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Real Birds in Imagined Gardens: Mughal Painting between Persia and Europe. Kavita Singh.
Getty Research Institute Council Lecture. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2017. viii +108 pp. $15.

Real Birds in Imagined Gardens is a refreshing study of the use of European and Persian visual idioms in Mughal painting of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The rather short book is an extended version of a lecture given by the author at the Getty Center in 2015, and as such is written in a lively and accessible way. It is illustrated by thirty good quality, albeit small, Mughal paintings that greatly enrich the discussion. From the outset, the author announces her intentions to depart from earlier scholarship that has seen Mughal painting on an evolutionary trajectory from Persianate to European style. Instead she explores why the two modes were used, at times side by side, by considering style as a visual language chosen with deliberation by artists and patrons. The simultaneous use of multiple visual modes is interpreted as the result of discrete choices made by artists for distinct purposes. The author engages in close reading of a number of Mughal paintings, providing innovative contextual interpretations of well-known as well as lesser-known artworks. The resultant study is one that gives agency to artists and patrons from the Mughal context, joining a growing number of scholars such as Molly Aitken and Yael Rice who are pushing the field in exciting new directions.

The author explores the question of style through examples arranged chronologically. She begins with the emperor Humayun's asylum at the Safavid Shah Tahmasp's court in the 1540s and the subsequent emigration of Iranian artists to India. After tracing the expansion of the Mughal manuscript atelier under Humayun's son Akbar, Singh discusses the encounter with European art, in particular Catholic devotional art. Here the author argues that the Akbari experimentation with European art paved the way to deeper engagements in the seventeenth century when Mughal artists used European conventions for specific rhetorical effects. This is made evident, according to Singh, in the art produced for Akbar's son, the future emperor Jahangir, during his period of rebellion against his father. Despite his interest in Europeanizing modes, Jahangir commissioned works in a classicizing Persianate aesthetic at this time, thereby distancing himself from his father.

After Jahangir came to the throne, his artists used Europeanizing modes for allegorical paintings depicting Jahangir surrounded by friends or enemies in imaginary circumstances. In these, Singh argues, Mughal artists were not merely adopting European visual conventions but also the ideas behind them, as this was also how Europeans depicted miraculous scenes. When analyzing "Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Sheikh to Kings" (Freer Gallery of Art, F1942.15a), the author leaves aside the much-discussed iconography of this painting to focus on the dissonance between the illusionistic aspects

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of the figures in the foreground and the flat depiction of the carpet. Singh ties the choice to use two different modes—the illusionistic and the deliberately flat—to Sufistic, Neoplatonic thought. The final section of the book turns to two legendary figures in Persian histories of art, Mani and Bihzad, and presents them as masters of allusion and illusion, respectively, and suggests that Mughal artists were able to be both simultaneously.

Singh's book is commendable for attributing agency to Mughal artists and patrons, and for trying to understand Mughal paintings in their cultural and intellectual context. Her presentation of images that deploy more than one visual mode as successful mobilizations of style, rather than as failures to fully achieve European-style depiction is a welcome assessment that incorporates new thinking from the broader field of Islamic painting. However, the book would have been even more successful had the author not also adopted outdated language that presents European style painting as more "accurate" than Persian (30) or ascribed the choice to use the two modes together to an anxiety about "the eye [being] . . . seduced by a painted image" (69). Wording such as "The Mughal artist was unable to resist the lure of mastering the illusionistic method, but he knew better than to give it free rein" (70) takes back the agency ascribed to artists in other parts of the book, implying that the pull of European-style depiction was so strong that it simply washed over powerless Mughal painters. This, after all, is not too different from the scholars the author criticizes in the beginning of her book.

Emine Fetvacı, *Boston University*
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The Riddle of Jael: The History of a Poxied Heroine in Medieval and Renaissance Art and Culture. Peter Scott Brown.
Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 278; Brill's Studies in Art, Art History, and Intellectual History 25. Leiden: Brill, 2018. xiv + 358 pp. $167.

Peter Scott Brown's thorough history of Jael imagery, including medieval exempla but focused on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, presents iconography in its most inclusive form: how do social, sexual, medical, and church histories, as well as intergenerational artistic traditions, alter and/or inflect the representation of a subject? This book provides insights based primarily on texts. But Brown always combines text-based analysis with broader histories as he tracks the representation of Jael.

What is the "riddle" of the title? In the biblical book of Judges, Jael appears briefly (4:17–22). As enemy general Sisera flees from the Israelite army commanded by Barak, Sisera finds the tent of an absent ally. The ally's wife, Jael, invites Sisera in to have milk. Later, as he rests, she hammers his head into the ground with a tent peg. Then she presents the result to

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