



Inv. no. 46/1980

CAT. 5. A PALACE WITH HAREM GARDENS

INDIA, FAIZABAD; C. 1765

Faiz Allah painted this fantastic prospect, which shows a harem (zenana) in an imaginary palace in the foreground. Related complexes did in fact exist and can still be found in India.

The prince on an elephant can be seen in the distance on the horizon, his private paradise well protected by walls and female guards armed with canes. His concubines can be viewed as earthly pendants to the houris of the heavenly Paradise, the eternal virgins whose only purpose is to delight believers.

The complex's various courtyards hold gardens organized according to geometrical principles, with channels and fountains as key elements. In the middle ground, framed by two tributaries, are other gardens, but also random vegetation, while a more natural landscape dominates in the distance.

