

Contextualizing Stylistic Eras 1

Architecture

FIN 106 Art History + Visual Culture

For this assignment you will **select one architectural structure** from the SPAIN Field School itinerary that you will identify, research, and analyze.

- Required reading for this assignment: **Introduction to Art Historical Analysis by Dr. Robert Glass** ([Reading LINK](#))

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

- Assignment will be typed in 11 or 12 size font, 1.5 or double spaced, and 1-inch borders.
- Use the Headers that are provided in this worksheet.

PHASE 1: SELECT ARTWORK

- DUE JUNE 3 @ 11:59pm (... or earlier:)**
- Post an image of the selected work on the discussion board along with questions you have for the instructor.

PHASE 2: ROUGH DRAFT

- DUE JUNE 13 @ 11:59pm (... or earlier:)**
- The rough draft will incorporate the headers outlined in the worksheet. This phase is to gather and develop the foundational content. At this stage point-form notes are acceptable. Evaluation will be based on meeting the parameters of each section.
- The instructor will offer feedback for the final draft.

PHASE 3: FINAL EDIT

- DUE JUNE 27 @ 11:59pm**
- The content will be refined and incorporated into the FINAL PROJECT
- Evaluation will be based on meeting the parameters of each section, thoughtful engagement, and clarity of writing. Take the time to develop and articulate your answers using your own words.

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| CONTEXT What/Who/ Where/ When/ Why | /10 |
| FORMAL ANALYSIS Art as Physical Object and the Visual Experience | /10 |
| STYLISTIC ANALYSIS identify the Stylistic era(s) of the Work | /10 |
| CULTURAL CONNECTION How does it connect to the Field School theme: Southern Spain: A Meeting of Four Worlds: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Indigenous 711-1614 CE | /10 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | /5 |

CONTEXT

Outline the basic factual elements: What/Who/ Where/ When/ Why

For this section you are not going into much detail, just simply lay out the basic facts (½ page max).

What: Great Mosque of Cordoba, general look at the building and its history, focused on Islamic architecture.

Who: built originally for Abd al-Rahman I, added onto by following Caliphs. The Christians renovated and built a Cathedral in the centre with chapels along the sides.

Where: Cordoba, Spain

When: Construction begins 731, cathedral constructed 13th century.

Why: first constructed as a monument to Abd al-Rahman I's legacy in Cordoba as he would never return home to Damascus. His descendants then added on to the space to secure their legacies. Christian addition of cathedral part of the "reconquest" and converting the space to Catholicism. The original proposal was to demolish the mosque and build new cathedral on the site, however, people of Córdoba were very attached to the Mezquita, so cathedral was built within the mosque itself. Claims that King Charles V gave permission for the gothic renovations to occur, against the wishes of the city council of Cordoba.

FORMAL ANALYSIS

Art historians use visual formal analysis to describe and understand the experience of the work. This approach focuses on form rather than subject matter or historical context.

A formal analysis consists of two parts:

- description of the visual features of a work
- and analysis of their effects.

To describe visual properties systematically, art historians rely on an established set of terms and concepts. These include characteristics such as format, scale, materials, composition, and viewpoint; treatment of the human figure and space; you could also include form, line, color, light, and texture. Your description should be thoughtful but concise (1 page max).

The Mezquita features both a Muslim and Christian prayer space its combination of styles and eras create a unique space, both architecturally and historically. The space is quite large at 590 by 425 feet and the scale of it generates a sense of grandeur. There are high ceilings in the entire building, especially in the cathedral. These high ceilings draw the eye upward which contributes the feeling of magnificence and adds an element of airiness and sense of space. The mosque itself is built primarily of brick and marble in the traditional Islamic style. The cathedral and chapels are built with polished, carved stone in the Gothic style. the cathedral is oriented east-west with incredibly high ceilings to draw the eye up towards God in the Christian tradition. The Mosque, however, points the opposite direction, oriented towards Mecca. The Qibla wall is used to orient prayer towards Mecca, and the Mihrab is where the Imam and Caliph would be present to lead prayer. The columns of the mosque form aisles in which to pray all facing toward the Qibla and Mihrab. There is a very stark delimitation between the two eras here, made even more obvious by the massive stylistic differences between Islamic and Gothic architecture. The Islamic style is much more subdued and uses geometry and pattern to show beauty and divinity, whereas the Gothic style is all about grandeur and embellishments. It's also interesting that the choice was made to situate the cathedral in the centre of the existing Mosque. It feels like a very blatant power move;

from all points in the building, you can see the stamp of Christianity over the original Muslim prayer hall.

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

The visual properties of works made by an individual artist or, more generally, by artists working at the same time and place, typically have common features. Art historians call these shared characteristics style. Period divisions traditionally used for Western art are based on style, for example Romanesque, Gothic, High Renaissance.

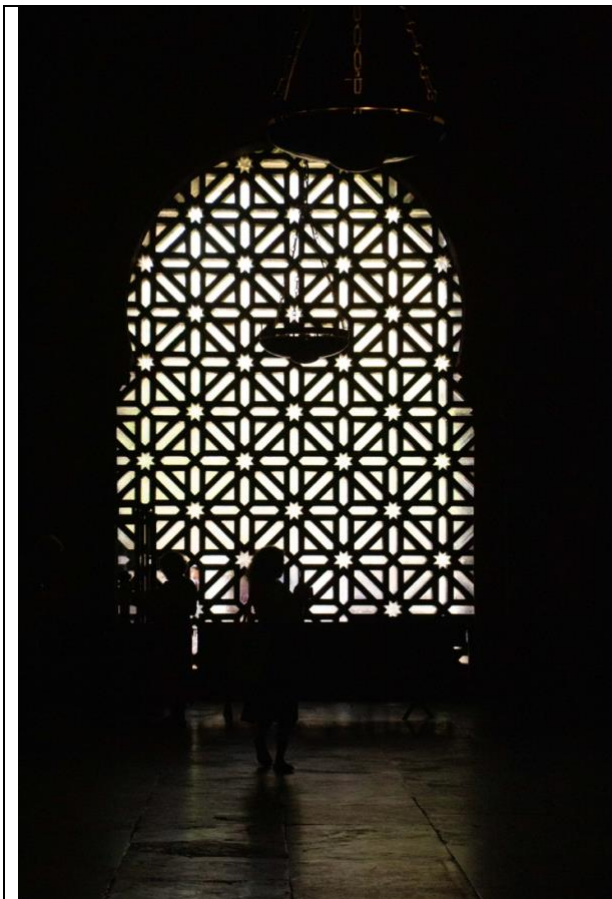
Outline the various stylistic era(s) connected to the work and provide 1-2 examples each for the style. Your answer should include 3-5 examples in total.

Each example should include:


- 1 image
- Explanation and/or definition of the feature (6-9 sentences)

Eras:

- Islamic original Mosque (8th-10th century)



Wooden privacy screens are a common element in buildings from this era. The screens allow light in without reducing privacy inside, they're common in both religious and personal spaces. As scenes or works depicting people or animals are not permitted in Islam, these screens often used geometric patterns in their designs. A common pattern uses the eight-pointed star, a

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| | <p>very important symbol in Islam. This star is seen in many uses throughout Islamic architecture.</p> |
|  | <p>A key point of design in all Mosques is the Qibla wall and the Mihrab. The Qibla wall should face towards Mecca so those praying can orient themselves towards correctly. In this location the wall doesn't quite face Mecca, it should face south-east, but instead faces straight south. The Mihrab is the inset space on the Qibla wall in which the Iman or the caliph would lead prayer from. This is the most decorated part of the Mosque to signify this section's importance. The ornamentation here also uses geometric designs, like the privacy screens. The wall decorations also include floral and scripture as design elements. Script is a common decorative element in Mosques.</p> |



The double arches in this space are a clear marker of the Islamic era. They provided excellent structural integrity and are a key feature in most buildings in this period. The way the arches in this building are designed create earthquake proofing and allowed for higher ceilings. The upper arch is semi-circular in the Roman style, while the lower arches are the more traditional to Islamic style horseshoe shape. The alternating stone and red brick create the illusion of date palm trees, common in Abd al-Rahman I's home of Damascus. The columns underneath the arches were not carved for this space, instead the builders retrieved them from older Roman and Visigoth sites and reused them here. This unique mix of so many different eras in the columns creates a very eclectic space.

- Gothic Cathedral finished in Baroque style (13th-16th century, Christian “reconquest”)



The cathedral section of the Mezquita is built in the Gothic style, with some of the finishes being closer to baroque. The high ceilings use ribbed arches to support their weight. There are also exterior elements that are common in Gothic cathedrals to provide additional structural support. These external supports are often some of the most iconic pieces of Gothic style, yet aren't seen much here, because the cathedral is built in the centre of the mosque. The large windows and significant stained-glass pieces are another element which clearly mark this space as gothic in style. The overall grandeur and ornateness of the finishes also contributes to this style.

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why does this work resonate with you?

How does the work connect to the Field School theme: Southern Spain: A Meeting of Four Worlds: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Indigenous 711-1614 CE.

(1 page min - 2-page max)

This was the first space we visited with its Muslim roots preserved throughout history, rather than being completely destroyed or knocked down to build something else, usually a church—the building touches on our themes of Islam and Christianity. The Mezquita also has tangential ties to the Indigenous in that the Cathedral portion was likely funded by wealth from trade with America. This site felt to me like an excellent literal depiction of the cultural blending in Al Andalus; there was a mixing of Islamic and gothic-Christian styles throughout the space. In some areas of the building the mixing felt almost natural and flowed well, in others it felt very disjointed and almost unsettling. I found it interesting that the catholic church/rulers chose to build the Cathedral within the Mosque rather than demolish and start fresh as they had in other locations. In my research I've found accounts that the people of Cordoba were so attached to the building that there was threat of unrest if the rulers had destroyed the Mezquita. Whatever the reason, it's incredible this building survived the "Reconquista" of southern Spain, when so many other Muslim sites were destroyed. I did find it unusual and frustrating that the Mosque isn't able to be a functional space, while the cathedral is. If you pray to Allah inside you will be removed, meanwhile the cathedral is still active and can hold mass.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Include a typed bibliography of sources consulted for the assignment content. This can be an informal format that should include the following:

- Source Title,
- Author (if available)
- URL link - for websites and eBooks
- publisher and year - for books

The vibrant visual cultures of the Islamic west, an introduction, Dr Sabahat Adil:

<https://smarthistory.org/islamic-west-introduction/>

Cordoba Mosque-Cathedral, CUNY academic commons:

<https://cordobamosque.commons.gc.cuny.edu/history/>

The History and Influence of The Great Mosque of Córdoba, Masterclass:

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/great-mosque-of-cordoba-guide>

The Great Mosque of Córdoba, Khan Academy:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/ap-art-islamic-world-medieval/a/the-great-mosque-of-cordoba>

The Great Mosque of Córdoba:

<https://pufflesandhoneyadventures.wpcomstaging.com/2017/02/08/the-great-mosque-of-cordoba/>
