

Orientalism in Architecture and Decorative Arts

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial covers Orientalism in architecture and the decorative arts. By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to identify and define today's key terms, describe the stylistic elements of the Moresque and Chinoiserie, and identify examples of Orientalism in architecture and the decorative arts. This will be accomplished through the exploration of:

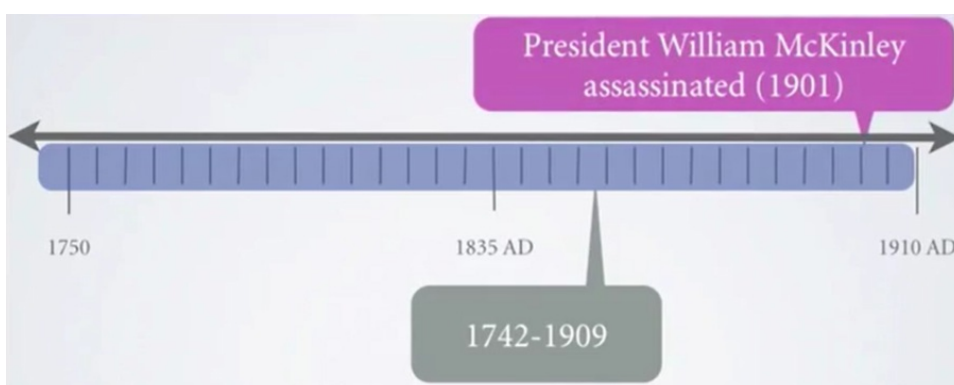


BIG IDEA

Orientalism in architecture and the decorative arts typically refers to a Moresque stylistic influence in architecture and the practice of Chinoiserie in the decorative arts.

1. Period and Location: Orientalism in Architecture and Decorative Arts

The artwork and architecture that you will be looking at today dates from between 1742 and 1909 and focuses geographically on Sofia, Bulgaria; Paris, France; and Vienna, Austria.



2. Orientalism in Architecture

The term “Orientalism” refers to the influence of the Middle Eastern and Asian—specifically China and India—esthetic on the art and architecture of Europe. Distinctly, **Moresque** refers to a specific style used by the

Moors, a Muslim culture that existed in Northern Africa and in parts of Spain. Elements of **Moorish** architecture were borrowed from **Islamic** architecture, which in turn borrowed elements from Byzantine churches.

A good example of Moorish architecture can be seen in the Moorish Revival style of the Sofia Synagogue, shown below, which is a Jewish temple in Sofia, Bulgaria.



Sofia Synagogue

1909

Sofia, Bulgaria

Notice the Moorish architectural elements detailed in the following photographs, such as the **arched windows**:



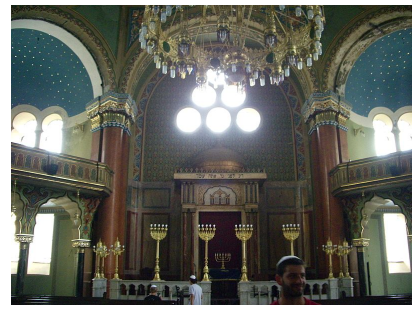
The Moorish arch window, the keyhole-shaped arch



The squashed or "onion-shaped" dome



The striped red-and-white motif that is reminiscent of a very similar motif in the Great Mosque of Cordova, Spain, for example



The ornamentation styles one would see on the inside of Byzantine churches

Moorish elements such as the towers or **minarets** may not necessarily be apparent here, but these can be seen in other buildings inspired by Moorish or Islamic architecture, such as the Royal Pavilion of Brighton, seen below. This building is in Southern England, which is part of the United Kingdom.



Royal Pavilion of Brighton

1787-1823

Brighton, United Kingdom



TERMS TO KNOW

Moresque

A synonym for an Islamic decorative style of arabesque or interlaced patterns observed in Mannerism.

Moorish

Relating to the Muslim people of North Africa; also a style of Muslim architecture in Spain.

Islam

The religious faith of Muslims with the basic principle of absolute submission to Allah.

Arched Window

A feature of Islamic architecture where the window is characterized by a rounded top.

Minaret

A tower attached to a mosque, and used for calling people to prayer.

3. Orientalism in the Decorative Arts

Moresque architecture within the context of Orientalism can also be seen as influencing the decorative artwork of the northern Mannerists and religious artifacts of Christianity, particularly in the implied symbolism and the use of arabesque, vegetal pattern motifs that became particularly influential during the mid-1800s.

Along with this, the idea of Chinoiserie developed, a French word essentially meaning Chinaesque, or China-like. **Chinoiserie** in the **decorative arts** was extremely popular.

Elements of Chinoiserie extended into painting, such as those depicting scenes of the Orient interior and exterior environments. You can see this influence in this Rococo painting by François Boucher, depicting his interpretation of a Chinese garden.



The Chinese Garden by François Boucher

1742

Oil on canvas

Chinoiserie can also be seen in landscape arts and architecture of English gardens, such as the Chinese Pagoda at the Royal Botanical Gardens in England.



DID YOU KNOW

Even modern-day dinnerware was influenced by Chinoiserie. Think of this when your mother asks you to bring out the good china at Thanksgiving!

However, Chinoiserie ceramics extended beyond dinnerware and teacups. It included pottery as well, such as **Delftware**, which is a specific type of **tin-glazed pottery** from the Netherlands, and imitation lacquerware. “Imitation” is the key word here. These were not authentic examples of Chinese goods but rather faithful imitations of Chinese productions with Oriental-inspired motifs. A production facility in Vienna was one the largest producers of this type of Chinoiserie pottery, such as this example from 1799. Artificial lacquerware was intended to look like real lacquerware. It was a very popular form of pottery until the closing of the Vienna factory in 1864.



DID YOU KNOW

True lacquer refers to a resinous secretion of the Lac insect, certain species of which are endemic to Asia. Pieces such as this example, however, are beautiful imitations of Chinese pottery made using a resin that produces a similar finish to true lacquer.



Vienna Porcelain Jug

Artificial Lacquerware

1799

Porcelain



TERMS TO KNOW

Chinoiserie

An 18th-century style of western European art that incorporates the influence of Chinese decorative elements.

Decorative Arts

A 19th-century art movement that rejected Realism, using instead the convention of representing things through symbols or signs.

Delftware

A type of tin-glazed pottery produced in the Netherlands from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

Tin-Glazed Pottery

Pottery covered in a shiny white glaze to make it resemble Chinese porcelain.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about the influence of **Orientalism in architecture and the decorative arts**. You

learned how to identify and define today's key terms and describe the stylistic elements of the Moresque and Chinoiserie. You also learned how to identify examples of **Orientalism in architecture** and **Orientalism in the decorative arts**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Ian McConnell.



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