Man with a Ram

Drawing
Gazvin, ca. 1590. Black ink, mounted with borders. 16.3 x 24.6 cm (sheet size) 9.1 x 14.7 cm (design area). Signed by Riza.

Besides dreamy and elegant youths, Riza’s portrait repertoire included a large variety of genre scenes, reflecting his keen interest in recording the world of the Iranian common folk. This ink drawing depicts a middle-aged man beside a large ram wearing a collar. Riza invariably characterizes his court dandies as aloof, idealized creatures; but in this work he represents a very real human being, complete with physical defects. The man’s misshapen ear and broad nose give proof of his humble origins, just as his sturdy limbs and ill-fitting tunic bespeak a life of hard work and poverty. The expression on his wrinkled face and the way he reaches out towards the animal suggest he is kind and humane; but Eric Schrader imagines the man is actually about to slaughter his pet ram with the knife he conceals behind his back (Schrader, 1950, p. 72). The sleek and well-fed animal, perhaps fattened for a special feast, gazes up trustingly, little suspecting that his end is near. Riza has captured a moment full of tenderness and tension.

The artist has signed the drawing between the ram’s forelegs: “Exercise of Riza.” The word “Arz” probably preceded this phrase, but it has been erased. Even without the signature, however, we could hardly fail to recognize Man with a Ram as a work by the great Safavid master. From the very beginning of his career, Riza developed a distinctive, calligraphic style of drawing. As in this example, his figures are always rapidly sketched and their outlines indicated by a series of broken lines of varying thickness. Common in Riza’s draughtsmanship are the short dabs of ink at the end of drapery folds, used here to represent the agitated hem of the robe. With this unique linear style Riza is able to convey simultaneously both the homeliness of a robe and the smoothness of cloth.

Most of Riza’s drawings are executed in black ink, without any tints, but sometimes he uses a soft ink wash to fill in certain forms. The man’s cap and knife-hilt and the ram’s horns have been painted with such a wash, and the ram’s collar has been filled in with a deeper tone. As in all of the drawings and paintings by Riza belonging to the Pogg, the background of this scene consists of a flower and rock landscape, lightly rendered in gold paint.

This drawing was cropped on the top and bottom, and possibly on the sides as well, before it was mounted with colored rulings and a floral strip. Man with a Ram apparently left Iran in the 20th century; the purple label at the lower right corner indicates that the work passed through the Iranian customs.

Nashmi the Archer

32

Miniature

Isfahan, dated 4 Rabî‘i‘ 1301/25 February 1622. Opaque watercolor, mounted with colored rulings and paper border. 23.3 x 14.5 cm (sheet size) 19 x 10 cm (design area). Signed by Riza.

Around 1805, Riza gave up painting and abandoned the aristocratic circles of the Safavid court. One of his contemporaries, the historian Qadi Ahmad, describes this sudden change as follows:

But the vicissitudes of fate have totally altered Qaqi Riza’s nature. The company of haughty people and libertines is spoiling his disposition. He is addicted to watching wrestling and to acquiring competence and instruction in this profession. (Mirsky, 1959, pp. 192-3)

Riza also avoided respectable society, had a foul temper, and was impatient and disagreeable (Eskandar Beg Monshi, 1978, vol. 1, p. 273).

Although Riza resumed painting and drawing some fifteen years later, he never regained what Eskandar Monshi calls “the delicacy of his touch.” But many of the works that Riza executed between 1620 and his death in 1635 reveal to a greater extent his sharp sense of humor and irony.

This painting, from the period just after Riza’s return to the royal atelier, is signed and dated in the inscription on the left:

Saturday, the fourth day of the month of Rabî‘i‘ in the year 1301 it was finished. The most humble Riza ‘Abbasii drew it.

The date corresponds to February 25, 1622. A much clearer inscription above gives the title: Portrait of Nashmi the Archer. This seedy-looking fellow who fits perfectly the descriptions of Riza’s low companions stands against a gold background similar to the landscapes in which Riza placed his more cultivated personages (see nos. 29 and 30). Holding his bow in one hand, the archer raises a lit pipe to his lips with the other; as Anthony Welch has commented, Nashmi is probably not smoking tobacco (Welch, A., 1973, no. 12). From head to toe his appearance is an affront to county sensibilities. He is physically unattractive, with a gigantic nose, prominent paunch, enormous feet, and a tiny head. His jutting features, mimicked by the pointed crown of his hat, sport several days’ growth of beard. Neither his brown robe nor his black cloak are properly fastened; in any case the latter is much too small. Nashmi has forgotten to put on one stocking and has let the other one slip down around his ankle. On his feet he wears white slippers, instead of regular outdoor shoes.

It is unlikely such a slipshod character ever served in Shah ‘Abbas’s reorganized imperial army whose ranks apparently did not include the traditional corps of archers. With Nashmi, Riza sympathetically caricatures an entire class of old-time warriors well past their prime.

The monk decorating Nashmi’s pipe reveals that Riza is also mocking a second group of people in this painting. During the late 16th and 17th centuries, many Christian missionaries, among them Carmelites, Augustinians and Capuchin friars, settled in the capital city of Isfahan where Riza must have encountered them often. The artist’s opinion of the Christians obviously was not very high!

When young Riza entered the employ of Shah 'Abbas, the Safavid painting studio was directed by Sadqi Beg Attab, master painter, poet and writer. Born near Tabriz in 1533/34, Sadqi Beg spent many years as a Ghilbash warrior before deciding to begin his training as an artist, first with the renowned poet and calligrapher Mir Sani' in Tabriz, and then with Muzaffar-'Ali (See no. 21) in Qazvin. Despite his considerable talents, Sadqi Beg left the court sometime in the late 1570s, apparently because, according to Iskandar Munshi, "...things did not turn out the way he wanted them." (Iskandar Beg Munshi, 1978, i, p. 271). However, by 1587, Sadqi Beg had been summoned back by 'Abbas I and appointed director of the royal library.

Ten years later Sadqi Beg was summarily dismissed from his prestigious position, primarily because of his abrasive personality which offended not only his colleagues, including an influential calligrapher named Ali-Riza 'Abbasi, but also his monarch and chief patron. Although stripped of power and privileges, Sadqi Beg pursued a productive professional career in the new capital city of Isfahan until his death in 1605/10. Much of Sadqi Beg's biography is further recorded by the artist-author himself, particularly in two of his major literary works, the Qanun al-Suwar [Canons of art] and the Majma' al-Khawass [Assembly of worthies] (Welch, A., 1976, p. 411).

Sadqi Beg's accepted oeuvre consists of illustrations for several important manuscripts, including a royal Shahnameh of 1576–1577, a self-commissioned Arvâr-i Shâhâyli dated 1593, and a large number of single page paintings and drawings. Although his style underwent certain changes, particularly under the impact of his young rival, Riza, Sadqi Beg's mature works share a kind of motionless rigidity. This quality is clear in the Fogg's Lion Tamer and confirms its attribution to Sadqi Beg (Welch, A., 1973, no. 3 and 1976, p. 205). The composition depicts a mustached man, dressed in a layered garment and a close-fitting cap and engaged in trying to restrain a large lion. The animal is undoubtedly tame, for it wears a belt and a collar attached to a stout rope, but he has nevertheless set off at a fast clip, dragging the trainer behind.

The drawing lacks the spontaneity and human emotion found in Riza's works (See nos. 29-32) and reflects Sadqi Beg's extremely intellectual approach to art. The forms are precisely delineated by firm lines, often of a striking boldness as seen along the lion's muzzle, back, tail, and haunches, and the finer lines defining drapery folds and fur are just as carefully rendered. It is easy to see why Anthony Welch has compared Sadqi Beg to the great French rationalist Poussin (Welch, A., 1976, p. 90).

The only embellishments of this drawing are outer rulings of gold, red, and white, and a band of green paper added in a later period. The other side of the leaf contains five panels of calligraphy, reserved in contour panels against a gold ground. These lines include four Arabic inscriptions, written in mulith script, and a Persian verse, penned in agitated shikasta and signed by the famous 17th-century calligrapher Muhammad-'Riza.

Standing Page with Cup and Bottle

Miniature
Isfahan, first half of 17th century. Opaque watercolor, mounted with animal and floral borders. 33.8 x 21.7 cm (sheet size) 20.7 x 10.3 cm (design area). Inscribed with the name “Bahram.”

Later Safavid painting abounds with single-figure studies of elaborately garbed, effeminate young men, often represented as cup-bearers. This modish dandy, placed in a gold landscape of trees, flowers, and racing clouds, is a perfect example of the genre. Striking an affected pose, the E geg’s page looks down over his shoulder and delicately raises a small wine cup up to his chest. In his left hand, he holds a double-handled wine bottle. Both vessels are made of gold and studded with pearls and precious stones. The youth wears a tight-fitting jacket, embroidered with gold clouds and trimmed with gold buttons and white pearls or beads, over a long green robe. A fancy striped sash, carefully knotted in the center, encircles his waist. The same kind of striped cloth hangs down from his impenetrable headgear, which is comparable in shape to the hat worn by Nasimi, the Archer (no. 32). It has a long conical crown, stippled in blue and white, and a bushy fur brim. The hat is also decorated with a gold and jeweled chain from which rises a tall, feathered plume. Long strands of wavy curls fall from beneath the head covering and enframe the page’s lily-white face.

The upper left corner of this composition is inscribed “Exercise of Bahram.” The final, cropped words can perhaps be deciphered as “portrait of A.” This phrase is probably not a signature, but an attribution added sometime after the completion of the painting. Only one 17th-century painter named Bahram has been recorded, but so little is known about his oeuvre that we cannot automatically associate him with this work. Whoever our Bahram may have been, he was obviously influenced by the style of the great master Riza, as were so many later Safavid artists. The page’s swayed stance, long robe with flipped hem, and the golden landscape setting are modeled directly on the standing-figure type Riza developed (See no. 29). Yet the painting completely lacks Riza’s subtlety of characterization and sensitivity of brushwork. Instead of defining his forms with fine lines, “Bahram” has used heavy, angularish lines, especially noticeable around the nose and face. All in all, this gaudily attired cup-bearer is a more heavy-handed version of Riza’s masterful Young Man in a Blue Cloak (no. 20).

The Shahnama relates that at the end of a peaceful and prosperous sixty-year reign, the legendary Iranian monarch Kay Khusraw fell into a state of melancholy and lost all interest in life at court. One night the shah dreamt the angel Surush brought word that a place had been prepared for him in Paradise. Despite the pleadings of his subjects, Kay Khusraw abdicated the throne and set off for a high mountain, accompanied by many brave paladins. When the company reached the summit, the shah ordered his troops to go back home. Rustam, Zal, and Gudarz obeyed, but five others elected to remain with their beloved monarch. The following evening, Kay Khusraw bid farewell to this little band and walked away from them forever. The warriors spent a whole day searching for Kay Khusraw and returned to camp unsuccessful, exhausted, and despondent. As they slept, a great blizzard struck and buried them in deep snowdrifts. Rustam and the others, worried about their companions, went back up the mountain top, but they never found a trace of the five lost paladins.

The illustration on the opposite page is actually a conflation of two separate scenes from the epic drama: at the bottom, the snowstorm buries the five paladins up to the top of their lances; at the top, Rustam and the other paladins conduct their futile search for the missing group. The illustration comes from the first half of a dispersed copy of a Shahnama manuscript. This part of the book is dated 18 December 1648; at the end of the codex is a colophon dated 1059/1649. The Fogg owns another page belonging to the same manuscript which depicts Rustam lassoing the Khaosan of Chin (no. 105). Although the complete set of original illustrations from this Shahnama has never been located, it seems that the book was entirely illustrated by the famous painter Mu'in Musavvir. On this particular illustration he has signed his name in the lower margin: "Drawing of the meanest [i.e., most humble] Mu'in Musavvir." The most celebrated and successful pupil of the great master Riza, Mu'in Musavvir had an exceptionally long career lasting from around 1635 until 1707. His documented oeuvre is prodigious, ranging from illustrated manuscripts—the 1684–89 Shahnama is one of his earliest—to single-page drawings. Unlike many of his contemporaries (See no. 40), Mu'in was not affected by the artistic influences penetrating from Europe in the late 17th and 18th centuries and thus is heralded as the last noteworthy exponent of the Safavid painting tradition.

Although his art closely followed the work of Riza, his teacher, Mu'in did develop a very personal style. He is particularly distinguished for his brilliant draughtsmanship and palette. Rustam and the Iranins in the Snow epitomizes both the traditional and the original aspects of the painter's oeuvre. The choice of this scene is not unprecedented, but Mu'in has rendered it with unusual sympathy for the loss of the five paladins and the survivors' grief. The faces of all the Iranins, including Rustam (shown wearing his customary tiger-skin tunic), express their noble suffering at the disappearance of their monarch and friends. Mu'in has also conveyed with great effectiveness the bitter cold of the mountains top landscape. The snowdrifts blur into the air which is thick with snow and the small flakes show dark white and cold against the dark colors of the stream and horses.

Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XXVIII; Rome, 1956, 524; Lilly, 1958, p. 24, pl. 6 and cover; Schoukine, 1964, p. 65; Robinson, 1965, p. 138, pl. 89. Purchase—Francis H. Burr Memorial Fund, 1941.254
Many Safavid paintings representing courtly or aristocratic figures, like Seated Princess with Spray of Flowers and Young Man in a Blue Cloak (nos. 19 and 20), are not likenesses of living personalities but idealized visions of "beautiful people." However, the corpus of 17th-century Persian painting does include several true-to-life portraits of Safavid monarchs and their courtiers, royal artists, and foreign ambassadors. A fine example of this group is the Fogg's portrait of Abbas I accompanied by a page. The inscription at the top of the sheet exults the Shah in lofty terms:

Q! [Imam] All! the picture of his excellency, the most high and most holy lord, Shah Abbas Safavi Bahadur Khan. Finished in the year 1042.

In addition to the inscription, "Abbas is identified by the prominent handlebar mustache, a personal trademark which he sports in other documented portraits.

Both the shah and his page wear short, sazhd tunics over tight trousers tucked into tall, black boots. The shah is in pink, the page in green. Their identical headdress consists of a curiously-shaped fur hat, topped with feathers and a pointed crown. Standing humbly behind his master, the page clutches a gold bottle, presumably containing wine to replenish the small cup which Abbas holds out in his right hand. The shah rests his left hand on a bow protruding from an embroidered case. He also carries at his waist a short dagger, a curved sword, and a quiver filled with bows; he wears a protective ring for archery on his right thumb.

Another almost identical version of this figure group belongs to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (arb. 6077, fol. v 10r). An inscription written near the king states that the painting was sketched by Riza and finished by a second artist, Mu'in Musaiev. In 1701 A.D. On stylistic grounds Anthony Welch has attributed the Fogg's portrait to Mu'in and has postulated that the artist painted it at the same time that he reworked his master's earlier composition (Welch, A., 1973, no. 85).

The version in the Bibliothèque Nationale seems to be a preliminary sketch for a much larger album painting, now in the State Public Libary, Leningrad, which Riza sketched on the 17th of Rajab, 1042 A.H., corresponding to the 28th of January, 1633 A.D. In a landscape setting, Shah 'Abbas, attended by a page, offers a wine cup to an Indian ambassador named Khan-i 'Alam. The painting commemorates an event that actually occurred in 1618 A.D. when the Mughal emperor Jahangir sent Khan-i 'Alam as an emissary to the Safavid court. There is little doubt that Mu'in was also familiar with Riza's "official" group portrait, since he incorporated the same year into the inscription of Shah Abbas and a Page.

Mystical Journey

37 Drawing
Istifjian, ca. 1560, Black ink and watercolor, mounted with a band of gold designs. 25.3 x 12.5 cm (sheet size) 22.7 x 10.2 cm (design area).

One of the most unusual and captivating works in the Fogg’s collection, this tinted drawing almost defies conventional description. Like the Composite Camel with Atabett (no. 28), it is filled with creatures of various shapes, sizes, and species: humans, dogs, rabbits, cats, birds, fish, and even insects, as well as fantastic beasts. But these things do not make up a recognizable form; instead they flow in and out of each other in abstract, rhythmic swirls.

The tending composition is dominated by a large, bearded man with a loosely wrapped turban, who floats down from the top of the page. Small fish dart past his face towards another man, probably a devilish, clutching a string of prayer beads. This character has an enormous posterior which has been transformed into an elephant. The trunk of this elephant curves over the back of a crane and around a host of other feathered and furry animals. Another elephant serves as an “anchor” for the central spiral, which winds around a flock of birds and several scaly fish and terminates in the head of the mythical simungh. To the left sit two fat and jolly fellows, not the least concerned by the large leopard racing beside them.

We do not know the original size of the drawing since it was cut down on all sides before it was mounted with its present border. Yet the actual dimensions are unimportant, for the swirling patterns look as if they could extend ad infinitum without any repetition. The underlying principle here is comparable to the concept behind the characteristically Islamic pattern known as the “arabesque” in which the design has no beginning, no end, and no central motif, or at least no motif identifiable as such. Hence the arabesque, like the Fogg’s composition, has the possibility of infinite expansion.

The drawing’s title, Mystical Journey, derives from the very palpable, ecstatic quality which gives life and energy to the strange combination of gliding forms. Anthony Welch best captures this mood in describing the work as “…a visionary’s journey, a visual rendering of profound spiritual experience, akin to that great work of mystical literature, the Conference of the Birds by Farid al-Din ‘Attar’ (Welch, A., 1973, no. 59). In the Safavid period, numerous literati, such as Mulli Vahshi, Mirzana Multanam, and Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali Shir, continuing the well-established tradition of writing on spiritual and sufi themes, employed the image of a voyage to express the mystical quest for knowledge of the Divine. Considering the close relationship between literature and painting throughout the history of Persian art, it is not surprising that even a non-narrative image such as Mystical Journey should be imbued with an other-worldly spirit.

This tinted drawing represents a mustachioed groom concentrating intently as he curries a horse. The man is simply dressed in tall boots, shawled in gray, full trousers, and a shirt. A small skull cap, patterned with geometric designs, covers his closely-cropped head. In preparation for the task at hand, the groom has rolled his long sleeves up well above the elbow and tied his sash at the back. The horse he reaches around and brushes so vigorously is a fine chestnut stallion with black mane, tail, hocks, and hooves. Although the animal neighs and rolls its eyes in protest at the groom’s rubbing, its movement is restricted by the leather bridle tied to the gold hook of a brown hatching post. In addition, a blue rope hobbles its feet. The horse’s hide, tail, and mane, as well as the post, are rendered in a fine hatching technique which gives these surfaces a natural, if too uniform, texture.

In front of the horse’s head and above the post is an extremely faint signature: “Writing of the humble Muhammad-Alí.” Son of the painter Malik Husayn Isfahani, Muhammad-Alí was active in the second half of the 17th century, particularly during the reign of ‘Abbas II (1642-66). Little additional biographical information about him is recorded. However, a number of other drawings heightened with colors and gold and signed by Muhammad-Alí have been published. At least one uses the same hatching technique to represent animal’s fur as does the Fogg’s Horse and Groom and includes a signature written in the same formula (Schroeder, 1942, pp. 154-156). As Eric Schroeder has pointed out, the artist favors continuous, firm curves for his contours, parallel lines in series for drapery folds, and scalloped edges for hems and sashes (Schroeder, 1942, pp. 155-156). Muhammad-Alí may not have been terribly innovative, either in style or subject matter, but he was certainly a careful and proficient draughtsman.

The cream-colored paper on which Muhammad-Alí used for this drawing is now stained and spotted with age. It is mounted between two panels of gold and green blossoms, fronds, and leafy scrolls, and is surrounded by a thin band of blue, pink, and yellow flowers on a rose ground. The outer border of this album page consists of dark blue paper stencilled in gold with large floral sprays.

Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XXIX; Rome, 1956, no. 525; Stchoukine, 1964, p. 52. Gift — Grenville L. Winthrop, 1937.16
Two Lovers

Miniature
Istfahan, ca. 1660. Opaque watercolor. 13 x 21.5 cm.

Nude figures are exceedingly rare in Persian art before the late 16th and 17th centuries. This fine example depicts two lovers dailying in a rocky landscape. A gold wine bottle and cup provide the pair with refreshment. The woman is stretched out on her side and propped up on a purple pillow woven with gold designs. She has lifted the long orange veil away from her generous thighs, and her only coverings are her flowing locks of curly black hair, gold ankle bands, and gold and beaded bracelets. Her kneeling partner is more formally attired; he wears a broad-brimmed black hat and a green cloak, strategically draped. The two airmail gaze deep into each other’s eyes as the man reaches over and caresses his beloved’s shoulder and breast. Despite such an explicit gesture, this composition lacks the blatant eroticism that characterizes many other Safavid love scenes in which the principals are fully clad. In fact, the Fogg’s naked couple look rather passive, although perhaps they are shown at the prelude to greater passion.

The painting contains no signature or identifying inscriptions, but its figures correspond stylistically to several nudes executed by Muhammad-Qasim (Welch, A., 1973, no. 61). One of Riza’s last pupils, Muhammad-Qasim was noted as an accomplished manuscript illustrator and draughtsman. Although he did not follow his master’s varying, calligraphic style, he developed a very fluid treatment of line, used here to define the contours of the lovers and the landscape features.

Muhammad-Qasim had a distinctive way of representing his female figures which he used here to depict the reclining beauty. His women are generally quite tall, with very long legs and flipper-like feet. Heavy bands just above the feet disguise the fact that Muhammad-Qasim was not adept at drawing ankles. The artist’s female nudes all have small rounded breasts, placed far apart and unnaturally high on the chest, prominent navels, and soft bellies. Their faces are moon-shaped and their long locks are painted to show every strand. Muhammad-Qasim’s men often possess many features of his women, especially the wide “bee-stung” lips. Muhammad-Qasim rendered both male and female bodies so soft and flaccid that they seem to be made more out of foam rubber than out of flesh and blood.

The upper and lower edges of this painting are noticeably abraded, which perhaps explains why these sides were cut down. The man’s green cloak has also suffered considerable paint loss. Large holes in the ball of the woman’s foot and in her veil have been repainted as have other areas of both bodies.

The Return from the Flight into Egypt

Miniature
21.7 x 14.7 cm (sheet size) 19.9 x 14.3 cm (design area). Signed by Muhammad-Zaman.

Beginning around the middle of the 17th century and continuing through the last half-century of Safavid rule, Iranian painting was increasingly influenced by Western art. Dutch artists painted murals on the walls of the Chihil Sutun Palace in Isfahan for Shah Abbas II and, during the course of their residency at court, taught younger Iranian painters. European prints, then in wide circulation in Iran, were another important source of influence.

Muhammad-Zaman, son of Haji Yusuf, is perhaps the best known of the later, Western-influenced Safavid artists. His style is so strongly Europeanized that many scholars believed a 17th-century report that Abbas II sent him to study in Rome where he converted to Christianity. Although recent research has demonstrated that this tale is untrue (Ivanov, 1979, p. 651), Muhammad-Zaman did benefit from generous imperial patronage throughout his career. In 1675 Shah Sulayman (1666–1694) commissioned him to refurbish the renowned copy of the Khamsa of Nizami that was illustrated for Shah Tahmasp in 1539–43. In addition to repainting some of the original miniatures, Muhammad-Zaman prepared four new compositions for this royal manuscript. These scenes follow traditional Persian iconography, but their human figures and settings reveal how much Muhammad-Zaman had absorbed of European artistic practices.

Muhammad-Zaman also executed at least four paintings of Old and New Testament subjects, including this masterful composition of Mary, Joseph, and the young Christ Child returning from Egypt to Galilee. The artist has documented his work with a lengthy enframing inscription:

For his excellency the successful Lord, for whom the sky is a stirrup, the most honourable, most holy, most high and exalted, May the most high God raise his flag and his wealth and his capitals above mankind until the Day of Resurrection. [This painting] was finished by ibn Haji Yusuf Muhammad-Zaman in the month of Dhu’l-Qa‘da 1100 [August 1688] in the capital city of Isfahan.

What Muhammad-Zaman does not tell us is that he adapted his scene from a 1620 engraving by the Flemish artist Lucas Vorsterman the Elder (1578–1607). Vorsterman print, in turn, is based on an Anthony Van Dyck drawing made specifically for the purpose of engraving after The Return from the Right into Egypt, a painting of about 1614 by Van Dyck’s teacher Peter Paul Rubens.

Muhammad-Zaman has rendered his version of the Holy Family’s return in the painting style that characterizes much of his oeuvre and reveals his familiarity with European techniques. All the forms in this painting are realistically modeled and elaborately shaded in the European manner. For instance, Mary wears a long pink robe, painted in deeper red along the folds, and a voluminous blue cloak. Small plants very similar to those in the Vorsterman print and its prototypes fill the landscape; a large palm tree stands on the left; and fluffy white clouds, touched with gray, float in a pale blue sky. In another departure from the traditional norms of Persian painting, Muhammad-Zaman paints a landscape which recedes into a blue haze.

Persian Painting
Post-Safavid Painting

A succession of Safavid shahs continued to rule Iran for a decade after the Afghan invasion of 1722, but by 1736 all political power had passed to the Afsharids. This dynasty exercised effective control only during the reign of its first and most brilliant monarch, Nader Shah (1736-47), formerly in the service of the Safavid monarch Tahmasp II. The political turmoil which followed Nader's murder in 1747 permitted another local strong-man, Karim Khan Zand, to found his own dynasty, called the Zand, and to take charge of Iran. The thirty years of his reign (1750-79) brought relative peace and prosperity, but upon his death another civil war broke out among his potential successors and the Zand dynasty passed through a series of short-term regimes. By 1796 all Iran was controlled by the Qajars, an old Turkman tribe from the Caspian region, destined to remain in power until 1924. The greatest Qajar dynasty was Fath-Ali Shah (1797-1834), under whose direction Iran established close diplomatic and economic contacts with the West and occupied a significant strategic position in international affairs.

Considering the incessant upheavals of the post-Safavid period, it is not surprising that artistic production declined in the 18th century. The highest quality work was executed in fresco and in oil paint, the latter a medium completely absent from traditional Persian art. The creation of large-scale oil portraits of royal figures and court scenes in a markedly Westernized (or more specifically, Italianized) manner related to the style of Muhammad-Zaman (no. 49) began during the reign of Karim Khan Zand. Under the enthusiastic patronage of Fath-Ali Shah, a number of important artists such as Mirza Baba and Mirza 'Ali developed a uniquely Iranian genre from the Western medium of oil painting.

Although 18th- and 19th-century Persian painters and their patrons seemed less interested in manuscript illustration, they did retain and develop a taste for tinted drawings and watercolors. Flower and bird pictures were particularly popular and often filled entire albums (See nos. 41, 42, 115-120, and 125). However, unlike the idealized representations of flowering plants characteristic of Timurid and Safavid art, these later drawings reveal a highly naturalistic approach underscoring the strong influence of European painting in Iran during the post-Safavid era.
These two flower paintings are typical of the delicate and naturalistic watercolors executed in large numbers during the 18th and 19th centuries. The rose bush with its several buds, large open blossoms, and a bright-eyed nightingale perched on a lower branch, is rendered entirely in varying tones of crimson paint. The other watercolor of dragonfly-like insects flying around a withering plant, possibly a tulip, is polychrome. Both light and dark shades of blue-green have been used for the flowers and leaves, with additional shading in rose and pinkish beige. The plant’s stems are in crimson. The same color appears on the insects’ wings, the other parts of their bodies are black.

Both works present problems in attribution. The three owner stamps on Rose and Nightingale were, of course, added sometime after the completion of the composition. In any case, the seals are too abraded to provide much concrete information on the painting’s provenance. Withering Plant and Insects does have a date beneath the bottom leaf. The year seems to be 1151 A.H., corresponding to 1738–39 A.D. However, the third digit is not very distinct, so this must be considered a tentative reading. In addition to dating his work, the artist seems to have written his name on the left side of the page. The formula he has used, “Ya Sahib (al-) Zaman” is, according to B. W. Robinson, a punning invocation—signature (meaning literally, O Lord of the Earth) favored by the great Safavid painter Muhammad-Zaman, who is known to have painted many floral studies (Robinson, 1976, no. 65, xx, b). Muhammad-Zaman died in the first decade of the eighteenth century, yet at least one early 19th-century painting bears the same “Ya Sahib al-Zaman” invocation found on the Fogg’s 1738–39 watercolor. Apparently post-Safavid artists were inspired to emulate not only the master’s Westernized painting style, but also his witty signature. It should be mentioned, however, that the phrase “Ya Sahib al-Zaman” could also be interpreted as a Shi’ite invocation to the Imam.
Lions Devouring Two Travelers

43
Watercolor
18th-19th century. Watercolor, flocked with gold, mounted with colored ruling and gold-flocked border. 18.5 x 28 cm (sheet size) 11 x 17.5 cm (design area).

This peculiar work depicts lions ferociously attacking a pair of travelers in a rocky landscape. The beasts have just knocked both men to the ground and now concentrate on devouring their first victim. Standing triumphantly atop the corpse, the largest lion holds the bloody head firmly in its jaws while the other lion tears at the right shoulder. The second traveler lies paralyzed in the foreground beside a fallen turban and staves as it transfixed at the voracious attackers. Actually, he may already be dead of a broken neck, as indicated by the unnatural angle of his head. The gory scene is observed by a jackal, who waits patiently beside a raggedy outcropping.

The painting seems to have been left unfinished. The lions are painted in a brown wash, with some suggestion of fur on their white underbellies and flanks. The jackal’s coat is a darker and redder brown. Both animal and human heads are executed in tones of deep brown and black. The men’s bodies and clothes are not as completely rendered; their robes are light green and blue and their pants and sashes are white. The landscape is painted in green and light red, except for the rocks which are indicated only by black outlines.

The disturbing quality of the composition derives as much from the characterization of the figures as from the subject. The facial features and expressions of the attackers and the attacked are modeled and shaded with a chilling and detailed realism which contrasts strikingly with the schematic representation of their bodies. The hooked noses, bulging eyes, emaciated cheeks, and wrinkled brows contribute to the lifelike portrayal of the travelers. Their expressions of pain, outrage and desperation also read clearly. Likewise, the muzzle of the uppermost lion is a study in concentration and ferocity, increased by the disproportionate size of its head and its surrounding mane.

Although traditional Persian painting does not entirely lack depictions of human and animal emotion (See no. 31), it is rare to find either such intensity or such a naturalistic approach to the theme. The artist of Lions Attack Travelers remains unidentified, but he was obviously a master of the realistic school of painting which developed in Iran during the Zand and Qajar periods.
44 Three Struchnos Plants Recto

45 Zodiac from the Castle Recto
Water Clock Verso from the Automata of al-Jazari [Book of ingenious mechanical devices]. Category I, chap. 1, sec. 9, Egypt, possibly Cairo. Dated 1334. Text copied by Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Izmiri. Miniature: 27.4 x 27.4 cm (sheet size). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1961, Fig. 2. Bequest—Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1980.191


51 Rashnavad Battles the Recto from the Damsot Shuh-numa. Tabriz, ca. 1300. Miniature: 40.9 x 29 cm (written surface) 13.1 x 16 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1961, fig. 5. Bequest—Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1980.204


53 Bahram Gur Hunts with Azada Verso from the Damsot Shuh-numa. Tabriz, ca. 1330-40. Miniature: 41.9 x 29 cm (written surface) 19 x 28.7 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Brian, 1936, no. 47. Schroeder, 1942, no. VII. Gift—Edward W. Forbes, 1907.193


55 Rustam, Zal and Other Verso from the Shahnama. Shiraz, Dated 1341. Miniature: 22.4 x 15.2 cm (written surface) 10.6 x 24.1 cm (written surface) 14.5 x 25.5 cm (illustration). Bequest—Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1980.180

60 Imam 'All in the Battle Verso from the Majma' al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Hafiiz Abdu, Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrkh. Miniature: 33.8 x 23.3 cm (written surface) 5.6 x 23.7 cm (illustration). Bequest—Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1980.181

54 Sam Visits Zal and Verso: The White Rustan Fights the White Elephant Verso from the Shahnama. Shiraz, Dated 1341. Miniature: 22.4 x 15.2 cm (written surface) 8.5 x 15.3 cm (illustration recto) 8.1 x 15.2 cm (illustration verso). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. II. Gift—H. Kevenjian, 1934.25


57 Persian Painting Timurid Period A Child Showered with Money from provincial school, 15th century. Miniature, possibly mounted as an album page. 19 x 29.6 cm (sheet size) 9.7 x 13 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. IX. C. Sears Collection, 1936.26

58 Persian Painting Timurid Period Imam 'Ali in Battle Verso from the Majma' al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Hafiiz Abdu, Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrkh. Miniature: 33.8 x 23.3 cm (written surface) 5.6 x 23.7 cm (illustration). Bequest—Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1980.180
61 Conquest of Multan in India Recto from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 37.2 x 26.9 cm (written surface) 13.7 x 22.4 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.182

62 The 3rd King (Saghayvans) [from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh]. Miniature. 34.2 x 23.2 cm (written surface) 15.3 x 23 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.183

63 Prophet Muhammad Converts Abu Bekr to Islam Recto from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 33.6 x 22.9 cm (written surface) 13.7 x 22.4 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.184

64 Prophet Muhammad at Medina Recto from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 33.5 x 22.9 cm (written surface) 14.8 x 22.6 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.185

65 King Ardashir, Son of Hurmuz Verso from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 34.2 x 23.2 cm (written surface) 15.3 x 23 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.187

66 King Manuchihir Enthroned Recto from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 34.8 x 23 cm (written surface) 18.5 x 25.5 cm (illustration). Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.188

67 King Yazdegird + Enthroned Recto from the Majma’ al-Tawarikh [Collection of histories] of Haijz-i Abur; Herat, ca. 1425, patronage of Shahrukh. Miniature. 33.6 x 23 cm (written surface) 15.3 x 22.6 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1961, fig. 7. Bequest — Estate of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1960.189

68 Rustam on the Turanian Throne Verso from the so-called Big-head Shahnama; Gilan, Turkman. Dated 1494. Text copied by Salik ibn Sa’id. Miniature. 24.3 x 16.2 cm (written surface) 13.2 x 15.3 cm (illustration). Gift — John Goelet, 1967.148

69 Mourning Over Iskandar’s Bier Recto from the Shahnama; possibly Turkman, late 15th century. Miniature. 18.2 x 14.7 cm (sheet size) 11.6 x 14.5 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XII. Sarah C. Sears Collection, 1936.29

70 Constellation Serpentinatus of Ophiucus Recto and Verso from ‘Alqib al-Makhtuqat [The wonders of creation] of al-Dzawki; 15th century. Miniature. 21.5 x 14.6 cm (sheet size) 16 x 8 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XI. Bequest — Harvey E. Welts, 1919.131

71 Persian Painting Safavid Period

72 Man Kneeling at a Horseman’s Feet from an unknown manuscript; possibly Tabriz, early 16th century. Miniature. 18.9 x 13.3 (sheet size) 11.9 x 5.7 cm (illustration). Gift — Mrs. Thomas Lyman, 1972.30

73 Three Personages and a Caged Bird perseveratively Tabriz, early 16th century. Miniature, possibly mounted as an album page. 18.2 x 10.2 cm (sheet size) 7.1 x 6.5 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XIV. Sarah C. Sears Collection, 1938.25

74 Layla and Majnum at School Recto from the Khamsa of Nizami; Shiraz, ca. 1575. Miniature. 33.6 x 22.5 cm (sheet size) 23 x 18.1 cm (illustration). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XVI. Gift — Dr. Denman W. Ross, 1922.75

75 Right side: Prince in a Kiosk with Attendants; Left side: Attendants Bringing Food and Playing Musical Instruments double-page miniature, probably a frontispiece, from an unknown manuscript; Bukhara, second half of 16th century. Miniature. 28 x 18 cm (sheet size, right) 18.7 x 10.3 cm (illustration, right) 30 x 17.7 cm (sheet size, left) 18.7 x 10.4 cm (illustration, left). Bibliography: Schroeder, 1942, no. XV. Gift — Society of Friends of Fogg Art Museum, 1916.38 & 39


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Persian Painting
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Timurid Period

Safavid Period

Post Safavid Period