



An Analysis of Non-Conventional Approach to Printmaking Techniques Practiced by Indian Artists of the 21st Century

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Abstract:

Printmaking is an artistic process based on the principle of transferring images from a matrix onto another surface, most often paper or fabric through traditional techniques: etching, engraving, lithography, etc.

This paper reflects upon how today's modern contemporary artists keeping in touch with traditional style while developing a new style with modern context have expanded to available techniques including serigraphy, collagraphy, mixed media, stencil printing, etc.

In the 21st century, contemporary artworks had broken the isolated barriers to its conventional approach in gallery space. Printmaking has developed a wide range of experiments stretching beyond the boundary of paper prints and has become popular in India through open-air space installation: an interactive approach toward the viewers through new methods of placements and aesthetical installation, public space installation for better public interaction and viewer's opinion for certain social experiments to modern context offering art for everyone rather than isolated space.

Contemporary artwork has not only focused on the techniques and context of art but also on how to make art available to the common people through the reproduction of master copies and the replication of great artists. The contemporary period had shown printmaking concerns turning to be solved. Alternative solutions for printmaking are popping up and art is getting mobilized. There is a slight shift in the attitude of art where non-conventional approaches such as serigraphy, mixed media, and stencil printing are the methods and techniques that are becoming the solution.

A variety of printmaking techniques are evolving in the field of printmaking that can be taken into consideration. New aspects of concepts are getting originated, experiments are also getting popular in this field. Artists are heading forward with the methods and the materials, developing and giving birth to new aesthetical art language which will lead with new possibilities in the future.

Contemporary Indian Artists of the 21st century included in this paper are **Ananda Moy Banerji**, and **Dr. Paula Sengupta** who have been working with innovative methods, modern concerns and approaches, new expressive ways to interact with viewers and approaches to overcome hurdles of old style and traditional techniques.

Keywords: Experimental printmaking, Aesthetic evolution in art, Modern context in art, Contemporary Indian artists, Innovative Printmaking Approaches.

Introduction:

Printmaking was initially used to reproduce different religious texts and manuscripts for distribution. Over time, it started evolving from preservation purposes to creating different works of art and also played a very important role in the involvement of the printing process. It engages an artist's sense of work, which certainly makes printmaking a beautiful experience.

For a printmaker, printmaking is not only an art form but a way we live and think today. It is through printmaking that we have reproduced and preserved most of our earlier art forms for today's generation. It would not be wrong to say that printmaking today has formed a cult, and it is one art form that has become a comfort for a lot of new and talented artists, patrons and enthusiasts.

Since the 1950s artworks were restrictively exhibited only in galleries and private collections, printmaking turned out to be revolutionary because it was easier for an artist to express their art more to the audience, a way to duplicate things instead of redoing them from scratch, and a way for the artist to expand their imagination from their mind to a physical world. It was easier for the people to obtain their art and it offer art to a larger audience with prominent effort breaking the isolated barriers of white walls.

Evolution of Printmaking in the 21st Century:

Traditional printmaking techniques include woodcut, etching, engraving, lithography, etc. In today's modern contemporary era artists have kept in touch with traditional style and have tried developing a new style expanding to available techniques such as serigraphy, mixed media; modern context such as new aspects and concerns of society via multidisciplinary art through use of audio and video, installation, public art, etc.

There are many global galleries, forums and societies that make a special effort to exhibit the artists who use different styles of printmaking techniques. These organizations want experimental artworks to be displayed in their gallery spaces, this inspires a wide range of printmakers to create innovative, experimental works of art which is new to the art world.

Artists comfort in various mediums in printmaking to express themselves, the cycle of an entirely new process that artists enjoy. Revolutionary methods and new ways of expressing art through printmaking eg: graffiti (stencil), street art, installation, public art and exploring the field of design through the window of printmaking, etc. are becoming popular.

Ananda Moy Banerji:

Ananda Moy Banerji is a contemporary printmaker who after completing his B.F.A in Painting from College of Art, Delhi (1975-80), and then M.F.A in Printmaking from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan (1983-85), went to Camberwell College of Arts and Crafts, London for research associateship in Printmaking under the Charles Wallace India Trust award. He has exhibited in numerous shows in India and abroad including several Solo shows in Gallery Espace, The British Council and Lalit Kala Akademi, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, and many other galleries in various cities.

When thematic concern becomes an important issue for an artist, it manifests itself in the form of an interlinked series of images. Over the period, his works have undergone many changes from the point of view of techniques and themes. He has always consciously sought to define himself as an artist with a constructive role to play in society and his works emphasising his social environment.

He says that the artist's role as an active commentator has inspired him to create works that look closely at structures of the society and the individual. The works of his earlier years from Santiniketan were mainly based on landscapes, once back in Delhi in 1985, portraying life assumed centre stage in his works. The

change from the isolated rural serenity of Santiniketan to the urban chaos of Delhi had a direct impact on his work.

All the series from 20th century “Today”, “Temptation”, “Performers”, “Reflections”, “Entwined” and “His/Her World”; no matter whether they are constructed to be political, social, religious, or romantic, are all an attempt to explore universal feelings and relations between “Man and Man”.

Multiple Encounter – IV:

His most recent body of work, "Multiple Encounter, 2018" (Plate no. 01) is a conceptual and technical fusion in which the word itself serves as the title and establishes a connection among all forms.

A print is created when a surface is transferred from one to another, and he observes that this process occurs frequently in contemporary culture. Every relationship is an experience and encounters are typically numerous in nature. In terms of surface vibrations as well as tactile properties, he discovers a remarkable relationship between drawings, paintings, and prints. The expansion of his art and his journey across time and space are both issues of existence in multiples. Drawings are used and purposefully reused, and new forms are created resembling how people interact with one another in our society.

A comparative study of Ananda Moy Banerji’s career shows the recurrence of specific motifs that aid in establishing a continued lore. He attempts to captivate the relation between layers in his prints to layers in our society, time and space. All his works together give a feeling as he is getting ready to take a plunge into a deep sea of “Human landscape”. In his work the whole world focuses on *human forms*, *human behaviour*, and *human endeavour*.

Retaining the conventional methods, his works are seen to deviate towards a non-conventional approach, asserting the authentic form of serigraphy he utilizes paper stencil in his works. Occasionally he manipulates a serigraphy print with drawing and etching over it. Using line and colour he manages to add a lyrical movement to his work. Multiple layers can be seen in his works where multiple forms are in movement, combining with layers of disguise with overlapping almost translucent colours creating new dimensions. Multiple figures seem to merge together physically brought together closer by strong black lines that intensify the intimacy and highlight the tension.



Plate no. 01: Multiple Encounters - IV
Serigraphy & Mixed Media on Paper
28.0'' X 40.0'', 2018.

Dr. Paula Sengupta:

Dr. Paula Sengupta is a contemporary printmaker, academician, and writer from Kolkata, who is equally at ease working with different forms of expression such as painting, printmaking, installation, and site-specific performance work. She has B.F.A in Painting from the College of Art, New Delhi, and M.F.A and Ph.D. in Indian printmaking from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.

Her artistic endeavours blend the effects of theatre and performance with Santiniketan education and her knowledge in teaching theatrical costume design. Her work, which defies hierarchy and fluidly integrates art, language, design, performance, and history, has a postmodern feel attributed to these various influences. She has produced correspondents, artist books, artwork, artefacts, performance installations, and community art projects. Her writings primarily fall under the autobiographical narrative genre and focus on feminism related topics.

On 30th March 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet into exile in India. Since then, over a hundred and twenty thousand Tibetan refugees have followed their leader into exile, fleeing their homeland in an effort to practice and conserve the Tibetan way of life. Severely threatened by the increasing Sinification, i.e. the process by which non- Chinese societies or groups are integrated or assimilated into Chinese culture, of the Tibet plateau, the immensely rich religion, language, culture, heritage, and unique habitat of this peace-loving people today faces extinction. Perhaps its last unthreatened traditional fortresses remain in the Indian Himalayas, and in settlements in Bhutan and Nepal, while a Tibetan Government in Exile struggles to cohesively function from a hilltop called McLeodgunj in India.

'Into Exile' reflects upon this deeply problematic situation, especially the annihilation and sacrifice of habitats, lifestyles, and cultures to inevitable transformations in systems of government and levelling of social structures that became a phenomenon of the modern world.

The Art project is largely developed from stories of exiled Tibetans and dwells on memory as an archive and re-creation of a culture, and the struggle to hold on to a threatened cultural identity. It draws on the indigenous craft and textile traditions of Tibet, as also the religious symbolism, rituals, and practices of Tibetan Buddhism, all of which constitute the cultural axis around which their society revolves.

The Monkey & the Dog:

The Monkey & the Dog (Plate no. 02 & 03) is reconstructed from a story narrated by Dawa Dolma and Tsamchoe, both Tibetans in exile in India. It derives from the traditional *thangkas* (Tibetan Buddhist painting) of Tibet, some of which are linear paintings in gold on black backgrounds. Taking the form of a lengthy accordion book of 10 pages, it is comprised primarily of eight etchings with serigraphy and chine- colle applying the medium of printmaking that forms her core practice. Although she has rarely been a ‘drawer’ in the conventional sense of the term, the act of drawing is deeply intertwined with her practice as a printmaker. She has spent long hours drawing meticulously with the needle on the etching plate, revelling in the sheer tactile pleasure of removing the dark beeswax layer to reveal beneath a sinewy, sharp, silver line of her own making. This lengthy, contemplative, even meditative process is, for her, the act of introspection, a catharsis that is integral to the eventual evolution of the work in progress.

The Monkey and the dog is an illustrated narrative reconstruction on paper through etching, where text has been printed in serigraphy and chine- colle has been used as decorative motifs to distinctly differentiate the important characters and events of the narration. In conventional method an accordion book would be just placed on a table but her approach of display is non- conventional where the work is framed and displayed on a pedestal like a manuscript in a museum.



Plate no. 02: The Monkey & the Dog (Accordion Book of 10 leaves)
Etching, Chine- Colle & Serigraphy on Paper
226'' X 12.5'', 2013



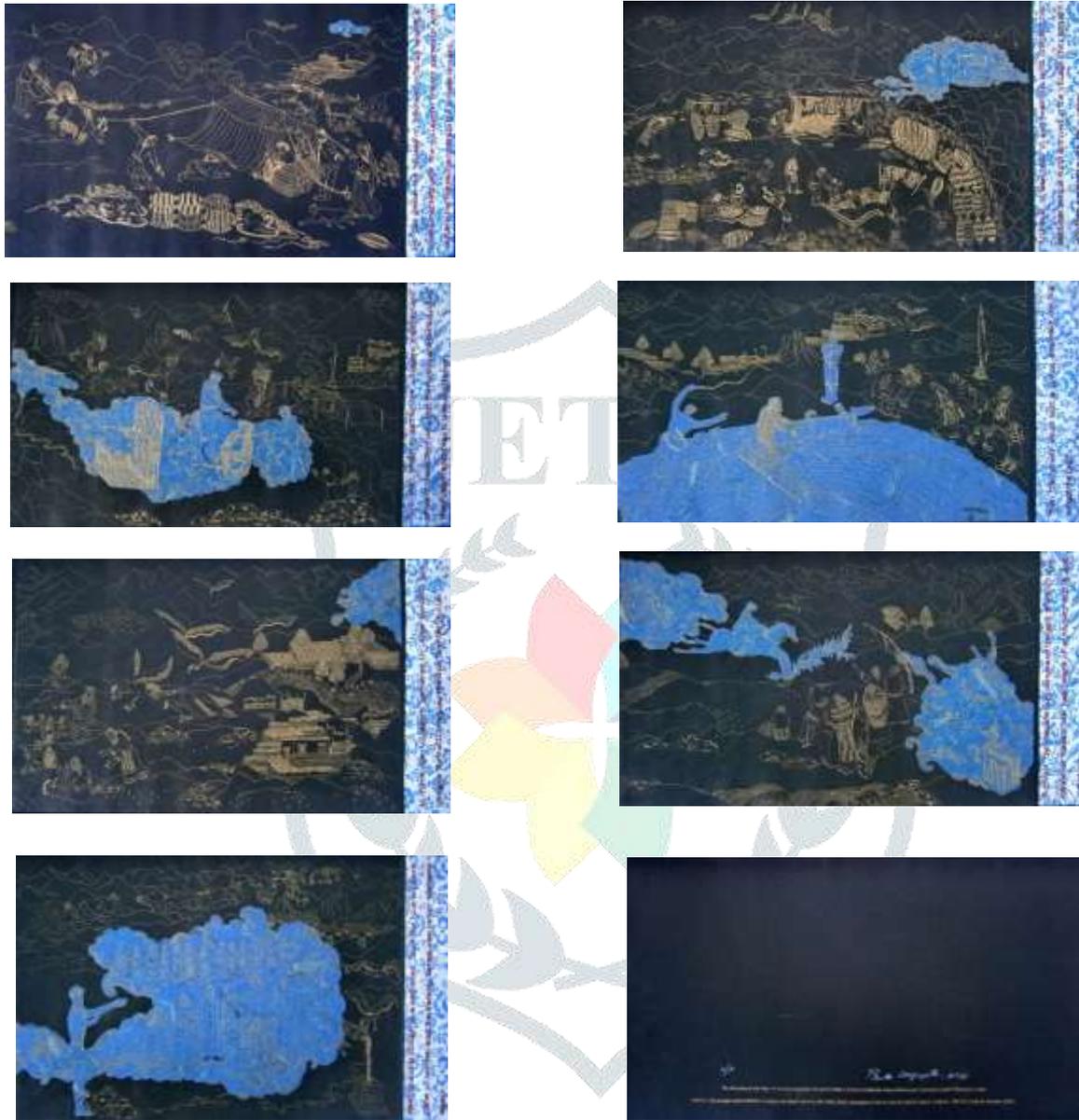


Plate no. 03: Detail of 'The Monkey & the Dog'
Etching, Chine Colle & Serigraphy on Paper
226'' X 12.5'', 2013

Conclusion:

To conclude, all the evidence has been collected from the respective artists and 1st Print Biennale India, (Lalit Kala Akademi). The evidence are in form of images, videos, interview of the respective artist and first-hand experience of assisting one of the artist to validate this paper. Additionally, supporting evidence could be granted proof that techniques such as serigraphy and mixed media is still successfully going on in each corner of the world as an astonishing artistic practice. The real essence of the art process is that it has maintained its place in both past and future, which is a unique combination in itself. In today's modern era, the art process has become a necessity but understanding a process it itself is problematic and it is impossible to predict its changing position and value in the field of art. One fundamental value addressed during this paper is that how non-conventional approaches with conventional techniques heightens artistic and aesthetic value in contemporary printmaking practices. And further creates a situation of many possibilities in terms of not just the process in which an artist works but also in terms of how a work is to be displayed. This paper further analyses artists working in the field and experimenting with conventional techniques overlapping them with non-conventional methods and approaches; an information that can be beneficial for those interested in working with non-conventional techniques and approaches as an artist or as a student of the art field.

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