

Gillian Turnham: Artist CV

gillianturnham.com . instagram/@gillianturnham

contact@gillianturnham.com . (705) 868-7184

Gillian Turnham is a Muslim-Canadian artist residing in Peterborough, Ontario. She graduated from NSCAD University (Halifax, NS) as a fine metalsmith, creating miniature sculptural works in metal, wood, and stone.

Her early work investigated elements of structure and embellishment through architectural miniature. Building on her interest in architectural ornamentation, 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, including pattern analysis and ruler-and-compass construction techniques. Her recent works position classical geometry and manuscript illumination techniques within a contemporary Fine Art context.

Following recent international successes in Turkey and California, Gillian will be exhibiting throughout 2026-2028 in both Istanbul, and London, UK. She has expanded her practice to include teaching and community engagement. In addition to exhibitions, written articles, a radio series, and commissioned works, she is a regular instructor with The King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts in London, England. She lectures privately and institutionally, most recently at Trent University, Peterborough and Carleton College, Minnesota. She is also a member of the Geometric Abstraction Artists Canada - [GAAC] Collective: a select group of visual artists from across the nation making vibrant contributions to the contemporary world of Geometric Abstraction.

Education:

- **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 Andalusia, Spain. (2017-2020)
- Distance and in-person study with **Richard Henry** (British Museum; King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts; Art of Islamic Pattern) and **Adam Williamson** (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; King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts) and **Alan Adams** (King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts): advanced Euclidean analysis of Islamic star and rosette patterns.

Teaching:

Gillian teaches courses in Intermediate and Advanced Islamic Geometric Pattern Construction through the King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts. She specialised in the Umayyad, Mamluk, and Ottoman patterns of Egypt and the Levant. Her classes offer students historic, religious and cultural context, as well as pattern analysis and ruler-and-compass construction techniques.

She has worked with Trent University, lecturing on Euclidean Geometry in Islamic Pattern Construction, and Carleton College, Minnesota, as a featured presenter at the Oct '24 "Points, Lines, Angles, and Shapes: Math and Art Symposium". She has also taught for the King's Foundation at Jameel House of Traditional Arts in Cairo, Egypt.

Publications:

- **"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, Sufi Studios, Bangalore, India, 2022
- Several artworks (incl. inside cover) featured in **"Profound Patterns"**, a print publication by Adam Williamson, Wooden Books, Glastonbury UK, 2022
- **"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, 2022:
<https://gillianturnham.com/pages/podcast>

Grants and Awards:

Electric City Culture Council Grants For Individual Artists - 2025
OAC Visual Arts Creation Projects - 2025
OAC Exhibition Assistance - 2023
Electric City Culture Council Grants For Individual Artists - 2022

Recent Exhibitions:

- “Light Upon Light” - The Reed Society @ Tarbiya House, Sacramento, USA (April 2026)
- “Geometric Artworks” - Watson and Lou, Peterborough, ON (March 2026)
- “What if you were me: Juried Members’ Exhibition” Artspace, Peterborough, ON (Jan - April 2026)
- “To The Beloved: A Commemoration of Our Prophet ﷺ” Kafkas University, Turkey (Nov 2025)
- “Centre and Circumference” - Sadlier House, Peterborough ON (Oct 2024-Sept 2025)
- “Centre and Circumference” - Acme Art Gallery, Peterborough ON (Sept 2024)
- “Interlaced” - (travelling show) Trent University; 360 Clinic; Douro-Dummer Public Library (March 2023- July 2024)
- “Juried Miniatures Show” - Atelier Ludmila Gallery, Peterborough ON (Aug 2023)
- “Earth Measure” - DesignTO Festival, Daniels Spectrum, Toronto ON (January 2023)
- “A Winter’s Market” - Atelier Ludmilla Gallery, Peterborough ON (December 2022)
- “Earth Measure” - Acme Art Gallery, Peterborough ON (October 2022)
- “Six and Growing” – Erring at King George; Public Energy, Peterborough ON (May 2022)
- “Supernumerary” - Atelier Ludmilla Gallery, Peterborough ON (August 2021)
- “Sevilliana” - Acme Art Gallery, Peterborough ON (June 2019)

Recent Commissions:

- “The Shield and The Drum” (watercolour and gouache on watercolour paper, 10”x10”) - 2023: Private client
- “Harmonic Rectangles” (watercolour, pencil and ink on indigo dyed hemp paper, 18”x24”) - 2023: Private client
- “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, 28”x38”) - 2021: Private client
- “Breath of the Compassionate” (gouache on watercolour paper 12”x18”) - 2021: Private client
- “Mamluk Ceiling” (gouache on watercolour paper, 20”x30”) - 2021: Private client
- “Seljuk Central Twelve” (gouache on watercolour paper, 24”x36”) - 2021: Private client
- “Revolving Twelves” Geometric timepiece (laser-cut wood and copper, 14”x14”) - 2020: Private client