

Studio Saturdays: 8-Point Star Tile

Rollins
Museum
of Art

Harem #1 by Lalla Essaydi

Lalla Essaydi

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2009

C-41 print on aluminum

60x40 in print



LIST OF MATERIALS

- Wood square
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Colored pencils

Lalla Essaydi is a contemporary artist whose work focuses on her identity as a woman, a Muslim, a Moroccan, and an artist. “Contemporary” means things happening right now in the present, but it can also relate to things that happened in the past ten to thirty years. When we say “contemporary artist,” that means an artist who is making art right now, or was making art within that time.

Lalla Essaydi’s photography centers on Islamic calligraphy— a visual art involving writing words in a decorative way— the female body, and the importance of architectural space in Islamic culture. In her art, Essaydi shows large interior spaces covered with patterns, placing women within them as if they are trapped. Essaydi states that in Arab cultures, public spaces, like markets and streets, are seen as places for men, and private spaces, like the home, are seen as places for women. By putting her female subjects in one small area of the larger spaces she is photographing, Essaydi suggests that they are trapped by the rules of men, represented by the walls and architecture.

In Islamic culture, calligraphy, geometric shapes, and floral or plant designs are used for the decoration of buildings. In many Islamic communities, this is partly because images of humans and animals are not allowed. This practice is called aniconism. Islamic art instead turned to words, flowers, and shapes to add beauty to buildings. Patterns of stars, circles, squares, and leaf or vine shapes are common, and the patterns often weave together with no clear beginning or end. A common pattern in Moroccan design is the eight-pointed star, which is made by two overlapping squares.

For today’s activity, we will be focusing on the geometric designs found within Moroccan tiles by creating our own mosaic-inspired wooden coaster! Using the eight-pointed star as a jumping-off point, you can take inspiration from the tiles and colors in Lalla Essaydi’s photograph or create your own design using calligraphy, flowers and leaves, and other shapes. Imagine if your design was spread across many tiles to cover a room—would each tile be its own design, or would they weave together and connect? Keep that idea in mind when creating your drawing.

THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

- 1) If you could only decorate your room with words, what would you write?
- 2) Will your tile be monochromatic or multicolored? Why?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Measure the edge of your wood square with a ruler and find the middle of it. Draw a horizontal line going across the center.
2. Measure the other edge of your wood square with a ruler and draw a vertical line going across the center of the square.
3. Line the ruler diagonally to the top and bottom corners of the square. Draw a line to connect them. Repeat this on the opposite side to create two diagonal lines.
4. Draw a circle large enough for the edges to touch the side of the square. You can trace the bottom of a large cup to create a perfect circle.
5. Find the corner point where the circle meets the diagonal line. Use the ruler to connect it to another meeting point and draw a line. Repeat these steps to create a square inside of the circle.
6. Find the corner point where the circle meets the horizontal and vertical lines. Use the ruler to connect it to another meeting point and draw a line. Repeat these steps to create a diamond inside of the circle.
7. For this next step you may choose how you want to erase your lines around the 8-point star. I'm erasing the circle and keeping the diagonal lines to create a diamond shape in the center.
8. Use colored pencils to color the wood square.