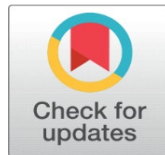
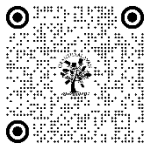


INDIAN SCROLL PAINTINGS AS ILLUSTRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Scroll paintings have been an integral part of India's visual and oral storytelling tradition. It is the variations as well as certain similarities in the visual devices used in the scrolls across traditions which makes them unique till date as indigenous. With the diminishing practice of these paintings due to various factors, its inclusion into the mainstream creative industry practice as well as understanding the indigenous visual practice becomes essential. In the currently existing scholarship, these paintings have been analyzed from the perspectives of heritage preservation, their narrative qualities, context, aesthetics however, its illustrative character mapping and its application in design education to enrich the knowledge of visual design gamut requires further exploration. This study attempts to address the understanding of the compositional character of these scrolls for common patterns or design by identifying the methods of arranging the visual elements i.e. the modes of composition.

Keywords: Scroll Paintings, Similarities, Perspectives, Narrative Qualities

1. INTRODUCTION

The folklore tradition and the visual depiction of the oral goes hand in hand in the storytelling tradition of the Indian Sub-continent. Each part/ region has its own unique and interesting ways to engage the viewer with the age-old concepts of ways of life (Chatterji, 2020). With the passage of time, there is a massive improvement in technology in order to make our lives better and achieve fast paced human development. New innovations are revolutionizing industry as well as impacting our very way of living (Sternberg & Preiss, 2005). However, with this fast-paced world, there exists another world in the rural regions of the country where tangible objects (artefacts) as well as intangibles (folk songs, stories, rituals) which are an essential part of the culture and identity. The villages of India are still scintillating with such rich cultural traditions which need recognition and inclusion in the mainstream in order to be preserved and carried forward (Stefan, Davis & Corsane, 2014). Their practice in everyday life is essential rather than just being displayed as objects of

the past. The creation of scrolls and the visuals used in the arrangements and the cultural context in different regions of India serves an important rationale to examine. This study attempts to understand one such aspect from the Indian scroll paintings which can later be converted into a structured course for visual design students to understand, appreciate and apply these local ways in their works.

1.1. THE SCROLLS – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A scroll painting is made on a roll of cloth or paper of a particular length and breadth which makes it different from single frame painting work. The single frame can be hung on a wall but the scroll's essential function is to be kept in rolls and opened only during certain ritualistic processes or narration of a story. The scroll's length varies according to the story depicted as well as place of creation (Mandal, Xianyi & Meiyen, 2018). The scroll paintings act as a visual aid to the storytelling sessions conducted by certain groups of travelling artists and performers. In Telangana (newly formed state by dividing Andhra Pradesh), the scrolls are specially made on request of a patron and comprises of three communities- Patrons, Artists and Performers. One of the themes of these scrolls is to present the "history" of the patron caste who ordered the performance under the form of a Purana. Also known as kula (lineage or family) (Fonseca, 2019).

The Bengal Pattachitra is a visual and oral art tradition practiced by the Patuas or Chitrakars of West Bengal, particularly concentrated in Medinipur and Birbhum. The patuas are the travelers who would travel from one village to another and display the scrolls to the community to orate and sing the story. Their stories range from Hindu Mythology, local folklores, Sufi tradition, and contemporary themes (Hauser, 2002). In Sanskrit, 'pata' means cloth — the Patuas initially painted on dried leaves or cloth. The recitation of the Pata is called 'Pat Khelano', and the song through which the visual narratives are sung is called 'Pater Gaan.' This runs in three stages – the kahani (story), the mahatmya (glory), and bhavita (introduction) (Bayen, 2013). Similarly, Phad is a scroll painting dealing with folk deities namely- Pabuji and Devnarayan and is practiced by Bhopa community in Rajasthan state of India. Like other regions, this style of painting is traditionally done on a long piece of cloth or canvas, known as phad (Mahawar, 2018).

Illustration as a term has been classified as a commercial form of visual art whose function is to convey a well-defined meaning to the receiver or the target audience. But if the term is seen from the lens of history, we find that the illustration was used a pictorial language for human expression as well as denotation of a message (Zeegen, 2009). Scrolls/ Patta paintings created by Indian artisans are an apt example of this. The elaboration in creating the characters, the planning and execution of the concept to be depicted requires years of practice, involvement in the craft. These scrolls are static visual narratives which are an essential part of the whole performance of an event/ story (Sarkar, 2017).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the modes of composition in the selected samples (refer Table 1) of the scrolls.
- To analyze the differences in representations of different visual elements in each scroll.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the study, five to six scroll painting image samples were collected from different states- Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Bihar. These samples were kept together and analyzed using compositional interpretation methods for understanding the illustration styles and visual features in these paintings. (Roy & Das, 2013).

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Figure 1

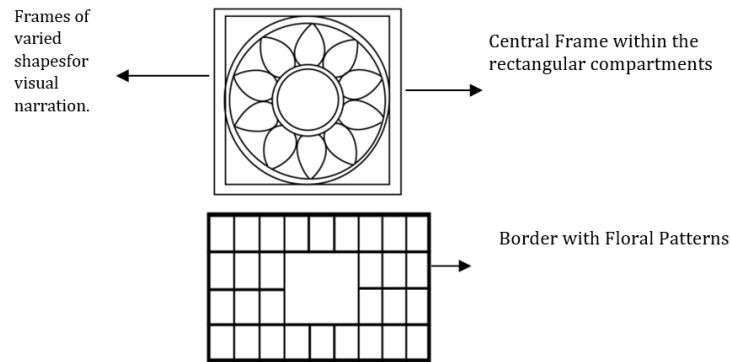
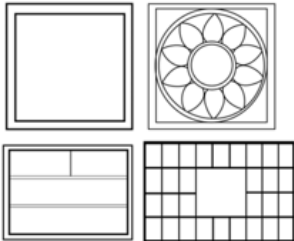
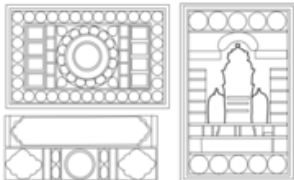
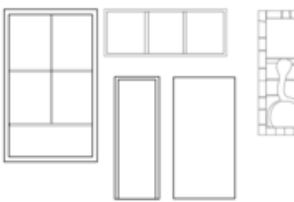


Figure 1 General Layout of a Scroll Painting

Figure 2

Name & Image of the Scroll	Extracted basic layout patterns	Description
1. <u>Cherival</u> Scrolls (Telangana)  Title: Unknown Year of Execution: early 21st century, Natural colours on processed khadi canvas Artist: D Sai Kiran Varma ©Artist  Title: Unknown Year of Execution: early 21st century, Natural colours on processed khadi canvas Artist: D Sai Kiran Varma ©Artist		Vertical and horizontal in <u>rectangular shape</u> as well as square layouts used. Layout- two types - simple mode- use of single frame to show one picture containing a particular event. Complex- with varying number of compartments- 1. Centre rectangular frame with three long equally divided strips for picturization, central frame with multiple equally divided small frames. The center frame can be rectangular or circular with repetition of those shapes within the pictorial space. A Border is generally present on the outside margins of the picture containing floral motifs.

2. Pattachitra (Orissa)  Raas Leela (Tala Pattachitra) (2016.37.9) Year of Execution: early 21st century, ink on palm leaf Artist: Bijaya Kumar Bariki © Sarmaya Arts Foundation  Pattachitra: Story of Jagannath (2015.2.157) Year of Execution: 2015 Gum Tempera on cloth Artist: Akshaya Kumara Bariki & Braikishore Bariki © Sarmaya Arts Foundation		Vertical and horizontal layouts used. Borders are detailed and multiple layers of a broad and narrow border are observed. The motifs are as detailed as the entire picture. The whole pictorial space is filled with elements with little negative space left. The concept of one picture within another picture is observed here. Combination of circular, rectangular, rhombus and other organic shapes frames are used. Apart from figures, the space is filled up with floral motifs but there is little negative space left within each compartment.
3. Pattachitra (Bengal)  Stories of Ramayana Kalighat Pattachitra Water colour on paper Artist: Unknown  Title: Durga Natural colours on processed khadi canvas Artist: Mamoni Chitrakar © Artist		The layout of the scrolls can be vertical or horizontal. Border is created within frame of reference. These borders can be double lined or single lined also. In few cases, there can be painting without borders too. The scroll is further divided into compartments with the help of thick horizontal and vertical borders. The compartments/frames made within the pictorial frame can be single (one frame only) or multiple frames arranged: one above the other, Two frames placed side by side and next two frames below them. These borders are sometimes decorated with motifs and sometimes left empty. The figures (animal, human, vegetation) occupy maximum space within each picture frame/compartment, leaving a very little negative space within the picture frame.

4. Iado Patiya  Title: Santhals feasting and dancing Year of Execution: 1850 Medium: Unknown Artist: Unknown Chester and Davida Herwitz Collection, Massachusetts (published in <i>Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art</i>)		Vertical and horizontal layouts used. In this form of painting, borders are absent. The whole paper surface acts as a frame of reference. The figures are not arranged in compartments or smaller frames. But a certain rhythmic flow in arrangement of the figures can be seen. In one composition, the figures are arranged in two horizontal sequences, whereas in another picture, these figures can be seen dancing and arranged in an reverse S- shaped sequence along with a horizontal arrangement
5. Paitkar Scrolls  Title: Dansai II Year of Execution: n.d Medium: Natural Colour, on paper Artist: Harekrishna Talukdar & Vijay Chitrakar ©Artist  Title: Santhal Dance Year of Execution: n.d Medium: Natural Colour, on paper Artist: Harekrishna Talukdar & Vijay Chitrakar ©Artist		Absence of further division of pictorial space. The artist utilizes the entire pictorial region to compose the figures and surrounding elements. However, these painting do have a broad border with simple decorations which shifts the focus to main compositional parts.

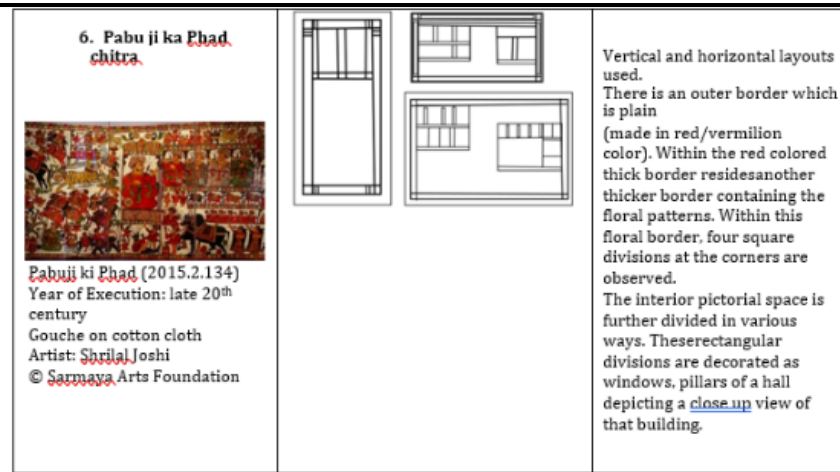


Figure 2 Composition Layout Analysis

5. COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS – HUMAN FIGURES

Cheriyal Scrolls: The figures have a thin black outline. The faces are of side view majorly and few times they are of front view. The ornaments are outlined in black and filled with yellow, red, and white colors to show gold and other valuable stones in jewelry. The nose is sharp. The female is distinguished from the male by putting nose ring, head bun to show longer hairs, elaborate jewelry, and bangles around the wrists. The eye (side view) resembles the shape of an almond, while the frontal face shows the eyes broad open with the eyeball in the middle. Various postures- standing, seated, resting, walking is created to depict different sets of events in the composition.

Figure 3

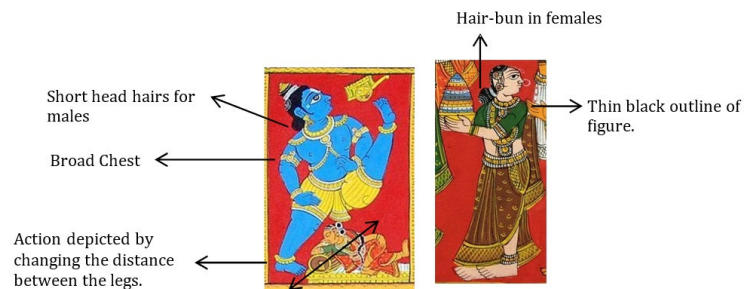


Figure 3 Details of a Cheriyal Composition

Orissa Pattachitra: The figures in Orissa style are rendered in black lines but these lines are thinner as compared to Bengal figures. Face and body are generally shown in a side-view and sometimes frontal view of the face and body is also seen. Figures are shown in various postures- seated, standing, bending, walking to depict motion. The features of the face are sharper than Bengal style figures. The upper part of the body (torso) is made broader whereas the waist area is narrow and curvy. Different parts of the body, whether it is a human figure or animal figure, is rendered with detail.

Male figures are either shown with a moustache or sometimes without moustache also whereas female figures wear a nose-ring, and their clothing is made different from the male counterpart to show the variance.

Figure 4



Figure 4 Details of Orissa Pattachitra Composition

Bengal Pattachitra: The human figures and other animal figures are executed in thick black lines. These faces are either of profile or side view. The eyes resemble the shape of a lotus leaf and are drawn bigger than other facial features such as nose or lips.

The human figures shown in compositions are either seated or standing in profile view. Male figures are depicted by showing black moustache, in some cases with beard. The female is depicted by use of ornaments like nose ring, earrings, and long grown head hairs. Ornaments are painted in white color. To focus upon certain characters or part of composition, the figures are drawn comparatively bigger in size or overlap the other figures.

Figure 5

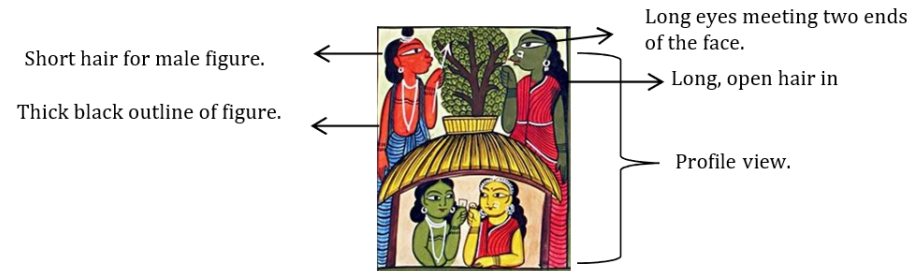
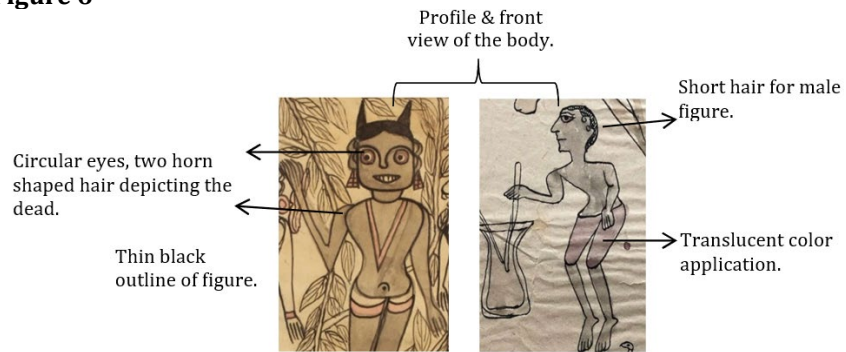


Figure 5 Details of Bengal Pattachitra Composition

Jado Patiya: This form of art consists of human as well as animal figures along with flora being rendered with thin black outlines, but the colors are translucent contrary to other scrolls mentioned above. The outlines of the figures (human or animal) are fluid. The facial features are simple; eyes are prominent feature in the face. The figures shown in the paintings have straight posture (standing or walking) or bent legs (to show seated posture). The faces have a side as well as front view. One peculiar feature of these paintings is that they depict dead people. The depiction of the dead is done by creating circular eyes with eyeballs in the middle of the circle. The inner boundary of the eye is given a red outline. The male figure has shorter hairs as compared to the female figures. The female figure wears a saree below her knees but little above feet, a flat, narrow strap like shape covers the upper body whereas the male is shown wearing tight dhoti covering the lower part of the body till the knees. The hands and feet are made with short line strokes resembling a wire brush.

Figure 6**Figure 6** Details of Jado Patia Composition

Paitkar Scrolls: The outline of the figures here is little bit thicker as compared to the Jado Patiya figure outlines. The shapes of the body are fluid, and the facial features are not sharp. The nose and lips are round around the tip. The eyes are again a prominent feature, and the shape of the eye resembles a muskmelon seed shape. The male and female can be distinguished by the length of the head hairs, bangles around the wrists of the female and the males wearing a cloth turban on the head. The dresses contain vertical and horizontal linear patterns. The hands and the legs shapes are rounded rectangles.

Figure 7**Figure 7** Details of Paitkar Scroll Composition

Pabu ji ka Phad Chitra: This style of painting shows an elaborate drawing of the characters created. The figures are majorly in profile view; the shape of the face is round with pointed nose, fish-shaped eye, small lips and a round chin. The male and female can be easily distinguished as the male has an S shaped moustache, shorter hairs and wears a headgear whereas the female is shown with a ghagra and choli, wearing a nose ring studded with valuable stones or pearls, long veil covering the head and half of the face, curvy breasts, broad shoulders and narrow waist resembling a rounded trapezium shape. The royal figures are shown either seated on a running horse or seated on a throne. In some compositions, the male figures are shown in action, fighting an animal. The subordinate male/ female figures are observed in standing postures.

Figure 8



Figure 8 Details of Phad Chitra Composition

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These scrolls contain certain similar aspects in terms of making margins in the form of elaborate borders containing various floral motifs as well the layout sense is similar to each other with certain variations. Out of 6 scrolls, the simplest scrolls executed are Jado Patia and Paitkar scrolls. The complexity in creating borders, dividing the interior pictorial space by creating more frames or compartments is observed to increase in Bengal Pata, then in Cheriya scrolls further enhancing in Orissa patta and finally in Pabuji ke Phad chitra. The attires shown in various scrolls depicts the lifestyle and fashion sense of the communities living in those areas. These styles show us the extent to which we can simplify the figures and yet depict the cultural elements pertaining to a particular area. These ways may help the instructors to help in explaining the modes of compositions in simpler terms to students who are new to the world of visual design/painting. It can be concluded that the figurative and compositional aspects of selected scroll paintings define the illustrative character consisting of varied details.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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