

# 3 things for the Vogue woman at Met's 'Sultans of Deccan India' exhibit



BY [AARTI VIRANI](#) 28 APRIL 2015

New York City's iconic [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) unveiled its highly anticipated new exhibition—nearly a decade in the making—last week. '[Sultans of Deccan India, 1500-1700: Opulence and Fantasy](#),' on display until July 26, is a dazzling, gem-encrusted ode to the golden age of the south Indian plateau, which was once a melting pot of Persian, Portuguese and Ethiopian influences. Expansive kalamkari tapestries, miniature marble paintings and clusters of ceremonial weapons lend an imperial vibe to the museum's sleek interiors, transporting viewers to an era where imagination was truly unbridled.

Here, Vogue shines the light on three highlights of the exhibit:

### **The Idol's Eye**

Image: Servette Overseas Limited 2014. Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

Though the exhibit is home to a constellation of historic jewels, including the Agra and Shah Jahan diamonds, the showstopper is undoubtedly this brilliant-cut, icy-blue Golconda (which dangles from a Harry Winston necklace)—a staggering 70 carats. While its most recent owner was Imelda Marcos, the notoriously lavish wife of the former president of the Philippines, this stone is rumoured to have once served as the sparkling iris of a Hindu deity in the early 17th century.

### **Armoured Shoes**

Image: Alan Tabor

These gilded steel boots, unlikely survivors from the second half of the 17th century, weren't exactly made for walking. But they were most likely paired with leather socks and worn on the battlefield. The stunning embellishment is a result of the koftagiri technique—an ancient, painstaking craft that involved filing metal surfaces, then hammering on delicate gold leaf. And don't miss the subtle heels, which meant that even powerful Deccan warriors reached for a little assistance in the height department every now and then.

### **Veiled Moon**

Court Dancers - Nilaya Sabnis, Deesha Narichania and Aditi Dhruv from Veiled Moon. Image: Ian Douglas

It isn't all royal artifacts and ancient relics—last Sunday, the Met showcased a contemporary dance performance in conjunction with the Sultans of the Deccan exhibition. Choreographed by acclaimed New York City-based Bharatanatyam dancer, Preeti Vasudevan, the program took inspirational cues from Mah Laqa Bai Chanda, a storied 18th century south Indian courtesan—and a renaissance woman of sorts—who was an empowering combination of soldier, poet, politician and dancer. To up the ante and make it one for the ages, Vasudevan's soulful, reverie-like show was prefaced by a talk from the award-winning author and historian, William Dalrymple.