

CONSULTING THE RIVAL FOR INNOVATION:
The Educational and Aesthetical Values of Henri Matisse's
Islamic Experience

By

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the University of Technology Sydney***

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I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. All help I have received in my research and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged.

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The East saved us (Henry Matisse)

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Abstract

This thesis argues the influences of Islamic art on the works of Henri Matisse. The study investigates the educational and aesthetic values of these influences. It is informed by the argument that Matisse has succeeded in mixing his European artistic traditions with Islamic art traditions, and that such a mixture has the potential to change not only the way we do and appreciate art, but also the philosophy that underpins art making and understanding. Based on Matisse's Islamic experience, this research explores the significance of exposing the artistic self to the artistic other. It argues that hybridity in art, culture and education has the potential to generate new meanings, based on difference rather than conformity, and that such differences are energizing. Recognition of the other in artistic experience may influence both artistic and educational discourse. Studying Matisse from Islamic perspectives is unique, and represents readings from a non-Western point of view as well as the opportunity to explore links with contemporary educational, social, cultural and political issues. Within its educational perspectives, this study explores Matisse's Islamic experience in relation to a contemporary school context in which the positive impact of such an experience on teaching and learning art is investigated.

Rational

This thesis argues the influences of Islamic art on the works of Henri Matisse. The study investigates in particular the educational and aesthetical values of these influences. In this, the study is informed by the argument that Matisse has succeeded in mixing his European artistic traditions with aspects of Islamic art traditions. Such a mixture, I would argue, has the potential to change the way we do and appreciate art, in addition to its potential to change the philosophy that may underpin art making and understanding. On purpose or by coincidence, Matisse paintings have always suggested blurry boundaries between his art and the other arts. He went to Spain, Russia, Algeria, Morocco and the South Seas seeking a kind of validity of the art of the “Other”. The validity of Islamic influences in Matisse’s paintings assumes that Matisse has succeeded in creating a kind of visual dialogue between different elements and aspects taken from his traditions and the Islamic traditions he has arguably consulted. This dialogue is between flatness and three-dimensional forms, decorative elements and picturesque representation. Within this kind of dialogue, I would argue, rest the educational and aesthetical values of Matisse’s experience. Indeed, the dynamic of bringing together the two traditions suggests a kind of a non-essentialist approach to knowledge by freeing arts and aesthetics from the epistemology of any determined art theory and eventually any determined world.

Before Matisse, many European artists have consulted somehow Islamic art traditions, i.e Rembrandt according to Schneider (1980) has introduced in his paintings some decorative motifs taken from Islamic rugs. However, the uniqueness of Matisse Islamic experience has no precedent within the course of Western art. That is, Matisse has had the chance to create his own aesthetical system based on the Islamic borrowed motifs. This system has had arguably the potential to shift the way contemporary art is grounded, technically and aesthetically, and it has the potential to shift the epistemology that underpins art

making and appreciating. The above argument has formed, in fact, the main hypothesis of this study. This study, then, investigates how these aesthetical values created by Matisse are driven from the aesthetics of Islamic art. More importantly, what is the impact of those aesthetics in reshaping contemporary art and the epistemology of both Islamic and Western art?

Concerning the educational side of Matisse's Islamic experience, this study investigates how such an experience may benefit art teaching and learning. Moreover, what are the conditions under which "the art of the Other" can be a part that is accounted for, and how has Matisse reflected these conditions in his *Notes of a Painter*? In this context, my experience as an educator and artist is grounded based on Matisse's Islamic experience. Indeed, my own experience informs this study in many ways. How do we teach art? How do we integrate differences when doing art? More importantly, how can we take advantage of the different artistic and cultural traditions brought to our schools by culturally different students? Based on the above questions, the educational values of integrating differences when doing art especially in schools has arguably the potential to influence not just the way we do and appreciate contemporary art, but the way we use art as a learning tool and a fields of inquiry, and the way we approach knowledge in general. As my research goes on, I realize that Matisse's Islamic experience is not just confined to its educational and aesthetical sides, but it is strongly associated with many contemporary issues that may cover the cultural, the social, and the political. Therefore investigating these issues has become necessary, as no research can be isolated from its background issues and all other issues that may influence it.

Investigating Matisse from such perspectives has led this study to deal with the issues of cultural differences, cultural and artistic exchange, cultural identity, hybridity, and Orientalism. In this context, Matisse's Islamic experience is looked at within the same context of cultural and scientific exchange that dominated the relationships between Islam and Europe from as early as the 8th century.

(Regarding this point, Pirenne (1993) cites some early cultural exchanges between the French king Charlemagne and the Muslim Caliph Haroun El-Rashid during the reign of the Abbasid Muslims in Baghdad). Indeed, Islamic knowledge in Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy, Geography and history long before Matisse were already at the centre of Western thoughts and practices. They become “the learning tools” Europe has succeeded in exploiting in order to acquire supremacy in every branch of knowledge including arts. Rodinson (1973), Bornstein (1981) and Feber (1975) give exciting details about the role of Islamic knowledge in Europe’s scientific and philological knowledge. Linking Matisse’s Islamic experience in the above historical, cultural and political context would deny, as I will argue, most European art critics the argument through which they confine Matisse’s Islamic experience to a mere temporary exotic or orientalist experience that seeks fantasy and strangeness. This once popular argument tends to underestimate the potential of Matisse’s venture as an experience that has the dynamic to explore Other’s experience as a source of learning instead of being a rival enemy with no role in knowledge and knowledge production.

In this context, the uniqueness of studying Matisse’s Islamic experience may consist in the fact that this study is the first to look at Matisse’s art from non-Western perspectives. Studying Matisse from Islamic perspectives becomes a unique investigation for many reasons. Firstly, it affords an unprecedented and unique reading of Matisse paintings from a non-western point of view (it is a kind of writing back, or letting the subject tell his own story). This by itself would generate new and unique outcomes that may elucidate the role of the Other within the evolution of western arts. In addition, it tends to link such an experience with many contemporary social, cultural and political issues such as education, orientalism, hybridity and cultural identity.

Secondly, the study offers a unique opportunity that may reveal the positive outcomes of borrowing from other traditions. That is, borrowing has arguably the potential and the dynamic to affect positively own traditions and own knowledge

and may enrich the epistemology that may underpin art making and functions. Thirdly, within its educational perspectives, the study has attempted to project Matisse's Islamic experience to a contemporary context through which the positive impact of such an experience on teaching and learning art is investigated. More importantly is the study's ambition to link its art education perspective to a much wider perspective through which the conditions of teaching culturally different students are explored in general. Finally, this study attempts to promote cultural, ethnic and perhaps religious harmony through artistic and aesthetical means. Such a claim may be justified by the notion that art can be used as an alternative to all political dogmas and orientalist thoughts especially in the relationships between Islam and the West.

CHAPTER ONE

Context and Overview

1.1 Introduction:

This chapter gives a detailed account about the research process, and in which way this process is going to be achieved and implemented. This includes the research background, the research questions, the purpose, the significance, the implications and assumptions of this study. Also, the chapter provides a detailed overview of the study's nine chapters.

Exploring the background of the research is important for this study for two main reasons. Firstly, it determines the researcher's suitability to conduct and argue the issues raised by the research assumptions. Secondly, background issues have the potential to connect the research claims with the present and the future including any contemporary context that can be verified by the research assumptions. In addition, educational and social and cultural personal experiences are used in this study for their potential to enrich research with intimate details that may create authentic research practice based on field studies and lived experiences. These experiences help in generating the research questions, which evolve upon the study's argument and assumptions. That is, how did Matisse succeed in validating Islamic art so that it may appeal to his European art technically, aesthetically, and educationally? More importantly, in consulting Islamic art within the energy it has arguably created, how does this process influences contemporary art education towards teaching and learning art in general, and how the process of consulting the Other will assumingly help create and validate new aesthetics in particular?

The significance and the purpose of the study are outlined in this chapter as well. That is, in which way this research is adding new to the body of knowledge. Moreover, how stakeholders, artists, art students and teachers, schools and educational institutions may become aware of the impact of Islamic art on Matisse's paintings. In addition, how they would be benefited from the study's

argument in order to plan, teach, do and appreciate art works based on Matisse's approach in consulting the Other's art.

The study's implications and assumptions are also identified in this chapter. However, all hypotheses and assumptions in this study are problematic. They tend to pose questions rather than seek solutions. Therefore, terms and definitions are used in this study within a contested environment. That is, nothing is ultimate and all facts are subjected to constant questioning and away from any static and taken-for-granted knowledge. For example, definition of Islamic art, European art, Orientalism, and cultural identity are used in this study in the ways they are outlined within the study's research questions and within the ways, they inform and verify the research's assumptions. In addition, this chapter provides a detailed overview of each of the study's chapters and includes data collection analysis, interpretation and the methodology of the research.

1.2 Background:

My interest in Henri Matisse started at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Lebanon two decades ago. An outside assessor (an artist of international reputation) labeled my 20 artworks (mostly paintings and Ceramic works) as 'completely' Matissian. At the time, I was in my first year as an art student with no particular interest in Matisse apart from the general interest in impressionist and post impressionist French artists. Once the faculty's assessment was finished, I went to the faculty's library and found a book about Matisse. I immediately fell under the spell of his world! Although I was not convinced by the opinion of the assessor about Matisse's influences regarding the style and techniques of my own art works, I gradually started to realize that my art works did reflect some Matissian ambiances toward the subject matter, colours, two-dimensional compositions and the non-depressing themes.

I have never reflected the Lebanese civil war in my paintings despite the fact that I was painting when the whole production of most Middle Eastern artists was

politically motivated during Lebanon's 15-year civil war. Instead, I was oddly busy drawing flowers, birds, and women's faces. I have been accused of living outside the real world. I could not find any explanation why I tended to draw women birds and flowers as much as I was exposed to the scene of dead bodies killed in the streets of Beirut every day. However, when I read Matisse's concepts about art I felt relieved. Here is an artist whom I share a common belief about the purity of means in art.

In his *Notes of a Painter*, Matisse(1908) wrote:

What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing a subject matter... A soothing, influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue" *Notes of a Painter* (Flam 1986, p.80).

As an artist and teacher, I learned and trained in a mixed cultural environment. I started to learn French along with Arabic from the early years of primary school. By the early years of high school, my cultural identity was shaped and French was an essential part of it. The way I eat, drink, dress, and talk would reflect some of the then current trend in French culture including philosophical theories, arts, music, and literature. All of these have given my world its French bit and have imposed a hybrid touch to my cultural identity. Indeed, to fulfill my academic study I was fully committed to read classical French literature from Rousseau and Racine to Hugo, Sartre and Foucault along with Arabic literature and philosophy. I enjoyed moving between two cultural traditions, although France's colonial role in my country inhabited continuously my percepts and spread conflicting feelings in me. I liked the French ways but I always suspected the aims of such Frenchness. However, I should admit that my French bit has helped me to free myself from the influences of many cultural "burdens" of my native culture such as the influences of extended family and other religious influences. This made me feel proud to belong to a larger community that goes far beyond my Arabic and Lebanese background, the great modern artistic and cultural legacy that France

had earned through its history. On the other hand, France's colonial role in my country made me suspicious of how culture can be manipulated to become a mean of domination. In another word how knowledge is linked to power as Foucault (1976) argues.

Fighting the symptoms of exposing the self to such bicultural education and cultural environment, Matisse's Islamic experience forms a great relief for me. On the one hand, it reveals the complexity of the concept of cultural identity and on the other, it has helped me understand and conceptualize my own identity as a unique individual. In fact, it helps me finding ways to coexist with the other. In this context, Matisse's Islamic experience has taught me to belong to my artworks regardless the influences they may reflect. In this, I learned through Matisse that my identity is an ongoing process that does not seek any determined world as my artworks and my identity are in constant change receiving and transmitting influences of all kinds. As Matisse's Islamic experience helps me to look reflectively at my cultural identity formation, it has helped me as well looking reflectively to my students cultural identities and the concept of identity in general. In addition, and as a teacher such an experience gives me an insight into how to teach art as it suggests and incorporates new perspectives in dealing with students' different artistic backgrounds. Finally, Matisse's Islamic experience has helped me to validate some of this study's assumptions. That is, sharing and recognizing different traditions on their own merit would help in locating the self-knowing and learning from the other and producing quality new knowledge.

1.3 Who am I?

On a personal level, I am a Lebanese Arab. I am a Muslim whose beliefs are blended with Christian doctrines through everyday living with Lebanese Christians. I was brought up and educated in Arabic, French, and lately in English. I interact in four languages. I taught French and I am teaching now mathematics in a Sydney high school.

Henry Lawson, T.S. Eliot, Adonis, David Ma'alouf, Al Moutanaby, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Aragon, Pinter, and Pablo Neruda are at the same distance from me. In addition, by self-research I have become fully convinced how for example an artist like Paul Klee has probably modernize some Islamic art forms more than many contemporary Muslim artists have done. This brief summary of myself made me reflective about my identity. Indeed, if I have to ask who I am, should I say I am a Lebanese since I was born in Lebanon? However, I feel I am a Lebanese and I am not. I am French and I am not. I am an Australian and I am not, I am a Muslim and I am not, I am a Christian and I am not at the same time. Ironically, I am happy not to be any of these as much as being any of them! Sad like a Shi'a devoted Muslim sensitive like a French romantic, primitive like an Australian aboriginal, and expressive like a German artist, in fact I am a bit of many things and tend to be none of them. My paintings could be read here as my identity. That is the product of many interacting different artistic and cultural traditions.

Trying to find out the root of such encounters with the other, I have soon realized that Persian and Yemeni tribes who left their lands and migrated to Syria and Lebanon, which were inhabited by Christian tribes, invaded my country Lebanon. Those tribes, Muslims and Christians, were blended over the time to become one people who still receive the influences of each other's cultures and civilizations due to geopolitical positions of the Middle East. In such an environment, it can be argued that every person has a kind of other that may complete or complement the self. Though any other may easily become an enemy in such a diverse environment, its presence over the time had become an urgent necessity. In fact, in most countries of the Middle East different people share common beliefs while they keep their own. They fought sometimes and they become one huge family at others. Perhaps part of the continuous conflicts in the Middle East is due to these blended differences. Getting out of such a diverse environment to a similar one (Australia) I feel always followed by an "Other" whom I like and I hate at the same time. To me, it is too close to build up a society together and too far distant

yet to build up a culture or a civilization. What I am trying to say in this respect is that the paradox of my identity's formation makes me thoughtful about the identities of my students who are living in similar culturally diverse circumstances.

When I looked thoughtfully at Matisse's Islamic experience, I saw a similar person whose limits are not terrestrial. He was looking for colours, lights and meanings while others were looking for adventures and excitements. To my advantage or agony, I have to deal with the same issues because I migrated to Australia ten years ago. Despite being a qualified teacher before I came to Australia, I was engaged in full study all over again to develop the English side of my teaching skills. When I entered a Sydney classroom for the first time, I realized that the classroom's environment is an amazing extension of my personal experience. This made me thoughtful about my students' identity, and how we, students and I, negotiate our identities on a daily basis. More importantly, I have soon realized the advantage of dealing with people and students in the culturally and artistically rich environment of schools and universities.

However, I should as well admit the persistent and problematic dilemmas I personally experience in dealing with differences in the classroom in my everyday teaching. As a teacher, there are moments when I feel fortunate to be in such a diverse learning environment. However, in other moments I feel down and depressed, as dealing with differences in the classroom is a serious matter that cannot be solved by wishes and good intentions. For example, apart from NSW Department of Education and Training policies about the so-called multicultural policy, teachers and researchers are left on their own in order to explore the advantage of dealing with different cultures and traditions brought by our students. Depression in teachers, I believe, comes from watching how theories and practices fail most of the time to build up on the importance of dealing with differences. Such a failure would arguably lead teachers and policy makers to become alienated from the reality of schools that should highlight differences

rather than try to hide them. Indeed, at school though sometimes I feel alone and depressed in terms of dealing with cultural differences, there are times I feel advantaged and special. Encouraged by Matisse's experiences in dealing with differences and by other similar experiences especially individual stories, I always feel that I have an upper hand towards dealing with culturally different students. For example, my problem solving skills, managing and catering for the special needs of students and the skills of incorporating arts and cultures in other KLA's are developed in me more than many other teachers who assume that one culture should prevail in the classroom.

The root of loneliness and depression stems from the fact that the majority of teachers in the school where I teach choose seemingly not to take any risk, assuming that one culture should prevail in which all teaching, learning and interaction should occur. However, inhibiting the expression of differences in the classroom denies students exiting learning opportunities as much as expressing themselves away from coercive pedagogy (Cummins 1990). On the other hand, recognizing students' differences not only has the potential to promote the development of complex meaning-making, but also strengthens students' sense of the self and furthers the acquisition of the types of competence needed to thrive in a diverse world community. (Helms,1995) (Phinney,1992).

Coupling Matisse's Islamic experience with my teaching background gives me moral ground as much as theoretical frame to infuse cultural identity issue (those of my students and my own) in learning communities. In fact, I always engage myself in this process with my own cultural identity when standing in front of 25 culturally different students .My own cultural identity is always presented in the classroom as a typical example of how we may contest our identity in an environment as diverse as the Australian schools. This identity is the product of many cultures, as I would argue, and it tends to reveal the complexity of issues surrounding cultural identity in the learning community. In brief, my background as an artist, teacher, and researcher has always formed part of my research and

teaching practice. And as I tried to define myself, I feel sometimes lucky enjoying a space that is not available to many other teachers and artists. However, I should admit that some times I feel torn between all these cultures. My time, then, is filled with a kind of dislocation or as if I am living in a continuous exile. But what always eases my sufferance, if the term is correct, is my strong belief that plurality in vision has the potential to compensate at least in part the lose of native home, native culture, or native being.

1.4 The Research Questions

Identifying the research questions in this study stems from three main issues. The first is technical, where the study assumes that Islamic arts gave Matisse not just the technical help he has needed to develop his paintings, but the epistemological ground that justifies his artistic venture. Thus, the following questions as addressed in this study are:

- In which way was Matisse influenced by the aesthetics and techniques of Islamic arts and to what extent?
- To what degree has, the philosophy that underpins Islamic arts affected Matisse's concepts about arts?
- How has Matisse "used" the Other? And what stylistic changes did he have to develop in doing so?
- Was Matisse's affection with Islamic art a temporary phase in his career? Or was it an intentional strategy through which he had the chance to test the validity of the Other's art in developing his own art?

The second issue is conceptual and related to issues connected to Matisse's Islamic experience. Here issues of knowledge production, cultural and artistic differences, cultural identity and identity in general, orientalism, hybridity and to some extent the rival and sometime oppositional relationships between East and West are to be addressed. Then a major question arises here . That is, how was Matisse's Islamic experience different from other similar experiences? More notably, how was Matisse's Islamic experience different from the well-acclaimed

orientalists' experiences? In addition, by linking Matisse's Islamic experience with many contemporary cultural constructs, the questions of its connection with cultural identity as a concept and my cultural identity and the cultural identity of my student is addressed in this study. Indeed, appreciating Matisse's Islamic experience as an introduction to the concept of multicultural identity, this study argues how we can identify ourselves in connection to the cultures we might contest.

The third issue raised in this study is the educational side of Matisse's Islamic experience. Such an experience is accountable to set clear examples of how to learn from and about the other through art. How can this experience be linked to a contemporary educational context such as a Sydney high school? Then how art can be learned and taught in favour of the Matissian approach? More importantly, is it possible to link this artistic experience to the trendy educational process of teaching culturally different students? In addition, what are the advantages, disadvantages and the conceptual ground that may be afforded by such an experience? Many other research questions emerged from the above. The first is: Can we learn cultural and artistic traditions from each other? How and when and what are the "right" conditions of such learning? What is the difference between the process of learning about the other, as Orientalism arguably did, and the process of learning from the other as Matisse did? This question is of importance for this study, as it tends to criticize the guild of the so-called orientalism as a regime of knowledge about the other. This type of knowledge is absolutely opposing the learning from the other. It actually belongs to the old empirical approaches to knowledge where research is confined to already made set of concepts. Indeed, learning from the other as assumed in this study is arguably a Matissian- Islamic project that recognizes the other instead of misrepresents it as Said (1978) claims.

Taking Matisse's Islamic experience as a guide, I am arguing that Matisse's success is arguably due to his recognition of the Other as an equal that may be

looked at on the basis of the values presented by its experience. In this way, Matisse's Islamic experience has arguably showed the bright face of Islamic art and has tended to validate the Islamic artistic traditions instead of misrepresent them. While the majority of orientalism literature is arguably full of misrepresentation and groundless generalization about Islam and its culture as Said (1978, 1991, 1993) argues, Matisse's Islamic experience comes to afford an alternative through which the self and the other are looked at and be appreciated at the same level. In this context the other's knowledge is complementing own knowledge and vice versa.

1.5 The Purpose of the Study

The role of Islamic arts in Matisse's paintings is a highly debatable issue. A variety of perspectives is addressed by scholars such as Schneider(1984); Fry (1950); Elderfield (1990). Though some scholars recognize the Islamic effects, others choose to ignore totally any Islamic traces in Matisse's paintings. However, most scholars in the East and the West have sought to articulate the complexity of such an experience as aesthetical and educational sides are well connected to the cultural political social, philosophical, and historical sides. This connection is well reflected in the work of a wide spectrum of scholars that includes those who dealt directly with Matisse's Islamic experience and its impact on his arts and consequently western arts. This includes Pierre Schneider (1984, 1990), John Cowart (1990); Alan Fourcade (1974); Roger Benjamin (1997, 2003); J. Elderfield (1990), Alfred Barns et.al.(1933); Gaston Dihel(1954); Afif Bahnassi(1961) and Frishta Daftari(1988) and others..

This research has looked at Matisse Islamic experience from two main perspectives. The first is its uniqueness in recognizing the values of both Islamic and western art. In this, the study is unique as it looks at the issues from non-western perspectives. That is, recognizing the validity of both arts could have the potential to shake up not just the many well-established assumptions about the Other but also the theories through which the Other is understood. The second

perspective is educational, and this is new by all means as this research tends to explore how different artistic traditions can create new reality through which we learn from each other's experience. In this context, the significance of the study is reflected in its assumptions that recognizing differences instead of assimilating them, especially in school and university environment would enhance teaching and learning through the process of learning from and about the other. Moreover, it may help art teachers and students to explore new techniques in making art and may enhance art appreciation and understanding by expanding artistic domain as never before.

The philosophy underpinning this research consists in the beliefs, that valuing cultural and artistic diversities would be reflected positively on knowledge and knowledge production in general. In this, the study would make significant contribution to the body of art education as it highlights the notion of appreciating each other's arts in addition to its potential to reconsider each other's experiences as learning processes. Moreover, the study is aiming at building up a multidimensional construct of intercultural understanding through which recognizing the other would greatly impact not only on the knowledge of the other but on the ways we represent that other in comparison to the self.

In this, the study is assuming that the site of cross-cultural and intercultural contacts is a highly abstract one where multiple cultures, opinions, beliefs and previous knowledge intersect to shape and reshape the ways we know the self and each other and the ways we produce and learn new knowledge. Such a site can be manifested in formal settings such as schools and universities where students from different backgrounds could reach a kind of reconciliation about how to coexist without harming each other's basic cultural foundations. In addition, the site can be manifested in informal settings where people at large including artists and art workers and administrators start to look at the other away from negative rival notions through which the other would commonly be seen as a threat or even an enemy. Ambitiously, or perhaps innocently, this study is tempting to influence

Muslim and Western scholars in the East and the West that recognizing the other is not just a matter of ethics or good will. But it is a practice through which one's own experience is validate somehow by that of the Other. In this, the study's aims is to become a role model of how can we engage with each other's culture without oppression or domination.

Therefore, and as intercultural understanding is highly influenced by positive and sincere attitudes and democratic practice, this study will be of interest to people in educational settings as much as those from art history and cultural studies. It offers new perspectives that can be used in the debate about the dialogue between culturally different people and how to deal with such differences in order to acquire the most of it. Finally, the purpose of this study consists in its relentless attempts to highlight differences rather than hide or dissolve them. Its aim is to provide art education with new perspectives that seek differences rather than conformity in looking for new aesthetics as much as using art as a way of inquiry.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of the study lies in the implications for understanding the meanings and the process created by Matisse Islamic experience. Significance is argued in two directions. The first is the significance of the study in relation to the body of knowledge it arguably generates. The second is its significance to all people who may benefit from it. Focusing on Matisse's Islamic experience would underlay the notion that relying on different artistic traditions has many advantages as much as implications. On the one hand, it may stir up the monotonous aspects of particular traditions by suggesting new techniques and aesthetics as well as new approaches and theoretical frame. On the other hand, it carries arguably the seeds of innovation based on the power and energy created during the mixing process of the different experiences. This power is arguably generated by the values of each experiences through which different people would become potential learners who are willing to learn not just from own experiences but from the other's experiences.

Indeed, when Matisse said the East saved us, Schneider (1990), he has actually endorsed the idea of looking beyond own traditions when making and appreciating arts. Fortunately, many researchers on Matisse such as Barns (1933); Schneider, (1984); Benjamin (2003) agreed that his venture into the Other's arts helped him to challenge or at least to find solid ground to challenge the then prevailing European schools of art especially impressionism. In this, the significance of the study may lie in its assumption that consulting the Other has arguably the potential to innovate in any field of knowledge especially arts. In addition to its potential to generate new ideas that can be put in practice, consulting the Other may arguably ease the tension between the self and that Other. However, such a process to be effective needs the recognition of the Other as a partner that has useful experiences that may be coupled with own experiences . In addition knowing about the Other must be acquired away from any prejudice especially away from the notion of the Other as an enemy.

The Other as a learning resource suggested by this study gives my research one of its important dimensions through which the arts of Islam have arguably helped through Matisse the European art to overcome many technical and epistemological implications. This study, then, is significant as to change the way we approach art history, as there is no focal point that can be always referred to make meaning of our history (Celik, 1996; Abu Lughod, 1989; Spivak, 1989; Young, 1990). Therefore, it would be significant to apply such an approach to knowledge production and the way " truth" is researched. In this sense, changing our understanding of the Other would greatly affect the way we interpret its culture, arts, knowledge and the way that other acquires knowledge.

1.7 Implications and Assumptions

Considering the exceptional nature of this study there are a number of limitations and assumptions that may affect the whole research process. Firstly, researching the Islamic effect on Henri Matisse's arts is by no mean an exclusive study in Islamic arts. The study does not pretend to refer to any particular period of Islamic arts evolution. Instead, general aspects of Islamic arts are referred to so as to link them to the context in which Matisse was working . In addition, this study is not as well a study in Western arts though they were referred to in relation to Matisse artistic experience. Data collection about Matisse's paintings and the Islamic miniatures he inspired are by no mean comprehensive, as researchers might find at any time new Matisse paintings and Islamic miniatures holding similarity or common aspects. However, this is fully discussed in chapter three where the research methodology is discussed. Regarding the educational program developed by this study, the program is not intending to measure empirically any research claims. Instead, the program is used to test the validity of Matisse's Islamic experience in a contemporary context such as the high school where I teach. Finally, terms used in this study have many implications. Indeed, term like Islamic art, Islam, Western art and the West are opened to interpretation. In this respect, terms like Islamic art and western art are referred to in broad terms as the arts that may show distinctive aspects of some traditions in different countries in the East and the West.

1.8 Delimitation:

1.8.1 The research

All the issues raised by this study are considered problematic. Issues of aesthetics, education, orientalism, hybridity, Islamic arts, Western art, and identity are contested concepts that may be subjected to different interpretation. In this sense, the quality of this research is highly influenced by the beliefs that a good research could be achieved through self-reflection and by questioning all the taken for granted truth. Opening dialogue and negotiating meanings is better stating the objectives of this study. However, whenever judgments are made, they are opened

to criticism and by no means they are ultimate. Thus, investigating all the issues raised by this study goes beyond the apparent meanings of any concept or phenomena. In this sense, this study does not seek to certify any existed arguments, nor does it have the aim to approve officially any opinion over the other. However, the above argument does not mean that debating the study's different issues will be a colourless process or without any substantial defensible criteria. Instead, my stance as a researcher, artist, and teacher is clearly reflected within the study's postmodern assumptions as much as my personal beliefs shaped by my own experience. In this the outcomes of this study would be reachable within the following assumptions:

1. All knowledge of the real is contextual. It can be therefore written, read, re-written, and re-read. In this, there is neither an originary point of knowledge nor a final interpretation.
2. Objective research is contextual as much as textual. Here the way research is written should be accounted for in addition to the research assumptions and objectives.
3. Universal knowledge is questionable. "real is unstable, in flux and contingent (Usher & Scott 1996)
4. There is no neutral or disinterested perspective because every one is socially located and thus the knowledge that is produced will be influenced always by a social interest.
5. Knowledge being relative to discourse is always partial and perspectival. Therefore, thoughts and experiences cannot be separated from the norms of socio-cultural contexts and practices.

1.8.2 Matisse, Islamic arts, and Matisse Islamic experience

Investigating Matisse's Islamic experience cannot be separated from many associated artistic, educational cultural and sometimes political issues. Such an investigation is moving across many disciplines covering arts, literature, education, culture, politics, and social science. Therefore, this study approaches such disciplines in the way each is crossed with Matisse's Islamic experience.

Although the study emphasizes the investigation of the educational and aesthetical values of Matisse's experience with Islamic arts, the other sides of such an experience are no less important, taking into account the post-modern conditions that influence its assumptions. Scrutinizing the study's title one may believe that it is an exclusive study about Islamic arts. This does not reflect truly my intention. This study is by no mean an investigation about Islamic art. Instead, Islamic arts are used in the way they are associated with Matisse's paintings educationally, technically, aesthetically and in term of the epistemology that may underpin them.

Regarding Matisse's Islamic experience, his paintings are investigated in two directions. The first is how Matisse's had directly inspired by the Islamic arts especially miniatures. The second is to investigate the extent of Matisse's indirect involvement with Islamic arts. In this context, later Matisse's paintings where Islamic aesthetics are implied are accounted for as a reconciliation between Matisse's Western artistic traditions and the Islamic artistic traditions. In addition, Matisse as a unique orientalist is investigated. My aim is not here to describe the characteristics of Matisse's paintings under any orientalist discourse, instead Matisse's art, especially his Islamic experience, is assumed in this study as opposing radically to Orientalism. Therefore, Matisse's paintings are analyzed in an aesthetical discourse created by marrying Islamic and European aesthetics.

1.9 Defining the terms

The third issue that may seriously affect the limit of this study is how to define the terms used in this research. Terms like the Other, Islamic arts, Western arts, the East and the West, Islam, orientalism, hybridity and identity are assumed problematic as they are all used as contested concepts within the study's postmodern disciplines and methodology. In the following paragraph, I am defining some of these terms in the way they are contested in this research.

1.9.1 Islam and Islamic arts:

“Islam” in this study is not a uniformed concept. Instead, it is understood as the religion of different people with their different races, cultures and languages. The term “Islamic art” is thus problematic as assumed in this study. One of the major problems is that the geographic or linguistic classification like those used for much of the European art is replaced by a religious attribute. Luscomb (2002) argues that the term Islamic arts replaced all other terms like Indian, Turkish Arab Saracenic and Moorish arts used before the nineteenth century by European scholars and orientalists. In fact, Islamic arts are believed to be the creation of Western culture as Blair and Bloom (2003) argues. According to Blair and Bloom the name and the academic field of Islamic art has only a tenuous and problematic relationship with the religion of Islam and that if some Islamic arts may have been made by Muslims for the purpose of the faith, much of it was not. While for example a mosque’s façade or a decorated page of a Koran may fit everybody’s definition of Islamic art, what about a twelve- century Syrian bronze canteen inlaid with Arabic inscription and Christian scenes Blair and Bloom ask. In this context Hodgson (1977) argues that all other definitions like the creation of a term “Islamicate”, used by some art historians to refer to the secular culture of Islamic civilization did not find wide acceptance.

In this study, the term “Islamic art” is used to refer not just to the religion of Islam but also to the larger cultures in which Islam was dominant but not the sole religion practiced. Indeed, Muslim and non Muslim artists have contributed equally to the Islamic arts evolution as Ettinghausen (1980) argues. Therefore, Matisse in this study is supposed to be aware of the evolution of Islamic arts as the outcome of mixing different artistic traditions as well. That is, Matisse’s art in this study is arguably developed within the same discourse that Islamic art was developed. That is recognizing and reconciling different traditions when making art.

1.9.2 Orientalism and orientalist discourse:

In this study, orientalism is approached from two main perspectives. The first is in the ways orientalist discourse is expressed by Matisse through his paintings and in which he recognized the Other as a valid “agent” to develop the self as assumed in this study. The second perspective is Orientalism as a regime of knowing the Other. In this respect, I tend to criticize such a regime on the ground of the nexus between power and knowledge as argued by Michel Foucault (1980) and later by Edward Said (1978, 1991) and other poststructuralist theorists. In brief, in discussing Orientalist discourse I tend to rely on the idea that knowledge is not founded in disciplines and that social reality and social world do not consist of ready-made objects that are put into representation as Game (1991) argues.

In this study, Orientalism as a regime of knowledge that strived to produce knowledge about the Orient will be criticized based on post modernist thoughts that see objective knowledge as a contextual construction. In this, I am criticizing the notion of absolute and universal knowledge about the Orient considering complexity, differences, heterogeneity, and uncertainty of its constructed reality. Finally, since the question of power has become relevant with orientalism and its products then its objectivity as a research regime would become problematic as I assumed in this study.

1.9.3 Orientalism as defined by Edward Said: Said defines orientalism as “a manner of regularized or (orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient.” “It is the image of the ‘Orient’ expressed as an entire system of thought and scholarship.” (1978 p.15)

1.9.4. The Orient as created by colonial power. Said defines the Orient as created by colonial powers to be a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and Western empire. The Orient then is constructed by and in relation to the West. It

is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien (“Other”) to the West. However, if we say the Orient today the term is large and without any limits. Therefore, the term Orient in this study is treated as belonging to a long history of generalization through which Europe distinguishes itself from the others. In this context, this study assumes that literally, there is no Orient as a distinctive entity and therefore there are no such oriental arts.

1.9.5 The Oriental as generalized by Western Institutions: Said (1978) argues that the oriental is the person represented as an alien to the westerners. He adds that man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because poses a threat to white, Western women. The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic. From the above the oriental is a single image, a sweeping generalization, a stereotype that crosses countless cultural and national boundaries. However, arguing to challenge the above is easy. That is, differences among the orientals themselves for example could be more striking than differences between some orientals and some Europeans. For example, A Turkish or a Syrian would have more in common with certain Europeans than with Iranian, Saudi Arabian or Japanese. Alternatively, a Lebanese woman may have more in common with French woman than she has with a woman from Saudi Arabia or Pakistan.

1.9.6 Latent Orientalism is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. Its basic content is static and unanimous. Then Orient as Said (1978) argues is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the other, the conquerable, and the inferior. The concept is based on the judgment that all values are seen from Eurocentric perspectives. For example depicting Prophet Mohamed as a cartoon is defended in the context of the freedom of expression. However from an Islamic perspective banning such a depiction is to give each Muslim the chance to imagine the prophet in the way he she likes.

Underpinning such a view is postmodern thinking in which any text, including the prophet of Islam may mean different things to different people.

1.9.7 Manifest Orientalism is what is spoken and acted up on. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of Latent Orientalism.

1.9.8 Hybridity: The use of hybridity in this study is based on the notion that our existence as human being is hybrid. However, hybridity as invented by scientists at the eve of 19th century would serve as a general definition for the concept. Instead, culture as a hybrid concept and more notably hybridity in arts will be used to elucidate the way Matisse paintings were the product of marrying between the Islamic and Western traditions. In this I am concentrating on the concept of “recognizing of the other” as a vital condition for successful hybridity. In this, Matisse has arguably recognized the Islamic art as valid aesthetic system. He has arguably manipulated the Islamic traditions by combining them with his Western traditions. Matisse’s aim in this context is seeking a new and unlimited new aesthetic system that may reflects both characteristics interacting to create a totally new means of expressing in addition to its potential to strengthen the foundations of art making and understanding..

1.10 Overview

Chapter 1 provides the common ground that may put in context the research process as well as the research methodology. In clarifying the background of the research, I have located and identified the central issue of the argument in addition to all other issues that emerge during the research process. In addition, my background as an artist and a teacher is mentioned to reveal my expertise and experience as an artist and a teacher to research the topic. Moreover, this chapter provided an insight into the significance of the study in terms of its educational as much as technical and aesthetical values. In this sense, the study will be useful for

art students, and teachers as well as artists and institutions. However, I made it clear from the beginning that researching Matisse's Islamic experience needs an unconventional structure that imposes unconventional methodology and research approach. Taking Matisse's Islamic experience as a typical model the study is supposed to reveal the educational and the aesthetical values of mixing different artistic traditions in making and appreciating arts. In this sense, revealing the many ways knowledge is generated including the way we learn from and about the other is one of the research assumptions. Another assumption of the study is the argument that identity and cultural identity are constructed as an overworked process

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature relevant to the current study. It begins by reviewing Matisse's arts with concentration on the artist's paradoxical position within the evolution of Western arts. In this, I am highlighting the notion that Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts was unprecedented within the course of Western arts. Within its values and depth, Matisse's Islamic experience arguably goes beyond all other Western artists' involvement with foreign traditions such as African, primitive or Asian traditions. In addition, Matisse's concepts about arts will be reviewed along side Islamic concepts to reveal how the artist arguably succeeded in marrying between his personal understanding about the issues of arts and the foreign artistic traditions he relied on.

Relying on the Islamic system as developed through the mixings of different artistic traditions Matisse great achievement as argued in this study lies in his attempts to conceptualize such a process and make it available and acclaimed universally. In this respect, literature that refer to Islamic arts as the product of mingling different artistic traditions will be reviewed to reveal its validity in making and appreciating art works. Finally, issues of Orientalism in arts, cultural identity, and hybridity in general and in arts in particular will be reviewed based on many theorists' works. Such issues become inseparable from Matisse's experience as they provide it with universal dimensions that may become shared between different people. As postmodern concepts, the above issues have

arguably the potential to influence the aesthetical and educational values claimed by this study in addition to their validity to put the study within a contemporary context.

In **Chapter 3**, the research methodology is argued in regard to the nature and the scope of the study. Within all the issues that emerged during the research, theories that may inform the research are located and discussed. In addition, the research process is detailed and the methodology of collecting and analyzing data with all methodological implications which are discussed in detail. In this respect, postmodern influences are discussed in order to justify data analysis and interpretation. Also in this chapter, the artistic paradigm used in the study is located and justified. However, in regard of the nature of this study other paradigms are associated with the artistic paradigms. Educational, cultural and political paradigms are used in this study. These paradigms are looked at as part of qualitative inquiry, which is by nature creative and artistic. This would enable me to transgress artistic discipline to argue cultural, social, and political issues related to the research.

Chapter 4 is a brief investigation into the main characteristics of Islamic arts. The need of investigating the aspects of Islamic art is to identify the ways such aspects have influenced Matisse's art. More notably identifying the Islamic influences would clear the ways towards identifying the aesthetical and the educational values of Matisse's Islamic experience. The chapter begins with an attempt to define the fleeting concept of Islamic art. Why do we call it Islamic though Muslims and non-Muslims have done it? How can we call it Islamic despite the fact that religion is not its sole domain? Then, a brief history of the evolution of Islamic art is investigated. The aim is draw an analogy with Matisse's art, as both arts were arguably the outcomes of mixing different artistic tradition. In this respect, this chapter is investigating in brief the history of artistic exchange and interchange between Islam and Europe. In this Matisse, Islamic experience is looked at as part of that lively artistic exchanges and cultural environment that were extended for many centuries around the Mediterranean Sea

shores. (It includes part of the Middle East and part of Europe). More importantly, the chapter has briefly tried to review a two-way influences by arguing that while Islamic thoughts about art were influenced by Plato and Aristotle's thoughts, Matisse the European has been influenced by the Islamic thoughts. This would evidently justify the argument that human history was not evolved in a vacuum instead; it is an accumulation of human being effort through the human history.

Chapter 5 is part of the research process and argues how Matisse benefited from Islamic art characteristics. The use of colors, the two dimensional approach to painting and the use of decorative pattern in Islamic art are also discussed. More importantly, Matisse's Fauvism as a theory for the decorative, especially the use of colours is associated in this chapter with the use of colours in Islamic art especially the use of colours in Islamic miniatures and other art forms. Islamic decorative influences on Matisse's paintings are investigated. More notably Islamic miniatures' purposes techniques and functions are investigated in order to justify The Islamic influences in Matisse's paintings.

Chapter 6 and 7 complement each other as they investigate the direct Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings. While chapter six is dedicated to investigating early, Islamic influences on Matisse a paintings. Chapter 7 investigates which particular Islamic miniatures have arguably influenced which Matisse's paintings. Key Matisse's paintings are located and deconstructed in order to reveal how Matisse has found himself within the course of Islamic art. In this context spiritual influences are argued linking Matisse's "soothing and trouble- less art" to the Islamic concept about paradise.

Chapter 6 starts by arguing the position of Matisse within European art at the beginning of the 20th century. This position within its oddity and unfamiliarity is translated in terms of Matisse's assumed affections with non-European artistic traditions, especially the Islamic traditions. Then, when and how has Matisse become familiar with Islamic arts? This is done by researching the Great Islamic

art exhibitions that took place in Europe especially during 1903, 1907, and 1910. Matisse in fact has referred to these exhibitions claimed that he was greatly influenced by the aesthetics of the exhibited art forms.

To put Matisse's Islamic experience in its European context, Islamic influences on other European artist are briefly reviewed. Foreign influences especially Islamic influences on Gauguin and Kandinsky are reviewed in connection to Matisse's paintings. Indeed, literature shows that Gauguin's "doctrines" about using different artistic traditions were arguably passed to Matisse. Coupling Gauguin's foreign experiences with other European artists' experiences have formed an encouragement for Matisse's venture into the art of other.

Chapter 7 argues the innovation in Matisse's Islamic experience, in particular how Matisse has translated the Islamic influences to fit in his own European project. The chapter sets up comparisons, analysis, and interpretations of the particular Islamic miniatures that could have inspired by Matisse. Therefore some Matisse hallmark paintings such as *The Dance*, *The Music*, *The Painter's family*, and *Conversation...* are read from Islamic perspectives in order to reveal what is unique and new in Matisse's endeavour toward developing new techniques and new aesthetics that are based on the mixture of the Islamic and European traditions. Also in this chapter, some of Matisse's paintings that show indirect Islamic influences are analyzed. The aim is to argue that Matisse fascination with Islamic art was not a temporary exotic interest but it was extended to form the backbone of a wider project that recognizes the other within the self and vice versa. In this the chapters argues that this recognition was what has distinguish Matisse from most other similar experience with the other's art...

Chapter 8 investigates the educational values of Matisse's Islamic experience. It starts by a new reading of Matisse's famous Notes of a Painter where Matisse has included his concepts about art's functions and techniques. These Notes, as argued in this study, have deeply influenced contemporary art and formed constant references for art makers and art teachers and students. To relate

Matisse's Islamic experience to a contemporary educational context a visual art program that inspires Matisse's art as a marriage of different artistic traditions is developed and described. The aim of such a program is to argue that Matisse's Islamic experience is still valid as to teach and make art especially nowadays where societies has become more and more bicultural.

In **Chapter 9** Matisse's Islamic experiences is linked to the concept of cultural identity. That is; as argued in this chapter consulting other cultures and traditions has the impact to influence not just the way we do art but it may influence identity and cultural identity formation. The chapter argues that Matisse's cultural identity is a reflection of the quality of the paintings he produced. Regarding this point, my cultural identity as a teacher, artist and researcher is reviewed as an accumulation of different contested cultures. Relating Matisse's cultural identity as influenced by his Islamic contacts and my cultural identity as influenced by French and Australian contacts to a high school environment is setting models that may highlight the formation of cultural identities of my students. The importance of exploring the cultural identities of my students stems from the educational dimension of this issue. Indeed, students who learn how to manipulate different cultures in a school setting are arguably more likely to achieve well in their schooling. This argument is based on case studies through which students express their understanding of their identities and how this may affect their studies as much as their belonging. Analysis of the case studies is rounded off in a literature that sees the recognition of student's different cultural backgrounds as to enhance students' learning as much as their cultural identities formation. In this respect, the model I suggest through this chapter is a flexible process that recognizes differences instead of assimilating them providing that differences are contributing to the mainstream culture, which by necessity is the outcomes of of them all.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Verifying the Context of the Study

2.1 Introduction:

This study is informed by research and theories in many areas. Literature related to Matisse as an artist in general and in particular to his Islamic experience is reviewed. In addition, literatures related to the issues that are associated with Matisse's Islamic experiences are reviewed. The purpose of this review is to put Matisse's Islamic experience within a contemporary context that may inform contemporary art education and practice as much as social sciences, cultural studies, orientalism and the politics of dialogue between civilizations. In addition to its aesthetical and educational sides, Matisse's Islamic experience could not be separated from many other cultural and social issues that are associated with art production and understanding. In fact, issues of cultural identity, hybridity in culture and art in particular, and orientalism give Matisse's Islamic experience its contemporary context and highlight its uniqueness as a venture into the Other's affair. In this, Matisse's Islamic experience highlights the connection between art making and appreciating and the issue of cultural identity as a daily contested process that may involve our cultural and social experiences. In addition, it tends to establish clear evidence that art has arguably a hybrid nature whether hybridity is visible or implied in any art works. In this respect, literature related to cultural identity and hybridist in art is reviewed.

Orientalism is another major issue that is associated with Matisse's Islamic experience. In this sense orientalism as a regime of knowledge about the orient is briefly reviewed. Because the domain of orientalism is so large, orientalism in this study is examined from two main perspectives. The first is orientalism as a regime of knowledge through which the other is represented. The second is Matisse as an

“Orientalist” since Matisse’s Islamic experience is looked at within western literature as an orientalist experience.

2.2 Organization of Literature Review

The literature review draws on many major issues that are associated with Matisse’s Islamic experience. For the purpose of clarity, and due to the complexity of such associations, these issues will be mainly examined separately. However, they may be examined in association with each other when necessary and if the needs arise. In the first section, literature related to Matisse as an artist in general and his Islamic experience in particular is examined. The aim is to reveal how Matisse found himself consulting different artistic traditions especially the Islamic traditions in his attempt to develop his paintings. This is followed by reviewing cultural identity as a concept. This is informed by this study’s assumptions that Matisse’s venture into Islamic art gave his identity its “Islamic bit”. Or rather, his Islamic experience has arguably enriched his identity as a western artist and reshaped his cultural identity. In the third section, literature about the relevance of Hybridity within Matisse’s project is reviewed. The aim of connecting Matisse’s Islamic experience to hybridity as a discourse is to argue that his art was the outcome of marrying different artistic traditions. In addition, the review of hybridity is to argue that art in general has a hybrid nature whether hybridity is visible or invisible. In this respect, Matisse was arguably attempted to hybridize his art in the same way Muslim and non-Muslim artists did through the evolution of Islamic art history. Indeed, Islamic art that has influenced Matisse has arguably gained its main characteristics from marrying different artistic traditions: Persian, Arabic, Byzantine, and Indian arts.

This review is influenced by theories that suggest that culture and arts are always the accumulation of human activities and in the assumptions that there are no pure cultures or arts but they are the outcomes of different interactive agents. Among the theorists who reflect on this matter are the works of Wittkower(1989); Moore (2001); Nanda (2001); Bhabha (1994). Finally, orientalism as a discourse of

knowledge is reviewed in literature. However, as the area of orientalism is large and complex in literature, reviewing orientalism is confined to two perspectives. The first is Edward Said's orientalism as manifested in his book *Orientalism*, in addition to literature that criticizes Said's understanding of the many issues and theoretical ground raised by orientalism. The second is orientalism in art. This will briefly cover the literature that analyzes orientalist arts in general and its association with Matisse Islamic experience in particular.

2.3 Matisse's Islamic Experience in its European context

Literature about Matisse's paintings is available through numerous studies that cover the artist's life and paintings. However, contemporary literature about Matisse's Islamic experience is rare, and when mentioned it is brief as in the work of Jack Flam (1986) or in the work Jack Cowart (1990) and John Elderfield (1990, 1992). Literature about Matisse's Islamic experience could be of particular values, as it would help in validating some of the assumptions of this study towards the aesthetical Islamic influences and the educational values of mixing different artistic traditions. In addition, reviewing literature helps in giving a detailed account of Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts. Moreover, it reveals the artistic and assumingly educational values of Matisse's Islamic involvement, the quality of those aesthetics he has invented, and what technical help Matisse has got in relying on Islamic art. Finally, literature will help in detecting other European artists involvement with Islamic art, a matter that has arguably helped Matisse in validating his foreign choices and resisting harsh criticism lead on him by art critics and historians.

Though other European artists' Islamic experiences would have helped Matisse identify and adopt the Islamic choice, his Islamic experience was arguably a unique venture that has the chance to bring about many artistic and non-artistic issues to the forefront of modernity as never before. Many reasons, as I would argue, have contributed to such uniqueness. The first is Matisse's distinction from the so-called orientalist template (Benjamin2003). This distinction was a reflection

of Matisse seeking aesthetics, colours, and lights, while Orientalism in art was arguably seeking exoticism, strangeness, fantasia and political ends according to Said (1978). The second reason for Matisse's uniqueness is based on the argument that Matisse's Islamic experience tends to recognize and put values on the art of the other. Perrone (1993) sees that the orient has come to Matisse instead of going to it as most orientalist did. Indeed a non-bias reading for Matisse's later paintings would reveal that Islamic art aesthetics has become a final and constant choice of the artist's work each time he would approach his easel. Indeed flatness, colours use, composition, arabesques are all Islamic aspects consulted all along Matisse's career. This is by all mean quite different, except of few Matisse's paintings, from the colonial aesthetic argued by Benjamin (2003). For colonial aesthetics were arguably based on myths, misrepresentation, imagination, and political goals, Matisse on the other hand, was seriously seeking solutions based on the validity of the Other's art, the common history of people and their experiences as much as technical and aesthetic concerns.

However, reading through literature especially contemporary studies about Matisse's paintings in general would reveal puzzling stands that tend to ignore totally or at best to minimize the Islamic influences. Examples include Jack Flam's many oeuvres about Matisse, which, tend to ignore totally the Islamic influences in Matisse's paintings. In some of his studies (see Flam 1986), Flam chooses to totally ignore the Islamic impact while in other (see Flam, 1990, 1993); he has superficially mentioned those influences. In general, modern art critics and historians tend to argue that if there are any Islamic influences in Matisse's paintings they were temporary and ended as early as 1911 (Elderfield,1990). Though others have recognized the foreign influences in Matisse's art they were unfortunately reluctant, for whatever reasons to call it Islamic. In fact, except few (see Barns and De Mazia, 1933, Schneider 1984) they would call it anything but Islamic. Oriental, African, exotic, Chinese etc... are all epithets used instead of the Islamic attribute. (See Barr, 1966, Trapp, 1966; Wichmann 1981)

Regarding the second direction, investigation of when and how Matisse's contacts with the realm of Islamic art have occurred could be a valuable process as it will give this study its credibility toward linking Matisse's particular paintings to some Islamic art form. This includes the investigation of all artistic events concerning Islamic arts that took place in Europe: Exhibitions and fairs of Islamic arts, casual and permanent Islamic art collections in private hands as much as art galleries and museums. This would cover Matisse's early career from 1893 up to 1910. A time that was crucial as Matisse's Islamic choice was arguably emerged. Establishing strong connections with casual and permanent Islamic art exhibitions and fairs would reveal the degree to which Matisse was exposed to the influences of Islamic artistic traditions. More importantly, researching such artistic events and Matisse's possible involvement with them would shed some light on the credibility of his venture. His works were associated with exoticism and orientalism (see Barr 1966) while he has tried to distinguish himself from both artistic trends in pursuing the "art of balance." (See Benjamin 2003)

The third direction is to investigate Matisse's Islamic experience as part of a trend in European art especially on the eve of 20th century in which many other artists before Matisse have showed some interest in Islamic arts... (I.e. Gustave Moreau, Gauguin, Delacroix, Klee, Kandinsky, and Gerome). The aim of such an investigation is to reveal the impact of Islamic art on the evolution of European art during the last two centuries. In this, Matisse and other European artists' foreign experiences would be seen at the forefront of the European art evolution and not as isolated experiences that hold just exotic or orientalist values. This will be done by investigating other chosen European artists' involvement with Islamic arts. Investigation includes mainly two European artists: Paul Gauguin and Vassily Kandinsky though Islamic influences could be detected on many other artists such as Klee, Renoir, Delacroix, and even Picasso. In this, Matisse Islamic experience was not looked at as an isolated venture. Instead, it is argued as a part of a larger movement through which the art of other has become at the center of

many European artists' practices. The fourth direction is to investigate the stylistic impact of Islamic aesthetics on Matisse paintings. In this respect, a full account of Matisse's paintings that show early Islamic influences will be analyzed and interpreted to show how the artist has relied on the Islamic aesthetical system in developing his paintings. This direction is in fact an introductory step in investigating Matisse's direct Islamic influences where Matisse has arguably inspired by some particular Islamic art forms.

2.4 Matisse: The European and the Beyond

The entry under postimpressionism in the fourth edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* characterized the art of Matisse as having gone "farther even than Gauguin in reconciling Western art with the Chinese. In that it depends entirely on arabesque and is not concerned with the third dimension". (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, P. 205) Such a definition tends to summarize the whole story of Matisse's controversy with western arts and in particular his Islamic experience.

Western contemporary art historians and critics have fully adapted themselves to the notion that Matisse's painting is somehow influenced by Islamic arts. Among the contemporary art critics and art historians are the works of Schneider (1984) Fourcade (1984, 1974); Flam (1986); Bock-Weiss (1986); Bois (1998) and Benjamin (1990, 2003). However, though their works recognize the Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings at different level they mostly downplay the real impact of Islamic art on Matisse's paintings as much as its impact in reconciling the Islamic and the Western traditions. In fact, most of them fail to see Matisse's experience and other artists' experiences as an extension of the cultural and artistic exchanges that dominated the East -West relationships since Islam took over Spain or even long before that date. In the following section, I review the literature about Matisse's Islamic experiences. The literature review covers Matisse's statements and sayings about his Islamic involvement as well as studies that mention such an involvement. In additions literature that covers Matisse's

contacts and connections with all Islamic artistic events that were held in Europe on the eve of the 20th century (fairs and exhibitions) is to be reviewed.

Literature about the Islamic influence during Matisse's life is rare. Except the studies of Albert Barnes and Violette de Mazia (1966), Gaston Diehl (1954) and Pierre Schneider (1984) there are no serious studies that may give a full account of Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts. In fact, most of what written about Matisse's Islamic influences could be traced in just few book prefaces, texts in catalogues and short interviews in the early year of the 20th century (see Desvallieres, 1908; Escolier, 1960; Fry, 1931). Though recognizing the Islamic effect in Matisse's paintings, most of these genres failed to get deep into Matisse's Islamic experience as a venture that may highlight the artist's effort in reconciling between the two different and 'rival' traditions. Unfortunately, Matisse's Islamic experience, even in modern times is looked at in general as an orientalist experiences in which Matisse's was drawn to the orient because of its exotic, adventurous, and sexual appeal. In this, they arguably rely on myths that were stopped to exist since the time of Thousand and one Night. But no one but few are ready to ask themselves the simple question: How much do Persian miniatures, Islamic rugs or ceramics (Islamic art forms that fascinated Matisse) reflect or bring about any sexual themes that may attract Matisse and other European artists? In Perrone's word "Matisse did not invade the orient instead the orient invades him" (Perrone, 1993, p.81)

2.5 Islamic Influences in Matisse's Paintings: a non Western Reading

In general, most Western art critics are conservative when approaching Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings. Their attitudes could be ranged from full denial to full recognition. They usually tend to hide the Islamic attribute under terms like oriental, foreign, primitive, non-European, Chinese, or Japanese influences. Just few have mentioned the aesthetics of Islamic art. (Fry, 1931; Schneider, 1984, 1990; Benjamin 2003). In researching the literature, one may face a total disagreement about Islamic influences among interested art critics and historians

in the East and the West. Disagreement is the result of two contrasted views regarding this matter. The first view tends to ignore or minimize the Islamic influences in Matisse and other European artists' paintings. The second fully recognizes the effect of Islamic influences. While the first view is believed to be politically motivated, as I would argue in this study, the second view chooses not to hide the Islamic effects in Matisse's paintings behind any political or ideological mask. For this reason, they fully recognize the Islamic influences without any reservation; however, the depth of such studies needs to be argued. In fact, most studies that mention the Islamic traces in Matisse's paintings tend to touch the subject superficially instead of exploring in depth its validity in providing new discourse in art making and appreciating .

Representing the first view about Matisse's Islamic experience is Burgess' stand who stated when attending an exhibition in the Salon des Independents "It was Matisse who took the first step into the undiscovered land of the ugly." (Burgess 1910, p.119). The land of the "Ugly" could be here any land provided Matisse has stepped on it extending from Corsica to Morocco and Algeria to Spain and South Sea Islands. More importantly, the land of Ugly could be any new style that Matisse has borrowed or explored from any other artistic traditions. Burgess's statement is typical in showing the difficulties the artist had at the beginning of his career. Indeed, his art was always associated with the breaking down of social values and weakening of European cultures as Burgess insists.

Eddy associates Matisse with ugliness as well stating "There is a good deal of the ugly in the works of Matisse .He is a good man to study but a bad man to imitate" (Eddy 1914, p.157). Andre Salmon (1912) accused Matisse as "the most incoherent of modern artists"! This accusation is based on the notion that Matisse's art especially from 1903 to 1924 reflects some contradictory aspects with the dominant aspects of European art at the time. This contradiction is believed to be the result of introducing the other's traditions to the standard French Bourgeois no matter how "ugly" they are.

Barr (1951) oddly, tends to reduce the importance of Islamic effects in Matisse's paintings. Regarding Barr's stands, Daftari argues that his study about Matisse's art reflects, "the cultural biases of the time and therefore one would not expect any great emphasis to be placed on non- Western influences" (Daftari, 1988, p.160). However, Barr (1951) could not ignore such influences. He talks about Matisse's inspiration from the East:

in his increasing use of flat clearly defined areas of colours in unprecedented harmony and dissonances and in his daring juggling of several different decorative patterns within the flattened space of a single canvas, Matisse certainly drew inspiration from the East" (Barr,1951, p.109).

Another art critic who tends to minimize the Islamic effects in Matisse's painting is Frank Trapp. Trapp (1966) cited in Daftari (1988) downplays the effect of Islamic art on Matisse paintings describing it as superficial .In his study on Matisse Trapp draws an analogy between Rembrandt's Persian influences and those of Matisse's to argue that if Matisse's paintings show some Islamic influences those influences were temporary and not essential in the artist's overall quality of paintings. Daftari (1988) quoted Trapp as saying:

Rembrandt for example knew Persian miniatures and even copied them as costume studies, and as well, no doubt from admiration. He thus found certain stimulation in Persian painting; but to say that he was deeply affected by that art would be to distort the nature of a simple and superficial relation. (Daftari, 1988, P.161))

However, the above argument can be criticized on many grounds. The first is what was applied to Rembrandt does not necessarily apply to Matisse as they belong to two different epochs within the evolution of Western art. The second

point that can be argued here is that geopolitical and cultural relationships between the orient and Europe especially France in Rembrandt's time are assumed to be different from Matisse's time. The third is that decorative elements, which were minimal in Rembrandt art, are arguably essential in Matisse's art as they are spread all over his paintings from 1903 to the end of his career.

Spurling (1999) in a book about Matisse's life chooses to ignore totally the Islamic influences on Matisse's art. Instead, she has distanced herself from such a task trying to use ambiguous concepts to state that Matisse's success in resisting the harsh criticism about the quality of his art is due to his "destiny as a Great artist"... According to Spurling (1999), Matisse was accused of painting "diseased" pictures. (The charge was not uncommon; critics had nicknamed the new Pointillist painters (the Bubonics). She argues that what kept him going in the face of criticism, even of apparent disaster, was the support of those who knew, or believed, that he was destined for greatness. Though important, encouragement and support alone could not validate a project such as Matisse's project. In fact, as Matisse tends to rebel against his artistic traditions, he would not put himself in such risky situation without relying on a well-established artistic legacy such as the Islamic artistic traditions. Schneider (1990) argues that the legacy of Islamic art has provided Matisse with theoretical and epistemological ground as much as technical help. Finally and oddly, in this camp is the work of Jack Flam (1986) who has rarely mentioned the Islamic impact on Matisse paintings...

In the opposite trend are the views of art critics who fully recognize the Islamic influences in Matisse's art without reservation. More importantly, they refer to it with an Islamic attribute. That is Islamic art, or Mohammedan art. However, the degree of recognition of the Islamic influences needs to be subjected to more reviews as most of the studies confine the Islamic effect to just one phase of the artist career. Such confinement would prevent us from evaluating the overall

contribution of the borrowed traditions on the evolution of the artist paintings and on the evolution of Western art in general.

The earliest hint to Matisse's involvement with Islamic art probably came from Georges Desvallieres (1908) who was an art student at Gustave Moreau art school. Desvallieres noticed that Matisse has learned how to colour from the way Persian carpet are coloured. Another early study that fully recognizes Matisse's Islamic involvement is the work of Schnerb (1910) who argues that Persian rugs could be a typical example of how Matisse has applied colours in geometrical forms. However, he criticizes Matisse based on mixing painting with the art of making rugs. This criticism is legitimate in a time craft was looked at as a minor art (*un métier*) within the European traditions. A leading art critic from this camp is Roger Fry who has fully recognized the direct link between Matisse arts and Islamic art saying, "Matisse's exceptional talent lies in his attempt to apply colours as flat as in Mohammedan art" (Fry, 1933, p.96)

In analyzing Matisse's later works, Barns et al. (1933) argues that Matisse succeeded to integrate different oriental traditions with his own traditions so that the Islamic influences cannot be identified in isolation. In this, Barns argues that the Islamic techniques especially the Persian miniatures' techniques are implied in Matisse paintings through decorative elements, patterns and the use of colours in separated spaces. Barn's approach is the closest to some modern approaches about Matisse (See Schneider 1984, Fourcade 1984), which see his Islamic experience as a cultural infusion toward a universal or cosmic culture.

In her study about the influence of Persian arts on Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky, Daftari (1988) argues that Matisse has never disguised the influences of Oriental or Persian art. Daftari here argues that Matisse in his early years drew:

from miniatures, textiles, ceramics and metal work and select those stylistic elements of Persian art that would advance his personal vision and his own stylistic development" (Daftari, 1988, p.207).

In this context Daftari states that in the Fauve period” Matisse’s borrowing was selective, and then in what she called the Symphonic interiors, she stated:

He indulges in an orgy of patterns and colours and enters the world of the intricately patterned Persian miniatures. In the following years, again Matisse sustained by Islamic art, he purged his paintings of that profuse multiplication of ornamental motifs to express a more sober and meditative vision” (Daftari, 1988, p.217)

Daftari’s study is informative regarding the influences of Persian art on Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky. However, it was a bit blurry about what is Islamic and what is Persian. Though the author has put effort to draw a fine line between what is Persian and what is Islamic, her argument is a bit of confusion as she herself uses the Islamic and Persian attributes as one in many occasions. Still in the same trend Gaston Diehl ((1954) stood on the opposite extreme of those who tend to reduce or ignore Matisse’s Islamic involvement stating:

Matisse a emprunte a l’esthetic oriental jusqaux moindre details. Principe de décor continue, des surfaces grannies integralment et divisees en registres vericaux and horizontaux des combinaison lineaires .Ou de semi de fleurettes, de rosaces, qu’il pris de superposition des objets, des personages, et effet de vue plongeant, composition des formses essentiellement ornamentale, tendance au geometrisme et parfois presence d’une bordure d’enterlacs vegetaux.(Diehl, 1954, p.62)

Diehl in his important study argues that Matisse’s reliance on the aesthetics of Islamic art involves even the little details, that is; decorative elements linear forms, patterns, geometrical form, stylized leaves all taken from the Islamic traditions and applied in Matisse paintings as never before.

Though John Elderfield cannot be counted in the camp of those who fully recognized the Islamic influences in Matisse's paintings, his analysis of Matisse's paintings has recognized somehow the role of the outside effects. Elderfield looks at Matisse's Islamic experience from a cultural perspective arguing that Matisse like other artists in his generations "came to maturity with a comparable order of culture in his bone." (Elderfield, 1990, p.203). The most important part of Elderfield's argument is the idea that "while Matisse was continuing to consider what the standard artistic model of his own culture might mean for him, he began additionally to consider whether his own culture was able to provide in its own models the meaning he sought" (p.203). Elderfield has concluded that while Matisse has worked within the context of a homogenous European culture, he stretched and extended it but never seriously considering its alternatives. Ironically, as Elderfield's tries to downplay the role of foreign traditions in Matisse's art he provides this study with one of its major assumption. That is, Matisse's Islamic experience gets its originality from the process of recognizing both Islamic and European traditions. In this, Elderfield has provided a vibrant argument that Matisse was really seeking to develop his European art, which is true. However, the question that Elderfield has never asked is to what extent the other's art and cultures were crucial in this process. In Elderfield's words:

It suited some early, uncomprehending critics to think that Matisse in looking beyond Europe had surrendered his priority of the European culture. And there is still too much said about how he changed the European art and not enough about how he preserved it. For even his most drastic attack on the homogeneity of his own culture, which began in 1906, was finally for him a way of renewing his culture, of recreating a new personal homogeneity for himself. As renewed, it was inescapably, radically altered by his absorption in the art of other cultures (Elderfield, 1990, p.209).

Looking at the above argument one can easily start to "draft" Matisse's project as argued in this study. That is, to absorb the culture of Other in order to innovate in its own. Such an argument would deprive the logic from those who see in his

Islamic experience just a mere exotic experience. On the other hand, it deprives those who see Matisse “going to the dog or to the ugly” from their argument as Matisse’s final preoccupation was his own traditions and nothing else. Moreover, the above argument would contrast some Islamic notions about the artist that see Matisse somehow converted to Islam at least artistically. Afif Bahnassi’s study about the influences of Islamic art on Western art is a typical example that reflects the above argument, (Bahnassi 1961). With a full chapter on Matisse, Bahnassi’s study perhaps is the only Arabic study that has tried to establish a kind of rapport between Islamic art and Matisse. However, the study seems to give a general impression that Matisse has been influenced by Islamic art, instead of detailing the importance and the values of mingling Islamic and non Islamic artistic traditions. In response to the logic of either reducing or overstating the outcomes of Matisse’s Islamic experience, I will argue here that Matisse in his Islamic project, whether on purpose or by coincidence reflects the process of validating the other culture in own culture and vice versa.

Looking at such a project from a contemporary perspective one can amazingly read some postmodern thoughts contested by Matisse oddly in the middle of the imperative norms of modernism. Indeed, contrasting the then determined reality of art work Matisse seems to argue(see Matisse’s Note of a Painters) the multidisciplinary nature of art work, the unstable reality of art work and the contested aesthetics(i.e. what is beautiful now may not be later). This as I would argue has formed the core of Matisse’s Islamic project, which could be read within postmodern perspective. Among those who fully analyze Matisse’s Islamic experience and recognize it as an innovative project that serves European arts is the study of Pierre Schneider. Schneider (1990) argues that Islamic art provides Matisse not just with moral support but also with technical help in venturing outside his own cultural traditions. Regarding this point Schneider (1990) wrote:

It is easy to understand why Matisse should have wished to place his own venture into the aegis of a major culture. Moreover, it provides him not only with moral support but also with practical help. Matisse did not only invoke Islamic art, he consulted it. In this respect, is more revealing than the lesson he drew from his observation of rugs. (Schneider, 1990, p.26)

In addition to its inclusion of mostly all Matisse's statements about his Islamic experience Schneider's study afford an educational perspectives for Matisse's venture that may provide a technical and epistemological guide for those who want to mix different artistic traditions in their art works. In addition it afford for the first time the theoretical frame to link Matisse's early Islamic involvement with what is known as the Nice period from 1930 up. Schneider (1990) argued here that since Matisse absorbed the Islamic lesson, there is no need to go to Morocco any more as Islamic art's aesthetics would be implied whenever Matisse would attempt his easel. Schneider even goes further to argue that Matisse in decorating the Chapel of Venice shortly before his death used Islamic ornament as a main gradient for his decoration (See Daftari 1988, p.216). Like Elderfield, Schneider(1990) argues that Matisse was torn between two opposite aspirations and that while he thoroughly digests the " Persian system" he did not stop to receive the influence of Cezanne who encourage him to depict volume.This is in Elderfield's argument the extending process of own culture.

Roger Benjamin in his most recent study about orientalism devoted one chapter on Matisse as an orientalist (Benjamin, 2003, p.159). Benjamin's argument is build up on the notion that Matisse's North African experience lies "entirely within the ambit of oriental practice" However, Benjamin sees in Matisse's orientalist experience major overlaps and excesses against orientalist template. He argues that Matisse before his travels to the orient distanced himself from the guild of orientalism. All his trips were self-funded while most orientalists used government bursaries. Secondly, Matisse stopped to exhibit in the *Salon of Independents* where orientalist artists used to exhibit. Upon his return from

Morocco Matisse, choose to exhibit his works in a one-man show excluding orientalist annual exhibitions from his agenda. These indications tend to afford some clues that Matisse's Islamic experience was an intentional act that reflects his deep interest in the orient and its art away from official channels which arguably directing most of orientalists' activities.

In brief, Matisse's attempt to differentiate himself from other orientalists is a clear indication of his different project. That is, he was looking for technical and epistemological help while other orientalists were arguably looking for "information" fantasy, and exoticism. By all accounts, the way Matisse has approached art making and understanding based on other traditions was serious than most of other artists' similar experiences because it has the potential to touch not just the artistic realm but also the political, the social and the cultural connections between Islam and Europe. Cultural identity, hybridity in art and representation of the other have become a contemporary discourse that cannot be ignored in Matisse's Islamic venture. In the following pages, I am reviewing briefly, the three discourses as they arguably become pertinent to Matisse's Islamic experience.

2.6 Cultural identity: We belong to our Experience

Celui qui vient chez moi me fait honneur Celui qui ne vient pas se fait plaisir. » Henri Matisse

If you live among a group of people be like them or leave them(Arabic proverb)

Looking at Matisse sketching himself with an Islamic turban or defining himself by the way his art is expressed and delivered one cannot ignore the paradox of cultural identity formation and its impact on understanding the self and the other and the world in general. More importantly is the connection between cultural identity and the way we approach and generate knowledge. Indeed the discourse of cultural identity has arguably the potential to reshape our knowledge of the self and the world and tends to affect deeply the ways we deliver and receive such knowledge. How do we learn, how do we behave and how we define

ourselves is well connected to the way we know the world around us. Foucault (1976) argues the close connection between knowledge and power on the one hand and the connection between knowledge and the way we define ourselves including sexuality (male or female) on the other. In the next few pages, I am reviewing the literature of cultural identity as a concept in general and in particular, how cultural identity would influence the way we learn in a school situation and the way we belong to the self and to each other. In this context, Matisse's cultural identity is linked to the quality of art works he has produced as much as his encounter with different artistic traditions. Such a new Matissian cultural identity will be taken as a model that has the potential to use the other's knowledge as a tool that may help in giving the self some new dimensions. Furthermore, as my students' cultural identities are generally outlined in this study, I tend to review the literature of the concept from an educational, cultural, and social perspective. In this, I am reviewing cross-cultural concepts to problematise the concepts of acculturation and assimilation as much as multiculturalism as applied within Australian educational institutions especially high schools. In this, context theories like acculturation and assimilation tend to become of essentialist nature that seeks to label the final cultural identity of any person or group.

2.6.1 Matisse's cultural identity: A global construct

Researchers of cultural identity as a global paradigm show shifts that are classified as subtractive, additive, affirmative and intercultural (Allen, 1994; Bradley, 1996). Such shifts are the result of different people getting involved with different cultures through the history especially in art making. (Oddly, at the time of Matisse it has been an accusation if you get involved with the culture of others). The cultural identities of my students who come from different cultural backgrounds and Matisse affairs with Islamic art are read in this study within such a discourse. That is; the discourse of involving the Other as an aesthetical being with the aesthetical self and vice versa.

Today, people are continually on the move for many reasons, especially in the last two decades. The reasons are many, ranging from economical to just the pleasure of traveling and changing. The outcome is always an increased interaction between different cultural traditions. Arts in this contest have arguably the potential to afford new perspectives that may help us to reshape the self by recognizing the other as an "aesthetic player." A player within its particularity, would have the potential not just to challenge the well established aesthetics but to give our cultural identities new dimensions based on the differences as much as conformity. However, the most important outcome of such a movement is that people tend to acquire different cultural identities without being aware to what happens to them when moving from one place to another (Said, 1995).

Looking at cultural identity from postmodern perspectives reveals the difficulties in conceptualizing the process as Shoemaker (1984) argues. In addition cultural identity is becoming an on-the-move-process that should be contested on a daily basis instead of sticking with an ultimate one that can be used for all times and in all places. The importance of such a postmodern trend consists in its potential to challenge many of the-taken-for-granted concepts about identity. Acculturation and assimilation for example could be discarded from their theoretical assumptions as recognizing, and some times living with different cultures imposes to reflect components of those cultures in our every day activities. In addition, as acculturation and assimilation are stable in concepts and in practices, postmodern thinking argues cultural identity on the extreme side of the issue. It is firstly unstable, as it tends normally to change as we move through the space and the time.

Said (1991) argues that identity in general would become more difficult to grasp if we look at the implications that may arise from governmental policies such as immigration policies, education, and the direction of foreign policies... Nevertheless, identity in general is vital, because it enables the verification of the presence of a subject by discerning unique characteristics, which set the individual apart from others (Shoemaker, 1984). Though important, identity is

understood in this study not as a pre-given, nor as essentialist. Rather, drawing from the theorists of difference, (Miller, 1990; Young,1995 ;Sassen 1996) who argue that personal identity is conceived of as being fluid, drawing upon an array of social fields that constitute a person's individuality, including ethnicity, sexuality, ability, class, and gender.

In other words, individuals are not born Muslim, Christian, French, Arab, or Australian but they develop their identities through a wider range of temporally specific, discursive practices that "label, name, and ascribe (Fincher and Jacobs, 1998, p.7). In this, Matisse's cultural identity cannot be seen away from the quality of his art works, as they are becoming the carrier of his thoughts and knowledge about himself, European art, Islamic art, Islamic people and the world itself.

Similarly, a student who comes with his family to another country to live, he will be arguably identified with that country as a social being that cannot stay way from the society's influences especially the cultural values of the society. Nevertheless, and under the current postmodern conditions the urgent question would be what to do with the culture brought by that students and his/her parents? A handy answer that has dominated this issue during the last two centuries is assimilation and at the best acculturation. It is believed here that acculturation as a process of cultural identity formation assumes that an immigrant student, in order to survive should be fully assimilated within the hosted culture. While acculturation has dominated the literature of the last century, the discourse seems to belong to a more essentialist discourse in which people are assumed to become identical regarding their actions, reactions and the ways they identify themselves.

Opposite to the acculturation is the discourse of recognizing and highlighting differences instead of being oppressed. (Matisse has arguably recognized the Islamic culture as a component of his art and concepts about arts). In this respect, I am suggesting a model of belonging based on the recognition of the different cultural traditions by the society. This is based on the establishing of the

parameters by which the subject (Matisse my students, and me) comes to be known. Indeed, my cultural identity in Australia, as an example, is made under specific historical and cultural circumstances. This includes my daily-lived experiences as much as Australian social cultural influences. Similarly, Matisse's cultural identity was arguably reshaped because of his contacts with Islamic arts in particular and with Islamic culture in general. In an attempt to reconcile the importance of cultural identity with its conceptual complexity, many operational definitions are employed in this review and the aim is to argue that acculturation has stopped to be a solution, instead it has become a problem:

- Cultural identity as constructed lived experiences
- Cultural identity as symbolic experience
- Cultural identity in a teaching and learning environment
- Intercultural perspectives of cultural identity

The point in discussing cultural identity as a constructed lived experience consists in the notion argued by Said (1995) that:

Human history is made by human being and that struggle over territory as much as social and historical meanings is part of it. In this, every society tends to maintain its culture against an other who always subjected to interpretation and reinterpretation as what "they" are different from" us (Said, 1995, p.15)

However, if we reexamine the evolution of any culture we cannot separate it from its historical context through which people would be subjected to all kind of different cultural influences. Bahbha (1994) and Young (1995) argue that this is valid if we look at cultures as collective activities that cannot be isolated behind high walls. Instead, different cultures tend to cross the boundaries and to interact less or more pending indispensable contexts. This is reminiscent of an old Arabic saying; "if you live with a group of people for forty days be one of them or leave them" or with the saying "When in Rome do as the Romans do." Indeed, In order to survive under today's conditions, individuals are urged to construct and

reconstruct their cultural identities up on pragmatic perspectives that may include the physical environment, cultural habit, languages, and arts.

2.6.2 Cultural identity as lived experiences:

Cultural identity involves the cultural performances through which individuals attempt to define, characterize, and position themselves within society through their daily activities and, conversely, how society attempts to label, imagine, and fix territorial limits upon its members (Bradley 1996). However, Alba (1994) argues that external labeling by society may rely on conventional, stereotyped images, and thus acts to constrain the individual's performances .i.e. (Australian Chinese students are smarter than the others, Australian Muslim students tend to back terrorism or a man from East European background did this or that as reported by some Australian media institutions). By contrast, Erickson (1968) argues that 'internal' labeling is a product of an individual's social environment and cultural ancestry. Thus, individuals will actively construct a distinctive identity employing forms of behaviour, concepts, and ethnic origins apparent around them. For example, Schoenberg (1985) argues that active participation in migrant social networks allows successive generations to be exposed to expressions of cultural identity from their 'home' country, such as language, dance, and religious beliefs. Such social networks are argued to act as conduits of information (Boyd, 1989). In this case, migrants especially children reverse their parents' cultural identity construction as they try to consult their parent's cultures in the same way their parents are consulting the host culture.

Nevertheless, expressions of cultural identity do not remain static. Eppink (1979) argues that students from minority groups will often alter their conduct to one, which is more compatible with that of the dominant host culture. Examples of how cultural identity is discarded and transformed by migration are illustrated in the work of Alba (1990) and Pulvirenti (1997). 'Hyphenated' identity is one expression of such transformations, indicating that migrants possess a dual loyalty or hybrid culture born of the transfusion of beliefs and practices from their

country of origin and settlement (Gilroy, 1993; Bhabha 1994; Hall, 1999). Furthermore, cultural identity is only one of many divisions of self-identity (e.g. female, a sister, a migrant, an accountant). Roosen (1989) argues that individuals may find that a particular identity may be more relevant than others in certain circumstances, hence flow effortlessly between self-identities. In this sense, cultural identity does not exist by itself; rather it is variously manifested in different contexts. There are many stories especially among minority people in Australia how their identities fluctuate in regard to the situations they may face. They, for example, identify themselves as Australian when backing an Australian sport team, or queuing in a social security office, and by their country of origin backing the country's sport teams. (Australian Greek soccer fans in Euro 2004) or showing solidarity with the country of origin in time of disasters and other special events.

More recently, Allen (1994) has argued that social conditions will require the boundaries of identity to be re-evaluated and subsequently re-drawn, and that this will continue throughout the life of an individual. The salience of one's cultural identity will fluctuate during one's lifetime; certain circumstances may prevail that require ethnic identification, or it may be advantageous for the individuals to define themselves in such a way (i.e. applying for a job that may need proof of aboriginality or NESB). Roosen (1989) highlighted this argument in the context of the social advantages of ethnic affiliation when government support is provided to disadvantaged minority groups.

2.6.3 Cultural identity as Symbolic expressions

The symbolic expressions of cultural identity are the shared meanings of people who associate with a particular culture, rather than arising through actions. Alba (1990) argues that expressions of symbolic and lived identity can exist mutually independently from one another. For some, cultural identity may be marginal to their daily activities, instead taking on a psychological expression. For example, this is demonstrated by the intensity of feelings of cultural obligation to teach

one's ancestral language to children, or to marry within the same ethnic community (Isajiw 1990). For Gans (1979, p.9) symbolic expression of cultural identity was expressed in a 'love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour. In other words, Gans argues that:

The shared meanings of symbolic identity enhance the feeling of ethnicity without strengthening its social structures. (One of my students said: eventually I am a Turkish but I am proud to be Australian, and I am). Symbolic identifiers facilitate the active construction of personal identity by the individual abstracting some 'ethnic spice' (Gans, 1979, p.30)

Smolicz (1981) referred to these symbolic identifiers in terms of 'core values' of a culture involving language, religion, the family, or other cultural institutions.

The theoretical review of cultural identity suggests that while there is widespread agreement that generation, income, education, and place of residence in part influence the salience of ethnicity in an individual's life, the nature of these relationships remains contested. For example, Sandberg's (1974) straight-line theory of ethnicity argues that each successive generation is assimilated more completely into the host culture through processes of social mobility and intermarriage. Nuances were added to this argument by Gans (1979), who argues that, whilst accepting that ethnic identity as lived experience may become marginal to successive generations, symbols that express a visible and clear meaning to a large number of young people become progressively more important as sources of individual pride. According to Gans (1979), the expression of cultural identity progressively changes between generations from a lived to a symbolic form. This is to argue that acculturation, no matter how it applied cannot succeed in abolishing native culture as the later is always manifested itself as symbolic identity. In the next few pages I am reviewing the concept of cultural identity in a learning environment arguing that concepts of assimilation and acculturation belong to a more essentialist approach as they tend through modeling to force identity formation into ultimate and uniformed aspects. This

stems from my argument in this study that recognizing differences implied a learning process that contested knowledge away from any essentialist truth.

2.7 Cultural identity: A learning institutions environment

Cultural identity as a concept is difficult to grasp as Allen (1994) argues. It highlights the individual differences found in culturally different students; the contradictions of multiple ethnic heritages; the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity; and the pedagogy in the learning institutions. As students bring their different cultures to schools and educational institutions, the answer to the question of how to deal with such differences would become a challenge. Indeed, within the implications of dealing with differences, schools and policy makers would find themselves in a situation they have never experienced. Two major trends of dealing with such a situation are most popular in the literature. The first trend is assimilation and acculturation. Through this approach, schools and cultural institutions would suppose that mainstream culture should eventually prevail. Therefore, they deal with differences as never exist.

The second is to recognize the differences as a wealth for learners' social lives as much as their learning and educational outcomes. Multiculturalism is often identified by these implications. That is; recognizing the differences that may benefit mainstream learners as much as the diverse learners including the constantly new coming learners. Representing the first trend is Sandbergs' theory. Sandburg (1974) believes that minority groups of students would eventually loose their touch with their background cultures and that ethnic identity will decline with each successive generation. Such an argument is becoming invalid, as globalization has opened the window on the recognition of other. In such a global context students as all other people started to reconsider their connections with their native cultures. They proudly tend to declare their cultural and ethnic identities based on their parents' cultures, realizing the benefit that may lie in such a process.

In this matter, Ortiz (1990) argues that ethnic identity as a construct has two aspects: content and salience. The content of ethnic identity refers to the customs, language, behaviors, music, literature, heroes, values, and worldview that a group with a common ethnic heritage shares. The salience of ethnic identity describes the degree to which membership in the group and the content of ethnic identity is important to the individual's sense of self.

Many theorists (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue, 1993; Cross, 1991; Helms, 1995; Phinney, 1992) argue that the degree of identification an individual may have with a culture is a developmental process of exploration and commitment to that group. Nevertheless, how students embrace each other and how they influence and become influenced within that huge cultural diversity? Two main terms are coined by theorists. However, they both lead to the same outcome: Enculturation and acculturation. The enculturation and acculturation processes explain how people come to feel a part of their specific cultural group while embracing the larger culture. This is probably the best part of such a concept as it recognizes the different cultures' retention while adopting the mainstream culture. Choney, et.al. (1995) propose an acculturation model that determines the degree to which a person has experienced acculturation to mainstream culture. They call the levels of acculturation traditional, transitional, bicultural, assimilated, and marginal (unconnected to either culture). In addition, they argue that acculturation to mainstream culture may occur along cognitive (language and customs), behavioral (activities), affective or spiritual (connection to others and religion), and social or environmental (place they live, who they socialize with) dimensions.

The problem with the above argument may lie in the assumptions that enculturation and acculturation may occur without any residue while postmodern thoughts assert on keeping the differences as resources of approaching our relationships with the self and with the other and consequently knowledge. In addition, while acculturation and enculturation assume a theoretical frame that may help once and forever in solving the problem of integration the two processes

fail to explore how deep cultural roots would remain. More importantly how native culture may become a dormant agent that may be awakened when the opportunity arises.

In a school environment, there are plenty of examples of seemingly acculturated students. However, a close look at the “native” cultures of those students may reveal undesired outcomes. That is, native cultures of those students are still active, though hidden for many social and sometimes political reasons. For example, an Australian Lebanese background student may become a typical example of the acculturated person, but in the meantime, he/she may keep hidden his/ her close connections with Lebanese habits, culture, or religion for many reasons. Ortiz (1990) identifies many logical reasons for such duality. She argues that hiding background culture is a defensive measure against the society dominant believes and it may have the potential to changes not only the way students view others and society but also the entire relationship with knowledge. Sorti (1990) argues that students from different ethnic backgrounds may hide their background cultures just because they believe that the legal system is always manipulated and is not always operated in a fair and equitable way; thus, justice does not exist for all people especially those with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, they pretend to be assimilated while the opposite is happening. In sum acculturation, enculturation and assimilation tend to belong to more essentialist approaches to knowledge. They tend to seek solutions and conformity rather than expressing differences and posing questions. They opposed by the virtues of their outcomes the notion of expressing the self, as it is lies deeply in Dewey’s democratic pedagogy. A pedagogy that recognizes the other so that expressing differences would create a vibrant teaching and learning environment. This is what Sorti(1990) called intercultural competence.

2.8 Intercultural perspectives

Looking at Matisse's Islamic experience from intercultural perspectives, one can understand easily how Matisse recognized the impact of Islamic culture in his arts without losing the connections with his own. The outcome in this case is an art that reflects both traditions but does not reflect any, as I should argue. Projecting such an argument to an educational environment, one could fairly argue the benefit of differences in our classrooms. In recognizing differences, we in fact tend to develop the ability to take and accept the intercultural perspective of others. Intercultural perspective taking as (Kappler, 1998; Steglitz, 1993) define it is a cognitive skill that enables the individual to recognize the existence and impact of different cultures and understand the ways in which cultures can vary.

In various studies such as Steglitz (1993), the cognitive nature of intercultural perspective taking is highlighted as a model of how we come to understand how behaviour and perspectives are shaped by culture. Furthermore, how culture influences individuals and how culturally different people may be influenced by their culture (or cultures), and how culture might influence the interpretation and perception of a situation. Another important point that arose from such a model is the notion that the ability to take the perspective of culturally different persons leads to the development of intercultural competence. (Sorti, 1990) argues that intercultural competence depends on the development of three separated but related dimensions: cognitive (knowledge and cognition), intrapersonal (identity, self-education), and interpersonal. In a study about intercultural competence in American students abroad (Moore and Ortiz, 1999) identified the characteristics of the intercultural competent person as:

Intercultural competent students are critical thinkers. They suspend judgment until all the evidence is collected. They include a diverse range of knowledge in what they consider evidence. They have enough self-knowledge (and a requisite positive sense of self) to know their own limits and can take positive steps to alleviate difficult situations. (Moore and Ortiz, 1999, P.34)

Though Moore and Ortiz (1999) discussed the issue of interculturality on a university level validity of such a concepts could be extended to secondary students by encouraging students to be critical thinkers who may constantly reflect on own experience as much as on other's experiences. This includes their cultural backgrounds and the host culture at the same level. Encouragement in this context should be reflected in curriculum change that really gives the students the chance to mind their own learning and to criticize freely what they learn and the way they are taught. In addition, schools and educational institutions would reflect policies that encourage students to be themselves (socially and culturally) rather than squeezing them into the compartmental discourse of assimilation. In sum, it seems the process of examining cultural identity formation and learning from different perspectives encourages a cognitive flexibility that leads to better problem solving both in and out of the classroom. In this, interculturally competent students are those who are willing to recognize differences as sources that have not stop feeding our reality, with a limitless ideas and experiences from the early history of human society. In this, knowledge, including knowledge of the self is to be argued as a hybrid process that cannot be confined to any templates or determined models. Instead, they are looked in this study as accumulations that have acted and reacted in order to shape our reality.

2.9 Hybrid Issues

Hybridity in literature is a discourse that recognizes human activities including art as a marriage of different experiences that may lead to new ones.

...Traditions co-exist with the emergence of new, hybrid and crossover cultural forms of tremendous vitality and innovation. These communities are in touch with their differences, without being saturated by tradition; they are actively involved with every aspect of life around them, without the illusion of assimilation and identity...

Stuart Hall (1999)

Analysis of Matisse's paintings within their foreign influences as much as their original connections with the foundations of European arts would clearly reveal that they are the outcomes of a hybrid process that would start from as early as the cave drawings of prehistoric people to the present day. In this context, Matisse's attempts to mix the Islamic and Western traditions in doing arts is unique for two main reasons. The first is that Matisse's experience was probably the only serious Western attempt to hybridize the two rival cultures since the end of Islamic invasion of Spain. The second is the potential of such an experience to create a valid theoretical frame to hybridize art and philosophy, art and theology, and art and literature as never before. However, in this review, Matisse's Islamic experience is discussed from a perspective that recognizes the hybrid nature of Islamic art itself. Indeed, Islamic cultures and arts have evolved by mixing the culture of Arabia with the cultures of the countries Islam has conquered (see Lewis, 1980, Ettinghausten, 1980, and Blair et al., 2001). Persian, Turkish, Indian, south East Asian, Arabic and Byzantine cultures formed the aspects of what we might call today Islamic arts. It is believed here that Islamic arts' glory is indebted not only to Islamic traditions but to the way Islam succeeded to recognize and to integrate this huge diversities of cultural traditions that extended from Spain to East Asia. Taking the above into account my argument is evolved around the notion that Matisse has shown evidences through his paintings that he was aware of the hybrid nature of Islamic art forms, and that the epistemological validity of Islamic art forms may reside in their hybrid aspects. This review examines hybridity from the point of view of the individual as he or she participates in the social construction of knowledge, which forms part of the hybridization process. It seeks to focus on 'the mechanics of the intricate processes of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjunction' as (Young, 1995) puts it. "Hybrid" as a term reveals how hybridity as a mating process between two different elements can be applied to cultural and artistic situations. In addition, exploring the conditions for a "successful mixture" would benefit the hybrid nature of art and cultures. Here, hybridity is argued as a post-modern

concept through which knowledge is contested away from any essentialism. In another word, it could be true to say that; the importance of hybridity especially in cultures could be its aspects as anti essentialism discourse to knowledge production. This hybrid discourse is reviewed as a preparation for the analysis of the hybrid nature of Matisse arts later on in this study.

2.10 Hybridity-Definitions

Cashmore (1996) defines hybridity as the process of developing new combination by grafting one fruit or plant to another. The term hybridity is believed to be originated in agriculture and the aim was to look for new breeds. That is, looking for ways to increase quantity and improve quality.

In social science, Bastide (1970) argues that hybridity first entered the field via the anthropology of religion, through the theme of syncretism. He defined syncretism as 'uniting' pieces of the mythical history of two different traditions in one that continued to be ordered by a single system.'

In Linguistics Bakhtin's work on polyphony is a related strand. Creole languages and creolization in linguistics was the next field to engage social science interest. In time, creolization became a wider metaphor beyond language (e.g. Richards, 1996; Siebers, 1996).

Bakhtin (1986) defines hybridization as:

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor.(Bakhtin,1986,P.96)

In culture Young defines hybridization as:

...The process of forcing of a single entity into two or more parts, a severing of a single object into two, turning sameness into difference... Hybridity thus makes

difference into sameness and sameness into difference, but in a way which makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different.” (Young 1995,p.26)

Young reminds us that the term hybridity was used originally to refer to a physiological phenomenon but has now been now reactivated to describe a cultural one.)

At its simplest, hybridity implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things ... making difference into sameness. Hybridity, thus consists of a bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulation” (Young 1995,p.26)

Applying the above definition to Matisse’s Islamic experience would generate enough energy to argue that enforcing Islamic decorative elements in Matisse’s paintings have created new qualitative paintings through interaction between different artistic traditions. Moreover, the process could not be confined to the technical side. As Matisse has forced Islamic techniques into his own he has arguably tried to involve the general aesthetic theories through which he has succeeded to marry between the Islamic aesthetical approaches and his European ones. Young (1995) employs Derrida’s term ‘brisure’ (joint) to convey this simultaneous breaking and joining. It is meant to foreclose the diverse forms of purity encompassed within essentialist theories. However, given the fact that hybridity itself is a hybridized concept, a view that Young (1995) adopts from Bakhtin, ‘there is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes’. This captures the fluidity of the process and provides for ‘multiple hybridities’ (Stronach and MacLure, 1997) encompassing different contexts and situations.

Homi Bhabha (1994) argues hybridity in cultures reveals the political sides of the issues. He has in fact tried to disclose the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the colonizer's ambivalence in respect to his position toward the colonized other. In his *Location of Culture* Homi Bhabha (1994) sees the concept as to express how the peoples of the world as living 'border lives', living on the borderlines of the 'present', seeking 'a tenebrous sense of survival', preoccupied with, excited and frightened by the sense of 'beyond'.

This is what Bhabha (1994) has to say about the beyond:

The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past. Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the "fin de siecle", we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-dela - here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth".(Bhabha,1994, p.127).

For Bhabha culture is located in the 'in-between spaces', the interstices, 'those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences' and which permit 'the overlap and displacement of domains of difference'. It is a space where different cultural elements start to merge, act, react, and interact. Nourished by the main bodies of the two parties the newborn would start to emerge hooding both characteristics but never become identical with any of them. It is always, as I argue, a gray space at the beginning, however through physical and symbolic interactions it starts to develop its own colour, its own distinctive identity. In this, cultural hybridity entertains difference without assumed or imposed any hierarchy; instead, it prepares the ground to cultural interaction without dictating the elements through which the process of hybridization would occur. One could here argue the democratic nature of such a process as

differences are needed and recognized where losing own identity is by no means a precondition.

Hybridity in art is not an exception. Harvey (1996) argues that Dada made mixing objects and perspectives, which inspired the technique of collage. Matisse, though not acclaimed in literature has hybridized paintings by marrying not just different techniques but by marrying different philological concepts. Surrealism in turn moved further along these lines and so did conceptual and installation art, (the use of different material techniques and ideas) However, the domains in which hybridity plays a part have grown over time to cover the following:

- Other strands concern structural and institutional hybridization, including governance (Ruijter, 1996)
- Organizational hybridity (Oliver and Montgomery, 2000) and diverse cultural influences in management techniques are other common themes (e.g. Beale, 1999).
- Interdisciplinary in science has given rise to 'new hybrids' such as ecological economics (McNeill, 1999).
- 'Menus have increasingly become monuments to cultural hybridity' (Warde, 2000 :).
- Most common of all is everyday hybridity in identities, consumer behaviour, lifestyle, etc. International relations, education, the 'hybrid car' (combining petrol and electricity), and so forth: nowadays there is no end to the travel and spread of hybridity as Pieterse (1995) argues.

2.11 Hybridity as a perspective

As a perspective, hybridity entails three different sets of claims Pieterse (1995) argues. The first is empirical (hybridization happens), the second is theoretical (acknowledging hybridity as an analytical tool) and the third is normative (a critique of boundaries and valorization of mixtures, under certain conditions, in particular relations of power). Pieterse (1995) concludes that hybridity is to culture what deconstruction is to discourse: transcending binary categories.

Another account of hybridity is Bhabha's 'in-betweenness'. Bhabha (1994) argues that recognizing the in-between and the interstices means going beyond dualism, binary thinking, and Aristotelian logic would create the ideal conditions for mating different cultural traditions away from any essentialist thoughts. In this context, Matisse's Arabesques developed from mixing Islamic and European art techniques could be seen here as an early signs of the in-betweenness, Bhabha has argued.

Young (1995) argues, that hybridity, though older than post structuralism, methodologically is the hallmark of post-structuralism and deconstruction; it represents an epistemological shift outside the boxes of Cartesian epistemology (*je pense donc je suis*) I think therefore I am. He adds:

that hybridity in its constructive sense involves a profound moment of collective reflexivity that includes the awareness that all kinds of boundaries are historical and social constructions; they are also cognitive barriers whose validity depends on epistemic orders, which are ultimately of an arbitrary or at least contingent nature. (Young, 1995, p.113)

Pieterise (2001) however argues that hybridity in itself is not new; and what is new is its expansion among broader strata of the population and its widening scope in relation to phenomena. Pieterise sets examples about the above argument stating that hybridity has helped yet intellectuals to question the world outside the Cartesian philosophy. He cites Thomas Kuhn on paradigm shifts in science, the emergence of 'new science' beyond Newton's science, Foucault on epistemic orders, Derrida on deconstruction, Deleuze and Guattari on nomadism, feminist boundary crossings (e.g. Caine et al., 1988), Lyotard on the space in between language games, Bhabha on 'third space'. However, the most important of hybridity discourse may lay in mechanisms and how it operates in order to get the desired outcomes. Canclini's view about this matter could be useful when read through Matisse's effort in bringing together the Islamic and the Western art. Canclini (1995) argues that hybridity starts by softening the borders between two

entities or subjects (i.e. Islamic and western arts for Matisse). In this, it provides us with a conceptual point of departure from which to break from fundamentalist tendencies and from the fatalism of the doctrines. One account in this respect could be explored is that the space across and between boundaries is not eternal as it changes on the ground as much as in people minds as Bhabha(1994) argues.

Long before the above argument was credited, Matisse in his Islamic affair has suggested blurry boundaries between his art and the other arts by creating a kind of visual dialogues between different elements and aspects taken from his traditions and the Islamic traditions he has consulted. Namely, dialogue between flatness and three-dimensional forms, decorative elements and picturesque representation are essential parts of Matisse's hybrid project. In this, it seems Matisse's early signs of bringing together the two traditions is suggesting of a non-essentialist approach that is free from the epistemology of any determined art and eventually the determined world.

Crossing the boundary of doctrines, does that mean that boundary crossing is to become a chaotic situation? More importantly, can we hybridize without any precondition? Moreover, what preparation should be done in order to grant a valid environment through which the newborn would emerge? However, before that, what conditions should prevail in order to soften the borders of any two entities

Young (1995) argues that there are conditions that should be considered as much as techniques otherwise the hybrid process would fail to achieve its main goal; the production of new quality. While in plants there are organic conditions under which successful hybridity occurs. In culture, mixing is not an automatic process that can be approached regardless or without identifying the elements that could be hybridized. These elements involve among many the boundaries of each culture. Young (1995) argues that acknowledging the contingency of boundaries and the significance and limitations of hybridity as a theme and approach means engaging hybridity politics. In this sense hybridity, politics would become a kind

of encounter through which differences are facing each other. In such encounters elements including people and cultures are to negotiate their differences as an intercultural confrontations that have the power and the mechanism to change not only the pure but to change the meanings of meanings in a world meanings have become hybrid contextual process.

Affiliating the above with Matisse's Islamic experience would give this research an essential part of its argument. That is, recognizing the other's art as valid involves the recognition and highlighting of differences instead of ignoring them. Negotiating and compromising differences would create energy that may rise from binary oppositions and comparisons. However, Werbner (1997) argues that though hybridity problematizes boundaries it does not erase them. This is in itself essential to make hybridity a continuous process. Because, if boundaries are simply erased, there would be no differences, and therefore no hybridity. In addition asserting on the existence of boundaries constitutes the recognitions of other as a part of a whole that produces itself as such in an endless process. Based on this notion, if Matisse has ever become a Muslim artist or if he was satisfied with just his European traditions he would not probably get the recognition he has. This recognition is believed to be the outcome of marrying the Islamic art traditions into his European traditions and vice versa. As an example, talking about people and identity, to be an Australian Lebanese for example is quite different from being a Lebanese or an Australian. Because without living in Australia and without exposing the self to the Australian cultural influences there would be no in-between space, in which elements from Lebanese identity and Australian identity are to be interacted to initiate a new one. To conclude this section Hybridity tends to leave no room for any essentialist thoughts because belonging to the past alone would ignore the survival mechanism needed to cope with the fleeting and changing instant of the present. In addition, essentialism within its pure, definite, and ultimate discourse leaves no room for the present as it invites us to import reality into future bypassing the present. In this respect, being a Lebanese, Chinese, German or Italian etc. cannot be understood away

from the process of mixing, sharing adopting, and adapting in order to survive. This in Coombes' (1996) words the specific context and conditions under which hybridity is operating...Similarly, in art my paintings, no matter how abstract they are, could not be produced in a vacuum; instead, they are the outcomes of what I succeed to bring to them on personal, social, cultural, and epistemological levels. They are in fact a kind of association between me, as a unique person, and all the different cultural and artistic experiences I have learned all along my life. Finally, celebrating Matisse's Islamic experience as a hybrid anti essentialist discourse implies by necessity the argument that such an experience cannot be stuffed with Orientalism as an essentialist discourse itself. In the next paragraphs I am reviewing Matisse's Islamic experience as an anti orientalist discourse against the wishes of many theorists who still see the work of the artist within orientalist perspectives

2.12 Matisse: The unique Orientalist

This is the Eastern woman that Europe depicted until now. . . It is assumed that this body is not the mistress of her house, the wife of her husband, and the mother of her children, but only a servant to the pleasures of the man who owns the house. What a misconception! (Mithad 1890).

Reading Matisse's Islamic experience away from an orientalist discourse is like trying to read Edward Said away from his Palestinian background. However, I have wished, when my English would help me, to argue independently that Matisse's project has nothing to do with Orientalism. This wish is based on the notion that what has been in Matisse' mind is not the orient and its people in the political sense, but what the orient can afford for him, in order to develop his paintings, (light, spiritual environment, and techniques). He was not in favour of any colonial aesthetics in Benjamin (2003) word. Instead, he was striving to show the validity of the colonized aesthetics in the colonial ones. That is using Islamic aesthetics in order to develop Western aesthetics away from any official or unofficial political stands, exoticism or myths.

2.12.1 Orientalism and its guild:

This is a brief review of orientalism in literature and the aim is to argue that if Matisse is to be looked at as an orientalist artist according to the academic definition of orientalism, his Islamic experience should be argued on the base that may contradict orientalism's essential functions. Researches beyond the conventional West occupy a position in the study of 19th- and 20th-century art literature and culture. Their focus is a class of culture that is by definition exceptional and different from the norms of a given home culture. Defining the nature and boundaries of such exceptional scholarship is a challenge in its own right. Such now familiar terms as orientalism are in fact a complicated concept by the virtues of its wide and nearly undefined domain. Indeed Orientalism tends to cover the study of languages, literature, history, geography, sociology, and art including music and dance.

Starting with the implication of the term Orientalism as the study of the orient and its people, art and culture, and ending with the question why and what were the motives of such a movement. And who gave it the needed momentum to proceed to cover an area as wide as the orient and its people? By academic definition, Orientalism is a scholarly pursuit that covers a wide area of scholarship comprising philology, linguistics, ethnography, and the interpretation of culture through the discovery, recovery, compilation, and translation of Oriental texts; (Lewis, 1982; Turner; 1994; Massad and Munthe, 2002). In response to the question why intellectual and non-intellectual in the west have tried to study the orient and its people, probably Edward Said is the first who tried to answer the question from the Other's perspectives. Said (1978, p.17) identified orientalism in his foundational work *Orientalism* as "the political, cultural, and intellectual system by which the West has for centuries managed its relationship with the Islamic world." In brief, according to Said and the army of intellectuals, critics and journalists who have come in his wake (see Prakash, 1995, Spivak, 1989,

Young 1995, Kabani, 1997, Orientalism transforms the East and its people into an alien "Other." According to Said (1978)

...That other usually a dark other, was in every way the inferior of the West: unenlightened, barbarous, cruel, craven, enslaved to its senses, given to despotism, and, in general, contemptible. Having established an Eastern Other in these degrading terms, the West emerged at the center of its self-serving discourse as, by obvious contrast, enlightened and progressive. (Said, 1978, P.76)

However, the most serious part of questioning orientalism consists in Said's attempts to show through concrete evidences, that many Western literary hallmarks are in fact full of misrepresentations for the orient and its people. Looking for evidences of such serious claims would unfortunately reveal how brilliant works of arts and literatures as original as Shakespeare, Gerom, Jane Austin, Diderot, Montesquieu, and Gifford were in fact orientalist works that misrepresent the orient and its people as argued by Said (1978). It could be true to say that the importance of Edward Said's Orientalism rests in the large amount of critiques it generated as much as in its discipline to transgress the boundaries of Western scholarships, as it tended to diffuse the lines between scholarility and politics. Literature, art, theatre, music are amazingly linked to their political motives as to say that the rational West loses objectivity when dealing with the east especially over the issue of Islam.

In the next few page I am reviewing Said's Orientalism in the literature as it becomes a discourse that criticizes not just old orientalism as defended by Lewis (1993) but the new orientalism manifested in the persistent essentialist view of the East and Islam in general and knowledge in particular. In addition, the reactions on Said's book are reviewed as an essential part of the debate about how to approach knowledge, and why Western scholarships adamantly tend to deny essentialism as a way of generating knowledge and become more compromising when the issue is related to the other especially the orient and Islam. Reactions from East and West are reviewed to give a clear picture about the problematic nature of orientalism especially when we see that scholars from the East tend to

attack Said's Orientalism while stands that are more sympathetic come to Said from Western scholars. Here some of Matisse's qualitative paintings perhaps could become a typical example that can be affiliated with Said's concept about misrepresentation. Indeed Matisse's Islamic experience provides us with art works that have put values on the orient and its traditions leaving through concrete examples no room for giving false information or representation about the subject matter.

2.12.2 Said's Orientalism: A Different interpretation

Said (1978) criticizes orientalism, as it is the intellectual outcome of the European affiliation of power with knowledge. To Said, orientalism as a Western cultural phenomenon is particularly related to the colonial and post-colonial reception of the Orient, its people, and history. Moreover, Said extends his examination beyond the works of recognized Orientalist academics to take in literature, journalism, travel books, and religious and philosophical studies to produce a broadly historical and anthropological perspective. What Said has been arguing in the last couple of years before his death is that Orientalism has become a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."

Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. The phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient, despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient". (Said, 1995, p.8)

Said's understanding of orientalism has arguably the potential to shake up the well-established Western scholarship using Western methodologies and that is perhaps Said's valuable advantage. Notably the generated responses to Said's

understanding were concentrated on his transgression of the borders of Western academic scholarship. In this context, many Western and Eastern scholars have criticized Said on many grounds. Prakash (1995) approaches the issue from its political perspectives arguing that Said's Orientalism has succeeded to politicized literary works that seemed to be mere literary works. He stated that:

...More than anything else, what accounts for Orientalism's insurgent existence is its relentless transgression of boundaries drawn by disciplines of knowledge and imperial governance. Unsettling received oppositions between the Orient and the Occident, reading literary texts as historical and theoretical events, and cross-hatching scholarly monographs with political tracts, it forced open the authoritative modes of knowing the other. An indeterminacy emerged in the authority of Western knowledge as it was brought down from it. (Prakash, 1995, p.1)"

Bernard Lewis is a typical orientalist whose scholarship is subjected to critique by Said in Orientalism. In turn Lewis criticizes Said on many grounds. Lewis (2001) accuses Said of poisoning orientalism meaning and history. He argues that the contemporary scholarship, he suggested, had become too diverse and bore little resemblance to its nineteenth-century predecessor which, in turn, scarcely resembled Said's Orientalism. Lewis concludes that in transgressing the boundaries of scholarships Said's argument was an illegitimate intrusion of politics into the world of scholarship.

Kerr (1980) found Said's argument preconceived. He argues that Said's connection between imperial interests and scholarly concerns was driven by polemics and passion, not sound analysis and calm reasons. Turning Said's critique against him, Kerr accused him of caricaturing orientalists. This came in response of Said's claims that there are no innocent orientalists for whatever the individual goodwill of the scholars; they are all prisoners of the institutions, governments, and other foundations that may fund their researches. In Kerr's words:

...Said seems to be stuck with the residual argument that whatever the individual goodwill of the scholars, they are all prisoners of the establishment—the old-boy network of government, business, the foundations—which, in turn, depends on propagating the old racist myths of European Orientalism in order to further the cause of Western imperial domination of the East (pp. 301-302). At best, this is a preconceived argument and a highly debatable one (Kerr,1995,p.3)

Windschuttle (1999) criticizes Said on the ground that orientalism was a Western scholarship that prepared the way for the extension of colonial rule over the Middle East and North Africa. Aside from invoking Michel Foucault's notion that knowledge always generates power, Windschuttle says, Said fails to provide any historical evidence about "the actual causal sequence" that led to English or French imperialism in the 19th century. (Historians usually point to desires for trade, investment, and military advantage as causes.) He questioned Said's Oriental integrity based on excluding the Germans, who produced prominent orientalists but "never went on to become an imperial power" like the English and the French? More importantly and as Said (1978) criticizes Oriental studies for producing a false description of Arabs and Islamic culture using a more essentialist approach, Windschuttle criticizes Said himself on the same ground arguing that he is guilty of the very "essentialism" he condemns. He argues that:

In Ascribing to the West a coherent self-identity that has produced a specific set of value judgments, Europe is powerful and articulate: Asia is defeated and distant, that have remained constant for the past 2500 years," (Windshuttle, 1999, p.5)

Windschuttle added" this reflects an essentialist view that Said struggles to criticize.

In this matter, Prakash (1995) Argues that Said's Orientalism was criticized not just from hostile sides but also from friendly and thoughtful sides. He cited the work of James Clifford who notes that Said's Orientalism "sometimes appears to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks... Clifford (1988) writes that Said's invocation of "human experience" underscores "the absence in his book of any

developed theory of culture as a differentiating and expressive ensemble rather than as simply hegemonic and differentiating,

Potter (2000) took the issue to the differences between USA and European orientalism. He argues that the most provocative and vulnerable part of Said's argument is his assumption that orientalism is invented as to dominate the East. Potter a former USA diplomat in the East tries to distinguish between the United States and Europe relationships with countries in the Middle East. In this context, Potter (2000) argues that Said's argument was based on Foucault assumption that knowledge generates power. This, upon Potter cannot be applied as an equation to USA's foreign policies in the same way it was applied to French and British colonial policies. He has finally concluded that Said's assumption is emerged mimetically from European versions a matter that can be strongly argues.

Looking at Arab scholars' stands from Said's Orientalism the outcome is more bitter. Mohamed Al Da'mi could be the most ardent in arguing the benefit of orientalism as an intellectual movement. AlDa'mi (1998) describe Said's concept about misrepresentation is unfortunate for Oriental cultures at large and for Oriental histories in particular. In his defense in favour of orientalism, Al Da'mi (1998) argues that orientalism, especially literary orientalism was, and still an intellectual movement and a cultural phenomenon that served a considerable merit for the Orientals. In fact such a stand is very popular among Islamic and Arabic writers and intellectuals Saad (1982) Al-Said (2000) Safa (1985) argue that orientalism preserved Islamic cultural heritage and to some extent Arabic heritage. They argue that orientalism is useful not because it serves imperial interests, but because it envelops a complex of cultural, personal and hereditary compulsions which are productive and significant for the intelligentsia of the Eastern countries.

More importantly, orientalist in relation to these views have offered us, as Al Da'mi argues, foreign perspectives and coercive challenges, which have enriched our approaches to our culture and history. Many examples of clever Eastern

writings on Oriental history can be traced to the prejudiced and “suggestive” orientalist writings. Al Da’mi adds:

Said’s generalization, no matter how true it is, could lead to depriving Eastern cultures of this useful (aggressive, impulsive, suggestive) orientalist challenge. “My point is: Said’s accusation, that orientalism supplies agents and expertise to empire,) endangers the uses which the orientals can make of orientalist literature (Al De’mi, 1998, p.17)

Al Da’mi’s (1998) goes on arguing:

That there are certain motives and compulsions that have affected the Orientalist reception and presentation of Oriental histories, which are not purely imperial. These compulsions have to be studied carefully not because they are important only, but also because they help us complement the Western image of the East. (Al Da’mi’ 1998 p.23)

The Egyptian philosopher Fouad Zakaria (1985) denounced Said’s Orientalism as “unscientific and arbitrary” and accused Said of denigrating modern Arab culture.

Najdi(2006) another Arabic author who wanted Orientalism not to be taken as a whole sale but to admit its bright face by mentioning those orientalists who make us, the Arabs, quite aware of our cultural and literary heritage.

Aijaz Ahmed (1992) however criticizes Said’s Orientalism with respect to its negative stance to Marxism. He attacks Said accusing him ‘..Of mobilizing all sorts of eclectic procedures to establish that Europeans were ontologically incapable of producing any true knowledge about non-Europe’. (Ahmed, 1992, p.78)

Dallmayr (1996) discusses Said’s Orientalism from identity formation perspectives. Dallmayr argues that Said uses far-ranging historical and literary investigations to uncovers a basic antagonism pervading much of Western history

and culture: That is, the West actively constructing its identity and the Orient being the mere recipient of a weak and demeaning counter identity". (Dallymar,1996, p.6). Orientalism in this sense can be seen as a kind of identity politics: namely, as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"; in Said's word.

Bauman (1999, p.97) argues Said's Orientalism from the perspective of the politics of knowledge production. She argues that Said's Orientalism methodology forms, a moral-epistemological belief system worthy itself of being an object of critical study. She argues that the ways of knowing are themselves mechanisms of power and implicitly that the work of exposing their function as such constitutes an act of opposition to that power. In this respect, Dallmayr (1997) argues that Said's transgression of disciplinary boundary to force the recognition of orientalism, as a discipline of power has become a model for navigating between literature, history, philosophy, and anthropology. Looking at the literature of feminist cultural and postcolonial studies one can easily conclude how Said's orientalism has influenced such fields. Moreover, Orientalism Influences can be cited in most poststructuralist, Western feminist, and neo Marxism theories.

Kabbani (1994) looks at Orientalism from gender perspectives arguing that there now exists a growing body of literature that analyze the relationships between imperial rules and gender politics... Kabbani analyze Richard Burton's experiences with women from India and Egypt stating, "They never rose above master-slave relationships" (Kabani, 1994, p.48). Miller (1990) however, criticizes Said for not going far enough in exploring the relationship between imperialism and gender. She argues: "That though Said in Orientalism offers an insightful parallel between imperialist and patriarchal oppression he fails to confront sexual meaning on which the illuminating parallel depends."(Miller, 1990, p.118). To conclude this part, the importance of Said's Orientalism resides probably in its potential to draw the attention of scholars across many disciplines of Social sciences and arts. Such a generated energy would be increased when

Said starts to question the disciplinary norms and boundaries of many Western genres starting from literature to arts and philology and the aim was to expose their colonial genealogy. Finally, Said's *Orientalism* offers a new reading for history as made by normal people and not just by authoritative powers. More importantly, it serves as a model towards a discourse through which the way we present knowledge deeply influences the quality of that knowledge. In this respect, *Orientalism's* methodology succeeds to create a discursive system of possibilities that allows putting together many seemingly different disciplines.

2.12.3 Orientalism in arts: The Colonial aesthetics (Roger Benjamin)

What probably makes Edward's Said at odds with many Western intellectuals could be his relentless critical writings about many Western landmarks in literature and anthropology. Said in fact was keen to relate such taken-for-granted literary and anthropology landmarks to his orientalist formula; that is the West is misrepresenting the East. In his book *Orientalism* Said argues that works such as Byron's *Sardanapalus* 1821 and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* 1817 were not just best-sellers in England; they were tremendously influential on the continent, especially among French artists and writers. However, they are full of misrepresentation and describe facts not on the base of field knowledge of the subject but on a false imaginary view. Another example taken from Said's *Orientalism* is the works of Eugene Delacroix' savage painting *The Death of Sardanapalus* 1827-28 and Victor Hugo's vivid lyrics in *Les Orientales* 1829. Said asserts that both represented the purely imaginary side of Orientals. Indeed, as Delacroix had not yet traveled to the Orient, he portrayed the Assyrian king arrayed in the Indian accessories he had in his studio. Similarly, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' peach-skinned *Grande Odalisque*, with her tasseled turban and peacock fan, was no more Oriental than a Cassoulet.

In his book *Orientalist Aesthetics* Benjamin (2003), gives us probably for the first time a full account of orientalism in arts with sympathy with the colonized. Though Said (1978) and others have mentioned the works of orientalist artists (i.e.

Delacroix and Jerome) Benjamin's study may become unique as it offers a full picture of the complexities of art and representation during half a century in French-colonized North Africa. Benjamin (2003) has uniquely tried to promote not just the work of orientalist artists such as Matisse, Renoir, and Dinnet but he extends his research to local artists such as the Algerian Mohamed Racim.. Indeed Racim's arts represents the process of mixing his own traditions with the European traditions. The outcomes were amazing and Racim produced miniatures that reflect western techniques and expressing Islamic themes . Zeebawi (2004) argues that Racim uses Western techniques to express Islamic themes. This is by all mean the reverse process of Matisse's Islamic experience where Matisse had used Islamic techniques to express Western themes. Looking at the arts produced today in the Middle East one cannot see such arts away from reflecting the mixture of Western and Islamic traditions. Examples include the works of artist painter Amine El Basha in Lebanon, Dia'a El Ezaoui in Iraq, and Nadeer Nab'a in Syria. In music Ziad Rahabani, a prominent Lebanese musician, actor, and theatre writer and director is always trying to integrate different local musical instruments with Western instruments as never before. Examples include the use of local *Bouzouki* and piano and local *Oud* and Western drums are played at the same time without being overwhelmed by each other. The outcome of such an amazing marriage is a music that can be universally acclaimed. It appeals to the local and easy to be tasted and understood by non-locals.

In poetry, Adonis, a Syrian born Lebanese poet seems to be interested in western literature and poetry traditions as he tries to tie local Arabic poetic forms and some Western poetic forms driven mainly from French Spanish and English Literature. Reading Adonis' poems or listening to Ziad Rahabani's music within their hybrid aspects is very reminiscent, as I would argue, to Matisse hybridizing his paintings with Islamic themes.

Like Matisse, it seems Benjamin shows some bright traces of orientalism by collecting and analyzing a variety of indigenous decorative art works in addition

to other works of Western orientalist artists. Benjamin's (2003) aim was arguably an attempt to distinguish orientalism as a political discourse from orientalism as an aesthetic discourse. More importantly, he seemed to be not far away from Matisse's project through which the Other is recognized on the merit of his experience. Benjamin here concentrates on the interactions between Western and non-Western artists (Dinet and Racim) suggesting the possibility of a more dialogical relationships between the colonized and the colonizer.

Celik (1996) discusses orientalism in art in a "rethinking the canon" perspective. She argues that the current trend in arts and architecture is focusing on sociocultural intersections of the "Western" and "non-Western" worlds. Many theorists argue that art and architectural history have responded to Said's challenge, albeit on a more subdued scale than some other academic fields (Benjamin2003). Through real examples, Celik (1996) tried to draw a line between orientalist arts and the way Western orientalists looked at the subject (the orient and its people) and local artists who depicted nearly the same subject matter. As argued later in this study Matisse's Islamic experience was the outcome of the artist's attempt to localize himself at least culturally and look at the representation issue from the local perspectives. Celik refers to the Turkish artist Osman Hamdi:

Whose men and women dressed in colorful garments in the Orientalist fashion and placed in "authentic" settings. They are thinking, questioning, and acting human beings who display none of the passivity and submissiveness attributed to them by European painters.(Celik, 1996, p.15)

In comparison, Matisse's Moroccan people depicted during his two trips to Morocco show, arguably similar aspects of Hamdi's people as I am arguing later on in this study. (See Matisse's paintings Zohra 1910 in Flam (1986). According to Celik, Osman Hamdi presented Islam as a religion that encouraged intellectual curiosity, discussion, debate, even doubt.

In painting after painting, his men of religion, reading and discussing books, maintain their upright posture as an expression of their human dignity, against a background of meticulously articulated architectural details. (Celik, 1996, p.27)

The above argument may form alternative views of harem and bath done by orientalist painters. For example, while most French orientalists (example Gerome, even Delacroix and Renoir) were busy depicting the sexual and the erotic in their oriental female nudes, Hamdi depicted his women in a way that reflected their intellectual status which had been "erased by most of orientalist painters" in Celick's word. Similarly, I am suggesting here that Matisse's many odalisques, even his most erotic nudes, do not project sensual reflections and exaggerated fantasy as subject matter (the female bodies) are reduced to their decorative nuances that are in full contrast of those of Gerome or even Delacroix and even Renoir! Zohra is a prime example of such a tendency. Matisse has reduced the female face of the woman into mere decorative features where exact features are not important but to serve the decorative elements in his paintings. Comparing Zohra's face with the face of the woman in Matisse's Red Dining Table one may easily come to conclude a certain similarity. That is, features are reduced to decorative elements and the identity of the woman is becoming hard to grasp.

In comparison with non-oriental women depicted by Matisse, he seemed to be in harmony with his continuous experiment. That is to force oriental into non-oriental nuances in order to produce a qualitative energy that may stir up traditional paintings. For this Matisse would add oriental accessories to his European models. Even if they are nude, Islamic decoration were spread on the carpets on the walls, and on furniture, a process that has the potential to change the basic traditions of depicting nudes in French art. A second example in this context is Matisse's painting Blue Nude (Souvenir de Biskra, 1906). In comparison with the women depicted in the Lux 1907 one cannot detect any differences between a woman from Biskra and other women who are supposed to be French. The same features the same bodies and the same elaboration of the

Eden myth. A third example in this context is Decorative figure on Ornamental background where the female nude cannot be identified whether it is oriental or not oriental. This is, as I would argue another clue that Matisse preoccupation was not the nude identity. Instead, his ambition is to test the visual dialogue between the French baroque of the wallpaper, the Persian rug covering the floor, the Venetian rococo of the mirror and the Japanese vase of flower. A final word in this context is the argument that what attractive in Matisse's nudes is not perhaps their naked bodies but the decorative accessories that may surround them, and the colours arranged to form a visual text away from direct meanings such as erotic or sensual presence of the naked bodies. This by itself would push Matisse away from the guild of orientalist artists who were arguably trying to feed the memory of the European people with what is strange and exotic when it comes to oriental women. In this context the Harem concept invented by many European orientalists was not a phenomenon that can be the subject of this wide recognition as it was just driven from the rulers' palaces of the 9th and 10th centuries. Oddly, even today we can still hear people in the West talking about the Harems especially in some Arabic countries

To conclude this section; if Matisse is to be called an orientalist artist, he was arguably a different orientalist. Here Said's argument that there is no innocent orientalism would become invalid. In this respect, I tend to argue that Matisse has nothing to do with orientalism regarding its essential discourse of misrepresenting the orient and its people. Instead, Matisse has succeeded to put values on the orient and its people by activating Islamic aesthetics and epistemology and forcing them into his European traditions. Whether French or Algerian, nude females in this context are the same. Both of them are two human bodies and what gives each of them distinctive aspects is by no mean political or social but there might be physical differences that can be found between all human beings. Visually speaking Matisse's nudes are looked at here within their decorative impact as they might please us not through their erotic presentation but through their decorative harmony with all other elements of the paintings. In this context

whether nude, landscape or a still-life painting would have one main objective; to beautify the subject matter as to “sooth” and keep stress away.

12.13 Conclusion: Perhaps the new and unique in Matisse’s Islamic experience may consist in its potential to be associated with many social, cultural and political issues as well as to its potential to become a contemporary model about how to deal with other traditions, arts and cultures. Dealing with the other’s traditions as Matisse did needs the recognition of the other. However, recognizing the other is not a mere statement through which we absolve ourselves from its implications. Instead, it is arguably an issue of validity through which, the other’s approaches and point of views are to be considered whenever approaching knowledge. In this, Matisse’s Islamic experience is well associated with the politics of identity and in particular cultural identity formation. It gives Matisse’s identity its Islamic part. However, the distinction of this Islamic identity consists in its potential to suggest some new aesthetics, based on the other’s techniques, spiritual beliefs, and cultural traditions. In addition, and by highlighting an orientalist discourse Matisse’s Islamic experience is argued here as a contra- orientalist discourse as it tends to put values on the other traditions instead of misrepresenting it. Indeed, orientalism as argued by Edward Said and all other postcolonial theorists tends to misrepresent the other or at best reducing that other to a mere exotic commodity. Indeed, while Matisse was busy looking for new aesthetics other orientalists were busy collecting information, telling exaggerated tales, and providing generalization about the orient its people and its religions.

Finally, as a combination of different traditions Matisse’s Islamic experience is suggesting a hybrid discourse through which knowledge is looked at as a product of the effort of all people that have preceded us regardless of racial, religious, and cultural differences. In this context, the importance of Matisse’s Islamic experience consists in promoting the argument that the outcomes arising from differences may hold both qualitative aspects and new energy with which one can approach new knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY- Transgressing the boundaries of the established discipline

3.1 Introduction

There are varieties of research methodology that could be applied to this study. This variety stems from the nature of the study as an educational artistic cross-cultural inquiry through which different cultural and artistic traditions are involved. More importantly, methodological “irregularity” and implications are better describing the design of the research. This irregularity is the result of transgressing the boundaries between different academic disciplines, as it becomes an inescapable process when researching all the issues raised by Matisse’s Islamic experience. However, the study does not attempt to promote any empirical outcomes, as it tends to promote an interactive research method for critical inquiry. A Hermeneutic approach is used in combinations with others research methodology. The aim is to achieve non-linear and complex interpretations of meanings and understanding similar to cultural elements and art making and appreciating. This research is in fact built up on the assumptions that making and understanding art is a creative process in which personal interpretation as much as technical and philosophical theories are equally accounted for. This notion stems from the belief that meanings in the field of arts are not a mere technical procedure. Meanings cannot as well be confined to just aesthetical significance but their creation in artworks should involve the cultural, social, and political dimensions that may underpin any work of art.

3.2 Organizing the Methodology

In this chapter the methodology, which underpins the research, is detailed and discussed. It starts with a discussion of the theories that may inform the research and how such theories may influence the outcomes of the research. The research process is described in details; how data is collected classified, analyzed, and interpreted. In fact, five major resources of data are used in this study. The first is

Matisse's selected paintings and the Islamic miniatures he has arguably inspired. The second is selected Matisse's paintings that showed some Islamic traces. These paintings are analyzed and interpreted to the extent of justifying the study's argument. The third type of data collected from an educational program that is based on Matisse's Islamic experience through which participants will have the chance to explore the process of mixing different artistic traditions in doing arts. Data in this process consist of the outcome of the program (artworks) as much as theoretical exploration (articles, essays and written assignments). The fourth source of Data is my own paintings through which I tried to put into practice some of the assumptions argued through the research. The fifth type of data is collected from the literature through which the study's assumptions and argument are grounded. It includes literature that deals directly with Matisse's Islamic experience. In addition literature that deal with the issues that emerged from such an experience have formed an essential part of the research process as they grounded the study's assumptions and connected the research to a contemporary setting.

Data analysis and interpretation is justified in terms of its meanings and significance to all participants including me as a researcher and teacher. As human participants is somehow part of this research (i.e. Year 10 11 and 12 students) every effort was made to deal with any concern regarding the ethical side of the research. In this context, all effort is made to grant the safety and well-being of all participants. Normal school duty of care is applied in addition special considerations when it comes to students ethnic, religious and cultural background were strictly applied when issue of privacy and confidentiality is involved.

Difficulties and implications aroused during the course of the research are described to reveal how the way we approach research may influence its outcome. In addition, how awareness of such implications may influence truth in general can only be understood in relation to the process of argumentation as Habermas

(1973) argues. The research paradigm is selected within the specific aims and objectives of the study. In fact, the paradigm used in this study is a combination of artistic paradigm and qualitative paradigm to research.

3.3 Theoretical ground.

All theories are relatively applicable Eisner (1997). Foucault (1980) suggests that theories are formulated to analyze the specificity of mechanism of power. In this research, I am relying on post-modern theories in addressing the issues raised by the study's assumptions. The choice of the theories that may underpin the research argument emerged from the nature of the study. As the context of this study is a mixture of artistic- educational, cultural, social and political perspectives, many interlocked issues emerge to manifest the complexity of the research. The first is how to teach differences in our school based on Matisse's Islamic experience. The second is how to teach arts in a diverse environment. The third is how arts can be benefited by mixing different artistic traditions. Finally, if we recognize differences as advantages to knowledge production, how do we then see ourselves (teachers, students, artists, and people at large) in such environment and more importantly how do we see the other? In brief, Knowledge in this study is looked at as a matter of knowing differently and that there is no truth that is independent of a context of knowing as Gadamer (1975) argues.

In contesting such questions, Post-modern theories gave me the hope as much as the right tools to justify the research claims. For example as I argue the hybridity of arts works, I rely on post-modern notions that truth cannot be existed apart from the conditions that may create it. Therefore, the meaning of any artwork may become contextual considering its history, artistic field, and aesthetical claims. In discussing and analyzing Orientalism, postcolonial discourse is emerged as to criticize the core of knowledge it produced. Here Edward Said's works (1978, 1986, 1992, 1995 and 1996) as well as many postcolonial theorists' works (i.e. Spivak, Prakash, William, Harvey and Mackenzie) will be used as analytical tools that may help in transgressing the boundaries of a traditional academic

research. (i.e. interpreting the political in Matisse's odalisques needs the examinations of different type of texts and genres to explain how the political may rest in the artistic and vice versa). As an example, Said (1994) used such a transgression in an attempt to reveal the politics in Wagner's Music or imperialist trace in the fine Jane Austin's novels. In addition to postcolonial discourse, and though attacked by post modernists, i.e. Foucault, Gadamar, Lyotard, and Said, I found the critical discourse as argued by Habermas(1972) a suitable one that may help arguing that there is no neutral or disinterested perspectives because everyone is socially located. In this context, Young (1990) argues that critical discourse provides the researcher the right tool to criticize the way reality is reflected especially in texts. This is firmly relevant to the assumptions that orientalism's knowledge about the East and Islam is textual as Said (1995) argues. In fact, one of the most brilliant achievements of Said is his argument that knowledge about Islam and the East was in general textual instead of being generated through field studies and direct investigations.

In fact, Said (1978) argues that a complex set of representations was fabricated by the discursive field of orientalist studies about Islam and the East. This provides as well the basis for the West's subsequent imperialist rule. The East appeared in Said's (1978) terms as "a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought Islam into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western imperialism". This is by all mean contradicting most contemporary Western theories about knowledge, and knowledge production away from essentialism. Oddly, a more essentialist paradigm is used through which a double standard stance may be applied especially toward the other especially if that other is not American or European. In discussing, the educational and aesthetical sides of Matisse Islamic experience I tend to examine different type of texts, visual and non-visual, philological, vocal and oral, musical texts, and poems as to argue the hybridity of art works as well as cultures and civilization's evolution.

In questioning the origin of any art works especially Matisse's and some Islamic art forms, I tend to lean on Foucault and his archaeology. Foucault (1976) argues that in looking at texts one must have in mind the position of the writer (or artist), the recourses of claimed assumptions, who is qualified to judge, and how truth is tied up to the nexus of power- knowledge. In this way I feel myself free to analyze, interpret, deconstruct, and reconstruct texts unmasking the ideologies that may underpin every issue addressed in this study.

3.4 Postmodern Influences

Postmodernism could be summarized in Nietzsche saying "Longing for the other shore." Postmodernism always opens window on alterity, differences, and non-identity threatening the safe guard of modernism by destabilizing its foundations and the cognitive boundaries created by its process Harvey (1989) McHall (1992). Indeed, what seemed to be stable and ultimate in modernism is questioned to the core by postmodernism. Ironically, as Matisse was tied to modernity, I tend to argue that no one like him has applied a postmodern approach in understanding art by the virtue of his Islamic art experience. On the one hand, he has studied the traditions of the great masters recommending not to just imitating them but to bypass them. On the other, he succeeded to highlight subjectivity through which all realities are reflected. In this sense, the artist has become an essential part of his work and he/she has the legitimacy to reflect his/ her view of the subject matter. Art under Matisse's shadow has become a field of inquiry instead of being a direct imitation of nature. This by itself holds a postmodern aura in itself. Reading through his Notes of a painter Matisse has arguably succeeded in connecting art to philosophy. It would be true to say that in this connection Matisse was arguably casting the seeds of postmodern epistemology.

Under post modern conditions philosophy has to be shifted from ready set of doctrines to an open-ended field of inquiry. Art is to be detached from its direct links to nature to reflect a mere sensuous mode of experience as Adorno (1966) put it. Politically, post modernism tends to clean our thoughts from their tendencies of

egocentric acquisitiveness, and cultural supremacy; Lyotard (1984). This may lead the world towards a more and more non-Western centered reality that recognizes people experiences on their merits. Another Matissian achievement could be felt here through validating Islamic art. Important though, adopting such a post-modern approach to research gives me an interpretational support regarding the assumptions of this study, though it did not solve fully the problem. What comforts me here is the belief that reality and truth are not ultimate concepts but they are contested perceptions. In this, this study is relying in part on Anna Yeatman's post-modernist feminism approach in generating meanings. Yeatman (1994) criticizes the classical theories of representations, which were grounded in the notion that meaning and truth preceded and determined the representations that communicates it. This view is reflecting the concept that meaning has become a contested process that cannot be measured with empirical tools. In discussing identity and cultural identity as a changing process, postmodernist thoughts especially feminist and poststructuralist approaches are explored. I am arguing here that identity is not something that can be inherited from parents or countries. Instead, Identity formation could be an evolving process that may reach far beyond the actual understanding and classification of people. The root of such an argument lies in Henry Matisse experience with Islamic arts and in some Islamic concepts about identity. (There is no preference for an Arab over a foreigner but with devotion; Prophet Mohamed Hadith). This means, it is not your ethnicity that counts but your knowledge of the self, the other and the god. By necessity, entering Orientalism discourse had dictated the discussion of power- knowledge nexus as contested by Michael Foucault and adopted by Edward Said and others.

Foucault (1976) opposing both hermeneutic and Marxist approaches to understanding systems of thought, contended that knowledge is constructed through discursive formations that determine the range of objects of knowledge, concepts, methodological resources, and the theoretical formulations available. Adopting such an approach to research gave me the needed support to interpret, analyze, and justify some of the study assumptions. In addition to post modernist and feminism

perspectives, Alasdair MacIntyre's hermeneutic approach to research is applied in this study as meanings especially for Matisse's paintings are subjected to interpretation and reinterpretation in a way that cannot ignore hermeneutic perspectives.

MacIntyre (1988) who advocates a hermeneutic approach that is opposed by Foucault, argues that the concept of tradition has much in common with Foucault's concept of "discursive formation." Like Foucault, MacIntyre (1988) recognizes the way in which inquiry, and correspondingly speech, is constrained and guided by institutionalized ways of understanding the world. However, unlike Foucault, MacIntyre stresses the role of inquiry and acknowledges that traditions have within them the capacity to confront their inadequacies and to transform themselves. He has shown how rival traditions can confront each other and give rise to new traditions. He has nothing to say about the power relations associated with such traditions and the claims to truth that they support, or about the non-discursive practices underlying discourse. However, despite Foucault's different concerns, all that MacIntyre has revealed about traditions could still be held to pertain to discursive formations as Foucault has conceived them.

3.5 Positioning

As an artist, I was fascinated by Matisse's paintings from the early stages of my career. In fact, Matisse's particularity for me stems from his extraordinary approach to art making and understanding, and his arts were always an archaeological site where I turn back every now and while seeking consultation and help. In the last three years, the duration of my research, I argued against art historians' stands in both the East and West regarding the nature of Matisse's Islamic experience. In the West, Matisse's experience is in general no more than a brilliant exotic one or at best a formidable orientalist adventure, MacKenzie (1995) Cowart (1990). In the East Matisse Islamic experience is highly appreciated and recognized but unfortunately within the context of Islamic influences on European civilization in the 11th and 12th centuries. In fact art historians in the East have failed yet to read such an experience as a typical example in inspiring own artistic heritage. To me

Matisse's uniqueness consists not just in his brilliant attempts to develop his own paintings but in his courage to recognize the Other's artistic experiences, as valid experiences that can be equally blended with own in looking for the new and the innovative. In other words, whether conscious or not Matisse recognized the difference as a source of developing his paintings.

In this context Matisse's Islamic experience stops to be just an artistic experience and its importance is driven from the many cultural, social, and even political issues it touches. As an artist, teacher and researcher whose religion is Islam and who was educated within many cultural contexts, I always tend to jump over the barriers in the pursuit of an other whom I see complementary as much as different. It could be any Other, including the self as an Other whom we always tend to consult. This reshape my thinking as a researcher to investigate such a great experience with the obsession that the way we approach research must be part of the researcher's life and experiences. My position as a teacher is no less important in reshaping my way of inquiry. Teaching experience gives me insight about the idea of the long- life learning process as much as the different way people learn. As a teacher, I always tend to use artistic means as teaching methods. To my pleasure, it always proves to be effective in approaching knowledge as much as a continuous research tool. On the other hand, teaching culturally different students makes me convinced that there must be something above the school rules or the formal educational policies that can maintain the harmony between all those "clients." It is not fear as in totalitarian regimes. It is not reconciliation as students always involuntarily display their differences though some may tend to hide them.

Based on my observation of my students dealing with each other's difference it could be argued here that culturally different people have inner tendencies to learn each other way and when they stop to do so we should suspect political motivations. They arguably tend to teach themselves aspects of the different cultures they encountered exactly in the same way Matisse taught himself within

the Islamic traditions. From my position as a teacher, I tend to look at my teaching environment as a unique field of inquiry through which the artistic informs the social and the political and vice versa in an endless process of change and exchange. Finally, as my position shapes the way I investigate Matisse's experiences and all other associated issues other participants such as my students and other art teachers I have consulted were essential players. In fact, they informed this study through the variety of ways they act, react, and suggest.

3.6 The Research Process- Methods

3.6.1 Data Types

Researching the influence of Islamic arts on Matisse's arts involves by necessity the dilemma of navigating across more than one disciplines of research. The design of methodology in this case is deeply influenced by the diversities of issues claimed by the research. It involves therefore comparisons, analysis and interpretation through which I suggest more than I decide and I pose questions more than I seek answers to them...Different types of data were collected in order to satisfy the variety of disciplines the research is dealing with. The first type of data is artistic where the collection of Matisse's paintings and the Islamic miniatures he arguably inspired needs laborious effort in terms of locating as much as analyzing and studying them. This process involved the visit of many art galleries, museums (mainly in France and Russia) and libraries that host Matisse's paintings or Islamic miniatures and other art works.

Literature about each painting and each miniature is collected, classified and analyzed. The aim is to justify some aspects of the argument that Matisse's fascination with Islamic arts was not a superficial admiration of a traditional orientalist or traveler but it was arguably a purposeful choice of adopting the Islamic system with the aim of developing his own artistic traditions. Moreover, literature related to the issues that emerged from the research are identified and examined as part of the research process .i.e. identity formation, cultural identity, Orientalism, cosmopolitanism and the Hybridity of culture and arts. Such an

examination dictates a fine selective process through which the relevance of every bit of writing is carefully examined. In this way, I tried to prevent the research to become an aimless or a colourless process that may deal with many issues without scratching but the surface of each one. Further more the research of educational and aesthetical values in this study needs a more oriented approach towards aesthetic and educational theories and the way knowledge is processed and generated. For the sake of these educational and aesthetical values, I fiercely resisted not to be trapped in the political side of the argument. Such a political side aroused from the nature of the research as well as from sensitivity of dealing with Islamic and Western connections like orientalism and the ever-rival relationships between Islam and the West.

The third type of data was generated through an art education program that involves some year 10 and 11 and 12 high school students whom I teach Visual Arts and Mathematics in a Western Sydney High School. The Program is evolved over two main issues: The first is how to teach art to culturally different students. This includes how can we take advantage of students differences in order to design and implement educational programs that may appeal to the majority of students as we tend to highlight differences in our classrooms. The second issue raised by the proposed educational program is how this would be reflected on students' academic achievement in general and in particular in art.

Although mixing different artistic traditions in making artwork is encouraged in broad terms in secondary art education in Australia (see NSW Visual arts Syllabus Board of studies 1997), recognizing students' differences in designing the syllabus and the support document is arguably vague and out of focus. program would address such an issue among students based on the assumptions that expressing freely the self by reflecting the many cultural influences would enrich art learning and extend the expressive horizon of culturally different students. More importantly, students participating in the program will inform the research by arguing the advantages and disadvantages of being influenced by

different cultures and artistic traditions. One of the main aims of the program is to argue that being the self by reflecting different cultural motifs when doing art could be educationally more progressive than assuming a strict homogenous approach to teaching in general and art in particular. In addition, the program will shed light on how our students understand each other's culture when displayed, and how they understand their identity accordingly.

The last type of data collected for this research is own original art works (mainly paintings and Drawings). These artworks were produced as a part of my study and served the research in many ways:

- Suggesting new aesthetics of mixing different cultural and artistic traditions.
- Setting an example of how to inspire other artistic traditions.
- Setting an example of the many ways we may deal with own artistic traditions.
- Creating new context for experimentation based on other previous experiments. i.e. Matisse and other contemporary artists chosen from different cultural backgrounds.

Looking at the different types of collected data reflects the notion that my research is evolved around examples, set by professional practices as much as younger generations' believes in addition to my own experience and personal understanding. The domain of my research then is built up of pieces of mosaic in which every piece would complement and serve the whole structure while retaining its own meaning and identity. In this way the method of the research doesn't contradict the main assumptions, as I tend to argue that the Islamic bit in Matisse painting is arguably a strength as much as the French bit in my own painting would be. Like Matisse, mixing Islamic traditions with his own I always find myself mixing the Western tradition especially the French tradition in my paintings. It is always a venture that tends to disturb all the taken for granted concepts about art making and appreciating. It would bring as well into stage all the "nuisances" created by hybridization and the process of mixing differences.

3.6.2 Data analysis

Due to this study's nature and scope implications stems not just from the research design as mentioned above but also from analyzing and interpreting the collected data. More notably, implications and some times problems are due to the process of analyzing and interpreting data about Matisse paintings whether those paintings have inspired directly or indirectly the Islamic aesthetics. This process was some times subjected to personal interpretation rather than direct comparisons and visual clues. This issue is important for itself and it may have the potential to put the research credibility in question. For example, what if the reader does not agree on the analogy between my interpretations of Matisse's particular painting and let us say an Islamic miniature? What if the reader has a different interpretation or analysis of either a Matisse's painting or an Islamic miniature? and in brief, what if the reader has a different interpretation of the whole process when making comparisons and analogies. To solve such problems I am arguing that any artwork should be subjected not only to logical analysis but also to personal interpretation due to the cognitive nature of artistic drive. However, this view has the potential to create a kind of representational crisis in which question like who represents what should be asked as Gadamar (1975), Bleicher (1982) argue. Another important question emerges here, can we really draw any clear distinction between analysis and interpretation in the context of qualitative research and the process of critical analysis that underpins reflective practices?

To conduct Data analysis and interpretation in such a context I have tended to adopt a more post-structuralist-feminist approach through which every piece of data is considered as a text that can be looked at from different perspectives. That is, deconstructing texts especially visual texts to leave to the reader the freedom to interpret, synthesis and analyze is a strategy that is adopted in this study. To establish a kind of credibility in interpreting the evidences of Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts I adopted two main strategies. The first is to collect

as many visual clues as I can of such an involvement. The second is to interpret invisible evidences based on literature when available and on my analytical and interpretational skills as a researcher, a teacher and artist. In this sense, interpreting my interpretation could become a legitimized process that can be as well interpreted in a discursive drive in searching for new meanings. (Hall, 1985; Foucault, 1985; Cherryholmes, 1988; Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987). On the other hand, implication of researching my students' understanding of mixing different artistic traditions and cultural identity formation were no less complicated.

Regarding the case studies collected from classrooms, data is analyzed based on the argument that inhibiting the expression of cultural identity in the classroom denies students exiting learning opportunities as much as expressing themselves away from coercive pedagogy (Cummins, 1990) argues. In this context, I should admit persistent and problematic dilemmas I personally experience in dealing with difference in the classroom in my everyday teaching. As a teacher, there are moments when I feel enthusiastic and success when I use my understanding in dealing with cultural differences in the classroom. However, as such, notions are not promoted by NSW Department of Education and Training (apart from the monotonous rhetoric of multicultural policy) I feel always alone begging always Matisse's experience and other similar experience in which cultural identity is an every- day ongoing process. Unfortunately, many other teachers in the school where I teach choose seemingly not to take any risk assuming that one culture should prevail and under which all teaching, learning, and interaction should occur.

Contrasting the prevailing one dominant culture in teaching and learning is the concept the recognition of students' differences in our schools. Ortiz (1995) argues that recognizing the different cultures brought to schools not only promoting the development of complex meaning making but also strengthen students' sense of self and further the acquisition of the types of competence needed to thrive in a diverse world community. In addition, analyzing Data from

the case studies is partially influenced by my own experience and my cultural identity formation, and the role of art in determining who I am. This is based on the recognition of difficulties and implications when infusing cultural identity in learning communities.

Indeed I always engage myself in this process with my own cultural identity when standing in front of 25 different students. My own cultural identity serves always as an example, as it reveals the complexity of issues surrounding cultural identity in the learning community. It highlights the individual differences found in culturally different students; the contradictions of multiple ethnic heritages; the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity; and the school formal policies that often inhibits educators and teachers from seeing students as holding knowledge that may better inform their own. In brief, data analysis in respect to this issue is based on a postmodern paradigm that tends to shake up and question all the taken for granted assumptions and truth itself.

3.6.3 Data Interpretation

Dealing with the collected data occupied a great deal of the research methodology in this study. In dealing with the type of data, I am using Matisse's paintings and Islamic miniatures; I have to examine the distinction that is sometimes drawn between analysis and interpretation in the context of qualitative research and the process of critical analysis that underpins reflective practices. However, whenever I used analysis or interpretation within the critical reflection process both are used not to produce knowledge that can be justified in terms of its rationality, or in terms of its empirical quality. Instead, I have tried to establish a dialogical approach to analysis and interpretation through which visual and non-visual texts, evidences, beliefs and practices were subjected not only to systematic analysis but also to personal interpretation that is founded on my skills as an artist, a teacher and a researcher.

3.6.4 Relying on interpretation

Taking into account the nature of the collected data i.e. artworks I tend to criticize the notion of emerging meanings through analysis. Instead, I am arguing that meaning is created by the researcher by putting new values on the collected data. In this context, data is used as provocative stimulant through which dialogical process is becoming the resource of meanings instead of being received from it. Interpretation in qualitative research and critical reflection is related to the hypothetical reasoning in sciences as Miles and Huberman (1988) argue. It involves making speculation using a speculative framework that may enable researcher to widen the scope of meaning making. Here the researcher interpretational skills and personal beliefs become pivotal in redirecting the emerging meanings to area that cannot be reached through traditional analysis.

Furthermore, Denzin (1994) and Walker (1996) argue that interpretation has the potential to become an inductive process by creating an explanatory story that may shed new light on the new meaning of evidences. In this sense, credibility of interpretation is established through deconstruction, construction and reconstruction of every bit of related data including literature that seem to be outside the direct scope of the research.

3.7 The Participants

Looking at the participants in this study may explain its complicated nature as they come from rich and different backgrounds. The first participant is Matisse himself whose art works as much as the related literature to his art especially his Islamic experience play a great part in informing the methodological design of the research. His Islamic experience and the way he approached the other's art may become a typical methodology that can be followed taking into account his time and the current contemporary context. The second participant is myself as an artist and teacher. In fact, my personal experience in arts and education is researched through my teaching practice and artistic career. In addition, I tend as a researcher to follow up the connections between East and West and how can we

create, through art, the best conditions for an effective dialogue between civilizations opposing the clash of civilizations as argued by Huntington (1996). Regarding the case studies and the art educational program participants are chosen based on their art works and their cultural and ethnic background including mainstream students. They mostly show an increased and clear tendency to show different artistic traditions in doing and appreciating arts. In addition, participant students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds are considered as to explore how students are attempting to solve the implications of acquiring their cultural identity. More importantly how students appreciate differences in the classroom especially cultural differences.

3.8 Implications

Collected data used in this study needed extensive research to locate and collect every bit of evidences that may justify the depth of Matisse involvement with Islamic arts .In addition, data about all the associated issues are located and collected in order to justify some of the study assumptions. The process was relatively easy in collecting Matisse's paintings, as prints of such paintings are available through many resources, i.e. reference books, posters, postal cards and the internet. However, locating and collecting the Islamic miniatures from which Matisse had inspired needs laborious effort. They are spread over many volumes in and outside Australia, and locating them in museums and art galleries is nearly impossible in the absence of accurate cataloguing in the museums that may host them across the Islamic countries. However, I had the chance to locate some of the mentioned miniatures in the national Library of Paris. Unfortunately, photocopying or photographing them was unsuccessful due to copyright matter as much as for technical issues. Examples included Islamic miniatures Sufi dance, Shepherd play a flute and Chess players...miniatures that Matisse respectively had inspired in his paintings *The Dance*, *the Music* and *the artist family*. Easier though was the collection of prints of Matisse's paintings that may show some Islamic traces especially his decorative works. The aim of collecting such prints was to argue that Matisse fascination with Islamic arts was not a temporary exotic

adventure that ended when Matisse left Morocco to France in 1910. Instead, it was arguably an act of faith to explore the great legacy of Islamic arts as Matisse had mentioned in several occasions. (See Schneider 1984). Furthermore, prints of Matisse's later works where Islamic traces are implied were collected, and the aim is to argue that Islamic effect has become an integral part of Matisse art.

In collecting Data from the case studies and the art education program many technical, ethical and epistemological issues has to be solved beforehand. The first is the consent of the school principal who has enthusiastically nodded ok about the art education program and to the case studies provided anonymity is well considered. Though the art educational program was free of implication as normal teaching and learning procedure are applied, case studies had more implications as each case study deal in general with personal and confidential information. More importantly talking about the self at secondary school level needs a certain level of awareness of the importance of the issues addressed by the case studies.i.e cultural identity formation, bias, tolerance and so on.

Consequently locating year 11 and 12 students who may become potential participants in the case studies was a bit problematic especially for those students whose religion is Islam. Though anonymity is assured, some students whose background is Islam have displayed some concerns about being identified as Muslims. This in itself reflects the conflict those students may have in being themselves in comparison with other students from the other ethnic groups of school community. A conflict that is arguably generated from a common strategy through which, students may feel safe if they hide their religious backgrounds especially in an environment that is influenced by the formula that equates Muslims to terrorism. In addition hiding one's ethnic or religious background is a well-known strategy especially among young students as they want promptly to be identified within the advantages mainstream students would enjoy (Ortiz1995). To ensure the voluntary nature of the case studies students had given the choice to decline to reveal any bit of information. In addition, they were quite aware how

collected information would be used within the scope and the nature of the study. More importantly, students were assured that participation is well disconnected with their formal study in visual arts and the objectives of the case studies were thoroughly explained. That is, students' participation is just an educational activity that seeks ultimate educational ends and nothing else.

In designing the questions many theoretical issues have to be overcome in order to grant that the questions reflect truly what I as the researcher has intended to research. For example, one cannot assume that all year 11 and 12 students have the same level of reflection on issues like diversity, identity and cultural identity. As a result, some students are given some hints about what could be meant to be a Lebanese Irish, French or Chinese. To encourage students to express the meanings of being of this particular group or that, all respondents were part of two group discussions (part of many art lessons) through which cultural identity is not looked at as a pre-given or essentialistic process. Instead, it is a contested process through which we build our cultural identity upon many parameters that includes the cultural the religious, the ethnic and the gender issue etc...More notably regarding this matter students through group discussion has got across the concept that Muslim or Christian students were not born Christians or Muslim students, but they become what they are through discursive ranges that label, name and ascribe as Fincher (1998) argues.

The last resource of data used in this study is my own art works mainly paintings and drawings. During the last two years, I was busy doing paintings at the CREAM room UTS, KG Campus used in part as an art studio at the UTS... What I did there and still do is to try to put in practice some of the assumptions argued in my research. I produced more than thirty paintings through which I am looking for "foreign" agents in addressing artistic problems in nearly the same way Matisse and other artists had looked at the Islamic arts.(i.e.Mixing Islamic decorations with aboriginal decorations with "J Pollock's decoration"or Arthur Boyd's" decoration)! was fascinating to me as much as it was problematic. In the

one hand, it gave me the freedom to navigate and transgress countless styles and schools of arts, and on the other hand, I had to be held responsible to work aesthetically in such a chaotic environment. In this sense, my paintings are experiments that seek to demonstrate that all artworks that appear to belong to one single culture or civilization are in fact an accumulation of many. In this context the great legacy of artists like Van Gough, Gauguin, Picasso or Kandinsky and Klee cannot be seen away from hybrid aspects and in which the other is always implied. Finally, my studio paintings are to be seen as suggestive texts more than ultimate art works and the meanings generated by those texts are contested meanings that are subjected to different interpretation.

3.9 Artistic Paradigm

This study within its aims and purposes is fully conducted using an artistic paradigm, and since artistic paradigm formed a part of other paradigms, it is used typically as a “qualitative intelligence in action” as Eisner (1998) describes it. It is arguably logical to assume that artistic paradigm is well associated with cultural social, political and educational paradigms in this study. This perhaps formed the most challenging aspect of this research. Many reasons can be argued in this matter.

The first is that moving across the artistic paradigm to touch the social, the political and the educational needs research transparency as much as methodological justification and personal qualifications. However I found no odd by moving across more than one paradigm of inquiry as all kind of paradigms aimed at contesting meanings within the social context we live in, Lather (1987). Though I am artistically and educationally inclined I am not privileging any type of paradigms over the other as they are all part of qualitative inquiry which is in nature artistic creative and interpretive as Denzin (1994) argues. To deal with such complicated issues I relied on my personal analytical and interpretational ability to collect analyze and interpret all sort of data that may reveal a clear connection between Matisse paintings and Islamic arts especially miniatures.

Moreover, I backed my analysis by extensive research about the literature, though rare, that may seek any connection between Matisse's paintings and Islamic arts.

My aims are to identify some working hypothesis through which I could represent the educational and the aesthetical as much as the political of Matisse paintings Islamic arts and my own paintings. Issues such as mixing different artistic traditions, Hybridity, orientalism in arts, cultural identity, and even the East and West cultural exchange are well connected as discourses with artistic paradigm. Here question like was Matisse a traditional orientalist who shared other orientalist in misrepresenting Islam and the East should be addressed from different perspectives. The first is the Orientalist discourse and the notion of misrepresenting the other as described by Said (1987). The second needs to enter the realm of the artist and his paintings to reveal how artistic paradigm may express the political, the social and the philosophical without losing its aesthetics and artistic aspects. What is counted in this research is, in which way was Matisse a different orientalist? This was developed by making comparisons between his paintings and other orientalist's paintings. How was he different when representing the Moroccan woman for example? How was he different when representing the light and colour of the Moroccan environment? Finally, how he was different when consulting the spiritual aspects of the Moroccan environment and life? Such questions have arguably the potential to elucidate many educational values through which differences are used as unique learning tools.

On the other hand, artistic paradigms will be ideal to associate the aesthetic aspects of Islamic arts with the rival relationships between East and West. In this context, Janesick (1994) argues the validity of artistic paradigm being part of the qualitative research to address such complexities and different contexts. However, the needs to research the epistemology that underpins Islamic art forms and how it helps Matisse developing his arts imposes the use of qualitative research paradigm to deconstruct dominant knowledge /discourses about Islam and its culture. The aim is to criticize all the taken for granted knowledge about Islam by

interrogating all the existed narratives created mainly by orientalism discourse. I am arguing here that knowledge of Islam and the East should be based on the direct research of what is happening in the streets of Islamic countries and not just on texts based on unjustified and general claims.

In exploring the educational side of Matisse's experience with Islamic arts, I choose art based research to address the educational issues that may emerge during research. Many reasons may justify such a choice. The first is the recognition of the validity of art-based research in addressing educational issues. Galbraith (1988) argues that art based research has eventually become more prominent in educational research. The second is that under the current postmodern conditions art based research has become more and more challenging to educational researchers to ask unconventional and innovative questions about how to learn and how do we learn. In this way, my study tends to promote the use of artistic paradigm to address educational questions. Eisner (1993) argues that arts can provide coherence imagery and particularity. Indeed arts may have the potential to engage teachers and learners in seeking knowledge using artistic means in approaching educational theories and practices. Green (1995) argues that current educational research deal with the same postmodern concerns as contemporary art literature and practices. This is true by all mean, as the context created by arts is widening due to the current visual revolution, which was not available for the progressive pedagogy of Dewey and Piaget.

3.10 Result issues

Anticipating outcomes for this study, in the traditional sense has no less implication than its methodology. That is, this study does not seek to measure empirically any artistic or educational constructs. Rather truth about the researched issues is a contested truth through which interpreting the meanings of meanings is always presented as a postmodern paradigm. However, this does not mean there is an absence of any anticipated results through which the research's purposes are justified. In this respect, arguing the Islamic effect in Matisse's

painting assumes that those effects are existed and embodied in many forms. Technical and aesthetical, and though opened to different interpretation any trained eye may realize them directly through analogies, comparisons and binary oppositions. Philosophical effects, however, could be read as results based on the available data through which the Matisse's direct sayings about his Islamic experience and about appreciating differences are collected as evidences that may feed the study's results. Researching Matisse's Islamic experience and the many issues associated with it in addition to the reflection on own art works may invoke unexpected educational and aesthetical results in many ways:

- In the way, cultural and artistic differences are manipulated in order to generate new artworks that may hold new aesthetical and educational values.
- In the way the context of art making and appreciating is perceived as a hybrid activity and the educational values of hybrid arts
- In the way, art educators and students can change their attitudes towards the art and culture of the other.
- In the way, orientalist arts can be re-evaluated, criticized and interpreted on the base of recognizing the other as an equal.
- In the way artistic means are used to address non-artistic issues i.e. social cultural and political and vice versa. Benjamin(2003) has called this "colonializing aesthetics"
- In the way, the social political and cultural may reshape the aesthetical in arts as much as epistemology that may underpin any art works.
- In the way, a number of themes from contemporary arts can be interpreted to redirect our curiosity about educational practices, policies, and theories. Eisner (1995, p. 15), refers to the arts as providing "coherence, imagery, and particularity"
- In the way of inspiring art when doing educational research, not only in reporting research, but also in the way we analyze and interpret data (Bresler 1995)
- In the way, the use of contemporary arts in educational research can further develop our intent as educational researchers to bring new educational research

traditions beyond the edges of our understandings and the current research traditions.

3.11 Conclusion

Taking into account the nature and the scope of this research building a research design and suitable methodology is the most difficult part of it. As a researcher, I have had to examine every piece of evidence in order to extract meanings in accordance of the study hypothesis. Miniatures taken from Islamic arts and the relevant Matisse painting were carefully classified and analyzed and the aim is to build up credible comparisons that may suggest and generate meanings. However, meanings and outcomes that emerged from the discipline of this study is by no mean ultimate neither does it necessarily to achieve any end. Instead, reached meanings are always opened to interpretation and reinterpretation so that any result could become an occasion that may stimulate the mind to reflect instead of affording any ready-made reality or truth. In this context, my interpretation of Matisse's paintings used in this research is not ultimate but it is a contested approach to their reality. In this context, I consider the methodology of my study as mosaic pieces that have different colours and shapes but that are legitimate to use in the final picture. Indeed arguing the politics of aesthetics cannot be done way from educational, social, cultural and artistic influences. Here as I would argue lies the uniqueness of my study. That is how the political and the social may influence the aesthetical and how the cultural and the historical may inform the educational. In this, the methodology in this study is based on two notions. The first is objective and in which I describe facts and realities taken from direct experiences (i.e. Matisse's Islamic experience, Islamic art forms and my paintings), and subjective as I tend to argue that the way we reach truth is deeply influence by way (method) we approach reality. This includes me as a researcher in addition to the concepts I bring to the field of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Islamic Art: The Influential Aesthetics

4.1 Introduction

The features of Islamic art have always generated debates and conflicts instead of conformity and agreement in the East as well as in the West. Starting with the debatable definition and whether Islamic art exists in the same way Christian art does, interested scholars agree to some extent that its main features and how such an art has evolved still generate some conflicting and some times opposing accounts. Non- representational art, avoidance of the third dimension, the absence of sculpture, Arabesque and the reliance on geometry in architecture and pattern creation are in brief the main features of Islamic art. Those aspects are not just related to any particular aesthetic theories or schools that can be referred to. Instead, they are arguably developed as to appeal to different ethnic religious and cultural environment through which Islam as a faith play the role of connector or unifying force(see Nasr, 1987; Grabar1973; Ettinghausen, 1946)

Many opposing and different accounts could be reviewed in this context. Can we define Islamic art in the same way we define any other religious art? Is it a religious art with the aim of addressing just religious themes? In which way it has evolved, and what is distinctive about its historical, cultural, political and social context... Was it a mere translation of the traditions that precede Islam? In this case how was it influenced by other theories of arts and how has it succeeded to influence the Other's art? Can we identify any clear philosophical or theological assumptions that may underpin such an art.? More importantly, what are the characteristics of such an art, and how it succeeds to infuse different traditions under a wide Islamic umbrella?

Addressing such questions in this study is by no mean represents a detailed account about each of them. Instead, the aim of mentioning them lies in this study's assumptions that the loose theoretical frame and the reliance on the art of

Others as an integral part has become perhaps the most important feature of Islamic art. Consequently, Islamic art could be seen as an open window through which it receives influences and through the same window, it spreads its influences. From this two-way influence, Matisse's venture into Islamic art is understood within an environment that was dominated by the artistic, scientific and cultural exchange of Islam and Europe especially between 12th and 16th centuries. Influences in both directions are looked at in this study, as strength and away from any reductionist perspective. In this, concept about cultural and artistic influence is well rounded off in the epistemology that arts and cultures cannot evolve and develop in a vacuum. Instead, they are developed based on interaction borrowing and exchanging ideas and experiences.

This chapter explores the common aspects of Islamic art that have been assumed to influence the art of Matisse. More precisely, the chapter would reveal some of the assumed common aspects of both Matisse's and Islamic arts. The investigation of Islamic arts' aesthetics becomes necessary for this study as it has the potential to put Matisse's Islamic experiences in its historical, artistic and cultural context. A context that is understood in relations to Matisse's tendency to look for foreign artistic traditions among them initially the Islamic traditions. Moreover, the chapter is based on the assumption that Islamic arts gave Matisse not just the needed technical support, but also the spiritual and epistemological ground on which he had the chance to legitimize his venture. Therefore, investigation will be conducted in two main directions: The first is to reveal the general aspects of Islamic art aesthetics by reviewing in brief its history, universal aspects and the idea of borrowing from other traditions. The second direction is to trace Matisse's paintings affiliation with the general aesthetics of Islamic art especially toward the use of colours, especially in Islamic miniatures. In this respect, issue of colours and other technical matters such as perspective and composition will be addressed.

Islamic art: Definitions and Delimitation

As I mentioned earlier in this study Islamic art has a conflicting nature. Many questions should be addressed in this context. What exactly we mean when we mention Islamic art Why it is classified on a religious basis? Why do we call it Islamic though Muslim and non-Muslim artists, architects and artisans have produced it (See Ettinghusen 1980)? More importantly in which way such an art is different from other arts produced by other civilizations? These questions are legitimate in order to redraw the Islamic art general frame under which Matisse supposedly was working. This frame cannot be restricted to few concepts or theories; instead, its loose theoretical cohesion is understood in this study as a strength rather than weakness. In this context, looseness and the absence of any strict and ultimate definition of Islamic art is looked at in this study as an advantage through which truth and reality would become a contested process and that diversities and differences are recognized as richness and strength.

Before I go any further, let it be known that the aim of addressing such unsolved issues is by no mean to give a detailed account about Islamic art. Nor is my study attempting to research the arts produced during the reign of any Islamic states or under any Muslim rulers or during a certain period of time. Instead, general characteristics of Islamic art that have supposedly influenced Henry Matisse's paintings or that can be traced in his art are the target of this investigation. More precisely, I am trying to identify an assumed common ground between Matisse's concepts about art and the general aesthetical aspects of Islamic arts.

4.2.1 Islamic Art The Dilemma of Definitions:

Thinking about defining Islamic art one could face a real problem as the term Islamic tends to have a problematic relationships with Islam as a religion as much as with the domain through which Islamic arts have evolved. Indeed, while some art forms may have been made by Muslims for the purpose of the faith, some other art forms whether made by Muslim or non-Muslims tend to have non-

religious and different purposes (See Grabar, 1973; Allen, 1989; Tabbaa, 2001). Then, why we call it Islamic if its purpose is not? For example, a decorated page in the Koran could be a full art form done for religious purposes while an illustrated scientific book may contain miniatures that may reflect non-religious art forms suggesting pure aesthetical issues. The odd in this case is that the decorated page of the Koran and the illustrations of the miniature are both called Islamic. On the other hand, examining the domain of Islamic art one may count the following art forms; Architectural buildings and dwellings including mosques, minarets, Manuscripts, including miniatures, metal wares, intricate carpets, ceramics, enameled glass, brocaded textile, and knotted handicraft. Blaire et.al. (2001) argue these art forms were considered minor art by the literature of Western art and their decorative aspects are less appreciated in comparison with the “noble” Visual arts mainly paintings and sculptures dominated the European arts during the last four centuries. Blair et.al. suggests here that:

Islamic art is most easily defined by what it is not. Or it is a misnomer for everything left over from everywhere else. Neither a region, nor a period, nor a school or a movement, nor a dynasty, but the visual culture of a place and a time”... (Blair, 2001, p.2)

Though the above definition is tempting, it can be easily criticized on many grounds. The definition is still relying on the old regime of thought about the decorative, the minor and the primitive in art. Though western modern perspectives still in general consider art as a pure domain that should be kept away from the decorative, many modern and postmodern theorists and artists tend to challenge this notion to reflect more openness on the decorative and the minor in art. (See Gombrich 1976). In addition artists like Matisse, Gauguin, Klee and Kandinsky, have tended to reflect views that see the decorative and the minor in art as “offering a truly plastic space” in addition to its expressive qualities.

Another definition that may seriously touch the reality of defining Islamic art is provided by The Eastern art magazine online edition(www.newman.au.uk), stating that there is a problem defining Islamic art through the history and in a contemporary context:

...Although widely used in art history as well as mass media, the phrase Islamic Art is more of a term of convenience than an accurate definition of the art produced through the past few centuries in lands inhabited by Muslim communities or ruled by Muslim caliphs or kings.

Here, one may argue that no matter where or how this art is produced it is mainly expressed through decorative art. On the other hand, though these art forms were produced and can be found in various countries of the world they still have many common aspects. These common aspects were coined due to Islam as a religion that seeks to claim the whole universe including nature, life and the arts. Nasr(1978) asserts on the universal nature of Islamic art arguing that artists whether Turks, Persians, Spaniards, Africans, Egyptians or Indians came together to produce elaborate work such as geometrical patterns and calligraphy to give Islamic art its distinctive features which are diverse by nature. Nasr (1978) defines Islamic art as:

Essentially a way of ennobling matter by means of geometric and floral patterns united by calligraphic forms which embody the word of God as revealed in the sacred book, the Holy Quran.” (Nasr, 1978, P.25)

The Encyclopedia Britannica, electronic edition, provides probably the most comprehensive definition of Islamic art that has carefully considered its evolution, people involved and its main styles, themes and general features:

Islamic art consists of a large number of quite disparate traditions that, when seen all together, appear distinguishable from what surrounded them and from what preceded them through a series of stylistic and thematic characteristics. The key question is how this was possible, but no answer can be given before the tradition

itself has been properly defined. The literary, performing, and visual arts of the vast populations of the Middle East and elsewhere that adopted the Islamic faith from the 7th century onward. These adherents of the faith have created such an immense variety of literatures, performing arts, visual arts, and music that it virtually defies any comprehensive definition (Electronic edition).

Looking at some factors that may give Islamic art these general features, Gocer (1999) does not exclude many opposing theories. She offered to illustrate the distinctive features of Islamic art arguing that the Islamic visual treasury has no figural images, for instance, and three-dimensional sculpture or large-scale oil painting, but instead contains miniatures, vegetal ornaments, arabesque surface patterns, and complex geometrical designs. To account for the phenomena Gocer has pointed to: the influence of Judaism, the Quranic prohibition against making images, Islamic resentment of the glory of Byzantine icons (Gocer,1999,p.1), logocentricism of classical Islam (Arkoun 1961) the spiritual dimension of Islam, Al Faruqi (1984) tacit Islamic assertion of “otherness,(see Necipoglu 1995) and contingency of history.(see Grabar 1996). Considering all these influences, one may conclude that Islam as a theological theory has in it the seeds of having the other always in mind. This has been manifested in Islam keeping other religions and consulting other civilizations in building up an Islamic culture including arts.

Khalili (2005) defines Islamic art as the art done by Muslim artists and artisans, however the term Islamic does not have any religious significance. Kahlili argues that the term Islamic is coined to describe the art that has its creative expressions derived from the epistemology and the spiritual aspects that may underpin Islam as a religion and way of life. Considering such an argument, one may understand how non-Muslim artists were producing Islamic art, as they were assumingly aware of the non-religious significance kahlili has suggested.

Reading through different definitions of what the term Islamic art might mean , this study resides on the definition that Islamic art is the art done by Muslim and

non Muslim and in which Islam was the normative force or the general frame under which arts were produced. This includes art forms done by non-Muslim mostly Christians and Jews artists and craftsmen and craftswomen and all the cultures through which Islam has not dominated. Perhaps the most important notion about adopting such a definition could be its potential to be linked with terms like religious tolerance, racial acceptance and cultural diversity. These terms, as I would argue, coined by Islam as a theological theory that has starts with the Koran to Prophet Mohamed's Hadith and to other Muslim thinkers and philosophers.

4.3 Islamic art: A brief History

Islam rose from a desert environment and among Arab nomadic people. However, some essential features of Islamic art predated Islam especially the decoration of every day life (Ettinghausen 1980). Simple nomadic art before Islam was materialized in decorating every day objects such as textiles, rugs and tents, which were the only carriers of their visual culture as Burckhardt (1976) argues. Because of their isolated life, their techniques imposed strict discipline and restricted the range of decorative possibilities suggested by the Arabian Desert where Islam was originated (Brend, 1991). However, in the mid 7th century when Islam started to advance into neighboring countries, military might was at the extreme end of recognizing the traditions and cultures of the occupied countries. Oddly to what was current at the time, the new faith choose not to oppress the cultures it has encountered, instead it encourages the arts and cultures of other people, suggesting Islam as a general frame that may contain all these differences (Nasr, 1987).

Conquering Syria and Egypt, then part of Byzantine empire, taking over Iran and Iraq, and reaching North Africa and Spain on the eve of the 8th century Islam has to deal, artistically with many interlocked issues regarding the artistic traditions of well established civilizations such Byzantine and Persian civilizations. Arabs just

brought their languages and different types of Arabic scripts and calligraphies to an area that was dominated by the art of Byzantium, which has absorbed the traditions of classical antiquity as much as the art of various peoples inhabiting the vast Byzantine Empire. Grabar (1953) argues that in comparisons to the well-developed artistic traditions of the conquered countries i.e. Persia and Byzantium, Arabic artistic traditions were very limited as they were confined to Arabic scripts and the decorated normal everyday objects.

By the 11th century, Turkey took over Islamic countries in Asia Minor (Brend, 1991) and then the Mongol entered a great upheaval that ended up in the formation of Ottoman Empire in the West and the Persian Empire in the East. This political and cultural mix and the succession of events make it hard, as I would argue to let any particular culture and traditions to prevail over any other. Instead, Islam as a faith and philosophy has arguably succeeded to invent a general frame for making art. This frame was based on preserving the existing traditions to be mixed with each other and with the coming traditions as never before. In such a context, Islam as uniting force has arguably succeeded in creating an art based on many interacting artistic traditions that includes the art of Arabia, Byzantium, Persia and India. This claim is based on the universal aspects of Islamic art where different influences are always manifested in many contemporary Islamic art forms.

4.4 The Universal Aspects of Islamic Art

From the above one can conclude that advancing Islam brought to the conquered countries just the Islamic faith and doctrines in addition to sophisticated Arabic language and scriptures and some primitive decorations. Knowing that those countries long before Islam had well-established civilizations and artistic traditions, the question of how Islam as a faith and a way of life has succeeded to cope with this reality becomes an important one. Indeed, how Islam has integrated all these differences and tackled the many issues related to religious and cultural

differences in order to create its Islamic arts, make scholars so busy evaluating the great experiences.

Ettinghausen (1980) argues that the unifying force of Islam as a faith has succeeded to contain a wide range of artistic styles infusing enormous different cultures and traditions. On the other hand Nasr (1987) relies on the spiritual dimensions of Islam to integrate all these differences and variations in different artistic traditions. He wrote:

Whether in the great courtyard of the Delhi Mosque or the Qarawiyyin in Fez, one feels oneself within the same artistic and spiritual universe despite all the local variations in material, structural techniques, and the like. (Nasr, 198, p.82)

Many factors have arguably helped Islam to create an unprecedented “democratic” general frame that helped in dealing with cultural and artistic differences. The first is the huge margin of freedom given to artists and craftsmen to produce an art that reflects their different traditions. Ettinghausen relates these diversities to “the absence of any wider regulatory directive or codes for artists and craftsmen through the Muslim world” (Ettinghausen, 1980, p.57). The second factor is political. Looking at how Islam as an occupying force has treated the people under occupation, a policy of tolerance including art is amazingly has been applied (see Holt et.al., 1970).

Every race is equal under Islam, and the only discrimination recognized in the Koran is between believers and unbelievers. (*There is no preference of an Arab over a foreigner but in the believe in the faith*) (*O Believers we create you people and nations to know each other. The only preference for any one is his/her faith; Koran*). No serious attempts were made to enter in coercive relationships with Christianity and Judaism the main two religions that predated Islam in the regions. Instead, a policy of recognition of the other faith is adopted based on many verses in the Koran. (See Mariam Verse)

Succeeding in developing a kind of reconciliation with the non Muslim communities Islam tends to recognize identities of others including their religions and even in some case independence, provided they pay their taxes.(whether they called *Mawali*; or the follower *Ahl Althimma*. Ettinghausen in Lewis (1980) argues that what affects the non-Muslim community is a kind of social division that may restrict their political rights, otherwise non-Muslims were protected and recognized especially for the freedom of worshipping and cultural and artistic activities. It is argued by many scholars (Grabar, 1973; Otto-Dorn, 1967) that relatively flexible policies had its positive impact on Muslims as much as non-Muslims' social cultural and artistic traditions. It is worthy to note here regarding this matter that these policies were drawn from the Kouran through which different interpretation can be at hand. In this case, treating non Muslim communities under Islam could be subjected to the ruler and his advisers' interpretation of the Kouran's verses that may indicate how to organize the life of non Muslim Communities.i.e Ahl al Kitab (the Christian minorities).With the absence of any rounded theories about art, art produced under Islam has a kind of looseness of cohesion and little overall resemblance resulted from the absence of any static art theories like Western art (. See in this matter Ettinghausen 1980; Blair 1997; Khalili 2005).

That is, reexamining different Islamic art forms would reveal the countries where they were made (Rice, 1968; Lewis, 1980). An example of this tendency is the Alexandria' Minaret in Egypt where the identity of Artists who have built it can be recognized by the many styles and traditions applied to it...Ettinghausen (1980) even goes further arguing that differences can be detected even in Arabic scriptures between different Arabic countries. He states that differences could be detected even in the ceramic of a town in comparison to the ceramics of another neighboring town. Recognizing the different artistic traditions have arguably contributed to the rise of multi national and multi religious traditions and cultures including arts. This is reflected in the 9th century philosophical society of Ikhwan el Safa when they define the "ideal man" as:

The ideal and morally perfect man should be of East Persian derivation, Arabic in faith, of Iraqi education, a Hebrew in astuteness, A Greek in the individual sciences, an Indian in the interpretation of mysteries, but lastly and specially a Sufi in his whole spiritual life (Ettinghausen,1980, p.57)

Reading the literature about the universal and multi- traditions Islamic art one can identify some essential aspects that can give Islamic art its universal characteristics promoted by a religion with its ambition to claim the whole universe.(Ayoub1997; Mack 2002; Nasr 1978, Grabar, 1973 ; Kuhnel, 1966; Otto-Dorn1967; Blair and Bloom, 1997).

The Following Islamic art aspects are identified based on the above literature and they are by no mean exclusive as to cover the universal aspects of Islamic art:

1. Islamic art has natural sequences of many styles. Persian Indian, Byzantine, and Arabic...
2. Extended over a long time span 7th century to 11th century.
3. Extended from Spain to Southeast Asia and India
4. Produced by communities that are different in terms of their ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.
5. Involve without restriction Non Muslim artists
6. Produced sometimes in favor of mystical groups who were different in their tastes and attitudes towards arts.
7. The absence of any clear rules or concepts about arts though literature were highly conceptualized and developed.
8. Little cohesion gives artists great freedom to initiate their own styles.

9. Strong regional and chronological differences

4.5 The unifying Factors: Islamic Influences in Matisse's Paintings

Though Islamic art has evolved in a multi religious, ethnic and cultural environment Islam as a faith had the normative force to unify all these contrasts or to manage rather all these differences. Ettinghusen (1980) argues that:

The normative force of Islam itself as the basis of the whole civilization has influenced art not through official concern which was minimal but by creating a way of life and general attitude that were to become universally accepted. (Ettinghusen, 1980p.57)

Islam as a faith has succeeded in fact to create a way of life that was shared between all people no matter what are their backgrounds. No priority for any one but up on his/her faith the Hadith Said (there is no priority of an Arabic over a foreigner but by faith says the "Hadith").

Ettinghausen identifies a second unifying factor through which art was influenced. He argues:

The heart land of Islam was part of a large political and cultural entity around the Mediterranean sea. Its heritage has influenced Islamic art by creating a psychological tendency for the generalizing tendencies of the art. (Ettinghausen, 1980, p.59)

A Third factor that may contribute to the diverse nature of Islamic art is that a great deal of such an art is produced by migrant tribes and people who for a variety of reasons have left their countries and influenced the life of the hosted countries especially in arts as Blair(2001) argues. A clear example here is the Moroccan *Almoravids* who by conquest and migration have build up a great civilization in Spain. Another example is The Seljuks in the 11th century. They

were migrated people who, according to Ettinghausen (1980) influenced not only the arts of Iran and the Fertile Crescent but also the arts in Anatolia.

Raby (1985) argues that some Muslim rulers who themselves were aliens would have influenced artistic traditions as they would encourage particular styles on the base of their traditions. In this context, the migrated traditions would be exposed to local traditions and a mixture of both would hold the seed of a new one that may hold the characteristics of both traditions. A process that has arguably the potential to create an energetic artistic environment resulted from contrasting and comparing many different experiences. Regarding this point, Ettinghausen (1980, p. 57-58) gives us an example involving Greek and Coptic craftsmen sent from Syria and Egypt to the Caliph Al Walid to help in reconstructing the mosque of Medina, While artists from Egypt were enlisted for the building of Damascus mosques. Islamic experience in Spain could become a typical example that may illustrate the impact of imported or migrated cultures and traditions in shaping the characteristic of Islamic art. i.e. Abd ar Rahman and other Umayyad rulers have to bring with them their Islamic Syrian traditions and cultures to Spain and soon they started to develop new artistic forms that cover not just Visual art and architecture but also Literature poems and music. Gomez (1980) argued two kinds of cultural import in Spain. The first is official, sanctioned by the rulers, and culminated by the establishment of Cordoba library with a collection of some 400,000 volumes, which is unrivalled in its time. The second is unofficial and smuggled by traveling students and pilgrims. These entire activities have ended with the creation of a whole civilization by importing different artistic traditions. Literature, architecture, Visual art, Ceramics, metal works, music and poems are blended as never before with the then local traditions dominated Spain at the time.

Gomez (1980) even goes further arguing that attempts to blend up different linguistic forms (Spanish and Arabic) resulted in producing a poetic genre called *Kharjah* developed by *Muqadam Ibn Muaafa* at the beginning of the 11th century. Gomez describes this including *Al muwashahats* as” a Marvelous fusion of two

literature, and two races in the multi racial melting pot of Cordoba under the caliphate". Knowing that the imported traditions to Spain are themselves the products of a mixture of different cultures and races one could speculate about the impacts of the process of exposing those traditions to the local traditions founded in Spain. It is assumed here that such a process would create an energetic environment to hybridize cultures and arts as never before. In the next paragraphs of this chapter, I would like to look at Matisse's Islamic experience from the above perspectives through which Matisse has exposed his art to Islamic art, and the outcome would be the coining of new aesthetics. Looking at the above argument regarding the general tendency that gives Islamic art its multi racial and multicultural aspects, it could be true to say that Matisse's paintings' early influences consist perhaps in the way Islamic art has evolved. Indeed Matisse has realized early that Islamic art has its dynamism by mixing the different traditions of the people who become the followers of the faith. This would be justified through Matisse's visits to the Islamic heritage in Spain, Algeria, Russia and Morocco. This arguably helps Matisse to stand firm in front of the harsh criticism (see Spurling 1999) backed by the legacy of the Islamic experience in integrating different artistic traditions.

4.6 Islamic Art and Matisse:

Sharing, Borrowing and exchanging Experience

Islamic art has arguably gained its dynamism throughout the process of borrowing from other established traditions like Greek, Persian and Byzantine traditions. Similarly, Matisse's best achievement may probably reside in his capacity to borrow from different artistic traditions especially Islamic traditions and to infuse such a borrowing into his own paintings. Daftari (1988) argues that Matisse mentioned on many occasions in addition to Islamic art, the Persian art, the Japanese art and the south sea art as sources of his influences. This process of borrowing has arguably enabled Matisse to explore new ways of expressing ideas and feelings as much as to explore new techniques that allowed him to suggest new and qualitative aesthetics. Matisse's venture into Islamic art has no

equivalent in European traditions as Schneider (1990) argues. Indeed, Islamic traditions and Western traditions seemed to have different paths or even non-compromising characteristics. For example, decoration, which is an essential feature of Islamic art, was regarded as “minor art by western traditions and generates more controversy about its use” (Blair et. al 1997).

Colours’ applications and aesthetics reveal two different approaches of both traditions. For example while Islamic miniatures rely mainly on applying primary colors, European paintings especially in the past few centuries seemed to swim in a sea of gray tones in order to represent the third dimension. Another major difference could be sought here; Pope (1938) argues that Islamic miniatures tend to organize its plans by superimposing its elements. In comparison, Western paintings were busy trying to capture the third dimension of the plans. In this context Matisse seems to follow the same path of Muslim artists, borrowing from Islamic traditions in order to validate his own art. Two important questions should be asked here; could the process of borrowing validate own art.? And does not borrowing challenge the originality that most people seek for their traditions. Reading through literature about the process of borrowing one may get across different point of views that range from total refusal to total endorsement.

Traditionally, borrowing from other could be seen as weakness rather than strength when it comes to cultures traditions and civilizations. In addition, it may impose some threats to the originality of a certain cultures. Borrowing in this respect would challenge orthodoxy and the originality of the determined world created by established traditions. It could be argued here that the idea behind refusing to borrow may lay in a more politically motivated argument, for borrowing may imply the sharing of achievement especially with a rival other or even an enemy. On the other hand, borrowing may imply the notion of seeking assistance and this by is itself an indication to a kind of self-inefficiency or weakness. In addition, borrowing would expose originality to a real danger in a time originality is still considered as a secure enterprise and on which people

would always refer especially when it comes to cultures and civilizations. Thinking about the great achievement in spreading knowledge at the beginning of the 18th century I cannot see the invention of printing press in Europe away from borrowing ink from China,, and the same thing could be argued for the invention of compass and gun powder regarding discoveries and weapons. Borrowing has always been there and what seems to be an essential characteristic of a particular civilization could be in fact the product of many different traditions.

Muslim scholars have always argued the impact of Islam on the European civilization especially in Sciences, Astrology, Mathematics and medicines see (Nasr 1986, Bahnassi 1966). In turn, Western scholars feel always at ease to argue that Islamic civilization itself was relying heavily on Greek civilization through translation and the study of Greek philosophy and sciences. For example Luscomb(1997), Gocer(1999) argue that many Muslim thinkers have worked on Aristotelian texts and through Aristotle, Platonic thoughts about religion, law and art were circulated in the medieval world including the Islamic world. Walzer (1962) argues that Muslim thinker Al Farabi has studied platonic dialogue and that the famous Al Farabi's work about happiness reflects a kind of Platonic influences. In fact, Walzer (1962) goes even further claiming that Islamic Philosophy is in fact Greek Philosophy. Lamer (1994) cites some common aspects between Al Farabi and Plato regarding knowledge, imitation, and religion. In brief, Greek influences on Islamic civilization are evident by the virtue of the shared concepts they are reflected and well discussed in the literature. However, it was proved difficult to give a full account about such influences regarding art apart from speculations and general notions as cited elsewhere in this study. One important question should be asked here. What are the constituents of Greek cultures and what influences such a culture does receive? Many scholars in the West argue that the Greek civilization itself was deeply affected by many other ancient cultures and civilization especially Ancient Egypt civilization and many other Semitic civilizations (see Bernal, 1987). In *Black Athena*, Bernal (1978) proposed a radical reinterpretation on the roots of classical civilization,

contending that ancient Greek culture derived from Egypt and Phoenicia and that European scholars have been biased against the notion of Egyptian and Phoenician influences on Greek civilization. However, many scholars (see Lekowitz 1996) argue that Bernal's claims are exaggerated and in many cases unjustified. They argue that in intellectual history the origins of Hellenic language and culture are supposed to lie in the second millennium B.C., when Indo-European-speaking invaders swept down into Greece from the North, and ultimately brought logic and democracy to the decadent Mediterranean.

Looking at Greek civilization from the above perspectives would reveal that whether Greece was affected by the civilization of the European "northerners" or the Afro-asiatic "southerners" or by both of them its glory could be a consequence of many traditions exposed to and interacted with each other. The above argument is based on the notion that building a civilization is all about trading ideas, interaction and not about clashing, as Samuel Huntington would like to argue. In addition, in today's epistemology and historical studies we cannot accept the notion that Greeks created philosophy, art, mathematics and everything else out of nothing. For example, Bernal (1987) states that Pythagoras had studied in Egypt, and Phoenicians who invented the alphabet have maintained close ties with Greece and influenced its alphabet. On the other hand, as history cannot only rely on myths the later may give a general mood about the kind of connections that have dominated the Greeks and Afro-Asiatic people. This includes many myths that describe the connections between the Phoenicians who were good traders on the Mediterranean shores and the Greeks. In addition Bernal (1987) claims that the connections of Greeks with ancient Egypt had its evidences in Herodotus's version of history as he has claimed Egyptians colonizing Greece.

In brief, any civilization may become influenced by any other through different channels and we inherit past experiences away from any political or geographical obstacles. In this, inheritance could not be an 'official or formal' process instead it would be assimilated gradually and over a long period of times so that what seems to be particular and distinctive for any culture or traditions could have its roots

somewhere else. (In this context, one can read the French Jack Chirac invitation to open an Islamic art department at the Louver museum with the aims of getting to know the art of Islam, in an attempt to ease the political tense between Islam and France)

4.6.1 Islamic thoughts, Platonic thoughts: We are closer more than ever

At the centre of the great movement through which Greek philosophy sciences and literature were translated and passed through Spain to Europe is the work of Muslim philosophers about Plato and Aristotle. This is by itself an indication of the active process of consulting the other for the sake of the self. Regarding art, Gocer (1999) argues some similarity between Islamic and Greek concepts about art and its functions on a personal level as much as the society as a whole. She states that Islamic concepts about art were influenced by Plato's concepts not just in political philosophy and geometry but through aesthetical influences as well. Grocer has made a comparison between the Islamic concept of god being the paradigm of beauty(God is beautiful and likes beauty) and the Platonic axiom that cosmological principal of order and harmony as expressed in Plato's work should be reflected in arts as created things must reflect the divine paradigm. (see also Grub, 1980 and Necipoglu, 1995).

Triggered by Matisse's attempts to infuse many different artistic traditions, in the following paragraph I am arguing how Islamic art has succeeded to infuse within its characteristics not just the traditions of different people Islam has governed but also the traditions and concepts of people that precede Islam more notably Greek traditions. In this, I would argue that in comparison of Plato's concepts about art, Islamic art shows similar concerns regarding, geometry, political philosophy, aesthetics and initially the purpose of art. Here Matisse's endeavour with Islamic art could be understood within the context of the borrowing process in general and within the cultural and artistic exchange that have dominated the relationships between Islam and Europe. Reading through Plato's thoughts about art (seeVlastos1971) one can easy identify substantial common concepts with the

epistemology that may underpin the formation of Islamic art. Comparing concepts about the functions of art, its usefulness in society, and its relationships with our understanding of nature including societies we are living in, any researcher would retrieve striking similarity.

Murdoch (1977) before Gocer connects Islamic concepts about art with Platonic ones. She claims strong connections between Islamic concepts and Greek concepts regarding divinity, god, the good and theology. However, the above arguments do not deny such an art its unique characteristics. Instead, they tend to confirm the Islamic idea of creating a cosmic art that is the product of different traditions but without being specific to any. An art on the god features. The above view, that art is a godly feature, is arguably developed by Muslim thinkers with the aims of producing arts that can be accepted by all Muslims. Moreover, since Islam tends to claim the whole world, its art should represent the diversities of its people. For example, Islamic rejection of certain kinds of art (realistic representation, sculpture) is based on the supposition shared by Plato. That is, because art can be a psychological harm to the individual, as Plato (see Plato in Vlastos 1971) states it must be subject to social control. Islamic rejection of certain kinds of art is also grounded in the concept that God is the supreme creator and by no means should people challenge such a great creator...Nasr (1987) argues reflects on the above idea arguing that god in Islam is the creator of everything and that his creation process is the source of all aesthetics. Indeed, the universe with all its harmony and balance, nature as a favourable place for enjoying life, and finally the unseen mechanism of how different natural elements operate in harmony are examples of god's will to induce life and promote its beauty. In addition, because god is beautiful and perfect he has created the world on his features and art, as a creative process is not an exception and must reflect the beauty of god and its divinity.

In comparison with Plato's thoughts about the issue of god and creation, one may easily identify striking similarity with Islamic thoughts. In Plato's doctrines god is

the paradigm of beauty (see Vlastos 1971) And in Islam god's beauty should be reflected not just in art but in all people endeavour's and daily activities. The most important point in the above argument lies in its potential of connecting theological themes (theory) with practical processes. Indeed linking beauty to god has always the potential to affect deeply the way Muslim artists do art and consequently impose many restrictions as to strictly reflect Islamic theories. For example, Nasr (1987) argues that Muslim artists were always suspicious about figurative representation based on its inherent deception and vanity. For this reason, they voluntarily avoid depth in paintings especially in Islamic miniatures.

This as well is very reminiscent to Plato's warning against realism in painting (see page 690 of Plato's work edited by Vlastos 1971) as it may lead to the illusions of perception. More importantly the figurative representations are to be avoided for both Muslim artists and Plato as such a presentation may run the risk of engendering in the artist the false pride of having created something real and, in the observer, the false admiration for human creativity.

In brief, and contrary to common opinions that Islam is suspicious about art, (Plato as well is accused of being suspicious about the role of art) Islamic philosophy and Plato's concepts about art do not deny pleasure received from art. Both take pleasure as a proper criterion in art but consider this pleasure to be of a cognitive kind. That is, the recognition of the divine as the measure of all; both consider a proper education in art as yielding the highest moral standard;(as perfect as god's work) and both advocate pure, simple modest art that attempts to emulate God's beauty and natural harmony in geometrical shapes, pure sounds, and harmonious literature. What is proposed here is that Platonic and Islamic theologies are frequently reviled in their conservatism about the artistic process. However, If this discussion shows anything, it shows that neither sees the creative act as reprehensible in itself. Quite the reverse, both accounts give a place for art to go; both views ask that art be an aide to reason and to help the mind concentrate on the divine not mundane.(In Islam god and the idea of creation should be presented whenever people is heading. That is; god should be consulted

in danger as a protector, in a flower that has just opened its petals and in difficulty as to gain god's strength). A final word about the above argument is that the comparative analysis proposed here should not be understood as a reductionist attempt to understand Islamic aesthetics only in terms of its Platonic echo. Clearly, there are complicated differences between Islamic theology and Platonic theology, and clearly, the ecological setting, political events, and culture vary in Islamic practice and naturally affect the kind of art created in particular regions.

4.6.2 A History of Artistic interchange and exchange

As discussed above theological exchange between Islam and Greece about art is regarded as an early sign of the long history of cultural, artistic and social exchange that has dominated the relationships between Islam and Europe from as early as the 8th century. In the next few paragraphs, I am briefly shading some light on such exchanges restricting the review to the era between the 10th and 12th centuries, where the connection between Europe and Islam had reached its peak. The purpose of reviewing such connections is to put Matisse's Islamic experience within its historical and political context. In this sense Matisse's endeavour is looked at as an extension to what was prevailing in the past regarding the cultural and artistic exchange between Islam and Europe.

Ferrand (1913) gives a general idea about the kind of exchange between Islam and other countries in the world stating that the Middle East was literally the center of the known world, the hub of an almost global trade until the 16th century. People and goods moved through Islamic lands to and from China and Europe, India and Africa, bringing their own artistic cultures and taking some of Islam's away with them. Laurent (1935) goes even further arguing that the art of China is exchanged with Europe through Islamic countries and more notably, through what Marco Polo has called the Silk Road.

Pirenne (1939) argues that exchanges and interchanges are not new in the history of Islam and Europe and that connections between Haroun El Rashid the Muslim

Abbasid Caliph and French Charlemagne is well documented. Pirenne confines such connections to the exchange of presents that were mostly art and craft works. Pirenne in this context has mentioned the political side of the ever tense relationships between the two parties stating that though there are times for wars and hostilities and disruptions between Islamic and European powers there are times for trading, exchanging ideas, cultures and arts especially between the 10th and the 12th century. Gotein(1967) detects most immediately the connection between Islamic and Christian powers located in the Mediterranean arena especially the crossroads of Europe, North Africa and Asia, including, among others, Norman Sicily, Fatimid Egypt and North Africa, al-Andalus and Byzantium. Gotein (1967) concentrates on the ethnic and religious background of the population for those centers. He informs that established trade centers were inhabited by a mix of populations representing the ethnic and religious peoples of all the other Mediterranean cities. He adds that members of these groups maintained networks of trading partners among co-religionists throughout the region and when traveling anywhere within the Mediterranean, “one was, so to speak, within one’s own precincts”. Ferber (1975) detects some artistic influences resulted from exchanging and trading goods. He argues that the existence of Islamic textiles, Glass, metal works Ceramics in southern Spain and some Italian centers like Venice were highly prized and inspiring for the local to imitate and innovate. Ferber even goes further arguing that Islamic art forms were not restricted to southern Spain and Italy but through the Crusaders Islamic art forms have reached Northern Europe and some art works were preserved in Christian churches to be used as reliquaries.

Richard’s (1976) as well describes the connections between Islamic and European countries during conflicts and hostilities. Richard argues that some cities, ports and centers (not countries) especially around the Mediterranean Sea’s shores have kept their connections even during wars and hostilities. This overlapping of the political systems and the history of hostility between the two rival parties has

arguably afforded a valid alternative based on continuity and interest in the connections between Europe and Islam.

Abu Lughd (1989) has called such connection interchange between Mediterranean countries, stating that such interchange was neither new nor momentary as geographically Mediterranean Sea had always been the natural connector between the people and cultures around its shores. Phoenicians, Greek, and Cartesians. According to Abu Lughd, well-traveled routes were established in antiquity and the strong ties between Mediterranean centers during ancient times laid the ground for a common tradition that was retained and recognized in varying degrees, in spite of great cultural changes after the heyday of ancient activity.

According to Abu Lughd (1989)

The old routes between the centers around the Mediterranean Sea were reactivated between the tenth and twelfth centuries, when interactions between Mediterranean centers became intense once again, these routes formed in antiquity and late antiquity were reactivated. During this time, the Fatimids, Byzantines, Normans and Umayyads in Spain flourished and competed in close proximity around the Mediterranean. Each sponsored its own impressive literary, scientific, artistic and commercial centers, and no single power dominated the others. (Abu Lughd, 1989, P.13).

Endorsing Pierenne's view Abu Lughd stating that Even, military conflicts between these centers were parts of their relationships. But fortunately, such conflicts did not succeed to stop the exchanging process of goods and people .

The energetic competition between these powers sometimes took the form of military conflict but for the most part the rivalry was played out through commerce and diplomacy. The constant traffic of people and goods, at court level through gifts and at merchant-class level through trade, proved an effective recipe for sustaining a fragile co-existence and a delicate balance of power (Abu Lughd 1989, p.21)

More on this point, Abu Lughud (1989) argues that by the middle of the thirteenth century the occident (Western Europe) and the Orient as far as China were linked together through a system of trade and, to much lesser extent, production that had begun to form into what he termed a "world system rather than a set of Imperial system"

Goods originated in the Middle East were being sold in Europe fairs, and Europe was exporting in exchange raw materials, metals and woolen textiles. Such trade was being conducted by merchants from highly diverse regions, speaking quite different languages and in touch with each other not just physically but by written instruments" (Abu Lughud, 1989, P.25)

Rosmoand (2002) has researched the connection between European countries and Islamic countries during the Renaissance arguing that Islamic goods in Italy were highly appreciated. He quoted a Florentine writer in 1384 as saying that there are many rich and delicate Islamic goods of all kind and Damascus's goods are supplied to the Italian cities as never before.

Analyzing literature of connections between Islam and Europe especially during the period extended from 10th to 13th centuries one may amazingly start to realize a kind of pluralistic environment created by both parties. For example, looking at goods and different art forms from that time one can easily detect two ways influences. For example, Feber (1975) has detected some Venetian textiles with Islamic patterns and some Chinese Ceramics with Islamic and Sicilian influences.

Recalling Matisse's early interest in textiles one may speculate that he was somehow aware of such artistic exchanges and more notably the way influences have been exchanged especially in goods like textiles, glass, ceramics and metal works. In addition, recalling Matisse's interest in craft works, and how he has elevated them to full artistic genres, one can speculate that Matisse's interest in

craftwork was driven from that early time when craft works cannot be separated from art works. If this hypothesis is to be justified the argument about Matisse's awareness of that pluralistic environment and its visual vocabulary has formed an essential part of Matisse's Islamic experience. That is His Islamic experience could become a reflection about the pluralistic artistic climate that has dominated the relationships between Islam and Europe through history.

A clear example of the above approach is Matisse's attempts to reflect different artistic influences through his painting *The Painter Family* 1910. Within its mixture of Islamic rugs' aesthetics and European aesthetics the painting could be easily compared with the 11th century Sicilian king *Rogers's II Mantle* (see Hoffman2001) where Islamic scriptures decorate the Christian king's dress . Describing the king's mantle Hoffman argues that art and craft work of Islamic and European makers reflect the presence of both influences without any domination over each other. This is reminiscent by all measures to Matisse balancing Islamic and European influences in his paintings. Describing the Mantel of Roger II Hoffman (2001) states:

...That a key marker of identity and one of the most significant connections for the Mantle is the visually striking Arabic inscription, which clearly spells out the date and localization of the piece, while serving as its elegant border design. The inscription reads: This is what was made in the royal treasury (khizanah). Full happiness, honour, good fortune, perfection, long life, profit, welcome, prosperity, generosity, splendour, glory, perfection, realization of aspirations and hopes, of delights of days and nights, without end or modification, with might, care, sponsorship, protection, happiness, well-being (success), triumph and sufficiency in Palermo (Madinah Siquilyah) in the year 528 (Hoffman 2001, p.1133-34)].

Comparing the above with Schneider's analysis (1990) of Matisse's painting *The Painter Family* (1910), the introduction of Islamic rugs and the decoration in the painting could be seen in the same context of introducing the Arabic inscriptions in Roger's Mantle. Another analogy could be drawn here is that the translation of what is written on Roger's mantle is amazingly reminiscent to Matisse's

statement about “the soothing and trouble less art” in his Notes of a Painter. In this context, the National Gallery of Art, Chicago has recently arranged an exhibition named Artistic exchange: Europe and the Islamic World (2004) with the aim of highlighting such artistic exchange between Islam and Europe. The importance of such an exhibition consist in its organizers’ effort to analyze the artistic influences in both directions by highlighting Islamic and European aspects in many European and Islamic artistic genres(Rugs, Paintings, Ceramics). For more information about this important exhibition, see the exhibition’s catalogue elsewhere in this study (i.e. Appendix 1).

4.7 Conclusion:

What gives Islamic art its specific aspects is a tendency to recognize differences as parts of valid traditions that should be kept and learn from. Indeed, bringing together themes that seem to be away from each other, (artistically) in searching the expressive and aesthetical energy that may arise from such a process was the main project of Islamic arts. In this respect, Matisse’s project was not away from such a notion. He always was trying to enforce Islamic traditions in European traditions when doing art causing trouble and challenge to the well-established traditions of European art. Matisse’s effort in this respect was not initiated from a vacuum. In fact, the history of mixing up the Islamic and the European traditions when doing arts is older than Matisse’s venture and goes back to the 10th century. The most exciting aspects in Matisse’s Islamic experience may reside here in its attempts to link or highlight the connections between Islam and Europe.

CHAPTER FIVE

Islamic Art: The valuable artistic sources for Matisse

5.1 Introduction.

It was a shock for European public taste when the Fauve artists officially exhibited their works. They were described as “beasts” and the “Ugly” who are “going to the dog”. Indeed, what Matisse and his followers of Fauvists were doing was to challenge the well-established schools of art and centuries of great traditions of the classical art in Europe. Primary colours were poured on canvas straight from their tubes, ignoring the disciplines of the great European traditions in using colours. Little or no attention was given to represent the third dimension, and drawing with colours is the process that may summarize the fauvists’ venture. Researching the roots of such a shift from European perspectives could be easily detected in art literature. Indeed, most art critics and historians agree that change about the use of colours and the purpose of art in general were a consequence of the impact of the industrial revolution that took place in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. Therefore, paints are produced in huge varieties and quantities so that artists would have the chance to experiment using huge ranges of colours. All of these experiments have culminated with Fauvism, Impressionism, Neoimpressionism, and Expressionism, challenging the foundation of classical art.

Looking at the above argument from different perspectives one cannot exclude the impact of foreign influences on this shift of using colours in paintings. Indeed, reexamining paintings from leading artists such as Gauguin, Matisse, Kandinsky, Klee, and even Picasso would reveal how colours in these paintings were applied reminiscent to the ways they are applied in Islamic miniatures and rugs and other foreign traditions such as Japanese and Chinese traditions. This chapter is specifically investigating this point as it was arguably a leading clue toward the argument that Islamic arts has helped Matisse to solve many technical and

aesthetical issues by suggesting new ways of using colours. These ways were absolutely on the extreme side of the ways European artists were used to approach colours when doing paintings.

The chapter defines generally the essential aspects of Islamic concepts regarding the use of colours in arts. It argues that Matisse's tendency to use colours in a decorative style was based mainly on Islamic traditions, coupled with his personal vision as a European artist who has copied the great old masters' works. More specifically, the chapter investigates Islamic miniature's influences on Matisse's art. Indeed, as argued in this study, Islamic miniatures have influenced Matisse as they were the main Islamic art forms available for him especially miniatures exhibited in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Their techniques, colours and compositions are said to reshape radically Matisse's art by helping him to overcome many technical and aesthetical problems.

5.2 The use of colours in Islamic art.

Many scholars (Ettinghausen 1980; Grabar 1987, 1992) see colours in Islamic art as a psychological response to the harsh colourless environment of the Islamic countries. Indeed, a great deal of the Islamic land is desert of a single dull colour and devoid of striking features. Buildings in cities or villages across many Islamic countries have the colour of mud, sand, or white as in the case of North Africa. Grabar (1987) and Ettinghausen (1980) argue that as a response to the colourless Islamic environment people, and as a psychological relief, tend to colour everyday objects in addition to their houses and dwellings. Evidences of this tendency of colouring could be found in many Islamic art forms including architecture. In fact, rugs, miniatures, ceramics, glassware and architectural structures all reflect the tendency of using colours as a relief to the less colourful environment. Islamic rug's makers whether Persian, Turkish, Indian or Mongolian were not satisfied with natural colours instead they tried to use the richest possible range of hues and patterns. This could be read as a psychological compensation against the colourless features of most Islamic countries' landscape. Pottery is no

less colourful when it comes to tiles, pots, plates and other ceramic made. El Said et.al (1993) argue that the limited color ranges of the classical Iranian pottery in the 9th century has followed by a series of highly colored ceramic works that reflect the same rich hues used in the Islamic carpets.

Regarding colours in glass Ettinghausen (1987) argues that colours in glass have no less importance in Islamic art. He pointed to Syria and Egypt where highly coloured and decorated glasswares were produced. On the other hand, Islamic miniatures provide strong proof of the Islamic tendency to use primary colours in an expressive way taking the small limited space such as a page in a book into account.

In Islamic architecture, colours are used in spectacular efforts to overcome arguably the monotony created often by the brownish or white single colour of the mud used in buildings. (See Khalili2005, Critchlow 1976). Colours were usually spread around the windows, the roofs and inside the rooms. However, when it comes to mosques sophisticated colour techniques were used in order to impress the prayers as much as normal viewers. More importantly is the believe, that colours are used in such spiritual environment as to impress attendances showing them the beauty of creation. Tiles coloured in all degrees of blue, ochre, green, purple, gold, silver black and white and were extensively used to decorate the domes and façades of mosque. Clear examples of this tendency could be seen in many Mosques in Iran, Turkey, India and many Arabic countries. (See Godfrey1987)

From the above one may argue that the use of colour in Islamic art has achieved many technical discoveries. For example as colours in architecture are mostly used in different glazed tiles, the possibility of direct mixing of colour has become logically nil. Instead, builders and artists have to rely on the effect of juxtaposing different glazed tiles. This process could be influential to the way European fauve and impressionist artists have applied colours. (Matisse and Gauguin in particular

have always tested the expressive quality of juxtaposing pure coloured spaces in their paintings). In this sense, is Fauvism any thing else than juxtaposing primary colors? Indeed, watching the façades of many tiled mosques would be quite suggestive of the expressive qualities of using primary colours. In addition, juxtaposing different colours next to each other would be arguably suggestive in reflecting the impressions of other colours. Amazingly, this process of exposing colours to each other has formed an essential part of the Impressionist project that has dominated the European art at the beginning of the 20th century. In the next paragraphs, Islamic concepts about colours are linked with that of Matisse's especially his fauvist period.

5.3 Matisse the Fauvist and the Islamic colours

The voyages to Morocco helped me accomplish the necessary transition and make contact with nature again better than did the application of a lively but somewhat limiting theory, Fauvism.” (Matisse quoted in Schneider, 1984, p.459).

It was really a breakthrough in European art history to colour trees with red, faces with green and skies with purple at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was actually a bold rejection of a long history of applying colours in paintings by the great masters in favour of colouring away from imitating natural colours. These concepts are brought by fauvism and had the chance to influence the whole course of Western art. In fact, Matisse in his Fauvism seems to take the process of colouring differently to its extreme end. After a “shaky” start as an artist, he has started to pour down colours straight from tubes to canvas suggesting new approaches and techniques to apply them. For example, Matisse has started to explore the decorative arrangement of colour, and the expressive qualities that may arise from such arrangements. In doing so, Matisse was actually forced to abandon the use of natural colours in his paintings. There is arguably a revolutionary discovery in this; that is there is no need any more for Matisse to imitate nature when doing paintings. Instead, a relief nature created by the artist is becoming within the reach due to the emerged concept of using colours in their

decorative arrangements. Technically, this would absolve Matisse from depicting what he hated most; the third dimensions and allows him on the other hand to draw with colours as he himself put it in his Notes of Painters. Though Matisse and other European artists, such as Andre Derain, George Seurat and Paul Signac have been influenced by the scientific use of colours on the eve of the Industrial revolution, Matisse's new concepts about colours have many connections with the origins of his revelation; that is, the Islamic art aesthetics. According to Flam (1986) Matisse from the early stage of his career showed some interest in the art of the orient especially the use of colours in carpets and miniatures. He has stated "The Italian primitives and especially the Orientals had made colours as a mean of expression (see Flam 1986).

Later on in his career, this interest became a source of revelation. Matisse on many occasions declared a kind of revelation comes to him through oriental colours. Quoted in Fourcade (1974) he said:" I felt the passion of colours developed in me when the great Mohammedan exhibition (1910) took place. Indeed, a close look at Matisse's paintings between 1903 and 1916 (See Appendix 5) one can easily realize the great shift Matisse has achieved regarding the use of colours in paintings. During this transition, Matisse's use of colours could be affiliated with the ways Islamic miniatures and rugs were coloured. Hodgkin cited in Daftari (1988) argues that a Persian art exhibition, probably held in Paris 1907 influenced Matisse paintings, especially in the use of colours for the rest of his life:

Shortly before Matisse became aware of Cubism, there was a very big exhibition of Persian paintings in Paris, which, though it cannot be directly connected with particular pictures of his, certainly had a great influence on his use of colour for the rest of his life".(Daftari, 1988, p.177)

In this respect, Elderfield (1990) argues that Matisse Fauvism has two main aspects concerning the use of colours. The first is the primary use of colours and the second is not to imitate natural colours. Strikingly, long before Matisse and Fauvism the two techniques have formed an essential part of Islamic miniatures'

techniques. Indeed, due to miniatures' techniques colouring horses in blue, faces in green, or trees in blue have become a reality for Matisse and other French artists and extend the expressive quality that can be suggested by not imitating natural colours. Ironically, in analyzing Matisse's shift in using colours, Elderfield has found no reasons to argue Matisse's shift regarding representation of natural colours but simply referred this to Matisse's personality as an artist.

Fortunately, Schneider (1990, 1984) tries to understand the roots of Matisse's revolutionary shift in representation away from natural colours. He argues that even after Fauvism has ended, Matisse has put relentless effort to capitalize on other European artists' use of colours like neo impressionists, pointillists, and even cubists. In this matter, Schneider (1990) argues that Gauguin has great influences on Matisse regarding the use of colours away from imitating nature. And if we know Gauguin's foreign inspiration especially the Persian miniatures one can imagine the great boost of Matisse's venture. Coupling the European scientific use of colours with the expressive quality of Islamic colours is believed to be the core of Matisse's project. It is believed here that what makes Matisse stand harsh criticism and accusations is his believe that he is standing on solid ground (the great Islamic legacy in doing art and architecture).

Many are Matisse's paintings that may reinforce the above argument about the use of colours and the influences of colours used in Islamic miniatures and rugs. For instance, *Harmony in Red* (1909) is a typical example where colours are strictly uniformed following the miniature traditions. The process of applying uniformed colour tones has arguably lead Matisse to realize that such a process will negate the depth in the painting by creating a new and qualitative plastic space.

In another landmark painting, *The Red Studio* (1911) Matisse starts to carry the Islamic lesson to its logical end. He argues in his Notes (see Flam 1986) that if colours can abolish the third dimension, differences of colours may recreate it.

However, the kind of perspective created through juxtaposed different colours can be manipulated more than in the traditional perspective that is based on graying the tone of one single colour. Happily and from now on, the energy of colours would be fully liberated to create the symphony of colours expressed as “Interior Symphonies” by Matisse. The importance of such an adventure consists arguably in its potential to let the artist-maker express the self instead of letting the subject matter transmit expression. This matter needs another shift Matisse has learned from Islamic art. That is; Muslim artists especially in miniatures do not take too much care about the reality of the subjects, instead, they were busy looking how to beautify them through colours and regardless any physical or psychological logics. In this, Matisse has always shown similar tendency trying to free the subject matter from its real status by isolating it from all trouble including its connection with the real world. Such a tendency would perhaps justify why Matisse has spent his life doing interior scenes, and has been culminated in the *Snail* 1950 and the *Sadness of a King* 1950 where Matisse’s interest in depicting recognizable natural form has completely vanished.

5.4 Islamic Decorative Patterns: Influences on Matisse

A leading clue of Islamic influences on Matisse paintings are the Islamic decorative patterns. In fact and like a Muslim artist Matisse has used them throughout his long career. But what are the characteristics of such patterns and in which way Matisse has made use of them? Scholars (see Critchlow, 1976; Ettinghausen & Grabar, 1987; Rice, 1995) agree that Islamic decoration consists of three main elements: the first is Calligraphy in various forms of Arabic script. The second is Arabesques including scrollwork. The third element is the floral or plant-like designs, and geometrical designs using a limited number of geometric shapes in many different ways. These three elements are often combined in the decorative scheme on a single object. However, the beauty of Islamic patterns can be approached not only in terms of art and mathematics, but also within the contexts of Islamic art and the spirituality claimed by Islam as a faith. (Matisse seems to capitalize on this in his decorative tendency).

Historically, throughout the Islamic world from Spain to Indonesia, patterns appear in architecture and interiors to organize space and to beautify the built environment. All patterns reflect the pure beauty of numbers, considered to be of divine origin in Islamic doctrine. And by their very nature, patterns exhibit multiplicity as expressions of unity, which is an attribute of God. Patterns in Oriental carpets for example may be seen as expressive of a worldview in which multiplicity exists in relation to the unity of all existence. Nasr (1978) argues that Geometrical patterns in Islamic art can be interpreted as representing universal, harmonious laws that express the unity within the diversity of our world. The same geometry can be found in the shapes of a snowflake, in a wasp's nest and in the arrangement of the petals in a flower. These patterns may be seen as symbolizing the Islamic principles of *Tawhid* (the unity of all things) and *Mizan* (order and balance), which are the laws of creation in Islam. Here repetition and variations that have characterized Islamic art are might be driven from such an argument. That is, one or two shapes may be repeated or combined in order to create a complex interlocking pattern. This process is read within Islamic epistemology that sees art as to reflect the process of god creation.

Another aspect of Islamic patterns is symmetry (see Abas and Salman1995) and the use of translation, tessellation and rotation. These techniques play an important part in most Islamic patterns. There may be a single line of reflective symmetry, usually from the top to the bottom, or there may be three or four lines of symmetry. Straight (translation) and turning (rotational) movements are also used. Sometimes reflective symmetry and the two kinds of movement are found in the same design. Symmetry and repetition give unity to the more complex designs. In many Islamic patterns, different elements seem to dominate, depending on how you look at the design. Applying such aspects to architecture, miniatures or rug pattern one may discover the same rule. In this, Field (1998) argues that the importance of Islamic art therefore must be considered in its entirety because each building and each object embodies to some extent identical

principles. Though objects and art differ in quality of execution and style, the same ideas, forms and designs constantly recur.

As assumed in this context, Matisse's paintings have consulted the Islamic decorative patterns so that they have formed an essential part of Matisse's compositions. He has repeated decorative patterns whenever he did paintings. In interior scenes, on textiles, on screens, around windows, in portraits and even in his landscapes (see Benjamin, 2003). Indeed, from 1903 Matisse never stopped depicting decorative patterns nearly in the same ways Muslim artists do in their miniatures. Using decorative pattern to enhance his paintings' expressiveness Matisse was always ready to test the energy of throwing decorative elements across his paintings. Whether he was depicting a rug, a textile, or a background of a painting, decoration will be everywhere suggesting plastic space that is by all means new to the European traditions.

Looking at any Islamic art form especially miniatures and rugs one may easily realize the avoidance of representing living beings, particularly people. However, there is a continuous tradition of using these kinds of figures as part of decorative schemes in non-religious contexts, particularly in the illustration of books and miniatures. However, representation of human being in Islamic art can be easily confined to a one single template (all figures are similar and there is no effort to represent the different features of different people). This is reminiscent to Matisse's depiction of human characters. Whether they are odalisques, normal people or even portraits, minimum efforts have been made by the artist to distinguish different facial or anatomical features. (For example in his painting the *Painter Family*, it is impossible to draw any differences between Matisse's two sons. In the *Music* and *The Dance* the features of all characters are carbon copies of each other. And in the *Moorish Screen or the Moroccan Café* characters show similarity as they were used in their decorative presence rather their natural aspects).

5.5 Islamic Miniatures: The Influential aesthetics

In addition to the influences of Islamic decorative patterns on Matisse, Islamic miniatures are also of importance. There is an agreement among art historians and theorists that many of Matisse's great paintings have been influenced by the aesthetics of Islamic miniatures. (See Flam, 1986; Schneider, 1984; Fry, 1931; Benjamin, 2003; Daftari 1988). As I argue elsewhere in this study, Matisse's reliance on Islamic miniatures has no equivalent in the history of western art. Indeed, some of his paintings were directly inspired by the Islamic miniatures. And in other paintings, the existence of Islamic miniatures is implied through colours, compositions and the expressive quality of the miniatures' elements. (Famous Matisse's paintings such as *The Dance*, *The Music*, *Conversation*, *Red Harmony*, *Pink and Red Studio* are typical examples of Matisse consulting the Islamic miniatures). Daftari (1988) argues that Matisse has arguably tried to familiarize himself with such Islamic art forms through the casual and permanent Islamic art exhibitions that were held in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. However, miniatures have occupied a greater deal in the artist's preoccupation. Schneider (1990) argues that Matisse believe that the importance of Islamic miniatures consists in their potentiality of affording a "greater plastic space". This space is arguably has the potential to suggest more expressive qualities that may allow the maker to be included as a part of the formula. In the following few paragraphs I am investigating the general aesthetical aspects of Islamic miniatures as they were arguably the catalysts that should be consulted in order to understand Matisse's paintings. However, this is by no mean a detailed investigation about this genre. Instead, the purpose of the investigation is to reveal how Islamic miniatures have influenced Matisse and which characteristics were more influential than the others were. And more importantly, how Matisse used the Islamic aesthetics to develop his paintings

5.5.1 Islamic Miniatures Definitions, history and aesthetics:

Islamic miniatures have always been appreciated in the East and the West for their simplicity and non-depressive subject matter. They are looked at by many

artists as major sources of aesthetics that can be consulted for technical and spiritual help, especially in the domain of paintings, in additions to their functions as illustrations that may beautify, explain and clarify. What is an Islamic miniature? What are its artistic and aesthetical values? During Islam golden age, books were very important as potential carriers of knowledge in general. In addition, books were used to promote the faith in particular by spreading knowledge about it (see Robinson 1976). Often, they were hand written to cover all branches of knowledge. They are translated bringing into play the knowledge of other. And because of their importance, they were illustrated and decorated to enhance the written texts with visual appeals. Wilson (1999) and O'Kane (1995) argue that book illustrations and visually enhanced texts are the source from which miniatures were originated. That is, within their limited space (a fraction of the size of a single page) miniatures are drawn some times on a small space in order to fit each of the written pages. However, many miniatures makers were fascinated with the smallest spaces on which they depicted their drawings. For example, a whole verse of the Koran with the decoration that may surround it was written on a single grain of wheat by a Muslim miniaturist. This fascination with the little and the small could be the result of an Islamic tendency to go back to the origins where god has created nature from one single cell. To reflect this trend, Islamic miniatures' domain is to reflect mainly the perfect and the small. In Arabic, a miniature is called *Munamnamah* plural miniatures *Munamnama* and it means the little and well groomed. The Arabic adjective *Munamnam* could be used in any context including people. A woman would be metaphorically called *Munamnamah* when she is beautiful, well groomed, with no default in her external and physical appearance. In general, *Munamnamah* means the small, whose parts complement each other in harmony.

To Safadi (1978) the word miniature, in general, refers to small-scale, painted illustrations in manuscripts. In its strictest sense, the word miniature (in manuscripts) refers to paintings in gouache often combined with gold. They may

be framed or unframed, full-page, half-page or smaller, independent of the text, set above or within it. They may be a single image or part of a cycle.

Scholars in the west especially orientalist argue that the miniatures have their roots in the Hellenistic and Byzantine traditions, (see Grabar1953; Rice, 1968). However, some Muslim and Arabic scholars argue that miniatures are developed within the Islamic art evolution while some other goes far beyond the rise of Islam arguing that miniatures were first developed during Mesopotamia civilization(see Bahnassi 1966: Safadi1978).. The advocates of this view rely on the major development that has occurred in miniature's making which took place in Baghdad with Mani from Babylon around 216 AD.

Mani Nama in Persian means the book of Mani. Maninama then is a book written and illustrated by Mani. It is believed here that the combination of Mani and Nama has influenced the derivation of the word *Munamnama* in Arabic and later the term miniature in the West. Starting from the first book, which, asserts the importance of the written world, Koran was decorated with all kind of stylized motifs taken mainly from geometrical forms. In general, Books' Illustrations have two main functions: Enhancing the reader's pleasure and imagination and to stimulate visually the readers about the beauty of the written texts. Perhaps, the most important purpose of doing miniature is to draw finely detailed compositions that present an idealized view of the world. They are small in scales and features, extensive use of gold and brilliant, rich and sparkling colours like ultramarine, Prussian blue, indigo, violet, purple, carmine and tangerine. Based on this account, miniatures probably were the most important inspiration for Matisse. There are many reasons that can be easily justified for this fascination. Within their peaceful and mostly innocent aspects, Islamic miniatures seem to strike a chord in Matisse's heart towards his dream of a soothing and troubleless art as he called it in his Notes or an art that is free of the hoax of the world as Flam (1986) has put it.

Technically, having primary colours as main pigments Islamic miniatures suggest a plastic space that was truly new for the European traditions. Coupling the primary colours tendency with his Fauve tendency Matisse has found himself applying the Islamic miniature's techniques. Regarding this point, one may start to speculate about the origins of Matisse's Fauvism itself, and whether Matisse and his fellow French artists (e.g. A. Market) were aware of the Islamic miniatures' effective use of primary colours. Was not it puzzling to see these groups of "Beasts" come out from nowhere and started to pour down their colours leaving Impressionism grasps for air within the great European traditions? Another important aspect of miniatures that may influence Matisse's paintings is that unlike Western art, Islamic miniatures feature a limited use of light and shade and an avoidance of linear perspective. In order to compensate the lack of depth miniaturists has developed two main strategies. The first is to designate a high vantage point and the second is to eliminate the differences in sizes and colours between objects in the foreground and background. Then depth is created by overlapping.

Looking at Matisse's paintings especially between 1903 and 1915 one can become puzzled by Matisse's boldness in eliminating the difference between the plans of his paintings reducing the whole compositions to mere juxtaposed colored spaces.(see Matisse's paintings, *Pink Onion* 1906, *Conversation* 1910 and *The Casaba Gate* 1912). Neglecting the logic of foreground and the background as known in European paintings, Islamic miniaturists put no effort to represent the depth.. Instead, miniatures rely on a kind of overlapping process to express the fleeting depth. This is done by making no distinctions between first and third plan, instead, the artist positions his miniature's elements above each other. Matisse has often used these techniques. For example in the "Bonheur de Vivre"1905 or in the *Lesson de Piano* 1916 Matisse dared to challenge the European tradition by depicting elements in the first plan that are in disproportion with elements in the third plan. Instead, Matisse depicts the elements of his paintings above each other in same way most Islamic miniatures were made. In

fact, Matisse's paintings since his encounter with Islamic art were a combination of miniatures' techniques mixed with his skills gained from copying the great European masters' works.

5.6 Other Islamic influences on Matisse

Looking at the aspects of Islamic art that may have influenced Matisse one may speculate about some spiritual and historical influences. Indeed, in his attempt to justify his shift from the main course of Western art Matisse has arguably found himself, spiritually within the course of Islamic art. It might be true to say that, what may distinguish Islamic art from other arts is its tendency to reflect always the beauty of divine across different art forms. By self-direction, Islamic artists and artisan do not usually represent real things but only the difference between the real the made things as Nasr (1987) argues. This stems from a philosophical Islamic concept that no body can make real things but god the great creator. In this context, people and artists should be preoccupied by the meanings of things instead of looking at the cheap dying aspects of things around us.

Reducing a thing to its semantic and semiotic existence may, by necessity imply establishing a kind of conversation between that thing and other things that surround it. In this sense, we are trying to understand the very existence of that thing in relation to nature, as much as in relation to that thing's different elements. How they are affected and how they affect other elements around them. How a thing looks like in comparison of other things and in relation of its own elements is a general reflected in practicing Islamic doctrines. That is, to draw lessons from nature's harmony as created by the great painter; god (*Almusawer, Allah*). In Islam, people are always urged to put under scrutiny the natural elements as to stay aware of the greatness of god and creation. Any thing looked at in this way could arguably develop in us the skill to critically look at things. Things in this sense would become tools of inquiries into the self and into the other since we are all invited to ask questions, compare elements, and suggest new means and meanings. Arts in this respect may become a more serious tool that may represent

the aesthetic of a thing (Its harmony with other elements in nature) as well as its significance and how it operates.

In locating Matisse's logic within the above argument, he once said to the writer and poet Louis Aragon (1947) "I do not paint things, only the difference between things." Matisse certainly thought of his paintings that way, not as copies of the world but as integral wholes with their own reality... "I must have a clear view of the whole right from the beginning," Matisse said in his *Notes of a Painter* (See Flam 1986). In comparison with Islamic concepts about the essential characters of things Nasr (1976) argues that Muslim artist's main duty is to reveal the essential characters of things by establishing rapports between objects and their surroundings and how a thing may operate. Strikingly, Matisse connected this with seeking to discover "the essential character of things," which was supposed to have been the project of the Cubists. The essential character of things for Matisse would be that set of its appearances as presented the thing to the viewer, selected with particular reference to the feeling about the thing that Matisse meant to convey. It was not involved with details and perhaps without a third dimension as appearance is not important as much as the essential. Before concluding this encounter of Matisse's art and Islamic arts one cannot ignore the similar way Islamic art and Matisse's art have evolved through the history. In fact, Matisse's endeavour to consult the Islamic traditions seems to hold in itself a similar endeavour imposed by Islam and through which Islamic art itself has consulted other traditions.

Long before Matisse, Islamic art has succeeded to produce an art based on diversities rather than homogeneity and on the recognition of the other's art rather than denouncing it as most of old, civilizations did as Nasr (1987) argues. In fact, many scholars argue that Greek, Byzantine, Persian, and many others traditions have influenced Islamic art. (see Grabar, 1992). Ettinghausen (1980) argues that two factors have contributed to Islamic art's acceptance of foreign influences. The first is Islam's tendency to create a "way of life and general attitudes that were to

become universally accepted". In this, art that could be accepted in Arabia could be accepted in India and Vice versa. The second factor as argued by Ettinhausen is the influences of other civilizations that preceded Islam. Indeed, countries like India and Persia and even Arabia have developed a great artistic heritage before Islam. This heritage is arguably recognized by Islam, and it was valid enough to create a common psychological climate for integrating and accepting the other's arts and traditions (Grabar, 1992). (This notion, accepting the other, is arguably reflected in Matisse's art as assumed in this study and arguably has the potential to distinguish the artist from all other orientalists.

However, Blair et al. (2003) add a third important factor that may contribute to the diverse nature of Islamic art. According to Blair et.al. a great deal of such an art is produced by migrant tribes and people who for a variety of reasons have left their countries and influenced the life of the hosted countries especially in arts. A clear example here is the Moroccan Almoravids who by conquest and migration have build up a great civilization in Spain. Another example is The Seljuks in the 11th century. They were migrated people who influenced not only the arts of Iran and the Fertile Crescent but also the arts in Anatolia according to Ettinghausen (1980). Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings may be read in this context. Schneider (1984); Daftari (1988), argue that Matisse, like all Muslim artists, has never hide or manipulate the foreign influences in his paintings. Instead, he has consulted them validating their aspects so they may fit his paintings. This tendency of Matisse receiving and accepting foreign influences is thought to be derived from Islamic art's tendency of accepting and appreciating different artistic influences. Regarding Islamic art, many factors have arguably contributed to the tendency of recognizing diversity rather than denouncing it. Etinghausen (1980) identifies two; the first is the normative force of Islam as a religion that forms the basis of a whole civilization. The second is that the heritage of the region through which Islam has expanded was rich of cultural and artistic traditions i.e. The Roman Empire, Byzantium, Persia, and India...

In comparison, Matisse has always recognized the importance of artistic heritage. He argues on many occasions that our traditions are the accumulation of many including Western and non-Western traditions i.e. Egyptian traditions and the Renaissance. Etienne cited in Flam (1986), argues that:

... To interpret that, the artist (Matisse) goes back beyond the Renaissance to the images makers of the middle ages, ingenuous as well as ingenious, and farther in the past to the Hindu and the Persian art. (Flam, 1986, p.49)

Barns and De Mazia (1931) have mentioned this tendency in Matisse's art, arguing that his paintings show many foreign artistic influences:

The Persian traits in his paintings are so interwoven with those of other oriental traditions and with elements contributed by Matisse himself that they appear as a pervasive quality which cannot be abstracted and identified in isolation. (Barns and De Mazia, 1931, P.67)

On the other hand, and like a Muslim who is ready to translate life in terms of his religious creeds, Matisse according to Schneider (1984) has shown the same a religious interpretation for life. Art for Matisse in this case is like religion for a Muslim as both have the aim to perfect life or to fill in the gap created by human beings' reality.

5.7 Conclusion

Islamic art is arguably the outcome of many artistic traditions interacting through history and emerging in energetic characteristics. In fact, Islamic art has gained its energy by succeeding in integrating local traditions with the traditions of the lands Islam has occupied. Such integration is amazingly based on recognition and preservation of different traditions. This policy is in full contrast with occupation and governing different people, sometimes against their will. Matisse's Islamic

experience is not too far away from the Islamic art evolution process. Islamic art was relying on different artistic traditions; Matisse's art has arguably followed the same path seeking technical, aesthetical and spiritual help from many different artistic traditions. Colours, flatness, decorative patterns, miniatures, rugs and Arabesques were introduced in Matisse's art as to experiment how to represent the subject matter while expressing feelings and transmitting meanings.

CHAPTER SIX

MATISSE: Going to the Ugly... Coming with its Colours

6.1 Introduction

As I have argued in chapter two, Matisse's encounter with Islamic art took place in both Europe and the Orient (mainly in Morocco and Algeria). In Europe, the artist has tried to validate his Fauvism by seeking arguably the assistance of Islamic aesthetics in general and in particular the aesthetics of Islamic miniatures. In this context, Matisse was trying to validate his Fauvist concepts about the decorative nature of colours by consulting some Islamic art concepts about decoration and the use of colours. To achieve his goals, Matisse has tried to secure some connections with Islamic arts by visiting the many art exhibitions held in Europe at the eve of the 20th century. In addition, many permanent Islamic art displays (i.e. The Louvre display) were of great importance for Matisse in his attempts to establish some credible connections with the aesthetics of Islamic arts.

In this chapter I am tracing the direct influences of Islamic arts on Matisse's paintings. Investigation is conducted in four main directions. The first direction is to Review the literature about direct and indirect influences of Islamic arts on Matisse paintings (see chapter 2 literature review). The second is to investigate when and how Matisse's contacts with Islamic art did occur? The third is to shed some light on Matisse's Islamic experience as a part of a trend in European art especially on the eve of the 20th century. And the forth direction is to locate and describe the stylistic impact of Islamic art on Matisse's paintings. What exhibitions of Islamic arts Matisse might have seen before and after he decided to go to Morocco? And how he succeeded to make himself familiar with different Islamic art forms especially miniatures, rugs and ceramics where decorations and the use of primary colours prevail?

6.2 When the Other starts to appeal: A Non –Western Reading of Matisse

Let it be known from the very beginning that evidences of Matisse's encounters with Islamic arts fairs and exhibitions that took place in Europe at the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century cannot objectively be secured. However, every bit of evidences were carefully collected and analyzed in order to establish a credible argument of what Matisse might have seen and what he was exposed to in those places especially in the year between 1878 to 1912. Facillon (1928) describes the earliest encounter of Matisse with Islamic arts speculating it may start as early as the time of Gustave Moreau's studio where he has studied art and has encouraged to explore the "beauty of Persian miniatures and other Asian arts". Holton, (1960) argues that Moreau who was Matisse's teacher was himself an eager artist who tended to explore some Islamic art forms especially miniatures and rugs. Gauguin was another source for Matisse's Islamic inspiration. Schneider quoted Gauguin saying: "O painters who are looking for a colour technique, study rugs. You will find all the necessary knowledge there" (Schneider, 1990, p.26). However, the interest in Islamic rugs is not new in the history of European art. Schneider (1984) argues that interest in rugs goes back to Domenico De Bartolo and Holbein but rugs were activated as inspirations in the romantic period. Delacroix quoted by Maxime Du camp (see Schneider 1984) as Saying" the most beautiful pictures I have ever seen are some oriental rugs. Maurice Denis upon Schneider said"

...Perhaps if we want to discover the presence of the sun in a work of art as real as those of Gauguin, we must go back to Gothic stained gals windows to oriental rugs"(Schneider, 1984,P.26)

In comparison with Gauguin's paintings Matisse seems to take the advice to its logical extreme and from now on rugs and textile patterns would be found almost in every painting. In sum, Matisse was trying to get himself familiarized with the aesthetic of Islamic art through Gauguin and other European artists as much as the studying of Islamic art collection in the Louvre museum. Asserting on consulting

the Islamic art aesthetics as a choice, Matisse at the beginning of his career seems to realize that it would not be enough to receive the Islamic influences by proxy. Instead, he should be in direct contact whenever possible with original Islamic art forms. Then the Islamic art fairs and exhibitions that took place in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century would become his major destination in his Islamic art choice.

6.3 The Great Mohammedan Exhibitions: Aesthetics that matter

Though Matisse has often recalled the 1910 extraordinary Islamic art exhibition at Munich (see Schneider, 1984), he appears to have been familiarizing himself with Islamic art long before that date. In fact, Islamic art was the subject of many exhibitions in Paris from as early as 1869. In the following paragraph, I am researching the Islamic art displays that were held in Paris in the decade or so that preceded the two 1903 and 1910 major Islamic art exhibitions of Paris and Munich. The aim of such a research is to relate these displays to the possibility that Matisse might have access to them. Another aim here is to shed some light on the Islamic artistic presence in Europe that might influence Matisse and other European artists' paintings.

Before 1903, research on the exhibitions of Islamic art that took place in Europe toward the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century reveals that just minor shows could be sighted. Then the accessibility of those exhibitions to Matisse is really an impossible task. In a major study on the Influences of Persian art on Gauguin, Matisse and Kandinsky, Daftari (1988) argues that many Islamic art exhibitions were held in Paris from the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties of the 19th century. However, in this study I tend to focus on the exhibitions of the nineties and up. The reasons of such a focus lay in the fact that Matisse's interest in Islamic art has become evident in the late years of the 19th century. In addition, it would be easier to trace the accessibility of the nineties exhibitions for Matisse and other European artists especially the French, as the French colonial power has become more involved in dealing with the Islamic

countries especially in North Africa. In addition, accessibility for those exhibitions proved to be easier by far as from as early as the year 1903. These exhibitions have become relatively documented with catalogues, while other displays especially before 1903 were either not or poorly documented and without any catalogues.

6.3.1 The Early Islamic art Exhibitions in Europe

Probably the earliest Islamic art exhibition was held in 1878 in Paris and was organized in the Pavilion of Trocadero. According to Daftari (1988), the importance of the exhibition consists in its collections of a variety of Islamic items such as Islamic rugs, miniatures, and arms. *The Trocadero* exhibition is celebrated by many art critics such as Henry Lavoix. According to Lavoix (1878) the exhibition was the first that contain Persia-Indian Islamic miniatures. According to Daftari (1988) another Islamic art held in *Paris World's Fair* in the same year. Though there are no evidences, whatsoever to trace Matisse's visit to this exhibition the exhibition naturally was a good occasion for Matisse and other interested artists (i.e. Gauguin) to familiarize themselves with the Islamic artistic traditions. In addition, the importance of the exhibition consists in the good collections of Persian-Islamic rugs. The exhibited Islamic rugs deserved the praise of Morceaux (1882) cited in Daftari (1988) who commented on the collection as follow:

The exhibited rugs in the Palais of Mars and in the Pavillion of the Trocadero (the exhibition's venues) attired the attention of all attendants through their subtle materials, and through the richness of their colours and pure drawings" (Daftari, 1988, P.147).

Investigating the accessibility of this exhibition to Matisse is of course an impossible task. However, the importance of mentioning this kind of exhibitions is to speculate that Islamic arts exhibitions were somehow a part of artistic life in France in particular and Europe in general. Therefore, accessibility would be

evident especially for those artists who showed some Islamic interest. In 1893, an Islamic art exhibition was organized at the Palais of Champs Elysees in Paris. The exhibition is mentioned by Gayet (1893), Harye (1893) and Blochet (1903) and was organized to show the public the arts produced by people who lived in France's colonies. In that exhibition different art forms were exhibited (Carpets, miniatures, arms and manuscripts, etc. (see Gayet, 1893) *the exhibition of Islamic art. L'Art LV and Casanova, P Islamic art in the exhibition organized by the Palais des Champs Elysees a Paris October November 1893*. Demombynes (1893) also mentioned the exhibitions criticizing its organization and its catalogue.

Barr (1966) speculates that Matisse might have visited the 1893 Islamic art exhibition as his painting *Still Life with Book* showed an Islamic carpet. Barr's argues that the introduction of the Islamic carpet in that painting could be a sign that Matisse might have seen the 1893 exhibition. Accordingly, the introduction of the Islamic rug in Matisse's still life could be the first sign of testing the Islamic art aesthetical influences.

Another Islamic art exhibition was held at *The Bibliotheque Nationale* in Paris in 1897. Up on Daftari (1988) the collection of the exhibition is borrowed from the bibliotheque's collection and from Schefer's collection. It includes Islamic manuscripts and miniatures, which were exhibited along *The Congress of Orientalists* that was held annually an exhibition for the paintings of orientalist artists. No one can assume that Matisse had visited such an exhibition. However, later on and when comparing some of Matisse's paintings i.e. *The Painter Family* with miniatures that illustrate some page of the Persian *Shahnama* one may argue that Matisse may have seen 1897 exhibitions especially the exhibited miniatures. Daftari (1988) cited many *Shahnama* miniatures, while I suggest a 13th century Islamic miniature, *Chess Player* as inspiration for Matisse when he did the *Painter Family*. (See Figures of Matisse's *The Painter Family* and the suggested Islamic miniature he might have inspired in chapter 7)

6.3.2 Seeking the Beautiful Other

Though there are no reliable evidences about Matisse's ability to access of all Islamic art exhibitions that took place in France before 1903, the exhibitions in themselves are testimony of the then artistic context that was striving to be inclusive of the art of the other. In the next paragraphs I am investigating the 1903 and 1910 Islamic art exhibitions as two landmarks that arguably left an impressive impact on the art of Matisse as much as other European artists.

The 1903 major Islamic art exhibition was held in Paris at the Pavillion de Marsan. According to Van Berchem and Huart (1903) the catalogue of the exhibition-documented objects of all media, which, were exhibited especially miniatures taken from the Shahanama and some ceramic wares. The catalogue as well recognizes the various collectors' items lent to the exhibition. What makes 1903 Islamic art exhibition so different is Matisse's direct statement about it. In answering questions in an interview recorded by Barr (1966), Matisse mentioned the 1903 exhibition praising the way Islamic miniatures and rugs strike a chord in his heart about the decorative nature of colours. Another clue of Matisse visiting the 1903 exhibition came from Schneider (1984) quoting Marguerite Duthuit in a conversation with her, confirming Matisse's visit. (See Daftari, 1988, PP 175-176)

From now on Matisse's connections with Islamic art have become secured and consequently, we may speculate that he may have attended any Islamic art exhibitions as an interested client whenever those exhibitions were held across Europe. In this respect, two important Islamic art exhibitions were held in Paris after 1903. Daftari (1988) cited two Islamic arts exhibitions that Matisse may have seen between these respectively 1907 and 1909 exhibitions...When Islamic art aesthetics become apparent in Matisse's activities, the greatest Islamic art exhibition was held in Munich in 1910. Arguably, in that year Matisse's decision to follow his "odd" path with Islamic art has been taken as an ultimate choice.

Fortunately, we cannot be mistaken the accessibility of 1910 Islamic art exhibition to Matisse as he has mentioned it many times (see Flam, 1986; Daftari, 1988).

Purman (1946) who had the chance to visit the exhibition with Matisse describes the exhibited collections in full details. This will give us a clear idea of what Matisse may have seen in 1910 Munich exhibitions. Reading the catalogue published in German language (see Sarre and Martin 1912) one can realize the importance of such an exhibition not just because of the varieties of the exhibited collections but through the huge numbers of the exhibited items (3500 items). More importantly though, is the stylistic impact of the Munich exhibition not just on Matisse's paintings' techniques but also on his concepts about colours and its functions and uses in art. Schneider (1990) stated the great influences of Islamic art on Matisse's painting quoting the artist as saying "I felt the passion of colour developed in me at the time the 1910 Great Mohammedan exhibition has taken place" (Schneider, 1990, p.25). Expressing the impact of the 1910 Islamic art exhibition Matisse has defended his choice arguing that Islamic art, and through its accessories suggests a greater space a truly plastic space. This helped me to find out my way out of the intimate painting (see Schneider, 1990, p.26). Talking about the accessories in Islamic art Matisse on the eve of 1910 exhibition seems to put an end to his hesitation about the full adoption of the Islamic decorative system stating: "First of all one must be decorative".

Daftari (1988) argues that there is no doubt that Matisse has visited the 1910 Munich Exhibition. She quoted Purmann who visited the exhibition with Matisse, that the artist had purchased "Post cards and photographs of miniatures and metal works". In this context, I made every effort to locate those post cards in the National library of France, in Matisse Museum in Nice, and in the Louvre's archive but unfortunately no post cards could be located. If found one day those post cards would become very important clues of Matisse's Islamic involvement, as they may show which Islamic miniatures Matisse has seen or was interested in.

In addition, they may be compared with Matisse's paintings to reveal any influences or stylistic impacts. However, the Archive of the National Library of France affords many publications that contain Islamic miniatures and illustrations that Matisse might have seen.

Finally, we should not stop speculating about the impact of permanent Islamic art collections in the European art galleries, as they were primary sites for Matisse and other artists to go back when the need arises. (eg. Klee, Gauguin and Kandinsky). We should mention here The Louvre museum's permanent Islamic art collection as an essential resource where Matisse often goes back in his attempts to promote his new concepts about arts. Another permanent collection of Islamic art that Matisse may have seen was displayed at *Le Musée D'arts Decoratives in Paris* (Schneider (1984) argues that Matisse maybe encouraged by his teachers at *L' Ecole D'arts Decoratives* in Paris to visit he Islamic art collection.

6.4 Matisse's Style: Islamic art as a site of Archeology

Looking at Matisse's early works, one can easily conclude the simplicity in approaching his paintings. Simplicity in colours, composition, and perspectives may give his early paintings its Islamic bit. However, no one can be sure at this stage about any foreign influences in Matisse's paintings. It is possible here to speculate that Matisse had his first encounter with Islamic art forms while he was at the Louver Museum copying the old masters' works. However, it would be futile to build up on this alone as most of Matisse's paintings before 1904-1905 is divided between an impressionist and sometime pointillist style with a simple approach in treating the different aspects of the paintings.

Many paintings that precede 1903 show a struggling typical French artist who is in line with what was become common in the evolution of French paintings. That is, a mixture of impressionist style and the stylistic influences survived by masters like Chardin, and Courbet. In the following paragraphs, I am quickly navigating this early period's paintings trying to trace when and how Matisse started to

consult the Islamic style and introduce it in his paintings. In others word when did the decisive shift in Matisse's style have occurred?

Matisse's painting *Interior with a Top Hat 1896*, is a leading example of a struggling artist. With its gray tones, Matisse seems to be working under the influences of the great European masters with desperate attempts to depict fleeting perspectives that may represent the third dimension. In 1897, Matisse made *La Desserte*. A painting that meant to reflect realistic style reflected in the woman organizing a vase of flowers over a table filled with dinner sets, bottles and the like. Here the artist shows his appreciation of the old masters' style reflected in the improved perspective mainly in viewing the table and the two chairs at the far end.

In 1898, Matisse produced *Corsican Landscape*. This very important painting reflects his tendency to liberate himself from the gray interior scenes. In addition, Matisse seems to be benefited from the light of the Mediterranean Island reflected in the sky, the sea, and the vegetation. However, he seems to be obsessed with depicting volumes especially in the trees that appear gray as he seeks the help of the gray tones in an attempt to represent the third dimension.

In 1899, as well Matisse produced *The Sick Women*. A vivid composition of a laying woman that has no details on her face with gray scale drawn to show a clear sharp contrast between dark and light. Still one cannot distinguish his style from other artists' style. The same years, he produced *Still life with Oranges*. The gray suddenly disappears except from the middle in an attempt to give the oranges and the plate a kind of volumes. However, two main new features appear in this painting in comparison with paintings produced before it.

The first is the introduction of a nearly pure yellow colour covering the background. The second is the introduction of window; a feature that is common in Islamic miniatures. These effects could be argued as the result of his Corsican

trip where the light of the Mediterranean sea of Corsica is more suggestive than that of the deemed light in Paris and Northern France. Upon his return to Paris in 1900, Matisse did his two Self Portrait and Interior with Harmonium. Describing the situation after he did these paintings, Matisse is quoted by Escolier (1937) cited in Flam 1986 "The students were making fun of my exercise" "I soon had to flee the place" (flam, 1986, p.41), and the place was Gustave Moreau's studio.

Indeed the three paintings of 1900 seem colourless composition is odd and perspective is anything but the right logical one. Despite Matisse's huge effort to challenge himself in terms of depicting the third dimension in Interior with Harmonium, the result was disappointing. Indeed a he seems to get himself in a muddy environment but without giving any sense of volume especially to the piano, the chair and the vase with two flowers. In a letter to Simon Bussy dated July 1903 (see flam 1986,p.42) Matisse reflects his disappointment blaming himself as saying "The unfortunate thing is that I have no genius and if I did have genius, from the pecuniary point of view it would be probably the same." In 1901-1902 Matisse did Luxembourg Gardens (see Appendix2). In this painting, Matisse's sensitivity to pure seems to be awakened by the relaxing Parisian garden. The artist proceeds with no caution to perspective or the depiction of the third dimension. Instead, his attention seems to be focused on the colours spread without any restriction. Red, purple, orange and blue cover the trees as much as the ground. In this respect, one may start to suspect some Matisse's early contacts with some Islamic art forms that he may have seen during his stay in the Louvre. This claim based on the argument that in Islamic miniature objects could be filled with any colour. In this respect, Gaston Migeon cited in (Daftari, 1988, P.105) is quoted as saying "Persian and Islamic miniatures were a source of stimulation to Gauguin for their arbitrary colours... their two dimensional quality..." The meaning of arbitrary as I guess here is to use the colour in a different context that may permit to fill in the natural objects with colours that are different from their natural colours. eg. bleu apple, green nose, purple grass etc...This note could be of

importance if we know that Matisse so often had mentioned Gauguin when talking about foreign influences.

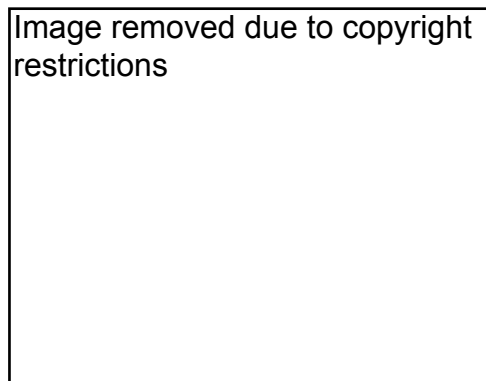
However, one would speculate that Islamic aspects start to emerge in Matisse paintings after the 1903 Islamic art exhibition that took place in Paris. It was an occasion for Matisse to introduce himself to a great legacy of Islamic art. It would be too early to argue that the radical changes that could be detected in 1904 and up in Matisse's paintings were due to Islamic influences. Instead, I tend to argue that these changes are the consequences of Matisse being subject to many conflicting influences among them the Islamic influences. For example in the 1904-1905 *Lux, Calm and Volupte*, we may detect Paul Signac and George Seurat pointillist effects, in addition of some Islamic general influences such as two-dimensional composition and non-depressing subject matter.

Along with *The Terrace, Saint Tropez* (1904) *View of Callioure* 1905 (see fig on the next page) is another landmark in Matisse's shift toward the Islamic art. In the first, Matisse decided to quit the pointillist style as he realized that we might get the same effects if we use colours in adjacent spaces. While in the second he decided to go to the Persian to depict pinky hills or Vermillion grass. It would be crucial to claim here that Matisse's first touch with the Islamic aesthetics could be materialized at this moment. More importantly, is the assumption that the root of Matisse's fauvism could be detected in that early Islamic notion of using primary colour to depict the subject matter.



Matisse View of Callioure 1905

Still in 1905, Matisse's painting the *Open Window* is arguably revealing more than any painting before his Islamic involvement with Islamic art. (A full analysis of this painting is to come later in this section pages).



Matisse Pink Onion 1906

Probably *Pink Onion* 1906 (See picture above) is Matisse's first painting through which he arguably decided to express himself islamically. Heavy decorated vases suddenly appear, nearly two-dimensional composition, and an economic semi-circular arrangement of the vases and the onions give the painting a very different aura in comparison of his earlier paintings. This is reminiscent in great deal to Islamic miniatures where its maker's concern was not by all mean the third dimension. More importantly, Matisse in the *Pink Onion* seems to put no effort in representing the third dimension as he was struggling to do in his earlier paintings. Instead, he kept his colour as pure as possible. Here, I assume, Matisse has realized that decorations on the three vases seem to be more energetic in reflecting harmony and arguably pleasure that may surpass the pleasure resulting from representing the third dimension.

In 1906, as well Matisse produced *Girl Reading*, (see fig in Appendix 2). In this painting Matisse seems to be more confident as he applies his colours in a decorative way. More importantly, he seems to distant himself from Signac or Seurat's Pointillist techniques pursuing his "decorative instinct". That is the meanings in the painting stem from the meanings of its colours and from the visual impact of interacting pigments through which the artist tries to express himself. At this moment, Matisse arguably seems to turn his back to all known European schools of art in favour of testing a new way of doing painting based on just reflecting his own feelings as a person. Spurling (2000) argues that this language was absolutely new in that time and caused Matisse a lot of pain as the critics frequently attacked him as much as the public.

1907-1908 seems to be the miniature's venture. Matisse produced in this year *The Blue Nude or Souvenir de Biskra*, *Le Lux 1* and *Conversation* (see figure in appendix 2). In the *Nude Blue*, which is, a souvenir from his unpleasant and unproductive trip to Algeria (see Schneider 1990 and Elderfield 1990) Matisse tries to apply literally the Islamic miniatures' techniques with all their economical composition and approach. Though Matisse's attempts to represent the third dimension on the nude's legs and chest he did not succeed as his "two dimensional mind" is yet inhibited with decoration rather than real subject matters.




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Matisse The Lux I

In *the Lux 1* (see Fig above), Matisse is still exploring the miniature's technique by simplifying the three female bodies without any serious attempt to depict the third dimension or to play the Impressionist's game in creating the illusion of the third dimension. Though there are four planes in the painting, the sky, the mountain, the water and the flat land, there is no attempt from the artist to integrate those plans as European traditions may suggest. Instead, Matisse seems to apply Islamic miniaturists' techniques in separating the different planes as in any Islamic miniatures. More importantly, In the *Lux 1* Matisse seems to take his painting away from just technical influence to touch the spiritual influence. Therefore, by depicting a paradise-like place he seems arguably to be aware of the Islamic paradise. As a promised place reserved by Islam to the true believers

Islamic paradise is a trouble free place. Beautiful women, rivers of honey and milk, flowers and birds of all kind are the Islamic paradise's features. In the Lux 1 Matisse's naked females seem to enjoy their times in an anti terrestrial place like heaven. This is believed to be an early indication of Matisse's concepts about a free of trouble art as expressed in his Notes of Painter 1908. See Matisse's Notes of a Painter in Flam 1986)).

As Matisse grows confident in his Islamic choice Conversation (1908) seems to be done after Islamic miniatures' approach and techniques, (detailed discussion is to follow in next chapter) . Still in 1908, a landmark in Matisse's decorative choice is *La Desserte* or Harmony in Red. (The Hermitage museum Leningrad). According to Izerghina (1978),

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Matisse *La dessert or Harmony in red*

painting belongs in the category of those milestone works by Matisse, which mark the principal stage of his artistic career (Izerghina, 1978, p.138). Though Izerghina

recognizes that Matisse tried to revive *La Dessert* of 1897 by making comparisons between different elements of the two paintings she fails to say anything about the initial decorative shift from *La dessert* of 1897 and *the Dessert* of 1908. By 1908, the date of *Harmony in Rouge* Matisse through this particular painting proves to apply the Islamic aesthetical system without any reservation. First two-dimensional composition is no more a problem for him. Applying primary colours has become a normal routine. Regarding colours in *Harmony in Red* Matisse has extended the monochromic red from the first plan of the table up to the wall. Though he separates the table and the wall with a fine black line any depth in the painting is declined. However, Matisse does not break completely with spatial reality, and the vague hint of depth materialized in the chair and the landscape through the window evokes arguably an existing clash between his European traditions and the adopted traditions. Consequently, Matisse has started to realize that a kind of clash is always existed between art and the visible world, a notion that can be assumed in the philosophy that may underpin Islamic art in general.

Getting back to *Red Harmony*, Matisse seems to test his Islamic decorative choice against his European artistic traditions. No attempts have been made to depict the fruit on the table upon Cézanne or even Gauguin (in terms of perspective) instead he reduces them to its basic decorative existence and spread them all over the place in a way reminiscent to Islamic miniature approach. Even the woman who is the main feature in the painting is reduced to a flat silhouette etched against the wall in a way that recalls Persian miniature where people are depicted economically to serve the decorative climate of the whole composition. To conclude this section, the chaotic aspects of Matisse's early paintings could be the result of many conflicting approaches when making art. The first is the European approach within its traditions of depicting the illusion of the third dimension and the second is the Islamic approach that denies the illusionistic perspective. Putting himself on the edge Matisse, the calm Matisse seems to be up to challenge...

6.5 Surfing on an Islamic art Wave: A colourful Venture.

Between 1903 and 1910, Matisse had arguably succeeded in drawing attention to his paintings not just, because he tends to neglect what was trendy in the realm of European art, but because he introduced new concepts of using colours. At the time, Impressionist artists were busy representing the fleeting moment concentrating on the natural light that may gives colours their qualities. Pointillist artists were busy trying to separate colour pigments relying on the illusion to "tromp L'oeil" "deceive the eye. Cubists were busy getting into the essential characters of things neglecting colours and reducing it mostly to a muddy set of brownish nuances.

In his Fauvist venture, Matisse according to Schacht (1922) made two discoveries regarding the use of colours in paintings. The first is that colours should be simply distributed based on purely formalistic principle. In this, colours should not be mixed as most European artists used to do but it should be spread as an independent being that can act and react on its own. It would be impossible then to manipulate the colours or to use too many colour tones... Instead, expressive values will arise, as different coloured space would interact with each other to generate expressive qualities. It is assumed here that using colours in well-defined spaces would give them decorative qualities. This is based on the definition of decoration as a process of establishing logical and aesthetical interaction between different elements (see Gombrich 1976, Grabar 1990). At this moment, Matisse dares to promote the idea of the decorative nature of colours. In this case, there would be arguably less chance to represent a clear perspective that may reshape the third dimension in the painting.

Before I start to argue Matisse's second discovery, I would like to compare such a concept (the decorative nature of colour) with the general traditions in using colours in Islamic miniatures. Then I would argue through examples how Matisse has acquired the new approaches about colours. As Matisse shows an eager tendency to explore some alternatives to illusionist space, he might find his

inspiration in the Islamic miniatures, which, in general neglect any illusion. The main feature of a typical Islamic miniature is to use colours in a flat surface without any particular attention to diversify the nuances within the colour itself. This technique would deprive the miniature from any illusionary space. Instead, the plans are organized adjacently beside and above each other. In addition, in Islamic miniatures there are no restrictions on colouring any object with any colour. Or rather, it becomes favourable to colour objects without any regard to their natural colours. Expression then would not just come from the object itself but from the interaction of different colours covering different objects.

In comparison to the Renaissance's traditions, this is absolutely new. How?

While Schacht (1922) was not concerned about the origins of Matisse's first discovery, he confirms that the new in Matisse approach is to subordinate other colours using a single tone, while the traditions of renaissance recommend harmonizing two or three tones and tends to hold other part neutral. Again Islamic miniatures' techniques especially the use of a single colour impose themselves on Matisse and other European artists. The second discovery that Matisse has achieved upon Schacht (1922) is the artist's engagement in looking at the objects as independent beings and to study their relationships when he depict them on canvas. Here as well lies Islamic art concepts about depicting objects.

Long before Matisse, Islamic decorators and miniaturists stylized objects to create harmony. In doing so they actually force different objects into a dialogical process in which each object would act like an independent element while contributing in the harmony and the meaning of the whole structure. This is called decoration upon the Islamic system. A religious aura spreads from the concepts of Islamic decoration. That is, in order to let any object get rid of its cheap dying material it should be reduced to its essence. In addition, its essence would be very close to its abstract quality, so that it can be affiliated with the abstract feature of god the creator of every object.

Indeed, it could be easily argued here that Matisse's tendency to simplify (to reduce objects to their essential characteristics) could have its origin in the Islamic miniatures he has seen. One here may assume that the huge number of drawings Matisse has done could be linked to the above concept so that a woman's face, a tree or a flower could be represented in a just mere linear line. Therefore, its aesthetics stem not from the similarity with any particular woman face but through the aesthetic of the line itself and through the way the line may organize the void of the surface on which the face has drawn. In detecting Matisse's possible encounters with Islamic art forms and literature Daftari(1988) quoted Schneider (1984) that Paul Signac introduced Matisse to Felix Feneon who upon Daftari owned copies of the Persian *Sunbul Zade* treatise on painting. Daftari has speculated about Matisse saw the Persian treatise and did *Lux Calme* and *Volupte* in 1904 under its influences. Looking at the *Sunbul Zade* Treatise, one may amazingly read how the Persian text urges artists to:

Proceed from primary colours... and to let the background of the paper lightens your colours and supply the white, but never leave it absolutely bared. Linen and flesh can only be painted by one who knows the secret of the art. Who tells you that flesh is light vermillion and that linen has gray shadow. (See Daftari, 1988, p.191)

Rawlence (1954) raises the possibility of Matisse seeing the Persian treatise when Matisse was with Signac in 1904 and that Matisse since then has acquired a major change in using colours. In comparing *Luxe Calme and Volupte* with the instructions of the Persian treatise, Daftari (1988) wrote:

In the *Luxe Calme and Volupte* Matisse uses a variety of hues but the dominant tones are red, yellow and blue, and the whole gamut is lightened by the clear background, just as advised by *Sunbul Zade*"(Daftari, 1988,p.191)

However, as I agree with Daftari's argument, I would suggest that probably Matisse's 1905 painting *View of Colliour* might represent the Persian treatise better. The various tone used in the painting are complementary hues derived just from the primary colours. In addition, the sky in the painting tends to lighten all

colours not through mixture but through the ambiance, it created and reflected all over the canvas. Moreover, the Vermillion is there and its “rude” application could be the consequences of reading how to apply it and without seeing enough practical examples. Later on, we are going to see how Matisse subdued his colors scheme when he became assumingly familiar enough with Islamic art forms especially miniatures and rugs. It could be argued here that Matisse put an end to the short-lived Fauvism when he saw enough examples how to apply colour as in Islamic miniatures so that no single colour would be devoured by itself or devour the others as the Vermillion does in *View in Colliour*. In sum Matisse, courage could not stand firm without being backed by a theoretical framework that may supply techniques as much as spiritual help. However, was Matisse alone in such a venture? The answer is no as many other European artists tend to seek some solutions from outside the European traditions. In the next section, I am briefly exploring Gauguin and Kandinsky’s involvement with the foreign art especially Islamic art.

6.6 Islamic art and other European artists

In this section, other European artists’ connections with Islamic art are briefly investigated. The aim of such an investigation is by no mean to give a full account of those European artists’ involvement with Islamic art. Instead, this is done in order to give a clear idea about the environment in which Matisse’s Islamic experience has been evolved. Therefore, the extent of such an investigation is defined by two main factors: the First is the argument that Matisse’s Islamic involvement with Islamic arts was a part of a larger movement in which many other prominent artists were involved. In fact, one may easily argue a kind of Islamic effect in the work of Gauguin, Kandinsky, Delacroix, Renoir, Marquet, Klee, and Picasso. This is based on Islamic aesthetics reflected in many works of the above artists’ paintings.

This section is concentrating on Gauguin and Kandinsky Islamic connections. The choice of the two artists is based on the argument, that the two artists more than any body else have approached Islamic art in their attempts to develop their arts. In this, they both share Matisse's interest in consulting other artistic traditions especially the Islamic traditions. Moreover, a quick reading of their paintings would reveal clear Islamic influences especially in some of Kandinsky's paintings. (See figures in appendix 5). The second factor is defined in terms of Matisse's connections with those artists, and whether he was influenced by their views and through their arts. In this respect, I am trying to trace Matisse's connections with those particular artists especially Gauguin.

6.7. Gauguin: the Priest of all cultures

According to Khan (1925) cited in Daftari (1988) Delacroix copied some Islamic miniatures even before Gauguin. Degas and Manet did some art works based on Islamic miniatures or copying miniatures themselves. During his stay in Europe, probably Gauguin might become the most ardent artist who has looked for foreign influences in doing art. He has mentioned many traditions; The Cambodians, the Egyptians and most often the Persians who strongly represent the Islamic art though Persian arts go back to pre-Islamic history.

Connections of Gauguin with Islamic art could be validated based on his statements about its importance in developing a new way of colouring. He has often mentioned the Persian art advising other artists to consult different artistic traditions when looking for colours' techniques or solving compositional matters. In his Notes about Art during the Universal Exhibition Gauguin (1889) expressed his view when seeing the Persian miniatures collections in the Louvre: *"Tout L'orient Mystique reveur se retrouve la- dedans"* He said. All the orient the dream and the marvelous can be found there. Schneider (1990) suggests that Gauguin's advice to artists about colours struck a chord in Matisse's ear when Gauguin said:

O Peintres qui demandez une technique de la couleur, étudiez les tapis, mais qui sait le livre est peut être cacheté, vous ne pouvez le lire. Puis les souvenirs de mauvaises traditions vous obstruent. (See Gauguin *Diverses Choses; Different things 1896-1898* in Ovi Paris 1974 (Schneider, 1990 p.190) (the quote is translated to English at the beginning of this chapter).

Rawlence cited in Daftari (1988) argues that probably Matisse may become influenced by Islamic arts through Gauguin. Rawlence adds that

Persian influences in Gauguin's paintings embodied in the flat area of pure colour with clear cut boundaries which suggest a compartmentalization of the picture surface" (Daftari, 1988, p.40)

Kloner (1971) mentioned the Islamic influences in Gauguin's paintings counting The Romantic and expressionist painting, Persian miniature, neo-impressionism and Cezanne. Looking at the above statement one can speculate about the artistic movement that took place in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century and in which transgression of artistic schools boundaries was led by artists like Matisse and Gauguin and others. The importance of such a transgression consists in its inclusion of the other's art. More importantly, the recognition of the art of the other in informing the well-established art schools in Europe has arguably helped concerned artists to explore new techniques. In addition, it provides them with additional means to express themselves based on their individuality. Matisse in this case must have some support from experiences such as Gauguin's, as he was struggling to introduce different artistic traditions in his paintings.

Gauguin's statement about Islamic art especially Persian art forms another clue for his involvement with different artistic traditions. In a letter sent to his friend Emile Schuffrencker describing his own painting "Self Portrait" Gauguin wrote "The eyes, the mouth, the nose are like flowers in a Persian rug" See Malingue in (Daftari 1988, p.140). Why Persian flowers? In a letter to Van Gogh, (cited in

Daftari(1988) Gauguin asserts on the abstract and symbolic values of the floral patterns as depicted in a Persian rug. This remark promotes the notion that Gauguin's project is seriously involving the Persian as his saying prove that he has attentively and in purpose studied those Persian patterns and decided about their qualities(abstract and symbolic).

In *Les Modernist* published by A Aurier, Gauguin (1889, P.86) in his *Notes sur L'art a L'exposition Universell* expressed his view about Islamic art saying:

..”I imagine there is a great genie that made me see muscles in flowers and flowers in muscles. All the dreamy mystical orient could be found there” (Gauguin 1889, P.86)

Leaving Gauguin with his genies feeding his paintings with Islamic aesthetics, Kandinsky however the Russian who had natural bridge with the Persians and their arts seems to had more access to many Islamic art forms especially miniatures and rugs.

6.7.1 Kandinsky A decorative Neighbour within the Reach

Like Matisse, Gauguin, and Klee, Kandinsky in 1904-1905 made two trips to North Africa. His destination was Tunisia and the aim is to be in touch with the land on which Islamic art has evolved. The trips are mentioned by Afif Bahnassi's study about the Influences of Arabic arts on the modern Western art. Bahnassi (1966) argues that Kandinsky's trip influences many of his paintings and provides the artists with stylistic justification in his attempt to develop his painting. The Tunisian writer Mohamed Soussi has mentioned Kandinsky' trip in an article called Kandinsky and La Tunisia. Oddly, Soussi (1985) (a Tunisian artist) fails to see any Islamic impact on the style of the artist. However, many Kandinsky's paintings are in fact directly inspired by Islamic miniatures.

It could be true to say that the most important aspects of Kandinsky paintings consist in the artist's attempt to break away from natural forms. Two main drives

could be detected here that may help the artist to go ahead with his non-representational style. The first is the artist's Russian background where the Russian icon with its abstract quality had the potential to influence the artist's choice towards abstract paintings. The second is that Kandinsky may have access to the neighboring Persia with its Islamic miniatures. Lindsay and Vergo (1982) argue that Kandinsky's early career is characterized by the notion that his art is a mixture of abstract and realistic forms. Something that can be found in most Islamic miniatures, especially the Persian ones.

Lindsay and Vergo quoted Kandinsky saying that Islamic miniatures he had seen in Munich exhibitions appeared as if they were coming from heaven like a revelation. Here is another artist after Matisse who is talking about revelation when seeing Islamic miniatures. This is another clue of the power of 1910 Munich exhibitions to influence a whole generation of European art. Moreover Kandinsky in his Letter from Munich(1910) (See Lindsay and Vergo 1982) himself argues the effect of the spiritual dimension he found in some Islamic art forms arguing the connection between the geometrical and the spiritual in art.

Gabriele Munter Kandinsky's companion to the Tunisian trips quoted by Roditi (1980) the effect of Islamic art on the abstract forms developed by Kandinsky. Munter declares that Kandinsky was impressed by the way Islamic art especially miniatures integrates the abstract into the picturesque. A matter that meant too much for Kandinsky as he himself tends to experiment such integration in most of his paintings. In brief, and like Matisse many early Kandinsky's paintings, consult Islamic art in a straightforward way. In this respect many Kandinsky's paintings and sketches demonstrate how influential Islamic miniatures were in his paintings. Examples of Kandinsky's paintings in which he has inspired by particular Islamic miniatures are many: *Blue Mountain* 1908 and *Rider* 1909 were inspired by a 16 century Islamic miniature titled *Two Warriors*. *Composition 1 and 2* 1909- 1910 were inspired by a 1560 Islamic miniature taken from *Ajayeb al Makhloukat for Alkazwini Improvisation*, 1910 is inspired by an

Islamic miniature *Shah Tahmasp* taken from the famous *Shahnama*. This claim is made on similarity of the subject matter as much as compositional elements of Kandinsky's paintings and the Islamic miniatures he inspired. In brief, this is not a full account of Kandinsky's Islamic inspiration because his paintings and sketches that were directly inspired by the Islamic miniatures are many. However, after 1911 Kandinsky started to mask the Islamic signs and integrate them into his abstract paintings exactly as if Matisse in his cut paper implies the Islamic influences but without showing them in full details.

6.8 Conclusion.

A reexamination of most modern art theorists' works about Matisse reveals that they look everywhere in order to understand the puzzling Matisse. Ironically, most of them fail to seriously detect and analyze in depth the Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings and subsequently on the European art in general. This is the result of either an intentional act fed by political agenda, as in orientalism or as a lack of knowledge about the aesthetics of Islamic art. In consulting the Islamic artistic traditions, Matisse did not turn his back to the European traditions. On the opposite, Matisse has contributed to the greatness of the European art by consulting the great traditions of Islamic art. Simply to understand Matisse's Islamic endeavour one must recognize Matisse's opt to go anywhere fighting the homogeneity of his own culture. He went to Spain, Russia, Corsica, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Tahiti, and New York looking for the art of Other, seeking its help. Eventually he produced an art that succeeded to mix the Persian with the Japanese, the Chinese, the Indian, the European and the primitives. There, perhaps lies Matisse's best achievement. Indeed, bringing colours from as far as Persia could be argued at the same level of Europe bringing the ink or gunpowder from as far as China to make the guns and the printer that granted the West its supremacy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Venturing into The Rival Other

7.1 Introduction

Based on Matisse's sayings about Islamic art in general and the Islamic aesthetical system in particular, Matisse seems to have arguably redirected his effort in two main directions in order to establish a kind of rapport between his native tendency to decorate and make patterns and the general decorative drive of Islamic art. The first direction is to visit whenever and whatever possible the permanent and the casual various Islamic art exhibitions that took place in Europe on the eve of the 20th century. The second direction is to visit the land of Islam where he can be in full contact with the spiritual as much as physical environment of that land. Searching for lights, colours, traditions, and cultures Matisse had the chance to visit Morocco, Algeria, Sicily, Russia, and Spain. Once Matisse secured these Islamic connections, he started to produce paintings that reflect directly Islamic aspects and in which the Islamic traces are not hidden or manipulated. This includes most of his paintings from nearly 1903 to 1915.

From 1915 on, Matisse started to produce paintings that were inspired by the Islamic aesthetical system but without any particular Islamic art forms in his mind. From that date on, the Islamic aesthetical system would be implied almost in every painting, as Matisse seemed to solve the conflicts arises from mixing the two different traditions. To elucidate these points this chapter examines examples taken from Matisse's paintings and the Islamic miniatures that were directly inspired. Matisse's paintings and Islamic miniatures will be compared in order to justify the above argument. For example, while Matisse's paintings *The Music*, *The Dance* and *The Painter Family* were respectively inspired by Islamic miniatures *Sufi Dance*, *Shepherded Play a Flute*, and *Chess players* in a direct manner, paintings such as *The Moorish Screen* 1921, *Still life with Aborigine*

1911, and *The Thousand and one Night* 1950 imply Islamic aesthetics but without showing any direct Islamic influences.

Though this study is mainly built on the assumptions that there are striking similarities between many Matisse's paintings and some Islamic miniatures, other Matisse paintings that imply the Islamic aesthetical system are analyzed and interpreted. The aim of such an interpretation is to argue that those paintings are no less important in validating the other assumptions of this study about the Islamic influences on Matisse's paintings. That is; when you recognize the other's art, the other would be there whether we mention it directly or whether it is implied. Then samples are chosen from his late career 1940 –1950 when Matisse had arguably mastered the Islamic system that permits him to link art to philosophy and to develop his early abstract forms despite his objection about the abstract nature of these late paintings.

Concerning the direct Islamic influences, this will be done through binary comparisons between each targeted painting and the suggested Islamic miniature Matisse has arguably inspired. Discussion about each pair will cover compositional similarity, the use of colours, tendency to minimize perspectives, and stylistic aspects. In this respect, I am trying to reveal the spiritual drive of the targeted paintings of Matisse. More importantly, how and where he tries to get the most from the Islamic spiritual environment within which Islamic art forms have evolved especially miniatures, rugs and ceramics. Concerning the indirect influences, general Islamic aesthetics would be apply as to argue how the artist has succeeded in integrating those Islamic aesthetics into his own traditions. In this, I would argue that Matisse through the Islamic influences has achieved two main results: The first is the integration of Islamic traditions with his European traditions without being swept by the tempting norms of the Islamic aesthetical. In this context, Elderfield (1990, p.209) argues that by looking for other traditions Matisse's aims were to preserve his own traditions. The second goal is to create the theoretical ground of a new engagement with the European culture and

traditions based on the recognition of the other. In this Matisse's 1906 complains about the homogeneity of his European culture should be understood within his attempts to renew his own according to Elderfield (1990). Here I tend to add an important result to Matisse's venture that may never come to his mind, which is the revitalization of Islamic art form itself. Indeed his paintings could be set as a typical example of how to modernize traditions in order to create contemporary art forms...

**7.2 Inspiring but not imitating: reproducing the self.
Just Open the Window to let the Other enter.**

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Matisse: Open Window 1905

Open Window 1905 could become the start and the end at the same time for Matisse. He had opened it in 1905 to let the influences of the Other come through, and never he has closed it until his death in 1954. Like many Muslim miniaturists, Matisse has shown fascination with depicting windows in his paintings. Actually, rare are Matisse's paintings that do not show windows in them. Metaphorically, windows could be understood as openness on the other, in addition to its

technical and aesthetical aspects. Windows by definition as I would suggest, are mediators. However, without two or more parties windows do not mean anything. Their primary functions are to link the outside to the inside and vice versa. More importantly, they tend to determine the shape of that contested relationships between the inside and the outside. However, windows are not exclusive to houses and walls. Windows are still playing mediating roles in our minds. In this context, some people find it necessary to open windows for their minds through which they look for changes and in general what is happening around them. Some others have no windows, choosing to stay on their own exactly living behind closed windows.

Looking at Islamic miniatures would reveal a clear fascination of Muslim miniatures' makers with windows. In fact, the Islamic miniatures that do not depict a kind of window are rare. It is believed such fascination with windows is the outcome of a clear Islamic architectural tendency on the one hand, and on the other, within the perspectives they may suggest windows would compensate Islamic miniatures the lack of depth and tend to solve many other aesthetical problems. That is, miniatures may extend the space of the interior just by mentioning the exterior but without being part of it as to prevent the third dimension. Visually, they tend to disrupt the dully continuity of a wall or any other closed space in addition of their basic functions as conduits for lights and air. Islamic art suggests new use of windows. Whether in architecture or in miniatures, windows are used as a kind of "occasions" for the artists to display decoration and ornament so that they may please the viewers looking across them. More importantly, windows were used to link interior scenes with outside nature, however, without getting involved with the details of the natural landscape. Matisse's 1905 *Open Window* could be understood in this context. When looked at within its stylistic effects and general approach one can see a close link to the Islamic miniatures where windows are used as paintings within paintings. From now on windows will be Matisse's favourite tool to relate many things to each other. That is, on the one hand they may be used to capture the fleeting space of

the third dimension without being involved with the grey scale of renaissance paintings. On the other hand, windows are presented as decorated geometrical forms that can be filled with plants and flowers to look like rugs or just mere coloured arabesques. Matisse's windows in this case tend to play aesthetically the role of rug for a Muslim. A Muslim kneels on the rug praying and when finishing he/she may hang it on the wall to enjoy its decoration as much as its context that may be extended as a relief friendly nature. Matisse is not arguably away from such a concept. His flowers on a window are fresh at all times and they tend to contribute in the right conditions to create the "soothing and trouble free art" he has always sought and consequently the world.

I would suggest here that some Islamic rugs could be seen as a kind of windows that may reflect a soothing subject matter. Indeed Islamic rugs' themes may include birds, flowers, leaves, trees, horses, and running water. These themes and elements can be mediated should all horizons become closed. This fascination with nature is depicted on Islamic rugs as to remind its owner of the soothing effects of nature in our life. Countless are the paintings and the drawings in which Matisse uses windows. (for example *Windows* could be easily detected in *Red Harmony* 1908, *Conversation* 1911 *The Blue Window* 1912, *Window at Calliour* 1914, *The Yellow Curtin* 1915 *The Piano Lesson* 1916 *The yellow Dress* 1931, *Window in Tahiti* 1935 *Still Life with Grenedines* 1947. He has used them either to foster an ever fleeting and deceiving perspective or to exhibit his skills in depicting a painting within a painting, a technique that was used frequently by Islamic miniaturists.

In tracing the Islamic influences in the above landmark painting, evidences are gathered on the ground that the Islamic miniatures were playing the role of a catalyst in most of his paintings produced from 1900 to 1905. Matisse in those paintings, including *The Window*, has applied new style that only Gauguin and to some extent, Cezanne have applied or dared to apply. That is, the experiment to find an alternative for the European illusionist perspectives. A tradition that was

denied by many Islamic art forms especially rugs and miniatures. In this respect, Flam (1986) mentions Matisse's obsession with windows arguing that Matisse use windows to depict a painting inside a painting. This strategy allows the artist to express more than one theme in the same painting. Examples of this strategy may be seen in Matisse's painting *Conversation* where a landscape is depicted through a window while the main theme is meant to be an interior scene.

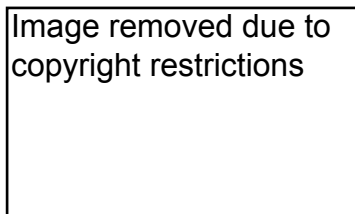
Daftari (1988) argues that windows are special aspects of Persian miniatures. They are used here as a pretext for decoration. In fact, in Islamic miniatures as well as in Islamic architectures heavily decorated windows are an essential part of Islamic artist's approach. Then if we assume Matisse's affection with Islamic miniatures, one may speculate about the origin of all these windows in his paintings. Matisse in this context seems to find himself consulting the windows in his endeavour to seek solution in dealing with what he so often called plastic space or in suggesting a relief compensation for the third dimension in his paintings. This could be easily detected in most of *Nice* paintings and the *Interior Symphonies* of the twentieth and the thirtieth of the 20th century.

Technically, Matisse has used windows to represent an illusive space that can be within the reach just by open a window. Clear examples of this tendency can be detected in many Matisse painting namely in *Conversation* 1911, *The Red Studio* 1910 where his own paintings play the role of windows, in the *Pink Studio*, in *Gold Fish Interior* 1912, and in *Gold fish and the Palette* 1915. Most of those paintings are interior scenes however through windows Matisse bring into play exterior scenes whether the scene is a country landscape as in *Conversation* or as an urban landscape as in *Bowl of Gold Fish* 1914. Within his limited "skills" of depicting the third dimension and within the two dimensional space suggested by non-treated colours, windows let Matisse's paintings to breath and let him to feel relieved. Lights enter and do what Matisse could not. That is creating a new plastic space that may evade the traditional perspective by suggesting a non-illusionistic one based on the organization of the paintings planes. Another

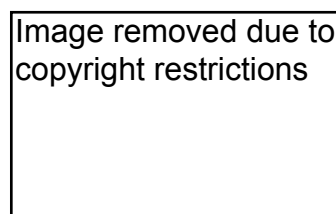
technical issue windows help to solve in Matisse art is the use of window as a pretext to jot down decorative elements, depicted as flowers, plants or even mere arabesques strongly reminiscent to the Islamic frizz. Examples include *The Piano Lesson*, *The music Lesson 1917*, and *Reclining Nude 1935*. In this context, windows as mediators have the potential to unify what the brush has failed to.

Finally, *The Open Window* could be read as an early evidence of Matisse experimenting his early Islamic choice. Within its flatness Matisse seems to put little effort to represent the third dimension. Instead leaves, flowers, vases and the boats in what supposed to be a far distance have been reduced to a kind of flat decorative motif. Even the sky is kept apart without any depth within well-defined brush strokes. However, we will see how Matisse shortly after the Window has become fully involved in applying the miniatures technique without any reservation. This includes most of the Moroccan paintings through which Matisse has gone to the extreme end in applying the aesthetics of Islamic miniatures. Examples of this direction includes *Red and Pink Studios*, *Le Lux 1*, 1907, *Harmony in Red*, 1908, *Conversation* 1908-1911, and the Moroccan paintings *Window at Tangier* 1912, *Zohra on the Terrace* 1912, and *The Casasba Gate* 1912.

7.3 Matisse's Studios: Red or Pink, Persian silk and treatise in action!



Matisse *Red Studio*



Matisse *Pink Studio*

Once Matisse realized the connection between his concepts about the decorative nature of colours developed during his Fauvist stage and the decorative discourse of Islamic art forms, Islamic arts techniques especially miniatures' techniques were presented every time he approached his easel. Upon Schneider (1990), Matisse has opened a kind of dialogue with Islamic art. He sometimes consults it in a direct way as in *The Music* and *The Dance* and at another, he tried to free himself from its tempting techniques. A clear example of this contested connection is Matisse's painting *The Red Studio* 1911 and *The Pink Studio* 1911. (See fig above)

The Red Studio is depicting a red interior in which the elements of the paintings emerge shyly from the overwhelming red Vermillion that covers the floor the walls, the table, the chair and all the furniture. Talking about the painting Matisse states "I do not know from where I got the colour" (see Elderfield 1988, p.87). However, when we recall *Harmony in Red* with all its similar patches of red covering mostly the whole painting, one may start to speculate about Matisse's possible exposition to the red silk of Persian textiles exhibited in 1910 Munich Islamic exhibition.

Daftari (1988) cited two pieces of red Persian silk listed as a part of Shcukin's collection in Moscow of possible influence that triggered all this red in both paintings. However, Elderfield (1990) insists that the red that Matisse has ignored from where it came was a red shadow in Matisse's studio. Matisse himself clarified this point, the source of the red, in his interview with Ernst Goldschmidt (1911) in 24 December 1911. He said talking to his interviewer:

Here, I painted the same furniture against a completely blue gray studio wall. These are experiments or studies if you will... Once I had discovered that red colour, I put these studies in a corner and that is where they will stay. Where I got the red from I could not say" (Goldsmith, 1912, p.128)

Then Matisse mentioned the flowers of his garden in explaining the sources of his red saying 'Is not that flower bed more beautiful than the finest Persian rug?' (Goldsmith,1912,p.128). Mentioning the Persian carpets in this context may become the magic solution for this "torrential "red. In this, Matisse tries to reveal his influences, which are the Persians and the flowers of his garden. Moreover, one may speculate of Matisse being exposed to the use of primary colour with little or no mixing effect as Sunbul Zade's Persian treatise advocates. (Details of the Persian treatise and possible Matisse's connection with it are discussed in chapter 5).So *The Red Studio* could be an experiment but with one single colour. This monochromic experiment was not familiar in European art at the time. Picasso some times in his career had tested the effect of this monochromic tendency. His Blue period and pink period are typical examples where the artist tends to use the different tones of one single colour in doing his paintings.

Matisse himself made a painting that was called *Harmony in Blue* but he changed it later to *Harmony in Red*. This could be an indication of the artist's attempts to explore the expressive and decorative aspects of each primary colours, applied solo and amazingly with little variation of tones. In this context, the use of colours is not the only Islamic aspect that has influenced Matisse as in *Harmony in Red*. For example in his painting (*L'atelier Rose 1911*) *The Pink studio*, Matisse is showing stylistic and compositional Islamic influences in addition to colour influences. The rug in the first plan with its simple patterns is probably a clue of Matisse becoming familiar with Islamic rugs within the pictorial space they may offer. Another feature in *The Pink Studio* that may reflect Islamic influences is the screen, which, Matisse has heavily decorated to become an independent decorated panel in itself, or a kind of painting within a painting. Another Islamic clue could be seen in the left corner of *The Pink Studio* is the Ivy bottle an item that has borrowed from Persian miniatures and introduced in many of Matisse's paintings as Daftari(1988) argues.

In sum *L'atelier Rose, The Pink Studio* could be understood in this influential context. That is Matisse in this painting proceed with more motifs borrowed from Islamic art. Or rather, Islamic motifs in the painting are more visible than the Red Studio. Indeed, once Matisse secured close connections with the basic aesthetics of Islamic miniatures he produced his studios applying a variety of techniques and stylistic effect. For example, colouring objects with colours that do not belong to them, the use of windows, and the use of Islamic accessories like rugs, decorated panels and islamically-decorated vases and ivy bottles are the Islamic part in Matisse's *Pink Studio*. However, though both Matisse's studios show to some extent Islamic influences as described above, the sculptures scattered here and there shows the artist attempts to include his own European traditions. A project Matisse has never claimed but it was obvious in almost every painting he did. That is introducing the Other and validating its art in order to innovate and validate the self.

7.4 Playing the game without reservation: Interior with Eggplants

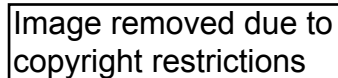
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Henri Matisse. *Interior with Eggplants*. 1911-12.

Interior with Eggplants 1911 belongs to the symphonic interiors through which Matisse has exhibited all his skills in mastering and assimilating the Islamic ways in doing art. The painting in its own shows that Matisse has received the Islamic influences especially the Islamic miniatures influences. He tries, in this context, to

introduce the painting as a rug, an Islamic art form he had experienced in *The Painter Family* and in *The Pink Studio*. To give a clue about this orientation, I had the chance to see at Matisse's Museum in Nice a photo of Matisse's studio at Issy. On the studio's walls was *Interior with Egg Plants*, hanged without a stretcher. This is an indication of Matisse treating the painting like a rug that can be hanged on the wall without any stretcher. Due to the Islamic influences, Matisse tries even to express new ways of exhibiting and displaying paintings. That is, in the way Islamic rugs can be hanged on the walls. Technically, one may barely noticed the main subject matter (the Eggplants) as Matisse has reduced them to their primitive decorative qualities. In fact, they are lost among the heavily floral stamped surface that covers the whole painting. To treat the surface with such a heavily decoration is an obvious clue of Matisse's attempts of recalling his love and expertise regarding textiles. Here again *Interior with eggplants* is manifested as a part of Matisse's project. That is, mixing the Other's traditions with his European traditions by bringing his previous experience to be infused into the Other's experience in doing and appreciating textiles. To show how well he has mastered the Islamic system, Matisse in the above painting has not neglected the window through which he would depict usually a landscape trying to link the borrowed motifs with his local motifs. In brief, *Interior with Eggplants* would be one of a series of paintings that have been done as a preparation to what we may call the *Nice Paintings* through which all kind of textiles and rugs were hanged on the walls to give the paintings of this period its Islamic bit. In this context, one may argue that the numerous numbers of odalisques done during that period were an attempt to explore the nude theme taken from the European traditions with the heavily decorated environment created through the Islamic patterns. More importantly as I should argue in details later in this chapter, even the female body in some of Matisse paintings has been itself stylized to become decorative motifs and to serve as expressive messages.

7.5 An Arabic Abstract Pleasure: The Moorish Cafe

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Matisse *The Moorish Café*, 1912

By 1912- 1913 Matisse's experience with Islamic art has known major turns. These turns occur from direct influences of particular Islamic art works such as miniatures and rugs to the inspiration of Islamic aesthetics in its broad terms but without any Islamic art forms in mind. These turns are very important as a logical consequence of Matisse seeking some solutions to his European artistic traditions. *The Moorish café* 1913 is a typical example of how Matisse has assimilated the Islamic system. Schneider sees *The Moorish Café* as a heading of Matisse's involvement with the aesthetics of Islamic art in which "the artist distilled several of the themes he had explored during his two Moroccan sojourns" (Schneider, 1990, p.104). However, Daftari (1988) argues that the painting was directly inspired a couple of Persian miniatures. She mentioned the Persian miniature *Portrait of a Dervish* 1500. Daftari's claims are based on the resemblance of the Dervish seating with some of *The Moorish Café's* characters. Another Islamic Metal artwork, *Inlaid Kettle*, Herat 1163 is associated with Matisse's *Café*. According to Daftari who relies solely on her analysis, that Matisse may have seen postcards of Islamic metalwork at Munich exhibition in 1910. In this Daftari (1988) quoted Hans Purrman, a German artist who was one of Matisse's best friends, stating Matisse's fascination with Islamic metal works exhibited in the

Great exhibition of 1910. However Daftari's claim could be justified as well in Barr (1951) cited in Izerghina(1990) who speculates that:

There is a certain resemblance between The Moorish café and the Islamic miniature The Potent and his Mentor by the sixteen century Iranian master Aga Reza. Matisse could have seen the miniature at 1913 exhibition in the Musee D'art Decoratifs; his impressions were translated as it were, into the monumental scale of a large panel, called since the most oriental of his paintings. (Izerghina 1990, p.178)

The Moorish Café is first exhibited at (Glary Bernheim – Jeune) in April 1913 (see Schneider 1990, Flam 1986). In a review of some of Matisse's paintings, Appolinaire (1913) found Matisse's painting (*Le Moroccan café*) *The Moorish Café* among few other paintings that were inspired by contemporary North African art (cited in Schneider 1990). Kostenevich Cited in Schneider (1990) suggests an affinity with Ingers *Odalisque and Slaves* "which shares with Matisse painting a pair of figures in the foreground as well as oriental and musical theme". Apart from the direct influences of any particular Islamic art form, the Moorish Café could become a typical example how Matisse's style is well shifted toward a dialogical process with the aesthetics of Islamic art. At this stage, Matisse has arguably showed how he assimilates the Islamic influences and how such influences become his newly distinguished style. This is reflected in Sembat's (1913) account of the Moorish painting. Wondering why Matisse has changed the colours of many characters in the painting Sambat cited in Flam (1988, p.149) quoted Matisse as saying:

"J'ai Mon bol de poisson ET mon fleur rouge. C'est Ce qui m'est frappe ces grand diables qui rest des heures contemplatifs devant une fleur ET des poissons rouges. Et bien si je le fait rouge ce vermillion me rendre ma fleur violette. Je le veux rose my fleur. Autrement elle n'est plus Au lieux que mes poissons ils pourraient etre jaunes. Cela ne me fait rien: Ils seront Jaunes" (Flam' 1988, p.149)

In the above French passage, Matisse is delicately describing his concepts about the relationships between colours and expression. In addition, he exhibited and tested his Fauve- Islamic concepts about the decorative nature of colours, stating how he chooses and alter the colours in *The Moorish Café* in order to express what he wants. See below my translation of Matisse's quote:

“I have my gold fish bowl and my pink flower. That is what struck me most. Those devils that spend hours contemplating a flower and some red fish. Well, if I paint them red, this vermilion will turn my flower violet. So what can I do? I want my flower pink. Other wise it is not my flower anymore. Unlike the fish, which could be yellow, I don't care about that, so yellow is what they'll be”!

Looking at a standard old Arabic Café, one can easily understand how Matisse has become inhibited by its atmosphere as much as by the visual appeal of the place. Visually, smoke of *Narjilehs* or cigarettes will make everything gray. Green will pervade as the colour is strongly connected to the Islamic faith. People attend the cafe for whatever reasons. Ironically, they are usually, escaping the outside world including their family houses to relax, smoke, have tea and coffee, playing cards and listen to music. It is a kind of typical retreat to relax and brush aside the worries of everyday life. In *The Moorish Café*, Matisse probably for the first time tries to get deep into the psychological side of his models. In doing so, he tends to reflect not only just the visual stimulation created by the café's environment but also the ways people are using the café as a place of pleasure.

To do so Matisse tries to put in practice the above statement and to express the simplicity of the environment in that particular café where people sit modestly on the floor, listening to music or contemplating a flower or a couple of fishes. To express such an environment, Matisse took away many elements from his painting in order to keep it as simple as the lives of those” devils” as he describe the café customers. In addition, the gray green that pervades the painting could be the result of the smoke that has the capacity to hide many little details and to infuse

together the elements of the paintings. Here we could relate the homogeneity of the cloth, faces, and hands of the people in the painting to that smoky environment. More importantly, is to assert that the simplified style in the painting is part of Matisse's approach that manifested in his concept that the simple is the best. This concept is arguably based on an Islamic notion that argues that to understand things around us we have to look at them in their simplest form. Alternatively, we have to explore their essential characteristics. Sambat (1913) translated in Flam (1986) argues that for Matisse to perfect is to simplify" *Pour Matisse se parfaire se s'implifier*"! A final word about *The Moorish café* is that Matisse's venture into Islamic art has given him the needed moral and technical support to neglect the foundation of impressionism and to survive the harsh criticism. This was daring and puzzling and could not be achieved without the Islamic art general aesthetics.

7.6 Trading Colours with concepts: Matisse the Sufi Dervish.



Sufi Dance, an Islamic miniature 11th century

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Matisse, *The Dance* 1910

It could be true to say that the most attractive aspect of "*The Dance* 1910" (Decorative Panel) is the circular position of the dancers. Though it is one of the most popular positions in the history of the dance for many different people, the circular position is well connected to *Islamic Sufi Dance*. In fact, in Sufi dance

people move in circular motion (see fig above), chanting the same verses repeatedly until, as they believe, they reach a status through which they spiritually connected to god. Etinghausen (1990) argues that Sufism in fact has nothing to do with Islamic sects but it was originated by some Islamic philosophers, ie. *Al Bayrouni* and *Ibn Arabi* and it seek to help individuals to establish their own connections with god. It is in fact a kind of praying that uses physical illumination toward spiritual illumination. However, modern Sufism is not purely Islamic Meier, (1992) argue that Islamic Sufism was influence by neo Platonist philosophy and later assimilated Indian ideas. Sufi Dervishes and Sufi dance groups were the subject of many Islamic miniatures especially Persian miniatures. Though Matisse might have seen more than one of these miniatures in the exhibitions of Islamic art arranged in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, the one that is supposedly inspired him on the eve of executing his painting *The Dance* (see figure above) is a Persian Timurid miniature called *Sufi Dance* and dated 1490.

A first glance at the miniature shows that like all Islamic art, *The Sufi Dance* is a combination of conceptual truth to nature and a high degree of stylization. Matisse here has found himself so often in the same position stylizing nature as never before but without loosing connection with reality (Schneider, 1990; Elderfield,1990). In the Islamic miniature the setting is made of a flat picturesquely pastoral (but supposed to be inside a Taakiyya, a building devoted to Dervish ritual) covered with different kind of flowers while in Matisse's painting the stage is a simple flat turquoise bluish space. However, in another version of the dance called *Fruits, Flowers and the Dance* 1909 Matisse covered the floor with decorative elements reminiscent to those of the Islamic miniature. This is arguably a proof that Matisse has studied this particular miniature as he produced more than three paintings called the Dance. Three years later, Matisse produced the fourth version of the dance. *Nastritum and the Dance* 1912, *The Pushkin Museum of fine arts* Moscow, but this time inside his "Takiyya" as he has depicted dancers inside a room or a hole. In the above version of *The Dance*,

another striking similarity could be recognized which is the horizon in both the Islamic miniature and Matisse's painting. It is an undulating horizon revealing a bright blue sky, through which spiritual connection with god will allegedly be established. The number of dancers in the miniature is four while in Matisse's painting there is one more. It is believed here that Matisse has added another person, as he might believe that it is easier for him to represent a circular motion with five persons rather than four persons where a square is more likely to be formed.

Though people in the miniature are well dressed in Islamic cloths, Matisse in the *Dance* gets them nude and shifts their genders to female or rather I would say people's gender in the *Dance* is not clear! This is another proof of the use of human forms in their decorative being. The reason behind such a shift lies perhaps in Matisse's attempt to get rid of all obstacles (even cloths) that may prevent direct connections between dancers and the spiritual function of the dance. Here Matisse as usual was always trying to get back to the origins in order to express spiritual aspects. To achieve such a goal Matisse makes bodies in his painting fly in the sky as to get closer to psychical illumination. In this, as I would argue, he tries to depict in colours and lines what Sufi movement has tried to reveal through poet and music. From now on Matisse paintings are not just decorative panels as he prudently likes to call *The Dance* but decoration will invade his canvas to form its main structures instead being used as accessories to them as many Matisse's early paintings have revealed.

7.7 The Music: We have just seven Sounds

When I first saw Matisse's painting *The Music Decorative Panel* 1910 in The Hermitage Museum Leningrad, I wondered why Matisse chose to depict the music using boys instead of adult men and women. In my research about what Matisse might have seen of Islamic miniatures that may depict a musical theme I found two. The first is called a *Shepherd Playing a Flute* from a Persian dictionary of rare words; 16th century. The second is called *Harp and Lute* from

the same collection and the same time. However, both of them are done on the same background with slight differences in the pattern of flowers. In addition, in the second there is a kind of bottle, (Ivy bottle) in the middle. In the first, there are three people. One is standing play a flute and the two others are listening attentively or submissively as both of them cross their hand as a sign of appreciating the music of the flute. The three people of the miniature look like boys despite the artist-maker's attempt to give one of them the air of a man by drawing a beard for him. In the second there are three persons as well, two boys are playing the instruments while the other sitting clapping his hand to mark the rhythm. In comparison with Matisse's painting *The Music*, it is suggested that Matisse may have seen both Islamic miniatures in an exhibition or through the pages of an Islamic manuscript. Moreover, like the *Dance* he has made some change so that he can express what he wanted to express reflecting an abstract context. My argument is based on the similarity of the compositions .i.e. In Matisse's painting the boys are depicted undressed as Matisse was adamantly struggling to stay away from regional or local culture in a sign that links people to no culture but to the music, itself within its seven sounds.

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Matisse *The Music* 1910

Below *Shepherds play flute*: Two Islamic miniatures from 16th century



Later in the research, we will see how this helped Matisse to liberate his painting from any anecdotal or realistic description of the subject matter. In addition, the place in Matisse's painting is reduced to a mere two-dimensional plan, and time is by no means suggestive or clear. All of these lead Matisse to say to Louis Aragon (see Aragon 1947 on Matisse) I do not paint things I paint the difference between real and painted things. In addition, Matisse's *The Music* seems to be a mixture of both Islamic miniatures but with one difference as Matisse reduced the number of people to five, two musicians and three listeners. Once again, Matisse in his painting adopts the same undulating horizon, which he has become familiar through the dance. In addition, he adopted the miniature's two-dimensional approach. What makes my suggestion legitimate about Matisse seeing the Islamic miniatures is a copy of the *Music* second stage of the painting in which Matisse tried to cover the ground with flowers in the same way the miniatures' maker has done. Another similarity can be sought here, which is the simplicity of both miniatures and painting. A final word about the *Dance* and the *Music* both of them are interrelated thematically and in terms of composition through both analogy and contrast.

7.8 On Earth or in Heaven a tempting Paradise is calling us



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Islamic miniature

The Treasury of Secret, 1658

Matisse *Le bonheur de vivre (The Joy of Life)*, 1905

In his painting *Le Bonheur de Vivre* 1905 (See figure above) Matisse is depicting a kind of earthy paradise. Beautiful nature, colorful trees, lights, water, flowers, and music. People are relaxing away from the worries of every day life hugging, kissing dancing and playing music. Beside *Le Bonheur de Vivre* is the Islamic miniature made at *Bukhara* in 1658 and represents *Nizami* reads his literary work *The Treasury of Secrets* written 1175 to a prince. According to the setting in the miniature, it is a typical Persian literary gathering. It depicts a garden with wine and fruits for refreshment with a musician playing music in conjunction of the reading of literary texts. There are some suggestions here that Matisse might have seen the Islamic miniature before he did *Le Bonheur de Vivre*. This could be justified if we know that Matisse might have seen the miniature in one of his visit to Islamic art exhibitions especially those held in 1903 and 1910 in Paris and Munich. In the following paragraph, I am trying to justify such suggestions relying on similar compositional components as much as a common spiritual aura spread by both Matisse's painting and the Islamic miniature. Starting with stylistic commonality, both art works show nearly the same circular gathering of the people and a distorted attempt to represent depth. It is suggested here that the woman who plays music in the first plan is smaller than the reclining women who

are depicted in the middle plan for Matisse's painting. In nearly the same way, the Islamic miniature shows two people in the first plan (the Tambourine player and the one who is pouring down wine). Amazingly, both people are smaller than Nizam and the prince who sit down in the farthest plane. Daftari (1988) argues that this reversed perspective is a major aspect of Persian miniatures which Matisse acquainted him self with through his visits of the above mentioned Islamic art exhibitions.

However, Daftari (1988) suggested other miniatures that Matisse might have seen before he did *Le Joix de Vivre*. She mentioned the miniature *Two Lovers* done by *Rida Abbasi* and exhibited in 1910 Munich exhibition. In addition she suggests another Persian miniature that may influence Matisse that represent an enthroned prince or king. In brief, Daftari's claim is justified on the ground of similarity between the two hugging people in *Le Bonheur de Vivre* and the *Two Lovers* of the Persian miniature. However, the similarity with the enthroned Sultan miniature could not be justified just on perspectival similarity because neglecting perspectives is really a common aspect in almost all Islamic miniatures. Because it was hard to trace accurately which miniatures Matisse have seen, I suggest that he might seen and influenced by more than one particular miniature. In this context, I would argue that whether Matisse was influenced by any particular Islamic miniature or not, he apparently has tried to affiliate *Le Bonheur de Vivre* with the spiritual function of the Islamic rugs. Regarding this point, Schneider (1990) argues, "The central theme treated by the rugs is the garden and more specifically, the garden of the bliss that is the Koran's idea of paradise" (Schneider, 1990, p.30). This imposed itself upon Matisse's painting at the same time as the aesthetic of Fauvism. In this, Matisse seems to get deep into the Islamic aesthetical system by showing some understanding how the spiritual would influence the aesthetical and technical and vise versa. Here Matisse ceases to need direct Islamic stimulus like miniatures or rugs since he masters the general conceptual frame of Islamic system. Schneider (1990, p.30) interprets these interlocked issues arguing, "When the decorative system replaces the realist

system, a religious content takes the place of a profane one” (Schneider, 1990, p.30). As I argue in chapter 4, The Islamic decorative system is based on this principle and this would definitely answer once and for ever the question of why Muslim artists were reluctant to depict realistic forms. They were in fact busy reflecting the religious content of life by giving meanings to those signs, which formed eventually the basic menu of decorative system.

Getting back to *Le Bonheur de Vivre* personal characters of Matisse’s could not be neglected in tracing why and how Matisse find himself within the Islamic system. No one was obsessed with paradise like Matisse. He often has tried to reach it through his paintings. Amazingly, like a devoted Muslim he wants paradise to be his eventual place in which he would rest away from the troubled world. This amazingly forms, as I would claim the central concept of his famous Notes of a Painter. He even suggests through his saying a relieve paradise made of colours and lights and away from every day stress. Schneider (1984) argues here that Matisse as a modern artist formulates in his writing and paintings the idea that art in general can live behind the contingency of this world in order to enter into the rarified atmosphere of pure and eternal artistic values. In this respect Flam (1986) states that Matisse was obsessed with the artistic and spiritual transcendence of this world.

Indeed Matisse through art tried to invent his own paradise and logically a paradise must be free of “depressing subject matter”. In this, Matisse has tried to isolate himself from the outside world and its historical struggle. Upon Herbert (2002), Matisse’s art has addressed spiritual values and succeeded to liberate itself from all connections with the messiness of our daily social and political life. Central to the above argument is Elderfield’s psychological analysis of Matisse’s characters and the idea of creating paradise through art. He quoted Matisse as saying:

When I start to paint I felt transposed into a kind of paradise. In every day life, I was usually bored and vexed by the things people were telling me I must do. Starting to paint I felt gloriously free, quite and alone" (Elderfield, 1992, P.241)

Drawing an analogy between Elderfield psychological analysis of Matisse's paradise and the psychological account of paradise for a standard Muslim It could be justified to argue that art for Matisse is like religion for a Muslim artist and that Matisse was quite aware of the Islamic concept about paradise. Elderfield (1990) relied on two main paintings of Matisse in arguing his Psychological account. One of them is *Le Bonheur de Vivre* and the other is *Lux Calm and Volpute*. However, both of them hold the same spiritual aspects and treat a like- paradise subject matter. Elderfield (1990) argues that the contrast between the paradises Matisse was dreaming and the vexation of his life has become an essential characteristic of his art. He identifies three set of contrasts in this regard. The first is the artist's dream versus reality. The second is the irrational compulsion that leads Matisse to his fantasy world versus his father and society's authority. The third is Matisse struggling for his identity against the heavy history of art in Europe. Regarding the above argument Elderfield, (1990) see *Le Bonheur de Vivre* as a sign of the artist's attempt to escape to his inner world. This upon Elderfield leads Matisse to recall his childhood and do painting as simplistic as a child.

On the technical and stylistic side of *La Bonheur de Vivre*, Elderfield (1990, p.255) offers a reading in which he sees the painting as summary of Fauvism. That is, drawing in paint was Fauvism's essential evolution... This process however is more apparent in the study painting for *La Bonheur de Vivre* in which Matisse's choice to defy Cezanne and his own new impressionism in favour of what he later call the decorative nature of colour. In respect to influences, Elderfield does not hesitate to recognize all kind of influences in *Le Bonheur de Vivre* except, oddly, the influences of Islamic art. He mentions prehistoric cave paintings, Greek vases; Rococo fetes Champetre, and Ingres. Two main reasons

could be argued in relation to this downplaying of the influence of Islamic art in Matisse's paintings. The first could be Elderfield's unfamiliarity with the essential aspects of Islamic art especially miniatures and the second could be a political reason that leads arguably many other Western art historians and art critics, especially American (see Barr 1966, Barn1933 and Trapp 1951) to reduce the role of Islamic influences on Matisse's Paintings in general.

On the extreme side of Elderfield's argument is Roger Benjamin. Benjamin (2003) argues that *Le Bonheur de Vivre* could be influenced by Islamic miniatures. While; light revelation and the religious feeling toward life reshape the decorative qualities of Matisse's painting. Benjamin (2003) asserts on the importance of arabesque in the development of Matisse's artistic drive. He argues that the landscape in *la Bonheur de Vivre* is a real proof of the suitability of arabesque to deal with any subject matter and with any medium. This view in itself is revolutionary as it releases the freedom of Matisse to extend his Islamic motif through arabesque to cover not just the great interior but landscapes portrait and sculpture. In this context Benjamin(2003) argues that Matisse's painting *Jardain Marocain* "The Moroccan Garden"(1912) holds motifs from *Le bonheur de Vivre*(1906) and both receive the Influences of Islamic miniatures. Regarding this matter Benjamin wrote:

"The Arabesque legacy of (Le Bonheur de Vivre) is more apparent however in the Moroccan garden (1912)...In the strange puffed forms of the foliage, hillside, and curvilinear Pathways, which seem divorced from any observable reality, recall the conventionalized landscapes of Mughal illuminated miniatures(if not indeed, the landscapes of Chinese scroll paintings". (Benjamin, 2003, p.129)

From the above one can conclude that reality should be affiliated with the idea of soothing and trouble free art as expressed by Matisse in his Notes. In this, one might see "*une bonheur de vivre*" or a paradise in any of Matisse's paintings since he is inhibited by the idea of paradise. In the next two paragraphs I am going to

argue how Matissian paradise even the one that was drawn as a recalling of the artist's childhood might have its root in the Islamic concept of paradise.

7.8.1 Muslim's Paradise

For a standard Muslim actual life has nothing to compare with life after death especially in the paradise that god promises his believers. Milk and honey rivers, fruits, flowers, beautiful women and more importantly freedom and eternity are actually the main aspects of Islamic paradise. For a Muslim believer paradise is what he/she is living for. However, it is still a promise and nobody has yet come again to life to say the truth about its existence. In this context, imagination feeds its shape and content upon different Muslim people's cultures. However, what is important about it is its psychological, corrective, and sometimes remedial effect on most Muslims. People do well in their every day life in order to gain a place in paradise. Because there is eternity there, (whether in Paradise or in hell) people tend to reduce every day life to a mere experience that has no value, but as a conduit to heaven, as we are all to leave it eventually. This would give the believers some relief as they balance between their right doing and wrongdoing and speculate about their final destination.

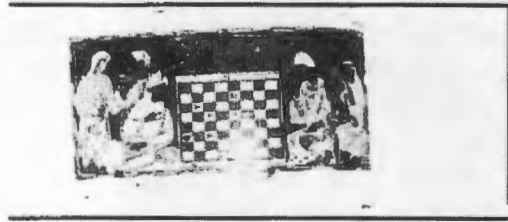
Apart from paradise as a place, the idea in brief has a huge psychological impact through which people get self-satisfaction and tend to be less interested in every day life's pleasures. This as well helps people to reach a kind of 'compromise' toward every day life. Paradise in Islam is promised through the Prophet Mohammed who lived and preached in Mecca (Saudi Arabia today). Its geographical description and overall features are in full contrast with the arid land of Arabia as a land that is deprived of running water, gardens, and the like. In brief, the idea of paradise in Islam gives Muslims hopes and assumes arguably some solutions to human existence. In comparison with a Muslim believer, who tends to use the idea of paradise as a retreat from the ugliness of the world and who is in fact torn between the truth about paradise's existence and the pleasures

of every day life Matisse has arguably displayed nearly the same concerns in several occasions.

Matisse's paradise is his art and in particular his paintings. Or rather, I would say Matisse creates his own paradise through his art. He was in constant retreat to his paradise like paintings, and exactly like a Muslim, he was torn between the sensual pleasures of his daily life and the promised paradise. In fact, Matisse was torn between his dream and the vexation of everyday life (see Herbert 2000). *Le Bonheur de Vivre* is arguably a paradise like paintings with its people and the surreal atmosphere it casts through colours composition and the poses of lovers bathers and musicians. However, we could argue that in every painting of Matisse there is almost a paradisiacal theme. This was reflected in a vase of flower, a bowl of fish, in the beautiful decoration of a rug, or even in the colourful hat of a woman. In *Zohra's* decorated shoes, I would argue Matisse has sought a type of paradise. In *The Dance and the Music*, in all his interior decorated scenes, or even in *Le chagrin de Roi (the Sadness of the king)* Matisse has expressed the king's sadness in paradise like atmosphere. In Islam, there is no separation between art and life. Art is about creation and life is about creation too. In comparison, Matisse's thinking of paradise has an aura of such the Islamic one. Schneider (1984, p.10) argues that Matisse is a religious painter. He was obsessed throughout his life with the representation of light as "the manifestation of the sacred in the age of waning faith". In this, Matisse found himself in the same position trying to spread his invented paradise through his colours. In fact Matisse and like a Muslim, did not stop talking about light and revelation, the two main ingredients of his spiritual life.

7.9 The painter's Family: An artistic and perhaps a cultural projection

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Matisse. *The Painter's Family*, 1911 *Chess Players*: Islamic miniature 13th century.

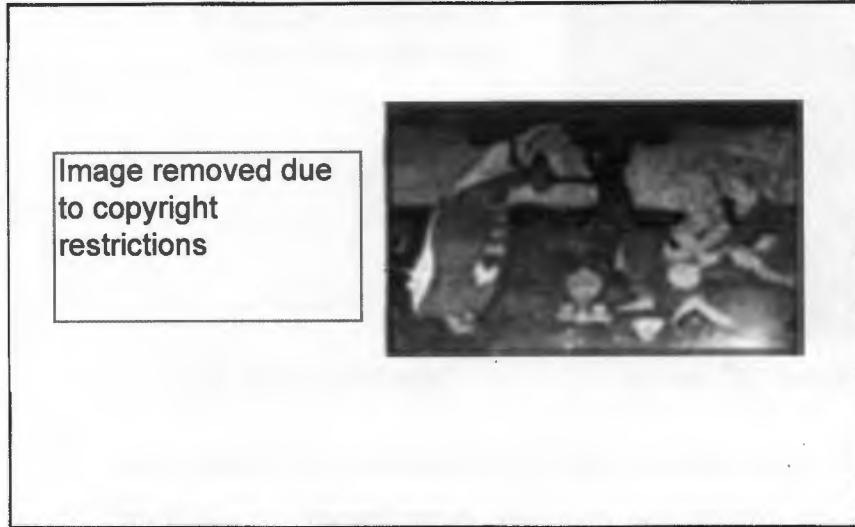
Schneider (1990) argues that Matisse's two paintings *The Painter Family* 1911 along with *Interior with Eggplants* 1911 are two early examples that may demonstrate how thoroughly Matisse had mastered the Persian system. Indeed in the *Painter's Family* (see picture above) Matisse reflects typically oriental, Islamic and more notably Arabic atmosphere. Except of the standing woman's dress and the small statue on the chimney both are two elements that belong to Matisse European culture while the rest of whole scene is invaded by decoration. On The floor through rugs, and that just local can appreciate its patterns and designs. On the heavily decorated sofas that stand in contrast the standard furniture of a French family. Decoration as well extended to reach the walls, the chimney and even the dress of the seated woman and the dress's collar of the standing woman. *The Painter's Family* of 1911 shows a checkerboard, with eleven squares along the front edge but running only seven squares deep. Here is another clue of Matisse's new tendency to neglect exactness in favour of the decorative and the expressive. Moreover, from now on Matisse would rely on the general ambiance created by his paintings. These ambiances would arguably let the viewers to interpret what they

see. In another world, neglecting or rather manipulating the natural form would suggest a painting that turns itself to a visual text that can be interpreted upon the viewers' interpretational skills. In this case, the checkerboard, or the heavily decorated room in the *Painter Family* would be looked at through the general aesthetical environment they create. In this, there would be no problem to reduce the artist's two sons and wife to their decorative being as there are no attempts what so ever to distinguish them from each other. This was new in European traditions at the time of Impressionism where depicting nature by proxy is the other face of the realistic style. Regarding this matter Benjamin (1999) argues:

In traditional perspective paintings, tiles and ceiling coffers are typically countable, to underscore the illusion of depth. So Matisse's inexact checkerboard subverts perspective illusion, and the painting in general subverts depth, since the table on which the checkerboard rests is not in the same plane as the boys playing on it but rather almost flush with the picture plane itself. Everything in the painting serves to flatten it forward and translate depth into mere pattern. What requires an explanation is Matisse's evident determination to diminish the authority of the third dimension and hence of solidity in the subjects shown. There is no modeling to speak of... (Benjamin, 1999, P.12)

Breaking away from his own traditions *The Painter Family* could be the outcome of Matisse observing and studying some Islamic miniatures (see figure on page 215). Indeed, Islamic miniature *Chess Players* 13th century is a typical example of such encounter with Islamic miniatures. Speculating about Matisse seeing the Christian miniature during his visit to Spain was an impossible allegation. However, the compositional similarity such as the number of people and the standing woman would suggest Matisse being somehow exposed to the Christian miniature during his visit to Spain.

7.10 Matisse's Conversation: The Dialogical aesthetics



Above is *Matisse Conversation* 1910 and an *Islamic wall painting* 16th century

On many occasions, Matisse states that he succeeded in justifying his own experiment by comparing them with other artistic traditions especially oriental traditions. In addition to Islamic art, Matisse has mentioned the Chinese art, the Egyptian art, the primitive and the south sea art. Regarding this, point Barnes argues:

“Matisse relies on Japanese and Islamic arts in justifying his treatment of colors as much as every element of his paintings. The Persian traces in his pictures are so interwoven with those of the other Oriental traditions and with elements contributed by Matisse himself” (Barnes, 1933, p.67)

Conversation is standing as a typical example of such an infusion of own and other artistic traditions. Daftari (1988) argues that in *Conversation* Matisse introduces the concept of depicting a picture within picture, a tradition that goes back to Islamic arts and more notably the Persian arts. In this context, Daftari suggests that Matisse might have inspired his painting from a 16th century miniature. While I am not arguing against Daftari's suggestion regarding

Matisse's *Conversation* and which Islamic miniature he has inspired, I tend to suggest that Matisse might have as well examined an illustration, a photo or a post card of a Persian 17th century wall painting in the hall of Forty Columns in Isfahan (Iran) (see picture above). My suggestion is based on Matisse's other experience regarding the inspiration of Islamic miniatures. He in fact becomes experienced in manipulating the Islamic miniatures by shifting the positions of his characters in his painting or by adding or subtracting elements that may fit his paintings' compositions.

Colour is another clue of Matisse inspiration of the Islamic miniatures especially in *Conversation*. Along his long career Matisse has established a new style based on the general adoption of the Islamic miniature techniques; i.e. Primary colours with little or no variations regarding tones, (art critics called it Fauve) tendency to neglect the third dimension, simplicity and the presence of window. Mixed with own traditions Matisse's way is based on changing some of the miniature's elements in a way that may suit his purposes in expressing his feelings as much as to represent his own concept about art. However, Elderfield (1976) argues that Matisse's treatment of colours is based on his fauve concepts and through which he rejects to imitate real colours as much as using bright tone and that both features were part of a western newly emerged traditions that go back to post impressionist root. Though Elderfield does not mention any foreign influences on Matisse regarding colours many art historians (see Schneider 1984) argue that this newly emerged concept has come to Europe through artists like Gauguin who states on several occasions the impact of Persian arts especially rugs and miniatures. A matter Elderfield fails to see. Mixing Fauve techniques with Islamic miniatures and rugs techniques were arguably the main ingredients of Matisse's venture. His statement (see Flam 1986) "I felt the passion of colours develops in me when the great Mohammedan exhibition took place" reinforces this argument and reveal the extent of Matisse's reliance on Islamic arts. More importantly, the statement tends to reveal the possibility of manipulating different styles, techniques, and traditions that seem to be away from each other. This would

arguably extend the possibilities of creating new means of expressions by extending the power of comparing and contrasting different artistic elements from different cultures. In comparing Matisse's painting *Conversation* and the Persian wall painting one can easily realize the similar aspects such as composition and flatness of both of them. Looking at the two main characters in both one can easily conclude similar position of the man and the woman though Matisse has shifted their position. (The woman in the illustration is standing, while the man is seating and the opposite happens in Matisse's painting). However, this does not affect the similarity between both artworks. In many other paintings during his, long career Matisse has become a master of making such a shift to serve his objectives or to suggest new aesthetics. Finally While Matisse painting is an inside view, Islamic wall painting is depicted as an outside view, in nature. However, Matisse reduces the inside to a mere flat surface, especially the tree, the grass, and flowers through a window. This would leave the impression that Matisse *Conversation* is entirely a landscape with two characters one standing and the other sitting. Regarding the tree Matisse has depicted it through a window while in the Persian miniature the main view is out in the open. Here Matisse uses his recalling skills especially for the miniatures he might have seen before to depict his painting. In this, *Conversation* could be seen simply as a combination of Islamic and European aesthetics.

7.11 Matisse's Mihrab: A combination of Visual pleasure and Semantic Signs.



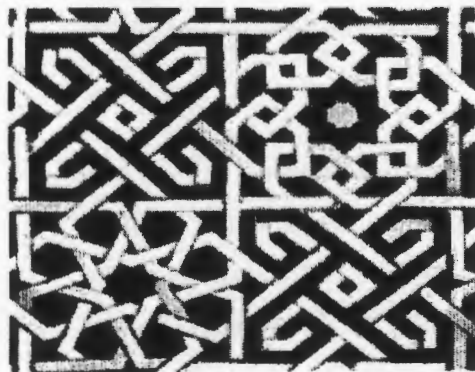
An Islamic decorated *Mihrab* 16th century

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copyright restrictions

Matisse Collage, 1945

This is another proof of the extent of Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts. Matisse here creates his own *Mihrab* (the place in the mosque in which the Muslim clergy would stand when talking to the mosque's audiences). This is a typical example about the process of inspiring the past in order to reform the art of the present. In this painting, Matisse has borrowed the Islamic arch to create a kind of window. More importantly is Matisse's attempt to modernize a classical Islamic pattern by freely spreading his spontaneous arabesque all around the window. In this respect, the finely decorated Islamic *mihrab* would be represented in Matisse's style as an easy to do task provided to stay within the holly atmosphere reflected by the arc of the window.

7.12 When The Islamic System is applied: Pleasure is there with and without women.



Islamic tiles 11th century

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copyright restrictions

Matisse: *Odalisque in Gray culottes* 1926

Matisse *Odalisque with Gray Cullottes* late 1926, spring 1927 is another example of Matisse's pictorial language developed based on the Islamic aesthetical system. Sensing the success of *Harmony in Red* done in 1911 Matisse has gone on his adventurous paintings of depicting human figure against fully decorative background. Getting back to the *Harmony in Red*, Schneider (1990) argues that Matisse in the painting try to "integrate into a patterned ground a category of objects that Islamic art had cautiously barred from its composition; the human figure". To solve such a conflict Matisse in *Harmony in Red* has arguably reduced the human figure into its two dimensional presence so that it would not be in contrast with the two dimensional flat composition materialized in the heavily decorated room. At the time, Matisse was arguably under the direct influence of the Islamic miniatures. That is, human figure is to be treated in the same decorative nuances of the non-human figures.

Most art critics (see Cowart 1990) argue that in his Nice paintings, Matisse has tried to liberate himself from the direct influences of the Islamic miniatures but not from their decorative presence. Therefore, he has started to depict in three dimensions, to the best of his ability, the bodies of his odalisques so that he could be reconnected again with his European traditions. However, since the decorative for him means the expressive, Matisse found it impossible to disconnect entirely with the Islamic style. In fact, Bois (1998) argues that the formula the decorative equal the expressive has become Matisse's eventual credo. One can smell a problematic situation in this context. That is; integrating the three dimensional with the flat in the painting. To deal with such a conflict and to grant a smooth transition from the early style of two-dimensional depiction of the human figure Matisse has employed several stratagems. The first is to rely on his memory to recall the Islamic motifs instead of direct stimulation. This would supposedly liberate him from the little details imposed by the direct influences and give him more space to explore the chemistry of opposing the human figures against the flat decorative surface created by non-human elements. Another strategy is to use

the colour to unify or reduce the contrast between the flat and the three-dimensional. In this, the colours of the human body will be derived from the colour of the background and its lines will be complemented with the decorative lines of all the elements of the painting.

Odalisque with Gray Culottes is one of Matisse's Nice paintings done to accentuate the contrast between the figure and the decorative background. Elderfield (1992) argues that in the *Odalisque and Gray Culottes* Matisse's colours strategy would create an optical dazzle that may prevent the viewer from concentrating on the human body. In this, the body of the odalisque though treated in three dimensions would be seen in its decorative presence as though it is depicted in two dimensions. That is that human figure stops to command the painting instead it is again a part of the whole structure. In this, Matisse uses the Islamic aesthetical system by proxy. In fact he was trying to integrate both traditions validating one in terms of the other and without going completely to the "ugly".

7.13 "Written Language has always been our failure to stay forever on the scene"



An edited picture which is a combination of Matisse illustrations and Arabic scripts, done to show how Matisse has relied on Arabesque to express his ideas.

Looking in the 1479 *Al Fardawsi's Shahnama* or *The Hariri Makamats* one can easily realized the way written texts are complemented with pictures. In Islamic art, these pictures are called miniatures and its modern equivalent is called illustrations... Matisse probably was aware of such techniques through his

contacts with the Islamic art exhibitions he has seen early in his career. Until now, Matisse through his paintings has secured a style that is based on inspiring the Islamic miniatures in a direct or indirect way. However to take his venture to its extreme end, Matisse has started to explore this genre (illustrating written texts) in order to create his own miniatures. That is to see his drawings juxtaposed with written texts especially poems (*poesies*). These traditions are well known in Islamic art. *Hafiz's poems, Divan Haviz 1309, Qisas El Anbia, stories of Prophetes, Nizami's poems, Al Qazwini's Ajaeb Al Makhloukat The Strange of The Creatures 1554*, are typical examples in which illustrations have equivalent (the terms is taken from Matisse as we will see later) artistic values of the written texts whether they are poems or stories. In addition, the importance of these illustrations consists in the dialogical process they created between texts and illustrations. While they explain, assist and visually stimulate the written texts the latter would become occasions by themselves for the artists that may supply new ideas and suggest new aesthetics. Though Matisse's full accessibility of the above Islamic oeuvres cannot be secured, the notion of Matisse's being exposed to some of these Islamic genres through Islamic arts casual exhibitions, copies owned by friends and permanent collections, as argued elsewhere, in this study could be fully granted. Mallarme's book (*poems 1932*) was Matisse's first encounter with such traditions. Illustrating Mallarme's poems Matisse seems to get deep into his Islamic venture as he tries to understand the way it operates on a micro level. That is to incorporate paintings with the written texts is very new for him but it is arguably appealing to his tendency to mix the seemingly unmixable. That is; European and Islamic traditions, flatness and perspectives, conservatives and liberal use of colours and finally written and visual texts. Describing his experience, Matisse in a statement to Teriade (1931) has expressed his attitude as follows: "It is agreeable to see a good poet inspire the imagination of another artist". The artist upon Matisse is sharing the poet his/her domain in order to create a visual text that can be, aesthetically at least, "equivalent" to the written one. Being aware about the radical effect of associating art with poem or not, Matisse in fact has established a close connection between different kinds of arts

through which different artistic genres inform each other. Bois (1998, p.77) argues that the word equivalent used by Matisse “points to an affinity between the aesthetics of Matisse and Mallarme”. That is, aesthetics of paintings and poems. This affinity is quite reminiscent of the affinity between Islamic miniatures and the texts they illustrate. Indeed any illustrated page in *Al Hariri's Makamat* (see appendix 4) provides the impression that illustration by itself would become an occasion initiated by the text but fully independent in its visual aspects and expressionist possibilities. The above picture is an artificial arrangement done by me to show how Matisse used the female bodies as scriptures that can be manipulated to become a means of expressions. Bois (1998) argues that Matisse's illustrations are splendid demonstrations of his ability to modulate the space of the page with arabesques that never function as closed contour. Bois' argument, in this context is quite connected with the way Arabic scripture is manipulated to express more than the literal meaning of the letters or the words themselves... That is, Arabic scripture artist are urged to establish a certain balance between the white of the paper with the linear movement of the lines in order to produce an effect of infinite radiance.

In fact, in his drawing and illustrations Matisse often uses such strategies. Because he does not know how to write Arabic, it is believed he has relied on the expressive qualities of Arabic scriptures to use human bodies especially the female bodies as his alphabet. In this sense, the female body is taken from its erotic and physical presence to a more abstract presence through which they were stretched, contracted, and modeled in order to express through the decorative quality of their representation. The above example is typical of how Matisse has used the female body “to write in Arabic”. Here again we are in front of a new Matisse's discovery that allows him to make alphabet out of human bodies! That is, Matisse's illustration has plenty of (Noons) and (Meems) “N's and M's in English borrowed from Arabic scriptures. In this, Whether Matisse illustrations are body's parts or any other objects, they stops to be what they really are in favour of the semiotic, semantic, and plastic meanings it may cast. Nudes' curves,

zigzags and undulating lines in this context are depicted as to explore aesthetics that are well beyond the aesthetics created by their physical presence. To finish this argument about the linguistic meaning of Matisse's nudes especially those that decorated Mallarme's poems, human bodies are always used as a mean of expression in arts. For the first instance Dance is an art that use human body to express feeling and issues related to aesthetics and the human body's existence in nature. However, Matisse's use of the body tends to expand the expressive possibilities of the body by linking it to its linguistic presence. In this, as I will argue, Matisse has reached a reversed process through which human body is evolved out of written language while historically written languages were developed out of concrete forms including human bodies. However, in Matisse's approach there would be no limits to depict human body in its decorative context. It can also be referred to as a whole or as a part by the aesthetics of its existence. In this, an Arabic letter N reads Noun (ن) could be manipulated to express feminist issues as much as aesthetical issues through its interactions with other letters and other decorative motifs. However, in asserting on the decorative does Matisse sacrifice the expressive? An important question that should be addressed here to exclude the trap of ornament and decoration in general.

7.14 When Matisse's Islamic experience starts to appeal: My Paintings

When doing paintings, I usually use female figures in additions to fishes, flowers and birds. They occupy a great deal of my artistic activity. Some art critics render this tendency as a psychological compensation of living in a male dominated family, I have five brothers and one sister. This introduction about my painting is generated by Matisse's way of representing human figures and other natural elements in the paintings, most notably, how he has depicted female figures from live model. He said once: "I do not paint a woman I paint a picture". In this sense, the model seated naked or not is reduced to a mere stimulation that would somehow provoke Matisse's creativity to do a painting. In this, Matisse's concerns would not be the aesthetics of the model's breasts or legs no matter beautiful they are but instead the aesthetics of the lines, colours and lights would

become the ultimate target. Some feminists would not accept such percepts accusing Matisse of objectifying the female body. Rather, he has used the female body as a commodity though the ultimate aim is to produce pure aesthetics through a noble mean as much as art. The above argument is not generated to discuss this particular issue in favour or against any feminist perspectives.



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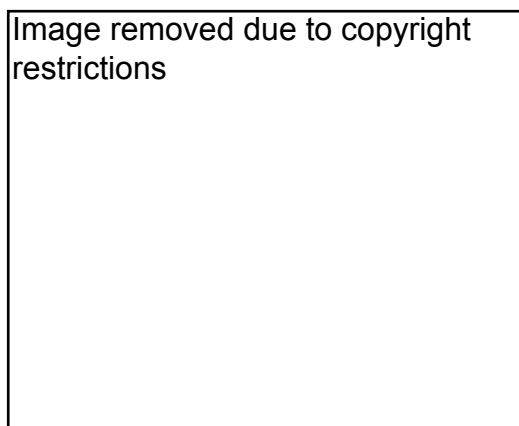
My Painting *Lady with Long Neck* (2005)

Matisse, *Lady with Green Eyes*

Instead, its necessity stems from the notion that Matisse's great achievement consists in his relentless attempts to link art to philosophy. Once we read his statements, we soon realize that new limitless horizons would be opened; or rather, I would say new windows, since Matisse's fascination with windows has no parallel. He once said I do not paint things I paint the differences between painted and real things. (See fourcade1984, Schneider 1990).

Regarding the above concept Elderfield (1990) argues that Matisse had to choose either to make nature conform to the existing requirements of his arts or make his art as it existed conform the requirement of the nature. In Elderfield final judgment, Matisse chooses the latter. In this Elderfield's argument hold when it comes to his statement that Fauvism and consequently the decorative choice, have to end because of its anti-naturalistic approaches. However, the odd in such an argument lies in Elderfield's attempt to promote the theory that sees Matisse Islamic experience, especially the decorative choice, as a temporary one that ended forever when Matisse has settled down in Nice after 1913. While a fair reading to any paintings of Matisse after that date would show the Islamic traces through, flatness, colours, textiles, a rugs and the overall Islamic aura spread out of those paintings.

7.15 Once you adopt the Matissian approach there are no limits of how to do a portrait of your wife!!!



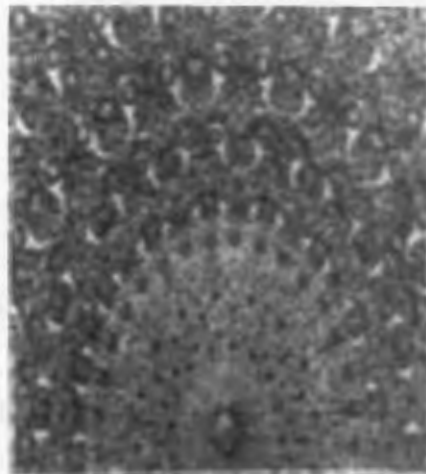
Amine El Basha, *A Woman Face* 2003



Matisse, *My wife* 1910

The portrait on the left is a painting done by the Lebanese and internationally acclaimed artist Amine Elbasha. Elbasha's paintings and concepts about the decorative nature of colours are arguably driven from Matisse. Like Matisse, the subject matter for him is a field of inquiry through which lights, colours and the artist's subjectivity are correlated in creating technical help as much as expressive possibilities. Moreover, Elbasha arguably tend to share Matisse his concepts about the soothing aspects of paintings. His landscapes are symphonies of lights and colours spontaneously jotted down as the artist tries to catch the ever-fleeting feelings of the moments. Colours and lights are what matter. Coupling these with the maker's mood, culture, feeling and approaches, painting then would overlap the fidelity of depicting the subject matter. Place in this context is becoming like an On-the-move process, an entity that is strongly tied to the fleeting aspects of time.

7.16 The Moorish Screen: When Female beauty warms our Perceptions



Matisse *The Moorish screen*

Decoration of a mosque wall

By now, Matisse had his own miniature. He seemed happy reconciling his European traditions and the Islamic traditions reflected in the above poetic painting *The Moorish Screen*. Schneider argues that in this phase of his artistic

life Matisse “had achieved the fusion between the sacred and reality“(1990, P. 46). Then, It does not intimidate him to return to a more realistic style that some how ruled over the period between 1913 –1924. This period as I would argue is Matisse’s most crucial phase through which he succeeded to in infuse both Islamic and European artistic traditions. Then from now on when Islamic traces are not visible, they would be implied. Some art critics called the paintings of this period Interior Symphonies, others called it the Odalisque period, and I tend to call it redressing the self with Islamic aesthetics. Indeed, the semi perspective reflected in the Moorish Screen is materialized in the artist’s relentless attempt to depict the third dimension. In fact, most of Nice paintings reflect Matisse’s tendency to play the traditional game of depicting the third dimension. However, his two-dimensional mind in addition to the heavy decoration he spreads all over his canvases have arguably prevented him to succeed. Another issue that is associated with the so-called semi perspective is the colours.

The tones of colours used in the paintings are the same in the first, second, and third plane and instead of taming the colour in the far distance where the screen is standing Matisse instead use the glittering French ultramarine sacrificing the perspective in favour of the “ joy” radiated by the elegant blue. In this sense, Islamic miniature’s colouring techniques would come to the forefront and that Matisse seems to become more confident to rely on its techniques. Moreover, the serenity that may come from Islamic decoration such as the façade of the mosque (fig to the right) is tempting when it comes to the idea of Matisse’s soothing art concept expressed in his Notes. Two identical women with identical angel dresses relaxing in a decorated room covered with luxury rugs and vase of flower and a violin in the far distance. However, no attempt has been made to depict their features, as their presence itself has become one of the main ingredients of the decorative motifs spread all over the spaces. Alternatively, I would rather argue that the two women cannot be seen but as in their decorative presence among the delicate balances of the decoration of the rugs the screen and on the walls. In this, Matisse has adamantly promoted the idea of decoration and the decorative in art.

From now on all his human characters would be reduced and stylized to their decorative beings. Looking at the above painting and the picture of a mosque façade Matisse seems to engage himself with a distinctive dialogue with Islamic art as never before. Indeed while Muslims were engaged in decorating their mosques, Matisse seems to invent his own “mosques” blended them with themes he is familiar with through European traditions. That is, depicting people, still life and sometimes landscape in their decorative presence and arabesque effects.

7.17 Zohra (flower): The powerful Moroccan Woman

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Matisse Zohra

In his painting of *Zohra*, Matisse, I would argue, is trying to reflect mosque ambiances by depicting Zohra kneeling with crossed hands as she was praying.

Indeed, *Zohra* is kneeling submissively, fully clothed including her head. According to Elderfield (1990), Matisse found it difficult to find female models while in Morocco. Based on Elderfield's claim, Roger Benjamin (2003) speculating that Zohra was a Moroccan prostitute, which Matisse has met, in his first trip to Morocco. In his second trip, Matisse upon Benjamin tried to find *Zohra* again but he failed. What I am arguing here that Zohra, upon the holy sitting depicted in the above painting, has meant for Matisse more than a prostitute may mean to an artist as he tried to find her in particular his second trip. My speculation is based on Matisse's two versions of Zohra. In both versions, Zohra seems to be a devoted woman dressed with traditional Moroccan garments and in both versions Zohra is depicted in a holy like place. It has been said (It was hard to me to document these claims as they were conveyed to me by some Moroccan friends) that Matisse has fallen in love with *Zohra*, and that Matisse's nickname among close friends' circle was Matisse *Zohra*. Even some Moroccan intellectuals went far to argue that what Matisse did from 1910 towards the end of his life is to draw Zohra. In this case, all his odalisques could be seen as variations of Zohra's constant presence in his life and in his paintings.

7.18 Zorah en Jaune (Zohra in Yellow)



Matisse *Zohra in Yellow*



Matisse *Studies for zohra*

In this version of *Zohra* Matisse has tried to link his model (no matter if she is a prostitute or a Jew as Elderfield argues) to the realm of Islamic art. Simple composition with two main colours and decorated traditional Moroccan dress through which Matisse has intended to show how much he would respect his model by not showing her erotically as he usually does with his Fauve models.. As *Zohra* paintings and drawings has grown out of Matisse's two separate trips to Morocco, they provide the perfect lens through which to look at the basic differences with Matisse's highly sexualized Fauve women in *Le Bonheur de Vivre*. In his essay entitled *Matisse in Morocco: An Interpretive Guide*, John Elderfield (1990) asserts that "Matisse seems to have had difficulties finding models who would pose for him, particularly women because of the law of the veil. "Only Jewesses and prostitutes were exempt" (see Cowart et. al.1990, p. 216). Matisse is thus lucky to have found the prostitute *Zorah*, yet importantly he does not paint her as a prostitute. Instead, in his first picture of her, *Zorah en Jaune*, sexual themes are most obviously absent from the canvas. As a prostitute used to exposing and flaunting her body, *Zohra* could have easily been painted nude or with less clothing to show herself off, but instead Matisse chooses to keep her clothed and posed with prudence. Unlike the primitive, nude Western women in the Fauve *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, Moroccan *Zorah* is clothed with respect and detail to her finer characteristics. She is kneeling in a way that does not flatter her body nor draw attention to her small, flat breasts that have not been enhanced with paint. This lack of attention to her body as a sex symbol shows a certain maturity in Matisse as an artist. In fact, Matisse is relying on his Islamic overall experience in developing his ability to paint with awareness of the non-sexual qualities of his subject, a movement that would take him away from Fauve women and Fauvism in general. Furthermore, a second item of interest that immediately deserves notice about *Zohra en Jaune* that makes it distinctly different from the primitive *Le Bonheur de Vivre*. It is the name *Zohra*. Elderfield (1990) argues that instead of "titling the painting generically, as "Moroccan Woman" would suffice, Matisse calls *Zohra* by her name. This automatically gives her a less primitive, less sexual existence" However one may speculate that Matisse has got to know *Zohra* in his first trip to Morocco, and in the second trip

he was trying to find her as a single Moroccan woman that can be presented in his painting. In this sense, Zohra as depicted by Matisse could be read as an attempt to show some respect to Zohra and her Islamic culture, an issue that remains absent from all orientalists. The pen and ink study of Zohra's visage shows the careful technique of Matisse to render truly her on canvas as lifelike and beautiful as she was in person. We see the development of her face from simple sketches to a finished painting, as in *Zohra en Jaune* above. This further exemplifies the artist's new focus on a woman as a subject, not an object.

7.9 Conclusion

Comparing Matisse's paintings and the miniatures he has arguably inspired leaves no room to exclude the full extent of Matisse's involvement with Islamic art especially Islamic miniatures. However, comparisons from non-Western perspectives, though exciting, is proved to become a difficult task. Indeed Western view about Matisse Islamic experience is not arguably ready to accept the full extent of Matisse's involvement with the rival traditions. However, I always feel relieved every time I get back to these binary comparisons as clues about what is Islamic in Matisse's paintings are there waiting to be collected and revealed. Moreover, comparisons have developed in me as a researcher, the skills of interpretation and analysis where the social the historical, the cultural, the political and the artistic feed each other in a web of correlation and interrelation that needs really fine and genuine knowledge about every bit of evidence. (Not to forget, personal interpretation has played an essential part in reading Matisse's paintings). This gave me an advantage over many art critics and historians whose modest knowledge about the essential characteristics of Islamic art prevented them from reaching fair conclusions about the full extent of Matisse's involvement with Islamic art.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Educational Values of Matisse's Islamic Experience

8.1 Introduction:

It has been argued that there is always connection between culture and education that culture is the core of education and vice versa. Within its conceptual framework and within its technical innovation Matisse's Islamic experience, informs art education in many ways. In the way we do art based on our own traditions and in the way we do art based on other traditions or in the way we do art by mixing our own and other traditions. In this chapter, the educational values of Matisse's Islamic experience are looked at from three main perspectives. The first is Matisse's personal experience as an artist, art teacher, and student. The second is the educational values of introducing the art of the Other to own art and artistic traditions. And the third is my own experience as an artist and art teacher and student.

Regarding the first perspective, this study assumes that Matisse's own concepts about art especially his *Notes of a Painters* 1908 form a rich source for art education. These *Notes* suggest arguably not just technical solution but epistemological ground in the field of art education. This study, thereby relies on the artist's *Notes of Painter* and the artist's sayings about the values of foreign resources he inspired especially Islamic art. Those resources have arguably the potential to change radically not just Matisse's concepts and styles but the whole course of Western art. As an art student and teacher Matisse's *Notes of a Painter* and his occasional sayings about how to teach and learn art, and more importantly how and why we do art form rich educational resources that can benefit contemporary art education in many ways. The second perspective is fed by the fact that Matisse's Islamic experience, as discussed earlier has always been linked with the art of the Other (see Shneider1984, Flam 1986). Such an issue as assumed in this study has its valuable educational side. It has arguably the potential to enhance own traditions by exposing them to the other's experience on

the one hand, and on the other it would validate the borrowed traditions and create new contexts for them as never being thought of before.

Within its different perspectives, the Other's experiences have the potential to gain educational values for the self in many ways. It helps for the first instance in understanding the other who is a constant part of our environment. In addition, understanding the other, by recognizing its unique experiences, lies in the heart of the process of learning and forms, since Dewey, the essential ingredient for Progressive Pedagogy. In addition, it helps the self to learn by comparing and contrasting own experiences with those provided by the others. More importantly, it has the potential to afford a constant framework that can be consulted when the need arises. This includes the unique and distinctive ways the other would create meanings from within a given environment, and the ways problems are solved and approached.

The third educational dimension of Matisse's Islamic experience is looked at from my own experience as an art teacher and an artist. In this context, I am looking at my own educational and artistic experience from the opposite side of the issue. Indeed as Matisse has consulted the Islamic art to develop his painting I am as "Muslim artist" consulting non-Islamic traditions in developing my paintings. As an art teacher the educational values of my own experience is uncovered through the development of an art program that is based on consulting different artistic traditions when doing art. The program was developed with the help of my students and the school where I teach art. It forms an attempt to reconcile the theories posed by Matisse Islamic experience with an Australian educational setting where different cultures and traditions are contested on a daily basis in our schools.

8.2 Notes of a Painter: The Educational Values

Being an art teacher and student Matisse from the beginning of his artistic life did not neglect the importance of education in promoting his new concepts about art making and appreciating. (Matisse was an art student at Gustave Moreau's studio and later on, he had his own school of art). In addition, to his casual sayings about art and art teaching and learning, Matisse's famous Notes of a Painter 1908 (*Notes d'un Peintre*) has become an influential manifest about how artists would approach their easels and more importantly why they would approach their art in this or that ways.

Issues of using colours, spaces, composition, decoration, representation are well rounded in *Notes of a Painter* to form valuable educational resources that can be consulted all the times. However, as I would argue whether Matisse was aware of the general aesthetics of Islamic art or not, his Notes of a Painter are arguably influenced by the general aesthetics of Islamic art. This includes the use of colours, decoration, Arabesques and more importantly the philosophy that may underpin Islamic art. In the following paragraphs, I am reviewing Matisse's Notes trying to locate the common aspects of his concepts and those of Islamic arts. The aim of such review is to argue that learning from the other is a continuous learning process that can be approached away from any ideological or political barrier.

8.2.1 The Valuable Notes; an Educational Guide

Matisse's *Notes of a Painter* has become the most influential artistic statement of the 20th century (see Duthuit 1949, Brill 1967, Clement 1993). Many reasons may justify such a statement. Firstly, the Notes arguably afford a general framework for art students, teachers and artists that enable them to deal with issues such as colours, composition and the artificial or natural arrangement of the subject matter. "A painter who addresses the public not just in order to present his work but to reveal some of his ideas on the art of painting, exposes himself to several danger" Matisse said (see Flam, 1986, p.76) . This statement has formed an early

lesson that a painting must stay away from the narrative so that it has to be evaluated on its own aesthetics and meanings. From the very beginning Matisse has tried to carve out a way for paintings in a time that was dominated by literature especially poems and novels. A painting then should stay away from the novel's narrative and from telling tales to become an independent being." A painter best representative is his work he said (p.76). An artist should not explain him/herself in order to be understood. This was new in the time of the great debate about the two opposite theories of art: Art for the sake of art and arts for the sake of the society. Indeed, Matisse first achievement in his first few lines of his Notes could be the establishment of a kind of rapport between paintings and the viewers' minds where all meanings are contested. In addition, it enables the artists to express the natural elements in the way he or she would see or understand them.

Establishing such a rapport would arguably release the artists from imitating nature. This concept is new as well at the time and rarely contested within the Western traditions where realistic forms were dominant especially in paintings. More importantly, the concept tends to challenge radically the way we approach the subject matter when doing art. On the one hand it release the artist from imitating nature and on the other it gives the artist the freedom to manipulate the subject matter so that it may appeal to its maker feelings and position. Are there any Islamic traces in this Matissian new approach? The answer is evident.

Long before Matisse, different Islamic art forms suggested a more stylized nature and away from imitating the natural elements (See Grabar, 1978; Otto-Dorn, 1967; Knars, 1982). In this, Muslim artists were trying to represent the subject matter but without imitating god's who is the sole power that may create real things. In this context, Massignon (1921) discusses this issue arguing that the representation of the physical subject in Islamic art has a religious or even a theological meaning. Massignon in this has relied on the Islamic philosopher Al-Jurjani's argument that we can transfer natural forms such as a group of letters

and moved them from their original meanings in order to express very different meanings. When applied to visual world Al-Jurjânî cited in Abu Deeb (1979) argues that the autonomy of forms from meaning allow for greater freedom in creation than if forms are tied to a specific meaning.

To be effective in carrying the desired new meanings, this process needs a sort of manipulation (distortion perhaps) of the visual form so that our mind can go beyond the initial meaning. According to Grabar (1999) this argument is reflected in many contemporary works about representation in Islamic art (see as well Papadopoulo, 1988; Burchhardt, 1967; Bakhtiar and Ardalan, 1973 and Nasr, 1987) . Indeed, once the painting has become an independent being it becomes arguably a visual text that can be interpreted and analyzed by the viewers and upon their individual and intellectual skills. For example, if I give myself the legitimacy to interpret, let us say, Matisse's painting *Conversation* 1910 as a conversation between the orient and the West, between the decorative and the non decorative, between the effect of flatness and the third dimensions, John Elderfield (1988) or Gerard Durozoi (1990) have the same legitimacy to see the same painting as a mere conversation between unhappy husband and wife. Here the importance of *Conversation* consists in its potential to generate more implications than conformity and to suggest different meanings to different viewers. At the time, this was new and revolutionary for many reasons. The first is that flatness was not part of the European traditions in paintings. Therefore, the flat aspect of Matisse's painting *Conversation* was arguably borrowed from Islamic miniatures according to Daftari (1988) and Schneider (1984).

The second is the intentional "negligence" of depicting *Conversation's* elements in three-dimensional shape. This negligence of 3D's representation was a totally Islamic concept at the time. It is argued here that Matisse has acquired this concept from his experiences when visiting the Islamic art exhibitions that took place in Europe in 1903, 1907 and 1910. (see Chapter four and five for more references on this point). Looking at different Islamic art forms especially

miniatures and rugs the shift of the focus from imitating nature in favour of a flat representation has enabled Muslim artists to manipulate the subject matter as they would represent what as individual they see and understand. In this case, flatness has become a tool that may help individuals to express their different views for the same subject matter. In this, lie great educational values, as I would argue. It tends to teach us that art making is a subjective process as well and through which we tend to express the self through the depiction of subject matter.

Reading through *Notes of a Painter* Matisse seems to master the Islamic lesson whether by coincidence or in purpose. That is, artists are not neutral in front of the represented subject matter. Here, I should argue that the process of generating new meanings from the same visual text would imply aesthetical sides through which, we should recognize that what might impress me as beautiful may become less impressive to someone else and not impressive at all for some others .

Looking at the above argument, the visual text would gain more characteristics as never before. On the one hand, it would appeal to all people at all levels (at least intellectually), and on the other, it may mean many things for one and nothing to another. A painting's values in this case may be determined by its qualities (aesthetical, intellectual, social and political as much as its realistic aspects) as an occasion to raise issues in the mind of the viewers. In this case, any artwork would have its own values and open the way towards the notion that all human made nature such as arts have their own aesthetics and meanings.

Later on, as I will argue, this enabled Matisse to equalize between craft and artwork as both implied their own meanings and aesthetics values. In this, Matisse's view implies the notion that we see differently and our views should be validated through the painting itself. Consequently, we represent nature differently and more precisely, we tend to represent nature in the same way we see it. However, since we see differently nature meanings and aspects will be represented differently. In brief, Matisse was suggesting a painting that can appeal

to anyone and regardless of his/her interpretational or analytical skills. In this sense, a painting may mean different things upon different people.

Another educational side could be added here through the *Notes of a Painter*: time as a fleeting element. By mentioning time, Matisse has wanted to convey that we have, as human beings artists and viewers, a changing nature that should affect and be affected by time. He argues that we are changing as time passes by. In addition, the meanings of things including paintings may change over time because we are changing and our concepts and perceptions as well. "I feel very strongly the ties between my early and my recent works, but I do not think exactly the way I thought yesterday Matisse said (See *Notes of a painter* in Flam, 1986, p.77).

Since thoughts are changing over time meanings as well are changing: "My basic idea has not changed but my thought has evolved and my mode of expression has followed my thought...My destination is always the same but I work out different routes to get there" Matisse said (*Notes of a Painter* p.77)...

This argument poses more challenge than it poses solutions. In addition, it may hold revolutionary ideas about approaching reality and the truth in general in a time that was dominated by empiricism and the fascinating positivist approach to knowledge production. In addition, it tends to challenge modernism itself where ironically Matisse had become one of its founders as (Spurling 1998) argues. On the one hand, it says that there is no stable reality as we are (including our thoughts) changing, and on the other, it suggests knowledge as a contested process that could be acquired upon limitless variables related to personal, intellectual, cultural and social paradigm, time, and space. This argument is paradoxically reminiscent to the post modernist argument through which reality and texts could be read and re-read written and rewritten and in a way that may promote the concept of denying the originary point of knowledge or the final interpretation of it as Usher (1996) argues.

Though Matisse expressed his loyalty to his past paintings, “I don’t repudiate any of my paintings,” he states: “If I have to redo them I would redo them differently”. The meaning of two such statements could become the early seeds of postmodernist thoughts. On the one hand these statements implies that we have no stable reality as reality is constantly changing and on the other hand they challenge objectivity using a subjective approach through which each of us can interpret and represent the world around us.

Matisse’s other major achievement in his Notes is probably the new concept about the expressive in art. That is, paintings must have their own language away from the narrative. Expression then “does not entirely reside in the passions glowing on a human face or manifested by violent movement” (Note of a Painter in Flam, 1986, p.77.) In this, Matisse prepares to turn his back to old traditions where paintings struggle to become carbon copies of the narrative in favor of a more advanced concepts through which “the entire arrangement of the painting is becoming expressive”. Matisse suggests here that expressions could be generated by the ways colours are arranged in a painting without even describing any particular subject matter. In this way, the different elements in a painting are related and interacted with each other through their decorative presence.

Investigating the roots of such revolutionary concepts one can easily detect Islamic traces in which decoration was long before Matisse validated in the domains of aesthetics and expressions. This argument has a tremendous educational impact as it has the potential to challenge centuries of western traditions regarding representation in art especially paintings. On the one hand, it recognizes painting as something that can be evaluated on its own against the then dominant approach of looking at the painting through the anecdotal meanings it may hold. In addition, it gives us a greater insight into how and what to teach when teaching art. In fact, it would lead art teachers and students to recognize aesthetic production as something independent from the social meanings and

more importantly; these aesthetics may hold their particular expressive qualities so they become valuable tools to express through arts.

Looking at any text as something separated from reality has arguably many implications not just in the domain of art but within the greater domain of the philosophy of knowledge production. In poem and literature, the use of metaphors as to keep away the text from the real would arguably increase the expressive possibilities of any text. Similarly, in paintings each line or colour has its own expressive qualities while contributing in the painting's total expressiveness at the same time.

Composition in painting as well was not forgotten by Matisse as composition (the ways things are arranged in a painting) suggests many technical solutions. He said:

Composition, the aim of which should be expression, is modified according to the surface to be covered. If I take a sheet of paper of a given size, my drawing will have a necessary relationship to its format (see Flam, 1986, p.78)

As early as 1908, Matisse's decorative choice had its potential to change not the way of applying colours but the way subject matter is arranged on a canvas. That is, when natural elements are arranged on a plan a kind of dialogue would impose itself as it is dictated by the virtue of the elements' very existence. Even in nature, things are arguably interacting with each other. Visually, a tree for example in an empty space would not have the same meanings or the same visual appeal as a tree in a bushy land. For the first, it will be seen in term of its surrounding and its relationships as a green mass with the empty space, sky it and all the other features of that surrounding. In this case, nothing can hide or affect the visibility of the tree. Or rather, the tree within the space it occupies can influence its surrounding and in turn become influenced by its surrounding.

Even the function of the tree in such a place will be different; in terms of its shade, colours, and shape. While its shade could be more appreciated by a tired passerby or a scared bird, its colour will become an extension of the colour of sky, earth and all other objects around it, and finally its shape would have the potential to occupy the space without any interruption. In comparison, a tree in a bushy land will be looked at in terms of other trees of its kind and in terms of other kind of trees perhaps. How the green of that particular tree is interacting with other greens? How its shape does affect and become affected in relations to other trees' shapes... and so on. One can argue here, that a tree is not the same at all places and all times and its meanings and some time functions may become different regarding time and place.

Visually speaking, the green of the tree will be affected by the green of other trees. More importantly, the shape of the tree will affect the way its green would be presented. However, what will happen if the tree is not green? A purple or red tree as Matisse has tended to represent. How would this affect its surrounding? What impact is there on its odd presence within its different colour? And so on...Matisse has arguably tried to apply this concept to painting where a colour is looked at as an independent being and in its relations to other colours and in relations to the whole composition. This is what Matisse has called the decorative nature of colour. (See Shneider, 1984; Flam, 1986; Cowart, 1990). Looking at colour in terms of its connection with other colours would make Matisse depart from impressionism and the so called pointillism lead by Seurat and Signac where every colour has its own function that does not change, instead" a certain tone could be used in a certain place as Matisse argues:

If upon a white canvas I set down some sensations of blue, of green, of red, each new stroke diminishes the importance of the preceding ones. Suppose I have to paint an interior: I have before me a cupboard; it gives me a sensation of vivid red, and I put down a red, which satisfies me. A relationship is established between this red and the white of the canvas. Let me put green near the red, and make the floor yellow; and

again here will be relationships between the green or the yellow and the white of the canvas which will satisfy me”...(Flam,1986,PP 79-80)

Reading through the above statement one may become fully aware of the importance of Matisse statement” First of all one must be decorative” In 1909, a year after Matisse published his *Notes of a painter*, Gombrich (1976) made two statements about the value of decoration in arts. The first is” I am old enough to remember a generation of art lovers who insisted that the test of a good painting lay in what they called it the decorative qualities”. The second statement is oddly contradicting the first or rather opposing its foundation. Gombrich wrote:

There is nothing the abstract painter may dislike more than the term decorative. An epithet which reminded him of the familiar sneer that what he had produced was at best pleasant curtain materials”. (Anger, 2004, P.1),

Recalling Gombrich’s two contradictory statements is to give a clear idea how European art received the decorative, which was Islamic as I will argue later, introduced mainly by Matisse, Gauguin, Kandinsky and other. The decorative nature of colours argued by Matisse does not reside only on the pure visual aspects suggested by juxtaposed colours but it is suggested to be used as a mean of expressions. He said:” The chief function of colours should be to serve expression” (Flam, 1986, p.80). However, the choice of colours whether used to represent a landscape or a still life does not rest on scientific theories as Matisse argues. Instead, it should be based “on observation, sensitivity and felt experience”... “Colours which render my sensation” he said.

Linking colours to instincts, sensations, and feelings would broaden colours’ functions. Feelings have no limits, and within their changing and “volatile” aspects, colours must follow up. This is another Matissian discovery that has the potential to release painting from imitating nature. In addition, it may set up no limits for their meanings and visual effects. From personal experience, meanings of the red for example are not the same at all times. Even its interactive aspects

are not the same at all times. It may comply easily sometimes with other colours, while in other times it may become hostile acting in discord with other colours. Do colours have their moods? Still with the effect of time, Matisse's statements have become an invitation to use nature within its global and changing aspects. Nature then should be used as a stimulant that may feed sensations and feelings; in turn, nature is fed by those feelings, as they are supposedly the main ingredients to understand nature.

Looking at the above argument one may amazingly start to trace new functions for doing art. That is, art from now on can be used as a tool of inquiry that may lead us to understand nature instead of being a submissive activity that simply imitates the natural element. Indeed, as feelings are always subjected to continuous changes our concepts of using colours would be changed accordingly. In this, Matisse tries to link paintings to the concept of how as individuals we interpret nature around us. More importantly, how as individuals can we create own unique nature in which each individual would feel in harmony and without being in dissonance with other. In this respect, each of us would summarize nature itself, exactly like a composition that acquires its harmony by balancing its elements through the mind of its maker.

Fauvism could be read here according to the above implications. Consequently, it could be argued here that Fauvism is a translation of Matisse's concepts about colours. However, short-lived Fauvism's principles have influenced Matisse's art and formed the theoretical framework for his later works. Its importance is based on its discipline to apply colours straight from the tubes and more importantly in the decorative use of colours. (See Bock-Weiss 1981; Chassey1998). Another aspect that may become associated with Fauvism is simplicity as Matisse has declared in his Notes that the simple is the best. Indeed, while Impressionism was trying to record the fleeting moments in nature, Fauvist paintings tend to replace the impressionist notion of recording nature's element by using nature' elements as a pretext to create a relief nature based on decorative motifs and arabesque as

Benjamin (1999) argues. This is absolutely a valuable lesson that can be used at all times in paintings and many other artistic genres such as poetry and literature. Finally, reexamining Matisse's above argument as stated in his Notes one cannot ignore the Islamic effects based on similar Islamic epistemology.

Long before Matisse, Muslim artists were preoccupied in representing the essential characters of things. (see argument in Chapter 4 and five of this study). This imposed self-restriction on the issue of representation has arguably extends Muslim artists ability to look deep beyond the appearance of natural form. This by itself holds tremendous educational aspects as modern pedagogy encourage learner to deconstruct and reconstruct reality and to dig deep into its structure instead of accepting it as a ready-made discourse. Based on commonality between Matisse and Islamic art concerning colours, compositions, decoration, simplicity and the essential characteristics of things, the next few pages are detailing an art education program with the aim of validating Matisse Islamic experience in a contemporary context. Another aim for the program is to argue the validity of Matisse's Islamic experience to afford limitless art educational discourses that involve different artistic and cultural traditions and perhaps the politics that may underlay them. In such an environment, secondary students will have the chance to use art as a tool of inquiry and to address many contemporary cultural and artistic issues related to their lives.

8.3 Making Art after Matisse: an Art Educational program: Introduction to the program

As I argued else where in this study, the educational values of Matisse's Islamic experience consist in its adaptability to integrate different artistic traditions with the aim of suggesting new techniques as much as new ways of expression. That is, validating different artistic traditions when doing and appreciating art may open the process of making art to limitless possibility. Putting Matisse's Islamic experience in a contemporary context, The Culturally Responsive Art Program

(CRVAP) was initiated in order to explore the adaptability of Matisse's Islamic experience to a contemporary context.

Through the Program, this study is attempting to argue that Matisse's case with Islamic art may become typical for art students and teachers in exploring the conditions under which one may inspire the other's traditions. In addition, the program may help art makers and learners to:

- Know and foster the other as a complementary being
- Explore the other's system of thoughts
- Manipulating the other's artistic techniques to fit own techniques
- Suggest new meanings for the other's art while seeking new meanings for own arts.
- Create a universal environment through which political identity may be scarified for the sake of cultural identity and that of knowledge in general.

The Culturally Responsive Visual Art Program was primarily initiated based on Matisse's Islamic experience and is guided by a conceptual framework that sees the other's experience as a rich resource of knowledge.

8.3.1 Background issues related to the program

The idea of The Culturally Responsive Visual Arts Program (CRVAP) was developed in 2004 in a Western Sydney Suburban high school where I teach Visual art and Mathematics. It initially involved 24 year 10 Visual art students and later in the program, some year 11 and 12 Visual art students had become participants especially in debating issues regarding different cultural and artistic traditions. The idea of developing the program stems from the fact that the 24 year 10 students represent 17 pure ethnicities and many other mixed ethnicities i.e. Serbs and Islanders, Syrians and Irish, Anglo and Aboriginals. The 17 ethnicities are Aboriginal, Anglo, Arab including Lebanese, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Irish, Islanders, New Zealand, Nigerian, Scottish, South American, South African, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Looking at this huge diversity and the possible traditions and cultures that may be brought to school implies excitement as much as difficulties and implications. On the one hand, excitement would come from the huge diversities that suggest the new and the unexpected in all aspects of teaching, learning and doing arts. On the other hand, it would imply the difficulties of managing diversities and more precisely to find the right educational policies that may cater for all students' needs. More importantly, dealing with such diversities would imply the tension of suggesting new aesthetics and techniques brought to the art classroom by culturally different students.

It was really a great challenge for an art teacher, like me, who is initially inspired by Henry Matisse's Islamic experience in doing art and who is practicing art with different artistic traditions in his mind. That is, to put Matisse's Islamic experience in a real context such as my classroom made me feel like I was in front of an archeological site that should be treated carefully to keep its delicate and fine balance untouched while exploring new ways of how to relate its contents to our daily life. However, difficulties and implications would arise from the very beginnings due to many conceptual and practical issues rise by the implementation of the program.

On the conceptual side, I was aware from the beginning that many students from different cultural backgrounds have doubts about the validity of their cultural backgrounds. So every effort was made to guide those students to reconsider their cultural and artistic backgrounds suggesting different strategies and encouraging students to research such backgrounds. Indeed, researching own cultural background and present finding in the classroom would arguably put values on students cultures and encourage them not to be ashamed of their backgrounds and to feel proud being part of that particular culture. In addition, I was quite aware of the position of mainstream students who at some stage feel disadvantaged when it comes to considering another cultural tradition when doing art. To

prevent the alienation of this mainstream group of students, they were advised to do research about culture or cultures that may appeal to them more than the other. Otherwise, I as a teacher choose another culture for them on individual basis.

Technically speaking, because of this huge diversity, the risk of students becoming disoriented with no direction to follow is considered as a serious issue since the majority of secondary students may not appreciate the cultural background of each other's, or even their own cultural background. More importantly, integrating the cultural self with the other's has arguably intellectual conditions that needs high cognitive skills in order to recognize the Other as a valid equal as Delpit (1988) and Hollins(1996) argue. This as I assumed in the program may not be fully developed among year 10 high school students. Exploring the possibility of implementing the program started actually in term three 2004 and involves the consultation of many art teachers in the schools including art education head teacher and the principal. Many other art teachers in five Sydney High schools were also consulted and their contributions were valuable giving advices and suggesting new ideas.

The program is designed to cover Visual art study for 2004 term 4 in accordance with NSW V/A Syllabus requirement that recognizes and appreciates diversities and the different cultural traditions brought to school by different backgrounds students. This is looked at as well as a multicultural focused curriculum that suggests the appreciation of different artistic traditions, though little ideas of how to integrate such diversity into daily activities is sought in such a curriculum(see NSW Department of Education and Training's Multicultural policy on www.det.nsw.edu.au).

Participants were approached based on previous art works that showed some tendency to consult (whether in purpose or accidentally) different artistic traditions when doing art. However, the Program was for all year 10 students including mainstream students (class A, B, and C). More importantly each

participant was advised to inspire his/her own artistic traditions though it is not a requirement as many students, especially from mainstream categories choose to navigate across many different artistic traditions. Examples include ancient Egyptian traditions, aboriginal, Chinese, Indian, south American and Islamic traditions.

8.3.2 Methodology

The program is delivered during term four. The duration of the program is 10 weeks with two periods a week and every period is 54 minutes)In the first period, students discuss the topic of the day, which is related to the issue of different artistic traditions, diversity in the Australian society, and identity and cultural identity formation. The aim of such a discussion is to encourage students to explore in depth the validity of their cultural backgrounds. More importantly, how this could be reflected towards good academic achievement and high self-esteem. In this respect, Tharp and Gallimore, (1988) argues that recognizing students cultural backgrounds may improve students academic achievement as much as to reduce discipline problems among them. These theoretical sessions have proved to be useful in giving students the chance to talk about the self and to express feeling towards the self and the other. Every week the class would be turned into three discussion groups. Each group would be assigned a particular culture and tradition and the topic to be discussed. However, each group may initiate any particular traditions agreeing to research those traditions and come back with findings and ideas in the following sessions.

However, to delimit the scope of the chosen traditions or culture, I as a teacher and researcher, designer and the supervisor of the program suggested few artistic traditions i.e.Egyptian traditions Aztec tradition, Islamic traditions, Australian Aboriginal or any Western School of Art. Theses traditions are by no mean exclusive as students have the freedom to choose any particular traditions or culture. .i.e. some students choose Chinese traditions in doing arts and crafts. Others choose African and Islanders artistic traditions. Students were asked to

bring to the classroom a full account regarding the aspects of the chosen tradition or culture. This includes different art forms including craft works, songs, music, cloths etc. More importantly, students were encouraged to incorporate foreign languages in their research and discussions, as one of the aims of the program is to elucidate the connections between linguistic forms and visual forms. Example of this is the use of scripture of some languages such as Anglo, Asian and Arabic when doing art. This stems from the believe that languages and cultures played a critical role in the development of young people's learning (see Pang and Rodriguez2001). Part of the methodology that has been used in the program is the assessment of students work and more notably on which criteria students were assessed

8.4 Assessment Issues

Holt (1961) argues that assessing student academic outcomes in general is problematic. However, assessing art and artwork could become more problematic in regards to the nature of art as a creative skill that involves not just the rational but also the irrational sometimes. Considering this, assessing the outcomes of the actual program is built up over many interlocked and some times contrasted procedures. In fact, the implications of assessing participants' outcomes stem mainly from two main issues. The first is that the program was run as a part of formal study so that participants need marks, feedback and reporting towards their school certificates. The second implication is that one of the aims of this research is to argue the validity of using the art of others as learning resources as much as a part of cultural identity formation. In this case alternative assessment procedures have to be adopted in order to assess how students would learn from each other's experiences and more notably how do they appreciate their cultural and the other's cultural backgrounds.

Considering the above, new assessment guideline is incorporated in order to widen the scope of assessing art works based on different artistic traditions. For these reasons a combination of assessment, procedures were adopted. To grant

that the program is reflecting some formal outcomes, the NSW Board of studies' assessment guideline were initially consulted. However, outcomes claimed by this study are assessed equally against many criteria's that are outlined in the next few paragraphs. That is, could arts help us to understand each other or could the other become a learning resource adding to its personal quality the quality of the artistic and cultural traditions brought by that other to school. Assessment of students' outcomes in this program is based on the notion that assessment should be an ongoing process as per NSW Visual Art Syllabus (see NSW7-10 V/A2005 p.44) on www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au). However, unofficial assessment procedures were equally adopted in order to reflect some of the claims of his study.

8.4.1“Official” and unofficial assessment- the problem of assessing art

Reading through NSW Board of studies Syllabus in general would reveal that assessment is still regarded as a main feature of the learning process in the domain of Visual arts. The importance of assessment, upon NSW Board of Studies, stems from the assumption that assessment is important for teacher as much as for students. For the teachers it provides them with ongoing opportunities to gather information about their students' performance and achievement in the Mandatory and Additional Studies courses. On the other hand assessment of student achievement should be based on the objectives and outcomes and with consideration of the course requirements. Outcomes should assist teachers to make reliable assessments of their students' achievements in relation to the practices, content, and teaching and learning processes. However, the promised aspects of the assessment in Visual art lay in the fact that policy makers and curriculum developers of the NSW visual art syllabus consider assessment as an ongoing process: In relation to this art program, students' experiences including cultural backgrounds as learning resources and is looked at as to broaden each student's chance to learn within his /her own perspectives as a social , cultural and unique individual. More importantly, it tends to give students the chance to recognize him/herself to what he she is and not what he she is taught to be. This is a reflection from progressive pedagogy as expressed by John Dewy.

In this respect, bringing students' different cultural backgrounds into play would reveal that assessment cannot be imposed by few policy makers as learning to be different implies the notion of recognizing differences instead of erasing them as official assessment would arguably lead. In this context, though official policy recognizes that assessment should be based on reliable information; as much as on a variety of valid and reliable assessment strategies; it arguably fell short to bring into play students' social and cultural backgrounds. In fact, as I would argue most assessment procedures in NSW V/A syllabus lead at best to report student's achievement within a policy that aimed at containing cultural differences instead of highlighting them. In this sense, assessment will show how students are progressing in grasping the mainstream curriculum and with little or no consideration to what and how students from different cultural backgrounds incorporate their different culture into making and appreciating arts. In this case, the Forms as analyzed in the NSW V/A Syllabus could be well recognized as students may use foreign traditions in doing art; however, the Frame is arguably well narrowed to fit just the mainstream culture.

Students upon the NSW V/A syllabus has the freedom to consult their cultural or artistic backgrounds when intending to do art, but unfortunately how these backgrounds are changing, acting and reacting are not recognized as something permanent that may affect the learning opportunity provided by the school. For example, it would be of extreme importance to assess students on how they would use their cultural backgrounds and other previous experiences in order to develop social skills and in general manipulate the school environment as much as the requirement of his/her formal study in order to achieve better outcomes. It would be arguably fair to suggest in this program that an assessment procedures aim to:

- Provides meaningful information about students'

This means the policy of assessing each individual against his uniqueness as an individual as much as his uniqueness as a social and cultural being. This would

include assessment be built on the notion of validating differences as resources of learning that should be encouraged instead of oppressed or compressed in favour of assimilation and acculturation as most assessment policies are arguably leading.

- Be conducted within a supportive environment.

While NSW Board of Studies V/A syllabus has developed many procedures to diversify assessment strategies it arguably falls short of assessing students on the outcomes that may occur beyond formal requirement. i.e. social skills; behavioural skills, integration and appreciation of other cultures.

By getting back to the Supportive Environment as understood by the actual NSW art curriculum's designers, a variety of assessment strategies are sought to assess student achievement in Visual Arts.

These may include:

- “process work evident in students’ Visual Arts Process Diaries, indicating the ways they have perceived, conceived and evaluated ideas in terms of their selection of Subject Matter, Forms and Frames;
- exhibitions of students’ works;
- Critical and historical Studies of artists/craftspeople/designers’ works evidenced in such things as discussions, essays, presentations, projects, reviews, assignments and reports.
- Self-assessment, including student/teacher discussions and self-evaluation.

Teachers can use this information to:

- determine the extent to which students have achieved the Objectives and Outcomes identified in levels of achievement.
- Award School Certificate grades based on the Course Performance Descriptors;
- Provide feedback to students so that they may improve their performance;
- Provide information to parents about the progress of their children”. (Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus).

As the actual program is part of a formal setting it does not pretend to surpass the above assessment outcomes, however it is tempting to add to the list that students should be assessed on the following outcomes:

- Does the process of using different artistic traditions help students to:
 1. Develop social skills and how this is reflected on the relationships between the students before and after the program
 2. Develop the skills (There are conditions for this process) to consult the other's art in order to produce contemporary art works.
 3. Detect the connections between common aspects of all cultures.(Democracy)
 4. Appreciate own cultures and traditions equally with other cultures.(self esteem)
 5. Are there any changes in student's attitudes toward other cultures as experienced through the program(social and behavioural skills)
 6. How has a student expressed his background(linking cultural to art form)

8.4.2 Program Example: Selecting Content

Though this program is developed and implemented as a requirement within the guideline of the NSW Board of Studies Visual art Syllabus, all effort is made to broaden up the syllabus requirement as to explore new content as much as the critical and historical studies and the process of making and appreciating art.

This process of overlapping the NSW Visual Art Syllabus has one major aim. This aim is to show policy makers and program developers as much as art teachers, students and concerned educational institutions that a culturally responsive educational program should recognize the wealth of experiences and cultures brought by diverse students at a micro level and not just in broad terms as The NSW V/A Syllabus arguably reflects. That is; making the study of the Other's art a requirement instead of being a recommendation. The concepts behind such an idea lies in the argument that art as a cognitive skills needs to deepen the inquiries done by students as to recognize all other experiences and

away from any geopolitical matters. The idea is drawn from Matisse's Islamic experience in which the artist has recognized the Islamic experiences on its merit and away from the rival relationships between Islam and Europe. In this respect, this program encourage students to really equalize art work and craft work as two means of expression that complement each other and which may hold equal aesthetical values. Consequently, students were given the choice to do their artwork or craft works or a combination of the two genres. Moreover, they were given the chance to expand their choice to cover not just only the visual experiences but also the audio experiences such as Music, and the illustrations of written texts. Important though to the content is the usage of written languages in their artistic forms. E.g. Arabic Latin and Asian calligraphy or oddly combinations of all of these. Regarding this matter, the aims are to help students to explore new combinations through which new arabesque forms will be explored as mean of expressions or just for their visual pleasure.

The content in the program is selected from Subject Matter, Forms and Frames. In this case, content is selected from within People, Drawing, Painting, and the Subjective, Cultural, and Structural Frames. From within this broad content, specific content for the program unit is selected which is appropriate to these Year 10 participant students. In the following pages, I am relying On the NSW V/A Syllabus to determine the basic content in relation to the practices of Making, Critical Study and Historical Study. However expanding the perspectives about this content is a major aim of this program as it may foster the idea of recognizing the other art on its own merit. More importantly, in selecting from the syllabus content students will be encouraged to look at recognizing different experiences within their specific contexts considering and the environment that may affect art forms' meanings and aesthetics. Taken from NSW Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus the following Medias are considered and students have the chance to use one or more of these Medias or even a combination of more than two Medias:

- Drawing, Painting, 3D Forms, Printmaking, Photography, Fiber, Ceramics, Electronic...
- Subject Matter Forms Frames
- People Other Living Things
- Objects Places and Spaces
- Events Issues and Theories

8.4.3 Sequencing and Relating Learning Activities:

The selected content and practices are then translated into learning activities, which are sequenced and related, using the process of exploring, developing and resolving. These learning activities are provided on the following pages.

- Self Portrait: Draw yourself in the way Matisse, Picasso or Van Gogh did.
- Use in your portrait some Egyptian effects drawn from your own research from Ancient Egyptian arts. Try to reflect the mood and other physical and psychological conditions. Try to relate what you are doing to the way ancient Egyptian use colours lines, perspectives symbols and religious believes.
- Try to reflect the quality of the self within our Australian society. This means try to reflect your Australian identity while you are consulting the Egyptian techniques and or style.
- If you wanted to submit a portrait for the Famous Archibald Prize, plan to do a portrait of a famous person in which use different artistic traditions to depict your paintings. e.g. imagine yourself to be an ancient Egyptian king, a Former Australian prime Minister, a mythical character such as Aladdin, the South American rebellion Ernesto Che Guevara or Martin Luther king or any other character you may choose. Try to reflect in your portrait the artistic aspects of the chosen character plus any other artistic traditions you may choose.

- Draw a female portrait in which you reflect Asian aspects, Islamic aspects Western aspect, African aspects or any other aspects you may choose, or combination of all of these. E.g. A white European female on an Islamic decorative background. A veiled female in an abstract form. A south Asian or Islander female reflecting their cultural and visual characters or combinations of these.
- Draw a self- portrait reflecting your cultural background. It is assumed that you choose your parents' cultural background. How do you consider yourself. Australian? By your parents' cultural background? Or by a combination of both. Try to reflect this in your self -portrait using signs and symbols that may refer to a particular cultural background. Try to incorporate colours to express passion, anger, love, critics, irony etc...
- Medias: You may use drawing using Charcoal, lead pencils, Graphite
Painting using watercolour acrylic, pastel crayons etc...
- Cultural Consideration: Research the culture(s) you wish to consult when planning to do your artwork. Research the eating and dressing habits, houses and building, Music, literature, and geographical features. e.g. Desert, Urban, Mountainous environment etc
- Appearances: decide how your artwork would be look like; small scale, large scale, Paintings, drawings, Ceramics etc...
- Personalities, moods: Try to reflect the mood and any special characters of your portrait. Refer to your portrait's background and try to represent this in your artwork. Use literature such as novels, stories, tales poems etc.
Try to reflect happiness, sadness, comic, humorous, emotion, distortion... Relate all of this to your portrait's background.

- **Anatomy and structure:** Decide about the structures and the anatomy of your portraits. Is it a face? Is it half the body portrait? Or a whole body portrait. Decide on the style of depicting the anatomy. Decide on how you will reflect your portrait identity or identities if there are any.
- **Insights into the human condition feelings, moods, psychological etc:** Try to reflect your feelings towards your portrait its culture and background. To do this you may use colours, texture, distortion, signs and symbols.
- **Frames: Cultural traditions of portraiture portraits as reflections and constructions of society:** Research the traditions of doing portrait. Look at how Henry Matisse did some male and female portrait. Look at Paul Gauguin's portraits of Tahitian women. Consider how they have reflected their cultural backgrounds. Look at how they mixed the European traditions with non-European traditions. Compare Matisse and Gauguin's experience with that of Kandinsky. Research other European artistes' portraits who have reflected different artistic traditions. Choose one of your classmate's experiences as manifested in this program. Consider the following when attempting your portraits: the colours, the lines, the texture, the compositions are used and study its connections with the different artistic traditions they are attempting to reflect.

8.5 Educational Values

Looking at the program from Matissian perspectives, the program is founded on literature that recognizes student's cultural background as a rich resource to enhance teaching and learning in general and art making and understanding in particular. In addition bringing different cultures to schools would arguably help students as future citizen to identify new and vibrant national cultural identity. Irvin (1990) asserts on teachers and schools helping students to bridge the gap between students' different cultures and the new social and educational environment they have found themselves involved. Irvin argues that this could be

done through teachers' competence in knowing the cultural backgrounds of their students on the one hand and on the other through designing a culturally responsive curriculum that may bring about any cultural background as a distinctive experience that may help students to be themselves. According to Irvine (1990), children bring cultural knowledge with them to school. It is critical that schools operate in ways that allow children's language, values, and norms to be expressed. Irvin adds that teachers as well need to know enough about their students' native cultures in order to design culturally responsive and student-centered instruction. However, in many instances, this is not the case and teaching practices result in cultural discontinuities between the home and classrooms as mainstream culture is trying to accommodate for a uniformed educational policies and practice.

From personal experience, teachers who gain an understanding of their students' cultural backgrounds are more likely to utilize teaching practices that are culturally responsive. Many theorists endorse such an argument Au (1990); Jones, Pang and Rodriguez, (2001) Tharp and Gallimore, (1988) argue that teachers who recognize their students' backgrounds are more successful in giving instructions and more successful in classrooms in dealing with special cases. In this case, an important connection occurs between culture, teaching, and learning. Such practices integrate students' everyday experiences into classroom instruction and allow for conceptual bridges between prior knowledge and new information.

Probably, the best part in implementing the program consists in the educational environment created by diverse students and the teacher (who is me) as we all share nearly the same concerns. This has helped us to identify some educational principles based on the recognition of the background of each of us as participants. The first principle is that development and learning occur within a sociocultural context. That is, in part, learning and development are defined by the teachers and students within the classrooms. Two important aspects of the classroom's sociocultural context are identified during the program. The first is the developmental level (cognitive, social, etc.) of students, this includes students'

awareness that cultural diversities can be exploited to make new meanings within the learning process in the classroom and that mainstream culture is a component of many that would form the overall teaching and learning environment. The second aspect is the position of teacher who is supposedly sharing students the cultural diversity and recognizing such diversity and integrating it in his/her daily practice. Teacher in this respect would stop to be a just mere supervisor in favor of becoming a real participant whose personal experience could not be separated from the learning process. Scribner and Reyes (1999) assert here that when teachers incorporate the different cultural backgrounds of their students in their practice, positive outcomes could be achieved. These outcomes include not just the educational and the academic achievement but the social and the psychological outcomes. Indeed, when students and parents would realize that teachers and the schools put values on their cultures instead of neglecting and dismissing them an arguably relaxed and cooperative teachers–parents relationships would arise (Cummins 1990).

Using a Vygotski (1962) model in scaffolding, (ZPD) the program provides a significant opportunity for students to learn from Matisse's experience, from each other experience and from my experience as a teacher and researcher. More importantly, in which way we, as individuals, would integrate any particular culture with a different one. That is, integrating and exposing own traditions to other traditions taking past experiences and stories as a model would arguably play a pivotal role of scaffolding learning in the classroom especially in art class. Based on the concept of The Zone of Proximal Development first described by developmental psychologist Vygotsky (1962), scaffolding provides temporary support to the learner based on the notion that what a learner can not do without help today, he/she can do alone tomorrow (see Peregoy and Boyle 2001). While scaffolding is normally applied toward intellectual skills and competencies, it takes on additional meaning in the culturally relevant classroom. Students and teachers, who have varying degrees of competency in one or more *cultural* orientations, can gain insights and greater competency in each of the *cultural*

orientations present in the classroom. Scaffolding promotes social interaction and the development of multicultural competencies within a culturally diverse classroom as it supports academic development as much as artistic knowledge. Another cultural principle claimed through the program is developed based on the concept that development and learning do not occur in a static environment. Instead, they occur within dynamic and ever-changing social and political contexts.

Social interaction among individuals continuously transforms the socio-cultural context of the classroom. Culturally responsive classrooms provide regular opportunities for students and teachers to interact with each other. Such interactions would arguably provide teachers with opportunities to gain extensive knowledge about their students. And for students they will have the opportunity to get to know each other culture, to identify survival strategies and more importantly to learn to accept the other based on the merit of his/her cultural and artistic traditions. In this context, exposing own culture to other culture(s) using cultural symbols languages, and specific artistic features in and outside the classroom would create an additive process in which students and teachers develop an array of behavioral, cognitive, and cultural orientations. In addition, it will ease the tension and foster understanding and tolerance

Pang & Rodriguez, (2001) discuss the issue of bringing different cultures to the classroom from the point of power. They ask who benefits and who loses by these conditions or acts stating that understanding each other's culture would put values on student's primary culture as much as on mainstream culture. On the other hand, it would reduce misbehaving problems as all students would feel equal and therefore they are prompted to achieve higher outcome as less time would be spent on managing behaviour and discipline issues.

Cummins (1990) discusses the role of teachers in promoting a culturally open classroom. He refers to the dynamic interplay between the primary and mainstream cultures in the lives of students by using the values, norms and

expectations of each respective culture to create a learning environment that fosters positive school engagement and multicultural development. Cummins (1990) argues that teachers who know the cultures of their students can teach not just through academic task but also through cultural and social interaction. Cummins even go further suggesting that putting values on parents cultures, through special cultural activities and community gatherings would be transferred to students and may be reflected positively on their academic achievement.

From personal experience when teachers put values on students' cultures students start to consider not giving up their cultural traditions. Instead, they start to realize that by keeping their cultures alive, mixing it with the mainstream culture would create a new platform that can be shared as it may equally reflects all the norms and the beliefs of all students. Finally, as the program celebrates cultural diversities in teaching and learning art, one of the important goals of the program is to promote Matisse's principle that the other's traditions could be of importance in validating the self. In this, the program would be justified in its democratic orientation where students would start to accept, appreciate, and tolerate each other's cultures.

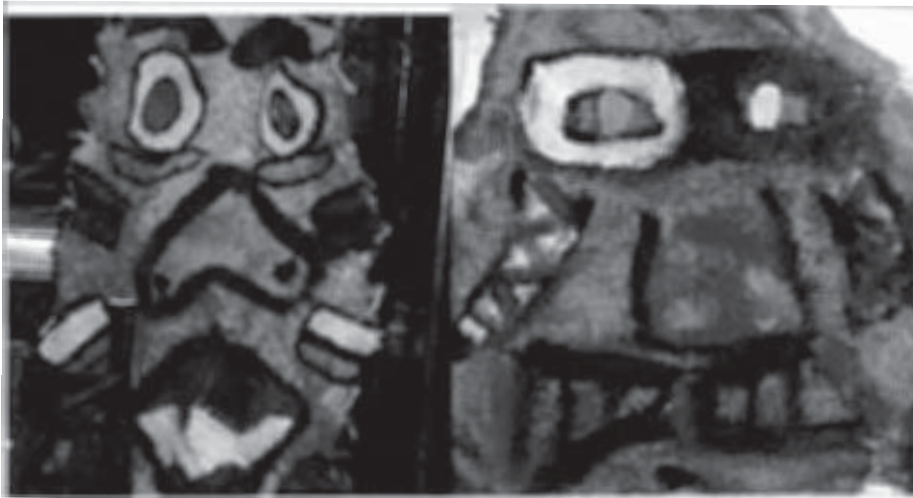
8.6 Conclusion: Matisse's Islamic experiences can be associated with art education in many ways.

1. In the artist's personal experience where his *Notes of a Painter*, which arguably meet Islamic concepts about, art making and understanding have formed the most vibrant contemporary statement about art.
2. In Drawing on the art of other, Matisse's Islamic experience informs contemporary art education by validating different cultural traditions on their merits.
3. In the way it has the potential to suggest culturally responsive curriculum that may cater for students from different cultural backgrounds.

4. In the way, Matisse Islamic experience can be used as a scaffold (see Yvgotsky1962) to design art activities that may occur in any classroom especially in culturally different classrooms. In this Matisse's Islamic experience, educational side may inform curriculum designers and developer in many ways:

- It provides new perspectives about the connection between education and cultures.
- It provides an educational model of how to deal with each other traditions in order to generate new and qualitative knowledge
- It promotes tolerance and acceptance in educational institutions.
- It helps students to coin their cultural identities based on the merit of their cultural backgrounds and on the merit of other cultural traditions.

8.7 Samples from students' works



Portraits inspiring African and south American Artistic traditions (Sculptures)



Portraits on decorative backgrounds (acrylic)



Sculpture inspiring Islanders Arts
Board)

Portrait inspiring African arts (Acrylic on
Board)

Chapter NINE

Reconstructing the aesthetical self:

Matisse's cultural identity as an Educational role model

9.1 Introduction

One of the main assumptions of this study lies in the argument that Matisse's Islamic experience could become a typical example of cultural identity formation. That is, recognizing the influences of other cultures in reshaping our identities has arguably the potential to change not just the way we look at ourselves but it may challenge the foundation of the concepts of a determined or ultimate identity that has dominated the epistemology of the last century. As we are living a busy and demanding life, few of us has the time and the will to ask at any stage of our life who am I?

As we are living in a political system that labels us: Australian, American, French Chinese, Indian or Arab, we tend as individuals to accept submissively the label brushing aside all cultural and artistic influences gained through interactions with different cultures. These interactions as I would argue tend to change our identities as contested constructs that can be formed and reformed upon our daily experiences and encounters with other cultures and traditions. Triggered by Matisse's experience with Islamic art, the issue of identity inhabited my thoughts as the question who am I urges me for an answer that probably never comes. Thinking about my identity stems exactly from Matisse's identity formation where he tried 100 years ago to define himself in terms of his art rather than in terms of his country of birth.

In this chapter, I am exploring Matisse's cultural identity as a model that may help us to acquire new cultural identity based on cultural, spiritual, social as much as practical experience into the other cultures. In addition, in this chapter I link Matisse cultural identity to my cultural identity and to my students' cultural identity arguing the issue from educational perspectives where cultural

differences are looked at as richness in our schools as diversities have become the norms.

9.2 Matisse Cultural identity: Early signs of modern epistemology.

Looking at Matisse's paintings and the way he approached art making and understanding leaves no room to ignore his involvement with different cultures in which Islamic culture is arguably a main influence. However, Matisse's involvement with Islamic arts does not arguably affected just his arts but it is connected to his cultural identity through which he expressed his Western traditions as much as many other different traditions. Looking at Matisse's from such perspectives implies the excitement of exploring the actual constituents of his cultural identity. It is arguably a hybrid identity through which Matisse gave us an example about how can we contest each other traditions without losing our native identity. More importantly, how to contest our cultural identity based on the cultural environment we live in or experience. This includes the other's traditions and cultures. Moving in more than one culture, Matisse seemed to be aware of such a delicate process declaring, " I sketch myself in the Moroccan turban so I look like a real Moroccan". Such a saying is reminiscent to an old Arabic Saying " If you live for forty days among a group of people be like them or leave them". However, the most important point in arguing Matisse's cultural identity formation could be its adaptability to be linked to a contemporary context where belonging to more than one cultural groups is not unusual as it becomes a matter of survival in many countries whose population is a mixture of many cultural ethnic and religious groups

9.2.1 Matisse's Cultural Identity upon his sayings

Matisse has arguably contested his new cultural identity from 1903, which was his first documented contact with the realm of Islamic art. Before that date Matisse was a mere French artist who was struggling to convince even his close friends of his talent (Spurling 1999). Defining himself in term of Islamic decoration he said " First of all one must be decorative" (See Aragon1972 in

Fourcade, 1984). The statement is daring as it happened when cubism carried the principal of Renaissance to their extreme consequences (Schneider 1990). However, the importance of such a statement does not reside only in its aesthetical or technical significance. It could be looked at as an indication of the artist new adopted cultural identity as a lived experience that involves the appreciation of the decorative in a time such a choice was really daring and challenging. In other occasion, Matisse said:” The Orient saved us” (Rayssiguier, 1949, in Schneider, 1990).The statement may imply a spiritual appeal as much as artistic choice. On the spiritual side, Matisse seems to protest against the tough conditions created by the European industrial revolution longing for a simple less trouble environment that just could be found in the orient. Ironically, Matisse declared his statement when Europe was about to crash Islam and the orient politically on the eve of the 20th century.

On the artistic side, Matisse’s statement is clear. That is; the Orient helps European art especially Matisse’s art to overcome the impasse of Impressionism. However, to relate this to cultural identity, Matisse seems to log himself in what Schneider (1990) has called the eternal conflict between own traditions and the traditions where he has found himself. In Schneider (1990) word:

Matisse was torn between two opposite aspirations: His own tradition and the Islamic traditions. He once said: I have received the influence of Cezanne and of the Orientals. Cezanne encourage him to emphasis volume; the oriental to attenuate it.

(Schneider, 1990, p.76)

Another statement that may indicate Matisse’s new cultural identity is his saying: “Revelation thus came to me from the orient “(Schneider 1984). Here is an artist whose revelation is coming from outside his native culture, and who is until now saved by the Orient, and must be decorative. Matisse in this context seems to add new dimensions for his identity. That is, it is a mixture of European and oriental

(Islamic) traditions. It is not a cut clear homogenous identity. Instead, it is a “decorative identity” with a spiritual aura that comes mainly from the orient. However, Islamic influences are not the only foreign influences Matisse has encountered. Indeed his works and his statements have reflected many other influences such as Japanese and South Seas influences. This arguably would add rich elements to his “decorative” cultural identity. To take his choice to its extreme end he states:” I feel the passion for color developed in me when the great Mohammedan exhibition was taking place (Schneider, 1984). In this statement, Matisse admits that the influence of Islamic art cut deep into the techniques he would use in order to develop his paintings. This statement as well has an identity aspect as the identity of any artist may reside in the quality of art he or she may produce. Indeed using other traditions as a mean of expression cannot be acquired without testing their validity on personal and artistic levels. In this context, one cannot understand Gauguin’s cultural identity away from Tahiti, South America, Egypt and France. Confirming his love for the orient Matisse said:

‘J’ai tout d’abord decouvert l’Orient et ai tire des couleurs nouvelles de ses ceramiques et de ses Tapis’ (Fourcade, 1974)

Matisse in this statement affirms his choice as the Orient has become a constant inspiration regarding colours, ceramics and rugs. Reading the impact of such a statement on Matisse’s cultural identity one may argue that doing artwork upon any particular traditions means somehow the acceptance of cultural influences that may be encountered by individuals at any stage of their lives. Fry (1931) sets parallels between Matisse and Islamic art claiming that Matisse was born with the gift of a Muslim artist:

Matisse has in the first place the gift that we note in almost all Mohammedan art, the gift of finding rich and surprising harmonies for colours notes placed in opposition upon a flat surface”(Fry,1931,p.284).

Taking Matisse's experience as a role model, in the following paragraphs I am reflecting on my cultural identity from a personal perspectives arguing that belonging to more than cultures has the potential to affect the way we do and appreciate arts. In addition, contesting different cultures and traditions would arguably enrich our social life in general and in particular, it may help to ease the tense with the other based on the formula that knowing the other is a precondition to effectively deal with it.

9.3 My cultural identity

"I find myself in a Persian rug," Matisse once said. The statement is immense enough to include the cultural, the artistic, the social even the political, because finding the self in a culture means that you feel home even without going to Persia. In the same way, I could say I find myself in a French poem or in a Matisse painting repeating with Nietzsche that we long for the other shore. I always try to redefine myself in terms of the new cultures and experiences I have acquired as a teacher, an artist and a researcher. I feel I am the decorative Matisse was taking about. I lived and still live a nomadic life in terms of moving across many types of cultural borders. In this sense, my cultural identity is the outcomes of many interacting cultures through which I live with the concerns of making constant reconciliations between different cultural elements. It is an on-the-move identity that enables me to switch off or activate cultural components upon the place the time and the position I might find myself in.

I am a Muslim, but not any Muslim. I am a Shia Muslim but not any Shia. My Islam is fully mixed with Christianity as the bells of church are always mixed in my memories with the morning prayers in my country of birth. I am from Arabic background and I am Lebanese at the same time. I was educated simultaneously in Arabic and French while the Spanish hovers over my sky as the Arab's civilization has peaked in Spain. Since childhood, I had listened to all kind of music. Singing with Jack Bell, Tom Jones, and Um Kalthum at the same time, I have received the influence of J Paul Sartre, Ibn Rushd, Karl Marx, Nietzsche Ibn

Arabi, Averroes and Edward Said. I feel lucky to be able to read Rimbaud, Adonis, and Henri Lawson, Les Murry and Mahmoud Darwish's poems, enjoying Henry Miller, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, David Maalouf, Paulo Kahlo, and Harold Pinter's novels.

Trying to define myself, I am a bit of all of these but never become one of them. As I tend to define myself in terms of my birthplace, I miss immediately a much wider community which I belong to by social and cultural interactions. Though a small kid, I was Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. I become an Australian aboriginal when I have the chance to see how remote communities are living there. Though a kid, the Apartheid in South Africa was a daily issue in my childhood. Pinochet of Chile shakes my soul to the core, and finally the dispossession of Palestinian people from their land by Israel inhabited my thoughts for so long. More important than anything else, I feel myself as to belong to the wider cosmopolitan artistic communities who seek the aesthetical side of life through which problems should be addressed in transparency and in terms of beauty. This is another clue of my fascination with Matisse's Islamic experience as he always tries to understand life in terms of aesthetics and away from what Flam (1986) has called "the vexation of modern life".

9.3.1 Personal Experience

Starting with my name, Ibrahim is a Hebrew name. My surname Mansouri with the letter I at the end is of Persian origin, while Mansour without I at the end is a common surname in the Arab world. In my first year of schooling there was no kindergarten I still remember that I started to learn the Arabic alphabet along with the French alphabet, matter that has created tension in me as much as pleasure. As I studied in higher grades, I started to understand the political implications of learning the French language from an early age. Earlier in primary and secondary schools, I enjoyed my little French, away from the politics of colonial power and imperialism! I enjoyed it because it was involving Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Rambault, Beaudlair, Jack Brell and Edit Piaf and later on Picasso Matisse,

Cezanne and Renoir. In brief, I really enjoyed the “game” of constantly crossing and often blurring the cultural boundaries between my native Arabic culture and the French Culture.

Later on, I became a French teacher and the paradox of cultural identity grew up inside me. To teach a language we have to teach it in social and cultural contexts and as both are contested, I direct my students to reconstruct their French bit in the same way they construct their Arabic bit. Entering the Institute of Fine Arts in Lebanon increased the challenge to define the self and to grasp the characteristics of my cultural identity. All the artists we have studied in the institute of fine arts in Beirut are mainly Europeans with concentration on the Frenchs. Suddenly Renoir, Matisse, Cezanne, and others become part of what I was doing and what I was thinking. In this sense, I start to realize that I am constructing myself in the framework of the specific cultural reality created by my early education as much as my tertiary education.

As an Arab Lebanese Muslim, why then do French Romantic poems have the potential to impress me in the same ways as the poems of Amine Nakhleh or Ilia Abou Madi do. Why do Victor Hugo *Les Miserables* impress me in the same way *Harafishes* Najib Mahfouz’s do? More importantly, why I tend to use French utterances to express myself even with people who may not understand the meanings of what I am saying? How then should I define myself and against what? My birthplace? My political believes. Or my paintings?

In the middle of every thing, I decided to immigrate to Australia. This in itself was a huge decision; however, I made it quickly a reality relying on an overconfidence gained from my past experience dealing with French culture. Here my cultural identity was entering a new phase. I call it the Australian phase. In Australia, I tried first to use my French bit (as it is a Western bit) but soon I realized that even western culture is not homogenous and that my French bit seems to the Australian as exotic as my Arabic bit to the French. Amazingly, I

found my Arabic bit more useful, and in my way home from Sydney University, I expect to hear Arabic dialects or to see few veiled women down in the suburbs of Tempe and Rockdale.

Soon, I realized the tremendously diverse nature of the Australian society and that the front line between Arabic and Australian culture is somehow a blurred line. I started to deal with the Arabs as they are my cultural group but soon I started to realize that they are not themselves homogeneous. There is a part that lives in a kind of ghettos keeping minimum contact with the Australian cultural environment for whatever reasons. Opposite to that side, there is an active part of the Australian Arabic young generations, who bear, not only the marks of forcing the Arabic culture as a newcomer culture into the Australian culture but also they bear the signs of cultural hybridization of all ethnic communities of the Australian society.

Having qualifications in arts and education from five Australian universities, I become a secondary teacher in Mathematics and arts. Soon, and through teaching, I found myself in the side of the younger generations. To my amazement, I start to realize that there is a melting pot of cultural, social and ethnic differences in Australian schools. This would include excitement as much as challenge to keep any stable identity in such place. In the next few pages, I am reflecting on my cultural identity as a Lebanese, as an Australian Lebanese, as an artist and as a teacher. The aim of such a reflection is to argue that identity in general and cultural identity in particular is a contested process that can be worked over as a constructed lived experience.

9.3.2 Being a Lebanese;

Lebanon is a tiny country on the Mediterranean Sea. Its history is built on the myth of ancient people of Phoenicians who have overcome the seas, as they were good traders. Upon Lebanese myths, they spread knowledge (their own alphabet) through the Mediterranean Sea's countries. Lebanon is a country in the middle of

the world and destined to be in the middle of every thing. The Lebanese are proud of their country's middle position between different civilizations or that is what as Lebanese we are taught. Half of today's Lebanese people are Muslims and the other half are Christians. In brief, it has been said that the Muslim half is inclined generally towards Arabic cultural influences while the Christian half, though Arabic culture is strongly influential among them, they tend to like a more westernized culture. In their daily struggle to survive, both Christians and Muslims deal with each other as enemy brothers. Their modern history is a chain of civil wars separated by truces. They fight over a poorly resourced country and more importantly, identity issue fuels their wars as a matter of life and death. Among the Lebanese people, there is a constant debate whether Lebanon is an Arabic country or not and during the civil war, the division always becomes clear between a claimed Christian society and Muslim society.

While the Christians in general are more open toward the West, the Muslims are more conservative towards such openness. Consequently, Lebanon has become during the last century an ideal place for Western and Muslim culture to be in contact with each other. Lebanese Muslims are known to be less orthodox than other Muslims in the Arab world. Oddly, Lebanese Christians have arguably become more westernized than people in the West itself, as they in general believe that the West should protect them as a Christian minority in the region. Because of the above situation, most Lebanese have become experts in manipulating social cultural and political situations in order to survive. They tend to invent new cultural identities expressed through languages, cloths, music, arts and food. Most Lebanese could communicate in more than one foreign language. Their markets are full of the latest in the world fashion industry. Their restaurants appeal to any appetite in the East and the West. Their hotels are branches of the great hotel in the world. This left the country in the hands of five percent class who manage those services through their powerful families and their connections with powerful politicians. Therefore, unemployment is dominant and within the poorly resourced country, there is no chance for people, Christians and Muslims,

but to immigrate in search for a living. They “invade” America at the beginning of the last century and later they spread all over the world including Australia.

9.3.3 Being a Muslim

Briefly, you become a Muslim when you pronounce the *Shahadataine* the two testimonies “there is no god but Allah” and “Mohamed is his messenger”. Then you have to accomplish the five pillars of Islam (*Ashahadataine*, praying, fasting Ramadane, visiting the prophet’s tomb at least once in lifetime, and *Azzakat* (giving money annually to help poor people). Then there is the system of ethics of denouncing stealing and lying. Not all born Muslims around the world practice strictly the five pillars of Islam including me. However, on personal level I tend to manipulate my Islamic belonging fasting and praying occasionally and seeking peace, listening to sheikhs submissively reciting verses from the Koran.

It could be odd to say that I always seek the aesthetics that may be reflected in Islam as a religion and as a way of life. I seek beauty in the eloquence found in Koran, in the close and immediate relationships with god, and in the beauty of nature as a reflection of the beauty of god. As a Muslim, I feel that god understands all of us Muslim and non Muslim and I truly believe that there are some Islamic traces in most non Islamic people as much as non- Islamic traces in Islamic people.

On a personal level, I feel so often close to Jesus when it comes to solving problems or conflict and more a Buddhist contemplating the running water of a river, and more Muslim when Mohamed’s wisdom would fill my mind about what is written is written (*Maktoub*) and no way we can change it. In doing art, I always try to reflect all of these mixtures of influences. I could not say I am a Muslim artist because I really do not know the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim artist. Both of them seek aesthetics and both of them would reflect expressions. Finally, both of them seek to understand and let the other understand through arts. However, I feel more Muslim when it comes to the idea of creation.

In Islam, God has created every thing as beautiful as himself. In this respect, I feel that the beauty of creation may be reflected in a bird singing, in a musician playing an instrument, or in the harmony between different colours.

Approaching my easel, I seek the aesthetics of lines as a primary refinement of all the ideas I have in my head. I always try to establish relationships and connections between my painting's elements in the same way I always contested life itself and my understanding of the world around me including the philosophy that may underpin my world. It is not complicated. It is as simple as god, (I am in this a Muslim as simplicity in Islam is a paramount). My paintings, in fact, are not manipulating they suggest more than they dictate. In this, I am following the unknown Muslim artists who left their artwork without signatures, as they assumingly believe that what would be reflected through the artwork is more important than who made it.

9.4 Torn but Alive: Matisse's Identity in a contemporary context

How can I define myself with such eclecticism? Some times, I feel lucky when I feel as close to a black South African as to a fellow Lebanese who is struggling to have a job in order to feed his seven-member family. In addition, some times it becomes a real misery, as I feel torn between all of these, unable to retain any particular characteristics that I might feel proud of. Looking for help, Matisse's Islamic experience gave me some relief as it arguably opens the horizon to be more than one at the same time. He was French and arguably a Muslim; He was a Persian and French. He was a Moroccan and French and some times, he was a Muslim Moroccan. Because he was all of these, he had declared one must be decorative. Is not decoration a bit of many things arranged in a certain order? Are not decoration's bits actively interrelated in order to create the overall decorated space?

How then can we identify Matisse? A western artist? He was not by the virtue of the quality of the paintings he produced. A French artist? He arguably was not as

he always looking beyond his Frenchness. A Muslim artist but he was not as he declared many times proud that he served his European artistic traditions. In this Matisse endeavour could be seen here as an early sign of a shift in the European politics of identity through which the other starts to be considered some how as an active agent in the European mind. Whether he was aware of that process or not, Matisse's venture into Islamic art had the potential to reconstruct his cultural identity in the same way he attempted to reconstruct his paintings. His identity then would be reflected as a "decorated" one through which Matisse has produced decorative paintings! It becomes really so hard to look at Matisse's identity away from the quality of paintings he produced. Because it is perhaps impossible to define any artist painter, poet, actor or conductor's identity away from the arts he or she produced.

Many artists and authors shares Matisse's positions as they took from other traditions in order to reshape their cultural identities in a way that may reflect the many cultures they have encountered. The French Moroccan Author Taher Ben Jalloun is a typical example that may illustrate the above argument from a different position. Spear (1993) argues that Ben Jalloun is a Moroccan French who was born in Morocco and lives in France and writes with its language, reflects in his novels the coexistence of his French and Moroccan bits. Answering a question whether he still identify himself Moroccan after he becomes a prominent figure within France's intellectuals, Ben Jalloun chooses his work to reveal his identity, exactly in the same way Matisse's has chosen the decorative paintings. Ben Jalloun said:

Yes of course, but I say so as to stop this sort of perpetual questioning that asks, Hey, why are you writing in French,? You are an Arab. I do not have problem with identity when you get down to it. What matters to me is what I produce what I write. Therefore, if what I write is associated with a particular place, my ambition is that this place should be everyone's place. (Spear, 1993, p.31)

Another French example about cultural identity comes from the prominent French writer Jan Genet who was by birth half French and half Moroccan. Genet sees identity from a wider perspective through which we are all as human beings share the same concerns. Those concerns make us equal and define our belonging. Spear (1993) quoted Genet calling these concerns “the Secret Wound”. Genet’s concept is illustrated in a Spear’s essay about the works of the Swiss artist Giacometti.

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano describes identity as “the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of every day” (Spear 1993, p.52). This definition of cultural identity is an invitation to understand our identity as a reconciliatory process through which we restore our different bits on a daily bases. However, if we stop doing so we will lose self-belonging. This can be easily connected to Genet’s Secret Wound. That is when we stop receiving the influences of other (including Genet secret wound) whether they are political, cultural or social we will loose direction and confining the self to a narrow corner. (Muslim Extremists are seen here as a group of people who are trying to shut down the self as to stop non-Islamic influences to be part of their lives). Said (1995) argues the issue of identity and cultural identity from socio-political perspectives. He claims that human history is made by human beings as a common struggle that may somehow affect each of them. Then he invites scholars and historians to look at human being history as a common struggle that may unify them instead of being a cause of agony and separation. This will be done by recognizing a competing other who may be consulted when problems arise: Said (1995) argues here:

The task for Critical scholars is not to separate one struggle from another, but to connect them, despite the contrast between the overpowering materiality of the former and the apparent otherworldly refinements of the latter. My way of doing this has been to show that the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of a different and competing alter ego (Said, 1995, p.2)

Moreover Said (1995) argues that identity as a contested process can be constructed, negotiated and invented as we cannot confine ourselves as human beings to just a particular group resisting any influences and most of the time unable to influence. Said in this context is attacking essentialism as a knowledge regime that may delimit the creation of an active and vibrant cultural identity.

What makes all these fluid and extraordinarily rich actualities difficult to accept is that most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only natural and stable, but constructed, and even occasionally invented outright? (Said, 1995, p.2)

9.5 Personal Stories as field studies for cultural identity formation

Using own personal story to elucidate the concept of cultural identity has many advantages. It provides the researcher with a genuine field study that may enrich accounts of developmental processes with texture, depth, and personal meaning. In addition, it has the potential to become a role model that may simplify the complexity of the concept so that ordinary people (like students) can compare own story with other stories. Relying on my personal account about my cultural identity, culture to me is not a monolithic event that can be adopted and lived within. Instead, it is a microorganism in which experience, customs, present, past, future, dream, success failure, signs, and symbols determine our life' aspects starting with the way how do we work and does not end with how to behave. I am in constant negotiation with my French bit, with my Lebanese bit, with my Australian bit and with any bit through which I may find myself. Similarly, when Matisse said I find myself in an Islamic rug, he meant that he was borrowing the aesthetics of the Persian rug, blending them with his own, rediscovering them, interpreting and reinterpreting them so that his paintings would reflect who he is. Though my raw materials for negotiating cultural identity are not Matisse's or anyone else's the process of belonging some how to another culture could be the

same in general with little variations regarding time place, gender and general psychological aspects.

As Matisse has consulted Islamic art, I consult Western art. And as he has found himself somewhere in Persia I tend to share Kamil Passerio and Edward Monet their leafy French gardens. However, both of us has brought his own experience, exposed to an other, and then activate it in the context of each own particular time and place so that the process of adding new cultural dimension to our identity would start. In the following paragraphs, I am relying on personal stories drawn from my students' experiences in the school where I teach in order to elucidate the multidimensional cultural identities of my students.

9.6 Cultural identity- An Educational Model- Case studies

The issue of cultural identity for culturally different students has become at the forefront of educational debate especially in a society as diverse as the Australian society. In this respect understanding, the implication of cultural identity in general is well connected to the understanding of the concept in our schools, as schools and other educational institutions have always been the best places to shape and reshape their clients' cultural identities. For this reason, this study suggests that issue of cultural identity should be on the top educational agenda of policy makers as it may affect students' lives and academic achievement in many ways towards:

- Promoting harmony and tolerance among different students
- Identifying issues and problems that may affect the schooling of culturally diverse students as much as the schooling of the mainstream students.
- Helping students to develop social skills in a truly sensitive cultural environment.
- Helping students to work and achieve to their full potential
- Helping students to acquire new identity that may reflect truly the diverse nature of the Australian society

- Helping policy makers and schools to design and implement culturally responsive curriculum that may appeal and respond to students special needs.

Indeed, assuming that students are culturally homogenous in Australian schools does not reflect the reality of the cultural environment that dominates most of the Australian educational institutions especially secondary schools. Though homogeneity seems to be prevailing any detailed account of students individual experiences would reveal the true extent of students bringing their cultural backgrounds to the schools and to other educational institutions. Irvin (1990) argues that students bring their cultural background to schools. According to Irvin they fail to hide their different cultures though a great deal of them tend to use such a strategy in their attempt to adapt to the mainstream school environment. Irvin (1990) argues that school should seriously consider the cultural identity of their students in order to design and implement culturally responsive and student-centered instructions. Regarding this point, the so-called Multicultural practice in a school environment is not a matter of ethics as we become nice with the other or accept them. Instead, it requires the understanding of all the issues that surround ethnicity and races and the appreciation of all the variables that define the culturally diverse students (Bennett, 1999). The term also implies that all cultures are valued at the same level and within their own system (Jablow 1996). In this respect, culture would become a valuable source for new knowledge as much as a serious tool that may help in locating the self in a particular society and the world itself. In the following paragraphs, case studies from chosen secondary students (taken from the high school where I teach) were researched and students speak about their cultural identity in a school environment. They express themselves on many levels providing the mechanism through which their cultural identities are manifested. The values of such case studies are drawn from its potential to become personal experiences that may inform policy makers and researchers of the delicate process of dealing with differences and the impact on student's social adaptability as much as academic achievement.

9.6.1 Case Study 1

- **Level 1 Kamel , a Kurdish, Turkish**

Kamel is a year 11 student. He is a Kurdish Turkish. He was born in Turkey and living in Australia for 7 years. The first implication for Kamel is his cultural group. He sometimes likes to be identified as a Kurdish and another as just a Turkish. Though there are no great differences between the two cultural groups, political implications of the relationships between the Turkish government and the Kurds who live in Turkey is felt in Kamel's passionate attitude towards his Kurdish part. Jumping over the ethnic identity issue, religious background is a matter for Kamel. Though he is not a devoted Muslim as he said, Kamel is ready to declare overtly he is a Muslim whenever he has the chance to mention it. Kamel uses some Arabic utterances like *Wallah*, and *Inshallah* mixed with his Turkish and English to prove that he has some connection with the faith. However, he does not pray, go to the mosque or fast in Ramadan, though his parents do. Kamel has many friends from mainstream and non-mainstream students in the schools. Though Muslim, he has a couple of girl friends outside the school. Kamel academic achievement is average. His social skills are average though he seems sometimes to be easily distracted.

Level 2: Being an Australian Kurdish Turkish: Kamel speaks

"Being a Kurdish Turkish is to share a relatively strong Turkish community the language, enjoying the Turkish food, listen to Turkish music and talking about Turkish soccer especially in the last soccer world cup. Before I talk about what it means to me to live in Australia, I would like to mention the problem between the Turkish government and the Kurdish people live in Turkey. Successive Turkish governments deny Kurdish people to express ourselves within our Kurdish language and culture. To be a Kurdish Turkish in Australia I feel so lucky. I always move between nearly three cultures enjoying what I like in them and giving up what I do not like. However, this does not save me of paying a certain price: While my Turkish is declining to the minimum, my English is strongly

improving. This creates a serious problem regarding the relationships with my parents whose English is absolutely nothing. I feel sorry for them but how can I communicate with them? Consequently, they are both unemployed. They are too old to go to school to learn English. Are not they? However, I feel lucky being in Australia. I have the chance to do what ever I like. Life and schooling is easy out there. In school, we do many activities such as excursions, sports events and school parties, things I enjoy and I was deprived in my school in Turkey. I am here for 7 years and I feel that Australian culture is becoming an essential part of me. The way I dress, the music I listen to, the friends, the food are indicators that I am slowly changing though I am proud to be a Kurdish Turkish. My concern today is to be a success in my schooling in order to get a descent job so I can sustain my parents and myself.

9.6.2 CASE STUDY 2

Level one; Miriam: A cultural awareness Model

Miriam is a year 12 student from Lebanese background. She came to Australia with her family 8 years ago. Her father is a track driver, while her mother is a housewife as she speaks little English. Miriam tops her class in Mathematics and sciences. She is good in English and has many friends from mainstream and non-mainstream students. However, veiled Miriam is quite outspoken and self-confident. Consequently, she was a vice captain in her school last year...

Miriam recognizes that there are some differences between her family's life style and the life style of other families in Australia whether they are from English speaking or from NESB. She refers this to her Islamic background. She believes that Muslims in Australia and around the world in general are more devoted than other religious groups. She is quite aware that the different cultures brought to Australia by all other ethnic communities could be either a reason for division in the society or a source of richness through which each community learns from the other the good things it has." It depends on how can we strike a compromise

regarding our differences” as she said. Miriam believes she is an Australian Muslim who had the chance to navigate more than one cultural tradition. She feels happy some times regarding such situation though she feels it is an extra burden especially when we look at the issue from the parent’s perspectives. Implications are tremendous for them she said. They stop receiving the cultural influences from their native country (Lebanon) and at the same time Australia’s cultural influences kept at minimum due to usually their deficiency in English.

- **LEVEL 2 Being a Lebanese**

Miriam says at the beginning she and her family suffered being Lebanese in Australia. We have been described as wog, dirty Arabs, and terrorists. Then things start to improve when we have to know our neighbours, and when my English and my brothers and sisters’ English improved. Being efficient in English, we start to reflect our normal nature. We start to express ourselves as we are. Then, people especially potential friends start to find out that there are many good things in our Lebanese culture that can be shared. We teach our neighbours how to cook Lebanese food. I invited and still invite my friends for dinner at our backyard feed them with Lebanese food done by my mother. We listen during those dinners to Lebanese, English and other music and we share our native languages to say for example I love you, hello, or to swear at each other.

- **Level 3 Being An Australian Muslim Lebanese**

Being an Australian Lebanese is very different from being a mere Lebanese Miriam said. First, you have to talk in English and less in Arabic. You have to listen to English music and to get involved in socially different relationships with other people and other students. Being a mere Lebanese is no more reflecting my identity Miriam said. Though my Arabic is good, I feel pure Lebanese only when I argue with my parents. This is the only occasion where conversations are happening in pure Arabic. However, I always tend to reflect my good Lebanese bit: that is helping the other, entertaining them and befriending with them.

I was taught these values at home by my parents. However, being a Muslim is by far more complicated than being a Lebanese especially after 11 September 2001. I struggle to convince the other and myself that I do not advocate violence in addressing any issue. I feel great when I pray or fast Ramadan and I feel great when we sing the Australian national anthem at the school's assembly. I usually enjoy, though my reading in Arabic is not that good, recite verses from the Koran in Arabic as much English poetry in my English class. At the beginning, I felt depressed when Islam is linked to terrorism. However, what comforts me is the idea I am a Muslim but not a terrorist and all the Muslims I know are not terrorists. Finally, I stand indifferent over the unfair accusation. Yes, I am proud to be a Muslim Australian exactly in the same way there is a Christian, Jew or Buddhist Australian. And I will be proud of it as my religion helps me to be good with the self as much as with the other.

9.6.3 CASE STUDY 3

Level1 Ernesto

Ernesto came with his parents from the Republic of Salvador in South America 4 years ago. He is a year 11 student. His father is a White Spanish, while his mother is a native South American. Ernesto took more from his mother's feature: black hair and dark skin. Ernesto speaks English with an accent but this does not affect his social skills as he has too many friends in the school. Academically he is an average student. Ernesto has two younger sisters who attend a primary school. His father and mother are unemployed because of their poor English as he said. His mother attends English classes while his father who was a farmer in the Salvador is looking for a job.

- **Level 2 Being a South American**

Being a mixture of European and South American (called Mestizo) forms 89% of the Salvadorian 4 million people. It is an advantage in the Salvador to be a Mestizo while being pure native or pure European you will belong to a definite

cultural group and not to the majority of the population. Politically speaking native people is struggling to get their rights from the Spanish white dominant government. Being a Mestizo you become confused whose side you should go for since you are a mixture of both. However as I believe El Salvador is becoming a mixture of both races and some times it is hard to tell about people's origin. Consequently, I speak, fluent Spanish with little native Ilobasco language, which is a native community dialect, learnt from my mother. Being a Salvadorian is to become prepared to immigrate in or outside the country. The reasons are many; poor resources and a corrupted political system that favours the elites and disadvantage the majority of population.

- **Level 3 Being an Australian Salvadorian**

“I will have no problem, I guess, when my English would improve. It is really improving every day. I have great support from the school where I attend special English Class (ESL) as much as from other students who at first laughed at my accent then they got used of it. Academically, I am an average student, but socially and culturally, I am above the average I guess. I am a good guitar player and I play Spanish music whenever it is possible in the school. To my surprise, the majority of students from different background appreciate the Spanish music and songs. In the mean time, I start to appreciate the English and Arabic music as I share some CDs with Australian and Arabic friends. Though new in Australia, I feel local every day I attend school. To be sincere I feel I am a pure Salvadorian only when I get an argument with my dad using full Spanish Language. Otherwise, I feel the impact of the Australian culture with all its diversities every day. This does not scare me. On the opposite, I feel more challenged and more excited to get to know new thing every day. More importantly, I feel lucky to have an escape when some cultural or social situations do not suit me. In comparison with the Salvadorian educational system, my Australian school is by far richer in resources more than the elementary schools I attended in Salvador. In addition, the school's welfare system in my Australian school is advantageous in comparison with El Salvador. Here you feel free to do many things provided you

play by the rules, (nice teachers, and flexible curriculum). In brief, the system helps you to be yourself except from occasions when some teachers and students would turn racist.

Being an Australian is by far quite different of being a Salvadorian. In Salvador, the Spanish culture dominates every thing. While here, you have the chance to choose, to change, and to interact with different cultures and that is exciting. The only bad thing here is the Medias where cultural diversity is not reflected rightly in the Australian radios and TV channels, and if mentioned it is in its passive and negative side.

9.6.4 CASE STUDY 4

- **Level 1: Aung speaks**

Aung is a year 11 student. He is from Burmese background and he came to Australia three years ago. He lived with his mother, father and two brothers and two sisters in a western Sydney suburb. His father is a computer technician and his mother is a housewife. Aung did not speak English before and therefore he attends ESL classes. He is excellent in Mathematics and science and has some trouble with English. Aung seems lonely in the classroom, but in the playground, he is popular as he shares and teaches other students some Burmese games. In fact, Aung's game- strategy to socialize himself earns him good reputation in the school. Fortunately, this was reflected positively on his quiet nature. On the other hand, it gives him the chance to improve his spoken English and to have many friends. Outside the school, Aung is a "shy lonely person" as he said .He spends his day playing with a Burmese special football. He said that people in the street tease him because of his English strong accent. However, he admits that this situation is improving every day. There is a wider than normal cultural gap that separates Aung from the mainstream society. Such a gap is in part the consequence of his shy nature and in other part to the cultural differences in relation to authorities. Therefore, respecting the authority of parents, teachers, and police is a paramount for him. He enthusiastically argues that respecting school

and teachers is essential in order to achieve better in the school. Though this is common among migrants, who come from underdeveloped countries Burma's oppressive political system is clearly reflected in Aung's relationships with authorities.

- **Being an Australian Burmese**

"I like Australia. You do whatever you like. However, what I do not like is how many students do not respect their teachers and their parents and they swear too much. Inside the classroom teachers seem to lost control while many students give themselves the right to disrupt and disobey teachers' instruction. This is not good. However most people are friendly to me and they are receptive especially when I teach them some Burmese games. I feel I have something worthy related to my background and I always feel proud. On the other hand, I appreciate the way male and female students become friends while in Burma you keep secret such a friendship. We, I and my parents become Australian citizens last month. My parents were excited because it meant to them many things (applying to get a social security benefit as they both unemployed). In addition, it let them attend some free English classes. To me I start to feel home. I believe with time it will become normal to me. And this will happen when I would reach an agreement between my Burmese identity and my Australian identity. Some Vietnamese and Chinese background who seems perfect Australians are good examples that give me hope to build up a new Australian identity. I asked them about their experiences and some of them telling me stories that gives me hope that one day I will be a good and productive Burmese Australian who is proud of his background as much as his new identity.

9.7 Analysis: The Paradox of Cultural Identity in a Culturally Diverse Society

Many theorists about cultural identity (Erickson, 1968; Brein and David, 1971) agree in general that the development of individual cultural identity is a process of acceptance of the cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and values of one cultural

group rather than another. Many factors would affect cultural identity. From the above case studies there is a general agreement that family unit, the peer group, the community, educational institutions, religions have a great impact in the development of individual cultural identity. Based on their social experiences especially in the school environment most students in the case studies believe that they can be identified with more than one cultural group at the same time or whenever the need arises. The meaning of such a shift consists arguably in the students' ability to reach some compromise between their different cultural traditions and the mainstream culture by mastering English and by sharing cultural components with other groups. However, one may argue easily against the concept of acculturation since case studies show that cultural backgrounds do not disintegrate though in some cases it may become dormant.

Based on Matisse's Islamic experience and my personal experience I am proposing a multiple cultural identity through which a students' existed identity may coexist with any other acquired cultural identity. In this students' background form a kind of scaffolding structure that can be dressed by borrowed cultural components brought to schools by culturally diverse students. The new in such an argument consist in the notion that students from different cultural backgrounds contest cultural elements that may suit them consciously (in purpose) or subconsciously without being aware what is happening around them regarding cultural identity formation. More recent theories of cultural identity i.e. Gunew (1998), Du-Bois and Reymond (1984) address the issue of the complexity of individual cultural identity in culturally diverse nations by proposing multiple cultural identities, where national identity coexists with a separate and distinct cultural identity.

Weston, (1996) argues the concept of cultural identity from the perspective that sees students who are culturally different as disadvantaged. Weston adds that cultural identity is epitomized in educational policies that ostensibly celebrate cultural diversity, while simultaneously treating students from non-mainstream

cultural backgrounds as disadvantaged. Matisse's Islamic experience could become a typical example of how one can move between different cultures whether in purpose or just by living in a country that is culturally different from the native one.

When approaching Islamic art Matisse in fact has arguably established a kind of contact with Islamic culture especially Islamic philosophy through which he had to expose his European traditions to the Islamic traditions. In selecting what may suit him, Matisse's experience had many advantages. The first consists in the artist's statement that he has found himself in that culture" I find my self in an Islamic rug" Matisse said. The second advantage consists in the artist endeavour to widen the scope of his view so that the other is becoming a constant player when approaching art making or generally on a personal level. The third and most important advantage of Matisse's Islamic experience is that such an experience provides a good argument that we can voluntarily enrich our cultural identity by other cultural effects whether we live in favour of the hosted culture or not.

In culturally diverse societies especially in schools students most of the times have no choice in facing an overwhelming force through which they have to deal with their identities in terms of what to maintain and what to give up. Smith (1990) argues that the phenomenon of belonging to more than one cultural group is no longer unusual. Even moving a between such cultural groups has become a norm instead of being a kind of defection. Smith argues that these cultural identities are not mutually exclusive, but cumulative layers, where the immediate cultural context determines which layer is relevant at any given time. In this case, the scarf of the female Muslim student is an indication of her religion while her love for dancing in front of a school party is a gained culture taken from outside her religious culture. And both habits as a social behaviour could be alternated without any clash when we become receptive of the other. Referring to the above case studies Aung for example seems to accumulate his Australian cultural identity while he is retaining what he thinks it is good from his native culture. For

example, respecting teachers by not arguing with them under any circumstance is part of such retention.

9.8 Analysis of Cultural Adaptability

Switching cultural identity at will is used by participants in most of the case studies. This strategy of switching is arguably used for adaptability reasons where any student may find him/herself better off within any particular culture. For Miriam for example she talks and act to me as an Australian Lebanese teacher in a quite different language and approach when she would talk to teachers from the school mainstream. However, she would as well use another quite different strategy to talk to a teacher from an Indian background. This strategy of shifting cultural habit, as I would argue, needs skills in manipulation and maneuvering some time and assumes a thorough knowledge of other cultures. Such knowledge has arguably the potential to develop not just the student social skills but his/her cognitive skills through which student is becoming aware of the multi faces of school society in particular and the larger society in general. In addition, it provides students with a valuable perspective through which he /she would realize that other point of views and cultures should be considered when dealing with situations especially in a multicultural environment. This, as I would argue, could be at the core of the democratic and progressive pedagogy where the other is always presented as “an opposition” that may prevent the formation of any determined and ultimate reality. The case studies as well reflect a general tendency of the mechanism through which students would adapt to the new situation as in the case of Ernesto and kamel.

Many theorists argue that the process of gaining new cultural identity would generally developed unconsciously where young students start to understand that to survive one should expose the self to the hosted culture. i.e. communicating in English is necessary; otherwise, the student will be disadvantaged. However, once an individual student starts to realize the advantage of having more than one

cultural identity he/ she would consider at will switching to different cultures when the needs arise.

Many theorists argue the above point (Baker, 1997; Phinney and Devich-Navarro, 1997; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1996) mentioning that peer and parental pressure to accommodate the self within the mainstream culture play a great role in adopting the self to the mainstream school culture. This should not be understood as an assimilation process though officially students will be praised for their adaptability to the mainstream culture. A clear example about the non-assimilation notion comes from the school where I teach. Many students who appear to be fully assimilated in the mainstream culture refer so often their cultural backgrounds (listen to different music, eating local food, uttering with their home languages)

However, shifting cultural behaviour is not free from many serious side effects. Baker (1997) views that students from different cultural backgrounds suffer from what he has called home/school disarticulation. Upon Baker (1997), there is a risk of alienating the students and their parents when the norms, values, attitudes and beliefs of the family unit differ from those of the education system. He argues that this issue may thereby alienate the student and the student's family from the education system. However, arguing the impact of differences between school culture and home culture reveal that there are many advantages as well to such differences. From personal experience in the classroom and from the above case studies some students and their parents have showed great skills and ability to use their cultural differences in favour of the students' academic achievement. (On occasional interviews with bicultural parents in the school where I teach, parents so often refer to their cultures in dealing with students especially to discipline them and to urge them to put more effort in their studies.) This would be reflected positively on the students' academic achievement and it may give teachers new tools to cater for students' welfare.

A number of research studies indicate that children of first generation in the USA, especially from Asian immigrants outperform students from mainstream cultural groups (Hawley, 1997; Harrington 1994; Weston, 1996). This argument is based on the assumption that many immigrant parents and students realize quickly that the host society offered new opportunities that would enable their children to succeed and that it was the parent's responsibility to encourage their children to work hard at school. This would give parents and students from non-mainstream society the hope not be looked at as disadvantaged because of their cultural backgrounds. In addition, it contradicts the claim that coming from a non-mainstream cultural background is automatically a disadvantage.

In brief, as cultural adaptability becomes an essential skill for survival, non-mainstream students need to constantly shifting cultural identity and using its positive components to their advantages. In this respect, researchers such as Sue (1990) have demonstrated that although this process is not easy, traditional/home cultural values give some adolescent immigrants in Western countries academic advantage over their mainstream counterparts. This is particularly the case for students whose traditional cultures value respect for authority, hard work and educational achievement as Sue (1990) argues. For example Aung (see case study 4) has stressed this point arguing that respecting the schools and teachers and working hard would eventually reflected positively on student's academic achievement. Aung in this respect is trying to adhere to a cultural components brought from his Burmese background and through which accepting authority and respecting its representative have a positive side that can help students achieve better.

Banks (1997) approaches the issue from teachers' perspectives. He argues that being aware of the potential of cultural differences teachers can turn these differences into educational assets that may serve mainstream and non-mainstream students together. Banks urges teachers to questions their cultural identities and students' cultural identities and consequently to decide which

culture should prevail in order to respond to students different needs. Banks(1997) regarding this matter argues that when teachers ignore the diversity of their students they in fact ignore the simple educational concept that we learn differently and the way we learn is dependent on many constructs that include culture, students and parents' expectation and many other societal and educational norms. To conclude this argument adapting to school culture or to the society at large in a diverse country needs students and teachers to recognize the different cultures they brought to schools. This recognition is based on the merit of those cultures and on the process of how to change difference as a divisive agent to an agent that may stimulate students' talents and cast the richness that can be found of our experience as human beings. However, recognizing other cultures in the schools is not a mere statement that may save educators and policy makers from bringing into play the richness of the "imported cultures", it needs differences to be reflected in the curriculum and to constantly putting values on students and parents' cultures.

9.9 Conclusion.

In a rapidly changing world of alterity and differences, cultural identity has become most recently a key element in belonging to the world . As I am arguing in favour of recognizing the Other in order to reconstruct the self, Matisse's Islamic experience has the potential to set up a clear example that political and geographical boundaries can be overcome by belonging aesthetically to the world. That is, sharing our different aesthetics would enrich the way we look at our self and at the others. It implies our experiences and their experiences, our perspectives and theirs and finally our aesthetics and theirs. From personal experiences as much as from field studies, recognizing differences and adopting what might suit us implies benefits as much as excitement on a personal, social, educational, and artistic levels. On the social level, it helps an individual to locate the self in comparison with the Other even with people from the same cultural background.

On the educational level, it arguably provides learners with a great opportunity to learn from each other and to expose personal experiences and values to the Other's experiences and values, a matter that would help in understanding the self and the Other. In a school environment, the benefits of having multiple cultural identities will be lost if educational policies encourage assimilation and if a multicultural background is regarded as a liability rather than an advantage. As the above case studies show, having multiple cultural identities is a natural response to living in a culturally complex environment, and developing the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts may be one of the key learning areas of the curriculum of the future. On the artistic level, excitement and benefits emanating from differences and diversities tend arguably to be more energetic than conformity. And since our perceptions about what is beautiful and what is not are quite different from one society to another, we will have the chance to involve our difference in searching for the new and the extraordinary. Finally the process of expanding the scope of our perceptions beyond our own traditions creates arguably the opportunity to challenge the norms of our cultural existence and it has arguably the potential to provide us not only with new techniques to do art works, but also with new ways of understanding each other and the world around us.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix One

Matisse's Islamic experiences: Who Would Learn the Lesson?

UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS:

In the next few pages, catalogues of art exhibitions regarding Matisse, Islamic art and artistic exchange are collected. Exhibitions are not comprehensively researched. However, examples are collected to give an idea how interested institutions have assimilated the Matissian Islamic experience and how some of them still believe that we are not heading toward clash of civilization but toward understanding, cooperation and tolerance. Using art as a dialogical mean is one of the main assumption in this study as arts tend to overlap all political dogmas that may classified judge and determine. On the other hand, art as a learning experience makes us insightful into the other's point of view especially the way aesthetics are created, and appreciated. In this, the Matissian project is always suggestive toward cultural and artistic exchange especially between Islam and the West. Reflecting this notion is the Louver Museum's project to open an Islamic art permanent department, and the aim is to promote the idea of reflecting the beautiful other instead of the "ugly" one. Here are some exhibitions related to cultural exchange, Matisse and Islamic art with Excerpts from the exhibitions' catalogues.

EXHIBITION ONE:**MATISSE'S MOROCCO****The Institute of the Arab World- Paris**

Du 19 octobre 1999 au 30 janvier 2000

LE MAROC DE MATISSE

Matisse's Morocco is an exhibition done by L'Institut du Monde Arabe to shed light on the Artist's Moroccan experience. It concentrates on the notion of Matisse's revelation that has come to him from the orient and cover paintings from both 1912, and 1913 trips to Morocco. Here is the exhibition catalogue's opening.

L'Institut du monde arabe présente une exposition consacrée aux séjours de Matisse au Maroc et à la très forte influence que ce pays eut sur son oeuvre.

"La révélation m'est venue de l'Orient": c'est en ces termes que le peintre résuma plus tard son expérience marocaine. Matisse effectua, en 1912 et 1913, deux voyages au Maroc qui lui procurèrent un dépaysement total.

Le Maroc joua effectivement pour lui le rôle d'un véritable révélateur; il lui permit de mieux comprendre la lumière, d'approfondir sa perception de l'intensité. La découverte de la plasticité de l'architecture arabo-islamique constitua également un élément essentiel de sa quête.

Par delà le Maroc, c'est tout l'Orient qui participa au renouvellement de sa pratique et à l'édification d'un nouvel espace plastique.

EXHIBITION TWO**matisse**

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the fabric of dreams
his art and his textiles

Poster of the exhibition

Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams

His Art and His Textiles

June 23, 2005–September 25, 2005

Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Exhibition Hall, 2nd floor

From the Exhibition catalogue

The impact of Henri Matisse's lifelong interest in textiles is shown in a selection of approximately 75 paintings, drawings, prints, and painted paper cutouts. His interest in textile probably has led the artist to explore the decorative patterns as applied in different Islamic art forms. Also exhibited are examples from the artist's personal collection of textiles, many of which have been packed away in family trunks since Matisse's death in 1954. Of particular interest are Matisse's canvases inspired by a fragment of blue-and-white printed cotton that the artist purchased from a secondhand shop in Paris, works from the 1910s and 1920s demonstrating the influence of North African fabrics and screens, paintings featuring Romanian blouses and couture gowns, and Matisse's late paper cutouts, which are juxtaposed with his African and Polynesian textiles. The exhibition concludes with maquettes of the chasubles that Matisse designed for the Chapel of the Rosary at Vence.

The exhibition was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and Le Musée Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis.

EXHIBITION THREE

"Matisse"

2000-07-16 until 2000-09-10

Birmingham Museum of Art

Birmingham, AL, USA United States of America

The importance of this exhibition consists in its recognition of Matisse's distinction of using decorative patterns and vivid colours as never before. Though

the catalogue does not mention directly the influence of Islamic art on Matisse's paintings, these effects are implied. (Simplicity, primary vivid colours, and decorative patterns)

From the exhibition catalogue Catalogue:

Matisse from the Baltimore Museum of Art features 68 dazzling works spanning 1898-1950. The works are drawn from The Cone Collection at the Baltimore Museum of Art, an internationally renowned collection of modern art. Matisse marks the largest U.S. tour of Matisse works from this Collection in more than 20 years. The genius of Matisse will be displayed in 35 paintings, 16 bronze sculptures, 15 drawings and 2 illustrated books. These magnificent works show why Matisse, along with Picasso, ranks as one of the two most important and influential artists of the entire 20th century.

*Matisse took the classical form of the body, and, with a revolutionary intensity of color and simplicity of brushwork, brought it into the modern era. Everything worked to bring out the sensual, expressive and essential elements of the human form: vivid colors and bold shapes evoked feeling rather than merely representing reality. Often called the master of color, Matisse applied pattern upon pattern onto the canvas, creating sumptuous interiors unlike any before. Visitors will be astonished even today by the brilliance of such paintings as *Interiors, Flowers and Parakeets* (1924) and *Seated Odalisque, Left Leg Bent* (1926). This exhibition not only features works by one of the towering figures of modern art, but it also highlights an important chapter in the development and formation of modern culture in America -*

EXHIBITION Four:

Matisse from The Baltimore Museum of Art

October 14, 2000 to January 28, 2001



Another Exhibition for key paintings of Matisse that are used in this study as clues of Matisse's involvement with Islamic art. The importance of the exhibition consists in its recognition that Matisse's particular paintings were revolutionary in developing the European paintings. And if we know how Islamic art is influential on those paintings as argued in this study, one may speculate easily about the role of Islamic art on the evolution of Western art.

The exhibition is a showcase of 33 paintings, 16 sculptures, 25 drawings and one illustrated book covering more than 50 years of his career. Matisse's bold creations include some of the most widely recognized works of the 20th century. He was a leader of modernism in Paris, known for his revolutionary use of vivid colour, pattern and texture as a means of expression.

From the Exhibition's catalogue: *...Outstanding examples of the colourful paintings included in the Cone Collection for which Matisse is well known are Blue Nude (Memory of Biskra) (1907), Large Reclining Nude (formerly called The Pink Nude) (1935), The Yellow Dress (1929), Standing Odalisque Reflected in a Mirror (1923). The drawings in the exhibition show Matisse's extraordinary talents as a drafter and include portraits of the Cone sisters. The sculptures are examples of some of the finest Matisse sculptures anywhere in the world, including The Serf (bronze, 1900-03) of male model Bevilaqua, who also modeled for Rodin.*

"It is impossible to think of the art of the 20th century without accounting for

Henri Matisse's great and bold influence," said AGO Director Matthew Teitelbaum. "Matisse was a radical thinker about the simplifications of colour and line and an artist of great expressive range. To see his work celebrated in this wonderful exhibition through the lens of two of the most adventurous collectors of early 20th-century America is a double pleasure. Collectors stress the personal, and Matisse was, above all else, an artist who addressed the intimacies of personal experience and pleasure."

EXHIBITION FIVE

IRAQ AND CHINA: CERAMICS, TRADE, AND INNOVATION *December 4, 2004–July 17, 2005*

This exhibition sheds some lights on the cultural and artistic exchanges that took place between different civilizations and how some traditions have influenced others. For example Chinese art forms especially ceramic were admired in Iraq where Muslim artisans have succeeded to create their own version based on the Chinese traditions. This is an indication of the trend in the evolution of Islamic art. That is; infusing different traditions to innovate, an argument that is in the core of Matisse's project.

From the Catalogue :

This exhibition focuses on revolutionary and enduring changes that took place in Iraqi ceramics during the 9th century as the humble character of Islamic pottery responded to a wave of luxury Chinese goods, imported by Arab and Persian merchants. During this period, Iraq became a center for Islamic ceramic production as new technologies transformed common earthenware into a vehicle for complex multi-colored designs. Chinese ceramics were admired in Iraq for their shiny white surfaces and hard body. As neither the essential raw materials nor the appropriate firing technology were locally available, Islamic potters therefore created their own versions by covering finely potted yellow clay hemispherical bowls with a glaze that turned opaque after firing, creating

ceramics that were described as "pearl cups like the moon." This technique offered the potters an ideal canvas for bold decorative designs, first in cobalt blue and then with "luster"; mixtures of copper and silver that were painted onto the glaze then fixed in a second firing.

Following the gradual disintegration of the Abbasid Empire after the 10th century, migrating Iraqi potters transmitted these techniques to Egypt and Iran from whence they traveled to Europe, giving rise to the great "Majolica" tradition in medieval Spain and Renaissance Italy. In China, 14th-century experiments with cobalt blue from the Islamic world led to Yuan and Ming blue-and-white.

EXHIBITION SIX

Title: Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee

City: Sydney

Publisher: Art Gallery of New South Wales

Notes: Roger Benjamin, curator and editor; Mounira Khemir, guest curator and contributor, Photography; Ursula Prunster, guest curator and contributor, Australian art; Lynne Thornton, contributor.

col. ill. ; 30 cm.

"Exhibition dates: The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 6 December 1997-22 February 1998 [and] Auckland Art Gallery, 20 March-7 June 1998"--T.p. verso. It contained 124 paintings and 50 photographs, most of which were produced by European artists in the nineteenth century on subjects in North Africa and the Levant.

The next three exhibitions (Exhibition 8, 9, and 10) were organized by Freer Gallery of Art / Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Smithsonian Institution

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EXHIBITION SEVEN

CALIPHS AND KINGS: THE ART AND INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC SPAIN

May 8–October 17, 2004

This exhibition brought to Washington for the first time approximately ninety objects from the collection of the Hispanic Society of America in New York. Emphasizing themes of longevity, continuity, and transmission in the Islamic decorative arts and sciences of medieval Spain, the exhibition presented works dating from the time of the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th century to the final phase of Muslim life in Spain in the 16th century.

Objects from 10th-century Córdoba illustrated the creation of a unique court aesthetic under the Umayyad caliphate that was widely copied by both Muslim and Christian rulers in the following centuries. Later works showed the eclectic, aesthetic, intellectual and political culture that resulted from the Christian conquests in the 11th-15th centuries of the cities of al-Andalus (Muslim Spain). During the 14th and 15th centuries, Muslim craftsmen working both in the Muslim Kingdom of Granada and for Christian patrons, the Crown, the nobility and the Church, and occasionally Jewish patrons in cities such as Seville, Toledo, Córdoba and Valencia produced some of the most beautiful and evocative ceramics and textiles of the time. These items were exported throughout Europe

and served as models for silk and ceramic industries in regions such as the Italian peninsula.

Works of particular note included a tenth-century ivory pyxis from Madinat al-Zahra' (Córdoba), an early 15th-century armorial carpet from Letur (Murcia) made for María de Castilla, queen of Aragon, and two exquisite, illuminated, fifteenth-century Hebrew Bibles.

EXHIBITION EIGHT

LOVE AND YEARNING: MYSTICAL AND MORAL THEMES IN PERSIAN POETRY AND PAINTING

August 30, 2003 –February 22, 2004

This exhibition featured twenty-six of the finest illustrated manuscripts relating to Persian lyrical poetry highlighting the union of word and image. "Love and Yearning: Mystical and Moral Themes in Persian Poetry and Painting" contained works drawn from the Sackler and neighboring Freer galleries' renowned permanent holdings and loans from several private collections and from the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. These works demonstrate how 15th- to 17th-century artists transformed the rich imagery of mystical concepts found in Persian lyrical poetry into stylized, meticulously detailed and colorful images.

Lyrical texts describing the epic love stories of the prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and Zulaykha, Khusraw and Shirin and the crazed lover Majnun and Layli were produced on a more personal and intimate scale than manuscripts devoted to historical, scientific, or epic themes. Although small in size and few in number, the paintings accompanying lyrical texts were intricate and included repeated recognizable compositions and stock figures that became as familiar to the viewer as the verses themselves.

Manuscripts that were on view included pages from Nizami's (1145–1207) *Khamsa* (Quintet), Jami's (d. 1492) *Haft Awrang* (Seven Thrones), as well as the *Bustan* (Orchard) and the *Gulistan* (Rose garden) by Sa'di (d. 1492). Two rarely seen textile fragments illustrated how narrative scenes were also adapted to other media. The exhibition included an interactive station with a touch screen where visitors can view all 28 minutely detailed illustrations of the Freer's *Haft Awrang* in depth. An audio feature described the production of the manuscript, its patron and artists. The exhibition and related programs were made possible by a generous grant from the Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute.

EXHIBITION NINE.

VISUAL POETRY: PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS FROM IRAN

December 16, 2001–May 5, 2002

In the first exhibition of its kind, 32 exquisite single folios of painting, drawing and poetry from 16th- and 17th-century Iran intended for assembly into albums were on view at the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery from December 16, 2001 through May 5, 2002. *Visual Poetry: Paintings and Drawings from Iran* included seven works by Riza Abbasi (ca. 1585–1635), one of the most celebrated Persian artists, particularly known for his innovative single-sheet compositions. Also on view were works by the notable 16th-century painter Aqa Mirak and Ali Riza Abbasi, the favorite court calligrapher of Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629).

In Iran, illustrations have been an integral part of secular manuscripts since the early 13th century. By the late 15th century, Persian artists also created independent drawings and paintings, a genre that reached its apogee during the reign of the Safavid dynasty (1502–1722). Some of the folios comprised artful assemblages of paintings, drawings, and poetry, while others focused exclusively on one or the other medium. Although no longer illustrating a specific text, single-page compositions still maintained their literary link. They were collected in elegant albums, and many depicted idealized single figures, inspired directly or indirectly by poetic conventions and imagery, such as the beautiful beloved, the

yearning lover, or the wise old sheikh or scholar. Further enriched by Sufism (Islamic mysticism), the compositions lent themselves to a variety of interpretations. Much like the poems of Rumi (d. 1273), or Hafiz (d. 1390), they could be viewed as evocations of earthly or spiritual yearning, or as metaphors for human or divine beauty. Instead of words, artists now used line and color to create visual poems, implying a range of meanings. The new format also encouraged artists to experiment with the genre of portraiture in the later 17th-century and integrate it within the repertoire of single-page compositions.

The exhibition is primarily drawn from the permanent holdings of the Sackler Gallery and the Art and History Trust collection (on long-term loan to the gallery), which include some of the finest single-page compositions ever produced in Iran. It highlights some of the salient characteristics of an art form that became a formal and thematic alternative to the manuscript illustrations after the 16th-century in Iran and the rest of the Islamic world. View [Visual Poetry online gallery guide](#).

Appendix Two

Chronology of Matisse's style shift

Detecting Matisse's Style over the Years:



Henri Matisse. *Dinner Table.* 1897. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

In this Matisse's early painting the artist was working within the common European traditions trying to depict a common theme; a woman setting a dinner table. Nothing special can be said about the painting. Though one with trained expert eye could detect a struggling artist who seems from the beginning to show some difficulty showing the traditional perspective. Colours then are grayed to show the artist's effort in depicting as realistic picture as he can. This is reflected in the relatively realistic representation of the woman, couple of fruit plates and bottles of wine.

If we compare this early painting with a later one like the *Sadness of the king* one may predict that if Matisse had insisted on the above impressionist-realistic style he will never succeeded in passing Manet, Monet, Pissaro and Cezanne's test.

Henri Matisse. *Blue Pot and Lemon*. c. 1897. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

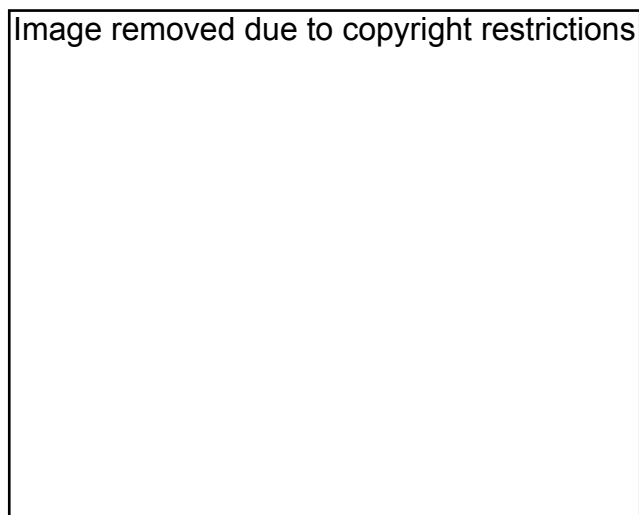


Henri Matisse. *Blue Pot and Lemon* 1897

Another still-life from Matisse's early paintings showing a struggling artist using grey tone in an attempt to play the traditional game within a mixture of realistic-impressionist style. Here again one may easily identify the artist's weakness in depicting the third dimension as the oblique line, which is the easiest way to represent perspective does not reflect any depth as the triangular area of the first

plan is filled with light gray beside the relatively dark tones of the objects on the table. By academic judgment, this is a weakness.

However, we are going to see later how Matisse has used this “weakness” in his favour suggesting that imperfect or distorted perspectives could be more expressive than traditional perfect one. This is become valid when Matisse had the chance to see the great Islamic art traditions where perspectives and third dimension are not prime targets of the artists. Instead, colours and logical interactions of different forms prove to have the potential to express better and to create arguably more stimulant visual texts.



Henri Matisse. *The Luxembourg Gardens*. 1901-2.

Henri Matisse. *The Luxembourg Gardens*. c. 1901-2. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

This is the start. Drawing with colours is one of Matisse’s suggestion in his Notes of a painter. Depicting juxtaposed colours would suggest new perspectives that

are totally opposed to the European perspectives in paintings. In this landscape, Matisse has reversed the process of traditional perspective. Indeed the green hills at the far distance close to the sky are darker than the green in the first plan. This is lesson one where Matisse is navigating outside his artistic oceans.

Indeed this technique is borrowed from Islamic miniatures where plans are superimposed without any consideration of the colours' tones and the dark and light. The Lux, *le Joix de Vivre*, View on Callioure, and Moroccan landscape are typical examples of such a technique. Matisse has always mentioned that using such a reverse perspective would extend the expressive quality of the subject matter and more importantly would suggest a relief nature that is based on inquiry and exploration rather than imitating submissively nature's elements. Creating a relief nature that is separated from the real one is arguably the core of modernity project. That is we are interactive creatures and our existence cannot be separated from our actions.

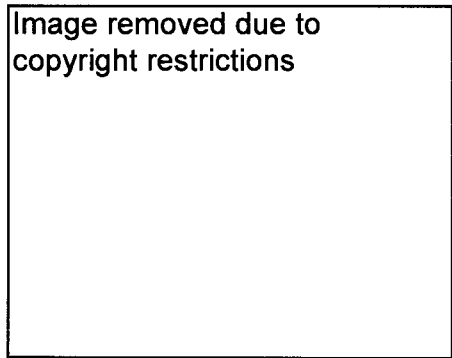



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Matisse. The Luxembourg garden 1901

In this painting that goes back to 1901 Matisse started to explore new style based on using colours themselves in order to represent the subject matter. In addition, No restriction on colours' use is applied. Red and purple trees and purple grounds reflect a tendency that may overtake the European traditions in applying colours. In comparison with the earlier paintings before 1900 Matisse seems to show more confidence in applying colours suggesting combinations that no other artists would dare at the time especially vermilion and blue colours. The secret behind this vermilion as revealed earlier in this study is due perhaps to Islamic Persian silk clothes and to a Persian treatise about the use of colours especially vermilion.

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Henri Matisse. *The Window*. 1905. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Some art critics consider the above painting as an indication of Matisse's disruption with his own artistic traditions. Schneider(1984) mentions this key painting arguing that Matisse's decorative project is manifested in the Window

based on Arabesques borrowed from the essential aspects of Islamic art.(see detailed interpretation for The Window else where in this study).

Henri Matisse. *Interior with a Girl*. 1905-6. Oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Arts, New York, NY, USA.



Henri Matisse. *Interior with a Girl*. 1905-06

This painting shows the decorative use of non- mixed colours. The girl, the fruit, the jag and the window are all reduced and simplified as to serve as visual stimulants instead of being intended to represent a girl reading in the comfort of her home. Aesthetical values in this case are due to the way Matisse has distributed his colours. More importantly, different colours and shapes are interacting with each other to suggest new aesthetics. This style was new at the time, and it is believed that Matisse by 1905 started to receive Islamic miniature's influences especially miniatures' colouring traditions.

Henri Matisse. *View of Collioure*. 1906. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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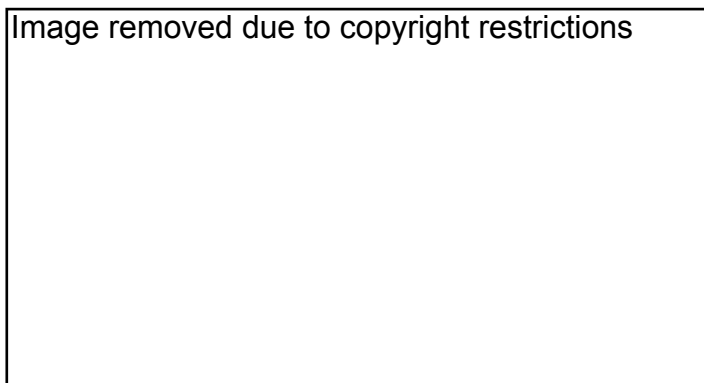
Henri Matisse. *View of Collioure*. 1906

Another key painting that reflects Matisse's determination to follow his instinct in testing the expressive quality of juxtaposing contrasted primary colours. Vermillion and blue explode as to declare Matisse's paintings divorce with old European great master's traditions in doing paintings. It is believed that Matisse could not stand up alone daring to challenge the great European traditions unless he has in mind a great artistic legacy such as the Islamic artistic traditions.

Henri Matisse. *Blue Nude. (Souvenir de Biskra)*. 1907. Oil on canvas. Baltimore, Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, USA.

This souvenir show Matisse's struggle in solving the conflict between his own traditions that urge him to represent the third dimension of the nude and his

adopting style that denies such a three dimensional representation. The result is a deformed body that has created the most expressive quality of Matisse paintings yet.



Blue Nude 1907 Oil on canvas. Baltimore, Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, USA.



Le Bonheur de vivre (The Joy of Life) 1905

The joy of life, hugging, kissing swimming, playing music, collecting flower is Matisse's manifest about the purpose of his art. A "soothing art" he said, a troublless world tempted by all people. However, it is believed that Matisse has

borrowed the concept of soothing art from the Paradise idea promoted by Islam as a religion. In that paradise every one is happy, river of honey and milk beautiful women, water, flowers birds and every thing a person may wish. In fact, Matisse's paintings have always formed his paradise as his non-depressing themes have materialized in flowers women and like heaven landscapes. A Final word about the use of colour that may convey Paradise like atmosphere is the combination of golden and blue green and pink combination in the tree, ground and the sky. This way of colouring can only be found in Islamic miniatures and rugs and not in any of the old masters' whose works were copied by Matisse.



Henri Matisse. *Harmony in Red*. 1908

Henri Matisse. *Harmony in Red*. 1908. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia. In *Red Harmony* Matisse has grown confident in adopting the Islamic miniature's style. Every bit of the painting is decorative even the landscape viewed through the window. The woman, the fruits the Islamic ivy are there as to take the adventure to its extreme end. That is, two-dimensional painting in which every element is not necessarily to be subdued. Instead, any element of the painting has its own role, its own plastic meaning that may contribute to the whole while amazingly preserving its independence

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Henri Matisse. *The Painter's Family*. 1911.

A year after the dance within its decorative economy Matisse did the Painter Family. Suddenly, decoration invades every bit of the paintings. It is everywhere on the walls on the chimney on the sofas on the dresses and finally on the floor with a heavily decorated rug. As argued in this study perhaps Matisse decorative 'explosion' would happen every then and while upon the availability of Islamic miniatures to him in Europe. In fact, between 1910 the date of the Great Islamic art exhibition and 1911 Matisse has arguably reflected clear evidences that have thoroughly mastered the Islamic miniatures lesson.

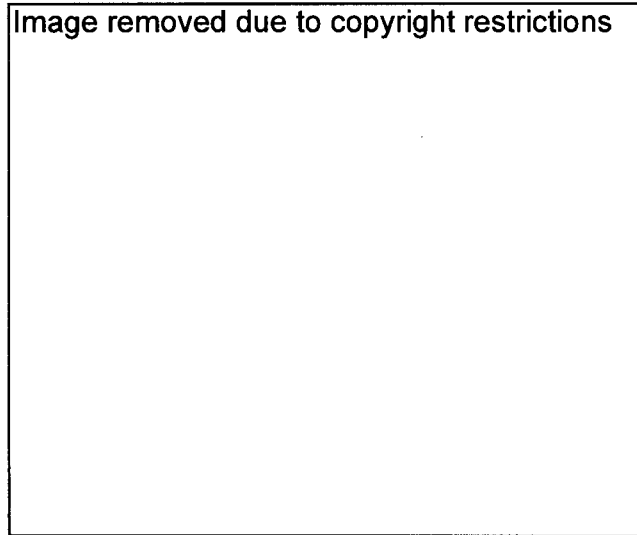
Another example that may verify this argument is Henri Matisse's interior with Eggplant.

Once Matisse has finished painting his eggplants he seemed to become eager to stamp the whole scene with floral decoration. This was done as to state that to express is to decorate and to impress is to understand the subject matter in its essential characteristics.

In this case, there is no need to shift the attention to the eggplants, the subject of the painting; instead, they become themselves a decorative tool that may complement in harmony or in dissonance sometimes with all other elements of the painting.e.g. Landscape through the window, the wall, the table and the vases.

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Matisse *Interior in Aubergines*. 1911-12.



Henri Matisse. *The Sadness of King*, 1950.

This cut out painting is done 2 years before Matisse's death. However, Decorative motifs borrowed from Islamic still dominate his art. Such a tendency has arguably lead Matisse to an abstract style through which nature is reduced to its basic decorative elements.




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Henri Matisse Nude: Perhaps Matisse's great achievement consists in his relentless attempt to understand nature in terms of the language that may represent it. Then a female body should be reduced to its basic decorative lines so that curves, dots, and all other arabesque characters are there to suggest, evoke and beautify. In the above etching, decorative element at the background cannot be separated from the lines that make the female body. In Islamic art, everything is always decorative since we always seek harmony between the self and the different shapes that surround us. In this, we do not need to tell stories; instead, we need to mention the subject matter leaving to the viewers to redress the simplified nature with their needs. This should be as simple as possible otherwise; we are trying to influence the viewers' percepts. A fact that may contradict our intention. That is to produce a visual text that may provoke the viewer's mind and taste.

Henri Matisse. *Decorative Figure on an Ornamental Background.* 1925-26. Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

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This is another proof how far Matisse has gone with Islamic art. More than 15 years since he saw the Great Mohammedan exhibition in Munich the artist still inhibited by decoration as never before. The figure, the “wooden” sitting figure is reduced to its decorative existence. Therefore, the figure within the painting is not important than the heavily decorated wall. What Matisse is suggesting here is that meanings are not generated just from imitating natural forms but from reducing the woman’s body to its decorative form. In this sense, the woman stops to represent any particular woman that may have a name and an identity but it may represent any woman or femininity itself.


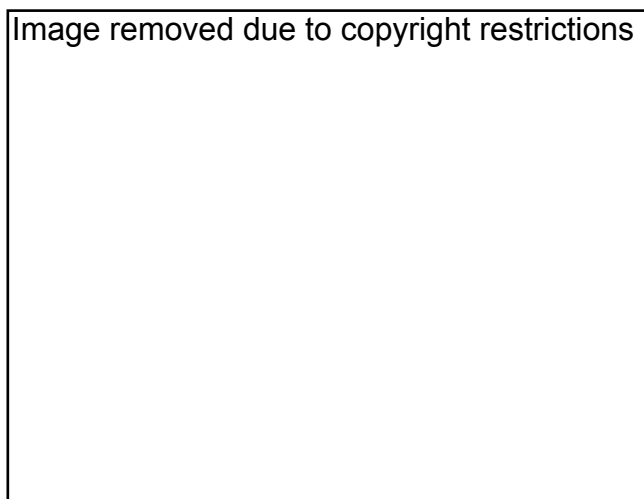


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Henri Matisse. *Polynesia, the Sea.* 1946. Gouache on paper cutout. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

Matisse did two identical paper cut paintings that represent the sea. Matisse's paper cut techniques is believed to be associated with Islamic rugs. In fact, Matisse towards the end of his life stopped to use the Islamic rugs as an integral accessory of his paintings in favour of a painting rug. Many are Matisse's paintings that can be considered as rugs. *The Sadness of the King* and *The Snail* are two typical examples through which modern motifs are derived from traditional motifs such as the traditional decorative motifs of Islamic rugs.

Henri Matisse. Interior of the Chapel of the Rosary Vence. At left The Tree of Life, stained glass. At right: St. Dominic, ceramic tiles. 1950.



This chapel is a genuine example how Matisse has assimilated the Islamic decorative system. One year before his death, Matisse has succeeded to bring the mosque's decorative motifs to the church as decoration has to contribute in creating a holy place where worshipers can relax and think. Moreover, Matisse has arguably succeeded to spread a religious environment through which both Islamic and Christian motifs are mixed together to create a unique place enhanced by Islamic decoration as much architectural motif (the arcs of the windows) Schneider (1984) insists that Islamic effects are apparent in Matisse's Chapel. This is another proof that Matisse's Islamic experience was an authentic project that has dominated the entire life of artist. Such an argument is based on the ground that Matisse's fascination with his Islamic project was not a temporary one as in the case of orientalist or exotic artists.

Appendix Three:

MY PAINTINGS

In this appendix, examples from my paintings and drawings are shown. The paintings are done in the CREAM room at the UTS KG campus. They are reflecting some Matisian approach toward using colours, lines, Arabesques and compositions. They are intended to suggest some energy generated from exposing to each other different cultural traditions in doing art. That is, my artistic background is read in these paintings in term of Matisse's Islamic experience which suggests a two way process. The first is to inspire Islamic art by a non-Muslim as Matisse did and the other is to inspire Western artistic traditions by a non-Westerner (me).

My argument here is based on the notion that differences must be highlighted instead being subdued. In doing so, many educational perspectives could be identified: The first is the learning that may occur by exposing the self on the other's experience. In most case worthy experiences brought to the scene would widen the scope of the learners by suggesting new and different ways of how to approach reality. The second educational perspective that may arise from mixing differences is the process of comparing and contrasting own knowledge with the knowledge of the other. The third educational perspective is the recognition of the other's experience. This is reflected in the concept that truth and reality is contextual and the other has always the potential to afford an essential part of the reality that we may miss or ignore.

Aesthetically speaking my paintings seek to take advantage by consulting the basic aesthetic system that can be found in different Islamic art forms as much as from western traditions aesthetical system. In doing so, there is good opportunity, as I would argue to test new aesthetics resulted from the "Shock" of contrasting and comparing different artistic experiences.



1. Two faces 2003:

Arabesque, decoration and colours used in this painting are Matisse's suggestion. In this series of paintings done in the CAREAR room at the UTS KG campus I try to reflect Matisse's suggestions by infusing a kind of arabesques and decoration putting aside the academic in favour of reflecting spontaneously my feelings. Even colour choices are tied to the present moment and jotted down as decorative elements with the aims of creating a two-way dialogue between colours themselves and between colours and shapes. In this way, no one even the artist can decide what would be the outcomes of his paintings towards suggesting new aesthetics and when and how these aesthetics in the paintings would emerge. This risky process is meant to open the painting's domain to become a tool of inquiry. Or I would rather say an open visual text that can be understood differently and upon the different viewer's positions.



2. Untitled 2003.

The drawing of mine was produced in 2003 as part of this study through which Matisse's project is always present. Colour or ink decorative arrangements have the potential to create energy enough to open t dialogue between colours shapes, ornaments repetitions and the viewers. In such an environment, the subject matter is reduced to its basic existence as not to say this is a particular woman, a particular bird, or a tree, but to say that the visual suggestions in any painting or the drawing belonging to the viewer's insight to read, interpret and decide.



3. Untitled 2004

This painting is relying on decorative arrangement through which elements are simplified to their basic representation. Arabesques are incorporated in the painting as to test their expressiveness. This is applied as to put to test Matisse's project; that is creating a relief nature based on the real one but is truly independent of it. In this the women, the fish and the birds in the paintings are lines that signify and mean by their own.



3. Two faces: ink on paper.

This drawing of mine is seeking to test Matisse's approach in using the decorative background as to integrate the main subject's details into that background. The aim is to create the drawing unity through decoration. Matisse himself has used this strategy in many paintings such as *The Painter Family* and many others paintings where rugs or heavily decorated walls give the painting its rhythm and create a sense of unity between the truly independent elements.



5. Rug 2005.

This painting is treating painting as a rug. Why not. Rugs are hanged on the walls for their decoration. They are used as mats for prayers.
The painting suggests a modern theme of two women with their daughters.



6. Untitled. 2005 When decoration is mixed with human faces there is no limit to remodel those faces as to serve the expressive quality that I always seek for my paintings. Eyes, hair, noses and mouths are used in their decorative aspect as to create harmony and meanings that would never be possible if I depict realistic women's faces.



7. Rug: 2004. Women, birds, and fishes are the main ingredients of this rug painting. All characters are reduced to their decorative beings while arabesque movements have played the role of integrating the different decorative elements to create a certain harmony that gives the painting its balance.

APPENDIX FOUR :Islamic miniatures: Three Miniatures from El Hariri's Maqamat done by Elwasiti.

The three miniatures of Elwasiti below are typical for their compositions that are based on superimposing planes above each other. A style that has been used arguably by Matisse and gives his paintings their distinctive features.

Miniature1



Miniature2



Mniature3



APPENDIX FIVE

Collecting and organizing Matisse's paintings by chronological order has the aims to locate Matisse's shift from his European style in favour of an Islamic art style that has arguably dominated the artist's works until his death. This smooth and gradual transition has arguably an educational impact where the other's traditions and own traditions are interacting with each other to suggest new aesthetics as much as new techniques and meanings. Another aim of this appendix is to provide some visual proofs of Matisse's shift through which key Matisse's paintings that reflect Islamic traces more than the other can be located and compared with other early paintings.

Such comparison would arguably show the extent of Matisse's involvement with Islamic art, which was a genuine project through which he was intentionally and purposefully trying to mingle the two traditions in the same way other branches of knowledge (e.g. sciences, philosophy) were mingled in order to produce what we might call the western traditions. In this, Matisse's endeavour has set up clear examples that knowledge has no clear-cut identity or rather identity could be sacrificed in favour of knowledge. Such a compromising concept would arguably have the potential to ease tensions between different cultures and civilizations by showing the active and valid part in those traditions or cultures.

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Blue Pot and Lemon. c. 1897. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Vase of Sunflowers. 1898. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Fruit and Coffee-Pot. 1899. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Crockery on a Table. 1900. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Male Model. 1900. Oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Arts, New York, NY, USA.

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Dishes and Fruit. 1901. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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The Luxembourg Gardens. c. 1901-2. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Studio under the Eaves. 1903. Oil on canvas. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK.

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Still Life with Vase, Bottle and Fruit. c. 1903-6. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Luxe, calme et volupté. 1904. Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

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La moulade. 1905. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

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The Window. 1905. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

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Madame Matisse, "The Green Line" (La Raie verte). 1905. Oil on canvas. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.

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A Woman Sitting before the Window. 1905. Oil on canvas. Acquavella Galleries, New York, NY, USA.

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Woman with a Hat. 1905. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

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Interior at Collioure. 1905. Oil on canvas.
Private collection.

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Portrait of André Derain. 1905. Oil on canvas.
Tate Gallery, London, UK.

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Interior with a Girl. 1905-6. Oil on canvas. The
Museum of Modern Arts, New York, NY, USA.

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Le bonheur de vivre. 1905-1906. Oil on canvas.
Barnes Foundation, Lincoln University, Merion,
PA, USA.

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Sea at Collioure. 1906. Oil on canvas. Barnes
Foundation, Lincoln University, Merion, PA,
USA.

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The Lying Nude. 1906. Oil on canvas.

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Les voiliers. 1906. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

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Self-Portrait in a Striped T-Shirt. 1906. Oil on canvas. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.

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Gypsy. 1906. Oil on canvas. Musée de l'Annonciade, Saint-Tropez, France.

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Oriental Rugs. 1906. Oil on canvas. Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, Grenoble, France.

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Marin II. 1906-7. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

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Lady on the Terrace. c. 1906. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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View of Collioure. 1906. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Dishes and Fruit on a Red and Black Carpet. 1906. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Bouquet (Vase with Two Handles). 1907. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Luxe I. 1907. Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

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Blue Nude. (Souvenir de Biskra). 1907. Oil on canvas. Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, USA.

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Music (Sketch). 1907. Oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Arts, New York, NY, USA.

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The Bank. 1907. Oil on canvas. Kunstmuseum
Basel, Basel, Switzerland.

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Blue Still Life. 1907. Oil on canvas. Barnes
Foundation, Lincoln University, Merion, PA,
USA.

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Madame Matisse: madras rouge. 1907. Oil on
canvas. Barnes Foundation, Lincoln University,
Merion, PA, USA.

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View of Collioure. 1908. Oil on canvas.
Private collection.

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Harmony in Red. 1908. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Greta Moll. 1908. Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London, UK.

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Nude (Black and Gold). 1908. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.