



Sheikh Sanân Beneath the Window of the Christian Woman, from Mantiq al-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds)

Date

mid-16th century

Medium

Double-sided watercolor, ink, and gold leaf on paper

Description

From the fourteenth century to the nineteenth century, Persian painting consisted primarily of book illustrations. The production of books and illuminated manuscripts during this period was centered around the royal court on account of the cost and labor required to create them. Numerous individuals were involved: the scribe, who copied the text onto the page; the gilder, who accentuated the calligraphic text with gold and silver leaf; the painter, who provided the detailed illustrations; and the binder, who compiled the book within an elaborate cover. In the early sixteenth century, the area of present-day Iran had been unified under the Safavids, who struggled against the Ottomans for the rest of the century to maintain control of the territory. This page was likely produced by practitioners of the school of Shiraz, the capital of Fars province, in the southwest, which was a cultural center at the time and an active book-making site. Islamic strictures forbid the representation of human figures and animals in religious contexts, but the practice flourished in the secular realm. A variety of sumptuous patterns and colors is visible in this

scene, which includes an exterior landscape as well as interior views filled with a riotous array of carpets, tiles, and wall decorations. Although the text from which the page was removed is unidentified at present, an inscription in French on the verso, likely by a former owner, notes that the image depicts a historical meeting between a princess and an envoy that took place in 1514. The sheet was donated by William G. Roehrick, Class of 1934, H1971, an actor and art collector with multifarious tastes. His participation in the advisory committee for the Root Art Center, his leadership on the Committee on the Visual Arts, and his generosity toward the Emerson Gallery were integral to the building of Hamilton College's art collection. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Sheet: 10 11/16 × 7 3/16 in. (27.1 × 18.3 cm) Composition (recto): 7 3/4 × 3 3/4 in. (19.7 × 9.5 cm) Composition (verso): 7 3/4 × 3 3/4 in. (19.7 × 9.5 cm)