

KENT ANTIQUES RUNJEET SINGH ROB DEAN ART

INDIAN AND ISLAMIC WEEK - LONDON – 2019

PRESS RELEASE

As part of Indian and Islamic Art week, Kent Antiques, Runjeet Singh and Rob Dean Art are pleased to announce that they will be exhibiting alongside one another at Gallery 8, Duke Street, London .

Participants: Kent Antiques, Runjeet Singh, Rob Dean Art

Venue: Gallery 8, Duke Street, St James's, London SW1Y 6BN

Exhibition Dates: 16th -25th October 2019

As part of Indian and Islamic week Rob Dean Art will exhibit a group of classical Indian paintings from the Pahari region of Northern India, with a further smattering of paintings from other schools, and areas of the subcontinent. The exhibition highlights the changing styles and aesthetic that existed in painting ateliers over a three hundred year period. The works reveal a constant evolution of styles and formats that depended upon both the whims of patrons, and the personal genius of individual artists based at the court. Paintings from this period tended to be produced anonymously, leaving the attribution of specific artists to paintings, a matter of academic debate, however, included in the current exhibition are several rare works that are undoubtedly by the hands of Master Artists working at the various court ateliers.

Highlights of the exhibition include two pages from the Shangri Ramayana. The illustrations are known as the 'Shangri' Ramayana after Shangri, the place of residence of a branch of the royal family of Kulu who were formerly in possession of the largest portion of these paintings. The Shangri Ramayana is widely considered to be one of the most important narrative series of paintings from the Punjab Hills. The series was rediscovered in 1956 by M S Randhawa in the collection of Raja Raghbir Singh of Shangri, but more recently B N Goswamy reattributed the series to Bahu or Jammu. Other leaves from this important series are in the collections of the National Museum, New Delhi; The Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares; The British Museum, London; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and several important private collections.

Two further highlights from the exhibition are a pair of illustrations to a Shiva Purana series, created in the Kangra style, but possibly produced at the court or Mandi shortly after the defeat of the Kangra ruler Sansar Chand by the Ghurkhas in 1805. The first page depicts the immolation of Kama by Lord Shiva. The inscription on the reverse of the work identifies the scene, 'The great Yogi [Shiva] surveyed all around... His eyes fell on Kama, stationed on His left side

with his bow fully drawn and ready to discharge the arrow. Seeing Kama in that attitude, instantaneously anger was aroused in Shiva, and a great flame of fire sprang up from the third eye of the infuriated God. Even before the god had the time to ask for mercy, Kama was reduced to ashes. ‘

This key moment of the Purana has been elegantly handled by the artist and is full of lively details and lush foliage. Although the work is unsigned the composition reveals many elements that are stylistically related to the work of the Master artist Purkhu and it is possible that further research may support this attribution. The second work from the Shiva Purana depicts the marriage of Shiva and Parvati. The Sanskrit inscription identifies the scene, ‘The priest conducted the bride and the bridegroom round the fire, with their eyes closed in mutual contact. With their marriage ceremony thus performed by the family priest, versed in the ceremony, the two became one.’ Both paintings are fine examples of the more decorative style favoured by Kangra and Mandi courts at in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Portraiture remained a popular subject in the Indian courts from the Mughal period to the end of the 19th century. Included in the exhibition are portraits of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, the Mandi Ruler Suraj Sen and the son of Raja Bakht Singh. Notably the portrait of the Mughal Emperor is posthumous and has been completed not in the Mughal style but rather in the Kangra style of the early 19th Century. Viewed as a group the portraits reveal the varying styles of regional courts from a similar period and provide an interesting insight into how the rulers identified with history and how they wished to be remembered by their descendants.

Further highlights from the exhibition will include the opening page from the Sundar Shringar which depicts Lord Ganesha with his consorts Riddhi and Siddhi, and several illustrations from various Nayika manuscripts.

For further information contact Rob Dean – rob@robdeanart.com