

Unknown (North India, Mughal)
A Prince with Ladies on a Terrace, ca. 1735
opaque watercolor on paper, heightened with gold
9 1/2 x 13 5/16 in.
Bequest of Mrs. Horace W. Frost
91.15.36

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Miniature painting in the 18th century Mughal court experienced renewed patronage under Muhammad Shah, even though the political climate lacked stability. Paintings of this period often reflect melancholic or romantic themes from contemporary poetry. Here, a simple composition is rendered with beautiful surface detail in the architecture and figures. The faces are blank, so it is left to gesture to impart meaning. The composition and attention to detail reference Mughal painting, rooted in the present but increasingly concerned with its own past.

DISCUSS

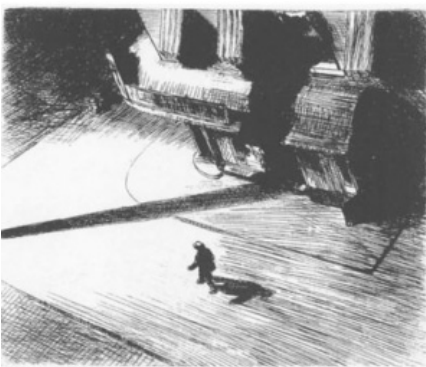
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Architectural features set the stage for this miniature painting. A prince dressed in richly patterned pants lounges outdoors while attendants fan him and play music. Consider how the setting influences the mood and meaning of the painting. How would you describe the building in the background? If it was a hospital building, would that change your reading of the scene? What if this scene took place in the midst of a busy public square?

The setting of a painting can play an important role in creating a mood and telling story. Take a look at these artworks and discuss the role played in each by the setting:



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Edward Hopper (American, 1882–1967)
Night Shadows, 1921, published 1924
etching on paper
6 7/8 x 8 1/8 in.
M.2003.3.6



Winslow Homer (American, 1836–1910)
Children on a Fence, 1874
watercolor over pencil on paper
7 3/16 x 11 7/8 in.
41.2



Chester Harding (American, 1792–1866)
Portrait of Amos Lawrence, Benefactor, 1846
oil on canvas
81 15/16 x 52 3/8 in.
Commissioned by the Trustees of Williams College
1846.1



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CREATE

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This miniature painting combines elegant architectural detail with a decadent outdoor scene. A prince dressed in richly patterned garments lounges on a day bed while attendants fan him and play music. Would you see this scene differently if it had a different background? How would the scene look if it was set in a dark and smoky room? Or a bustling city?

Look around your school or home to find an interesting location for a photo shoot. Gather some friends to pose for you. Together, think about a story that could take place in your chosen location. Take a series of photos of the group in that setting that tell the story.

Compare your photos with your classmates'. What settings did they chose? How did the choice of setting influence the images and stories? For an extra challenge, try composing a *ghazal*, (www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5781) to accompany your photos. A *ghazal* is a poetic form that was popular at the time *A Prince with Ladies on a Terrace* was made and influenced many painters of the period.