

## Yale Center for British Art First U.S. Venue for Groundbreaking Exhibition of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Photographs of India's Monuments

The Yale Center for British Art is the first United States venue for a new exhibition of photographs and other representations of Indian architecture from the British colonial era. *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation* (October 16, 2003–January 11, 2004) features superb nineteenth-century photographs of the great monuments of South Asia, along with engravings, prints, maps, rare books, postcards, posters, and other unique artifacts.

Linnaeus Tripe, *Inscription around  
Basement of the Bimanum of the  
Great Pagoda in Tanjore*, 1858,  
Collection Canadian Centre for  
Architecture, Montréal

Organized by the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Montréal, the exhibition presents photographs not merely as aesthetic objects or records of South Asia's architectural past, but as artifacts of the complex cultural and political forces that shaped colonial India.

Challenging the nineteenth-century belief in the veracity of the photograph and the timelessness of monuments, the exhibition views architecture as a living entity that is preserved, collected, valued, and transformed through time. *Traces of India* weaves different narratives around major sites of Indian history to show the temporal nature of photography in British India as “a sure testimony, but a fleeting one” (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*). The exhibition takes us from colonial to post-colonial India, exploring the meaning of India's national heritage in the context of this cross-cultural view of architecture.

Linnaeus Tripe, *Minakshi  
Varashvara Temple, Madurai*,  
c. 1856-57, Collection  
Canadian Centre for Architecture,  
Montréal

### MONUMENTS AS ICONS

Within a decade of the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839, photography was actively practiced in southeast India. A host of talented practitioners of the new technology included official government photographers such as Colonel Thomas Biggs and Captain Linnaeus Tripe, amateurs like Dr. John Murray, and commercial photographers such as Samuel Bourne and Felice Beato. These men created a vast body of work documenting the landscape and architecture of India, following in a

Felice Beato, *Taj Mahal from the  
Ganges River, Agra, India*, 1858-  
Collection Canadian Centre  
Architecture, Montréal

The Indian subcontinent presented a mesmerizing number of ancient monuments worn by time. Survey photographs of Indian architecture not only provided accurate representations of temples and mosques and their inscriptions, but also brought the perilous state of these ruins to public attention. Works by British officers, draftsmen, and photographers illustrate the correlation between photography, the preservation of architecture, and the creation of a western historiography of India's ancient monuments.

John Murray, *The Moti Masjid (the Pearl Mosque) in the Agra Fort, India*, 1858-65, Collection Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

Photographs of Indian architecture were often vehicles for collective remembrance for the British community of its experience in India. They were not simply views of distant times and places, or documentary records of ancient buildings, but were also memorials to battlegrounds and fallen political regimes. The Indian Rebellion against the British (1857–1858), codified as “The Mutiny,” generated a vast production of views of India as a place of war. Photographs of Agra, Lucknow, and Delhi by Felice Beato and John Murray are displayed in the exhibition together with newspapers, watercolors, and popular forms of entertainment (such as a nineteenth-century board game from the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the Yale Center for British Art), suggesting the value of these photographs as examples of colonial memory.

While under colonial rule, British India was transformed into a kind of museum in which ruins were left intact, on site, while reproductions in the form of photographs, drawings, and plaster casts were sent to collections and archives in England. International expositions provided showcases for India's architecture, as well as its arts and crafts. *Traces of India* features photographs from five world fairs, from the Crystal Palace of 1851 to the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in London.

In addition to colonial-era photographs, the exhibition features images from popular Indian culture (calendar art and clips of Bollywood films) that explore contemporary Indian visual culture and its ties to nineteenth-century photographs. This portion of the exhibition looks at how architecture participates symbolically in post-Independence India, and how the imagery of devotional sites and colonial sites appropriated from the nineteenth century is used today for new national purposes.

Pratima Bhanu Singh, *Movie actress Urmila Matangini in front of the Taj Mahal, Agra, India*, 1989, Bromolithograph, unknown publisher, Private Collection

Curated by Maria Antonella Pelizzari, *Traces of India* draws on the Canadian Centre for Architecture's remarkable collection of nineteenth-century photographs of historic monuments of India, along with others from public and private sources. Nicholas Olsberg, Director of the CCA, writes, “This exhibition represents an inquiry into the relation between early photographs of Indian architecture and the cultural

#### ACCOMPANYING PUBLICATION

*Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation* is accompanied by a 360-page book with more than 208 color and black-and-white illustrations. This publication features twelve essays by major scholars in art history, anthropology, colonial history, and political theory. It is copublished by the CCA and the Yale Center for British Art and distributed by Yale University Press and Mapin. The volume will be available at the Yale Center for British Art's Museum Shop for \$39.95 (soft cover). For information or to order, call 203 432 2828.

Exhibition publication: *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900*.

#### RELATED EXHIBITION

##### *Company Culture: British Artists and the East India Company, 1770-1830*

To complement the exhibition *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation*, the Yale Center for British Art will present a companion exhibition featuring works related to the East India Company, drawn entirely from the Center's permanent collection of paintings, works on paper, and rare books. This exhibition, organized by Morna O'Neill, doctoral candidate in the Department of the History of Art, Yale University, will be on view from October 16, 2003–January 11, 2004.

Through the lens of the East India Company, this exhibition aims to highlight important aspects of the visual production of British artists working in India and traveling throughout the subcontinent in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *Company Culture* addresses concerns similar to those of *Traces of India*, such as monumentality, ways of image making, imperialism, and national history, but in the initial period of British ascendancy in India under the auspices of the commercial East India Company (1770–1830). In these years, the British East India Company possessed a commercial monopoly over the products of India and waged a battle for legitimacy of rule. At the same time, the company and its “servants” presented India as a locus of artistic inspiration and patronage, providing both new vistas and new financial possibilities to enterprising artists such as Johann Zoffany, William Hodges, and Thomas and William Daniell.

#### REPRESENTING THE RAJ SYMPOSIUM

A related symposium, *Representing the Raj*, will be held at the Yale Center for British Art, October 17–18, 2003. This symposium will explore the political and cultural messages both explicitly and implicitly present in representations of the people, places, and institutions of British India. The keynote speaker on Friday, October 17 at 5:30 pm is Arjun Appadurai, William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of International Studies and Director of the Center on Cities and Globalization, Yale University. His lecture, *The Still Life of Empire*, will focus on the tension between the realities of colonial force and the preoccupation with civilization as “still life” in British India. This symposium and all related programs have been organized in association with the South Asia Humanities Festival, with support from the South Asian Studies Council, the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, the Vinod Rustgi Family Fund, and the Friends of the South Asian Studies Council at Yale University. Registration required; call 203 436 0506 for information.

(continued)

## YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Its foundation is the gift of paintings, drawings, prints, rare books, manuscripts, and sculpture presented to Yale University by Paul Mellon (Yale Class of 1929). The collection explores the development of British art, life, and thought from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center offers a year-round schedule of exhibitions and educational programs, including films, concerts, lectures, tours, and special events. The YCBA also provides numerous opportunities for scholarly research, including the Yale-in-London program and residential fellowships. Academic resources of the Center include the Reference Library and Photo Archive, Conservation Laboratory, and Study Room for examining prints, drawings, rare books, and manuscripts from the permanent collection. An affiliated institution in London, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, awards research grants, publishes academic titles, and offers facilities to Yale students studying British art and culture.

erial view of the Yale Center  
r British Art, photograph by  
ichard Caspole

## THE BUILDING

One of the Center's greatest treasures is the building itself. Opened to the public in 1977, The Yale Center for British Art is the final building designed by internationally acclaimed American architect Louis I. Kahn (1901–1974). The structure integrates the dual functions of study center and gallery, while providing an environment for works of art that is appropriately simple and dignified. The building stands across the street from Kahn's first major commission, the Yale University Art Gallery (1953).

## GENERAL INFORMATION

- Location:** 1080 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut  
(on the corner of High Street)
- Admission:** Free and open to the public
- Hours:** Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am–5 pm; Sunday, noon–5 pm;  
Late-night Wednesdays until 7 pm through November 19; Late-  
night Thursdays in December until 8 pm; closed Mondays and  
major holidays
- Tours:** Introductory tours, Saturdays at 11 am  
Docent-led tours of exhibitions, Thursdays at 11 am and  
Saturdays at noon. To book a tour Tuesday through Friday, call  
203 432 2858
- Reference Library:** Open Monday through Friday during museum hours;  
Saturdays, 1pm–4:30 pm; 203 432 2818
- Museum Shop:** Open during museum hours; 203 432 2828
- YCBA Contact:** For information on the Center and its exhibitions, programs,  
and events call 203 432 2800, or visit [www.yale.edu/ycba](http://www.yale.edu/ycba).

ourth-floor galleries of the  
ale Center for British Art,  
hotograph by Richard Caspole