

Emperors & Jewels: Treasures of the Indian Courts **Sparkles with Style and Status**

Princely jewelled adornments of the 16th and 17th centuries from the world-famous al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait, exclusively on display at the Aga Khan Museum, opens August 18



Ring, India, 17th century, gold, set with rubies, emeralds, and turquoise.
Courtesy of The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, LNS 752 J

Toronto, July 19, 2018 -- Discover the opulent lifestyles of the Mughal emperors and the sultans of Deccan, India, in *Emperors & Jewels: Treasures of the Indian Courts from the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait*, opening August 18 at the Aga Khan Museum. The Canadian premiere exhibition reflects the splendour of the Mughals, who were great patrons of the jewelled arts, which blended Central Asian, Iranian, and Indian traditions.

Exquisitely crafted pieces of men's jewellery, once owned by the Mughal emperors who ruled India from the 16th to 19th century, bear witness to the deep love of beauty and craftsmanship. They also speak of the blossoming creativity of these highborn rulers, who adorned themselves magnificently to feast and to fight. Paintings from the Aga Khan Museum Collection, showing hunts and battles, receptions and gardens, set the scene for the jewelled works of art from the renowned al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, and reveal the artistic passions of the Mughal emperors.

"This exhibition celebrates the splendour and the grandeur of the decorative arts, and showcases the Mughal royalty's affinity for luxury and their appetite for innovation," says Henry Kim, Aga Khan Museum Director and CEO. "The rich cultural exchanges between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures in the 16th and 19th centuries enabled Indian artisans of this period to produce some of the finest artistic achievements in jewellery and ornamentation."

From whimsical rings and turban ornaments to intricately designed daggers and swords, the compilation of objects in the exhibition reinforces the status, wealth, and ceremony of the courts of the Mughals and their contemporaries.

"Filiz Çakır Phillip of the Aga Khan Museum and Salam Kaoukji of the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, co-curated *Emperors & Jewels*. "During this period, when the India subcontinent was booming with trade-driven cultural exchange, artisans were able to borrow freely from many sources," remarks Phillip. "Due to the masterful application of the Indian techniques of hardstone carving and gem setting, as well as of gold inlaying and associated arts, these treasures provide a unique opportunity to discover the relationship between dynastic traditions and the ingenuity of jewellery designers."

Exhibition highlights include:

- A 17th-century dagger sash-cord ornament from Northern India or Deccan, made of jade, inlaid with gold and set with rubies, diamond, pearl, coral, blue sapphire, cat's eye chrysoberyl, yellow topaz, and emerald. (The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, LNS 257 HS)
- A cup from late 16th-century India made of jade, set with ruby, emerald, sapphire, and dark sapphire-blue and emerald-green transparent glass. (The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, LNS 140 J)
- A genealogical chart of the Emperor Jahangir and his immediate family, executed as a set of jewel-like portraits painted in opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper. (AKM151)
- A folio from a 16th-century manuscript of *Akbarnamah* (Biography of Akbar), painted in opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper and showing the Mughal emperor luxuriously adorned. (AKM149)

Emperors & Jewels runs from August 18, 2018 to January 27, 2019 at the Aga Khan Museum. For more information, visit agakhanmuseum.org.

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Museum's mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage while often reflecting, through both its permanent and temporary exhibitions, how cultures connect with one another. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto's Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

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FOR PRESS INQUIRIES PLEASE
CONTACT:

Nicole Amiel, Holmes PR
namiel@holmespr.com
416.628.5612

Kelly Frances, Aga Khan Museum
press@agakhanmuseum.org
416.858.8735