

# Computer Graphics and Geometric Ornamental Design

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Abstract

Computer Graphics and Geometric Ornamental Design

by Craig S. Kaplan

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Throughout history, geometric patterns have formed an important part of art and ornamental design. Today we have unprecedented ability to understand ornamental styles of the past, to recreate traditional designs, and to innovate with new interpretations of old styles and with new styles altogether.

The power to further the study and practice of ornament stems from three sources. We have new mathematical tools: a modern conception of geometry that enables us to describe with precision what designers of the past could only hint at. We have new algorithmic tools: computers and the abstract mathematical processing they enable allow us to perform calculations that were intractable in previous generations. Finally, we have technological tools: manufacturing devices that can turn a synthetic description provided by a computer into a real-world artifact. Taken together, these three sets of tools provide new opportunities for the application of computers to the analysis and creation of ornament.

In this dissertation, I present my research in the area of computer-generated geometric art and ornament. I focus on two projects in particular. First I develop a collection of tools and methods for producing traditional Islamic star patterns. Then I examine the tessellations of M. C. Escher, developing an “Escherization” algorithm that can derive novel Escher-like tessellations of the plane from arbitrary user-supplied shapes. Throughout, I show how modern mathematics, algorithms, and technology can be applied to the study of these ornamental styles.





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## VITA

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Craig spent five years as an undergraduate at the University of Waterloo, studying pure mathematics and computer science. He also spent a number of internships at Alias|Wavefront in Toronto. He then ventured to the beautiful Pacific Northwest to pursue a PhD at the University of Washington in Seattle. At the end of 2002 Craig, his wife Nathalie, their new daughter Zoë, and their three cats will make the trek back to Ontario, where he will return to Waterloo's School of Computer Science, this time as a member of the faculty.