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Art that defines women in Neeta Mohindra's art forms

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Abstract

Apart from being a skillful and much-admired visual artist, she is an outstanding theatre artist. Well-known Punjabi artists accomplished a number of beautiful works in bold, vividly blushed narrative paintings. Being a visual artist, she offers delicate brilliance and impulsiveness to her thoughts through her artworks. She has constantly engaged a time away to let the player bloom in her audacious brush and knife drawings. She had always represented scrupulous faultlessness in her artworks by using rudiments of art like shape, line, colour, tenors and textures in various ways to produce such peculiarity and sensations having volume, space, movement, and light on a smooth surface.

Keywords: Art, contemporary, acrylics, women, brushstrokes

Introduction

Women forms have been rendered in numerous characters such as pin-ups, mothers, priestesses, heroines, warriors and goddesses by an expending assortment of media drawings, digital drawings, photographs paintings etc. which remain precisely striking. She tussles to study and characterize the folks who have been part of her life through her works, she endeavours for successive effects adorably assigning subtle yet unflinching themes which arouse intense emotions. Her figure's audaciousness and vigour formalized conventionally reinventing figures and edifices as illustrated on stage by an artist. The nature of her work is comprehensive with colour, line rhythm and flow effortlessly.

The themes are shown with an array of women folk descriptions where art is inferred as a joyful activity while crafting art motifs. Her works are so imposing like her acting that demonstrate her cerebral and creative milieu in synchronistic modus. Neeta Mohindra (Plate-1) was born in 1962 in Hoshiarpur the city of water rivulets (choes) and mangoes orchards acknowledged for its elaborate wood inlay work in Punjab. Her father Sh. Subhash Chander Mohindra and her Mother Mrs. Raj Mohindra constantly reinforced her passion for art pursuits. From the time when she was a toddler, she was attracted towards Art and theatre. In 1986 She did her Ph.D. in Tribal Art Forms of Southern Rajasthan. She toiled firmly and prolifically for several years while she stayed in Amritsar she performed the role of an art teacher at BBK DAV College for Women, Amritsar. Her work concentrated on an abstract yet figurative style which has a viewpoint of its kind. Her artworks express her temperament outlook as a generous and modest human being which might be seen in her introspective version of female subjects. She completed the number of gorgeous works with knife in oils, acrylics and mix media. One of her favourite subjects was a representation of women, smart women folk with meticulous facial expressions, and ornaments, shown in abstract configuration. Along with female figures, she attempts to describe opulent green foliage, fruit trees, flowers etc. She accomplished her style with liberty of expression. She was immensely inclined towards works of M.F. Hussain since her college days, which were classified as bold and dazzlingly coloured chronicle paintings, which were finished in cubist style and was therefore known as "Picasso of India",

The stimulus could easily be seen in her paintings through an upbeat palette and vivacious brush strokes that express an outstanding sense of movement and liking. Great forte could be seen in her colour schemes with illumination and sturdy contrast where colours never amalgamate into her compositions. She has been painting habitually and unveiling her work in leading galleries of India like Shridharam Gallery, New Delhi 1994, Lalit Kala Galleries, New Delhi 1987, 1989, 1992, 2002, Taj Gallery Mumbai, 2002, Nehru Centre, Mumbai 2000, Jahangir Gallery, Mumbai 1998, Lalit Kala Galleries Chandigarh 1989, 1992, 1994. Indus 2nd Bank, Chandigarh 2002, 2004, Government Museum Chandigarh 1987, Atmosphere in Ludhiana 2009, Virsa Vihar in Jalandhar 2009, Indian Academy of Fine Arts

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Amritsar 1984, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1994, 2003, 2006, 2009. In total, she has done 28 solo shows and many group shows [1]. Not only in India but her international projects have brought her pronounced appreciation. She went to the USA in 1991 under a group study exchange programme. She also exhibited her work in various states of the USA like Oklahoma. She received a British Council fellowship to prepare and perform 50 shows of the play Land of the Five Rivers with FETCH Theatre Company in 2001. This play was also performed in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester and other cities of the UK. She also steered a workshop in theatre and painting with kids of Asian origin in Birmingham in 2001. One of her best-celebrated solo play BUHE BARIAN was staged in Lahore, Pakistan in the years 2004 and 2005. During this workshop, twenty-five creative and reputed women, writers, film-makers and visual artists were together for six weeks to discover the creative process. Apart from camp and workshops she delivered numerous lectures at several universities. She had been dynamic in performing arts since 1978. She had generated her theatre group by the name Rangtoli which ran very successfully. During her stage performances, they had voyaged extensively. She had directed about 30 plays and acted in shows. She was awarded with Sangeet Natak Akademi National Award in 2009 for her involvement in the arena of theatre for acting [2]. She also received the Kalpana Chawla Award for brilliance in painting & theatre in 2011. Pride of Amritsar 2010, Maan Dheeyan Te 2009, Saptrishi Award 2005, Best Teacher Award 2002, Vocational Award 1995, 2002, 2008; Kala Ratna 2005, Life Time Achievement 2009, Artist of the Year 1990; Dhee Punjab Di 2009, She got State award in 2003 and the best actress award from Punjabi Academy in 1998 [3].

She acquired a diploma in acting from the late Harpal Tiwana Institute, the Punjab Kala Munch. She had performed in and directed about 100 productions. She also got the opportunity to work in collaborations with countrywide & worldwide directors like Andrew Purwin (UK), Marcus Constama (German) Kanallam Pannikan, M.K. Raina, Neelam Man Singh. She performed in many national festivals like Bharangham New Delhi, Nehru Centre Festival Mumbai, Prithvi Festival Mumbai, National Festival Orissa, Bharat Bhawan Festival Bhopal, National Festival Kerala, Ekal Yatra, Calcutta. Not only this she did talk shows like Baithak and Current Affairs for Punjab Doordarshan for ten years. She performed as a leading actor in television serials like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sarhad, Rain Basera, Mantonama, and Prem Chand Ki Kahaniyan. She also did many films like Kaya Taran (Hindi), Dil Apna Punjab (Punjabi), Jag Jeondian De Mele (Punjabi), Akhian Udeekdian (Punjabi) Ek Noor (Punjabi), Ik Kudi Punjab Di (Punjabi), Dil Tenu Kardahe Pyar (Punjabi) [4, 5].

Once she said, "I found my language and need to keep discovering new vocabularies". In 2012, her exhibition named "Prithmanian" was exhibited. She brought the uncountable stories of significant women from Sikh history alive on a canvas. During one of her interviews with sikhmet.com news (Conversation - Canvas she said "Natyashastra considers art an amalgamation of theatre, dance, music and painting. There is no compartmentalisation. I am both an actor and a painter. There are no ambiguities or deliberations in my mind concerning that. And I enjoy spending new mediums, technology and inputs to express myself!").

In Prithmanian she revealed the first Sikh Guru Sri Guru

Nanak Dev Ji's mother Mata Tripta and sister Bibi Nanki, Second Guru Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji, wife Mata Khiwi, Guru Amardas Ji's daughter and Guru Ram Das Ji's wife Bibi Bhani, Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's wife Mata Gujri, Mai Bhago who was influential in making 40 Sikhs apologise to Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sahib Kaur who added sweet to the Amrit which was prepared for baptising the Sikhs and Sada Kaur who played central role in Ranjit Singh's life. She could not find any reliable image of any of the above great heroes. To create these stunning fancies she used literature as well as the latest technology [6]. She put herself into each character while validating the role on stage to create a consistent image. She also toiled on a series of paintings on Punjabi and Kashmiri Sufi women. Most of her canvases echoed her characters which she played on the stage. According to her, during one of her interview sessions with Indian Express "For many years I was beholding for motivating women to paint, and when I began whirling the pages of Sikh history, it's a treasure-trove that I found".

Largely the substance of the painting determined its function, whether it's ritualistic, devotional, decorative, entertaining or educational. She was permanently smeared with freedom invented her visual language and always tried to try out new forms and techniques. Two of her latest works from her series called Mellow Fruitfulness are interestingly done in acrylic colours.

The painting from her series Mellow Fruitfulness is done in Acrylic colours. (Plate-2) It is the artist's latest series done in 2022-23. Size of the painting is 4"X4". The figure clothed in red in this painting represents the persona of a well-dressed female having lots of confidence. Her sharp features and spectacular eyes explode with dynamic vertical movement of her eyes. One can almost imagine the atmosphere created in the background with green, orange, and yellow as if the space created is the park. Less movement but more energy is depicted. The main attraction of this composition is the bold brushstrokes and the application of thick colours to create a delightful sense of power and vitality that derives from the female figure. The significant evolution by strokes of the brush transformed into the activity of paint. Portraits like these for Artist Neeta Mohindra became somewhat not to be observed or imagined but something to be experienced while putting paint on the canvas. Here the artist's vocabulary seems to shift to express the deeper thoughts of the women. Jewellery and hairdress are beautifully shown.

This is another painting of the artist's series Mellow Fruitfulness done in the year 2022-23 in Acrylics. The size of the work is 4"X4". (Plate-3) The features resemble to previous image of this series, sharp and stunning eyes. The headdress is fully decorated along with long hanging earrings. The background work does not refer to any actual landscape or particular nature or urban form but the implication of monotonous colours in simplified patches which let the spectator identify the tempestuous but outstanding balance of nature and the human figure. There is reorganisation of atmospheric pressures, shadows and glare embodied in brushstrokes, which depicts warmth. The lovely facial expressions depict the harsh time faced by the image despite which she is well-dressed and presentable. She seems to be deeply involved in the maze of worldly concerns.

The third painting is again mellow fruitfulness done in the year 2000 in acrylic and multimedia. The dimensions of the

painting are 18”X24”. (Plate-4). Like other works of Neeta Mohindra the composition looks quiet but at the same time seems to be powerful and evocative. The female figure seems to be a narration about the hardships faced in daily life activities. The image engages audiences in discovering diversities and simultaneity. It is equally motivating to understand the varied accounts portrayed by the artist in different compositions. The interest in this form triggers the the consideration of multiple shades of red and black in an intrinsic manner which holds the composition together. While looking at the face one enters into multiple stories with several entries and exits, which enables the viewers to go from one story to another.

The next interesting theme of the painting was “Ballika Vadhu” (Plate-5) (child marriage) which she witnessed at Patna and transformed her feelings on the canvas in 1980 in acrylic and multimedia. The size of the painting is 24”X36”. The artist tried to link her painting with Indian cultural and aesthetic traditions. Neeta Mohindra rich and unique rendezvous with figuration in Indian style ties tight boundaries between realistic and abstract painting. The structure of the image resembles a rural girl child who is unaware of what is happening around her. However, in the background, the head covered with cloth flows in the back until it disappears. Both the girl's postures are typically Indian, speaking about social mores and traditions.

During her exhibition on Sikh Women known as “Prithmanian” The title celebrates the many roles and facets of women. The Sikh Gurus called her Prithmani, a word that originated from Prithvi, mother earth. Her experience as a Fine artist and theatre is based on two theories according to the artist herself. Her painting series are research or academic-based where whereas theatre is performance and experiment-based. While struggling to find the characters artist realised that a part from a set, props, etc. the description of faces was quite challenging. She rehearsed the characters on the stage while performing each character herself wearing costumes according to character. Then she finally decided to perform all the characters herself as she did in theatre, which is why we see her performing each character at centre stage. This painting was executed in

2011-12 in acrylics and multimedia. The size is 5’X4’ (Plate-6) Bringing her experiences through the creative process on canvas, she has used bright and cheerful colours. Here the stress is usually on figuration where pressure is laid especially on the character performed. The typical Sikh women narrative is more emphasized by the Hawk sitting nearby her. With the help of elements, the artist contemplates the textural work. The layer of neutral colour is seen like yellow, orange, scarlet red, brown and beige. These colours also symbolize Sikhism. The figure did not gaze into the eyes of the audience eyes focusing on something particular.

Reflecting on her creative process, Neeta Mohindra explains that “I didn’t deliberately portray myself principally it is the result of the process that I devised” It seems as if she is in discourse with work, anxious to make it come alive. She works justly and diligently, to epitomize the characters with accuracy and to produce them capably through her series and is still working on it.

The large size painting of 5’X4’ done in the year 2008-09 and titled “Chehre” is from the same series of Prithmanian. (Plate-7). The canvas with repetitive images and a noticeable palette of red and black which involves the artist's imagination. She incorporated literature and technology for communication and to produce connections with the onlooker. The work portrays everyday existence at personal and social levels to overcome turbulence and produce the ability to cope with these situations, celebrating the spirit of every woman. The composition gives the photographic images through dark shadows and light shades. Here the artworks act as a medium to comment on the situations that seem to be over layed by different contrasts and create multiple dimensions. If the figure is red then the backdrop spring out the figure with black or vice versa in each block. Each figure seems to hit you and there is no escaping from reality. The expressions of the faces are different like intense, happy, sad, pitiful, joyful etc. The eyes appear to be gazing over and sometimes covered in shadows of black. Again, the artist leaves a lot for the viewer’s imagination.



Plate 1: Neeta Mohindra



Plate 2: Mellow fruitfulness

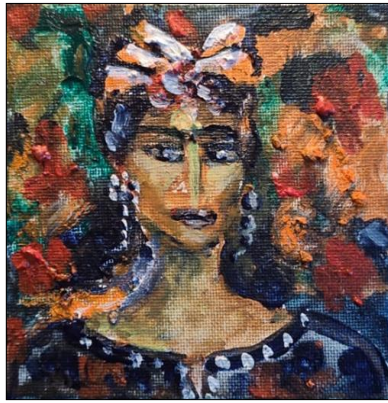


Plate 3: Mellow fruitfulness 1

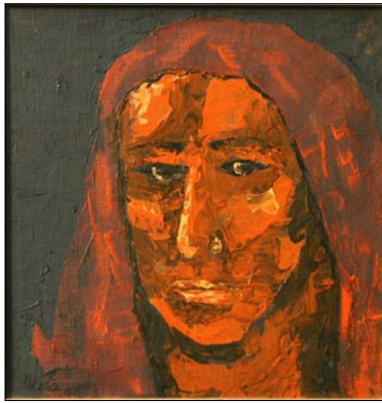


Plate 4: Mellow fruitfulness

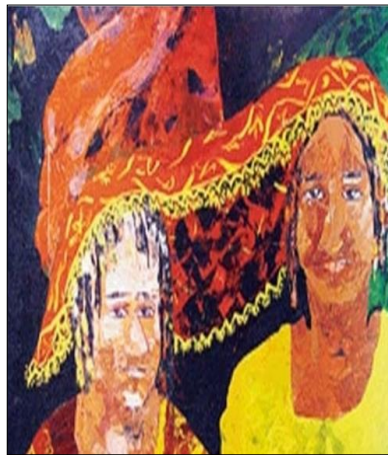


Plate 5: Ballika Vadhu



Plate 6: Prithmanian series

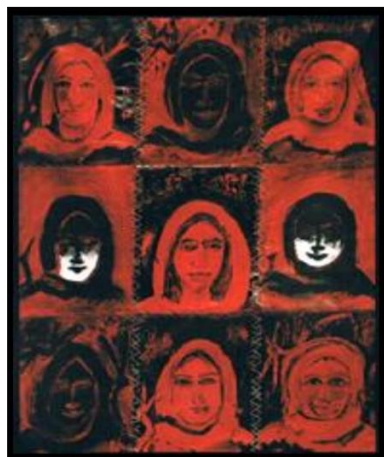


Plate 7: Painting chehre

Conclusion

Thus, we can summarize that the artist in her paintings used essentials in a combined manner to understand a narrative theme or to create abstract visual relationships. The artist had mostly used oil-based mediums in her paintings. The choices of the medium and forms by the artist combined to make beautiful visual images. Her paintings replicated the Indian spirit with the use of bright colours. The subject of the artist customarily revolved around women. Not only the form and their expressions the artist had pondered colours as an important tool to express sentimentalities and feelings. Colours also captivated viewers and their instant attention. Hence her contribution to contemporary art becomes ever rewarding experience for young artists.

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