

surrey  
art gallery

# TEACHERS' GUIDE

## Many Visions, Many Versions

Art from Indigenous Communities in India

The exhibition is organized by BINDU modern Gallery and is toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.



WITH BIG IDEAS CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



Sita Devi. *Krishna*, c. 1970s, mud, oxide colors on particle board. © 2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery. Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

# Dear Teachers

This guide is a classroom resource, designed to support teachers and students attending the exhibition *Many Visions, Many Versions*, on display at the Surrey Art Gallery in the winter of 2018. The Teachers' Guide contains exhibit information, as well as activities that will prepare your students for their Gallery visit and engage them in classroom discussion afterwards. These activities reinforce the ideas and processes examined in the exhibition and provide continuity between the Gallery visit and classroom. The pre-visit activity addresses themes of narrative and how images tell a story; the Art Encounter Workshop at the Surrey Art Gallery examines pattern, mark making through abstracted animal imagery; and the post-visit activity addresses our relationship to community through collaborative figure drawing. The activities in this guide are adaptable to different grade levels and require a minimum of materials.

This guide also provides vocabulary, a resource section, and links to the BC Education Curriculum in the area of Arts Education, Social Studies, and English Language Arts from grades K-12. We hope that you enjoy engaging with the exhibition and creating art with your students using this guide.

## Surrey Art Gallery Education Team

The Teachers' Guide was created with contributions from International Art & Artists and Surrey Art Gallery staff including: Volunteer Program Coordinator Chris Dawson-Murphy, Art Educator April Davis, Visual Arts Programmer Lindsay McArthur, Curator of Education and Engagement Alison Rajah, Communications Coordinator Charlene Back, and Curator of Exhibitions and Collections Jordan Strom.

# ABOUT THE SURREY ART GALLERY

Surrey Art Gallery is the second largest public art gallery in the Metro Vancouver region. Internationally recognized, the Gallery showcases diverse artistic practices, including digital and audio art by local, national, and international artists. The Gallery projects art after dark as well, exhibiting digital and interactive exhibits at its offsite award-winning venue UrbanScreen. The Gallery's mission is to engage the public in an ongoing dialogue about issues and ideas that affect our numerous communities as expressed through contemporary art, and to provide opportunities for the public to interact with artists and the artistic process.

To receive announcements about exhibitions and related events at the Gallery, sign up for our e-newsletters at [www.surrey.ca/arts-signup](http://www.surrey.ca/arts-signup). The City of Surrey also has an e-newsletter specifically for teachers: [www.surrey.ca/enews](http://www.surrey.ca/enews).

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Gallery's school programs develop an appreciation for, understanding of, and excitement about contemporary art. Visit the Gallery's website to learn about our school programs and the range of resources that we offer for teachers:

[www.surrey.ca/artgallery](http://www.surrey.ca/artgallery).

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*Jamuna Devi, Raja Salhesh with his two brothers and three flower maidens—detail, c. 2000, natural dyes on paper. Photo courtesy of Sneha Ganguly.*

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

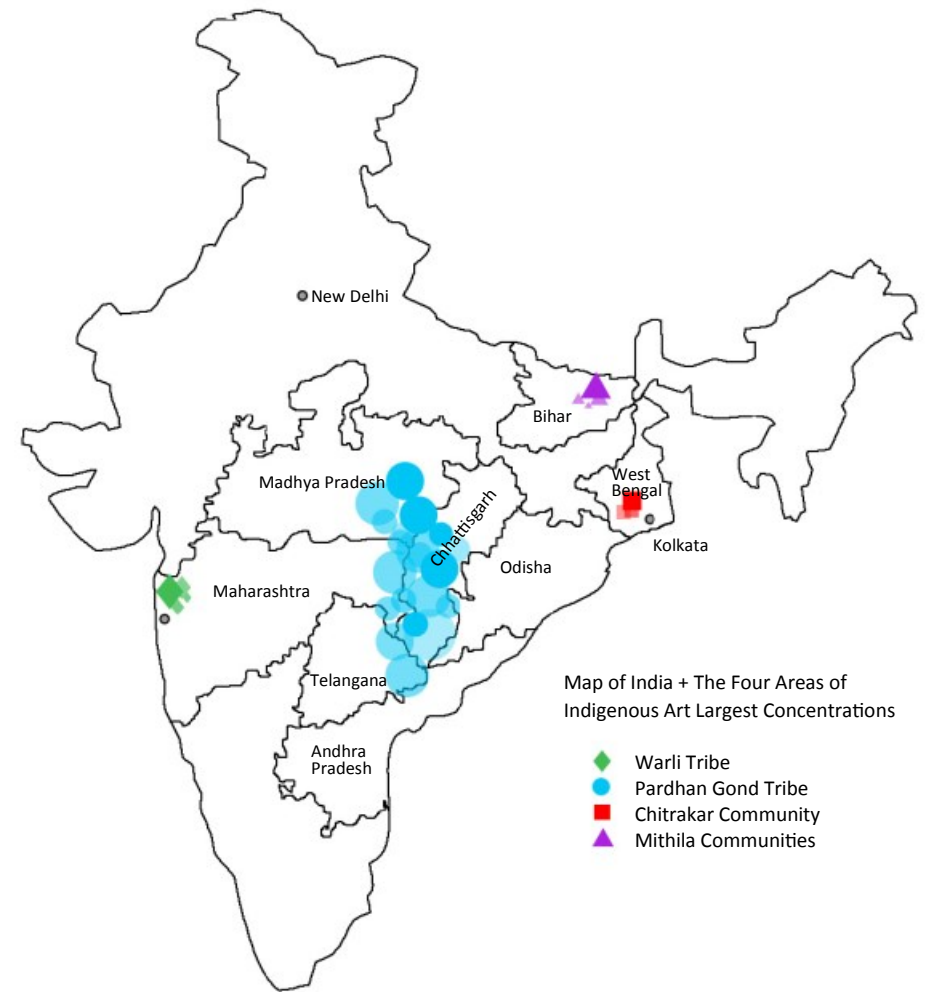
*Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India* is the first comprehensive exhibition to present contemporary artists from four major indigenous artistic traditions in India. The exhibition includes art from the Gond and Warli communities of central India, the Mithila region of Bihar, and the narrative scroll painters of West Bengal. Featuring 47 exceptional paintings by 24 celebrated artists — including Jangarh Singh Shyam, Ram Singh Urveti, Bhajju Shyam, Jivya Soma Mashe, Baua Devi, Sita Devi, Montu Chitrakar, and Swarna Chitrakar, among others — the exhibition reflects diverse aesthetics that remain deeply rooted in traditional culture, yet vitally responsive to the world at large.

The exhibition is divided into four broad categories: Myth and Cosmology, Nature Real and Imagined, Village Life, and Contemporary Explorations.

India's rise as an Asian power on the global scene has focused the world's attention on the country and its culture. For Americans of all ages eager to know more about Indian art, *Many Visions, Many Versions* offers an opportunity to learn about life and culture in India through these remarkable artworks. By focusing on the four most prolific indigenous art traditions in India, this exhibition is able to showcase the diversity and richness of Indian culture and offers a new vision of contemporary art in India.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Aurogeeta Das, art historian and scholar of indigenous Indian art, London, UK; Dr. David Szanton, anthropologist and president of the Ethnic Arts Foundation; and in consultation with Jeffrey Wechsler, former senior curator of the Rutgers University Zimmerli Art Museum.

## MAP OF INDIA



## MYTH AND COSMOLOGY

In some ways the central theme of the exhibition, this section illustrates the rich imagery and diverse pictorial languages used by the artists in the four communities to express the continuing hold and power of myths, symbols, icons, spiritual traditions, and religious beliefs that are often an amalgam of both Hindu and indigenous worldviews. By depicting or suggesting myths or stories about legendary figures and divinities or by portraying rites of passage, the paintings offer a glimpse into their distinct cultures, animated by a common love of narrative as a source of meaning in daily life.

## NATURE — REAL AND IMAGINED

Reflecting the centrality of nature in the life, myth, religion, culture, and society of the four communities, this section explores the many ways in which concepts of nature have manifested themselves in the lives and imaginations of the artists and their communities. In these paintings, perceptions of nature reflect shared communal views as well as highly individual observations; and can be depicted realistically, interpreted narratively, or celebrated through myth and deification. Collectively, they highlight life-affirming beliefs and reveal a tendency towards anthropomorphism, as well as a sensitivity to the interconnectedness of human, animal, marine, bird, insect, and plant life, and a keen awareness of distinctive habitats.

## VILLAGE LIFE

Many indigenous artists continue to live in rural India or otherwise maintain close ties with their native villages. This section includes paintings that intimately convey the rhythms and realities of village life, as well as how the village lives on in the hearts and minds of the artists who have made their homes in cities. These works bring to life customs, beliefs and rituals that are particular to the artists' communities—or, at other times, more broadly representative of rural life in India—and often marked by activities determined by seasonal changes. Topical preferences among the communities are also common, such as the tendency of Warli paintings to focus on livelihood activities.

## CONTEMPORARY EXPLORATIONS

No matter how rooted in rural villages most of the artists are, they nevertheless show themselves to be keen observers and insightful commentators on contemporary urban life and modern realities. Current events and sociopolitical concerns characterize most of the works in this section. While the paintings deal with issues of contemporary life, they draw much of their visual power from distinctive, and often ancient, collective aesthetic forms and traditions.

# VOCABULARY

## B

**BADA DEV:** principal deity of the Gond tribes

**BINDER:** a component of paint that fuses with the pigment to give it a workable fluid structure: i.e. acrylic or oil

**BORDER:** a space delineated around an image or object

**BRAHMIN:** a high caste in Hinduism composed of priests, teachers, and people responsible for teaching sacred knowledge

## C

**CANVAS:** fabric stretched on a wooden frame for the creation of oil or acrylic paintings

**CASTE:** a class of people that are distinct with a culture, often related to social status

**CHITRAKAR:** translates literally as image-maker and refers to scroll painters, mostly from the state of West Bengal in India

**COMPLIMENTARY COLOURS:** colours that appear opposite one another on the colour wheel; when shown together these colours appear to be more intense and have the greatest visual contrast

**COSMOLOGY:** an account of a theory of the origin of the universe

## D

**DEITY:** a god or goddess

**DIGNA:** domestic floor paintings commonly made by Gond women

## E

**EPHEMERAL:** objects that last only a short period of time due to their perishable nature

## F

**FOLK ART:** traditions with roots from local/rural communities that are primarily utilitarian and decorative rather than purely aesthetic

## G

**GEOMETRIC:** of geometry, using regular lines and shapes

**GOBAR:** cow dung

## H

**HINDUISM:** religion of the majority of people in India and Nepal, with over 900 million adherents worldwide

## I

**ICON:** sacred image of a saint, prophet, or other hallowed figure

**IDENTITY:** how one perceives oneself in the context of, and in relation to, others and the culture we live in

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:** people native to a particular region or environment with their own linguistic and historic ties

## K

**KAYASTHA:** a high Hindu caste largely composed of traditional record keepers, writers, and state administrators

**KOHBAR GHAR:** a wedding chamber adorned with elaborate and symbolic wall paintings where the bride and groom spend the first few days of their marriage

**KUMKUM:** red powder used by Hindu women in India for social and religious purposes

## L

**LAYOUT:** the placement of visual elements in a composition

**LIKHIYA:** term for both writing and painting in Mithila and other Indian languages; also a professional who made copies of manuscripts before the invention of printing



# VOCABULARY

## M

**MEDIA:** the materials used to create an artwork (i.e. acrylic paint, graphite, marble, found objects, video, audio, etc.)

**MONOCHROMATIC:** an artwork or design created using a limited colour palette using just one colour, of different values, on a background colour

**MURAL:** an image, painting, or drawing created on a wall or horizontal surface

**MYTHOLOGY:** a collection of myths, stories, or legends, especially expressing the worldview of a particular sacred, religious, cultural tradition, or cultural community group

## N

**NARRATIVE:** an account of connected events that tells a story; can be communicated through spoken word, writing, or images

## P

**PATTERN:** a series of repeated motifs often used to create visual interest in an artwork

**PATUA:** artisan community in the state of West Bengal in India, also known as Chitrakars

## P

**PIGMENT:** a material, usually a powder, used to create colour in a paint or dye; these can be derived from chemicals like cadmium, or natural sources like turmeric root, or beets

## R

**RAKSHASA:** demon from Hindu mythology

**RITUAL:** a religious ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed in a prescribed manner

## S

**SCROLL PAINTING:** a painting on a rolled surface, commonly made of paper, parchment, or other material

**SHESHA:** multi-headed serpent that holds all the planets of the universe on his hoods and constantly sings the glories of the god Vishnu from his many mouths

**SINDOOR:** traditional red- or orange-red-colored cosmetic powder usually worn by married women in India along the parting of their hair

**SYMBOL:** something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention; in art, often an image or object that represents an idea or concept

## T

**THEMATIC:** having or relating to a particular subject

**TRADITION:** customs or beliefs passed on from one generation to the next

**TRIBE:** a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader

## V

**VILLAGE:** an area in which a community is formed including houses and buildings, often in a rural area

## Y

**YAMADEVA:** God of death in Hinduism

**YAMADOOT:** messenger of the God of death in Hinduism



Montu Chitrakar, *Osama*, 2010, natural dyes on paper glued to fabric, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery. Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

## SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Story & Song—Scroll Painting

**THEMES:** Narrative: How do images tell a story?

### OBJECTIVES

To learn about the living art form of Bengali patua **scroll** painting, storytelling, narrative structure, and visual and performative forms of contemporary art.

### BIG IDEAS FROM THE BC CURRICULUM

- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world (Kindergarten to Grade 9, English Language Arts)
- People connect to the hearts and minds of others in a variety of places and times through the arts
- The arts provide opportunities to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places and cultures (Grade 9, Arts Education)

### ACTIVITY

Each student will create their own **scroll painting** that depicts a story or song of their choosing.

### DISCUSSION & INTRODUCTION

Engage your students in a discussion about Bengali Patua Scrolls (see pages 14, 18 & 22, 23 of this guide) and describe how these artists use paintings and song to tell a story. Explain that this art form has a long history but is still practiced today by Bengali contemporary artists.

Introduce them to the work of exhibiting scroll painter: Swarna Chitrakar by first showing a video of her recounting a traditional story of Krishna and Radha. Swarna unrolls her painted scroll to reveal one frame at a time as they depict key parts of the story told by the song. You can find the video here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gi-OMuTmj\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gi-OMuTmj_I)

In another video Swarna Chitrakar sings about the benefits of planting trees in the community, again using a painted scroll and song to tell this story.

[https://youtu.be/CCMX\\_6wPHdI](https://youtu.be/CCMX_6wPHdI)

Ask students:

What did they see? What did they notice about the videos they have just watched.

Have they seen similar kinds of storytelling? Cartoons, graphic novels, sing-a-longs

What actions did the artist use to indicate what she was singing about?

How did the artist enhance the artwork with decoration? i.e. borders, patterns on the back

# SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Story & Song—Scroll Painting

## THEMES: Narrative: How do images tell a story?

### MATERIALS

- Pencils, erasers and sketch paper
- A 5.5" x 14" sheet of white paper for each student
- Watercolour pencil crayons
- Paint brushes and water in containers

### PROCESS

Inform the students that like artists Swarna Chitrakar and Montu Chitrakar, they will be creating a scroll painting that tells a story through the illustration of a song.

Discuss the following questions with your students:

- What songs are they familiar with that tell stories? Offer some examples appropriate to your groups age i.e: *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, *Baby Beluga* by Raffi, *Someone Like You* by Adele, or *Forever and Always* by Taylor Swift.
- Choose an example that the students are familiar with. Ask students to break the song down into a few key events that tell the story.
- Brainstorm to imagine images that could illustrate each of the key events they have identified.

Invite each student to choose a song that tells a story that they would like to illustrate by creating their own scroll.

Using pencils and sketch paper students will make a list of the illustrations that will be included in their scroll. Once they know how many illustrations they'll need they will lightly draw a **layout** arranging the pictures on their paper scroll. Remind them to arrange the story chronologically: the beginning at the top with their last image at the bottom. Encourage students to include space for decorative elements such as borders around the edges and/or between the illustrations.

Students are now ready to illustrate the events of their chosen songs using watercolour pencils. They can be used dry or dipped in water before drawing to make a darker line. Water can also be applied used after the pencils are used to a watercolour effect.

After the artworks have dried students can roll up their artwork from top to bottom to create their scroll.

Extension: Students may decorate the back of their scrolls with patterns and colour.

### CONCLUSION

Students can take turns presenting their scroll paintings. Encourage students to unroll their scrolls as they tell their stories, and can even sing if they like and point to the illustrations.

Are there any songs that other students know the lyrics to—they can join in the refrain as the children did in the Swarna Chitrakar video.

When the students visit the exhibition be sure to visit the scrolls in the exhibit and the paintings by Swarna Chitrakar.



Artist Swarna Chitrakar,  
photo by Biswarup Ganguly , 2014.  
Licensed by CC-BY-3.0



## SUGGESTED POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Collaborative Figure Drawing

### THEMES: The Village: Community and Representation



Jivya Soma Mashe painting in front of his house,  
photo by Romain Mounier-Poulat, 2009.  
Licensed by CC-BY-2.5

### OBJECTIVES

To examine themes of community and **representation** and to explore new materials, colour use, and drawing methods, through creating a Warli inspired artwork.

### BIG IDEAS FROM THE BC CURRICULUM

- Works of art are influenced by the world around us (Grade 5, Arts Education)
- The arts provide opportunities to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places and cultures (Grade 9, Arts Education)

### ACTIVITY

In this activity students will reflect on and analyze the exhibition artworks of Warli artists: Jivya Soma Mashe and Balu Jivya Mashe. They will create a collaborative artwork inspired by Warli painting using white pencil crayon or “white charcoal”. Through this they’ll examine new mark making techniques, colour palettes, ways of depicting the figure, and methods of perspective drawing.

### DISCUSSION & INTRODUCTION

Introduce and discuss the tradition of Warli painting with your students.

Traditionally Warli paintings were created on the interior of village houses, in many cases on the wall in the marriage chamber, their function was to ensure that the marriage would be auspicious and that the new couple would have a healthy relationship and family life. These works of art were meant to be ephemeral and were traditionally painted using a rice flour paste, sometimes mixed with sugar or sap. They were often painted on a wall surfaced with cow dung (which was thought to have antiseptic properties). A brush would have been created using a bamboo stick that had some fibre, or cotton, adhered to its end.

# SUGGESTED POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Collaborative Figure Drawing

## THEMES: The Village: Community and Representation



Jivya Soma Mashe, *Coal Mining Process—detail*, 2011, acrylic on paper, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.

Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

### DISCUSSION & INTRODUCTION (CONT.)

Contemporary Warli painters have expanded the content of their works that consider modern life and their own lives and experience. These artists will often work with modern painting materials: acrylic paint on canvas.

You can also show them a video that looks at artist Jivya Soma Mashe's work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGsaknjA1kE>

Ask students: What about Warli art stood out to them? Looking at the image on page 24 ask them to look closely. What is represented? What are the people and animals doing? Where are they? Have the group analyze how Warli artists draw: What marks have the artists used, what do they notice. Do they see particular shapes in the work? How are these used? How have the artists made the figures appear

animated? Can the students find patterns, large and small? Where else do they see repetition?

### MATERIALS

- Sketch paper, pencils, and erasers
- Large pieces of brown or black construction paper
- Soft white pencil crayons or white charcoal pencils

### PROCESS

#### Warli figure drawing practice:

Using pencils and sketch paper ask students to experiment with the use geometric shapes as drawing elements. Inspired by Warli art, not simply copying their techniques, they can invent their own methods. Have students create ways to make their geometric figures appear animated, as though they are running, jumping, dancing, climbing a tree or...?

#### Collaborative drawing:

Students will create individual drawings that will be joined together to form a collaborative Warli inspired artwork.

Using white drawing media on their black/brown paper students will depict an activity they imagine happening in their own community, using their own Warli inspired drawing techniques.

### CONCLUSION

Display all the drawings joined together to create a collaborative artwork representing the students collective community.

Ask the students to discuss their experience of drawing this way. What did they notice? Did it change how they think about drawing? Did they learn anything new from trying this? Did they enjoy working in a monochromatic palette? Would they try drawing in this way again?

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Participating in a guided tour, studio workshop, or self-guided tour in conjunction with the exhibitions supports Big Ideas and Learning Standards in the British Columbia Arts Education Curriculum for grades K-12. The exhibitions can be used as a touchstone for discussion relating to themes and concepts addressed in a variety of curricular areas.

## K-7 ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

### KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 2

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Observe and share how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences
- Describe and respond to works of art

### GRADES 3 - 4

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Observe, listen, describe, inquire and predict how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to create and communicate
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences
- Connect knowledge and skills from other areas of learning in planning, creating, and interpreting works of art
- Express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism in the arts

### GRADES 5 - 7

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Observe, listen, describe, inquire, and predict how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to create and communicate
- Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world
- Describe, interpret and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism to express meaning through the arts

## CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

### Social Studies, K-3

- Explain the significance of personal or local events, objects, people, and places (significance)
- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to: ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

### English Language Arts, K-3

- Engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate to develop understanding of self, identity, and community
- Create stories and other texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community

# 8-12 ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

## GRADES 8 - 9

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts
- Describe, interpret, and evaluate how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to create and communicate ideas
- Reflect on works of art and creative processes to make connections to personal learning and experiences
- Interpret works of art using knowledge and skills from various areas of learning
- Describe, interpret, and respond to works of art
- Adapt learned skills, understandings, and processes for use in new contexts and for different purposes and audiences

## GRADE 10

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using imagination, observation, inquiry, and ideas
- Express meaning, intent, emotions, and feelings through visual art
- Recognize knowledge and skills from other contexts in the planning, creating, interpreting, and analyzing of artistic creations

## GRADES 11 - 12

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using imagination, observation, and inquiry
- Engage in appropriate risk taking to express thoughts and emotions
- Describe and analyze, using the language of visual arts, how artists use materials, technologies, processes, and environments in art making
- Apply knowledge and skills from other contexts in the planning, creating, interpreting, and analyzing of artistic creations
- Adapt learned arts skills or processes for use in new contexts

## CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

### English Language Arts—New Media 11

- Apply appropriate strategies in a variety of contexts to comprehend written, oral, visual, and multimodal texts; guide inquiry; and extend learning

### Social Studies 10

- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (perspective)





Mayank Shyam, *Origin of Life*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.

Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

# GOND ART & WARLI ART

**Gond art** refers to paintings made by a subgroup of the Gond tribe, the Pardhans, who traditionally painted on mud walls and floors during weddings and festivals. Their wall and floor paintings are primarily geometric and composed of auspicious symbols for celebrating particular occasions. Jangarh Singh Shyam was the first prominent Gond artist to paint on paper and canvas. As Jangarh's popularity grew, he invited his clan members to help him with his work so they could share in his success. In time, his apprentices, such as Ram Singh Urveti and Bhajju Shyam, became professional artists, and today about 40 Gond artists constitute what some refer to as the Jangarh Kalam School of Art. Some unifying themes of Gond art include the pervasive presence of nature in their storytelling, portrayals of fantastical animals and trees, and their pantheon of deities. The Gond people's rich repertoire of mythical and genealogical tales has readily transferred to their paintings.

The **Warli tribe** resides in the Thane district of Maharashtra, situated north of Mumbai. Similarities between Warli art and cave paintings in central India have led some historians to believe that Warli art dates back to traditions from the Neolithic period. Wall paintings in Warli homes represent ritual icons, religious beliefs, harvests, livelihoods, and human relationships, and show close links to their deities and to nature. The paintings inspired by their festivities and rituals include symbolic references to their religious beliefs and practices. Humans and animals are composed of triangular or hourglass-shaped figures and gain movement and life by subtle alterations to their alignments, angles, and shapes. Warli artists still use only red, brown, and white pigments. Jivya Soma Mashe has emerged as an internationally recognized Warli artist, thanks to his elegant and ethnographically rich images of Warli daily life.

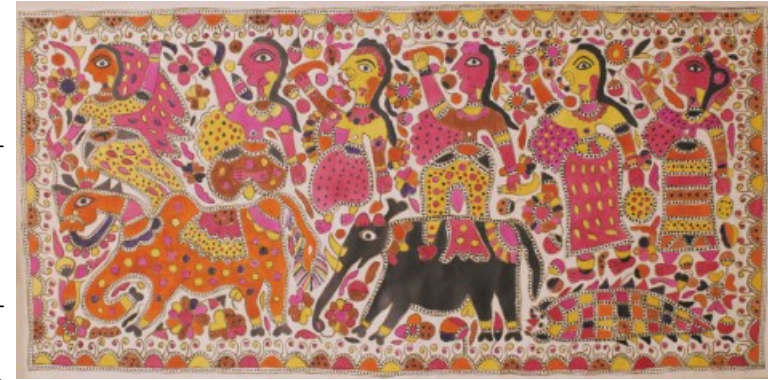


Jivya Soma Mashe, *Coal Mining Process*, 2011, acrylic on paper, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.

Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

# MITHILA PAINTINGS & BENGALI SCROLLS

The **Mithila** region covers a large part of northern Bihar. Literary references reveal that women in Mithila have been painting gods and goddesses on interior walls of their homes since the fourteenth century. The images are intended to create auspicious spaces for domestic rituals and to promote fertility, marital felicity, and general family well-being. Using vivid colors made from local, organic, and mineral pigments applied to their cow-dung and mud-plastered walls with simple bamboo and raw cotton brushes, women created a vigorous and distinctive wall painting tradition. In the late 1960s, in the midst of a severe drought and encouraged by the government, a few women, including Baua Devi, began transferring their wall paintings to paper in order to supplement family income through sales. With this transformation, the thematic repertoire expanded from focusing only on Hindu deities to also encompassing episodes from the epic poem Ramayana, in addition to local tales, rituals, autobiographies, and, since the late 1990s, powerful feminist critiques of patriarchy and gender inequality, as well as major global events.



Jamuna Devi, *Raja Salhesh with his two brothers and three flower maidens*, c. 2000, natural dyes on paper, © 2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.  
Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly



Swarna Chitrakar, *Tsunami*, 2005, Fabric paint on canvas, © 2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.  
Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

The painter-singer communities in eastern India are called **Chitrakar**, meaning “one who makes images.” Their tradition of singing and painting stories on patuas (long vertical scrolls) goes back several centuries. Currently, most of the Chitrakars live in Naya, a village near Kolkata. Traveling from village to village, itinerant Chitrakar painter-singers recount stories and legends in song, while unrolling scrolls one frame at a time, and pointing to the corresponding depiction of the events. Patua scrolls reference mythological and religious themes, socio-political topics, as well as local, national, and world events. In Swarna Chitrakar’s 2005 work *Tsunami*, the artist depicts the 2004 Asian tsunami by reworking traditional patua mythological icons to describe a contemporary event with global implications.



## GOND

**Bhajju Shyam (b. 1971)**

Bhajju Shyam became an apprentice to his uncle, the artist Jangarh Singh Shyam, at the age of 16. Jangarh noticed his nephew's talent and encouraged him to work as an artist. Within a few years, Bhajju's works were being shown internationally and in 2001 he received the Madhya Pradesh State Award for Best Indigenous Artist. Drawing upon his experiences of visiting London in 2002, Bhajju created a stunning visual travelogue, rendering London as an exotic bestiary in which the Underground appears as a giant earthworm, Big Ben merges with a giant rooster, and English people are depicted as bats that come out to play at night. These drawings were published in a book, *The London Jungle Book*, and became the subject of a special exhibition at the Museum of London in 2004. Bhajju lives and works in Bhopal.

**Jangarh Singh Shyam (1960–2001)**

Jangarh Singh Shyam is considered the leading Gond artist and the creator of a new school of Indian art, which some call "Jangarh Kalam" in his honor. Born in the village of Patangarh in eastern Madhya Pradesh, he attracted the attention of talent scouts from Bhopal's multi-arts complex, the Bharat Bhavan, and its first director, the modern artist Jagdish Swaminathan, who showcased Jangarh's first paintings at Bharat Bhavan's inaugural exhibition in February 1982. Just five years later, Jangarh was awarded the Shikhar Samman, the highest civilian award given by the government of Madhya Pradesh. In 2001, during his residency at the Mithila Museum in Niigata, Japan, Jangarh committed suicide. His work was included in the exhibitions *100 Magiciens de la Terre* (100 Magicians of the Earth), Centre Pompidou, Paris (1989); and *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2013).

Japani Shyam, *Jungle Scene*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.

Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

**Japani Shyam (b. 1988)**

Japani Shyam is the daughter of Jangarh Singh Shyam. Encouraged by her father, Japani started painting while still very young. At the age of 11, she was awarded the Kamala Devi Award. Japani's primary subjects are the lives of animals and birds. She lives and works in Bhopal.

**Mayank Shyam (b. 1987)**

Mayank Shyam was initiated into painting by his late father, Jangarh Singh Shyam. He is one of the youngest members of the Jangarh Kalam School and one of the first Gond artists to develop a distinctive contemporary style, infusing urban themes with a Gond ethos. His subjects vary from cityscapes to nature to folklore. In 2006, Mayank received the Madhya Pradesh State Award for rural arts. Mayank lives and works in Bhopal. His work was included in the exhibition *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2013).



Ram Singh Urveti, *Woodpecker and the Ironsmith*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.  
Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

## GOND

### Ram Singh Urveti (b. 1970)

Ram Singh Urveti is one of the first Gond artists to transition from ephemeral art to painting on canvas in the early 1980s. His paintings celebrate the spirits of his tribe and, as with many tribal artists, the tree is omnipresent in his paintings. In 2001, he received the prestigious Kalidas Award for the arts, and in 2008, his illustrated book, *The Night Life of Trees*, received the Bologna Ragazzi Award for children's books in Italy. Urveti lives and works in Bhopal.

## WARLI

### Balu Jivya Mashe (b. 1963)

Balu Jivya Mashe is the son of the renowned Warli artist Jivya Soma Mashe. His pictorial style is rooted in the tradition of the Warli, with rhythmic, simplified forms representing the complexities of the world around him. Balu lives and works in Kalambipada.

### Jivya Soma Mashe (b. 1934)

Jivya Soma Mashe is the most prominent Warli artist. Born in the village of Dhamangaon in Maharashtra, the shock of losing his mother at the early age of seven rendered him mute for several years, during which time he communicated only by drawing pictures on the floor. His talents were discovered by government officials in charge of preserving and documenting rural arts. Jivya demonstrates a heightened sensitivity and an unusually powerful imagination, perhaps the legacy of his early introspective period. He is the first Warli artist to step beyond ritualistic paintings, not only by painting everyday village life, but also by painting on canvas. He received the National Award for Tribal Arts in 1976 and in 2011 he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honors. Jivya lives and works in Kalambipada. His work was included in the exhibition *100 Magiciens de la Terre* (100 Magicians of the Earth), Centre Pompidou, Paris (1989).



Manisha Jha, *The Jackfruit Tree (Tree of Life series)*, 2012, acrylic and ink on canvas.  
 © 2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery,  
 Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly .



## MITHALA

### Baua Devi (b. 1944)

Baua Devi belongs to the earliest generation of women who began transferring their wall paintings to paper in the late 1960s. She gained immediate recognition, appreciation, and many followers through her distinctive paintings of Hindu deities, the sun, the moon, and snakes. These are rendered with a bright palette, clear and elegant figures, and are usually surrounded by a wavelike border. She was one of the first Mithila artists to receive international recognition after her paintings were selected to be shown at Centre Pompidou in 1989. She received the National Award in 1984. She lives and works in New Delhi. Her work was included in the exhibition 100 Magiciens de la Terre (100 Magicians of the Earth), Centre Pompidou, Paris (1989).

### Jamuna Devi (1915–2011)

Jamuna Devi was born in Jitwarpur to a family of “untouchables” (members of a low-caste Hindu group). In the late 1960s, she was part of the first group of women to transfer their wall paintings to paper. Working in the brightly colored painting style of Sita Devi, Jamuna began painting deities and daily life, and quickly developed her own unique style. In the 1970s, she innovated again by preparing the paper with a light brown gobar (cow dung) wash so that the images would appear closer to those on traditional mud walls. She was the first “untouchable” to receive a National Award for her paintings.

### Manisha Jha (b. 1970)

Manisha Jha is perhaps the first Mithila artist who may be considered a mainstream contemporary artist. Trained as an architect, Manisha incorporates elements of so-called “outside” influences but identifies herself as a Mithila artist who straddles both worlds. The artist currently runs the Madhubani Art Centre, which she established to teach other artists and to promote their work nationally and internationally. In 2015, she was selected to represent India at ART Santa Fe and she also received the National Award for Excellence in Mithila paintings. She lives and works in New Delhi.

### Rani Jha (b. 1964)

Although born into a conservative family where girls traditionally received little education, Rani Jha went to school and completed her PhD at Darbhanga University with a thesis on Women and Art in Mithila History. She is also the first woman in her family to work outside the home. She worked previously with a non-government organization (NGO) shelter for abandoned women and is now a master painter and teacher at the Mithila Art Institute. As a feminist painter, her work draws inspiration from her experiences at the shelter, where she documented incidents of abuse against women. Through her paintings she seeks not only to tell their stories but also to have some small effect in changing social conditions for all Indian women. She lives and works in Madhubani.

“Artist Bios appear courtesy of International Art & Artists”



## MITHALA

### Sita Devi (1914–2005)

Sita Devi was one of the early pioneers of Mithila painting on paper. She developed a distinctive style of painting that emphasized tall elegant figures and strong vibrant colors. She also pressed visiting dignitaries for the infrastructural development of her native village of Jitwarpur. During her long life, Sita Devi brought national and international attention to Mithila. In 1981 she was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civil award by the government of India. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

## THE PATUA

### Montu Chitrakar (b. 1984)

Montu Chitrakar was born in the village of Naya in Bengal to a family of Patuas. His repertoire includes narratives of traditional religions and folktales, as well as works dealing with such issues as the earthquake in Gujarat, religious riots, women's rights, AIDS, and the environment. Montu lives and works in Naya.

### Swarna Chitrakar (b. 1974)

Swarna Chitrakar was born to a family of Patuas residing in the village of Naya. Swarna is the most well-known Chitrakar and has participated in major festivals in Australia, China, England, France, Germany, India, Sweden, and the United States. Her body of work depicts incidents like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 9/11 terrorist attacks; social themes like AIDS and child trafficking; as well as issues related to women's empowerment. Over the years, Swarna has also emerged as a role model for the women of Naya. Swarna now paints on a diverse range of media, including cloth, clay, and ceramic. She lives and works in Naya.

Montu Chitrakar, *Osama*, 2010, natural dyes on paper glued to fabric, ©2015,

Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery.

Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mithila Painters: Five Village Artists from Madhubani, India (1983, 40 min.)

- <https://youtu.be/w9xZd78FTWY>

Singing Pictures, Lina Fruzzetti, Ákos Östör, Aditi Nath Sarkar, (40 min, 2005) Bengali w/ English subtitles

- <https://youtu.be/ZaNdrHfHNs>

The Tales we Tell: Indian Warli Painting at the V&A Museum of Childhood

- <https://youtu.be/9cqtvsJRmBs>

Shaline Kumari

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vh5VMLfdK1E>

Amrita Jha

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bADe\\_eGo98k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bADe_eGo98k)

Rani Jha

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_X67LvQc3Lc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_X67LvQc3Lc)

National Gallery of Canada Artist Interview: Venkat Raman Singh Shyam

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsNnD-dl3e8>

Swarna Chitrakar sings the story of Krishna & Radha

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gi-OMuTmj\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gi-OMuTmj_I)

Swarna Chitrakar sings about the value of planting trees in your community

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

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# IMAGES

Jangarh Singh Shyam, *Tree and Panther*, 1988, gouache on paper, ©2015, Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery. Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly





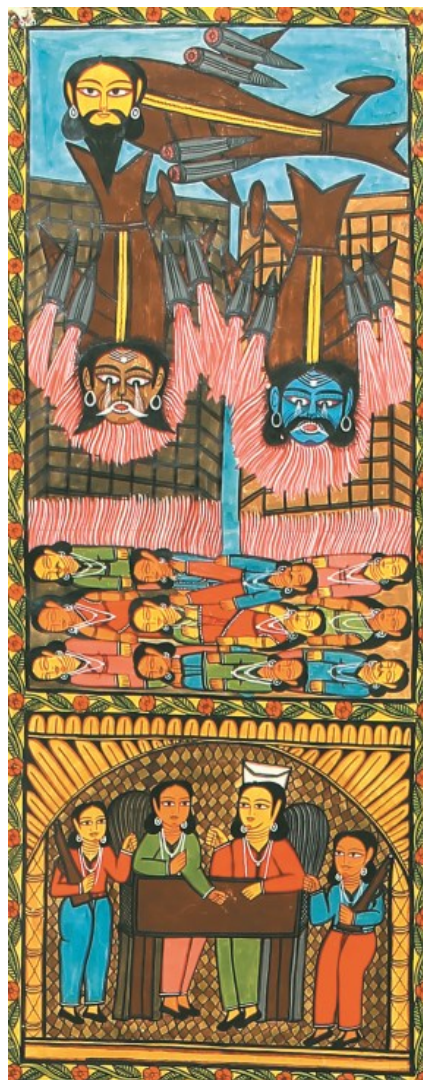
# IMAGES

Swarna Chitrakar, *Tsunami*, 2005,  
fabric paint on canvas. © 2015,  
Courtesy of BINDU modern Gallery,  
Photo credit: Sneha Ganguly



# IMAGES

Left and right image: Montu Chitrakar,  
*Osama*, 2010, natural dyes on paper  
 glued to fabric. © 2015, Courtesy of  
 BINDU modern Gallery, Photo credit:  
 Sneha Ganguly





# IMAGES

Jivya Soma Mashe, *Coal Mining Process*,  
2011, acrylic on paper, © 2015, Courtesy  
of BINDU modern Gallery, Photo credit:  
Sneha Ganguly



जिव्यासोममशे



# INFORMATION / MAP



- 2km walk from King George Station
- Take the Skytrain to Surrey Central Station and catch Bus #321 or #96 B-line and get off on King George Hwy at 88 Ave
- Free parking

## SURREY ART GALLERY

13750 88 Avenue  
Surrey, BC V3W 3L1

604-501-5566 (press-0)  
Gallery.Schools@surrey.ca

[www.surrey.ca/artgallery](http://www.surrey.ca/artgallery)

## GALLERY HOURS

Tues, Wed, Thurs: 9am – 9pm  
Fri: 9am – 5pm  
Sat: 10am – 5pm  
Sun: Noon – 5pm

**Closed on Mondays & holidays**

Admission by donation

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