

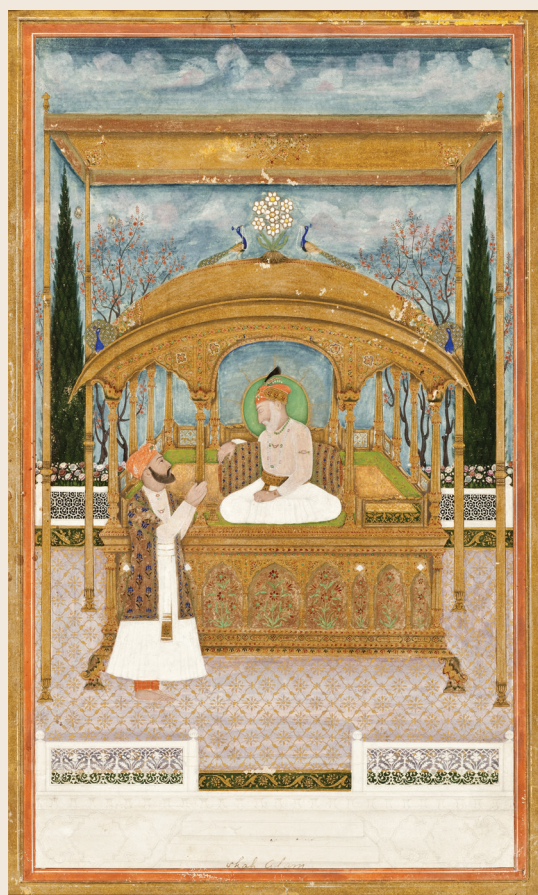
Untitled, Bengal Presidency, late 19th century; Sarmaya Arts Foundation;
Portrait of an unidentified individual on a plantation chair, epitomizing practices
depicting colonial lifestyles; Photographer Unidentified

Sarita Sundar will present a vignette from her recent publication, *From the Frugal to the Ornate: Stories of the Seat in India*, highlighting an object that we pay scant attention to. This ubiquitous and expressive culture object, “the seat”, participates in the organization of power and privilege in a variety of ways.

Elevation, adornment, extravagance convey commonly recognized societal norms in expressions of the seat. This talk brings to light seats that defy typecasting, and defy time and space. Yet they command power – seats that inspire awe, but also bring discomfort. Maverick, out-of-the-ordinary seats, such as Gandhi’s humble seat on the floor, the stark monobloc, and the legendary Peacock Throne, will be explored.

Sarita’s research delves into the seat’s relationship not only with the sitter, but also with those on its periphery, revealing the power it wields and the power it grants, simply by association. The book asks: what is the seat for, what are the worlds to which it belongs, what worlds have been, and will be opened by it?

From the Frugal to the Ornate: Stories of the Seat in India, is a compilation of Sarita’s in-depth project research, supported by Godrej Archives, Mumbai.



Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II (reigned 1759-1806) seated on a golden throne in Delhi, Opaque watercolour and gold on paper; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Public Domain

Much like Shah Jahan’s Peacock Throne, inlaid with gold and jewels, the royalty and artists continue to represent the Mughal Empire at the height of its glory. The reality was quite far from what this image record of the time depicts.

Right (detail):
Moulded Plastic Chairs in a village house painted with Mithila paintings, Madhubani region, Bihar; Photographer, Chirodeep Chaudhuri



Sarita Sundar is the Founder of Hanno, a heritage interpretation and design consultancy, based in Bangalore, India. Her interests in cultural and design history have led the direction of her work. Over the years, she has engaged in critical inquiries into how culture engages with the visual, ranging from research into Indian vernacular typography to studies of intangible culture in performance practices.

Following a graduate degree at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, Sarita pursued her academic training in Museum Studies at the Univ. of Leicester, UK, through a Master’s Program specializing in Heritage and Interpretation. Sarita is presently on a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Fellowship, at the Univ. of Vermont, History Department, researching the intersectional milestones in Indian and American design histories.

SUNDAY
March 12, 2023
2:00 - 3:30 PM

SACHI and Asian Art Museum, SF
Invite You to Explore
Unique Perspectives
on Seating Culture in India

Power, Posture & Privilege: The Politics of the Seat in India

Join Design Historian and Author
Sarita Sundar

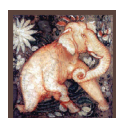
Fulbright Visiting Scholar
Department of History, University of Vermont

In an In-Person
Illustrated Presentation

Samsung Hall, Asian Art Museum, SF

RSVP: info@sachi.org and
[Please Register Here](#)

Free Admission for Asian Art Museum Members.
Pls. Note: Museum Admission Fee applies to Asian Art Museum Non-Members. All are welcome.



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