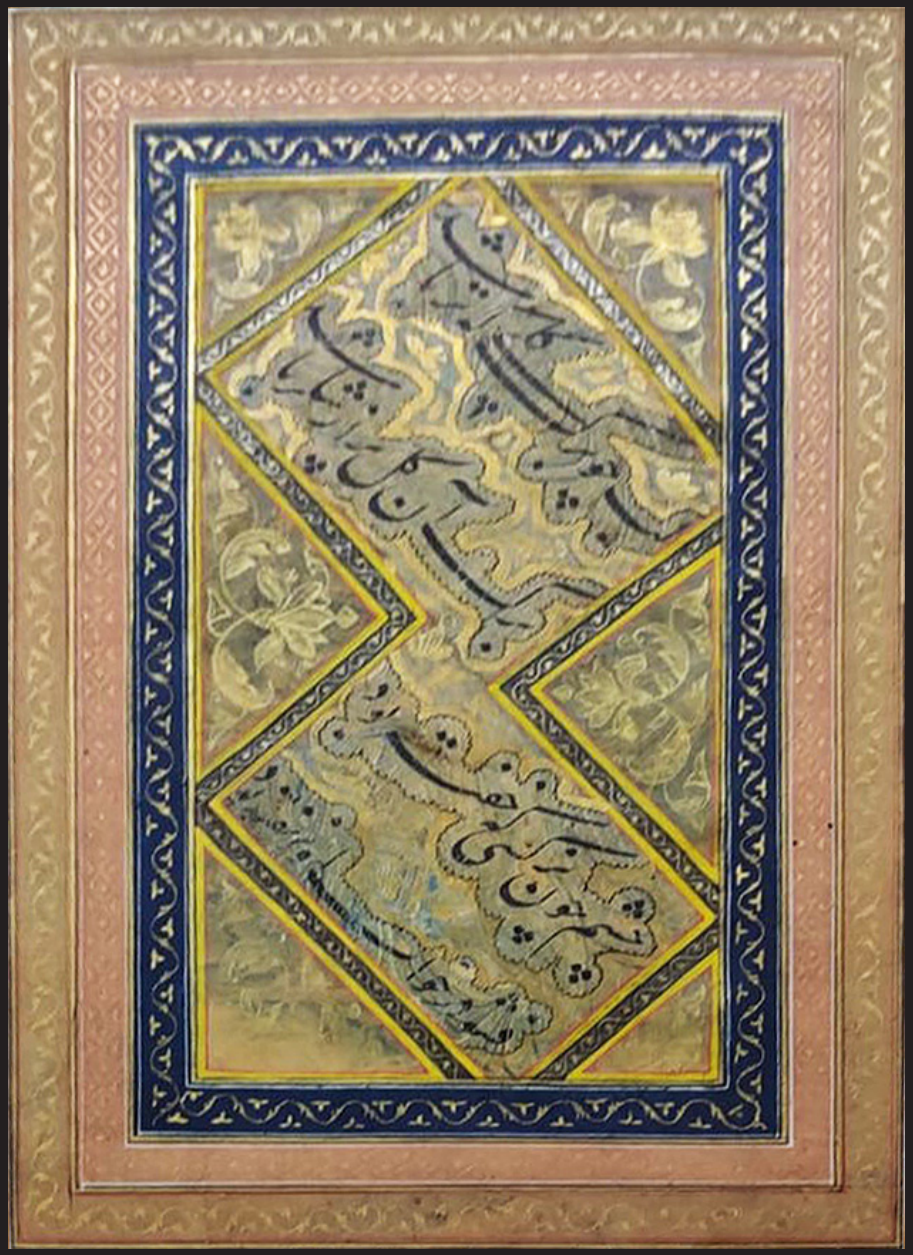
OBJECTS AS HISTORY

INDEX



CALLIGRAPHIC QUATRAIN

This is an image of a 'calligraphic quatrain', that is, a verse or poem of four lines. They have an independent and separate theme. The style of script used in these quatrains was called 'Nastaliq'. Nastaliq was the first style to be invented with the Persian language in mind. The general trajectory of the Nastaliq script slopes from top to bottom. This is of particular significance as there is no fixed level or height for any character. In Persian and Arabic scripts, each character usually takes a different shape depending on whether it is at the beginning, middle, or end of a word. The Nastaliq style of writing is even more context-specific, where the shape of a character is further altered depending on the 4th or 5th preceding character of the word. Unlike the This quatrain was issued by the rulers of the Safavid or Mughal Empire, who ruled over the subcontinent between 1500's and 1800's.

These calligraphic renderings of individual quatrains of poetry were known as 'qit'as'. Qit'as were used for topical poems, satires, and light verse. Some were also religious and expressed love for God. Their production started in the beginning of the 16th century. They were mounted on a canvas diagonally and turned into stand-alone works of art. Elaborate and decorative embellishments were often a part of the canvas. Safavid, Persian and Mughal rulers commissioned leading artisans to enhance especially treasured examples of these quatrains. Rulers often donated and issued such religious works to associate themselves with divine power. To these quatrains, they added intricate gold-leaf illuminations, Persian miniature-style watercolor paintings of flowers, birds and human figures and scenes, and patterned margins.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

https://www.wdl.org/en/item/6933
https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/persian-calligraphy-takes-flight/2014/10/02/fd62abcc-38f9-11e4-9c9f-ebb47272e40e_story.html
https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/nastaliq-calligraphy-turquoise-mountain/cwJSp5iKC7aLKg?hl=en

MARWARI PAINTING

This is a painting that belongs to Marwar, which lies in the South-western region of Rajasthan. It consists of Bikaner, Kishangarh, Pali, Nagaur, Ghanerao and Jodhpur. Each place has its own style of Marwari paintings. The Marwar School of Paintings imitated Mughal style of paintings and scenes. In the Marwar paintings, festivals, ceremonies, elephant fights and hunting expeditions are generally portrayed. The most important features of the Marwar School were the use of thick lines, muscular figures with whiskers,huge turbans and strong facial expressions which were depicted in bright colours. The

The painting was made in the 18th century. The use of camels as a means of transport hints that they belonged to a desert/arid region or were travelling to/from this region. It also suggests that they had to cover a large distance in a short amount of time. Camels can store large amounts of water in their humps which makes them ideal for travelling for long hours in arid regions. Similar outfits and turbans suggest that these men belonged to the same kingdom or area. The man in front appears to be a noble or prince as he is shown as wearing more jewellery, a 'tika,' and has a more elaborate turban. The man behind is carrying a spear and a shield, and is not dressed as elaborately, which suggests that he belongs to a lower status. The painting also indicates that they were probably going on a hunting expedition. However, the spear and shield may have been carried only for protection and defense purposes, as they may have been travelling from one region to another.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

https://www.marwar.com/7140-2

https://www.rajasthanhistory.com/blog/history-art-culture-tourism-in-thar-desert/history-of-marwar-school-of-painting-1

PATOLA SAREE

This style of weaving is named Patola. The technique used here is known as the Ikat, where the yarn is dyed and then woven according to the desired design. The word Ikat comes from a word Malay-Indonesian, Maniket which means binding, knotting, or winding around. It normally takes three people four to seven days to finish this weave, which is why this type of weave is extremely time consuming, and therefore expensive.

In general, patolas are represented by abstract designs and geometrical patterns. Elephants, human figures, kalash, flowers, shikhar, paan, and parrots are popular as are designs inspired by Gujarat architecture. In this saree the patterns that are used are Elephants, parrots and flowers. Elephants in India symbolize royalty, wisdom and great intellect. Since, Patola is extremely expensive, it makes sense that this saree was worn by the women of royal families.

Mostly natural dyes are used for these sarees, like catechu, cochineal, indigo, turmeric, natural lakh, harde, madder roots, manjistha, ratnajyot, katha, kesudo, pomegranate skin, henna and marigold. These give out unfading bright colours which makes them very efficient.

Patolas are believed to have magical powers that ward off evil, which is why they are considered as essentials during certain ceremonies. A common pattern that includes a circle of lotus flowers, buds and leaves known as chabardi bhat (basket design), is associated with fertility and is worn in some cultures for wedding ceremonies. In Gujarat, brides are given patolas as part of their trousseau.

The colour scheme used in this saree is split complementary; green, red and orange, where the dominant colour is red.

Patola sarees can be draped whichever way desired. The normal way, where the pallu falls behind the shoulder. Or the opposite way, which is more common in Gujarat, where the pallu is taken from behind and falls in front of the shoulder.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

https://www.vogue.in/content/gujarati-patola-sarees-history-significance-weaving-process

https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/YwliJhNY4glTLQ

LEHENGA CHOLI

The lehenga was worn up in its rudimentary form until the Mughals reign, which brought tremendous advances for early Indian fashion with them. Initially Mughal women remained with the three piece suits reminiscent of their Persian heritage featuring a peshwaj, paijama, and patka or dupatta. The combination was similar to kurta-chudidar of modern day.

Further integration with the indigenous Indian population has brought about the modern lehenga silhouette. Depictions of Rajput or mythological themes from the early 17th century showed the dupatta as being highly translucent and possibly made out of muslin. The custom of wearing the lehenga with a patka persisted until the early 19th century, when the dupatta was worn like a modern saree.

Particularly after the Mughal empire's collapse in the early 20th century, women often wore flared umbrella-style lehengas that were stitched clumsily and tied together with a girdle. The style was more common in North India as it was a powerful Mughal hold meaning the fashion was largely influenced by the royals.

Regardless of their social status, women adopted the same type of lehengas but with different fabrics more fitting to their gender. Higher-class women made more costly lehengas from finer fabrics while lower-class women wore lehengas in cotton or khadi.

Also the lehengas were ankle length as bejewelled toes suggested the marital status of the lady as some parts of India required women to cover their faces with a veil or ghoonghat. In some other parts of India, for ease of movement while working outdoors, tribal women wore shorter lehengas ranging from their knees to their ankles.

The colour scheme used in these outfits compliment each other, since the colours present in the blouse are somehow used in the lehenga as well which makes them go well together.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

https://strandofsilk.com/indian-fashion-blog/driven-curiosity/lehenga-through-ages

JALI

Mughal architecture has been noticed and appreciated over the years. One of the most noteworthy and important features of a Mughal 'darbar' is its arched windows with 'jali ka kaam'. Jali work is one of the ancient arts of the Indian Subcontinent which has been extensively used in India for permitting light and ventilation in buildings. Jali is a screen with geometrical perforations usually made out of stone or marble. The first traces of Jali work have been found in Mesopotamia, then in the Indian subcontinent and finally heighten in the Mughal Period.
The Mughals used these perforated screens both for functional and aesthetic purposes. In this architecture of the Mughal darbar, we can see white marble jālīs with geometrical patterns, fitted into rectangular windows and railings. Inside the palace, arched roofs over the windows are also present. The jālīs show two types of geometric interlacing. One is based on a central star-octagon shape with interwoven circles and squares that is present on the railings. The other present on windows is based on interlacing circles, with triangles and tear shapes bordering it. Characteristically, looking like simplified and stylized floral motifs with exact geometric calculations. This is an absolute representation of Islamic 'girih-sāzī' designs. Girih sāzī in Persian means "knot making" where the knot has been defined as "geometric (often star-and-polygon) designs composed upon or generated from arrays of points from which construction lines radiate and at which they intersect". The eight-pointed star is another common motif in Islamic architecture, often found in tile-work and other media. Star patterns are extremely complex when the outer points are joined together and other intersections connect systematically.
Mughal jālīs easily identifiable and retain their character and reflect the prevailing ornamental vocabulary of the court.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
https://www.sefrijn.nl/girih/
Research paper-
"Ornamental Jālīs of the Mughals and Their Precursors"
Dr. Masooma Abbas

NATURAL AND MINERAL COLOURS

This is a picture of natural and mineral colours that were used in miniature Mughal paintings. The colours used in these paintings were made using minerals, vegetables, animals, precious stones, as well as pure silver and gold. Making natural colourants had become common worldwide during this era. Some specific substances like lac for producing red, gall black for black, saffron for yellow were found to be used throughout the empires in the world. Yet, in every empire material explorations were taking place for new shades and variants of colour. New designs for the same product were being made by using native techniques and materials.

The Indian subcontinent, from antiquity, was famous for the growth and production of Indigo for the colour blue. Indigo got its name because of its origin in the Indus valley, discovered some 5000 years ago where it was called 'Nila'. While on the other hand, the Egyptian blue, acknowledged as the first blue colour made was created around 2200 BCE. It was formed using ground limestone, sand and a copper-containing mineral. The former was deep blue and used for watercolour while the latter was an opaque fluorescent blue.

The pigment yellow was considered to be regalia and used in paintings for Gods and kings in both, Indian and Egyptian empire. The earliest yellow pigment used in Egypt was ochre-yellow, a mineral consisting of iron oxyhydroxide. Whereas in India yellow was composed of magnesium euxanthate, a residue obtained from a cow's urine when fed exclusively on mango leaves.

Hence in both cases, variants of the same colour were created using different materials and techniques, a testament of human evolution to suit their needs for the given time and location.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Research papers-

Indigo — The Crop that Created History and then Itself Became History (Rajendra Prasad)

Dyes in ancient and medieval India(Mira Roy,1977)

Sites-

https://mymodernmet.com/shades-of-blue-color-history/

https://www.ancient.eu/article/999/color-in-ancient-egypt/

FIN