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Knuppel: The American Institute of Indian Studies was founded nearly sixty years ago to further the knowledge of India in the United States by supporting American scholarship on India. The programs of AIIS foster the production of and engagement with scholarship on India, and promote and advance mutual understanding between the citizens of the United States and of India. AIIS seeks to provide access to scholarship about India to a wide and diverse audience.

Welcome to the January 2021 installment of the American Institute of Indian Studies podcast. My name is Anandi Silva Knuppel and I am a media specialist with AIIS. Through this podcast series, we hope to explore various exciting AIIS initiatives and engage with our current and former fellows, students, instructors, and researchers in this challenging time for connection.

In this episode we'll speak with one of the 2019 AIIS book prize winners, Dr. Dipti Khera Associate, Professor of Art History in the Department of Art History and Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

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With interdisciplinary training in art history, museum anthropology, and architecture, Dr. Khera's research and teaching integrate Indian Ocean and Eurasian geographies and engage longue durée perspectives—from the medieval to the modern. Today we'll be discussing her new book *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* that won the AIIS Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in the Indian Humanities.

In order to promote scholarship in South Asian Studies, AIIS awards two prizes each year for the best unpublished book manuscript on an Indian subject. Applications are typically due in the early fall and a selection process follows with an announcement of the book prize winners traditionally in the following spring. AIIS book prize winners span a diverse range of scholarly fields from art history to religious studies, anthropology, political science, and more.

Dr. Khera's book, published this year by Princeton University Press, "uncovers an influential creative legacy of evocative beauty that raises broader questions about how emotions and artifacts operate in constituting history and subjectivity, politics and place.

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It looks at the painting traditions of northwestern India in the eighteenth century, and what they reveal about the political and artistic changes of the era,” according to the official book website.

Joining us to speak with Dr. Khera is Dr. Deborah Hutton, Professor of Art History at The College of New Jersey. Dr. Hutton is not only a former AIIS Book Prize committee member, but she also received an AIIS book prize in 2004 for her work *The Art of the Court of Bijapur*. With direct experience with the AIIS book prize, Dr. Hutton will help explain a little bit about the book prize selection process and its significance and then guide us in discussion with Dr. Khera.

Dr. Khera and Dr. Hutton - thank you both for being here in this new year.

Dr. Khera, before winning the 2019 AIIS book prize, you were also an AIIS junior fellow. Could you tell us a little about your experience with the AIIS fellowship programs?

Khera: Sure. First of all thank you for this opportunity to talk about the book and to talk about it with none other than Dr. Deborah Hutton, whose work I've deeply admired and learned from over the years.

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I'm honored to share my journey with the AIIS community since AIIS has supported my research at various stages of my career. As you mentioned, I held the AIIS junior fellowship in 2009-2010 for my research as a PhD student and what I learned about AIIS when I held that fellowship was that AIIS creates the critical infrastructure for you to become a scholar. So this infrastructure consists of helping you connect with become part of an intellectual community but also become part of Institutions within South Asia, within India, to find the connections, to find the pragmatic routes to complete your research. So I was based at the Institute of Development Studies in Jaipur, that is where I was affiliated for my fellowship. And you know, supervisor was Dr. Varsha Joshi, a scholar who passed away far too young recently. For me, at that time, being based in the Institute for Development Studies, an institute that was based more on social welfare projects at that time, being associated with Dr. Joshi was very very helpful because of her training as a historian and that enabled me to connect with several small archives, several local historians, take these almost weekly, fortnightly trips to archives spread across Rajasthan.

So one could turn to the local institute as an AIIS fellow and one could turn to the AIIS center in Gurgaon and to the various centers across India to find connections with other

fellows who were completing their research that year but also to be connected with archives and small institutions - how do I get about it? Who do I connect with in these institutions in order to gain access? In fact, I was in touch with the AIIS Hindi program in Jaipur before I was a junior fellow in 2008 when I was doing pre-dissertation research.

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And at that time Dr. Rakesh Ranjan who was heading the Hindi program over there, connected me to one of the local scholars, Dr. Premraj Purohit who was teaching Hindi in the AIIS summer program, but his regular, outside of the summer, his regular position was in Jodhpur University. He was trained as a scholar of classical Hindi literature - Braj Bhasha. And so I actually began reading some important manuscripts with him. He's helped me transcribe some of the texts that feature in my book. I've consulted him on translations. We've discussed launching a collaborative project. It's also important for me to mention that all fellows are in the AIIS program, at least in my year, you know, came together in December during this workshop meet that was held at the Gurgaon Center and that was a fantastic space to discuss ideas, where your research is going. There were all of us who were junior fellows, who were doing our PhDs, there were senior fellows. You had scholars like Prof. Philip Lutgendorf, Martha Selby, and we all presented where our projects stood then and everything from the intellectual to the pragmatic was on the table. So one saw how mentoring the junior fellows was at the center of AIIS in giving this fellowship and that is something that I found incredibly useful. And in some ways I would say that at Columbia where I was doing my PhD I saw my own advisors, Prof. Vidya Dehejia, Prof. Allison Busch, participate in AIIS as mentors, participate as senior fellows, so that one had the sense that there is a certain community that this institution enables, which is centered on scholarship but which is very much taking into account the nuts and bolts of how scholarship happens.

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Knuppel: That's a wonderful summary of the AIIS ecosystem almost. One considers at first glance that a fellowship is, you know, support to travel to India but there's so much that the AIIS fellowship program actually offers just like you said in supporting scholarship happening. So there are the institutional affiliations but I've ever heard such wonderful things about the network of fellows who are on fellowship at the same time getting to come together like you mentioned you know it's there so much support that goes on just beyond the kind of logistical support in the mentorship and being extremely important, as a part of that so thank you, Dr. Khara. You mentioned a couple of things in terms of connections that you made during your fellowship period that went as far as

influencing your book process a little bit. Were there any other aspects of the AIIS Fellowship experience that helped support the subsequent book process?

Khera: Sure, several members were part of this community during my time at AIIS as a junior fellow. Many of them completed their dissertations at the same time. We all have transformed our dissertations into books, you know, give or take a couple of years around the same time. So, and transforming one's research from fieldwork to writing a dissertation to writing a book, as we all know, is a tedious, grueling, part of research. Right? It's about writing, rewriting, soliciting feedback, publishing, trying to figure it all out. So there are several people who contributed to that but I, for example, due to various kinds And at that time Dr. Rakesh Ranjan who was heading the Hindi program over there, connected me to one of the local scholars, Dr. Premraj Purohit who was teaching Hindi in the AIIS summer program, of constraints, was not able to take part in some of the excellent programs that AIIS has for supporting you through this process and thinking about the dissertation-to-book workshop.

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Even though I could not participate in that forum, I certainly had good mentorship in place to realize that finding the storyline and thread from the dissertation to the book is a circular process which requires you to take distance to choose certain threads to take them forward. But what I want to flag in how AIIS was very helpful for me for realizing this book is directly related to actually the book prize I received because for me it came at a very critical time and it played a very significant role in the making of the book and transforming it into a physical object. It's a unique prize, as you mentioned, which recognizes a manuscript. So clearly there is a lot of thought that has gone into creating this prize as it helps push your work into the publishing pipeline and I want to speak to the importance of this especially from the vantage point of my field, South Asian art history. You know, for art and architecture historians, often scholars in the humanities and social sciences don't realize that the costs really add up. We are researching artifacts in private and public collections. We are studying architecture in situ. We are mapping and walking in lesser-known places. We have to return to these sites again even though we might think the world has opened up to us digitally. There's nothing that really replaces field work, as we know. And then finally we have to pay for image rites to reproduce high quality images of artworks which are integral to the argument, which are integral to the narrative. What comes with this demand is that not many publishers have the resources either in terms of the experts or in terms of the funds to produce art history books.

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And they are significantly more expensive to produce. They require a much larger subvention within this kind of publishing ecosystem of art history. Then South Asian art history is kind of straddling various kinds of margins, as we know that it's a field that is defined in curricula, in job adverts, even within departments by the region and not necessarily by time. So we have several scholars working on, say, early modern Europe, on the nineteenth century, on ancient medieval times, but we'll have one scholar working, if at all, on South Asian art or one scholar offering all of Asian art or one scholar offering South Asian and Islamic art and in some cases one scholar offering South Asian art, Asian art, Islamic art - clump it all together. And we may think that this is something that is restricted to how certain fields are taught but that is how they get classified within the publishing industry as well. So I, for example, ran against limits of this kind of compartmentalized, and specifically a very colonial racialized region-based ahistoricized division of fields in the publishing industry. So a press that takes several eighteenth-nineteenth century art history books did not necessarily see South Asia as being part of eighteenth-nineteenth century art history or a publisher who was interested in South Asian studies had to be convinced that art history is a field that would be of relevance or that would have a much wider readership. So there are ways in which one then slips through these cracks. So, while I had a lot of interest in the book - I actually had three presses that were going for the book and there was a press in place when I submitted the manuscript for the AHS book prize - one way or the other things kept on not materializing and the book was not being sent for reviews as it was coming up against these kind of compartments and these modes of defining and boxing one's work and narrative. This was a learning experience but it was also incredibly ironic because my work in this book is extremely interdisciplinary. My work in this book is very much questioning the modes in which we bifurcate archives, the modes in which we bifurcate genres, the modes in which we don't ask certain questions of certain fields. So the recognition by the AHS prize brought in a modest subvention but it brought in a certain kind of recognition at a time where three presses were thinking whether they should take the book or not.

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And then once I had the prize, I think they had reached their own conclusions of being, perhaps taking the book, being on the edge. But then they prioritized, they all wanted it, and I could go with the press that I felt could do the most justice with the book and with its art and with the production of the art which I saw as absolutely integral to the arguments that I was making.

Knuppel: I think you raise such important points about the publishing process and also about how AHS, you know, supports making scholarship happen - the creation of

scholarship from the research through the creation of the book. And one thing - thank you for kind of signposting the dissertation to book Workshop, which, if anyone's unfamiliar, AIIIS hosts a dissertation-to-book workshop every year at the Madison conference; this past year in 2020 it was held virtually but nevertheless mentors and books [fellows] with their dissertations met to work on the next steps; how do you start taking the dissertation and moving it into a new genre? I've heard only good things about that process so thank you for reminding us all that that's also something available to to the to participate with AIIIS - but then coming to the dissertation-to-book process I think, you know, being a recent grad myself, when you're knee deep in the dissertation the last thing that you're thinking about are the hoops and obstacles and colonialist kind of gatekeeping of the publishing pipeline.

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I think that you raise such important points, Dr. Khera, about how difficult these things are and how they are not straightforward and it's not something that you often receive mentorship about during your PhD career. It's something that you may receive or may not receive mentorship from an advisor but the publishing landscape is almost kind of a trial-by-fire almost I feel like for junior scholars and this is their first time going through the process. And it's interesting you note how the AIIIS prize being for a manuscript specifically, not for a published book, actually helps to support early career scholars in finding their place in this landscape and being able to make waves with new forms of work with that extra support. I think that that's really important for those folks to know who might be entering into this stage or who may already be looking at this publishing landscape and wondering, you know, "how do I go forward? what does that look like?" And thank you for kind of outlining that.

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Also, it's an excellent way to segue, kind of, into talking about the book prize categories themselves, you know, what are they and what impact they make on the field that they cover? And so, just so everyone knows, every year AIIIS awards two prizes for the best unpublished book manuscript on an Indian subject. The awards are the Edward Cameron Dimock Junior prize in the Indian Humanities and the Joseph W. Elder prize in the Indian social sciences. Now only Junior Scholars who have received the PhD within the last eight years are eligible and this must be the first book by that author. A prize committee determines the yearly winners and then the prize includes a subvention, which Dr. Khera mentioned, of \$2,500 for the press publishing the manuscript. And now, Dr. Hutton, as a book prize committee member can you tell us a little bit about the categories and about the book prize selection process?

[0:20:38-0:21:50]

Hutton: Sure. First, call me Deborah please and thank you so much for including me in this conversation. It's a wonderful conversation and I'm excited to be a part of it. So as you just mentioned there are two categories one for the humanities and one for the social sciences. It's one committee that reads all of the manuscripts that are submitted for consideration, whether they're humanities or social science. Most of the time it's clear which ones, which category they'll fall into but occasionally we do have a little bit of wiggle room because some history manuscripts can be considered either humanities or social science. In any case, the committee members read all of the submissions and the committee itself is comprised of scholars from a variety of disciplines. The chair of the committee tries his or her best to ensure that as many different disciplines are represented as possible and that the people on the committee come from a variety of institutions, primarily research universities. I think I'm one of the few that's on the committee or that has served on the committee, at least when I was on it, that was from an undergraduate institution.

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But there's definitely a range of Interests, experiences, and expertise on the committee which helps to ensure a balanced outcome. The process itself is pretty fluid. We start by each choosing a few manuscripts we want to read and then we sort of virtually pass them around. One thing that has struck me during my time on the committee is how strong the pool of potential prize winners is. This, on the one hand, makes our job difficult. I often wish there was more than two prizes to give out. At the same time, though, it's really exciting and energizing to see the quality of scholarship that's being produced right down the field of South Asian studies. And I think that is what I enjoy the most about being on the committee was just seeing all of these amazing manuscripts, most of which go on to be published, and it's exciting to read them in this early form and then see what they turn out like when they're finally published.

Knuppel: What kind of impact or significance to the prizes and the awarded books have in their respective fields and on India studies more broadly?

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Hutton: The significance of this prize is that it's awarded pre-publication. There are a number of other book prizes that are awarded post-publication from different groups but this is the only one that I know of that's pre-publication. And I think that that raises its

impact and, in the ways that Dipti mentioned, is also I think important to recognize that it's one piece of this larger AIIS support of Junior Scholars. That it's part of a holistic effort to mentor and to push through a new generation of scholars studying India and that all of it together really raises the quality. So that gets at what I said before. I think the reason why they're so many high-quality book manuscripts coming out right now is because of all of this work that AIIS does from the junior fellowships onward, the PhD dissertation-to-book workshop, etc.

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And so I think that these days often times the people who are submitting their manuscripts already actually have a publishing deal but what the prize it does is it raises the profile of their books and so it makes them more apt to get other prizes or other subventions. Dipti mentioned how expensive it is to publish art history books. There are other subvention pots of money that our historians can apply for and getting this recognition then makes them more likely to get some of those other grants or subventions as well. So, success begets more success.

Knuppel: I think that that's really important to point out and really parallels how the AIIS kind of Fellowship support experiences is cumulative as well as. You know, with all of this discussion of the book prize it's a great time to actually jump into the book itself. I'm excited to hear you all kind of take a deep dive into the themes of the book and what this book really brings to the field. So at this point I'd like to hand things off to Deborah to guide us in discussion with Dr. Khera about her book, the process of writing, and some of the important themes that run through this work.

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Hutton: Thank you. So Dipti, first, congratulations on the prize. I think I've said to you before but I want to say it publicly here. Congratulations. It's very deserved and well-earned. *The Place of Many Moods* is a wonderful book and, you know, the amount of work that went into this book is evident when you read it and specifically with regard to the range of archives and sources that you consulted which leads to my very first question for you which is that *The Place of Many Moods* is interdisciplinary, incredibly interdisciplinary in terms of the range and number of resources it tackles and that was in fact one of the things that really impressed the prize election committee about your manuscript, was this interdisciplinary approach. So can you talk a bit more about that, maybe why you adopted it? Or did it come out of your training? Was it conscious on your part or is it sort of subconsciously how you approach the material?

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Khera: Thank you, Deborah. Thanks for asking me this question. Thanks for reading the book at various stages. So, to talk about this interdisciplinary aspect, let me just briefly talk about the category of the mood of a place because that is the category this book tracks, right? So, the starting point of the book or the starting point of the research what got me hooked what I started tracing was this artistic shift that we see around circa 1700, when painters hailing from the city of Udaipur expand the size of their canvas, of their paintings, and shift the subjects, and they start making much paintings that are significantly larger in scale than portraits, illustrated manuscripts that could be held in a single hand, and they represent the courtly worlds and cities of their kings, various sacred landscapes of the gods in the city but also in the world beyond the city, their idolized worlds of the gods, bazaars with bustling merchants, pilgrims, craftsmen, and so on. So you see that they specialize in representing the sensorial, embodied experience of a place that's a certain kind of admiration that is built in these works though the few who've been to Udaipur are perhaps amongst, you know, have been smitten by the place in similar ways. You know, it's a city that was established as the capital of the regional court of Mewar in 1559. It's a city that's built around lakes. It's built in the Aravalli valley.

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And what one finds is that the early modern painters are the first ones to give visual form their enchantment with the valley's sustaining lakes and flowing streams and so on. So, this is the starting point of the book and it's this shift that is what got me hooked in the first place and trying to understand that. I figured that Udaipur painters emerge as experts in devising these imaginative ways to visualize historical moods of their place. And to do that they mined the aesthetics of idealized emotions - I'll talk more about this in a bit - they also turned to the endearing natural and built environment that is around them. They turn to ephemeral atmospheres and celebrated seasons. So what these works evoke, what I was able to track, are these powerfully immersive and politically contingent conceptions of a place's *bhāv*, moods, feel, or emotion. Now this is a category, if you're talking about *bhāv*, which is recognized within premodern aesthetics by both poets, by intellectuals, since the third century. It's a word that encompasses moods, emotions, feelings. And what Udaipur's painters do is they expand the conceptualization of *bhāv* on visual terms, rendering the moods of the material world around them. In order to understand this work that they were doing, how were they expanding the work of *bhāv* on visual terms, I turned to regional literary culture that was contemporaneous, that attested that the intellectual thinking around describing the

emotions of a place was rich. It had developed by this time by various poets who deployed an intensely sensorial lens to describe the vistas, architecture, the places, the seasons, the cities, creating these seductive worlds around them within literary devotional practices that grew up on cross-cultural idioms from Muslim, Hindu, Jain literary devotional practices and a variety of linguistic registers within the various vernaculars of North Indian Hindi, Braj Bhasha, Gujarati, Urdu, and so on.

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These literary works of course were in conversation with much deeper classical traditions in Sanskrit and Persian poetry as well. So one aspect of trying to understand the conception of *bhāv* of course took me in the direction of literature. When I went to these works of literature, it's not that I was looking for a direct line of connection between literature and painting. I did not necessarily, I did not go looking for that and neither did I find that there was a direct translation project that was going on over there but there were these intermedial parallels that were in there in how the mood of a place was something that was being emphasized in the work to tell about a place, to tell about the time, to think in terms of what a particular historical time was, what a place was. So in a way, to understand these paintings, which were enigmatic, which enchanted me, I found that I had to dig deeper into what was depicted to find a trajectory on pictorial terms but I had to constantly step beyond the pictorial to understand that why was depictions of the moods of a place given so much importance in these paintings. To kind of go back to one aspect of your question that fosters something intuitive as I went to this variety of sources, it was not entirely intuitive per se but it was intuitive in the sense where I felt that any single source or digging into any particular singular medium was not getting me any answers and it's took me much longer in the process of the writing of the book to realize that that is the work of moods, right?

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Moods are very difficult to capture. Moods are very difficult to historicize. To research the effect of moods is something that is very very difficult as well. So it became clear to me much later in the process of writing this book that the arguments in some ways of the book and the conception and the understanding of the moods of a place as a category is something that is addressing these histories of aesthetics, histories of affect, histories of painting places on paper, of building exceptional place, of politics, of literature, of religion, of the ecologist to which painters are responding and the moods of a place, the painted moods of a place in some ways, emerges between these various histories and is made to do a lot of work in between these various histories, right?. Like it's made to do a lot of work in making certain kinds of worlds feel alive on paper but

what I figured was that in that process, the work that artworks were being made to do was also to cohere certain communities, to cohere a certain group of people on land, to make certain kind of historical memories, to claim certain kinds of territories.

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Hutton: I loved what you said when you said moods are difficult to capture and to historicize that because they emerge from between histories and that's the work that they do - that they cohere things - so you had to use a variety of sources in order to get at that information. That is a very compelling and clear way to talk about the way that interdisciplinarity works in your subject, in your work. And, you know, I think that, again, just hearing you talk about it again, it speaks to how much work that you did to do this research but also the richness that it brings to your analysis. The other thing that struck me about what you said is that you know you started with these paintings, you started with the object, these paintings that were beautiful, captivating, bigger, and there is this shift. You wanted to understand them. Around 1800 there's a shift, you wanted to understand it, and then the path that you took, this interdisciplinary path, expansive path, was about understanding them. And I was thinking about that. I was thinking that that's such a great description of what interdisciplinarity is that each of us starts at our disciplinary starting point, right?

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If you're a historian it might be a historical source. If you study dance it might be a particular dance. And then drive to understand that. We reach out and look at all of these different types of evidence but what you do well, what marks I think a successful interdisciplinary project, is that you treat each source in the way that it needs to be treated. You take it seriously rather than trying to just use it for your own ends. So to that end, you know, I think a lot of people who aren't art historians want to use art objects, in the same way that you use literary subjects, and I wondered if you had any tips for working with objects because at the end of the day as interdisciplinary as your book is it's all so clearly an art history book.

Khera: That is a great question because I may actually contradict what I have said about interdisciplinarity until now because I did not start with this project as an art historian. And that's something that may come as a surprise to you and perhaps to some readers of the book as well. I came to this project in a very circuitous way and I was actually not very comfortable with working with objects and with an interdiscipline of art history as I was trying to find this project in my dissertation, as a dissertation project.

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So perhaps a little bit of a detour over here may be productive since you brought up the question of how scholars may want to use visual sources and how we all, when we do interdisciplinary work, in some ways, how we are always working at certain limits of our training. So I actually got interested in looking more at visual materials, spacial cultures in the eighteenth century when I was completing my master's in museum anthropology at Columbia. And then I was doing this masters that came from a very specific interest in public history, in heritage landscapes, in thinking about history museums and not art museums. I was not drawn to art museums as much when I came to Columbia to do this particular masters. The project that I pursued at the end of this masters, or the kinds of things I was trying to think about, was coming out of work work that I had done in architectural documentation, in questions of conservation in Udaipur, living in Udaipur for a year, year and a half, before I pursued this masters. And so, in working with conservation architects, urban conservators, and so on, the museum anthropology program gave me the tools and time to think about heritage versus history, material culture and cultural landscapes as understood from the fields of anthropology and archaeology. It also brought me essentially to the role of nineteenth century histories and historiographies in framing Rajasthan's landscapes as tourist destinations - how the question of Orientalism, orientalized histories, specific narratives, how those were entangled. When I was trying to research some of those narratives that were playing out within the contemporary spaces in Rajasthan and how it was taking me back to some of these nineteenth century narratives, how I was learning the tools to do that kind of historical work, if you will, with historians, with historical anthropologists, and so on. And so, in the process my interest became more historical and I applied to PhD programs. In fact, I applied to PhD programs in art history at Columbia, architecture at Berkeley, anthropology at Chicago, so the interdisciplinary question that you were asking earlier, I can go into that from a variety of angles but all I can say is that I decided to pursue the PhD in art history but it took me some time from anthropology, from using anthropology when I came into art history, to feel at home in the discipline, to feel that I could own the discipline.

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So a lot of my questions in a way were coming from being introduced to why, you know, 18th century history is the interesting place to be, is where certain questions might lie. And because I was coming then from this interdisciplinary training, if you will, I did not in that sense necessarily see that I had to go and look only at a visual archive or I had to only look at certain specific mediums. In that sense I did not feel bound to that and that was also partly, I would say, the discomfort of being in a PhD in art history when I

initially started my program at Columbia because every discipline has its own gatekeeping, has its own margins, has its own boundaries within which they want to train you and I was not coming trained as an art historian at an undergraduate level so it took me time to get comfortable with both owning the discipline but also finding that my motivations or my questions of what I was looking after need not be circumscribed by just one kind of an archive or one kind of a medium. And this brings me back to actually what we were talking about earlier, that if one aspect of the book is about then tracing these painted moods of a place, Udaipur painters and how they expand this category on pictorial terms, that it's impossible or I think that you cannot make sense of any of this unless you historicize it and it's in historicizing it that I realized that the story that I'm after or what drove me to these report artifacts in the first place was finding the place for many moods or finding the place for other possible moods of the 18th century.

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So in the 18th century as a well-established historiography, if one is thinking of the long 18th century from the perspective of the subcontinent, we are thinking of the time period from around the 1680s/1690s to 1830s. That is the years of the decentralization of the Mughals, the death of Aurangzeb, 1830s the time by which certain forms of colonial economy were in place in most of northern and western India for sure and which eventually led to the establishment of the British Colonial state. So in this time period from around the 1700s to the 1830s for the British, as is well known, the mood of the period was one of decline, desolation, decadence, princely hedonism and a place that was then in the dire need of rescue by the British. And the visuals that help tell the story within the Orientalist archives of India's 18th century decline were picturesque landscapes by many artists - William Hodges was one of the well-known artists - which were overtaken, which were ruins that were overtaken by trees and foliage that were participating in another kind of tradition of aesthetic moods where moods of fear, moods of contemplation, certain kinds of sublime moods were elevated. And in the context of, and several scholars have written very much more eloquently about this than me, these kinds of landscapes and moods as they were applied to the environs in India, you had the making of a specific kind of an Indian picturesque which spoke to this idea of decline. And so one of my questions was just as scholars through the historical literary archive were finding that there wasn't necessarily any kind of overarching artistic cultural decline, you had different kinds of political systems and affiliations and communities that were coming into place.

[0:47:05-0:49:15]

That what was happening within the artistic archive, within the urban archive and we certainly know that within the context of the 18th century it's not just Udaipur but it is across northern, western, southern India, that as you have different kinds of political formations that are taking ground, different kinds of control loyalties, different kinds of personal friendships, different kinds of representations that are taking shape in the late-seventeenth century at the grounds for both politics and culture had shifted by this time. Moghul authority was largely restricted to its capital in Delhi and you had various court cultures flourishing like in the new city of Jaipur that was built. Lucknow was imagined in distinctly local and urban ways through their painting, poetry, and cartography, and city building. And there were ways in which each of these localized cultures were having very specific conversations with deeper histories and with the place and environment around them and amongst painters and amongst various practitioners of various kinds of arts. So it's within this kind of a political context that we see in Udaipur as well that painters and patrons led by immersing the second turn to their city and it's not as if they completely discard other modes of creating portraits or genealogical histories and so on but there is a very significant shift in which that this time kind of genre of larger topographical paintings gains ground. And so there's this very kind of specific looking at the environment around them that takes place.

[0:49:16-0:50:44]

So there are different moods at play in this time period and in some ways the book is tracking the moods of a place and it is trying to find the place of many of these moods in the 18th century to productively think about the work of moods. There's actually a conversation to be had across these archives to think through these categories from various vantage points.

Hutton: Thank you, that was wonderful. There're so many things that you said in there that I could kind of draw on or reflect on. For example, you were talking about this idea of emotional bonding and that you didn't just want the art to be seen as a response to politics but also being productive in its own right. And you know thinking about this and thinking about the long 18th century what we know was going on in India but also specifically about Udaipur as a place there's an interesting kind of question that I have for you that's about this sort of tension that I'm thinking about when I think about your book, which is on the one hand it feels so specific to Udaipur - like I like that you said several times that you know that the artist with the patrons were smitten with Udaipur, you were smitten with Udaipur.

[0:50:45-0:52:08]

I think if anyone who's travelled there, that's a feeling that you get when you go there, right, that it's such a beautiful city with the lake and the palaces and I think all of us if you're even a little bit familiar with Indian painting of this era you can visualize in your mind those early 18th century paintings of the Udaipur palace, with the ruler and all of his courtiers and sometimes dancers, those kind those kind of bird's-eye views in of the White Palace we can all imagine that - so there's a way in which what you're talking about feel so perfectly suited to Udaipur but there's also a way in which as you just explained as well that this shift this kind of decentralization and regionalization and the need to identify places as having their own character really works across India during the time because of the decline of the Mughals, because of the rise of regional centres like Lucknow and Jaipur as you mentioned. So I have two sort of questions for you. One is, do you see this work that you did as being very specific to Udaipur or do you see it as an approach that someone could take to another region of India during the 18th century? Or even beyond India?

[0:52:10-0:53:31]

Because if you think globally during this period within, for example, European art, this rise of the sublime or the rise of pleasure or if I think about, you know, even Ottoman art during this period there's kind of the same shift of this idea of them, you know like, albums that show Istanbul and all of those kinds of things. So do you see it - my first question for you is, do you see this sort of as specific to Udaipur or as having a sort of larger significance? The second question is about your own relationship with Udaipur and I'm asking this because I know that there's a story there about your first trip to Udaipur so I kind of want to ask you about that as well.

Khera: Thank you. That's such a fascinating question and it's so, both in terms of thinking about the various localizations that are taking place within the sub-continent but also localizations of pleasure, of appreciation of certain environs, of enhancing of certain moods of places that are taking place globally and what is the conversation to be had over there with this tour de force that I see coming from Udaipur's painters, right?

[0:53:32-0:56:05]

So to address first in terms of the 18th century question within the subcontinent, I think as several scholars have shown, for example, with regards to a variety of mediums, that there is a specific regionalization that is in place at this time in the subcontinent and I would say it's not just a certain regionalization but there's a specific localization of urban cultures, localization of belonging to a place in terms of what say artists from Kishangarh do as well, right? There's this elevation of being on the terrace next to the

lake but your protagonists are not necessarily always the courtly men and women but are Radha and Krishna. And so you have scholars like Heidi Powell, Francesca Orsini, who've been thinking through multiple localizations and I think that is where the conversation is to be had. That there is a certain motivation at this time for using localizations to create a certain sense of belonging, to create a sense of territoriality, to create a certain kind of intellectual culture, to create certain kinds of artistic cultural claims through it. That does not mean that there aren't conversations that are taking place between these various localized cultures and I talk about some of them in the book and many of them, as I talk about in the conclusion, is that these are important conversations waiting for us to be had. But in order for us to have those conversations we first need to be able to evaluate each of these localized investments into which, you know, patrons, artists, political men, communities of connoisseurs, right, are pouring so much into it, are competing with each other to become part of this sphere.

[0:56:06-0:58:32]

It's part of how they are building their cultural and political capital. And that brings us to the transregional 18th century connection as well. So I have an investment in this and I actually, just as I was completing this book based on conversations with my colleague in 18th century art in my department, Meredith Martin, who works on 18th century France, who looks at spaces of pleasure that are patronized by women in France and so on, we actually embarked on a project of teaching in places and empires of pleasure, cultures of pleasure across the 18th century. And we looked at some of these kinds of artifacts that you have in your mind say from Istanbul and so on, where you have transregionally this kind of emphasis on moods, on emotions, on pleasures of a place to create certain cultures of connoisseurship, aesthetics, bonding, communities, and so on. So again, what I think is interesting, what I think it brings to our historiography in some ways, if we are thinking about the 18th century broadly, is that there are important connections in place, right, people who are travelling across long geographies, to think about cross-cultural ideas, to think about them with regards to the kind of colonization that follows and the shifts that take place in territoriality, in empire at this time. But what we also have think about equally are these kinds of conceptual, aesthetic, epistemic categories, artifacts that are emergent in the 18th century, which may give us evidence of certain kinds of connected histories but which may provide us certain ways to think about conceptions comparatively, to think about certain affinities between these conceptions of moods and pleasures.

[0:58:33-1:01:19]

So what I am trying to say is that, yes, we should look at these different localizations within the region and see what are the, what might be the connected points, what might be the comparative points, what might not be the comparative points, what might be very local to a place. And I would say that that would be the way for us to think about it in transregional terms as well and in a way it would enable us to think about a model for how we teach transregional histories of art.

I do want to answer your question about the story of Udaipur that you asked because that story actually, for some reason, got edited out of my book, out of its acknowledgements, and it's again something that I could have never imagined that this is where that story would end. And who knows? Maybe there's more to come. So I first visited the city in the mid-1990s as a student of architecture. I was - my first undergraduate degree was in architecture at the Sir JJ College of Architecture in Bombay - and I was in my second year of architecture and students of architecture will know that there is this annual competition - I think it still takes place organized by the National Association of Students of Architecture (NASA) - where you have schools all over the country who look at a particular design problem together. So the design problem that year was about how to make a hotel more environment-friendly and my team at JJ actually chose the Lake Palace Hotel at Udaipur, the same Jag Niwas Palace that was built in the mid-eighteenth century, which is at the center of chapter three of my book, which looks at the mood of pleasure and the work that the mood of pleasure does in this time period for creating a certain kind of politics, for creating a certain kind of enchantment, for sort of holding a place together. So the same Jag Niwas Palace is now the world famous Taj Lake Palace Hotel, again an image that pops up in peoples' minds when they think of Udaipur, whether they have gone inside or not. And that was my first visit to the city as we were a team of five students who were on a very meager budget.

[1:01:20-1:04:01]

We could hardly be in the city for two days and we were the students in rags inside this luxury hotel and nobody wanted to see us. But the problem we took for ourselves was that this was a historic building. It was converted into this luxury hotel. What was changed in the process or what might one do in adapting a building like this for it to become a luxury hotel? And we had these ideas. We actually won the trophy that year - not that I think anyone at the Taj was interested in our ideas then or now. But that was my first introduction to Udaipur, my first introduction to Rajasthan. That's how I went back to the place for a lot of my research and as I followed a certain path from architecture to being drawn more into research to then working at the museum in Udaipur and then coming to the museum anthropology program and then going more

into art history. So yeah I have had trouble in containing myself within a discipline and it, in a way, comes back to the book and the category of the moods of a place. Another last anecdote that I would want to end with is that, as I was researching for this category, as I was looking for genres of depiction of place, of talking about experience of place, of the responding to places - how were places given meaning in the pre-nineteenth century archive, which motivated my questions - another genre that I came across was that of long painted invitation letter scrolls which were commissioned by merchants, by Jain merchants of a particular city, to invite monks to arrive in their city the following monsoon and set up their domains over there. And so these painted letters were then praises, they were urban praises so that you could enchant a monk to take that journey over foot in the months just before the monsoon breaks out, when it's extremely hot, to take that journey and to arrive in a city and with him would arrive other merchants, other monks, lay men and women. The entire economy of a city would change.

[1:04:02-1:06:22]

And, you know, these are not... it's not that these artifacts are not known but nobody has studied them with a lot of seriousness within art history and it was actually finding an artifact like that, where I saw what Udaipur painters did with a genre like that. They completely transformed it, created a 72-foot long painted invitation letter which maps a principal street of the city and praises it as the most flourishing place in the 1830s just as the colonial archive was saying that the economy of this place is completely dead. It was that kind of an object which ultimately enabled me to understand that moods of a place is a conception to contend with because it is being circulated across genres, because it's being made to do a certain kind of work. So in a way, yeah, I would say that stepping out of the bounds of disciplines, stepping out of the bounds of artifacts, perhaps coming to histories and objects that you're not entirely trained to tackle - I wasn't trained from the beginning or trained extensively when I took on this project as well as a historian of Indian painting - is not a bad thing. It does mean that when you will handle these sources, you will make mistakes. It does mean that things will slip through the cracks in looking at a variety of sources and so you're putting forward one plausible history, one plausible story of these kinds of conceptions. But I would say it's worth it. It means that you will never be satisfied and I don't think that's a bad thing.

[1:06:23-1:07:40]

Hutton: For sure. Thank you so much. This has been such a pleasure.

Knuppel: Well, that's our time for today. A grateful thank you to both Dr. Dipti Khera, Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, and Dr. Deborah Hutton, Professor of Art History at the College of New Jersey, for guiding us through Dr. Khera's new book *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's 18th Century*. *The Place of Many Moods* is now available through Princeton University Press and links to the book and publisher websites will be in the podcast description.

Khera: Thank you for this excellent opportunity. I enjoyed having this conversation and I look forward to many more. Thanks to you, thanks to AIIS, and thanks to Deborah for giving me this opportunity.

Hutton: Thank you to you both and thank you to AIIS as well. It was really fun.

Knuppel: And thank you for listening. For more information on all of the American Institute of Indian Studies programs and fellowships visit www.indiastudies.org.