

Gillian Turnham: Artist CV

Peterborough, Ontario

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Gillian Turnham emerged from NSCAD in 2007 as a fine-metalsmith. She refined and expanded her practice in the period that followed, working with wood, stone and hand-pierced metal to create miniature sculptural works that investigated elements of structure and traditional pattern. Building on her interest in traditional ornamental design, her attention turned towards tessellating geometric patterns. Since 2019 Turnham's work has explored ever more complex patterns from the Islamic tradition. She has received training and mentorship from some of the world's premiere educators in Islamic geometric design. Her most recent work transects geometric beauty with its underlying mathematical complexity, most notably in her ongoing 'Geometric Deconstruction' series, in which the underlying mathematical properties are revealed within the completed designs. Gillian spent three years in southern Spain where she was immersed in the study of the Islamic geometric tradition, creating hand sewn tapestries, two-dimensional and three-dimensional commissioned works, as well as a series of mechanical clocks that incorporate traditional Islamic geometric patterns with other tessellating forms. She continues her practice in Southern Ontario, with regular exhibitions, written articles, a radio series, geometric pattern workshops, and commissioned works in a variety of media.

Education:

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- **Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School** - (1999-2001) Arts Program: Specialised in Visual Art
 - **NSCAD University** - (2003 - 2007) BFA, Interdisciplinary. Graduated with a solo exhibition at Anna Leonowens Gallery (Me and the Me Generation, 2007). Additional solo exhibition at The Khyber Center For The Arts (Hunter and Me, 2007), and multimedia video premiere at the Toronto Images Festival (The Perfect, 2006)
 - **On-site study** of Islamic pattern in Granada and Seville. Special focus on designs from the Almohad palace known today as the Real Alcazar de Sevilla. (2017-2020)
 - Online study with **Richard Henry** (British Museum; Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Art; Art of Islamic Pattern) and **Adam Williamson** (Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Art; Art of Islamic Pattern): practical tuition in traditional Islamic geometric and biomorphic constructions.
 - Ongoing study and mentorship from **Ameet Hindocha** (University of the Arts London; Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Art) and **Alan Adams** (Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Art): advanced Euclidean analysis of Islamic rosette and star patterns

Publications:

- **“Beauty, Goodness, Truth”** – creator, editor and host of a podcast series on the cultural and symbolic significance of Islamic art throughout history and today. This production is the result of an artist residency provided by The Community Radio Fund of Canada and Trent Radio; Trent Radio and online, Jan 2022 – ongoing:

<https://gillianturnham.com/pages/podcast>

- **“Poetry of Pattern: Reading the Significance of Geometry in the Islamic World”** – Author of a full length article on the religious symbolism of Islamic geometric patterns; Muslim Perspectives, April 2022:

<https://www.muslimperspectives.com/poetry-of-pattern-reading-the-significance-of-geometry-in-the-islamic-world/>

- Front and back cover of **“Sufi Lines: Reflections for Your Spiritual Journey”**, a print and kindle publication by Mohammed Ali Vakil and Mohammed Arif Vakil, India, 2022

- Several artworks (incl. inside cover) featured in **“Profound Patterns”**, a print publication by Adam Williamson, United Kingdom, 2022

Workshops:

Gillian teaches Islamic geometric pattern workshops to adults through Jason Wilkins Factory and Atelier Ludmilla Gallery in Peterborough, Ontario. In these sessions, students learn basic ruler and compass skills, and create a finished pattern unit to tessellate and/or paint in watercolour paints. Participants also gain insights into the symbolic context and scope of the tradition.

Gillian has additionally begun teaching in schools, presenting and running workshops to Arts Program students at TASS Collegiate, and is scheduled as guest lecturer and workshop host for the second year Euclidean Geometry students at Trent University in Spring 2023.

Recent Exhibitions:

DesignTO Festival - Artscape Gallery, Toronto (January 2023)

“A Winter’s Market” - Atelier Ludmilla Gallery (December 2022)

“Earth Measure” - Acme Art Gallery (October 2022)

“Six and Growing” – Erring at King George; Public Energy (May 2022)

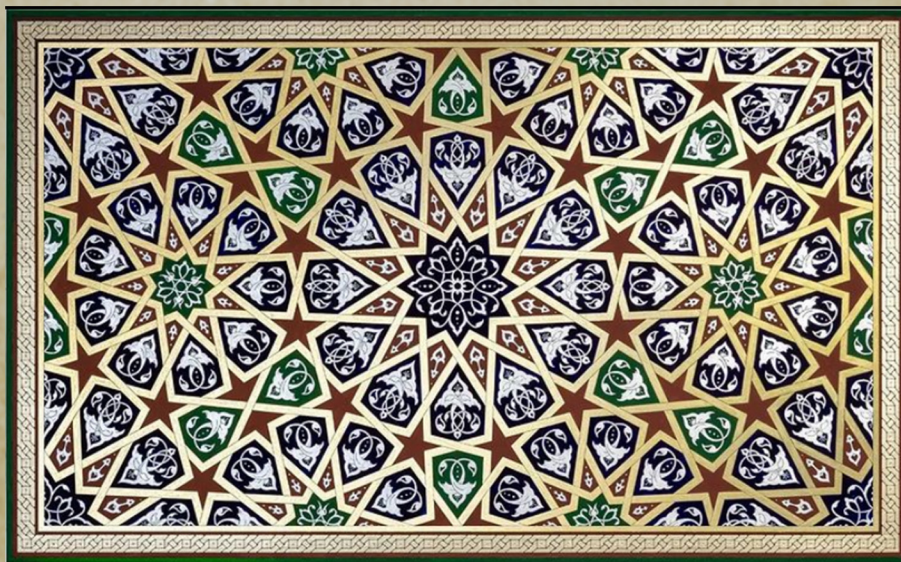
“Supernumerary” - Atelier Ludmilla Gallery (August 2021)

“Sevilliana” - ACME Art and Sailboat Company (June 2019)

Recent Commissions:

- “Fragrance of Jannah” Custom designed functional incense burner (hand-pierced brass, hand-pierced nickel silver, hand-worked copper 6”x6”x4”) - 2022: Cambridge Islamic Art Foundation (cambridgeislamicart.com)
- “Hyperbolic Eight” (gouache on watercolour paper, 38”x28”) - 2021: Private client
- “Breath of the Compassionate” (gouache on watercolour paper 18”x12”) - 2021: Private client
- “Sultan’s Ceiling” (gouache on watercolour paper, 30”x20”) - 2021: Private client
- “Seljuk Central 12” (gouache on watercolour paper, 36”x24”) - 2021: Private client
- “Revolving 12s” Geometric timepiece (laser-cut wood and copper, 14”x14”) - 2021: Private client.

Further commissions available upon request.



Seljuk Twelve, 2021, private collection