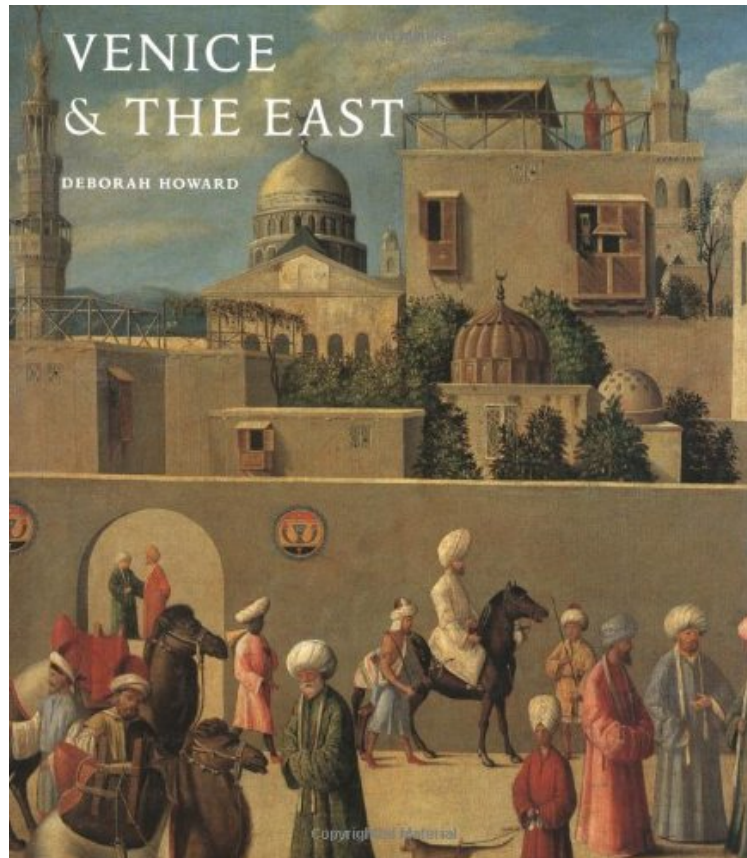


Venice the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 11001500

Deborah Howard

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Venice the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 11001500:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Venice - the Hong Kong of its timeBy G. KennedyVenice is nothing like the rest of Italy ... everyone can see this ... instead of looking below the surface most people just describe it as "magical" . Having been there numerous times, it has clear influences from the Islamic world. I also have not seen much that is truely Gothic in the rest of Italy for that matter ... Milano Cathedral being the only real example I've seen.This is a very good book, and anyone who believes that Gothic (with its pointed arches, etc) is not derived from Islamic architecture needs to do some travelling (outside of Europe), and stop believing in magic.Tourists heading to Venice should read this book - and "A History of Venice" by J.J.Norwich and look at the photos (not text - which was translating by Babelfish methinks) in "Palaces of Venice" by A.Fasolo.You will then know that it was a maritime empire populated by entrepreneurial merchants, that made loads of money from having a virtual monopoly of the spice

trade from the east (Islamic countries) to Europe, to fund the building of all these great buildings. This all came to an end when Portugal found another way to the east and bypassed Venice. Not unlike Hong Kong being bypassed by Shanghai today.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Richard J. King
Awesome!
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Many Veils of Venice
By Wayne Dawson
Deborah Howard is steeped in the enigma of Venetian architecture and gives a fabulous interpretation of its development through trading relationships with the Islamic world from 1100-1500 AD. By emphasising the mental 'Transmission and Propagation' of Islamic imagery as much as any materialistic one through trade, Howard shows just how elastic the 'process of cultural diffusion' was and restores the importance of the oral tradition in the 'reformulation' of that imagery into another space and time. Her focus on the Middle East draws our attention away from Constantinople, bringing out the importance of Alexandria as one of the main sources of cultural inspiration. In a vivid example of a rescued and transformed architectural motif, Howard mentions at length the lighthouse Pharos of Alexandria. This wonder of the ancient world was still standing when Islam spread across the North African coast and its secular function as a light in dark places became a potent spiritual symbol with the slimmed down rise of many a minaret. The offspring of Pharos continued to multiply with Venice contributing several of its own; the last example, Codussi's campanile for the cathedral church of San Pietro di Castello with, 'its snow-white ashlar masonry . . . stands at the eastern end of the city, as a beacon for the sea borne traveller from the east.' The Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus also gets singled out for special attention as does the Abbasid and Fatimid periods in general, with their legacy of impressive building projects that impacted upon the mind of many a Venetian merchant. Howard reminds us how the papal ban on trade with Moslems became more than just a tiresome irritant for the Venetians. With so much lucrative trade at stake, the essence of its survival, good relations with the Moslem Middle East were a necessity; in Cairo for example, 'only Venetian gold ducats are accepted currency.' Venice also became a facilitator in pilgrim traffic to Jerusalem and it is the combination of so many of those factors that makes Deborah Howard's narrative so interesting. With splendid photographs and maps to reinforce her view, we look at Venice with fresh eyes while the ghost of bygone Alexandria dazzles, mirage like, before us. The ripe old civilisations of the east were infused with much positive creativity in the wake of Islamic conquests: Howard's narrative helps dissolve the rigid and outdated paradigm of a 'clash of civilisations,' revealing a grudging sense of admiration by many a Christian merchant and pilgrim who stood witness to Islamic ways of life and became transmitters of that imagery back to Venice. An unusual book: Highly recommended!

Precious spices and textiles, imported from distant trading posts in the eastern Mediterranean, stocked Venetian markets in the Middle Ages; but Venice's merchants imported more than material goods from the East—they acquired also a wealth of visual ideas and information from Muslim culture. This lively and richly illustrated book investigates the influence of oriental trade and travel on medieval Venice and its architecture. Architectural historian Deborah Howard examines the experiences of Venetian merchants overseas, focusing on links with Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, as well as with Persia and the Silk Route. She argues that many Venetians gained insight into Islamic culture through personal contacts with their Muslim trading partners. Based on wide-ranging multidisciplinary research, this book examines the mechanisms that governed the exchange of visual culture across ideological boundaries before the age of printing. Howard explores a range of building types that reflect the impact of Islamic imagery, paying special attention to two icon buildings, San Marco and the Palazzo Ducale. She considers the complexities of importing Muslim ideas to an unambiguously Christian city, itself the point of embarkation for pilgrims to the Holy Land.

"[A] brilliant study . . . reopens modern eyes to Venice much as John Ruskin did for the Victorians. With superb illustrations." -- The New York Times Book From the Inside Flap

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About the Author
Deborah Howard is reader in architectural history at the University of Cambridge and fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, England. She is chairman of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (1997-2000). Her books include *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice*, published by Yale University Press.