



Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design

By Issam El-Said

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Issam El-Said pinpoints the rules of composition that form the basis of the geometric concepts of Islamic art. He then shows how intricate patterns are based on these basic principles. Fully illustrated in three colors to show the development of the patterns, this book offers an insight into how craftsmen and designers in the Muslim world achieved monumental feats of artistic expression using the simplest of tools. Chapter I presents graphical analyses of numerous complex patterns, to reveal the numerical rationale behind them. In Chapter II, the author analyses the system of measure used in ancient Egypt, before the use of numbers for calculating measurements. He shows how measuring cords and a geometric method based on a grid-pattern originating from the circle were employed by master craftsmen in the design of Islamic art and architecture. The book offers an insight into how craftsmen and designers in the Muslim world have achieved monumental feats of artistic expression with harmony and precision, using the simplest of tools such as a ruler, a string and templates, together with a system of measure that is both simple and sophisticated.

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Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design By Issam El-Said Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #316449 in Books
- Published on: 1998-02-14
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .60" w x 13.00" l, 2.46 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 112 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

‘One need not be adept at measurement and computation to be mesmerized by and drawn into the visual analysis Said offers here.’

About the Author

Issam El-Said (1938-1988) was an Iraqi artist and scholar. He earned an Architecture degree from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1961; studied art at Hammersmith College of Art and Design, London and prepared for a PhD on the Methodology of Geometric Proportioning in Islamic Architecture at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1988, which was sadly not completed due to his untimely death that year. As an artist, he achieved great renown and his works are in private and public collections worldwide including the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Museums in Baghdad and Amman.

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