

PRESS NOTE



CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ VASTU SANGRAHALAYA (CSMVS)

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For Immediate Release

‘Early Photography and Archaeology in Western India’ new international exhibition opening at CSMVS

In its third collaboration with the British Library, London; Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai introduces a compelling exhibition, ‘Early Photography and Archaeology in Western India’ opening for the public on 25th November 2022.

An exhibition of collections held by The British Library and CSMVS showcasing to the public for the first time some of the rarest, earliest and most striking photographs and objects of India’s rich archaeological heritage, complemented by contemporary photographs that will forge new connections between the past, present and future.

The proposed exhibition aims to be an immersive visual journey telling the story of the discovery of India’s architectural and archaeological heritage seen through the photographic record. It will bring to public attention the history of exploration and documentation, when major monuments and archaeological sites were photographed for the very first time by European and Indian archaeologists. While the core of the exhibition will be the historic photographic prints, a number of new comparative photographs will document the present state and setting of selected historical monuments and sites, providing an opportunity to reflect on issues of protection of heritage sites, challenges and conservation needs.

The audience will travel chronologically through six sections showcasing photographs produced by Thomas Biggs, William Harry Pigou, Shivshankar Narayan, Robert Gill, Edmund David Lyon, Sykes and Dwyer, and Henry Cousens. These were scholars, officers and photographers employed by the East India Company to document the unique architectural heritage of western India. From the 1850s – 1890s, projects carried out by these seven photographers will also chronologically trace the progressing contemporary technologies of photography being invented throughout the 19th century which were employed by them in their works.

The photographs from the collection of the British Library will be displayed in India for the very first time and have been carefully selected to include some of the most important archaeological sites from the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka including Satrunjaya, Somnath, Ajanta, Ellora, Elephanta, Kanheri, Nashik, Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Hampi to name a few. This selection also complements the CSMVS archaeological collection and the display will be enriched with sculptures from the very sites these photographs document.

The CSMVS a pioneering educational institute and patron of heritage arts in India, has gone a step further in a collaboration with Studio Goppo of Santiniketan to physically produce handmade photographic prints using 19th-century processes of salted paper and albumen prints giving audiences the rare opportunity to appreciate them as they would have been seen in the 19th-century.

The exhibition "Early Photography and Archaeology in Western India" has been supported by Cyrus Guzder and the British Council and is part of the "India/UK Together, a Season of Culture". The season celebrates and strengthens the bilateral relationship, friendship and vibrant cultural bonds between the two countries and also marks India's 75th anniversary.

The Exhibition is curated by John Falconer Exhibition Curator and former Lead Curator Visual Arts/Curator of Photographs, British Library.

Quote by CSMVS, Director General, Sabyasachi Mukherjee

"The exhibition "Early Photography and Archaeology in Western India" has been a project that has long been imagined by the British Library and CSMVS and we are delighted to be able to present this to our audiences in our centenary year to draw focus on to the great monuments of western India and the art of photography, both of which are in a unique amalgam in the museum.

Through this endeavour, the British Library and CSMVS, aim to present an invaluable resource to Indian audiences for the first time with a compelling and interactive exhibition featuring side-by-side historical photographs, contemporary photographs and archaeological collections. The exhibition will be enriched with accessible interpretation and be accompanied by a publication. A public learning programme will be delivered both onsite at the CSMVS and online."

Quote by British Library Chief Executive, Roly Keating

"This exhibition marks another significant milestone in the long-standing collaboration between the British Library and CSMVS, one of our key partners in India. Making our collections accessible to everyone is at the core of the British Library's mission, so we are delighted to be able to share these historic photographs with audiences in India. We are also particularly pleased to have the opportunity to work alongside colleagues at CSMVS to curate this exhibition and for both institutions to share their specialist knowledge and expertise."

Quote by British Council, Director Arts India, Jonathan Kennedy

"India/UK Together, a Season of Culture celebrates the friendship and vibrant cultural bonds between India and the UK and also marks India's 75th anniversary. The must-see exhibition "Early Photography and Archaeology in Western India" showcases for the first time some of the rarest, earliest, and most eye-catching photographs and objects from India's rich archaeological heritage, that would be complemented by photographs by contemporary Indian photographers that are sure to transport one back in time."

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, is one of the premier art and history museums in India. CSMVS celebrated its 100 years' glorious journey as one of the premier, public enlightenment centres of the country on 10th January 2022. This was a landmark moment, not only in the history of the Museum but for the cultural movement of the country. In the last decade the Museum has undergone a profound modernization process with the idea to transform the Museum from a national level repository of antiquities to an institute of international standards. In its Centenary year, CSMVS has put together a list of significant projects and initiatives which will be undertaken in and beyond 2022 to mark this landmark year and moment.

The British Library

We are the national library of the UK and we are here for everyone. Our shelves hold over 170 million items – a living collection that gets bigger every day. Although our roots extend back centuries, we aim to collect everything published in the UK today, tomorrow and far into the future. Our trusted experts care for this collection and open it up for everyone to spark new discoveries, ideas and to help people do incredible things. We have millions of items in a range of formats and languages and our London and Yorkshire sites hold collections ranging from books, manuscripts, newspapers and maps to sound recordings, patents, photographs and prints, as well as a copy of every UK domain website and blog. Our public spaces provide a place to research, to meet friends, to start up a new business or simply to get inspired by visiting our galleries and events. We work with partners and libraries across the UK and the world to make sure that as many people as possible have the chance to use and explore our collection, events and expertise. And we're always open [online](#), along with more and more of our digitised collection.

About India/UK Together, a Season of Culture

India/UK Together, a Season of Culture, is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK. Marking India's 75th anniversary, it will see a vast programme of creative collaboration, education and cultural exchange take place online, and in cities across both countries. Working with a number of partners and institutions in the field of Arts, Education and English, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will bring together people in both countries, raise awareness around key real-world issues, and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's educational and cultural ties. For more information on India/UK Together, a Season of Culture, please visit www.britishcouncil.in