

# the **spiritual** architecture of hand-typography

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For Faizal Somadi, the craft of illustrating letters is a fusion of love for illustration and writing. The pen has been his intimate childhood toy since 3, and at 8, drawing and writing became his expression for everyday thoughts ever since. Soon, this habit evolved into artistic and literary contribution in schools and local Malay papers.

Faizal started Roman calligraphy with his primary maths teacher at the age of 10. He grew up as an art and technical student, and later underwent training in Visual Communication under Temasek Polytechnic School of Design in 1996. The interest in visual crafts and design led him to explore the world of scripts through cultural and religious studies. Upon his grandfather's consent and blessings, in 2002 Faizal decided to embark on Arabic calligraphy, under his former secondary school teacher.

*Khat*, a term known as Arabic calligraphy, heightened and enhanced his senses and aesthetic skills through the art of crafting letters. Embracing its strict discipline, demand of patience, profound understanding and attention to meticulous details, it has brought Faizal into the spiritual architecture of hand-typography. Faizal also learned and worked with pottery through various projects and exhibitions under his craft and design mentor, master potter Iskandar Jalil. He also seeks lessons from his grandfather - Ahmad Sonhadji, a religious scholar and his childhood teacher, on religious and spiritual aesthetics, as well as arts and social affairs until his passing in 2010. Adding the mix to all these, he enjoys illustration, painting and photography.

Faizal grew up practicing and training in design, pottery and calligraphy all along the same period of time. After 3 years of training with a local calligraphy teacher, Faizal went to Malaysia in 2005 to train Arabic calligraphy for a year through various teachers including a recognised Malaysian master calligrapher Tuan Haji Syed Mahdar As-Sahab and an art mentor, Tuan Haji Mohd Saheh Haji Moktar.

Working under Iskandar Jalil's projects, Faizal contributed his first wall mural of handmade tiles for National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) in 2004, and in 2008, he continued to serve his design mentor for his second wall mural design with Arabic calligraphy for Singapore Islamic Religious Council (MUIS). In the same year, Faizal was appointed as the head designer in collaboration with local artistes, Sarkasi Said and S Mohdir to produce Singapore's first modern version Quran known as "Mushaf Singapura", which was officially launched in 2010.

Faizal began sharing Arabic calligraphy to the public in 2006. In 2006-2008, he served a local art club Mediterranean Visual Arts Club (MVAC) and in 2011, he conducted calligraphy lessons at The Nuun Centre (NCSA). Following, Faizal went to Turkey and was referred by Klasik Turk Sanatlari Vakfi (KTSV) - Classical Turkish Arts Foundation, to attain his personal tutelage under a Turkish master calligrapher, Ahmet Kocak whom he learns with to date.

Since 2012, Faizal has been serving various calligraphy programmes and performances to various private and public organisations. His contribution and participation includes Esplanade, Asian Civilisations Museum, National Library Board, People's Association, As-Souq Arabic Academy, as well as universities, institutions and public mosques.

Faizal was also approached for various forms of interviews and research, involving educational, cultural, communal and corporate works and missions. In 2011, Faizal's first calligraphy article was featured in Asian Geographic, Cultures of Islam Edition. Since then, his contribution involves individuals, groups and bodies including UNESCO-NIE CARE, National Museum of Singapore, GoBeyond.sg, The A List Singapore and National Heritage Board.

Since 1998, Faizal has been providing graphic and corporate design services. He has also conducted training in a primary school, teaching Information Communications Technology (ICT), digital media and photography. Apart from providing design and calligraphy services, he conducts workshops, courses and performances not only on calligraphy, but also various art projects through various clients and organisations.

Faizal now yearns to excel in his calligraphy practice through his Turkish tutelage, as well as exploring deeper into Arabic calligraphy and other forms of visual arts by doing research, studies, experimentations, in both manual and digital craft works. With such, he aspires to elevate his artistic pursuits through all aspects of knowledge he can grasp.