



INDIAN ART: MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES

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INTENDED AUDIENCE: Students enrolled in BFA, BA, B. Tech. Candidates preparing for competitive examinations in India Students enthusiastic about art, culture and design histories.

COURSE OUTLINE:

This course introduces the diversity of art practices and material culture from the Indian subcontinent and situates them against their socio-cultural, political and temporal settings. The content is arranged according to materials and techniques to support an immersive approach to understanding Indian art. Focus on materials and practices will enable students to draw connections between the historical artifacts and contemporary objects from the immediate surroundings. This course is beneficial for art practitioners, aspiring art historians, educators, and those preparing for competitive examinations in India. After Partha Mitter's concise compilation (2001) of the essential facets of the art in the Indian subcontinent from the Indus valley period until contemporary times, a comprehensive book on this area is eagerly anticipated. In the last two decades, dedicated studies on Chola sculptures (Dehejia 2006, 2021), Mughal architecture (Koch 2001, 2006; Michell 2011), Pahari miniature paintings (Goswamy 2009, 2021) and art after the independence of India (Kapur 2000; Mathur 2019; Khullar 2017) have presented fresh perspectives on these topics calling attention to examining the critical themes in Indian art, such as tradition, rupture, continuity and innovation. Drawing on these studies, the proposed course brings together the recent findings in Indian art and directs to the possible ways the students can explore these thematics.

ABOUT INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Rajarshi Sengupta is a practitioner and art historian, presently an assistant professor in Fine Arts, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India. He previously taught at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Kangra (2021), and University of Hyderabad (2019-21). Sengupta completed his Phd in art history from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada (2019). His thesis, titled "Making Kalamkari Textiles: Artisans and Agency in Coromandel, India," reconstructed the understudied histories and knowledge structure of the dyed, painted and printed textile makers of southeastern India. Sengupta received the IARTS Textiles of India Grant, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2017-18), and has co-curated an art-research project titled 'WE', a **शुद्ध** **द/شيد**, with Baishali Ghosh and received a curatorial grant from the Korean Cultural Centre, New Delhi, India (2016). He was involved in the exhibition Cloth That Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz (2020), Royal Ontario Museum, curated by Dr. Sarah Fee, and contributed to the exhibition catalogue.

COURSE PLAN:

Week 1 : Clay: Terracotta and Terracruda

How is clay processed into objects?

Brick structures and urns from the Indus Valley and Megalithic sites in south India

Sculptures of terracotta and bronze from Harappa

Terracruda or unbaked clay-made objects and rituals

Week 2 : Architecture I: Basics of Buddhist and Jain architecture

Wood, stone and living rock

Stupa, vihara, caves and temples from Shunga, Kushana, Maurya and Gupta periods

Week 3 : Pigment: Mineral and vegetal colours

How pigment-based paints are processed and applied to walls

Bhimbetka drawings

Murals of Sittanavasal and Ajanta

Week 4 : Architecture II: Hinduism and temple building

Architectural treatise and utilisation of Vastupurusha mandala for making temples
Temples of Badami Chalukyas, Rashtrakuta, Chola, Chandela and Eastern Ganga dynasties

Week 5 : Stone: Memorials, Architectural Remnants and Objects

Types of stone in India: Mathura Sandstone, Deccani Basalt, Rajasthani Marble
Stone carving for architecture
Hero stones and their social significance
Household items and objects in royal court

Week 6 : Garden

Islam, the garden of paradise and afterlife
Tombs, palace, garden and waterways from the Mughal and Deccani context
Regional and foreign flora and fauna in Mughal and Deccani gardens

Week 7 : Paper

How does paper affect the character of painting and calligraphy? How are ink and pigments prepared?
Jain manuscripts and Islamic treatise
Mughal, Deccani, Rajput and Pahari miniature paintings
Mysore and Tanjore paintings

Week 8 : Printing: European Interventions

Printmaking techniques and their application in books and images
Bazar paintings of Kalighat and Battala woodcuts
Lithograph and Oleograph from Calcutta, Pune and Lucknow

Week 9 : "New" Colonial Media

Company paintings, European watercolour and Indian artisans
Oil painting in the Princely courts
Raja Ravi Varma

Week 10 : Daily Practice and Nationalism

Gandhian philosophy and stress on day-to-day practices such as spinning, weaving and self-sustainability as decolonisation
Alternative art education in Santiniketan, stress on habitual practice, co-existence of cultures
Nandalal Bose, Gandhi and Haripura posters
Overview of the significance of craft in nation-building

Week 11 : Multimedia Approaches I:

Introduction to the key developments in Indian Art after 1947
Post-independence artistic and design practices
Canvas painting, textile, furniture making between the 1950s and 1990s

Week 12 : Multimedia Approaches II:

Neoliberalism, transnational connections and "new media" approaches
Curatorial and collaborative projects between artists, educators and communities
Biennale, entrepreneurship and expansive notion of "art" after 2010