

#NEW BEGINNINGS

Expansion of French Language & Culture

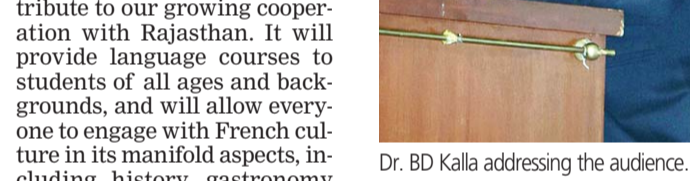
The Alliance Francaise of Jaipur opened its doors recently with a scintillating cultural evening at Pink City's multi arts and culture centre, Jawahar Kala Kendra.



A view of the performance by Dastangoi Collective, Poonam Girdhani (left) and Rajesh Kumar (right).



The opening of an Alliance Française in the historic city of Jaipur reflects the deep links between France and the Pink City, and will contribute to our growing cooperation with Rajasthan. It will provide language courses to students of all ages and backgrounds, and will allow every one to engage with French culture in its manifold aspects, including history, gastronomy and the arts. The Alliance also hosts the office of Campus France, the French agency that helps foreign students access higher education in France, as France is keen to welcome more students from Rajasthan. "This was stated by the Ambassador of France to India, Emmanuel Lenain on the occasion of the opening of the Alliance Française of Jaipur recently. With the opening of this center, which is the 15th Alliance Française network in India, French language and culture will now be more accessible than ever to the citizens of the Pink City.



History of Alliance Française
The Alliance Française (AF) is a non-profit organization established to promote French language and culture throughout the world. It was founded in 1883 by two French historians, Pierre Foncin and Pierre Cambon, who were deeply committed to the development of Francophone and expansion of French culture globally. The Alliance Française network in India comprises 15 Alliances Françaises, AF Jaipur being the latest to join their ranks. The promotion of Francophonie and the French language remains one of the biggest objectives of the Alliances all over the world.

The AF of Jaipur will regularly host events including exhibitions, seminars, online and offline meetings with eminent French personalities, concerts, French cinema showings, French theatre performances, literary readings, etc. What is particularly significant is that all of these events happen in a true spirit of collaboration with Indian partners, cultural practitioners, artists, students, etc and not as an imposition of one culture over the other.

A cultural treat
The inauguration of AF Jaipur was marked by a remarkable cultural evening.

During the cultural performance, the French story 'The Little Prince' by the renowned French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, was adapted into the ancient Urdu art of storytelling, Dastangoi. The performance was given by Poonam Girdhani and Rajesh Kumar of the Dastangoi Collective. The evening also witnessed a special opening act by the celebrated puppets of Barefoot College, Tilonia where the iconic Jakhim Chacha led the audience into the evening.

The Minister of Art & Culture, Government of Rajasthan, Dr BD Kalla was also present on this milestone occasion. After witnessing the performance, he said: "This performance of the Dastangoi of 'The Little Prince' is a true example of culmination of our two cultures - an essentially Indian performance embracing a French story. It is indeed a moment of pride for us to open the doors to this new chapter in the history of the bilateral relation between France and Rajasthan. I sincerely believe that the Alliance Française will add new dimension to the historical city of Jaipur."

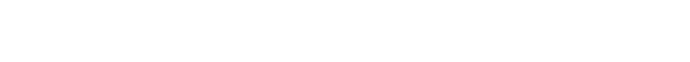
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The large-size paintings of the Hamzanama, executed on cloth backed with paper that contains the text, are considered as the first major artistic productions of the Mughal taswirkhana started under the supervision of the Persian master painters Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abd us-Samad not long after the beginning of Akbar's reign. The unnamed painters responsible for the composition and colour rendering in the two works representing the rhino appear to have been familiar with the animal but have taken some liberties to suit the demands of the work which celebrates the legendary exploits of the hero, Amir Hamza, an uncle of Prophet Muhammad, and his band of heroes. It is well-known that the hide of a rhino is extremely tough and it is almost impossible to cut through it with a sword; however one picture shows the leg amputated while the other shows the sword slicing through the neck, perhaps to demonstrate the supernatural power of the hero. Also, there is no record of using a rhinoceros as a war animal; it is not an animal that could be trained for the battlefield!

Asok Kumar Das
writetoarbitrit@kashtradoot.com

Artists of Akbar's taswirkhana had depicted rhinoceroses long before the illustration of the different copies of the Baburnama undertaken in the last decade of the 16th century. Perhaps the earliest representations of a rhinoceros in Mughal Painting are in two folios of the dispersed copies of the Hamzanama in the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art (MAK), Vienna. One is titled 'Prince Qasim beholds the rhinoceros mount of the giant Keybur Dev in the battle for control of the Shisan Dam', and the second, 'A Muslim hero fights a duel against a gigantic black warrior astride a rhinoceros'. In the large composition of the second painting, the rhinoceros occupies most of the lower foreground. It is drawn with amazing clarity and care, with appropriate life-like colours. In spite of losing part of its left foreleg, the animal has gored and killed the horse of the attacking hero.

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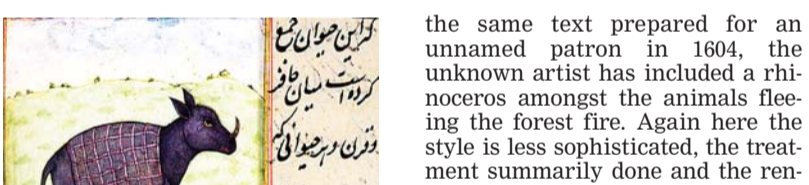
In a solitary example in the manuscript of the Razmnama, the Farsi translation of the Mahabharata prepared for the personal library of Akbar in circa 1584-86, a rhinoceros is visible amongst the large number of birds, animals and plants given refuge in the giant ship to escape the Great Flood unleashed to cleanse the Universe. The treatment of the animal is, however, conventional. As the artists were required to show a large number of birds and animals in small scale for this subject, they had little opportunity to depict them with accuracy. Similarly, in a painting of the episode Burning of the Khandava forest, in another copy of



A Muslim hero fights a duel against a gigantic black warrior astride a rhinoceros, folio from the Hamzanama, c. 1570. Photograph: MAK/Georg Mayer. Courtesy MAK - Austrian Museum of applied arts/ contemporary art, vienna, B1. 8770-17

The Unicorn In the Mughal Records

#STORY OF THE INDIAN RHINOS



Page showing a rhinoceros, from a dispersed copy of aja'ib al-makhlūqat, Delhi (c. 1789). Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, no. 1 1907.625.

the same text prepared for an unnamed patron in 1604, the unknown artist has included a rhinoceros amongst the animals fleeing the forest fire. Again here the style is less sophisticated, the treatment summarily done and the rendering devoid of life.

Literary Works
The task of drawing rhinoceroses to illustrate the Baburnama manuscripts brought about greater familiarity with the animal, and the artists of Akbar's taswirkhana began to depict them in illustrations to literary works and individual pictures with greater confidence. The most remarkable example is to be found in the picture of Isfandiyyar hunting rhinoceros from a dispersed copy of the Shahnama of circa 1585. This illustration is by that well-known master Miskin who excelled in drawing birds and animals. It shows two full-grown rhinoceroses: one has been wounded by Isfandiyyar with his spear, while the other hides beside the hilly tract. While illustrating this episode and some related ones the painters often interpreted the Farsi word kark or karg as a rhino, though in numerous other examples of the Shahnama prepared in Persia the animal being hunted is shown as a wolf with horns.

Instances of Shahnama heroes hunting rhinoceroses, or of rhinoceroses present in animal groups in other scenes, are not rare in Persian painting, as noted by Richard

Ettinghausen, Basil Robinson and Norah Titley, among others. Similar hunting scenes with rhinoceroses involving Shahnama heroes have been noticed in some later Mughal manuscripts. Two notable examples are in a Shahnama manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, written at the command of one Mirza Rustam (whose identity is not clear) at the city of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh in 1695. Clearly the artist has depended on some second-hand source as revealed by the stereotyped depiction of the animals.

Thoughtful and Sensitive

In scenes from Nizami's Khamsa the rhinoceros often finds place amongst the wild animal assembled near Manju as he wanders in the wilderness, or amongst animals in stance before Aflatun (Plato) playing enchanting music. The finest image of this genre is found in the picture of Aflatun playing music (in this case a European organ) in the deluxe copy of the Khamsa-i-Nizami completed for Akbar in 1596, now in the British Library. This is true of the numerous images of rhinoceroses found in compositions showing an assembly of animals, be it in the scene of Manju wandering in the forest, or the meeting of Layla and Majnu in the wilderness, or Suleiman (Solomon) presiding over the animals, or the animal kingdom being addressed by a raven. In earlier examples drawn by masters like Miskin the composition is thoughtful and sensitive, with the animals, mostly in pairs, drawn with care and liveliness. In the Majnu scenes the animals, mostly in pairs, drawn with care and liveliness. In the Majnu scenes the animals have assembled to express sympathy for the forlorn lover; and where the lovers unite in the wilderness the animals assemble in close proximity to demonstrate their joy. The rhino is also there, with other ferocious animals, standing or squatting before them.

Amongst many examples of Layla-Majnu scenes in the wilderness drawn in various centres at various times, the ones in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, National Museum, New Delhi, and Museum Rietberg Zurich stand out for their neat execution. While the



Majnu in the wilderness, by an unknown artist, c. 1630. Single leaf, mounted on album page. Museum Rietberg Zurich, RW 1036, collection Alice Boner. Photograph: Rainer Wolfsoberger.



Isfandiyyar hunting rhinoceros, by Miskin folio 261b from a dispersed copy of Shahnama, c. 1585. Present whereabouts unknown (from Sotheby's London, October 19, 1994, lot 112).

first one probably belongs to the Akbari atelier the second one appears to be from a sub-imperial atelier like that of the Khan-i-Khanan. Akbar's minister who was also a poet. The pair of rhinoceroses in the Alice Boner copy of later date in the Rietberg, though lightly coloured, looks very lively, with a pair of rhinos in the lower part of the composition. Mention should be made also of two excellent late 17th and late 18th-century pictures in the Bodleian Library, showing the union of the lovers Layla and Manju in the wilderness before this birds and animals. In the former

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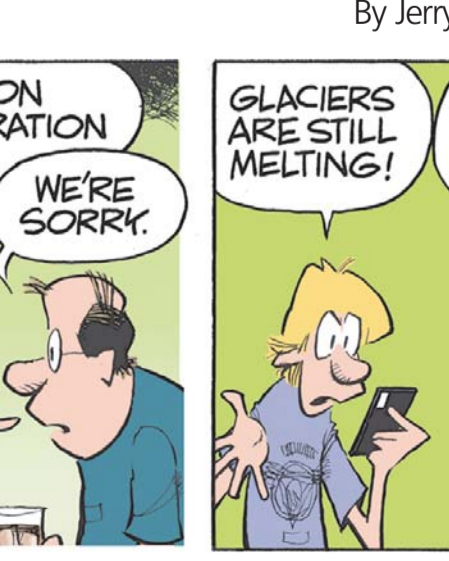
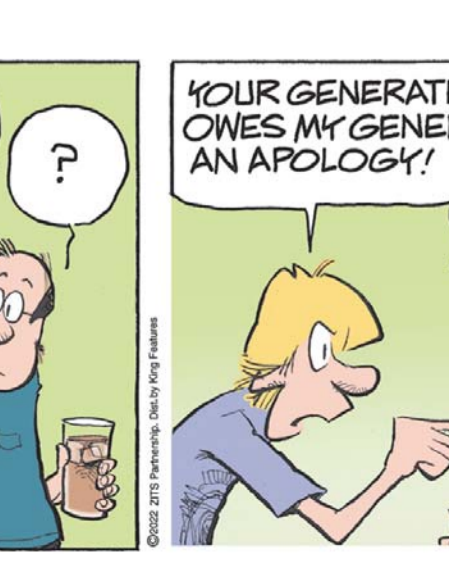
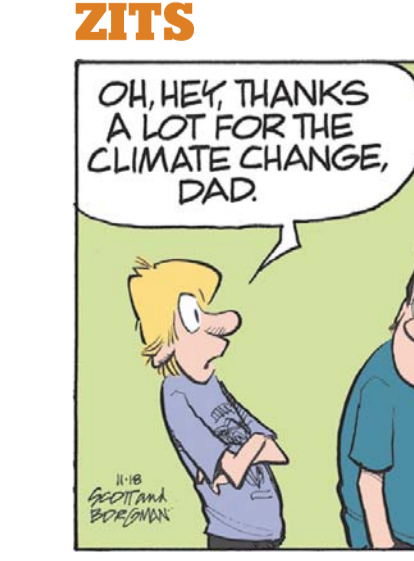
picture a pair of full-grown rather bloated rhinoceroses stand in a shallow pool in the foreground with elephants and ducks, fishes, turtles and an alligator. In the latter, painted in Avadh style, the landscape is greener and the rhinoceroses stand in a grassy path as they normally do. For painters of Avadh the rhinoceros was never a stranger as herds of them lived in the neighbouring Terai grasslands close to the foothills of the Himalaya.

In illustrated copies of Zakariyya ibn-Muhammad Qazvini's 'Aja'ib al-Makhlūqat (The Wonders of Creation), prepared both in Persia and India, a lone rhinoceros is often shown standing in a landscape following the textual description. There are many examples available in different collections, both public and private: Norah Titley found as many as 18 examples in 12 different manuscripts from early 16th century Timurid to mid-19th century Qajar and Punjabi manuscripts in the British Library alone. An image of a caparisoned rhinoceros standing in a landscape on a stray page of the 'Aja'ib al-Makhlūqat dated 1788, probably written in Delhi, shows the artist's lack of familiarity with the animal. Devoid of the characteristics folded and armoured hide, though the horn and ears are of a rhinoceros, it looks more like an elephant without a trunk!

Acknowledgement
1. The Book: 'The story of India's Unicorns'
2. Authors: Divyabhanusini, Asok Kumar Das & Shilpani Bose.
3. Publisher: The Marg Foundation.
4. For Purchase: The book is available for purchase on www.marg-art.org

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

#INSIGHT

Pared-back Simplicity

Religion, art and politics have all led to the minimalist idea of "less is more".



the simple device of almost total suppression."

Strictly speaking, the word "minimalist" belongs to the world of fine art. It was first used in the early 20th Century to describe an uncompromisingly abstract artwork by avant-garde Russian painter Kazimir Malevich, The Black Square, 1915. Later, in the 1930s and '60s, the label was given to an emerging band of like-minded US artists who sought to distance themselves from Abstract Expressionism. The new generation of Minimalists exchanged wild self-expression for hard-edged or monochrome paintings or sculptures in the form of grids or crisply rectilinear cubes.

A taste for simplicity in interiors has fallen in and out of favour for centuries, influenced not just by aesthetic preferences but, more profoundly, by religion, philosophy, politics and economics, too.

Architectural historian and cartoonist Osbert Lancaster observed this in his 1964 book, A Cartoon History of Architecture, a survey of architecture and interior design from the Parthenon to 1960s high-rise housing. Influence on Interiors
Early on in his interiors-through-the-ages-chronicle, Lancaster highlights "the Spartan simplicity of the Norman home". But during the Middle Ages, he writes, "the upper classes began to interest themselves in... decoration and the plain whitewashed walls of their Norman ancestors were hidden behind tapestries, painted canvas or frescoes, according to the financial resources of the householder".

By contrast, the Elizabethan era ushered in "decoration for decoration's sake... The simple, linen-fold panelling of Tudor times had given way to acres of woodwork carved and chiselled with patterns of quite staggering complication and hideousness." However, he points out the Jacobean era that followed (during the reign of King James I), heralded "a progressive and welcome simplification".

Religion also influenced interiors, notes Lancaster. The Reformation reined in ornamentation inside its churches because it was "equated with idolatry". He wrote: "For the Calvinist, the problem of adorning was forcefully... solved by

the aspidochelone, the little bronze from Benin grimaces where smiled the shepherds from Dresden".

Radically Modern
Yet it was modernism that wholeheartedly and self-consciously championed minimalist, open-plan, white-walled interiors. These spaces emphasised the connection between outdoors, making rooms feel more spacious. Adolf Loos articulated early modernism's aims with his 1908 polemical essay, Ornament and Crime, which took its main inspiration from the simplicity of vernacular architecture. Another modernist luminary, architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who described his buildings as "skin and bones", championed minimalist interiors, complemented by his radically modern, tubular steel cantilevered furniture. Van der Rohe, a director of the Bauhaus from 1930 to 1933, who immigrated to the US in 1937, lived by the motto "Less is more".

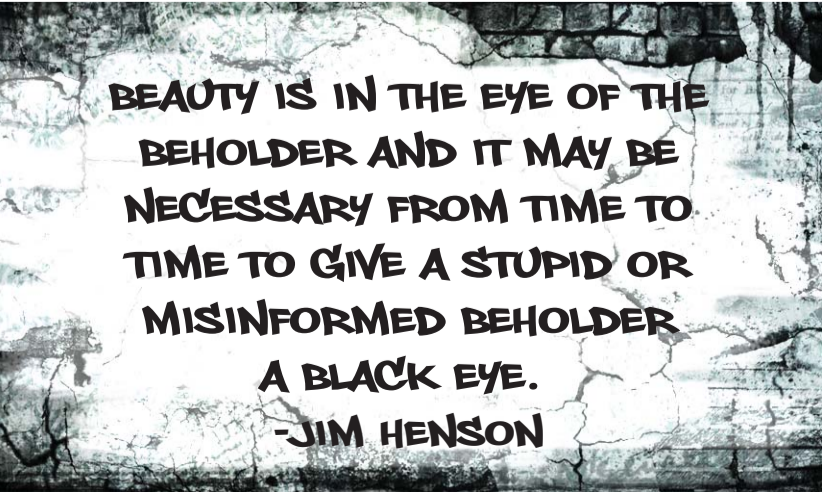
A wider acceptance of eclecticism in recent years, resulting in a vogue for exuberant maximalism, has seen the popularity of minimalism fade. A younger generation of influential designers, such as Luke Edward Hall and Rachel Chudley, have espoused maximalism as they rediscovered antiques and historical references long banished from homes by the previous generation. But new minimalist interiors, reflecting a growing awareness of and commitment to sustainability, coupled with a desire to make a visual impact with fewer elements, are returning to fashion.

Today a push for sustainability could see the popularity of minimalist interiors grow for years to come. One contemporary example is Architecture for London's Low Energy House in Muswell Hill, London, which features a limited palette of natural materials, including stone, wood and lime plaster.



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

THE WALL

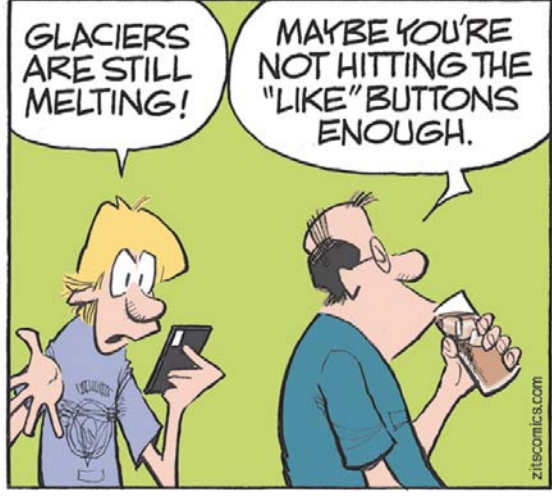
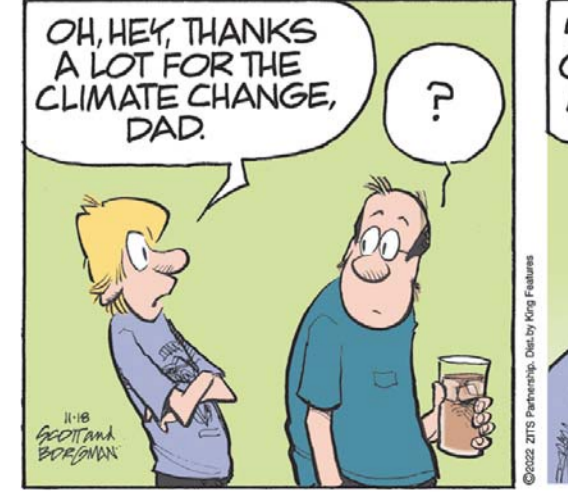


BABY BLUES



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