



**THE FREER HOUSE**

An International Landmark... A World Class Lecture Series



71 East Ferry, Detroit, MI 48202  
313-664-2500



# From Traveler to Aesthete: Charles Lang Freer and Indian Art



**Zayn al-'Abidin**

Artist

Hanuman returns the mountain with the four healing plants to the Himalayas.

Folio from the Ramayana of Valmiki, vol. 2., South Asian, Mughal period, late 16th century, Freer Gallery of Art

**by Brinda Kumar, PhD**

Assistant Curator

Department of Modern and Contemporary Art  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

**Sunday, June 4, 2017, 2:00 pm**

LECTURE

**Detroit Institute of Arts**

**Marvin and Betty Danto Lecture Hall**

FREE with DIA admission

**3:30-5 PM Reception & Tours**

Freer House

71 East Ferry Street, Detroit

\$10 General Admission

\$5 Students

\$5 FAAC or Freer House Members

(pay at the door)

**Co-Sponsor**

Friends of Asian Arts & Cultures (FAAC), DIA

For information contact Rose Foster at:

**313-664-2509 or [rmfoster@wayne.edu](mailto:rmfoster@wayne.edu)**

Detroit industrialist Charles Lang Freer's passion for India influenced the formation of one of the finest early collections of Asian art in America. Freer's visionary aesthetic ideas positioned Indian art as "fine art" in an era when it was largely relegated in the West to being of only ethnographic or decorative interest.

When Freer planned his first trip to Asia in 1894, his initial focus and first stop was India. His interest in India may have been sparked by his encounter with Swami Vivekananda, whom Freer met during Vivekananda's visit to the

U.S. earlier that year, while his itinerary was in keeping with similar travels by other American collectors such as Isabella Stewart Gardner.

Although he visited India only once, Freer would consider Indian art and culture to be "an important link in the chain" as he developed a collection of Asian and Near Eastern art. This lecture will situate Charles Lang Freer's seminal and enduring passion for India and Indian art within his larger aesthetic and collecting project that culminated in the creation of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

**A special Indian classical dance performance will follow the lecture.**

**Details and map on back.**

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## FOLLOWING THE LECTURE

### Special Performance by Sreyashi Dey

Immediately following the lecture by Dr. Kumar, renowned dancer and choreographer Sreyashi Dey will present a short dance, inspired by a series of paintings collected by Charles L. Freer and based on the ancient epic poem the *Ramayana*. Her performance, in the classical Indian Odissi style, has been created especially for this event.

Ms. Dey is one of the most highly acclaimed dancers of the Odissi style in the U.S.. Based in Ann Arbor, she has performed across the U.S., Europe, Asia, and recently at the Embassy of India, in Washington, D.C.. Ms. Dey is founder and artistic director of the arts organizations, Aksahra and Srishti Dances of India.



SREYASHI DEY



BRINDA KUMAR

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Brinda Kumar** is an Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. She received her PhD in Art History from Cornell University, where her dissertation focused on the history of collecting Indian Art in America in the early 20th century, including the pioneering collection assembled by Charles Lang Freer. At Cornell, she worked on the exhibition *Ramayana in the Arts of South and Southeast Asia*. Most recently Dr. Kumar helped lead two inaugural exhibitions in 2016 at the MET Breuer museum, *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible* and *Nasreen Mohamedi*, a retrospective exhibit on the significant 20th century Indian artist. Her scholarship has included fellowships at Cornell, the Frick Collection and the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Galleries.

## THE FREER HOUSE, MERRILL PALMER SKILLMAN INSTITUTE



C.L. Freer, Alvin Langdon Coburn, 1909 Freer Gallery of Art Archives

**Charles Lang Freer** (1854-1919) made his fortune in railroad freight car manufacturing in Detroit. His remarkable shingle style residence on East Ferry Ave. was designed in 1892 by Wilson Eyre, Jr. Freer's home contained one of the world's greatest collections of Asian and American art, that include paintings by Whistler and his famed Peacock Room. Freer bequeathed his collection to the Smithsonian where it is housed today at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.



photo by ALEXANDER VERTIKOFF

**The Freer House** (1892) is ranked as one of the most important historic buildings in Michigan. Its fine architectural detail and rich cultural history are both locally and internationally significant. The Freer House is also recognized for its role in child and family development as the home of the renowned Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute since 1920.

The Freer House membership organization works to preserve this landmark through public events, tours and fundraising for restoration. Recent accomplishments include the reproduction of original paintings for the main hall and parlor and a new historically appropriate roof. Current goals include the courtyard garden and the Whistler Gallery restoration projects.

**For information contact:** William Colburn, Director  
william.colburn@wayne.edu or 313-664-2511

### Reception Location: **FREER HOUSE**

71 East Ferry St., Detroit, MI 48202  
(One block north of the DIA)



**Parking** is available behind the Freer House. Travel south on John R. to access WSU Lot 35. Pay \$7.50 at the gate with credit or debit card.