Public access description

The Harivamsa, "Genealogy of Hari" was a continuation of the great Sanskrit text, the Mahabharata. The Mughal emperor Akbar ordered it to be translated into Persian so that it could be read by non-Hindus. In this illustration to the text done in about 1590, Krishna sweeps down on the bird Garuda to triumph over Indra, the lord of the gods, riding on the white elephant Airavata, watched by gods and celestial beings. The swirling fabrics, billowing clouds, and the boat in the lower part of the scene, are all the result of the influence on Mughal court artists of European paintings. The original manuscript was dispersed and some pages were remounted for later albums, as here. The borders were probably added in Lucknow in the 18th century.

Descriptive line

Painting, Harivamsa, Krishna in combat with Indra, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, Mughal, probably Lahore, ca. 1590

Physical description

Painting, in opaque watercolour and gold on paper, the battle between Krishna and Indra is shown to be taking place in the sky above a landscape strongly influenced by European painting. Gods and celestial beings hover in the billowing clouds. Krishna swoops down on his bird Garuda to attack Indra on his white elephant.

Dimensions

Height: 43.5 cm, Width: 32 cm

Museum number

IS.5-1970

Object history note

Bequeathed by the Hon. Dame Ada Macnaghten, 1969.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16759/krishna-and-indra-painting-unknown/