

linear printmaking technique that we have. In short, though we have many newer techniques, we don't have any better techniques.

Look at any contemporary process—ink jet, offset lithograph, an ultra-high resolution smartphone screen, anything—with a magnifying glass. All modern processes are made up of broken points of some kind. When you look closely, every single digital image becomes a flat ghost of a grid, a sophisticated but disjointed and lifeless mosaic.

Now look at a genuine engraving with a magnifying glass. I think you will be struck by the sheer physicality of the image. Lines don't dissolve into broken dots! They remain lines no matter how many times you magnify the image. The paper itself bears witness to the immense pressure needed to print an engraving in the embossed edge on all four sides. The lines in an engraving range from thin, spidery lines the thickness of a human hair to thick worms of ink rising above the paper. The slightest change in pressure of the engraver's hand corresponds to variations of width and thickness of every printed line. The ink isn't flat, but sculptural, alive, much more so than even a pen and ink drawing.

For me, turning off all digital devices and using the tools of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century internet lets me make tangible analog multiples that can be spread all over the world, but retain the intimate sculptural physicality that is so lacking our image-saturated world.



ISLAMIC ART AND THE LDS FAITH

Lisa DeLong

My first encounter with Islamic art was a photograph of the Alhambra: architecture transfigured by light, into light. It expressed a spiritual reality in a way I had not seen before.

As I began researching this and other jewels of architecture and craftsmanship, I became interested in how the art and architecture of Islam acted as a direct extension of the faith. There seemed to be no separation between the life of belief and the life of action. Both sacred and secular buildings were inscribed with words of scripture, something that recalled a time in LDS history when our community buildings—not just the temples—carried the inscription “Holiness to the Lord.”

Eventually, I found myself at The Prince’s School of Traditional Arts in London, where I began to study principles of design as viewed from a traditional perspective. Several of my courses were taught with reference to the Islamic world, where many of the traditional crafts are still being practiced by living artisans.

The arts of the Islamic world are frequently demoted and dismissed as “merely decorative” or as somehow lesser than the fine art traditions of the West. This dismissal is based on a profound misunderstanding of the purposes and application of art in Islamic culture.

Islamic art is founded on three visual languages: the calligraphic, the biomorphic, and the geometric. The knowledge of how to apply these languages within the crafts is handed down within an apprenticeship system. Each of these disciplines requires decades to master.

Calligraphy is the art form considered to have the most direct connection to revelation: the scribe works directly with the word of God as revealed to the prophet Mohammed. There are many different scripts, each requiring adherence to specific laws of proportion. The ink is ideally made from the soot gathered from mosque lamps, which are perpetually surrounded by the prayers of the faithful as the oil burns. The mastery of calligraphy requires not only consummate skill and discipline within a tradition, but a profound knowledge of scripture and hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammed).

In the biomorphic language, floral and foliate elements are highly stylized. A “realistic” depiction of a rose shows only the essence of a particular bloom seen from a specific vantage point at a fixed point in time, whereas a stylized bloom reveals something regarding the essence

of all roses in their most divine manifestation. Biomorphing adornment also alludes to the beauties of paradise and specifically to the Tree of Life. The floral language adapts to the constraints of the medium, but certain principles always govern its forms. The composition always has an origin or focal point, such as a vase, seed, roots, or cloud from which the rest emanates. All growth moves outward from this point, unfurling and spiralling in a symphony of leaves, buds, and blossoms. This acknowledgement of an origin for a foliate composition is an acknowledgement of the Source, of the Origin, of the Divine.

The biomorphing and geometric languages are complementary and inseparable. They echo the organic and crystalline aspects of Creation. Their proportions and forms are intended to reflect the Divine ordering of the cosmos. In *The Need for a Sacred Science*, Dr. S. H. Nasr writes, “This order is, moreover, related to an incredible harmony which in the technically musical sense pervades all the realms of nature from the stars to subatomic particles. The proportions of the parts of animals and plants, of crystal structures or of the planetary movements, when studied mathematically from the point of view of traditional or Pythagorean mathematics, reveal the presence of a harmony pervading all orders of the universe. It is as if the whole cosmos were music congealed into the very substance of things, which not only have their existence according to the laws of harmony but also move and live according to the rhythm of that cosmic dance.”¹

The third visual language in Islamic art is geometry. Geometry’s presence is implicit within the art and architecture of civilization, perhaps most conspicuously in edifices built for worship. It governs decorative elements and organizes spaces of human activity, endowing art and architecture with sacred significance and directing heart and mind to the Creator.

1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (New York: SUNY Press, 1993) 120.

Meditation on the circle and its expression of the oneness of God lie at the heart of Islamic geometric pattern. Circles are drawn with compasses, a tool which combines both rest (the fixed central point) and activity (the inscribing of the circle's circumference). This echoes the layout of sacred sites where a temple or shrine serves as the fixed point around which the rest of human activity centered.

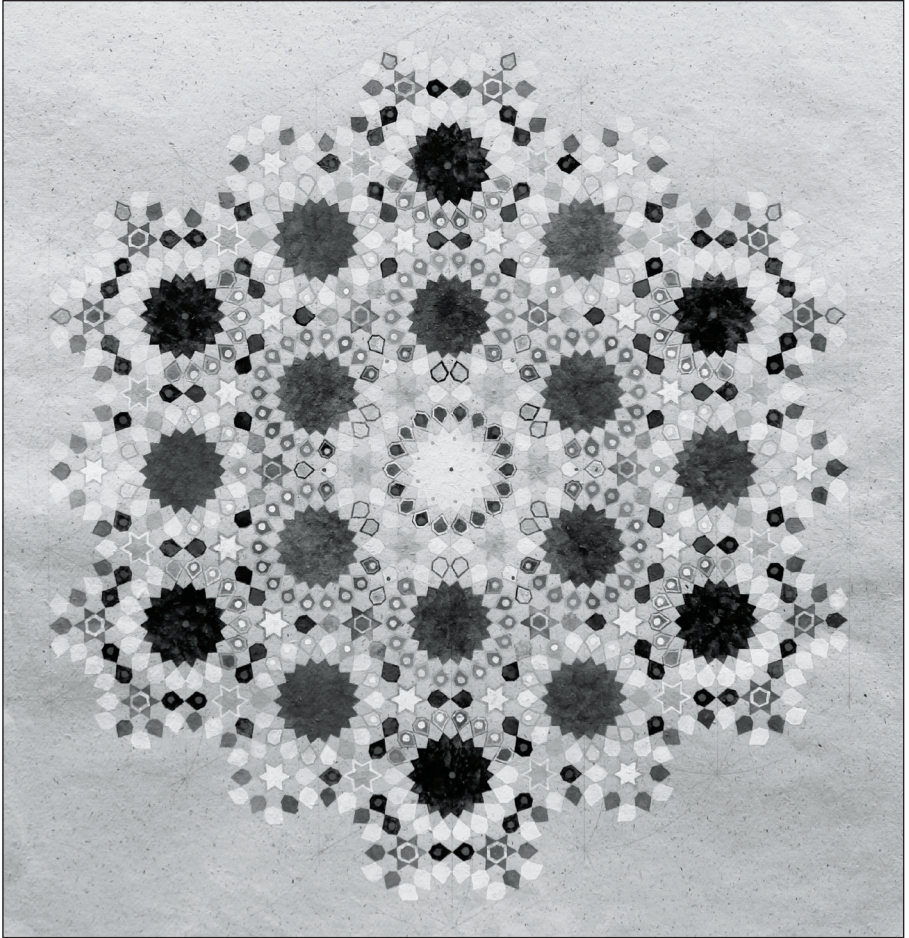
The circle is closely associated with wholeness as it is entirely self-contained and generated by movement centered around the navel of a single point. In all cultures, the circle is considered a symbol of the Divine, the heavens, and all things celestial. It is associated with eternity, completeness, truth, inclusion, governance, and perfection. All points on the circumference exist in a unified relationship to the center. It is a perfect symbol of unity and wholeness. The circle operates as a limitation, an enclosure, a boundary, and a protection. In the King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith likens the eternal spirit of man to the ring from his finger: neither have a beginning and both continue one eternal round.

The square is likewise considered a symbol of earth. The Brethren of Purity, a group of Muslim philosophers based in tenth-century Baghdad, discuss the four-fold nature of the created world, and ascribe various groupings of four in nature to God's intention and creation: the four physical natures, which are hot, cold, dry, and moist; the four elements which are fire, air, water, and earth; the four humours, the four seasons, the four cardinal directions, the four winds, and the four directions.

In architecture, the circle and square are manifested in three dimensional form as the cube and the sphere. These two shapes do not tessellate without a transition: to set a dome on a square structure requires an architectural transition. This transition is most commonly octagonal. The octagon thus occupies a symbolic space which mediates between heaven and earth. There is an architectural inevitability to the use of this shape as it allows the volume of the square base to transform beautifully into the realms of the heavenly spheres. It is both structurally logical

and aesthetically pleasing. This geometric symbolism of transition finds great expression in the Islamic arts.

For a Latter-day Saint, rich inspiration can be found in the processes that lead to the beautiful geometric patterns of Islamic art and architecture. No matter how complex or simple the design, the discipline of constructing a pattern begins with the use of a compass. Its point punctures a navel into the center of the paper and the composition is circumscribed, divided, and beautified. Layers of pattern merge and diverged, creating microcosm and macrocosm, reconciled one to another in harmony and unity.



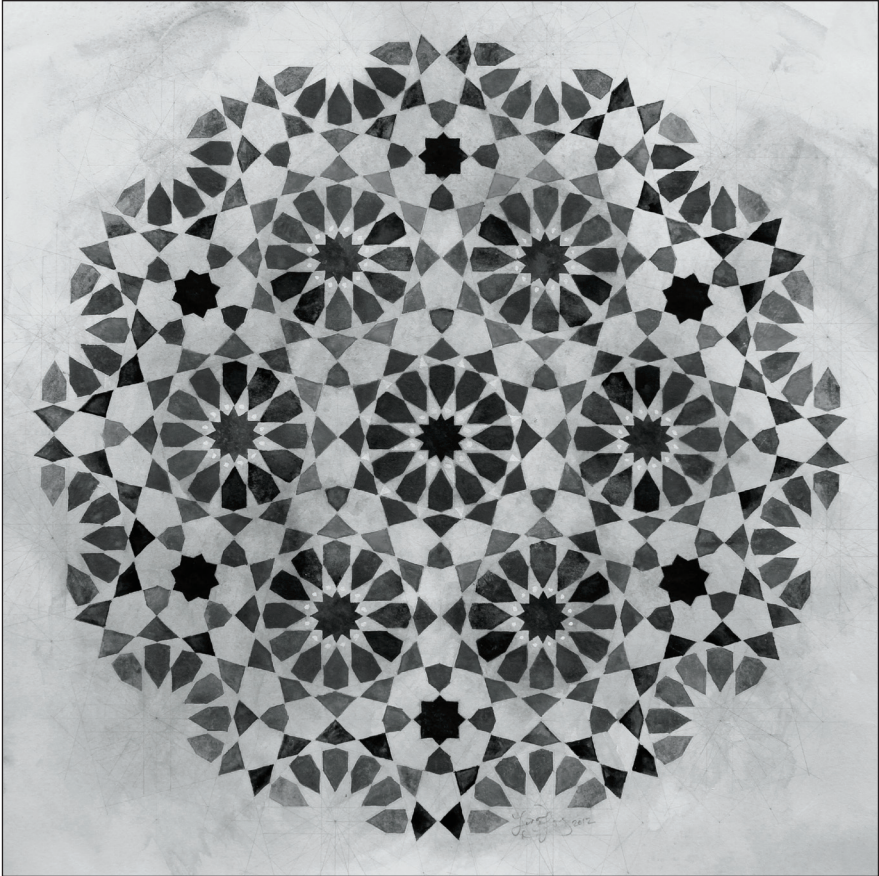
Lisa DeLong

By Jove!

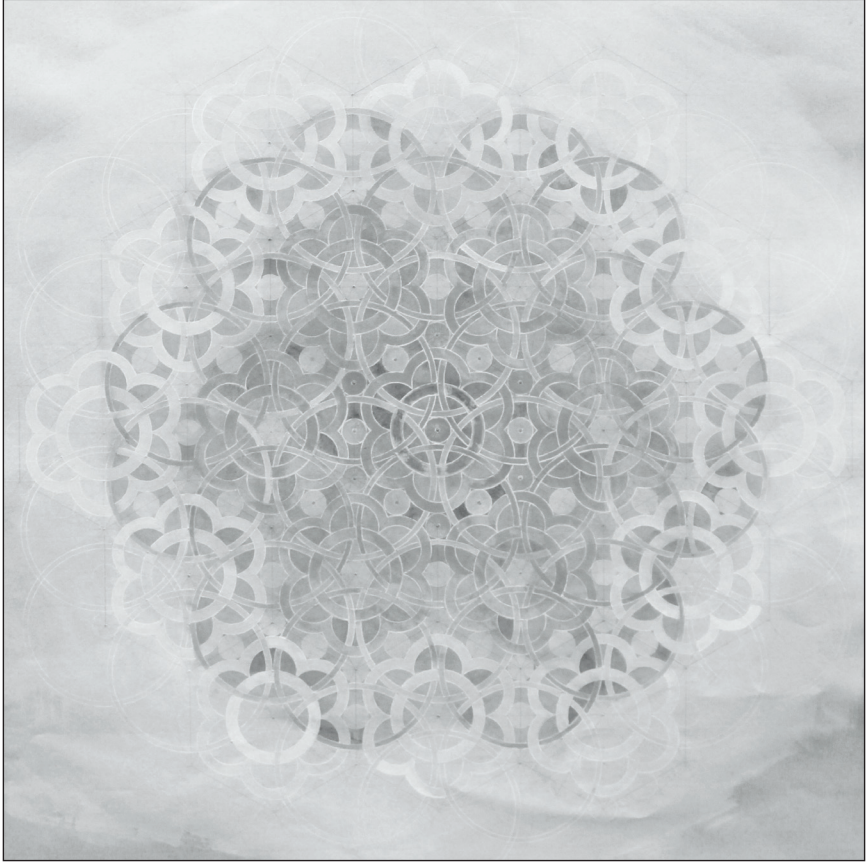
Lead tin yellow and other handmade watercolours on

Khadi paper

2014–2016



Lisa DeLong
Gathering
Handmade watercolour on Arches hotpress paper
2001–2014



Lisa DeLong
Revelation and Echoes
Watercolour, gouache, and Rotring ink on Nideggan paper
2014–2016