as an example. The nature of Sufi literature is important in understanding Islamic art particularly painting. The spiritual and world view of the Sufi is not only painting work but art in general because artist and craft guild were largely part of the Sufi movement. For example the Sufi used wine in their poetry as metaphor to express and represent ecstasy of the lover and his beloved and the intoxication of the eye. This view is usually misinterpreted especially the painting that show parties of people sitting with cups in their hands. Poetry and painting are used by Western art writers as evidence to indicate that drinking was part of the lifestyle of the elite class. For example Ettinghausen has interpreted manuscript painting and used them as evidence. He concluded that the subject of painting represented actual drinking parties.

Furthermore, the publication of Persian painting has dealt with the view of Islam toward the question of image. It leads to the same conclusion of the mainstream studies. The study of Persian painting in certain context related to Islam in terms of its religious attitude, however there was no effort made to show how Islam inspired

Persian art at a spiritual and aesthetic level. It might be relevant to quote the following statement out of the publication of *Persian miniatures*.

“ Much has been written on the prohibition of images and figure painting by the Tradition of the Prophet, which seems so strangely contradicted by the profusion of the pictorial art in Persia. All that need here be said is that while painting was not anti-religious, it was at all times condemned by the theologians. Patronage came, never from the Church, but only from princes and rich men; and the artists had to follow their patrons' taste. Writers on art have sometimes deplored that European painters were so long limited in free expression by being dependent on the Church. In Persia may be seen the complementary case of limitation coming from the Church ban: it was probably the more injurious limitation of the two” (Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, 1971, p.7–8).

Some of the early views on Islamic painting was presented in the catalogue of Persian miniatures by Basil Gray, who in 1961 published his full work in a book, with colourful illustrations, entitled *Persian Painting*. In this study Gray did not add anything new to the debate of image representation and the perspective of painting in Islamic art. His study considered a unique example of some current works where Islamic paintings is viewed in relation to their aesthetic values but with emphasis on the ethnic element of the Muslim Persian races and culture.

Persian painting is a very current term and usually used by mainstream writers in connection with Islamic painting. Gray's study however only deals with the perspective of painting in Islam in a limited and general sense. Gray has largely focused on the quality of art work and reviewed some manuscript painting artefacts, in relation to the artistic contribution and skills of Persians artists. His view is based on the notion that some non-Arab Muslim races were more liberal in their outlook toward art and painting work. It is not a new notion, and it is shared by many western writers (such as Arnold, Ettinghausen, Allen and Grabar). All these writers, who arrived at the same view from different angles, considered the art of Islamic painting the work of Persian artists or the contribution of non-Arab

ances. This argument usually suggests that painting is an old art tradition but it was part of the visual expression of some Muslim ethnic societies. The Persian people are particularly viewed to have had a painting tradition and art history of their own. More importantly, Persian painting and culture was not thought to be influenced directly by the thought of orthodox Muslims.

Some studies, that involve the usual theological debate of Islam's view of image, often argued that Persia was dominated by the Shi'a sect, and that the Persian Muslim people have a different school of thought inspired by their own special view of Islam. The Persian people and the Shi'a sect are more liberal in their interpretation of the Prophet's tradition. Gray's work is based on the same notion and in his approach he considered that Persian painting was less influenced by the Islamic worldview except in general terms. However, Arnold did not accept this idea that the Shi'a rejected the orthodox Muslim view and did not condemn figurative image to the same degree as Sunni Muslims. Arnold has discussed this point in his study of Islamic painting and indicated that Shi'a theologians, were not less strict than Sunni Muslims. The Shi'a theologians condemned far less the art of image representation and usually supported their views with strict interpretation of the Prophet's Hadith. Arnold looked into many accounts from Shi'a sources and quoted the view of the most authoritative early Shi'a scholars who were of the opinion that the monetary value of a painting is not lawful because an image is one of many works and items that were counted as forbidden or to charge a price for. (Arnold, 1965).

“ Another question in regard to the condemnation of the painter demands consideration here. It has frequently been asserted, in explanation of the abundance of the contribution made by the Persians to the history of painting that the Shi'a, because they did not accept the traditions set forth above by

Sunni theologians, were unhampered by any such ecclesiastical condemnation, and could therefore practise the art of painting undeterred by the fear of hell. Thus, one of the ablest living authorities on Muslim art writes in reference to the traditions quoted above" (Arnold, 1965, p.12- 13.)

The previous example may show that Western art writers do not have a clear view and general argument in terms of Islam's attitude towards image especially when they only rely on theological sources. Persian painting is a Western art term and as has been mentioned earlier, often tends to approach the study of Islamic painting within the context of the ethnic background of Muslims races. The main assumption underlying such an approach is that the art of painting represents the ethnic art values and artistic talents.

Terry Allen is a Professor of Islamic art at the University of Michigan. In 1988 he contributed to the study of painting in relation to the worldview of Islam. His full view of the subject is systematically presented as part of his thematic study of Islamic art that was published with the title *Five Essays on Islamic Art*. The book contains a collection of comprehensive papers and deal with different questions of Islamic art. One of his major essays is twenty pages long and is mainly devoted to the discussion of the attitude of Islam towards icon and painting with reference to the theological view of Islam and religious sources. Allen as an academic writer was expected to suggest something new, but his response to the question is a typical example of the work of the early mainstream writers. Some of his arguments and literary discourse rely on the work of Grabar in *The Formation of Islamic Art*.

He did not only quote Grabar but also shares the same view and dismissed any sort of direct link between Islam and the early Islamic art tradition. To him the non-representational visual art perspective was not a new art style or direct

response to the world view of Islam. There was already decorative art and geometric pattern traditions before Islam and the non-figurative art forms and conventions were well established prior to Islam. Allen has the same approach as Grabar in his response to the lack of image element in the major form of Islamic art which was basically established on non-representational visual form. Allen considered the geometric style of Islamic art a result of cultural evolution conditioned by historical and political forces. The attitude of Islam towards image and painting is not unique or something that represents certain art values or the intellectual view of Muslim schools of thought.

“ No development in material culture is entirely without precedent. It is literally, even today, impossible to create something totally new. Yet what we call Islamic art (primarily the art of those lands conquered by the Arabs in the seventh and eight centuries) and especially early Islamic art, has been regarded very nearly as something totally new. It has been seen as fundamentally different from Western art, as a drastic mutation created by the confluence of the Sasanian and early Byzantine tradition with some amorphous but distinctively Islamic taste. Even those art historians who have stressed the contribution of Byzantine and Sasanian art to Islamic art have been at pains to distinguish Islamic art as a radically new development.” (Allen, 1988, p.1)

Another example, the study of Philip Bamborough titled *Treasures of Islam* was published in 1976. The author is an expert on the art of Islam and Islamic culture. In this condensed work, Bamborough has devoted about 25 pages to examining the value and the state of image with reference to the legal view of Islam. Like most of the late history books and painting studies, Bamborough's book includes some reproduced copies to illustrate the chapter with an example of Islamic paintings.

At the beginning of this chapter he stated that the religion of Islam generally was not supportive of representational art. According to him, there has been always a love/hate relationship between Islam and painting. Islam is not associated with the art of painting like other religions, but Islam is closely allied with the art of Arabic

calligraphy. In early Islamic culture, painting was deemed low artwork and the painter was not appreciated as an equal of the calligraphers. Islam never sanctioned or sponsored painting, and image representation was not part of the religious art. This is a brief summary of Bamborough's view, but it clearly shows that he was not much different in his perspective and outlook to the question, representing the same mainstream view. However, in another chapter of his book, he drew the attention to the role of the Arabic language and calligraphy, in Islamic visual art and aesthetic expression. It should be mentioned that he recognized the value of the Arabic language in the integration of Muslim races and in uniting the Islamic culture. He also stated that the study of the unique value of calligraphy is very important to the understanding and appreciation of Islamic art. That was only a proposal without suggestion of any certain ideas to explain how calligraphy could contribute to the study of Islamic art and highlight the question of image representation. He just explained in practical terms, why representational art was not a major element of expression and often not integrated with certain art products, such as architecture especially mosques. To him not only was this to do with restriction and a view of the Qur'an to image representation, rather the development of an art tradition did not focus on painting, especially when calligraphy was a highly developed major art form. Moreover, the aesthetic quality of calligraphy was highly improved and used artistically in architecture design to the extent that there was no necessity for representational painting especially in mosques, where the Koranic text is often transformed into art work and integrated with the external and internal design of the architecture. Bamborough did not explore this area further.

His study of the question of painting was largely focused on the theoretical debate of whether Islam had ever forbidden images. The final conclusion is that painting was not religious art but rather a private and secular art.

In 1994, the British Museum Press published the work of Dr. Barbara Brend. She is a specialist in Islamic art and archaeology with particular interest in the study of manuscript painting. The work of Brend is like most of the studies of Islamic paintings, where there is usually a special space for a debate to deal with Islam and image representation. Brend has devoted part of her book to discussion of the painting product after she made her statement about the theological view of image in Islam.

She has almost the same view of the writers discussed earlier but she disagreed with them over certain matters. She has a different outlook on the nature and values of painting in relation to the traditional art of Islamic culture. At the same time, she has the same orientation and generally did not consider Islam to have an explicit view of image which directly influenced the paintings of early Islamic art. In her view, the Qur'an forbids representation only in the worship of idols, which is specifically condemned. The objection against representational art was due to a late Muslim theological trend. Brend also referred to the Jewish tradition as a possible source of the antagonism towards artwork of image representation. It is often believed that Islamic thought was influenced directly by the Jewish religious traditions where image is regarded as a prohibited practice.

“An antipathy to representation, related to the Jewish prohibition of graven images, seems to have been latent in early Islamic thought and to have hardened in the course of the first century. It is typified by the fact that the Caliph Umer is reported to have used a censer with figures on it to perfume the mosque at Medina, but in 783 the governor of Medina had the figures removed”. (Brend, 1994, p.19)

The term Islamic art still does not have definite meaning in the recent literature of Islamic art studies. Brend made her remark about the definition, and for her Islamic art does not necessarily refer to homogenous religious art like Christian art, for example. Islamic art is not always made only by Muslim artists, or good individual Muslims. In terms of function, Islamic art is largely of practical form. It is not often of religious value and usually produced for the population of Muslim cultures and the rulers.

“A definition of Islamic art needs to be wide enough to include all the artefacts, which might interest any of these approaches, and the definition used here will be: the art produced for rulers or populations of Islamic culture. The work discussed does not always have a specifically religious purpose, sometimes far from it, and the patrons and artists were not invariably good Muslims, and occasionally not Muslims at all” (Brend, 1994, p.10)

In general Brend developed her view along the same lines as the mainstream studies of Western writers. She only disagreed with them about some points related to the traditional definition of Islamic art painting. In some of the early Western studies the aesthetic value of Islamic painting is often treated as a minor subject. The art of Islamic painting is often classified as illustration work rather than fine painting originally produced as an integral part of the manuscript design. Brend seemed to have the same approach, however in her study. Painting is either defined with the term *book illustration* or *book painting*. Her study was not limited to a particular art product but rather deals with Islamic art in general without treating the painting as independent art. Under the subtitle, *The Art of the Book*, she devoted several sections in each chapter to the discussion of some paintings in order to relate the history of paintings in the early Muslim dynasties. Here it seems that Islamic painting is sometimes considered the product and achievement of the state in political terms. It is perhaps because, in Western culture, the art product is

often directly associated with the patrons who were usually the rulers and the heads of the states.

It is not surprising that Brend used the term “book painting” because in her view the style of painting follows a schema of design to illustrate the book or make the manuscript an attractive and beautiful work. But some writers only focus on the subject matter out of the original context of painting work. The Islamic manuscript painting was often used as a source of historical evidence about the social and political norms of Islamic culture, which was viewed in the iconographical approach of Arnold and Ettinghausen. Brend in her comment about the origin and the history of Islamic painting, suggested that painting was encouraged as a consequence of Muslim interest in science.

Robert Irwin, a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, is another example, whose work includes the *Middle East in the Middle Ages* and *The Arabian Nights*. He was also teaching and broadcasting on Islamic art for many years. In 1997, his book *Islamic Art* was published for the first time. Although this book is quite recent the basic view of Irwin is not much different from the mainstream writers, who shared the same interest in the study of Islamic art. However, he discussed some significant new points with some updated materials. Some of his views established a new approach to the question of Islamic art and verified some common problems related to the definition and study of Islamic art. His response to the question of image is not very radical, but he has maintained a critical outlook to the study of Islamic art in general.

One of his general views indicates that Islamic art is a new field of interest and it is largely constructed by Western intellectual thought and art experts. For him, the term Islamic art does not refer to a definite product of religious art equal to

Christian art. In addition there is a gap of knowledge in such an area of study, because the Muslims did not leave enough historical records or special written sources about visual art, and how to value and appreciate art or painting. Art historians have gathered a collection of some materials to portray the attitude of Muslims towards art but still there is no definite idea about the nature of Islamic art. He thinks that there is still much needed to be done and learn about Islamic art and its original orientation. In certain contexts, he suggested a new outlook and pointed to some of the limitations in the study and definition of Islamic art. For example, he does not totally agree with the notion and study of Islamic art history often constructed with limited reference to the political factor. One of the notions that is usually emphasised by the mainstream critics who considered historical and political factors to have had a major role in the formation of Islamic art.

“The study of Islamic art in the west is still in its infancy, and our comprehension of it is far less developed than that of quattrocento Italian or seventeenth-century Dutch art”. (Irwin, 1997, p.12)

The definition of Islamic art in terms of the political history of early Muslim states may be limited. From his point of view, the early Islamic states did not establish strict political influence in a modern sense. The art of Islamic culture hardly represented the political view and interest of the state. Western writers sometimes consider Islamic painting a secular art originally made for the court, and argue from the same perspective of Western art definition. In other words, representational painting was originally developed and produced to meet the interest of certain classes and individuals specially those who were wealthy and in control of political power. From Irwin’s point of view, this notion cannot always be applied to Islamic art. Mainly because it is very difficult to trace any formal relationship between artist and patron, especially in early Islamic society. There is no historical source of contract and documents to indicate that Islamic art or

special products were originally made for certain individuals and patrons. In Western culture and during the Renaissance, there used to be a formal contract between the artists and patron. For example the written document often included the artist's agreement and other details concerning the type and quality of artwork that the artist should produce for the patron. In early Islamic Culture, there were no such documents and contracts. The Muslim artists used to work within a guild and were encouraged and generously paid for the value and quality of their works. However, there were certain patrons who would be only interested in certain artworks and pay for it generously.

Irwin, has brought it to the reader's attention that the "art patron" in Islamic culture is different and did not have the equivalent role and influence of arts patron in Western culture. This point is very important because western writers very often over emphasize the role of art patron and frequently Islamic art is valued in the context of states and Muslim rulers. For example some collections of art products are usually studied in the political context of the states of early Muslims dynasties, where some art writers tend to construct formal views about the style of one dynasty to emphasize the political differences between the different states.

The concept that art is a fine creative product is Western, in contrast, in early Islamic culture, art did not have such aesthetic values and the same art definition. Robert Irwin disagreed about some views of other Western art experts especially the mainstream writers. For example he does not think that Islamic art can be studied on a limited historical context of Western art perspective. His point is that Islamic art referred to the body of work of specific art products, which might not be appreciated in Western culture.

"Students hitherto only familiar with Western art may be surprised to find so much space devoted to what in Europe or America would be classified as "minor arts," such as ceramics and metal works, but, as will be demonstrated, the Western distinction between major and minor art forms

does not apply within the Islamic culture area. The idea of an “Islamic art” is itself in many ways Western construct” (Irwin, 1997, p.12).

Irwin has devoted much of the last chapter of his book to highlighting the serious problem of the traditional approach of using the Islamic art as a source of historical record. This is perhaps his response to those Western art writers who usually overemphasise the historical value of Islamic art achievement.

“Art historians have (perfectly understandably) a tendency to fasten on superb art works and to construct a story almost exclusively from what is well displayed in the showcases of museums. In such circumstances interpretation leans heavily on accidents of survival and uncertain ascriptions of provenance. As has been said, archaeological excavations and the study of a broader mass of less spectacular and usually fragmentary material can provide a useful corrective to this”. (Irwin, 1997, p.241)

His view refers to the historical approach where Islamic art is often considered a development of late antiquity. An example of such approach is the study of Allen who attempted in his study to link Islamic art style with early Byzantine decorative art. This has been discussed in the work of Grabar in his major work on Islamic art formation, which is a source of inspiration for Allen especially his book *Five Essays on Islamic Art*. Earlier in his study, Irwin stated that Western art writers emphasise the value of some minor works of Islamic art and overlook the most important art element of Islamic art.

“Most western historians of Islamic art tend to overvalue the figurative at the expense of the abstract and the calligraphy. I have gone along with this to an extent, on the basis that it is easier to relate figurative works to literary material. However, I have also included some discussion of examples of calligraphy, mindful that for the medieval Muslims calligraphy was the most important art form of all, despite the fact that for many western readers the appreciation of this somewhat austere discipline remains difficult.” (Irwin, 1997, p.13).

Under the title, *The Illuminated Manuscript*, Irwin has made some of his own original remarks about the painting art of Islamic manuscript. He devoted a comprehensive chapter to the study of the art style and techniques of illustration in

some of the most well-known Islamic manuscripts. Irwin tends to value the manuscript art in internal terms with subject matter and text of original written works. His art attitude is quite a rare example because Islamic painting is often studied as an independent art with emphasis on its historical value. Irwin referred to the history of Islamic manuscripts and how this art was developed in relation to the early book illustration of Christians and Sasanians. He argued that most of the early-illustrated books were non-fiction. The illustration of these manuscripts was not always the identification of various plants, (but rather originally translated works of natural remedies) The image is often made as an element of decoration or tales of enjoyment.

The other remark of Irwin on the nature of manuscript art is that painting is often associated with literature especially at the later stages of Islamic history when literacy became more prevalent in Muslim culture. Irwin has some special remarks about the illustration of some examples of the most well-known Islamic literature such as the popular fables of *Kalila wa Dimna*. It might be useful to take an example of Irwin's remarks about this illustrated fable where he attempted to view the painting work in relation to the theme of the story. The illustration of the *Kahla* manuscript does not focus on the stories, but the image of animal protagonists are posed in a schematic scene. According to Irwin the book used to be read by scribes in the service of the caliphs' and princes' children.

From the point view of Irwin, the paintings of *Kahla wa-Dimna* and the *Maqamat* could have been aimed at the children of the rich. It might be interesting to quote him since it seems a very useful study of manuscript art in relation to children's art and education. The following statement quoted the original view of one of the well-known early medieval Muslim literary critics and authors of *Kahla wa-*

Dimna, Ibn al-Mugaffa. His view clearly indicated that painting was an integral part of the manuscript literature and the painting is used for fables and other similar books, which were produced to instill some moral values and achieve certain education objectives. Most of these values associated with Islamic manuscript art are often overlooked especially when this integrated artwork is only studied in the Western context to the art of painting.

“Kalila wa Dimna was valued as a text for mastering Arabic. In the preface to one of the manuscripts of the later, Ibn al-Muqaffa (or a later writer impersonating him) explains why he has produced a book of animal fables. He argues, firstly, that children would be attracted by the placing of human speech in the mouth of animals, and, secondly, that the book has images in a variety of colours and pigments, so that they delight the hearts of kings; and their enjoyment is increased by the pleasure to be had from these illustrations”. (Irwin, 1997, p.185)

One interesting remark made by Irwin was the artist’s workshop, which often produced the manuscript art but it is very hard to know their personal profiles. According to Irwin, the artists of the manuscript usually work as team not individually and even a single painting work was often produced by more than one artist. In the West, the artist is considered as an individual and the art product often appreciated with reference to the personal view of the artist, which would establish his fame and identity. It is for this reason Irwin argued that Islamic painting should not be associated with the actual life of early Muslims or accepted evidence about early Muslims. Firstly because there is usually no information about the artist, who made the work, since early manuscript paintings are never signed by artists. The second factor has to do with the subject matter of paintings because early Muslim artists do not tend to represent their real life but rather follow some schema of representation.

Another point highlighted by Irwin was the artist’s attitude towards painting visual perspective. The Muslim artists were not interested in linear Western perspective

to achieve an illusion of actual visual eyewitness's view. Muslim artists often present different side views on the same image but these usually cannot be seen together in the same space and time. Irwin has illustrated this point with reference to some painting examples made by a team of Muslim artists who produced the manuscript of *Kalila wa-Dimna*.

Irwin indicated that painting was not a major product and part of the basic element and visual form of Islamic art. Islamic painting was not an independent art but rather it was originally developed in relation to the art design of manuscript works. There is only a limited number of wall paintings, which were discovered by archaeologists in modern time in a few residential palaces. Arnold and the rest relied only on these discovered wall paintings to make their point of view as we have seen previously.

On the contrary, according to Irwin, the history of these palaces is not clear and all the wall paintings were found in different buildings that belonged to different Muslim princes or rulers. The paintings were few in number and only a few were in good condition. Until now the history of all these paintings has not been well established, and there is much speculation about them. There is not enough historical information about the date and the real owner of the deserted palaces, where the wall paintings were found. This limitation of source and evidence did not seem to be a problem for some Western art historians who have considered these wall paintings to be enough material to suggest that painting in Islamic culture was a private and secular art made for the rulers.

"Naturally, the important palaces and government residences were in towns such as Damascus but very little has survived of those buildings. The so-called 'desert palaces,' or *qusur* (the plural of *qasr*), have survived better and have attracted more attention from archaeologists and historians. These "palaces" include Khirbat al-Mafjar, Mshatta jabl Sais, Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, and Qasr al-Hayr al sharqi. The precise purpose of these country residences has caused much debate in recent times, and a variety of explanations for their proliferation has been put forward... in some cases at

least, such residences could have served as centres for administration of agricultural estates.”(Irwin, 1997, p.103-104).

Although, Irwin generally shared the mainstream view especially with regard to image representation and Islam’s world view of art, he clearly stated that the issue of non-representational art is a complex issue to deal with, which is usually taken for granted. Also he pointed out that some Muslims, who do not accept any sort of image, very often support their views with reference to the religious teaching source of early Islamic history. In the following centuries, the word *taswir* was used and referred to any sort of image. At early stage *taswir* was only associated with the art of pagan idols in the context of the seventh century. In later centuries when Islamic art and culture was established, some religious scholars interpreted the Qur’an and Hadith in a manner that banned image.

“The issue of non-representational nature of Islamic art is something that any study of the subject needs to address. The one “fact” that the people who know little in even general terms about Islamic art think they know is that representational art is forbidden in Islam. This, however is a simplification of a complex issue, but it remains one of the commonest misconceptions about Islamic art. It is true that many devout Muslims opposed the use of any images of a representational nature in art or architecture; and that there is a preference for decoration of a calligraphic and abstract nature, which is in itself one of the chief glories and achievements of Islamic art.”(Irwin, 1997, p.14)

The works and views that has been discussed so far represent the debate of image representation with particular reference to the world view of Islam, and provide a clear idea about the importance of this question in the understanding of Islamic art. The discourse is not necessarily comprehensive and covers much material and details but rather it was limited to the most current views about the study of painting.

There is still no general agreement with regard to the question of image in Islamic art. Most of the mainstream studies very often focus on the theological debate to

answer whether Islam forbids image or not. All these studies basically agree to some extent that Islam did not forbid image but on the other hand there was no effort made to study the question in relation to organic link between Islam and art. Muslim theologians themselves often are not in general agreement about this question. The notion that Islam did not forbid figurative art is not something new but it has been always a problematic question because the theological view often produced two different answers to the same question (See Chapter Three.)

From a theoretical point of religion, the question of figurative art has always been very problematic even in Christian thought and the Jewish tradition (Minor, 1994; Taylor, 1995). In both cultures of the two major religions, figurative art was originally forbidden to represent an image of God to be used in a religious context especially from the point of view Judaism (Allen, 1988; Douzinas, 1996). The Jewish people often do not tend to see their God in a visual image that did not encourage them to use figurative art in the decoration of their synagogues like the Roman temples for example. All these theological views are very well-documented even before Islam but it did not stop the Jews and the Christians in particular developing figurative art in their defined ritual space and religious places (Saxl, 1970; Baggle, 1995; Jairzbhoy, 1996).

It might be relevant to take two more books as an example of the latest articles on Islamic art, to show the conflict in views with regard to the interpretation of the question of image in reference to the Qur'an's message.

The first book is *Islamic Designs* published by the British Museum, and the second is a history book written for A-Level and adult education students in the United Kingdom.

Eva Wilson, in her book *Islamic Designs*, expressed the view that “the law of the Koran bans representational art”. The quoted statement seems to refer directly to the Qur’an, which totally conflicts with the view of mainstream scholars, who generally agreed that the Qur’an does not speak against representational art, but only discourages figurative art and image representation in the form of icons. In this example, the Qur’an is presented as a source of law and seems here to restrict representational art rather than to inspire certain expressions and visual language.

“The law of the Koran is social as well as spiritual: no aspect of life is untouched by it and therefore all art has to abide by its principles. The complete ban on representational art in the most important contexts, such as in the mosque or in the writing and illumination of the Koran, is particularly striking and meant that the artistic genius of the Islamic world took a different direction to Christian art... the attitude to art laid down in the Koran reflects this.” (Wilson, 1997, p.9)

John Spencer, the author of “The Art History Study Guide” has expressed similar opinions in his book and stated:

”Islam founded in the seventh century... Strictly speaking, Islamic artists were forbidden to represent human and animal forms, a prohibition that encouraged them to invent, increasingly complex patterns of surface decoration...the scholars of the Byzantine West began to emulate Islamic restraint and instituted a period of iconoclasm (a movement that forbade virtually all religious imagery)” (Spencer, 1996, p.78).

The second example showed Islam not only restricted representational art, but the statement clearly indicated that Islam influenced the Christian art tradition when the Byzantine Church forbade religious imagery. The former quotation of Spencer’s clearly conflicts with the already formulated view of mainstream writers who always tried to study the question of image in relation to early-established religious tradition before Islam.

The view of Islam toward figurative art should be considered an art question. Islam is the religion that has a special organic link with art through the Arabic language.

With this device Islam very often influenced the visual art and aesthetic form of Islamic culture especially ideas in the art of painting. The influence of Islam in the art expression of Muslims is evident even in the recent work and views of many Muslim Western-educated artists (Ali, 1989.). Ahmed Moustafa is one of the celebrated Muslims who lives in the U.K and his painting is based on the Arabic script. In his view, Islam did not restrict image but it is a matter of a different aesthetic mode of expression. His Ph.D. thesis was on the scientific foundation of Islamic art, where he argued that Islamic art is based on the science of geometry orientated towards Arabic calligraphy (Theophilus, 1993).

On the other hand, Sayyid Hossein Nasr has generally referred to the problem of the recent studies in Islamic art. He argued for a new approach to study Islamic art, since the subject is still considered from the view of the Western aesthetic.

“Likewise, Western aesthetics has continued to dominate Western scholarship in the field of Islamic art. The significance of various art forms, whether they be painting, calligraphy or carpet weaving were determined until a short time ago by the priority given in Western art to painting, and the distinction made between arts and crafts or fine arts and practical arts. In the absence of an Islamic philosophy of art, Western criteria have continued to be applied not only by Western scholars as would be expected, but also by Muslim scholars within the Islamic world.”(Nasr, 1989, Vol. 6, No. 2, p.5)

The following part of this chapter discusses image in the context of the spiritual and intellectual aspects of Islam, taking into account the views of some Western and Muslim art writers who have a radical outlook to the visual formation of Islamic art. This outlook may provide a practical insight on the problem of image in the light of the spiritual worldview of Islam and art. Studies of this kind are limited in number, however, they involve both a theoretical and analytical approach to major art forms and the design of Islamic art, with particular attention to the value of geometry and Arabic language and script. Most of these subjects are

relevant to the nature of Islamic art and the understanding of its imagery and provide a practical clue to the view of image in Islam reflecting the liberal approach of these writers who did not commit themselves to a particular art history tradition.

Their point of view is important because none of them were involved in the theoretical debate of the legal view of image representation in Islam. In other words the group did not focus on the general socio- political aspects of art but, tried to study certain aspects of Islamic visual art forms taking into account the internal elements involved in the formation of the artwork.

All the selected works cover most of the major studies, although this trend is still growing, it represents the most radical approach to the study of Islamic art based on the orientation of all art form in Islam and Islamic culture.

Sir Ernst Gombrich (b.1909), one of the twentieth century's most influential art historians, has written a number of acclaimed essays and books on Renaissance and Mannerist art, theories of perceptions and art historical method (Edwards, 1999).

In 1972, he published his book *The Story of Art* which, covers the history of major art around the world but only devoted a small space to the history of Islamic art, which was only two pages out of his comprehensive volume that included some remarks about the problem of making image in Islam. Most of Gombrich's other studies focused on the evolution and the process of image representation. In this particular work, a great deal of Gombrich views are relevant and significant to the understanding of the question of painting in relation to the system of Islamic art. It might be useful to start with remarks of Gombrich about Islamic art in his work *The story or art*. In this book, he expressed his scholarly opinion about the

orientation of image representation in Islamic art. Although his general remarks on Islamic art are quite short, his view conflicts with the mainstream Western writers especially with regard to the attitude of Islam towards image. In short, Gombrich discussed image representation in Islamic art, making him one of those writers who considered that Islam's teaching is against figurative image and representational art. According to his view, the Muslim artists did not have any other choice except to rely on their imagination and 'play with patterns' of plants and geometric motifs. The art of painting was only developed, in certain parts of the Muslim world, when some sects of Muslims were not very concerned about the banning of image. He stated that figurative painting in Islamic art was only encouraged and used mainly in the manuscript illustrations as long as these painting are not meant to be used as religious icons. However, it is not clear from a historical point of view whether Islam figurative art was banned at the beginning of Islam or Islamic art developed based on a different visual perspective. The most significant remarks of Gombrich are perhaps, the way he explained figurative painting style and technique in the context of visual perspective of Islamic art.

There are two major works of Gombrich. Both were devoted to the study of many aspects of representational art, especially from the visual and psychological perspective of image. It is not the aim to review any of these works but rather to discuss a few of Gombrich points since it seems very helpful to understand the attitude of Islam towards image in a more practical sense. Gombrich argued that image is influenced by the value and function of art, "visual form of image follows the practical function of art". For him image representation in artwork is not always originally made for purely subjective artistic expression. This is only one example and there are more views where Gombrich shows that the process of making image is influenced by many factors other than the aesthetic values of

image. Unlike other traditional art historians, Gombrich adopted a psychological scientific approach to understanding the value of image in artwork, (Cunliffe, 1998). In his view of representational art, he tended to establish links between image representation and visual perception to understand the utilitarian application and verbal function of image representation.

In his book *"Image and Eye"* Gombrich thought that image in artwork usually serves other purposes and mostly to communicate certain views, which common verbal language may not possibly mediate. On the other hand, verbal language does not always arouse a response, and the feeling of the actual situation and reality does not have the same emotional and psychological effect of the visual image. To him the image is superior to the verbal and written language, especially when the objective of artwork is to mediate certain messages, ideas and concepts which are very hard to express verbally. In contrast, visual image representation is inferior in expressing some logical and definite abstract ideas, which only verbal language can communicate without confusion. Gombrich has illustrated his view with an example to show that image often misleads, no matter how much detail it records about certain visual reality. A verbal image or concept such as "a cat on the table" might be very confusing and it is definitely not possible to communicate such a verbal concept in a visual image. The visual image of a cat sitting on the table is often open to many possible interpretations. Image representation is limited to a great extent in terms of communication of verbal ideas and messages regardless of the power and psychological impact of image on the emotional sense and cognitive perception of a human.

Sometimes the power of image cannot be overlooked when there are needs for visual aids to illustrate and make clear some narrative account. Gombrich referred to the attitude of the Christian Church when image was renounced because of the

fear of the negative psychological effect of image and its potential to be the subject of idolatry

“Images were thunderously accused of idolatry by the new theologians: the adoration given to icons, as material objects, was diverted from its true and only object, which is God” (Settis, 1994, p.122)

At the same time, the Church recognised image as one of the most powerful visual aids especially in the context of the Christian faith. The Church justifies the use of image for illustration for those Christians who cannot read so that they can comprehend certain abstract views of their faith and understand or remember the bible stories. Some Christian sects have encouraged representational art for the same reason, especially because image has a greater effect than words to arouse the feeling of wholeness in the space and concentrate the devotion of worshippers during the Church service. He thought that sometimes the image is unlikely to function well, and that representational art cannot achieve the right psychological and emotional effect without the assistance of the written word and at least some previous knowledge about the subject matter of the depicted image. This point might be much clearer and easier to understand with a brief quotation of Gombrich's original words.

“The Church feared idolatry but hesitated to renounce the image as a means of communication...without the aid of the spoken word, the illiterate, of course, could not know that the sufferer is not a malefactor but a saint who is marked by the symbol of the halo, that gestures made by the onlookers indicate compassion. But if the image alone could not tell the worshipper a story he had never heard of, it was admirably suited to remind him of the stories he had been told in sermons or lessons. Once he had become familiar with legend of St. Lawrence even the picture of a man with a gridiron would remind him of the saint.” (Gombrich, 1994, p.155, 156)

On the other hand, there are some visual views and information that can only be communicated and more easily understood through certain styles and techniques of image representation, which is similar to the childlike image style. Maps, graphic

signs and blueprint images are usually made without reference to the common eye observation and optical perspective. There is no need for much detail when the image is made to represent a conceptual visual view. It would not be practical to create an illusion of visual reality or the effect of dimensions when the image is made to provide an overall picture about the national park with the trees and location of the lake or how the facilities can be located all over the park ground. Gombrich referred to city maps and tourist guide booklets. In this context, the style of representation is more related to the function of image, but not necessarily what the eye can see. Some convention and styles of representation were developed to create image with intention to show important visual information where it is not possible to see directly or imagine the actual location of these visual scenes or images. Gombrich used the style of ancient Egypt as an example, where the convention of image representation is different and the ancient art is usually compared to children's art. The Egyptians drew image in all directions to represent the shape of an object and the ground without reference to the convention of one point of view and three-dimensional perspective. The Egyptian image style is more practical in certain contexts and is now universally used in tourist guides. The image almost follows the technique of a map and this way it can provide leading visual information because it is easily intelligible. (Gombrich, 1994)

This view of Gombrich might be helpful to understand the value of the written word, in relation to the visual form of Islamic art, especially in the spiritual context.

Islamic Art and Spirituality (the first book published in the English language on this subject) mainly deals with the spiritual origin of Islamic art. The study represents a systematic outlook of Sayyid Hossein Nasr, in response to the views

of Western and Muslim academics who adopted the modern trends of Islamic art history. He mainly criticised Western and Muslim art historians who tend to study the origin of Islamic visual art with limited reference to the external force of history and the socio-economic and political conditions (Kultermann, 1993). These were the main factors that most Western art historians usually considered very crucial in the creation of Islamic cultural materials and the development of Islamic art.

Nasr is familiar with Western thought and the orientation of Islamic art history and studies. His interest in the subject grew out of a deep understanding and close experience with Islamic culture and art tradition. He is the Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University. His major was Science, Philosophy and the History of Science at MIT and Harvard University. *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, is one of his major works and the only study that was fully devoted to the subject of Islamic art and spirituality (Nasr, 1987).

For him the origin of Islamic art cannot be explained with reference to Islamic law and theological views, neither can it be explained in relation to the external force of history and the socio-political factors. Islam interacts with art at the spiritual level. Nasr rejected the Orientalist and academic Western perspective of Islamic art study where art work and style are considered the direct result and product of cultural materials. To him this view denies the spiritual and qualitative aspect of Islamic art and reflects natural philosophy where nothing can exist beyond quantitative space and the material world.

Nasr suggested a new approach to the study of Islamic art with a close focus on the link between Islamic art and Islamic spirituality. There is no indication in the outlook of Nasr that image representation is forbidden. He is of the opinion that

Islamic law does not tell people how to make things. Islam has an inner dimension and this is where the relationship interfaces between art and Islam occurs. However art cannot be explained in relation to Islamic law and theological views. Islamic art is basically concerned with the optical world and the representation of outward images but visual forms and materials were used as a means to represent the inner reality in physical space.

“The art is based upon a science of an inner nature which is concerned not with outward appearance of things, but with their inner reality. Islamic art manifests, with the aid of this science and by virtue of the Muhammad *barackah*, the *haq'iq* of things... this casual nexus provides the reason for understanding why, whenever there has been a decay or eclipse of the spiritual dimension of Islam, the quality of Islamic art has diminished.” (Nasr, 1987, p.8-9)

Unlike the Western approach where the study of visual art is often isolated from the art of literature. Nasr recognized Islamic art in the traditional sense where it is not always useful for strict comparison to be made between one form of art and another. Usually there is a very strict distinction observed between fine major art and minor artwork or crafts product. Islamic art definition in the discourse of Nasr reflects the traditional aspect of Islamic culture where all professions and sciences are interrelated areas of interest. Visual art is directly associated with science and closely linked with the arts of music and Arabic literature.

By using an historical study, it would not be possible to highlight the origin and source of spiritual unity in the form of Islamic art. For Nasr, it does not matter whether some of the Islamic art was produced by Muslims, or whether in some respect it expresses the artistic and aesthetic values of the individual artist or represents the artistic talent of a particular race. The product of Islamic art is homogeneous in form of style and objective which mainly reflects the spiritual world of Islam. That was the reason why Western historians failed to recognize the

origin of Islamic art. They relied on limited sources and evidence of proof to deny the relationship between Islam and art. Nasr argued that it is very difficult today to recognize the spiritual and intellectual orientation of Islamic art as an outside observer, especially when the study relies on historical account or theological sources without the study of the tradition of Islamic art.

“ In certain epochs of Islamic history written sources are present to provide evident proof of the relationship between Islamic spirituality and intellectuality on the one hand and art on the other, while in many other cases the oral tradition has left no direct written trace to enable this relationship to be studied in detail from the outside.”(Nasr, 1987, p. 9)

This study, though difficult, dealt with the aspect of spirituality, which is an abstract subject, is a very essential element to understanding the visual perspective and imagery source of Islamic art. His view might be easily understandable in relation to analytical studies of the same trend. Others not only shared a common view with Nasr but have made breakthroughs in many areas of interest related to the study of imagery in Islamic art.

It might be useful to discuss other examples of different studies that basically deal with both the visual and spiritual aspects of Islamic art.

Islamic Pattern is an analytical study of the original source and qualitative meaning of geometrical design which intersects with Arabic script. The book was first published in 1983 with a preface by Sayyid Nasr, who highly praised the efforts of the author, Keith Critchlow. Quoting at length some words of Nasr, seems very important in understanding the value of Critchlow's research especially in relation to the spiritual study of Islamic art.

“Keith Critchlow is to be congratulated for composing a work which is an important contribution to the field of Islamic studies and also to the new and yet ancient search of discovering the nature of things... This work itself should be a means of awakening many people to dimensions of both art and science long forgotten but now

sought by those who have become aware of the shortcomings of a partial knowledge of things..."(Critchlow, 1995, p.6).

In Islamic art, geometrical design is often applied for aesthetic and visual expression in most the traditional art product of Islamic culture. Geometry plays a major role in Islamic art and according to Critchlow, the intellectual and metaphysical aspect of geometric pattern have drawn the attention of artists away from the representational world. The geometrical style of Islamic art is not quantitative in its origin or the manifestation of an abstract visual form in a mathematical sense. The geometric pattern of Islamic art represents divine unity.

In the introduction to his work, Critchlow quoted the view of the medieval Muslim intellectual groups who considered the study of practical geometry very fundamental because it leads to skills in practical arts, while the study of practical geometry is specially helpful in intellectual art. They considered the science as the gate to the knowledge of the essence of the soul. According to Critchlow, the study of the mathematical orientation of Islamic pattern is very crucial to study of Islamic art, nevertheless this area is often disregarded. (Critchlow, 1995)

Critchlow selected the point as the origin of geometry, which is a basic element of creating form, and space although the point may not have dimensions but it still exists between the metaphysical and physical world. In this example, Critchlow seems to provide a practical idea to recognizing the connection between the internal and external worlds where their existences depend on each other. On the other hand he used the example of point to define the fine line between abstract idea and sensible expression and between reality and its source. He attempted to interpret the fundamental concept of Islam based on the same argument.

"...and in the fundamental formula of Islam – *la ilaha illa* ('no divinity if not the sole divinity'); this formula consists of two pairs of words, each word representing a degree of reality, as well as each pair denoting the negation (*nafy*) and the affirmation (*ithbat*) respectively; the negation refers to the manifest domain and the affirmation to the supra formal and the principle

together. This supreme mystery manifesting itself as paradox in the human mind to remind it of its inherent limitations, can be expressed variously as: no God but God; no part without whole; no reflection without source. It is no less applicable in the field of geometry: no dimension without all dimensions.” (Critchlow, 1995, p.7)

Critchlow made very useful remarks about the orientation of geometry in Islamic art. He also referred to the common bias of Western views towards Islamic art, as it is not appreciated as anything more than complicated decoration.

The study contains detailed analysis of some of the mathematical aspects of Islamic art. He devoted a very comprehensive essay to discuss the concept of Magic Squares related to the symbolic meaning of geometry in Islamic art, because this subject is very abstract he included diagrams to explain the mathematical formula used to make some Magic Squares. He referred to some examples of Muslim scholars and scientists who traced the relationship between mathematics and cosmological views infused in Islamic art and geometrical pattern expressions.

“Al-Jabir’s alchemical square: The whole arrangement shows the 3x3 grouping of different number patterns. The central pattern was specifically chosen by al-Jabir to demonstrate certain mathematical principles which have a correspondence in the context of natural phenomena. The sum of the digits enclosed by the heavy line is 28, which for al-Jabir symbolized the 28 – day lunar cycle.” (Critchlow, 1995, p.45)

Islamic art in some respect reflects the traditional Islamic cosmology which originated in the Qur’an revelation and developed in relation to Islamic science and philosophy. The concept of Islamic cosmology is based on the unity of creation, which is considered to have inner and outer aspects. The objective of spiritual disciplines is to unite both the inner and outer, the part with the whole in one integrated form in art. This view is usually expressed through geometric forms, for example, the circle shape in pattern design has greater value over all other geometrical elements in the expression of cosmic unity. Some of the Islamic

pattern grids include five point stars and it is suggested they have the same archetypal meaning and may represent the days of creations expressed in the Bible and the Qur'anic revelation. (Critchlow, 1995).

The use of pattern has a practical function and is not only meant to produce a beautiful geometrical design. It is also suitable for certain art works allowing the craftsmen to use the materials economically. Critchlow also made some remarks about the application of symmetry, which is a fundamental element in Islamic art especially in design work and controls most Islamic pattern structures. Symmetry is not only used to set up the plan of the system of some given pattern, symmetry can be viewed as an expression of unity through mathematical equality.

Titus Burckhardt is an outstanding scholar of Islamic art. He is among the few radical art commentators who are interested in the esoteric interpretation of Islamic art and its traditional perspective (Irwin, 2000). His major work *Art of Islam, Language and Meaning*, was translated into English by J. Peter Hobson, and published in 1976 by the World of Islam Festival. The book was forwarded by Sayyid Hossein Nasr, who considered it one of a few objective studies of Islamic art. The view of Nasr is that the spiritual aspect of Islamic art is still neglected because there are only few studies that deeply focus on the inner meaning of the Islamic art.

Burckhardt's study focused on the quality and the origin of Islamic art, considering the historical approach very limited. His point is that all historical studies only answer certain general questions about Islamic art, for example, the relation of Islamic art to the early traditions, which is not enough to provide a clear answer because Islam spread swiftly, and Islamic art was developed in an unusually short period of time, about a century after the Prophet's death. Islamic art, for him was

not only developed quickly but it has displayed a completely convincing unity, and maintained its unique character for centuries. It is only Buddhist art that has a comparable homogeneity despite the ethnic difference attributed to Buddhist art which emphasizes certain expressions and icons. On the other hand, Islamic art is abstract and totally different from the art of other cultures. Its origin is not directly from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet. Islamic art developed without scriptural foundation but is still profoundly has Islamic character.

Burckhardt is unlike the mainstream writers, who often considered Islamic art as a late development of an early art tradition of early cultures such as Byzantium and Persia. The art for him in some respect was developed in relation to external factors especially from the early period of Islam, where it was associated with Arabs, who were a nomadic or semi-nomadic society. Only after the first stabilisation at the end of Umayyad period, interest in art became very serious and real. Burckhardt does not agree with the notion that the early monuments of Islamic art represents models of early Byzantine art.

There is usually a dispute about the first Islamic art monument, The Dome of the Rock. This mosque was built about 60 years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, between 688 and 693 A.D. The Dome of the Rock might be considered to represent the art technique of the Byzantine tradition, but the same monument is one of the early products of Islamic art especially in the choice of its constituent elements. The second major monument is the great Mosque of Damascus, started in 706, finished in 715. It is one example of the early Islamic art in its general form, but not in term of its details. The new art form of Islam expanded rapidly toward the middle of the eighth century. It was quite a short time to establish

universal art in a very broad front from Damascus in North Arabia to Cordova in Spain.

He is of the view that representational painting was not an element in the early formation of Islamic art. He referred to the first Islamic art monument the Dome of the Rock because its original decoration does not include any representation of living images. This early art evidence does not support the view of the Orientalists who tend to argue that Islam did not reject anthropomorphic images, and that image was discarded in art work of the religious place at a much later stage of history after the dogma was formulated. According to Burckhardt, the art of the Dome of the Rock, may represent the meeting point between the Byzantine and Islamic point of view, which was possibly due to the Platonic element inherited in Byzantine art. On the other hand the art of the Dome of the Rock is an integration of the world view of Islam oriented towards the unity of God in both transcendent and immanent aspects.

“It should be noted, however that the decoration of the Dome of the Rock includes no representations of animate beings”....This worldly art of the Umayyads can be explained by the fact that Islamic art this period was still in the process of formation.”(Burckhardt, 1976, p.13-14)

Burckhardt has a radical approach to the interpretation of the Qur'an's language with reference to the study of Islamic art. He devoted a special essay in one chapter to the discussion of the Arabic language with the message of the Qur'an and its literary style. To him Islamic visual art not only developed in relation to the Arabic language but it is an expression of the poetic style and message of the Qur'an. The way he interpreted the Qur'an and explored its aesthetic language is a very unique example in the recent study of Islamic art. As we have seen, the mainstream writers did not make any efforts to relate the Qur'an's language to the form of Islamic art. Burckhardt's study seems to fill the gap, since the language of

the Qur'an is a very important element in the understanding of the abstract form of Islamic art.

“The language of the Qur'an is omnipresent in the world of Islam; the entire life of a Muslim is filled with Qur'anic formulae, prayers, litanies and invocations in Arabic; the elements of which are drawn from the Sacred Book; innumerable inscriptions bear witness to this. It could be said that this ubiquity of the Qur'an works like a spiritual vibration- there is no better term to describe and influence which both spiritual and sonorous – and this vibration necessarily determines the modes and measures of Muslim art; the plastic art of Islam therefore, in a certain way, the reflection of the word of the Qur'an it is assuredly very difficult to grasp the principle by which this art is linked to the text of the Qur'an, not on the narrative plane, which plays no part in the customary art of Islam, but on the level of the formal structure, since the Qur'an obeys no laws of composition, neither in the strangely disconnected linking together of its themes, nor in its verbal presentation, which evades all the rules of metre. Its rhythm, powerful and penetrating as it is, follows no fixed measure; entirely unpredictable, it maintains at times an insistent rhyme like the beat of drum and will then suddenly modify its breath and pace, shifting its cadences in a manner as unexpected as it is striking.” (Burckhardt, 1976, p.45)

On another occasion, Burckhardt mentioned that the inner logic behind the geometrical pattern of Islamic art was rarely studied. This was stated in his foreword to the study of Issam El Said and Ayse Parman, (*Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*)

This book, published in 1976, represents a practical and theoretical comprehensive analysis of the applications and concepts of geometry in the design form and expression of Islamic art. Geometric method is the most simple technical system that enabled early Muslim artists to freely create endless and accurate pattern designs without the need to be restricted by any complicated numerical measurement tools.

Both authors tried to explore the methods used by early Muslim artists and craftsmen to create these geometrical forms. This infinity is the source of unity in the expression and composition in Islamic art, despite the diversity of the materials

and styles used by Muslims from China to Spain. The authors have stated that representational art did not have significant priority in Islamic culture. To them this led to the development of an art trend with a unifying concept and major interest in abstract visual style and expression to represent the physical world rather than to create a pictorial imitation of the natural visual image of nature. On the other hand, the interest in a representational and subjective aesthetic has prevented other civilizations achieving similar universal unity of Islamic art in all sorts of expressions, which are attached together in the matter of their forms and concept yet integrated with other artistic traditions.

In their study they explained the unifying element of Islamic art with reference to the concept of *mizan*, this Arabic word means balance, which considered the basic law of all creations. The *mizan* law was applied in the geometric approach to design, the systematic method to the execution of decorative art, calligraphy, architecture and the composition of music and Arabic poetry. They devoted a special chapter to exploring the concept of geometry in Islamic visual art with reference to the law of balance in Arabic literature of poetry.

The grammar and phonetic system of the Arabic language in some respects follows geometrical patterns, which is the source of unity in all forms of Islamic art. Arabic poetry is often composed according to eight verbal units and each one produces rhythm. The poet has to choose his word not only to produce the desired meter of the line of verse but also to achieve unity of rhythm and rhyme. The authors have tried to explain this aspect of Arabic poetry to indicate the orientation of geometry in all forms of Islamic art.

“The ratio of the numbers of vowels to silent sings in the whole, in one half-and in one-quarter of the *Tawill* meter are 28:20, 14: 10 and 7:5, 10 and 7:5, respectively. It is this geometric proportioning

of sub-units, which gives the poetry its *mizan* (order balance).” (El Said and Parman, 1976, p.136)

Arabic Music also follows the same concept of balance as the authors have attempted to show the link between the art of music and Arabic poetry. In music, balance is achieved in the matter of geometric pattern oriented by poetry forms based on the verbal units. In general the authors explain the method used in creating geometric forms for abstract design. They attempted to show that all forms of Islamic art are oriented and unified by the same concept of balance which, is found in geometrical design, and all other forms of art expressions.

In 1975, the Middle Eastern Studies Department of the University of Chicago has academically assisted and published the comprehensive joint study of Nader Ardalan and Laheh Bakhtirar, *The Sense of Unity*. The subject of the study grew out of field research and it was mainly concerned with the origin of unity in the Islamic architecture of Persia and the Sufi tradition. It does not deal with painting but is still very useful in helping to understand the value and perspective of image in the traditional art of Islamic culture. This is because Islamic architecture is the major art and closely associated with geometry and Arabic script. These two elements are interrelated and often integrated to express the qualitative and spiritual world views of Islam, especially the concept of the divine unity. Based on this, traditional Islamic architecture interfaced with other art forms that share altogether the same homogeneous aesthetic values and sacred principles.

The authors explored some of the aspects that usually deal with the esoteric relationship between Islam and art. This view is the focal point of the field study

which explores the subtle unity in the art of Islamic architecture with particular reference to Sufi tradition.

Islam contains a law and a path that is closely interrelated but have a different effect on the work of Muslims and craftsmen. The law is related to behaviour and does not directly influence the fashion of creating new things, and the path refers to spiritual guidance. The guilds that produced traditional Islamic art were directed by traditional masters. Some of the craft masters are Sufi scholars, and the guilds are largely part of the Sufi order. Their art is created by observation of the principles that lead man to recognize divine unity in the essence and diversity of forms. Traditional Islamic education and the Sufi discipline incorporate deep spiritual training, the study of science and the formal practice of some kinds of crafts and art.

The Sufi regard the study of science especially geometry, alchemy and mathematics as a very important means of comprehending divine reality. One of the most basic fundamental principles of Islam is to recognize the Unity of God and this is referred to in the Arabic word (*Tawhid*). It literally means unity of all God's essences. All Muslims share the same basic belief but the Sufi school of thought considers spiritual and intellectual knowledge are equally important elements in comprehending and recognizing the divine unity of God. Islamic art involves craft talent integrated with science and altogether provides the means to produce art that is functional with a sense of unity.

The authors have analyzed both the practical and qualitative value of geometry and Arabic script in the art form and design of Islamic architecture. From the Sufi point of view, geometry and calligraphy have symbolic and qualitative value and both have mathematical order. This view corresponds to the Sufi perspective of visual forms where everything has an external and internal essence. The external is like-

the shape and the form of an art object. This is considered the sensible aspect of reality. The internal refers to the value of things, which is related to the divine origin of all forms.

Furthermore, Ardalan and Bakhtiar attempted to show the symbolic meanings associated with certain geometrical forms usually used as basic elements in the design of Islamic art. The square and octagon are frequently applied in the design plane of structure and surface space especially in the mosque architecture. In this context the octagon and square symbolize the dimensions of the Universe and these geometrical shapes are used to define the space and structure of the building where the typical dome of the mosque rests. The dome is often built up over the constructed space of a square shape but it rests on the centre and is held apart by an octagon. The final structure of the Dome with its a square and octagonal base represents heaven.

“The Dome rested upon a square held apart by an octagon which symbolised the eight angels, the bearers of the Throne, who in turn corresponded to the eight. Art shape related metaphysically to the Qur’an verses “ He is the First [*Awwal*] and the Last [*Akhir*] and the Manifest [*Zahir*] and the Hidden [*Batin*] and He knows infinitely all things.” (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 1976, p.40)

The sense of unity may help to study Islamic art in depth in the light of values and principles rather than with the reference to historical borrowing or material technique. Architecture is a major form of Islamic art and all other forms of art are usually closely related to architecture whether in terms of visual forms or functions.

Syed Jan Abas and Salman Amer Shaker tried to explore the application and major role of geometry in Islamic visual forms and expression. Their book *Symmetries of*

Islamic Geometrical Patterns is another practical example in understanding why image representation was not an element of expression in Islamic art, as it has a different visual system and is very much oriented by the abstract form of Arabic language and script.

The application of geometry in visual expression and design work was highly encouraged since the early stages of Islamic art formation. In relation to similar art traditions of early cultures, however, no other civilization applied geometry in art expressions with the same diversity and complexity as used in Islamic culture.

This study is one of the few studies made to explore the scientific orientation in Islamic art designs form and the language of expression. According to Abas and Shaker, there are three distinct forms of Islamic geometrical pattern and design. The first is the recognizable pattern of the rectangular Kufic script, which is usually applied with other geometric designs to create patterns out of the graphics of Arabic script. That is one of the major elements of design in most early Muslim monuments. It is useful to explore the value of Arabic script in Islamic art in relation to geometrical art design in the art product. However, this point will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The authors also explored some of the areas where Islamic art and science were integrated. They argued that the value and potential of Islamic symmetric and geometrical patterns, can be a very practical model to achieve a unified experience especially with reference to mathematical education. They have suggested some practical ideas where Islamic art can be very useful in the context of educational process and the study of modern science. For example, the Islamic art of geometry and symmetrical patterns can provide the means to understanding some complex subjects where there is a possible interrelation between art and science. For

example, the relation between art and physics or mathematics may be recognized in geometrical design and symmetrical patterns.

They have pointed out that Islamic patterns can be related to some of the physical and chemical structures of natural substances. In this sense the study of geometry and particularly, Islamic patterns is a very useful means for understanding and analyzing some scientific subject matters. In chemistry and physics for example, there are certain issues that are usually very difficult to explain in verbal language or with reference to mathematical or geometrical theory. They referred to the atomic and molecular state in certain respects and showed that both have the same basic structure of symmetrical and geometrical pattern.

In this sense, it seems that there is a growing awareness of the potential of Islamic art especially in relation to the broader objective of art education where art is considered an integrative subject and can be closely related to the study of science. The authors indicated that there are only few studies that focused on Islamic geometrical art in relation to science such as the Ph.D. thesis of Harry Bixler, who showed particular interest in the Islamic symmetry and geometrical pattern in reference to science. Another study by Emil and Mlota Makovicky examined the Arabic geometrical patterns in relation to crystallographic teaching.

“Geometrical patterns of Islamic art can serve artistic scientific and educational needs in all cultures. They are of course of special value for the educator in Islamic culture.

Offer something truly excellent and of universal value from the past which may be conjoined with the learning of today.”(Abas and Shaker, 1995. p.ix)

The Arab Beauty by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, who worked at the University of Munich, was first published in 1999 when she was a visiting Professor at Harvard

University. Among her other works there are several books on Islamic architecture and social history.

The Arab Beauty is one of the late theoretical comprehensive studies on Islamic art where the author attempted to study the expression of aesthetic beauty in relation to literary sources of Islamic art and Arab culture. The book represents many different views in which the author attempted to correct some misconceptions and misinterpretations of Islamic art.

In the introduction Behrens-Abouseif quoted the English Encyclopaedia of Islam where there is a remark about the lack of Islamic theory and conceptualization of Islamic aesthetic. In her view, this lack of aesthetic theory is not exclusive to Islamic culture.

“The European middle ages never developed a theory of fine arts to deal with the artistic creations whose essential purpose was to convey aesthetic enjoyment, with all the exalted meaning involved in such an aspiration”. (Behrens-Abouseif, 1999, p.3)

In most of the major studies of Islamic art the question of image in Islam was often discussed. The Qur'an is only considered as a source of evidence in understanding the legal view of image in Islam. On the other hand, the aesthetic element of the Qur'an message is overlooked. This limited view has been brought to attention by Behrens-Abouseif. Early Muslim culture did not produce written sources for analyzing the process of making art and design. According to Behrens-Abouseif, that lack of such written source should not be taken as negative evidence since the early Muslims were very aware of the organic relationship between art and beauty. With this argument Behrens-Abouseif has corrected some current misconceptions of some commentators, who may totally deny the aesthetic orientation of Islamic art due to the lack of formal theory or written sources on the Islamic aesthetic. For example, Grabar in his study of the origin of Islamic art tends to doubt if there was an established aesthetic theory when most of Islamic art monuments were

produced. Behrens-Abouseif's book is limited to the concept of beauty among Arabs but her view might have been generalized in some aspects when she considers early classical Islam as an Arabic speaking culture. She admitted the influence of other races, but she clarified the point that the art and aesthetic criteria of the Arab is very hard to apply to all Muslim cultures.

There is a problem about the term Islamic art. In this regard Behrens-Abouseif has made a useful comment. The term Islamic art often referred to the historical approach of Islamic art and aesthetic from a global perspective. It usually seeks to define the art form within the whole universal culture of the Islamic world to cover the art evolution between the eighth until the eighteenth centuries or later.

There is no clear Muslim or Arabic definition of Beauty, nevertheless the practical attitude often accepts aesthetic behaviour as part of normal life. There is no formal view to explain Islamic aesthetic theory. Visual art in Muslim culture is an integral part of everyday life that is enjoyed all the time. Architecture is one of the most prominent forms and expressions of Islamic art.

In her attempt to define the Islamic concept of beauty she adopted a new approach to the question with reference to the Qur'an's message and language. Behrens-Abouseif argued that the modern Arabic term for beauty (*Alm Al-Jamal*) has no direct reference in the Arabic language of the Qur'an but only in a moral context. There is no discrimination between beautiful and good in the Arabic language. However the verb, *Zayyana*, is used in the Qur'an and it refers to the process of making something good or look beautiful. *Zayyana* literally may mean, embellish or ornament and in general refers to aesthetic beauty.

There are some other Arabic terms that refer to the aesthetic quality of physical beauty and the Qur'an is full of reference to the beauty of the natural world. Through the Qur'an's message believers are encouraged and invited to reflect and contemplate on the universe to recognize the signs of God. This aspect of the Qur'an has not often received attention and this will be discussed later in Chapter Three. It would be useful to refer to the view of Behrens-Abouseif in this regard.

Islam has a great inspiring influence on the concept of art but not in the accepted Western sense. Behrens-Abouseif has explained this point with reference to the views of Arabs and their attitude towards the art of poetry as an example before Islam. The Arabs were fond of poetry especially before Islam and the poets were not only highly appreciated artists but they were believed to possess supernatural power, and each poet was inspired by *jinne* or ghosts. After Islam this notion disappeared and poetry became an art of creative talent, unlike the Greeks who considered poetry as a gift rather than a science. In contrast, the Arabs put much emphasis on the creative and technical aspects of poetry and these can only be improved by skill and study. The beliefs in these talents did not disagree with the principle faith in God who is behind all human successes.

The view of poetry can be applied to other art since all art forms are considered as crafts. In some of the later art publications there are many references to support this notion. As matter of fact the Arabic word, *sina'a* often refers to any form of crafts.

The attitude of Muslims toward aesthetic expression may be explained with reference to the recitation of the Qur'an in a beautiful voice. The majority of Muslim opinion favoured beautifying the holy book of the Qur'an. Its illumination

has always been a major art of expression to celebrate the Qur'an's sanctity, as an aid to favour its reading. The ornamentation of the Qur'an was not only a matter of illumination. It also functioned in recitation. Just as early Arabic poetry used to be sung, the Koran, when read, is not simply recited, but accompanied by a melody. Several theologians, such as Qurtubi (d. 1272) and Ibn Qayyim, have explained this phenomenon as part of the ancient Arab passion for music and songs.

In 1986, Labelle Prussin published her dissertation with the title "*Hatumere*", originally derived from the Arabic word *khahtem* for seal, with a minor change in the pronunciation. *Hatumere* is often used to refer to a particular type of unusual graphic design, using simple geometrical layout on paper or other materials. This kind of design involves knowledge and skills connected with mathematics, geometry and magic squares closely associated with certain healing formulas that are expressed in the Arabic script. The designs were usually used on sacred objects such as amulets. They were mainly created to protect their owners and whoever carries them, and were not, in the first instance, produced as works of art per se. Prussin was obviously very interested in finding objects carrying script in a mainly oral culture, viz:

"History has been traditionally dependent on the written and physical record; it has often consisted merely of arranging names, dates, and places in chronological sequence. In Africa, the minimal written documents are full of bias, oral traditions are veiled in a fabric of myth and legend, materials and artefacts are mutable and perishable, and the archaeological record is still in its infancy. Yet, it is often of this very challenge that innovative interpretation is born" (Prussin, 1986, p.xx-xxi).

Nine years later, the study was reviewed as one of the most comprehensive systematic studies about Islamic art in Africa (Adahl and Berit, 1995). Prussin's fieldwork gathered unique sources of evidence of a surviving art tradition, showing how Islam had been instrumental in shaping the design of visual material and

everyday art objects in the Muslim culture of the Western Sahara. Her study provides a radical approach to the study of art history since the early approach was basically aimed at reconstructing the art legacy of the past and remote cultures with reference to recent art views and knowledge. There is big gap of time and this makes it very difficult to study art history of past cultures with reference to present definitions of art because it simply does not reflect the same concept.

Although the study, *Hatumere*, has something in common with other related research, in which there is general agreement about the value and role of both geometry and Arabic script in the founding of a non-representational visual art tradition in early Islamic culture, most of the other studies concentrate on the philosophical and theoretical aspects of this issue in relation to past Islamic art tradition. Prussin, however, reveals this connection by showing how this operates in the daily practice of Muslim communities in the Western Sahara. Prussin's work is also important in that it identifies and records Islamic art traditions that have been passed down from times with no written records about art or artistic traditions. Islamic art studies usually relies on limited cultural/historical sources, in which Islamic art work is often considered from the perspective of the Western art tradition and is, therefore, seen in certain aspects, out of context. The dissertation, *Hatumere*, has thus filled a gap with regard to the study of the world of Islamic art in recent Muslim culture, with reference to the surviving art traditions.

“Western historians, ignorant of Islam, have tended to dismiss its pervasive and subtle presence and to avoid consideration of the ways in which traditional belief system and behavior patterns have absorbed and integrated facets of the Muslims heritage. The long-held belief among students of African art (and indeed, the whole scholarly community) that Islam destroyed traditional indigenous art forms still persists, despite the few scholarly attempts to prove the contrary...that such attitudes have severely limited the

development of any real understanding of the subject is obvious; even more important, they reflect the deep-seated, historically evolved patterns of theoretical misconception and its interpretation". (Prussin, 1986, p.4)

Prussin was not only concerned with the theoretical view and definition of art in Islam from a religious perspective, she was also interested in analyzing how Islam had influenced the creative and technical processes of art making, and how the written Arabic word often developed into abstract visual imagery, which became a major design element in art and architecture, in the Western Sahara.

She goes on to show how just as the Arab traders brought with them to the new territories, new building techniques and skills, the impact of Arabic script, or calligraphy, became a new visual metaphor and helped to create a new art aesthetic within sub-Saharan peoples, whilst at the same time, consolidating the art aesthetic of Islam over a wider field both geographically and spiritually

In her study, she recognised the subtle, political force of Islam on these West African cultures and how it had altered the values of the earlier traditional "sub-Saharan aesthetic". Nevertheless, the exchange was a two-way one, for the Islamic art of the urban centres was integrated, stylized and changed in a further ethnic abstraction, whilst remaining still recognizably Islamic.

"Only when Muslims in part achieved status and in part became integrated into the nascent political hierarchies did the indigenous ruling elites begin to exploit Islamic symbols and integrate them into traditional behaviours. Finally, it was only with the advent of political rule, in the name of Allah, that society-at-large converted to Islam. In percolating down to the commoners, the material symbols of Islam became Africanised and further abstracted." (Prussin, 1986, p.73).

With Prussin as an architect and architectural historian, one of the objectives of her dissertation, was to explore the active spiritual relationship and intellectual

interaction of Islam and Arabic language with a close look at the aesthetic, geometric and spiritual aspects of Arabic script. Based on this approach, she was able to explain how the world views Islam's Qur'anic education, and provides the potential craftsmen with special spiritual knowledge and skills of Arabic language. These skills are interrelated, however, the skill of Arabic writing is very critical and very often used as a tool for design to create visual form and pattern to organize the space in Islamic culture for application to daily life

Some of her research field includes observation of the traditional school system where the Qur'an is major source of education. The study of the Qur'an involves memorisation and studying the written text and with this basic element of education Muslims became familiar with the form of Arabic writing. In recent times, people in illiterate Muslim societies usually recognise the Arabic script as visual memories of the Qur'an's verbal message. Craftsmen are usually scholars or healers and their education includes deep knowledge of many basic areas of Islamic doctrine and other related skills such as Arabic writing and calligraphy.

In her study of the art products of the Western Sahara, Prussin became convinced that the original two-dimensional designs of the people had a double value; one the surface value of design, and the other an esoteric magic or spiritual aspect. With the overlay of Islamic design and the application of other elements to the design process, the original secret meaning of various patterns and designs has become lost over time, leading to a situation in which the patterning is seen as pure abstraction and aesthetics. However, the influence of the Qur'an is still much in evidence in the artwork of this region and religious awe can still be elicited by the designs and art products of the cultures there as they act in an emblematic way. Indeed, Prussin pays great attention to the fact that two-dimensional art has great

power in the largely illiterate culture of the Western Sahara and instead of becoming lost as people achieve literacy, an interesting aesthetic shift takes place.

“With the introduction of the written word, however, the multilevel complexity of oral language and physical behaviour is not immediately lost; instead, the visual image is shifted to the spatial dimension. It is precisely this shift which may explain the ultimate development of the richly elegant pattern work of surface of both the personal and physical environment in Islamicised West Africa” (Prussin, 1986, p.73).

In conclusion, the study of Islam’s attitude towards image has always been very significant in understanding the aesthetic value and application of painting in relation to the art form of Islamic culture. Unlike the traditional art of Christianity and other religions, Islamic art is based on an abstract form of expression with no interest in image representation of the visual world. Image representation and painting has no religious value in Islam but Islamic art is closely related to crafts. There is very detailed emphasis on the geometric design work and painting representation, which is often integrated with the craft of manuscript.

In modern times the study of Islam’s attitude towards the art of painting has been the focus of great interest especially in the West after the formation of Islamic art with reference to the new concept of socio-cultural history. As has been discussed, most studies of Islamic art and painting are largely influenced by a Western art history approach and with the growth of Islamic art history, certain notions were formulated about the attitude of Islam towards figurative image and painting.

There are two major approaches to the study of Islamic art. Each lead to different interpretations of the question of image representation in Islam. The first formulated notion of Islamic art reflects the image of Islam and the value of art in Western thought and culture. The relation between Islam and art are usually

interpreted in context of the secular view and normative theory of history. Islam's attitude towards painting has not been recognized as conveying a different worldview, neither was Islamic art defined to represent a distinct aesthetic trend and form of expression.

The question of painting has been mostly studied in historical reference to the theological view of Islam and the political formation of early Muslim states. It has been suggested that Islam did not have explicit views about image except after the growth of Islamic culture, and the formation of religious dogma, and that the art of representational painting was banned by the religious Muslim authorities. The common view was that the art of painting was a private art and represents the political power of early Muslim states since most of painting product of Islamic art were originally funded by the Muslim court. This approach is problematic simply because it denies the role of Islam in the formation of Islamic visual art style where geometry and Arabic script are the source of expression.

The second approach to Islamic art is more liberal and the question of image here is interpreted in relation to Islam spirituality and its influence on the visual language of Islamic art. The following two chapters will try to explore the attitude of Islam toward image in relation to this approach, where it focuses on the message of the Qur'an and its language as the main source of Islamic art form.

CHAPTER THREE

THE QUR'AN AND THE REPRESENTATION OF VISUAL IMAGE

The conclusion of the previous chapter has suggested that Islam particularly does not restrict image in art forms. It has usually been a problem to understand this question in terms of theology and historical study of Islamic art. It seems much more practical to accept the fact that Islam has a special active link. However, image representation has no ritual function in Islam. On the other hand, the art of painting did not take a leading place in the visual expression of Muslims. This attitude to art needs to be examined in relation to the Qur'an's spiritual message and language because both these elements are sources of great influence on all Muslim forms of expressions.

There is not much attention devoted to this aspect of the Qur'an because in the debate of image, the Qur'an is usually reviewed with limited evidence concerning religious law. In this sense the organic relation between the Qur'an and art is hardly recognised. It seems very important to look closely at both these aspects. Firstly to view the Qur'an as a source of law to see why art writers usually have controversial opinions about the attitude of Islam toward image. Secondly, to view the message and language of the Qur'an where there are great possibilities for understanding the nature of Islam's spiritual and aesthetic influence on art form and expression. (Behrens-Abouseif, 1999)

As stated previously, the Qur'an was used by some art writers as a major source of Islamic law to support their views in regard to the attitude of Islam towards image. The second important source is the Hadith, which is supplementary and a major key to the interpretation of the Qur'anic text. The Hadith documents a profile of

the Prophet where all his views and actions were recorded. The Hadith was collected from oral tradition and was written down after the death of the Prophet. In practice only the authentic Hadith is considered a source of law next to the Qur'an (Grabar, and Ettinghausen, 1987). The language of the Hadith has no special literary style while the Qur'an for Muslims is literally the word of God, and its language is highly aesthetic. On the other hand, the Qur'an plays a major role in the intellectual life of Muslims (Tabatabai, 1987) and the Hadith usually influence their moral and social behaviour.

The interpretation of the Qur'an is related to the science of theology and it requires particular knowledge of both the style and the grammar of the Arabic language, which are considered a major key to understanding the Qur'anic text. (Denffer, 1994). The *Hadith* is not only a direct source of law but it is very closely related to the understanding of the Qur'an. In other words, the *hadith* is used as reference to augment certain statements of the Qur'an in terms of laws, taking into account the action and view of the Prophet. The Qur'an's language is direct and concrete and it has few statements that refuted image representation in the form of icons and idolatry artwork. However, all art forms and aesthetic expressions of Islamic culture were stimulated and developed in a close relation to the Qur'anic message and literary style (Behrens-Abouseif, 1999).

The *hadith* is not only similar to the Qur'an, in the sense that it is also concerned with image in regard to religious practice and location. However, there is no direct link between the *hadith* and art. It has been reported through some *hadiths*, that the Prophet personally disliked image in certain contexts and circumstances in everyday life. On one occasion the Prophet objected to a curtain in his house, which was decorated with an image, mainly because it was hung in his praying

place (Hofmann, 1993; Al- Qaradawi, 1994). There were other items, like dolls, cushions and tablecloths decorated with images but the Prophet did not object seeing them in his house (Hofmann, 1993). The hadith does not have one single view, which directly indicates a negative attitude towards art, or generally restricts all kinds of image representation. In one Hadith the Prophet was reported to have said: “*innaalha jamilun, yuhibbu-l-jamal*” God ... the beautiful One... loves beauty (Hofmann, 1993, p 115}. In other *hadiths*, there are several accounts that apparently restricted three-dimensional image in a religious context. Some of these *hadith* seem to allow visual images in certain different circumstances and encourage art in some way as well (Al Qaradawi, 1994; Hofmann, 1993)

Muslim theologians often rely on the *hadith* as a source of ‘*qiyas*’, which is an analogy to establish a legal opinion to answer the question of image. (Behrens-Abouseif, 1995). There is no general agreement about the state of image in the artwork because the *Hadith* collectively discourages image in the context of religious affairs and allows some forms of image in artwork and objects made for every day life.

In theological sources, image representation is still an open question upon which Muslim scholars have no general agreement. According to the science of jurisprudence, image may be considered a disputable question. That means, the problem of image is subject to analogy and ‘*ijithad*’ innovation. Many Muslim scholars often agree that image in artwork is not restricted because the Qur’an supports such conclusions and only refers to image in the context of idolatrous practices.

“Later Muslim authors have ambivalent attitudes, judging from their views towards the question. Among the liberal writers were Al-Nahhas (d. 948 A.D.), Al-Farisia (d. 987 A.D.) and Al-Qayrawani (d. 1045 A.D.) all of whom regarded *taswir* as

legitimate. They recalled that statues (*tamathil*) had been fashioned for Solomon (Qur'an xxxiv,13). Midway stood Qadi Iyad al-Andalus (1083-1149 A.D.) who allowed representations of trees and natural objects (including dolls) that do not have spirits. Most restrictive was Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawani (922-966 A.D.) who condemned the representation of animals on chairs, domes canopies, walls, seals and on fabrics."(Jairazbhoy, 1996, p. 36)

The Qur'an is more specific compared to the Hadith especially with regard to the view of image representation and generally has few normative rules that usually regulate the life of Muslims. These rules are expressed in the form of logical recommendations in small number of '*ayah*' verses throughout the Qur'anic text. One of these verses in addition to some narrative argues for Muslim believers to abstain from any idolatry practice or the use of icons in the context of faith, whether it is in the form of visual image object or actions. This particular aspect of the Qur'an's teaching often receives much attention in the discourse of Islamic art, however, the spiritual aspects of the Qur'an are more relevant in understanding the question of image. In contrast, the attitude of the Qur'an towards idolatry is usually subjected to different interpretation. In some opinions, the Qur'an only restricts images and artwork created in the form of icons and made for worship, sometimes the restriction is generalised and the Qur'an is considered to forbid images regardless of their form and application.

As has been mentioned earlier, the interpretation of the Qur'an is related to the Hadith. There are two major notions about the view of the Qur'an and attitude of Islam towards image representation. It is not the intention here to focus on any of these notions but rather to briefly summarise them, since each one leads to a different conclusion. Most art writers in their debate about the attitude of Islam towards image refer to the following basic notions of image representation.

The first notion considers the Qur'an to have a strict view of image and totally forbids the representation of any figurative images in artwork. This is based on one 'ayah' in the Qur'an that condemned all form of icons whether an image or any celebrated object that would be subject for worship.

“O ye who believe, intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones and (divination by) arrows are an abomination. Of Satan's handiwork eschew such (abomination) that you may prosper.” (Ali, 1994, The translation of the meaning of the Qu'ran, S.5 A. 89-91 p. 315)

However, the quoted *ayah* deals with idolatry and does not literally speak about image in the form of artwork. It is for this reason that some modern art writers consider the Qur'an more definite and does not forbid image. It has been said that the original Arabic word in the Qur'an is '*al an'sab*', when it is taken literally does not refer to figurative artwork or statues. *Al an'sab*, literally refers to any commemorated individual or visual object including places, which could be associated with idolatry in the form of spiritual or ritual ceremony. In the English translation of the Qur'an's meaning, there is some comment about the Arabic word *Al an'sab* and it is perhaps very useful to quote here.

“The stones there referred to were stone altars with stone columns on which oil was poured for consecration, or slabs on which meat was sacrificed to idols. Any idolatrous or superstitious practice are here condemned. The *an'sab* were objects of worship and were common in Arabia before Islam.” (Ali, 1994, The translation of the meaning of the Qur'an, 5.5A. 89-91 p.315)

The first notion generalised the view of icon in the Qur'an, and therefore representational art is held to be totally forbidden. However, the theologians who are proponents of this position argue that visual image making may lead to or encourage idolatry, which was a common practice before Islam especially among Arab tribes.

The Qur'an in general does not contain negative attitudes towards art. The teaching of the Qur'an seems very specific, as far as the function of image is concerned. However, the first notion, goes further in emphasising that the Qur'an is the word of God and it has challenged those who compete with or imitate God's creations (Al-Qaradawi, 1994). Visual image representation of living creatures such as humans and animals are considered to be a form of competition with God. This view refers to Names of God, the Fashioner or the Creator, which are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an. Based on such an argument, visual image representation is entirely forbidden.

The second notion strongly suggests that image is not forbidden in artwork and other similar art forms, as long as these images are not fashioned for religious icons and when the images are not objects of worship. This notion is substantiated by the fact that the Qur'an only discourages idolatry, and the Hadith of the Prophet do not refute all the works of image representation.

The two major notions about the views on image in the Qur'an discussed above developed in relation to the Hadith and are generally considered to represent the attitude of Islam towards image representation. Art commentators especially the main Western scholars have acted like theologians who were concerned about the source of normative law in the Qur'an and Hadith. There is a recent effort to interpret certain verses of the Qur'an in relation to three-dimensional image, and in support of figurative art of human representation.

In the Qur'an, it is reported that the Prophet Jesus, peace be up on him, was endowed by God to perform some miracles and he was able to fashion out of clay an image of a bird. The Qur'an in another chapter referred to the story of Prophet Solomon, where it indicated that he was well-served by his followers who used to

do for him what he desired of artwork such as arches, images and large basins like reservoirs.

These two references to the Prophet Jesus and Solomon are considered a clear evidence that the Qur'an did not forbid figurative image when it was produced for creative expression and adornment. This interpretation appeared in the recent work of an Arab art historian, Afif Bahansi, when he discussed the question in an article "*Islamic Arts Heritage and Future*", (1995). A similar argument was made by the Islamic art historian, Oleg Grabar, in his discourse of image representation in relation to the formation of Islamic art. Grabar suggested different explanations to this passage of the Qur'an, where there is a clear reference to the same sort of figurative art that was especially made for the Prophet Solomon. To him, the Qur'an in this particular account may refer to certain types of image that could represent a likeness to living creatures and it might clearly be explained with the help of some Jewish legend.

"The second point is that statues or whatever they seem to be associated here with very prosaic, everyday object like cauldrons and cooking pots. It is possible that some very specific Jewish legend explains this particular passage" (Grabar, 1973, p.25)

There are still limited attempts to answer the fundamental question, how the Qur'an influenced art at the spiritual and aesthetic level. On the basis of the answer to this question, it is possible to understand the state of image in relation to the source of visual form and expression of Muslims.

The Qur'an's message and language have great influence on the world view of Muslim art more than any other dogma and religious sources of Islam. There are many different ways the Qur'an can be related to Muslim art forms (Grabar and Ettinghausen, 1987). This approach seems helpful in understanding the actual

source of interaction of Islam with the art forms and aesthetic expression of Muslim people.

The spiritual message of the Qur'an is centred around the basic divine view of one God who is the creator of the whole universe.

“Say: He is Allah, the one; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.”(Ali, 1994, The translation of the meaning of the Qur'an, S.112, A. 1-4, p.208)

“There is nothing like Him, yet He hears and sees all things.” (Ali, 1994, The translation of the meaning of the Qur'an, S.42, A. 11, p. 1476)

God is the only one and his attributions are only revealed in verbal images throughout the Qur'an's message (Philips, 1996). It is important to understand the attitude of Islam toward art in relation to the expression of the metaphysic world and divine reality. There is no doubt that the art products of Muslims reflect their values and beliefs, where the Qur'an is the major source of Islamic faith. There is no need to repeat and emphasise here that art is closely associated with religion and the concept of God that has always been the central theme in religious art of all cultures. In the view of Herbert Read, art can hardly be isolated from religion, even at the secular and individual level. The isolation of the two is only a matter of definition because any artwork often associated with some sort of ideology is not necessarily a religious dogma in the traditional sense.

“At times we think that the highest point has been reached in some particular masterpiece, at times there seems to be no art at all, and finally we begin to think that there can be no great art, or great periods of art, without an intimate link between art and religion.” (Read, 1951, p.82-83).

Visual art plays a central role in organising the physical world with symbols and forms. There is no other way to define spiritual reality except to use verbal symbols or visual forms. On the other hand, religious views and beliefs has always

been the subject of art expressions in both verbal and visual language. For example, Gombrich considered representational art closely related to Christian theology, where the paintings were used in relation to the narrative of the Bible to represent the divine images for illiterate people. (Gombrich, 1992). The art plays a central role in defining the dimension of the spiritual reality, for example, spiritual space. For Muslims, worship may need a special place with some type of furniture that may need certain forms of art to define and organise the spiritual space of worship. In Islam the spiritual space is not totally separate from the daily life and this is reflected in the function of the mosque. In the Qur'an, there are many references to mosques with emphasis on their function and the duty of the believers to maintain them for worshipping God alone.

“And the places of worship are for Allah (alone): so invoke not any one along with Allah” (Ali, 1994, The translation of the meaning of the Qu'ran, S. 72, A. 18, p.1834)

Muslims do not need a special place for their daily praying. Only when they pray in a group any suitable ground or space can be converted into a place of worship. The building of the mosque can be of very simple architecture since its original function is to provide a clean and peaceful shelter with enough space for all worshippers to stand in rows facing the direction of Mecca. The mosque is a public building, where the Muslim community meet five times a day for communal worship especially on Friday. The word *massjid* in the Arabic language refers to the mosque's land and building, but it is literally derived from the term prostration. In the Qur'an the mosque is associated with physical praying that usually involves prostration on the ground in act of submission and worship for God. Another term for mosque in the Qur'an is referred to as the house of God. This very much reflects the actual function of the mosque in Islam. The building and space of the

mosque is not only restricted to worship, it serves other functions such as social gatherings and educational centres.

Furthermore, religious views and beliefs has always been the subject of art expressions. For Muslims, the Qur'an is not only a holy book but it is also a major source of knowledge and education (Nasr, 1975; Hofmann, 1993; Denffer, 1994). In this respect the Qur'an has a great influence on their intellectual work and art product. The early education of Muslims was mainly focused on the study of Qur'an and other related subjects, such as Arabic language and science, especially mathematics and geometry (Hofmann, 1993; Hitti, 1998). In traditional Muslim schools, students start their primary education by learning to read and memorise the Qur'an because all Muslims usually recite some of the Qur'an when they pray. With this method even illiterate people become familiar to a certain extent with the phonetic format of the Qur'an. An average Muslim person may recognise the Arabic text since all Muslims try to read and recite the Qur'an in Arabic (Abu-Baker, 1997). In fact every Muslim is expected to read and memorise some of the Qur'anic passages or the whole book if possible in its original Arabic language even those who do not speak it. Learning to read and write in Arabic is a very important element in the spiritual education of Muslims since their objective is to understand the actual words of God and his images in the Qur'an's revelation (Philips, 1996)

The Qur'an for Muslims is the actual word of God, it is unlike any other religious book (Baljon, 1961 ; Nasr, 1975). For example, the Bible has no sacred language to unite the rhetoric of all worshippers. For Christians, the Bible does not literally represent the divine revelation, instead Jesus is the true word of God. The Bible can be translated into different tongues and there is no one universal language for worship for all Christians. The example maybe helpful in understanding the unique

relationship between Islam and art, which is not directed by theological law but by spiritual reality.

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and when it is translated into other languages it is no longer considered the actual word of God. Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and through this aspect it represents the word of God in a verbal sense and visual form. Unlike any other religious book, the Qur'an can be read from the text or memorised although most Muslims do not speak Arabic (Prussin, 1986).

While the image of Jesus reflects the divine truth and it plays a very significant part in the Christian faith, the Qur'an represents the divine image of God through his words (Nasr, 1975). That is a fundamental element in the definition of the physical and spiritual reality of Islam. The Qur'an not only shapes up the image of God to Muslims but it is very unique source of aesthetic inspiration and expression of their spiritual reality. The Arabic language is the source of the link and direct interaction between the Qur'an and art. This relationship is very important in understanding the role of Arabic language and script in the aesthetic expression of Muslim culture. (See Chapter Four).

The link between the Qur'an's language and the art of Muslim culture goes back to the early centuries of Islamic history. However, this subject is not often covered in the source of Islamic law, which basically deals with the evidence of legislation in the Qur'an and Hadith. In fact the study of the Qur'an in relation to art is a well-established field of interest and it incorporates different areas of interest such as the Arabic language, literature poetry and criticism. The Qur'an for Muslims has a unique literary form and this has encouraged a great deal of study in the art of literature in an effort to appreciate the aesthetic aspect of the Qur'an's message. It

has always been of great interest to Muslims to understand the source of fascination in the immutable aesthetic style of the Qur'an and this subject has been a major area of study in relation to the art of Arabic poetry.

The Qur'an's language, although it is highly aesthetic with a very powerful poetic effect, has no equal in Arabic literature (Hitti, 1998). On the other hand, it does not follow the usual line of Arabic poetry and prose. The opponents of Muhammad (SAW) who had rejected Islam used to refer to the Qur'an as poetry or consider the Prophet a poet. This statement is well documented and it is reported in the Qur'an itself. Calling the Qur'an's language poetry was not limited to the view of the early Arabs, who were very interested in poetry.

Many non-Muslims who have studied the Qur'an in modern times describe the Qur'an as having a poetic style because of its unique literary language, (Denver, 1989). For Muslims the Qur'an is a miracle, and its literary art and immutable quality are enough proof of its divine source (Mir, 1986; Watt, 1970; Hofmann, 1993; Deedat, 1998). Early Muslim scholars such as Ibn Khaldun explained the difference between literature and the Qur'an, and his opinion is quoted in Denver's study. For Ibn Khaldun the Qur'an's Arabic language is not like the poetry style of the Arabs and their prose form, neither is it metrical speech. Titus Burckhardt, (1976) explained this point much further in his study of Islamic art language when he attempted to draw the fine link between the Qur'an literary form and the geometric pattern designs of Islamic art.

"It has been demonstrated convincingly that there is a connection between the Arabic aesthetic principle of constant repetition (in the Qur'an literature and music, and the *dhikr* prayer) which triggers as a state of ecstasy on the one hand, and the attempt to grasp the infiniteness of God on the other and that both aspects are symbolised by arabesque and other unending ornamentation" (Hofmann, 1993, p.117)

The Qur'an is very unique in its own literary style, a composition that fulfils the objective of its message. The subject matter in some of the Qur'an's chapters deal with many views of different themes. On the other hand, the Qur'an has a unique rhythm and rhyme but is different from one chapter to another. However, the pace may change in some passages in harmony with the mode of the subject matter. With the growth of interest in the meaning of Islamic art, the geometric patterns have now been considered to represent the visual expression of the Qur'an's spiritual message and language in terms of rhythm and powerful melody.

The framework to understanding the visual form and expression of Islamic art is to find the interaction between the Qur'an and Arabic language in the form of literature. The study of the Qur'an's literary style in relation to art is not a new subject (Qutb, 1993). Early Muslims were fascinated with the eloquence of the Qur'an's language. This has been a part of the Ph.D. thesis of the researcher Mustansir Mir in 1986, who summed up the work of early Muslim scholars that studied the Qur'an's eloquence with reference to the Arabic language and poetry.

It is perhaps useful to give two examples to show how Muslim scholars look to the Qur'an as a source of aesthetic inspiration. The first is the views of Al Ghazali on beauty and music, where he developed his notion based on knowledge of the Qur'an's language and message.

The second example represents some of the work of Qutb, especially his systematic study of the Qur'an's aesthetic style, where he studied the Qur'an with reference to the late literary art trend theory. Qutb has pointed out how the Qur'an appealed to Muslims since the early history of Islam. In his view early Muslim scholars did not focus on the aesthetic style of the Qur'an in modern terms but

rather on the equivalent and that to him reflected the literary trend of their time. (Qutb, 1993)

Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali is an eminent medieval Muslim scholar, 1058-1111 A.D. (Smith, 1994; Behrens-Abouseif, 1999). He is a good example to show how the Qur'an formulates the aesthetic view of Muslims and shapes their attitude towards art. Al-Ghazali is unlike those theologians who limit their points to jurisprudence, even though he himself is a scholar in theology and jurisprudence. However he had a great interest in all sorts of knowledge and he was a poet and a creative thinker, with an interest in aesthetic experience. Moreover, he stated that his intellectual experience is based on his reflection of the Qur'an (Smith, 1944). Like all the Sufi scholars of his time, Al-Ghazali relied very much on his personal and inner experiences and was potentially a creative thinker (Smith, 1944).

His reflections on the Qur'an and his interpretations of the Qur'anic text were very radical compared to those Muslim scholars who only spoke in terms of its purely legislative and divine aspects. Al-Ghazali's theological work is not similar to the work of most traditional theologians, in the sense that they mostly dealt with religious issues. Unlike the traditional scholars, Al-Ghazali's work combined many different religious themes, blended at the same time with natural science and philosophy (Smith, 1944).

He developed an aesthetic theory based on his reflections on the Qur'an (Smith, 1944). Although it is fragmented and has been expressed throughout his theological work, his theory is still very clear and has the quality of original philosophy that brings more insight into the Qur'an's attitude towards art. He seemed to hold very radical views with regard to the value of aesthetic experience

in relation to the spiritual life of the individual. For example, he identified music and poetry as the most important elements in the spiritual growth of an individual.

“Al-Ghazali writes, 'consider the poetic sense by which certain people are distinguished.' This statement shows where Al-Ghazali differs from others and emphasizes his interest in discriminating between the scansion of regular meter and that which is irregular. Consider how this sense is in other capacities, so developed that it thereby produces music and melodies, which are able to provoke sorrow and joy, to produce slumber, weeping and madness, which can incite combat or can cause swooning. But these effects are produced strongly only in one who is himself possessor of these gifts, while one who is not affected by it, swoops away, even if all those who are themselves poets or musicians were to try make him understand what it means to oppose that faculty. Al-Ghazali writes elsewhere: 'he who has a heart (is spiritually minded) and knows its true nature, is moved by poetry and music, as he is not moved by other things. 'therefore he seeks to move it in this way, either by his own voice or that of another' (Smith, 1944, pp.82-83).

Al-Ghazali tried to reconcile aesthetic understanding with religious theology based on his first hand experience of Islamic traditions, and that of the Qur'an in particular. He found evidence based on his instinctive approach to the Qur'an and the Prophet's *hadith* to support his aesthetic outlook. For example, he believed that the Qur'an does not contain any negative views towards music. Moreover, he argues that the Qur'an is a source of aesthetic inspiration to the individual. Firstly, the Qur'an not only allows the individual to enjoy all the pleasures that God has created, including the enjoyment of beautiful sounds, colours and forms, its own text is artistically executed (Fazlul-Karim, 1991). Secondly, the Qur'an encourages the individual to reflect on all kinds of beauty, since this would lead them to comprehend what underlies the physical appearance of beauty (Smith, 1944).

Al-Ghazali valued music as a purely physical medium and considered it equal in merit to the music that is produced by the means of the human voice. Al-Ghazali did not restrict the practice of music as did many other Muslim scholars. However, he believed that music is an extension of the individual's inner natural ability

which assists one in expressing one's spiritual experience, whilst enabling them also to comprehend some other individual's experience. According to Al-Ghazali, music should be restricted only when it is associated with an unlawful act and this principle is applied to all other actions that the individual might take (Fazlul-Karim, 1991).

“It was a much vexed question among the orthodox in Islam, as to whether listening to music and singing was permissible or lawful. Al-Ghazali ranged himself with those who reckoned it to be lawful.....so, we ought to draw an analogy from the voice of the nightingale to the sound which proceeds from other bodies, especially the sound which issues from the throat of man, or from musical instruments” (Smith, 1944, p.85).

Al-Ghazali strongly recognised the value of the aesthetic experience, yet his views seem to bring more insights to Islamic art in general and visual art in particular. However, it should be borne in mind that Al-Ghazali is a religious authority with many different interests, yet he has a profound understanding of the value of the aesthetic experience. His views are still of a great help in understanding how Islamic teaching and the Qur'an specifically may influence the concept of art among Muslims.

Ettinghausen commented on the concept of beauty in Al-Ghazali's mystic thought. Some of Al-Ghazali's theological work attracted Ettinghausen especially his concept of beauty. He was particularly interested in Al Ghazali's work as one of the most prominent medieval Muslim theologians but he only saw his mystic thoughts in relation to Persian art. He attempted to reformulate the aesthetic view of Al-Ghazali, which he considered to have a well-established Persian philosophy of aesthetic that had a deeper meaning than the casual appreciation of beauty. However the view of Ettinghausen seem very helpful in showing that the early Muslim theologians such as Al-Ghazali were interested in aesthetic experience and their view were deeply influenced by Al Qur'an. Unfortunately, this view is rarely

considered and even Ettinghausen himself did not mention Al-Ghazali when he discussed the question of image with context to the theological view of Islam. Al-Ghazali recognised the active role of art in his mystic life according to Ettinghausen. "Al-Ghazali does seem to pay much attention to art in relation to mystic experience, however, he is fully aware of the significance of beauty and the beautiful" (Ettinghausen, 1984, p.160).

Sayyid Qutb, (1906-1966) is a modern Muslim scholar, whose major scholarly work has focused on the Qur'an. However, Qutb's knowledge of the exegeses together with his talent as a poet, writer and art critic, all seem to have influenced his outlook as regards Qur'anic text. Nevertheless, Qutb approached the Qur'an with the intention of highlighting the aesthetic elements, which underlie the Qur'an's style (Mir, 1986; Al- Kalidy, 1989; Maadi, 1997).

For this purpose he published one of his major works *Al Tasweer Al-Fani Fi Al Qur'an*, which means, The Artistic Image-Making in the Qur'an. *Al tasweer Al-Fani* is a systematic approach to the Qur'an's literary style, which is completely based on aesthetic values and principles.

Qutb believes that imaginary visual image is the major method of expressing the message of the Qur'an but legal matters and religious affairs have always been expressed in perceptual images. He argued that the Qur'anic styles provoke visual images in the sense that the expressed words and ideas turn into live images with all the details of colour, sound and emotion. The style of the Qur'an, Qutb believes generates imaginary live images to depict even metaphysical and abstract views of an emotional and psychological nature. This view of Qutb has been clearly

expressed in his major work *In the Shade of the Qur'an*. Recently, one volume of this book has been translated into English.

“This surah is presented in rapid and violent touches. The text moves swiftly from one scene to another. As we come to the last verse, everything – the verbal expressions, the connotations, the subject matter and the rhythm – settle down in a manner similar to that of a courser reaching the finishing point.” (Qutb, 1992, p.260)

He explains that the Qur'an describes some conditions of the natural phenomenon in imaginary, but images are presented as if they were living creatures. The Qur'an's style has portrayed by colours and emotion, some of the earthly conditions. For example, it described one condition of the earth as being still, quiet and even dead. But life would be given again to the earth by rain, so that it would bloom again with all sorts of colourful life and vegetation.

The Qur'an's style also represents in visual images, the emotions and psychological conditions of some aspects of the human behaviour. Human feelings and psychological emotions were visualised and were given some of the features of human physical abilities, so that emotions and feelings are personified as if they were living creatures.

Qutb was very explicit in the aesthetic theory, which he developed, based on the Qur'anic literary style. He analysed the Qur'an's style and drew direct evidence to provide very clear examples, which support the stylistic and artistic review of Qur'anic language. This approach, despite the sensitivity of the topic has received favourable appraisals and enthusiastic acceptance from radical and non-radical theologians. This indicates that Muslims generally agree in terms of their appreciation of the aesthetic content of the Qur'an .

The study of Qutb and his view of the Qur'an is not new in some respects, but his outlook on the Qur'an's literary form represents the latest trend on the Qur'an's

aesthetic study. Qutb has emphasised that art has frequently been misinterpreted and misconceived. For art has always been considered as a product of imagination and is consequently beyond the scope of reality. Therefore, he highly valued art, especially as he believes that the aesthetic aspect of it would enhance intellectual work and would render it appealing and attractive. He believed that art, while shaping the form of the work and even influencing its quality, does not influence or affect the execution of the contents. He has thus, addressed the fear of those who were particularly concerned with the Qur'anic contents and messages. He debated that the Qur'an's aesthetic style adds beauty and harmony to the message of the Qur'an, while it maintains the truth that the Qur'an contains. Therefore, he did not hesitate to accept the Qur'an's style as a high form of art and he insisted that the Qur'an's message did not conflict with art, since art is part of the language of the Qur'an and its aesthetic values.

Qutb was very radical concerning the Qur'an's aesthetic style and he went so far as to support his theory with the aid and experience of many experts in the field of visual art, music, theatre and movies.

Qutb, also used many technical terms and art terminologies, which were probably rarely used by Muslim scholars when they dealt with Qur'anic text. Moreover, these technical terms and art terminologies are not even commonly used by literary art critics. He, also used some other forms of art terms, such as visual art, music, cinema and theatre, to shed more light on the aesthetic style of the Qur'an.

Qutb has used the terms, colours, painting, brush, tones, rhythm, performance, audience, stage, character, motion and lighting in the same senses those terms are used in the fields of visual art, cinema and theatre. He believed that the Qur'an's style not only draws colourful pictures but also adds sound, motion and lighting to

these images. The effect of sound, light and movement would enliven the visual images, since, they by themselves would appear as still and motionless, no matter how colourful and detailed these images might be. He, indeed emphasized this particular aspect, for he sincerely believed that the Qur'an's style generates visual images when needed and adds sound effects to those images. The musical rhythm of words is in harmony with the meaning of those expressed words. For example, the words that express fast actions and movements are selected from the appropriate and rich Arabic vocabulary to produce the musical rhythm that expresses the condition of these actions and movements.

“The rhythm of the surah is robust and thunderous and thus fits well with the dusty and clamorous atmosphere these characteristics of the rhythm are also appropriate to the picture of ingratitude, thanklessness and extreme miserliness , . a framework for this picture is provided by a dusty and tumultuous atmosphere of horses racing and thundering. Thus the frame and the picture are in perfect harmony with each other.” (Qutb, 1992, p.260)

For him, the Qur'an 's style generated live visual images of some of the human characteristics. Thus these characteristics can be seen as personified as living creatures acting on a stage. Those who might come across these visual images would be reacting similarly to an audience who seem to be watching real theatre. They also became involved since the images of the characters with all the details of their features are fully and well-represented.

From his research, Qutb concluded that art had been frequently misinterpreted and misrepresented, for art had always been considered as a product of the imagination and, therefore beyond the scope of reality. He believed that art should be highly valued and that an aesthetic dimension could enhance all intellectual work, making it more attractive and appealing. Art might shape the form of the work in question and even influence its quality, but this had no effect on the message or content of the object. Although, according to him, the Qur'an is unlike any other book, it still

has literary art form. On the other hand, the aesthetic quality of the Qur'an has no equal (Al-Kalidy, 1989).

According to Al-Kalidy, Qutb's view of the Qur'an has been accepted by Muslims religious theologians and modernist scholars. This indicates that all Muslims appreciate the Qur'an as a source of aesthetic inspiration and enjoyment. However, some scholars criticised certain ideas of Qutb because he used terms connected with music and image-making in his discussions on the Qur'an. Some scholars consider these terms not suitable to define the aesthetic aspect of the Qur'an because it is the word of God. Generally Qutb's study of the aesthetic form of the Qur'an has been widely accepted by Muslims, and this book has been republished in more than twelve editions in Lebanon alone (Qutb, (1993).

The Qur'an has a great impact on the arts of Muslims in general, and the study of Qutb attempted to show the aesthetic element of the Qur'an's message. However, Qutb is not the first Muslim scholar who studied the Qur'an from a purely aesthetic view. The Qur'an's language has been the subject of literary study since the early history of Islam but the aesthetic approach of Qutb to the Qur'an is very radical and seems to reflect the literary interest of Muslims in the Modern age. It is perhaps not possible or enough to understand the views of Islam toward art when only taking into account the study of the Qur'an as a source of law.

The direct influence of the Qur'an's literary form and aesthetic upon Islamic art has gradually become recognised in some of the latest field research and art programmes of Islamic art. There is a modernistic attempt to understand the visual form of expression within Islamic art. This is combined together with the relation to the concept of God, as a unity, which is the central belief of the Qur'an's

message. The visual form and aesthetic of Islamic art has now been considered as a form through the perspectives of the art philosophy and traditions of the Muslim world. It has been suggested that Islamic art represent a traditional way of life, motivated by a strong faith in divine reality. The Islamic art and tradition have been the focus of the latest field research and preservation programme established by the Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture, between 1995/1996. The staff and students of the Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts Department in the same institute have made study trips to learn about the preserved and unique heritages of the Islamic art tradition, in the ancient city of Fes, Morocco. The aim of this research project was to study and understand the geometrical expression of Islamic art in relation to the Islamic philosophy and convention. The director of the programme, Keith Critchlow, together with the staff and students who have contributed to the project and each individual attempted to understand in his own terms the meaning of the geometrical patterns in Islamic visual art and aesthetic expression. There is a general agreement among the students and the staff involved in the field research that Islamic art represents a traditional way of expressing an oriented view towards the unity to integrate the sacred aesthetic with the patterns of everyday life. This liberal approach is based upon the study of the philosophy and practical aspect of Islamic art, in the city of Fes. Furthermore, Critchlow represented this view in the final report of the project. In addition, he made an attempt to portray the direct influence of the Qur'an on the visual and aesthetic form of Islamic art.

“Remembering that the universities in Fes were well in advance of those of , say, Paris or Charters in Europe, the speculation that we are going to suggest is that there was virtually no separation in specialist subjects as there is today in our universities (or would it be more correct to describe modern ‘western ‘ places of learning as Diversities ?). The Islamic curriculum, founded on the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, was structured further on the Liberal Arts as they had been unfolded in the works of Plato.” (Critchlow, 1996, p.94)

Emma Clark, a tutor who participated in the study of Islamic art tradition of Fes, has a similar view to that of Critchlow. However, she particularly referred to the views of the Muslim students towards traditional art. That is those who believe that geometrical design is an expression of the Qur'an's message.

It is found that there is a great link between Islam and art. However, this relationship through a theological debate is complex to comprehend. As previous studies of Islamic art have revealed that within the process and evolution of art history there is a tendency to overlook the evident interaction between Islam and art. The question based upon 'image' is in relation with the Qur'an's message, where in particular the Arabic script has a greater influence, as this art trend has no roots that relate to the art tradition of other cultures. In the following chapter, it seems more appropriate to examine the question of image in terms of the aesthetic in Islamic art, taking into account the link between the Qur'an and Arabic language.

The same view has been suggested by Richard Yeomans in his book *The Story of Islamic Architecture*, where he signifies the influence of the Qur'an on the mode of expression of the Islamic art.

"Poetic, transcendental and visionary passages like this provide the key note for much of the content of Islamic art. The celestial imagery in this, and other Qur'anic verses, establishes a cosmic vision that ultimately finds its expression in the infinitely complex visual geometry of Islamic art." (Yeomans, 1999, p.10)

CHAPTER FOUR

IMAGE AND THE LANGUAGE OF EXPRESSION IN ISLAMIC VISUAL ART

The problem with the Orientalist's points of view put forward by scholars, such as those discussed in Chapter Two, or the theological views of image in Islam, is that such approaches promote misconceptions about the real attitude of Islam towards image representation. This provokes controversial religious debate. Furthermore, this approach also overlooks the fact that Islamic art was developed in a close relationship to the Qur'an's message and its written language (see Chapter Three). Image is an aesthetic technical visual phenomenon, which is unlikely to be discovered through the interpretation of religious sources taken out of the spiritual context and the aesthetic influence of the Arabic language.

The objective of this chapter therefore will be to study the development of a visual art aesthetic within the Islamic culture. It will focus mainly on the role of the Arabic language, combined with script in the evolution of design styles and visual form of art in Muslim cultures. Moreover, it will examine the reasons why such an abstract geometrical art form such as script, should have become the dominant art aesthetic among these cultures (Welch, 1979).

Islam and the Arabic language are inseparable (Nasr, 1975; Burckhardt, 1976; El-Said and Parman, 1976; Welch, 1979; Nasr, 1985; Tabatabai, 1987; Critchlow, 1995; Crystal, 1995 and Behrens-Abouseif, 1999). This observation seems to give a practical clue to the attitude of Islam towards the representation of the image. Islam perhaps, like many other religions does not have specific normative views about representation or formal aesthetic visual art theory. As stated previously, Islam unlike other religions interacts directly with all forms of art through the

Arabic language of the Qur'an. Thus, the visual art form of the early Muslims was not based on direct visual observation, but rather developed in relation to the spiritual and abstract nature of the Arabic language and script combined with the written text of the Qur'an.

“Arabic script is the central form of Islam's arts and was the first and is the foremost of its characteristic modes of visual expression.”(Welch, 1979, p.22)

As has been discussed before there is no clear evidence that Islam restricts the representation of figures through visual images, rather visual imagery has no function with regard to the nature of Islamic faith, worship or culture. Art was originally created to serve a practical function, the design forms were oriented by the abstract form of the Arabic language. Image was not used for aesthetic expression only but rather applied as a visual aid with limited context to some manuscript work and design.

The Arabic script was developed after the establishing of Islam and was used as the main form of verbal and visual system of artistic expression. The act of writing in Islam itself fulfils both spiritual and aesthetic expression.

Writing as the primary form of art and design within a society is a unique art phenomenon, which is limited to the art traditions of certain cultures, such as the Japanese and the Chinese, and particularly to the classical period of Islamic culture. This deserves special attention, indeed it seems that the term 'writing' and even 'calligraphy' are somewhat inadequate to describe the major artistic element in the design of all visual art products. A more appropriate term may therefore be 'graphics'.

The term 'graphic' has been redefined in modern times with reference to certain visual styles of art and design work (Crystal, 1995). In the context of language the word graphic traditionally refers to all visual aspects of any writing system (Hollis,

1994). This term 'graphic' will be used throughout this chapter to refer to the visual, aesthetic form of the Arabic script. In practice, this term is used to identify the role of the Arabic script in the evolution of an abstract visual art tradition in early Muslim culture.

Writing as a means of verbal and visual representation in art form and design of art products is to a great extent limited to the art tradition of certain cultures. This observation may be seen most obviously in the classical art of Islamic culture. There is need for a more accurate definition to interpret the phenomena of writing as something more than just a minor form of art. The art of writing is very often studied in isolation from other forms of visual arts. In this case a broader definition, that would include writing as a major artistic element in the design of all visual art products, particularly the abstract art styles of Muslim culture, is required.

At some stage in the development of languages, the visual form and graphic of writing systems becomes more abstract. In other words, some writing forms were developed into alphabetical systems; in this case there is no direct visual relationship between the graphic form and the verbal contents of written words.

Chinese script, for example, is based on a visual system (Appendix, Plate 1, Fig. A) and Chinese people still recognise images in their graphic writing system (Yee, 1938). Arabic script is one of those writing forms that are based on an alphabetical system. Regardless of whether or not the writing is based on a visual system or alphabetical character, all writing is generally developed from two-dimensional graphic design. In this particular sense writing in its visual form seems to share the basic values and concept of graphic art and design. The visual form of Arabic script represents the phonetic structure of the Arabic language (Khatabi and

Sijelmassi, 1994). This simply means that the graphic form of Arabic script is a very abstract form of graphic and that there is no direct relationship between the verbal and visual content of the written word. (Burckhardt, 1976).

“Studies of graphic writing and design revealed that all writing seems to share some of the common principles and value of visual art and design. All writing forms were originally based on simple design systems of graphic images.

Writing can be described roughly as assignment of speech forms to graphic signs” (Anderson, 1969, p.3).

The term graphic design, in a very limited sense refers to all these creative skills that involve some type of artwork and is usually made to communicate an abstract idea in the visual form. Writing is one form of graphical art and design but the visual system of any writing form follows the verbal structure of the language. As a result, the nature and verbal structure of the language conditions the graphic design of any writing system. In this sense, the aesthetic element of writing is often limited to some degree to its use for artistic expression, especially when the writing is taken out of the context of the verbal structure of its language. For this reason it is perhaps more difficult to apply the aesthetic and visual form of writing as a major element of design.

“Graphics can be signs, like the letters of the alphabet, or form part of another system of signs, like road markings. Put together, graphic marks – the lines of a drawing or dots of a photograph – form an image. Graphic design is the business of making or choosing marks and arranging them on a surface to convey an idea. A sign is not a picture. Graphic images are more than descriptive illustrations of things seen or imagined. They are signs whose context gives them a unique meaning, and whose positioning can lend them a new significance most usually words and images are used together; either text or image may dominate, or each have its meaning determined by other. Some of the most sophisticated examples of graphic design have relied on the precision of words to give an exact meaning to an ambiguous image”. (Hollis, 1994, p.7).

The graphic design of Arabic script may be exceptional for the following reasons.

Firstly, the Arabic alphabet is based on a rich and systematic collection of lines.

Secondly, each letter follows some kind of geometrical order and it is therefore easy to manipulate the form of letters and keep the script in proportions. Thirdly, the verbal structure of the Arabic language is unique, since most of the words start and end with one particular letter. For example when the script is used in the design work the words that usually start with the same letters provide the design with a sense of rhythm and balance. Thus, in general, Arabic script can be made to fit into all kinds of geometrical shapes. For this particular reason, the graphic form of Arabic script provides Muslim artists with unlimited sources for visual and aesthetic expression. It was also suitable for the use in design work of most artefacts and materials. This point will be discussed in more detail later in the context of the principle of design and in relation to the elements of Arabic writing in the form of artwork. This aesthetic aspect of Arabic, in the form of design, might be better viewed in context to other forms of writing systems.

Perhaps there is no writing form equal to Arabic writing where the script can be used for verbal and artistic expression. Likewise, it can be applied in the original design of different types of art products made of various materials. Chinese script for example, is considered in China, the primary form of art, for verbal and visual expression (Yee, 1938). The Chinese writing is based on a free and very expressive stroke of lines but the script is made of collection and independent number of graphic symbols (Appendix, Plate 1, Fig.B). The graphic form of Arabic script is based on a connected system of alphabets made of fluent rhythmic lines. Unlike the Roman script, the Arabic alphabet can be rearranged in many different visual motives and shapes, while at the same time the graphic form of Arabic script still can be recognised in context of the verbal content of language.

“Restless and crawling, the graphic content of Art Nouveau needed a calligraphic tradition like the Arabic attempted to fulfil its needs

in letter structure but never quite got it. One can observe the fulfilment in the Moorish architecture of Spain. Roman inscription model and the minuscule could not be reworked to fit the graphic need” (Anderson, 1969, p.180)

There is increasing awareness of the influence of the Qur'an's message and language on the visual form and expression mode in the Islamic art. However, the role of the Arabic language may only be recognised in relation to calligraphy, but this art form in the West is still considered a minor subject; as it is only concerned with the aspect of the Arabic script from the perspective of calligraphy. The term has a definite meaning that often refers to beautiful writing. However, the term calligraphy does not represent the role of Arabic language and script in Islamic art and design.

Arabic script is a major element of expression and it is the basic source of design in the traditional art of Islamic culture. The word *Khatt* in Arabic is used in all Muslim languages and usually refers to technical and aesthetic aspects of Arabic handwriting. The word *Khatt*, literally means line, and from the root of the same word, comes the verb (*Khataat*) to plan. In aesthetic term, *Khatt* refers to geometrical and cursive styles, which generate all forms of Arabic script usually used in art and design work. The art of *Khatt* is the source of all Islamic art and it does not have the same definition of the term, calligraphy. In the view of the Muslim scholar Ibn Kaldun, *Khatt* is a drawing of the shape of letters to indicate the spoken words. The role of Arabic script and its aesthetic value is very essential to understanding the source of imagery and visual form of Islamic art. (Tarikh Al-Allamah Ibn Khaldun , 1956)

The use of calligraphy in the design and artwork in Muslim architecture took place early. It was first applied in large-scale design work in the internal decoration of the first Islamic monuments, which were built at the end of the seventh century.

Graphic art often served as a key element in the design work of internal and external decorations of the architecture. The art of *Khatt* takes many different forms in the design and can be applied in all materials usually used in building construction and craftwork (Hayward Gallery, 1976).

In most design work, the *Khatt* is often interlaced with other elements in the overall scheme of the design, whether it is a developed form of geometrical shapes or a floral one. Calligraphy can be the most fundamental element in design or the focal point of the whole artwork and decoration. In the architecture of the mosques, there are many examples where the whole of the initial design was made of calligraphic written statements and usually takes up large areas. (El-Said and Parman, 1976)

“Taken from the Greek, the word calligraphy quite simply means beautiful writing among certain cultures, however, the concept of calligraphy goes far beyond this definition. For the Islamic world, the art of writing has always been of extraordinary importance.... in the West, a similar manifestation of the faith in the power of the manuscripts that were produced by countless anonymous monks in the Middle Ages, but their art never reached very far into secular circles, and it died with the birth of printing” (Welch, 1979, p.17).

The evolution of the art of writing and the formation of the visual art form

The graphic and visual form of Arabic script went through rapid and constant development right after the beginning of Islam. In less than one hundred years the Arabic writing system in its verbal and graphic form became the main visual art form for both spiritual and artistic expression. There is no function for image with regard to the nature of Islam's spirituality, but there is an organic relationship between Islam and the Arabic language. This fact is of great importance when it comes to the interpretation of the attitude of Islam towards art, particularly in relation to the role of Arabic writing in the evolution of the abstract visual art form of early Islamic culture.

The Arabic writing system was recreated after Islam. It was used for the first time during the lifetime of the Prophet (SAW) to record the Qur'an. After the Prophet's death the Islamic faith began to spread far outside the frontiers of Arabia. Many nations accepted Islam and the majority of these were not Arabs. The Arabic language became a common language to all Muslims. Both Arabs and non-Arabs considered as Muslims used Arabic in the context of their faith. All Muslims' worship and prayers are performed in the Arabic language. As a result, Arabic became the basic element in the education of all Muslims.

As stated previously, the Qur'an has played a major role in developing Arabic writing (Safadi, 1978). It has also stimulated a spiritual bond and attachment to the Arabic language among Muslims. Arabic script was adopted into many different languages, this encouraged considerable creative works that played a major role in the development of the graphic form and aesthetic quality of Arabic script.

There was hardly any visual art form in Arabia before Islam and even the Arabic writing was at primitive stage. Writing was the only graphic and visual form, and the Arabs perhaps had never thought to improve the visual form of their script. In the early days of Islam, Arabic writing was introduced as a basic element in the elementary education of Muslims. This step took place later. When the first Muslim community was established, the graphic form of Arabic was not sufficiently developed for clear communication. The primitive Arabic script was used first to record the Qur'an's message based on limited writing skills and materials. At the beginning it was hard to read, however, this problem was solved later during the documentation process of the Qur'an's message (Appendix, Plate 2). Early Muslims relied on the oral tradition to record the Qur'an. There was a lack of writing skills and materials but the documentation of the Qur'an was

developed into a creative process. Within a short period of time, Arabic script became a highly aesthetic form of art and was applied as an element of design to create new form of Art.

“Arabic script evolved very late compared with other systems of writing, some of the which go back thousand of years. The Arabs of the Pre-Islamic period relied largely on oral tradition, especially for poetry for which they had a passionate interest. The Koran was first transmitted by word of mouth, however, it soon became necessary to set it down in writing. And the Arabic script then rapidly developed into and astonishingly beautiful artistic medium.”
(Wilson, 1997, p.11)

The development of the aesthetic and graphic form of Arabic script

The development of the aesthetic and graphic form of Arabic writing was quite rapid. In general, it can be described in three major stages. In the first stage, the primitive Arabic script was used to record the message of the Qur'an. At that time it was early for Muslims to improve the graphic form of Arabic script. In the second stage, Muslims made much effort to improve the script writing system in the context of the verbal and grammatical structure of Arabic language. At the third stage, the graphic form of Arabic was quite improved compared to the early work. The Arabic writing system was quite well-established and the Muslims made considerable efforts to develop the writing into a visual art form.

When Islam spread outside of Arabia, the graphic aspect of the Arabic at this stage did not improve in an aesthetic sense, but some new visual forms were added to the script making it more systematic and readable. Many non-Arabs, who accepted Islam, found the Qur'an difficult to read accurately. Dots and some other visual characters were adapted to the script to distinguish similar letters, (Appendix, Plate 3). These changes were originally made to improve the verbal aspect of Arabic script but they have also made the graphic form more visually attractive. Arabic was improved and writing was much better-established. Later on, considerable

efforts were made to improve the aesthetic form of Arabic script, especially when the problem of the primitive script was already solved.

Both primitive styles of script the Kufic and Cursive were developed and at this stage writing was used for aesthetic expression, (Appendix, Plate 4). The use of Arabic writing as an art form was not limited to manuscript work but was also used as the main form of visual expression in the early stages and formation of Islamic art. The graphic form of Arabic script was used in the design work of the first Muslim monument. The aesthetic and graphic form of Arabic writing was much improved later especially when geometry was introduced to create proportion to the graphic form of Arabic script.

Islam, and the Qur'an in particular, played a great role in the development of the art of writing, however, in practice the aesthetic and visual form of Arabic script was developed by creative and intellectual means. The creative work of Ibn Muqla is considered a very great contribution to the art of writing. He applied his knowledge of geometry and his artistic talent to develop the art of writing based on the principle of proportion. He used the dot as a unit of proportion to each letter of the Arabic alphabet with reference to the first letter Alif (Appendix, Plate 5).

“Ibn Muqla’s reform had created a method both creative and critical... by measuring its letters in terms of the rhomboid point and alif.....” (Welch, 1979, p.30)

Ibn Muqla considered the size of the dot, made by the thickness of the pen nib, as a unit of measurement of each letter with reference to the length of the Alif which is the first letter of Arabic alphabet (Khatibi and Sijelmassi, 1995). This leads to the conclusion that the graphic forms of Arabic script had a geometrical base. It is for

this reason that Arabic writing played a central role in the evolution of the new visual art.

“Alif is taken as the module of every Arabic calligraphic system; this choice and method are due to religious and mystical concepts, ... the length of the *alif* varies according to the writer, but all agree on using the dot as the universal unit of proportion. This is a square (rhombic) impression formed by pressing the tip of pen onto the paper. The dimensions of each side of this square dot thus depend on the way in which the pen has been cut, and on the pressure exerted by the fingers. This pressure had to be sufficiently delicate and precise to separate the two sides of the nib”. (Khatibi and Sijelmassi, 1994, p.47)

Arabic script and principles of design

There is something very unique about the visual and verbal structure of Arabic writing in artistic expression and design work. Arabic writing is quite easy to modify with artistic skills to create infinite forms of graphic design (Burckhardt, 1976). This visual and aesthetic aspect of Arabic script may be better explained in relation to the basic principles of graphic design; writing is based on a graphic system and shares with other forms of visual art the basic aesthetic elements and principles of design. All kinds of art design are considered to share one common principle whether they are complicated or simple (Kandinsky, 1979). Design is generally based on two dimensions. Graphic shapes are usually manipulated to plan and produce some new visual forms. All shapes and visual forms originally have a geometric base in their visual structure. Design in the geometrical sense is developed from a collection of different types of graphic lines.

A single line is created from multiple dots and the visual form of a dot and line is considered the basic formula of graphic design. This is usually applied to the creation of all sorts of visual forms. (Ching, 1996; Porter and Goodman, 1988; Unwin, 1997).

Line is the major element in any form of design since line creates two-dimensional shapes and all other visual motifs. On the other hand, line is the basic geometrical element in the visual forms of square, triangle and circle. All other shapes and motifs are generated from these basic geometrical forms. In general the square, triangle and the circle are part of the structure of all visual objects.

Similar views are also expressed by Porter and Goodman (1988) and Lillian Garret (1967). They argued that the dot and the line are considered to be the basic formula for any graphic design. The dot is regarded as the single smallest shape that can be recognised in the visual space and is the origin of the line and all other forms of graphics. (Porter and Goodman, 1988; Garret, 1967)

Arabic script and design element

Arabic script and the alphabet represent a group of graphic signs of straight and curved lines. Letters share many common characteristics. Diacritical marks are part of the verbal structure of Arabic writing, and these marks are usually placed above and below some letters (Safadi, 1987). These marks provide additional graphics to the visual form of the script. There are some little circles and loops that are often placed over certain letters, and some short slashes are used and placed over and beneath some letters. All these marks are very small in comparison with the size of the written letters and are there to indicate vowelling or doubling. Dots and other diacritical marks were originally introduced after Islam; this was to prevent making mistakes when reading the Qur'an. For the artistic expression, the dots and diacritical marks are very often rearranged in a creative way to provide the design with a sense of harmony and balance. In general, the graphic form of Arabic script can be arranged systematically in three basic geometrical shapes and other free forms.

“Calligraphy is the art of linear graphic, it restructures one’s visualisation of a language and its topography in this sense, calligraphy in Arabic language is constructed of a simple spatial principle. The Arabic alphabet is written in interplay of horizontal base line and vertical line of its consonants. It reads from the right to the left, which are positioned variously above and below the base line. The originality of this written form, which in some respects has no equal, is created by the architecture and rhythm of the letters, here we recognise the force of the ‘arabesque’ as a plastic form. (Khatibi and Sijelmassi, 1995, p.6).

The fluent straight and cursive lines are geometrical elements in the structure of both of the two main forms of Arabic script. The Kufic is more static and the Cursive is dynamic with some letters made of lines and semi-circular shapes. Each script style has its own unique geometrical base and can be designed with creative skills to achieve particular visual form.

Design element and Kufic script

The Kufic style is an angular and diagonal style. This form of script is very often used to create some geometrical graphic shapes and forms. For example, the Kufic is not suitable and perhaps is hard to represent in the form of a circle since the script is very static. All the Kufic styles are usually applied in the form of squares and equilateral triangles. These are primary shape elements because each one can fill the surface without leaving any gaps (Critchlow, 1995). The Kufic is very practical in square units. Only the cursive style can be designed in a shape of a circle and other similar forms (Safadi, 1987). All the Kufic script styles forms a major element in the geometrical patterns of Islamic art (Appendix, Plate 6, Figs. A & B). Furthermore, the Kufic styles can be an integral part of the surface and design structure of many art products especially architectural work (Appendix, Plate 7). This particular form of script has a very great influence in the design structure of architecture too (Appendix, Plate 8).

“As time progressed, however, many ornamental varieties of Kufi evolved; serifs, hooks and foliate forms were added, and complex

patterns were created by intertwining the verticals of certain letters particularly the *lam-alif* combination, and the letters forming the word Allah". (Begley, 1985, p.14)

Design element and the cursive script

The cursive styles are more expressive and full of movement, which usually needs a considerable artistic skill to be produced (Begley, 1985; Wilson, 1957). On the other hand, this form of script is easier to modify in the form of circle and other round shapes. The cursive styles are usually applied to achieve a particular visual motifs to fill round surfaces and is usually integrated with other fluent forms of design mostly floral patterns (Appendix, Plate 9, Fig. A). They are sometimes used by some celebrated artists to create masterpieces of graphic design in the shape of some recognisable objects and images.

Design element and the letter Alif

The Arabic language is rhythmic and most of the written words start with the letter *Alif* and *lam*, which are roughly straight lines. These straight-line letters appear frequently in the script and give the design a sense of balance and unity

The 'Alif' also appears in the middle of most Arabic words, which is one aspect of the verbal system of the Arabic language. The *alif* letter has a special aesthetic quality; the length of this letter is used as a reference to measure the size of the other letters to give proportion to the graphic design of the words. The dots are part of the verbal structure of the Arabic script, originally introduced to distinguish between similar letters. In design work, the dots are arranged carefully to make the graphic form of the writing more attractive and balanced.

The visual and verbal system of the Arabic language have both contributed to the aesthetic and geometrical structure of the script. The graphic form and Arabic writing can be easily developed into the three geometrical shapes, the square,

triangle and circle, (Appendix, Plate 10). Based on these basic shapes it is possible to create and develop more shapes.

Arabic writing in its verbal and visual content can be applied in design work of all art products and material (Welch, 1979). There are many complex forms of design, that are completely based on the graphic forms of written words, and no matter how complex the design is, the written statement usually can be readable.

“For almost all the inscriptions are ‘legible’ in the sense that they are capable of being read or deciphered eventually if not immediately. In no sense, however are they all immediately readable. Some are placed in obscured areas; others are too high and too far away to be read; others are so intertwined and convoluted that it is beyond the ability of the average person to puzzle them out” (Thackston, 1994, p.55).

Graphics in the design of artwork

At the early stages of the development of art, the graphic of the Arabic script was applied as a basic element in the design work of many visual art products. This phenomenon might be easy to observe and explore in some visual art form, which is made of various materials, such as wood, ceramics art objects and architecture.

The geometrical style, which is basically developed from Kufic script takes a pure geometrical form, based on proportioned shapes of the square and triangle with no additional details. Most letters are usually arranged in different directions to control the space of the design into a single constructed unit. Sometimes the design is based on one word or a few words of a particular meaning to Muslims. For example, the word ‘Allah’ and ‘Muhammad’ are often represented in geometrical design. The word or words are organised into a visual unity of symmetrical shapes. The geometrical Kufic script is sometimes applied as part of the original plane to some art objects such as tables and doors (Baer, 1998). In some cases two different types of wood are used that usually consist of different colours. The design of the written statement will appear as part of the original structure and form an object

based on the contrast of the wood colours. The design form of the written statement will appear part of the whole structure of the art object (Appendix, Plate 11, Figs. A & B).

The graphic form of Arabic script and image representation

Image is very rare in the art products of the early Muslim cultures. Image was used in book design, illustrations and in the form of graphics, in selected design work. There are particular types of painting, mostly related to literature and subject matter of some manuscript works. In this sense the style of the image representation was very much influenced by the perspective technique of Arabic script.

“Finally, a word may be said on the subject of the non-figural decoration. This plays quite a significant part in the secular works but its role was of course even more important in the religious manuscripts, for there, all figural work was wholly avoided”.
(Rice, 1971, p. 175)

The early Muslim artists did not try to represent natural objects in their immediate visual form. The training of early Muslim artists was mainly focused on the art of writing. Any one who mastered the art of writing gained high status in the Islamic culture (Burckhardt, 1976; Begley, 1985). In practice the art of writing involved knowledge, a great deal of talent, skills and techniques. This in particular influenced the perspective of Muslim artists toward visual form and image.

However, there were some forms of art and design work, that incorporated elements of images to a limited degree (Appendix, Plate 11, Fig. B). In this case images were usually treated like graphic art whereas other images were made up of Arabic letters.

There are two styles of image representation; both of these styles developed in relationship to the graphic of Arabic writing. The first form of image is made of the written word, usually the written statement has a verbal message and can be

read quite easily or needs to be figured out. The second type of image is part of a painting, which was originally made to illustrate stories or some science themes. This type of painting was mostly, if not always, developed in the context of literature and science manuscript work. The style and subject matter of this type of painting was either influenced by the written text or by the graphic of the Arabic script.

The first style of image representation was developed by the individual talent of some Muslim artists. This form of image expresses the artist's view and his artistic abilities especially when the cursive script was highly developed. Some artists who mastered one of the cursive scripts usually produced some images made of written words. The fluent line of cursive script seemed to facilitate the artistic skills. This form of image is limited to the cursive since the Kufic is very angular and static.

The design of the image is usually based on some written words that are rearranged to the shape of some particular animals. Most of the reproduced and published graphic images are of lions and birds and some other visual objects. Other graphic images were made in the form of particular plants, and were designed in the shape of tiny flowers or little leaves with a readable written words (Appendix, Plate 12, Figs. A and B).

“Oriental calligraphers — here the Turks seem to have been most inventive — created ingenious pictures of living beings built up from pious ejaculations and sacred formulas. Pigeons composed of the *basmala*”. (Schimmel, 1990, p.111)

The written forms of images were produced by the same technique, usually involving the art of writing. On the one hand, the image form shows the unlimited flexibility of Arabic graphic in design work, whereas, the style of the image indicates the individual artistic skills of the artist. The design of these graphic

images may be developed by the original work of the artist but on some occasions it is also likely that the design is based on a previous design.

Calligraphy and Painting

It is visible through many works of art that teams of calligraphy artists produced many Islamic paintings and manuscripts. However, there is a little attention devoted to the study of this particular area. Thus, it is very useful to examine some examples of paintings, in order to portray the relationship between the style and technique of calligraphy in Islamic paintings.

An analysis of some of the paintings or manuscripts will consider the subject matter, design, technique and the use of colours.

- **Subject matter**

In some Islamic paintings and manuscripts it is easy to distinguish that an artist has considerable knowledge of Arabic calligraphy design. In some paintings the artist uses geometrical styles of Arabic calligraphy but this form has been drawn in a certain way to make the calligraphy appear as ceramic tile work. In other examples the paintings show different styles of Arabic writing, which indicates that the artist is a skilled calligrapher. Not only does the painter use different styles of writing but also uses the writing to portray everyday life objects such as signs on buildings, decorations in places like mosques and houses. Another example is that the paintings are integrated within the text of the manuscript. This also indicates that the painting or manuscript was designed and produced by a group of calligrapher artists, rather than being made by an individual artist.

- **Design**

There are some examples in particular paintings that do not show a single, strict frame to separate the subject matter of the paintings from the text of the manuscript. For example, the painting may have many frames in order to leave

columns for the text and the image. Although some frames of paintings are divided into separate parts, the larger frame includes the painting subject matter, and the other sections only include the texts. Some of these designs include more than one frame to show different scenes. However, in other designs most of the subject matter is inside the frame but other parts of an object might be extended to the exterior of the frame, for example, a few tree branches, or parts of a building.

Furthermore, other examples include the text covering a large proportion of the painting, and only some parts of the painting are visible. Overall, the design incorporates geometric patterns with the design to obtain and influence the composition of the painting and its subject matter. In many paintings the artist has used significant effort to show details of geometrical designs in parts of the painting like architecture, floors, carpets window frames and tiles.

- **Technique**

Calligraphy is a two-dimensional art that has influenced on the technique of painting. For example, some paintings use bold colours, that have a similarity to graphic art, which is attained in order to discard the depth of shading.

Another resemblance to graphic art is that almost all the drawings are outlined in black. In some of the paintings it is perhaps very easy to note the technique of calligraphy in a drawn style, for example, drawings of human figures and details such as clothes, which are sometimes illustrated through the use of various artistic techniques such as strokes, lines and stitches for effect and emphasis. These reflect the useful and effective tools and techniques of writing.

- **Use of colour**

Colours can be used in many different ways to give different effects to the work of art. In many examples of Islamic paintings the use of colour is limited to primary and secondary colours. A major element in most of the paintings and manuscripts

is the use of harmonious colours incorporated with the Arabic calligraphy; together these create a colourful and dynamic visual image.

Some of these paintings have used colour as though it is applied like a wash, where the calligraphy is written on a light background or the background is rich and dark with a light coloured text. This adds brightness and emphasis on the painting as a whole, thus gives more visual appeal to the manuscript.

Another example is the use of bold, bright colours that illustrate and accentuate the detail of patterns of images within the painting. Many have very rich complicated geometrical designs that are conveyed through this colour technique.

New trends in Arabic calligraphy and painting

In the early twentieth century, both the art of Arabic script and manuscript painting tradition have greatly changed to an extent where many traditions are associated with these arts. The manuscript art and miniatures in particular are no longer produced for the same function, and in the traditional artistic context of the early Islamic culture. The art of Arabic calligraphy has become a minor profession. Furthermore, it is greatly associated with the modern painting approach of graphic art and banner signs productions, (Gray, 1982).

As has been established, the Arabic script was the most fundamental aesthetic element in the art of the Muslim world. In recent times, traditional calligraphy has become a commercial profession, but the aesthetic form of the Arabic script is still highly appreciated in the modern Muslim world. The subject matter of the recent traditional calligraphy art work is often limited to selected statements from the Qur'an's text, and there is now hardly any major calligraphic artwork to be found in the interior and external designs of the modern mosques or other monumental buildings, (Ali, 1989; Theophilus, 1993; Rahim, 1996).

Although the Arabic script has started to take a new aesthetic role in Islamic culture, the major calligraphic art works of the past such as the Qur'anic manuscripts and decorated books are not in demand and artists rarely produce traditional calligraphy and paintings. Nowadays, Muslim artists tend to be interested in the aesthetic quality of Arabic calligraphy, as a result of the recent trend to adapt Arabic script for post-modern art expression. This is largely because the formal aesthetic value and function of traditional art were both disturbed as a result of the new technology and commercial development, together with the outside influences and cultural exchanges

During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the traditional and universal Islamic art was greatly effected by the economic and political factors in the Muslim world, (Blair and Bloom, 1994; 1997). The traditional Muslim artists in general along with manuscript painters and designers in particular were amongst the first professional artists to lose their elevated position and their careers. The artist guilds of calligraphy and miniature painting were no longer called to produce copies of books and manuscript, whilst the printing machine was imported from the West to the Muslim world around this time.

Calligraphy and painting in Islamic culture were integrated arts and were closely developed in relation to the art of book-making (Rahim, 1996). In Islamic culture calligraphy has been more than simply a form of fine art, which is made only for aesthetic enjoyment. The Arabic script is a central element in Islamic art, and in the past, calligraphy was much in demand for producing copies of the Qur'an in beautiful script and visually attractive works of art. The art of calligraphy was the most important element in the design of all the major art products and specially in the production of the books of literature and science.

When the printing machine was introduced there was no more need for teams of calligraphers and painters to copy texts and illustrate every book and manuscript with artistic and skillful handiwork. In the past, the skilled calligrapher and miniature artist used to work together as a team. The cost of such production was high for both design and production of any fine manuscript or artwork. All the original paintings and fine design of Islamic manuscript were extremely expensive to produce, subject to artistic labour, materials and time. (Blair and Bloom, 1994).

Today, the mass-production of printed books has made artwork and illustrations quite cheap and easy to produce in large quantities, and are not expensive to buy. The cost of one-hand made manuscript was almost equal to the cost of the production of hundreds or thousands of printed books. Therefore, these factors have had a negative effect on the profession of calligraphy and other forms of art in the Islamic culture. Also the art of the Islamic world has been greatly influenced by Western art. This has directly effected the quality and form of local art in the Muslim world. Many forms and styles of the Islamic art have faded out or changed, especially when the Western aesthetic norm, which focused on individual expression, was adopted .

Through cultural exchanges and direct political influence, many Western art schools were established in almost all-Muslim countries. In many parts of the Muslim world a new generation of artists emerged, who had only received a Western art education. It is obvious that most of the formally educated artists have had little chance to study in depth local traditional art. The guild system and traditional art education was interrupted. In addition, Muslim artists in the modern sense learn the basic skills of Western art as part of their general education. Professional artists often go to specialist art schools for art education and training

to learn the principles and techniques of Western art. In the West, painting and sculpture are highly valued forms of art. However, today Muslim artists have started to produce artwork, mostly painting, following the style of European artists, particularly those who studied the Western art tradition. However, this was not a success for Muslim artists, in the sense that they relied heavily on Western art, which had created a new type of art that was unattractive to the public. The reason for this is that, the Western style and paintings are alien to the art conventions of the indigenous Islamic culture, in which local art is usually integrated into the fabric of life and the aesthetic element is not divorced from the utilitarian function of art.

As a result of this, there is hardly any market for Western art in the Muslim world and even professional artists cannot rely on their artwork to make a living. Most Muslim artists who produce painting in the Western style are supported by the state, or by large Western-oriented business companies and banks. Some modern local Muslim artists often exhibit their artwork abroad in Europe or in the U.S and largely rely on Western collectors and centres to sell their art works. Although Muslim or Arab artists may produce very creative and fine quality paintings of a Western style, their artwork is aesthetically less valued or appreciated in the eyes of Western people, and have received only marginal attention in the West. There is hardly any single Muslim painter who has been appreciated on the same level with any of the celebrated artists in the West.

This reality has created an artistic problem and ideological challenge for non-Western artists in general, and particularly for Western-oriented artists in the Muslim world. In fact, many Muslim artists who have lived in Western countries for a certain period or have settled there have suffered greatly for not being as appreciated as their counterparts. Individualistic art style is often the focus of

Western aesthetics, but when a Muslim artist has to meet such criteria, his work is valued as primitive or ethnic in style.

Recent paintings in the Muslim world are seen as a weak imitation of Western art styles. To a great extent, this view is valid since most modern Muslim artists have been greatly influenced by Western aesthetics and the movement of the classic art painting and the latest modern art trends. The root of the problem focuses on the fact that the Western art aesthetic relies mainly on the creative process and on the value of an individual artist, and often ignores the function and value of art in the life of the society. The view that art is only valued for its creative quality is too 'alien' in the Muslim world. The other problem is that Western art is based on different aesthetic values, where painting is highly valued creative work and utilitarian craft art is considered as low work. So it is extremely hard for the average individual in the Muslim world to understand the true value and function of Western art, and painting. However, the Islamic art of the past, although produced for a different social function and with different aesthetic context, has been a source of inspiration for modern artists, especially the new generation of Muslim artists who have received formal education in Western art.

Lately Muslim artists have started to look back into their past searching for a source of authentic art form. In fact particular paintings of modern Western artists were influenced by the style and technique of Islamic Art, such as calligraphy and manuscript painting. Henry Matisse (1869-1954) is an example of this, he was the first and probably the greatest artist to integrate into his own work, the West's growing familiarity with Islamic art.

"Matisse incorporated some lessons he had learned from looking at Islamic art into his painting. A work such as *The Painters Family* (292) done in the Spring of 1911, was inspired by the works of Islamic art he had just seen in Munich" (Blair and Bloom, 1994, p. 309).

Another example is Paul Klee, who is well-recognized in the West as one of the earliest modern artists. Klee used the graphic shapes of letters in his painting, and was inspired by the arabesque design of Islamic art. His work was an early step in the development of the graphic art in which, modern artists start to integrate writing and painting together in their artwork. This creates a new visual form of a powerful aesthetic expression. It was only in recent modern times that the graphic form of writing has been accepted and appreciated in expressionist painting, an idea that was too radical to be accepted in the Western art of the classic and romantic periods.

“...the graphic arts provide a foundation not only for calligraphy as drawing, but also for the distribution of colours within the space occupied by any creative exercise. It was perhaps this quality which so captivated certain painters in North America (Kline, Tobey and Pollock) and Europe (Degottex and Michaux, to name but two) and encouraged them to turn... to the calligraphy of China and Japan”. (Khatibi and Sijelmassi, 1994, p. 214)

The composition and technique of this particular painting was directly influenced by Islamic painting style in its flattened visual perspective. This new Western painting style was originally associated with the universal modern art movements in the West, where artists were searching for new forms and aesthetic in the remote art tradition of non-Western cultures. One example of this new art trend was the Cubists painting style in which Picasso and other artists found inspiration in African art. The modern painting style of Picasso, in particular, was directly influenced by the images of masks and tribal art of African people.

However, in recent decades artists in many Muslim countries have started to reassess their own cultural heritage and local art traditions to find some means of distinctive visual expression. For example, a group of artists in the Muslim world incorporated Arabic calligraphy in the subject matter of their paintings. Often the artists used only Arabic letters to create an abstract painting work. This is totally

different in concept and aesthetic from Western traditional art painting. Indeed there are several reasons that lead Muslim artists to adapt to such new painting styles. The most important reason for this is that this kind of Muslim artists work follows the Western art school. However, their art style is often rejected in the West because it is considered as a copy of an early Western art trend.

As a matter of fact the whole modern art trends in the Muslim world are almost ignored by the Western art observers and critics. In the published French art encyclopaedia of worldwide art, very little has been said about the art of the Muslim world, out of four volumes comprising 6800 pages. Only six pages were devoted to the discussion of some examples of contemporary Western art trends in the whole Muslim world. (Mediene, 1989).

Another reason is the awareness of Muslim artists of their art heritage, which still influences the aesthetic values and attitude of the public towards art. In this respect, Muslim artists have been culturally motivated to produce artwork that would bring them closer to Muslim followers of the native art tradition. Most modern Muslim artists have a problem in communicating with their own societies even in progressive Muslim countries (Ali, 1989).

There is a growing and universal interest in the aesthetic quality of Arabic script especially amongst the artists of the Muslim world, and many Muslim artists are experimenting with Arabic scripts to create authentic paintings and artwork. It may be considered a new school of painting that would bring the modern painting style and the native artists much closer.

“At this particular level this painting is relatively unusual within Islamic art, and seems so closely related to Mondrian’s experiments and to the other painting from the twentieth century, but there is a third level of meaning to this peculiar compositions”. (Grabar, 1992, p. 47).

The written word was a major element of visual expression and this visual perspective still influences the attitude of the Muslim toward modern art throughout the modern Muslim world. The works of certain Muslim artists may provide a deeper understanding of the impact of the written word on the modern and Western painting style in Muslim countries. This approach may help to clarify the problem of representation of art in relation to the recent art trends of Muslim world.

It is perhaps more pertinent at this point to give examples of artists who have mainly focused upon the Arabic script as a mean of visual art and self-expression in a Western art sense.

Some of the recent and well-established Muslim artists, who associated themselves with calligraphic painting, include the following individual and celebrated names:

Ibrahim al-Salahi, is one of the early Western-oriented artists originally from the Muslim state of Sudan. As he returned from England to his country, he started to include some elements of Arabic script in his painting work. (Diab, 1989).

Issam el-Said, an artist from Iraq, was able to build a successful career in the West producing calligraphic painting with arabesque patterns for free standing art pieces. The painting style of Dia Azzawi, also represents Arabic script that is influenced by abstract quality and the graphic forms of the Arabic letters (Mudaffer, 1989).

Mansure Qadriz, is one of the early modern artists in Iran, that is known to make use of Arabic calligraphy and decorative patterns his paintings. (Diba, 1989).

In Malaysia, the Islamic art and aesthetic have become of central interest to a group of native, modern artists and their artistic commitment (Jamal, 1989). In

Pakistan calligraphic painting style has become a growing art trend, since the seventies. Later it reached a certain degree of maturity.

“The eighties saw a greater awareness of Islamic principles in art. In 1984 the Islamic Civilisation Exhibition was an attempt to give shape to the notion of pictorial art created within the framework of Islamic ideological principles. In a seminar which followed the exhibition, it was posited that in a pluralistic society, Islamic aesthetic principles could be accepted by non-Muslims in the same way that Christian and Zen principles had influenced the works of Muslim artists”. (Jamal, 1989, p. 207)

The Pakistani artist, Sadequain (1930-1987) was a figurative painter, with allegorical significance. He was the first among modern artists in Pakistan to adopt a free form of Arabic calligraphy in his compositions. More than any other painter, he popularised painting for the average citizen by appealing to his combined religious and aesthetic sense. Another artist from Pakistan was Shakir Ali (1914-1975), who had the most influence on the art movement of the fifties. He executed murals with calligraphic motifs for the Punjab public library. In such monumental painting, he employed calligraphy, beside some other familiar symbols of his own style. The ranks of the formalist art school of Pakistan was expanded with the contributions of great artists like Sadequain and other celebrated names, who devoted their energies to develop a free form of calligraphy and executing gigantic calligraphy murals. While all forms of experimentation with painting and sculpture suffered from the prevailing conservative climate, calligraphy gained new impetus. Also among the modern artists in Pakistan are Ozzir Auby, Sarder Muhammad, Aslalm Kamal, Shafiq Farooqu and Moojid (Ali, 1989).

The revival of calligraphy that had started in the seventies reached a certain degree of maturity in the eighties in a climate of Islamic cultural renaissance. Classical and free forms of calligraphy, embodying Qur’anic texts, were integrated into two

and three-dimensional compositions. Although the experiment with calligraphy continues, it will certainly bring new developments that might give modern Pakistani art, a distinguished character (Ali, 1989).

In some other parts of the Muslim world such as Bangladesh, artists have greatly been influenced by Western Art, but there are native individual artists who still practice calligraphy, such as Siful Islam, Abu Taher, Murtaza Bashir and Shamsul Islam Nizami (Quader, 1989).

In the Muslim countries and Arab states of North Africa, some individual native artists have adopted Arabic script as a means of authentic style, while they produce art paintings following Western trends.

Khada, is a native artist of Algeria who was born in 1930. He is one of the earliest artists from his country, who used the Arabic alphabet in modern styles. Islamic art and aesthetic were of greater concern to the artists of North Africa especially those who settled in France (Mediene, 1989).

In Morocco, the modern art trend is associated with the brothers Omar, and Mohammed Racim. Others like Mameri were forced into exile to Spain, as the art in their native countries was required for its practical and decorative value. An artistic object was only useful if it could be sold. Life was different for Omar and Mohammed Racim, Temmam and Ranem. Calligraphy brought them closer to abstract art. It was not a merely simple form of ornamentation and illustration, as Georges Marcais seemed to suggest; it was skill of great importance (Benamar, 1989).

Mohammed Khadda, Abdullah Benanteur and Ahmed Cherkaoui were the first of the Maghrebans to interpret and interiorize Arab calligraphy in the way that Klee, Kandinsky, Matisse and Mondrian had done before them. (Benamar, 1989).

Guided by the Islamic idea and vision of the world, which embraces everything, the native artist, Jilali Gharbou, was one of the first radically abstract painters who used different art techniques. His painting style uses figural forms, as well as traditional geometrical order.

In the Arab state of Egypt, modern calligraphic painting spread. This type of art represents the latest trend in Egypt. The art of Arabic calligraphy and arabesque are blended with late Western expressionist and abstract techniques. Taha Hussein is one of the foremost Egyptian artists today. He is a painter, who produced more than one form of art, but he usually combines drawing together with the use of calligraphy in his paintings (Ramzi Moustafa and Ahmed Moustafa). Kamal Amin Awad, from Egypt (1923-1980) has produced etching artwork which represents human figures in the foreground but the background composition is totally based on graphic Arabic script. Another pioneer artist from Egypt, who was interested in Arabic script as a basic medium for an aesthetic and visual expression is Ahmed Moustafa. He now lives in England and his artwork and views are a very good example of the strong impact of Islamic art and influence on the recent aesthetic norm.

Moustafa is an academic, and professional artist, who utilises the aesthetic forms of Arabic script as central subjects and main themes in his paintings. He is one of the many Arab and Muslim artists, who have settled in Western countries, but their intellectual views and artwork is very much inspired by the early Islamic art forms and aesthetic ideology. His artistic talent and academic knowledge have both been combined to revive the traditional art of the Arabic script, taking into account the recent visual art approach.

In Egypt, Moustafa studied Western art with special interest in Printmaking. Calligraphy is at the centre of Moustaf's academic research study; he is also a

master calligrapher. Both his academic areas of research and calligraphic talent were behind his unique artistic achievement especially in the West. His skilful painting techniques are unusual even from the perspective of Western modern art, because silkscreen printing is not very often mixed with painting. Moustafa not only blends silkscreen printing with painting but also uses the written scripts as his basic element of visual representation and composition in all his painting art works. Moustafa spent more than fourteen years of research on the views and works of the master Muslim calligrapher of the tenth century, Ibn Muqlah (Abas and Salman, 1994). This area of Islamic art was hardly explored in depth before Moustafa, therefore, he had many definite views about the aesthetic quality and science of the Arabic script. He considers Arabic calligraphy a profession of great talent and an art of highly aesthetic values with scientific orientation, as well as medium of creative expression. Moustafa with his research background and artistic talent was able to explain in a very sensible terms the aesthetic value of Arabic writing in the formation of the universal form of Islamic art.

The recent Muslim artists of today, like Moustafa, reject the view that Islam restricts figurative painting, but it is a matter of a different art system and aesthetic. Arabic calligraphy was the favourite art choice of Muslim artists especially when the theory of mathematical proportion was introduced into the art of Arabic calligraphy by the greatest Muslim artist Ibn Muqlah.

Traditional Arabic calligraphy has its own aesthetic theory and is often associated with particular geometrical models of proportion. Some modern Muslim artists tend to use Arabic script as a means of aesthetic expression in their painting. However, those artists may not pay attention to the canon of traditional calligraphy. What is important to most artists, is the abstract and aesthetic quality

of the Arabic script. The artists sometimes use written text or try to reconstruct certain letters, shapes, or groups of Arabic letters in order to produce an abstract painting (Ghulam, 1973; Gray, 1982). Moustafa is perhaps the only modern Arab artist who pays special attention to the canon and the aesthetic theory of traditional calligraphy. He kept his calligraphy in proportion whilst using the script as a free form of expression. This form and its content are not separated in Moustafa's work, even when he blends calligraphy and painting techniques together. In most of Moustafa's silk-screen paintings, there are readable written messages, but they might not be easy to read in the usual senses of ordinary writing. The texts are reconstructed in a different order to form a recognizable images made of selected texts.

Moustafa is a master calligrapher in the traditional sense. His writing is fine and highly aesthetic even when he uses the script to create recognizable visual images. For example, one of his most powerful silkscreen paintings represents a horse image made up of written Arabic text; this text reads as a long piece of poetry. The painting was inspired by an old Arab poet, who is describing the movement of his incredible horse. Moustafa is fascinated by poetry. He not only rearranged the poem's structure and phrases to create a general or rough image of a horse, but he also made a very impressive visual image of a horse. This represents the mode of the poet and his wild description of the horse. Unlike traditional calligraphers, Moustafa used the script in a unique fashion for creative expression in both silkscreen printing and painting techniques (Theophilus, 1993).

"From what he said, Dorival accounts for the plastic arts in the Islamic countries by emphasising the religious and political taboos, which inhibited and even prevent the spirit of creativity. The feeling of bitterness that I mentioned earlier is in fact rather ambivalent, since it is based half on reality and half on prejudice, as suggested by Dorival whose knowledge is indisputable" (Benamar, 1989, p.13).

Little study has been carried out on Islamic art in relation to the recent global art education theories and trends. This point has been brought to public attention by Richard D. Hickman, in his article "*Art Education in a Newly Industrialised Country*". In this article Hickman has pointed out that the Islamic aesthetic form of expression is verbal instead of visual. He concluded that Islamic visual imagery is basically derived from Arabic and geometrical patterns. From his observation on Singapore's art education, he stated that Muslim teachers and students accept image representation as a form of artistic expression. On the other hand, many devoted Muslims do not object to representational art, and that contradicts some reports from Western art educators. From Hickman's multicultural perspective it seems that Islamic art can be related to art education with the view that Muslims have different visual systems from Western art.

Amongst the Western Muslim art academics, only Syed Jan Abas and Amer Shaker have tried to direct attention to the educational potential of Islamic geometrical patterns. In their book, "*Symmetries of Islamic Geometrical Patterns*", an effort was made to identify the value of symmetry in both art and science with reference to the example of Islamic geometrical art and patterns designs (See Chapter Two).

The integration of art and science is one aspect of Islamic art that was not appreciated in the early art education programmes. This was mainly because Western art education theories and the aesthetic norm were mainly focused on the aesthetic elements and expressive quality of artwork. Art is taught as an independent subject and not integrated with other subjects such as children's education.

It is only in recent times that art is appreciated as an integral part in the total academic education of an individual, and may be accepted in the light of the fact that art education in a progressive sense should not be limited to teaching children about art.

There is a great potential that children would learn better and may easily comprehend through various art experiences and subjects. Not all children are expected to grow up to be artists or art masters but visual art is a very interesting subject of an aesthetic appeal to all people. This kind art education may make it possible to understand some of the educational aspects of Islamic art. Here this approach seems to shed more light on the value of art in the Islamic culture. Such a view is very important in consideration of the development of the studies of art and could solve the recent problems of art education in Muslim societies. Islamic visual art is not divorced from the crafts, and is not the only kind of expressive fine art in the Western sense.

The work of Islamic Art has usually an immediate function, which is related to the individual interest and needs of the society at large. Most of the Islamic art products were not made only to express aesthetic values but the majority was made for various needs of the daily life as mentioned earlier. Islamic art has played a major role in the education process especially during the high achievement of Islamic civilization. Islamic art is interrelated with education, since the major form of expression is based on the aesthetic visual form of writing and geometry. Both these elements are an integral part in most design work of most traditional Islamic art products. In the light of this fact Islamic art has a scientific foundation and this has to be considered in relation to the study of art in schools.

As has been established early in this chapter both Arabic script and geometrical art forms were developed with reference to systematic proportion and mainly influenced by certain scientific knowledge.

“During the past two decades much effort has been spent in the Islamisation of education in the Islamic world, and several major conferences have been devoted to programming for and carrying out this task. Most of this work however, has been concentrated in fields other than art, a few have emphasised how significant art is in the creation of an Islamic ambience and the establishment of an integral educational system which would be veritably Islamic” (Nasr, 1989, Vol. 6, No. 2, p.4).

This chapter has attempted to show that the traditional art of Islamic culture has a different visual system from that of the West in that the Islamic aesthetic form of expression has been deeply influenced by the Arabic language, especially since the Arabic script developed into a major design element. It is perhaps possible now to suggest briefly an art curriculum which focuses on the design element and aesthetic in Arabic script in order to integrate visual art with other aesthetic experiences and areas of knowledge. This approach would promote the value of art in the education process beyond the mere aesthetic enjoyment and exercise of artistic skills associated with the art programme. There is an urgent need to consider the potential of calligraphy to restore the status of traditional art in the context of the art education programme. This would help students to study art in relation to other artistic disciplines while using their creative talents.

Calligraphy in art curriculum

- Calligraphy and the training of art teacher

The education of art teachers plays a major role in any successful art programme. Art teachers should be trained in the many aspects of traditional art and aesthetics in order to study the history of calligraphy in depth and its role in developing the visual system of Islamic art. The art of calligraphy in Islamic culture is an

important element in the design of most art products. On the other hand, the aesthetic form of Arabic script has to be the source of unity that underpins all forms of Islamic art.

Art teachers may find in calligraphy a rich source of material through which skills and activities can be developed which promote the creative ability of students and help them to develop their artistic talents. At the same time they will be exploring many areas of knowledge related to art and other subjects.

The art of calligraphy, when redefined in the context of theories of graphic art and design can be much appreciated for the major role that it can play in integrating visual art with other aesthetic experiences such as creative writing and poetry. It would perhaps be extremely useful if art teachers were to adopt the same holistic approach in the art programme. This could be a practical step in promoting the value of art in Muslim society and in establishing a strong art foundation. This would do much to improve the quality of education in traditional Muslim society.

The art of Calligraphy is associated with handwriting and it involves cognitive and creative skills and the practice of calligraphy can lead students to learn and appreciate other art experiences related to the education of every individual.

There are two main areas where calligraphy seems to play major role in promoting the creative skills of students and improving their ability to learn. These two areas should not be separated since the study of art at school is aimed at encouraging students to express themselves through art and at the same time broaden their education in other fields.

Art teachers need to study the art of Arabic script, but it should not be limited to the traditional concept of calligraphy. Arabic script has a unique aesthetic quality and, as has been discussed, Arabic calligraphy is a major form of expression in

Muslim culture. In this chapter, some attempt has been made to redefine the aesthetic value of Arabic script in relation to the Western art aesthetic in which calligraphy is considered to be a minor art compared to the art of painting. This why there is no reference to the role of calligraphy in relation to art education programmes in Muslim countries because at present they are based on Western models. Art education still influence by the Romantic view image representational in children art considered very important element of expression. The problem of this art education model is not possible to put into practice because art is associated with complex values and principles. On the other hand art has different aesthetic form and function in every society. It has been acknowledged however that the Western art aesthetic is not helpful in answering many important questions in relation to the art of non-Western societies (See Chapter Five).

Therefore, it should be taking into account the aesthetic value and education element associated with Arabic calligraphy, especially in relation to the study of art and other subjects in the school programmes of Muslim countries, the following points may briefly outline the value of the creative experience that calligraphy can provide in art curriculum.

- Calligraphy and art

Arabic calligraphy shares common aesthetic principles with other forms of visual art and literature and this element should be the focus of art education programmes in Muslim schools. Calligraphy is an art that has been practised by Muslims for thousands of years and it is not necessary to understand Arabic in order to appreciate its unique aesthetic quality. However, Arabic script looks familiar to the eyes of Muslims who speak different languages because every Muslim tries to read the Qur'an in Arabic. Calligraphic art was originally developed in relation to the Qur'an and it has spiritual connotation for the Muslim people beyond its aesthetic

quality (See Chapter Three). The aesthetic and spiritual value of calligraphy in Islamic culture is equal to the value of painting in the art forms of some societies. The art in every society is an important element in relation to the aesthetic and spiritual development of individual. This experience should be considered but the study of calligraphy in school should not be limited to the spiritual value associated with art work. Calligraphy might be integrated to provide many art experiences such design, graphic painting and creative writing

In art programmes, students need to learn the basic skill of design to help them use art to express creative and verbal ideas through visual forms. Writing is based on graphic design logic but, at the early key stages, children may have problems in learning how to write. Art activities help them to overcome such difficulties. For example, in calligraphy lessons, children can be encouraged to enjoy writing by designing of little cards, making name signs and creating script books. Calligraphy at the early stages should be taught as a form of art design and not only focus on the traditional handwriting skills. Calligraphy shares some elements with design art where lines and shapes are used to express certain abstract ideas in visual forms. The study of design with calligraphy skills seems to help children to understand the logic of writing where visual shapes represent individual letters and words.

- Calligraphy and painting

Arabic calligraphy in the art of Islamic culture has been integrated with other mediums of visual expression and is closely associated with painting especially in manuscript work. This form of aesthetic experience needs to be taken into account in the art curriculum to help students appreciate painting in relation to their art heritage.

In the art world today, the gap between painting and calligraphy has been narrowed and artists may use image and script to communicate certain messages through art work. Graphic artists and book illustrators often combine writing and images and this kind of art has become an art element in newspapers, magazine and books. Students should be encouraged to use writing and image together to express their views since this kind of art activity may lead them to relate art to other areas of knowledge.

The question of image in relation to art education may easily be solved when visual forms of expressions are integrated with other aesthetic experience and art forms. Arabic calligraphy has aesthetic value and a practical function since this art form carries written messages.

In traditional Islamic visual art, painting was developed in relation to the art and design of manuscripts. The art of bookmaking integrated many artistic skills associated with different areas of knowledge. The study of calligraphy in relation to painting would provide the student with a new medium of expression where writing and image can be used together in a different aesthetic context based on the integration of visual and verbal elements.

There has been very little done in studying this form of art experience in relation to art programmes and education. As has been discussed earlier, Arabic script is a major art form and it should not be taught only within the limited frame of the craft of calligraphy, which is viewed as a minor art in Western culture. This view should be at the centre of the art programme and the study of calligraphy should include many other artistic skills to help students to express themselves without limiting their field.

- Calligraphy and creative writing

Calligraphy in a limited sense refers to beautiful writing but the art school should provide a rich fund of art skills to promote the creative abilities of students. Calligraphy is associated with writing which is a strong medium for any creative and aesthetic expression in language. The study of calligraphy, whilst aiming to develop handwriting skills, must be integrated with other creative activities such as story writing and poetry if it is to be of wider use to students.

This a very brief idea must be systematically developed to redefine the art of Arabic calligraphy, to find a new possible sources of aesthetic and creative expressions where many art experiences can be integrated in a meaningful art programmes to promote the value of art education in Muslims societies.

The following chapter is focus on the question of image in relation to the theory of self-expression associated with Western art philosophy and aesthetic. For this reason, it has been suggested here to look to new sources of materials in traditional art, to design a meaningful curriculum to teach art based on the aesthetic values and function of art in a broader cultural context. Further explication of the ideas expressed in this section of the art curriculum may be found in the following references. (Baer, 1998; Wilkes, 1994; Welch, 1979; Safadi, 1978; Nasr, 1976; Burckhardt, 1976; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Shah, 1971; Lings, 1971; Rice, 1971; Hay, 1965; Kubičková, 1960).

APPENDIX
PLATES OF ILLUSTRATION

PLATE 1

Figure A Chinese graphics and writing originally developed from visual images known as ideograms.



(Yee, 1938, p.120)

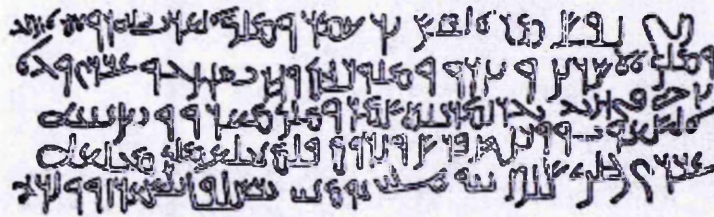
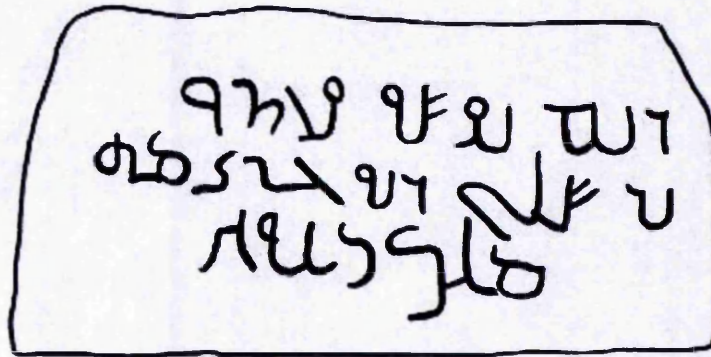
Figure B Chinese script is based on a collection of individuals graphic signs in a non-alphabetic writing system.



(Yee, 1938, p.56)

PLATE 2

An early stage of Arabic writing. (An inscription from a gravestone).

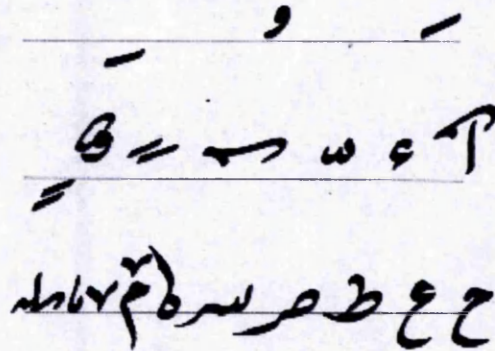


(Safadi, 1978, p. 6)



PLATE 3

Adding dots and other diacritical marks, originally gave the text clarity, but now adds to the aesthetic quality of a design.



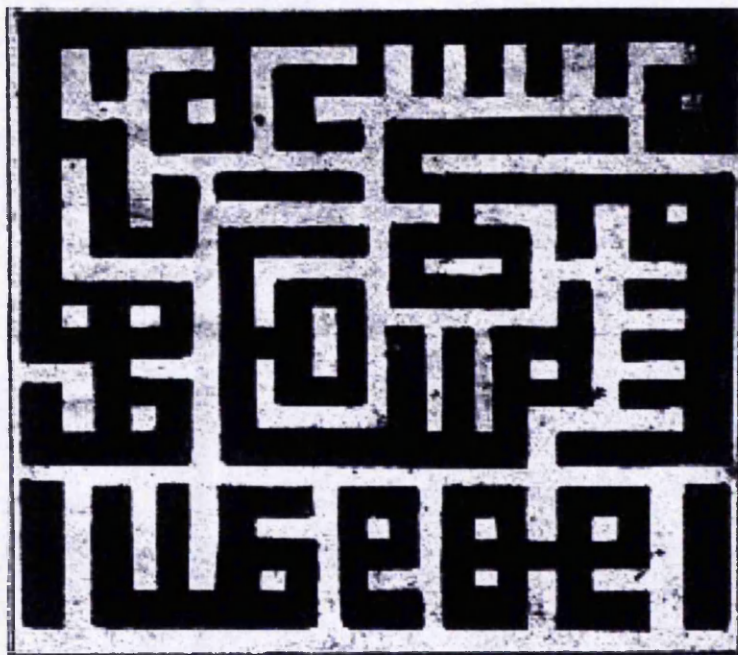
(Khatibi, 1994, p. 92).



(Khatibi, 1994, p. 145).

PLATE 4

Arabic script: Kufic and Cursive



(Khatibi, 1994, p.40)

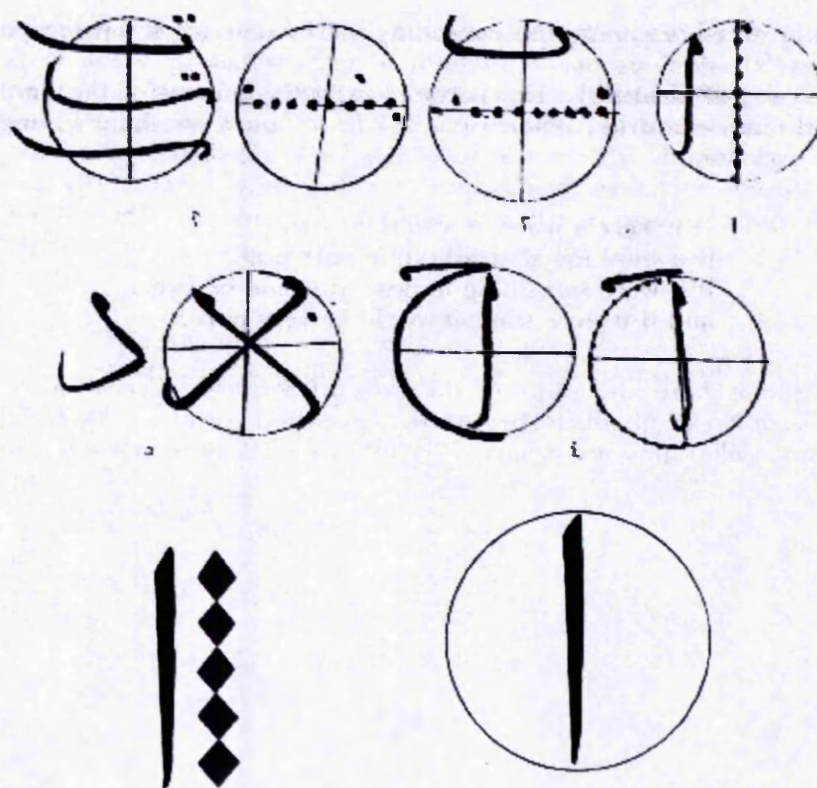
اب ج د ر ز س ص ط
ع ف ق ك ل م م
ن وه ه ل ا ي ع لا

ذِيَّوَانُ الْخَطِّ الشَّعْرِيِّ

(Khatibi, 1994, p.79)

PLATE 5

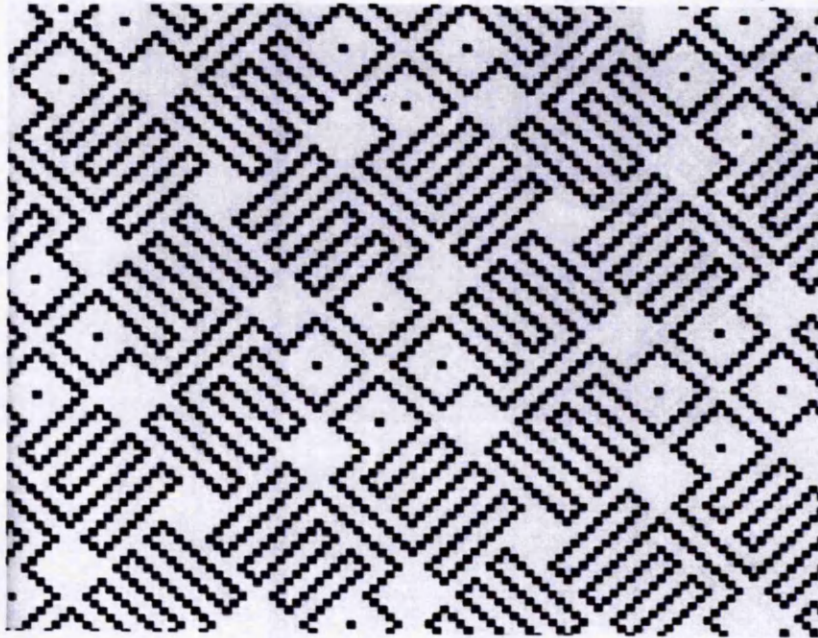
Using the dot as the canon of proportion for the letters. Showing the connection between script and geometry.



(Khatibi, 1994, p. 46-47-50)

PLATE 6

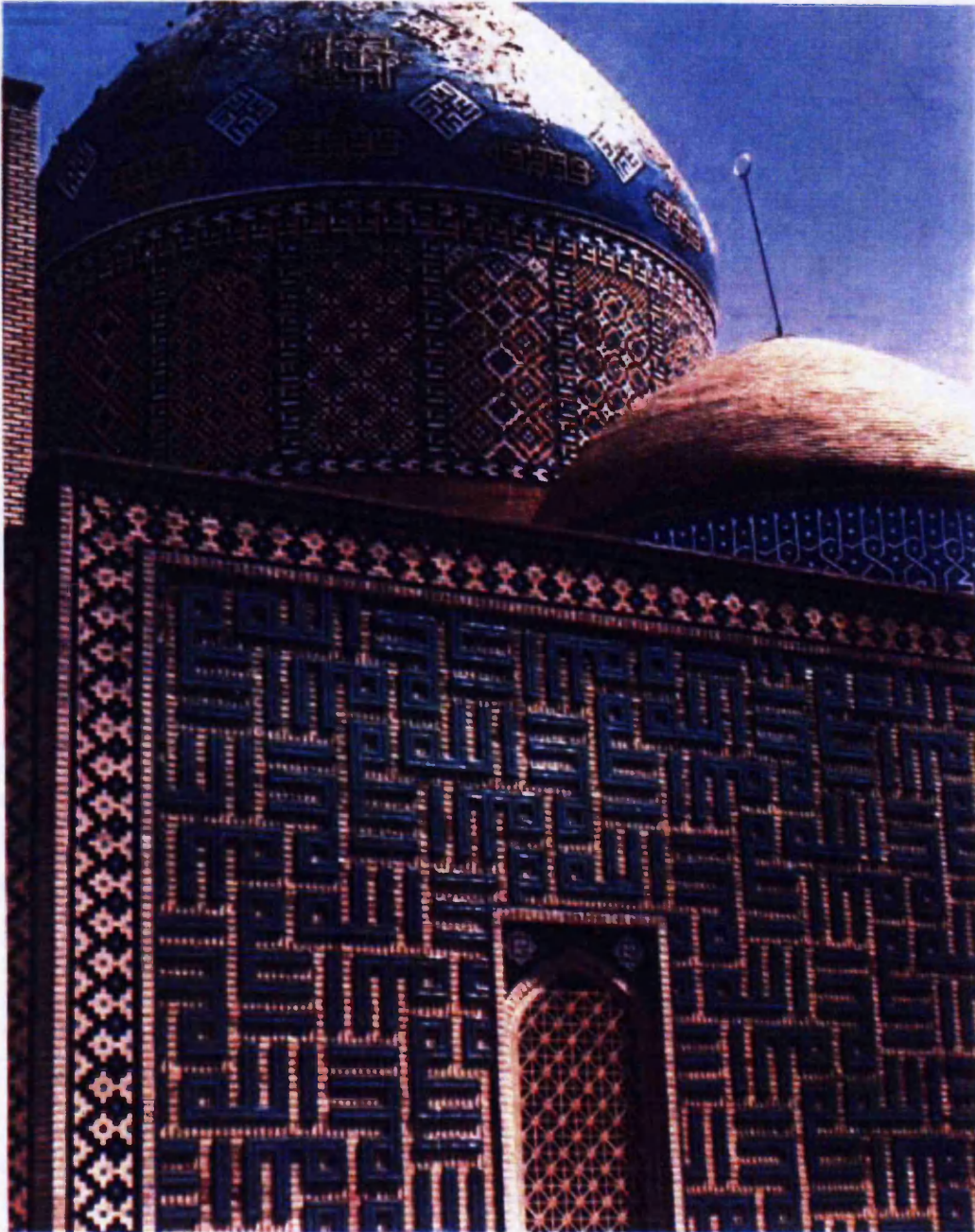
Arabic letter shapes of the Kufic script style are easy to apply to design work in the form of a block of tile or other similar building material. This type of script often can form part of the structure of a body of artwork. It is for this kind of geometric quality that Arabic script had great influence on the original design and choice of materials in artworks and monument.



(Khatibi, 1994, p. 131)

PLATE 7

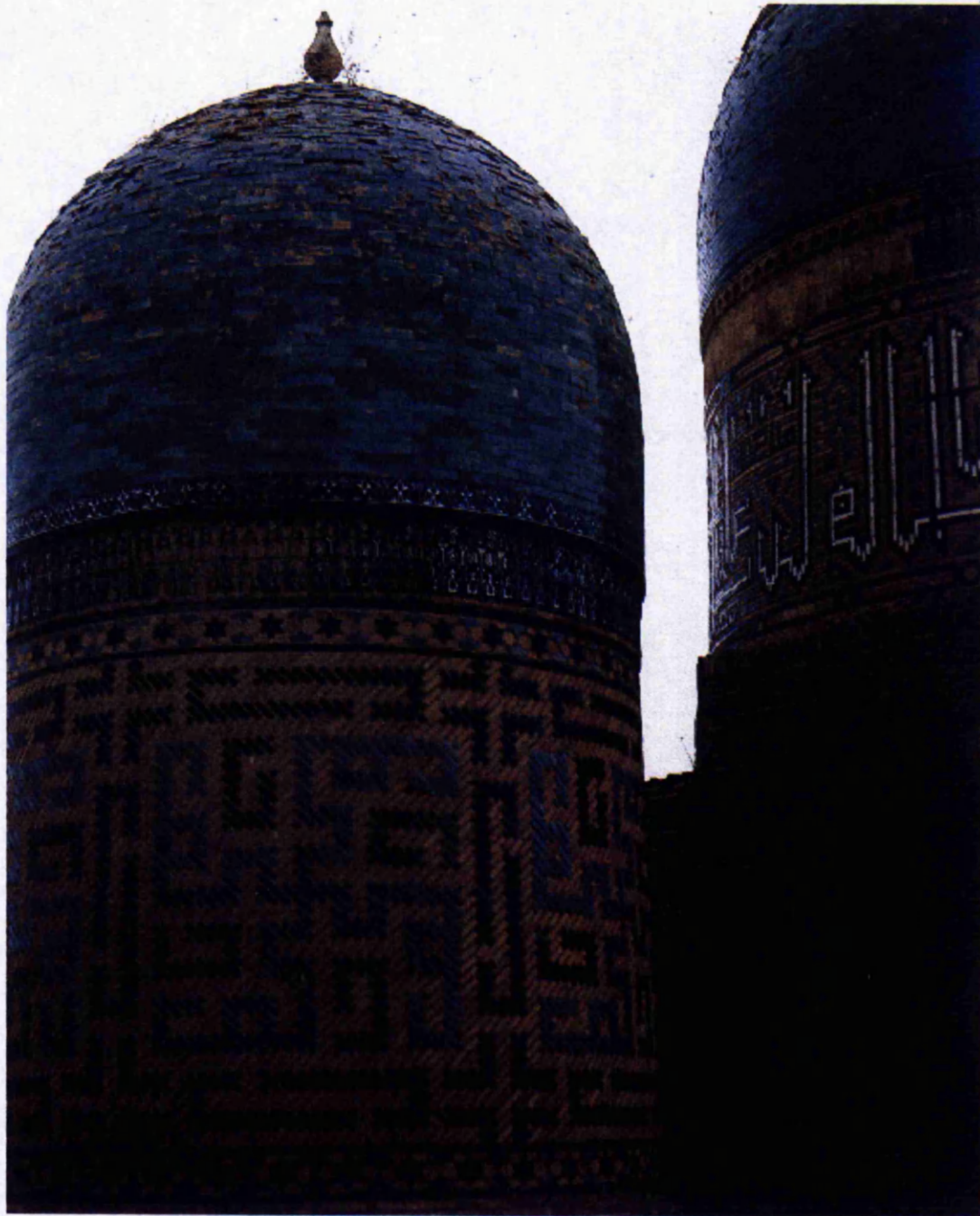
The construction of buildings and design incorporating Kufic or angular Arabic design and structure. Material: glazed brick.



(Ghulam, 1973, p. 73)

PLATE 8

The Kufic style influenced the design and structural techniques of Islamic architecture.



(khatibi, 1994,p.211)

PLATE 9

Figure A Cursive script is used in metalwork and other art craft techniques to create rounded surfaces, and it also gives structural integrity, both physically and aesthetically.

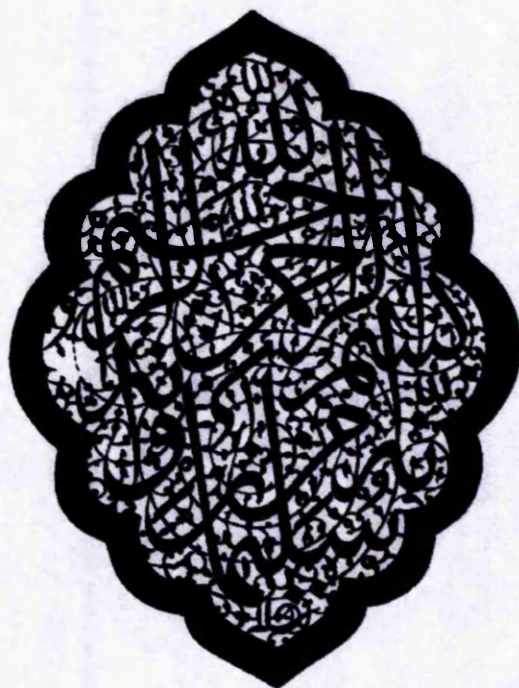


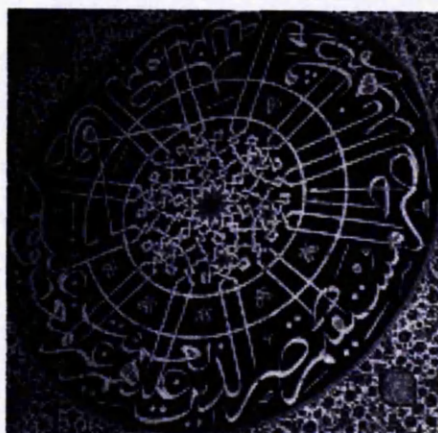
Figure B: Example of Cursive script in metalwork



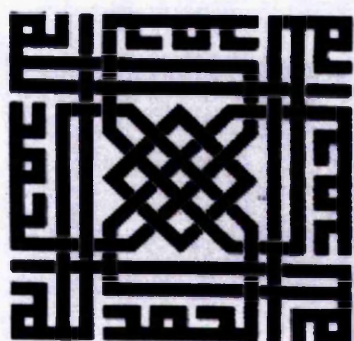
(Safadi, 1978,p.59)

PLATE 10

Writing fits in all kind of geometrical shapes (circle, triangle, square)



(Katibi, 1994, p.201)



(Katibi, 1994, p.49)



(Katibi, 1994, p.152)

PLATE 11

Figure A The Islamic design and writing in different materials both wood and marble, using Arabic script and image combined.



(Safadi, 1978, p.57)

Figure B Arabic script with image design.



(Katibi, 1994, p.108)

PLATE 12

Figure A Designs and the graphic form of written words



(Katibi, 1994, p.112)

Figure B Design of written words on shape of animal.



(Katibi, 1994, p.161)

CHAPTER FIVE

IMAGE REPRESENTATION IN ART EDUCATION TRENDS

The earlier three chapters attempted to view the question of image in Islam by taking into account the related studies that finally helped to explain the problems in terms of the organic link between Islam and art. The Arabic language plays a major role in the formation of Islamic art and the visual form of expression. Unlike Western art, Islamic art is developed in relation to the abstract form of the Arabic language. Painting does not have the same value as in Western art, since Islamic art is oriented towards geometric design, this is closely associated with the Arabic script. (See Chapter Four). There is an ideological conflict when Western art trends are introduced into the art education of the Muslim world (Abusabib, 1995; Ali, 1989).

It is perhaps more important to view the question of image in relation to Western art education in order to understand the origin of conflict. Image representation of human figures has always been a central element of expression in the visual art of Western culture, especially the art of painting. The image of human figures has both highly spiritual and aesthetic values. This attitude has been a source of great influence on the art form of Western culture from the Renaissance until modern times. The aesthetic value of human figures in the West is similar to some extent but differs in the religious aspect of image, which may have been lost in secular art products. There have been different methods in the representation style of the human image and this is the result of the Romantic view of expression and the radical approach towards painting in the later modern art movement. Nevertheless, image representation is still a very important form of expression in Western art.

The materials and techniques of painting seemed to be influenced or developed in relation to the representation and perspective of human images, especially at the peak of the classical art movement. There is historical evidence indicating that some old painting materials were developed and made with much better quality products, such as oil and watercolours. There was a higher demand for the fine quality of painting during the Renaissance, with the use of good coloured pigments. The artists were able to develop some new techniques to improve the representation of the image (Milman, 1986). Linear perspective is an essential technique in image representation, especially in figurative painting. The artist took advantage of colours to produce varieties of hues or tones in order to create an illusion of reality, especially when the subject matter is focused on the image of human figures. Linear perspective is believed to have been discovered by Western artists as an attempt to improve the technique of image representation. The technique was strictly observed by the academic artists, who themselves were eager to accomplish this in their painting work. This produced a natural effect with reference to a three-dimensional perspective. (Spencer, 1966; Milman, 1986; Edgerton, 1991; Savedoff, 1999).

An image of the human figure is as an ideal symbol of beauty, on the other hand it is a major reference of aesthetic value in Western art. In the tradition of the classical period, painting may have been appreciated or rejected in terms of accuracy of the image representation. Many of the works by famous artists are often praised because of their skills in representational technique.

The image of the human figure is closely associated with myth and individual views, this factor played a major role in developing representational art in the West. It has been well-documented that many of the classical and folk paintings

were produced with the support of religious groups (Kallir, 1982; Settis, 1994; Evdokimov, 1990).

The human body, especially women, is not only a major theme in painting but it is also considered as an ideal reference of aesthetic measurement. In history and Western aesthetic, there are many views related to the aesthetic values of human figures, such as how the painting should represent the image of the face and other parts of the body in relation to the proportion of the whole figure (Baxandall, 1988; Cooper, 1994; Duro and Greenhalgh, 1993).

The human image has been associated with myths, various art terms and philosophy, and thus was not only influenced by religious theology (Saxl, 1970; Grimes, 1976; Duro and Greenhalgh, 1993). In the artwork of particular artists, the subject matter of paintings represents a Platonic philosophy. The human figure of women represents nudity to convey a modest approach of sensuality. Generally female figures have been a major inspiration for Western artists (Gould, 1972; Pointon, 1986). In some of the works by Leonardo da Vinci, especially in painting, he painted human figures of saints to represent a metaphysical view of mystery in sensual terms. It has been suggested that he was interested in the anatomy of the human figure and that reflects the work of Leonardo as a scientist and artist. On the other hand, his use of androgynous men was deliberate because he rejected the muscular body of a nude male to express female qualities (Cooper, 1994).

Furthermore, nude figures are a major subject in artwork, like that of Michelangelo. In particular his masterpiece the statue of David, was an artwork that represents a naked boy (Cooper, 1994). This is only an example to show how important the human figure has been in Western art, and how there are particular views about the nude body. The interest in human figures is rooted in ancient

Greek philosophy and it is a very fundamental element in the Western art aesthetic where the nude body represents the ideal physical beauty (MacDonald, 1970; Duro and Greenhalgh, 1993).

The study of art in other cultures especially tribal art started to attract the attention of art in the West. On the other hand, Western artists started to look further for new subjects and methods, this trend was originally started by some of the Romantic artists.

In Romantic art, the representational method was dramatically changed but the image of the human figure was still a major theme, in painting during this period (Clark, 1976). Romantic art was an expression of many radical philosophers including Jean Jacques Rousseau, who called for freedom of self-expression. This view was developed into an influential reform movement and liberated the art and the artist from the restriction of tradition in classical art (MacDonald, 1970).

Figurative paintings was no longer treated as an object but rather as a medium of expression and both image form and representation style were intended to portray an emotional feeling and have dramatic effect. The human body was occasionally represented with less attention being paid to the role of proportion and visual perspective, by some artists. Colours were used in a very expressive way with less effort to produce a very fine touch as colour techniques were quite loose. However, this radical change was gradual (Clark, 1976).

The human image is a central element in the majority of the works by Romantic artists, where the subject matter did not only involve the representation of religious figures. Furthermore, imagination was an important source of expression in Romantic art. Many other views have influenced the human image in Western art especially in modern painting, but these views were motivated by the same

Romantic philosophy and the development of the natural and social sciences. The Romantic interest in the noble human being, inspired artists to search for a new image of idealism and an uncorrupted society (Clark, 1976).

The Romantic art movement opened the door to the outer Western world, where some individual artists searched towards other non-Western arts and civilizations for a new vision and inspiration, (Mackenzie, 1995). The Romantic ideal and imagination dictated the artistic expression, especially through the representation of the human figure. The artist is, however, influenced by the art style of the East, together with the image representation reflecting the Western art, there is emphasis on the subject matter of human figures. In some context the art of painting is associated with religious views and the Oriental family life style is seen to represent the route to the world of the Bible. (Mackenzie, 1995). This example shows that although Western art accepts other art traditions, it still projects the values and beliefs on the aesthetic of Western culture, where the image is a source of powerful representation.

Researches in art education of non-Western culture has indicated some serious predicaments, especially when the Western aesthetic and art model are introduced into a non-Western society, where there is a well established art tradition (Meyer, 2001; Abiodun, 2001; Lo, 1989). One of the areas of conflict is related to the different religious values and aesthetic concepts attached to the art of image. In the West, the human figure is a major element for expressing religious concepts. This view may no longer be observed in the recent Western secular art, however this does not recognise the value of image in the art of other cultures.

Generally, image has been recognised as having a great potential to express ideas and feelings, especially with regard to the art education of children. This is still, a theoretical and debatable view in the sense that image is not always a major element in the art tradition and products of all cultures (Hickman, 1991; Editorial, 1993).

The traditional art of Islamic culture is one example, but there are some other forms of art in certain cultures such as that of the Chinese or the Japanese. This refers to the image as having no equal aesthetic value, similar function or visual perspective as visual representation has in the art of Western culture (Parezo, 1983; Cox, Perara, and Fan, 1999; Burton, 1992; Saville-Troike, 1984; Gardner, 1989). However, this Western art aesthetic is very much now at the core of art education in modern Muslim societies and this factor has led to difficulties, for art educators in the Muslims world, in determining the exact function of art in a developing society like Saudi Arabia.

In Western society, art has a clear cut role as the medium for expressing the central beliefs of Western culture. Through the centuries, in both religious and secular contexts, it has come to be based mainly on the aesthetic of the figure, with the individual artist as the main agent through whom the grand ideas are expressed and the most highly regarded avenue of expression is normally through the art of painting. Sculpture is also regarded as a high art form in the West but painting is more favoured especially art education programme of children. (Anderson, 1995).

A culture has arisen in the West in which the practice of making art is seen as a separate, and somewhat rarified, activity, that takes place apart from one's daily life, and which does not necessarily have to have a function beyond pure self-

expression. In this environment, an artist may become as famous as the work he produces, either because some people find his work attractive or because he, or his name even, has become fashionable among wealthy clients. This leads often to a situation in which the value attached to art has nothing to do with its actual function in that society. This state of affairs can only be found, one could argue, in mercantile or highly industrialized societies, which are based inherently on the trading of commodities.

In Western society today, the art teacher is expected to encourage individual creativity, through emphasis on the pleasure of producing art as play or as self-expression, whilst urging students to display their individuality and encouraging them to find inspiration in the works of the great masters or the artistic inheritance of Western culture. (Atkinson, 1991; McWhinnie, 1972; Taylor, 1992).

In the Muslim culture there is a different art tradition, where traditional skills and craft were very much adhered to, and artifacts were often produced for social practical usage (Al-Zayer, 1989). But, today in largely traditional societies, which are now a market for the industrial world, such as the oil-producing Arab countries, the function of art is highly problematic. Art education is influenced by Western theories and based almost exclusively on the interests and the developments of the individual child and self-expression. This art theory conflicts with the cultural norm which can be found in certain contemporary Muslim societies as well as those of the Far East and Asia (Hickman, 1991; Editorial, 1993).

Self-expression is therefore, regarded by many critics as something that should not be actively encouraged because of this emphasis on the interest of the individual

child. It is also seen a somewhat self-indulgent practice that does not have a clear and definite, positive objective beyond the pleasure of the individual himself.

It has been noted that problems arise when children are asked to relate to or accept an alien perspective on art, which has the image as its focal point. Indeed, some critics have pointed out that when non-Western children have been asked to employ Western skills, such as drawing images, this has in some measures limited their creativity. However, when the students were asked to relate to their own cultural artistic values and modes, they produced very expressive art work (Varkalis, 1992).

It is not just a matter of the religious issues for Muslims, concerning the representation of the image but rather it represents a deeper art problem (see Chapter Six). This art question may be found in many parts of the Muslim world, since studying art in school relies heavily on the art trends and education of Western methods and theories. This presents a big problem for art educators, in Saudi Arabia, today. Not only do the general public perceive that foreign perspectives and approaches do not fulfil their cultural, religious and creative needs, but educators are also aware that because of the dominant influence of Western art values in the art education system, classical and traditional Islamic art practices are being neglected and no attention is being paid to these indigenous art forms, within teacher-training programmes. Recent studies on the question of the representation of the image, in the field of art education, shows how sensitive this issue has become for both teachers and educators, in Saudi Arabia (Al-Amoud, 1991; Bajouda, 1993; Al-Doyhi, 1994; Alyamy, 1995).

The consequence of an art education system that promotes art as play, or as creative self-expression, is that art teachers have rarely become concerned about the function of art in their society at large. This situation pertains, one could argue, in both the West and the Muslim world for different reasons. In the West, art teachers have concentrated on producing art, developing individual creative skills and making art an enjoyable experience in a classroom situation without giving value or attention to the socio-cultural aspects of art in general. Thus, there was no coherent objective, for art production, beyond the classroom itself. Because of this, according to Zimmerman (1994), art was often associated with entertainment and, therefore, was held in low esteem by students and parents alike. Also, in a multi-cultural environment, art educators have to respect the art traditions of the various ethnic groups found in a classroom, and take care not to promote or value one particular art aesthetic over another. In a positive sense, this leads to children being exposed to different artistic norms. However, on the other hand, it hinders the development of a central art aesthetic by which a group can be culturally linked to a single art tradition (Hart, 1991 ; Anderson, 1995). Nevertheless, Zimmermann claims, that in the last three decades, since concerns were voiced about the nature of art education, teacher-training has improved and parents are beginning to recognize the value of art education in their child's development as a social being. Indeed, since the practice of studio-oriented art has been reviewed, in the West, the teaching of multi-cultural art practices has become more widespread and art has been linked, in the curriculum of many schools, with other subjects such as literature and science. Art teachers are also expected to have received a much broader academic education before entering the profession as an art teacher. (Zimmermann, 1994)

On the other hand, in many Muslim countries, where art education is a fairly new discipline and sometimes regarded as a foreign import, there are often negative attitudes among parents towards children doing art for more than religious reasons, since the art in school is reduced to the interest of the individual and art seems to the general public as something meaningless, and just something for children to do to pass the time and play. Therefore, in order to avoid conflict, art teaching, in Saudi Arabia particularly, has focused on art as enjoyment and relaxation, without addressing the real issues of art and artistic traditions and the place of art in one's own society. In both the West and the East, art educators have recognized this phenomenon as a limitation in the teaching of art.

However, it should be stressed here, that cultural norms surrounding art differ from one Muslim country to another. For example, even though Egypt and Saudi Arabia are both Muslim states and share much the same rich and colorful artistic heritage, on the other hand, the geographical location of Egypt has made it more open to the outside world throughout history. There is no doubt that cultural attitudes towards art are quite distinctive in Egypt from those in other Arab countries. Through history, art has played an important role in the life of the Egyptian people and, indeed still has been a source of income to that society.

The Status of Art Education in Saudi Arabia

Visual art education, in its contemporary form, is a relatively new subject on the curriculum of state schools in Saudi Arabia, with the first art programmes being introduced in 1954 and the first training programme for art teachers was established at university level in 1975, with two major art education institutes

providing academic training for teachers of art (Al-Zahrani, 1988; Al-Amoud, 1991).

State schools and the two major institutes of art education are now the only institutions that offer visual art education to the public on a national scale. In fact, art education departments are not only a training ground for prospective art teachers, they have also been considered as institutions which can provide training in art skills for local artists and craftsmen (Al-Amoud, 1991).

However, some local artists are also professional art teachers, who are trained in Western art and do not relate much to the art values in the local environment. This does not help to create a bridge between teaching practice and art as a valuable element in the social context and everyday life of the individual and society at large in traditional Islamic culture.

Also, the content and goals of art programmes, in these institutions, do not seem to be reflecting the needs and interests of the society in general. This has widened the gap between art education and the public, resulting in a negative attitude towards art education (Al-Amoud, 1991). This has been the cause of concern for many art educators and local authorities (Al-Ghamedy, 1986; Al-Zahrani, 1988; Al-Amoud, 1991). (See Chapter Six).

Society has a pressing need to study art education from a cultural perspective, to consider the problem of the isolation of art from society and give more recognition to art education courses in the educational curriculum. (Al-Amoud, 1991, p.9)

The main source of limitation about art programmes in the state schools and art teacher training colleges, is that the curriculum is based, almost exclusively, on Western art education models, founded on the Western art aesthetic of the figure, and on the notion of self-expression, with its natural emphasis on individualism. In

practice, this means that, theoretically, the individual should be provided with the freedom to express himself. Students are, therefore, encouraged to experiment with many techniques, including making representations of the human figure. For, according to Greek philosophy, the human figure, in its proportions, contained all the elements of aesthetic principles (MacDonald, 1970). This type of approach to art and the content of the art programmes are not at all compatible with the Islamic art values, let alone the value of art in a social and cultural context. Nevertheless, it constitutes the major proportion of the art curriculum in most institutions and, as a consequence of this, Islamic art and the teaching about aesthetic values within the Islamic art tradition have no major role in art education (Al-Amoud, 1991).

The difficulty, in this situation, is that Western art models often involve the use of figurative, representation and this does not seem to fit with art criteria of Islamic art tradition. (See Chapter Four). For this reason, some sections of the public are suspicious of art education and it is this negative attitude towards art education in Saudi Arabia that, according to some educators, is causing the most serious problem for the profession (Al-Ghamedy, 1986; Al-Zahrani, 1988; Al-Amoud, 1991). Indeed, Al-Ghamedy and the others emphasize that art educational programmes need to be re-evaluated in the context of local culture, and prospective art teachers' attitude towards art in their own culture should be examined. And, such a view has, in fact, been incorporated into the guidelines of the Art Education Department of the Umm Al-Gura University, viz:

To develop art educators and teachers who are committed to Islamic directions to work at various levels. (Al-Amoud, 1991, p.22)

However, at the King Saud University, (Al-Amoud, 1992) believes that changes are now taking place in attitudes towards the content of art programmes, with the

help of research work, in the field, concentrating on the cultural aspects of art education in Islamic society.

In 1986, Al-Amoud has investigated the response of students in Arabia to both Western and Islamic art. He found that Western art education models did not always integrate with what he recommended, that drawings of human beings should be discarded in art lessons. From his point of view, the concept of child art and theory do not relate to the art values and traditions in Islamic culture. However, he proposed anthropological approaches to adapt art education to the artistic needs of children in traditional Muslim societies.

In 1989, Al-Zayer attempted to study the effect of economic and social changes on traditional art practices in some contemporary Muslim societies. In the same thesis he tried to develop the initial idea of teaching traditional art to prospective art teachers. This is one of the few studies that have been made to reconcile Western art education with the skills and techniques of Islamic art.

In 1994, Al-Eid studied the art of the traditional Arabian houses, and he tried to introduce this art experience into art education programmes. This study represents another unique effort to define art education in relation to value and place of art in Islamic traditional society.

Also in 1994, Al-Doyhi made a comparative study to analyse the drawings of two groups of schoolchildren. The first group included some who lived in the USA while their parents went to study in American universities. The other group, were raised in Arabia and have never lived in a foreign country. This study is one of the few researches totally dedicated to the study of cultural influence based on a systematic analysis of children's art expressions. It is important to note that the researcher did not find children to have a problem with drawing images but their

culture had a strong influence on their expression. However he recommended that children's art from many different cultural backgrounds should be carefully studied. These views have provide a valuable source of inspiration for this study. On the other the same views clearly indicate that art educators in Arabia are aware of the problem of art education in a social and cultural context.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the practice of art and art education is often a complicated process in Saudi Arabia, as there are many factors which seem to affect the perception of art within society. For instance, Islam influences all aspects of a Muslim's life, so Muslims are naturally likely to hold distinct views about education and about art education, in particular. This makes the process of teaching art and training art teachers a more difficult task, for teachers have to be made aware of cultural issues and address them in their work. But this can only be done in a curriculum designed to meet local needs and this view should be applied to art education.

However there is still general problem in the early study because researchers, who often try to understand the history of art education in Saudi Arabia, usually look to this subject from the view of Western education and in relation to the project of nationalism in the newly-established Arabic states. Art education is still not defined in a traditional sense. The study of and teaching of art is considered as an imported package that was only introduced in the country when formal education was first established in 1957, almost two decades after the state of Saudi Arabia was created. However, Alyamy has attempted to look at the history of art education in the right context especially since the country is the birth place of Islam, which has a great impact on the art of Islamic culture .

Generally, the problem of art education has been addressed by a number of researchers who have pointed out some of the areas of conflicts or difficulties when art is taught in school based on Western art models. For example, Bajouda has indicated that the art education curriculum is based on art studios such as drawing and painting. (Bajouda, 1993)

According to this art educational package, the total growth of children depended very much on the unhindered development of their emotional, psychological, mental and creative aspects. This art educational philosophy originally gained a wide acceptance, mainly in the West, because it is centred on the beneficial aspects of art and adopted a universal approach to children's art. Also, it demonstrated the notion that children's drawing goes through predicted and standard stages of development, which correlate with age level and the normal growth of the child . Not only that, but such ideas corresponded perfectly with the commonly-held view, at the time, that art had a global dimension (Hart, 1991).

However, with the development of a multi-cultural art education approach, such concepts have been questioned so widely in areas where there is different aesthetic value and a large cultural art heritage. Also, art education turned on a particularly Western view of the child in society and the role of art in that society. Instead, art educators in many countries have begun to respect and attend to the cultural differences between children in different societies, and address the big question that different groups not only have a different ideology concerning what represents a child in their society, but they also have different perspectives on art and the role of art in the life of the society and the individual, (Winner, 1989; Chanda, 1993). In fact, art as a separate activity from daily life and function would be seen as a

totally foreign concept in some cultures, not to mention the idea of children's art as a separate category.

In 1991 Hart in a research report focused on the limitation of Western art education with regard to the art need of native children and other immigrated minorities in North America. Hart pointed out that students who came from non-Western societies still have a live art tradition of their own but do not meet the aesthetic criteria of Western art. As a result this non-Western art form was not represented in the art education curriculum. Hart explained what seems to be serious problem when children of other traditional cultures are limited to only learning art based on Western art education models. There are many art systems and different views about the production of art but the study of art is usually limited to Western art. One fundamental problem of the Western art aesthetic is that the value of art is considered to present the view and value of individual artists who are expected to be creative and produce original work that is usually appreciated according to a set of formal aesthetic values and measurement.

Recently art educators have begun to challenge some of the assumptions that have precluded the incorporation of these art systems into mainstream North American art education.

“McFee (1986) for instance, stresses on the necessity of critiquing and expanding our understanding of definition of art and culture in term of complexities encountered in cross-cultural and multicultural situations” (Hart, 1991, p.146).

She suggests that art educators question Western definitions of art, the role of art and artist in a culture, and the criteria used for judging. Whether they intend it or not, the way teachers think about art and aesthetics conveys specific and often

implicit messages to children in art classes. These messages must be examined explicitly in a broader social and cultural context.

The most recent research and observation of children's art revealed unexpected cases that have greatly shaken the belief in all notions of children's graphic representation (Selfe, 1977; Pariser, 1997). For example, take a six year old child who is not able to speak but her art ability is found to be much higher than that of other children, even of a gifted one. The quality of her art work is impossible to value with reference to children's art theories established by psychology sciences. The child's drawing surprised psychology experts in the Child Development Research Unit, at the University of Nottingham, who studied the case and considered the drawing of the child not only extraordinary but very strong evidence to indicate that art cannot be an accurate measurement in studying children's ability. In other words the classification of all children's art into a set of criteria does not necessarily correlate with the actual skills and abilities of all children.

There was and still is a very well-established view that the art of children represents their mental state and cognitive abilities. Psychiatrists in children clinics share an interest in art in relation to the diagnoses of psychological behaviour and the mental health of children. One of the general practices is that an upset child is not able to draw like normal children, who share a set of predicted common skills (Golomb, 1993). This view is the basic foundation of children's psychology clinics, but now there is a big question of the universal theory of children's art.

In this case a child who was treated like a subnormal person produced drawings similar in quality of those made by a mature artist. It was not an exceptional case,

even by the modern art educators' standards regardless of their own perspective of children's art. On the other hand, the experts in child clinics acknowledge the limitation of the children's art theory even in relation to their professional practice. It should be mentioned here that Western art education models are often accepted in non-Western societies because it claimed to have scientific foundation but research has indicated that cultural background has effects on children's art.

"Nadia, a child who turns upside down all our notions of graphic representation.....we had been the fortunate inheritors of 24,000 "pictures of mummy"....We had spent some time analyzing these drawings and paintings in terms of the stages of development which characterize children's ability to depict the human form..... We thought we knew what was possible for a 6 year- old, and what was not "his observation made us turn upside down all our notions of graphic" (Selfe, 1977, p.1).

It might be relevant to summarize here the general theory of Lowenfeld, since it has been the model of art education in most Muslim and Arab countries. Viktor Lowenfeld is an American art educator and scholar who left his mark on the children's art movement, (Arnheim, 1983). It has been said that it was he who formulated the modern approach of art education, with his revolutionary work in an attempt to reconcile the science of psychology and in the study the relationship between the mental development of children and their physical growth. His art education model is centred on the individual child and its psychological development. Unlike the classical and traditional Western education models, the Lowenfeld approach is less concerned about the art product and more in the experiment of the artwork and its value in the promotion of self-expression and creative abilities of children. Lowenfeld has added to the efforts which started 100 years ago to study the expressive aspect of children, particularly the graphic representation of the human body (McWhinnie, 1972). It was not an isolated study of children's drawing, for he built upon the works of early Europeans

psychologists and art educators such as Goodenough and Piaget especially Cizek, who sacrificed much for the liberation and recognition of children's art during his lifetime, (MacDonald, 1970; Golomb, 1993).

Interest in the study of children's art in its own merit goes back to the early Romantic art views of self-expression in relation to the individual and his right to think freely. Children's art in this model differs from the classical approach of art education where children are expected to learn art and painting by training and imitation of adult methods. The view of Lowenfeld was influenced by this psychology experience particularly when he worked with blind children early in his career. However his main theory provides practical methods for interpreting the drawing of children in relation to their psychological, mental, creative and physical growth. The art and drawing schema of the child corresponds with his or her stage of development. The abilities of children to draw naturally developed through certain definite stages and each one can be predicated at certain age of their childhood, (MacDonald, 1970; Arnheim, 1983).

As early as 1960, and after Lowenfeld's death, his theory began to be challenged and invalidated with new research studies in the psychology of children and their art in social life and the broader cultural context (McWhinnie, 1972; Lange-Küttner, 1995). Western art education models and the child centred approach fell under systematic criticism as the result of the growth of multicultural movements (Arnheim, 1983). Art educators in the West and world-wide now questioned the old belief that art generally has the same value to all individuals and that there is a universal criteria for teaching art to develop the creative abilities of all children. The limitation of such a view has been the subject of many studies in relation to the art tradition and children's education in non-Western cultures.

It is not only Islamic cultures that seem to have a problem with Western art education trends in relation to the value of image in children's artistic expression. There are other societies who have art traditions of their own art forms based on different system of image representation. This is why there is a big question about children's art theories, since there is a different aesthetic principles and social values associated with art in each society and culture. In one of the recent published art education symposium, it was accepted that Western art philosophy and its art aesthetic are not universal and are therefore not suitable for the study and teaching of art in non-Western cultures (Bloker, 2001; Wah Man, 2001; Abiodun, 2001; Meyer, 2002). The following chapter focuses on this question based on the experience of art educators in Islamic culture and who are in close contact with the problem of art education in the traditional society of Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER SIX

VIEWS AND OPINIONS OF ART EDUCATORS

In the previous chapter it was argued that Islamic art has a different language and imagery in the form of art expressions. This finding helps to understand the problem of image presentation in relation to the Western art education models, which were adopted for the art programmes in Muslim countries. Furthermore, in this particular area the thesis is built upon the interviews of art instructors and educators, because of their knowledge and actual contact with the problems of art in the Muslim world in recent times. The question of image representation represents a special art case in relation to the formal art education model in Muslim societies, but this study is more concerned about the situation in Arabia.

Generally the question of image is related to many other problems of the recent art programmes because the art education model is heavily dependent on the new philosophy of teaching art that is rooted in the late Progressive movement of children's art. In this aesthetic education model, art is not defined in the traditional sense rather this approach is oriented by the early Western art trends, especially the Romantic views of an individual, and the concept of self-expression. Romantic art and thought were radical reactions to Christian theology and classical aesthetics. The early formal theory of children's art and art education were both influenced by the Romantic aesthetic especially the strong belief in the subjective view of art, regardless of the convention and social values of art itself.

The Romantic philosophy and aesthetic placed much emphasis on the expressive aspect of visual art. As a result of such radical aesthetic trends, the representation art was liberated from the direct influence of religion and the early tradition of classical art. Art in general and painting in particular have assigned a new aesthetic

value in relation to the creative expression of the individual artist. This art approach gained a universal acceptance in Western art education trends with support from social sciences, whilst psychology was established to study many aspects of human behaviour. It became possible to understand certain patterns in relation to the biological growth of humans. Based on the study of art, particularly the interpretation of image representation in children's art expression it is for this reason that there have been special interests in visual art, in relation to the education process after formation of certain psychology theories about the universal aspect of children. Image representation is considered a very important factor towards the development of the intellectual and creative skills of children, and this reflects the new value of art in the education philosophy of modern Western societies. However, there is a problem with this art educational approach because it only recognises the value of art in relation to the individual but overlooks the function of art in the social and cultural contexts. Another big problem with this art education model is that it is not possible for all cultures to recognize art and teach it to their children based on one universal art criteria. Furthermore, there is increasing concern about the value of art in a cultural context and this movement has already started in the West since art is only important to the individual.

Art itself is considered to have a universal approach where it is interacted through social and economical values, not only in the West but also in every society. For example, in the United Kingdom, there has been central focus now upon design education and it has been included in school programmes. This reflects the economic value of art in the modern industrial world. The question of image in relation to art education in the Muslim world has to be carefully viewed taking into

account the art function and values in traditional Muslim societies. Research in multicultural art education in many non-Western societies has revealed some areas of conflict because image does not have the same aesthetic values, in relation to the art system of other cultures. This approach may provide a framework to understanding the problem of image in relation to the recent Western art educational trend and Islamic visual art system and aesthetic form.

The Interviews

The interviews were undertaken at intervals over an extended period between October 1996 and February 1997, and were focused on the issue of image in the actual context of teaching art, and they also concentrated on the personal views and practical experiences of the teaching staff at the Department of Art Education at the University of Umm Al-Qura in Mecca and the Department of Art Education at the University of King Saud in Riyadh.

The aim was to look at which issues in art education caused the most difficulty for art teachers. By asking questions on the four main topics of religious attitudes, socio/cultural attitudes (which included both official and public attitudes), Western influences in art education, and art as an aesthetic concept, it was hoped to develop a deeper understanding of the issue of image in the context of art education.

Because of the sensitivity surrounding this issue, which has been made evident in the previous chapters, the professionals who gave their time and opinions willingly and generously have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The participants' pseudonyms are: Said; Ali; Ahmad; Adel; Khalid; Karim; Ramez; Umar; Walid; Jamil; Samir; Assam; Raschid; Jalal; and Mahdi, and they will appear throughout this chapter in exactly this form.

The Strategy of the Interviews

In the early part of this century, research fieldwork in general was largely influenced by the scientific quantitative research approach developed in the 19th century by anthropologists and philologists, and in the later part of that century by social scientists and commentators such as Marx and Weber. At this time, the vast majority of fieldwork research was limited to quantitative evaluation and assessment of types or categories of certain groups of people or functions. However, in current studies in areas such as education, a more qualitative approach has frequently been adopted (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Schwartzman, 1993). This has proved to offer more flexibility in terms of selecting the research question, the topic and the subject of the fieldwork. Indeed, there are many qualitative and interpretive research methods in art education, such as ethnography, case study approach and phenomenology; the latter being of particular interest to this study.

Phenomenology is a relatively a new redefined research method, which is used to investigate topics and questions of spiritual, intellectual and creative significance. The term, phenomenology, was originally associated with an intellectual trend and theoretical approach to research in human sciences, and as a research approach has been frequently employed, in addition to the other scientific types of qualitative research methods, such as ethnography and case study (Moustakas, 1994; Bogdan, Robert and Taylor, Steven J., 1975).

The philosophical orientation of the phenomenological approach is complicated, but it is basically interested in the human interpretation of living reality, regardless of the external condition (Moustakas, 1994; Mitchell, 1979; Bogdan, Robert and Taylor, Steven J., 1975). Data may include visual objects in the physical environment, such as works of art and other objects of importance and value to an

individual or group. Research inquiry is largely based on the fieldwork investigation, which usually takes place at the actual setting of the phenomenon under investigation.

The research area and subject of the study are usually selected in terms of their significance to the researcher and the participants' experience and interests. In this type of research, the researcher may take an active role and use his personal experience as long as this contributes to the research (Moustakas,1994; Bogdan, Robert and Taylor, Steven J.,1975). At the same time, the researcher should avoid influencing the research result. In terms of objectives, phenomenological research aims at a better understanding of the problem in hand, and a positive result is expected to emerge out of the investigation. However, the findings of the research are open to discussion and generalisations are to be avoided.

Phenomenological research inquiry is a creative process and may not follow any standard structure. The process of research is planned according to the nature of the research question and the subject of the study in its own setting (Moustakas,1994; Bogdan, Robert and Taylor, Steven J.,1975).

The Setting

Image is a matter of great importance, especially in terms of art education, in a Muslim country such as Saudi Arabia, where the subject has never been dealt with from the perspective of this study, that is from an aesthetic point of view. The fieldwork aspect of this research was very much related to the experience of the researcher and the participants who are involved in these issues. This problem is also relevant to researcher's experience as an art teacher where the fieldwork took place. Some of the teaching staff who participated in the study were senior

colleagues and friends, who shared the common bond of their culture, language and similar problems in art education, which helped the participants to open up and to talk honestly and sincerely about the question of image. Indeed, the question and concept of the research developed as a result of the researcher's teaching art for a number of years, which provided him with the opportunity to be close to those who work in the field of art and art education and have first-hand knowledge of the problems of image-making in Muslim cultures.

The research questions encompassed religion and art and necessarily involved some personal experience and beliefs, as every individual interprets and values art in their own way, and their background naturally affects their understanding and interpretation.

Both religion and art involve abstract views which make it complicated to investigate such matters. So, it is often difficult to find out what are the generally accepted views in a society. Art has cultural and social links, but it also involves special skills and knowledge, which make it an exclusive activity for certain individuals and groups. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it was considered to be more useful to examine the views of individuals in the context of their actual experience, which is usually overlooked by traditional quantitative and qualitative large scale studies.

Sample

The field in which the research took place was limited to the staff at the two main art education institutions in Saudi Arabia. The numbers involved were eight from the Art Education Department at King Saud University in Riyadh and seven from the Art Education Department at the Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca. Although

only fifteen in total, they had a sufficiently wide range of expertise and experience to warrant detailed attention of the study.

The original plan for the fieldwork was to interview the staff members and give a questionnaire to a large sample of the students, in order to gather a wide spread of data. This plan was modified when it became evident that there was some official resistance to the idea of involving students. The fieldwork was then limited to the teaching staff.

The teaching staff, at the two institutions involved in the study, were considered to be amongst the most highly-educated and qualified art education experts in the Arab World, and they included people from several different countries. Many had been to Western countries and several had worked for Western organisations, like the United Nations, in their home country. All the staff were graduates from universities, fine art colleges and art academies, in both Arab countries and Western countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

The faculty members had extensive experience in the field of art education; some begin their careers as early as 1965. They had all worked as teachers on art programmes or as art education directors. Some were and still are committee members on art education curriculum planning boards and art supervisors at every level in education. Amongst them, were some professional artists and several had written books, covering a variety of topics in art and in art education. A large proportion of them were members of influential art organizations, both local and international. The teaching staff of both institutions were involved in the process of teaching art and, therefore, interacted directly with the students. This made them aware of the views and attitudes of the students towards art, in general, and towards image-making, in particular. The students at these schools also represented

many different classes in society and they mostly shared similar beliefs and held the values of that society. The staff's awareness of the state of art was also enhanced by their own involvement in other activities, such as art fairs and exhibitions by students and discussions of activities outside the school environment.

Fifteen art education professionals agreed to take part in this study. These people were practitioners and educators from two main centres: the Department of Art Education at the University of King Saud in Riyadh and the Department of Art Education at the University of Umm Al-Qura in Mecca. Although the majority of these people were natives of Saudi Arabia, five came from other countries where there was a significant Muslim population. All but one of them had experience of studying and working in foreign countries. Many had studied and worked in the USA. Their fields of experience were wide and varied, covering many of the topics with which this research is concerned, and most of them were artists in their own right who had given exhibitions of their work or taken part in art exhibitions. All but one of the interviewees had published work in the field of art and art education. Much of this was in the form of Masters theses or Doctoral dissertations, but many of the interviewees had written further works exploring their own specialisms and some were continuing to prepare works for publication on their own areas of expertise. All held positions of authority and responsibility and were concerned to promote both the concept of art and the practice of art as integral parts of the school or college curriculum. The range of their academic publication and research topics covers the following issues:

Problem of evaluation and students attitudes towards visual art

The Arabic Language

Problems in the Fine Arts in Muslim Countries

The Art Education Syllabus

Adult Education and the Art Education Curriculum

Arts Productions in Television and Theatre

Local Cultural Heritage

Relationship between the Physiology of the Brain and Perception of Art

Art as Therapy

Art Education at Primary School Level

Photography and Printing

The Abstract Expressionism of Non-objective Painting

Art Syllabus Structure

Art Education Structure – Syllabus and Teacher Training

History of Art Education in Muslim Countries

Creative Thinking Among Children

Effects of Social and Cultural Background on Children's Attitude to Art

Interior Decoration and Furniture

The inclusion of this list helps to demonstrate the broad field of interest of the interviewees and assists in showing that concerns about the development of the art education curriculum are felt at many diverse levels in the field of art education

Structure of the Interviews

Each participant was interviewed individually. A rigidly designed questionnaire was not used for these interviews as it was felt that a less structured format would yield more information and results. This would also allow participants to feel more relaxed and not pressurised in any way. Time was allowed for interviews to expand on certain subjects and areas about which they had a great deal of

knowledge or felt strongly about. In all cases, the semi-structured interview schedule (see Annexe) was completed. This ensured that the areas under investigation, that have been previously mentioned, were adequately covered.

In addition to the formal interview, opportunities were taken to gather data informally during conversations with interviewees and therefore observing some teaching sessions. On some occasions it was possible to follow up the formal interview with further informal discussion to clarify issues raised in the original interview. It was hoped that this research approach would establish a useful profile of the personal opinions and thoughts of each member of staff through which to explore the wider issue of image.

Each formal interview was tape-recorded with the participant's permission and usually started with a general question referring to personal history and experience moving on to any problems that the interviewee had encountered in art education. Leading and direct questions were avoided, but it was hoped that any particular opinion expressed by a participant would direct the focus of the interview towards the aim of the research question (Manion, 1994). During this interview, also tape-recorded, participants were asked to expand upon comments which were of particular interest to the research topic.

All the interviews were conducted in Arabic and tape-recorded. The material was transcribed from the tapes to written Arabic and then translated into English. This written text was then checked with the help of a professional English translator and a native Arab speaker to approve the final version. The original Arabic interviews ran to some five-hundred typed pages. However, when they had been translated into English and typed up, and superfluous conversational material omitted, this number was considerably reduced and constitutes Annexe to this study.

The majority of the formal interviews took place during school hours, in both Riyadh and Mecca, and were between 8.00 am and 3.00 p.m. The average time of each interview was between 90 and 120 minutes. In Riyadh, they were conducted in a vacant office provided by the Head of Department, which was both comfortable and private. Some of the interviews took place at the home of the staff member. In Mecca, all but one of the interviews took place in the offices of the staff, as no other facility was offered. One interview took place at the participant's home.

Thematic Discussion of Interview Data

In order to gain an insight into the role of image in art education, the interviews were analysed under the four categories mentioned above. It was hoped that by looking at these issues together that it would be possible to determine whether art teachers and educationalists saw the problem of the image as basically a religious problem, or whether there were other factors, which affected the art teachers' role and status and led to difficulties in the pursuit of their profession as art teachers. The interviews were therefore analysed in the order given below: religious influences; official and socio/cultural influences; art education as a Western import; and art as aesthetic – traditional art versus fine art.

Religious Influences

An analysis of the interviews showed that most art teachers and educators, who participated in the fieldwork study, did not believe that religion has direct influence on the practice of art education in countries such as Saudi Arabia. But many argued that it did inform official and public opinion, below the surface, which in turn helped to form certain attitudes towards art, in general. This filtered back into

the classroom, affecting both teacher and pupil behaviour. For example, Said noted that, even though the state took a secular attitude towards using images in art education, individuals made their presence felt in schools and educational establishments, because they regarded such art as useless. He reported that, in 1983, a student from the Department of Islamic Culture attacked work that had been done in the Art Education Department, and destroyed all the paintings of animate things (Annexe 1.18). In the same vein, Ali argued that society naturally exercises gentle pressure on the child's actions, in all spheres; and as religion is intimately bound up with the social culture, particularly in Muslim countries, it is not surprising that there was a religious aspect to some objections against certain forms of art practice, such as drawing the human figure. He stated:

“The child can encounter difficulties if he is trying to draw something that entails some social or religious activity, the market place or the pilgrimage for example. He might draw a picture of a car going along a road laden with goods and no one driving it. Clearly the work here is incomplete. This poses a problem for both the child and the teacher” (Annexe 2, 2.36)

Like many other interviewees, Ali was not making the point that Islam forbade figurative representation, but rather that there was a great lack of knowledge on what was permitted and what was forbidden. This caused confusion and conflict. Art teachers tended to err on the side of caution if they foresaw problems. Indeed, as Jamil remarked, “We do not know what is permitted and not permitted.” (Annexe10,10.3). However, this depended a great deal upon the situation and context in which the individual found himself (Annexe.5, and Annexe 15). Several participants reported that they had been in schools where text books and pictures, or art work containing the human form had had the heads removed or drawings that would have normally contained people had had the people removed. (Annexe 2; Annexe 3; Annexe 4; Annexe 8; Annexe 11; and Annexe 13). With regard to

this issue, Samir stated that art teachers were sometimes told that Islam was against the fine arts in order to discourage them from pursuing their profession further (Annexe 11).

In addition to the above, Ramez drew attention to the fact that, when there was an economic oil boom in the 1970s, art education began to receive solid financial support from the authorities. But this rise in wealth and economic influence from the West was accompanied by a parallel rise in Islamic movement, which led to some stagnation in the area of art and the teaching of art. He stated:

“Twenty years ago, people were more tolerant, children are now extremely cautious about drawing a picture of animate objects.
(Annexe 7, 7.3)

This illustrates the fact that religious belief was not directly responsible for a change in art practice and attitudes towards art, rather it was a view between authorities, and the prevailing power base which brought about this situation and was more political than religious. It could be argued that not only did it affect the practice of art in educational establishments, but its influence was also felt throughout the modern media technologies.

In this connection, Ali also referred to his teaching experience in northern Nigeria and northern Sudan, where some Muslim groups showed a growing hostility towards art in the form of statues. He pointed out that in recent years tribes in the north of Nigeria had begun to reject the idea of sculpture as art, and that full statues had become unacceptable to some activists, with the result that some statues had been destroyed. Also, he felt that some Muslims felt guilty when they created statues and therefore sculpting was becoming a dying art in parts of northern Nigeria and Northern Sudan. However, production in the mainly non-Muslim Southern Sudan was still continuing. There they made statues of humans and animals in ebony and ivory, probably motivated by economic reasons rather than

artistic or traditional motives, for both the tourist and the indigenous market. However, the making of large statues had now largely ceased. The only ones to be found were mostly antique and in museums (Annexe 2).

This is interesting in that it shows how sculpting was probably a widespread practice or perhaps an ancient Sudanese or Nubian art form left from the pre-Islamic times. And that the practice of making statues and images had not been affected by Islamic religious attitudes over the centuries. Thus, a negative response towards this art form was developed through being informed of ideas about religious prohibition and had become the norm in northern Nigeria and northern Sudan.

All of these factors made the teaching of art difficult and perhaps it could even be argued that the art class was not the best place to teach students about the role of art in their own society. On the other hand, art programmes were circumscribed by the authorities, pursuing their own agendas and using art for their own purposes. Indeed Karim held the view that “you cannot make art without making images. When you make images you cannot ignore the human element.” (Annexe 6). This issue represented the great dilemma for art teachers and educators.

In order to understand attitudes towards art that affects the practice of teaching art today, all historical perspective can perhaps demonstrate the religious view of image at certain periods in the history of Islam. This, according to Ali who held positive views about the contribution of Islam to the world of art, has led to a situation in which conflicting views are held about art in the same society because different groups of people adhere to different pronouncements from different clerics on the subject of image. For example, some people believe that one day the Prophet asked his wife, Aisha, to remove a picture that was placed in front of him and so some Muslim artists take this to indicate that images are forbidden by

Islam; although there is no reference to this actual incident in the Qur'an. With regard to this issue, Ali quotes the example of the caliph in the Abbasid age, having in his palace a statue of a knight carrying a spear in his hand and surrounded by six maids; three white and three black. Yet, whenever guests entered the palace the Caliph sent orders for the statues to be removed from the entrance so that they would not cause offence. This demonstrates that some local censure, concerning figurative art, must have been operating in his society, but was not strong enough to have the statues removed altogether or destroyed, at that time. Recently, Muslim art experts and intellectuals interested in the issue of the image in Islam have used historical documents and artwork as sources of evidence to support their viewpoints on art. Some traditional and influential Muslim institutions, like the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, do not seem to take a reactionary approach towards the issue of the image. Perhaps one reason for this was voiced by Umar, who argued that Islamic art is social because it is so bound up with every aspect of the daily life in Muslim countries (Annexe 8). However, he believed that some Muslims did not take this view of certain art practices, such as figurative painting, because this art form is considered to be against Islam; a view echoed by several others (Annexe 4 and Annexe 6). This, he felt, was counter to the spirit of Islam which promoted harmony and balance in all things. Indeed, respected and well-known graduates of the Al-Azhar University have published distinctive and interesting views on art, such as Qutb, whose ideas were discussed in Chapter Three. As Ali pointed out, attitudes towards the figure must have varied over time for they were not always negative. For example, he says:

“Other statues can be seen in the Alhambra Palace which are still there to the present day. In Cairo, there are some around the Al-Azhar Mosque, and the role that they played enables us to reflect on the claims that when the early Muslims entered India and Cairo, they did not destroy the statues there.” (Annexe 2, 2.37)

Nevertheless, it must be said that historical facts can be used in different contexts to support totally opposing views. This often leads to controversial debates, especially on the subject of representation of the image. Indeed, as Said declared, "We have always been surrounded by the word 'taboo.'" (Annexe 1). This view is supported by Ahmad, who felt that there were certain elements in society who had a literal commitment to all religious values and could only see art as a taboo subject (Annexe 3).

However, as some of the interviewees have already stated, image was tolerated in Islamic countries in the past in spite of periods of religious prohibition. In fact, a positive view of Islam's role in the promotion of art is held by several interviewees. For example, Ahmad was at pains to point out that, in spite of the religious controversy surrounding the issue of figurative art, most educational institutions offered art courses. What was needed, according to him, was a heightened awareness on the part of teacher trainers and teachers themselves to the teachings and sensibilities within Islam concerning the context of image; a point of view also put forward by Jamil (Annexe 10). If these were observed, Ahmed said, then conflicts would be resolved (Annexe 3). In fact, Ahmad believed that this was of the most importance to the preservation of Islamic culture and arts. His view was that Islam was about harmony and bringing all religious and social aspects together to form a unified society. The art teacher had a role to play in helping to achieve this (Annexe 3). These views were echoed also by both Walid and Samir (Annexe 9, Annexe 11).

Continuing with the same theme, Adel pointed that art was usually produced in a religious context in ancient Egyptian society. There was, however, a high art form which is to be found even today in funeral monuments, like the pyramids, which

were built in honour of rulers or high government officials and were built to last. Local or popular art was produced in perishable materials and has not survived the passage of time. This leads to a belief in historical terms that there was only one kind of art, which reflected a unified society. Adel believes that this is not the case and that there was a discrimination between high art and vulgar art in Egyptian society, even though most art had a religious bias. This however, is not the case in Islamic culture according to Adel. For he believes that the architecture of the mosque and decoration involving Arabic script united all the followers of Islam from high government officials to ordinary people and this brought about a unification of art forms. He, therefore, believes that it is possible to have thriving art in a predominantly religious society without any ideological conflict (Annex 4). In agreement with this view, Karim said that it was ignorance about the metaphysics of Islam and its aim to deepen the spiritual nature of man that was causing the fundamental problems in art education. As far as he was concerned one had to only look at the Islamic legacy in many parts of the world to see how Islam and Islamic art had influenced and enhanced social as well as religious life (Annex 6). This was a view also held by Ramez (Annexe 7).

The above discussion shows that the issue of Islam and the image in art is an extremely complex issue on many levels and one which impinges upon the teaching of art in many ways. This problem (as has been suggested in Chapter Four) has to be studied in relation to the language of expression of Islamic art. It is this aspect of the debate, which is of interest to the study, was revealed by Samir when he spoke of problems he encountered when submitting non-figurative work for an exhibition:

“I personally have given three exhibitions in which I put verses from the Qur’an to artistic use. To do so I asked permission from two religious leaders. Fortunately, they were not only ready to give

their permission, but they were also prepared to encourage me to go further into the matter.” (Annexe 11, 11.8)

Interestingly, this highlights the debate between art as function and art as aesthetic, which will be debated later in this chapter. This portrays the sensitivity surrounding the art message in some Muslim countries. The fact that Samir asked permission to display art made from Qur’anic verses showed his awareness of possibly giving offence by imitation, in other words, copying or ‘making art’ from a religious object, in this case, the most precious religious symbol in Islam, the Qur’an. Also, this constant return in Islamic cultural history to an abstract aesthetic, which avoided figurative imaging suggests that the problem of image and art is more deeply rooted in the socio/cultural sphere than it is in the religious sphere. The following analysis of comments on this area seems to support this view.

Official and Socio/Cultural Influences in Art Education

According to the view of Samir, the official policy of the government in Saudi Arabia is “to change and to modernize people” (Annexe 11). Therefore, the Government in Saudi Arabia as in most countries in the world, is involved to some extent in the shaping of the curricula taught in schools and universities. When asked if teachers received directives from any official sources on how and what they should teach in art classes, Samir acknowledged that he had seen such circulars. But he pointed out that these were educational simply aiming to “inculcate certain moral and religious values” (Annexe 11). This did not mean that the circulars were in themselves religious or generated by religious groups, but rather that in Muslim countries the public institutions are governed mainly by Islamic principles enshrined in Shari’a law. Thus, the content of any school

curriculum would be inherently developed in line with Islamic precepts. This was done in order to reconcile art with the social and spiritual values to meet the expectation of larger sectors of the public. Art education in Saudi Arabia was no exception to this.

Yet, Walid made the point that there seemed to have been a recent tightening of control by certain curriculum to what should be taught in art classes. In fact, they had issued circulars to this effect (Annex 9). This was seen by Walid as a retrograde step by the Islamic movement. Indeed, in the past he had been interested in the art program and felt that such directives limited the creativity of students. This view was also held by Ali, who said that rules coming from the headquarters of the Ministry of Education were not only concerned with figurative art, but contained specific instructions about sculpture and Arabic calligraphy. All of these restrictions affected art education (Annex 2). This opinion was also held by Ramez (Annex 7), who believed that the economic boom in the 1970s had been partly responsible to explain the attitude to the arts and art education. However, according to him, circumstances varied from private to public institutions with regard to the teaching of art. Walid also commented that, in spite of a broader syllabus now, he seemed to have less freedom to do what he wished to encourage creativity in the classroom. Indeed, he felt that art was treated merely as a recreational subject (Annex 9).

However, the government in Saudi Arabia was not only committed to make sure that art education followed the principles of Islam, according to some observers, it also wished to engender feelings of nationhood and national pride in the younger generation through its education programmes. Therefore the art curriculum was designed in a way that emphasised certain aspects of nationhood. These aspects of

governmental involvement were discussed in the general framework of art educational activities that had been dictated by the Ministry of Education. And the educational authorities had been specifically instructed to design their art education plans according to the Ministry's general framework. As art teachers are limited by these guidelines, they have to make choices as to what to present to their students. Yet, it is clear from the comments of various interviewees and other commentators, that, while certain subjects are circumscribed, image is, in fact, encouraged within a restricted context, mainly to create a certain psychological effect, such as nurturing a love of one's nation. Figurative art was to be avoided, it seemed, wherever it was linked to religious subjects such as pilgrimage, but portraying a military parade was different .

The ambivalence and confusion which surrounded the subject of art education had, according to many interviewees, a negative effect on both the official and public perception of art education. Because of this, art education was held in low esteem by many sectors of society. Indeed several interviewees spoke of how head-teachers had such a low regard for art as a subject and art teachers, that art teachers were given the task of merely keeping the school environment looking aesthetically pleasing or doing odd jobs (Annexe 1, and Annexe 15). This lack of recognition of art as a suitable school subject, not only in Saudi Arabia but in other parts of the Muslim world, meant that often according to several participants in the study, art education was treated "as something of secondary importance". (Annexe 1, Annexe 4, Annexe 14, and Annexe 15), and little time was allotted to art in the school syllabus. Indeed, it was often squeezed out if other subjects were deemed more important (Annexe 14, Annexe 15) and text books were often not provided (Annexe 1, Annexe 2). Art teachers had become, in fact, marginalized members of the community (Annexe 11). Even at university level, Khalid felt that grants were

given to students to study art “for the sake of it, not for the love of it” (Annexe 5), for some official were not really convinced of the value of art education.

The result of this lack of esteem of art teaching in the profession and as a profession itself had the effect, according to some interviewees, of making art teachers feel worthless and not able to carry out their tasks effectively (Annexe 3). In Ramez’s view it was not rewarded financially like other professional with similar qualifications (Annexe 7). This in turn led to a situation in which parents regarded art teachers as having no professional worth and art was not regarded as a fitting subject for their children to study. In fact, it was often not treated as a serious subject by teachers, students and parents (Annexe 1, Annexe 12, Annexe 14, and Annexe 15), prominence being given instead to chemistry, physics and mathematics. Because of this, several participants put forward the opinion that teacher training courses should address these issues and prepare art teachers better for a worthwhile role in society (Annexe 7, Annexe 11, and Annexe 13). One issue that had to be addressed, as far as Said was concerned, was the training of art teachers in the evaluation and assessment of their students’ work. This was a difficult matter because of the differing artistic values between Western art and Islamic art (Annexe 1).

However, Karim saw difficulties in giving art, of the kind taught in schools, prominence in the thinking of his students, when some sections of society saw this sort of art as elitist practice. This viewpoint was supported by the fact that cultural institutions, such as museums and galleries, were nearly always sited in middle-class areas of towns and cities. This made them no-go areas for many ordinary citizens, who believed that they had no right to go there and, therefore, art had no relevance to their lives (Annexe 6). Nevertheless, Assam argued that people could

be educated about the function of art in society and about aesthetics if more books were available in libraries and there were more bookshops selling books on art (Annexe 12). Said also felt that more information, in the classroom, on Islamic art might help to change student's attitudes towards their own cultural inheritance (Annexe 1).

However, other interviewees did not see art education in Saudi Arabia in such a negative light. For example, Ahmad (Annexe 3) found that, from a practical point of view, the official policy of the Ministry of Education was very positive and art education was seen as a subject in its own right, with its own budget allotted to it. This seemed to signify to him that the political, religious and social establishments all considered art education to be a good thing. He argued that such recognition showed that art was appreciated generally as an element by which the human being could be cultivated and refined into a higher moral self. There was a moral aspect to art which he felt was being acknowledged by the support it was being given on an official level. Also Ramez argued that art teachers are aware of the value of art and did their best to promote awareness of all aspects of art. In fact, his aim together with his colleagues was to use the collections of art in museums and galleries as educational tools for research and documentation (Annexe 7). This would benefit all sections of the community. In addition to this, Assam pointed out that art education departments were often the only place where promising artists could develop their talents (Annexe 2).

With regard to parental attitudes towards art education, in general, the interviewees felt that they did not seem to have any main objections towards art activities at school. The majority of parents, according to some participants were willing to leave the matter in the hands of the teachers, whom they perceived to be working

to governmental guidelines, which they felt had been designed for the protection of the public good. Where objections were raised about the content of the art curriculum, it was usually concerned with religious practice, in general, and not opposition to the image, or figurative work, in particular. Indeed, Ali noted that difficulties about the art curriculum were only raised by parents at classroom level or with the headteacher (Annexe 2). Parents did not seem to have a problem generally with the art syllabus prescribed by the government, but objections were raised sometimes when children were asked to draw figures. This as we have seen, is still regarded by some members of Muslim society as a taboo subject which sometimes causes difficulties for the art teacher.

However, one art educator, Umar, highlighted an area of difficulty for both teachers and parents and this was the teaching of female students. As there was single-sex education at all levels (Al-Doyhi), he only had contact with female students through close-circuit TV. At university level, teachers like Umar could teach female students when there was no qualified female teacher available, but there was no face-to-face contact and the means of communication was by direct telephone line. During one lecture on how to draw figures, one female student phoned him to say that she had always been told at intermediate level not to draw figures. Other students then phoned to say the same. When Umar discussed this attitude with his students later, they expressed the view that it was Saudi culture, not religion or the Government that disapproved of art (Annexe 8).

Another aspect of cultural pressure was mentioned by Adel, who commented that parents often put great pressure on students to study science or become an Arabic teacher because they saw no prestige attached to becoming an art teacher and thus no economic advantage (Annexe 4). Also, as Assam remarked, "Good students

tend to go for medicine or engineering studies. Often those who are admitted to art college are there because of low grades. Often, on finishing, the good art education graduates do prefer to join professions other than that of teaching.” (Annexe 12).

However, several interviewees suggested that the main difficulty facing art teachers was not connected to either religious or official attitudes but was rather to be found in the lack of understanding among the public at large about the function art education. Indeed, art education was seen by many as an idea imported from the West. Their comments will be addressed in the following section.

Art Education as a Western Import

It was proposed in Chapter Five, that Western art theory and practice have been dominant influences in art education in some Muslim countries during the twentieth century and this idea was supported by Ali, who commented:

“You have to bear in mind that art education is an exercise that we have borrowed from the West. The teaching of fine art was first experienced during colonial times. As for our conventional arts, we used to inherit them from the previous generation, but we received art education from the West, along with Western culture and Western techniques. These techniques remained after the departure of the colonisers. We can begin with the example of Egypt, Sudan, Iraq and Jordan. Both the system and the curriculum remained the same after the departure of the colonisers. This led to the fact that people were under the influence of the West, the result being that our art education practice seemed to be alien to the milieu where it existed.” (Annexe 2, 2.45)

Because of this influence, according to several interviewees, people were unable to appreciate the value of “studying” art because the kind of Western art taught in schools had no meaning for them or any place in their daily lives. And, according to Said, the concept of art education, in which art was seen as something divorced from everyday life, and form had been divorced from function, was something

totally alien in much of the Arab and Islamic world. This was particularly true of the Bedouin people amongst whom Mahdi had worked (Annexe 15). Also, the people responsible for designing education programmes did not always seem to treat art education as a separate entity in its own right because they themselves were not fully convinced of the value of art education (Annexe 1). Indeed, Karim declared that some teachers in the institute where he worked did not seem to know what art education was, or that there was even a department for art education in the same complex (Annexe 6). As a consequence of such ignorance, a theory for arts education had not yet been fully developed in many Arab countries (Annexe 9).

In addition to all of this, some interviewees argued that people should stop looking outside for a cultural identity and learn to appreciate their own cultural inheritance (Annexe 2, Annexe 4, Annexe 6, Annexe 9). This would lead to a much-needed re-evaluation of Islamic art and help to give it a central place in the minds of both educators and the public.

The strong Western influence in the development of art education in the Arab countries has been responsible for introducing into Muslim and Arab societies the concept of schools of art (Annexe 7) (see chapter Five). It has also brought in Western ideas of evaluation of beauty which, according to several participants, are totally foreign to Islamic art, as are notions of trends and “schools”, such as the school of Michelangelo or Impressionism and Futurism (Annexe 1, Annexe 2). All of this, according to Walid turns students into imitators and prevents them from developing their art or expressing their cultural identity (Annexe 9). This view was supported also by Ali, who complained that this was a dangerous cultural problem for countries like Saudi Arabia. He said, “A lot of young artists do want to associate themselves with schools of international reputation so as to become

international themselves.” (Annexe 2). This meant that they were looking outside their own culture for artistic reference points.

Indeed, the Western emphasis on painting as the main artistic expression was found by Adel to be too narrow a definition of art, and this had led to a situation in which traditional arts had become devalued in the eyes of a large sector of the public and this was to be regretted (Annexe 4). According to Umar, the traditional arts were seen as vocational subjects because of this displacement brought about by emphasis on Western art. And he believed that if traditional arts had been studied properly, there would have been a place for them on the school curriculum (Annexe 8). Such a situation led to confusion about what was or was not art. This commentary leads the debate into the role of traditional art in Muslim societies such as Saudi Arabia and what approaches to this should be taken in art education.

Art as an Aesthetic Concept

Many of the interviewees felt that as art teachers there was one main problem that had to be addressed and that was the central dichotomy between traditional crafts and fine art. This initially stemmed from the dominant influence of Western practices and theories of art, which have influenced Muslim societies, in general, and modern art teaching approaches, in particular. As a result of this, there had been a devaluation of traditional crafts and skills by teachers and educators who wanted to follow what is considered a progressive art movement. But, as he remarked, “Traditional crafts have a utilitarian function, while the expressive arts have an aesthetic function” (Annexe 5) and it was the teacher’s role to bring the two together. Unfortunately, according to Umar (Annexe 8), an appreciation of the latter is missing in many spheres of art education because of the leaning of the educated and elite sectors of society towards the Western concept of fine art. And

so attitudes to the objectives of wider art education were often misguided and negative. Yet, Khalid believed that both aspects had a full role to play in the education of future generations. Through the study of the traditional crafts, which have their own ethnic vocabulary, would come a sense of identity, while a broader study of aesthetics would lead to a greater understanding of the civilizing power of art and the role of art in society (Annexe 5). This opinion was also supported by Karim (Annexe 6).

However, with regard to teaching traditional crafts in schools and placing greater emphasis on them as part of artistic heritage, Karim makes the point that was reinforced by the fact that the organic relationship between the old and the new has been broken by the migration into towns during the economic boom. Not only that, there was increasing economic pressure by urban planners and developers to do away with the old: viz.

“Our development has not been natural. That is why we come to have this big gap between our past and present. Unfortunately, our banks used to give loans to those who wanted to build villas and refused loans to those who wanted to build traditional houses.”
(Annexe 6, 6.5)

Because of this break with tradition and subsequent loss of some ancient crafts, this interviewee urged his students to study the old crafts and traditional ways of making art and try to bring some of the elements or techniques into their own work, thus bridging the chasm between the old and the new. He also wanted his pupils to be aware of more art traditions than just the Islamic and the Western, both of which he himself appreciated. What must not be forgotten here, as Ramez points out, is that traditional crafts were functional in more than one sense. They not only served a decorative purpose, but were often the main means of economic and

financial support for whole families (Annexe 7). Art as a separate entity to everyday life was thus, to these people, inconceivable.

Traditional or folk art was, therefore, more highly valued by a large section of the society mainly because it had a function and required a less abstract and educated approach. It also had closer links with ancient traditions and the everyday life of many people. As one interviewee remarked:

“The old and locally made materials remind me of my father and my grandfather and of the houses that were built of mud. I feel that these things belong to me and I belong to them.”(Annexe 1,1.8)

Indeed, not only does the art educator have to take into account of government guidelines on the teaching of art, he also has to be aware that art, oriented towards the Western model, based on the figure, has no relevance for those students who come from cultures that have not been exposed to it (Annexe 2, Annexe 13). For such people, art is not a separate activity divorced from the daily practice of living in and decorating one's environment in a traditional way (Annexe 7). Regarding this issue, Adel stressed the importance of making art education relevant to society. He cited the experience of the ancient Egyptians who saw that the function of art was to inform all aspects of human civilization, including the religious and the social. This attitude, according to him, still prevailed today in the Egyptian approach to art and art education which had tended to be, over the last few decades, much more flexible than in many other parts of the Muslim world. Art education should, therefore, be related to the society and have links with the cultural heritage of the society in which art was produced (Annexe 4).

In addition to the idea of relevance of art to society, some interviewees called for a fundamental re-assessment of Islamic art in order to reinstate Islamic art in its former glory and diversity (Annexe 2, Annexe 3, Annexe 7, and Annexe 9). This would also help people of all stratas to learn to appreciate and evaluate both

Islamic and Western art. Indeed, Adel argues that under Islam the religious and social aspects of culture were fused in the same public art which decorated both temple and house. Here “the aesthetic value of art came to be the same for both the public and elite art” (Annexe 4). This appreciation of their own Islamic inheritance, Adel argued, would help to make people aware of their own identity (Annexe 4, 4.3) and provide a solid foundation on which art education could be established in Muslim societies.

Critique of Interviews and Findings

Several factors made it difficult to properly assess the views and opinions expressed here. The first one related to the fact the researcher could only use, as interviewees, people whom he knew and in whom they had trust because of the sensitivity of the issue of image question. The consequences of this were that firstly, some questions were phrased to seem ambivalent in order not to force interviewees to discuss areas or topics with which they felt uncomfortable, and, secondly, views and opinions about art teaching were limited ostensibly to two localities; Mecca and Riyadh. Thus, account was not taken of any other local variabilities, and opinions on such, which could possibly give a totally different picture of the state of art education in other areas of Saudi Arabia. This could mean that the views and opinions examined here were in fact not representative of the country as a whole and different approaches needed to be considered when developing the art curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

Another difficulty involved openness of the answers. It must be said that all participants were eager to take part in a study that would help to clear up misunderstandings about art and art teaching practice, and gave their time willingly. However, they were aware of their professional positions as both public

employees and guardians of public morality. Some were unwilling to venture into areas which might cause controversy or give offence and so were a little more reticent to voice their opinions and give their views which made it difficult to ascertain how natural and free their opinions actually were and accounts for the varying lengths of the interviews.

In spite of this, it seemed that there were several main areas of concern being expressed by the participants. Firstly, there was the inappropriateness of an art curriculum, based on the Western model, which did not include education about an Islamic art aesthetics or address local needs and sensibilities. Secondly, there was the issue of the devaluation of local arts and craft traditions which, had been brought about by the high profile given to Western-oriented art forms and practices and the displacement of nomadic people from the countryside to the urban centres during the economic boom of the 1970s. And, thirdly, there was a lack of interest in art education, as a separate subject in school, which permeated all levels of the educational structure and had a detrimental effect, generally, on art education.

The opinions expressed seemed to show a division of attitude among the participants, in that there were those teachers who embraced a multi-cultural approach to art and welcomed other influences, declaring that students could learn better in a more open environment. This did not mean a loss of old ways or traditions, rather it meant that they were nurtured in a growing awareness of art at the centre of cultural life. Others, on the contrary, felt that Islamic art and traditional art culture, was the only model required, if the art education curriculum were to meet local needs. There is perhaps some truth in this, but it ignores the contribution of other theories to the practice of art, which is not a stagnant process.

Overall, the researcher found that the interviewees were limited in many ways by their own education and training which had either emphasised the Western notion of high art and thus led them to favour modern, Western abstract art forms, or had restricted practice to certain areas which would not lead to controversy. The old idea of religious taboo still surrounded the subject, with only a small minority wishing to question its validity or seek out the deeper reasons behind certain prohibitions. There also seemed to be much weight placed on the function of art in the classroom, which is understandable, but hardly any interest was shown in determining the underlying aesthetics of either Islamic or Western art, which would provide a more understandable rationale for the practice or phenomenon of art itself. Because of this, only one or two interviewees brought up the subject of script as being relevant to art work or art practice, in the classroom.

It is obvious from the above discussion that attitudes towards art, in Saudi Arabia and many Muslim countries, are ambivalent. But what art educators wanted was to see the creation of new principles and a new art education structure which would allow more flexibility in approaches to art. For, as Jalal remarked, students will accept modern art in fashion and home design, but they fail to be attracted to modern art as a subject (Annexe 14).

This illustrates a gap which art education could fill. According to Ali a broader approach to art would assist pupils in seeing that all aspects of their life were related in some way and that art was not a separate entity. For him, plastic art, visual art and performance art all had something in common. Poetry and painting used different mediums; the poet used the rhythm of language, whilst the artist used the rhythm of colour. Yet, both were attempting to achieve the same end; to make art (Annexe 2).

Ali felt that a possible way forward for future art educationalists, in Saudi Arabia, lay in some new approaches being tried in Nigeria. He gave an account of a new art concept that had achieved positive results in the School of Art at the University of Ahmed Bello, in Nigeria where he had worked. The school had incorporated some traditional and popular folk art into the art curriculum. Local women, who produced ceramics, in the traditional way, were given a job in the School of Art to teach students their ancient methods. This was an attempt to bridge the gap between the functional needs and aesthetic values of the local culture. But it also had the effect of improving understanding of the traditional forms of art and its relationship to modern art styles being taught at the school (Annexe 2).

In addition to this, Ali explained that, as a member of many international organisations, such as INSEA, the Pacific Society of Art Education, and the Society for Gifted and Talented Learners, he had come to realise that many Arab and Asian countries suffered from the same problem, in art education, of making a link between the traditional crafts, which were learnt by apprenticeship to master craftsmen, and modern art, as taught in schools, as a means of visual and creative expression. In industrial and developed countries, artistic self-expression had become an acceptable norm, but this issue still had to be resolved, one way or another, in the more traditional countries, like Saudi Arabia (Annexe 2).

With regard to the teaching of art aesthetics, this appeared to be an issue which the interviewees felt could only be addressed when all the other hurdles had been surmounted. Once the public had been educated in the nature of art and the role and value of art both in the lives of the public, and in the life of the individual, then art educators could begin to approach the concept of an art aesthetic itself. Unfortunately, because of the dominance of Western art ideas, in Muslim

countries, art aesthetics have become linked automatically with Western philosophy and concepts. Some interviewees welcomed the cross-cultural fertilization, which this situation encouraged, but not at the expense of the loss of their own cultural inheritance or growing materialism which took students attention away from a deeper appreciation of art. Educators had, therefore, the task of bringing students to the realization that there is always, whatever the art, a metaphysical approach to the subject: an underlying aesthetic to be discovered. According to Umar, students had to be taught from an early age that Muslim artists had exploited the abstract arts to address complex Islamic ideas and these artists had contributed immensely to the development of Islamic art culture (Annexe 8). It should also be stressed that the Islamic art aesthetic of the script developed in parallel with the Western art aesthetic of the figure. This approach would help towards a much deeper understanding of Islamic truths and values from a holistic perspective and show the role of art as a mediating vehicle. This approach then applied to Western art would lead students to a better understanding of the role of figure in Western art and demonstrate the necessity for a central art aesthetic, by which members of most societies confirm their social identity.

It is interesting to note, at this point, that although much Islamic art revolves mainly around the Arabic script, this element was very rarely mentioned in all the discussions on art education with the interviewees. There was one exception, Mahdi, who commented that, when Bedouins were in an art group, they were offered calligraphy as an art subject, but they approached this merely from a functional angle, to improve their handwriting and not from an aesthetic angle (Annexe 15). It could perhaps be argued that to appreciate Arabic calligraphy means that one understands the concept of fine art and this too was just as foreign a

concept as enjoying Western figurative art, which had no place in the lives of people such as the Bedouin.

This kind of situation reflects only one of the problems found by art teachers in approaching and teaching art as a purely aesthetic, enjoyable activity, unencumbered by outside influences, or generally negative attitudes, whilst, at the same time, making art relevant to the socio/and cultural context environment in which it is practised.

In general, art educators have been very helpful in assisting an understand of the problem with image in relation to other art education problems, which reflects two different aesthetic values. The Western model is focused on image as a means of creative expression, while Islamic visual art is oriented by the verbal and abstract form of Arabic language and script.

ANNEXE

ANNEXE**INTERVIEWS**

ANNEXE 1	SAID
ANNEXE 2	ALI
ANNEXE 3	AHMAD
ANNEXE 4	ADEL
ANNEXE 5	KHALID
ANNEXE 6	KARIM
ANNEXE 7	RAMEZ
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ANNEXE 10	JAMIL
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ANNEXE 13	RASCHID
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ANNEXE 15	MAHDI

ANNEXE 1: SAID

1. 1 What experience do you have in art education?

I teach at a university and have participated in exhibitions organised by my department and have been involved in other collective exhibitions. During my postgraduate studies, I think my experiences crystallized and I became more serious. My interests have now become more academic and intellectual rather than being concerned with day-to-day life. When you give exhibitions, you really have to work hard and struggle. I found these experiences really useful, particularly the discussions with the students.

1. 2 Have you carried out any studies or published work in the field of art evaluation?

What has been published is my MA dissertation which was an evaluation of the attitude of intermediate stage students towards landscape and figurative drawings, be they in the form of sculpture or painting. The problem I encountered with my supervisor was that of evaluation. This was connected with the way I had collected data from my informants. The method adopted was that of giving questions or observing the informants and then recording these observations or giving them a test and then evaluating and measuring my data. All of these are accepted methods for collecting data. We have also the method of evaluation by art. I have shown students work by Leonardo da Vinci: *La Gioconda* and asked them to describe it either as beautiful, ugly, don't know or normal. I also asked them if they liked certain kinds of work, when showing them works say by Michelangelo. I have drawn here on the works of the Renaissance era. I go back to my main premise that "I believe that I like, don't like or don't know" are adequate questions to use as a method of evaluation.

I remember that I had the experience of meeting a woman who is a specialist in fine arts in Kansas and told her about my research. She asked me how it would be possible to actually evaluate the attitude of a human being towards something. At that moment, I felt that I had arrived at an essential question. From that day on, I started to think in a different way. Earlier, I used to approach this kind of thing theoretically, but now I have come to look at it practically. This is why I didn't publish in this area.

1. 3 This leads us then to the fact that nothing is ever approached totally objectively or in other words there is never 100% agreement about things.

I believe so. Even in applied sciences there is room for anomalies. However, you can't leave things to objectivity alone.

1. 4 What are the problems that face art education in your opinion?

Do you mean as a concept and as a philosophy?

1. 5 In whatever shape or sense.

I think it is the problem of evaluation and assessment. It is still unclear. Maybe you have already read what I am going to say. However, in spite of that I am going to say it again. It goes back to arts as a concept. Probably in Saudi Arabia as well as in the Islamic and the Arab world we don't find this kind of thing. We are confined to a specific frame and a specific way of thinking. You cannot cross certain lines. Since we are now heading to an open discussion, I can say that you and I probably hold the same philosophy. Apart from that, society is controlled by the conventions with which we were brought up. The problem again is when you discuss the matter with the people you only discuss it from an educational point of view. The problem here is that there are different directions and this is where the problem of assessment comes in.

How can I assess *La Gioconda* and other works? If I am an objective person, I have to assess them in relation to the principles on which that work was based. We can say that *La Gioconda* is a classical work and that Van Gogh's work is expressionist. I have to refer to such a piece of work in its original context and then apply the criteria of each particular school to each respective work. If I am going to take the criteria set by the classicists and apply them to Kandinsky, I will find out that he will be rated as zero. In other words, it is impossible to take the criteria of a particular school and apply it to another. The main question we have to answer is: Are these evaluation and assessment methods valid as far as you are concerned? You might have different methods of assessment. Here is the crux of the matter.

1.6 Are the problems that face the arts and art education due to particular attitudes and concepts prevailing in our society?

Firstly, with regard to the position of art education in comparison with other school subjects and as an academic subject, it is a subject that is facing a shaky position. Sometimes, it is allotted 2 hours a week, other times one hour and a half. Every now and again, there is a new timetable. The same thing never happens to mathematics, Arabic grammar or Islamic studies. This tells us that those responsible are not fully convinced that arts education is a subject in its own right, just like mathematics, science or religion.

A different matter is that of a researcher who was an official in the Ministry of Education in 1975, when art education was not included in the timetable at secondary level. The researcher used to work at the same Ministry and had very strong connections there. When he conducted his interviews, some of the officials refused to answer his questions. Others stated that the basic needs are provided for art education and that, at this level, there were more important subjects. Another group answered by saying that there was no room for it in the school timetable. This is the situation of art education among decision makers. It is clear that people are not fully convinced by the value of art education. This can be evidenced by the fact that the subject has no specific school text book. Moreover, some of those who are teaching this subject do not seem to be serious teachers. Most of the students are serious and need to be guided. You have to be there for them, otherwise they are not going to learn. Since there is no reference book for the student, then the only reference point has to be the teacher. Of course, there are other experiences, but it is the guided experience of the teacher that helps the student. So, there is lack of textbooks, as well as the lack of final evaluation and assessment. We also need to take account of the fact that this subject is always given the last periods of the day in the timetable. All of this

contributes to the fact that art education is perceived as not an important subject. This is reflected also in the attitude of the headteacher as well in that of the teachers of other subjects.

Again, we have to bear in mind the fact that Saudi society is a conventional society. Two holy mosques are located in Saudi Arabia and it is the cradle of Islam. So there is the problem of treating as taboo the mere idea of drawing or painting living things. This forms a philosophy that controls our way of life and education. We have always been surrounded by the word 'taboo' when it comes to art education.

Egyptian teachers of art education do not mind taking account of the students who are disapproving of the subject they teach. This can bring about some lack of balance. This could also demonstrate that other people from the Arab world have a flexible attitude to these things. Needless to say, there is room for personal freedom in a country like Egypt. All of these matters can have their effect on the curriculum, the philosophy towards art education and the existence of art education in schools. Maybe if we have enough information on Islamic art that might help to change the way we regard art education as a subject.

I remember some of the comments made by art education supervisors in one of the meetings I attended. It became clear that some of the headteachers preferred to teach art education and sometimes asked the official teacher of the subject to teach mathematics. Some of the headteachers abused the art teachers by forcing them to carry out other works such as installing electrical fittings in the school or organising the headteacher's office. This led the art teacher to have very low expectations of himself because of the way society was treating him.

1. 7 On the social level, how do you see the matter?

The majority of people are attracted to folk art. As someone who has returned from the West, I can see that people have changed considerably. In the early days, everything was taboo. Now everything is normal. Life is becoming busier and people do not tend to be thinking a lot about what is taboo and what is not taboo. After all, the overall purpose of a piece of fine art is aesthetic. In my opinion, people tend to go more for folk or traditional art and they are less flexible about fine art. However, there is still a group of people that is in open conflict with fine art.

1. 8 Why is traditional or folk art popular?

I will try to give you my own opinion on the matter. Some like folk art for reasons that are known to all. For example, the old and locally made materials remind me of my father and my grandfather and of the houses that were built of mud. I feel that these things belong to me and I belong to them, though I have seen things like "*alnahala*" being put to use. Others might only be following suit. Later on, people begun to appreciate it because there is a big gap between man and modern art. Men lack the basic information to understand the philosophies with which modern art is dealing. Maybe man is clinging on to these things not for their own sake but as an escape from a greater evil and this tells us something about the extent of the abilities of modern man.

1. 9 Do you think traditional art is closer to the people and the circumstances surrounding them?

I believe so. The reason is that it deals with things that people encounter in their day-to-day life. We are still subject to imitation and there is a proverb which says, "Your old thing is your companion." or "Your past is your companion."

1. 10 Do you think they can see it as an extension of their past culture?

Maybe they see some sort of glory in their past experiences, though there are some reservations here. Even when things go wrong, people still attach some value to them. They ignore the fact that we have to investigate. Even though my grandfather did certain things, it does not mean that I have to remain captive to my past. People adhere to the old because they see their origins there and experience a sense of belonging.

1. 11 What is the attitude of people in general towards the fine arts?

It seems to me that people see it as something of secondary importance - something that just fills their spare time – something that can be pursued when other basic and more important things have been attended to. As far as the financial boom we are now experiencing, people have tended to pay more attention to luxuries, such as clothes, houses and other things for external appearances. But when it comes to philosophy, they don't believe in it as something important in their life.

1. 12 Do people expect art to play a particular role in their life?

It seems to me that the majority of people can see no role that art can play in their life. This attitude can even be found among teachers.

1. 13 Is there a particular sector in the community that adopt a certain attitude towards art?

Yes, the Islamists.

1. 14 Why?

In general those who are religious take up a certain stance. They have the problem of regarding it as illicit. The problem is that human beings are subjective. They cannot take an objective attitude to something in their social life. This kind of attitude spreads into all aspects of their lives. Those who hate art education may also hate those who work in the field and even the raw materials on which art relies. This lack of objectivity compromises many things.

1. 15 Is this attitude directly related to problems encountered in art education?

On a local level, yes. On an official level, no. I mean on the level of schools but not on the level of the philosophy adopted by the state.

1. 16 Does this cause problems?

Yes, to the teacher. When a teacher is planning to show the good work of his students he might come the following day to find that the whole thing has been vandalized. This has happened to us in the College of Education where all the work we did was vandalized.

1. 17 Was this intentional?

Yes, of course. They didn't care because they expected to be rewarded by God for this act.

1. 18 When did this happen?

The Department of Islamic Culture attacked our works and destroyed all of them. All the drawings and paintings of animate things, be they duck, bird or animal, were destroyed. Plastic works were also torn apart.

ANNEXE 2: ALI**2. 1 What experience have you had in art education?**

Immediately on my graduation, I joined the teaching profession. I studied Arabic, at the same time, I was also teaching art.

2. 2 For how long?

For some years.

2. 3 Could you tell us about the major problems facing art education at the time you were teaching?

Where I was teaching there was a major problem in that there was a lack of understanding of the value of art education. There was also a lack of concern from those people in positions of responsibility. This in its turn reflected on practical matters such as the non-provision of raw materials necessary for the work. It was very discouraging for a young graduate to go and teach in a village where there was nothing provided for him.

2. 4 What are the reasons behind this lack of understanding?

It goes back to a number of reasons. One of the reasons is the cultural differences between people. As an art teacher you always have your own ideas which you want to apply. As the teacher has studied the fine arts you would expect him to follow the principles of a particular school of art and thought. Among the general public those who have a leaning towards the fine arts expect to see only trees and roses around them. There is a big gap between these people and those who know very little about the fine arts. This leads to a lack of understanding between people.

2. 5 Do you see this as a local problem?

No, it is not. I have seen the same problems in Nigeria. There, they do not value modern art. My Masters dissertation was a study of the problems with fine arts in Sudan and Nigeria. These kinds of problems repeat themselves in a number of countries. Each group of people have their own distinctive art that links them to their own environment. In Nigeria, art is vital to the life of the people. You can see women in the street, especially in Central and Southern Nigeria among the Yorba and the Ibo tribes, engaged in woodcarving, ceramic work and printing. They don't regard this as art. They see it as a kind of job that is part of their life. They have many fine arts. However, their opinion about a work of fine art in a decorated frame is that it is a thing of no value and does not relate directly to daily life.

Going back to your question, I believe that all the Arab and Asian countries share the same opinion about the fine arts. They don't show an appreciation of the arts in its modern sense. They see all of art education as something that is separate from the needs of society and the environment. It doesn't relate directly to the life of the

people. The same kind of art is practised on a larger scale. In Nigeria, they have tried to solve the problem by bringing art to the people. In the Ahmed Bello University, where I worked in the teachers' college, local women who were experts in ceramic work were brought to the university, where they made ceramic ovens. This was an attempt to relate art to people and people to art. In the same way, printing on clothes and batik was taught by the women who practised these arts and traded them on the public roads or in the small villages.

2. 6 Do you think this kind of experience can reconcile the differences between society and the fine arts?

Yes. It brought some sort of understanding and it will also lead to mutual respect between people with different views. For example, most of the students who are studying modern fine arts used to look upon this kind of work as something backward. Now they have more respect for it.

2. 7 You mean to say that there is more understanding between what the school has to offer and what people are used to having?

Yes. In Nigeria, the general public was brought to the scholar, while in the Sudan it was the scholar who explained the role of art education to the public in order to develop awareness.

2. 8 What, in general, are the experiences that you have acquired and that connected you directly to your field of study?

Because of the studies I have undertaken, I could say that I had a number of experiences. When I talk about art now, I am able to say that I have a background in many aspects of art. When one talks about art, some people and artists ignore the oral arts of poetry and music. In colleges of fine arts, the emphasis is always on the visual arts. The point here is that you have to set similar criteria: melody and rhythm versus lines and colours. Again, there should be harmony between colours or between words and phrases. I think the experience I had in the field of Arabic Language and language teaching has deepened my understanding of the fine arts in general. Also, my studies in literary criticism enabled me to understand art in a better way. Moreover, the nature and the way of life in the Sudan, where I came from a farming background and relied heavily on manual work, also made room for creativity in the solving of problems in your day-to-day life. Working in agriculture and dealing with domestic animals, with all their problems, makes you dextrous. You take your manual skills from your daily life and experiences.

2. 9 Have you found differences in the concept of art education between one group of countries and another – Eastern Asia versus Western Europe, for example?

Probably for the Asian, Arab and African countries there is almost the same attitude and the same approach. Art is often taught here through apprenticeship. On the other hand, fine arts in schools are often regarded as a subject. It is also viewed as something alien to the culture. I think that is why there is a need for this branch of

knowledge to have its roots in these societies. The problem in these countries are almost the same. In a conference, in Singapore, the topic for discussion was "The Role of Schools", where every artist was attached to a particular Western school. This concept often disturbed artists here. They don't like to be categorized in this way. However, you can always see the relationship between Asian, African and Western arts. They have benefitted from each other. I need to mention the fact that the problem lies with our own critics. They always try to associate you with a particular school. This is one of the problems in the field of fine arts and I think it is one of the duties of art education to address this problem.

2. 10 What reasons lie behind this problem?

The reason is that they attribute everything to our coming under the influence of Western arts. Artists are aware of their own history and past and they want to be given the chance to do what will benefit them. It is better than dividing people between this school and that school.

2. 11 Would you elaborate further on this topic? On a personal level, what have you done in this area?

Maybe one of the things that relate to art is the art of poetry or the art of the short story. I published some of these during my early youth. I have published a few poems and recited poetry on some occasions.

2. 12 Have you carried out any studies or done research work?

One of my published pieces of research is on the idea of belonging to a particular school among Saudi artists. I think it is a problem. The reason is that a lot of young artists describe themselves as surrealists or they sometimes see themselves as being similar in their style to a particular artist. I also wrote on art education. The educational system here has undergone some changes. I wrote a research study on the problem of art education under the present educational system. I also discussed the role of arts education in the advanced secondary stage. I made some reviews on books on art education. One of these reviews is on a book dealing with terminology in art education and the other two were on books on art education. Equally, I wrote an explanation of art education. The study was an approach to this subject for beginners, i.e. approaches, history, principles and the philosophy of art education. I wrote on the role of art education in the field of special education; special education here involves both slow and fast learners.

2. 13 How did you discuss the problem of belonging to a particular Western school? How did you deal with the problem?

I think this is a dangerous cultural problem. A lot of young artists do want to associate themselves with schools of international reputation so as to become international themselves. You can see that the danger here lies in our own identity, culture and civilisation. Another problem is that these schools are going to put barriers between artists. As an Arab artist, I think it is important for me to get myself out of this difficulty. To many people, art in the Arab and Asian world is regarded as second-

class work, while Western art is seen as first class. They wanted us to revolve around them because they see themselves as the core. Even in the West, the names given to schools were often platitudinous. The great artists themselves were not happy with these names. If you like, we can take Impressionism as an example. It was rejected in the beginning and seen as an insult to art. The Impressionists were seen as a group of people who failed to see reality and that was why they resorted to giving their impressions of reality. Even the artists themselves were not happy with labels such as Fauvism, Divisionism and Cubism. It is, therefore, ridiculous that we are clutching at things that were once rejected by those who made them. By so doing, I think we are compartmentalizing ourselves. We are setting limitations on our own space and essence.

2. 14 What are the reasons behind this problem?

People are always interested in being famous and being known world-wide. People are interested in big names and titles.

2. 15 During your stay here, have you seen any change in these problems?

There are strict limitations here. You have to bear in mind the commitment to religion and the limitations of that. There is a problem with sculpture or woodcarving and figurative art. These things could not be practised here in schools. They are viewed as religiously taboo. The word "*sora*" which has come to mean photograph, does not have the same meaning in religious Arabic, where it has come to mean embodiment and the incarnation of things. It is not regarded as having the same value among different groups. In other words, things like the art of sculpture are facing real problems, though you can encounter these things in personal exhibitions and on a personal level. However, on the school level, these things are still stumbling blocks and we have a long way to go. Another factor is that most of those teaching this subject are expatriates who are made to believe that these things are against the law.

If I can make a comparison between art in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Nigeria, I would say that in Nigeria sculpture or woodcarving is part of the life of ordinary folk. It has been handed down from generation to generation. Even the Muslims are practising it for they regard it as mere decoration or ornamentation. The way they see art is different from ours in quite a remarkable way. Even when you travel on the highway and make a stopover at a service station, you see a band playing music. Men and women who are selling their goods at this station carry on selling things and dancing at the same time. For an Arab person, this is a very striking difference. Art is very important to their life and it is also very natural for them. They have their own interpretation of art no matter how different their backgrounds are. Their view of art is unified.

2. 16 Is the case the same for Muslim tribes?

The most dominant Muslim tribe is that of the Hosa in the North. It should be noted that carving among the Hosa people is not very common. Some researchers, however, attribute this to the lack of raw material in the area where the Hosa people live. In central and northern Nigeria, where the Ibo and the Urba tribes live, carving and other kinds of art are very common. So, the way and the style of life of the two groups is

different. On the other hand, the religious side might have its effect on distinguishing the art of the Hosa from that of the rest. Carving or engraving, among the Hosa, could be seen on the level of decorating the front of their houses for example.

2. 17 Do the Hosa see the aesthetic value of carving?

Among the Hosa, carving is taken for its aesthetic value only. The vast majority of the Hosa are Muslims. However, among the other tribes, there are the Christians and the non-religious. There are also some pagans who have their own idols. I have seen that personally. For example, during the time of the floods, large groups of people go out to the rivers where they drop particular objects into the water and carry out some rituals as a sign of blessing. For these people, the small statues and masks play a vital role in their lives. They believe that they could protect them from evil spirits. They can also bring them good luck and ward off the enemy. Art has a functional role in the life of these tribes. These things should not be seen as something of the past. Actually, it is still there and functioning in their daily lives.

2. 18 Among the Muslims, does carving have any role other than the aesthetic?

No. They don't take carvings as having religious value. Their main purpose is aesthetic.

2. 19 Does carving among the Hosa stand for an extension of the old values or has it come about as a trend from the modern schools of art?

It has been there for literally ages. The young generation of the Hosa people who studied art at the university are taking quite a modern approach to it. They also study carving or sculpture according to the traditions of the Western world. In this university in the Muslim north of Nigeria, statues are there in the university and they were made by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The statues here reflected the daily activities of life.

2. 20 Is the carving or sculpting practice of the Hosa a modern one or is it an extension of its African counterpart?

It is an extension of the past. A heritage. However, later on and due to the spread of Islam, things came to be made for a different purpose. The same person who used these carvings did so to ward off evil is still doing the same thing, but for a different purpose. Sometimes it is for an economic purpose, such as selling them to tourists.

2. 21 In their own lives, does carving still have the same value?

Only as an ornament and only in the form of small pieces and shapes.

2. 22 Is the role of religion in the Sudan and Nigeria as important as it is here? I mean in terms of its impact on art.

Now there is a kind of Islamic revival taking its toll across the Muslim world and lots of people have come to view statues as something taboo.

2. 23 Is this kind of activity also taking place in the Sudan?

Yes, in the last few years. Full statues are no longer welcomed and the matter is escalating. In Nigeria, the case is the same for there is a rejection of the idea of carving or sculpting as an art. Some have even started attacking statues. Some Muslims feel guilty when they make a statue. That is why this kind of art is decreasing in both Northern Nigeria and Northern Sudan. However, the production of statues in Southern Sudan is still continuing. Still there are works made of ebony and these are of both human beings and animals. These things are made from ebony or ivory and are available in the tourist shops in Khartoum as well as found in Sudanese homes for decorative purposes. As for big statues, I dare say that they have become extremely rare. Some of them are available in museums and they are quite old.

2. 24 On the level of art colleges, what is the situation with this kind of art?

Carving and sculpting in fine arts colleges is a major subject and it is taught according to the known principles and rules. After graduation no student or graduate is able to make a statue and put it in a public place. Students have compensated for this by moving into abstract art.

2. 25 Among the members of the profession, are there any problems of this kind?

People are still carrying on in the same old way. The view of art in general and of carving or sculpting in particular is still unchanged despite the opposition from the other side.

2. 26 Do you think this will have an impact on art education?

Not directly at the present time work is still being produced. However, if there are photographs, drawings or works of painting of a woman, the woman has to be properly dressed, for example. It has to be done according to the conventions.

2. 27 During your stay here, have you seen an escalation of this problem?

Actually, since I came here, I have noticed that there are some regulations or rules. We have received some circulars from the official level setting out some specific rules not only about carving or sculpting, but also concerning Arabic calligraphy. There is an official circular stipulating that verses from the Koran have to be produced in a clear way so as to avoid confusing those who later read them. I am not telling you this for the sake of criticism. These are existing facts. These things can have their effect on art education. The art teacher can only succumb to these rules. The teacher has no power to resist rules coming from the headquarters of the Ministry of Education.

2. 28 This is on an official level. Is it also there on the social level?

We can see that there are exhibitions made on all kinds of levels and there are too many of them. As for making portraits and the idea of portraying people, in general, as well as portraying other animate things, you can see an entire exhibition portraying this kind of thing. You can note that the works of Prince Khalid Alfaisal is relating all his works to realism. In these works, you may see a knight on the back of his horse or a Palestinian woman fighting her aggressor. The human and the animal element is rampant among the works of artists. Currently, there is a Saudi exhibition and it will continue until next week. In it you can see quite a few portraits of human beings. One of these works was done by a female artist and it won a prize. The exhibition was inaugurated yesterday.

2. 29 Does the problem exist on the social or the official level? In other words, do children in school have the freedom to draw what they want? Have their parents any objections to what they are doing?

The majority of parents prefer to leave it to the school concerned. They believe that the school is able to do the right thing. In a few cases, some parent intervened. In some instances and while I was doing some supervisory work in schools, I have come across a couple of classes where the fathers of some children objected strongly to what we were teaching their sons. In one case, parents asked why we had given the children permission to draw people moving around the Holy Kaba (The House of God). It posed quite a problem to that trainee teacher. However, this is one of the rarer cases. It is worth repeating that the majority of parents prefer to leave the matter in the hands of the school in which their child is being taught.

2. 30 Maybe sometimes this restriction is made by some of the teachers themselves?

Yes, some of the teachers do try to restrict the freedom of the student.

2. 31 What is the view of the public in general? Do you think that some people can reject the mere idea of having art education?

Yes, some people refuse to deal with art education since it seems to permit things that they do not approve of.

2. 32 This is not the public at large?

This is a tiny majority.

2. 33 Is this attitude associated with particular geographical areas?

Not as such. However, there are differences between the backgrounds of people. The teacher is of course, the one who can play a certain role.

2. 34 Is the economic factor one of the problems?

It could be a problem, but certainly not a basic problem.

2. 35 What problems have you encountered in teaching art?

The problem for the teacher is that his aim is to make the child express himself with a degree of freedom. The first of these expressions could be through drawing human shapes as one of the elements for expressing that freedom.

2. 36 What kind of a problem does this create?

The child can encounter difficulties if he is trying to draw something that entails some social or religious activity; the market place or the pilgrimage, for example. He might draw a picture of a car going along the road laden with goods and no one driving it. Clearly the work here is incomplete. This poses a problem for both the child and the teacher.

2. 37 In your own opinion, what is the attitude of Islam towards this problem?

Historically, in the beginning, idols and pictures were prohibited. All these things were destroyed at the beginning. Earlier, the Prophet asked his wife, Aisha, to remove a picture that was placed in front of him. In the Holy Koran, there is no clear indication for this. However, this removal of the picture is taken as the rule that prohibits the act. Again, another prohibition is found in the religious saying that angels do not tread in houses where there are dogs and pictures. These things are taken as a total prohibition of the arts. In Islamic history, we can note that in the Abbasid age in the caliph's palace during the reign of Caliph Mamoun, there was a statue on the top of the dome of the palace. It was the statue of a knight carrying a spear in his hand. He was surrounded by six maids. Three of those maids were white and the other three were black. The caliph had them moved when guests entered the palace. Other statues can be seen in the Al-Hamra palace and they are still there to the present day. In Cairo, these things are still there. Around the Al-Azhar Mosque, there are statues and nobody can deny the role the Al-Azhar Mosque has played in the revival of Islamic culture. One of the things that gives us cause for the reflection is the fact that when the Muslims entered India and Cairo they didn't destroy these statues.

2. 38 Is Islam against the arts?

No, it is not against the arts. When we define art in general we can say that it is about organising things. When you organise your lines and colours you make art. When you organise your words and make a rhythm, you make poetry and poetry is an art. When you organise your movement that becomes dance and dancing is an art. Art is about organising things. Organising things is one of the main concerns of Islam. Islam also asks for perfection and patience and these can be practised through the arts. Art is also about beautification and ornamentation and Islam asks for this as well, "God is beautiful and he likes all that is beautiful."

2. 39 Is the element of picture important in the field of art education?

The element of picture is basic in art education.

2. 40 Some people say that we can make substitutes for that.

It is true that some people can substitute visual art for oral art. I believe that the visual side is very important in art education.

2. 41 Do people in Eastern Asia have the same kind of problems?

No, they have approached the matter in a different way.

2. 42 Let us talk about the main objectives in training the art teacher and the importance of relating his work to the environment? Do you think this is important?

It is very important to associate him with his environment. If we don't do that he will be there in isolation from his surroundings and later he might not be appreciated or judged fairly.

2. 43 Are there particular shortcomings in this area? Could there be some religious reasons that prevent the artist from expressing the needs of his local culture?

Yes, this is one of the problems.

2. 44 You have already said that the problem is that there is a gap between the kind of art that exists in the environment and that taught in schools and colleges – does this cause problems for you as an art teacher?

Yes, this has its impact on the matter.

2. 45 In your opinion, what is the impact of the local culture on art education?

You have to bear in mind that art education is an exercise that we have borrowed from the West. The teaching of fine art was first experienced during colonial times. As for our conventional arts, we used to inherit them from the previous generation, but we received art education from the West, along with Western culture and Western techniques. These techniques remained with us after the departure of the coloniser. We can begin here with the examples of Egypt, Sudan, Iraq and Jordan. Both the system and the curriculum remained the same even after the departure of the coloniser. This has led to the fact that people came under the influence of the West. The result of this is that our teaching practice seemed alien to our own environment. This is the main reason. An Englishman by the name of Greene Law came to the Sudan and attempted to associate the arts with the environment. He came to use the locally made material in art education. That was a completely new matter and he was one of the most successful art teachers. Strangely enough, the man was equipped with a deep understanding of the Sudanese culture and he took sides with the Sudanese against the English when the Sudanese made a few uprisings in the forties of this century. We see

him as a hero in art education in the Sudan and the reason for this is because of his success in relating art to the environment.

2. 46 In what way can our local culture and arts enhance our work in art education?

When you relate art to its surroundings, you are going to strengthen it. However, you always need to start with the basics and after that you go further by introducing new things as ancillary objects. In the past, it was the opposite. Western art was at the centre, other things were looked at by the artists from their ivory towers. Even words like "*baladi*" (local) and "*Arabiyy*" (Arabic) were associated with low quality work. The words "modern" and "advanced" were associated with all that was Western. Clearly, local arts were not well-appreciated. By studying our own culture and art, we would be in a position to understand it better and we could even judge, in a better way, the arts of the others. It is just like laws when they are alien and superimposed upon a society.

2. 47 We have mentioned many things. Is there anything that you might like to add?

It is the last point. When people rely on their own arts and heritage, they are in a position to produce better quality works. Secondly, we need to re-read our Islamic heritage. We need to re-evaluate this so as to understand the role of art in a Muslim society. There are lots of aspects in art that have to be explored. People tend to avoid certain aspects believing that this may lead to embarrassment or even harassment. There are naked facts in the recorded history, but people do not care to touch on them. Today, we can note that there is a number of writers and philosophers who, for only touching upon a specific aesthetic point, have been declared apostates or have been ostracized. We need to re-read our history with some of the tolerance and understanding of Islam. Were we able to do this, we could then understand the arts in a wider and more beautiful way that would enable art to play its role in our life, God willing, in a better way.

ANNEXE 3: AHMAD**3. 1 Do you have any other activities apart from the work you are involved in in art education?**

Indeed. I am deeply concerned with short story writing as well as the writing of free verse and the theatre. I also have interests in the field of cookery as well as in spiritual education and contemplation. Moreover, I have my involvement, of course, in the field of fine art both on the domestic and foreign level.

3. 2 Are you an artist?

Probably, yes. I think that when you participate in exhibitions and you carry the burden with others while having your own ideas and thoughts, one could be called an artist. I have been trying to concentrate for a long time on the idea of popular symbols among the Saudi people. I am also trying to move from the local heritage into the Arab and Islamic heritage in general. A number of new works focus on symbols related to Islamic heritage.

3. 3 Do you produce these works in the form of pictures and paintings?

I am now concentrating on producing pictures and paintings. I also use other different kinds of materials. Because of my background in the field of sculpture and carving, it was my wish to move into this field.

3. 4 In your postgraduate studies, how did you try to discuss the issue of art education and its relationship with the social aspects of life?

My doctoral research centred around the social and cultural matters that are associated with the role and place of art education in society. Later, the topic was narrowed down to the statements made by final year students, at the intermediate stage, when they are presented with works from Islamic art and works from Western art. The kind of statements they make are free from the artificiality that characterizes statements in their written form. When things are said with spontaneity, they leave a kind of collective fingerprint that reflects all the influences that society has on the arts.

3. 5 Do you think that art education faces cultural and social problems?

According to the anthropologists, culture is a big concept. It is a complex whole that can encompass society, religion, arts, customs, race, political systems, etc. Whatever that society has is going to be part of the culture of that society. If a particular emphasis is made of art as part of the culture, then you cannot separate this out from the culture when you are trying to find out about it.

3. 6 As an art teacher, what, in your opinion, are the problems that art education is facing?

To a large extent, I believe that a society has to undergo changes and cultural and civil transformations. Not only our society, but all developing societies. The culture of any society develops as time goes on. It also changes as times change. This change is necessarily influenced by a number of factors, be they economic, social or external. The external factors could be military occupation or economic hegemony. All these factors have, to a large extent, their influence on the development of that society. Therefore, any of the elements that contribute to the entire making of culture do contribute to the development of culture and the development of the society embracing the culture in question. Therefore, arts, and the place of arts in that society have to change within the general cultural frame of that society.

I feel that we are still in our transitional period. We have not reached the stability other societies are witnessing. Of course, change is relative. However, this relativity of change differs materially from one society to another. Institutions in the West change with time though you cannot compare their change to the kind of change our society is undergoing. Let us, for example, look at the situation and position of the arts in this country twenty years ago. There is no comparison between the position of the arts today and its position then.

3. 7 What do you think is the public attitude towards art?

In general, no society on this earth has been denied a sense of beauty. Nobody is insensitive to beauty. Art works within this mechanism. It is difficult to imagine anyone from any community on earth feeling disgusted because of a picture or a painting he had seen and the feeling compelling him to destroy the work. It is most likely that he will have feelings of comfort and pleasure and therefore the work fulfils some human need. In general, all works of art are there to fulfil particular needs that reflect how developed the society is.

When we move into the details of how society views its own art, we can see that there are different groups of people. As I told you earlier, we are now undergoing a process of change. In this society, there is a stratum of the conventional. This stratum believes in the stringent and literal commitment to all religious values that have to be interpreted in the classical manner in which there is no room for renewal. There are some people who just on hearing the word, picture, can think of nothing other than it being something taboo. To such people, the road is blocked and there is no room for a new interpretation. From an Islamic point of view, this is an open and wide subject. In it, there is room for new interpretations to be made and lots of effort to be exerted. When we examine the case of the middle-classes, i.e. teachers, engineers, etc., or those who graduated from secular universities, they have an aptitude for art in its civilized sense and are always prepared to make efforts to know what art is about. They can view pictures and paintings and these do not offend their social conventions. Such viewing helps them to accommodate art. This involves quite a wide stratum in our society.

There is a third stratum which enjoys greater freedom in accepting the arts and the issues and purposes that art is aiming to address. This is the group of people who have come into contact with Western culture. Normally, this is the group of well-read and highly intellectual people. Unfortunately, they are in a minority. These are the ones who give feedback. They can give a better dimension to arts and the role of art in our society. We don't want this to be imposed on us. We don't want it to be imposed

on us in any frame but our own. Our intellectuals, tourists, businessmen and all those who come into contact with other cultures, always seem to welcome and understand the kind of art we are producing. I have to mention that some businessmen have now started to adopt some exhibitions that took place in the two major cities of Riyadh and Jeddah. This is an indication of the understanding and assimilation of art by our society.

3. 8 According to what you have said, what is your opinion of art?

In my opinion, when an artist takes up his brush and puts effort into a particular piece of work, he is not there in isolation. He is part of the society in which he lives. He is part of the social conventions of that society even when he is rejecting those conventions. The artist is only a mirror that reflects his own society. We cannot say that the artist is independent from the society in which he lives. When he carries out a particular piece of work, this particular piece of work is a response to a collective need in that society. No artist is a person in a world of his own. He is there in response to a social need. Even when the artist is trying to seek his own identity, he cannot escape the fact that his individuality is part of the life of the society in which he lives. Art, in my opinion, is one of the necessities of the life of a society that, in turn, deals with a life that is changing around it. It is said that the vast majority of knowledge stored in the human brain is perceived visually. The artist is a person who is able to co-ordinate the relationships between those visual signals. He is the one who can create harmony between one thing and another.

3. 9 Do you think that awareness among the public has developed to the extent that it can accept the present movements in the world of art?

As I told you earlier, you cannot expect that from everybody. I don't expect an exhibition that takes place in the Imam Islamic University to be highly applauded. It could be treated with some lack of seriousness. It could be seen as something that is not important. It could even be classified as something forbidden. It is not the same case when you hold an exhibition at a university like that of King Fahad or King Saud or King Abdulaziz. There is a big difference again between an exhibition taking place in an art gallery and one taking place in a commercial complex. I participated in a commercial exhibition that took place in the city of Alkhobar. For me this was a golden opportunity to witness the instinctive and spontaneous attitude of society towards art.

I was out there among the public trying to judge their impressions without any reservations. I was there among them. They didn't know that I was an artist. They took me as one of them. I remember that there were two young women. An interesting dialogue took place between them. One of them began talking in a highly intellectual way about the works she was seeing. Her colleague was critical of her point of view. I have noticed that women in our society are more responsive to art and they appreciate it better. They spend a considerable period of time in galleries and exhibitions. Men tend to give a quick glance and go away. Women are more diplomatic and more intelligent when they are in the company of their own sex. Their comments are more refined and more aesthetic. Unlike men, they don't make careless comments. Women, by nature, are more sensitive to beauty. Most of men's attitudes

towards art tend to reveal that they have no point of reference to the place of fine arts in their culture.

3. 10 What is the attitude of people in general towards art education?

We have to look at art education from a pedagogical point of view. Most of our educational institutions offer art education among their courses. However, there are different attitudes. Some people see it as a beautiful thing that helps to cultivate their children. They sometimes view life and reality by going over the children's work in art classes. The majority of people lie within these classes. They see it as a relief from the tribulations of life. There is another group, however, that views it as mere nonsense. There should be no place for it in the school syllabus. To them, there are other subjects that ought to be studied and students should not waste their time on this kind of thing. Towards the extreme end, there is a group that believes that nothing but evil can come out of this subject we are teaching. Their justification is that this subject demands a lot of material and involves everything that had been classified by religion as taboo. Some parents object strongly against art education being offered to their sons and daughters as a school subject. However, there are some teachers who take up the matter with them and make great efforts to convince those parents both of the importance and the limitations of art education. For example, one could simply tell them that landscaping is part and parcel of art education.

3. 11 Is the objection of this group of people primarily against the picture and painting in art education?

There is a particular group that believes that art education in whatever shape is illicit. They see it as an approach to the making of pictures and in the picture lies the problem. There is another group that has a different interpretation that says that children are free from all religious responsibilities and they can do what they like without being challenged religiously.

3. 12 Has this problem been addressed on the level of the art education syllabus?

No, the matter, to the best of my knowledge, has never been discussed. It is normally discussed on the level of the art teacher with the child's parents or the art teacher with the religious teacher. There are cases where the art teacher discussed the matter with his headteacher who is the scapegoat on which the teacher hangs all his frustrations.

3. 13 Is the element of the picture one of the problems that face art teachers?

Yes. There are some instances in which the picture can pose a potential problem. However, I must stress that this is not always the case. We are moving forwards. At least, there is room for discussion. In the recent past, the discussions tended to require only the answer whether a thing was permissible or not.

3. 14 What is the attitude of Islam towards the fine arts? Is it encouraging or not?

I think Islam approves of the fine arts. Had it not been for fine arts, Islamic civilization would have collapsed ages ago. If you go into a mosque, you find art there. Take for example the tapestry, the woodwork and the domes. It is only those who are culturally superficial or extremist who can deny this.

3. 15 Do you think that art education can be used as a tool with which to dispel the ignorance of particular groups of people?

Yes. We have to believe that art education is working within a community that has its conventions and customs. There are some conventions and customs that do not comply with Islamic traditions. However, the different interpretations of the picture within the frame of Islam have to be perfectly understood. If art education, as a subject, wants to function as an influential factor in the life of this society, then it has to understand the nature of the forces that surround it. There, for example, is no tribalism in Islam. Equally well, the matter of colour does not count. Islam sees things in their totalities. It sees everything in the universe as a unified whole. Art education needs to understand all of this and it also has to avoid being dragged into conflicts. We need, as artists, to avoid complicating issues with others. This may lead to our total elimination. This has happened to some academics here in our very recent past.

3. 16 Do you think that art education has the ability to understand society without being in a position to impose ideas on the society in question?

Yes. Any syllabus has to respond to a particular social need. It has to spring from the social need. Art education is about education in the first place, rather than about art itself. We use art as a means to an educational end. Therefore, it has to comply with the social conventions and traditions. Art education has to avoid conflict and friction. Conflict and friction will not settle matters to our advantage. Art education in its modern sense has the ability to accommodate all that there is in the society. Art education today can survive anywhere. The modern artist is the one who views reality and assimilates it, sums it up and reproduces it while adding it to his own experience and experiments in life. As a creative person, the artist can relate to reality in quite a different way.

3. 17 In the world of children's drawings, have you seen any reflections of the changes we are undergoing?

As you know, the stages of a child's development in relation to art are divided into seven. The first stage is that in which the child is an observer and an imitator. Then he may move into taking up pens and pencils and trying to make his own lines, either in vertical or horizontal shapes. When a child expresses himself through his drawings, he is consciously or unconsciously communicating a message. He is making his own cultural symbols from the dictionary of his culture. Children are always aware of their cultural limitations and they are also aware of what is taboo and what is not.

I remember that one of the students came to me a few years ago and explained to me that one of his pupils in the primary school where he was teaching had made a drawing of human figures in very close physical proximity. When the teacher asked

him about what he meant the pupil became frightened. Clearly, the child here had encountered difficulty in expressing himself verbally. The reason was that he was aware of the social taboo. Later, it was revealed that one of the two figures was a woman, whom it turned out was the housemaid and the other was the child himself. The woman was playing with him as a sex object. The child himself was aware that what he and the maid were doing was not legitimate. The matter here was entirely instinctive. The child, of course, was haunted and greatly disturbed by what was happening to him. This was the reason why he expressed it in his drawings. By his drawing, the child was trying to relieve himself of the harassment he was suffering. This can sum it up in some way.

This is what art is about. It is about expressing yourself. It is about the removal of pain and distress. Sexual abuse is a problem everywhere. It seems it is part of human nature. Clearly, the problem here is that society is exercising some pressure on the individual, i.e. the child. The whole system is filtering a code of behaviour for the child. It is telling him what to do and what not to draw. These social and cultural boundaries cannot be escaped. They are there and are deeply rooted in the shape of religion and creed. In the name of religion and belief, there are those out there who intervene in what our children are drawing. To add insult to injury, this high-handed intervention can come from people who are equipped with nothing more than ignorance. This problem is not only found in the arts alone. There are too many examples to cite. The problem again is that those who intervene do so in good faith. They just want to make the child a better person without knowing how important the process of drawing is for the child's well-being. As a human being, you have to express yourself in a visual way no matter what your background is. When you express yourself, you express your individuality. You express things that concern you personally. As a child, you relate to all aspects of life around you. The animal kingdom often constitutes a wide source of information. Objects and subjects of the animal kingdom have their cultural value and cultural significance.

3. 18 Do you think that children's drawings can conflict with local culture?

No. I don't see any conflict here. Even when there is a conflict, this conflict is going to take place within the context of the culture in question. Let me explain this issue further. A number of those children who belong to religious families do often draw pictures of animate objects. There is nothing wrong with drawing a picture of an animate object. However, some people believe that cultural convention dictates that the head should be cut off this animate object thereby rendering it inanimate. Here is an act of strong objection and opposition. However, it is an objection within the context and frame of the culture. Culture here has a role to play when it intervenes. It aims to shape and reshape the child according to its own norms and traditions, according to its own limitations and boundaries.

3. 19 Do you think the problem is connected to culture rather than religion?

To me, with my background in anthropology, art is part and parcel of a culture. We have to take this for granted. Art is one of the components of a culture. I dare say art is a tool in the hand of the culture which tries to express the essence of that culture.

Art has to keep abreast of the other components that go to make up that culture. This is a matter of co-ordination, a matter of harmony and homogeneity.

Homogeneity is important if a society wants to survive and to contribute effectively to the betterment of mankind and the prosperity of its own members. Homogeneity can guarantee the smooth transition of this culture from one generation to another. When there is conflict between the elements of culture, i.e. between religion and art, religion and politics, that will lead to the demise of the culture. Here, we can cite the example of Europe in the middle ages. That was the time when the Church came into dire confrontation with politics. That is why religion is of minor importance in today's Western culture. In my opinion, there is no such conflict in Islamic culture. Islam calls for homogeneity and harmony in the relationships between one thing and another. Islam calls for harmony in the universe at large.

I think Islamic culture and Islamic civilization do give the necessary support and impetus to the visual arts. This has already been proven not only at a local level in Saudi Arabia, but also on an international level. A number of world famous artists acknowledged the benefits they have gained from Islamic art in North Africa. They have seen Islamic art as an art with its own spirituality, its own world and its own uniqueness from which an artist can benefit.

I believe that fine art in our world, along with its applied and practical sides, are developing well and are accepted in the field of art education. There is no sign of a problem or a great deal of conflict in this area. In each culture or system, there are things that are marginalized. This marginalization brings about some interaction and when you interact you encounter ups and downs. Even in a country like America, one can come across research studies which show that there is not a 100% harmony between society and the arts. There have been a number of studies done on this area. This is very important because it is the process through which we can create a critical dialogue between the members of a society concerning one of the elements of their culture. Such a dialogue is a guarantee of continuity and of diversity at the same time. It is a sign of renewal for the sake of harmony. Let us take the example of the child who tries to draw a picture of a nude woman. What would you expect to happen in this case? Certainly, there would be a big attack not only on this child, but also on the art teacher, his headteacher and probably the Director of Education in the area, as well as the Minister of Education. The reason here is that the child has touched on one of our social taboos. Nudism is not permissible, neither on the level of drawing nor on the level of real life. It is expected that drawing should reflect the realities of life. When a child draws something that goes deep into the realm of imagination that will be met by some sort of worried response on the part of the art teacher.

For example, a child may draw a picture of a man suffering everlasting damnation in the abyss of hell. This may be a reflection of the fact that he knows someone who is always drunk and subjecting his wife and sons to physical abuse. It also reflects the religion and culture of the child. From an Islamic point of view, you don't have the right to imagine someone else in hell. This is only for God to decide. An intervention has to take place here not only from the art teacher but from teachers of other subjects as well.

3. 20 Would you say that art education is to some extent in harmony with the needs of the society?

Yes, to some extent there is harmony between art education and the needs of the society. Even when there is no harmony, this would be quite acceptable within the frame of the culture.

3. 21 What aspects of harmony do you see?

Our society is undergoing a massive change when you compare it to other developing societies. I believe that there have to be research studies trying to monitor the nature of drawing and the nature of picture-making. This has to take place within a flexible Islamic framework. The matter has to be researched scientifically. Conferences have to be held where scientists from different backgrounds sit down and discuss the matter openly. For example, all over the world, the first thing a child can think of when asked to draw is to make a picture of a man or an animal. Why should our children be different? Why aren't they given the chance to draw what they like? We want their art education to take its course just like anywhere else in the world. Children are natural creatures. They would never think of being disobedient to their God. Children are full of energy and they always want to put this energy to use. In their day-to-day life, they might undergo some unpleasant experiences with their brothers and sisters at home. They might also be subject to illtreatment by their fathers or mothers, or both. They might be bullied at school. We all know that children are very sensitive creatures. Drawing could be quite a useful tool in these circumstances. It could enable the child to get rid of these worries. To do so, the child needs to be given the opportunity to be spontaneous and free. By the time they grow up they can choose for themselves. If a grown-up does not like to draw, nobody is going to force him to do so. If he can choose, he should be able to do what he likes.

3. 22 Why don't we undertake research studies that look into what changes have to take place in art education that will help it to reflect the changes taking place in society?

When you set up research studies or workshops to discuss such matters, you have to understand that, among the participants, it is the cleric who is the most influential. In today's society, we do need to share the responsibility. However, we need to understand the fact that we will always be in need of people who are knowledgeable and, at the same time, enjoy a high degree of broadmindedness and vision. With regard to the flexibility and tolerance of Islam, we can discuss the problem of fine arts and art education. We are not discussing the problem of legalizing alcohol or drugs. If we are going to make drawing illicit, there might come day when talking will become illicit as well. We have to see and discuss art education in the light of the fact that it is a tool through which the human being can express himself. From an educational point of view, an educational psychologist might need to see the drawing a child produces so that he can assess the capabilities or problems of the child in question. Drawing here is a tool through which you can fathom and measure the personality of the child. We cannot allow the narrow-mindedness of a tiny minority, who regard these things as taboo, to hinder us from carrying out our work in fine art or art education.

3. 23 Has the art teacher a role to play in discussing cultural issues?

Unfortunately, this matter has never been discussed. As an issue, it has always been ignored when plans were made for teacher training, be it on the level of the university, teacher training colleges or intermediate training institutes. When a teacher finishes his training course and goes on to teaching in schools, he is always shocked by how painful reality is. Moreover, the forces of culture are always stronger than that of education. This may lead the teacher to lose confidence in himself, as well as in his plans to enhance the course of education. I can imagine how tragic it is for someone who studies a subject at university for four years and then goes out into the open to put it to use only to find people out there who make it tough and difficult for him. Some art teachers lose their feeling of connectedness to art teaching and take other kinds of jobs. He soon realises that he is devalued as an art teacher in the eyes of society and often loses his self-esteem as well.

3. 24 Besides his academic training, what other things does an art teacher need to be equipped with to enable him/her to grapple with this harsh reality?

A teacher has to have a great deal of confidence and a strong feeling of belongedness to the academic institution where he received his training. They have to have a firm belief in what they are doing. They have to ignore the problem of people not believing in what they are doing. The academic part of the training of the art teacher has to develop his awareness of this problem. He must be imbued with diplomacy, tact and practicality, when encountering this kind of thing. He has to assess the reality around him. He has to know the geography of the place where he is teaching. He also has to know the quality of the people and the quality of the residents of his area. The art teacher has to develop the skill of being able to talk persuasively. That is part of his mission. He could simply start off by accepting that he is not, and never will be, an enemy of his own religion, and that his art education is one of the components of his own culture; i.e. the Islamic culture.

3. 25 Are there attempts being made to include cultural elements in the art education syllabus?

From a real and practical point of view, the official policy of the Ministry of Education, as well as that of the general presidency for girls' education, is that art education is a subject in its own right. Art Education is a school subject here. It has its own plans, content and budget. It is fully recognized as a subject and this recognition does not come in a vacuum. Needless to say, this means that all the political, religious and social establishment approve of art education and its role in society. This recognition has been further enhanced when it becomes clear that art education is important to the development of the human being. It is one of the elements that cultivates and refines the human self. Art education is not about drawing and painting alone. It is more than that. It has a moral message to convey. That is why it has received the official support it deserves. Art education is here and will continue to exist. It will develop and prosper along with the development and prosperity of this society.

3. 26 What, in general, is the place of Islamic, oriental and folk art in the art education syllabus?

Art education as a subject carries a heavy burden. I have to admit that we are not always able to maintain our balance. We are not always able to give everything its due. There are some teachers who are fully aware of these things. It think that we are putting our environment and our natural resources to very good use in the field of art education.

ANNEXE 4: ADEL

4. 1 What are your views on the role of the artist?

As an artist, I believe in a simple and well-defined rule: the functional role of art in society. A piece of art is always produced by an artist and that artist himself is made by the society of which he is a part. The functional role of art has to be related to the society and should have its impact on both the individual and the society. To me, my cultural heritage is the foundation on which the artist has to base his works. Heritage itself has three dimensions: the local, the national and the international. You need to keep abreast of what is going on in the world at large. While you are part of all this, you are also an artist and expected to have your own character. In other words, you have to reflect on what you see and experience.

All kinds of heritages are in the possession of mankind at large. In Egypt, there was the stage of the ancient Egyptian civilization and then the Islamic civilization. Our heritages comprised of these two aspects. There is a combination and a mixture between the two elements. My overall view begins with the primitive stage: the days of the first man, starting with the scratches the first man made on ceramics, along with the temples and other architectural works with all their mosaics and other decorative and ornamental aspects. In all of this, I do see my identity through Islamic art and architecture. Now I am, with the other artists, struggling to try to maintain my own identity lest it be watered down, just like that of other nations and civilizations which have been engulfed by stronger forces. This is the frame of my philosophy and my attitude towards art, or at least, it is the frame within which I try to define and discover myself.

4. 2 You have stated that art has a social role to play. What is the difference between the roles played by the ancient Egyptian civilization and that of the Islamic civilization?

There are similarities and dissimilarities between the ancient Egyptian art and Islamic art in terms of the roles they have played. In ancient Egyptian art, the relationship between art and religion was very strong. The religious role of art here is the most dominant of all roles. Architecture at this stage aimed to inculcate the message religion wished to convey: the idea of resurrection. Therefore, the graves were designed in a way that allowed them to withstand the forces of erosion and the challenges of time. The pyramids are the strongest evidence for this. Equally, the temples were built to inculcate the concept of religion. This can be seen in the icons and engravings in those temples. The icons are directly employed to serve a religious purpose and are deeply rooted in the religion and creed of the ancient Egyptians. We could say here that the arts played a functional role that aimed to address a religious purpose and to a lesser extent, a social purpose.

As for Islamic art, I dare say that it acquired characteristics that were unique to it. All arts in ancient civilizations did comprise two aspects or sides. One of these aspects was that of the government or state and the other was a public aspect. In ancient Egypt, there are two kinds of art. There are the graveyards of those in power: government officials' graves were made of high quality and expensive materials, while those of the general public were made of simple, cheap material and that is why

all traces of such graves have disappeared. All of the ancient Egyptian art now available was produced for government officials.

As for Islamic art, we could say that Islam as a religion aims to address two sides of life; the present life and the afterlife. Islam came to reflect these two sides of life. The philosophy of the Islamic creed was about simplicity and the close relationship between a governor and his people. This bridged the gap between the two extremes of ancient culture. The mosques that were built aimed to accommodate the public rather than the elite or cream of a society. It is worth mentioning that even the palaces of the caliphs, built during the Abassid age, were characterized by a kind of decoration which was not exclusive to any particular sector of society. The same kind of decoration was more or less available to the public. Another characteristic of Islamic art is that the popular arts proved to be a true picture of applied Islamic art. I am therefore able to say that the functional role of Islamic art was a role that directly related to the social aspects of society. The aesthetic value of art came to be the same for public and elite art. The clothes were the same and so were the jewels and other objects.

So, Islamic art has a distinctive quality of being closely related to and available to the public. We could go further and say that there was no official art, i.e. art for the state and popular art or art for the people. Islamic art has come to amalgamate the two aspects at the same time. Unlike ancient Egyptian art, Islamic art did not confine itself to the religious side alone. It went further to address the two sides of the coin. Islamic art went hand in hand with scientific development. There was the art of dyeing and tapestry and ceramics. When chemistry, as a science, developed in the Islamic world, Islamic art succeeded in making use of it. Islamic art was a vital part of what was going on at the time. In my opinion, this is the most striking characteristic of Islamic art.

4. 3 Having said that Islamic art plays a vital role in the social life of its people, do you think that people are always able to accept Islamic art as an art in its own right?

Your question is clear to me. I would rather distinguish between two aspects. The first aspect is that of theory, while the second one is that of the de facto. Theoretically, people, being subject to their own religious traditions, do accept what they believe to be Islamic. The real problem that we are facing with fine art is that fine art is not always within the reach of the public mind. I am confident that should the fine arts reach the public, the public would then be able to understand and interact with it. When a Muslim person chooses a particular kind of curtain and a particular kind of internal décor for his house, it is clear that these things which reflect an Islamic ambience will be of preference to him. To choose this kind of décor, you need to understand and appreciate the value of Islam. The point I want to clarify is that we need more galleries and a better means of communicating our message. In just the same way that we organised our water and electricity supplies to reach our houses, we can treat our heritage likewise. Our icons, ceramics, tiles are all supposed to reflect the character of our Islamic art, be that on the level of the internal décor of our houses, or on the level of the décor of public buildings. Nowadays, I can see signs of this in airports here.

4.4 Could you tell me about the problems that art education as a science is facing? I prefer that you make particular reference to Egypt.

In my opinion, the problems that art education is facing in both Egypt and the Arab world are to do with the element of time. I mean to say that the problems are getting less and less serious as time goes by. We are in need of more time here, while in the West the problem was solved years ago. The reason is that people there are more prepared. It is taking us a long time here to know the importance and the role of art education. At the turn of the century, the role of art education went hand in hand with the industrial development. After that, it went forwards to liberate itself so as to express the needs of the human self. It went on to draw on expressionism rather than emulation and mere copying and duplication. It is vital to the cause of education in the West where it aims, among other things, to express the depths of the human self.

Clearly, we to a large extent are not able to make our educational curriculum fulfil our present needs. It is more important to us to make human beings than to make factories. You cannot make a human being without enabling him to have a fully integrated character. If we could be clear about this in our national curriculum, we would then be able to have the advanced kind of art education which is a must for the making of the integrated individual. The chief problem in Egypt, as well as in the rest of the Arab world, is that art education is not recognized as a subject and is always treated as something of secondary importance. People do always tend to ignore the fact that art education is more important than other subjects, particularly at primary level. Science alone cannot fathom the depths and the potential of the individual. Child Psychology is all based on the child's ability to know the difference between the shape of one thing and the other. Art education has the ability to activate the perception of the child and his relationship with the surroundings.

4.5 You stated that art education as a science is treated in an unfair way. What are the reasons for this treatment?

There are two reasons. The first reason is a social one. People cannot see a real role for art education. You have to remember that there came a time when the Islamic civilization ceased to function. This led to the present situation in which art is placed below science. In the early beginnings of Islamic civilization, art and science were on an equal footing. For us now to make art education available to the public, we need to seek the aid of the media, as well as that of the Department of Culture.

Why is there always a gap between art and society?

Let me give you an example. You can see how popular football is. Needless to say, you cannot be popular if you do not have an audience. I am very hopeful because I always see a kind of progress in the attitude of people towards art. The appreciation of art can spread from the individual to the group and from city to the village. An easier way to do this is by addressing the problem at the grassroots level, i.e. the primary stage, where you could give the subject the place it deserves, the resources and adequately qualified teachers.

4.6 Do you see any difference between the problems of art education here and the problems of art education in Egypt?

Probably here the parents are not always prepared to approve of art education. This can, of course, hamper the development of the child in the field of art education. Luckily, this problem is waning. The situation could be further improved by developing the awareness of the masses. From a religious point of view, there are those who view art education as a harmful thing. Art education must play its role effectively. It has to distance itself from the practice of copying, imitating and duplicating.

4.7 Why is art education not able to play its role effectively?

There are efforts being made, but not yet up to our expectations.

4.8 What do you suggest could be done to enable art education to play the role it ought to play?

There are many things that we ought to do so as to enhance the role of art education. Firstly, more attention has to be paid to the teacher's preparation and the syllabus. The Art Education syllabus has to undergo constant development and re-evaluation. The teacher himself has a role to play: updating his knowledge and keeping abreast with new developments. Moreover, more research has to be undertaken in the field of art education. The most important kind of research that has to be undertaken can be summed up in the following:

- a) Making comparative studies in the field of children's art in the Arab world.
- b) Doing experimental work and research on the syllabus on a regular basis.
- c) Finding out what kind of environment would enable the learner to reach his potential in the field of fine arts.
- d) The classification of raw materials locally available and their uses for those working in the field of art education.
- e) The research must be co-ordinated by the Central Ministry of Education.
- f) The art teacher has to be given a reasonable degree of freedom to determine his subject and materials.
- g) Art Education must be treated as a discipline-based subject.

In addition to the above, I have to say that there has to be integration between the different branches of art education. All of this has to culminate in the area of art production. It is always important to find out that there are new techniques and new styles. This can go on to include areas as diverse as pottery, tapestry, textiles, jewellery and industry at large. All of this can come about when we develop our own curriculum. Needless to say, when you develop the curriculum, you will also develop your heritage.

4.9 Is there any place for our cultural heritage in our art education curriculum?

Theoretically, yes. The problem with the present curriculum is that it is now fifteen years old. Moreover, the teachers are not always able to play their roles as integrators in their field of work.

4. 10 Is that due to a problem in the way teachers are academically prepared?

I would like to answer this question in a straightforward way. The role of the academic institution that trains the teacher should not cease at the stage of the teacher's graduation from his institution. There should always be an on-the-job training scheme. There should always be room for professional development. Specialized periodicals should always be in reach of the teacher.

4. 11 Does this problem apply to teachers in all fields?

Regrettably, yes. We in the Arab world do always pay attention to the external appearance, rather than to the essence of things. As a teacher, all that you need to do is to keep regular attendance. It does not matter what you do when you are in your office. You receive promotion and annual increments on this basis. The development of the competence of a person is based on what they do in reality not in fantasy.

4. 12 Are we always able to produce the kind of teachers that we want?

A teacher has to believe in what he is doing. To make a teacher play the role you want you have to give him resources and incentives.

4. 13 Is the curriculum we have in our teacher training departments able to imbue teachers with the spirit we want?

No. Not up to the required standard.

4. 14 Is society's attitude towards art the same in most Muslim countries?

More or less. When given the chance, a family would exert a great deal of pressure on its son or daughter to become a science or Arabic language teacher rather than an art teacher. However, this attitude is now more prevalent in rural rather than urban areas.

4. 15 Are the reasons for this religious?

The reasons were religious decades ago. With the rise of Islamic fundamentalism nowadays the situation has gone back to where it used to be in the past.

4. 16 In the first place, is the problem of art education a religious or a social one?

In my opinion, the problem is a social one. There is confusion between what is art and what is not. A ballet dancer can describe himself as an artist and so is the tailor. The problem here is on the level of the interpretation of what is art and what is not.

4. 17 Are the students facing the same problem towards art?

The problems are dwindling day by day here. When I came here ten years ago, a picture of a ram in a school book had to show that the ram's neck had already been cut. Now this is no longer the case. The element of time is playing its role.

4. 18 Do you find conflict between cultures because art education is a concept that has come to us from the West – maybe people here are not clear about what art education is about?

I am against the idea that there are Western arts and Oriental arts. Arts relate to mankind and to human nature. Across cultures and civilizations, everybody has contributed something to the cause of the arts. People here are fascinated by shirts made in France. They disregard the fact that the cotton from which the shirts are made is Egyptian cotton. Clearly there is a problem here of technology not civilization. There is no reason why one should not import the technology. However, when you do that, you will also come to see that you are again faced with the problem of civilization. Everybody wants you to speak English and to dress yourself like an English person. To avoid falling into this trap, you have to be aware of your own national identity. In developing an awareness of national identity, the arts have a great role to play. Our art production has to derive its essence from its surroundings and its heritage. In other words, I can develop people's awareness through Islamic art, not through Western art.

4. 19 Are students fully aware of the social role of art in the development of their own society?

From what is available to me here, I would say, yes. The recent graduates are more aware of the nature of the problem.

4. 20 Are children able to express themselves freely in their drawings?

To a large extent, yes. The problem is no longer acute.

4. 21 Is there any room for child creativity in an atmosphere where everything is determined?

The curriculum is now based on modern techniques and concepts. It is actually evolving around three things, i.e. skills, knowledge and tendencies. The aim of the school, in its modern sense, is to facilitate the process of learning.

ANNEXE 5: KHALID**5.1 In the field of art education, what have you done?**

Most of my work in art education is three-dimensional. I would say that all my work involves sculpture as well as pottery. When I was abroad, I worked with metal. On coming back to Saudi Arabia, I have come to realise that raw materials are not readily available to me. Maybe this is the reason why I have resorted to pottery and conceptual work. In this kind of work, I am trying to relate to things outside the world of academia, i.e theatre, television and video.

5.2 Have you done any research work during or after your graduate qualifications?

The kind of research I did relates to the development of traditional crafts. My chief aim here is to push crafts into the mainstream of society. I am also trying to do some research in areas that would bridge the gap between art education and society at large. I am not aiming to create individual artists. My main aim here is to make people appreciate art.

5.3 Are there any social factors that come between art education and society in Arabia?

The society leans towards conservatism. That is why the influence of social and religious factors are strong. The art teacher knows that he will encounter all kinds of difficulties when he tries to challenge any belief be it good or bad. Maybe in other societies the artist has the right to question social beliefs without being subject to hostility from the society.

5.4 In relation to what you have said, are there any problems in art education that come directly from religion?

Yes, there are a lot of problems. Anything that has to do with the human figure is a potential problem for some people. There are others who stretch this further to include any living thing. This kind of thing strongly influences art education. It has its effect on me as a teacher on the level of the kind of work I present to my students. This kind of conservatism is not only to be found in the Islamic world. It is now a trend all over the world. Perhaps people are somewhat disappointed in science. Science has not achieved what it promised to people. I see it as a problem with which we have to live for a long time to come.

5.5 Has Islam a role to play here?

It is a mixture of the social beliefs that have developed throughout history. The issue of figures has been around for a long time. It is not religion alone that forced such beliefs to come into existence. Clearly, Islam puts figurative art as a minor concern in the work of the artist. You know that the chief belief of Islam is that everything is transient and every creation will vanish. It is the Creator alone who is eternal. Even

when an approach to nature is made, the belief is that what is in nature cannot be reproduced.

5. 6 Is the problem the same everywhere in the Arab world?

I dealt with traditional artists and traditional craftsmen in the Arab world. I could say that I saw nothing figurative in their works. In some countries, there are some Western influences.

5. 7 Is the role of traditional art in society similar to that of the expressive arts?

Traditional crafts have a utilitarian function, while expressive arts have an aesthetic function. If you look at the traditional crafts in the Arab countries, you will see that they draw their vocabulary as well as their principles and elements from the Islamic arts. That is why this kind of art has a strong aesthetic function. A fountain's purpose, for example, is to moisten the air. But, at the same time, it has a decorative value. Though, the functional purpose of the fountain may have disappeared, it can still retain its aesthetic value.

5. 8 Do you think this cultural background can still exercise its influence on people's appreciation of art?

Certainly the influence is there. It reminds people of their past. Still, all over the Arab world, there is a local market for this kind of art. It is not only a tourist business. People's customs and traditions are related to this kind of art. Craftsmen have their roles to play on the occasion of births, marriages and deaths.

5. 9 Do you think art education has a role to play in the traditional arts?

You have to remember art education in this country started in 1957. Of course, it started at school and it is still elbowing its way forward. It has influenced people's attitude towards traditional crafts. The economic factor has a role to play here. I have to admit that in this country, in particular, a traditional craftsman cannot provide for himself through his trade. Moreover, art education, in its early beginnings here, disregarded traditional crafts. However, awareness is now developing among the different sectors of society. It is our role to remind people of the fact that a craft is a symbol of the past – of identity.

5. 10 How do you value the place of art education among other subjects?

Still, there are a number of people who don't really understand what art education is all about. Last night, my brother, who is a computer engineer, asked me if there were any other place a person could go to if he were not admitted to the drawing section. An architect to whom I talked some time ago assumed that all we did here was to teach drawing. When I explained to him what we did, he was really surprised.

5. 11 What are the reasons behind this lack of awareness?

For a long time, art education in our pre-university system taught only drawing. People have not yet changed this idea.

5. 12 In general, is people's attitude towards art education positive or negative?

The majority has a negative attitude towards the arts. However, the number of those with positive attitudes is always rising. Fortunately, those in positions of authority in the Ministry of Education are positive towards art education and are also aware of the role that art education can play in the life of the learner.

5. 13 Do you think there is a particular class or group that support the arts?

I would say that people in education give their support. However, sometimes there are educated people whose understanding of the role of art is naïve. Even at this university, some officials see it as something vocational. You sometimes get the feeling that even the grants and support given to the arts are given for the sake of it and not for the love of it. I would not hesitate to say that religious conservatives have strong objections to art. I would also add that the uneducated have no attitude towards it at all.

5. 14 Do you think figurative art is a real problem for those who are teaching art in schools?

Yes. It is one of the main problems. However, you are sometimes surprised by the difference between one school and another. But, if we want to generalize, we could say that figurative art is a problem that an art teacher often faces. At the university level, this is not really a problem. We do deal with figurative arts, but in a very careful way. We tend to avoid heated arguments.

5. 15 Can we meet the objectives of art education without experimenting with figurative art?

There are many people who are prepared to accept it from a child, but not from an adult. I know of many people who can accept a piece of figurative work made by their child. The same people would not buy such a thing or hang it on their walls. Some art teachers avoid this kind of thing and move on to something else.

5. 16 Do you think art theories conflict with some values in society?

Parents and teachers are aware of the areas of conflict. There are many channels through which you can teach art without touching on sensitive issues.

5. 17 Are there any values in the traditional arts that art teachers can capitalize on?

Yes, certainly. Even though we haven't emphasized this much in our curriculum. Traditional crafts are of great benefit. They have a lot to offer art education with regard to appreciation, vocabulary and elements that could be used by students. It also has a nationalist function. Traditional craftsmen do lean on ideas and beliefs that are

in the life and blood of the people. People tend to relate to and feel proud of the traditional arts. The development and revival of craft is important for the course of the arts in their entirety. Efforts here could be combined between the Ministries of Industry, Culture and Information. The educational part is very important though it is not the only part. You can see that in leatherwork, there is room for learning from traditional arts. However, since you are offering painting and drawing, you have to admit that you are not going to draw on traditional crafts. In metalwork, you really don't use traditional crafts.

5. 18 Do you think this branch of the arts can bridge the gap between society and the arts in its modern sense?

I would say it is one way of trying to convince society of the importance of art. However, it should not be the only way. You have to remember that traditional art is often held dear for its nostalgic value. You can use it for such purposes. You also have to remind the present generation of its value.

5. 19 Do you have anything to add or suggest?

I would like to see if there has been any shift in people's attitude towards figurative art. I would like to see this from questionnaires and observations. I would also like to see how people's geographical and cultural background affect their attitude. I would also like to know the extent of religion on their attitudes. I would like to know the attitude of the public in general and devise a means for measuring this.

ANNEXE 6: KARIM**6.1 Could you tell me about your experiences related to your teaching and the field of art education?**

Apart from my academic qualifications, I have had experience in the field of computer graphics.

6.2 Would you describe yourself as an artist?

I think, to some extent, I am. Maybe I am not a famous one. I do see myself as someone who possesses the skills of the artist. I am interested at least in interior design and this is a kind of art.

6.3 What kind of activities that you practice are related to the world of art education?

I am now working on a project that aims to make a visual record of all the elements of traditional architecture: windows, decoration, doors, etc. I am trying to design it in the form of a visual library. I am aiming to describe the quality of houses, i.e. Are they middle-class or working-class houses? I hope that the result of this project will be of benefit to engineers, artists and publishers as well. Unfortunately, the field of computer graphics in this country is dominated by foreigners who do not have in-depth knowledge of the local culture. As for other matters, I am trying to produce some art work in spite of the fact that there are difficulties that one encounters.

6.4 Would you tell me more about why you concentrate on traditional arts and the material culture?

You know the circumstances that we underwent. Our economic boom came all of a sudden and we have had to import everything. This has created a gap between people today and their earlier material culture. I have always told my students about their past culture and the importance of trying to put it to use in some way or other in our present day life. You may also try to see if there is anything in the traditional culture that could be the subject of development.

6.5 Do you think there is a harmonious relationship between people and their material culture?

In the past, there was a good deal of harmony. At present, there isn't any. Take for example, the modern villas we are building. People can hardly derive any benefit from them. Unlike the modern villas, every part of a traditional house had a purpose to serve. The same kind of traditional houses that we used to have here, can still be found in states like New Mexico and Arizona. Our development has not been natural. That is why we come to have this big gap between our past and present. Unfortunately, our banks used to give loans to those who wanted to build villas and refused loans to those who wanted to build traditional houses.

6. 7 In terms of interior décor, how could we relate people to their own traditional art forms?

You know that the Arabs are hospitable people and the fireplace is always of great importance to them. The "*Komar*" where the fire was lit has now disappeared. It used to be of great ornamental value. The same value can be revived again.

6. 8 Do people here prefer art that has social connections?

For the new generation everything has to come from abroad. We have to import everything nowadays, not only our furniture, but also the pieces of artwork that we hang on the wall.

6. 9 Could we say that the traditional arts are part of our way of life?

Indeed. Let me give you the example of the bird box in the Arabian peninsula. It used to be of great symbolic value. You also have to remember its functional value when it was placed on one of the corners of the house. Home appliances had a similar value as well.

6. 10 Do you mean to say that besides their artistic value, these things also have a cultural value?

These things were indigenous that is why they have such a place in people's lives. They are also associated with very old traditions.

6. 11 As an art teacher, what are the problems you encounter with your students?

Unfortunately, students seem to lack an adequate background in the arts. They also tend not to be aware of the practical value of the arts we are teaching. There are as well signs of a lack of seriousness towards the subject.

6. 12 Do you think that society already has pre-conceived ideas about art in general?

Yes, beyond a doubt. People simply assume that they can do without it. The notion of cultivating the human self is often ignored.

6. 13 Is this very common among all sectors of society?

Yes. Even here at the university, I came across those teachers who do not know what art education is. Our neighbours, the Department of Administrative Sciences are not aware of the fact that there is an Arts Education Department in this university. You have to excuse them because art education and literature do not pay well in this part of the world.

6. 14 Is there any particular sector of the community which is more negative towards art education?

Those who are religious do always ask about the moral value of art education.

6. 15 Are these people against everything in art education or do they have particular things in mind?

Their problem is their ignorance about art education. They tend to forget that Islamic art aimed to deepen the spiritual side of the human self. It is true that there are problems with the figurative arts. However, all arts are not figurative.

6. 16 Is art education as a subject suffering from this kind of misconception?

Yes, there are problems, but not to a dangerous extent. At least, we are here now. The problem is not only with the religious sector, it is also there with those who are educated.

6. 17 In general, is there a problem with the public at large?

On the contrary. The average person seems to accept arts when they are presented to him in a reasonable way. Human beings are instinctively inclined towards the arts.

6. 18 How can we present the arts in a reasonable way?

Let us associate it with the surroundings and needs. Let us organize our exhibitions and invite people to them. The media has to come to our aid here.

6. 19 Is it easy to bring art to the society here?

No. Take the artists themselves. When they talk about art, they tend to make it elitist. They tend to look down upon the rest. As an artist, it is not your duty to please people. However, it is your duty to make people understand what you are doing. You have to write about arts in general and you also have to expose yourself to the media.

6. 20 Is art isolated from society?

Cheap art is not. True art is. People tend to see fine art as a luxury. You have to realise that all our cultural centres are placed within the diplomatic quarter. Ordinary citizens believe that they are not supposed to go there. You have to put your museums and galleries at central locations so that they are within easy reach of the public.

6. 21 Has Islam any positive attitudes towards art education?

Islam as a religion paid a lot of attention to civil life. Islam always embraced local arts. You can see that in India, Iran, Morocco and Spain. You can see how big is the difference between Persian Islamic art and Fatimid Islamic art. There is nothing called Buddhist art or Jewish art, while there is Islamic art. The mosque in itself is a piece of fine art. However, in the West, art has been confined to the service of the Church.

6. 22 From an Islamic point of view, what is the role of art in society?

Islam wanted art to cultivate the individual. Art in Islam aimed to convey a message and possibly to influence other matters as well.

6. 23 That means that Islamic art was not isolated from society and is possibly why it was accepted?

What is available to us now from early Islamic arts are the kind of arts that were once found in palaces. As for the art of the ordinary people, there is nothing that we can lay our hands on.

6. 24 Has Islamic culture, in any way, come to influence our traditional arts?

Yes, Islamic values made their impact on traditional arts. Take for example the harem quarters. Koranic verses are also used as decoration.

6. 25 Is it possible to teach art without resorting to photographs or pictures?

No, I don't know how one can do that. You can't make art without making images. When you make images, you cannot ignore the human element.

6. 26 In children's drawings, how can this matter be solved?

Children's drawings are always about families. The human figure is very important to them.

6. 27 What is the place of traditional arts in art education?

There is supposed to be a central place for it. We must not separate ourselves from our past. The terminology does not matter. When you teach art in Saudi Arabia, you have to consider Saudi culture and that has to be done in a scientific way. You have preserve your traditions while you are developing.

6. 28 Do you think a consideration of this aspect might help to make the general public appreciate art?

Yes. This will help to a great extent.

6. 29 Do you think that introducing art in an academic way may create some distance between the general public and art?

The world of academia is always different. This does not mean that you have to separate yourself from your traditions. However, everything has its own function to play.

6. 30 Do you mean to say that by relating art to its environment, this may make it more acceptable?

Absolutely, yes. However, you are part of a wider world. The concepts beyond Western arts must be taught also. Meanwhile, you also have to study your own material arts and make them presentable.

6. 31 How can we present these arts as a subject?

As an academic, you can't teach these things without a theory. You have to explain why things are taking a particular shape.

6. 32 Could you say that art here is not put in a framework that makes it acceptable to the public?

Certainly, yes. The general public views it as a Western thing. Draw something about life in the desert and you will see its impact on the public. We have to do that as individuals. You cannot always accuse others of ignorance. If you want to develop, you have to start with the basics. No human being is universal, you are the product of your own local society.

6. 33 Do you have any further observations to make?

The only thing I would add is that you cannot always blame it on the receptor. Often we have ourselves to blame. I learnt a lot from my experience in the West. I dare say it is difficult to take everyone to the West in order to make them appreciate what you are doing.

ANNEXE 7: RAMEZ**7.1 Have you done any research work that is directly related to art education?**

I am now writing a book on figurative arts in Saudi Arabia. I am also considering doing a piece of research work on modern Arab figurative arts. This research aims to discuss areas of figurative arts in the Arab world. It also aims to make a review of its history and the formation of arts academies in the Arab world. A third piece of research work which I am planning to carry out shortly is about the educational programmes in art museums and galleries in the Arab world. Here, I will make a comparative study between galleries and museums in the Arab and Western worlds.

7.2 You did your Doctorate research on the relationship between society and art galleries and museums. Can you tell us about that?

The relationship between society and art goes back in history. A number of books have been written on society and its relationship to art. Some of these writings focused on the way human beings expressed themselves. Others focused on art and religion and the way religions came to view art across time. There are times when religions used art and times when it was despised. Art has always been part of human life ever since the world was created. With regard to art collections in museums and galleries, our aim is to use these in research, education and documentation. That is why such institutions are of great cultural and educational importance.

7.3 As someone who has been witness to the development of art education in this country, do you think the problems have always been the same?

Art education in this country has been a school subject since 1957. There have been lots of social variables here and art education has to be part and parcel of the changes we have witnessed. There were some reservations and a lack of understanding at the beginning. When things became clearer, people began to come to terms with art education. Things started to develop gradually. With the economic boom in the 1970s, art education began to receive solid financial support. However, with the present cuts in government budgets, art education has suffered. It has been a matter of ebb and flow according to the social and economic situations. Maybe there is some sort of variation in the way private and government schools are funded. There are also other influences, for example, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism has led to some sort of stagnation in the area of the arts and art education in general. We are now revolving around new influences. Twenty years ago, people were more tolerant. Children are now extremely cautious about drawing a picture of animate objects.

7.4 Do you think this problem was less severe in the past?

As I said before, in the past people used to be more tolerant. Even those who used to have some objections did not dare to voice them. The way they saw it in the past was that since the government had agreed to art being taught in schools, then there was no reason why they should object. In the past ten years, those on the religious side came

to be sceptical about it. The case went even further when some of them have decisively decided that fine arts have to be banned.

7.5 Why are such people unable to understand the educational value of art?

The reason is that these people are officially allowed to voice their opinions. Another reason is that the religious educational establishments are on the increase and so is the number of those graduating from such establishments. The third reason is that these extremists are co-ordinating their efforts throughout the Arab world. Lately, these groups have begun to use terror as a weapon. However, here in this country, we have not yet come to this stage. The general public has now come to know the shortcomings of such groups of people. They are not only against art education, they are also against modern technologies, the press and television.

7.6 Is such an attitude inherent in Islam?

I don't think so. It is only the attitude of this group of people and it is due to the way they see religion. The way I personally see Islam is that it is a religion for the service of science, knowledge and civilization at large. The only problem with this kind of Muslim is that they have rather a superficial understanding of Islam. You can see that there are some teenagers now who claim to be knowledgeable about these matters and they are being given a free hand to touch on matters about which they have no knowledge at all.

7.7 Islamic educational establishments are on the increase and they are adopting hostile attitudes towards art - can you comment on this?

The problem is that, at present, people do not understand the historical and natural development of art in the Arab world. They are not prepared to study the history of what is now internationally referred to as Islamic art. They don't want to accept that the arts have flourished throughout history with the encouragement of earlier Muslim governors and leaders. Muslim artists contributed immensely to the industry of book-making in the early days of Islam. Islamic scripts are now of the greatest value in world museums. All that I want is for these people to know this history. Art is always a sign of the strength, progress and prosperity of a nation. Our problem with the fundamentalists is that they do not know this and they don't want to know this. They are lacking in everything, even in their behaviour towards others. Art is part of the nature of human beings. Those are giving their support to this fundamentalist trend are proving themselves to be against what is natural in human nature. Here lies the problem for art and its role in our social life.

7.8 Are these people working in isolation from society and the functions of society?

Look at the way they produce their publications. It all tells how stagnant their approach is. Some of their Islamic institutions are teaching a topic called Islamic Arts. However, they only see this topic from an historical point of view and it has no application at all to their lives. Actually, some of them prefer to obliterate the word, art, from the scene altogether. They do not want to associate it with Islam in any way.

7.9 Is the art teacher facing particular problems because of this new trend in our society?

Of course, he has a big problem. When we talk about the art teacher as an individual, we could say that it all depends on how lucky he is. It all depends on the location of the school he/she is posted to. If he is posted to a school where there are some fanatic teachers, then he has to prepare himself for pressure or even ostracism. In reality, there are some art teachers who are limited to teaching only the drawing of inanimate objects. Those who are fortunate enough to be posted to a different kind of school may enjoy a reasonable degree of freedom to teach the subject the way it has to be taught. As a judge of children's drawings in competitions, I have come to notice that drawings coming from children in private schools often contain animate objects. This in itself has to be studied as a phenomena. According to government policies, the educational objectives should be the same be they in the private or public educational sector.

7.10 Historically, Islam has no conflict with art. How do we justify this problem?

The current fundamentalist movement has no depth. They are only using religion as a weapon to serve their own hidden purposes. I would describe them as on the wane. Something that will take its course and disappear.

7.11 In your opinion, what is the most appropriate way for an art teacher to deal with this problem?

It all depends on the personality of the teacher. He has to equip himself with adequate knowledge of his subject. At least, he has to remember that he is backed by the state and that he is on the right side of the law. Those of weak personality often come to be sceptical about their own subject and have laid down their weapons to take sides with the opposition. Some others abandoned their field and went on to do something else.

7.12 Do you think that the way we prepare our art teachers can have some part in this problem?

Absolutely, yes. You have to remember that we live under the same shadow. If pressure is exerted at primary school level, then you have to expect a similar pressure at university level. Probably, at university level, you may have some flexibility that enables you to carry on preparing the kind of teachers you want. However, it is difficult to isolate yourself from your surroundings. We don't want put on masks. We do want to face our responsibilities. We all know what is going on around us.

7.13 Is this problem escalating or could it be brought under control?

In spite of all these pressures and obstacles year after year, we are witnessing more and more students desirous of joining art education departments.

7. 14 Do you think the time factor will be the catalyst?

Indeed. Time is always the best healer. We have always been subject to change.

7. 15 Could we say that it is ignorance rather than religion that has brought about this misunderstanding?

We are a parochial society. The student here is always surrounded by a custodian be that in the home or in his school. The learner here is always treated as a receptor and this does not help their personalities to crystalize properly. You have to create a generation that knows how to say no.

7. 16 Do you think Egypt has the same problems that we have here in Saudi Arabia?

In Egypt the situation is different. Egypt, to a large extent, is an open country and art is part of its life and history. Maybe one has to be sensitive to the feelings of Muslims with regard to the trend of nudity in the fine arts. Egypt has economic problems and is a highly-overpopulated country. This may not help them there to make their teaching effective.

7. 17 Apart from the religious factor here, how do you see people's interaction with art?

Things are progressing. You can see that more attention is now being paid to the beautification and decoration of public buildings, streets and private houses. There are, on the official level, lots of projects being implemented in major cities. This has helped to improve the way ordinary citizens can develop their appreciation of the arts. We are now paying more attention to the internal decoration of our houses. We are like the rest of human beings anywhere in the world. When you are given a chance to see and learn, you will certainly develop and show your potential and ability. You cannot say that people are insensitive to aesthetic values. All that you need to do is open their eyes to the world of fine arts. It is rational to expect them to respond.

7. 18 Before the economic boom, what was the place of art in our society?

Before our economic boom, our arts were more or less of a localized nature. They were leaning more towards apprenticeship and craftsmanship. There was the craftsmanship of sword and dagger-making. There was also the local leather industry as well as that of interior decoration of houses. The kind of art we are now talking about is a new concept. Arts in their modern sense came to Egypt in the last decade of the eighteenth century with the French invasion of Egypt. This doesn't mean that we did not know about art. However, the way we knew art was in the form of craftsmanship. Nothing was made for its sheer aesthetic value. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia knew of art in the traditional sense that I have mentioned. Art in its modern sense came to be known gradually. The first Institute for Fine Arts was opened in 1965. It is the institute in which I studied. Before that, the Ministry of Education sent a few candidates to study art in Italy. On their return, they tried to

introduce art, in its modern sense, into society. They also started to teach in schools. Things took off from there.

7. 19 Do you see any difference in the way people regard Western art and our local arts?

In Europe in the fifteenth century, people adopted a similar attitude towards the artist. The artist was also a craftsman. With the advent of the Renaissance, a new development took place. This liberated the artist from the authority of the Church. Things gradually developed until they reached the stage where the door was wide open for artists to express themselves freely. It took the West, in spite of all its resources, some time to reach the stage they are now enjoying. Here, we are still going through the stage of labour. We still need plenty of time to make art part of our lives.

7. 20 Have traditional arts a direct role to play in our lives when we compare them to Western arts?

Yes, for the ordinary individual traditional arts have a functional purpose, i.e. utilitarian purpose. A dagger has to be decorated. The same bedouin who is decorating the dagger knows that he might one day need to put it to use. He might use this dagger to defend himself against danger or he might put it to use for its ornamental value, when he is attending a wedding or some other kind of celebration. We could say that the arts are used for their aesthetic and utilitarian values. The utilitarian value is often more important. There is a third value attached to more precious crafts. These crafts have an economic purpose. When people undergo an economic crisis, they can resort to selling off these precious pieces. Quite recently, we have started, though on a limited scale, to open up galleries that deal with these arts from an investment point of view.

7. 21 Could we say that when art education is given the chance to play its role effectively this might help to reduce the effects of fundamentalism?

To enable art education to do so, you have to base it on strong scientific foundations. Its curriculum has to be reviewed and it has to be treated as a serious school subject. We have to consider the fact that one part of the problem is that art education is not always a financially rewarding job.

7. 22 Maybe the public feels that art education does not pay as well as other professions?

It is the nature of the arts that you do not expect to be rewarded immediately. Maybe being nationally and internationally recognized is a reward for an artist. However, you cannot guarantee this for all artists. Equally, you have the same problem in areas like literature and poetry. Probably when we develop from a department into a college that may help us to create better artists. When you create better artists that may enable you to expect them to achieve better financial and social rewards.

7. 23 In terms of financial reward, which one pays off better, is it traditional art or modern art?

People engaged in the traditional arts have always seen art as having a financial and economic purpose. A graduate of fine arts here can expect to join the teaching profession. As a teacher of art, he may not expect to be treated on an equal footing with the teachers of other subjects. Art teachers here have not yet attained the place they deserve.

ANNEXE 8: UMAR**8.1 Would you describe yourself as an artist?**

This is a difficult question to answer. On a personal level, I do use art as therapy. To me the artist is someone who produces artistic works. I do have the ability to produce works of artistic value. However, I dare say, I am not a producing artist. I am an artist because I possess the necessary skills and experience. In spite of that, I am not participating and I do not want to. The reason is that I have the alternative of helping a patient to get over his/her problems. I see this kind of activity as more valuable. Should there be an appreciation of art, I would have sat down and produced some work. In other words, I am using my skills, as an artist, for therapeutic purposes.

8.2 Have you done any research in the field of art education?

I did a lot of research work. On my first degree level, I did a piece of research work on the impact of economic factors on children's drawings. It was first degree research work and wasn't that detailed. On my Masters level, I did no research. The reason for this was that it was a Masters Degree by courses. On my Doctorate level, I carried out a number of pieces of research. However, there were two important pieces of work of which I am really proud. One of them was about the relationship between the physiology of the brain and works of art. My second piece of research work was on the effect of graphic re-enactment on studies. An important factor that I have to mention is that I started to question the validity of therapeutic art in a country like Saudi Arabia. This caused me to carry out some fieldwork. Greatly to my advantage, the results were very encouraging. At the beginning, people refused to co-operate. When I explained to patients that this might help them to recover, they started to co-operate.

8.3 Can you tell me more about your research on the impact of economic factors on children's drawings?

Though it was preliminary research, it was very interesting. Our assumption was that those who came from a poor background might not adopt a kind of spontaneous attitude towards art. However, due to my lack of experience at that time, I was surprised by the findings of the research. Those from upper-class backgrounds tended to draw lifeless objects. Those from lower-class backgrounds had drawn pictures that were teeming with life. In other words, pupils from poor areas and backgrounds were freer and more fluent in their drawings.

8.4 In your opinion, what are the problems that art education as a science is facing in our schools?

There are too many problems. One of these problems is chronic. I came to see this problem through my students when they were doing fieldwork in the area of children's drawings. People here neither accept nor encourage the arts and artists. There are different reasons for this kind of attitude towards art. The most striking of these reasons is that our social culture is not able to approve of art. One example is when I

was giving a lecture to my female students on how to draw figures. One of my students contacted me by telephone to say that when she was an intermediate school student, her art education teacher used to instruct her not to draw figures. A number of other female students followed to say the same kind of thing. As a teacher, I discussed the matter with them. We came to the conclusion that our Saudi culture disapproves of art. I tried a number of ways to teach them techniques without encountering serious problems. Another example is that of my wife, who is an art teacher. Through her, I came to know that some students prefer not to draw human figures. On one occasion, she gave her students an assignment. The following day, some students came to complain that their parents has prevented them from drawing human figures. Some students, in an attempt to make it possible, separated the heads from the rest of the human body. Regrettably this is a reality. This reality is not confined to a particular geographical area of the country. One of my university students told me that she still tends to avoid producing a full drawing of a human being. The problem is inherent in many of these students. They do produce beautiful pieces of work, but with no trace of human beings in them. We have to carry on working and we have to avoid falling into clashes with others.

8.5 Can you see any other alternative?

Fortunately, Islamic art approves of the abstract. The abstract can give you the chance to express yourself. Children's drawings are nothing more than an abstract kind of art. I can see no reason why they should be prohibited. This can give you an indication of how stagnant the situation is. We can resort to the idea of drawing parts of the human body. The method I am now trying to adopt is that of drawing for therapeutic purposes. This can be a useful approach. It is addressing a different purpose. Here, the person is given the opportunity to express himself in a way that can be of benefit to him/her personally. Art here can be treated as if it is a medical drug. Art here is treated as a need. It is just like alcohol and other drugs. When I explained this to patients that the purpose behind the drawing was for their well-being, they became very responsive and did what I asked them to do.

8.6 Do you mean to say that art can be accepted when it is associated with material benefits?

Yes. People do accept something when they feel its value. People here do not see any role that art can play in their life. Art here has never played its true role significantly. We have to prepare our teachers adequately so that they can communicate their message effectively. Personally, the reason why I love art education is that I was fortunate enough to come across a teacher who was able to make me understand the value of art. It is very important to learn how to appreciate. Moreover, through art education, I learnt a craft, carpentry, and, from an early age, I became an independent person. You have to associate your art with specific and defined values in your life.

8.7 Do you mean to say that is why art education is not able to find a place in the society here?

Art education is not a job that anybody can do. I would like to say that those who could do it should be properly prepared and equipped. The touches of art are there in

our everyday lives. All that we need to do is to make this clear and of direct influence. People can drink their coffee without paying attention to the decoration the artist has put on the glass they are holding. I believe that it is the role of the teacher to alert people to the artistic values of what they see around them. Those who treat art as something taboo do tend to forget that the car they are driving has been designed by an artist. Art is not only about drawing. There is a massive misunderstanding that we should remove.

8.8 Do you think that it is only drawing the human figure that poses a problem for the art teacher?

Yes. The human figure is the chief problem for students and their families. There are even some teachers who encourage their students not to draw human figures.

8.9 In your opinion, what is the attitude of Islam towards the fine arts?

The way I see it is that the Islamic Sharia is always trying to debase the value of art education. The spiritual value of art has never been seen by the proponents of such ideas: the fundamentalists. In other words, they tend to see things on the surface level only. In the early Islamic age, Muslim artists exploited abstract art to address issues of complex Islamic values. These artists contributed immensely to the development of Islamic thought. Islamic art is a social rather than a religious art. This becomes clearer when you compare it to Christian art. In my opinion, it is better to label this kind of art as the art of Islamic society rather than Islamic art. Its aim was to play a role in the life of its society. It came to express particular values in people's lives. On the educational level, this art came to illustrate particular ideas. On the psychological level, art came to express how deep and truthful is the belief of the artist in the creator of the universe. When you look at Islamic architecture, in the way the mosques were built, you will come to see that every part of the mosque has a particular spiritual role. The majority of the mosques aim to glorify the role of God in our lives. Even when you paint and decorate a mosque, you have to use certain colours so as to make the mosque a place for worship.

8.10 Do children's drawings express or address particular aspects of our lives?

Children's drawings are like psychological tests: draw a person tests. As teachers, we aim to see children's drawings from different perspectives. Even when you look at the works of our early educationalists, you will see that issues like that of the human figure are often ignored. Arab writers and educationalists have never touched upon the place of the human figure in children's drawings. Probably, in a country like Egypt, the problem is not so acute as it is here. However, in spite of that, there is a clear dearth of literature on this issue.

8.11 Is there any area in which we can see the influence of the environment and society on art?

Our society has its own distinctive characteristics. The problem of drawing a human figure can clearly be seen here rather than anywhere else in the Arab world. The art teacher has to understand the circumstances of the society in which he lives. I would

be happy if I could see research on the way people of the Gizan area view the human figure. You have to weigh up and consider the environmental and cultural impact on the individual. Art teachers have to be equipped with the knowledge of the area in which they are working.

8. 12 Do you see a role for the traditional arts in introducing art education to the community?

Art teachers always try to distance themselves from traditional arts believing that they have nothing to do with their intellectual training. They always prefer to teach modern art. They don't recognize traditional arts as a branch of art education. They seem to forget that the traditional arts are part of their own upbringing. Maybe traditional arts are classified as the kind of art that carries a lower cultural value. Moreover, traditional arts are seen as something vocational and something that is to be placed below other academic subjects. Had traditional arts been studied properly, there would have been a place for them in our art education curriculum at the school level. I do believe in the value of the traditional arts and I think that students and pupils should at least be given introductory lessons on traditional arts and their place in the life of those who made them.

8. 13 Do you have any other comments to add?

I wish that you could give us in your research an idea of the way the different strata of our society view the arts. I would like to see the matter being discussed so that we can help our student here at this university to be familiar with the beliefs and attitudes of the people. This will enable the students to address and know the kind of problems they will meet and their root causes. I am also able to add that your research could also give the art teacher the chance to know something about the role of traditional arts and their place in our daily lives. Maybe the reason why people are unable to interact with art education is that we are teaching things that are too far removed from the values and concerns of our own lives.

ANNEXE 9: WALID**9.1 What kind of art research are you interested in?**

In a country like America, there is always room for cultural diversity. There are the American Indians, the Japanese and the Africans. Each of these ethnic groups was trying to retain its own ethnic values and traditions. The mainstream subject revolves around the white man's culture and Western values. The kind of art work they were using as models were mainly masterpieces of the great Western artists. There are, however, some concessions made to art from other parts of the world, such as that of ancient Egypt or even that of Islam.

9.2 As an art teacher, what are the problems you are facing in your work?

Strangely enough, art education in the past used to receive more support and teachers were more motivated and used to receive better incentives. These things are now disappearing. I do not mean to say that the syllabus in the past was more clear-sighted. In reality, the syllabus was rather modest. In spite of that, both the teacher and the learner enjoyed a reasonable degree of freedom to do what they wanted. I repeat saying that in terms of resources and material, we used to be in a position better than the one we are witnessing at the present time.

9.3 How do you want art teachers to be trained?

In the past, and from a practical point of view, teachers were better prepared in terms of artistic skills and techniques. The emphasis used to be on fine art as a subject in its own right, rather than on art education. This would definitely help the learner to strengthen his skills in the rather isolated world of fine art in this part of the world. In our day, we did have the chance to apply the theories we had studied. The only shortcoming of that period was that the theories we relied on were rather old.

9.4 What are the main problems that art education is suffering from?

The first problem is that of the concept of art education. We haven't yet developed a theory for art education here. Not enough research has been done so as to identify the areas of weakness and suggest the remedial work needed to address the problem in question. We haven't yet developed a system through which we can follow up the achieved results should there be any. Art education as a subject is still viewed as a subject that is to be used for recreational purposes. I mean to say that nobody is prepared to treat it as a serious subject. We do need to develop a framework that is able to integrate the different branches of this subject. Moreover, to teach art, you need to be properly equipped with resources and materials. Whilst having these resources and materials, you will still find it difficult to convince your students and pupils that you are doing anything serious. Art education relies heavily on visual perception. This reliance on visual perception alone is not enough. It has to be backed up by the media and the press. We do need to know where exactly is our place in society. We are not the kind of society that is able to utilise art for functional

purposes. However, and in spite of that, we can use art to inculcate aspects of our ethnic identity and cultural heritage. We have to develop an awareness among the present generation of its national culture and of its traditional arts and folklore. On the national level, art education can be used to consolidate the unity of this country.

The other point that we often discuss is that of our intake and preparation and training of our student teachers. Some students tend to believe that upon their graduation and their joining of the teaching profession they are not going to be asked to do much work. Probably that may mean to them that they are not going to be accountable and they are not going to be taken seriously. We are working extremely hard to correct this problem. We are improving the content of our syllabuses. We have also started to make our students understand that we are a serious department. If you don't work hard, you will not get the desired result. In reality, some students withdrew from the department since we started adopting this kind of attitude. Art education, when taken seriously, has never been an easy subject to learn and will never be. When you are clear about the content of your courses and the material you are introducing, then you tend to expect others to take you seriously. We have to uplift art education from the position where it is treated as a subsidiary subject. We have to integrate the theoretical with the practical sides of this subject. This would enable us to introduce it as a proper school subject.

9. 5 Do you think that there are social and cultural problems that hamper the development of art education in this country?

Unfortunately, the word, art, is associated here with the word, vice. It is sometimes seen as a threat to the moral values of society. People here are very sceptical about the value and the place of art in their lives. Early Muslim artists went deeply into the world of the abstract and they perfected their work to a potentially high and sophisticated level. They were able to reach this stage because they were greatly appreciated and given the impetus by those in positions of influence and by society at large. We have a past and a heritage with which we can deal and be aware of our own self-esteem. You cannot convince other cultures that you have something to offer unless you are able to produce something distinct. This is from where you gain your place and respect in the world of fine art. A number of Arab artists were lured by the trends introduced by the Western schools of art. This took them nowhere, because they were imitators. As an imitator, there is no place for you in the world of fine art. You have to relate yourself to your identity and entity. You can imbibe from the Western arts, but not at the expense of your own originality. Later, it became clear to them that they had to come back to their roots. You can imitate others in the world of technology and the other applied sciences, but not in the world of fine art, where originality is the only thing that guarantees you your place. Therefore, we have to develop a comprehensive framework through which we can work, not only as teachers, but also as integrators. I do not mean to say that you have to work in isolation from others. In America, I attended a number of seminars and workshops where papers on Islamic arts were presented by Americans.

9. 6 Has this problem always been here or has it come about with the advent of new trends in the world of art here?

In the past, there were no restrictions. Everbody knew that children's drawings are innocent and instinctive things. We never used to receive any instructions about what to do in our classes. The teacher was able to act and perform freely. Nowadays, I have been told that there are some instructions restricting the drawing of animate subjects. I dare say even from a very strict religious point of view, this kind of edict can be disputed. In the early days of Islam, the aim was to distance the people from paganism and idolatry. That was why this kind of thing was restricted. Islamic art was used to illustrate certain issues and this is of great artistic value. It was used to illustrate the journeys and battles the early Muslims had undergone. I can see nothing religiously or morally wrong with this.

9.7 Do you think this problem represents a great obstacle for the fine arts and art education?

In actual fact, we were surprised when we were faced with official circulars bearing those directives and instructions. It is of prime concern to us to see children being given the freedom to express themselves. Giving the child the freedom to express himself is very important in making him achieve a natural development with regard to the world of art education. Maybe this is why we are embarking upon things in the wrong way in this area. The fact is that children's drawings can help them to overcome certain problems that they may encounter in their home environment.

9.8 We can see that children's drawings are not only of educational value.

Yes. Children's drawings can reveal some of the problems the child is experiencing. As educators we must not ignore this aspect.

9.9 Has this problem been raised or discussed on the level of teacher training programmes in general, so as to have it addressed properly?

We are able to discuss it from our own perspectives, i.e. our own area of specialisation which is that of art education. We also try to the best of our abilities to talk to others and tell them that art education is in no way against any of our religious conventions or social norms. Needless to say, we have to back up our arguments by the theoretical work made by great Muslim scholars who were able to appreciate the value and the place of art in our life. This will equip our graduates with the necessary weapons that will enable them to perform their job adequately and play their roles properly in the communities in which they live.

I remember one of our students who carried out research in which he interviewed a number of religious sheikhs asking them for their views on art education. His result was that Sheikh X was able to approve of this and Sheikh Z disapproved of that. This kind of research has nothing to do with art education. The same student later found himself in the Department of Islamic Jurisprudence to have his research examined.

9.10 As an art teacher working in Mecca, would you say that Meccan people are more open-minded towards the world of art?

You cannot rely on personal opinions. There is no research that is able to prove this. However, from what I have seen in private exhibitions, you can tell that there is some sort of freedom. Recently, an official circular has been published and its aim is to set restrictions on certain issues.

ANNEXE 10: JAMIL**10.1 Tell me about your research on art from an Islamic perspective.**

Firstly, on the social level, we have always been surrounded by a massive misunderstanding with regard to the way Islam views art and art education. This has its influence on us in this branch of knowledge. It is very common to come across someone who believes that the teaching of art education, as a subject, is against the teachings of Islam. From an Islamic point of view, there are aspects on which we are not supposed to touch. To avoid this ambiguity, we were constrained to change the way some courses were titled. I have also tried to research into the Hadith (The sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), so as to know the attitude of Islam towards the arts. I came to the conclusion that there are some areas in fine art which are prohibited and there are other areas which are permitted to be touched upon. I have also tried to reveal how aware the art teacher is of these issues. A student can refuse to take his teacher's instructions under the pretext that what the teacher is asking for is against the teachings of Islam. This is the main concern of the research.

10.2 Do you see this as a real problem?

It is certainly a problem. We have to answer the question that asks from where do we derive our attitude to life. Sometimes we argue about things only because of the fact that we are not aware of what reality is. All we want to do is to prepare the learner in a way that makes him able to express himself and give him the tools to do this. He has to see life from different perspectives, be they social, religious or philosophical.

10.3 Do you think that the issue of religion conflicts with the message art education is trying to convey?

I don't think so. If we are able to know what is permitted and what is not permitted from a religious point of view, we would then be able to know our limitations. The chief problem now is that we do not know what is permitted and what is not permitted.

10.4 Has this influenced the way your programmes of study have been structured?

Of course. When we restructured our programmes, we tried to keep them in harmony with the traditions and the teachings of Islam. We are not specialists in Islamic creed and jurisdiction, but, as Muslims, we have to relate what we are doing to our conventions and culture. I don't agree with those who say that the Muslims were the first people to introduce abstract art. This kind of argument contributes nothing to the debate. We couldn't say the present theories in the world of abstract art are the same as those that were prevalent in Islamic art a thousand years ago. It is difficult to prove this save on a superficial level. I have to view Islamic art from a perspective that reflects my own personality and traditions. We also need to avoid repeating ourselves. We have to base what we are doing on a theoretical and philosophical foundation. To do so, we have to develop our awareness on a large scale.

10. 5 What is the attitude of the public in general towards art?

I can divide people into two groups. One group is of those who disregard what Islam approves or disapproves of in the world of art. The other group is entirely unaware of what the limitations are and tend to avoid the matter entirely.

10. 6 As a person working and teaching in this field, do you see any students who are facing this problem?

Probably sometimes. The problem is there, but not to the extent of being acute. Moreover, there is already a circular that has been made effective and which aims to tell teachers how to avoid matters of a controversial nature.

10. 7 Is this a problem that has come about recently?

I don't think so. This problem has been around for quite a long time. Nowadays, you can see that people are culturally more aware of what is going on around and this cuts across the different sectors of the community. People are now more educated and more affluent and they are moving forward.

10. 8 Are people eager to go to exhibitions and galleries?

There are huge budgets being spent on this area. However, the outcome is not up to the desired level. We are not able to set plans and objectives for what we are doing. It is often viewed as an activity that aims to encourage the young to do something. Due to this recent affluence, people have started to possess some works of art and they display them in their houses. Often these activities are supervised by people who know nothing about the world of fine art. Sometimes, the opportunity is given to amateurs whose work is far below the required standards. That is why I am keen on setting up plans and objectives for what we are doing. Planning will save time, money and effort. You also need to have specialist writers who write about this to the press.

10. 9 What are the things in fine art that are more appealing to the public now?

I am not really keen on knowing what people really do want. In general, I can see that people generally tend to go for works that relate them to their heritage in quite a superficial way. To create a real movement, we have to address issues on the level of serious works of art.

ANNEXE 11: SAMIR**11. 1 What is your special area of interest in art education?**

In the studies I have made, it was of prime concern to me to investigate the way in which children express themselves through their drawings. For a long time, we have have talked about children's drawings and treated them as if they were pieces of art. To me this is a mere quibble. What children draw is merely a way of thinking which bears particular significance for them. I am a strong proponent of the idea that says that primary schools should be properly equipped with workshops that enable children to draw.

I aimed with some of my research to highlight the point that psychological tests alone are not enough of an indicator of the child's mental capabilities. My assumption is that children's drawings have to be the main factor when an assessment of the child's ability is made. Children are always able to ask serious questions and they expect to be answered adequately. Sometimes, we, as adults, are not able to answer those questions. That is why we need to provide the child with well-prepared educational programmes that enable him to express himself in a symbolic way. We have to treat children as individuals who are able to think. To make a child able to think you have to give him enough time and space.

11. 2 In your opinion, what the problems facing art education in the Arab world?

Society views art as an unnecessary subject. In this connection, I think art teachers are responsible for the way society has judged them. The art teacher is always viewed as an irresponsible person who does not know exactly what he is supposed to do. Most art teachers have never played their roles significantly in the schools where they were teaching. That is why they have been marginalized. Their awareness of their role in society has been blurred by the lack of a sense of direction. I can sum up the problem by the fact that society is sceptical, the teacher is ill-prepared and the learner is misguided. The main solution lies in the fact that teacher training programmes in art education have to be based on respecting art education as a subject in its own right, a subject that possesses its own foundations, its own principles and its own objectives. It has to be treated as a serious subject. However, this seriousness cannot come about unless everybody working in this field is aware and is sure of what he/she is doing. It is important that we have to address the way our learners view and appreciate art.

11. 3 Is the same problem prevalent in a country like Egypt?

Unfortunately, yes. The problem is that the Egyptian art teacher is everywhere in the Arab world teaching this subject. That is why problems are the same wherever you go in the Arab world. People do sometimes assume that being an artist means you have talent. This is not true. Art is a skill that one can learn. All of this this has led to the wrong perception and to the dreadful treatment art education is now experiencing. To discourage art teachers, people have begun to use the very useful weapon of religion

where the assumption is that fine art is against the teachings of Islam. As art teachers, we are aware of the fact that we have a long way to go. We cannot carry on unless we have the courage to face the problems we are going to encounter along the way. We are now optimistic. There are a lot of postgraduate art teachers who are better equipped and they are now doing their job in the community. It is important to enrich your faculties and imagination and to do so you have to enable art teachers to perform their job adequately.

11. 4 How are we going to address the problem of how society views art?

You have to make it part and parcel of your teacher training programmes so that trainee teachers are aware of the problems in the society in which they live. They have to be aware that they are educators and it is part of their job to solve problems. However, the programmes we are now introducing are still lacking and unable to provide answers to all questions. The social aspect is always ignored. The emphasis is always on the academic side. The teacher is prepared in a way that makes him go to school, teach his lesson and leave the matter to rest at this point. Art education programmes have to address issues that will enable the teacher to reconcile his differences with the society and this has to be done in a systematic and scientific way. To do his job, the art teacher has to have the artistic skills that go hand in hand with clarity of mind and strength of character.

11. 5 Is the problem of what is religiously permitted and not permitted still present?

This problem is raised now and again. Islamic civilization reached its peak when Islamic art was able to perform strongly. The problem we are now facing is that of misunderstanding for both Islam and art education.

11. 6 Is this problem also prevalent among our intellectuals or is it confined to a particular sector of society?

Unfortunately, the problem is common among the intellectuals.

11. 7 Is it so to a similar degree in Egypt?

Yes. The similarities are always there. You have to remember that the religious code is always the same and people do prefer to rule out everything that bears the possibility of creating a problem.

11. 8 Has this problem always been there or does it come and go according to circumstances?

The problem is that religious men are not able to keep abreast of the times and developments. They tend to repeat themselves. In spite of that they have their influence on society, while we have very little power to resist. We always believe that we have never practised fine art so as to distance ourselves from God. All religions are about diversity. To see that diversity you have to use both your visual skills and the perceptive ones. I am still wondering why men of religion are unable to put fine

art and art education to a use that serves their purposes. There is a lot in common between fine art and the way a Muslim views the universe. Between religion and fine art there is supposed to be harmony above all. I personally have held three exhibitions in which I put verses from the Koran to artistic use. To do so I asked permission from two religious leaders. Fortunately, they were not only ready to give their permission, but they were also prepared to encourage me to go further into the matter.

11.9 Do you think the question of what is permitted or not from a religious view can hamper the progress of the art teacher?

Yes, to a great degree. In reality, some art teachers do sometimes instruct their students not to draw certain pictures for the reasons that this is not religiously permitted. This kind of art teacher can be found anywhere you go in the Arab world. However, the vast majority of art teachers are able to remain in conformity with their social conventions and norms, while doing their job in a perfect manner.

11.10 Have these things ever been officially imposed?

On the official level – no. There is only a misunderstanding from particular groups in society. To them there might be some specific areas where the question of permission could be valid. The conflict sometimes knows no bounds when one moves from the specific to the general. You can draw a picture of a plant. Someone might say to you that a plant could also be described as a living organism and therefore should not be portrayed or painted. The vicious circle goes on and on. Let me go back to the main point. I could tell you that on the official level, the opposite is true. The official policy is to change and to modernize people.

11.11 What about these circulars which have recently been issued by different directorates of education?

Some teachers take them as a pretext. The main aim of these circulars is entirely educational, i.e. to inculcate certain moral and religious values with which no art teacher has a conflict. We don't want to adopt this policy of "Everybody is guilty until they are proven innocent".

11.12 How can we reconcile the differences between children's drawings and the issue of moral and religious values?

If we believe that there are areas where we fear to tread, then there is a serious problem. If you are able to think rationally, a child could draw nothing outside the world in which he lives. The world in which he lives is that of his parents and the other members of his family. When the objects are treated as something sacred, then there is a problem.

11.13 What is the alternative to this situation?

One alternative proposed is to draw a picture of human being and cut the head off.

11. 14What is the logic and the theory behind this?

I don't know of a theory or the logic to justify this. When I was supervising some of my students while they were doing their teaching, I was surprised to note that all the human figures drawn by the students had their necks cut in a way that damaged the work. I have to admit this is one of the major drawbacks.

ANNEXE 12: ASSAM**12.1 Would you give me a brief idea about any research work you have undertaken?**

I did some research which was an attempt to make a comparison between the drawings of a group of American children and the drawings of a group of Saudi children who were living in America. Later, I undertook some research which focused on a group of Saudi children who had lived in America and then went home and a group of Saudi children who had lived in Saudi Arabia all their lives. The necessary condition for the group of Saudi students who lived in America was that they had to have lived in America not less than three years and go on to an American school. The aim of the research was to see the influence of this life on the Saudi child. I mean what happens when children are exposed to a culture and a way of life other than their own. Particular attention was paid to the religious, social and leisure activities usually practised by the children in their daily lives. I have noticed that those children who lived part of their life in the West, enjoyed a greater degree of freedom in their drawings. Particular attention was also paid to the captions these children put on their drawings. When pictures are drawn by children describing people going out to do their shopping, attention was paid to the way people were dressed. All of these are factors that we tried to examine and investigate. Needless to say, it is a difficult topic to touch on here. Those who were exposed to Western culture, were more liberal in their attitude towards this kind of thing. In analysing these drawings, I sought the help of three colleagues. Two of these colleagues were Saudis and the third was an American.

On the level of age, these children were divided into three groups: primary stage, intermediate stage and secondary stage. In the drawings made by the groups of Saudi children who had never been abroad, the picture of the mosque was often prevalent. Even when the human figure is touched upon, men and women were drawn separately. Strangely enough, from this same group, there were drawings of rivers and forests. Probably these are external influences from television and such like. Some Saudi children in the American group came to draw pictures of Christmas trees as well as other Christian activities. When their colleagues saw their drawings, they accused them of heresy. These innocent children, of course, strongly refuted this false accusation.

More important than all of this is the fact that the American school came to have a direct influence on those Saudi children. They proved to be more inquisitive and more daring in their questions.

12.2 Are there any signs of local culture in the drawings of Saudi children who have never been abroad?

Yes. It is always there.

12.3 Are there signs of religious influence in the drawings of those who have been to America?

In general, they are the ones who have drawn more human figures and animals.

12.4 Was this kind of thing available in the art education courses you studied during your degree days?

No. It was not there during my first degree days.

12.5 In general, what kind of problems is art education facing in Egypt?

One of the problems is that good students prefer to go to study medicine or engineering. Often those who are admitted to the art education colleges are there because of their low grades in their secondary school certificate. On finishing their courses, good art education graduates prefer to join professions other than that of teaching.

12.6 Why are people not interested in the teaching profession?

In the field of art education, those who join the profession are not wholly convinced of its worth. There is a problem of low morale among people working in this profession. Moreover, in Egypt, we don't have enough resources that can meet the increasing demands of art education.

12.7 You said earlier that art education as a subject at university level is not in high demand. What are the reasons for this?

I didn't mean that literally. Those who are genuinely interested in art education do join art education departments and derive a good deal of pleasure from their experiences in those departments. Art education departments are often the only places where these promising artists can polish their experiences and talents. The only question that disturbs these students is: What am I going to do on completion of my courses at university?

12.8 Why don't they have an answer to this question?

The only available job is that of teaching and most of the students don't like the idea. To them the unavoidable fact is that it is extremely difficult to secure yourself a place in the world of art if you are interested in working on your own. Even for a talented person, recognition comes after a long period of patience and suffering.

12.9 This is a problem that exists all over the world.

That is right.

12.10 How does society view art education in Egypt?

In Egypt, art education enjoys a great deal of respect. This respect has come about as a result of the efforts made by earlier artists and art teachers and educators. The only problem with our students here is that they are interested only in studying either engineering or medicine.

12. 11 Why engineering or medicine in particular?

The only reason is that of financial reward.

12. 12 What do you think of the students here?

The problems are the same. Out of twenty students, you can find only four or five students who are really talented.

12. 13 What in your opinion are the problems facing art teachers?

Art education is facing potential problems. The problem is sometimes the teacher himself. A learner here can be taught by two kinds of art teacher. One of these is the one who looks on art education from a natural and creative perspective. While his counterpart, adopts the perspective of a fundamentalist who likes to set limitations and boundaries on the learner's imagination. This can lead to the problem of giving the pupil two conflicting models. We don't have to leave the matter to the judgement of the individual. We have to have a unified front. Another problem is that of teacher training. We are not yet able to produce the kind of teacher who is able to teach his subject efficiently. We also need to make a well-thought out and properly guided syllabus that can protect the pupil from the conflict that he encounters with art teachers, on the one hand, and from conflict with his home environment, on the other.

12. 14 Is this conflict between art teachers themselves or is it between art teachers and the teachers of other subjects?

Religion offers you no alternatives. If you believe that something is religiously permitted, do it. If you believe that something is not religiously permitted, don't do it. You have to be clear about this. It is important that we avoid contradictions. I remember when I was doing some work, I asked a group of my learners to draw certain things. One of these pupils drew the picture of a man. It happened that the school supervisor was around. When he saw what this pupil was doing, he tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Is it you who is drawing this kind of thing? I thought you were a Muslim." I intervened immediately and asked the supervisor to leave the student alone.

12. 15 Do you see this as a major problem?

Yes. The way I see it is that this is quite a major problem.

12. 16 What can we do to absorb this problem?

The Central Ministry of Education has to create a well-defined syllabus. This matter of permitted or not should not be a topic on which anyone can make their own judgements.

12. 17 Has this problem got roots on the social level or in the way that people appreciate art?

Maybe the home environment is of crucial importance. The present circumstances can to a large extent have their impact on the way people might appreciate art. Things may go even further and have their influence on the child's creativity. They may also have their impact on the way we perform. To possess drawing skills would enable you to be a better engineer or a better doctor should you decide to move into those professions.

12. 18 Is this problem escalating or is it only a matter of time before it disappears?

It is like the ebb and flow of the sea. You can never tell.

12. 19 Is this campaign directed only against pictures or is it directed against art in general?

The problem with art is that there will be no place for it in a materialized society. People prefer to give their respect to someone who can be of direct material benefit. As an art teacher, I cannot help you to get a job. The community here relies on nepotism or "Scratch my back and I will scratch yours."

12. 20 Could we say that art education is viewed by society as an activity of low importance?

Yes. Socially it is viewed with little regard. You have to remember that it is always difficult to differentiate between what is cultural or social and what is religious. Society and religion are two faces of the same coin.

12. 21 Is art part and parcel of its environment?

Yes. Art is always the product of its own surroundings. However, when you close yourself up in a circle of your own, your art will go into decline. You have to adopt a policy of openness and face the opposition with similar weapons.

12. 22 Is art education something that has taken people by surprise? Is it something that people have never seen before they came to school or in school?

The other forms of art were already there. It is the picture and the photograph with which there is a problem. We don't have the same kind of problem with calligraphy and decorative arts. The main problem is with art in its modern sense. The problem here can be attributed to misunderstanding or lack of understanding. People here are captives of their own surroundings. They haven't been exposed to a number of

diversified experiences. You can check on the public libraries and bookshops. You will find no books on art. How can you expect the ordinary person here to be introduced to the world of art. Even when art is appreciated by the average person, this appreciation comes about for its nostalgic value. People do like to possess works of art that remind them of their past. This has pushed a number of artists into the quagmire of imitations and repetitions. Those who tried to be innovative fell into the trap of associating being innovative with being Westernized.

12. 23 On the practical level, do you think that the problem of human figures will create difficulties for the art teacher when he is doing his job?

Sometimes a student may say, "This is not permitted." But when you are a confident person, when you are aware of what you are doing, you will have nothing to fear. You could simply avoid the problem by telling the student not to do it if he does not approve of it.

12. 24 Do you think that art students are fully aware of the problem and have the ability to avoid falling into the trap?

It is difficult to say, yes. However, the possibility is there. Abstract art can be one solution. Art education is not only about teaching a child how to draw. It has to have a number of other purposes.

12. 25 Has this problem been raised at the level of syllabus design and curriculum planning?

No. It has never been raised at that level. People have a tendency to avoid dealing with this extremely sensitive issue. They don't want to get into trouble.

12. 26 Theoretically, is it very important for the child to draw a human figure?

Yes. I want this to be approved and in a way that does not push the child into a conflict with his religion. There are many approaches by which we can achieve this end.

12. 27 Art education has a number of problems. Do you see this problem as a major one?

Yes. It is one of the major problems we have to address.

12. 28 Is this problem prevalent in all our schools here?

There are two sides to this problem. It all depends on the teacher and his personality and attitude towards this problem. The social class is also a factor. Children with educated parents do certainly enjoy a greater degree of freedom.

12. 29 What is the place of local and Islamic art in the school curriculum and in art teacher training courses?

On the whole, there is a missing link. Our sudden economic boom created an imbalance in our life. We have a generation that missed out on a number of things. I can ask you the question of how this city used to look twenty years ago. We all lived in houses made of mud. There was no electricity. After that, things began to undergo drastic changes. All of those who are below 25 years of age have not seen what I have seen and what you have seen. People are entirely cut off from their past. This raises issues of belonging. I repeat that there is a missing link in our curriculum and in the design of our syllabuses.

12. 30 How can we rectify this problem?

Make people aware of the reality. Making people aware of what and who they are will help to a great extent.

12. 31 Do you have anything to add?

Let us hold three different exhibitions. One for traditional arts. The second for traditional and modern arts. The third for modern art alone. Then let us invite people and see their responses and impressions. We can even design questionnaires so that we can embark on something concrete. The point is that we have imported technology and the rest of our material things. Some of us have tried to do the same in the arts. We have forgotten to look around us and relate ourselves to our environment and heritage.

ANNEXE 13: RASHID**13.1 Have you found a strong relationship between art and society?**

Yes. This is always the case. You have to take your raw materials from your environment and you have to relate the work you produce to the society in which you live.

13.2 Why do you think there is renewed interest in traditional arts?

This interest in traditional arts has come about as a result of the wide spread of machines and modern technology. The machine has to a dangerous extent marginalized the role of the craftsman and craftsmanship. Handmade things have always enjoyed a better artistic value.

13.3 To what extent do people accommodate modern art in a country like Egypt for example?

Modern art is able to attract the attention of those who have formally studied art. As for the ordinary Egyptian, modern art is still outside his area of interest.

13.4 What are the reasons behind these attitudes?

They simply don't understand what modern art is about. They are able to understand and relate to things made by the Egyptian craftsman.

13.5 Do you mean to say that traditional art is directly associated with the life of these people?

Yes. That is right.

13.6 On the educational level, how do people view art as a subject taught in schools?

In Egypt, people are more prepared to approach art and deal with it. It has to some extent become a part of their lives. However, here in Saudi Arabia, I have seen that people approach art in a very tentative manner. This can be attributed to the effect of Sharia Law which does not approve of certain aspects of art.

13.7 What are those aspects?

The drawing of animate objects and the human figure.

13.8 How do you see this problem?

I have come to feel it personally. I remember while I was teaching a group of students, I drew the head of a bird on a chandelier I had designed. One of the students objected strongly and told me that what I had drawn was against the teaching of our religion.

13. 9 Was it an art student who said this?

Yes, it was. I cancelled the whole design and did something else.

13. 10 Was he trying to justify his own incompetence?

Well, I have seen this in the school textbook. All human figures in the textbooks have their heads cut off. Drawing a line across someone's neck does not kill him. I have seen this in educational books here in this country. As for people inside the Department of Art Education, such a kind of attitude is not a trend. It is quite a tiny minority which rejects this kind of thing in art education.

13. 11 Does this problem exist in Egypt?

In general, this is not the case in Egypt.

13. 12 What is the function of art in the life of Nubian society?

In Nubia, it is associated with conventions, customs and traditions of the people. For example, on the two sides of the main gate of a house, there is a drawing of an eye. The eye is not there for decorative purposes. It is there to ward off the evil eye of one's adversary. The palm of a hand can also be seen on the gate for the same purpose: to ward off an envious person. The drawings of palm trees and fishes are supposed to bring prosperity to the occupants of the house. There are also some round openings in the walls of the houses. The aim of these is to let in the spirit of the owner of the house once he has passed away. The drawing of a lion indicates the strength and power of the owner of the house. On a house on the opposite side of the road there might be a drawing of a lion being killed. The significance of this is that I am stronger than you. Inside the rooms of the house, there may be drawings of fishes and small birds. These are amulets and are supposed to have the potential to increase the owner's fertility.

13. 13 What names do the Nubians give to evil?

They call it "*angraib*". It is a Sudanese word. Nubia is made up of three tribes, each with its own distinct language. The languages spoken there are Figikas, Kanzi and Arabic. Those Nubians who speak Arabic are treated as a separate Nubian tribe. The word, Nubia, means land of gold. Between the Nubians and the Arabs, the Arabic language is the lingua franca. It is worth mentioning that old Nubian men and women do not speak Arabic. This means that they have a communication problem with the Arabs who live with them.

13. 14 What do you think are the problems facing art students?

They often complain about negligence they encounter in schools in which they are doing their training. This negligence can come from a person as influential as the headteacher of the school in which they are doing their training. The same applies to

teachers of other subjects as well as the majority of the students. I would say that things are getting better.

13. 15 Is this a new problem?

As I said, things are getting better and artists are becoming more aware of what they are doing. Moreover, artists do nowadays come from different parts of the Arab world to exhibit their works here.

13. 16 Why are the ordinary people here insensitive towards the arts?

They are less caring about modern art. The case is not the same with the traditional arts.

13. 17 What is the difference between the two kinds of art?

Traditional art is associated with the people's lives. As for the modern arts, these are entirely beyond their comprehension.

13. 18 Can people's attitude to modern art be traced directly to the inefficiency of art education in schools?

There could be two reasons here. The first is that of misunderstanding, while the second is the religious factor.

13. 19 When I was working as a teacher some years ago the problem was not that acute. What has happened?

This is a difficult question.

ANNEXE 14: JALAL**14. 1 Have you undertaken any studies that deal directly with art education?**

I have held a number of exhibitions in the field of design and I have designed for different departments and companies in the private and public sector. I am not one of these artists who can confine themselves strictly to the classroom. I prefer to move in society and interact with it. I prefer to serve as a link between society and the world of education.

14. 2 What are the problems you have encountered in art education in Egypt where you had some experience?

On the professional level, they always try to utilize the raw materials that are locally available. We tend to forget that other kinds of raw material, which are used worldwide, cannot lend themselves to the kind of art we produce. Confining ourselves to our locally-produced raw material has, to a large extent, narrowed our experience. Technology has helped a great deal in narrowing the gap between ourselves and others.

14. 3 In other words, what are the problems that art education, as a school subject, is suffering from?

People tend always to view it as a school subject of minor importance. They also consider it to be a waste of time. Their attention is always diverted towards subjects such as Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. They do also tend to ignore the aesthetic value of art education. This has resulted in the painful fact that we now have lots of educated people around who are totally devoid of any artistic or aesthetic sense. You can see this in the way they furnish or decorate the interiors of their houses. Things are always in the wrong place and lack proportion.

14. 4 You were brought up surrounded by art works. Why do you think the rest of the people are insensitive to works of art around them?

They see it around them, but they don't feel it. The sun rises everyday. Very few people are interested in watching the beauty of the sunrise. A farmer is always interested in the growth and vitality of his plants and animals, but is hardly interested in the beauty and the greenery. I think it is our duty to draw their attention to what surrounds them.

14. 5 Is this the only problem facing art education in Egypt?

Egypt is over-populated and the average Egyptian is under a great deal of pressure. This pressure could be social on the level of securing a home and meeting day-to-day expenses. The average person is now moving towards setting themselves up and I dare say that things are getting better as far as art is concerned. We have now gained an international reputation for our ceramic and tapestry work. It is true that you have to enjoy a certain level of prosperity in order to be able to look at art and enjoy it.

14. 6 Here in Saudi Arabia, how do feel that people view art?

I have not done any fieldwork here and it is only two months since I arrived in this country. Therefore, it is a difficult judgement to make.

14. 7 How do you find your students?

I am here among art students and I think they will make good art teachers. What makes me sad is that the higher you go with the students' level, the less pleased you are with the quality of their work. Surprisingly enough, the beginners are often able to produce work of a better quality and value. Maybe this is because I am teaching them design and I have to adopt different approaches. With different approaches, there are always different responses.

14. 8 How do people accept art education as a modern subject?

People are more interested in traditional arts.

14. 9 What is the reason for that?

Maybe they are more familiar with it. As for modern art, they can accept it on the level of decoration of their clothes and the internal décor of their houses. Apart from that, modern art captures very little of their attention. They are more prepared to accept things if they have a function and a purpose in their life. I think people do have a problem when it comes to abstract kinds of art. Calligraphy enjoys a different place. Maybe this is due to the fact that calligraphy reminds them of the Koran.

14. 10 Are people clear-sighted about the purposes of art education?

On the educational level, art education together with physical education are viewed as subjects that could be removed from the school timetable should there be chance to do so. Now, there is some concern being shown towards the arts, religion and physical education. Those in charge of educational affairs are now more aware and more enlightened about the place of these subjects in the curriculum. Art teachers have now come to occupy their places in the senior levels of ministries of education across the Arab world. People have come to see the value of art education in putting across important message to the community. This could be on the level of primary health care or the obliteration of illiteracy. In this way, art education could prove its worth to everyone in the community.

14. 11 From a religious point of view, what do you think is the view of Egyptian society towards fine art?

There are a few groups that view it as something that works against their religious beliefs. I often prefer to distance myself from politics. Yes, there is a tiny minority that treats art as something against religion.

14. 12 Has this kind of attitude, no matter how small, had an impact on the way people accept art?

It depends on your cultural background. When you move from being specific to being general, then you will create problems when you make judgements.

14. 13 Is this kind of problem something new in Egyptian society?

It has come about with the recent emergence of the fundamentalist and extremist Muslims. Their problem with this matter went even further and compromised the economy. I think if we are going to bow to them, we will find ourselves being dragged back into the dark ages. They have a very strong tendency to separate science from religion. By adopting this attitude, they will never succeed in introducing Islam to the modern age.

14. 14 What do you think are the objectives of both classical Egyptian art and modern Egyptian art?

Earlier, all arts tended to serve a purpose and be of functional and vocational value. Classical art was always associated with the furniture and the home. That is why ancient art is very much liked by the people. They see it always around them in their daily lives. Nowadays, we do have the problem of mass-production. Mass-production tends to reduce the value of things. On the level of modern art, people hardly see any functional purpose to it.

14. 15 Do you think this is the difference between the two kinds of art?

Yes, I believe so.

14. 16 Do you think that classical arts have played the same role that Western art played during the Industrial Revolution?

Artists do always have a role to play on this level. Currently, we can see that companies trading in furniture and tapestry are always employing artists to put their own touches on their products. In our part of the world, I think that the true artist is not the one who narrows himself down to one particular thing, such as oil painting. An artist has to be comprehensive and should have the ability to put his touch on everything.

14. 17 What do people think of the artist and the art teacher?

Let me give you an example. If a father of a young, beautiful woman is given the chance to choose between an art teacher and an engineer as a husband for his daughter, he will definitely opt for the engineer. People do not realise that an art teacher has the ability to diversify his sources of income. He is an inventive and creative person and wherever he goes, he can succeed in making a living. However, I have the firm belief that we as artists and art teachers will survive through our sincerity, truthfulness and commitment to what we are doing

ANNEXE 15: MAHDI

15.1 Apart from your teaching experience, have you gained any other experience in the field of art education?

I worked as an inspector of art education.

15.2 Have you noticed any difference between the way art is taught in say National Guard schools and the way it is taught in Ministry schools?

I found out that art education in National Guard schools was of very marginal value. The soldiers were recruited from rural areas and they came with their Bedouin spirit. They were more concerned about their military training. All that they knew about art education was the drawing of a tree or an apple and the matter ended there. Art education had neither a place nor an identity among the other subjects taught there. The art teacher's job was supposed to be that of preparing teaching aids for teachers of other subjects. It was also part of the art teacher's job to mend broken furniture and to maintain the general physical appearance of the school. I tried to explain to those headteachers that an art teacher should do nothing outside his own job and that was teaching students art.

15.3 Could you make a comparison between the experience of teaching art in Saudi Arabia and say teaching in the United Arab Emirates?

In the United Arab Emirates, I believe there is better awareness. In the first place, headteachers in the UAE are mainly foreigners on contract posts. Their educational policy has been imported mainly from Egypt. Art education studios are better equipped. The art teachers are always encouraged to undertake new projects. Moreover, the art teachers are treated on an equal footing with teachers of other subjects. However, the attitude of society is the same here, but not in the schools.

15.4 From a social point of view, how do you think art education is viewed?

Things, on the social level, are very much the same. At that time, education was offered on a limited scale. There was a serious lack of suitably qualified native staff at every level. Their background for teaching art was not there. The same could be said to apply to all of the Gulf States. They always share the same background and social makeup. Now things are changing and this could be attributed to the affluence and interactions with others.

15.5 Are there any objections against art education that have been raised by particular sectors of the community?

When students are given homework, they often encounter problems with their parents. Those parents do not want their children to waste their time on art education. It is a subject in which grades do not count academically. This is why parents prefer to see

their child spending time doing his homework on another subject. However, there are some parents who sometimes come to the art teacher and say that their son likes art and they prefer him to do his homework in that subject. I have not come across those who reject it in principle.

15.6 What problems have you experienced in teaching art?

My experience with the National Guard had distanced me from the problems of art education as a school subject. Moreover, within the National Guard itself, I had worked in the capacity of inspector rather than that of a teacher.

15.7 Have some of the teachers in the National Guard art education department complained of any particular kind of problems?

They live in a rather isolated military complex and the kinds of problems they have were more to do with the supply of raw materials. Also the kind of personnel they are dealing with are Bedouin soldiers, who are often burdened with their family and tribal obligations, in spite of their limited income as rank and file within the National Guard.

15.8 Are there any cultural or social factors that posed a problem to the art teacher?

I have not come across any myself. Two years ago, we started a programme for gifted learners.

15.9 Apart from the material resources problem, have you encountered any other problems?

When we started evening classes, we were surprised to see that every learner was happy to join the physical education programme. In the arts education programme, we tried every incentive to attract a reasonable number of candidates. In reality, we only managed to attract three pupils who had no talent for art.

15.10 What were the reasons for this?

We have studied the situation. We realised that those who are talented are often talented in more ways than one. If a student is talented in both sport and art, he would often prefer to go into sport. These people love movement and the freedom of doing what suits them.

15.11 Why were these Bedouins more attracted to the sports programme?

Football was the first thing that attracted them. Football, as you know, is a very popular game in this country. This forced us to suspend the footballing activity. When we did this, the students joined the theatre group and gymnastic activities.

15.12 What happened to the art education programme?

We continued for fourteen weeks and then suspended it due to the poor turnout. Before this, we tried extremely hard to convince some of our students to come and finish the work that they had started.

15.13 Were there any cultural, social or religious factors behind this refusal?

The problem that I had to face on this issue was with the other teachers rather than the students. There are some teachers who are of fundamentalist views regarding art education. They always prevent their students from drawing pictures of any animate things.

15.14 Are these people art teachers?

Yes. They are art teachers. In one instance, I had a drawing of the Kaba, the Holy Mosque, but there were no worshippers around it. When I asked why this was done, the students told me the teacher had prevented them from putting people in. We have always tried to explain to these people that people are used in drawings for symbolic value. Needless to say, it is difficult to develop your argument with people who view this matter from a religious perspective. Frankly, I prefer to avoid this kind of argument.

15.15 Is the percentage of such teachers quite high?

Out of thirty teachers, there were only two teachers who held such views.

15.16 Were they art education graduates?

Yes. One of them graduated from the university's Department of Arts Education, while the other was a graduate from the Arts Education Institute.

15.17 As for the parents of your students, did they have any complaints?

No. I had no complaints. Maybe there were sometimes a few problems on the personal level and such problems are minor.

15.18 Are students able to express themselves freely through their drawings?

We don't have major problems in this area. Last year, we held an exhibition on nature and environmental protection. There were drawings of children doing different activities. There were also drawings of animals dying because of marine pollution, as well as animals being hunted in the desert. To a large extent, in that exhibition, our students expressed themselves freely. The exhibition was a success and was visited by people from different sectors of the community. However, I would say that not every school is ready to give the same degree of freedom to its students. In other words, some schools or some teachers dictate to their students the type of drawing the students should do.

15.19 Are there any problems that reached the level of confrontation and challenge?

No. Not to that level. Sometimes some parents tell you directly that they prefer to see their sons revising other school subjects rather than wasting time on art. They don't see it as something that conflicts with their moral or religious values.

15.20 Do you mean to say that the Bedouins have nothing against art education in principle?

Absolutely not. Actually, the students here are quite creative when given the chance to work with handicrafts. Sometimes, you can see that what they did is above their level. When you ask them, they will admit that their mother or sister helped them. This gives you the feeling that the home environment is supportive and, of course, approves of such things.

15.21 What kind of work do they do?

Works such as fans, tapestry and weaving. The colours are often primary colours and this makes the work striking. The colours are very strong and have no gradations in them.

15.22 What kind of work appeals to them most?

Textile work is very appealing to them.

15.23 Have you seen this only here?

Yes. It is only here among the Bedouins. I have never seen it during my days with the Ministry of Education.

15.24 What is the situation with painting and drawing among these Bedouins?

What they do is often guided by the teacher and here there are limitations. Even when they are given the chance to do what they want, they tend to make a drawing of the desert or a tent.

15.25 Is this trend also prevalent even among those who were born after their parents' settlement in the town?

Yes. There are no traces at all of modern houses and the modern way of life.

15.26 What about Arabic calligraphy?

With Arabic calligraphy, the situation is much better.

15.27 Do they see the aesthetic value of Arabic calligraphy?

No, they don't approach it from that perspective. They only approach it from its functional side to improve their own handwriting.

15.28 You told me earlier that you did some fieldwork that aimed at making a comparison between the drawings of adults and children. Could you give me a brief idea of your findings?

I did this work thirteen years ago and I am not able to exactly remember those findings. However, I am able to remember that the adults were more restricted in their approach. When the interpretations were made, we realized that there were lots of similarities between the drawings of the two groups. They both approached the subject as absolute beginners and they tended to lack sophistication.

15.29 From your experience in the evening classes, was there any place for art education in the syllabus of those schools?

No. There was no place for art education. Those classes were created for the purpose of obliterating illiteracy – reading and writing. It is better here to get your priorities right. These people had families to look after and jobs to do in the daytime. By the time they could read and write, they left. They did not like having obligations to schools and schooling.

15.30 Are the Bedouins easy to deal with and teach?

Their intelligence is instinctive. However, they have problems on the level of storing and memorizing information.

15.31 Do you encounter any problems with the Bedouins?

Never. They are very straightforward people and very sensitive about issues relating to their dignity. They never complained about why we were teaching their sons things like carpentry or metalwork, in spite of the fact that they held these two crafts in low esteem.

15.32 As an inspector of art education, what problems do teachers complain of?

On the level of resources, the newly-appointed teachers often fall into avoidable problems and this is connected to their training. Some of them are over-enthusiastic, some are too violent and some over-react. All of this brings them to the attention of the school administration. They have to be continuously visited and supervised by the headteachers and area inspectors. I would say that some of them do a disservice rather than a service to their profession of art teacher. What they lack is experience and that has to come with time and on-the-job training which tackles basic issues like classroom management.

15.33 Are there any chronic problems in the area of art education in this country?

Firstly, the same school syllabus has been around for nearly twenty years. It is a weak syllabus and ill-prepared. It lacks vision and has refused to keep abreast with other developments which we have achieved on other levels. This is a major problem that has weakened the cause of art education in this country. Secondly, art is always

pushed to one side in favour of other subjects. The Higher Committee for Education in this country has made it clear that art should only be taught once a week. The same committee also stipulated that no student should be failed in it. The subject is treated by this same committee as a subject of minor importance in comparison with other subjects. The essence and value of art education have never been appreciated here.

At the other end of the scale, the problem of art education teacher training is always problematic. As someone involved in the inspection of art education teaching, I constantly come across two kinds of teacher: those who graduated from the university and those who graduated from the Arts Education Teachers' Institute. From my experience, I am able to say, with confidence, that those who graduated from the Institute are always far better trained than those who graduated from the university. They are better equipped on the levels of both theory and practice. The university graduates tend to narrow themselves to one particular aspect.

15.34 Which of the two graduates is more productive?

To me, art education is not about theories. It is about practice. When it comes to practice, it is the Institute graduate who is able to do better. They are better equipped to get their message across.

15.35 What is the reason for this?

The reason is clear. There is more exposure to this subject at the Institute and more emphasis is made on enabling the student to acquire and strengthen the necessary teaching skills. In my opinion, at the University we have the tendency to ignore the issue of integrating skills.

15.36 This problem will, of course, hinder the progress of art education in this country?

This is an important question and it has been disturbing my peace of mind for a long time. It is a question of commitment to your subject and the University does not seem to teach people this. The system they are adopting is that of the course unit system which does not seem to provide properly for the graduate's commitment to his subject.

15.37 Do you have any further comments to make?

I lived for a long time with art education. It has become part of my character. If you know how to practice and teach art in the right way, then you can be sure that you will have no problems with it. It is just like being a soldier who loves his country. His job is to defend his country when it has been attacked by his enemies. Art education, in this country, will be better off without those who are unable to commit themselves to it. I always open my meetings with art teachers by reminding them of the fact that respect and consideration will be given to art education only when they are able to teach their subject in a way that commands respect. This respect will come about when I adopt innovative methods in my teaching that urges the students to become creative. When you repeat yourself, your students will get bored with you. Needless

to say, as a teacher, you have to deal with results. The results we are now getting are very disappointing. You will achieve good results only when you are able to make your students feel proud of what they have done. For a long time, we have been laying the blame on society. The reality is that we, as art teachers, have only ourselves to blame.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to approach the question of image representation from a worldview and aesthetic of Islam, but not from a religious or purely historical standpoint. Based on such a perspective it becomes easier to understand that image is a problem of a cultural aesthetic rather than a religious one. The knowledge gained in this exploration is not only particularly useful for art educators in Muslim countries or communities, but also adds to the wider philosophical debate about art aesthetics in both the universal trend of art and multicultural art education.

It is hoped that by examining the notion of image representation from an aesthetic view that certain misconceptions about Islamic art can be clarified in order to shed more light on the reasons for certain paths of development. It is widely acknowledged that Islamic societies share traditional art cultures where the religious and secular worlds are closely related and because of this, the issue of representation through images is not practically discussed from the limited views of religion. Islam influences art and forms of expression at the spiritual and aesthetic level. This area of interest has been given little attention, in both the Western and the Islamic worlds. It is very important to look at the function of the image in the wider field of Islamic art itself and see how it can be related to art trends and education in the modern world of Muslim societies.

As a consequence of this, an urgent reappraisal is needed of art education policies taking into account the function and aesthetic values of art especially in the Muslim society of Saudi Arabia, which shares with other Muslim countries many values and beliefs. Modern art education is based on the Western aesthetic and it must be redefined in relation to the art traditions in Islamic cultures and this is particularly important in solving the question of image. This is however, an

extremely delicate issue because it touches religious sensibilities and it is much better to focus on the interaction and organic relationships between Islam and art. Yet the outcome of such an undertaking can only be a good thing if it is approached with concern to promote the best methods for encouraging creativity within a particular society whilst taking account of local traditions and cultures together with the post-modern art trends and multicultural art education approach.

The problem of image therefore, within this study has been approached in the context of Islamic aesthetics and artistic development throughout the centuries. A narrow theological perspective has been avoided because this tends to create a circular argument, which leads nowhere in terms of discovering the underlying aesthetic of a culture. Indeed it has been argued throughout this study that Islam, as a religion, does not influence the forms of art, or directly restrict art practice through religious law. However, Islam does interact with art at the spiritual and aesthetic level through the Arabic language and script. It is therefore, on this level that one might argue that Islam influences art, but this does not mean that it exerts a religious restriction in itself. Moreover, it is something much more deeply rooted in the whole fabric of Islamic art culture where image is not a particular focus of expression. This misunderstanding has often been responsible for negative Muslim responses towards painting in recent Muslim art critiques and art education practice.

This does not deny the fact that there are some Muslims who believe that Islam forbids certain art practices such as image representation of humans. However attitudes towards art are not only held by Muslims. In the Christian culture there are some problems with image in certain art contexts, there are well-documented incidents where figurative art or image representations are attacked or destroyed

even in modern secular worlds. Some other cultures like Chinese, American Indian and Hindu have different forms of images or paintings. The arts of these ethnic societies have social and ritual functions. Thus, the attitude of a certain groups of Muslims towards image cannot be taken as valid evidence to represent a universal religious view. Especially since not all Muslims share the same attitude, in the past and the present, furthermore, the interpretation of the question of image is understood with greater or less degrees of flexibility.

However, if one takes an aesthetic view it could be said that the art of painting was practiced in the early history of Islamic art. But it was not considered a major element and was not valued in the same way as religious art has been in Western aesthetic development. This was mainly due to the organic link between Islam and the Arabic language, which directed art towards a new trend of expression. As Arabic script and geometry fused together and combined to form the dominant mode of artistic modern art trends in the Muslim world of today and far beyond the geographical borders of Islamic culture. It is, therefore, more practical to look at the issue of image from the wider perspective of the difference of art orientation in the art of Muslim and Western cultures. This point of a motivating aesthetic is often ignored in the discussion of Islamic art, because it is overshadowed by narrow debates that related only to the religious view of icons or to the psychological and political aspects of image in a historical frame of reference. It is not being suggested here that these are not essential elements in the wider debate on Islamic art, but they do not represent the whole picture. It must be recognized that, in Islamic or Muslim art, image is closely associated with the aesthetic form of the Arabic script and the function of art is closely bound up to the cultural aspect of society. This cannot be divorced from the interest of the societies at large, for this

reason the aesthetic sentiment of Islamic art has been always focused on the design of art product in relation to its application in everyday life.

This is reflected in the verbal message associated with Arabic script and geometric design of Islamic art, which is not individualistic in the same sense as Western art, where image representation is a major element of expression in both religious visual expression and secular art trends. Islam, in all its diversity is linked with an inherently different art system of expression. This therefore affects the shape of Muslim attitudes of their aesthetic views. It is a very important point that this should be taken into account in the study of image in relation to the question of Western art tradition and art education models in Muslim countries.

This study is limited in the sense that the questions of art and education are dynamic, dealing with so many issues of human values and beliefs. It should be acknowledged that any study that deals with art and education, cannot come up with definite answers.

The question of image has always been a complicated art subject, and in relation to Islamic art it involves religious debate, due to the nature of the Islamic faith and the type of art Muslims have produced. The findings of this study may be useful in raising many more interesting questions, than answers, in search for a new meaning to understand the image in relation to the language of expression Islamic visual art.

Recommendations

Art education in a formal sense is a new subject that needs to be defined with reference to the role of art and its values in a social and cultural context in the Muslim world, taking into account the special needs of every Muslim country. Most of the problems of art in Muslim societies are related to the vague definition of art education and it is very hard to make sense of any problem without clear definitions. The concept of modern art education is new to the traditional Muslim cultures, where art is often produced and appreciated in terms of the quality and function of artwork and its contribution to the society and people's life and social needs.

The formal art education in Muslim societies still largely reflects almost the same values and terms of art and education in modern Western societies. In some respects, art education seems to violate the value of art and education in Muslim society. On the other hand, some views and objectives of Modern art education are hard to recognize or achieve especially in Muslim culture.

Western art education is associated with complex views and values usually expected to be achieved, such as free self-expression and creativity. These terms and values are sometimes misunderstood and cannot be achieved because of the different orientation of art education in Muslim society. There are some important areas of art education that must be reevaluated within the context of Muslim culture. It might be very useful to suggest some research topics that will help to illuminate the problem of art education in relation to the role of art and education in Muslim society, such as what motivates people to produce art and what is the application of art in their life.

There are big differences between the art form in the West and the art tradition in Muslim culture. The view that modern art education is oriented by universal art theory has been challenged in the light of the simple fact that every society and culture has its own concept of art and education.

Some research topics should first focus on the definition of art to find out whether art is some kind of special work that is especially made out of certain materials just for leisure and aesthetic enjoyment, or does the term art refer to skilful and creative talent to make beautiful and useful work for individuals and societies. What is the definition of beauty in relation to the individual and society values and interests. Is there a definition for art that can be generalized regardless of the role and value of art in the life of the individual and society?

Should art be taught in schools with the objective of developing skills and knowledge to help students to produce a certain quality of artwork? Is the main objective in teaching art just to encourage children and students to express themselves regardless of the quality of the art product? What is the concept of expression in relation to Western Art and educational views, and is it possible to apply it to the art education system of Muslim societies?

Why it is not possible sometimes to implement and achieve the objectives of a Modern art education programme? Finally, what kind of art should be taught in schools and in which sense can the art contribute to the individual and society?

It is very important to look at the problem of art in general within a broader context of Muslim art and culture. Firstly because Muslims share a common belief, history, spiritual and social values including universal art experience. The Muslim nation in the past shared a very rich art culture and it can provide a very valuable source of

study and inspiration to Muslim art experts for understanding and solving the art questions in their countries. The question of art cannot be expected to be solved easily and there must be a very well-planned project for the study and evaluation of the art of Islamic culture. The project first needs to be established based on a clear definition of art in terms of quality and aesthetic values and function in the early and present Muslim culture. Perhaps it is very difficult to solve such a big question without considering the most basic one. On the other hand, it is not easy now to make plans for large-scale projects. It is very important to start with the study of art, in order to learn from the early Muslim art experience and to find practical examples and solutions to answer the recent art problems.

The study of Islamic Art needs to be re-evaluated with reference to the history of Islam and the context of art values and traditions in Muslim culture. The study of Islamic art is a new field that started to develop in the West when there was a special interest in the study of art in relation to the new notion of cultural history. The field of Islamic Art focused on historical values of artwork to construct the political and cultural history of Islam. As a result, there is much difficulty in understanding the orientation of the visual form and aesthetic mode of Islamic art. Students and teachers of art usually do not find sources from which to learn about the organic relationship between Islam. For example, how Islam inspires art in terms of visual and aesthetic expression. The recent art history of Islamic art is still influenced by early studies, which usually study the artwork in relation to politics and the ethnic element, but little is devoted to the quality and function of artwork. The artwork of Islamic culture is usually collected and studied out of context of its original art setting and function.

The evaluation of art is a very big project and cannot be achieved in the near future but ideas and views presented here may contribute to the project. It does not seem practical to just wait and do nothing. It would be a good idea to suggest some solutions for solving the present problem or try to find ideas to make any positive changes.

Art education models need to be carefully adjusted and balanced according to the art history and traditions, including the value of art in Muslim society. Modern art education in a Western sense is not always possible to apply especially in traditional Muslim societies where people do not value art in the same way as in Western industrial societies. There are many problems involved with Western Art trends and this also can be said about modern Western art education when the same system is introduced into traditional societies

There are some objective works of certain writers that seem to provide very good references about Islamic Art and these need to be well-presented to the art students in Muslim countries. Some individual writers, in the West and the Muslim world, have broken away from the traditional Western cultural history approach, where the mainstream writers are only interested in the historical value of Islamic Art. There are a number of writers who are more interested in the unique aspect of Islamic art and often focus on the quality forms of artwork taking into account the aesthetic values and function of art in a cultural context. The work of this kind is not much and usually deals with the question of Islamic art in an objective way, so it might be recognized by the mainstream trend. Perhaps most of the radical studies of Islamic art, will not appear to contribute much unless they are presented to a wider audience. It would be very great project if this kind of work is carefully

studied and included in an art programme and art history course. The following writers are some of the art experts and authors who have original views about Islamic art and need to be included especially in art courses in Muslim countries. Titus Burckhardt, Sayyid Hossein Nasr and Keith Critchlow.

Small research projects can be useful and not difficult to plan and achieve results in quite a short period of time. It would be very rewarding to encourage short research papers to study many different topics of Islamic art. There is a need to search and study important questions, for example, to focus on the problem of terms and definitions related to the study of Islam and art. The following outlines may inspire some useful research projects.

Islam and art are interrelated terms and usually put together to refer to the art forms of early Muslims. The most common term used in English publications is Islamic Art, and it generally refers to the art product of Muslim cultures before Modern history. This term is an important area of study and can be the subject for different research projects.

For example, manuscript painting or Islamic painting are related to the question of image and are very important areas to study for an understanding of the art of Islam. Both these two art terms refer to the same kind of painting style usually part of the art and design work of early Muslim manuscripts. It is usually not clear what is the difference between Islamic painting and manuscript painting except in terms of the objective of the study. Most Islamic painting studies are usually interested in the historical value in the artwork of painting without much concern about their original artistic context. Islamic painting is defined as an independent art subject

equivalent to painting in Western fine art terms. Islamic painting refers to the study of artwork collected and taken out of the illustration of manuscripts of many different subjects. It would be a practical solution to the problem of image in art education to study the original context of manuscript painting, especially in relation to the value and function of art in Muslim culture. There are many questions that may be useful to explore some of the unique aspects of Islamic manuscript art as a whole and how painting styles fit the design work, for example, to integrate art and painting with other areas of knowledge. It would be very interesting to study, in great depth, how Arabic script influences painting techniques in relation to manuscript art and design. This recommendation, may contribute to the study of art and art education in Muslim culture and it should be taken into account.

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