

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

By

Ibrahim Mansouri

M.Ed (Macquarie Uni) M.Ed.AdultEd (UTS) M.Ed. Mathematics(Newcastle Uni)

G. DipV/A (USYD, SCA) Dip Ed (USYD) DipTLOTE(UTS) Bch V/A

The Leb Uni, Bch Teaching Beirut Teachers' College

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY (UTS)



Image removed due to
copyright restrictions

***A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in education at
the University of Technology Sydney***

March 2011

I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been as a part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged in within the text.

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.

I certify in addition that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis

Production Note:

Signature of candidate
Signature removed prior to publication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The East saved us (Henry Matisse)

This Research is possible because of the support, assistance and guidance of many people and institutions:

- *I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Rosemary Johnston and my co-supervisor Dr Anne Bamford for their valuable critique, assistance, feedback, patience and flexibility. Indeed their effort and guidance, and the valuable discussions about my topic as much as the needed technical support gave me the momentum to continue in really difficult times.*
- *Also I would like to thank my students who were so helpful in feeding some of the assumptions of this study by talking about themselves and doing art works as apart of the research of this study.*
- *In addition I would like to thank all the people who gave me every assistance in Matisse's Museum in Nice and the National Library in France and whose opinions were crucial in redirecting this study.*

To my Mum Zienab Nasser who always urges me to learn.

To Layal, May, Ream and Mohamed my children colouring my life as being valuable resources for my revelation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	XIV
Rationale.....	1

Chapter One Context and Overview

1.1. Introduction: Setting the Ground.....	5
1.2 Background.....	6
1.3. Who am I.....	8
1.4. The Research questions.....	12
1.5. The Purpose of the Study.....	14
1.6. Significance of the Study.....	16
1.7. Implications and assumptions.....	17
1.8. Delimitations.....	18
1.8.1 <i>The Research</i>	19
1.8.2 <i>Matisse's Islamic art and Matisse's Islamic Experience</i>	19
1.9. Defining the Terms.....	20
1.9.1 <i>Islam and Islamic art</i>	20
1.9.2 <i>Orientalism and Orientalist Discourse</i>	21
1.9.3 <i>Orientalism upon Edward Said</i>	21
1.9.4 <i>The Orient as created by colonial power</i>	22
1.9.5 <i>The Oriental as generalized by Western Institutions</i>	22
1.9.6 <i>Latent Orientalism</i>	22
1.9.7 <i>Manifested Orientalism</i>	23
1.9.8 <i>Hybridity</i>	23
1.10. Overview.....	24

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW:
VERIFYING THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1. Introduction.....	30
2.2. Organization of literature Review.....	31
2.3. Matisse: Islamic experience in literature.....	32
2.4. Matisse: The European and the Beyond.....	35
2.5. Islamic influences in Matisse's Painting: A non-Western Reading.....	36
2.6. Cultural identity: We belong to our lived Experience.....	45
2.6.1. <i>Cultural identity : A Global Construct</i>	46
2.6.2. <i>Cultural identity as a lived expression</i>	50
2.6.3. <i>Cultural Identity as a symbolic experience</i>	51
2.7. Cultural Identity: Learning Institution environment.....	53
2.8. Intercultural Perspective.....	55
2.9. Hybrid Issues.....	57
2.10. Hybridity Definition.....	59
2.11. Hybridity as a perspective.....	62
2.12. Matisse: The Unique Orientalist.....	66
2.12.1. <i>Orientalism and its Guild</i>	67
2.12.2. <i>Said's Orientalism: different Interpretation</i>	69
2.12.3. <i>Orientalism in arts: The Colonial Aesthetics</i>	75
2.13. Conclusion.....	80

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction.....	82
3.2. Organizing Methodology.....	82
3.3. Theoretical Ground.....	84
3.4. Post modern Influence.....	86
3.5. Positioning.....	88
3.6. The Research Process: Methods.....	90
3.6.1. Data Types.....	90
3.6.2. Data Analysis.....	93
3.6.3. Data interpretation.....	95
3.6.4. Relying on Interpretation.....	96
3.7. The Participants.....	96
3.8. Implications.....	97
3.9. Artistic Paradigm.....	100
3.10. Results issues.....	102
3.11. Conclusion.....	104

CHAPTER FOUR

The Influential Aesthetics

4.1. Introduction.....	105
4.2. Islamic art Definitions and Limitation.....	107
4.2.1. Islamic art the Dilemma of definitions.....	107
4.3. Islamic art: A Brief history.....	111
4.4.The Universal Aspects of Islamic Art.....	112
4.5.The Unifying Factors: A guide to Islamic Influences in Matisse's Painting.....	116
4.6. Islamic Art and Matisse: Sharing the Borrowing and exchanging experience.....	118
4.6.1.Islamic Thoughts Platonic Thoughts we are closer than ever.....	122
4.6.2. A history of Artistic and cultural exchange and interchange.....	125
4.7. Conclusion.....	130

CHAPTER FIVE:

ISLAMIC ART:

THE TECHNICAL AND AESTHETICAL HELP FOR MATISSE

5.1. Introduction.....	131
5.2. Technical help for Matisse: Colours in Islamic art.....	132
5.3. Matisse the Fauvist and the Islamic Colours.....	134
5.4 Islamic Decorative Patterns' Influences on Matisse.....	137
5.5 Islamic Miniatures:The Influential Aesthetics.....	140
5.5.1. Islamic miniatures: Definition, History and essential aesthetics.....	141
5.6. Other Islamic Influences on Matisse.....	144
5.7 Conclusion.....	147

CHAPTER SIX
MATISSE: GOING TO THE 'UGLY' COMING WITH ITS COLOURS

6.1. Introduction.....	149
6.2. When the Other Starts to appeal: A non- Western Reading of Matisse's paintings.....	150
6.3. The Great Mohammedan Exhibitions: The Aesthetics that matter.....	151
6.3.1. The Early Islamic art exhibitions in Europe.....	152
6.3.2. Seeking the Beautiful Other.....	154
6.4. Matisse's Style: Islamic Art as an archeological Site.....	156
6.5. Surfing on An Islamic wave: a Colourful Venture.....	166
6.6. Islamic art and other European artists.....	169
6.7. Gauguin the Priest of all Cultures.....	170
6.7.1 Kandinsky a decorative neighbour within the reach.....	172
6.8. Conclusion.....	174

CHAPTER SEVEN
VENTURING INTO THE RIVAL OTHER

7.1. Introduction.....	175
7.2. Inspiring but not imitating: reproducing the self :.....	177
7.3. Matisse's Studios: Red or Pink, The Persian silk and treatise in action.....	181
7.4. Interior with Eggplants: Playing the game without reservation.....	184
7.5. An Arabic abstract pleasure: The Moorish Café	186
7.6. The Dance: Matisse the Sufi Dervish.....	189
7.7. The Music: We just have 7 sounds.....	191
7.8. On Earth or in Heaven The tempting Paradise.....	194
7.8.1 A Muslim Paradise.....	199
7.9. The painter's Family: An artistic and perhaps a cultural projection.....	201
7.10. Matisse's Conversation: dialogical Aesthetics.....	203
7.11. Matisse's Mihrab: A combination of visual pleasure and semantic signs.....	205
7.12. When the Islamic System is applied: Pleasure with and without women.....	206

7.13. Written Language has always been our failure to stay forever on the scene	208
7.14. When Matisse's Islamic experience Starts to Appeal: My Paintings.....	211
7.15. Once you adopt the Matissian approach there would be..... no limits of how to do a portrait of your wife!!	213
7.16. The Moorish Screen : When Female beauty warm our Perceptions.....	214
7.17. Zohra, the Powerful Moroccan Woman.....	216
7.18. Zohra in Yellow.....	217
7.19. Conclusion.....	219

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF MATISSE'S ISLAMIC EXPERIENCE

8.1. Introduction.....	220
8.2 Notes of a Painters:The Educational Values.....	222
8.2.1The Valuable notes:Educational Values.....	222
8.3. Making Art after Matisse: An Art Educational Program.....	232
8.3.1 Background issues related to the program.....	233
8.3. Methodology.....	236
8.4. Assessment Issues.....	237
8.4.1. Official and unofficial assessment.....	238
8.4.2. Program Example: In Selecting Content.....	241
8.4.3 Sequencing and Relating learning Activities	243
8.5 Educational Values from Matissian Perspectives.....	245
8.6 Conclusion.....	249
8.7 Samples from students works.....	250

CHAPTER NINE

RECONSTRUCTING THE SELF: Matisse's Cultural identity as an Educational Model

9.1. Introduction.....	252
9.2. Matisse's cultural identity: The early signs of a contemporary epistemology.....	253
9.2.1. Matisse's cultural identity upon his sayings.....	253
9.3. My cultural identity.....	256
9.3.1. <i>Personal experience</i>	257
9.3.2. <i>Being a Lebanese</i>	259
9.3.3. <i>Being a Muslim</i>	261
9.4 <i>Torn but alive: a contemporary approach to identity</i>	262
9.5 <i>Personal stories as a field study</i>	265
9.6 Cultural identity and educational model- Case studies.....	266
9.6.1 Case study 1.....	268
• <i>Level1 Kamel Speaks 301</i>	
• <i>Level 2 Being An Australian Kurdish Turkish</i>	268
9.6.2 Case Study2 <i>Mariam Speaks: a cultural awareness story</i> ...	269
• <i>Level 2 Being a Lebanese</i>	270
• <i>Level 3 Being an Australian Muslim Lebanese</i>	270
9.6.3 Case Study 3.....	271
• <i>Level 1 Ernesto speaks</i>	
• <i>Level2 Being a South American</i>	271
• <i>Level Being an Australian Salvadorian</i>	272
9.6.4 Case study 4.....	273
• <i>Level 1 Aung Speaks</i>	
• <i>Being an Australian Burmese</i>	273
9.7 Analysis The paradox of Cultural identity in a culturally diverse society.....	274
9.8 Analysis of cultural adaptability.....	277
9.9 Conclusion.....	280

REFERENCES.....	282
APPENDIX1.....	306
APPENDIX2.....	317
APPENDIX3.....	333
APPENDIX5.....	342

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.