

Khatam - 8 Pointed Star and the High Sophia Mosque

Islamic patterns or geometry is one of the three distinct disciplines of Islamic art the others being calligraphy and Islimi.

The eight pointed star or Khatam is used widely in Islamic architecture. In simple terms it's construction comprises two congruent squares, interposed, one of which is rotated through 45deg. The khatam can be progressively broken down in order to find the classical elements of 8-fold symmetry. Several patterns can emerge through the extensions of the parallels thereby forming a network of lines, at the intersection of which several shapes or designs emerge.



The individual shapes used in the mount border derive from the classical eight pointed star and cross pattern referred to as 'The Breath of the Compassionate' design and the image is a photograph I took inside the Hagia Sophia Mosque Istanbul.

The shapes that emerged from breaking down and extending the parallels of the Khatam were drawn, input, merged where necessary and saved to the Valiani software. Once this had been achieved I decided to use just two of the many shapes these were the 8 pointed star and cross pattern.



The mount dimension were set at 460mm x 330mm with borders top 115, bottom 125mm and sides 85 mm each and both the and reveal of the two window mounts were painted gold.

Initially I had a practice run, on scrap board, in pencil and acrylic to check on the design and once satisfied completed the whole border in pencil.

The 8 pointed star and the cross pattern were then drawn in using a split leaved ruling pen and acrylic gold paint followed by the ruled lines. The lines were spaced as follows:

1. Single line 5mm from aperture.

2. Two lines spaced 2mm apart and 12.5mm from the first line.
3. Border panel 30mm wide followed by a single ruled line.

Once the ruled lines were in place the composition for the wash for the shapes was decided. I experimented with a number of dilution of the acrylic but as this increased then the acrylic emulsion thinned and pigments became more evident to overcome this and give a more even wash I used a blotter. This produced a finish not dissimilar to using shell gold. This can be better seen on the image.



Finally, the artwork was 'T-Hinged' to the undermount.

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