



## **Weekly Seminar: The Contested Canvas of Mithila Painting**

Speaker:

Sandali Thakur, Azim Premji University

Date / Time:

September 13, 2011 - 3:30pm - 5:00pm

Venue:

Room 103, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

The Mithila painting tradition has rendered itself to be 'invented' at many different levels and at various moments in history. For the nationalist project, it was a timeless tradition, steeped in antiquity, to be salvaged and preserved. The Nehruvian rhetoric of "progress" provided the impetus to invent the tradition in the welfare and development mode of generating livelihood. This resulted in the transformation of the contexts of production- from walls and floors to paper and from rituals to market. Further, globalisation of the art market, ubiquity of electronic and other media and an unprecedented interest in all things "folk" have invented the art form yet again- in varied avatars, most notably, the so-called "fine art" variety. Last but not the least, the project of Maithil nationalism has invented the art form for articulating the demand for a separate state of Mithilanchal, to be carved out of Bihar.

However, the process through which a tradition is 'invented' is a highly selective one. From collapsing all rural art into the category "folk art", without recognizing hierarchies and contestations within, to considering the cultural productions of the elites as the only authentic varieties- investigation of this process points towards a range of ways in which the Mithila art form and its multiple articulations has become a site for marginalization, resistance and contestation, amidst a burgeoning domestic and global art market, a rigidly hierarchical and unequal socio-economic fabric and a growing.