



News Release

V&A India Festival

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This autumn the Victoria and Albert Museum presents 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 marks 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. The V&A has one of the greatest collections of South Asian art in the world, and is particularly renowned for its Mughal court arts, textiles, paintings and sculpture. 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.

Highlights of the V&A's 2015 India Festival

- ***The Fabric of India*** (3 October 2015 – 10 January 2016), the highlight of the India Festival, is the first major exhibition to explore the incomparably rich world of handmade textiles from India. On display are around 200 objects that illustrate the skills, variety and adaptability of Indian textile makers, including previously unseen treasures, ranging from the earliest known Indian textile fragments to contemporary fashion. The exhibition is complemented by an international conference on Indian textiles, taking place from 6-7 November 2015. Supported by Good Earth India, with thanks to Experion and NIRAV MODI.
- Major exhibition ***Jewelled Treasures: The Al Thani Collection*** (21 November 2015 – 28 March 2016) will present around 100 spectacular objects drawn from a single private collection. It will showcase jewellery and jewelled objects made in, or inspired by, India from the 17th century to the present day. Sponsored by Wartski.
- ***When Soak Becomes Spill*** (23 October 2015 – 31 January 2016), a new installation on Exhibition Road from renowned contemporary artist **Subodh Gupta**. Born in Khagaul, India in 1964, Gupta is known for adapting everyday Indian objects into large scale installations. His work reflects on his heritage and global themes of consumerism, the environment and the common man.
- ***Kalpataru: The Wishing Tree*** (10 November 2015 – 6 January 2016), a festive light installation in the Grand Entrance of the V&A by Delhi-based designers Sarthak and Sahil. Named after a wish-fulfilling divine tree in Hindu mythology, the installation

celebrates the concepts and customs associated with the ancient Hindu festival of Diwali, or 'the festival of lights'. With thanks to Peter Louis and Chandru Ramchandani.

- ***The Art of Indian Storytelling*** (11 August 2015 – 24 January 2016), a display that will explore methods of storytelling in India, presenting popular objects from the 19th century to the contemporary, including illustrated books, playing cards, a storyteller's box and a shadow puppet.
- A display of ***Warli Paintings*** (14 November 2015 – 3 July 2016) at the V&A Museum of Childhood, a tribal artform originating from the Thane region, north of Mumbai, which has had little exposure in the West. Developed in collaboration with A Fine Line. Supported by The Helen Hamlyn Trust.
- ***Musical Wonders of India*** (16 September 2015 – 31 October 2016), a digital project by the V&A in partnership with Darbar, a South Asian classical music organisation. 19th-century musical instruments from the V&A's collection will be juxtaposed with footage of leading contemporary musicians playing similar instruments of more modern date, enriched by interviews with the musicians and other experts. A number of the 19th-century instruments will also be installed within the Nehru Gallery, complemented by live performances in the Museum. Supported by The Helen Hamlyn Trust.
- A broad and varied programme of debates and lectures, including the annual **Benjamin Zucker lecture on Mughal Art** in November 2015.
- A lively programme of educational events for adults, children and families comprising talks, performances, courses, screenings, storytelling and special events. A cultural festival focussed around Diwali is planned for **October half term** (24 October – 1 November). Half term events with thanks to Peter Louis and Chandru Ramchandani.
- The festival will also mark the culmination of an **online cataloguing project**, funded by the Parasol Foundation Trust, which has resulted in full catalogue entries and new photography of 8,500 paintings, textiles and hardstones being available on the V&A's Search the Collections database: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

The V&A's Nehru Gallery was opened in November 1990 to give an evocative setting to the Museum's important collection. Highlights include Tipu's Tiger, a life-sized carved and painted wood model seen in the act of devouring a prostrate European figure, the golden throne created for Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a wine cup made of white nephrite jade for the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, Mughal paintings dating to the late 16th and early 17th centuries, stunning examples of textiles and dress, and a 19th-century jewelled sword belonging to Maharaja Holkar decorated with diamonds, rubies and emeralds.

Coinciding with the opening of the Nehru Gallery at the V&A in London, the Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections (NTICVA) was set up in India. Central to its foundation was the V&A's ambition to make its collections and those of other UK institutions more accessible to scholars

from India, and to support the development of scholarship on Indian art and culture more generally. For the past 25 years the NTICVA has enabled scholars and professionals from India and the UK to develop and share skills and gain access to cultural resources in both countries. These aims are met primarily through administering grants and offering a range of awards, from three month fellowships to be held in the UK to projects for fieldwork in India. The Trust has awarded nearly 500 awards in total. It has created a vital network between scholars and professionals in the two countries, with many alumni now in senior academic, museum and conservation positions in India and the UK.

Ambassador Ajai Malhotra IFS (Retd.), newly appointed Chairman of the Nehru Trust, said: *“Over the past quarter century The Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections at the V&A, working closely with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and a wide range of other organisations in India and the UK, has contributed significantly to the development of professional skills and scholarship in museology and conservation in India. The NTICVA will even more actively promote interest in India’s vast and magnificent art and cultural heritage in the years ahead. Through our annual awards and other initiatives we will also focus on increasing awareness about the value of museums and the importance of conservation efforts.”*

The V&A also maintains active partnerships with many institutions in India and recent years have seen a varied programme of exhibitions touring to the country. In 2010 the V&A, together with the British Library and British Museum, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Museum of India, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Culture in India, which outlined its continuing commitment to exchanges of staff and the provision of professional advice.

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