

# The Ayyubid Era Art and Architecture in Medieval Syria: Islamic Art in the Middle Ages

The Ayyubid era was a period of great artistic and architectural achievement in medieval Syria. The Ayyubids, a Kurdish dynasty founded by Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, ruled Syria from 1174 to 1260. During this time, they oversaw the construction of numerous mosques, madrasas (Islamic schools), and other religious and secular buildings.

Ayyubid art and architecture was heavily influenced by the earlier Seljuk and Fatimid periods. However, the Ayyubids also developed their own unique style, characterized by its elegance, simplicity, and use of geometric and floral motifs.



## The Ayyubid Era. Art and Architecture in Medieval Syria (Islamic Art in the Mediterranean) by University Press

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**\*\*Ayyubid Architecture\*\***

One of the most striking features of Ayyubid architecture is its use of pointed arches. Pointed arches were first used in Islamic architecture in the

12th century, and they became increasingly popular during the Ayyubid period. Pointed arches are stronger and more stable than round arches, and they can be used to create taller and more spacious buildings.

Another characteristic feature of Ayyubid architecture is the use of iwans. Iwans are vaulted halls that are open on one side. They are often used as entrances to mosques or other public buildings. Iwans can also be used to create a sense of space and grandeur.

Some of the most famous examples of Ayyubid architecture include the Great Mosque of Damascus, the Citadel of Aleppo, and the Krak des Chevaliers. The Great Mosque of Damascus is one of the oldest and most important mosques in the world. It was originally built in the 8th century, but it was expanded and renovated by the Ayyubids in the 12th and 13th centuries. The mosque is famous for its beautiful courtyard, its intricate mosaics, and its towering minarets.

The Citadel of Aleppo is a large and imposing fortress that was built by the Ayyubids in the 12th century. The citadel is located on a hill overlooking the city of Aleppo. It was used as a military stronghold and a royal residence. The citadel is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Krak des Chevaliers is a crusader castle that was built by the Hospitaller Knights in the 12th century. The castle was later captured by the Ayyubids, and it became one of their most important strongholds. The castle is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**\*\*Ayyubid Art\*\***

Ayyubid art was also heavily influenced by the earlier Seljuk and Fatimid periods. However, the Ayyubids also developed their own unique style, characterized by its elegance, simplicity, and use of geometric and floral motifs.

Some of the most common motifs used in Ayyubid art include stars, circles, squares, and triangles. These motifs were often combined to create complex and beautiful designs. Ayyubid artists also made extensive use of calligraphy. Calligraphy is the art of writing beautifully. It was often used to decorate mosques, madrasas, and other public buildings.

Some of the most famous examples of Ayyubid art include the Aleppo Codex, the Damascus Casket, and the Mosul Vase. The Aleppo Codex is a manuscript that was written in the 12th century. It is famous for its beautiful illustrations and its elegant calligraphy. The Damascus Casket is a small wooden box that was made in the 13th century. It is decorated with intricate carvings and inlaid with precious stones. The Mosul Vase is a large ceramic vase that was made in the 13th century. It is decorated with a variety of geometric and floral motifs.

### **\*\*Legacy of Ayyubid Art and Architecture\*\***

The art and architecture of the Ayyubid era had a profound impact on the development of Islamic art and architecture. The Ayyubids' use of pointed arches, iwans, and geometric and floral motifs became standard features of Islamic architecture throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The Ayyubids' art and architecture also had a significant influence on European art. The pointed arch, for example, was adopted by European

architects in the 13th century, and it became one of the defining features of Gothic architecture.

The art and architecture of the Ayyubid era is a testament to the creativity and skill of the Ayyubid artists and architects. Their work continues to inspire and amaze people today.



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