Twenty-eight essays on art history, archaeology, and material culture make up the collection of papers in *Cultures in Contact: From Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.*. Drawn from a series of lectures and symposia, these essays are a response to the 2009 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition *Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.*. These studies reveal a Bronze Age network of cross-cultural interactions and propose a new concept of a hybrid visual culture of the Mediterranean and Near East.

Through detailed iconographical and written analysis, participating historians profile trade between merchant city-states—cultural hubs that traded fine metals, ivories, ceramics, and other luxury goods. These trade centers fostered webs of interactions that proved integral in shaping artistic styles. Many studies in *Cultures of Contact* are drawn from such archaeological findings as the Uluburun shipwreck off the coast of southern Turkey, and elephant bones in the ruins of the Royal Palace of Qatna in western Syria. These studies demonstrate that areas of artistic hybridity were tied not only to diplomacy and power, but to a common desire for beautiful objects, religious fulfillment, and what was "in-style."

This collection of essays elucidates particular cultural interactions of the time through iconographical evidence, notably in Marian Feldman's study of ivory carving, which argues for the development of a Late Bronze Age International style. The sophistication of the carvings during this period indicates widespread trade of goods and of cross-cultural stylistic conventions. The evolution of artistic styles is partially attributable to goods being traded between royals as acts of diplomacy.

The conclusions presented in this group of essays debunk older theories which largely held that marginal cultures absorbed all cultural production of Babylon and Egypt—the dominant empires of the second millennium B.C. E. These marginal cultures, located throughout the Levant, Anatolia, coastal Greece, and modern-day Syria, participated in a push-and-pull relationship with larger, more powerful cultures integrating outside customs and styles with a myriad of ethnic identities. These essays ask the reader to consider how many of modernity’s challenges such as globalization, immigration, and integration are not exclusive to the modern world.

The collection is well-serviced with ample high-quality color illustrations, maps, and charts. Notably, readers may find it difficult to pinpoint information in the book, as there is no index and no table of contents. There is, however, an extensive bibliography. Highly-researched, this book is appropriate for graduate-level art history and ancient Middle Eastern studies programs with a strong archaeological component.