MASTERWORKS of ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

FROM DAMASCUS TO GRANADA,
FROM CAIRO TO ISTANBUL

Henri Stierlin
The rapid spread of the Islamic faith from its seventh-century origins in the Arabian desert, northward into Mesopotamia and Syria and westward across North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula, carried with it a great cultural blossoming. The arts, technology, and sciences flourished thanks to this extraordinary renewal of the spirit. In addition to history, mathematics, geography, philosophy, poetry, and astronomy, architecture was a major expression of the new esthetic, producing a legacy of exceptional architectural achievements—mosques, Qur’anic schools, palaces, forts, aqueducts, gardens, public baths, and mausoleums—around the western, southern, and eastern edges of the Mediterranean. As early as AD 687—less than sixty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad—the Umayyad masterpiece the Dome of the Rock was built in Jerusalem. Shortly afterward, the Great Mosque was constructed in Damascus. These were followed by the great works of many dynasties—the Abbasids, the Seljuks, the Fatimids, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, the Aghlabids, the Almohads, the Merinids, the Nasrids, the Ottomans—who ruled the Islamic lands at various times from Damascus to Granada, from Cairo to Istanbul. In this rich visual tour of some of the most outstanding buildings of the region, beautifully illustrated with over 360 stunning color photographs, art historian Henri Stierlin celebrates the triumphs of the architectural and decorative arts of Islam in the Levant and Asia Minor, in North Africa and Spain.
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Born in Alexandria, Henri Stierlin is an art historian who specializes in Islamic art and architecture. He has published numerous works on the subject, and has spent much time traveling and photographing in Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and India.

Cover
The configuration of the Qaytbay Mausoleum (1468) is based on four iwans arranged inside the sahn, a covered hall that in this case replaces the courtyard. An octagonal wooden lantern illuminates the prayer area, where the abundance of Mamluk decoration reaches its peak.

Back cover
Delicate stone and stucco work in the Alhambra at Granada.