

ASIAN ART

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HOYSALA EMPIRE TEMPLES WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee met in September in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to inscribe new sites on the World Heritage List. One of the sites under consideration (not confirmed at time of going press) is the 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala' in India, which represents the pinnacle of artistic and cultural accomplishments of the Hoysala Empire that reigned from the 11th to the 14th centuries, largely in present-day Karnataka in southern India. The buildings also represent a cultural value and respect for the pluralistic spiritual beliefs of Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Jainism and contributed to the development of where the sacred and the spiritual intersected with ordinary people and their daily lives in numerous ways. The period contributed enormously to the development of several creative fields as well as spiritual and humanistic thought.

These sacred ensembles went far beyond temples for worship, as they were also expressions of spiritual purpose and vehicles of spiritual

practice and attainment. Set in the foothills of the hilly and forested terrain of the Western Ghats on sites of enduring sanctity, the sacred ensembles included grand and small Hindu temples designed on ancient treatises, Jaina temples, numerous secondary structures, intricate sculpture and iconography, temple dances and music, lakes and tanks, town planning with the sacred elements, and a relationship to the natural environment that was both material and symbolic.

During their reign, the Hoysalas built more than 1,500 temples all across their empire of which only a little over 100 survive today. The intricate sculptural artistry of the Chennakeshava temple at Belur and the Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid are thought to be among the masterpieces of South-Asian art making the name of Hoysala synonymous with artistic achievement.

In addition to supporting both Shaivite and Vaishnavite sects of Hinduism, the Hoysala rulers gave



Jagati following the stellate plan form of the garbhagriha in 2015
Photo: Ar Maniyarasan © INTACH Bengaluru Chapter

court recognition and status to Jainism, a religion that prescribes a path of non-violence and self-control as paths to spiritual liberation and emphasises the equality of all beings. They were not only inclusive of the plural religious following, but also were important agents of the spiritual beliefs of Vaishnavism, Shaivism,

and Jainism through interpretations in sculpture, poetry, music, classical dance, and Kannada literature.

The most remarkable architectural achievements of the Hoysala are the numerous intricately carved stone temples built in a star-shaped footprint on a platform. The architecture is a hybrid of the nagara-

style temple architecture, seen in north India and the Dravidian style of the south. A navaranga was usually included as a place for people to gather and participate in cultural programmes such as music and dance performances, story-telling from mythology, as well as religious discourses. Visual elements such as a gently curving bell-shaped *chajja*, (overhanging eave) and lathe-turned stone pillars with circular rings carved on them are typical stylistic elements of Hoysala architecture.

Some 50 cultural properties are under consideration, those confirmed include the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er (China); Deer Stone Monuments and Related Sites of Bronze Age (Mongolia); Gaya Tumuli (Republic of Korea); Koh Ker: Archaeological Site of Ancient Lingapura or Chok Gargyar (Cambodia); Santiniketan in India; the Silk Roads: Zarafshan-Karakum Corridor (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan); and the Persian Caravanserai in Iran.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, LONDON

To commemorate its bicentenary, the Royal Asiatic Society in London, has commissioned a limited edition re-issue of Lt-Col James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, with a new Companion Volume by Norbert Peabody (co-published by the Society and Yale University Press in 2023). Tod was a founding member of the Society and its first librarian. While librarian, he completed his *Annals* (originally published in 1829 and 1832), which was the literary fruit of his 23-year East India Company career, during which he served as the first Political Agent to the Western Rajput States of Rajasthan (1818-22).

The Brunei Gallery, SOAS and the Royal Asiatic are also presenting an exhibition celebrating the society's bicentenary and its involvement in the study of science, literature, religion and the arts of Asia since 1823. The exhibition traces the broad development of Asian Studies in Britain as revealed through the Society's collections and the activities of its members. It also highlights the important contributions made by Asian teachers, translators and artists who played significant roles in facilitating British scholars in their encounters with and explorations of Asia over the past 200 years. The exhibition runs from 12 October to 15 December. For more information, royalasiaticsociety.org

TIBETAN BUDDHIST ART DONATION, MINNEAPOLIS

The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) has announced that Alice Kandell, a New York collector, has made a major gift of Tibetan Buddhist art to the museum. More than 200 objects that comprise a historical Tibetan shrine room will be installed together in Mia's Himalayan art galleries. The shrine

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IMRAN QURESHI

by Olivia Sand

With his training in traditional miniature painting, nothing in his background would suggest that Imran Qureshi (b 1972, Pakistan) was to become the diverse and accomplished artist across various disciplines that he is today. Following a curriculum at the National College of Arts (NCA) in Lahore, he has gradually expanded his practice towards monumental paintings, site-specific installations, and performance, while also addressing miniature painting in a more creative way. Mastering scale from the very small to larger than life, Imran Qureshi's practice continues to be fuelled by meaningful ideas.

With a career that spans more than 25 years, he keeps reinventing himself, bringing together the meticulous aspect of miniature painting with the spontaneity that is essential towards innovation. In the interview below, he discusses in depth his latest body of work, as well as his projects as an artist and teacher.



Imran Qureshi. Photo: Usman Javed

Asian Art Newspaper: You had a residency at the Smithsonian in Washington DC this summer. What did it entail?
Imran Qureshi: I was selected for this residency back in 2019 and it was supposed to start in 2020. I was unable to go at that time, and therefore postponed it to the following year. Then, Covid happened, delaying everything once again. I could finally join them this year for an entire month for what is basically a research fellowship. The idea behind the fellowship is based on my proposal to look at their collection of historic Indian and Persian miniature and painting from the 15th to 16th centuries. I look at the pieces as an artist observing their techniques, their colour palette, and studying them in great detail. Ultimately, I will create a body of work in response this experience. Although the residency is typically scheduled to last six months, I could only afford to stay one month since I had to go back to Pakistan where I am teaching at the NCA in Lahore.

AAN: Was the fellowship a positive experience?
IQ: The Smithsonian fellowship was very useful. During my stay, I was looking at objects, especially their historic miniature paintings from the subcontinent. When we are taught miniature painting in Pakistan, we

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NEWS IN BRIEF

room will exist as it would have in an aristocratic family home or small temple in Tibet's past. 'This gift is truly transformative', said Katherine Crawford Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. 'Mia has long been recognised for its strength in Chinese and Japanese art. Alice Kandell's collection, for which we are grateful, recognises that Tibetan art and culture deserves a prominent place within our narratives of Asian art – and provides us with the means to share part of this history, making us a destination for the study and appreciation of Tibetan art in the US'.

The Kandell shrine room in Minneapolis will contain over 200 objects – gilt bronze Buddhist statuary, *thangkas*, ritual implements, painted furniture, and textiles, including carpets, wall hangings and canopies. Created in Tibet and Mongolia between the 14th and 19th centuries, these objects represent Kandell's deep interest in Tibet and nearly 40 years as a passionate collector. As part of the process of bringing these works to the museum, Mia's team will conduct research on each piece – after which they will be placed in a specially prepared room within the museum's Himalayan gallery. The fully installed Kandell shrine room is expected to be unveiled to the public in August 2024. This is the second time this collector has given a significant collection to a public institution; The Tibetan Buddhist shrine room at The Smithsonian's

National Museum of Asian Art was a gift in 2010 from Ms Kandell.

NEW CHAIRMAN FOR ASIA WEEK NEW YORK

Brendan Lynch has been named the new Chairman of Asia Week New York, the collaboration of prominent international Asian art galleries, six major auction houses, and numerous museums and Asian cultural institutions. 'I am honoured to be the new chairman of this illustrious association of galleries and auction houses devoted to the promotion of Asian art', Lynch said, whose London-based gallery, Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, Ltd., specialises in Indian, Islamic and Himalayan art, as well as Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities. He continued, 'As we head into our milestone 15th year, I look forward to maintaining the high standards of excellence promoted by our members. It is my intent to expand the scope of our association by building upon these strengths and encouraging new interest in Asian art'.

CHAM SCULPTURE FROM AUSTRALIA TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA

Another museum caught-up in the Latchford scandal, this time in Australia, is returning objects to Cambodia. This time it is The National Gallery of Australia, which is handing back one of the highlights of its Asian collection, a

trio of 9th-century Cham sculptures. Australia's connection to this saga came to light when the National Gallery of Australia undertook an extensive investigation into the provenance of the sculptures. The sculptures were bought by the NGA in 2011 for US\$1.5m and disguised using fake provenances. They were eventually identifies as the Padmapani and her attendants as sculptures that had been dug from a rice paddy in southern Cambodia, 20 km from the Vietnamese border, in 1994. In Cambodia, an American lawyer, Bradley Gordon has taken up the challenge on behalf of the Cambodian government to claim back the nation's cultural challenge, working pro bono with a team of archaeologists, lawyers and researchers to uncover the illicit origins of works of art in museums and private collections, and advocate for their return.

KHMER SCULPTURE FROM US RETURNS TO CAMBODIA

And there's more ... Pieces from the Lindemann family collection were returned to Cambodia last month after several years of federal investigations by American and Cambodian officials. The 33 works in question, believed to have come from Angkor Wat and Koh Ker, were purchased over several decades by George Lindemann, a gas and oil executive and Palm Beach, Florida, art collector, who died in 2018 at the age of 82. Since 2012, the US Attorney's

Office for the Southern District of New York, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations has successfully investigated, identified, and repatriated 65 stolen and illegally imported Cambodian antiquities in the possession of individuals and institutions in the US.

GALLE LITERARY FESTIVAL RETURNS, SRI LANKA

This much-loved festival is back since taking a break in 2019. Speakers include the Booker Prize winner 2022 Shehan Karunatilaka. The event runs from 25 to 28 January, 2024. Updates will be posted on the website, galleliteraryfestival.com

MANDALA LAB OPENS IN LONDON

Inspired by Buddhist principles, the Rubin Museum of Art's Mandala Lab is free and open to the public in Union Square at Canary Wharf, London until 25 November, as part of the London Design Festival. The interactive space is designed to explore challenging emotions and consider how to transform them into wisdoms. The Lab features five experiences, including scents accompanied by videos, a sculpture that invites collective breathing, and curated percussion instruments dipped in water – that guide visitors on an inner journey that supports connection, empathy, and emotional learning.

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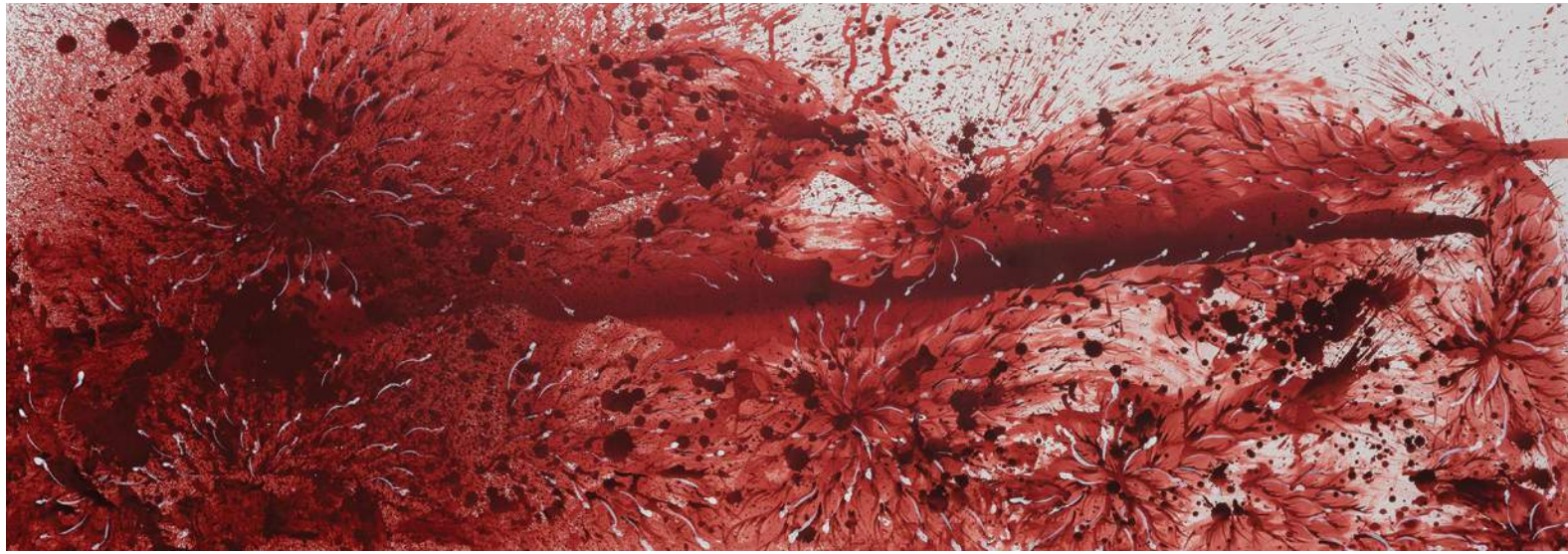
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A Pair of Chinese Huanghuali Continuous Yoke-back Armchairs, Nanguanmaoyi 17th/18th century

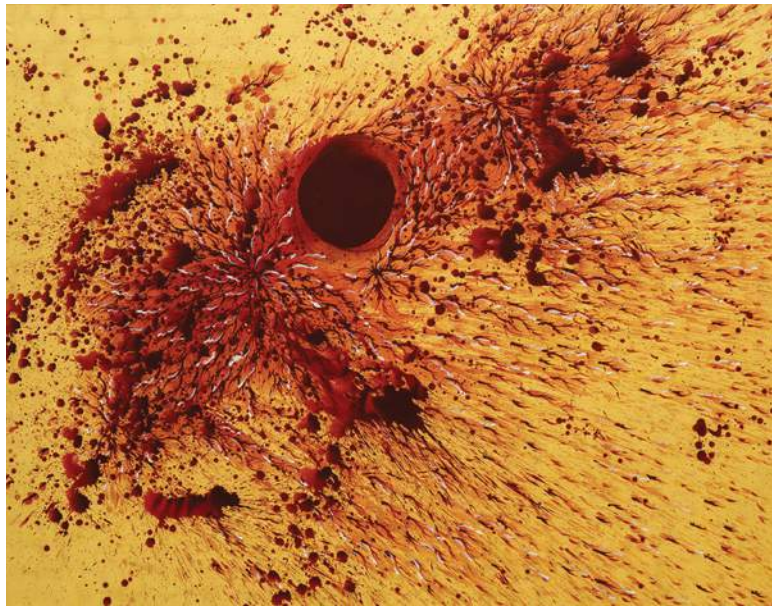
PROVENANCE

Acquired by the grandmother of the present owner in China between 1932 and 1937. Thence by descent. Property from an American private collection. \$30,000-50,000





Love Me, Love Me Not (2019), acrylic on canvas, 122 x 334.5 x 3.5 cm, courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery. Photo: Charles Duprat © Imran Qureshi



Going Deep (2018), acrylic paint on gold leaf on canvas, 213.4 x 274.3 cm, courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery. Photo: Charles Duprat © Imran Qureshi

look at them in books, as we are unable to access original works. Examining miniature painting through reproductions compared to looking at the original work without any frame was a totally different experience. I learned so many things in terms of technique, as well as the making of miniature paintings. I do not think the residency will immediately result in something new in my practice, as it needs time, it is an ongoing process, but it was very beneficial for me. The museum was wonderful, with their team and staff very supportive of my undertaking. The whole process was extremely exciting. As a result, I want to make a new body of work in response to my experience at the Smithsonian. There is no deadline for it, but I am curious to see what will happen. I am thrilled about the whole experience, especially actually looking at the original works and holding them and being allowed to see them in such close detail. This allowed me to study them very carefully and the fellowship has fuelled a lot of new exciting ideas.

AAN: The residency was a wonderful way to handle a number of key works from India and Persia from the 15th and 16th century. Many similar, important, works are in other Western institutions such as the British Museum, the Royal Collection Trust, and The Met, for example. Have you had a chance to see some of the works in these institutions?
IQ: I did see the collection at The Metropolitan Museum in New York a few years ago when I did the rooftop project commission. At that time, I went to their Islamic art section. The museum had an exhibition of my works on paper in one of the galleries, putting some of the originals from their collection alongside my paintings.
AAN: You are teaching at the NCA in

Lahore, which used to be the only university in Pakistan teaching miniature painting when you were a student. Today, are there any other universities with such a department, or is the NCA still the leading entity?
IQ: Yes, there are presently more institutions offering this subject in their curriculum. However, when it comes to a full specialisation in that area, I believe the NCA remains the leading one as it tends to be more focused on the subject.

AAN: You have also been teaching miniature painting abroad, at the summer academy in Salzburg, Austria for example. Beyond Pakistan, do you feel there is a more global interest and demand for studying the art of miniature painting?
IQ: So far, teaching outside of Pakistan has been a wonderful experience. In Salzburg, there were students from all different parts of the world. In the beginning, it seemed they had a very different way of doing things, especially when it came to their posture while working on the paintings. Whenever I go to an institution abroad, they set up chairs and tables which I immediately ask to be removed and replaced by floor cushions everywhere. At first, they all hesitate to use and sit on them, but later, they truly enjoy that whole idea of being on the floor. They realise the importance of it while creating miniature paintings, because you need to sit for hours and hours to focus on one small part of the work, which makes the whole process very meditative. Beyond the fact that the students enjoyed it, I feel my teaching was also very productive.

AAN: What were the pieces your students completed like? Making a parallel with Chinese calligraphy, there are only very few Westerners that have mastered it convincingly. Could your students



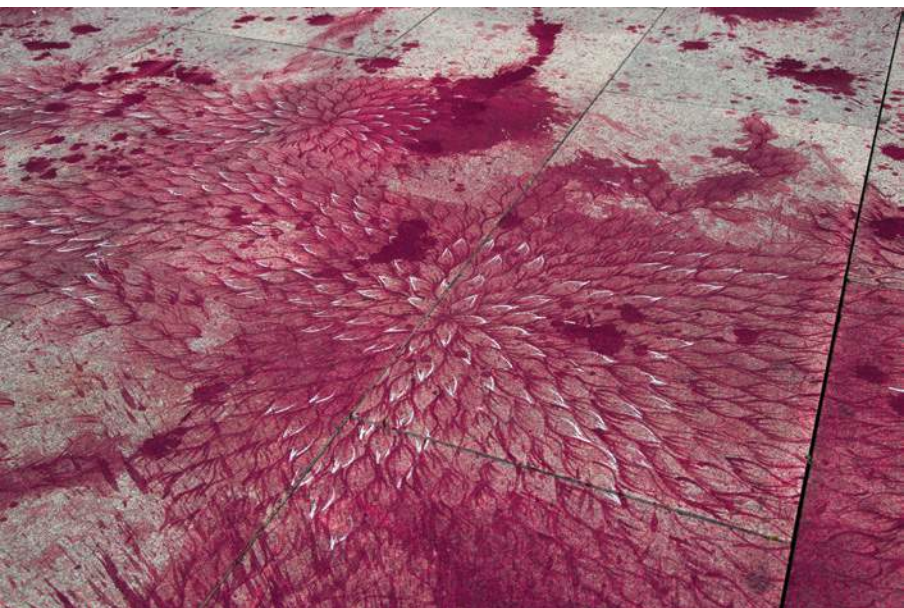
Imran Qureshi during a performance at Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery, Paris Pantin, in 2019. Photo: Charles Duprat

approach it successfully, or was it obvious for anyone with your background that the miniatur was completed by a Westerner?
IQ: Technique is very important in miniature painting, and people slowly did get used to it. Of course, the most satisfactory part is when you start seeing results. This is what happened with my students: after a few days, once they saw results, they truly started to enjoy the experience and get involved. For some of them, taking my class also made a substantial difference in their personal practice, which was the case for a German artist, for example, who later started painting miniatures. It was interesting to see how my teaching created an impact at these various levels.

AAN: Some of your students in Pakistan would probably want to follow your example, becoming full-time artists to make a living. Beyond the technical aspect, what do you try to pass on to them?
IQ: I believe the most important thing is the way we teach them. Learning the technique of miniature painting is one thing, but at the end of the day, they are also independent artists. Therefore, we try to train them as independent practitioner artists to critically look at their own art or practice, with the ability to make decisions whilst making their art work. Luckily, most of the trained miniature painters are practising their

art, and there is a market for them with collectors. However, even though they live off their miniature painting, they also do other things as well.

AAN: As you emphasised, it is important to get the students to be independent and have a critical eye. As a teacher, how do you go about encouraging them to be open-minded?
IQ: When the students do their thesis in their last semester, we look at it as a very professional and independent art-practice by the artist. We hold



Installation view of The Roof Garden Commission (2013) by Imran Qureshi
Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Hyla Skopitz]

“
*I nitially trained
as a miniature
painter*
”

many sessions with them that include critiques, discussions and then we let them do what they want to do. The one thing we emphasise is that they own their practice. They should never base their choice on what a teacher asked or recommended. It is their work, even though they listen to their teacher. It is all their decision. If a student disagrees, he should disagree, and come up with his own points. That is precisely the purpose of all practice.

AAN: You recently had a gallery exhibition in Paris entitled *Homecoming*. Was the title a reference to the practice of miniature painting that originally brought you recognition in the art world?
IQ: Although my practice is diverse, including large-scale canvases, installations, and performances, Homecoming refers primarily to my initial training as a miniature painter. I was fortunate to be taught by an excellent teacher by the name of Professor Bashir Ahmad, who insisted on the importance of the various rules in the discipline. However, as a graduate student, he did not agree with my practice evolving beyond miniature painting as he felt that it would destroy my skills of being a miniature painter. He therefore recommended I do not do anything else, but focus exclusively on my miniature practice instead. I disagreed, and as a result, or as a reaction, I keep revisiting my practice of miniature painting while also doing so many other things. Having a diverse practice allows me every time I revisit miniature painting to add something new to it, taking it into a new direction. Immersing myself again into miniature painting as I did for Homecoming is something I truly enjoyed, as it meant going back to my roots, to my traditional practice.

AAN: Within your miniatures or installations, you have been using a very unique and recognisable red colour. How do you come up with this?
IQ: In my earlier work, I was using red, and it was already indicating violence or something negative. Later on, however, it became a direct symbol of blood, after I saw a specific

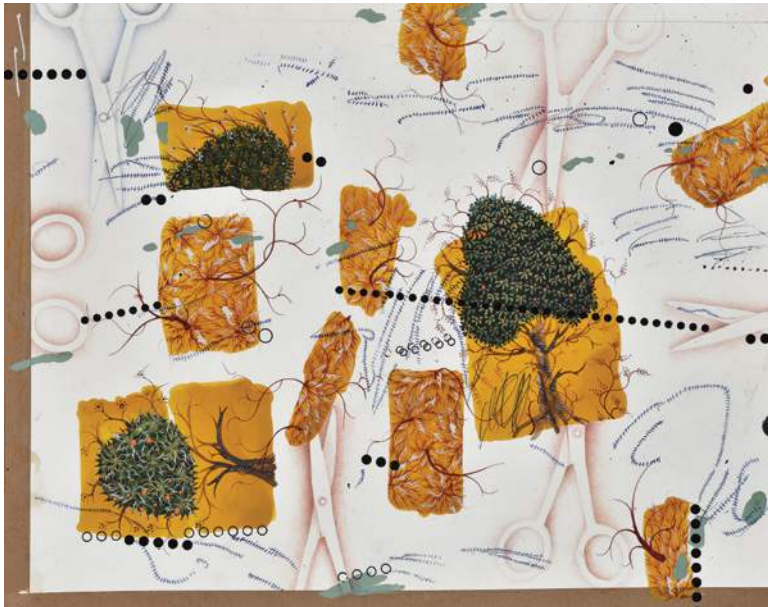
colour by Winsor & Newton called 'Perylene Maroon'. When you mix it in water, it looks like a real blood colour. So I started using it in my practice, especially after 9/11 in New York, when Pakistan had to face many bomb blasts. In addition, there were violent attacks all over the world, and we were all getting used to looking at that type of imagery within the media and on television.

AAN: At that time in the art world, several artists were saying that it was difficult to be an artist from Pakistan. Have times changed?
IQ: Yes, it was difficult at the time, but fortunately, things have now got better.

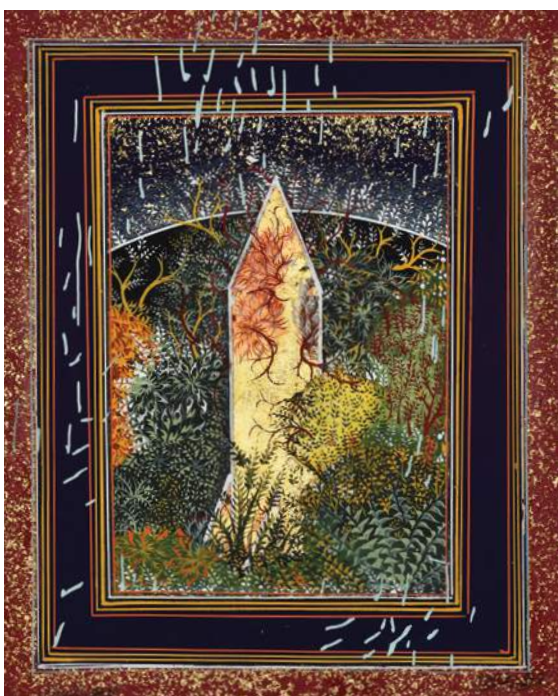
AAN: You indicated you were addressing various topics with the colour red, be this violence, birth, rebirth and death. Flowers can be associated with all of these happy or sad occasions and, by extension, can be represented by petals. How did petals make their way into your work?
IQ: The Lahore Museum has a wonderful collection of Pahari School miniatures. There are beautiful works depicting Raja and Krishna that also feature landscapes with foliage in them. Consequently, I started making a series called *Love Story*, which includes these elements in a very formal way. In my earlier work, I used them in my traditional formal miniature paintings and then later on, they slowly transformed into something different, taking on various shapes of missiles, letters, or shirts. I ended up filling up everything with foliage and leaves, doing it in the same style as the Pahari miniature paintings. The colour red is simultaneously depicting the idea of life or the idea of violence as I am always interested in having two opposites in my art practice, whether on the formal level or on the conceptual level. Formally, I was completing carefully drawn images like flowers, but then in the same imagery, they also represent very abstract mark-making. These opposites work very well for me.

AAN: One often reads that your work bridges the traditional with the avant-garde. In your eyes, what is traditional and what is avant-garde, or do you not agree with this statement?
IQ: No, I do not agree with that approach, because as you said, the traditional art-practice is an art form for me and it is a way of working oil colour, watercolour, acrylics, sculpture, or printmaking in the same way I look at miniature painting traditions. But at the end of the day, I am an artist, so whatever I am doing, I am not conscious of the fact that I am a miniature painter. Whatever I am doing, I am doing because I want to do it and if it connects with my practice as a miniature painter that comes very naturally. It is not a conscious decision of bridging my ideas through this traditional medium. Everything happens in a very organic way, with a certain fluidity of ideas and way of working.

AAN: There was a new element in your show in Paris – fragmentation. Are you thinking of exploring it in a different scale and medium?
IQ: So far, I have not explored that kind of visual in my large-scale paintings. In these drawings, the fragmentation is more about the freedom of using a traditional art form because miniature has certain boundaries like the decoration, the border or the ornamentation, for example. These drawings, like



Easy Cutting (2023), gouache and Letraset transfer on wasli paper, 28.2 x 35.6 cm, courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery. Photo: © Imran Qureshi



Camouflaged Love (2023), gouache and gold leaf on wasli paper, 35.1 x 27.6 cm, courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery. Photo: Usman Javed © Imran Qureshi

paintings, are more like floating imagery and the floating of ideas on a surface which comes very naturally. They are completed based on a traditional technique, but then again, they are also done with a very spontaneous decision-making featuring at the same time mark making, abstraction, and very carefully drawn images.

AAN: When it comes to fragmentation, you keep an interesting balance between control and spontaneity. It sounds incompatible, yet it is not. Do you agree?
IQ: Absolutely, and in the future, I will explore such imagery on a larger scale. I do not know how such a scale will work on canvas, neither how it will look like, but I am eager to try.

AAN: Upon our last encounter, you indicated you were planning on exploring sculpture. Has that project materialised?
IQ: Sculpture is truly a medium I want to explore. The Lahore Biennale recently approached me, asking me to do something permanent in the city, which they would unveil at the next Biennale. I have some ideas that I have discussed with them which they liked, but I have to develop this project further.

AAN: I understand you cannot reveal too much about the project at this stage. However, what medium are we talking about?
IQ: I can still provide a lead into visualising it. By using the local craft, I want to make something with metal thinking about an object we have been looking at, or experiencing, since our childhood. I am referring to fans which are made out of old and recycled paper. I intend to change the scale, the quantity as well as the material in

order to observe how it fits in with the landscape.

AAN: You now produce works that range from the very small to monumental installations. How important is scale in your practice?
IQ: To me, scale is not a big challenge. The space, however, is equally important to me, whether I am making a miniature or a large scale piece, I enjoy both sides of scale. The space is also essential when I am doing a performance, doing puppetry, or other things. Basically, I am used to the idea of the scale changing in my practice. I have already completed a 200-foot long mural at the airport in Islamabad, which is a permanent artwork there. However, I need to be aware of the fact that sometimes, scale will affect the overall way a piece looks, with the danger of turning it into something decorative. In that sense, scale is important to me. If something is decorative, one can lose the main idea behind it. Overall, I think that with a change of scale, of material or medium, one can just take it as both, something very pleasant as well as being serious at the same time.

AAN: You are dealing with permanent and also ephemeral installations. Do you feel the ephemeral ones somehow also pass the test of time?
IQ: Whether I was working on The Met's rooftop commission, the Sharjah Biennale's courtyard, or my large-scale painting at the Washington National Cathedral in DC, I know it is there for a certain time period before disappearing. However, in my opinion, this is not the fact, and the work stays in people's mind, imbedded in their memory. I believe it works in a different way once it's gone, but it has

that much power or strength that somehow, it remains there.

AAN: With a practice as broad as yours, working in various media, you must have faced various challenges in your career?
IQ: The toughest time I had while making my artwork was at the Sydney Biennial in 2012, because the surface and the weather, and the location were extremely challenging. I found it truly difficult to work there, mainly because of the surface of the site at Cockatoo Island. As an island, it had the concrete ramps for the ships to park. Historically, it was abandoned, but it was used during World War II for the transportation of weapons. The surface was super absorbant and it was sucking-up all the paint. In addition, the sunlight was intense and there were certain time periods where I had to stay there when the sunlight was so reflective that I was unable to see even my own painted imagery! As a result, it became increasingly challenging and complicated for me to deal with the situation. Over the years, I have come to do many challenging things, but this was a project where I can say that it drove me crazy. Against all odds, I ultimately completed it and, overall, I ended up learning a great deal from this project.

AAN: Such challenging installations tend to involve several people. Do you continue to work by yourself?
IQ: Mostly, I do. For the large-scale paintings, I take one of the assistants to help me, mixing paint, for example, but I do the main drawing myself. Ultimately, it is all about the thought process. Even if I do something that looks like the same foliage or a repetition of the same leaves, it is actually not. For me, it is very meditative and I equally enjoy each and every leaf form that I am drawing. With the fluidity of colour, it is more like writing a text to me. It is very calligraphic. By blowing-up those lines and zooming in, one can see they are very calligraphic with the strokes and the mark making. Therefore, I establish a connection with a text or calligraphy.

AAN: Many lifestyle companies have initiated collaborations with contemporary artists. On your end, you have made an artistic collaboration with a leading cricket team in Pakistan. Can you talk about this further?
IQ: I had a collaboration with the Islamabad United (IU) team. The IU owner, Ali Naqvi, is an art lover, who is also one of the biggest collectors of Pakistani and international art. He invited me to do a collaboration and since he has a certain understanding and knows my work, he gave me total freedom to design the team's costumes. For me, it is most important that I enjoy whatever I am doing in my art practice. While working on the project, I wanted to really connect with it and not do it for the sake of doing it, or for adding something new to my portfolio. That was not my concern, and it has never been. So when I was asked to do this, I told them that I did not want to be involved by relying on my existing imagery that would simply be printed on their shirts and trousers. For me, to partner with a cricket team, there should be a strong reason behind it and, similarly to a site-specific installation, their shirts, trousers, hoodies, and jackets became the site of my work.
I asked two famous cricketers to come to my studio where they played cricket on my canvas surface with a paint soaked ball. Through their play,

the batsman and a bowler were producing marks that were going straight onto the canvas, resulting in a mapping of their movements. One could see the difference when the ball was moving on the canvas and when the ball was being hit, as the impression was totally different. The canvases were very large, similar to the scale of a cricket pitch and they were playing on this. Then, I took the piece to the actual cricket ground and painted over there. Basically, the idea was that the cricketers were in the artist's studio and the artist was on the cricket ground, with both working on the same piece. I ended up using that imagery on the shirts and trousers, and to add to it, I wanted to do something shocking for the audience as well. In my opinion, inviting an artist simply to come up with something very safe – designing another outfit – did not make any sense. Ultimately, they were wearing something crazy painterly and there was a lot of noise on social media, with people also making memes of it. That is precisely what I wanted: to start a discussion, because if it is not noticeable then, there is no point of doing it. The response has been very positive and I enjoyed it. My involvement brought the project to another level. I was not only doing their cricket kit, but was also working with other objects, painting cricket balls, bats, etc. The various tools, the surfaces of the canvases all became part of that big project. It was more like a complete solo exhibition, which I have not shown to the public yet. Perhaps, I will do so at some point in the future.

AAN: After a busy summer, what is your upcoming project?
IQ: After the Smithsonian, I will be part of the Lahore biennale (opens February 2024). In addition, I may curate a small section at the biennale with my students' work from my drawing class at the NCA. I have certain plans for my class and I will be travelling with the students every day on their drawing days on the local train system. We will work through these experiences of travelling, and whatever we are doing, it this will be part of the biennale.

AAN: Speaking on a more long-term basis, is there a project that is dear to your heart and that you absolutely want to carry through?
IQ: I am planning to start a residency program for artists in Northern Pakistan. There is a very young artist, who used to be my student a long time ago. He also started teaching and now he is back in his village in the upper Hunza Valley, near the border with China. He has offered me his land and I am setting up a small structure there for artists, which will include studios and living space. My dream is to convert that village into Pakistan's first sculpture village. In addition, I have a beautiful old house in Lahore, which I bought a few years ago that I want to transform into a small museum. I would invite Pakistani artists and artists from abroad to show their work, for the latter probably focusing on digital and video art in order to avoid high international shipping costs. By showing Pakistani artists along with international artists, I hope I can create a meaningful dialogue. Ideally, I would like to connect both, the museum as well as the residency, into one institution. These are my two dream projects.

● For more information on the Lahore Biennale, lahorebiennale.org



Hybrid tiger-dragon figure 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 154 x 58 x 38.5 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 8, Sanxingdui Museum



Figure with headdress 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 40.2 x 23.3 x 20 cm, unearthed in 1986 from Sanxingdui pit 2, Sanxingdui Museum



Head 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 41.5 x 24 x 17 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 8, Sanxingdui Museum



Human head with gold mask, 1300-1100 BC, bronze, gold, 14 x 18.8 cm, unearthed in 1986 from Sanxingdui pit 2, Sanxingdui Museum



Kneeling figure with twisted head 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 48 x 15.5 x 13.6 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 4, Sanxingdui Museum



Standing figure wearing a ridged hat 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 19.5 x 5.5 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 8, Sanxingdui Museum

“Excavations at Sanxingdui have greatly changed the face and knowledge of Chinese prehistory”

in the north. Sanxingdui points to an early China that was pluralistic, with multiple sites, including a previously unknown centre in the Yangzi river basin of Sichuan. Once considered a backwater in archaeological terms, Sichuan is now critical to understanding the evolution of China's ancient past.

The first section of the exhibition, *Timeless Gazes*, features various bronze human heads, masks, and depictions of deities. In different forms and shapes, they are expressive and magnificent, futuristic yet ancient. These gazes suggest stories now lost to history, guiding us through time and space. Sanxingdui's state of bronze technology was relatively sophisticated. Ancient Chinese bronze comprised an alloy with varying proportions of copper, lead, and tin. These sources were rare in north China and were usually accessible from the south and southeast. Analysis of Sanxingdui's bronze elements suggest they were reliant on sources closer to Yunnan. Defining an archaeological culture unique to Sanxingdui are objects that have no parallel in Bronze Age China. Large bronze masks, heads and figures appear to be physical manifestations of the supernatural.

They betray an obsession with protruding pupils and defined almond-shaped eyes.

The second section, *Urban Life at Sanxingdui*, looks at and reconstructs Sanxingdui's urban landscape as one of the largest Bronze Age metropolises in East Asia. This urban centre housed modest dwellings, as well as one of the biggest palatial or ritualistic constructions of its time in China. The section also displays a large number of bronze, jade, gold, and pottery objects created by the city's craftsmen.

The third section, *Gods and Shamans at Sanxingdui*, explores Sanxingdui people's religious activities and their understanding of the cosmos. Through advanced technologies, archaeologists have restored bronze altars and statues to recreate the rituals conducted by the people of Sanxingdui. The Shu people apparently practised ancestor worship and adopted a system of avian iconography. The bird was an icon in bronze art and a totemic symbol of the sun, appearing also as bells and finials. The names of Shu emperors such as Cancong, Baiguan and Yufu were also used as bird appellations. Zoomorphic bronze sculptures from Sanxingdui include birds, roosters,

dragons, snakes and tigers, a majestic bird's head with a protruding beak has large eye sockets painted red, and a smaller bird sculpture sports an elaborate crest and a feathery tail. Series of confronting birds line the top of an openwork plaque. The snake, a traditional deity of Sichuan, was an ancient 'gate keeper' of the Chengdu Plain, prominent in Shu iconography. These zoomorphic forms allude to spiritual beliefs and the possible practice of shamanism.

The final section, *The Origin and Inheritance of Sanxingdui*, traces Sanxingdui's origins and legacy and explores how the Sanxingdui culture and other closely connected cultures influenced and integrated into each other over time, forming the 'diversity in unity' developmental pattern of Chinese civilisation. The exhibition also summarises the archaeological discoveries in and research on Sanxingdui and other areas, including the most recent discoveries and information.

Tang Fei, Director of the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, commented on the exhibition, 'These precious cultural relics unearthed from the Sanxingdui and Jinsha sites represent the splendour of the ancient Shu material and spiritual civilisation, an important part of Chinese civilisation. These artefacts reflect the remarkable achievements of the civilisation developed in the upper Yangtze River region before the Qin dynasty. The ancient Shu civilisation had close connections with the civilisations in the Yellow River region and the middle and lower Yangtze River regions'.

● Until 8 January, 2024, Hong Kong Palace Museum, Hong Kong, hkpm.org.hk

GAZING AT SANXINGDUI



Mask 1300-1100 BC, gold, 31 x 16 x 17.5 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 3, Sanxingdui Museum

The latest exhibition at the Hong Kong Palace Museum highlights new archaeological discoveries at Sanxingdui in Sichuan province, featuring 120 bronze, jade, gold, and pottery objects dating to 2,600-4,500 years ago. Nearly half of these were unearthed in the most recent excavations at the Sanxingdui site between 2020 and 2022, and many are exhibited outside Sichuan for the first time, such as bronze heads, mythical creatures, eye-shaped objects, dragon-shaped objects, a hybrid tiger-dragon figure, as well as a jade rectangular stand with animal face and phoenix-bird motifs, which are currently on display at the new Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan, Sichuan.

Among these 120 objects are 23 grade-one national treasures, including the bronzes unearthed in 1986 and on loan from the Sanxingdui Museum: a bronze head with mask, a mask with protruding pupils, a figure with animal headdress, a zun-vessel, and the stand of a bronze tree. Eighteen of the exhibits were unearthed from 2001 onwards and are on loan from the Jinsha Site Museum in Chengdu,

including grade-one national treasures over 3,000 years old, including a bronze eye-shaped object; two jade yue-axes excavated in 2001, which are displayed in Hong Kong for the first time; and a gold trumpet-shaped object with openwork swirling cloud motifs discovered in 2007.

The latest discoveries in Sichuan demonstrate the remarkable achievements of the ancient Shu

civilisation, presenting the 'diversity in unity' developmental pattern of Chinese civilisation. The ancient Shu civilisation, represented by the Sanxingdui culture in Sichuan, is an integral part of this development early civilisations and demonstrates the remarkable achievements of the contemporaneous cultures in the upper Yangtze River region.

Jay Xu, in his essay discussing the character of the Sanxingdui Culture,



Mask, 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 71 x 66 cm, unearthed in 2021 from Sanxingdui pit 3, Sanxingdui Museum

(in *Ancient Sichuan, Treasures from a Lost Civilisation*, 2001), wrote, 'In the second millennium BC, when the Sanxingdui culture was developing in the Chengdu Plain, civilised societies existed in several regions of China. In and near the middle Yellow River valley, in a region traditionally called the Zhongyuan (Central Plain), urban centres had arisen during the first half of the millennium. Large-scale bronze metallurgy made its first known appearance at the Zhongyuan sit of Erlitou. This Erlitou culture was felt over a wide area, reaching as far as Sanxingdui'. He continues to explain that in the Zhongyuan, power shifted from Zhengzhou to a new centre, Anyang, in about 1200 BC, the capital of the Shang dynasty. However, growing out of the Baodun culture, the Sanxingdui culture evolved against the backdrop of these wider developments – the rise of the Bronze Age civilization in Zhongyuan by 1500 BC, then its outward spread and regional diversification over the next three centuries. The Baodun culture (circa 2500-1700 BC) is a late Neolithic culture in the Chengdu plain and the adjacent region, characterised by the cluster of large cities that had evolved on the plains.

The four thematic sections of the exhibition present the art, urban life, belief systems, and origins and legacy of the ancient Shu civilisation from the sites of Sanxingdui, Jinsha, and Baodun to explore the achievements in art and technology across the Chengdu Plain.

Dense deposits excavated in the mid-1950s in the vicinity of a 'three star mound', sanxingdui, led for the first time to the site's name. excavations in 1963 yielded further evidence of material traits suggesting developmental stages of a complex ancient culture. The existence of an archaeological culture at Sanxingdui was only confirmed in the early 1980s. Its duration was estimated by radiocarbon dating as extending from the late Neolithic era (circa 2500-1000 BC), that is the end of the Shang, to the beginning of the Western Zhou (circa 1100-771 BC).



Grand mythical creature 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 9 8 x 104 x 39 cm, unearthed in 2022 from Sanxingdui pit 8, Sanxingdui Museum



Mask with protruding pupils, 1300-1100 BC, bronze, 82.5 x 77.4 x 55 cm, unearthed in 1986 from Sanxingdui pit 2, Sanxingdui Museum



Trumpet-shaped object 1200-800 BC, gold, diam. 4.2 cm, unearthed in 2007, Jinsha Site Museum

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Candlestand with Dragon Motif, 1621, Ming dynasty, porcelain and underglaze cobalt-blue decoration, 49.2 x 18.5 cm, Shanghai Museum



Mount East, Gu Family Embroidery with postscripts by Dong Qichang, 1632, Ming dynasty, embroidery and ink on silk, overall: 28 x 761 cm, Shanghai Museum

According to Clarissa von Spee, the James and Donna Reid Curator of Chinese Art, the idea of the exhibition was to explore what we associate with the traditional culture of traditional China today, such as silk and rice production, bamboo, celadon, garden culture, and landscape painting – all of which originate from, or flourished, in the lower Yangzi delta. The exhibition features more than 200 objects relating to Jiangnan, which has remained one of China's wealthiest, most populous, and agriculturally fertile lands.

Jiangnan's lush, green scenery inspired poets and artists to conceive it as heaven on earth. For millennia, it has been an area of rich agriculture, extensive trade, and influential artistic production. Art from Jiangnan – home to such great cities as Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing, as well as to hilly picturesque landscapes stretched along rivers and lakes – has defined the image of traditional China for the world.

In the exhibition, the changing scenery of the area over the centuries can be experienced through scrolls, paintings showing vast riverscapes to cultivated rice paddy fields, and later in time to cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou.

Although the Jiangnan region of China, meaning 'south of the Yangtze', was the site of the first Ming-dynasty capital, the court relocated to the north of China half a century after the dynasty's founding. From this time, emperors and their immediate families were largely absent from the culture of this prosperous and vibrant heartland. However, many ties still linked the culture of Jiangnan's 'Southern Paradise' and that of the Ming court. The transition from the Ming to Qing dynasty came with the Manchu conquest of China from 1618 to 1683, with the Qing keeping their capital in the Manchurian lands of the north.

Highlights in the painting section include one of the handscrolls that make up the set of the *Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour*. The Kangxi emperor (r 1662-1722) is considered one of the most remarkable figures of the Qing dynasty. After the first Qing emperor, Fulin, dies of smallpox in ascended the throne at a very early age and was in effective control, freed from controlling regents, from the age of fifteen. As part of the Manchu dynasty that had ousted the Han Ming dynasty, the emperor needed to consolidated his authority over the expanding empire – he did

CHINA'S SOUTHERN PARADISE



Sunset at Wuyi Lane, 1500s-1600s, Gu-style embroidery, Ming dynasty, embroidered panel, silk satin with embroidery and painted colours, 66 x 56 cm, Nanjing Museum



Twelve Views of Tiger Hill, Suzhou: The Thousand Buddha Hall and the Pagoda of the 'Cloudy Cliff' Monastery, after 1490, by Shen Zhou (1427-1509), album leaf, ink on paper or ink and slight colour on paper, 31.1 x 41 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C Hanna Jr Fund

“
The exhibition explores the changing scenery over the centuries
”

one of the Kangxi Emperor's first acts of artistic patronage.

In 1689, the emperor commissioned a record of his second grand tour to the south, which was created by a number of artists, including imperial artist Wang Hui 1632-1717 . The whole set (some of the 12 handscrolls have been lost, others are dispersed around the world in museum collections) depicts, in great detail, the journey south, with the Emperor and his entourage travelling through cities, to famous mountains and sacred sites, alongside rivers and famous beauty spots. The handscroll on display at Cleveland is from the University of Alberta Museums Art Collection, from the Mactaggart Collection, and is the seventh scroll of the series, which depicts the route from Wuxi to Suzhou. The scroll can also be viewed online on the museum's website.

Other painting highlights include a National Treasure from the Tokyo National Museum of a Chinese landscape painting depicting a mountain range showing a mystical landscape of mist mountains and water, *Imaginary Journey through Xiao-Xiang*, circa 1170.

Painters of small scale, poetic landscapes during the Southern Song

dynasty (1127-1279) excelled at using their brushes to create misty, indistinct ambience, creating artworks where painting and poetry blended into each another. One particularly important source of inspiration for Southern Song artists was the natural beauty of Hangzhou and its environs, especially West Lake, a famed scenic spot ringed with lush mountains and dotted with palaces, private gardens, and Buddhist temples. This style, according to the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, can be traced back to Su Shi (1037-1101) and other Northern Song dynasty literati, who believed that paintings are 'silent poetry' and that poems are 'formless painting' or 'paintings made from sound'. Elements of Southern Song painting lingered on in China into the Qing dynasty. Although the Mongols, the conquerors who created the Yuan-dynasty in China (1271-1369) moved their capital to Dadu (now Beijing), there was no formalised imperial painting academy established at the Yuan court, therefore the Southern-Song style continued to exist. Hangzhou, the old capital, remained a cultural centre frequented by the *wenren* (gentlemen scholars), literati, *Chan* (Buddhist) and Daoist monks



Mahasthamaprapta, Zhejiang province, Southern Dynasties period (265-589), gilt bronze, height 39 cm, Zhejiang Provincial Museum



Elegant Gathering of Five Suzhou Natives, Ming dynasty, handscroll, colour on silk, 37.4 x 188.2 cm, Shanghai Museum

and intellectuals, and artists, who all continued practising the style earlier disseminated and used by earlier professional painters.

The Cleveland Museum of Art's well-known carved jade cup with a Daoist procession, almost identical in shape and decoration with an imperially marked white cup in the Beijing Palace Museum, are shown together for the first time. Believed to have been made by Suzhou craftsmen, they exhibit a high point of refinement and workmanship, and offer a unique opportunity for comparison.

When the Song court fled south, the lush environment around the Southern Song (1127-1279) capital, Hangzhou encouraged new approaches, and new forms of landscape painting. Many of these were lost, but surviving numbers have enabled the field of Southern Song art to be defined. The influential Ma-Xia school of Ma Yuan (fl. 1189- after 1225) and Xia Gui (circa 1180-1230) frequently used a diagonal composition called *bianjiaojing*, 'one corner painting', where landscape elements were confined to a lower corner against a large receding space. It circulated on small-scale formats such as album leaves and fan paintings. Panoramas in the handscroll format, given to extended narrative when unfurled from right to left, are not often associated with the school.

The region is still known for their textile arts and during the Ming dynasty, the south was noted for its decorative embroidery. One embroidered silk panel on show in the exhibition shows the techniques of Gu embroidery. This form of stitching originated in the late Ming dynasty (1368-1722) and was very popular into



Imaginary Journey through Xiao-Xiang, circa 1170, Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), Li, unidentified handscroll, ink on paper, 30.3 x 402.4 cm, Tokyo National Museum. National Treasure. Photo: TNM Image Archives

the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The motifs of Gu embroidery are taken from nature and historical incidences and it is said that they were originally based on classic ink brush paintings from earlier periods (especially the Song and Yuan dynasties). Traditionally, Gu embroidery is associated with one family: Miao Ruiyan, a concubine of the eldest son of a high-ranking official Gu Mingshi. The family lived first in Songjiang, Jiangsu province and later in Shanghai. As Gu embroidery grew in popularity and demand grew, the techniques become more commonly used by other artisans and by the middle of the Qing period, poor quality pieces were being made that only had the outline of the design created with stitches and the rest was painted in the

imitation of embroidery. However, Gu embroidery had a great influence of the embroidery produced in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi River for centuries and continues today, seen as a cultural heritage of the country. An early example of the craft is *Eighteen Views of Huzhou: Baoyang Lake*, circa 1588, portrays a lush valley river with mountains in the background.

Other objects in the exhibition explore the rich legacy of literati taste – ceramics and jades including a number of ceramics from the Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties. The imperial porcelain factory was established at Jingdezhen at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (136-1644), and from this time the position of Jingdezhen as the centre of

porcelain production became consolidated. The imperial wares that were specially manufactured for use at court were made particularly exquisitely and were marked with the reign mark of the emperor himself. In addition to the monochromes and the underglaze blue porcelains that continued to be produced among the official wares of the Ming dynasty, innovations appeared throughout the period. In addition to these decorative innovations, the Ming period exported porcelain around the world on an unprecedented scale. Aside from supplying porcelain for domestic use, the kilns at Jingdezhen became the main production centre for large-scale porcelain exports to Europe starting with the reign of the Wanli Emperor (1573-1620). After the fall of



Venerable Friends (1652), Zhang Qi (active mid-1600s), Xiang Shengmo (1597-1658), hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, overall 227 x 64.5 cm, Shanghai Museum

the Ming dynasty, the kilns remained, saved by the new rulers of the Qing dynasty being enthusiastic patrons of the arts. The Imperial Porcelain factories were rebuilt under the Kangxi emperor and production resumed in 1683. The peak of Chinese ceramic production was seen in the reigns of Kangxi (1661-1722), Yongzheng (1722-1735), and Qianlong (1735-1796) during which improvement was seen in almost all ceramic types, including the blue and white wares, polychrome wares, as well as monochrome wares.

Earlier civilisations of the Yangzi delta are also explored. Ancient Hunan bronzes were recorded to have existed in the Song dynasty and Hunan is considered one of the most important areas for the historical study of the Chinese Bronze Age culture that flourished in the middle banks of the Yangzi. In 2004, an archaeological excavation revealed a lost ancient civilization at the centre of the mid-Yangzi River valley in the Xiang Jiang River basin, now called the archaeological site of Ningxiang Tanheli.

The oldest exhibit must be the sample of carbonised rice, from the site of the Neolithic Hemudu culture (5500 BC to 3300 BC), located in modern Zhejiang province, representing the world's earliest cultivated rice, showing how the delta has been important to China and its development since the earliest civilisations.

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ASIAN ART | OCTOBER 2023

BEYOND THE PAGE

Exploring the links between contemporary and traditional South Asian miniature painting, this exhibition at MK Gallery in the UK is showing 180 works by artists from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, Netherlands, UK and the US. Artists from different generations working in dialogue with the miniature tradition in the exhibition include Hamra Abbas, David Alesworth, Nandalal Bose, Noor Ali Chagani, Lubna Chowdhary, Adbur Rahman Chughtai, Samuel Fyze-Rahamin, N S Harsha, Howard Hodgkin, Ali Kazim, Bhupen Khakhar, Jess MacNeil, Imran Qureshi, Nusra Latif Qureshi, Mohan Samant, Nilima Sheikh, Willem Schellinks, the Singh Twins, Shahzia Sikander and Abanindranath Tagore.

With a long history stretching back to the 9th century, South Asian miniatures illustrate epic tales and mythology, as well as sacred texts and histories, a world of gods and goddesses, rulers, romances, mythology, and political intrigue. Some can be considered factual records of court life and historic characters, including maharajas, maharanis, court nobles, and other wealthy personalities. Modern miniatures can often be seen as a commentary on modern life, with artists adding a sense of humour or irony to their work.

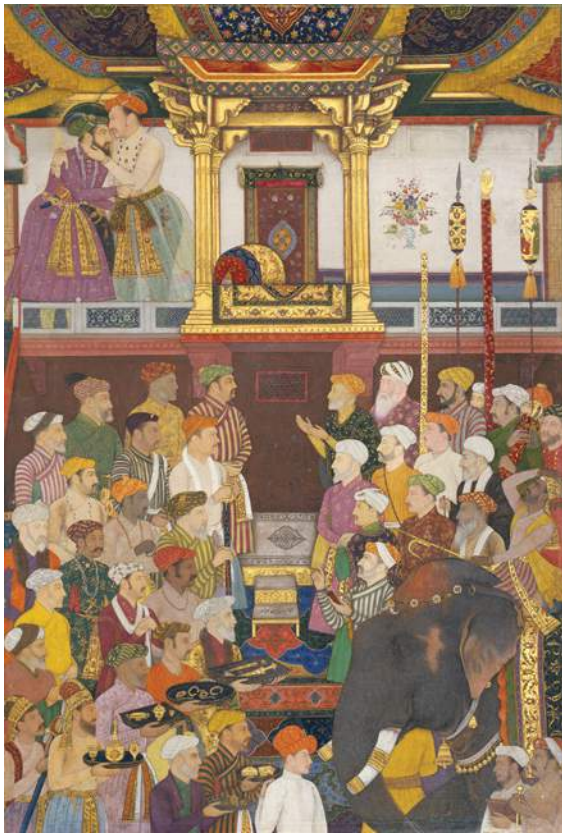
Opening at MK Gallery in October, the exhibition explores how the traditions of miniature painting have been reclaimed and reinvented by modern and contemporary artists, moving beyond the pages of illuminated manuscripts to experimental art forms that include installations, sculpture, and film. In the early 20th century, miniature painting represented a strand of cultural resistance to colonial rule. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, artists in South Asia and beyond continue to find contemporary relevance in the possibilities offered by the miniature tradition, including its capacity to tell multiple narratives, challenge Western hierarchies of material and techniques, and its natural tendency to combine original concepts with traditional painting skills.

Contemporary works are shown alongside examples of miniature painting dating from the mid-16th century, drawn from major collections including The Victoria & Albert Museum and The British Museum, many on public display for the first time. A highlight of the exhibition is the selection of pages from the *Padshabnama* (The Book of Kings), loaned by His Majesty The King from the Royal Collection Trust. This 17th-century manuscript with illuminated miniatures, which constitute some of the finest Mughal paintings ever produced, has inspired numerous contemporary responses.

The *Padshahnama* is considered to be amongst the greatest treasures held within the Royal Collection in the UK. The album forms an official record of the first 10 years of the reign of Shah Jahan, the fifth Mughal emperor (and builder of the Taj Mahal). During the 18th century, the manuscript entered the collection of the Nawabs of Oudh,



The Explosion of the Company Man (2011) by Shahzia Sikander, gouache with screen printing on marbled paper, 30.4 x 19.3 cm, private collection, London / Karachi



Murar, Padshahnama – Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan (10 October 1617), circa 1630-50, Padshahnamah folio 49r (plate 9), gold arabesque design on the border of each folio, nastaliq calligraphy by Muhammad Amin Mashhadi, 30.8 x 20.9 cm, Royal Collection Trust © His Majesty King Charles III 2023

rulers of Lucknow in eastern India, whose wealth and power quickly eclipsed the declining imperial court. In 1797, it was given by the reigning Nawab to Lord Teignmouth, the then Governor General of India, for presentation in 1799 to King George III.

Shah Jahan (1628-1658) was known as a great patron of the arts and, in the early 1630s, he commissioned The *Padshahnama* as an illustrated account of his reign. The commission of the manuscript was given to Abdul-Hamid Lahawri. The text, compiled from meticulous records of major events, was written in Persian, the formal language of the court. The manuscript in the Royal Collection was transcribed by the calligrapher Muhammad-Amin

of Mashad in 1657-8. The rarity of this manuscript is that it is the only known version of the chronicle to include illustrations of the period.

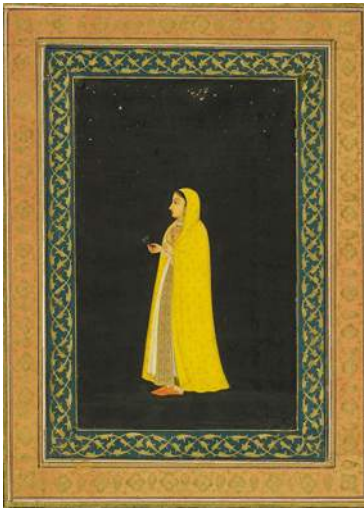
The 44 illustrations and two illuminations were executed by at least 14 of the finest Mughal court artists, amongst them Balchand and his brother Payag, Ramdas Murar and Bhola. On a number of occasions these artists have included their own portraits in the scenes, along with those of the principal members of the imperial circle and visitors to court. Sumptuous ceremonies and weddings, scenes of dancing and music, hunts and battles, offer a glimpse of a world of opulent splendour, magnificence and power.

The original sketches for the

illustrations would, in many cases, have been done from life and incorporated the additional evidence of eyewitness accounts. The drawings were transferred on to a sheet of paper and the vibrant watercolour paints applied over a white translucent ground with tiny brushes. Finally, the whole painting was polished to create a smooth enamel-like surface. Set amidst beautiful landscapes and the architecture of palaces and forts, the formal composition of many of the illustrations denotes the strict hierarchy of the Mughal court and creates a masterfully controlled rhythm of pattern and colour. Yet it is the artists' delight in the tiniest details, the texture of lavish fabrics and arrangement of fantastic jewels that gives the pages of the *Padshahnama* their extraordinary intensity.

The exhibition looks at raising questions of culture and power in the entangled histories of Empire and globalisation; many of the greatest collections of these miniature paintings and manuscripts are held in the UK. For more than 400 years Indian miniatures have arrived in Britain, from Mughal royal portraits presented to James I by his envoy to the Mughal court in the early 17th century, through to the vast collection of fine paintings and manuscripts amassed by employees of the East India Company. The process of these acquisitions and their central role within British and South-Asian art histories are explored in the exhibition.

An example of this interaction can be seen in the work of Zahoor ul Akhlaq (1941-1999) and Gulammohamed Sheikh (b 1937). Both studied at London's Royal College of Art in the mid-20th century where they discovered new ways of engaging with the miniature tradition through the Victoria &



Leaf from a late Mughal album of calligraphy and paintings, unknown artist, circa 1720-1740, album of specimens of calligraphy and paintings set into dyed paper margins in ink and opaque watercolour including metallic pigments and gold leaf, painted and lacquered bindings, 43 x 58 x 4.9 cm, Royal Collection Trust © His Majesty King Charles III 2023



A Rajput Sirdar by Samuel Fyze-Rahamin, circa 1914-15, watercolour, gouache and ink on paper, 49.5 x 29.2 cm, presented by the State of Bhavnagar in 1925 to Tate

Albert Museum's rich collections of Indian miniature paintings. Returning to the Subcontinent as influential teachers and practitioners, Akhlaq and Sheikh went on to inspire generations of artists, including N S Harsha (who won the Artes Mundi Prize in 2008), Imran Qureshi (see this month's artist profile, page 2) and Shahzia Sikander (see profile Asian Art Newspaper, June 2021). All these artists are associated with two of South Asia's most important art schools, the National College of the Arts, Lahore, Pakistan and the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, India.

The works in the exhibition are drawn from major collections in the UK, including the Royal Collection, Tate, The Ashmolean Museum, National Museums Scotland and The British Museum, as well as private collections including Deutsche Bank, many of which are rarely on display, and include a number of new commissions from contemporary artists.

● From 7 October to 28 January, 2024, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, UK, mkgallery.org
● Catalogue available



Seoul Home, Seoul Home, Kanazawa Home, Beijing Home, Pohang Home, Gwangju Home, Philadelphia Home, 2012–present, Do Ho Suh, private collection

THE SHAPE OF TIME

This exhibition examines Korean contemporary art after 1989 featuring 28 South Korean artists all born between 1960 and 1986. The rise in popularity of Korean culture, through film, dramas and pop music has also driven an interest in the country's contemporary and modern art with a clutch of exhibitions opening on contemporary Korean art and culture in the West in last few years. *The Shape of Time: Korean Art after 1989* not only explores South Korea's growing influence in 'cultural diplomacy' and the fascination of the rest of the world with its rapid rise as being one of the leading trendsetters on the world stage, but also how the country deals with its past.

The Korean peninsula saw tumultuous changes in the 20th century, especially after the destructive Korean War (1950-53) and the establishment of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), resulting in North and South Korea. As a result, South Korea experienced a long period of military dictatorships. In 1980, the Gwangju Uprising in May was a consequence of the assassination of President Park in the previous year and the election of a new unpopular military dictator, President Chun, (term 1980-88), who also established martial law in the country. Students at Chonnam University, in the south, protested against this new regime that encouraged further

social movements in the country urging democratisation. The first direct elections for a non-military president were eventually held in 1992.

However, a less troubled watershed in Korea's history came a little earlier with Seoul's hosting of the Olympic Games in 1988, which allowed for more contact with the West, a lifting of many import restrictions, whilst seeing a lighter touch by the ruling military government. It also opened up the possibility of foreign travel to many more of South Korea's citizens. The modern earlier art movements of Dansaekhwa (monochrome and abstract) and Minjung (political) gave way to a new generation of artists, experimenting with art in a completely new way. This gave rise to a number of small group movements working and experimenting in a wide range of mediums.

One of the most well-known artists in the show is Do ho Suh (b 1962), who is one of the first contemporary artists from this group to gain international recognition in the West. Suh originally trained in traditional Korean painting techniques, but went abroad to do postgraduate studies Rhode Island School of Design and Yale in the US. He is mainly known for re-creating architectural structures and objects using fabric, acts of 'memorisation', such as his *House* series. He represented Korea at the 2001 Venice

Biennale.

Another artist that explores division is Kyungah Ham (b 1969). In *What You See is the Unseen/Chandeliers for Five Cities*, Ham underscores the ongoing tension between North and South Korea by attempting direct communication across the DMZ. Through covert back channels, Ham's contacts smuggled the plans for her impressive, oversized embroideries into North Korea to be hand-stitched by highly skilled artisans there. The precariously hung chandeliers both reflect the Korean Peninsula's historic instability and represent the foreign powers responsible for its division, which Ham and her collaborators take great risks to attempt to overcome.

Using a huge variety of mediums, including ceramics, painting, fibre-art, photography, lacquer, installation, metalwork, mixed media, embroidery, video and performance the artists explore themes of conformity (Confucianism remains a fundamental part of South Korean life for many), displacement, gender, coexistence and dissonance. These human emotions allow the audience to consider what it is to be a South Korean today and how the past is related to the present.

● From 21 October until 11 February, 2024, Philadelphia Museum of Art, philamuseum.org
● Catalogue available



WATCH
Kyungah Ham
discuss her work

WATCH
Kelvin Kyung Kung
Park's video
A Dream of Iron
(2014)

Asian Art

Wednesday
8th November 2023

Mallams
1788

A large polychrome porcelain Canton moon flask
Chinese, 19th Century
49.2cm high x 34cm wide
Provenance: Part of a collection from a private Oxfordshire country home.
£2,000-3,000



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Marg

FROM THE EARLIEST INDIAN SUFI ROMANCE:

THE LORE OF LAURIK AND CHANDA



THE CHANDAYAN

By Richard Cohen

With essays from Naman P. Ahuja, Qamar Adamjee, Vivek Gupta

Chandayan will be out this October. Stay tuned!
Visit www.marg-art.org



Drukpa Kuenly, 18th century, Phajoding Goempa, Thimpu

The small mountain kingdom of Bhutan saw several international exhibitions dedicated to its art and culture in the latter part of the 20th century, *Art from the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon* (1990), at Asia Society, New York; *From the Land of the Thunder Dragon: Textile Arts of Bhutan*, which toured the US in 1994-1996; *Bhutan: Mountain Fortress of the Gods*, at the Museum für Volkenkunde, Vienna, (1997), and *The Dragon's Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan* (2008), which started at the Honolulu Museum of Art and toured internationally. An exhibition, in India, *The Living Religions and Cultural Traditions of Bhutan*, organised by the Department of Culture in Thimpu, Bhutan, was on show in Delhi and Kolkata in 2001.

The New York show was the first to look at its Buddhist heritage through artefacts from the main monasteries in the country, including painting, embroideries, sculpture, ritual objects and musical instruments. The accompanying booklet, written by Dasho Rigzin Dorji, *A Brief Religious Cultural and Secular History of Bhutan*, served as a historical guide to Bhutanese Buddhist and its importance in everyday life.

Buddhism was introduced into Bhutan in the 7th century, and since then has played an important role both in the history of Bhutan and in the way of life of its people. Dasho Rigzin Dorji wrote on the origins of Buddhism in Bhutan, 'Although the two most sacred and historical Buddhist temples, Kyerchu and Byamspa, were built in the 7th century, it was not until the visit of the Indian saint Guru Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, in 746 that Buddhism took firm hold in Bhutan. Padmasambhava converted King Sendha, who reigned in the Bumthang valley to Buddhism, after which the faith gradually spread to other parts of Bhutan. A Bhutanese chronicle narrates that the King lost his kingdom and his son was slain, he ordered the

Punakha dzong, Bhutan



Himalayan Kingdoms BHUTAN



Monks undertake arduous training to participate in local festivals, or tshechu, this one took place in Bumthang district



destruction of temples in his kingdom. The protecting deities were displeased and ignore his cries for help. Guru Rinpoche accepted an invitation to help and travelled to Bumthang, where he organised a festival of ritual dances, and with his magic powers, assumed eight manifestations in eight forms of dance in order to subdue the evil spirits. Following these miraculous events to restore the kingdom and

the king's health, King Sendha was converted to Buddhism and undertook to propagate the new religion and re-establish the monasteries and temples.

In *Textile Arts of Bhutan*, Diane K Myers and Francoise Pommet discussed the history of dance costumes in the accompanying catalogue. Religious festivals are held at different *dzong* (fortified monasteries) at different times of the year, according to local custom. These festivals last several days and feature a series of dances re-enacting episode from Himalayan Buddhist history, portraying historical characters and import Buddhist deities and are performed by the monks who undergo rigorous physical, mental, and spiritual training. The monk dancers wear elaborate costumes and masks inspired by Tibet sacred dance traditions. Dance costumes (*cham go*) are made primarily of Chinese silk brocades, which in the past came from Tibet. Dance robes are sewn by the monks responsible for tailoring and new ones are made whenever a patron will pay for them, usually every 20 or 30 years.

Bhutan: Mountain Fortress of the Gods took a more broad and scientific approach to exploring the country. Edited by Francoise Pommet and Christian



Yab Yum Vajrasattva, 19th century, Norbgang Lhakhang, Punakha

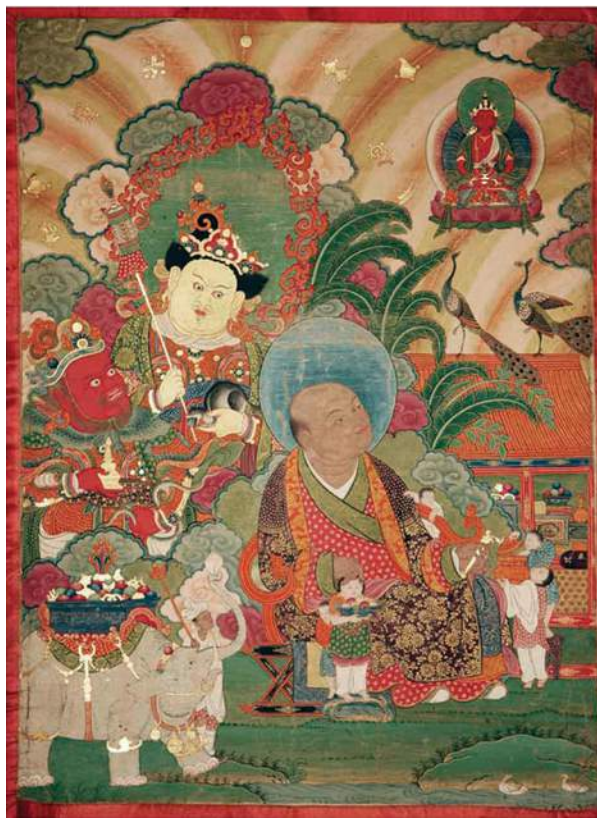
“*Religious festivals in Bhutan can last for several days*”

Shicklgruber (two eminent Tibetologists), the exhibition and catalogue explored Bhutan's geography, ethnography, architecture, arts, religion and history. Francoise Pommet explained that the people of Bhutan are known as 'Drukpas', a term which derives from Druk Yul, the name of the country in Dzongkha, the national language. She wrote in the catalogue, 'It is said that in the 12th century in Tibet, a monk called Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorje wanted to build a monastery. At the chosen spot, he heard the sound of thunder which is believed to be the roar of a dragon. Taking this as a good omen, he decided to call his monastery Druk, which means thunder/dragon. As often in Tibet, the name of the religious school he founded took the name of the monastery, and his followers were called Drukpas. Much later, in the 17th century, the Drukpa religious figure, the Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, unified Bhutan. The country was then known as Druk Yul, its inhabitants as Drukpas'.

The Dragon's Gift: Sacred Arts of Bhutan was focused on painted and textile *thangkas*, sculptures, and ritual items to the story of the country's Vajrayana Buddhist culture. The works on show dated from the 8th century to the 20th century, with especially strong examples of painting and sculpture from the 17th through to the 19th centuries – a golden age in the Buddhist art of Bhutan. The objects were selected for outstanding aesthetic accomplishment and wide iconographic scope.

However, nearly all of the items in the exhibition required conservation and the Honolulu Academy (now renamed The Honolulu Museum of Art), led the conservation programme to restore hundreds of works of art and trained a new generation of conservators, primarily monks charged with the responsibility of caring for these sacred objects.

Bhutan is the only country in the world to adopt Vajrayana, or Tantric Buddhism, as its official religion, and the particular form of Buddhism



Thangka depicting the arhats, 18th century, Tango Insitute, Thimpu



WATCH A Closer Look at Bhutan through the eyes of Supe Kunga Tenzin Dorj

Gangteng Monastery. Photo: Christopher J Fynn

found in Bhutan permeates all aspects of culture and the arts. Bhutan is remarkable for the antiquity and continuity of its Buddhist teachings, with the first temples in the region established during the 7th century. The arts of the two main branches of Vajrayana Buddhism in Bhutan, the Drukpa Kagyu and the Nyingma schools, are represented in this exhibition. Steven Little explained in his introduction to the exhibition, 'Of the three vehicles of Buddhism (the other two being Theravada and Mahayana), Vajrayana is the most complex, and is still practised today in Tibet, Ladakh, Bhutan, and Japan (in Japan, Vajrayana is the foundation of the Shingon and Tendai Schools of Buddhism)'.

The exhibition introduced such key Buddhist masters of the country, such as Guru Rinpoche from the 8th century; Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), who was a famous 'Treasure Revealer'; Drukpa Kunley (1455-1529), the 'Divine Madman'; and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651), as well as such key religious figures as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (Tara and Vajrayogini), and wrathful deities such as Mahakala and Yamantaka.

Buddhist ritual dances, or cham, were an important part of this exhibition and were illustrated by works of art with dance content as well as video. Part of the Honolulu exhibition's aim was to also explore these rich sacred dance traditions in Bhutan. The dzongs are the venues for the great festivals (*tshechu*), comprising ritual performances of sacred dance that embody and symbolise the Bhutanese cosmogony and shared mythologies that are both Buddhist and local (pre-Buddhist) in origin.

Members of the Core of Culture, a non-profit dance preservation foundation based in Chicago and staff from the museum spent several years in Bhutan creating a digital archive that documents many hitherto unknown Buddhist dances. As with visual art, dance is both a spiritual practice in itself and a means of communicating Buddhist teachings.

The sacred architectural heritage of Bhutan was also included in the exhibition, examining the role of chorten (or stupa), and monasteries. In general, they both follow the sacred proportions of design, known as *thigtsbed*, which were also used in Tibet. Dorji Yangki, wrote in his



essay on sacred architectural heritage that the famous Gangteng monastery, which follows the Peling lineage of the Buddhist Master Pema Lingpa, is one such monastery. Folk stories narrate that it was built under the supervision of a master carpenter invited from Lhalung in Tibet so that the building would be built in the tradition of Tibet's Peling Monastery, which was the main centre for the teachings of Pema Lingpa.

These five exhibition and their catalogues, spanning nearly 20 years, are not only an extraordinary depository of specialist knowledge, but also a means to keep the history and culture of Bhutan available and in the public eye.



WATCH Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon at Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2009 Part 1



WATCH Part 2



Guru Pema Jungney, thangka, late 17th century, Trashichoedzong, Thimpu

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Cranes by Ogata Korin, pair of screens, late 17th/ early 18th century, ink, colour, gold, and silver on paper, each 166 x 371 cm, National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, purchase Charles Lang Freer Endowment



A JOURNEY TO KYOTO

Visitors to Kyoto and its residents will be able to experience a unique exhibition in October. The Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art has partnered with Canon Inc and the Kyoto Culture Association (KCA) to show Masterpieces from Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the institution. Eighteen high-resolution facsimiles of Japanese works will be on view at Japan's oldest Zen temple, Kenninji, which is located in the city.

This setting allows the works to be seen in natural light, something impossible to achieve with the original paintings. This installation will create an experience unlike any usual museum exhibition and allows the National Museum of Asian Art to share its collection with visitors from across Japan and around the world.

Because of legal restrictions that date from the founding gift of Charles Lang Freer, pieces in the Freer Collection cannot be lent. Seeking to find creative and innovative ways to share its Japanese collection with the people of its country of origin, the National Museum of Asian Art initially established this particular partnership over a decade ago. Kenninji has thousands of visitors each day, and the exhibition will take place in the most prominent space in the temple, ensuring the reproductions reach a broad audience.

Located in the historic Gion district and a stone's throw from the crowded thoroughfare leading to the popular Yasaka Shrine, Kenninji was founded in 1202 by the monk Eisai (sometimes pronounced Yousai) on the request of Emperor Tsuchimikado and with the support of Shogun Minamoto Yoritomo. At first the temple practiced a mix of Tendai, Shingon and Zen Buddhism, but during the tenure of the 11th abbot, Kenninji converted to a purely Zen temple. Eisai (1141-1215) is credited with founding the branch of Zen known as Rinzaï, and Kenninji is a Rinzaï temple. Eisai is also associated with tea and wrote a book on its properties.

The Hojo (abbot's quarters) displays many paintings and screens owned by the temple, notably a series of 32 sliding doors depicting 'The cycle of death and rebirth' by Hashimoto Kansetsu, the famous Nihonga painter from the early 20th century, but probably the most well-known artworks are a pair of screens by Tawaraya Sotatsu (circa 1570-circa 1640), from the early 17th



Waves at Matsushima by Tawaraya Sotatsu, Edo period, 17th century, six-panel screen, ink, colour, gold, and silver on paper, 166 x 369.9 cm, National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, gift of Charles Lang Freer



Screen with Scattered Fans, Tawaraya Sotatsu, early 17th century, ink, colour, gold, and silver on paper, 170.2 x 378.5 cm, National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, gift of Charles Lang Freer

century that depict Fujin and Raijin, the Gods of Wind and Thunder. Actually what is displayed are copies as the originals are in the Kyoto National Museum.

The Smithsonian's screens on view in Kenninji in October include Sotatsu's *Waves at Matsushima*, acknowledged as one of Freer's most noteworthy acquisitions. This pair of screens marks an important stage of Sotatsu's career and shows his transition from ink painting to polychrome *yamato-e* painting. Its treatment in style, technique and material differed considerably from that of the Dragons and Clouds screens, an ink monochrome work depicting the auspicious moment when dragons miraculously appear in watery clouds, leading white wave crests to rise up and soar.

Waves, which was probably conceived later, is a powerful seascape with unique mountain-like waves in gold and *sumi* ink, forming a 'thousand waves' pattern with eddies and wave crests. Although the manner of depicting waves was influenced by Ming painting, Japanese themes that were incorporated include *kizui* 'auspicious omens', or 'miraculous events',

usually found in the traditional painting of oceans. Elements suggesting the realm of the immortals also borrowed from the *hamamatsu zu byobu*, 'pine shore screens' genre dating from the Muromachi (1333-1568) to the Momoyama (1568-1615) periods.

A screen by the most famous Rinpa artist, Ogata Korin (1658-1716), is also part of the exhibition. Probably best known for his screens of irises and red and white plum blossoms, the artist was extremely successful during his lifetime and worked across many disciplines, including hanging scrolls, fan paintings, lacquer ware, textiles and ceramics.

Rinpa art is usually associated more with Kyoto, its nobles and elite craftsmen, along with an artistic tradition influenced by courtly, poetic ideals, together with the practice of Zen and the tea ceremony. The name for the movement comes from the second character of the family name of Ogata Korin (1658-1716), who is considered the leading exemplar of the Rinpa school of decorative art with the school later named after him (Korin plus 'ba' - school of).

All were much inspired by the area's rich nature. The sober, monochrome aesthetics of the tea ceremony had almost a monopoly on taste through the 15th and 16th centuries and it is as if in defiance of this - as well as to celebrate the new political stability and affluence - that extraordinarily talented artists and craftsmen began to explore a freer, more exciting use of colours, pattern and form. The Rinpa school was less regulated than other movements and did not have a continuous teacher/pupil system in place. Many artists mastered the style through their own independent study and observance of existing works and not through direct pupillage. Artists also expanded their practice to encompass lacquerware, ceramics, and textile design.

Characteristic of the Rinpa style is the dramatic sense of design and pattern, unusual techniques of painting, and a flair for exciting composition. Drawn outlines were often ignored, and *tarashikomi* - the application of ink or pigment to pool on wet paper - was a chosen method for shading or colouring. Gold or silver was often used in leaf-form as background, or as a finely ground

dust mixed with liquid agent for painting, and, as clients for Rinpa works tended to be from the elite classes, both materials and pigments were usually of the best quality.

While the Rinpa artists had no enforced limits to their artistic expression, they all seemed bound by an awareness of the refined taste that is associated with Kyoto - a taste for colour, line, texture and form that has become easily recognisable and harmonises with modern aesthetic ideals. Also inspired by the monumental paintings of the Momoyama period (1573-1615), Rinpa painters began to create large screen-paintings with a gold or silver background that were mainly used for delineating space in aristocratic and court households, and temples.

In this time of great debate on what should and should not be held in institutions - and a sharp focus on other country's important works of art in the custodianship of other nations - it is timely to seek direct and also creative ways to move forward. Chase F Robinson, the Smithsonian's director said of this Japanese partnership, 'As the museum enters its second century, we are focusing on making our work accessible to even more people to promote understanding of Asian arts and cultures. This exhibition at Kenninji demonstrates how shared stewardship of objects is one way to make that possible'.

Canon and KCA created these facsimiles of the most important Japanese paintings in the museum's collection using a combination of advanced printing technology and traditional craft, such as hand-applied gold leaf and traditional fabric mountings. For several years, as part of the institution's shared stewardship efforts, it has been making available replicas of Japanese hanging scrolls and screens to audiences in Japan. The most recent project was the creation of high-resolution facsimiles, *Maple Leaves on a Stream* (front) and *Mountain Views* (reverse), *Screen with Scattered Fans and Landscapes, Flowers, and Trees of the Four Seasons*, three of the most important art works in the museum's collection - all on show in October. A previous project was a large exhibition of 13 works by Hokusai at the Sumida Hokusai Museum in 2019. The facsimiles are created by ink-jet printing high-resolution photographs of the originals and mounting them using traditional artisans and materials.

● From 13 October to 3 November, Kenninji Temple, Kyoto

GEORGE CLAESSEN

Poetry in Paint and Words

by Alistair Hicks

Home at last - it must be heaven,' sighed Claessen as he saw Britain for the first time in 1949. He glimpsed the roof tops and spires of Gravesend from the ship that had brought him from Bombay. Since his days during the Second World War as a founding member of '43 Group in his birthplace Sri Lanka, he had travelled to Melbourne and then India for some three years as the British Empire crumbled. His painting and poetry are a headlong flight from the devastating destruction of the nasty cocktail of nationalism and colonialism. Claessen remained in Britain for the rest of his life. In his pictures he created a sense of belonging.

Claessen's art is aspirational: those spires seen at the end of a long voyage stayed with him. He was relieved to reach London. He recalled sitting on a bench in a Bombay park and thinking 'this is it - I am going to end my time here'. He arrived in a city that was not only undergoing rapid social and political changes, but was also the refuge of many artists from abroad. The School of London was emerging at this time fuelled by the restless energy of the likes of Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, R B Kitaj and Leon Kossoff. These men, in the circle of Francis Bacon, all primarily worked in opposition to the dominant avant-garde art form of the moment - abstraction. Claessen had nothing against figuration. Indeed, we include several of his architectural drawings, including those of spires, and portraits of those around him in his new home, but he found a regenerative spirit in abstraction. His paintings illustrate the healing qualities of abstraction as much as any of his more famous contemporaries.

'I did try to make another dimension,' said Claessen, 'another dimension which I thought had been overlooked and not known in a mathematical sense'. In some of his later abstracts, there is a sense of combining geometry and the spirit he was looking for, but he was still wary of trying to pin things down. In painting after painting he is asking



An Intimation of Infinity (1996), egg tempera on canvas

“The ‘43 Group has defined Claessen’s position in the story of art”



Revelation (1995), oil on board



Consort of Primaries (1969), oil on canvas

photographer, filmmaker and critic.

The group was created in opposition to Imperialism, but the turbulent times in Sri Lanka did mean that the '43 Group were not only diverse practitioners but also were dispersed across the world. Ivan Peries and Claessen both spent more than half of their lives in England.

Claessen made most of his work in North London, his home for the majority of his life. Back in Colombo he was a figurative painter. There were hints of the abstraction to come in *Church by the Sea*, 1944 and even *Nude*, 1944, but they were only hints. Even if the '43 Group were demarcating their difference from South Asian art, both contemporary and of the past, Claessen did not make the leap into abstraction till he was safely settled in London, where abstraction had become the currency

of the avant-garde. Despite this, Claessen's abstraction, is a world entirely of its own. He made a home in his art.

Two world wars, the genocides of Mao, Stalin and Hitler, the demonstration of the horrors of nuclear destruction in Japan, certainly were enough to make intelligent people question the way 'man' was running the world. There was a thirst for a new way of thinking and seeing. Abstraction was one of the responses. Claessen's abstraction manages to be aspirational and nostalgic at the same time. They contain the dreams of the spires and heavens above but also one is aware of the rich, complicated and troubled

past. The artist admitted that the 1914 Colombo riots and fights between the Sinhalese and Muslims had a distinct impact on him.

Claessen is very successful in making a new abstract home for himself. Despite the political background there is a great peace in most of the pictures. While there are echoes of the spiritualism of Kandinsky, there is no heavy reliance on colour theories (ie which colours trigger which emotions). The world he creates is much calmer than Kandinsky's. He has built it up more like Cezanne's contemplation of Mont Saint-Victoire. Remember Claessen is a word smith! He treats paint like he treats the words in his poems. He is shifting them around like a child with putty.

Rather like Rabindranath Tagore, Claessen sees few barriers between words, music and painting. Ironically, for a man who fiercely denounced crude nationalism, Tagore wrote the national anthems for both India and Bangladesh. Claessen too fled the effects of nationalism but found his land with no borders inside abstraction. One can almost hear the sound of a calm sea in some of Claessen's paintings. They are generally peaceful, but we know what storms brew in the oceans. At the moment the little waves could be the result of a little pebble. The artist made a better world. He knew of the horrors out there, but was prepared to share his new enchanted waters with us all.

Any text on George Claessen has the risk of limiting his work, so I leave you with his words:

*'This knowledge completely vanished
In a matter of a few moments,
Utter Simplicity of truth
Passed beyond my comprehension.'*

- Babel to Abstractions, an exhibition of George Claessen's works is on show from 19 October to 31 December, at Three Highgate Gallery, London, threehighgate.com
- An anthology of George Claessen's poetry is in the process of being published and will be available at the exhibition
- A film about the artist's life and work will be released in November



Trinity Gate (1992), tempera on canvas

ASIAN ART IN LONDON 2023

Asian Art in London (AAL), in its 26th edition, runs from 19 October to 4 November, and is split into two weeks to reflect the auctions and events in the Indian, Islamic, and East-Asian art worlds. The Indian and Islamic art event is the first to open, from 19 to 28 October, to complement the Indian and Islamic sales that are traditionally held in London at this time of year. East Asian Art, encompassing the arts of China, Japan, Korea, as well as Southeast Asian art, follows on, from 26 October to 4 November.

This year, dealers and galleries from the UK and abroad are showcasing a range of works of art from South, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Korea, the Himalayas and the Islamic world, dating from antiquity to the contemporary.

Dealers and Auctioneers Guide

Dealers exhibiting at Cromwell Place, South Kensington:

Anrad Gallery and Schoeni Projects, Simon Pilling, Hanga Ten, Jacqueline Simcox, Runjeet Singh, Anastasia Von Seibold, Katie Jones, ArtChina, Mo Hai Lou and Alisan Fine Arts.

• Late night: 27 October, 5pm onwards

Kensington dealers:

JAN Fine Art, Marchant and Jorge Welsh

• Late night: 28 October, 5 pm onwards

St James' dealers:

3812 Gallery, Rob Dean Art, Grosvenor Gallery, Littleton & Hennessy, Pundole's, Susan Page Snuffbottles, Priestley & Ferraro, Rosebery's, W Shangshan

Mayfair dealers:

Bonhams, Eskenazi Ltd, Sotheby's

Chelsea:

Michael Goedhuis

Events / Information

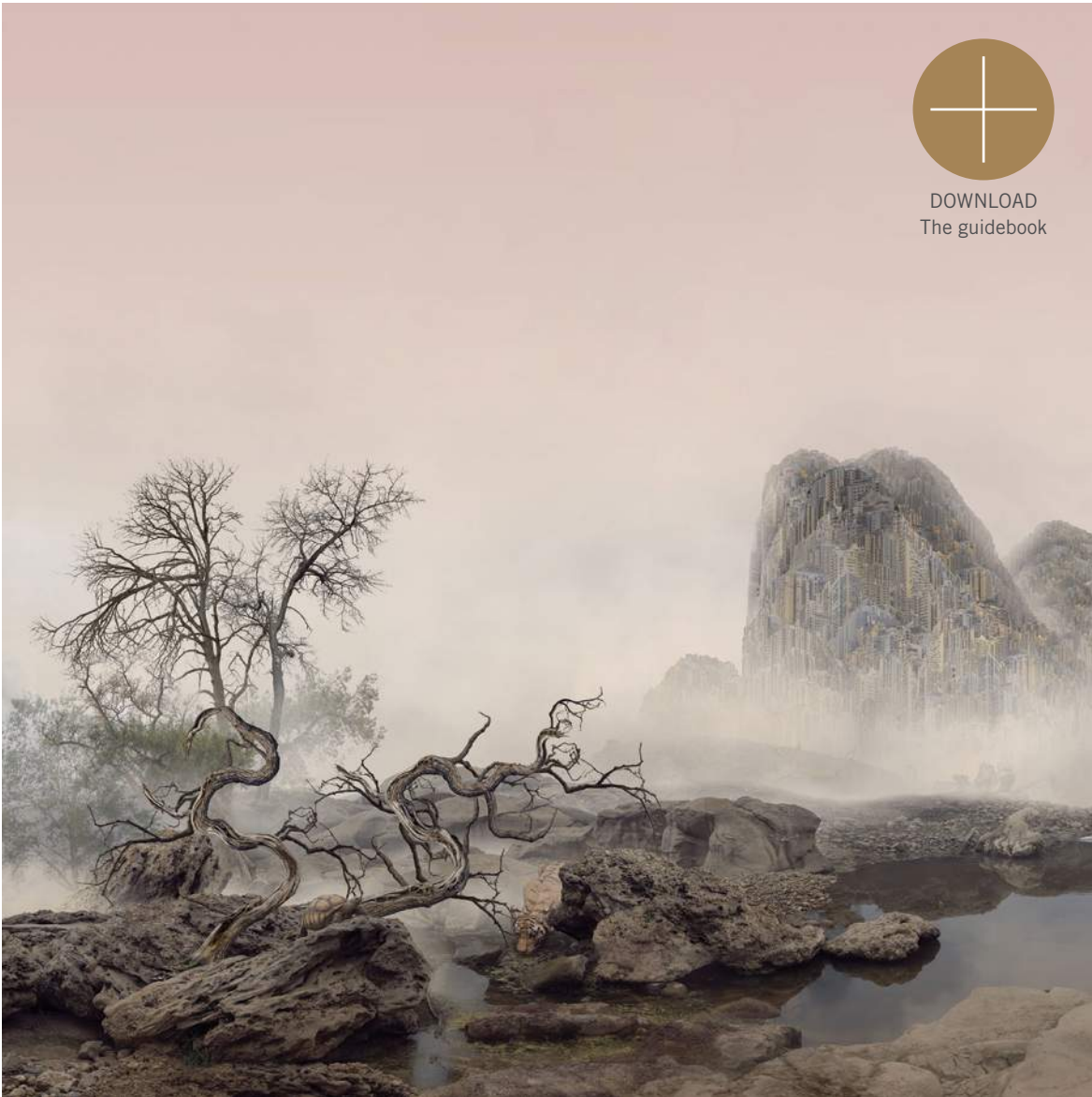
• Late evening viewings have always been part of the event with opening nights for the main areas. Check the guide to see which galleries are participating

• A champagne reception will be held at Sotheby's on 26 October, 6.30-8.30 pm, booking essential, tickets £80

• Full information on all events and gallery shows can be found in the dedicated guidebook produced by Asian Art in London, and on asianartinlondon.com

Gallery Previews

• Below is a selection of what is on offer in the London galleries, in alphabetical order, during Asian Art in London in 2023



Tiger (2021) by Yang Yongliang, Giclée print on fine art paper, 110 x 110 cm, edition: 15/15, Alisan Fine Arts

Blue Rain I, showcasing fluidity and dynamism through her brushwork. Currently, Chinyee's works are on show in *Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction 1940-1970*, a touring exhibition that started in London's Whitechapel Gallery and is now at the Van Gogh Foundation in Arles, France

The exhibition also features artists who tirelessly explore and reinterpret centuries-old Chinese art traditions, such as Chu Chu's *She Walks in Beauty*, showing her exceptional talents blending classical and modern materials and methods to create new artistic expressions; Cherie Cheuk Ka-wai's *Hide and Seek* that exhibits her *gongbi* prowess transcending different cultures; Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian's introspective and elegant style in his painting, *Brightness*; Lin Guocheng's *Red Stone and Courtyard 1*, depicting a serene and minimalist courtyard in a modern way; Wang Tiande's innovative use of incense sticks as a unique brush to create traditional landscapes in *Lakeside Voyage*, Yang Yongliang's digital cityscapes that provide a critical commentary on modern urbanisation in *Tiger*; and Lee Chun-Yi's *Unmatched Beauty*, using his distinct style, which incorporates Chinese seals and ink rubbings to capture the beauty of flowers within a contemporary context.

• Alisan Fine Arts, from 26 October to 5 November, Gallery 11, Cromwell Place, South Kensington, alisan.com.hk

DANIEL KELLY

Kamal Bakhshi is showing works by Daniel Kelly. Born in Idaho Falls, Kelly is a painter, printmaker and multi-media artist. He studied at the University of Portland and Portland

BEYOND TRADITION The Metamorphosis of Chinese Art

The gallery is presenting the works of 15 distinguished Chinese artists from different generations and diverse backgrounds. The exhibition aims to underline the manifold and profound evolution of Chinese art over the past 50 years, by showcasing how each artists reinterpret classical subject-matters of Chinese art by incorporating innovative materials and creative methods while preserving the traditional culture and spirit, in a salon-style hanging presentation, encouraging a more immersive and interconnected experience, and allowing viewers to

explore the intricate details and connections within the exhibition.

Highlights include works from Lui Shou-kwan, Walasse Ting, and Chinyee, showcasing the pioneers who pushed the boundaries of Chinese art. Ink master Lui Shou-kwan's *Abstract Landscape S63-12*, demonstrates his artistic prowess in blending Western abstraction with traditional Chinese landscape painting. Celebrating diaspora artists, there is also a selection of Walasse Ting's renowned vibrant and playful works, including *Three Girls Relaxing*, that exude a zest for life and sensuality, as well as Chinyee's captivating abstract expressionist painting,



Persimmons (1991) by Daniel Kelly, woodblock print with hand colouring, 120 x 148 cm, Kamal Bakhshi



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Black-grey-glazed haikatsugi stoneware tea bowl and mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer stand. Bowl: Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), Jian kilns, Fujian province, diam. 12.8 cm. Stand: Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), max. diam. 16.7 cm, Eskenazi

recognised at the time when it was likely the example itemised in the publication *Ganka meibutsu-ki* (Record of Famed Pleasurable Objects). Not only was the quality of the object of utmost importance, but a significant provenance was key, ideally traceable to a historic figure; the Moori family were descended from Ōe no Hiromoto (1148 - 1225), a vassal of the Kamakura shogunate.

The stoneware bowl was created in the Jian kilns in Shuiji, Jianyang county, Fujian province, during the Southern Song dynasty (1127 - 1279). In Japan it is known as *haikatsugi temmoku* (black ware - in this case Jian - with an ash-coloured glaze); only a few examples are

known, and the present one has been noted as being extremely rare for the fact that its glaze is truly grey. The bowl is accompanied by a Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) mother-of-pearl lacquer tea bowl stand with intricate floral scrolls. Though it is unclear when the two were deemed to be a suitably complementary pair, they are housed together in a specially made fitted box of elaborate construction, which probably dates to the early Meiji period (1868-1912) when it still would have been in the Moori family collection. They were acquired from the Mori family in the early 20th century by Takeuchi Seiho (1864-1942), painter of the Nihonga school and Imperial Household Artist from 1913. They

were subsequently acquired from his grandson in 1970 by Chief Abbot Arima Raitei (b.1933), descendant of the Arima clan, the Lord of the Kurume Domain.

A circular gold dish measuring 13.5cm in diameter is a rare example of Song gold workmanship and would most likely have been produced for use at court or for very high-ranking patrons. The simple but striking use of a central floral medallion against an undecorated ground is a radical departure from the often densely decorated metalwork of the Tang period. The emphasis on simplicity of form and the fluid use of organic motifs drawn from nature call to mind the aesthetics of Song ceramics such as seen on Ding ware.

Ding ceramics are considered one of the 'classic' wares of the period and were major suppliers of porcelain to officials and to the court during the Song and Jin dynasties. Produced from around the ninth century, the period between the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the height of production. The exhibition features a superbly potted large glazed carved porcellaneous stoneware bowl from this period. Decorated with fluidly incised decoration and glossy glaze, it was clearly produced as a luxury item probably for court use. It was previously in the collection of AW Bahr (1877-1959), a pioneering collector dealer whose mother was Chinese and who was born and raised in China, and Johannes Hellner (1866-1947), the Swedish politician. It was shown at the Danish Museum of Decorative Art in Copenhagen in 1950.

• Eskenazi, from 19 October to 4 November, Mayfair, eskenazi.co.uk



Peacock Pearl and Jade D (2015) by Wei Ligang, ink, acrylic and lacquer on paper, 180 x 96 cm, Michael Goedhuis

CHINA AND JAPAN Ink, Brush and Bronze

Michael Goedhuis' exhibition features a selection of the leading Chinese contemporary ink artists: Yao Jui-chung, Guan Zhi and Lo Ch'ing and Wei Ligang, together with the boundary-breaking calligraphic work of the foremost

woman calligrapher in Japan today, Tomoko Kawao.

The works are presented alongside a selection of Japanese bronze flower vessels.

• Michael Goedhuis, from 24 to 29 October, Chelsea, michaelgoedhuis.com

Continued on page 18



Asian Art in London

Indian & Islamic Art: 19 – 28 Oct 2023

East Asian Art: 26 Oct – 4 Nov 2023

asianartinlondon.com

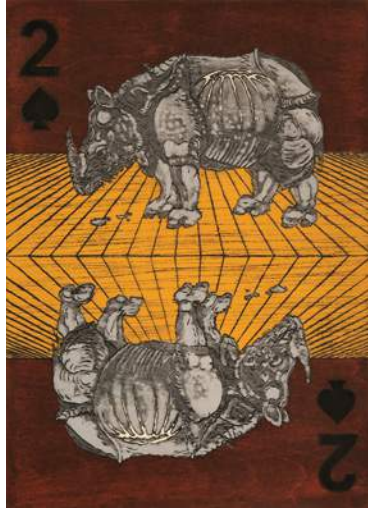
FLORA AND FAUNA IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART

Throughout the centuries, Japanese art has depicted animals and nature emphasising the strong coexistence of these two forces in the lives of Japanese people. From the more spiritual images of dragons and phoenixes to daily creatures such as dogs, horses, cats and birds, they are beautifully and meticulously rendered in all art forms. This exhibition highlights how contemporary Japanese artists have incorporated flora and fauna images utilising both traditional and unique techniques of printmaking and painting. Artists exhibiting include Tadashi Nakayama, Nana Shiomi, Daniel Kelly, and Katsunori Hamanishi.

- Hanga Ten, from 26 October to 1 November, Gallery 1, Cromwell Place, South Kensington



Double gourd ewer and cover, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662-1722), porcelain decorated in underglaze powder blue, overglaze famille-verte enamels and gold, height 20 cm, Jorge Welsh



Durer's Law of Printmaking Twin Rhinos (2022) by Nana Shiomi, woodblock print, 60 x 43 cm, Hanga Ten



Large pottery figure of Guandi in full armour, height 45.2 cm, 17th century, early Kangdi, with wood stand, Marchant



Black glazed jar, Cizhou kiln, Jin dynasty, 12th century, 8 x 11 cm, JAN Fine Art

KANGXI BISCUIT AND POTTERY A Private French Collection

This private collection of Kangxi-period biscuit and pottery objects was amassed between 1924-1941. The collector was meticulous in note taking, so most pieces even state where and when they were purchased. An online catalogue of the works will be available.

- Marchant, from 23 October to 3 November, Kensington, marchantasianart.com

CHINESE SNUFFBOTTLES

A range of bottles from various collections, including highlights of underglaze blue and white bottles from the Fragrant Snow Collection.

- Susan Page Snuffbottles, from 26 October to 3 November, exhibiting at Daniel Crouch Rare Books, St James
- There is a talk at the gallery on 31 October, at 3pm, *Subject Matter on blue and white snuff bottles, Unexpected Tales*.

KOGEI NO BI the Beauty of Craft

Japan has some of the most remarkable craftspeople of any nation in the modern world. Traditionally, regional artistic skills were promoted by feudal lords to strengthen political influence and patronage. When Japan opened to the West in the late 19th century its artistic prowess was a central pillar in gaining international respect. Over the last 100 years the values inherent in Japan's artistry have found increasing worldwide resonance. The exhibition is showcasing work by some of Japan's leading modern practitioners, including those designated as Living National Treasures.

- Simon Pilling East Asian Art & Interiors, from 26 October to 1 November, Gallery 1, Cromwell Place, South Kensington, simonpilling.co.uk



A large Chinese famille-rose 'Magu' dish, Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng Period, £3,000-5,000 (property from an English Private collection, all to be offered without reserve).



Porcelain snuff bottle; of tall cylindrical form, painted in underglaze-blue, with three layers of paintings showing in total, twenty-four examples of filial piety, Jingdezhen, 1790-1850, height 9.5 cm, from the Fragrant Snow Collection, Susan Page Snuffbottles

Imperial presentation box, Taisho 4, 1915, gold & black lacquer, 26 x 21.5 x 14 cm, Simon Pilling East Asian Art & Interiors



CHINESE CERAMICS AND WORKS OF ART

The exhibition presents a selection of Chinese works of art spanning over 2,000 years from the Warring States period to the 20th century and made in a variety of materials including jade, ceramics, silver, gold, lacquer, *cloisonné* enamel, glass and painting. Highlights include this important *cloisonné* enamel box and cover from the collection of Mrs Walter Sedgwick. The subject matter of a scholar in a lonely boat is a familiar literati theme but rarely found as a subject on *cloisonné* enamel. Only a very few *cloisonné* boxes of this style, form and palette are known, making this a remarkable as well as very attractive piece.

Another highlight from the exhibition is the very rare marble-glazed lobed dish with swirling mixed glazes of white and café-au-lait colours. Closely related to a dish in the V&A museum, these pieces may come from the Dangyangyu kilns in Henan province. The



Marble-glazed eight-lobed dish, Jin dynasty, 13th century, diam. 18.8 cm, Priestley & Ferraro

technique of creating a marbled effect with the glazes rather than with the clay is very rare and gives an appealing movement to the design.

- Special Exhibition Preview Tour: Wednesday 25 October at 3pm, RSVP by email to gallery@priestleyandferraro.com, spaces limited
- Priestley & Ferraro, from 26 October to 3 November, St James, priestleyandferraro.com

ARMS, ARMOUR AND WORKS OF ART FROM INDONESIA AND THE REST OF ASIA

Arms, Armour & Works of Art from Indonesia and the Rest of Asia will present the rich tapestry of Asia's history and culture by exploring the intricate world of arms, armour and works of art.

Demonstrating Indonesian craftsmanship includes a collection of keris daggers. These daggers, which are both weapons and spiritual objects, have been selected to demonstrate through beautiful parmor's (distinctive blade patterns) the ingenuity and skill the Indonesian artisans possessed.

Other objects on offer include daggers and swords from noble courts, as well as paintings and artworks depicting Sikh imagery, and intricately carved objects and shields with Islamic calligraphy and iconography.

- Runjeet Singh, from 25 October to 1 November, exhibiting at Gallery 5, Cromwell Place, South Kensington, runjeetsingh.com



Four keris daggers from Bali, Indonesia, 18th and 19th centuries, Runjeet Singh

LONDON AUCTIONS

FINE CHINESE ART

Bonhams, New Bond Street, 2 November

The Fine Chinese Art sale is presenting a selection of Chinese Imperial ceramics, musical instruments, paintings, bronzes, jades, and works of art from important collections from the UK and Europe. The sale features had a selection of Qing-dynasty Imperial ceramics including a *famille-rose* 'pomegranate fruits' vase, *meiping*, Qianlong seal mark and of the period (est £200-300,000); three music instruments from two important European sinologists RH van Gulik (1910-1967) and Cecilia Lindqvist (1932-2021), and a selection of paintings by painters including Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), Chen Yifei (1946-2005), and Xu Conglong (active 18th century).



Chinese imperial famille-rose and underglaze-blue decorated 'pomegranate fruits' vase, *meiping*, Qianlong period, est £200-300,000, Bonhams



Inscribed blue and white copper-red 'virtuous officials' brushpot, bitong, Kangxi six-character mark and of the period, diam. 19.1 cm, est £250-350,000, Bonhams

also represented by sword mountings, along with a selection of individual sword fittings.

THE EDITH & STUART CAREY WELCH COLLECTION PART III

Sotheby's London, 25 October

Stuart Carey Welch (1928-2008) was a ground-breaking scholar and visionary curator, whose contribution for over half a century to the study of the art and aesthetics of India and the Middle East was second to none. A pioneering art historian, his career as a magnetic lecturer at Harvard (1960-1995) was complemented by his role as curator of Islamic and Indian Art at Harvard Art. Welch's acquisitions were culturally and geographically wide-ranging and included works from Persia, India, China, Japan and beyond. In 2011, Sotheby's offered the first and second parts of Stuart Carey Welch's collection that included several auction records. In October, the final tranche of the collection is offered alongside pieces from Edith Carey Welch's personal collection. The top lot is a 17th century Deccan painting of Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur atop his equally famous elephant Atash Khan (est £300-500,000). Other highlights include a Company School painting of the *Taj Mahal* by *Moonlight*, painted for the Marquess of Hastings in 1815 (est £30-50,000), and a Mughal rock crystal mango-shaped flask inlaid with rubies and emeralds (est £100-150,000).



Wood netsuke of a sleeping shojo (drunken sprite), est £3,500 -£4,500, Bonhams



Gold-lacquer kodansu (small cabinet), est £4-6,000, Bonhams



Lotus (1981) by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), est £100-150,000, Bonhams



Gilt-bronze figure of Avalokitesvara, Dali Kingdom, 11th/12th century, est £200-300,000, Sotheby's



Spotted Mounia and a purple-rumped sunbird on flower branches by Zayn Al-Din, from the Lady Impey series, est £150-250,000, Sotheby's



The Taj Mahal by Moonlight (1815) by Sita Ram, est £30-50,000, Sotheby's



Pair of Chinese imperial porcelain lemon-yellow glazed saucer dishes, Yongzheng marks and of the period (1723-1735), diam. 8.8 cm, est £60-80,000, Rosebery's

ISLAMIC ART Property of a European Collector Part VI and Islamic & Indian Art

Chiswick Auctions, London, 31 October

Five pieces from the renowned Chinese export 'Blue Service' made for the Qajar prince Mas'ud Mirza Zill al-Sultan (1850-1918) lead the final tranche of a private European collection sale. Alongside *famille-rose* decoration is the unusual grey-mauve ground and a gilt inscription in Persian that identifies them as part of the large service commissioned by the prince, the eldest son of the ruling Shah Naser al-Din Shah (1831-96). As his mother was a commoner Mas'ud Mirza was excluded from the Qajar throne and instead operated as governor of Isfahan from 1866-99. His title Zill al-Sultan means the 'Shadow of the King'.

ASIAN ART, PARTS I AND II

Chiswick Auctions, London 6 and 7 November

In these sales, Chinese, Japanese and Korean works of art from various private collections include a group of early Chinese bronzes and neolithic jades from an old English private collection and a selection of blue and white ceramics from Sir Hugh Cortazzi's collection, a former British ambassador to Japan. In Asian Art II, a highlight is a Japanese Aesthetic movement cabinet mounted with four Nanban lacquer panels from the Momoyama period. A highlight of the sales in a Joseon-period pair of



Chinese porcelain doucai bowl, Qing dynasty, Jiaqing mark and of the period (1796-1820), diam. 16.5 cm, est £20-30,000, Rosebery's

embroidered screens from the Gompertz Collection.

ASIAN ART Rosebery's London, 8 and 9 November

Taking place over two days, the sale comprises around 1,000 lots. Highlights include a Chinese porcelain *doucai* bowl, Jiaqing mark and of the period, depicting a continuous scene of mandarin ducks swimming admist lotus blooms (est £20-30,000) and a pair of Chinese imperial porcelain lemon-yellow glazes saucer dishes, Yongzheng marks and of the period (est £60-80,000).

- Preview at 6 Duke Street, St James 28 and 29 October, in auction rooms 2 to 6 November
- Talk Symbol of Flowers on Chinese Art, 29 October at 4pm



One of a pair of Korean embroidered 'Sun and Moon, Birds and Flowers' four-panel screens, Joseon period, late 19th century, from a private collection, est £4-6,000, Chiswick Auctions



Set of four Chinese gold and silver inlaid bronze 'Goose' mat weights, Han dynasty, from a private collection, est £8-12,000, Chiswick Auctions



Group of Chinese 'Famille Rose' porcelain bowls and dishes from the 'Blue Service' of the Qajar Prince Mas'ud Mirza, Zill Al-Sultan, Canton, made for the Persian export market, dated 1297-1298 AH (1879-81), est from £800 to £2,000, Chiswick Auctions

KAZUMA/KOIZUMI Chasing Modernity

For their autumn exhibition Scholten Japanese Art offers the work of two modern printmakers, Oda Kazuma (1881-1956), and Kishio Koizumi (1893-1945), both prominent members of the *sosaku banga* (creative print) movement who shared an interest in depicting daily life in views of modern Japan, particularly following the transformation of Tokyo after the 1923 earthquake. Although both embraced the ‘artist as creator’ ethos associated with *sosaku hanga*, they utilized varying techniques.

Oda Kazuma was the leading colour lithographer in Japan who also produced self-carved as well professionally published woodblock prints, the exhibition includes examples of his landscape and figural prints produced in all three modes of production.

Kishio Koizumi was a passionate *sosaku-banga* artist dedicated to carving and printing his own woodblock prints. The gallery exhibition has on view a selection from a complete set of Kishio Koizumi’s monumental series, *One Hundred Pictures of Great Tokyo in the Showa Era* (Showa dai Tokyo hyakuzue), produced between 1928 and



Festival in Asakusa, tori no ichi (no 36) by Kishio Koizumi, from the series One Hundred Pictures of Great Tokyo, colour woodblock print

1940. The complete series of 100 prints is being offered as a set (likely destined for an American collection) with an original storage box signed by the artist, but in the meantime, you can view almost a third of the works in

person at the gallery and every print is fully catalogued in the online exhibition.

● Until 15 October, by appointment only, Scholten Japanese Art, New York, scholten-japanese-art.com

JAPANESE PAINTINGS AND PRINTS 1910-1935

Sebastian Izzard’s autumn exhibition explores the world of Japanese prints in the first half of the 20th century. This was an era of energy, new influences, and styles, and a refocusing of the Japanese print world by catering to new tastes. The man at the centre of this revival was the entrepreneurial genius Watanabe Shozuburo (1885-1962), whose publications form the greatest portion of the works in this exhibition.

Deeply interested in Edo period *ukiyo-e*, Watanabe made it his project to rescue the art form, which had fallen somewhat out of fashion. Blessed with a natural flair for business, a good eye, and a personable manner, he placed himself at the centre of a team of newly recruited artists and craftsmen who worked in tandem, in this aspect resembling the great 18th- and 19th-century publishers Tsutaya Juzaburo and Nishimuraya Yohachi. In doing so, he single-handedly created the Shin-hanga movement, recording the fashions of the day and the landscapes of Japan in the pre-war period, for the delectation of his market, both



Kumoi Cherry Trees (Kumoi zakura) by Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), 1926, colour woodblock print, 58.4 x 74 cm, signed: Yoshida (in brush), Hiroshi Yoshida (bottom left margin in pencil), sealed: Hiroshi; publisher: self-published (jizuri)

domestic and international. Watanabe worked with successful professional artists such as Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950) and Hashiguchi Goyo (1880?-1921), both of whom were trained in the Western manner and knew what appealed to foreign tastes. He later commissioned a very young Ito Shinsui (1898-1972) to create beauty prints for him, and Kawase Hasui (1883-1957) completed over five hundred landscape images for Watanabe before

his death. Artists who were not represented by Watanabe are also featured in the exhibition. They include Takahashi Hiroaki (1871-1945), Kobayakawa Kiyoshi (1899-1948), and Torii Kotondo (1900-1976) whose beauty prints captured the stylish elegance of the Taisho era.

● From 4 to 27 October, by appointment only, Sebastian Izzard, New York, izzardasianart.com. Hours: Mon-Fri, 11-5pm

LI RAN Waiting for the Advent

For his first solo exhibition in London, Li Ran (b 1986) presents a selection of video works alongside new paintings and texts portraying the psychological state of a group of semi-fictional ‘humble intellectuals’ revolving around him in China. In the form of a booklet, the exhibition presents the artist’s painting sketches, video scripts, as well as an excerpt from a short story called *Godly Sorrow*, which is also interspersed with poems. In the short story, the artist – posing, in the first person, as a contemporary Chinese poet – gossips about his writer friends: leaning left or right, some of them displaying unwavering determination and occasional arbitrariness, while others perpetually hesitant or melancholic.

These intricate mental states are also reflected in the video work, *The Most Abstract Paragraphs* (2021-22), featuring two writers from Shanghai who appear to belong to the 1940s or post-Cultural Revolution era. Engaging in ceaseless banter and jests about the perspectives of themselves and others, they test each other, console each other, and grapple with the anguish of their positions, gestures and the perplexing question of where they truly



Li Ran is exhibiting paintings, video, and texts at the gallery

stand as creative individuals set adrift in a historically complex and politically-charged ocean.

The theme of the art industry’s inner workings, formed with seemingly abstract conversations and secret languages known only to insiders, permeates Li Ran’s artistic practice. The paintings, referencing and resonating with the texts and videos, vividly capture the emotions of these

intellectuals trapped in their self-made worlds of alienation and distress. Li utilises a violet tone in the background to establish an ambience of weary anticipation in works such as *Standing in the Haze* or *Waiting for the Advent* (both 2022), the latter title also serving as the exhibition title.

● Until 28 October, Lisson Gallery, London, lissongallery.com

CAN’T SEE THE FOREST

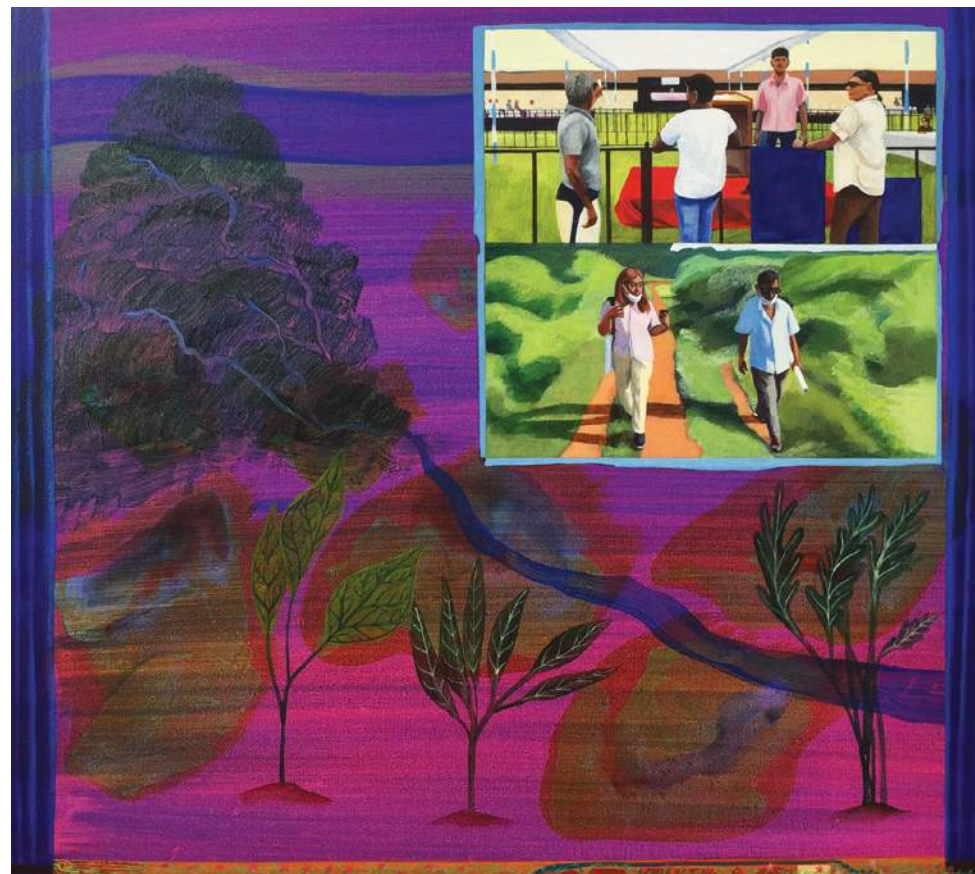
This exhibition presents Karishma D’Souza’s latest body of work. Known for her sense of composition, these new pieces include vignettes and bring the human figure back into her work. Beyond the technical aspect with all pieces beautifully executed, storytelling is at the centre of Karishma D’Souza’s practice. Whether alluding to family, friendships or to the political, social or economic situation

affecting certain communities, the artist echoes their story by also bringing to the forefront those who are less fortunate or those who otherwise would go unheard.

Alternating bright and darker sections, the works respond to the artist’s symbolic regarding the selection of colours towards completing their figurative composition. Born in

Mumbai in 1983, but based between Goa and Lisbon, Karishma D’Souza experienced a childhood filled with travels and the discovery of foreign countries. Up to today, she draws from that rich childhood to create pieces where people and landscapes are the starting point for vibrant stories.

Olivia Sand
● Until 28 October, Galerie Xippas, Geneva, xippas.com



Ground Conversations: Ode to fighters (2023) by Karishma D’Souza, vinyl and acrylic on canvas, 40 x 45,5 cm, courtesy Xippas Gallery



Rama as Vishwarupa Blesses Kaka Bhushundi With Wisdom, 1814, Style D, Master-artist from the second wave of migrations from Jaipur

BOOK OF GOLD The Kanchana Chitra Ramayana of Banaras

Curated by the late Kavita Singh and Parul Singh, this exhibition shows how spirited the Indian painting tradition was, well into the nineteenth century. Challenging the older art historical narratives that miniature painting in northern India had faded by this time, is the story of a most ambitious illustrated manuscript made for the royal court of Banaras. Spanning from 1796 to 1814, over a period of 18 years, several artists belonging to different schools converged to work on the manuscript of Tulsidas’ *Ramcharitmanas*. The book was known locally as the *Kanchana Chitra Ramayana* – the Golden Illustrated Ramayana.

Its name highlights two of its significant features. The first, ‘Kanchana’ or ‘Golden’, referred not just to the abundant use of gold paint in its folios, but also to the scale of the project as a whole, for which no expense seems to have been spared. Gold is lavishly used in its

resplendent folios — in the form of delicate lines between the lines and punctuation marks in the text pages; as well as spread out across the painted pages as intricate scrollwork on depicted textiles, the glow of the dawn sky, entire walls of magnificent palaces and vast cityscapes; and the broad margins of all the folios, both text and image. The suffix ‘Chitra’ underlined the prominence of paintings in this book: every text page had a facing painting, totalling about 548 paintings.

For the first time, this exhibition brings together nearly eighty pages from the manuscript. Through exploring the historical context in which it was made, it showcases the diversity of artists involved, and the ingenuity of the narratives they devised for this monumental artistic endeavour.

● Until 8 March, 2024, MAP Bengaluru, India, map-india.org



SHEHUO Community Fire

Zhang Xiao, the 11th recipient of the Peabody Museum’s Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography, takes the visitor on a bilingual photographic exploration of the transformation of *Shehuo* (Community Fire), a traditional spring festival held in rural northern China that coincides with the New Year. It was traditionally a time to pray for good weather for abundant crops (earth) and safety from evil spirits (fire). Zhang began his photography in 2007, when the festival was celebrated with great regional variation, and included prayers for a good harvest and ritual performances of local folk tales. A decade later, Zhang found that the festival – while still fascinating and visually engaging – had become a highly commercialised, tourist enterprise with mass-produced props and costumes.

When Zhang Xiao began this exploration, he created ethereal photographs of performers wearing elaborate makeup and costumes. The performers told him some of the meticulously crafted costumes had been passed down generation to generation from the time of the Qing dynasty. When he returned to the project in 2018, these heirlooms had been replaced by mass-produced products, sold on China’s popular e-commerce marketplace, Taobao. Zhang documented the festival over

a decade of modernisation, creating a portrait of how traditional practices sustain themselves amid rapid change. During his fellowship, Zhang was called to ‘document the human condition anywhere in the world’. Today the festival includes traditions such as dragon dances, acrobatics, stilt-walking, bonfires, markets, storytelling, and performances. ‘Almost every villager attends or participates by performing or by making elaborate costumes and props,’ writes Zhang.

In 2018 and 2019, Zhang visited the Henan Province village of Huozhuang in Jian’an District, Xuchang City. ‘I decided to explore the production of contemporary Shehuo props, and the people involved in the industry,’ explains Zhang, ‘to examine the growing relationship between traditional culture and mass-produced goods, which heralded a new era of consumption for rural communities’. Shehuo props and costumes had been manufactured in Huozhuang for nearly 100 years, but villagers struggled to find buyers. As e-commerce made selling easier, eventually more than 80 percent of the villagers became engaged in producing Shehuo supplies. Now the manufacture of Shehuo props has become one of Henan Province’s pillar industries, transforming previously impoverished villages.



Villagers in Crane Costumes, Huozhuang Village, Lingjing Town, Jian’an District, Xuchang City, Henan Province, 2019 © Zhang Xiao

Zhang’s work explores the extent to which ancient folk beliefs and rural society can sustain themselves amid modernisation, and how they can weather the effects of an industrialised and digitalised economy. ‘Over the many centuries of disruption and transformation that Shehuo has endured, we may find evidence of progress and traces of tradition’, he writes. ‘All people face social and cultural change and must recreate traditions in new

ways to adapt to the ever-changing realities of their environment.’

The exhibition is accompanied by the book, *Zhang Xiao: Community Fire* (Aperture/Peabody Museum Press, July 2023), which includes text by Ou Ning, a writer, curator, and writer based in New York. ● Until 14 April, 2024, Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard, Cambridge, peabody.harvard.edu

GHOSTS AND DEMONS IN JAPANESE PRINTS

Supernatural beings have always been common features in Japanese legends, prints, and Kabuki theatre. The prints on view in this exhibition, all from the celebrated Clarence Buckingham Collection, capture common Japanese folk tales as well as their Kabuki adaptations from the early 18th-century to the last years of the 19th century, offering distinct insight into the nature of these beloved stories and characters.

Amid the performances depicted in these prints are *Kaidan mono*, or Kabuki ghost plays. Ghost plays were known to feature dramatic special effects: quick costume changes in moments when an actor transformed into a ghost or the use of trap doors and flying apparatuses to terrify and excite the audience. Kaidan mono were most often put on in the heat of summer, the traditional time for telling ghost stories. Tales were meant to give the audience a chill.

One of the prints depicts a scene as told on stage in the play *Edo no Hana Mimasu Soga* (Flower of Edo: An Ichikawa Saga), the tragic love affair of the monk Seigen and the Cherry Princess Sakura-hime ends with him being driven from his temple for breaking his vows of celibacy. He later dies alone and impoverished and then haunts the princess; in this print, his ghost is shown as a skeleton drawing close to a cowering woman. When this scene was performed, the actor playing the ghost wore a black costume with bones painted on it. Here, the skeleton bears the crest of the actor on his arm, helping to identify the performance as one held at the Nakamura Theatre in Edo (now Tokyo) in 1783.

● Until 15 October, Art Institute of Chicago, artic.org



The actors Ichikawa Danjuro V as a skeleton, spirit of the renegade monk Seigen (left), and Iwai Hanshiro IV as Princess Sakura (right) by Katsukawa Shunsho (1726-1792), in the *jouru* Sono Omokage Matsu ni Sakura (Vestiges of Pine and Cherry), from part two of the play *Edo no Hana Mimasu Soga* (Flower of Edo: An Ichikawa Saga)

CLOUD SONGS ON THE HORIZON

Ranjani Shettar

Cloud Songs on the Horizon, the artist's first major institutional show in Europe, features a series of new, large-scale suspended sculptures across the entirety of the Conservatory's 23,000 square foot space. A tropical oasis in the heart of London, the Barbican Conservatory is home to a vibrant mix of 1,500 species of plants and trees from across the world. Shettar's sculptures, currently in production in her studio in southern India, are each handcrafted by the artist and



Cloud songs on the horizon by Ranjani Shettar

draw inspiration from the complexity of nature. They employ a range of materials including wood, stainless steel, muslin, lacquer and

techniques that have been adapted from traditional Indian crafts.
● Barbican, London, barbican.org.uk

OSMAN YOUSEFZADA

Yousefzada's work engages with the representation, rupture, and reimagining of the migration experience. The British-born South Asian artist works across textiles, sculpture, moving image, installation, garment making and performance. A gifted storyteller, his work merges autobiography with fiction and ritual. The exhibition also features a new series of studies on paper created by Yousefzada during a recent residency at the Birmingham School of Art. The selection of prints are made up of different media and are partly inspired by characters in the *Falnama*, a book of omens used by fortune tellers in Iran, India and Turkey during the 16th and 17th centuries. People seeking insight into



Untitled (2020) by Osman Yousesfzada, from the series inspired by the Falnama

the future would turn to a page of the Falnama at random, and interpret the text and colourful drawings to predict their future.
● Until 10 March, 2023, Wolfson Gallery at Charleston, Firle, UK, charleston.org.uk

ERASE AND SEE

This exhibition showcases the work of Japanese artist Sumi Kanazawa (b 1979). Through an understanding of the contradictions and discrepancies that are contained in our past and present, Kanazawa suggests ways of being more imaginative about how to live now, to problematise distinctions conventionally drawn between individuals, politics and society, between public and private identities.


This is exemplified by her *Drawings on Newspapers*, featured in the gallery. Like a star-spangled night sky, this large-scale installation radiates the kind of information that floods the world, counteracted through artistic intervention. Kanazawa uses a black 10B pencil to obliterate printed words and images in newspapers, except for those that appeal to her, either for a reason or intuitively. The


remaining content is thus excised from its context to weave new stories. For Kanazawa, the erasure of context is a liberating experience, pointing up the discrepancy between an individual's sense of time and that regulated by society. In this way, her work constitutes an idiosyncratic overview of a social context from the delimited space within which an individual exists. Significantly, Kanazawa

creates her work at night, during 10pm-3am, when most people are fast asleep. Her time-consuming artistic process goes against the grain of modern mass- and social-media, encouraging us to slow down and break free.
● Until 25 January, 2023, Daiwa Foundation, London, dajf.org.uk

View of a previous installation in Japan of Sumi Kanazawa's work, 2017







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ISLAMIC ART

PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN COLLECTOR PART VI

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ISLAMIC & INDIAN ART


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AUCTIONS

Islamic Arts Diary

by Lucien de Guise

BRIDGING THE PERSIAN GULF

Qatar is a Gulf state that has been leading friendly engagement with Iranian culture for longer than most. Now that even Saudi Arabia is opening up to its highly populous neighbour, we can expect more exhibitions that acknowledge the debt of Islamic art to the empire formerly known as Persia. Although it was the Safavid dynasty that made Shi'a Islam the state religion of Iran, the latest exhibition at Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art is *Fashioning an Empire: Textiles from Safavid Iran*.

Not only is this a display of the regional rival's glorious past, it is all about the sort of textiles that traditional Islamic culture has always been wary to embrace. Silk features prominently. The contents are all from the Mia's own collection and, best of all, they are being shown in Sheikh Saoud Gallery, named after the once-disgraced Sheikh Saoud al Thani. Since his death, this visionary collector of everything – especially Islamic art – has been rehabilitated by the ruling family of Qatar.

'Fashioning an Empire' began its life at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, DC, where it was a focal point of the 2021 Qatar-USA Year of Culture. Returning to home territory, the exhibition has grown, with more than 100 works. Among the displays are 20 of the superb silk-brocade textiles for which the Safavids were so renowned, many ended up as

Detail of 'Portrait of a Caucasian Gentleman', Iran, Isfahan, Safavid Period, 17th century , Mia

Catholic priests' vestments in the distant past. These are accompanied by 12 Safavid carpets, which are probably the most famous artefacts ever created in Persia. The market for such wares went far beyond their homeland. Centuries ago the carpets, in particular, caught the eye of rulers throughout Europe, where they were often confused with 'Turkey rugs' and considered to be equally desirable.

The exhibition is about more than the objects on display, though. It is a lesson in geopolitics as well, beginning with an analysis of Persia in the time of one of the few rulers whom the British Museum has considered worthy of a solo show (way back in 2009). Shah 'Abbas I was the commercial visionary behind Persia's silk monopoly and the ruling dynasty's involvement in textile production. A lot of attention is also given to the city

Detail of 'Portrait of an Armenian Lady', Iran (Isfahan), Safavid period, 17th century

that was the capital under the Safavids and retains more magic to this day than Tehran. Isfahan has a mythical sound to it, despite being Persia's trading marketplace at the time. Image was everything, even then, which is explored in a section of the exhibition that looks at self-representation in Safavid society. Costume and fashion were vital components in how Persia projected itself, admirably explained with pairings of Safavid textiles alongside illustrations and paintings of their era.

As the curators have chosen not to restrict themselves to the two-and-a-bit centuries of Safavid rule (1501-1736), the exhibition accelerates towards the present. There is a selection of wares by Qatar-based designers inspired by the textiles on display. These include garments and, of course, handbags.

Detail of Brocade velvet with figural design, Iran, Safavid period, mid 17th century, MIA

Bringing it all together is one of the most visible female faces of the Arab world. Qatar Museums Chairperson Sheikha Al Mayassa is a tireless advocate of global understanding: 'The presentation of "Fashioning an Empire" in Washington, DC was a great highlight of the Qatar-USA 2021 Year of Culture, and a shining

example of how cultural exchange brings people together and fosters mutual understanding. Nothing could have been more appropriate since cultural exchange is the very theme of this abundantly fascinating exhibition'.

The Director of Mia, Julia Gonnella, is more specific about the Iranian connection: 'The exhibition illuminates a particularly significant period of Iranian history, during which Iran acquired a very distinctive visual identity. Artwork originating from Iran represents the largest holding in Mia's collection, and until now, we have not had the opportunity to display many of these pieces. Through the presentation of our collection, we hope to deepen the understanding and appreciation for Islamic art and demonstrate the vast diversity of Islamic culture across the world'.

Since reopening a year ago, after a substantial renovation, the Mia has changed. The building is still one of I M Pei's most striking works, but the collection has been made more accessible to the great diversity of people who live in and travel to Doha. The exhibition confirms the international status that Iran once had. Stars of the show are four full-length portraits which highlight the diverse population that embodied the far-reaching imperial grandeur of Safavid Isfahan.

● Fashioning an Empire: Textiles from Safavid Iran at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, from 23 October to 20 April 2024

IRANIAN ART IN AMERICA

Iran is equally topical to an exhibition that is having its final month in the USA. The Institute of Arab and Islamic Art (IAIA) is presenting a first major solo show of Behjat Sadr (1924-2009) in America. This Iranian-born artist was adept in a wide range of creative fields, including painting, photography, photomontage and kinetics. Before the 1979 revolution happened in her homeland, she had already proved herself to be one of the few women to achieve significant acclaim. This exhibition focuses on Behjat Sadr's engagement with painting, which revolved around the relationship between body, memory and medium.

Behjat's big break came after completing her studies at the University of Tehran, where she would later teach. It was at the Rome Academy in the Dolce Vita days of the late 1950s that her star began to rise. Combining the meandering narratives of Western modern art and Persian visual culture, she experimented with new modes of expression. Inclined to using organic forms to create her work, the most telling element is the thick black pigments that are redolent of the oil that was so vital to Iran's growing status in the world.

Within a decade of the Islamic Revolution, Behjat had sought exile in Paris. The onset of cancer forced her to work on a smaller scale. The new collages were composed of her photos of Iran's extraordinary landscapes juxtaposed with those

Two views, showing the variety of work by Behjat Sadr, at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Art, New York

that offered a glimpse into the urban life of an exile. These late works are the ultimate expression of the artist's commitment to the experimentation of medium and the mining of memory. By tracing Behjat's ceaseless engagement with abstraction over five decades, this

exhibition reveals the trauma of living in a period of instability, alienation, modernity and tradition within the communities she inhabited.

● Behjat Sadr, at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Art, New York, ends 15 October

ISLAMIC INSPIRATION IN MILWAUKEE

Also taking place in the US is another exhibition of relevance to the Islamic world, but featuring female artists who have not yet acquired the fame of Behjat Sadr. Nadia Al-Khun is one of the artists involved, as well as being a biologist and the proprietor of the new gallery that is showing *Islamic Inspired*. Instead of being in New York or the other typical centres of such activity, the exhibition space is in Milwaukee. NAdiaNA Art Gallery occupies a surprisingly old building which, apparently, was once used for keeping horses warm on winter nights.

The exhibition includes the work of seven visual artists and comprises paintings, mixed media, drawings, photography, textiles, jewellery and applied art. The artists are not all Muslim although their inspiration is. Islamic architecture, design and calligraphy make up the prime mover in this space. For Nadia the message is: 'Islam inspired me to be a strong, independent woman. I love that I can be myself as a Muslim woman and run my art gallery and display my artwork and the artwork of people regardless of their backgrounds or identity. It brings together people from different background backgrounds in one space to connect through a universal language – art!'





Unlike Behjat Sadr, Nadia is a self-taught artist with a background in the Arab, rather than the Iranian, world. She would be unusual in any

The Eternal, Ever Present Allah (2022) by Nadia Al-Khun, oil and acrylic on canvas

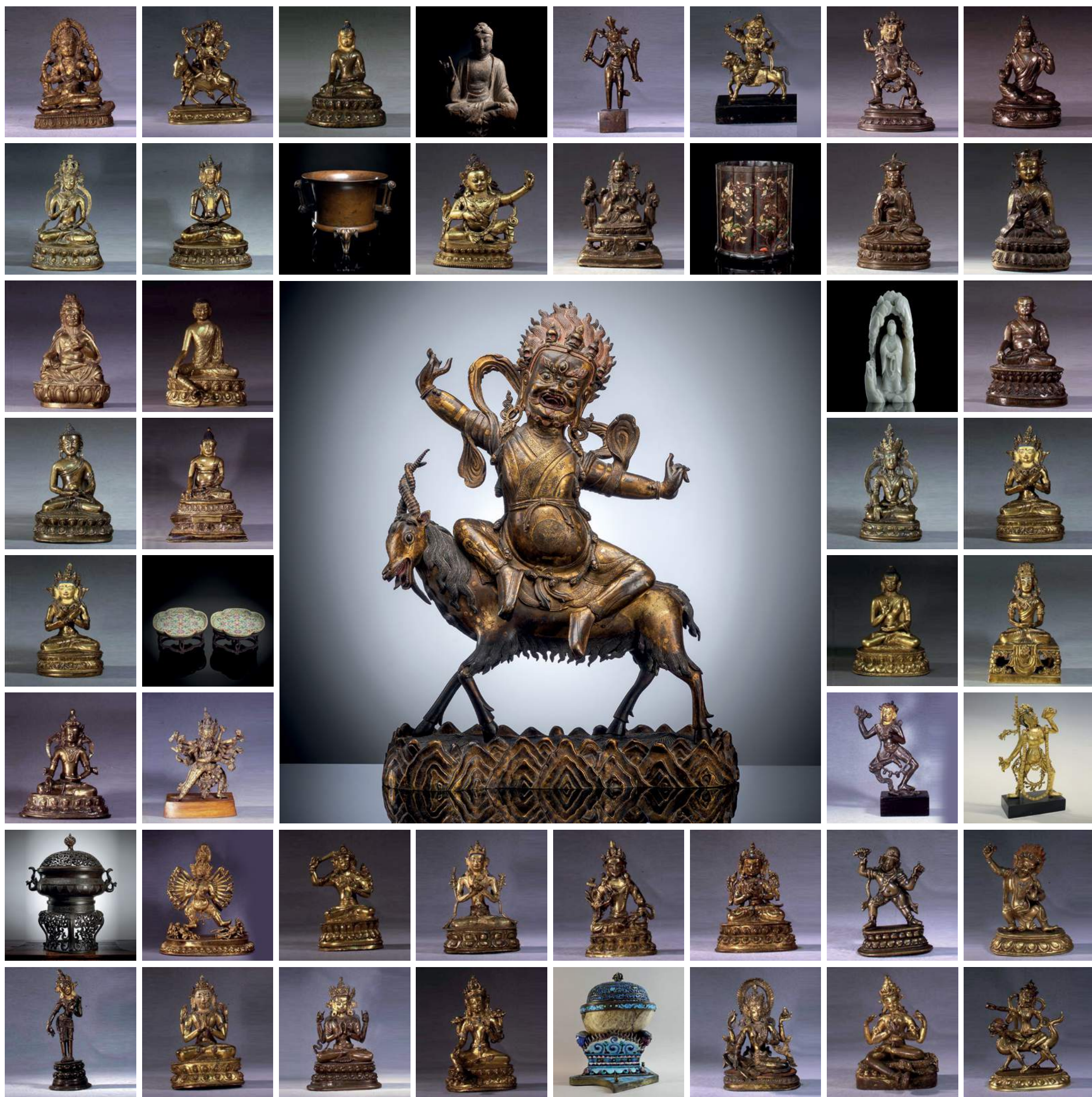
part of the world for having university degrees in both fine art and biology. She likes to combine the two interests in her work: 'My paintings allow the spectator to delve into the microscopic world of juxtapositions represented by flat and illusionistic elements'.

As if all of this were not enough, she is also on a mission to showcase the creativity of artists facing chronic illnesses. We do not hear much from Milwaukee in the Islamic Arts Diary, so it might be time to explore an otherwise unknown destination. Perhaps Wisconsin will be the next Texas in terms of emerging new centres of Islamic culture.

● Islamic Inspired at the NAdiaNA Art Gallery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, until 21 October

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