

INDIA: A JEWELRY SPECTRUM



OCTOBER 8 - JANUARY 31, 1999

BGC

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts

18 West 86th Street, New York City

Cover: Tibet, Ear ornament
Gold, turquoises, fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Mis, Brussels

Himachal Pradesh, Marriage nose ring
Gold, fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Ghysels, Belgium



Beginning on October 8, the Bard Graduate Center will present a major exhibition called *India: A Jewelry Spectrum*. The exhibition will run through January 31, 1999 and will present the first comprehensive exhibition in New York devoted exclusively to the remarkable jewelry of India with all the extraordinary ingenuity and beauty that characterizes all classes of Indian jewelry. The objects themselves will range from simple, decorative pieces to highly elaborate gemmed pieces of real splendor. The exhibition will be curated by Oppi Untracht, a leading



Kerala, Earrings
Gold, fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Ghysels, Belgium



authority on Indian jewelry whose pathbreaking book, *Traditional Indian Jewelry*, is a landmark study of this field. The exhibition itself will expose viewers to the rich diversity of Indian jewelry, from very primitive to highly sophisticated forms that convey the remarkable creativity evident in both its design and uses. The exhibition will explore the rich cultural meaning inherent in the pieces as well as showcase the artistry and techniques they embody.

India: A Jewelry Spectrum will feature 250 objects surveying the range of forms, designs and materials that comprise Indian jewelry. The objects examined will be loaned from public and private collections in Holland, Belgium, Finland, Switzerland and the United States. The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated and annotated publica-

Karnataka

Earring with chain support

Gold, fabricated, 19th century

Collection: Mis, Brussels

Kerala, Dancer's collar

Cast brass, 19th Century

Collection: Mis, Brussels

Kerala, Marriage necklace

Gold, fabricated, 19th century

Collection: Chrischilles, Brussels



tion and will be organized to mirror India's cultural development and traditional social hierarchy.

Tribal and Amuletic Jewelry The opening section will be devoted to tribal and amuletic jewelry, including the primitive jewelry of the Naga tribes, whose Neolithic culture persisted almost intact into the mid-twentieth century. This section also will feature examples of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim religious jewelry including rosaries and amulets, coin jewelry and animal jewelry.

Rural Jewelry The second section of the exhibition will consider rural jewelry, focusing largely on the jewelry associated with marriage. In India, no single ornament serves



as the prevailing symbol of marriage; rather, regional and religious traditions have spawned local and group practices. The section will feature examples from north and south India, including nose-rings and studs widely used in the north, and thalis, a protective metal amulet worn in the south. Examples of men's marriage ornaments will also be shown.

Bangles constitute an important subdivision of this section. The typical Indian marriage ornament, bangles, are made of virtually every material used for jewelry, including wood, shell, horn, ivory, metal, glass and lac, a material used for this purpose since ancient times and produced by an indigenous Indian insect. The section on rural jewelry will also include examples of silver jewelry worn on all parts of the body, includ-

*Tamil Nadu, Head ornament
Gold, diamonds, rubies,
fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Mis, Brussels*

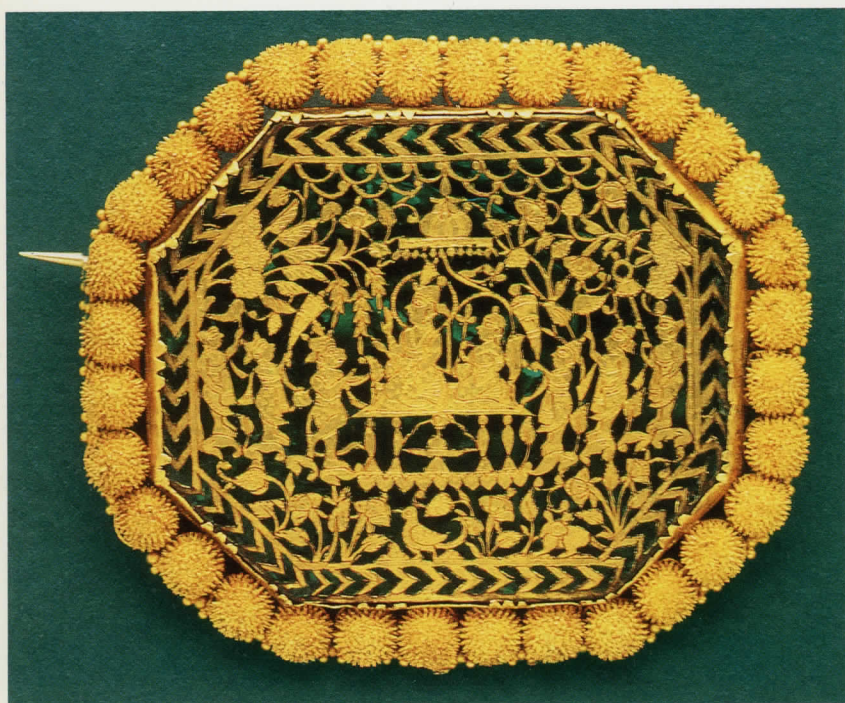


ing ornaments for the top and back of the head and ornaments for the ear, neck, torso, waist, fingers, wrist and ankles.

Gold and Gemstone Jewelry The final section of the exhibition will showcase gold and gemstone jewelry. Gold, according to Hindu belief, is a sacred metal symbolizing the warmth of the sun. Its use in dress or ornament is restricted to upper class and wealthy people and is a powerful indicator of the social status of the wearer.

Throughout the exhibition, a large selection

*Rajasthan, Brooch
Gold, green glass,
fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Mis, Brussels*



of photographs will help the viewer understand how and by whom these pieces of jewelry are worn while illustrating the relationship of jewelry in India to the ritual and secular events in which they are used.

The Catalogue

There will be a catalogue of the exhibition with an essay by Oppi Untracht and a selection of color photographs.

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts

The Bard Graduate Center is located at 18 West 86th Street, just off Central Park West. It can be reached by subway (B, C, 1, 9, to 86th Street) or bus (the crosstown M86). The Galleries are open Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 am to 5:00 pm; Thursday to 8:00 pm. Admission is \$2 for adults; \$1 for students and seniors. The Bard Graduate Center makes its exhibitions and programs accessible to those with special needs; please call prior to visiting to discuss arrangements. For further information, please telephone 212-501-3000.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Lectures and Special Events: A variety of offerings on topics relating to Indian jewelry, decorative arts, and culture will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition. In celebration of the opening, the guest curator, Oppi Untracht, will give a slide-illustrated talk, *Highlights of the Indian Jewelry Spectrum*, on the evening of October 13. Events for seniors, community groups, and special needs audiences will be held.

For a complete list of offerings, please call 212-501-3013, TTY 212-501-3012, fax 212-501-3097, or email programs@bgc.bard.edu.

Exhibition Tours: Guided tours of the exhibition will be given regularly. Guided group tours will be available by advance reservation. Please call 212-501-3023 for tour schedule and booking information.

Both Grown-ups' and Children's Programs at the BGC: Programs for children ages 6 to 12 and their adult companions will be held to complement the exhibition. Activities will include gallery tours and art workshops in which each participant will create an object inspired by the pieces in the exhibition. Please call 212-501-3011 for program dates and details.



Tamil Nadu, Gold necklace,
fabricated, 19th century
Collection: Ghysels, Belgium

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