



V&A announces first major exhibition celebrating the ‘Golden Age’ of the Mughal Court

The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence

9 November 2024 – 5 May 2025

Galleries 38 & 39, V&A South Kensington

- **First major exhibition presenting the monumental artistic achievements of the ‘Golden Age’ of the Mughal court (c. 1560-1660)**
- **Rarely seen objects drawn from the V&A collection alongside national and international loans**
- **Shining a light on the internationalist culture of the great courts, combining artistic inspiration from Hindustan, Iran and Europe**

Today the V&A announces details of a major new exhibition *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence*, which will present the monumental artistic achievements of the ‘Golden Age’ of the Mughal court (c. 1560-1660). Opening November 2024, the exhibition will celebrate the extraordinary creative output and internationalist culture of Mughal Hindustan during the age of its greatest emperors.

Across three sections, displayed chronologically, the exhibition will span the reigns of Emperors Akbar (r.1556-1605) Jahangir (r.1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658), with a particular focus on the craftsmanship, arts and creative outputs of the courts. Over 200 objects will be on display, including rarely shown paintings, illustrated manuscripts, brilliantly coloured carpets, and delicate textiles, as well as architectural pieces and vessels made of mother of pearl, rock crystal and jade, and precious metals.

The exhibition will include both famous and little-seen objects from the V&A, as well as loans from museums across the world. On display will be four rare folios from the colourfully illustrated volumes of the *Hamza Nama*, or ‘Book of Hamza’, commissioned by Akbar in 1570, on loan from the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, and the ‘Ames Carpet’ (c. 1590–1600), a woven carpet from the imperial workshops, on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and on display in the U.K for the first time.

Susan Stronge, Curator of *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence* said: “*This is the first exhibition to reveal the international art and culture of the Mughal court. Hindustani artists, Iranian masters and a few Europeans came together in the imperial workshops to create a new, hybrid art. We are pleased to display some of their greatest creations, many of which have never been exhibited before.*”

The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence will examine the extraordinary hybrid art created in the imperial workshops by Iranian and Hindustani artists and craftsmen working in the Persian-speaking court and producing work of unparalleled quality. The exhibition will also explore the influence of European art on the workshops, which were introduced to the court by Christian missionaries, foreign ambassadors, and merchants.

The Mughal dynasty was founded in 1526 when Babur, a Central Asian prince descended from Timur (d.1405) and the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan (about 1162 – 1227) invaded the land he knew as Hindustan (the Indian subcontinent). He seized the Delhi Sultanate from its ruler and laid the foundations of what would become one of the world's great empires. The dynasty would become known by the Persian word for Mongol. Persian, the language of culture across Iran and Central Asia became the official language of the Mughal Empire. At its peak, the empire controlled a large portion of the Indian subcontinent, extending from Kabul in present-day Afghanistan to the borders of the Deccan sultanates in the south of the subcontinent, and from Gujarat in the west to present-day Bangladesh in the east.

Highlights of the exhibition will include: a unique wine cup crafted from white nephrite jade, made for Shah Jahan in 1657, shaped with the head of a ram and inscribed with his title, one of the most exquisite surviving objects from the Mughal court: two vivid paintings by Jahangir's famous artists depict exotic animals, a North American Turkey Cock, and an African zebra: on loan from the Al Sabah collection for the exhibition will be a number of a unique bejewelled objects, including a gold dagger and scabbard set with over two thousand rubies, emeralds and diamonds: four rarely seen folios from the colourfully illustrated volumes of the Hamza Nama, or 'Book of Hamza', commissioned by Akbar in 1570, on loan from the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna Also on loan from the Al Sabah collection will be an extremely important deep red engraved spinel of Jahangir and Shah Jahan and Ulugh Beg, Timur's grandson.

Finally, on display in the U.K for the first time, will be the Ames carpet (c. 1590–1600), on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This carpet woven in the imperial workshops demonstrates the interconnectedness of art at the Mughal court. Scenes inspired by manuscript painting are combined with borders in purely Iranian style.

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For further PRESS information about *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence* please contact Shannon Nash on s.nash@vam.ac.uk.

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

Support for the V&A is more vital than ever. *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence* has been supported by the Huo Family Foundation, The Al Thani Collection Foundation, Blavatnik Family Foundation, with further support from Maithili Parekh and Shashank Singh, Santi Jewels and the V&A Americas Foundation

About the V&A

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity. Our mission is to champion design and creativity in all its forms, advance cultural knowledge, and inspire makers, creators and innovators everywhere.

V&A South Kensington is a world of extraordinary global creativity, with unmissable exhibitions, experiences and educational programmes for all. One of London's most iconic buildings, it is home to national collections of art, design, fashion, photography and furniture to theatre, performance, architecture, and ceramics, as well as the UK's National Art Library. It is a place where everyone can experience a story of creativity that spans 5,000 years and every creative discipline, which brings that story to life through programmes and activities for all ages and specialisms, and world-leading research and conservation. Vam.ac.uk

About the Huo Family Foundation

The Huo Family Foundation's mission is to support education, communities and the pursuit of knowledge. Through its donations, the Foundation hopes to improve the prospects of individuals, and to support the work of organisations seeking to ensure a safe and successful future for all society. The Foundation aims to make art more accessible to all through its support for galleries, museums and centres for the performing arts. <https://huofamilyfoundation.org/>

About The Al Thani Collection Foundation

The Al Thani Collection Foundation is a non-profit organisation whose core mission is to advance and promote art and culture. This objective is principally delivered through public art initiatives including sponsorships, museum projects, the staging of exhibitions, an international loans programme and academic publications, honouring artistic achievement across a rich diversity of cultures.

About The Blavatnik Family Foundation

The Blavatnik Family Foundation supports world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and across the globe. Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, founder of Access Industries, the Foundation advances and promotes innovation, discovery, and creativity to benefit the whole of society. Over the past decade, the Foundation has contributed more than \$1 billion to over 250 organizations. See more at www.blavatnikfoundation.org

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With additional support from Santi Jewels:

About Santi Jewels

Santi, founded in 2019 by Krishna Choudhary, creates a small number of highly individualistic, one-of-a-kind jewels inspired by the Mughal era, bringing a fresh and unseen modern facet to the arts of Indian subcontinent.