Ornamental

A Treasure Trove of Indian Jewelry dazzles at the Carlos Museum at Emory this spring

The Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University is unveiling some truly spectacular works of art this spring. “When Gold Blossoms: Indian Jewelry from the Susan L. Beningson Collection” features more than 150 beautifully crafted pieces spanning 2,000 years, primarily from South India. On view March 18 through July 12, the exhibition includes rings, anklets, earrings, hair pendants, jeweled crowns, ivory combs, and an elaborate swing and a gold throne for a deity. Some of the pieces are worn in daily life, others dedicated to deities in Hindu temples. Photographs from the 19th and 20th centuries will be displayed to provide a fuller understanding of the ways in which jewelry is worn and used.

In conjunction with the exhibit, the Carlos Museum has developed a series of public educational programs highlighting Indian art and culture and facilitating an understanding of the religious aspect of Indian jewelry – from the materials used to create it, to the sacredness of adorning the body, to the narrative imagery drawn from the Hindu pantheon.

Emory faculty member and Kuchipudi dancer Saiakala Penmanarthy will explore the movement and sound inherent in much Indian jewelry. Other faculty will introduce audiences to the riches of Indian literature, from the ancient Sanskrit Bhagavad Gita to modern classics by Indian émigré Jumpha Lahari and others. A spring break art week will provide opportunities for children to explore Indian culture, from adorning the body with printed textiles, henna decoration, and jewelry to savoring the sweetness and spice of Indian cooking.

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Opulence

Gold necklace set with diamonds, edged with a border of seed pearls, and hung with emeralds and seed pearls (front). North India; 19th century. 14 x 15 cm. Susan L. Bennington collection. Photo: Benjamin Harris B.S.K.

Gold swaying earrings (links) with rubies. South India; 19th century. 2.5 x 2 x 2 cm. Each. Susan L. Bennington collection. Photo: Benjamin Harris B.S.K.

Gold pendant set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. South India; 19th century. 7 x 4.5 cm. Susan L. Bennington collection. Photo: Benjamin Harris B.S.K.

Gold cobra-head braid ornament (nagar) set with rubies, emeralds, diamonds and pearls. South India; 18th century. 5 x 5 cm. Susan L. Bennington collection. Photo: Benjamin Harris B.S.K.