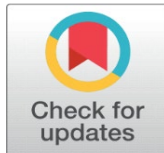
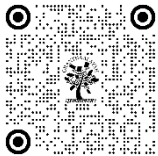


HISTORY OF THE USE OF WASTE MATERIALS IN VISUAL ARTS: CONCEPT AND ROOTS

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ABSTRACT

Today the whole world is struggling with the problem of waste materials and their proper maintenance. Examples of the use of waste material are also found in art. An artist always needs a medium to create their artwork, and also, in contemporary art, many artists are creating artwork from waste materials and beautify their environment and make people aware of its reuse. The process of making artwork from waste material is today known as 'Scrap Art' or 'Junk Art'. An early example of the use of waste materials in art comes from the 'Dadaism' Art Movement, which started in France in the 20th century, when artists started exhibiting industrially produced objects as artwork, along with their titles. From here, a question mark was raised regarding the idea of 'Readymade Art' and its aesthetics. Behind this was the main artist 'Marcel Duchamp' whose work 'Fountain' in 1917. The other two major Artists were Man Ray and Francis Picabia. The second developed form was seen in Picasso's 'Bull Head' artwork in 1942, where Words like 'Found objects' and 'Ready-mades' became popular in the history of art. Many artists in contemporary art are creating artworks using these waste materials. This is not only enhancing the beauty of our public places but also making people aware of their reuse and also showing a new dimension of art creation. This research paper analyses what new changes have taken place in terms of style and thought due to the use of waste material in art from the beginning till today.

Keywords: Readymade Art, Found Object Art, Junk Art, Scrap Art, Waste Materials

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the whole world is struggling with the problem of pollution, and new efforts are being made every day to get rid of it, we use a large number of mass-manufactured products made by companies, and after using them, we throw them in the garbage. But very few of us probably think about recycling or reusing. Today many social and government organizations are trying to make people aware of getting rid of this problem. In the same way, many artists have also used these waste materials in their creativity and are doing so even today. So that they can be given a new life and a new perspective can be developed regarding their use. Because the

artist has always been looking for a medium for his expression, many artists have used these waste materials as their medium of creation. Even today, they are doing well and setting new records in the field of art and presenting a new perspective of seeing these waste materials to society [Shukla \(2006\)](#)

The use of waste material in the field of art proves to be an important revolution because usually, we are habitual to view art in the form of paintings and sculptures. However, the creation of works of art in waste materials represents a new aesthetic approach and method in the history of art. This paper analyzes the historical aspect of the use of waste materials in art, its development over time and the current scenario to see how important it is in terms of expression.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research paper explains the use of waste material in the history of art. The main objective of this paper is to see what kind of change came from the use of waste material in the art field. As well as how the process of creating artwork with waste materials differs from traditional styles of art making such as painting or sculpture. This paper also throws light on what kind of ideas were the main ones behind the use of any found object or any readymade object in art. And how it was accepted in art. Also, how was the concept of aesthetics, and how has it developed?

3. METHODOLOGY

The analytical method has been specifically used in this research paper study. Sources of information have been obtained mainly by studying books, research papers and reading articles available on the internet. Criticism is done based on the information received which has been previously analysed.

- **Marcel Duchamp and his Artwork 'Fountain.'**

The earliest examples of the use of these waste materials in the visual arts come from the modern art of 20th-century France. In which Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp displayed his artwork 'The Fountain'. In 1917 he submitted an ordinary object, a urinal pot made of Porcelain, signed by R. Mutt (the name of the manufacturer of the company making the urinal) for selection in the exhibition of the 'Society of Independent Artists' [Bajpai \(1980-81\)](#). After all the controversy of the selection committee on this, it was selected as an artwork by saying that the artists who had deposited the exhibition fees would have to accept it. But it was displayed at the back of the exhibition and from an ostracized perspective. This exhibition was held in the exhibition hall of the 'Grand Central Palace' in New York.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Fountain, 1917 by Marcel Duchamp [Stieglitz \(1917\)](#)

'But it came to light when it was published as an article in a Dadaist magazine or journal titled 'The Blind Man' after it was photographed in Alfred Stieglitz's studio.' Due to the use of these ordinary objects in daily life in art, some new words started coming into use in the world of art, like readymade art, found object art, etc.

- **Readymade Art and concept of new aesthetics**

The society, horrified by the horrors and cruelty of the First World War, now wanted to be free from all its old traditional cultural stereotypes because the World War had shaken everyone from the inside. In such a situation, European artists, philosophers, thinkers, and poets were looking for something new. Readymade art was also the result of these revolutionary ideologies, which were started by Marcel Duchamp. In which the artists started using any normal thrown or found object shape for their expression. Moving away from their actual use of that object, artists started using it as artwork. Due to this, the artist and viewer developed a new conceptual aesthetic vision of seeing an object and some new words were created in front of society, which were mainly away from the technical terminology of traditional art creation. This revolutionary change in art paved the way for many more main streams of modern art, such as Conceptual Art, Assemblage Art, Installation Art, Junk Art, etc. [Sakhalkar \(2007\)](#) In today's time, many artists are expressing themselves using these 'Ready-mades' in different ways. The main reason for the increase in its use is today's consumerist society, industrialization, mass production and development of science as well as the discovery of new materials.

- **Marcel Duchamp and his ideas about readymade art**

Marcel Duchamp challenged and ridiculed the idea of beauty in art. He used to display such found objects and ask the audience whether they would like to display it in their home. Duchamp used to reject such art, whose beauty attracts the audience. He said that 'simply by the artist choosing an ordinary object, it is transformed from its actual use into a work of art'. He also said that 'if artists are tired of copying things and are eager for innovation, then why don't they look at daily life objects and accept them as art? Let's take when art is not something different from life, then why not accept the ordinary things of life as art'. His statement is 'I do not believe in art but I believe in the artist' [The Art Story. \(2023\)](#). Duchamp did as he was told; in 1913, he tied a bicycle wheel on a stool and called it a sculpture (Bicycle Wheel, 1913). He was titled an axe, a 'broken arm'.

- **Impact of the Dadaism Art Movement**

Dadaism is a movement of modern art that began in Zurich, Switzerland, during the First World War, and to understand the use of waste materials in art, it becomes necessary to understand the ideology of the artists of Dadaism. Dadaism itself later transformed into surrealism. Which greatly influenced modern artists and art lovers. Dada is a French word, and it means 'Horse or Hobby horse' [Shukla \(2006\)](#). The word 'Dada' has no relation with art, but how it came to be associated with the movement of modern art is an interesting phenomenon. Dadaism has been the most bizarre, unique and ridiculous of all the movements of 'modern art'. This movement shows the extent to which artists can go in their craze. Dadaism originated in Switzerland, and after attaining enlightenment, his activities became active in Paris as well. This movement of artists was not only a campaign of art but an expression

of the feeling of rebellion and despair burning in the hearts of the Artists. Greed in humans, fascination for power and faith in traditional art against all these was the source of this movement. In other words, through the Dadaist movement, the painters and poets raised their voices against the First War, openly ridiculing the accepted social beliefs and beliefs by seeing its divisive, destructive pastimes.

Jean Arp has written, "While on one side the flames of war were raging, on the other hand, the fire of rebellion against it was burning in the hearts of the artists. When the guns were being fired in the distance, we were sitting in the houses, taking pictures against them. They were singing songs and doing whatever they could. We were looking for the art that could heal the wounds of man in this age of madness. Dada's campaign started from poetry, painting, and sculpture to architecture. More than art, "Dada" was a philosophical approach that spread to photography, film, music and graphic design. There was a kind of anger, and there was anger of sad people. Its purpose was to take the mind out of its deranged state. The artists wanted to escape from their immediate deteriorated society, which had become so spoiled due to the war. They wanted to be completely free [Shukla \(2006\)](#).

Poet Tristan Tzara, sculptor Hans (Jean) Arp, and painter Francis Picabia started the movement together. He left the public in awe and wonder with the display of his unusual works of art. Seeing his irrational, strange and ghastly creations, the public was deeply shocked and lost their senses. Dadaist exhibitions and publications continued in France and Germany after the First War. In 1920, these eccentric Dadaists held an exhibition in the city of Cologne, in which they used hatchets to destroy anti-art pieces on the wall so that the audience could freely attack them. Seeing their impudence, the police had to forcefully shut down the exhibition. Similarly, in the city of Paris, Duchamp prepared a colourful replica of Monalisa, in which he added a moustache and beard to his face and also wrote some obscene words in the painting. This painting is the culmination of the frenzy of the Dadaist painters [Dixon \(2018\)](#).

Dadaism was not an art movement but a reaction. Seeing the orgy of war, the heart of the Dadaists became restless to throw away all the old ideologies. Instead of creation, he started seeing beauty in destruction.

- **Picasso, Bulls Head, 1942**

The Bull Head, a work created by Picasso combining the handle and seat of a bicycle, was shown in Paris in 1944 at the Salon d'Automne exhibition with a total of 78 works by Picasso. Seeing which the audience was very surprised, and a lot of criticism was also made.

Figure 2

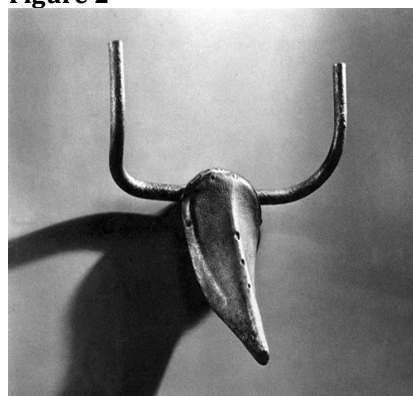


Figure 2 Bull Head, 1942 by Picasso [Xennex \(2020\)](#)

This artwork of Picasso, Art critic Eric Gibson said that 'this artwork is the most different of all Picasso's artworks because it has a glimpse of the childish joy inside Picasso and on the other hand it also has a glimpse of his intelligent but destructive mind. 'He also said that this artwork reflects the imagination power of the human brain beyond the subconscious. Picasso's statement is important in this regard 'Think how I made the bull's head, I found the seat and handlebar of a bicycle in a pile of junk, and as soon as I saw it, I put them together in my head to form a bull, I just welded them together. 'If the viewer is looking at the bicycle seat and its handlebar separately, they will not be able to see the bull' [Pablo Picasso. \(2023\)](#). This artwork made from found objects further reinforces the idea of readymade by Marcel Duchamp, and at the same time, it also exposes a new aesthetic view along with newly created words in the art field like Junk art & Scrap Art, Assemblage Art.

- **Modern Art Movement and Evolution of 'Junk Art'**

To understand the word 'Modern Art' it is important to know about its history and understand what exactly Modern Art is, when and for what reasons it started, and what changes were brought about in the field of art by this movement. However, the reason for the beginning of modern art can also be seen from the Industrial Revolution. The daily life of humans started changing due to the influence of manufacturing industries, transport industries, and the development of different technologies. According to the changing times, the needs of the people also started changing and new cities were also built along with different industries. As a result, along with the development of architecture, importance was also given to design. The Bauhaus school also made a major contribution to this field in the 19th century. Along with these industries, industrialists were also born. Apart from selling art and explaining its importance, art critics and their collectors also started being formed. The world's most famous modern museums were also established during this time. In this sequence, photography was a big invention, that directly impacted fine arts [Cork \(2023\)](#). Due to all these reasons, there was a big change in the field of art. Both the artist and the audience were eager to see something new. This was the reason why the artists of that time were doing new experiments and adopting new methods of art creation and exhibition. This is the reason why artists gave birth to new mediums that were never heard of before, such as collage art, assemblage art, kinetic art, land art, performance art, junk art, etc.

- **Mid-20th century Junk Art**

Due to new experiments in modern art, different methods of art creation developed, such as sculptures started being made through the assemblage technique. Texas-born experimental artist 'Robert Rauschenberg gave rise to the "Combined Series" by combining the mediums of painting, sculpture, and installation into one artwork. The artworks made from these found objects were first named 'Junk Art' by British art critic and curator Lawrence Alloway in 1961. He used this term for artworks made from scrap metal, broken machine parts, old torn clothes, timber, waste paper, and other found materials. Similarly, American sculptor 'David Smith' Created 'The Hudson River Landscape Sculpture in 1951 by assembling scrap welded steel parts. In 1960, Swiss kinetic artist 'Jean Tinguely' created the artwork 'Homage to New York' which proved to be the main example of kinetic art. French-American artist Arman (Armand Fernandez) is known for his

famous assemblage artworks. His artwork 'Home Sweet Home' made from a waste gas mask in 1960 is the most famous [P \(2016\)](#).

Figure 3

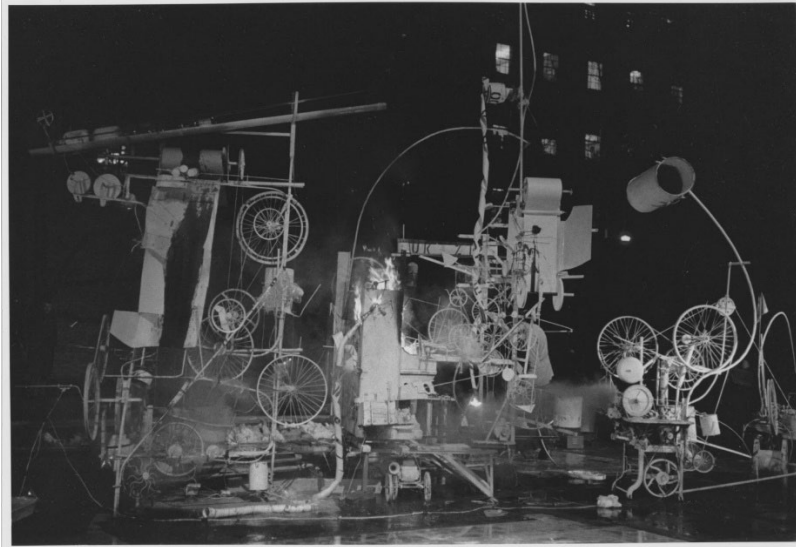


Figure 3 Homage to New York, 1960 by Jean Tinguely [Gahr \(1960\)](#)

- **Junk Art in the British - 1990s**

In the 1990s, the 'Young British Artists' group was quite active and controversial in working with found objects and junk materials. 'Damien Heirst's artwork 'A Thousand Years' (Saatchi Collection, 1990) was displayed in the gallery in which he displayed the severed head of a cow along with insects and flies attached to it. This also reveals another side of the use of waste materials in art and also shows a different aesthetic vision. It is also seen in installation art and conceptual art.

Tracey Emin, the second major artist of this group, displayed her artwork 'My Bed' at Saatchi Art Gallery in 1998. She displayed his bed with sweat and stained bedsheets and underwear lying on it, which was very controversial among artists and art critics [Cork \(2023\)](#). The use of waste materials in art has been viewed and used from different ideological and aesthetic points of view in every period of Modern Art. Similarly, in contemporary art, artists are creating artworks from waste material using different art creation styles like assemblage, collage, mixed media, etc. Art and artists have always been influenced by the current innovations and social conditions in every period because art has been called the mirror of society. Every artist has his art creation style. Whatever he feels, he expresses it to society. An artist always needs a medium for his expression which can express his imagination and thoughts. By using waste material in contemporary art, artists are not only showing a mirror to society but are also giving a new vision to the future, which is setting new parameters of beauty with its unique creation process and is also telling that art is changeable.

- **The contemporary Artist**

In contemporary art, many artists are creating works of art using waste materials as their medium. Each artist has a distinct style and way of thinking. Some artists create sculptures and paintings through assemblage techniques, while some give visual form to their ideas through installation Art. Brazilian artist Vik Muniz and

Texas (USA) artist Vince Hannemann are internationally renowned contemporary artists actively working with waste materials [Chirat \(2018\)](#).

Many contemporary artists in India are widely using these materials in the creation of their artworks; among them, Hari Babu Natesan, Manish Nai, Sakshi Gupta, and Subodh Gupta are prominent. The picture shows Hari Babu Natesan with his artwork 'Volkswagen Beetle', which is being prepared by electronic waste [Natesan \(2014\)](#).

Figure 4



Figure 4 Marat, 2008 by Vik Muniz [Muniz \(2008\)](#)

Figure 5



Figure 5 Volkswagen Beetle, 2014 by Haribabu Nateshan [Natesan \(2014\)](#)

4. CONCLUSION

The use of waste materials in art gives a new form of art, which develops a new multidisciplinary style by adopting traditional art styles. The main reason behind this is the growth of science and technology, industrialization and mass production. Which, on the one hand, proves to be right somewhere to meet the demand of the growing population. On the other hand, due to its lack of proper recycling sources, it is also becoming a threat to human life. With the use of these waste materials in art, awareness is also coming among the people about their reuse, as well as we can

keep our environment clean and make it beautiful too. If we talk from the point of view of art history, artists have started seeing any readymade and found object as their medium, due to which the concept of beauty contained in artwork has also changed. Art has always been influenced by contemporary events, and the artist just needs a medium for his expression that can embody his feelings. Even though examples of the use of waste material in art are derived from Dadaism, according to art historians, it was just a reaction to an unbalanced society, but the ideas of Marcel Duchamp changed the perspective of looking at a simple object. He proved to be an inspiration for the arts to come. Picasso's experimental mind also proved to be a major factor in its development. Later, artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely and Louise Nevelson also made major contributions to it. It starts in Western countries, but its influence is fully visible in India too. Many contemporary artists in India are actively creating works of art by adopting this medium. The main reason for this is also the development of technology and science. Due to globalisation, the communication of information has become easy.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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