Public access description

This architectural sketch belongs to a portfolio of 238 designs on paper, once owned by a working architect in Qajar Tehran, in nineteenth-century Iran. There are two complete paper scrolls, and 236 smaller designs, most of which were cut down from other scrolls. They are a rare survival. The drawings vary in style and content, showing a range of designs proposed for tilework, stucco and woodwork, as well as architectural groundplans and elevations. Some reflect Iranian traditions of long standing, while others show decorative fashions imported from Europe. They are probably the work of several different individuals.

The drawings were acquired for the Museum in 1875 by Caspar Purdon Clarke, an architect who later became Director of the V&A. In 1874-75, Purdon Clarke was in Tehran, renovating the British embassy buildings. During the project, this drawing series was presented to Purdon Clarke by the local master-builders he was working with. He reported later that this was not a sale but an exchange, in acknowledgement of his teaching some European building-techniques to his Tehran colleagues. The two master-builders, Ostad Khodadad and Ostad Akbar, explained that the portfolio had belonged to the late Mirza Akbar, a court architect active in Tehran earlier in the century.

Descriptive line

Middle East, Paper. Architectural drawing, graphite, ink and paint on paper, attributed to Mirza Akbar, Qajar Iran, 1840-1870

Dimensions

Height: 26.4 cm, Width: 39 cm

Museum number

AL.8309:2

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1266435/drawing-mirza-akbar/