



## Leonardo

---

A History of Mughal Architecture, Vol. I by R. Nath

Review by: R. F. Erickson

*Leonardo*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1984), p. 134

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1575016>

Accessed: 20/11/2014 23:00

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*The MIT Press* and *Leonardo* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Leonardo*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

practitioners. The layout is uniformly pleasant and eye-catching. The biographical section manages to be informative without suffering the distortions introduced by the translation and lack of editing found in the essays, probably simply because little grammar is required to list dates and titles.

Reviewed by **Kenneth Krabbenhoft**, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University, 19 University Place, New York, NY 10003, U.S.A.

**A History of Mughal Architecture, Vol. I.** R. Nath. Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1982. 301 pp., illus. Cloth, \$90.00.

One of the most interesting ideas in this book is in the epilogue, where Nath introduces the term "personality architecture". Nath, Reader in the Department of History and Indian Culture at the University of Rajasthan, relates the development of Mughal (Mogul) architecture in its early phase to the dictates and feelings of the three rulers Babur (1483–1530), Humayun (1507–1556) and Akbar (1542–1605). In his historical sketch (chapter one), Nath describes the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century as decadent and deserving of the destructive invasion in 1398 by Timur (Tamerlane). In the period following the invasion, the ground was prepared for a cultural renaissance. "In fact, the Mughals built their cultural state upon the legacy which bequeathed [sic] upon them."

Of the three rulers, Babur is described as a lover of gardens and landscape architecture, which was reflected in the gardens and water settings incorporated into much of the architecture of his time. Examples are the Rambagh Garden at Agra (the Flower-Scatterer Garden) and the Lotus Garden at Dolphur. These were the surroundings for pleasure pavilions and mansions. They show Babur's attachment to, and understanding of, the Persian garden tradition of terraces and water courses. Nath praises Babur as an innovator who "revolutionised the whole art of building".

Babur's superstitious son, Humayun, was seriously interested in astronomy and especially astrology and constantly sought guidance from the stars. His personality is emphasized in his architectural use of the twelve-pointed star for the twelve signs of the zodiac. He is also supposed to have built an observatory for his personal use. His recorder and biographer, Khwandamir, wrote of him as a builder of large buildings and strong forts. Unfortunately, many of these structures no longer exist, or exist as parts of later buildings. In Agra, for example, there is only one structure remaining, a mosque, that is definitely of Humayun's time.

Nath describes the reign of Akbar as the most significant for personality architecture, naming him the "greatest innovator", and the "rare genius on the Indian scene". One of the great surviving monuments of his reign is the Tomb of Humayun at Delhi. Although Nath agrees that this was the project of Queen Bega Begum, he is convinced that Akbar was associated with it throughout its construction. The influence of Babur is also present in the layout of the enclosed garden, and the influence of Humayun can be seen in the bulbous double dome.

Another element in Mughal architecture Nath considers of major significance is what he calls the geophysical factor—the climate and the availability of building materials. The Jamuna–Chambal region, a relatively small area of northern India which includes the three principal centers of Delhi, Agra and Gwalior, is the setting for architecture of the period Nath discusses. The climate is tropical, with excessive heat from March to October. Thus, architects and builders sought to provide relief from the sun through shadows and water gardens. They also used soothing shades of color and introduced cool mosaics of stones and glazed tiles.

Altogether, Nath's *History of Mughal Architecture* is a fine and interesting study of an important architectural period. It is written in a straightforward style, and the text is illustrated by many photographs, diagrams and sketches. Each chapter contains a list of footnotes, including bibliographical references, but there is no complete bibliography. There is also an index and a list of abbreviations. Admirers of Indian art and architecture will enjoy this book and will gain new ideas about architectural sources and inspirations.

Reviewed by **R. F. Erickson**, Historical Studies, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL 62025, U.S.A.

**The De Stijl Environment.** Nancy J. Troy. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1983. illus. Cloth. \$45. ISBN 0-262-20046-5.

Nancy J. Troy has made a valuable contribution to the history of twentieth-century art. The topic of the book is the interior design of several De Stijl artists, realized by abstract painterly means. But Troy also touches on various problems of the period and is not limited to projects and executed rooms by artists usually labeled as belonging to De Stijl. This book goes beyond Jane Beckett's excellent article 'The Abstract Interior' (*Toward a New Art*, The Tate Gallery, 1980, pp. 90–124).

The main focus of Troy's book is the integration of color and space, one of the crucial topics of early twentieth century art and a heritage of art nouveau, going back to William Morris. The artists of De Stijl tried in the first years of their rather loose association to achieve this integration by 'Collaboration' (Chapter One) between painters and architects. Troy gives various examples from the early collaborations between Oud and Van Doesburg, Wils and Van Doesburg, Huszar and Wils, and others to show their guiding principle: the De Stijl painters followed the architectural conception and enhanced it by color. Only Bart van der Leek, who refused from the very beginning to stick to the rules, produced innovating designs. In this early phase colors were employed strictly as a 'second voice' to the architectural theme. Van Doesburg's designs for floors, mosaics and stained glass windows (in De Vork's work and in the De Lange house in Alkmaar) fit this idea.

A new approach started after 1921, with a new conception and treatment of the corner. For the first time, the architectural frame is broken by the painter's conception: it is not the structure of walls and surfaces that creates space; rather, space is created by the color, by the painter's conception. Huszar's works show his hitherto neglected importance in this field, and Piet Zwart, though moving outside the De Stijl group, is shown as an innovator, with his designs for exhibition stands. To this new treatment of the corner, which contrasts with architectural forces, Troy opposes Mondrian's conception of space as a succession of flat planes. She argues that the arrangements and design of Mondrian's studio were not only a background to, but also a source of inspiration for, his painting.

The last two chapters, 'Collaboration Reexamined' and 'Total Abstraction', deal mainly with Van Doesburg's attempt to overrule architectural schemes through a coloristic, almost musical order. He was disappointed with the collaboration with Oud in Spangen and unsuccessful in Drachten. But his collaboration with Van Eesteren led to his great adventure of designing two utopian houses for Leonce Rosenberg, where indeed space and color coincide. 'Total Abstraction' stresses Lissitzky's impact in dissolving architectural space by painterly means and brings up three examples of painterly domination: the Spatial Color Composition by Huszar and Rietveld for a 1923 Berlin exhibition, Van Doesburg's Aubette in Strasbourg as a painterly spatial invention, and Mondrian's Paris studio as an example of spatial composition reflecting the artist's tenets about harmony and restfulness. Here the author could have gone further. Vordemberge's window displays of the early fifties in Amsterdam are an ultimate outcome of these trends.

Troy's book is valuable because she follows the development of De Stijl in an area that has not yet been treated: the collaboration and competition between painters and architects. This approach leads to a view of De Stijl not as a homogenous group, but as a sometimes conflicting collection of artists. The conflicts laid bare by Troy's method reveal more conflicts around the rather difficult personality of Van Doesburg than about the essential, abstract, and ethical tenets of De Stijl. *The De Stijl Environment* thus throws a new light on Van Doesburg in the year of his centenary. The book is a model in another way as well. Troy starts from the works and quotes theoretical texts as an abstraction (and not the other way round), showing that she has well understood De Stijl's ideas: "It shall become clear that the new work of art does not proceed from theories accepted *a priori*, but the other way round, that the principles come forth from plastic (*beeldend*) work."

Reviewed by **Hans Jaffe**, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 17, Amsterdam, The Netherlands..

**Clorindo Testa, pintor y arquitecto.** Jorge Glusberg. Ediciones Summa, Buenos Aires, 1983. 102 pp., illus.

How do we judge an architect who is also a painter, or a painter who is also an architect? What does each body of work have to say about its