

Nature the Ultimate Inspiration for Art: Its Capabilities and Role to Conserve and Sustain the Environment

Ms. Ritu Shekhawat^{1*} Dr. Giriraj Sharma²

¹ Research Scholar, Fine Arts, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur, S.F.S. Gurukul Marg, Mansarovar, Jaipur

² Associate Professor, Sculpture Department, Fine Arts, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur, S.F.S. Gurukul Marg, Mansarovar, Jaipur

Abstract – Art and nature has always been correlated and connected since beginning of human existence and history of art. Art took inspiration from nature and civilization and art and culture developed along with environment with the resources it offered. Early example of nature’s impact can be found in cave paintings presenting aspects of nature through drawing of animals, human figures and symbolic drawings by observing nature. Art evolved with human civilization by utilizing its resources like metal and stone to create both utilitarian and non utilitarian works and connected art with way of living. With evolution of human artistic creativity and stability art explored its boundaries with natural surroundings. Art flourished in form of monumental sculptures, murals, paintings and became a part of civilizations that existed. With the spread of industrialization and modern development of urban cities the environment suffered and became imbalanced. The population explosion created pressure on nature’s natural resources and contaminated them on a larger scale. The dramatic habitat destruction, contamination of air water and land and drastic depletion of forests impacted the ecosystem and its balance in nature. This created the need for art that is environmental and sustainable in nature. The site specific land art emerged as a movement and artists started creating works in collaboration with physical world. Public art came up with new definition of public welfare rather than just publically accessible outdoor art. Artists saw the need to think of art which does not disrupt the environment but sync with natural surroundings and inspire for coexistence with nature. Natural mediums were encouraged and waste or scraps were incorporated to collaborate with natural spaces. Minimum disruption of environment during art expression led to a change in art scenario in the world through evolving trend of ecological land art. In urban and public spaces outdoor art created a great platform to inspire and engage larger audiences about ecological awareness of the nature. This wave of eco friendly sustainable expression of art is enhancing our relationship with nature and inspiring human race to give back the nature what we consumed and conserve its treasure. Art as a way of living surrounds us and impact us with understanding of emotions and self awareness. Art through music literature sculptures installations etc uplifts our spirit and inspire us to improve in every aspect of life. Being an impactful medium of expression art plays a major role for needed change in the society. Nature being basic inspiration for art and foundation of living world need to be given back by using art medium to spread awareness sensitivity and hope toward our natural habitat.

Keywords – Environmental Art, Sustainable, Conservation, Environment, Inspiration, Public Art, Land Art, Installation, Ecological, Collaboration, Coexistence.

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INTRODUCTION

Nature or environment is the physical world that encompasses every living and non living matter on the planet. Natural environment include rocks, mountains, forests. Land, ocean, river etc and provide food and shelter and hospitable atmosphere for living.[1] These natural resources are vital for the existence of life and balance of ecosystem in nature. Everything life needs

for existence and evolution is provide by nature like food for nutrition, material for shelter and natural cycles of climate for environment to exist. Beyond physical necessities nature provides inspiration for creation, spiritualism and appreciation of beauty and aesthetics in life.[2]

EMERGENCE OF ART THROUGH NATURE AND THEIR CO EXISTENCE

The relation of art and nature has a history of existence since emergence of human consciousness on planet earth. Nature existed way before human life on earth and created environment for life to evolve. Since beginning of human civilization nature provided for the needs of living. Art has been an inseparable part of nature as creation is the basic essence of nature. Art became part of existence and way of existence pre historic era of human race, as human was in sync with nature and its surroundings. Everything consumed for mind or body was derived from the atmosphere nature provided. Inspiration for the mind and material for creating form of imagination was found and extracted from the resources of nature. Human connection with nature made his art more rhythmic and relevant to the environment. The visuals from surroundings became inspiration for symbolic representation of art. The mediums to express in physical forms of art like sculptures and paintings were also found from the surroundings. Mediums like wood, graphite, charcoal, colour pigments stone and metal alloys were extracted from nature and used to create works of art by the artists since generations of human civilization. Music and literature also evolved amidst nature inspired from natural frequencies and rhythm of our world.

IMPACT OF NATURE ON ART AND ITS EVOLUTION

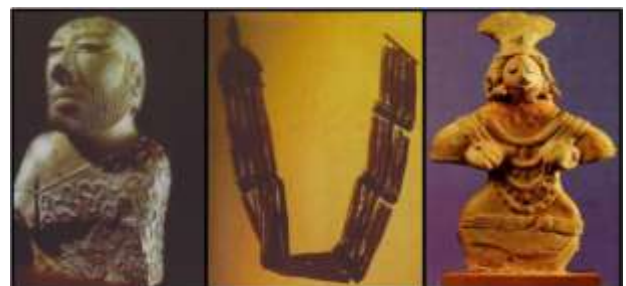
Early examples of nature's impact on art and way of living can be seen in specimens of cave paintings found of pre historic times. It's an evidence of earliest example of art in form of simplified symbolic visual expression. It was the proto historic era when the language was not formed and art became a medium to communicate through visuals and express and give form to thoughts and imagination of early human. Drawing of animals, birds, human forms, scenes of hunting and other daily life activities are expressed through drawing and painting with natural pigments and carving with tools.[3]



Horse depicted in Lascaux Cave in the Dordogne, south western France, dated to the Upper Palaeolithic period.[3]

Nature took form of visuals in artist's minds through observing and mimicking situations and forms of environment. This act of observation led the way of early emergence of art which flourished with evolving civilizations. Nature always gave purpose to art and created a deep connection with human art practice.

Landmark civilization that existed and left specimens of art led to the development of art history with an approach to appreciate nature. Its evidences of art from Indus valley civilization (3300 BCE- 1300 BCE) include seals depicting animals and sculptures of deities as mother goddess inspired from fertile Mother Nature.[4] They created art that was connected with the environment and understood human race a part of bigger ecosystem.



Seals, terracotta figurines of mother goddess and human busts.[4]

When we look into Egyptian and Greek civilizations and their approach towards art we come across more mature and developed expression. The huge metal sculptures of Greek period show great understanding of metallurgy and stone carving both materials found within nature and transformed into medium of art expression.[5]



The statue, portraying Zeus or Poseidon



Goddess Aphrodite

Gigantic stone carved sculptures depicting mythical creatures, animals and human forms ensembled with monumental architecture show refined artistry and expression.⁶ These examples prove the inspiration environment projects for art and aesthetic in human life.



The sphinx, Egypt

IMPACT AND ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ART FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Visual art always had the capacity to impact the viewer in an instinctual manner. Being more receptive to sight visual arts like painting, sculptures, installations, affect its surroundings more than any other medium. This capability of visual form brought art outdoor from museums and galleries with an attempt for social impact and removes the restrictions of inaccessibility.

The outdoor art gave birth to environmental art movement that emerged during 1960's and 70's.[8] With pressuring environmental issues like pollution, global warming, depletion of natural resources and pressure of human population over ecosystem's balance, the need to conserve the environment emerged. Art made accessible through environmental and land art installations came forward as a strong medium to express on these global issues of environment. These public works with ability to interact and symbolically express views acted as a medium to spread awareness about environmental issues.

Sustainable art became the new trend by using environmental friendly materials and recycled waste as medium of art. Conversationalists took initiatives and with the financial funding by govt and authorities started working to inspire for climate change initiatives and conservation of nature. Artists played a key role in creating relevant works, with mind stirring visuals through sustainable land art and helping to improve deteriorating environment.

Some of the pioneers that emerged with environmental art movement are Nils- Udo, Anges Denes, Andy Goldsworthy and Jean- Max Albert. Their works acted as the inspiring landmarks for the future environmental art.[9]

Nils Udos natural works with found materials from nature are stunning example of site specific environmental art.

Assemblage of wooden twigs and creating pattern with fallen leaves create a dreamy visual done in remote areas like forests river sides etc.



Nils Udos, "The Nest"

Andy also does similar installations with found materials and documents the changes time and weather play over them. British artist Andy Goldsworthy's outdoor sculptures were created on site and out-of-doors, in areas where he found a range of natural materials - from snow, ice, and boulders to leaves, twigs and mud - which he then used to build art works which were often short-lived, subject to the whims of the environment they occupied.[10] His works talks about fleeting moments in the cycle of life and how change is the only constant.



Andy Goldsworthy, "Striding Arch at Benbrack"

Some of the contemporary environmental art have created inspiration for viewers in today's world.

The huge dome made out of reusing garbage like bottles is a brilliant sculpture floated around Inwood Hill Park in New York. This work was executed in 2011 by Amanda Schechter and Alexander Levi. Through

the sculpture artists gave an inspiring aspect of waste recycling and reusing 450 discarded umbrellas and 128 emptied bottles to make something productive. It attracted the attention of society towards consumerism and increasing level of non biodegradable waste on the planet.[11]



"Harvest Dome" Inwood Hill Park 2011.

Robert Smithson, known for his observation based land art. His "Spiral jetty" (1970) work is a 1500 foot long spiral made of stones and natural material extended in the salt lake of Utah. It's a site specific work which keeps on changing due to submergence of the form in water in specific seasons. This work of art is like an iconic statement by artist against commoditization and ownership of art in market and restriction of art within galleries.



"Spiral Jetty" Salt Lake, Utah 1970.

"Surrounded island" the environmental installation by Christo and Late Jeanne- Claude, the artists famous for their monumental land art is a visual inspiration for the viewers. In 1983 Miami, Florida, they surrounded eleven islands with pink woven fabric encircling the contour of the island and while working on installation they got removed tones of garbage from the water around the islands. This is a brilliant example of a statement given on pollution of water

bodies through land art. The installation was intended for attracting viewers with vibrant visual and creating awareness amongst the residents regarding pollution and disposing of waste in water bodies.[8]



“Surrounded Island”, Miami, Florida 1983⁸

CONCLUSION

To conserve the environment and evoke sensitivity amongst the society artist are playing a vital role through environmental art. It is creating connection between us and the nature and getting humans in sync with the ecosystem. Land art and sustainable art with their eco friendly approach is working for the betterment and focussing on pressing issues of pollution and depleting natural resources. These site specific installations are addressing environmental and sustainability issues and encouraging society to take initiative for a change. These creative collaborations and interactive installations intend to bring people together to discuss and work on community issues.

Art has the capability to create transition in the attitude of society towards nature it can develop a sense of responsibility to conserve and sustain the natural resources as heritage for the future generations. The understanding of sharing and the feeling of coexistence can lead to a promising future.

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Corresponding Author

Ms. Ritu Shekhawat*

Research Scholar, Fine Arts, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur, S.F.S. Gurukul Marg, Mansarovar, Jaipur