

## ISLAMIC AESTHETICS AND ARTS IN THE REFLECTION OF THE QURAN: A PRACTICE LED FRAMEWORK FOR CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH MEDIUM ARTISTS

Sanela Hossain

B.A. (English) Student, Department of English, Daffodil International University Daffodil Smart City (DSC), Birulia, Savar, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh.

Tel: +8801312532776 E-Mail: sanela2302161328@diu.edu.bd

Md Muntaqim Meherab

B.Sc. (CSE) Student, Department of Computer Science & Engineering, Daffodil International University Daffodil Smart City (DSC), Birulia, Savar, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh. Tel: +8801704452423 E-Mail:

meherab2305101354@diu.edu.bd

Liza Sharmin (Corresponding Author)

Professor & Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Daffodil International University Daffodil Smart City (DSC), Birulia, Savar, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh.

Tel: +8801726-008144 E-Mail: deanfhs@daffodilvarsity.edu.bd

### Abstract

This paper develops a practice-led framework for artists who work primarily in English yet wish to ground their creative work in Qur'anic aesthetics. Building on the principles of tawhīd (unity), ihsān (excellence/beauty), and dhikr (remembrance), and informed by canonical scholarship on Islamic art, calligraphy, geometry, architecture, and sound, we propose the TID Model (Tawhīd–Ihsān–Dhikr) as a design compass for contemporary practice. We translate these principles into concrete studio constraints and opportunities across text, image, sound, and digital/AI media, while respecting established norms on sanctity, decorum, and representation. Two original figures (a conceptual Venn and a geometric construction) and three operational tables (principle-to-practice map, digital guardrails, and an evaluation rubric) are provided to support reproducible, ethically mindful making. The contribution is both theoretical and practical: a Qur'an-reflective, media-agnostic method suitable for artists producing in English, with extensive references to the tradition and recent scholarship. Keywords: Qur'an, Islamic aesthetics, pedagogy, contemporary art, AI art.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For over fourteen centuries the Qur'an has animated a rich ecology of arts—from the measured beauty of recitation to the precision of geometric pattern and the disciplined elegance of calligraphy [1, 3, 9, 12]. While artists today work across languages and media, many English-medium practitioners seek a principled way to let Qur'anic aesthetics shape their craft without reducing the scripture to slogans or neglecting the sanctity of its words [17–20]. This paper answers that need with a practice-led framework that makes Qur'anic principles actionable in studio contexts, including text-forward work (English typography and poetry), image-forward work (non-figural geometry and architecture-informed design), sound-forward work (voice, ambience inspired by tajwīd), and computational work (rule-based, pattern-generative and assistive AI). We articulate a coherent triad—tawhīd, ihsān, dhikr—as a compass for creative decisions, and we translate it into guardrails, prompts, and evaluative criteria. Our approach honors well-known constraints (decorum with Qur'anic text, avoiding trivialization, sensitivity around representation) while keeping space for innovation [2, 4, 16].

Scriptural motivation and alignment. Our motivation is anchored in concise, foundational texts that translate directly into design criteria. In particular:

Allah commands justice and excellence. Qur'an 16:90 [21]

He raised the sky and set up the balance, that you not transgress in the balance; establish weight with justice. Qur'an 55:7–9 [21]

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. Qur'an 24:35 [21]

Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty. (Muslim 91a [39], alBukhārī 7527 [40])

Allah listens most attentively to a Prophet with a beautiful voice reciting the Qur'an aloud.

We operationalize these cues through the TID triad—unity (tawhīd) as conceptual coherence, excellence (iḥsān) as measured craft, and remembrance (dhikr) as contemplative orientation— and enact them in the six-step workflow (§ Methods) and the rubric (Table 5).

Contributions. Here we have summarized our core contributions:

- A concise synthesis of Qur'an-reflective aesthetic principles for contemporary art.
- The TID Model and a principle-to-practice map (Table 1).
- An ethically grounded set of digital/AI guardrails (Table 4).
- An evaluation rubric for reviewers, curators, and educators (Table 5).
- A conceptual Venn and a reproducible eight-point star construction.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

Foundational accounts emphasize the metaphysical unity that underwrites Islamic art (tawhīd) and the discipline that converts form into remembrance [1,2]. Oleg Grabar frames ornament as a mediator of meaning, not mere embellishment [3,4]. On geometry, the documentary record runs from historical treatises and builders' scrolls [5] to analytic reconstructions and contemporary pattern studies [6–9]. Scientific analyses demonstrate sophisticated mathematical structures, including quasi-crystalline arrangements in medieval architecture [11] and algorithmic star-pattern generation [10]. Calligraphy is both scripture-bearing and abstract form, extensively treated by Blair and Schimmel [12, 13]. On sound, Nelson and Sells analyze how recitation aesthetics (rhythm, timbre, pause) shape religious experience [19, 20]. Architectural meaning and urban situation are explored in Creswell, Rabbat, and Tabbāa [14–16]. For aesthetics as a philosophical field, Leaman and Gonzalez assess method and misreadings in modern discourse [17, 18].

### 3.QUR’ANIC AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICE

Qur’anic guidance toward beauty and decorum is explicit: “Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship” (7:31) [21]. The hadith “God is beautiful and loves beauty” situates beauty within ethical comportment rather than vanity [22]. Other motifs include measure and balance (*mīzān*), proportional perfection (32:7), and God as *al-Muṣawwir* (59:24) [21]. We distill the following:

- *Tawhīd* (unity): coherence, integration of parts, avoidance of fragmentation in concept and composition [1, 2].
- *Ihsān* (excellence/beauty): craft quality, measure, proportion, restraint; beauty as truth-guided and morally situated [4, 22].
- *Dhikr* (remembrance): forms that indicate beyond themselves, inviting contemplation; avoidance of trivialization of sacred text [12, 19].

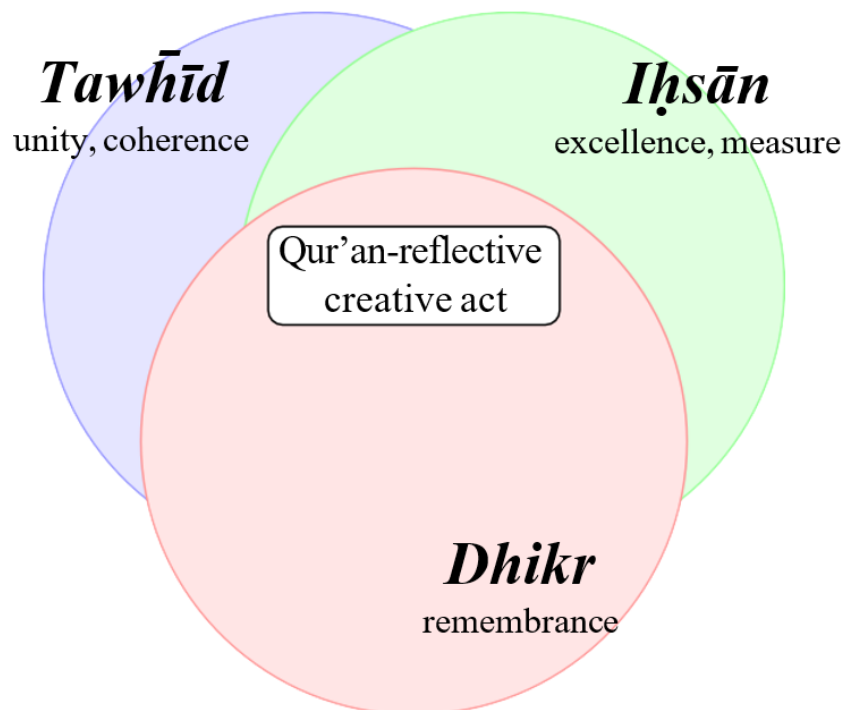


Figure 1: The **TID Model**: Qur’anic aesthetic triad as a design compass.

Table 1: Principle → practice map for English-medium artists.

Principle	Studio Constraint	Actionable Moves / Examples
<i>Tawhīd</i> (unity)	Conceptual coherence across text, image, and sound	Single governing metaphor; limited palette; consistent grid; repeating ayah as structural refrain [4, 9].
<i>Ihsān</i> (excellence)	Measured proportions; craft quality; restraint	Use canonical ratios; calibrate kerning and line-height; high-quality materials; deliberate whitespace [6, 8].
<i>Dhikr</i> (remembrance)	Non-trivial handling of sacred text	If Arabic Qur’anic text is present: correct orthography, no distortion; avoid placing on floors or trivial objects; provide source/translation [12, 21].

#### 4. METHODS: A PRACTICE-LED WORKFLOW

We propose a six-step workflow:

1. Anchor. Choose an ayah/theme and a peer-reviewed translation for English context (e.g., Abdel Haleem) [20, 21].
2. Decorum. If using Arabic script, follow calligraphic and sanctity norms [12, 13]. Avoid trivial placements; cite surah:ayah.
3. Form language. Select a geometry, grid, or typographic system; prefer rule-based constructions over freeform pastiche [5, 6, 9].
4. Media choice. Map TID to the medium (voice, print, digital). For sound, respect tajwīd aesthetics as inspiration, not mimicry [19].
5. Ethics & rights. Credit translations; if using the Qur’anic text visually, verify orthography; in digital works, avoid generating anthropomorphic imagery attached to sacred content [17, 18].
6. Iterate & review. Use the rubric in Table 5; seek informed feedback (calligrapher, reciter, or historian) [1, 3].

Figure 2 has shown the TID-guided six-step workflow, with a pre-release Ethics & Rights gate and a rubric-guided feedback loop that routes iteration from review (6) back to craft decisions (2–3), while light connectors tie each numbered marker to its corresponding action card.

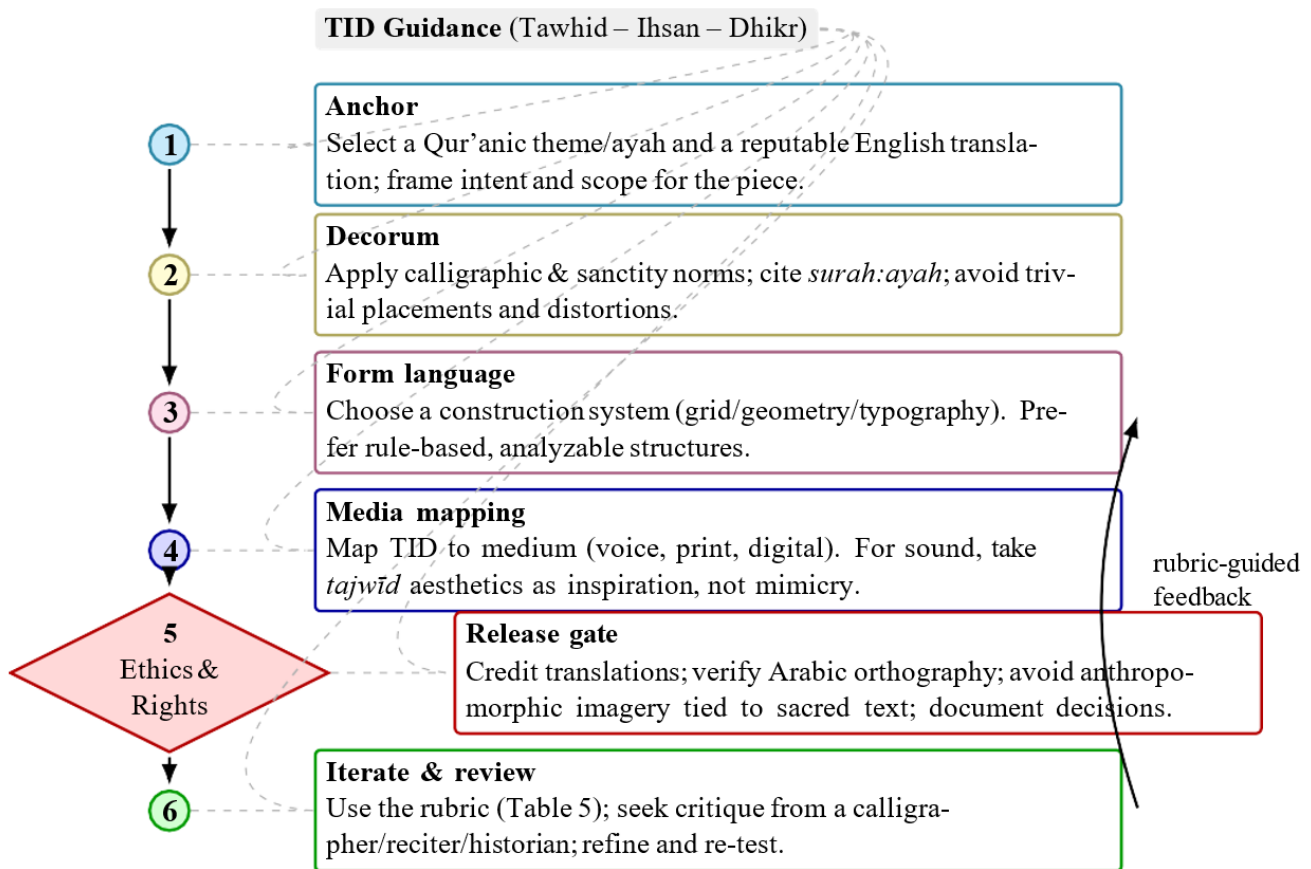


Figure 2: Practice-led workflow as a vertical timeline with a release gate.

4.1 Worked example: enacting the six-step workflow on Q. 55:7–9 (al-Raḥmān) Anchor (1). We anchor the piece in the mīzān verse:

He raised the sky and set up the balance, so that you do not transgress in the balance; establish weight with justice. Qur’an 55:7–9 [21]

Decorum (2). Arabic is set in a classical Naskh face with verified orthography; the citation (sūrah:āyāt, translator) appears adjacent. The Arabic text is not warped, masked, or used as back-ground texture. Placement avoids trivial surfaces; in print it occupies the typographic “honor line” (upper third) with adequate white space.

Form language (3). The verse’s notion of balance becomes rule:

- Grid: a symmetric scaffold derived from an eight-point star (orthogonal + diagonal divisions), with inner rings at radii {1, 7, 4} to yield three proportional “scales.”

- 6 3
- Ratios: column width:gutter= 6:1; primary stroke:secondary stroke= 3:2; tile valences constrained to mirror pairs (no odd singleton).

- Join discipline: interlace crossings meet at 45°/90° only; any motif that “looks” balanced but violates the scaffold is rejected.

Media choice (4). Two deliverables demonstrate media-agnostic mapping:

- Print poster (A4, single-column): vector artwork (PDF/X-1a), CMYK, Arabic line set above the geometric field; caption in English below.
- Ambient audio sketch (60–75 s): just-intonation chime pairs (left/right) panned symmetrically to suggest “weighing,” breath-length pauses echoing tajwīd pacing without imitation.

Ethics & rights (5). Translation credit [21]; Arabic source double-checked against a Muṣḥaf baseline; no anthropomorphic imagery; process notes archived (versioned vector file, audio stem list).

Iterate & review (6). Using Table 5, we run a quick, concrete pass:

- Conceptual unity (tawḥīd): Does every visual element serve the “balance” metaphor? (Fail case: decorative flourishes with no bearing on the scaffold.)
- Craft & measure (iḥsān): Do stroke weights hold the 3:2 rule at all scales? Are crossings clean at 45°/90°? (Spot-check: 10 random joints.)
- Remembrance (dhikr): Does repetition lead to quiet attention rather than visual noise? (Heuristic: viewer can trace one continuous ring without confusion.)
- Decorum with scripture: Is the Arabic readable, unwarped, and respectfully placed with source/translation visible?
- Innovation within tradition: Are the ring ratios and mirrored tile pairs a fresh—but rule-keeping—move?
- Transparency (digital): Are the grid, ratios, and export settings documented for re-use?

What the example shows. The āyah is not a caption pasted onto a picture; it drives proportion, spacing, and cadence. The outcome is reproducible (named grid and ratios), reviewable (Table 5), and portable across media without compromising decorum.

Table 2: Verses and aḥādīth mapped to concrete design prompts.

Doctrine	Text Anchor	Design Prompt (studio-facing)
Tawḥīd	Q. 16:90 (al-Naḥl); Q. 55:7–9 (al-Raḥmān)	Preserve balance and lawful symmetry. Prefer constructions whose constraints enforce proportion/justice; penalize motifs that <i>appear</i> balanced but violate the underlying tiling relations.
Iḥsān	Muslim 91a (“Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty”)	If two renderings are doctrinally equivalent, select the one exhibiting higher craft fineness (line quality, intersections, negative space) while avoiding ostentation.
Dhikr	Q. 24:35 (al-Nūr); Bukhārī 7527	Use graded illumination and repeating leitmotifs to sustain remembrance. In sound-linked pieces, shape cadence and breath to echo tajwīd without imitation or theatrics.

## 5. FAITH-GROUNDED EXTENSION: OPERATIONALIZING THE TID TRIAD

We operationalize the TID (Tawḥīd–Iḥsān–Dhikr) triad as a practice-led framework for contemporary English-medium artists. Design choices are made accountable to Qur’ānic guidance and authentic ḥadīth, while the geometry–calligraphy synthesis is supported by recent Q1 literature in cultural heritage and computational design.

### 5.1 Scriptural Anchors for Design Cues

We read Tawḥīd (Divine Oneness), Iḥsān (excellence/beauty), and Dhikr (remembrance) as an artist’s triad guiding form and process. Justice, balance, and proportion in surfaces draw on the Qur’ān’s moral geometry: “Allah commands justice, doing good, and generosity” (Q. 16:90), and the Light Verse (Q. 24:35) suggests a luminous logic of gradation and veiling.<sup>1</sup> Beautification is not vanity; the Prophet (ﷺ) clarified: “Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty; pride is rejecting truth and looking down on people” (Sahīh Muslim 91a) [39]. For sound, “Allah listens most attentively to a Prophet reciting the Qur’ān in a sweet voice” (Sahīh al–Bukhārī 7527) [40], which justifies careful timbral and rhythmic choices when artworks engage recitational motifs. As Table 2 has shown, the scriptural thread is not ornamental citation but the criterion that keeps our forms accountable to meaning.

### 5.2 Q1 Geometry Backbone for Practice

For the geometric layer we cite peer-reviewed, field-leading studies. Rosette structure and concealed composition can be detected and characterized with computer vision, then recomposed (Nasri, Benslimane & El Ouazizi, *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, Q1) [41]. Algorithmic star-pattern synthesis proceeds from symmetry-group fundamentals with tunable parameters (Khamjane & Benslimane, *Computer–Aided Design*, Q1) [42]. We keep our artisanal compass-and-straightedge ethos, but we let these results validate the grammar behind the studio moves. At historical scale, Lu & Steinhardt’s *Science* report supplies a canonical reading of decagonal/quasi-crystalline order where appropriate to museum-context discussion [43] (see also [44, 45]). Figure 3 has shown the pipeline by which meaning governs method without replacing craft.

<sup>1</sup>Translation: Abdel Haleem, Oxford University Press [38].

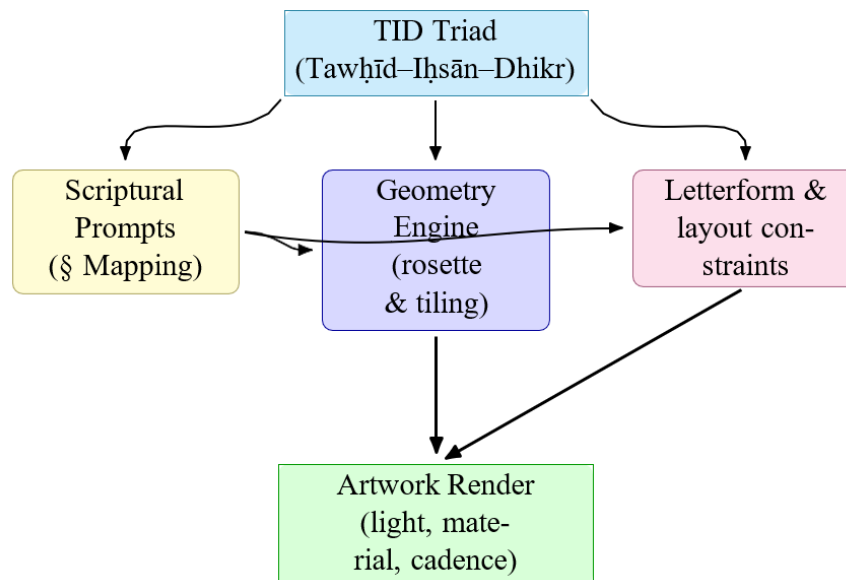


Figure 3: The operational pipeline: doctrinal prompts drive geometry and letterform constraints which, together, condition rendering choices. Has shown how meaning governs method.  
Table 3: Studio rubric (0–3 each): low-stakes guidance, not mechanistic scoring.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Guiding question</b>
Doctrinal fidelity	Does the piece enact the cited āyah/ <i>ḥadīth</i> without literalizing or trivializing it?
Proportion & balance	Are symmetry, subdivision, and interlace resolved without visual deceit?
Craft fineness (iḥsān)	Are lines, joins, counters, and spacing carried with care?
Remembrance (dhikr)	Do repetition, pause, and light lead to quiet recollection rather than spectacle?

### 5.3 A Modest, Reproducible Rubric

To keep the human voice and avoid mechanistic scoring, we use a light rubric for internal critique and for small user studies.

### 5.4 Notes on Calligraphy and Sound

Letterforms should follow recognized hands and spacing ethics; rhythm can respectfully echo tajwīd (elongation, pause), yet never mimic a named qāri'. The injunction to beautify recitation supports careful sonic choices while warning against theatrics. We cite Bukhārī 7527 [40] and the “yataghannā” ḥadīth discussed by jurists.<sup>2</sup>

## 6. APPLICATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

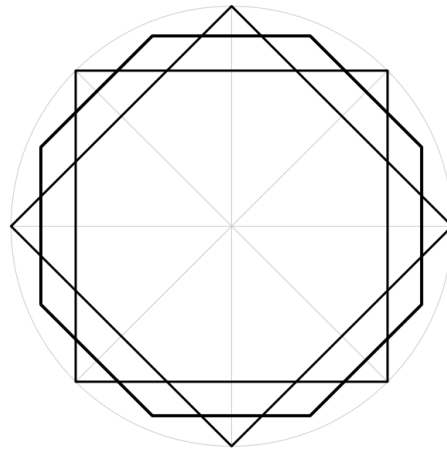
### 6.1 Calligraphy–typography hybrids (English-forward)

When Arabic calligraphy is not feasible, artists can use English letterforms disciplined by calligraphic logic: stroke modulation, rhythmic contrast, and proportion sets. Provide the Arabic source and translation nearby; employ ligatures and spacing to suggest flow rather than simulate Arabic script [12, 13].

<sup>2</sup>See the references to Bukhārī and scholarly explanations in the bibliography.

### 6.2 Geometric constructions (image-forward)

Geometry offers a non-figural path that communicates measure and unity. Figure 4 presents a reproducible eight-point star construction. Such stars and interlaces can structure entire compositions while avoiding superficial patterning [9, 10].

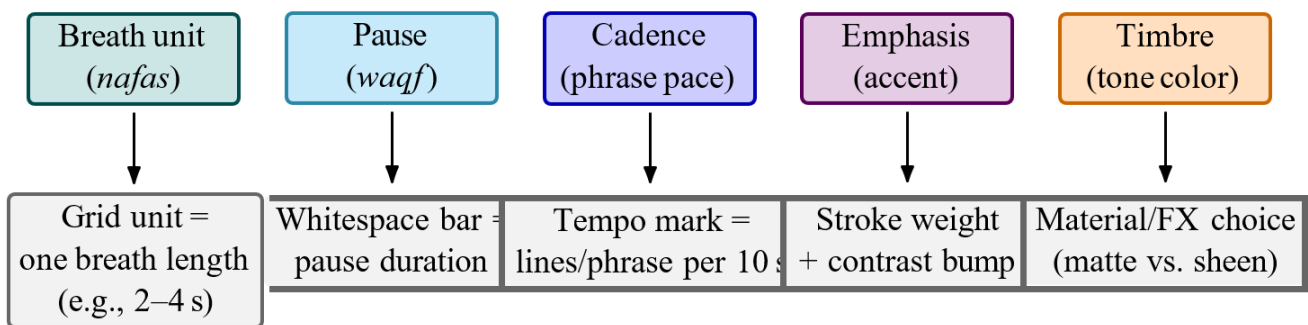


Eight-point star, constructed by orthogonal and diagonal divisions (cf. [6, 8, 9]).

Figure 4: A canonical eight-point star for non-figural composition.

### 6.3 Sound and voice (sound-forward)

Artists may draw from the poetics of Qur’anic recitation—breath, cadence, pause—without imitating sacred recitation for performance contexts. Spoken-word pieces can weave English lines with respectful pauses on Arabic phrases, noting sources and avoiding musicalization of Qur’anic verses outside appropriate settings [19, 20]. The prophetic counsel to recite beautifully encourages craft, not ostentation [23]. Figure 5 has shown how recitational cues—breath, pause, cadence, emphasis, and timbre—translate into concrete design moves—grid unit, whitespace bars, tempo marks, stroke contrast, and material—guiding timing and texture without imitating sacred recitation.



*Inspiration, not imitation:* cues are abstracted into measurable studio parameters (timing, spacing, weight, material), avoiding any mimicry of sacred recitation while preserving a remembrance-oriented cadence.

Figure 5: Cadence → design map: recitational cues inform concrete studio parameters (timing, spacing, stroke, material) without imitating sacred recitation.

#### 6.4 Digital and AI-assisted practice (computational-forward)

Rule-based and guided-generative approaches can extend tradition responsibly:

- Parametric geometry: Implement compass-and-straightedge logics algorithmically [9, 10].
- Texture synthesis: Use tiling and symmetry groups rather than photorealistic figuration [7, 8].
- Assistive AI: When using image generators, constrain prompts to abstract pattern, light, and materiality; avoid anthropomorphic depictions tied to Qur’anic text [31–33].

Table 4: Digital/AI guardrails for Qur’an-reflective creative work.

Domain	Do	Avoid
Arabic text	Validate orthography; keep text legible and unwarped; provide surah:ayah and translation [12, 21].	Warping or fragmenting verses; placing Qur’anic text on trivial/unclean surfaces.
Pattern & geometry	Use constructive rules; cite sources; prefer vectors [9, 10].	Random “Islamic-like” textures without structural logic.
Imagery	Focus on abstract light, landscape, architecture details [4].	Anthropomorphic depictions linked to Qur’anic text; sensational effects.
Sound	Use ambient textures; English voice with decorum; credit sources [19].	Backgrounding Qur’anic audio under unrelated content; gimmickry.
AI systems	Document prompts; filter outputs; human-in-the-loop curation [31, 32].	Unfiltered generation or auto-posting sacred content.

### 7. EVALUATION RUBRIC

Table 5 supports fair review in classrooms, galleries, and festivals. Table 5: Rubric for Qur’an-reflective artworks (score each 1–5).

Table 5: Rubric for Qur’an-reflective artworks (score each 1–5).

Criterion	Indicators	Notes
Conceptual unity ( <i>tawhīd</i> )	Clear theme; integration of elements; coherent narrative	Cross-check with artist statement.
Craft & measure ( <i>ihsān</i> )	Proportion, spacing, material care; no visual clutter	Use canonical ratios/grids.
Remembrance ( <i>dhikr</i> )	Work invites contemplation; avoids trivialization	Provide sources and context.
Decorum with scripture	Accurate citation, orthography, placement	Consult specialists when in doubt.
Innovation within tradition	Rule-based novelty; avoids pastiche	Document process and constraints.
Transparency (digital)	Prompt/process documentation; curation	Provide versioned files when applicable.

## 8. DISCUSSION

Our framework is intentionally media-agnostic yet rule-positive. Rule-based making is not a constraint on creativity but a source of depth; it is how geometry, calligraphy, and recitation achieve their characteristic power [1,9,12]. For English-medium artists, the challenge is to avoid merely translating Arabic forms into Latin scripts or copying motifs without understanding their generative logic. The path forward is conceptual rigor (principle-led) and material excellence (craft), with humility toward the text and communities it centers [18].

### 8.1 Limitations

This framework intentionally modest in scope. It does not prescribe legal rulings; for sensitive contexts, local scholarly guidance should always be sought. The scriptural mapping draws on selected translations and narrations—while Abdel-Haleem’s rendering [38] and canonical collections [39, 40] are authoritative, exegetical nuance varies across commentators. The rubric itself is deliberately lightweight and would benefit from inter-rater reliability testing in future studies. Likewise, the geometric validation foregrounds specific algorithmic families [41–43]; alternative constructions may yield different affordances and should be explored further. Finally, the AI guidelines we outline are evolving alongside technology, and future work should examine these guardrails more closely in classrooms, residencies, and other live contexts.

## 9. CONCLUSION

We presented the TID Model, operational tables, and reproducible figures to help contemporary, English-medium artists create Qur’an-reflective work responsibly and beautifully. By aligning unity, excellence, and remembrance with concrete studio moves, the framework invites innovation that remains anchored in the Qur’an’s vision of meaningful, measured beauty [21, 22].

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