

LOVER

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Return of the Prince

October 25, 2021

As a novice art collector — only two years in — unless you count the Shilpa Gupta soap artwork I picked up from this installation in 2010, one of the problems I've never had is in having art in storage. While too much art in storage feels like first world problem, it is in fact, a first world problem. Thanks to colonisation and museums' practises of collection (see also our latest story on Vitra Design Museum here), art from once colonised countries has ended up in museum back rooms all over the Western world out of sight and out of mind.

And so we love these two recently launched projects initiated by local artists to bring historic artworks back home in two unique ways.



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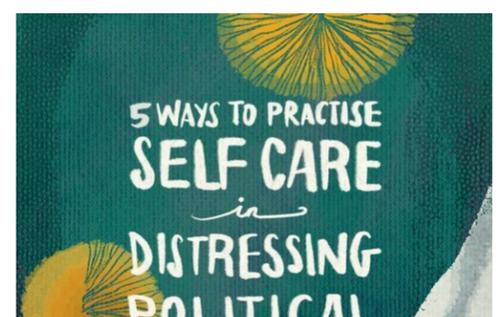
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A PRINCE HAVING AUDIENCE
17TH CENTURY MUGHAL
OPAQUE WATERCOLOR AND GOLD ON PAPER
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BOSTON

In Bagh-e-hind, art critic and perfumer Bharti Lalwani, who has previously written about her practise on LOVER collaborates with historian, gardener and scholar Nicolas Roth, to create scent translations of five 17th and 18th century Mughal and Rajput paintings handpicked by the latter.

The virtual exhibition asks the question 'What would it mean to smell and taste heritage?' and takes the viewer into the immersive worlds of art, heritage, perfumery, horticulture and process, based on the five central smell themes from the paintings: rose, kewra, narcissi, smoke and iris.

Take the narcissus painting above — a personal favourite of Nicolas who chose paintings that have particularly prominent or complex olfactory elements. “It depicts two aristocratic young men sitting across from each other on a garden terrace and sniffing sprigs of narcissus, with a little bowl of what appear to be jasmine blossoms on the ground between them.”

Bharti on the other hand, is partial to its perfume translation. “Constructed from pure narcissus extract, indole, synthetic animal musk, and cashmeran aroma molecule, this scent attempts to translate the atmosphere of poetry and luxury in the pale moonlight,” she tells us. “We also observed other elements in the painting, in particular the peacock feather whisk, luxurious garments, shawls, textiles covering bolsters, wool and silk carpets. The ‘Objects’ section of this chapter includes a number of these items, virtually borrowed from various museums — my favourite are the carpet weights or “mir-i farsh” that Nicolas drew my attention to.”

The vast, engaging online exhibit showcases conversations, writings, flowers from Nicolas’ own garden, scent-related objects, rugs, and artworks from personal and public collections including the Victoria and Albert museum, Aga Khan museum, Brooklyn museum and many, many more. Bharti's incisive comments "The British Museum catalogues this painting as 'Found/Acquired: India'" make the browse additionally pleasurable.

While the vivid descriptors, accompanying imagery, poetry and even sounds and songs, handpicked by architect Uzair Siddiqui (featured previously on our journal) are meant to conjure a synaesthetic experience so that viewer can experience the scents for themselves, for those in aid of imagination, the accompanying giftshop offers Bharti's original work: agarbattis, Edible Perfume™ and limited edition Synaesthesia artworks that allow you to experience the scent translations first hand.

Browse the exhibition at baghehind.com.



Earworm meets visual feast in the video for Grip, a modern electronica single from Indian music producer OAFF (Kabeer Kathpalia) with Landslands (Sohrab Nicholson), where London-based editor and filmmaker Thomas Rebour uses classical Indian paintings as 'raw material'.



[Download the zine here.](#)

Our Journal



Return of the Prince

A homecoming for Mughal and Rajput paintings via two unique museum projects.



We like Indian Design at Vitra Design Museum

Guest curator Khushnu Panthaki Hoof on her selection for the ongoing exhibition featuring women in design.



What Design Can Do

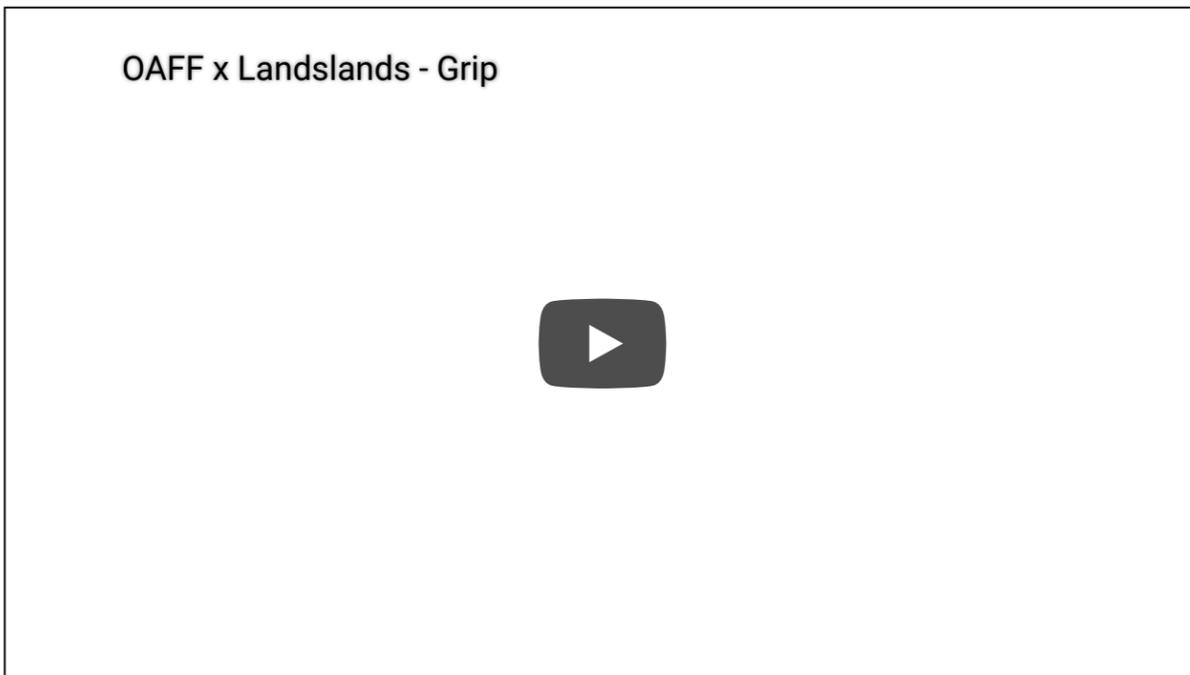
Ayush Chauhan of UnBox on the No Waste Challenge and the need for local design solutions.



We reached out to Kabeer to understand their process. “The song obviously came before the video. The music has this strong pulsating beat and I wanted to explore that visually. Thomas started using European renaissance paintings that were open access from museums. I thought it looked great but it had no connection to where I was from,” he tells us. “I felt it might be interesting to give the song an Indian context to the song since most of my other videos don’t necessarily feel Indian. I remembered as a child how fascinated I was by Amar Chitra Katha. The idea of using classical Indian imagery in this music video resonated with me on many levels.”

The result is a mesmerising music video that juxtaposes characters from Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings at a dizzying pace, employing a technique Thomas describes as ‘kinestatic stopmotion’. “I downloaded over 500 Indian paintings and artworks from both the Smithsonian and the MET’s public domain collection and started organising and categorising them. This took about a week of focused attention. Once all the images were categorised, I was able to slowly assemble sequences together – frame by frame.”

Watch the video below – hundreds of views/listens may be ours alone.



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