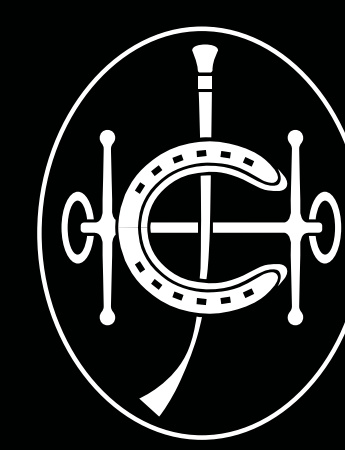


Hong Kong Palace Museum Special Exhibition

This exhibition is jointly organised by the V&A and
the Hong Kong Palace Museum



Solely sponsored by



香港賽馬會慈善信託基金
The Hong Kong Jockey Club
Charities Trust

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: Treasures of the Mughal Court from the Victoria and Albert Museum

06.08.2025–23.02.2026



Treasures of the Mughal Court from the Victoria and Albert Museum

06.08.2025 – 23.02.2026

Gallery 8, Hong Kong Palace Museum

Between the 1560s and the 1660s, the Mughal dynasty (1526–1857) in South Asia experienced its “golden age” as one of the world’s most powerful imperial families at the time. This century witnessed the reigns of three remarkable emperors: Akbar (r. 1556–1605), his son Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), and his grandson Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658). This exhibition celebrates the extraordinary artistic achievements of the Mughal dynasty, focusing on the roles of the three emperors in shaping and developing the rich and diverse artistic traditions of the court, where cultural elements from South Asia, China, Iran, Europe, and beyond converged.

The Mughals were a Muslim, Persian-speaking dynasty. Their first emperor, Babur (r. 1526–1530), was descended from both Amir Timur (r. 1370–1405), the Central Asian conqueror, and Genghis Khan (r. 1206–1227), the founder of the Mongol dynasties. Babur’s dynasty became known as “Mughal”, the Persian for “Mongol”.

This exhibition is jointly organised by the V&A and the Hong Kong Palace Museum, and is solely sponsored by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. Approximately 100 spectacular loans from the V&A Collection, supported by loans from Kuwait, UK, and other international collections, range from paintings to jewellery, architectural fragments, weaponry, textiles, and ceramics. The Hong Kong Palace Museum, the Chris Hall Collection at the Hong Kong Palace Museum, and the Collection of Mengdiexuan also provide important loans.

About the Victoria and Albert Museum

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity – its power to entertain and move, to enrich our lives, open our minds and change the world. We celebrate and share that power through a programme of exhibitions, events, educational and digital experiences, a collection of 2.8 million objects, and through our support for new works and commitment to conservation, research and sustainable design. Together, our work tells a 5,000-year-old story of creativity, helping to advance cultural knowledge everywhere, and inspiring the makers, creators and innovators of today and tomorrow.

Taj Mahal: A Love Story in a Majestic Monument

One of the greatest emperors and art patrons of the Mughal dynasty, Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658), is known for his many remarkable achievements. A crown jewel among them is the construction of the Taj Mahal in Agra, then the Mughal capital city, to commemorate his beloved empress, Mumtaz Mahal (1593–1631). In 1631, the empress died giving birth to her fourteenth child, and the grief-stricken emperor began planning a majestic mausoleum, which came to represent the pinnacle of Mughal architecture. He employed many top talents. Ustad Ahmad Lahori (about 1580–1649), one of the greatest architects of the 17th century, was appointed the principal architect, and the Iranian calligrapher Amanat Khan (1570–1645) designed the large scale Quranic verses inscribed on the buildings. Thousands of artists were employed in building and decorating this mausoleum, which was formally completed on the twelfth anniversary of Mumtaz Mahal's death. The Nobel laureate, poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), described Taj Mahal as “a teardrop on the cheek of time”. Today, this tomb shines as brightly as ever and is popularly recognised as one of the “new” Wonders of the World.

Screen

Court workshops

Mughal dyansty, about 1640

Pierced marble

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 07071(IS)



Founder of the New Era

Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605)

Although Emperor Babur (1483–1530) is credited with establishing the Mughal dynasty, his grandson Akbar is often regarded as its true architect. Akbar ascended to the throne when he was just fourteen years old. During the turbulent early years, the young ruler rapidly expanded Mughal territory through conquest as well as diplomatic alliances. Akbar created an atmosphere of religious tolerance to secure his reign and enable him to rule a diverse, but mostly Hindu population. His enlightened religious policies, combined with other innovations, contributed to the prosperity of his realm.

A great patron of the arts, Akbar established court workshops that specialised in different forms of art. There, Muslim and Hindu artists from South Asia and Iran collaborated in producing an enormous range of artefacts for the court. The Mughal court also incorporated cultural elements from China and Europe. The blending of these diverse traditions led to the creation of a radically new and distinctly Mughal art.

Emperor Akbar being entertained by Azim Khan at Dipalpur in 1571

Jagan, Asir, Sur Das, Madhav (court workshops)

Mughal dynasty, about 1590–1595

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IS.2:94–1896, IS.2:95–1896





Casket

Gujarat

Mughal dynasty, about 1600

Teak overlaid with mother-of-pearl and black lac, with brass mounts

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 155–1866



Altar table with flowers and plants in pots and vases

China

Ming dynasty, 16th century

Black lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay over wood

Gift of Hei Hung Lu & Chang Ping Wen

Hong Kong Palace Museum, 2022.502



Ewer

Gujarat

Mughal dynasty, about 1600–1625

Mother-of-pearl, metal wires

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 4258–1857



Thumb ring

Court workshops

Mughal dynasty, about 1615–1620

Gold set with rubies and emeralds, enamelled on the inside

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IM.207–1920



Explorer of the World Treasures

Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627)

When Akbar died in 1605, his son Salim succeeded him as the emperor of the Mughal dynasty. Salim chose the title Jahangir, meaning “World Seizer” in Persian. The new emperor, Jahangir, inherited a stable and wealthy realm and continued his father’s legacy of artistic patronage. The elite of the court used their extensive networks to find valuable, unusual, and finely made items for the emperor. Nephrite jade from Khotan in northwestern China, a rare material at court, was fashioned into vessels and other artefacts in the emperor’s workshops.

Jahangir kept a detailed diary that revealed his activities and interests, including his curiosity about the natural world and his favourite pastimes, hunting and viewing beautiful landscapes. He travelled regularly across his vast domains, always accompanied by artists and craftsmen who served in the court workshops. The emperor’s keen interest in exploring nature had a profound influence on Mughal art during his reign, for he commissioned the court artists to record flora and fauna, and their nature studies were then replicated in a variety of media, including jade, gold, and silver vessels.

Emperor Jahangir in a garden

Manohar (court workshops)

Mughal dynasty, about 1610–1615

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IM.9–1925



Dish

Imperial kilns, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province

Ming dynasty, Hongzhi period (1488–1505)

Porcelain with yellow glaze

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 551–1878





Pendant

Court workshops
Mughal dynasty, about 1610–1620
Jade (nephrite) with rubies, emerald, and gold inlay
The Victoria and Albert Museum, 02535(IS)



Panel with dragons, flowers, and clouds

China

Ming dynasty, probably the first half of the 16th century

Embroidery; polychrome silk threads on silk gauze

The Chris Hall Collection at the Hong Kong Palace Museum,
2025.CH-HKPM.478



Celestial globe

Qa'im Muhammad, Lahore

Mughal dynasty, 1626–1627

Brass inlaid with silver

The Victoria and Albert Museum, M.828–1928



North American Turkey

Mansur (court workshops)

Mughal dynasty, about 1612

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

Lady Wantage Bequest

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IM.135–1921



Rosewater sprinkler

Mughal dynasty, about 1630–1660

Gilt silver

Gift in memory of Michael Jones

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IS.46–1988



Ram's head dagger

Mughal dynasty, 17th to 18th century

Watered steel, rock crystal, gold, rubies, emeralds

Collection of Mengdiexuan



Architect of Paradise on Earth

Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658)

Shah Jahan, whose name means “King of the World” in Persian, became emperor after his father, Jahangir, died in 1627. The vast wealth accumulated in the Mughal court allowed Shah Jahan to commission exquisite jewelled artefacts, and the carved jades from this period later became prized items in the collection of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736–1795) of China. The emperor pursued his passion for architecture as well. The most famous monument from his reign is the majestic Taj Mahal, a tomb complex built in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal (1593–1631).

Mughal royal art during Shah Jahan’s reign is renowned for its opulence and its floral designs. Inspired by European botanical prints, Mughal artists rendered various flowers realistically, the most frequently seen among which are roses, lilies, tulips, and irises. Budding and blossoming flowers not only decorated the Taj Mahal, but were also carved in jewels, woven into textiles, and painted along the borders of albums to symbolise the beauty and eternity of the dynasty under his rule, suggesting it was like a garden of paradise. Just like the famous Persian verse inscribed in Shah Jahan’s palace in Delhi proclaims: “If there is Paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.”

Emperor Shah Jahan holding an emerald

Muhammad Abid (court workshops)

Mughal dynasty, about 1628–1629

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

Gift of Sir Robert Nathan, K.C.S.I, C.I.E

The Victoria and Albert Museum,

IM.233–1921



Cameo portrait of Emperor Shah Jahan

Court workshops

Mughal dynasty, about 1640–1650

Sardonyx

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IS.14–1974



© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Wine cup

Court workshops

Mughal dynasty, about 1640–1650

Rock crystal

Wells Bequest

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1664–1882



Wine cup

Court workshops

Mughal dynasty, about 1650–1700

Jade (nephrite)

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IS.19–1997



Pen box and utensils

Court workshops

Mughal dynasty, about 1700

Jade (nephrite) with rubies, emeralds, diamonds, gold inlay

The Victoria and Albert Museum, 02549(IS)



The Legacy

Emperor Shah Jahan's reign came to an abrupt conclusion in 1658 when he became seriously ill, which enabled his third son, Aurangzeb (r.1658–1707), to seize power. The new emperor significantly expanded Mughal territory, thereby irreversibly weakening the realm. The splendour of Mughal art, however, did not fade away after the “golden age” ended. As the Mughal dynasty declined, court artists and craftsmen came to serve other courts. They disseminated the skills and designs developed under the Mughals and adapted them to local styles. Today, architectural forms and floral decorations similar to those from Shah Jahan's reign are still widely used in South Asia. The Mughal influence across the globe continued. In English, the similar-sounding word “mogul” refers to a person with enormous wealth and power, much like a Mughal emperor.

Wall hanging

Gujarat

Mughal dynasty, about 1650–1700

Embroidered cotton with silk

The Victoria and Albert Museum, IS.168–1950



DISCOVER AND GET INVOLVED

For the General Public

Visit the website to download key exhibition texts in Simplified Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Learn more about Mughal art and culture through talks, workshops, docent-led tours, and audio guides.

[Details](#)

For Families

Join our Interactive Theatre: Mughal Dynasty (For kids and families)

[Details](#)

For Students and Teachers

Download exhibition learning material and sign up for our popular school group visits.

[Details](#)

For Community Groups

Discover our special access tours and workshops tailored for eligible charities and non-profits.

[Details](#)



