

Madhuban art is a domestic ritual, notable for being practiced almost exclusively by women. It originated in the Maithila part of Nepal and parts of Bihar in North India. The region of Mithila is also birthplace of Sita, the central female character of the Hindu epic Ramayana.

Initially, Madhubani art was primarily practiced by the higher caste Brahmin women who saturated their canvases with bright colours. Kayastha artists use more muted black and red colours. The latter community was landless and the women turned to Madhubani art to support themselves and earn their income. The Dushadh or Harijan style differed from the others, as they experimented more with bright colours and rather more abstract patterns, incorporating lines, waves, circles etc.

Traditionally, as the painters worked, some women would sing alongside them or narrate the stories as they worked. There is an extraordinary simplicity and a forceful appeal that is unique to rural art. Elements of the animal world as well as snapshots of the spiritual inherent in everyday life are evoked through the paintings so as to display the wealth and dynamism of India's cultural heritage.

The idea behind these works was to invite the artists to the Habitat Centre to build a body of work that would seize the imagination of the public. This particular painting was then housed in the elevator in **Core 4A** for nearly two decades, as an initiative to bridge the gap between art and the general public audience.