

Contemporary Islamic Graffiti: The New Illuminated Manuscript



Click the following video link on contemporary Graffiti artist Mohammed Ali. Mohammed was invited to be a part of the Eid Festival at the Riksatern Theatre in Gothenburg Sweden, by the British Council in Sweden. He painted a unique cube over a 2 day period outside of the museum, where he engages with the people around him while he paints.

<http://www.aerosolarabic.com/portfolio/mohammed-ali-in-sweden/>

Overview

The following lesson is part of a Visual Arts instructional unit exploring Graffiti as a visual art form expressing contemporary ideas of Islamic culture. Historically, Illuminated manuscripts (especially Illuminated Qur'ans) were instrumental in spreading ideas of Islam. The function, form and style development of Illuminated manuscripts correlated with the need to not only record and spread the revelations bestowed upon the prophet Muhammad, but also to signify the importance and reverence of the word of Allah.

Contemporary Islamic Graffiti developed in response to a need to illuminate contemporary ideas of Islam in a visual platform that is not only visually captivating, but in the public sphere. Graffiti tends to challenge perceptions and hold a visual mirror up for society to reflect upon cultural practices and structures. Contemporary Islamic Graffiti artists Muhammed Ali and eL Seed are creating a platform for spreading contemporary ideas of Islam and challenging stereotypes and perceptions of Muslims and Islam as a monolithic religion.

In this unit, students will first explore the visual art form of historic Illuminated Manuscripts and engage in critical analysis of at least one historic work. Students will then participate in group seminar to understand the role of perception set in our aesthetic response to Islamic art forms: Illuminated Manuscript and Contemporary Islamic Graffiti. Students will explore the works of Contemporary Islamic Graffiti artists. In addition, students will compare function, form, aesthetics and intent of Historical Illuminated manuscripts and Contemporary Graffiti in order to understand the power both platforms had on spreading ideas of Islam. The culminating unit project will engage students in creating a graffiti work that addresses a personal stereotype utilizing process, techniques, concepts of stereotype/perception learned during this unit.

Grade

9-12, Community College

Subject

Visual Arts: Proficient (teacher can easily modify lesson for Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, AP 2-D studio art)

Essential Standards

Visual Literacy

- P.V.1 Use the language of visual arts to communicate effectively.
- P.V.1.1 Use art vocabulary to analyze compositions.
- P.V.1.3 Recognize contemporary styles, themes, and genres in art.

This lesson was created by Anita Rubino-Thomas as part of the Global Islam and the Arts Teacher Fellows program. For more information about the program, please visit ncmideast.org.

- P.V.2 Apply creative and critical thinking skills to artistic expression.
- P.V.2.1 Implement planning to arrive at original solutions to artistic problems.

Contextual Relevancy

- P.CX.1 Understand the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts
- P.CX.1.2 Understand how personal perspective is influenced by temporal context.
- P.CX.1.3 Exemplify contemporary art and artists.
- P.CX.1.4 Understand how personal aesthetic responses to art are influenced by culture.

Critical Response

- P.CR.1 Use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.
- P.CR.1.1 Differentiate between personal aesthetic response and objective critical response to art.
- P.CR.1.2 Critique personal art based on reflective inquiry.

Essential Questions

- How does our perception set (culture + individual experiences/beliefs) shape our reactions and understanding of art from other cultures? Why is it important to recognize the role our perception set has on our aesthetic response to art?
- How does contextual information impact or help inform our aesthetic responses to art in general and to Islamic art in particular?
- How do Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts and Muslim Graffiti artists utilize art to unify diverse identities in Islamic cultures?
- What impact did the Illuminated Manuscripts/Qur'an have on spreading Islam?
- What role does Graffiti have in breaking stereotypes about Islam and spreading contemporary ideas on Islam?
- What process/techniques/training were necessary in the creation of illuminated manuscripts? What process/techniques/training are necessary in the creation of Islamic Graffiti?
- How and in what ways does the art form of Calligraphy transform the written word?
- What are characteristics of Islamic Calligraphy?
- How and why do artists blend calligraphy techniques with graffiti techniques to express modern ideas of Islam?

Materials/Equipment

- Teacher access to computer with projection capabilities and speakers
- Laptop or computer access for each student
- Student sketchbooks and drawing materials
- Subjective Aesthetic Response Survey (attached)
- "With which image do you engage?" slide (attached)
- Objective Response to Islamic Illuminated Work group document (attached)
- Objective Response to Islamic Art Works handout (attached)
- "What is Calligraphy?" article and questions (attached)
- Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts PowerPoint
- Spread of Islam via Illuminated Manuscripts handout (attached)
- "Perception" by graffiti artist eL Seed (attached)
- Islamic Graffiti PowerPoint
- Slide: compare/contrast Illuminated Manuscript with Muhammed Ali's Graffiti artwork (attached)
- Compare/Contrast of Illuminated Manuscripts and Contemporary Islamic Graffiti worksheet (attached)

Duration

5 days of 80-minute classes + optional culminating unit project in which students create a Graffiti work.

Teacher Resources

- Video on Evaluating Art Through Different Lenses <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/lenses-and-art-getty>
- Contemporary Islamic Calligraphy Exhibition 'NUN WA AL QALAM' http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/contemporary_islamic_calligraphy_exhibition_nun_wa_al_qalam/
- Islamic Arts & Architecture <http://islamic-arts.org/>
- Remix and Globalization of Street Art: Post-Modern Flair, Graffiti, and Arabic Calligraphy <https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/cctp-725-fall2014/2014/05/03/remix-and-globalization-of-street-art-post-modern-flair-graffiti-and-arabic-calligraphy-draft/>
- Archive of illuminated manuscripts: <http://www.islambook.net/bbs/archiver/showtopic-1585-13.aspx>
- Library exhibit from Southern Methodist University on manuscripts in the Islamic tradition: http://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/IslamicText/MS31_1600
- The art of Mohammed Ali Aerosol: <http://www.aerosolarabic.com/>
- Illuminated Islamic Manuscript collection at Yale University <https://www.library.yale.edu/neareast/exhibitions/exhibit20071.html>
- Baker, Colin F. *Qur'an Manuscripts Calligraphy, Illumination, Design*. The British Library. London, 2007.
- Deroche, Francis. *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to 10th Century*. Nour Foundation with Oxford University Press. New York, 1992.

Student Preparation

Before beginning this lesson, students should have a basic understanding of Islam. As homework before beginning this unit, assign this short article for students to read, "How to Evaluate Art: A layman's guide to understanding personal aesthetics" <http://www.davidhcunningham.com/2013/02/evaluate-art-laymans-guide-understanding-personal-aesthetics/>.

Procedure

Day One: Seminar: Understanding Subjective Response to Islamic Art versus Objective Response

1. Tell students that today's class will explore how our perception set (culture + individual experiences/beliefs) shapes our reactions and understanding of art from other cultures. Tell students that "subjective" refers to personal perspectives, feelings, or opinions entering the decision making process, while "objective" refers to the elimination of subjective perspectives and a process that is purely based on hard facts. Tell students that subjective/ personal preference can be the product of our environment.
2. 10-15 mins: Have students independently complete the Subjective Aesthetic Response Survey (attached) to begin student reflection on subjective aesthetic response versus objective aesthetic response. Then, project the attached slide with two images side by side titled, "With which image do you engage?" Ask students and discuss as a class:
 - Which image from these works do you engage with?
 - WHY? What about the work engages you?
3. 65 mins: Make sure that each student has access to a computer or laptop. Put the Forming Objective Aesthetic Response questionnaire (attached) into a Google Doc and allow students to edit it simultaneously. Go over each question as a class, with the teacher guiding responses. Students should put their name in front of their typed answers on the group document. For question 9, the class should come up with their own criteria for looking at art objectively. Example criteria include:

Time: ample time to look again at the artwork to analyze and evaluate (take a second look and discover more!)

Knowledge: Contextual information that includes: artist statement, artwork information, background, culture, artist place, history of place at that time, techniques, art history
Intent, Function, Purpose, Meaning
Technique/process/material use
Visual Literacy: Elements of Art, Principles of Design, composition, symbolism
Creativity, Passion, love

Day Two: Historical Overview: In depth look at Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts

4. 35 mins: Review basic information about Islam. Remind students that Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion. Tell students that there are about 1.8 billion Muslims in the world. Review the five pillars of Islam:
 1. Shahada – professing that Allah is the true God and Muhammad is his messenger.
 2. Salat – praying five times a day in the direction of Mecca.
 3. Zakah – paying a tax or giving a certain amount of money to charity.
 4. Sawm – fasting from the sun up to sundown during the holy month of Ramadan.
 5. Hajj – going on a spiritual journey (pilgrimage) to Mecca.

Then, provide an introduction to Islamic Manuscripts by showing this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMfHNpvph40&list=PLS12qnwBb76cyPSanbORu4Kod8aRrUD72&index=39> . Be sure to point out variety of Illuminated Manuscripts shown in presentation. Discuss how Illuminated Manuscripts helped unify diverse cultures with Islam.

5. 45 mins: Pass out copies of the Objective Response to Islamic Art works handout. Independently, students should work on responding to the questions on the handout.
6. Assign for homework for next day: pass out copies of the “What is Calligraphy?” article and questions. Students should read the article and take notes in their sketchbook.

Day Three: Continue Historical overview of Islamic manuscripts

7. 20 min: Have students pull out sketchbooks and as a whole group, discuss the reading from assigned homework. Facilitate whole class discussion on the article:
 - How does the author define *calligraphy*?
 - What characteristics are part of the calligraphy art form?
 - Do you agree or disagree with the author? explain
 - What would you add to the information?
 - How is calligraphy similar across the cultural traditions discussed in the article?
 - How is calligraphy different across the cultural traditions discussed in the article?
 - Why calligraphy?
 - In what ways do contemporary artists use calligraphy?
 - In what ways could you use calligraphy?
8. 20 mins: Instruct students to read following article on Islamic Illuminated books and take notes in their sketchbook/visual journals: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/isbk/hd_isbk.htm.
9. 30 min: Teacher presentation on Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts: go through the Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts PowerPoint. Using slide 2, play part of the video, “Quranic Manuscripts from 8th to 18th

Century” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpsh7Qo8KLI>). The video moves through a collection of Quranic manuscripts at the Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art.

10. Slide 3: Tell students that Muslims believe that the Qur'an contains the literal words of God, which were spoken in Arabic. Therefore, Muslims throughout the world share a linguistic bond based on the desire to read the Qur'an in its original language. Many Muslims around the world learn to read and speak Arabic, even if Arabic is not their native language. Tell students that Illumination is the addition of visual elements to provide structure and information. Move through the components of and history of Illuminated manuscripts (slides 4-9). Show various examples of Illuminated manuscripts (slides 10-17).
11. 10 mins: Pass out copies of the Spread of Islam via Illuminated Manuscripts handout, and have students begin answering the questions. Students should finish responding to the questions for homework.

Day Four: Overview of Contemporary Islamic art using Graffiti and Text

12. 15 min: Lead a class discussion on the spread of Islam via Illuminated Manuscripts: review homework questions assigned previous class.
13. 30 min: Project the image of “Perception” by graffiti artist eL Seed image for whole class to see. Give students 2 minutes to look at image and then hide the image. Have students write down answers in their sketchbooks to the following question: What do you see and where do you see it? Allow students 2 minutes to write. Ask students to sketch what they saw and described above in their sketchbooks.
14. Begin a class discussion by asking students for their responses. Reinforce answers from students by repeating and/or paraphrasing. Ask students to utilize elements of Art/Principles of Design vocabulary. Try to avoid giving judgements of “Good”, etc.
15. Bring Graffiti artwork back up on board and ask students to look at image again and answer the following questions:
 - What else do you see and where do you see it?
 - Where do you think this artwork is located?
 - What do you think is going on? What visual text informs your ideas?At this juncture, give students some contextual information regarding artwork: tell them that it is in a particular community in Cairo, Egypt, created by the graffiti artist, el Seed. Ask students:
 - Why do you think the artist created this work?
 - How do you think the artist created this work?
16. Allow students to see contextual information: “In my new project ‘Perception’ I am questioning the level of judgment and misconception society can unconsciously have upon a community based on their differences. In the neighborhood of Manshiyat Nasr in Cairo, the Coptic community of Zaraeeb collects the trash of the city for decades and developed the most efficient and highly profitable recycling system on a global level. Still, the place is perceived as dirty, marginalized and segregated. To bring light on this community, with my team and the help of the local community, I created an anamorphic piece that covers almost 50 buildings only visible from a certain point of the Moqattam Mountain. The piece of art uses the words of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, a Coptic Bishop from the 3rd century, that said: ‘Anyone who wants to see the sunlight clearly needs to wipe his eye first.’

The Zaraeeb community welcomed my team and I as we were family. It was one of the most amazing human experience I have ever had. They are generous, honest and strong people. They have been given the name of Zabaleen (the garbage people), but this is not how they call themselves. They don't live in the

garbage but from the garbage; and not their garbage, but the garbage of the whole city. They are the one who clean the city of Cairo.”

Ask the following questions:

- Why did the artist choose this location?
- What do you notice about the quote written in graffiti?
- Why do you think the artist utilized calligraphy?
- What do you think is the relationship between location and the quote?
- Why do you think the artist chose to write the quote in Arabic?
- What does this work make you wonder?
- What additional information would you like to find out about the artist?

17. 35-40 mins: Lead a presentation on contemporary Islamic Graffiti using the Islamic graffiti PowerPoint. Moving through the slides, click on the links and allow students to view imagery and ask their opinions. Be sure to ask students to be aware of what “lens” they are using in looking at work.
18. Assign for homework: Reflective Visual Journal: Visual close read upon student chosen image of Islamic Graffiti utilizing 1) subjective response and 2) objective response/criteria developed from Day One.

Day Five: Continue Overview of Contemporary Islamic art using Graffiti and Text

19. 80 min: Small/Whole group discussion on connections between Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts and Islamic Graffiti: Project the slide with the Illuminated Manuscript side by side with Muhammed Ali’s Graffiti artwork and facilitate discussion among small groups:
 - Do you see any similar visual characteristics between Illuminated manuscripts and Islamic Graffiti?
 - Do you see any differing visual characteristics between illuminated manuscripts and Islamic Graffiti?
 - Who is the audience for Illuminated works?
 - Who is the audience for Contemporary Graffiti works?
 - Do you similarities between the function of illuminated manuscripts and Islamic Graffiti?
 - Do you see differences between function of illuminated manuscripts and Islamic Graffiti?
20. Pass out the Compare/Contrast of Illuminated Manuscripts and Contemporary Islamic Graffiti worksheet. Have students respond to the questions independently and then as a whole group in order to reinforce connections between the two art forms made throughout the lesson. Continue to project the

Possible Extension Activity

If you have time, complete the following activity: students will engage in a creative project, utilizing student directed small groups, creating Calligraffiti style works that address an issue in their local community. Complete Unit and Materials are available upon request from arubino@currituck.k12.nc.us.

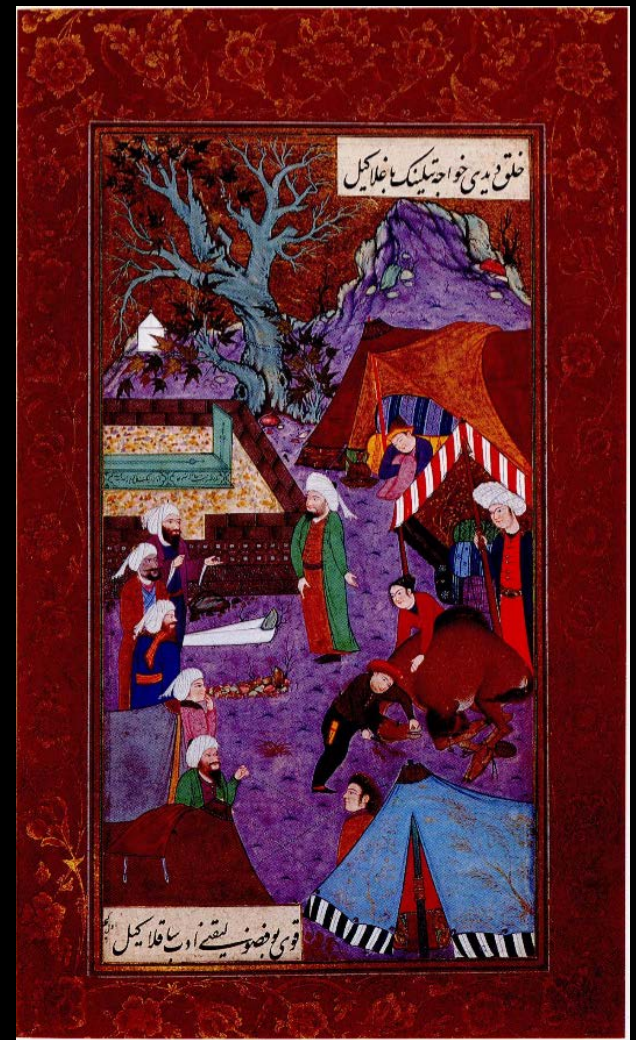
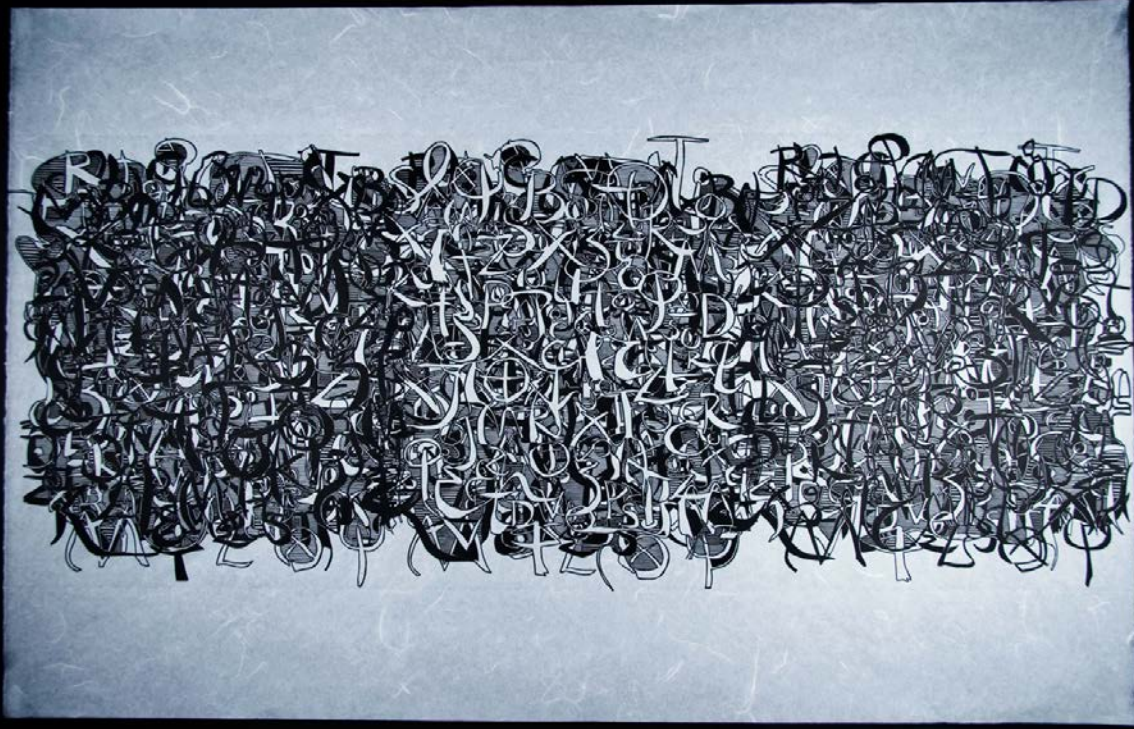
Subjective Aesthetic Response Survey

In your sketchbooks, please answer the following questions:

- *What colors do you like?
 - *What do you do for entertainment?
 - *What types of books do you like to read?
 - *If you could live in any environment, where would it be?
 - *What shapes are you attracted to (draw them)?
 - *What kind of music do you like?
 - *Do you prefer comfortable clothes or stylish clothes?
 - *What genre of art do you prefer?
 - *For vacation time, would you prefer to travel or stay home?
 - *What is your reaction to “new” things?
 - *Do you like adventure?
 - *Do you like things orderly?
-

- *What is bias?
- *How does bias affect your analysis/evaluation of art?

With which image do you engage?



Forming Objective Aesthetic Response

Students will put name in front of answers on this Group document

1. When we look at art, what do we use initially in forming our response to the work?

*sensory reactions?

*emotional reactions?

*intellectual reactions?

*other:

2. How is our initial response affected by our bias?

3. Does bias contribute to a subjective aesthetic response to art?

4. How do the following factors contribute to a Subjective lens in analyzing/evaluating art?

*Culture:

*Individual experiences:

*Time:

5. What is a perception set?

6. Is looking at art with a Subjective lens the only way to look at and evaluate art?

7. What does “Objective” mean in terms of looking at art?

8. If a Subjective lens is the combination of bias and individual perception set, then what makes up our objective lens when looking at art?

9. What Objective criteria do we use in looking at art?

Fill in table: Criteria for Looking at Art Objectively

10. What do we need to know about Islamic Culture (historically and now) in order to analyze and evaluate Islamic art with an Objective Lens? (list)

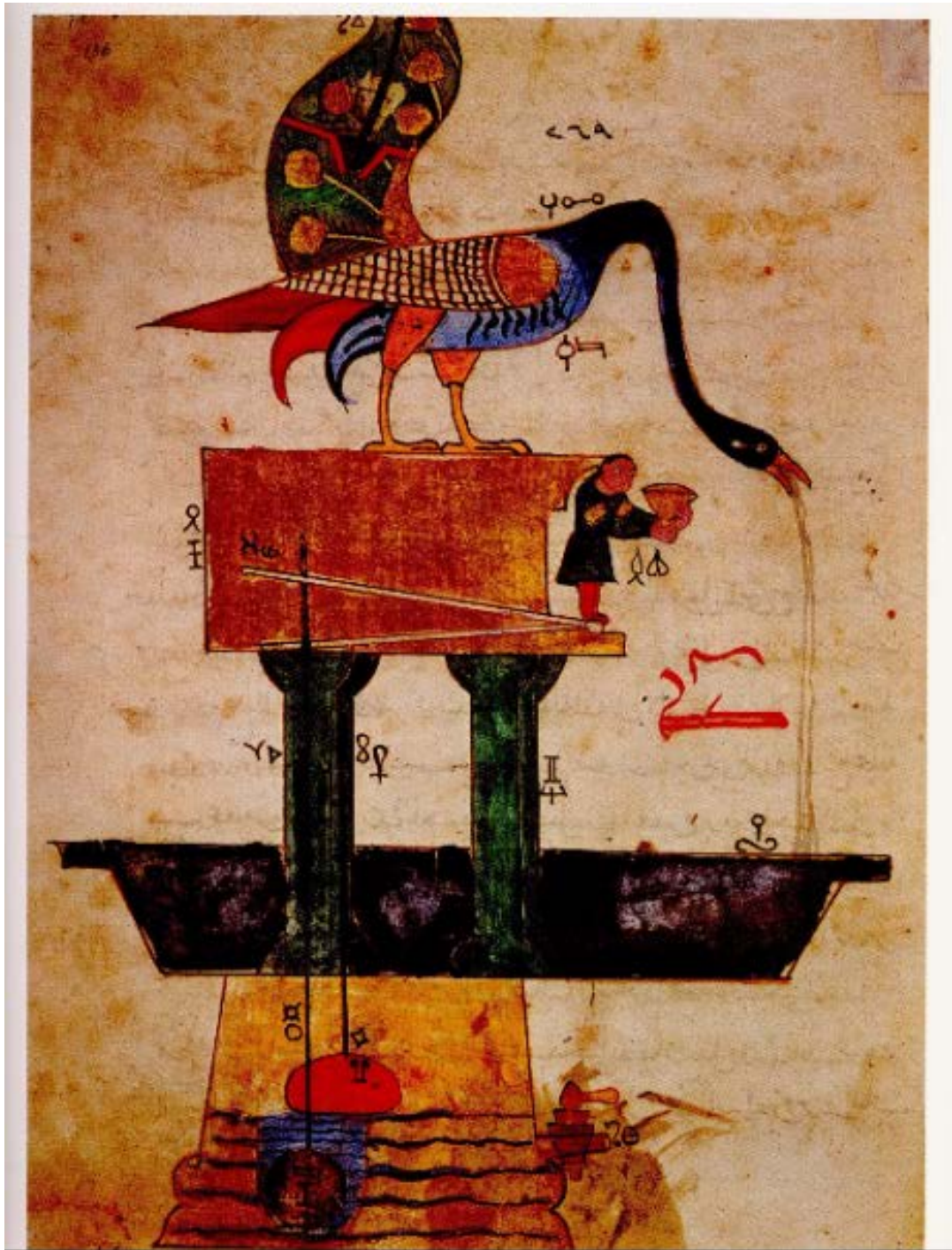
Objective Response to Islamic Illuminated work

*Select an artwork from imagery below and read the contextual information:



Quran. Illuminated manuscript in Arabic on paper. [Persia, ca. 1600].

The Quran, the sacred book of Islam, presents the text of God's revelation that the prophet Muhammad (ca. 570-632) received through the angel Gabriel. This Quran is Bridwell Library's most important example of the rich tradition of manuscript illumination in the Islamic world. Its 388 leaves exhibit the precise and graceful Arabic calligraphy that was customary of every Quran manuscript. Each page bears a unique decorative pattern executed with lapis lazuli (an expensive blue pigment imported from Afghanistan), other bright pigments, and burnished gold leaf. Similarly, each of the 114 *surahs* (chapters) of the Quran is separated by a gilded decorative panel.



Wash-basin in the form of a peacock: Illustrations from al-Jazari, *Kitab fi Ma'rifat al-Hiyal al-Handisayya* f. 136a, 33.5 x 22.5 cm.

Water from the reservoir in the peacock's tail (which must have made the wash-stand dangerously top-heavy when full) flowed out of the peacock's beak when the servant surreptitiously pulled a ring at the tip of its tail (no longer visible because the page has been trimmed). As the level of the water in the pedestal rose, a rod bearing a slave with a pot of alkali was pushed up and brought the slave forward. As the water-level rose further, a float attached to another rod – this time bearing a slave with a towel for the user to dry his hands – came forward.

Many of al-Jazzari's inventions seem scarcely to have been worth the trouble and expense of construction. Nor are they all original: the tradition of such automata, which goes back to Hellenistic Alexandria, was introduced to ninth-century Baghdad by the Banu Musa, three brothers who contributed generously to the progress of science at the Abbasid Court.

Name: _____

1. What bias did you use in your initial response to the work?

2. How did your perception set impact your reaction to the work?

3. Think about your subjective response to the work and tell me HOW and WHY this impacted your initial response to the artwork:

4. Using the Objective criteria we developed in class as well as the information on Islam, critique the work:
Criteria for Looking at Art Objectively

5. How does contextual info help you in objective analysis of work?

6. How does the objective aesthetic response deepen your understanding and engagement with the work?

Name: _____

Spread of Islam via Illuminated Manuscripts

Based upon your classwork today, think about the questions below and answer to the best of your ability:

1. What cultural influences impacted the development of Illuminated Manuscripts and Qur'ans?

2. What role did the illuminated Qur'ans have upon spreading Islam?

3. Illuminated Qur'ans were written in Arabic: how did this have a unifying effect on the diverse cultures who are Muslim?

4. Besides Qur'ans, what were other types of Islamic Illuminated Manuscripts?

5. What characteristics do you see in Islamic Illuminated manuscripts that are distinctive to Islamic traditions?



"Perception" Graffiti artist eL Seed. Zairaeb community in Cairo, Egypt. March 2016

<http://elseed-art.com/el-seed-perception-zairaeb-egypt/>

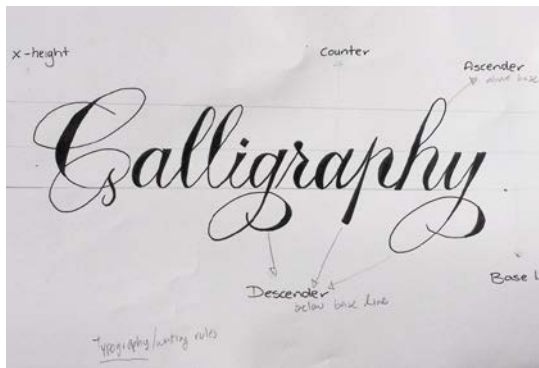
What is Calligraphy?

Read the following article and respond to the following questions in your sketchbook/visual journal:

- How does the author define *calligraphy*?
- What characteristics are part of the calligraphy art form?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author? explain
- What would you add to the information?
- How is calligraphy similar across the cultural traditions discussed in the article?
- How is calligraphy different across the cultural traditions discussed in the article?
- Why calligraphy?
- In what ways do contemporary artists use calligraphy?
- In what ways could you use calligraphy?

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS CALLIGRAPHY

Art History • Andrey V.



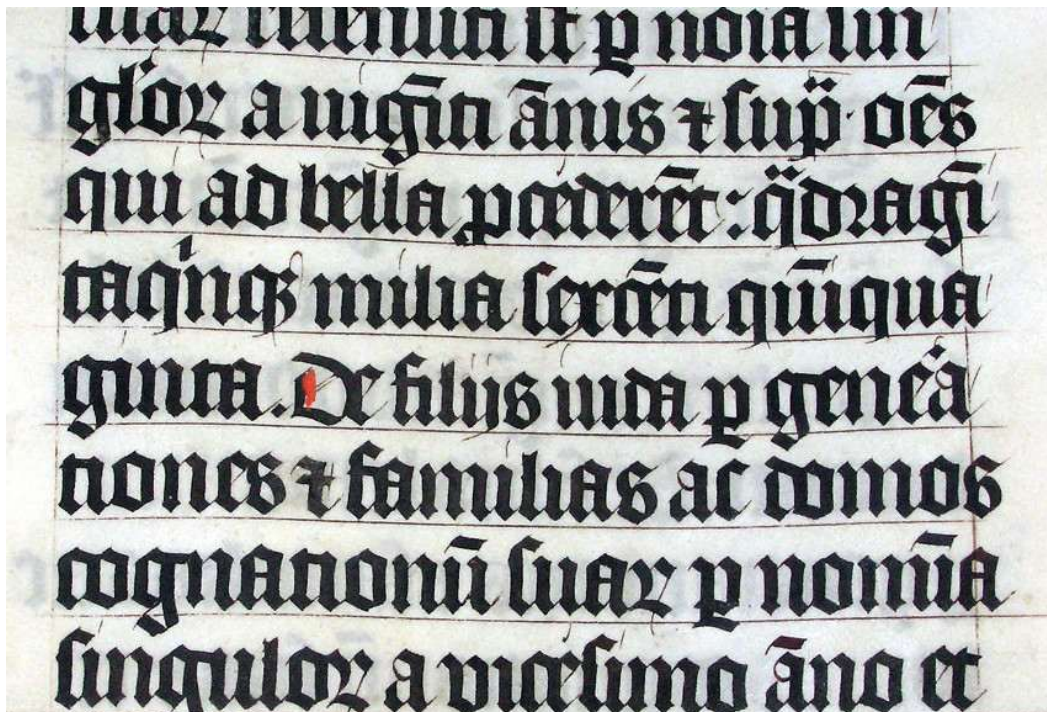
We'll start with a seemingly simple question: what is calligraphy, exactly? Although many will nod their heads in confirmation that they know the correct answer, putting it into words is a much bigger challenge. And, in all honesty, it's not surprising that many can't provide a reliable explanation of what calligraphy is as modern times definitely blurred the line of this discipline's description. In fact, the introduction of printing machines has been slowly deteriorating the reputation of calligraphy as everyone who needed something written usually opted for the more effective, faster and cheaper method. Such a situation only escalated with the inventions of home printers and computers. However, calligraphy managed to survive all the difficulties history placed before it and is still regarded as a valid artistic discipline despite flying a bit under the radar for centuries. In the remainder of this article, we will attempt to clarify what calligraphy exactly is and what it is not, as well as take a look at some contemporary occurrences that dictate the current direction of the lettering craft.



Traditional Equipment – Image via newzealandcalligraphers.com

What Calligraphy Is Not

The dictionary definition states that calligraphy is a skill of handwriting, or even something more vague as simply stating that it's beautiful writing. Although undeniably true, these interpretations do no justice to calligraphy as this craft is much more than just well-performed penmanship. In fact, it is these half-hearted theories that are dimming both the value and characteristics of the calligraphic discipline. Bear in mind that the primary goals of handwriting are being quick, easily written and accurately read. Beauty, personality and artistic impact all fall second to these demands and are not at all important in handwriting as clarity and speed. On the other hand, these are some of the key features calligraphy strives to achieve. Another common and obscure explanation is that calligraphy is the process of making ornamentally decorated letters. This is, as well, partially true as dressing up the pages with different forms of decoration is a big part of the discipline. However, this is also just a segment of calligraphy as a whole and is far from a complete definition of the entire discipline.

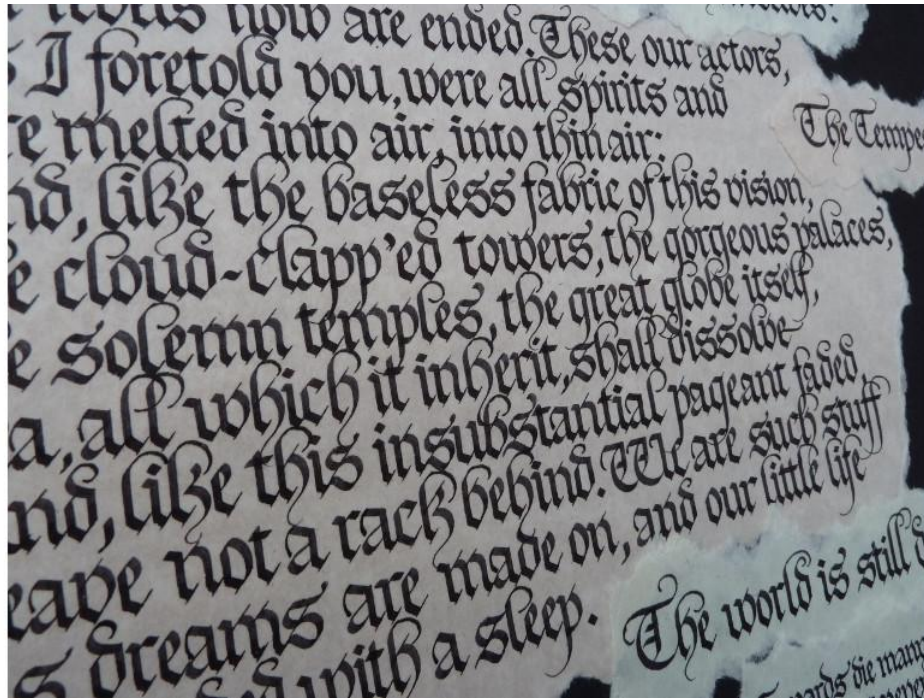


Malmesbury Bible – Image via [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malmesbury_Bible.jpg)

So... What Is Calligraphy?

Calligraphy is the artistic process of forming beautiful symbols by hand and arranging them in a way that inscribes words that possess integrity, harmony, some sort of ancestry and rhythm. In this definition, integrity represents admirable proportions and design of letters and symbols. Harmony is a pleasing relationship between the words, characters and single letter's elements. Ancestry refers to the preservation of heritage of letter-shapes, materials and techniques which calligraphers use. Finally, rhythm is a deliberate repetition that creates feelings of pattern and emphasis within the eyes of the viewer. On their own, any of these factors do not amount to a valid calligraphic discipline – only when they are all assembled together does the entire process start to take on a shape of calligraphy.

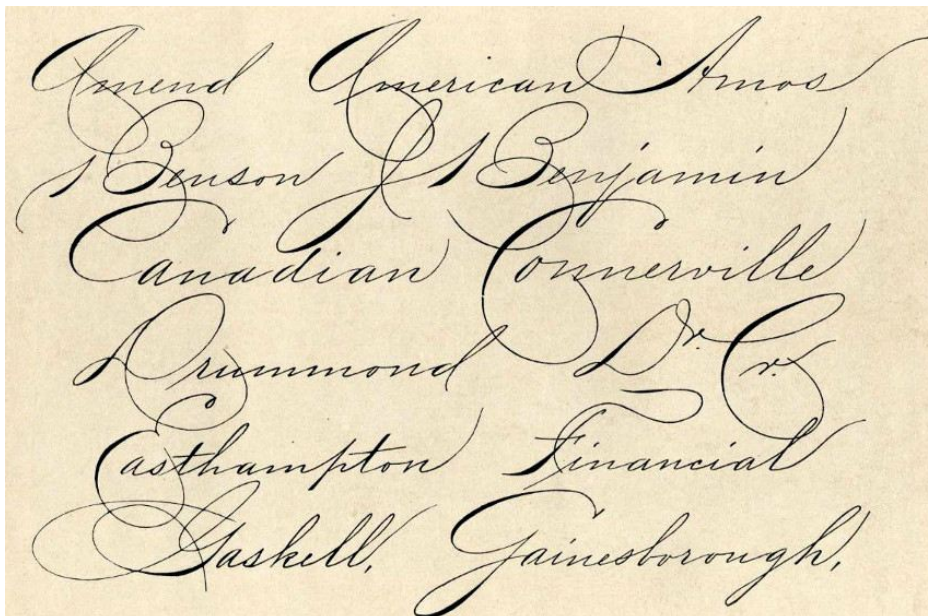
Many calligraphers agree that there is another ingredient in the mix of perfect lettering and that is creative fire.^[1] A bit puzzling and nebulous, this can be explained as a slightly mysterious life and individuality of any piece of art. This individual stamp of the calligrapher's personality on the work is ultimately what makes calligraphy a valid member of arts, it's the key aspect that separates it from conventional penmanship and any machine standardized letter form. Calligraphy aims to produce a reaction, just like any quality piece of sculpture or painting, its goals are to invoke a deeper meaning and communicate with the viewer on both the linguistic and creative level. Although a bit too metaphorical to be considered a valid definition, many experts recognize that reading calligraphy is the closest way one can get to hearing music with eyes. Interestingly, this may be the most precise explanation of what calligraphic creative fire actually is.



Gothic Calligraphy – Image via gixturner.com

Different Types of Calligraphy as Unique Lettering

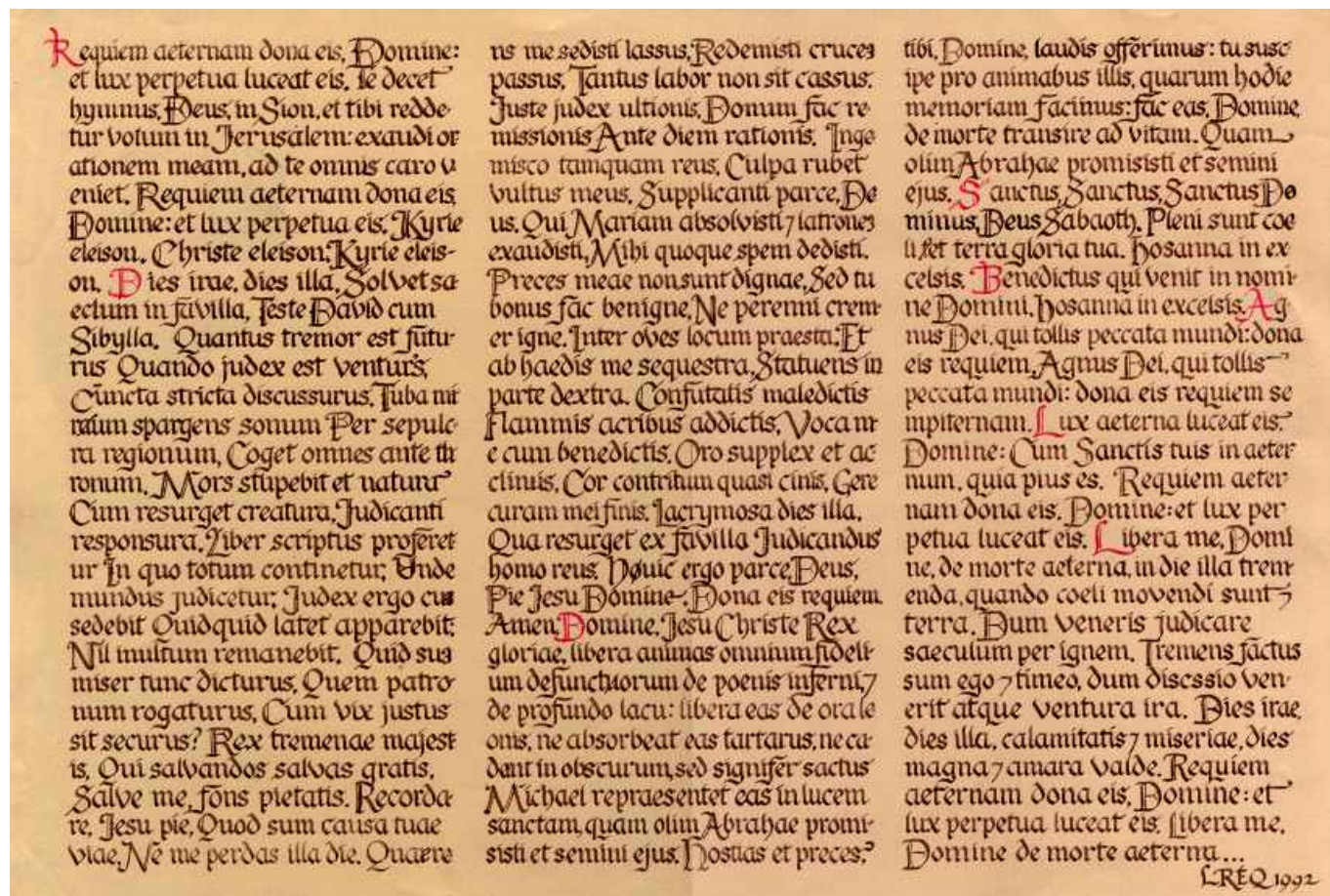
Fully analyzing the entire history of calligraphy is an almost unsurmountable challenge, one that would take thousands upon thousands of pages to be considered comprehensive. Since the dawn of civilization, every single community had its own variant of calligraphy, all of which were founded between a mix of necessity and creative desires. All of them had differing styles and tools used. Calligraphers are very aware of such ancestry and it plays a major role in contemporary calligraphy which is shaped by a long, inventive heritage. In fact, imitating historical handwriting is a wide and encouraged method of achieving calligraphic success. Learning how to write in historical styles is an excellent means of training both the hand and the eye. It should be noted that mere copying of ancient handwriting does not represent the creative purpose of calligraphy. However, it does provide both a fine starting point for beginners and an interesting exercise for those with more experience. Many specialists agree that calligraphy can be classified into four broad categories: Western Calligraphy, Eastern Asian Calligraphy, Southern Asian Calligraphy and Islamic Calligraphy.^[2]



Quill Writing Alphabet – Image via pinterest.com

Western Calligraphy

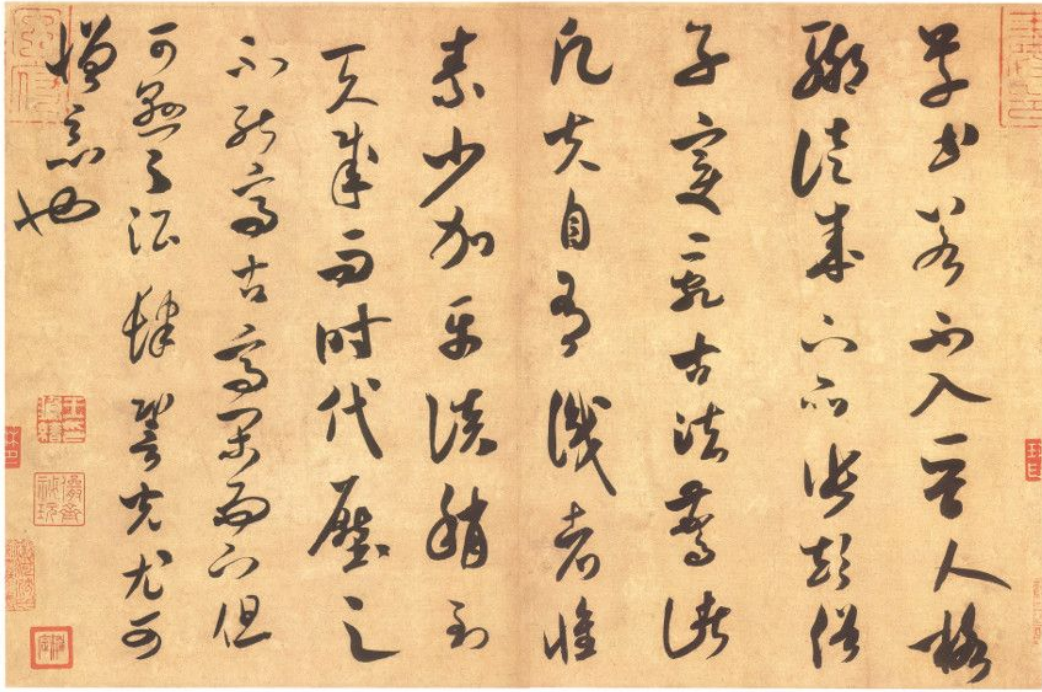
Western Calligraphy emerged in the 10th century and still continues to evolve to this day.^[3] Known for its strict rules and geometric patterns, this popular style is one of the most prominent example of calligraphic art. The most recognizable use of the Western lettering is in the Latin script which underwent numerous drastic changes over the centuries as the ruling dynasties switched places. The humanist minuscule of the Renaissance was one of the crucial moments of this style, as well as the 17th-century Batarde and the English script about a hundred years younger. Traditionally, Western Calligraphy's tools include a flat-balled or round-nipped pen, a brush, water-based ink, high-quality paper or parchment, a knife for removing work and templates.



Latin Calligraphy – Image via holoweb.net

Eastern Asian Calligraphy

This particular style of lettering encompasses the calligraphy of China, Japan and Korea. Every single dynasty that ruled these lands had its own variants of calligraphy techniques and visuals. This style is easily recognizable as it's not difficult to distinguish Eastern symbols that have the purpose of entire words. Logically, their manuscripts are much shorter than those found in the Western territories. Eastern Asian Calligraphy is valued as a very important heritage in its respected countries and all of them dedicate much effort to making sure the local calligraphic techniques are well preserved. Technically speaking, Eastern calligraphers use paperweights and desk pads beside the usual writing equipment.



Eastern Asian Calligraphy – Image via 9610.com

Southern Asian Calligraphy

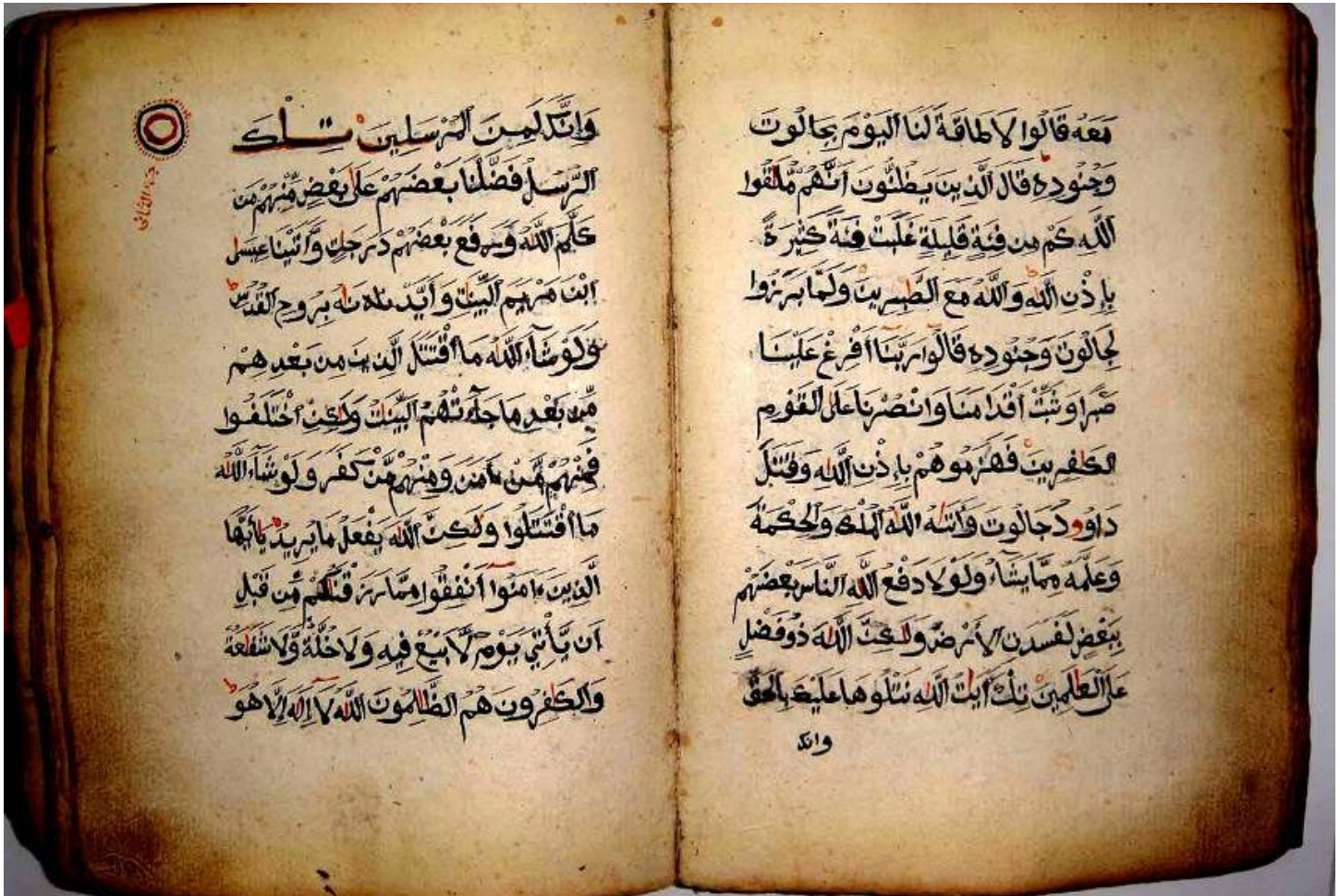
This collection of styles include the practices emerging from the territories of India, Nepal and Tibet. These manuscripts were widely used for various Buddhist and secular purposes and could be seen being used in a lot of instances, starting from their prayer wheels to the letters of the Dalai Lama. With some of the examples going back to inscriptions in stone, pieces of Southern Asian Calligraphy can be described as some of the most ancient lettering practices ever discovered. Indian calligraphy was the most influential of the three and it had used many unconventional methods over the course of its existence, such as burnt mud, smoke treated palm leaves, copper and birch barks.

প্রকৌশলী
হেঁপাহ মোৰ পলোৰাঁ নাই
ৰামপ্রসাদ সাউ

Indian Calligraphy – Image via pinterest.com

Islamic Calligraphy

This style can be found as an essential element of Islamic art.^[4] It uses unique geometric patterns and the best examples of these can be found on mosque walls. Islamic Calligraphy is considered to be the most beautiful example of lettering by many and it has evolved along with the progression of the religion and the Arabic language. It should be noted that Muslims view calligraphy as the highest kind of artistic expression since it is observed as the most efficient means of communicating with the spiritual world. The Ottoman Era is considered to be the peak of development of the Islamic Calligraphy as not many aspects of lettering has changed since then, especially in more conservative circles of societies. However, modern times saw many alterations made to traditional lettering, resulting in a unique contemporary Arabic calligraphy.



udanese Type Calligraphy – Image via bp.com

The Modern Era of Calligraphy Writing

After printing became ubiquitous during the 15th century, the production of illuminated manuscripts began their fast-paced decline in production. However, the rise of printing did not mean the ultimate end of calligraphy which retained a number of practitioners over the centuries. The modern revival of calligraphy began at the end of the 19th century and was influenced by the aesthetics and philosophy of William Morris who spurred the Arts and Crafts movement. The main figure of this calligraphic renaissance was Edward Johnston. He studied numerous manuscripts held at the British Museum which allowed him to teach courses in calligraphy, sharing his fascination with anyone interested. In his free time, Johnston was also designing typefaces, many of which are still used today. By doing so, Edward single-handedly revived artistic penmanship and lettering. His efforts influenced further generations typographers and calligraphers, having a strong impact on the works of Graily Hewitt, Stanley Morison, Eric Gill and Anna Simons.

An interesting feature that modern calligraphy introduced was that the letters were not always intended to be readable.^[5] This characteristic did not rely on any historical practice at all, as all older manuscripts and similar documents had to be understandable to at least some audiences. Yet, by closing these particular doors to the past, practitioners of calligraphy opened new grounds which invigorated numerous experiments in the discipline. As a further consequence of such an abstract concept, many visual artists of the modern era were inspired to include calligraphic elements in their work, such as Cy Twombly, Chaz Bojorquez and William S. Burroughs. Some younger artists also come to mind, including the likes of Patrick Hartl and Hongyu Zhang. Naturally, calligraphy found an interesting common ground with street expression as graffiti are a perfect technique for one to practice stylistic lettering. Some of the finest graffiti calligraphers are Niels Shoe Meulman, El Seed, Retna and Rostarr.



Niels Shoe Meulman – A Word Is – Image via tomthebackroadstraveller.com

Resource:

<http://www.widewalls.ch/magazine-category/art-history/>



Illuminated manuscript



A1one work about Syrian war

Name: _____

Compare/Contrast Illuminated Manuscripts and Contemporary Islamic Graffiti

1. List ALL the visual similarities between the two artworks.

2. Are there similarities in the function each artwork serves? (the reason they were created) Justify answer.

3. What role does calligraphy have in both?

4. What role does illumination have in both? Can we say there is illumination in Graffiti?

5. How do Illuminated Manuscripts differ from Contemporary Islamic Graffiti?