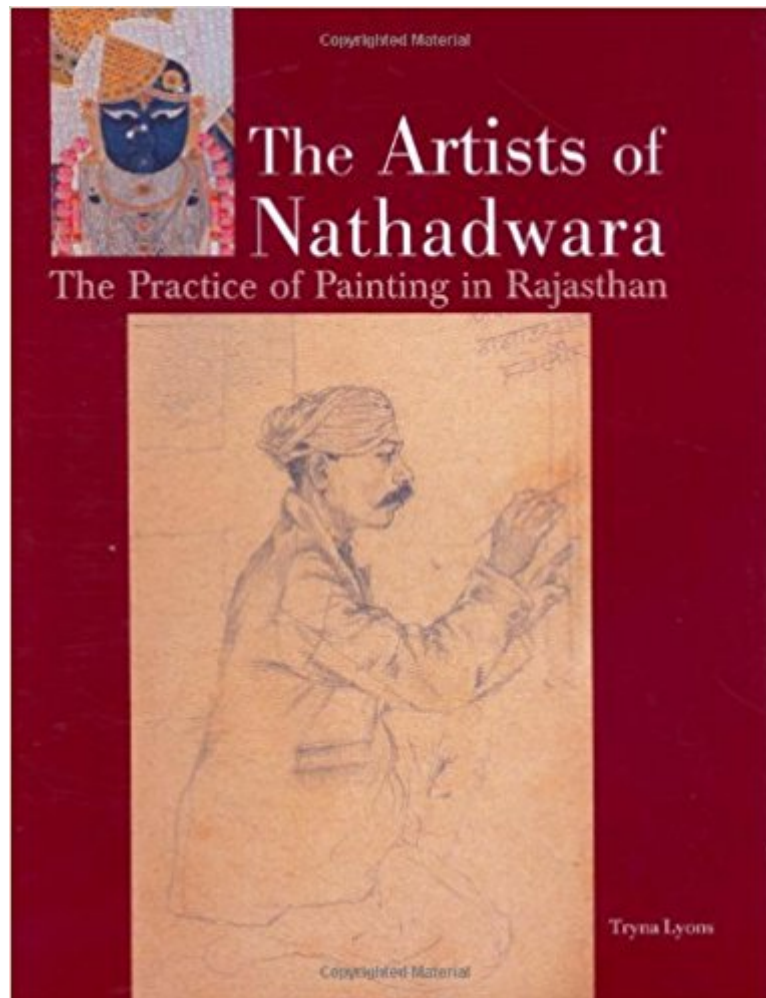




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The Artists Of Nathadwara: The Practice Of Painting In Rajasthan



Synopsis

In this beautifully illustrated study, Tryna Lyons combines ethnographic and art historical methods to examine the work and careers of artists in Nathadwara, Rajasthan, India. The religious pilgrimage center of Nathadwara is home to a large community of traditional artists, who retain sketchbooks and other materials handed down in their families for generations. The old sketchbooks, still used to teach younger generations and to provide established artists with ideas, reveal the connection between contemporary practice and the historical antecedents of the Nathadwara school of painting. Lyons's innovative approach focuses on analysis of the sketchbooks of five artists active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reproduced here in detail alongside full-color reproductions of their work and related images. The sketchbooks reveal personal style and innovation, demonstrating the array of choices open to artists in a time of cultural ferment and excitement. A section on women artists documents the careers of successful female exponents of the Nathadwara style. Appendixes include a glossary and a collection of artists' genealogies, some stretching back 17 generations, recording significant information on artistic activities, commissions, and patronage. The Artists of Nathadwara should make us question Orientalist assumptions about tradition and the anonymity of South Asian artisans.

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Customer Reviews

"... This text provides myriad rewards for careful readers willing to accompany Lyons on her sometimes painstaking, but always faithful, illuminating, and deeply evocative journey into a period

and place of unexpected creativity." [American Anthropologist](#), June 2008 ([American Anthropologist 2008-01-00](#)) "Scholarly and well illustrated.... Recommended." [Library Journal](#) ([Library Journal](#)) "Independent scholar Lyons reconstructed more than 15 years of the history of artisan families who practiced in the pilgrimage town of Nathadwara since the 19th century.... The author's style is informal and easy to read.... A unique book for students of Indian studies. Recommended." [Choice](#) ([Choice](#)) "Delving into hard-to-find, hard-to-access, and hard-to-read records... Lyons has brought an enormous amount of new material to light from previously unknown sketchbooks, to her findings on women artists, to her extraordinary tracings of painter family history. She has made these artists too present to ignore, and many of our assumptions will have to make way to accommodate them." [caa.reviews](#) ([caa.reviews](#)) "I thoroughly recommend this beautifully produced book to anyone interested in the development and practise of Indian painting as well as the lives of the painters." [Anne-Marie Gaston](#), [Carleton University, Ethnologies](#), Volume 29, Number 1-2, 2007 ([Anne-Marie Gaston, Carleton University Ethnologies 2007-01-00](#)) "Though this book is a delight to look through, and the text pleasantly light and welcoming to both scholar and general reader, there are important issues working under the surface of *The Artists of Nathadwara*: the face-off between folk art and traditional high culture; the presence in the artists' self-image of an imposed European aesthetic; artistic integrity and individualism within a system of religious patronage. Lyons does not so much evade these issues as nod gracefully to acknowledge them, then return to her exposition of the artists and the objects they produced." [Diane Johnson](#), [Western Washington University, JRNL AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY ANE](#), Oct.-Dec. 2007 ([Diane Johnson, Western Washington University JRNL AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY ANE 2007-01-00](#)) "The Artists of Nathadwara is a rich and beautifully rendered consideration of the work and lives of artists inhabiting the pilgrimage center of Nathadwara (Rajasthan, India) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries." [Jeffrey G. Snodgrass](#), [Colorado State University, AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST](#), Vol. 110.2 June 2008 ([Jeffrey G. Snodgrass, Colorado State University AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST 2008-01-00](#)) "Tryna Lyons's *The Artists of Nathadwara* vividly renders a community of traditional painters. It brings to life a profession that the field of South Asian art studies has tended to sidestep in its focus on objects... By interviewing living artists from Nathadwara and studying late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Nathadwara painters whose notebooks exist and whose descendants remember them, Lyons finally turns the field of Indian painting studies toward the artists' perspectives, with the result that we begin to see the painter's profession in a very different light." [caa.reviews](#) ([caa.reviews](#))

A richly illustrated look at the lives and careers of North Indian artists that combines ethnographic and art historical methods, and calls into question Orientalist assumptions about tradition and the anonymity of South Asian artisans. The religious pilgrimage center of Nathadwara is home to a large community of traditional artists, who retain sketchbooks and other materials handed down in their families for generations.

Essential text on this particular branch of traditional Indian devotional painting.

This book is a thoroughgoing, well-rounded study of the artists of Nathadwara town in Rajasthan, India, and of their various art productions and practices: a rigorous and innovative ethnography of living and deceased painters and painting in the Pushtimarg tradition of Vaisnavism. The book design is a delight, with its miniature drawings from Nathadwara art motifs placed on the pages and also at the end of each chapter, plus the beautifully printed color (and B&W) illustrations—a true feast for the eyes. In her Introduction the author situates the art in relation to previous scholarship, then briefly surveys the history of Pushtimarg and how it became settled in Rajasthan, the role of the picchavai in this tradition, the question of whether it is art or folk art, and the scope of the study. The next nine chapters intensively discuss the following topics: Mural paintings by Nathadwara artists; artists' workshops at turn-of-the-century; a glimpse of the temple in old Bombay based on an artist's sketchbook; artist families as frameworks for the evolution of style; an artist's eye to the future as exemplified in a sketchbook; the influence of British stylistics on an England-retained master artist; the women artists of Nathadwara; artists' histories and myths of caste and kin and location, and the genealogists who maintain and also invent them to please their patrons; and a conclusion that surveys issues of religion in relation to art and life in Nathadwara, artist views on aesthetic excellence, and younger artists' experimentation with other kinds of painting. Throughout her in-depth examination of art and art making based on interviews, photographing art on location, studying rare artist sketchbooks, and extensive travels to important sites in and away from Nathadwara, the author reveals the many ways in which the artists of Nathadwara experience and fulfill their religious devotion in their works. I highly recommend this beautiful as well as impressive book as a resource for Vaisnava studies as well as for historians of traditional arts on the Indian sub-continent.

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