

# THE ALCHEMIST

Jamini Roy

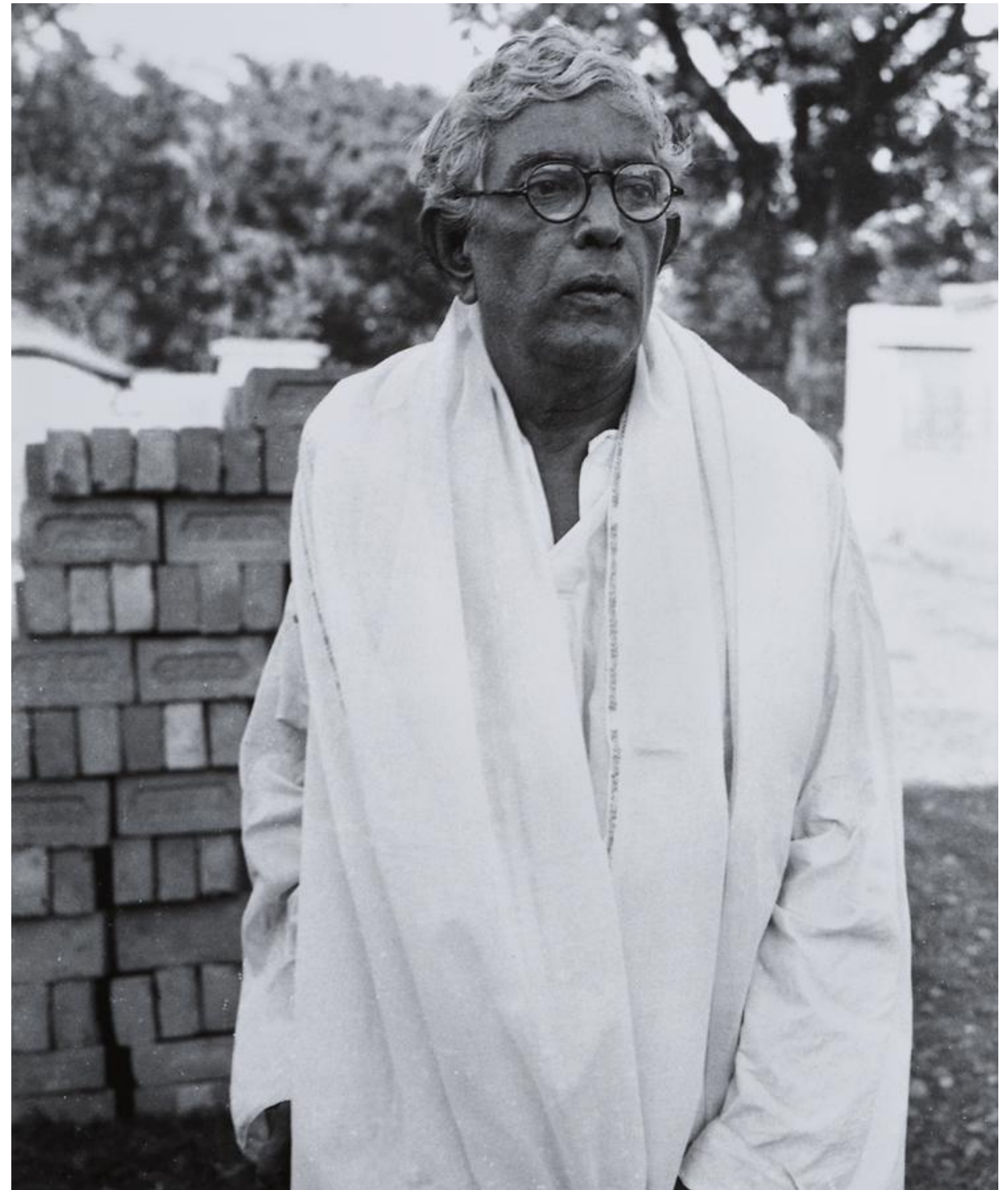
MAP DISCOVER



Jamini Roy is a famous Indian artist who lived in West Bengal more than a hundred years ago.

He loved drawing and painting since he was a little boy.

In order to study art, he moved to the big city of Kolkata when he was only sixteen!



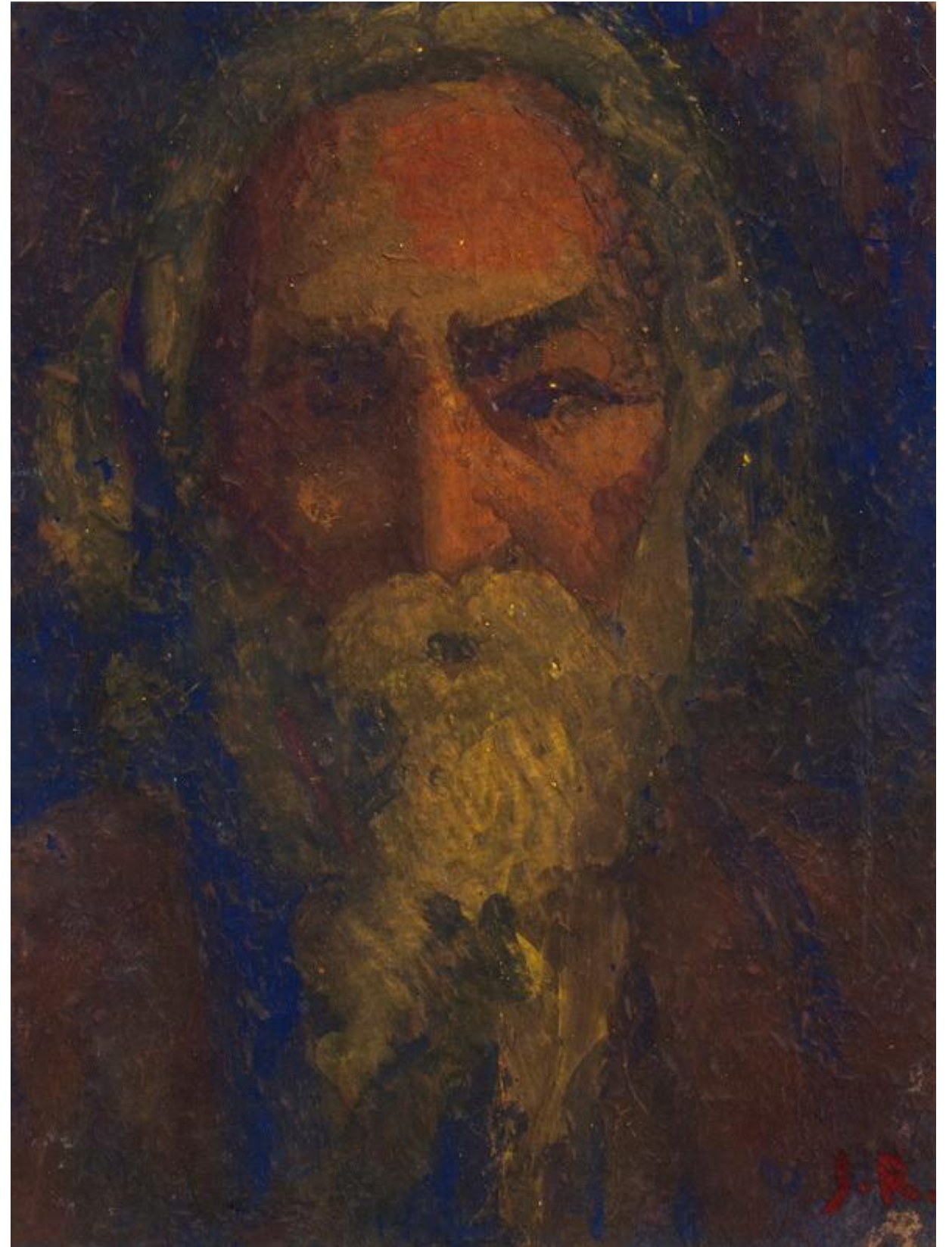


In the city, young Jamini did fairly well. He was taught by some of the best art teachers in the country!

He made a bunch of new friends, among whom were members of the Tagore family.

Which members of the Tagore family do you know of?

Do you recognise the man in this portrait? He was one of the most famous Tagores.

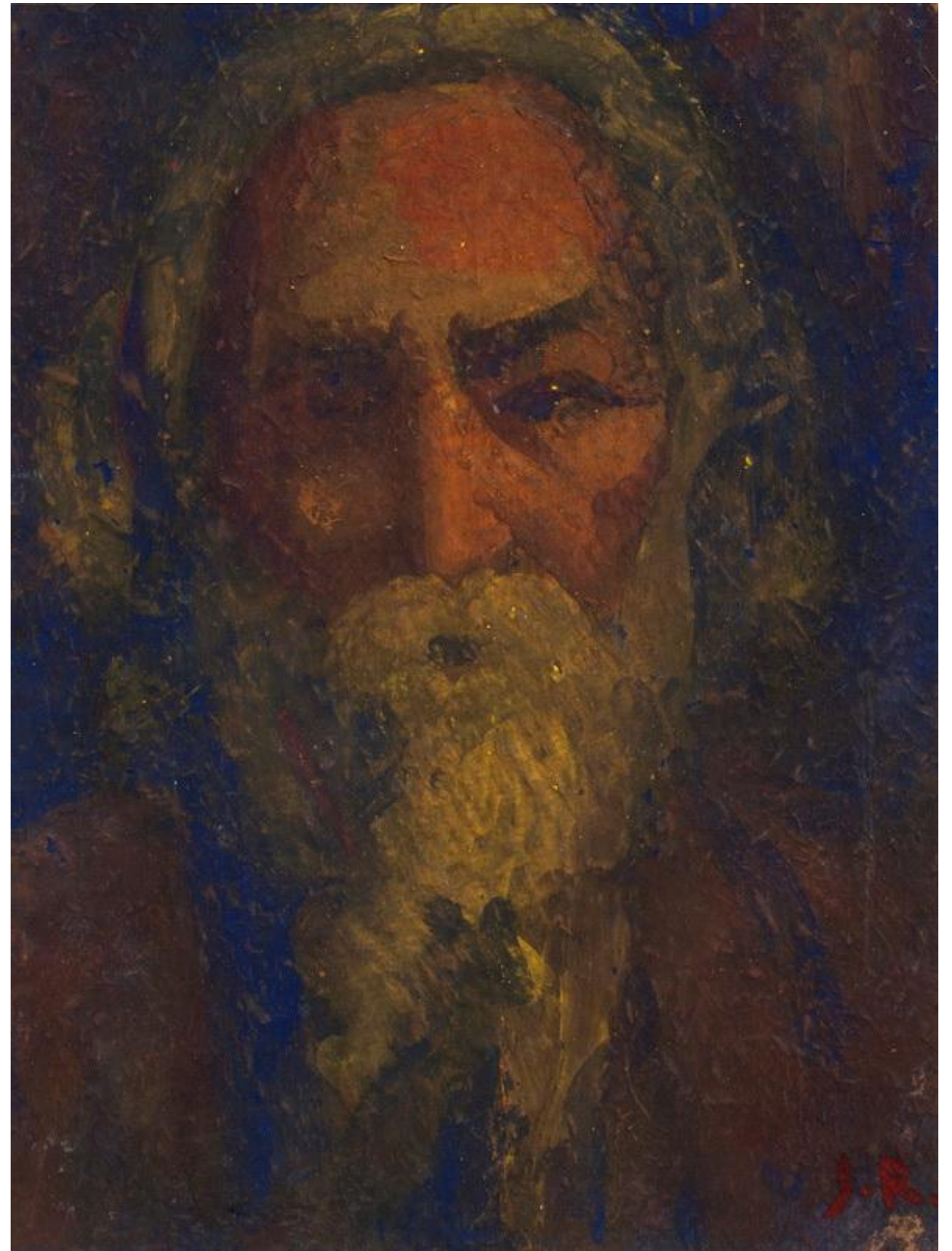




## POP QUIZ!

If your guess was **Rabindranath Tagore**, then you guessed right! Pat yourself on the back. Now let's do a pop quiz to see how well you know him.

- He was the first Non-European to be awarded a Nobel Prize. Do you know under which category?
- You probably know that he wrote the national anthem of India. But did you know he did the same for another country? Find out which one.
- He wrote and composed so many songs and poems that today this category of music is named after him. Do you know what that name is?





When Jamini Roy finished college, he started painting landscapes and portraits for people to make money.

Here is another one of Roy's portraits.

- Do you know who this is?
- Can you guess the materials used to make this painting?
- Does it look realistic? Why or why not?





## LEARN MORE.

At school, Jamini learnt several European art techniques, including a famous style called **Impressionism**.

Have you heard of it before?

In this style, colours were directly applied in thick dabs and short brushstrokes on the canvas, without any clear outlines.

The idea was to capture the essence of the scene, rather than the details.

Detail of a painting made by Jamini Roy, A detail of an artwork is only a part of it, like when you zoom into a photograph.





Here you can see the complete painting.

## **LOOK CLOSELY.**

What is the subject of this painting?

Can you guess where in the world it is?

Can you guess the time of the day?

What season is this you think?

Does the painting make you feel anything?



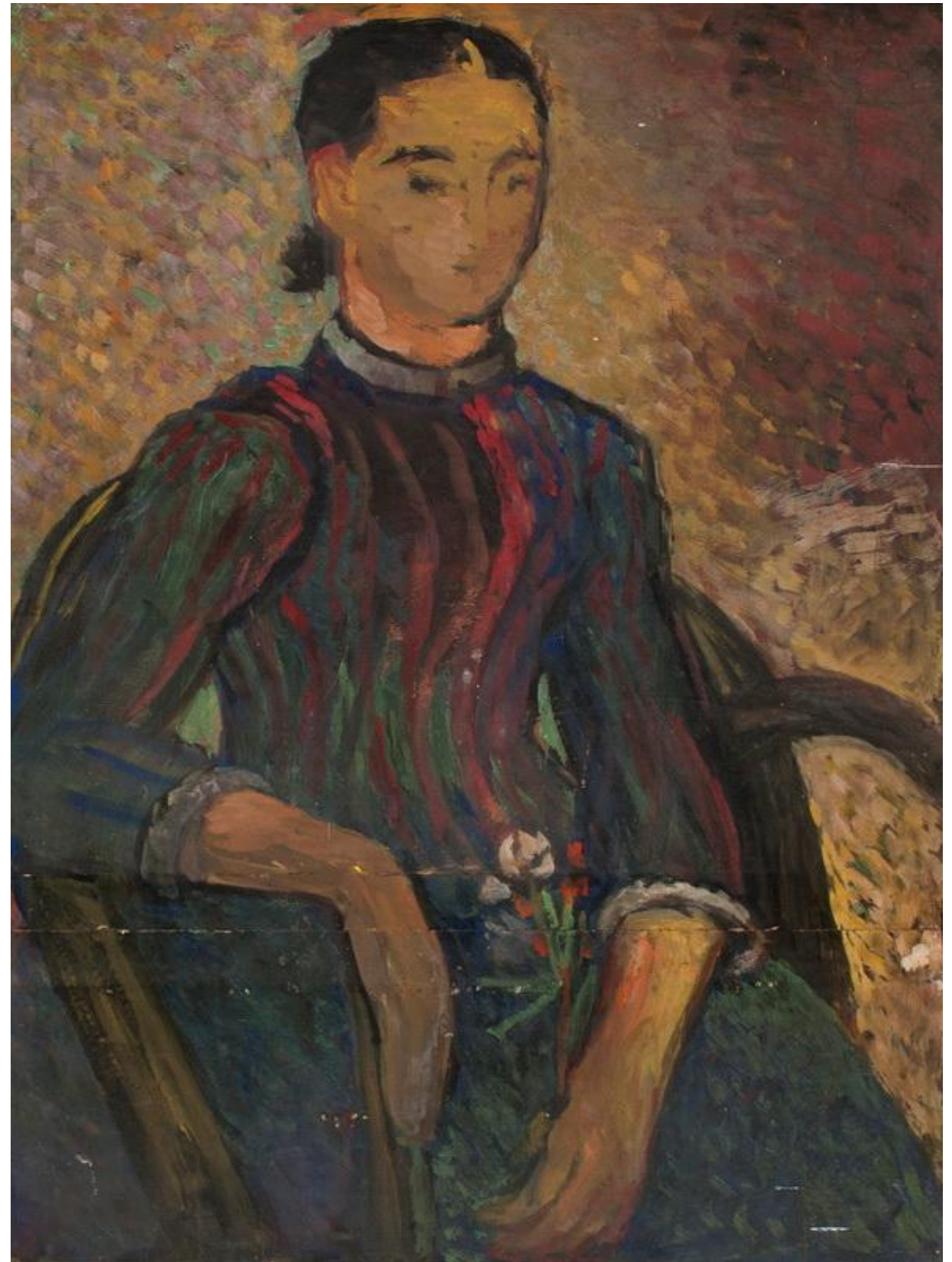


In the beginning, Jamini worked by mainly using the European styles that he'd learnt. He also did a number of small copies of famous Eastern paintings.

Here is one of those early works. Go to the next slide to see the original that inspired this work.

Why do you think Jamini was copying other artists' works and styles?

Could it be useful in any way?

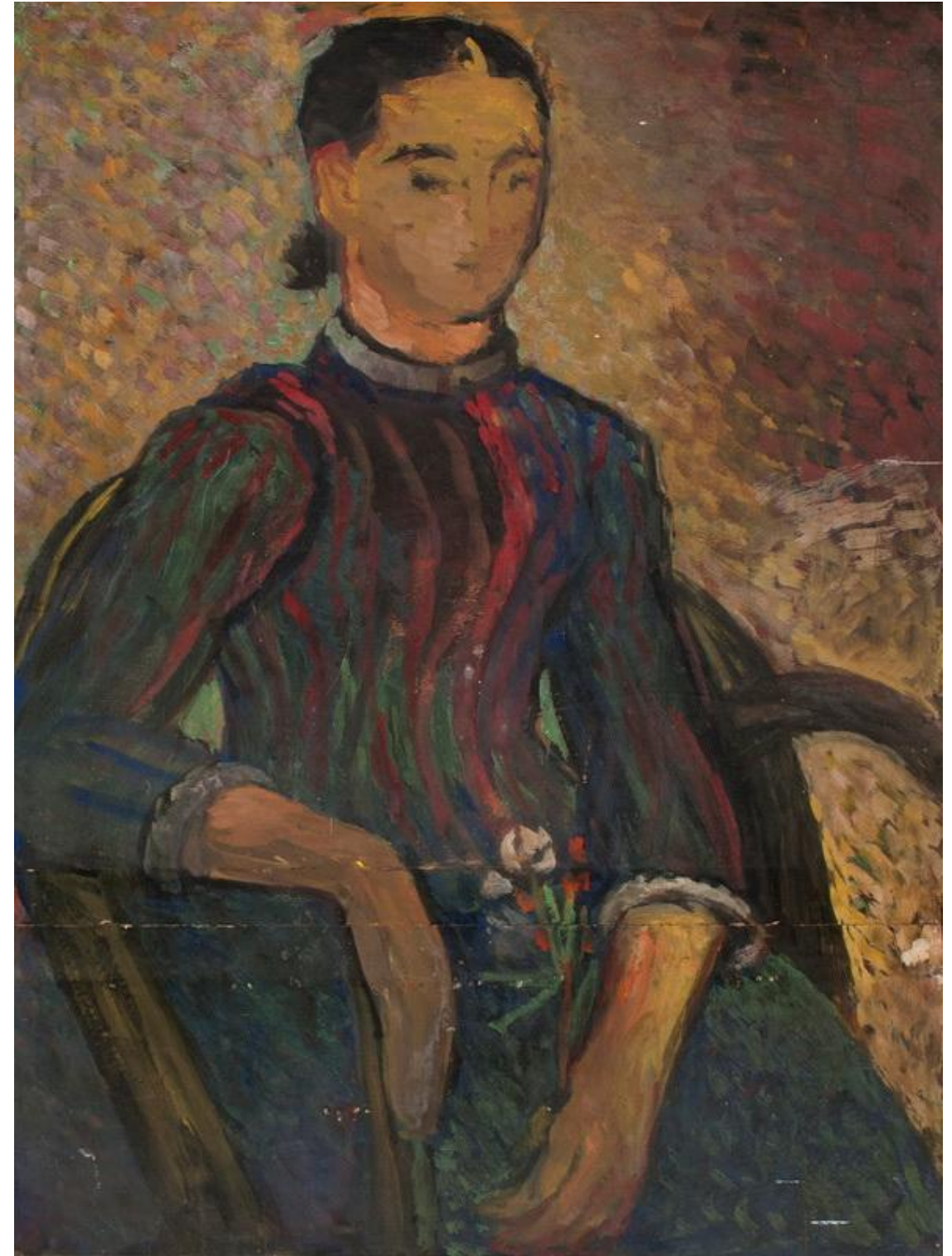






Famous Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh's painting titled *La Mousmé, Sitting in a Cane Chair, Half-Figure (with a branch of oleander)*.

Image: National Gallery of Art, Washington



Jamini's painting inspired by the *La Mousmé*



## COMPARE & CONTRAST

In the previous slide you saw one of Jamini's exercises in trying to imitate a famous painting. Without going back to the previous slide, try answering these questions:

- What about the two paintings are similar?  
How many can you find?
- What about the two paintings are different?  
How many can you find?
- Why do you think Jamini made these changes to his version?
- Which one do you prefer or like more? Why is that?



**Now go back to the previous slide to look at the paintings closely and answer these same questions again.  
Do any of your answers change?**





One day, Jamini came across painters in Kolkata who were selling their work on the streets. They were making quick watercolours on thin sheets of paper.

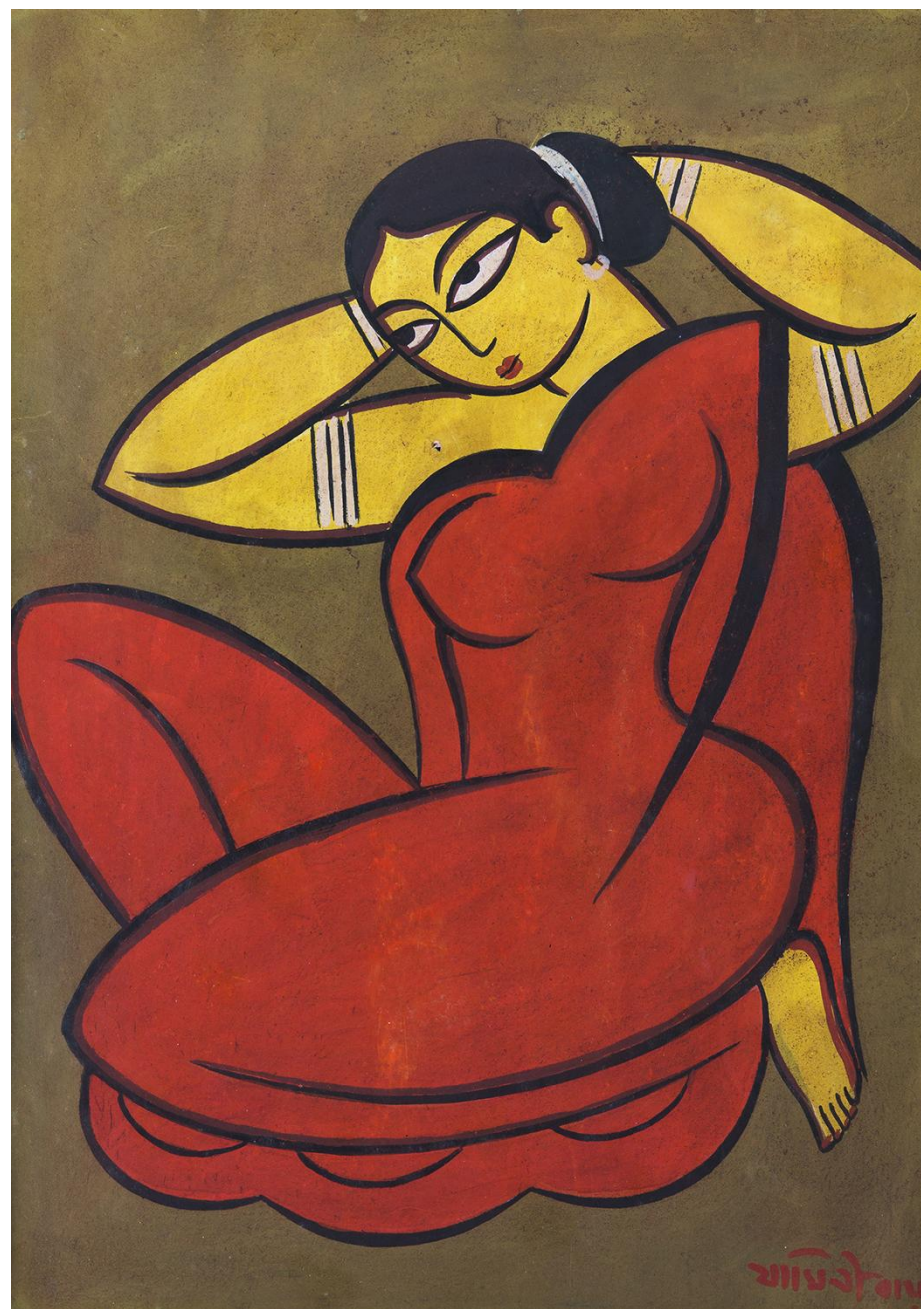
Today, they are known as **Kalighat Paintings** because of the area they were made and sold in – Kalighat. Here is an example of such a painting.

Jamini liked these so much that he decided to go back to his village and try painting like them himself.





A kalighat painting by Kalam Patua one of the last artists who still paints in this style in the 21st century.



A Jamini painting that shows influence of the Kalighat painting style.

Do you remember the **Compare & Contrast** exercise from before?  
Try doing it yourself this time – with these two paintings!





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In the village, Jamini found many things to inspire him. Things he had always seen and grown up with, but began to pay more attention to now, like the potters and their terracotta\* works.

Here is a photo of one of the things that Jamini began to look more closely at.

Do you know what it is?

Have you seen anything like it before?

\*Terracotta is a type of pottery made out of clay that is baked. Its colour is a natural orange-brown. Depending on size, terracotta sculptures are made either by shaping entirely by hand, or with different parts on a potter's wheel, and then baked.





This is a painting by Jamini.

Do you see anything similar between this one and the terracotta one?

What about differences?





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Many parts of India have traditions of drawing on the floor. In Bengal, these are called *alpana* (pronounced 'aalponaa') and are made with rice paste and water.

Jamini was also inspired by these, and their influence can be seen in borders of his works or as small designs elements.



Detail from the background of a Jamini painting.





Here is an example of his use of alpana motifs.

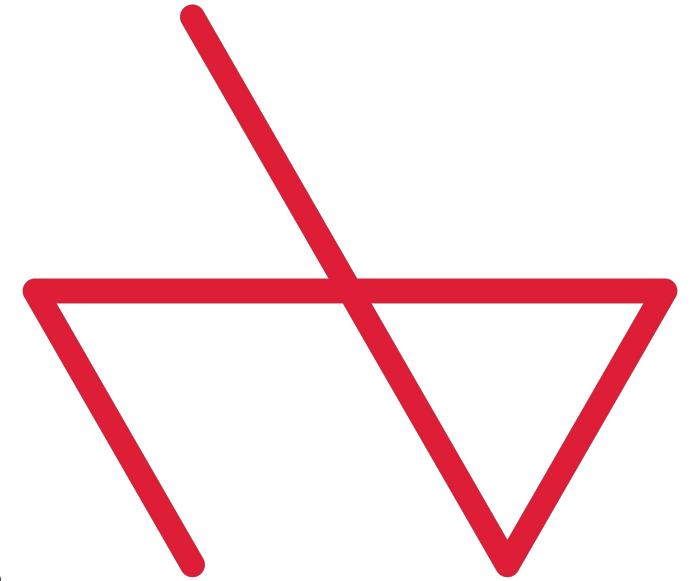
Check out the elephant in the centre and the details in the borders.



## CREATE.

Let's create and collect some borders for future use!

- 1.** Divide a sheet of paper into four equal bands.
- 2.** Pick any designs you like from the Jamini paintings you just sawn and create two borders using them.
- 3.** Get inspired like Jamini! Pick a design you like from any object in your house. Does your mug have a cool design? Or maybe the dinner plates? What about the curtains? Now create a border using this design.
- 4.** Repeat step three and create your fourth border. Now that you're becoming a pro, try creating a complicated design this time.



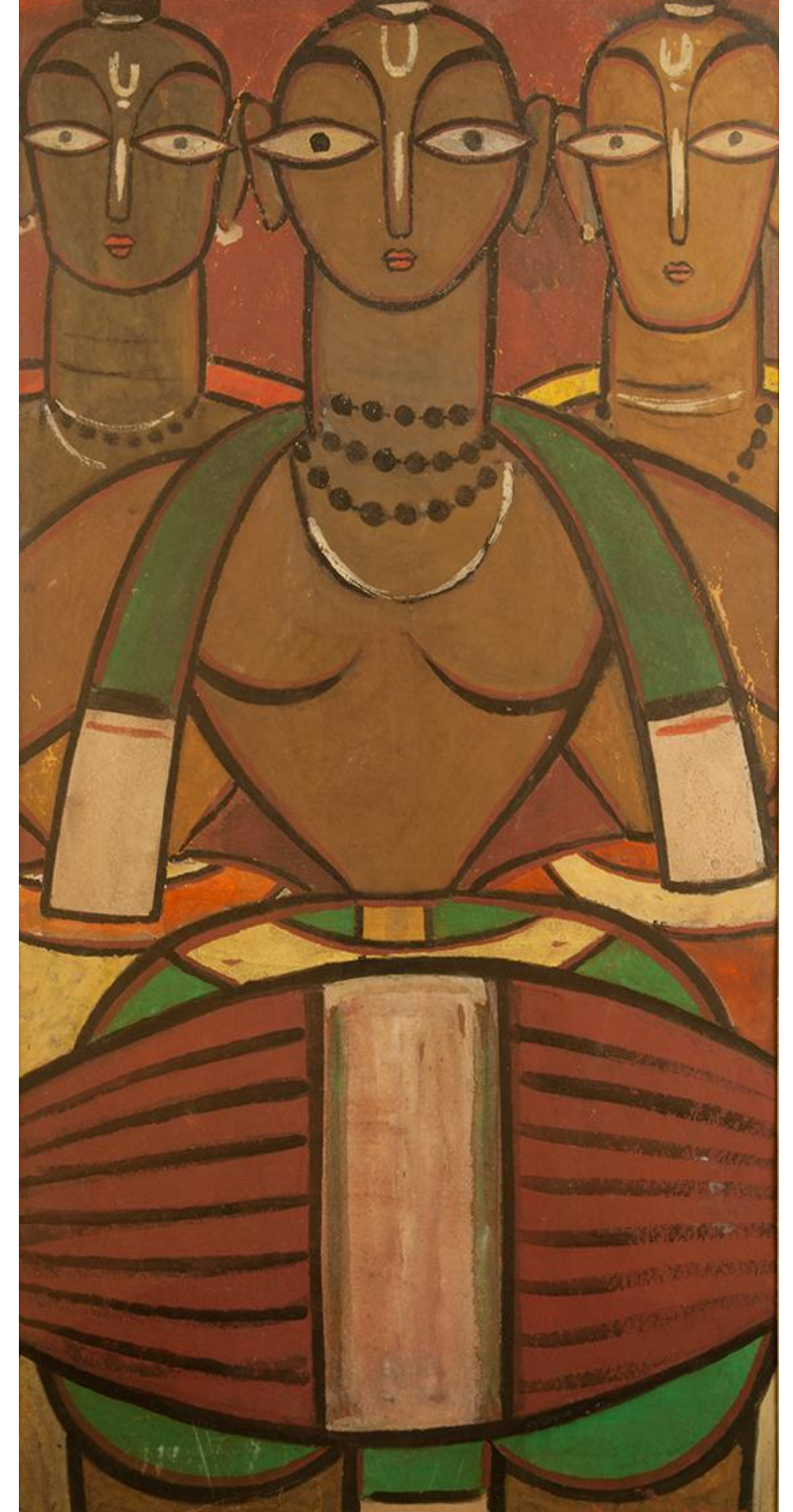
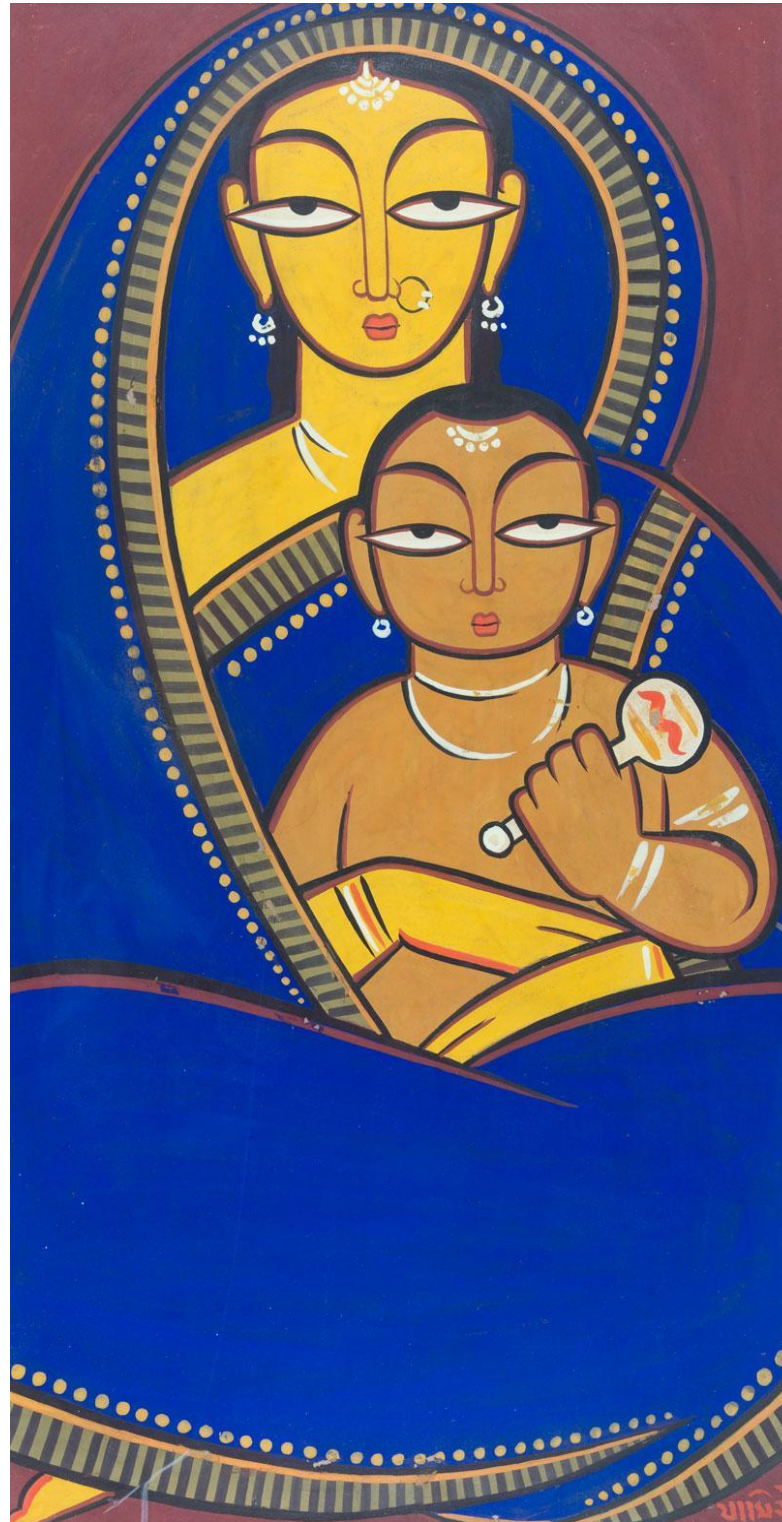


Jamini Roy's paintings also had some unique markers.

Like..

- Big, almond shaped eyes.
- Fluid brushstrokes or lines that look like they're flowing.
- Flatly applied colours.
- Absence of any real backgrounds.

Can you spot the markers in these paintings?





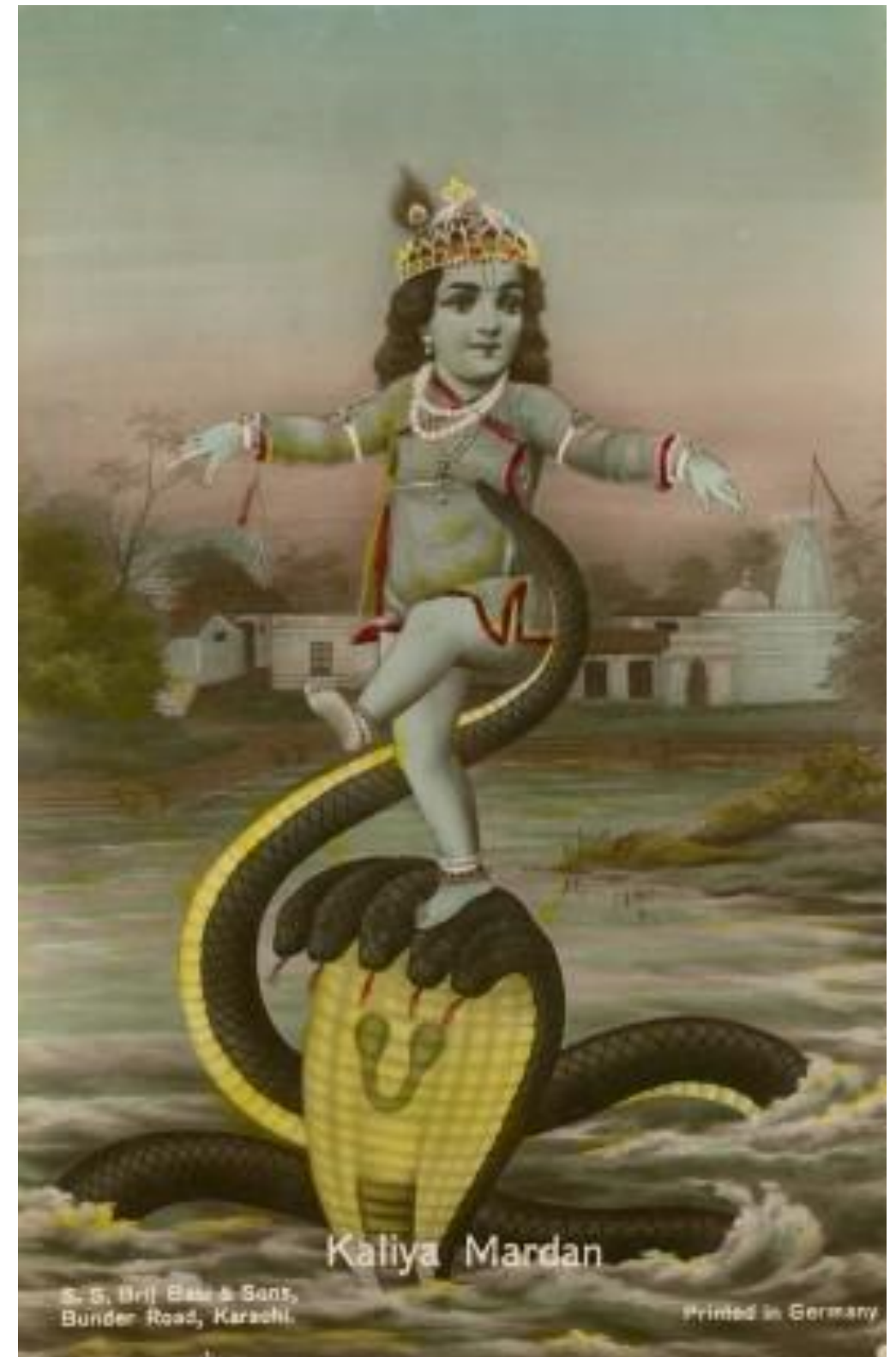
## CREATE.

Here is a postcard from the museum's collection. Make your own postcard by drawing this in the Jamini style!

All you need is some card paper – any thickish paper will do. Cut it to a postcard size and get started.

Here are some tips:

- Before you start, try different pens to test the thickness and thinness of lines you can get.
- Go back to the previous slide to check all the markers for a Jamini style painting.
- Add a border from the border guide you created for a nice finish!



Want to know what's going on in this image?  
Try googling Kaliya Daman by Krishna.



Jamini not only tried out different styles, but also different materials.

He began to make his own colours, and even his own canvases, out of natural things.

**OBSERVE.**

Look at this painting he made. Can you guess what he was inspired by?





## CONNECT.

Look at this detail from a mosaic\*

Do you see any similarities between this and Jamini's painting?

How do you think he created a similar effect?

\*Mosaic, in art, refers to the decoration of a surface with designs made up of closely set, usually variously coloured, small pieces of material such as stone, mineral, glass, tile, or shell.

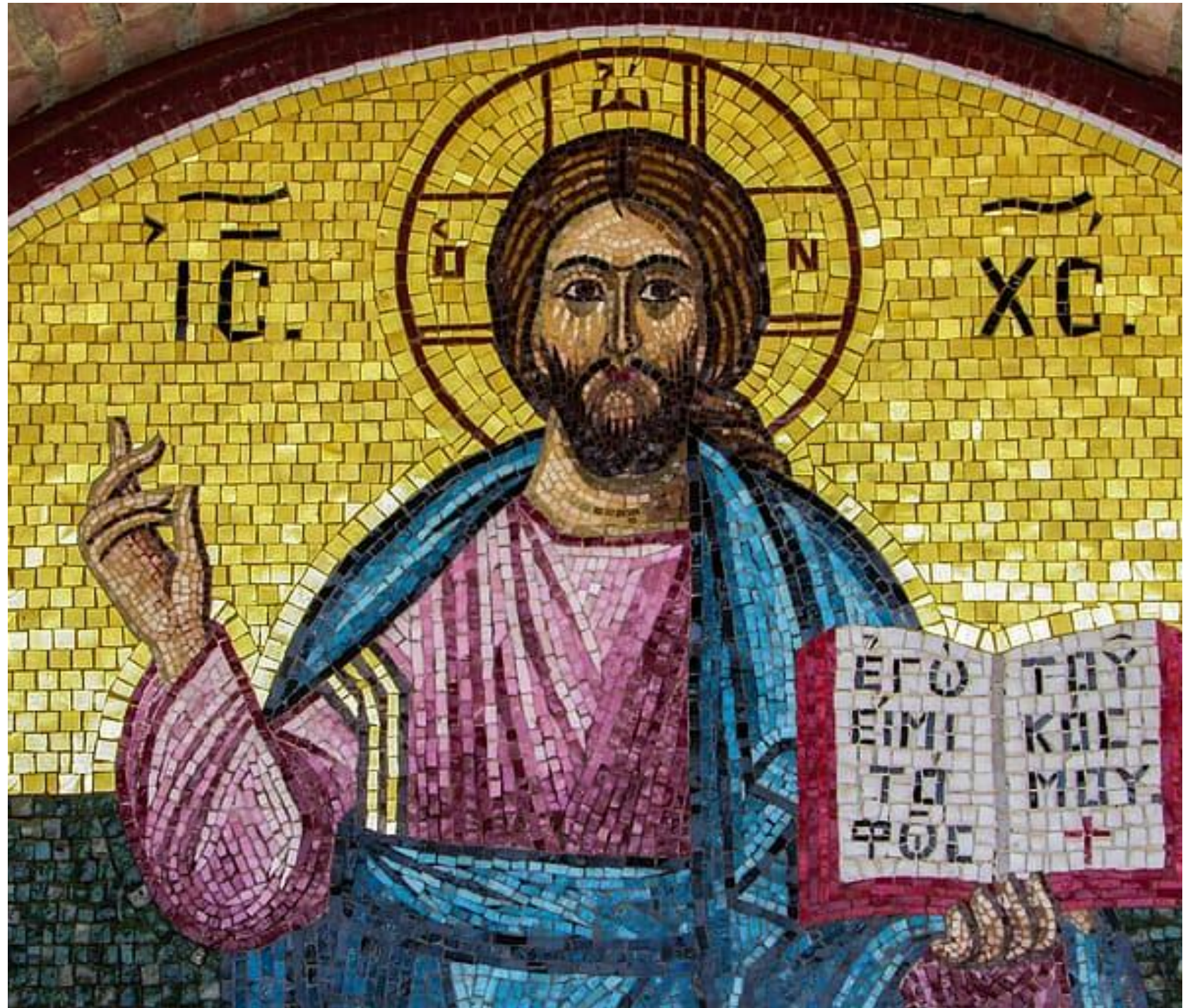
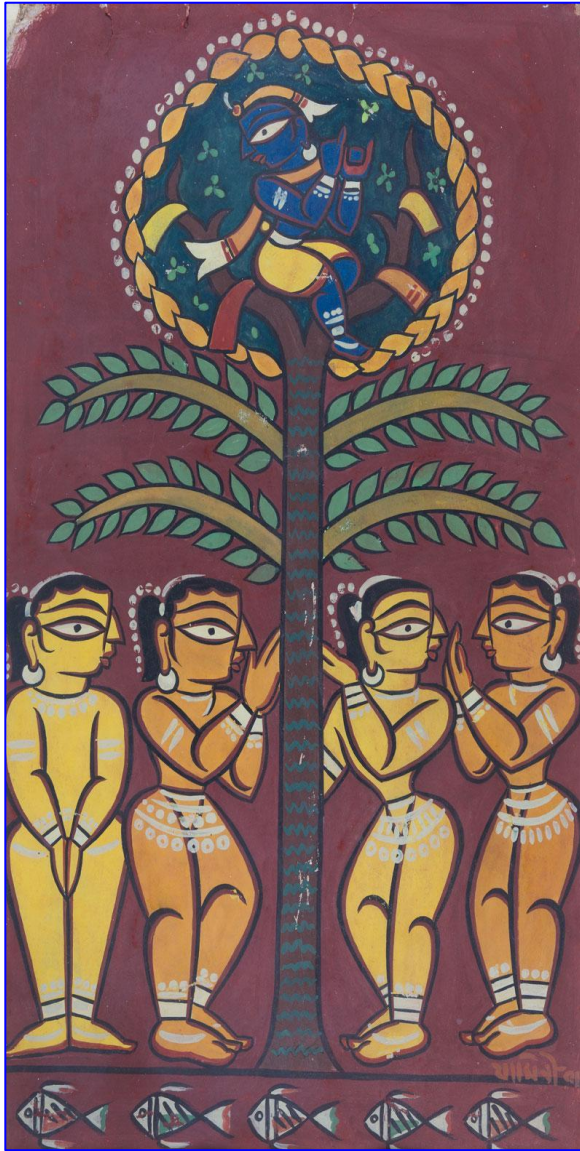


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Some of Jamini Roy's favourite things to paint were:



Mythological  
Stories



Animals & Birds



People Doing  
Everyday Things



## LOOK CLOSELY.

Do you recognise the main character in this painting?

Do you know the story the painting is telling?

Have you seen other paintings of this figure or story before? What makes this one different?

Just like this painting, Jamini Roy made many Christian-themed paintings. What made them unique was the fact that he made them in his own style.





This is also one of Jamini's paintings with a Christian subject. It's called **Flight into Egypt** and in it, we see Joseph and Mary with baby Jesus fleeing (or running off) to Egypt. According to the story, Joseph had a dream that told him to flee Jerusalem with his family, for the king (King Herod) was looking to kill Jesus.

## REFLECT.

Do you know of another popular or religious story with a similar narrative? Why do you think different cultures and religions have similar stories?



## EXPRESS.

Time to tell your own stories!  
Check out our **Stories With Art** extra and work on a Jamini-inspired tale!



Jamini Roy died in 1972.  
In 1978, India Post released  
this postage stamp in his  
honour.

Jamini Roy is also one of the  
nine national art treasures of  
India. His artworks therefore  
cannot be sold outside the  
country. Look up who the  
other eight are!

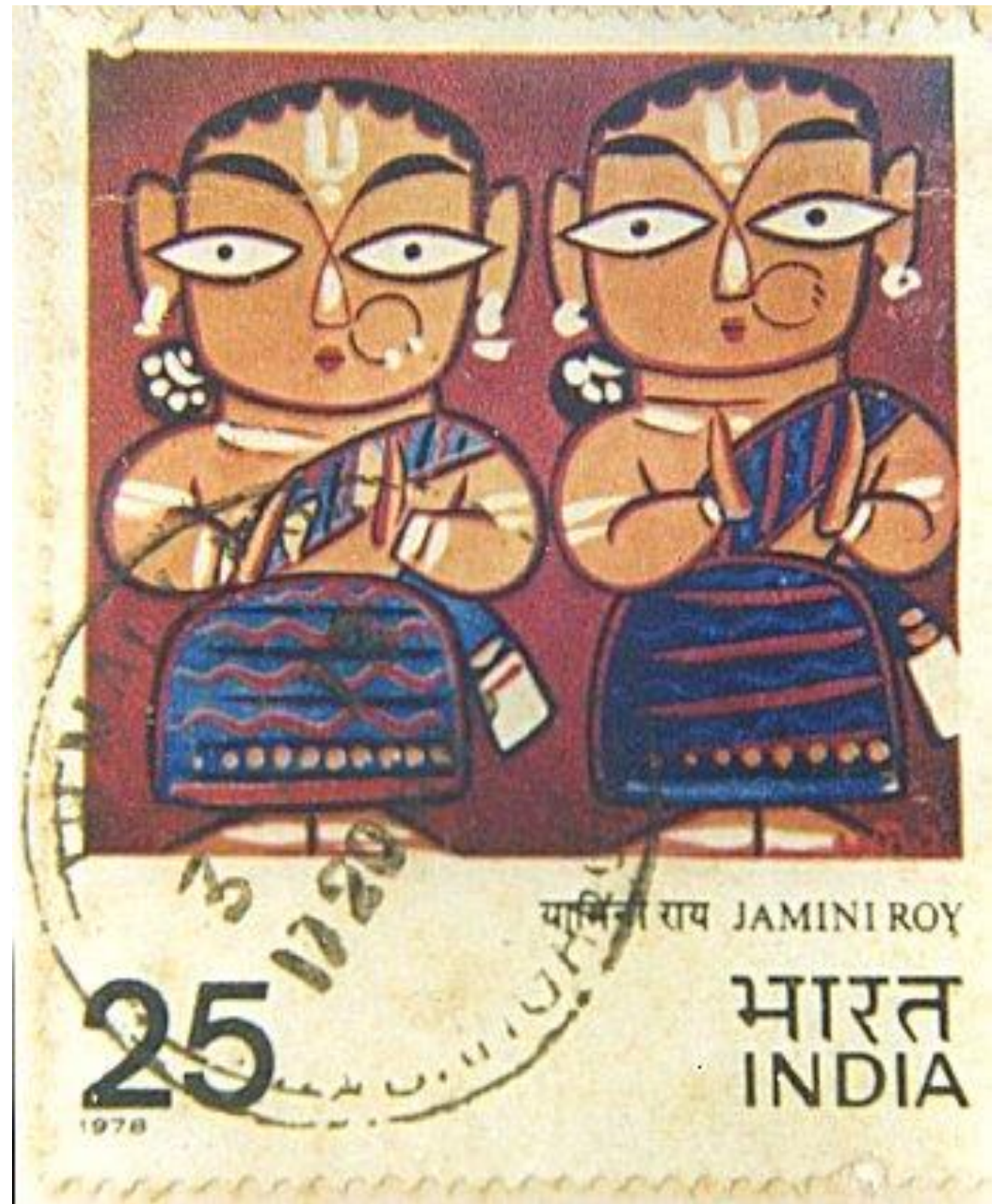


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Image: Google.com, distributed under the Creative Commons License

Also in 2017, Google released this doodle to commemorate (or show respect and celebrate) Jamini's 130th birth anniversary.

Doesn't this horse look familiar?  
Brownie points if you can spot the Google logo!



## CREATE.

How about some fun activities with Jamini Roy artworks to wrap this up?

Head to our **DIY Guide** to learn how to make your own colours and to our **colouring sheets** extra to try your hand at colouring one of Jamini Roy's artworks!







**MAP**

**Museum of Art  
& Photography**

**MAP**

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26/1 Kasturba Cross Road  
Bangalore 560 001, India

[map-india.org](http://map-india.org)

 [museumofartandphotography](https://www.instagram.com/museumofartandphotography)

