PARKED TIME

Friday, August 11, 2017 – Chandigarh (India) Government Museum and Art Gallery

30.749160,76.787485

Here, time stands as still as the oppressive tropical air. The partition walls, the wallpaper, the vitrines, the lighting, the armchairs: nothing appears to have changed since the museum opened back in 1968, nothing seems to have shifted. Even the old Sikh, with his long, white beard, guarding the Department of Indian Modernism seems to be a part of the furniture. With his slumped head and his lanky limbs, he resembles Lehmbruck's *Seated Youth*.

His posture has nothing accidental about it; even when he slumbers he does not look like a fatigued guard. He has not nodded off in an armchair, he has retired; he does not just doze, he has taken on the pose of the doze. It is in the order of things that he has not simply taken off his slippers, but has placed them tidily under his chair. He's probably aware that the position of his feet mimics that of the *Pilgrim Guru Nanak* traversing the landscape right behind him. The elder Sikh has dropped off the clock of daily life; he has slipped from the fleeting realm of the visitor into the timeless world of museum pieces – for the duration of his working hours as a slumbering guard, at any rate.

To his right is an empty Bräuer chair: Should one take that as an invitation to sit down and observe the guard? Is it any surprise that the fan on his left is not whirring? Sculptures do not need a cooling wind.

Translated from German by Gunvanthi Balaram.

The German version of this text has first been published in *Kunstbulletin 10/2017*, p. 192.

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