

**N G
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**ACCESSIBLE LEARNING WITH
VENKAT RAMAN
SINGH SHYAM**

ARTWORK
IN FOCUS



Venkat Raman Singh SHYAM
The world of the Gonds 2017
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
125.0 × 91.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2019
© Venkat Shyam, courtesy of Minhazz
Majumdar

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCE

The Accessible Learning with Art resources are designed to provide opportunities for students with diverse learning abilities to view and meaningfully respond to works of art and design from the NGV Collection. The resources promote the development of close looking skills and introduce strategies to encourage students to critically respond to visual elements, ideas and artmaking processes.

The video component focuses on a single artwork and is intended to be used as a starting point to inspire exploration, discussion and artmaking. Each self-contained video is accompanied by a PDF support document, which can be utilised by teachers and/or parents to scaffold and extend student learning. The level of support given should be adjusted based on the age and abilities of the students. Observe student engagement levels to inform how far to progress with the video and related activities. Each video can be watched in full or paused as needed.

In this video, students are invited to respond to a painting by Indian Gond artist, Venkat Raman Singh Shayam. This resource presents an opportunity to explore the way artists like Venkat Shayam use colour to express moods in their artwork and evoke emotional responses for those that view them. Taking inspiration from Shayam's work, it also encourages students to consider how simple shapes, lines and marks can be manipulated and repeated to create pattern and detail. In addition, students are invited to reflect on what it means to be part of a community, and how everyone can contribute to a functioning and supportive community of friends, peers or other social groups.



LEVEL

Foundation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify a range of colours and make choices when using these in their own work.
- Name and visually represent members of their own communities.
- Recognise and describe patterns and repetitive motifs; and consider ways of using them in their own work.

CURRICULUM LINKS**VISUAL ARTS****Respond and Interpret**

Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks ([VCAVAR020](#))

Explore and Express Ideas

Explore ideas, experiences, observations and imagination to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE017](#))

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY**Self-awareness and Management**

Identify a range of groups to which they, their family and members of their class belong ([VCPSCSO004](#))

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The following suggestions have been provided to support teachers and parents to empower young people to actively engage with works of art and design, explore ideas and establish connections to their own lives and to each other.

PRIOR TO WATCHING

PREPARE YOURSELF

- Familiarise yourself with the content and structure of the Venkat Raman Singh Shayam video resource.
- Identify and prepare any necessary visual cues required to further support student understanding of concepts explored in the video, guided discussion and activities.

Venkat Raman Singh Shyam was born into a Pardhan Gond family in the village of Sijhora, located in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. He began painting at the age of 10 and went on to work with his uncle, the renowned Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam. Today, Venkat Shayam is one of India's pioneering second-generation artists from the Pardhan Gond tradition.

The Gond tribe has its origin in Madhya Pradesh and derived its name from the word 'Kond,' meaning 'green mountain.' The Gond people believe that every element of nature, such as the hills, the sky or the trees, is inhabited by a spirit. When Gond artists recreate forms and images of nature through their art, they do so with great reverence and respect. Gond paintings take inspiration from the myths, legends and experiences of the Gond people and scenes from the contemporary life of village people. As many of the Pardhan Gonds are musicians, their paintings often portray the stories of their songs.

Gond paintings are created with vivid colours, dynamic geometric shapes and patterns as well as an exquisite attention to detail. Traditional paints are usually derived and extracted from organic sources such as coloured soil, charcoal, plant leaves and sap, and even cow dung. However, contemporary artists, such as Venkat Shyam, use poster and acrylic paints to produce their lively and colourful artworks.

PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS

- Introduce the activity when students are feeling calm and at ease.
- Explain to students that they will be looking at a painting and learning about the person who made it. A person who makes art is called an artist.
- Introduce art galleries as places for displaying works made by artists. Talk about what students might see if they were to visit an art gallery. This may include drawings, paintings, sculptures, photography and films.
- Look at photos of the NGV and/or navigate through [interactive virtual self-guided tours](#) accessible on the NGV website. Explain that the artwork students will be looking at, as well as other works of art and design, can be viewed in real life on display at the Gallery, where anyone can go and visit.
- Explore editable [social stories](#) about visiting the NGV to familiarise students with the gallery experience.
- Ensure adequate time is allocated for students to slow down and look at the artwork, with minimal distractions.

DURING AND/OR AFTER WATCHING

GUIDED DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

The video covers three key themes that you may wish to explore in more depth. You will find suggested discussion points and activities to assist on the following pages. They are intended to be flexible, so choose the ones that best suit the interests and needs of your students. You may like to encourage their efforts by modelling your own responses to questions or by trying the activities together.



THEME 1: COMMUNITY/ WORKING TOGETHER

TUNING IN

Look at the painting with your students and ask them to share what they notice. Direct their attention toward the people in the work by prompting until they mention the figures on the back of the tiger. From here, initiate discussion and questions around who these people may be, what they might be doing and what feelings they might be experiencing. Whenever possible, ask students to expand their response by explaining what they can see in the painting that makes them say that.

The figures in the painting are a group of people that live together in a village or town. This means they are a part of a community, or a group of people who live or work together in the same place. Ask students to search for clues in the painting that might show us that the people are part of the same group or community. This may include the way the people are standing close together or that they are wearing similar clothes.

In a community, every person has a role to play, whether it is big or small. When people in a community work together, everyone can share the load and things are often achieved more easily. Encourage students to identify a community that they belong to such as their class, school, church or sporting team. To further build on the concepts of community and teamwork, scaffold a discussion with prompts such as:

- > Who are the other people in a community you part of?
- > What jobs or roles do you have within that community?
- > How about the other people in your community, like your friends or family members. What are the jobs that they do?
- > Imagine if you had to do all those jobs on your own. That would be very difficult wouldn't it?
- > What would happen if you and the other people in that community didn't do these jobs?



ACTIVITIES

- To develop and encourage close looking skills, play a game of 'I Spy' using the painting as the focus. Once someone has spied a particular detail, for example *'I spy a tiger'*, that detail should not be repeated. Model descriptive language by contributing detailed answers such as *'I spy a young person who is wearing a green shirt and carrying something red in their hand'*. If appropriate, make a list of the students' answers as they share them. After the game, highlight that even though each person was playing 'I Spy' as an individual, the answers combined have made one big, long list. This is teamwork and an example of a community list of ideas.
- Define and explain the word community and the many forms it can take, including someone's friends, class, school, sports team or church. Create a class community portrait. Invite each student to draw or make a visual representation of themselves and cut around it, assisting if required. Label each image with the student's name and create a display of the class community. A blank face or body template can be used to scaffold this activity, if necessary.
- Problem solving activities, such as building the tallest tower out of dry spaghetti and marshmallows, are a great way to encourage teamwork and social skill building. Provide various opportunities for students to practise strategies for working together to achieve a common goal. During partner or group work tasks, assign roles to share the workload and through modelling and role play, encourage students to help others in their group if they see they are having difficulty with the task.



THEME 2: COLOUR

TUNING IN

Colour is a very prominent element in this artwork. Ask students to identify all the colours that they can find in the image. Write a list or create a visual record by drawing colour swatches of each colour that they name. You could refer to a colour chart as a visual reference to prompt students to consider any colours they may have missed.

Once students are familiar with the colours in the work, invite deeper engagement by explaining that colours can remind us of things in our lives. For example, the colour orange may remind us of the orange fruit, tigers or fire. You could lead with a statement such as “Let’s look at this picture and see if any of the colours remind us of anything”. Scaffold this discussion with your own examples. Develop the idea that some of the things that come to mind can make us feel happy, such as a sunrise, and others can make us feel down, like blue rain. Explore how we can refer to colours in different ways, such as happy colours or sad colours or hot and cold colours.

Most students will have a favourite colour. You may wish to use this to further explore the theme of colour. Questions may include:

- What colour stands out the most to you when you look at this painting?
- Do you like this colour more than the other colours? Why?
- What is your least favourite colour? Why is that?

ACTIVITIES

- Create a collage of a favourite colour. To begin, ask students to share their favourite colours and describe why they like them so much. Students can either cut or tear images and swatches of their favourite colour from magazines, catalogues and textured and patterned paper and then paste them onto a sheet of paper. Model an approach to the task by thinking aloud. For example, *‘My favourite colour is yellow, so I’m going to cut out this lemon, and this ad for yellow socks. Here is a big bit of yellow in this person’s dress, so I’m going to tear that out too!’* Once complete, you may wish to display these colour collages as a complete rainbow in the room.
- Look closely again at the painting. Support students to identify the background by asking them to look for an area that is all one colour (orange). You can also help define this area of the painting by questioning whether the students can see any details in the area, or whether they can only see a colour. Reiterate that this space is called the ‘background’. Show the students examples of other works where there is a solid-coloured background. Practice recognising which part of an artwork is the background and naming the colours used in it. Then, look at the parts of the painting that are not orange. This is the ‘foreground’, or the main part of the painting that the artist wants us to concentrate on. Look at the same sample images from the background activity, and practice naming what is in the foreground, asking students to explain how they know the difference.



THEME 3: PATTERN

TUNING IN

When we look at this painting, we can see colours, shapes, people, animals and lots of different patterns. Explain the concept of a pattern by asking students, 'What is it called when something happens again and again, or over and over? It is called a pattern!' You could also extend on the concept of pattern by referring to the various patterns within the artwork. As you move around the painting, point to different areas and ask questions such as:

- > Is this a pattern? Yes, or no?
- > How can you tell?
- > How about this here?

Allow students time to practice identifying the patterns in the image.

ACTIVITIES

- Challenge students to find all the secret patterns hidden in their surrounding environment. Encourage them to look for things like the panels of a fence outside, stripes on the carpet or checks on their uniforms. Invite students to photograph all the patterns they can find, using a phone or iPad. You may wish to print these out and make a pattern display. Alternatively, do this yourself prior to the lesson and print off small pictures of each pattern to create a series of pattern cards. Distribute these cards to each student and allow them to walk around the space and find the real-world pattern that matches their card.
- This activity is designed for learners who like to draw and colour with pencils. Prior to the activity, make a quick worksheet with several patterns down one side. Ensure each is repeated an adequate number of times before ending but leave enough space for the students to continue drawing and/or colouring the pattern to the end of the page.
- This version of the previous activity may be better suited to students who enjoy more hands-on approaches to learning. Use coloured pencils to create a repeating pattern on the floor. Think aloud to model the thought process for identifying and continuing the pattern. For example, *"What colour comes next in this pattern? Look, we have a red pencil, a blue pencil, a red pencil, a blue pencil... which pencil should go next? It was blue last, so the next colour must be red."* Students can also make their own patterns in this way and challenge classmates to finish them.

EXTEND THE LEARNING

Plan a visit to the NGV for your students to see the artwork they have learnt about on display. Please note that sometimes artworks are moved around the Gallery or are taken off display. We recommend checking their location in advance by searching [Collection Online](#).

For information on accessible programs, services and facilities at the NGV, visit the website or email education.bookings@ngv.vic.gov.au to talk to our bookings staff or NGV Educators about program options for your group.

A range of resources to help you prepare for your visit are available on the NGV website.



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Developed in collaboration with Specialist Art Educator, Karlee Sangster, Croxton Special School.