

RELATING DESIGN PRINCIPLES WITH ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY BASED ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATURE IN DESIGN PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

The biological, physical and visual aspects of the environment influence life philosophy, culture, society, tradition and creativity development. However, the potential of environmental resources such as plants can contribute to the design production has not been examined adequately and analyzed systematically. There is a lack of exploration on linking the design process and idea with the Islamic principles embedded in the Islamic spirituality. This paper presents an analysis of the design process of nature (plants) and its relationship with the Islamic principles, design and qualities. The principles and terminology are discussed in relation the Islamic spirituality and the qualities of Asma' ul Husna to gain a comprehensive understanding of the creative process and the aesthetic content of design products. The study highlights the potential to interpret design works based on the internal process of human creativity. The link to the spiritual values originated from the Light of the Creator, Allah swt has been made evident in the creative process. The findings provide a process of linking the external and internal processes of designing exemplified by an analysis of nature as the source of ideas thus increases the value and content of Islamic design products.

Keywords: Nature, design process, Islamic design principles, Islamic spirituality, Asma' ul Husna

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most amazing God's creations is nature and its growth. It is important to examine the way humans observed nature in design and create systems in the creative design process. There is a need to study nature at all levels – from the function and form of biological molecules, to the structure and process of tissues and organs, to the behavior and gross anatomy of entire organisms, to complex interrelations between the numerous species of an ecosystem. In this regards, innovations in design through transformation based on the fundamental study of transformation principles have informed the significance of new and original designed products with enhanced function (Xiang et al., 2015). Design concept inspired by nature resource provides us with combinations of shapes and colors and textures. It is possible to incorporate these basic images into our design. The vision in graphic design is to promote respect for the natural world by incorporating nature into the visual design and spiritual values. This paper analyzes the transformation process of design in light of the understanding of the potential growth of nature and Islamic principles and meanings. It requires the understanding of the relevant definition of the concept of transformation in accordance with the application of design ideas into design products.

The Quran emphasizes on the importance of unity, which means Muslims are meant to be an united ummah, which is justly balanced in nature between the legal aspect of religion and the spiritual dimension, also between the internal and the external aspects of life. Through symbol design that integrates the concept of Islamic spirituality, the stability, harmony and prosperity of life could be felt and valued in accordance with the understanding and practice of the Quran, the hadith and the spirit of Asma' ul Husna (God's "most beautiful Names").

The core idea of nature growth and Islamic spirituality concept is a science that studies nature's ideas and then regenerates these designs and processes to solve human problems, with the understanding of Islamic principles. According to Zakaria & Mohammed (1994), since the beginning of life people's thinking has been affected by the natural elements and resources. In addition, the influence of the shape and character of plants have been incorporated in the development of human life and social behavior. However, the process requires the understanding of the definition of the concept of transformation by changes in applications and technology and the production process (Muslim, 2016)

Apart from the influence of culture and traditions, images of plants also serve as a symbolic element to show the meaning that could be applied in various design patterns for building, the traditional pattern for textiles, tiles and transformation process of creation of Islamic symbols in the context of cosmology. The problem relates to the inability of designers to translate the forms and shapes of nature based on an understanding of Islamic principles thus the products designed have devoid of spiritual meanings. Lack of emphasis is given to the process of translating the idea based on Islamic principles and the adaptation to the design products is weak (Muslim, 2018). This is evident in the end products of nature-based such as traditional motifs using plants and geometric patterns that are repeatedly used in various contexts such as buildings and furniture without addressing the spiritual meanings according to where the idea is applied. Therefore there is a need to examine the design and translation process to link the development of the forms and shapes to the qualities associated with Islamic spirituality.

Laleh Bakhtiar (1997: 9) has described the process in his book entitled 'Design Process of Symbolic Meaning in Islamic Sufism'. According to the analysis, the design can be translated using dynamic and static forms. The transformation of the design generated from the form of round, triangle, square and point, where the process is moving and changing shape to forms of dynamic and static. This associates the forms with the ideology and terminology in the context of Islamic Sufism. It discusses the creation of god, the level of knowledge and practice of human divinity in Islamic cosmology. The researcher also highlights his point of view on the interpretation of the design of geometric shapes based on the Islamic concept that has been interpreted according to the Quran as explained by Tarek El Bouri and Keith Critchlow (1993: 55) as follows:

“The foundation and principles by Issam El-Said in geometric design identified as 'Usul', which he conceived as the system of creativity in the Islamic artistic heritage and as the conceptual essence of al-

Mizan, the 'balance' mentioned in Al-Qur'an: “and the sky He exalted and established the balance...” (Surah Ar-Rahman: 50).

The objective of this paper is to examine the image of local plants and relating it to the Islamic design concept and principles. It includes searching for new and current methods in the design process to discover the potential of nature. The image of plants inspired by Islamic design can be observed in the design product such as tiles, lamps and furniture design. The design terminology, the process and method of application could be more effective by developing the conceptual and methodological framework based on the Quran and Asma'ul Husna. This integrated design approach has a great potential to be explored by designers and researchers in increasing the value of the product.

2. METHODS

In the production of design, a lot has been discussed on the quality of the product but there is a lack of emphasis on the processes involved, the way the design is produced and its influence in the development of Islamic design concept. In terms of the source of ideas in Islamic design characteristics, there is a gap between the design process and the sources from the Quran, the hadith and the Asma'ul Husna, in contributing to the value of the design product. Therefore, a clear and systematic design process with an adaptation of the Islamic principles the creation and production process is still unexplored by designers. In this investigation, the Islamic principles and concepts in the design process will be translated and discussed in light of the qualities associated with Islamic spirituality and Asma'ul Husna.

The content of the product design should also relate to the interpretations of Islamic spirituality and visual symbolism, which elaborated from the pillars of Islam and Faith. Through a system of a transformation process, an observational analysis of nature and environment resource as a potential elements for Islamic design ideas and inspiration to produce a functional design to suit with the current lifestyle, culture and contemporary modern living environment.

In examining the design transformation process, the criteria for the transformation process will be established through the manipulation of forms and shapes. The method is designed by selecting the most relevant design elements. The design phase includes the process of recognizing, refining and strengthening the design criteria by producing more detailed transformation processes and translation. The principles of design will be translated into Islamic spiritual concepts and values based on the beautiful qualities of Asma'ul Husna.

3. ISLAMIC DESIGN AS SPIRITUAL PROCESS AND THE MIRROR OF THE DIVINITY OF ALLAH SWT.

Islamic design should be regarded as spiritual development process. It can be reflected in the shape of circles, which have no end therefore infinite. Conceptually, these elements remind the designers and observers that Allah is infinite. Complex designs create the impression of unending repetition, and this also helps a person get an idea of the infinite nature of Allah.

The repeating units also demonstrate that in the small space we can find the infinite. A single element of the pattern implies the infinite totality. The use of each unit is part of the way that Islamic art represents nature and objects by their spiritual qualities, beyond their physical and material qualities. The repeated shapes of each design motifs often make use of plant motifs. The integration of arts and crafts into everyday life was very much the norm in the traditional Islamic world. The idea is that Islam is integral to every part of a Muslim's life and makes it beautiful, so Islamic design should influence the beauty of everyday life. The emphasis in Islamic design is on ornamentation rather than on art for art's sake.

The art of the Islamic world reflects its cultural values, and reveals the way Muslims view the spiritual realm and the universe. For the Muslim, reality begins with and centers on Allah. Allah is at the heart of worship and aspirations for Muslims, and is the focus of their lives. Islamic design focuses on the spiritual representation of objects and beings, and not their physical qualities. The Muslim artist does not attempt to replicate nature as it is, but tries to convey what it represents. This lets the designer and those who experience the art, get closer to Allah. For Muslims, beauty has always been and will always be a quality of the divine. There is a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad that says: "Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty."

A common feature of Islamic design is covered with geometric and organic constructions of design. This use of elements is thought to reflect the language of the universe and help the believer to reflect on life and the greatness of creation.

4. THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL THINKING IN ISLAMIC DESIGN

The concept aims to encourage intellectual, spiritual and philosophical thinking and the meaning of existence and macrocosmic laws, enhance the soul and nourish the spirit. Adopted in the design process and design expressions, cultural or religious symbols are perceived with their meanings. A universal version of a symbol, through the application of the digital tool

generates the simplicity of the symbolic form. Tradition, history and religion become the key elements beyond the physical design, while being in tune with the essence of nature. The design concept explores the rich heritage tradition of the Islamic world, with a particular focus on the philosophy, the concept and creative thinking. The element of lines and structure normally emphasis with the harmony, nature and qualities of beauty that complement the tradition of Islamic design civilizations. The concept incorporates with numbers of each part with the meanings of God's manifestations. An Islamic spiritual meaning that represents the tawhid, the servant of God, the submission to God, the purity, the Quest (talab), the Love (ishq), the Gnosis (ma'rifat) the Contentment (istighna), the Content, the Wonder (hayraf), the annihilation (faqr-o-fana) and others.

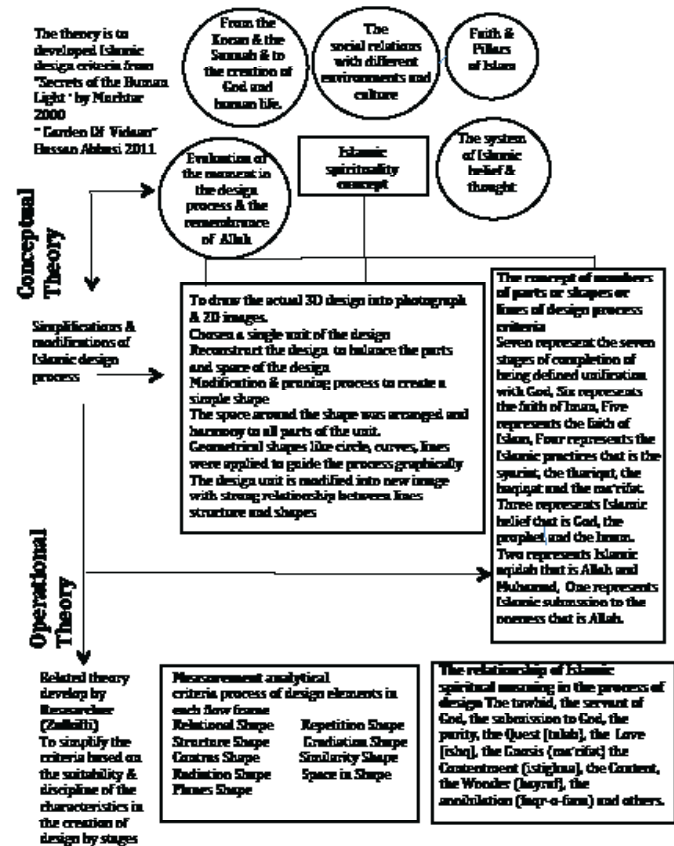


Figure 1 : Theoretical development of Islamic spirituality concept in the process of design creation

4.1 Design Concept Relating to God’s Light in Islamic Spirituality

The transformation process associated with the concept of the manifestation of the light of God towards human beings, quoted from the book of “Secrets of the Human Light ‘ by Baginda Muchtar. The link between the design process and the Light manifested in the human heart as a perfect human can be conceptualized in the following diagram (see Figure 2). The relationship can be translated in a way that the end product or the outcome of the design is not considered as the reality. The reality is embodied in the spiritual process of the human as a perfect creation. For instance, the spiritual process of the intention is a manifestation of God’s creation that reflected as the design intention (the pre-process towards the goal of the design process). The light of the heart is the light flow of ideas that are reflected as the source flow from the origin of the image or design output. The light of the movement is the implementation of the development of the design process. The light of the soul captures a sense of feeling that is reflected in the appreciation of design (the beauty and aesthetic). Thus, the light of the mind is to translate action and the results are reflected in the creativity of design.

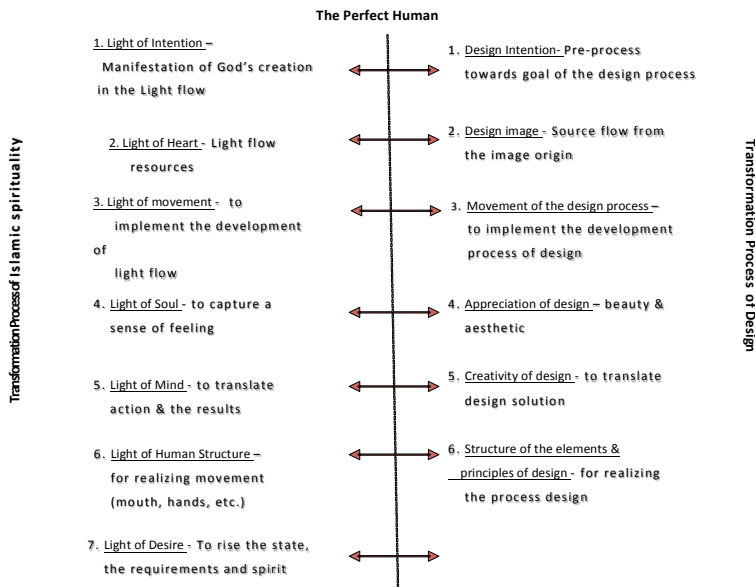


Figure 2 : Linking Islamic spirituality with design transformation process

4.2 The qualities of Asma’ul Husna

The qualities of Asma’ ul Husna are experienced when a human soul absorbs the higher qualities of God’s creations and transform the qualities in a design creation. The following tables summarize the relationship developed as a result of the translation of the design elements with the qualities of the Asma’ul Husna

Table 1 (a) to (d) : Linking the design elements and principles with qualities of Asma’ul Husna: The Structure

(a)

The basic structure - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Musowwir			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The Basic Structure	The pillars of Islam	Islamic foundation	Al-Musowwir - المصور (The One who forms His creatures in different pictures)

(b)

The balance structure - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Hakam			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The Basic Structure	The balance of Ritual Practice	Islamic Balance	Al-Hakam - الحكم (The Arbitrator, The Judge)

(c)

Structures that Merge/Separation - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Waarith			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
Structures that Merge/Separation	The relations among Muslims	Merges	Al-Waarith - الوارث (The One whose Existence remains)

(d)

The Basic Structure - Absorbing the qualities of Az-Zohir			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The external lines	The relations of physical practices	The outer appearance	Az-Zohir الظاهر (The Manifest)

Table 2 (a) to (d) : Linking the design elements and principles with qualities of Asma'ul Husna: The line, the form and basic structure

(a)

The Basic Structure - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Baathin			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The internal lines	The relations of spiritual practices	The inner spirit	Al-Baathin - الباطن (The Hidden)

(b)

The Flow of Lines - Absorbing the qualities of Ar-Roqib			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The flow of lines	The journey to God	The flow of Rivers	Ar-Roqib - الرقيب (The One that nothing is absent from Him. Hence it's meaning is related to the attribute of Knowledge)

(c)

The Connecting Lines - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Waarith			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The connecting lines	The journey to God	Lineage of Faith	Al-Waarith - الوارث (The One whose Existence remains)

(d)

The Dominant Form - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Qahhar			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The dominant form	The truth and honest in Islamic principles	Islamic control	Al-Qahhar - القهار (The Dominant)

Table 3 (a) to (d) : Linking the design elements and principles with qualities of Asma'ul Husna: The structure, form, color and texture

(a)

The Function of Form - Absorbing the qualities of As-Somad			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The function of form	The faith in destiny and the divide decree	The function of destiny	As-Somad - الصمد (The Master who is replied upon in matters and reverted)

(b)

The Primary Colors - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Musawwir			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The primary colors	The reflection of unity among human beings	The reflection of colors	Al-Musawwir - المصور (The Organizer, The Designer)

(c)

The Message/Concept of Elements - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Halim			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The Message/Concept of Elements	The guidance of Quran and Sunnah	The elements of messages	Al-Halim - الحليم (The One who delays the punishment for those who deserve it and then He might forgive them. The Gentle. The most patient, the Clement)

(d)

The Secondary Colors - Absorbing the qualities of Al-Barr			
2D Design Terminology	Islamic Symbolism	Islamic Principles	Absorbing the qualities of Asma' ul Husna
	Interpretation of Pillars of Islam and Faith		
The Secondary Colors	The reflection of unity among human beings	The elements of messages	Al-Barr - البار (The Benefactor, The Beneficent, The Pious)

5.THE ART OF WISDOM, THE DESIGNER AND THE DESIGN PROCES

The art of wisdom & Islamic principle in design process

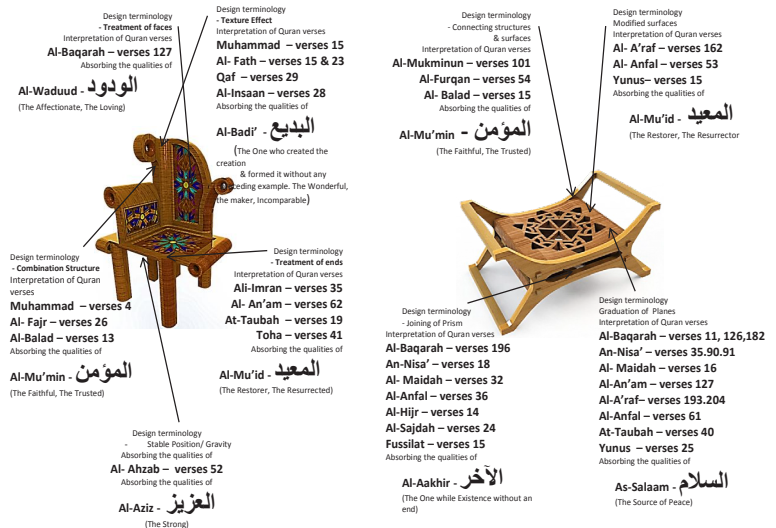


Figure 3: The Art of Wisdom: -Translating Islamic Principles in Design Process

Evaluation of the design process and the remembrance of Allah

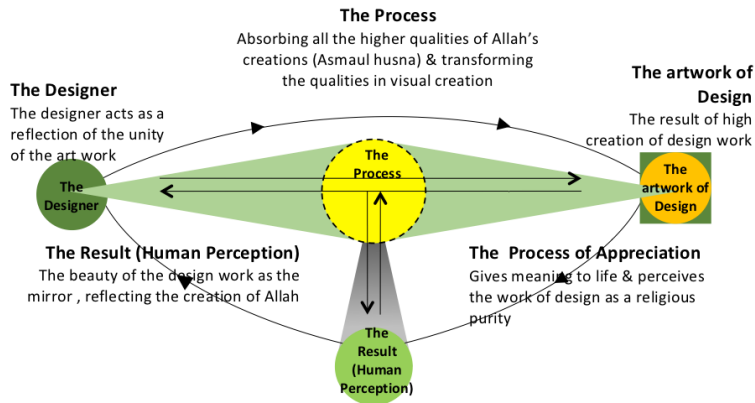


Figure 4: Linking design process, the designers and the Remembrance of Allah swt

Table 5(a) to (d) : Designers as a reflection of the higher qualities of Allah's creation

a)

The spirit of Seeing Al-Basir البصير The All-Seeing, The One who Sees all things that are seen by His Eternal Seeing without a pupil or any other instrument.				
Purity practice of spiritual zikir	Amount of practicing	Absorbing the higher qualities of Allah 's creations	The process of spiritual practice	The outcome - Islamic human perception
Al-Basir البصير	7 Times of Spiritual practice of 'Al-Basir' daily	The spirit of Seeing	The work of design as a religious purity	The beauty of seeing spiritually and enhance the aesthetics of the design work as the mirror, reflecting the creation of Allah

b)

The spirit of Hearing As-Samik السميع The All-Hearing, The Hearer, The One who Hears all things that are heard by His Eternal Hearing without an ear, instrument or organ.				
Purity practice of spiritual zikir	Amount of practicing	Absorbing the higher qualities of Allah 's creations	The process of spiritual practice	The outcome - Islamic human perception
Al-Samik السميع	7 Times of Spiritual practice of 'As-Samik' daily	The spirit of Hearing	The work of design as a religious purity	The sense of hearing spiritually and enhance the aesthetics of the design work as the mirror, reflecting the creation of Allah

c)

The spirit of Saying Al-Muhaimin المهيمين The Protector, The One who witnesses the saying and deeds of His creatures.				
Purity practice of spiritual zikir	Amount of practicing	Absorbing the higher qualities of Allah 's creations	The process of spiritual practice	The outcome - Islamic human perception
Al-Muhaimin المهيمين	7 Times of Spiritual practice of 'Al-Muhaimin' daily	The spirit of Saying	The work of design as a religious purity	The beauty of saying spiritually and enhance the aesthetics of the design work as the mirror, reflecting the creation of Allah

d)

The spirit of Smell - Al-Waajid الواجد The Perceiver, The Finder, The Rich who is never poor. Al-Wajid is Richness.				
Purity practice of spiritual zikir	Amount of practicing	Absorbing the higher qualities of Allah 's creations	The process of spiritual practice	The outcome - Islamic human perception
Al-Waajid الواجد	7 Times of Spiritual practice of 'Al-Waajid' daily	The spirit of Smell	The work of design as a religious purity	The sense of smell of fragrance spiritually and enhance the aesthetics of the design work as the mirror, reflecting the creation of Allah

From the analysis, it can be summarized that the Interpretation of design can be interpreted in various forms based on different beliefs and the dominant principles applied. Interpretation of a design depends on the level of understanding and a way of assessing it. To create innovation, designers can translate their skills in the beautiful and divine elements from religious design and culture. The knowledge of design creation has been linked with the appreciation in the remembrance of Allah creation. The qualities of Asma' ul Husna can be associated with various principles such as the beauty of seeing spiritually, sensing the smell of fragrance spiritually and enhancing the aesthetics of the design work as the mirror, reflecting the creation of Allah swt and reflected in the colors, balance and the designed elements. The design process should be regarded as a spiritual process that directly linked to the qualities manifested from the Islamic spirituality. The aesthetic quality of the design should be internalized as the manifestation of the beauty of Allah swt as the sole creator. Thus the link between the internal and the external occurs in the process of designing and interpretation of the design will follow according to the spirit of the elements explored in the design process.

With regards to the spiritual process, in order to achieve the Islamic value, Muslim designers need to practice spiritual zikir and absorb all the higher qualities of Allah's creations (Asma' ul Husna) and transform the qualities in design creation. This appreciation will give meaning to life and perceive the value of works in design as a religious purity. The value of the products can be assessed based on the level of interpretation and closeness to spiritual qualities associated with the elements based on the transformation of nature as the source of reference.

6. CONCLUSION

The study analyzes the design process relating to nature and Islamic concepts. Based on the natural resources and Islamic understanding, the value of technology, cultural and aesthetic is built. The study has established a link between the processes of production and creativity of nature-based designs and Islamic spirituality. Islamic designers should translate their work based on the variance of the reality that combines artistic vision and philosophical thought, scientific and aesthetic values. There is a meaningful relationship between the design process and spiritual meanings and experience. The internal process of human creativity should be linked to the spiritual values originated from the Light of the Creator, Allah swt. The findings provide a potential link between the external and internal process of designing exemplified by an analysis of nature as the source of ideas thus increases the value and content of the end product.

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