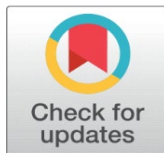


WOMAN PRINTMAKER OF BOMBAY SCHOOL: SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI: HER EXPRESSIONS FROM RESTRICTED SPACES TO MULTI MEDIUMS AND TECHNIQUES OF PRINTMAKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the contribution of woman visual artist, printmaker Shakuntala Kulkarni from Bombay School who is breaking forms of artwork from restricted spaces to multi mediums and technologies. Artist Shakuntala Kulkarni's thought process and experiences give an overview on her socially engaged art practice by using contemporary technologies of print making as well as combinations of arts and craft in works. This paper will provide relevant narratives like film, video, drawing, painting and print making that emerges in her work from artistic thought process and journey of the artist. Artist works against the backdrop of a growing movement to bridge the gender gap are timely and on point with a focus powerful expression on unique modes, methods even process through which she addresses and engage with society, politics, history, emotions and environment of contemporary times and becoming part of the global international art scene.

The Artist remains insufficiently investigated or appreciated where Bombay was one of the flourished centres socially, politically, and culturally. She creates a space for empowerment through the use of multi mediums, emerging trends in interactive works of art and becoming inspiration to eminent artists and young generation too. The history of visual arts and printmaking of Bombay School in particular cannot be written without acknowledgement of her contribution as print maker and multidisciplinary artist.

Keywords: History, Printmaking, Woman Printmaker, Multidisciplinary Artist

1. INTRODUCTION

Printmaking or Print is work of art which allows multiple impressions in exact/ identical forms of the original image. Impressions, pictograms, symbols have played very important role to give evidence of development of civilization of human being. General handprints on walls are stamped or airbrushed by mouth to blow pigment. It appears that there is close relation to the signs and handprints. These people left

handprints, palming them had hopes of reaching beyond spirit. These impressions, pictures of pre-history show that human beings tend to have equal influence on where their group lived.

Pictorial multiples have been in wide use since fifteenth century as a means of visual communication to serve the needs of the church or the monarch. Prints and illustrations of religious themes are known to have made their beginning in Europe in the 15th century or earlier. Printmaking was introduced in India to create printers and illustrators to develop native narratives and visual vocabulary. [Dhongade \(2019\)](#)

The Bombay School was founded in March 1857, and Mr. M. Agyer followed with the opening of Sir J.J. School of Art and Industry which was named after Sir Jamshetjee Jeejibhoy, a businessman and philanthropist who gave donation for its endowment. John Griffiths became the principle of the School in 1865 where Mr. Wilkin Terry taught drawing and wood engraving. Intrinsic quality of print making then was carried to expressive art. But Sir Jamshetjee Jeejibhoy always wanted this school to be an industrial design center for arts. So, it had no tradition in print making as expressive medium in Bombay school like other schools until 1938. In the decades of 50s and 60s of post-independence, the idea in print making of Bombay school strongly revolves around Indian modernism in art, and in 1962 print making subject started in syllabus by support of Vasant Parab after continuous struggle of graphic art class by Y K Shukla from 1947 in Bombay school. Religion, culture, language, country, society and economy changed rapidly during this period. Print making became medium of expression parallel to drawing and painting but in the art history of visual art and print making, women artists have been an underrepresented category alongside many others. Bombay school has diverse records of the key events, excursions, various communities and castes who studied here. After Independence if we see Bombay school there have been remarkable and admirable women print makers i.e. Lalitha Lajmi, Prafulla Dahanukar, Shakuntala Kulkarni, Durga Kainthola, Vishakha Apte and many others who remain insufficiently investigated or appreciated where Bombay was one of the flourished centre economically, geographically, politically, social and culturally. [Indian Print Making Today 1985 \(3rd ed.\). \(2000\)](#)

This research paper is focusing on to appreciate the excellence of women print maker Shakuntala Kulkarni and limitations to examine the position and status of women print maker after independence of Bombay School. Women printmakers have been an underrepresented category alongside many others. It can help to understand socio-political status of that period. This research is highlighting the works of Shakuntala Kulkarni and her contribution as print maker in print making and how new experiments, digital technology will be inspirational for young print makers.

Qualitative analysis is used in methodology to understand ideas and experiences of an artist by taking an interview and through books, news articles, catalogues, magazines, art journals, published papers.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Catalogue of annual exhibition of Sir JJ School of Art **Roopa-Bheda 160th Annual Art Exhibition 2016-17** gives diverse records of the institute. In this particular issue 'Feminine perspectives: Women artists of Sir JJ School of art (1880s to 1970s)' there is a reference to women artists, print makers, their career and

works written by Dr. Manisha Patil. 'Compilation of women artist of Sir JJ School of Art from 1980 to 2002' is an article written by Abhijit Gondkar which gives brief about revolution period of this institute. Here in these articles there is basic information about women printmakers of Bombay school. [Kauffmann \(1962\)](#)

The book, **Bharatiya Sandharbhatun Streewad, Streewadi Samiksha ani Upayojan** explains the social, cultural, religious, political, economic nature of the society. Indian women circle around traditions and culture and the traditional and cultural life is different in every case and caste. In the unpublished thesis, **Mumbai ke Cchapachitrakar ek Adhyayan-2016** by Dr. Ganesh Tartare, there is a detailed study of Printmaking, Mumbai but there is a brief analysis of women print makers of Bombay School- their expressions, depiction of different aspects of women printmakers in print making medium.

The book, **Bhartiya Cchapatitra Kala: Aadi se Aadhunik Kaal Tak** traces the development and important aspects of print making from ancient art. Author has represented and composed theoretical side with practical sense by his observation, experiences and research on several changes of print making. To address this gap, this research helped to bring out the role and different aspects of woman print maker by different aspect and expressions in different mediums and techniques of print making in details.

3. SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI- A PRINT MAKER, MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST

Shakuntala Kulkarni (b. June 22,1950) is a Bombay based artist who completed her art education from Sir JJ school of art in 1972. Later she studied Mural. She did 2years print making course from MSU Baroda. In Shantiniketan she received guidance from famous print maker artist Somnath Hore. She has participated in many group exhibitions throughout the country as well as abroad and many important workshops. In 1998, she was selected for the prestigious residency at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, UK. Her artistic journey started with abstract painting influenced by American abstract art. She became interested in drawing and sketching the human figure after her stay at Shantiniketan. [Naik \(2007\)](#)

Figure 1



Figure 1 Untitled, Engraving, 1978-88

Source <http://shakuntalakulkarni.com/other-projects.html>

Figure 2



Figure 2 Untitled, Engraving, 1978-88

Source <http://shakuntalakulkarni.com/other-projects.html>

Figure 3



Figure 3 Juloos and Other Stories, Digital Prints: Erased Drawings On Board

Source <http://shakuntalakulkarni.com/juloos.html>

Figure 4



Figure 4 Juloos and Other Stories, Digital Prints: Erased Drawings On Board

Source <http://shakuntalakulkarni.com/juloos.html>

In the beginning of this stage of drawing and painting she found subjects in the people around her in daily routine, maids, servants working at home, old couples, retired people. Shakuntala Kulkarni has done her work with immense and social structures of society with tradition and religion. Her collaboration and learning process dissolves socio-economic differences and collectively readdress the use of medium from etching, aquatint, silkscreen to digital print with different surfaces.

4. SOCIAL ASPECT IN WORK OF ART THROUGH EXPRESSIONS

From mid-eighties, her work shifted from earlier concerns of human factors to gender specific issues specifically an enquiry into the lives of urban women and their spaces like the home as work space as well as cultural and social space within the society which is basically patriarchal. Even various kinds of violence and discrimination towards women resulted women constantly experiencing a sense of fear, oppressive, anxiety, alienation. She has done works on women and explored issues related to a women mentality, emotions, gender specific issues, the physical and mental conflicts they had to face, their position in patriarchal society. Although growing up in liberal family of artists in Mumbai in the 1950's, she did experience certain restriction on woman outside the comfort of my home. 'Beyond proscenium' (Fig.4) in 1994 was her first prominent work focusing women in indoor spaces in which she used steps, platforms railings and screen to make sense of tension and uneasiness in the viewer. Here to articulate her message better she staged theatrical performance around the work to extend mood through movement, sound, rhythm and of course medium of print making like screen print. Here there is experimentation by incorporating and blurring boundaries of different disciplines and art forms in her art work. [Singh \(2016\)](#)

Shakuntala Kulkarni believes in humanity rather than one nationality or in a particular religion which turns out to experiment and emerge different things by mixing several styles in artwork can bring world together. Her art comprises traditional, modern and symbolic images and creator a different world of emotion. Shakuntala Kulkarni stands as a feminist voice in Indian art scenario that presents a range of findings and approaches to materials.

5. USE OF DIFFERENT MEDIUMS AND TECHNIQUES OF PRINT MAKING ACCORDING TO WORK PROCESS

Shakuntala Kulkarni has addressed some of these issues and the possibility of dealing with them with the need of rearranging and stretching of visual language. It compelled her to shift her works from two-dimensional space of painting and printmaking to three-dimensional sculpture space. She did works on women and explored issues related to a women mentality, emotions, gender specific issues, the physical and mental conflicts they had to face, their position in patriarchal society. Here to articulate her message better she staged theatrical performance around the work to extend mood through movement, sound, rhythm and of course medium of print making like screen print. Here there is experimentation by incorporating and blurring boundaries of different disciplines and art forms in her art work.

Figure 5



Figure 5 Of Bodies Armour and Cages, Photo Performance (2010-12) Digital Print on Rag Paper
Source Artist

We can see the adaptation of technologies has significant impact on artistic practices. By engaging with computing on variety of levels as medium using it as tool, as iconography artist find her ways into the domain of print making. For Shakuntala, the conceptual implications of digital technology inspire ideas. Here she establishes use of the matrix (color choices, scale, limitations and distribution) which functions as a translator of artist generated or defined information whether photographic image or data sets.

6. EXPERIMENTATION WITH MULTIMEDIA'S AND COLLABORATIONS OF ART AND CRAFT

Shakuntala Kulkarni's family background as in theatre and film/ performing world we can see performances like moving, exercising dance, ballet and yoga in her work of art. Even her intimate involvement with the theatre permitted her the freedom for experimentation with form, time and space resulted exploration in multimedia installations. Here the work 'Of Bodies armour and cages' (Fig.5) the armour is made by weaving of natural cane. To make this work she worked with a cane craftsman, weaver from village. One can observe decorative elements, intricate, swirls in it. For armour work and exploration of this idea she employed the expertise of natural artisan skills that one fuses with her urban contemporary thinking. The materials bind and bends is a vivid social contemporary on the state of women. She has taken inkjet prints on rag paper of her performances and has limited editions of it. [Story of JJ School of Art 1857-1957 \(1957\)](#)

Many relevant narratives like film, video, drawing, painting and print making that emerges in her work from artistic thought process and journey. Her multimedia works include 'Reduced spaces anonymously yours', 'Aajichya gosti' (Grandmother's tales) explored through the help of yoga and film to understand the space of social / cultural history, traditions of women with the use of different mediums like fabric, fabric paint and thread in it. Shakuntala who originally trained in painting, print making has shifted her work from flat surfaces to sculpture performance, new media. And if we say about space of exhibiting work or some her performance art work she had people come up and ask about her work to engage in dialogue with folks on non-commercial platform for as diverse an audience as possible. [Tartare \(2016\)](#)

7. CONCLUSION

Shakuntala's works against the backdrop of a growing movement to bridge the gender gap are timely and on point with a focus powerful expression on unique modes, methods even process through which she addressed and engage with society, politics, history, emotions and environment of contemporary times and becoming part of the global/ international art scene. Multidisciplinary artist give expressions to different experts in her works and an exploration of artwork from painting, print making to multimedia and different modes of surfaces. Here there is experimentation by incorporating and burring boundaries of different disciplines and art forms in her art work through different contemporary technologies of print making. The history would certainly register and note Shakuntala Kulkarni- a women print maker contribution in art world and become inspiration to young artist as well as art students.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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