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The Netherlands

A Comparative Visual Analysis of Nineteenth-Century Iranian Portrait Photography and Persian Painting

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Citation

Pérez González, C. M. del. (2010, February 2). *A Comparative Visual Analysis of Nineteenth-Century Iranian Portrait Photography and Persian Painting*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/14653>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Stellingen bij het proefschrift van Carmen Pérez González
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1. The Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) called attention to the fact that pictures change appearance and loose meaning when turned into their mirror images. He realized that this happens because pictures are “read” from the left to the right, and naturally the sequence changes when the picture is inverted.
2. If the only condition for that rule of composition is that the pictures are “read” from left to right (like the direction of writing of all Western languages), then the opposite applies to the rest of the languages, i.e. those written from right to left (like Farsi): Iranian photographers produce mirror-like images to those made by Western photographers.
3. Research in the field of neuropsychology has demonstrated that there is a significant effect of reading habits on aesthetic preference, with left-to-right readers showing a preference for stimuli with a rightward directionality while right-to-left readers preferred stimuli with a leftward directionality.
4. The influence of the traditional use of text or calligraphy in painting and later on in nineteenth-century photography is apparent, this element being so characteristic of Iranian culture that it is even found today.
5. Independently of which kind of information is given in the inscription on the photograph (factual or interpretative), the language is always poetic.
6. The use of the traditional kneeling pose in Persian miniature painting and Qajar portrait painting has been inherited by nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography.
7. There is a chronological evolution from the traditional Iranian pose to a more westernized pose, chiefly symbolized by the use of chairs in the painter’s and, later, in the photographer’s studio.
8. The isometric system of projection and the vertical composition/vertical perspective is used consistently in Persian miniature painting. The combination of these two strategies to suggest perspective is a unique element found in this painting tradition.
9. Persian miniatures display a diffuse composition and grid structure layout. The grid layout typical of the Persian miniatures is also to be found in Iranian photographs that depict large groups of people spread over a big space.
10. Western influences on the aesthetics of Iranian photographers were the product of

travels between Europe and Iran that Western and Iranian photographers undertook in both directions.

11. The final result of this encounter between Western and Iranian photographers is a *mixed aesthetic* present in their work, one that can be found in many images taken mostly by Iranian photographers.

12. The best invention after the washing machine is Kindergarten.