



**THE CLOTH
THAT
CHANGED
THE WORLD**



**INDIA'S
PAINTED
AND PRINTED
COTTONS**



THE EXHIBITION

The painted and printed cottons of India changed human history. Over thousands of years, artisans in India perfected the weaving of fine cotton, making dyes so vibrant and strong they revolutionized fashion, art, and science around the globe. Connecting cultures, it was the cloth that drove the spice trade in the East Indies, first drew Europeans to India, and provoked the Industrial Revolution. Printed t-shirts and Laura Ashley floral patterns can all trace their ancestry back to these exuberantly coloured cottons of India.

The Cloth that Changed the World: India's Painted and Printed Cottons (working title) celebrates the elegant beauty of Indian Chintz while exploring the ways this luxury cloth has influenced art, science, and fashion around the world. It tells the fascinating stories behind the making and the makers of the cloth, and its far-flung trade to Cairo, Sumatra, Japan, Zanzibar, London, and Montreal. At the same time, it explores the darker sides of the global consumer desire for Indian chintz, from labour riots to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

A sumptuous feast for the eyes, it features close to 100 objects spanning 1,000 years and four continents. Amongst the highlights:

- ◆ **visually stunning palampores and other large hangings**

for palaces and elite homes of Asia and Europe (17th century to early 19th century),

- ◆ **a selection of Western and non-Western fashions** of bold colour and rich design including contemporary couture, and

- ◆ **unique archaeological fragments** from the 11th century.

Compelling audio-visual content conveys the complexity of the cloth-making process (printing, painting, dyeing) and features interviews with today's top artists and designers on the major revitalizations they are spear-heading, and the ecological challenges they face.

THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Featuring fashions and textiles from the Royal Ontario Museum's collection of Indian 'Chintz', and a few important, rarely-seen loans from private collections, this exhibition brings to life India's contributions to arts, science, fashion and design, the deep and long interconnections of our world, and the impacts of consumption on the global environment. Visitors to the exhibition learn about the full global reach of this fabric in four thematic sections:

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1 THE INDIAN INTERNAL MARKET

Creating for Court, Temple and Countryside

Introduced to India's textile artisans, crafting techniques, and varied internal communities, visitors gain an appreciation of India as the motherland of cotton, and the genius of the Indian art and science of dyes. They also learn how all levels of Indian society used their cotton textiles to dress the body, the home, and to venerate deities.

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PHOTO (BLOCK PRINTER) COURTESY OF TIM MCCLAUGHLIN



2 CLOTHING THE WORLD *Export Markets*

From ancient times, India proverbially 'dressed the world', annually exporting millions of yards of its coloured cottons to the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. In this second section, visitors see a stunning range of the finely patterned cottons that were so eagerly sought, including examples from 1200 AD.



3 CHANGING THE WORLD *The World Responds*

Indian Chintz profoundly influenced the textile arts globally in terms of fashion and trade. Here, visitors learn how Indian painted cottons inspired design and technologies – from Indonesian batiks to Oberkampf *toiles de Jouy* – and changed production and economies around the world.

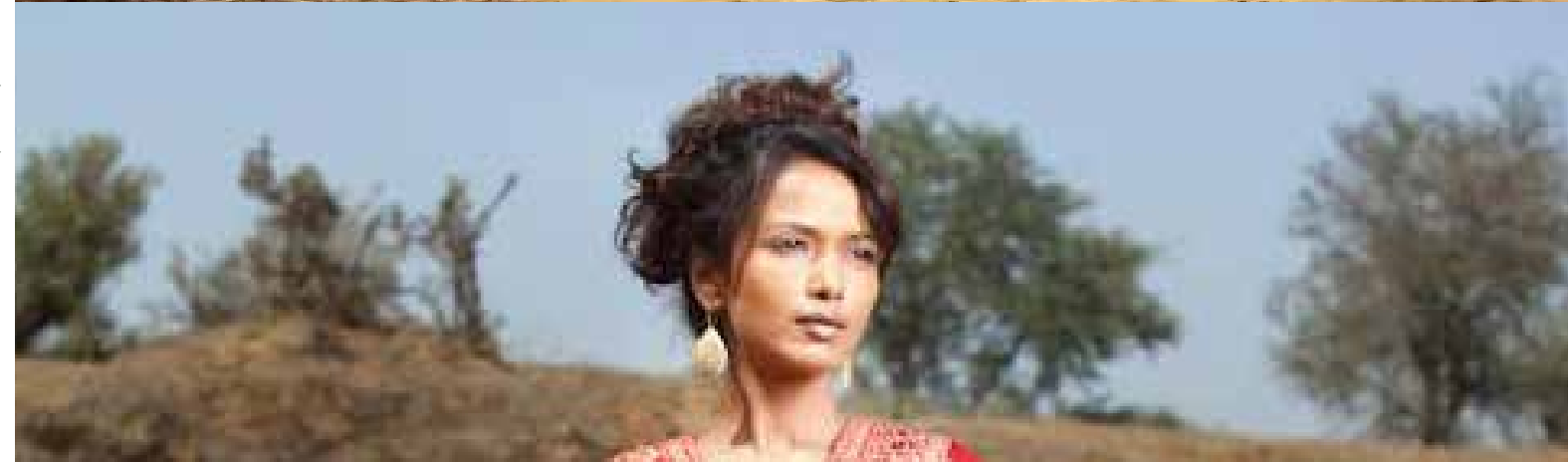


Specially commissioned pieces from today's internationally recognized great designers tell the ongoing story of Indian Chintz

4 CREATING FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The story of India's painted and printed cottons does not end in 1800, as some scholarship would have it... nor in 1900... nor even in 2000. In present-day India, the art continues and, indeed, has experienced important revivals. In this last section of the exhibition, specially commissioned pieces from today's internationally recognized great masters and top designers are presented to tell the ongoing story of Indian Chintz.

ANOKHI / MARTIN PRINODA. (OPPOSITE) COURTESY OF GAURANG SHAH





THE CURATORS

LEAD

Dr. Sarah Fee

Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Textiles & Fashion, Associate Professor in Department of Art History, University of Toronto

Sarah Fee oversees the ROM's renowned collection of approximately 15,000 pieces of textiles and fashion from Africa, Asia and the Islamic World. With degrees from Oxford University and the School of Oriental Studies, Paris, she has written and lectured widely on the textile arts of Madagascar and the western Indian Ocean world. Most recently, she was co-editor of *Textile Trades, Consumer Cultures and the Material World of the Indian Ocean: An Ocean of Cloth* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018). Her 2017 article in the journal *Textile History* on the textile trades between Africa, India, and southern Arabia received the prestigious Pasold Essay Prize. Thematic interests include textile trades, global fashion, the museum after-lives of objects, cross-cultural appropriations, ceremonial exchange, and spinning, weaving and dye technologies.

CURATORIAL ADVISORS

Dr. Deepali Dewan

Dan Mishra Curator of South Asian Art and Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum

Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art/Graduate Department of Art, University of Toronto
Deepali Dewan's main research focuses on the history of photography in India and the South Asian diaspora as a means of understanding how photography has shaped contemporary ways of viewing and being in the world. She has also researched 19th-century decorative arts in colonial India and Victorian Britain. Her third research area is in contemporary art, with a focus on the work of specific artists as a way of mapping the larger picture of post-colonial visual practice within South Asia and its diasporas.

Dr. Alexandra Palmer

Nora E. Vaughan Senior Curator, Chair of the Veronika Gervers Research Fellowship in Textiles and Costume at the Royal Ontario Museum

Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art/Graduate Department of Art, University of Toronto
Responsible for over 44,000 artifacts in the collection of western fashionable dress and textiles, Alexandra Palmer has curated many exhibitions. Her most recent exhibition, *Christian Dior* (2017), was a critical and popular success and is about to embark on an international tour. Recognized as a specialist on the history of couture, her book *Dior: A New Look, A New Enterprise 1947-57* (2009) won the 2010 Millia Davenport Publication Award.

Dr. Ruth Barnes

Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art, Yale University Art Gallery

Ruth Barnes received her doctorate from Oxford University and was previously the textile curator at the Ashmolean Museum, where she organized exhibitions on Asian and Islamic textiles, early Indian Ocean trade, and the theme of pilgrimage. She was also curator of three new permanent-collection galleries for the Ashmolean's reopening in 2009. Her publications include *The Ikat Textiles of Lamalera* and *Indian Block-Printed Textiles in Egypt: The Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*. Her most recent book, *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles*, co-edited with Mary Kahlenberg, received the R. L. Shep Award in 2010.