

#ART AND DEVOTION

Rare 200-year-old Pichwai

'Pichwai Through the Ages: Art and Worship,' a meticulously curated exhibition by ICA Gallery and Darshanam, opened its doors



In a poignant confluence of faith, heritage, and artistic grandeur timed with the auspicious occasion of Jannashanti, the Pink City hosts an extraordinary showcase of divine artistry. Pichwai Through the Ages: Art and Worship,' a meticulously curated exhibition by ICA Gallery and Darshanam, opened its doors on Saturday, bringing to life the timeless reverence for Shrinathji and the rich painterly traditions of Nathdwara through rare, centuries-old masterpieces. The grand inauguration was graced by an illustrious gathering, including Chief Guest Vaishnavacharya Abhinav Goswami, Maharaj of Vrindavan's renowned Shri Radha Raman Temple, Rajiv Arora (Co-founder, Amrapali), distinguished art historian Michelle Crites, alongside ICA's Vijendra Bansal and Abhinav Bansal. The Exhibition displays approximately 70 exquisite artworks drawn from the cherished personal archives of Michelle Crites and Vijendra Bansal. Many of

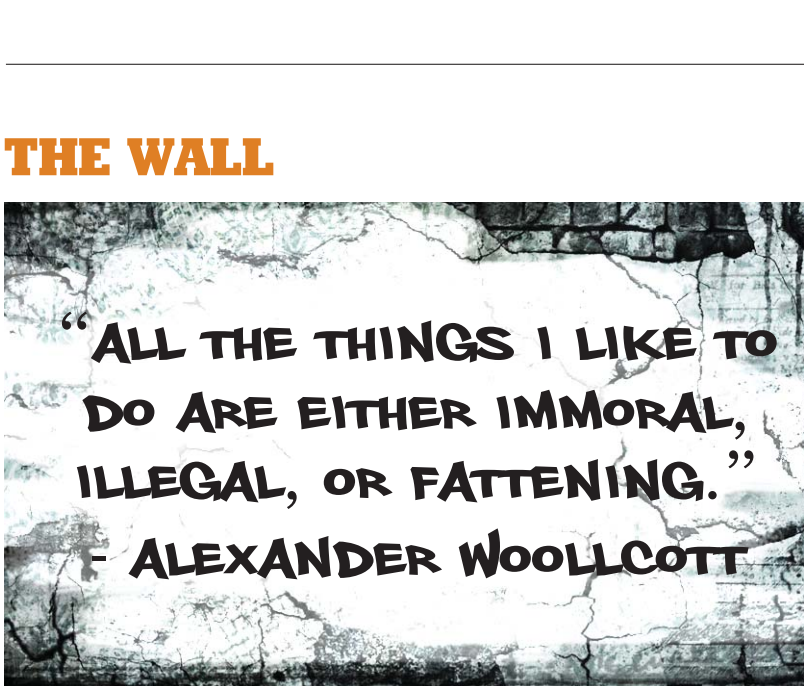


Adapted by Salahuddin Ahmad for Arbit

Like brass and percussion responding to a conductor, the engine began its performance with a blinding sheet of yellow flame and a drum roll. Winter throttled back, slowing the drum and changing the shape and colour of the flame to a gaseous feather of blue that danced around the exhaust pipes and made his face swell and contract as the shadows exploded and died. Winter held a blue flickering hand above his head. He felt the wheels lurch forward as the chocks were removed and he dabbed at the rudder bar so that he could see around the aircraft's nose. There was no brake or pitch adjustment and Winter let her gather speed while keeping the tail skid tight down upon the ground. They took off in a vic three, bumping across frozen ruts in the balding field with only the glare of the exhausts to light their going.

It was easy for Winter; as formation leader he relied on the others to watch his engine and format on him accordingly. At full screaming throttle, they climbed over the trees at the south end of the airfield. A gusty crosswind hit them. Winter banked a wing-tip dangerously close to the tree tops rather than slew into the boy's line of flight. Ginger did the same to avoid his Major. The boy, unused to these heavy operational machines with high-compression engines, found his air-craft almost wrenched from his grasp. He yawned across the trees, a hundred yards from the others, before he put her nose up to regain his position in formation. Close, he must keep close.

Winter spared him only a brief glance over the shoulder between searching the sombre sky for the minuscule dots of other aeroplanes. For by now, the black lid of night had tilted and an orange wedge prised open the eastern horizon.



Winter led the way to the front lines, the others tight against his tail-plane. The first light of the sun revealed a land covered by a grey eiderdown of mist, except where a loose thread of river matched the silver of the sky. Over the front line, they turned south.

Major Winter noted the north wind and glanced back to see Ginger's aeroplane catch the first light of the sun as it bent far enough over the horizon to reach them at fifteen thousand feet above the earth. The propeller blades made a perfect circle of yellow gauze, through which reflections from the polished-metal cowlings winked and wavered as the aeroplanes rose and sank gently on the clear morning air.

Here, on the Arras section of the front, the German and French lines could be clearly seen as careless scrawls in the livid chalk. Near the River Scarpe at Feuchy, Winter saw a constant flicker of artillery shells exploding 'the morning hate.' Pin-heads of pink, only just visible through the mist. Counter-battery fire he guessed, from its concentration some way behind the lines.

He pulled his fur collar as high round his face as it could go, then raised his goggles. The icy wind made his eyes water, but not before he had scanned the entire horizon and banked enough to see below him. He pulled the goggles down again. It was more comfortable, but they acted like blinkers. Already ice had formed in the crevices of his eyes and he felt its pin-pricks like daggers. His nose was numb and he let go of the stick to massage it.

The cavalry officer, Willy, they called him, was staring anxiously at the other two aeroplanes. He probably thought that the banking search was a wing-rocking signal that the enemy was sighted. They read too



many cheap magazines, these kids; but then, so had Winter before his first posting out here: 'Ace of the Black Cross,' 'Flying Dare-Devils,' 'True War Stories.'

Well, now Winter knew true war stories. When old men decided to barter young men for pride and profit, the transaction was called war. It was another Richard Winter who had come to war. An eighteen-year-old child with a scrapbook of cuttings about Blériot and the Wright brothers, a roomful of models which his mother wasn't permitted to dust and thirteen hours of dangerous experiments on contraptions that were bigger, but no more airyworthy, than his dusty models. That Richard Winter was long-since dead. Gone was the gangling boy whose only regret about the war was leaving his mongrel dog. Winter smiled as he remembered remonstrating with some pilots who were using fluffy yellow chicks for target practice on the pistol range. That was before he'd seen men burned alive, or worse, men half-burned alive.

He waved to frightened little Willy who was desperately trying to fly skillfully enough to hold formation on his bad-tempered flight commander. Poor little swine. Two dots almost ahead of them to the south-east. Far below, Ginger had seen them already but the boy wouldn't notice them until they were almost bumping into him. All the new kids were like that. It's not a matter of eyesight, it's a matter of knowledge. Just as a tracker on a safari knows that a wide golden blob in the shadow of a tree at midday is going to be a pride of lions resting after a meal, so in the morning, an upright golden blob in the middle of a plain is a cheetah waiting to make a kill. So at five thousand feet, that near the lines, with shellfire visible, they were going to be enemy two-seaters on artillery observation duty. First, he must be sure that there wasn't a flight of scouts in ambush above them. He looked at the cumulus and decided that it was too far from the two-seater to be dangerous. Brownish-black smoke patches appeared around the planes as the anti-aircraft guns went into action.

Winter raised his goggles. Already, they had begun to mist up because of the perspiration generated by his excitement. He wagged his wings and began to lose height. He headed east to come round behind them from out of the sun.

Five hundred yards: these two

The new boy is in trouble



Honouring Freedom on Liberation Day

celebrated on August 25, Liberation Day marks the historic moment in 1944 when Paris was freed from Nazi occupation during World War II. After four years under German control, the city was liberated by French Resistance fighters alongside the Free French Forces and Allied troops. The day symbolizes the triumph of freedom, resilience, and national pride. Commemorations include military parades, memorial services, and historical reenactments across the city, particularly at the Hôtel de Ville and Place de la Bastille. Liberation Day not only honors the heroes of the past but also reminds future generations of the enduring value of liberty.

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PART:2

#STORIES



Ginger loosed off a short burst of fire to be sure that his guns were not frozen. Winter and the boy did the same. The altitude had rendered him too deaf to hear it as more than a ticking, as of an anxious pulse.

Winter took another careful look around. Flashes of artillery shells were bursting on the ground just ahead of the enemy planes' track. The ground was still awash with blue gloom, although here and there, hillocks and trees were crisply golden in the harsh oblique light of morning. The hedges and buildings threw absurdly long shadows, and a church steeple was bright yellow. Winter now saw that there were four more two-seaters about a mile away. They were beginning to turn.

Winter put down his nose and glanced in his mirror to be sure that the others were close behind. The airspeed indicator showed well over a hundred miles an hour and was still rising. The air stream sang across the taut wires with a contented musical note. He held the two scroplanes steady on his nose, giving the stick and rudder only the lightest of touches as the speed increased their sensitivity.

Five hundred yards: these two

still hadn't seen their attackers. The silly bastards were hanging over the side anxiously not to get their map references wrong. Four hundred.

The boy saw them much later than Ginger and Winter. He stared in wonder at these foreign aeronautes. At a time when only a handful of madmen had ever tried this truly magical science, and when every flight was a pioneering experiment to discover more about this new world, he hated the idea of killing fellow enthusiasts. He would much rather have exchanged anecdotes and information with them. Ginger and Winter had no such thoughts. Their minds were delivered to their subconscious. They were checking instruments, cocking guns and judging ever-changing altitudes, range and deflection.

If that stupid kid fires too early damn him, damn him! Oh, well, Ginger and Winter opened fire too. Damn, a real ace gets in close, close, close. They'd both learned that, if nothing else. Stupid boy! The artohs leader pulled back on the stick and turned so steeply as almost to collide with the two-seater to his left. He knew what he was doing; he was determined to make himself a max-

imum-deflection shot. Winter kept his guns going all the way through the turn. The tracer bullets seemed un-naturally bright because his eyes had become accustomed to the morning's gloom. Like glow-worms, they were eating the enemy's tailplane. This is what decided a dogfight: vertical turns, tighter and tighter still. Control stick held into the belly, with toes and eyes alert so that the aeroplane doesn't slide an inch out of a turn that glued him to the horizon. It was sheer flying skill. The sun a watery blob of gold seemed to drop through his mainplane and on to his engine. Winter could feel the rate of turn by the hardness of his seat. He pulled even harder on the stick to make the tracers crawl along the fuselage.

The smell from his guns was acrid and the thin smoke and hear from the blurring breechblocks caused his target to wobble like a jelly. First, the observer was hit, then the pilot, throwing up their hands like badly-made marionettes. The two-seater stalled, falling suddenly like a dead leaf. Winter rolled. Two more aero-planes slid across his sights. He pushed his stick forward to follow the damaged two-seater down. Hearing bullets close



to his head, he saw the fabric of his upper plane prodded to tatters by invisible fingers which continued their destruction to the point of breaking a centre section strut and throwing its splinters into his face. His reflexes took over and he went into a vertical turn tighter than any two-seater could manage.

Aero-planes were everywhere. Bright-green and blue wings and black crosses passed across his sights, along with roundels and dark-green fabric. One of them caught the light of the sun and its wings flashed with brilliant blue. All the time, Winter kept an eye upon his rear-view mirror. A two-seater nosed down towards his tail, but Winter avoided him effortlessly. Ginger came under him, thumping his machine-guns with one of the jammers which they all kept in their cockpits. He was red-faced with exertion as he tried to clear the stoppage by force. At this height, every movement was exhausting. Ginger wiped his face with the back of his gauntlet and his goggles came unclipped and blew away in the air stream.

Winter had glimpsed Ginger for only a fraction of a second but he'd seen enough to tell him the whole

story. If it was a split round, he'd never unjam it. Trees flashed under him. The combat had brought them lower and lower, as it always did.

The new boy was half a mile away and climbing. Winter knew it was his job to look after the kid but he'd not leave Ginger with a jammed gun. A plane rushed past before he had a chance to fire. Winter saw one of the two-seaters behind Ginger. 'My God, they were tough, these fellows. You'd think they'd be away, with their tails between their legs. Hold on, Ginger, here I come. Dive, climb, roll; a perfect Immelmann turn.' The world upside down; above him, the dark earth, below him, the dawn sky like a rasher of streaky bacon. Hold that. He centred the stick, keeping the enemy's huge mainplane centred in his sight. Fire. The guns shook the whole airframe and made a foul stink. He kicked the rudder and slid down past the enemy's tail with no more than six feet to spare. A white-faced observer was frozen in fear. Up. Up. Up. Winter leaned out of his cockpit. See below him.

The new boy is in trouble. One of the two-seaters is pasting him. The poor kid is trying for the cloud bank but that's half a mile away. Never throttle back in combat, you fool. White smoke? Radiator steam? No, worse: vaporizing petrol from a punctured tank of fractured lead. If it touches a hot pipe, he'll go up like a torch. 'You should have kept close, sonny. What did I tell you. What do I always tell them.' Winter flick-rolled and turned to cover Ginger's tail. Woof: a flamer. The boy: will he jump or burn? The whole world was made up of jumpers or burners. There were no parachutes for pilots yet, so either way a man died. The machine was breaking up. Burning pieces of fuel-soaked wreckage fell away. It would be difficult to invent a more efficient bonfire. Take thin strips of timber, nail them into a framework, stretch fabric over it and paint it with highly inflammable dope. Into the middle of this build a metal tank for 30 gallons of high-grade fuel. Move air across it at 50 m.p.h. Winter couldn't decide whether the boy had jumped. A pity, the chaps in the Mess always wanted to know that, even though few could bear to ask.

The dogfight had scattered the aeroplanes in every direction, but Ginger was just below him and a two-seater was approaching from the south. Ginger waved. His gun

was working. Winter side-slipped down behind a two-seater and gave it a burst of fire. The gunner was probably dead, for no return fire came and the gun rocked uselessly on its mounting. The pilot turned steeply on full throttle and kept going in an effort to come round in a vertical turn to Winter's rear. But Ginger was waiting for that. They'd been through this many times. Ginger fired as the two-seater was half way through the turn, raking it from engine to tail. The whole air-plane lurched drunkenly, and then the port mainplane snapped, its main spur eaten through by Ginger's bullets. As it fell, nose-down, the wings folded back along the fuselage like an umbrella being closed. The shapeless mess of broken struts and rangled steel wire fell vertically to earth, weighted by its heavy engine which was still roaring at full throttle. It was so low that it hit the ground within seconds.

Winter throttled back and came round in a gentle turn to see the wreckage. There were no planes in sight. Winter increased his throttle and came alongside Ginger. He pushed his goggles up. Ginger was laughing. The artillery fire had stopped, or perhaps, its explosions were lost in the mist. They turned for home, scampering across the trees and hedges like two schoolboys.

Winter and Ginger came over the airfield in echelon. Eight aeroplanes were lined up outside the canvas hangars that lacked only bunting to be a circus. A dozen officers fell over themselves scrambling out of the Mess tent. One of them waved. Winter's machine, painted bright green with wasp-like white bands, was easily recognized.

Winter circled the field while Ginger landed. He'd literally lived in this French field for almost a year and knew each tree, ditch and bump. He'd seen it from every possible angle. He remembered praying for a sight of it with a dead motor and a bottleful of blood. Also, how he'd focused on blurred blades of old dewy grass, following a long night unconscious after a squadron booze-up. He'd vomited, excreted, crashed and fornicated on this field. He couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

For the first time in a month, the sun shone, but it gave no warmth. As he switched off his engine, the petrol fumes made the trees bend and dance on the heavy vapour. Pops hurried across to him but couldn't resist a quick inspection of the tail before saluting.

'Everything in order, Herr Major?'

Winter was still a little deaf but he guessed what the Sergeant was saying. He always said the same thing. 'Yes, Sergeant. The strut is damaged but apart from that, it probably just needs a few patches.'

'Another Englishman?' said Pops. He warmed his hands before the big Mercedes engine, which was growling softly.

Bristols: one forced down, one destroyed. We lost the new young officer, though.' Winter was ashamed that he didn't know the boy's name, but there were so many of them. He knew he was right to remain unfriendly to all of them. Given half a chance, new kids would treat him like some sort of divinity, and that made him feel like hell when they went west.

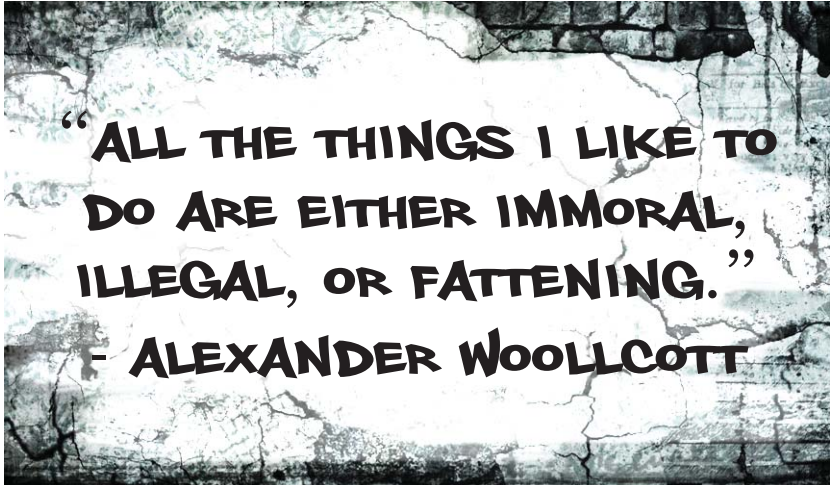
Winter wiped the protective grease from his face. He was calm. Briefly, he watched his own unshaking hand with a nod of satisfaction. He knew himself to be a nervous and relentless killer, and like any professional assassin, he took pride in seeing a victim die. Only such men could become aces.

Concluded.

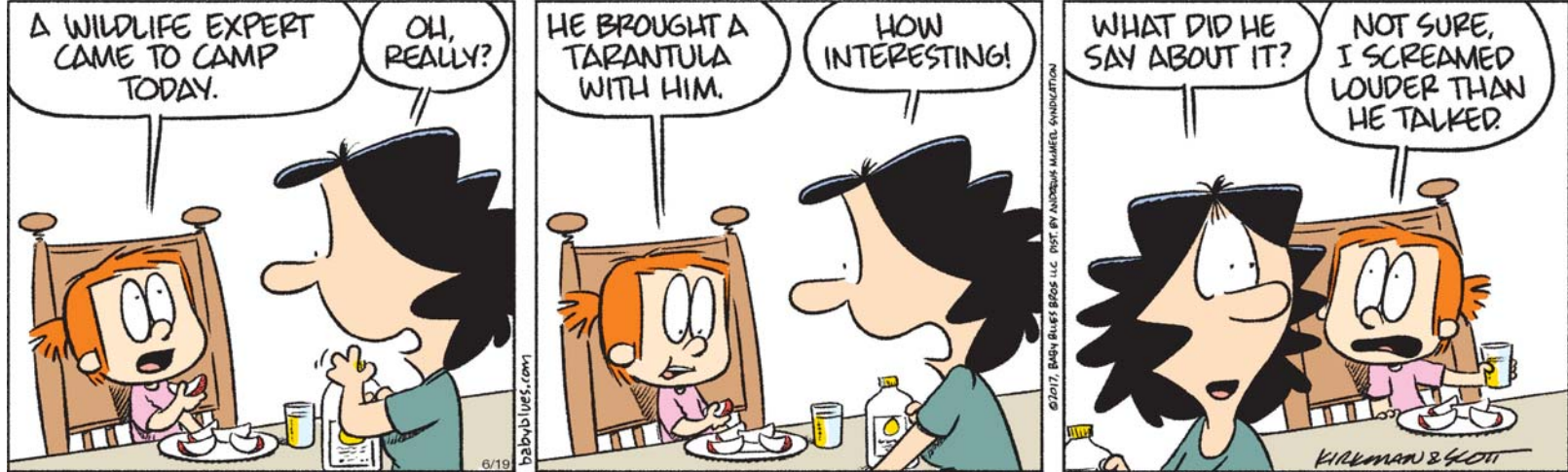
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THE WALL

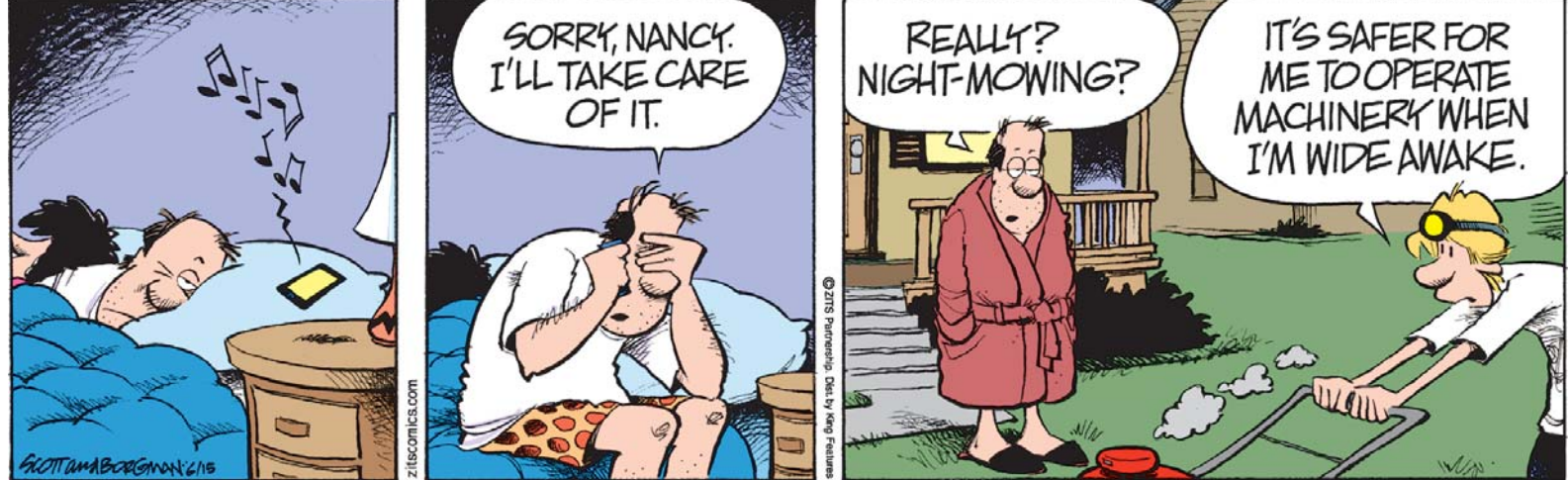


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman