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Whatever the keywords for this decade be, one needs to be essentially responsible and responsive towards architecture and the community.

AR. SOURABH GUPTA
Studio Archohm



FORGOTTEN MASTERS

indian painting for the east india company at the wallace collection london, uk

commission : nissen richards studio, London, uk

Guest-curated by renowned writer

and historian William Dalrymple, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company* is the first UK exhibition of works by Indian master painters that were originally commissioned by officials from the East India Company in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The exhibition represents an unprecedented opportunity to see these vivid and original paintings together for the first time. Nissen Richards Studio undertook both the exhibition and the graphic design for the show, along with the script-editing.



The artists behind the stunning natural studies of flora and fauna in *Forgotten Masters* were not credited at the time of commission and the exhibition restores proper authorship in almost all cases. Artists whose works are on show include Shaikh Zain ud-Din, Bhawani Das, Shaikh Mohammad Amir of Karriah, Sita Ram and Ghulam Ali Khan. An important aspect of Nissen Richards Studio's interpretive approach was the way in which the works are introduced to visitors ensuring that, for the first time, the artists come first, with artist portraits featuring in the very first vista of the exhibition.

The array of dazzling and often surprising artworks, which reflect both the beauty of the natural world and the social reality of the time, offer a rare glimpse of the cultural fusion between British and Indian artistic styles during the period. The artists hired by East India Company often created artwork albums, such as the famous Impey album, commissioned by Lady Mary Impey, and were heirs to an artistic

tradition of precise observation whose roots lay in medieval Iraq and Iran. The miniaturist art style was brought to India by the Mughal Empire and the training that it involved enabled artists to adapt to the later requirements of the science-obsessed English aristocrats and officials of the East India Company, using the modern paper insisted on by the commissioners, whilst still being presented in the Mughal album tradition. Other paintings in the exhibition focus on people, from soldiers to beggars, and on buildings, from the grandeur of the Taj Mahal to everyday village life.

The exhibition layout creates a very different feel for this space with the long central space being subdivided into room-sets to create five thematic showcase areas, using single-colored walls that relate to and complement the paintings in order to create instinctive step-changes for visitors. New, sub-dividing wall structures at the perimeter create the feel of a series of rooms. The internal surface of the linking threshold



doorways has been painted a cool white to create a theatrical break between themes and underline a sense of transition as well as an accent between the brighter colors as visitors look down the whole space. The existing light-mid toned timber flooring also ensures an overall sense of balance with the saturated intensity of the colored walls. The interiors of the showcases that punctuate the space have been lined in a fabric that suggests the natural textures of silk dupion in bright colors that contrast with the walls.

The sections of the exhibition are: The Master Artists of Lucknow; Sheikh Muhammed Amir of Karriya and Yellopah of Vallore; The Natural World; The Master Artists of the Impey Album; The Late Mughal Master Artists of Delhi and Agra; Sita Ram and the Hastings album. Information on individual artists and artworks is presented via a simple and subtle graphics approach that references the symmetry of the botanicals within the artworks on display. Information on each of the five showcase sections has been applied directly onto the walls in black or white and set within decorative borders directly inspired by the paintings. A similar decorative motif has also been used for the map locations in the entrance area. if

