

مَسْدَار كَالِغْرَافِي

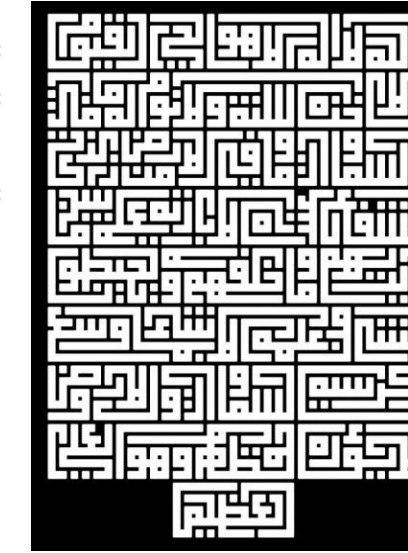
masdar calligraphy

introduction

Calligraphy is considered the quintessential art form of the Islamic world and its prevalence is not simply related to its non-figural tradition; it rather reflects the centrality of the notion of writing and written text, as according to the tradition “the first thing God created was the pen”. Real “source” of the Islamic culture, calligraphy is revered as a medium of infinite duration and visual expression of faith and knowledge. It is noteworthy that the United Arab Emirates host every other year the Dubai International Calligraphy Exhibition as the climax of the cultural scene of the year, as well as the outcome of the region’s social identity. With our proposal, then, we envision a fertile dialogue between Dubai and Abu Dhabi under the aegis of the Arabic script that we use as a “source” of inspiration for our landart work. As the Islamic calligraphy has developed a vast range of styles we decided to assign a representative style to each of the two areas of the site. The Square Kufic (kufi mrabba’) to the north west area as the link to the past and a more curvilinear contemporary Naskh-like style to the south-east as the link to the future. The whole forms a rectangular layout: the Masdar Calligraphy.

back to the source of the arabic script : the kufic style

The first formal calligraphic style is called the Kufic style after the city of Kufah in Iraq. It was used in many early Qur’anic manuscripts and for inscriptions, including those at the Dome of the Rock. Confusingly, the same name is also commonly used for a second major group of script styles, which came to prominence in the 10th century. These new, more angular styles came to include many fanciful variants such as foliated Kufic (decorated with curling leaf shapes) and floriated Kufic (decorated with flower forms). This second group of Kufic styles was used in contexts as varied as Qur’anic manuscripts, coinage, architectural inscriptions and the decoration of ceramics. Before the invention of paper, vellum or parchment was the highest quality writing material available. It was made from prepared animal hide. A reed pen, with the tip cut at an angle and filled with ink, would have been used. Writing on vellum could be erased or altered.

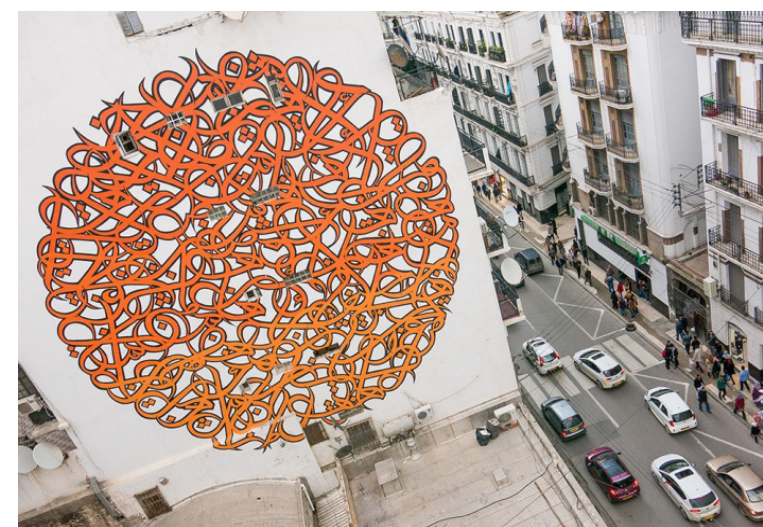


the north-west area : the kufic style

The North-West area of the site hosts the Kufilab an installation of roughly 2318m² originated by the vertical extrusion of a urban-scale Kufic text creating a sort of outdoor labyrinth. The hemstitch roof and the elevations are clad with modular colored solar panels produced by the Dutch company Kamaleon Solar. The idea is that to create a colorful whole through the assignation of a color to each word of the text. The result is a monumental and extremely modular complex taking advantage from the geometric regularity of the Kufic style. The relationship between the massive elements composing the words and the empty spaces engenders a variety of possible paths as the metaphor of all the calligraphic styles of the past and of the future. The interiors are characterized by a series of “chambers” inspired by the «diwan» of the Islamic architecture. They are carved in the mass of the volume and each chamber presents one of the historical developments of the art of script both in the past as in the future. The quite infinite range of paths allows a non-conventional discovery of the Islamic calligraphy that can be adjusted year after year. Thanks to the complex’s regularity we decided to use a modular construction system of precast concrete walls tinted in the mass.



a new script : the contemporary style



A new system of proportional cursive scripts was codified from the tenth to the thirteenth century. In a proportional script, each -letter’s shape is determined by a fixed number of rhombic (diamond-shaped) dots. A rhombic dot is the shape formed when a calligrapher presses his or her pen to paper in one downward motion, producing the diamond shape. A word written in one of the proportional scripts can vary in size but the letters will always be in strict proportion to one another. There are six proportional scripts (the Six Pens)—naskh, thuluth, muhaqqaq, rayhani, tawqi’, and rika. Through the centuries, the term calligrapher tended to be applied only to those artists who worked within strict boundaries of established schools and styles respecting precise geometries and expressing a devotional content. Nonetheless, in

the past 100 years the works of artists from African, Gulf and Middle Eastern countries started to free themselves from canons. After the independence of many Arab states most Arab artists resorted to calligraphy as a solution to reclaim an identity adapting the traditional styles to the aesthetics of contemporary world.

the south-east area : the contemporary style

The South-East area accommodates a lawn punctuated by 85 curvilinear characters and a series of orange dot-like elements for power storage. Each of the character is composed by a vertical pipe and a curvilinear base. On top of each of the 28m high pipes there is a 2.40 m high VAWT produced by the company WINDSIDE. While creating a playful urban space composed by circular outdoor chambers, the aim of each of this element is twofold:

- 1) Produce energy with the VAWTs;
 - 2) Create a passive system of Canadian wells;
- The Eolic system has a nameplate power of 250Wp and a production of more or less 221 250 kWh per year (see more details in the next paragraphs). The Canadian well system works as follows: below the VAWT an air intake lets air into the hollow pipe. A series of small fans draw the air to the ground while gradually cooling it. After the circular base the pipes go 3m below ground following a path of at least 30 m in order to reach the dew point at the stable temperature of 15° C. The humidity contained into the air is condensed and stocked into several tanks below ground to be used for irrigation purposes, while the cooled air is injected to the close-by buildings. We estimate a rough energy saving between the 30% and the 60% in the HVAC system.

