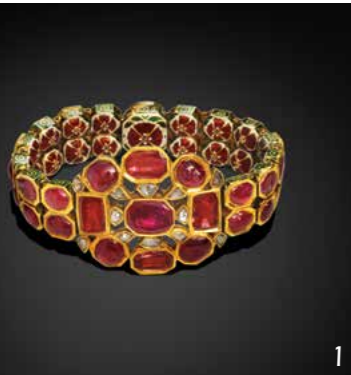


# Opulent Al Thani Collection Goes on Display in Paris

By Marie Chabrol



**1.** Bracelet, Northern India, Jaipur, circa 1750-1800. Diamonds, gold and rubies with enamel on reverse. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved. All photographs apart from image 4 by Prudence Cuming.

For hundreds of years, Mughal Emperors then Maharajas have commissioned extraordinary royal jewelry – firstly from Indian craftsmen, and later from French and European high-end jewelry houses.

Although many pieces are preserved in the most important museums around the world, no-one owns a more mesmerizing collection than that which belongs to Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani. For many years, he has gathered Indian jewelry from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These include Mughal empire masterpieces, famous Art Deco works by Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and Boucheron, and bold contemporary designers' creations inspired by the opulence of the Maharajas' lifestyle.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani is a member of Qatar's royal family. He is the son of Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-Thani (a brother of the country's former emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani) and a cousin of the current emir. An art collector and close friend of the royal family, he is known to have bought and restored Dudley House, the last magnificent Ward family residence in London.

After being on display at New York's

Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2014, and the V&A (Victoria and Albert) Museum in London in 2015, a part of the collection will be on display at the Grand Palais in Paris from March 29 until the June 5.

The exhibition, *From the Great Mughals to the Maharajas: Jewels from the Al Thani collection*, invites visitors to immerse themselves in some impressive jewelry traditions, such as the distinctive Kundan technique in which gemstones are set with gold foil between the stones and its mount. A popular variation is known as *Bikaneri* or *Jaipuri* jewelry where the reverse of the jewel is enameled with vivid colors and designs.

Visitors will discover more than 250 pieces, together with major works on loan from prestigious institutions and private collections. Famous and historic Indian diamonds from Golconda, spectacular and bold precious objects such as legendary pieces of jewelry will be publicly unveiled as an introduction to how Indian tastes and techniques have changed during the last five centuries.

The exhibition highlights many different dynastic gems: Golconda diamonds such as the Agra, the Idol's Eye or the Arcot II, Badakhshan spinels or Colombian emeralds – quite often hand-engraved



**2.** Crown (Sirpech). Nepal, circa 1900. Canvas, pearls, colored glass, diamonds, emeralds and rubies, silver, bird of paradise feathers. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013.

**3.** Nose ornament (Nath), India, circa 1925-1950. Gold, diamonds, pearls and emeralds. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013.



**4.** Archer ring (Shast), India, circa 1750-1800. Gold, néphrite, rubies and emeralds. Saint Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum. Photo: © National Hermitage Museum, Saint-Petersburg, 2017 - Vladimir Terebenin.

**5 and 5B.** Turban ornament (face and reverse), Northern India, circa 1675-1750. Gold, spinels, diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Photos: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved.

**6.** Flask for rose water (Gulabpash), Northern India, circa 1675-1725. Gold, rubies, emeralds and pearls. Engraved on the base 64 tola 4 masha and 64 tola 2 masha. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved.



**7.** Jahangir Cup, Northern India. Nephrite. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2015. All rights reserved.

**8.** Turban ornament (Sarpech), Northern India, circa 1875-1900, spinels dated from circa 1636-1640. Gold, diamonds, rubies and spinels. Photo: ©The Al Thani Collection 2013. All rights reserved. Shah Jahan ibn Jahangir Shah



with the name and the title of the Mughal Emperors – such as the impressive 30.61-carat Shah Jahan emerald.

Among the exceptional and refined pieces, the jade cup of the Emperor Jahangir hand-engraved with verses of Persian poetry, the tiger-headed finials from the throne of Tipu Sultan or a gem-set stool lent by the State Hermitage Museum which formed part of the original loot taken from the Mughal treasury by Nadir Shah, who invaded Delhi in 1739.

French visitors will be able to admire rare and important jewels commissioned by the Maharajas: the exceptional enamel Peacock aigrette made by Mellerio dits Meller, the renowned diamond necklace and ruby choker or the Tiger Eye turban ornament made for Jacques Cartier's close friends: the Maharajas of Patiala and Nawanagar. To close out your visit, outstanding creations by Cartier, JAR or Viren Bhagat set with Indian gems which, using contemporary techniques and materials, pay extraordinary tribute to Indian jewelers and traditional techniques. Save the dates, spring '17 in Paris will be dazzling! ♦