

In a special exhibition, the Museum for Islamic Art pays tribute to the remarkable collector Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier (1741-95), whose albums, with their splendid Indo-Persian miniatures, are among the most outstanding holdings in the museum's collection.

Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin, Museumsinsel Berlin
Pergamonmuseum, Buchkunstkabinett
Bodestraße 1 – 3, 10178 Berlin
Entrance: Am Kupfergraben 5
Opening times: Mon – Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.,
Thurs 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.

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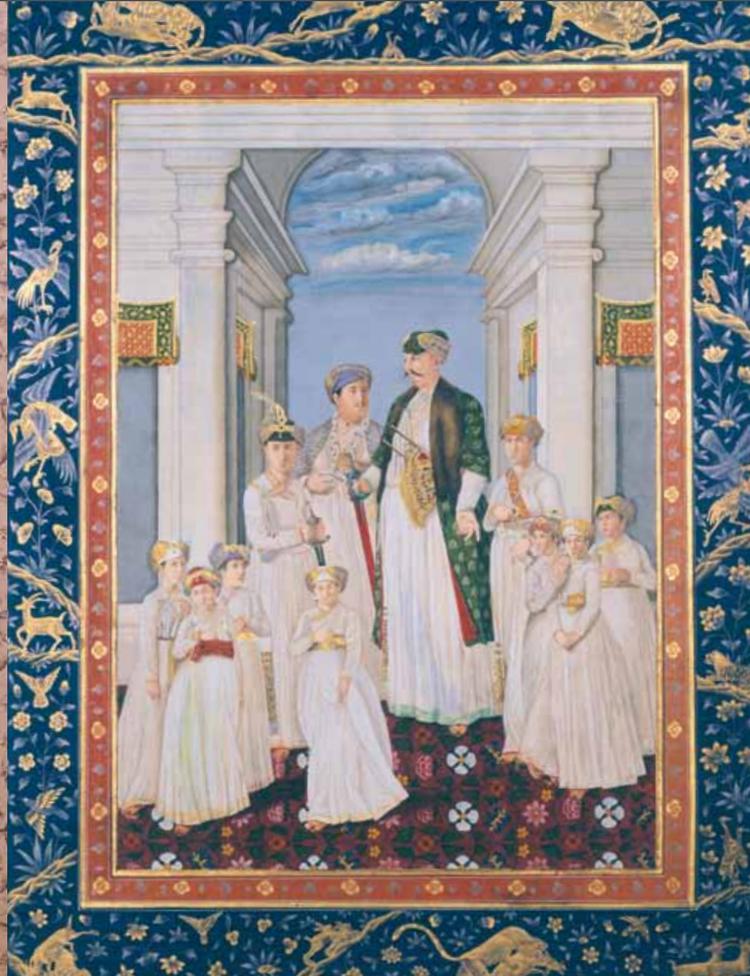
B Museum für Islamische Kunst
Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin

An Indian Aristocrat: Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier and his Albums

*Mihr Chand. The Mughal Emperor Humayun, c. 1770.
Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB*

*Mihr Chand in the style of Tilly Kettle. Prince Shuja ud-Daula
with his sons, c. 1770. Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB*

A special exhibition from 5 March to 30 May, 2010





Mihr Chand. De Polier watching "nautch" girls, ca. 1780.
Collection Princess Catherine Aga Khan, Geneva



Dedication for de Polier's Album,
Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB



In the style of Tilly Kettle. De Polier watching "nautch" girls, c. 1780.
Collection Princess Catherine Aga Khan, Geneva

Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier, a nobleman from Lausanne, as well mercenary, engineer, spy, businessman and collector of oriental manuscripts, was one of the most versatile Europeans to set off for India with the English East India Company and seek their fortune there during the latter half of the 18th century. Not being English, he was denied any chance of promotion in the British trading venture. As a result, he was drawn into the services of the North Indian prince Shuja ud-Daula (1732-75) of Oudh for whom he worked as an architect, surveyor and advisor for many years. _____

Polier was fascinated by India, and adopted the lifestyle of the local aristocracy. He committed himself to the study of Indian mythology and history, and also learned Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu. The letters he wrote in Persian also mention his two Indian wives. _____

As an ambitious collector, Polier acquired precious manuscripts, miniatures and calligraphies. More importantly, he commissioned countless new pictures and thus made a decisive contribution to the flowering of Indian miniature painting in Awadh. The genre's best-known representative, the painter Mihr Chand, created a number of notable artworks for Polier. The artist's encounter with English painters such as Tilly Kettle (1735-86) and Johan Zoffany (1734-1810), who were both active in India, was to have a powerful influence on Indian painting during this period. _____

In addition to important loans from the Indian department of the Museum of Asian Art, the Museum of Islamic Art is showing some of the most exquisite miniatures and calligraphies from Polier's albums. _____

School of Lucknow:
Two ladies on a terrace, c. 1770.
Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB



French school.
De Polier and his wife,
c. 1790-95.
Collection Countess
Marion von Polier

We owe it to exceptionally good fortune and the owners' generosity that we are now able to borrow important works from the private collections of Countess Marion von Polier and Princess Catherine Aga Khan (Geneva) and present them together in public for the very first time. They show the collector himself, and provide a striking contrast between the different worlds – the world of India and that of Europe – in which he lived. _____