

A Splendid Land

Debra Diamond and Dipti Khera

*What a rose-bodied beauty is [Udaipur]!
She is the city that captivates everyone.¹*

What makes a place captivating? In the second decade of the eighteenth century, a visionary artist conjured the ambience of Udaipur at dawn (fig. 1). Washes of scarlet, gold, and blue swell and furl into billowing clouds. Beneath the rosy sky, the capital of the early modern court of Mewar—with its grand City Palace, fortified walls, green hills, hunting grounds, villages, and temples—surrounds a spectacular lake. City dwellers and villagers go about their morning activities to the sounds of dipping oars, splashing fish, and the scoop and swish of a waterwheel. Dams, sluices, and wells, in signaling that the lake is both man-made and well-used, extol the Sisodia dynasty's beneficence (cat. 11).

The painting's patron, Maharana Sangram Singh II (r. 1710–34), appears twice, first on the prow of a royal barge near Jagmandir lake palace, and again on Lake Pichola's south shore, with a party out for a tiger hunt. Although such paintings are commonly interpreted as portraits, the maharana is hardly the central focus of the landscape or the action.² The painting's subject is its mood—specifically, the mood of the king and his companions on a tiger hunt at sunrise in an enchanting realm. Teeming with genre details, minutely attentive to fauna, and painted in highly burnished pigments and gold on paper, *Sunrise in Udaipur* is five feet wide. The scale means that viewers, like the inhabitants of the city, are immersed in the ambience of Udaipur.

Nestled in the Aravalli mountains, in the state today known as Rajasthan, Udaipur was established in 1553 as the new capital of the Mewar kingdom, replacing the previous capital Chittor.³ The city's founder, Maharana Udai Singh II (r. 1537–72), scion of the Hindu Sisodia dynasty, chose its location on the Girwa plain for both security and sustainability.⁴ Although the semiarid region was dependent on an unpredictable monsoon, its mountains discouraged invasion, and its watersheds and natural depressions allowed for extensive water harvesting. To create Pichola, the lake at the heart of Udaipur, Udai Singh II's engineers expanded an existing water body and strengthened the site of the future city by constructing Lake Udai Sagar and Dudh Talai reservoir (fig. 2).⁵ Making the most of the delightful microclimate, the maharanas commissioned spectacular white palaces with garden courtyards both on and around Lake Pichola. Over the



FIG. 1 CAT. 11 Detail

years, they remedied successive droughts and grew the economy by creating more lakes—Jaisamand, Rajsamand, Rup Sagar, Rang Sagar, Jana Sagar, and Fateh Sagar, to name a few—as well as various dams (*bund* or *pal*), stepwells (*baori*), and stepped platforms (*ghat*).⁶ Local communities built yet more wells and smaller dams. Together, these transformed Udaipur and its environs into a thriving agricultural zone and a water-filled oasis within the dry landscape of northwestern India.

For a century—from 1605, the date of the earliest extant paintings from their workshop, until around 1700, Udaipur court painters created two-dimensional paintings with idealized forms and saturated primary colors (see cats. 1–6). Their subjects were sacred narratives, poetic treatises, and, toward the end of the seventeenth century, small portraits. When painters turned quite dramatically to large topographical paintings and local color at the turn of the eighteenth century, they offered as subject the *bhava* of Udaipur—the sensorial, embodied experience of the city and its palaces, lakes, and hillsides. *Bhava*, which we translate throughout this catalogue as “mood,” conveys the all-encompassing ambience and interpersonal connections that make a place and a time memorable. Not bound by a singular focus, a standard size, an exclusive kingly portrait, a contiguous viewpoint, or a homogeneous temporal moment, painters freed themselves to combine firsthand observations and aesthetic ideals in unceasingly inventive ways. Depicting sensory experiences and topographical vistas, and commemorating political encounters and environmental interventions, using the same medium of paint on large sheets of paper or cloth, they produced an entirely new and immersive art form.

A Splendid Land focuses on that revolutionary turn, traversing the cultural, urban, and political arenas in which it became imperative to

create emotional bonds to a praiseworthy land. Bringing together some eighty paintings spanning two centuries, it explores the poetic and pictorial moods that celebrated place, inspired pride, stirred memories, and forged communities. Most of the paintings were commissioned for the rulers of Mewar. However, an ambitious scroll connected to merchants, monks, and historians of the Jain community (cat. 7) and several works commissioned by courtiers (cats. 41, 42, and 47) make clear that other powerful players informed conversations on the city's culture, politics, and economy. Such works give an expanded understanding of the contexts within which the art of place was shaped and consumed.

Emotions and Moods in Indian Art

Over two millennia, Indian philosophers returned again and again to the question of why artworks move people.⁷ Writing in the cosmopolitan language of Sanskrit, they explored the exact combinations of characters, gestures, and settings that could engender emotions, feelings, and moods—the affective states encompassed by the term *bhava*.

The Sanskrit tradition is extraordinarily rich and complex, but several developments are key to understanding aesthetic emotions in Udaipur. By 1000, writers on aesthetics generally came to agree that emotional resonance is not located within artworks but rather realized in the bodies and minds of discerning audiences. Indeed, for connoisseurs, feeling *bhava*

FIG. 2 Lake Pichola with Jagmandir lake palace and Aravalli mountains; Dudh Talai reservoir at lower right.



leads to the ultimate aesthetic experience: the tasting of *rasa* (sap, juice, essence), a blissful immersion in the core emotion of the artwork.⁸ Philosophers and poets understood these core emotions to be interior states, such as love or longing. But in the sixteenth century, North Indian intellectuals and poets began rethinking the Sanskrit tradition. Writing in a more accessible vernacular (classical Hindi, also known as Brajbhasha), they expanded the parameters of emotions to include collective feelings, such as the shared experience of being in a certain place at a particular time.⁹

While *bhava* and *rasa* are foundational to both Sanskrit and vernacular Indian aesthetics, thinkers based their theories on dance, drama, and literary works. Occasional, usually indirect, references suggest that the visual arts similarly evoked emotions within viewers.¹⁰ But a crucial clue, one that firmly and explicitly links *bhava* to visual art, was unstudied until recently. It lies in the scribal notations on the backs of large paintings made for the Udaipur court during the eighteenth century that describe the subject of paintings as the *bhava* of a place or event.¹¹ *A Splendid Land* includes five paintings with such scribal notations identifying, respectively, the mood of the Kota palace (cat. 8), the mood of the celebration of a birth (cat. 24), the mood of a wedding procession (cat. 25), the mood of the hunting grounds at Nahar Magra (cat. 31), and the mood of the temple of Shri Eklingji (cat. 50).

On some paintings, pithy references to *bhava* are scrawled along the top of the sheet; on others, they are embedded within lengthy inscriptions written in the regional language of Mewari. The longer texts always name the maharana and often specify the location and date of the event, the artist(s), and the date on which the painting was presented to the king or entered the royal storeroom, evocatively called *jotdan*, the container of light. It is not unusual for inscriptions to identify courtiers by their name, rank, and physical location in the scene relative to the king, or to enumerate the sequential movements of key protagonists through space and their actions over hours or even days.

The king and his courtiers likely generated the content of the inscriptions when gathered around the paintings. Entries in the daily records (*haqiqat bahida*) of the Mewar Court show that paintings were viewed collectively in the picture hall (*chitrashali*), an ornate palace interior adorned with murals (fig. 3).¹² An entry dated to a Tuesday in November 1780 specifies that it was only *after* the paintings were ceremonially presented to Maharana Bhim Singh (r. 1778–1828) that a scribe was called into the room to produce the inscriptions.¹³ We therefore can understand the inscribed texts as indices of gatherings in which the viewing of artworks occurred. That such viewings took place in the *chitrashali* indicates that audiences encountered paintings in a location precisely designed to heighten aesthetic immersion and receptivity.¹⁴ Their collectively generated recall and identification of places, events, and individuals speak to the role that paintings played in strengthening shared emotions. And the scribal references to *bhava* confirm that courtiers, well versed in poetics, understood paintings and places to stir emotional responses.

The Culture of Connoisseurship

From as early as the second century, the sensitive appreciation of the arts (along with refined emotions and learned gestures) was a highly valued, even essential, behavior for Indian elites.¹⁵ This remained true across the Hindu and Muslim courts of early modern North India, where rulers and

courtiers sought to become *rasikas*, connoisseurs who could sense *bhava* and taste *rasa*.¹⁶ Udaipur was part of this world of male sociability and discernment. Poetry, music, dance, painting, magnificent architecture framing spectacular views, fragrant gardens with playing fountains, sumptuous textiles, and lavish feasts were threaded into daily court life. Eighteenth-century Udaipur painters celebrated their patrons by depicting their sophisticated comportment: Raj Singh I listening to music with his lover in the monsoon (cat. 63); Ari Singh II, the poet-king whose pen name means mirror, gazing at his reflection (cat. 16); and countless maharanas and noblemen delicately savoring the fragrance of a single blossom. These are portraits of men who had cultivated rich emotions, senses, and intellects.

To become a connoisseur, one had to grasp the typologies and nuances of aesthetic emotion. In Udaipur, courtiers learned those subtleties through poetic treatises such as the *Rasikapriya* (Handbook for poetry connoisseurs).¹⁷ Composed in classical Hindi by Keshavdas in 1591, the *Rasikapriya* laid out, in verses about the passionate romance between the deity Krishna and his beloved Radha, every situation, gesture, and element essential for stimulating the *rasa* of desire.¹⁸ In a *Rasikapriya* folio from about 1660 (fig. 4), an Udaipur court artist keenly conjures a heroine's overwhelming passion.¹⁹ Overcome by desire, Radha braves a stormy night and a treacherous landscape to meet Krishna. She disregards snakes and demons with a single-minded focus that the poet likens to that of a yogi,

FIG. 3 The courtyard and vestibules of the Badi Chitrashali, “big picture hall,” were constructed during the reign of Maharana Sangram Singh II (r. 1710-1734) and expanded under Maharana Bhim Singh II (r. 1778-1828).



and which the painter externalizes, at upper right, as an ascetic seated in a cave. Dressed as a sixteenth-century nobleman, Krishna is a model of regal decorum, his erotic ardor conveyed through the saturated red interior of a resplendent pavilion. Such illustrated *Rasikapriyas* schooled Udaipur's audiences to "feel" rather than "think."²⁰ As painters turned to depicting Udaipur's courtly connoisseurs within the precincts of the lake city, they entwined such evocations of ideal *bhava* to deepen the moods and beauty of a beloved place.

In expanding the size of paintings, Udaipur artists continued to use opaque watercolors prepared from natural and mineral pigments, but worked on larger surfaces made from conjoined sheets of handmade paper known as *wasli*. They used the larger format not only to transform subjects but also to innovate new painterly techniques.

Politics and Pleasure

The shift from illustrated manuscripts to large paintings of place cannot be disentangled from the political and cultural shifts that swept India in the eighteenth century. In the process of establishing hegemony, the Mughals (r. 1526–1857) restructured the political coalitions and hierarchies of seventeenth-century North India. Within this political landscape, regional kingdoms paid fealty to the empire and at the same time individual rulers were strengthened in their own realms. By the late seventeenth century,



FIG. 4 *The Fearless Heroine*, folio from a *Rasikapriya*, Udaipur, ca. 1660, Purchase and partial gift from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection — funds provided by the Friends of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S2018.1.72

however, as imperial political authority lessened, the grounds for allegiances shifted. North Indian courts and Mughal successor states began flexing their independent muscles. Each reemerging polity reimagined its realm in distinctive ways. Building up cities and mobilizing the arts were among the key strategies in building new alliances and securing the loyalty of noblemen.²¹

With the new pressure on regional polities to strengthen internal loyalties, Maharana Amar Singh II (r. 1698–1710) reorganized the Udaipur court, establishing a powerful inner core of sixteen noble houses. Perhaps the earliest painting of the inner circle (ca. 1708–10) depicts the courtiers celebrating the spring festival of Holi with the king (fig. 5). The noblemen, or thakurs, are seated by rank and their names are listed on the back with a formality that recalls official documents. They are equally—and no less importantly—enveloped together with Amar Singh II in a haze of joyous Holi color (*gulal*) that expands into the glorious red blossoms of a surrounding garden. Built near the Rajsamand Lake outside Udaipur by Amar Singh II's father in 1652, the gardens of Sarbat Vilas included tanks, fountains, and pavilions.²² The lush painting reveals that the new political hierarchy and images of the court enjoying pleasures in captivating settings emerged as entwined phenomena. This genre, which we call paintings of place, becomes the major focus of the royal atelier over the next two hundred years.

The Poetry of Place

In depicting the king and court in Udaipur, artists frequently drew on the heroic, erotic, and wondrous sentiments that imbued seventeenth-century representations of poetic verses and epic narratives. They also brought in new *bhavas* linked directly to Udaipur, among them pride in Mewar's abundance and seasons, and the pleasures of recalling one's own activities in the lake city. In this way, the paintings of mood resonate with the literary praise of place that flourished in this era across courts and languages. Urban description and panegyrics written in Sanskrit and classical Hindi (*nagara varnana*) as well as Persian (*shahrashub*) emphasize the verisimilitude of real places while stirring feelings and emotions associated with idealized abodes.²³ The court poet Nandram, for example, demonstrated his participation in the transregional phenomenon in a poem about Jagniwas lake palace, the *Jagvilas* (1746).²⁴ Forging new affective metaphors that celebrated local environs, he invoked the steadily flowing water in the city's lakes to describe the generosity of Maharana Jagat Singh II (r. 1734–51) to courtiers and likened the awe-inspiring Shivprasana Amar Vilas Mahal (more commonly known as Baadi Mahal), a garden located on the highest point of the City Palace, to Lord Shiva's heavenly Himalayan abode. Yet the poet concluded that Udaipur's connoisseurs were ultimately charmed in the garden-palace by together partaking of poetry, paintings, and delicacies, and thus collectively experiencing new types of tastes (*rasa*).

Not limited to courtly audiences, urban praise poetry made Udaipur and the broader Mewar region compelling and resonant for diverse communities. Traveling Jain monks (*yati*) such as Khetal, for example, wrote verses extolling Udaipur's wonders.²⁵ Khetal walked the city's streets and lakefronts, and traversed steep hills and forests in the early 1700s, describing sounds, sights, and smells. While his vantage points are mountainsides



FIG. 5 CAT. 72 Detail

and bazaars (rather than palaces), and his language is boisterous and multilingual, his verses reveal that the emotional aura and celebratory tropes of Udaipur exceed genres and media. Like the painting *Sunrise in Udaipur*, Khetal's couplets create an emotional register that encompasses Maharana Amar Singh II, city dwellers, and villagers alike.²⁶ He describes with wonder the Aravalli's undulations and the palace gardens. And he is smitten by the men and women on the *ghats* of Lake Pichola in the rosy light of dawn.

An Aesthetic of Plenitude

To convey mood visually, artists developed an immersive aesthetic that invites lingering and multisensory recall. Each large painting layers sensate details, vantage points, and temporalities.²⁷ Vast palaces open up to

simultaneously reveal many rooms, afternoons pass into evenings, and scenes intermix planar, elevation, and bird's-eye perspectives. Individuals, events, places, and moods are tightly interwoven. Artists might trigger feelings of connection to place by enlarging the most significant spaces of a palace, or by depicting the ridges of the Aravalli mountains as they appeared to courtiers riding out from the direction of Udaipur. Hunting landscapes, in their plenitude, also provide an unparalleled opportunity to gauge historical attitudes toward land use and natural resource management, for they are peppered with artificial lakes, stepwells, dams, and sluices—the new motifs (*uddipana*) of the eighteenth century meant to praise the kingdom and inspire pride.

Throughout the landscapes and palace scenes, the king, always luminous and calmly reserved, appears repeatedly as he moves through and enjoys his realm. Unlike paintings from other regional courts, Udaipur's aesthetic of plenitude, like Khetal's poem, fulsomely integrates merchants, laborers, villagers, holy men, and Bhils (Indigenous inhabitants) into the fabric of the celebrated realm. There are depictions of figures who ignore the king, including mahouts washing down their elephants at dusk, a woman quietly sorting lentils (fig. 6), and workers chatting among themselves. Their presence invites a consideration of subjectivities not bound by elite perspectives.

Although art historians have generally relegated this profusion to the background of royal portraits, it is better understood as an aesthetic of affective abundance. As seductive statements of political legitimacy, the paintings both conjure and create memories of the pleasures and plenty of Udaipur. Most were made for the king and an elite circle of *rasikas* who were familiar with the poetic genres of place—and who were often represented within the images. Depending on the viewer, a motif might be a fragment of memory, a determinant of mood, a moment for aesthetic delectation, or all three. That is, one might *recall* a Holi celebration, *feel wonder* at dazzling palace scenes, *be aroused* by the plump pomegranates in a *zenana* garden (cat. 76), *appreciate* the way that a hunting scene's scratchy brushwork invokes the thrashing of a tiger through underbrush (cat. 36), and *savor* the ways that pictorial motifs inflect the words of poets.

Expanding Conversations

Comprehending representations of people enchanted by wondrous and momentous moods, created in and shaped by natural and built environments, however, is far from simple. The study of Udaipur painting has been dogged by the legacy of colonial histories. James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* (1829, 1832) played an outsize role in framing Indian kings and royal pleasures as examples of Oriental decadence.²⁸ Like other nineteenth-century historians, its author, the first senior British colonial administrator in northwestern India, saw India's history as one of decline. Tod thus credited the Sisodia dynasty with a glorious past and damned its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century royal patrons for "voluptuous inactivity."²⁹ To some readers the designation of Udaipur's large-scale court paintings as *tamasha*, or spectacle, signals the extravagances of a hollow crown, and to others it conveys fabulous events. And while pleasure, *vilasa*, has a long and productive history in South Asia, the term has largely been employed pejoratively by art historians and historians writing in English and Hindi.³⁰ The oversaturation of such ideas has shaped ahistorical and

anachronistic understandings of the place of pleasure in Udaipur and in early modern courts beyond its borders. *A Splendid Land* takes seriously the work of pleasure in creating emotional attachments and loyalties.

Our project engages (and creates) interdisciplinary connections across academia and museums. By bringing together South Asian aesthetic theories on emotions with insights from the sensory turn in contemporary scholarship, Dipti Khera, in *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* (2020), revealed eighteenth-century Udaipur painting to be an art of picturing emotions. *A Splendid Land* further considers the entwinement of emotions with social networks, pleasure, politics, and cultural landscapes. Putting canonical works into conversation with previously unpublished paintings, it explores the conceptual, painterly, and cartographic strategies that artists deployed to invoke the local, recall embodied experiences, and create immersive moods. Such emphases identify Udaipur's significance to scholarship on imagination and emotions in South Asia, while disrupting the periodization of art and artistic practices into precolonial and colonial frameworks.

Our focus on emotions, sociability, and environment was inspired, first of all, by a desire to make sense of a vast number of eighteenth-century paintings of place. Our project opens onto new interpretative terrains by heuristically decentering the figure of the king and the preoccupation with symbolic sovereignty. Paying particular attention to the noblemen who were, along with the king, the primary subjects and viewers of the large paintings of place, we illuminate the importance of the court as an institution, looking more closely at the dynamics of friendship—a type of relationship that was until recently considered impossible within Rajput courts.³¹ This shift situates the paintings as agents of historical change that played an integral role in forming the social bonds that maintained the political order. Using paintings, inscriptions, and poetry as archival resources, we have uncovered visual languages of camaraderie and friendship. Large hunt scenes, for example, emphasize collaboration over individual prowess, while the dynamics between Maharana Jagat Singh II and Thakur Sirdar Singh of Sardargarh, when tracked over multiple paintings, indicate a strong personal bond—see, for example, their physical closeness as they enjoy thrilling elephant fights (cat. 44) and tiger hunts (cat. 36) or sit together in parties and processions (cats. 13 and 28).

Considering that India's rich visual traditions center on the bodies of gods and royal humans, it is remarkable that artists in Udaipur produced, between 1700 and 1940, hundreds of paintings that depict Mewar's riverine plains, forested hillsides, and monumental monsoons. The recent turn in humanities, art history included, toward pressing concerns of ecology and climate change provided the ground for bringing landscape to the foreground of our research.³² *A Splendid Land* offers the first art-historical study of Indian court paintings as portals onto cultural landscapes that evolved through human use. By mapping the landscapes and reading them in relationship to recent studies of early modern South Asia that connect aesthetic, political, ecological, and historical memories, we interpreted the scenes as cultural terrains in which the king and his courtiers saw themselves enacting relationships not only with each other but also with the built and natural environments.

To trace the aesthetic, epistemic, and political threads that run through the art of picturing moods, we followed the environmental



FIG. 6 CAT. 76 Detail

constituents—mountains, rivers, rains—that shaped Udaipur. We studied its lakes and palaces, the views from its terraces and hills, and the contours of its hunting grounds and mountains, dwelling upon their imaginings in paintings, drawings, painted letters, daily court diaries, diplomatic correspondence, and the verses of court poets and Jain monks. In yet other instances, by drawing upon previously untranslated historical sources and retranslating inscriptions, we tracked the political roles and interpersonal bonds of kings, nobles, and colonial officers, and read against the grain to pay heed to the musicians, dancers, court attendants, merchants, and laborers whom painters scrupulously included to depict abundant worlds.

Exhibiting the Mood of Place

In curating *A Splendid Land*, we sought to create the conditions for visitors to immerse themselves in another world and time, to linger over and enter the mood of these paintings. Walking through an exhibition is in itself a meaning-making event.³³ Acknowledging the embodied experience of

visitors, we organized the galleries geographically and temporally. To underscore that each room is a new destination and a new mood, the gallery sequence constitutes a journey that begins with the lake and palaces at the center of Udaipur, continues outward to the City Palace and the city's streets, moves on to the mountains and valleys surrounding the capital, and finally, more metaphorically, arrives at sacred sites and the cosmos. Side excursions draw the visitor into the monsoon season and springtime festivals.

Because *A Splendid Land* focuses on the emotions of being in extraordinary places at remarkable moments, a key challenge was how to address the gap between historical viewers, who not only knew the locations but also would recognize themselves within the paintings, and contemporary audiences. To establish distinctive moods, we dedicated each gallery to a specific place or season. A dominant palette, such as the liquescent greens and stormy grays of the “Monsoon” gallery, for example, creates the first impression of place. The choreographed arrangement of paintings—with dynamic juxtapositions that are at times vertiginous—emphasizes how artists experimented fantastically with scale and perspective. The adjacency of like subjects, while inviting comprehension of painterly effects and pictorial elements, also establishes the conditions for creating memories. Even if one has never been to the Jagmandir, seeing the king and his consort in the lake palace courtyards in one painting allows viewers to recognize how those spaces of pleasure are nuanced in a nearby work.

The extraordinary filmmaker Amit Dutta composed a distinctive soundscape for each gallery drawn from motifs within the paintings, such as crashing thunder, pouring rain, and crying peacocks in the “Monsoon” gallery. The sounds invite visitors not only to lose themselves in a mood but also to look more closely for aural motifs within the paintings, a useful key toward unlocking what are often large and densely packed works. Whether triggering a memory or forming a new one, each sonic collage poetically interweaves ambient sound elements with silences, and all are woven together into a cumulative experience.

The Catalogue

Just as Udaipur artists, poets, musicians, and historians all worked together to create *bhava*, the contributing authors here collectively illuminate topographies of emotion. Likewise, the interdisciplinary perspectives they bring to this catalogue reveal its value across wide-ranging artistic, political, and intellectual milieus.

Richard David Williams examines the role of music, literary recitations, and assemblies in shaping the aesthetics of affect and immersion and the allied ideals of courtly conduct and connoisseurship in eighteenth-century Mewar. Outlining methods for imagining auditory atmospheres from visual and poetic cues, he enunciates how sound and sense converge to create pleasurable and pious moods.

Debra Diamond and Dipti Khara identify the strategies that Udaipur artists developed to convey specific places in ways that heighten affect, tell stories, and capture the passage of time. The authors further address how the paintings reveal local ecologies and the labor of the men and women who enabled the art of moods.

After India's independence, the court of Mewar evolved into a public trust. Conservation architect Shikha Jain outlines the Maharana of Mewar

Charitable Foundation's efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of Udaipur city and its palaces. This peek into the studies and projects involved in conserving the oldest parts of the City Palace, now the City Palace Museum, and its collections reveals environmental, architectural, and social facets that continue to make Udaipur exemplary.

Object-focused entries by Molly Emma Aitken, Debra Diamond, Catherine Glynn, John Stratton Hawley, Robin Owen Joyce, Dipti Khera, Shailka Mishra, Emma Natalya Stein, and Caroline Widmer are thematically grouped. By clustering artworks around specific places, times, social networks, or sacred topographies, the entries illuminate connections between paintings, emotion, and place. Cynthia Talbot relates the history of Mewar's kings deploying painted excerpts from a rare genealogical scroll likely penned by a Jain scribe and dated to 1730–40. Geographies and histories tied to Chittor reveal emotional attachments that were valued by eighteenth-century audiences in Udaipur.

The Reference Catalogue begins with a report from the conservators at the City Palace Museum who conserved the paintings loaned to *A Splendid Land*. Saloni Ghuwalewala, S. Girikumar, Anuja Mukherjee, Bhasha Shah, and P. M. Vasundhara provide an insider's look at the establishment of the conservation lab as well as insights from the first stages of what will become a comprehensive project to conserve all the large paintings. The Reference Catalogue entries follow, many with new or first-time translations of the paintings' inscriptions. In order to illuminate the narratives, temporal strategies, and cartographic infrastructure of the paintings, key works are diagrammed and juxtaposed with geospatial imagery. An Appendix features original verses and translations of poetry cited in the essays and entries.

A Splendid Land opens collaborative opportunities. We invite you to relish, work with, and think through these dazzling paintings. We hope for new conversations among historians of art, literature, and religion; conservators of architecture, ecologies, and objects; and scientists studying painting pigments and water systems that will expand our knowledge of the artistic and environmental abundance of cultural landscapes seen in Udaipur's painted moods.

Notes to the essays

A Splendid Land

Debra Diamond and Dipti Khera

- 1 Khetal, *Udaipur rī gajal*, 1718, Agarchand Nahata Jain Granthalaya, MS 7677, verse 26. For the original and translation of the complete couplet, see the Appendix, p. 360.
- 2 Andrew Topsfield's copious scholarship on Udaipur's courtly arts, indispensable for our research in many ways, views these large paintings primarily as royal portraits. Andrew Topsfield, *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar* ([Ascona]: Artibus Asiae; Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2001). In studying how Rajasthan's painters adapted Mughal portraits, Vishakha Desai identified the genre as contextual portraits. Vishakha N. Desai, "Timeless Symbols: Royal Portraits from Rajasthan, 17th–19th Centuries," in *The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity*, ed. Karine Schomer, Joan L. Erdman, Lodrick O. Deryck, and Lloyd I. Rudolph (New Delhi: Manohar and American Institute of Indian Studies, 1994), 1:313–42.
- 3 The first palaces in Udaipur were built in 1559, but the city was founded as the capital in 1553 according to the *Cittaurā-Udayapura kā pāṭanāmā*, a court record (*bahī*) that includes events related to the city's early history and land-settlement patterns. Krishna Singh Rathor, *Cittaurā-Udayapura Kā Pāṭanāmā: Mevāra Kā Itihāsa*, ed. Manohar Singh Ranawat (Sitamau, MP: Shri Natnagar Shodh Samsthan, 2003). On this source, see Bhanwar L. Bhadani, *Water Harvesting, Conservation, and Irrigation in Mewar (800–1700)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 226–31. For an excellent introduction to the city that combines history and walking tours, see Shikha Jain and Mayank Gupta, *UDR: Udaipur Architectural Travel Guide* (Barcelona: Altrim Publishers, 2021), 9.
- 4 An earlier capital in the Debari valley, to which Udai Singh II had first decided to relocate Mewar's capital in 1553, lacked a perennial source of water. Neither of the nearby rivers, the Berach or the Kotra, flowed for all twelve months of the year. Ishwar Singh Ranawat, *Rājasthāna ke jala-samsādhana: Mevāra ke sandarbha meṃ; 16 vīm evaṃ 17 vīm śatābdi* (Udaipur: Chirag Prakashan, 2004), 14–15.
- 5 The story is told that Lake Pichola was created by nomadic or Indigenous inhabitants of the land in the late 1380s; the embankment of Badi Pal on Pichola, built by Udai Singh, was strengthened under Amar Singh I (r. 1597–1620). On the nearby mountain of Machla Magra on the south, Udai Singh created a water-holding tank called Dudh Talai that functioned as a defensive watchtower. The lake of Udai Sagar was created between 1559 and 1564 to defend the eastern frontier of the Girwa plain. The hills to the west, near Lake Pichola, provided a natural barrier to the chosen site, and the expanse of land on the northeast was available for settlement and cultivation. Ranawat, *Rājasthāna ke jala-samsādhana*, 79, 94–97. See reference catalogue entry 11, fig. 1.
- 6 The lakes are massive. Lake Pichola measures two and a half miles from north to south, while Lake Jaisamand, the second-largest artificial lake in the world, has a thirty-mile circumference. For an overview of Udaipur's historical waterworks enumerated in written sources since the sixteenth century, see Ranawat, *Rājasthāna ke jala-samsādhana*, chaps. 1 and 2. On their construction, see Bhadani, *Water Harvesting, Conservation, and Irrigation in Mewar*. On the urban biodiversity created by Udaipur's historic water systems, see Satya Prakash Mehra, Sarita Mehra, Krishan Kumar Sharma, "Importance of Urban Biodiversity: A Case Study of Udaipur, India." In *The Security of Water, Food, Energy and Liveability of Cities: Challenges and Opportunities for Peri-Urban Futures*, ed. Basant Maheshwari, Ramesh Purohit, Hector Malano, Vijay P. Singh, Priyanie Amerasinghe. (Water Science and Technology Library, vol 71. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 403–418.
- 7 For an overview of Indian aesthetics both succinct and magisterial, see Sheldon Pollock, *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
- 8 Katherine Butler Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions: The Mughal Rasika," in *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, ed. Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (n.p.: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 407.
- 9 Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37–40.
- 10 See Dipti Khera, *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), esp. 7–16, and Molly Emma Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), esp. 50–55, which establish methodologies for connecting *bhava* and pictorial practice by piecing together verses, paintings, and fragmentary accounts of audience response. On the theoretical discussion of mimesis and art in Indian aesthetics, see Parul Dave-Mukherjee, "Who Is Afraid of Mimesis? Contesting the Common Sense of Indian Aesthetics Through the Theory of 'Mimesis' or Anukarṇa Vāda" in *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, 1st ed., ed. Arindam Chakrabarti (Bloomsbury Research Handbooks in Asian Philosophy. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 71–91.
- 11 Apart from the inscriptions highlighted in this catalogue, Udaipur's late nineteenth-century painting inventories attest that scribes used *bhava* often to denote the mood and feel of places, of seasons, of momentous spectacles and festivals. Khera, *Place of Many Moods*, esp. 56–59. See Topsfield, "Royal Paintings Inventory," 188–99. We thank Molly Aitken for sharing her copy of the 1891 inventory, written in the format of an Udaipur court register (*bahī*), currently in the Rajasthan State Archives (Udaipur branch). It follows a different classification system than the notations from two other late nineteenth-century inventories that are seen behind the paintings. Aitken, *Intelligence of Tradition*, 302nn61,62.
- 12 The assemblies held by Maharana Bhim Singh (r. 1778–1828) took place in one instance (1780) in the Chitrashali of the Jagniwas lake palace, and in the other (1787) in the City Palace. Khera, *Place of Many Moods*, 56. In *Jagvilas* (1746), discussed further below, the poet Nandram describes painted rooms that delighted Udaipur's courtly assemblies. For the original and translation, see the Appendix, p. 358, verse 45.
- 13 Unpublished *Haqiqat Bahida* (BH 664), daily court diary of Maharana Bhim Singh from samvat 1835 to samvat 1837 (1778 to 1780). Maharana Mewar Research Institute, Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation.
- 14 For the ways that certain spaces, landscapes, and the built environment can "provoke" identifiable feelings, see Margrit Pernau, "Mapping Emotions, Constructing Feelings: Delhi in the 1840s," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58 no. 5 (2015): 634–67. For how "sitting together" creates feelings, see Emma Flatt, "Sitting Together: A Practice of Friendship in Indo-Persian Courtly Societies," unpublished paper, last modified August 11, 2017. Since painters, poets, and scribes created illustrated manuscripts in the court workshop, where artists also worked together to produce large paintings, it is often assumed that scribes inscribed large paintings in the same milieu. Knowing that the variance in inscriptions in terms of identifying images on the recto likely emerged from their intermingled production within spaces of reception fundamentally shifts our understanding of how and where meanings associated with paintings were made. Also see reference catalogue entry 71.
- 15 Daud Ali's groundbreaking work on the codes of behavior and modes of thought in early court culture in South Asia initiated this field of inquiry. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- 16 Allison Busch, "The Anxiety of Innovation: The Practice of Literary Science in the Hindi/Riti Tradition," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 no. 2 (2004): 54.
- 17 As Busch has pithily summarized, handbooks like the *Rasikapriya* were "the price of entrance into the learned courtly circles of early modern India." Busch, "The Anxiety of Innovation," 55.
- 18 The enormously influential *Rasikapriya* (1591) transformed the Sanskrit poetic tradition of categorizing romantic types. Not only was Keshav Das's text written in the vernacular of literary Hindi (or Braj) but it also personalized the classical tradition by identifying the lovers as the Hindu deity Krishna and Radha, a girl from a cow-herder village.
- 19 Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 32–33.

- 20 Sheldon Pollock, "Introduction," in Bhanudatta, *Bouquet of Rasa and River of Rasa*, trans. Sheldon Pollock, Clay Sanskrit Library 41 (New York: New York University Press; JJC Foundation, 2009), xxx.
- 21 Rosalind O'Hanlon has suggested that, for early modern local elites, holding their communities together perhaps was even more important than holding on to land for declaring territories. Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Cultural Pluralism, Empire and the State in Early Modern South Asia," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 44 no. 3 (2007): 368. On the significance of eighteenth-century localizations, see Francesca Orsini, "Between Qasbas and Cities: Language Shifts and Literary Continuities in North India in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 39 no. 1 (2019): 68–81. See also Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee, "Introduction," in *History in the Vernacular* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008), esp. 7–9. For instance, court cultures flourishing in the cities of Jaipur, Delhi, and Lucknow reimagined their place in distinctly local and urban ways—through painting, poetry, cartography, and city building. See Chanchal Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper: Architecture as History in the Late Mughal Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
- 22 "Sarbat Vilas," the local name of the gardens, features in the inscription. In most secondary scholarship, the gardens are referred to by the name "Sarvaritu Vilas." See Kaviraj Shyamaldas, *Viravinoda: Mevāra kā itihāsa; Mahārānāom kā ādi se lekara san 1884 takak kā vistrta vṛttānta ānushaṅgika sāmāgrī sahita*, 4 vols. (1886; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 2:443.
- 23 See Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 72–73, and Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 73–81.
- 24 We thank Dr. Prem Rajpurohit for transcribing the manuscript copy of the *Jagvilas*, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, accession no. 2216. The eighteenth-century poetry of the *Jagvilas* (World of pleasure) commemorates the commencement of the three-day inauguration ceremony of the Jagniwas lake palace on January 20, 1746. The court poet Nandram presents the *bhava* of *vilasa*—the mood of courtly pleasures—as an idealization of real gatherings at Jagniwas, thereby inviting an interpretation of the title of his praise poem not simply as "Jagat Singh's delights" but also possibly as "Pleasures offered by Jagniwas" or the "Jaga of *vilasa*"—that is, "World of pleasure." Nandram's transformation through poetry of *vilasa*, a courtly aesthetic and ethic intertwined with luxury, connoisseurship, and joyful experiences, reveals its multidimensional valence. For the original text and translation of the passages described here, see the Appendix, p. 359 verses 175 and 46–49.
- 25 Khetal, *Udaipur ri gajal*, Agarchand Nahata Jain Granthalaya, MS 7677. Jain monks composed and sang *gajals*, highly repetitive poetic songs, each consisting of a series of mono-rhymed couplets—in a combination of dialects of Rajasthan, Brajbhasha, Persian, Awadhi, Gujarati, and Punjabi—that sought to evoke their experience of seeing new places. Poetry offered traveling monks a medium through which to expand their gaze to subjects beyond Jain religiosity. They turned to the associated literary genres of urban praise discussed above and across linguistic boundaries. For a longer discussion, see Khera, *Place of Many Moods*, 166–169. For an excellent discussion and compilation of poetry in this genre, see Vikram Singh Rathore, ed., *Paramparā Rājasthāni gajala samgraha* (Jodhpur: Chaupasani Shodh Sansthan, 1964).
- 26 For the original text and translation, see the Appendix, p. 360.
- 27 See Molly Emma Aitken, "Parataxis and the Practice of Reuse, from Mughal Margins to Mir Kalān Khān," *Archives of Asian Art* 59 (2009): 81–103.
- 28 James Tod, the first senior British colonial administrator in northwestern India, served with the East India Company in central and western India from 1799 to 1822. He favored Mewar kings over other Rajputs and came to view the thakurs as responsible for the court's ruin—*a view that supported his belief that the British should "protect" and "restore" the power of the Udaipur ruler Bhim Singh (r. 1778–1828)*. See Jason Freitag, *Serving Empire, Serving Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), esp. chaps. 3 and 4.
- 29 James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han, or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*, vol. 1 (London: Smith Elder, 1829), 433–34.
- 30 Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha, *Udayapura rājya kā itihāsa*, vol. 2 (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthaghar, 1999), 609, 641.
- 31 To define the centrality of the arts in producing sociability and political subjects in the early modern world, scholars have turned their attention to pleasure and friendship. For instance, see Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt, "Friendship in Indian History: Introduction," *Studies in History* 33, no. 1 (2017): 1–6; Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions," 408–10; Molly Emma Aitken, "The Laud Rāgamālā Album, Bikaner, and the Sociability of Subimperial Painting," *Archives of Asian Art* 63, no. 1 (2013): 46–53; Debra Diamond, Catherine Glynn, and Karni Singh Jasol, ed., *Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2008); Mana Kia, "Adab as Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India," in "No Tapping Around Philology": *A Festschrift in Celebration and Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, ed. Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 281–308; and Kavita Singh "Scent upon a Southern Breeze: The Synaesthetic Arts of the Deccan" in *The Arts of the Deccan*, ed. Kavita Singh (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2018), 8–23.
- 32 The emphases on harnessing water in the capital and territory of Mewar, which surely served as an impetus for painters and patrons alike, has eluded art historians until recently. Scholarship on environmental histories of early modern North India and Rajasthan that seeks to shift disciplinary conversations include, among others: Brajmohan M. Jawalia, "Food Security in Rajasthan with Specific Reference to the Marwar Region during the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Asian Agri-History* 5, no. 4 (December 2001): 265–82; Irfan Habib, *Man and Environment: The Ecological History of India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2010); Bhadani, *Water Harvesting, Conservation, and Irrigation in Mewar*; Tanuja Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Mayank Kumar, "The Uncertain Monsoon: Perceptions and Experiences in North-West India in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Revisiting the History of Rajasthan: Essays for Professor Dilbagh Singh*, ed. Mayank Kumar, Rameshwar Prasad Bahuguna, and Surajbhan Bharadwaj (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2017), 240–63; Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geo-aesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550–1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); Pratyay Nath, *Climate of Conquest: War, Environment, and Empire in Mughal North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sugata Ray and Venugopal Maddipati, eds., *Water Histories of South Asia: The Materiality of Liquescence* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2020); and Purnima Dhavan, "Ass-loads of Rice: the Dilemmas of Ecological Sufficiency in Mughal Kashmir, 1586–c. 1700," unpublished paper, last modified April 2021, PDF file.
- 33 Mieke Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 201–18.

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- Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- For the original Brajbhasha texts, see the Appendix, pp. 358–360. Translations are mine.
- Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Suktimuktavali* of Bhagadatta Jalhana 303.4 (1258 CE). See Ludwik Sternbach, ed. and trans, *Mahā-subhāṣita-Samgraha: Being an Extensive Collection of Wise Sayings in Sanskrit* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1974), no. 6894. At the same time, enjoyment and play had to be tempered: the connoisseur should be intelligent (*pravina*) in his conduct and emotions, and avoid becoming inappropriately absorbed in pleasure.
- Francesca Orsini, "Clouds, Cuckoos and an Empty Bed: Emotions in Hindi-Urdu *Barahmasas*," in *Monsoon Feelings: A History of Emotions in the Rain*, ed. Imke Rajamani, Margit Pernau, and Katherine Butler Schofield (New Delhi: Niyogi Books), 97–135.