

paramparik **karigar**

an association of craftspersons

Exhibition of art and craft

2014

An exhibition of select paintings and sculptures by traditional master craftspersons

November 30 to December 3, 2014
Coomaraswamy Hall, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya

At Paramparik Karigar, it has always been our endeavour to uplift the heritage and tradition of Indian craftsmanship and to create awareness about our country's vast expression of art forms.

This time, for the 5th consecutive year, Paramparik Karigar will hold an exhibition that will display 13 select forms of traditional Indian art by 13 artists who are pioneers in their own genre. We aim to provide these traditional masters with a renewed platform to exhibit their work.

The following art forms will be represented:

- Patashilpa from Bengal
- Ceramics from Maharashtra
- Pattachitra from Odisha
- Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh
- Phad paintings from Rajasthan
- Bronze sculptures from Karnataka
- Miniature paintings from Rajasthan
- Mata ni pachedi from Gujarat
- Mithila paintings from Bihar
- Stone carving from Odisha
- Gadwakam from Chhattisgarh
- Pichhwai paintings from Rajasthan
- Gond tribal art from Madhya Pradesh

Let us celebrate the diversity of our heritage and acknowledge the complexity and detail of our tradition. Let us understand that traditional art is an expression of our country's legacy. By supporting and elevating it, we are keeping this tradition alive.

Cover image: Gadwakam by Suresh Waghmare

Patashilpa

West Bengal

This is a painting drawn on a piece of cloth known as 'Pati' or 'Patta'. The brush used is made of a bamboo stick and goat hair. Colours are obtained from natural herbs & plants.

The Patuas of West Bengal are traditional artists who specialise in painting narrative scrolls. They also sing the songs to accompany their unrolling. In the olden days, the scroll painters would wander from village to village, seeking patronage by singing their own compositions while unraveling painted scrolls on sacred and secular themes.

In West Bengal there are five folk forms of Patashilpa:

a. Chau dance of Purulia

b. Jhumur Song and dance of Bankura and Purulia

c. Gambhira and Domni of Malda

d. Baul and Fakira of Nadia

e. Patachitra of Purba and Paschim Medinipur

Today, scrolls by the young painters venture even further into current affairs, history and other subjects outside their tradition.

Patashilpa is one of the ancient folk art traditions of Bengal and dates back to over five thousand years. Their style is reminiscent of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa as also the Ajanta Caves.

These scrolls are painted with vegetable dyes fixed with a vegetable gum on paper. The panels are sewn together and fabric from old saris is glued to the back to strengthen the scroll. Individual paintings may resemble single panels from same scroll stories, or independent images of wild animals and scenes from the artist's imagination.

Anwar Chitrakar, born in 1980, is a traditional Patua painter from Paschimbanga and has been practising the art for 20 years. He has participated in many group exhibitions in India and abroad, including the Berlin Festival in April 2012 and the Namaste India Festival in Japan in October 2012. He won the State Award (West Bengal) in 2002 and the National Award in 2006. His painting of Goddess Durga is a part of the fabulous Art collection by leading Artists at the Mumbai International Airport.



Debi Durga

Acrylic on canvas I 30”x 42”

This patua shows how Lord Ram invoked the blessings of Goddess Durga by performing a puja in order to destroy Raavan. Today we celebrate this victory as Durga puja, as Goddess Durga symbolises power.

Pottery

Maharashtra

Pottery is perhaps the oldest craft in the world.

Traditional folk pottery has always been a part of Indian life and ceremonies. From pre-historic times, there has been an abundance of beautifully fashioned utilitarian pottery. It is one of the most ancient crafts surviving today. Different varieties of pottery like red, black, buff and grey were often painted with black and white pigments or decorated with geometrical incisions. Domestic pottery comes in a bewildering profusion of attractive shapes and sizes.

The process of pottery involves modelling, shaping of clay, drying and firing. Clay can be categorized as primary clay which include china clay and bentonite and secondary clay which include common clay, red clay, ball clay and fire clay. The potter throws the painstakingly kneaded clay onto the centre of the wheel, rounding it off, and then spinning the wheel around with a stick. As the whirling gathers momentum, he begins to shape the clay into the required form. When finished, he skillfully severs the shaped bit from the rest of the clay with a string. Though the firing is done in an improvised kiln, the quality and beauty remains unaffected. Intricate glaze is made from a mixed composition, fired to form a vitreous material with a glazed surface, and then coloured by different mineral substances.

Pottery is generally classified as earthenware, stoneware and porcelain, in relation to the clay used and the firing temperatures.

Abhay Pandit trained in the art of working with ceramics under the tutelage of his father Bramhadeo Ram Pandit, a founding member of Paramparik Karigar, who received the Shilp Guru Award in 2008 and the Padma Shri in 2013. He holds a degree in ceramics from the J.J. School of Art. He trained under Ray Mecker in Pondicherry and has created textures with wire art techniques and tools. In 2009, he studied Raku smoke pottery with David Roberts in Holmfirth, U.K. He received the Charles Wallace India Trust Award from the British Council in 2005 to study pottery in U.K. In 2013, he undertook a residency at the Fuping Pottery Art village in China.



Smoke-fired Vessel

Pottery I Height 15” x diameter 12”

The pot is made on the potters wheel, and fired at 1000 degrees centigrade. The patterns are carved with a toothpick on a glazed coating which creates a play of lines depicting motion and illusion.

Pattachitra

Odisha

The folk paintings of Odisha have flourished around the great religious centers of Puri, Konarak and Bhubaneswar. Traditionally, the painters are known as 'chitrakars'. Their painting, the 'pattachitra', resembles the old murals of that region, dating back to the 5th century BC. The best work is found in and around Puri, especially in the village of Raghurajpur.

Pattachitra is a traditional craft, where the artisans delicately paint on primed cloth or 'patta' in the finest detail. The 'chitrakars' (artists) prepare, what looks like a hard card paper using layers of old Dhoti cloth and stick them together with a mixture of chalk and tamarind seed gum, which gives the surface a smooth leathery finish, especially after it is rubbed with a conch shell. The theme is sketched with a pencil, then outlined with a fine brush using vivid earth and stone colours obtained from natural sources, like the white pigment prepared from conch shells, yellow from orpiment, red from cinnabar and black from lamp soot. After completion, the painting is held over red hot charcoals and lac mixed with resin powder is sprinkled over the surface. When this melts, it is rubbed over the entire surface to give a coating of lac.

A recent modification in Pattachitra paintings is the division of the Patta into a row full of squares with the high-point of the story in the larger centre square and various events portrayed in the other squares.

Themes usually depict the Jagannath temple with its three deities - Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra and the famous Rath Yatra festival. These paintings were originally substitutes for worship on days when the temple doors were shut for the 'ritual bath' of the deity. Many Pattachitra paintings are from the ancient Indian texts based on Vishnu and Krishna. The paintings are of various shapes and sizes.

Pranab Narayan Das has learnt the art of Pattachitra Painting from the National Award Winner Late Shri Arjuna Maharana. Having been associated with Paramparik Karigar from 1992, Pranab Das has exhibited his creations at Mumbai,Chennai,Bangalore,Ahmedabad as well as in New York, USA. Jamaat Art Gallery has had his exhibits in 2010 and 2011. Most recently he has been honoured with the State Award Citation 'Shree Jagannath Chetana Gabeshana Pratisthan' in Puri, Odisha.



Gaja Uddharana Besha (Lord Jagannath)
Painting on Tussar Silk I 44” x 34”

This painting depicts a story from the puranas on how Lord Jagannath saved Gajendra the elephant King from the attack of an alligator on a full moon day in the month of “Magha” (January / February).

Kalamkari

Andhra Pradesh

The Andhra Pradesh Kalamkari evolved with the patronage of the Mughals and the Golkonda Sultanate. Kalamkari art was once called 'Vrathapani'. There are two distinct styles of kalamkari – Machilipatnam and Kalahasti. Machilipatnam style is made at Pedana near Machilipatnam.

Kalamkari is the art of painting on cloth and derives its name from the word 'kalam', meaning pen or brush. Traditionally, Kalamkari paintings were used to decorate temple chariots used in religious processions or stretched behind the idols of Gods. The designs usually have a main central panel and are surrounded by smaller blocks arranged in rows which depict the major scenes from a legend. It may also include verses from original texts written in black ink beneath the rows.

Traditionally, the craftsmen of Srikalahasti painted stories and scenes derived from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which include the story of Krishna and themes from the environment like the Tree of Life.

The cloth to be painted is dipped in a mixture of milk and 'harda' and dried in the sun. The design is outlined on the cloth with a bamboo sliver using 'kasimi' - a black dye made from iron filings and jaggery. The interior of the design is then painted with various natural dyes one after another, each involving a laborious process of application and washing. Red colour is obtained by painting the relevant part of the design with alum, washing in running water and then dipping in a dye of madder.

J. Niranjan comes from a family of traditional Kalamkari artists. His father Gurappa Chetty is one of the first recipient of the Padma Shri Award and is a founding member of Paramparik Karigar.

Niranjan received the state award in 1997 and the Shilp Jan award in 2002. He was invited to conduct workshops at the India Festival at the Kennedy Centre in Washington in 2011. He participated in a residency programme at the Museum of Norwich in June 2011. In 2013, he participated in the Akshara Festival organised by UNESCO Paris. He won the International Bronze Award in the Nantong International Contemporary Craft Competition held at Nantong China on 23 Oct, 2014. He participated in the World Craft Council Golden Jubilee Summit in Oct 2014.





Kalamkari Chintz Colage

Natural colours on organic cotton I 60”x 20”

This wall hanging showcases intricate kalamkari in a vibrant blend of colours.

Phaȣ Painting

Rajasthan

This is a popular style of folk painting done in Rajasthan. Traditionally done on long pieces of cloth known as 'Phad', the narratives of folk deities of Rajasthan, mostly 'Pabuji' & 'Devnarayan' are depicted on the Phads.

The Joshi families of Bhilwara, Shahapura are known as the traditional artists of this folk art form. In Rajasthan, a tradition of wandering minstrels developed in the 14th century. The stories told were of Rajasthani folk heroes who were worshipped as demi-Gods. The large horizontal paintings that portray the epic lives of local folk heroes and demi-Gods in Rajasthan are popularly known as Phad paintings. These paintings have the task of representing a complex folk epic narrative which they achieve through their very specific style of representation. These paintings form a visual backdrop to all-night storytelling performances.

The process of preparing the cloth for painting is an important aspect of phad painting. The cotton cloth is first stiffened with starch made of boiled flour and glue and then burnished with a special stone device called 'mohra' which makes the surface smooth. The artist makes his own pigments using locally available plants and minerals, mixing them with gum and water. Once the composition is laid out in a light yellow colour, the artist applies the traditional colour –red, white, green, blue, orange and brown.

Born in 1969, Kalyan Joshi, son of Padmi Shri awardee Shri Lal Joshi, is a leading *phad* artist who received the National Award in 2012. He comes from a lineage of *phad* painters dating back to as early as the 17th century. He has experimented with new stories, contemporary style painting and line drawing. He is the founder of Ankan, an institute that trains children in the art, and has participated in exhibitions hosted by the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco; the Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal; the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and the Crafts Museum in New Delhi.



The Ramadala Phad

Natural pigments on canvas I 30”x 60”

The painting depicts the holy ‘Chaar Dhaams’, the four pilgrimage sites in India which are revered by Hindus; Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameswaram. The painting portrays a discourse by Lord Krishna and major events from the epic Ramayana. Scenes from heaven and hell are illustrated in this ‘Phad’ painting.



Bronze Casting

Karnataka

The classical art of bronze-casting was perfected by craftsmen who rendered religious imagery into metallic forms. Slender images of goddesses rich in detail, and mighty gods in awe, inspiring postures are created and each pose or gesture has a mythological significance. Stylistically the images made in Tamil Nadu conform to periods like Pallava, Chola, Pandyan and Nayaka.

Bronze contrived from copper and tin is used to shape the beautiful sculptures following the guidelines mentioned in the Shilpasastras. While making the countless and individualistic images with extreme precision, the craftsman has to not only learn the physical measurements necessary to achieve the right proportions but also familiarise himself with the verses describing each deity, its characteristics, its symbolism, and above all its aesthetics.

Usually a coconut palm leaf is used as a measuring ribbon and markings are made by folding the leaf. The mould is given several clay coatings. In the solid casting stage, the molten alloy is poured in a thin even stream into the mould. When the mould is broken, care is taken to see that the head of the icon comes out first as a sign of good omen. Connecting rods are often used for support and these have to be detached most skillfully. In hollow casting, a clay model is made, over which a thick coating of prepared wax is applied. The thickness of the wax must match that of the final article. The mould is kept rotating on the lathe as the hot wax is spread, over which the designs for decorating are marked and pressed. To keep the wax intact a coating of burnt clay is performed. An opening is provided in the outershell and when fire is lit around it, the wax melts and flows out through it. Molten metal is poured into this empty space. It is then alternately tempered with heat and cold.

M. V. Lakshmanan is a first-generation artist who has mastered the art of bronze casting under Guru Bhashyam Sthapathy at the Regional Design & Technical Development Centre, Bengaluru. He received the National Award in 1980. Lakshmanan has held workshops at the National History Museum in New York in 2007 and the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad in 1981.



Mahishasura Mardhini

Cast in bronze I 16”

This sculptures depicts Goddess Durga slaying the demon king Mahishasura. She is seen holding a sword, shield, severed head of the demon and trident in her hands.

Miniature Painting

Rajasthan

A miniature painting is an intricate form of illustration, executed meticulously with delicate brushwork. This exquisite form of art was used in early times to document historical accounts, literary works of poetry and prose, biography and important texts. Though the history of miniature painting can be traced to the sixth century AD, this form of art flourished in the court of the Moghuls and then spread to other kingdoms of north India creating the Rajput, Pahadi, Punjab, Jaipur, Kota, Boondi, Kangra, Alwar, Malwa, Bikaner and many other schools, each with its own distinct style of miniature paintings.

The artists painted on a variety of materials like paper, ivory-panels, wooden tablets, leather, marble, cloth and walls and used colours derived from minerals, vegetables, precious stones, indigo, conch shells, pure gold and silver. The brushes were made from very fine hair, mostly obtained from squirrel.

Even today, masters of miniature painting follow the same methods and use the same natural colours to create their masterpieces. They frequently use paper from old manuscripts and books for their paintings.

S. Shakir Ali was born in 1956 and learnt the art of miniature painting from the age of 15, under the guidance of renowned artist, Shri Ved Pal Sharma (Bannu ji). He has specialised in Mughal art and has restored the old paintings at the City Palace, Jaipur, and at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. He is the recipient of many awards including the Rajasthan Kala Kendra in 1978; the first prize at the 10th Folk Festival in 1992 organised by SAARC at Islamabad; and the second prize at the International Illumination and Miniature Festival in Algeria in 2009. He was recently presented with the NextGen Excellence Award on Gandhi Jayanti (Oct 2, 2014) in Jaipur.



Mineral Pigments on paper I 12” x 15”

This miniature is of Shah Jahan on his gallant horse. This Moghul painting is done in Gowardhan style.

Mata Ni Pacheòi

Gujarat

Mata ni pachedi literally means “behind the Mother Goddess”, and is a cloth that constitutes a temple of the goddess. When people of the nomadic Vaghari community of Gujarat were barred from entering temples, they made their own shrines with depictions of the Mother Goddess on cloth. The paintings usually have a set patterned quality, strong and bold, reinforced by the starkness of red and black, the only colours used. In the centre is the commanding figure of the ‘Mata’ or Mother Goddess in various iconographic forms, sitting on a throne or mounted on an animal.

In Ahmedabad, artisans make these paintings using the same methods followed 200 years ago. Cotton fabric is first de-starched and then treated with ‘Harada’ paste to prepare it for absorbing the colour. Outlines of the figures are painted first, with black colour prepared from jaggery and iron. After this, red colour, extracted from tamarind seeds, is filled in and the areas supposed to be white are left blank.

After application of each colour, the fabric is boiled in alizarin solution, to bring out the colour, and then washed. For washing, the craftsmen go to the Sabarmati River as the cloth must be washed in running water only, so that any excess colour flows away, instead of staining the cloth. It takes days of patience and dedication, to prepare one piece. For instance, painting a cloth of 5” x 9” can take two months.

The strong lines and bold use of colour, that reflect the power and energy of the goddess, have now transformed into more artistic and detailed illustrations but the depiction style of mythical characters remains the same. The artists now incorporate many more colours such as indigo, green and yellow in the paintings, using age-old methods of extracting colour from natural materials.

Sanjay Chitara was born in 1978 and started painting at the age of 15. The *mata ni pachedi* has been painted by his family for over 300 years. His father, Manubhai Chunilal, and mother, Manjuben Manubhai, jointly received the National Award in 2004; the Shilp Guru Award in 2009; and the Rajiv Gandhi Shilp Award in 2013. Sanjay received the State Award in 1999 and the National Award in 2000.



Goddess Hadkai

Mordants painted on cotton cloth | 48” x 74”

The painting celebrates the formidable Goddess *Hadkai’s* pilgrimage to the temple at Kothagam during the Navratri Festival. She is standing in a decorated chariot drawn by dogs, and accompanied by a large number of devotees on foot.



Mithila Painting

Bihar

Mithila is also called Madhubani Painting, practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar and in the towns of Madhubani and Darbanga.

The painting was traditionally done on freshly plastered mud walls and the floors of huts. It is done with a broomstick and colours extracted from leaves and flowers.

The main themes are religious (Gods and Goddesses), nature (birds, animals, forest) and social (day-to-day life).

During festivals and celebrations, women decorate their homes by drawing distinct patterns on the walls, ceilings and floors. This region has been exposed to many religious influences, thus buddhist and tantric imprints on local motifs are visible. It was in the sixties, due to natural calamities, that the idea occurred to transpose the art onto paper so that the paintings could be taken to other states and sold to collect Relief funds.

The beauty of Mithila Art lies in its painstaking detail and includes different designs for various occasions and festivals, e.g. birth, marriage, holi, suryashashti, kali puja and durga puja. Apart from their decorative purpose, they also constitute a form of visual education from which we learn of our heritage.

Satyanarayan Lal Karn is considered one of the finest Mithila artists of India. He learnt this art from his mother and renowned artist Jagadamba Devi. He was head of the creative art department and the teacher's training programme at the National Bal Bhavan, New Delhi, until 2012. He received the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Memorial Award in 2000 and the National Award in 2001, jointly with his wife Moti Karn. He is one of the founding members of Paramparik Karigar and has participated in exhibitions in India, U.S.A., Bulgaria, France and Australia.

Moti Karn received the National Merit Certificate in 1999 and the Vijaya Deshmukh Award by Paramparik Karigar for 'The Best Woman Karigar' in 2005. Satyanarayan and Moti Karn work together on all their paintings in complete harmony.



Sarva Dharma Sam Bhav

charcoal and natural pigments made from flowers on paper I 22” x 30”

The flower signifies all religions being similar. The leaves symbolise all religions having a common root in humanity. The border depicts the symbols of all religions.

Stone Carving

Odisha

Some of the finest examples of stone carving in India have evolved around religion, specifically buddhism, hinduism and jainism. The stupas at Sanchi in central India; the temples of Ellora, Elephanta, Khajuraho, Madurai and Mahabalipuram; the Sun Temple at Konark; and the Jain temples at Mt. Abu have impressive sculptures.

The sculptors follow the principles of the *Shilpa Shastras*, a doctrine containing guidelines on stone measurements and techniques of sculpting. Minerals such as black granite, red sandstone, Odisha green stone, *tenali* stone and green marble are normally used for stone sculpture; and *gambhari* (beech wood), teak and neem wood are used for carving wooden statues.

Sudarshan Sahoo was born in 1939 and has been working with the medium of stone and wood for the past six decades. He was bestowed with the National Award in 1981; the Padma Shri in 1988; the Shilp Guru Award in 2003; and an Honorary D.Litt in 2011 by the University of Bhubaneswar.

On the invitation of the Buddha Sangha, London, he carved the Jataka Tales in the Buddhist Pagoda at Milton Keynes. He established the Sudarshan Crafts Museum in 1977, a training-cum-production centre in Puri. In 1991, he set up the Sudarshan Art and Crafts Village in Bhubaneswar, which follows the ancient *guru-shishya parampara*.



Lord Ganesha in grey Kochila, single stone I 20” x 14.5” x 7”

He is ‘Vignavinashaya and Agra pujyate devta’. Intricately carved with an ‘ankusa,’ a demon head signifying awakening and ‘pasa’ a cobra denoting control. His right hand is holding a broken tusk for protection and his left hand a ‘modak’, a reward for devotion.

Gaḍwakam

Bastar

The Adivasis of Bastar use the ancient method of casting metal by the lost wax process. They create icons for worship, ornaments like anklets and necklaces, items of utility like containers and measures, oil lamps, musical instruments, trees and animal forms. Their craft includes sculptures of their Gods and Goddesses like 'Raodev', 'Dhanteshwaridevi', 'Moulidevi' and 'Pardesin Matadevi'. An interesting characteristic of Bastar art is the stylized figures with elongated torsos and arms. With the introduction of steel and plastic the craftsmen do not make items of utility but continue to make religious icons for their ceremonies and temples.

The procedure of gadwakam is laborious. The clay model is covered with wax on which intricate detailing is done. Another layer of fine clay is added onto the wax layer with a hole at the bottom. When the outer shell is dry and hard, a fire is lit around it so that the wax between the two layers melts and comes out of the hole. A cavity is created which is then filled by pouring in a molten mixture of brass and bronze. When this metal cools and solidifies, the outer layer of clay is removed to reveal the object which is then filed and burnished.

Suresh Waghmare is a leading exponent of *gadwakam*. After completing his education, he started working with Phool Singh Besara, an expert in this technique of metal casting. His work has been on display in India and abroad including exhibitions at the Lal Bagh Palace, Indore, 1993; the Kala Academy Goa, 1995; the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, 2004 and the Namaste India Festival, Spain, 2006. Since several years, he has been conducting workshops and lecture demonstrations to promote his craft.



Ghotul Nacha in metal cast

52” x 7” x 18”

This sculpture depicts a dance performed and celebrated by the village men and women. The dance is an expression of love, unity and strength.

Pichhwai Painting

Rajasthan

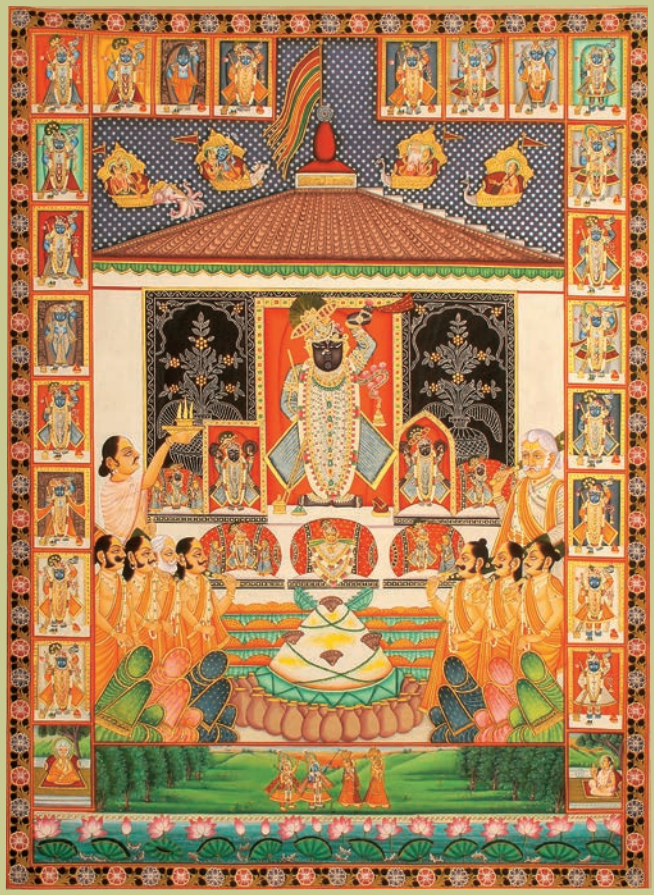
The word Pichhwai is derived from the Sanskrit word 'pich' meaning back and 'wai' meaning hanging.

Pichhwai are intricate paintings, done mostly on cloth or paper, portraying Lord Krishna. This art form has its roots in the holy town of Nathdwara in Rajasthan. Krishna is shown in different moods, body postures and attire. It is a very ancient form of art passed on from generation to generation. The purpose of Pichhwais, other than its artistic appeal, is to narrate tales of Krishna to the illiterate. These artists mostly live in 'Chitron ki gali' (street of paintings) and 'Chitrakaron ka mohallah' (colony of painters) and make a close community with constant interaction.

Pichwai paintings are works of art that are used to adorn the walls of temples, behind the idol. The Pichwai style is from the Nathdwara School and is identified by characteristic features of large eyes, a broad nose and a heavy body similar to the features on the idol of Shrinathji. While the paintings depicting summer have pink lotuses, the paintings depicting 'Sharad Purnima' comprise a night scene with the bright full moon. Festivals such as Raas Leela and Holi are also themes that are often depicted. Sometimes rich embroidery or appliqué work is used on the paintings. Enclosed in a dark border, rich colours like red, green, yellow, white and black are used with a lot of gold decorating the figures.

On a starched cloth, the painter first makes a rough sketch and then fills in the colours. Traditionally natural colours and brushes made of horse, goat or squirrel hair were used. The use of pure gold in the paintings adds to their value and charm and it may take 3-4 days to just prepare colour from pure gold.

Sushil Soni was born in 1981 and started painting at the age of 10. He holds a degree in drawing and painting from Nathdwara College, Rajasthan. He has also learnt Miniature paintings from Ghanshyam ji Nimbark and introduced intricacies of miniature into folk Pichwai paintings. His works have been exhibited at the Jamaat Art Gallery, Mumbai; the Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur; Marushree Parishad, Kolkata; Crafts Museum, New Delhi; Dastkar, New Delhi; Dastkari Haat Samiti, New Delhi and the Chitakoot Art Gallery, Kolkata. He has conducted several workshops for Paramparik Karigar in Mumbai; for Marushree Parishad in Kolkata; and for SPIC MACAY in Kolkata.



Annakut (mountain of food)

Natural colours on cloth I 2' x 4'

The painting depicts Sri Nathji and six manifestations of Krishna in the haveli at Nathadwara. The priest stands on either side, one performing 'aarti' and the other holding a morchhal. In front of Sri Nathji is a pile of rice and leaf baskets of food and earthen pots. In the starlit sky are celestial chariots with Sage Narada, Brahma along with Shiva Parvati.

Gond Painting

Madhya Pradesh

Geographically, the Gond territory extended from the Godavari in the south to the Vindhyas in the north. This art form is popular among most tribes in Madhya Pradesh and it is particularly well developed as an art among the Gond tribe of Mandala district.

Gond wall decorations are made with a thick stick dipped in mud or clay mixed with chaff and water. When a house is under construction, the mud wall is kept damp for patterns to be imposed on it, which is then covered with cow dung or lime. The area may be sub-divided into panels by broad bands enhanced with geometric motifs. Within the panels, a design is carved with geometric patterns, animals, human figures and flower patterns which are formed in interesting circles. Spirals and circles are also enhanced with alternate triangles.

In all these paintings there is a basic simplicity. They appear without anatomical details, and move in silhouettes. A simple impression of a pair of wings turns gradually into a geometric figure. A fish is symbolized by bones, a tortoise by its flippers. The former stands for fertility, while the latter for stability. Designs in white or red wash on the floor ensure security of the house. Blue, yellow, black are used in contemporary as well as traditional art.

Local deities, cock fights, forest scenes, agriculture, weddings and other visuals find a significant place in Gond tribal art.



Venkat Raman Singh Shyam belongs to the Pradhan tribal community of the Gonds. Born in 1970, he started painting from the age of 10. His main inspiration comes from the renowned artist, J. Swaminathan and from the legendary Gond artist, Jangarh Singh Shyam. He has participated in the National Exhibition of Art, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1995, as well as exhibitions in Mumbai at the Jehangir Art Gallery, 1999; the National Gallery of Modern Art, 2001; and the Jamaat Art Gallery, 2009. In 2012, he was part of 'Vision of India', a Pradhan-Gond painting exhibition at the Horniman Museum, London, and his solo show, 'The Tribal World of Venkat Raman Singh', was on display at the Brookline Arts Center, Massachusetts. In 2013, he participated in 'Sakàhan' an exhibition of indigenous art forms at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and 'Vernacular India' at Galerie Anders Hus, Paris.



Winged Elephant

Acrylic, ink on canvas I 4”X 3”

Elephant, the mode of transportation of the Gods, decided to fly down to earth. Much to the dismay of the villagers, it started attacking and destroying the vegetation there. The villagers had to seek the intervention of the Gods to protect them from the elephant.



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