

MIXED MEDIA **ROCKS**

ARTISTS/TECHNIQUES/TOOLS

Issue 15

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

*Finding materials anywhere
and everywhere*

PRODUCT REVIEW: GOLDEN GAC 100

EXPLORING SYMBOLISM

*The how and why
of its role in art*

IT'S A GRUNGE THING

**KATY HIRSCHFIELD FLASHES US
BACK TO SEATTLE IN THE 90'S**

ARTIST
PROFILE



DANA ARWATANI

GEOMETRIC *SCAPES*

Spheres and circles are the starting point for Dana Arwatani's unique perspectives.

Dana Awartani is a half-Palestinian, half-Saudi Arabian artist born and raised in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. After finishing her International Baccalaureate, Dana relocated to London to complete a foundation degree in Art and Design at Central St. Martin's Byam Shaw School of Art, and then a B.A in Fine Art at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design. Dana's artwork for her final degree show was influenced by traditional Saudi Arabian patterns and motifs to explore the cultural role of the Arab world in today's globalized society.



Dana continued her interest in traditional Islamic pattern by enrolling on a masters degree course at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts where she graduated with a distinction. It was here that Dana was able to discover the technical aspects of traditional arts and crafts covering a wide range of practices including manuscript illumination, parquetry, ceramics, stained glass, miniature painting, iconography, and mosaics. She was inspired by how all of these artistic disciplines, which hail from a diverse range of religious and cultural contexts, share a common origin in mathematical and geometrical principles.

Through research and her own practice, Dana was particularly drawn to the perennial philosophy to which geometry and all of the traditional arts subscribe. She found geometry to be representative of a timeless language of aesthetics which, through its mathematical



"All my drawings start with a circle and finish with a geometric design, and no matter how complicated or simple the design, is they always start and finish within a circle as complying with the laws of geometry."

and visually democratic origin, represents a universal language of beauty and harmony; in essence, geometry is the perfect reflection of God's infinity and manifestation on earth as found in nature and His creation. Geometry therefore combines artistic creativity with an inherent logical system informed by Divine principles. With this in mind, Dana is keen to stress that her work is less about the artist and more about the art itself.

Currently Dana is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where she continues her practice as well as private commissioned work. She also participates in outreach projects to schools and communities around the world in order to further the appreciation of the traditional arts. She has exhibited her work privately as well as at Central Saint Martin's and the Prince's School of Traditional Arts. Further, four of her pieces are included in the Farjam Collection, one of the largest gatherings of Islamic art in the world and part of the Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi.

"As Plato said 'Beauty is the splendor of Truth'... Traditional art provided this beauty on the external, formal level, which itself acts as a support for the attainment of inner beauty. This art also speaks, often in silent language, of the truth whose attainment constitutes the very *raison d'être* of human life." Syed Hossein Nasr

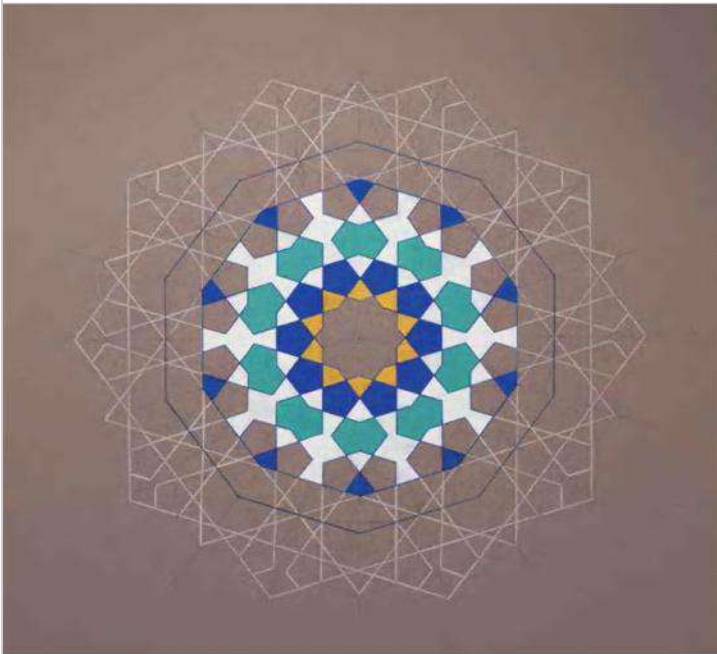




“Dodecahedron”, “Hexahedron” and “Icosahedron”

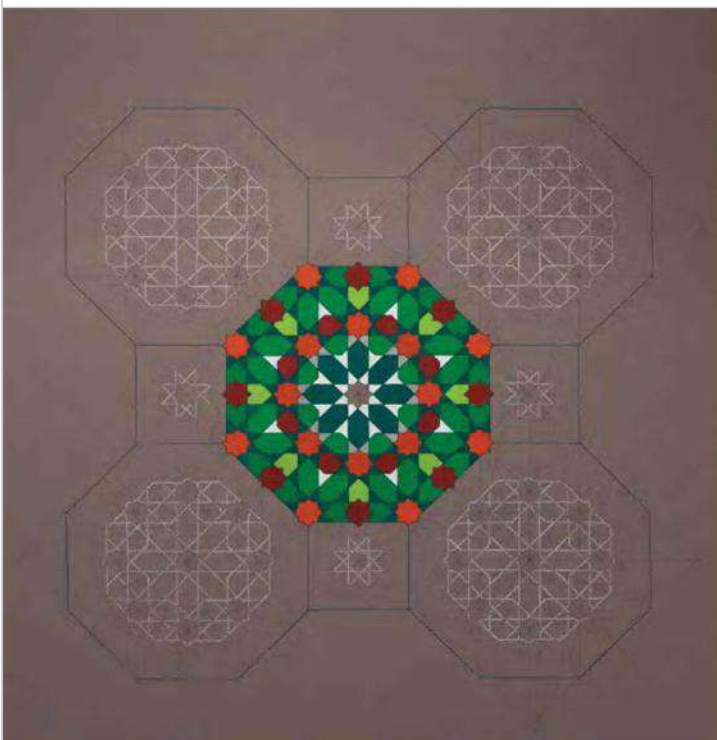
This series of paintings is based on the Platonic Solids, an ancient study of shapes based on Euclidean geometry. Geometers have studied their mathematical properties and been fascinated by their inherent beauty and symmetry. What makes them particularly important is that they are considered as the only five ‘perfect’ shapes in three-dimensional space that derive from a sphere. They appear the same from any vertex, their faces are made of the same regular shape, and their vertices represent the most symmetrical distribution of the numbers 4, 6, 8, 12, and 20, on a sphere. I have taken direct inspiration from these forms and translated these three-dimensional shapes into two-dimensional paintings using Islamic design. Each painting is based on the numerical value of the platonic solids and the colors used are directly inspired by the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) and the heavens that Plato has attributed to each shape.

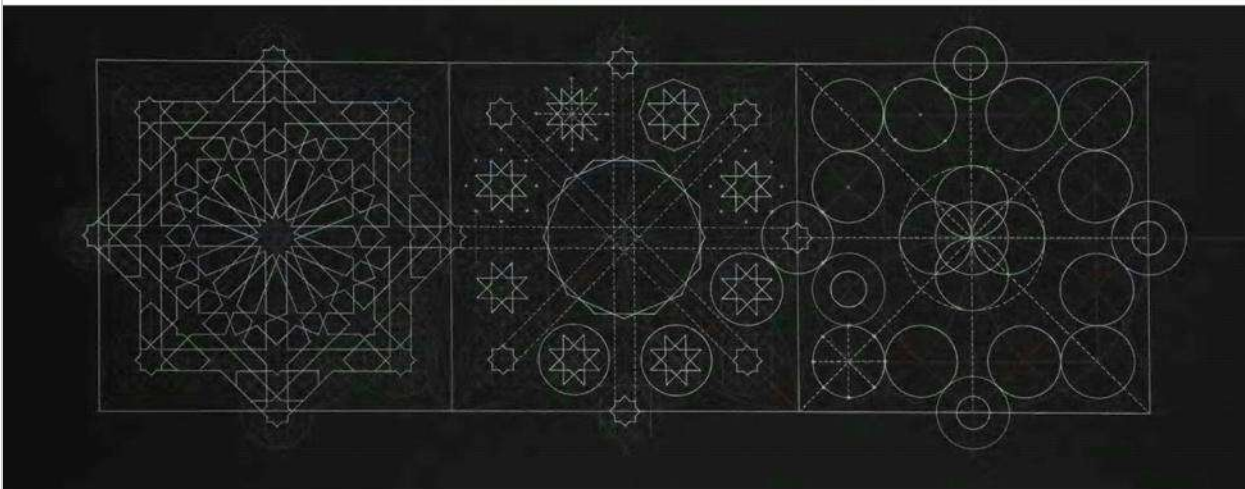




“He who created the heaven and earth in six days”

This piece is inspired by the story of creation in the Islamic tradition. The six panels depict the creation process of an illuminated manuscript and I have used it to mirror the story of creation. Manuscripts were made to represent the heavens and the earth through the use of symbolism in aesthetics. Since the use of the human form is not favored in Islamic art, the use of numbers, geometry, colour and arabesque was developed to translate a message. Geometry plays a key role in this piece as I have based the central design on six-fold geometry, there are six main borders and also the whole design is based on a route three triangle, all being part of the six fold ‘family’ in geometric terms. The colours I have used also play an important role as I have chosen mostly greens and blues to reflect an abundance of water and vegetation, both highly rare in desert countries and sacred in the Islamic tradition.

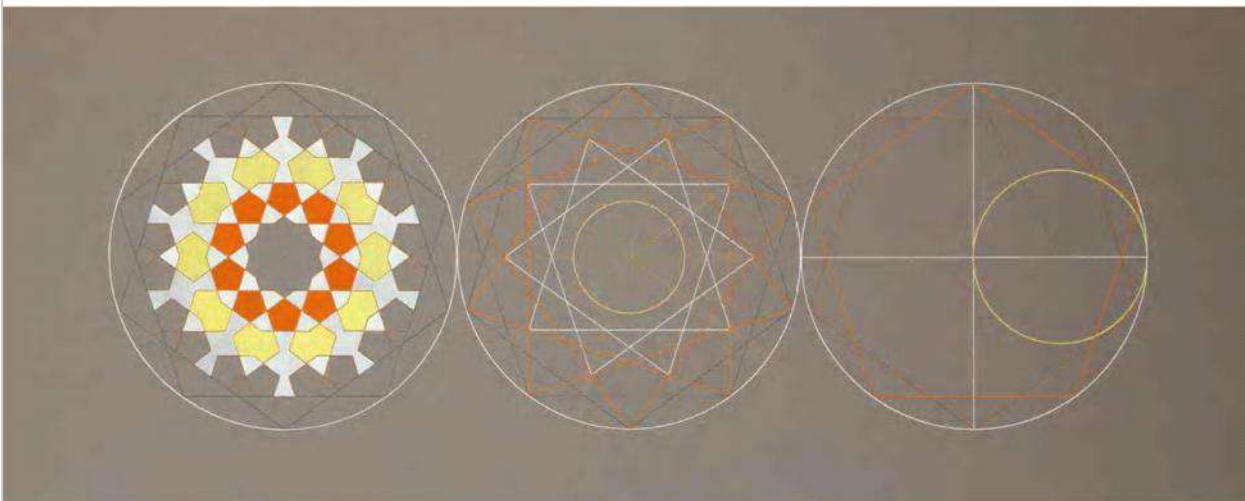




“Progressional drawing 6”

My progressional drawings are inspired by the idea of “Tawhid”, which is the Islamic teaching of Oneness, the oneness of God and the unity of the people of Islam also known as “unity within multiplicity”. All my drawings start with a circle and finish with a geometric design, and no matter how complicated or simple the design, it always starts and finishes within a circle as complying with the laws of geometry. I do not purely see geometry as a mathematical practice, but also as a reflection of the transcendent laws of the universe, and I try to embody this belief in the drawings. The circle can also be seen as a symbol of birth or beginning as everything on this earth, whether it be an embryo or a seed starts off as circle, and every living thing on this earth needs the sun (also a circle) to survive.

“Progressional drawing 7”



LIST OF TOOLS

- Sable brushes ranging from size 1 to 10/0
- Natural pigments (Powder form)
- Gum arabic water
- Burnishers
- Mortel and pestle
- Palette knife
- 240gsm paper
- Muscle shells
- Shell gold
- Gelatin
- HB pencil
- Eraser
- Tracing paper
- Calligraphy ink
- Compass
- Ruler

I use shells to store my pigments after I grind. Then I paint out of the shells. To make shell gold, I dilute gelatin into hot water, the gelatin and water act like a binding agent. Without it the gold would just rub off the paper. The gum Arabic is mixed in with the pigments as a binding agent, I source all my materials from a specialized art shop in London called L. Cornelissen & Son.

