

INTRO GALLERY

Intro Panel

A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur

Around 1700, court painters in Udaipur, the capital of the Mewar kingdom in northwest India, began creating immersive works unlike anything else in Indian art.

Turning from small images depicting ideal worlds to large paintings of lived events in local settings, these artists sought to convey the *bhava*—the emotional tenor and sensorial experiences—that make places and times memorable.

By combining the local, the spatial, and the ephemeral with idealized portraits of Mewar’s kings, artists created a new genre. *A Splendid Land* explores the moods that the paintings evoke, the stories they recount, their unique visual strategies, and the environmental, political, and emotional contexts in which they emerged.

The exhibition of sixty-three paintings, many never shown publicly before, is structured as a journey. Each gallery is devoted to the *bhava* of a specific place, from the lake palaces at the heart of Udaipur, outward to the city, then the hills, and, ultimately, the cosmos. A side trip immerses visitors in the moods of the monsoon, the annual rains so crucial to Mewar’s prosperity. Throughout, an ambient soundscape created by filmmaker Amit Dutta draws out the aural dimensions of ambience, enhancing the journey through *A Splendid Land*.

- Exhibition Curators: Debra Diamond and Dipti Khera

The Donor’s Panel

A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur is organized by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art in collaboration with the City Palace Museum, Udaipur administered by the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation. The exhibition celebrates the Centennial of the National Museum of Asian Art and the 75th year of India’s Independence.

The National Museum of Asian Art gratefully acknowledges support from members of the *A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur* Leadership Council.

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Combined Label

Poetic Emotions, Ideal Worlds

For a century, from 1605 until around 1700, Udaipur court painters focused on small manuscript paintings. In each, they sought to capture the emotional essence of a verse, a sacred narrative, or a musical composition.

Their patrons were kings and courtiers who had learned to savor emotions from treatises on aesthetics, music, and poetry. The most influential of these, the *Rasikapriya*, was structured around the passionate romance between the deity Krishna and his beloved Radha. In *The sweet-sharp heroine* (center), Radha reprimands Krishna for spending the night with another woman. The poetic sentiment imparted by the painting is the complex and conflicted feelings of a betrayed woman who still longs for her lover

The early court style was suggestive rather than naturalistic: every landscape was idyllic, every king a connoisseur, and every woman a beauty. In *Shri Raga* (left), a king enchanted by music embodies the austere melody of a musical composition. Bold colors and rhythmic forms convey its emotional resonance.

In the painting on the right, Rama, the divine hero of the Hindu epic the *Ramayana*, extols the beauties of a forest. The painter aroused wonder through fantastically imagined trees, luscious colors, and Rama's wide-armed gesture of pleasure.

F1991.1

Shri Raga, from the *Chawand Ragamala*
Nasiruddin, 1605

Opaque watercolor on paper
 Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment
 Freer Gallery of Art, F1991.1

F2011.5

The sweet-sharp heroine, folio from a *Rasikapriya* (Handbook for poetry connoisseurs)
 Udaipur, ca. 1660
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 Purchase from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—Charles Lang Freer Endowment
 Freer Gallery of Art, F2011.5

S2018.1.73

Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita in the Chitrakuta forest, folio from a *Ramayana*
 Attributed to the Master of the Jagged Water's Edge, ca. 1680–90
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 Purchase and partial gift from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—funds provided by
 the Friends of the Freer and Sackler Galleries
 Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S2018.1.73

Wall quote (above *Sunrise in Udaipur*)

What a rose-bodied beauty is [Udaipur]! She is the city that captivates everyone.
 —Khetal, *Udaipur ri gajal* (an urban praise poem), 1718

Baffle Wall ELS2020.1.74

A Splendid Land

What is the mood of Udaipur at dawn? Beneath billowing clouds of scarlet, gold, and blue, the grand City Palace, fortified walls, green hills, and temples surround a spectacular lake. While the king protects the realm by hunting a tiger that has come close to the capital, city dwellers and villagers go busily about their morning activities to the sounds of dipping oars, splashing fish, and the scoop and swish of a waterwheel.

ELS2020.1.74

Sunrise in Udaipur
 Udaipur, ca. 1722–23
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0015

Scroll label for Rotation 1

Unscrolling History

This scroll traces, over its ten-foot length, Mewar's royal family and its Sisodia dynasty, from its origins through the fifteenth century. Closely entwining political power and geography, its images of capital cities celebrate the rulers' achievements and historical trajectory. Painters devoted the largest panel to Chittor, the almost impregnable fortress that preceded Udaipur as the capital.

Illustrated historical narratives in scroll format are unique to Mewar; they were produced within the Jain community, which played a significant role in literature and local governance.

Please return in mid-February to see the second half of the scroll.

Genealogical scroll of the rulers of Mewar

Udaipur, 1730–40

Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on paper

Spencer Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation, Indian Ms. 89

Rotation 1 captions blue arrows

- Valabhi, Gujarat, an early Sisodia capital
- Land of Shri Eklingnathji, the Sisodias' guardian deity
- Ahar, the capital in the 10th to 11th centuries
- Sisodia ancestor Bappa Rawal receives a boon from the ascetic Harita-rashi
- Bappa Rawal's capital at Chittor
- Kings of Mewar

Rotation 2 captions red arrows

- The sultan of Delhi, Ala'uddin Khalji, attacks Chittor fort
- Ancestor Ratansen brings princess Padmini from Simhala island to Chittor
- Kings of Mewar

Map

Regnal Chart

Maharanas (great kings) of Mewar who appear in *A Splendid Land*

| Maharanas | Reign dates |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Raj Singh I | 1652–80 |
| Amar Singh II | 1698–1710 |
| Sangram Singh II | 1710–34 |

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Jagat Singh II | 1734–51 |
| Pratap Singh II | 1751–54 |
| Raj Singh II | 1754–61 |
| Ari Singh II | 1761–73 |
| Bhim Singh | 1778–1828 |
| Jawan Singh | 1828–38 |
| Swarup Singh | 1842–61 |
| Sajjan Singh | 1874–84 |
| Fateh Singh | 1884–1930 |
| Bhupal Singh | 1930–55 |

Curatorial Conversations: National Museum of Asian Art and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

In spring 2022, ten graduate students participated in a curatorial seminar titled “Emotions, Ecologies, Exhibitions: Sensing Histories in Early Modern South Asia” at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. The contributors spent the semester immersed in the painted landscapes and themes explored in *A Splendid Land*, developing new research and interpretations of paintings in this exhibition with the guidance of Dipti Khera and Debra Diamond.

Their research delves into a range of topics, from poetry to pyrotechnics, sensory experience to animal husbandry, often centering on overlooked figures and details. To engage with these perspectives, look for the NYU labels throughout the galleries.

For more, visit their exhibition companion website, which offers a guided close-looking experience for ten paintings.

Ariela Algaze
 Mohammed Salih Cholakkalakath
 Elizabeth Clancy
 Spriha Gupta
 Emma Hartmann
 Kinaya Hasane
 Hannah Loughlin
 Pippa Mott
 Isla Stewart
 Ruth Waddington

LAKES & LAKE PALACES GALLERY – Gallery 2

Worlds of Pleasure: Udaipur’s Lake Palaces

Within the dry, mountainous landscape of Mewar, Udaipur appears as a shimmering oasis. At its center are the white palaces on Lake Pichola. The city’s founder-king, Udai Singh, created

Pichola from a smaller water body and built its first island palace in the sixteenth century. When the palace was enlarged a century later with new structures and extensive gardens, it was renamed Jagmandir. Then, in 1746, Jagat Singh II constructed a second lake palace, Jagniwas.

Both island palaces integrate thoroughly with their lake settings. Not only are they surrounded on all sides by water, but they feature pools and fountains in their gardens, are cooled by lake breezes, and have open arcades framing spectacular views.

Paintings reveal the importance of these elegantly designed spaces in cultivating bonds with noblemen and allies in the eighteenth century. They convey the atmosphere of refined pleasures (*vilasa*) and would have articulated to courtiers their participation in an elite community of sophisticates and power brokers.

Udaipur's Lakes

At Udaipur's founding in 1553, engineers expanded an existing water body to create Lake Pichola. Over the following centuries, they remedied successive droughts and grew the economy by creating more lakes—Jaisamand, the vast Rajsamand (the world's largest artificial lake until the construction of the Aswan in 1963), and Fateh Sagar, to name a few—as well as various dams, stepwells, and stepped platforms (*ghats*). Local communities contributed to the infrastructure of water harvesting by building yet more wells and smaller dams.

Wall Quote

Everyone enjoys together here; they find an ocean of joy.

—Nandram, describing Jagniwas lake palace in *Jagvilas* (World of pleasure), ca. 1746

North Wall ELS2020.1.58

The Pleasure of Politics

When the importance of regional alliances intensified in the eighteenth century, Udaipur painters began documenting the sensorial delights of royal diplomacy. On this moonlit night in the Jagmandir palace, two of Rajasthan's most powerful rulers enjoy colorfully spiced kebabs and wine. Delicate adornments, likely sourced from Jagmandir's sprawling gardens, reveal fragrance emanating from the maharana's body: a betel-leaf pendant rests on his torso, jasmine peeks from his waistband, and orange jungle geraniums embellish his turban.

North Wall ELS2020.1.58

Maharana Sangram Singh II and Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh enjoying delicacies at Jagmandir

Attributed to Jairam, ca. 1728

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

MJM Collection Monaco

ELS2020.1.57

Man in the Mirror

Shambhu celebrates Maharana Ari Singh as a connoisseur and poet. His portrait of Ari Singh admiring his own reflection plays on the maharana's pen name, Arsi (mirror). Framed within delicately scalloped arches and wearing the sheerest of muslin robes, the poet-king and his courtiers enjoy a cooling lake breeze on a summer night. One figure, tucked into the left corner, does not wear a nobleman's dagger. It is likely Shambhu, his self-portrait proclaiming the artist's role in creating a splendid world.

ELS2020.1.57

Maharana Ari Singh II regards himself in a mirror at Jagniwas

Shambhu, ca. 1764

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

Private collection

East Wall ELS2020.1.26

A Memorable Thrill

The mood of courtly pleasures (*vilasa*) included excitement. "One time," the inscription on the painting's reverse begins, Sangram Singh and his courtiers rushed into a palace kitchen to watch crocodiles tussling in the lake. A painter visualized the spectacular fight. Gigantic reptiles with spiky tails, feet, and teeth lunge toward the chunks of meat offered by a lone attendant. White curling lines on the flat silvery surface evoke splashing water.

East Wall ELS2020.1.26

Maharana Sangram Singh II attending the feeding of crocodiles at Jagmandir

Udaipur, ca. 1720

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS88-1980

East vista ELS2020.1.9

A Languid Mood

Sometimes a painter, rather than capturing a spectacular moment, builds a sense of pleasures savored at a meandering pace. Here, the mood of the day encompasses myriad moments and actors, from the woman operating a Persian waterwheel (at far left) and courtiers playing chaupar (a game similar to modern Parcheesi) in a grape arbor (right) to the king's many activities.

The bird's-eye perspective allows us to follow the maharana as he admires trees plump with pomegranates, shoots fish from a ceremonial window (*jharokha*), and watches the feeding of crocodiles. His beloved is always at his side.

ELS2020.1.9

Maharana Ari Singh II enjoying Jagmandir

Attributed to Jiva and others, ca. 1767
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2011.18.0037

Trio of small paintings – East

ELS2020.1.55

Noble Pleasures

Always sporting a dashing beard and jaunty mustache, Sirdar Singh, the dearest friend of Maharana Jagat Singh, was a connoisseur with refined tastes and cosmopolitan interests. His mansion on Lake Pichola faced the Jagniwas palace, which he had helped design. The mansion's elegant garden had a menagerie with gray-crowned cranes from sub-Saharan Africa and a white Himalayan ibex, among other species.

This finely painted folio from “The Pleasures of Sirdar” illustrates a verse about the nobleman's clever love play.

Another folio is from this manuscript is on view in the last gallery, Heaven on Earth.

ELS2020.1.55

Pleasures on a moonlit autumn night, folio from the *Sirdarvilas* (The Pleasures of Sirdar)

Shahji, ca. 1740

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

Private collection

ELS2020.1.55 NYU Label

That Magic Touch

Touch drives this painting's narrative and heightens the garden's erotic mood. At top left, the absence of physical contact between Sirdar Singh and his senior wife piques the nobleman's desires. She then teases his sensual cravings by covering his eyes at the center of the image. Finally, Sirdar Singh satisfies his yearning for contact by embracing a junior wife at bottom right. His anticipation and fulfillment of touch prove his ability to relish in the senses, earning him the right to be called a *rasika*, an aesthetic connoisseur.

—Hannah Loughlin, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.29

The Queen's Temple

Although historical women are rarely the subjects of Udaipur paintings, they are present in other ways. Here, Jagat Singh worships the deity Shiva at a lakeside temple built by his grandmother. Its tower, evoking a snow-covered peak, refers to Shiva's home in the Himalayas. Celestial beings with rainbow-colored wings and Udaipur turbans flutter above, bearing fragrant jasmine blossoms. By merging the temple with Shiva's abode, the painter honors the queen's memory and affirms the sanctity of Udaipur.

ELS2020.1.29

Maharana Sangram Singh II or Maharana Jagat Singh II worshipping Shiva

Udaipur, ca. 1730–40

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS103-1980

RLS2019.7**A Positive Prediction**

Artists enriched the perception of the capital city as an extraordinary place by depicting its palaces as symbols of plenty. From an illustrated book of omens, this painting of a lake pavilion predicts joy and wealth. The scene is intriguingly surreal: lush greens and springy tufts of grass in the foreground suggest an abundant monsoon year, but the pavilion’s supporting piers—typically revealed only during droughts when lake waters are particularly low—are visible.

RLS2019.7

An auspicious omen, folio from a *Sakunavali*

Attributed to the Master of the Jagged Water’s Edge, 1720–25

Opaque watercolor on paper

Private collection

West wall ELS2020.1.66**An Ocean of Joy**

Conversing amiably with friends, Jagat Singh arrives at his newly built Jagniwas palace. Two female dancers on the boat and the king’s throne—a plump bolster under a red canopy on the palace’s roof—signal that an open-air performance is imminent.

The decorations on Jagat Singh’s magnificent golden boat conjure an idyllic lake filled with lotuses and water creatures. Along with the frothy eddies created by the pull of oars and a composition that omits any view of the sky, the painted boat accentuates how the king, in the words of court-poet Nandram, found the palace to be “ocean of joy.”

ELS2020.1.66

Maharana Jagat Singh II boating near Jagniwas, Udaipur

Udaipur, ca. 1746–50

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Museum Rietberg Zürich, RVI 1832

East Wall ELS2020.1.94

A Plan for Pleasure

This painting is unusual not only because it depicts Jagmandir without inhabitants but also because it represents the island palace unconventionally from the west. It was probably commissioned to inform the construction of the palace, which was completed in 1746. Elegant and with a hint of mystery, the painting conveys the ideal qualities of lake palaces—a porosity between interiors and courtyards, water around and within, delicate white architecture, lush gardens, and flower-scented breezes.

East Wall ELS2020.1.94

Jagmandir on Lake Pichola

Udaipur, ca. 1740–43

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift in gratitude to John Coolidge, Gift of Leslie Cheek, Jr., Anonymous Fund in memory of Henry Berg, Louise Haskell Daly, Alpheus Hyatt, Richard Norton Memorial Funds and through the generosity of Albert H. Gordon and Emily Rauh Pulitzer; formerly in the collection of Stuart Cary Welch, Jr., 1995.79

A Side of Vitrine

Making Waves

Cameras reproduce everything in front of the lens, but the choices photographers make transform how we see the world. Consider how different Lake Pichola looks in each of these photographs: Colin Roderick Murray, whose picturesque style came from European painting traditions, presents Pichola as a shimmering mirror, while court photographer Mohanlal suggests a breeze by capturing delicate ripples. Conversely, the choppy wake trailing Maharana Bhagwat Singh's boat lends drama to this snapshot taken during US First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy's 1962 visit.

B Side of Vitrine

Wish You Were Here—

These three photographs commemorate different journeys to the City of Lakes. In 1895, museum founder Charles Lang Freer struck up a friendship with the kingdom's future minister Fateh Lal Mehta, who gave him Mohanlal's photograph of Lake Pichola. (Mohanlal's father, Tara, and brother Shivalal have paintings in the exhibition.) As another memento of his trip, Freer purchased Murray's photograph from the firm Bourne & Shepherd. Decades later, an unidentified photographer recorded a candid moment from the 1962 visit of U.S. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy.

ELS2020.1.92

The Palace in the lake, Oodeypore

Colin Roderick Murray, ca. 1873

Albumen print

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Mehta Gift 29, Charles Lang Freer Papers, FSA.A.01_12.07.29

ELS2020.1.87

Jagmandir, Lake Pichola

Mohanlal, before 1895

Albumen print

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Mehta Gift 2, Charles Lang Freer Papers, FSA.A.01_12.07.02b

ELS2020.1.101

Udaipur visit of American First Lady Ms. Jacqueline Kennedy

Udaipur, 1962

Gelatin silver print

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2009.09.0297-00010_R

MONSOON GALLERY – Gallery 3

Chat

Monsoon Moods

Located in arid northwest India, in a region with only one perennial river, Mewar depended for its prosperity on annual monsoons and extensive water harvesting. A failed monsoon led to food shortages and inflation; a succession of poor rains meant famine and unrest. In happy contrast, abundant rains were a source of delight and wealth. Moreover, because soldiers and merchants did not travel during the monsoon, the summer months became associated with romance.

Joy, prosperity, love. In India, the monsoon is a mood with its own ambience. As the first rains fall, the searing heat lifts, the hills turn from brown to green, and the air, smells, and colors of the sky change. Poets described the cries of peacocks and the bellows of elephants. Musicians played ragas that conjured the rumbling of thunder and the yearning of women for absent lovers. The anticipation was even distilled into a perfume with the clay-like smell of dampened earth.

Tapping into the longing for rains, Udaipur painters celebrated the feeling of ebullient relief when the monsoon filled their city's lakes and reservoirs, and the sensual pleasures of the season.

F2012.4.3

The Feel of Rain

Rain itself is this painting's subject. The artist first flowed gray and indigo watercolors onto paper, turning the sheet right and left so that the colors pooled and puddled into storm clouds. He

then spattered bright white pigment into dots and lashes of rain that engulf the young Amar Singh. As the prince walks alone in the countryside on a hot summer night, monsoon rain drenches his cotton wrap and pings off the shield that he balances as a protective hat.

Prince Amar Singh II walking in the rain

Attributed to the Stipple Master, ca. 1690

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—

Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2012.4.3

West Wall F2012.4.2

A Monumental Monsoon

The first large-scale artwork to celebrate the monsoon in Udaipur, this painting on cloth features rains sweeping across the Aravalli mountains on the painting's right—the northwest direction from which monsoon winds usually arrive. Gusting air and moisture are palpable, as waterlogged clouds release torrents of rain and silvery waves ruffle lake surfaces.

The painting praises Amar Singh, who watches an elephant fight from the courtyard of the City Palace. It associates him with an abundant monsoon, a magnificent palace, and a thriving city.

Maharana Amar Singh II in Udaipur during a monsoon downpour

Udaipur, ca. 1700

Opaque watercolor and gold on cloth

Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—

Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2012.4.2

Text on diagram:

- A. City Palace
- B. Lake Pichola
- C. Swarup Sagar Lake
- D. Moti Magri (mountain)
- E. Devali Talab (now expanded into Fateh Sagar Lake)
- F. Sobhagpur
- G. Ayad River
- H. Baadi Mahal (Garden Palace)
- I. Manek Chowk (courtyard)

Caption:

The painting draws on mapping techniques to convey the topographic interrelationship of palace, city, mountains, and lakes. This geospatial view is from an eye altitude of about 25,000 feet.

- A. City Palace
- B. Lake Pichola
- C. Swarup Sagar Lake
- D. Moti Magri (mountain)
- E. Devali Talab (now expanded into Fateh Sagar Lake)
- F. Sobhagpur
- G. Ayad River
- H. Baadi Mahal (Garden Palace, built in 1699 on a hillock sixty feet high that offered the most comprehensive views of the valley)
- I. Manek Chowk (courtyard)

Caption:

The painting draws on mapping techniques to convey the topographic interrelationship of palace, city, mountains, and lakes. This geospatial view is from an eye altitude of about 25,000 feet.

West Wall ELS2020.1.50**A River Runs Through It**

An Udaipur artist immerses us in green lushness. He tilted the landscape forward to fill the frame, emphasizing the flow of the river downward from higher mountains to the foothills of Banki Magra, the range west of Lake Pichola.

Appreciation for water takes a delightful new form as Sangram Singh, after hunting, sits enthroned in a glittering palanquin set down like a bridge across the river. Its mists cool the king, as farmers till nearby fields and servants roast kebabs.

Maharana Sangram Singh II hunting in a riverine landscape

Udaipur, ca. 1730

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

North Vista Wall ELS2020.1.17**Waterworks**

Shivalal's masterpiece, which took seven years to complete, powerfully conveys the feel of swelling rivers and drenching rain in an awe-inspiring valley. As lightning snakes across the sky, rain splashes on each horse, hill, and courtier. Its subject was long thought to be a flood. In fact, the painting memorializes Udaipur's water infrastructure.

The grand composition draws inspiration from the aesthetic of the “view,” a sensibility apparent in the work of photographer Mohanlal, Shivalal’s brother. The painting’s perspectival depth creates the illusion of a landscape that can be entered, an effect heightened by the implied placement of the viewer within the river itself, surrounded by a wetness that is almost tangible.

Maharana Fateh Singh crossing a river during the monsoon

Shivalal, ca. 1893

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0038

East Wall ELS2020.1.15 NYU Label

A Poignant Memory

Beneath a shimmering gold veil of rain, teal and emerald hills ripple downward, inviting viewers to enter a magical landscape. In the foreground, the court enjoys a royal picnic that took place in 1867. A year later, when the painting entered the royal collection, it surely provoked a poignant response, for 1868 was a drought year, and the picnic’s mood was by then the stuff of memory.

ELS2020.1.15

Painting Rain, Running Paint

The ground shimmers in white daubs and watery greens as Shivalal paints himself, brush in hand, at the bottom of the scene. Streaks of blue and red drip down the paper on his drawing board. The edges pool with liquid color liberated by the rain, staining the front of his garment red. He captures a landscape glistening with moisture, lit by shafts of serpentine light breaking through dark gray monsoon clouds.

—Spriha Gupta, graduate student, NYU

Maharana Shambhu Singh on a monsoon excursion

Shivalal, 1868

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0040

East Wall Trio of Small Paintings

In the Mood

One of Udaipur’s earliest royal portraits depicts Raj Singh romancing a woman. The fragrance of the jasmine garland in his hand mingles with the melody of the raga played by the musicians outside the pavilion. A heavy, monsoon-dark cloud hovers above; the raga is likely Malhar, a monsoon composition that was a favorite of the maharana. The painting praises Raj Singh as a sophisticated lover, a skill expected of all proper kings.

ELS2020.1.56

Maharana Raj Singh I and beloved in the monsoon

Udaipur, ca. 1670

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

F2012.4.4

The Romance of Rain

The “Stipple Master,” named after his delicate painting style, depicts Amar Singh, now older and sporting a handlebar mustache, gesturing as he counts the beats of a raga. Every classic motif that poets drew upon to evoke the erotic charge of the monsoon is here, from besotted lovers and lightning-gilded clouds to a dancing peacock. Amar Singh’s faux-rural hut is constructed from a fragrant grass that becomes especially cooling when moist. Set on a luxurious palace terrace, it epitomizes refined delights.

F2012.4.4

Rana Amar Singh II with his consort in a garden pavilion

Attributed to the Stipple Master, ca. 1705

Opaque watercolor on paper

Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—

Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2012.4.4

A Monsoon Melody

Udaipur’s kings commissioned paintings of classical music compositions (ragas) to establish themselves as connoisseurs of related arts. With its watery clouds tumbling above a wine-dark sky, this dreamlike painting captures the emotions of another raga associated with the rainy season. Celestial beauties with multicolored wings on a palace terrace embody its mood.

Although the scene seems suspended in time, the winged nymph at center reaches forward delicately to adorn an icon of god Shiva with a freshly plucked lotus petal.

S2018.1.75

Raga Nand Malahar, folio from a Ragamala

Attributed to the Master of the Jagged Water’s Edge, ca. 1720

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase and partial gift from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—funds provided by the Friends of the Freer and Sackler Galleries

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S2018.1.75

CITY PALACE – Gallery 4

The City Palace

Perched on a ridge on the east bank of Lake Pichola, the City Palace looks out over the streets of Udaipur. Its construction, begun in 1553, marked the founding of the city, and the vast palace grew and evolved over four hundred years. Successive kings added new palaces and courtyards, which are aligned so that the palace facade appears continuous and imposing. Today much of the iconic cultural landmark is a public museum housing the royal collection.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, painters developed distinctive ways to convey the specific qualities of various palace spaces and the way that moods build over hours. By capturing the look and feel of lived experience, artists radically realigned the kingdom's visual expression. Painters experimented boldly with multiple perspectives and temporalities within a single work to accentuate the moods of delight, devotion, and celebration.

East Wall opposite Intro Chat ELS2020.1.41

The Mood of Kota palace

This may be the earliest painting to identify the mood (*bhava*) of a particular place as its subject.

The multiple aerial perspectives of Kota palace invite the viewer to peruse and imagine an array of moods, from the emotions of a king watching his young son toddle to those felt by ladies strolling together through verdant gardens.

An Udaipur artist likely adapted the painting from an aerial view of the palace (below) made by a painter at the neighboring court of Kota. Inspiring generations of Udaipur painters, he transformed the complex into a phantasmagoria of jostling perspectives, dynamic diagonals and jewel-like colors.

Caption

The Palace in Kota, ca. 1690–1700, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-T-1993-277

ELS2020.1.41

The Mood of Kota palace

Udaipur, ca. 1690

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS68-1980

East Wall F2000.17

Anticipation and Fulfillment

Moonlit gatherings took place on white terraces that were regionally known as *chandini* (moonlight). First represented in the painting to your left, they became a favorite subject for Udaipur painters. Artists Bhima and Kesu Ram conveyed the effect of moonbeams on gleaming

surfaces with a unique palette of silvery gray, mauve, and pale blue; the silver moon and stars (now tarnished) once shone in the sky.

The painters twisted and stacked palace terraces to highlight emotions of anticipation and fulfillment. Ari Singh enters (stage left) eager to see his two favorite dancers; at right, he savors their performance.

F2000.17

Maharana Ari Singh II at a moonlight gathering

Bhima and Kesu Ram, 1764

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2000.17

Double Label F1986.7 & ELS2020.1.12

The Garden Palace within the City Palace

Commemorating the piety of Udaipur's kings, these two paintings invite admiration of the City Palace's most cherished courtyard. Built at the palace's highest point, the perfectly symmetrical Baadi Mahal (Garden Palace) features a central pool, a geometrically patterned floor, marble-columned bays on three sides, and towering trees.

Baadi Mahal's architecture inspired bravura experimentation. Shambhu's 1765 composition playfully transforms the courtyard's stone inlay into a syncopated pattern and sharply exaggerates the shadows cast by torches. Claiming his artistry, Shambhu appears (at lower right) holding a rolled sheet of paper in his hand.

Some seventy years later, Ghasi radically reconceived the Baadi Mahal's monumental presence. An artist who deployed conventions of architectural drawing in his large paintings of place, Ghasi dynamically emphasized the courtyard's volumes by rendering its side arcades at 45 degrees.

F1986.7

Maharana Ari Singh II at worship in the City Palace

Shambhu, 1765

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F1986.7

ELS2020.1.12

Maharana Jawan Singh at a religious ceremony in the City Palace

Attributed to Ghasi, ca. 1835

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2011.18.0033

S1996.33**To See and Be Seen**

The scalloped arch that frames Bhim Singh's portrait is the *jharoka* window in the Baadi Mahal. The ceremonial window offered kings spectacular city views and allowed them to be seen and admired from the more public Manek Chowk courtyard below.

The *jharoka* appears in its architectural context in the paintings to your right.

S1996.33 NYU Label**High Moon**

Enthroned on a balcony of the City Palace, Bhim Singh glows in the light of a crescent moon. Its placement near the maharana's forehead likens him to the great god Shiva, who wears the crescent moon in his hair. Crescents and dynamic curves repeat in the king's powerful body, dazzling jewelry, and textiles. They crescendo in the maharana's towering turban; its ornament bends under teardrop emeralds, while enameled peacocks bow their elegant necks over a diamond coronet.

—Elizabeth Clancy, graduate student, NYU

S1996.33

Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar at a palace window

Workshop of Chokha, ca. 1810–20

Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton

Gift of Terence McInerney

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1996.33

ELS2020.1.95**-Exuberant Abundance**

Chokha and the artists in his circle created a new aesthetic in which Bhim Singh's pneumatically plump body conveys conspicuous consumption as a sovereign virtue. The Badi Chitrashali, or "Big Picture Hall," is equally abundant. The maharana had recently renovated the space, ornamenting it with blue-and-white tiles imported from China and the Netherlands.

Geometry girds the profusion of flesh and pattern without detracting from the overall exuberance of the scene. Columns contribute a vertical rhythm, while the rolled curtains at top and the orange carpet below provide strong, stabilizing horizontals.

ELS2020.1.95

Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar ties his turban

Attributed to Chokha, ca. 1810

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Stuart Cary Welch, Jr., 1999.303

F2012.4.6**The Mood of Humble Devotion**

The gentle hum of a vina plucked by a lone musician imparts a meditative mood to a painting of Jagat Singh worshipping at dawn. Humbly bare-chested and bare-headed, the calmly focused king lifts a golden lamp to honor the deities arrayed on the crisp white sheet. Fresh fruit and lotus offerings lie scattered around a black stone icon of the dynastic deity, Shri Eklingnathji, and among gold images of Shiva and Parvati, and Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and Balarama.

F2012.4.6

Maharana Jagat Singh II worshipping in the City Palace

Udaipur, ca. 1735–40

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—

Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2012.4.6

Diagonal Baffle Wall - Celebrations in the Manek Chowk**Celebrations in the Manek Chowk**

Manek Chowk, the immense courtyard used for spectacular celebrations, extends along the eastern facade of the City Palace. To record its grand festivities, artists established, by 1715, a compositional archetype. They evenly divided the picture plane—palace above and courtyard below—and framed the two halves with a narrow strip of lake or sky at top, a triple-arched gateway at right, and the arcade wall of the royal stables at bottom.

The paintings offer the delight of contemplating the palace itself, a structure that was continually in the process of becoming. Echoing the way that each maharana made his own additions to the palace, artists treated the structure elastically. To demonstrate their virtuosity, they shifted perspectives and expanded or condensed elements. See, for example, how the triple-arched Tripoliya gate hugs the right perimeter in one painting and then tilts inward or slants outward in the others, changing the rhythm of the courtyard's enclosure so that the complex seems new in each painting.

The moods encompass both magnificent architecture and spirited events—a wrestling match, a birth celebration, and a wedding dinner. The profusion of figures makes visible the lives and labor involved in creating the splendor of Udaipur, while cementing memories for the king and court of extraordinary pleasures with favorite companions in remarkable settings.

ELS2020.1.1

Maharana Sangram Singh II watching wrestlers at the City Palace

Udaipur, ca. 1715–18
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0028

ELS2020.1.3

Maharana Sangram Singh II celebrating the birth of Prince Pratap Singh at the City Palace
 Udaipur, ca. 1724
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2011.18.0038

ELS2020.1.5

Marriage feast of Prince Jagat Singh II at the City Palace
 Udaipur, ca. 1730
 Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2011.18.0040

The Maharana in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Meeting the camera's gaze, Maharana Bhupal Singh (r. 1930–1955) presents a relaxed pose. His ease may come from experience: unlike his predecessors, the maharana was regularly photographed from birth. Here he sits on a terrace that overlooks the largest courtyard of the City Palace, the Manek Chowk. The photographer, Prabhulal Verma, organized the scene around the balustrade that divides the space. He focused on the king and courtiers, while blurring the crowd below into a murmur.

ELS2020.1.99

Maharana Bhupal Singh seated in Naginabadi Darikhana, The City Palace, Udaipur
 Prabhulal Verma, ca. 1930–45
 Gelatin silver print mounted on card
 The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2008.07.0176_R

Opposite to the Manek Chowk City Palace Paintings & Adjacent to the City Chat.

From Palace to City

In February 1940, K. L. Syed photographed the wedding between an Udaipur prince and a princess from Bikaner. People and elephants stream out from the City Palace toward the photographer and the city. Glowing lanterns suffuse the scene with celebratory warmth and foreground the photographer's medium, which relies on light to suspend a moment for eternity.

The image records a festive connection between palace and city. At top is the triple-arched Tripoliya gate, which appears in each of the three celebrations on the opposite wall.

ELS2020.1.98

Wedding procession of Maharaj Kumar Bhagwat Singh of Udaipur

K. L. Syed, 1940

Gelatin silver print mounted on card

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2008.07.0189ii_R

On wall adjacent to the City Palace Intro Chat

The Evolving Palace

These photographs capture moments

in the history of the City Palace complex and its surroundings. The image of the palace's southern façade (at top) can be dated to the 1880s, because the bare hillside at its center is now the site of the Shiv Niwas Palace, begun in the same decade. Thirty years later, N. Parasur carefully arranged his shot so that the city of Udaipur unfolds beneath the City Palace's iconic eastern façade and its less-frequently pictured exterior wall. With their depth of field and panoramic sweep, both photographs follow the conventions of the "view." Some court painters drew upon this aesthetic to spectacular effect, although the new style came to coexist with the complex, multi-perspectival depictions of mood and place at the heart of A Splendid Land

Top

ELS2020.1.81

The southern facade of the City Palace complex, Udaipur

Udaipur, ca. 1880s

Albumen print

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2008.06.0106ii

Bottom

ELS2020.1.83

The eastern facade of the City Palace complex, Udaipur

N. Parasur, ca. 1910

Gelatin silver print

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2008.07.0062

CITY – Gallery 5

Chat

In the City

When artists switched, around 1700, from small paintings of poetic subjects to large paintings of Udaipur, they took on as subject the mood of the city itself. These five paintings, from left to right, provide a pocket history of artists' responses to the challenge of representing the city, its inhabitants, and its moods.

The earliest depicts events imagined to have occurred in Udaipur. It takes the brightly colored, compartmentalized pavilions characteristic of seventeenth-century manuscript painting and arranges them into streets flanking Lake Pichola.

Two paintings of urban festivals demonstrate an immersive aesthetic that combines naturalistic observation with multiple vantage points and temporalities. The aesthetic is notably inclusive: it integrates diverse populations into the fabric of the celebrated realm, giving us glimpses of subjectivities beyond that of the king.

The last two images demonstrate in different ways how artists adapted imagery from maps and construction plans to represent the city and its environs. Their play with scale enables a form of storytelling that both empowers the king and exalts the city.

Next to Chat F1986.13 NYU Label

A Political Allegory

This work stages the coming together of different moments in time through imagined journeys to Udaipur. The time travelers are Vishnu's avatar Narasimha; the poet-saint Tulsidas, who died in 1623; and the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah I, who reigned from 1707 to 1712. A political allegory, the painting refers to the emperor's restoration of religious freedom in Mewar after a period of intolerance.

A Defense of Icons

Bahadur Shah, a Muslim, asks the revered Hindu poet Tulsidas, "Why do Hindus worship stones?" Tulsidas responds by telling the story of Prahlad, whose demon-king father, incensed by Prahlad's devotion to Vishnu, tries to kill the boy, laughing that his god cannot save him. Undaunted, Prahlad insists that Vishnu is present everywhere, even in stone. Vishnu (in his form as the lion-headed Narasimha) then bursts forth from a stone pillar, slaying the demon and proving that Hindu icons are more than mere stones.

—Ariela Algaze, graduate student, NYU

- A. Prince Prahlad and his pals write "Ram," the name of god, on their school slates.
- B. The wicked king raises his sword to kill his son.
- C. The king tries again to slaughter Prahlad; the schoolboys flee from the king's fire-breathing brother.
- D. Narasimha bursts out from a stone column and disembowels the king.
- E. Tulsidas re-creates the deed in his mind's eye and sings its moral.

F. With harmony restored, the people of Udaipur worship (from right to left) Ganesh, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and Vishnu.

G. Emperor Bahadur Shah asks Tulsidas, “Why do Hindus worship stones?”

F1986.13

An emperor visits Tulsidas

Attributed to the Master of the Jagged Water’s Edge, 1710–12

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F1986.13

ELS2020.1.2

Day Into Night

By manipulating light, a master painter captured the shifting moods of the Gangaur festival as daytime gives way to nightfall. In the foreground, women throng Udaipur’s streets in bright daylight. By the time they reach the lakeshore, the shadows of dusk bathe their bodies. After night falls, Maharana Sangram Singh, seen three times as his boat circles the lake, admires the spectacle. Gold fireworks explode, leaving smoky trails in the starry sky and casting golden ripples on the lake’s surface.

ELS2020.1.2 NYU Label

Slices of Life

This bustling painting depicts the annual festivities devoted to the goddess Gauri. Nestled within the crowds are moments of levity that enhance the jovial mood and provide glimpses of everyday life. In the foreground procession, many women lift their henna-adorned hands to honor images of Gauri, while one mother gently lifts her distracted child off the ground. In the upper right corner, a group of festivalgoers scatter in all directions after a firework explodes on the ground. —Kinaya Hasane, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.2

Maharana Sangram Singh II at the Gangaur boat procession

Udaipur, ca. 1715–18

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0014

ELS2020.1.16

Inside/Outside

Within the precincts of the Sitala Mata temple on a busy festival day, women flock to the shrine (left) as the king holds court (right). This work from the early 1900s reflects the impact of photography, notably in the cropping of the temple’s spire and the shading on women’s faces,

especially those who face us. Indeed, a photographer with a box camera, his head under a black cloth, appears at the top center of the scene.

Outside, a gardener standing barefoot on soft tufts of grass peers over the well-guarded compound wall. His yearning turns the spatial barrier into a keenly felt boundary of caste and class.

ELS2020.1.16

Maharana Sajjan Singh celebrates the festival of the goddess Sitala

Pannalal Parasuram Gaud, early 1900s

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0015

ELS2020.1.76.

Art of the Real

Raj Singh, though only about eleven years old at the time of this painting, is depicted authoritatively as the master of Udaipur. Beneath the Aravalli hills and Lake Pichola, the city's outskirts spread out behind the young king. Courtiers could readily identify the miniaturized locations, which were adapted from construction plans and maps.

The dazzling cloth on the back of Raj Singh's elephant mount is another kind of realism: its red and gold designs are painted on a textile affixed to the surface of the painting.

ELS2020.1.76

Maharana Raj Singh II in procession

Udaipur, ca. 1754–61

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.18.0203

ELS2020.1.8

Curving Space

To situate a royal hunt, the artist Bhima curved space and manipulated scale so that the distant city and the foreground quarry are equally diminutive.

Reminding us that Udaipur's image was central to the self-fashioning of its kings, the crystal-clear palace architecture is the brightest spot in the painting. More unusual is its depiction of hard labor: within the quarry, two men take turns chiseling stone and smoking, while a woman is shown continuously carrying away waste rock in a basket on her head.

ELS2020.1.8

Maharana Ari Singh II hunting deer by a stone quarry

Bhima, ca. 1767

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0041

BEYOND THE CITY (LANDSCAPE) – Gallery 6

Chat

Beyond the City

In South Asian art, visual representations of local geographies are rare. But between 1700 and 1900, Udaipur artists produced hundreds of ambitious paintings that depict Mewar's vast territory beyond the capital city—its mountains, rivers, lakes, and fields.

Painters devised endlessly novel solutions to convey the mood (*bhava*) of remarkable men enjoying a remarkable land. To capture the feel and appearance of the local landscapes, artists physically traversed and rigorously plotted terrains, combining strategies from North Indian mapmaking with their observations of the natural world. Because storytelling was a central component in commemorating events, artists retained the traditional technique of repeating significant figures (both human and animal) throughout a painting to show how events unfolded in time and space.

In these paintings, the natural world provides a site for artists to showcase their innovation and dexterity. The king and his court would have savored such artistic ingenuity. They were trained to appreciate how painters, poets, and musicians riffed on motifs, and they were proud of their deep knowledge of the lands they inhabited, protected, and enjoyed.

ELS2020.1.46

Lights, Paintbrush, Action

To represent the fleeting light of late afternoon, the painter Badar sensitively observed how darkness falls quickly but unevenly in mountainous terrain. In the upper left, a gleaming sun tinges clouds gold and tints hills lavender; in the upper right, it is already dark.

To conjure the passage of time and convey dramatic action, Badar depicted the haloed king six times. He first circles a plot cultivated to attract wildfowl and then races off with his falcons in pursuit of the startled cranes.

ELS2020.1.46

Maharana Sangram Singh II hunting crane at Nahar Magra

Badar, ca. 1715–20

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS94-1980

F2012.4.7 – a combined label

Experiments in Immersion and Perception

Hypnotically patterned and bristling with texture, these two hunt scenes invite viewers to search the jungle, peer through brush, and circle crags in order to find the hunt parties and their prey. For the king and his courtiers, the act of scanning Jugarsi's bear hunt (left) or Pyara and Naga's tiger hunt (right) would have brought back memories, along with the emotions and sensations, of hunting big game in the forests and scrub-covered hills around Udaipur.

Water plays an orienting role in both paintings: a silvery river in one and Lake Pichola's spiky fingers in the other mark the routes that each party took to the hunting grounds.

F2012.4.7

Maharana Jagat Singh II hunting bear

Jugarsi, ca. 1730–45

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Purchase and partial gift made in 2012 from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection—

Charles Lang Freer Endowment

Freer Gallery of Art, F2012.4.7

ELS2020.1.18

Maharana Jagat Singh II hunting tiger at Tikhliya Magra

Pyara and Naga, son of Bhagwan, ca. 1735

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0011

ELS2020.1.18 NYU Label

Tiger's Din

Royal hunting parties produced a lot of noise. Musicians and “beaters” used sound to flush animals out of dense jungle and toward hunters. Here, three rows of beaters roughly form a triangle. In the rightmost row, a drum and horn help build a percussive din. In two other rows, men beat bushes with sticks as they move inward, corralling the tiger. At the center of the brush-covered mountain, a single tiger moves frantically away from the sounds, appearing multiple times as it reverses course.

—Isla Stewart, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.18

Maharana Jagat Singh II hunting tiger at Tikhliya Magra

Pyara and Naga, son of Bhagwan, ca. 1735

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0011

Baffle –Baffle chat**The Hunting Grounds at Nahar Magra (Tiger Hills)**

Udaipur’s maharanas cherished Nahar Magra for its abundant game. They saw virtue in its steep ravines and spiky acacia, identifying their own toughness and military prowess with the rugged land.

In representing the distinctively humped profile of the mountain range, painters typically emphasized its scratchy terrain and precisely recorded the course of its river. When the royal hunt lodge appears to the right of the river’s fork, west is at the top of the painting. Conversely, when the lodge is to the left of the river, the painting is oriented to the east.

ELS2020.1.28**Courage and Camaraderie**

Because it was so challenging to hunt wild boar on horseback in rocky terrain, the moods of boar hunts encompass exhilarating danger as well as sportsmanship and camaraderie.

During one hunt on Nahar Magra’s thorny slopes, Sangram Singh (depicted eleven times on his dark stallion) raised his spear high and thrust it vigorously into the side of a boar. The spear broke (center), leaving the king dangerously vulnerable to the attack of a wounded boar. A courtier then swooped in and killed the enraged beast.

ELS2020.1.28

Maharana Sangram Singh II hunting boar at Nahar Magra
“The mood of Nahar Magra”

Udaipur, ca. 1720–30

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS96-1980

ELS2020.1.14**Panoply and Power**

This royal hunt asserts the power of the state. Early on a winter morning, Maharana Swarup Singh and his courtiers, cavalry, and infantry proceed with the bravura and formality of a military parade. Even the acacias, stamped regularly across the chilly green hills, seem to follow a disciplined order.

The painting dates from the mid-nineteenth century, a period in which Maratha armies (from western India) and British agents were chiseling away at Mewar’s territorial integrity and sovereign authority.

ELS2020.1.14 NYU Label**A Dawn Procession**

As the sun rises, a royal contingent proceeds south from Shri Eklingnathji temple toward Udaipur. The names of the splendidly garbed courtiers are written across the painting's surface and repeated on its reverse, an indication that large Udaipur paintings are both celebrations and commemorations.

A Beloved Stallion

Of the many animals featured within this extraordinary state procession, the maharana's stallion Sabtash takes pride of place. Two artists, a father and a son, created the effect of a velveteen cheek and muzzle by applying fine, concentrated brushstrokes over an opaque layer of pigment. The engorged veins threading across Sabtash's cheek express vigor and exertion.

The maharana and his stallion epitomize regal composure, yet chaos simmers in the painting's lower register. Hooves fly and furtive glances abound as a tightly packed group of mounted nobles and nervous footmen attempt to rein in the disturbance.

—Pippa Mott, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.14

Maharana Swarup Singh hunting boar at Nahar Magra

Ambava, ca. 1853

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0007

ELS2020.1.10

Maharana Bhim Singh in procession from Shree Eklingnathji temple

Attributed to Bakhta and Chokha, 1800

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0002

BEYOND THE CITY – TIME AND MOOD – Gallery 7

Beyond the City: Time and Mood

Time is at the core of every Udaipur painting of place. Each painting commemorates a particular occurrence on a specific day. But because mood (*bhava*) is a prolonged state of feeling, artists sought to represent the unfolding of events over time.

Master storytellers, Udaipur painters often conveyed a sequence of events by depicting the same figure at successive moments. Because artists used well-known cartographic strategies to represent actual places, courtiers could identify the location of each appearance of a character and thus follow a story in space and time. Some artists also manipulated light to distinguish areas visited during the day from those experienced at night.

The marking of seasonal time had its own conventions. When the court gathered in springtime, for example, painters emphasized sensorial delights such as the seductive fragrance

of blossoms and the mists of color wafting through the air during celebrations of the Holi festival.

ELS2020.1.42

Power Play

Around 1700, Amar Singh established a new political order. The earliest extant painting of the kingdom's chief powerbrokers depicts them enjoying a spring festival. Within the lush garden, the king and noblemen celebrate the Holi festival by showering one another with red powder.

The artist created the powdery effect by dipping a crumpled cloth in red pigment and daubing it across the paper's surface. The color seems to fly through the air, speckling the courtiers' bodies and expanding outward to merge with red blossoms.

ELS2020.1.42

Maharana Amar Singh II and courtiers play Holi in the Sarvaritu Vilas garden

Udaipur, ca. 1708–10

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS74-1980

ELS2020.1.13

Circle Game

Soaring arcs of red and green powder transform the City Palace's main courtyard during the Holi festival. On the left, the king and his companions ride in a tight circle, then break loose on the right, slinging cloth projectiles containing powder that, upon breaking, fills the air with color. Enthralled spectators, including fathers holding up their small children to see the mock battle, surround the courtyard. Swarup Singh's bright green halo is easily spotted four times, allowing the viewer to track the action as it unfolds in time.

ELS2020.1.13

Maharana Swarup Singh and courtiers playing Holi at the City Palace

Attributed to Tara, ca. 1851

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0012

ELS2020.1.73

Holi Diplomacy

To evoke the mood of a summit meeting between Udaipur and the powerful kingdom of Jaipur, a painter recorded their two rulers playing Holi over hours. Their diplomatic play begins during the afternoon in the Udaipur tent (right). Dusk falls as the two rulers cross the river: patches of ground deepen to sienna and some servants carry torches. Night comes on gradually as we move

higher up the page. Behind the Jaipur tent (left), darkness softens the contours of grooms and landscape alike.

ELS2020.1.73

Maharana Sangram Singh II and Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur play Holi

Udaipur, ca. 1734

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0014

ELS2020.1.96 NYU Label

Garden Party

Depictions of springtime parties set in rose gardens became a pictorial genre in its own right. This ambitious composition expands the commemoration of a garden party to encompass its urban setting. The pleasures of the Gulab Bari (literally, rose garden) are represented in spatial relation to a suburban street lined with shops. Beyond the garden lies Machla Magra mountain and Lake Pichola, which is rendered as a field of blue.

Flower Power

Every spring, when roses bloom and soft breezes scent the air, the Udaipur court would visit a rose garden southeast of the City Palace.

Surrounded by rose bushes, Sangram Singh holds court on a gleaming white platform. While his nobles, all wearing pink rose garlands, enjoy the sweet-smelling blooms, the maharana delicately relishes the fragrance of a single petal of the champaka flower (a type of magnolia). Through this unique scent, the maharana elevates himself above his nobles and the world.

—Mohammed Salih Cholakkalakath, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.96

Maharana Sangram Singh II celebrating the Spring Festival with his nobles in the Gulab Bari

Udaipur, ca. 1715–20

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

ELS2020.1.35

Petal Diplomacy

Paintings of notable court assemblies (*darbars*) conjure the moods and material stuff that enabled political diplomacy. In the 1730s, the powerful kings Sangram Singh of Udaipur and Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur met often to strengthen regional networks. At this lakeside *darbar*, flower petals, rendered in thin strokes of translucent color, lie heaped on trays and leaf platters. Outside the tent, attendants fluff petals for a fresh supply.

ELS2020.1.35

Maharana Sangram Singh II receiving Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur in a tent encampment

Attributed to Jairam, ca. 1732

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1980, AS100-1980

ELS2020.1.25**Territorial Tension**

By 1832 the contours of the British colonial state had emerged. After securing individual treaties with Rajasthan's kings, the British convened formal assemblies (*darbars*). Unlike Jairam's painting from a century earlier (to your right), Ghasi's recording of a meeting between Jawan Singh and Lord Bentinck conveys territorial tension rather than shared pleasure.

Weeks of furious negotiations over protocol preceded the *darbar*. It had been agreed that the maharana and the governor-general would sit as equals on a couch. They perch on it uncomfortably. Like the horses in the stable at top, twisting in various positions but regimented in space, or the stiffly arranged rectangles of cloth gifts, the men's rigidity suggests the uneasy formalizing of a new political arrangement.

ELS2020.1.25 NYU Label

Maharana Jawan Singh of Mewar receiving the Governor General of India, Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Feb 8th, 1832

Attributed to Ghasi, ca. 1832

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on cloth

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Alvin E. Friedman-Klein Foundation, Inc. in honor of Dr. Bertram H. Schaffner's 90th Birthday, 2002.34

Royal Wedding

When the eleven-year-old Raj Singh married the daughter of a powerful nobleman, court painters recorded his dazzling wedding procession. They structured the composition around two key locations: the red tents, from which the king departs, and the grand palace of the bride's father, where he is welcomed. Celebrating the joining of the realms of a fledgling ruler and a seasoned powerbroker, the parade reveals how social relationships and territory were interwoven. The bride, Princess Rose of Bedla, is not pictured.

Snap, Crackle, Pop

Four unique types of fireworks—from exploding vessels to spinning wheels—light up this royal wedding procession. In eighteenth-century India, artisans produced pyrotechnics from

gunpowder mixed with pigments like bright yellow orpiment and light green verdigris. Nema and Jiva used red, pure gold, and a range of brushstrokes to capture different effects and to communicate the sensory experience and celebratory mood of the moment: popping and cracking sounds announce the spectacle, embers glitter in the sky, and the smell of smoke lingers long after the procession has passed.

—Emma Hartman, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.75

The wedding procession of Maharana Raj Singh II at Bedla

Nema, son of Bhagwan, and Jiva, son of Chand, ca. 1754–55

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.20.0016

ELS2020.1.6

Disaster Averted

At first glance, there appear to be many elephants in this night scene. In fact, there are only two, the pale gray Medani Mal and the one-tusked Gara Rao.

The bout's dramatic high point is almost invisible. It occurs in the dark when Gara stumbles into a well (lower left). To save the frantic elephant, the king's great friend Sirdar Singh (in orange pants) organizes laborers to create a ramp so that the prized animal can climb out. Building up a mood of excitement and suspense, the painting celebrates the cleverness of Sirdar Singh.

Caption:

Because the river's course and built structures closely parallel the way that they appear from the top of an oft-visited hill, Moti Magra, local viewers could easily follow the progress of the epic fight in space and time.

1. The mansion where the elephant Gara Rao was tethered before the bouts
2. The fight began in Sobhagpur (well-irrigated and fertile crown land right outside Udaipur)
3. The fight continued by Roop Sagar Lake
4. The stepwell into which Gara Rao fell
5. The direction of Bedla, where Medani Mal was taken after the bouts

ELS2020.1.6

Maharana Jagat Singh II watching two elephants fight at night

Udaipur, ca. 1735

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

The City Palace Museum, Udaipur, 2012.19.0031

HEAVEN ON EARTH – Gallery 8

Heaven on Earth

In the eighteenth century, court artists depicted Udaipur as a heaven on earth. Not only did they represent Hindu gods inhabiting the lake-palace city, but they also envisioned divine realms as mirrors of Udaipur.

To praise Udaipur, artists drew upon the ideals of kingship, architecture, and lakes that appear in paintings throughout *A Splendid Land*. They also mobilized the Hindu understanding of gods as both transcendent and completely present. Shiva, for example, appears in subtle form at the apex of the universe and as Eklingnathji, the tutelary deity of the Udaipur rulers. Krishna manifests as a cosmic deity, a young lover in Braj, the son of a lovelorn mother, and a temple icon.

The paintings—which respectively stir heroic, playful, and blissful emotions—reveal ways that artists inflected and deepened *bhava* to establish Udaipur as a place sublimely beautiful and graced by the gods.

ELS2020.1.67

The Goddess Who Is an Island City of the Sun

The Flood of Beauty, a Hindu devotional poem, describes the infinitely powerful Great Goddess as an “island city of the sun.” Her palace floats in a sea of nectar at the apex of the universe. Here, the jagged-edged lake setting and the palace’s arches, dome, and lotus finials evoke Udaipur, blurring the distinction between cosmic and local.

Conveying the poem’s mood of sensuous bliss, the Goddess gazes intently into the eyes of her beloved husband, Shiva. Her touch glances his arm as his foot caresses her knee.

ELS2020.1.67

The goddess on Jewel Island, eighth verse of the *Saundaryalahari* (Flood of Beauty)

Udaipur, ca. 1725–30

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Museum Rietberg Zürich, RVI 939

ELS2020.1.53

Krishna in Udaipur

The verse at top is attributed to the sixteenth-century poet Surdas, who sang of Krishna’s life in Braj. The painter has tellingly transposed Braj, an area some one hundred miles south of Delhi, into Udaipur. At the landscape’s top center, a sluice, or sliding gate, built between two white pavilions spans the river. One would never see such a sluice in Braj. In Udaipur, however, it was a familiar feature of water management.

On the river’s banks, Krishna and Radha reverse roles in the game of love.

ELS2020.1.53 NYU Label

How Do You Paint a Poem?

Let us go on a journey through the painting, taking the poem line by line. Radha, the beloved of the blue-skinned god Krishna, is our narrator.

*Darling, just a little, let me play your flute.
The notes that you've been singing out, my dear,
let me produce them all.*

Take notice of the clothes that Radha and Krishna are wearing; something unusual is about to happen.

*The jewelry you've been wearing, I'll put on—
and dress you up in mine.*

Radha began by asking to play Krishna's flute, and now they've gone a step further. On the left, the blue-skinned Krishna wears Radha's clothes and, in the center, Radha wears Krishna's clothes and plays his flute. Radha appears on the right again, simultaneously; the painter shows us that we are in Radha's mind.

*You'll sit aloof, a woman angry with her lover;
I'll come and plead with you, I'll touch your feet.*

The artist translates these lines into side-by-side scenes of the same action—a lover begging for an angry woman's forgiveness. On the left, they are themselves, and on the right, they have exchanged clothes and roles.

*You'll retreat to a hut in the forest;
I'll tug at the edge of your clothes to lure you out.*

Radha and Krishna wear their own clothes on the right.

*I'll pull back the veil from the love of my life
and hold you close, take you in my arms.*

Radha imagines their role-playing adventures.

*You'll be Radha. I'll be Madhav, Madhav—
everything upside down.*

Here we see the couple twice: at left, in their own clothes, and at right, in each other's.

Lord of Surdas, you defeat the three worlds

Now, in the last lines, we meet the poet Surdas, who defines Krishna as his lord. The painter cleverly represents the three worlds (heaven, earth, and hell) as three demons that Krishna defeated during his life in Braj.

and I, in turn, defeat you.

Radha imagines one last moment for us. Krishna touches her feet, showing that Radha, who usually feels she is struggling to obtain Krishna's undivided love and attention, has fully won him over.

—Ruth Waddington, graduate student, NYU

ELS2020.1.53

Krishna and Radha, folio from a *Sursagar*

Attributed to the Master of the Jagged Water's Edge, ca. 1700–1710

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

ELS2020.1.52

A Woman's Lament

For royal women in Rajasthan, Krishna was the paramount object of intense devotional desire. Then whom, a poet pondered, might Krishna's mother desire?

The poet may have been a queen, for its mood—of an older mother's longing for romance—was unprecedented for its time. The mother appears, white-haired, on the veranda of a royal pavilion at lower left. Kama, the god of love, with his lotus-tipped arrows, and her son Krishna, wearing his peacock-feather crown, embody her contradictory desires.

ELS2020.1.52

The mood of desire

Udaipur, ca. 1720

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

ELS2020.1.65

Krishna's Heaven

Present everywhere, the great Hindu gods also have their own divine worlds. This monumental painting represents Krishna's heaven (*Krishnalok*) in the form of a lotus, an auspicious symbol of generative power and purity.

Within the eight inner petals are splendid palaces and gardens that evoke eighteenth-century Udaipur. Krishna (whose heavenly form is white) plays Holi, enjoys dance performances, and makes love during the monsoon, thus recalling the activities of Udaipur kings and providing a divine role model.

ELS2020.1.65

Krishnalila Mandala

Udaipur, ca. 1710–40

Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton

Museum Rietberg Zürich, Gift of Novartis, 2007.177

ELS2020.1.64

Location, Location, Location

This cosmic diagram locates Udaipur at the heart of the universe. It situates the universe's numerous worlds within and around the form of a cosmic man (*lokapurusha*). The human realm is the flat disk ringed by seven continents and seven oceans.

An artist carefully mapped Lake Pichola, the Jagmandir lake palace, and the City Palace onto the land to the left of the cosmic man's torso. Places and events connected to Krishna's life on earth surround Udaipur.

Diagram Key

Inscriptions suggest that the monumental *lokapurusha* was commissioned to commemorate the visit of "N," a saint (or abbot) devoted to Krishna, to Udaipur during the reign of Amar Singh II (1698–1710).

- A. Krishna's circular dancing ground
- B. Mathura
- C. House of Kamsa
- D. Krishna playing flute
- E. Prison
- F. Merta (where Mirabai was born)
- G. Play in the Nine-Jewels Lake
- H. "N" is welcomed at the royal palace built by Amar Singh

- I. Royal Temple
 - a). “N”
 - b). “A” [Maharana] Amar Singh
 - c). “Su”
- J. Dome
- K. Padmavati worship
- L. Sloped roof
- M. Prabhasa, where the Yadavas were destroyed
- N. Krishna
- O. Balarama (brother of Krishna)
- P. Jara
- Q. Krishna

ELS2020.1.64

Lokapurusha Mandala

Udaipur, 1710–40

Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton

Museum Rietberg Zürich, Gift of Novartis, 2007.176

ELS2020.1.54

A Connoisseur’s Devotion

At his private temple on the shores of Lake Pichola, the debonair nobleman Sirdar Singh, dressed in gold, worships a four-armed form of Krishna. Respectfully honored and properly adorned, Krishna is fully present in Udaipur. The “lake” in his shrine and fragrant lotuses are offerings to delight the manifest deity.

The birds perched on the temple’s spire are the artist’s flourish, a lively detail to delight the painting’s patron, an urbane connoisseur of the arts with a private menagerie.

ELS2020.1.54

Sirdar Singh worships Krishna, folio from the *Sirdarvilas* (Pleasures of Sirdar Singh)

Shahji, ca. 1740

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

ELS2020.1.59

Temple Moods

Represented at a grand scale, the temple to Eklingnathji, an incarnation of Shiva, evokes awe.

Devotion, playfulness, and sensorial pleasures are equally present in this painting: the day's events begin (upper right) with Sangram Singh and courtiers hugging floats and frolicking in Indrasarovar lake. Afterward, the king worships at temples to the Great Goddess (upper left) and to Eklingnathji, the kingdom's guardian deity (center). The visit wraps up with a luxury picnic by the lotus-filled Baghela lake (lower right).

ELS2020.1.59

The mood of Shri Eklingji temple

Udaipur, ca. 1730

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Private collection

Artists and Scribes in Udaipur

Painters (all men) in Udaipur were typically trained within their families before joining the court atelier. Working alone or in pairs, they brought together firsthand observations with motifs from earlier paintings, drawings, maps, and plans.

Because artists used different strategies to represent the same subjects (whether buildings or landscapes), we can deduce that painters and patrons appreciated novelty and nuance. The extensive inscriptions on the verso of many large paintings shine further light on how such works were made and interpreted.

Our best evidence is that scribes wrote the inscriptions while the king and courtiers viewed and described the paintings. Some inscriptions identify the subject as the mood (*bhava*) of a place or event. Others feature play-by-play descriptions of events as they unfold in time and space.

Typically, inscriptions begin with the name of the maharana. Many include the names of courtiers, artists, palaces, gardens, hunt grounds, and favorite horses and elephants. A fair number specify the date of the represented event or the day that the artist (or artists) presented the painting to the king.

Paint, Process, and Paper

Udaipur artists painted with opaque watercolor, a gouache-like medium. Most pigments were produced by finely grinding minerals, among them ultramarine, iron oxide, lead, and gold. Organic pigments included Indian yellow, which was made from the urine of cows raised on mango leaves.

The large paintings are on paper that has the weight of thin poster board. To make the sturdy supports, artisans pasted together sheets of thin handmade paper (*wasli*). They polished the paper to provide a smooth surface and then applied each color in several thin layers. After a paint layer

had dried, artists burnished the back of the paper support to make the color luminous. Gold and raised details were applied last.

Amit Dutta soundscape labels

Gallery: Intro Gallery and Lake Palaces

Loop-1

A Journey through Sound

In this gallery, we hear two boats moving toward a lake palace. One of them carries a singer whose voice travels closer and recedes in synch with the boat.

Each soundscape provides a poetic entry into the spirit of the paintings—not only the milieus and events they depict but also the line of thought of the painters who, through their artistic vision, present an interior view of an exterior world. My aim is to create a subjective mood, a vehicle for one’s imagination to navigate the paintings, while also highlighting or illustrating certain details so that the faint outlines of a story emerge.

—Amit Dutta

Loop -2

A Journey through Sound

A boat skirts the palace and pulls up near the broad steps of a *ghat*. A woman wearing anklets gets off and proceeds to walk up the stairs, passing by a group of genealogists reciting lineages. She heads toward a courtyard where a dancer wearing bells makes her entrance; musicians are getting ready, tuning their instruments and testing the vocal pitch. The woman then walks off into a secret garden tucked inside the palace. All other sounds recede; only the welcoming songs of birds remain.

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—Amit Dutta

Gallery: Monsoon Gallery

Loop - 3

A Journey through Sound

One of the horsemen from the royal retinue has lost his way. He faces many hurdles: rain, river, lightning, and thunder. It's getting dark and he is moving from one place to another, but

eventually comes back to the same place, as if caught in a loop. The rain comes in fits and starts. The man's horse comes to a sudden halt; far from the palace, he hears the strains of Malhar raga, a monsoon melody. As he moves away, the frogs sing, and he knows the monsoon has arrived.

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—Amit Dutta

Gallery: City Palace and City

Loop- 4

A Journey through Sound

The desert winds have journeyed far, bringing to the city square stories, news, energy, and excitement. Musicians start tuning their instruments, wrestlers wrestle, people cheer, the crescendo of their voices traveling far when their favorite athlete wins. Eventually, everything merges into the sound of the desert wind, which is music in itself.

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—Amit Dutta

Loop-5

A Journey through Sound

It is said that the clouds are Indra's elephants; sometimes the Malkauns raga is envisioned as two elephants fighting. As they do battle, strains of a mouth harp emanate from the palace walls. As the drama of courtly life unfolds on the upper levels of the bright palace halls, the forces of nature are engaged in a mysterious, quiet conflict in the level below. So too the sounds end in Malkauns, in tribute to the painter's symbolic restraint.

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—Amit Dutta

Gallery: Beyond the City Part 1

Loop-6

A Journey through Sound

The tiger hides in a bush, which is also home to bees. The retainers are chasing the tiger with the sound of kettledrums and horns into an open space where the king is waiting. As the king shoots, the tiger falls. Then there is silence, and the sound of bees.

Each soundscape provides a poetic entry into the spirit of the paintings—not only the milieus and events they depict but also the line of thought of the painters who, through their artistic vision, present an interior view of an exterior world. My aim is to create a subjective mood, a vehicle for one's imagination to navigate the paintings, while also highlighting or illustrating certain details so that the faint outlines of a story emerge.

—Amit Dutta

Gallery: Beyond the City Part 2

Loop-7

A Journey through Sound

Amid the festivities of Holi, a wedding procession takes place. The bride can't see anything from her palanquin but hears everything: elephants, musicians, nearby horses, and faraway fireworks. Every sound is acute and clarified, except for human voices. As she reaches her destination, she gets down from the palanquin and walks inside the palace. Everything is reduced to the sound of her anklet.

Each soundscape provides a poetic entry into the spirit of the paintings—not only the milieus and events they depict but also the line of thought of the painters who, through their artistic vision, present an interior view of an exterior world. My aim is to create a subjective mood, a vehicle for one's imagination to navigate the paintings, while also highlighting or illustrating certain details so that the faint outlines of a story emerge.

—Amit Dutta

Gallery: Heaven on Earth
Loop-8

A Journey through Sound

Echoes of worldly sounds, evoking memories of sights and smells of the floating palace, waft in and out like residues of past lifetimes, like fish emerging from and returning to calm lake waters. Slowly everything fades into silence; the great formless beyond becomes evident in this tiny framework of form.

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