

Design Resource

Pen

Ganesh Idol Making

by

Abhey Singh

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/pen>



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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/pen/introduction>

Introduction

In India, majority of religious events revolve around the idols of deities. With festivals like Durga-Pujo and Ganesh-Chaturthi (which occasion immersing the idols in water-bodies as the final ritual) gaining increasing popularity, a steady demand for these idols has emerged. This has given birth to places like Pen which is known for Ganesh idol manufacturing.



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Place

Pen is located on Mumbai-Goa highway, 80 km from Mumbai, in Raigad district of Maharashtra. It was an important trade centre before it became hub for Ganesh-idol making. Pen is home to more than 550 karkhanas (workshops), majority of which are located on Kasar Ali and Kumbhar Ali Street – streets in old part of town named after the profession which people earlier practised. These karkhanas employ 10 thousand artisans all-round the year and another 50 thousand during the peak season. Every year 7-8 lakh Ganesh idols of various shapes, sizes and forms are produced generating a revenue of 10 crore. Most of these idols are sold in and around Mumbai and Pune. Nearly 1/4th are exported to US and UK.

As the business of Ganesh idol making is growing rapidly, most of the other shops are relocating outside the town into neighbouring villages. Most popular of these villages is Hamrapur where majority of shops have migrated. Even the idol making karkhanas on Kasar Ali and Kumbhar Ali would have one workshop in the outskirts of town for making large idols.

Pen



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A delivery truck with finished idols.

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Pen.



Artisan outside a workshop at Kasar Ali in Pen.



Unfinished Ganesh idol outside a house cum workshop in Pen.



Unfinished Ganesh idol in Pen.

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Artisans and buyers in a workshop at Pen.



Bashinder Koli, a fisherman by trade earning some extra income during off season.



Artisan in a workshop at Pen.



Artisan in a workshop at Pen.

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A unfinished Ganesh idol outside a workshop at Pen.

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Hamrapur



Artisans in a workshop at Hamrapur. To systematize the process, Ganesh idols are marked with different colours to indicate which stage there are in.

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Artisans in a workshop at Hamrapur, joining various parts and making it ready for painting.



Artisans in a workshop at Hamrapur.



Artisans in a workshop at Hamrapur.



Unfinished Ganesh idols in a workshop at Hamrapur.

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An unfinished Ganesh idol in a workshop at Hamrapur.



Unfinished Ganesh idols in a workshop at Hamrapur.



Artisans enjoying some light moments sitting on a sculpture of lion.



Artisan in a workshop at Hamrapur.

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View of a workshop at Hamrapur.



Finished Ganesh-idols in a workshop at Hamrapur.

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Prabhakar, an artist specializing in painting eyes and other minute details.



Artisans in a workshop at Hamrapur.

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Ganesh idols outside a make-shift workshop at Hamrapur.



Old sculptures.

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Old sculptures.



Old sculptures.

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A woman going home next to a delivery truck.

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People

Pen used to be important point for trade in old times but was never famous for sculpture. Bhikaji Krishna Damodar and few others used to make traditional Maharashtrian headgear known as Pagdi but that business started to go down. During the same time Lokmanya Tilak re-organized the festival of Ganesh-Chaturthi as an opportunity to organize masses for independence. Hence, Ganesh came out of homes into public. This gave a perfect chance to Bhikaji and others who shifted to making Ganesh idols. Soon the business flourished and more people joined. Shrikant Deodhar, the President of Pen Murtikar Sangthan is fourth generation of the Deodhar family working in this industry.

People from all strata of life engage in the industry at the time of Ganeshoutsav. Some people like Gourab, who is pursuing B.Com. from a local college, engage in it for part-time income and others to help in completion of the idols on time. The industry has people specialized in various steps of making the idols giving birth to a chain system which helps in faster and cheaper production. But not everybody is happy with the trend, as Shrikant Deodhar points out that out of 50,000 people working in the industry only 25 are artists who design the idols and most of people make copies of them. This, he said, has mechanised the whole process causing people not to associate with the idols in a personal manner in the way it used to happen with clay idols. He himself has stopped making Ganesh-idols on mass scale and only works on selected projects. But not everybody can afford this luxury and the industry does provide a valuable source of income for the people in the region.



Sagar Zala and his friend with the Ganesh idol they bought. They come every year from Vapi to buy idols in Pen.

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Bashinder Koli, a fisherman by trade earning some extra income during off season.



Artisans in a workshop at Kasar Ali street in Pen.

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Shrikant deodhar, president of Pen Murtikar Sangthan in his workshop at Pen.



An artisan specialized in painting eyes at Hamrapur.

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Kailash Bhivwa Mhatre with his unfinished sculpture in his workshop at Hamrapur. He worked in a workshop in Chembur, Mumbai for a few years after which he opened his own workshop at Hamrapur.

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Process

First a sample idol is prepared by an experienced artist. It is then coated with latex followed by a POP cover to harden. The sample idol is then removed and the mould of (latex +POP) is ready to make more copies. The raw material usually comes from Bhavnagar (clay) and Bikaner (POP). One mould can make approx. 200 idols. Hands and other parts which protrude much are made separately and are later joined to the main body. After finishing the assembly of the main body, work starts on preparing the idol for painting. The idol is first scrubbed, then painted with POP and in the end the cracks are filled. This makes the idol smooth and ready to be painted. First a basic coat of primer is painted so that the paint sticks. It is followed by painting the flat background colours. When the background colours dry, shading work is done. Eyes and other delicate painting work is done only by the specialized artists.



Preparation of latex mould.

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Preparation of latex mould.



A worker carrying packets of Plaster of Paris.



Inside part of a latex mould.



Artisan filling the mould with Plaster of Paris mixed with hay.

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Artisans making the frame-work for large Ganesh idols.



Removing the outside Plaster of Paris cover.



Removing the latex mould.



Removing the latex mould.

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Sculpture uncovered from the mould.



An artisan with a mould. You can typically make around 200 idols from one mould.

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Hands to be joined to the main sculpture.



Artisan joining various parts.

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Finishing the sculpture.



Painting with POP using a spray gun to fill the pores.



Keeping the sculpture out for drying.



Colours and brushes.

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Artisan painting a clay idol.



Painting the shades using a spray gun.



Artisan painting the eyes.

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Artisan painting the eyes.



Ganesh idol ready to be delivered.

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Artisans loading the Ganesh idols on a truck to be shipped to Surat. Big idols are generally painted after transportation.



Idols in a delivery truck.

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Products

Ganesh-idols of all sizes, shapes and forms are made in Pen. Most of the work is done in POP but clay idols are also made on demand. They are known throughout India for their vibrant colours, exquisite designs and detailed finish. Apart from the traditional designs new designs come as per the market demands. Getting a cue from animation industry some of the new designs this year looks more like the animated Ganesh characters. The cricket Ganesh became very famous when India won world cup. This year Bahubali Ganesh — idol inspired from the blockbuster movie Bahubali, is the hot choice.



Traditional Ganesh idols.

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Ganesh idol denoting the year.



Ganesh idol with Ganesh sitting on avulture hunting snake.



Ganesh idol sitting on Nandi with Shiva on top.

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Ganesh idol with Ganesh on a bike.



Doctor Ganesh.

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IPL Ganesh.



Ganesh idol in the form of Shivaji.

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Traditional Ganesh idol.



Ganesh idol with Ganesh on a chariot.

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Ganesh idol in the form of B.R. Ambedkar.



Ganesh idol with Ganesh sitting on a bullock cart.

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Traditional Ganesh idol.



Bahubali Ganesh idol inspired by a movie.

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Ganesh idol with Ganesh as a saint.



Ganesh idol in the form of Saint Tukaram.

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Ganesh idol with Ganesh sitting on a bullock cart.

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