

#TRENDS

The Exoticism of the East

The Exoticism of the East: A Cultural Obsession That Transformed French Jewellery and Fashion



At the turn of the 20th century, Paris became the nexus of a cultural phenomenon that captivated designers, artists, and society at large: the 'exoticism of the East.' This fascination wasn't just an aesthetic trend; it was a cultural obsession that reshaped the language of jewellery and fashion, influencing the design ethos of the era. From the ateliers of Place Vendôme to the maison collections of the Belle Époque, the allure of Eastern culture permeated the Parisian fashion scene. As global travel expanded, and colonial exhibitions brought the wonders of India, Persia, China, and Japan to Paris, the East left an indelible mark on Western art, transforming jewellery design into a cross-cultural conversation.

1. The Role of Colonial Exhibitions and Global Exploration

The dawn of the 20th century saw the height of the European colonial empires, which led to a surge in global exploration and cultural exchange. The Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris was a particularly pivotal moment, showcasing the wealth of Eastern art, culture, and craftsmanship. The exhibitions brought in treasures from India, Persia, China, and Japan, creating a new level of exposure to foreign objects, gemstones, and textiles that had previously been beyond European imagination.

2. The Eastern Aesthetic: India, Persia, China, and Japan

Each Eastern culture offered a unique aesthetic that inspired French jewellers in different ways.

- India: India, with its long history of gemstone cutting, kundan (gold setting), and meenakari (enamel work), captivated designers like Cartier. The country's rich gemstone palette, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, inspired pieces of jewellery that combined bright, bold colours with intricate designs.
- Persia: Persian design, known for its geometrical patterns and delicate motifs, had a profound impact on the Art Deco movement. Persian art's focus on symmetry and ornamental motifs translated into jewellery designs that often featured intricate engravings and stone settings.
- China: China's contribution to Western jewellery came in the form of jade, lacquer, and porcelain.

3. Curiosity Becomes Fascination: The Reinterpretation of Eastern Elements

What started as curiosity about Eastern culture soon evolved into an intense fascination. Parisian jewellers didn't merely copy the designs and motifs they saw in the exhibitions; they began to reinterpret them, blending Eastern forms with Western craftsmanship. The resulting pieces were a synthesis of the two worlds, leading to some of the most iconic jewellery creations in history. Cartier, in particular, became known for its ability to fuse Eastern aesthetics with French artistry. The Tutti Frutti collection, with its elaborate use of emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and diamonds, is one of the most celebrated examples of this cross-cultural dialogue.

4. The Enduring Legacy: Eastern Influence on Modern Jewellery

By the time Art Deco reached its peak in the 1920s and 1930s, the influence of the East had become firmly embedded in Western jewellery design. The techniques and motifs inspired by India, Persia, China, and Japan left a lasting legacy, which can still be seen in the jewellery collections of today's most prestigious houses. The interplay between Eastern and Western aesthetics in jewellery not only transformed the designs of the early 20th century but also established a precedent for global influences in the world of luxury. The elegance of Chinese jade, the richness of Indian gemstones, the precision of Persian geometry, and the simplicity of Japanese forms continue to influence contemporary jewellery, providing a timeless link between cultures.



Plain-bellied Emerald.



Blue and yellow Macaw (Ara ararauna).



Canje Pheasant.



Glittering-throated Emerald Male.

My Bush Hunting Days

Sunsets are different in Guyana where you are almost on the equator, so, there is no twilight. If you are in the Savannah, one minute you see a flaming globe that colors the whole sky, anything from a deep orange to blood red and the horizon looks as if the whole world is on fire. Then, there is sudden darkness. If you are on a trail in the forest or on the river, you will find yourself in darkness, but if you look up at the tops of the trees, you will see bright sunlight, lighting them up. Treetops look like they are on fire and remain that way a long time after darkness has fallen on you.



Mirza Yawar Baig  
Naturalist and Wildlife Conservationist

I love the bush and I loved hunting. So, every alternate weekend, Peter Ramsingh and I would go on a long drive into the bush to hunt what we could. Most of this was for the table because in the Kwakwani of those days, if you wanted variety on your table, you had to find it yourself. The Commissary (company owned department store) was no help in adding variety to the table either. My cook and housekeeper, Naomi, was a gem of a woman, very large, very bossy and with a heart of gold. She was from St. Lucia and took it as her bounden duty to fatten me up. But no matter how many delicious meals she cooked, I refused to get fat.

Naomi appreciated getting fresh fish and bush meat to cook. I never asked her to account for what I gave her, which suited us both very well. The last thing I wanted to do was to count pennies and eggs and if she took something for her family, she was most welcome.

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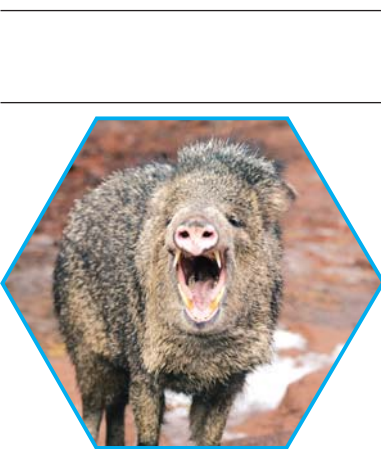
Macaw (Ara ararauna).

Naomi took care of my house, cleaning, washing clothes, ironing, and cooking. Everything inside the house. I took care of my pets, poultry, and what garden there was. My hunting and fishing therefore had other beneficiaries.

We hunted mostly birds; the Canje Pheasant found all along the Berbice and its tributary, the Canje Creek. Another common game-bird was the Powis (Curassow). It was as big as a turkey and good eating. We would also, on occasion, get an Agouti (Brazilian Agouti or Red, Orange or Golden Rumped Agouti) or two. And when we were lucky, a small Savannah deer. Bush pig, the Collared Peccary (called Javelina) was also good game, and though we both did not eat it, we had many friends who welcomed our hunts because we were the only people who would shoot a pig and then give it away. I never shot a Tapir or Jaguar or Puma. I never even saw a Jaguar or Puma in all the years I lived in Kwakwani, which is strange, because there are many in those forests. But given the nature of the forest, it is understandable.

Peter inherited my yellow Land Rover when the sawmill started, and I got a small Toyota pickup. Peter and I would take turns driving the Land Rover over the bush trails. The Land Rover contained in the back everything that we needed for our camping or emergencies. A chain saw, thick rope, hammocks, some fishing net and lines and hooks, Jerry cans with spare petrol, an axe, a spade, the ever-present cutlasses (machetes), and various odds and ends. Each of us carried a 16-gauge shotgun. We would load up a cooler filled with drinks and some pre-cooked bananas or cassava and off we would go. What would have been ideal was a cell phone or radio but the first hadn't been invented and the second we didn't have. So, we relied on ourselves.

What we shot, we would cook in the bush and eat. What we saved; we would bring home. Sometimes, in the bush, we would come across a stream flowing at the bottom of a deep ravine and would have to build a bridge to get across it. At other times, we would get stuck in the sandy soil, or if piling freshly cut leaves and branches under the wheels didn't work, we would tie



Javelina.



Howler Monkey.



Hummingbird.

the rope to a nearby tree and use the winch on the Land Rover to haul it out. In the evening, we would find a camping place, sling our hammocks between ever-present trees, all conveniently located so that we could tie our hammocks, of course. Then, we would light a fire and put on the tea pot.

Once we had a nice cup of tea sweetened with condensed milk, we would put on the cooking pot. Peter, meanwhile, would have cleaned the game of the day. We would get water from the stream nearby, water that was coffee colored but perfectly clean and tasteless. The color was due to the dyes that leach into the water from the roots of trees that trail their feet in the stream. I have no idea what those dyes did, but they didn't seem to have any detrimental effect, and we drank that water straight from the stream all the time we were in the bush, with no ill effects. The bush meat would go into the pot with salt and chillies, some onions, and as it cooked, we would sit and talk about life.

Sunsets are different in Guyana where you are almost on the equator, so, there is no twilight. If you are in the Savannah, one minute you see a flaming globe that colors the whole sky, anything from a deep orange to blood red and the horizon looks as if the whole world is on fire. Then, there is sudden darkness. If you are on a trail in the forest or on the river, you will find yourself in darkness, but if you look up at the tops of the trees, you will see bright sunlight, lighting them up.

An hour or so later, once the food

#AFRICA

was ready, we would take the pot off the fire, pull out the bread that we had brought, and have our dinner. Then, after some more discussion of world affairs, we would climb into our hammocks and drift off into peaceful sleep, looking at the stars, possible only when we were camped at the riverbank where the canopy did not obstruct the view. Those days there is nothing to do apart from talking to your companions in the firelight, which can be very pleasant depending on the quality of the company, you and your companions. The fire casts strange shadows because of the 'floor level' lighting, illuminating some parts of your face while making others dark. The dancing flames constantly change the pattern of shadows which is fascinating to watch. But looking into a fire, though it is instinctive, destroys your night sight, so, when you look away from it, you are totally blind for a while until your eyes adjust to the darkness. For this reason, when you are in the bush and sitting at your fire, it is better not to look directly at it.

The bush in South America is different from its counterpart in India or Africa, and in my view, less dangerous because of the absence of major predators and large herbivores like rhino, elephant, and hippo. The only big ones are the Jaguar and the Anaconda, but neither will attack a person except in special circumstances. So, it is possible to sleep very peacefully if you are not on the ground.

Remember when you read these pages, that if I have written about a stream, it is there, and the water is good to drink. These are stories of real life, real people, their hopes and loves and fears. And they will live on until they are remembered.

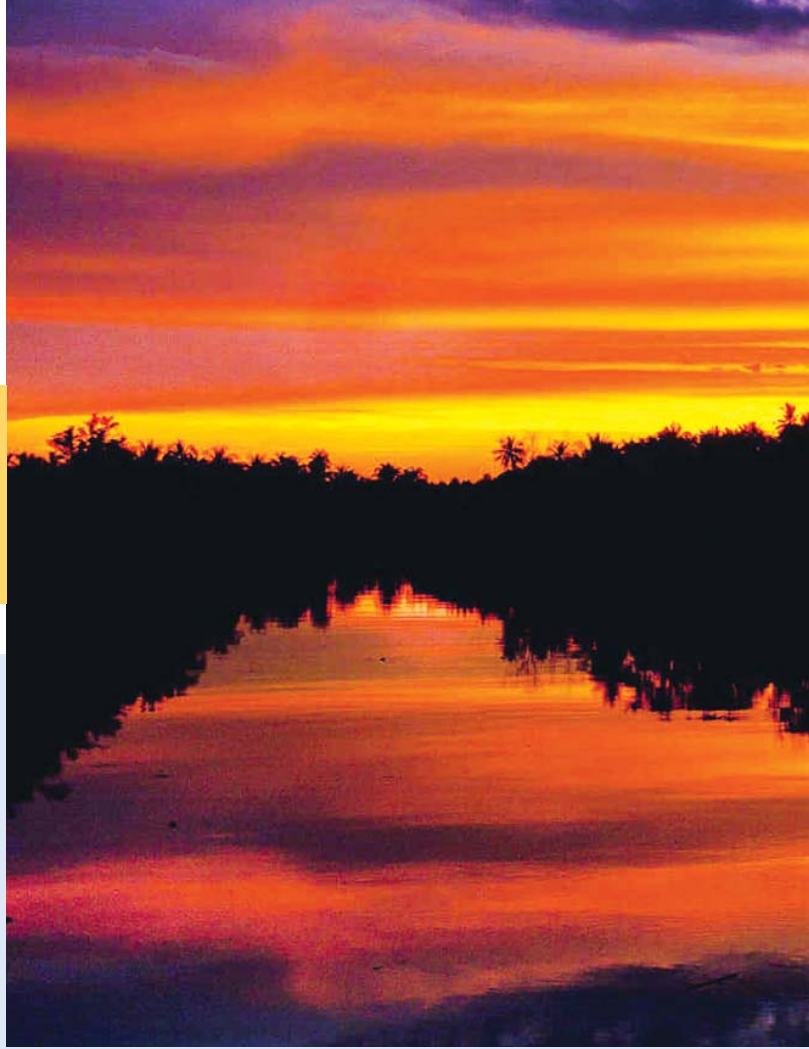
The Berbice River was the lifeline of the forest. If you lived in Kwakwani, no matter where you went in the bush, you were never far from the river. The rainforest was so thick and difficult to traverse that the preferred mode of transportation was by boat on the river. In our



Bake Cookies Day: A Sweet Celebration of Warmth and Tradition

Bake Cookies Day, celebrated on December 18, invites people to embrace the joy of homemade treats and the timeless comfort of baking. The day encourages families and friends to come together in the kitchen, creating delicious cookies that fill homes with warmth and festive aromas. It highlights the simple pleasure of sharing freshly baked treats, whether classic chocolate chip, spiced gingerbread, or creative new recipes. Beyond its culinary charm, Bake Cookies Day celebrates togetherness, creativity, and the small traditions that make the holiday season special. It's a reminder that sometimes, the sweetest memories begin with a warm oven and shared moments.

PART:1



Guyana's sunset reflections.

case, when we were driving on the Savannah, we were away from the main river, but every so often, we would cross its tributaries, some flowing and some waiting for the rain to flow. Camping near their banks was a risk because what was a dry, sandy stream bed could become a raging torrent in minutes. If that happened in the middle of the night when you were fast asleep in your tent, you could end up losing all your possessions and worse. We ensured that we always camped on the other side of whichever stream we needed to cross and high up above its bank. We would take water from it, bathe in it and enjoy that, but we would sleep away from it.

The water of the Berbice River changed complexion throughout the day. Early in the morning it has, what looks like steam rising from it. So, you would be floating through this cloud of vapor looking ethereal and ghostly. As the sun rose and it got hotter, we were sitting close to the equator; remember, the mist would disappear, and you would see the colors of the trees reflecting in the river. If we were planning to stay another day, we would spend a couple of hours walking in the forest, following some track or the other simply to enjoy the experience of being in the rainforest. We were not hunting seriously and only the unwary animal with suicidal tendencies achieved its objective at our hands.

We were more interested in watching Hummingbirds flit from flower to flower looking like moths more than like birds. Hummingbirds beat their wings so fast that you can't see them, and they are the only birds that can fly backwards. They fly up to a flower, and hovering before it on buzzing wings, insert their specialized beaks deep into it for the nectar, then fly backwards to get out of that flower and go to another one. For those who like details, the wingbeat of Hummingbirds varies from 15-90 beats per second. Yes, per second.

Mornings are announced by the booming call of the Howler Monkey answered by his cousins everywhere, and so for a while, there would be cacophony in the forest. Macaws taking off for their daily commute would also be talking to each other and you would hear their calls. Toucans would call to each

other as they hunted for fruit in the tops of giant figs. You would hear the crash of branches as Sakiwinki (Spider Monkeys) took off on their highway a hundred feet in the air, throwing themselves from one forest giant to another with gay abandon. They would be followed by others, heavier than them and the branches would crash more loudly. Ah! The difficulty is in trying to describe what the eye sees, what the ears hear and what the heart feels in mere words on paper. It is the whole atmosphere of the forest when you become one with it, when time has no meaning and the daily grind and work pressure feel like a bad dream that you woke up from.

In Guyana, I never heard the term 'rainforest.' People used 'back-dam' or just 'bush.' Even 'forest' was not used, though, we lived in the middle of it. These lands were not truly uncharted because people, mostly Amerindian hunters, and loggers, had long gone along the trails that we drove on. I have no idea who made these trails originally, but they were ideal for Peter's yellow Land Rover. Peter had a great sense of direction, so, we always got back safely two days later, even though, I had no clue where we were going or had been. I would just concentrate on the driving or on watching out for game.

To be continued...

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



The Berbice River.

#EDMONIA LEWIS

The Trailblazing Sculptor Who Defied Boundaries

Despite facing significant racial prejudice and personal challenges, Edmonia Lewis's work has earned her a lasting legacy in the art world

Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907) stands as one of the most remarkable and pioneering artists in American history. Born to a mixed-race background, of African American and Native American descent, Lewis broke barriers in both race and gender to become the first African American and Native American woman to gain international recognition as a sculptor. Despite facing significant racial prejudice and personal challenges, her work has earned her a lasting legacy in the art world.



Early Life and Education

Edmonia Lewis was born in Greenbush, New York, in 1844, to a father of Haitian descent and a mother who was part Native American. After the death of both of her parents at a young age, Lewis was raised by her maternal relatives, the Chippewa people. Growing up amidst the struggles of racial and cultural tensions, Edmonia's early life was one of resilience.

She initially studied at Oberlin College in Ohio, where she was the subject of both admiration and prejudice. Despite these challenges, she excelled academically and found a passion for art. In 1863, she moved to Boston to pursue her artistic career, but it was in the next phase of her journey that she would find her true calling in sculpture.

Move to Boston and Artistic Development

In Boston, Lewis studied under renowned sculptor and educator Horace Mann and soon gained the attention of the city's art community. Her first major public work, *The Death of Cleopatra* (c. 1876), displayed her exceptional talent in marble sculpture, blending technical skill with evocative emotion. However, it was the highly detailed realism of her works and her ability to capture powerful themes from African

Themes of Race, Identity, and Empowerment

Many of Lewis's works address complex issues of race, freedom, and identity. As an African American and Native American woman in an era of intense racial discrimination and gender inequality, she used her art as a vehicle for social commentary and cultural expression. For example, *The Death of Cleopatra* (1876) was controversial not only because of its striking realism but also due to the fact that it represented a Black woman as the subject of classical mythology, an unprecedented move at the time.

Legacy and Influence

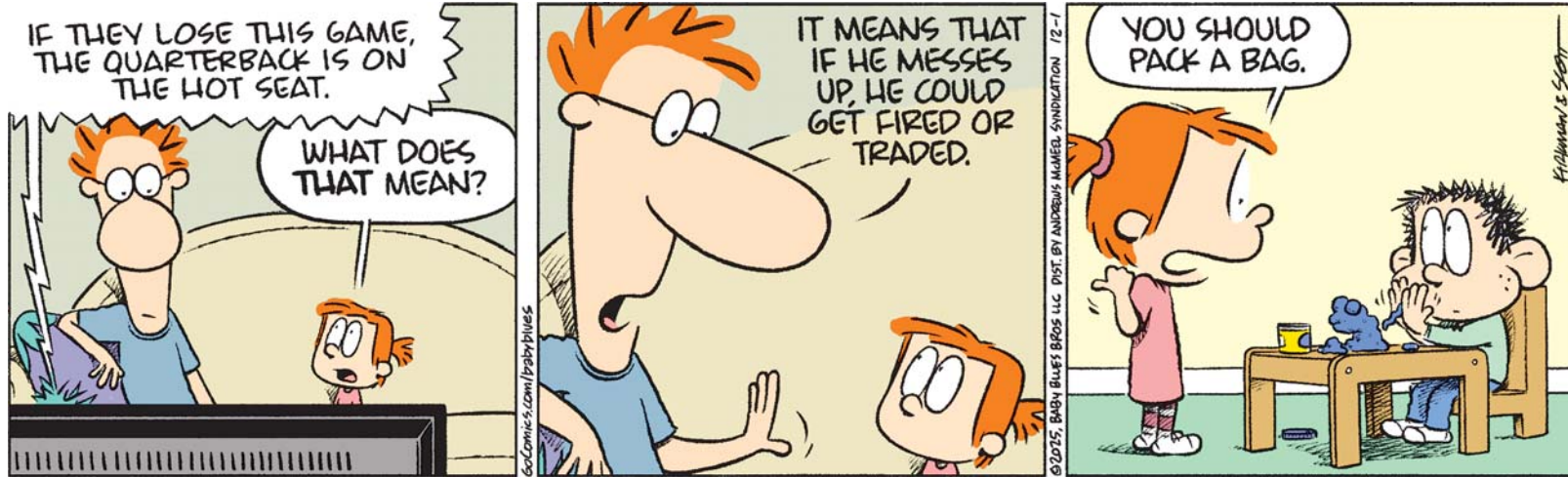
Despite her trailblazing career, Edmonia Lewis faced numerous obstacles due to her race and gender. She was often excluded from prominent art circles and struggled with both professional and personal setbacks. For instance, she faced criticism for being a woman in a male-dominated field, and her work was sometimes dismissed by critics who were uncomfortable with the themes she explored.

Nevertheless, her influence and reputation grew over time. Today, she is celebrated as one of the most important sculptors in American history. Her works continue to be recognized for their historical significance, their technical skill, and their contributions to the representation of Black and Indigenous peoples in the arts. Edmonia Lewis's commitment to self-expression and social justice has inspired generations of artists, especially those from marginalized communities, to push boundaries and redefine the possibilities of art.



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman