

An annotated list of recommended reading in conjunction with the exhibition
Bhuri Bai: My Life as an Artist.

(A) BHURI BAI

- 1 Mukherjee, Debjani, and Bhuri Bai Bhil. 2019. *Dotted Lines*. New Delhi: Katha Books.
<https://bit.ly/37scWaw>

Written and illustrated by Bhuri Bai and designer-scholar Debjani Mukherjee, this children's book presents the story of Bhuri Bai's life.

- 2 Basu, Soma. 2020. "On the Dot." *The Hindu*, March 20.
<https://bit.ly/2l8DrJw>

An article on Bhuri Bai's first collaboration with researcher Debjani Mukherjee for the book *Dotted Lines*. It gives a brief summary of the book and highlights some of its key findings, such as Bhuri Bai's use of dots in her paintings being a reflection of the seeds of maize (corn) grown locally near her village and which served as a useful device to paint the walls of her home while she was a child.

- 3 Hoskote, Ranjit. 2009. "Now That the Trees Have Spoken." *Pundole Art Gallery*.
<https://bit.ly/2JxP6SQ>

A curatorial essay for the exhibition *Now That the Trees Have Spoken*, which included works by Bhuri Bai as well as Lado Bai, Narmada Prasad Tekam and Ram Singh Urveti. The practice of the artists featured in the exhibition engage with issues concerning developmental policies in their home states, recurring political violence, ecological disturbances and conflict over natural resources.

- 4 Lyngwa, Amorette. 2017. "Bhil Art - How A Tribe Uses Dots To Make Their Story Come Alive." *Expressions: The Artisera Blog*, June 05.

<https://bit.ly/3g8xmcy>

An informative take on the various motifs in Bhil iconography and their larger connections to nature as seen in the works of Bhil painters. It is also a brief commentary on the ritualistic connotations of traditional Bhil painting.

5 "Bhuri Bai".

<https://bit.ly/2JJm6r5>

A brief article detailing the life and practice of Bhuri Bai along with an analysis of her artworks, with emphasis on the interplay of flat, rich colours, fine line-work and a visual language that evokes themes including the modern versus the natural, man and predator and the domestic realm juxtaposed against the wilderness.

(B) FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Swaminathan, J., et al. 1987. "Art and the Adivasi." In *The Perceiving Fingers*, 32–38. Bhopal: Bharat Bhavan.

One of the earliest texts to raise questions about the dominant notions of the conceptual categories of "tribe" or "tribal", particularly when applied to art. Preferring the term "adivasi" instead, the text questioned existing anthropological and institutional identification of these communities and the tendency to homogenise them. This text presents a more cautious approach towards the nuances of understanding indigenous Indian communities, their histories and their art.

- 2 Swaminathan, J., et al. 1987. "Anga of Lingo." In *The Perceiving Fingers*, 39–43. Bhopal: Bharat Bhavan.

An essay discussing the artistic practices of adivasi communities in Madhya Pradesh, India, including the Gonds, the Bhils, the Abujhmadia, the Muria and the Pardhan. The art of these communities, while inspired by mythological narratives and involving ritualistic practices, displays secular, decorative intent; thus, this practice creates objects of art informed by the direct experiences of the artist and shaped by the daily constraints of material existence. The essay elaborates on changes in traditional artistic expression in adivasi communities, where exposure to different colours, tools and media impact the work of singular artists, particularly Jangarh Singh Shyam and Bhuri Bai.

- 3 Hacker, Katherine. 2014. "'A Simultaneous Validity of Co-Existing Cultures': J Swaminathan, the Bharat Bhavan and Contemporaneity." *Archives of Asian Art* 64 (2): 191–209.
<https://bit.ly/3oo3ID4>

Katherine Hacker discusses the historical connections between ethnography and the art of adivasi communities in India, particularly in reference to J Swaminathan and his ideas

during his tenure as the Director of the Roopankar Museum of Fine Arts at the Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The essay discusses the stances of various artists, curators and scholars on contemporary art and debates on adivasi art being included within that category. Hacker elaborates on the role of art within these communities and the changing perceptions of these artistic practices within India.

- 4 Garimella, Annapurna. 2010. "Making: The Exhibition." In *Vernacular, in the Contemporary 1*, v–xii. New Delhi: Devi Art Foundation.

An essay that provides insight into the curatorial process behind the exhibition *Vernacular, in the Contemporary*. It elaborates on the challenges of organising an exhibition focused on allowing a closer look at the artists' individual practices. The essay also explores ways to challenge traditional notions of looking at adivasi art as an ethnographic tool for studying social relations by grounding these art practices within the larger context of a globalised world.

- 5 Garimella, Annapurna. 2011. "The Education of a Curator." In *Vernacular, in the Contemporary 2*, iv–x. New Delhi: Devi Art Foundation.

Annapurna Garimella elaborates on the various artistic practices showcased in the exhibition *Vernacular, in the Contemporary*, and the use of the term "vernacular" as an appropriate descriptor of the artworks and the practices of the featured artists. Garimella argues that artists from different social locations and regions sharing certain commonalities can be better understood through the term "vernacular" as opposed to more rigid labels such as "folk" or "tribal", which have had negative connotations of colonialism associated with them.

- 6 Garimella, Annapurna. 2011. "Do What you Will: Identity Exhibitions and Contemporary Indian Vernacular Art." *Take on Art*.

An essay examining the process of identity creation in Indian contemporary art through modes of representation in the context of vernacular art in India. Garimella takes into account the development of a separate exhibition space for adivasi art at the Roopankar Museum, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. She also delves into the presence of two spaces, separately exhibiting "tribal and folk art" and "urban and modern art", that were the central concern in Jyotindra Jain's 1998 exhibition *Other Masters: Five Contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists from India*. The essay proceeds to track the changes between the 1998 exhibition, held at the National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, Delhi, and its 2010 reprisal, held at Musée du Quai Branly, Paris.

- 7 Garimella, Annapurna. "Taking it to the Gallery: Vernacular, in the Contemporary as Curatorial Activism."

An essay that elaborates on the practice of art curation and art criticism in India, with reference to the author's own work for the exhibition *Vernacular, in the Contemporary*, curated for the Devi Art Foundation in 2010–2011. The author analyses curation for artistic

practices classified as “folk”, “tribal”, “traditional”, “courtly”, “popular”, “craft” or “temple” art – which have not been ascribed the same importance as contemporary art in India.

- 8 Adajania, Nancy. 2011. “Coomaraswamy to Ambedkar: Tracing the Vanished Horizons of the ‘Vernacular, in the Contemporary.’” In *Vernacular, in the Contemporary* 2, 97–105. New Delhi: Annapurna Garimella and Jackfruit Research and Design.

An essay tracing the histories of various intellectual debates in India leading to the crystallisation of categories such as “tribal”, “folk”, “rural”, “national”, “contemporary” and “vernacular” and their relationship with cultural expressions, including art. The essay analyses relevant historical debates, including those between MK Gandhi and Dr. BR Ambedkar, as well as GS Ghurye and Verrier Elwin, to reveal the effects of major ideological forces, primarily the different shades of twentieth-century Indian nationalism, on the dominant and institutional understanding of marginalised sections of Indian society that emerged in this period.

- 9 Guha, Ramachandra. 1996. “Savaging the Civilised: Verrier Elwin and the Tribal Question in Late Colonial India.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31 (35/37) (September): 2375–2389. <https://bit.ly/3opLzVM>

Ramachandra Guha narrates the history of Verrier Elwin and his advocacy for the isolationism of Indian tribal groups that was strongly opposed by the dominant nationalist scholarship and politics of post-independence India, as seen in the arguments of personalities like GS Ghurye. This article reveals the nuances of conflicting understandings of the tribal question in India at the time, some of which were eventually lost as official policy towards tribal groups took a more concrete turn with the progress of the twentieth century.

- 10 Guillaume-Pey, Cecile. 2018. “From the Self-Portrait of the “Lady in Pink” to Anonymous Calligraphy. The Processes of Creating “Tribal Art” in Museums in India.” In *The Relational Dimensions of Art: Creative Processes, Development, Political Action*. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne. <https://bit.ly/2KWoifp>

An essay that addresses the different types of artistic production by adivasi communities in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, on the basis of surveys conducted in Bharat Bhavan, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (Museum of Mankind) and the Tribal Museum. The essay explores the connections between the artistic practices of adivasi communities and the ritualistic belief their practice is largely inspired by, while analysing changes that emerge as new visual genres outside of the confines of traditional practices in the community.

- 11 Jain, Jyotindra. 1998. “Sonabai.” In *Other Masters: Five Contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists of India*, 47–59. New Delhi: Crafts Museum and the Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports Corporation of India.

A chapter in Jyotinda Jain's book that discusses the life and works of Sonabai, a sculptor and painter from the Rajwar community of Sarguja, Chhattisgarh, specialising in clay-relief work. The text allows the reader to gain a comparative understanding of a female contemporary artist from a marginalised social location in India — much like Bhuri Bai — as well as appreciate the artist's works for the innovative styles and improvisations of traditional art forms associated with their communities.

- 12 Jain, Jyotindra. 2018. *Jangarh Singh Shyam: A Conjuror's Archive*. Bangalore and Ahmedabad: Museum of Art & Photography in association with Mapin Publishing.

Jyotindra Jain documents the life of Pardhan artist Jangarh Singh Shyam, shedding a critical light on J Swaminathan's separation of ethnographic contexts of an adivasi artist, like Shyam, from their art. It is a thought-provoking read on how the tensions between the disciplinary boundaries of ethnography and art history have evolved over the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, with particular reference to understanding the contemporaneity of what is commonly understood as "folk" or "tribal" art. The book compels us to think of Shyam's works, and by extension, those of any adivasi artist, as a potential archive of their life experiences and memories.

- 13 Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. 1997. "Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in "Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa"." *African Arts* 30 (1) (Winter): 10–12+83–84.
<https://bit.ly/2JOr9GB>

An article that raises the complexities involved in curatorial decisions and questions of representation in the context of African art. However, these complexities can play out differently in regional contexts and deal with questions of insider and outsider when representing "true" knowledge about the art.

- 14 Marchand, Julia. 2012. "Vernacular Moment: Rethinking Tribal Art." *The Sunday Guardian*, September 23.
<https://bit.ly/3lCyW7L>

An article that lists a number of shows and exhibitions to highlight the debates around calling art produced by artists from indigenous communities in India "tribal art." It also discusses how the term "vernacular" has gained popularity and importance in similar curatorial decisions.

- 15 Adajania, Nancy. 2016. "Why is Folk Art Not Treated on a Par With Contemporary Art?" *Hindustan Times*, July 16.
<https://bit.ly/39MXGrT>

An opinion piece that articulates the historical divisions between "contemporary art" and "folk art", and why the latter tends to be dismissed with the claim that it does not include contemporary elements in its form and content.

- 16 Bose, Purabi, Bas Arts and Han van Dijk. 2012. "Forest governmentality': A genealogy of subject-making of forest-dependent 'scheduled tribes' in India." *Land Use Policy* 29 (3): 664–673.
<https://bit.ly/2VCfGgc>

An article that traces the history of categorisation of tribes in India. It uses the concepts of governmentality and subjectification developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault to evaluate how different governmental policies related to forest governance have shaped the politics of social identity of forest-based communities in India. By mapping forest governance in India throughout the colonial and post-independent periods, this article provides insight into the erosion of the customary rights of forest dwellers, with particular focus on the Bhil communities of western and central India.

- 17 Perera, Sasanka, and Dev Nath Pathak, ed. 2019. *Intersections of Contemporary Art, Anthropology and Art History in South Asia: Decoding Visual Worlds*. New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan.

A volume containing essays that explore disciplinary boundaries and their historical tensions to give the reader an optimistic view of the potential of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding art. The text makes a case for viewing art not only as an isolated process but being connected to particular socio-historical contexts that influence cultural expressions.

- 18 Foster, Hal. 1996. "The Artist as Ethnographer." In *The Return of the Real*, 171–204. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Hal Foster interrogates an "ethnographic turn" in art emerging from the 1960s and contextualised through the relationship between neo-avant garde and artistic movements like Dadaism, Surrealism and Constructivism. In this context, Foster investigates the politics of otherness, where the site of political change is located in the repressed "other", and the role of institutions (universities, museums and exhibition spaces) in creating spaces where exclusive definitions of "art", "artist" and "community" are enforced.

(C) FROM THE ESSAY "UNDERSTANDING ADIVASI ARTISTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT"

- 1 Vidal, Denis. 2018. "All for one, one for all : A new art for the Gonds." In *Visual Histories of South Asia*, ed. Annamaria Motrescu-Mayes & Marcus Banks. Delhi: Primus Books.

In this essay, Denis Vidal traces the creation of a contemporary form of Gond art that is the result of market forces rather than indigenous history or traditions. Vidal proposes that the work of contemporary artists such as Jangarh Singh Shyam is often advertised as traditional while being sold in the current market at high prices. Over time, Shyam's work

and process were adopted by others, inadvertently creating a tradition that caters to the demand of collectors and speculators.

- 2 Goldstein, Ilana Seltzer. 2013. "Visible Art, Invisible Artists? The Incorporation of Aboriginal Objects and Knowledge in Australian Museums." *Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, 10 (1).
<https://bit.ly/3oo4akK>

Ilana Goldstein focuses on the systems by which Aboriginal art from Australia has been historically incorporated into public and private collections, with a special focus on museums. The article also highlights the high prices such objects fetch on the international market, while the artists themselves are often unacknowledged or placed in market niches and exoticised.

- 3 Tilche, Alice. 2015. "A Forgotten Adivasi Landscape." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 49 (2): 188–215.

An article that traces the documentation of Koraj Hill in Chhota Udaipur district, Gujarat — a site of rock paintings, cave structures and old fortifications associated with the history of adivasi groups living in the area, notably the Bhils, Nayaks and Rathva people. The project, initiated by Alice Tilche, focuses on building repositories of knowledge comprising adivasi history, memories, the nature of worship and sacred sites around the landscape through a process of active remembrance.

- 4 Elwin, Verrier. 1955. *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*. Oxford University Press.

Verrier Elwin provides an in-depth analysis of the history and culture of the Saora hill community of Odisha, India, focusing on the religious beliefs and practices that inform members of this community. The study described in this book is based on numerous visits undertaken by Elwin over seven years from 1944 onwards, into the territories of the Saora community.

- 5 Kochhar, Ritika. 2017. "Folk Theorems." *Open*. December 6.
<https://bit.ly/2JPVvEv>

An article that analyses the position of "folk" and "tribal" art within the larger art market. Ritika Kochhar elaborates on the changing nature of interest for collecting "tribal" and "folk" art as distinct from the appeal of contemporary art, and the increasing number of galleries that provide exhibition spaces to practitioners.

- 6 Jain, Mahima A. 2019. "The Exoticised Images of India by Western Photographers Have Left a Dark Legacy." *Scroll.in*. February 20.
<https://bit.ly/33l0brs>

An article that discusses the publication *Photography in India: A Visual History from the*

1850s to the Present, written by Nathaniel Gaskell and Diva Gujral, that offers a comprehensive analysis of the history of photography in India up to the twenty-first century. The book sheds light on the development of photography as a tool for anthropological and ethnographic studies and its use in India to further the development of Colonial-Imperial mechanisms of control and documentation.

- 7 Singh, Kumar Suresh. 2012. *People of India*. Seagull Books.

A book that presents an introduction to and the final words on the 'People of India' project — an effort to conduct the first pan-Indian ethnographic study to present accurate anthropological profiles of the varied communities in India. The study involved interrogating existing linkages between seemingly disparate and separate communities and involved hundreds of scholars from across the country.

- 8 Daley, Paul. 2016. "The Gweagal Shield and the Fight to Change the British Museum's Attitude to Seized Artefacts." *The Guardian*. September 25.
<https://bit.ly/3qrVs73>

An article that discusses the efforts of the Gweagal community of indigenous Australians to reclaim cultural artefacts from the British Museum, particularly the effort of activists Rodney Kelley, Roxley Foley and Vincent Forrester. The artefacts — a wooden shield and a number of spears — were acquired from the native Cooman people by Captain Cook and members of his expedition party on 29 April 1770. The article also elaborates on efforts to permanently reclaim these artefacts for the Gweagal people from their current display in the British Museum and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

(D) ADDITIONAL VIDEOS

- 1 Sahapedia. 2017. "Bhil Art: In Conversation With Bhuri Bai." Interview by Indira Mukherjee. *YouTube*, December 10.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r90yUAXCs4>
- 2 Sahapedia. 2018. "Kapil Tiwari on Gond and Bhil Culture." Interview by Indira Mukherjee. *YouTube*, May 17.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjKJNecTQDM>
- 3 Doggett-Williams, John. 2012. "Melbourne Art Fair 2012 Lecture and Forums: The Vernacular Contemporary: Annapurna Garimella." *Vimeo*.
<https://vimeo.com/47226311>