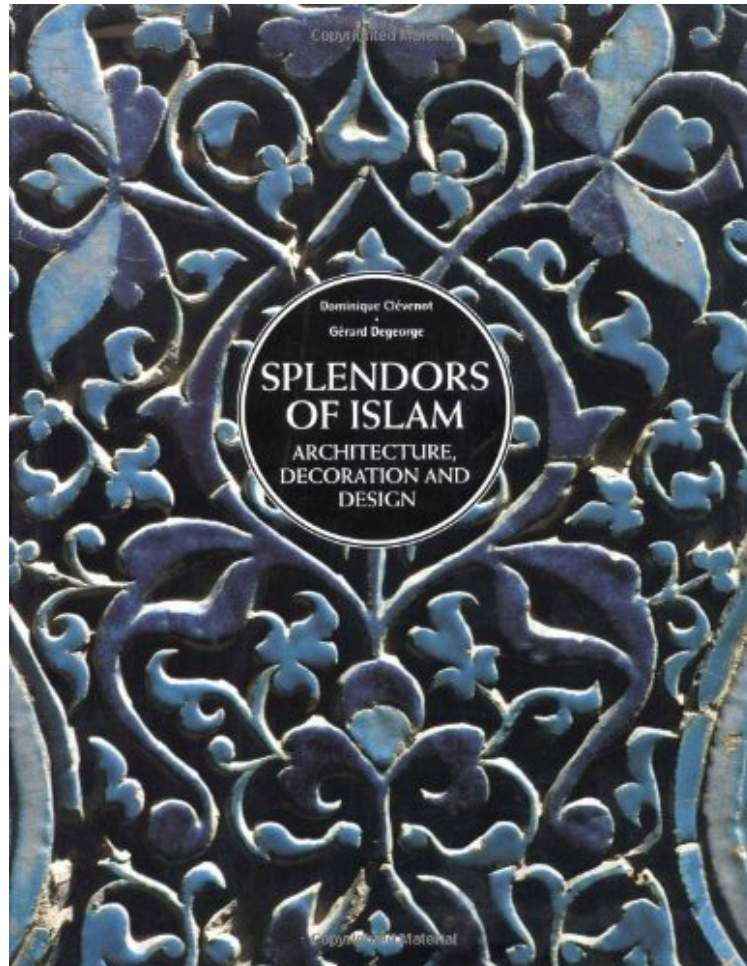


Splendors of Islam: Architecture, Decoration and Design

Dominique Clevenot

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Dominique Clevenot : Splendors of Islam: Architecture, Decoration and Design before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Splendors of Islam: Architecture, Decoration and Design:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Terrific Photography; Some Troubles with the Text By Barbara Evans The 325 photographs in this book--all in color--merit every superlative reviewers have given them. But the text itself is in need of a good editor, for parts are repetitive. (See my content summary for specifics.) Furthermore, the last section is often so grandiloquent that I, a seasoned English teacher who is also well read in the field of Islamic architecture, had to work to decipher it. So why did I pay \$40 for a used copy of SPLENDORS OF ISLAM (sans dust jacket)? Quite simply because none of the many other books I examined taught me nearly as much about the decoration and design of Islamic architecture. Granted, for example, one can look at a structure and see that its bricks create patterns, but to learn in detail how this was done is fascinating. For those unable to find a copy to preview, what

follows is a more specific summary of its contents. SECTION 1--which focuses on the variations in Islamic architecture in one part of the world--devotes 8 to 10 pages of photographs and clearly written text to each of the following: the Dome of the Rock, the Alhambra, the Taj Mahal, and Persia's Shah Mosque. Eight pages of smaller photographs of other significant monuments from the Arab lands, Turkey, India, Iran and Central Asia follow. SECTION 2: After a lengthy chapter which goes into great detail about the history of the use of brick, stucco, mosaics and ceramics as decorative techniques, separate chapters are devoted to each of the materials. New in each is the detail about how the material is created; repetitive is much of the information about how it is used as architectural decoration. Although no text explains them, additional photographs illustrate the use of bronze, wood and painted wood as decorative devices. SECTION 3 focuses on the decorative use of mathematically defined forms--e.g. stars, hexagons--vegetation, calligraphy and even occasionally the human figure. SECTION 4 looks at how the elements in Sections 2 and 3 combine to create surfaces that resemble textiles. Specifically discussed (and often repetitive of information in Section 2) are a) the division of flat surfaces into panels and bands, b) the multi-layering of textures and c) the use of repetition to create geometric designs. Not repetitive is this section's discussion of the use of ornamentation to disguise supporting forms and embellish supported ones. NOTE: For those who are interested in more of an overview of Islamic architecture in general, I'd highly recommend Treasures of Islam: Artistic Glories of the Muslim World. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. DiscoveryBy M. W. Stevens This is a thorough and scholarly exploration of a fascinating subject - the world of Islamic Design. The work covers all the main areas of the field, from al Andalus to India. The text is clearly written, yet scholarly in its approach, while still being accessible to the amateur. The excellent photographs serve to illustrate this magnificent work well. 12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Four different approaches to Islam architectureBy Midwest Book Review Islam expanded quickly within a few centuries, embracing a wide area and altering the political and cultural heritage of the entire region. Splendors of Islam examines the visual effects of Islam, considering the structures in contrast with other architectural traditions and examining the role given to various decorative choices and styles. Four different approaches to Islam architecture provide an exceptionally well-rounded view, with color photo examples packing an oversized coverage.

This magnificent book is the key to understanding one of the world's most important architectural traditions, one that spawned major masterpieces throughout the near east, and particularly in Persia, India, Turkey, North Africa, Southern Russia, and Spain. As human representation is forbidden in Islamic religious monuments, design and ornamentation reach unparalleled heights of expression through mosaics, stucco, brickwood, and ceramic. Brilliant colors are used everywhere to enhance design. This monumental study is a close collaboration between Dominique Clevenot, a distinguished scholar of art, and Gerald de George, a renowned photographer. Together, they visited and photographed hundreds of monuments, selecting their most noteworthy features. Unlike other books, which divide the subject geographically or chronically, the authors have approached this complicated topic from four different and interconnected angles: the history of Islamic architecture, materials and techniques, ornamental design, and the aesthetics of ornamentation. Each of these topics is presented through a number of outstanding examples and comparable monuments from all over the Islamic world. Travelers overwhelmed by the Taj Mahal or the Alhambra will gain greater understanding. Architects and designers will find endless inspiration and ideas. Historians will be illuminated. Anyone interested in the vast world of Islam will find new knowledge in this magnificent full-color publication.

From Library Journal Examining the architecture of important Islamic buildings designed for a variety of purposes, this volume presents uniformly excellent photographs, matching the quality of the detail that they capture. The first section looks at the diversity of styles resulting from the syncretism of Islam with the many cultures it conquered. Section 2 discusses the various materials used and the accomplishments of builders and artists. Section 3 discusses the principal decorative themes, and the last section looks at aesthetics and the relationship between form and decoration. At the end of each section there appears a "documentary notebook," mainly containing photographs, that permits a fuller examination of the topic. Presenting the subject from these four viewpoints, rather than chronologically, yields some valuable insights that make this book an important contribution to the study of Islamic art. The volume has a map of the major sites of Islamic ornamentation, a chronology of the principal Islamic dynasties, and an index of the monuments. This truly beautiful book should be in both public and academic libraries. Martin Chasin, Adult Inst., Bridgeport, CT Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Dominique Clevenot is a professor at the University of Toulouse and author of several books on Islamic art.