



Andalusian Morocco: A Discovery in Living Art: 1 (Islamic Art in the Mediterranean)

Abdelaziz Touri, Mhammad Benaboud, Naïma El-Khatib Boujibar, Kamal Lakhdar, Mohamed Mezzine

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Andalusian Morocco: A Discovery in Living Art: 1 (Islamic Art in the Mediterranean) Abdelaziz Touri, Mhammad Benaboud, Naïma El-Khatib Boujibar, Kamal Lakhdar, Mohamed Mezzine As early as the beginning of the eighth century, having just reached this extreme territory of the Maghreb, Moroccan Islam started to cast its eye to the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar and shortly after set foot on the Iberian Peninsula. From that time on, and for a further eight centuries the fate of both areas would be inseparable, and it is this real Hispanic-Maghreb culture that this MWNF Exhibition Trail examines, one which would feed a sophisticated and innovative artistic culture by inspiring every aspect of daily life. Fertilised by thousands of architectural and decorative styles, Andalusian art places Morocco at the zenith of Islamic civilisation. From the outset (the mid-ninth century) the birth of Islamic art in Morocco was placed under the omen of confrontation, for the foundation of the two great Idrissid sanctuaries in Fez (the Qarawiyne and the Andalusian mosque) were the respective works of Ifriqiyans (Tunisians) and Cordoban immigrants. At a later date, the Almoravids would borrow heavily from Andalusian art, although it is under the Almohads that Muslim architecture would reveal in its entirety a Moroccan-Andalusian symbiosis. The Merinids would perpetuate this tradition by enhancing it further with new elements: their palaces, madrasas and mosques exhibiting the lavish décor of zellij are considered the most accomplished expressions of Andalusian art in Morocco. From the Buinaniya madrasa in Meknès to the Almohad ramparts of Rabat, from the Qaraouiyine library to the Kasbah in Tangier, to the holy city of Chefchaouen, its porticoes of painted wood, elaborate patios and minarets, Andalusian Morocco set the scene for the 'Golden Age' of Mediterranean history suffused with an unprecedented artistic and intellectual emulation.

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