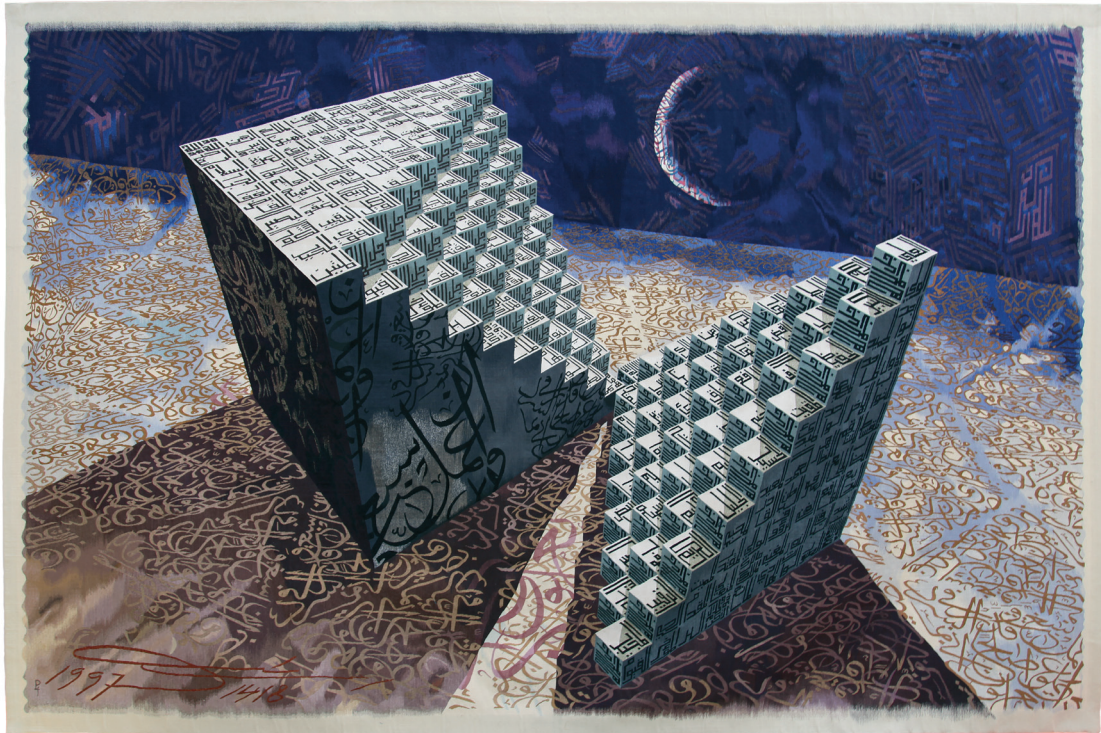


## The Divine Bedrock of Human Artistry



This composition is a breathtaking example of the way Ahmed Moustafa makes concrete images of sacred texts. The words and letters of the *Fatiha*, the opening sura of the Qur'an, are interlaced in square Kufic script in ceaseless expansion to encompass the sky down to its horizon. It generates the overall perspective, in combination with a subtle layer of cursive writing in the foreground which repeatedly affirms in rhythmic contrast, the earth of the composition expressing the verse 'do good deeds lavishly, without stint, and give deep thought to their steady flow' (Qur'an, 34:11).

The artistic choices which have determined the make up of the composition are motivated by the desire to heighten and stimulate the viewer's perceptive awareness through contemplation of these visual forms. They are to be seen as an introductory framework which invites us to gather our diverse faculties of understanding and concentrate them in order to probe the meaning of these towering geometric blocks made up of rows of cubes in ascending and descending pattern. Questions then arise in quick succession: what are these kufic letters and words that fill the exterior of the two blocks? And why and on what basis are they split into two? What meaning is all this aiming to convey? The answer to these and other questions can be found to be inherent in the fabric of the work; at the same time, it exceeds their bounds and, in content and form, encompasses a yet wider scope.

Once we closely scrutinise the work the key to some its riddles comes within our grasp. Then we discover that if a cube is constructed of sides measuring ten units, and within this cube

are envisaged one thousand interlocking smaller cubes of sides measuring one unit, when the structure is opened by lifting an equilateral based segment it will reveal the clustered cubes of the interior; they number ninety-nine – one hundred minus one.

It is typical of Ahmed Moustafa that the harmony of his visual “solutions” is always based on a committed search for an underlying rational which uncovers an authentic relationship between textual content and image

The inner 99 cubes inscribed with the Divine Attributes of God clarifies the reason for the Prophet’s statement that ‘God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one, and whoever recites them enters Paradise’. While the absolute perfection of the attributes belong to God alone and is beyond the reach of man, nevertheless, by reciting and contemplating their treasured inner meaning, and by embodying them as far as possible in his/her actions creatively, they constitute the The Divine Bedrock of Human Artistry.

Then we also discover that the sum of the number of cells which make up the height, breadth and width of the principle cube amounts to twenty-eight, which equals both the number of the mansions of the moon and the number of letters of the Arabic alphabet, thus bringing into play also the numerical values associated with these letters which range from one to a thousand. All this takes us to the meaning enshrined in the Qur’anic verse ‘It is He who made the moon a light and determined its mansions so that you might know how to compute the years and measure time’ (Qur’an 10:5).

In thus seeking to explore the convergence between the visible Book of Nature and the written Book of Revelation which the Creator has granted to the world as a guiding light, the work is a profound expression of Islamic spirituality. It would be erroneous to think, however, that a deeper understanding of it depends entirely on prior knowledge of that tradition, such as familiarity with the Arabic script and the text of the Qur’an. The contrary is the case, for the primary motive of the work has been to awaken the natural faculties of observation and intuition inherent in us all. The monumental landscape generated by these geometrical forms is in itself sufficient to make the viewers sense that the drama displayed in front of their eyes invokes transcendental powers and seeks to explore some of the secrets of this great cosmos. Pure, unpremeditated contemplation of the work is enough to make us perceive what, in the briefest possible terms, it aims to bring about: to capture the singularity of meaning contained in the multiplicity of worlds, the apparent and the hidden.

title: The Divine Bedrock of Human Artistry  
artist: Ahmed Moustafa,  
size: 273cm x 417cm (height x width)  
medium: Tapestry  
woven: 2013/14 by Les Ateliers Pinton in Felletin, Aubusson, France.  
note: This tapestry is one of a kind (1/1) – there are no editions.