

KALA UTSAV: ARTS & CULTURE

NEWS: Artists of sohrai, pattachitra and patua art call on the president as part of the artists in residence programme

WHAT’S IN THE NEWS?

The *Artists in Residence – Kala Utsav* programme at Rashtrapati Bhavan aims to celebrate and preserve India’s rich folk, tribal, and traditional art forms by inviting artists to reside and create at the President’s Estate.

Recently, artists of Sohrai, Pattachitra, and Patua art traditions participated, bringing national recognition to these living heritage practices.

Artists in Residence Programme – Kala Utsav

Introduction:

- The ‘Kala Utsav’ is an initiative to **preserve, celebrate, and promote India’s folk, tribal, and traditional art forms.**
- It provides a **platform for artists** to showcase and sustain their unique cultural practices at a national level.

Launch and Objective:

- Launched in **2013** under the tenure of **President Pranab Mukherjee** as part of the broader **“In-Residence”** programme.
- The core aim is to **foster engagement with artists, thinkers, and writers** by inviting them to reside and work at **Rashtrapati Bhavan.**
- The program facilitates **cultural exchange, exposure, recognition, and institutional support** for rural and tribal artists.

Recent Event:

- In 2025, artists practicing **Sohrai, Pattachitra, and Patua art forms** met with **President Droupadi Murmu** at Rashtrapati Bhavan under the ‘Artists in Residence’ initiative.

Traditional Art Forms Highlighted in Kala Utsav

Aspect	Sohrai Art	Pattachitra Art	Patua Art
Region	Indigenous to Jharkhand , especially among the Kurmi, Santal, Munda, and Oraon tribes	Originated in Odisha and also practiced in West Bengal	Rooted in West Bengal , mainly by the Patua (Chitrakar) community

Aspect	Sohrai Art	Pattachitra Art	Patua Art
Cultural Significance	Painted by tribal women during Sohrai festival after Diwali to celebrate harvest and fertility	Deeply tied to Jagannath cult (Odisha) and Vaishnavism (Bengal); used in temple rituals and festivals	Used to narrate religious, social, and political stories ; scroll performances are central to its storytelling tradition
Occasions/Use	Created on walls of homes during festivals as ritual blessings	Offered as pilgrimage souvenirs , used in temple decorations , and sold during festivals	Used in itinerant storytelling , education, and now also for social awareness campaigns
What is Painted	Features geometric patterns, animals (cows, peacocks), floral and symbolic designs	Depicts Hindu mythological themes such as stories from Krishna Leela, Ramayana , and tales of Lord Jagannath	Narratives from epics, folk tales , and modern social issues including gender, caste, environment, and politics
Background/Canvas	Painted on clay walls of tribal homes using natural brushes and hands	Painted on cloth treated with tamarind paste and chalk for longevity	Long scrolls made from cloth or paper , often used in storytelling performances
Materials Used	Natural earth pigments , clay, hematite (red oxide) , charcoal	Natural dyes like lamp black, haritala (yellow arsenic), conch shell , etc.	Vegetable dyes, natural gum, and handmade paper
Modern-Day Adaptation	Displayed at urban public spaces such as airports, galleries, craft exhibitions, and museums	The village of Raghurajpur (Odisha) has become a renowned cultural tourism hub for Pattachitra artisans	Adapted into textiles, terracotta panels, digital formats , and showcased in international art exhibitions

Conclusion

- The ‘**Artists in Residence – Kala Utsav**’ program is a significant step in **recognising and reviving India’s living art traditions**.
- It **empowers grassroots artists** by giving them a **national platform**, thus helping in **economic upliftment and cultural preservation**.
- The initiative reflects India’s commitment to **inclusive cultural policy**, where **tribal and rural art forms** are given space in the **national consciousness**.

Source:

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2147793#:~:text=A%20group%20of%20artists%20called,July%2014%20to%2024%2C%202025.>