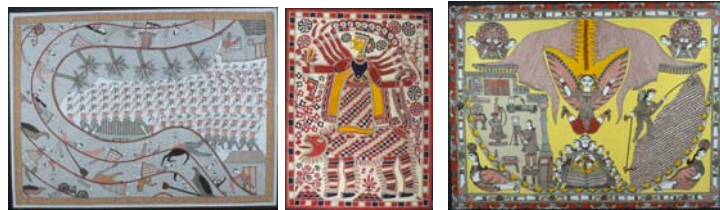


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ANCIENT GODS AND MODERN POLITICS
Mithila Painting
April 12 – September 13, 2009



Rich in color and infused with stories both ancient and new, Mithila paintings from the central state of Bihar in India arrive in Los Angeles this spring. From ancient Hindu deities Siva and Rama to the tragic events of 9/11 and the East Asian Tsunami, Mithila painters convey their unique perspective in vivid detail. Organized by the California-based Ethnic Arts Foundation, established in 1980 to support and promote Mithila painting, this exhibit illustrates the extraordinary development of this unique art form. “While the Mithila painting tradition has maintained a remarkable vitality, it is difficult for the mostly women painters, living in poor rural communities, to travel and gain recognition for their work,” says David Szanton, EAF President, “They are therefore thrilled that CAFAM will be exhibiting their paintings to audiences in Southern California.”

Wall and floor paintings that reflect life cycles and domestic rituals have been a long-standing tradition in the Mithila region of India. Centered in the state of Bihar, Mithila is an ancient cultural region of Indian civilization known for a wealth of diverse artistic production. British colonial official William Archer first discovered the intricate beauty of Mithila painting in 1934 when he was documenting the aftermath of a major earthquake. Archer’s photography of the exquisite, yet ephemeral paintings, prompted officials to encourage painting on paper as a means to supplement meager family income in the aftermath of a devastating drought in 1966. As Mithila painters embraced working on paper, word of their vibrant works spread throughout the country and have now achieved international acclaim.

Contemporary Mithila paintings reflect a shift in subject matter from ancient epics and local legends to include national and international politics as well as personal narratives. For example, painter Shalinee Kumari's *Women can do everything* depicts women in a variety of powerful roles – from climbing mountains to working in science labs – against energetic swatches of yellow and red. In *Tsunami in Sri Lanka*, Amrita Das renders the chaos and heartbreak of the 2004 tsunami in sweeping lines of black and red ink. Mithila paintings reflect a uniquely modern Indian aesthetic that values vibrant colors, fine details, and lush storytelling.

The commercial success of Mithila paintings has also raised the status of its women artists and the general economy of the Bihar state. **Ancient Gods and Modern Politics** traces the extraordinary development of this artwork that encompasses ritual art, folk art, and contemporary art. This exhibit will be supported by lectures, workshops, and other special events that will provide further insight into Mithila painting. A reception on Saturday, April 18, 2009 from 6pm – 8pm will celebrate the opening of this exhibit in Los Angeles.

***** High resolution images available *****

About CAFAM

...because a shrinking world requires an EXPANDED mind.

CAFAM champions cultural understanding by encouraging curiosity about our diverse world. Our exhibits and programs serve as a catalyst for the exploration of art and ideas that reflect our ever-changing community. In a shrinking world, CAFAM believes in building common ground. As the twenty-first century brings global cultures ever closer together, we often find ourselves traveling in unfamiliar lands. This mapless new landscape requires inter-cultural fluency and frequent trips to CAFAM.

About The Ethnic Arts Foundation (EAF)

The Ethnic Arts Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 1980 dedicated to the continuing development of Mithila painting. The EAF supports several different activities: purchasing paintings directly from the painters; organizing exhibitions; underwrites research and publications on Mithila paintings and Mithili society; facilitating sales of works, with profits being returned directly to the artists. The exhibitions also expand national and international appreciation of the painting tradition. In January 2003 the EAF established a free Mithila Art Institute in Madhubani to further the training and opportunities of talented young Mithila painters. <http://mithilapainting.org>

Craft and Folk Art Museum

5814 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Information

Tel. 323-937-4230
www.cafam.org

Museum Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 11 am – 5 pm
Thursday 11 am – 7 pm
Saturday and Sunday 12 – 6 pm

Museum Admission

General \$5.00 / Students and Seniors 3.00
Members and Children under 12 Free / Free 1st Wed of month