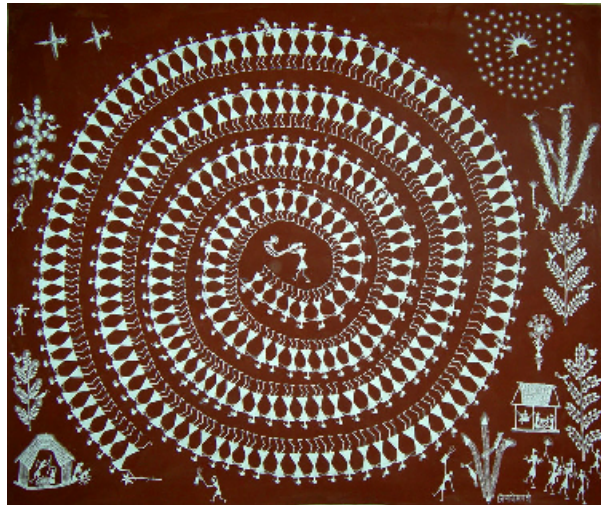




Warli Painting (Investigation into Non-Textual Interface)

Special Project

Guide : Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

Submitted by:
Dipu George, Prashant Bhandare



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The Visual Communication **Special Project** entitled “Warli Painting (Investigation into Non-Textual Interface)” by Dipu George, 05625809 and Prashnat Bhandare, 05625002 is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Design Degree in Visual Communication.

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Acknowledgement

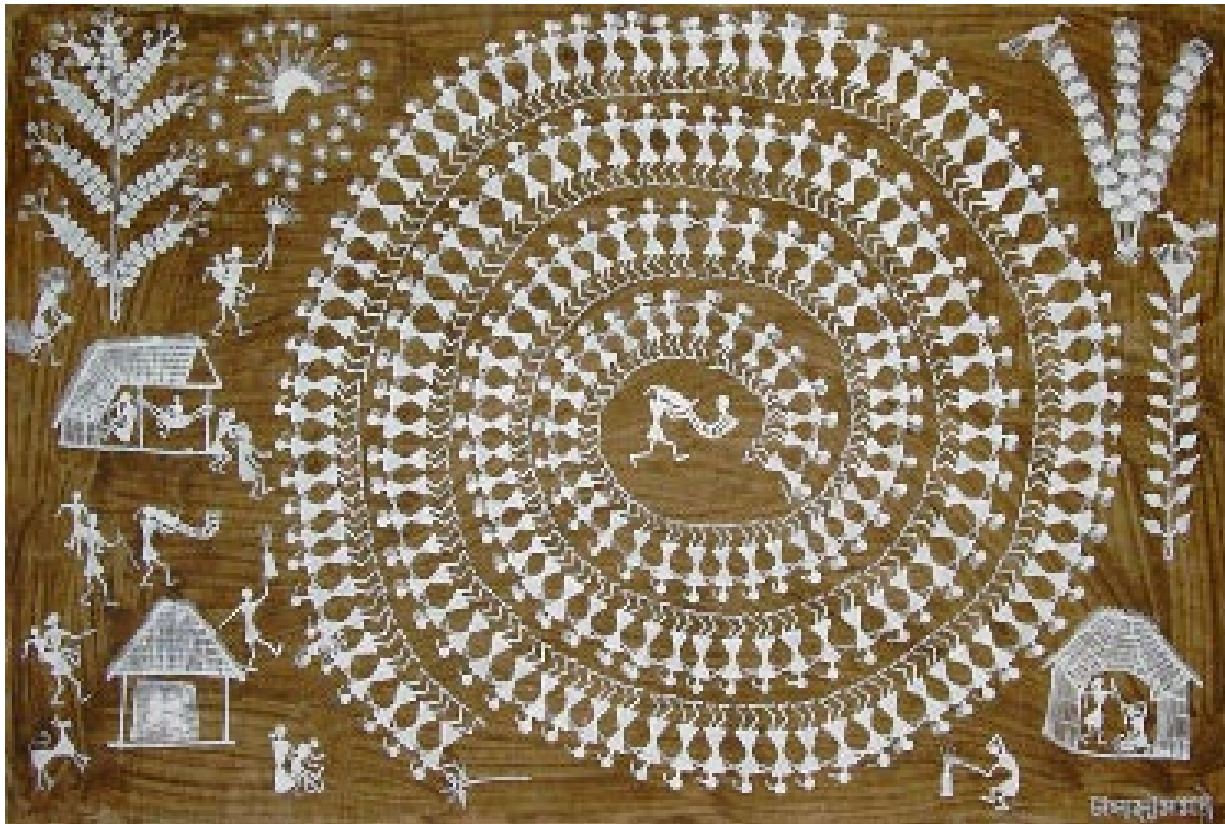
We are most grateful to our guide, **Prof. Ravi Poovaiah** for his valuable help and guidance throughout the course of the project.

We deeply acknowledge the help and support received from Prof Shilpa Ranade, Mr. Sachin Datt, and Ms. Sherline Pementa and Mr. Rajesh Hegadi.

Thanks to everybody at IDC, especially Hashim, Chaaru for their constant support and valuable suggestions.

Warli Painting - Scope of the Project

The scope of this project is to identify, locate, document, categorize, analyze and suggest applications for a Non-Textual Interface as practiced in the different art forms / media in our country.



Types of Non-Textual Interface

Interfaces that deal with aspects other than text can be termed as non-textual interfaces. Audio, Video, Spoken language, Performing Arts, Visuals etc are some examples of Non-textual interface. Some of the examples identified from the Non-computing Environment were Warli Paintings (Narratives), Kathakali (Gestures and Audio), Dabba walas Code signs (Signs and symbols) and Temple Motifs (Symbols)

Because of time constraints the scope of the project was restricted to analyzing only one from the above mentioned.

For the purpose we chose to document and study Warli Painting as part of the special project.



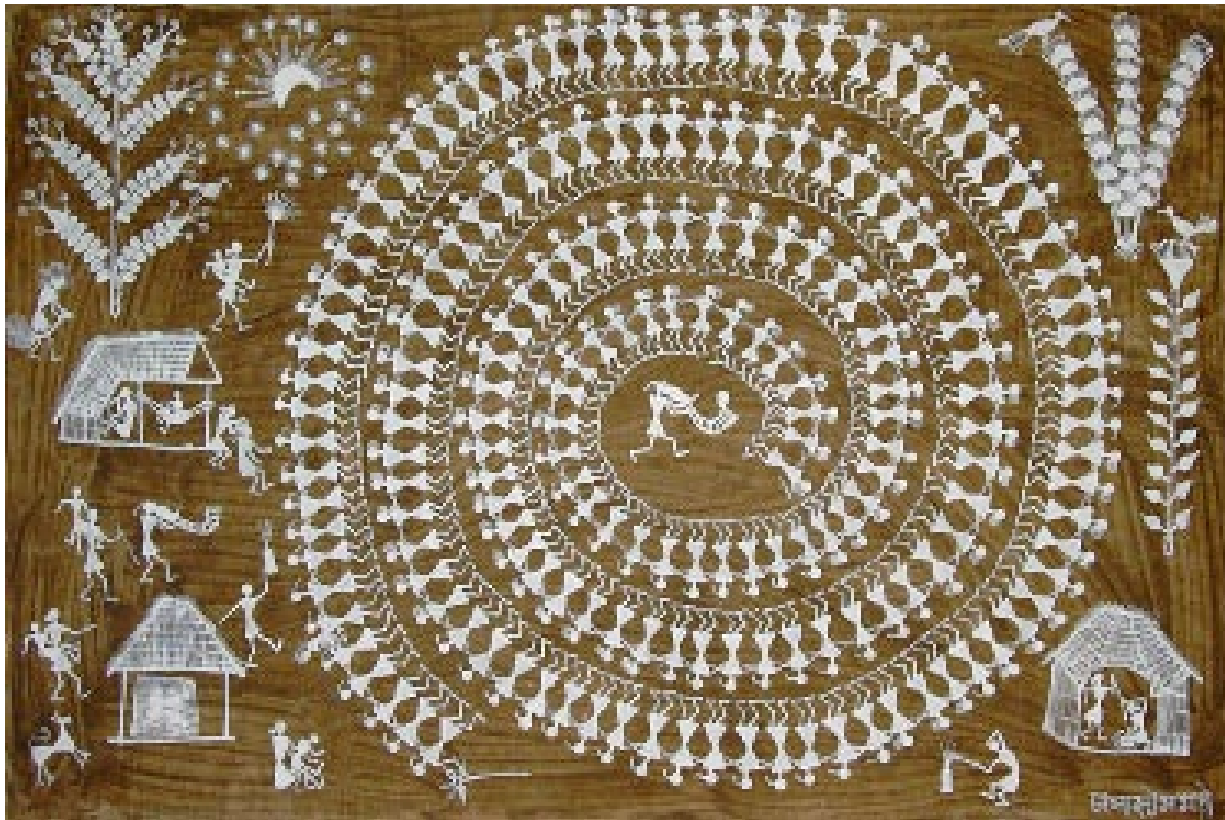
History

There are several Clans of Adivasis (original inhabitants) occupying part of the region north of Mumbai, the most numerous being Warlis who call themselves kings of the Jungle. The Warli Tribe, which resides in the Thane district of Maharashtra are spread out mainly in the villages of Dahanu, Talasari, Mokhada, Vada and Palghara. For our study we chose the village of Dahanu.

The origin of the warlis is yet unknown and no records of their art form are found, but many scholars and folklorists believe that it can be traced to as early as tenth century A.D. when such men learnt to build walls of the house.

The economy of the warlis is basically agrarian. The warlis have survived for millennia in harmony with their environment and without oppressing others. Their culture incorporates the spiritual and material, living and non-living, into one integral whole.

As the life of warlis is linked closely with nature, they worship nature in different forms – sun and moon, god of thunder, lightning, wind, rain, and several others. The nature goddess is called “Hirva” and nature’s produce was considered as gifts





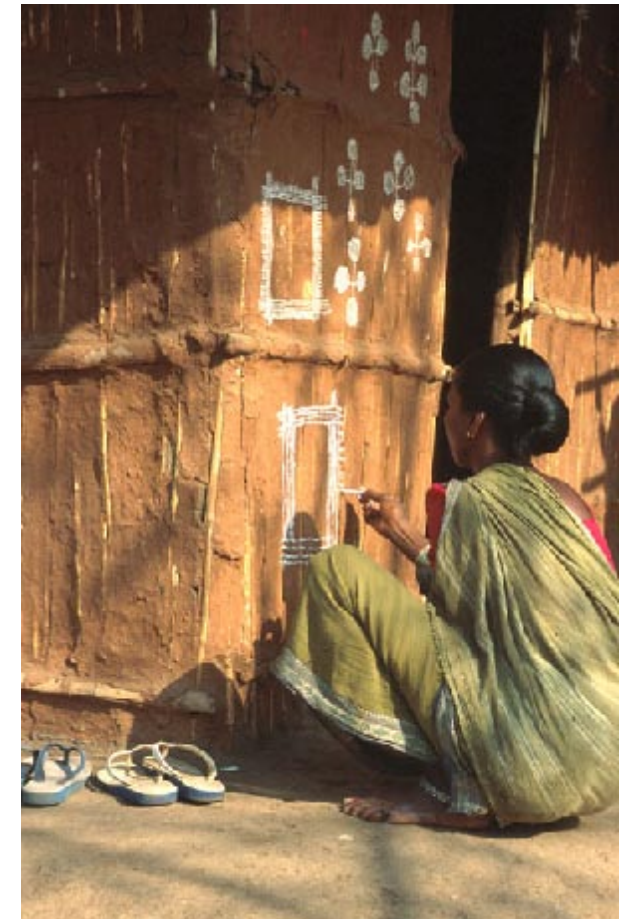
of Hirva. The warlis identify themselves as Pardhi, the hunter companion of Hirva. Gods are worshiped according to the seasons. In the coming of the first rice harvest they worship the god of rain and it's called the festival of Naranadeva. This is then followed by the worship of household gods, in the festival of Hirva, Jhoting and Naranadeva.

Next is the festival of Tiger God, and then is Kansari, the goddess of grain, and finally the marriage rituals (during the month of February) take place, and this time the deity of fertility, Palghata, is worshipped.

For the Warlis, Time, life is cyclic repeating itself eternally. Circles best represent the art of Warli, which has neither an end nor a beginning. This concept of time enables them to survive without undue stress or anxiety about the future.

The Warli crafts include products from bamboo like baskets, children toys, woven chatais made of palm leaves etc. The warlis do not have a tradition of written language and the language now spoken is primitive marathi. However their vast store of consistent traditional knowledge has been orally handed down through generations. The conservation of many plants and animals in their jungle is a

part of their culture and this respect for life is reflected in their art as well. This art is the painting tradition of the warlis depicting natures and life scenes and other recreational activities while some larger paintings represent myths, fables or other stories.



Visual Culture

It is during the marriage ceremony that the paintings are done and the warlis call them as marriage paintings. The importance of the paintings is such that without it no marriage can take place. The paintings depict their life and beliefs and fables. These paintings express everything they believe in life, from animals, birds, plants, houses, landscape, humans and their respect of nature is also evident. The origin of the paintings can be traced to the 10th century AD when these men learned to build houses. These paintings are manifestations of their oral traditions



Visual Content

Mostly Warli paintings are done on occasions such as harvest seasons and marriages and depict stories, myths and fables. The most famous Warli painting is the marriage Chauk – a painting made at the time of marriage. Women called Savasini (married women whose husbands are alive), paint a Chauk on their sacred kitchen wall



facing the main room. Before starting to paint, these walls are first plastered with cow dung and the most important part of the wall is coated with red mud. On this a Chauk is made and in the center is placed the Mother Goddess Palaghata, as she has to be present for the wedding. The Goddess Palaghata represents the goddess of fertility. The space around the Chauk is filled with dotted trees providing shade to the goddess, animals, and men doing various activities like dancing, playing music, climbing trees, carrying loads, or just standing with their limbs flying in the air and also various objects used by women in their married life. It also includes the sun and the moon, which means the bride, will enjoy marital bliss till the time the sun and the moon shine on the earth.

In fact the marriage can't take place without this event. At all occasions – birth, marriage, and death they draw circles, symbol of Mother goddess. Death is not the end for them; rather it is a new beginning. Nowadays-small paintings are done on cloth and paper, but they still look best on the walls or murals bringing out the vast and magical world of Warlis.

Visual Grammar

The grammar of Warli painting is simple. They are based on three elementary shapes combined in various ways

- 1) The triangle (reminiscent of the pointed form of the sacred mountains and human forms)
- 2) The circle (the sun and the moon) and the

visual pattern of the narration.

3) The square (which is the shape both of the sacred space and the piece of land)

Dots and dashes represents geometrical designs and single line. Through this mural painting, the Warli represent their oral legends, such as that of Narayandev, which tells of the transition from the nomadic life to that of agricultural permanence, or those that explain the origins of the names of the tribes. Until the end of the '60s, almost exclusively women did Warli painting but now it's the men folk who are engaged in the art. The figures and traditional motifs are very repetitive and highly symbolic.

When looked closely, they have a light singing and swirling movement, describing their daily activities. They communicate through their paintings and their life style and passion for nature are depicted simply.

A multiplicity of events takes place simultaneously, and the perspective changes. Each painting has numerous elements giving a vast panoramic view. The subjects found in these paintings are wedding scenes, various animals, birds, trees, men, women, children, descriptive harvest scene, group of men dancing around a person playing the music, dancing peacocks, and many more.



Visual Medium

The following pages indicates the various medium employed for the depiction of the paintings in terms of the tools, surface, techniques and the purpose.

Inscriptional tool	Surface	Reproduction	Purpose
Twigs / Rice paste	Mud Walls	Hand Copying	Decoration Rituals Celebration
Brushes / Paints	Brown paper	Printing / Scanning	Marketable Commodity
Wooden moulds Fabric paints	Cloth / Fabric	Block printing	Tourist attraction
Digitally Enhanced	Wall paper, Post Cards, Posters	Digital Printing	Ethnic style potrayal
Oil paints	Canvas	Warli replica but modern	Modern Art

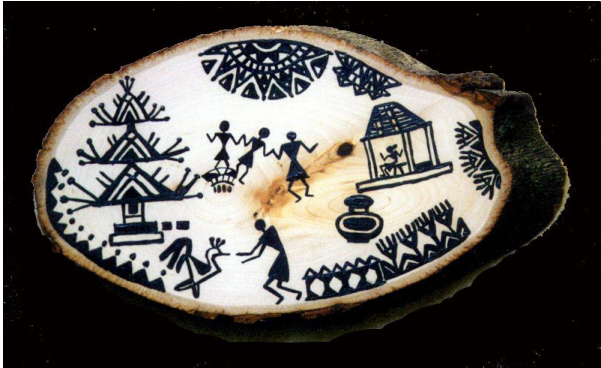


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The Fruit Girl

Here the whole legend is told in a single painting. In this painting is depicted the story of how a certain king who wanted to marry a special girl (one born of the fruit of a magical tree) decided to reward handsomely any one who can bring him that special fruit.

The narration is about how a young man sets his search for the same. While having rest under a tree he spots a snake about to devour the nest of a peacock.

His deed of cutting the snake to pieces (right part) brings about the bird's gratitude that in turn takes him to the magic tree where he is able to collect the special magic fruit (left part). In the center of the painting is depicted the escape of the man on the peacock's back while fielding himself against the attacks of the tree guardians.

The last stage of the story (as shown in the lower left) involves of how the young man while sleeping fails to protect the fruit girl (who has hatched by now) from an evil woman who throws her into the well and disguises herself as the fruit girl. The unsuspecting man in turn takes her to the king while in the meantime the fruit girl is reborn through a banana tree.





The Contract

In this painting is the story of how Goddess Earth (central human figure) weighed down by the ever-growing weight of the earth asks in vain for help from God Shiva. Thus she turns towards God Brahma for help and requests that this agreement be put in writing (since she doesn't trusts the gods anymore).

In the painting is depicted the signing of that agreement with a huge snake as witness to the contract.

Warlis consider snakes as godly creatures thus justifying the use of this being as a right witness to the agreement.

In the painting God Shiva is shown on the right while Brahma is to the left.

Harvesting Wood And Charcoal Making

In this painting the process of making charcoal is beautifully pictured in the lower right part.

The painting shows the process of how wood is harvested, piled up and made into small mounds and finally transported as charcoal back into the village.

This work is best interpreted starting from the center and moving out in a circular pattern. In the center of the painting you can see how a priest and some villagers are in the process of burning a tree on which a demon resides and who consistently terrorize the men. This demon is pictured as one with long hair.

Noticeable is also the numerous animals especially the squirrel which is painted on almost every tree and also the tiger depicted just as a tiger and not as a god.



Man



Woman



Categorizations

Humans - Man and Woman

Human figure drawings consists of combination of triangles and lines and their variations to show emotions and movement.

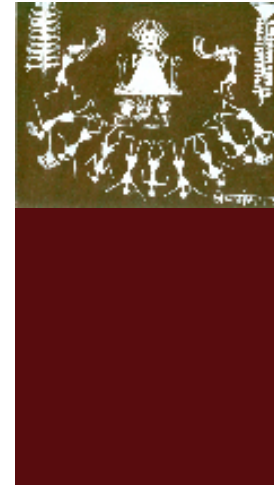
Vegetation - Trees

The Trees drawn by the warlis are mainly two type and their variants and can be found to be the main species growing in their environments .

Trees



Hirva deva



Dieties

Hirva Deva, Palgatta, Kansari,
Gavtari, Waghoba

They worship nature in different forms

The Nature Goddess is called “Hirva Deva”

The God of rain “Naranadeva”.

The Goddess of grain “Kansari”

The Deity of fertility, “Palghata”

The Goddess of Cattle “Gavtari”

The Tiger God “Waghoba”

Palgatta



Birds



Birds

The people of the jungle associate themselves with nature. Birds and animals form an important feature accompanying their story in the paintings. The species of birds depicted in the painting are mainly found among the environs where they live. The Peacock is drawn mainly part from the wedding "Chawk".

Animals - Tiger, Horse, Cattle etc

As mentioned before animals such as cattle and wild animals find a place in their paintings because of their agrarian and tribal culture. Some animals are also associated with fertility for e.g.: the tiger which they most often consider it as a Godly creature.

Animals



Artifacts - Instruments, Articles like Comb, Ladder, Houses, Instruments, Tools etc

Most of the artefacts found in the paintings are objects of everyday life. In fact in the Chawk paintings one can come across objects used by the bride in her day to day life. In contemporary paintings one can see new objects adapted in the Warli style.

Houses



Nature - Village landscape, Sun and Moon, Mountains, Rivers

The Warlis, in their paintings draw from among their environments as is evident in the portrayal of nature in the canvas. The village landscape, site boundaries, rivers, the sun and the moon etc.

Village landscape



My Dog



Warli Painting - Contemporary Art

What is interesting about the Warli contemporary art is the way they have adapted to contemporary themes to which they are presently exposed to due to social factors. The present tribe of Warli artist can paint any modern theme with ease.

The Station



Analysis Of The Paintings

Virtually all the Warli paintings are characterized by their lack of perspective and repetitive figures. The whole story is told in a single canvas (mud wall or paper or cloth). One can rarely find straight lines in the paintings. The repetitive figures and artifacts drawn are highly symbolic. The lack of facial features can be attributed to the fact that repetitive figures are always drawn in the paintings and also due to the classless social set up within the community.

The main feature of Warli art is their use of just two colors namely white figures on the dark (red mud or cow dung color) background (like a negative).

The paintings are the manifestations of their oral traditions and fables and daily activities as the original warlis lacked a written language. The fact that it's a group activity that conducts the Chawlk ceremony could be the most probable reason attributed to the non linearity of the story as seen in the paintings.

One can see the paintings come to life with nature genuinely respected. The paintings neither have a beginning or an end with no importance given to proportions of images.

The minimalist style indicates the way the Warli artist show their life as they understand it which implies that such visual interfaces tend to be highly culture specific as was evident in the fact that while the Warli children understood the paintings as it reflected their way of life it was initially difficult for an outsider to fully comprehend the paintings before a background study could assist him in understanding it later on.



Warli Painting - Wedding Ceremony

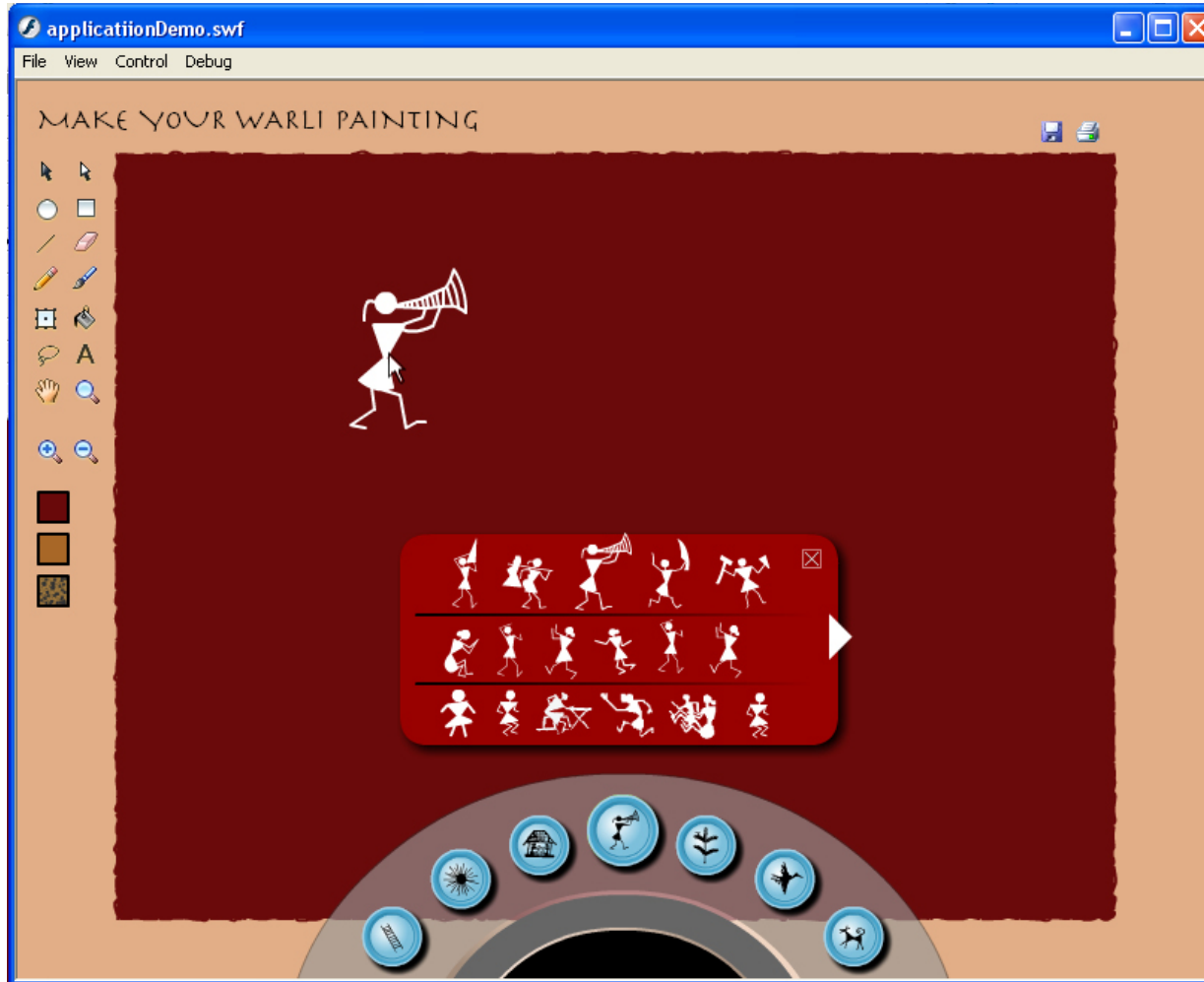


- Their wedding ceremony is given the greatest importance.
- These paintings are drawn by mother-in-law before the bride enters her new home but now its rare for women to do this task.
- They usually include the goddess of fertility to ensure good progeny
- Various day to day articles used by the new bride is depicted around the goddess
- The sun and moon signifies marital bliss

Application - Image Based Story Telling

The application decided after the study and analysis was to make an interface for young children to make their own stories based on the Warli Style.

The Target group identified was children since children like stories. The aim of the application was an image/icon based story telling initiative to encourage children to make their own stories through visuals. The objective was to make this as simple and intuitive as possible. The end result is a story which they can share with others.





The interface consists of a circular palette with seven items highlighting the unique elements in Warli painting namely human figures, animals, birds, vegetation etc. The tools on the right enable the user to manipulate size and color and size of the images drawn and options for erasing also. One step further which could be adopted was to make this interface as a collaborative environment with multiple users sharing the canvas and contributing to the story. Children can also create their own characters and add them to the library.



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