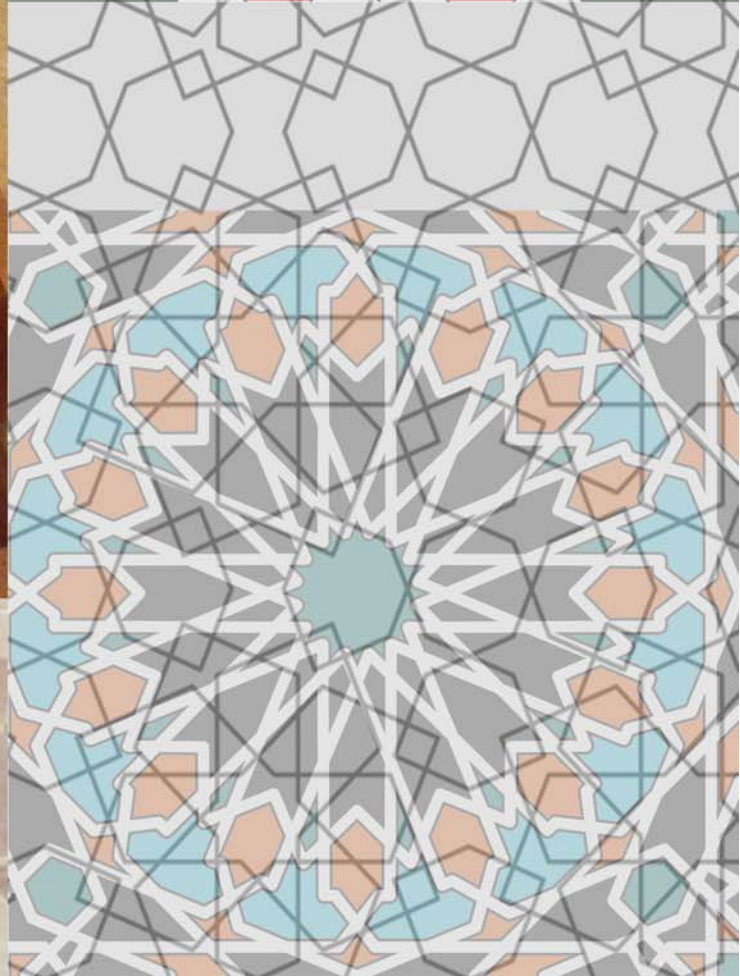
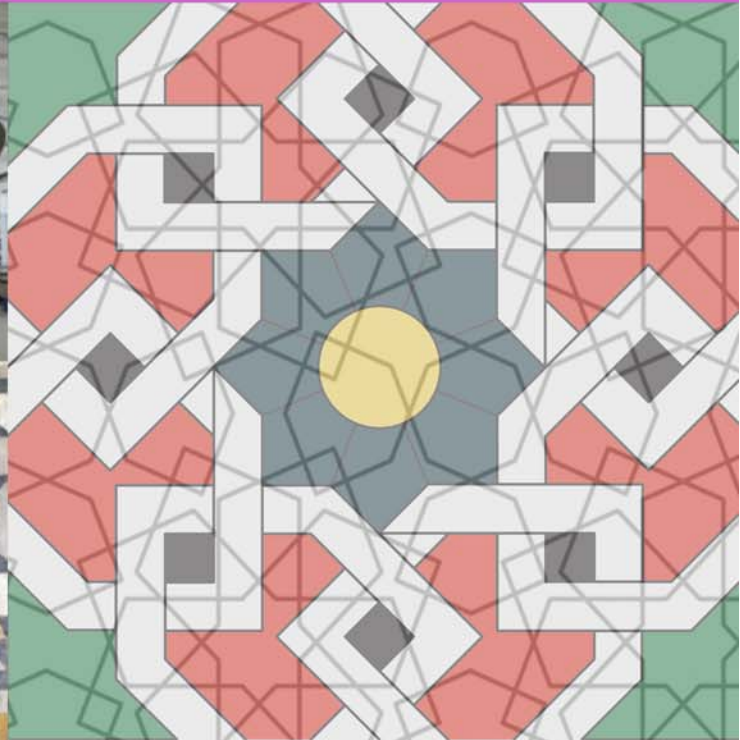




Blackwork Journey ***Inspirations*** ***Islamic Floors***



Blackwork Journey Inspirations - Islamic Floors

Introduction

I would like to introduce you to one of the many areas that have inspired some of my designs and embroideries.

Across many countries and cities of the world you will often find some wonderfully designed floors within their historic buildings, ranging from early Christian pavements in basilicas, temples and cathedrals, through to medieval tiles and majestic mosques and temples. Whilst it is easy to ignore the flooring when visiting such buildings, they often play an important part in the overall character of the architecture and I have been very fortunate in visiting many buildings in different parts of the world where the flooring has made a direct impact on my senses and influenced my work as a designer and embroiderer.

What is flooring?

Flooring is, of course, the general term for a permanent or loose laid covering to provide a walking surface and the materials commonly used include wood, ceramic tile, stone, terrazzo and marble, whilst loose laid coverings include carpets and rugs.

Geometry in flooring

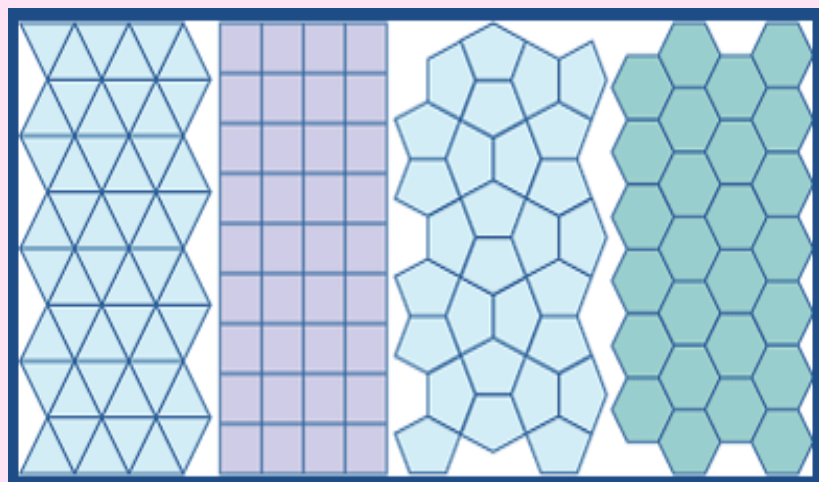
In countries where the Islamic influence is significant, geometry is often used to create the most inspiring embroidery designs quite easily.

Islamic designs have three basic characteristics and their geometric patterns can often be generated by a compass and ruler;

1. Most patterns are made of a small number of repeated geometric elements

The simple forms of the circle, squares and straight lines are the basis of many of the patterns and these elements are combined, duplicated, interlaced and arranged in intricate combinations.

True tessellations have no fillers between the shapes



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Contrast the ornate walls of the Harem in Istanbul with the simple geometry of the floor!

Most patterns are typically based on one of two types of grid - one composed of equilateral triangles, the other of squares.

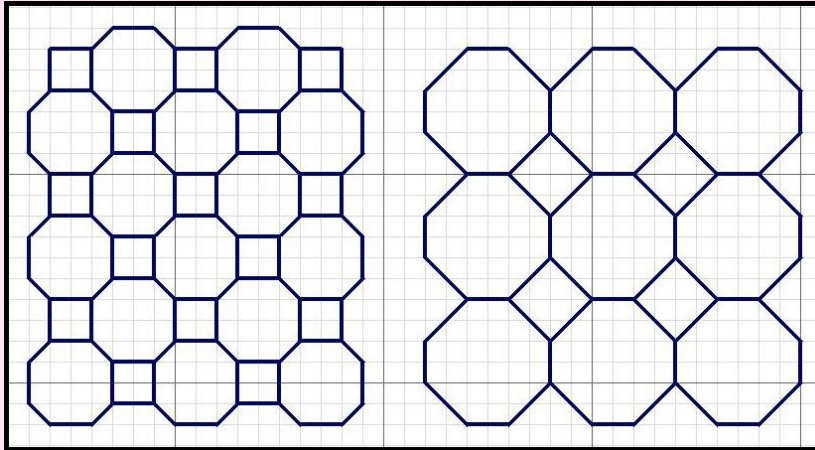
However, there is a third type of grid, composed of hexagons, which is a variation on the triangle. This type of construction is called a tessellation. They radiate out from a central space and are repeated as long as there is surface left to fill. Tiled floors, such as this one in Istanbul (above) are tessellations, just waiting to become blackwork designs! Once the outline is stitched, suitable motifs can be inserted. However, they must not overlap or have gaps between them if they are to be true tessellations.

Not all regular shapes can be tessellated to cover a plane surface. Some shapes will require the addition of filler pieces in order to create a complete covering. Shapes with three, four, five and six sides are the only regular shapes that will tessellate by themselves and the hexagon is, of course, comprised of six triangles.

2. They are two-dimensional. Islamic designs often have a background and foreground pattern.

3. They are not designed to fit within a frame.

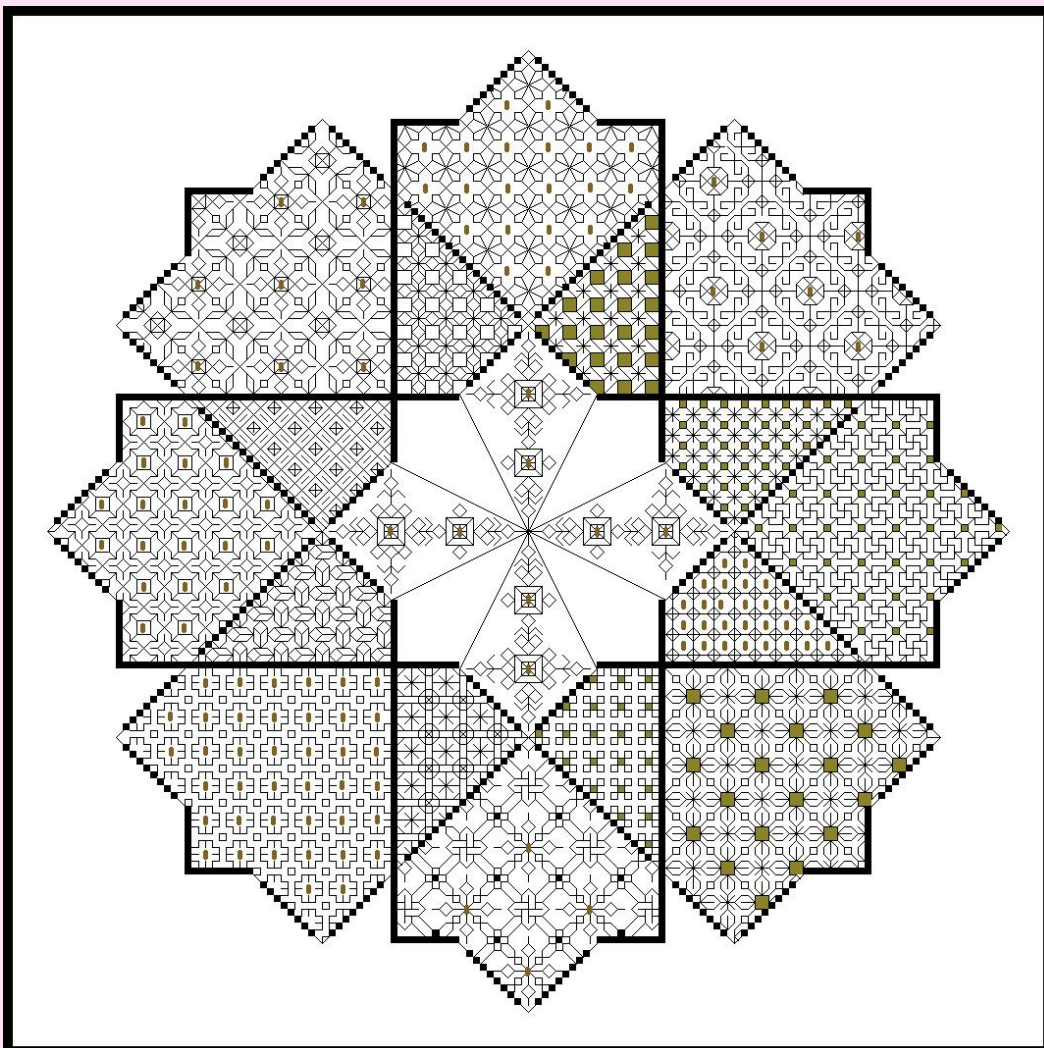
Blackwork Journey Inspirations - Islamic Floors



Octagons make ideal shapes for simple blackwork designs, but they are not true tessellations because they have fillers between the blocks.

There appear to be circles in many of the designs and approximations of the circle can be seen in geometric patterns, but these circles are formed from the straight sides of polygons rather than an actual drawing of a circle.

CH0070 Star Challenge consists of interlocking shapes which appear to fit inside a circle, but the circle is indicated rather than actually drawn.

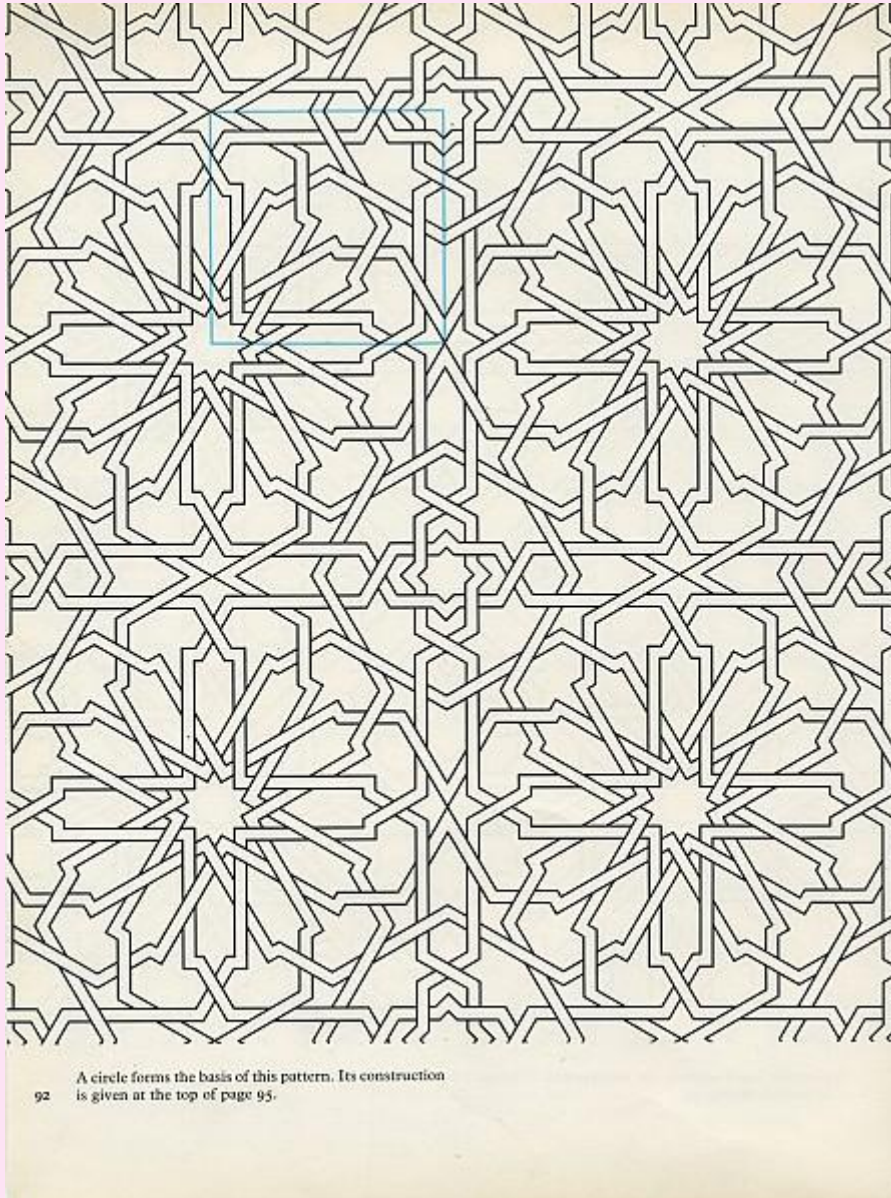


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Pattern in Islamic Art

David Wade 1975

This book was especially helpful in understanding how the Islamic geometric designs are constructed and it gave me a greater understanding of what I was actually looking at and how to interpret the way the patterns are constructed before I attempted to embroider them.



I saw many intricate architectural designs in Spain and the Middle East and occasionally found ones being created in new buildings using traditional techniques, by skilled craftsmen who had developed skills that had been passed down the generations..

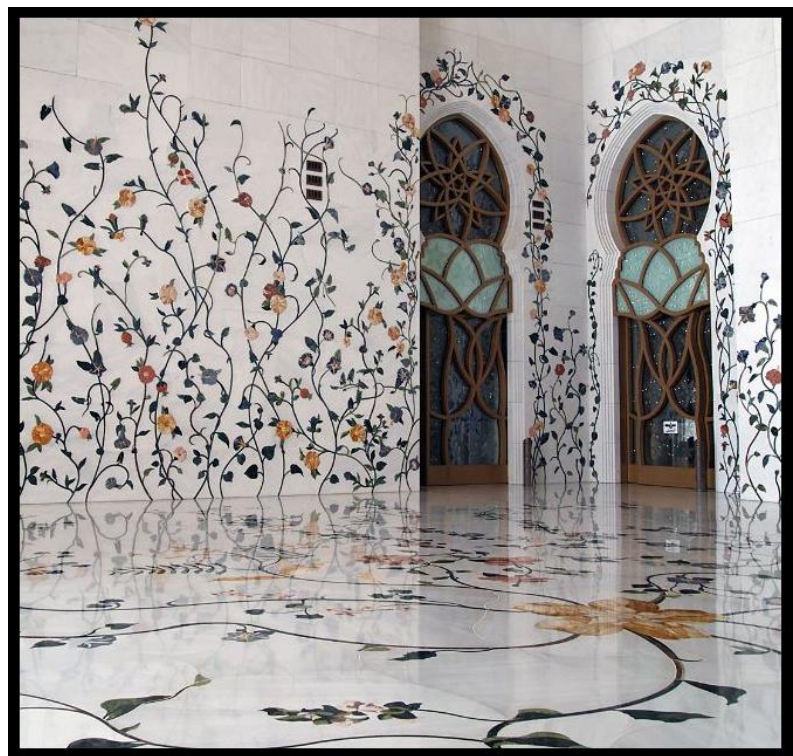
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This craftsman was creating decorative inlays in semi precious stones for one of the marble floors in the Grand Sheik Zayid Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

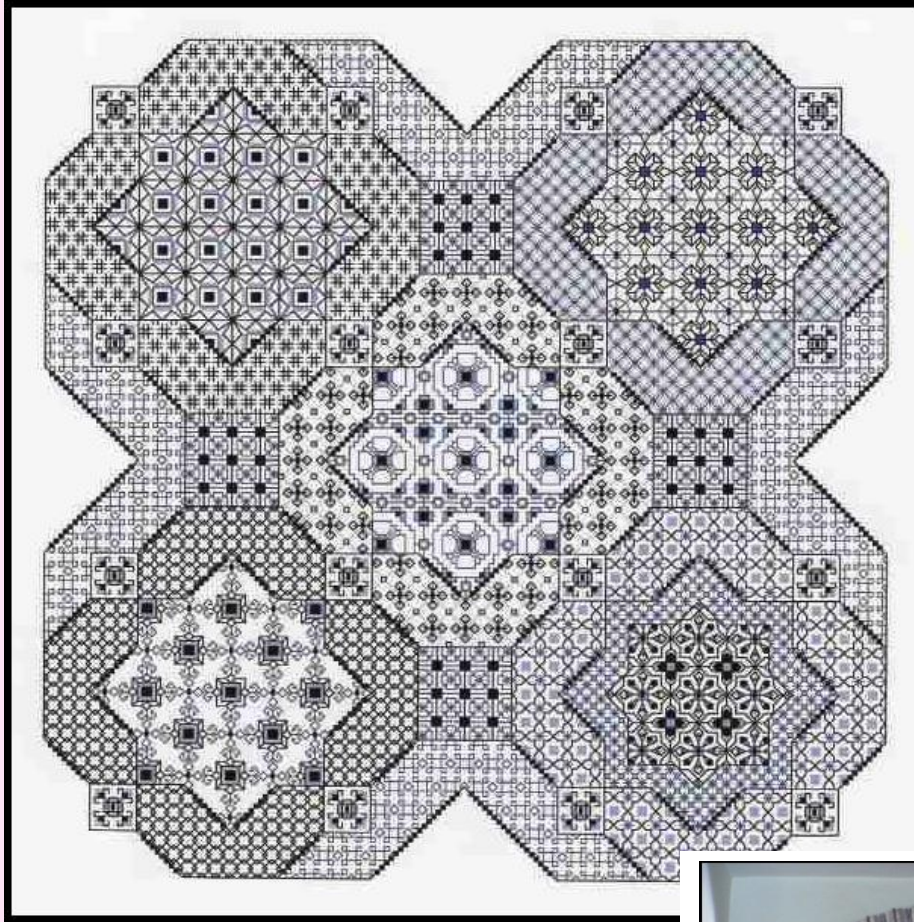
The floor was inlaid with arabesque designs of flowers and leaves which are also a common feature of Islamic architecture.

Contrast this with the cool marble floor in the Emirates Palace Hotel in the United Arab Emirates



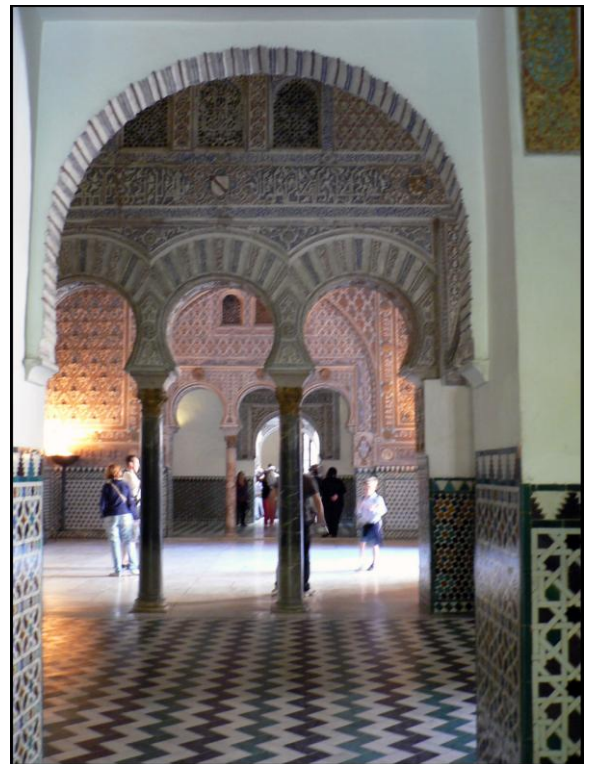
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The Great Mosque of Cordoba in Spain is an example of where decorative brickwork is integral to the design. The eight-pointed star is another common motif in Islamic architecture, often found in tile work and other media. Star patterns are extremely complex when the outer points are joined together and other intersections connect in a systematic way. The Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain is a famous example of repeating motifs which occur in the tile and stucco decoration. Hexagons appear in Islamic architecture in various shapes, often in marble floors.

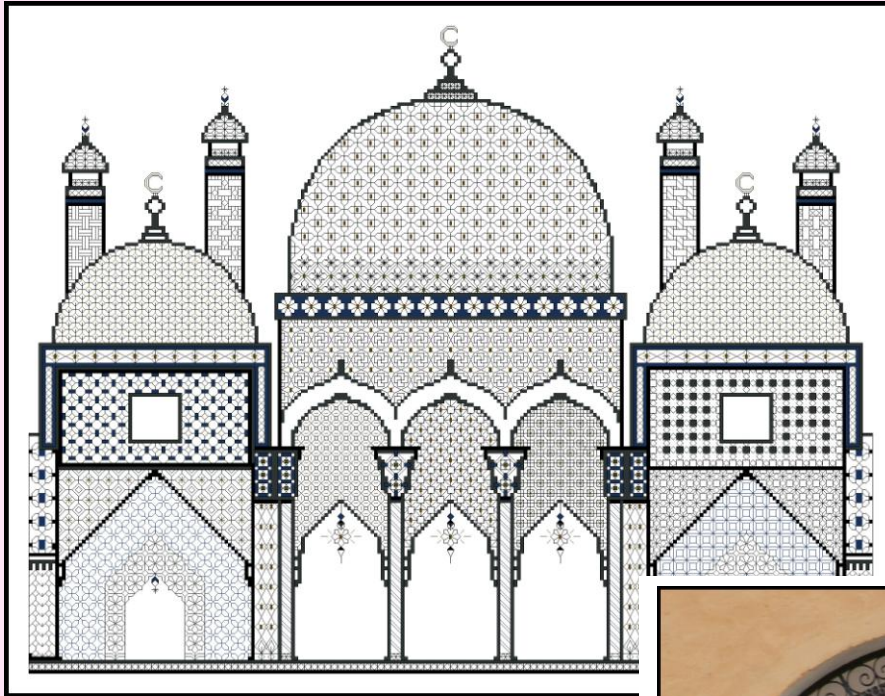


*CH0074 Evolution
Viewed from above
this could be a tiled
floor in an
important building.*

*From the elegance and beauty of the Alhambra
to a simple ironwork gate leading to a tiled
courtyard, inspiration is everywhere if one is
looks closely!*

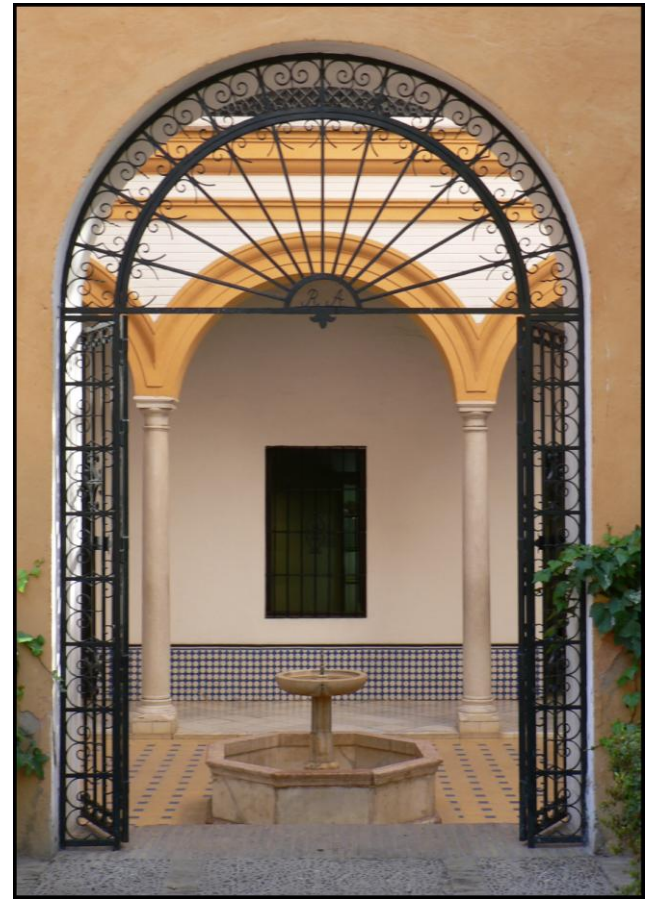


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*CH0096 Andalusia –
from the simple to the
complex, embroidery
covers all aspects of
design!*

CH0218 Bukhara



*Look around and see what inspires you!
Happy stitching,*

Liz