

castes, and although they work as painters, have a high position in society. Although the catalogue contains several examples of painting manuals (p.16), the Introduction provides little or no information on such sketchbooks, or on the texts used by painters, such as manuals and guidelines. It would also have been helpful if this section had included some information on the substance of the colours and materials used.

While the stylistic overview of the paintings provides valuable general information on the collection, the opportunity to provide a bold summary and interpretation of Newar painting has not been taken. Kreijger stresses that Newar paintings are noticeably different in style from both the Indian and Tibetan painting traditions, but makes little attempt to identify these differences and to delineate clearly the distinctive features of Newar painting and their development over time. While certain typical Newar characteristics such as representations of a deity's vehicle in pairs (p.42) are pointed out in the catalogue text, more general tendencies could have been outlined to prepare the reader at the beginning of the book. The final section of the Introduction provides a useful commentary on Nepalese religious practice, though there are several passages where useful information has been omitted, such as the identification of the "holy lake where devotees of Shiva bathe" (p.21) as Gosainkund. In addition, the use of broad generalizations occasionally obscures whether a statement refers to specific items in the collection or to the whole genre of Newar painting.

In its totality, this well illustrated and documented catalogue of the previously unpublished Jucker collection provides an extremely valuable and detailed contribution to the study of Newar painting between the 13th and 20th centuries. Kreijger sets out to remedy the lack of material available on the arts of the Kathmandu Valley, to provide a study which is of interest and an aid to all students of Nepalese art, and which serves as an introductory text on the subject. His enthusiasm for the subject will inspire readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the Newar painting tradition.

Earth. Door. Sky. Door: Paintings of Mustang by Robert Powell with an introduction by Roberto Vitali. London : Serindia Publications, 1999. 108 pp., col. ill., maps. ISBN 0906026539.

Reviewed by Clare Harris

In 1992 the Nepalese government allowed a partial opening of the restricted area of Mustang, a decision which enabled a number of Himalayas and Tibet specialists to begin research projects in the region. Among them was the Australian artist Robert Powell. He joined a team of historians, architects and photographers (led by Niels Gutschow) who aimed to study and document the architecture of Mustang. Gutschow made an inspired choice when selecting his colleagues for this project, the results of which can be appreci-

ated in *Earth. Door. Sky. Door*. Although this publication reproduces works displayed by Powell at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C., it is not merely an exhibition catalogue. The combination of Powell's images and the text by fellow team member and Tibetologist Roberto Vitali make this an extremely useful contribution to our knowledge of Himalayan architecture in a particularly interesting location.

As a cleft in the Himalayan ranges, the Kali Gandaki valley has been traversed by those wishing to venture from the Tibetan plateau to the plains of India and vice versa for perhaps three millennia. Mustang, in the upper reaches of this valley, is therefore a place where architecture displays a convergence of Tibetan and South Asian influences. Powell's paintings provide ample evidence of this and allow us to observe that, for example, the superstructures of Mustang homes bear close resemblance to those of Central Tibet and Western Tibet, though window fittings are in some cases carved in the style of the Kathmandu valley. However, the style of the Mustang built environment not only reflects a degree of hybridity but asserts some distinctive local variation, particularly in the use of vivid colours for exterior wall painting. Even the Sakyapa architecture of Tibet pales in comparison to the drama of the vertical bands of pigment used in Mustang.

Many of the images in *Earth. Door. Sky. Door* are executed with a realism and accuracy that makes them invaluable to the student of Himalayan architecture. In fact this is a case where the painter has eclipsed the photographer, as Powell includes a cross-section of a cave temple, illustrations of a set of stupas, and an interior which cannot be recorded by the camera. Vitali's captions and introduction provide historic, technical and ethnographic detail which is not available elsewhere, and ensure that the book is underpinned by sound scholarship. However, I suspect that the atmosphere of Powell's images will attract other readers beside Tibetologists. Many of his paintings move beyond the purely descriptive, verging instead towards the surreal and the abstract. An image such as 'House at Tsarang' takes some of the basic ingredients of Tibetan architecture—white painted mud wall, a doorway with black 'horned' architrave, and a thick layer of firewood stored on a flat roof—and transposes them by close cropped framing into a Rothko-like modernist work. When Powell paints yak horns impaled in mud at Drakmar (in a style reminiscent of working drawings by the sculptor Anish Kapoor) they inspire him to create an imagined 'yak horn device', an object that looks like a cross between a torpedo and the crown of an obscure potentate. Thus Powell metamorphoses the local meaning of yak horn, where it functions as a protective votive to the earth spirits, into an icon from a more personal cosmology. Hence I agree with Vitali when he remarks that Powell should not be compared to the Orientalist painters of the monuments of South Asia who "painted an invisible barrier separating their easel from the world around them" (p.11). Powell's sensibility is so thoroughly engaged with his subject that his paintings become what Giuseppe Tucci, the founder of Tibetan art scholarship, would call 'psycho-cosmograms'. Since Tucci used this Jungian terminology to refer to the Tibetan mandala, the comparison is, I think apt, for Powell has clearly used his eye and brush to try to see beyond the physical appearance of Mustang in an attempt to capture something of its essence. To my mind this

inevitably also reveals something of the mentality of the observer—in this case an Australian who has travelled extensively in the Himalayas as part of an emotional intellectual commitment to the cultures of Tibetan Buddhism, and who clearly shares the late twentieth century view that the region can effect what Vitali calls a ‘metaphysical transformation’ in the visitor. Hence for me there is some tension in these images, for Powell’s aestheticisation of the material culture of Mustang is so ravishing that it can surely only inspire many others to beat the same path and to knock on the ‘earth door sky door’ of Mustang. It is only in this sense that Powell’s paintings are similar to the engravings and aquatints of the Orientalists: they will drive the imagination of others and catapult them towards making the ‘Grand Tour’ of the Himalayas.

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In the body of your text:

It has been conclusively demonstrated (Sakya 1987) in spite of objections (Miller 1988: 132-9) that the ostrich is rare in Nepal.

In the bibliography:

Sakya, G.D. 1987. *Nepalese Ostriches: A trivial myth*. Kathmandu: Mani Pustak Bhandar.

Miller, M.D.D. 1988. 'A comprehensive rebuttal of G. Sakya' *Kailash* 6(2): 121-83.

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