



Islamic Art and Spirituality

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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With remarkable breadth of vision, Seyyed Hossein Nasr reveals for both Western and Muslim readers how each art form in the Islamic tradition is based upon a science of nature concerned, not with the outer appearance of things, but with their inner reality. Ranging across calligraphy, painting, architecture, literature, music, and the plastic arts, Nasr penetrates to the inner dimension of Islam and shows the role art plays in the life of individual Muslims and the community as a whole--the role of inspiring the remembrance and contemplation of God.

Once the author establishes art as an aid and support to the spiritual life, he traces the creative act to its ultimate source: inner knowledge and barakah, or grace, which make the crystallization of inner realities in form and space and time possible. Through this knowledge and grace, the author asserts, unity manifests upon the plane of multiplicity, making archetypal realities perceivable by the senses. Through this knowledge and grace, art functions as a ladder for the journey of the soul from the visible to the invisible. How Islamic art leads man to the inner chamber of divine revelation forms the substance of much of this important work.

An especially close look is given to the Sufi tradition within Islam, for its mystical teachers have often clearly demonstrated in their works the spiritual significance of beauty and served as the source of inspiration for art.

By rediscovering the root of art in the Islamic tradition, Seyyed Hossein Nasr opens doors to new dimensions of unity which have seemingly been obscured in recent Western art. In so doing, he extends the significance of this book beyond the Islamic belief system to touch the hearts and creative impulses of readers from all traditions.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is currently University Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University. Born in Tehran and educated at MIT and Harvard, he was previously professor of the history of science and philosophy at Tehran University and first president of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy. He has taught throughout America, Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, India, Japan, and Australia. He is the author of over twenty books in English. Among them are *Sufi Essays*, *Islamic Life and Thought*, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, and *Three Muslim Sages*.

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