

PRESS RELEASE

The Tales We Tell: Indian Warli Painting

14 November 2015 – 3 July 2016

This exhibition presents a rare insight into Warli painting, a tribal art form from Western India. Drawing on a store of tribal memory, myths and everyday life, it has evolved from restricted ritual drawings into an applied art in a process of transition. Opening at the V&A Museum of Childhood on 14 November, the exhibition is part of the V&A India Festival.



The Tales We Tell focuses on the innovative style of Jivya Soma Mashe who opened up the traditions of Warli to a new iconography and his follower Ramesh Hengadi, who has developed his own distinctive style in response to the changes in community life, shifts in local markets and global economies. Further canvases by Mashe family members and fellow artists broaden the story of the evolution of Warli art.

A counterpoint to the selected paintings is an installation created through a pictorial exchange between children at Redlands Primary School, Tower Hamlets and children from the village school in Dahanu, Thane, using the accessible narrative language of Warli to tell each other stories about their respective lives.

Also featured is a film by commissioned artist Johnny Magee. Exploring the paintings and the visual abstraction of storytelling, Magee's film reflects on the environment, practice and the daily life of Mashe.

During the course of the exhibition the V&A Museum of Childhood will host a Warli residency with exhibiting artists from Thane. The artist will create new work to animate the exhibition and undertake a workshop programme to share techniques and develop ideas to extend this rural Indian and urban East London visual dialogue.

Supported by  THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

A collaborative project with A Fine Line: cultural practice A FINE L/NE

Brighter Sound Creative Music Company www.brightersound.com

V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA.

Nearest tube: Bethnal Green

Open daily: 10.00 – 17.45, last admission 17.30.

Switchboard: 020 8983 5200 vam.ac.uk/moc

The Tales We Tell: Indian Warli Painting is a FREE display as part of the V&A India Festival. It opens on 14 November 2015 and runs until 3 July 2016.

Images are available in the Museum of Childhood folder on the V&A press website

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Notes to Editors

The Warli Project

Traditionally women did Warli paintings for special occasions and festivities. In the late 1970s, a man, Jivya Soma Mashe, started to paint as an artist, retaining the distinctive narrative style in creating images of everyday life in rural India, and visualising the folk tales of the Warli tribe. Jivya is credited as a master, the founder of a new tradition of Warli painting. Other artists have followed, using his visual language and adapting it to develop their own. Warli painting has migrated from the walls and floors of houses in Thane district near Mumbai: paper and canvas paintings have crossed over cultural and geographic borders, bought by tourists and art lovers and exhibited in India, Europe and America. The artists have travelled too, their experience filtering back into the paintings extending the visual vocabulary and taking the narrative beyond the traditional.

Warli is termed a Tribal art; it is also an applied art. Farmers are not just supplementing their livelihoods, they are now earning their living and supporting family and communities through their art practice.

There is practically no awareness of Warli art in the UK. It is unrepresented in public collections and it has not been included in any surveys of Tribal art. Over the past nine years A Fine Line has been collecting and commissioning work by Jivya Soma Mashe and his family and Ramesh Hengadi, creating a collection that now stands at over sixty canvases and works on paper. In so doing A Fine Line has developed strong partnerships with the painters, inviting them to participate in residencies in the UK, exhibiting their work and building a relationship with their communities.

A Fine Line has also worked closely with the Manchester based filmmaker Johnny Magee, in documenting their practice and way of life, reflecting on the evolution of the art form. His most recent film will form an integral part of this exhibition. The film alluding to the Warli narratives and drawing on the idea of Mashe's inner imagination provides a way for visitors to understand the context in which the paintings are made and their cultural and social significance for their communities.

A Warli inspired musical score performed by composer and vocal sculptor Jason Singh and virtuoso guitarist Guiliano Modarelli will launch the exhibition on 12 November 2015, 6pm. The musicians were commissioned by the Creative Music Company Brighter Sound and they developed their piece during three weeks spent in the Warli village in the company of Warli painters Ramesh Hengadi and Jivya Soma Mashe.