

Design Resource

Madhubani Paintings of Bihar

The Art of Interpreting “forests of honey”

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/madhubani-paintings-bihar>



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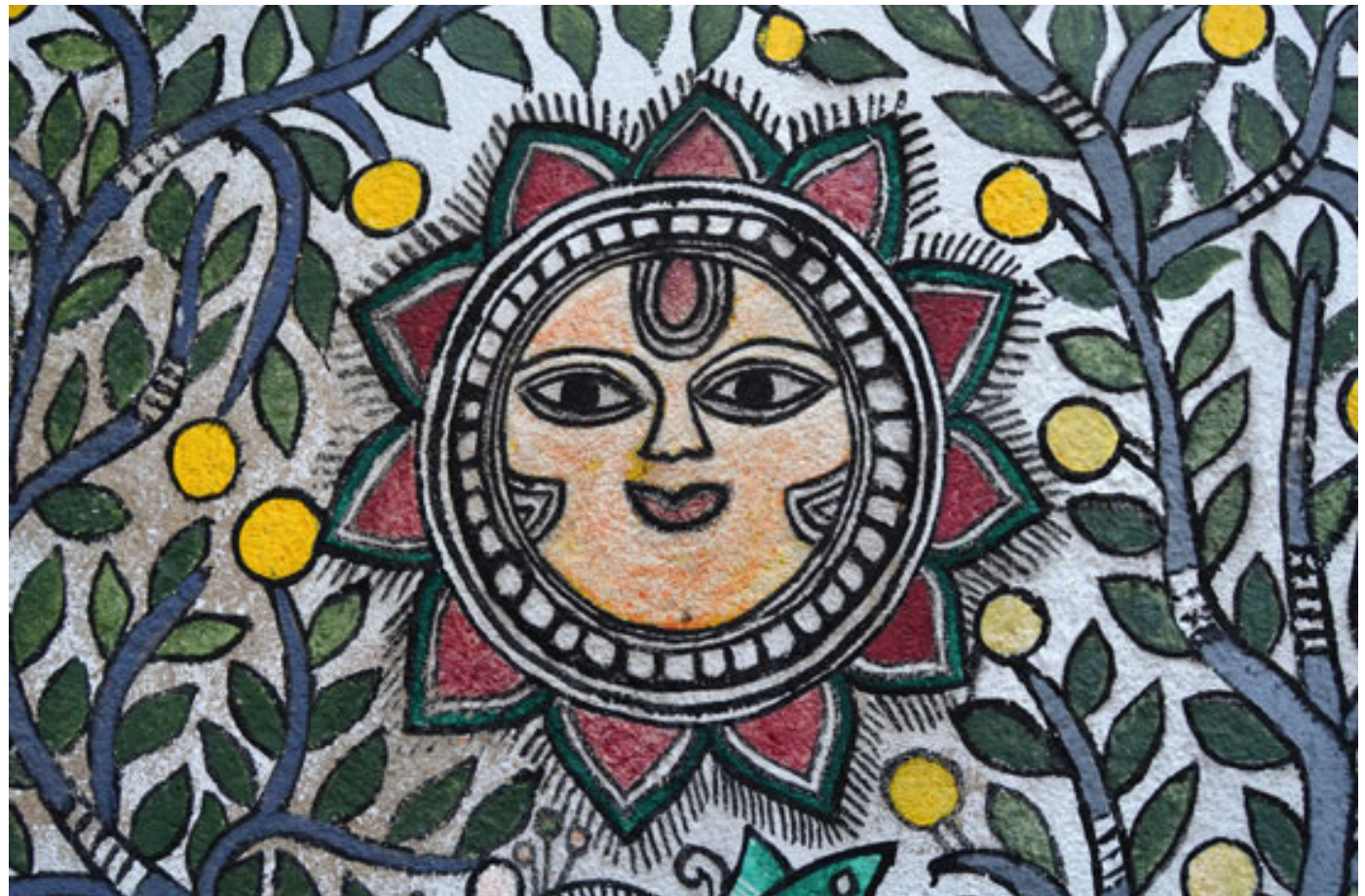
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/madhubani-paintings-bihar/introduction>

Introduction

Mithila painting (or Madhubani painting as it is now beginning to be called) is a style of Indian painting practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar and the adjoining parts of Terai in Nepal. Madhubani literally means forests of honey. These paintings were done traditionally by the women on freshly plastered mud walls and floors of huts but now they are also done on cloth, handmade paper and canvas. These use two-dimensional imagery and the colors used are derived from plants. There are paintings for each occasion and festival such as birth, marriage, holi, surya shasti, kali puja, durga puja and the sacred thread ceremony.



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Place

Madhubani lies in the Indian state of Bihar. There are several artists in the Ranti and Jitwarpur villages of this district who paint for a living. More than six thousand people here are practicing the craft. Earlier, the painters did not exhibit their work to anyone. What really led them to share their work with the larger world was a major ecological economic crisis the resulted from a prolonged drought in 1966-68 that struck Madhubani. In order to create a new source of non-agricultural income, the All-India Handicrafts Board encouraged the artists to produce their traditional paintings on handmade paper for commercial sale. Shilp Sangh, a Jiyo!-Jeevika initiative, implemented by The Asian Heritage Foundation in this village is a platform for the women artists to showcase their work and develop new designs. It is a self-supporting cooperative. Mithila Art Institute was established in Madhubani in 1980 by The Ethnic Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization, dedicated to encouraging, training and creating opportunities for the younger generation of the talented Mithila painters. The Institute provides free instruction, working and exhibit space, materials, and a supportive community for these artists. The major emphasis is on developing their painterly skills and imaginations, while retaining a rootedness in Mithila traditions and aesthetics.

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Entering Ranti village of Madhubani.



On the roads of Madhubani.

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On the roads of Madhubani.



On the roads of Madhubani.

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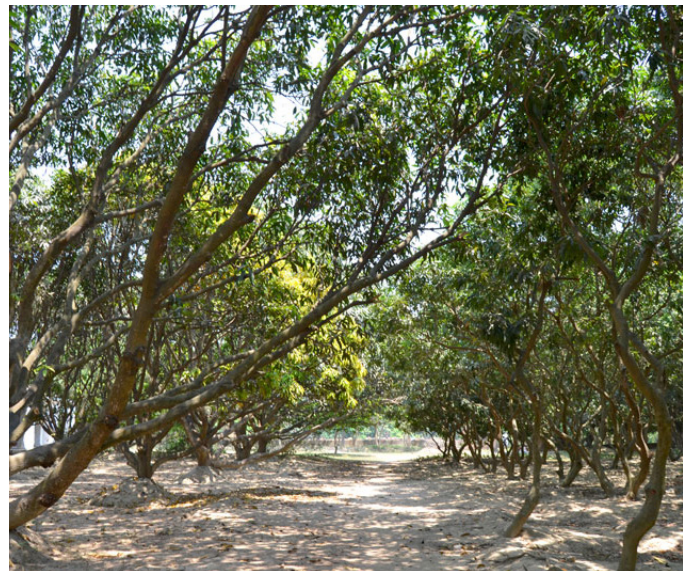
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The greens of Ranti, Madhubani.



The signage to Shilp Sangh.

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The building where the Shilp Sangh women artists work. The building where the Shilp Sangh women artists work.

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Shilp Sangh women artists.



Details of the Shilp Sangh building.

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Details of the Shilp Sangh building.



Shilp Sangh office board.

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Details of the Shilp Sangh building.



Details of the Shilp Sangh building.

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Details of the Shilp Sangh building.



Artists' paint box.

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Painting on the walls of a building in Ranti.



Painting on the walls of a building in Ranti.

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Painting on the walls of a building in Ranti.



Painting on the walls of a house in Ranti.

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Painting on the walls of a house in Ranti.



Painting on the walls of a house in Ranti.

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On the roads of Madhubani.



On the roads of Madhubani.

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Painting on the walls of a house in Jitwarpur.



Painting on the walls of a house in Jitwarpur.

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Painting on the walls of a house in Jitwarpur.



Painting on the walls of a house in Jitwarpur.

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Mithila Art institute building, Madhubani.



Mithila Art institute.

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People

For the people of Madhubani, these paintings are a culture, a way of life. They live and breathe their craft. They pray before beginning work everyday. Apart from the legendary traditional artists (Ganga devi, Baua Devi, late Jagdamba Devi, late Sita Devi, Mahasundari Devi, Vibha Das, Dulari Devi) who mostly paint Hindu deities like Krishna, Ram, Shiva, Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, there is the younger lot that likes to experiment and innovate. They paint on contemporary subjects like alcohol, polio, politics etc. and participate in a lot of exhibitions - national and international.



Narmada Devi, President, Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.

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An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.

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An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.



An artist of the Shilp Sangh.

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Dulari Devi



Mahasundari Devi.

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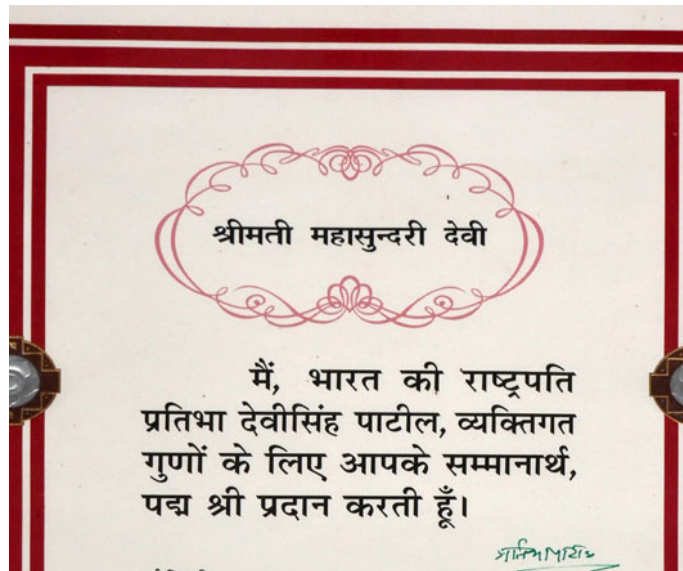
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Mahasundari Devi's Padam Shree certificate.



Vibha Das, Mahasundari Devi's daughter-in-law.

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Baula Devi



Late Sita Devi's family member.



Late Sita Devi's family member.



An artist of Jitwarpur.

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An artist of Jitwarpur



A young kid on the streets of Madhubani.

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A young kid on the streets of Madhubani.



A young kid on the streets of Madhubani.

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A young kid on the streets of Madhubani



Young kids on the streets of Madhubani.

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Process

The first choice any artist makes is the subject of the painting, no matter what the material - paper or fabric. Once that is decided and sketched out roughly with pencil, the shapes and figures are outlined with black paint using nib-pens (brush, in case of fabric). Then these are filled with natural dyes and pigments (now being replaced by fabric colors for their longevity) using brushes, twigs and fingers. Generally no space is left empty; the gaps are filled with flowers, animals, birds and even geometric designs.

Though there are no class of artists and most of the subjects are common, the different schools of Madhubani paintings have been classified into three types:

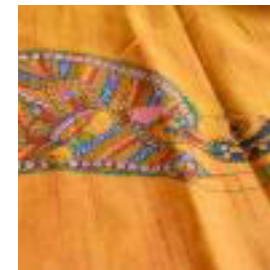
Kachni style of painting employs only one or two colors, black and vermillion. The artists rely on delicate fine lines enlivened with a variety of patterns using hatching and stippling. Kachni literally means ‘line’. This style is usually practiced by the Kayasta community in particular.

Bharni style of painting employs bold black outlines to clearly define the subject. The enclosed areas are filled with vibrant colors. The style is flat with no attempt at creating depth or ‘shading’. Bharni literally means ‘filling’. This style is practiced by the Brahmin community in particular.

Godhana style consists of small stick like figures geometrically organized in parallel lines, concentric circles or rectangles. Some of the paintings are then filled with color, others simply drawn in black. Some of the artists use a gobar wash on the paper, creating a background closer to that of the wall paintings. Tattoo paintings are generally painted by the Dusadh community.



Paper



Fabric

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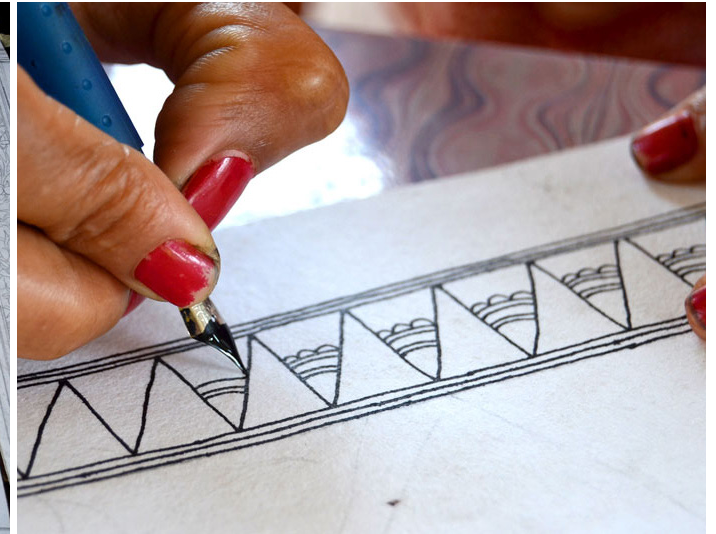
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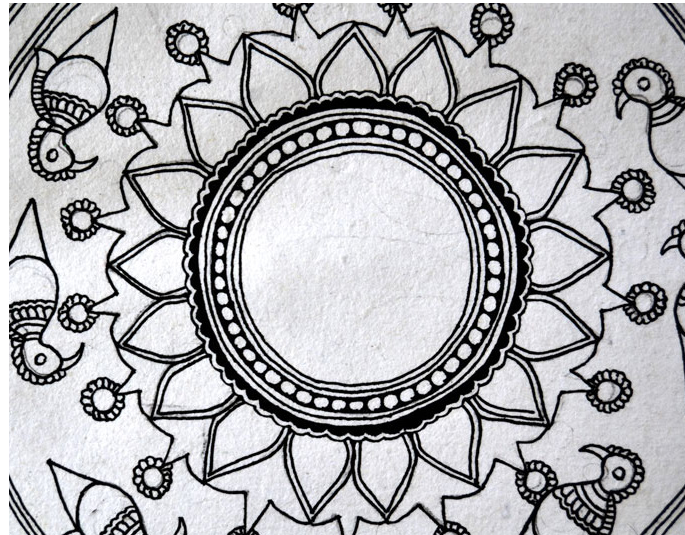
Paper



Designs sketched out with pencil.



Black outlines being made with nib-pen.



Black outlines.



Black outlines being made with nib-pen.

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Black color being filled in with brush.



A mono color painting being made with a nib-pen.

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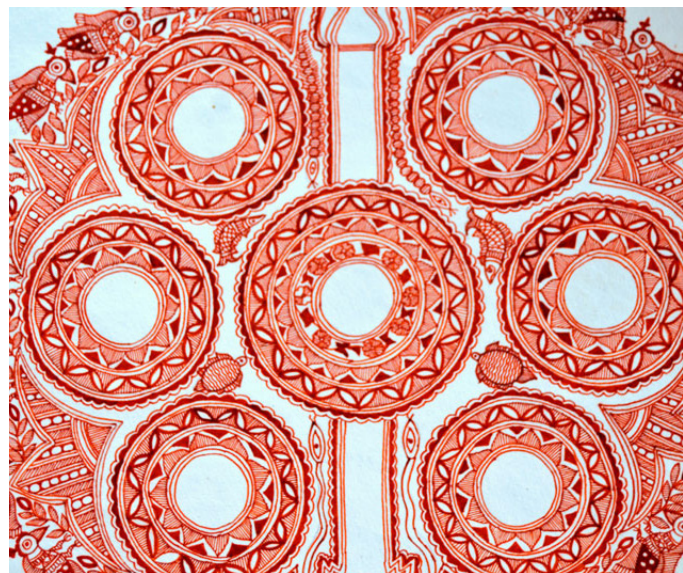
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Kachni style of Madhubani painting.



Kachni style of Madhubani painting.

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Black outlines being made with nib-pen.



Paint box.



Color being filled in with brush.



Color being filled in with brush.

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Color being filled in with brush.



Color being filled in with brush.

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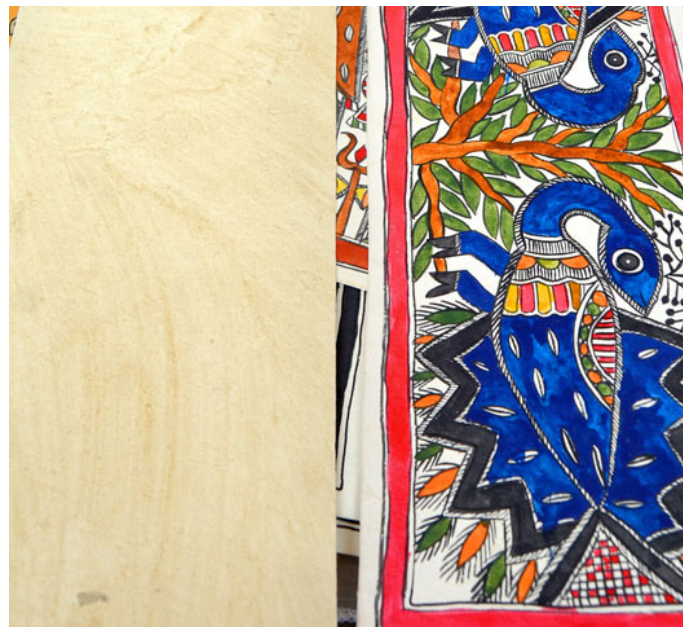
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The gobar-wash on the paper makes it off-white.



Color being filled in with brush.

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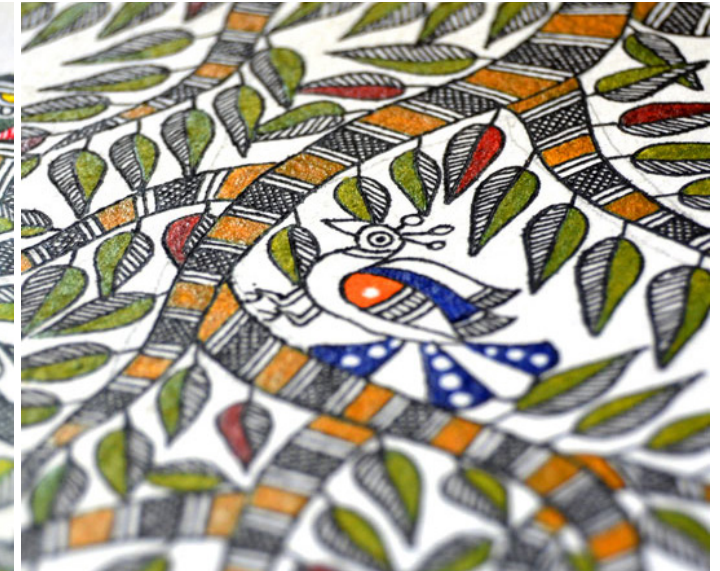
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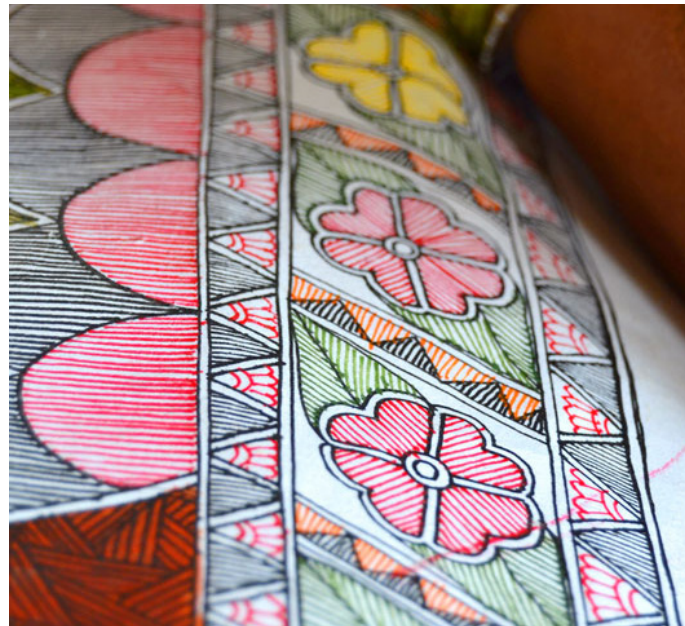
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Color being filled in with brush.



Color being filled in with brush.



Another round of detailing with the nib-pen.



Another round of detailing with the nib-pen.

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Another round of detailing with the nib-pen.



Another round of detailing with the nib-pen.

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Bharni style of Madhubani painting.



Bharni style of Madhubani painting.

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Bharni style of Madhubani painting.

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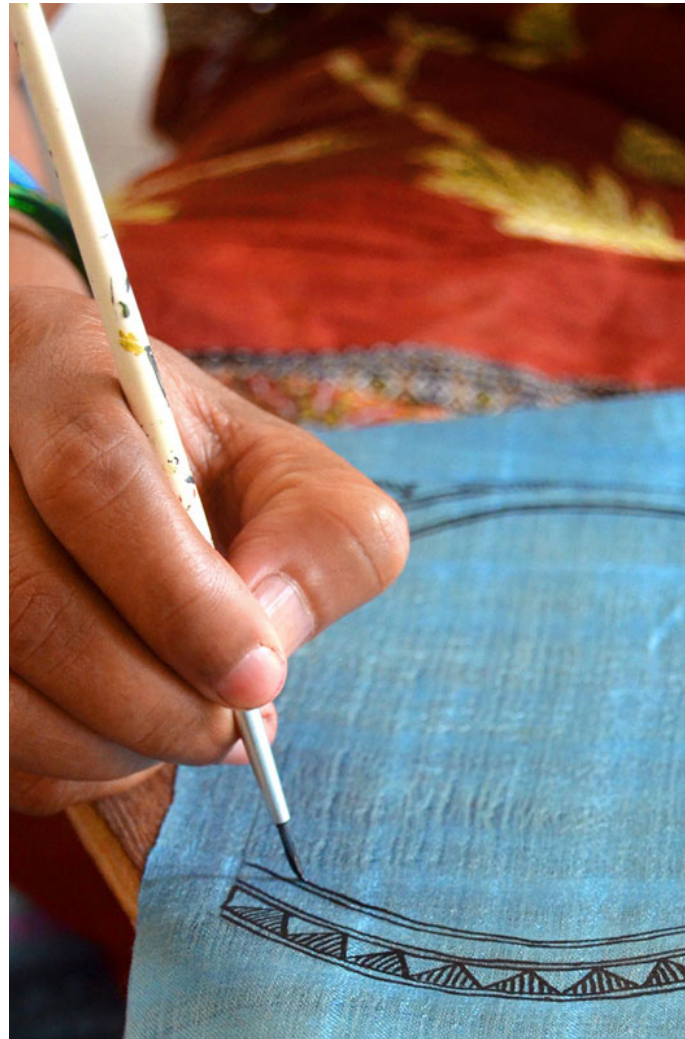
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Fabric



A silk dupatta being painted with black.



A silk dupatta being painted with black.

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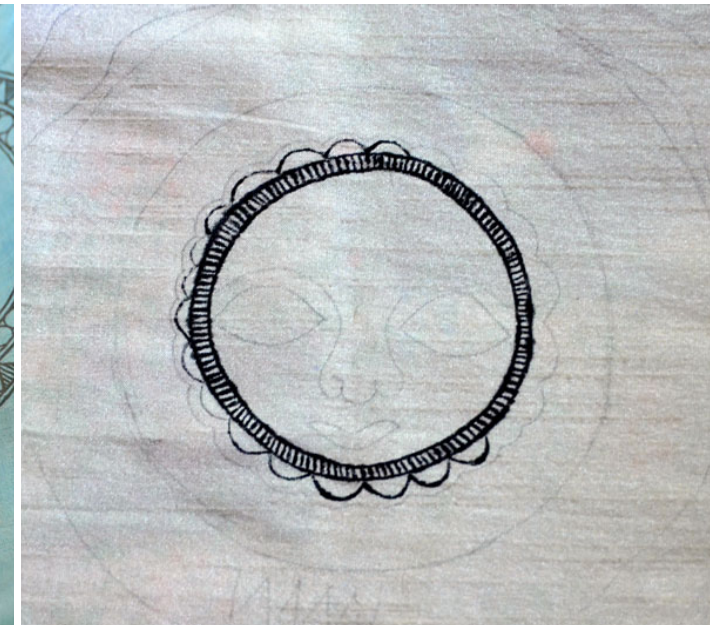
The machine that presses the upper.



A silk dupatta being painted with black.



The dupatta, completed.



Sun being painted with black on a silk cushion cover.

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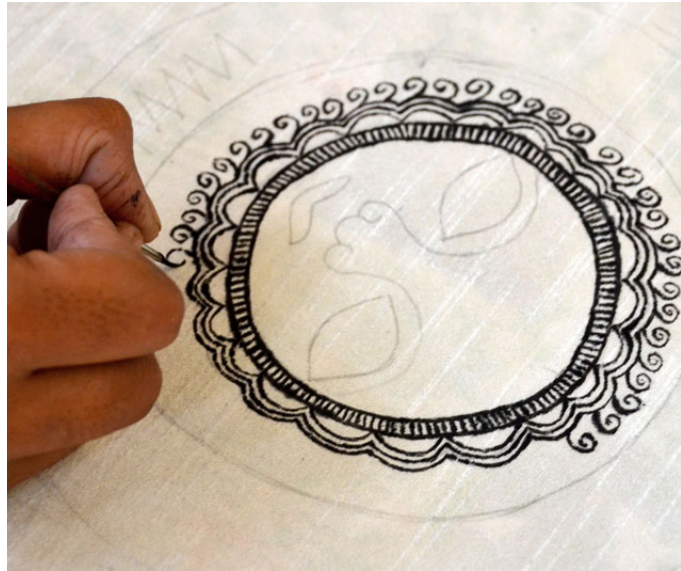
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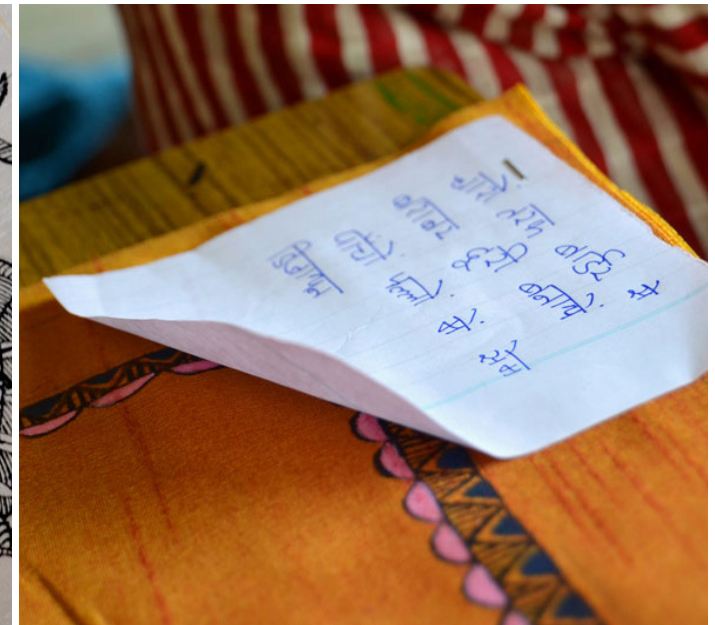
Sun being painted with black on a silk cushion cover.



Fishes being painted with black on a silk cushion cover.



Fishes being painted with black on a silk cushion cover.



Instructions for painting the cushion cover.

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Design being traced out from the sample cushion cover. Design being traced out from the sample cushion cover.



Design being traced out from the sample cushion cover. Design being traced out from the sample cushion cover.

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The cushion design being planned.



Design being sketched on the fabric.

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Paint box.



Black fabric color.

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Painting begins with black outlines.



Painting begins with black outlines.



The completed multi colored figure on the silk cushion cover.

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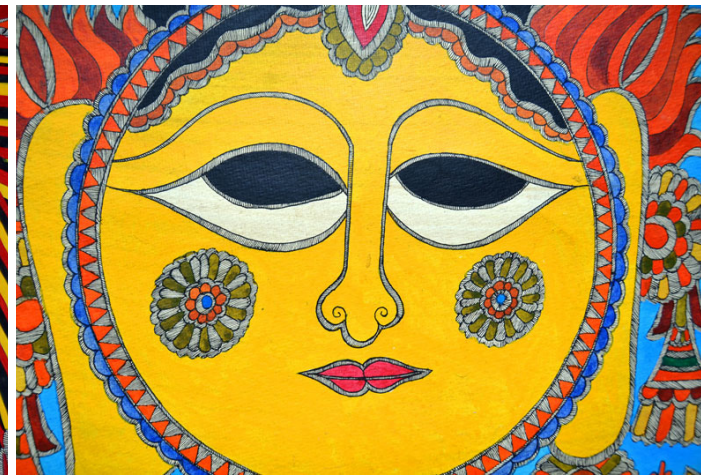
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Products

Artists of different castes and genders are now borrowing themes and styles from one another, and painting it on a variety of materials like paper, fabric, paper mache, cardboard, wood and metal boxes. The product range includes wall paintings, wall tiles, pen-holders, dustbins, plates, sarees, dupattas, suits, ties and cushion covers. These usually get sold out of the artists' home directly.



Sun painted by an artist of Jitwarpur (Bharni style)



Sun painted by an artist of Jitwarpur (Bharni style)



Peacocks painted by an artist of Jitwarpur (Bharni style)



Fish painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)

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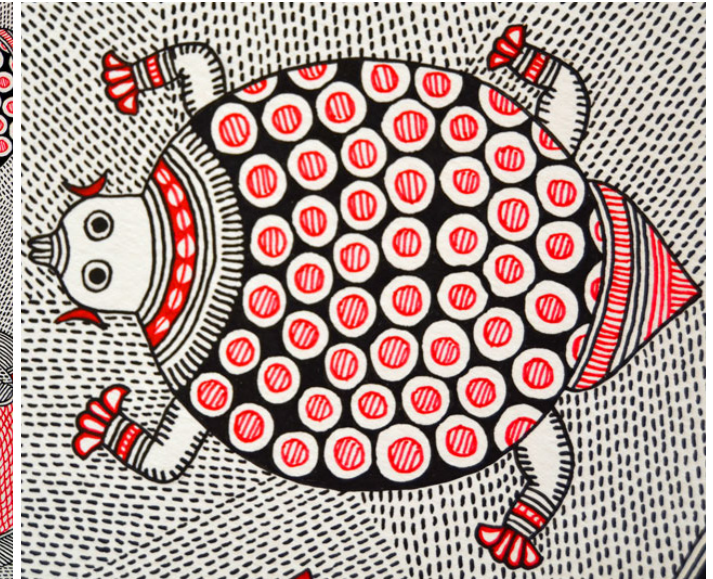
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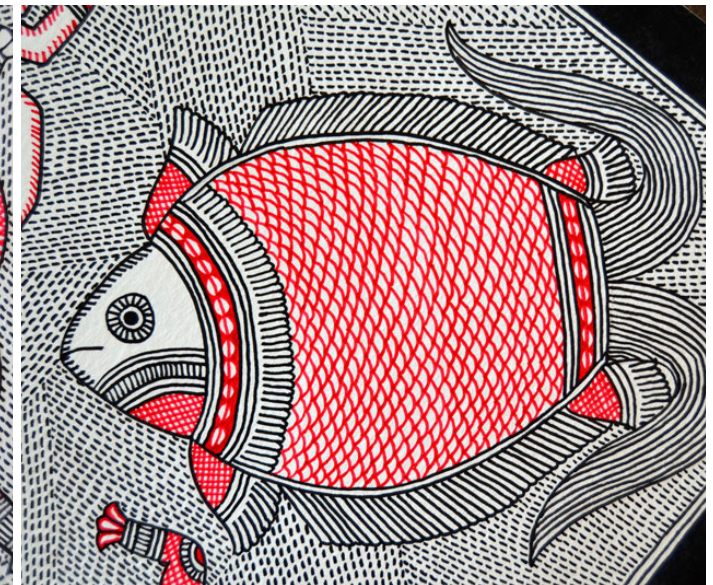
Water animals painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



Water animals painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



Water animals painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



Water animals painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)

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Madhushravni Vrat, a type of fast that a newly wed bride keeps, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)



A part of Madhushravni Vrat, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)



A part of Madhushravni Vrat, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)



A part of Madhushravni Vrat, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)

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A part of Madhushravni Vrat, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)



A part of Madhushravni Vrat, painted by Vibha Das, Ranti (Bharni style)

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A painting by Vandana Karna, Ranti (Bharni style)



A painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)

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IDC, IIT Bombay

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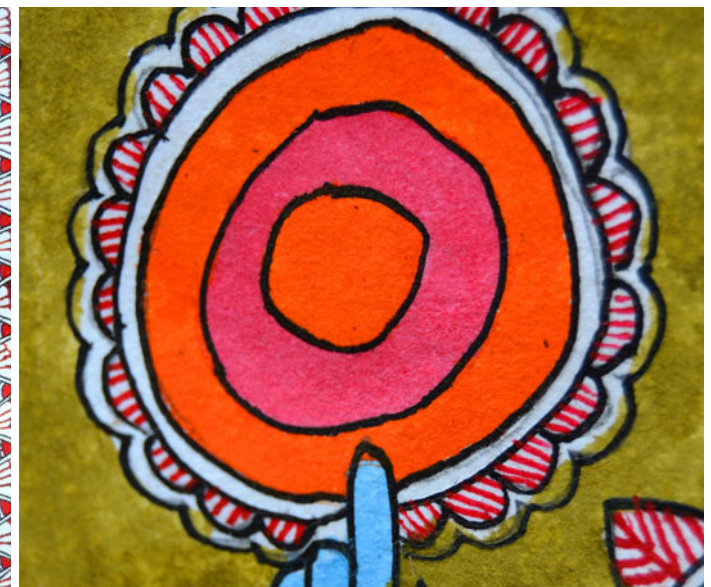
A painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A painting by an artist of the Shilp Sangh (Bharni style)



A part of a painting by an artist of the Shilp Sangh (Bharni style)

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Madhubani Paintings of Bihar

The Art of Interpreting “forests of honey”

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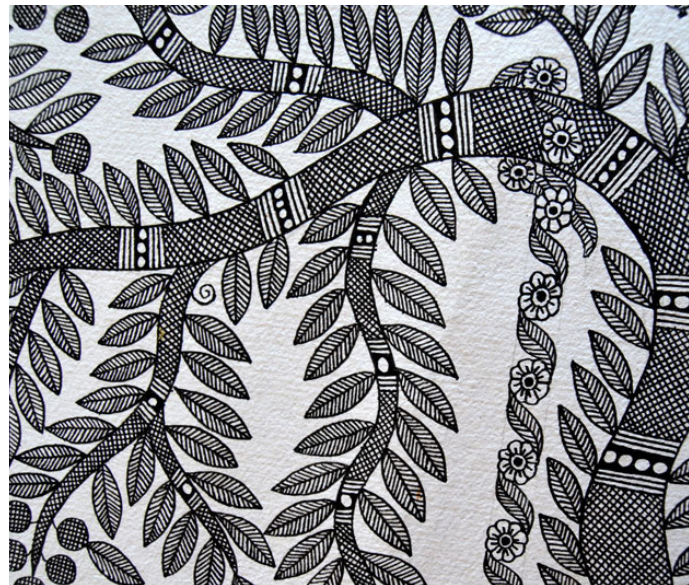
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A part of a painting by an artist of the Shilp Sangh (Bharni style)



Krishna and Radha painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A part of a painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A part of a painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)

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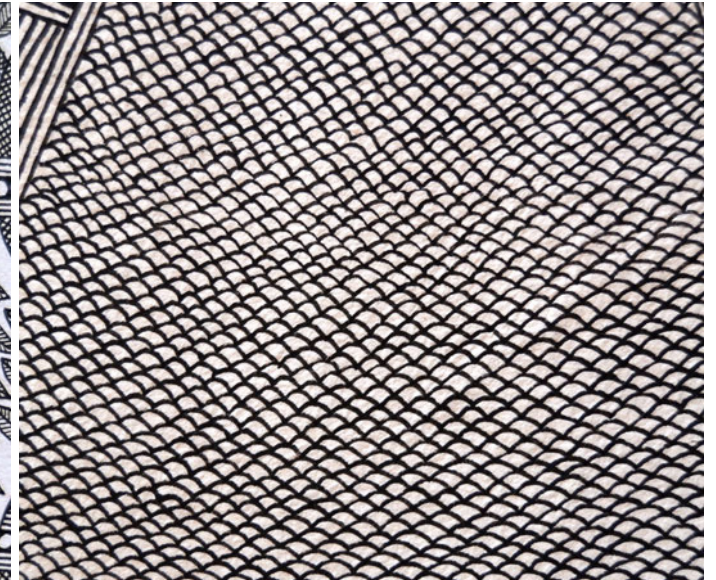
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A part of a painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A part of a painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



A part of a painting by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Kachni style)



Conch painted by Mahalaxmi, Ranti (Bharni style)

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A painting by an artist of Ranti (Bharni style)



A painting by an artist of Ranti (Bharni style)



A painting by an artist of Jitwarpur (Godhana style)



A painting by an artist of Jitwarpur (Godhana style)

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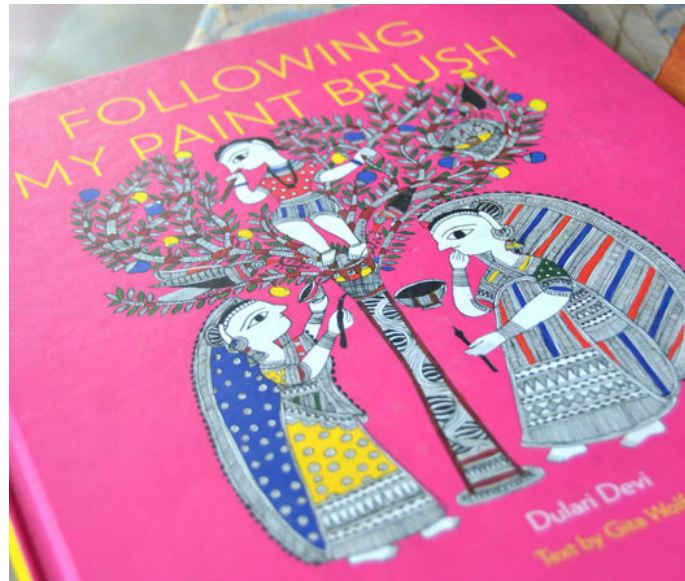
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Dulari Devi's artworks printed by Tara books, Chennai



A painting by Baua Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)

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A part of a painting by Baua Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)



A part of a painting by Baua Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)

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A part of a painting by Baula Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)



A part of a painting by Baula Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)

1. Introduction

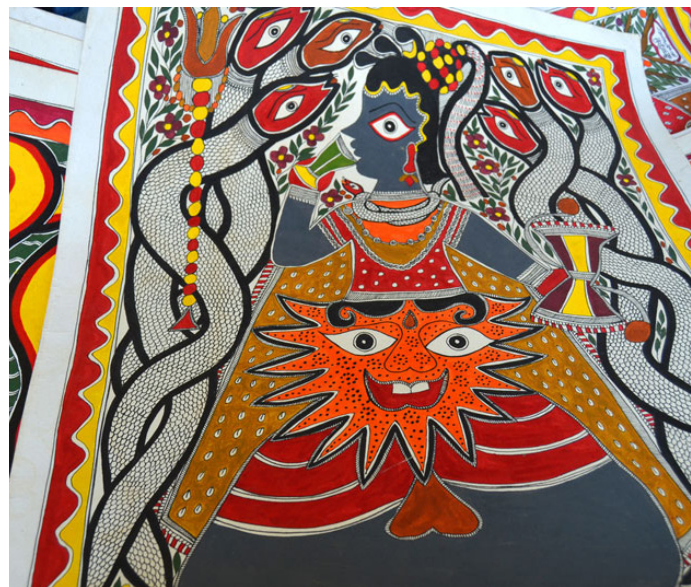
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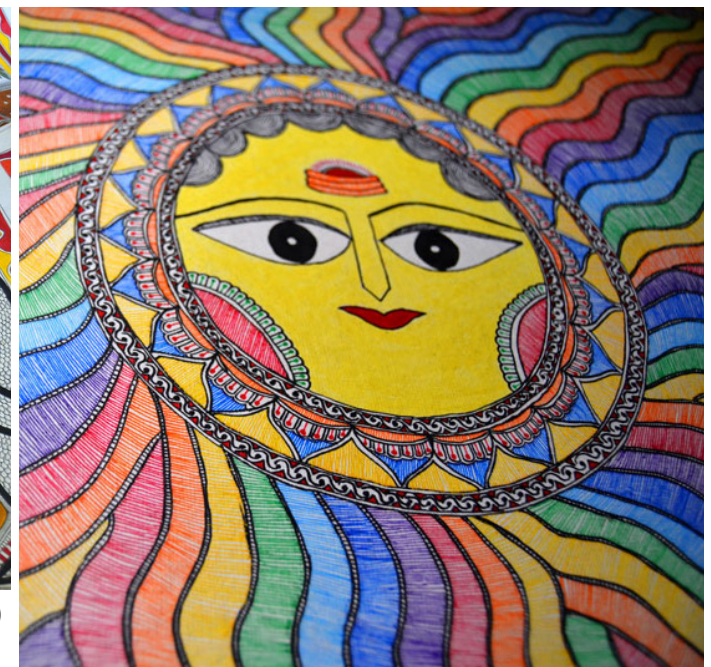
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A part of a painting by Baula Devi, Jiwarpur (Bharni style)



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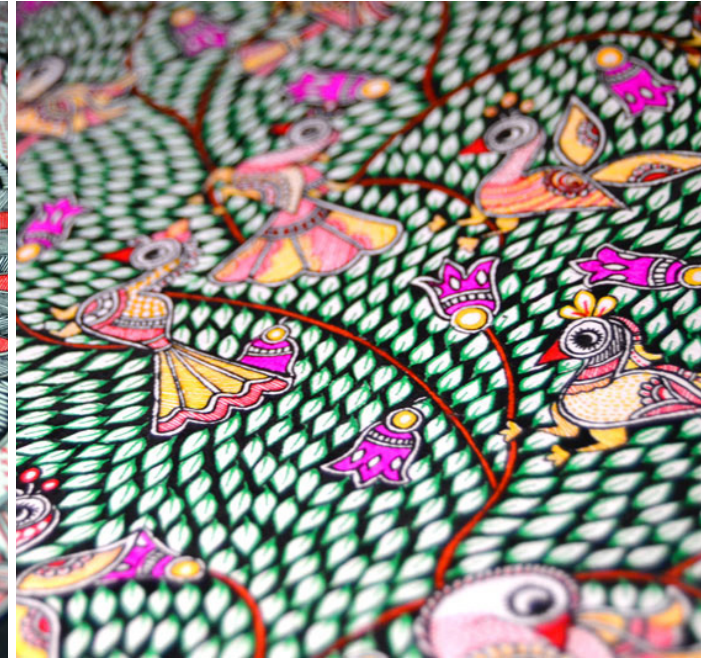
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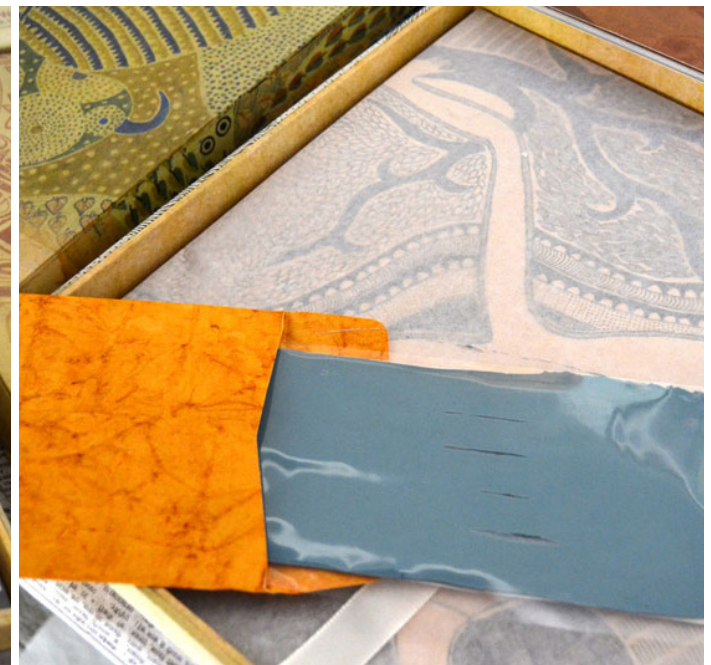
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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sakshi Gambhir at **IDC, IIT Bombay**

You can get in touch with Sakshi Gambhir at [sakshigambhir\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:sakshigambhir[at]gmail.com)

For Further details you can contact to:

Narmada Devi

President, Shilp Sangh

Village post - Ranti,

Rajnagar, Madhubani

Kaushik Kumar Jha

Mithila Art Institute

Baua Devi

Village and post - Jitwarpur,

Distt. Madhubani

Uttam Prasad

You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

Industrial Design Centre

IIT Bombay

Powai

Mumbai 4000 076

India

Phone: 091-22-25767820/7801/7802

Fax: 091-22-25767803

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

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