

## News Release

# Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860

Part of the V&A India Festival

24 June – 11 October 2015

[www.vam.ac.uk/linnaeustripe](http://www.vam.ac.uk/linnaeustripe) | #LinnaeusTripe



Amarapura: Colossal Statue of Gautama Buddha to the North End of the Wooden Bridge, 1855. Collection of Charles Isaacs and Carol Nigro

Captain Linnaeus Tripe (1822-1902) was a pioneer of early photography who created an outstanding body of work depicting the landscape and architecture of India and Burma (now Myanmar) in the 1850s. This major presentation of Tripe's photographs includes more than 60 of his most striking views taken between 1852 and 1860.

On display are Tripe's photographs of architectural sites and monuments, ancient and contemporary religious and secular buildings, as well as roads, bridges, moats, landscape vistas and geological formations throughout India and Burma. Many of the images are the first photographic records of these sites and the prints on view represent the highlights of Tripe's output. They are shown alongside bound albums of his work, a panoramic scroll and two models of monuments similar to his subjects.

Linnaeus Tripe was born in 1822 in Devon, the ninth of 12 children, joining the East India Company army in 1839 and stationed in India throughout the 1840s. He learned to photograph during several years on leave in England in the early 1850s. The exhibition highlights Tripe's considerable skill at a time when photography was about to undergo rapid change and the practice and recognition was becoming more widely adopted. It also shows his understanding that photography could be used to convey information about unknown cultures and places to the general public.

The photographs on view represent two major expeditions and preserve an important period in Indian, Burmese and British history. In 1855 Tripe was appointed by the governor-general of India to accompany a mission to Burma to study the area. Here Tripe became the first person to photograph the region's remarkable architecture and landscapes. He then went on to be the first to photograph extensively in south India after his subsequent appointment as photographer to the Madras government. Through this official role Tripe aimed to capture as much of the south Indian region as possible. After each trip he returned with more than 200 large format paper negatives, from which he carefully oversaw the complex printing in his Bangalore studio that he founded for this purpose.

Tripe's photographs are technically complex and he is known for his innovative precision with the camera, paying close attention to both his composition and its realisation when printing. To evoke atmospheric effects Tripe retouched most of his negatives by applying pigment in thin layers and included in the exhibition are a selection of waxed-paper negatives that reveal these working methods. Also on display will be a segment of a panoramic scroll showing the inscriptions around the base of the Great Pagoda temple in Tanjore. Composed of more than 20 prints assembled and mounted onto a long canvas scroll, it is now regarded as a considerable technical achievement, given the physical and climatic conditions of the time.

*Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860* is organized jointly by the National Gallery of Art, Washington and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in association with the V&A. It includes photographs from the collections of the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum, the British Library and many private lenders, as well as photographs and objects from the V&A's own extensive collection of Tripe's works.

**-ENDS-**

#### **Notes to Editors**

- *Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860* is curated by Roger Taylor, Professor Emeritus, Photographic History, De Montfort University. It has been adapted for the V&A by Martin Barnes, V&A Senior Curator of Photographs
- The exhibition is FREE to attend
- The exhibition is accompanied by a book *Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860*, by Roger Taylor and Crispin Branfoot with Sarah Greenough and Malcolm Daniel, Delmonico Books.
- Versions of the exhibition have been shown at: National Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2014 – 4 January 2015; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 24 February – 25 May 2015; with the final presentation and the only venue in Europe at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 24 June – 11 October 2015.
- Part of the V&A India Festival

#### **About the V&A India Festival**

The V&A will present a series of exhibitions, displays, events and digital initiatives that will explore the rich and varied culture of South Asia, both past and present. The India Festival will mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Museum's Nehru Gallery, which displays some of the most important objects from the V&A's South Asian art collection produced between the 16th and 19th centuries. It is also 25 years since the launch of the Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections (NTICVA), which encourages the study, preservation and display of India's art and cultural heritage.

**For further PRESS information please contact Lucy Hawes on 0207 942 2500 or [l.hawes@vam.ac.uk](mailto:l.hawes@vam.ac.uk) (not for publication). A selection of high resolution press images is available to download at <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>**