



# Visions of Mughal India: The Collection of Howard Hodgkin

*Andrew Topsfield*

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Hodgkin collection here for the first time both in its entirety and in its full maturity, after a lifetime's constant improvement and refinement.

Many of the works shown are recent acquisitions by Hodgkin which have never been exhibited previously.

Renowned British painter and printmaker Howard Hodgkin, also an art collector, is one of the great aesthetes of the age, say critics. The celebrated artist's full collection of great Mughal art is being presented for the first time at the Ashmolean Museum in an exhibition running from early February to mid-April 2011. The catalogue includes over 110 Indian paintings and drawings from these remarkable private works that Hodgkin began acquiring whilst a school boy.

"You need things to look at, things to affect your feelings, and your intelligence, and your heart" the artist has said. Many paintings shown are recent purchases never before exhibited revealing how Hodgkin has constantly refined the collection over the years.

The collection comprises most of the main types of Indian court painting that flourished during the Mughal period (c.1550-1850), including the elegant naturalistic works of the imperial Mughal court, the poetic and subtly coloured paintings of the Deccani Sultanates, the boldly drawn and vibrantly coloured styles of the Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan and the Punjab Hills.

Hodgkin's own art is collected worldwide in museums as diverse as the Tate and the Phillips Collection and Yale Center for British Art in America. Named by England's Queen Elizabeth II as a Companion of Honor (2003), his unique works hold glimpses of incandescent impressions of Turner; the emotional explosiveness of Van Gogh, the colder abstractions of Pollock and De Kooning and the late canvases of Kline.

Hodgkin once said his collecting had affected him as an artist but "Not in the way people think", that collecting had made him "Very aware of quality, and increasingly demanding of my own work."

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