



*Wall Painting Sites
in Delhi*



INTACH

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Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)

INTACH Conservation Institutes (ICI)

71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi 110 003, India

T: +91 11 2462 7371 (Direct), 2463 1818, 2463 2267 F: +91 11 2461 1290

Email: intach@intach.org

pdmhintach@gmail.com

Website: intach@intach.org

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Research & Editorial Team

Nilabh Sinha, Principal Director, ICI, INTACH

Dr. Padma Rohilla, Director, ICI Delhi

Sushant Rana, Project Coordinator, WPD Project, ICI

Garima Tomar, Project Assistant, WPD Project, ICI

Rubani Bindra, Project Assistant, WPD Project, ICI

WPD Survey Team

Photographs by INTACH WPD Survey Team

Design: arrtcreations@gmail.com

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Maitreya Buddha, Chemdey Monastery, Ladakh

The paintings found on most monuments in Delhi are more recent than most of the examples mentioned above and date from the 15th century till the turn of the 20th century. This does not mean that they are less valuable, art historically speaking. They have been documented for the first time by INTACH through the *Wall Painting Directory* initiative.

What distinguishes these medieval paintings from those of the ancient period, is that they are one of the many means used to decorate the surfaces of the interiors of medieval monuments. These paintings are done in the service of Islam which came to India from the 8th century onwards, though it took longer for this new religion to establish itself and carve out empires in the sub-continent. Stylistically and conceptually these paintings are very different from the earlier wall paintings in the Indian Subcontinent. The paintings done on Delhi monuments and its interiors, are with very few exceptions from the Islamic period and they are not the focal centre pieces of these monuments, but are meant to augment the architectural details of the buildings they decorate. Additionally, unlike the cave paintings of early times, where the stability afforded by solid rock nested the paintings and provided a safe environment for them – not that it prevented human beings from misusing these places so that the earliest paintings of our civilisation have been completely lost to posterity – the safety of these paintings of the medieval period cannot be ensured without stabilising the structures on which they were painted. This makes their scientific conservation especially challenging.

physically, chemically or biologically. The most common factors responsible for the deterioration of wall paintings include structural damage, damage due to moisture, soluble salts, biological damage, atmospheric pollution, etc.

Problems related to the buildings

Wall paintings are executed on the interior and exterior surfaces of built architecture and therefore the condition of wall paintings is directly connected to the condition of the structure housing them. Wall Paintings, along with buildings, where they exist are an open physical system and are prone to reactions with the environment. In this given condition the building can be good buffer protecting the wall paintings from the environmental aggression and other causes of the deterioration, or can be a bad buffer (not able to protect wall paintings). If the building has structural problems, wall paintings created on its structural surfaces will also be under the risk of damage (or may have been damaged). Some of the building related problems observed are:

Ageing/ Weathering

With age, buildings show stress and loss of original fabric and material. Most of the structures housing wall paintings in Delhi are showing the signs of distress due to ageing and prolonged effect of climatic conditions including temperature and relative humidity variations, wind, rainfall and other natural elements.

Weathering leading to damage of wall paintings (Red Fort)

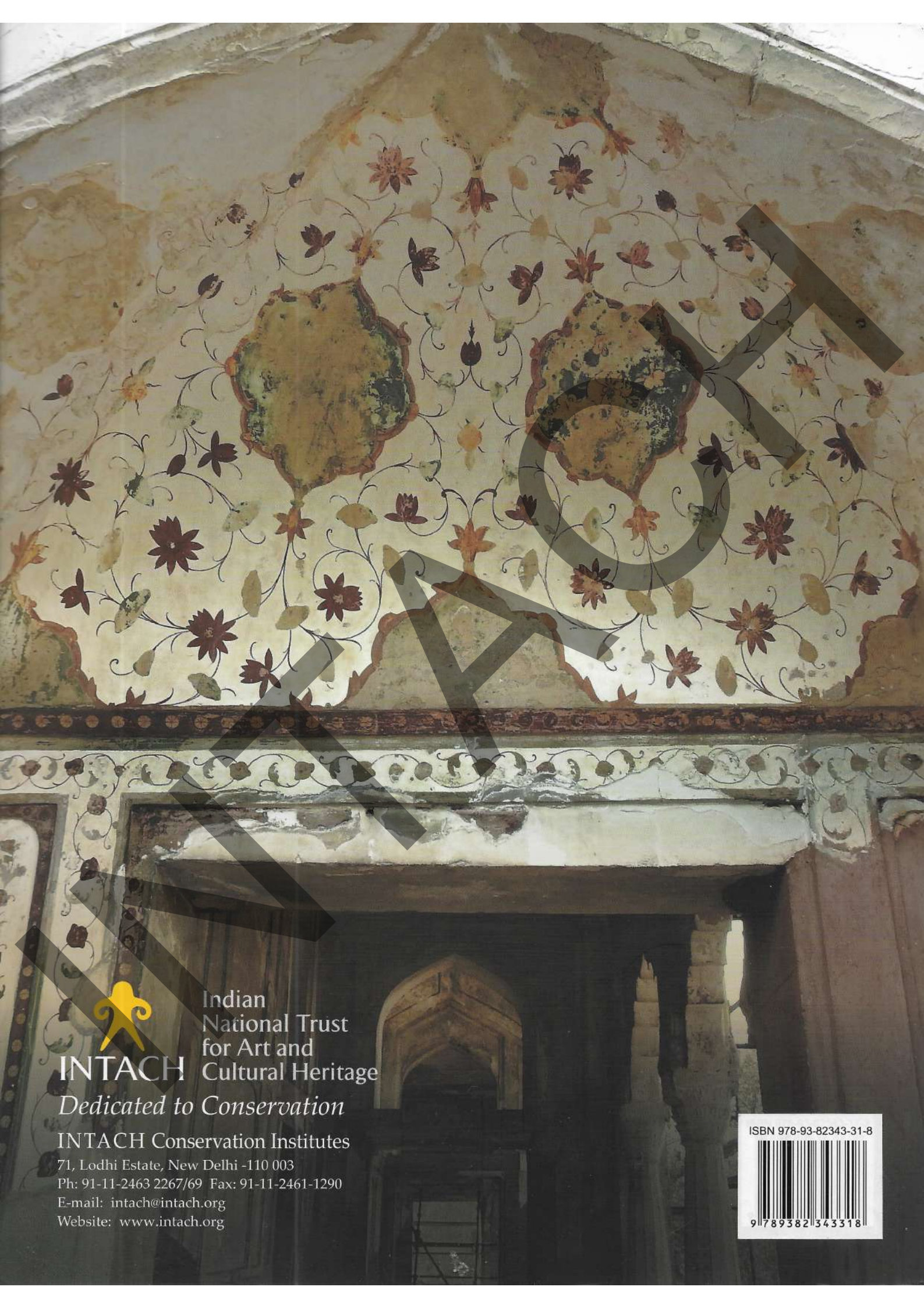




Traces of painting on the exterior



Detail of wall painting



Indian
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Dedicated to Conservation

INTACH Conservation Institutes

71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi -110 003

Ph: 91-11-2463 2267/69 Fax: 91-11-2461-1290

E-mail: intach@intach.org

Website: www.intach.org

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