

Sheikh Nasser al-Sabah

Reflecting on my encounters with Sheikh Nasser, at wide intervals over the years, I am struck that in my memories he is always smiling, or laughing quietly at some absurdity of life, always with kindness.

He was an extraordinary collector in my own field of Moghul jewellery and jewelled artefacts, as the *Treasury of the World* exhibition of 2001 revealed. No exhibition before that had been exclusively devoted to the subject, and even specialists had never seen so many objects brought together to demonstrate the range and quality of the jewelled arts of the Moghuls. I vividly remember my intense frustration that the then V&A director could not find a suitable space in the museum when Sheikh Nasser offered this ground-breaking exhibition to us. But I remember equally vividly the intense excitement of being part of a small privileged group taken round the show before it opened at the British Museum by Manuel Keene, its curator. The early 17<sup>th</sup> century gold dagger and scabbard delicately inlaid with rubies, diamonds and emeralds, and the supremely important 249.3 carat spinel engraved with the titles of Timurid, Safavid and Moghul rulers, were among many outstanding objects.

The conference, and the publication that derived from it, were both sponsored by Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussah al-Sabah, in a typical act of generosity indicating their acute awareness of the importance of scholarship. In Sheikh Nasser's foreword to *Jewelled Arts of Mughal India*, the volume of conference papers, he expressed his strong desire that the exhibition and associated publication would generate an interest in the subject in the wider public. He also hoped that they would result in an 'enhancement and intensification of scholarly and artistic studies in the area'. In both, his hopes would be realised, perhaps more than he could have imagined.

Sue Stronge

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