



THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN CONTEMPORARY ART : BLENDING TRADITION WITH MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of Indian contemporary art spans a dynamic journey from its beginning to the present day. Rooted in diverse cultural traditions, artists have navigated through changing socio-political landscapes. From the early influences of modernism to the embrace of indigenous narratives, Indian contemporary art reflects a fusion of tradition and innovation. The artists exemplify this evolution addressing societal changes, identity politics, and global influences.

KEYWORDS : Contemporary, Indian art, Creative, Modern art, Global art

Contemporary Indian art, with its kaleidoscope of colours and diverse expressions, stands as a testament to the dynamic evolution it has undergone over the decades. From the early pioneers who bridged tradition and modernity to the avant-garde movements shaping today's artistic landscape, the journey of Indian contemporary art is a fascinating exploration of creativity and cultural transformation.

In the mid-20th century, artists like M.F. Hussain, S.H. Raza, F.N. Souza embarked on a transformative journey, breaking away from the academic traditions. Their bold experimentation with styles and themes laid the foundation for what would later be recognized as Indian contemporary art, introducing a departure from the rigid confines of conventional artistic norms.

The Progressive Artists' Group, formed in the post-independence era, played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Indian contemporary art. Infusing a spirit of modernism, artists within the group sought to harmonize global influences with indigenous themes. This period marked a crucial shift as artists grappled with identity, tradition and the changing socio-political landscape. Pushpalata N. is known for her photographic and performance art, often challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Through her work, she addresses societal norms and cultural identity, contributing to a broader dialogue on social issues in contemporary India. Bhupen Khakhar on the other hand, was a prominent painter who dealt with themes of sexuality, identity, and politics. His art often depicted the complexities of human relationships and the intersection of personal and political spheres. Khakhar's work engaged with issues relevant to society, offering a unique perspective on the political and cultural landscape. Sudhir Patwardhan, a renowned painter, focuses on urban scenes, portraying the human condition within the cityscape. Natraj Sharma's art often explores urban landscapes, capturing the changing dynamics of city life. Raghubir Singh, known for his photography, extensively documented urban life in India. His works provide a visual narrative of the urban landscape, reflecting the vibrant and diverse aspects of the country. Ram Rahman, though his photography and activism, addresses urban issues, including social and political aspects, contributing to a nuanced understanding of urban complexities. Gulam Mohammed Sheikh's art often explores cultural and urban spaces, examining the intersections of tradition and modernity, contributing a broader discourse on the evolving nature of urban environments in India.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a surge in artistic expressions centred around identity. Artists like Bharati Kher, Subodh Gupta and Atul Dodiya began to explore themes related to cultural heritage, diaspora, and individual identity, this introspective phase added layers of complexity to contemporary Indian art, capturing the essence of a nation in flux. Contemporary Indian art marked by a rich diversity of

styles, techniques and mediums often involved a critical engagement with historical and creative narratives. Artists often addressed social issues such as identity, gender, caste, and environmental concerns drawing inspiration from traditional roots while embracing global influences. Artists examined traditional gender roles and narratives providing feminist perspectives on historical stories and social structures. What created a hybrid aesthetic. This fusion reflected the interconnectedness of cultures in the modern world.

The turn of the century brought forth a wave of artists exploring new media and unconventional mediums. The distinction between various art forms, such as painting, sculpture, and performance became fluid. Traditional art forms got often integrated into interdisciplinary projects collaborating with artists from other fields such as dance, literature, music. This collaborative approach expanded the possibilities of expression. From video installations to performance art, practitioners like Shilpa Gupta and Raqs Media Collective embraced a multidisciplinary approach, pushing the boundaries of artistic expression by challenging the traditional definition of visual art and questioning the established norms.

As the world became more interconnected, Indian artists engaged in a global dialogue. Participating in international exhibitions and residencies, creators such as Jitish Kallat and Subodh Gupta not only gained exposure but also contributed to the diversity of global contemporary art, infusing Indian narratives into the broader artistic conversation what reflects the intricate interplay between politics, society and the state. Artists engage with current issues, cultural shifts, and historical narratives, offering a lens into the complex fabric of Indian life. Political commentary, social critiques, and reflections on state policies can be found in various mediums, shaping a dialogue between art and the broader context in which it exists. Nalini Malini's installations and video projections narrating the national political histories, In the works of the prominent Indian contemporary artists Vivan Sundaram, Rummana Hussain, N.N. Rimmzon, Jitish Kallat religious violence and social riots have been explored as themes. Sundaram's installations often reflect on communal tensions, while Kallat's art engages with political and social issues, including the impact of riots. Rummana Hussain's works address the human cost of violence, providing a poignant commentary on communal conflicts. N.N. Rimmzon's Works subtly convey the aftermath of religious strife, and Navjot Singh's multidisciplinary approach delves into the complexities of identity and communal discord. Collectively, their artworks contribute to a nuanced dialogue on the impact of religious violence on Indian society.

In the works of Indian contemporary artists, tradition is often reiterated through lens of reinterpretation and modern perspectives. Artists like Bharati Kher, Subodh Gupta, and Anita

Dube infuse traditional elements into their art, bringing the gap between the past and present. Kher, for instance, incorporates bindis into her sculptures creating a contemporary narrative rooted in tradition. Gupta uses everyday objects with cultural significance to explore global themes, offering a fresh perspective on tradition in the context of modernity. Dube through her installations, reimagines traditional symbols, providing a platform for dialogue between tradition and contemporary discourse. Ravinder Reddy, Nilima Sheikh, and Ranbir Kaleka exemplify the rethinking of tradition in Indian contemporary art through distinct approaches. Ravinder Reddy challenges traditional sculpture by merging classical forms with a contemporary aesthetic. His large-scale, vibrant sculptures of female heads infuse ancient iconography with a bold, contemporary presentation, promoting viewers to reassess conventional artistic norms. Nilima sheikh employs traditional Pahari miniature painting techniques to address contemporary socio-political issues. Through her intricate works, she reimagines traditional storytelling, bridging historical narratives with contemporary concerns, showcasing a dynamic intersection of the old and the new. Ranbir Kaleka, known for his video art, navigates the fusion of traditional Indian miniature painting with digital media. His works often explore complex narratives, creating a dialogue between tradition and modernity through a synthesis of techniques, offering a fresh perspective on cultural continuity.

In these artists' works, tradition undergoes a thoughtful re-evaluation, demonstrating how artistic expression can transcend temporal boundaries while engaging with the rich heritage of Indian culture. In this way, Indian contemporary artists breathe new life into tradition, fostering a dynamic and evolving cultural landscape.

In the 21st century, the digital revolution has played a transformative role in how art is created, consumed, and shared. Artists leverage technology to amplify their voices, reaching a global audience through virtual exhibitions, online platforms, and social media, further blurring the lines between local and global artistic discourse. In conclusion, the evolution of Indian contemporary art is a captivating narrative of resilience, innovation, and cultural metamorphosis. From the pioneers who dared to challenge conventions to the contemporary artists navigating a digital age, each chapter contributes to a vibrant tapestry that reflects the spirit of a nation in constant evolution.

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