

Noya Village Paintings

Noya village, in the district of West Midnapore in the state of West Bengal, is a village of painters known as patuas who produce the traditional patas (paintings) of the region. Formerly, these patuas were singers who painted pictures to illustrate the songs that they composed. The tradition evolved in an opposite direction, such that now they compose songs to accompany their paintings.

The most traditional works are scroll paintings that tell a story associated with a narrative song. As the patua sings the song, he or she (most patuas are men, but there are women painters as well) unrolls the scroll to reveal the scenes that are described in the song. The narratives range from stories from the Hindu epics (e.g., the life of Krishna) to modern events (e.g., an earthquake in Pakistan), including tales with contemporary social import (e.g., a story that critique the practice of dowry).

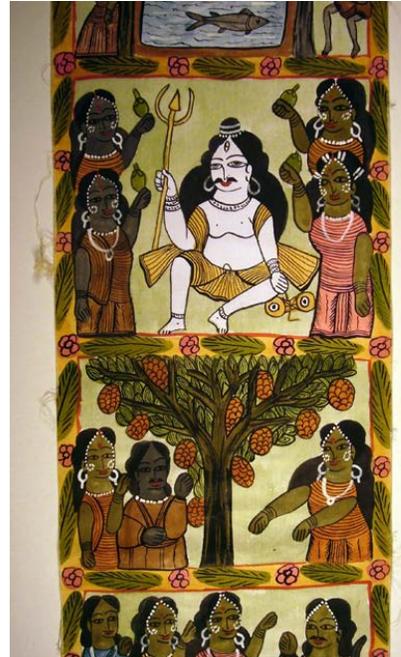
Besides scroll paintings, the patuas paint individual works on paper. These are images of Hindu gods and goddesses, scenes from daily life (including sometimes curious views or critiques of the city life in Kolkata), scenes of the customs of the tribal people of the region, and copies of the so-called Kalighat style paintings of the late 19th century. Although Hindu themes dominate in these paintings, most of the painters themselves are Muslims. By the late 20th century, the Noya village patuas have acquired an international audience for their work.

For more information

Korom, Frank J. (2006). *Village of Painters: Narrative Scrolls from West Bengal*. Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press.



Durga Slaying the demon Mahisha



Shiva. Section of a scroll painting