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A detailed watercolor painting of the entrance to the Palace of Amber. The central feature is a large, ornate arched doorway with a dark interior. Above the doorway is a decorative pediment with intricate carvings. The walls on either side of the doorway are covered in a grid of smaller, similarly styled arches and niches, each containing a different carved or painted motif. The architecture is characterized by its warm, earthy tones of ochre, brown, and red, with some areas of white and blue. The top of the building features several domes with golden finials. The foreground shows a simple, light-colored ground with a few steps leading up to the entrance.

Edwin Lord Weeks

The Entrance of the Palace of Amber, Rajasthan, c. 1887

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EDWIN LORD WEEKS
(Boston 1849 – Paris 1903)

AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE PALACE OF AMBER, RAJASTHAN, C. 1887

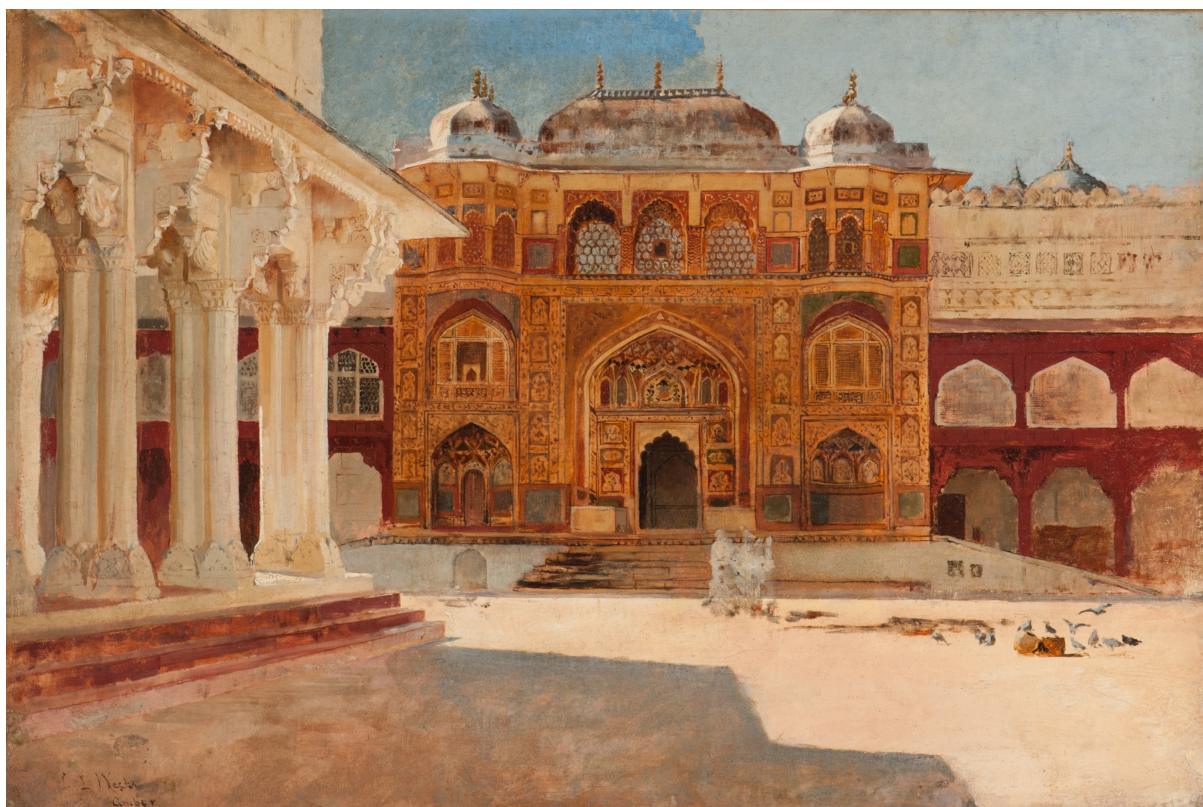
Signed lower left: 'E. L. Weeks. Amber'.

Oil on canvas
51 x 76 cm; 20 x 29 3/4 in.

Provenance

Barridoff Galleries, August 2000;
Private Collection, Spain.

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The painting looks across a sunlit courtyard toward a richly decorated gateway rising through three storeys of carved and painted ornament, ochre and gold picked out with red, blue and green, to a cluster of domed chhatris, the small domed pavilions typical of Rajput and Mughal rooflines, crowned with gilt finials. A wide flight of steps leads up to a deep, pointed archway, flanked by smaller arched niches with pierced stone jali screens, an openwork lattice cut to filter light and air, and shallow figurative panels set into the surrounding wall. To the left, in shadow, a colonnade of white marble columns runs along a raised gallery; its long diagonal shadow cuts across the pale stone paving of the courtyard floor. An arcade continues the composition to the right of the gateway, its own arches receding into shade. In the foreground, a small group of pigeons gathers near a low stone kerb; the canvas is signed, in the shadow at lower left, 'E. L. Weeks. Amber.'

The scene is almost certainly the Ganesh Pol. This ornately frescoed gateway, which was built under Raja Jai Singh I (r.1621-1667), separates the fort's outer courtyards from the private royal apartments at Amber.

Weeks made this study, and others like it, en plein air during his second expedition to India in 1887, working directly in the courtyard itself. A closely related architectural study, painted the same year and possibly this very canvas, is described in the Edwin Lord Weeks Catalogue Raisonné Project as having formed the basis for one of Weeks's major exhibition paintings, *The Arrival of Prince Humbert, the Rajah, at the Palace of Amber*,¹ completed the following year and sold at Sotheby's New York in 1998.² In that catalogue entry, figures are described as having been 'ghosted in' to the smaller study, later completed in the finished work as a group assisting Prince Humbert down from his elephant; the sky, too, was tried in two distinct blues before Weeks settled on the darker for the final canvas. Whether the present picture is that specific study, or a further, closely related version of the same view, remains uncertain.

¹Ellen K. Morris, catalogue entry, Edwin Lord Weeks Catalogue Raisonné Project, originally prepared for Barridoff Galleries, August 2000: Architectural Study for 'The Arrival of Prince Humbert, the Rajah, at the Palace of Amber,' painted 1887.

²*The Arrival of Prince Humbert, the Rajah, at the Palace of Amber*, oil on canvas, 99.1 x 132.1 cm, signed and stamped with the artist's Moghul device. Provenance: Durand-Ruel, Paris; M. Knoedler & Co., New York; John J. Hill; Mary H. Hill estate sale, Parke-Bernet, 20 November 1947, lot 97 (as *Arrival of the Great Mogul*); Boccolino Collection; Sotheby's New York, 7 May 1998, lot 21, sold \$1,157,500; acquired by the present owner. Offered, Bonhams London, 26 October 2020, lot 18 (estimate £500,000–700,000), withdrawn.

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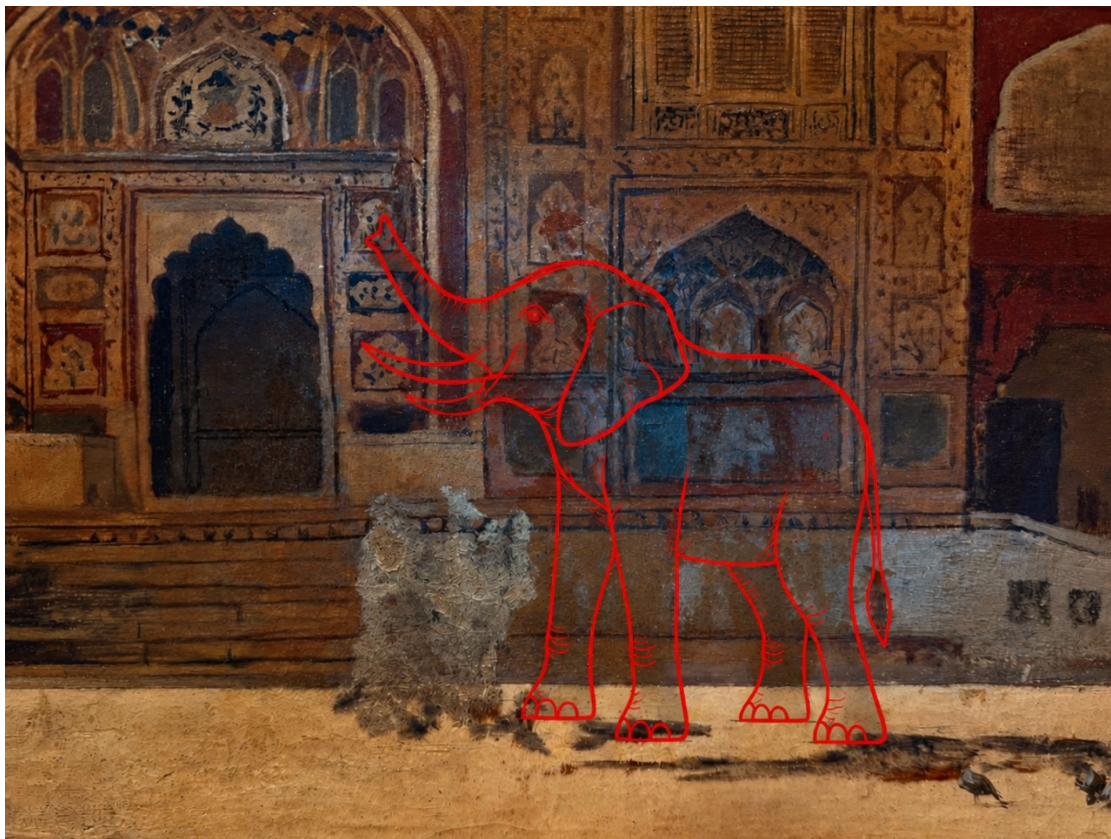
Amber Fort, on a hillside above Jaipur, was begun under Raja Man Singh I in the late sixteenth century and enlarged by his successors over the following century, its honey-coloured sandstone and white marble combining Rajput and Mughal architectural vernacular in a manner Weeks, like many Western visitors of his generation, found deeply expressive. The court abandoned Amber for Jaipur itself in 1728, a date Weeks gives in his own account, leaving the older city and palace largely deserted but for a few retainers by the time of his visit. Weeks describes the final approach as too steep for the carriage that had brought the party from Jaipur; at that point, as he wrote, “we found an elephant waiting for us,” which carried them up the last stretch of the road to the gateway itself.³ He returned to Amber’s courts and gateways repeatedly throughout his career, making a direct comparison, in his own account of the journey, between Amber’s architecture and the Alhambra, describing both as embodying what he called the Arabian idea of a kingly retreat. Amber Fort is today inscribed, together with five other Rajasthani hill forts, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under the designation Hill Forts of Rajasthan.

A technical examination of the canvas by Hamish Dewar Fine Art Conservation in September 2026 recorded some condition issues typical of a plein-air study of this date: undulations in the canvas requiring restretching, a stable pattern of raised drying craquelure, and retouchings, now discoloured, which appear to cover small losses and some original paint. Examination under ultraviolet light also revealed a pentimento in the courtyard immediately before the steps⁴, in which the spectral outline of an elephant can be discerned, subsequently painted out. If this reading is correct, it would suggest that Weeks first considered placing an elephant, and perhaps its attendants, within this very study, before setting the idea aside in favour of the empty courtyard as the picture now shows it, a concept he would return to and develop fully the following year in the arriving elephant procession of *The Arrival of Prince Humbert*.

³Edwin Lord Weeks, *From the Black Sea through Persia and India*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896, p. 240.

⁴Hamish Dewar Fine Art Conservation, Examination / Treatment Report, Record No. exam17766, 4 September 2026, plate 11 (“Pentimente, UV light”).

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Ultraviolet photograph of the present painting (Hamish Dewar Fine Art Conservation, 2026), with the proposed elephant pentimento outlined by Federico Bonezzi, Colnaghi London.

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The Arrival of Prince Humbert, the Rajah, at the Palace of Amber, oil on canvas, 99.1 x 132.1 cm, signed and stamped lower left with the artist's Moghul device. Private Collection.

Weeks was born in Boston in 1849 and went to Paris in the early 1870s, where he studied under Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904) and Léon Bonnat (1833–1922) at the École des Beaux-Arts. He sent two works to the Royal Academy in London in 1878, but later exhibited almost exclusively at the Salon de Paris, of which he became a regular and decorated presence: an Honourable Mention in 1884, a Third Medal in 1889, a Gold Medal in 1900, and, in 1896, the Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. He travelled to India three times between 1882 and 1893, building up over these successive journeys a large stock of studies and, increasingly, photographs, which he used as working material back in his Paris studio. He also contributed writing and drawings to Harper's and Scribner's magazines, and wrote a book on Moorish art. He died in Paris on 16 November 1903.

Set beside *The Arrival of Prince Humbert*, the finished Salon-scale picture it almost certainly informed, this small canvas belongs to the working method behind Weeks's major exhibition paintings rather than to their public face: a record made on the spot, in the actual heat and glare of the courtyard, of a single fall of shadow across sunlit stone. Whereas the larger

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painting stages an event, a Rajah's elephant procession arriving in state, this picture records only the setting that awaited it, empty of ceremony, its steps and archway holding the promise of an event not yet underway.

Bibliography

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Weeks, Edwin Lord. *From the Black Sea through Persia and India*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896.

Archival and conservation documents

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Morris, Ellen K. Catalogue entry, Edwin Lord Weeks Catalogue Raisonné Project. Originally prepared for Barridoff Galleries, August 2000.

Auction and sale records

The Arrival of Prince Humbert, the Rajah, at the Palace of Amber. Provenance: Durand-Ruel, Paris; M. Knoedler & Co., New York; John J. Hill; Mary H. Hill estate sale, Parke-Bernet, 20 November 1947, lot 97 (as Arrival of the Great Mogul); Boccolino Collection; Sotheby's New York, 7 May 1998, lot 21, sold \$1,157,500; acquired by the present owner. Offered, Bonhams London, 26 October 2020, lot 18, withdrawn.

Reference works

"Weeks, Edwin (Lord) or Weecks." *Bénézit Dictionary of Artists*. Oxford University Press, published online 31 October 2011, updated 2 October 2012.

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