(Los Angeles, October 18, 2010)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents India’s Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow—the first major international exhibition devoted to the cosmopolitan culture of the northern Indian court of Lucknow, and the refined artistic production of the city’s multiethnic residents and artists. On view from December 12, 2010 through February 27, 2011, the exhibition will include almost 200 artworks: European oil paintings, watercolors, and prints; Indian opaque watercolor paintings generally made for albums, vintage photography, textiles, and garments, and a range of decorative art objects including metalwork, glassware, weaponry, and jewelry. Organized by Stephen Markel, LACMA curator of South & Southeast Asian art and department head, and Tushara Bindu Gude, associate curator, The Art of Courtly Lucknow will not only present the unique artistic traditions of Lucknow, but will also provide a framework for understanding the history of this extraordinary region and the nature of India’s colonial history and memory.

“Lucknow was the nexus point for one of the great dramas of history,” said Markel. “Not only were starkly diverse cultures competing with immense riches and political domination at stake, but the dynamic lead characters
and brilliant aesthetic achievements all made for a deeply poignant era and vital artistic legacy.”

Lucknow was the capital of Awadh (a province in the Mughal Empire located in the present-day Indian state of Uttar Pradesh), and has become identified with the broader region and culture. From the mid-eighteenth century until the establishment of formal British rule in India in 1858, Lucknow overshadowed Delhi—the capital of the Mughal dynasty—to become the cultural center of northern India. Indian artists, poets, and courtiers flocked to Awadh seeking security and patronage, as Delhi suffered an extended period of unrest beginning in 1739. European artists, travelers and political agents were also soon lured to the region, seduced by tales of the wealth, opulence, and the generosity of Lucknow's rulers (nawabs) and by the beauty of the city itself. The dynamic interaction between Indians and Europeans, the interplay between their respective tastes and traditions, and the hybrid lives led by many of Lucknow’s residents are explored in the exhibition and accompanying publication.

The Art of Courtly Lucknow examines this interaction against the broader narrative of India’s colonial history. Following the Indian Uprising of 1857 (also known as the Great Mutiny, Rebellion, or First Indian War of Independence) and the consolidation of British power in India, Lucknow’s prestige decreased dramatically. It continued, however, to be an important center for the production of luxury objects and a key destination for European and Indian visitors. British and Indian artworks of the late nineteenth century indicate the different ways in which the image and memory of Lucknow were deployed. Many works chart the loss of diversity and the fixing of national identities and aspirations, but some also recall Lucknow’s past glory. In the popular culture of modern-day India, Lucknow has an ambiguous history. It evokes nostalgia for a lost past but is also presented as a source of national and cultural pride.

Exhibition Organization
The exhibition consists of twelve sections that will be arranged in ten galleries. Sections are organized chronologically and thematically in
order to convey both the narrative of Lucknow’s history and the
development of its artistic traditions.

Gallery I.  Introduction
Gallery II.  The Emergence of a Sovereign State
Gallery III.  The Rulers of Awadh: Patrons and Kings
Gallery IV.  The Allure of Faizabad and Lucknow
Gallery V.  Religious Architecture at Lucknow
Gallery VI.  Courtly Opulence
Gallery VII.  Part I: Major General Claude Martin and the
Cosmopolitan Culture of Lucknow
Gallery VII.  Part II: European Collectors of Indian Painting:
Antoine Polier and Richard Johnson
Gallery VIII.  European Collectors and the Emerging Colonial State
Gallery IX.  The Great Uprising of 1857 - 58: European Memories
of Lucknow
Gallery X.  Part I: Artistic Production in Lucknow after the
Great Uprising
Gallery X.  Part II: Courtesans and Courtly Culture: Indian
Memories of Lucknow

The exhibition begins with several key images in the introductory gallery
which suggest the multiple perspectives that informed Lucknow’s history,
culture, and legacy. The two sections that follow introduce the court of
Awadh through Mughal paintings, portraits, photographs by European and
Indian artists, and decorative arts bearing heraldic imagery. Gallery II:  
The Emergence of a Sovereign State locates the historical origins of the
Lucknow court within the structure of the Mughal Empire and describes the
Lucknow rulers’ adoption of Mughal royal prerogatives even as they
asserted their own political independence. Gallery III: The Rulers of
Awadh: Patrons and Kings consists primarily of portraits which introduce
the major rulers of Awadh and highlight their patronage of European
artists, many of whom flocked to India in the late eighteenth century in
the wake of significant political gains made by the English East India
Company.

Gallery IV: The Allure of Faizabad and Lucknow explores the appeal of
Lucknow, particularly its palatial architecture and romantic landscape,
through the eyes of British and Indian artists. The beauty of the city’s
architecture is also evident in the paintings and photographs in Gallery V
which focuses on the Shia Muslim religious monuments built by Lucknow’s ruling elites. Gallery VI: Courtly Opulence showcases the refined cosmopolitan culture of Lucknow through its sumptuous decorative arts. These early sections of the exhibition focus on the fashioning of self-identity by Lucknow’s rulers and also indicate visually the basis for Lucknow’s legendary fame. In addition, the artworks selected for Galleries II through VI articulate the stylistic development of early Lucknow painting and the aesthetic that informed the region’s architectural and decorative art traditions.

The remaining sections of the exhibition examine the mature phase of Lucknow’s history, from the late eighteenth century through the Uprising, and its important cultural legacy. Gallery VII explores the interaction of Indians and Europeans at Lucknow, focusing particularly on the hybrid lifestyles, identities, and patronage of the latter. The artworks comprising the section Major General Claude Martin and the Cosmopolitan Culture of Lucknow highlight the aesthetic pursuits of one of Lucknow’s most significant European residents. The section European Collectors of Indian Painting: Antoine Polier and Richard Johnson focuses on the Indian painting traditions that developed in Awadh, which are described entirely through works collected by two important European connoisseurs. Lucknow's painting traditions are also highlighted in Gallery VIII: European Collectors and the Emerging Colonial State where the broader social and political world that connected various collectors is explored. Sections VII and VIII permit reflection upon the fashioning of elite European identity in India.

Section IX: The Great Uprising of 1857-58: European Memories of Lucknow presents the shift in European attitudes to Lucknow as a result of The Uprising. European paintings and photographs suggest the multiple ways in which the events of the Uprising were imagined by and for a largely British viewing public. The first part of Section X: Artistic Production in Lucknow after the Great Uprising showcases luxury wares that were produced at Lucknow in the late-nineteenth century. Absent royal patronage, these goods were largely consumed by an emerging class of powerful landowners and European visitors. In the Section: Courtesans and
Courtly Culture: Indian Memories of Lucknow, which concludes the exhibition, eighteenth-century Indian and European artworks, nineteenth-century Indian photographs, and Indian films are brought together in order to examine the impact of Lucknow’s refined and highly romanticized courtesan culture upon the city’s legacy.

**Itinerary and Publication**

Following its presentation at LACMA, the exhibition will travel to Musée National des Arts asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, and be on view from April 6, 2011 through July 11, 2011. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated volume of historical and media-based essays by leading international scholars on a broad range of Lucknow’s distinctive humanities, including its renowned literature and music. The publication, together with the exhibition’s thematic and chronological emphases, offers an unparalleled multilayered interpretative approach to Lucknow’s rich corpus of aesthetic achievement.

**Related Public Programming**

**Lecture: The Rise and Fall of Courtly Lucknow: A Courtesan’s Perspective**  
December 11, 3 pm, Brown Auditorium  
Free, no reservations

Courtesans shaped the cuisine, the fashions, the music, the romantic affairs, and the extravagant styles of entertaining and feasting for which the city of Lucknow became famous. They commanded great respect in the court and in society, but also became targets of a colonial regime that brought Lucknow’s courtly existence to an abrupt end. Veena Talwar Oldenburg, Professor of History at the City University of New York and at Baruch College, will examine the rich and complex history of Lucknow’s legendary court through the courtesan’s eyes. Her publications on Lucknow include *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* and *Shaam e Awadh: Writings on Lucknow.*

**Film: The Chess Players**  
December 11, 7:30 pm, Bing Theater  
Tickets: $7 for members, seniors 62+, and students with ID; $10 for nonmembers. Reservations: 323 857-6010

In collaboration with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, LACMA will be screening the restored original print of Satyajit Ray’s *The Chess Players.*
5th Annual Distinguished Lecture on South and Southeast Asian Art Europeans and European Influence in Nawabi Lucknow 1775 – 1856
January 22, 3 pm, Brown Auditorium
Free, no reservations

Lucknow was not only a paradigm of a brilliant, if short-lived Indian kingdom. It was a magnet for foreigners from many parts of the world, but Europeans were to have the most profound influence on its architecture, its amusements, and ultimately its politics. An illustrated lecture by scholar Rosie Llewellyn-Jones who has known the city since the early 1970s and is the editor and author of a number of books on Lucknow including, Portraits in Princely India: 1700-1900 (2008), Lucknow: Then and Now (2006), and A Fatal Friendship - The Nawabs, The British and The City of Lucknow (1999).

Film: Chaudhvin Ka Chand
January 22, 7:30 pm, Bing Theater
Tickets: $7 for members, seniors 62+, and students with ID; $10 for nonmembers. Reservations: 323 857-6010

Dance Performance: Indian Kathak
January 30, 1 pm, Bing Theater
Tickets: $12 non-members, $10 members, seniors, and students.
Reservations: 323 857-6010

Kathak is the classical dance style of North India and one of its major schools (gharanas) developed at Lucknow. Bhairavi Kumar, disciple of Uma Dogra and founder of Nritrodaya Kathak Academy, directs and performs an afternoon of Lucknow Kathak dance.

Lecture: Listening to the Courtesan – The Soundscapes of Pakeezah (1971)
February 6, 2:00 pm, Brown Auditorium
Free, no reservations

Listening to the Courtesan – The Soundscapes of Pakeezah (Dir: Kamal Amrohi, 1971) examines the soundtrack of the highly acclaimed 1971 Hindi film Pakeezah surrounding a Muslim courtesan, Sahibjaan. The discussion will focus on how the film’s ghazals combined with iconic sounds such as those of a train and layered noise reflect Sahibjaan’s complex inner disposition. This is a unique and subjective representation that aligns with the courtesan’s worldview and resists objectification of her position. Aparna Sharma is a filmmaker, film theorist and Assistant Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA.

Urdu Poetry Reading
February 17, 8 pm, Art of the Americas Building
Free, tickets required and available the day of the event

**Music: Concert by Pandit Swapan Chadhuri**
February 24, Time TBD, Bing Theater
Tickets: TBD

Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri is a highly regarded tabla player who was trained in the Lucknow school (gharana). He performs extensively as a soloist and accompanist.

**Andell Family Sundays**
January 9, 16, 23, 30| 12:30–3:30 pm, Los Angeles Times Central Court
Free, no reservations

Artist-led workshops and bilingual gallery tours of the exhibition designed especially for families.

**Public Tours**
Docent-led tours of the exhibition are offered on Mondays at 2 pm and Thursdays at 3 pm starting December 20, 2010 through February 27, 2011.

**Credit**
This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was supported in part by grants from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support was provided by the Southern Asian Art Council.

**About LACMA**
Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography-and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing Transformation project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

**Location and Contact:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

**Hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: noon–8 pm; Friday: noon–9 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 11 am–8 pm; closed Wednesday
General Admission: Adults: $15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: $10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 5 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

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(Left) Style of Mihr Chand (India, active 1759-86), A Partridge and an iris, c. 1765-1775, India, Uttar Pradesh, Faizabad or Lucknow, Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 16.3 x 25.4 cm (image), Museum für Islamische Kunst, Photo © Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany (Inv. I. 4595 fol.17)/Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY (ART407593)

(Right) Muhammad Azam, Portrait of Nasir al-Din Haidar, c. 1830, India, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, Oil on canvas, 36-1/4 x 28-3/8 in. (92.1 x 72.1 cm), Collection Drs. Aziz and Deanna Khan, Photo courtesy Drs. Aziz and Deanna Khan

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Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

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