
This beautifully illustrated exhibition catalog was an absolute pleasure to review based on its scholarship, writing, organization and production quality. Produced in conjunction with the recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of the same name, this volume helps to shed new light on a subject that until now received very little scholarly attention. Previous scholarly treatment regarded Indian painting more as craft and less as an art and never made reference to the actual artists. This book, one of the first to discuss the artists and their works, is therefore monumental.

The 224 pages are rich with 155 full-color illustrations including three maps as well as a glossary, index, and bibliography. Works by forty eminent painters are organized in six chronological sections.

Geographically speaking, the majority of the book focuses on artists working in the North of India, which given that the Mughal courts were located around Delhi, is perfectly understandable. That is not to say that all of the paintings and artists whose works are represented only work in the Mughal style; there are Rajput and Hindu court artists represented as well. However, in terms of period and style the bulk of scholarship covers what is called “The Golden Age of Mughal Painting, 1575-1650,” encompassing the workshops formed under the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan.

This book is well constructed, with eight-page signatures all well stitched and bound in cloth covered boards. It would be an excellent addition to any arts collection and would be beneficial to fine arts students as well as art history students and scholars. The quality of book, uniqueness of the scholarship, and its color illustrations make it well worth $45.00. The only complaint is that the book could have been larger, and some of the artists and ideas could have been explored in greater depth, but those are not generally aspects one finds in an exhibit catalog, so there is no great fault. For librarians wishing for a more substantial reference book on the study of Indian painting, one alternative may be the larger two-volume set, Masters of Indian Painting, also published in conjunction with the exhibition at the Met.

Sylvia Welsh, Manager, Property Information Resource Center, Harvard University, sylvia_welsh@harvard.edu