

Indian Publishing Today

The publishing industry in India is complex, rich and very varied. The industry brings out books not only in **English** but also in **24** other languages. Many of these **languages** have their **own scripts**, and each language has its own **publishing history**, presence and **reading cultures**: in this sense, vernacular publishers form a very large segment of our publishing industry.

The **Indian state** also publishes **widely**, through various cultural organizations, research centres and institutes of higher education. These publications are in **English**, as well as in the different **vernaculars**. **Educational publishing** constitutes a **bulk** of state publishing – textbooks, books for use in higher education, research monographs etc.

English language publishing today comprises:

- Houses like **Penguin** and **Scholastic** that have a wide reach, a **variegated list**, including for **children**, books in the **social sciences**, **biographies**, and a list of books they acquire from their parent companies in the UK or USA, and which are **richly endowed** with resources for **distribution and publicity**.
- Publishers of **fiction** and for the **trade**, which are affiliated to one or the other of the **big global publishing conglomerates**, whether **Random House**, **Penguin** or **Harper Collins**; there are also local players such as **Rupa and Co**, **Westland**, **Tranquebar**, **Blaft** and so on.
- Publishers of **art**, including **Mapin** and **Marg** which do large coffee tables books on Indian art
- Houses like Oxford University Press, Sage Publishing, Routledge, Orient Blackswan, Permanent Black and many others which are best known for their **Social Sciences** and **Humanities** titles. These publishers cater to **higher educational centres and to libraries**.

Some contemporary experiments include:

- Small and alternative publishers such as Stree, Zubaan, Leftword, Three Essays Collective, Yoda Press, Prism Books and several others who started to publish books that had a clear political intent, whether linked to the women's movement, the communist parties, or movements for the abolition of caste and for the rights of sexual minorities.
- A growing group of children's publishers, including Tara Books, Tulika, Ratna Sagar and Karadi Tales.
- The vernacular publishing industry is very complex and I am not really going to talk about that, because I would have to talk about 24 different languages and I cannot do justice to such an enterprise. So what I would like to do is talk about our own publishing house, Tara Books.
- In the Indian context, we occupy a modest but unique space, and I will tell you why in the course of my talk.

- Tara started out doing **children's books**, but today we are chiefly known for its **Visual Arts** list. We publish in **English, Tamil** and in the future, will publish in Hindi as well.
- We also are perhaps the only publisher in the world who do **handmade books** on a large scale: these are **essentially artists' books**, which we make **available widely** through our **Bookcraft workshop**.
- Our books have been **translated** and **published** in over a **dozen world languages**, including **Korean**.
- We have brought to Indian publishing a **new visual voice** and perspective: we work widely with **folk** and **indigenous artists**, bringing **old traditions** into new and **contemporary contexts**, and into the **form of the book**.
- In what follows I hope to introduce some of our important efforts.
- Meanwhile, we work to **push the boundaries** of the form of the book, confident that its history and career are not yet over.

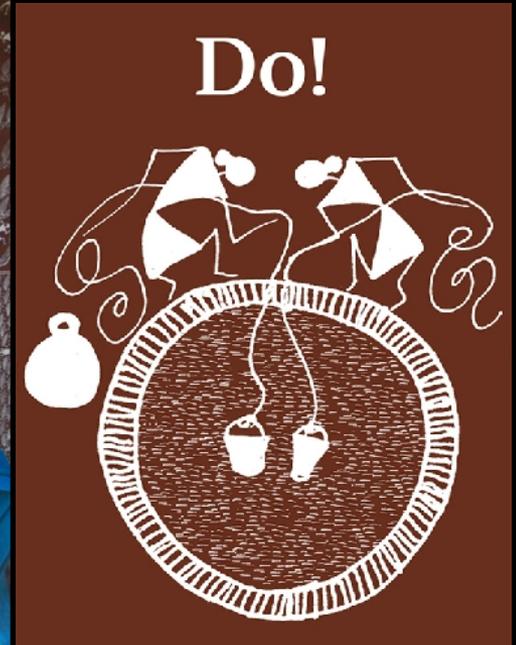
Visual Dialects

*[A dialect is a form of speech
varying from a recognised standard]*

The Crucial Balance

Experiment & Communication
Politics & Didacticism
Context & Appropriation
Tradition & Contemporary

ART ON WALLS



Offering alternatives

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND COLOUR



splash!

Illustration, typography and design work together

DESIGNER AS AUTHOR

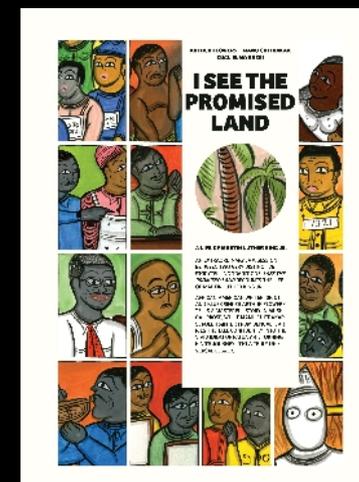
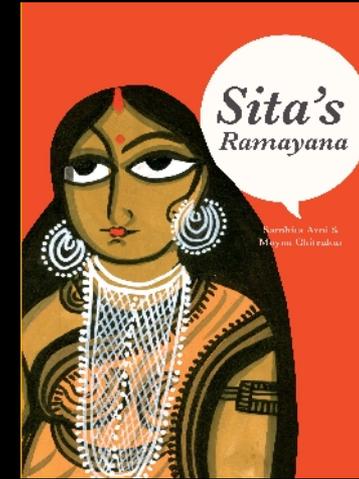
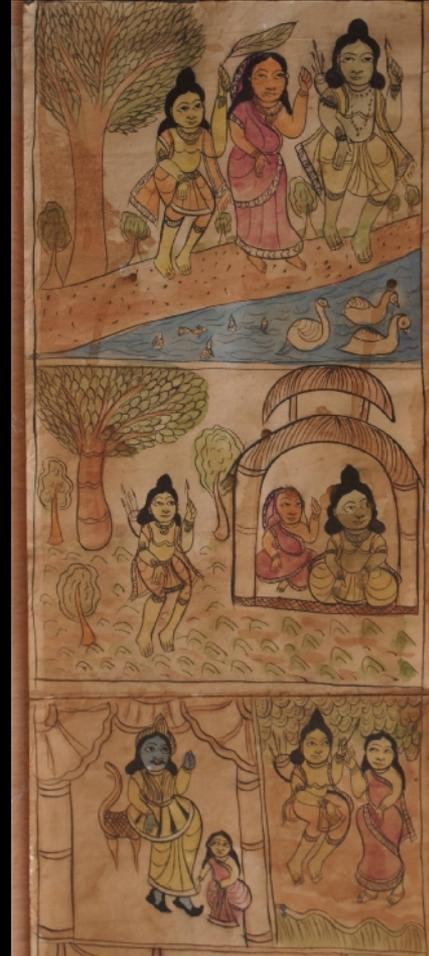


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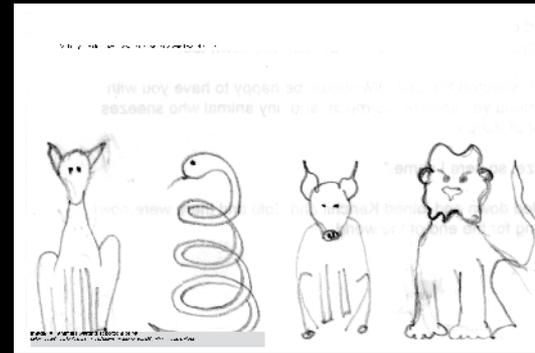
on a tree

PLAY WITH FORM: Scrolls, Vertical Books, Graphic Novels



Do books need to be sheets bound between two covers, and read left to right? Cannot a scroll become the basis for our own version of the graphic novel?

WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL AND TRIBAL ARTISTS



Pushing the boundaries of traditional pictorial language

CHANGING THE FRAMING 1: Children's Work

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OLD GOSSIPS

We made a pair of gossipy old people with balloon heads. One of the gas-bags was so full of hot air that she exploded in the middle of the show. People thought it was part of the fun.

we used

- 2 balloons
- Thermocol
- Coloured paper
- Scissors
- String
- 4 bottle caps
- Glue
- Old cloth

to make them

- 1 Blow up the balloon and tie it up tight with string.
- 2 Glue strips of coloured paper onto the balloon. Make sure the balloon is completely covered with paper. Otherwise, the air escapes after a while.
- 3 Stick the bottle caps on to make the eyes. Cut the other features out of thermocol and glue them onto the balloon. You could also paint the features or glue them on with coloured paper.
- 4 Drape a piece of cloth over the balloon, but make sure the face is left uncovered! Glue it down firmly.

5 Make the other gossipy balloon head in the same way. Make the features out of different materials to get different characters.

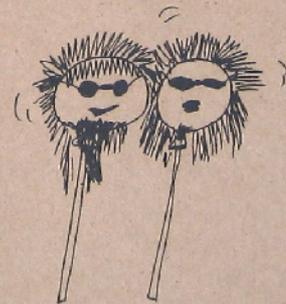
to move them

Hold the base of each of the balloons. When you move your hands, the gossips will knowingly wag their balloon-heads up and down.



on your own

Uncover the balloon heads, and watch the old gossips turn into young punks. Add green or orange or purple hair. Fix the balloons onto sticks to make them wag wildly.



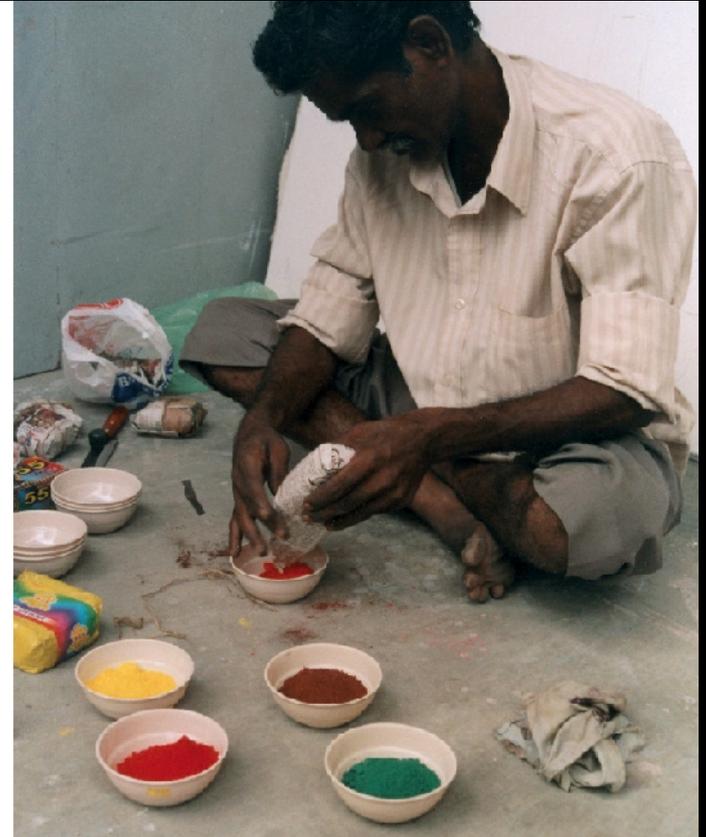
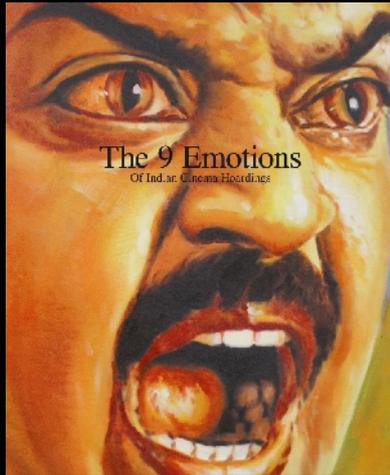
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CHANGING THE FRAMING 2: Removing the Context



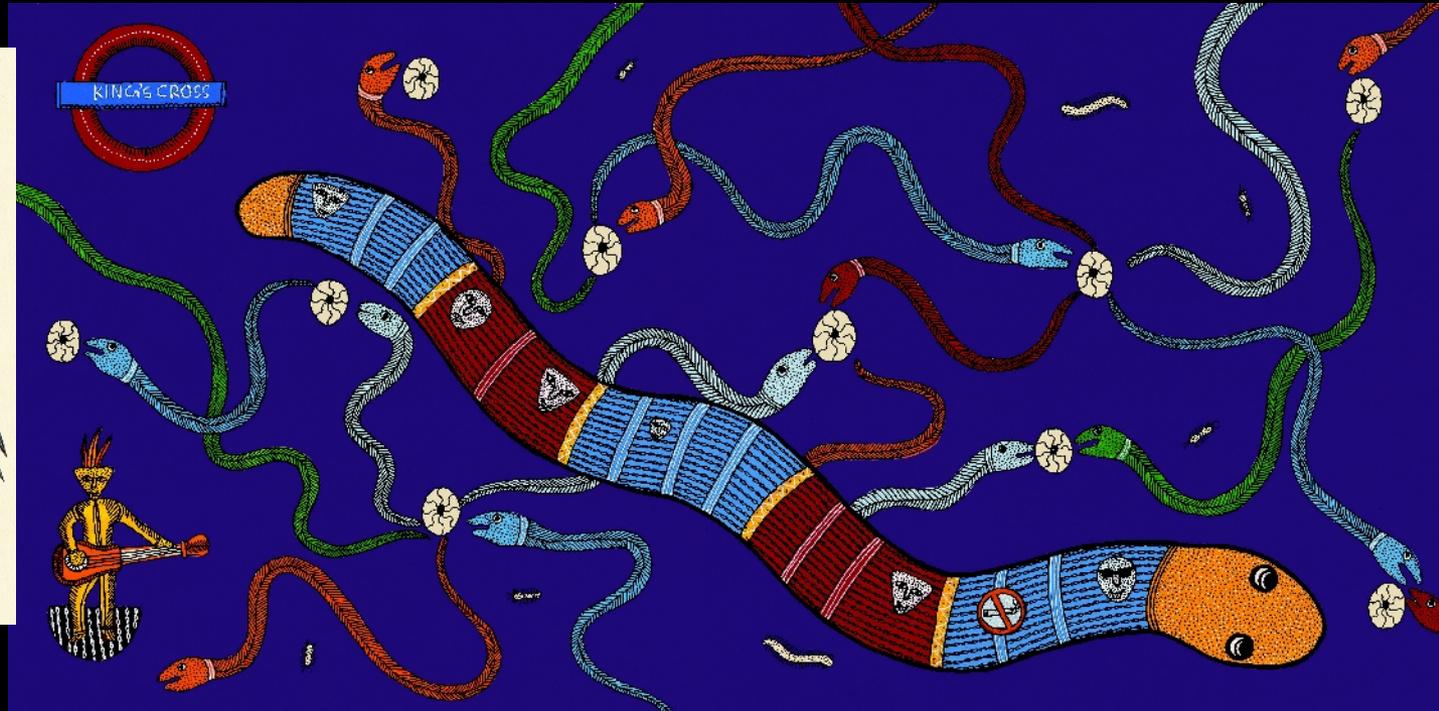
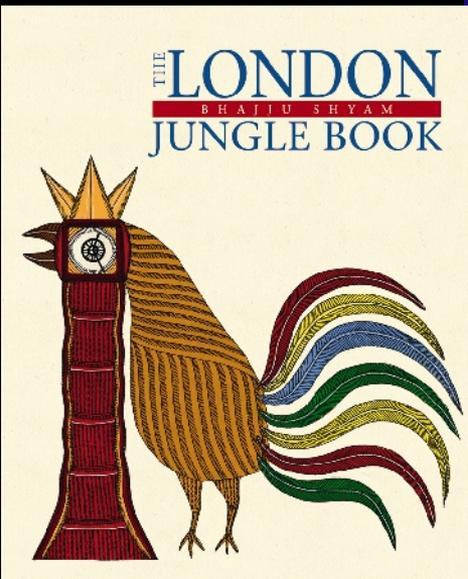
Isolating elements brings out the essence

CHANGING THE FRAMING 3: Introducing Context



Back to the street: restoring the artist to the art, and politics to design

THE PICTURE BOOK FOR ALL AGES



Neither fine art, nor graphic novel

HANDCRAFTING THE BOOK EXPERIENCE



Bringing the senses back to the book