

Navjot Altaf's Use of Colours in Installation Art

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Abstract

Installation art presents a descriptive idea of a particular reference to layered work and specifically transforms the concept of intervals into a new form. Artistic expression in installation art offers a new dimension. Within this realm, Navjot Altaf developed her thoughts on the social status of women. She gave prominence to themes of women's decline, inequality, upheaval, and violence in her installation works. Navjot Altaf also incorporated new mediums in her installation art, such as video, sound, interactive activities, physical performance, and verbal realism.

Keywords: artworks, social, projection, installation, video, women.

Navjot Altaf was born in 1949 in Meerut and pursued her art education from J.J. School of Art. When her thoughts on the social status of women developed, she started to focus her attention entirely on social issues. In her artwork she prominently highlights issues like decline, inequality, upheaval, and violence against women.¹ Since 1993, she has considered the female figures within broader social and historical contexts, which has shaped the current form of her work. The inspiration and expression of her sculptures were experienced in "**Circling the Square**," where she wanted to experiment with various materials. And later she incorporated new possibilities into her work. In 1994, she created "**Links Destroyed and Rediscovered**," involving two musicians and a documentary filmmaker.² After this phase, she developed a strong interest in sculptural installations. In one of her works "**Images Redrawn**" (1996), she collaborated with a sculptor and a carpenter. In this monumental female figure, she represented women's oppression and pain in contemporary times. Another piece, "Whitening the White of the White" created in 1993, involved using colours on wood. This sculpture installation was made with indigo, iron, and twisted fabrics.³

Her installation titled "**Lacuna in Testimony**" was inspired by the violence surrounding Hindu-Muslim riots and provided an equal sentiment. It particularly centred on the incident where Hindu pilgrims were burned alive inside a train. This installation artwork was exhibited at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University. It depicted the massacre of Hindu pilgrims on the train and the scenes of the massacre of Muslim community in Ahmedabad. Navjot Altaf used visual language to portray a horrifying event that etched on the mind as an unspoken memory. In her video installation some scenes are quite vivid while others are with the dialogue going on. In the installation the images are projected using three screens showing human figures who were moving over the Arabian Sea, with the sounds which feels like rising and falling waves. Seventy-two rectangular mirrors were placed on the ground reflecting the video projection. The installation had two focal points, adding a contrasting tone to the otherwise hypnotic display. It featured video projections on forty-eight screens. In every screen there were still or moving figures, conditions, and objects. Each and every projection often had a blurry image. The blue Arabian Sea was projected on three screens. The wave sounds were clearly audible.

Sometimes black frames appeared on the projecting screen. The installation took references from various violent global events touching on themes of empathy which make human beings emotional. The installation attempted to bring together the two aspects of time, past and present, on a single platform. There is a use of coloured lights which has its own impact which is projected in the installation through photographs taken by artists, print media, scenes from films, and Durdarshan.⁴

"Displaced Self" (2003) is a project of dialogue between Najot Altaf, Bailey Shafir and Ritania Corvelli which was presented with great emotions. This colourful video installation was made in 2003 lasting nine and eighteen minutes respectively. This was created after Navjot Altaf spent significant time in Bastar, Madhya Pradesh. Through extensive travels across many parts of the world, she deeply questioned if people are aware of emerging situations or know more about it? Do we view things in their relevant contexts and how do we communicate the process of understanding? Can we develop the sensitivity required for the potential to work? This was a unique way for her to project herself in various conditions expressing women's emotions in an original manner.

The installation titled **'Touch'** created in 2008, was presented as a video sculpture on five monitors. It depicts the desire, need, and importance of touch. It is a form of communication that occurs through the body. This work, which shows unity in sensitivity and emotion, is based on experiences gathered through memory. Navjot Altaf has personally viewed this subject in a social and cultural context, both from a historical and contemporary perspective, and has also drawn ideas from the structural bodily references of Lévi-Strauss. The concept of 'Touch' was actively inspired by contemporary dance, small steps dance, and the actions of art and artists. She also took ideas from traditional drawing symbols and short film scenes. In this type of installation, the connection between artists and people is seen as an expansion of visualization for the artists. In the installation **'Avatar of the Object'**, she emphasized the tradition of tattooing practiced by tribals and certain castes and classes of people. Various stories related to this practice are socially accepted, and different groups and regions narrate different tales about it. They have distinct symbols of belief. Inspired by the excellent geometric designs of Bastar, she used video for the installation. She even got tattoos on her own body. In this way, she created a new form of installation in the modern era.⁵

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that Navjot Altaf's installation art attempts to portray societal conditions of women and various emotions.

References

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