

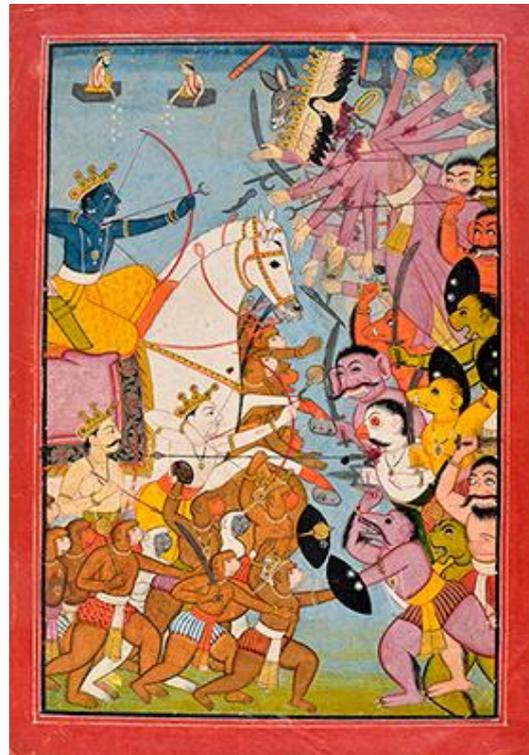
Media Release
Monday 17 August 2015

Historic Indian miniatures from New Delhi tell an epic tale at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



Basohli style

Pahari, *The Portrait of Rama* c1730, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 14.8 x 10.2 cm, National Museum, New Delhi, India



Guler style

Pahari, *The Great Battle between Rama and Ravana* c1780, opaque watercolour on paper, 23 x16.5 cm, National Museum, New Delhi, India

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see an exquisite collection of rare Indian miniature paintings that depict the epic Sanskrit tale of Lord Rama.

The Story of Rama: Indian Miniatures from the National Museum, New Delhi will make the final appearance of its world tour at Auckland Art Gallery from Saturday 5 September 2015 to Sunday 17 January 2016. Entry to the exhibition will be free.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says the Gallery is honoured to exhibit *The Story of Rama*.

‘This is the largest collection of historical Indian art ever shown in New Zealand and an absolutely rare occasion to see these astonishingly beautiful miniature paintings in this country. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to offer this exhibition free of charge to our visitors,’ she says.

One of the most important stories in Indian culture, *Ramayana*, or journey of Rama, is a tale of love, loyalty and the triumph of good over evil. It recounts the life of the



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hero Lord Rama, a model prince and the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, whose character to the current day is admired for his honour, courage and compassion.

Credited to the sage Valmiki, *Ramayana* dates back as far as the 5th to 4th centuries BC, and is the earliest and most significant work composed in Sanskrit.

The selection of miniatures from the National Museum, New Delhi features 101 paintings that represent 24 regional Indian miniature painting styles dating from early 17th to 19th centuries.

The exhibition is arranged to reflect the traditional division of the story into seven kandas (cantos or books), which follow the life of Rama from his birth as a prince of Koshala to his marriage to the beautiful Sita, their exile from Koshala, the kidnapping of Sita by Ravana, and her rescue by Rama with the help of his brother Lakshmana and Lord Hanuman, the monkey general.

At the end of the sixth kandas, Rama and Sita return home triumphant to a joyous celebration lit by thousands of beautiful oil lanterns. For many, Rama and Sita's homecoming marks the origin of Diwali, the festival of lights.

'We're proud to present this exhibition in Auckland during the festival of Diwali. By sharing the rich cultural and artistic heritage of India through this exhibition, we're able to demonstrate our commitment to reflecting Auckland's dynamic and rich cultural diversity,' says Devenport.

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Exhibition Details:

The Story of Rama: Indian Miniatures from the National Museum, New Delhi

When: Saturday 5 September 2015 to Sunday 17 January 2016

10am to 5pm daily except Christmas Day

Where: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Corner Wellesley and Kitchener Streets
Auckland, New Zealand

Admission: Free

About the National Museum, New Delhi

Founded in 1949, the National Museum, New Delhi, is an important repository of India's rich artistic heritage dating back more than 5000 years. It holds one of the largest collections of miniature paintings in India, from which *The Story of Rama* has

been drawn. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is delighted to be partnering with one of India's leading cultural institutes to host *The Story of Rama* and reveal the splendours of Indian miniature painting and the *Ramayana* to New Zealand.

Auckland Art Gallery is also grateful for the support of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, in delivering this exhibition.

An overview of the Seven Kandas of the Ramayana

1. The birth of Rama; his education and training; defeat of the demons afflicting the sage Vishwamitra; Rama breaks the bow of Lord Shiva and wins the hand of Sita; return to his home Ayodhya.
2. Exile from Ayodhya; refusal to return to Ayodhya for the 14 years stipulated by his father; brother Bharata rules the kingdom as Rama's regent; lives life in the forest.
3. Rama and his brother Lakshmana both refuse the advances of Surpanakha, who then attempts to kill Sita; disfigured by Lakshmana, Surpanakha appeals to her brother Ravana, king of Lanka; Ravana orders his brother Maricha to take the form of a golden deer so as to entice Rama away from Sita; left alone by Rama and Lakshmana, Sita is abducted by Ravana.
4. In their search for Sita, Rama and Lakshmana meet Hanuman, the general of the monkey army; Rama agrees to kill the rival of Sugriva, the exiled monkey king, in return for his help in finding Sita; the monkeys finally identify Sita's place of incarceration (the island of Lanka), and Hanuman leaps across the water to Lanka.
5. Sita in Ravana's custody and his attempts to seduce her; Hanuman's adventures in Lanka.
6. Hanuman reports back to Rama; the monkey army builds a bridge to Lanka; the succession of battles; the death of Ravana; Rama's rejection of Sita and her subsequent trial by fire (a test of her chastity while in Ravana's custody); their return in triumph to Ayodhya.
7. The coronation of Rama and Sita; Rama's abandonment of the pregnant Sita (following rumours that she was unfaithful while in Lanka); the ceremony involving the horse which reveals Rama's sons to him; Sita taken back into the ground (whence she came) by Mother Earth.

Auckland Diwali Festival

Auckland Diwali Festival is a celebration of the city's ethnic diversity and a chance to enjoy and experience traditional and contemporary Indian culture in its many exciting forms.

When: Saturday 17 October 2015 to Sunday 18 October 2015

Where: Aotea Square
Queen Street
Auckland, New Zealand

Admission: Free