

Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture - 58

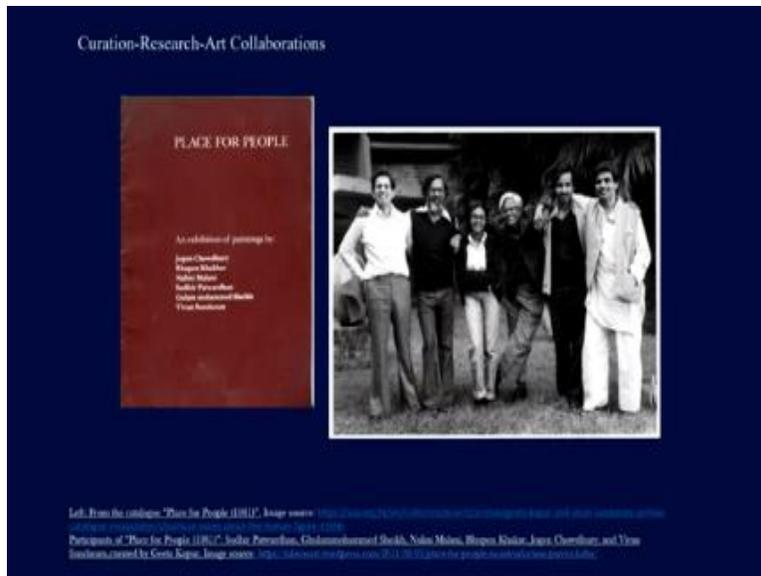
Hello everyone, I am Rajarshi Sengupta and we are continuing our discussion on the artistic practices that emerged in the late 20th century and we have already looked into some of the characteristic features of this newly emergent practices. For example how they have set up a dialogue between history and contemporary art and but at the same time we also see that how that have called for attention from the viewers from the audience about how to appreciate art, what are the roles of art in the society and to what extent we can push the limits of this different kinds of expressions the mediatic expressions.

So, today we will be talking about the relevance of the curation research and art collaborations and in them I mean we will be like I mean initially speak about some of those curatorial projects and then get into the research component of this kind of collaborations. So, by the idea of curation we find that there have definitely been curators in the mid 20th century mostly what we find that in the prominent museums, institutions and gallery in the western world like I mean in Europe, in North America and so on.

But perhaps like I mean what we understand in terms of like what is the role of a curator is to see and to observe to be sensible to be sensitive towards different kind of artworks and then how to bring them together how to think about a linkage between them or perhaps sometimes we also see that if there is a particular kind of theme, if there is a particular concern and then how the curator think about bringing the artist to respond to this theme.

So, curator's role is not always about getting involved into the material practice of making but their role is about like understanding the position of the artist and also like I mean how their works that can respond to certain concerns of our times and from our society. So, this kind of concerns we find that I mean in some of the curatorial projects in the as I have already mentioned in the mid;

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And late in the mid and late 20th century in Western Europe, in North America and so on. But perhaps one of the first consciously curated show in India would be place for people by Art historian Gita Kapoor and Gita Kapoor this particular show that had a huge impact in the arts in India and of course in entire South Asia. So, what we have here that we find that Gita Kapoor was also interested in terms of thinking about the relevance of white cube.

That is the gallery space the institutional space understanding of whether art stands for itself should we think about like I mean art making is for the appreciation of art or is there linkages for with the society. So, in all this dialogue where do we think about the role of audiences in all this dialogue what do we think the roles of ordinary people are. So, this kind of issues we find that those were consciously brought forward in this particular exhibition project called the place for people.

And in this image as we can see that there are, the participating artists are there and then Gita Kapoor wrote the curatorial note for this exhibition and all the works which were displayed in this exhibition were framed by Gita Kapoor to how this particular curatorial note like a Manifesto. If I can think about in the early 20th century would be crucial for understanding the works or to see the Works through the frame of the curator.

That is something we find it was a conscious effort as a collaboration between the artist and curator from this project. So, this project was, in this project we find that some of the artists like Sudhir

Patwardhan, then Gulab Muhammed Sheikh of course then Nalini Malani one of her project we have seen at the beginning of this week's lecture and then Bhupen khakhar this other prolific artist and then Jogen Chowdhury and Vivan sundaram.

So, this all of this artist works we find that I mean they were featured as part of place for people and it was considered as a landmark exhibition in the history of South Asian contemporary art and so from there we find that this exhibitions where this particular exhibition and then the other exhibition that would also was considered as one of the pioneering exhibition projects and that was called the question and dialogue in 1987.

And this also was but that exhibition I had said that I mean that had a different flavour from Gita Kapoor's exhibition this place for people. So, in this exhibition for place for people if we think about like this one particular character I mean one particular figure of curator and how the curator is responsible to bring all the works together in this exhibition and all those artists they were already either they were established or they were in the process of being established in the field of Indian art but as individual artists not necessarily as a group or they did not really work collectively.

So, that is one point we find that how they were functioning individually even though there were dialogues between them but how they were functioning individually and then Gita Kapoor made the effort of bringing their works together to start a new kind of dialogue through this works. Now what happened with like question and dialogue, it was organized by this short-lived a group called the radical painters the artist group in Kerala and this radical artist we find that I mean they functioned as a group and this exhibition you know that was conducted.

So, that came from only from this group. So, this is something that we find that they had already an agenda and they already had a particular aim for making their Works collectively and so that is how the character of this exhibition was different from what we understand for place for people.

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So, in the left side we have images of by a Bhupen khakhar. So, Bhupen khakhar was not trained in the institutional art practice but his works we find that I mean those where humorous they were also satirical in many parts. And he was perhaps the first or some of among the early openly gay painters or artists in India and in South Asia and for that reason that I mean he did not shy away from expressing his view.

Whereas we find that I mean a majority of the society in India to very recent times had reservation towards understanding things which go beyond the hetero normalcy. So, those things we find that I mean how Bhupen khakhar's works which were also were featured in place for people. So, they were also important as part of thinking about the artworks from the perspective of a person who is not considered as part of this heteronormative society.

And then what different perspective do we see and does that also allow us to think about the other aspects of life which we do not pay attention to, what are the discriminations that happen to people who do not fit into the society and also at the same time that how what are the directions from these situations. So, these are some of the dialogue we find that I mean those perhaps that came forward in Bhupen khakhar's work.

And how those also contributed to making of this new Metropolitan spaces in India and you know the changing or perhaps like I mean you know how the changing perception of the majority towards different ways of being. So, that came into a conversation the issues around gender, sexuality and what is normal what is not; all these ideas came forward with this works. Now the other work that was also featured in this exhibition project which is by Navjot Altaf this artist and this is called between memory and history.

And in this one what we find that 1990s also saw the Bombay riots and certain things that I mean Navjot Altaf had collected you know Memoirs and written notes about the right and then various expressions and experiences from people who had survived that and who have lost their family who have lost their dear ones property and many other things. So, those things what we find that in this particular display that she had this three monitors in which like the video concerning her exploration of the theme was played.

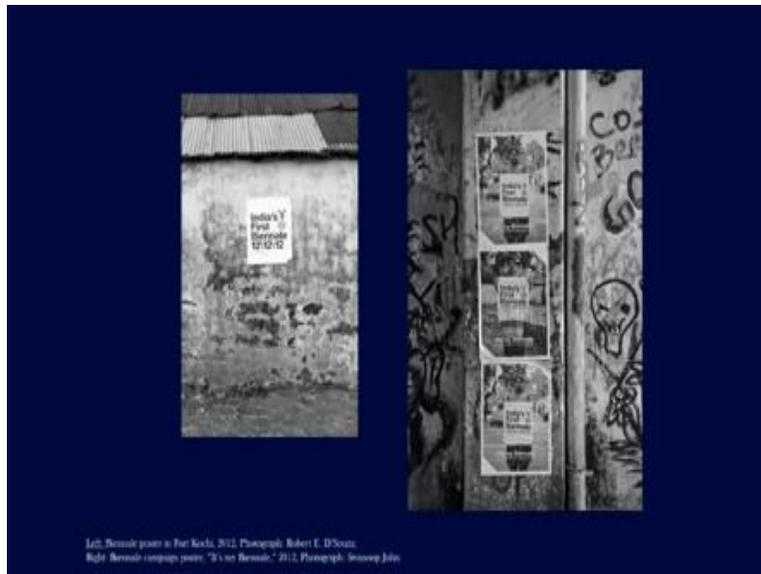
And then in front of that you know there was a bar like form, like this where it is completely made of iron and a place which sort of like I mean marks a boundary which is certainly not always we associate that with fond memories. So, if this is one thing and then in that we find that all those written notes from various people about their experience that can be experience of laws, that can be experienced about evidencing the riot.

And the changes in the society during this time. So, all those things were then made into this small paper you know fragments and then they were inserted within this fence like structure. So, what happens the viewers were invited to you know see the video but at the same time the viewers were also invited to take one of those pieces of paper and read it. And in other words that I mean it was a more participatory kind of work in which we find that the viewer's participation was intended as part of this.

And in many the Sufi shrine in the Dargah we find that how people keep their wishes in form of like I mean written papers or like in form of like threads and all and how those are tied into the shrines of the Sufi Saints. So, a kind of that gesture is also given here but then we see that I mean this particular practice which had been there in South Asia for a long time period is then transformed and that practice also has this participatory aspect.

But here then like the viewers participation in this work has completely a different view and through that we get to know about, we actually get connected to this unknown people whose experiences are there in the pieces of papers.

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So, this kind of activities we also find that I mean you know how the curators they bring together various aspects of this in Indian metropolitan cities like I mean if Bhupen khakhar's work comment on the issues of gender, sexuality, discrimination then like Altaf's work talk about the role of community then violence and then you know the need for peace everything. So, in this way we find that various different aspects of the metropolitan cities or the changing way of lives in India in 2000s or in the 1990s.

Those were put forward as you know as depiction of this Century City in Tate Modern. So, there we also find that in 2007 there was this other exhibition project which is called Horn Place at the Kunstmuseum in Bern and there was a revisiting of this two pioneering exhibitions that is placed for people and questions and dialogue. So, place for people from 1981 and then a question and dialogue from 1987.

So, this two exhibitions were revisited in this curatorial project in 2007 at the Kunst museum. And so what we see there in that exhibition that some of the artists like Gulam Sheikh, Atul Dodiya or all of them that they had commented on this issue of narrativity. And then this idea of narrativity and making of narrative art that had been there and it had created much debate in the post 1947 in India.

And so for that reason we also find how the progressive artist group they have deliberately moved from making narratives. So, from there we find that how those things are then sort of compared and those were you know taken to a different perspective when this revisiting of this exhibitions took place in the Kunst museum. Now from there we also find that this another exhibition project that that I mean I will not say I mean it is an exhibition project I mean this is a much more a bigger scale in terms of how the project was conceived.

And that is the first biennially of India. So, the biennially are the ones in they happen once in two years and we find that there were already International print biennially or triennially and you know biennially is the international ones like the Venice biennially and so on where it would did they showcased artworks from various different part of the globe.

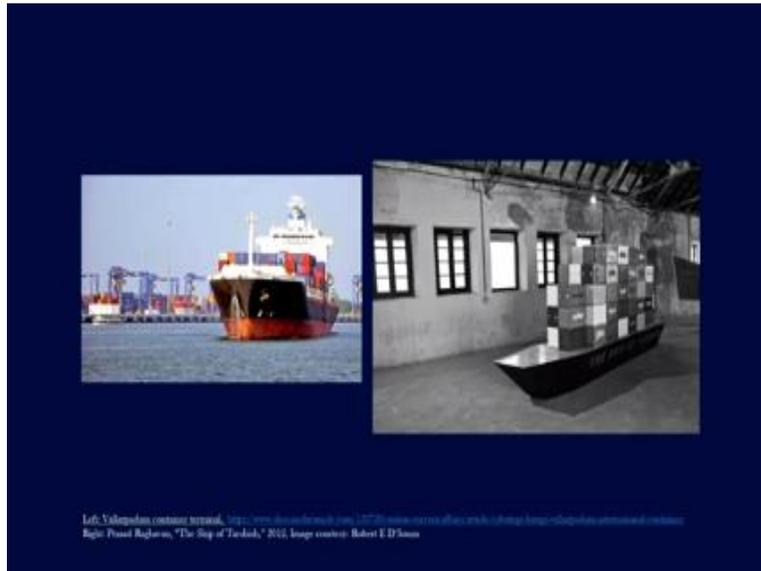
And in a way that I mean the those kind of biennially they become the hub for all people who are interested in contemporary art to visit that site one once in two year and have those extended conversation, dialogues at the same time the viewing of artwork from across the world. So, that was there in you know in the 20th century art practices. But in India what we find that I mean that was something that started in 2012 and in form of Kochi biennially.

So, Kochi biennially as we can see that there are some of the posters here we have in on screen and this posters where the way they sort of also popularized the biennially in Kerala that we see that I mean it was called as the India's first biennially. But also that some of the posters like for example here what we see that I mean people who do not really look like the you know like the so called the elite Gallery goers.

They are the ones who hold the poster like India's first biennially and this is a gesture towards calling attention to, you know a more inclusive experience of viewing which will not just be relegated to the gallery going audience or the people who go to museum for viewing artworks. So, in other words I can say that how the starting of the biennially and the need for extended attention at the same time participation of the audience and public was something that was kept in mind for starting of this biennially in India.

And how they have thought that I mean this is indispensable, it cannot just be exclusive to a few handful of gallery goers but it needs to engage a larger society a larger group of people in order to survive to sustain and to flourish. And so those things we find that was prioritized from the very first biennially in India.

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And here what we find in biennially is not just the artworks which are brought from different artists and different part of the globe to the site and then displayed. But there were also projects in which we find the site specific works were developed. Now what is site-specific work? So the site specific works also started perhaps from the 1970s 1980s we find when a land art in part of Europe and in North America that got its prominence and you know we would see that I mean how the artist they have their ideas they have their practice.

But when they arrived in a particular site how do they respond to that site. The site as a space, a site where people are already there, a site where there are objects and objects with history. So, how their practice the artist practice can be you know can be sort of like I mean transformed or made into something that fits this particular site that is called the site specific work that we see. And it is also in a way it is a way to sort of questioning this idea of artist individuality.

Because as we can see that in the modernist regime this idea of artist individual approach towards making artworks and which may or may not respond to the changing norms of society, socio-

political situations and everything those things were there and developing a particular style of work. More than anything else that was also something that was given priority for particular given time.

So, the site specific works we find that certainly marks a departure from that it compels the artist or it gives opportunity to the artist to move beyond these established norms that if they have already established a particular way of making works. What are the ways in which one can question that they can push their own boundaries and make works which are fresh in their approach at the same time that can also be a learning experience for the artists themselves.

So, this is one project that I wanted to show here and this the Kochi biennially, the place of the biennially which is very close to the harbour area and here we see the Vallarpadam container terminal which was in the making and that is one of the that is a huge container terminal in this vicinity of Kochi. So, this particular place is there and then one of the sites for displaying the work that we see which is like right adjacent to this Vallarpadam container terminal.

So, from this windows you can actually see this ships and part of the terminal. So, the artist who had worked here in this place in 2012 and that is Prasad Raghavan. So, he had Incorporated this image of the ship as part of the work. So, this is called the ship of Tarshish and this ship with all those like those containers on the top of them which gives a specificity to this site that was made here in the interior.

So, when we see this ship in the interior as an artwork and then from the window we actually see the ships which are on the move. So, what kind of dialogue that creates and that is something that question I mean perhaps I mean more than a conclusive answer that is you know put forward by the artist. And also when we see a particular ship within this institutional space or a gallery space or a display space then we start considering it as an artwork.

When the; same shape if we see through the window which is on the move could be considered that as an artwork. So, these kind of complicated questions are also put forward by creating a dialogue between what is already there and what is constructed within this given space. So, that

kind of activities I think I mean that that also added to the complexity at the same time the layered understanding of the contemporary Indian Art and the artist's participations.

So, we will continue more on this works at the same time will get into more of the participatory works in the next lecture, thank you.