

MEDIA RELEASE

Treasury of the World

Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals

World-famous exhibition makes Asian premiere at the Asian Civilisations Museum

10 February 2010, Singapore – A majestic 600-year-old balas ruby inscribed with the names of its six imperial owners, a gold turban ornament set with emeralds and diamonds, and a magnificent dagger and scabbard encrusted with more than 2,000 gemstones. These are among the priceless artefacts that will be on display at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) from **12 February to 27 June 2010**. On show for the first time in Asia, ***Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals*** features works of art from the Mughal Empire (1526-1858) of India, one of the wealthiest and most powerful dynasties in history. The exhibition will be launched by **Guest-of-Honour His Excellency S R Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore** at **6.30pm on 11 February 2010**.



© The David Collection, Copenhagen

Treasury of the World features over 400 jewelled artworks from The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, one of the world's greatest collections of Islamic art. This renowned collection was assembled over four decades by Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah and Sheikha Hussah Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, the son and daughter-in-law of the Amir of Kuwait. Sheikha Hussah is also the director general of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI), the cultural organisation formed to manage the loan of The al-Sabah Collection to the Kuwait National Museum and other related activities. Since 2001, *Treasury of the World* has been exhibited in some of the most prestigious museums

around the world, including the Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the British Museum in London.

“We are delighted to be the first Asian venue for Treasury of the World. It is a wonderful opportunity to bring the treasures of one of the great dynasties in Indian history to Singapore. The period of Mughal rule in India represents a time of cultural diversity and artistic excellence and Treasury of the World will allow our audiences to appreciate its legacy and contribution to world culture,” said Mr Michael Koh, CEO of the National Heritage Board.

The Mughal Empire (1526-1858)

The great beauty and splendour of the exhibits exemplify the power and wealth of this mighty empire. The Mughals emerged from Central Asia and were led by the descendents of the Central Asian conqueror Timur and the great Mongol ruler, Genghis Khan. They invaded India in 1526 and continued their campaign rapidly across the Indian subcontinent. At its peak, Mughal territory was more than 6,000 times the size of Singapore and 25 times our population. The Mughals ruled for over three centuries before the empire’s unceremonious end at the hands of the British in 1858.

A Love for Beauty

The Mughal empire was a significant period in Indian history, renowned not only for the peace and prosperity it enjoyed, but also for the splendour and luxury of the Mughal courts.

“The Mughal empire was one of the most powerful dynasties the world has ever known. Most Mughal rulers revelled in the luxury that their privileged position afforded them. Dressed in all his finery, the emperor Jahangir was once described by the English Ambassador Thomas Roe as ‘the treasury of the world’, thus inspiring the title of this exhibition,” said Nicola Kuok, Assistant Curator (West Asia), Asian Civilisations Museum.

This appreciation for beauty is evident in objects which would have been used by the emperor and the court. These range from serving dishes, spoons, necklaces, turban ornaments, dagger and scabbard sets and even a back scratcher. Nearly every exhibit is encrusted with rubies, diamonds and emeralds and set in gold using the *kundan* technique – a typically Indian method of setting gemstones.

Examples of this include a dagger and scabbard (c. 1619) covered in a total of 2,393 stones – rubies, diamonds, emeralds, ivory, layered agate and glass. With its intricate design and lavish decoration, it would have been worn as a symbol of its owner's power and wealth. Other highlights include a cameo pendant bearing the image of Shah Jahan (1592 - 1666), the Mughal emperor most famous for building the Taj Mahal in memory of his beloved wife.

While the Mughals ruled over a largely Hindu population, they were themselves Muslims. A miniature Qur'an with an intricately enamelled case highlights these Islamic roots. The Qur'an manuscript is placed into a beautiful casing set with diamonds, rubies and emeralds in a floral pattern.

An Exhibition with Something for Everyone

Treasury of the World begins with an introduction to the Great Mughals – six of the most important emperors who ruled the dynasty during its heyday. The exhibition then divides into 13 sections based on the styles and techniques of Mughal jewelled arts such as the *kundan* technique, enamelling, gold-embellishment and carving of gemstones.

To bring the Mughal courts to life, the exhibition at ACM includes additional features for local audiences. These include a gallery trail which will introduce the visitor to the food, culture, weaponry and leisure pursuits of the emperors. Life-sized graphics of paintings of Mughal court life have been designed as discovery walls, with ample photo opportunities and hands-on fun for families. To complete the experience, the gallery has been designed to recall the lush interiors and courtyards of a Mughal palace.

“Treasury of the World is a show that has something for everyone. The exhibits on show are unquestionably stunning and there are also plenty of fun activities for families with our gallery trail on Mughal court life and interactive play areas within the exhibition. By introducing these special features, we hope that visitors both young and old will come away with a glimpse of the greatness of the Mughal empire, and its place in the history of the world,” said Ms Kuok.

Public Programmes in conjunction with *Treasury of the World*

Visitors will have a chance to relive the glory days of this vast dynasty at the *Mighty Mughals Weekend Festival* from 27-28 March 2010. This festival will offer plenty of activities for the family ranging from music and dance performances, archery, craft activities and a chance to sample Mughal cuisine.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum will also organise talks, curator’s tours and the dance performance *Shah Jahan: The Eternal Love Story of an Emperor*, presented by the Tagore society.

Treasury of the World is organised by The al-Sabah Collection, National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters, Kuwait, in collaboration with the ACM.

APPENDICES:

Treasury of the World Factsheet
Exhibition trail of Mughal court life

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About the Exhibition

Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals

物华天宝:印度莫卧儿时代的珠宝艺术

Perbendaharaan Dunia: Seni Bertatah Permata India Pada Zaman Mughal

உலகின் பொக்கிஷம் - முகலாயர் காலத்தில் இந்தியாவின் அணிமணிப்பூண் கலைகள்

Exhibition Dates : 12 February to 27 June 2010

Venue : Special Exhibitions Gallery, Asian Civilisations Museum
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555

Website : www.acm.org.sg

Enquiries : 6332 7798 / nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg

Admission charges : \$8 (adults) / \$4 (concession). Family package: \$20 for up to 5 pax.

Free admission for children aged 6 and below and seniors aged 60 and above every day (locals and PRs only). 50% off for foreigners aged 60 and above. 50% discount every Friday, 7-9pm

Opening hours : Mondays – 1pm-7pm;
Tuesday to Sunday – 9am – 7pm (to 9pm on Friday)

Getting there : By MRT – Raffles Place, By Bus – 100, 107, 130, 131, 167

Media Invitation

You and/or your representative are cordially invited to the Official Opening of ***Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals.***

Guest-of-Honour : His Excellency S R Nathan
President of the Republic of Singapore

Date : 11 February 2010

Time : 6.30pm (Proceedings begin at 7pm)

Venue : Asian Civilisations Museum
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555

Please RSVP to Mr Melvin Tang by 11 February 2010.

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

The Asian Civilisations Museum's mission is to explore and present the cultures and civilisations of Asia, so as to promote awareness and appreciation of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and their links to Southeast Asia and the world. The Asian Civilisations Museum first began its operations at Armenian Street in 1997, which closed at end-2005, and re-opened on 25 April 2008 as the Peranakan Museum. The ACM's flagship at the historic Empress Place Building opened on 2 March 2003.

About the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI)

The Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is a cultural organisation based on a Kuwaiti private art collection. Since its inception in 1983, DAI has grown from a single focus organisation created to manage the loan of the prestigious al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait to become an internationally recognised cultural organisation. Growth hasn't been limited to the role of the organisation, as Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah and his wife, DAI director general Sheikha Hussah Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, continue to foster the development of the collection, ensuring that all media and techniques are included. As such, the collection preserves and presents all aspects of the art, including extraordinary manuscripts, scientific instruments, carpets, jewellery, ceramic, metalwork, wood and glass. It now includes more than 30,000 pieces from the full geographic and chronological range of the Islamic world, from Spain to China, from the 1st – 13th centuries AH/7th – 19th centuries AD.

The comprehensive nature of the collection is further reflected in the activities of the organisation. The DAI organises an annual lecture series that attracts noted scholars from around the world; produces a quarterly magazine, Hadeeth, and a quarterly newsletter, Bareed; plans and executes travelling exhibitions based on the collection; participates in appropriate exhibitions at museums throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas; hosts seminars on a variety of social/cultural subjects; offers conservation training programmes; hosts an interactive cultural awareness programme for children; supports several research

and archaeological projects throughout the Middle East; publishes scholarly books on art and culture in the Islamic world; hosts an international music circle; and is actively working with the Kuwaiti government to restore the National Museum destroyed during the Iraqi occupation of the country.

When the rehabilitation of the Kuwait National Museum is complete, the collection will once again be on exhibition. At that time, visitors will be able to enjoy the beauty inherent in more than a thousand years of art from the Islamic world.

Highlight Artefacts

Caption	Image
<p>Inscribed royal spinel ('balas ruby') 4.8 x 3.6 x 1.8 cm Image courtesy of © The al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait (LNS 1660 J)</p> <p>Inscriptions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Timurid, Ulugh Beg (before 1449)2. Safavid, Shah Abbas I (1617)3. Mughal, Jahangir (1621)4. Mughal, Shah Jahan (undated)5. Mughal, Alamgir (Aurangzeb) (1659 – 1660)6. Durrani, Ahmad Shah (1754 – 1755)	
<p>Turban ornament set with emeralds and diamonds India, probably Deccan c. 1650 – 1700 17.3 x 5.3 x 1.3 cm Image courtesy of © The al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait (LNS 1767 J)</p>	

Dagger and scabbard set with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, ivory and agate

India, Mughal

c. 1615 – 1620

33.3 x 11.7 cm

Image courtesy of © The al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait
(LNS 25 J)



Pendant with cameo portrait of the emperor Shah Jahan set with rubies

India, Mughal

c. 1650 – 1660

3.7 x 3.3 x 0.8 cm

Image courtesy of © The al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait
(LNS 43 J)



Miniature Qur'an with a white nephrite jade cover inlaid with gold, and set with rubies and emeralds

India, Deccan or Mughal

1674 – 1675

9.4 x 5.7 x 1.9 cm

Image courtesy of © The al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait
(LNS 373 HS, LNS 2201 J)

