

Contemporary Art in Indian Context

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Abstract:

This article has a focus on Contemporary Art in Indian context. Through this article emphasizes upon understanding the changes in Contemporary Art over a period of time in India right from its evolution to the economic liberalization period than in 1990's and finally in the current 21st century. The article also gives an insight into the various techniques and methods adopted by Indian Contemporary Artists over a period of time and how the different generations of artists adopted different techniques in different genres. Finally the article also gives an insight into the current scenario of Indian Contemporary Art and the Contemporary Artists reach to the world economy over a period of time.
key words: Contemporary Art, Contemporary Artists, Indian Art, 21st Century Art, Modern Day Art

Contemporary Art

Contemporary Art refers to art – namely, painting, sculpture, photography, installation, performance and video art- produced today. Though seemingly simple, the details surrounding this definition are often a bit fuzzy, as different individuals' interpretations of “today” may widely vary. Therefore the exact starting point of the genre is still debated, however many art historians consider the late 1960's (the end of modern art or modernism) to be an adequate estimate.

Evolution of Contemporary Art in India

The origin and evolution of Indian Contemporary Art takes us back to the establishment and emergence of Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, which was founded by eminent contemporary artists – K.H. Ara, S.K. Bakre, H.A. Gade, M.F. Hussain, S.H. Raza and F.N. Souza in 1952. These artists institutes newest methods and techniques of expressing thoughts in the post – colonial India. Though the group got dissolved in 1956, it played pivotal role in changing the appearance and structure of Indian Art fraternity.

Independence and its Impact

The country's independence from colonial rule in 1947 might have seemed like the right moment for a form of expression that would match the significance of the occasion. However, it appears that art does not always take its cues from events seen as historical or defining; and if it does, seems to make references that appear to veer sharply from the direct. The so-called 'artists of transition', for instance, seem to be engrossed in a contemplation of life's simpler pursuits, the everyday, small and trivial. Perhaps it was a way of suggesting that now that the overriding objective had been attained, it was time to savour the pure sense of being alive. These artists, among them Sailoz Mukherjea, [N.S. Bendre](#), [K.K. Hebbar](#) and Shiavax Chavda, seemed at peace with life around them, and aimed to capture its fleeting, joyous moments. This innocent interlude is characterised by simplified forms and lively colours.

The response of the Bombay Progressive Artists Group too, seemed apolitical, the fact of their coming together in the year of Independence being purely coincidental. What these artists were more exercised about was the fact that art as practised in India till then had to change. Their manifesto called for a total break with the past and its stultifying constraints, both cultural and artistic.

Sculptors, too, broke away from the naturalism and portraiture of colonial art and experimented with different materials and techniques to lend a more personal and reflective quality to their work. Among the modern vanguard of Indian sculptors were Dhanraj Bhagat, [Sankho Chaudhuri](#), [Adi Davierwalla](#), Pillo Pochkhanwalla and [Meera Mukherjee](#). In addition, printmakers like [Krishna Reddy](#) and [Jyoti Bhatt](#) championed means of artistic

expression that had not been taught and explored in India during the preceding decades, opening up several new possibilities for artists in the country.



F.N. Souza – Balzac Etcetera, 1971

View of a Village colored street by
S.H. Raza, 1948

Economic Liberalization (Post 90's Period)

The process of economic liberalization in 90's in India further resulted into contemporary Indian art to respond to both western and indigenous influences. A number of distinguished contemporary artists, mostly born in post independence years have responded to this changing reality. For example, artists Devajit Roy introduced a new genre of art called Pseudo realism, in which he used offbeat colours and abstract shapes to create imagery depicting regular scenes of Indian Life. The ongoing process of globalization has resulted into contemporary Indian art to respond to both western and indigenous influences. A number of distinguished contemporary Indian artists, mostly born in post-independence years have responded to this changing reality.

Modern day artists have responded to the middle class of India, its ambitions, trials, and tribulations. In their work they have reinterpreted the iconic, at times drawing on historical and mythological sources, which often reveal a metaphor for the country's new realities. Their work is also characterized by a paradigm shift in the materials used thereby making the whole experience much more versatile.

Contemporary artists continue to use a varied vocabulary of abstract and representational forms to convey their ideas. It is important to remember that the art of our time did not develop in a vacuum; rather it reflects the social and political concerns of its cultural context.



Turning the World Upside Down by Anish Kapoor



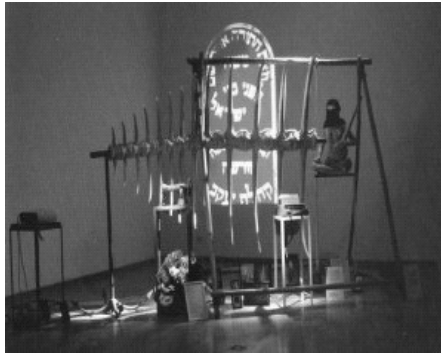
Sitting Bridgette by Devajyoti Ray

21st Century

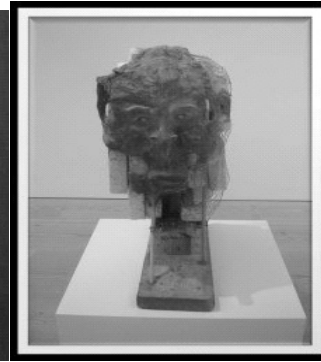
The new generation of artists are experimental as well as expressive in blending traditional art forms like drawing, painting, photography, collage with technologically driven art medium like video, graphic and animation. In the modern approach they are impressively creative and rationally sensitive to highlight the complex issues of the present era. The new digital medium equipped them to visualize their ideas and thoughts. They have assimilated in observing the events around them and they are pretty successful in getting the attention of worldwide audiences through their stimulating images.

These shifting strategies to engage the viewer show how contemporary art's significance exists beyond the object itself. Its meaning develops from cultural discourse, interpretation and a range of individual understandings, in addition to the formal and conceptual problems that first motivated the artist. In this way, the art of our times may serve as a catalyst for an on-going process of open discussion and intellectual enquiry about the world today.

Over the last many years Indian Contemporary Art has taken a lead and has gone global, grabbing attention from art collectors, curators and auction houses across the globe. It is finding its ways from sculptures to paintings and pottery to fine dining crockery. Eminent contemporary artists like T.V. Santosh, AtulDodiya, Subodh Gupta and Jitish Kallat are some of the most sought after Indian artists who are steering a host of competing buyers. In addition to a demand for the paintings by some known Indian artists, there is also a demand for work by new emerging artists.



Construction De[Con]struction [Re]construction,
Vibha Galhotra, 2012



Public Notice 2, Jitish Kallat

Conclusion

As a result of globalization of world economy during last decade, support base of Indian Contemporary Art has also got transformed. Apart from being supported by business houses, government agencies and royal rich families, discerning Indian middle class which also benefited from economic growth has been supporting Indian Contemporary Art in a big way. This new found love for art has given immense sense of identity and pride to globetrotting professional Indians during first decade of 21st Century. One can hope that Indian Contemporary Artists will be more at ease in experimenting and breaking new grounds in coming years.

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