

Interpreting elements of image making

a formal analysis of an existing
Indian art form...PATTACHITRA OF ORISSA

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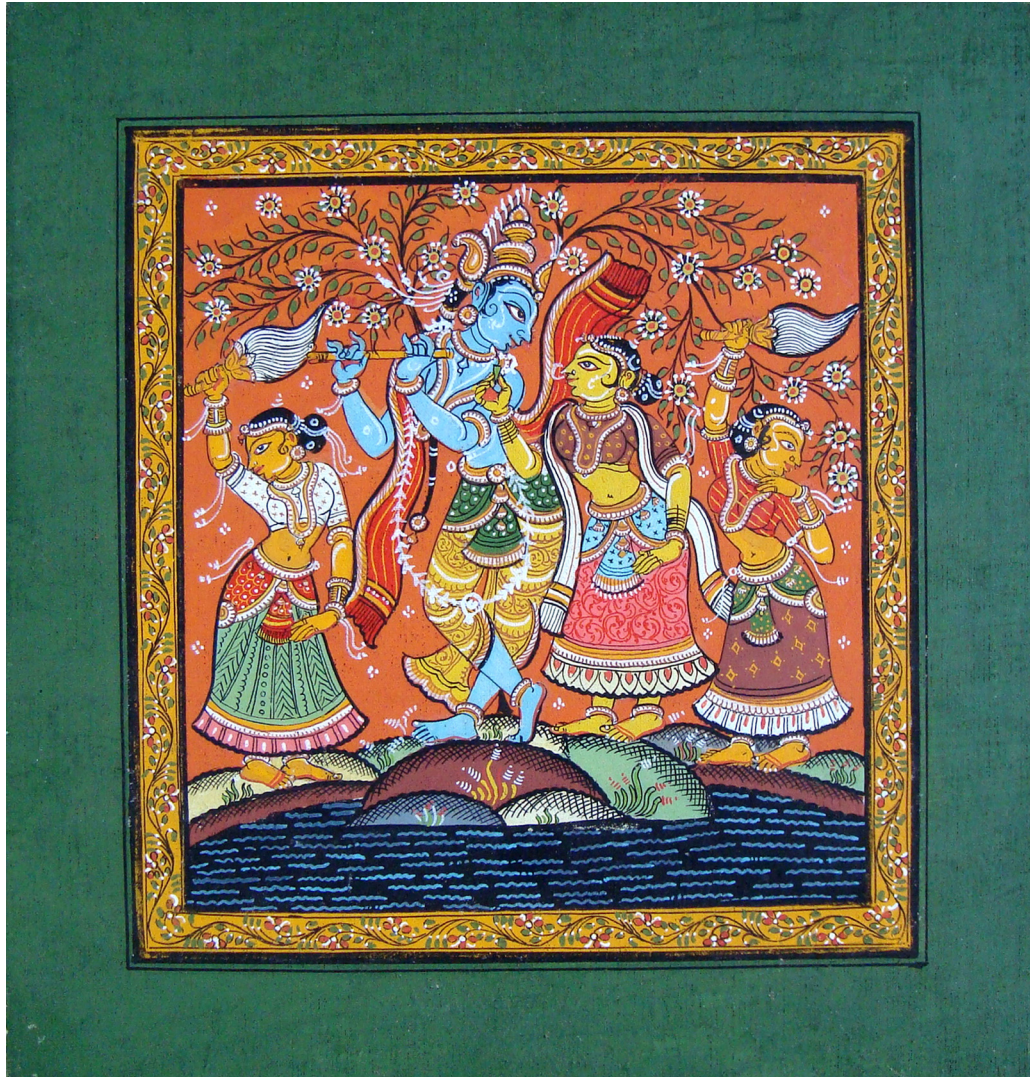
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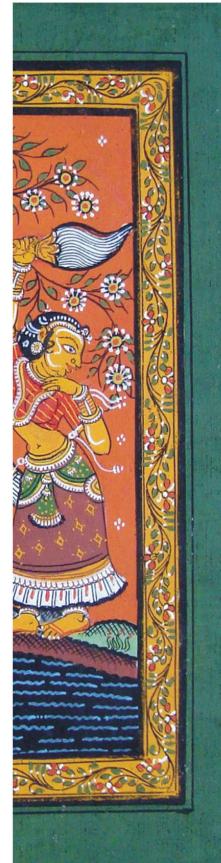
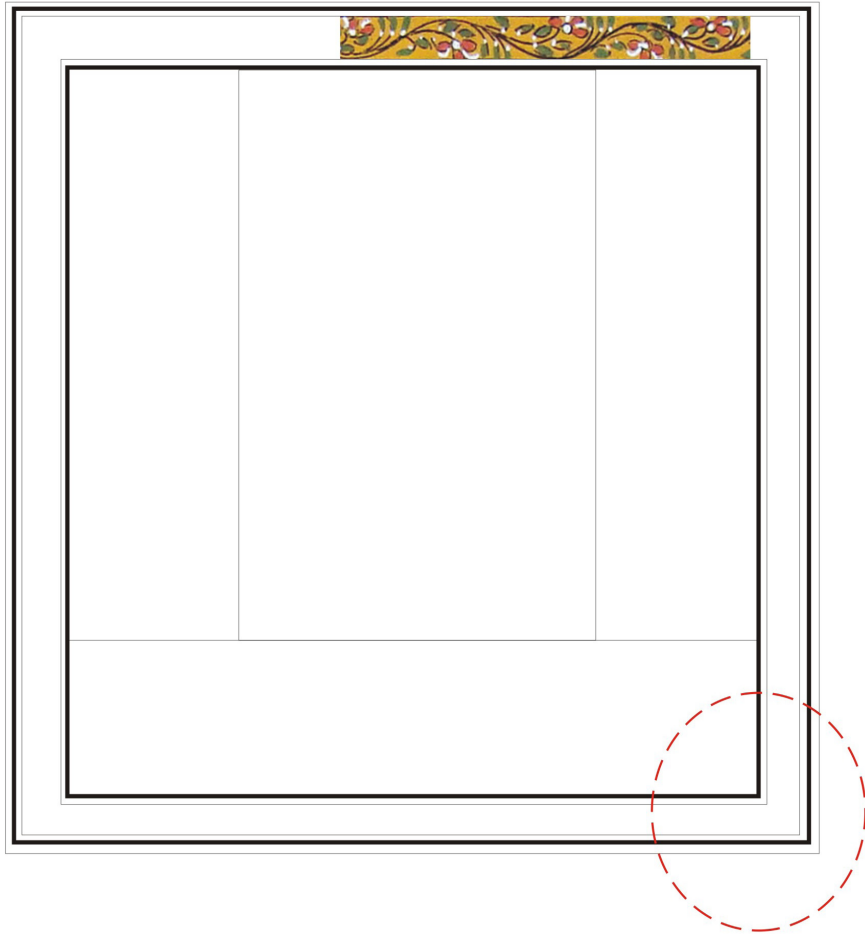




INTRODUCTION

The word patta is a Sanskrit word meaning canvas and chitra meaning picture. This art form is defined by its rich use of colour, its creative motifs and designs, and its portrayal of pure and simple themes. Hindu mythological themes revolve around this art form and mostly deals with stories of Mahabharata, Ramayana and legends concerning Radha and Krishna, Lord Jagannath and other popular legends.

But, the most popular, and believed to be the source, is the depictions of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, the Divine triad or Sri Jagannath Patti. The chitrakaras do not strive for realism but a definite expression of feeling and emotion is strongly visualized in their work with neat patterns and designs that calls for a closer observation for appreciation.



LINE

Thick black lines:

Portions which are to be coloured black, e.g. The hair, are as also the borders of garments, architecture etc, where thick black lines to be applied.

Thin black lines:

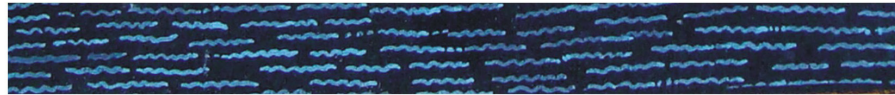
With fine black (thin)* lines, the Chitrakara outlines the face, the body and the dress and the ornaments. Eyes are painted and the dress given borders and designs. Figures get their final outlines and expressions and the colours become decorative.

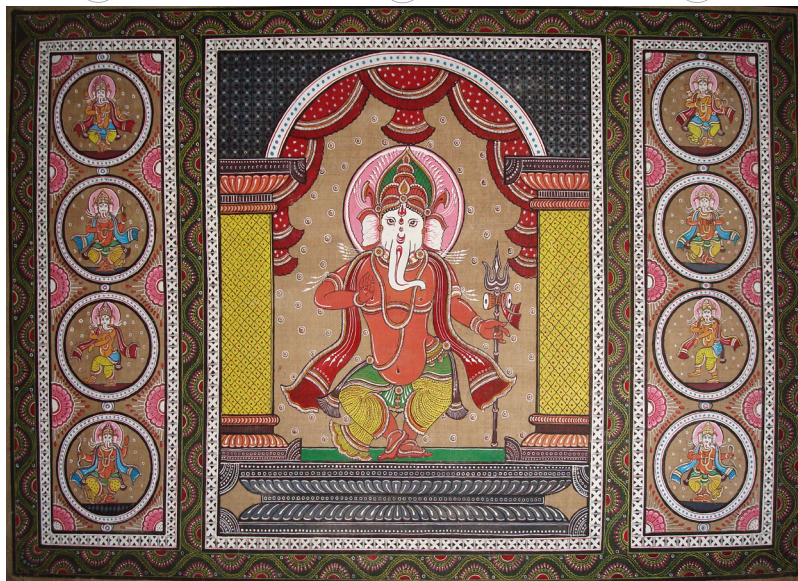
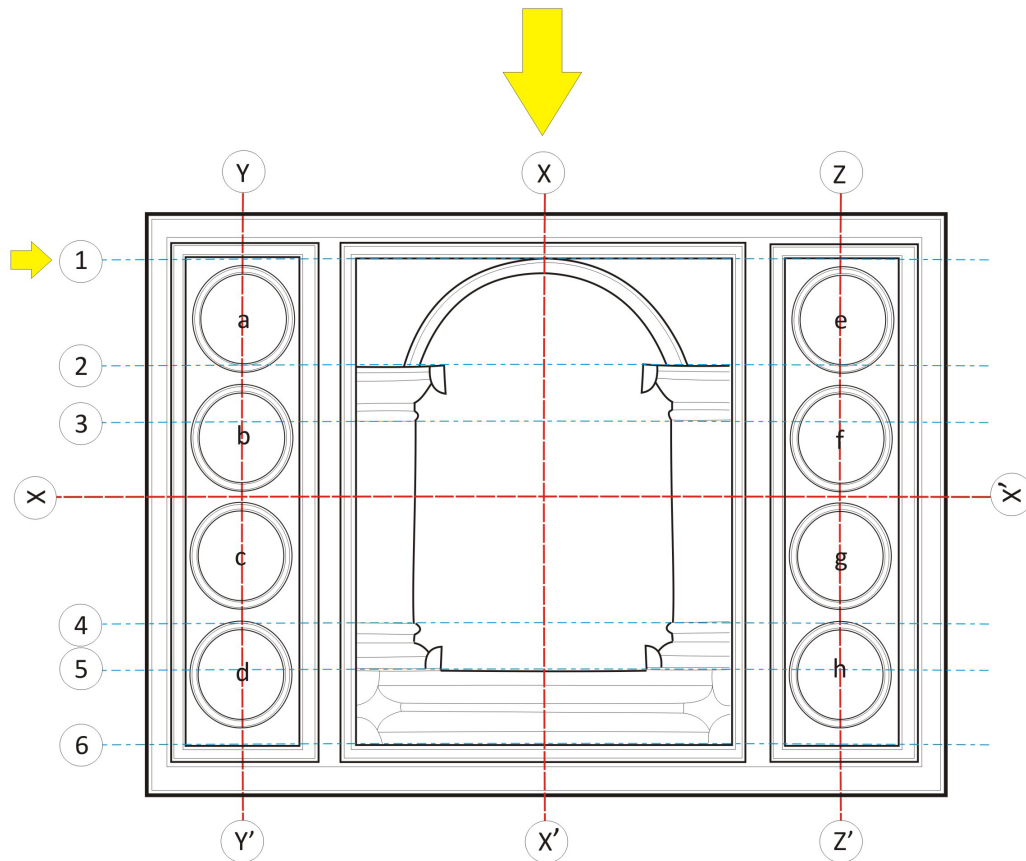
* For outlines around all the different colour applications, it requires delicate workmanship.





HATCH



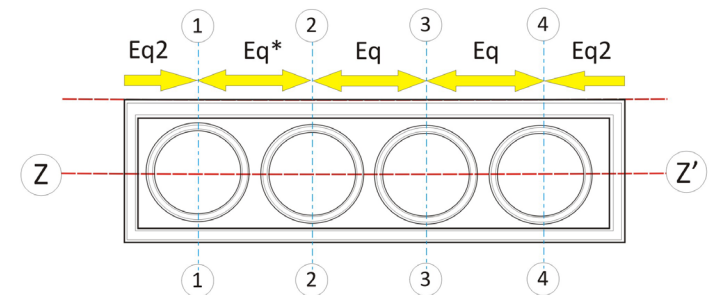


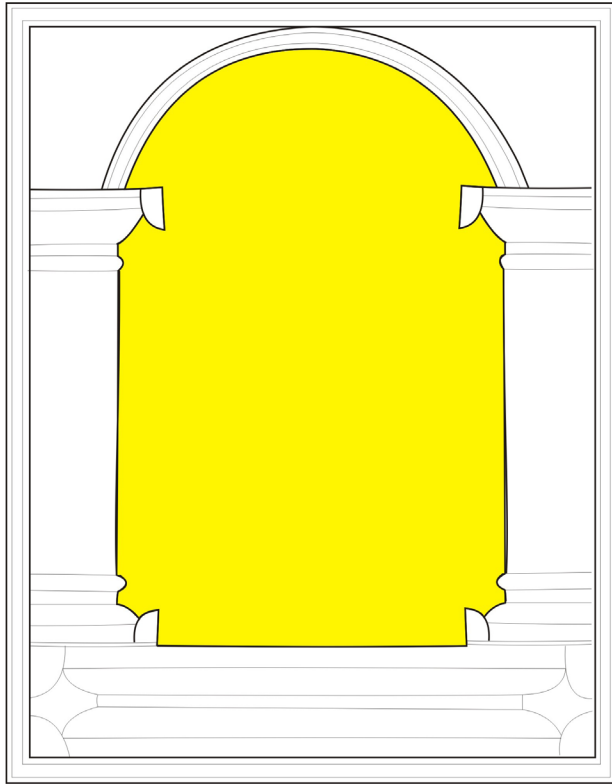
BALANCE, SYMMETRY

Two axial centre line divides the painting in to four parts. This gives the desired symmetry in to the painting. The main character is placed in middle while rest of the story boarding is done in the rest of parts.

GRID

A grid is being followed which determines the placing of objects in their respective position. This also determines the hierarchy between individual elements and this improving the effective focus on desired subject.





CENTRE OF INTEREST

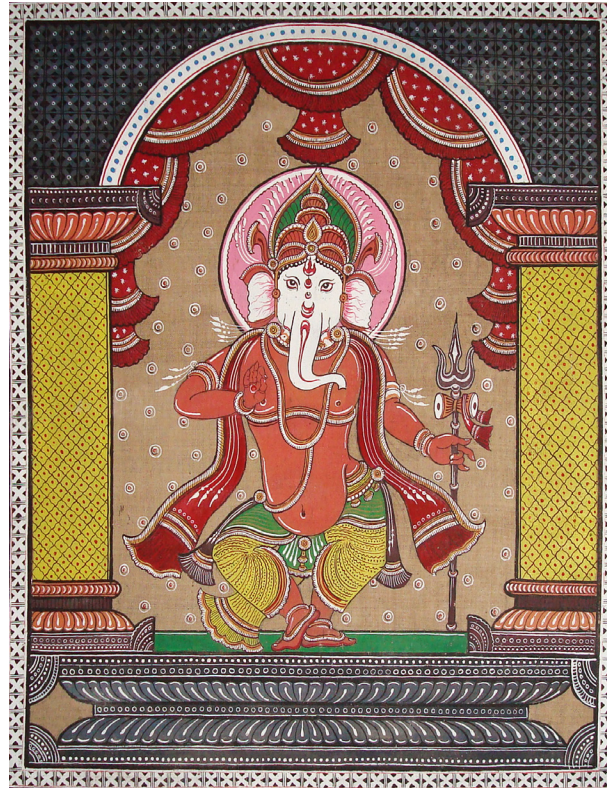
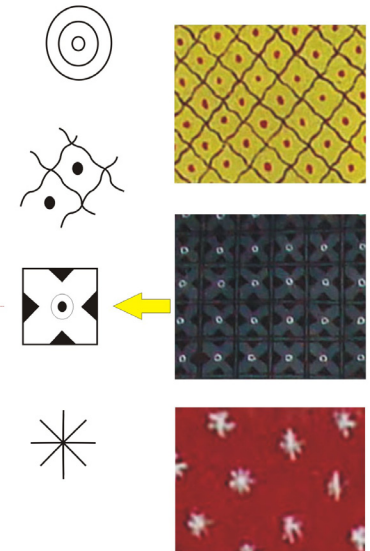
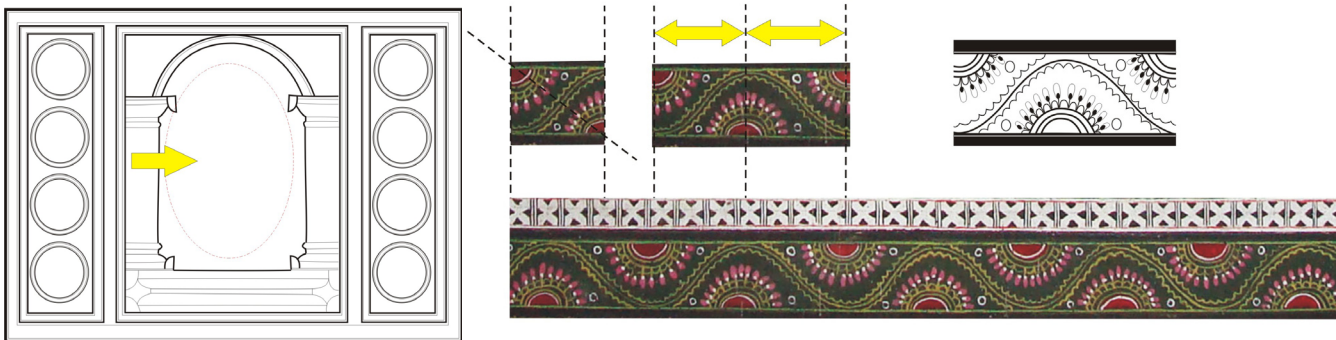
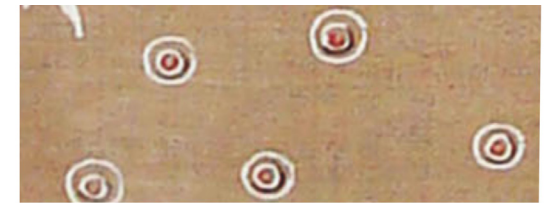
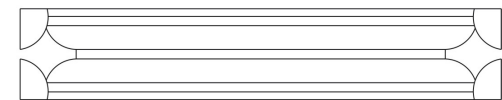
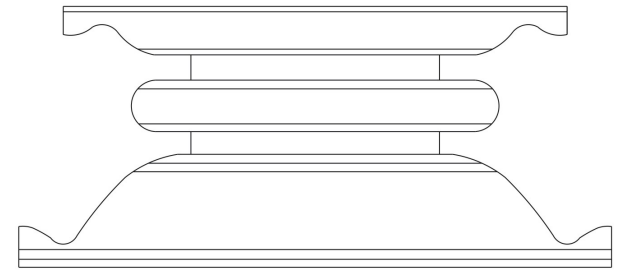
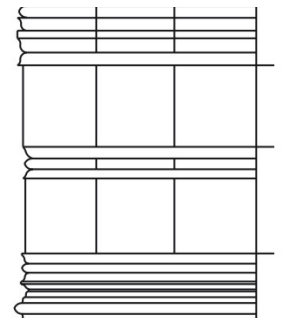
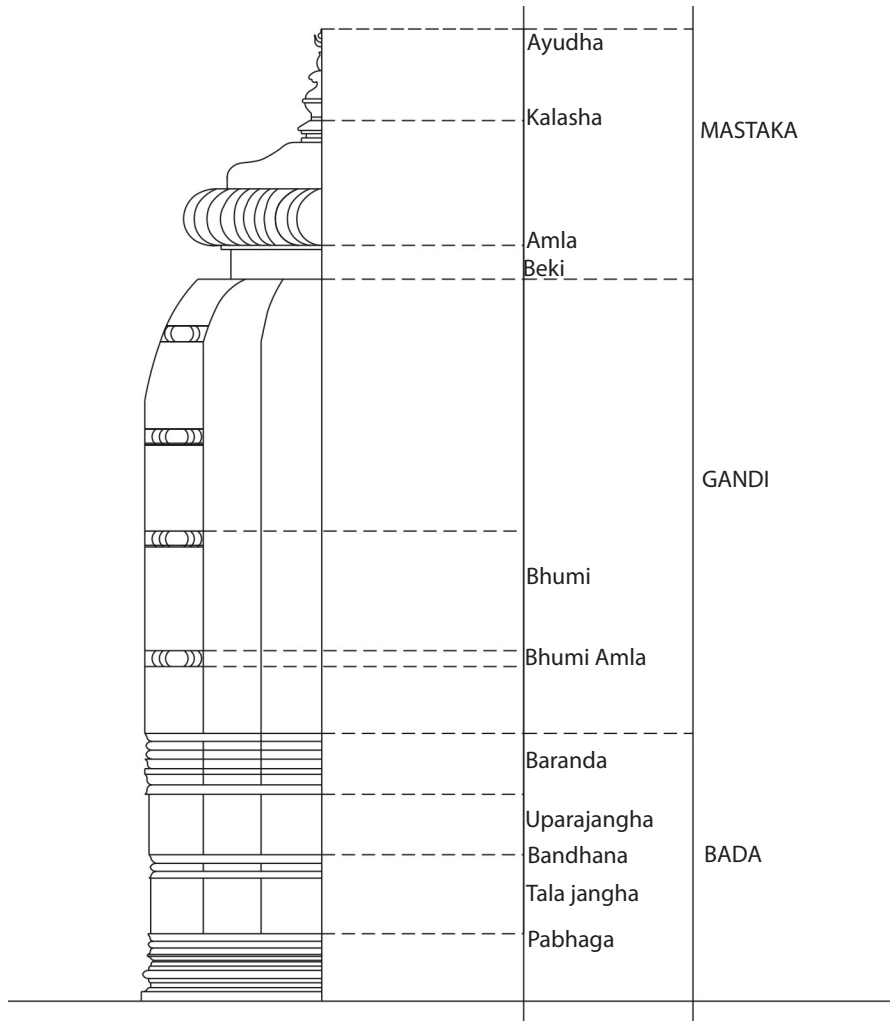


FIGURE AND GROUND

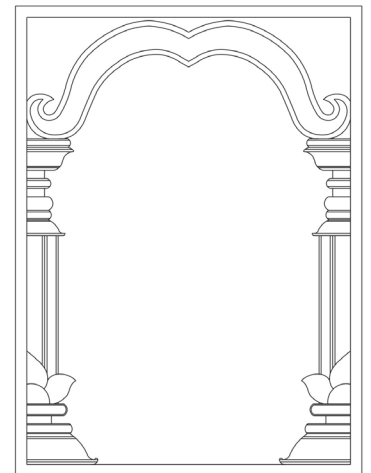
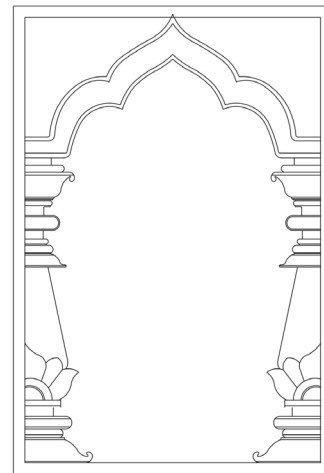
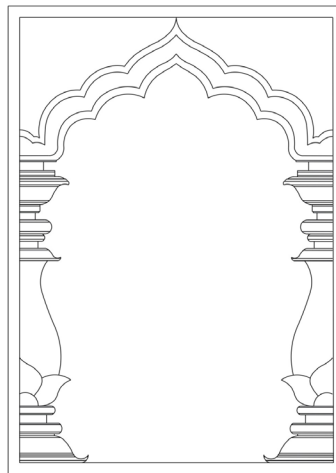
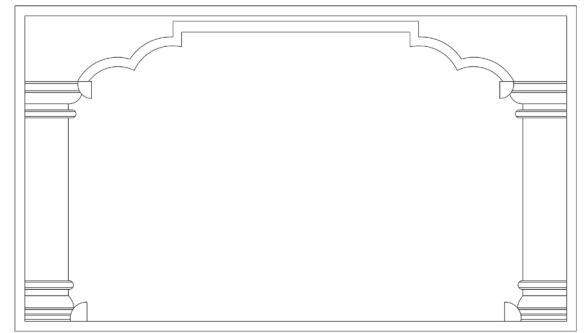
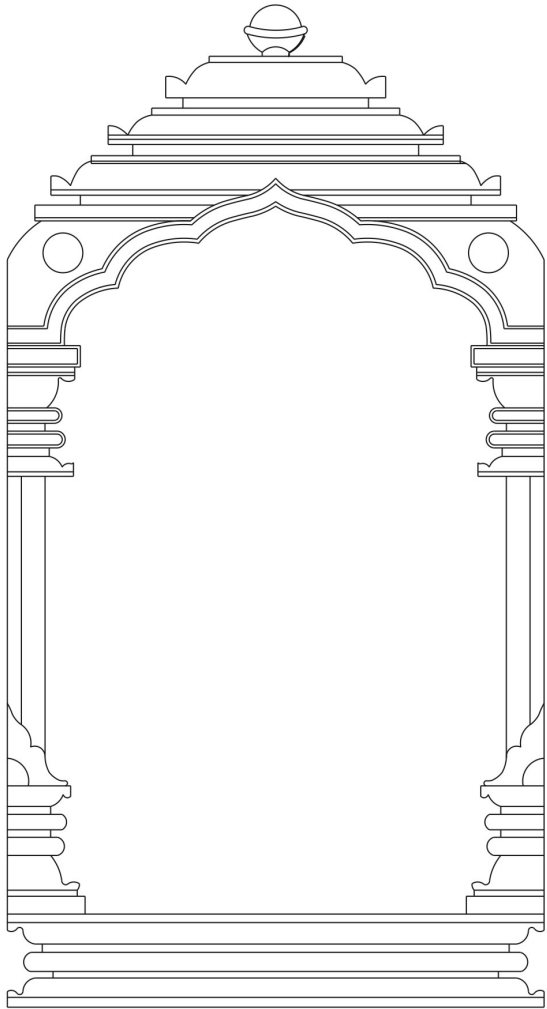
The use of striking colours and intricate detailing differentiates and highlights the figure in the painting. All the supporting features and elements are also highlighted in a homogenous style which makes it easy to differentiate it from rest of the ground.

To make ground less dominating, dull colours and small detailings in form of small pattern or curve is often used. But use of such flat ground takes away the depth of painting and is difficult to analysis it from perspective point of view.





ARCHES





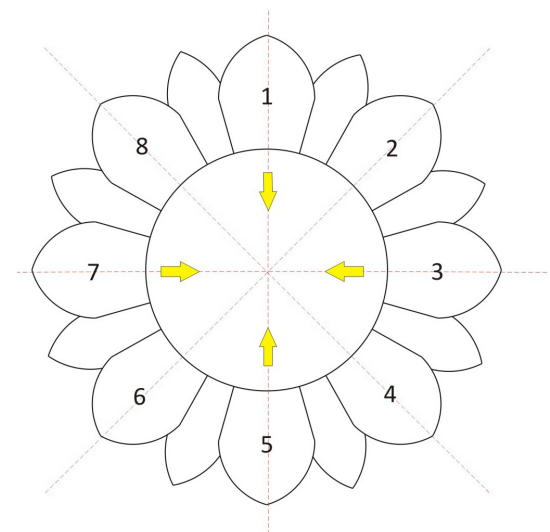
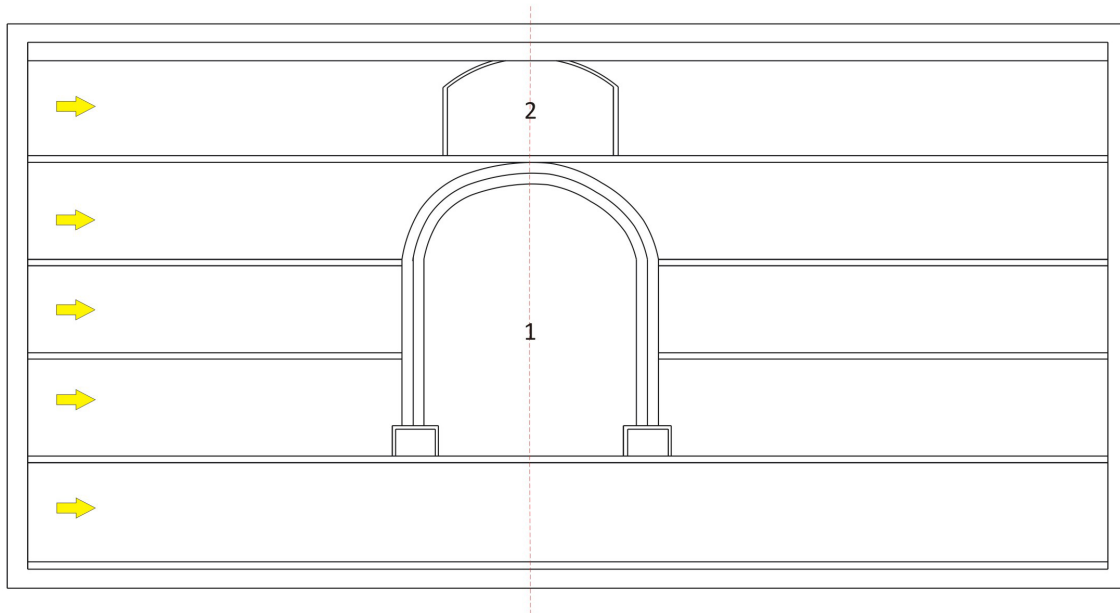
STORY PAINTING

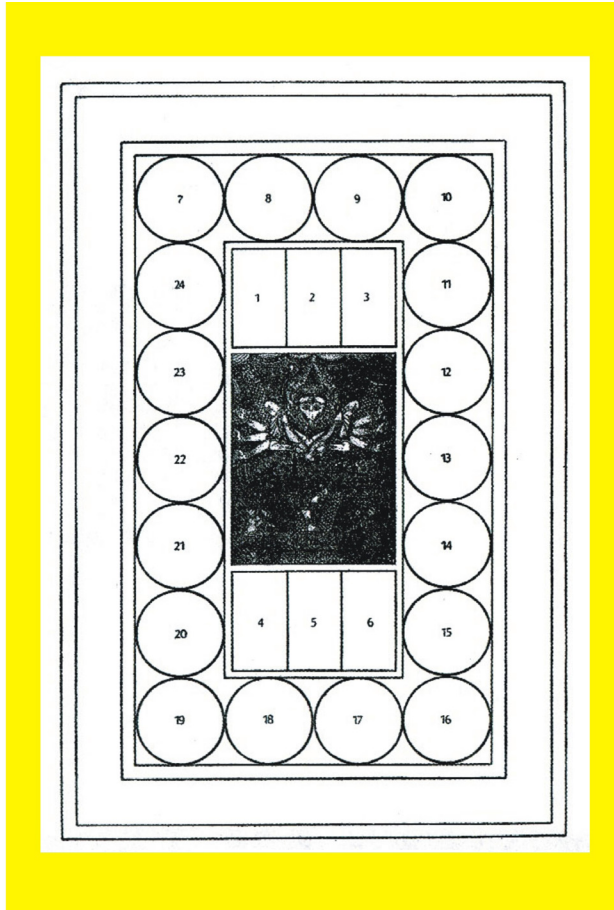
The idea of story painting seems to have been borrowed from the Krishna Janma pati made by the Chitrakara sevaka for the Jagannatha temple. The pati showing Ya-soda and the child Krishna in the middle and the events of Krishna's life shown in eight petal-like compartments around it.

The main prerequisite of the story paintings is that they must be painted in such a way that, by "reading" the pictures in a sequence, one will understand the whole story.

The high point of the story is painted in the centre and the sequence of other events are shown around it. The sequence of events are painted with in a geometrical shape.







The story painting of Narasimha

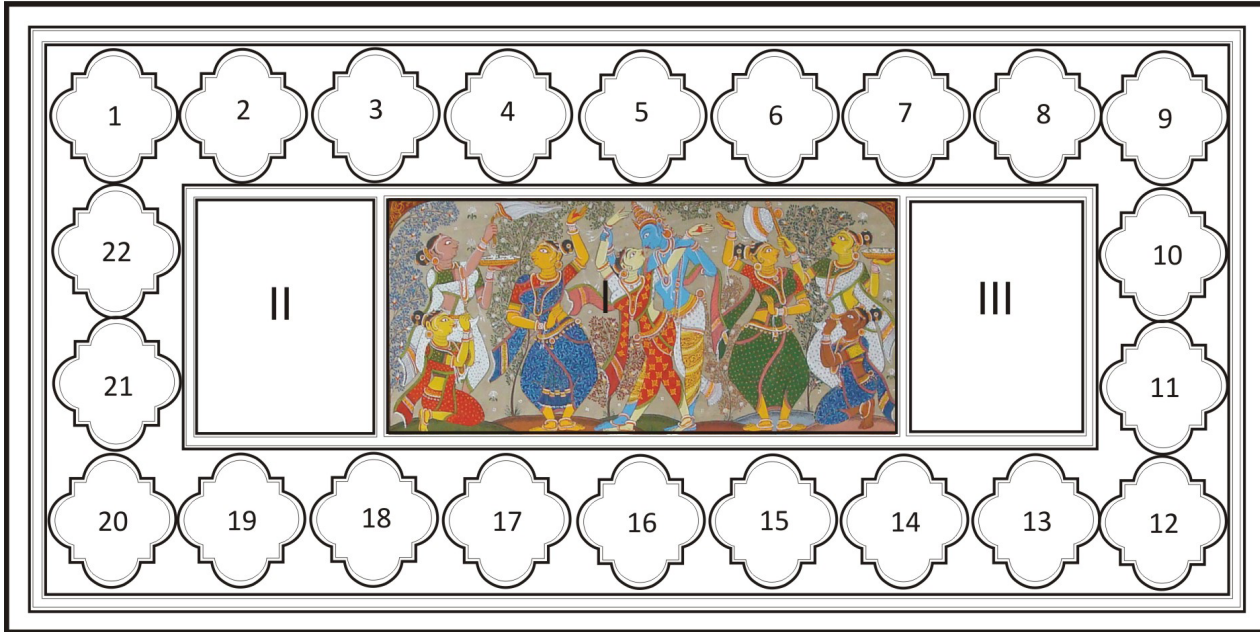
In the vertical central panel, the picture of of the fourth incarnation of Vishnu killing the demon king Hiranyakasipu by tearing out his entrails. Above and below the panel are three small rectangles, and there are 18 circles of 10cm diameter each between the two inner borders.

In these 6 rectangles and 18 circles are depicted the events leading to killing of the demon.

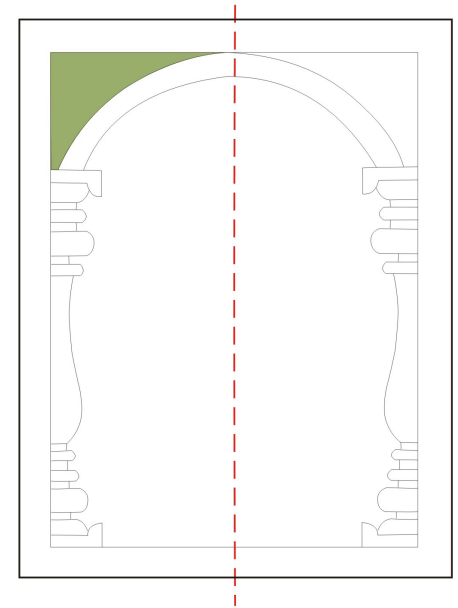
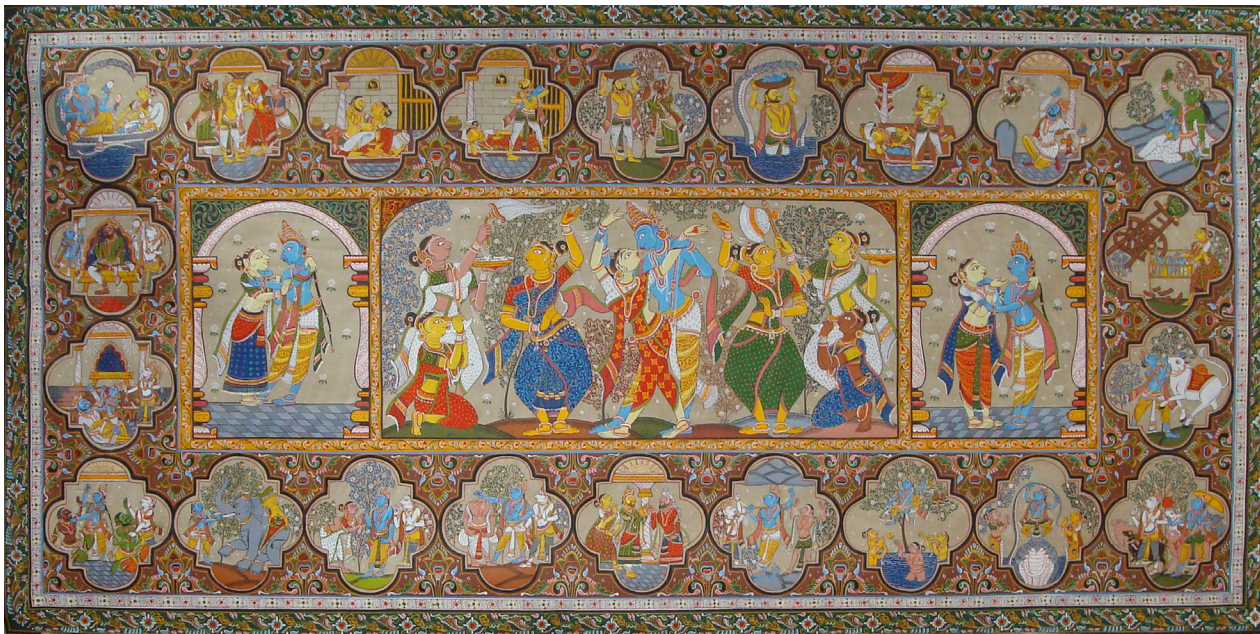
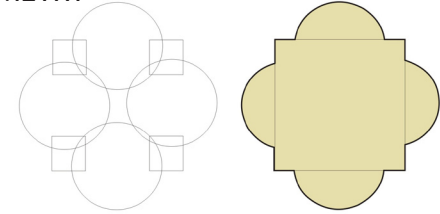
The sequence of the pictures:

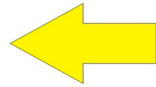
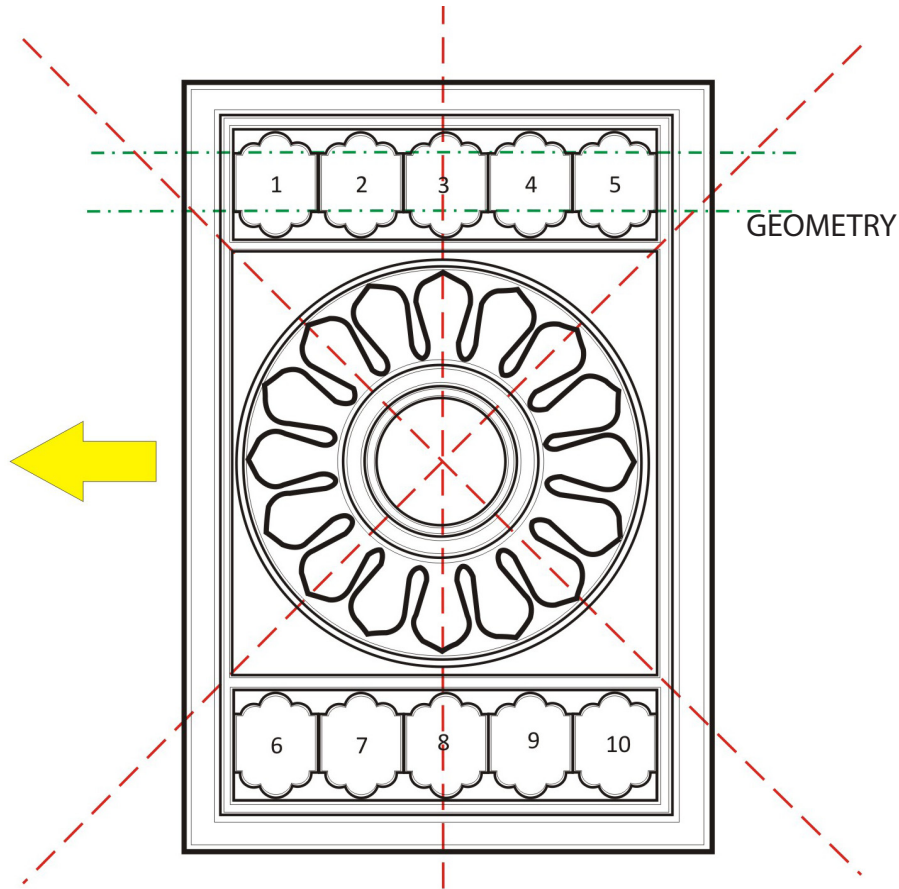
1. Father, mother and child Hiranya (showing the birth of Hiranyakasipu)
2. Hiranya praying (showing that he was a devotee)
3. Hiranya standing with folded hands before Shiva (getting a boon that neither man nor animal would kill him, neither at day nor at night, neither within the house nor without)
4. Hiranya on a chariot (conquering neighbouring kingdoms)
5. A woman garlanding Hiranya (his marriage)
6. Hiranya on throne surrounded by courtiers (coronation)
7. Hiranaya, his queen and a child (birth of Prahlada)
8. Prahlada playing with father and mother
9. A teacher instructing Prahlada
10. Prahlada praying to Vishnu (against his father's wishes)


11. Hiranya and Prahlada before Shiva (Hiranya asking his son to worship Shiva instead of Vishnu)
12. Hiranya with sword and dead body of Prahlada (having killed him when he refused)
13. Hiranya throwing Vishnu image in to the sea
14. Prahlada worshiping Vishnu (having been brought back to life by Vishnu)
15. Prahlada under the uplifted foot of an elephant (trampled at Hiranya's order; Prahlada survives)
16. Prahlada and a messenger with a snake (bitten at Hiranya's order; Prahlada survives)
17. Prahlada praying in jungle surrounded by four tigers
18. Hiranya, Prahlada, messenger and a big pan on fire (in to which Prahlada was thrown)
19. Hiranya and messenger with and Prahlada being thrown in to the sea
20. Vishnu reclining on the serpent, his consort Lakshmi, and Prahlada
21. Queen, and Hiranya holding Prahlada by the hair (asking him where Vishnu was)
22. Prahlada pointing at the pillar
23. Hiranya kicking at the pillar
24. Narashimha emerging out of the pillar

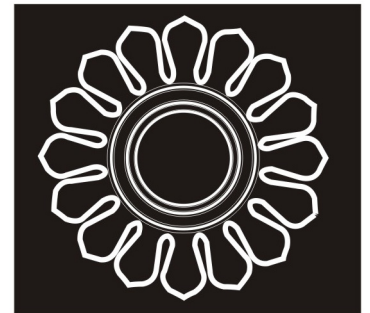
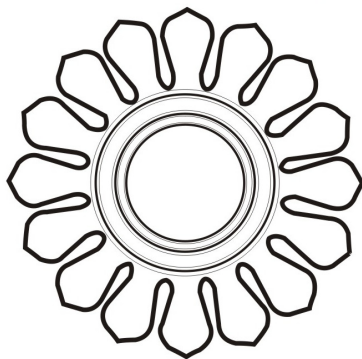
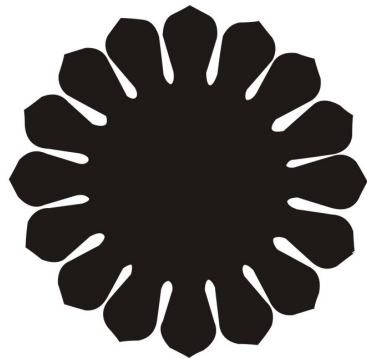
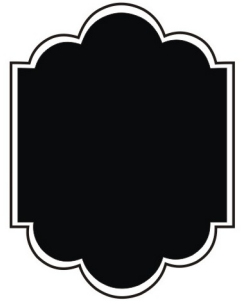
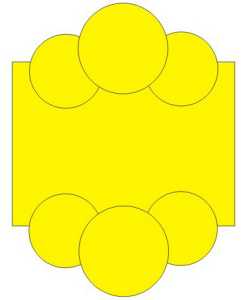


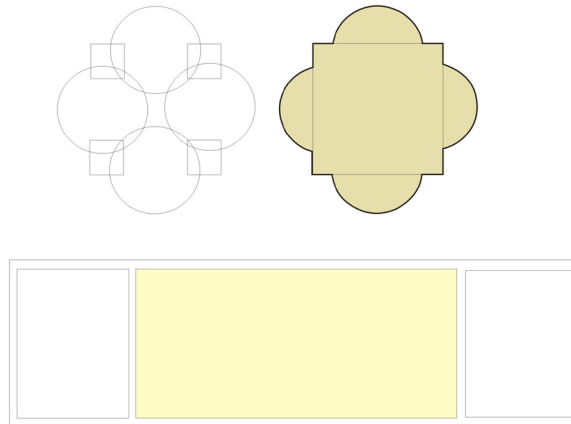
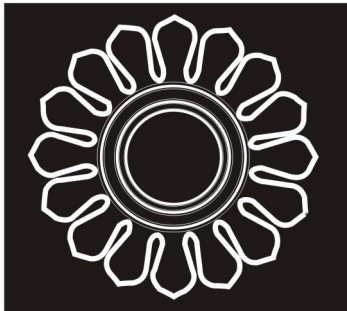
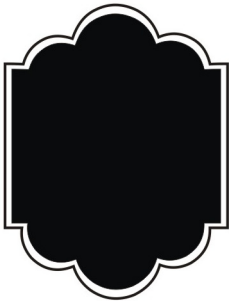
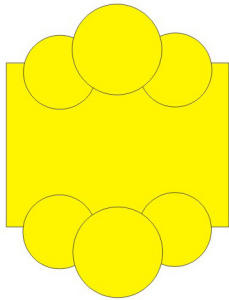
GEOMETRY





FORM  DECORATION





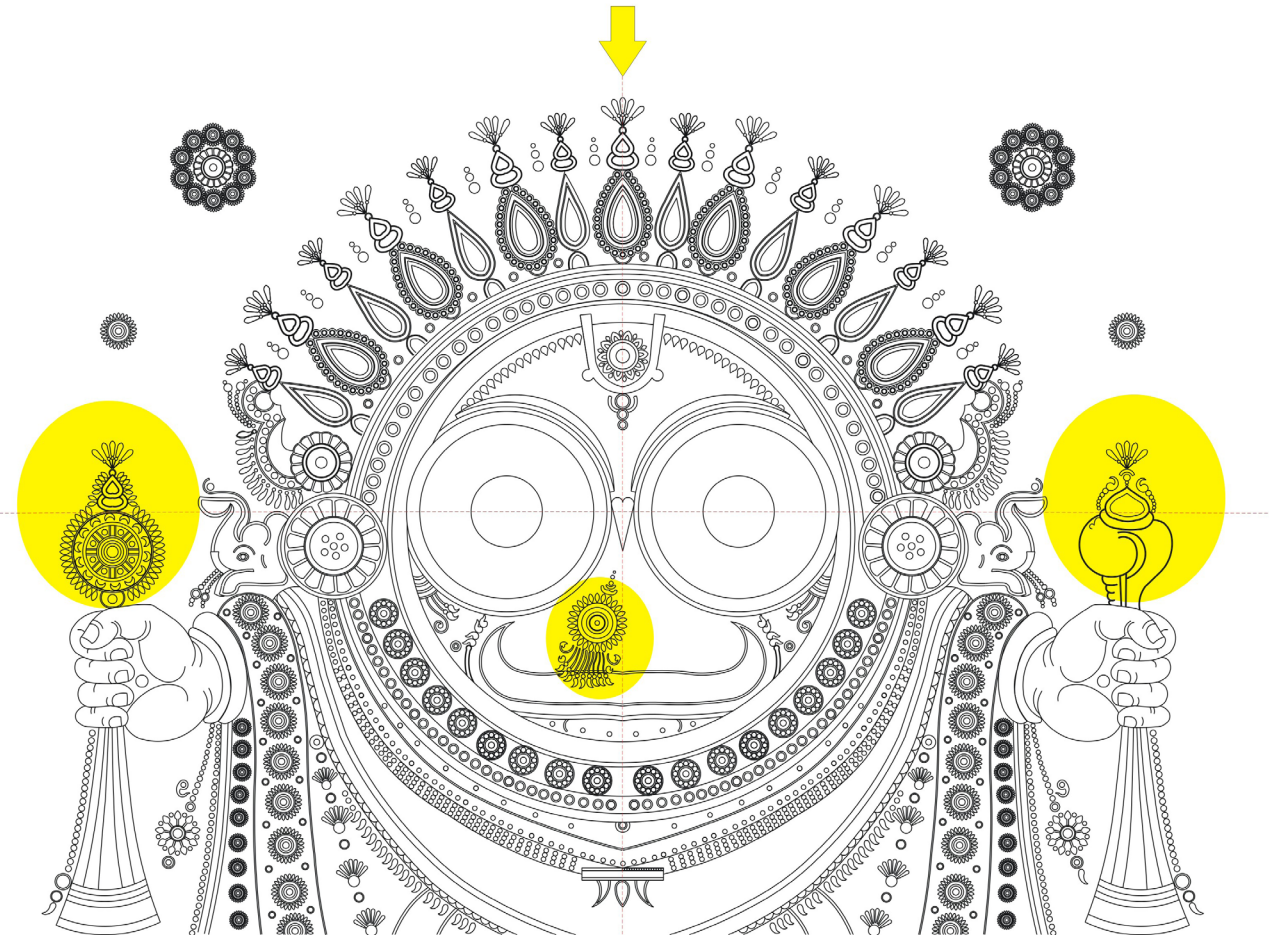
GEOMETRY

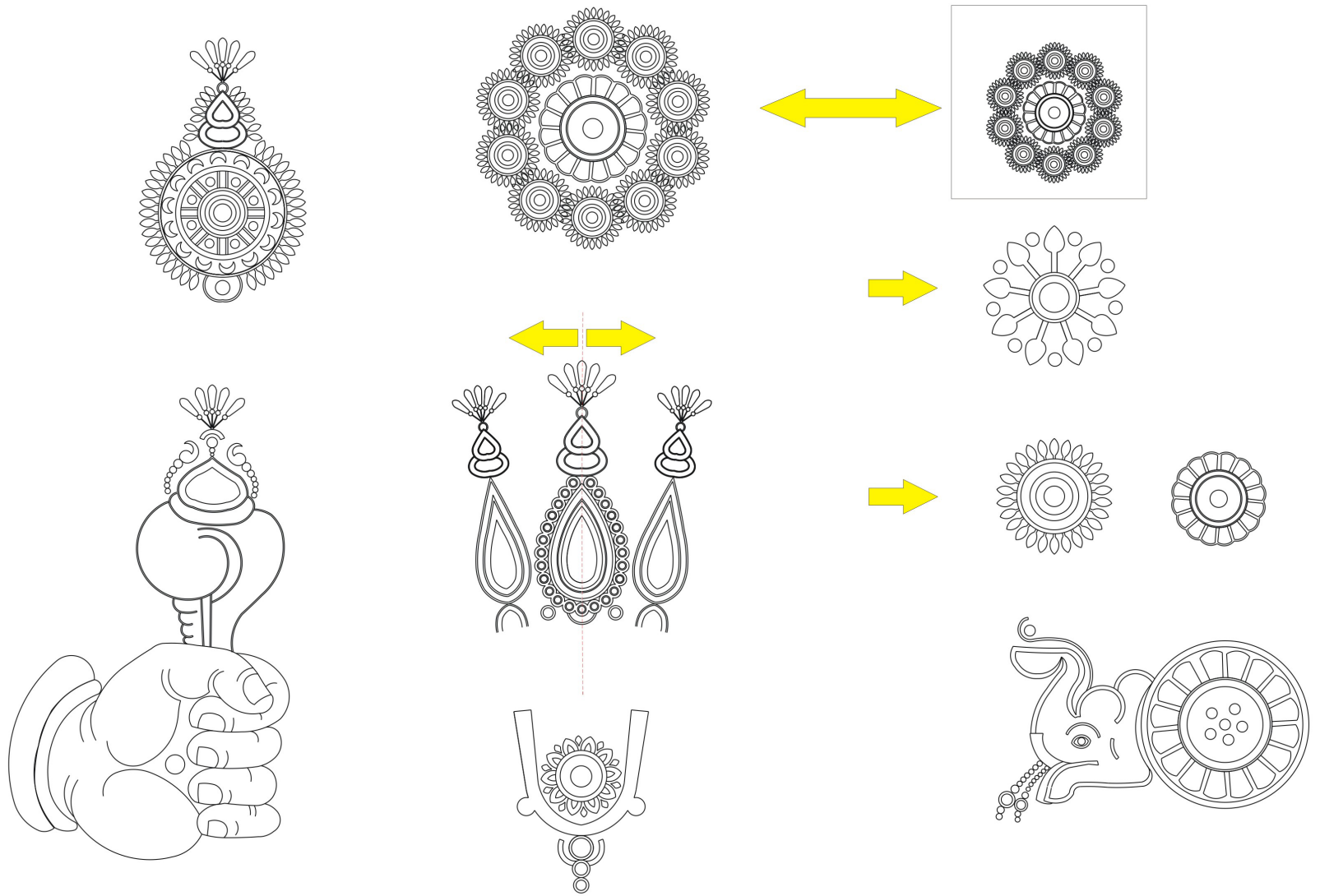
The painting divides its basic shape from a quadrilateral, rectangle in most of the cases.

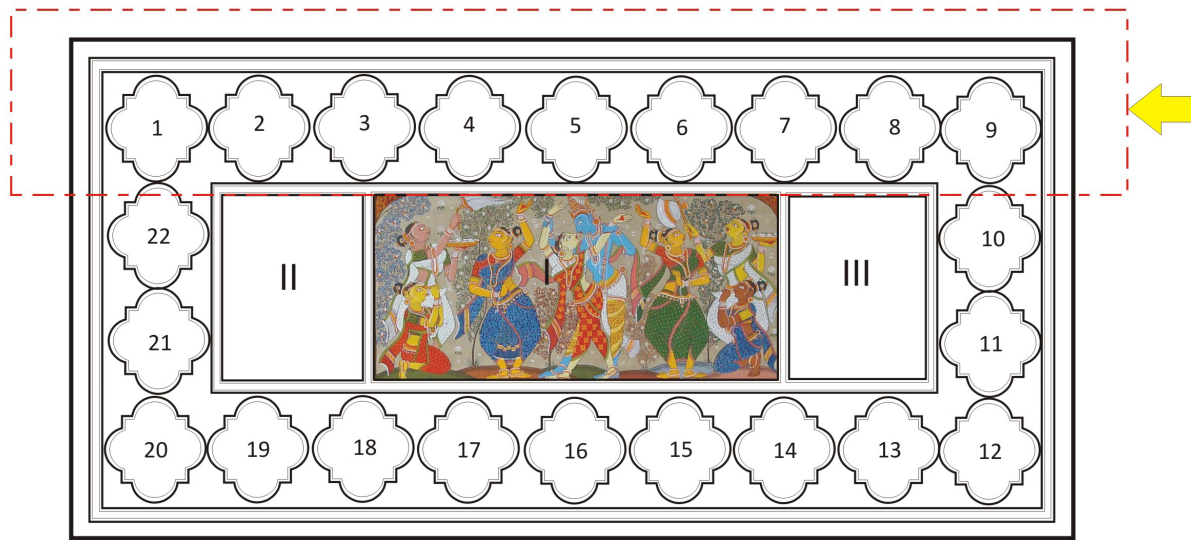
The rectangle base is divided into areas of main figure and the area with the decoration and detailing which runs along the sides of the central or the highlighted figure.

To highlight the figures in the painting, rectangular enclosure with further vertical subdivisions are used. Subdivisions are used depending on the subject and the storyline which creates a contrast between the main and supporting characters. Artist uses geometrical figures like circles and squares to create striking compositions as seen in most of the paintings.

To make sure that all the patterns and detailings are symmetrical and identical in nature, radial and linear grids are used to calculate the internal spacings.





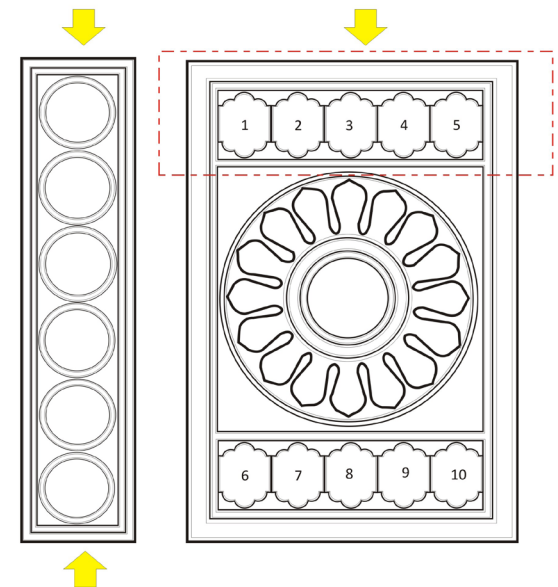
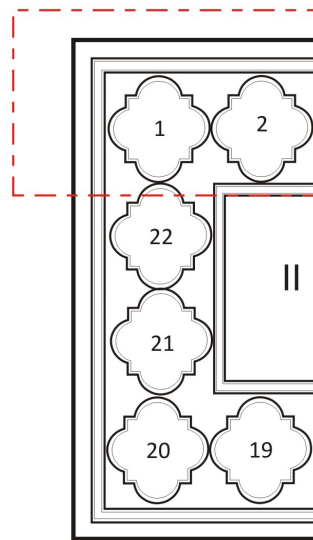


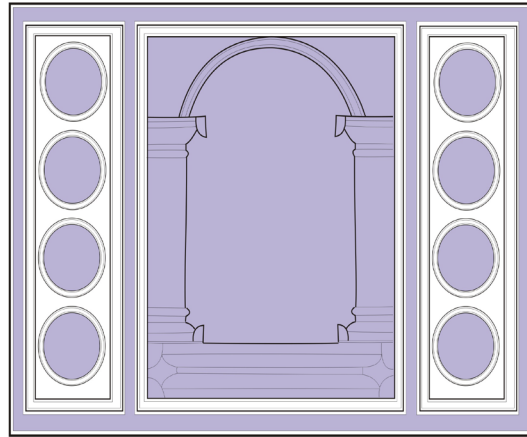
GROUPING

Grouping is done on basis of enclosing the storyboard in similar geometric figures and their repetition through central element has been given prominence and story boarding is all around it.

SPACE

The painting has been divided in to primary and secondary spaces. The primary spaces consist of figure of Gods and the story boards related to them. The secondary spaces have various patterns (textures, patterns, hatches, borders) and are used to highlight the figure enclosed.





SURFACE (PLANE AND BACKGROUND)

1. Two dimensional approach
2. Actual representation of elements as being visualised in real.

RHYTHM

- Rhythm in colour (colours of same)
- No variation in brightness.

HARMONY

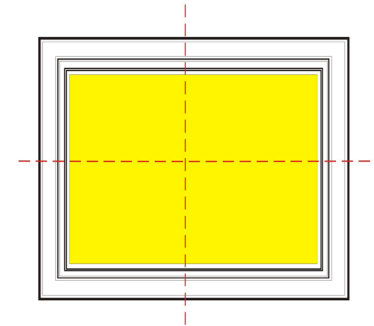
The strict harmony of the painting comes from three basic things

1. The actual representation of story
2. Repetition of geometrical forms
3. Colours



CONTRAST

- Enclosed boundaries
- Highlighted figures



EMPHASIS

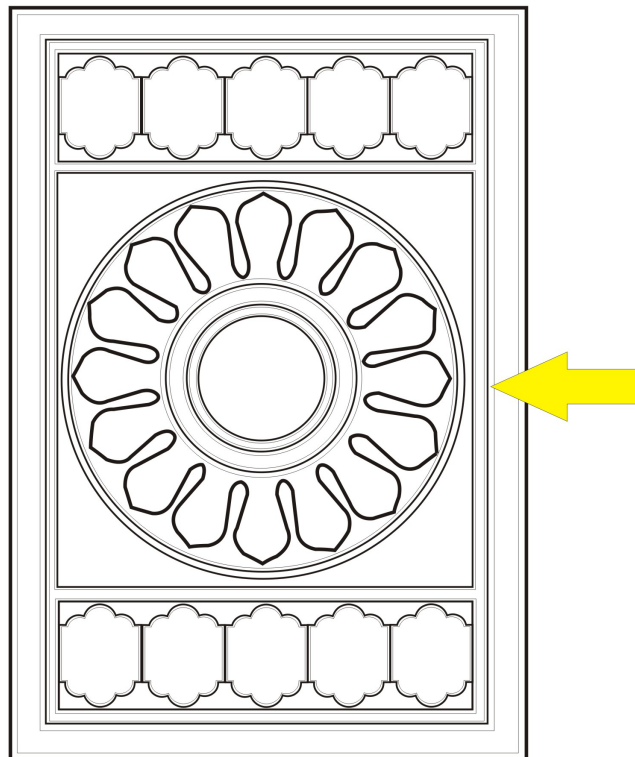
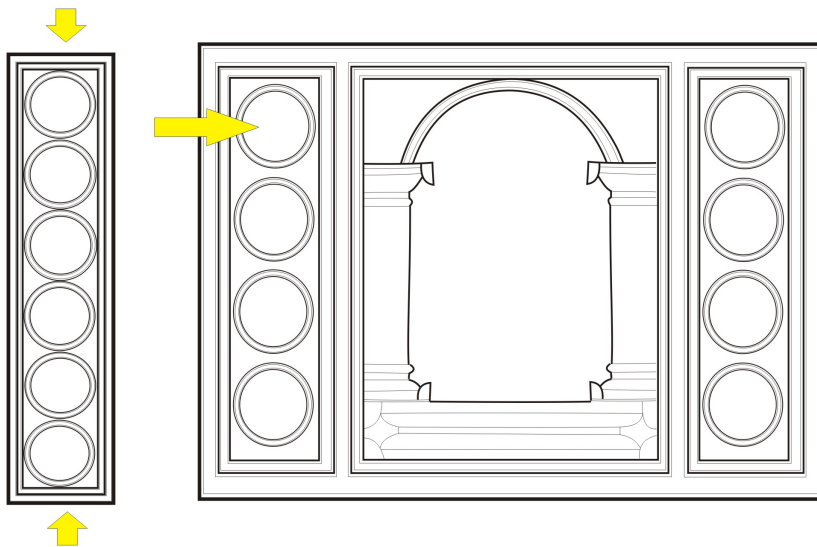
The center placement of figure in cross axis.

PERSPECTIVE

As it is two dimensional approach, there is no perspective to show distances.

SYMBOLISM

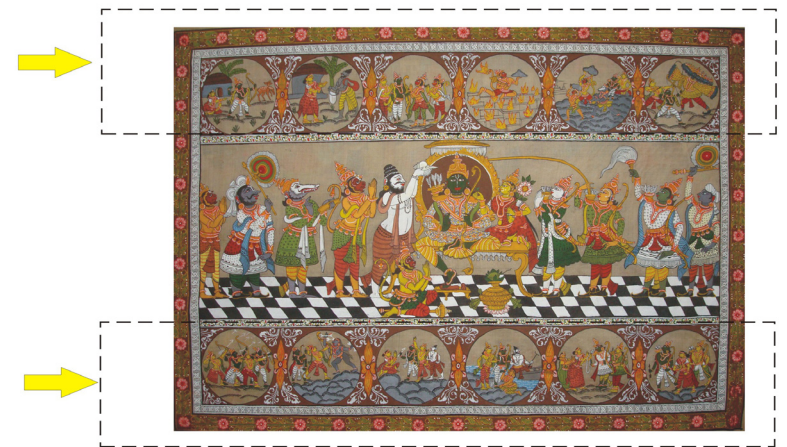
- No direct symbolism
- No metaphor used
- Only the actual representation with their expression.

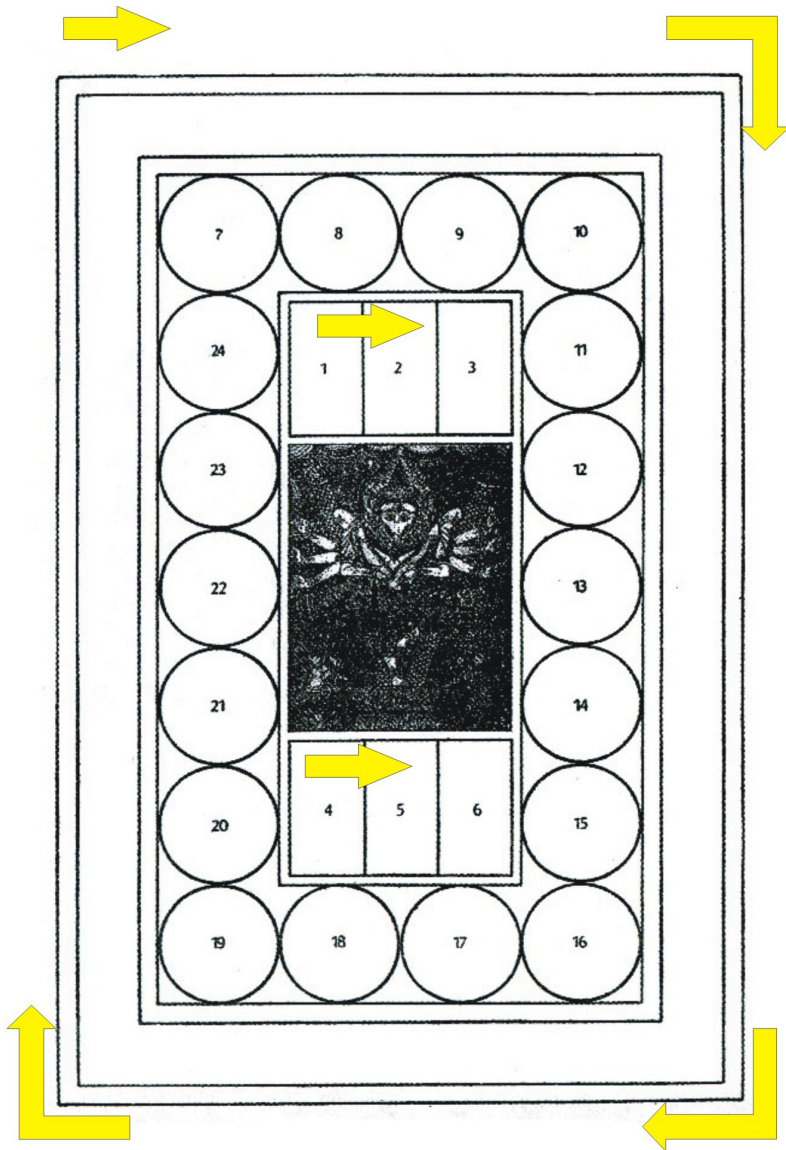


CIRCLE PLACEMENT

The circle is the wild-card element in all the compositions. Even though it is very small, it has a tremendous amount of visual power. This is true of any circle, any size, in just about any composition.

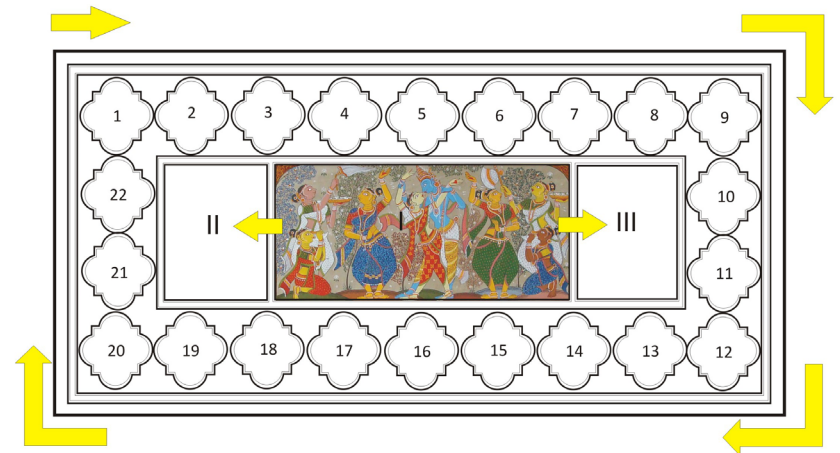
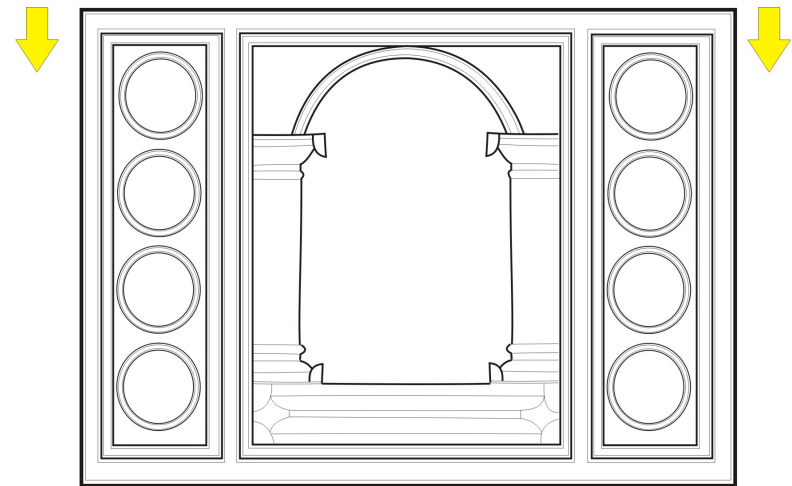
The human eye loves the circle and embraces it. The contrast in form to the inherent visual power of the circle itself.



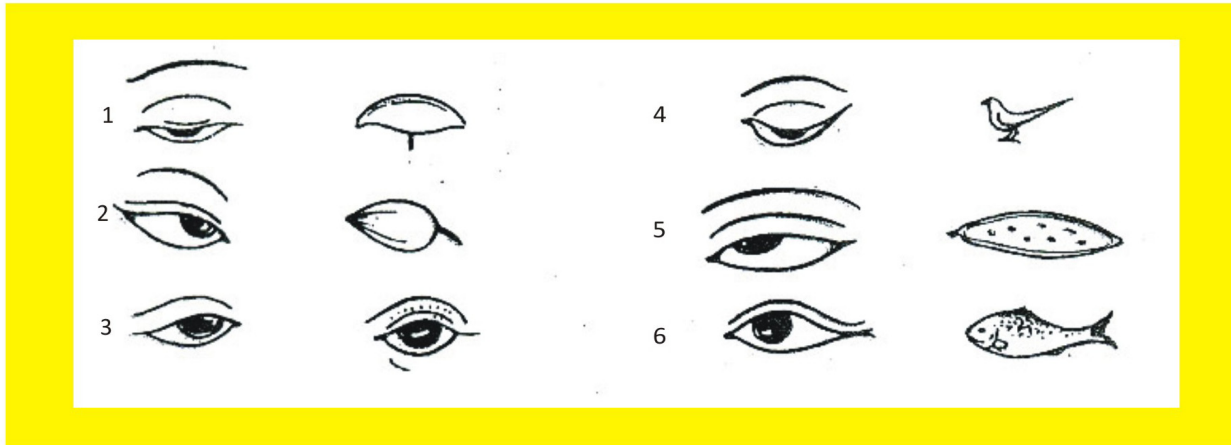


READING DIRECTION

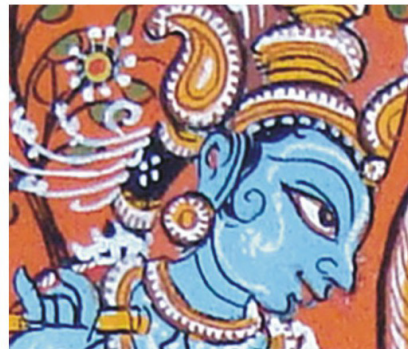
1. Clock wise reading direction. This is visually comfortable.
2. Constrasting reading direction. Vertical rectangular box and circles with in represents the story.



MOVEMENT (EYE)



1. Padmapatra nibha
2. Utpala pravbha
3. Harini nayana
4. Khanjana netra
5. Potola chira
6. Matshyadara



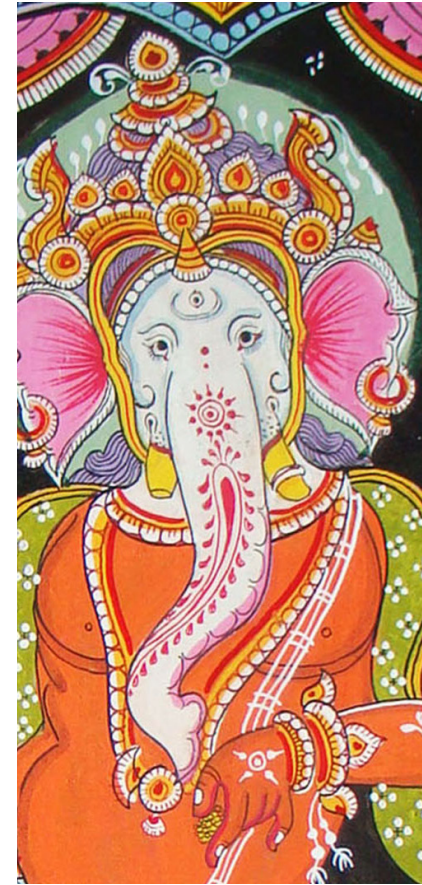
MOVEMENT (BODY)





Different facial expressions of "Ganesha"

EXPRESSION



Like other school of painting, the Orissan pata follows many Indian art traditions, but has certain conventions of its own. The colour expresses the quality of God or Goddess.

The Jataka story describing the Goddess of ill-luck attributes to her dark colour, dark cloth and dark ornaments. Body colours of Gods and Goddesses in paintings are not painted naturalistically, but follow certain conventions.

Colour symbolism underlines all images, the sattvika, rajasika and tamasika aspects of Gods being expressed by white, red and black colours respectively. Dhyana-mantras describe the body colors of the Gods and Goddesses as refer to the dark cloud colour of Krishna or the champaka (michelia champaka) colour of Durga.



COLOUR

The rasas (sentiments) expressed by the images are also taken to be manifested by colours:

sringara (erotic)	_____	dark blue
Hasya (hilarious)	_____	white
Karuna (pathetic)	_____	grey
Vira (heroic)	_____	yellowish white
Raudra (furious)	_____	red
Bhayanaka (fearful)	_____	black
Vibhatsa (loathsome)	_____	blue
Adbhuta (strange)	_____	yellow

Oriya Chitrakara follows the same convention so far as the colours of the deities are concerned may well be the colours of Puri Triad.

The wooden images were presumably painted right from the time of their installation and so the convention of painting Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra in black, white and yellow colours respectively should have started in the 12th century itself. The 17th century manual for banka-lagi of the images mentions kala (black), sankha (white) and haritala (yellow) for the tree deities.



Some of the other conventions followed by Chitrakaras in respect of use of colour for the different deities are:

Yellow



Matsya, Kurma, Prsurama and Buddha incarnations, Radha, Sita, Lakshmana, Brahma. Maids and other females are also painted in yellow.

White



Narasimha and Balarama (Haladhara) incarnations, Siva, Varuna, Saraswati.



Black
Kala, Narayana, Yama (In some older paintings Krishna has been painted in this colour), Jagannath, Ravana.



Blue
Vamana and Kalki incarnations, Krishna, Arjun, Bishnu, Kali.



Red
Agni, Mangala. (The face of Hanumana is also painted in red colour), Surya.



Green
Varaha and Rama incarnations are painted in pacha (green); demons in phika-pacha (light green).



Grey
Snakes and montains in pahadia (grey)

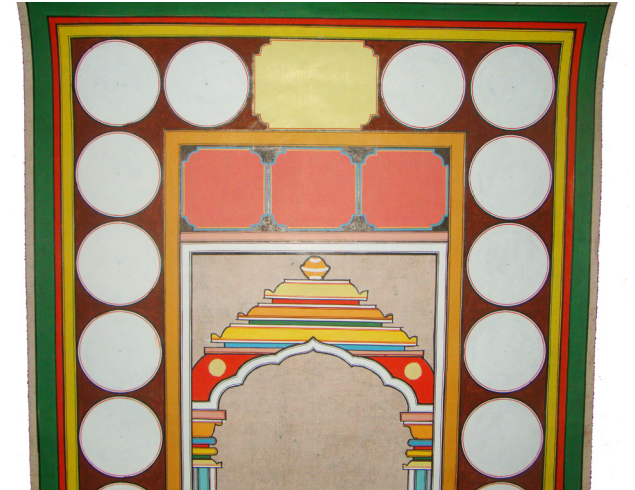
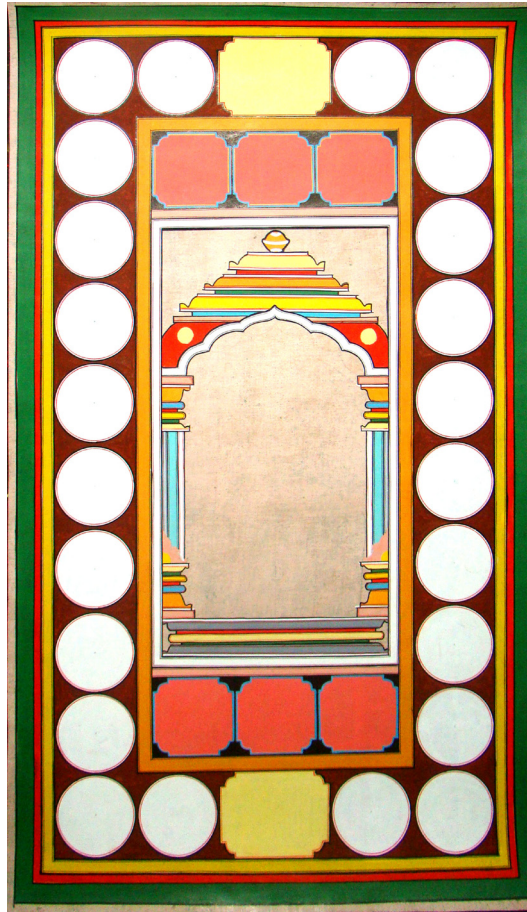
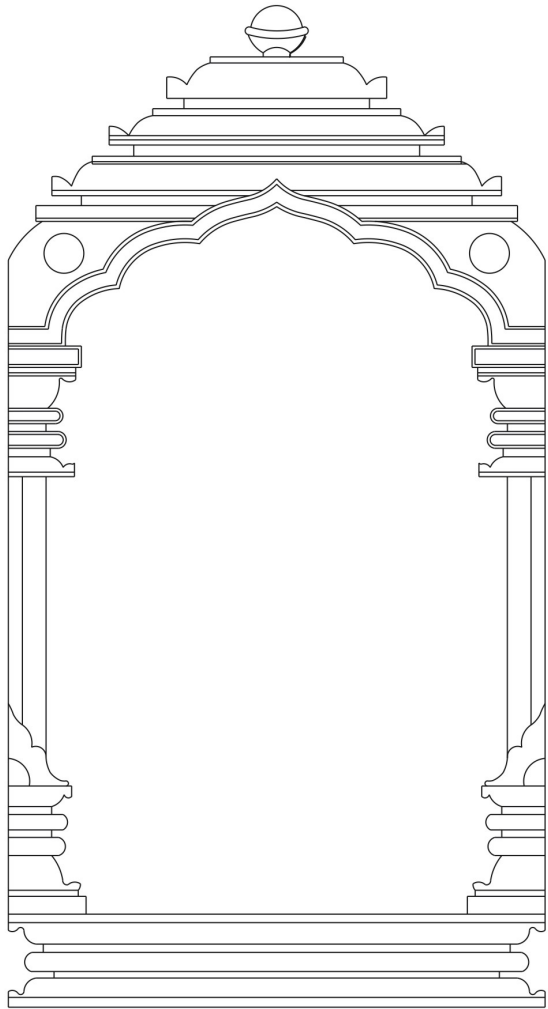
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	● ● +	●	= ● ନାଲି
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ହରିତାଳ	● ● ● ● +	●	= ● ସବୁଜ
	● ● ● +	●	= ● ପତ୍ତ
	● ● ● ● +	●	= ● କମଳା
	● ● ● ● +	●	= ● ଗହୁଣା ହଳଦିଆ
ଗେରୁ	● ● +	●	= ● ଗାଢ଼ ଗେରୁ
			○ + ○ = ● ଫିକା ସବୁଜ
କଳା	○ +	○	= ○ ପାଉଁଶିଆ (ପାହାଡ଼ିଆ)
ଗାଢ଼ ନୀଳ	● ● + ○ +	●	= ● ପାଣିନାଳ

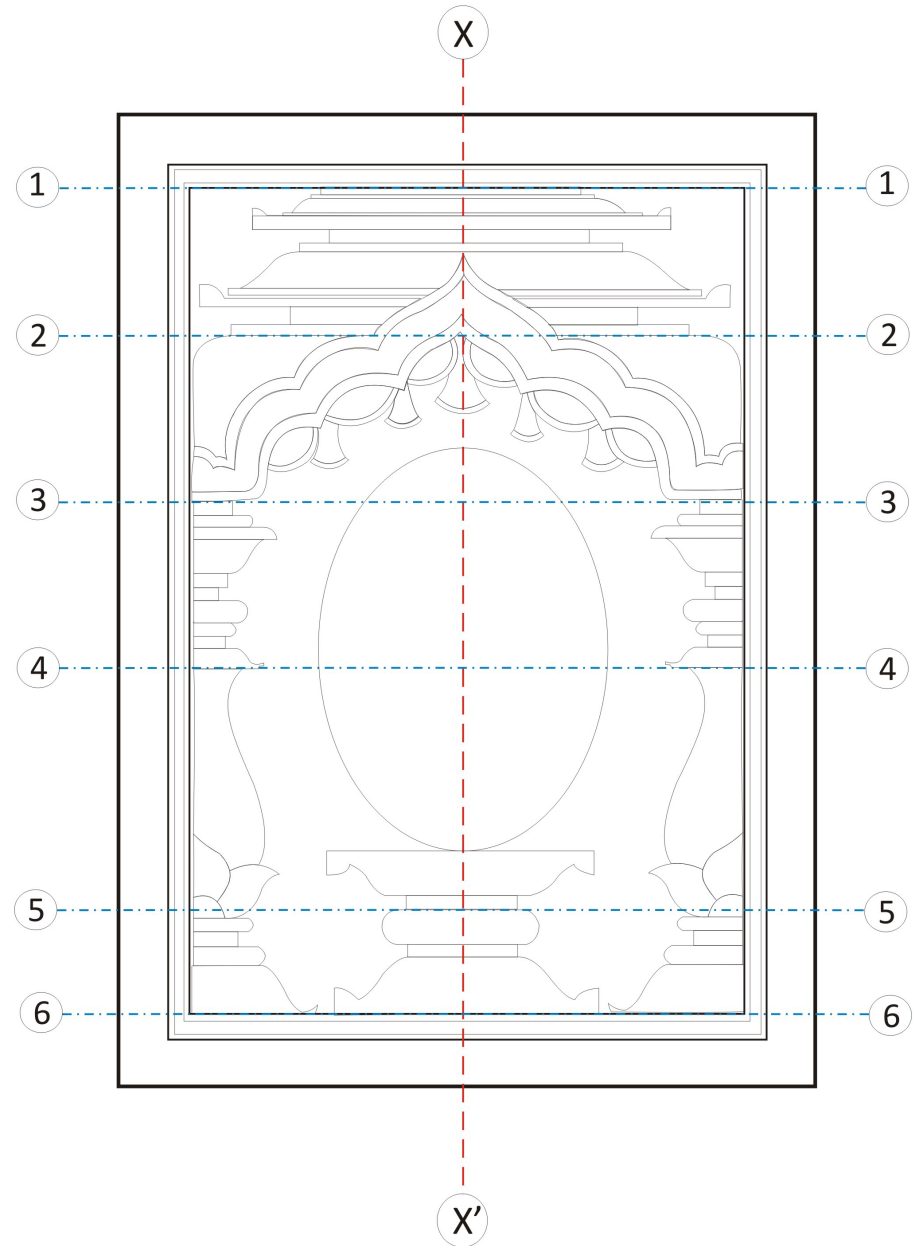
4 PARTS(WHITE)+DARK BLUE=LIGHT BLUE
 4 PARTS(WHITE)+YELLOW=LIGHT YELLOW(CHAMPA)
 4 PARTS(WHITE)+RED=PINK
 4 PARTS(WHITE)+BROWN= LIGHT BROWN
 4 PARTS(WHITE)+BLACK=GREY

2 PARTS HINGULA (CRUDE CINNABAR) +ORANGE
 = RED
 2 PARTS HINGULA (CRUDE CINNABAR) + YELLOW
 = RED
 2 PARTS HINGULA (CRUDE CINNABAR) + WHITE
 = DARK RED

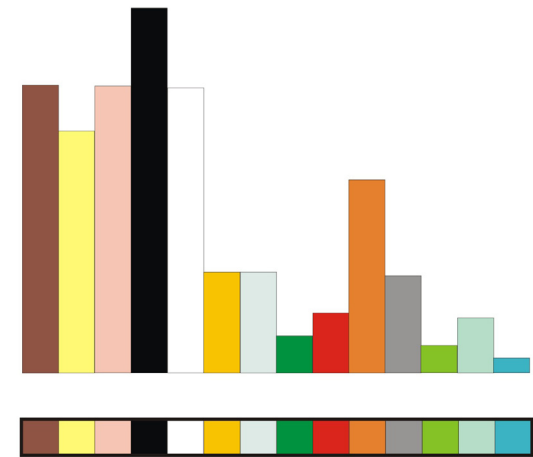
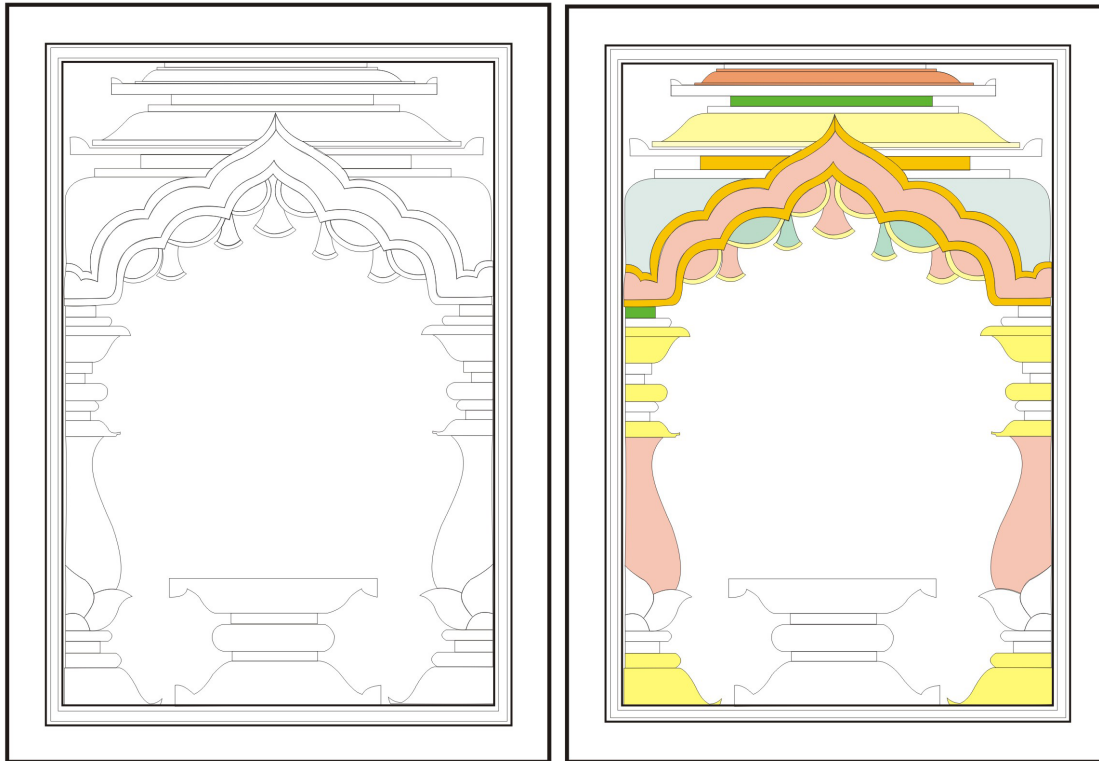
4 PARTS HARITALA (ORPIMENT) + BLUE = GREEN
 3 PARTS HARITALA (ORPIMENT) + 3/4 BLUE
 = DARK GREEN
 4 PARTS HARITALA (ORPIMENT) +2 RED = ORANGE
 4 PARTS HARITALA (ORPIMENT) + 1RED = DARK YELLOW

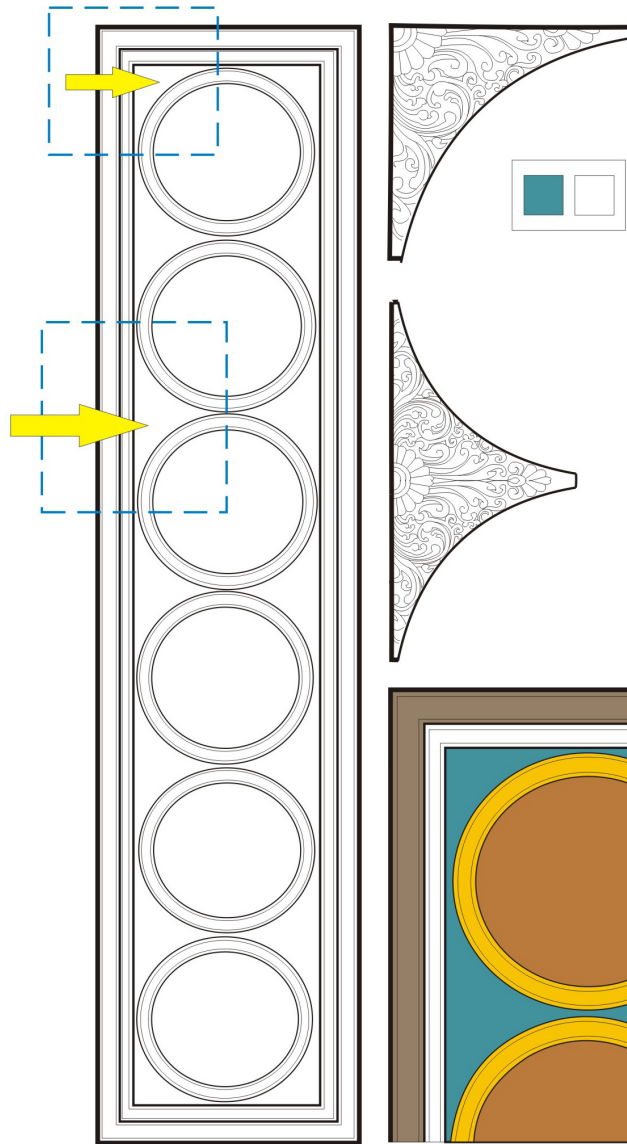
2 PARTS GERU + 1/2 BLACK = DARK GERU (DHAU)
 3/4 BLACK + WHITE = GREY
 2 PARTS DARK BLUE + WHITE = WATER BLUE





COLOUR SCHEME





COLOUR SCHEME

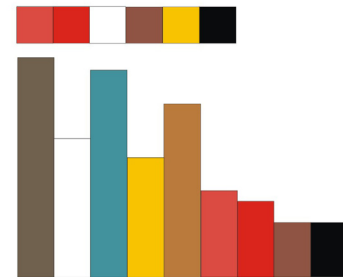


Colour Palette

1. first stage (filling work)

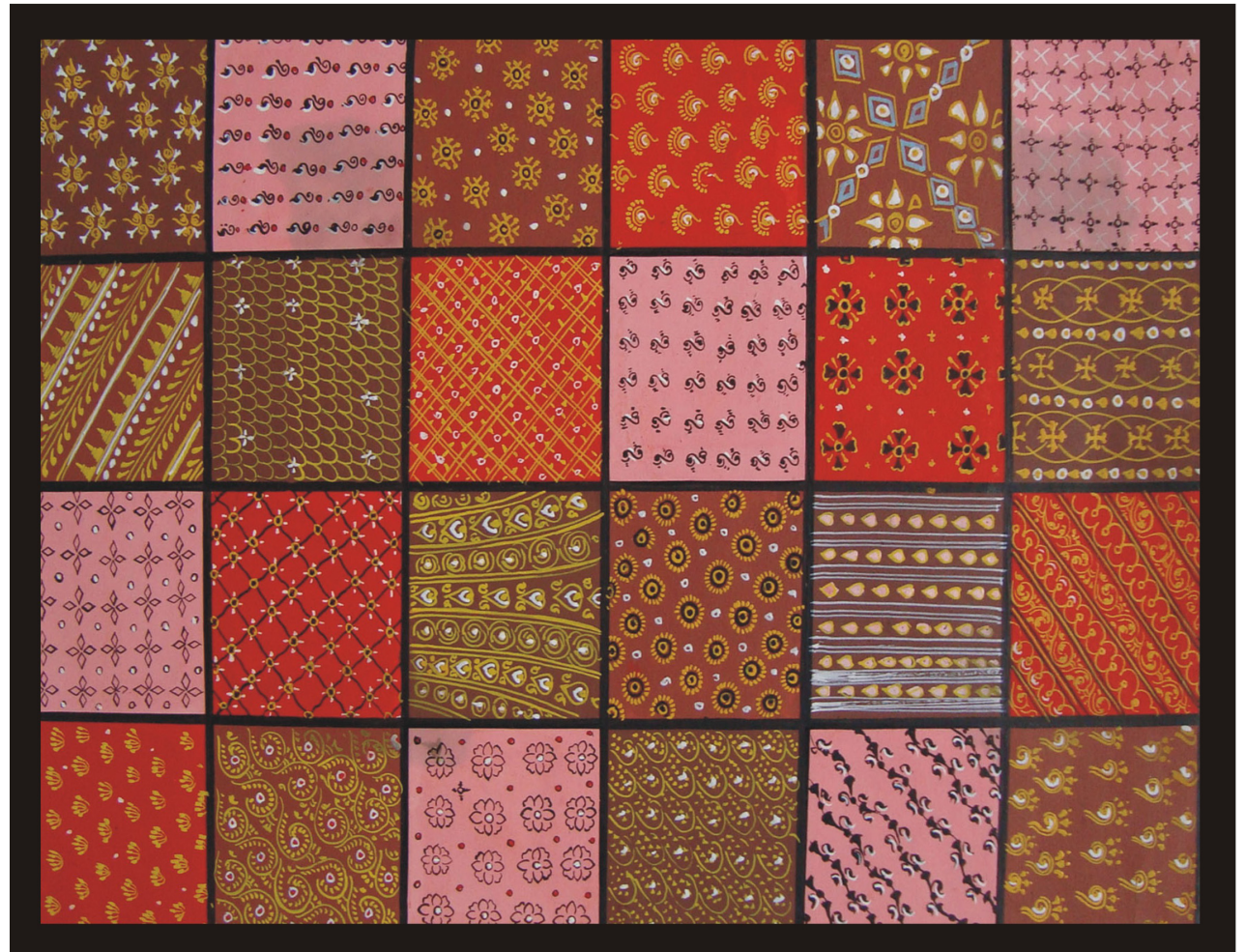


2. second stage (detailing work)

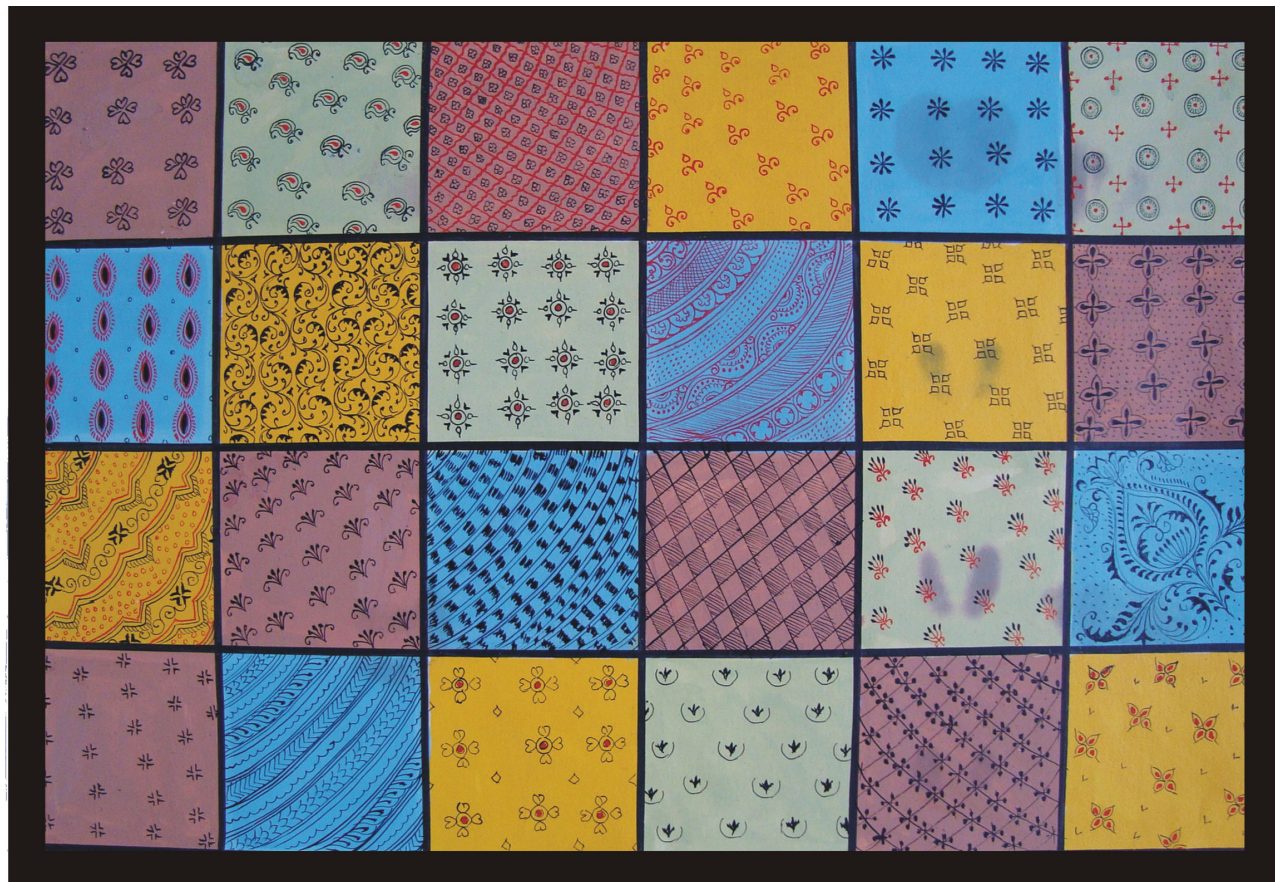


PATTERN

Ornamentation of clothes (chhita kama)



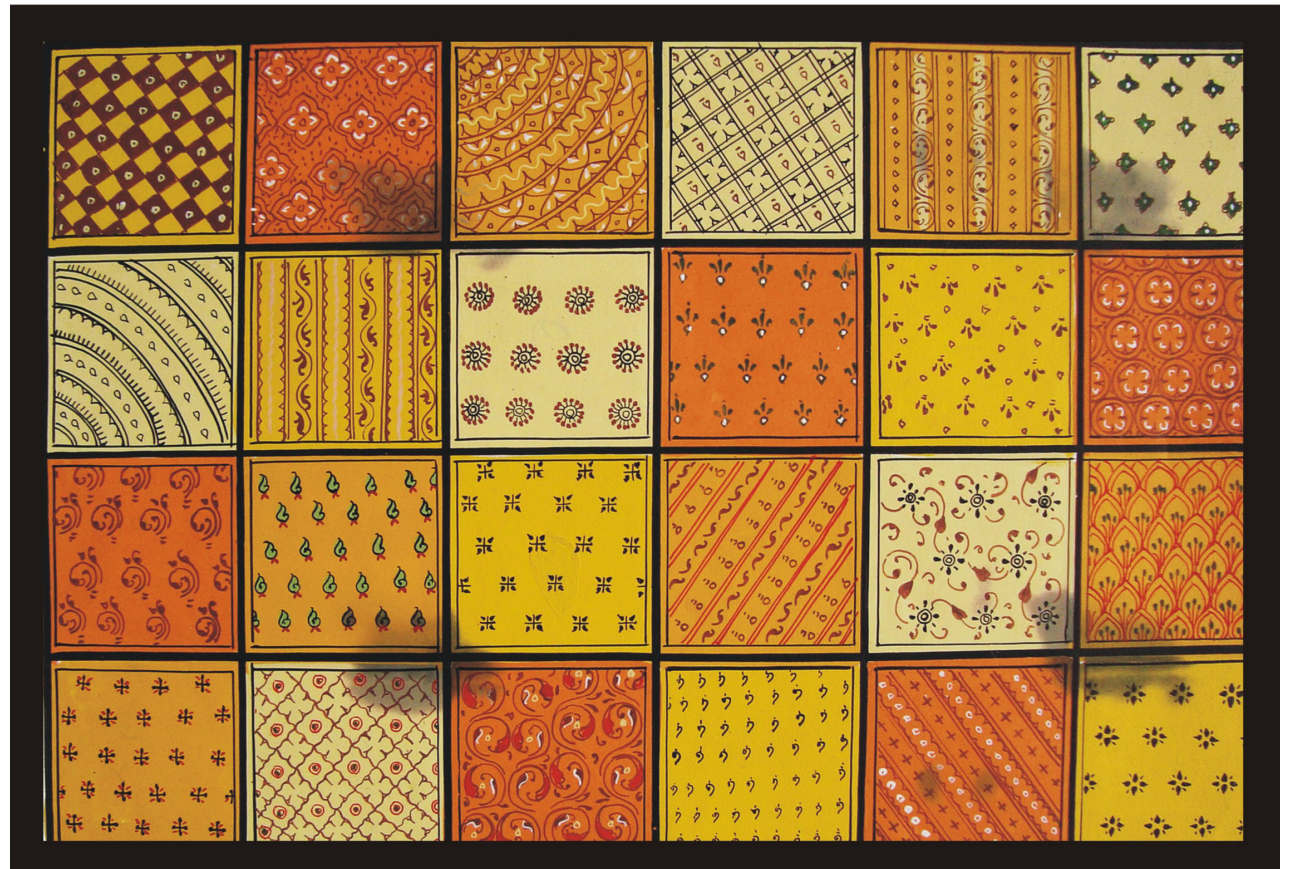
Ornamentation of clothes (chhita kama)

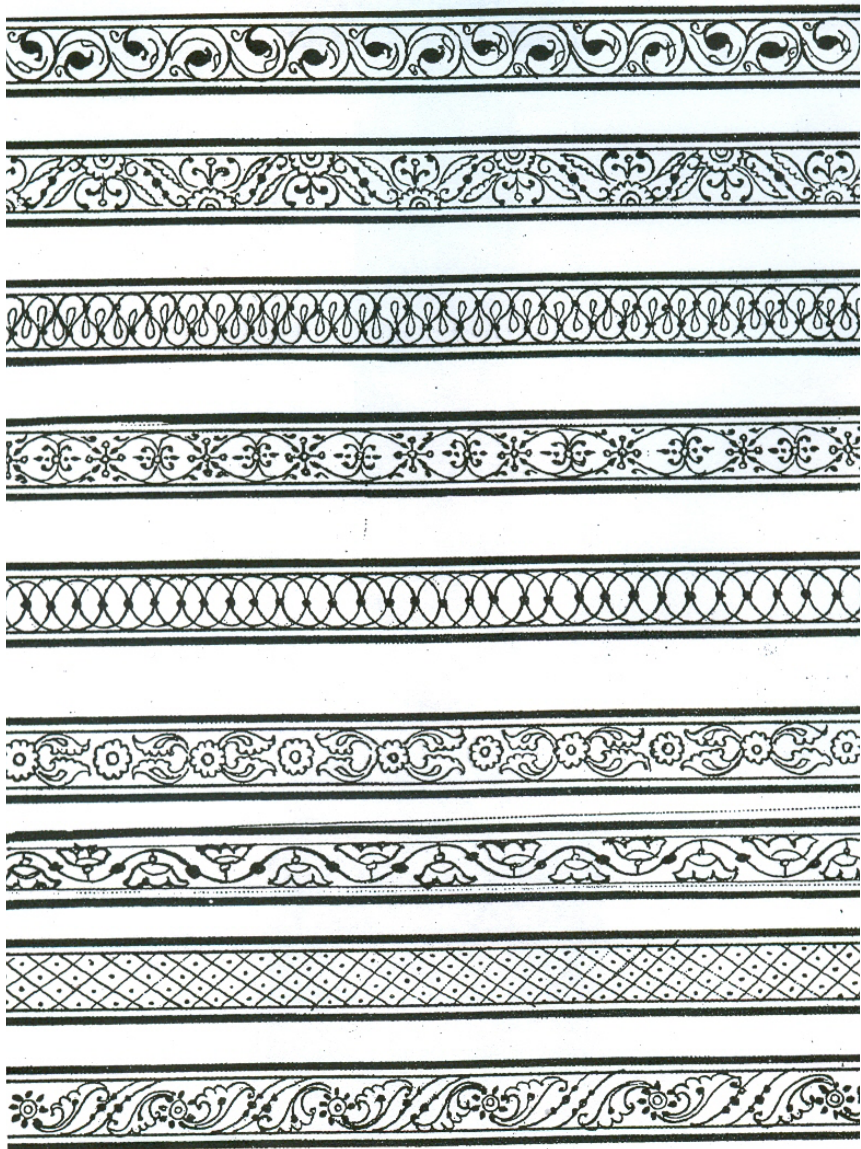


Ornamentation of clothes (chhita kama)



Ornamentation of clothes (chhita kama)





BORDER

one of the distinctive features of pata is the special type of borders used in these paintings. Older patas simple borders, sometimes as simple as a black band with white blobs on it, the motifs used on borders seem to have become more and more decorative and complex over the course of time.

The Chitrakara of Orissa has confined himself to traditional motifs, many of which can be seen in temple sculpture of Orissa.



Depending on the size and the subject matter of the painting, the Chitrakara uses either narrow border or a broad border. In some paintings, two borders are given. The broad border is painted on the outer side and the narrow one on the inner side. Some motifs, because of their very nature can be used only in a broad border, e.g. pari (fairy) or peacock motif. Some motifs like lahara (wavy) are suited to narrow borders.



There are also borders with geometrical designs.



HUMAN FIGURE

Orissan pata also followed the convention of having human figures in the frontal position for the body, with the legs and face in profile. The exception to this convention in pata were Lakshmi, Durga in Mahishasuramardini aspect, Nataraja, dancing Ganesha and Lakshmi-Narayana. Brahma and Ravana were also given a frontal treatment because several heads had to be painted.

The sages are represented as lustrous but, weak and emaciated, with matted hair and the deer skin as their clothing. Brahmanas (brahmins) are shown as full of splendour and wearing white garments. Ministers, astrologers and royal priests are adorned fully and in a gaudy fashion, but they are shown wearing turbans and not crowns. Daityas and danavas (demons) are of a terrible aspect, i.e fearful face with globular eyes, frowning eyebrows and with gaudy apparel.



Sage



Brahmana



Minister



Daitya

POSTURE IN PATA

Odissi* as is a dance form is full of sculptural poses known as bhangis, the most popular of these being tribhangi (three bends).

Tribhangi is an important form in Hindu iconography, and the pose consists of one leg bent, a curvature at the waist and the inclination of the head to one side. Tribhangi is a familiar pose in Orissan pata for standing figures.

Among the other standing postures in pata is virabhangi (heroic posture) in which the figure is shown with the chest thrown forward. This is adopted for Hanumana, demons, wrestlers, kings in war time and other figures in the heroic mould.

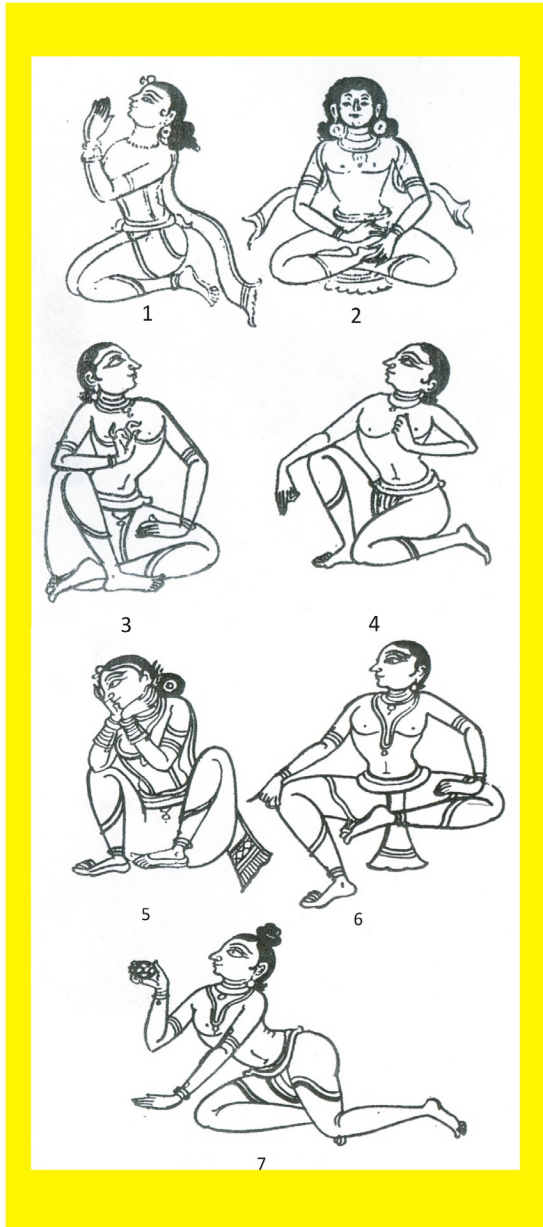
Lalita-bhangi (delicate posture) is used for all females, and also for Vamana avatara.



Tribhangi

Vira-bhangi

Lalita-bhangi



SITTING POSTURES IN PATA

1. Natajanu (kneeling)

Persons worshipping or accepting benediction are shown in this posture. Vibhisana and milk maid Manika are often represented this way.

2. Padmasana (lotus posture)

The figure sits upright with legs crossed over the thighs. Buddha, Siva and Rishis in meditation are painted in this posture. (As also Narayana, Seshadeva and Bhubaneswari in the three anasara patis*)

3. Parsva-bhangi is a posture in which both legs are folded at the knee, one knee touching the ground and the other upright.

4. Kneeling, with one leg put forward-----this is drawn in profile and is the usual posture of Hanumana.

5. Sitting flat on the feet with the legs drawn together---- Yasoda cosoling the child Krishna is portrayed thus.

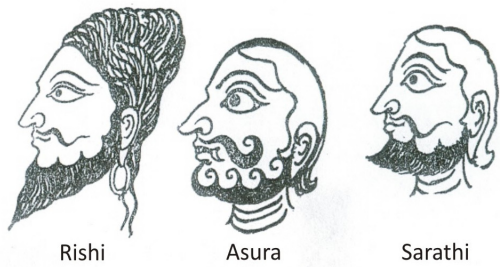
6. Sitting on a throne----- This is a frontal view, one leg dangling and the other leg placed on the thigh.

7. Kneeling on all fours----is how Anthua-Gopala (kneeling Krishna) is shown while stealing butter.



WOMEN POSTURES

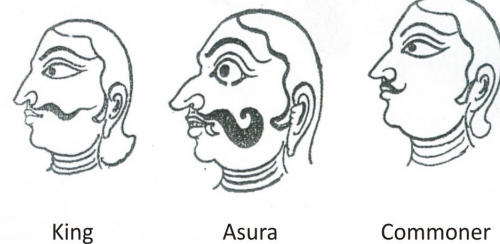




Rishi

Asura

Sarathi



King

Asura

Commoner

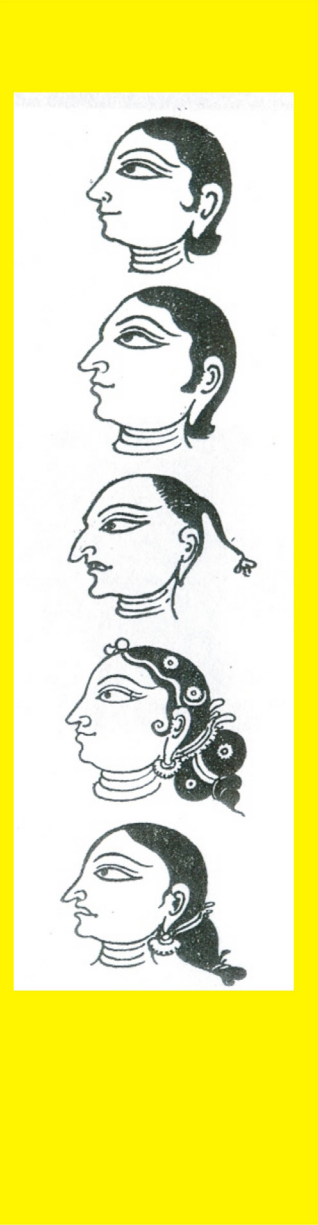


Male

Garuda

Female

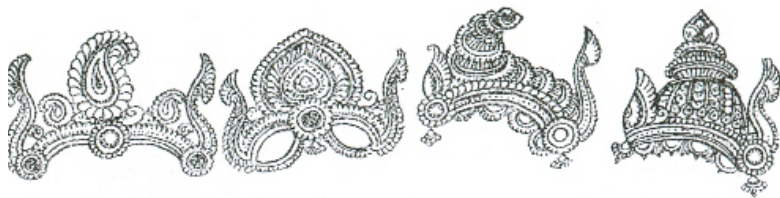
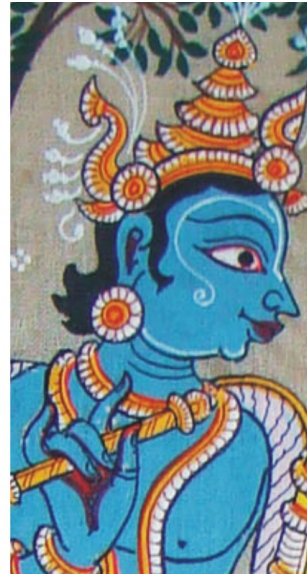
Asura



FACE

All faces in Orissan pata have long beak-like noses, prominent chins and elongated eye. In the female face, the nose is drawn as a flowing line from the forehead whereas in the male face, there is dip between the lower forehead and the nose. In the female face, the eyes are longer extending almost to the ears, the chin is more rounded, and the hair is a solid black.

Beards and moustaches are given to the faces of Rishis, Asura, Sarathi, Jaya-Vijaya and Kings. The bearded is usually pointed and forms three crescent shaped steps at the edge of the cheek. The moustache of kings is shown long and curling up, that of asuras in loops and those of commoners pointing straight.



DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Four types of crowns are portrayed

1. Banka-chulia (tilted plume) for Krishna.
2. Topi-kirita, a royal crown, for kings and gods like Indra and Vishnu.
3. Ambakashia (tender mango) with the crest shaped like a mango, for queens.
4. Pana-patri (betel leaf) a heart-shaped crest for Kali, Bhairavi, Tara and other goddesses.

Female figures are draped with sari whereas in the male figure, the torso is left bare except for an uttariya, a long scarf, which goes behind the neck and comes over the shoulders to fall down to the thighs. The sari has floral or geometric designs and a kanchula (blouse) in a different colour.

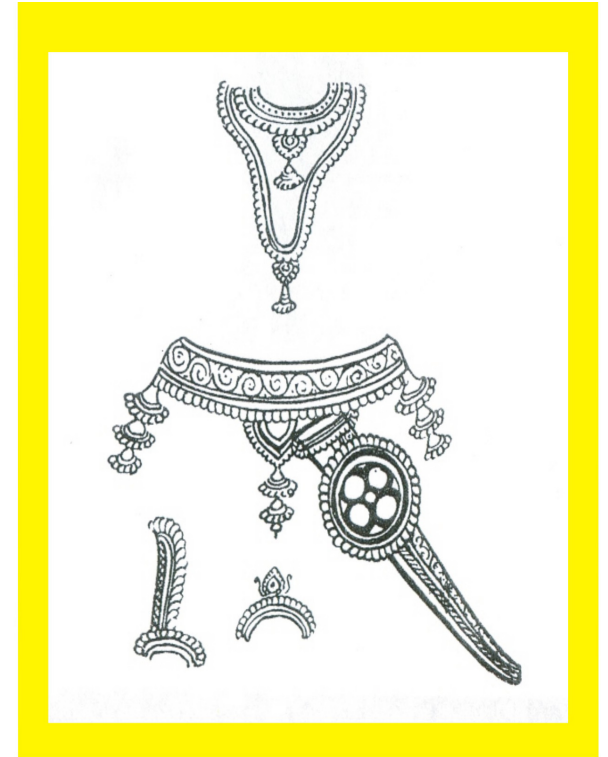


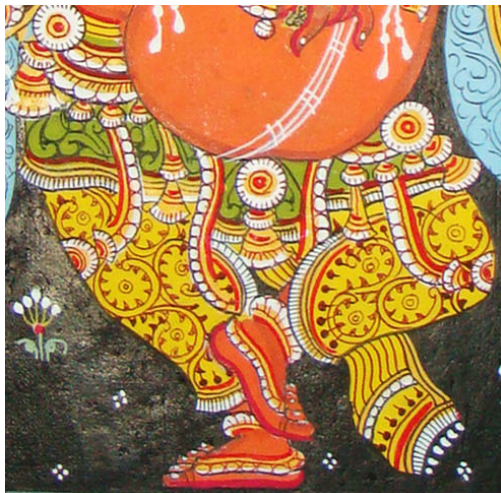


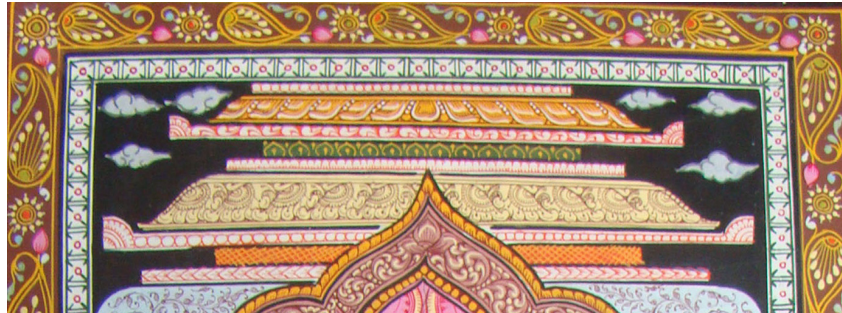
FEMALE ORNAMENTS



MALE ORNAMENTS







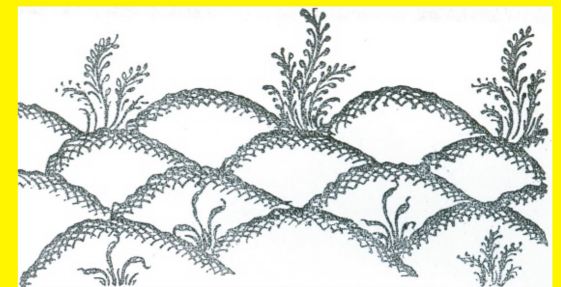
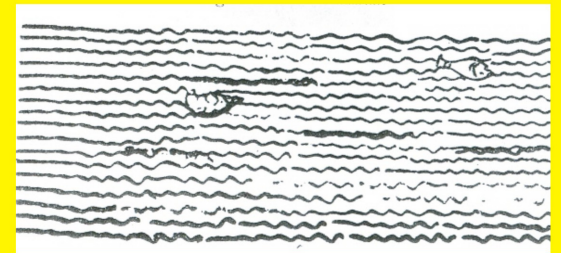
LANDSCAPE

With a monochrome background dominating the part, there is little scope or need for landscape painting. However, representation of the sea or river becomes inevitable while showing Krishna on the banks of Yamuna or Puri temple on the sea shore.

Sea or river is painted blue with wavy lines in white, and fish, crabs and shrimp are shown in the water.

Mountains are painted as a series of piled up arches in grey colour. (Nowadays Chitrakara treats mountains with black hatching)

Sky is rarely painted and the paintings never indicate whether it is day or night.





FLORA AND FAUNA



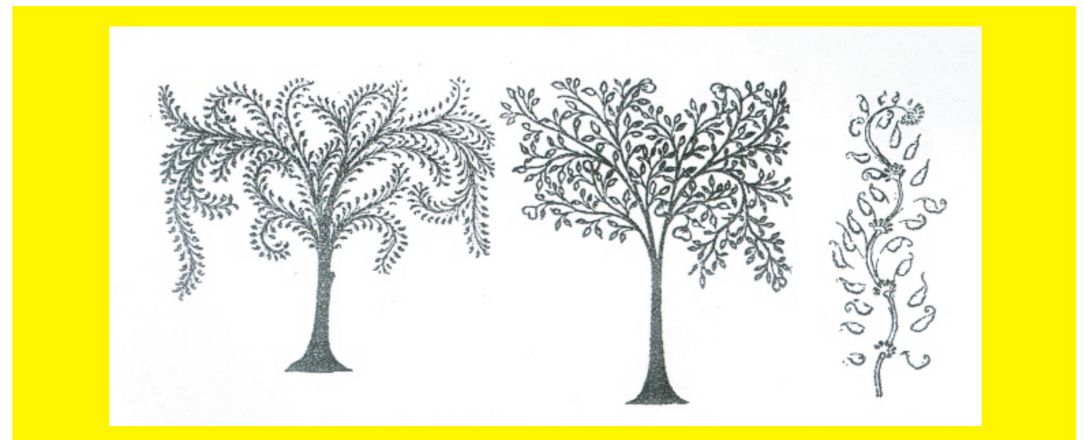
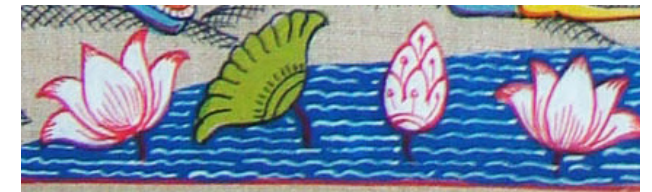
Trees are painted slender and willowy, and each leaf and flower is separately drawn. Since the background is mostly red or orange, the trees are often depicted in grey. Trees are drawn mainly to fill the blank spaces.

The two favoured trees among Chitrakaras are kadamba (Nauclea Cadamba) and bilva (Aegle Marmelos), to be painted depending on the subject matter

Trees like kadamba is drawn in Krishna-lila paintings, and Shiva is associated with bilva.



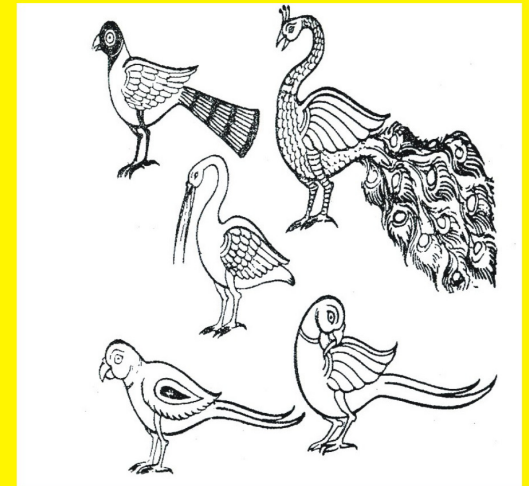
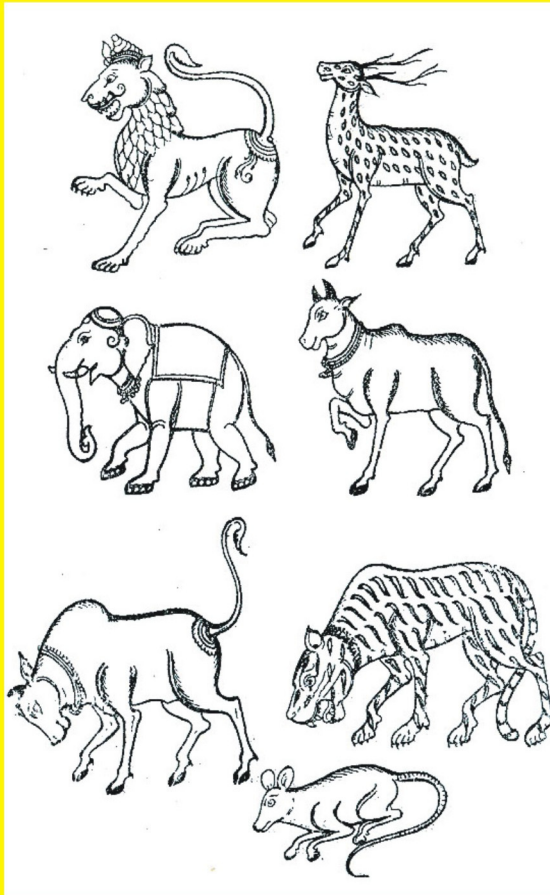
Creepers and tufts of durva (grass) are painted to fill up the blank spaces in the background.

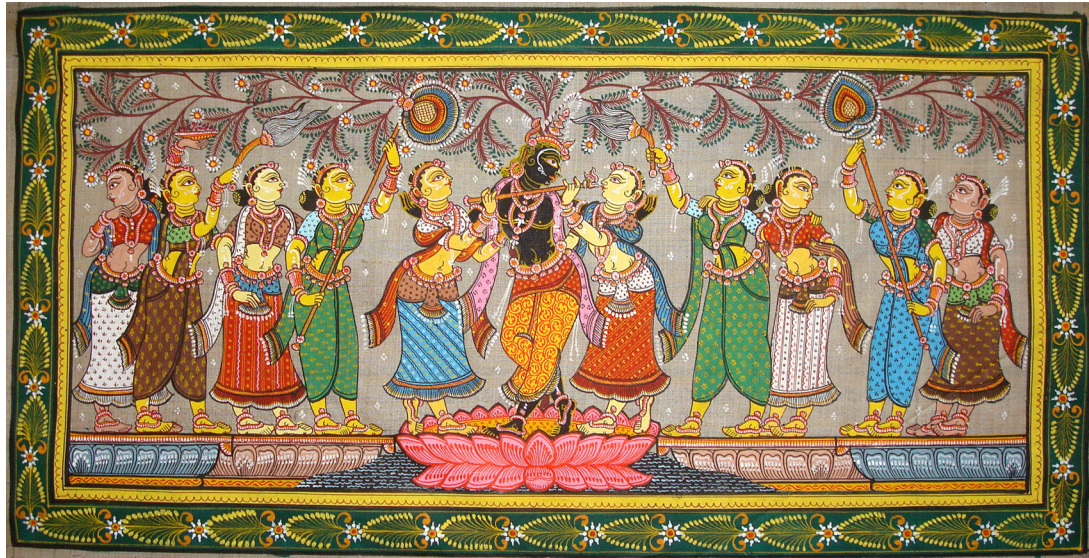




BIRDS AND ANIMALS

Ducks and cranes are shown on water, parrots. Peacocks on trees, two peacocks are drawn on the two sides of archway. Parrots looking backwards (olata-sua) are drawn near the pinnacle of temples. Lions are drawn to signify the simhadwara (lion gate) of a temple.(when there is a circular design with in a square, four lion heads are drawn to fill up the traingular spaces at the corners). Deer are associated with the groves of Vrindavan. Horses and elephants with royalty. Buffalo and mouse are portrayed along with the gods.

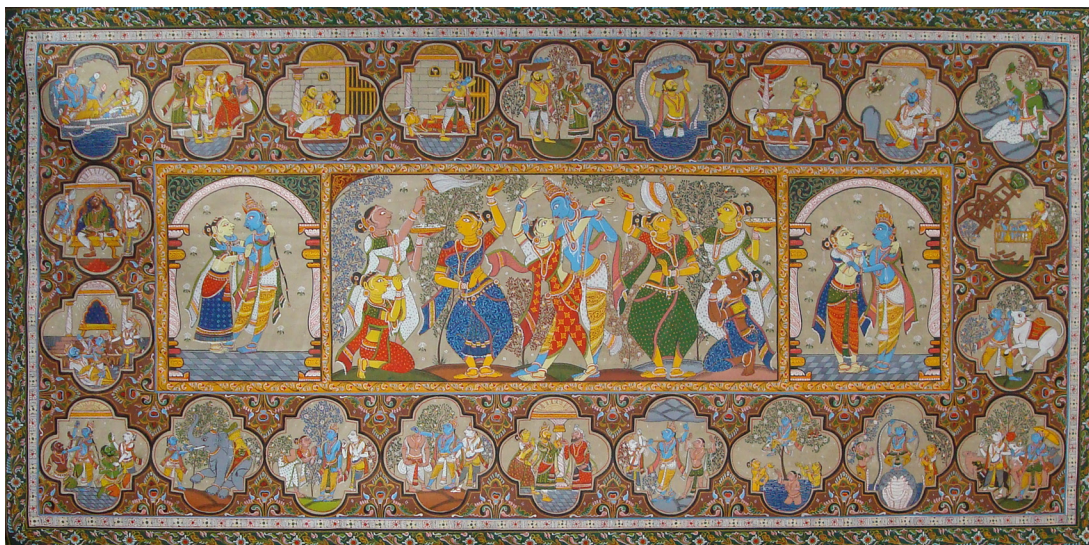




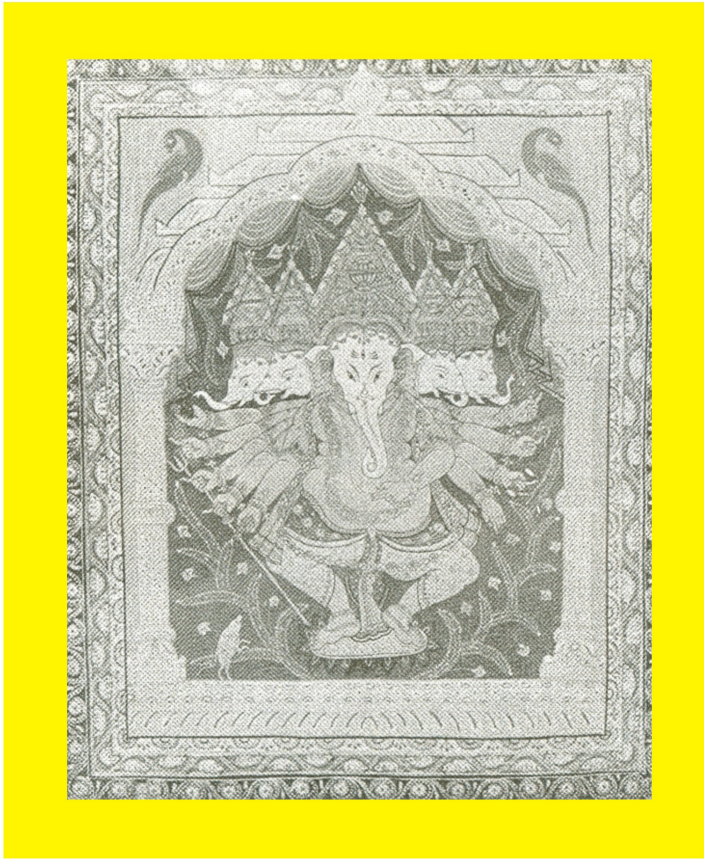
KRISHANA-LILA

Krishna-lila became a favourite subject with the Chitrakarars. Some of the popular themes depicted in pata paintings are the birth of Krishna, slaying of various demons, Kaliya-damana, lifting mouth Govardhana, and Vastraharana (stealing of clothes).

The Krishna themes of Orissan paintings are called as rasa pictures, rasa being understood as a special form of erotic games in which gopis take an active part. This part consists of a fanciful twisting of their bodies in impossible postures so as to compose the forms of an elephant, a horse or a chariot to provide a mount for the joy-rides of Krishna.



* The idea of designing composite animal forms spelled out of the bodies of human beings or animals does not seem to be an original Indian concept, for such composite designs have also been found in Persian paintings from which Mughal artists have derived the practice. Therefore Mughal paintings showing a horse or an elephant formed by putting together different animals and men.



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

1. The linework has a lyrical sensitiveness, illustrating as it does romantic kavyas.
2. Drawing is less angular, more sweeping and sensitive and is of a " delicate draughtmanship and patterning.
3. Orissan art during the period from the 14th to the 16th century suggests that the classical tradition of the province not only survived but developed with a certain baroque vigour which can be very impressive.
4. There are landscape and architectural settings. Trees are willowy and slender with each leaf and flower separately shown.
5. All figures are drawn to some extent in proportion to one another and to the background. Gods and princes are not shown taller than an elephant, tree or building.
6. The chin is elongated and there is no protruberance of the farther eye in to space. The pupils in the eye of faces are also not small (as in Western Indian paintings)
7. Orissan pata is strictly religious in content and deals with no secular themes.



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