

Art of the Mughal Empire

Akbar (1556–1605)

- Akbar was the first great Mughal patron of the arts and commissioned various building projects
- He created the new capital city of Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra. It was completed in 1585 and included a residential palace
 - The construction reflected a combination of styles from Iran and Central Asia with indigenous traditions of Hindu and Muslim India.
- Although he is said to have been illiterate, Akbar commissioned numerous illustrated manuscripts that incorporated Persian, Indian, and even European elements.



Jahangir (r. 1605–27)

- Akbar's son Jahangir had strong artistic tastes, preferring a single painter to work on an image rather than the collaborative method of Akbar's time.
- He also encouraged careful plant and animal studies, and prized realistic portraiture.
- Jahangir commissioned literary works such as the *Razmnama* (a Persian translation of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*)



<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/c-welch-part-ii-l11227/lot.101.html>

- This picture is probably from one of Jahangir's leading painters.
- The Persian influence is strong.

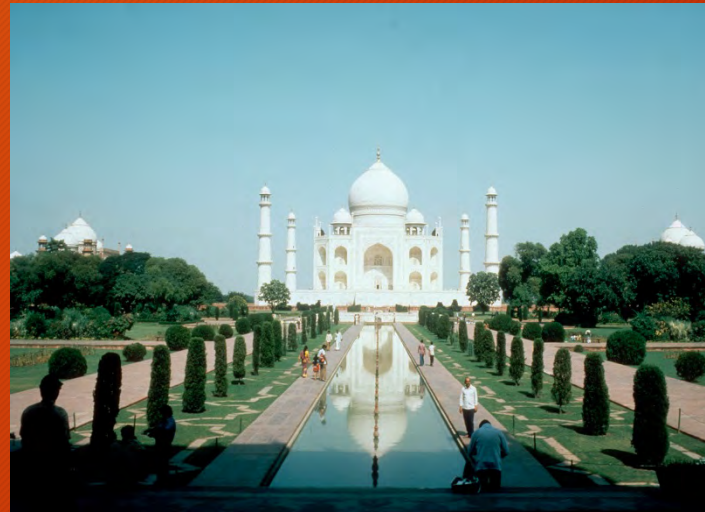


Discussion Question:

- India's most recognizable building was built during the Mughal Empire. Can you name this architectural gem? What was the purpose of this building?

Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58)

- Shah Jahan is most celebrated for his architectural achievements, including the Taj Mahal.
- He commissioned this tomb for his wife after her death in 1631 and it took sixteen years to complete.
- After moving the capital from Agra to Delhi in 1648, Shah Jahan built a new city there, called Shahjahanabad, and a congregational mosque (1650-56), the largest in all of India.
- Paintings from his reign were characterized by formal portraits and courtly scenes, replacing the more wide-ranging and personal subject matter under Jahangir.



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/jeffroesmann/5674811425/>



"The Emperor Shah Jahan with his Son Dara Shikoh"

Artist: Painting by Nanha Calligrapher: Mir 'Ali Haravi (d. ca. 1550)

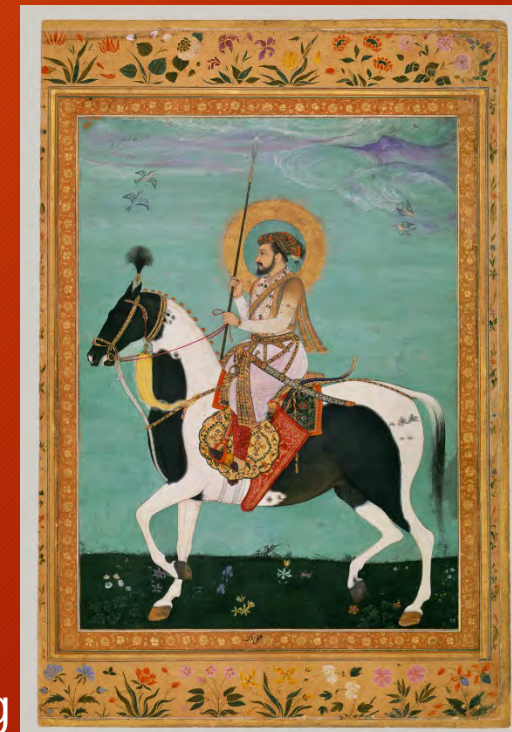
Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper



"Shah Jahan on Horseback"

Artist: Painting by Payag (Indian, active ca. 1591-1658)
Calligrapher: Mir 'Ali Haravi (d. ca. 1550)

Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper



Mughal Motifs



Michell, George. "The Majesty of Mughal Decoration."

Decline of Mughal Arts

- Shah Jahan's son, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), held increasingly orthodox Sunni beliefs.
- His reign saw the decline of Mughal patronage of the arts.
- In 1680 he banned music and painting from his court.
- The emperors who followed him were too weak and the state too poor to support the production of lavish paintings and books as before.

Discussion Question:

- What are similarities in the art of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires?
- What are differences?