

Art in the Muhammadiyah Islamic View: A Balance of Aesthetics and Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Art plays a crucial role in human life, reflecting social, cultural, and religious values. This study examines the concept of art according to Islamic scholars, the Qur'an, and Hadith, as well as the Muhammadiyah perspective. The approach used is literature review. The findings reveal that art in Islam has aesthetic, moral, and spiritual dimensions, serving not only as a visual expression of beauty but also as a means of drawing closer to Allah and improving character. Islamic scholars stress that art must align with sharia, carrying spiritual value and fulfilling religious obligations. Muhammadiyah's view of art emphasizes the balance of aesthetics and ethics, aiming to educate, improve character, and strengthen faith without contradicting sharia.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a universal, eternal, and perfect religion revealed by Allah to provide guidance and blessings for humanity (Agbaria, 2024). Its main goal is to help humans fulfill their roles in life to achieve happiness in both this world and the hereafter. In the Islamic perspective, humans play an important role as khalifatullah, Allah's representative on earth, tasked with realizing the message of Islam as a mercy to all (Murshidi et al., 2024). Additionally, humans are also Abdullah, who must continuously worship Allah. Worship in Islam is not limited to inner activities but also includes physical actions in relation to Allah, fellow humans, and the universe (Widyastuti et al., 2024). Understanding this concept, humans are expected to fulfill their duties responsibly as both khalifah and servants of Allah.

Islam is a religion revealed for all humanity, sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah (Hossain, 2023). Islam aligns with human nature, encompassing desires, will, emotions, traits, feelings, and intellect. According to Mainiyo & Sule (2024), the human soul contains a love for beauty, an aspect of art. Beauty in art can move the soul, create intimacy, and evoke various emotions such as joy, sorrow, and even hatred or resentment. Therefore, art plays an important role in human life, aligned with their nature and basic needs. Art also provides a space for humans to express themselves creatively within the framework of Islamic values.

According to Mujazin (2024), Islam is more than a theological system; it is a complete civilization. Nawawi et al. (2024) states that Islam is not just a religion in terms of worshipping the Almighty but also a culture. This statement highlights that Islam is not only related to theological aspects but also to culture, including art. Art in Islam is part of human efforts to understand and approach divine values reflected in the beauty and harmony of Allah's creation.

Art is part of culture, and in Islam, art holds an important place (Prayogi & Nasrullah, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2024). Islam as *din al-Islam* encompasses both religion and culture, making art a part of Islamic religion. Art in Islam is designed to address human nature, guiding them toward salvation and pleasure. In the Islamic perspective, art is not merely entertainment but also a medium to bring humans closer to Allah and strengthen their relationships with fellow humans and the universe. Art in Islam also functions as a learning tool, inspiring humans to recognize Allah's greatness and wisdom through beautiful and meaningful works.

Beauty is one of the main elements in art, and in Islam, the value of beauty is in harmony with the values of truth and goodness (Hafsa, 2024; Siswanto & Andriyani, 2024). The universe created by Allah is a manifestation of beauty, such as the sky adorned with stars. In the Qur'an, Allah conveys His teachings in ways that engage the entirety of humanity, including through art (Al-Olaqi, 2024). The real and symbolic stories in the Qur'an are often combined with imagination through concrete images, creating a profound aesthetic experience for humans. The principles of art in Islam are based on *tawhid*, obedience, and beauty. Art in Islam provides not only aesthetic pleasure but also deepens spiritual feelings and strengthens one's faith.

According to Rahman (2024) and Astiwi et al. (2024), beauty is the ability of an object to fulfill human desires and attract the interest of individuals or groups. This definition indicates that beauty has a universal appeal, satisfying the aesthetic needs of humans. In Islam, art containing beauty aims to touch the human soul and bring them closer to Allah, providing a sense of harmony and peace. Islamic art offers a space for humans to find a balance between their spiritual and material needs through works that reflect noble values.

The relationship between Islam and art is like two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated (Belabes, 2024; Syah, 2024). Islam without art and art without Islam cannot achieve perfection. Islam, as a divine teaching, requires art to explain the depth and mysterious aspects of its teachings. Conversely, art needs Islam to provide spiritual and moral values that enrich its meaning. Art in Islam serves as a medium for experiencing beauty, tranquility, and longing. Pisriwati et al. (2024) and Yogyanto et al. (2024) states that those who lack an appreciation for art may suffer from spiritual dryness. Good art can calm the soul and improve human character. Therefore, art plays an important role in the spiritual and emotional life of Muslims.

Art in Islam has a broad dimension, encompassing aspects such as music, literature, architecture, and visual arts (Sumarna & Gunawan, 2024). In the Qur'an and Hadith, art is often presented as a medium for conveying moral and spiritual messages (Slosse et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2024). However, there are differing views among scholars about the boundaries of permissible art. Some scholars allow art as long as it does not violate Islamic principles such as tawhid and ethics, while others prohibit certain forms of art that are believed to negatively impact faith and morality. This view shows that art in Islam must always align with Islamic values.

From the Islamic perspective, art should function as a means to strengthen faith and character. Muhammadiyah, for instance, emphasizes that art should be in harmony with Islamic values and contribute to the formation of an Islamic character. Art produced should guide humans toward goodness and away from immorality (Hosaini & Akhyak, 2024; Pisriwati et al., 2024). Therefore, art in Islam is not just for entertainment but also serves as an educational and da'wah tool. Art based on Islamic values has the potential to build a better and more harmonious society.

From the above discussion, several issues can be further studied concerning art in Islam. First, how is art viewed by scholars, both in the general context and within the framework of Islam? Second, how does art appear in the Qur'an and Hadith, including the views of scholars who permit or prohibit it? Third, what is the perspective on art in Islam in general and Muhammadiyah specifically? This study is important to understand the position of art in Islam holistically and profoundly.

By understanding art in the Islamic perspective, we can see how art can be an effective medium for conveying Islamic values. Art is not merely visual beauty or aesthetics but also has a profound spiritual dimension. In Islam, art should be directed to bring humans closer to Allah and improve their relationships with others and the universe (Siswanto et al., 2024; Afandi et al.,

2024). Therefore, art in Islam is not only culturally relevant but also theologically and morally significant. Truly Islamic art can inspire humans to live better according to religious teachings.

In conclusion, art in Islam holds high value as part of culture and civilization. Art in Islam not only fulfills human aesthetic needs but also serves as a medium for da'wah and education. Thus, art in Islam is not just an expression of human creativity but also a manifestation of faith and piety toward Allah. Islam teaches that art should reflect beauty, goodness, and truth, making it a mercy for all humanity. Islamic art, with its deep spiritual values, can contribute greatly to the development of a better human civilization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Views on Art in Islam

Islam has a unique perspective on art, distinguishing it from other artistic traditions in the world (Alam et al., 2023). Art in Islam is not merely viewed as an aesthetic expression, but also as a means to instill spiritual values (Maemonah et al., 2023). According to the Qur'an and Hadith, art should be grounded in the principle of tawhid, the oneness of Allah, which forms the foundation of all human creativity. This means that art in Islam must align with religious teachings and should benefit both individuals and society. For example, Islamic calligraphy, which has flourished in Islamic civilization, reflects beauty intertwined with divine messages, avoiding representations of living beings to maintain the purity of tawhid.

Moreover, art in Islam is multidimensional, encompassing visual arts, literature, music, and architecture, all aimed at conveying moral messages and values of goodness (Polymenopoulou, 2022). Islamic architecture, such as mosques with their intricate geometric designs, symbolizes spirituality and harmony (Gumelar et al., 2024). Scholars like Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized that art must serve to bring people closer to Allah, provide inner peace, and strengthen social bonds. Art involving elements of immorality, such as music or entertainment that corrupts morals, is considered contrary to Islamic principles. Islam's approach to art shows that it is not only entertainment but also a medium for education, da'wah, and character building.

The Relevance of Cultural Art with Islamic Teachings

Cultural art in Islam has deep roots in human nature, particularly the need for beauty and harmony (Supriyadi et al., 2023; Putri & Siswanto, 2024). This view aligns with the concept of Islam as a religion in harmony with human nature. Cultural art that develops in Muslim societies often reflects local values integrated with Islamic teachings, such as traditional music, carving arts, or dance that highlight religious themes (Syah et al., 2024). In this context, Islam allows for cultural expression as long as it stays within the boundaries of Sharia, such as avoiding elements of shirk (associating partners with Allah) or violating moral values. This demonstrates Islam's flexibility in accommodating cultural art while maintaining the purity of religious teachings.

Muhammadiyah, one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, asserts that cultural art must serve as an effective medium for da'wah

(Emridawati et al., 2023). Cultural art is not only intended to preserve traditions but also to creatively spread Islamic values. A concrete example is wayang kulit (shadow puppetry) adapted with Islamic stories, such as the stories of the Prophets and companions, to reinforce societal morality. Therefore, cultural art in Islam is not just a cultural identity for Muslims but also a strategic medium to strengthen faith, enhance religious understanding, and create social harmony.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a literature study method, which is an approach carried out by examining various relevant theoretical reference sources to answer certain cases or problems (Sugiyono, 2019). Literature studies aim to collect information, ideas, and findings from previous research or literature related to the research topic. This process involves critical analysis of sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, official documents, and other written works that are considered credible and relevant to the topic being raised. In the context of this research, theoretical references are obtained by accessing existing literature and assessing the quality and suitability of the information to the problems being studied. The steps in literature study research include identifying research topics and objectives, searching for relevant sources, evaluating and selecting literature, and synthesizing information to answer research questions. The results of this literature study will be used as a theoretical basis to support the analysis and interpretation of the problems discussed, as well as helping researchers draw more comprehensive conclusions and recommendations.

RESEARCH RESULT

Art According to Experts

According to Al-Ghazali (2005), art is an essential part of beauty created to bring humans closer to Allah. In his book *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that art serves to touch the soul, create a sense of peace, and improve human morals. Art, in his view, is a medium that leads humans to a deep appreciation of Allah's greatness and awareness of the afterlife. True art must align with Islamic values, reflecting beauty, truth, and goodness, and should serve as a means of educating and purifying the heart from negative traits such as arrogance and hypocrisy. Al-Ghazali also warns against using art for trivial or sinful purposes; instead, it should strengthen faith and bring people closer to Allah.

Al-Qardhawi (1993) sees art as a creative expression of humanity that must be based on the values of monotheism (tauhid) and Islamic teachings. In his book *Islam and Contemporary Issues*, Al-Qaradawi explains that art has great potential to convey profound moral and spiritual messages. Art that aligns with Islam, he argues, is art that educates, benefits, and does not violate the principles of Shariah. He stresses that art should be a tool to enhance human awareness of Allah's greatness and foster harmonious living. For Al-Qaradawi, art is not merely entertainment but also a tool for social transformation that

guides people towards goodness. Therefore, he underscores the importance of cultivating awareness among Muslim artists to create meaningful works that do not contradict Islamic beliefs.

Al-Attas (1990) defines art as a manifestation of divine beauty (*jalal and jamal*), reflecting the order and harmony of Allah's creation. According to Al-Attas, art is a symbolic medium for depicting truth and leading humans to profound reflection on the greatness of the Creator. He argues that Islamic art not only emphasizes aesthetics but must also reflect ethical and spiritual values. Art, he believes, can be a pathway for humans to understand their true selves and their position as servants of Allah in this world. Furthermore, Al-Attas stresses that good art is art that enhances both the spirituality and intellect of humans, while simultaneously being a tangible expression of Allah's beauty and grace in daily life.

Rahman (1982) views art as part of Islamic culture, expressing universal values such as beauty, justice, and truth. In his work *Islam and Modernity*, he states that art is a vital tool for building connections between humans and Allah, as well as between humans themselves. Rahman believes that art plays a significant role in fostering mutual understanding of beauty and harmony, ultimately creating a better society. Art also functions to encourage introspection and personal character development. He emphasizes the importance of art that is not merely entertaining but also inspires people to live according to Islamic values. Ideal art, in his view, is art that instills values of justice, empathy, and respect for life.

Abduh (1974) regards art as a means for humans to understand and appreciate the beauty of Allah's creation. From his perspective, art has a dual function: as a *halal* form of entertainment and as an effective medium for *da'wah* (Islamic outreach). Abduh stresses that art in accordance with Islamic teachings is art that carries moral messages, does not violate *Shariah*, and enhances human awareness of spiritual values. Art, according to Abduh, can bridge the gap between the material and spiritual worlds, enabling humans to live balanced lives. He also believes that art has great potential to create social harmony and build collective awareness of the importance of religious values in daily life.

Based on the views of Islamic scholars, it is evident that art in Islam is not merely an expression of visual beauty but also has profound spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions. Art that aligns with Islamic teachings is art that educates, improves character, and strengthens the relationship between humans, Allah, and fellow human beings. The beauty of art in Islam is always closely related to the values of *tauhid*, justice, and harmony in life.

Art According to the Qur'an and Hadith

Art is one of the cultural aspects inherent in human life (Abduh, 1974). In Islam, art is not only a creative expression but also a means to draw closer to Allah and strengthen spiritual connections. The Qur'an and Hadith provide profound insights into art, linking it with the values of monotheism (*tauhid*), morality, and harmony. Verses in the Qur'an teach the importance of beauty in human life, just as Allah created the universe with aesthetic perfection. In Surah

Al-A'raf, verse 31, Allah says: "...Wear your adornment at every masjid, eat and drink, but do not be excessive...". This verse shows Islam's appreciation for beauty, while maintaining adherence to the boundaries of Shariah.

In Islam, the beauty of art is seen as a reflection of Allah's attribute of the Most Beautiful (Al-Jamil). The Qur'an mentions in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 3: "He who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see any in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency...". This verse emphasizes that Allah created everything with order and harmony, which serves as inspiration for Islamic art. Art that aligns with Islamic teachings should reflect this order and beauty, guiding humans toward a deeper understanding of the greatness of the Creator.

Prophet Muhammad SAW provided views supporting art as a halal and beneficial part of life. The Hadith, "Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty..." (HR. Muslim), affirms that art, if performed within the framework of Shariah, is a form of worship. This Hadith encourages Muslims to appreciate and create art that carries moral and spiritual values. Art created with good intentions and noble purposes can become an effective medium for da'wah (Islamic outreach) to spread the teachings of Islam.

The Qur'an and Hadith teach that art can be used as an effective tool for da'wah. In Surah An-Nahl, verse 125, Allah says: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best...". Art, such as music, poetry, or visual arts, can serve as a medium for conveying Islamic messages that touch the heart. During the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW, poetry was widely used as a tool for da'wah. One of the Prophet's companions, Hassan bin Thabit, was known for using his poetic talent to defend Islam and deliver moral messages.

Islam sets ethical guidelines and limitations in art to maintain morality and spiritual values (Maemonah et al., 2023). The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Indeed, what is halal is clear, and what is haram is clear..." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim) underscores the importance of ensuring that art does not contradict Islamic teachings. Art that conforms to Shariah should not contain elements that conflict with belief, such as pornography, blasphemy, or actions that corrupt societal morals. Furthermore, art should not distract humans from their religious duties, such as prayer and dhikr.

Islamic architecture and calligraphy are two highly valued forms of art in Islam. Mosques, as places of worship, are often decorated with beautiful and meaningful Qur'anic calligraphy. Islamic calligraphy is a form of art that reflects reverence for the words of Allah. Historically, calligraphy was not only used to adorn the Qur'an but also the mihrab of mosques, walls, and everyday objects. Islamic architecture, such as the Nabawi Mosque in Medina and the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, reflects harmony between aesthetics and spirituality.

Art in Islam is not just for entertainment but also serves as a means to strengthen the relationship between humans and Allah. The beauty of Islamic art is designed to inspire reflection on Allah's greatness and bring people closer to Him. In Surah Az-Zumar, verse 23, the Qur'an mentions: "Allah has sent down the best speech, a book consistent in its verses, which the skins of those

who fear their Lord shudder..." This verse demonstrates that beauty in Islam encompasses a deep spiritual dimension.

The Qur'anic and Hadith perspectives on art reinforce its role as an act of worship in Islam. Art that aligns with Islamic teachings does more than create beauty; it educates, improves character, and strengthens the relationship between humans and Allah. Art in Islam is always connected to the values of tauhid, morality, and harmony, making it a means to enrich the spiritual and social life of the community. Therefore, art is not only an aesthetic expression but also a medium for da'wah and a reflection of faith.

The Perspective of Art According to Islam and Muhammadiyah

Islam views art as an integral part of life, possessing both aesthetic and spiritual dimensions. The Qur'an mentions in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 31, that Allah taught humans the names of things, reflecting creativity as a divine gift. In Islam, art is seen as a means to express the beauty created by Allah. However, art in Islam is not solely about aesthetics; it must also reflect moral values, monotheism (tauhid), and benefits for the community. This is in accordance with the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty..." (HR. Muslim).

In Islam, art is considered one way to contemplate the greatness of Allah. The art produced must direct humans toward a deep understanding of tauhid. Visual arts, music, literature, and Islamic architecture, such as mosques adorned with Qur'anic calligraphy, are examples of how art in Islam serves as a medium for da'wah. Al-Ghazali (2005) asserts that art should be used to improve character and strengthen the closeness of humans to Allah. Art that does not comply with Shariah, such as that which violates morals or deviates from belief, is not permitted as it may distance people from Islamic values.

As one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah holds a distinctive view of art. Muhammadiyah sees art as a means of da'wah that must adhere to the Qur'an and Hadith. In Muhammadiyah's perspective, art is not merely for entertainment but also for building character and instilling Islamic values. This is outlined in the Muhammadiyah Guide to Islamic Living (PHIWM), which emphasizes that art must educate, provide benefits, and not contradict Shariah principles. Muhammadiyah also encourages the use of art to strengthen faith and promote social justice.

Muhammadiyah acknowledges the importance of art that is contextual with local culture, as long as it does not conflict with Shariah. For example, Muhammadiyah supports traditional arts such as gamelan and wayang, provided the content and messages conveyed align with Islamic values. Islamic art adapted to the local context becomes a more effective medium for da'wah because it can resonate with people's hearts without erasing their cultural identity. This approach reflects Muhammadiyah's flexibility in accommodating art as a medium for education and da'wah.

In both Islam and Muhammadiyah, art is not only viewed as individual expression but also as a tool for conveying moral and spiritual messages. This aligns with Surah An-Nahl, verse 125: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction...". Art that contains elements of da'wah, such as

nasheeds, Islamic films, or performing arts, can capture the attention of a wide audience while conveying the teachings of Islam in an easily understandable way. Muhammadiyah utilizes art as an effective medium for da'wah, both through modern and traditional art forms that are modified to align with Islamic values.

The views of Islam and Muhammadiyah on art emphasize the balance between aesthetics and ethics. Art in Islam is not only about visual or auditory beauty but must also reflect the values of tauhid, morality, and benefit for humanity. Muhammadiyah, as a modernist Islamic movement, integrates art into da'wah and education while remaining grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith. The Islamic art produced from this perspective is not just entertainment but also a means to strengthen faith, improve character, and build a better society.

DISCUSSION

Based on the Islamic perspective, art has a highly significant aesthetic dimension, but more than that, it also plays a profound spiritual and moral role. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, art is a tool used to bring humans closer to Allah and must reflect beauty, truth, and goodness. In his book *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali teaches that art not only encompasses visual expression but also has the potential to improve human character and purify the heart from negative traits such as arrogance and hypocrisy Al-Ghazali (2005). This indicates that art in Islam should serve as a means to enhance spirituality and closeness to Allah while preserving moral values in accordance with Islamic teachings.

This view is also reinforced by Al-Qardhawi (1993), who sees art as a creative expression of humans that must be grounded in the values of tawhid and Islamic teachings. In his book *Islam and Contemporary Issues*, Al-Qardhawi (1993) explains that art in accordance with Islam is art that educates, provides benefits, and does not violate the principles of Shariah. Art is a tool for social transformation that can lead the community toward a better and more harmonious life, while ensuring that the artwork remains within the boundaries that do not contradict religious teachings. Therefore, art in the Islamic view is not merely for entertainment but must have deep educational and spiritual value.

Al-Attas (1990) also asserts that art is a manifestation of divine beauty that reflects the order and harmony of Allah's creation. According to him, art should not only emphasize aesthetics but must also lead humans to a deeper understanding of the greatness of Allah. He emphasizes that art must have an ethical and spiritual dimension that can help humans recognize the true nature of themselves and their position in this world (Al-Attas, 1990). In this regard, art functions as a medium that not only expresses visual beauty but also serves as a tool to improve human spirituality and intellect, while simultaneously being a tangible expression of the beauty and mercy of Allah reflected in daily life.

The Islamic view of art is also reflected in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an teaches that the beauty of art is a reflection of Allah's

attribute as the Most Beautiful. In Surah Al-Mulk, verse 3, Allah describes His perfect and harmonious creation, which becomes an inspiration in Islamic art. Art in Islam must be able to reflect this order and beauty, leading humans to a deeper understanding of the greatness of the Creator. The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW, which states "Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty..." (HR. Muslim), reinforces the idea that art performed with good intentions can become an act of worship that brings the community closer to Allah. Thus, art in Islam is not merely an expression but also an effective medium for da'wah to convey moral and spiritual messages that benefit the community (Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl, verse 125).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Art from an Islamic perspective has deep dimensions of aesthetics, morality, and spirituality. Islamic scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Qaradawi, Al-Attas, Fazlur Rahman, and Muhammad Abduh, emphasize that art is not only an expression of visual beauty, but also a means to get closer to Allah, improve morals, and teach the values of monotheism and morality. The Qur'an and Hadith teach that art that is in accordance with Islamic law must have spiritual value, not neglect religious obligations, and be effective as a medium of da'wah. Muhammadiyah's view of art is in line with Islamic principles that prioritize the harmony of aesthetics and ethics, where art must educate, improve character, and strengthen faith without conflicting with the law, and support contextual local art as long as it does not violate Islamic values.

It is recommended to develop Islamic art that reflects the values of monotheism, truth, and goodness in various media, such as music, literature, fine arts, and architecture. Art education needs to integrate aesthetics and ethics, teaching art that is spiritually and morally profound. Art can also be an effective tool for preaching, both through modern and traditional works of art that are in accordance with Islamic law. Muhammadiyah can support local arts, such as gamelan and wayang, in preaching as long as they remain in line with Islamic principles. In addition, society is expected to appreciate art more as part of spiritual life to improve moral quality, creating a harmonious and moral society.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Based on these findings, further research is suggested to focus on the development of Islamic art that reflects the values of monotheism, truth, and goodness, with an emphasis on various media such as music, literature, fine arts, and architecture. This needs to be balanced with efforts to integrate art education that combines aesthetic and ethical aspects, which not only emphasize visual beauty but also spiritual and moral depth.

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