

considered the foundation for his attempts to ‘make pornography art’ was then and is now inadequate for the complex questions his images pose. It is pointless to deny the striking quality of the double portrait of *Ken Moody and Robert Sherman* (no.135; Fig.84), whose alopecia left them with no hair, and of the equally well-known image of Thomas Williams posing nude within a circle, recalling Leonardo’s *Vitruvian man* (no.136). Yet the neo-classicism of the nude figure studies seems dated, an uninspiring model for contemporary art concerned with gender, sexuality and the body. The same can be said of the photographs and short film that Mapplethorpe made with Lisa Lyons, a champion female bodybuilder who both appeared unabashedly muscular and performed a version of hyper-femininity better suited to gauzy perfume ads.

Mapplethorpe the portraitist has his great successes, such as the Patti Smith image used on the cover of her album *Horses* (no.29). Even so, too many pictures seem mere commercial fodder or of interest primarily as a record of the downtown scene in New York City. The self-portraits, although undertaken only sporadically, are something else again, and constitute an enduring body of work. Mapplethorpe was a master of self-fashioning and self-representation, whether posing as the epitome of cool as a leather-clad stud with a cigarette dangling from his lips (no.85), or as a pretty young thing in women’s makeup (no.91), not to mention that closing image in *Portfolio X*. The photographs of the youthful, handsome and playful Mapplethorpe pale beside his final self-portrait, which shows a skull-topped walking stick in the foreground while his gaunt face, surrounded by darkness, stares out from the background. It is a courageous, tragic image (no.174; Fig.85).

The curators and catalogue authors may overestimate Mapplethorpe’s influence on contemporary art, yet the LACMA exhibition concluded smartly with a work that does offer strong supporting evidence, Gillian Wearing’s *Me as Mapplethorpe* (2009): a large (59 by 48 inch) print, showing Wearing engaged in a re-enactment, with her eyes visible behind a photographic mask based on that devastating final self-portrait. It is a complex tribute in a contemporary form, and suggests how Mapplethorpe’s photographs can live on in the present.

¹ S. Sontag: *On Photography*, New York 1977, p.100.
² Patti Smith, quoted on p.177 of the Catalogue: *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Photographs*. By Paul Martineau and Britt Salvesen, with contributions by Philip Geffer, Jonathan D. Katz, Ryan Linkof, Richard Meyer and Carol Squiers. 330 pp. incl. 241 col. ill. (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2016), \$59.95. ISBN: 978-1-60606-469-6. Published on the occasion of the exhibition: *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Archive*, by Frances Terpak and Michelle Brunnick, with contributions by Patti Smith and Jonathan Weinberg. 240 pp. incl. 274 col. + 134 b. & w. ill. (Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2016). \$49.95. ISBN 978-1-60606-470-2.

Puja and Piety

Santa Barbara

by ALKA PATEL

THE SANTA BARBARA Museum of Art’s seventy-fifth anniversary promises to be a significant milestone for the institution, which plans to expand; already extensive renovations have been undertaken on its historic building located at the heart of this beachside university town. Despite gallery closures resulting from construction work, the Museum has mounted two exhibitions celebrating the anniversary, one focused on works from its permanent collection, which ranges from medieval Chinese sculpture through Impressionism to contemporary masters and American photographers. The other exhibition, under review here, is devoted to its most active area of collecting: art from the Indian subcontinent, spanning a wide range of historical periods. Comprising over 150 objects, the exhibition highlights the many gifts made to the Museum in recent years, brought together with objects lent by southern California collectors, perhaps potential donors in the future.

Puja and Piety: Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist Art from the Indian Subcontinent at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (to 28th August) is based on an innovative premise, namely the examination of ‘the relationship between aesthetic expression and devotional practice (*puja*)’ in three of the four ‘indigenous’ Indic religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism (Sikhism is omitted; see below).¹ For novices to Indic culture, the exhibition serves as an adequate overview of the three religious traditions; for viewers with knowledge of the Indian subcontinent’s past and present, however, the exhibition may incite more unease than satisfaction, caused as much by what the exhibition omits as what it includes. Given that more than half of the displayed objects are gifts to the Museum, the exhibition demands that we carefully deliberate the representation of South Asian art in this regional museum, and mark the lacunae that should be filled if the Museum is to continue to expand its holdings in this important area of collecting.

The exhibition is divided into three sections, each containing objects associated with one of the three religious traditions within the exhibition’s purview. Informative wall texts in each section briefly explicate each religion’s



86. *The Cosmic Parshvanatha, A Shvetambara (White-Clad) Tantric composition of Mantras.* Mewar, Rajasthan, c.1775–1800. Ink and colours on paper, 45.7 x 32.4 cm. (Lent by Julia Emerson; exh. Santa Barbara Museum of Art).

87. *Façade of a Jain household shrine. Gujarat, late eighteenth–early nineteenth century. Wood with traces of pigment, 121.9 x 113 x 35.6 cm. (Santa Barbara Museum of Art).*



historical development, overall characteristics and some specific deities and concepts – again all useful for those newly exposed to Indic culture. There is also a twenty-one-minute film showing clips of various religious rituals. The sections juxtapose both historical and contemporary objects of common ritual use within each religion, such as votive icons (cat. no.111), with esoteric and aesthetically driven objects intended for more regulated or specialised ritual contexts, such as – respectively – temple sculpture (no.103) and meditation scrolls (no. 109). Thus, the placement in near proximity of early historic terracotta reliefs with exquisite sculptural fragments (nos.18 and 22), metal icons with wooden carvings for religious processions (nos.39 and 40), and cosmological diagrams (Fig.86) together with household shrines (nos.121, 130 and 132; Fig.87) underscores one of the principal thrusts of the exhibition: to demonstrate the extremely broad and richly creative spectrum between personal devotion to individual deities (*bhakti*, *pūjā*) and textually prescribed religious traditions, a spectrum seemingly in existence from the Indic civilisation's earliest historical periods

to the present day. The result is valuable for both the novice and the experienced viewer, and the exhibition provides a clear illustration of the broad and dazzling array of religious expression of three of the Indian subcontinent's religious systems.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are not, however, *all* the indigenous Indic religions, and a justification for the exhibition's emphasis on only three of them is critically missing. Without such an explanation, it seems mysterious that Sikhism is absent, as it was a religious tradition that emerged in the Punjab during the latter half of the fifteenth century. Evolving within the early modern Indic milieu, it took on an increasingly distinct identity during the sixteenth century in tandem with a burgeoning Mughal imperium (1526–44; 1555–1858).² The Indic tendency is to encompass a broad range of devotional and canonical practices, as witnessed in this exhibition (and emphasised in the wall texts and catalogue). Devotional practices in Sikhism, ranging from individual worship to canonical piety,³ would have formed a fascinating component in the show.

The exhibition could have been complemented by a corollary theme, briefly mentioned in the catalogue's introduction (pp.26ff.), of the enduring inclusivity of and fluidity among the subcontinent's religious traditions, whether indigenous or 'imported'. This is illustrated in pieces such as the sculpture of the Buddha as the ninth *avatar* of Vishnu (no.42). Additionally, Islam and Christianity entered the Indian subcontinent with West Asian and Mediterranean populations who settled there during the first millennium AD, their religious traditions subsequently attracting local adherents. Christianity claims a presence in the region virtually since its birth, and Islam is historically and culturally integral to the subcontinent: the Muslim population of India ranks as the second largest in the world after Indonesia. A treatment of these non-indigenous religious systems would have provided a more accurate representation of the subcontinent's religious and cultural landscape, both in the past and the present.

Indeed, a number of objects in the exhibition clearly call for the inclusion of Islam in the context of South Asia (e.g. nos.30, 50 and 51).



88. *Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu, with the devoted Prahlada watching.* Folio from an unidentified manuscript of a Vaishnava devotional text. Bikaner, Rajasthan, eighteenth century. Ink, colours and gold on paper, 35.6 x 27.3 cm. (Santa Barbara Museum of Art).

For example, the Persian text, which occupies half of the folio depicting Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu (no. 30; Fig. 88), might mystify viewers. The folio probably comes from a Persian translation of the Narasimha Purana, and was made in the desert city of Bikaner. A section on South Asian Islam in the show would have helped the viewer to comprehend the various parts of the folio. Islam was integrated into the subcontinent shortly after its appearance there in the eighth century, and by the twelfth century specifically South Asian Islamic sects, such as the Bohras, the Khojas and their respective sub-sects, had emerged. Popular iconography taken from epic texts associated with the Islamic world, such as the Persian *Shahnama*, was not uncommon in elite Jain manuscript painting of the fifteenth century, and the translation of Hindu epics into Persian began in earnest

by the sixteenth century.⁴ This Bikaner folio naturally falls into a long genealogy of inter-religious exchange, which was not limited to indigenous Indic developments alone, but rather encompassed imported religious traditions as well.

As a regional museum in a university town, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art serves the important function of facilitating global awareness for students and the local community with wider global awarenesses through art. Given the Museum's role, it is imperative that it carefully cultivates its collection of South Asian art. In order to create a select yet usefully representative collection, the Museum will need to fill the gaps still left, despite the generous gifts it has received, especially those representing the fascinating histories of South Asian Islam, Christianity and other religions in the Indian subcontinent.

¹ Elaborated by P. Pal in his introduction to the Catalogue: *Puja and Piety: Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist Art from the Indian Subcontinent*. Edited by Pratapaditya Pal. With contributions by Stephen P. Huyler, John E. Cort, Christian Luczanits and Debashish Banerji. 256 pp. incl. numerous col. ills (Santa Barbara Museum of Art and University of California Press, 2016), \$65 (HB). ISBN 978-0-520-28847-8.

² P. Singh: 'The Sikh Tradition in the Pre-Modern Period', in K. Singh, ed.: *New Insights Into Sikh Art*, Mumbai 2003, pp.20-31.

³ See W.H. McLeod: *Popular Sikh Art*, Oxford 1992.

⁴ For Jain painting, see K. Khandalavala and M. Chandra: *New Documents of Indian Painting – a Reappraisal*, Mumbai 1969, pp.35-37; and S. Doshi: 'The Master of the Devasano Pado Kalpasutra', in M.C. Beach, E. Fischer and B.N. Goswamy, eds: *Masters of Indian Painting*, Zurich 2011, pp.60-62. For Mughal translations and illustrations of Hindu epics see, for example, R. Skelton: 'Mughal Paintings from the Harivamsa Manuscript', *Victoria and Albert Museum Yearbook 2* (1969), pp.41-54; and J. Seyller: *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India: The Freer Ramayana and Other Illustrated Manuscripts of Abd al-Rahim*, Zurich 1999.