

# Thangkas

## Tibetan Painted Scrolls



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## Thangka Painting in Nepal



"Painting is the mother of all forms of art", so says a Hindu scripture, whereas the pre-historic cave paintings of Dordogne in France and Altamira in Spain are considered 12,000 years old, the history of painting in Nepal dates back Lichhavi period in the beginning of the Christian era. The wall paintings and inscriptions in Chhabahil near Pashupatinath are dated to the 5th century, and inscriptions in Kathmandu and Gorkha are some other examples.

Some of the oldest most refined and beautiful Thangka paintings founded in Nepal date back to the 12th century or even earlier. The majority of these paintings come from Buddhist manuscripts like Pranjaparamita, and are preserved in national archives, in temples and monasteries, and in private collections and museums.

Wall paintings, frescos and mural paintings are found in Kathmandu Valley in all the three palaces of Kathmandu, with whole rooms painted without an inch uncovered, showing both religious and secular themes.

Thangka painting in Nepal was used to describe the complicated tantric philosophy which also worked as a visual aid to layman. Thangkas are also painted to commemorate the building of a temple or stupa, and are used in worshipping divinities in their various manifestations. An experienced master artists adhere to the iconographic rituals.

The two types of thangka painted are the Newari and the Tamang Thangka which has been influenced by the Tibetan school. The Newar thangkas have gods, Buddhist gods dominating the whole canvas, while the Tamang thangkas mostly depict mandalas, kalachakra, tara, the life of buddha, wheel of life and so on.

## The Making of a Thangka:

Most our thangkas are painted on a linen canvas. Technically, making a painted thangka occurs in four stages:

- 1) preparing the foundation
- 2) sketching
- 3) painting
- 4) framing

### Preparing the Foundation:

The painted canvas are rectangular or square in shape. The canvas are folded twice, rather than hemmed, to prevent them from unraveling. Then the canvas is fastened with thread to four laths that are firmly attached with twine to a wooden frame, and strung tightly, so that it looks like an upright trampoline. The cloth is painted with a pasty gesso, a mixture of lime or rice flour, and plaster of chalk. After the layer has been applied, it is polished with a smooth stone or shell.

### Sketching:

There are separate drawings, or templates, available for many of the figures that are to be painted. They are transferred to the canvas either by pricking holes or by transferring figures using block prints.

### Painting:

When applying colours, a particular sequence is commonly followed. First, the area furthest away in perspective, the sky, is colored. Then the closer landscape is done, following by trees, rocks, and water. After that come the deities and other figures. The throne, clothing, and nimbus are painted first. Light colours are applied before dark colours, and then details in gold are added.

### Framing:

Once the painting is finished, the canvas is loosened from its stretches and framed if necessary. Framing is done with textile edging.

*"When applying colours, a particular sequence is commonly followed".*



Price of the Art  
USD225

Showcasing some of thangkas

## Vajra Sadhu



50cm

37cm

Red Buddha

50.5cm



36.5cm

Price of the Art  
USD225

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Buddha Shakti



52 cm

37 cm

Price of the Art  
USD350

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Green Tara

78 cm



57 cm

Price of the Art  
USD300

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Guru



71cm

51cm

Price of the Art  
USD500

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White Tara



65cm

47cm

Price of the Art  
USD1100

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Kalachakra Mandala



100cm

100cm

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