




# ARCHIVAL DOSSIER

## THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION OF INDIAN ART AT THE WARBURG INSTITUTE, 1940

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### Introduction

On November 14, 1940, amidst the turmoil of the Second World War, the Warburg Institute in London welcomed visitors to a *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art*. Organized by the art historian Stella Kramrisch, the exhibition showcased around 250 black-and-white photographs of Hindu temples, Buddhist monuments, and traces of cultural exchange between “East” and “West”. The photographs, mounted on large panels with descriptive captions, formed a striking visual essay that captivated and educated its London audience. In a turbulent time marked by the influx of Jewish refugees into Britain, the rain of German bombs on England, and rising resistance to the British Raj in India, the exhibition stood out as an unlikely cultural triumph. It not only attracted large numbers of visitors, but also received enthusiastic reviews from critics. Its success marked it as the most celebrated of the Warburg Institute’s photographic exhibitions during the 1930s and 1940s, offering a rare moment of artistic and intellectual engagement to a city gripped by war.

The *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* not only represented a unique collaboration between Stella Kramrisch and two major London institutions – the Warburg Institute and the India Society – but also marked a pivotal moment in Kramrisch’s career in England. Even before organizing the exhibition, Kramrisch had established multiple connections in London. Part of her collection was on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), and she had previously published with the India Society. In addition, she taught Indian art history at the Courtauld Institute during the summer term from 1937 to 1940. During these years she also collaborated with Fritz Saxl, director of the Warburg Institute, gathering reproductions of Gandharan sculptures for the institute’s photographic collection.

This archival dossier presents a selection of archival materials that illuminate the exhibition’s key themes, photographic techniques, and context in wartime London. Among the subjects dis-

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cussed in its fourteen image commentaries are the motivations behind the exhibition, the public and critical responses, and the exhibition's subsequent tour across Great Britain. Given the 1940 exhibition's collaborative nature, relevant archival sources are found dispersed across multiple institutions: the Warburg Institute's archive and photographic collection (London), the Philadelphia Museum of Art Library and Archives (which house Stella Kramrisch's papers) and the British Library (London), which holds the papers of the India Society. We extend our thanks to Eckart Marchand, assistant archivist, and Paul Taylor, curator of the photographic collection at the Warburg Institute, as well as Kristen Regina, Director of the Library and Archives at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, for their invaluable support in locating and digitizing these materials.

### I. The Exhibition Setup [Fig. 1a and Fig. 1b]

The 1940 exhibition was not only an institutional collaboration; it was also an intellectual one. The selection of images and narratives that made up its first two sections – on Hindu temples and Buddhist architecture and art, respectively – unmistakably reflected the perspectives of Kramrisch's scholarship. The third section, by contrast, examined Gandharan art through the quintessentially Warburgian lens of cultural exchange.

In this view of the section on “Images of the Main Hindu Deities”, a central panel devoted to representations of Śiva is flanked by two side panels on Śakti and Viṣṇu. These panels and others like it were installed in front of empty library shelves, stretching across the reading rooms of the Warburg Institute, then located in the Imperial Institute in South Kensington, London. The arrangement of photographs on upright cloth panels was fully in keeping with the Warburg's in-house style. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Warburg Institute had produced several photographic exhibitions, beginning with *The Visual Approach to the Classics* (1939) and culminating with *English Art in the Mediterranean* (1941) and *Portrait and Character* (1943).<sup>1</sup> These exhibitions embodied the Warburg Institute's ambition to demonstrate the relevance of its art and cultural-historical scholarship to British society. The 1939 *Visual Approach to the Classics* show, for example, toured museums and schools across the UK, serving as a model for the following year's exhibition on Indian art.

Such outreach efforts were critical for the institute and its staff, all of whom were exiles from Nazi Germany, as their funding and future in Britain were far from secure. By the winter of 1940, when the exhibition was held, the Warburg – like other cultural institu-

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Johannes von Müller, “Under the Most Difficult Circumstances”. Exhibitions at the Warburg Institute 1933–45, in: id., Joanne W. Anderson, and Mick Finsch (eds.), *Image Journeys. The Warburg Institute and a British Art History*, Passau 2019, 29–42. In the same edited collection, see also Joanne W. Anderson, Cultural Life and Politics in Wartime London, 43–51.



[Fig. 1a]

Exhibition view of panel "VII. Images of the Main Hindu Divinities", in the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute, Warburg Institute Archive (WIA), I.24, Exhibition catalogue containing fifty-four photographs of the screens, fol. 17, photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



tions, including museums – had already moved its most valuable holdings out of London due to the intense bombing during the Blitz. If the photographic exhibition owed its success to the rarity of cultural activities in the wartime capital, another, more important reason was the theme of Indian art itself.

## II. Warburg Institute Exhibition Leaflet [Fig. 2a and Fig. 2b]

The exhibition leaflet not only bears the imprint of its author, Stella Kramrisch, but also attests to the research priorities of the Warburg Institute.<sup>2</sup> Kramrisch’s emphasis on the “essential conceptions of the Indian mind”, “the unbroken tradition of India”, and “the consistency of Indian thought [...] through thousands of years” reflects her deeply entrenched conception of the transcendental and timeless nature of Indian art. By contrast, the text’s assertion that the meaning of Indian artistic traditions “cannot be verified by logical and reflective thought alone”, but “must be tested and made concrete by practice and a training in which all the faculties of mind and body are engaged” distinctly evokes the Warburg Institute director Fritz Saxl’s emphasis on visual education as a form of popular education. Recapitulating the methodological argument of the institute’s photographic exhibition of Greek and Roman art from the previous year, the leaflet text expounds on the rationale of its didactic approach, which guides the viewer from “aesthetic appreciation to intellectual understanding”.

Interestingly, the text attributes a dual power to photography, which can both isolate sculptures, detaching them “from the setting in which they appear”, while also helping “to visualize the original context to which they belong”, among other things by reproducing atmospheric light and darkness. While critics like Iqbal Singh would fault the Warburg exhibition for decontextualizing and dehistoricizing Indian art, it can be argued that this was only one of the exhibition’s strategies.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible that Saxl’s pedagogical method of curating photographic exhibitions – first honed in the milieu of socialist Vienna and refined through his ongoing collaboration with Aby Warburg, the institute’s founder – even made an impression on Kramrisch’s curatorial style. On November 13, 1940, as she was about to depart to Calcutta, she wrote to Saxl:

2

In a letter to the India Society secretary, who was responsible for printing the leaflet, Saxl explicitly requested that Kramrisch’s initials at its end should be deleted. Warburg Institute Archive, Associations, India Society, Fritz Saxl to Frederick J. P. Richter, November 30, 1940.

3

On Singh’s critique, see Jo Ziebritzki and Matthew Vollgraff, Editorial. Stella Kramrisch and the Transculturation of Art History, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 4, 2024, 787–809.

## Exhibition of Indian Art

AT THE WARBURG INSTITUTE, NOVEMBER 1940

**T**HIS present photographic exhibition of Indian art has been planned to show how the Indian builder and craftsman have given shape to the religious ideas of the Indian people. The monuments convey, by their form and contents, the essential conceptions of the Indian mind.

A proper understanding of Indian tradition requires a closer and a different kind of study than the generally educated public can give. Its meaning cannot be verified by logical and reflective thought alone. It must be tested and made concrete by practice and a training in which all the faculties of mind and body are engaged. The visual approach introduces the student to the monuments from the perceptible and the intelligible side. The monuments guide him from æsthetic appreciation to intellectual understanding.

Indian sculptures in museum collections are only fragments of a whole. They are detached from the body of the temple to which they belong, detached also from the setting in which they appear, from the light which envelops them and is reflected from them. The photographs show the light, or the darkness, in which the sculptures dwell on the walls and in the interior of the Indian temples, and help to visualize the original context to which they belong. They illustrate, in their juxtaposition, the consistency of Indian thought underlying the variety of the forms in which it has been clad through thousands of years in the many regional schools of the Indian continent.

The exhibition is devoted to works that illustrate the unbroken tradition of India, based on the Vedas and known as Hinduism. It also includes works of the

[Fig. 2a]

WIA, I.24.1, n.p., photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

religious reform movements of Buddhism and Jainism. Both are rooted in the same tradition. A later exhibition will show in a similar manner the achievements of Islam in India.

The exhibition is divided into three sections. They illustrate (1) a millennium of temple-building from the seventh to the seventeenth century A.D. and beyond, (2) a millennium of the 'cave' or rock-cut monuments of India, from the second century B.C. to the eighth century A.D., and (3) almost half a millennium of contacts and exchanges with the classical art of the West, in the northern border regions (Gandhara, Afghanistan), and in various Indian schools, including the south of India.

In all its manifestations Indian art serves the purpose of leading from appearance to reality. It uses the abundance of life of which it is a part as support and symbol of an ultimate state which comprises and transcends life. In this function the work of art is instrumental in the same way as is the human body. By its training and mastery neither its physical perfection alone nor its subjugation are attempted in India. The human body is made the place wherein and by means of which man achieves union with the absolute.

The exhibition has been prepared by Dr. S. Kramrisch, and is held under the joint auspices of the Warburg Institute and the India Society.

You have made real to me a world in which I always believed and of which I had come to think as unattainable. In the sustained ceremony of opening the eye which you have performed on me during these months you have made me see and know the kindness which comes from understanding, the thoroughness of application which comes from consistent thought – and their results. [...] Perhaps I shall be able to contribute to them. This is how it should be when a Bodhisatva is near and a Vidyadhara passes by.<sup>4</sup>

### III. The Hindu Temple and Raymond Burnier's Photography [Fig. 3]

Around 1940, after authoring major monographs on both sculpture (*Indian Sculpture*, 1933) and painting (*Survey of Painting in the Decan*, 1937), Kramrisch turned her attention decisively toward the study of Hindu temples. The exhibition, in particular its first section, was an important milestone on that research journey; from it stem both this reproduction of panel “II. The Spire of the Temple Represents the World Mountain” and the exhibition view showing a *Krishna Lila* scroll hung between two panels. The Hindu temple section of the exhibition foreshadowed the culmination of her in-depth research in the richly illustrated, two-volume study on *The Hindu Temple* (1946).

Various photographic sources were used when assembling the images to be shown to the London audience. When proposing the exhibition to the India Society, Saxl emphasized that it was “essential that photographs chosen should be modern and appeal to the wide public which has now grown accustomed to the latest photography through the daily press”.<sup>5</sup> As was typical for photographic exhibitions at the Warburg Institute, where photographs were treated as tools for visual analysis rather than as autonomous works of art, photographers and image sources were not credited.<sup>6</sup> This practice extended to the exhibition of Indian art, where the artistic merit of the photographers was similarly downplayed.

Kramrisch, however, had collaborated with renowned photographer Raymond Burnier, whose expressive photographs of Indian sculptures and temples possessed undeniable artistic qualities. She actively resisted the Warburg Institute's policy of leaving professional photographers unacknowledged, advocating for Burnier's work to be credited. Ironically, while pushing for Burnier's recognition,

<sup>4</sup>  
Warburg Institute Archive, GC Stella Kramrisch, Stella Kramrisch to Fritz Saxl, November 13, 1940.

<sup>5</sup>  
British Library, MSS EUR F 147/78, Fritz Saxl, Aspects of Indian Art, A Series of Exhibitions, undated typescript.

<sup>6</sup>  
We thank Johannes von Müller for his insightful research on this point.





[Fig. 3]

Exhibition view of panel "II. The Spire of the Temple Represents the World Mountain", in the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute, WIA, I.24.1, fol. 2, photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

Kramrisch herself chose to remain anonymous as the collector of over a dozen sculptures featured in reproductions in the same exhibition.

This panel on northern Indian temples illustrates Kramrisch's twofold strategy for making monumental temple structures more accessible to European viewers. First, she relied on Burnier's high-contrast, almost expressionist photographs: here Burnier's images dominate the top left, top right, and central sections. The captions identified the temple's name, location, date, and sometimes the deity depicted – for example, the two top images name Śiva. Some captions also offered symbolic interpretations, such as the description for the top-left image: “Central Part of the Spire, Nilkantheshvara Temple, Udaypur, Gwalior, 11th century. Mountain mansion, carvings represent windows. Śiva, the main Divinity of this Temple, is in large ‘Trefoil Window’ carving.” However, these explanations could still seem cryptic without prior knowledge.

Hence Kramrisch's second strategy was to provide comparative examples more familiar to European visitors. For instance, the bottom-right photograph shows the entrance arch of a Gothic cathedral, accompanied by a caption reading: “The form of the Archivolt leads the devotee into the church, whereas the Indian temple projects its sculptures towards the devotee” – a reference to the “reverse perspective” Kramrisch had studied in the murals of Ajanta.<sup>7</sup> Previously, Kramrisch had argued for an “inner affinity” between Gothic cathedrals and Hindu temples, noting how both express spirituality through form and architecture.<sup>8</sup> In this 1940 exhibition, by contrast, this parallel was primarily a didactic tool intended to engage and accommodate the cultural expectations of a European audience.

#### IV. *Patras* (Scroll Paintings) in the Photographic Exhibition [Fig. 4]

The *Krishna Lila* scroll, displayed between two panels in the first section, was one of the five *patras* (scroll paintings) Kramrisch added to the photographic exhibition. *Patras* are a Bengali narrative art form that depict folkloric and religious stories. The scrolls featured in the exhibition were all from West Bengal and dated to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Interestingly, they were neither mentioned in the exhibition leaflet, nor were they reproduced in the systematic photographic documentation of the entire exhibition now held in the archive of the Warburg Institute, suggesting that they were added spontaneously to inject color and vibrancy into

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See Sylvia Houghteling's article in this issue: Another Perspective as Symbolic Form. Stella Kramrisch's Writings on the Ajanta Paintings, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual – Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 4, 2024, 863–900.

8

Stella Kramrisch, Indian Art and Europe, in: *Rupam* 11, 1922, 81–86.



[Fig. 4]

Left: Exhibition view of photographic panels and a scroll in the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute. Right: *Krishna Lila Pat*, 19th century, Indian, artist unknown, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Stella Kramrisch Collection, 1994-148-548a,b.

the exhibition, rather than as integral components of its narrative. While these folk art pieces were merely supplementary to the Warburg exhibition, almost three decades later Kramrisch would dedicate the major exhibition *Unknown India* entirely to Indian folk art.<sup>9</sup>

The scrolls came from Kramrisch's private collection, and likely represented a practical means of including original artworks in the exhibition. Their inclusion, despite the risk of destruction from bombing, suggests that she did not consider them as valuable as other items in her collection. In 1945, Kramrisch wrote to Frederick J.P. Richter, honorable secretary of the India Society, to inquire about the whereabouts of some of her items, including the *patas*: "I do want to get them back. Does anyone come to India and could bring them?"<sup>10</sup> When she finally retrieved them is unclear, but she eventually did, as the *Krishna Lila* scroll and other *patas* from the exhibition now form part of the Stella Kramrisch collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>11</sup>

## V. Exhibition View [Fig. 5]

The building that housed the exhibition was neither the first nor the last of the Warburg Institute's London locations. After a temporary stay at Thames House from 1934 to 1937, the refugee German research library moved into the Imperial Institute Buildings in South Kensington, where it remained until 1958. As Tim Anstey describes, the space "consisted of a suite of heavily moulded, double-height rooms within a stylistically eclectic building with monstrous flying stone staircases and monumental corridors".<sup>12</sup> It was in this occasionally challenging space that all of the institute's major photographic exhibitions were held.<sup>13</sup>

In this photograph of the exhibition's first section, four panels are visible. The first, panel "XII. The Animal as Seat of the Divine Presence 'Vahana' and the Anthropomorphic Image of Divinity", explores the iconographic representation of animals as divine

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See Darielle Mason's article in this issue: Timing the Timeless. Stella Kramrisch's "Unknown India", in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual – Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 4, 2024, 813–861.

10

British Library, MSS EUR F 147/70, Stella Kramrisch to Frederick Richter, September 4, 1945.

11

See Stella Kramrisch collection at the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#) (October 15, 2024).

12

Tim Ainsworth Anstey, Moving Memory. The Buildings of the Warburg Institute, in: *Kunst og Kultur* 103/3, 2020, 172–185, here 179.

13

See Anderson, Finch, and von Müller, Image Journeys.



[Fig. 5]

Exhibition view of the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute, PMA, Library and Archives, Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art at the Warburg Institute.

mounts, as well as anthropomorphic deities like Ganesha.<sup>14</sup> The two central panels fall under the heading “XI. Recurrent Themes of Reliefs”, with subtopics “XIA. The Royal Duty of Combat as a Means of Attaining Truth” and “XIB. ‘Mithuna’, The Union of the Male and Female Bodies as the Symbol of the Supreme Union”.<sup>15</sup> The photograph conveys a sense of the intellectual, visual, and spatial density that confronted the visiting public.

## VI. Report of the Opening Reception, in *Indian Arts and Letters* [Fig. 6]

This press agency photograph of Leo Amery (left), the Secretary of State for India, and Sir Francis Younghusband (right), the Chairman of the India Society, was taken at the opening of the exhibition. The India Society, represented by Younghusband, had originally been planning a major loan exhibition of Indian art at the Royal Academy, the organization of which was already well underway when the outbreak of the Second World War prevented the show from opening. That exhibition eventually took place, after long delays, between 1947 and 1948. This kind of disruption became a common feature of cultural life in the British capital during the war as many of the national museums and galleries were gradually emptied of their collections for safe storage. Smaller and private galleries continued to stage exhibitions, but the logistics and funding of such events were unsurprisingly difficult during the war. A photographic exhibition like the one on Indian art was much easier to arrange and assemble under these difficult circumstances, although certainly not without logistical challenges which Kramrisch, the Warburg, and the India Society worked hard to overcome.

Founded in 1910 by a group of cultural campaigners and activists, including some prominent anti-imperialists, based predominantly in the UK and India, the India Society was dedicated to the promotion of the fine arts of the Subcontinent.<sup>16</sup> By the time of this collaboration, the society had settled into a more establishment phase; it would go on to receive royal patronage in 1944. Younghusband was a prominent and well-known figure to appoint as chair of the India Society. As a British Army officer, he led a

<sup>14</sup>

To the right of Panel XII, for instance, one can see an 11th-century sculpture of Ganesha and his Consort made in Madhya Pradesh. The sculpture formed part of Kramrisch’s personal collection and is now held by the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#) (October 15, 2024).

<sup>15</sup>

Other sculptures from Kramrisch’s personal collection are likewise visible in this photo, including the northwestern Indian sculpture of *Two Warriors in Discussion* from the Chahaman Dynasty Period (Panel XIA) and the 13th-century *Maithuna* sculpture from Odisha (Panel XIB) (October 15, 2024).

<sup>16</sup>

Sarah Victoria Turner, *Crafting Connections. The India Society and Inter-imperial Artistic Networks in Edwardian Britain*, in: Susheila Nasta (ed.), *India in Britain. South Asian Networks and Connections, 1858–1950*, Basingstoke 2012, 96–114.



[Fig. 6]

Leo Amery (left) and Francis Younghusband (right) at the opening of the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute, in: Anon., *Indian Arts and Letters*, 1940, Plate I.

much publicized expedition to Tibet in 1903 and held the post of British Resident in Kashmir. By the 1930s, however, he had become a leading figure in religious and spiritual matters, helping to organize the World Fellowship of Faith's congress in London in 1936 and published books with titles such as *Modern Mystics* (1935). He would have undoubtedly been supportive of Kramrisch's curatorial approach, emphasizing the aesthetic power of the religious art of Hinduism and Buddhism – in both its ancient contexts and its contemporary significance.

## VII. Stella Kramrisch's Testament (1940) [Fig. 7]

The war's impact not only permeated all aspects of British cultural life, but was also felt by many on a profoundly personal level. On the eve of the exhibition's opening, Kramrisch wrote to the Warburg Institute's chief librarian, Gertrud Bing: "I wish I could mobilize some of the protecting forces on view in your exhibition to act against the noise of guns and bombs. They will do it in their own way, I am sure, 'merely by being looked at'."<sup>17</sup> Imagining the photographs as talismanic protectors against the Blitz may have been wishful thinking, but it provided a much-needed sense of solace. Acutely aware that her life was at risk in the UK, Kramrisch put her affairs in order as she prepared to board a ship to Calcutta, a journey that could have been her last. On May 27, 1940, she recorded her will, with fellow Viennese Jewish exile Fritz Saxl serving as witness.

Kramrisch's one-sentence will focused on safeguarding her scattered collections, which were then housed in various locations across the UK – at the V&A, the Indian Institute in Oxford, the Watts Gallery in Compton, and in the care of British archaeologist Kenneth de Burgh Codrington, then Keeper of the Indian Section at the V&A. At the time she drafted her will, her mother, Berta Kramrisch – her only direct relative – had been forcibly relocated from Vienna to the Łódź ghetto, where she would perish in 1942.<sup>18</sup> In her will, Kramrisch named twenty-eight-year-old Renaissance art historian Charles Mitchell as the executor of her estate. Mitchell, who was then serving on the civilian staff of the British Admiralty, had completed his BLitt thesis on Grünewald's Isenheim Altar at Oxford in 1939, under the informal supervision of Fritz Saxl. After the war, he joined the Warburg Institute as a lecturer, where he

<sup>17</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, GC Stella Kramrisch, Stella Kramrisch to Gertrud Bing, November 13, 1940.

<sup>18</sup>

See Danielle Mason, *Interwoven in the Pattern of Time. Stella Kramrisch and the Kanthas*, in: *Kantha. The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal* (exh. cat. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art), ed. by ead., Philadelphia 2010, 158–168, here 166–167.



In case of my death I desire my collection of Indian Sculptures on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum London, and my collection of Indian Sculptures and two banners on loan to the Indian Institute Oxford, my collection of miscellaneous Eastern works of art deposited at the Watts Gallery Compton Surrey, and one Bengali scroll painting in the care of K. de B. Codrington Esq. to be made over to Charles Mitchell Esq. to dispose of as he considers proper.

*(signed) Stella Kramrisch  
witnessed by Dr. Seal*

London 27.5.40.

[Fig. 7]

WIA, GC Kramrisch, Testament, May 27, 1940, photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

remained until 1960.<sup>19</sup> Given the urgency of wartime, Mitchell’s lack of expertise in Indian art may have seemed less significant than his youth, trustworthiness, and naval credentials, which likely made him a dependable choice in uncertain times.

### VIII. Kramrisch’s Collection of Temple Fragments [Fig. 8]

Among the items kept at the V&A in 1940 were Kramrisch’s collection of sandstone temple and sculpture fragments. The panel titled “XB. Types of Physiognomies of Gods” featured images of sculpted heads of various deities, including five reproductions of pieces from her collection.<sup>20</sup> As Brinda Kumar has noted, Kramrisch was a deeply private collector who often left reproductions of her own pieces unacknowledged, both in this exhibition and in her publications.<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of photographs of her items highlights the exceptional quality of her collection, yet it also suggests that Kramrisch deliberately chose not to expose these valuable sculptures to the dangers of bombing – a risk she was more willing to take with the painted scrolls [see Fig. 4]. This distinction makes it clear that, despite her personal appreciation for various art forms, she was acutely aware of the market value of the pieces in her collection and acted accordingly. Indeed, as she organized the London exhibition during the summer of 1940, Kramrisch showed a greater willingness to risk her own life than to put her prized collection at risk [see Fig. 7].

### IX. Activating the Exhibition [Fig. 9]

A lecture series was organized to run alongside the exhibition under the title “Lectures on Cultural Relations Between East and West”, aligning closely with the Warburgian interest in cross-cultural associations. The first lecture in the series was given by Professor Paul Kahle, a German scholar who had taken up a post at the University of Oxford after being forced to leave Bonn University due to his employing a Polish rabbi as an assistant and to his family’s support of Jewish neighbors. The second lecture, on “Mughal Painting”, was

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Jaynie Anderson, Obituary: Professor Charles Mitchell, in: *The Independent*, October 31, 1995.

20

These are: X.B.2 (upper left image): *Nimbate Head of Attendant Divinity*, c. 10th–11th century, Khajuraho; X.B.1 (upper middle images): *Male Head*, c. 10th century, India; X.B.3 (upper right image): *Nimbate Head of Deity*, c. 10th century, Madhya Pradesh; X.B.4 (lower middle image): *Upper Portion of a Male Warrior*, early 11th century, Kiradu, Barmer District, Rajasthan; X.B.6 (lower right image): *Gana*, mid-to late 13th century, Odisha, India (October 15, 2024).

21

See Brinda Kumar’s article in this issue: From Field to Museum. Placing Kramrisch and her Collection in Postwar United States, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual – Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 4, 2024, 925–965.



[Fig. 8]

Exhibition view of panel "XB. Types of Physiognomies of Gods", in the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute, WIA, I.24.1, fol. 23, photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

THE WARBURG INSTITUTE  
IMPERIAL INSTITUTE BUILDINGS, SOUTH KENSINGTON  
LONDON, S.W.7.

LECTURES ON CULTURAL RELATIONS  
BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

at 2.30 p.m.

December 3 PROFESSOR P. KAHLE: ISLAM AND FAR  
EAST IN THE TIMES OF THE MUGHAL  
RULERS.

Under the joint auspices of the India Society and the Warburg Institute:

December 10 MR. BASIL GRAY: MUGHAL PAINTING AS  
AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN ART.

Under the joint auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Warburg  
Institute:

December 17 DORA GORDINE (MRS. RICHARD HARE):  
THE BEAUTY OF ASIATIC SCULPTURE.

Further lectures in this series will be announced at a later date.

[Fig. 9]

WIA, I.24.4, Leaflet of *Lectures on Cultural Relations between East and West*, December 1940.

co-organized with the India Society and given by the art historian and British Museum curator, Basil Gray. The third lecture was provided by the Latvian-born, London-based sculptor Dora Gordine at the Royal Asiatic Society. Kramrisch's name is missing from this list of lecturers because by the time the exhibition opened, she had traveled back to India. Gordine was a high-profile speaker, with the art critic Jan Gordon writing in 1938 that she was "very possibly becoming the finest woman sculptor in the world".<sup>22</sup> Gordine and Kramrisch certainly knew one another and presumably Kramrisch would have approved of the choice of a sculptor to talk about her exhibition because, as she claimed, "it is in sculpture that India has made her greatest artistic contribution to the world [...] the whole temple is conceived as a work of sculpture".<sup>23</sup> Gordine wrote of Kramrisch: "Few people have done more than Stella Kramrisch to reveal the beauty of Indian sculpture to Great Britain."<sup>24</sup>

Gordine, like Kramrisch, had traveled extensively in Asia (although not India).<sup>25</sup> She had lived in Johor Bahru (now in Malaysia but then part of the Sultanate of Johore) from 1930 to 1935 with her first husband Dr. George Herbert Garlick, who worked for the Malay Medical Service. While in Malaysia, Gordine had become friends with the eminent scholar and president of the Royal Asiatic Society, Sir Richard Winstedt, who invited her to give the lecture entitled "The Beauty of Asiatic Sculpture" (published as "The Beauty of Indian Sculpture" in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*) to coincide with Kramrisch's exhibition.<sup>26</sup> Selecting a wide range of sculptures to discuss, Gordine articulated a very personal response to the works in the exhibition. "My appreciation of Indian sculpture", she stressed, "is not that of an art historian but that of a living sculptor". She continued:

I shall not therefore attempt to say anything about historical developments or to compare and criticise the characteristics of different periods, but I shall concentrate instead on trying to show some of the great and timeless qualities of Asiatic

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Jan Gordon, Dora Gordine at the Leicester Galleries, in: *Observer*, November 6, 1938, 14.

23

Stella Kramrisch, Medieval Indian Sculpture, in: *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 87/4535, 1939, 1180–1195, here 1181–1183.

24

Letter by Dora Gordine, n.p., quoted in Jonathan Black and Brenda Martin (eds.), *Dora Gordine. Sculptor, Artist, Designer*, London 2007, 54.

25

For more on Kramrisch and Gordine, see Turner, *Crafting Connections*.

26

Dora Gordine, The Beauty of Indian Sculpture, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 73, 1941, 42–48.

sculpture which makes it as alive and significant for us today as it was to its unknown creators.<sup>27</sup>

To have such a response by a leading female sculptor to an exhibition organized by a leading female art historian and curator from this point in the twentieth century is unusual. The exhibition thus becomes a metaphorical meeting place – a site not only of scholarship, but of creative inspiration. Whatever we now might think of Gordine’s universalizing tropes for the “timeless qualities” of the Hindu and Buddhist works she was responding to, her plea was for her contemporaries to look carefully at these works, to find meaning for them as “alive and significant” in the troubled world of the start of the new decade feels genuine in its call for cultural openness and curiosity.

### X. Close Encounters through Photography [Fig. 10]

Under the heading “India’s Sculptural Treasures and Superb Temple Symbolism. A Wartime Photographic Exhibition”, the *Illustrated London News* noted that “the essential greatness of Indian art can only be shown in this country by means of photographs, as some of the finest of it is embodied in great monuments and temples, and in sculpture carved out in the living rock”.<sup>28</sup> The implication here is that the photographs showed *living* sculpture; sculpture which was still *in situ* in contrast to the examples which populated the halls of the Indian Museum in South Kensington, such as the *Sanchi Torso*, a body in fragments which visibly bore the scars of its removal. India’s sculpture was made present in this London exhibition through the powerful visual, indexical presence of the photographic image. The photographer Raymond Burnier created particularly dramatic images of Indian sculpture, making the most of the light effects created by the shadows of the sun on the stone of the sculpture and architecture [see Fig. 3]. His photographs often showed the sculpture in extreme close-up, so close that the smallest of details, such as the naturally occurring pits in the stone, could be easily seen. Burnier’s photographic technique had the result of collapsing distance; sculpture rendered in such exacting detail seemed suddenly close enough to touch.

Fritz Saxl was not only committed to facing the challenges of organizing exhibitions at the Warburg Institute during wartime, but he also provided leadership on the educative and aesthetic possibilities of using photographic images for such a purpose. He

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid., 42.

<sup>28</sup>

Anon., India’s Sculptural Treasures and Superb Temple Symbolism. A Wartime Photographic Exhibition, in: *Illustrated London News*, November 23, 1940, 674–675, here 674.



commented on these circumstances at the opening of the Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art, saying:

In these days, when museums are closed and libraries inaccessible, a photographic exhibition can perform an important task. It can present new ideas and new aesthetic values. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the life and thought of another race. It is our hope that Miss Kramrisch's work will produce such fruit and be helpful to all those who seek for a better understanding of the great living tradition of Hindu thought.<sup>29</sup>

Through the medium of the photograph, Saxl imagined a different and "deeper" encounter with India through Indian art; one which was not simply connoisseurial or passive, but productive. Saxl envisioned the exhibition as a kind of conduit; a site of encounter generating "new ideas and new aesthetic values" about Indian, and specifically Hindu, art in Europe.

This was an exhibition of 1,000 years of historic sculpture and architecture (from 200 BC to 1700 AD), but Saxl was keen to stress the importance of "the great living tradition of Hindu thought" for war-torn present times. Here, through the modern technology of the photograph, what the Warburg director describes as "the visual approach of our period", India's historic sites were rendered more immediate and present for the exhibition's visitors in 1940.

## XI. Cultural Exchange [Fig. 11]

The panels of the exhibition in the third section, and especially panels VII–XII, tackled a theme with distinctively Warburgian resonances: the "Contacts of the Classical Art of the West with Indian Art". This exhibition marked the first and only time in its exhibition history that the Warburg Institute expanded its horizons to include Asian art. This third thematic section strongly reflects the long-standing interest of its director, Fritz Saxl, in Gandharan art.<sup>30</sup> From the mid-1930s, at Saxl's request, Stella Kramrisch had collected photographs and glass negatives of Gandharan sculptures for the Warburg Institute's photo collection. After her final departure in the winter of 1940, Saxl commissioned Hugo Buchthal, a medievalist by training who also worked at the Warburg, to study the Gandharan material. Despite some reluctance, Buchthal presented

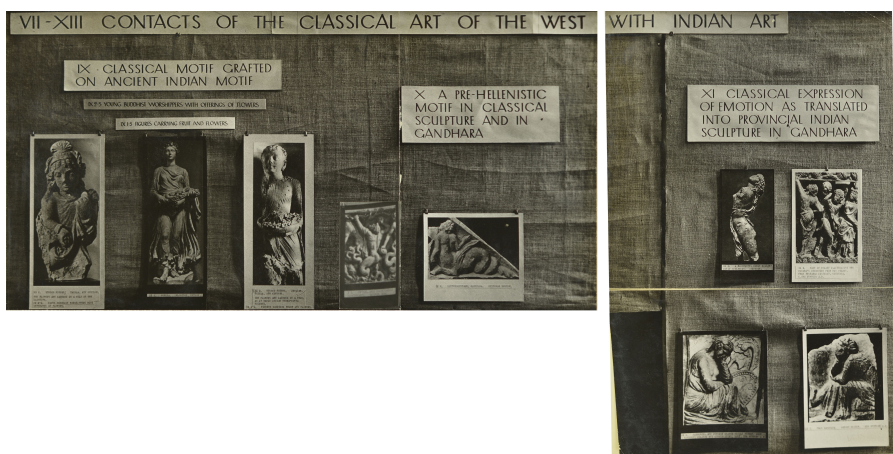
<sup>29</sup>

Fritz Saxl, Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art, in: *Indian Art & Letters* 14/2, 1940, 114–117, here 116. See also British Library, MSS EUR F 147/78, Fritz Saxl, Aspects of Indian Art, A Series of Exhibitions, undated typescript.

<sup>30</sup>

See Kramrisch's discussion of Gandhara art in Stella Kramrisch, Die indische Kunst, in: Curt Glaser (ed.), *Die aussereuropäische Kunst* (Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte 6), Leipzig 1929, 252–268.





[Fig. 11]

Exhibition view of panel "VII-XIII. Contacts of the Classical Art of the West with Indian Art", in the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1940), London, The Warburg Institute. WIA, I.24.1, fol. 52 (left) and fol. 50 (right), photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

and published on the topic throughout the 1940s, culminating in his book *The Western Aspects of Gandhara Sculpture* (1947).<sup>31</sup>

Archaeological interest in the art of the Gandhara region – located in present-day northern Pakistan – was deeply shaped by imperial perspectives. Western scholars such as Alfred Foucher, Albert Grünwedel, James Fergusson, and Alexander Cunningham attributed the so-called “Greco-Buddhist” style of Gandhara to the influence of Greek sculptors following Alexander the Great’s eastern campaign. This theory, though lacking solid evidence, remained dominant in Western scholarship for some time.<sup>32</sup> It faced sharp resistance from the art historian Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who argued that Gandharan art’s significance and aesthetic quality had been entirely overstated.<sup>33</sup>

Kramrisch shared Coomaraswamy’s skepticism about the relevance of the Greek influence on Gandhara’s provincial Buddhist art for the development of Indian art. In a 1923 article, she wrote:

We need not fight against the windmills of Gandhara which appear to European eyes so huge because their Greek features are so near to cherished reminiscences. The question for the present moment is: What did Indian art contribute to the International school of Gandhara for such it was, as Indian, Parthian, Scythian and Roman colonial workmen and traditions met there. It gave its plastic conception, not at once yet in the course of time, and in this way the syncretistic Gandhara sculpture became Indianised. Buddhism and mythology moreover supplied the sculptors with Indian themes. The most ardent problem, however, involved in Gandharan production is whether, as it is held up, the pictorial type of the Buddha originated in Gandhara or not. The question still has to remain open.<sup>34</sup>

However, when it came to the 1940 exhibition and its section on “Contacts of the Classical Art of the West with Indian Art”, Kramrisch’s focus shifted away from the contested issue of the “origin

31

Hugo Buchthal, *The Western Aspects of Gandhara Sculpture. Annual Lecture on Aspects of Art, Henriette Hertz Trust of the British Academy*, London 1947. Buchthal joined the Warburg Institute as librarian from 1941 to 1943. The lecture upon which the book was based was delivered in 1945.

32

See Michael Falser, *The Graeco-Buddhist Style of Gandhara – a ‘Storia ideologica’, or: How a Discourse Makes a Global History of Art*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 13/2, 2015, 1–52 (October 15, 2024); Robert Bracey, *The Gandharan Problem*, in: Jaś Elsner (ed.), *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity. Histories of Art and Religion from India to Ireland*, Cambridge 2020, 27–50.

33

Juhyung Rhi, *Reading Coomaraswamy on the Origin of the Buddha Image*, in: *Artibus Asiae* 70/1, 2010, 151–172.

34

Stella Kramrisch, *The Contact of Indian Art with the Art of Other Civilisations*, in: *Calcutta Review*, 1923, 514–530, here 523.

of the Buddha image” (in Coomaraswamy’s phrase) to the transmission of motifs and gestures from Greek and Roman art to Gandhara – subsumed in this case to an anachronistic geographical idea of “India”.<sup>35</sup> The photographic panels emphasized specific emotive gestures, or what Aby Warburg had termed “pathos formulas” – including many of the very same motifs that had once preoccupied Warburg himself.

For example, Panel IX, “Classical Motif Grafted onto Ancient Indian Motif”, compared three flower- and fruit-bearing figures. The panel featured a Roman sculpture of Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruits (1st century AD, Uffizi, Florence), flanked by two stucco reliefs of “Young Buddhist Worshippers with Offerings of Flowers” from 5th- and 6th-century Taxila. The relevance of this comparison for Saxl becomes clear if we recall that Aby Warburg, in his 1893 dissertation, had linked this same Roman statue to the figure of Flora in Botticelli’s *Primavera*.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Panel XI, “Classical Expression of Emotion as Translated into Provincial Indian Sculpture in Gandhara”, focused on another of Warburg’s favorite pathos formulas: the ecstatic maenad. This panel juxtaposed an early Hellenistic sculpture of a bacchante with a similarly posed female figure in a 2nd century AD Gandharan relief illustrating the “Great Renunciation” (Buddha’s departure from his palace). Warburg viewed the enraptured gestures of the bacchante as a survival of “pagan” emotional expression that had, almost of its own accord, resurfaced in the art of the Italian Renaissance – where the classical maenad, he believed, could even be found disguised as Mary Magdalene grieving under the cross.<sup>37</sup> In the Gandharan relief, by contrast, the “bacchante” figure is likely a musician from Siddhartha Gautama’s palace.

With this comparative display of Gandharan art, and with Kramrisch’s input, Saxl thus sought to forge intellectual continuity between Warburg’s legacy and the institute’s uncertain future in Britain, extending the study of classical reception to Indian art – if still within a constricted framework of asymmetrical “influence” and “contact”.

<sup>35</sup>

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, The Origin of the Buddha Image, in: *The Art Bulletin* 9/4, 1927, 287–329.

<sup>36</sup>

Aby Warburg, Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* and *Spring* [1893], in: id., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity. Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, transl. by David Britt, Los Angeles 1999, 89–156, here 126.

<sup>37</sup>

See Edgar Wind, The Maenad under the Cross. I. Comments on an Observation by Reynolds, in: *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1, 1937, 70–71.

## XII. Cultural-Political Relevance of the Exhibition [Fig. 12]

Writing a review in *The Listener*, Herbert Read commented that the exhibition was “of the greatest interest, both intrinsically, as a display of the beauty and significance of Indian Art, and incidentally, as a demonstration of what might be called exhibition technique”.<sup>38</sup> The arrangement of photographs, according to Read, not only allowed for a “continuous narrative series” but also “the contacts and exchanges which Indian art (particularly in the northern border regions of Gandhara and Afghanistan) has had with the classical art of the West”. “In this section”, Read wrote about the third section of the exhibition, “the Warburg Institute is in its special element, and some remarkable parallels are shown” [see Fig. 11].<sup>39</sup>

Read also used his review to critique the display of South Asian art in the collections of London’s prestigious museums. According to Read, the Indian collections in London “remained a standing insult to one of the greatest phases of art the world has ever seen”, with their cluttered arrangement and “archaeological” approach.<sup>40</sup> The art historian Robert Skelton confirms this in his article on the Indian collections at the V&A, describing them as in “a pathetic state of deterioration and confusion” in this period.<sup>41</sup> Read took aim at the authorities for this sorry state:

The neglect of cultural values which is characteristic of our whole colonial administration has been mitigated by the enterprise of private bodies such as the India Society. It is the India Society which has co-operated with the Warburg Institute in a photographic exhibition of Indian Art now being held at the Imperial Institute buildings, South Kensington.<sup>42</sup>

Read understood this exhibition as a curatorial intervention – critique, even – at the very heart of London’s imperial geography. Housed in the Imperial Institute in South Kensington, a building which had been erected for the contents of the “Colonial and Indian Exhibition” of 1886, the exhibition was organized in a space that was physically placed at what Tim Barringer has evocatively

<sup>38</sup>

Herbert Read, Indian Art, in: *The Listener* 24/619, 1940, 729–730, here 730.

<sup>39</sup>

Ibid., 730.

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., 729.

<sup>41</sup>

Robert Skelton, The Indian Collections, 1788–1978, in: *Burlington Magazine* 120/902, 1978, 297–304, here 303.

<sup>42</sup>

Read, Indian Art, 729.

21 NOVEMBER 1940

THE LISTENER

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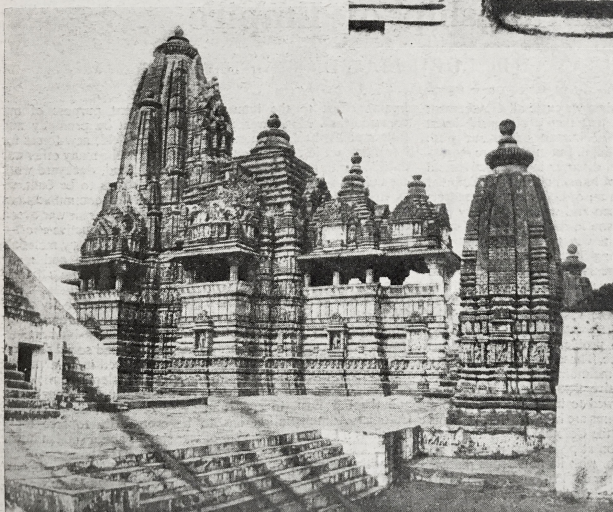
## Indian Art

By HERBERT READ

THE English have been established in India for more than three centuries; for more than eighty years that vast country and its civilisation have been under the direct rule of the British Crown. But the average Englishman remains completely ignorant and—what is worse—incurious or sceptical, about the ancient culture of the Indian people. For this neglect our Government must be held largely responsible. It is true that we maintain an archaeological mission in India, and that there is an Indian Section at the Victoria and Albert Museum; but the archaeological mission is concerned with the survey and recording of monuments in India, and has no educative function in this country; and the Indian Section at South Kensington, far from serving its purpose, has remained a standing insult to one of the greatest phases of art the world has ever seen. Tribute must be paid to the energy of the present Keeper of that department, Mr. K. de B. Codrington; he has purged the junk-shop of its rubbish and introduced some order and intelligence into the arrangement; but he and the Director of the Museum have had to contend with a hideous and unsuitable building, and with authorities (the Board of Education, the Treasury and the India Office) completely lacking in any imaginative grasp of the situation. It is no exaggeration to say that if we as a nation had shown a real sympathy for the culture of this great imperial possession, and a genuine appreciation of its manifestations in architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance, we should not now be at such political loggerheads. Our imperial policy, as advertised to the outside world, aims at the creation of a democratic commonwealth of nations. But the only sure basis of a commonwealth



Siva, the union of the male and female principles: an eleventh-century statue from Ardhanarisvara Murti, Kumbhakonam, Southern India. The two natures of Siva, male and female, are shown as the right and left halves of his body



Caturbhuja Temple, Khajuraho (c. A.D. 1000). The diagonal ascent of the hall-towers towards the main tower symbolises the pilgrim's progress to the sanctuary below the highest peak

is mutual understanding. Unless a commonwealth is bound together by spiritual values—by a mutual understanding of each other's religion, art and literature—it remains nothing but an economic and therefore a dead conception, ready to break at the first impact of external force.

This neglect of cultural values which is characteristic of our whole colonial administration has been mitigated by the enterprise of private bodies such as the India Society. It is the India Society which has co-operated with the Warburg Institute in a photographic exhibition of Indian Art now being held in the Imperial Institute buildings, South Kensington. It is an exhibition of the greatest interest, both intrinsically, as a display of the beauty and significance of Indian Art, and incidentally, as a demonstration of what

[Fig. 12]

Herbert Read, Indian Art, in: *The Listener*, November 21, 1940, 729.

described as the “intersection between empire and scholarship, between learning and display, education and entertainment”.<sup>43</sup>

Read emphasized the educative rather than the entertaining aspect of Kramrisch’s approach. This was not, he warned readers, an exhibition which “can be skimmed casually”. Instead, “to get any real benefit from it, the visitor must *read* it patiently, but read it in a new manner”. Again, it was the visual relationship between the photographs and the viewer that Read stressed. He continued:

Art is a language, and though we may at first need the symbols of our written language to initiate us into its secrets, essentially it is a language with its own symbols, and it cannot be properly understood unless we learn to read these symbols directly, with our eyes.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, this photographic exhibition of the religious art of South Asia required new, serious and dedicated ways of looking. It was supported in this motivation by its host, the Warburg Institute, an institution that emphasized transcultural and historical image-work. Read’s review was published in *The Listener*, which also devoted its front cover to a full-page reproduction of one of the photographs in the exhibition, a twelfth-century sculpture from Kiradu, Jodhpur.

### XIII. The Unrealized Sequel. Islamic Art in India [Fig. 13]

Saxl had always envisioned the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* as the first in a planned series of exhibitions exploring different “Aspects of Indian Art”. The projected second exhibition would deal with “the characteristics of Indian Islamic Art”, with a potential third examining the “expansion of Indian art to the Further East”.<sup>45</sup> In November 1941, a year after the opening of the first exhibition, Saxl approached Kramrisch to curate the second, dedicated to Islamic art in India. Again, as had been the case with Gandharan sculpture, the Warburg Institute’s interest lay in artforms that bore witness to processes of transculturation. Kramrisch, on the other hand, was more interested in the visual expressions of Vedic philosophy. Like Coomaraswamy before her, she had largely ignored Mughal miniatures in her writings – likely just what Saxl had in mind for the Islamic Indian art exhibition. Despite her limited

<sup>43</sup>

Tim Barringer, *The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project*, in: id. and Tom Flynn (eds.), *Colonialism and the Object. Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, London/New York 1998, 11–27, here 26.

<sup>44</sup>

Read, *Indian Art*, 730.

<sup>45</sup>

British Library, MSS EUR F 147/78, Fritz Saxl, *Aspects of Indian Art, A Series of Exhibitions*, undated typescript.

10th February 1942.

Dear Miss Kramrisch,

I was just as delighted as Saxl was to have your letter, and I am very pleased too that you consider making the Islamic Exhibition which, I am sure, will meet with very good response in this country. Saxl will of course write to you as soon as his time allows and will certainly also tell you that it does not matter at all when this Exhibition will come off, as long as there is a chance of its being done at all. You know from his letter that Mr. E.M. Forster was among those who urged Saxl again and again to do it, but this whole matter is really not for me to write about. What I wanted to do is to give you a little more personal details of our life here than Saxl will probably condescend to doing.

I was very sorry to hear that so many messages from you have gone lost. All I have ever had from you was one letter quite soon after you had arrived in India, and one from the 7th of August 1941. It also seems as if at least two of my letters have not reached you, and of your parcels only the first one has arrived. This, however, is of course what was to be expected, and anyhow we are grateful now at least to know how you are and what you are doing. It is only a pity that through this getting lost of letters you will feel more isolated out there than you need be. We are talking and thinking of you very often and always, as far as I am concerned, with the same feeling of friendship and admiration that your presence here has created.

[Fig. 13]

WIA, GC Stella Kramrisch, Stella Kramrisch to Fritz Saxl, May 3, 1942, photo:  
The Warburg Institute, London.

interest in this field, Kramrisch initially expressed cautious enthusiasm about the collaboration. This prompted a positive response from Gertrud Bing, who, in February 1942, wrote that she was “very pleased” that Kramrisch was considering “making the Islamic Exhibition which, I am sure, will meet with very good response in this country”.<sup>46</sup>

However, just a month later, Kramrisch informed Saxl that she had to withdraw from the project, since the photographic negatives it required had been sent to more secure locations – just as the artworks in London had been when she prepared the exhibition there. Although she assured the Warburg’s director that she “hopes to resume work” once the material was accessible again, Kramrisch was at the time deeply immersed in writing her book about Hindu temples, and probably never planned to return to a subject distant from her scholarly interests.<sup>47</sup> The claim of inaccessible materials may well have been a convenient excuse.

Her withdrawal effectively marked the end of the planned exhibition on Islamic art in India. This was a disappointment not only to the Warburg Institute but also to the India Society, both of which had shown great interest in the project. As a result, the exhibition was indefinitely postponed, and with it, the broader vision of a series exploring multiple aspects of Indian art was quietly abandoned.<sup>48</sup>

#### XIV. The Exhibition on Tour [Fig. 14]

After the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* had captivated audiences in London, it embarked on a nationwide tour, visiting museums and educational institutions across Great Britain. This was in keeping with the Warburg Institute’s practice of circulating its photographic exhibitions. The tour began promptly in January 1941, and over the course of the year, the exhibition traveled to art galleries and museums in nine cities, including Manchester, Cambridge, Sunderland, and Brighton. Ann-Marie Meyer, the Warburg Institute’s secretary, coordinated the tour from London, ensuring that the exhibition moved without delay from one location to the next. The exhibition package included photographs, captions, and a photographic reproduction of the original London setup to assist

<sup>46</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, GC Stella Kramrisch, Gertrud Bing to Stella Kramrisch, February 2, 1942.

<sup>47</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, GC Stella Kramrisch, Stella Kramrisch to Fritz Saxl, May 3, 1942.

<sup>48</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, Associations, India Society, Frederick Richter to Fritz Saxl, November 17, 1942 and Frederick Richter to Gertrud Bing, March 16, 1943.



WAKEFIELD CITY ART GALLERY.

GUIDE TO THE  
EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
INDIAN ART.

APRIL 5TH TO 20TH, 1941.

THIS EXHIBITION WAS <sup>PREPARED</sup> ~~PREPARED~~ BY DR. KRAMRISCH AND WAS  
FIRST SHOWN AT THE WARBURG INSTITUTE, LONDON, UNDER  
THE JOINT AUSPICES OF THE INSTITUTE AND INDIA SOCIETY.

THE EXHIBITION IS INTENDED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A  
BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE AND MEANING OF  
INDIAN ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE. THE PHOTOGRAPHS  
ARE FULLY LABELLED TO INDICATE SYMBOLISM AND PURPOSE  
AND THIS GUIDE IS INTENDED ONLY TO SHOW THE METHOD OF  
HANGING AND SEQUENCE OF THE GROUPS.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF SCULPTURE ARE NEVER WHOLLY SATISFACTORY  
FOR SHOWING THE AESTHETIC QUALITIES. BUT THOUGH THE  
EXHIBITION DOES NOT CONCENTRATE ON THIS ASPECT SOME-  
THING OF THE VITALITY, SPIRITUAL CONTENT AND FORMAL  
QUALITIES OF THE CARVINGS IS APPARENT TO THE OBSERVANT  
VISITOR.

[Fig. 14]

WIA, I.24.8, fol. 1, Wakefield City Art Gallery, Guide to the *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* (1941), photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

local institutions in staging the exhibit, though Saxl noted that these guidelines were only followed about half of the time.<sup>49</sup>

Saxl's occasional frustrations with the varied local setups were offset by instances in which the exhibition was enriched by local expertise and collections. For example, at the Wakefield Art Gallery, Director Ernest Musgrave added his own foreword to the exhibition leaflet originally authored by Kramrisch [Fig. 2a and Fig. 2b] and published an overview of the panels. Musgrave also included six small Indian carvings lent by Baron Eduard von der Heydt, a prominent collector of Indian and Chinese art in Europe, just as Kramrisch had included the *patas* in London [Fig. 4]. The inclusion of carvings from von der Heydt's collection in the exhibition at the Wakefield Art Gallery highlights the broad network of interest in Oriental and Asian art, a network that included figures like Kramrisch, the Warburg Institute, and the India Society, as well as politicians like Leopold Stennett Amery and the sculptor Dora Gordine [Fig. 6 and Fig. 9], and widened its scope to involve numerous directors of art galleries and collectors like Musgrave and von der Heydt during the tour.

The traveling exhibition was not only well-received by institutions but also attracted significant public attention. James Crawley, director of the Sunderland Art Gallery, reported an impressive daily average of 610 visitors, amounting to 14,645 attendees over the 24 days the exhibition was on view.<sup>50</sup> The Brighton Art Gallery experienced a similar surge of interest, prompting it to host the exhibition twice in 1941 – first from May to June, and again in December – due to popular demand. Positive reviews and word-of-mouth spread news of the exhibition's aesthetic, historical, and political significance, eliciting interest from institutions in Canada, the USA, and Australia by the summer of 1941. However, it does not appear that any of these international prospects came to fruition.<sup>51</sup>

From May to December 1942, the exhibition continued its tour in England, visiting colleges and schools. It made its final appearance in the summer of 1943, at the Workers Educational Association in Bradford. Thus, the exhibition not only toured extensively across England but also reached a diverse range of institutions, including art galleries, university museums, an art school, a women's college, and a workers' association. Against this background it becomes evident why Saxl wrote to Kramrisch in March 1944:

<sup>49</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, Loans of Exhibitions 1941–1950, Fritz Saxl to R. E. J. Weber, October 10, 1947.

<sup>50</sup>

Warburg Institute Archive, Exhibitions Engl. and India, loans and photography 1940–1941, James Crawley to secretary, August 20, 1941.

<sup>51</sup>

British Library, MSS EUR F 147/70, Stella Kramrisch to Frederick Richter, July 25, 1941; and Anon. to Stella Kramrisch, September 29, 1941.

The Indian Exhibition has been on tour until recently, and will soon go away again. It was really a surprising success, considering the general attitude to Indian art. With this exhibition you have done more for Indian art in this country than anybody has done for a long time. I am quite convinced that all this talk about the study of Eastern art is useless unless they get you here as the main teacher for India.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this high praise and the exhibition's popularity, the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, and the India Society in London were unable to secure funding to secure Kramrisch's teaching position in England. Instead, the by then eminent expert of Indian art was appointed Distinguished Professor at Calcutta University in the same year. The collaboration between Kramrisch and Saxl formally concluded when Kramrisch retrieved her collection the following year. The failure to retain Kramrisch – and by extension, her invaluable collection – reflects the lack of institutional commitment to establishing a permanent chair in Indian art history in Britain. However, even if Kramrisch left the UK for good, her 1940 *Photographic Exhibition of Indian Art* offered inspiration to Indophile artists and intellectuals and nourishment for voices critical of imperial rule.

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