

UZBEK FOLK APPLIED ART AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

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Annotation

Samarkand scroll work (naqqoshli ornament) is recognized globally among architecture specialists and art enthusiasts for its aesthetic and historical significance. As a cultural heritage, preserving and promoting Samarkand's naqqosh art on the international stage is vital. Equally important is emphasizing each monument's cultural value.

Keywords

architectural art; applied art; national pattern; pottery; embroidery; carpet weaving; gold embroidery.

Abstract:

Uzbek folk applied architectural art has rich traditions. The surviving examples of applied architectural art are diverse and vibrant. These include pottery, silk and wool textiles, various carpets and rugs, household items made of wood and metal, marble objects carved with floral motifs, suzanis (embroidered fabrics), floral jackets, gold embroidery, various doppi (skullcaps), and more.

Each region's applied art reflects its unique local features in shapes, patterns, and colors, indicating that artisans had distinctive tools and decorative styles. In Uzbekistan, types of applied arts such as embroidery, carpet and rug weaving, and gold embroidery continue to advance.

Uzbekistan is renowned for its colorful silks – shoyi, atlas, beqasam, and xon-atlas – since ancient times. Today, fine textile arts flourish in Margilan, Fergana, Namangan, Samarkand, and Bukhara.

Carpet-making, a major branch of textile arts, is widespread. Masterfully made carpets, rugs, and sholchalar (short rugs) are woven in various forms rooted in folk traditions. For example:

- In Karshi and Koson districts: richly-colored geometric “gul sholchalar” (flower rugs).
- In regions of Samarkand: elongated “julkir”-style paloss.
- In the village of Oyim (Andijan): “qizil oyoq” carpets.

- Xiva is known for its tekkin technique rugs.

Recently, pottery has developed significantly in Uzbekistan. Each city and district has a unique style in crafting and coloring earthenware: Bukhara and G'ijduvon use reddish brown hues; Rishton uses turquoise, sky blue shades; Samarkand artisans prefer green yellow tones; while Shakhrisabz favors red colored glazes.

Decorative patterns on copperware hold a special place among Uzbek folk crafts. Especially in Kokand, Karshi, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, and Khiva, naqosh and miscar masters create exquisitely crafted teapots, samovars, teapots, kuldon pots, trays, and other objects found in many homes.

Wood artisans inspired by Eastern tradition also show distinct styles. Wood-carving art is more developed in Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Shakhrisabz, and Tashkent. Carvers manifested their artistry in doors, columns, windows, ceilings, and similar architectural elements. Nowadays, they contribute to decorating homes and public spaces. In woodcraft shops you can find modern pieces—coat racks, wardrobes, sofas, tables, chairs—crafted by emerging artisans. These objects are elegant, simple, and very functional, reflecting today's creative trends. Painters who apply bright colors also play an important role.

The art of wood carving began around the 4th century. Florally ornamented medieval monuments have survived to the present day. Since ancient times, schools, madrasas, columns, guesthouses built by nobles or officials were adorned by naqqosh (carving artisans) with delicate patterns.

Ganch masters intricately carved delicate floral motifs into madrasa walls and cornices.

Naqqosh art demands patience, steadiness, and keen attention. Kaykavus, the grandson of Qabus (10th century), believed mastering a craft was every youth's duty.

Learning craft in childhood influences moral development and respect for honest work, fostering social bonds and improving living standards. Kaykavus explained that without work and skill, one can neither attain knowledge nor enlightenment:

"Working to acquire knowledge, and saving the body from laziness, benefits a person. Laziness and laziness damage the body and cause illness. If you don't discipline your body with labor, you can't be healthy or hold a dignified position..."

Crafts and professions prevent youth from wasting time and engaging in harmful behaviors. They instill resilience and redirect negative thoughts formed in adversity.

Great thinkers who gained world renown—Aristotle; Al Khwarizmi; Al Beruni; Ibn Sina; Nasir Khusraw; Nizamiyy; Sa'di; Omar Khayyam; Alisher Navoiy; Bedil; Babur—contributed to cultural advancement through their scientific and artistic legacies. They believed that beauty brings joy to the heart and helps overcome sorrow and suffering.

Babur valued the craft of intricately patterned irmoqlu (lace-like) artisans, inviting them to his court, giving memorable gifts, and stating: “Hard working artisans are respected in the land”.

Navoiy appreciated naqqosh artistry and wished artisans immortal fame in front of the people. Such figures contributed to the discovery and refinement of ornamental flowers and the continuation of carving arts.

In the palaces of Varakhsha (7th–8th centuries), the diversity of folk applied art astonished visitors. During the early 9th–11th centuries, decorative arts and architecture rapidly advanced in Central Asia. Following Arab invasions, cultural development occurred in stages:

1. Mid 8th to 9th centuries: Construction inside cities declined.
2. Late 9th to 10th century: After independence from the Abbasid Caliphate, rebuilding revived.
3. Early 11th to early 13th century: Under feudal rule, architecture and urban construction reached new heights.

In the 17th–18th centuries, applied art began to be used extensively in residential decoration. By the 19th century, ornamentation became rigorous and structured. Until the mid-19th century, ochre-yellow, red jusha, carrot hue pigments were used; later, lighter dyes like yellowish carrot and shingob (a local dye) appeared. Uzbek patterns always feature smooth transitions—e.g., from black to white, jusha red to deep green, green to yellow.

No formal schools or books on decorative art existed. Masters transmitted their skills from teachers or fathers. With student help, they decorated mansions, palaces, and madrasas to earn a livelihood.

Since the 1920s, many artistic workshops and factories opened across Uzbekistan to promote applied art. Student associations were formed in artels; each group had one or two masters attached. Apprenticeship lasted 3–6 months depending on task complexity. Apprentices received monthly stipends, materials, and tools. Upon completion, they took exams and earned qualifications based on their work and knowledge.

In 1952–53, the Practical Art Department opened at the P. P. Benkov Art School in Tashkent. Notable national masters—Yoqubjon Raufov, Muhiddin Raximov, Jalil Xakimov, Mahmud Usmonov, Toir Tuxtaxujayev—taught there.

In 1949, at the Ostrovskiy Pioneer Palace, and in 1954 at the Lenin Pioneer Palace, carving and ganch (gypsum stucco) work clubs were formed, where students learned both arts with great interest.

Also in Tashkent, a technical school for art and applied arts opened. Workshops for carving, metalwork, jewelry, and rug-making were established.

Today, masters and apprentices collaborate to decorate theaters, clubs, museums with ornamental art, presenting their craftsmanship to the public. They also showcase their artistic products at exhibitions.

Recent years have seen the publication of books dedicated to folk art—for example: “Tashkent Naqqoshi” about the pattern master Qosimjon Olimjonov; “Tashkent Wood Carving” on the craftsman Maqsud Kasimov; and works on other regional masters like Abdulla Boltayev. Such books help nurture young naqqosh artists, hone their skills, and inspire modern creative works.

Conclusion (Final, Corrected Version):

During the Timuriy era, decorative art reached remarkable sophistication, guided by theoretical principles of color, mosaic, calligraphy, geometry, and precise symmetry. Monuments such as Samarkand’s Registan Square and the Bibikhanum Mosque serve as clear examples of this period's ornamental excellence.

In Samarkand architecture, decorative art plays a vital aesthetic and functional role. It not only enhances the beauty of buildings but also conveys historical and cultural values. Decorative elements bring architecture to life, expressing people's ideas and emotions.

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