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Karin Rühdanz

Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/6133>

DOI : 10.4000/abstractairanica.6133

ISSN : 1961-960X

Éditeur :

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 15 mai 2006

ISSN : 0240-8910

Référence électronique

Karin Rühdanz, « *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353.* New York, The Metropolitan Museum, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2002, XIV+322 p., 279 illustrations, mostly in colour. », *Abstracta Iranica* [En ligne], Volume 27 | 2006, document 245, mis en ligne le 02 janvier 2007, consulté le 25 septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/6133> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.6133>

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 25 septembre 2020.

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- 1 While the title of this catalogue may imply that art and culture of greater Iran under the Ilkhanids is portrayed as a predominantly Mongol achievement the subject of the exhibition is, in fact, artistic exchange: exchange in all directions “as by-product of the Mongol conquest of Asia”. Focussing on westward artistic influence, the preceding and the simultaneous Persian and Central Asian influences on East Asian art are also dealt with, and parallel artistic developments in another area under Mongol rule, the Golden Horde, are taken into consideration. All this is documented by a wealth of extraordinary objects including acknowledged hallmarks as well as lesser-known material, partly unearthed during the last decades of the 20th century only, in Inner Mongolia and southern Russia.
- 2 The historical, social and economic backgrounds are explained by M. Rossabi (*The Mongols and Their Legacy*) and Ch. Melville (*The Mongols in Iran*). The wide range of “Artistic Exchanges in the Mongol Empire” is explored by J. Watt. The contributions by T. Masuya (*Ilkhanid Courtly Life*) and Sh. Blair (*The Religious Art of the Ilkhanids*) enable the reader to see particularly tiles, but also furniture within the context of the nearly extinguished courtly and the somewhat better preserved religious buildings. While miniatures are used throughout to illustrate different aspects of life in Iran

under Mongol rule, a chapter by R. Hillenbrand deals with the development of “The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran”. “The Transmission and Dissemination of a New Visual Language” is the subject of L. Komaroff’s contribution. She identifies textiles as the “principal transmitters of East Asian (primarily Chinese) visual culture to the West” and suggests drawings on paper as another medium of dissemination. Additionally taking into account the advantage the weaver would derive from drafts, and referring to European examples, this hypothesis is mainly built upon sketches and drawings of the 15th century preserved in albums, and the reference to a – probably – 14th-century artist in a Timurid source (pp. 184-194). While the idea, in general, is convincing, the attribution of two drawings, as examples, to the 14th century is less so.

- 3 A final chapter on “Synthesis: Continuity and Innovation in Ilkhanid Art” by S. Carboni broadens the view by pointing to artistic developments in areas less under the impact of East Asian influence and to stylistic changes in the second half of the 14th century. Two technical studies, one by S. Bertalan on “Leaves from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*”, the other by J. Hirx, M. Leona, and P. Meyers on “The Glazed Press-Molded Tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman”, complement the presentation of a century of aesthetic openness and experimentation following the destruction of most former patronage structures and profiting from an unrestricted cultural exchange.

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Thèmes : 5.1. Monde iranophone

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