

Decorative Art

The Decorative section displays a huge collection of ivory objects along with different schools of textiles. The artefacts of this gallery came from various colonial exhibitions where the dazzling opulence of the Orient was on show. The Lord Carmichael collection and the Rai Manilal Nahar Bahadur collection (1927-1928) comprising paintings, miniatures, zed objects, textiles and Tibetan artefacts are here.



The Indian Museum in Kolkata, one of the oldest and largest museums in India, houses an extensive collection of art, artifacts, and antiquities. Among its various sections, the **Decorative Art Gallery** is particularly noteworthy for its diverse and rich collection. Here's a detailed overview:

Overview of the Decorative Art Gallery

Location: The Decorative Art section is located on the ground floor of the Indian Museum in the building's eastern wing.

Focus: The gallery is dedicated to showcasing various forms of decorative art that highlight the craftsmanship, artistic excellence, and cultural diversity of India. The collection spans several centuries and represents the artistic traditions of different regions and communities across the country.

Key Exhibits and Collections

1. Textiles:

- **Types:** The collection includes an array of textiles such as saris, shawls, embroidered garments, and tapestries.
- **Highlights:** The gallery features exquisite examples of Indian weaving techniques like Banarasi silk, Kanchipuram silk, and Jamdani. Embroidery styles like Zardozi, Kantha, and Chikan work are also well-represented.

2. Jewelry:

- **Types:** A rich display of traditional Indian jewelry, including necklaces, bangles, rings, earrings, and other ornaments.
- **Materials:** Items are made from gold, silver, precious stones, and semi-precious stones, showcasing India's long-standing tradition of jewelry-making.
- **Styles:** The collection reflects various regional styles like Rajasthani, South Indian, and Mughal designs.

3. Metalware:

- **Brass, Copper, and Bronze Items:** The gallery houses intricately designed vessels, utensils, and decorative pieces made of brass, copper, and bronze.
- **Bidriware:** A unique form of metalware from Bidar in Karnataka, where intricate silver inlay work is done on metal surfaces.

- **Artifacts:** Items like lamps, idols, and ritualistic objects used in religious ceremonies.

4. Woodwork:

- **Carvings:** The gallery includes beautifully carved wooden panels, furniture, and decorative items.
- **Craftsmanship:** The collection showcases the skills of artisans from regions like Kashmir, Gujarat, and Kerala, known for their unique woodcraft traditions.

5. Ivory and Bone Work:

- **Ivory Carvings:** Intricately carved ivory artifacts, including figurines, boxes, and combs, reflecting the fine craftsmanship of Indian artisans.
- **Bone Inlay Work:** Furniture and decorative items with detailed bone inlay work, a specialty of regions like Rajasthan.

6. Ceramics and Pottery:

- **Terracotta:** The gallery features terracotta items like figurines, vases, and tiles from different periods.
- **Blue Pottery:** The famous blue pottery of Jaipur, known for its vibrant blue and white patterns, is also displayed.

7. Glassware:

- **Stained Glass:** Items featuring stained glass art, popular during the colonial period, are part of the collection.
- **Glass Artifacts:** Decorative glass items like vases, bowls, and perfume bottles.

8. Paintings and Miniatures:

- **Styles:** The gallery includes traditional Indian paintings such as Pattachitra, Madhubani, and miniature paintings from the Mughal, Rajput, and Deccan schools.
- **Materials:** These paintings are often done on cloth, palm leaves, and other traditional materials.

Importance and Significance

The Decorative Art section of the Indian Museum offers a deep insight into the cultural and artistic heritage of India. The artifacts not only reflect the aesthetic sensibilities of different regions but also provide a glimpse into the social and cultural life of the past. The gallery is a testament to the incredible skill and creativity of Indian artisans across centuries.

Visiting Information

- **Timings:** The museum is generally open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Tuesday to Sunday. It remains closed on Mondays and certain public holidays.
- **Entry Fee:** The entry fee varies depending on nationality (Indian or foreign), and there may be additional charges for photography and video recording.
- **Guided Tours:** The museum offers guided tours, which can provide additional insights into the collections.

Tips for Visitors

- Allocate sufficient time to explore the Decorative Art section thoroughly, as it is rich in detail and history.
- Consider visiting during weekdays to avoid crowds and have a more immersive experience.
- Photography might be restricted in certain areas, so it's advisable to check with the museum authorities.

The Decorative Art Gallery in the Indian Museum is a must-visit for anyone interested in the artistic traditions of India, offering a unique perspective on the country's rich cultural legacy.

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