Drawing - Three men from Amritsar jail working at a carpet loom

Object: Drawing
Place of origin: Amritsar (made)
Date: 1870 (made)
Artist/Maker: Lockwood Kipling, John, born 1837 - died 1911 (artist)
Materials and Techniques: Pencil, pen and wash on paper
Museum number: 0929:33/(IS)

Public access description
This scene of carpet weavers was sketched by the English artist John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) in 1870, probably in the jail at Amritsar, in the Panjab. Kipling was a potter in Staffordshire before studying art in the Schools at South Kensington. In 1865 he went to India to become Architectural Sculptor at the Bombay School of Art. From 1875 to 1893 he lived in Lahore, and was Principal of the Mayo School of Art, and Curator of the Central Museum, in the city. He was fascinated by the vast range of skills to be seen in India and made a large number of detailed drawings documenting them. The jail at Amritsar, about 30 km from Lahore, was a major centre of carpet weaving in the region in the late 19th century, when the commercial carpet-weaving industry was in decline. Kipling has included tools such as the beater for compacting the wefts (on the left of the left-hand weaver), a short knife with a curled blade for cutting off the excess wool when the knots are tied on the warps, and the large scissors used to trim the pile when the rug is complete (both behind the right-hand weaver).

The drawing was acquired by the Indian Museum in London and was transferred with other parts of the museum's collections to the South Kensington Museum (later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum) in 1879.

John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) was born in Yorkshire but as his career developed became an established artist and scholar, and in 1865 settled in India with his family. He became professor of architectural sculpture at the JeeJeebhay School of Art in Bombay and in 1882 curator of the Lahore Museum. During his career JL Kipling was a member of the Department of Art and Science at the Victoria and Albert Museum and was also involved in the museum's decoration. John Lockwood Kipling was the father of Rudyard Kipling.

Descriptive line
Drawing, from a series of drawings of craftspeople of northwest India, pencil, pen and wash on paper, John Lockwood Kipling, Amritsar 1870

Physical description
Drawing of three weavers, probably all convicts from Amritsar jail, seated at a loom to produce pile carpets. The woollen yarns hang from a string above the loom. Beside the man on the right lies a large pair of scissors for trimming the pile. Next to the weaver on the left lies a comb for beating in the weft to make the fabric compact.

Dimensions
Height: 26.2 cm, Width: 35.6 cm

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Object history note
John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) was born in Yorkshire and began his career as a designer and architectural sculptor. In the early 1860s, he joined the South Kensington Museum (as the V&A was then known) producing decoration for the new V&A buildings with terracotta architectural sculpture under the direction of Godfrey Sykes.

In 1865, Kipling left London for India and spent ten years in Bombay (now known as Mumbai) to teach at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art and became fascinated by Indian crafts. He was commissioned by the Indian Government to prepare a series of studies of crafts people and he visited the artisans in their workshops during a tour in 1870 that included Simla, Amritsar, Delhi and Lucknow.

In 1872 on a visit to Khamgaon in Berar he became fascinated by the process of cotton cultivation and produced a series of studies from life showing seeds being sown, filling gunny bags and farmers taking cotton to the market.

Kipling was a supporter of the Arts and Crafts movement in England which sought to re-establish the importance of good craftsmanship and design in the face of rapid industrialisation. His beliefs strongly influenced his teaching and when he was appointed Principal of the Mayo School of Art (today Pakistan’s National College of Arts) and curator of the adjoining museum in Lahore, he promoted the study of traditional crafts.

John Lockwood Kipling was the father of Rudyard Kipling, author of The Jungle Book and Kim.

Transferred from the India Museum in 1879. 1880 Register Entry: [Room 8. On The Wall.] '0929. TWENTY-EIGHT FRAMES, glazed, each containing two sketches, by J. L. Kipling, of the School of Art, Bombay, illustrating the craftsmen of North-western India. 1 to 56'