

Taj of the Raj: The Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata



An international conference at Yale University 15 - 17 September 2023 Loria 351, 190 York Street, New Haven

The conference draws together leading scholars from India, the UK and USA to offer new critical perspectives on the history, architecture and collections of the Victoria Memorial Hall. Histories of empire, the future of museum collections and the international role of South Asia are today topics of urgent import, and the VMH offers a unique case study. It embodies the fraught relationships between museums, imperial histories and post-Independence India. The conference will offer a new critical analysis of the institution informed by contemporary theoretical concerns.

An imposing marble building designed by the architect William Emerson, amidst 64 acres of spectacular gardens laid out by David Prain and Lord Redesdale, the VMH was dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria. Martin and Company, an engineering firm founded by Rajendra Nath Mookerjee and Thomas Martin, built the museum. The elaborate gardens offer an important case study in horticulture and urban ecology. The collections, forming a visual legacy of the British Raj, include European paintings; colonial sculpture; historic photographs; colonial textiles; Mughal, Rajput and Bengal School paintings; and musical instruments.

Speakers: Rimli Bhattacharya, University of Delhi; Manas Bhaumik, Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata; Swati Chattopadhyay, UC Santa Barbara; Edward Cooke, Yale University; Caroline Cornish, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Vinita Damodaran, University of Sussex; Anshuman Dasgupta, Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan; Adam Eaker, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Durba Ghosh, Cornell University; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata; Margot Finn, University College, London; Michael Hatt, University of Warwick; Annu Jalais, Krea University; Nilina Deb Lal, Heritage Consultant, Kolkata; Joanna Marschner, Historic Royal Palaces, UK; Sumathi Ramaswamy, Duke University; Jayanta Sengupta, Victoria Memorial Hall; Holly Shaffer, Brown University.

Convenors: Romita Ray, Syracuse University, Tim Barringer, Yale University.

For the **program**, click [here](#). *Taj of the Raj* is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund and The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University, and Syracuse University.