

# The possible space in *Timurid painting* Reintroducing devices of pictorial composition

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## Abstract

Although for a long time, it had been believed that the Persian miniature arranged freely autonomous fragments, there are some discoveries bring a new light of conventional devices in manuscript art. The most relevant observation had been done by Robert Hillenbrand<sup>1</sup>, in his article entitled “*The use of space in the Timurid painting*” he highlighted some conventions for the depiction of space by means of four specific categories of experimental space namely; Architecture, solid blocks color or form, margins, and empty spaces. Consequently, he remarked that the spatial setting in Timurid painting had been structured as precise as Parthenon intercolumniation. Previously, Ernst Grube<sup>2</sup> implies to those conventional devices as the classical style of Islamic paintings, he stated that “*One of the most fundamental elements of this style is the intense preoccupation with the relation of each element to the next, and of all elements to the total image*”. A few recent studies done by Friederike Weis<sup>3</sup> applied the golden section as one of the conventional devices painting’s composition, while the large part of this structure still remained untouched. This study firstly brings more clarities on conventional, hidden, and established devices beyond the paintings then tried to reintroduce typology as a possible alternative for pictorial composition.

In a more practical way, this study attempted to analyze paintings attributed to Bihzad during Timurid era, as the first step, by reflecting the underlain geometrical composition, tried to retrieve the indicative hidden frames as decoded device delineating the intention among placed segments into subdivided frame thereby relation of sequence of frames as total scene examined. Recalling Ernst Grube’s statement alluding to the relation of painting’s elements; considered individual geometrical diagram conveying; Architecture, figures, textual frames, and detached elements. Secondly, each frame as an autonomous structure was studied through the main typology.

According to two defined structures for architectural space<sup>4</sup>: 1. Geometrical composition determined the place of elements. 2. Mentally arranged fragments through hand and mind of Artist. In terms of architectural speaking, the dialectic between the content and container, regarding various typologies to the extent of possible alternatives, it seems that conventional devices and typology are following the two modes of spatial structure respectively. Precise geometrical diagrams explicitly depicted that artist deliberately adhered to conventional devices, he accurately drew frames, captured cardinal lines and points, while the entire scene sprang from his intuition to innovate the sequence of frames as the possible space.

**Keywords:** spatia. structure, Conventional devices, Typology, Timurid painting, Kamal Ud-din Bihzad

1. Robert Hillenbrand, “*The use of space in Timurid painting*”, Leiden and New York. 1997, p. 76-102.

2. Ernst Grube, *The classica style of Islamic painting*, 1968, p.34.

3. Friederike Weis, “*New light on Bihzad’s method of placing figures within his compositions*”, *collected essays of international conference of Kamal-Uddin- Bihzad*, 2005, p.317-329

4. See, Franco Purini, *The Italian Measure of Architecture*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2008.