8.4. Wayward Youths
Attributable to Shaykh-Muhammad
Ca. 1570
161 x 078 mm (miniature only)
Lent by the Département d'Antiquités Orientales, Section Islamique, Musée du Louvre, Paris (No. 7131)

One senses their desperation in this brilliant drawing of two adolescents, who resemble Parisian demi-mondaines of the 1800s. Their pinched, etiolated faces and ambiguous emotions symbolize Sultan Ibrahim's bleak years at Sabzavar. In relation to them, Shaykh-Muhammad's young dandies of Mashhad, such as number 76, appear boyishly innocent. The artist's stylistic transformation from the crisp restraint of the Camel and Groom (no. 73) and the first Amir of Bukhara (no. 77) to the increasing looseness and mannerism of the second Uzbek portrait (no. 80), has now reached a stage once dubbed "the evil style." Through these years of sweeping, if superficial, change, the artist held to certain formulae, such as his evenly twisted turbans, and the seemingly kneeless curve with which he rendered legs—a legacy from his teacher, Dust-Muhammad (see nos. 31 and 34). New, however, is the dancingly calligraphic freedom of line, with its sensitive flourishes and runs—symptomatic, perhaps, of the unflagging inner spirits of Sultan Ibrahim and his court during their years of adversity.
85. Double Page Illustration: Hawking Party
By Mirza'Ali
Ca. 1575
479 x 318 mm. (each folio, with borders)

a. Left half. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1912 (32.223.1)
b. Right half. Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912 and Picture Fund (14.624)

This splendid double page must once have been the opening scene of a great, now dispersed manuscript. It can be assigned to Mirza'Ali towards the end of his and his patrons' lives. Following his recovery from a severe illness in 1574, Shah Tahmasp experienced a change of heart. Now mellowed, he forgave many who had suffered his ire. Sultan Ibrahim was recalled to Qazvin, where he was put in charge of the innermost circle of court. A final, happier period of patronage seems to have followed, when the uncle and nephew together encouraged artists. The Hawking Party, with its boldly scaled, expansive forms, and its superb borders of animals and marbling, combines Shah Tahmasp's continuing taste for the restrained, polished style of the Qajar with the mannerism of Ibrahim's Mashhad and Sabzavar pictures. Tragically this artistic flowering ended soon, in 1576, when Shah Tahmasp died in his sixty-second year. He was succeeded by Isma'il II, who had been imprisoned since 1557. One of his first acts was to order the execution of Sultan Ibrahim.

1. For a color reproduction of the right half of this double page illustration, see Basil W. Robinson, Persian Drawings from the 12th through the 19th Century (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), pl. 48. Also see Gray, Persian Painting, p. 198.

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