

## Contemporary Art

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### ABSTRACT

Technological development is affecting almost all the facet of life and disciplines of knowledge hence art is not the exception. Modern Art is not limited to the paint and canvases only. This study is conducted; referring to the changes in the art practices and examines some recent developments in contemporary Indian Arts. Today it's combining, connecting or involving two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines. It represents the fusion of two or more professions, technologies, departments, or the like.

*The wise words of the French author Marcel Proust: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes".*

Evidently, art has no definite language, and no individual mediums instead it changes with the passage of time, availability of mediums and the interest or knowledge of the artist. It depends upon creator that how he wants to convey his message and which medium he prefers. In this era of technology and novelties, artists are seeking their recognition and value their personal expression. They have freed themselves from the bindings of 'criteria', other 'constraints' and use of conventional mediums while adopting the new ways of expression that are enhancing the vocabulary of art. The traditional style of painting with brush and carving/moulding stone/metal into sculpture has transformed into a vast interdisciplinary conjunction of practices. So entire scenario of modern art, which is ostensibly inviting a careful analysis of existing and ongoing art practices, has become a motivation for this study. And also questioning the same time, whether, Contemporary Indian artists are employing a myriad of media into their works to express themselves or just blindly following the west without any honest self intuition?

*The words of P. N. Mago that he has stated in his book about contemporary Indian Art (Mago, 2001, p. 195): "What happened in the art scene of Europe yesterday seems to be happening in India today" appears wholly accurate.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is evident through the discoveries that art has always remained with the existence of human being. In ancient period it was in the form of wall paintings such as in Ajanta and Ellora caves later on in Pala, Rajasthani, Mughal, & Pahari Period it was in the shape of Miniature and manuscripts, initially painted on Palm leaf, and clothes afterward on papers. In 19th century (Tanjore Art) paintings has been decorated with gold, precious stones, and glass pieces were studded to it. Bengal School of early 20th Century is world famous for the wash technique of painting on paper. Henceforth the most preferred surface for the painting which was canvas came into vogue with the work of progressive Artists groups.

### Modern Art Practices in India

Last twenty-five years witnessed many exciting, significant development in the medium, depiction, and the whole process of art making that changed the face of contemporary Indian art scene. Factors such as the growing discourses on art and contemporary artist's reflective turn upon art and its past recorded history influenced the work of artists in different ways. Now, art is evolving from previously laid out barriers and has become a cluster of media such as installation art, video art, performance art, conceptual art and the new buzz of media art. This is because they want to convey their message in a language that is prevalent nowadays and to create novelty in their stylistic manner. Through this myriad of media, they register their prominence into a media driven, techno-world which has become a global village. The art practices and its development does not happen in a vacuum, rather contemporary artists live in the society and respond to the events and issues of their time. They select their symbols, technique, medium, and style for a work of art from the wide variety of paraphernalia that is available today. The combination of newer materials and images with inclusion at international biennales and galleries since the late 1990s has proved to be heady. Paintings and mixed media sculptural installations made since the new millennium reflect the changing face of Indian art world: of older galleries refurbished into larger more expensive premises, in turn showing large masculinist formats in painting and installation. Interdisciplinary art began to appear in India since the inception of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but the conditions for the growth of this art approach existed in the works of Vivan Sundaram, Nalini Malani, Ved Nayar, and Romana Hussain in 1990s. The glimpse of Interdisciplinary art in India is apparent in the work of artist tactician M. F Hussain. Husain's artistic practices have crossed boundaries of traditional mediums of art and made installations for the first time later on it became a common practice in India. Husain

strewed newspapers at the Jehangir Art Gallery in 1992 showing great devastation to the mounting of the Last Supper in Red and the Last Supper in Blue in 1993, his expansive oeuvre moves seamlessly from one medium to the other. He had also made films. He had made a highly innovative installation, Theatre of the Absurd, a perception of violence and its aftermath, at the Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi, in 1990 which created a stir among art lovers in the capital. In the same decade, Vivan Sundaram and Ved Nayar emerged as the most consistent practitioners of Installation art in India. Other artists who have been contributing towards creative installations and conceptual art include Amaranth Sehgal, Satish Gujral, Gogi Saroj Pal and Ratnabali Kant. The work of these artists cannot be defined as painting, drawing, sculpture or Installation but has carved a niche for itself somewhere in between all these mediums. Their work is an ephemeral confluence of violence, nationalism, religion and femininity and questions each of their positions in Modern India.

The decade of the 1990's became the catalyst for a paradigm shift in the context of Modern Indian Art. There seems a lot of development, change and a kind of upheaval in art practices. At that time the country was facing a particular contradiction of technology and its effect across the nation. One phase of India was presenting the incomplete process of modernization and the complicated role of technology, its various possibilities, and applications. The mobilization of technology for political gain has acquired a colossal dimension. At that very moment, Modern Indian artists looked wisely at the existing situation, and they started to use technology in their artworks.

From 1990 onwards, the sculpture has become a hugely expanded horde of concerns, mainly regarding the use of varied materials in relation to expressive needs, and it developed gradually in harmony with new shifts in ideology and paradigm which is evident in the works of contemporary artists. Sculptors have broadened the criteria for selecting the materials and technique up to the limits of their own imaginations. The context and location of sculpture in India has considerably changed. The shift away from the unitary piece to installation, often incorporating other media, has brought fresh attention to bear on the use of material and form. The growing use of ephemeral material, light and sound with sculpture has redefined the way in which a work is perceived. Fresh locations like international biennales, art fairs, global institutional buying as well as international collectors have encouraged incrementally ambitious indoor projects, which has blurred the line between sculpture and sculptural installation. Traditional media like stone and metal changed into new treatments and unusual combinations, and inventive techniques like site-specific installations and kinetic sculpture gained popularity.

Besides, boundaries between traditional disciplines like painting and sculpture were dissolved, with artists like Anita Dube, and Navjot Altaf, Sudarshan Shetty, Anandajit Ray, Jagannath Panda and G.R. Iranna, hybridizing the two through their practices.

### **Modern Art Practices in Interdisciplinary manner**

According to the Dutch curator Johan Pijnappel, artist in India begun to work with video only after the 1990s, because of the established media of painting and sculpture remaining a dominant force in Indian cultural life. Initially, the video was employed as a component or element in a wider or more diverse approach. For example, Nalini Malani produced a single channel documentary of her site-specific installation *City of Desires* (1992), and Vivan Sundaram incorporated video screens into his sculpture and installation *House from House/Boat* (1994). However, since the mid-1990s there has been an increasing number of younger Indian artists working with video. Many of them first encountered the medium whilst studying abroad – mostly in the USA, the UK, and Australia, and on their return from their education continued to work with the medium. This group includes Ranbir Kaleka; *Man with a Cockerel* (2002), Subba Ghosh, *Remains of a Breath* (2001), Sonia Khurana, *Bird* (1999), Tejal Shah, *I Love My India* (2003), and *What Are You?* (2006), Eleena Banik, *An Urban Scape* (2004) and Umesh Maddanahalli, *Between Myth and History* (2001). Subodh Gupta (2016) highlights the distinction between notions of purity and impurity through the material he uses, and thus satirizes the Indian obsession with caste boundaries. Shilpa Gupta (b. 1976), a Mumbai-based artist has occupied streets, built websites, sang songs, strung up fairy lights, handled cloth stained with menstrual blood- all to create art that will be striking to both a connoisseur and a spontaneous onlooker. Her art often described by art critics and writers as “unpredictable”. The work by Jitish Kallat at the Nature Morte booth appeared like a flat illuminated document at the end of a tunnel. Viewers go through the fog-laden tunnel with their bodies touching Gandhi's words (2010-2016). Other artists such as Sheela Gowda, Hema Upadhyay, L.N.Tallur, Pushpamala N., T.V.Santosh, Nalini Malani, Bharti Kher, Rina Banerjee, Anita Dube, and Sheba Chhachhi to name a few, are on the forefront who employs new media to convey relevant issues of the world in their own distinctive way of expression. These artists are the vanguard of interdisciplinary art practices in India. The works of these artists have new hierarchy of materials where found and ready-made objects, video and software technology, join marble and oil paint in the realm of installation.

Video art in India started at the time of political turmoil and 1992/93 Mumbai riots, and with its inception, the development and change took place in the content of visual arts. After few years

the younger generation of artists who had already become acquainted with video whilst cramming abroad, found themselves in a similar dilemma at the time of the devastating Gujarat violence of 2002. The widespread riots, political conditions directly affected the society as well as artists and accelerated the demand for moving out of the "frame". So, a large number of single channel videos produced by the artists at that time. The artists even first timers no longer focused the video camera on themselves, but on the horrific world outside, while trying to make sense of the insane situation. Other artists such as Vivan Sundaram and Rumanna Hussain broke out of the painting frame and started to present their ideas through the medium of installations with all kinds of materials including video, photographs, ordinary building construction material, ephemeral wall drawings and more. Over time, video matured into the preferred medium.

The debate around issues of identity, indigenism and communalism, rapid interference of technology in all disciplines, Indian social polity, and political upheaval up to the new millennium affected the art practices. Indian art has become increasingly global in its address through the effects of new media, international residencies, art fairs, biennales, galleries and a fluid globalized vocabulary to enter into the discourse. Through new media and installation, there is a reworking of the subjective/political space occupied by the artist. This matrix of highly interwoven political, social and economic conditions having new questions, different concerns borne the idea of vex modernity in India. India's eager embrace of technology, the liberal and imaginative use of the photograph, and an alliance with international modernities contribute to the beginning of contemporary art practices in interdisciplinary manner. The blur between street and studio, traditional and contemporary media, ideologies and practices, feeds back into the particular identity that Indian art has so consciously created.

Robert Rauschenberg remarks about art in America during the 1960s, and the 1970s seem curiously to be true for the present day art scene in India: *"Today's art is not merely shown; it puts on a show and solicits audience participation. Action paintings invites the spectator's engagement in the artist's creative act. Along with the active art appears the artist-actor. In happenings, painters and sculptors build props, compose scenes and perform."*

### **Rationale:**

With the dawn of modern art in interdisciplinary manner in India, the young generation of artist is producing their work by experimenting, combining, connecting, and involving different academic/scientific/artistic disciplines. In this way, they are parting from conventional mediums into modern mediums of art such as mixed media installations, site-specific installations, performance,

Kinetic Sculptures, video art, interactive art, digital prints and mechanical art, found objects and photography. Rather limiting themselves to the traditional mediums of art, they are frequently using metals, wood, glass, steel, plastic, light bulbs, fibreglass, concrete, stone, video and digital art, etc. These artists are undisputedly creating hegemony in contemporary art.

Continuously increasing multidisciplinary practices in modern art have begotten certain issues and challenges related to the exhibition and preservation of artworks. Presenters often do not have suitable technical facilities to exhibit innovative work involving advanced digital technologies. “Today we paint with absolute freedom for contents and techniques, almost anarchic; save that we are governed by one or two sound elemental and eternal laws, of aesthetic order, plastic coordination, and color composition,” wrote Souza in his manifesto for the Bombay Progressives Art Exhibition in 1948. Nevertheless, galleries and museums are expanding their proficiency to represent these multidisciplinary artworks but still at this juncture; modern Indian art needs to be reviewed in the context of interdisciplinarity and plurality and against continuities and discontinuities with traditions. Thus, due to the lacing of systematic, defined and fruitful development, the Indian Contemporary art becoming emerging as more degraded expressions in terms of comparatively to traditional practices over the periods.

*‘After Midnight’* illuminated avant-garde practices within two historical moments of Indian art through the juxtaposition of post-independence and globalization as experienced in India. With this group of contemporary artists poised as the phoenix, ready to rise from the ashes of the internationalism experienced by the Progressives, the challenges that lie ahead for India as a nation come into focus. Modern Indian art has undergone vital changes over the last 50 years. As we approach a new millennium, individual and global responsibility whether in art or in any other aspect of life, have become mutually more dependent than ever before. In the West, the new holistic concept of art has been borne out by the works of many artists over the decades. Where does we especially India, see its place in this new and all-embracing creative process?

Indian fine arts tradition belonging to the prehistoric age . Some art forms are still in surviving condition and some are in practice with dying situations with degraded forms. The blind imitation of western acts and behaves without any deep intuition, one cannot get any benefits. Traditional fine arts are the integrated part of Indian life style. Bygone days of Indian Arts were great. We wrote, we sang, we acted, we built, we painted, we carved, we lived, we invented and we poured ourselves out on every side to reach the ultimate truth, which helped towards betterment, empowerment and sustainable self reliance of Human kind through regular practice in day to day life, there was tremendous excitement and cultural richness.

Hegel prized the beauty of art above that of nature. Nature is the source and foundation of all our sentient and cognitive aspects. And aesthetics, as a branch of the study of human sensibilities, has always been concerned about the changes happening in the relationship between human beings and nature. Even the foundational theories of art laid by Plato in the West and Bharata in India are based on nature and human responses to them. Though a human being is part and parcel of nature, his or her creativity is part of a culture. Our conceptions of nature may vary and each version may find independent reasons for thinking its object beautiful and purposeful. Art is so powerful a medium that disturbing elements are meek and sooner or later wither away. Visual art demonstrates the inner depth of beauty in human life and thereby sends a very powerful message.

*It is said that till man sets his relationship with nature right he cannot set himself right.*

### **Conclusion:**

‘Art’, which has always devised means to rejuvenate the relationship of Man and Nature, Man and the Creator, has, in recent years, missing the purposes and discussing more of human conflicts. Traditional Indian theories had highly developed treatises elaborating upon the formal processes that led to an experiential ‘object’ of transformation and bliss i.e. *Ananda*. The attempt is to call for analytical framework that semiotic theory can provide to the works of Indian Artists who have, ‘ontologically progressed beyond the initial appeal of modernism and the attendant desire to use acknowledged western idioms. More than anything else, they respond to politics, and work to impact social justice. This is where tradition appears-via narrative’ (Seid, 2007, P13).

Art was integral to ordinary life and is deeply woven into the religious warp and secular weft of India.

When we says Art, it means an aesthetic approaches. But now, when one says Modern Art, it means the Issues. The issues most probably with social and political dilemmas of globalised world and there lies the thin lines which have been rectified between ‘Realistic approach to place the element in presentational manner called Installation Art, Decorative side of Art, Intellectual side of Art and Art for Bliss.

*“It is the essence of art to bring back into order the multiplicity of nature, and it is in this sense that he (the artist), prepares all creatures to return to God.”*

*-Anand K.Coomaraswamy*

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