



International Reception of Mithila Painting

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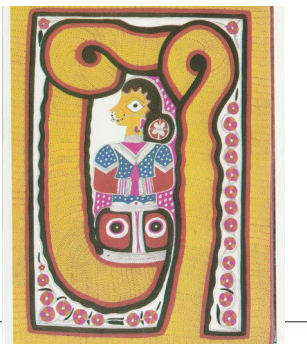
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International Reception of Mithila Painting

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Evolution of Mithila Art

Mithila: N. Bihar (IND) & Terai (NEP). Birth place of Sita & Janaki (*Rāmāyana*). **Mithila painting:** umbrella term for ritual & art forms. Since at least 14th c., women's domestic wall and floor (*aripana*) imagery: Hindu deities, icons of fertility (elaborately for weddings in bridal room, *kohbar ghar*). 14th c.: rigid matrimonial relations in upper castes (*Panji*), *purdah* (veil...), painting as outlet for women assertion. Impact of Vidyapati's Maithili songs. 3 styles: *geru* (mostly red), *bharni* (vivid colors), *kachni* (mostly lines in black and red).

60s: transferred on paper, paintings undergo changes: recognition of artistic individuality, new styles (tantric & *godana*/tattoos)... 1956: 1st commercialization (B. Kulkarni). **1966:** Indian govt (P. Jayakar, I. Gandhi) provides patronage by giving women paper & colors: **relief program further to drought & famine of Bihar**. Marketing policies (govt, develop. agencies) to attract national and worldwide audience: exhibitions, paintings on Jayanti-Janata Express, Madhubani station (L.N. Mishra), National Awards for Craftsmen...

Mithila art on global village, transnational spaces (airports, galleries...). **'New Mithila' artists,** art graduated, mix aesthetics, symbolic elem. of global & local cultures. Awareness of national & global position of a firstly local practice. Transnational flows renew syncretic painting.

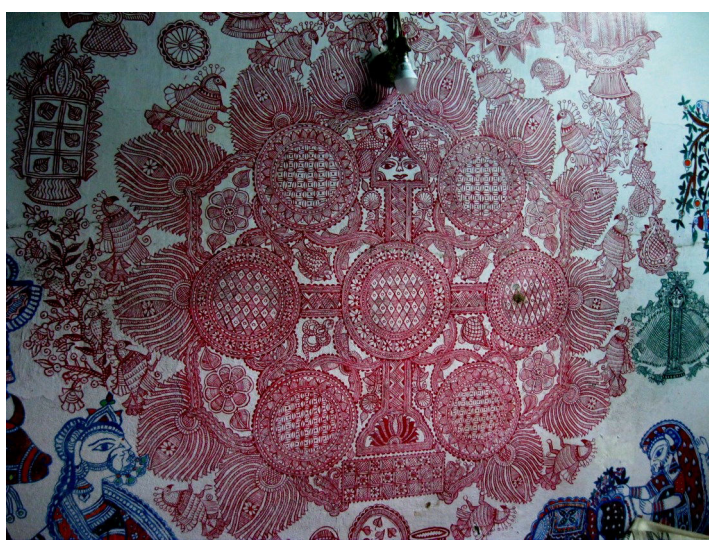
'Indianness', nation & art

1980: Crafts Museum Delhi

2003: Mithila Art Institute

1980: Ethnic Art Foundation, USA.

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Kohbar-ghar (lotus, bamboo grove) Godawari Dutt, April 2017, Ranti.



Bright fanning, Sabhapati Das household, Kayasth, vill. Darema, Photogr. W. Archer, 1940, Brit. Library



Lakhola Jha, *Krishna and Gopis*, c. 1970, s.l., Bharni style. Holi Pigm. Priv. Collect. N. N. S. Nirala. Photogr. 2017.

1934: Nepal-Bihar earthquake, W. Archer, local officer, 'discovered' paintings on walls. 47 photogr. (Brit. Library). Close to nationalist Bengali scholars, search for popular paintings. **1949:** his article *Maithil Painting* underpinned by universal aesthetics based on dominant movements in Post-War Anglophone World. Ritual & formal aspects set in unchanging tradition (styles per castes; feminine, anonymous & collective practice).

70s: Indian enchantment of counterculture; orientalist & romantic visions of S. Asian universe as spiritual, pantheist & sensorial. 'Flower power' quest: 'on the road' rather than 'on the job', free-love, spontaneous creation, anti-bourgeois. **Kairos of 60s indophily.** Internat. mediators: E. Moser-Schmitt (D), J. Elder, R. & N. Owens (USA), T. Hasegawa (J), Y. Véquaude (F). Véquaude's writings: timeless village utopia, *Sehnsucht* of lost Eden.

Late 90s: deconstruction of male Westerner interpretations through gender & cultural studies, like paintings as immemorial expression of Hindu women rituals... Appearance of men painters (10 %): gender categories redefined? But patriarchy not called into question.

Mithila Paintings introduced to world, redefined through outsiders' needs and Western paradigms. Devoted places to paintings and more than 130 exhibitions in 25 countries (cf. maps).

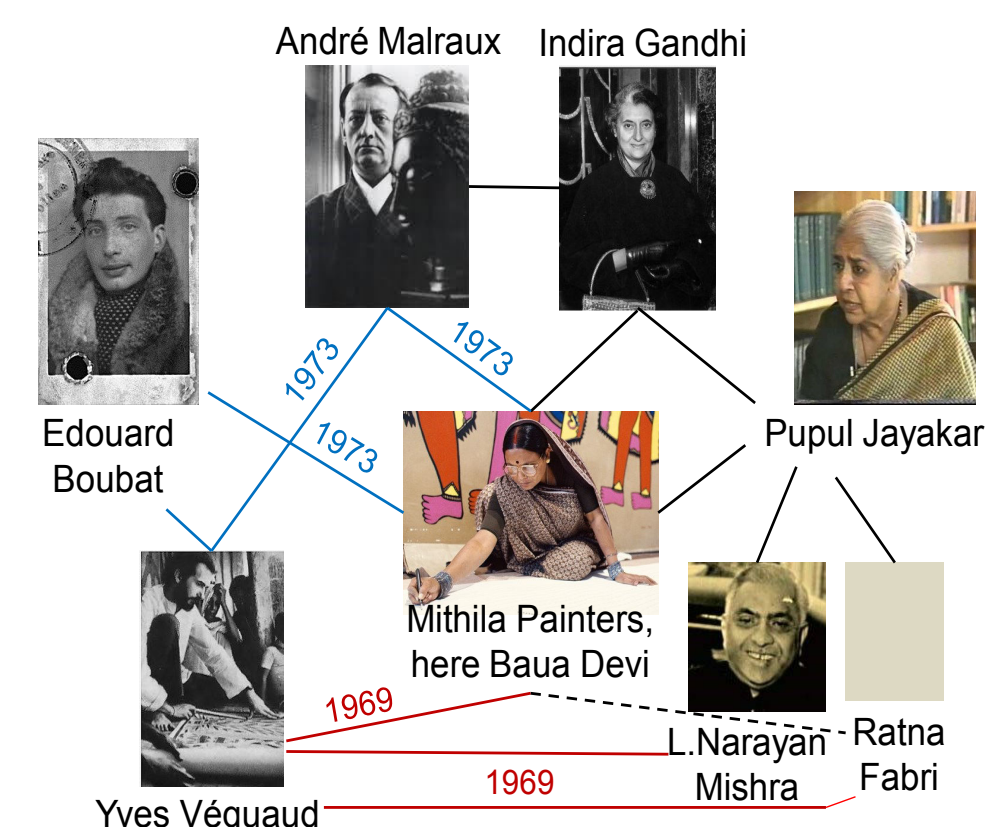
3 phases of reception with valued discourses of Zeitgeist:

- Late colonial and post-independence moment.** Archer's universal aesthetics stemming from colonialism, vanguards, psychoanalyze, surrealism, organic art vision.
- 1st phase of globalization, 'global 60s', 1960-1989 (climax 70s).** Romantic world re-enchantment vs 'technocratic soc.' Véquaude: 'hippie' bohemia, neo-tantrism, prophetic painters, village communitarian utopia, return to pre-industrial & holistic community. Mithila art misunderstood as homogenous, stable and rural.
- 2nd phase of globalization, 'postmodernity', 1995-today, (climax 1st half 2010s).** Techn. & styles shared, wider motives. Transversal dynamics of 'Neo' or 'New' Mithila artists. Women painters considered mostly through gender studies.

Between religious, political and cultural fields. Diplomacy crucial to paintings globalization (I. Gandhi; A. Malraux; M. Singh, Indian ambassador in Finland, 80s...) Interactions between stakeholders, vectors of cross-cultural transfers, led to construction of 'transnational' cultural field.



Y. Véquaude, B.S. Mandal, Baua Devi, her husband J.Jha making *Snakes*, acrylics. Behind: *King and Queen Story and a River Inside*, fresco. *Magiciens de la Terre*, Paris, 1989. Photo: Fr.-X. Bouchart © N. Beauchéac



Aspects of Franco-Indian cultural network around Mithila Paintings in 70s



Globalization of Mithila Paintings: Worldwide Exhibitions

-1970 1970- 1975- 1980- 1985- 1990- 1995- 2000- 2005- 2010- 2015-

