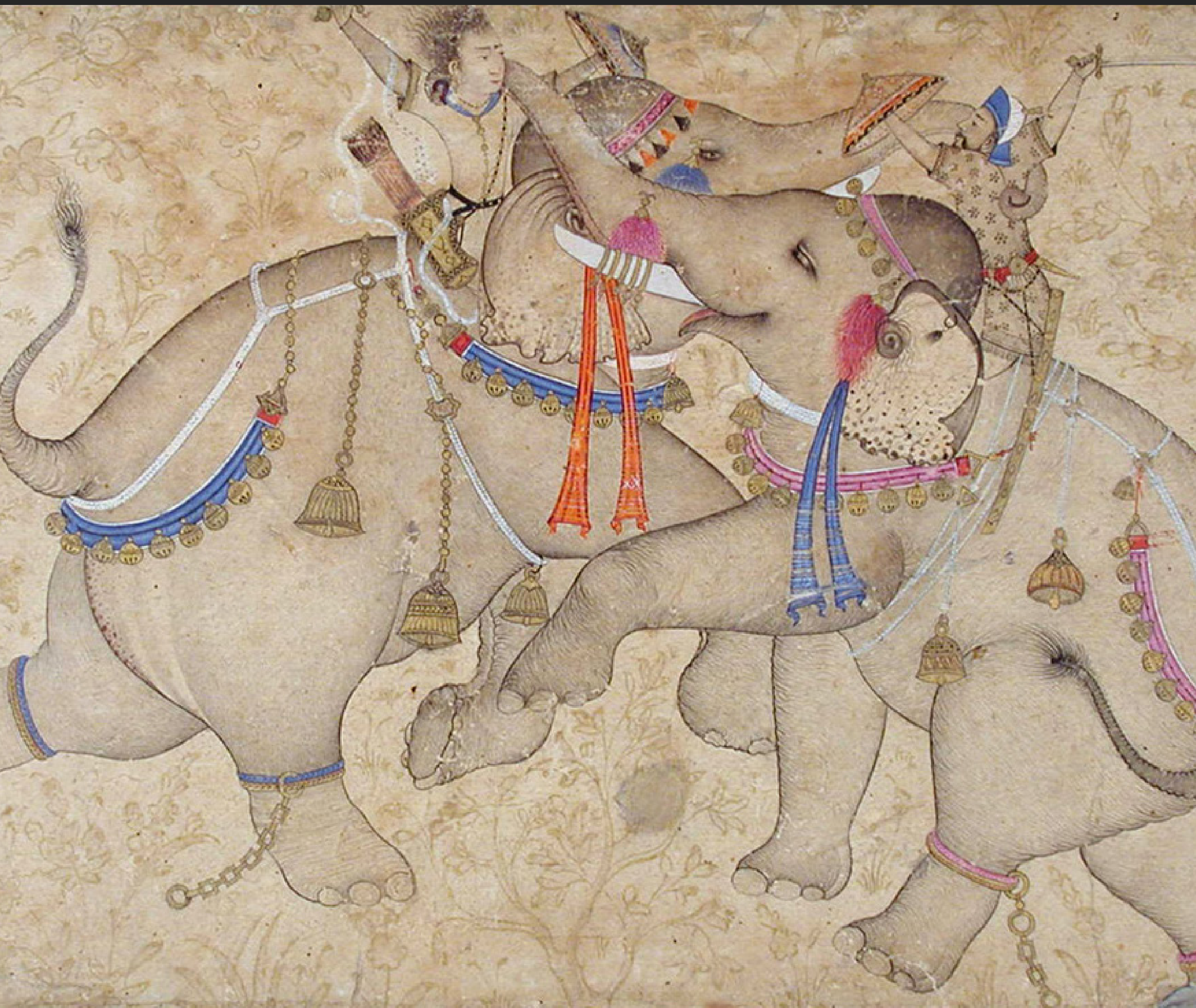


# MASTERPIECE MINUTE



Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute on Virtual SDMA. This week is my first as your host, Ladan Akbarnia, Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. I'll be delving into SDMA's collections of art from places such as India, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Drop in every Friday at 10am to pick up a new 60ish-second mini talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

[Music]

Artists at the courts of Hindu and Muslim rulers produced splendid paintings and studies of elephants, many of which were collected in albums, such as the subject of today's

podcast, believed to have been completed in the early 17th century in a part of southern India known as the Deccan. It is a drawing of a pair of elephants fighting, each guided by its respective driver or mahout, the person responsible for the animal's training and care.

The bells, ornaments, and ribbons on the elephants, the playful way in which each of them curls its trunk around the opposing driver's body, and the fact that there isn't a single drop of blood, all suggest that the combat is a staged spectacle. In addition to being trained for the battlefield and as executioners, elephants were taught to fight for court entertainment, as shown here. Such sport, however, could often end in tragedy.



Some trivia: The lightly-colored method of using ink and monochrome wash with bright colors and gold reserved only for embellishments like the tassels and bells is known as *nim qalam*, Persian for “half pen.” This technique was introduced from Iran to Mughal India in the late 16th to early 17th century and also adopted by artists in the Deccan, where this drawing was made.

Thank you for listening. This has been Ladan on Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA!