



Govardhan (North India, Mughal)
Two Courtiers, ca. 1610–15
opaque watercolor on paper, heightened with gold
5 1/2 x 3 5/8 in.
Museum purchase, Karl E. Weston Memorial Fund
76.3.B

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Govardhan (North India, Mughal)
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Studios producing Mughal manuscripts resembled complex and organized assembly lines. Copyists, colorists, gilders, calligraphers, pagers, binders, and others worked under the direction of master painters to produce works of combined effort. Govardhan, a court artist, painted this small fragment of the border to an album page for the Mughal leader Jahangir, the descendant of the legendary ruler Akbar. Margin pages such as this were meant to be replaceable, protecting the edges of the album from too much handling when the sheets were turned. The margin pages were often as carefully painted as the central portion, hinting at the quality of the overall page they decorated.



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DISCUSS

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Take a close look at this painting, rolling your cursor over the image to magnify. What can you tell about the people depicted here just by looking?

- What details do you see?
- How has the artist used lines? Color?
- Does the image look realistic? Why or why not?
- How are the figures dressed?
- Who do you think these people are? What do you see that leads you to that conclusion?

This painting depicts two courtiers, men who served as advisors and companions to kings and emperors in their royal courts. In Mughal studios, teams of copyists, colorists, gilders, calligraphers, pagers, and binders worked under the direction of master painters to produce works of a combined effort.

When have you worked in a team? Was it more difficult or easier than working alone? Why? Do you think the artists who worked in these studios faced the same issues?



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CREATE

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This small painting of two courtiers was pasted into a book or album of images made for a Mughal leader. Studios that produced paintings like *Two Courtiers* were often organized into complex assembly lines. Copyists, colorists, gilders, calligraphers, pagers, and binders worked in teams under the direction of master painters to produce works of a combined effort.

Follow these steps to make a collaborative class or family album.

1. Each person can use pencil to create a one-page drawing to represent him or herself. Add colors and patterns with colored pencils, marker, or watercolors.
2. Collect all of the images together into a pile and punch two or three holes near the left edge to begin forming your album.
3. As a group, brainstorm ideas for an album cover. What text and images would best represent this project and your group as a whole? Stiff paper, cardstock, and light cardboard all make good covers.
4. On a new piece of paper, each person will use a pencil to draft an illustration of a memorable moment or occasion from the past year. Leave a blank border around the edges 1 inch wide on each side and at the top and 2 inches wide across the bottom of the page.
5. Before adding any color, exchange your drawing with someone else.
6. Add color to your partner's drawing, still leaving the border blank.
7. Exchange drawings again, this time with a different person, if possible. Now use color and pattern to create a decorative border 1 inch wide around the four sides of the drawing, leaving the 1 inch band at the very bottom of the page empty.
8. Exchange drawings one last time. Write a one-sentence caption in the blank band at the bottom of the page, asking the original artist for more information, if needed.
9. Collect the pages in a pile, adding them to the portrait pages and hole punching them in the same place. Hold the pages and cover together with ribbon or binder rings.
10. Reflect on the process of creating the album.
 - What was it like to create your own page from beginning to end?
 - How did that experience compare with the assembly line method of steps 4 - 8?
 - What about the cooperative decision-making that went into designing the cover? How were those decisions made?
 - What are some of the benefits of each working method?
 - What was most challenging?
 - What did each individual contribute to the final group project?