

## THE FANTASTIC WORLD OF PRITPAL SINGH POLLY'S SCRAP SCULPTURE

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### **Abstract**

*There are uncountable objects around us that become unusable with the passage of time. People either throw away these unused scrap especially of iron, steel, bronze etc. or sell them to the junk shop. While, an artist brings these items back to life by molding them into beautiful artworks. An artist has an unlimited imagination that makes an ordinary object special and somewhat unique by giving it an unimagined form and appearance. This research paper deals with one such contemporary sculptor of Punjab- Pritpal Singh Matharu also known as a metal and scrap sculptor whose artworks are a unique combination of material, creativity and aesthetics. Pritpal Singh has been creating many gigantic works of art by giving artistic and aesthetic forms to unusable materials. He has made a unique and distinguished mark in the field of scrap sculpture and is surprising the art world with his artistic skills. He has completely succeeded in changing the perspective of everyone associated with the art of sculpture by giving an artistic form to the useless and discarded materials and objects. Contemporary Punjabi Sculptor and Engineer- Pritpal Singh is also striving to give Chandigarh a unique identity in terms of artistic and aesthetic aspects by giving an artistic form to scrap.*

### **Keywords**

*Chandigarh, Contemporary, Scrap Sculpture, Factory Scrap, Pollybots, Robotics, Metal, Steel.*

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## **Introduction**

There are uncountable objects around us that become unusable with the passage of time. People either throw away these unused scrap especially of iron, steel, bronze etc. or sell them to the junk shop. While, an artist brings these items back to life by molding them into beautiful artworks. An artist has an unlimited imagination that makes an ordinary object special and somewhat unique by giving it an unimagined form and appearance. One can see this unique combination of material, creativity and the method of making the sculpture in the artworks of Pritpal Singh Matharu also known as a metal and scrap sculptor. Pritpal Singh has been creating many gigantic works of art by giving artistic and aesthetic forms to unusable materials.<sup>1</sup> He has made a unique and distinguished mark in the field of scrap sculpture and is surprising the art world with his artistic skills. He has completely succeeded in changing the perspective of everyone associated with the art of sculpture by giving an artistic form to the useless and discarded materials and objects. Perhaps no one would have imagined that sculptures could be created like this. Only a person with an artistic vision can make an effort to give a unique and artistic form to unusable objects by collecting them in a beautiful manner.<sup>2</sup> Such objects take the form of a living sculpture and make people realize their existence. That is why he is leaving a unique mark in the art world by weaving engineering and art into a thread together to make his engineering studies more enjoyable and exciting. When he saw the metal waste lying in the factory, he thought of doing something creative. On the one hand, he wanted to use the unusable objects while, on the other hand he wanted to give them a unique look by creating some forms out of them.

Chandigarh-based engineer Pritpal Singh Matharu nicknamed as 'Polly' by his school friends, paved the way for his own path to create sculptures with his unique skill of transforming useless scrap into fantastic and mesmerizing works of art. In the early stages of his passion for the art of sculpture, he mostly made robots, which he named as 'Pollybots'. Perhaps Polly himself did not know when his hobby had turned into a passion. Just as Nek Chand- a famous sculptor of recycled art gave Chandigarh a unique identity with his 'Rock Garden' and changed the view of the art lovers towards useless objects by creating artworks out of broken cups, plates and stones similarly, Contemporary Punjabi Sculptor and Engineer- Pritpal Singh is also striving to give Chandigarh a unique identity in terms of artistic and aesthetic aspects by giving an artistic form to scrap.

## **Family Background and Inspiration**

Pritpal Singh Matharu was born on 14 August, 1974 in Chandigarh at his maternal home. The rituals were given by his father, the late Mr. Satpal Singh Matharu

and his mother Harminder Kaur Matharu in the form of *Gudhti* which sowed the seeds of art in Pritpal's mind.<sup>3</sup> When Polly used to visit the market with his father during festivals as a child, he used to see shops decorated with colorful garlands. The undecorated junk shop in this market moved Polly's artistic mind. He began to see various artistic forms emerging from the items lying around in the junkshop. By realizing these forms, he started creating works of art from unusable materials. The technical knowledge of making scrap sculptures was inherited from his father who owned an iron factory. While working in the factory for 10 years, he had a natural instinct to see iron being cut and molded every day. He saw all this with his own eyes, due to which he acquired the skills of welding and grinding at the age of just ten. Since the environment around him was filled with creative pursuits, he did not feel the need to go outside to learn all this.

Polly started his artistic journey from childhood with a passion for painting and giving artistic form to the unused cardboard boxes lying around the house. He would never have guessed that his childhood hobby would one day bring him to the public eye as a 'Scrap Sculptor'. Due to this hobby of combining engineering with art, he has been creating scrap sculptures and robotics for over a decade.<sup>4</sup> He has used his inherited creative skills in an artistic manner to the extent that he spends most of his time in the factory, creating artwork, expressing his inner feelings, and creating different shapes from the leftover metal scrap in the factory. In order to strengthen his attachment and faith towards art, he took such a leap that instead of selling the scrap left in the factory to the scrap dealer, he started creating life-like shapes and forms out of the scrap. Encouragement from a friend after seeing Polly's unique artworks served as a kindling for the burning lamp, due to which the flame of passion for art grew longer and succeeded in illuminating the path leading to creating masterpieces. The biggest challenge for him is how to give an aesthetic and artistic form to an artwork created out of scrap.

### **Appreciation and Recognition**

In 2013, he took his first step towards the creation of a scrap sculpture with the help of a co-worker in a factory. He made a model of a scooter from the discarded iron metal scrap lying at the factory godown. According to him, the factory has a great contribution in shaping this unique art form where he looks at different types of iron metal pieces and scrap with an artistic vision which results in creating animals, birds, human faces and robots through welding.<sup>5</sup> This hobby that was started from the factory very soon reached art exhibitions. Whenever he gets time, he totally immerses himself in the world of sculpture. His passion for art has also inspired many art critics who appreciated his artworks immensely. He has won a lot of appreciation by displaying

his artworks in the Annual Art Exhibition at Punjab Kala Bhawan, Chandigarh. According to him, *"My morale has increased with the recognition of my art."*

It is worth mentioning that although Polly has not received any academic training related to art but the artworks created by him meet the standards set for art.<sup>6</sup> Whether there are elements or principles of art, his artworks have the honor of being the adornment of renowned exhibitions. His artworks also have the ability to touch the chords of the hearts of the audience. He believes that art goes hand in hand with the background of man. Art is an important part of our daily life. Wearing clothes, getting ready for a job or office, and even shopping is an art, is that it is necessary for a person to reflect aesthetic feeling in every gesture and posture. Polly believes that social media has given recognition to his artworks in India and abroad. Whenever he shares pictures of his artworks on social media, he gets positive feedback from the general public as well as art critics which motivates him to create more such unique pieces of art.

### **A Flight into the World of Scrap Sculpture**

Polly is creating different series related to robotics that take children to a new imaginative world and also give the message that nothing is useless. Even the things we consider useless have many possibilities of living life hidden in them. Polly is a self-taught artist.<sup>7</sup> He has not received any training from anyone in the genre of sculpture. His passion and dedication have made him to join the ranks of top-notch sculptors in a very short time. He spends his free time in giving shape to the shapeless scrap pieces. He never used fresh pieces of metal to create his artworks, but rather he has the ability to create many forms by artistically combining the leftover parts or pieces of metal. In the early stages, Polly created small sculptures that he could easily place on a table and give them a fantastic shape. Then he felt and saw that people were making large sculptures and he should not be limiting his creations to small sizes. In this way, he started trying his hand at creating large scrap sculptures of 6 to 7 feet in height. When he achieved maturity in these sculptures too, he easily started enjoying making sculptures of 15 to 20 feet while continuing this challenging artistic journey. Now his goal is to create sculptures of up to 30 feet and do something different in the field of sculpture.

Pritpal Polly has always chosen the subject of his sculptures from the surrounding area. The sculptures include robotic figures, animals, birds, and animals such as horses, camels, bulls, elephants, and roosters. In addition, human faces and musical instruments are also included.<sup>8</sup> He has also created a series of robotic figures of animal bodies. Polly's collection of artworks has been exhibited at the Park Chandigarh Club in Sector 48, Chandigarh, Rose Garden, Ludhiana, Airport Road,

Mohali, where the common man as well as lovers of art can enjoy looking at them. Apart from these public places, his artworks have the honor of being the adornment of various art exhibitions. Polly has so far displayed his artworks at various prominent art exhibitions by Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, Arpana Caur Art Gallery, New Delhi, Ek Deshpande, Ludhiana and many more.

Polly has created most of his sculptures in the medium of metal like as steel, brass and iron. The most important thing among his artworks is that he uses metal scraps that are left over or which are of no longer use. He has never taken a new piece of metal to create his scrap sculptures. Rather, it is a challenge for him to create one or the other sculptures from the remaining scrap. He never feels lonely in doing this work rather he derives aesthetic pleasure out of it. Eventually new forms of art keep emerging from this pleasure. Polly has a masterful skill in using the smallest pieces of scrap which allows him to create sculptures with greater subtlety to bring them to life. He is a sculptor who has the ability to make each sculpture not with his hands but with his soul, until perfection and aesthetic pleasure are achieved in the sculpture. The artist should be enough calculative to wrap the work especially at the last and final stage of the sculpture.

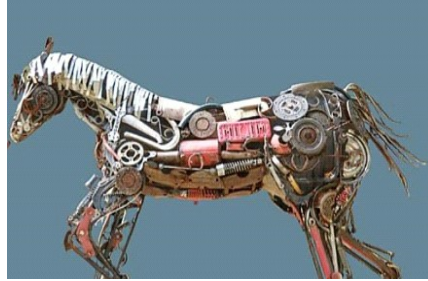
According to Polly, every person can make a sculpture, but it is very difficult to wrap it up until when there are possibilities of doing work in the sculpture as art is such a genre that can never end.<sup>9</sup> In short, the final stage of artwork is equally important and significant to its starting. Every sculptor prepares a drawing before making it, but he admits that he has never prepared a drawing for his sculpture rather it remains or is imprinted in his mind. Polly takes references only for realistic figures of sculptures such as animal, bird or human figures so that he can make figures exactly as realistically as possible. If a piece of metal bothers him because of its size is too big or small, he removes it and replaces it with a piece of the appropriate size and tries to give an aesthetic look to his artwork. On the other hand, if he creates a robotic sculpture, he doesn't take any references but rather uses his own imagination.

#### **A Mirror to some of his Prominent Scrap Sculptures:**

**Horse:** The sculpture of a horse created by Pritpal Polly is one of his most magnificent creations inspired by Nature. Here the figure of the horse is shown as a symbol of energy, power and youth means of never getting old. According to Polly's perspective, this horse represents my ability to do work very quickly without getting exhausted. Its rapidly increasing steps towards its destination represent my passion. Its tail waving in the air describes its fast speed and power. Every part of its body is shown full of motion. Its limbs are shown with more firm and strong muscles. The sculptor has given the sculpture a unique and realistic look by using each piece of

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scrap with great aesthetic taste. The muscles, body parts and hair of the horse have been created in a very realistic way. Although, it is made in the medium of metal scrap but it gives a glimpse of a real horse. **(Figure: 1)**



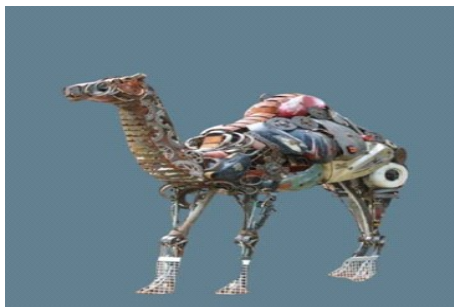
**Figure 1:** ‘Horse’, 3ms X 1m X 2ms, Scrap Metal, 2024

**Rooster:** The sculpture of a rooster made by Polly is one of his masterpiece sculptures. The special thing about this sculpture is that its wings are not painted after making the sculpture, but the sculptor uses colored scrap pieces which gives the illusion of a real rooster. The rooster does not only convey the message to the people to stay awake, but also inspires them to fulfill their responsibilities on time. **(Figure: 2)**



**Figure 2:** ‘Rooster’, 3ms X 1m X 2ms, Scrap Metal, 2024

**Camel:** The scrap sculpture representing the figure of a camel is created very realistically and aesthetically. Camel is also called ‘The Ship of the Desert’. Camel always has the ability to travel long distances and face harsh difficulties. The depiction of camel is found in many folklores of Punjab. When the camel’s hump is taken away by the thieves, the camel gives up its hump in the desert and gives up its life. It seems as if the long neck of the camel is looking towards its destination. The movement of its feet seems to be moving towards its destination with great ease. Its physical structure has been presented very well by the sculptor. Each piece of scrap has been fitted with great understanding and experience to make the charming figure of the camel. **(Figure: 3)**



**Figure 3:** 'Camel', 4ms X 1m X 3ms, Scrap Metal, 2024

**Robot:** The robotics sculptures created by Polly are a combination of his art and engineering. This is the reason why he calls his robotic sculptures 'Pollybots'. He has entered the field of sculpture with fresh steps by creating his robotic sculptures. Robotics is one of the most transformative technologies of the present era which the artist has described through his art. It is a combination of his imagination and creativity. Polly says that the man of the present era has invented 'a Robot' to fulfill the responsibilities of mankind due to one's hectic time schedule. This big sculpture of the robot by Polly also shows the responsibilities of the man. In the era of technology, although today's man works like a robot but still his emotions are real is that original whereas robots in the true sense are entirely devoid of any such emotions but there is no match in terms of their accuracy and speed which is much higher than that of humans. **(Figure: 4)**



**Figure 4:** 'Robot', 5ms X 1.5ms X 1.5ms, Scrap Metal, 2023

**Human Face:** Polly has not limited the subject matter of his artworks to animals and birds only, but he has also transformed human faces from fictional robots through his unique art. His aesthetic power regarding physical structure is of a high order. The artworks created by Polly meet the standards set for art. He has a

remarkable understanding of using scarp pieces at the best and most suitable place to get maximum advantage. The human face created by him is one of his most unique works of art. Each part of the face has been created with great beauty, simplicity and skill. The eye of the face is showing spirituality as if he is dreaming a blissful dream. The lips have been shown in a very good way. The slight smile on the lips expresses his spiritual happiness. The sculptor has described the unique feeling in the tender heart of man very earnestly. **(Figure: 5)**



**Figure 5:** Human Face', 3.5ms X 1.5ms X 1m, Scrap Metal, 2024

### **Conclusion**

Even after the artistic and creative journey of the last one decade, Pritpal Polly's exploration of unique and diverse experiments in the field of sculpture is still ongoing. He believes that art is infinite and can be enjoyed by man throughout his life. He is always in search of new subjects, forms and ideas. Due to this, his art is completely successful in making its identity in the world of scrap sculpture through a unique medium. He is contributing his due share in the genre of Contemporary Sculpture of Punjab. His contribution will not only increase the prestige of sculpture, but will also be an inspiration for every person coming into the field of sculpture. His passion for art is taking a leap from the factory to homes, art galleries and art exhibitions. The mystical and emotional creation and creativity flow like blood in the veins of his sculptures.

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