

Divine Landscape

A self-guided walk through the ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS



INSPIRED BY

The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur

GARDEN *and* COSMOS

ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES 29 OCTOBER – 26 JANUARY 2010

Ganesha, Saraswati, and Jalandharnath (detail), identified here as a copy of folio 1 from the Nath Purana, attributed to Amardas, c1825; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 47 x 123 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust

Between the 17th and 19th centuries maharajas from the Jodhpur region in northwest India created pleasure palaces with luxurious gardens in stark contrast to the surrounding desert. The gardens were the centre for religious festivities and royal pastimes. Court life is lavishly portrayed in the paintings on view in the exhibition *Garden and cosmos: the royal paintings of Jodhpur*. Indian deities, omnipresent in the landscape, are depicted in lush groves and holy ashrams in shimmering compositions.

There are seven stops in the Divine Landscape walk, each matching a painting in the exhibition with a location in the Royal Botanic Gardens. With the inspiration of the maharajas, we invite you to wander through the tranquil beauty and sensuous delights of our own surroundings.

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1

The gopis search for Krishna (detail), folio 4 from the *Krishna Lila*, Jodhpur, c1765; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 63.5 x 136.5 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust

The gopis search for Krishna

When the mischievous Krishna disappears from the forest during the evening of revelry, the bereft and fretful gopis seek their beloved among the thickets and groves.



La ballarina

A beautiful and recently restored statue from 1883 gleams white against masses of dark green foliage. It is a copy of a famous statue, *La ballarina*, by the Venetian sculptor Antonio Canova. Statuary was in abundance in the Royal Botanic Gardens in the late 19th Century giving them a distinctive Victorian character.



2

Musical merriment for Maharaja Bakhat Singh and Prince Vijai Singh, attributed to 'Nagaur Master', Nagaur, ca. 1736; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 43.5 x 61.3 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust



Musical merriment for Maharaja Bakhat Singh and Prince Vijai Singh

Royal gardens in India united visual and aromatic elements in an effort to create ultimate sensual pleasure. Water, trees, flowers, birds, animals, wind and light combined to enhance the seductive experience.

The Band Lawn with the royal connection

This lawn was a popular spot for regimental bands and was named after the bandstand that stood here between 1858 and 1911. The Paper Bark, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, and Cabbage Tree Palm, *Livistona australis*, that can be seen on the southern end of the lawn, were planted in 1881 by Prince George (later King George the V) and Prince Albert.

This area has always been a favourite part of the Royal Botanic Gardens due to the lovely views across Sydney Harbour. Marrying couples are often seen 'saying their vows' among the trees and flowers, while other visitors simply enjoy the ambience.

3



The creation of the cosmic ocean and the elements (detail), folio 3 from the *Shiva Purana*, c1828; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 45.5 x 124 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust



The creation of the cosmic ocean and the elements

The god of creation, the four-headed deity Brahma emerges from the splendid lotus in a state of bewilderment. Voicing the fundamental questions of existence, Brahma asks 'Where have I come from? Who is my creator?'

The 'Lotus Pond'

The Lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*, is one of the most beautiful flowers in the world and is revered in the East as a symbol of fertility, nobility, holiness and purity. Due to its display of all the stages of growth simultaneously bud, flower and seedpod—the Lotus is also a symbol of the past, present and the future. Lotus flowers are an oddity in the plant world as they can generate their own heat. They are able to maintain a temperature of 30°C though the surrounding temperature may be much lower.

As you view the blanket of lotus in the pond, contemplate not only 'where you have come from' but also 'where you are going!'

4



Maharaja Bakhat Singh delights in an outdoor musical performance (detail), attributed here to the 'Nagaur Master', Nagaur, 1737 (Samvat 1794); opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 52.1 x 42.5 cm (image). Mehrangarh Museum Trust



Maharaja Bakhat Singh delights in an outdoor musical performance

The maharaja focuses on the six musicians with rapt attention. Three pairs of birds are mating suggesting a sexual encounter between the maharaja and one of the women. Fertility and fecundity are symbolised by the avenue of flowering trees.

Twin Ponds — our own billabong

Hanging over the southern end of Twin Ponds is a Coolabah Tree, *Eucalyptus coolabah*, like the one referred to in the much loved Australian song 'Waltzing Matilda'. You may also like to take a seat by the 'billabong' and recall the words written by Banjo Paterson. The ponds are an oasis for waterbirds such as the Pacific Black Duck, *Anas superciliosa*, the Chestnut Teal, *Anas castanea*, and the Dusky Moorhen, *Gallinula tenebrosa*.

5



Jalandharnath at Jalore (detail), Amardas Bhatti, ca. 1805–10; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 29 x 39 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust



Jalandharnath at Jalore

Amid a dense, luxuriant garden of flowering trees, vivid blossoms, and tall palms with radiating fronds, the immortal ascetic Jalandharnath meditates within a marble pavilion.

The landscape is bathed in the rosy light of early evening. Ethereal qualities are heightened by diminutive celestial beings emerging from rolling clouds to sprinkle golden flowers on the scene.

The Vista Pavilion

Magnificent views across the Royal Botanic Gardens to Sydney Harbour can be observed from this octagonal shelter pavilion built in 1907. Large flowering trees, tall palms and sweeping lawns can be seen in the distance. The late afternoon sun casts a magical spell over this beautiful vista. This is a perfect place to enjoy the serenity of the Gardens.

6



Vishnu and Lakshmi in their heavenly palace (detail) Nagaur, c1755–60 Opaque watercolour on paper; 44.5 x 62.2 Mehrangarh Museum Trust



Vishnu and Lakshmi in their heavenly palace

The Hindu god Vishnu and his companion Lakshmi sit under a golden umbrella on a floor designed to look like a sea of flowers. The holy couple are offered food and delicacies, music and dance. The atmosphere of this heavenly court—with gardens, building and background trees—is one of a joyous celebration.

The Palace Rose Garden

The Royal Botanic Gardens contains the Palace Rose Garden, a very special area with 1800 roses. The beautiful blooms and the seductive scent fill the air with romance and make the garden a perfect setting for a 'joyous celebration' of weddings.

The Royal Botanic Gardens employs sustainable horticultural practices in growing roses. Information can be found on: www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au



7

Ganesha, Saraswati, and Jalandharnath (detail), identified here as a copy of folio 1 from the Nath Purana, attributed to Amardas, c1825; opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 47 x 123 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust



Ganesha, Saraswati and Jalandharnath

Jalandharnath sits in a clearing under a tree and raising his hands in the gesture of teaching, he reveals to his followers that he created the cosmos. Within the lush landscape the artist has created an intimate scene of contemplative interaction. The auspicious deities Ganesha and Saraswati appear in two other vignettes in this painting which introduces a religious text.

Lawn 9, an ashram in the city

The Garden Palace, which was the venue of Australia's first International Exhibition in 1879, spanned across Lawn 9 to the Conservatorium of Music. It was the largest building in Sydney at the time. In 1882 it burnt down mysteriously. Today this grass area is bordered by a lush landscape, creating an intimate 'ashram' and a favourite place for city workers to relax and enjoy the tranquillity of the Royal Botanic Gardens.



Botanic Gardens Trust
SYDNEY

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