Research Paper Fine Arts

# Fine Art Pedagogy in India And Impact of New Media Art

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**ABSTRACT**

*Fine Art pedagogy in India has a long history and it is primarily based on three aspects the colonial, indigenous trends and radical perspective. Today the impact of New Media Art is eye-catching in all major art institutions and gallery spaces. The conventional curriculum in Fine Art requires a new model which occupies the new practices in contemporary art. This paper try to evaluate and put forward some of the important facts and ideas to incorporate with in the Fine Art pedagogy, and bring forth a point that today New Media Art is gaining momentum in all leading art schools in India, so the curriculum require fresh framing which correspondingly move with the changing trends in fine art nationally and internationally.*

**Keywords : Fine Art pedagogy, New Media Art, Changing trends Nationally & Internationally, Curriculum, Contemporary Art.**

**PRELUDE**

Before we begin our discourse on "**Impact of New Media art**" with in the art schools in India, let us locate the origin of new media art from Western historical perspective and how its roots are firmly grounded in Indian soil at the threshold of 21st century. Historically at the beginning of the 20th century the long privileged painting tradition of Western World was challenged by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso to incorporate everyday materials in their paintings such as newspapers and rope etc. to extend the periphery of painting beyond paints and within few years it overturned many of the visual conventions that dominated western art since the Renaissance. This practice to incorporate everyday material laid the ground work for innovative art for later generation of artists. Later on the camaraderie of Dadaist and Surrealist, the Dadaist aim to destroy traditional values in art and to create a new art with the use of readymade to replace the old, the gradual shift to Pollock's work as action painter, Abstraction, Conceptualism, Kinetic Art, Minimalism all participated in a profound questioning of traditional painting. Another focus during the century was on "**Experimental Phenomena**" and its use in art making. Questioning on nature of art and breaking taboos and blurring the boundaries between sculpture, photography and painting. This experimental nature of art gave artist a new freedom of expression and to incorporate new materials into their work; Robert Rauschenberg's "Combine Paintings" lie somewhere between painting and sculpture: some works hang on the wall but also rest on the ground; others give a feeling of real space such as eagle; or are subject to actual gravity, the hanging pillow. The material itself becomes a voice to artist for their ideas. It is conspicuous in the works of many artists such as Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Robert Smithson etc. during 60's to 80's.

The technological advancement and the concept of Globalization created a new world of experiences, electronically connected planet provided a bigger platform of discourse and debate, questioning about electronic medias as means of expression for artists, the use of unfamiliar material, the use of body itself as a material for expression, site specific concepts to installing objects at various private and public places. The 60's witnessed a far-reaching reappraisal of what art could be. The practicing artists started creating videos, Installations and digitally manipulating works. The New Media artists moved into the direction of engaging themselves with the world around, using photography, film and video-technologies that record the actual physical world. People around not only became the subject for artists but an active participant in the making of an art work. We witness some of the practitioner at this juncture, "The Singing Sculptures" by Gilbert & George, Cindy Sherman's "Film Stills" in which she uses herself as model in many roles, Tracey Emin's autobiographical works, Nam June Paik renowned as a pioneer of video art, Damien Hirst's, "For the Love of God" consists of a platinum skull, complete with real teeth, and adorned with over 8,000 diamonds and dead animals kept in formaldehyde solution.

On the other hand "**New Media**" in Indian art is relatively a new phenomenon. Its root lies during 50's and 60's in the experimental works of Krishen Khanna, where artist accidentally used wide-angle projector and photography as a tool to execute his works, another contemporary Akbar Padamsee executed a silent, black and white animation based work called "Syzygy" a word derived from Greek technical term meaning the coupling of two things that might be alike or opposed. Unfortunately these works could not receive critical recognition, but this experimentation somewhere reflects a new tendency in Indian artists to see beyond the traditional practice of painting and sculpture. The actual shift can be noticed during the 1990's, when some western curators started projecting works of Indian artists in a new paradigm and the idea of Globalization started dominating the Indian society and new digital technological development became conspicuous in everyday life. This swift change provided the Indian artists an exposure to the mainstream western art and simultaneously to various technological tools to experiment with their visual vocabulary beyond the conventional painting and sculpture tradition to communicate their ideas with the global audience. Early 1990's was the transitional phase for Indian artists with the opening of few private galleries with a vision to provide a venue for cutting edge art works with the use of new media as a tool for their expression. This developed a practice among artists to evolve a deep conceptual insight as they broadened the horizon for execution with new possibilities such as installation, the performance, and video art. Some of the prominent names are Nalini Malani, Vivan Sundaram, Sheba chhachhi, Navjot Altaf, Raqs Media Collective, Subodh Gupta, Bharti Kher, Ranbir Kaleka, Rummana Hussain, Anita Dube, Sonia

Khurana, Shilpa Gupta, Sudarshan Shetty, Tejal Shah, Atul Dodiya, Jitish Kalat, Baiju Parthan, Pushpamala N, who came up with a use of variety of medias like text, sound, Video projection, Sculpture, Photography, Internet, Video projection on painting, Installation, Performance, Digitally manipulated works, Digital prints etc.

**ART FAIR, GALLERY, WORKSHOP, MUSEUMS AND NEW MEDIA ART**

It is also important to intervene into the gallery circuit and other body which were formed with an aim to provide platform for new media practicing artists because only with such platform this practice got momentum and exposure to international art arena. During 1997 one of the important figure Peter Nagy American artists who turned as a curator in India and established a gallery "Nature Morte" in Delhi, promoted innovative gallery practice with the display of photography, installation, video art along with paintings. Another important figure Pooja Sood Art Manager and Curator came up with "Khoj International Artists Workshop" Khirkee village in Delhi the same year and had its first international exchange programme in Modinagar. This vision really took art to the public sphere out of the white cube gallery space and provided a dialogue between artist and the local people. These two directorial giants curated several activities and shows based on New Media Practice including cultural exchange with international artists in residence programmes. One of the memorable events in 2008 was "Public Art Festival", 48 degree celceus Public. Art. Ecology, a combined initiative of Goethe Institut/ Max Mueller Bhavan and GTZ, an experiment set within the capital metropolitan city of Delhi. The ambition of this project was to cross-examine the teetering ecology of the city through the prism of contemporary art and Pooja Sood was one of the team members to conceptualize the event. She is also a curator of the Apeejay Media Gallery, the first space in the country for New Media works in early 2000. Beside galleriest and art curators, the art collectors also showed great interest in New Media Art and inspired to establish private museums in the country and raised a debate on the role of museums and their acquisitions. One of the first private museum set up by Lekha and Anupam Poddar named "The Devi Art Foundation". They consistently supported the cutting-edge art forms and established a new philosophy of museums and questioned the role and position of a museum in social framework. In recent times "Kiran Nadar Museum of Art" is another private museum in the country opened in January 2011 focus not merely on collecting art rather providing a platform for cutting-edge art forms and their recent acquisition a work by Subodh Gupta titled "Line of Control" a monumental sculptural installation, visually the giant mushroom cloud composed of steel utensils displayed in a public mall culture. Since 2008 Art Fair in the country augmented the pace for art activities with a global vision and such Fair provided a bigger platform not only for conventional art approaches but brought forward the practice of New Media Art across the globe. In 2012 the Fourth Edition of India Art Fair which was earlier known as India Art Summit successfully concluded in New Delhi. India art fair is the country's premier platform for modern and contemporary art across the globe. This edition featured most of the international and national galleries and leading artists to witness their original works, India Art Fair provide even a larger canvas of art engagements with featuring curated walks, video lounge, speaker's forum, art projects, book launches and other collateral events. Such art fairs across the country providing art students, artists, curators, art historians, gallerist, art educationist a wider platform for art and cultural dialogue and debate and rewrite the definition of Contemporary Art. This coherence of Art Fairs, gallery, private museums, collectors and curators provide an exiting condition for artists to look into diverse mode of expression and some where suggest the root of New Media is firmly grounded in India at the end of the first decade of 21st century.

**ART SCHOOLS AND NEW MEDIA ART**

Above Prelude somewhere suggest a new vision of art practice in India and impose a new vision of restructuring the art pedagogy in the country. Considering the fact that there are quite good number of art schools in India which are offering undergraduate, post graduate and doctorate programme in Fine Arts. These art schools provide a comprehensive knowledge on theoretical as well as practical disciplines under various specializations and also provide extensive research orientation on various areas. It has been observed most of these art schools some where work on the same pedagogical structure since their inception before independence. In India the art schools were established even before independence by the British in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow, Jaipur. Other independent organizations which promoted contemporary art before and after independence were Bombay Art Society established in 1888, All India Fine Arts and Craft Society Delhi established in 1928, The Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta established in 1933. It is quite noticeable today that there is a wide gap between the contemporary mainstream practices of art and the pedagogical structure of Fine Arts Schools in India. From a historical perspective we witness various model for art pedagogy, firstly the colonial period witness art activities based on portraiture, landscape, still life in an accomplished academic style, which were purely based on the British art pedagogy and art school in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta followed the same. Secondly another pedagogic model we come across during pre-independence within Nationalist movement is establishment of Kalabhavan Santiniketan based on indigenous ways of expression and methods and thirdly the most modernist radical school after independence during 1950's is Faculty of Fine Arts M.S.University Baroda and other parallel art school across the country on the same modernist stand consistently pursuit to restructure its educational activities and objectives with the changing demand of time.

In recent time amalgamation of these pedagogical models exist in most of the art school in the country and at this juncture considering the fact of acceptance of New Media art within the gallery circuit, public spaces, Museums, collectors and even within the art schools, somewhere suggest that we require a new pedagogical model for Fine Arts in the country. Proposing a new model for art pedagogy require training in varied new trends which are prevalent in mainstream art practice. The conventional model impart training under varied nomenclatures such as Painting, Drawing, Portraiture, Composition, Printmaking, Photography, Mural, and Sculpture etc. simultaneously the new vision should embark on varied nomenclatures such as New Media Art, Installation art, Video Art, Performance art, Public Art, Site Specific Art, Collaborative Art Projects, Digital Art, and Interactive Art etc. This new vision will provide the multicultural Art Education, Experimental and Research based practice in Artistic visual language, visual cultural studies and Art History. This will also offer thoughtful and innovative materials that challenge the normative practices of art education and traditional art history. New model for art schools can also include other specialized programmes such as Art Management Programme, Curatorial Programme, Experimental Media Art, Museum and Gallery Practices and New Media Art Programmme etc. Such new initiative can be seen in some of the Art and Design School in India, like Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Banglore already offering some of the programmme based on experimental new media art and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar University, Delhi also propose a new model for such programmes under School of Culture and Creative Expressions and other private universities also looking into the same direction as they are in the position to conceptualize new programmes for study.

New Media art practice is gaining momentum in various art schools in India and that is evident in their final year display/ exhibition works. Although it is not part of their curriculum as such even than the new media practice is evident and that is due to more exposure to the students to the mainstream art practice through exhibitions, online galleries, and International art Fairs and other public Art Projects, which are motivating or inspiring them to experiment with the diverse mode of expressions. Students of various disciplines becoming sensitive

to new media art approaches and showing great confidence and interest in their artistic endeavors, even beside the parallel move of routine framework of their syllabi do not restrict them to work within the closed boundaries of course structure. This approach is only visible in some of the leading art institutions in India and rest of the art schools are still into a mode of conventional pedagogy and drawback for such schools lies in the teaching methodology which needs revival in research methodology, theoretical writings and exposure to the recent developments in art. But today such schools should not be seen themselves in isolation because the impact of technology is far reaching to every small corner of life, the need is to gain energy from such changes in society and the globe is electronically connected, hence it is an exiting condition to aim at multidisciplinary and research oriented approach with more emphasis on critical thinking, experimentation and effective observer participation and to provide a new homogeneous pedagogical model for all art schools in India.

**Some of the important Links for New Media Art in India**

- Gallery Nature Morte, New Delhi.
- Khoj International Artists Workshop, Khirkee Extension, New Delhi.
- Apeejay Media Gallery, Delhi, a premier forum committed to showcasing high quality, experimental work in new media and emerging technologies from India and abroad.
- Raqs Media Collective, New Delhi was founded in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta, they play plurality of roles, often as artists, curators, philosophical agents, film makers, writers, computer programmers, etc. and have left deep impact on contemporary culture in India.
- Camp was founded in 2007 by Shaina Anand, Sanjay Bhangar and Ashok Sukumaran. CAMP is not an “artists collective” but a space, in which ideas and energies gather, and become interests and forms. In this process, they try to move beyond binaries of commodity markets vs. ”free culture”, or individual vs. institutional will, to think and to build what is possible, what is equitable, and what is interesting, for the future.
- Centre for Experimental Media Arts (CEMA), Bangalore.
- Srishti School of Art, Design & Technology, Bangalore.
- Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, Haryana.
- Shaina Anand founded Chitrakarkhana – image workshop or picture factory, a fully independent, small scale unit for experimental media in Bombay.
- SARAI a space for research, practice and conversation about the contemporary media and urban constellations founded in 2000 in Delhi.
- The School of Culture and Creative Expression, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi.
- Religare Art Initiative Limited, New Delhi.
- Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, DLF South Court Mall, New Delhi.
- Goethe-Institut Max Mueller Bhavan New Delhi.

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