

Impressions of Arabia: Architecture and Frescoes of the Asir Region

Thierry Mauger

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Thierry Mauger : Impressions of Arabia: Architecture and Frescoes of the Asir Region before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Impressions of Arabia: Architecture and Frescoes of the Asir Region:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Came faster than said :)By Mr. Thomas R StaceyEqual condition to expectation, very fast shipment and glad to get a copy as I think is out of print!! It was published in 1996.1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Tour from your armchairBy ...so many books...This book is full of vivid and interesting pictures, accompanied by informative text. Although it cannot substitute for experiencing Arabia in person, it is a rich and satisfying substitute.

With its awe-inspiring landmarks, its dense woodlands, and the delightful coolness of its mountain-tops, the region of Asir stands in sharp contrast to the usual patterns of Saudi Arabian landscape. "This could have been the site of the Garden of Eden," wrote St. John Philby in the 1930s, and as this extraordinary book of photographs demonstrates, the claim still holds true today. The story of the author's two journeys around the Asir region is told through the architecture, frescoes and lifestyles of the people. Granted royal approval for his second project, Thierry Mauger has been able to gain access to previously unseen interiors and to win the trust of the people. In the process, he reveals how the art of the Asir region, the handpainted, brightly colored interior decoration, the painted faades, the symbolism

of the architecture, and the unique landscape form a complex code which provides valuable insights into understanding this little-known culture. In the midst of Westernizing trends, the author demonstrates the strong traditional forces which imbue the art and architecture of Asir today. New architecture is taking up forms and ornamentation from traditional regional styles, and as the author shows, the painted interiors by Asir women resonate with the traditions of magic and religion, blended with new images drawn from the contemporary culture.

From Library Journal The rugged mountains of southwest Saudi Arabia define an area with unique environmental and cultural features. Ethnophotographer Mauger (*The Ark of the Desert*, Routledge, 1991) twice has explored that Asir region, recording some of its most distinctive characteristics—striking domestic architecture distinguished both in form and by traditions of exuberant decoration expressed through ornamental stonework and brilliantly colored exterior and interior murals. The book is predominately a photo essay, with excellent color images of the often spectacular architectural decoration. The text, while providing useful background information, reveals the author's lack of expertise in art and architectural history and limited understanding of art vocabulary. Nevertheless, the book is highly recommended as a visual record of a little-known art tradition threatened with extinction because of modernization. Eugene C. Burt, *Art Inst. of Seattle Lib.* Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Mauger's wondrous book illuminates the intensely spiritual presence of architectural structures in Saudi Arabia's Asir region and examines building materials that create unique, richly textural surfaces. Powerfully graphic polychrome frescoes, which have traditionally decorated that country's interior spaces, are also highlighted, along with unexpected examples of such exterior features as small outbuildings and entire edifices adorned with bold colors, ornate geometric patterning, and abstract symbols to heighten overall impact. A luminous vision unfolds as Mauger reveals thoughtful connections between artistic themes and cultural customs in a book informed by the author's intimate knowledge of a mesmerizing area. Alice Joyce About the Author Thierry Mauger has been a radar instructor, computer field engineer, weapons system instructor, and ethnophotographer. He is a graduate of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, a member of the *Socit des Gens de Lettres*, and a Fellow of the *Royal Geographical Society*. He is also active in the *International Cooperation for the Preservation and Protection of Traditional Architectural Heritage (CICAT)*. Well known to everyone interested in Saudi Arabia, he has traveled extensively in Asia and shared the life of the Arctic Inuit in 1985 before devoting himself to the tribes of Arabia. He is the author of several books, including *In the Shadow of the Black Tents* (Tihama, 1986), *Bedouins of Arabia* (Souffles, 1988), *Flowered Men and Green Slopes of Arabia* (Souffles, 1988), *The Ark of the Desert* (Souffles, 1991), and *Undiscovered Asir* (Stacey, 1993). He has also published a scholarly work on the image in the Arab world (EHESS, 1994) and a doctoral dissertation (social anthropology and ethnology) on the vernacular architecture of Asir (EHESS, 1995). A ten-year stay in Saudi Arabia inspired Thierry Mauger to conduct a very extensive exploratory survey. After traveling across the country, he focused on Asir, one of the least known and most accessible parts of the globe. It is to the author's credit that he discovered and photographed the flowered men and the polychromatic frescoes in these remote territories.