

Islamic Geometric Design

Art & Design

A geometric tradition built from compass and straightedge, with rules of its own.

Pattern systems developed across the Islamic world from about the ninth century, generated with compass and straightedge from a repeating grid, alongside calligraphy and vegetal arabesque.

FROM

about the 9th century

TOOLS

compass, straightedge

- Three strands: geometry, calligraphy, arabesque.
- Girih strapwork on 5-, 6-, 8- and 12-fold stars.
- Every pattern is constructible with two tools.
- Repeat units tile the plane without leaving a gap.
- Muqarnas carries the geometry into three dimensions.
- Figurative art exists, mainly in books and secular work.

LOOK FOR IT

A twelve-fold girih pattern begins as one circle divided into twelve equal parts.

Contested: the popular claim that the Alhambra contains all 17 wallpaper groups is disputed. The geometry stands regardless.