is politically inspired. His prints and lithographs often revolve around the
texts of popular poets such as the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish,
whose poem ‘Beirut’ was written during the 1982 Israeli siege of the
city, or the Algerian Mohammed Dib, whose poem al-Tif jazz waq-
harb reflects on the vicissitudes of childhood and war. Koraichi never
transcribes the poems in their entirety, instead selecting fragments
which he repeats, reverses, or re-orientates, often in mirror reverse. His
work is also Sufi-inspired, and Koraichi credits his family with
encouraging his mystical leanings. He prefers monochrome or
bichrome to polychromy, typically contrasting black on white or gold
on blue.

In the 1990s Koraichi worked in many separate media. Three series
of ninety-eight amulets produced in 1994, for example, were tiny
steel arrows engraved with pictograms. Golden Batique, one of a
series of seven silk-screen banners made between 1993 and 1995, is
decorated with pseudo-Chinese characters in gold on an indigo blue
ground. Koraichi chose the colors as symbols: blue to represent the
sky and gold to symbolize pure matter and royalty. The combina-
tion of gold on dark blue also recalls the mosaic inscriptions from the
Dome of the Rock (Figure 3.3) and our first dated evidence for the writing
down of the Koran. Koraichi arranged some ideograms in a grid recalling
a magic square, evoking the same popular imagery used by
Moustafa, but set others in the shape of a barque, recalling Egyptian
funerary papyri. Koraichi also plays with direction and mirror: his sig-
nature at the bottom of the banner, like many of his texts, is screened
in mirror-reverse, though the date in numbers reads correctly. This
arrangement is willful, for Koraichi believes texts should be written
as if reflected in a mirror so that the meaning is veiled to those who
do not understand. The artist is therefore a mediator and a mirror
reflecting divine transcendence.

Koraichi has recently combined many of these individual works in
multi-media installations that reflect his Sufi-inspired philosophy.
His Tariq al-Ward (Path of Roses), presented in 2001 at the 45th
Venice Biennale entitled Authentic/Ex-centric and exhibited at
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in Ithaca,
NY, in the winter of 2001-2002, is a collection of embroidered scroll-like
silk banners, inscribed ceramic basins filled with rose water, and
calligraphic steel sculptures mounted on the wall and on wooden blocks
(Figure 13.14). According to the artist, the installation was intended
to re-create the travels of the great Sufi Jalal al-Din Rumi across the
continents, both literally and metaphorically. (See Figure 9.1 for the
first clean copy of Rumi’s text.) The basins, inspired by local pottery
traditions and intended to evoke that sense used for ritual ablutions, for
example, are inscribed with quotations from Rumi. The twenty-eight
free-standing sculptures, measuring a meter high, echo the twenty-
eight letters of the Arabic alphabet. In form, they evoke the
Mawlawi order’s whirling dervishes who dance to the music of time.
In Koraichi’s words, he seeks to create an ‘alphabet of memory’
that transcends the boundaries of space and time, in which the sacred
and profane converge into one.’ He has abstracted signs and writing,
turning the alphabet into an aesthetic and ideological act.

This handful of examples shows some of the ways in which
modern artists integrate Islamic calligraphy into their works of art.
They illustrate the many media that artists use to bring out differ-
ent aspects of writing, ranging from its semantic and formal qual-
ties to its talismanic properties. It seems to be difficult to indulge in
such artistic expression in the traditional Islamic lands, as many
artists have emigrated to Europe or the United States, not only for
freedom of expression but also because that’s where the market is.
For those outside the Islamic tradition, the use of writing can at times
seem heavy-handed and the symbolism rather blatant, but these
works are instructive in charting new paths for an old field. Given the
rapid spread of Islam (it is the world’s fastest-growing religion), there
is no doubt that this interest in Arabic calligraphy, ranging from its
history to its applications in typography and art, can but grow in the
twenty-first century.

2. See Chapter 13.


4. New sources of information are also available: the world-wide web. While the supporting material in the previous chapters was drawn largely from books, much of it in this chapter is taken from websites. Though convenient and timely, they are often ephemeral. Even in the time between writing a first draft and checking it, many have disappeared. Hence, I have tried to cite only those that I think will be around for a while.


6. Private collection, color reproduction in Ali, *Modern Islamic Art*, pl. 4, top. Born in Baghdad in 1939, Wijdan All received a degree in history from Beirut College for Women and a doctorate in Islamic art from the University of London, with a dissertation on modern Islamic art. Founder of the Royal Society of Fine Arts in Jordan [1979] and the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts [1980], she is one of the main authors and critics writing about modern Islamic art.


9. See the biography in Efr, "Bayâni, Mehdi." He came from a long line of chancellor scribes and fiscal officers from Farahān. From childhood he received training in calligraphy, attending the Dar al-Faman, the arts school founded in Tehran in 1851 by Nasir al-Din Shah. He was also a scholar, receiving a doctorate in Persian literature from Tehran University in 1945. Bayâni was the founder and first director of Iran’s first national library [Kitâbkhana-yi Millî], and in 1956 was appointed head of the Royal Library [Kitâbkhana-yi saltanatî]. He also taught courses on the development of Persian calligraphy and founded a society for the support and encouragement of calligraphers and the calligraphic arts [Anjoman-i hisâyat-i khaṭ va khattatari].


11. This contrasts to the Mughal canon, as articulated by Abu’l-Fadl Allami, in which naskh and its larger counterpart thuluth are said to have one-third curved and two-thirds straight. See Chapter 12.


13. Again, this contrast to Abu’l-Fadl Allami’s description of the Mughal hand, which he claims is entirely round.


19. Abu’l-Fadl Allami used this metaphor as well, see Chapter 12.


23. Derman, *Art of Calligraphy*.


28. Samir al Gailani [ed.], *Ebrû Art, Marble on Paper, the Work of Fedidun Özgörün* [Bahrain, 2001].


32. E.g., the album in the Sabancı Collection (no. 381), Derman, *Letters in Arabic*, no. 60.

33. For a short introduction to the subject, with extensive bibliography, see the article on ‘Printing in the Islamic lands’ by the expert in the field,
MANY FACES OF ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY IN MODERN TIMES


35. Geoffrey Roper, "Paris al-Shidiq" and the Transition from Scribal to Print Culture in the Middle East", in The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany, NY, 1993), 209-231. Born to a Maronite family in Lebanon in the first decade of the nineteenth century, he grew up in a literate household. Following family tradition, he became a professional copyist, transcribing, for example, registers and chronicles of a local amir for his composite history of Lebanon and the region as well as other Christian works. Paris worked in Malta and Egypt before ending up in Istanbul, where he founded al-Jawa'il, a press that published classical Arabic literature, contemporary writing (including his own), and semi-official Ottoman publications. When he died in 1887, he was one of the foremost editors and publishers of his age.

36. To meet the increasing interest in the Orient, culminating in Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, typographers at the Imprimerie Royale in Paris had amassed a substantial collection of Western-designed Arabic type under the supervision of Baron Antoine-Issac Silvestre de Sacy (1788-1858), who had been appointed professor at the newly formed Ecole des Langues Orientales in 1795. For details, see Les Caracteres de l'Imprimerie nationale (Paris, 1996). Many fonts were imported from Italy: in 1798 the ones used in the Printing Office of Propaganda in Rome were brought to Paris by those who enjoined the Medici Oriental Press in Florence, including the naskh designed by Robert Grenon in 1756 and used for the first printed edition of the medical treatise by Ibn Sina [Avicenna]. Grenon's new fonts represented a major improvement in elegance and legibility. See Geoffrey Roper, 'Early Arabic Printing in Europe,' in Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution, a Cross-Cultural Encounter, a Catalogue and Companion to the Exhibition, ed. Eva Hanebout-Benz, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper [Westhoffen, 2003], 1, for a case study of one of Grenon's fonts. Their calligraphic quality was enhanced by the liberal use of ligatures, which in turn necessitated very large fonts and complex case layouts. Other new and artistic or specialized fonts were designed in Paris. In 1805, for example, Renard designed naskh and Qaranth, while Pioche in 1846 Marcellin Legrand designed a new makhtiti font. The variety of types used attests to the burgeoning interest in Orientalism and Arabic texts in Paris and its emergence in the nineteenth century as a center for Arabic printing.

37. For a general description, see The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Ed. (New York, 1910), 2773-45; Turner, DoA, 'Printing 2. Origination of the image.'

38. See the interesting appendix by Hanr Gobayan, 3, and probably the last lineotype salesman in the Middle East, in Eva Hanebout-Benz, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper [eds], Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution, a Cross-Cultural Encounter, a Catalogue and Companion to the Exhibition (Westhoffen, 2003), 216-22.

39. Daniel Willard Fiske, An Egyptian Alphabet (for the Egyptian People (Florence, 1897).
Many faces of Islamic calligraphy in modern times

position, for ba’, ra’, and ya’ are identical as are fa’ and qa’. The fourteen letters making up the mysterious letters represent every consonantal form in early Arabic script, in which wa’, fa’, and qa’ were the same graphemes as were dal, dhal, and far.


63. Others, particularly popular with well-to-do collectors, use poems in praise of the Arabic horse by pre-Islamic or early Islamic poets such as Imru’ll-Qays or Ibn al-Mu‘azzz, including an oil and watercolor trilogy done in 1980 and a print of frolicking horses done in 1993; see Porter and Barakat, Mightier than the Sword, no. 109.

64. Reproduced in slightly different versions at http://www.lenoon.com/portfolio/pages/002791.html and Ali, Modern Islamic Art, pl. 5 bottom.


67. In addition to the website, these two are reproduced in color in Ali, Modern Islamic Art, pls. 7 bottom and 6 top, respectively.


76. Tanavoli himself is also a collector of these metal objects: see Parviz Tanavoli and John T. Wertime, Locks from Iran: Pre-Islamic to Twentieth Century: The Parviz Tanavoli Collection [Washington, DC, 1996]. James Allan and Brian Gilmour, Persian Steel: the Tanavoli Collection, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 16 (Oxford, 2000).

77. His work was the subject of a retrospective exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran in 2003. See the review by Nina Cichocki in International Institute for Asian Art 50 (March 2003): 42.

