

Design Resource

## Miniature Painting

The art of Miniature

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Ms. Anisha Crasto and Ms.

Anushree Kumar

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/miniature-painting>



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## Introduction

Rajasthan is the land of great culture, tradition, art and crafts. The artistic and craft culture of Rajasthan was largely influenced by the Mughal Rulers. These rulers along with them brought several art and crafts which with little change in style and form slowly emerged as a native practice of Rajasthan. Miniature paintings are one such art form that was introduced by Mughals but later developed its own distinctive style fitting to the culture and tradition of Rajasthan. The art flourished under the patronage of Mughal and Hindu rulers from Deccan, Rajasthan etc. Many important painting/art schools came into being and flourished in different parts of the region. These can be broadly divided into Mughal, Rajput/Rajasthan, and Deccan schools. The Rajput school began to absorb elements of the Mughal style due to the growing alliances between the Rajput kingdoms and Mughals. These paintings involved/ incorporated elements of Hindu, Persian, and European styles/stories.

In Rajasthan there are four main schools for miniature paintings: The Mewar school uses bright colors to paint religious motifs and Hindu mythological characters, the Amber-Jaipur school uses muted colors to depict court scenes, landscapes, and nature, the Marwar school depicts accentuated facial features like large, curving eyes, and rolling clouds and a common theme including Bani-Thani, the love of Sawant Singh who ruled Kishangarh, and the Bundi-Kota school depicts landscapes and hunting scenes.

In Jaipur artists, mainly from the Brahmin family work on a variety of materials from handmade paper and boards of wood to cloth and marble. Most of them still use natural colors derived from insects, shells, minerals, vegetable matter as well as silver and gold, and artists also use brushes made out of squirrel hair. Traditionally the artist used vellum in place of paper. Before this paintings were made on special surfaces made from bamboo, jute, palm leaf, and cotton.



A miniature painting depicting Krishna and Radha.



Natural colors used in miniature paintings are kept in shells.

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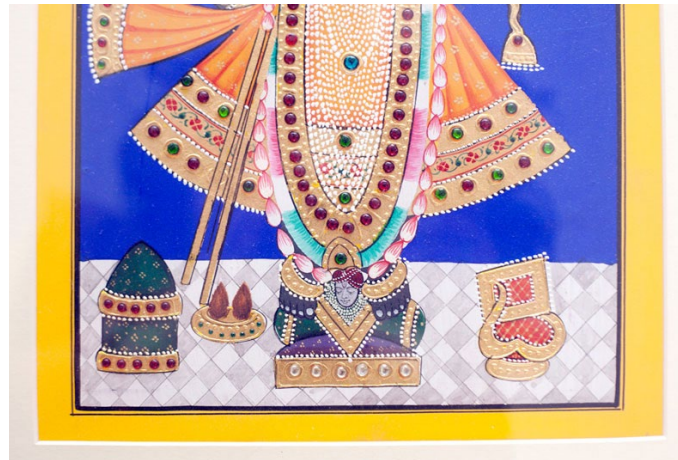
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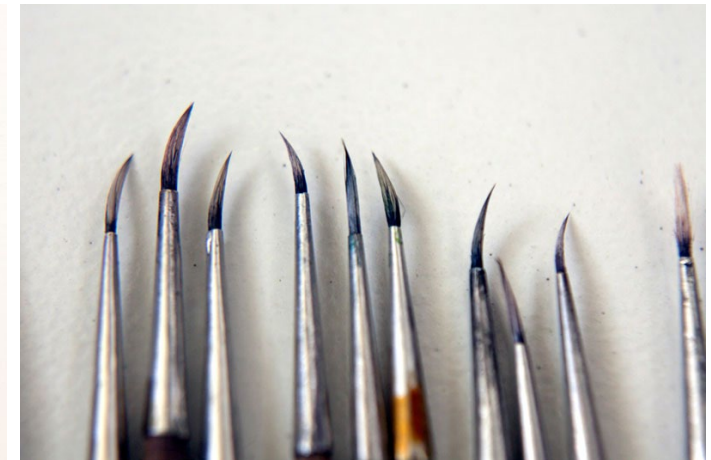
Stone from which colors are extracted.



An artist engaged in painting work.



Sometimes artist replicate painting of different style.



Special brushes made out of squirrel hair are used for making painting.

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## People and Place

Painting tradition in India dates back to the primitive era. People for ages have been painting in caves, walls, leaves etc. and it is spread all across the country. In Rajasthan miniature paintings had four main schools under which several centers flourished having different styles and color combinations. The main centers were

- **Mewar School** : Main centers were Chittor, Udaipur and Nathdwara.
- **Amber -Jaipur School:** Main centers were Amber, Jaipur and Alwar.
- **Marwar School** : Main centers were Bikaner, Jodhpur, Kishangarh, Jaisalmer and Ajmer.
- **Bundi-Kota School:** Main centers were Bundi, Kota, Jhalawar.

In Jaipur, the craft is practiced by various people in different parts of the city.

### Artisan and Community:

The artists who are engaged in the making of miniature paintings are called Chitrakars. Traditionally, the art was practiced by people of any caste and was not restricted by religion. Kings and other prominent personalities encouraged artists to paint and patronized artists with high skills. Since the craft was brought by Mughals therefore both Hindu and Muslim Chitrakars were involved in making paintings that had their respective distinctive styles. However, the artists in most cases belonged to upper castes. Today, many students belonging to different castes and creeds learn this art and practice in their local areas.



Miniature artist, Shri. Ajay Sharma ji is involved in making painting from past 25 years.



Ms. Vinita Sharma making a painting.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

### • Tools

Tools used in miniature paintings are outlined below:

#### **Brushes:**

Round and flat brushes of different sizes are made from squirrel hair. These brushes are suitable for making very fine details on the canvas and are long-lasting.

#### **Seep (Shell):**

Shells with smooth surfaces are used to keep/store colors and these also are used for burnishing, and as bowls for mixing colors.

#### **Hakik ka Pathar (Burnishing Stone):**

The stone is used to rub on a handmade paper coated with a mixture of Khadiya and Gond. This helps in making the surface smooth and therefore the movement of the brush becomes easy.

#### **Wooden Rod:**

This is used for drawing straight lines.

#### **Pencils and Erasers:**

Pencils and Erasers are also used while making miniature paintings.

### • Raw Materials

The main raw materials used in making a miniature painting are different types of colors which are procured from various types of stone, flowers etc.

#### **Canvas:**

The painting is done either on cloth or handmade paper. These are procured from the local market and further processed to make them suitable for painting.

#### **Colors:**

Various colors are extracted from flowers, stones, leaves etc. through intense grinding and filtering process. These are all water-based colors. Apart from natural colors sometimes water colors are also used. The main colors are:

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1. Kadiya- white
2. Ramraj- yellow
3. Malachite- green
4. Hazratbel- grey
5. Hansraj- brown
6. Mensar- orange
7. Sararevan- light yellow
8. Lampblack- black

### Varakh (Gold Leaf):

This is applied to enhance the borders and jewellery of the drawn/painted characters like kings and queens in the paintings.

### Gond:

It is used to mix with Khadiya to make the base color.

### Tracing Paper:

Used to trace the design.

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Handmade paper coated with the base color, a mixture of Khadiya and Gond.



Khadiya, is a white color rock which is grinded and converted into powder.

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Gond is procured naturally from babul tree.



Various natural colors are obtained from different rocks. These are further processed to form usable colors.

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Khulkharaba stone from which pink color is obtained.



Hazratbel stone, used to get grey color.

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Malachite gives green color.



Ramraj stone give yellow color.



Different number of brushes made out of squirrel hair are used.

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Hakik ka Pathar is used to burnish the paper.



Shells are used for storing colors.



Artisan's works on a small stool while sitting on the ground.

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## Making Process

Making a miniature painting involves a lot of intricate processes and stages and therefore the art is time-consuming. Following are the main steps:

- Preparing the surface
- Painting
- Finishing

### Preparing the Surface:

Mainly the paintings are made on paper. Special handmade papers are procured from Sanganer and processed to make them suitable for painting. Handmade paper is called Basli. Two to three thin papers are stuck together with the help of starch to make them thick. It is then allowed to dry. After drying the surface is coated with a mixture of Khadiya and Gond. This mixture is prepared by dipping Khadiya in water for 4-5 hrs and allowing it to dissolve. After that, it is sieved and mixed with Gond. The mixture is allowed to dry and the hard lumps are ground to make the powder. This powder is again mixed with water to make the paste and applied to the paper. This paste gives strength and a better surface to the paper.

### Painting:

The painting starts by sketching the borders with the help of a pencil. Thereafter the figures, trees etc. are made on the Basli. Sketches are made very lightly so that marks of pencils are not visible after the application of color. Once the sketching is done artisans start filling the colors. Application of colors starts with filling the base color and then followed by details. Shading and fine detailing of the face are done at the end with a fine squirrel brush. Face and facial expression are the most important part of the painting and are therefore done with utmost precision and patience. Chitrakars give special detailing on eyebrows, eye, eyelashes and lips etc. Borders of the garments and jewellery of gods, goddesses, kings and queens are painted with gold powder mixed with water. Sometime Varakh is also used. Once embellished the painting is allowed to dry properly.

### Finishing:

After drying the painting is covered with butter paper and rubbed with a smooth oval-shaped stone. This smoothens the painting surface and gives a shine to the same. Sometimes artisans use potassium permanganate to apply to the paintings. This helps in overcasting the colors, giving it an antique look.

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Handmade paper coated with the base color, a mixture of Khadiya and Gond.



Artisan rubbing the surface of the paper with burnishing stone.



Khadiya, a white color rock is ground and converted into powder and mixed with Gond, procured naturally from babul tree.



Various natural colors are obtained by different rocks. These are further processed to form useable colors.

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Colors are mixed in the shell since their surface is smooth; they don't react and also do not absorb the color.



Chitrakar painting the base color.



Initially light colors are filled followed by dark shades and then detailing comes.



Ruler is used to take reference while drawing straight lines.

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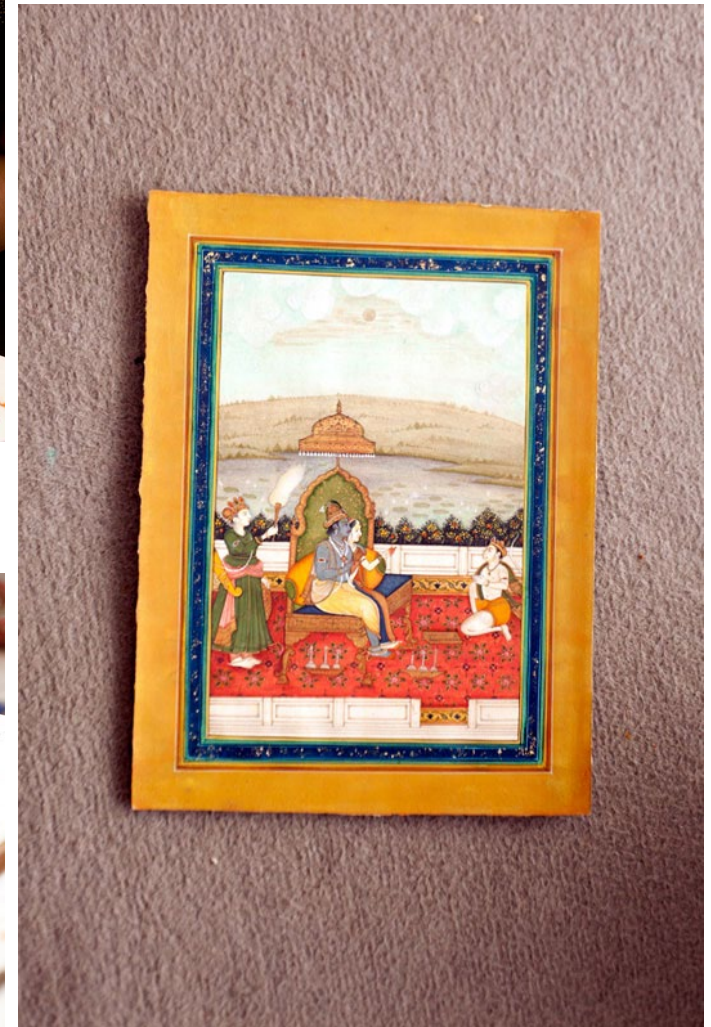
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Artisan mixing color in earthen pots. The surface of earthen pots are rough and thus helps in properly mixing the color.



Application of darker shades.



A completed miniature painting with borders and other details depicting Krishna and Radha.

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## Products

Apart from using these paintings as art pieces, artisans also make miniature paintings on wall hangings, diary covers, coasters, walls etc. Artists also make paintings in Glass, Velvet, Marble, Silk and Wood. These products are sold in the market as souvenirs.



Artisan showing a miniature painting

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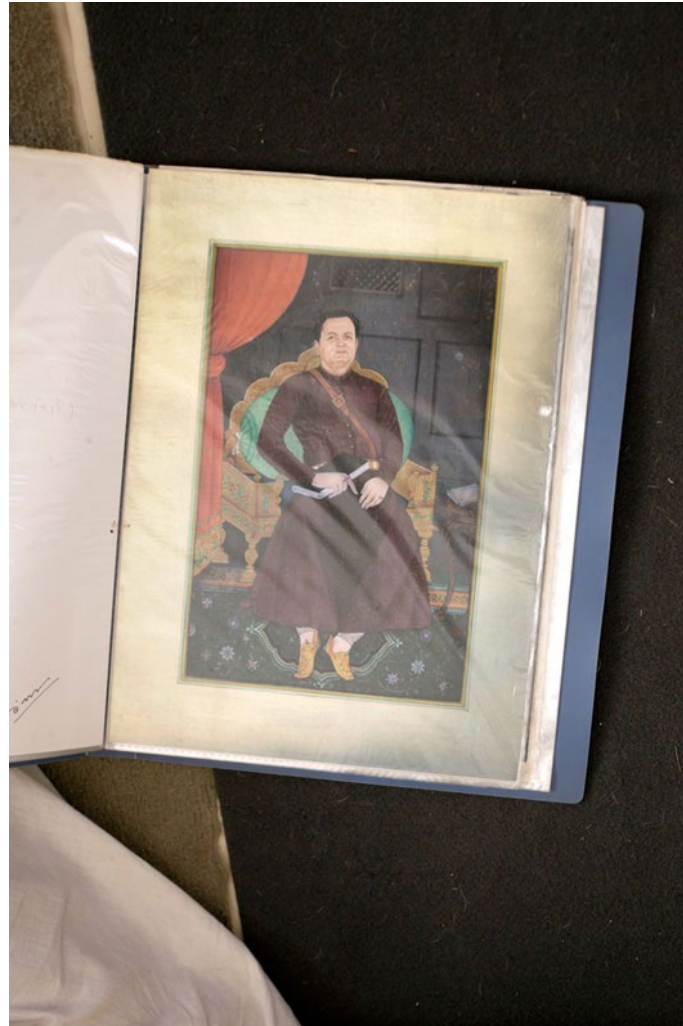
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Painting of a prominent personality done in miniature style.



Painting showing a warrior.

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Lord Shree Ram and Sita.



Hanuman portrayed from the story of Ramayana.



A replication of the south Indian miniature style.

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## Designs

Paintings depict themes such as wars, fights between animals, gathering of women, Krishna and Radha, ceremonies, festivals, court scenes, gardens, forests, palaces, hills and valleys, deserts and hunting scenes. The different painting schools were identified by the subjects they paint and the use of colors.

### Mewar School:

The motifs are religious including hunting scenes, Krishna-Leela, Ramayan, and Bhagvad Puran. They use bright colors procured from stone.

### Amber-Jaipur School:

The artisans made gods and goddesses, kings and Durbars and nature, with muted colors that were influenced by the Mughals.

### Marwar School:

These paintings emphasized a lot on facial features, like large and curving eyes and rolling clouds. Bani-Thani has been an important theme in the paintings of this region.

### Bundi-Kota School:

Motifs made were of landscapes, forests, and hunting scenes. The Marwar and Jaipur schools show a greater Mughal influence.

With a change in time artists have started depicting current scenarios in painting using the same style.

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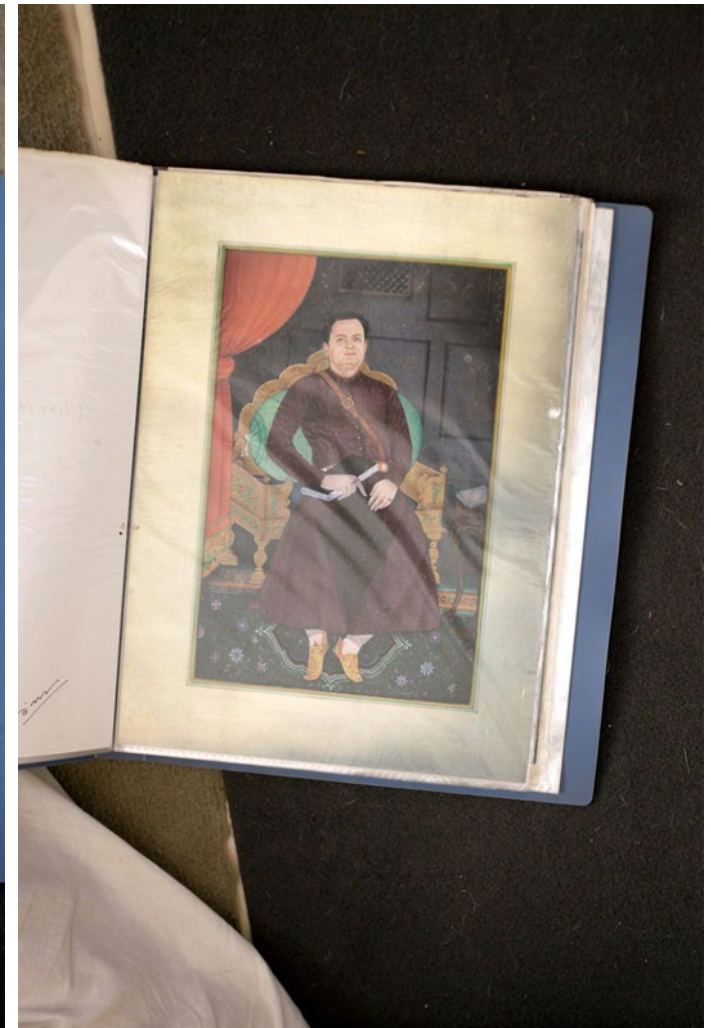
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A new experiment in miniature painting. Depicting current scenario in miniature style.



Representation of Rajput warrior.

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Prominent personality in royal attire sitting in a Durbar.

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