

# WINTER 2021-22 SUPPLEMENT



*Madhubani:*

Folk art of the Mithila region of India.



The Friends of Asian Art Association (FA<sup>3</sup>) is an all-volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization celebrating a decade as an active, vital community resource. The Mission of FA<sup>3</sup> is to promote interest, understanding and support for Asian arts and cultures. This includes the past, present and future as well as local, national and international Asian arts and cultures of the 50 Asian countries within the regions of the Asian continent: North Asia, East Asia, South Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia.

We seek to engage, involve and educate the general public as a means to create greater respect and deeper understanding for the traditions, arts, cultures and diversity of Asia and Asians. Each year, FA<sup>3</sup> seeks to expand its services and outreach within the community. Our Senior programs have brought Asian arts and cultural activities to retirement center residents in Seattle and King County for the past three years. Our youth collaborative activities and events have engaged young people throughout the area. Our focus on the differently-abled has provided special programs and materials to call attention to this often marginalized and under served population. And our attention to the many exceptional contributions to the arts and culture by the LGBTQ? community have been significant and worthy of note.

FA<sup>3</sup> is pleased to have worked with the young students at Deepti Designs for the past two years. We are proud to present a special arts supplement produced by the talented artists enrolled in a unique art school in Redmond. They exhibit tremendous potential as outstanding creative artists of the future! This FA<sup>3</sup> Special Winter Supplement is a tribute to Deepti Designs, its founder Deepti Agrawal and the students under her skilled and devoted tutelage. It is our honor to have played a part in supporting their growth and development in the community.

For further information or membership in the Friends of Asian Art Association, our website is at: <https://www.friendsofasianart3.org/>.

In addition, direct contact can be made at: [friendsofasianart3@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofasianart3@gmail.com).

*Deepti Designs*  
It's Trendy to be Traditional

Madhubani Painting is an ancient visual art form from the interiors of India. Its origin is lost in antiquity and its form has evolved over the years but the one thing that remained constant over centuries, is its ability to tell stories. The art has been long used as an expression to outline mythological, social, and personal narratives. While every project is an attractive blend of vibrant colors, intricate details, human or animal figurines, they are also symbolic representations of a cultural aspect with deeper meaning and hidden iconography.

Our founder Deepti Agrawal has taken a contemporary approach to present this traditional art to make it appealing to modern sensibilities while keeping its heritage essence intact. She founded the Deepti Designs School of Art with a mission to shape creatively dynamic, culturally rooted and socially sensitive artists, where she aims at honing artistic skills while also focusing on overall personality development of every student, kids and adults alike. There is a gamut of social-giveback activities conducted all around the year as she strongly believes in using art as an instrument to stimulate change.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the Friends of Asian Art Association for constantly providing a platform for the young artists to showcase their works and for helping amplify our efforts to reach a wider audience.

We invite you to go through the paintings and the write-ups in the supplement and enjoy the visual treat and cultural narratives that the artists have churned out after innumerable hours of labor of love.

For questions or queries, Deepti Designs can be reached at [info@deeptidesings.com](mailto:info@deeptidesings.com).



BRAVE DURGA by Meg Isohata (Grade 11)

This painting depicts the Hindu Goddess of War, Durga. In Indian mythology, Durga's creation starts thousands of years ago with the buffalo demon Mahishasura. Mahishasura meditated to impress Lord Brahma so that he could be blessed with immortality and power in an exchange. After years of meditation, Lord Brahma appeared before him and promised to grant him any blessing that Mahishasura desired. Mahishasura asked to be unkillable by either a man or a god, and his wish was granted.

Soon, Mahishasura unleashed his rage and chased the gods out of heaven and nearly destroyed the earth. Afraid of Mahishasura's power and immortality, the gods asked the Lords Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva for help. The three lords joined hands and started to radiate a blinding light. From this light, the Goddess Durga was created. The tiger that Durga is riding symbolizes power, her open palm forgiveness and blessings, and her red clothes passion. Durga is also holding different weapons in her hands, which were given to her by the gods to aid her in her fight against Mahishasura. Durga bravely fought Mahishasura for 10 days, and as she was neither a man nor a god, she was able to defeat him. This battle is celebrated annually with a 10-day festival known as *Durga Puja*.

This art form is called Madhubani, which is a 2500-year-old folk art from the Mithila region of India. Its origins can be found in the *Ramayana* when King Janaka ordered these paintings to be created for his daughter Sita's wedding to Rama. Bright colors, intricate details and patterns, and borders are distinct characteristic of this art form. For centuries, the practice of Madhubani has been passed down from mother to daughter and has recently started to gain worldwide popularity.

I've been a student of Madhubani since April 2018. This painting, which I have titled "*Brave Durga*", is so far my favorite because Durga is a strong symbol for women's empowerment and passion.



DIVERSITY PAINTING by Aashika Vishwanath (Grade 12)

### DIVERSITY

As I deeply reflected on some of the indelible events of 2020 triggered by racial discrimination and minority subjugation, I wanted to express my thoughts through a channel I was very familiar with - visual arts.

Diversity is an integral part of America and our society can achieve peace and progress only by realizing the true value of this diversity. In my painting, I have shown a scale that is delicately balanced on earth and holds people from all walks of life irrespective of differences in race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, or outward appearances. Each one of them brings concord.

We all must work in unison to support our planet. I've depicted this by showing Mother Earth and all creation supported by hands that represent a diverse group of individuals. The different sections in the background portray elements of identity that make each individual unique, such as language, ethnic symbols, flags, religious symbols, and gender identification symbols.

The mélange of colors on top represents the pride flag, honoring the LGBTQ community. I've incorporated several Madhubani techniques to add elements of uniqueness and diversity to contemporary art form to further highlight the underlying theme behind my painting – we all hail from diverse backgrounds, yet this diversity is what shapes our nation into one that can harness the unique perspectives of each individual to achieve societal progression. We all truly matter.



LORD ARDHNARESHWARA by Khushi Garg (Grade 5)

Type of Art: Madhubani

Subject: Lord Ardhnareshwara

#### SIGNIFICANCE

Ardhnareshwar is comprised of three Sanskrit words *Ardh* means half, *Nari* means woman, and *Ishwara* means God. Collectively Ardhnareshwara is a composite male-female figure of the Shiva together with his consort Parvati.

There is a symbolic meaning of various aspects of this painting: Crescent moon: Shiva bears on his head the crescent moon, also called *Chandrashekhara*. Third eye: Shiva has a third eye on the forehead with which he burns the demons. Ashes: Shiva's body is covered with ashes, the ashes represent a reminder that all of material existence is impermanent, comes to an end becoming ash; whereas Devi has glowing skin like gold representing life. Blue throat: Since Shiva drank the Halahala poison churned up from the Samudra Manthan to save the universe, he prevented the poison from going below his neck and thus his neck became blue. Sacred Ganga: Shiva is called *Gangadhara*, "Bearer of the river Ganga". It is said that Ganga dropped from the heavens and made her abode in Shiva's hair and then came to earth. Clothes and ornaments: Shiva wears tiger skin, Rudraksh beads and snake as he is a *yogi*, and Devi wears red and gold with beautiful ornaments symbolizing opulence. Trident: Shiva typically carries a trident called *Trishul* to kill the demons. Drum: Shiva, also called *Natraj* or God of dance, plays a small drum shaped like an hourglass, known as a *Damaru*. Vehicle: *Nandi* is the name of the bull that serves as Shiva's mount. Shiva's association with cattle is reflected in his name, *Pashupati*. Lion: It is said that *Himavat*, the God of the Himalayas and father of Parvati, gave her the lion. Lion represents strength, courage, and leadership. Goddess Parvati is supreme energy that controls this lion, the embodiment of power.

Overall, the composition portrays that the male and female principles are inseparable. Furthermore, the importance of having a balance of masculinity and femininity or Purusha and Prakriti for a well-functioning universe.



RADHA AND KRISHNA: A Madhubani Painting by Mahima Kolar (Grade 4)

Madhubani is an ancient folk art, highly influenced by Indian history and legends. Despite the fact that it originated centuries ago, Madhubani art has persisted to this day, and continues to thrive, though it has undergone some changes to suit modern art techniques.

Mithila is the birthplace of the Madhubani art form. According to legend, Madhubani originated during the time of the *Ramayana*, a great Indian epic. When King Janaka of Mithila had his daughter Sita married to Rama, a human incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu, he asked the women of Mithila to paint the walls of his palace for the wedding. The designs that the Mithila women painted were the first works of Madhubani art.

I started doing Madhubani art four years ago. Since then, my paintings have increased in size and complexity to the painting I am writing about today.

My painting depicts two important figures in Hindu mythology: *Krishna* and *Radha*. *Krishna* is another avatar of Lord Vishnu, reborn on Earth to wipe out the *asuras* (demons) and preserve justice. *Krishna* is also a key figure in the *Mahabharata*, another great Indian epic like the *Ramayana*. The *Mahabharata* describes the war between the five Pandava brothers (noble warrior princes who were cousins of *Krishna*) and their evil cousins, the Kauravas. *Krishna* is typically depicted with a flute in his hand, wearing brightly colored clothing, adorned with a peacock feather. *Radha* is his true love and eternal consort. *Radha* was an exceptional singer and dancer. She and *Krishna* excelled in a form of dance called *Ras Leela*.

*Radha* and *Krishna* are shown here in front of a Kadamb tree (*Krishna*'s favorite tree) on the banks of the River Yamuna, where they usually met. *Krishna* is playing his flute, and has a peacock feather around his neck. *Radha* is depicted with a lotus in one hand, and a string of pearls in the other.

*Krishna* and *Radha* have been drawn in the usual Madhubani style, with side profiles, and traditional outfits. I decorated their clothing with designs you can find in almost every Madhubani painting, including *kachni* (closely drawn parallel lines, like the blue lines on *Krishna*'s cape), *bharni* (solid painting in one color, like the blue portion of *Radha*'s skirt), and cross-hatching (two groups of *kachni* intersecting like a grid, forming a fabric effect, like the intricate blue penwork on *Radha*'s veil). The other designs, such as grass details and the flowers on the sky, are a miscellaneous assortment of techniques not specific to Madhubani art, but still included occasionally in Madhubani painting.

Madhubani, like all art, is a witness to the progression of human civilization, and thus changes along with us. These days, Madhubani is making a comeback into our society, with some differences, and some similarities to what it was hundreds of years ago. I believe modernized Madhubani art, besides being intricate and beautiful, is a fabulous way of expressing Indian myths, landscapes, and traditions such as the tale of *Radha* and *Krishna* depicted in my painting.



ASHTALAKSHMI By Prisha Mundra (Grade 8)

Madhubani is a beautiful art form that originated in Bihar, India. It consists of eye-catching geometric patterns and is completed with various tools such as pens, acrylic paint, brushes, and sharpies.

Similarly, my Madhubani painting represents all eight forms of the Hindu goddess, *Lakshmi*. The first form is Adi Lakshmi, the avatar of Mother Lakshmi and the wife of Lord Vishnu. In my painting, she is shown holding a lotus in both of their hands which represents purity and rebirth. The second form of *Lakshmi* is Dhana Lakshmi who is the goddess of wealth and manifestation. Next, Dhanya Lakshmi is responsible for the equitable distribution of grains/food, and is regarded as the provider of agricultural health. The fourth form of mother Lakshmi is Gaja Lakshmi who is the giver of animal wealth. This goddess signifies royalty and power. To add on, Gaja Lakshmi always has male and female elephants on either side of her to represent prosperity and good luck. She is then followed by Vijaya Lakshmi who is the goddess of victory, thus the meaning of her name. Moreover, Vijaya Lakshmi was incarnated with the specific purpose of helping others overcome problems, and handling each situation with grit and determination. The sixth form of Mother Lakshmi is Santana Lakshmi. She symbolizes fertility and blesses childless couples with children. As portrayed in my painting, she is holding a baby in her lap to represent this power of hers. The very last form, Vidya Lakshmi, provides wealth in the form of knowledge.

*Lakshmi* is a very important goddess that is heavily worshipped in Hindu culture. “She is the divine power that transforms dreams into reality”(QuartzIndia). She is the perfect creation: a *shakti* (energy), *maya* (illusion), and the goddess of wealth and purity. *Lakshmi* is believed to wander Earth during the night of *Lakshmi Pooja* (prayer). On this very evening, people open their doors and windows to warmly greet her. They place *diyas* (tealights) outside their house and on windowsills to kindly invite her.

Apart from gaining insight into the cultural aspect of this painting, I also learned about various design techniques. From picking each pattern to picking out each color, every detail took a lot of time and effort. Creating this painting felt like a roller coaster; one moment everything was going smoothly, and then the next moment I reached the bottom and had to struggle my way back up again. One of the biggest challenges I faced the whole experience again.

Throughout the five months was scripting the *mantras* in *Sanskrit* for the backgrounds. This was a completely new experience for me, as I didn’t know how to read or write in *Sanskrit*. Although it made the task difficult, I successfully overcame this challenge with the help of my art teacher and family. Despite these hardships and challenges, the roller coaster finally stuck to the end. I was left with a feeling of joy and happiness. I loved every second of it and wanted to do the whole experience again.



MANDALA PAINTING by Sri Hansika S.A. (Grade 5)

This painting, is made in the Madhubani style and is a *mandala*. The style of Madhubani art is a classical art form that originated in India. When Madhubani first started which was said to be 2500 years ago, they used twigs and natural dyes. Now in the modern era we use canvases, sharpies, paints, etc. Though our tools have been getting better and more elaborate, the ancient beauty of the Madhubani style hasn't been changed by the modern world. Women back then were mainly taught to paint and passed it down for centuries and have majorly contributed to keeping this ancient and beautiful art form alive.

*Mandala* in *Sanskrit* means circle, as a *mandala* is a circle. *Mandalas* are typically made up of geometrical shapes and traditionally are used for *pujas* or prayers. They represent the circle of life and symbolize (for some people, this is opinion based) the idea that life is never ending and everything is connected. *Mandalas* are very similar to something called a *yantra*. *Mandalas* are very colorful and are circles which often have something around them as a background. However, *yantras* are usually limited to a few colors and have a square gate with 4 Ts drawn around the *yantra*. *Yantras* generally depict a god or goddess in the center instead of an animal (although *mandalas* could also have a deity in the center).

This Painting is done with 4 colors, orange, green, blue, and black. I chose these 4 specific colors because 3 of them are included in the Indian flag. In each corner I have incorporated a lotus which is the national flower of India. It perches atop a ring that has blue *Jitki*, and is surrounded by blue dots which represent water. In the *mandala* I have drawn many living creatures, the most outer border includes birds and the next big border uses fish. In the center of my *mandala* is a peacock, this bird was chosen because in India peacocks are the national bird. Lord Murugan (a hindu deity) rides a peacock as his vehicle, hence its importance to the culture. My mom often speaks about Lord Murugan and the peacock is one of her favorite birds. I also agree with her and think that peacocks are the epitome of elegance and magnificence.

As I previously stated, I incorporated birds and fish into my *mandala*. In the borders in between the birds there are vines. This is also included as part of the background connecting to flowers. We often, in Madhubani, use vines to fill in blank space. For example, the background vines if taken away, would leave a lot of white blank area. In between the fish there are little horizontal lines and curved shapes. The lines are called water lines and are imitating water. The shapes are like waves in the ocean. There is a lot of pen or line work involved in this painting and Madhubani in general.



The main pen patterns I used are, cross hatching, *jitki*, *katchni*, double lining. Cross hatching, is drawing lines very closely but neatly together and then crossing it by doing it at another angle. An example of this in the painting is in the center bird for its neck pattern. I used blue cross hatching. *Jitki* is drawing lines continually going up and down to create a kind of triangle formation. I used *jitki* on the base for the lotuses in the corners. *Katchni* is kind of like cross hatching but you only draw the lines going in one direction. I used this a lot; one example is in the *koshes* which are the curvy bumps on the very edge of the *mandala*. I used alternating green and blue *katchni*. Lastly, but mostly used, is double lining. Double lining is drawing a second line very close but carefully to your first line. You do this to get a nice clean separation between sections.

I worked hard on this painting and really enjoyed creating it. If this inspired you to create a Madhubani style painting then I hope it turns out good, but if it doesn't I hope you have fun doing it. Thanks to my teacher for teaching me this style, and my family for helping me write this article. Thank you for reading this article on my *mandala* painting. I hope you enjoyed and liked it.



DASHAVATARA by Inchara Chetan (Grade 11)

It's no new discovery that paintings often tell the story of different cultures. They are rooted in history and generally convey a particular meaning or story. The Madhubani art style is a great example of this. Practiced in the Mithila region of the Indian subcontinent, Madhubani art is a style of Indian painting done using a variety of tools, colors, and geometric patterns. It's done using fingers, twigs, brushes, pens, and matchsticks, and consists of bright colors that take up almost all of the canvas, leaving very few blank spaces. The themes of these paintings usually consist of natural elements like animals and plants, but this ancient art form has also been known to depict scenes of wedding rituals, religious festivals and cultural events from Hindu mythology.

Recently, I, Inchara Chetan, a junior at North Creek High School in Bothell, Washington, finished a Madhubani painting illustrating the *Dashavatara*. *Dashavatara* refers to the ten avatars of Vishnu, the Hindu God of preservation. Vishnu is said to descend in the form of an avatar to guide Earth back onto the right course during troubled times. These avatars of Vishnu are said to have played a major role in shaping human evolution throughout the centuries.

Different traditions have different beliefs as to how the avatars are listed, but this is the order I believe the avatars are listed: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Balrama, Krishna, and Kalaki. Each one of these avatars has their own story regarding how they rescued Earth during a crisis, ranging from battling demons to saving the Earth from extinction, but they are all said to have restored cosmic order when needed.

So far, Vishnu is said to have reincarnated nine times, but Hindus believe that he will be reincarnated one final time during the end of the world. The final avatar, Kalaki, is said to be Vishnu's current incarnation. Kalaki is supposed to end Kali Yuga, one of the four periods in the endless cycle of life.

The reason why I was fascinated by *Dashavatara* enough to paint it using the Madhubani art style is because it is such a significant and predominant part of the Hindu culture. By depicting the *Dashavatara* on canvas, I was able to learn and understand the Hindu religion better while also depicting Hinduism in an art form that originated in the same place as the ancient religion. Let's make all of our lives richer by appreciating the authentic Indian heritage that is restored through Madhubani art.



REBUILDING LIVES by Tanvi Mathrubootham (Grade 12)

This painting portrays an Indian adaption of Wonder Woman, inspired by warrior princess Devasena from Baahubali 2: The Conclusion, destroying COVID-19.

It takes on the name “Rebuilding Lives” as it demonstrates the exigence to come together and help those whose livelihoods have been impacted the most by the pandemic. In these testing times, unity is needed more than ever to overcome the virus. It is necessary for each and every one of us to join hands and combat the pandemic as one cohesive force.

This painting was completed using acrylics and paint pens on canvas and incorporates both ancient Indian techniques from the art form Madhubani and modern elements.

# STUDENT ARTISTS



**Khushi Garg**



**Sri Hansika**



**Meg Isohata**



**Mahima Kolar**



**Tanvi Mathrubootham**



**Prisha Mundra**



**Aashika Vishwanath**



**Inchara Chetan**



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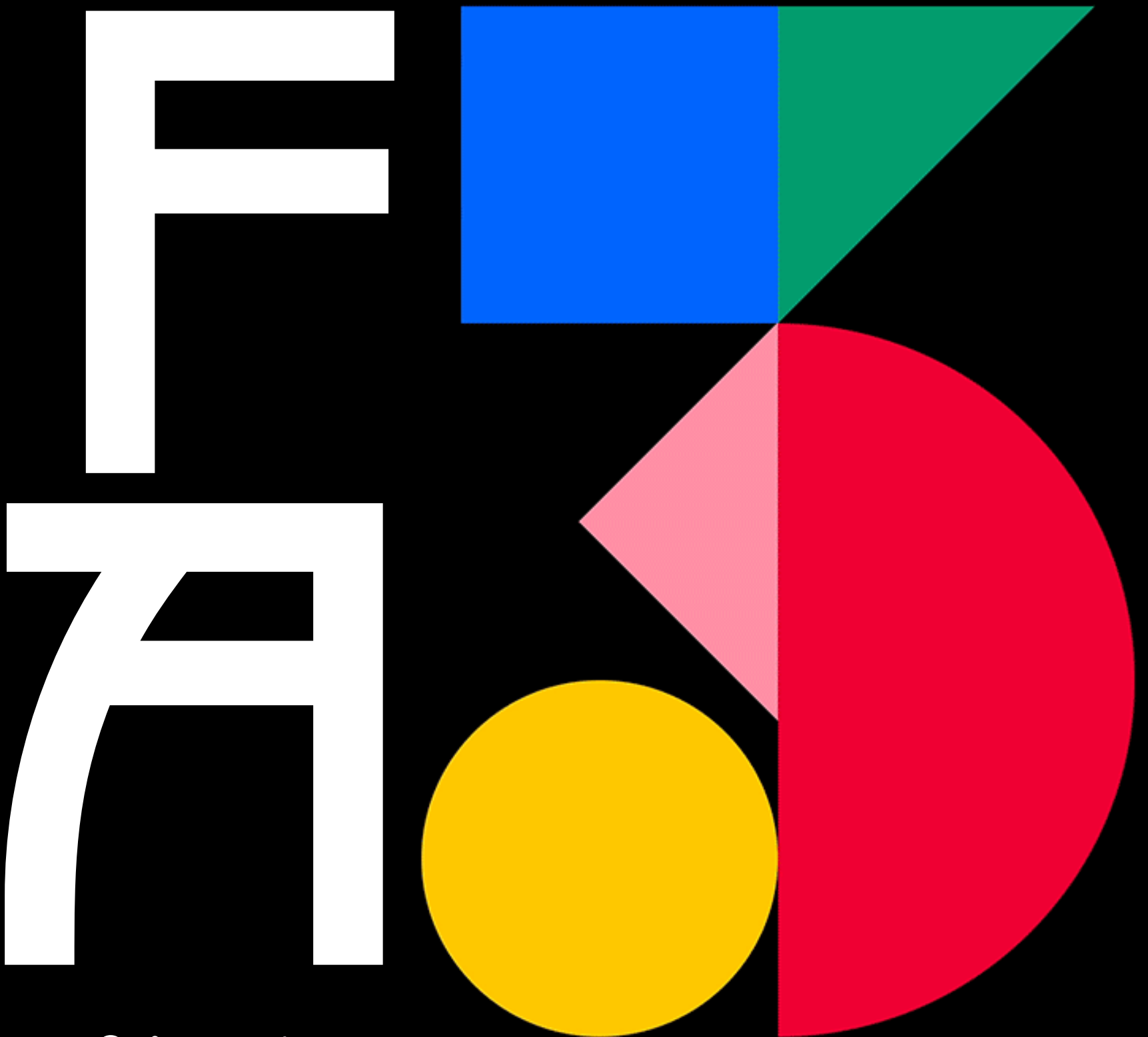
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