

# ASIAN ART

THE NEWSPAPER FOR COLLECTORS, DEALERS, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES · APRIL 2023 · £5.00/US\$10/€10

## KHMER GOLD JEWELLERY RETURNS TO CAMBODIA

An illicit horde of Khmer gold jewellery has recently been returned to Cambodia by the family of the late Douglas Latchford, Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts announced in February. It states that a collection of 77 pieces of pre-Angkorian and Angkorian gold jewellery, including an array of crowns, woven gold belts, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and amulets had been stashed in London for decades. Experts think that most of the items in the cache were probably worn by Angkorian royalty with some other pieces intended to adorn statues. Also found in the collection was a large bowl, appearing to be made of solid gold, that dates to the 11th century – although the metal cannot be confirmed until it has undergone a laboratory test.

When Latchford died in 2020, at the age of 88 in Bangkok, he was under indictment for crimes in the US. After his death, his daughter agreed to return his collection, saying at the time that the works rightly belonged on Cambodian soil with

more than 125 Khmer artefacts returning to Cambodia in 2021.

In the statement released by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts in Phnom Penh this February, the government confirmed that it had reached an accord with Latchford's family in September 2020 and all Cambodian artefacts in the possession of the Latchford family would be returning to Cambodia. As part of this agreement, the committee in charge of the repatriation organised for the latest 77 items to be returned from London.

When the trove reached Cambodia, it was unpacked at the National Museum in Phnom Penh with monks on hand to celebrate its return.

During the 9th century, Angkor became the capital of the thriving Khmer empire, which flourished between the 9th to 15th centuries. The city was the empire's political capital and the centre of spiritual and cultural power. It advantage was that it was located an equal distance from the great lake of Tonlé Sap and the mountains, and had easy access to



A diadem believed to have been part of a set of jewellery worn by Angkorian royalty

flat fertile land which supported the growing population with food. According to recent research and archaeological exploration, the city may have sustained upwards of one

million inhabitants at its peak. It also made use of the Mekong River for transport, allowing the Khmer to trade in regions both north and south of the empire.

At its height, the Khmer empire covered a large part of what is modern-day Southeast Asia, dominating parts of today's Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

The temple complex of Angkor Wat, built by the Khmer King Suryavarman II (1084-1150) in the first half of the 12th century, was heavily looted during the French colonial period. However, many of Cambodia's other temples were looted during the Khmer Rouge era in the 1970s, and the turmoil that continued for decades. Many stolen artefacts during this period have started to return home to Cambodia.

Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, Dr Phoeurng Sackona commented on the latest news, 'The repatriation of these national treasures opens a new era of understanding and scholarship about the Angkorian empires and its significance to the world'.

The treasure will eventually go on show to the public in the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM OPENS DIGITAL GALLERY

The National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties (CPCP) and the Tokyo National Museum (TNM) have now opened the Digital Gallery of Horyuji Treasures, an interactive, technology-based exhibit, which is part of the regular exhibition in the museum's Gallery of Horyuji Treasures.

Early in the 7th century, the revered Japanese statesman Prince Shotoku founded Horyuji Temple in the city of Nara. The buildings of the temple's Western Precinct (Saiin Garan), which include the Kondo Hall, Five-story Pagoda, Chumon Gate, and Covered Corridor, are among the oldest surviving wooden structures on earth. In 1878, during the Meiji era, the temple presented more than 300 of its historic treasures to the Imperial Household. The Gallery of Horyuji Treasures was established in 1964, as part of the Tokyo National Museum, to preserve and display these priceless objects. In 1999, the original gallery was replaced with a striking new building by Yoshio Taniguchi, a well-known Japanese architect who also designed the renovation and expansion of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

The Digital Gallery of Horyuji Treasures allows museum visitors to view and interact with digital reproductions of historic objects from the temple that, due to their fragility, cannot be offered on permanent display. While viewing on a massive 8K monitor or taking a close look at the reproduction panels, visitors will be able to freely examine and study these ancient works of art, down to the smallest detail, and with much better clarity than is possible when viewing the originals. The first digital content comes from the *Illustrated Biography of Prince Shotoku*, a series of paintings designated as a National Treasure. In August, 2023, the content will change to

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# JIAB PRACHAKUL

by Olivia Sand

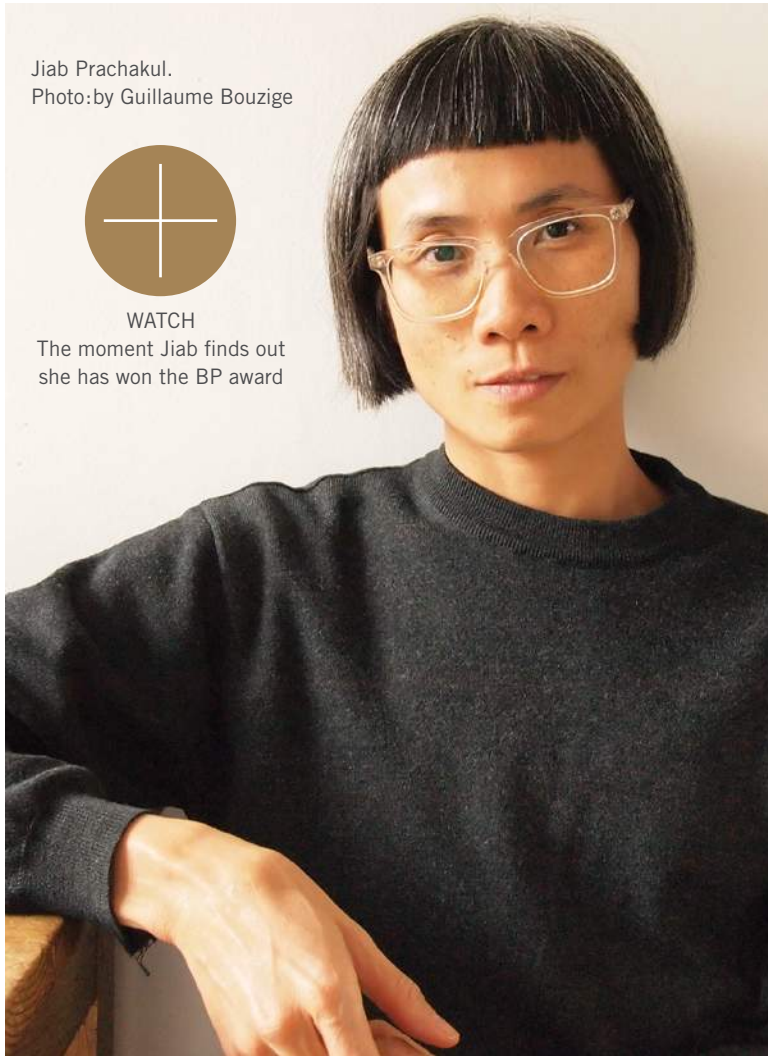
Jiab Prachakul (b 1979, Thailand) first came to attention in 2020 by winning the BP Portrait Award (*Asian Art Newspaper*, June 2020). She had first applied in 2017, but was not being shortlisted; however, the artist did what she always does: she took her faith into her own hands, pursuing her quest towards becoming a skilled and recognised artist, regardless that she had no academic training in art and belonged to the Asian diaspora in Europe with no contacts or leads in the art world.

Depicting family and friends from the Asian diaspora, her paintings explore Asian identity, but most of all address situations that are common to all of us as human beings. Fascinated by the medium of painting, Jiab Prachakul is an enthusiastic observer, curious and keen to learn from the likes of David Hockney or Lucian Freud in order to make portraiture a medium to be embraced by today's generation whilst presenting a fresh look for the medium. Coming from the world of journalism and film, she aims to create the perfect painting, where the composition, aesthetics, and the overall feel are equally compelling. In the interview below, Jiab Prachakul shares her view on her trajectory and provides an insight into what it means to be a self-taught artist today.

Asian Art Newspaper: In the past, you were based in Berlin, London, and Lyon. Where are you living now?  
Jiab Prachakul: I am presently living in Brittany, more specifically in Vannes, France. Before that, I was based in Lyon, but since I have asthma related problems, I decided with my husband to avoid a big city and move to a place which would have a positive impact on my health. We came here in 2021 and we very much love the lifestyle.

AAN: It is refreshing to see that someone that is not a graduate from a traditional art school can still make it into the art world. If you had to do it again, would you follow the same path or, on the contrary, choose the traditional curriculum?  
JP: I appreciate not having a lot of training, not feeling the pressure of being in that kind of society where you think so much of yourself. It has been my experience that within the

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Jiab Prachakul.  
Photo: by Guillaume Bouzige



WATCH  
The moment Jiab finds out she has won the BP award

## NEWS IN BRIEF

a series of murals that originally hung in the temple's Kondo Hall.

### THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY, CALIFORNIA

In April, The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens is exhibiting for the first time the oldest printed book in its collection, *The Scripture of the Great Flower Ornament of the Buddha*. Printed in 1085, this Chinese Buddhist canon from the Song dynasty, is on view from 29 April to 4 December. More than 900 years old, the book is part of the 5,850-volume *Great Canon of the Eternal Longevity of the Chongning Reign Period*. Produced during the Song dynasty (960-1279) between 1080 and 1112, the accordion-style book unfolds to a length of 31 feet, 21 feet of which will be on display. It is one of the longest sutras, or collection of aphorisms, in the Buddhist canon and is a compendium of doctrines and ritual practices widely followed throughout East Asia. The text presents a vision of the entire universe as consisting of elements that all interpenetrate (like mirrors reflecting in mirrors) within the body of the Cosmic Buddha.

### BEACH BUDDHA, AUSTRALIA

A small bronze of the infant Buddha dating to the Ming dynasty has been found, by metal dectorists, on an Australian beach. Lee Young, an expert of the TV programme the *Antiques Roadshow* confirmed the date and origin, explaining figures

like these were brought out for ceremonies relating to the Buddha's birthday. The current authentication means the statue is the oldest found Chinese artefact in Australia to date.

### PHNOM BAKHENG CAMBODIA

Phnom Bakheng, the state temple of the first Khmer capital in the Angkor region, survives as one of the world's greatest architectural treasures. The temple was constructed between the late 9th/early 10th century by Yasovarman I as the centerpiece of his new capital, known as Yasodharapura. The site was abandoned only a few decades after its completion, but its privileged hilltop location makes it unique among the temples of Angkor. Its stepped pyramid construction is a built representation of Mount Meru with the 5 shrines on the top platform, arranged in a quincunx formation, representing the five peaks of Mount Meru. Today, Phnom Bakheng is a popular spot for panoramic views of Angkor's landscape, often enjoyed by visitors at sunset. In 2023, WMF will inaugurate a new phase of work at the site, which will include the conservation of the west half of the temple and the construction of a visitor centre.

### PERANAKAN MUSEUM, SINGAPORE

The Peranakan Museum reopened the public in February this year, after

nearly four years of renovations. Each of the museum's permanent galleries has its own distinctive look and feel, and spotlights a particular aspect of Peranakan culture. While some favourite and familiar elements remain, there are parts of the museum that have become very contemporary, to reflect the living culture. Displaying over 800 objects, ranging from newly acquired or generously donated objects to well-loved artefacts and set pieces, the museum explores the Peranakan identity through universal themes of Origins, Home, and Style.

### PREHISTORIC THAI CAVE PAINTINGS

Forest rangers, in the Khao Phu Luang no-hunting zone, have found ancient cave paintings during their patrol to check animal shelters in the So mountain range in Thailand's north-eastern province of Nakhon Ratchasima. Ancient cave paintings have previously been discovered in two caves in Si Khieu district and one in Soong Nern district of the province.

### GWANGJU BIENNALE, KOREA

The 14th biennale is entitled *Soft and Weak like Water* and runs from 7 April to 9 July. It takes its inspiration from a chapter of *Dao De Jing*, a fundamental Daoist text, which speaks of water's capacity to embrace contradictions and paradoxes. The biennale proposes to imagine our shared planet as a site of resistance, coexistence, solidarity, and care, by thinking through the

transformative and restorative potential of water. Bringing together around 80 artists from different corners of the globe, the Biennale will present over 40 commissioned projects and new works.

### NEW MUSEUM FOR ALULA

The Royal Commission for AlUla, in Saudi Arabia, has signed an agreement with the Centre Pompidou in France to develop a contemporary art museum in AlUla. The two centres will pursue a reciprocal relationship based on collections, museum loans, curatorial partnerships and shared museological expertise. It will also span training, education, curatorial expertise, museum management and exhibitions across a variety of arts and cultural spaces. The museum will house contemporary Middle Eastern, North African and South Asian art, with immersive installations by artists from every continent. The structure itself will be designed as an archipelago of pavilions, which aim to present a bridge between contemporary Arab and global artists.

### SYMPOSIUM ON JAINISM, LONDON

A symposium at SOAS, London, on 15 April is entitled *Kanaji Svami and the Digambara Traditions* and includes the screening of a film on Kanji Svami, as well as a cultural programme of events on 16, 22 and 23 April. An associated exhibition at the Brunei Gallery, runs from 14 April to 25 June.



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SOTHEBY'S

TAJAN

## MUSEUMS

MUSÉE GUIMET & MUSÉE D'ENNERY

MUSÉE CERNUSCHI

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

MUSÉE DU LOUVRE  
FONDATION DES ARTISTES -  
CABINET DE CURIOSITÉS  
DE L'HÔTEL SALOMON  
DE ROTHSCHILD

MUSÉE DES ARTS ASIATIQUES  
DE NICE

MUSÉE DE LA COMPAGNIE  
DES INDES DE LORIENT

MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS  
DE NANCY

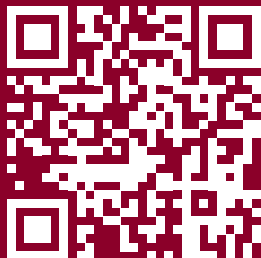
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Fantastic Night (2022)  
Image courtesy of the artist and Timothy Taylor, London / New York

circle of artists, we sometimes think too much of ourselves and of our own practice. Of course, there are collective ideas between artists, but then I always valued that I studied journalism and filmography, because this gave me a wider perspective of life.

If I could go back, I would do the years in Berlin differently. I had moved to Berlin from London because I wanted to become an artist. However, the years in Berlin proved to be most particular and very tough. In order to make a living there – without speaking German – I created my own business selling products based on my artwork. It was very successful in the local market and I lived off these sales. However, I did not have much time to do what I actually wanted to do, which was art. Therefore, if I was given the chance, I would certainly fix these eight years in Berlin, because I lost time and was not properly focused on what I really wanted to do.

**AAN: Is fashion something you may pick up again in the future?**

**JP:** I truly like fashion and, in my practice, I also love when my sitters care about the way they dress. Throughout their lives, in a span of 15 to 20 years, there are people whose style keeps changing with fashion, but for others, although their style developed with fashion, the core of their being is still the same. And that is precisely the aspect that interests me about fashion, not just the trend, but the character of the person and how they express this through the way they dress which they pick what they wear. However, I am not a fashion designer, I like to stay in the craft of making paintings, but overall I like to see and look at things, with an equal passion for fashion, film and cinema.

**AAN: As much as there are numerous positive aspects in attending art school, sometimes it can also represent a burden or a constraint. As a result, some artists keep saying that it is essential to forget everything they learned at art school, when starting out. In your case, was your approach to move forward no matter what, regardless of what could restrain your creativity?**

**JP:** I think I was the lucky one. Schools sometimes teach a different approach. Some artists would say that they were trained at school not to use the colour black out of the tube. On the contrary, I kept thinking why not use black paint out of the tube? Some years ago, the way I was working on my painting intrigued one of my friends, who had attended art school in Italy where they teach traditional classical painting. She was surprised that



3 Brothers (2020)  
Image courtesy of the artist and Micki Meng, San Francisco

I used black –concentrated black – and was wondering how I proceeded with its use? She could not imagine that I had simply used black colour from a tube. I can understand why this is being taught, but I also think that with these kind of rules and restrictions, you can end up losing some possibilities.

**AAN: As an artist, getting gallery representation is a challenge, even more so as a self-taught artist. What hurdles did you face trying to get your foot in the door?**

**JP:** In Berlin and London, I had been trying to participate in exhibitions – I found London a little bit easier, as my type of work, portraiture and figurative, was more accepted there. In London, over the course of those two years, I felt it was easier to progress. There were different opportunities, for example, at a small local gallery or a festival to something like the BP Portrait Award, which is open to everyone. This is just so nice. In Berlin, it was another story. My type of art is not considered so cool and is not on-trend at all. When I sent my work to galleries, they would answer that they did not accept any unsolicited material. Basically, the message was quite simple: if you are not recommended by a curator or someone important, do not send any material as we have already too many artists. To them, the artwork seemed like it was adding to a mountain of rubbish and in no way did I want to be part of it. But then, looking back after being rejected by galleries, and as an artist with no training, perhaps my work was not strong enough.

Of course, I draw and paint well, but then what do I have more than other artists who also paint well? The time in Berlin helped me realise why I paint what I paint, and what I want to say. Everyone has something to say: as a journalist, when you write, why would you want to write about a particular topic? The same applies to painters: why do you want to paint that, and why would a gallery want

to support your idea? That is when I understood that it is not all about the fact that you are not in the art circle, or not from an art school, but it is primarily about your work. If your work is good, over time, it will speak for itself. When I applied for the BP award, I never thought of myself as a possible winner. In addition, when I look at the past winners, it is just so epic, and there have been 'classic' winners. My work is classic, too, but also my sitters are somehow out of context since they are all Asians. I came to realise that you need a little bit of recognition because it makes sense, similarly to when you rent a house, you need a guarantee. In Germany, for housing, you even need to prove that you do not have a bad background. For artists, it is the same thing, as you have the recognition from an institution or a place to say you are legitimate. As a result, everyone feels safer when it comes to investing in you and to collaborate with you because you are solid. As an artist outside of this, you are just constantly trying to fight to get to a place that can make you legitimate.

**AAN: Your trajectory makes it obvious that there should actually be a prize for mid-career artists. Prizes tend to be limited age wise, and these days, it is not uncommon for artists to have had a career in another field before becoming full-time artists. Do you agree?**

**JP:** You are absolutely right. Actually, I think about this a lot, because I keep looking at prize applications all the time, but it is so limited, even more so for figurative painting. Then, there is the age criteria and the country of origin. That narrows it down from the start. I am now 42 years old, and I end up being legitimate only for the Lee Krasner Prize and perhaps the Luxembourg Prize for some of the other prizes, it is now too late, since I am over the age limit of 40, and beyond that, there is nearly nothing. In France, there are a few more options, but then, it is on another level.

So, absolutely, we should have that kind of prize, one that is also recognised by institutions, as you mentioned earlier, for people who could not start their art career before. That also applies to people from art school: how can they make a living for 12 years? It seems there are two choices: either you make it so big, or you are so poor. It is a career where people think you do not have enough credit if you do not make it to the top. Alternatively, if you try to make a living off your art work in a commercial way, you are automatically put in the artisan box, which for some artists can be a trap. Although that dichotomy exists in other careers as well, I find it is just more brutal in the art world. It is even more hurtful for vulnerable art



14 years (2020)  
Image courtesy of the artist and Micki Meng, San Francisco

students coming out of school, wondering what they are going to do for the next four years before they can make it. And we need to keep in mind that not everyone can make it to the top.

**AAN: You applied several times to the BP award, which you won in 2020. Looking back, was there a difference of style or also of quality in your work?**

**JP:** It was probably a combination of everything. I kept thinking I was going to keep applying until I would get in. One criterion of the BP award is always the same: the painting needs to convey the empathy of the sitter. That year, I did not produce that many paintings. Then, going over my works, Night Talk was the only one that fitted the description so I applied with that work. I never imagined that I would win the award, getting this recognition in such a legacy. Although it seems I covered all the criteria in the eyes of all the judges, it was also sheer luck as well.

**AAN: It is interesting that you picked painting and portrait, the most ancient and traditional art form, which also makes it the most challenging to innovate. What can you bring to the medium that would be different or an addition?**

**JP:** Portraiture is wonderful subject matter, but it has been suffering from this ancient legacy, especially in Western art from Italy or France, where portraiture was usually just about and for the elite and aristocracy. My approach is the opposite, as I want to talk about ordinary people using my own lens. My sitter does not have to be someone famous or rich, but rather someone who has something special about them. In my painting, I expand in their life. When I do this, I feel the interconnection between them and me. For example, I have these sitters in Berlin, German-Japanese twins, whom I saw every weekend when I was working at the market. They were waitressing at Ramen House, where I used to go after finishing work. At the time, they were young, maybe 16 years old, and I kept wondering how come that although they are Asian, they move with such confidence? Over time, I learned that they were German, but when I see the expansion and the context of their life, I can find an interconnection; this is what I find interesting about involving with your sitters. Then, that specific context can come out in the portrait in the form of something we all feel the same way about, where we can understand the aesthetics and the sensation without class barriers.

Twelve years ago, when I decided to paint figures, I went to Florence and studied the beautiful early portraiture. I was simply stunned, and could not breathe. Looking at these portraits that represent the golden age of portraiture, I kept wondering how do you bring it back to our generation? Of course, there are artists like Lucian Freud (1922-2011), or especially David Hockney (b 1937), who focused on the figurative without being afraid to show what people really look like. Portraiture has not been considered popular for a long time, but things seem to be changing. Artists like Kerry James Marshall (b 1955) brought back the wave of identity and being, with his powerful works. The first time I saw his work, I thought that was the rebirth of portraiture, because it is new, fresh, and has not been done. In the past, I cannot think of any reference in



An Opening (2020)  
Image courtesy of the artist and Micki Meng, San Francisco

“  
*I want to talk about ordinary people using my own lens*  
”

portraiture – Asian or French – between the impressionists and now. In my opinion, there was a big gap which has been filled by cinema with directors such as Truffaut, Godard or Rohmer depicting the aesthetics of people. Perhaps, this is a time where I can have painting and portraiture bridge the gap between cinema, photography, and classical portraiture? Maybe I can continue to work on something that is still an old format, but combine all these sensations together?

**AAN: Do you have close relationships with your sitters? Do they actually sit for you, or do you paint from photographs? What is the process?**

**JP:** I know all the people I paint in person. Maybe there is one commission where I have not met the person in real life, but we have known each other by talking on the phone or having common friends. I always need a connection between me and the sitters in order to feel honest about what I do, because if there is one thing I want to avoid in my work, it is to feel pretentious and create something fake. On Instagram, which I do not use anymore, I see so much fake content, it is everywhere. Therefore, I now try to figure out what is real and what is not. When I do things, I want to show what is real, what is honest, what is not pretentious and not just there to be seen.

My process starts in a more classical way. Before working on the actual painting, I meet the sitter. They sit for me in the studio, I take a photograph, and do a light drawing. I am not a fast drawer so I can only do one drawing. However, I realised over time that this process did not fit my approach. Therefore, I focus more on the sitting session, where I am not drawing or painting, but asking them some questions, interviewing them, talking to them about their childhood, and then taking the photograph.

Sometimes, taking photographs can be challenging because some people have a hard time losing the stiffness, or awkwardness, from their body and

I end up taking close to 100 shots. Basically, I am not aiming at the best shot, I just need to shoot many and pick the right one. Sometimes, out of 200 photos, I would select a single one. If I do not exactly find the right one, I photoshopped some parts together. Recently, the process has gone even further. Sometimes, I would create the scenario I envisioned or that I had experienced before. All too often, I would witness a great scene on the street that touched me, but would be too late to photograph it. Since I could not take a picture or memorise it, I would reproduce it by what I remembered, with the feeling of it, recreating it and then take a picture of it. I send it over to my sitters and their friends, for them to interpret it in their way, and see how they feel about it. They then take a picture of it and send it back to me. That is the latest method I have used and I find it to be so refreshing with the input and interacting of other perspectives.

This whole process is quite long, as I reflect on what I want to do, what kind of picture I want to produce and what I want to paint. Then I need to find the reference material, the sitters, the composition and ultimately, when it comes to the final stage, I can start working on the canvas. That is the moment when it is more about painting per se, about technical patterns, about painting skills, about what I want to explore by bringing all these processes together.

**AAN: So it is a true collaboration between the painter and the sitter with the photograph going back and forth. You seem to establish a true connection with your sitter.**

**JP:** I put a lot into the canvas as the sitters share a great deal about their life with me. Most of my sitters are my friends, family, and people I am close to and ultimately, the painting is an extension of me knowing them. For some of my friends, I keep painting them for a longer period of time, sometimes up to two years, even though within those two years they may change their state of mind, they have grown visibly older or their body has changed. Basically, it is a continual process of getting to know one another. We never stop growing and changing. In addition, I really like that I can keep interacting with them over time in this way.

**AAN: For people you have known for some time, what features do you want to highlight? Is it a challenge to decide on the feeling, or character, of the painting?**

**JP:** When considering the feeling I want to create in the painting is where I think my ego comes in. I feel, most of the time, every painting I did ultimately not just come from the character of the sitters. They may be different from me, but I always try to find a moment and a way to connect, so I can sympathise with them. Many things need to come together: the character, the moment, and the overall feeling, which is actually why I can totally pour my heart into the work. It comes down to me being them, and them being me – we truly coexist. Also, I like existentialism as a philosophy, and therefore, I feel that my existence as a person is not totally mine. It is a fractional part of many identities coming together, which I take from everyone around me. For example, if you look at the artist that I admire so much, and I want to take the path and become like them, then, their identity becomes mine. It goes back to the idea of archetype as well, all



Lexi (2020). Image courtesy of the artist and Micki Meng, San Francisco



Yasuko (2020)  
Image courtesy of the artist

that is yours is actually not entirely yours, but it is just a fragment of others. I find this to be quite wonderful. When I meet my sitter in view of the painting, I am trying to figure out what it is in my sitter that makes me feel so proud to be me, what makes me feel comfortable to be a person, not just as an Asian person, but as a human being.

**AAN: The diaspora is a topic you briefly addressed earlier with the example of the German-Japanese twins. You indicated you were struck by the confidence with which they were able to move in the world. Where does this level of confidence come from?**

**JP:** When you see the Asian diaspora in a European context, you feel there is a little bit of holding back, or a little less confidence, because we are not in our own homeland or using our home language. Apart from all that, even if you speak the language, your appearance is just different and even if you were totally integrated in society, there would be someone or something making you hold back.

Somehow, these girls did not have this so much, and one of them said that she may not look like it, but she felt and was totally German. She thinks in a German way, lives her life the German way, and completely is at home. My experience is that I feel Asian, I am from Thailand, I have a Thai identity that is part of me, but then, my European part has developed considerably, outgrowing my Thai part. I think the difference between the twins and me is that I have the baggage of memories from Asia, the lifestyle, family, friends, as well as identities that are still so much embedded in me. However, I have another part that has now developed that has outgrown them, and both are constantly clashing. You always have to find a place where they can live together in a balanced way. In my opinion, that is the difference between diaspora that just moved to the country and a diaspora that grew up in the country.

Take my example, it took me 16 or 17 years to now live the life I had in Thailand at the same level I had back home in my birth country. I feel I

have a certain comfort now, and finally, I can work in the career that I like and I can get involved with the people at the level that I had when I was in Thailand. There, I worked in advertising production companies, and my colleagues were always people in film, cinema, or advertising, remaining within the same kind of circle. Then, when I moved to London, everything was just torn apart, and I had to start from scratch: you cannot choose who you are going to be paired with or choose who you are going to go out with. If you are from Asia, or more specifically from Thailand, and this other person comes from Asia (or Thailand) too, you should be paired together and there is no way around it. However, companionship and friendship is not just based on coming from the same country, or even looking alike. It is also a matter of compatibility, and for me, that was actually one of the hardest parts. As a person from the diaspora living abroad, I felt that you could not choose. Ultimately, if you settle in one place, people start to know you in the stores, and you begin to feel that you are part of the community, that you belong somewhere. This is the way I have just started to feel recently. Adjusting to a new life is a very complicated process.

**AAN: As to the backgrounds depicted in the paintings, are they real, staged, or invented?**

**JP:** Most of them are real. As we discussed earlier, the paintings have to feel authentic. If I place my sitters somewhere where they do not belong, or there is no connection to them, then it is fake and not legitimate. Most of the time, I use a real background, trying to create the composition according to the proportions I envision. That approach has freed my practice a lot.

Also, with real backgrounds, it is exciting for me to go into the details, connecting even more with the place and its objects. Before starting work for my upcoming exhibition at Timothy Taylor in New York in the autumn, I was not convinced I could paint nature and landscape, but since I moved to Brittany, I see things differently. Surprisingly, the nature and landscape here remind me of my hometown. My hometown was next to a river and the place where I live now in Brittany is next to a gulf, where the sunsets remind me of Thailand. So, once again, it is about the interconnection, about making connecting back and when I feel this,

It is interesting that you used the word 'revelation', because I experienced it twice in my life. One was the David Hockney exhibition, and the second time surprisingly, was



Sakatomo Brothers (2013)  
Image courtesy of the artist

I believe it is right for me to do these paintings.

**AAN: Years ago, when you were in London, you went to see a David Hockney exhibition and experienced a moment of revelation. One does not experience such moments very often in life. How did it happen and how did it change the course of your life?**

**JP:** Beyond the way the exhibition was curated and set up, walking through the different rooms made me aware of what you can achieve the moment you dedicate yourself to something. David Hockney's work is just so good, so beautiful, it gave me goosebumps. Also, what I admire about him is that he also paints something very true of himself without pretending, depicting his own world. When you see the people he paints, they look interesting and you want to know them. They are not fake, but real because that is their identity. Whether they are artists, writers, designers or something else, they are real and that is the kind of art I like. As I walked through the exhibition, I also saw his work once he had moved to Los Angeles. The work had developed, had become looser, and one could feel that he had reached a different stage in his life. At the time, I did not know anything about the artist. It is only after I found out more about his life that I came to realise that the works said everything already. He is truly an artist who is open to life. If he wants to do works using an iPad, he just does it. He is willing to explore.

On my side, I am still young with time to explore and experiment. Up until now, I fought these tendencies towards letting go, because I feel skill is something you need to master and refine first before becoming more fluid. To me, it is wonderful to see the example of a master like Hockney and learn from the way he explores. However, you cannot rush yourself. Everyone has their own pace, but there comes a moment when you feel reassured and can take risks to be more free. Even after all that time, I still look at books discussing his work. In a way, they have become study books or guidelines for me when skill-wise I need to solve problems in my paintings. Beyond David Hockney, I also admire the work of Peter Doig (b 1959), who has also been an inspiration.

It is interesting that you used the word 'revelation', because I experienced it twice in my life. One was the David Hockney exhibition, and the second time surprisingly, was

not in any exhibition, but when I discovered the work of Kerry James Marshall, Toyin Ojih Odutola (b 1985) and Jordan Castiel (b 1989): it was just an explosion and although it may sound dramatic, I felt like crying. Considering my work, I could previously not associate myself with any specific period in time. When you look at art history from Impressionism to Expressionism and the Vienna Secession, where all artists joined together, it is a fact that you need to ride with the wave, and share ideas. There was a time when I thought these days of sharing ideas were gone, but I discovered other artists, who had started something. I think I could be part of. This second revelation made me feel alive again in my practice.

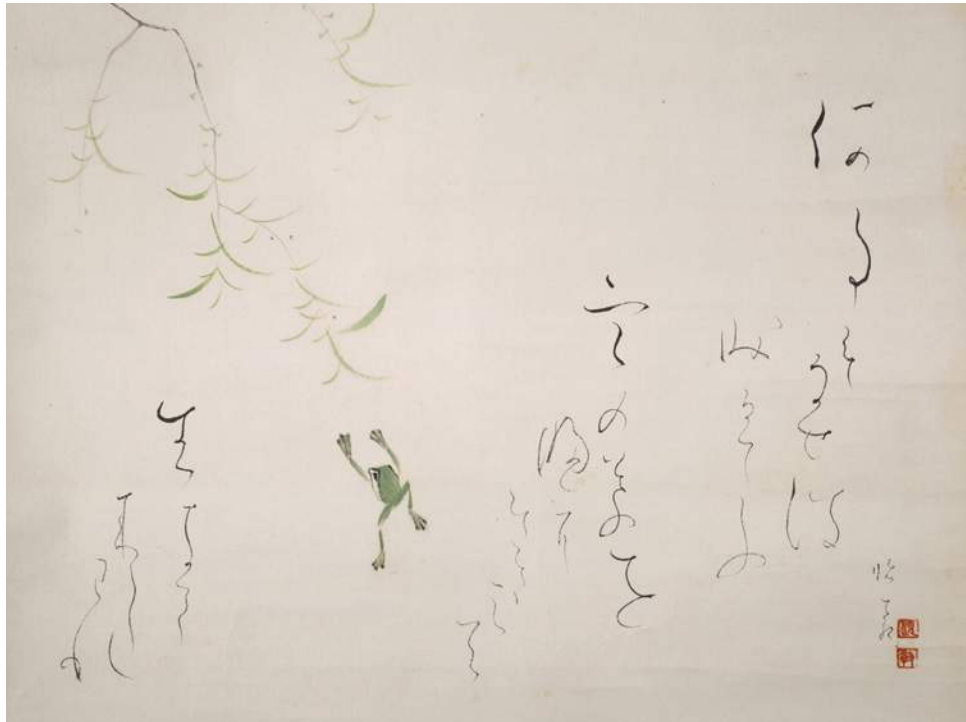
**AAN: In your career, you have always taken a moment to pause before taking the next step. What would you like to explore next?**

**JP:** I am looking forward to developing further and seeing the possibilities. I feel happy with my practice at the moment although there are some elements, technically, I would like to address in a different way. I want to be more free, basically less focused, and less of a perfectionist. Being a perfectionist in my practice may come from my Asian side, where I impose on myself so many restrictions. I end up being so obedient in my work, as well as in my skill, that I am now truly looking forward to letting go, exploring just a little bit more and seeing where it will take me. As to the subject matter and context, I also want to work a lot more with people who are close to me – friends and family. I like the idea of the sitter that appears frequently, similarly to the films I like where the directors tend to use the same actors all the time. The same applies to my sitters: I want them to exist throughout each and every stage of their life. I want to explore that even more. During Frieze London, I visited the booth that featured some of my paintings in a two person show. Although it was nice to see all these beautiful paintings, I would also like to further explore the element of interaction. I was asking myself, what else could I bring to the show? Rather than showing paintings coming out of the studio, what could I bring to the exhibition in order to make the experience even more worthwhile? What new element can I offer to the audience, in addition to just look at the paintings? This is an aspect I am currently exploring.

**AAN: It seems the audiences are now more open minded towards looking and appreciating art from all parts of the world. Do you agree?**

**JP:** When it comes to works created by Asian artists, it seems to me there is a gap in the representation. From my perspective, I feel somehow stuck and classified in the traditional or classic Asian art world, which to me seems generally a little holistic or religious. The impression I have is that if you are Asian, as an artist, you must do something that people think is 'Asian', which can stereotype you. However, in that sense, I am doing something Asian and I have an Asian representation – I am Asian. But then, the question is what is this type of Asian art? That is the question. I completely agree with you that the context has changed considerably in museums, institutions, and galleries and curators are also much more open to the new context of what Asia really is and the context of the art made by Asian artists. And that is truly wonderful.





Willow and Frog  
by Oishi Junkyo,  
mid-1900s,  
ink and colour  
on paper.  
All images  
Denver Art  
Museum, gift of  
Drs John Fong and  
Colin Johnstone  
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© Denver Art  
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The Goddess  
Benzaiten and  
Her Lute (biwa)  
by Kiyohara  
(Kano) Yukinobu,  
circa 1660-1680s,  
hanging scroll,  
ink, colour and  
gold on silk

# HER BRUSH

This intriguing exhibition takes a nuanced approach to questions of artistic voice, gender and agency through more than 100 works of painting, calligraphy, and ceramics by Japanese female artists from 1600s to 1900s Japan, with many of the artworks being on view for the first time to the public. It traces the pathways women artists forged for themselves in their pursuit of art and explores the universal human drive of artistic expression as self-realisation, while navigating cultural barriers during times marked by strict gender roles and societal regulations. These historical social restrictions served as both impediment and impetus to women pursuing artmaking in Japan at the time.

To explore these complex themes, the exhibition is organised into seven sections, each representing different realms in which artists found their voice and made their stamp on art history. Subtle design choices borrowing from traditional architecture and materials – such as paper and ink, plastered walls, sliding doors and *tokonoma* niches – distinguish and allude to each of the spheres presented in the exhibition.

The artists featured include Kiyohara Yukinobu (1643-1682), Otagaki Rengetsu (1791-1875), and Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913), as well as relatively unknown yet equally remarkable artists like Oishi Junkyo (1888-1968), Yamamoto Shoto (1757-1831) and Kato Seiko (fl 1800s).

An introductory space presents the two major themes of the exhibition: artists' pathways to art, and art as agency. Each gallery evokes a different cultural context, within and through which artists pursued their art. Whether being born into a family of professional artists or becoming a nun for the freedom to produce art, the groupings do not pigeonhole the artists as identities. Instead, they highlight how women navigated their personal journeys as artists. In the exhibition, many of the artists can and do appear in more than one section, shuttling through these spheres, despite the strict limitations imposed on them by the time's gender roles and class hierarchies.

The next section is entitled 'The Inner Chambers' (*ooku*) and refers to



The Deified Sugawara Michizane  
Crossing to China (Toto Tenjin)  
by Ono no Ozo, early 1600s,  
hanging scroll, ink on paper

the secluded areas where women primarily resided within the courts and castles of the upper class. The term became synonymous with women and reveals the gender segregation in the upper echelons of early modern Japan. Daughters born into elite and wealthy households studied the fundamentals of 'Three Perfections' (painting, poetry and calligraphy). This artistic education was intended to prepare them to be proper companions for the men in their lives; they were not expected to become working artists. Included here are works by exceptionally driven and talented women who leveraged their unique access to education to become artists in their own right. Included in this section are works by Nakayama Miya (1840-1871), Oda Shitsushitsu (1779-1832) and Ono no Ozu (1559/68-before 1650).

In the third section, 'Daughters of The Atelier' (*onna eshi*) visitors discover the world of professional artists. Painting traditions were commonly passed down in the form of apprenticeships or from father to

son. In this manner, some lineages endured for centuries. These professional painters subsisted through the patronage of wealthy clients. Artists in this section emerged from artistic families and, thanks to their talent and tenacity, established themselves as successful professional artists themselves. They were able to continue their family's artistic legacy, while developing a distinctive style and voice. Included in this section are works by Kiyohara Yukinobu, Nakabayashi Seishuku (1829-1912) and Hirata Gyokuon (1787-1855). Yukinobu (1643-82) was related to the celebrated artist Kano Tany'u (1602-1674), who founded the Kano school, the official school of painting instruction for the Tokugawa shogunate, and creating the *shin-yamato-e* painting style that illustrated scenes from traditional Japanese stories and legends. Yukinobu often depicted female figures, persons of historical note, Buddhist icons, shin-yamato-e content and natural scenery such as flower and bird paintings, all of which were popular themes at the time.

Hanako Brown in her essay on Japanese female artists remarks that the Edo period gave rise to many successful women artists, those who were professional and equal in their successes to their male counterparts, but additionally the forgotten domestic artists whose interest in creative pursuits were shaped by the societal standards of the time. Deftness in painting, poetry and calligraphy were all deemed



acceptable interests for women in this era. However, although the existence of female artists in the Edo period was widespread and undeniable, their subject matters and styles were somewhat corrupted by the patriarchal standards for painting at the time. In order to gain popularity and establish herself as a prominent artist, one may have to submit to the creations of popular *bunjin* (male literati) subjects and a limitation of techniques deemed suitable for women to emulate.

The next section, 'Taking the Tonsure' (*shukke*) sheds light on the world and work of Buddhist nun artists. Taking the tonsure, the shearing of one's hair to join a Buddhist monastic order, was a symbolic act of leaving one's past behind and becoming a nun. Shukke literally translates to 'leaving one's home'. Subverting expectations, this section brings works by Tagami Kikusha (1753-1826), Otagaki Rengetsu, Daitso Bunchi (1619-1697) and others for whom taking the tonsure did not mean relinquishing autonomy. On the contrary, it offered them a form of liberation from societal expectations, such as 'The Three Obediences'

(*sanju*) of a woman to her father, husband and son. It also enabled nuns to travel freely in times of state-imposed restrictions, which especially impacted women. Above all, it allowed them the freedom to pursue their art. Leaving their old names behind and taking new names as ordained nuns, these artists crafted new identities for themselves.

In the online catalogue, Melissa McCormick discusses the work of the poet, painter, and ceramicist Otagaki Rengetsu and her status as a Jodo Buddhist nun. She explains that Rengetsu's work challenges assumptions concerning the gender identities of historical subjects. Active for over 50 years as an artist after taking Buddhist vows, Rengetsu, and other nun artists of her era, demands a nuanced approach to gender beyond static notions of female and male. Since she removed physical markers of conventional lay femininity – shaving her head, donning simple robes, taking the name Rengetsu (Lotus Moon) – her identity can be understood through a contextualised lens that accommodates the historically contingent nature of gender categories. Although aspects of her



Breaking Waves in  
the Pines (Shoto)  
by Murase Myodo,  
late 1900s,  
hanging scroll,  
ink on paper



Orchids on a Cliff (1898)  
by Okuhara Seiko, hanging scroll,  
ink on paper

artistic identity and self-expression may seem straightforward, Rengetsu's work often demonstrates an engagement with a Buddhist philosophical tradition that questions the very nature of the self and artistic subjectivity.

In 'Floating Worlds' section (*ukiyo*), the 'floating world' refers to the state-sanctioned quarters or urban entertainment districts, which catered to male patrons who frequented the teahouses, brothels and theatres. The term alludes to the ephemeral nature of this realm. Entering it, whether as a musical performer (*geisha*), an actor or a courtesan, meant leaving behind one's name and constructing a new persona. Entertainers often cycled through several stage names, inventing and reinventing themselves time and again.

Being well-versed in 'The Three Perfections' was a coveted trait in women of the floating world, adding to their allure. Some, however, transcended the strict confines of the pleasure quarters, sometimes even undoing their indentured servitude, becoming important artists and leaving their literal mark by creating artworks that were collected and cherished for generations. Alongside calligraphy by Tayu, commonly translated as 'grand courtesans', this section introduces works by the 'Three Women of Gion', who were not prostitutes, but rather owners of a famous teahouse. The three became formidable artists, in effect forming a matriarchal artistic lineage.



Hanging Flower  
Vase in Shape of  
Hechima Gourd  
(hana ike) by  
Otagaki Rengetsu,  
stoneware



READ  
The online  
catalogue

The sixth section, 'Literati Circles' (*bunjin*), features literati societies united by a shared appreciation for China's artistic traditions. For these intellectuals and art enthusiasts, art was a form of social intercourse. Together, they composed poetry, painted and inscribed calligraphy for one another. Literati painting (*bunjinga*) prioritised self-expression over technical skill. Following this understanding of the brushstroke as an expression of one's true self, artists in this section conveyed their identity and personhood through art.

As in other social contexts explored in this exhibition, literati circles included women from diverse backgrounds. More so than any other sphere introduced in this exhibition, literati circles were accepting of women participants. Many prominent women artists in Edo and Meiji Japan flourished within these intellectual cliques, including Okuhara Seiko, Noguchi Shohin (1847-1917), Ema Saiko (1787-1861) and Tokuyama (Ike) Gyokuran (1727-1784), the latter being one of the Three Women of Gion.

The concluding section, 'Unstoppable (No Barriers)', takes its name from a double-sided screen by Murase Myodo (1924-2013). On one side, it reads: 'no', or 'nothingness'. On the other side, it reads 'barriers'. When considered together, the two characters spell 'unstoppable', or 'no barriers' (*nukan*). Each of the works in this gallery, including paintings and calligraphy by Takabatake Shikibu (1785-1881), Otagaki Rengetsu and Oishi Junkyo, addresses the subject of perseverance, overcoming personal and societal obstacles, and shattering the glass ceiling. Otagaki Rengetsu wrote, 'Taking up the brush just for the joy of it, writing on and on, leaving behind long lines of dancing letters'.

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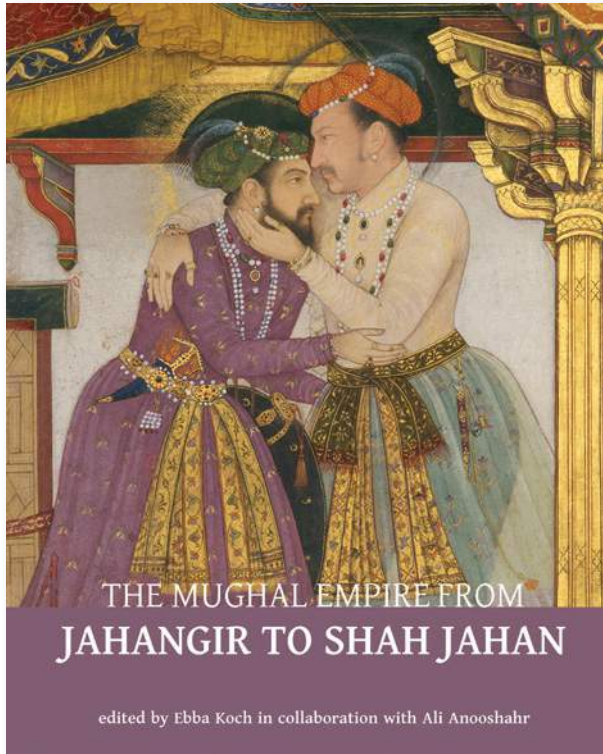
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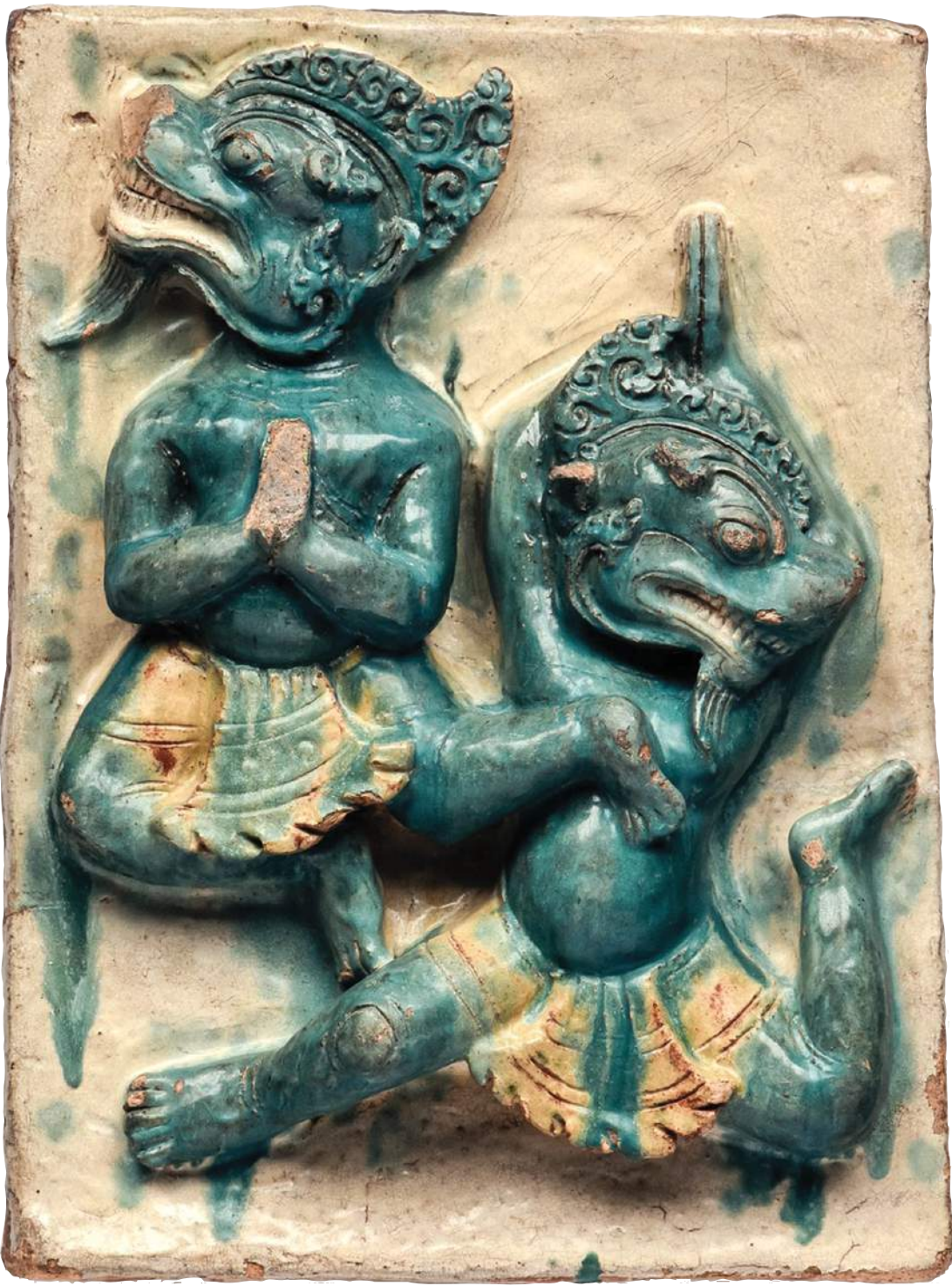
Mara's demon warriors, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma  
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford



Mara's demon warriors, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma, 47 x 33 x 10.2 cm, National Museum, Nay Pyi Taw



Mara's bird-headed demon warriors, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma, 45.72 x 33.02 x 5.08 cm, gift of Marilyn Walter Grounds, LACMA



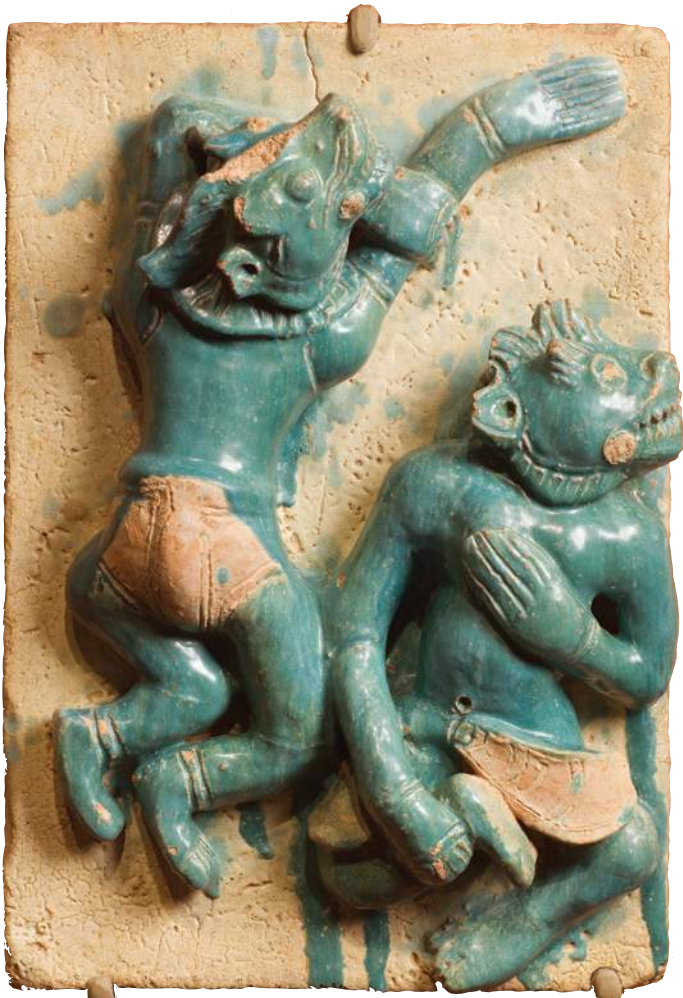
Mara's demon warriors, glazed earthen tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma, Linden Museum, Stuttgart.  
Photo: A Dreyer



Mara's animal-headed demon warriors, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma



READ  
The Nidanakatha, or an Introduction to the Jataka tales from Buddhist Birth Stories by TW Rhys Davids (1925)



Mara's demon warriors with horse heads on human bodies, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, showing green bodies with brown dresses, carrying axes over their shoulders, Pegu, Burma © The Trustees of the British Museum



Mara's demon warriors holding chakra, or battle quoits, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma, private collection

# MARA'S DEMONS IN PEGU

There are a number of large earthenware tiles, scattered across the world in museums and private collections, that come from a lost temple complex in Pegu (Bago) in lower Burma. They are eye-catching in their design and the viewer nearly always draws closer, intrigued to know more. They were made during the reign of King Dhammazedi (r 1471 to 1492), a devout Buddhist ruler, who recreated a temple based on the texts describing the seven-week period before the historic Buddha attained enlightenment. It is believed it was based on a temple in Bodhi Gaya in Bihar, eastern India.

Dhammazedi was the 16th king of the important Hanthawaddy Kingdom (circa 1369-1537), during the Ava/ Taunggyi period (1287-1752) in current Myanmar (Burma). During the earlier

Pagan period (11th to 14th centuries), a strong culture and connection between the arts and religion had already been established that flourished at both the court and in the monasteries. The Hanthawaddy kingdom was in its 'golden age', from around the 1420s to 1530s, when its rival the Ava kingdom was in gradual decline. Building on this great arts tradition, the Hanthawaddy kingdom produced numerous monuments, despite being plagued by numerous wars involving neighbouring states. Dhammazedi was considered one of the most enlightened rulers of the dynasty and under his rule, the kingdom remained relatively peaceful. It also profited greatly from foreign commerce due to Pegu, the capital, becoming an important inland port. Dhammazedi's rule also coincided with the European Age of Discovery, when Portuguese traders visited the kingdom in the great age of exploration fuelled by the desire for new markets with which to trade. The kingdom was also a famous centre of Theravada Buddhism with strong ties to Sri Lanka and sent emissaries to Bodhi Gaya, in Bihar eastern India, where the Buddha gained enlightenment.

Dhammazedi, a former monk, remained devotedly Buddhist – his mother-in-law was Queen Shinsawbu (reigned circa 1453-1472), who was also celebrated for building numerous religious monuments. He continued her work at the Shwedagon pagoda,

but also started his own project at Payathonzu in 1476, south of Pegu. The temple was dedicated in 1479. Sylvia Fraser Lu, in her essay in Asia Society's *Buddhist Art of Myanmar* writes that the temple complex was built to commemorate the crucial, transitional, seven-week period in the life of the Buddha following his enlightenment. This time had been spent by the Buddha meditating at various sites in the vicinity of Bodhi Gaya and culminated in his decision to embark on his teaching mission to

mankind, beginning with his first sermon at Samath.

Apart from the remnants of some later structures, very little remains of Dhammazedi's original buildings. However, examples of glazed earthenware tiles used for decoration still exist. They would have adorned the enclosure wall of the now ruined Shwegugyi temple, the former central monument of the complex. They nearly all depict pairs of demon warriors dispatched by Mara to avert the Buddha's quest for enlightenment. Also,

once located in niches within a wall surrounding a temple dedicated to the Buddha's fifth week were similarly glazed ceramic tiles featuring the lascivious daughters of Mara. Theravada Buddhism linked Burma (Myanmar) to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from as early as the 4th century. This long tradition of continuous contact and influence has been recorded in the ancient chronicles of both countries. It was particularly strong from the 11th century onwards, as Dhammazedi was educated in a Sinhala Sangha monastery



A pair of glazed earthenware tiles, Mara's demons, 1479, Pegu, Burma, sold at Sotheby's New York in 2011



Mara's demon warriors, glazed earthenware tile, 1479, Pegu, Burma © Asian art Museum San Francisco

in Ava before his accession in 1471. The accounts of the Buddha's seven weeks at Bodhi Gaya are related in the *Nidanakatha*, part of the *Jataka* tales, in the Theravada tradition, and were probably used to form the plan of the temple complex at Bodhi Gaya and later used for the layout of Dhammazedi's temple in Pegu.

The seven locations represented the seven weeks when the meditating Buddha faced temptation at Bodhi Gaya. The first location represented the Bodhi Tree, where the Buddha had attained enlightenment (*nirvana*); the next was the Prayer Hall where Buddha stood in his second week meditating; the third week was when the Buddha spent time meditating and pacing 18 steps back and forth in the golden walkway; in the fourth week he

meditated in the Jewelled Hall, where six coloured rays emanated from his body and these colours are now used in the Buddhist flag; the fifth week saw Mara send his daughters to tempt the Buddha; the sixth week found Buddha at the foot of a Mucalinda tree and when huge rains arrived, a cobra (*naga*) appeared to protect him from the rain; in the seventh week the Buddha meditated under the Rajyatana Tree; finally, on the 50th morning, after seven weeks of fasting, two merchants brought the Buddha food to break his fast – and these two men became the first disciples.

Throughout this period, the future Buddha remained in meditation and ignored the temptation. Realising that this plan would not work, Mara then sent vast armies of demons to attack him, in an attempt once again to distract him from meditation. Siddhartha remained calm and undistracted through this onslaught. Mara sent a final challenge, demanding the Buddha to defend his claim on enlightenment. This is when the Buddha touched the earth and called the earth to witness his achievement.

The *Jataka* tales, which comprises more than 500 morality stories, all relate to the former lives of the Buddha. The narratives include a large number of mythical creatures, animals, as well as princes, hermits, and otherworldly creatures. Coming from the Pali canon, these stories are more folktales than

serious religious texts, but they have had an important influence for centuries and are still used extensively in the decorative arts throughout the lands influenced by Theravada Buddhism.

The demon Mara is part of this tradition and is associated with death, rebirth, and desire – and can clearly be seen as a force that is antagonistic to the process of enlightenment. He is not only a character in a tale, but is also seen as the representation of inner temptations. One example, seen on the Pegu tiles, is when Mara tempted the future Buddha by trying to seduce him with the vision of beautiful women,



Mara's daughters, glazed earthenware tile, 44 x 33 x 7.6 cm, Pegu, Burma © Asian art Museum San Francisco

even his own daughters. The accounts of Mara's temptation of the Buddha can vary in many respects and there is no one definitive tale. However, some ways in which Mara tries to distract and tempt the Buddha are broadly the same – first he uses his army of demons, then he tries with his daughters. Other accounts relate that he also offers him his kingdom and rank, or tells him that he could prevent war by becoming king and ruling wisely and justly. In some versions, he brings bad news from Kapilavastu and asks the Buddha to return to his hometown to set matters right.

Donald M Stadtnr in his essay *A Fifteenth-Century Royal Monument in Burma and the Seven Stations in Buddhist Art* writes that the shrines at Pegu were first noticed in the late 19th century, at a time when the English were beginning to explore and document Burma's past, similar to events occurring in India and Ceylon. The temples of the complex that were dedicated to the events in the future Buddha's life that he experienced in Bodhi Gaya were constructed over a wide area, approximately measuring a square kilometre.

The temple complex was laid out with the Mahabodhi temple at the centre, surrounded by the Jewelled House, the Goatherders' Tree, Mucalinda Lake, Mara's Defeat, and Steadfast Gazing. Stadtnr goes on to describe how the monuments would have looked, 'The

largest shrine, marking the first week, signalled the Buddha's enlightenment. Its central position and its size indicate that it was the principal monument around which the others were orientated. Another shrine is situated a short distance to the east of the principal temple and is dedicated to the fifth week. Thus the plan adopted at Pegu was probably based on a combination of sources drawn from the Nidana Katha and records compiled during the Pala period by Buddhist pilgrims from abroad. Lost texts from Sri Lanka may have informed the layout in 15th-century Burma and Thailand, since Sinhalese Buddhism exerted a tremendous influence on these two countries during the 15th century.'

How people worshiped at the site remains unknown, but Stadtnr suggests that through the Mon inscriptions found on many of the tiles the worshippers moved from station to station in a formal sequence and paused to read the accompanying epigraphs.

The large earthenware that are illustrated here are thought to all have come from two of the temples and placed in niches on the face of the compound walls of the temples, telling a story that worshippers would recognise. Many of these plaques found their way out of Burma during the 19th century and were originally found in private collections. Today, they are the only remnants left of this once important temple in Lower Burma.





Dish, Maiolica decorated with gold lustre, Spain, Valencia, Manises, height 7.5 cm, diam. 48 cm, late 15th/early 16th century, Palazzo Madama – Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Torino



Dish, Maiolica decorated with gold lustre, Spain, Valencia, Manises, height 6.8 cm, diam. 38.7 cm, 15th century, Palazzo Madama – Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Torino



Dish, Maiolica decorated with gold lustre, Spain, Valencia, Manises, height 7 cm, diam. 46 cm, 15th century, Palazzo Madama – Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Torino

# LUSTRE AND LUXURY FROM ISLAMIC SPAIN

With this exhibition, Museo d'Arte Orientale (MAO) in Turin wants to analyse the tension between Asia and the European continent in terms of the artistic and cultural trajectories undeniably tied historically by continuous trade, references, and hybridisation. Hence the drive for the museum to open the Islamic Art Gallery to new interpretative directions through other collections and curatorial exchange. This is the first project in collaboration with The Bruschettini Foundation and the curatorship of Filiz Çakır Phillip to bring to MAO *Lustre and Luxe from Islamic Spain*, which aims to present

objects and images that transport visitors to little explored territories, opening new trajectories of knowledge and reflection. Philip discusses this Islamic legacy in the West in his essay in the exhibition's booklet, explaining that over a period of more than 700 years, the Iberian Peninsula made up the occidental frontier of the Islamic World. The first interest of Islamic rulers to expand their territories into Europe was awakened in the early 8th century. Spain witnessed the first Muslim invasion in the year 711, the dawn of the caliphate period (711-1031), resulting in the cities of

Malaga, Granada and Cordoba becoming part of western Islamic territories. The term 'Andalusia' (Arabic: al-Andalus) was soon coined, referring to Islamic Spain. These cities received new settlers mostly from Yemen and Syria together with thousands of Berbers from North Africa. In the Mediterranean coastal cities, the new settlers planted sugarcane and cotton, fig and olives trees, and in the provinces of Malaga and Granada oranges and vine. The Valencia region turned into a fruitful territory through the installation of artificial water channels, an advanced agrarian

technology brought by the Arabs. In the region of Murcia black mulberry trees were planted that became crucial for the silk production of the region's legendary textile industry of later periods. All in all, the region of Granada became the most important production centre in Andalusia dedicated to silk and cotton, and their dyeing, as well as leather manufacturing. Toledo became the centre of al-Andalus' arms and armour production. The region of Almeria (meaning 'Mirror of the Sea' in Arabic) and the port city of Almeria became known for their magnificent silk manufactories, but

also embraced the establishment of workshops of pottery. According to al-Idrisi, the city of Chinchilla in the province of Murcia produced wool carpets since the 12th and 13th centuries. These carpets were colourful with vivid patterns derived from indigenous Iberian designs, luxury silks, and imported Turkish carpets mainly from the city of Ushak in western Turkey. During the 15th century, Spanish carpets were manufactured for Christian patrons, by Muslim weavers using materials from Jewish producers. The city Manises, near Valencia, was a

famous centre of ceramics that produced from the 14th to the 17th century. A highlight of the exhibition is a fragment of a border of a carpet from the collection of the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, dated between the late 15th or early 16th century and representative of the group of Mudéjar carpets with heraldic coats of arms.

Continuing with the theme of the influence of trade, Cristina Maritano, conservator at Palazzo Madama, and Alberto Boralevi, Florence, in her essay notes how Western civilisation has often found itself admiring the technical and technological progress of eastern civilisations, China and Islam, as well as the beauty of their art. During the Middle Ages, there came a phase marked by the passing on of techniques and knowledge for which the Mediterranean basin was a place of privileged exchange. The interchange and integration of different cultures made the Iberian Peninsula particularly fertile on the artistic plane. Pottery, understood as a universal language, is an interesting interpretative key for gaining a better understanding of the encounter between the Islamic and Western civilisations.

The history of lustreware begins between the ninth and 10th centuries in the Near East, in the areas that are now part of Iraq, Syria and Egypt. There, Muslim artisans had refined the difficult technique of incorporating metal oxides into the glassy surface of their pottery. After being shaped and fired once, the clay objects – for the most part basins and vases – were covered with a tin and lead enamel and fired a second time. After the second firing, the objects were painted with a mixture of metal oxides (copper and/or silver), clay,

ochre and vinegar. At that point, the pottery was fired again, at low temperature in a reduction atmosphere, which is to say with little oxygen: this complex finale made it possible for the metal ions to penetrate the glass, transforming them into nanoparticles and releasing their shine.

This technique, which lent the objects astonishing gold and silver reflections, spread throughout the Islamic world and the first exemplars soon began to circulate in the West. By the 10th century, lustreware basins were imported into Italy and France and used to decorate the exterior of religious buildings, paying no heed to the fact that many of them bore inscriptions in praise of Allah. The powerful Maritime Republic of Pisa, at the centre of a vast trade network, was a great admirer of this pottery, and many of the city's bell towers and religious buildings, as well as public and private secular buildings, were decorated with Islamic pottery.

With the advance of the Islamic conquest, first in the Maghreb and then in Andalusia, the lustreware technique arrived in Europe and Spanish lustre-painted dishes, ewers and bowls were produced under both Muslim and Christian patronage.

The ceramic production of Islamic Spain was important for the Mediterranean and European trade and had a particularly great impact on the Italian manufacturing centres of ceramic, namely the centres of maiolica.

The first important centre of production was Malaga, in the kingdom of Granada. The famous 'Alhambra' vases (so named for the important collection in Granada) date to this period: large, purely decorative vases that are easily the most famous type of Spanish lustreware object. With the advance of the Catholic reconquest, the Muslim potters moved from Malaga to the region of Valencia, which is rich in argillaceous soil. Although the area had already been reconquered by Christians in the 13th century, the Muslims were allowed to continue to work. And so, phenomena emerged in Spain like Mudéjar art, which is to say Muslim art under Christian rule. This period marked the apex of lustreware production, flourishing in particular in Manises and Paterna. The decoration was mainly drawn from the plant kingdom, and one of the most popular patterns in the middle of the 15th century was that of 'Bryony flowers and leaves', referred

to in Florentine documents as *fiordalisi* (fleur-de-lis). Later on, the 'ivy-leaf' pattern became popular. Generally speaking, the lustre was gold lustre and applied over cobalt blue paint.

The success of lustreware was matched by that of the Spanish tiles known as *azulejos*, which from the 15th century onwards were embellished with geometric decoration such that when put together they created intertwined shapes comparable to those of the carpets and suggested the infinite repetition of the pattern, cancelling out the distinction between the individual tiles.

The trade of these tiles reached its apex between the second half of the 15th century to the mid 16th century in Genoa, a key Mediterranean port. The fashion for decorating floors and walls with Spanish tiles spread through the homes of the upper and middle classes as well as churches and monasteries. The term 'azulejo' derives from the Arabic word *Al-zulayj* and means glazed terracotta, and indeed the tiles were made of terracotta, with at least one side covered with enamel or glaze. This technique, which probably originated in Persia, was spread by Muslim artisans throughout the countries along the southern coast of the Mediterranean and arrived in Spain with the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

The objects in the exhibition vibrantly bring together trade and craft to explore how Arabic influences created Hispano-Moresque style and the unique culture of Iberian Spain.

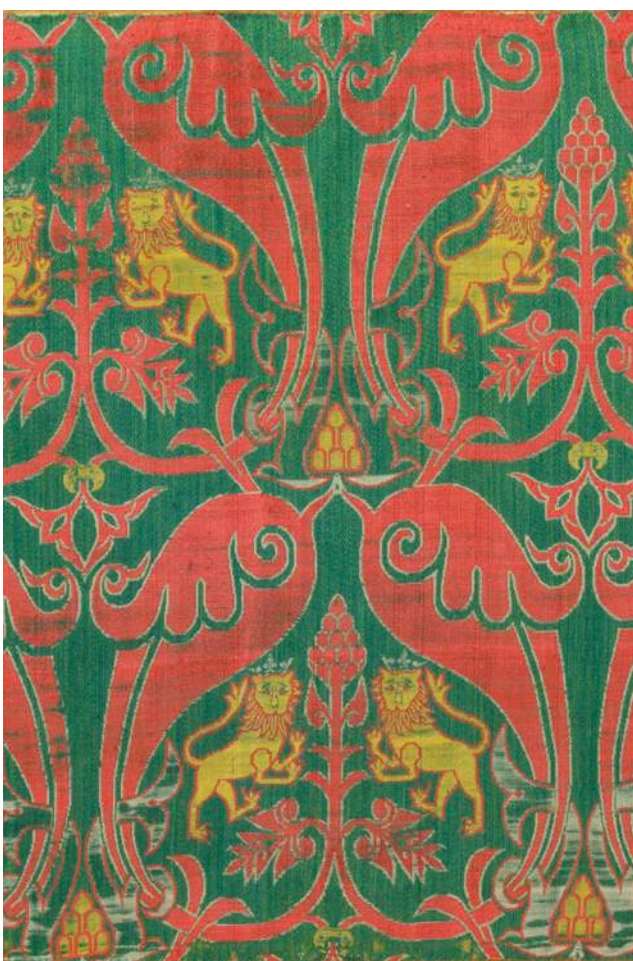
● Until 28 May, Museo d'Arte Orientale, Turin, maotorino.it



Hispano-Moresque carpet fragment, Spain, wool pile on wool foundation, 182 x 57 cm, end of the 15th century, Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid



Wreath carpet, Spain, Alcaraz, wool, first half of the 16th century, 299 x 178 cm, Galleria Moshe Tabibnia, Milano



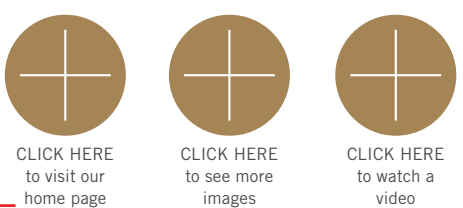
Lampas fragment, Spain, silk, Spain, Granada, 36 x 30 cm, Christian period, 15th century, Galleria Moshe Tabibnia, Milano



Fragment of a carpet with vegetable motifs, Spain, Cuenca?, early 16th century, 70 x 43 cm, Galleria Moshe Tabibnia, Milano

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Rungiah and Govindoo's  
BOTANICAL DRAWINGS  
FOR ROBERT WIGHT



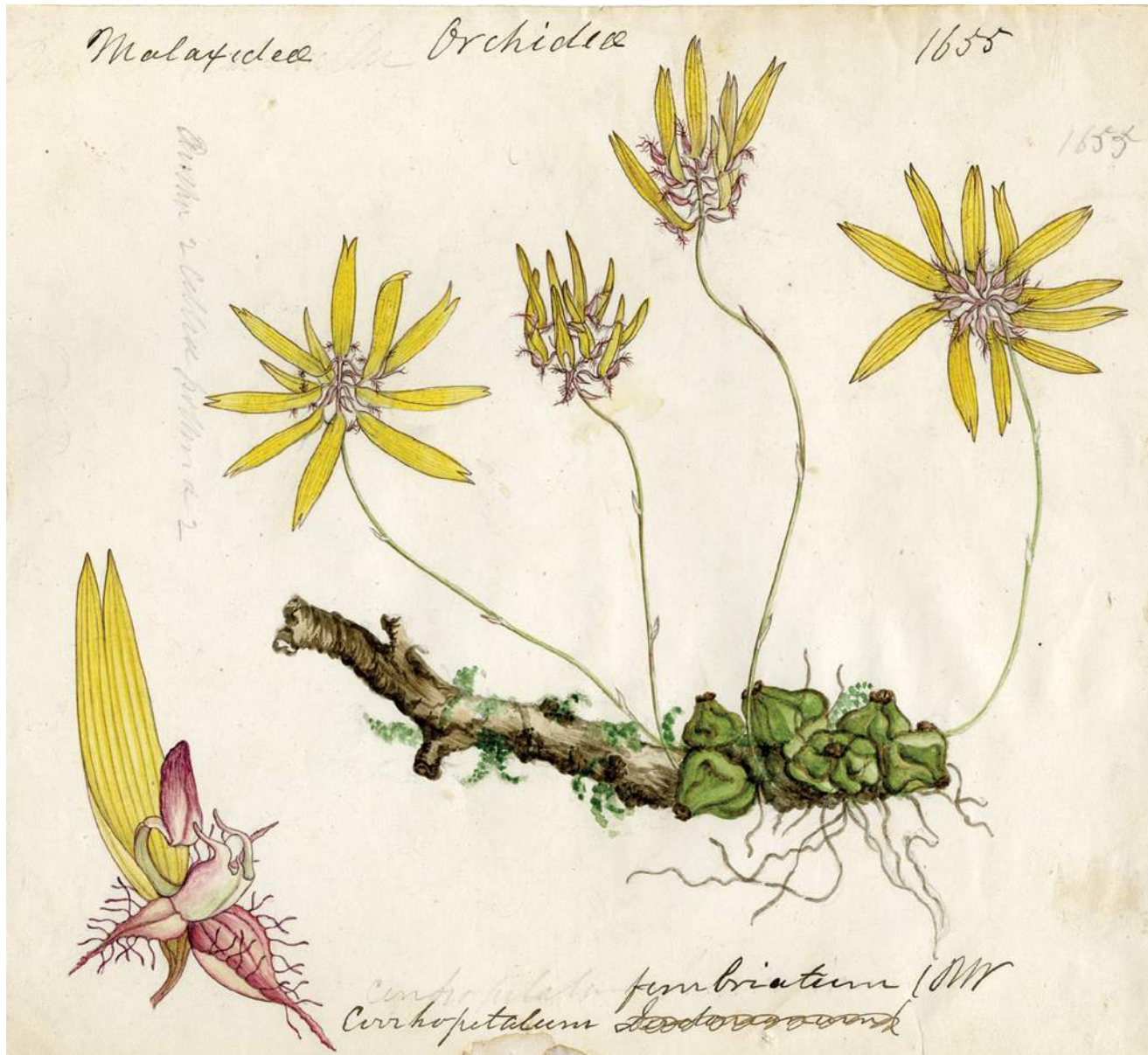
Mesua ferrea, iron-wood, by Rungiah, circa 1840

by Henry Noltie

Research by Dr Henry J Noltie has uncovered the scientific and social history of Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh's (RBGE) vast collection of botanical drawings that were made by Indian artists for botanically-minded Scottish surgeons who worked for the East India Company in the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. The collection made for Alexander Gibson by an anonymous Portuguese-Indian artist at the Dapuri botanical garden in the Bombay Presidency was the subject of an illustrated monograph first published in *Asian Art Newspaper* in May 2002. In 2007, with generous sponsorship from the same fund, it was possible to produce a similar work on a much larger, and botanically even more significant, collection – made for Robert Wight in the Madras Presidency. One significant difference between the collections is that in this case the names of Wight's two artists are known: the first (from 1826 to 1845) was Rungiah, followed (from 1845 until Wight retired from India in 1853) by Govindoo.

Although we know their names, and despite considerable research in Britain and India, it has sadly been impossible to glean any more

information about these artists other than that they were Telugu-speaking, and that at least Rungiah belonged to the Raju community of painters who in previous generations had worked for the rajas of Tanjore. The body of work is of incredible richness both artistically and scientifically. The artistic interest comes from the exquisite control of line achieved especially by Rungiah, the decorative and imaginative mise en page, and the way the artists rose to the challenge of depicting the botanical details required by a Western scientist. This included use of the microscope to produce the stunning magnified details showing the all-important floral and fruiting structures. Scientifically these drawings are of major importance as Wight was the most prolific taxonomist working in South India in the first half of the 19th century, and he described more than 1,200 new species and 100 new genera of flowering plants. In many cases the drawings were made from the very specimens that are the vouchers ('types') of Wight's new species, and relate to the 23,000 dried plant specimens in the Edinburgh herbarium. Wight did not commission these drawings purely for his own interest and use – he had a mission to make them available



Bulbophyllum fimbriatum, an orchid of the Western Ghats, by Govindoo, circa 1850

“  
Royal Botanic  
Gardens  
Edinburgh holds  
a vast collection  
of prints  
”

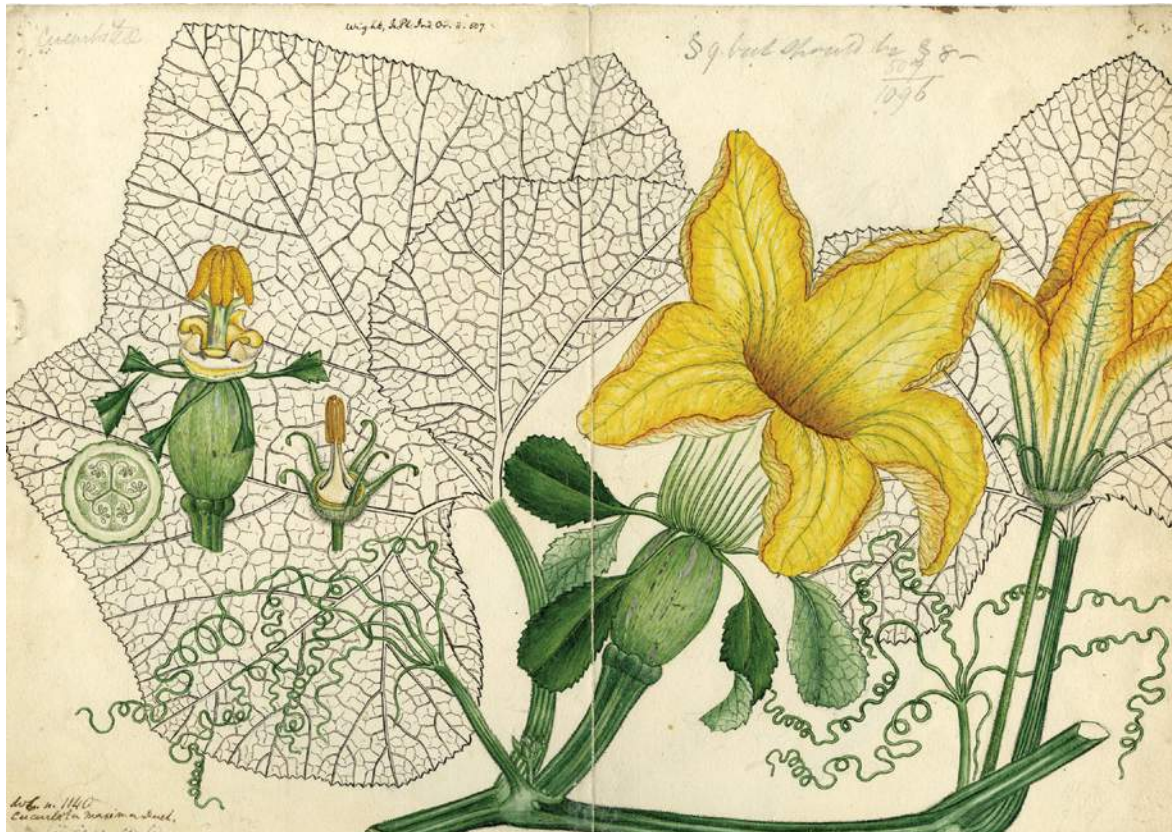
Pradesh), harvesting and pressing plants on an almost industrial scale, which he then took great pains to distribute to fellow botanists and botanical establishments in America, Europe and Russia.

It is not known how or when Edinburgh acquired the 700 drawings, and there are related collections at the Natural History Museum and at the RBG Kew, amounting to some 2,118 in total. However, this represents only a part of Wight's original collection. This is known because Wight did not commission these drawings purely for his own interest and use – he had a mission to make them available

through reproduction, to help others with the difficult task of identifying plants in India, and the original drawings for almost 1,500 of the prints have not so far been found.

When Wight went out to Madras in 1819 illustrations of Indian plants were few in number and difficult of access – such as the uncoloured copper engravings in Hendrik van Rheede's opulent late 17th-century, 12-volume work on the medicinal plants of the Malabar Coast, or the then much more recent hand-coloured engravings in the three lavish folio volumes on the plants of the Coromandel Coast by William Roxburgh. Wight had great difficulty even catching sight of these rare and expensive works, and he was determined that others would not face similar challenges. In 1838, he therefore embarked on publishing Rungiah's drawings in Madras, using the relatively cheap process of lithography, which he taught himself. He became increasingly busy with other work, and so passed the lithography on to professionals in the Government Printing Office in Fort St George, and in this way were produced the six-volume *Icones Plantarum Indiae Orientalis*, the two-volume *Illustrations of Indian Botany*, and the hand-coloured, two-volumes of *Spicilegium Neilgherrense*.

By the time he left the country Wight could boast that the Indian flora was 'more fully illustrated than any other country under British sway, Great Britain alone excepted'. What was not realised until recently was that the original drawings of at least some of these published illustrations had survived at Edinburgh, where they were filed taxonomically in a vast Cuttings Collection, mixed in with text items and printed illustrations relating to plants from all over the world. The Wight drawings were extracted, and a generous grant from the Eddie Dinshaw Foundation allowed essential conservation of the drawings. As they had never been displayed or exposed to light the colours (which are probably indigenous Indian vegetable and mineral pigments) are as bright as the day they were painted. The main task was therefore to remove the drawings from the acidic backing sheets to which they had been glued for incorporation into the Cuttings Collection. Many of the sheets had drawings on both sides, and freeing them led to the discovery of some previously unknown drawings; it also did away with the need for harmful handling to see drawings on the verso of the partially attached sheets. Although publication of these



Cucurbita moschata, pumpkin, by Rungiah, circa 1830



Impatiens munronii, a balsam from the Nilgiri Hills, floral details by Rungiah, circa 1838

joint products of Indian and Scottish artistic and scientific enterprise was a valid aim in itself, I wanted to do more and to try to explore their context, and the reasons they were made. After five years' work, the three volumes were finally published in May 2007. The first is an account of the life and work of Robert Wight. Although employed as a Company surgeon, his broad interests were quickly recognised, and for brief periods he served as a vet in the Cattle Depot at Seringapatam and then in the position of Madras Naturalist. After a three year furlough in Britain, where he worked

furiously on taxonomy, he returned to Madras in 1834, and was employed effectively as a Government economic botanist, investigating natural and agricultural resources that the East India Company might be able to exploit commercially.

From 1840, this took the form of running a massive series of growth trials of American long-staple cotton based around Coimbatore, which cost the Company the equivalent of well over £2.5 million in today's terms. All this time Wight continued his descriptive botanical work, and the commissioning of painters and collectors paid for from his own

pocket. Wight's life (1796-1872) spans an interesting period, raised in the embers of the Scottish Enlightenment, and in the Statistical tradition of documenting resources with a view to improvement not only for the benefit of the Company, but, at least theoretically, in part for the benefit of Indians. By the time Wight left India there was far less idealism around, and he was sending plant products to that great manifestation of Victorian enterprise and globalisation – the Great Exhibition (1851), and investigating suitable timbers for railway sleepers. The second volume includes a



Parkinsonia aculeata, Jerusalem thorn, an early drawing of Rungiah's, circa 1826



Cucurbita moschata, drawing of fruit discovered on verso of image top left

selection of 200 of the Edinburgh drawings (representing 137 species) reproduced in colour, with introductory chapters dealing with the artists, the collections, and Wight's use of lithography. The final volume is an illustrated travelogue describing my journeys in search of Wight in Britain and on a four month trip to southern India.

Other Indian botanical works in Edinburgh at the Royal Botanic Garden are held in the Illustrations Collections. They include The Cleghorn Collection, which together with the Hope and Snelling Collections, are by far the most important element of the Illustrations Collection at RBGE is the group of several thousand botanical drawings commissioned in India, from Indian artists, by Hugh Cleghorn (1820-1895). The drawings include a collection made in Mysore in the 1840s, a group made in and around Madras in the 1850s, many of which

are by Wight's artist Govindoo, and a large collection of drawings copied from book illustrations. Another is the Parry Collection, comprising 18 drawings by Manu Lal, including two signed works for Richard Parry (1776-1817), while resident at Fort Marlborough in Sumatra between 1807 and 1811. The Wenger Collection was amassed by William John Leslie (1877-1969), who was born the son of missionaries in Calcutta and was himself appointed as a missionary in 1904. His service including periods in Barisal, Dacca, Chittagong and Lushai. The Illustrations Collection also includes 93 watercolour drawings of plants from these regions painted by Wenger between 1924 and 1933. Robert Wight and the Botanical Drawings of Rungiah & Govindoo by HJ Noltie is published by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, ISBN 9781872291856, rbge.org.uk





Jain community painting on paper, Rajasthan, early 19th century, Rietberg Museum, gift of Eberhard and Barbara Fischer © Museum Rietberg, Zurich



WATCH  
Animation on  
Being Jain

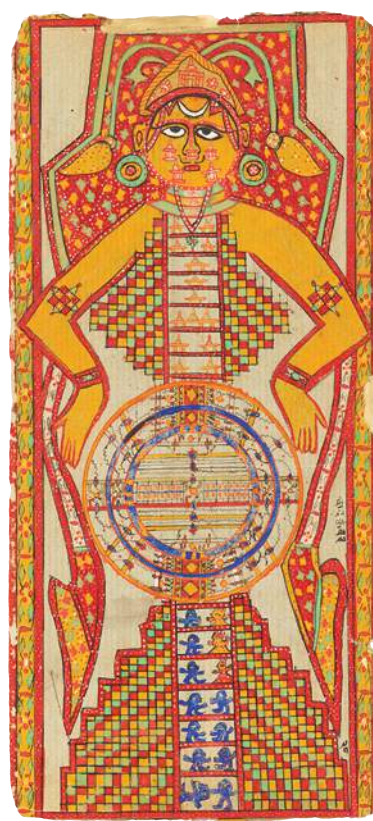
# JAIN ART AND CULTURE

After almost 50 years, Jain culture returns to the Rietberg Museum in a major exhibition that offers a new take on the religion. On display from the museum's own collection, and on loan from India, are lavishly illuminated manuscripts, sculptures, paintings and carvings that reveal Jain ideas and ideals that evolved over many centuries. The exhibition also examines contemporary practices among this small but economically influential religious community that is found around the world, yet is hardly known outside India.

Hardly any religion formulates ethical values more rigorously than Jainism. Until today, absolute non-violence, renunciation of possessions and universal tolerance are the guiding principles of this religion originating in India. This exhibition aims to provide insights into the teachings, rituals and practice of Jainism through selected works of art and invites visitors to engage with the topic of sustainability. Interviews, films, and the 'And you? The Game of Questions' are intended to encourage visitors to change perspectives and dare to explore new paths.

The exhibition is an introduction to a religion which currently has about five million followers worldwide. Outside India, Jainism is largely unknown; unlike Buddhism, which emerged around the same time, it was never embraced by Western followers. In six chapters, the exhibition presents the fundamental beliefs of Jainism, its influence on daily life and religious practice, and features works of art created to illustrate and promote those beliefs. Visitors are encouraged to engage with the essential principles of Jainism, such as non-violence towards all living beings, sustainability and tolerance of other opinions and ways of life.

Pratapaditya Pal, in his introduction in *The Peaceful Liberators, Jain Art from India* (1995) explains that the faith's name derives from the word *jina*, meaning conqueror, or liberator. Jains believe that an immortal and indestructible soul (*jiva*) resides within every living entity, no matter how small. Passions such as greed and hatred render the soul vulnerable to the effects of former deeds (*karma*), which cause the soul to suffer by being subject to repeated rebirth. Such suffering is believed to cease only with the chain of rebirth is broken. The final goal of a Jain, like that of a Hindu or Buddhist, is to sever the chain of rebirth and achieve a state of liberation known as *kaivalya*, *moksha*, or *nirvana*. This is accomplished through rigorous devotion to ascetic practices and the elimination of human passions and attachments. While liberation is possible only for those who as monks or nuns have renounced the world, wealthy Jain merchant families have been the mainstay of the religious community



throughout history, supporting monks and donating temples and images. Although the renouncers are an important part of the Jain community most Jains are laypersons who follow the ideal of well-being rather than seeking complete liberation.

Jains believe in a group of 24 Jinas (tirthankara), who ford the gap between *samsara* and liberation. The twenty-third Jina, Parshvanatha, who is thought to have been a historical figure and lived in the 8th century BC, founded a Jain community based on renunciation of the world. Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last Jina to appear in this age, is traditionally thought to have lived from 599 to 527 BC and was thought to have been an elder contemporary of the Buddha. Jainism encourages personal

The Cosmic Man, Gujarat or southwest Rajasthan, 19th century, painting on paper, Museum Rietberg, gift of Eberhard and Barbara Fischer © Museum Rietberg, Zurich



Representation of the Jain hells, Gujarat or southwest Rajasthan, 19th century, painting on paper, Museum Rietberg, gift of Eberhard and Barbara Fischer © Museum Rietberg, Zurich

meditation, following a strict ethical code, and practicing *ahimsa*, or non-violence, and kindness toward every living creature

The major centres of Jainism are located in India, mainly in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan in western India, Madhya Pradesh in central India, Maharashtra in the Deccan, and Karnataka in the south. Jain temples became quite magnificent structures in the Middle Ages. Particularly well-known are the temples of gleaming white marble in the Indian state of Rajasthan.

Over time, there came to be two primary sects in Jainism: the Shvetambaras, whose monks wear white robes, and the Digambaras, whose monks reject all possessions, including clothing. Artists clearly identify the figure's affiliation, and represent the Jinas in one of only two positions: seated in meditation, or standing in the *kayotsarga* (body abandonment) pose. The latter is a visualisation of the Jina's liberation from human attachments and emotion.

The legends contained in the epic Sanskrit text *The Mahabharata* were adapted by Jain poets to produce their own accounts situating the events within the 'Jain Universal History', which deals with the lives of the Jinas, the Cakravartins and the nine groups of Baladevas, Vasudevas, and Prati-vasudevas. The stories in the Jain Mahabharata are not limited to those of the Pandavas and the Kauravas families as in the Hindu version, they also include the biography of Krishna, who Jains consider to be the ninth Vasudeva, the biography of the 22nd Jina, Neminatha, and a version of another popular South Asian narrative known as the *Brhatkatha*.

Based on the latest findings in the history of art and religion; at the same time, it also presents results



The World of People and Animals, Gujarat or Rajasthan, 17th/18th century, painting on fabric © Museum Rietberg, Zurich



VISIT  
The JAINpedia  
timeline



Jina Rishabha with 12 Jinas, 15th century, copper alloy, Museum Rietberg © Museum Rietberg, Zurich



Jina Mahavira, Karnataka, Hassan district, 12th century, stone © Manjusha Museum, Dharmasthala, India

from field research and interviews with practicing Jains from all over the world. This study bridges history and the present by talking about migration, the Jain diaspora, but also about important issues such as ecology and non-violence. About 200 masterpieces of Jain art are on display, from sculptures, ritual objects, large-scale textile paintings, illustrated manuscripts, and sacred texts to utilitarian objects used by monks. The artworks come mostly from the collection of the Museum Rietberg, but also from Indian museums and private collections. The oldest artworks were created almost 2,000 years ago with the most recent on show coming from the 20th century.

The exhibition is complemented in the Park-Villa Rieter by *Being the Jina: The Kalpasutra*. Here, the legends of Jina Mahavira and Jain saints are retold through pictures, stories and an animated film. In addition to the artworks, five short films are being shown in two locations and deal with the ritual practices of the Jains, the production of manuscripts and their use, temples, pilgrimages and the everyday life of Jain ascetics in India. Portraits and

interviews allow insights into very personal life stories. These can also be accessed via the museum's website and the link shown here in our digital-active edition is for the animation.

A separate area in the exhibition gives the opportunity to approach these questions in a playful way. 'And You? The Game of Questions' is based on the game Snakes and Ladders, which originated in India and also plays a role in Jainism as a teaching tool. The large-scale game in the exhibition combines analogue game elements with a web-based app that allows visitors to ask their own questions.

*Being Jain: Art and Culture of an Indian Religion* aims to do more than just look at the way of life and attitude of Jains and provides an exploration of physical objects. It also wants to address the challenges of our time. Do Jain concepts such as tolerance and non-violence offer answers to our questions?

- Until 30 April, Rietberg Museum, Zurich, rietberg.ch
- The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, CHF 39



Detail from a house shrine with carvings, inside the shrine was a sculpture of a jina, Gujarat, 17th century, wood. Similar shrines are still in use today © Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, India

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SH Raza in his studio, Mumbai, 1948. Image courtesy of The Raza Archives © Adagp, Paris 2022 © The Raza Foundation

# SAYED HAIDER RAZA

The Pompidou Centre is showing the first monographic presentation of the work of the Indian painter Sayed Haider Raza (1922-2016) in France, where he lived and worked from 1950 to 2011. The artist's years of training in India illustrate the effervescent artistic and political climate of 1940s Bombay (Mumbai) in an economic context marked by the interaction between commercial activity and artistic research, and the opening of the first modern art galleries. Distinctly different from the nationalist aesthetic canons of the Bengal School, the training Raza received at the Sir JJ School of Arts focused renewed attention on the forms of classical Indian art. The formal experimentation of the Progressive Artists Group (PAG), of which Raza was a founding member in 1947, outlines the contours of a generation of cosmopolitan artists determined to invent and showcase new forms of expression.

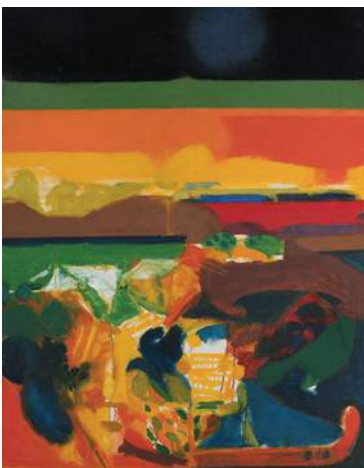
In 1950, the artist moved to Paris with the help of a French government grant and began his uninterrupted dialogue between these two cultural worlds. Though the material effects of his abstract landscapes borrowed from the School of Paris, Raza never ceased to conjure up the cultural heritage of India. The vibrations of his chromatic range thus evoke the luxurious forests of his childhood, but also ragas, melodic frameworks of Indian classical music. Beginning in the 1970s, his work includes thematic elements derived from his unique relationship with the land, the subject of a series of major canvases.

The five stages marking the development of Raza's oeuvre are presented in chronological order in the exhibition, providing reference points for understanding the complexity of the Indian modern

project from the 1950s to the 1990s, and the issues defining the globalised space of contemporary creation. 'Midnight in Bombay' features the watercolours Raza started to produce in Bombay from 1943 that mark the cadence of this multicultural, multi-faith and multilingual 'archipelago city', bristling with effervescence in the wake of the Quit India Movement initiated by Gandhi. Through PAG's experiments, which sketched the contours of a generation of cosmopolitan artists, Raza was determined to invent new modes of expression – attentive to the forms of classical Indian art and to the European avant-garde.

'Reconstructed Landscapes' is concerned with the artist's early days in France. Raza left Bombay for Paris in 1950 in the company of the painter Akbar Padamsee, where he enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts. On their arrival, they were welcomed by Ram Kumar, who was then studying under André Lhote and Fernand Léger. The three friends also met up with FN Souza, who was living in London at the time. Padamsee, Souza, and Raza exhibited for the first time at the Saint-Placide Gallery in 1952, and the following year in the Creuze Gallery. During this time, Raza's experiments around the human figure and in an ample series of churches provided points of convergence for the three artists.

In 1953, Raza visited Italy: Ferrara, Ravenna, Padua, Venice and Rome. The medieval villages of the Menton region that he painted at the time were inspired by the two-dimensional space of Indian miniature paintings and Byzantine icons, Roman sculptures and the Siennese primitives, whose delicate moderation he appreciated. Painting became a tangible experience of wandering, and landscape became the place

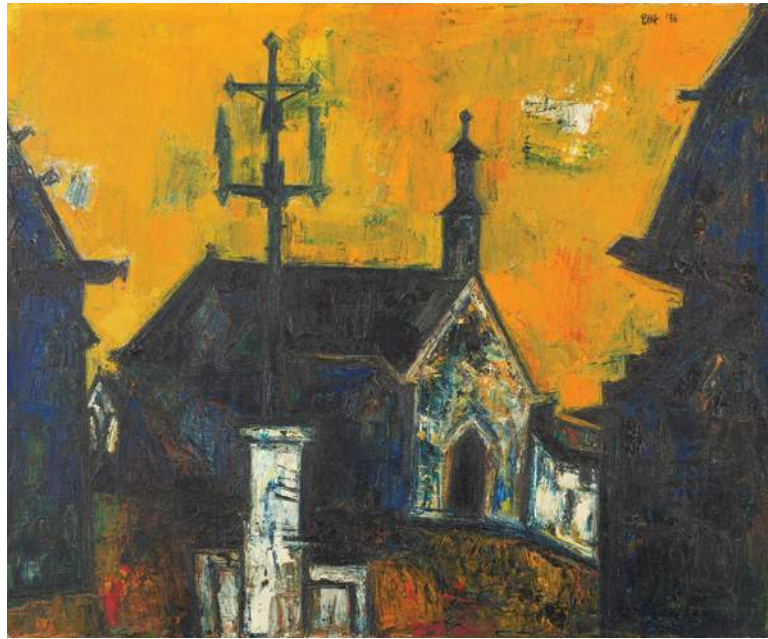


Punjab (1969), acrylic on canvas, Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai © Adagp, Paris 2022 © The Raza Foundation

“  
Raza absorbed  
abstract  
expressionism in  
the 1960s  
”

where he inscribed a plural identity.

At the Beaux-Arts in Paris, Raza met the artist Janine Mongillat, who would become his wife. The couple surrounded themselves with many friends, among them, Jean Bhowanagary, a protean artist who was then a filmmaker at UNESCO, Jean and Krishna Riboud, a couple of collectors, photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and Lebanese artist Shafic Abboud. Raza frequented the Paris museums assiduously and kept an attentive eye on the work of his



Church at Calvaire Breton (1956), oil on canvas, Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai © Adagp, Paris 2022 © The Raza Foundation



Black Sun (1968), oil on canvas, Collection Jerroo Mango, Mumbai © Adagp, Paris 2022 © The Raza Foundation

contemporaries, notably Bernard Buffet, Zao Wou-Ki, and Nicolas de Staël.

The year 1955 marked a turning point in his practice when he met gallerist Lara Vincy, who represented him and worked with determination to promote his recognition. The switch to oil painting, worked with a palette knife, further engaged him in the deconstruction of landscape and brought him closer to the large and heterogeneous community of foreign artists living in Paris, grouped together by critics as the 'School of Paris'. In 1956, Raza was the first foreign artist to win the prestigious Prix de la Critique. He frequented the homes of important critics and curators, such as Jacques Lassaigne, Pierre Gaudibert and Waldemar George, and saw the opening of his first international exhibitions.

Beginning in 1959, Raza made frequent trips to India. Section four, 'Sacred Geographies', discusses work from this period when he was inspired by the Rajput miniature paintings of the Mewar, Malwa and Bundi schools from 16th and 17th centuries, which celebrate the sensuality of nature through intense chromatic ranges and an abstract composition. He also studied *ragamala* paintings, which illustrate the refinement of court art at the time and embody a dialogue between the arts in which painting, music and poetry reconstitute the mood of a scene given by the melodic framework of the raga.

Invited to teach at Berkeley in 1962, Raza absorbed the works of abstract expressionist American artists – notably Sam Francis, Hans Hofmann and Mark Rothko – the spiritual resonance and gestural scope of whose work he appreciated. He visited the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, which was hosting several

Indian artists at the time, including Krishen Khanna, VS Gaitonde and Tyeb Mehta. The abstract landscapes unfurling freely on canvases from the 1960s are charged with a sensual and emotive value. In the 1970s, Raza produced a series of major canvases entitled *La Terre* (The Land), magnetic and crepuscular variations drawing on the theme of his attachment for his native soil. The picture space, fragmented into so many miniature shards, defines the contours of a metaphorical landscape 'enshrined as an icon, as sacred geography' (*Geeti Sen*).

The final section, 'Significant Forms', looks at Raza's works from the 1980s, when the artist directed his practice toward a radical and symbolic geometric abstraction. He abandoned compositions guided by the contrast of opposing values in favour of elementary forms derived from meditation. Black, 'the mother colour' in Indian thought, acquires a depth and density that flourishes through his recourse to the motif of the *bindu*, 'grain', 'point', or 'drop' in Sanskrit. *Ankuran*, Germination, *Bindu*, *Bija*, and *Surya* thus celebrate the perpetual renewal of nature and a cyclical conception of time. Having always refused to assimilate this period to the neo-tantric trend in vogue in the age of Flower Power, Raza identified with an abstract Indian tradition based on the geometrical representation of symbols, such as the *yantra*, a visual support for meditation in the Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist religions. This spiritual dimension of the geometric motif was combined with the research for a rigorous visual ordering. For Raza, the *bindu* is a 'significant form', as defined by the British critic Clive Bell.

● Until 15 May, Pompidou Centre, Paris, [centrepompidou.fr](http://centrepompidou.fr)

With a career spanning six decades, Saito Kiyoshi (1907-1997) was one of the most prolific and popular Japanese artists of the 20th century. Largely self-taught, he experimented with the expressive potential of woodblock printing, including the texture of the wood grain and effects from cutting and scratching the surface with knives and awls. He said, 'I work to create painting without a brush, using the flat surface of the plate instead'. The range of subjects in his work varies – from landscapes and architecture to the human figure and cats – but there is always an element of abstraction, with the patterns, colours and textures being as much the focus as what is depicted.

In the early years of the 20th century, the rise of two dichotomous print movements, *shin-hanga* (new prints) and *sosaku-hanga* (creative prints) brought a new dynamism to woodblock print making. The Shin-hanga movement strove to revitalise classical *ukiyo-e* of the 18th and early 19th centuries, utilising the classical collaborative (*hanmoto*) system, almost an assembly line division of labour, where the creation of a print began with the artist's drawn design which was then passed to the block carver, then to the printer and finally to the publisher/distributor for sale to the public. Their inspiration came largely from European Impressionism and the artists incorporated foreign designs of light and shadow and the 'mood' of the subject, especially in landscapes.

On the other hand, the *sosaku-hanga* movement's aim was worlds apart. Not only had they rejected the *shin-hanga* collaborative method of print production and replaced it with the artist as the only source of creating a print, they also rejected the traditional subjects and how they were depicted. What is immediately evident in many *sosaku-hanga* prints is the strong influence of Western wood-cuts and linoleum-cuts: heavy use of fields of black (or sometimes colour) and lines of raw irregularity slashing across the surface to create the desired image.

The movement, led by Yamamoto Kanae (1882-1946), looked for very different results from the woodblock, their aim was to use the print as a means of artistic self-expression,

which have been partly driven by the cost of producing prints using the *hanmoto* method.

Saito was associated with the *sosaku-hanga* movement and, like the other artists, handled all stages of the process, designing, carving and printing, which resulted in highly individualised artworks. The artist was born in Fukushima Prefecture and moved as a child to the northern island of Hokkaido and then, in his late twenties, made the move to Tokyo in 1932 to study oil-painting at the private Hongo Painting Institute and, in 1937, joined Ono Tadashige's *Zokei Hanga Kyokai* (Plastic Print Association). Saito was a self-taught artist, he had started life as a sign painter, and his trajectory was a gradual self-education of a natural artist.

The Kitoshi Saito Museum of Art in Yanaizu, Fukushima, has a biography of the artist, writing that although Saito was self-taught, he maintained an association with the *sosaku-hanga* movement and had a print accepted for the Kokuga-kai exhibition in 1937. He eventually began showing with the Japanese Print Association in 1942. The influences of Edvard Munch (1863-1944) and printmaker Koshiro Onchi (1891-1955) can be seen in his early works. A few decades later, in 1951, he surprised the Japanese art world by taking the first prize with the cat print *Steady Gaze* from 1948, (together with the etcher Komai Tetsuro) for a Japanese work of art at the first Sao Paulo Biennale. After winning this prize, he became a representative of the *sosaku-hanga* movement and helped popularise their work internationally.

Saito quickly gained worldwide renown, and from the 1950s, he repeatedly visited Europe and the US to interact with international artists. He seems to have keenly perceived global art trends, and continually incorporated them into his own expressive techniques. At one stage, between 1956-67, he was also a teacher of printmaking at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan – the university still has a collection of his prints. His works were especially admired by Americans travelling to Japan in the postwar years, such as Virginia W Kettering, who collected all the



Cat and Girl, circa 1952, woodblock print, ink and colour on paper

## Woodblock Prints of SAITO KIYOSHI



Persimmon Tree in Aizu, circa 1970, woodblock print, ink and colour on paper

Kinkaku-Ji, Kyoto (1967), woodblock print, ink and colour on paper. All images: Dayton Art Institute, gift of Mrs Virginia W Kettering



prints on view in the Dayton exhibition.

His early prints were of winter scenes in his native Aizu, his birthplace, but he changed to figure subjects portrayed in a rather European style, and then started to create prints with Buddhist and other subject matter. This gave his work great variation and was subject to many changes of technique. The works until the 1950s depict his motifs with simple forms composed of thick, flat areas of colour. They were unique for their simple, dignified appearances. He also used the woodblock print technique to depict very Japanese themes such as clay figurines, ancient Buddha statues, Kyoto temples and buildings. Saito's artworks conformed to the trends in the art world at that time, presenting new subjects, very Japanese subjects, to a domestic and international audience.

By the 1960s, Saito began questioning his own path as an artist and fell into such a deep slump and did not enter his studio. During this time of struggle, he tried out new techniques like collagraph printing



Kinkaku-ji, Kyoto (1967), woodblock print, ink and colour on paper

and *bokuga* (*sumi-ink* painting), which broadened his range of expression. He also created numerous artworks with a strong awareness of the artistic effects of the printing materials, which seemed contrary to his previous intentions. His work had started to incorporate complex nuances stemming from the flat

areas of colour. The biggest change was the way he depicted shadows in delicate gradations, which became prominent in his work from the 1970s. Saito's artworks depict a sense of vitality hidden in his landscapes and objects through the use of shadows and richly nuanced effects, making his work more profound and giving it a sense of depth and strong spiritual quality.

However, he did not merely accept these trends without questioning them. The artist Koshiro Onchi (1891-1955), considered 'the father' of the *sosaku-hanga* movement, called Saito a 'modern realist'. As this suggests, realism was the basis of Saito's art – he constantly used real, visible phenomena as themes, and always produced complex sketches for his pieces. Saito posed a constant challenge to himself and by linking his foundation of realism with the abstract art that was the mainstream style of the time, to create his own unique images that are still admired and collected today.

● Woodblock Prints of Saito Kiyoshi Until 16 July, Dayton Art Institute, Ohio, [daytonartinstitute.org](http://daytonartinstitute.org)



# IKAT

## A World of Compelling Cloth



Women's sarong, early 20th century, Philippines, Mindanao Island, Bagobo, abaca, warp ikat, 75 x 56 in



Kimono, 20th century, Kyushu, Kurume, cotton double ikat, 65 x 50 in



Woman's sarong, early 20th century, China, Hainan Island, Meifu Li, cotton, silk, warp ikat, discontinuous supplementary weft, supplementary warp, 33 x 22 in



Patola (sari), 19th century, Gujarat, silk, double ikat, 125 x 36 in

“  
*Ikat weaving can be seen in many forms throughout Asia*  
”

This exhibition features over 100 textiles made from the 12th century to the present, drawn from the museum's collection and gifts and loans from the Seattle-based Collection of David and Marita Paly, including works from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Of the many handloomed textiles in the world, *ikat* stands out for its required dedication: the weaver must coordinate each and every thread, choosing which to tie to resist the application of dye. The term 'ikat' comes from the Malay-Indonesian *mengikat*, meaning to tie or bind. Threads are tied tightly, to resist any dye, before they are woven. Each thread's resistance to the dye is slightly different, which results in ikat's unique edge. Every pattern is said to be feathered or flaming, jagged or blurring where images hover inside the cloth, embedded, and serve as a reminder of the depth of dedication required to make an ikat.

Ikat examples from Japan include a display of *futonji* (futon covers). These domestic textiles played an important part in the home. Placed atop futons, bedding stuffed with raw cotton, which came into use in Japan in the 17th century, *futonji* not only provided physical warmth and comfort, but became an art-form in itself.

Indigo-dyed textiles have a long and cherished tradition in Japan. *Kimonos* using the kasuri technique

and indigo (*ai*) were hugely popular and worn by men and women alike and bold designs were fashionable and widespread in the country in the 19th and 20th centuries. The depth of indigo bleeding into blue-black forms a backdrop for accents that are executed in white double ikat, a pairing that takes exceptional skill. *Kasuri* comes from the verb *kasureru* meaning 'to blur', echoing the heritage of ikat in all its forms. In Japan, as elsewhere, it is a method of creating patterns in cloth through a dye process whereby threads are bound or resisted before the dyeing. The classification of kasuri is done first and is named by the technique and direction in which the resisted or tie-and-dyed yarn is done. Warp kasuri (*tate gasuri*) refers just to the dyed resist of warp threads (the horizontal threads on the loom). Weft kasuri (*yoko gasuri*) is the method where each vertical thread must be placed in an exact position to create the design. Warp and weft kasuri (*tate-yoko gasuri*) encompasses both. Further kasuri classification is done: by colour, by technique, by design, and finally by place of production.

In India, the tradition of ikat weaving is linked to religion as well as part of the early trade connections in the region. Indian *patola* cloth has been desired and traded by many cultures for centuries. One legend recounts that the Jain Raja Kumarpula (1143-1174) called on

700 patola creators to enable him to wear a new cloth every day for his visit to the temple. One of the homes of the Jain community is Gujarat and is where his legacy took hold. It took three people four to twelve months to complete each cloth with the complex calculations required for the double ikat process. The reputation of patola spread widely beginning with the establishment of the spice trade in the 16th century. Used as a commercial tool, particularly during the spice trade, the cloth spread into southeast Asia and Indonesia and



Pardah hanging, late 19th century, Uzbekistan, silk, warp ikat, cotton weft, 90 x 65 in. All photos: Collection of David and Marita Paly

was traded to the West. As the Dutch East India Company (VOC) arrived to barter for sandalwood and spices, patola was also an important part of this business.

Often created in a range of reds, patola is said to represent the colours of the mother goddess of Jain weavers. Patola became expected for high-status brides, but they have had an even broader impact as a sacred presence worn by priests, deities, mothers, babies, those who are sick, and the deceased. Like no other ikat cloth, patola has crossed religious boundaries, been imitated and adapted, and taken on new meanings, and its influence will be seen in the coming galleries. An example in this section is a patola sari with *Vohra gaj bhat* (trellis design), probably from Patan – it was the Muslim Bohra communities that developed and gave the trellis name to this patola design. The Bohra are traditionally traders and have established their own distinctive dress for centuries. This type of sari would be worn by a bride and the bride's and groom's families at weddings and other occasions. Abstract geometry is preferred by these patrons, while framing a central field and ending the cloth with triangular motifs is a common Gujarat patola design.

In Southeast Asia, a dynamic expansion by Austronesians from Taiwan by 3500 BC established a manner of relying on cloth that is seen throughout the region. Cloth

became powerful: used as a gift, a symbol of alliance, and an invitation for the dead, gods, and spirits to form a relationship with the living. All Southeast Asian cloths are made by women, balancing men's association with metal and imported goods. In the 19th century, Southeast-Asian cloth designs experienced extensive elaboration. There is a sense of exchange in some ikats, while others are tightly restrained. In the weavings, you can see ancient ancestors, sacred mandalas of Hindu-Buddhism, dragons from China, stars and flowers from India, as well as homage being paid to indigenous species – frogs and crocodiles are prominent in many designs.

In the Philippines, the people of the highlands of Mindanao Island consider abaca, a species of banana native to the Philippines, for weaving with ikat to be the most appropriate medium and design for ceremonial clothing and gifts. Bagobo women create three panels, with a centre called the mother and the sides called children. A profusion of intricate scrolls form rhythmic patterns throughout. Mandaya women record their alliance with crocodiles as a source of sacred character by inserting humans and crocodile outlines in a consistent alternation. Look for them in the stripes, with their hands and legs pushed to each side, as they assert their union amidst lace patterning.

Further east, in southernmost

China, Hainan Island, is considered the best-preserved tropical forest in the country and is home to the Li peoples, who have been cultivating cotton there for 3,000 years. Their penchant for decoration is seen in extensive tattooing and in their cloths, which feature lines of geometric forms, figures, birds, geometry, and frogs in animated repetition. Frogs are given tribute as the largest creatures and are known as sacred ancestors. Floating bands of golden colour are likely the result of turmeric dyes. In 2009, UNESCO put the textiles of the Li of Hainan island on the list of intangible cultural heritage in need of protection.

An exhibition on ikats would not be complete without the famed examples from Uzbekistan. Exuberant textiles filled the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in the 19th century. Uzbeks call ikat *abrabandi* (cloud binding) and took it to new heights of exploration. William Eleroy Curtis, an English visitor to Uzbekistan, wrote in 1911, 'Everybody wears a coat like a rainbow. No matter how humble or hungry a man may be, and even if he has but a single garment, it is made of the most brilliantly coloured material he can find'.

Central Asian ikats are best known for their bold, abstract designs and vibrant colours, the result of painstaking and highly skilled work by craftsmen throughout the region. Unlike a majority of textiles that are woven with solid-

coloured thread or are printed or dyed after weaving, ikat is produced using the reverse process. Individual threads are first dyed with several colours that, when woven together, produce the energetic patterns unique to this textile tradition. Successful application of this complex technique requires extensive forethought and teamwork between various craftsmen and the designer.

For this reason, ikat has been celebrated in Central Asia as one of the region's great arts. In the 19th century, when costume indicated an individual's social rank, wealth, domestic role, tribal affiliation and geographic origin, ikat was considered the most prestigious material to wear. The production of fabrics with *abr* (cloud in Persian) patterns was the most labour-intensive of the decorative methods. It required a craftsman artist to draw a pattern onto the silk warp yarns and then, according to a predetermined sequence of colours, parts of the warp bundles were tightly bound with cotton threads that resisted dye penetration when they were immersed in vats of dye, once, or several times, depending on the complexity of the pattern. This technique is still used today in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries and the craft is flourishing and exported worldwide.

● Until 29 May, Seattle Art Museum, [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

Olivia Sand

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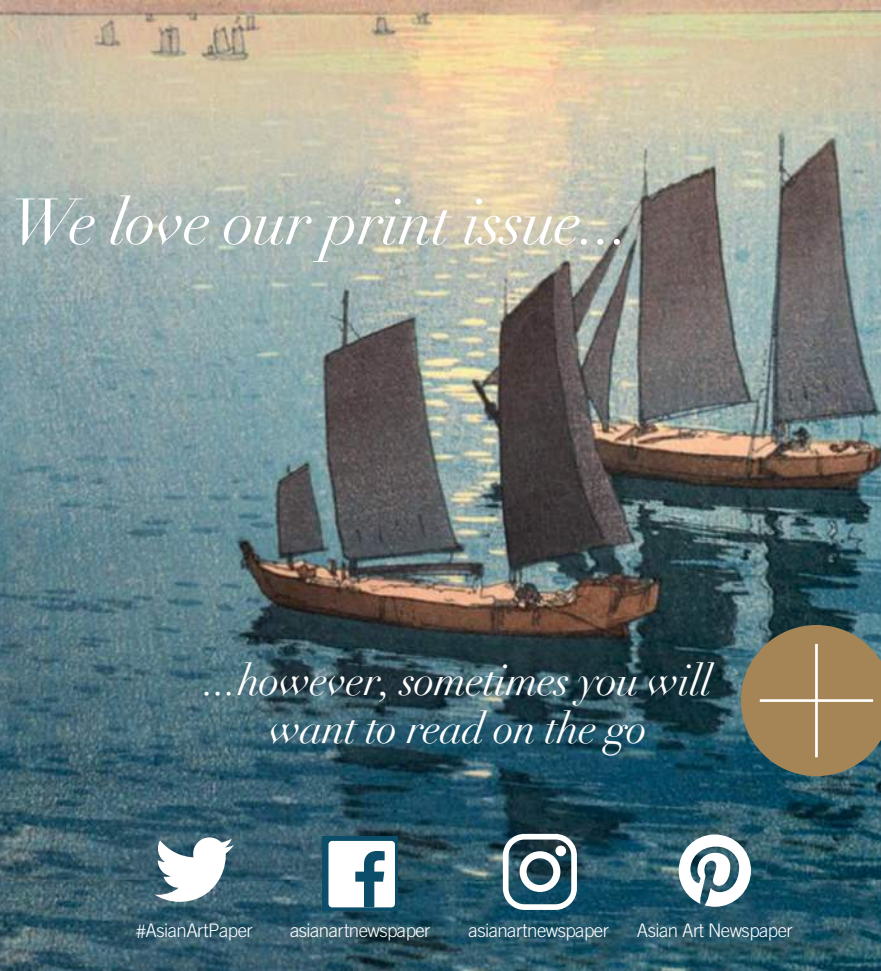
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# RED AND BLUE AND WHITE Yuan and Early Ming Ceramics of the Ming Dynasty



Kendi, Ming dynasty, Hongwu period (1368-98), Jingdezhen, porcelain with underglaze-red decoration, height 17 cm

This exhibition documents the advanced development of red-and-white and blue-and-white Chinese ceramics. These highly sophisticated artefacts would come to take on unprecedented importance both for the domestic and foreign markets. While the surface decorations exemplify technological advances in glaze materials and firing techniques, the depicted iconography employs a vocabulary of symbols long celebrated in Chinese culture. Rare examples display stylistic features adapted into export wares that were – like some of the decorative bottles and bowls sent to patrons in the Middle East – more Islamic than Chinese in terms of shapes and motifs.

The selection of ceramics in the exhibition prefaces and extends the museum's own collection, and the array of further developed forms and colours that characterise later Ming and Qing dynasty porcelains.

● Until 30 April, University Museum Art Gallery, Hong Kong, [umag.hku.hk](http://umag.hku.hk)



Mandarin duck yuhuchun vase, Yuan dynasty, 14th century, Jingdezhen, porcelain with underglaze-blue decoration, height 25 cm

# THE WONDER UNBOUND

In New York, a different type of exhibition examines modern contemporary Korea through the images and texts from 120 multidisciplinary books published in outside Korea from the late 1700s to the 1960s. For the past 20 years, Professor Seung-Chul Lee, Director of the Dongduk Women's University and a renowned *hanji* (Korean

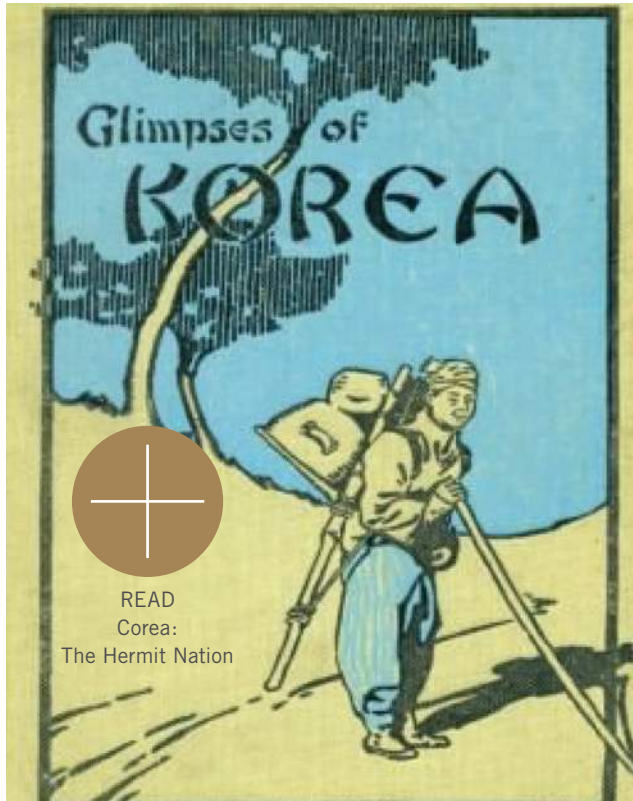
traditional paper) artist himself, has amassed over 1,350 rare and vintage books from this period. *The Wonder Unbound* unveils a curated selection from his collection, opening these treasures to public view for the first time.

The books are in large part written by non-Korean foreigners who had visited or worked in Korea between the

years 1700 and 1960, ranging from missionaries, diplomats, soldiers, to historians, art historians, and explorers. These valuable texts bring to light varying perspectives and observations on Korean culture, economy, daily life, and notably, bring an added point of interest to the discourse as they are published in the author's original language after they had returned from their travels abroad. The books were mainly written when Korea was known as 'The Hermit Kingdom', the label was invented by the American author William Elliot Griffis (1843-1928) in his book *Corea: The Hermit Nation*, published in 1882, reflecting the period when the country deliberately shut itself off from the rest of the world.

The books have been selected for their multi-dimensional reflection of life in Korea during the time of publication, which can be seen in the choice of cover images, illustrations, maps, and photographs. These changing visuals are also meaningful to compare from a historical viewpoint to show the changing face and perception of Korea through illustrations, black and white and ultimately to colour photography.

● Until 27 April, The Korean Cultural Center, New York, [koreanculture.org](http://koreanculture.org)



Cover of Glimpses of Korea (1932), written by American missionary E J Urquhart. Courtesy of KCCNY

# ANYANG China's Ancient City of Kings



Ritual wine pouring vessel (gong) with masks (taotie), dragons, and real animals, Anyang or middle Yangzi region, circa 1100 BC, bronze, gift of Eugene and Agnes E Meyer; ritual wine pouring vessel (gong) with masks (taotie) and dragons, middle or late Anyang period, circa 1100 BC, bronze, gift of Arthur M Sackler; ritual wine pouring vessel (gong) with masks (taotie), dragons, and real animals, middle Anyang period, circa 1150-1100 BC, bronze, Charles Lang Freer Endowment  
Photo: National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution

This is the first major exhibition in the US dedicated to Anyang, the capital of ancient China's Shang dynasty, with the objects entirely taken from the museum's own collection. The show brings together more than 200 objects from the museum's collection to examine the Shang state and the artistic achievements of those who lived in its capital over 3,000 years ago.

Anyang, the capital of ancient China's Shang dynasty (occupied circa 1250 BC–circa 1050 BC), is the source of China's earliest surviving written records, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the birthplace of Chinese archaeology.

The archaeological site of Yin Xu, close to Anyang City, some 500 km south of Beijing, testifies to the golden age of early Chinese culture, crafts and sciences, a time of great prosperity of the Chinese Bronze Age. A number of royal tombs and

palaces, prototypes of later Chinese architecture, have been unearthed on the site, including the Palace and Royal Ancestral Shrines Area, with more than 80 house foundations, and the only tomb of a member of the royal family of the Shang dynasty to have remained intact, the Tomb of Fu Hao. The large number and superb craftsmanship of the burial accessories found there bear testimony to the advanced level of Shang crafts industry. Inscriptions on oracle bones found in Yin Xu bear invaluable testimony to the development of one of the world's oldest writing systems, ancient beliefs and social systems.

Some highlights of the many bronzes in the exhibition include a ritual wine container, *you*, with masks *taotie*, dragons, birds, and owls, from the middle Anyang period, and a Ritual wine pouring vessel, *gong*, with dragons, waterfowl, and

heads of a tiger and owl, from the early Anyang period.

Anyang holds a special connection with the National Museum of Asian Art. Beginning in 1928, archaeological work at the Bronze Age site was supervised by Academia Sinica, China's first interdisciplinary research institute. One year later, Li Chi (1896-1979) assumed leadership of the excavations. At the time, he was also a staff member of the Freer Gallery of Art (1925-30). To promote archaeological practice in China, the museum supported Li and his first two seasons of work at Anyang.

This collaboration, predicated on the advancement of scientific knowledge and the protection of cultural patrimony, marks an important chapter in the history of Sino-American relations.

● Until 28 April, Sackler Museum, National Museum of Asian Art, Washington DC, [si.edu](http://si.edu)



Ritual wine container (you) with masks (taotie), dragons, birds, and owls, middle Anyang period, circa 1150 BC, bronze, Charles Lang Freer Endowment; ritual wine container (you) with masks (taotie), dragons, birds, and owls, early Anyang period, circa 1200 BC, bronze, Gift of Arthur M Sackler; and a ritual wine pouring vessel (gong) with dragons, waterfowl, and heads of a tiger and owl, early Anyang period, circa 1200 BC, bronze, Charles Lang Freer Endowment  
Photo: National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution

# TOFUKU-JI Monumental Zen Temple of Kyoto

Famous for its springtime greenery and autumn foliage, Tofuku-ji is one of Kyoto's most prominent Zen temples. It was established at the behest of Regent Kujo Michiie – the most powerful official at the imperial court – and was inspired by the great temples of Todaiji and Kofukuji in Nara. Tofuku-ji's buildings are collectively referred to as 'the façade of Tofuku-ji' for their massive, imposing scale. This exhibition, at Tokyo National Museum, is the first ever to comprehensively introduce Tofuku-ji's temple treasures. These include *The Five Hundred Arhats*, a monumental work by the 'painter-saint' Mincho, which is on display for the first time since conservation. Also included are examples of invaluable cultural heritage that survived the Onin War, as well as Buddhist sculptures, paintings, and works of calligraphy that mirror the grand scale of Tofuku-ji's buildings.

In 1235, Enni (1202–1280) travelled to China to study under Wuzhun Shifan (Bujun Shibān, 1177-1249), a prominent figure in the world of Southern Song Chan (Zen) Buddhism. After returning to Japan, Enni established Joten-ji Temple in Hakata, Fukuoka. He later found favour with Kujo Michiie and was entrusted with the task of founding the huge Tofuku-ji Temple complex in Kyoto. Through numerous disasters, the temple has managed to safely pass down many treasures associated with Wuzhun and Enni, including ancient documents, calligraphy, books and portraits. Unparalleled in terms of both quantity and quality, this collection helps to illuminate the history of Sino/Japanese relations and the development of Zen Buddhism in East Asia during the 13th



Part of the Five Hundred Arhats by Kissan Mincho, Nanbokucho period, dated 1386, Tofuku-ji Temple, Kyoto

century, with Tofuku-ji now one of the largest and most important medieval Zen temples in Japan.

Enni's successors became known as the Shoichi School. Enni was a master of Esoteric Buddhism as well as Zen, with the earliest members of the Shoichi School also well-versed in Esoteric teachings. These priests often

travelled to China before returning with treasures, knowledge and a greater understanding of the continent's Zen traditions. Many works associated with these priests still exist at Tofuku-ji and its environs.

All masterpieces of Zen art, these include calligraphy, surplices and personal belongings, and portraits and



Tiger, written in large characters by Kokan Shiren, Kamakura–Nanbokucho period, 14th century, Reigen-in Temple, Kyoto. Courtesy Tokyo National Museum

sculptures. With its cosmopolitan flavour and deep love of learning, the Shoichi School produced many eminent priests and it played an influential role in Zen Buddhist circles.

Kissan Mincho (1352–1431) was a Buddhist painter based at Tofuku-ji. He was held in the same regard as the great Sesshu up until the Edo period. Also known as Cho Densu, he decorated the temple's halls and was responsible for keeping the temple clean and illuminated. While studying traditional Chinese Buddhist paintings, he developed his own simple style that fused deft ink painting with vivid colouring. He also created many works whose monumental size fitted in well with Tofuku-ji's vastness. This exhibition also introduces masterpieces by Mincho that were passed down through Tofuku-ji and its sub-temples.

After studying Zen in China, Enni returned to Japan with many Buddhist treasures. Enni's exchanges with China's Buddhist circles continued after his return home, with his international network inherited by his



One of the standing Four Heavenly Kings, Tamonten, Kamakura period, 13th century, Tofuku-ji Temple, Kyoto

disciples, the Shoichi School. These priests were actively involved in trade and diplomacy, with Tofuku-ji accumulating various articles that would play a pivotal role in the development of Zen culture in Japan. In this way, Tofuku-ji played a key role in Japanese cultural history through its development as a hub for international exchanges.

The sheer scale of Tofuku-ji is symbolised by the massive temple buildings dominating Kyoto's Higashiyama district and by the temple's monumental Buddhist sculptures. When Tofuku-ji

was first built, the principle image of a seated Sakyamuni and other huge sculptures were installed in the temple's central Shichido ('seven-hall') Garan compound. Tofuku-ji subsequently survived many disasters, with numerous examples of Zen architecture, sculpture, paintings and calligraphy passed down safely through its reconstructed buildings or sub-temples. As such, the temple complex still presents a magnificent sight to this day.

● Until 7 May, Tokyo National Museum, [tnm.jp](http://tnm.jp)

# MOHAMMED SAMI The Point 0

Mohammed Sami is part of a young group of artists with exceptional technical skills that allow him to produce on the canvas whatever images, thoughts, or impressions he wants to highlight. Considering his trajectory, Mohammed Sami (b 1984, Iraq) is not short of recollections he wants to share. To quote the artist, he literally 'lived four lives with gaps in between these lives'. Growing up in Baghdad, he left the country towards France before being welcomed in Sweden, moving on to Ireland and finally settling in London. Already considered exceptionally talented as a young boy while in Iraq, painting in all its forms has always been part of

Sami's existence.

*Point 0*, the title of the exhibition, refers to the artist's return to Iraq following his father's death. Approaching the runway before landing in Baghdad, the outlook from the window plane remains blurred with no other perspective than ochre coloured dust. The other paintings in the show unveil moments or episodes the artist recalls from the past. Whatever feeling Sami wants to convey, he does it by insisting on the overall atmosphere of a place, making the canvas even more compelling by deliberately avoiding featuring any human presence. In that sense, the viewer becomes the leading character of the piece,

imagining what it could mean to experience and be exposed to the specific setting envisioned by the artist. With a glimpse into the private sphere of individuals that remain anonymous, we can imagine what our life could have been with the challenges it entails. Determined to stay away from images as they can be found in the media, Mohammed Sami continues his quest towards painting views and impressions that so far remain undocumented. Through his paintings, places or situations are revisited in an ambiguous way, triggering a journey that is unique to every one of us. **Olivia Sand**

● Until 28 May, Camden Art Centre, London, [camdenartcentre.org](http://camdenartcentre.org)



The Point 0 (2020) by Mohammed Sami, acrylic on linen, 170 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Modern Art London, and Luhring Augustine New York



Hong Kong Spring Sales

**4 to 8 April**  
This April, in celebration of their 50th anniversary in Asia, Sotheby's Hong Kong are presenting a specially curated Chinese Works of Art sale series. Many of the objects can be viewed as landmarks in the history of the Chinese art market, having broken records at auction in the past with their provenances collectively represent a number of the greatest names in the field. Dr Alice Cheng's early Qianlong period *falangcai* bowl showcases the pinnacle of enamelling at the Palace workshops in the Forbidden City in Beijing, where the most exclusive wares were produced under the Emperor's close supervision. The bowl has a history that goes back to the late years of the Qing dynasty, when it was in the collection of

C Oswald Liddell, and subsequently passed through the hands of Charles Ernest Russell, Barbara Hutton, Robert Chang and finally Dr Alice Cheng. In addition, the TY Chao blue and white ewer from the Yongle period portrays – for the very first time – the five-clawed dragon design, one of the most potent symbols of Imperial power. The ewer is reappearing on the market for the first time since the TY Chao sale in 1987. Another lot from a famous collection is the set of 12 Kangxi period *famille-verte* month cups from the collection of Alan Chuang, possibly the first complete set of such cups to be recorded in the market when it belonged to Edward T Chow in 1950 and later entering the collections of Paul and Helen Bernat and



The Dr Alice Cheng Imperial falangcai 'Swallow' bowl, blue enamel mark and period of Qianlong, diam. 11.3 cm, estimate on request, expected to to fetch in excess of HK\$200 million



The TY Chao blue and white Imperial 'Dragon' ewer, Ming dynasty, Yongle period 22.5 cm, estimate upon request, expected to fetch in excess of HK\$80 million



Set of seven jade imperial archer's rings from the Yin Xue Tang Collection, with an Imperial inscribed cinnabar lacquer box and cover, marks and period of Qianlong. The box and cover recorded to have been made in or before 1752, lacquer box diam. 12 cm, est HK\$ 50-70 million

TT Tsui. Another highlight is the set of seven jade archer's rings preserved in an imperial inscribed cinnabar lacquer box and cover, whose poems chart more than half of the Qianlong Emperor's reign, which is presently in the Yin Xue Tang collection.

Another work from the private collections is a recently discovered Yongzheng-period puce-enamelled falangcai 'dragon'

vase, which is one of the largest porcelains ever to have been enamelled at the Imperial workshops in Beijing and recorded in the court archives. Sotheby's are also presenting a group of archaic bronzes and gold works of art which passed through the hands of the



Black-glazed cizhou sgraffiato 'peony' vase, meiping, Northern Song dynasty, height 32.8 cm, from the Hirano Kotoken Collection, est HK\$ 6-8 million



Imperial puce enamel falangcai 'Dragon' vase, blue enamel mark and period of Yongzheng, recorded to have been completed in 1732, height 30 cm, est HK\$50-80 million

London dealer Giuseppe Eskenazi, over 80 archaic jades from the Robert and Cissy Tang collection, a collection of Song ceramics assembled in the last 20 years by Ryoichi Hirano, plus jades from the De An Tang collection, including a large green jade seal from the

Qianlong period bearing the seal face Tian En Ba Xun Zhi Bao, which was extensively impressed on Imperial paintings.

Preview 1 to 7 April, sale 8 April, Sotheby's, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong, sothebys.com



Set of twelve famille-verte 'Month' cups from the Alan Chuang Collection, marks and period of Kangxi, est HK\$60-80 million

Michael Goedhuis  
BRUSH AND BRONZE

**18 May**  
The London dealer Michael Goedhuis is offering a selection of contemporary Chinese ink paintings and antique bronzes from his collection. 'The Brush' in the auction title refers to a group of Chinese ink paintings by some 20 or so key artists spanning the last four decades. The bronze element refers to what Goedhuis calls China's 'second Bronze Age', the sculptures and vessels produced from the Song dynasty (960-1279) to the Qing (1644-1911). The ink paintings on offer come from some of the best-known and influential names in the field – Xu Bing, Liu Dan, Li Huayi, Qiu Deshu and Wang Dongling.

Chinese ink painting, in the earlier part of this century, was somewhat lost in



Bronze lozenge-shaped 'mythical beast' vase, hu, late Ming/early Qing dynasty, est £9-12,000



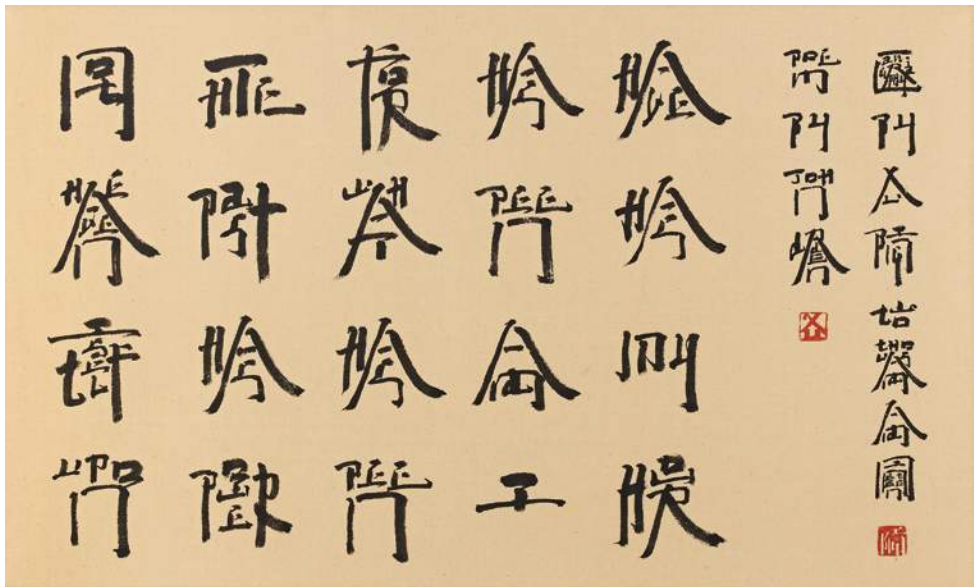
Confrontation of Yin and Yang (2005) by Wang Dongling (b 1945), est £15-20,000



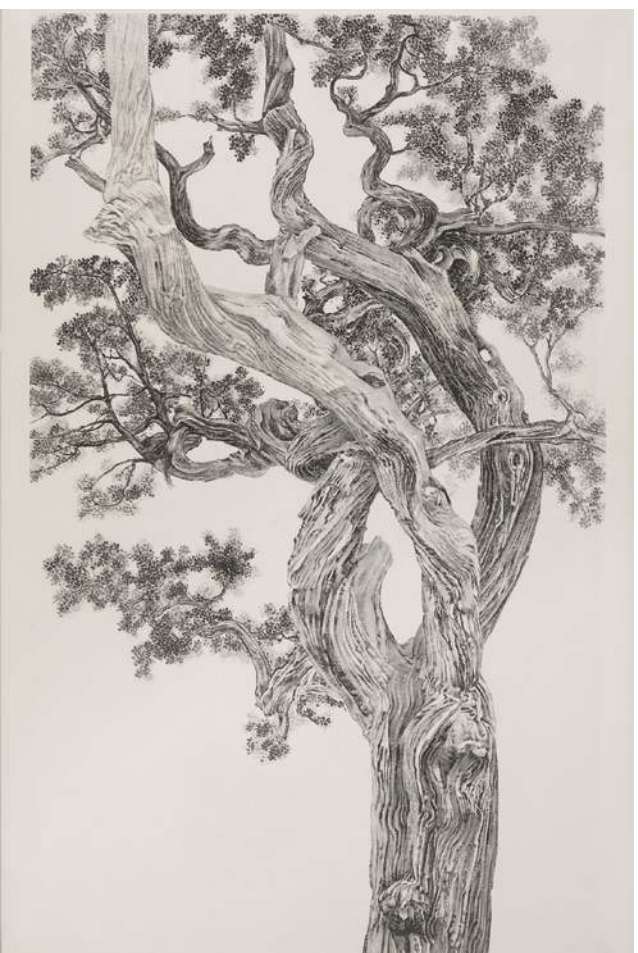
Mountainscape (Red), 2005, by Qiu Deshu (b 1948), est £30-50,000

the race created by the more flamboyant and experimental works produced by some Chinese contemporary artists from the 1990s onwards. Their presence exploded onto the international stage when astonishing prices were achieved for their works at

auction. Then the speculators moved in and the market went haywire. However, there was another, quieter revolution going on in traditional ink painting, which was also reacting to the tumultuous events in Chinese history and moving with the



Happy the Man (2019) by Xu Bing (b 1955), ink on paper, framed, 60 x 100 cm, est £30-50,00



Old Cypress from the Forbidden City (2007) by Liu Dan (b 1953), ink on xuan paper, 259.1 x 137.2 cm, est £200-300,000

times and can be just as cutting – all within the traditional parameters of literati painting. It was just eclipsed by the more sensational and commercial art. Michael Goedhuis has always supported and promoted these artists working in the medium of Chinese-style of ink painting.

These artists were not exclusively working in China, Liu Dan, as well as Li Huayi, also lived and worked in the US for a considerable period of time, with many of the artists' work represented in museum collections around the world.  
● 18 May, Bonhams, London, bonhams.com

# Islamic Arts Diary

By Lucien de Guise

## VIVA ANDALUSIA!

It has been quite a while since London's Royal Academy held an exhibition of Islamic interest. Among the greatest blockbusters along these lines was in 2005, with *Turks: Journey of a Thousand Years*. Even this time frame included considerable creative input from before the Turkish peoples became Muslim. The latest RA exhibition actually features a lot of Islamic art, despite having a title that does not make it too obvious.

*Spain and the Hispanic World* delivers exactly what it promises: from 4,000 years ago up to the 20th century. It is a huge exhibition, which means plenty of space for the long period when Spain was Al-Andalus. As for the 'Hispanic World' ie Spanish and Portuguese colonies, there is no contribution at all from the Muslim cultures that made the Iberian Peninsula what it has been ever since Tariq ibn Ziyad invaded in 711. By the time Spain and Portugal took over much of the 'New World' these two kingdoms had become determinedly Christian, rejecting where possible the influences from south and east of the old Roman colony of Hispania. At the same time, it seems that the exhibition curators have not dwelt on the contact between the Hispanic



Detail of a lavish wall hanging (an 'Alhambra silk') from Nasrid Granada, circa 1400

colonies in the Americas and those in Asia. It would have been interesting to hear more about the substantial activity between the west coast of the Americas and the Philippines, Goa and Macau. The entire exhibition comes from the collection of the Hispanic

Society of America. Fortunately, the founder decided that relics of Al-Andalus were going to be part of his buying spree more than a century ago. The New York HQ of this museum is nothing like the deprivation of *West Side Story*. The collection of 18,000 works of art was

mostly accumulated by one man: Archer Huntington. He wasn't of Spanish descent but became enthralled with a culture that he first saw as a young man holidaying in Europe. His collection has not travelled much since then.

As no phase of Hispanic culture has been overlooked, there is plenty of gallery space allocated to the more southerly part of Spain. Al-Andalus lasted for seven centuries and did such a good job of blending Christian and Islamic cultures, they often became the same thing in visual terms. By the time the Reconquista had really asserted itself, the big transformation was the quantity and forcefulness of Catholic art that came to characterise Spain. Before the Iberian kings went all out to eradicate any trace of the Muslim past and population, a lot of that input was already part of local culture. The designs of weavings from the Islamic period continued for centuries after, and they are still visible in tilework and other products of the peninsula.

Ceramics in general were the greatest legacy of the Islamic period. From the geometrical intricacy of the Alhambra to the fabulous lustre wares that were unchallenged for centuries, a debt is owed to the emirates that ruled in Spain. The development of the albarelo shape



After the Reconquista, the Islamic art of Spain remained especially strong with ceramics. This dish is from Seville, circa 1500

is one example that travelled from West Asia to Islamic Spain and then on to the rest of Europe. It proved invaluable to apothecaries everywhere. This vessel was part of a period of interaction that the Arab world is still very proud of, even if many Spaniards would prefer to forget it. Surprisingly, it was npt always like this. In the 19th century there was a revival of Spanish interest in the non-Christian past that led to some of the finest inlaid metalwork that Europe has ever seen. It's not much in evidence at this exhibition. Instead, there is a painting from the same era that shows a different side of the story. It is a painting by the Orientalist artist Mariano Fortuny (father of the fashion designer with the same name) showing an episode from the most topical exchange of the time: the Spanish-Moroccan War, 1859-60.

● Spain and the Hispanic World, Royal Academy, London, until 10 April, 2023 royalacademy.org.uk

## MAJOR COLLECTION FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

From the modern Arab heartland of the Gulf, this is a very different type of exhibition. It is more of an auction preview than a Royal Academy-style offering; all the exhibits are from the Islamic world, mostly contemporary. Eighty works from the collection of the Al Zayani family were on display in Dubai last month and will be at Sotheby's, London, ahead of the sale on 25 April.

It is rare to see an auction from a single owner – if that is what we can call a family collection – and even rarer for this to come from Bahrain. Over recent decades, it is collectors and institutions in the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia that have received the most attention. It makes a change to be discussing the inventory of an individual such as Abdulrahman Al Zayani, patriarch of the family as well as head of a luxury advisory service in the field of jewellery. Needless to say, the latter covers the ground between New York, London and the Gulf.

The art collection has a more Muslim-world focus. Featuring works of the last century, they are from Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and North Africa. The other thing they have in common, it seems, is that they are linked by the bonds of cultural heritage. There are some very well-known names in there, along with the less obvious. From different eras are Abdel Hadi El-Gazzar, Hassan Hajjaj, Fahrelnissa Zeid, Hatem El-Mekki, Mahmoud Moussa, Mohammed Melehi, Farid Belkahlia, Behjat Sadr and Taner Ceylan. Among the most memorable works is a charmingly naïve painting by Gazbia Sirry from 1959, along

with an enigmatic semi-abstract by Fouad Kamel, later titled *The Drinker* (1941). Adding a further touch of relevance to the regional appeal, these paintings are accompanied by jewellery, watches and traditional art of the Islamic world. Most remarkable is the pace at which the art world has accelerated in the Middle East. This collection is a classic, and yet it is less than 20 years old. As it is increasingly common to have a mission statement with such auctions, here are some words from the Al Zayani family: 'As we open the doors to our collection, the overarching sense is that these pieces were acquired with love, and we are excited for them to go to new homes where they will be discovered and appreciated anew... The world of Middle Eastern art has transformed since we first started almost two decades ago, and we are proud to witness and be a part of that evolution, living in a region that is



'The Drinker', 1941, by Fouad Kamel, is a classic work from the Al-Zayani collection

now becoming one of the cultural hubs of the world'.  
● Exhibition of the Al Zayani collection at Sotheby's, London, from 21 to 25 April, ahead of the live auction on 25 April



Gazbiah Sirry ('The Garden', 1959) is among the female stars at Sotheby's April auction of the Al Zayani collection.

## ECHOES OF A TROUBLED ERA

Bringing things right up to the present is an exhibition of paintings by a well-established woman artist of the Arab world. Afifa Aleiby is from Iraq but finds herself unable to bear living there. Decades of destruction have ruined the country for her. *Timeless Echoes* is an appropriate title for recent works that resonate with her own life amid the numerous issues that confront people and societies.

Aleiby's paintings have an ethereal quality, combined with an inner intensity of emotion. Women are always at their core. Whether strong, fragile, happy or miserable, her subjects are ambiguous, often stalked by a sense of disquiet. These women have much in common with monuments: pallid, motionless and sad; broken in two like a wrecked statue; or dressed in black hugging her daughter as they are enveloped in the darkness of war. The mood can change with works that hint at happiness and contentment: a woman fast asleep holding her wide-awake baby; or another female subject standing by a window sill holding a flower, for what reason we do not know.

These women exude a dreamy elegance despite the subject matter taking place in a harsh society. A certain amount of serenity envelopes their existence on Aleiby's canvases. Her works are unquestionably poetic, as would be expected of the world she grew up in – valuing poetry above so much else. To this she adds a measure of realism and symbolism, and occasionally some surrealism too. The variety of subjects she tackles expresses her own life and experience. Nada Shabout, one of



Afifa Aleiby, 'Rest after the Harvest' (2022-23), at the Zawyeh Gallery, Dubai

Iraq's pre-eminent art historians has written: 'At the first glance, Afifa's work rattles the viewer with its intimacy. One cannot escape the uneasiness of entering a personal space. Afifa's vibrant colors and the elegant lines of her figures are self-reflective. In response to her physical displacements, the space of the painting becomes her ultimate home.'

Although Aleiby has always denied that her work is intended as a feminist statement, she accepts that it 'may at times be related to women's issues'. She adds: 'I use the female figure as a medium to help communicate this idea. Women as human figures have something special that you cannot find in men: the way they move and their beauty'. Still going strong and travelling far at 70, she has learnt and painted much.  
● Timeless Echoes at Zawyeh Gallery, Dubai, ends 8 May 2023 zawyeh.net



# International Antiques Fair

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