

Jordan's Contribution to the on-Line 'Discover Islamic Art Project' *

Jordan was chosen to represent Islamic Art in the Umayyad period in the Mediterranean countries, in collaboration with the Islamic Art Museum at the Pergamon Museum, Germany. A committee of curators from Department of Antiques of Jordan and experts from the Friends of Archaeology was appointed to select items from Jordanian museums, as well as monuments, for inclusion in the project.

Permanent Collection

35 sites and monuments and 50 artefacts from museums, all dating to Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods were selected, mainly from the holdings of the Jordan Archaeological Museum at 'Ammān Citadel, but also from the Mādabā, 'Ajlūn, al-'Aqaba, Umm Qays and Sarāya Archaeological Museums, the Museum of Jordanian Heritage at Yarmouk University and the Jordan National Bank Numismatic Museum.

Virtual Exhibitions (FIG. 1)

Jordan contributed to three virtual exhibitions:

1- The Umayyads (FIG. 2)

Concentrating on the Umayyad dynasty, 36 museum items and 20 monuments were selected from Jordan to reflect Umayyad art and architecture. A smaller quantity of material was also contributed by institutions in Germany, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Italy, Morocco, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Following bilateral meetings between experts from Jordan and Germany and discussion of all Umayyad items and monuments, five main themes were identified as representing and reflecting Umayyad art, which is a combination of decorative styles and motifs drawn from different artistic traditions.

These themes are:

Administrative reform (FIG. 3): During the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, a policy of administrative and political centralisation was initiated, including the urbanisation of the administration and the establishment of a standard Arabic system of coinage. One monument and ten objects from Jordan, Syria, Italy, Morocco, the United Kingdom and Turkey were selected to represent the administrative reforms of the Umayyad period. These objects are mainly coins, but also the lower part of statue, fresco paintings, a milestone and bronze weights.

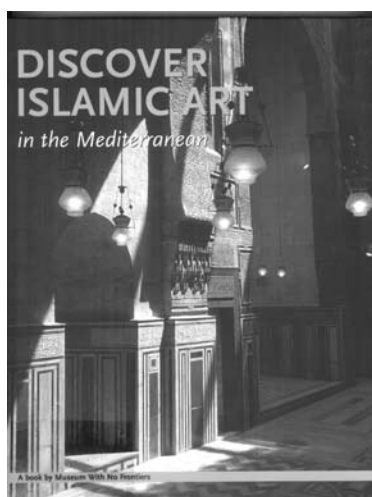
Umayyad official patronage (FIG. 4): This theme is introduced by architecture, including religious buildings (mosques) palaces and palatial administrative complexes. Eleven monuments from Palestine, Syria and Jordan represent this theme, including the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa mosque, Umayyad mosque in Damascus, al-Qaṣṭal minaret, audience hall at 'Ammān Citadel, Umm al-Walid complex, desert palaces in Jordan (Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt, Qaṣr al-Kharānah and Qaṣr al-Mushatta), Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī and Khirbat al-Mafjar in Palestine. Three museum objects were selected from Jordan and Germany, specifically a piece of carved limestone from al-Qaṣṭal, a lintel from Umm al-Walid and the al-Mushatta façade.

Formation of Islamic Art (FIG. 5): Umayyad art is usually considered to be a continuation of the late Antique art of the fourth century AD, with a combination of Sassanian, Byzantine and Coptic elements. The fifteen objects which represent this theme are drawn from a wide range of material, including a marble frieze, the interior decoration of the Dome of the Rock, wooden panels, decorative

* <http://www.discoverislamicart.org>



Discover Islamic Art in the Mediterranean



Welcome to the Virtual Exhibitions

- > The Umayyads
- > The Abbasids
- > The Fatimids
- > The Atabegs and Ayyubids
- > The Mamluks
- > The Ottomans
- > The Muslim West
- > Pilgrimage
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- > Echoes of Paradise: the Garden of Islamic Art
- > Geometric Decoration
- > Al-Franj: the Crusaders in the Mediterranean
- > The Normans in Sicily
- > Mudéjar Art
- > Western Influence in Ottoman Art




This project is funded by the European Union

1. Virtual exhibitions.

stones, mosaic floors, fresco paintings, ivory, pottery and metal vessels. The selected objects were drawn from participating museums in Palestine, Syria, Germany, Jordan and Egypt.

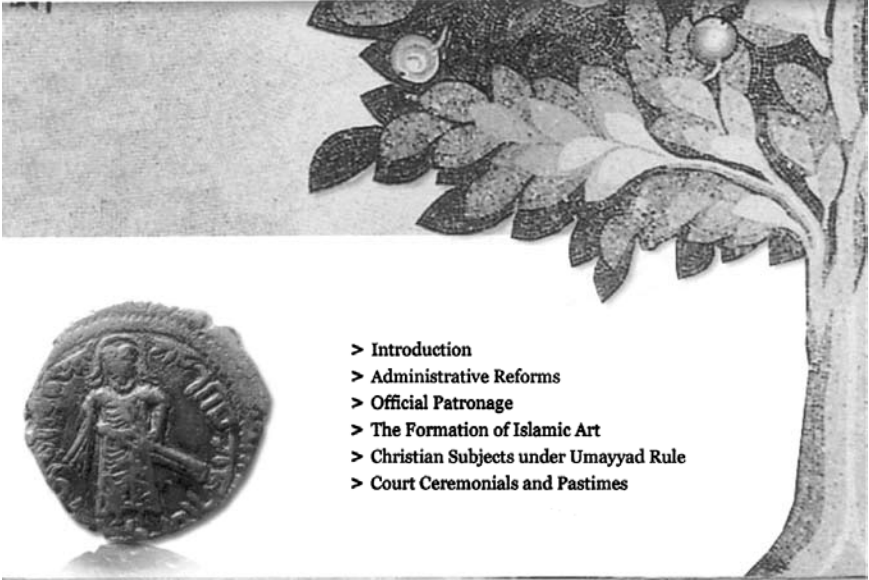

Christian subjects under Umayyad rule (FIG. 6): Christian buildings remained intact under the Islamic rule of the Umayyads: 46 existing churches continued in use and eight new ones were built

and paved with mosaics. Influenced by the new socio-religious conditions, the artistic traditions of Christian communities underwent some change: representations of humans and animals were gradually replaced with crosses and geometric and floral motifs, which were created by the churches or at least under their supervision. On the other hand, Christian artisans continued to produce artifacts




The Umayyads

'Umayyad art is a combination of decorative styles and motifs drawn from different artistic traditions.'

- > Introduction
- > Administrative Reforms
- > Official Patronage
- > The Formation of Islamic Art
- > Christian Subjects under Umayyad Rule
- > Court Ceremonials and Pastimes

2. The Umayyads.




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The Umayyads


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Administrative Reforms



'Each province continued in the tradition of the previous regime.'

For the first 70 years of their rule the Muslims made no attempt to introduce a new, Arabic-speaking administrative system for the whole of the dominion, rather each province continued in the tradition of the previous regime. In Syria the language of the revenue department was Greek, while its administration was still in the hands of local Christians. In the fiscal administration, however, the Arabs introduced an innovative system according to which all fully fledged members of the new polity were entitled to regular stipends ('*ata'*); a system that was financed by the taxes of the local populous. The main taxes were land tax (*kharaaj*), a fixed rate in kind or money and the poll tax (*jizya*), which was imposed on every mature non-Muslim and means tested according to income. Priests, monks, and the disabled were exempt from paying *jizya*.




Citadel of Amman (general view)
Around hejira 110 / AD 728
Umayyad
Amman, Jordan

The citadel was an important Umayyad administrative centre comprising the infrastructure necessary for administration of the province.

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3. Administrative reform.







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Official Patronage

'Architectural patronage was a demonstration of the power of the new faith.'

For the Umayyads architectural patronage was a demonstration of the power of the new faith in general and their own dynasty in particular. Umayyad patronage included major religious buildings such as the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and the Great Mosque of Damascus.

The mosque as an architectural type unique to Islam was created during the pre-Umayyad period on the basis of the House of the Prophet in Medina. The Umayyads contributed new features that in time became characteristic components of every mosque: the *minaret* (symbolic of the presence of Islam and from which the call to prayer is made); the *mihrab* (to symbolise the presence of the Prophet) and the *maqsura* (an enclosed space reserved for the *imam*, the leader of prayers, or caliph) next to the *mihrab*.



Two carved limestone blocks
Hegira first quarter of the 2nd century / AD first half of the 8th century
Umayyad


Museum of Jordanian Heritage, Yarmouk University
Irbid, Jordan

The palace complex of al-Qastal aptly demonstrates the evolution of a typical Umayyad decorative repertoire of profuse stone-cut geometric and vegetal motifs.

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4. Umayyad official patronage.







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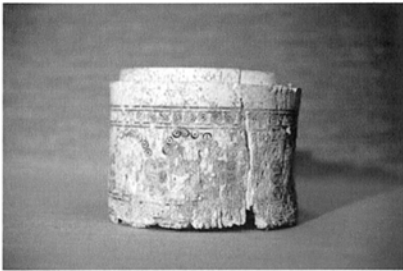
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The Formation of Islamic Art

'The juxtaposition and combination of decorative styles drawn from different artistic traditions.'

In this formative phase one cannot speak strictly of a full-blown Islamic art as it is the juxtaposition and innovative combination of various decorative styles and motifs drawn from different artistic traditions that produced such striking results and made them appear different. The eclectic art of this early period is different from that which developed in later centuries; it lacks the predilection for abstract and infinite designs which became characteristic of later Islamic art. Islamic Art in this early phase might be considered as a continuation of Late Antique art of the AD 4th-6th centuries.



Ivory container (pyxis)
Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century
Umayyad

Jordan Archaeological Museum
Amman, Jordan

Simple geometrical designs, such as that seen on this pyxis, or intricate architectural and geometric patterns are common features seen in all periods of Islamic art.


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5. Formation of Islamic Art.

with Christian symbols, such as lamps and crosses, for religious and secular use. Six objects selected to represent this theme from Jordan include mosaic floors from Mādabā, Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, Masūh

and Mā'in, in addition to pottery lamps and bronze cross. Two churches from Palestine (the Church of Nativity and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), along with a fresco fragment from Damascus, were







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Christian Subjects under Umayyad Rule

Christian communities remained prosperous and artisans continued to produce numerous artefacts.

The conquest of the Middle-Eastern region that arches across the northern part of the Syrian Desert and extends to the Nile Valley encompassing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers – in modern times known as the Fertile Crescent – was undertaken in the name of Islam. The period of Umayyad rule that followed brought fewer changes for the Christian population than is popularly thought, for while Muslim communities were concentrated in the cities and in newly established towns as a military elite, the Christians continued to live in small towns and in the countryside and were not excluded from government posts. Christian communities remained prosperous and artisans continued to produce numerous artefacts such as lamps, for both religious and secular use; Christian imagery appears on many of them. Few churches went out of use. The three-aisled basilica church was the most commonly seen and, as might be expected, churches in towns were usually more sumptuous than those in rural areas. Many churches of the era are famous for their beautiful floor mosaics.




Lamp and base
Hegira 1st–2nd century / AD 7th–8th century
Umayyad
Jordan Archaeological Museum
Amman, Jordan

The Christian motif of a fish indicates that this lamp was used within the Christian community.

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6. Christian subjects under Umayyad rule.







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Court Ceremonials and Pastimes

During the audience the caliph or his representative would sit on an elevated throne.

Literary sources indicate that there were two types of audience: public (*majlis al-'amm*) and private (*khass*), the latter restricted to the closest aides and counsellors. During the audience the caliph or his representative would sit on an elevated throne (*sakhir*), while the audience would be seated according to rank. Some buildings, like Qusayr 'Amra, Khirbet al-Mafjar near Jericho, and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi in Syria, have extensive iconographic programs showing musicians, dancers and female gift-bearers, pastimes that became an integral part of Umayyad court life.



Fresco panel: 'Dancers'
Hegira first third of the 2nd century / AD first half of the 8th century
Umayyad
In situ at Qusayr 'Amra
Amman, Jordan

The image of a fully clad girl dancing goes back to the Roman repertoire and is present, painted, on Fatimid pottery.

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7. Umayyad court ceremony and pastimes.

also selected.

Umayyad court ceremony and pastimes (FIG. 7): The surviving Umayyad palaces, with their extensive decoration, along with literary sources, give us a good idea of court ceremony and pastimes. Fresco paintings in Umayyad palaces provide clear depictions of this subject, e.g. musicians, female dancers and hunting scenes. Twelve objects were selected to represent this theme: two floor paintings from Syria, six fresco paintings from Qaşayr ‘Amra and one from the Pergamon Museum in Germany, two female statues from Qaşr al-Mushatta (one from ‘Ammān and the other from Germany) and a bronze brazier from al-Fudayn.

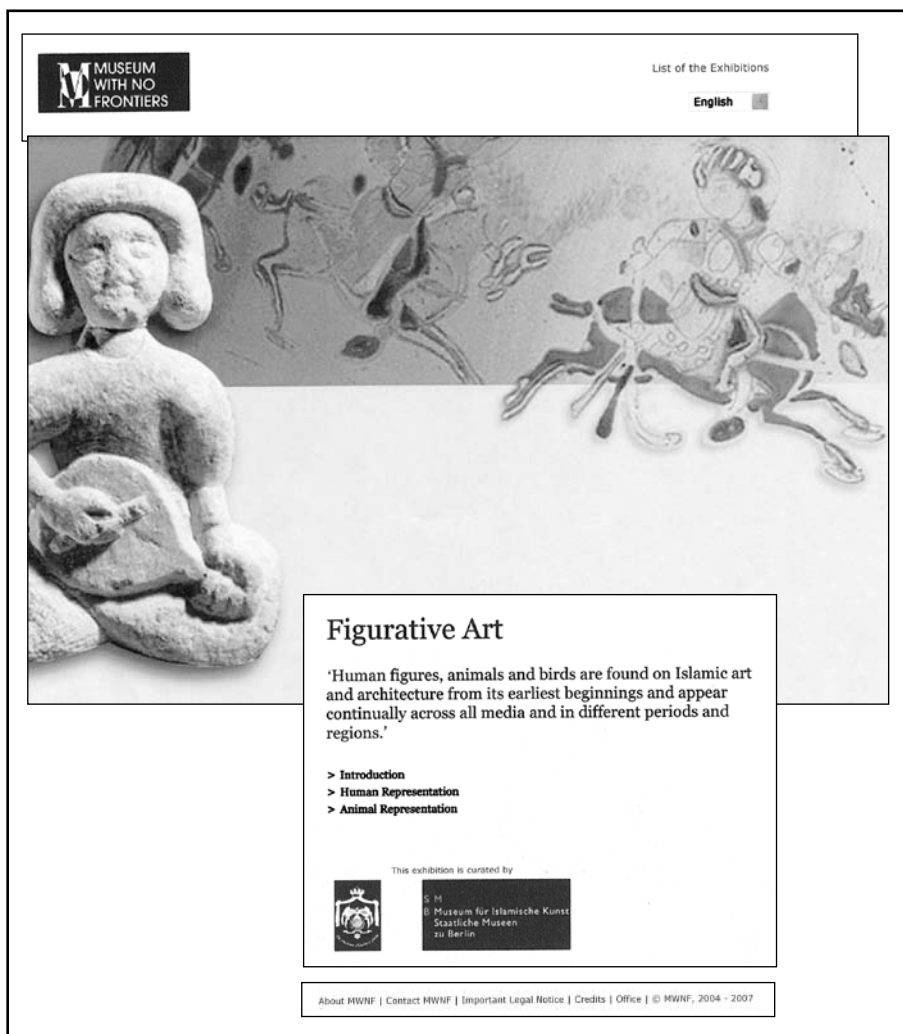
2- Figurative Art (FIG. 8)

Jordan and Germany were chosen to curate the multi-dynasty theme entitled ‘Figurative Art’. The Committee went through all of the items, which had been selected from participating museums in order

to determine sub-themes, which were categorised on the basis of style, namely human, animal and mythical representation. Representations of human figures, animals and birds are found in Islamic art and architecture from its very beginnings, and continued to be used across all media and in different periods and regions.

Human figures (FIG. 9): Human figures appears in a wide variety of forms, including paintings on wood and paper, fresco paintings, ceramics, relief works and sculptures, ivory caskets and metal works.

Animals (FIG. 10): Representations of animals, whether real or mythical, appear in a wide variety of forms and occupy an important place in Islamic art. Mythical animals, such as harpies, griffons, dragons and unicorns, were derived from traditional Greco-Roman themes. Eighteen items — wooden panels, rock-crystal vessels, ivory boxes, mosaic floors, fresco paintings, ceramics, metal works and



8. Figurative Art.


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Figurative Art

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Human Representation








'During later periods, figurative art manifested primarily in manuscript illustrations and ceramics.'

In later periods although the human form is still present, it does not occur with the same frequency as it had done in the art of the Umayyad period. During the Abbasid (132-750 / 923-1517), Fatimid, and in the periods following, figurative art was manifest primarily in manuscript illustrations and ceramics, where a broad variety of subjects both religious and secular, were addressed. Religious themes include the Prophet's mystical journey and His Ascension. Secular subjects include scenes from daily life and expressions of the ruler's splendour.



Brazier
Hegira 2nd century / AD 8th century
Umayyad


Jordan Archaeological Museum
Amman, Jordan

 **A brazier decorated with erotic scenes; on each of its four corners there is a statuette of a female nude.**

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9. Human Representations.








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Figurative Art


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Animal Representation

'Both real and mythical animals held an important place in Islamic art.'

The virtual preclusion of human and animal representations in the religious context was systematic and deliberate, but in all other spheres both real and mythical animals held an important place in Islamic art. Birds and mythical animals, dragons and griffons are predominant, while beasts of burden, animals of the land, appear only occasionally, often reflecting local popular culture.



Floor mosaic
Hegira 101-5 / AD 720-4 or AH 125-6 / AD 743-4
Umayyad

In situ at al-Qastal, Jordan
Jordan

A floor mosaic depicting a lion attacking a bull and representing blatantly the power of the owner; such scenes were known in the art of the Byzantine period in Jordan and Syria.

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10. Animals Representations.


sculpture — represent this theme.


3- *Western Influence in Ottoman Lands* (FIG. 11)
Jordan also participated in this virtual exhibition; the 'History of Jordan during the Ottoman Period'


focused on three main themes: administration, *hajj* forts and stations, and the Hejaz railway (FIG. 12). The administrative system of Jordan, especially during the second phase of Ottoman rule (1864-1918), was based around two main geographical districts:



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Western Influence in Ottoman Lands


From the 19th century on, the Ottoman Empire began to adopt a centralised system of government for the sake of modernisation.

- > Introduction
- > Turkey
- > Syria
- > Jordan
- > Egypt
- > Tunisia


This exhibition is curated by



11. Western Influence in Ottoman Lands.



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


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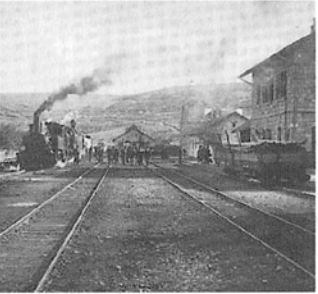
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Jordan

The Hijaz Railway was one of the most important achievements during the Ottoman period...'

The Ottomans changed the Hajj route (Darb al-Hajj al-Sham) which follows the mountains east of Wadi Araba, known as the King's Highway, to a new route which lay along the edge of the desert, known as Darb al-Bint after the daughter of Sultan Salim I, who had complained of bandits on the King's Highway. A series of forts and pilgrimage stations were built along this new route to protect pilgrims and provide them with water, food and merchandise. The Hijaz Railway was one of the most important achievements during the Ottoman period, completed in 1908 during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hameed II. The main purpose of the Hijaz railroad was to transport pilgrims from Damascus to Medina in Saudi Arabia through Jordan. The system was severely damaged during the First World War, but some sections are still functioning, for example Damascus to Amman and Amman to Qatrineh.



Hijaz Railroad Line
AD 1901-1908
Ottoman
Jordan

The Hijaz Railroad, constructed by order of Sultan Abdul Hamid, was begun in October 1901 between the small towns of Muzayreeb and Derra. The line reached Damascus, north of Derra and Amman south of Derra, on October 1 1903, and reached Medina in the Hijaz on August 22 1908. In total, the line is about 1,302 km long from Damascus to Medina. In 1904, an extension of the line stretched from Derra going west to the Port of Haifa.
(Photo credit - Dr. Baker Majali - Royal Courts)

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12. Hejaz railway.

JORDAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ON-LINE 'DISCOVER ISLAMIC ART PROJECT'

'Ajlūn and Irbid in the north, and as-Salt, al-Karak, Ma'ān and Aṭ-Ṭafilah in the south. All were under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Syria.

The Hejaz railway was one of the most important achievements of the Ottoman period. A series of forts and pilgrimage stations were built along the new pilgrimage route, known as *Darb al-Bint*, which lies along the edge of the desert.

Objects from the Jordan Museum of Popular Tradition, such as the face veil (*burqu'*) and chin chain (*zinaq*), were selected to represent this theme. Finally, a residential building, the Abu Jaber house in as-Salt, is a fine example of the effect of

western influence on Ottoman buildings in Jordan, with its paintings of natural scenes unknown in Ottoman lands done by a European artist, who signed his work (FIG. 13).

Conclusion

The on-line 'Discover Islamic Art' project provides a suitable forum for a dialogue between countries aimed at promoting the concepts of shared history, different interpretations, cultural diversity, mutual tolerance and respect for others. It therefore complements the co-operation in economical and political spheres encouraged by the Barcelona process.

MUSEUM OF POPULAR TRADITION
JORDAN

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Western Influence in Ottoman Lands

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Jordan



In Jordan the Western artistic characteristics of the Ottoman period are mainly represented in naturalistic scenes that were not previously part of the visual language known to the Ottomans.'

In Jordan the Western artistic characteristics of the Ottoman period are mainly represented in naturalistic scenes that were not previously part of the visual language known to the Ottomans. These scenes were painted by European artists who brought with them new artistic elements that they skillfully integrated with the artistic works they implemented in Jordan. Also during this period the utilization of Western coins with human figurative motifs was frequently used, more than the Ottoman coins. People preferred Western artifacts, in particular the coins, which they used as adornments, specifically for necklaces, chin-chains and veils. They also decorated their houses, churches and buildings with fresco paintings created by western artists. Some of these buildings later became museums and many of the churches are still in use today, while others continue to be the homes of private owners whom conserve and restore them.

Even after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Jordanians still appreciated Western and Ottoman coins and women still wore gold pendants and bracelets adorned with the coins of King George V and Sultan Muhammad Rashad V that had been gifts to them as dowries. This heritage still exists at the Folkloric Museum and some still belong to the successors of these old families.



Abu Jaber's house, fresco paintings of naturalistic scenes
AH 1309-25 / AD 1892-1908
Ottoman
Salt City, Jordan

Naturalistic scenes painted by the European artist Menlik from the ceiling of Abu Jaber's house in Salt City.

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13. Jordan western artistic characteristics.



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Today's highlight from the Permanent Collection

Vase

Hegira 869-97 / AD 1465-92, Nasrid

Moulded and applied earthenware with white glaze; pair with blue and brown lustre and manganese

The British Museum

London, England, United Kingdom

[View description](#)



This project is funded
by the European Union



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A SHARED COMMITMENT



New
Pre