

“The Night Power” by Mohammad Firdaus Ibrahim: Interpreting Islamic Aesthetics through Imam Al-Ghazali's The Concept of Beauty Theory and The Nazariyyah Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This study examined a piece of art called "The Night Power," which was made by Muhammad Firdaus Ibrahim, a Malaysian artist from Kedah. "Subhanallahi Wa Bihamdihi, Subhanallahi Azhim," one of the most well-known Dhikr in Islam, is used in this Islamic calligraphy painting. Muslims use this Dhikr as a recital to express their devotion to God. An interview with the artist was undertaken in order to gain a deeper understanding of the visual narratives surrounding this piece of art. Imam Al-Ghazali's The Concept of Beauty Theory and The Nazariyyah Philosophy will be used to analyse this piece of art in order to comprehend and decipher not only its aesthetic elements and tenets but also its spiritual narratives. The Night Power was similarly analysed, concluding that it achieved the highest level of beauty by representing the concept of loving Allah, who embodies love and beauty, while also reflecting the Nazariyyah philosophy within the painting.

Keywords: Islamic Art, Islamic Esthetics, Al-Ghazali, Concept of Beauty, Nazariyyah

1.INTRODUCTION

Islamic aesthetics embodies a rich tradition that integrates spirituality, philosophy, and artistic practice. At its heart lies the principle of *tawhid*, the unity of God, which frames all forms of artistic expression. Beauty, in this context, is not pursued for its own sake but as a reflection of divine order and harmony. This worldview also informs the practice of *aniconism*, the avoidance of figural representation in sacred contexts,

which has led to the flourishing of abstract forms such as geometry, arabesque, and calligraphy. The Qur'an itself underscores this aesthetic foundation, presenting God as *Al-Jamil* (The Beautiful), and beauty as a manifestation of divine perfection within creation.

Philosophical interpretations of beauty within Islam have further enriched this aesthetic tradition. Imam al-Ghazali regarded beauty as an expression of truth and perfection, teaching that outward beauty is meaningful only insofar as it reflects inner spiritual reality. Ibn Arabi expanded this perspective by linking beauty to God's divine attributes (*jamal*), viewing artistic creation as a means of experiencing the Divine. Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy placed light at the center of aesthetic experience, treating it as a metaphor for divine radiance that permeates existence. Together, these thinkers established a philosophical foundation where aesthetics functions as a pathway to knowledge of God.

In practice, Islamic art manifests these ideas through distinctive visual and material forms. Calligraphy, considered the highest art form, transmits the divine word of the Qur'an, elevating script into a sacred medium. Geometry and symmetry express the order and precision of creation, while the arabesque, with its infinite repetition, symbolizes the eternity of God. Architecture, particularly mosques and madrasas, embodies these principles in physical space, transforming communal worship into an experience of beauty and transcendence.

Beyond the visible, Islamic aesthetics also extends into mystical and spiritual dimensions. In Sufism, the arts are understood as vehicles of *dhikr*, the remembrance of God. Poetry, music, and even visual ornamentation serve to guide the soul toward divine presence. Practices such as *sama* (ritual listening) emphasize sound and rhythm as mediums of transcendence. In this framework, aesthetic experience becomes an act of worship, where the encounter with beauty is simultaneously an encounter with the Divine.

Contemporary interpretations of Islamic aesthetics continue to evolve, balancing tradition with modernity. Many artists reimagine classical forms such as calligraphy

through abstraction or digital art, while others engage with interfaith dialogues, highlighting Islamic aesthetics within global discourses of spirituality and symbolism. At the same time, scholars critically reassess how colonialism, globalization, and modern cultural exchanges have reshaped Islamic artistic identity. These reinterpretations affirm that Islamic aesthetics remains a living tradition—deeply rooted in classical foundations yet responsive to contemporary realities. Ultimately, to interpret Islamic aesthetics is to recognize it as more than a collection of artistic forms. It is a holistic vision in which beauty, truth, and spirituality is inseparably intertwined. Whether through the rhythmic flow of Qur’anic calligraphy, the mathematical harmony of geometric patterns, or the contemplative silence of a mosque’s interior, Islamic aesthetics invites us to perceive the divine through the language of beauty.

Within the Islamic religion, the context of art spirituality is also prominent in the religion and communities. In the history of art within the Muslim community or the Islamic Art, there are various of art genres that are prevalent with the context of spirituality in art, in fact it can be said that most of the Islamic art have a heavy relation with the spiritual aspect (*BBC - Religions - Islam: Islamic Art*, n.d.). This is because most of the Islamic art are heavily related to the stories and topics within the Quran and Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (SAW). To further understand this, one would have to look into the art within the Islamic art, especially the genre of Calligraphy art of the Islamic art. Within the written calligraphy, there can be many verses from the Quran, which are the words of God and there are also verses form Hadith, which are words and wisdoms from the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

The words and wisdoms from the Al Quran and Hadith are often used as the subject of the Islamic Calligraphy art. This is because, the words are a word of philosophy, wisdom and most importantly beauty. This wisdom is known as Ihsan in the Quran (Renovatio, n.d.). One example of Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is “He Who Knows God Knows Himself”. This Hadith contains wisdom like no other, it is so much so that one of the most prominent scholars in the Islamic history, was moved in his heart that he started looking into his spiritual self. This scholar is none other than Imam Al Ghazali. The Hadith moved him to the point of him writing a book based on the hadith, titled *The Alchemy of Happiness*. This book was so profound within the Islam

community that it is still being used as a point of reference for art criticism, even for the Islamic art communities.

The theory that was brought up by Imam Al Ghazali was The Concept of Beauty and The Nazariyyah Philosophy. These two theories, have been used simultaneously by the Islamic art communities to give or to decipher the analytical aspect of an artwork. The artworks that are used can range from western fine art to eastern Islamic art, and not to mention the southeast Asian artworks. Within the Southeast Asia, there exist many countries filled with many cultural and religion backgrounds, one of them is the country Malaysia. Malaysia is a unique and diverse country filled with many race and religion backgrounds. This uniqueness can also be seen through their artworks that were produced by them. The most prominent religion group in Malaysia is Islam and their Islamic artworks are unique to their demographic and social background.

In this paper, the artwork titled The Night Power by a Malaysian artist known as Mohammad Firdaus Ibrahim will be explored by using Imam Al Ghazali's The Concept of Beauty Theory alongside with the Nazariyyah Philosophy Theory. These theories will be used to interpret and decipher the artwork in the context of spirituality. The spirituality aspect that are going to be discussed are not be just bound to individuality categories but as a whole. Islamic art has long been associated with spiritual and metaphysical dimensions, with scholars emphasizing its role in embodying divine beauty and wisdom. Within this tradition, Imam Al-Ghazali remains a central figure, offering theoretical frameworks that continue to inform Islamic aesthetics.

2.IMAM AL GHAZALI

Imam Al Ghazali is a famous scholar in the history of Islamic education. This is because of his success as a philosopher earning his doctorate and his place as a professor in his early 30s. His success was so wide known that even both the west and east regarded him as the best Muslim after Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (*THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF AL-GHAZALI*, n.d.). However, with all of the achievements he had in the world he still felt like something was missing, incomplete. It was later then that he came to the conclusion that it was his spiritual aspect was lacking, so he

began to devote himself so that he would attain his place in the paradise or Jannah, and avoid Hell.

3.THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

Al-Ghazali's *Concept of Beauty* establishes a hierarchy of love and beauty. The first level, love of self and family, emphasizes self-awareness and recognition of divine creation. The second level, love for Allah, reflects unconditional appreciation of existence and creation without expectation. The highest level, love of Allah, transcends worldly perception and represents total devotion, where beauty is experienced through the 'eye of the soul.' This framework situates beauty not only in physical form but also in moral and spiritual dimensions, aligning art with divine truth.

The Concept of Beauty talks about the hierarchy of beauty in the perspective and understanding of Islamic values. This is because, this theory talks and discuss the topic of beauty that transcends even beyond the physical aspect of life which includes manners, and expression (Ghehi, n.d.). This theory talks about the concept of beauty that can be seen or perceive through the eyes or lens of Love. In the first stage of beauty being the lowest in the Hierarchy of Beauty, Imam Al Ghazali talks about *The Beauty to Love Oneself and Family*. This first stage in the hierarchy of beauty talks about the Beauty to love, understand and accept one self. This is because in the book *Alchemy of Happiness*, Imam Al Ghazali explores the famous Hadith saying that came from the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that goes "He Who Knows Himself Knows God", which talks about someone who understands and appreciate themselves will come to a realization and understanding of God. This is because in Islam, it is believed that the human soul was made in a fraction of God's power (*If Allah Blew Part of His Soul Into Adam.Does That Mean That Adam Is Part of Allah?*, n.d.). To further understands this, another Hadith or saying from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said that humans was made in the image and likeness of God (Elias & Elias, 2019). This proves that the Hadith saying that those who knows and understand themselves will find themselves understanding God. When it comes to the physical aspect, those who take time to understand their backgrounds and family heritage will start to appreciate and accept themselves for who they are through their families. In doing so, one will start to fall in

love with themselves and their families as they discover themselves, in which indirectly is a form of love towards God.

The Second stage of beauty is *The Beauty to Love for Allah*. In this stage of beauty, Imam Al Ghazali talks about the beauty to love anything and everything without ever needing or expecting anything in return. This level of beauty has more to do with being able to love everything around us, seeing and appreciating life as it is, be it good or bad and not expecting anything in return (al-Ghazali, 2001). Often times love is seen as something transactional, love is not seen as something that is cheap or something attainable just because which makes love as something that is expensive in terms of metaphysical perspective. However, in this stage of beauty one can achieve this level of beauty by having a sense of peace and love with self and the world around them. Only then can the love for everything, be it nature, humans and animals can be achieved. And only then one can achieve the second stage of beauty, to Love for Allah.

Lastly, the third stage of love, being the highest in the hierarchy of beauty is *The Beauty to Love Allah as Allah is The Embodiment of Love and Beauty*. In this highest stage of beauty, Imam Al Ghazali talks about the beauty to Love Allah by giving a complete devotion and worship to Allah as Allah is the epitome of beauty (Shama, 2025). In this stage, one can only achieve this highest level of beauty by practicing prayers and recitals or Dhikr for most of their times. In doing so, one will be able to perceive the beauty of love for Allah through the sixth sense, known as the Eyes of the Soul. The Eyes of The Soul is ability to perceive and experience through the understanding of the soul which is through our heart. In this stage, it is considered one of the most romantic in the hierarchy of beauty for human to love God

4. NAZARIYYAH PHILOSOPHY

Complementing this, the *Nazariyyah Philosophy* provides a broader ontological and cosmological foundation for understanding art in Islam. It consists of four dimensions: (1) *Illahiyah* (divine existence), which explores the metaphysical relationship between humans and Allah; (2) *Amaliyyah* (human responsibility), emphasizing ethical duties of stewardship; (3) *Riyaziyyah* (mathematical and geometric order),

which highlights the harmony embedded in creation and reflected in artistic proportion; and (4) *Tabii* (natural law), which underlines the purposeful order of the natural world. Together, these dimensions reveal how Islamic art embodies both symbolic meaning and metaphysical truths.

Nazariyyah Philosophy discusses about the question of life, of the universe. The question of where a human stands in the life (al-Ghazali, 2001). The question of human's position in life comparatively to animals and nature. It is Imam Al Ghazali's way to discuss of the ways to seek the truth of God. In The Nazariyyah Philosophy, there are four aspects that makes up what the Nazariyyah Philosophy is. The first one is the Aspect of *Philosophy Of Illahiyah*. In the aspect of Philosophy of Illahiyah, it talks about the existence of Allah. This aspect explores the same two Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) of "He Who Knows Himself Knows God", and "God Created Man In His Own Likeness" to understand and seek the truth of Allah (REFERENCE). These two Hadith are the key to understanding of Allah as both Allah and soul are non-physical or metaphysical elements, they are both do not confine by any physical qualities or attributions. When one's knowledge of self are gained and through devotion of God, it then will become the key to the knowledge of God.

The second is the aspect of *Philosophy of Amaliyyah or Insaniyyah*. For this aspect, it talks about nature of human, specifically the nature of human's responsibilities on this world. Being made in God's likeness, humans were given the responsibilities by God onto this world to protect, preserve and nurture the lives on the world be it the flora and fauna as well as between humans. Humans are ought to coexist with other humans of different races and the nature and ecosystem. These responsibilities are more heavily given duty to Muslims as by doing and carrying out this duty, they will perform Taqwa to Allah. The Third is the aspect of *Philosophy of Riyaziyyah*. This aspect discusses the abstract from of geometrical elements and the numbers that exist in the universe. The mathematic equation such as the theorem Pythagoras and The Golden Ration is the major examples of mathematical equations that exist beyond the naked human eyes. These patterns and numbers can only be seen after one is able to see through using the Eyes of The Souls as mentioned before in which also helps to develop intellectual faculty.

Lastly, the fourth is the aspect of *Philosophy of Tabii*. Opposite of the Philosophy of Amaliyyah, this philosophy talks about the responsibilities of the nature, flora and fauna, to abide by their fitrah, or in a more common understanding is known as the laws of nature. This is important as every being that was created on this world serves a purpose that is unique to them. For example, an apex predator like Malayan Tiger is there to serve as a means to keep balance of the lives in the food chains, whereas pigs and crocodiles were created as a form of maintenance to keep the environment neat and tidy (Ashraf, 2024). All of these animals and plants serve a purpose each unique to their own to keep the balance of the ecosystem. Previous scholarship underscores that Islamic calligraphy, in particular, integrates these philosophical principles. As words of the Qur'an and hadith are visualized, they become both aesthetic forms and vehicles of devotion. Contemporary scholars such as Bensaid (2017) and Abu Wish & Hamidon (2022) argue that Islamic art continues to operate as a bridge between sensory beauty and spiritual transcendence. Thus, applying Al-Ghazali's theories and Nazariyyah Philosophy provides a robust framework for analyzing modern artworks like **The Night Power**, situating them within the continuum of Islamic aesthetic and spiritual traditions.

5. ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Mohamad Firdaus bin Ibrahim is a Malaysian born and raised artist. Born in the year 1987, he grew up in the state of Kedah and is still currently residing in the state of Kedah, specifically in the city of Alor Setar. Growing up, Firdaus has been doing abstractive arts unknowingly even by him. He recalled that between his brother and him, he has always been the kind of child that would draw in a more erratic and no direction or form in drawings whereas for his brother, would always draw more of a caricature or cartoon drawings. He said that he was often scolded by his mother for scribbling on paper and not actually drawing (*Muhammad.F.Ibrahim, Personal Communication, June 12 to June 13 2024*). He then was introduced to the art of Islamic calligraphy or Khat, by his Ustazah when he went for his al-Quran studies in a village near to where he lives. After that he also studied and practiced calligraphy art by

looking and mimicking the Khat on the book covers and signage on a mosque near where he lives. This proved to be beneficial as he won the Kedah district level school representative for calligraphy competition. Due to his winnings he aspires to learn and do more in arts, so he began copying and mimicking caricature arts that he saw on cartoon magazines most notably the Ujang Magazine, one of the most famous caricature art magazines in Malaysia.

Before continuing his art journey on a professional level, he went to UMS (University Sabah Malaysia) to receive a formal education in Visual Arts Technology Degree in the year 2010 to further his skills in the art and design aspects and industry. There, he began learning every medium of art be it traditionally or digital arts. This means he explores different media and mediums in furthering his art skills to create and produce better artworks. However, in furthering his skills, he recalls saying it was hard for him there as there was no guidance or experts to teach him. He also said that with the course only being basic level and no specific courses to learn more in depth it makes it hard for him to deepen his understanding in arts (*Muhammad.F.Ibrahim, Personal Communication, June 12 to June 13 2024*). These circumstances of course, did not stop him from going for what he wanted. In the third year, the final year of his studies he majored in Fine arts as he said that was what felt right.

He did a much different job than arts or creative industry related occupations before becoming a full-time artist. At the very start of his career journey, he first became an art tutor for two years in 2011 to 2012 in UMS Art School, teaching as well as guiding other students in his university that are also in the same course as he was. He then moved to a different job being a trainer for The National Service Training Program or Program Latihan Khidmat Negara (PLKN). Back then it was Malaysia's national service program run under the old political government party of Barisan Nasional. However, since then the government has changed and so does the National Service Training Program which was dissolved in the late of 2018, specifically on the 13th of august 2018. This also affected Firdaus' job and position as the dissolve means that he also loses his position as trainer. While looking for other jobs and trying to care for himself through his health conditions, he started to paint back as a means of therapy and self-healing. Unbeknownst to him, his artworks created a lot of attention that he

was able to sell his paintings and artworks. It was then that he decided to become a full-time artist, selling and painting till today. He has since joined many art exhibitions, such as Pameran Jemputan APK at Balai Seni Kedah in the year 2010, Pameran Jemputan janda Baik, at Galeri Liza Othman in the year 2023, and very recently Pameran Persatuan Khat Khalima at Galeri Prima in the year 2024 or known as the Insyirah art exhibition at Galeri Prima. Although he took many parts and joined many art exhibitions, he said that he only does it when he is free as he is often busy with orders and commissions that he takes from his customers. He said that his upcoming art exhibitions will take place at Galeri Shah Alam (*Muhammad.F.Ibrahim, Personal Communication, June 12 to June 13 2024*).

6.METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology to examine *The Night Power* by Mohammad Firdaus Ibrahim through the lens of Islamic aesthetic philosophy and contemporary artistic practice. The methodological framework integrates Al-Ghazali's theories of beauty and perception with primary interview data and secondary scholarship. This multi-layered approach enables a rigorous interpretation of spirituality embedded within the artwork.

6.1 Theoretical Application

The analysis is grounded in two foundational aspects of Imam al-Ghazali's aesthetic thought: the Concept of Beauty (*al-jamāl*) and the Nazariyyah Philosophy of perception and inner meaning. These frameworks were operationalized as analytic tools to examine the formal, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions of the painting.

Al-Ghazali's articulation of beauty as harmony, order, and moral resonance. It provided a basis for reading the visual composition (al-Ghazali 1980; Michon 2011). Meanwhile, his Nazariyyah Philosophy, which emphasizes perceptual refinement and the unveiling of inner meaning (*bāṭin*), guided the interpretation of metaphysical elements present in the artwork (al-Ghazali 1998; Nasr 1987). Applying these theories systematically enabled the study to identify spiritual signifiers embedded within the aesthetic structure of *The Night Power*.

6.2 Artist Interview and Analytical Procedures

A semi-structured interview with Mohammad Firdaus Ibrahim served as the primary empirical source for understanding the conceptual motivations and spiritual intentions behind the artwork. The interview was transcribed and subjected to thematic coding, following qualitative analytic conventions (Creswell 2018).

Themes were organized around recurring concepts such as illumination, ritual experience, and personal spirituality. These were then examined in relation to Al-Ghazali's theoretical constructs to evaluate correspondences between the artist's intentions and Islamic aesthetic principles. This systematic alignment ensured that interpretive claims were grounded both in theory and in the artist's own narrative.

6.3 Scholarly Triangulation

Secondary literature on Islamic aesthetics, spirituality in art, and contemporary Malaysian art practice was consulted to contextualize the analysis (Nasr 1987; Schuon 1987; Burckhardt 2009). These sources strengthened the interpretive framework by situating *The Night Power* within established scholarly conversations on spirituality and visual culture. Triangulating theoretical, empirical, and scholarly materials enhanced the methodological robustness and reliability of the study.

6.4 Synthesis and Interpretation

A final interpretive synthesis drew together insights generated from Al-Ghazali's theories, interview data, and scholarly discourse. This integrative process allowed the study to articulate a multidimensional reading of *The Night Power* as a contemporary artwork that resonates with classical Islamic aesthetic spirituality. The systematic convergence of these data sources supports a holistic interpretation consistent with contemporary art research practices.

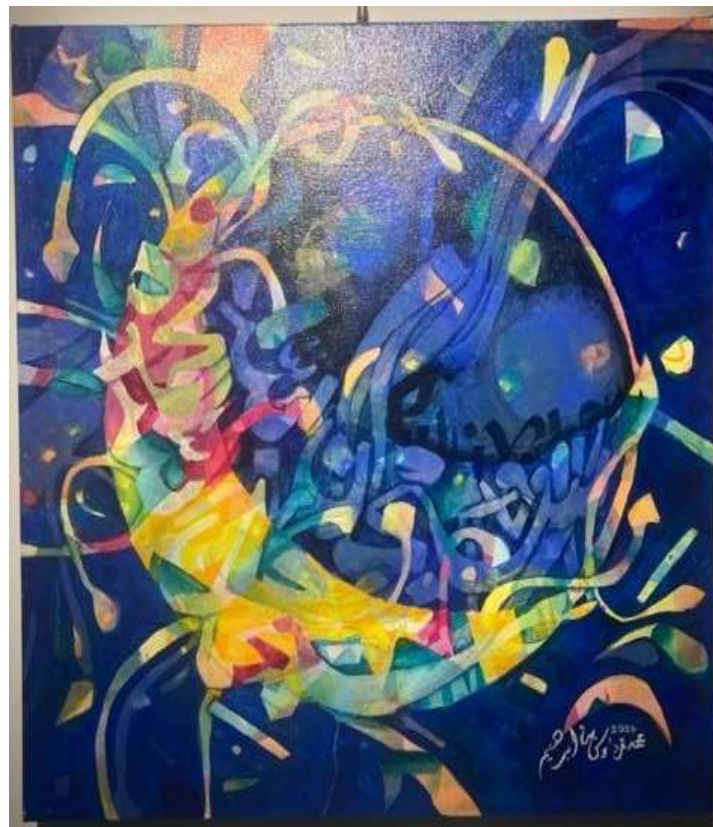
7.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Artist's Perspective and Visual Context

The Night Power (Figures 1–3), exhibited at the Insyirah Art Exhibition at Galeri Prima, presents a complex visual field that merges symbolic forms that most notably the

crescent moon and a calligraphic dhikr with layered colors and abstract textures. According to the artist, Mohammed Firdaus Ibrahim, the work is conceptually rooted in the final ten nights of Ramadan, known as Lailatul Qadar, a spiritually significant period in Islamic belief (Muhammad F. Ibrahim, personal communication, June 12–13, 2024). While the artist's statements offer insight into his intentions, the analysis must move beyond descriptive recounting to evaluate how these intentions are materially and visually enacted in the artwork.

The central crescent-like form (Figure 1) immediately situates the painting within Islamic visual traditions. Its stylized construction using calligraphic forms suggests a deliberate merging of devotional text and celestial symbol, thereby producing a layered semiotic effect. Rather than accepting the visual symbolism at face value, this study examines how the artwork negotiates meaning between artist intention, aesthetic form, and theological philosophy.



*Figure 1. The Night Power (Muhammad.F.Ibrahim)
(Photo taken at Galeri Prima)*

Islamic Calligraphy as Devotional Form

The calligraphic inscription, “Subhanallahi wa bihamdihi, Subhanallahil ‘Azim” operates as both a textual and visual element (Figure 2). Firdaus interprets this dhikr as a source of personal calm during hardship and a reminder of divine presence. However, a critical reading requires examining how this text functions within the pictorial system, not merely in the artist’s devotional life.

From Al-Ghazali’s Concept of Beauty, beauty is achieved when external form reflects inner spiritual meaning (al-Ghazali 1980). In *The Night Power*, the calligraphy is not centrally placed nor visually dominant; it instead blends with the painterly field, suggesting an integration of remembrance (dhikr) into the fabric of lived experience rather than presenting it as a distinct object of contemplation. This subtlety complicates the artist’s stated intention: rather than overtly declaring spirituality, the work visually enacts the idea that divine remembrance permeates everyday reality.



Figure 2. The Night Power (Muhammad.F.Ibrahim)
(Photo taken at Galeri Prima)

Moreover, although Firdaus views the dhikr as a personal spiritual anchor, the painting’s abstracted calligraphy can also be interpreted as an aesthetic strategy that risks obscuring legibility. This raises a critical question: does abstraction enhance the spiritual universality of the work, or does it detach the text from its doctrinal specificity? Such ambiguity is central to contemporary Islamic art discourse and deserves further reflection.

The Moon and the Night Sky: Symbolism and Interpretation

The moon motif (Figure 2), derived from the artist's observation during Ramadan, visually anchors the composition. While Firdaus frames the moon as a direct reference to Lailatul Qadar, the artwork's formal elements introduce a more complex interpretive space. The moon's fragmented, calligraphic construction challenges the viewer's expectations of a stable celestial form. Thus, the work does not merely represent the sacred night but visually interrogates the relationship between perception, spirituality, and abstraction.

Under Al-Ghazali's Nazariyyah Philosophy, the Tab'iyyah level concerns recognizing divine order in nature. However, in this painting, the moon is not presented in naturalistic form. Instead, its abstraction suggests an oscillation between the physical and metaphysical realms. Such treatment invites viewers to consider whether spiritual experience is inherently elusive considered as an interpretation that complements but does not replicate the artist's stated narrative.

The surrounding colors consist of radiant blues, greens, and magentas evoke a cosmological expanse (Figure 3). Rather than merely illustrating "magic," as described by the artist, the chromatic layering creates a tension between serenity and intensity. This effect encourages viewers to confront the emotional and perceptual instability associated with spiritual longing. This more critical reading situates the painting within broader contemporary aesthetics, where spirituality is often approached through experiential ambiguity rather than doctrinal clarity.



Figure 3. The Night Power (Muhammad.F.Ibrahim)

(Photo taken at Galeri Prima)

Interpreting the Work through Al-Ghazali's Concept of Beauty

The artist's personal devotion during the painting process; performing dhikr and prayer, does inform the conceptual framing of the work. However, from a critical standpoint, spiritual authenticity cannot be evaluated solely through intention; it must be examined through how effectively the artwork conveys transcendence or moral beauty (Michon 2011; Nasr 1987).

At the first level of beauty which is self-recognition, Firdaus's narrative of illness, study, and artistic development provides context, yet the artwork itself does not explicitly visualize biographical struggle. Instead, the abstraction and color fields gesture toward a broader spiritual universality rather than personal confession. This divergence between intention and visual language is significant: the painting invites contemplation not of the artist's journey but of a collective, shared aspiration toward closeness with God.

At the second level which is loving others for the sake of God could be envisioned through the work's public exhibition and its contemplative visual language seen as the acts of *dakwah*. Yet, this interpretation depends on viewer reception rather than artist intention alone. The painting's abstraction may also limit accessibility for some audiences, challenging assumptions that devotional content inherently produces clear spiritual communication.

The highest level of beauty, loving God appears most strongly aligned with Firdaus's stated motivation. Nonetheless, the critical question arises: does the artwork succeed in visually manifesting divine love, or does its meaning remain dependent on external explanation? This tension underscores the need to evaluate spiritual art by balancing theological frameworks, visual evidence, and interpretive openness.

8.NAZARIYYAH PHILOSOPHY AND LEVELS OF MEANING

Applying Al-Ghazali's Nazariyyah Philosophy reveals how multiple interpretive layers coexist within the artwork:

8.1 Illāhiyyah Level (Divine Truth):

The dhikr embedded within the composition asserts remembrance of God, yet its visual integration challenges traditional expectations of script clarity. This tension reflects contemporary Islamic art's negotiation between devotion and aesthetic experimentation.

8.2 Tabī'iyah Level (Natural Order):

The moon and abstract forms hint at natural and metaphysical beings, but their fragmentation complicates a straightforward reading of divine order, instead implying the limits of human perception.

The findings demonstrate that The Night Power operates at the intersection of personal devotion, Islamic aesthetic philosophy, and contemporary abstraction. Ultimately, the painting does not offer a definitive representation of spirituality; instead, it cultivates a contemplative space where the viewer negotiates meaning through perception, memory, and faith. This interpretive openness aligns with Al-Ghazali's notion that true understanding emerges not from surface appearances but from the inward struggle toward spiritual insight.

9.CONCLUSION

This study examined The Night Power by Mohammad Firdaus Ibrahim through the integrated lenses of Al-Ghazali's Concept of Beauty, the Nazariyyah Philosophy, and qualitative insights drawn from the artist's interview. The analysis demonstrates that the artwork negotiates a complex relationship between devotional intention, abstract visual language, and Islamic aesthetic philosophy. Rather than functioning solely as a direct representation of Lailatul Qadar, the painting constructs a contemplative visual field in which celestial symbols, calligraphic fragments, and chromatic layering collectively evoke the experiential ambiguity of spiritual seeking.

A key finding is the tension between the artist's stated motivations and the artwork's interpretive openness. While Firdaus frames the painting as an expression of personal

devotion and remembrance, the visual abstraction challenges straightforward spiritual legibility. This tension is not a limitation but a productive feature, situating the artwork within contemporary Islamic art discourse where spirituality is increasingly explored through conceptual ambiguity rather than literal depiction.

Applying Al-Ghazali's hierarchy of beauty and levels of perception reveals that the artwork engages although not always conclusively with ideals of divine love, natural order, and ethical reflection. The painting's abstraction invites viewers to participate in meaning-making rather than receive a fixed doctrinal message. Such openness aligns with Al-Ghazali's emphasis on inward contemplation as the path to recognizing divine truth.

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