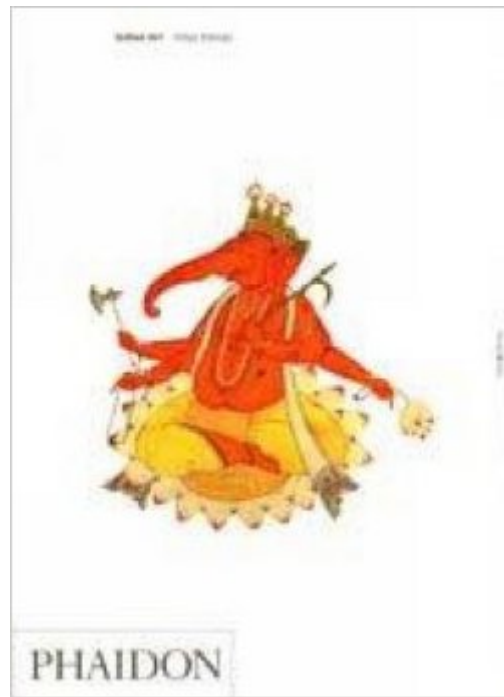


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Indian Art



Synopsis

This text looks at the role of art in the Indian subcontinent and then analyzes early art from the Indus civilization (2000 BC) to the time of Buddha (c.5000 BC). The Mauryan emperor Ashoka (4th century BC), was an important player in the dissemination of Buddhism, using art to this end. A stable economic base and the rise of a mercantile community were important in Buddhism's growth. Inscriptions show that the contributions to pay for art came from housewives, householders, merchants, traders and a range of other common people. The vibrant narrative tradition displayed in this art is analyzed.

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Customer Reviews

Vidya's book is a delight not just for the scope and content of the written material and references, but also for visual pleasures it provides to the users. Indian art is nothing if not immensely varied and rich, and Vidya brings this to the fore. I was delighted to see the way the Madurai Meenakshi temple was treated, to see its Gopurams teeming with mythological figures and dieties of all kinds : an apt symbol of the diversity and richness of this civilization and of life that it celebrates, for in many ways Indian art is like life : beautiful and confusing at the same time, a buzz of forms , shapes, and materials, all with their own rationale for existence and appeal. Vidya's book tries to a give a very good idea of this, from the earthy Khajuraho to the elegant Elephanta, from the ancient Indo-Greek Gandharan Buddhas to the naturalistic Nayaka. A book to please both scholars and lay readers alike.

This is a significant improvement over Roy Craven's colonialist take on Indian art. This book is much more sensitive to the culture of India and its rich amalgamation of Vedic thought, the religion and philosophy of Buddhism, what we now term as Hinduism, and of course, later Islamic influence. Especially significant is the explanation of the narrative sculptural relief panels at Sanchi and Amaravati. Dehejia explains their rich narratives clearly - and what at first appears confusing becomes instead a rich tapestry of imagination. Her explanations also merge style with context; in effect, we understand these panels as they were understood at the time of their historical inception. She rightly de-emphasizes the dynastic and stylistically rigid categorizations that are so predominant in Western scholarship. A worthy and timely text. I highly recommend it.

While no expert in Indian art and architecture, I have been studying in this area off and on for about fifteen years. I have not encountered an introductory survey that was more balanced and illuminating. It is also well written and beautifully illustrated. The eccentric reviewer who accorded this book merely one star is obviously carping--perhaps because his or her own work was omitted from the necessarily selective bibliography. The other reviews have all been favorable up to this point, and for a good reason.

It's all right for a very, very brief introduction, but that's it. After taking a class on this book at UC Berkeley, reading this book barely scratches the surface of Indian Art. If you're genuinely interested in the subject, you'd probably be better served by a more in depth treatment of the subject. The paper quality, binding, and images within the book are at a high standard, and the book itself is at a nice price point.

Vidya's survey is outstanding. Her exposition of the 'Rasa' theory in Hindu aesthetics should help non-Hindus to understand the alternative basis of art appreciation. She points out that according to this 'Rasa' theory the contemplation of a work of art must evoke in the viewer a state of "heightened awareness" of an emotion, the emotions being, erotic, comic, kindness, furiousness, heroic, terrible, odious, wondrous and peaceful. Hindu aesthetics thus stressed the prominent role of the viewer's response in the appreciation of art. This theory was crystallized in the fourth century ACE. One may recall Eliot's criticism of Shakespeare's Hamlet that it lacked 'objective correlation', i.e., that when certain external facts which must terminate in a sensory experience are given, a relevant emotion should be immediately evoked. Vidya also points out that in the visual

story-telling adopted by sculptors in Ancient India, viewers understood that the lower part of a panel was near to them and the upper part further away. When this has been basically understood, displaying the objects in the 'background' of a relief as large and clear as those in the 'foreground' led to a legible telling of the story. Vidya says that, therefore, perspective was a non-issue, clarity of visual comprehension was the objective. On the whole a very impressive survey. The photographs are also very good. I only wish Vidya had said more about Chola Sculpture like Dakshinamurthy and Bronzes like Parvathi in the Sackler Art Gallery, Washington.

This text is scholarly and thus somewhat dense- i.e. to me a little tough to read for someone new to the subject. It covers content areas I haven't seen discussed in other Indian art surveys, such as a discussion of Portuguese Goa and a chapter on 20th century art in India. In general I like Phaidon publisher's art history surveys.

It was a very good book. Very informative and helpful for classes. Beautiful pictures back up the writing and help you get a good idea for Indian art and architecture. "Indian Art" also helps you learn about the history of the Indus valley civilization and different archeological finds and theories based on those finds.

Good book beautiful photos and lots of great historical information. I would recommend this book to anyone who has an Asian Art history class or simply likes Asian art and History.

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