The Art of Arabic Calligraphy
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- Islamic Art and Arabic Calligraphy
- General Features of Arabic Calligraphy
- Development of Arabic Script & Calligraphy
- Primary Styles, Samples & Features
- Calligraphy & Architecture
- Calligraphy & Fine Art
- New Techniques & Applications
Elements of Islamic Art:

- Arabic Script & Calligraphy
- Geometric Patterns
- Floral & Vegetal Motifs (Arabesque)

Jamal Badran, 1980’s Decorations on Glass
The Art of Arabic Calligraphy

Al-Hambra Palace

Candlestick
The Art of Arabic Calligraphy:

- The Art of the Pen
- The Art of Writing
- Geometry of the Spirit
- Geometry of the line

How Writing Became an Art Form:

- The Revelation of the Qur’an as an inspiration
- To glorify the words of God – visually as in recitation
- The discouragement of representing human figures
Development of Arabic Script:

• The Arabic Script was developed from the *Nabataean* script, which was itself derived from the Aramaic script.
• As a writing system, Arabic appeared in early 5th Century.
• The revelation of Islam had a major impact on the development of Arabic language & Script.

Funerary inscription from an-Namara (AD 328), speaking of the famous pre-Islamic poet Imru l-Qays.
Islam & Arabic Calligraphy:

- First Revelation of the Qur’an & Other verses
- Teaching Arabic writing in the first mosque
- The 40 scribes that recorded the Qur’an
- The release of Prisoners of war for teaching others
- The collection and copying of the Qur’an.
Calligraphy Applications:

- To Glorify & Beautify God’s words
- As a form of worship
- As a spiritual activity
- Artistic
- Decoration
- Identity
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Geometric Principles:

Three elements are the basis of proportion in Arabic Calligraphy:

• The height of the *alif*, which is a straight and vertical stroke (3-12) dots.
• The width of the *alif*, (the dot) which is the square impression formed by pressing the tip of the calligrapher's reed pen to paper
• An imaginary circle with *alif* as its diameter, within which all Arabic letters could fit and be written.

System of Ibn-Muqla, 9th Century
Primary Styles

- Over 100 Styles
- 6 Primary Styles
- Additional Artistic forms
  Named based on:
  - width of the pen - *Thuluth*
  - usage - *Nasakh*
  - curvature of style - *Yabis*
  - place of development – *Kufi*
  - the name of creator - *Yaquti*
Kufi or Kufic: is noted for its proportional measurements, angularity, and squareness. Kufic is one of the earliest styles to be used to record the word of God in the Qur’an. One of the early kufic inscriptions can be seen inside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.
Variations of Kufic Style:

Fayeq Oweis, 2005
Arab American National Museum

Source: www.sakkal.com
Thuluth means “one third,” referring to the proportion of the pen in relation to a previous style called Tumaar. It was first formulated in the 7th century A.D., and fully developed in the 9th century. It is noted for its cursive letters and its use as an ornamental script.
Nasakh means “copy” in Arabic, is one of the earliest scripts, redesigned by Ibn Muqllah in the 10th century A.D., using a comprehensive system of proportion. It is noted for its clarity to read and write, and was used to copy the Qur’an.
"Ta’liq means “hanging,” referring to the shape of the letters, is a cursive script developed by the Persians in the early part of the 9th century A.D., and it is also called Farsi (Persians).
Diwani was developed by the Ottomans from the Ta’liq style. This style became a favorite script for writing in the Ottoman chancellery, and its name was derived from the word “Diwan,” which means the “Royal Court.”
Riq’a is a style that has evolved from Nasakh and Thuluth. It is noted for its simplicity and its short horizontal stems. The word Riq’a means “a small sheet,” which could be an indication of the media on which it was originally created.
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*Tughra’* was used by the Ottoman sultans as their signature. It was supposed to be impossible to imitate.

*Signature of an Ottoman Sultan*  
*Basmallah* in *Tughra’* style
**Pictorial Calligraphy:** words are manipulated and structured into the shape of a human figure, a bird, an animal or an object.

Prayer in a form of a Lion
“Ali bin abi Talib, the victorious lion of God, may God be pleased with him”

Prayer in a form of a human figure
“I testify that there is no god, but God and Muhammad is a messenger of God"
Qur’anic verse in the shape of a mosque
Awda (Return) by Fayeq Oweis, 2006
Tarab (Joy/delight). Fayeq Oweis, 2006
Calligraphy & Architecture

A major application of Arabic Calligraphy is in Architecture where inscriptions provided:

- Place Identity and Function (mosque, school, etc.)
- Historical Information (dates, artists, ruler, etc.)
- Spiritual (Qur’anic verses and prayers)
- Artistic / Decoration

Original Kufic inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock Jerusalem, 692 AD
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Arabic Calligraphy in Mosques

- The Dome of the Rock
- Minbar & Mihrab - Mosque of University of Jordan
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Calligraphy & Diversity of Materials

Glass

Mosaics

Wood
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Calligraphy & Diversity of Materials

Ceramic

Plaster

Leather
Contemporary Development

For over a century, there has been no major development in Arabic Calligraphy, except:

• Development of new type styles – for printing
• The use of Digital Media
• Incorporating Calligraphy in Fine Arts

Crown Letters - Egypt 1925

Computer Fonts
Computers & Calligraphy

Computer type using *DecoType Thuluth* Style for Windows OS:
Functional with no aesthetic

Computer Manipulation: Applying Calligraphy Rules
Calligraphy and Fine Art

Steps and Shadows
by Mamoun Sakkal

God is Beautiful and Loves Beauty
by Mamoun Sakkal
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Arab American National Museum- Front Entrance, 25’x16’ – Mosaics
Dearborn, Michigan, May 2005. Implemented by Mosaics House- Morocco

Fayeq Oweis, Ph.D.
Arab American National Museum
Calligraphy and Fine Art

Calligraphy and Fine Art

Allah Jameel “God is Beautiful and loves beauty”

Allah Noor “God is the light of heavens and earth”
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Arabic Calligraphy & Digital Prints from Two series
“Visual Interpretation of Arabic Words & Letters”
to be presented at the Arab American National Museum, April 2006

Adaala (Justice)
Let's try this
Love and Peace
Love & Peace, 6’x3’ – Acrylic
San Francisco State University – Office of Professor Dina Ibrahim, March 2003
Internet resources:
Islamic Art & Architecture Organization
www.islamicart.com
Los Angeles County Museum
www.lacma.org
Mamoun Sakkal Design
www.sakkal.com
Fayeq Oweis
www.oweis.com