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# *Terra Firma* and Fluid Spaces. Warli Painting from the Neolithic to the Postmodern

**Abstract**: This essay examines the locus of change and, perhaps more significantly, the consequent implications and ramifications behind the recontextualization of Warli painting since the 1970s. The arguments put forth adopt an art historical perspective to analyse and address questions of how to view the status of the art object in a wider discursive context. The discourse focuses on the juxtaposition between an uninstitutionalised ancient art form as it is disseminated in an institutionalised contemporary society and the dialogue that results from this dichotomy, which attempts to navigate the shaky terrain upon which identities are formed and binaries are transcended. Issues surrounding representation have always been in contention and these are heightened in the case of Warli painting, which until the mid-20th century lacked any kind of formal structure. Acknowledging the exigent need to investigate the changing identity of the artefact within the context of the current postmodern age, which is marked by its very fragmentation and intrinsic "incredulity toward metanarratives", (Jean-François Lyotard) previously unalienable Truths such as Authenticity, Identity, Originality are thrown into question, consequently utterly destabilising the position of the art object. And a fundamental issue is raised: how does one interpret and negotiate an ancient art form within a highly commercialised global context?

**Keywords**: *Warli art*, *postmodern*, *identity*, *third space*, *deterritorialization*

## The Players and the Playing Field: Contextualizing the Discourse

The term Warli art is eponymously linked to the Warlis, an Adivasi tribe that comes from the Thane district of India. Knowledge and practice of Warli painting was principally limited to the inhabitants of the region until the late twentieth-century after which it "took a radical turn when a man, Jivya Soma Mashe[1] started to paint, not for any special ritual, but on regular basis";[2] since that time Mashe has unanimously been credited as having been the one to have popularised and promoted Warli painting. In the early 1970s Mr. Bhaskar Kulkarni, a social worker invested in the development and protection of the Warli tribe, took a special interest in Mashe's talent[3] and his support encouraged the forty-nine year old artist to publically display his work for the first time at the Gallery Chemould, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai in 1975. A clear articulation of this moment is fundamental as it marks not just a radical turning point in the history of Warli art as it moved from the village and into the gallery but also for the significance of Mashe's contribution, which lies in both his rendition of the art form as well as his role in the very remapping of the artefact by casting it into an entirely altered dimension of physical space and contextual relevance in the contemporary sphere.

Warli painting, no longer tied to the site of its original physical landscape, has

[1] Mashe, a member of the Warli tribe, has also received a great deal of acclaim for his work both at a national (he has won the National Award for Tribal Art 1976, *Shilp Guru* award 2002 and the highly acclaimed *Padma Shri Award* in 2011) and international level (he was honoured with The Prince Claus Award in 2009).

[2] Http://www.warli.in/2010/12/how-it-explore-to-world.html, accessed 26 October 2015.

[3] It is of relevance to mention that Mashe, who was a farmer at the time he met Kulkarni, painted solely as a form of recreation and self-expression.

(since) been imported from the local to the global arena and directly into the proverbial space of the 'white cube'. Expressing the different paradigms that underline the global and local, anthropologist Arturo Escobar says: "the global is associated with space, capital, history and agency, while the local, conversely, is linked to place, labor, and tradition – as well as with women, minorities, the poor and, one might add, local cultures".[4] Considered in such a context: what happens when a local art enters the global; especially when mediated by the western hegemonic dynamic of the international art world?

The gallery can never, even under the most banal circumstances, be a "neutral space"[5] and is, on the contrary, a highly activated site suffused with an agency that offers a platform for socio-political, cultural and intellectual exchange. The physical act of moving the art object from the local and into the global, across both space and culture, creates an almost metonymic performativity upon which the artwork is staged thereby resulting in a considerable degree of flux, mutability and recoding, causing not just a physical but a conceptual shift as well. In his seminal essay "Notes on the Gallery Space" art critic and academic Brian O'Doherty highlights the potency of the gallery, noting that the walls of the gallery serve as a "membrane through which aesthetic and commercial values osmotically exchange".[6] Once placed inside a gallery, the automatic aestheticisation of a work allows it "to be both decontextualized and commodified"[7] and there is an unavoidable institutionalization of the art object, 'normalising' it through the (newfound) accessibility and commodification that it can now draw upon. Significantly then, the gallery becomes a kind of framing device through which to view objects that might not have previously or otherwise claimed an 'art status' such as in the case of "tribal art, [where] Art historical practises have mostly relegated Warli art to craft".[8] This commercial foundation, which necessarily results as a consequent commodification of the object as art, has impacted Warli paintings greatly, as the very act of 'transporting' it from the hutments of the Thane district and into galleries spanning the globe, has resulted in not just a hefty price tag but a host of epistemological concerns as well.

In recent years, the changed location of Warli painting has also forced a change in the viewing experience whereby paintings that were once typically done in the interior space (inside) on a hut wall and "mostly" considered as craft are now hung in the exteriors (outside) in a gallery and considered as art. The changed dynamic from the private space of the hut to a public space like the walls of a gallery raise questions concerning the role of the viewer and the complexities of spectatorship, specifically asking what it is that is being viewed, and perhaps more importantly, how?

O'Doherty proposes that context, including especially history and tradition, invades both the artworks and viewing experience, highlighting that effectively, "context becomes content".[9] As a result, the status of the artefact itself then gets thrown into question and Warli painting becomes not just an art object but rather

[4] Arturo Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization", *Political Geography*, 20.2 (2001), 155-156.

[5] Daria Dorosh, "Art and Context: A Personal View", *Leonardo,* 21.4 (1988), 361.

[6] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 79.

[7] Hal Foster, *The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art*: (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1985), 203.

[8] Interview with Jothi F. Xavier by Rollie Mukerjee, *New Developments in Warli Art* (TarpArt Catalogue, 2015), http://tarpart.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[9] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 15.

one that is ordered within the confines of being defined as a *tribal* object. An attempt to counter preconfigured notions of tribal art calls for the recontextualization of the object as understood in the changed context of its position and "the founding act of this recoding is the repositioning of the tribal object as art".[10]

Mashe's first international contribution followed shortly after his national debut, at the *Palais de Menton* in France in 1976 that preceded his participation in the seminal and highly controversial show at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, *Les Magiciens de la terre* in 1989. The exhibition, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, not just effectively exposed Warli painting to an international audience[11] but significantly did so within the context of the ambitious premise of counteracting "ethnocentric practices and colonial mentality within the contemporary art world".[12] Artist and curator Rasheed Araeen describes the experience as:

> A grand spectacle with a lot of fascination for the exotic.... However, exoticism is not necessarily inherent in the works themselves. It is in their *decontextualisation*, not only in the shift from one culture to another (which is inevitable), but more importantly, in the displacement from one paradigm to another; this has emptied them of their meanings, leaving only what Frederic Jameson calls a 'play of surfaces' to dazzle the (dominant) eye.[13]

What Araeen notes is fundamental as it addresses the sensitive nature of the dissemination of art-knowledge as it travels from a local to international forum. The "inevitable" "decontextualisation" however cannot be undermined as the hegemonic impulses and attitudes with regard to the exotic 'Other' are deeply intertwined in a shift in paradigm. At a very fundamental level, simply by virtue of being in a show entitled *Magiciens de la terre*, the art object participates in archetypical associations that harken dangerously close to ideas of primitivism and the indigenous native; the *bon sauvage,* labouring away in peaceful oblivion on the walls of his hut, blissfully ignorant of the guiles of the world at large all the while creating "Tribal objects ... [which] are still not entirely free of the old evolutionist association with primal or ancient artefacts".[14]

*Les Magiciens de la terre* was a watershed event and was seen as a counter response to the MOMA *Primitivism* exhibition in 1984. *Primitivism* was a show that was especially polemical for several reasons but particularly for its juxtaposition of 'primitive' and 'tribal' as used to define non-western art, which was consequently placed in diametric opposition to western art, which was considered to be 'advanced' and 'modern'. One is always "properly wary of the terms *primitive and tribal*"[15] the latter two being words that lie uncomfortably close to one another especially so with the pejorative undertones when considered in light of their inescapable position in postcolonial discourse where the negotiations of power are set up in a dichotomy such that the identity of Self seeks definition in its relationship to the Other.

[10] Foster, *The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art*, 202.

[11] Mashe's work has since been exhibited all over the world, including Germany (in a shared collaboration with Richard Long in *Kunst Palast*, Düsseldorf, 2003), Italy (in 2004 at *Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea,* in Milan), the United States (in 2006 at Shippensburg University) and Paris (at the gallery *Halle Saint Pierre).*

[12] Fosco Lucarelli, *Jivya Soma Mashe and the Controversial Exhibition 'Les Magiciens de la Terre' (Paris, 1989),* (December 8, 2013), http://socks-studio.com/2013/12/08/jivya-soma-mashe-and-the-controversial-exhibition-les-magiciens-de-la-terre-paris-1989/, accessed 1 November, 2015.

[13] Rasheed Araeen, "Our Bauhaus, others' mudhouse", *Third Text; Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, 6 (Spring 1989), 3-14. Emphasis added.

[14] Foster, *The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art*, 202.

[15] Foster, *The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art*, 62. Emphasis as in the original.

The Warlis, due to their status as Adivasis, a term that literally means 'original inhabitants' and "is the collective name used for the many tribal peoples of India",[16] are outside the Hindu caste system and "the majority of the population regards them as *primitive* and aims at decimating them as peoples or at best integrating them with the mainstream at the lowest rung of the ladder".[17] Their peripheral status, functioning outside central confines of the normative "mainstream" (Indian society) places the Warlis at the center of the hegemonic matrix. Jothi F. Xavier, art historian and curator, is deeply invested in contemporary development and discourse in Warli art.[18] Xavier draws upon the arguments made by anthropologist Felix Padel in his book *Sacrificing People- Invasions of Tribal Landscape*, which articulates the historical nexus in which the hegemonic dynamic was established suggesting that: "British colonialists, anthropologists and the missionaries have approached Adivasis as primitive people labeling them as savages in need of mainstreaming... [and are] responsible for propagating negative stereotypes about Adivasis which has come to be deeply embedded in the psyche of modern Indian society."[19]

What is noteworthy in Padel's argument is not just his articulation of colonial domination as being a source of "propagating negative stereotypes" but perhaps more notably how these negative stereotypes are ongoing and have taken on an almost archetypical standing in the "psyche of modern Indian society". Stereotypes are "collective frames that probably come from a 'cultural matrix', receptacle for myths, stories, and impressions common to one or more groups",[20] and are oftentimes intrinsically considered as hallmarks of identity of the 'Other' cultural group. This dynamic raises valid concerns about the art object and its relationship to representation as a production of identity, "which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation".[21] If this is the case, how does one then represent (tribal) art without running the risk of what might be called stereotyping? Is it possible to take the "tribal" out of Warli painting seeing as its very tradition is grounded in its tribal identity or is the term so encoded with "negative stereotypes" that it is crucial to even make an attempt to do so?

## What is Ideologically at Stake? Representation of Identity

Once Warli painting entered the art network a whole set of questions were raised, particularly those centering around the difficulty of representation within the context of space, agency and identity considered under a postmodern perspective. The primary difficulty being that Warli painting had to navigate itself within a series of dichotomies that were set up by the very nature of its position of originating in one context (ancient)[22] but emerging and developing in another (contemporary). On identity, cultural theorist Stuart Hall said: "Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of

[16] Adivasis of India, http://www.faqs.org/minorities/South-Asia/Adivasis-of-India.html, accessed 1 November 2015.

[17] Dr. Durgesh Narpat Valvi, *A Study of the Impact of Welfare Measures on Tribal Development in Nandurbar and Dhule Districts of Maharashtra*, (Laxmi Book Publication, 2015), 9, emphasis added.

[18] "Jothi F. Xavier is founder & director of Green the Blue Trust, which is working in the field of art and environment. In 2013, he received a fellowship on Warli art from IFA, Bangalore. He has documented new developments in Warli art and recently curated exhibitions in Vadodara and Ahmedabad", http://www.arthinksouthasia.org/2015-2016-fellows, accessed 1 November 2015. Mukerjee, "New Developments in Warli Art", http://tarpart.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[19] Mukerjee, "New Developments in Warli Art", http://tarpart.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[20] Monique Jucquois-Delpierre, "Cultural Stereotypes in Film", *Crossroads in Cultural Studies*, Tampere (Finland), Conference and Congress (June 1998). Series B: 39, Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere.

[21] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 392.

[22] While there are precise records that attest to this as a fact, it is generally and widely accepted by varying scholarly sources, that the "Warli culture goes back to the 3rd century BCE" specifically originating "sometime in the Neolithic period between 2,500 BC and 3,000 BC".

becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves".[23]

Hall's theory situates identity in close dialogue with the ceaseless production of representation, both in terms of how identity is represented and how it represents itself. The simultaneous flow of the contradictory nature of identity is apparent and intrinsic to representation. Considered in the context of self-representation, AYUSH (*Adivasi Yuva Shakti*) a "group of tribal intellectuals here to create awareness about tribal empowerment and development"[24] has set up a webpage that plainly states that the "page is created and maintained by tribals, *we* are here to share *correct* information about Warli art".[25] Interestingly, the 'negative', 'primitive' and 'marginalised' stereotypes predominately associated with the word 'tribal' are juxtaposed alongside an exaltation of the tribal identity that resounds with a strong communal voice of authority and pride. Significantly, Warli painting is forced to confront the inherent inconsistency of conceiving of both "ourselves-as-others", and "others-as-ourselves" in an arena where there is a "permeability of borders".

In a panel discussion on global tendencies and exhibitions British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, who is particularly interested in ideas of cultural identity and its relationship with globalisation, expressed his concern regarding "the proliferation of and a curatorial tendency toward a neo-nineteenth-century 'discovery' of the new and foreign artist".[26] Shonibare's particular use of the words 'discovery', 'new' and 'foreign' are salient in the case of Warli painting where what is 'new' and "foreign" is not the artist himself or even the art form – but rather the contemporary context in which the artwork produced is being viewed, understood and disseminated, which renders 'ancient' and 'unknown' 'new' and 'discovered'.

This viewing, understanding and dissemination takes place within a system where "in the shows curated on 'Tribal' (vernacular) Art in particular" Shonibare's "over travelled curator" becomes what Xavier calls the "higher authority ... whose position reshuffles between 'we' and 'I' and in the process the artist's agency is negated".[27] As a way to "undo the very stereotypes that constitutes 'Tribal Art'" Xavier repositions the place of the "higher authority" consequently retaining the focus on artist's individual identity and consequent agency. Through this focus on the individual rather than the collective, the stereotyping which often occurs as a result of the generalization made of the collective tribal are minimized.

Highlighting recent trends in the curation of "Tribal Art", Xavier notes that "there have been some scores of shows curated which attempted at removing the anonymity of the "Tribal" artists by placing them at par with the mainstream urban contemporary artists yet they are still recognized by their community identity".[28] However, while the concept of "communal identity" in this case refers to its tribal framework and hence 'negative stereotypes' associated with tribal connotations, the importance of the community cannot be undermined as it is the very act of the communal that marks traditional Warli paintings.

[23] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in S. Hall and P.du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 3.

[24] Https://adiyuva.wordpress.com/about/, accessed 1 November 2015.

[25] Http://www.warli.in/2010/12/about-us.html, accessed 29 October 2015, emphasis added.

[26] Yinka Shonibare, *Global Tendencies: Globalism and Large-Scale Exhibition. Panel Discussion*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_3_42/ai_110913973/pg_11/, accessed 3 December 2011.

[27] Mukerjee, "New Developments in Warli Art", http://tarpart.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[28] Ibid.

The 'community identity' present in traditional Warli painting becomes an important framing device through which Warli art is perceived and through the changed position of the art object ideas of cultural agency also come into play. As Bhaskar has noted, individual action, cannot be considered in isolation and is always bound to society, which "is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency".[29] The agency derived from the traditional communality of Warli art is rendered porous though a network that is a "constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments which ... both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations".[30]

Customarily, Warli painting was created 'only' by groups of married 'women' who painted on the walls of their huts, in a manner that was once considered a ritualised craft, to commemorate events such as marriage. Once placed in a gallery the communal inclusiveness morphed "into a kind of social elitism – [as] the gallery space is exclusive ... [and] art is difficult".[31] Furthermore, after that critical moment in the mid 1970's, what was once considered as community craftwork done by women came to be understood not just as art but an art whose 'reinventor' was a 'man' who helped define and create the shift from a ritual to what is now called a 'regular'[32] practice. The male hegemonic dynamic is enforced and the movement from the local space of the tribal village into the international space of the gallery gets almost seamlessly intertwined within a power structure centring around gender dynamics.

Mashe has oftentimes been praised for his 'reinvention'[33] of Warli painting, which at some level references his pioneering ability to adapt to different kinds of material including paper and then later canvas and acrylic – a far cry from the traditionally used methods.[34] However, excavating the word 'reinvention' at a more profound level brings to the front a deeper relationship between the ancient 'invented' art form and Mashe's contemporary rendition, one that betrays the series of implications that underpin the dramatically changed trajectory of Warli painting from within the parameters of the village of its origin into a global forum.

## The Passage of Time: Deterritorialization and Movement

The extreme mobility of Warli art as it travels, transcending not just physical and geographical boundaries but virtual ones as well, forces a reordering of the once stable philosophies and cultural ideologies that once defined, and indeed sustained, its very ethic. The question of decentralization is perhaps that much more radical for an art whose premise is based upon its very tradition. Contemporary representations of Warli painting have inspired criticism that considers drawing "figures on trays, pen stands, plates, pots ... [to be] anthropologically and even ethically wrong".[35]

Art objects, like all things, are non-static and subject to changes in the

[29] Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences,* Second Edition (New York: Harvester Weatsheaf, 1989), 34.

[30] Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency?", The *American Journal of Sociology*, 103.4 (January, 1998), 962-1023.

[31] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 76.

[32] Https://adiyuva.wordpress.com/about/, accessed 25 September 2015.

[33] The Prince Claus Award acknowledges Mashe "for his creative reinvention of an art vocabulary that was disappearing, for his vivid representation of the Warli vision of nature and culture in equilibrium, for highlighting the contemporary relevance of local forms of knowledge, and for his significant contribution to the culture and development of the tribal peoples". Visit http://www.princeclausfund.org/en/activities/opening-soil.html, accessed 15 August 2014.

[34] Reema Banerjee quotes Khurshed Gandhy, wife of late Kekoo Gandhy who was the owner of Gallery Chemould: "Bhaskar had discovered Madhubani paintings and he then told us that he had found these beautiful paintings of an unknown art form in the villages of Maharashtra as well. Warli paintings were done on walls by the womenfolk-on occasions like marriages and it wasn't easy to get these crafts persons to use paper as a medium instead. Bhaskar then discovered that Jivya was good at painting on varied media and trained him. We went with him and met Jivya and agreed to do a show for him at Gallery Chemould". Visit http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/salon-talking-in-tribal-tones-1109736, accessed 5 August 2014.

[35] Robin Tribhuwan, *Threads Together: A Comparative Study of Tribal and Pre-historic Rock Painting* (New Delhi: Discovery Pub. House, 2003), 52.

environment of which they are a part and to consider or perhaps even expect that they stay in hermetically sealed compartments, uncontaminated, as it were, by the fluid pace of the surrounding culture is unrealistic. The art object assumes a kind of malleability and becomes almost a sort of cultural artefact, which by definition is susceptible to change and ultimately baring testament to the transformations that come with time. Being a human construction, an artefact is both physical and conceptual and adds to the knowledge of a specific culture and its cultural production. According to theorist Michael Cole: "By virtue of the changes wrought in the process of their creation and use, *artifacts are simultaneously ideal (conceptual) and material.* They are ideal in that their material form has been shaped by their participation in the interactions of which they were previously a part and which they mediate in the present".[36]

While the material aspect is more self-evident (i.e. the obvious physicality of the artwork) the non-material (the values and traditions sustained within them), termed *conceptual artifacts*, by Carl Bereiter are considered equally significant. On conceptual artifacts Bereiter observes that "[they] are human constructions like other artifacts, except they are immaterial; and instead of serving purposes such as cutting, lifting and inscribing, they serve purposes such as explaining and predicting".[37] Due to the fragmentation of the postmodern and especially due to its inherently decentralizing nature, the conceptual has a tremendous effect on the perception of the material (artefact).

Can the varied manner of representation of Warli art in contemporary society be considered a transgressive act and has this, as a consequence, compromised on the Authenticity of the art object? If one is to engage with the work in the gallery as being a simulacrum, in the Baudrillardian sense of the term, then the work assumes a certain level of hyperreality, and is no longer to be considered as simply a replica of the paintings on the huts but rather a reality, suffused with meaning in its own right. Rather than being an aggressive ethical assault that compromises on the authenticity of the art object, the plurality in representation and creation of Warli painting repositions the understanding of the art object as developing within the inevitable growth of cultural evolution. With changing conditions it is crucial to call upon a new conceptual language to redefine the aesthetic theories that confined the position of tribal art as (being) "repetitive reformulations of preordained schema, collectively arrived at and subject to limited innovation".[38]

The lack of site specificity and the shifting topographies result in an intense anthropological 'deterritorialization' and the expanding contexts subject the art object to the sensitive relationship between geography and culture. The deterritorialization of Warli art has effected not just its supply but also at a more fundamental level, its mode of creation; oil paints now substitute rice paste, and hut walls are being replaced by lampshades and dresses on fashion runways.[39] The long reaching arm of the Internet has added yet another layer to the deterritorialization of Warli art, and now finding a "how to make Warli Painting

[36] Michael Cole, *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard U. P., 1996), 117. Emphasis added.

[37] Carl Bereiter, *Education and Mind in the Knowledge Age* (Mahwah: Routledge, 13 May 2002), 58.

[38] Mukerjee, "New Developments in Warli Art", http://tarpart.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[39] In 2006, at the Lakme india fashion week, Warli hit the runways of India and famous Indian models were seen sporting clothes with Warli motifs.

Tutorial" is freely accessible to people sitting continents away from the hutments where the Warli Tribe resides. When the artwork moves into not just another space, materially or geographically speaking, such as a gallery, but into other intangible spaces like the Internet does this lead to the dematerialization of the 'original' art object and as a consequence result in the suspension of the artwork's autonomy?

Deterritorialization is, in many respects, fundamentally a liberating phenomenon, which results in fresh interpretation, growth and meaning.[40] People are more aware of the Warli tribe; there is a dissemination of information on their art form, their traditions, their history, indeed, their very existence – not to mention the vast improvement in the economic status of the artisans and their tribe. In the case of Warli art, deterritorialization is extreme and changing territories have utterly re-articulated the relationship between tradition and place; especially if place can, as Massey asks, be considered the "prime source for the production of personal and cultural identity?"[41] How does this affect the production of individual and cultural identity?

[40] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum, 2007).

[41] Doreen Massey, "Geographies of Responsibility", *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86.1 (2004), 5.

The importance of 'place' in tradition of Warli painting is vital primarily because of the relationship the Warlis have with their land. At a very physical level, it was on the walls of the huts made out of *karvi* sticks that the paintings were traditionally done and the materials used in creation were chiefly drawn from the earth itself: mud, cow dung, and charcoal for making what could be seen as a sort of canvas; and rice, water and gum to make the paste necessary for the dye required in painting of the white figures and designs. Vaguely spartan in nature, the almost minimalist style that uses the triangle, square and circle for definition,[42] draws upon an austere lexicon, which seems to harken the vocabulary of early cave paintings, to pass down its tradition and folklore. Thematically speaking, the paintings typically depict scenes that represent quotidian life in the village, folk tales, nature and mythology; including themes such as religion, festivals and harvest. It is significant to note that the Warli people speak the unwritten Warli language and so Warli paintings assume a kind of heightened significance as being a physical manifestation of the spoken word or unrecorded thought – the importance of the pictorial highlights their intense relationship with the natural world.

[42] "The circle and triangle come from their observations of nature, the circle representing the sun and the moon, the triangle derived from mountains and pointed trees. Only the square seems to obey a different logic and seems to be a human invention, indicating a sacred enclosure or piece of land. While men and women are depicted in almost identical fashion, the only differentiator is the little knot of hair in the form of a bun, that indicates women", http://www.warli.in/2010/12/history-of-warli-art.html, accessed 1 November 2015.

It would be fatuous to assume that Warli painting remains a discreet entity after and through a continued and ongoing process of deterritorialization and yet it would be impossible to ignore the traditions that form its very foundation. Ultimately, the paintings function out of the limits of classification, existing instead, as an entity, which is *sui generis* – not ancient and not contemporary, collapsing instead into the indistinct ground of the liminal – the Third Space, which provides a location for the unravelling of "new signs of identity" and meaning. According to Bhabha: "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs

of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself".[43]

Bhabha's elucidation highlights the importance of the liminal ground as being an active site for the progression of identity, which always has an impact on the larger breadth of society. And it is in the ambivalence of the Third Space that Warli art plays out positioning itself in a way that refutes binaries of being one or the other but both – an ancient art that not just functions but also flourishes in a postmodern context.


Fig. 1: Examples of traditional Warli painting. More examples are available at the following link: http://www.warli.in/.

## Embracing Hybridity: Redefining Identity in the Third Space

The word 'glocal' is a useful portmanteau, which recognizes the "localization of the global and the globalization of the local".[44] The hybridity of this term allows for the coexistence of a relationship that does not consider the local and global as discreet entitles but allows instead for the possibility, based on the necessity of "dialogue, negotiation and coexistence"[45] within the cultural plurality of the postmodern world of today. The 'glocal' aspect of Warli painting acknowledges it as a dynamic art form full of evolution and growth. Refusing to embrace its evolution would relegate it to the limitations of a tightly bound "anthropological framework resulting into fossilization of tribal art"[46] – completely static and without movement and consequently without agency.

The conflict between the anthropological "fossilization", ringing with colonial hegemonic undertones, and the postmodern movement rearticulates the understanding of the Warli identity as being inevitably hybrid in nature: "This destabilization and reconfiguration of the notion of identity can lead in many directions, both conceptually and politically. It can, on the one hand, turn inwards, towards an appreciation of the internal multiplicities, the decentering of identity, perhaps the fragmentations, of identity. It is in this context that we consider place as meeting place and the inevitable hybridities of the constitution of anywhere".[47]

A changing context results in the creation of a kind of hybridity, which is understood to be "the integration (or, mingling) of cultural signs and practices".[48] Contextualized as being a "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation"[49]

[43] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.

[44] Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places", 156.

[45] Mario Blaser, Ravi de Costa, Deborah McGregor, eds., *Reconfiguring the Web Life: Indigenous Peoples, Relationality, and Globalization*, in *Indigenous Peoples And Autonomy. Insights for a Global Age* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 21.

[46] Mukerjee, "New Developments in Warli Art" http://tarpart.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/catalogue-jothi_for-email.pdf, accessed 1 November 2015.

[47] Massey, *Geographies of Responsibility*, 5.

[48] John Lye, "Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory", (1997/1998), available online at http://www.butler.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/postcol.php, accessed 5 August 2012.

[49] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 37.

hybridity provides an activated site that simultaneously destabilizes binaries while raising other conceptual models through which the inscription of identity politics is registered. Questions of hybridity are a pivotal facet in the understanding of (the identity of) Warli art where it is no longer to be considered as a binary object but one, which thrives in the middle space.

Establishing an ethic through which one viewed Warli painting was complicated from the very outset because one was dealing with a work, which had previously[50] no institutional validation or framework thereby locating it in an area of vulnerability. Since its growth beyond the village walls, Warli painting has been repositioned, literally and metaphorically, into an entirely different dialogue and realm of understanding. The necessarily hybrid status it has acquired when placed in the (inevitably) contemporary environment of today, has re-configured the art object "in accordance with the contemporary processes of internationalisation" (134) but at the same time retaining it's fundamental basis in the ancient art it started out as eons ago.

[50] As understood as before Bhaskar Kulkarni's intervention in 1975.