

The background of the poster is a collage of Indian art. At the top, there's a painting of a woman in a sari. Below it, a central panel features a vibrant, multi-armed deity, likely a form of Lakshmi or a similar goddess, surrounded by floral patterns and other figures. At the bottom, there's a painting of two women in traditional attire. The text is overlaid on these images, with a diagonal white band containing the main title and a smaller white box at the bottom left containing descriptive text.

BAMPFA + UC BERKELEY PROFESSOR SUGATA RAY'S
FALL 2019 COURSE INTRODUCTION TO THE ART AND
ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA PRESENTS...

FIVE TABLES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

FROM MYTHICAL PERCEPTIONS OF VAST OCEANIC WATERS TO PORCELAIN EXCAVATED FROM SHIPWRECKS,
FROM THE VISUAL CULTURE OF PORT CITIES TO DEPICTIONS OF MARINE LIFE, THIS EDITION OF
FIVE TABLES MINES THE BAMPFA COLLECTION TO UNEARTH GLOBAL HISTORIES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN.

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FIVE TABLES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

From mythical perceptions of vast oceanic waters to porcelain excavated from shipwrecks, from the visual culture of port cities to depictions of marine life, this edition of Five Tables mines the BAMPFA collection to unearth global histories of the Indian Ocean—the earth's third largest body of water and the site of the world's oldest cultural continuum, facilitating the mobility of people, objects, and ideas around the world. Curated by students in UC Berkeley Professor Sugata Ray's Fall 2019 course *Introduction to the Art and Architecture of South and Southeast Asia*, this presentation explores how such oceanic networks also shaped global histories of art.

December 5, 2019

4 -7 PM

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

2155 Center Street, Berkeley

TRANSCULTURAL GARDENS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN



Gardens in South and Southeast Asia were designated as spaces of sanctity and authority that also held religious significance. Lush gardens were both compared to paradise and were symbolic spaces of ritualized kingship. Such ideas of the garden circulated across the Indian Ocean world through trade and the movement of people. In South Asia, for instance, the idea of a planned garden (charbagh) was introduced by the Mughals from central Asia in the 16th century. Similarly, Hindu and Buddhist notions of the garden reached Southeast Asia through trade links with India. Reaffirming the significance of the garden as a transcultural design typology, representations of rare and luxurious trade commodities such as Chinese blue and white porcelain can often be seen in paintings of gardens. In this exhibition, one can also discover trade commodities evoking the garden. At the same time, gardens served as a backdrop for intimate relationships between men and women, humans and nature, and the material and divine worlds. The theme of the garden illuminates these dualities and, at the same time, blurs their distinctions.

SUBTOPICS



GENDERING THE GARDEN

In this section, we highlight the relationships between women, men, and nature within the context of gardens in South and Southeast Asia. Gardens are depicted as spaces for political engagements, religious rituals, and social leisure. Within each of these contexts there is a spectrum of roles for both men and women, displaying various gender dynamics. On one end of the spectrum, depictions of women partaking in activities such as smoking hookah serve as a bridge between nature and leisure, indicating that women could enjoy recreation in the garden. A Chinese landscape painting from 1683 offers a comparative framework of visualizing gardens in other Asian contexts. Additionally, representations of male deities interacting with women portray the gender dynamics between men and women within the setting of the garden, particularly in a religious context. These depictions bring together aesthetic qualities and traditions that invite the viewer into the garden.

In this section, we highlight vessels with garden motifs and objects for containing liquids that were used in the garden. Vessels were highly-valued commodities that make visible how different identities, cultures, and styles intersected in the space of the garden. Ceramics excavated from Hoi An in the coast of Vietnam were valuable Indian Ocean export commodities that incorporated garden motifs used in Chinese blue and white porcelain. These vessels were then used in gardens—a place of elite leisure—across the Indian Ocean world. Paintings such as *Princess Holding Child with Woman on a Terrace* and *Ladies on Terrace* thus include Chinese export dishes and hookahs in gold, highlighting the value of vessels in the garden. This section seeks to show South and Southeast Asian vessels in two contexts: the vessel as a transcultural object of trade in the Indian Ocean region and the vessel as incorporated into contemporaneous paintings.



VESSELS IN THE GARDEN



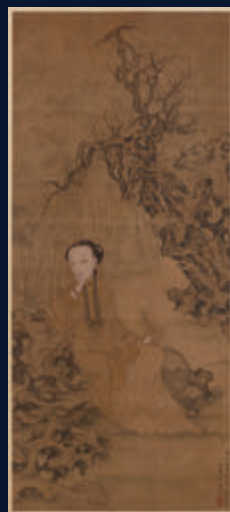
GENDERING THE GARDEN



A Girl Smoking a Hookah
1776-1800, India
Ink, gouache,
and gold on paper
Gift of Jean
and Francis Marshall
1998.42.8

A woman is depicted smoking a hookah in isolation. Her elegant attire outlined with gold ink suggests that she belongs to a royal family and the painting was commissioned by the court. In the 18th century, artists often adopted realism based on Mughal courtly practices that developed in the 16th century. Often, paintings such as these reflected courtly life in this period. The painting offers a secluded space within a private garden, where the woman potentially thinks and longs for her lover. In contemporaneous paintings, terraces in gardens would normally be depicted as a space for joyful gatherings. In contrast, this painting posits the garden as a space of introspection, where a woman can reflect while smoking the hookah. One can almost imagine the bubbling sounds of the hookah complementing the sense of peace and tranquility within the garden setting. Commonly used as recreation and a socially bonding experience, the depiction of the hookah adds a multisensorial element to the painting. At the same time, the gold outline of her dress in contrast to the dark background draws attention to the languid, leisurely lifestyle of women in the royal court. (Written by Hyunji Kim, Theresa Tran, and Olivia Ho)

China, between the 15th and the 17th centuries, has often been compared to the Renaissance in Europe. In this period, paintings were often made using extravagant material such as fine silk. This work by Gu Jianlong with its hybrid use of colors and ink on silk, part of a collection donated by the art historian James Cahill, is representative of this new painterly culture in early modern China. Works that depicted nature and human subjects, such as this one, were highly appreciated and admired at this time. The painting depicts a woman, adorned with jewelry and a fan and wearing fine clothing and a refined hairstyle, surrounded by dry, achromatic trees and stones in an ungroomed bamboo garden. The artist has sharply contrasted the soft flowing lines of her clothing and face in the context of the jagged lines of the rocks and trees. In a similar vein, her elegance is carefully juxtaposed against the unkempt landscape. Her bodily posture—modest, yet consumable to the male gaze—as well as her direct outward gaze, makes her desire apparent. In the 17th and 18th centuries, women were commonly portrayed as dependent and an object of desire or possession. Despite her elegant clothing, which might imply wealth or elite social status, she is still depicted in a way prostitutes were painted in this era. Her direct gaze can also be seen in paintings of prostitutes, intended to establish intimacy with the audience. The lonely landscape with leafless trees and lack of blooming flowers, alongside the seductive gestures of the woman, might offer the perspective of an abandoned woman desiring the attention of male viewers. The garden could be read as further reiterating the woman's state of mind: dry, achromatic, and somber as a result of Confucian virtues of the expectation to be devoted to and obey the words of a man. (Written by Hyunji Kim, Theresa Tran, and Olivia Ho)



Gu Jianlong,
Chinese, 1606-ca. 1688
Beautiful Woman with
Rocks, Tree, and
Bamboo
1683, China
Ink and colors on silk
Gift of James Cahill
2009.32.1



GENDERING THE GARDEN



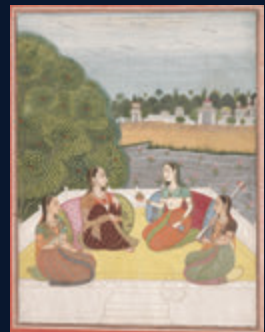
Karnati Ragini
1680-1700, India
Ink and gouache on paper
Gift of Jean
and Francis Marshall
1998.42.212

Painted around the late 17th century, the Karnati Ragini is part of a series of paintings—known as the Ragamala (literally a garland of ragas)—that visualize a range of musical melodies. These works served to give form not just to music but also to the pleasure of looking. Often such paintings depicted a man and a woman: raga signifying the male protagonist and ragini the female. Even the root word for raga relates to color, mood, and delight, an important and often represented aspect of court life. Figured as a manifestation of desire, the raga was associated with “coloring the hearts of men” in early treatises such as the 5th- to 7th-century Brihaddeshi, which makes the play between two women in this painting a fascinating rarity. In the painting, we see the wife of Sri Raga, Karnati (the central figure), playing a stringed instrument alongside another female musician. Seated in the courtyard of a garden terrace, the two women are being served by an attendant with a chauri or fly whisk. Locked in an intimate moment, the two avoid our gaze, creating a connection of their own. While raga paintings typically include a male figure, the omission of a male protagonist offers the possibility of intriguing interpretations. Who are the women playing for? The two women playing the instruments alone in the garden—finding enjoyment in the music itself and their pastoral surroundings—could be read as both objects and subjects of desire. The musicality of the work can be related to both the formal aesthetic qualities of the painting and the multi-sensorial experiences of the court. Indeed, one can almost hear the work. The central placement of the figures within the garden and the viewer’s possible pleasure in seeing this play places the painting within larger tropes of gender, nature, and leisure.

(Written by Isaiah Acosta and Collette Keating)

This painting depicts four women socializing on a terrace, overlooking a river which separates them from the city in the background. The woman on the far right holds a musical instrument and the woman to the left extends her hand out to offer a cup to a woman seated with her knees folded, leaning against a set of pillows. She appears more comfortable and relaxed, implying her higher status or nobility. Gardens during this period were imagined as spaces of pleasure, among other things, where men and women alike could socialize. The primary focus of this leisurely activity was a separation from city life through the evocation of paradise in nature. The large stylized tree on the left and the wide river dividing the space between the terrace where the women are seated and the city in the background reiterate the secluded nature of the garden. The shape of the terrace recalls Buddhist and Hindu architecture in which a square plinth was used to mark a sacred space, implying the garden’s simulation of paradise.

(Written by Jacquelyn Northcutt and Snow Guifoyle)



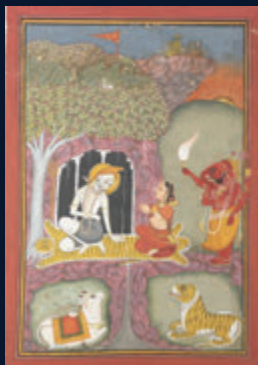
Ustad Mahmud, Indian, 18th
cen.

Ladies on a Terrace
1763, India

Ink, gouache, & gold on paper
Gift of Jean & Francis Marshall
1998.42.84



GENDERING THE GARDEN



Shiva's Family
1730, Rajasthan, India
Ink, gouache, and gold on
paper
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.213

This painting, likely from the Indian state of Rajasthan, has an orange evening sky consistent with the north Indian Kotah style. However, although the work portrays Hindu gods, the artist has borrowed elements from Mughal styles as well, which can be seen in the rounded depiction of boulders. Rather than show a royal court within a garden, this particular painting abandons all human constructions in favor of a purely natural setting. In fact, nature itself serves as the royal garden for the god Shiva and his family, who is seated in a wild landscape. The tiger, a symbol of the wild and untamed aspects of nature, develops an almost domestic quality when Shiva sits upon its hide. Similarly, the cave, which hearkens back to Hindu architectural conceptions of the garbhagriha (primal womb-like chamber) or the inner sanctum of a temple, serves as Shiva's home. The harmonious coexistence between man and nature shown in this painting differs significantly from the relationship depicted in the painting Krishna meets with Radha (1998.42.191), which highlights a garden with water fountains. The water reservoir in the painting, with its man-made walls, contain birds and fish, while the carefully-arranged flora suggest the planters' mastery over nature. The contrasting relationships with nature depicted in both of these paintings correlate with the differing characters of their respective gods: Shiva is an ascetic who lives in the wilderness while Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu, the warrior-king. Moreover, the depiction of gender is also very different in both paintings; while Shiva appears relatively equal to Parvati, Krishna occupies a position of predominance over his female consorts. These contrasting representations of gender within the garden reveal a possibly counterintuitive conclusion: in the wild, Shiva's relationship with his consort appears far more intimate and personal than Krishna's relationship with women within an urban context.

(Written by Valmic Mukund, Cristal Trujillo, and Gio Hur)

Although the artist is unknown, this painting was perhaps produced in the Bundi or Mewar court in western India. In contrast to Shiva's Family (1998.42.213), the painting depicts a luxurious royal garden. Krishna serves as the primary figure of focus in the painting, surrounded by both male and female devotees including Radha, Krishna's consort. This painting shows the mutual love between Radha and Krishna. In the painting, Radha can also be seen as the personification of devotional service to Krishna. Equally importantly, the garden setting could be seen as a place of worship and a manifestation of divine love. Although there are far more trees in this work than that of Shiva's Family, the garden here appears much tamer since it is being occupied by a group in a social setting. The man-made fountain in the foreground of the painting also suggests that there is continuity between the natural and human world. In the process, both worlds unite and allow the natural elements in the painting to be more humanized.

(Written by Valmic Mukund, Cristal Trujillo, and Gio Hur)



Krishna Meets with Radha
ca. 1750, India
Ink, gouache, and gold on
paper
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.191



VESSELS IN THE GARDEN



Bowl
1115-1234, China
Porcelain, northern
celadon
2008.11.33

Four adorable, pudgy boys scamper amidst a delicate background of stylized foliage and leaves on this shallow bowl. All of the boys have a slightly oversized head with a few tufts of air, and hold a lotus from the same root while their necks entangled with stems of the foliage, emphasizing a sense of unity and a scene of happiness. Such representations of children do not play an important role in early Chinese art. But, by the 11th century, the motif—plump, barely clad youngsters—had become standardized and were depicted on ceramics for several centuries. It is highly possible that imagery portraying young boys in foliage was introduced in China through Silk Route trade. The theme of small boys in garden was prevalent in the art of the Roman empire and was often reinterpreted in the early artistic traditions of Gandhara, where it was also incorporated into Buddhist imagery. In addition to the fact that these charming figures express a wish for children and blessings, floral motifs such as lotuses are important representations of paradise and sacred symbolization in traditional Chinese art and had great significance in Buddhist cosmologies. Therefore, this piece could be considered as a fascinating example of global trade that connected ancient Europe, India, and China. The grey-green colored glaze also indicates that this is a Yaozhou celadon produced between 1115 and 1234 CE, where export ceramics was a prevailing trade phenomena and similar type of ceramics could be found commonly.
(Written by Lucia Liu and Andy Liu)

Four women are gathered outside a terrace to enjoy a casual game of what appears to be chess while leisurely inhaling from a hookah. The hookah, a vessel for tobacco and therefore a vessel for relaxation, is glimmering gold indicating the women's high status. The lavish clothing along with the luxurious setting—a garden—also suggests their wealthy status. In the early modern period, the garden had become an important site for leisure, celebration, politics, and even mystic rituals. Consequently, gardens were represented in paintings as well. While gardens had become especially important during the reign of the first Mughal emperor, Babur, it was under emperor Akbar that the Mughal elite enjoyed unparalleled cultural and economic prominence. This new wealth generated an opulent lifestyle, as seen in the painting, as well as the financial means to commission paintings decorated with gold and other expensive pigments. The woman clad in a blue dress highlighted with gold stares intently at the chessboard, waiting for her friend's next move. The figure in the rose-colored attire appears to be distant from the game as she glances down to her right. The main protagonist holds the hookah perhaps implying that, directly or indirectly, she maintains a firm grip on power in this setting.

(Written by Ryan Horne, Maleah Moore, and Alina Herri)



Ladies on terrace
1780-1830, India
Ink, gouache, and
gold on paper
Gift of Jean and
Francis Marshall
1998.42.32



VESSELS IN THE GARDEN



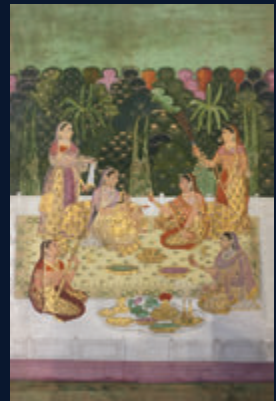
Krishna Meets with Radha
ca. 1750, India
Ink, gouache, and gold on
paper
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.191

This painting depicts the two divine lovers, Radha and Krishna, enthralled by each other's gazes near a lotus pond in the foreground. In the background, one sees a beautiful and lush forest with an array of birds. Krishna holds his panchajanya conch—an attribute of the god—in one hand. The lush foliage in the painting indicates that the painting belongs to the Bundi school, further reinforcing the importance of the garden as a symbol of divine paradise and power. However, the flatness of the figures and the use of vibrant color suggests that the artist also drew inspiration from Mewar paintings, a school of Indian painting which originated around the late 16th and 17th centuries in Rajasthan. Paintings from Bundi have a distinctive emotional appeal. In this instance, the painting evokes a sense of intimacy between Krishna and Radha. Delicate lotus flowers floating in the fountain represent bodily purity, rebirth and eternal beauty. The fly whisk that Krishna's attendant holds is an emblem of royalty that emphasizes the perfect meeting of the two figures. Even the conch shell represents freshness and new hope, exhibiting the relationship between the lovers in a lavish environment. Together, these elements paint a picture which encompasses "vessels" or items that indicate the significance of each person, their place in the garden, and the romantic encounter.

(Written by Esha Dahake and Siena Mazza)

This painting depicts six women and a baby gathered for a celebration. Pink, green, and gold opaque watercolor fills the painting, perhaps setting the scene for the Hindu naming ceremony or the namkaran. This ceremony is one of the sixteen most important Hindu samskaras—or rituals—that celebrate a person's rites of passage. The etymology of the term namkaran comes from the Sanskrit word nam meaning name and karan meaning create. While the namkaran puja often takes place in a temple, the painting possibly depicts the celebration with friends and family in the privacy of a wealthy person's home or garden terrace. The baby is clothed in lavish garments and the women are wearing expensive jewelry, signifying the importance of the celebration. Namkaran celebrations often involve food and gifts, depicted by the trays of green and purple grapes carefully spread in elegant dishes. The mother, holding the baby, is shown as the center of attention: an attendant fans her and the child, another woman plays music, and others offer her a cup. Gold dominates this painting. It is visible not only in the clothes, but in the rug and the utensils, highlighting the physical and cultural significance of gold as a valuable commodity.

(Written by Anoushka Sharma and Anmol Bal)



Princess Holding Child with
Ladies on a Terrace
1695-1705, India
Opaque watercolor and
paint on paper
Purchased with the aid of
funds from the Binney
Foundation 1974.7



VESSELS IN THE GARDEN



Ustad Mahmud, Indian,
18th century
Ladies on a Terrace
1763, India
Ink, gouache, and gold
on paper
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.84

In this painting, four women are depicted on a terrace within a garden. During the Mughal period, gardens were significant sites in both Islamic and Hindu cosmologies. Gardens and bowers were seen as the sacred abodes of Hindu deities and gods were often represented through plants. In Islam, paradise is seen as a garden. Therefore, gardens were places of both divinity and higher authority. However, along with religious connotations, gardens were also elite spaces of leisure. The woman in the upper right appears to be holding a blue and white porcelain container in her left hand and a golden cup on top of a golden plate in her right hand. Blue and white porcelain and gold were both highly desired commodities in this period. Blue and white porcelain from China was valued for its translucent qualities and exported through the trade routes of the Indian Ocean. Gold was another valuable commodity and a sign of wealth and status in India. The artist Mahmud's inclusion of valuable vessels within the setting of a garden highlights the significance of such rarities in Mughal India.

(Written by Paul Lee)

This three-piece Vietnamese ceramic box was recovered from a shipwreck near Hoi An, Vietnam. The objects were produced in the kilns of the Red River Delta (such as in the Chu Dau village), the oldest pottery center in Vietnam. The region was renowned for its high-quality export ceramics that often mimicked traditional Chinese motifs. This work features the "four islands in the sea" Chinese design on the lid with a band of petals surrounding its rim. The cavetto of the bowl is covered in large lotus petal with beautifully painted ruyi patterns. The concave lid is decorated with a bamboo motif, also a popular Chinese design. Vietnamese blue and white ceramics was made from less superior grey-white clay fired in high temperature and decorated with cobalt blue underglaze. The overglaze has been almost completely eroded due to the vessel being submerged in the ocean for a considerable period; bits of barnacles are still attached to the underside of the lid. Although Vietnamese pottery were considered inferior to Chinese blue and white porcelain, such vessels were exported across the Indian Ocean region and hints at the demand of Vietnamese pottery across South and Southeast Asia. People would display these vessels in their homes or use them during gatherings to establish their wealth. One assumes that this piece, too, would be used for the storage of food or jewelry. It is also interesting to note that a number of paintings in this section include vessels that can be linked to either Chinese blue and white porcelain, further highlighting the value of these export commodities.

(Written by Aakriti Aggarwal and Lok Ching (Ella) Chan)



Large covered box with
inset sauce dish and
landscape decoration from
Hoi An Hoard
1467-1534, Vietnam
Ceramics, Vietnamese Blue
Pottery
2000.51.5.a-c

MOBILITY

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN



Mobility is defined as the ability to move freely and easily between two places. In this exhibition, we explore the mobility of goods and ideas through trade and travel in the Indian Ocean region. While trade may typically suggest physical movement, ideologies such as religion were also spread by trading communities. Merchants transported not just cargo, but also their cultures, beliefs, and customs, using elephants, camels, and ships. The Ramayana, a Hindu epic, traveled to Indonesia from India and was transformed through regional influences. Likewise, Iranian-style paintings transformed painterly cultures in India. Through trade, a region's existing culture diversifies and art provides a viewpoint through which we can observe these changes.

SUBTOPICS

This section of the exhibition highlights the transformations that have occurred in South and Southeast Asia in the context of the movement of religious and political ideology. As ideas are shared amongst cultures, they are adopted, assimilated, and translated to fit local paradigms. The section focuses on a 19th-century Ramayana textile banner from Bali that makes visible localized iterations of ideas shared across the Indian Ocean through trade and mobility. While Ramayana, the story of Rama saving his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana, originated in India, it made its way to Southeast Asia over time, leading to changes and transformations in representation and meaning. The mobility of such religious ideas allowed for rich cultural exchange that has impacted the essential beliefs and practices of societies in South and Southeast Asia.



POWER & EXPRESSION

Western modernity and globalization has impacted, and been impacted, by South and Southeast Asian art. As antithetical and contradictory worldviews function in tandem in the age of neoliberal capitalism, the depiction of the World Trade Center in New York by an Indian folk artist makes visible the intersections between global capital and local aesthetic styles. Paintings of composite camels and chained elephants, vehicles of mobility themselves, highlight modernity's increased control over the natural world as a testament to the expansion and consolidation of power. In this section, cross-cultural exchange is presented as reciprocal and multi-faceted, where no single region's artistic culture is seen as superior or inferior.

IDEOLOGICAL MOBILITY





MOBILITY



Sita Devi, Indian, 1914–2005
World Trade Center
1970s, Mithila, Bihar, India
1999.25.44

In the 1970s, Sita Devi painted the World Trade Center after visiting New York. Sita Devi was a folk art from Mithila, a region in northeast India. The painting includes dazzling geometric patterns delineated by black outlines filled with vibrant colors, suggesting that this was the Bharni style of coloring within Madhubani art from Mithila. Sita Devi represents the American architectural landmark through a particularly Indian lens: In her painting, the World Trade Center resembles an Indian temple with its decorations on the top, while the use of red, orange, and purple creates a sense of festivity. Sita Devi emphasizes decorativeness as she deliberately sacrifices natural proportions for symmetry and ornamental values. The artist also features herself in the elevator in memory of this novel experience. Madhubani painting was originally a tradition practiced by women of the Mithila region on the mud walls of their homes, especially to commemorate marriages. But the tradition was revealed to the rest of the world following an earthquake in 1934, and Madhubani artists started painting on paper, canvas, and cloth soon after. Passed through generations of women, this artistic style served as a form of communication and empowerment that granted women mobility in a society where they were confined to household roles. The shift in medium allowed for the social mobility of these female folk artists to become global artists. It also allowed for increased mobility of artworks, as they were sold across the world. The fact that a Western landmark symbolic of globalization is portrayed by an Indian female artist also highlights the idea of the mobility of people, artists, and artistic styles in the broader context of cross-cultural communication.

(Written by Ryan Keane, Jingyi (Annie) Zhou, and Brenda Whited)

The two figures in the photograph are Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur, the prime minister of Nepal from 1901 to 1929 during the Rana dynasty, and Nanda Kumari. Upon returning from a tour of Europe—the second prime minister of Nepal to do so—Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur made a number of changes in Nepal. He remained conservative, but is known for abolishing slavery, making murders for witchcraft illegal, establishing Nepal's first college, and becoming an ally to the British, specifically during the First World War. It is said that he, comparing Nepal to other countries in Europe, was not satisfied with the ways in which the country was represented. The existence of this hand-colored photograph indicates the importance of the prime minister, as there are not many similar works from Nepal. The hand-coloring on the photograph was utilized to enhance realism before color photography was invented. This practice, beginning in Europe and spreading soon after, became popular particularly for Japanese landscapes, but did not seem to gain popularity in Nepal. This further indicates the value of this photograph, both in its original context and today. The color in this image, the clothing of the figures, and the medium of photography in general showcase the mobility of art practices, commodities, and technological advancements in the modern period. These choices offer insight into the prime minister's ambitions of situating himself and Nepal within a modern global network.

(Written by Kat Wharton and William Goodwin)



Portrait of Chandra Shamsher
Jang Bahadur and Nanda Kumari
ca. 1920, Nepal
Hand colored silver print
Gift of Jan Leonard and Jerrold A.
Peil 2002.43.60



MOBILITY



Chained Elephant
1820-1830, India
Ink and color on paper
1974.8

One need only to imagine a person of power commissioning an artist to draw a portrait of his magnificent elephant. The elephant depicted here, undoubtedly a royal vehicle, illustrates the juxtaposition of mobility and immobility. Although this piece was created after the disintegration of the Mughal empire, it is consistent with the prominent style of representation of that era, which consisted of making realistic portraits, focusing mainly on animals and plants as subjects. This specific style of representation was simultaneously being used in Europe and India in order to categorize animal and plant species from the 16th century onwards. In contrast to the art which was being created in Europe as a means of categorization, the use of chains here adds context and depth. Rather than creating a portrait of an elephant in its natural habitat, the animal is intentionally depicted in chains—separating the elephant from its own world and placing it into the world of the dominating humans. The idea of categorizing nature and depicting it as separate from humans was indicative of a modern ideology, which viewed humans as superior and in control of the natural world. This drawing could symbolize this shift in the power-relations between human and nature through the simultaneous representation of the elephant as a vehicle for human transportation and a contained and restricted possession for human wonder.

(Written by Julio Lopez and Eugenell Mae Lopez)

Although the artist of this single-paged watercolor painting remains unknown, this piece is representative of the adoption and proliferation of 12th-century Iranian composite animals during the Mughal empire (16th-19th century CE). A lady is seated on top of a composite camel, which is guided by a horned demon. The lack of sky and the vast expanse of greenery behind the subject matter exemplifies the limitlessness of the earth and the possibilities for the subject to travel, bringing multiple musical instruments such as a tambourine and a stringed lute along on the journey. Contained within the camel's legs are a distinct set of animals: the tiger, mountain lion, duck, and the hare with their mouth open and wrapped around the next animal's torso. This predator to prey balance encapsulates the dynamic hierarchy of life that is harmonious and under one ruler. The abundance of luxurious commodities such as gold ornaments, elaborate textiles, colorful garments, and stringed instruments is indicative of the consumption patterns of Mughal elites during a time of flourishing trade. Additionally, the use of camels as transportation marks the continuous and expansive growth and intermingling of various economies and cultures since the Silk Route trade. Though the destination of the travelers remains elusive, the fusion of mythical and worldly elements creates a cohesive image unaffected by temporal and spatial barriers.

(Written by Rahul Chekhuri and Joyce Kye)



Composite Camel
18th century, Murshidabad,
eastern India
Painting, gouache and gold on
paper
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.37



MOBILITY

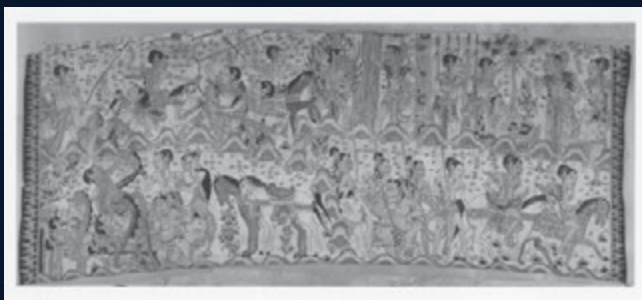


Newly released captives on board HMS London, Zanzibar
Zanzibar, late 19th century
Photograph; Albumen print
2005.3.2

This photograph was taken on the H.M.S London, a British Royal Navy ship first launched in 1840. The photograph can be placed within a historical framework of British colonialism and the trans-oceanic slave trade that commodified both objects and bodies. The HMS London was a second-rate ship of the Royal Navy and served as a depot ship in the Zanzibar Bay after sustaining damage during the Crimean War. Those pictured in the photograph are African slaves serving on the ship during her time in Zanzibar, and were freed from slavery by the Royal Navy in 1882. While the Navy stopped illegal trade in enslaved Africans, the overexposed white background nonetheless stands in stark contrast to the mass of black bodies in the center of the image. The photograph erases the particularity of individual faces and the bodies of the subjects are homogenized, dehumanized, and commodified. The gaze is still colonial, dominating, and possessive—taken from afar and slightly from above—creating a distinct separation between the photographer and the photographed. This work reveals the ways in which racialized bodies were commodified as producers of labor and points to the instances of forced mobility across expanses of ocean and land.^t

(Written by Jady Lee and Kieran Zimmer)

IDEOLOGICAL MOBILITY: THE RAMAYANA



Episode from the Ramayana
19th century, Bali
watercolor and ink on fabric
1974.39

The banner depicts a scene from the Ramayana, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. The Ramayana chronicles the story of Rama (an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu) in his quest to find his wife Sita, who had been abducted by the evil raksasa (demon) king Ravana. The epic is attributed to the sage Valmiki between the 5th and 1st centuries BCE. This scene, which may draw from a Javanese version of the Ramayana known as the Kakawin Ramayana, depicts the Battle of Lanka in the Kamasan style of Balinese painting. When comparing the Balinese banner to contemporaneous 19th-century Indian depictions of the Battle of Lanka, several stylistic differences can be observed. The Indian paintings are vibrant with a more diverse color palette and the figures have stockier builds with more naturalistic proportions. The Southeast Asian figures are depicted with long limbs, lean figures, and flat angular faces. The thin black outline of the figures are visible, likely due to the limited color palette, and there is an emphasis placed on the movement in the figures' joints. This draws stylistic parallels to the long standing tradition of Balinese puppet theater, Wayang. In certain areas of Indonesia, puppets were considered by some to be objects of which religious deities and spirits could temporarily inhabit. Thus, it is possible that the figural depictions may resemble puppets to possess similar capabilities to those of actual puppets, inviting the divine to reside in the painted depictions.

(Written by Shreya Kareti, Lily Ramus, and Steven Zhou)



IDEOLOGICAL MOBILITY: THE RAMAYANA (CONTINUED)

This banner depicts several scenes in the climactic battle between good and evil, which takes place in Lanka, the realm of Ravana. The heroes—Rama and his faithful younger brother Lakshmana—have crossed a man-made bridge to Lanka. In the upper-left quadrant, Rama and Lakshmana charge into battle mounted on horses, driving back Ravana's army. Just to the right of this, Ravana's son Indrajit may be confronting a fearsome creature devouring a snake. This is the legendary bird Garuda, who later in the narrative scares away the snakes that threaten Rama and his brother. In the upper-right quadrant, the gray-skinned Indrajit reports to his father, Ravana (depicted seated), at his court. In the bottom-left quadrant, Indrajit has shot snake-noose arrows at Rama and Lakshmana. The section shows phases of the scene in which the brothers are strangled by the snake-nooses. Vibhisana, Ravana's brother who is allied with Rama, and a female figure with her hair let down, showing a widowed status, look on. This suggests this woman is Sita. The demons with checkered loincloths may be the "jesters" Twalen and Merdah, who are specific to the Balinese tradition. Subsequently in the narrative but not depicted here, the legendary bird Garuda descends and scares away the snakes, waking Rama and his comrades. In the bottom-right quadrant, Rama and his army have recovered and march off to battle again with Vibhisana (who walks just behind the brothers), and Twalen and Merdah trail behind them. Notably absent in this depiction are the monkey troops that accompany Rama in the epic.

(Written by Shreya Kareti, Lily Ramus, and Rowen Hunter)

As the Ramayana traveled from India to Bali and the rest of Southeast Asia, the story became embedded into the life and culture of Southeast Asian people. They reiterated and altered the epic so that it reflected their own social aspirations and ideological beliefs. For example, in India, Rama is worshipped as an actual god but Rama is considered only a significant figure in Bali. In Laos, the Ramayana is not even considered a Hindu epic. Instead, it is considered to be a Buddha origin story. When mainland Southeast Asian societies embraced Buddhism, Rama began to be regarded as a Bodhisattva. In this context, the early episodes of the story were emphasized, symbolizing Rama's Buddhist virtues of filial obedience and willing renunciation. Furthermore, throughout the region, Hanuman enjoys a greatly expanded role in Southeast Asian interpretations; he becomes the king of the monkeys and the most popular character in the story and is a reflection of all the freer aspects of life. The presence of Hanuman in the piece is founded on a syncretic belief with roots established from Tao literature referencing "deleted" scenes Hindu devotees lack in their version. Within the piece itself he is showcased multiple times with a plaid covering and gold adornments along with the flying demon surrounded by dragon-esque serpents. This demon is at war with Rama who directly faces the demon in battle within the upper-portion of the banner. Regardless, some aspects of the Ramayana remain the same throughout South and Southeast Asia. Performances of this epic are ubiquitous in these regions. Acrobatics, elegant dance and opulent costumes can be found in portrayals of the epic. The Ramayana, though viewed differently in both regions, portrays the story of a beautiful relationship, one characterized by adventure and romance that remains uniform towards old and new followers within the region.

(Written by Joshua Jiwannmall, Jalen Gelb, and Zhipei Xu)

The significance of physical mobility manifests both in the formal content and in the context/material of the Ramayana banner itself. The depiction of horses on the banner is not only reflective of a means of transportation, but it also embodies a symbol for political power during the era of colonialism. Although horses were originally domesticated in the steppes of central Asia during the second millennium BCE, it quickly spread to Southeast Asia—particularly in Bali, Java, and Indonesia—in the late 15th century during European colonialism in the region. An animal that was selectively bred for stature and speed, the horse was very much an imperial agent. Horses were often utilized for mobility for warfare, similar to how they are depicted in the Ramayana banner. While the representation of the horse speaks to the mobility of imperial power, the banner itself is a mobile object used to spread religious ideas. The banner is made of a flexible cloth, which would have allowed for it to be rolled up and carried anywhere by a single person. In Indian contexts, such banners were used to aid storytelling, their relatively compact size and material allowing storytellers to carry them to various places. In Bali, these same Indian epics, along with local stories, were often shared through performing groups and puppet theaters. In Indonesia, this banner might have been used in a similar way to those in India, serving as a mobile backdrop for the spreading of religious stories. Thus, when this banner was used as a backdrop for performances, the ideas, story, and style contained in it could be transported and preserved across space and context.

(Written by Amy Zhong, Brigitta Rehn, and Coby (Jacob) Zhong).

A GLOBAL HISTORY OF WATER



Across the globe, civilizations are shaped by the waters around them. Bodies of water such as the Indian Ocean generate creation myths, the economies of trade and migration, and cultural identities. The relationship is reciprocal: Not only has water been the root of displacement in society, but by harnessing its power, environments have been crafted to maximize economic, political, and spiritual authority. The fluidity of water is simultaneously defined by its tangible form and its ability to both manipulate and be manipulated. Controlling access to water has allowed communities, individuals, and empires to gain great power. Moving beyond South and Southeast Asia, this section makes visible water's multidirectional impact on art and culture across Africa, Asia, and North America.

SUBTOPICS

The function of water as bountiful, whether as a means of exchange, a sacred resource for life, and a commodity, is pivotal in South and Southeast Asia. On the one hand, water is elevated as a powerful force in the realm of religious imaginations. On the other hand, when viewed through the framework of trade and commerce, water is perceived as a bountiful resource that humans control and manipulate. Water can thus simultaneously be perceived as a resource in colonial photography and a vital source of life for all creatures and a realm of sacred mythologies in Indian painting. This section showcases how perspectives drastically shifts when water is perceived through different lenses.



WATER & DISPLACEMENT

From mass migrations due to flooding along the Yangtze River to water carriers in Egypt, civilizations have controlled or been controlled by water. Seen as both a form of displacement and containment, the effects of water in its various forms is explored in this section. While some of the works depict water as containable and transportable, for instance the photograph of an Egyptian water carrier or a Vietnamese kendi (pouring vessel with a spout), other works such as the Korean-American artist Theresa Cha's 1975 artist book and Michael Cherney's photograph annotates water as a powerful form of displacement. Water, we see in this section, indelibly shapes the environment, people, and other lifeforms dependent on this natural resource.

BOUNTIFUL WATER



WATER & DISPLACEMENT



Kendi with (replacement) lid, with floral and lappet designs
Late 15th-early 16th CE, Vietnam
Ceramic pottery
2001.51.6.a-b

This kendi was intended to be transported as a trade product, but the 15th-century Hoi An shipwreck altered its course, leaving it submerged for centuries until its excavation in 1999. Before meeting its fate in Hoi An, Vietnam, this ship was transporting artifacts from Chu Dau, one of the most prominent pottery and ceramics centers in Vietnam. At the time, the Chinese Ming dynasty ruled over this province, and it quickly became a key porcelain manufacturer, although Vietnamese artists still incorporated their own artistic touches to the pieces. Our kendi was one of 244,000 ceramic artifacts unearthed from the Hoi An shipwreck; despite being submerged in the ocean for over five centuries, the kendi remains beautifully preserved. It has a glossy finish and its rotund base curves up to a bulbous spout used for pouring liquids into cups and bowls. The slender neck of the kendi is held while pouring or used for directly drinking from it. The glaze on the piece suggests that it was used in more formal settings, as unglazed ceramics were used for mundane purposes. The journey of this vessel reveals an intriguing duality: the kendi would have been an object used for transporting and holding liquid and, at the same time, it is the water of the ocean that has simultaneously dislocated and preserved the kendi. The shipwreck altered the kendi's identity over time, shifting it from a tool to an artifact because it was never used for its intended purpose. Like the Egyptian water carrier in this exhibition, this kendi is meant to be a vessel for transporting water, but due to the failure of an even larger vessel, the ship, the kendi came to be held by the ocean. The contradiction of this kendi's fate opens the door to a fascinating question: Was the kendi's value preserved because of the ocean's protection or was it compromised because the kendi never reached its destination?
(Written by Sukhmony Brar and Cameron Hui)



Michael Cherney,
American, b. 1969
2013-2014, China
Photography, ink
and stamp mark
on mica-flecked
Xuan paper,
wutong wood
box
2013.33

This photo was initially taken on 35mm black and white film, from which a portion was enlarged to make the grain of the film more visible. The grain introduces uncertainty to the image, removing a clear reference point in order to capture the scene itself in the photograph. In addition, the image is printed on Xuan paper, a soft type of paper traditionally used for calligraphy or painting. Its affinity for absorbing water causes a further blurring in the final printed copy of the image, making it less vivid, almost adding a hazy effect to the work. Michael Cherney's style and materials are modeled after Chinese landscape paintings. However, the subject of ships within this photo symbolizes Asia's move towards a more industrial, westernized type of life. In this work, the artist encapsulates water worlds and the history of trade in it. The ship's placement in the famous Yangtze river symbolize trade, movement, and industrialization, which simultaneously displace the native people. While the ships are necessary in order to develop infrastructure, they also pollute the waters that people depend on to survive.

(Written by Cameron Hadley and Nicholas Nolte)



Yun Fei Ji, Chinese, b. 1963
Three Gorges Dam Migration
2009, Beijing
Wood block printed on scroll
2015.8

The artist Yun Fei Ji utilized traditional Chinese printmaking techniques in order to document the displacement of people in the Yangtze region that he witnessed as the Three Gorges Dam was being erected. Because he came of age during the Cultural Revolution, which he describes as “a time of immense chaos and confusion throughout the country,” his work aims to deconstruct and expose the darker side of industrial development in contemporary life through classical Chinese techniques. This banner depicts one of the largest displacements of people in Chinese history. After visiting the Yangtze region, Ji witnessed the effects of natural displacement caused by the Yangtze River’s frequent floods. The substantial length of the scroll depicts numerous groups of people and their own reactions to not only the severe natural floods but also to the government’s construction of the dam. Although there are two factors caused the displacement of people here, the frequent floods should be considered as the driving factor. Ji utilized the traditional Chinese technique to show the entire scroll as an interconnected piece even though the figures within the piece may seem disconnected from one another. One significant part to be noted is that Chinese paintings usually depict the beauty of landscapes; here, Ji chose a rare theme to illustrate the power of natural diseases. Illustrated in the scroll, there are scenes of families traveling with their belongings in search of a new home, elderly folks reluctant to leave the place they call home, and debris left from the flood. Though these depictions may seem separate and individualized, viewed together they form a theme of displacement mainly caused by natural force.



WATER & DISPLACEMENT



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,
American, 1951-1982

Presence Absence
1975

Bound visual novel. Photo-
copied.

1992.4.487

At the age of twelve, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha emigrated from South Korea. With her family, her trans-Pacific migration included time spent in Hawaii before settling in San Francisco. Her visual novel depicts a picture of her family successively becoming more obscure as wave-like trajectories fill up each individual page. This concept of progression is characteristic of Cha's work, that depict a narrative over time through a constant medium. Cha utilizes the form of a book in order to convey a stark contrast between a typical family photo album and her own, revealing how her familial experience differs from that of a family that did not move across water. As shown through the entirety of her book, the repeatedly Xeroxed image is slowly moving off the edge of the page and becomes more and more blurred. The movement is symbolic of how she was relocated by crossing the Pacific Ocean, and ultimately was separated from her family. It is the increased opacity that demonstrates how water is what comes between and divides her family, due to the fact that they did not emigrate at the same time. Water as displacement is depicted through the physical separation of what was once her home and the emotional separation within her family.

(Written by Alyssa Mae Legaspi and Jessica Nathan)

Since the initial settlement of ancient Egypt in the time of the Old Kingdom, the control of water, particularly the control of the flood, has been associated with power. Water management formed one of the key components of Egypt's political system, encompassing more complex crop irrigation systems as well as carriers who transported water for daily village activities. In the photograph, one can see how the amphorae used for water collection formed a part of daily life in Egypt. Water can be seen both as a representation of life and as crucial to sustaining it. The photo was taken in the 1880s and shows that, despite the effects of colonization and westernization, some traditions such as the use of the amphora were seen as too important to lose. The depiction of vessels and containers here contrast sharply with other displayed works that show a stylistic rendition of water-carrying vessels. For example, ceramic kendi vessels (2001.51.6.a-b) play an important role in not only daily life but in religious rituals as well and is often depicted in paintings in the hand of Hindu gods such as Brahma and Shiva. In contrast to the more commonly-used Egyptian amphorae, the kendi was also seen as a ritual container for holy water occasionally used for the purification ceremony of kings. In relation to the overall theme of water as a form of displacement, the photograph depicts how the control and management of water as a resource was inseparable from the fabric of daily life in Egypt.

(Written by Jaide Lin and Tara Menon)



Zangaki, Georgios and Constantinos (Attributed to); Bonfils, Félix (Attributed to)

Egyptian water carrier filling pot
with woman behind screen
ca. 1870-1880, Egypt
Photograph; Albumen print
2005.3.49



BOUNTIFUL WATER



Lalita Devi, Indian, b. ca. 1945
Krishna Adorned and the Churning of the Sea of Milk
20th century, Mithila, Bihar, India
Ink and color on cloth
1999.25.20

Lalita Devi is a traditional Madhubani artist, known for her depictions of Maithil traditions, fables, and religious scriptures. From the region of Bihar in northern India, Madhubani art has been passed down through generations of women. While originally painted on the walls of a married couple's house to bring prosperity, its meaning has expanded as artists shifted to paper. Today, Madhubani painting has become a symbol of Indian folk art and its popularity in the global art market has resulted in the creation of NGOs to promote this art style. Composed of two panels, the painting's right segment depicts the mythological narrative of the churning of the ocean. The devas or gods and asuras or demons churn the ocean together, hoping to obtain amrita, the nectar of immortality. Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma are to the right of the goddess Lakshmi, who is in the center. In the narrative, the god Shiva—the third figure on the right in this painting—drinks poison that emerges during the churning, turning his throat blue. This painting relates to the exhibition's overarching theme of commodifying the bountiful substance of water. The water, which in this story has become a device to obtain amrita, is elevated beyond a source of life to a source of immortality. The water's transparency, expressed through thin lines, makes visible not only the devas and asuras' divine power, but also the organic life surrounding it. (Written by Alex Clendenning-Jimenez and Neha Shah)

❁ BOUNTIFUL WATER



A Man drinks from the stream
1776-1800, India
Painting
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1999.15.15

In this 18th-century painting, the artist depicts a man bending to drink the water from a flowing stream. Next to him, his horse too has a protruding tongue, creating an image of dehydration. The two seem to be on a journey, making a brief stop to replenish their bodies with the bountiful water. The man is surrounded by other animals; three birds and two squirrels in the tree above, and two fish in the stream below. The water not only environmentally connects the man to the animals within the painting, but compositionally connects them as well. Water is a major resource for living, acting as a source of life by providing sustenance to all the organisms it reaches. The painting serves as an intermediary to the other works depicting water as bounty. As opposed to only considering water as a catalyst for transportation such as the colonial ports, the transparency uncovers water's own autonomous complex system and the support that it gives. Water acts not only as a body to tread over, but a body to tread through. The transparency of the water signifies its sacred vitality, bridging the connection between sustenance, environment, and the mythological. As it acts as a key resource to nurturing life, water is figured as a divine entity. The water's divinity is highlighted by the water's ability to provide accessible nourishment. The transparency conveys submergence through the inclusion of the legs of the man and the horse, which allows for them to be immersed in the water and become a part of the ecosystem.

(Written by Taiz Salazar, Chanea Smith, and Graciela Mocerí)



Matsyavatara (Fish avatara of Vishnu)
18th Century, India,
Painting;
Gift of Jean and Francis
Marshall 1998.42.82

In this painting, Vishnu, incarnated as the Matsyavatara, appears as a half-fish, half-man with four arms holding a lotus, flute, conch, and a disk. It is believed that Vishnu embodied a total of ten avatars, and that the matsya (fish) was his first. In the sea, towering over Vishnu's right is a multi-headed snake and seated on a shell to his left is a demon. King Manu (often identified as king Satyavrata), a devotee of Vishnu, was offering water to a deity in the river Kritmala when he saw a small golden fish asking for protection from the big fish in the river. As it was the king's duty to protect those who asked for protection, he put the fish in a small pot filled with water. In a short amount of time, the fish outgrew the pot and kept growing. Finally, the king put the fish into the sea. The fish was Vishnu and told the king of a great flood that will happen on the seventh day, and asked the king to prepare a boat with pairs of all animals, insects, herbs, and seeds. While the flood began, Vishnu appeared in the form of Matsya and told the king to use Vasuki, the large serpent, to carry the boat to a safer place. Because Vishnu resides in and rises from the sea, the water transcends from a physical location to a symbol of spiritual bounty and importance. Furthermore, the story of the Matsyavatara shows water as a source of destruction, but in order to have destruction there must be creation. Water's bounty, as seen in the organic life in the painting's transparent waters and its religious importance highlights creation, while simultaneously being used as a tool for destruction.

(Written by Lily Tennekoon and Kathy Moua)



BOUNTIFUL WATER



Bridge Across the H, The West
Branch of the Ganges, Calcutta
1860-1880, Calcutta
Photograph; Albumen print
2002.43.89

Calcutta was the capital of the British Raj from 1772 to 1911, serving as the center of British rule in the Indian subcontinent and an important hub of global trade. The bridge in the photograph towers above the water's flat, nondescript surface. In the foreground, ox-drawn carts and people carry on with their daily labor. In the distance, industrial steam can be seen rising over the cityscape. The depiction of such massive infrastructure was important to the British ethos of conquest and economic domination. The bridge connects the two sides of the Ganges, facilitating trade and implying the empire's power to dominate the natural landscape by forcefully transcending natural barriers. As well as its subjugation, the colonial perspective reflects a complete commodification of the water; the river is now only a conduit for trade and commerce, quite literally losing its depth when compared with other works. In *Man Drinking from Stream* (1999.15.15), the man is pictured interacting with fish and other water-dwelling creatures. In mythological portrayals of the ocean such as *Lalita Devi's Churning of the Sea of Milk* (1999.25.20), the sea is brimming with strange creatures and mythological beings. While the distinction between painting and the medium of photography is important, the focus of this image on the bridge, boats, and city infrastructure indicate a colonial vision. (Written by Holly Stoufer, Nikolai Oh, and Samantha Kim)

History of Art 30:
Introduction to the Art and Architecture of South and Southeast Asia



Taught by Professor Sugata Ray and Ariana Pemberton, Photo by Julie Wolf

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) staff, especially Larry Rinder, Director and Chief Curator, and Lynne Kimura, Collections Engagement Associate and Academic Liaison; to the Academic Advisory Committee of BAMPFA and chair Lauren Kroiz; to Cathy Koshland, BAMPFA Board President and Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education; and to the Museum Social Justice Initiative. We would also like to thank Ariana Pemberton, our Graduate Student Instructor, for her help and insightful suggestions in preparing the exhibition and catalog.

Catalog designed by Alina Henry, Anika Cruz, Angelica Quetua, and Pamela Carbajal
Conceived, curated, and authored by students in History of Art 30: Introduction to the
Art and Architecture of South and Southeast Asia, Fall 2019, UC Berkeley
