

Design Resource

## Traditional Painting - Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Classical Paintings

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha  
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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### 2. Tools and Raw Materials

### 3. Making Process

### 4. Products

### 5. Video

### 6. Contact Details

## Introduction

Since the ancient times the tradition of painting has been carried out in Indian subcontinent. Some of the examples for Indian paintings dates back to the era of Ajanta and Ellora, Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts, Mughal and Kangra schools of miniature paintings and etc. As per the reports, paintings were used for decorating the doorways, guest rooms etc since earlier days. Traditional Indian paintings have some sub divisions in which paintings of Ajanta, Sittanvasal and Bagh depict the love for nature and its energies in paintings.

Indian paintings as it evolved with the time, it blend with various traditions influencing them. The folk paintings of India have also become very famous in national and international level. These folk paintings reflect the influence of traditions and local customs. Some of the famous Indian styles of paintings are as follows:

### Cave Paintings:

These paintings dates back to the prehistoric period. Some of the examples of this period are murals of Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh, Sittanavasal etc. These reflect an emphasis on naturalism. Cave paintings of India serves as a showcase to our ancestors who inhabited in these caves. Red is the color was predominantly used in these paintings. Green yellow and blue or black were also used that were extracted from minerals. The subjects of these paintings changed with the time and areas. Animals and humans are the usually depictions that could be seen in cave paintings. They are superimposed figures made using geometrical forms that represent humans and animals individually.

### Madhubani Paintings:

These paintings are also called as Mithila painting that belong to a small village known as Maithili of Indian state of Bihar. It was originally started by the womenfolk of the village. They drew the paintings on the walls of their houses. The paintings used to be the illustrations of their thoughts, dreams and hopes. As the time passed by, the paintings became the part of festivities and special events like marriage, naming ceremony etc. They are done with fingers, brushes, matchsticks, twigs and natural pigments. Madhubani paintings are made using the geometrical forms.

### Miniature Paintings:

Miniatures are beautifully handmade paintings that are tiny in size. They are most colorful and attractive that highlights the delicate and intricate brushwork which makes this type of painting unique. They were made on perishable materials like paper, cloth etc. During 17th century from Western Himalayas these Indian miniature paintings started to evolve. It was highly influenced by the mural paintings of 18th century. The records convey that the contribution of Mughals to these Indian miniature paintings by introducing Persian tradition is immense. Thus this style of paintings was improved by artisans under the various rules.

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Video

6. Contact Details

### Mughal Paintings:

Mughal paintings are the combination of Islamic, Persian and Indian styles. These painting evolved during 16th - 19th century during the development of the Mughal rule in India. The paintings progressed in different forms in different parts of the country. These paintings have some important features that seems to be originated during the reign on Humayun in India. Some of the master artists of this period are Basawan, Kesu Das, Lal, Miskin, Daswanth and Dalchand. The motifs that can be seen in Mughal paintings are roaring clouds, winged angels, fighting scenes, plants, birds and animals in realistic forms. These paintings were also made on the lives of the rulers, depiction of flora etc.

### Mysore Paintings:

This is a form of classical painting of South India, evolved in the Mysore city of Karnataka state. During the reign of Raja Krishna Raja Wodeyar in Mysore this particular style of painting reached its zenith under their patronage. Thin gold foils are used to make these paintings. They require immense concentration and hard work to produce single piece of painting. The most popular themes of these paintings are scenes from Hindu mythology, Hindu gods and goddesses and etc. It mesmerizes the viewers due to its beauty, grace and intricacy work. Earlier it was mineral and vegetable colors used but today poster and water colors are used to in Mysore paintings.

### Pahari Paintings:

These paintings are made in the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh of India. This name is given to the Rajput paintings made in these two states. It evolved during the period of 17th to 19th century. These paintings are predominantly done in miniature forms. The themes of these paintings were taken from the epics, puranas, poetry and folk songs of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. Later with the time, themes also evolved and revolved around love and devotion.

### Rajput Paintings:

Rajput paintings originated during the late 16th to early 17th century in the royal state of Rajasthan. These paintings are strongly influenced by the Mughal style as Mughals ruled almost all the states of Rajasthan during this time. The themes of these paintings revolved around the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, Life of Lord Krishna, Landscapes and humans. These paintings were done on forts, walls of palaces, havelis etc. The colors used for these paintings were derived from plant sources, conch shells, precious stones, minerals, gold and silver etc.

### Tanjore Paintings:

It is the native art form of 'Thanjavur' also known as 'Tanjore' city of Tamil Nadu. It is one among the famous classical forms of South Indian paintings. These paintings are distinguished from other types of paintings due to the usage of vibrant colors, dense compositions and surface richness. They are relief works that gives three-dimensional effect. These paintings are embellished with precious stones, glass pieces and pearls. These paintings originated in India during the reign of Cholas in 16th century. Artisans from Tanjore, Trichy and Madurai practice this style of paintings. The main theme for these paintings is saints, Hindu gods and Goddesses etc.



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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

Thus in modern days, the contemporary artists being influenced by these traditional art forms have excelled their modern works by expressing their imagination and by using their artistic liberty.

Artist Mr.Sridhar known for the traditional painting resides in Madurai. He is not trained in any fine art institute. His keen interest on painting and due to his good observing skill he has mastered the skills of drawing and painting in an appropriate perspective with proportional anatomy. During his childhood he was inspired to do paintings thus by observing calendars and book arts he initiated to do art works. Artisan uses his palm as his measuring tool while sketching to maintain the proportions of the sketch. A face of the figurine is made as per the length of palm and the body size of the figurine is 8 times of palm length. As per the requirement of the painting, brushes like round or flat shaped are used accordingly.



Traditional painting of Goddess made on wall.



Lord Ganesha is painted on a sheet using acrylic colors.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Experienced artisan Mr. Sridhar of traditional painting in Madurai.



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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/tools-and-raw-materials>

## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for making traditional painting at Madurai are as follows:

- **Cloth:** It is the base material used for making a painting.
- **Paints:** Paints are used for enhancing the beauty the painting.
- **Paint Brush:** Using paint brush the image drawn on the base material is enameled.
- **Water:** Water is used for cleaning the paintbrush every time while switching one color to the other.
- **Waste Cloth:** Waste cloth is used for while the excess of the paint on the wall or from the paintbrush.
- **Scale:** Scale is used for measuring the image to make proportional elements in a painting and also used for measuring the base material on which the painting had to be made.



Sheet: It is the basic material on which the traditional painting is done.

### 1. Introduction

### 2. Tools and Raw Materials

### 3. Making Process

### 4. Products

### 5. Video

### 6. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Acrylic colors: It is used for beautifying the traditional paintings by enamelling.



Paint brushes: Used for outlining and coloring.



Water: Slightly mixed with color to make the color consistency thin and to wash off the color that is in paintbrush.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Design Resource

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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

## Making Process

The steps involved in making of a traditional painting is as follows:

It involves the preliminary sketch of an image on the base. The base could be either wall or a cotton/canvas cloth. On the cloth, it is usually the acrylic paints used. On wall it can either be oil paints or acrylic and Asian paints. Using these paints the initial outline is made. Second layer of details are added to this outline. Further the minute details like facial features are sketched. Traditional paintings usually consist of mythological scenes, images of God and goddesses and etc. Thus the outline face of the chosen character is made and accordingly by using the measurements, the other features of the body are rendered proportionately. Once the basic outline of the image and details are drawn further the procedure of enameling the image is carried out. A single coat of flat color is applied as the base color on the image (required area). Second and third layer colors are applied on the base color to get the tonal variations in the painting. Further the highlights are given to the image. As the final procedure the minute details like intricate designs of jewelries, eye and eyelashes etc. are made and allowed to dry. Thus the traditional painting in Madurai is done.

Flow Chart:

[1. Introduction](#)[2. Tools and Raw Materials](#)[3. Making Process](#)[4. Products](#)[5. Video](#)[6. Contact Details](#)



Design Resource

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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Required color sheet is chosen for painting.

Design Resource

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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

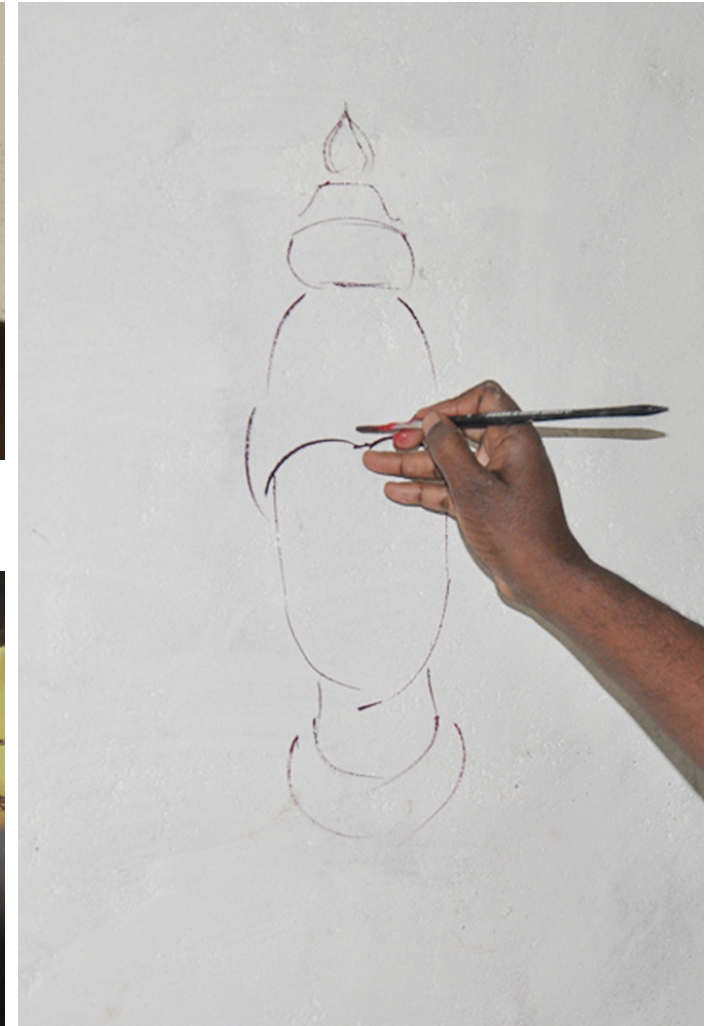
1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Traditional painting is also done on wall as per the order given by the client.



If the base is a sheet of paper on which the painting has to be made then the outline of the painting is made.



A basic outline is made initially.



Design Resource

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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Second stage of details is added to the basic form.



The outlines are finalized with analogy.



Details of the face are rendered carefully.



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<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



As per the face length, other characters of the painting are rendered accordingly.

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<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



A view of completed basic outline of the traditional painting.



The initial layer of color is applied.



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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Depth is rendered by added few more colors.



Highlights are given carefully.



Design Resource

## Traditional Painting - Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Classical Paintings

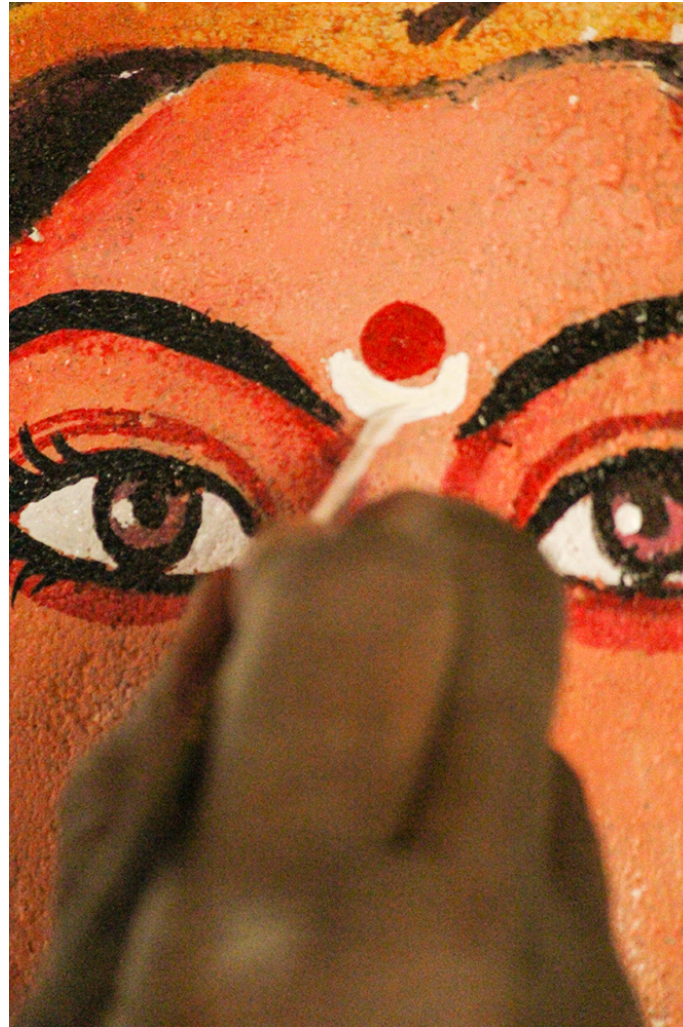
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<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Fine details are made on the traditional painting.



The final completed traditional painting.



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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details

## Products

The traditional paintings are made on the walls of the temples in Madurai. Some of the temples are Madurai Meenakshi Temple and other temples. The size of these paintings varies as per the space allotted or as per the order given by client. These traditional paintings include mythological characters, Gods/Goddesses, landscapes and etc. Paintings on wall are made using oil paints to sustain the durability. As per the adoption of modern technique the exterior paints are also used for painting on the walls of the exteriors like houses and offices etc.



A village scene painted on the wall.



Design Resource

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Classical Paintings

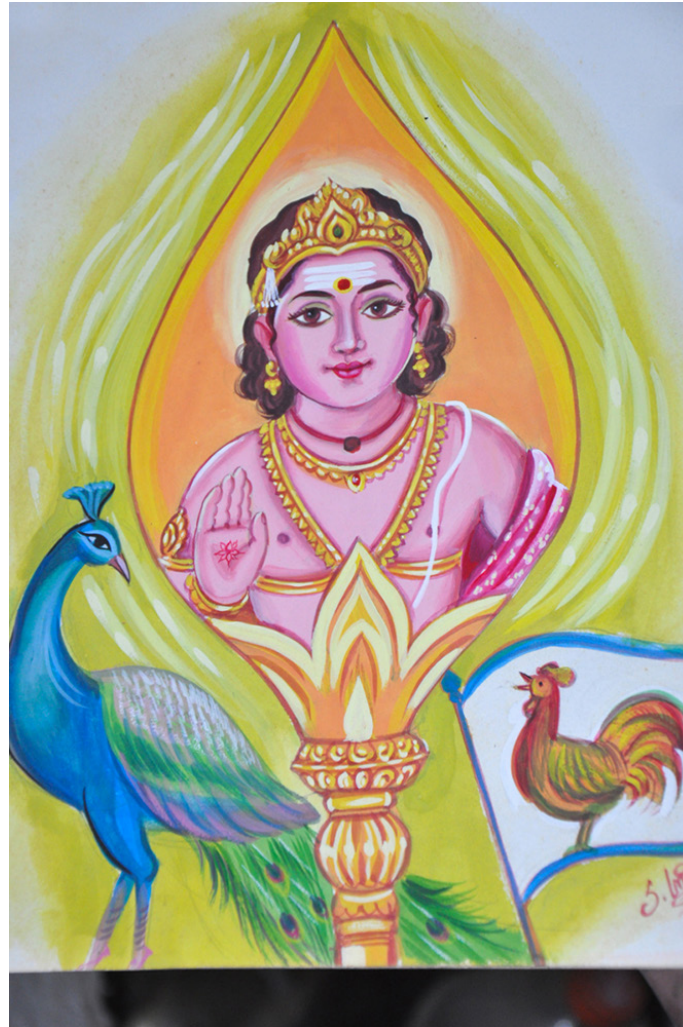
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<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



The painting of Lord Kartikeya with his symbolic representation in which his two halves of his body turned into cock flag and a peacock.



Lord Hanuman is painted in the traditional form.



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<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Monochrome painting of the couple.

Design Resource

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Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/traditional-painting-madurai-tamil-nadu/video>

## Video



Traditional Painting - Madurai, Tamil Nadu

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Video
6. Contact Details



Design Resource

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

You can get in touch with

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

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**1. Introduction**

**2. Tools and Raw Materials**

**3. Making Process**

**4. Products**

**5. Video**

**6. Contact Details**