

The objective of the project is the art history analysis of Madhubani paintings from the collection of the Asia and Pacific Museum, which is the only one of such kind in Poland and it is the third biggest in Europe. The research concentrates on providing historical background, analysing the Madhubani genre in terms of art theory and art history, explaining the process of art-making, iconographical background and analysing the paintings in terms of individual features and personal styles.

The Collection of Madhubani Painting from The Asia and Pacific Museum. The 148 artworks were acquired in four individual collections during the 1970s and 1980s directly from India, therefore they represent the early stage of Madhubani Painting on paper.

Project is based on the approach proposed by Isabella Nardi in her exquisite book *The Theory of Citrasutras in Indian Painting. A Critical Re-Evaluation of Their Uses and Interpretations*. Nardi stresses the need of multidimensional research on Indian art, combining the analysis of Sanskrit theoretical treatises, interviews with living painters and the analysis of artworks in terms of every aspect described in Sanskrit treatises. Nardi points out that most of the art history research on Indian painting focused on symbolism and mythology as the main criteria to understand artworks, and that it is not a sufficient method. It must be complemented with the fundamental paradigms of Indian art, which are the means to explore ways of conceiving Indian art. For that reason, field studies in India are crucial for earnest and profound research. Interviews with living artist will deepen our knowledge of the process of art-making, as well as the understanding and interpretation of motives and symbols, which may vary locally.

The method is based on the detailed analysis of the physical artefacts (paintings from the Collection of the Asia and Pacific Museum) along and within classical Indian theories of art and interviews with the living artists.

The first part consists of the analysis of Indian (Sanskrit) texts describing theory of art, in original and various editions. The second part is the collection and analysis of anthropological data. The core of the project is the art history description including the iconographical analysis, description, and comparison of styles of the Madhubani Painting and individual artists and in the context of other styles of painting from the "East India school of painting" (Pat Painting and Pattachitra Painting from West Bengal and Odisha in the Asia and Pacific Museum).

The cultural heritage of India is not only vast, but also strongly diversified. However, art history research on painting so far concentrated on Indian miniature painting (16th c. onwards), ignoring the background and the tradition within which it was created. In reality it was strongly influenced by regional styles and schools, among others the so-called East India school of painting, which Madhubani Painting represents. Art history research on Madhubani Painting is then not only needed for the understanding of this particular style, but also for the understanding of tendencies and changes in the whole art of East and North India. The significance of spreading the horizons and notions of art cannot be underestimated, if we want to understand other cultures, as well as develop the understanding of the fundamentals of our heritage.

Despite all the popular recognition, Madhubani Painting has not been researched thoroughly. First research dates to 1949 (Archer). Since then mainly anthropological projects were conducted in the area. Researchers themselves call for the art history study of Madhubani Painting. This need was illustrated by the exhibition by Annapurna Garimella during the India Art Fair 2017, presenting vernacular art, including Neelkanth Chaudry and his Madhubani paintings. The results of the research will add to the discussion about the division into folk art and fine art and their boundaries.

Results of the project will be published in form of a book with a catalogue containing the critical analysis (in Polish and English) and reproductions of Madhubani paintings. Other materials will be collected: video and photographic documentation from the Mithila region (illustrating process of art-making, and influences such as social conditioning, cultural heritage), interviews with living artists. Finally, the revision of iconographical identification of paintings and identification of authors of unidentified paintings from the collection will be provided.

Research project based on the analysis of variegated collection of Madhubani paintings and preceded by anthropological study is therefore a great opportunity for art history and general public. The analysis and its results will be published in the form of a book, featuring colour reproduction of artworks from the Collection, and on the Museum's website (in the section 'Collection').