

Descriptions of Map Sections

Section 1 introduces the exhibition by narrating MacKenzie's early life, the historic uniqueness of India, and the rise of British control of the country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These three components intersected in 1892, when an art dealer in Calcutta commissioned MacKenzie to travel to India and create a series of sketches and paintings depicting big game hunting.

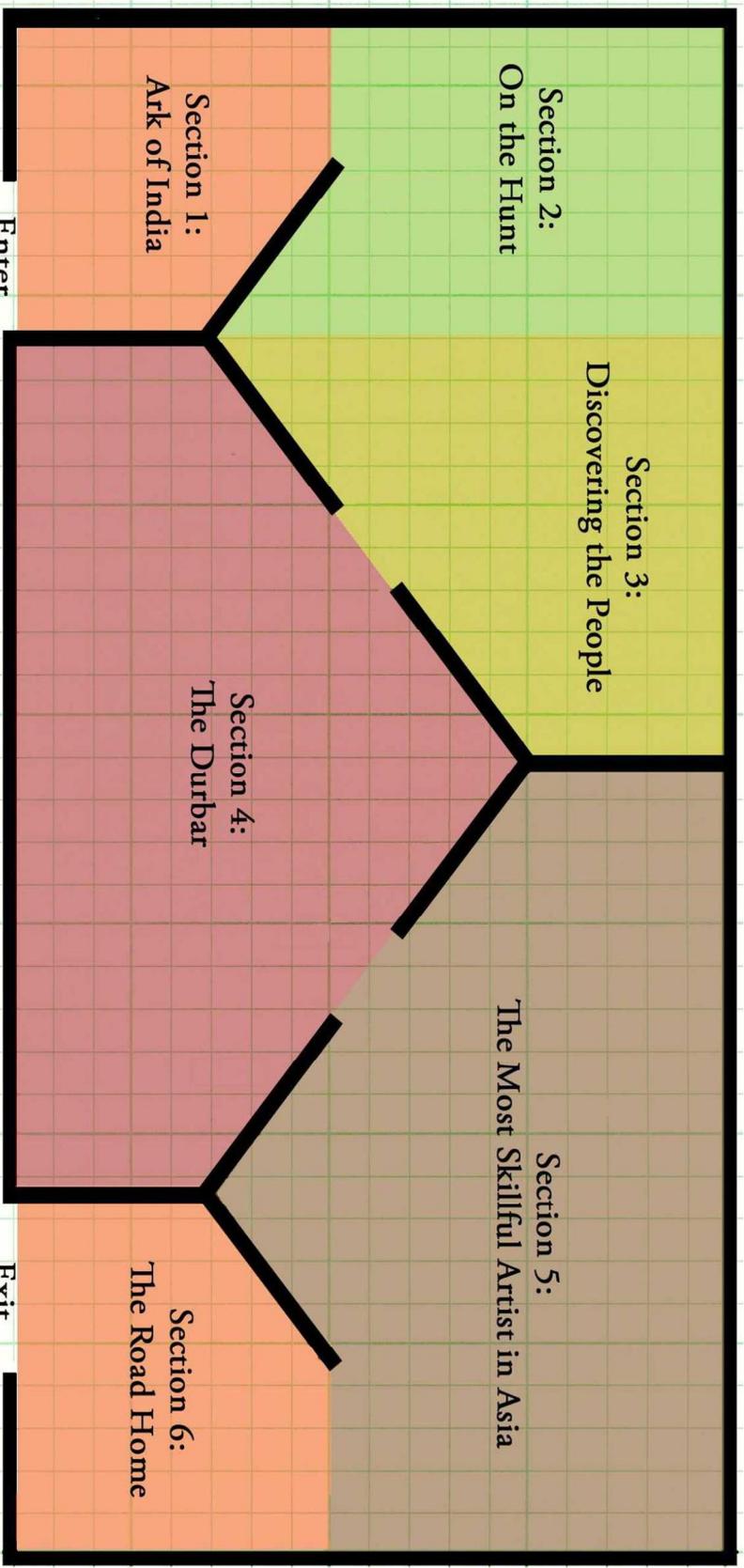
Section 2 finds the artist traveling through the jungles of central and northern India, witnessing dangerous expeditions hunting tigers, buffalo, and wild boar. The artist also spent a great deal of time with the rulers, called Maharajahs, of several princely states in India. His commission lasted from 1893-96.

Section 3 discusses MacKenzie's decision to remain in India after his commission ended. His days of chasing tigers were over. Instead, the artist immersed himself in an exploration of the people of India. He traveled throughout the country pursuing this personal ambition. He climbed mountains along India's Northern border, swam in the sacred Ganges River, and marveled at the captivating beauty of the Taj Mahal. His artwork depicting the daily lives of Indians was popular and earned him his greatest commission.

Section 4 details this commission. In 1902, British officials selected MacKenzie as one of the official artists to depict the Delhi Coronation Durbar. This elaborate event marked the coronation of King Edward VII. MacKenzie's subsequent mural of the event was eighteen feet long and almost ten feet high. It featured more than three hundred high-detailed figures. This section of the exhibition features a replica of the mural.

Section 5 finds MacKenzie pursuing greater exposure for his work. He traveled to London and Paris, exhibiting his paintings of India. His works were well-received, but did not result in the financial rewards he had hoped for. In 1913, after an absence of almost 25 years, MacKenzie and his wife decided to return to America.

Section 6 narrates MacKenzie's long road home to Mobile, which included several stops between New York and North Carolina where he offered lectures on Indian art and society. Upon returning to Mobile, he soon found other commissions to occupy his time. Roderick MacKenzie is best known for his depictions of Birmingham Steel Mills in the 1920s and his beautiful murals in the capitol dome in Montgomery. But his experience in India remained with him for the rest of his life and he frequently returned to his time there as a source of inspiration. MacKenzie spent more than a decade in India, a place he described as exotic, dangerous, and colorful. Through his time in the country, he earned a deep and abiding respect for its people, perhaps because they were not so different from the artist himself.



Ark of India: An Alabama Artist Explores Southern Asia

Section Layout Bird's Eye Map

