

Peacock strutting on the grounds of Summer Palace.

the mirror walls of the Khona'i Safed or White Throne room.

"These are the traditional Uzbek art of fresco in tempera and *gunch* stucco lace carvings," Fazl tells us. "And you are right about the Russian effect because architects from St. Petersburg helped construct the palace and many skillful Bukhara craftsmen were employed to decorate the interior." I know that by the time the palace was finished the Bolsheviks were ready to break down the gates! So, while I look at the antique furniture, the gilded art objects in the cabinets, the gold on the ceilings, the rich carpets, I cannot help thinking of Nero fiddling while Rome blazed.

We head towards the more modern palace-complex, built during the rule of the last Bukhara emir Alim Khan during the 1910s and 1920s. The entrance is guarded by two marble sculptures of lions made by local craftsmen. The pavilion that used to be the guest annexe now houses a costume museum (a glittering collection of the 19th-century national dress, hats and belts made by the best gold embroiderers of Bokhara displayed in glass cases) and also various artifacts such as samples of palace furniture, utensils, Chinese and Japanese porcelain. Also old photos of how the people dressed.



Costume display at a museum in the Summer Palace.