

+

+

Ascribed to Faizullah

Lucknow, India

Krishna Fluting, 1775

Gouache and gold on paper

Lent by Nancy Wiener Gallery L.2014.4.1

Krishna, the beloved avatar of Vishnu, plays the flute to a mesmerized crowd gathered on the riverbank. In the distance, cows and cowherds strain to hear the melody. The mood is mirrored in the beautiful landscape of delicate rocks, flowers, trees, and a blue sky streaked with spectacular orange clouds. Lucknow, northwest of Calcutta, had become a major center of Indian cultural and intellectual life by the late 18th century, frequented by European and Indian painters circulating between Lucknow, Delhi, and Calcutta. An inscription on the city wall at the middle left attributes this work to the artist Faizullah.

+

+

+

+

A master of the first generation after Nainsukh

Kangra or Guler, India

Krishna and Radha Exchange Clothes, 1775

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Lent by Nancy Wiener Gallery L.2014.4.2

Krishna and Radha, Krishna's favorite cowherdess, approach a secluded forest, slipping away from the populated countryside. They have exchanged clothes so that Krishna can trick others into thinking he is a woman, allowing them to be alone together. He wears her sari, she wears his crown and long garland—an exchange that also symbolizes their unity.

+

+

+

+

Kangra, India

**Lovers Watching an Approaching
Thunderstorm, 1780–90**

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The Margaret McMillan Webber Fund 92.102

Two lovers embrace on the terrace of a white building, gazing at the oncoming storm. The prince points to the heavy clouds and lightning bolts, which have startled white cranes into flight. A graceful peacock perches on the building's eave, stretching its head in anticipation of rain. The artist has carefully depicted the landscape: at the lower right, parrots peck at ripened mangos while a banana-laden tree bends under the weight of its fruit. In the distance, cowherds urge their flock towards shelter in the green hills.

Servant ladies attend to the couple, holding fans, pipes for smoking, and a covered dish, while female musicians perform on the lower level. The strains of the stringed *vina* and the drumbeat of the *tabla* seem almost audible and in keeping with the music of the storm, a metaphor for the couple's passion.

+

+

+

+

Kishangarh, India

The Vilaval Ragini, 1780

Opaque watercolor, gouache, and gold on paper

Gift of Catherine and Ralph Benkaim 83.111

This painting depicts a classical Indian melody (*raga*) personified as a beautiful woman (*ragini*). In South Asian painting traditions, many courts produced painted albums of musical melodies, known as *ragamalas*. Indian princes hired musicians to perform *ragas* at their courts as part of Sanskrit dramas in which different *ragas* were associated with seasonal changes and figures of worship, making nature a particularly poignant feature of this genre.

The woman on a golden footstool represents the Vilaval raga, performed between 9 a.m. and noon. In poetry and painting, she appears as lovely courtesan awaiting her lover while preparing for adornment in front of a mirror. Here, she stands beside her two ladies in waiting, one holding a mirror, the other a tray of golden flasks. Even without her makeup, sarus cranes have flocked around her, enchanted by her beauty.

+

+

+

+

India

Pink Lotus, 18th or 19th century

Folio from an album

Opaque watercolor on paper

Anonymous gift of funds 84.44b

Mughal elites commissioned albums from their own artistic ateliers, filling them with elaborately illuminated calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. This painting of a fresh pink lotus with stylized green stems and leaves would have been kept in an album, demonstrating an ongoing interest in artistic observations of the natural world. The lotus is among the most important flowers in the visual arts of India; many gods are shown holding lotuses, almost invariably sitting or standing on an open lotus in full bloom. As expressed in many poems and visual works, the flower is symbolic of beauty and purity, and, most often in devotional literature, is a metaphor for the human heart.

+

+

+

+

India

Folio from a Manuscript of the *Ramayana*,
1595–1605

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The Jane and James Emison Endowment for South Asian and Indian Art and the Helen Jones Fund for Asian Art 2010.6.2

This folio comes from a well-known, widely dispersed manuscript of one of the most important Hindu epics, the *Ramayana*. Probably commissioned by a high-ranking Mughal official in northern India, and damaged by fire, it shows Rama, the epic's blue-skinned hero and an avatar of Vishnu, standing on the right next to his brother, Lakshmana. They have arrived at the foot of the demon Ravana's palace to rescue Rama's wife Sita, held captive in the golden fort in the distance. They command an army of bears and monkeys, led by the monkey king Hanuman and the bear king Jambavan, against Ravana's demon armies. The lively, colorful rendering shows the artist's skill in illustrating the natural world and conveying movement, particularly seen in the demons lurking behind the rocks.

+

+

+

+

Mankot, India

Vasudeva Carries the Infant Krishna Across the Yamuna River, early 18th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 93.3

Amid pouring rain, Vasudeva crosses the Yamuna river with his infant son Krishna in his arms. A prophet had predicted that a son of Vasudeva would slay the reigning king, Vasudeva's brother Kamsa, so Kamsa planned to kill Vasudeva's children. Knowing this, Vasudeva secreted Krishna to foster parents in a nearby village across the river, where he grew up in disguise among the cowherds.

The natural world plays an enormous role in portraying the drama of this scene. The multi-headed serpent rises out of the water to shield Vasudeva and Krishna from the rain like an umbrella. The roaring tiger at the other side of the river likely symbolizes the dangers surrounding Vasudeva and Krishna, and the river itself is swirling with countless whirlpools.

+

+

+

+

Bhavani Das

Kishangarh, India

The Stallion Jukaldan Ayragi, early 18th century

Opaque watercolor on paper

The Katherine Kittredge McMillan Memorial Fund 92.115

Indian princes prized their animals, often commissioning portraits of their favorites. This portrait of a piebald stallion is unique for several reasons, most of all because we know its name: Jukaldan Ayragi. This is revealed in the Devanagari and Persian inscriptions atop the page, which translate as “The horse Jukaldan Ayragi, with tenacious face, belonging to this land.” In the upper lefthand corner is the signature of the artist, Bhavani Das, a rare occurrence. While we don’t know who owned the horse or commissioned this painting, the artist did complete several other paintings at the Kishangarh court in Rajasthan, where he was the most highly paid state employee.

+

+

+

+

India

Manuscript Map of Northeast India, 1765–70

Ink and watercolor on paper

Courtesy of Arader Galleries L.2014.5.1

An early example of colonial cartography, this French-labeled map shows the Ganges River and its many tributaries snaking through the vast area—dotted with British settlements and forts—between Delhi in the northwest and modern-day Bihar in the southeast. Colonial companies invested heavily to find navigable river routes, making this map a valuable tool that was probably secreted away and closely guarded. Likely designed by French cartographers collaborating with Indian land surveyors, the map was created during heightened tensions between colonial powers, the British having pushed French forces out of Calcutta in 1757, and may have been intended to help the French prepare for future military struggle.

+

+

+

+

Edward Lear

English, 1812–88

**Figures on the Banks of the River Hoogly,
Tollygunge, Calcutta, 1874**

Pencil, gouache, and watercolor on paper

Courtesy of Arader Galleries L.2014.5.2

A famous English artist and poet, Lear toured India in his later life as a guest of the colonial viceroy, sketching landscapes and composing “nonsense songs.” The riverbank and temple depicted here are located at a British-made canal named Tollygunge, which connected East Bengal to Calcutta. Lear described Tollygunge’s beauty in his journal, noting its “general misty grayness, more like English than Nile scenes at early morning, owing to the profusion of vegetation.” Interestingly, Tollygunge later became the primary studio location of the renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray, whose film *Charulata* can be seen in this gallery.

+

+

+

+

Calcutta, India

Castor-Oil Plant, 1790–1800

Gouache and pencil on paper

Courtesy of Arader Galleries L.2014.5.2

An Indian artist painted this large image of a castor-oil plant, known for its medicinal properties, for Major James Nathaniel Rind, an English colonial agent stationed in Calcutta after 1789. Rind was an enthusiastic collector of Indian paintings and also commissioned a number of zoological and botanical studies.

+

+

+

+

India or Iran

Rug, 19th century

Cotton and wool

Gift of Mrs. C.C. Bovey 41.68

Carpets from Iran, India, and Turkey were essential adornments, a prestigious demonstration of status, in the finest homes of India and Europe—a fact attested to by numerous paintings of aristocrats depicted with Eastern carpets. Once draped over tables and benches, carpets were used primarily as floor coverings by the 18th century.

Indian artisans produced rugs with Persian designs, obscuring their origin. This rug bears a traditional Persianate pattern of peacocks, vases, and flowers, and could be from India, but is likely an Iranian import.

+

+

+

+

After Pietro Foglia, artist

Italian, 1617–91

Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Draakestein, author

Dutch, 1636–91

Frontispiece for vol. 1 of *Hortus Indicus*

Malabaricus, 1678–1703

Hand-colored engraving

The Dwight and Helen Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P.17,680

This title page perfectly illustrates the melding of Indian and European sources in the creation of van Reede's tome describing the medicinal properties of Indic plants. The artist Pietro Foglia inscribed the title in the center of a classical Greco-Roman entablature, upheld by two caryatids, in the middle of a tropical garden. In the foreground, he invents an Indian goddess of botany, who holds a rake and is attended to by four Indian cherubs. Every illustration within the *Hortus* also attests to the synthesis of European and Indic descriptive practices by listing the local plant name in Roman, Malayalam, Nagari, and Arabic scripts.

+

+

+

+

After Pietro Foglia, artist

Italian, 1617–91

Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Draakestein, author

Dutch, 1636–91

Nialel

From *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, vol. 4, 1678–1703

Hand-colored engraving

The Dwight and Helen Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison
Van Derlip Fund P.12,210

+

+

+

+



Photography is not allowed in this gallery.

+

+

+

+



Photography is not allowed in this gallery.

+

+

+

+

After Pietro Foglia, artist

Italian, 1617–91

Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Draakestein, author

Dutch, 1636–91

Kaida-taddi

From *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, vol. 2, 1678–1703

Hand-colored engraving

The Dwight and Helen Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison
Van Derlip Fund P.17,681

+

+

+

+

After Pietro Foglia, artist

Italian, 1617–91

Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Draakestein, author

Dutch, 1636–91

Kaida

From *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, vol. 2, 1678–1703

Hand-colored engraving

The Dwight and Helen Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison
Van Derlip Fund P.17,682

+

+

+

+

After Pietro Foglia, artist

Italian, 1617–91

Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Draakestein, author

Dutch, 1636–91

Tenga

From *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, vol. 1,

1678–1703

Hand-colored engraving

The Dwight and Helen Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison
Van Derlip Fund P.17,683

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Oriental Magpie Robin with Katydid and Leaf

Hopper on Monkey Jack Branch, 1778

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.1

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Crepe Ginger Plant, 1780

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.2

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Brahminy Starling on Neem Tree Branch, 1780

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.3

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

**Brahminy Starling with Two Antheraea Moths,
Caterpillar, and Cocoon on Indian Jujube Tree,
1777**

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.4

+

+

+

+

Ram Das

Calcutta, India

Spotbilled Pelican, 1780–82

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.5

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

**Black-hooded Oriole and Insect on Jackfruit
Stump, 1778**

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.6

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Hwamei on Terminalia Branch, 1780

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.7

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

**Red-whiskered Bulbul and Aganais Ficus Moth
on Kadamba Branch, 1777**

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.8

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Indian Roller on Sandalwood Branch, 1779

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.9

+

+

+

+

Sheikh Zain al-Din

Calcutta, India

Rufous Treepie and Caterpillar on Branch, 1777

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.166.10

+

+

+

+

Ram Das

Calcutta, India

Grey Heron, 1780–82

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark L.2013.178

+

+

+

+

Bhavani Das

Calcutta, India

Rohu Fish, 1780–82

Folio from a series commissioned by Lady Impey,

Opaque colors and ink on paper

Courtesy of Arader Galleries L.2014.5.4

+

+

+

+

George Edwards

English, 1694–1773

The Swallow Tailed Indian Roller

From A Natural History of Uncommon Birds and Gleanings of Natural History, 1802–5

Hand-colored engraving

The Minnich Collection, the Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund
P.18,934

A Natural History of Uncommon Birds, originally published between 1751 and 1764, was an early and important contribution to the burgeoning field of ornithological illustration in England. This depiction of an Indian Roller illustrates the predominant conventions for representing birds at the time, showing it in a static profile view and perched on a stump. The detail may be exacting, but the representation is very different than the approach taken to showing Lady Impey's birds.

+

+

+

+

John James Audubon

American, 1785–1851

Orchard Oriole, for *The Birds of America*
(Bien ed.), 1860

Color lithograph

Gift of Charlotte Griffin Weld P.99.8.1

Audubon remains the most famous American artist of birds to this day. He grew up in France but fled in 1803 to escape Napoleon's draft, settling on his father's farm outside of Philadelphia. He later migrated to England, where he found an enthusiastic market for his huge bird drawings, made in a size he termed "double elephant." These nesting orioles show Audubon's flair for lifelike depiction, a trait his works share with Lady Impey's commissions.

+

+

+

+

Birdcalls: The ambient sound in this gallery was composed by musician Brian Tighe from the calls of every bird in Lady Impey's paintings along with samples from the soundtrack of Satyajit Ray's film *Charulata*.

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

Who Invented the Modern Way of Showing Birds?

James Audubon is often credited with inventing a more dynamic and lifelike manner of depicting birds, showing them in flight and in their natural habitats. But it's a myth—one that Audubon himself perpetuated. While it's true that earlier bird artists focused more on conveying scientific detail (see George Edwards's *Indian Roller* at left), not all depictions were stiff. Intriguingly, several of Lady Impey's lifelike bird paintings found their way into an English earl's collection after her death—the same earl who became one of Audubon's earliest benefactors. Were Lady Impey's energetic birds Audubon's true inspiration?

+

+

+

+

India

Writing Desk on Stand, c. 1725–50

Desk: rosewood, ivory inlaid with lac and silver; stand: ebony and other wood

Gift of funds from Mona W. Brown, the Ferndale Foundation, Barbara Jabr, Al and Mary Agnes McQuinn, Mahendra and Asha Nath, and the Ethel Morris Van Derlip Fund 95.57a-k

In her Calcutta home, Lady Mary Impey might have penned letters from a desk remarkably similar to this one, a type that Indian artisans in the southeast coastal city of Vishakapatnam produced for elite Indian and European patrons. In fact, a painting of her sitting room (as seen on the wall panel labeled “Lady Impey’s Menagerie”) depicts a wooden chest of drawers with an identical ivory inlay.

The desk is a fusion of styles: the foldout writing lid, drawers, and ball-and-claw feet reflect English furniture design while the silver ornamental gallery on top and the rippling curves of the legs where they meet the table seem to mimic the architecture of India.

+

+