The interpretation of calligraphy by graphic designers in our local industry through the idea of beauty and function

By

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Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

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This Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN, from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates calligraphy being interpreted by our local graphic designers working in the industry. It involves a focused approach on how these graphic designers have interpreted calligraphy and how function and beauty play a pivotal part for it in the design industry.

The study raises the debate of how calligraphy was being utilised by our local graphic designers in order to communicate a specific message. Working in the advertising industry these graphic designers have to communicate the message in either Urdu or English as per the demands of the clients. The result of which is an amalgamation of aesthetics of calligraphy and a functional visual form. The research studies similar occurrences to other regional industries, a background of calligraphy as well as the current trend in our local industry. The research strategy is qualitative through interviews, and a focus group of local young graphic designers is also conducted. Furthermore the dissertation’s research findings have been compared and contrasted from secondary research of books, articles, dissertations, journals and websites. The dissertation challenges the arguments of calligraphy being interpreted to its uses; whether aesthetic and emotional value trumps functional communication or not, and could the ever-expanding world of the graphic industry have a tantamount change to calligraphy’s existence.
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Introduction

“What joy there is in hearing yourself think, and to make that thinking into ink.”¹

-John Olsen, Australian Artist

Calligraphy has always been an area of interest for me. Being a student of design, typography as a subject requires one to think creatively despite the strict adherence to its rules and guidelines. Though we are not generally taught calligraphy we are given the graphic licence to apply it in our assignments. Short studio courses on Urdu typography have set up a basic understanding of calligraphy and as Karla states in his article in The Indian Express(newspaper) ‘even though the popularity of the art form is fast dwindling,’² this connection is evident with our culture and its basics are imperative in our use of script. So naturally the types of graphics in Pakistan that have always caught my eye have been those of calligraphic nature. Brand identities such as Gulabo and Faysal Bank, the hierarchy and subtlety of the PIA logo, and the evergreen demand for wedding cards are just a few examples of where calligraphy has been applied.

In order to grasp the nature of the argument, we need to outline how calligraphy can be understood. As described by Albertine Gaur ‘calligraphy makes a statement about a particular society, a statement about the sum total of its culture and historical heritage.’ This is just one of the many interpretations of calligraphy by artists and designers worldwide, but since she spoke about culture and heritage it becomes apparent of how integral calligraphy is to understanding

aparticular society. A detailed account of calligraphy has been provided in the relevant literature outlining what calligraphy is, its rich history and the general applications where it can be found.

Given the importance of relevant information pertaining to calligraphy’s role in the creative industry; a brief overview of the literature has been discussed and highlighted to establish the connection of calligraphy with the local design work.

Through my research I studied calligraphy’s role as a language in order to establish what caused calligraphy and script to go through such changes and how this affected our industry. Donald Jackson states that ‘The process whereby man learned to embody his language in writing is one of the great miracles in the history of civilization.’ This directly leads to the next discussion and review of calligraphy as a catalyst in writing. This chapter reviewed the set rules and guidelines that calligraphy is infamous for. With a focus on Islamic calligraphy, as the Arabic and Farsi script is closely related to the Urdu script.

The vast majority of interpretations of calligraphy and its occupation with functional languages around the world have been reviewed through corresponding literature; the relation to Urdu and Urdu script is of paramount importance in this dissertation due to both being strongly linked to those regional languages and their respective writing, namely Islamic calligraphy.

Through primary research I have studied the effects of calligraphy in the creative and graphic industry of Pakistan by carrying out interviews and analysing a focus group. I have also researched on Pakistan’s ideology behind visual representation of beauty in calligraphic script, and the importance of its beauty and functional communications. Most of my primary research of interviews and a focus group are focused on the importance of such skills when working in the industry to launch creative campaigns. The compiled secondary research set up a framework for me to conduct these primary research materials effectively that established the arguments and

discussions of my analysis. Through both types of research I hope to find if calligraphy can be used in numerous contexts and be applied as functional beauty.

**Literature Review**

Before I can establish the results it is important to take you through the framework of secondary research data compared and contrasted with opposing research. This includes looking at the basics of calligraphy, its role in design, as a language and as a form of writing. The idea of beauty and functional beauty is applied throughout the research. Global references are important to note, and finally a brief overview of the current and past situation of calligraphy with Pakistani designers is researched.

**Beauty and functional beauty**

The relation between functional and aesthetic value is the backbone of my research. Everything discussed about calligraphy and the local design industry is done in the light of beauty and function. Understanding this we look at Catalina Butaru’s online article ‘Functional Beauty and User Experience’ (January 18th 2013) for *UX Magazine*, she approaches the important concept of successfully bringing together beauty and function to create functional beauty. She uses Socrates’ quote to best describe this, ‘all things are good and beautiful in relation to those purposes for which they are well adapted “[and]” bad and ugly in relation to those for which they are ill adapted.’

This summarizes her understanding of functional beauty, and argues that it is the best way to create an effective product. However, this idea is limited to products and when contrasting it to design she does mention, ‘While the nature of beauty is still a mystery, the nature of design is unquestionably linked to the beautification of crafts throughout

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human history.\textsuperscript{5} Her approach is used to understand the interpretation of calligraphy; by our local designers because of the links beauty and functional beauty have with our language and script.

\textbf{An overview of calligraphy}

In Patricia Bukley Ebrey’s online publication ‘Calligraphy’ she describes it as “beautiful writing,” and reflects an interest in ornamenting words on the page.\textsuperscript{6} Here already we see the limitation of how calligraphy is being interpreted. She only considered its aesthetic value and left its function to the bare minimum that exists in writing. Khatibi and Sijelmassi in their book \textit{The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy} comment that ‘calligraphy is of course the art of writing but it is by no means universal. Many peoples have not developed it in detail, whereas for others it is a supreme art.\textsuperscript{7} There are two contrasting yet supporting statements made here by Khatibi and Sijelmassi. The first is their generic comment on how it is restricted to be an art of writing, yet they broaden their spectrum by stating that its interpretations are subjective. Khatibi’s and Sijelmassi’s interpretations provide a greater holistic approach than Ebrey’s and show one very important fact about calligraphy, that it can be understood in a number of ways. Whether it is through its applications, language or writing, it is further described in the online journal ‘Calligraphy and Graphology,’ as ‘the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious and skilful manner… The art involves the creation of functional lettering in an artistic manner which is used today in many different and popular ways.’\textsuperscript{8} Yet another interpretation that provides another angle of calligraphy, in this case it is the function that argues importance. So

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item James Hughes, \textit{L'art calligraphique arabe}, trans. Dr Mohammed Sijelmassi and Abdelkabir Khatibi, \textit{The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy}. (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1976), p22
\item ‘Calligraphy and Graphology’, http://www.kalligraphia.co.uk/ [Last accessed: 11\textsuperscript{th} December 2012]
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
because calligraphy is so expressive and emotional, its openness to interpretation leaves it very
difficult to claim any one person’s interpretation as incorrect.

Just to understand such interpretations we scan the vast landscape of applications where

calligraphy is present. In Amin Gulgee’ exhibition book *Artists Voices: Calligraphy*, he had
asked ‘artists from across Pakistan to engage with Islamic calligraphy,’9 in a particular

exhibition. The idea, as he states, ‘was not only to create a dialogue on the subject of calligraphy,
but to bring fresh ideas and experimentation to an art form that very much belongs to us.’10 The

exhibition boasted some of the top artists of Pakistan who all interpreted calligraphy in their own

way. It may seem of less importance when considering that these artists had more of a personal

function, but it is still useful in understanding that their beauty of calligraphy was derived from

our culture just as our design industry is. Aside from this, the general applications of calligraphy

can be found in holy books, architecture, historical artefacts, logos, newspapers, brand identities

and so much more although die-hard artists like Khatibi and Sijelmassi would argue that

calligraphy’s ‘decline coincides with the spread of printing,’11 but Gulgee’s exhibition proved to

show that it is an art form that demands artists and designers alike to delve into it; therefore,

proving that newer mediums can still be used to produce functional calligraphic work.

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of Islamic Calligraphy*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1976), p26
Calligraphy’s role in writing

Gaur states in her book *A History of Calligraphy*, ‘the history of calligraphy spans over five thousand years... It requires the interaction of several essential elements, including, most importantly, the availability of suitable calligraphic tools and materials, and it demands insight and individuality on the part of the calligrapher, though expressed with strictly prescribed boundaries.’ Another profound interpretation of calligraphy, but here Gaur mentions its historic appeal, and indicates how the beauty is limited to the ability of the designer and its function to the prescribed boundaries. She goes on to comment on how ‘true calligraphy can be said to have developed among only three of the world’s major civilisations: the Arabs (and those who use the Arabic script), whose centres on the preservation of the divine Koran; the Chinese… and the Europeans.’ Since the association of Urdu script is so close to Arabic, Sijelmassi and Khatibi explain that ‘both Persian and Swahili, and Urdu too, are written in Arabic characters.’ It seems logical to focus on Islamic calligraphy more than the other two major forms of calligraphy. As Khaitibi and SijelMassi state further ‘calligraphy becomes a veritable iconography of the written word. It illuminates Quranic manuscripts or liturgical texts with an assemblage of architectural themes.’ And this is exactly the role that calligraphy took in the Islamic world due to the forbidden use of imagery. Though this interpretation of calligraphy’s function is limited to its development in Arab civilisation. Calligraphy played a divine role, glorifying God through beauty for His written word. It seem only when a particular culture’s language and writing (Urdu and Urdu script) began did the function of calligraphy change.

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Amra Ali in Gulgee’s exhibition book states that ‘a more natural link to text is through the Urdu language, its script being the same as the Arabic and Persian. And maybe there is a need to widen the focus on calligraphy, which is seen only as religious text.’ Here we finally see the importance of experimenting with calligraphy’s function as opposed to Khatibi and Sijelmassi’s insistence that it remains only as religious text. This introduces the importance of writing in calligraphy and how its function had evolved over the years.

Calligraphy is more than beautiful writing. It results from an interaction of several essential elements: the attitude of society to writing; the importance and function of the text; definite, often mathematically based, rules about the correct interaction between lines and space and their relationship to each other; and mastery and understanding of the script, the writing material and the tools used for writing. This sets up the discussion that calligraphy is indeed a trunk to the roots of writing. Had it not been for the need to improve the aesthetics of writing, calligraphy would not have seen such a rich and profound history. In a few short years of the inevitable birth of writing Heather Whipps describes in her online article ‘How Writing Changed the World’ (10 February 2008) for Live Science that ‘the entire ancient world had writing schemes that vastly improved the efficiency of economies, the accountability of governments and, maybe most importantly to us, our understanding of the past.’ Writing allowed us to dictate how to live in a civilized world; it gave birth to emotion with fictional stories, beautiful poetry, and more importantly to calligraphy.

In contrast Malayan mentions in his article ‘The Art of Calligraphy: Script in its Purest Form’ for The Armenian Weekly that ‘Primitivism and functionalism emasculated the culture of

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communication. They denied the graphic writing the opportunity to improve artistically.”

Due to function’s importance in this time period, aesthetics became increasingly redundant and in communication, calligraphy experienced a drastic decline in use.

**Calligraphy’s role as a language**

Sijelmassi and Khatibi’s *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, make an important point about language and calligraphy, ‘The essence of calligraphy lies in its relation to language.’

In essence it would mean that, if calligraphy were the body, the soul would be the language. The language would provide the aesthetic emotion and would give more meaning to its communication function. Gulgee’s book *Artists’ Voices: Calligraphy* tells a story of a time in Pakistan during General Zia’s rule when ‘the outspoken artist Bashir Mirza who, during the eleven years of the military regime, hung up his brushes and refused to show his work.’

This was due to the market ‘flooded with exhibitions of so-called “calligraphy.”’

We can see here the impact calligraphy has had on language and culture. It represents a dialect of its own, especially since the nation is Pakistan, where the script is bound to calligraphy. Through language we see calligraphy, Sijelmassi and Khatibi explain, as ‘an art which, in the patterns which it creates, implies a theory of language and of writing. This art starts off as part of the linguistic structure and institutes an alternative set of rules, deprived from

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language but dramatizing and duplicating it by transposing it into visual terms.\textsuperscript{23} This explanation talks about the relationship of calligraphy with language and writing, stating how even the process starts off with language and ends up through writing, but as far as beauty and function are concerned, it fails to transcend its original function. In Khatibi and Sijelmassi’s justification, calligraphy is the exaggeration of language. As mundane as it may seem, this paved the way for future artists and designers to experiment with the functions of calligraphy.

The emergence of Urdu as a language saw a rise in the development of a particular script. \textit{Smashing Magazine}’s article ‘The beauty of typography: Writing Systems and Calligraphy of the World’ (10 May 2010) tells us of the script ‘Nasta’liq [meaning] “suspended,” which is a good way to describe the way each letter in a word is suspended from the previous one.\textsuperscript{24} ‘It is extensively practiced as a form of art in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{25} This is the reason why it gained further popularity in our design industry and of which I will mention more extensively in my analysis and discussion.

\textsuperscript{23}James Hughes, \textit{L’art calligraphique arabe}, trans. Dr Mohammed Sijelmassi and Abdelkabir Khatibi, \textit{The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy}, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1976), p20


Calligraphy’s role in design

What is design? In order to make the connection with calligraphy and its role in design we must first understand what design is. Merriam-Webster defines it as ‘The art and profession of selecting and arranging visual elements—such as typography, images, symbols, and coloursto convey a message to an audience.’ So because graphic design is a collaborative discipline the need for a wide range of artists is always welcome.

What use is typography if there is no originality in design? Perhaps this is where the demand for calligraphers increases. In Marco Campedelli’s book Calligraphy and Graphic Design, the synopsis states how ‘Calligraphy differs from computer graphics because of its quality and unquestionable originality. An inscription carried out by hand arguably communicates much more than standard typography… work in diverse commercial sectors [includes] packaging, fashion, publishing and advertising.’ Clearly this shows the vast areas where calligraphy is in constant demand, and Campedelli’s argument in favour of calligraphy is spot on. The comment on originality, better communication and the examples sums up the best possible use of calligraphy in this day and age, for functional beauty. Butnaru’s article ‘Functional Beauty and User Experience,’ UX Magazine (January 2013) gives the best example of how calligraphy should be used today, ‘Beauty may be fleeting and in the eye of the beholder, but functional beauty is not an elusive attribute. It comes to life through hard work and remains

for the entire lifecycle of a product.\textsuperscript{29} Some of the most successful logos that have stood against
the test of time are those of calligraphic nature, because of the hard work that is put into them.

Arguably in Gaur’s \textit{A History of Calligraphy}, she disputes that ‘Calligraphy has never
been a craft bound to form and function but an expression of deeply felt sentiments connected
with the inner life of the people: in Islam this meant the message of the Koran, and in the Far
East the individualist essence of an otherwise communal culture.'\textsuperscript{30} Here calligraphy to her
understanding is strictly bound to what it was born to be, this view however may be accurate, it
somehow becomes faulty due to a number of reasons: One being the strict adherence to a
singular function of emotion and importance to beauty and two persistence to not allowing more
contemporary ideas to evolve calligraphy’s function and desire of beauty.

In the creative industry there is a constant demand for calligraphers and those skilled
properly in the art form. Logos are sketched by hand, packaging names are designed with the
\textit{qalam} (pen) and entire campaigns have required the need for calligraphy to be incorporated with
the design process. The language’s script also requires it and the constant demand of innovation
requires it as well. In Gulgee’s book an artist by the name of Nilofur Farrukh states that ‘the
contemporary artist’s interface with calligraphy has been with printed and digital text for
promotion and marketing. Until recently, this printed text originated not from a mechanized
process, but from the calligrapher’s pen. Handwritten pages were etched on the printer’s matrix,
a practice still alive in the designing of logotypes and headlines of Urdu board sheets.'\textsuperscript{31}Fact of
the matter remains, graphic design demands a constant need for innovation and calligraphy can

\textsuperscript{29}Catalina Butnaru, ‘Functional Beauty and User Experience’, \textit{UX Magazine}, (Posted: January 18\textsuperscript{th} 2013).
\textsuperscript{31}Amin Gulgee, \textit{Artists’ Voices: Calligraphy}, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p 15
easily be used as functional beauty to represent such innovation. For example, The Al-Jazeera news channel logo is a good example of a calligraphic logo. *Textwrap*’s online article ‘Isolated Glyph: Deciphering Al-Jazeera’s logo’ explains the logo to us perfectly. ‘[The] distinctive logo consists of a teardrop-shaped glyph with the words Al Jazeera below in Arabic or English. What non-Arabic speakers might not realize is that the glyph itself also spells out “the Island,” al Jazeera, in a modified Arabic script. It was quickly designed by a Qatari man who entered it in a design contest, where it was chosen by the Emir of Qatar.’

Notice how the Arabic script’s font form is pushed using calligraphy to incorporate functional beauty. The beauty of course lies in the aesthetics; the function is not only to represent the brand, but also to explain the meaning as to what the brand’s origins are. The word represents the fact

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that the Arab world is ‘surrounded’\(^{33}\) by water, and the shape that is in a ‘teardrop’\(^{34}\) represents that as well, as mentioned in the article. I will be contrasting this logo with one of Pakistani origin in my analysis to see if there.

**The global interpretations of calligraphy**

Although calligraphy was practiced and used more in the east, it has found its ground in the west through its history, according to Gaur. ‘Western styles of calligraphy have their roots in the Roman system of scripts used in the area of the Roman Empire...the basis of Western calligraphy is the Roman (or Latin) alphabet which appeared for the first time in Italy in inscriptions dating from the 7\(^{th}\) or 6\(^{th}\) centuries BC.\(^ {35}\) Today there are artists in all facets of art and design who frequently use calligraphy and sometimes this amalgamation of ‘western function [and] eastern beauty.’\(^ {36}\) The online article ‘Calligraphy and Cultural Identity’ in the magazine *Dia: East of Fashion* gives us some great examples of such an amalgamation.

New York based Moroccan photographer Lalla Essaydi has been attracting the art world’s attention with her series of portraits “Les Femmes du Maroc.” Before taking a photograph she will first apply layers of Arabic calligraphy using henna, onto her models as well as the backdrop. Her work explores the “complex female identities” found throughout the Muslim world... Lebanese Pascal Zoghbi is one of the most innovative Arabic type designers and typographers working today. Consistently pushing the boundaries of graphic design in the region with his bold posters and web designs, Pascal has also created new Arabic fonts such as

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“Sada” a bold rounded type that has appeared on everything from newspapers to labels on wine bottles... His modern pieces are all handmade using traditional techniques.\textsuperscript{37}

Perhaps the most striking aspect about these designers using calligraphy is that they seem to understand the technique involved, it demands the respect from the designer to use the traditional techniques before executing it. Essaydi’s work with calligraphy is used more so that the work is recognized to be addressing ‘female identities throughout the Muslim world.’\textsuperscript{38} So her priority is aesthetic value and because the function is a personalised communication message, her priority remains towards aesthetics and beauty, much like calligraphy was. By contrast Zoghbi’s work has ‘pushed’\textsuperscript{39} the boundaries of calligraphy. Due to his work focused on Arabic type and graphic design, it has allowed him to create functional beauty with calligraphy. Whether that be packaging for products, producing new typefaces in Arabic or websites, the beauty lies in the function, calligraphy is vastly improving the aesthetics of this function, and his calligraphy is executed with all the techniques that are required.

Calligraphy in this day and age is very evident in the global graphic design world. As Zapf puts it in his book \textit{Alphabet Stories: A Chronicle of Technical Developments}, ‘The digital era has facilitated the creation and dissemination of thousands of new and historically styled fonts. Calligraphy gives unique expression to every individual letterform within a design layout.’\textsuperscript{40} The problem with Zapf statement is that the creations of such fonts are both beneficial and harmful to

\textsuperscript{40} Zapf, H., \textit{Alphabet Stories: A Chronicle of Technical Developments}, (New York: Cary Graphic Arts Press Rochester, 2007) p23
calligraphy. This aspect is investigated more thoroughly in the analysis but we do understand from Zapf’s statement that fonts are by far the best way to incorporate functional beauty with calligraphy.

In addition to all this, graphic designers in the global world are using calligraphy to whatever function they desire. ‘Reza Abedini, a world renowned designer and a professor of graphic design at Tehran University. His work often combines modern and traditional themes, producing an updated take on Persian typography. As well as being a jury member at several biennials throughout the world, he has received numerous awards for focusing attention on the diversity found within modern Iranian culture.’41 Abedini is truly one of the leaders in using calligraphy to push the boundaries of design. There is no disputing his work with Farsi, and proves an example for our local designers to emulate him. Recently an artist by the name of Bahia Shehab involved calligraphy with one of the most historic times of Egypt’s history. ‘Art historian Bahia Shehab has long been fascinated with the Arabic script for ‘no.’ When revolution swept through Egypt in 2011, she began spraying the image in the streets saying no to dictators, no to military rule and no to violence.’42 Because her function was to spread a message with calligraphy, the beauty in her work was the purpose that calligraphy was playing. It allowed the residents of the nation to connect with it through difficult times and shows us a very unique way the calligraphy has been interpreted.

Of course there is another stance to calligraphy; one which focuses on the less contemporary form, the classics from Guglee’s Artist’ Voices: Calligraphy would argue that ‘too

often we see calligraphy that is hastily done, or created solely to decorate homes,"\(^{43}\) meaning that the true art of calligraphy is being lost with this new age tactic of handling calligraphy as 'shapes'\(^{44}\) for a design element, while current graphic designers could argue that like all art forms, calligraphy also must go through a constant evolution process without losing its rules.

**Calligraphy and graphic design by Pakistani based designers**

Calligraphy in Pakistan has always been popular. Again as Guglee puts it quite rightly ‘Islamic calligraphy appears everywhere. There are billboards with divine text and many private homes have versus from the Quran emblazoned on their outside walls.’\(^{45}\) Yet even though the commercialisation of calligraphy in Pakistan has caused many artists to be averse from it, Pakistani artists abroad have clung on to this art form because of the close association to our (Urdu) script. Farrukh tells us of a story of an artist by the name of Shemza ‘who moved to the UK in the 1950s, found calligraphy by default...Shemza turned to calligraphic forms as an outcome of an identity crisis when his encounter with the dominant art discourse in his new homeland left him alienated.’\(^{46}\) Another such case, that too with the field of graphic design, is when ‘a message in elegant Urdu script proved a provocative act when Rasheed Araeen created a billboard design in the UK that praised the British for their racial tolerance.’\(^{47}\) Here calligraphy not only communicated a successful message, but the calligraphic design was indeed successful in its aesthetic form to earn a place on a billboard, functional beauty at its best.

Urdu script was the natural link to calligraphy in Pakistan. Gulgee’s book addresses, ‘Text in the Kufic, Nastaliq or other scripts, has long been a part of the imagery that informs the artistic sensibility particular to this region.’\textsuperscript{48} It is these scripts that calligraphy was practised with and through the scripts a notion of beauty was established. The functions of the language required the communication to be as effective as it is, yet the beauty and forms of the script was what artists and designers experimented with. This however also had a backlash. Due to the success of such scripts in the design industry, more Pakistani designers would not take the time out to create new and experiment with different fonts, like Zoghbi did for the Arab world. This is more comprehensively explained in the analysis through primary research.

Now though, Gaur correctly says that ‘there is a rich harvest of new ideas and experiments,’\textsuperscript{49} and more importantly more artists and designers now, ‘have studied at Western universities and come into contact with Western concepts.’\textsuperscript{50} These are the examples, which go to show that functional beauty has started to become a reality with calligraphy, because of western influence and it is strongest in our industry of graphic and creative design.

\section*{Research and Methodology}

My interest with calligraphy and graphic design was initiated with the constant requirement of Urdu logos and design by brands around Pakistan. In order to completely understand the framework of calligraphy it is important to research on its roots and the various ways that it is and can be related to graphic design.

\textsuperscript{48}Amin Gulgee, \textit{Artists’ Voices: Calligraphy}, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p17
\textsuperscript{50}Albertine Gaur, \textit{A History of Calligraphy}, (London: The British Library, 1994), p211
With that research understood, calligraphy’s role in writing and as a language is researched through the idea of functional beauty. Therefore secondary research will be conducted with the help of three main books; *A History of Calligraphy* by Albertine Gaur, Amin Gulgee’s gallery exhibition book *Artists’ Voices: Calligraphy*, and Dr Mohammed Sijelmassi and Abdel kabir Khatibi’s *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*. All three books will provide me with sufficient information to build a good understanding of calligraphy and it’s meaning as well.

In detail, *The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy* is useful because the book looks at calligraphy as “the art which combines visual image and written word,” as well as focusing on Islamic calligraphy, which is most closely related to Urdu script and calligraphy, these two key factors help in shaping up a reliable framework in understanding calligraphy and its role in writing and as visual images, particularly the dual nature of calligraphy. Albertine Gaur’s *A History of Calligraphy* helps in identifying calligraphy as a statement of a society’s cultural and historical heritage. It is extremely helpful in forming the connection of calligraphy with its roots and gives sufficient information of the importance in understanding writing with calligraphy. The various chapters include the history of calligraphy in its 3 most developed cultures; the Arab, the Chinese, and the Christian Roman culture. These chapters of the book, namely the Arab traditions one, aid me in understanding how calligraphy was understood as a means of language and more so the importance of writing. The latter chapter of the book discusses the present nature of calligraphy and how calligraphers in the Islamic world, with their newly found

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confidence in their national identity, start to express themselves with ideas they had incorporated at Western universities and art schools.⁵⁴

Gulgee’s gallery exhibition book *Artists’ Voices: Calligraphy*, is influential to deciphering the nature of calligraphy as a language, especially our local language of Urdu, as well as the various interpretations of calligraphy by different artists featured in the book. Because so many of them were not calligraphers by profession their understanding of calligraphy, particularly Gulgee’s, is that calligraphy has ‘tremendous emotional resonance for us.’⁵⁵ The range of interpretations from these artists and designers give a strong representation of the idea of functional beauty in calligraphy and maintain it with relevance to Pakistan’s local design industry. All three books help me form a strong basis for my secondary research with the help of online articles, books and journals that support in various ways such as the global interpretation of calligraphy, beauty and functional beauty.

The online publication *UX Magazine* ‘Functional beauty and User Experience’ (online article), gives me a solid understanding of functional beauty and apply that concept throughout my literature review. In addition, a calligraphic logo’s properties are broken down to compare it with a local one through *Smashing Magazine* and an online article in *Textwrap*.

The next step was figuring out the primary research. First hand information is acquired with the help of various interviews and a detailed focus group that are conducted. The focus group is carefully conducted to figure out the qualitative research that is needed through specified samples. They are shown pictures of logos and other design work that had applications of calligraphy on them, and for example are asked whether they identify that particular design piece

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to calligraphy. The results of the focus group will give me a clear understanding to how people identify calligraphy and the correlation it has to our Urdu script designs. The demographics of the presentation are all graphic designers currently working or about to work in the design industry.

To find out specific answers to questions on calligraphy questions are asked to Mr. Muzammil Ruheel\(^\text{56}\) who is a practicing creative well-versed in calligraphy and its regulations. His knowledge of calligraphy combined with his exposure to calligraphy and its applications in our local design industry help in forming a debate for my analysis.

Furthermore Mr. Adnan Yousuf\(^\text{57}\) is interviewed because of his experience of the local design industry and his influence on many of the more famous Pakistani brand names. His views and information provided paramount understanding of how calligraphy has been amalgamated into design. Mr. Khuda Bux Abro\(^\text{58}\) is interviewed being a fine artist and currently teacher calligraphy to graphic designers in particular. He was able to point out the traits and behaviour of Urdu script and calligraphy not only today but what the future may hold in our local design industry.

Mr. Rafi Naqvi\(^\text{59}\) is interviewed to answer all questions related to calligraphy and its application in the industry. His profound experience in writing and designing calligraphy on paper, which will eventually be incorporated on designs, helps me identify a strong link between calligraphy

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\(^{56}\)Muzzamil Ruheel is a calligrapher and visual artist, and is a Faculty member at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

\(^{57}\)Adnan Yousuf, CEO Shift Content and Creative Consultants

\(^{58}\)Khuda Bux Abro is an illustrator for the Daily Dawn, an art director and a designer as well.

\(^{59}\)Rafi Naqvi is a calligraphic designer at Interflow Communications
and the local design industry. Mr. Muhammed Kashif Khan is a self-taught calligrapher who teaches calligraphy to graphic design students. His experience and willingness to see more calligraphic work in the design industry is refreshing and helps me answer lots of questions regarding both calligraphy and the design industry in all facets.

**Analysis**

“The difference between a commercial artist and a fine artist is just that graphic designers have a tool of reaching to a greater audience than just a mere exhibition display.” This is by no means demeaning the works of fine artists, as there are several of them who have reached global audiences in the past, present and will continue to do so in the near future. Rather in a more generic way, Khan is merely stating that in such scenarios the graphic designer is more exposed to a greater audience with the tools they have as opposed to a fine artist. Perhaps, but the first thing Khan mentions is that the relationship and bond you have with calligraphy should be very strong. He feels that international standards will give him a ‘bigger audience’ so he actually does crossover to the commercial side.

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60MuhammedKashif Khan is a self taught calligrapher living in Karachi
61MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
62MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
63MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
64MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
We recall how Gaur had noted that calligraphy is ‘purest’ as a fine art. Yet the bond Khan is referring to can be instigated with graphic designers as well. There are numerous brands that wish to give a more personal touch to their artwork and identity. Often they wish to achieve such a feat with the use of calligraphy. Companies, for example Islamic Banks, would aim to capture the attention of potential customers by using calligraphy in their identity designs.

Another interesting point is that since the Urdu script and the language are borrowed, from Farsi and Arabic mainly, we are predisposed to using Islamic calligraphy and its elements.

We also know of calligraphy’s initial function was to communicate its beautiful writing as discussed in Gaur’s readings. However, over the course of time calligraphy has been used with various mediums. Fashion, advertising, social media and in particular the development of fonts as my research indicated in my literature. Good and bad situations will arise as a result and all of the factors discussed in my literature will play a part in the discussion of this analysis, such as culture, interpretations, contrasting calligraphic logos and what the future holds.

**Interpreting Calligraphy**

“Essentially calligraphy is all about following rules and keeping within boundaries.”

This is by far the most generic interpretation of calligraphy. Every artist knows the importance to adhere to the rules in calligraphy, even graphic designers have been taught rules, yet some people still continue to push them. Using this we identify how various interpretations arise here in Pakistan.

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66 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
67 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
Muzzamil Ruheel was taught calligraphy under Ustaad Khursheed Alam Gohar, his understanding of calligraphy in Pakistan and the Subcontinent has a lot to do with the way calligraphy is perceived.\textsuperscript{68} He states, ‘that in Pakistani calligraphy, or any text based work which has something to do with Arabic, calligraphy is usually perceived as a visual and not as text. They don’t really understand what is written but from the composition or text they think it is sacred. That is why in Pakistan text based work especially calligraphy is very difficult if you are not working on sacred texts.’\textsuperscript{69} This perception is very true, more often than not you will find inscriptions and carpets with Islamic calligraphy featured upon them hanging on the walls in houses demanding respect. In addition to this Adnan Yousuf, who has over 20 years of experience in advertising here in Pakistan has supported this view. He says the problem is that there is a very clear created divide between the fine art and commercial design. That the fine artists don’t want to ‘cross into the commercial side’\textsuperscript{70} and that nobody is trying to ‘bridge the gap’\textsuperscript{71} either; therefore, the people who learn calligraphy are not bringing it back to design and neither are the designers going to go through the pain to learn calligraphy.\textsuperscript{72}

Few however succeed in understanding what is written either. During Ruheel’s time with his Ustaad studying calligraphy and reading the Quran he had asked him if he could ‘write anything other than Quranic piece or sacred text and he told me that it is just a way of practising and you can write anything with it.’\textsuperscript{73} He points out how ‘in History all the patrons had used to support Islamic Art and that is why you get so much calligraphy in Islamic Art; it acted as

\textsuperscript{68}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{69}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{70}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{71}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{72}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{73}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
liberation…That is why when we have any kind of Arabic text in the house we use it as wall hangings and don’t understand it.\textsuperscript{74}

So the underlying factor as far as to why there have been such misinterpretations with calligraphy in Pakistan is that there a lack of understanding of the text and the language where our calligraphy is inspired from, which is Arabic. However, going back to the basics we must understand calligraphy before successful interpretations can be made. One of Pakistan’s most revered calligraphers, Mohammed Kashif Khan, who started the course of Calligraphy and Illumination at Karachi University and painted the roof of Karachi Port Trust.\textsuperscript{75} He tells us of the difference between the two types of Pakistani calligraphers, the Khatat and the Katib.\textsuperscript{76} ‘The difference between a Katib and a Khatat is that a Katib writes small and intricately. Whereas Khatat writes intricately, big and small but always remains in the rules and maintains measurements. But a Katib does not follow rules.’\textsuperscript{77} Designers and artists who are pushing the rules of calligraphy may have gained huge success but it is important to stay within these boundaries.\textsuperscript{78} Perhaps the insistence to stay within boundaries stems from a deeper reasoning, for example recognising a particular artists’ paintings. It is their identity, their elements and their treatment that is repeated makes it their identity.\textsuperscript{79} Khan adds the same idea to calligraphy stating

\textsuperscript{74}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{75}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{76}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{77}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{78}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{79}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
that an identity is created when the artist has experimented with the art form without altering ‘the
rules and order.’ He goes on to say how he can write a single letter in so many different scripts
and it holds more interest to him than merely creating an image or setting it within shapes. This
is why calligraphy should have a deeper understanding and a close relationship because it can be
used to identify it.

Khan goes further to comment on the presence and ‘influence of the west’ just as
discussed in the literature review. He feels that the west has influenced designers and artists to a
great extent and because there are a lot of students coming from different schools of thought and
when they design they are asked to create their identity. Without focusing on the basics they try
to merge ideas from the west into our art. This explains why there is a distortion in our
culture’s identity.

Such is the multi-purpose ability of calligraphy that it allows various interpretations to
develop all sorts of functions, and because aesthetics are such a key factor, these interpretations
allow calligraphy to have functional beauty. It functions as an identity for a painter, a culture, a
country, and even emotions. Khuda Bux Abro who is an illustrator at the Daily Dawn says
‘calligraphy is our foundational art form which has a marked presence in our culture. This has
been evident in the past and till now people use it.’ He feels that we should learn from our

80 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
81 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
82 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
83 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
84 KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02nd January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
neighbours in Iran that have excelled in the field of graphic design and typography because art and design have been given great importance allowing them to push the function of calligraphy and modernised it whereas we are just limiting its form to religious decoration.\textsuperscript{85} Interestingly he mentions a particular designer whose example was researched in my literature review, Reza Abidini, stating that he is ‘is the best example.’\textsuperscript{86} However the trends of calligraphy in the design industry are very different in Pakistan and further primary research will show why.

**Calligraphy and The Local Design Industry**

The literature review had mentioned how Pakistani based artists abroad had clung on to calligraphy as a means of association. However, the interview with Adnan Yousuf, shows a contradicting scenario for calligraphy by designers in the local industry.\textsuperscript{87} When asked for his view of calligraphy in our industry he comments ‘calligraphy is only perhaps a need to do basis exercise.’\textsuperscript{88} Meaning only if the client has specified that the artwork should be done in calligraphy, then the agency will look to obtain a designer who has good understanding of the language (Urdu) and calligraphy.\textsuperscript{89} Going on about the current crop of designers he mentioned how most of them are ‘cutting corners’ with computerised fonts and not giving calligraphy the true respect it deserves.\textsuperscript{90} Ruheel also reiterates this and adds that as designers and creatives it is our job to ‘settle this down.’\textsuperscript{91} Meaning designers have a responsibility to maintain the language and writing. They should use it so that upcoming designers and artists get inspired and apply

\textsuperscript{85}KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02\textsuperscript{nd} January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{86}KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02\textsuperscript{nd} January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{87}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{88}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{89}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{90}Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
\textsuperscript{91}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
calligraphy in their designs. This would allow calligraphy to be used more frequently and preferably as functional beauty. Not only creating an identity of sorts because of breakthrough design, but making it very culturally relevant.

The requirement of communicating in a preferred language plays a significant role. Yousuf mentions if the client has asked the designers for a campaign or artwork to be done in Urdu then only will they seek out those who have acquired the skill. 92 An example of such a person who is regularly called to an ad agency for such work is Rafi Naqvi. Naqvi is an experienced calligrapher with over 35 years of experience.93 The skill of calligraphy was passed down to him by his family and because of his good understanding of it; he picked up on it quickly.94 His input on the way calligraphy is handled in advertising is very interesting because it provides an insight as to how calligraphers think when dealing with commercial based work. He insists that when clients restrict calligraphers’ creativity to the brief’s descriptions, then there would be no use of the calligrapher.95 In essence, because of his understanding of the rules and regulations of calligraphy the client must give some creative space to the calligrapher to operate. Although, this is almost how every designer feels, I somehow disagree with Naqvi to some extent. In the commercial industry every designer must adapt to the needs of the client. As Yousuf very rightly puts it, ‘do remember advertising is a business at the end of the day it is not a charity. Businesses only flourish if you keep the costs at minimum and you generate more business.’96

92 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]  
93 Rafi Naqvi interviewed 22nd December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]  
94 Rafi Naqvi interviewed 22nd December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]  
95 Rafi Naqvi interviewed 22nd December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]  
96 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
However, that doesn’t mean that calligraphy cannot flourish because clients hardly require calligraphic work. Instead designers should take the initial step and involve clients to use calligraphy, as Yousuf remarked, ‘don’t do the logo in English I think you should use Urdu calligraphy... it’s widely understandable and it looks good.’ As functional beauty, calligraphy would thrive because once understood its aesthetics can easily be used to communicate the product’s functions. This approach is much more clearly understood after you have read my breakdown of a calligraphic logo. Going back to language and calligraphy in the local design industry, the best way to sum up this scenario would be how Yousuf states it, ‘it is more to do with the language and the respect we give it, if advertisers keep Urdu as an afterthought than the jobs that stem out of it will also remain an afterthought. This is very apparent in the number of Urdu script fonts that have been created for the computer. Over his 20 odd years in advertising, Yousuf states that he hasn’t seen ‘more that ten Urdu fonts being developed.’ So he tried to search for some Arabic script fonts for inspiration and he found so many of them that the ones he had shortlisted were close to 40. Again the argument here would be that there are more Arab speaking nations than one that speak Urdu. However, this shouldn’t hold us back because even someone as skilled as Abro comments that ‘even if we use those few fonts from the computer let’s say Nastaliq, designers can easily create so much out of these scripts.’ What makes this relevant is because I had mentioned in literature review about how designers around the world are pushing the boundaries with their script to incorporate calligraphy as functional beauty, and

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97 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
98 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
99 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
100 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
101 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
102 KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02nd January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
if the Farsi script can be pushed to such an extent, there is no reason why the Nasta’liq script cannot also be experimented with.

**Breakdown of a Calligraphic Logo**

By taking the logo broken down in my literature review I will be contrasting it with a Pakistani based calligraphic logo. One of Pakistan’s more famous logo is the PIA logo.

![PIA logo](image)

As we can see the calligraphy in this logo has been thought out so that it has stood the test of time. During a focus group, which consisted of participants that were primarily graphic designers, they were shown a variety of logos one of them being PIA. The majority of the participants identified with this logo because of its “familiarity” with being Pakistani. This factor is also apparent in the logo that I had researched on in my literature review, in that it identified with the Arab culture. The aesthetics of the PIA logo is also done well because, as one of the participants in the focus group mentioned, it depicts the “mood and essence of the product.”

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103 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
104 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
105 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
Travelling from right to left, each letter is placed on top of the corresponding one so as to signify a well-balanced logo. The colour choice and the style used convey the “geography of the brand”\(^\text{106}\). Furthermore, it represents functional beauty because not only is the calligraphy representing the brand, but like the Al-Jazeera logo, it is also functioning for its culture and the aesthetics.\(^\text{107}\) This is one of the few calligraphic logos in Pakistan that has remained unchanged for decades.

**Future Prospects of Calligraphy in the Local Design Industry**

Calligraphy and its applications have so far received mixed reviews, as far as the future is concerned, through the focus group that was conducted the participants were all young and upcoming graphic designers. Their views were more towards a positive note.\(^\text{108}\) Majority of the participants agreed that calligraphy could play a pivotal role in our design industry.\(^\text{109}\) One participant said that it should play a pivotal role, [again] looking at Iran they’ve used calligraphy as a backbone in their design.\(^\text{110}\) Another added that as long as Urdu is spoken and written calligraphy will always remain since it is a very deeply embedded part of our art and design.\(^\text{111}\)

These are some very encouraging aspects for calligraphy’s involvement in the design industry; however, some of the more experienced heads had more of a reserved view. For example, Ruheel talks about how designers tried to break the trend from the ‘few fonts’\(^\text{112}\) that existed. He mentions how despite their efforts to incorporate graphic elements, it did not do...

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\(^{106}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{107}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{108}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{109}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{110}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{111}\) Focus group conducted on 1\(^\text{st}\) May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]

\(^{112}\) MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\(^\text{th}\) December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]
‘justice to the true nature of type itself.’\textsuperscript{113} Similarly, Abro feels even though some young designers are pushing boundaries while learning the skill, because they only come from a ‘certain sector of society’\textsuperscript{114} there is hardly any exposure for them.\textsuperscript{115} Yousuf feels that the ‘economy’\textsuperscript{116} has a major part to play. Comparing it with Arab speaking nations, and stating that because of the higher influx of foreign brands, the requirement was to create the logo in all its original properties in Arabic.\textsuperscript{117} Hence the calligraphers found enough commission and their library became quite extensive.\textsuperscript{118} So it goes back to what I he had earlier said that it is the respective we give our language and an effort to use it, which will result in a brighter future for Urdu calligraphy.\textsuperscript{119} Mr Khan has a fairly more optimistic view, he feels that calligraphy should definitely be more commercialised and because he ‘prefers teaching calligraphy to graphic designers rather than artists;’\textsuperscript{120} he believes even with a ‘basic understanding’\textsuperscript{121} they can push it forward in their work and that could ‘instil our culture into our audiences.’\textsuperscript{122}

Throughout the analysis calligraphy’s interpretation was brought forward and viewed repeatedly through the idea of functional beauty. Its meaning and interpretations were predicted and argued through primary research. They were compared and contrasted repeatedly and other

\textsuperscript{113}MuzzamilRuheel interviewed 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{114}KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02\textsuperscript{nd} January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{115}KhudaBuxAbro interviewed 02\textsuperscript{nd} January 2013. [Interview was conducted in person, recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{116}AdnanYousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{117}AdnanYousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{118}AdnanYousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{119}AdnanYousuf interviewed 08\textsuperscript{th} December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{120}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{121}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]

\textsuperscript{122}MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03\textsuperscript{rd} March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
important factors were discovered regarding calligraphy and our design industry. A notable, local calligraphic logo was compared with one that was researched in the literature review. The focus group and interviews provided plenty of surprising insights to what the future holds for calligraphy’s interpretations in our local design industry through the idea of functional beauty.

**Conclusion**

Reaching the end of this dissertation, one must remember that the research aims to understand whether the interpretations of calligraphy by our local graphic designers in the industry can be done so in the light of beauty and function.

Through the research put forward, the results yielded very promising and surprising results. After understanding calligraphy and its relevance in our culture through various factors such as writing, language, its role in design, global interpretations, and how Pakistani based designers dealt with it in their work. We saw that calligraphy interpreted in the graphic industry can be used as functional beauty if its proper rules and regulations are applied through out.

The primary research was compared and contrasted with not only other interviews and the focus group, but also with the secondary research presented in the literature review. This allowed me to reach certain concrete conclusions such as the ‘importance of giving respect to our language’ so that calligraphy may thrive in our design industry. The current interpretations of calligraphy in our design industry are usually done so for ‘commissioned work’ and most

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123 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
124 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
designers are ‘content’ with that, but the future remains positive as people like Khan who insist on teaching calligraphy to graphic designers, and the focus group in which the participants of young upcoming graphic designers who were ‘keen on using calligraphy in their design work in the future.’ Past examples of how well calligraphy incorporated functional beauty was also analysed. This was understood through the focus group mainly because of how well, the beauty, functions to make the logo ‘culturally relevant,’ one participant even mentioned of how the logo was ‘aesthetically appealing’ again showing the good use of functional beauty.

If the interpretations of calligraphy in our local design industry through the idea of function and beauty results in calligraphy ‘instilling our culture’ as well as representing its subsequent brand or product with good aesthetics, then it successfully achieves functional beauty and that would have positive results for our culture and our calligraphy.

The requirement of writing this dissertation had its high and lows, but after successfully applying myself it became thoroughly entertaining. The journey to see how calligraphy is interpreted in our local design industry was exciting to say the least, and the idea of functional beauty being applied to calligraphy allowed me to view it in a unique way. The results of this dissertation not only showed me the importance calligraphy has in our culture and language, but also the responsibility we as graphic designers have to carry it forward in the future.

125 Adnan Yousuf interviewed 08th December 2012. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
126 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
127 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
128 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
129 Focus group conducted on 1st May 2013. [Conducted in person, noted and transcribed]
130 MuhammedKashif Khan interviewed 03rd March 2013. [Interview was conducted in person recorded and transcribed]
calligraphy was so much more practiced and evident in the past. Perhaps the most surprising result of this dissertation was how something of such aesthetic value (calligraphy) can have a range of contexts, as it could be functional on so many levels. Learning new and digging up insightful things, throughout the research, about calligraphy and its relationship with the design industry has made this academic venture worthwhile.

**Bibliography**


**Appendices**

Interview with Adnan Yousuf

Anamta: What are your views on calligraphy in advertising?

Yousuf: What the people, rather advertising designers are using it for is the script. Only they are not looking at the aesthetics of type in terms of a design element. Perhaps the simple gauge for
this statement would be that in the past 20 years or so, that I have been associated with advertising as a student or a practitioner, I haven’t seen more than ten Urdu fonts being developed, and I guess you as student have seen that as well those are the fonts that come with Inpage and nobody has bothered to do anything. Although we are all designers but we obviously didn’t feel the need for it to spend some time and design our own fonts, and no matter how many times we say that Urdu is our primary language here, we always and when I say always 95% of the times we start thinking in English. We develop things in English, we design things in English; and Urdu becomes a translation or an afterthought. Even in design if we have nothing to write, let’s say package design then we’ll draw lines on it just to indicate the type comes here. I think it’s more to do with our fluency with certain softwares and since there’s no compatibility with Urdu fonts or software hence the designers are cutting corners in that. Recently about two years back or so I was quite sick of whatever fonts are available to us so I looked up some Arabic type sets and there are so many and so many nice ones available. I kept short listing fonts and even then I picked up about 40 fonts. Someone obviously went through the pain to develop that. Now having said that, a logical reason behind this could be that there are many Arabic speaking nations compared to the number of people who speak in Urdu and secondly the number of literate people who speak Urdu. So perhaps the numbers are corresponding to that, but I think as designers we haven’t done justice to the Urdu script and I feel hardly anyone is using Urdu script as a design element. Very rarely would you see that and if you look at one of the biggest newspapers that is Jang, we all know but till about 8 or 9 years back they had a large studio where they had people sitting and writing now all of these guys are unemployed and I guess the reason is the same I guess those ten fonts have taken over their jobs. As a designer if I’m looking at making a logo in Urdu, I don’t even think of going to the computer and looking at those ten fonts and try and make the logo out of it. I usually look for a calligrapher, there are very few and
far and you have to locate these guys, although it is not the expense of it I mean usually the economy tells you if there is a major dearth of something than the prices will always go up but these guys are hardly charging anything and yet they have very little work. So if I go to these calligraphers and I tell them I have to make a logo and I am looking at this particular type of khat chances are they are going to give me four different styles on their own, they are not cutting corners if they are proud of what they are doing and I think it is unfortunate that we are not taking care of these people nor that we are bothered with this. I think the reason is very simple it’s just that the kind of people that are ending up in the kind of profession we are in the profession that utilises calligraphy in design it is coming from such backgrounds that half of them may not even speak Urdu, half of them will tell you they cannot speak Urdu. I belonged to a family where nobody really forced me to do this or do that but I think the society that we all belong to your not judged based on even what you study or what your degree is, what subject it is, Although it feels that way but this is my take on it as long as your earning more than your sibling your doing just fine. In most of the social circles this is how the success is defined. This is why we see our siblings our children studying for a grade or a degree but not towards acquiring a certain skill. Many designers say but why do I need to learn how to write or calligraphy it is a dying skill and all the fonts will be developed in a computer and we’re waiting for somebody to develop those fonts for us. We are not picking up the qalam to do calligraphy. Again the question of the economy kicks in immediately if you see the people who are actually going through the pain to learn are perhaps those people who have been learning it through generations. The new breed that went through the pain of learning I feel did that for economic reasons. Case and point the only calligraphy aesthetically done you see in certain paintings or very graphically stable pieces which look more like posters rather than paintings. I’m not saying to establish something negative I love those as well but I just feel those people who went ahead
and learnt that skill thought that calligraphy as paintings sell well. If you didn’t have buyers for that they wouldn’t have done that either. The problem is that we have made a very clear divide between the fine art and commercial design. The fine artists don’t want to cross into the commercial or design side of it so nobody is trying to bridge the gap either, hence the people who learn calligraphy are not bringing it back to design. Designers are not going to go through the pain to learn calligraphy.

An aspect is that we feel that calligraphy is only for wall hangings and I feel it goes more towards the cultural side that we hold these things very sacredly. At times I will also pick the paper up from the floor if it is written in Arabic, but it could might as well be a statement by the manufacturer but since it is written in Arabic. And it looks like Quran scripture I will pick it up.

So a lot has been done subliminally that we have put it on a pedestal. People take it offensively let’s say that I paint nude and write something using a script and even if I have written something related to the concept of the painting people will be offended. It is a perception. Because we have put this language in such high regards we do not want people to mess up the perception up for us. Although I read the Quran but I don’t understand it but I would be offended but if the same thing is written in English or any other language I’m ok with it. But it’s more to do with our own understanding and we have seen that people will give it more due respect and people are ok hanging Arabic scripture on their walls why not put it in the paintings. So I guess that why people are using it for decoration at least in our market.

Anamta: Being an experienced creative what is your perception of calligraphy in Pakistan? And where is it evident.

Yousuf: Just too specifically answer that question calligraphy is only perhaps a need to do basis exercise. That a client wants an ad in Urdu that was initially created in English so let’s go and
translate it and let’s try and make the design as similar to the English ad as possible so we don’t have to go through the approvals process again. You see its more to do with the language if clients started walking into the agencies and says let’s make a campaign in Urdu and send me the script I want to see and he knows his language well chances are I cannot send him something fluffy it needs to have substance. So you will ask do we have a good Urdu copy writer around here if we don’t then let’s hire one this is an important client. If a client walks in and wants to spend billions of rupees on the agency and ask if we have good Urdu copywriters and calligraphers and if it is a prerequisite we will hire them, all those people who are out of work will find work. It is more to do with the language and the respect we give it if advertisers keep Urdu as an afterthought than the jobs that stem out of it will also remain an afterthought. If there is work walking in through the corridors I will hire him but if my clients are ok with the computer generated font, whether as a designer I am ok with that or not or my client service says to cut down on costs. Do remember advertising is a business at the end of the day it is not a charity. Businesses only flourish if you keep the costs at minimum and you generate more business. So it has more to do with our own need of the language number one. Number two we have all been reading about that print in general is dying. We are so used to looking at this breaking news on Geo and Ary, half the Urdu that they are writing is wrong as in the script is wrong. Jazba should not have a zay it should have a zaal but they are writing it and getting away with it because by the time you notice the screen is gone so everybody is ok with that. The paper remains in your hand it has to be proof read by somebody competent it has to be typed out or done calligraphy by somebody competent. It has to be thought out by somebody who understands Urdu well. Print holds you to your word because your client can say that there is a typo of any kind. When put something in print then you are bound to be cautious of things, and
in electronic media there is no check. The visual will move in the next 5 seconds. Hence it’s not just the script it’s the language that’s dying as well.

Anamta: Over the years how do you think calligraphy has been adopted by our ‘designers’ or is there a change taking place?

Yousuf: The only regular statement that I’ve been hearing perhaps it make some sort of connect with calligraphy is that people walking in asking for logos is the “UAE type” logos. Now I understand their design is refined but they work on their type as well. They have developed enough scripts to use on their brands. Even in Iran but just like us who prefer NooriNastaliq they also prefer that. But why do we find more variety in UAE and Arab markets is just because of economy, because most of the foreign brands walk in there, because they were affluent and they has disposable income for people to make the purchase. All the foreign brands went there each and as per requirement they needed to work one font. That is because Starbucks is only going to approve one font, which all the Arab countries are going to use in their local communication. In order to do that they need to commission a font designer who can make that font for them. It is no coincidence that every foreign brand has an Arabic version designed which looks very close to the English logo. So they ended up commissioning lots of fonts and they commissioned lots of calligrapher just for the logos. I was just looking the logo for New look and how he has designed it to look identical although it does not have any abstractions and you can still read New look but it has all the properties of the English font. So they ended up spending money and hence the saved those calligrapher designers and ended up commissioning so many fonts that now their library is extensive. We are a third world country and no one is developing it in Urdu. Chances are there was a brand that need a logo and you put a few dots here and there on a logo already
designed in the UAE and developed that and since we are quite similar to Arabic no one really cared.

Anamta: Can the ways in which designers create visuals using calligraphy actually be termed as calligraphy?

Yousuf: Difficult question the designers will say that it should be but at the end of the day it should be driven by the need or required by the design than its just another design, because the brief said you needed to do this otherwise you won’t. I think any font any language any script is only going to flourish when people are using it by desire or by their own free will rather since the document said please use Urdu calligraphy in my design. Advertising at the end of the day is all commissioned work somebody is putting the bill so that somebody usually ends up sending you a briefing document and you need to follow it to the peak. So if you are doing it on somebody’s instructions because somebody wants this script in there yes you will fix the aesthetics of it that’s why you’re the designer and why he’s paying you money. I think things will take a different turn if I went to the client and said don’t do the logo in English I think you should use Urdu calligraphy in there it’s widely understandable and it looks good and that is something that even if I told you that story it will look like someone is making an effort. So if you’re talking about general practice call it whatever because at the end of the day it is commissioned work. That is if somebody is putting an effort to revive this I don’t think so. It is our own way of not respecting our language enough. How many countries speak Urdu only Pakistanis do. Now if I don’t want to be seen or am avoiding to be seen as a Pakistani I obviously don’t use the language outside. In that way I am avoiding the language as well. At the end of the day you represent your country and you speak the language proudly.
Anamta: Do you think the use of calligraphy with our language fulfilling a function by creating an identity?

Yousuf: Not at all, Identity is for people to recognize you and for people who don’t recognize you. If I have a much bigger number who looks like me and speaks a different language it sounds like Urdu, so if I’m talking to somebody in Turkey he will think I’m from India and I’m speaking in Hindi no matter how many times I explain it to them so if I give him a document written in Urdu he will turn around and say I don’t understand Arabic, that’s how our script looks like. So what identity are we talking about did we try and differentiate the Urdu script from the Arabic script or from Persian script how are we going to explain it to a non-believer he recognises that this type of script is Arabic script. I am sure even Iran face the same challenges as we do. But since the Arab speaking community is much bigger and they have more access to the West or the general world that’s why the script will always be referred to as Arabic script.

Interview with KhudaBuxAbro

Anamta: What is your interpretation of calligraphy?

Abro: I feel calligraphy is our foundational art form which has a marked presence in our culture. This has been evident in the past and till now people use it. But when General Zia came to power, everything had to be Islamized and politicised many great figurative artists such as Shamzah who were masters at calligraphy as well suffered a lot in his regime and the art of calligraphy was degraded. That era brought a major shift where many artists adopted this art and those who had little connection to the art world such as the calligraphers or Katibs and khatats
used their skills to just merely add a few strokes and apply colours to their own benefits, I feel calligraphy lost its true meaning. Secondly figurative artists and painters did not use this art to the fullest. Now its use is only limited to religion and you will find it being used to write Ayats and make frames to sell in shops, I disagree with this completely. Personally I have explored the art of poetry using calligraphy in my work. When I went to NCA in my first year I worked on Shah Hussain and then a few years ago I started working on Ghalib. My upbringing was in Farsi and I’ve learnt typography and music from Iran, I feel Iran has excelled in the field of Graphic Design mainly typography because art and design have been given great importance and we can see that in their work. They have pushed the meaning of calligraphy and modernised it whereas we are just just limiting its form to decoration. We do not have any design exhibitions, after graduating students find jobs in the commercial sector and no design work is taken to galleries. Over a few course of years we have seen photography displays. This is why over two years I have been conducting design gallery displays for posters, I have been working with an organisation know as ‘Posters for tomorrow’, a competition is held and posters from all over the world are selected and displayed. But I feel like as the use of the pen is diminishing the culture of computers is taking over at, where one is forgetting how to write and read. Calligraphy was our art and always will be, but we need to modernise it’s which many artist are doing but not to that extent. When we look at our magazine we are not using typography as design, visuals would not be needed if the typography has been worked on in the design. But if we look at magazines and scripts from Iran they have been worked on greatly. They have created visuals from typography and used it in many interesting and modern ways. I didn’t learn this skill but worked on many different scripts and incorporated it in my work because I believe in moving ahead and pushing ideas further and I constantly ask myself as to how to make my work better. (Conversation edited not relevant to discussion). I agree that calligraphy is a decorative art but I believe you can also
communicate and spread your message effectively, that’s the beauty of it. Even if we use those few fonts from the computer let’s say Nastaliq designers can easily create so much out of these scripts.

Anamta: How can calligraphy have an impact on Pakistani designers?

Abro: I have covered quite a bit before but I just feel there is no direction and our designers in any field be it advertising or television, they all want to rush into execution without understanding the core designs. I do feel this is just a period which will pass because I see people and youngsters pushing boundaries learning these skills and actually spending time understanding them, but they are coming from a certain sector of society they might know about the education they are given other than that there is no other exposure for our young designers unfortunately. (Conversation edited irrelevant to discussion).

Anamta: So then what is the purpose of it or is it a decorative art?

Abro: I feel calligraphy to an extent is considered a decorative art but you can really utilise it which none of our designers are and many foreign designers are pushing their creativity Reza Abedini is the best example. I feel if one finds it difficult to learn or copy this skill then being designers we can play with its form and use it according to your own aesthetics and design sense. 

Conversation edited, irrelevant to discussion.

Interview with MuzammilRuheel

Anamta: Being an experienced creative what is your perception of calligraphy in Pakistan?
Ruheel: In Pakistan and the Subcontinent as I particularly talk about this point in my work and I have always institutionally critiqued this through my work is just that in Pakistan calligraphy or any text based work which has something to do with Arabic is usually perceived as a visual not as text. They don’t really understand what is written but from the composition or text they think it is sacred and that is why in Pakistan text based work especially calligraphy is very difficult if you are not working in sacred texts. So the point is that in the Subcontinent if I talk about Arabic, the Qurans language is based more on metaphor, you have to take out your own understanding of the sacred text. When I was young since my mother comes from a different sect and father is from a different sect and whenever they told me stories about religion they would always be edited, and I would always try to question and look for answers so I researched on different Firqas and sects found that they have all something different to say, and who ever is following them is following them blindly. I then consulted the Quran and read it with an Ustaad and realised it was very difficult and very conservative thought coming to me from that book. My father had used to tell me one thing and that is the Quran is not what it is, its way beyond our thoughts. So then my father introduced me to one of his friends who was very learned and open minded and I started reading the Quran with him when he told me that you should always try and read the Quran with someone who has a vision. Soon I found these little posters which were very fanatic and had manipulated some verses on Jihad, when I researched I found that there were many conditions that had to be taken into consideration and that was when I realised how people are really manipulating Islam in the masses that was an eye opener for me. I then went to my UtaadKhursheedAlamGohar with whom I was also learning calligraphy and I asked him if it was ok to write anything other than Quranic piece or sacred text and he told me that it is just a way of practising and you can write anything with it. In History all the patrons had used to support Islamic Art and that is why you get so much calligraphy in Islamic Art and it as liberation. Then
I started writing phrases and acknowledged the fact that we have been mislead or misinterpreted by text, because we don’t understand text. That is why when we have any kind of Arabic text in the house we use it as wall hangings and don’t understand it. A lot of my pieces that I did earlier were based on the fact that what you see is not how it is. So all these fanatics are just manipulating the text and provoking you to take steps. In other countries that don’t have the same language and even Arabic countries don’t understand their language. So the point is if I ask you to read IsmatChughtai but if you don’t understand the context then the words will just be words for you and nothing more. If you know what the context is if you have a vision you will really understand what she is saying or tying to portray so Quran is something like that. The point is that our script is very similar to that script but we can vocally express it but don’t understand it and this is a huge dilemma. As creative’s if this is happening we should try and settle this down and if calligraphers are facing issues it is because they don’t have patrons of this particular Art. So what happens is when they don’t have any patrons and they don’t get support from proper channels so in order to keep their bread and butter they find ways to sell their art and they don’t understand that they are misleading people through this genre. I had a series of work called what you see is what you get but this is not what you are looking at when I showed it to people they said this is Islamic Art. The time when I brought this bit of shift in my work and worked on visuals people had a very different reaction. I was trying to depict the chaos around us by using this particular form but this time I have wrote sentences and I have made those lines into images. So this time round the reaction was even more different where they had a visual to associate with. That’s the problem with our people no one wants to read or understand. In another way I was trying to educate people with my work I was trying to make them experience that in the real life this is what actually is going on with them. So my entire purpose was to educate people.
Anamta: Over the years how do you think calligraphy has been adopted by our graphic designers?

Ruheel: I would say that calligraphy has not been so mainstream. There was a time when our newspapers were written by hand and this skill was much respected in the days where people would earn their bread and butter but soon the computers took over and softwares replaced man and a gap was created. Now text is not like English text where you can make small interventions and create a new font, it can take you centuries to create a new font. When the softwares came in and the Katibs lost their jobs the fonts came into being but soon people became bored of these few fonts. People started making interventions with these fonts, there was development and people did try to incorporate the graphic elements into their design but I feel that it just did not do justice to the true nature of type itself. Now I’ve designed the logo for Duniya TV and of course you can push the form but you must push the skills. Like I say there is craft and then there is Art, Craft just has these set patterns and you have to follow that. A calligrapher and a katib are two different people a calligrapher develops and a Katib only works on the set patterns. Katib comes from Kitabat and calligraphy and khatati is the result which comes from developing a khat. I am a Khatat not a katib and I intervene into many texts. I am always trying to get something new from texts.

Anamta: Can the ways in which designers create visuals using calligraphy actually be termed as calligraphy?

Ruheel: I feel there is a very thin line I can say that it is ext and calligraphy but there is a difference. Calligraphy has a very broader term it is not just writing one or two words it’s an entire genre. Like English you have set modules for A B C D and you can use them in that way. But when you talk about Arabic Urdu you have Alif Bay JeemDaal and Seen and their joints,
which need to be developed but will take a long time and no one has the time or the patron or government support to develop this. All the Ustaads in Pakistan and their students who do learn this skill are not taking up this challenge and are doing what they doing just earn a living. This is why no development is taking place so we can call it calligraphy but partially. There is a huge gap in the development phase I feel.

Anamta: Do you think is the use of calligraphy with our language fulfilling a function by creating an identity?

Ruheel: Basically Urdu itself does not have an identity it is a combination of many different languages and so has the font. Taleeq from Persia we picked up certain scripts from different languages to create our own. In Pakistan the finest Ustaad was Parveen Rakam and then her student Ustaad Yousuf Silisi and their set patterns, which are still considered when working on fonts. Now we have Inpagea software developed by India and we use it, but the question is where is our identity. I feel we don’t really have an identity but yea when we use Nastaliq people actually say its Urdu. Even when we use Inpage for Nastaliq people say its Urdu but as soon as the font changes people say its Arabic when it’s just a minor change in the font.

Interview with Muhammed Kashif Khan

(Parts of the interview was translated due to the nature of this dissertation being in English)

Anamta: Where did you learn this skill and what inspired you to take it up?

Khan: My name is Mohammad Kashif Khan I am basically from Karachi. I feel I a born artist. I haven’t studied in an Art school but I was always interested in attaining this skill. I had used to
learn drawing at home. I had used to observe Khattats on the television and practiced it. This interest continued into my work in school and soon I became a student of UstadAbulRao Delhi. He belonged to the Delhi school of thought. I learnt Nastaliq from him. Then I went on to Ustad Ahmed Madani Sahab where I learnt Khat e Sulus for three years. Soon I started exhibiting my work in places for example I painted the roof for Karachi Port Trust, I worked for various private banks designing logos and titles for books. But I worked as a Khatat and not a Katib.

Conversation edited, irrelevant to discussion.

Anamta: What's the difference between a Katib and a Khatat?

Khan: The difference between a Katib and a Khatat is that a Katib writes small and intricately. Whereas Khatat writes intricately, big and small but always remains in the rules and maintains measurements. But a Katib does not follow rules. These are the fundamentals of both these skills. Soon I started teaching Khatati and I earned a lot from it. Conversation edited, irrelevant to discussion. I started the course for Calligraphy and illumination at the Karachi University. I was the first one to start this course in this field. It was quite fruitful and many batches graduated with this skill.

Anamta: How do you interpret calligraphy? What is your understanding of it?

Khan: The first thing is that the relationship and bond you have with calligraphy should be very strong. I feel that the kind of work I do I want to make maintain a level of it and bring it to international standards as well. So it’s recognised with a bigger audience and not a niche. I have an attachment with this skill. Just like a friend I have the same relationship with calligraphy. You learn to hate it and love it at the same time. If there is a boundary line that has been drawn and you cannot cross it and whoever has crossed it has gained huge success and name and we should
respect that. But we should always learn to stay within boundaries, because essentially calligraphy is all about following rules and keeping within boundaries, and producing work by staying within them. Every time you do it people will look at it and say that it is the same Khat, and everyone in the world might use the same khat but when you compose it or make a composition it changes. It becomes your identity. The same is with single words which become your identity just as it is with artists when you look at a painting you recognise the painter. How do you recognise it? It is their identity. They have their own elements and treatment and they tend to repeat a lot. If someone uses calligraphy anywhere in the world the rules and order remain the same but creates a different identity. This is a little difficult in the case of calligraphy, because you can recognise the line quality of a painter but you can only recognise calligraphy if you have followed the rules and guides yourself. But if someone says calligraphy does not have any identity and everything looks the same then that is a misconception.

Anamta : Why do designer push this form like you said it follows rules. What is the need?

Khan: *Conversation edited, irrelevant to discussion.* I feel one must follow rules in order to understand how to push the limits but keeping the boundaries in mind. When you are working on the classical styles you have to research on every small detail. This is the relationship I have with calligraphy. I can write a single letter in so many different scripts and it holds more interest than merely creating an image or setting it within shapes. That is what I think and feel calligraphy requires an understanding and deep relationship. I feel the west has influenced designers and artists to a great extent. I will explain that there are a lot of students coming from different schools of thought and when they enter a field they asked to create their identity without focusing on the basics. Instead we try to merge ideas from the west into our Art. I feel that classical calligraphy should be done in that style only once you become an expert in this of this
form and then you wish to change a few things you will be able to create that identity. When we get influenced from the west and try to somehow fit our work into it, we start breaking rules and don’t build an understanding of the form.

Anamta: So then what is the purpose of it?

Khan: Calligraphy is a very important tool of the Islamic world. I feel it is a means of expression a tool for those who want to express themselves and their voices heard. A place where one couldn’t express through imagery this method was adopted. We are definitely conveying a message about our heritage and our culture. When we look at calligraphic logos from different banks for example Faisal bank the logo tells us about the banking and its system. So yes it really speaks about the rich Islamic culture.

Anamta: What impact does calligraphy have on our local graphic designers?

Khan: When our designers enter this field they have no sense about this skill at all. Many different art directors and TV channels have commissioned for their work and I have made sure I keep a strict check on the work and if it isn’t being changed. The thing is these designers coming from different backgrounds don’t really have and know how about this skill and they are not to blame. I am teaching graphic designer’s calligraphy at Karachi University, so that they have some basic understanding. It will have a great impact on our designers and bring back our heritage. My students always try to incorporate calligraphy in their work for their clients.

Primarily our script was taken from Persia; we infused the Persian script into our own script. From that many different schools of thought came about. There are about seven to eight schools of thought in Iran and there are five to six scripts present in Pakistan, which many people do not know of. There are many schools of thought working upon the Lahori script. Now how did
calligraphy become our culture? Just as Urdu is a language developed a combination of different languages, and just as Islam entered Hindustan it came from the Arab nation. The two things that these people brought with them was their language and their script which further went on to Iran and then the Ottomans, who when wrote letters to their enemies they used their script. Allama Iqbal himself stressed how his poetry was to be written and would refuse to do poetry if his text was not written using this style. I feel graphic designers have a great tool, if they even have little sense of this skill they will bring it forward into their work. They will in a way instil our culture into the audiences, who even though might have little understanding of design but will familiarise with it. The difference between a commercial artist and a fine artist is just that graphic designers have a tool of reaching to a greater audience than just a mere exhibition display. Even if you look at the titles and logo on Geo TV they all use Arabic script. Aljazeera has a very set style and even though many won’t understand it, we still remember it and have great value. So I believe that calligraphy should definitely be commercialised, and I myself choose to teach designers over artists. Conversation edited, irrelevant to discussion.

Interview with Rafi Naqvi

(Parts of the interview was translated due to the nature of this dissertation being in English)

Anamta: How did you learn calligraphy and what is your interpretation of it?

Naqvi: This is a skill which has been passed onto me by my ancestors all the women and children in our house are taught this skill. I was talented and I picked this skill fast. In this field I am known as Rafi Naqvi and it has been 37 years in this field and I have been privileged enough
to be invited by the government of Iran to work on many site related projects by them. This was just a brief introduction of how I got into this now moving towards the question about calligraphy being commercial I personally feel you find many loopholes. There is no reality in our work one can very clearly see that many times things have been copied or picked up from other sources. One needs to be sincere with their work and committed and especially when working with these set of rules and skill.

Anamta: Do you think calligraphy is just used for beautification or is communicating to the audiences?

Naqvi: I feel everything needs to be beautiful, everything needs to be polished or it will never appeal to the audiences and so is the case with design. Now when we look at an English font we always judge which one looks good and so is the case with Urdu that if an ad or a hoarding is being made one must always take care of the text. Now if there is a poster we will only use a font which is visible from afar.

Anamta: Do you think it is important for designers to increase its application?

Naqvi: Yes of course one requires these skills from time to time. Now one of the big problems is that a client comes to a designer and asks him to work on a certain theme I feel this is wrong because then there is no use of a designer. If he has been provided a theme he will only work on that theme and lose his own creativity and if he diverts the design is rejected because that is not the client’s requirement. Calligraphy is such skill which does not require any machine to take over I feel.

Anamta: What changes have you seen?
Naqvi: Advertising and print media these are two different fields. Like I’ve said before changes should come about and if there is no reality in your work, it will never fulfil or satisfy you. Now the designers just use a certain font at my time all the newspapers and magazines were written by hand. But we required a long time but the computers have made results fast but it is not original just as how a designer or calligrapher could do.

Anamta: How do the designs have an effect on designers from different backgrounds?

Naqvi: The thing is if there is a good designer or an artist and when he produces a piece which is appealing to the eye people will appreciate it. If it is readable and the layout is understandable it becomes easy for other calligraphers or designers to pick and get influenced from them in a good way. Now there are many names from my family for example Sadiquan was one of the top most Khatats of the world and it is true that I have been influenced by his work. If there is good work only then can you be influenced.

Anamta: What are your thoughts on the computerised fonts?

Naqvi: If we talk about the people that generated these fonts on the computer they were never Khatats in my eyes. The reason is that I myself developed a Khat known as ‘Surkhab’ which was given to Imam Alvi, and that was the very first font that came about onto the computer and you also will find all the rules applied onto this font, which are missing in all the other fonts. Hopefully I do feel in the times to come people will bring about improvement. Because right now the fonts that are being used are quite useless, it is just for the sake of getting your work done I feel.

Anamta Should this skill only be used in Art and not commercially?
Naqvi: Calligraphy itself is an Art and when it goes into this field it becomes commercial as well. Now if I have an exhibition after one or two years and will only be for a limited audience if I commercialise this it will be viewed by millions daily. The thing is that many people in Pakistan only understand Urdu and can write in only Urdu and people will always recognise two fonts in our country the Khat e Naqsh that is the font for the Quran and Nastaliq, which is commonly understood as our local font.

Focus Group

Video shown: Bahia Shehab, ‘A Thousand Times No,’ Ted Talks

The presentation shown is provided in an attached document

The topic had been introduced by the author Anamta Kari. A presentation was shown which was divided in two parts, after which everyone’s opinions were taken into consideration and any queries were answered.

**Focus Group consisted of participants relating to a design background:**

1. Ms. Mariam Shakeel Age: 23 (Graphic Designer at Ogilvy and Mather)

2. Ms. Mahak Jiwani Age: 24 (Studying Graphic Design)

3. Ms. Wajeeha Abbasi Age: 22 (Graphic Designer at Ogilvy and Mather)

4. Mr. Aamir Riffat Age: 25 (Graphic Designer at Ogilvy and Mather)

5. Mr. Akber Ahmed Age: 25 (Visualizer at Ogilvy and Mather)
Part A: A variety of logos were shown and the following questions were asked.

Q1. Which logos do you identify with more? Why.

A1. Majority identified with PIA, Gulabo and Aajtv, primarily because of their familiarity as being Pakistani and also being mentioned by one of the participants as ‘aesthetic appealing’. The posters were also familiar as they had seen it on walls in many locations.

Q2. Does the use of calligraphy convey a message? If yes please specify.

A2. Majority felt it definitely conveyed a message and felt that ‘it gave a local feel and made it more relatable’ also that it ‘conveyed the geography of the brand well’ another participant mentioned that ‘calligraphy usually brings out cultural relevance, and contributes to the aesthetics, similarly group member felt that ‘calligraphy is the beautification of text. The only message it conveyed was the one the text stood for, however the form of calligraphy conveyed somewhat of a feeling that represented the brand’.

Q3. Is the use of calligraphy just to add beauty?

A3. The participants had a divided opinion on this, one if the participants said that ‘it brings out cultural relevance’ where as most of them felt that it was not in all cases but they agreed that it did add beauty to text.

Q4. The group was asked if they had ever used calligraphy in their designs and how had they applied it.

A4. They had all used it on a variety of projects they had done for example Posters, logos, titles and brochures. One of them mentioned she tries to make it look ‘contemporary’. They all seemed keen on using calligraphy in their design work in future as well.
Q5. The group was asked if by adding calligraphy in design would add to cultural significance.

A5. They all agreed on and felt it was in tune with our culture and gave examples of how they had used calligraphy in their design pieces.

Q6. From the discussion a question was asked to everyone as to what were the consideration taken when using calligraphy.

A6. Again the participants had different opinions and shared their individual thoughts where they all agreed that it shouldn’t be an afterthought. One added that it should not be distorted and it should be readable if the project demanded it. As long as it looked good and that was justified it didn’t need to follow specific rules. But it should depict the mood and essence of the product.

Part B: A video by ShehabBhai was shown and questions were asked in relation to the video.

Q7. Did calligraphy play a role in that revolution? How?

A7. The video led to the participants discussing it between each other. They all felt agreed that calligraphy acted as a means of communication between the people and the authorities. One of the participant explained that language itself conveyed so much hence the typeface used held equal importance.

Q8. Can calligraphy play a pivotal role in Pakistan design industry?

A8. Majority was in agreement but they all had their own point of views. One of the participants said’ As long as it is used with proper understanding and not used like ‘Akhbar e Jahan’ with 60 effects. Another participant explained that ‘not only can it, it should. Taking a leaf from Iran’s book, they’ve used calligraphy as a backbone of their design. This brings cultural relevance and
unparalleled beauty. Another view was that ‘calligraphy is a very deeply embedded part of our art and design and will continue to be one, as long as Urdu is spoken and written.

Q9. Why is there reluctance by designers to apply calligraphy in their work?

A9. There were many contrasting views that arose from this question. Some said ‘We don’t think there is, however a lot of designers are trained in English, so Urdu doesn’t come as naturally. The others felt designers in Pakistan are too busy trying to emulate the west instead of looking at the east for inspiration. Another view was that people think that somehow English makes it look international. Somehow English has a wider audience. Which is why in this day and age people prefer a universal message that can be understood by all, hence they either stick to English or don’t use any text at all.