SHILPSUTRA
INTERNATIONAL OPEN ELECTIVE 26
4-15 JANUARY, 2027

राष्ट्रीय डिज़ाइन संस्थान
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN
AHMEDABAD

Sohrai Painting

Jharkhand

Seats Available 13

OE26B17
Bengaluru Campus



Sohrai painting is a traditional mural art form from Jharkhand, created by tribal and rural women on the mud walls of their homes to celebrate the post-harvest Sohrai festival and honour nature and cattle. It is most strongly associated with the Hazaribagh district, where it has been practised for generations by communities such as the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Prajapati, and Khurmi.

Sohrai is linked to an autumn harvest and cattle festival observed after Diwali (around Kartik Purnima), when villages clean and re-plaster their homes and paint new murals as thanksgiving to Nature and livestock. The name is often explained through local terms: “Soh/Soro” (to drive away) and “Rai” (stick), reflecting the festival’s agrarian and pastoral associations. Sohrai murals are characterised by earthy pigments and bold, rhythmic compositions that turn house walls into living archives of local ecology. Common motifs include peacocks, elephants, cows, horses, flowers, vines, trees, and geometric patterns; some works also depict Shiva as Pashupati (lord of animals) in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms. The style is typically outline-first in white, with figures filled using black and red, creating high-contrast, graphic surfaces.



Manikchand Mahto

Traditionally, Sohrai art decorated the walls of homes, and was made from natural pigments derived from organic materials including plants and minerals. Manikchand Mahto transfers these traditional techniques on to paper and canvas, and depicts animals, plants and the lives of people in simple, bold strokes that are simple, unique and rich with a connection to a centuries-old heritage and a time when we were all closer to the natural world. Manikchand Mahto is a master of Sohrai, an art form from the tribal communities of Jharkhand.