

Ottoman Illustration: The World of the Miniaturist

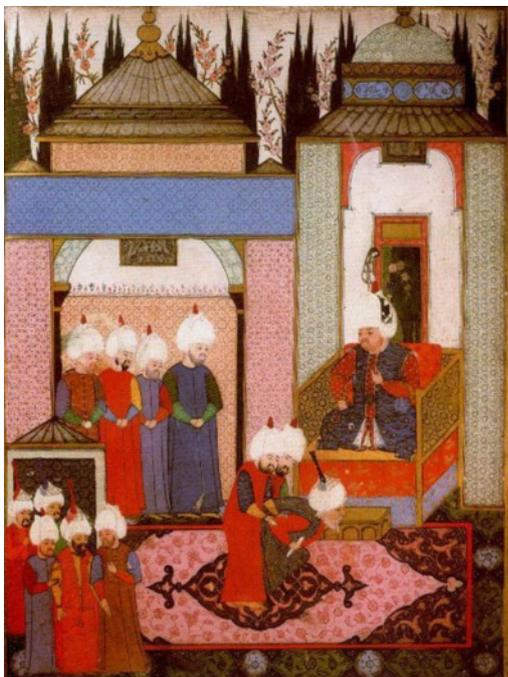
Synopsis and images

Jane Angelini - 15 May 2019



Ottoman miniatures share much in common with Persian and Central Asian miniatures, and the Turkish artists of the 15th-17th centuries follow in the tradition of the Grand Masters of Herat, Samarkand and Tabriz where a profound sense of poetry and mysticism prevails. However, the best examples of Turkish miniatures possess a quality of frankness, vitality and vigour which is not seen in other Islamic paintings. Brilliant, vibrant colours that seem to penetrate the eye, technical mastery leading to exquisite drawing, a profound sense of rhythmic contours, an appreciation of the perfect beauty of an occasion or a person, and an element of humour are the chief characteristics of the miniatures created at the Ottoman Court in Istanbul. The role of the miniaturist was to provide a visual record of people and historical events, often illustrating a text. They were commissioned by Sultans and typical subject matter is portraiture, the stories of battles, vivid scenes of brightly coloured cities under siege, the occasion and celebration of festivals, sultans riding or hunting with courtiers, or enthroned to receive

homage under a bulbous floral tent. Perhaps most memorable of all is the image of Suleyman the Magnificent, simply walking in old age in a garden, gaunt, stiff but still upright, attended by two pages. This is a colourful, entertaining subject. I will discuss the artistic rules underlying miniature painting and the fundamental difference in aesthetic approach between traditions of the East and the West, the training received by the miniaturists within the court guild, and the subject matter chosen by the patron.



Selim receiving the Safavid ambassador in his palace in Edirne in 1567, 1567



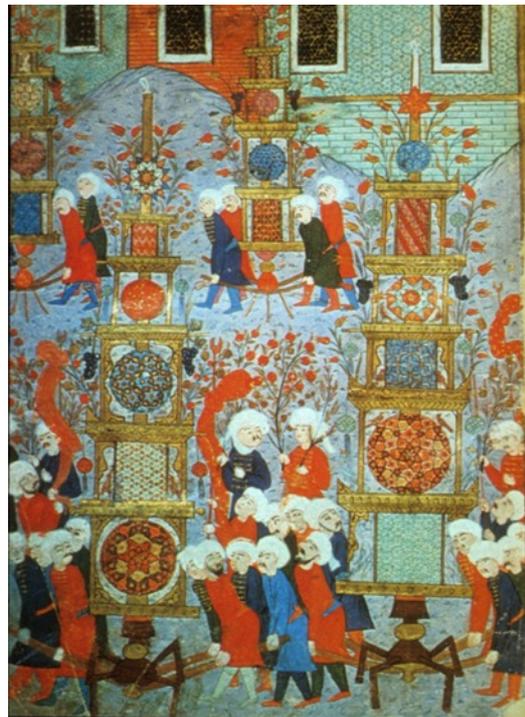
Nigari Jesters

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Koran of Mehmet II



Osman Miniature showing Flower Procession



Festivities on the Golden Horn, Ahmed II reign



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