

**NPTEL
NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE**

**Course
On
Visual Semantics for Visual Communication**

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**Lecture 17: Visual Semiotics for
Visual Communication (Contd.)**

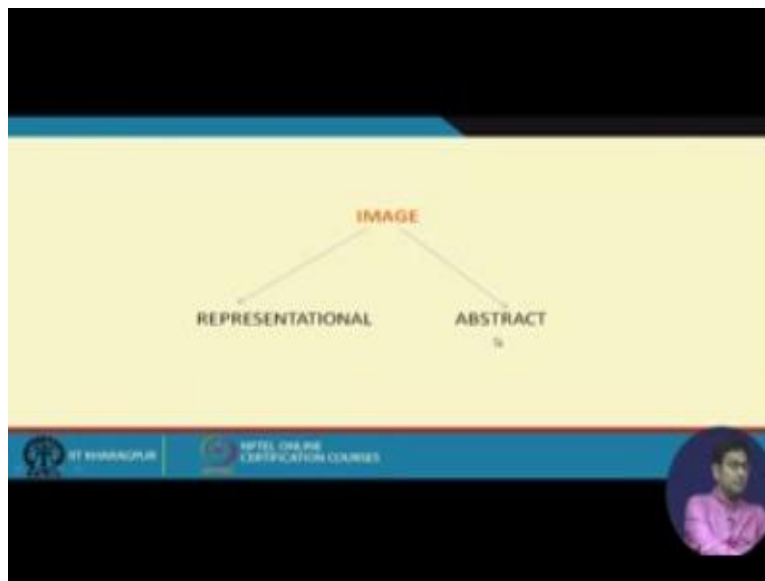
Hello students welcome back to our course on visual semiotics for visual communication. We will take today's lecture from where we have in it in our last class that is with visual representation and abstraction. So these are two major ways categories of image that we see in our real world and these are two categorization that we have and based on that we discussed in a great detail on how representation of images are done and we just discussed a little bit about the abstraction.

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So we will start from there, because today's lecture as you can see today's lecture we will be talking about visual narrative and visual narrative is very, very relevant to this representationism and abstraction. So we have to understand this it in a little bit more detail, and then we will look at what narrative is and how it works.

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So if we go by our large discussion we saw that image could be broken down into two distinct categories one is representational and one is abstract.

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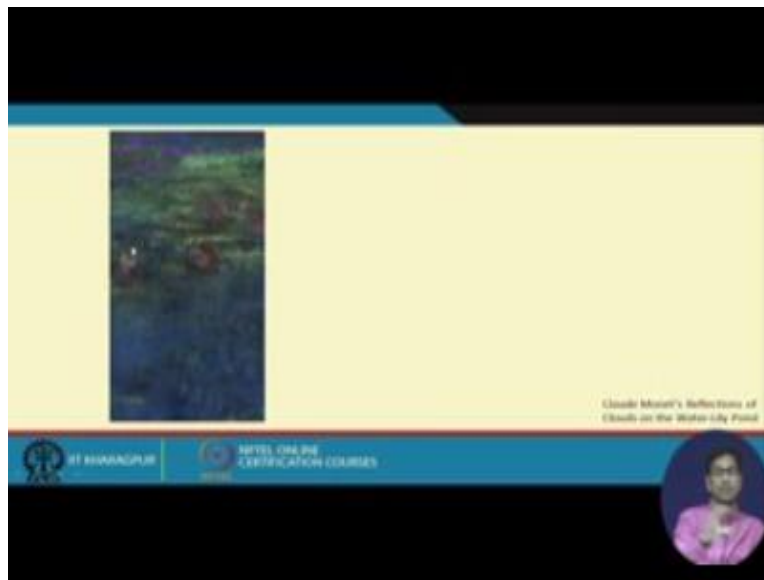


So there is not much confusion in what representational image is we looked at this particular image where money is very well depicting the sky and reflection of the sky on a pond. So that is the title which he has provided and that and that is what he is trying to depict that is what he is trying to represent in this particular image and we really do not have much difficulty in understanding that, because if you go by that semiotic model again we have a very good knowledge about the object which is being depicted over here.

The representation of that object has been very prudently done, has been very realistically transformed. So that is the signifier so this is the signifier of that particular place or object and then this is having an expression, so there is an expression of that through color these are nothing but blob of colors we will just see in the next slide that these are nothing but some composition of colors and shapes coming together and that at the end of the day reaches to the interpreting which is you in with this case and you are processing that information and making a judgment with that real object.

And hence the whole meaning of this representation comes into being it is a very simple painting but it holds a lot of elements, a lot of discourse about semantics and semiotics, because this is how we are making meaning out of it.

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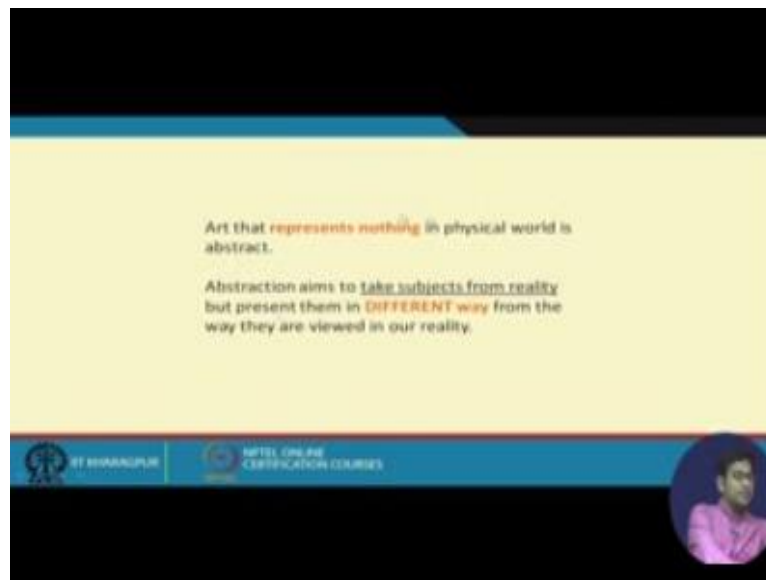


But now let us what is the interesting is let us take a deeper look and go closer so if we go closer in that particular painting if we deep dive you see that as I was discussing this is nothing but some color swatches some kind of pattern which have come together. So in other words what we can see is that this is a level of abstraction, so at a deeper at a closer level this is abstract it is not representing anything for that matter which we can relate to the real world, but when we are taking a zoom outlook when we are taking an overall look which we learnt in the gestalts also that we make a judgment by the whole and not by the parts.

So when we take that overall holistic look we can make out what this image is all about, but if we zoom in we can see that there are certain color blocks and this is exactly what is related to abstraction. The level of abstraction can lead to something which is representational but at the end of the day we also deal with abstraction. So it is at one goal you might feel that everything is representational and everything which is abstract is also part of representational, but there are

certain aspects which are abstract and which also exists along with representational structures. So we will see that in a little bit more details today.

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So now going back to what the abstract means is odd that represents nothing in physical world is abstract and abstraction aims to take subjects from reality, but present them in a different way from the way are viewed in our reality. So this is something which is very crucial when it comes to understanding what abstract is, so one thing about abstract is that it is nothing to do with reality or in other words it is not trying to represent reality which we see the way they are.

So it is trying to again represent no doubt that it is not trying to represent that so that it is trying to represent that's why we are getting the semiotic landscape that is why the question of trying to infer that or interpret that comes into picture definitely we are in that position where we are trying to infer that. But what is important over here is that it is trying to represent the reality in a different way the way you are seeing me the way I will be represented pay someone is making a sketch of me or someone is making a painting of me will try to represent me still and make people identify that express that which is easily, you know captured or easily perceived by the interpreted.

But if now my same me is being represented in the different way much different from the way you are looking at me that will lead to an abstraction, and that abstraction may have some connection with reality or may not have some connection with reality. So this is a very crucial stage where lot of imagination comes into picture, a lot of intellectual capacity comes into picture, variations in image comes into picture, and we see that many visual artists, or visual designers, or visual communicators use this sense of abstraction and representation in a very, very dynamic fashion to communicate with it receiver or viewer.

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So moving on we will look into some of the movement art movements which took place related to abstraction and look at some of the very, very crucial aspects of abstraction which evolved as a course of time as art movement. So we first come into the genre of minimalism where we see eliminating all non-essential forms or features or concept this is a very famous artwork by Kazimir Malevich which was done a way back in 1915.

So you can see that this is nothing but a black square and he has experimented a lot with this kind of forms which apparently does not mean anything which is just the square which is just a

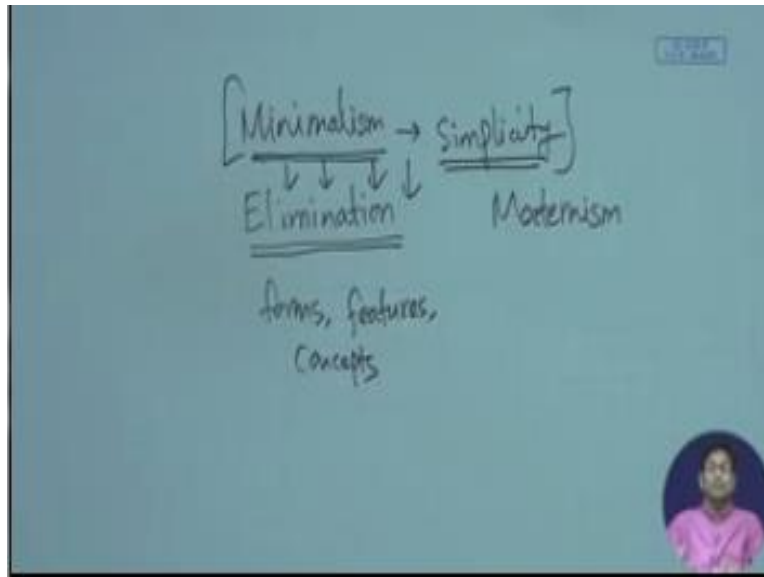
form and he is trying to represent that as an artwork. So this is a very important step in our discourse of visuality. So as we said that we are part of a culture and our way of seeing is deeply rooted to what we see and what has been shown to us.

So this we will discuss in much greater detail in our next lecture when we talk about visual culture, and visual persuasion for that matter how it affects us behaviorally and things like that. But for this particular lecture we are concentrating on some of the art movements and these art movements or you can say some of the some of the friends in art, and this friends in art has been visible to us.

The world has looked at it, made some inferences and that has an impact that has been rooted to with us and hence we have changed our way of looking at the world. So this is keeping on this keeps on happening with us we change with technology time with different perspectives viewpoints and that changes our way we look at world. So Malevich was a very, very crucial milestone in terms of what we see before this stage there were representational expressionism where you have something being represented in its true form.

And we have talked about realism and you know Impressionism in our last lecture where we see that lot of stress was given on how accurate that is or how realistic that the particular image looks like but here you see nothing of that sort has been kept in mind rather what has been kept in mind what has been the crucial essence of this kind of artwork was elimination.

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So you are so here the essence was on elimination and it was not incorporation so in Expressionism you see that there has been lot of incorporation of different attributes which make them look realistic but when you are talking about abstraction and when you are talking precisely about minimalism that is the minimum that could be done to represent something so that is something which a modern world heavily banks on is minimalism and minimalism needs to simplicity and these two concepts of minimalism and simplicity which our notions of modernism which are no sense of modernism relies on elimination of forms features and concepts.

So here you can see that why in an artwork now we are we try to depict something so we have if you again go back to semiotic landscape we have an object and we are trying to signify that right we are trying to signify that by incorporation of many things from that object so this sign in that case could be iconic or indexical are not symbolic to some extent and we are trying to you know represent that in some fashion and that being expressed in some other form which reaches to the interpreting but here.

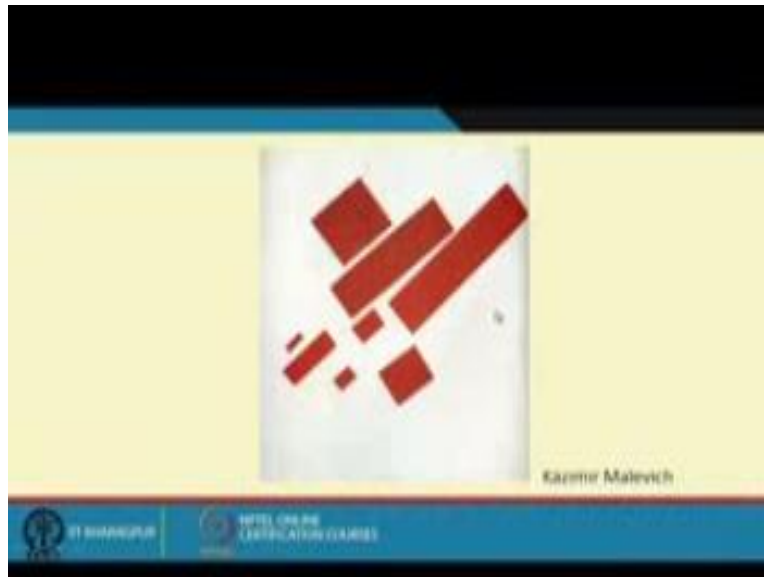
Now you can see that a complete different approach has been taken and this is not only crucial for us to understand and you know study this as a subject but also you can all of you are taking

part in this course you can rely on the fact that the communicators the visual communicators hold a very strong perspective or hold a very strong convention by which the you can change the way though the you know the world looks at reality or in other words you can change people's attitudes people's behavior people's way of things.

And that is held somewhere deep within you have the potential to do that but to do that you have to first understand how other great leaders other great practitioners have done that in past and hence take a step forward this is inevitable because with the change of society with change of times the perspectives will change the visuality will change it will keep on changing there will be new notions of abstraction new notions of representationalism who knows.

But it is about the way you are trying to debate signify expressed and all of it comes together and forms a different discourse so here we are seeing that minimalism which banks on two concepts of eliminating unnecessary forms unnecessary concepts and yet still perhaps trying to communicate something.

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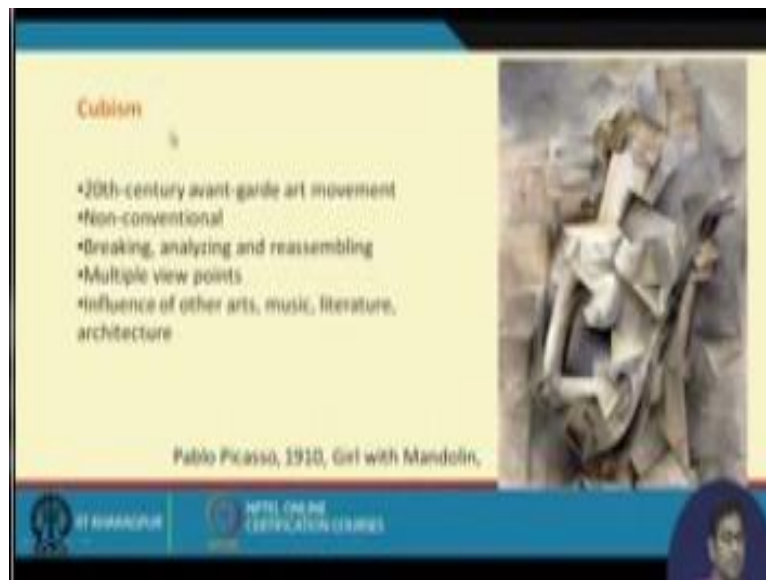
So if you look at the next artwork which is the seven rectangles or seven forms so you see that it is nothing but he has used certain forms together and that is perhaps creating some kind of connotation so the notation wise these are seven rectangles no doubt so see this is connecting with our last study of connotation and denotation so visually these are just seven rectangles placed in some kind of order in some kind of directionality but looking at it if you again have a look at it may evoke some kind of connotation with you may evoke it may relate to some kind of emotional attachment with you and this may try though.

It is abstract but it may represent something in your mind right so that is the beauty of abstractionism perhaps militia was trying to represent something over here but from a much different way that we see it in reality it is not the way that you are seeing a tree you are seeing a lotus on door you are seeing some person or something like that but perhaps Mallory was trying to resist in that with the seven rectangles but represented in a much different way that we see in you in reality.

So this is what abstraction is in a nutshell is very interesting thing to understand but very difficult to express how do you bring the sense of something which is there in reality you have taken

inspiration from reality but you are depicting that in a way which is very different and yet you are communicating with your viewers so very important aspect to look at.

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Now we look at another aspect which is all of you have must have heard of table Picasso and the movement which started in 20th century as a cubism with the avocado art movement where a lot of changes were happening with conventional techniques so lot of difference was happening when we talk about cubism this was a non-conventional form so the way we used to look at artwork we take a deviation from that we look take a nonconventional approach and here if you look at this famous painting by Pablo Picasso as early as in 1910 a gap girl with a mandolin so this is a girl playing a mandolin and if you see that there has been a lot of breaking and analyzing and resembling putting it back into pieces.

So there is a sense of analytical approach within an artwork so which was previously just representational now we take a different standpoint and we try to analyze that we try to break it what does a scientific analysis does to a phenomenon it breaks it looks into the different aspects investigates and then puts it back and formulate something so that is the way we take an analytical approach and that same concept was coming very in a very sublime fashion within art

where we are you are looking at any subject with a very analytical approach you are breaking it down and then putting it back.

And while you are doing that if you see a sense of multiple viewpoint comes into picture a sense of time and space comes into picture that you are looking at me from this angle that would be very different if you go and decide and look at me so you are looking at the same me you are looking at your subject the same subject but something has changed the time has changed the space has changed but in an artist notion if you try to put them back together because all that you have is one frame all that you have is one visual media where you are trying to communicate this fact that your subject could be viewed from different viewpoints.

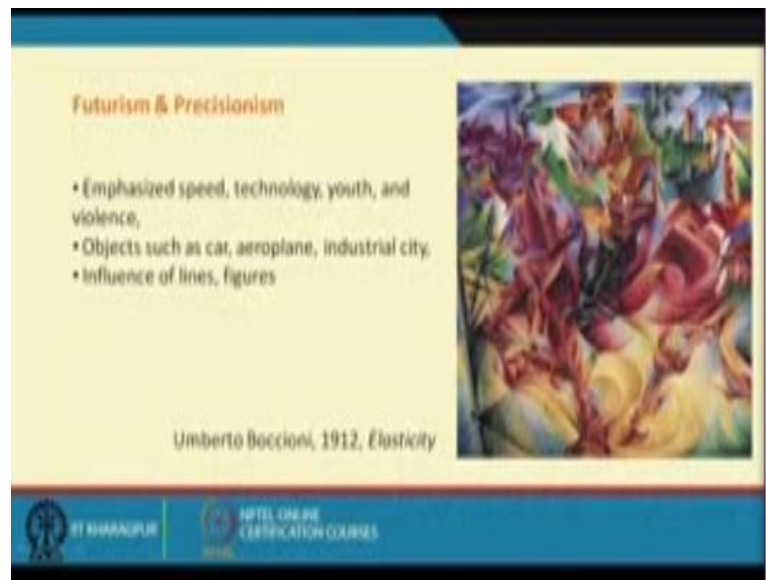
There could be a lot of analytical approach that I have put into and you have this one slide to represent that and that brought the concept of cubism where you can study that in detail there are very magnificent books about Picasso and Cubism both so cubism has a lot of many other participants in it so where there is a notion of time space movement and there is the notion of depth in the sense that there it is not just one subject that you are seeing but they you can see the same subject with different aspects with different stories revolve around it which is our team today.

That is why I started with abstraction ism when we talked about visual narratives and here you see the notion of abstract concepts are coming in where the it is showcased from reality in a very different way so if you look at this work again this is not the way you look at a girl with a mandolin this is not the color these are not the forms that you see but that has been the way which has been represented and that is one step towards abstraction which is very different showcased in a very different from that of reality and also there is a notion of cubism brought in with the fact of multi-disciplinary.

Today we live in a world where we talk about multidisciplinary tea when we talk about academic paradigms but the notion of multidisciplinary with performing arts architecture science all blending with each other and forming into the visuality was taking shape here so this was the starting point with the beginning of 20th century when we were taking a different look at art we

were taking a complete shift from the way of representationism and newer forms were taking shape. Which we have clubbed together and calling it as abstraction.

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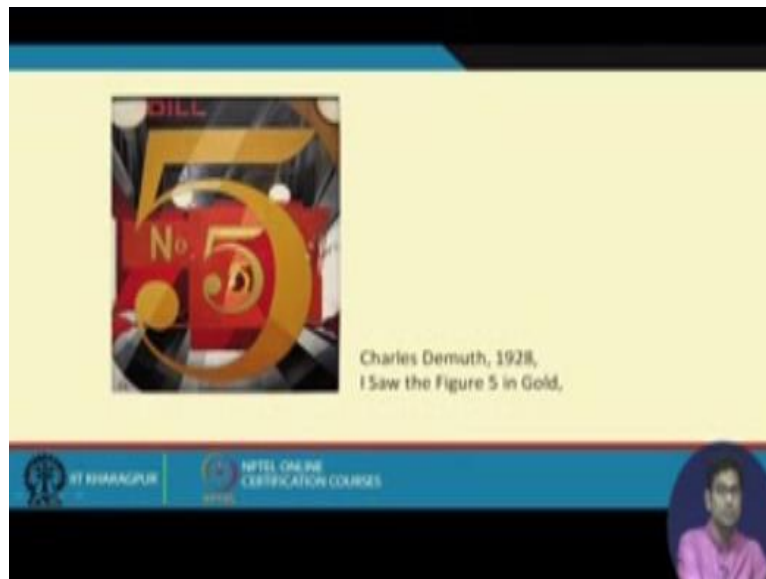


So let us look at the next one which is another milestone in abstract concept where we talk about futurism and precisionism so futurism in a way was very rooted to technology it was related to speed time scientific developments and things like that so it is related with the time when it was being visualized force you know evolved so it had it with the notion of science and technology and speed youthfulness and things like that.

So if you look at this artwork by Boccioni which is talking about elasticity so you see lots of elements which is again a true form of abstraction you can see but you can see certain objects or the influence of lines and figures which are giving you a notion of industrial industrialism vehicles, technology usefulness lot of commotion, violence activity clashes so all of this together for shaping the futurism and positions.

So where you get the you know a sense of that time where you are residing in so it brings in the police machinist the attribute of place where it belongs into the art work.

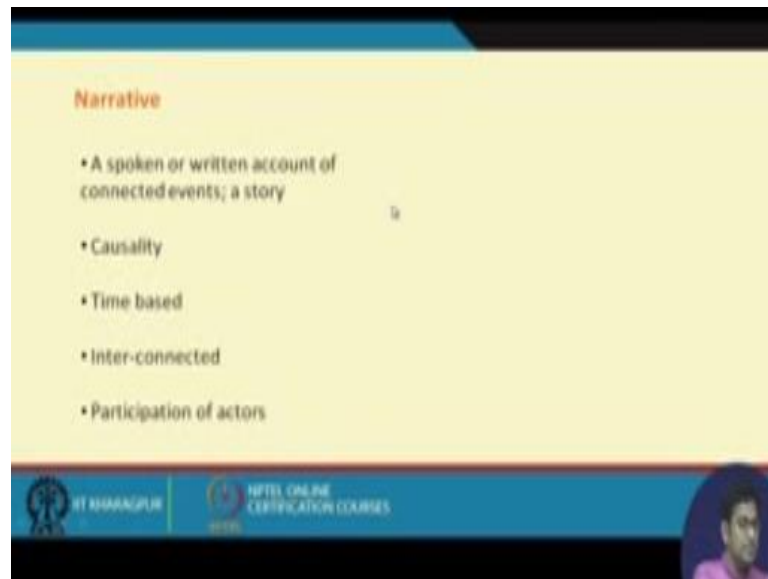
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And if you look at the next work by De Muth I C the figure 5 in gold so you can see the textural quality this is not work where it is taking an abstract thing which is five and bringing it into you know focusing that and trying to communicate and the title is I am seeing five in gold and look at the kind of effect the particular image has which has with it the luster the youthfulness the you know richness the time and space and all of it together but if you see the subject it is very abstract in nature which is this number five.

But represented in such a fashion it is something an abstract concept but represented in such a fashion that it brings with it certain kind of event so that brings us to the crux of abstraction and that from there we will now take a leap into how a narrative is built, so I have shown you some kind of images which apparently does not denote anything which apparently is a shift from reality but all of them has a story to tell. It has something which engages you and this is what is visual narrative.

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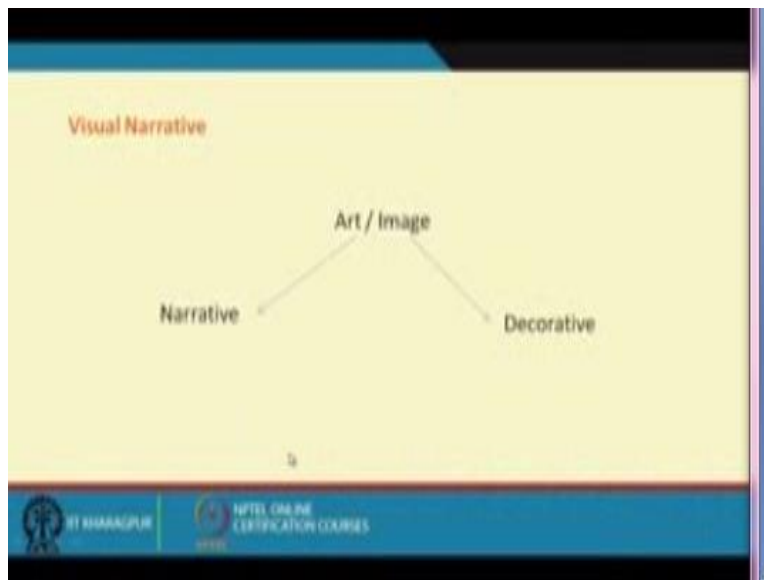
And if we look at by definition now what is the narrative a narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events or simply strictly speaking it is a story so when we have connected even there is a causal relationship of one event adding on to another then adding on to another a story gets formed so basically it is the storytelling approach it is a step-by-step approach if you see now what are the what are the aspects or what are the crucial feature so there is a causality there is a time based approach there is a interconnectedness and this participation of actors.

So we have already talked about causality and now we see there is a sense of time so whenever we are talking about the story whenever we are talking about the stream of events there come there comes an essence of time so that is something another very important aspect which we saw that some of the art movements are already addressing the notion of time in an image in a static representation and that is where we are stepping into the narrative concept and then we move on to something which is interconnectedness.

So if I have a event here and an event here which are not connected they do not take us to anywhere so there has to be an interconnectivity of even and of course there are no participant so in our last lecture we lost our last lecture where we talked about participant the participants

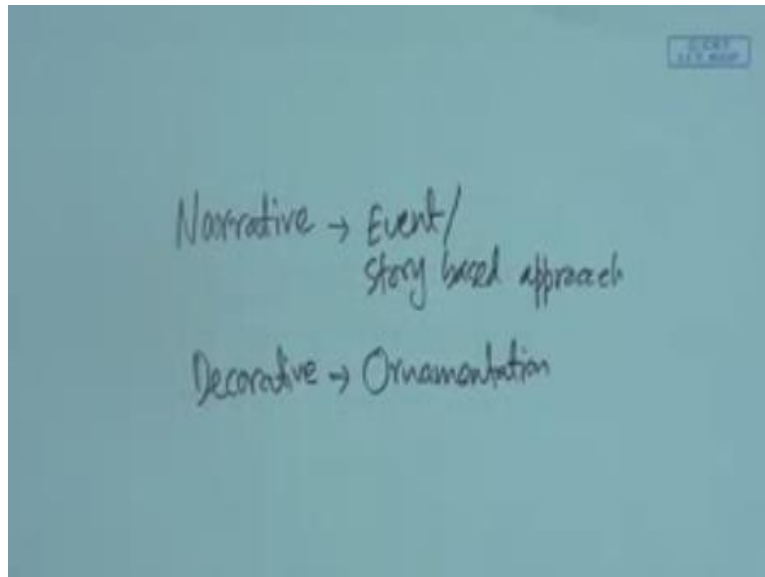
within your work and the participant as you and your viewer so all of them are playing a role here so the actors are part of this entire band of storytelling where the events are top step by step.

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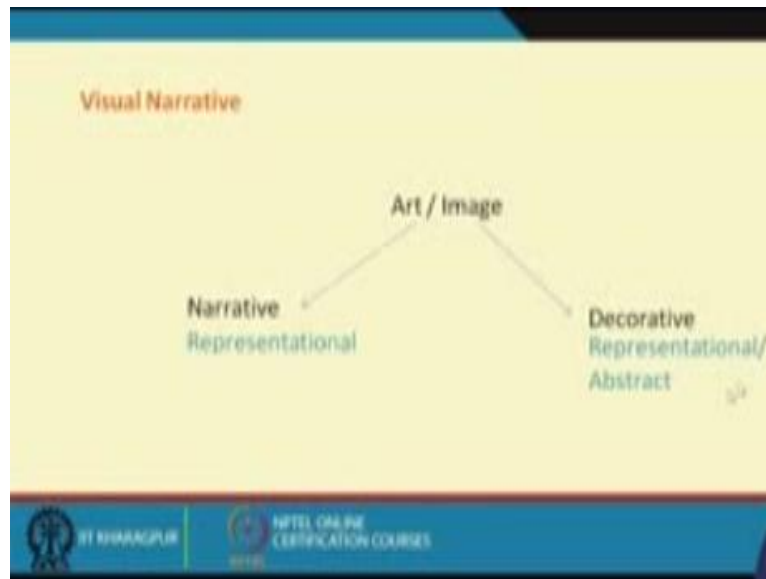
So now if we look at visual narratives so what an art or an image does, it essentially could be bifurcated into two notions one is a narrative and another is a decorative.

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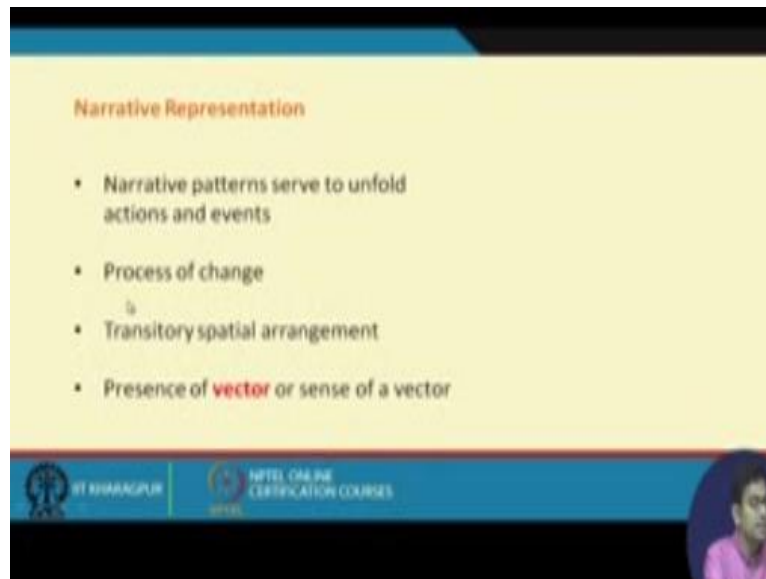
So a narrative form is an event our story based approach whereas a decorative form does not have any story based approach it's a mirror ornamentation so both are prevalent in our practice both are prevalent in our visual communication where we have a narrative approach where we have sequence of events being unfolded within one visual field and there is a decorative aspect which still acknowledge and appreciate the decorative aspect of art and imagery where a lot of decorations which does not talk about anything is just a visual representation of something which you know elaborates or expands certain things that is all but there is no aspect of narrative concept.

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So that basically forms the visual analytics narrative here if you look at essentially is dependent on some kind of representationism and decorative could be representation or abstract so there could be flowers and leaves being used for decoration or it could be some abstract shape but if you look at narrative it has to be representational in notion and we looked at something that even abstract forms are representational of the world but depicted in a different way so even if in certain later segments will see that maybe it is related to abstraction. But it has a connectivity with the representationism.

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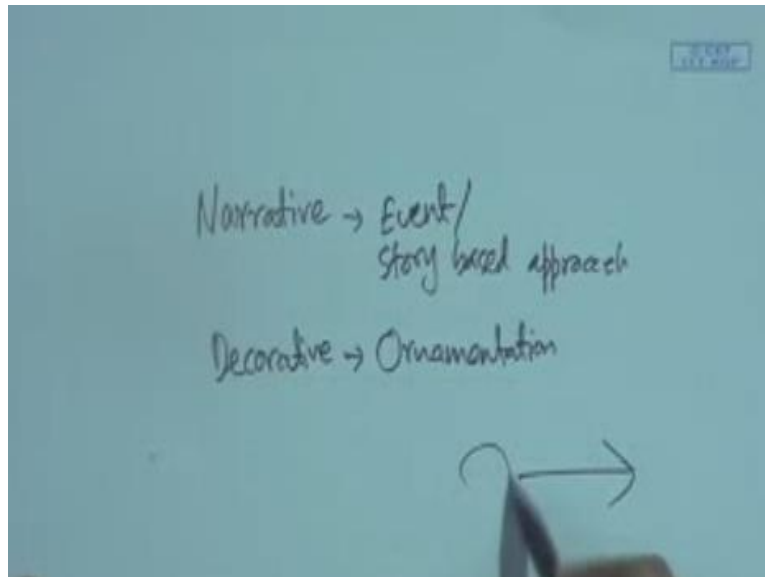


So now we look at some of the features of narrative representation narrative pattern serves to unfold actions and events which I have already talked it represents a process of change and it has a transitory spatial arrangement will come to vectors in a little while but let us look at these three things together so here we know that it is talking about some kind of event integration and hence there is a process of change.

So your visual depiction is not static your eyes will move in your visual depiction your meaning making will move in your visual depiction and that has to follow an order so this order has to be efficiently represented on your image so in future whenever you are forming an image an artwork keep always in mind if it is a narrative representation this flow this transitory spatial arrangement should be such that it takes you from here to there.

And there to there and not the other way around then the storytelling will be wrong right so this is something that you have to keep in mind and there comes the importance of vectors, so there is a presence of a vector or a sense of a vector so vector is nothing but if I put an arrow right.

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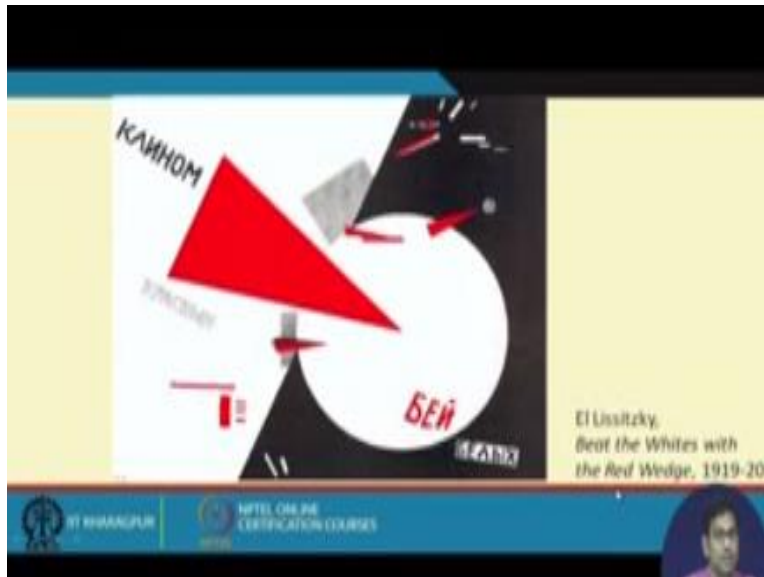
So this is causing this and then this is causing this so this is a very diagrammatic representation of how we may near Times form our narration but not always you put an arrow and represent something there is a sense of a vector also in an artwork.

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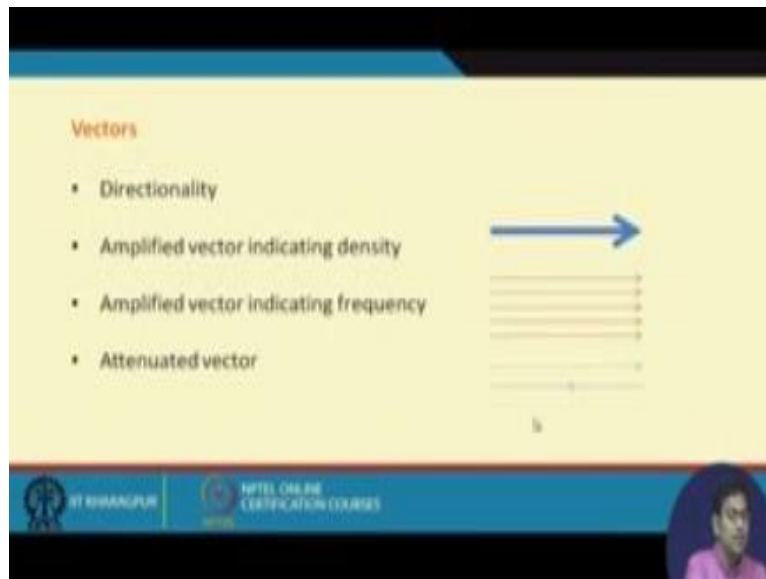
And say for example again we go back to Malevich and it is just a red square in the black square so you see that this is an abstract representation this is an abstract depiction of an artwork but yet it is representing a diversion of movement there is a sense of escapism from the black which is dominant and the red which is vibrant and smaller there is a sense of movement there is a sense of escapism so you can you can bring in a lot of representational attribute to it but the idea here is if you look back there is a sense of vector coming into pictures and hence it will definitely evoke a sense of storytelling.

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Let us look at the other picture will beat the whites with the dead which if I would not have shown you this particular text and just shown you the image you would have had a different notion you would have a different connotation and with the text it is making more sense it is nothing but a combination of certain forms but it is see over here it is trying to tell you a story there is something more than the some forms coming together it is trying to tell you a story step by step there is a sense of vector that.

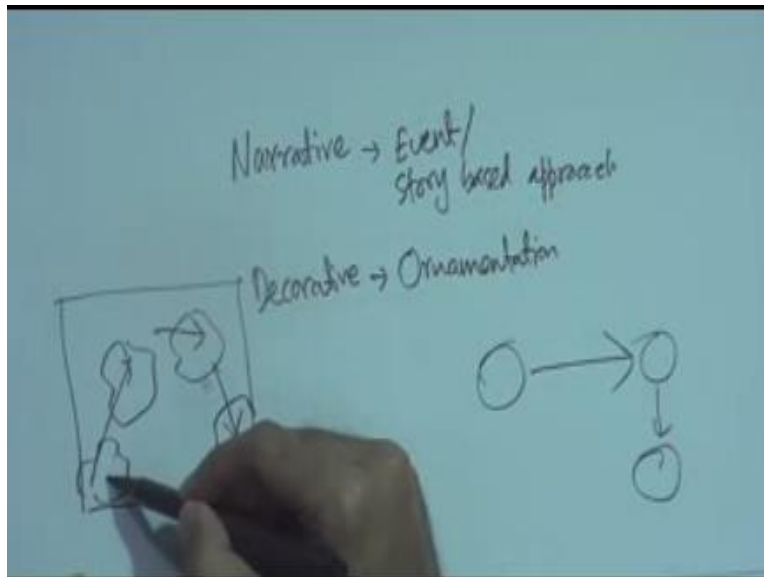
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So now if you look at vectors bring within the directionality of course and there could be amplified vectors so which brings in the density you know the intensity trust of something which could be brought in by an amplified vector into indicating density there could be another aspect if we look here amplified vector indicating frequency so there could be vectors which are in numbers and trying to do present frequency, so one could represent directionality of course one could represent the trust you know the force the density.

The other could represent the directionality the frequency of all of it coming together and then you have many a times attenuated vectors which are very Indian indirect which are not direct which are not showing you the effect on your you know actors but which are we sublime somewhere they are very, very attenuated in nature these are various kind of vectors that you can create in et in your artwork.

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So in future when you are depicting your visual field always keep these vectors of our tents of vectors in mind and hence start your representational attribute so that these vectors always work in place and see whether you want a you know an amplified vectors over here representing density you have you one certain you know different frequency to represent or you want some attenuated vector so always have this in mind where in your scheme of words and then go ahead with your representation.

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The slide is titled "Narrative Representation" in orange text. It contains three bullet points on the left and two diagrams on the right. The first diagram shows two blue circles connected by a single horizontal double-headed arrow. The second diagram shows two blue circles connected by two horizontal arrows, one pointing right and one pointing left, stacked vertically. At the bottom of the slide, there is a blue banner with the IIT Bombay logo, the text "IIT BOMBAY", and "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES". A small video inset of a man in a pink shirt is visible in the bottom right corner.

Narrative Representation

- Interchangeable visual and verbal participants in image
- Coherent semantic structure of word and image is always visual
- Simultaneous and sequential bi-directionality of the participants

So now we look at another aspect of narrative representation where we use the visual and verbal together not always we use the image but we also use the verbal and these are used interchangeably, so basic there you know places one presents another and another represents each other I mean so beat they are used interchangeably they are supporting each other so this many a times helps in our visual narrative formation, so they are active participants in the image and then coherence semantic structure of word and image is always visual.

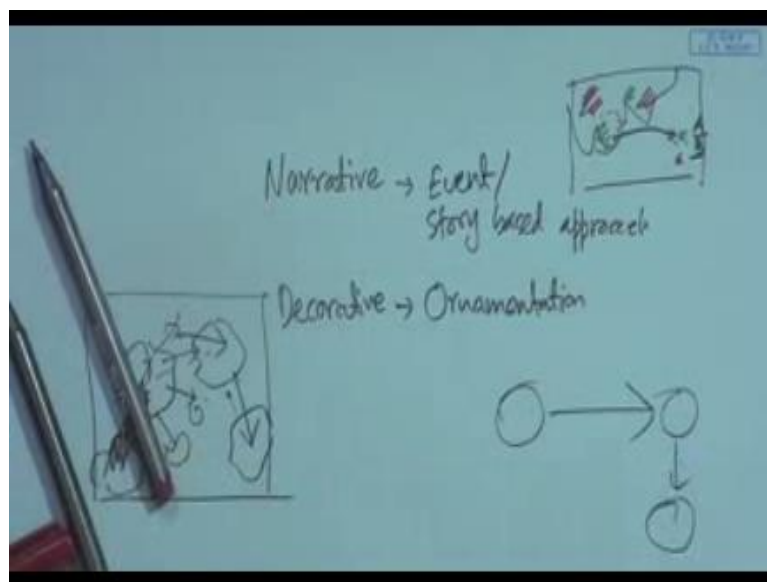
So this is something very crucial for you to understand that if the semantic logic the meaning making attribute of the word and image are similar so if you are showing a bird and you are representing a bird and if they are similar then the concept there is a coherent semantic attribute mapping them together and the effect is always visual, so what it means is this bird as a word and this bird as a visual will together.

Ultimately in your mind create an image still create an image bird if I say or apple if I say at the end of the day it is creating a visual imagery in your mind and hence you are recognizing what it means so they together are part of an image so we will have one of the lectures precisely dedicated to text and image how do they interact with each other but for the time being for visual

narrative purpose understand that text and image go side by side and they always work in continuation and then simultaneous and sequential by directionality of the participants.

So this is a case where so we talked about participants if you remember within the artwork and outside the artwork so there could be a simultaneous by directionality that the communication happening between you and me through a artwork and the particular art works enforces that that the what I wanted to create is seeking some kind of reaction from you and there is a simultaneous by directionality with all the participants or there could be a sequential by directionality that I convey something and you respond something say for example look if you look at a map okay.

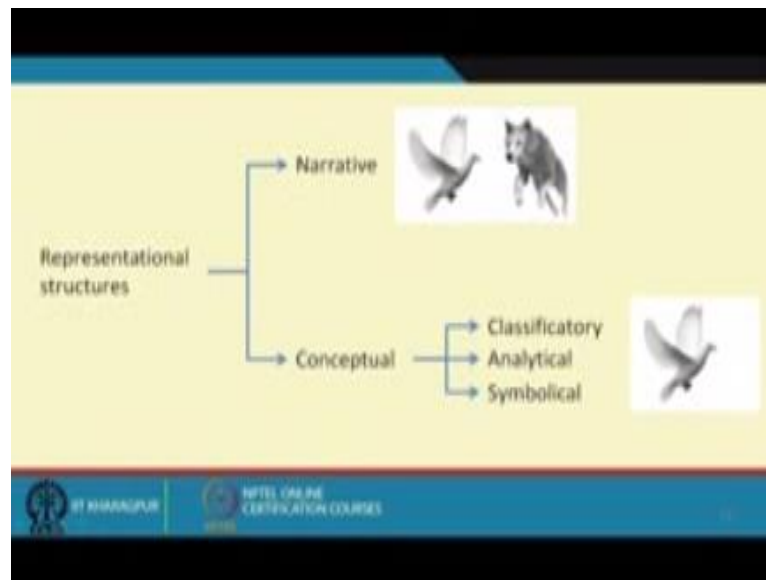
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So if you look at a map for it say this is a map and you have legend so many a times he use legend over here and it is over here and over here and we have a small legend with terms what is what so this is something this is something this is A, this is B so see here the communication is happening in a way this is a sequential one so you look at this and then you look over here what he is trying to communicate so I have tried to communicate step one is green is represented by A and where so you look back at the image and try to so this is a sequential way in which the participants acts the image itself me and you coming together and having a sequential narrative

approach, so this is also part of a narrative it is talking about something in an event time spaced manner.

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So that in short brings us to this final classification where we have been talking about the representational structures, so representational structure could be broken into two forms one is the narrative framework which we talked in depth and another framework which is a conceptual framework which is you can say a time agnostic which is time-tested and which has been their Universal okay, so which is their overt time universal in nature and that is something more conceptual predominant in nature going to its classification factor going to the analytical factors by which we look at it and going to its symbolic factor.

So minded this has developed over course of time this three aspects of conceptual representationism say for example you are representing a bird the way it is here is what is happening it there is a class that you are trying to create that it is a bird so there is a classification which we have conceptually in our world you remember the conceptual model and the mental model so there is a map between them we classification wise we have certain things in mind and we know that this is the bird and then we have our analytical approach of what this body is about

and then we have the symbolic nature what this body is associated with and that creates the conceptual representationism.

Whereas in a narrative representationism we have something related to time and even base so I will just show you one example which will clarify that so when we show a dove here you can see conceptually classification analysis and symbolic wise you have thought of something as soon as I put the bird there but whereas in a narrative formation has put a bird and another object together and immediately it is they are starting to tell you a sequence of events over the time, so this is in short what visual narrative and visual representationism and abstraction together brings us that ends our lecture over here in our next lecture we will talk about visual culture, thank you very much.