

# “Imperial Nature: Flora, Fauna, and Colonialism in India”

JANUARY 18–APRIL 20, 2014

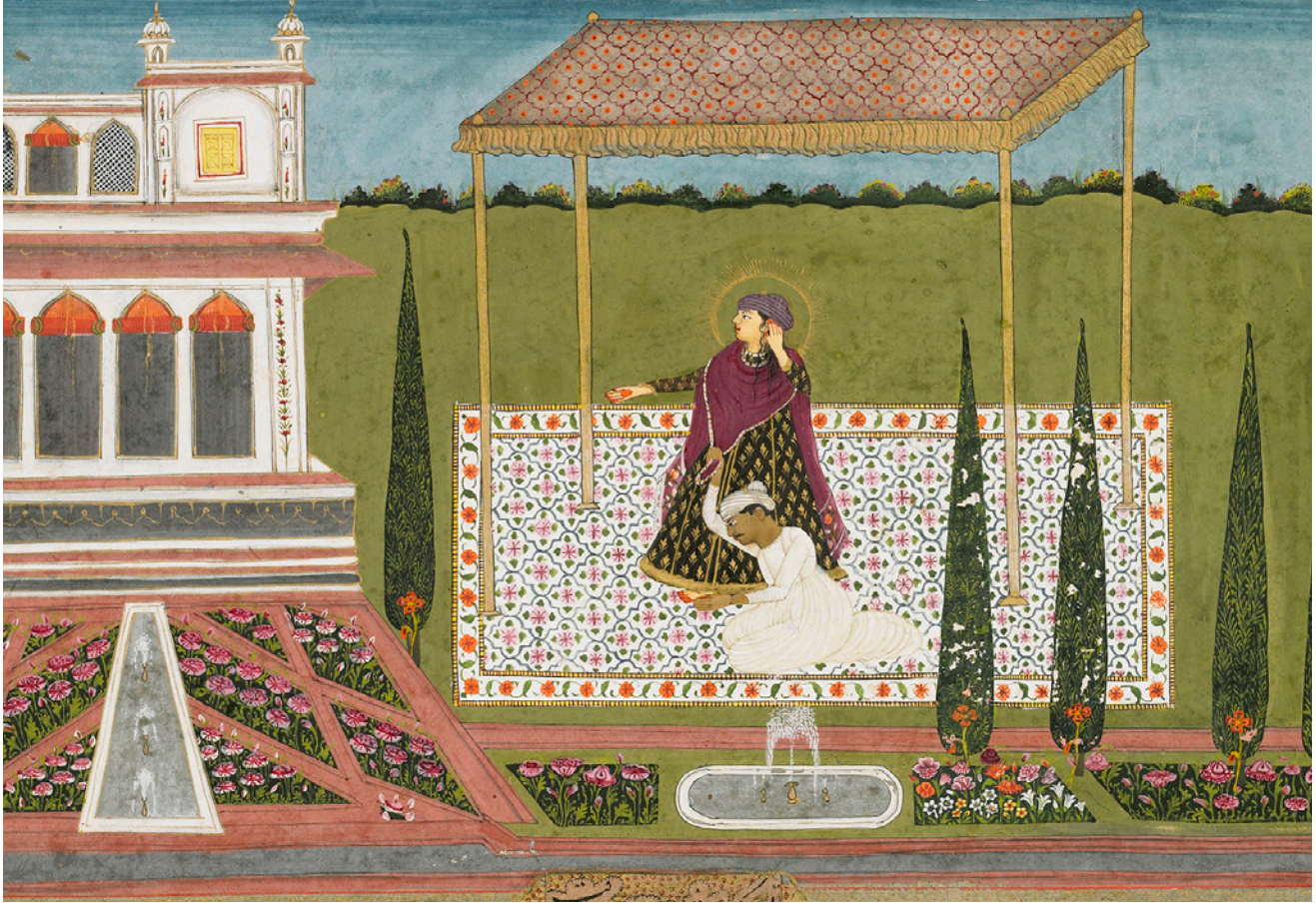
Cargill Gallery | Free exhibition



Antony Jakob Goedkint, *Tenga*, from *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus* (Vol. 1) (detail), 1966, hand-colored engraving, The Minnich Collection, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund P.17,683

## MINNEAPOLIS, MN, JANUARY 22, 2014

European and Indian histories have long been interlaced. During the 17th and 18th centuries, as English colonial rule intensified, the two cultures melded and converged, producing bold and unique depictions of nature. “Imperial Nature: Flora, Fauna, and Colonialism in India” at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) showcases these representations of nature, commissioned by Indian princes and increasingly powerful European colonial patrons, to reveal an artistic and scientific confluence that forever reshaped the way we view the natural world. The exhibition, on view in



Asia, A Garden Scene (detail), c. 1725, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, Gift of funds from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cleveland and Helen Winton Jones 84.118.6

the MIA's Cargill Gallery from January 18 to April 20, 2014, features twenty-nine works on paper, two textiles, a film, and multimedia elements.

One of the MIA's newest curators, Risha Lee, Jane Emison Assistant Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, organized the exhibition. "'Imperial Nature' will be the first exhibition of historical Indian art in nineteen years at the museum," she stated. "Beautiful works of art grew out of this complex period in Indian history, and we are thrilled to present such rare depictions of nature to Minnesota audiences."

At the heart of the exhibition are eleven "Lady Impey" paintings on loan from the private collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark, major collectors of Asian art from whom the MIA received a large gift of Japanese works in 2013. A British colonialist in Calcutta, Lady Mary Impey commissioned Indian painters to illustrate birds from her private menagerie, resulting in several hundred images that owe as much to European natural science as India's rich painterly tradition. Before Lady Impey's time, botany had a colonial enterprise in India, owing to the commercial and medicinal value of Indic plants. In the time of Lady Impey's bird paintings, botany became an elevated science, lifted above the realm of mere commodity. In "Imperial Nature" at the MIA, the paintings will be exhibited for the first time. The exhibition will also feature artworks on loan from the Nancy Wiener Gallery and Arader Gallery.

“Imperial Nature” is composed of five distinct sections:

- India’s global trade networks in the 17th and 18th centuries
- Princely Indian paintings of nature
- Lady Impey’s Menagerie
- *Natural History in India*, including selections from the Hortus Indicus Malabaricus, a 17th-century Dutch multivolume work on the identification and function of Indian plants
- *Charulata*, a film by Satyajit Ray depicting the Indo-European encounter in colonial Calcutta

In addition, the exhibition features an ambient soundtrack of birdsong consisting of birds portrayed in Lady Impey’s paintings. As the exhibition is located in the Cargill Gallery in the MIA’s lobby, the subtle sounds will immediately welcome visitors into the alluring elements of Indian depictions of nature.

## PRESS CONTACTS

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## ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Home to over 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—the MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. The 2013 fiscal year marked the highest attendance—679,357 visitors—in the nearly 100-year history of the MIA.

General admission to the MIA is always free. Some special exhibitions, including “Matisse: Masterworks from The Baltimore Museum of Art,” have a nominal admission fee.

**Museum hours:** Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org).