

# VISUAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES IN TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

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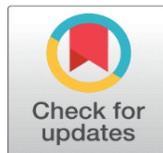
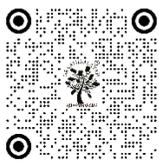
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## ABSTRACT

Painting has also been a core purpose of visual storytelling since it allows one to express cultural materials, beliefs, and human experiences in a visual form. This paper analyses the changes in the methods of visual storytelling in both traditional and contemporary painting along with the development of the way narrative organization, symbolism, material activities and interaction with the viewer has been changing over the recent decades. Traditional painting is examined as a form of narrative based on these characteristics of sharing of iconography, linear or cyclical storytelling and culturally fixed meanings through which stories are interpreted. Contemporary painting, in contrast, has been approached as an open-ended narration practice, which is fragmented, conceptually rich, highly-mediated, and participatorily interpreted. The study is conducted through the lens of a qualitative and comparative analysis based on the narrative theory, visual semiotics, and art-historical analysis to identify the preservation and the breakage of the conventional and modern methods of visual storytelling. The evidence shows that even though modern painting has broken the ties with organization and clarity of storytelling, it still possesses the basic instincts of storytelling in symbolic articulation, emotional appeal, and physical arrangement. The transformation in collective narratives into the subjective and critical storytelling is an indication of wider social, cultural, and philosophical transformation that has attempted to influence the visual culture.

**Keywords:** Visual Storytelling, Traditional Painting, Contemporary Painting, Narrative Theory, Visual Semiotics, Symbolism, Viewer Interpretation, Visual Culture



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Visual storytelling is one of the most ancient and strong ways of people to express their ideas, which has existed before the introduction of a written language. Painting has been employed through the use of images, symbols, and composition to capture visual narrative through which myths, rituals, historical records, and experiences can be captured historically. Visual stories: Since cave paintings to classical murals, religious iconography and miniature traditions, have been visual means of communication other than aesthetic artifacts, in that they convey values, belief systems and collective memory. In this respect, painting can be viewed as a visual text, which encourages the viewers to read, interpret, and experience stories that are incorporated into visual patterns [Ciancarini et al. \(2023\)](#). The conventional methods of painting were dependent on the systematic narrative patterns. The visual cues were very well organized through visual symbolic motifs, hierarchical arrangement, sequential scenes, and expressive gestures to present mythological and religious motifs, royal narratives and moral allegories. The narrator of the story assumed the role of a visual narrator, controlling the viewer along a fixed narrative. Time dynamism was frequently presented in one frame, through repeating figures or space division, and as such one composition would convey the several points in time of one story simultaneously. These methods ensured that there was indisputability and strength of shared cultural interpretation especially in the cultures where visual literacy was developed first before textual literacy [Ausubel \(2012\)](#).

Nevertheless, the development of the artistic thought, and in particular since the modern era, there were notable changes in the manner in which the stories were narrated by painting. The strict narrative lucidity of traditional art indulged itself in the ambiguity, the abstraction, and psyche. The contemporary artists started to blame the linear narrative and instead of applying it directly they used disjointed shapes, figurative distortion, and emotional echo. The piece of art no longer exemplified an imaginary narrative but rather more and more developed into a referential experience in which a meaning was implied as opposed to dictated [Vygotsky \(2012\)](#). This shift was a pivotal one in the context of visual storytelling, and it has re-established the connections between the artist, the work of art, and, obviously, the viewer. This change is further extended to contemporary painting by incorporating pluralistic accounts and open-ended interpretation. In current art practices, artists often relate on personal memory, identity politics, social critique, and intersections among cultures around the world to build up visual narratives that are not mean to be singled out [Hu and Li \(2025\)](#). Narrative approaches no longer follow a linear form of narrative structure, but are developed in layers of symbolism, juxtaposition, and conceptual metaphor. The introduction of mixed media, digitality and non mainstream materials have also brought more colour to visual storytelling, allowing painters to diffuse the lines between the visual culture, the performance and the painting [Cross \(2023\)](#).

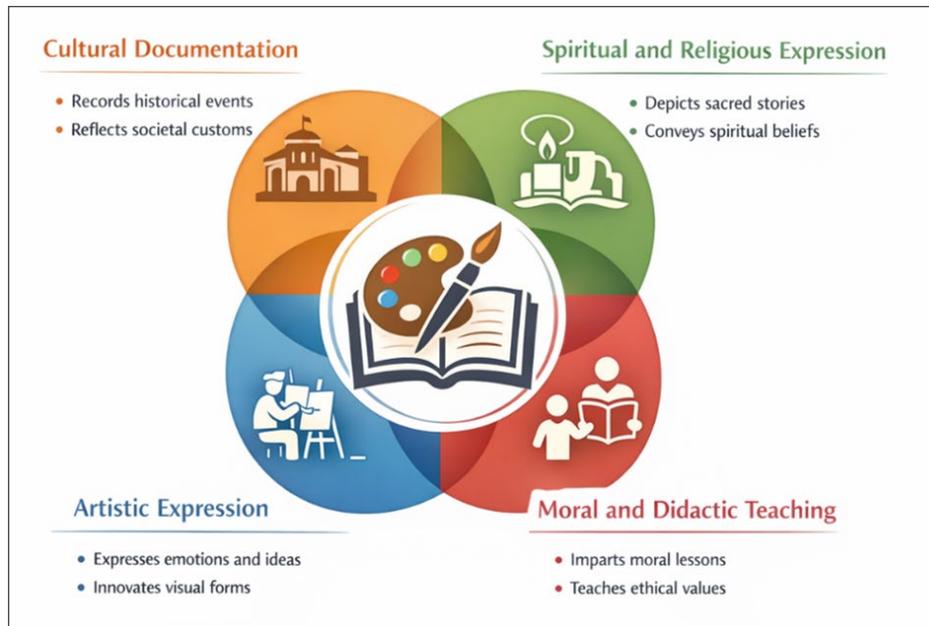
However, the main impulse of telling stories does not change in traditional and contemporary painting notwithstanding these changes. Both of them attempt to convey the experience of a human being; however, they employ different visual tools and narratives [Lawson \(2006\)](#). The traditional form of painting stresses on community storytelling based on common mythologies and codes of culture, whereas contemporary painting favours subjective and fragmented and even conflicting narratives. The continuity and change of visual storytelling practices is an issue that some crucial questions are brought to light with this juxtaposition. What is the development of narrative technique in periods of art history? How are the new visuals receptive to new stylistic changes? How far does the viewer interpretation reproduce the narrative meaning in modern day painting? These questions have to be answered, as otherwise the task of studying and analysing a painting as a communicative and narrating practice will be understood once only as a work of aesthetic value. Previous research has treated narrative theory, semiotics and iconography of particular art historical situations but limited comparative research has been conducted on visual tricks of narration in traditional and modern painting. The proposed research is aimed at closing that gap and examining the process of narrative creation, communication, and interpretation in the context of various artistic paradigms.

The major aim of this paper is to compare and contrast storytelling styles in traditional and modern paintings with special reference to composition, symbolism, time depiction, and the involvement of the viewer. With the help of a qualitative and interpretative methodology backed by selected case studies, the paper will attempt to find continuities as well as disruption in the strategies of narration. The study has a wide range in terms of cultural conditions since visual storytelling is viewed as a process that changes and develops due to the impact of history, society, and technology.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework of interdisciplinary comprehension of the visual storytelling that involves narrative theory, visual semiotics, art history, and viewer-Response perspectives is required to understand the visual storytelling in painting. In contrast to the literary storytelling, which is presented in a language and in a linear form, visual storytelling is presented in its images, symbols, space organization, and perception. The role of painting is then to create a system of non-verbal narrative where the meaning is developed based on visual relationships as opposed to series of sentences. In this section, the theoretical background that will be applied to the visual aspect of storytelling in both the classic and modern day painting is presented.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Functions of Painting as a Narrative Medium

Essentially, visual storytelling describes the systematic expression of ideas, events, emotions, or experiences in visual forms. The narration of a painting is not done through explicit narration but the combination of form, color, composition, symbolism, and referring to the context. Narrative meaning tends to be implied and not expressed, and the visual cues have to be read, active, on the part of the viewer. This perceptual transparency characterizes visual narration of stories compared to descriptive illustration and makes painting a dynamic narrative, as opposed to a fixed image [Verganti et al. \(2021\)](#).

Narrative theory offers a critical way of understanding the way stories are constructed and perceived. Classical narrative theory focuses on factors like plot, character, temporality and causality. These elements when used in painting are converted into visual counterparts. Characters can be embodied either in figures or gestures, or in symbolic and abstract form, events may be implied either by spatial order or by repetition, temporality may be expressed either by series of images in succession, or by stratification. Conventional painting has been linked to comparatively familiar narrative forms whereby spectators are able to construct an understandable narrative with the assistance of shared knowledge of culture [Lyu \(2019\)](#). Contemporary painting is in contrast often disruptive of these conventions, such that linear narrative is substituted with fragmenting or associative narrative.

In the interpretation of visual stories, semiotics are of a key position. The semiotic theory, which is based on the study of signs and symbols, describes the mechanism of visual use of elements as meaning carriers. In painting, the signs can be iconic (similar to that which they denote), symbolic (learned meanings in the culture), or indexical (meaning(s) suggested by association). The conventional painting is also quite traditional in the use of systems of the established symbols: religious iconography, mythological features and allegorical characters with which one should interpret them. The modern form of painting usually disrupts or makes individual the symbolic sensibility, creating a degree of ambiguity

and increasing potentiality [Song et al. \(2022\)](#). Consequently, the meaning becomes a bargaining point between the artwork and the spectator.

Through iconography and iconology, the analytical framework is additional because visual imagery is associated with historical, cultural and ideological contexts. The subject matter, motifs, and themes are the objects of iconographic analysis, and the issue of philosopher and cultural meaning lies behind the iconographic motifs and subjects, and is examined by an iconology. In classic painting, iconography prevails in narration, and suggests continuity of meaning through time. However, contemporary painting does not always refer to historical symbols, but is often recast in new context to comment on contemporary problems such as identity, power, memory, and globalization. This transition is an indication of wider change in storytelling, the replacement of collective by individualized and critical story telling.

The other important theoretical aspect is the depiction of time and space. The painting of visual story telling is not temporal like literature or cinema. Rather this tends to squeeze, stretch or overlay time into one frame. Techniques that were used by the traditional painters include the continuous narration where different phases of a narrative are evident in the same composition. In later painters, however, the clarity of time is frequently obscured to an extent of being entirely lost, be it through abstraction, repetition, or loss of space, to refer to psychological or conceptual time as opposed to chronological sequence. This development indicates the transformation of the perception of the reality and experience of the modern and postmodern thinking.

The interest of viewers is also a crucial part of the conceptual framework. The artist does not alone create meaning in the process of visual storytelling but rather the viewer worldly perception and interpretation. The classic painting tends to guide interpretation based on singular symbols and status quo composition. Modern painting conspicuously, however, often espouses openness, uncertainty and freedom in interpretation. The viewer is engaged as a participant and brings in missing narratives and makes up personal meaning. This transition corresponds to the reception theory, which focuses on the importance of the audience in defining the meaning excepted by the narrative.

These theoretical approaches combine in a unified approach to study visual storytelling in different periods of art. Integrating the theory of narratives, semiotics, iconography, time, and analysis of viewer-response, the study builds a multiplexed prism according to which one can compare, in a systematic manner, both traditional and contemporary painting. This framework allows defining not only the principles of the narrative that can be followed across time but also the changing strategies of storytelling, which will be further pursued in the paper in terms of the succeeding visual analyses and case studies.

### 3. VISUAL STORYTELLING IN TRADITIONAL PAINTING

Historically, traditional painting is a potent medium of narrative and it has been traditionally injected with a story in the visual form long before the effective use of written scripts. Traditional visual storytelling is based on traditional cultural, religious and social backgrounds; it is a storytelling which is known by narrative intelligibility, symbol inventory and conventions of visual representation. Painters were also working within a predetermined structure that allowed the viewers to decode the meaning through the use of common practice imagery and gesture, as well as compositional techniques. This part looks at the main narration processes that were used in traditional painting into specific thematic subsections.

#### 3.1. MYTHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES

The traditional painting is based on mythical and religious narratives across the civilizations. Graphical stories based on religious literature, heroic poems, and folklore were not only made to be appreciated aesthetically, but also taught to keep the stories, worshipped, and passed on by the culture. These paintings are representing already known events and figures, which means that people will instantly place the image within a larger narrative context. Regular iconographic indicators: divine attributes, postures, ritual objects and the like provide reading accuracy and identity [Sung et al. \(2022\)](#).

The repetition of sacred myths in form of visual effects strengthens the belief systems and moral principles shared by people. Spatial arrangement often implies the narrative sequencing, when several episodes of a single story are present in one piece of work. These paintings serve as pictorial scriptures, allowing narration through means of images in the textually illiterate societies. This position of the artist is, then, in line with that of a narrator, who dutifully passes along narratives approved by the culture.

### 3.2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STORYTELLING TRADITIONS

In addition to the sacred stories, traditional painting has also a great role in the record keeping of historical and royal patronage, and the cultural rituals. Courts paintings, battles and ceremonial images maintain the instances of political authority and social peace [Ginting et al. \(2024\)](#). Neutral records are not characteristic of these works but well-compiled accounts that accentuate authority, legitimacy, and collective identity.

The compositional hierarchy plays the main role in historical narration. The main people are made bigger or positioned in the middle, and the background personalities are used to enhance the story that is progressing. Architecture, costume and props give context, and make a historical background stronger. By these visual protocols traditional paintings become narrative archives, conditioning the memory and interpretation of history.

### 3.3. SYMBOLISM, ALLEGORY, AND VISUAL METAPHOR

The use of symbolism and allegory are basic elements of traditional painting narrative. Having visual elements is hardly literal but with meanings that are greatly enshrined in the cultural and philosophical traditions. Colours can be used to imply moral attributes, beasts can imply virtuous or unethical traits, and natural objects tend to have religious or cosmological meanings.

Allegorical painting is a form of representation making abstract ideas take the shape of human beings or other symbols allowing complicated ideas to be passed across in an artistic manner. Metaphoric narratives enable a painter to tell in a multifaceted way, a multidimensional narrative, functioning literal, moral and philosophical [Tripon \(2024\)](#). These symbolic systems are dependent on common knowledge about culture, and they have intergenerational interpretive coherency.

### 3.4. COMPOSITION, GESTURE, AND SPATIAL NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

In conventional painting, composition is the support structure to the visual story of the image. Space is arranged carefully by artists in order to control flow of the story and direct the eye movement of the viewer. Symmetry usually shows harmony and order, whereas diagonal movement only implies action or struggle. The narrative episodes can be divided spatially or emphasized relationships can be outlined between characters.

Body language is very important in communication of feeling and meaning. Text is not used to communicate narrative tension, devotion or conflict through facial expressions, body movement, and interpersonal positioning [Arefi \(2024\)](#). The plot can be defined as an intuitively developing one, as all the clues appear through visuals and allow facing both the emotional and narrative understanding of the message.

### 3.5. REPRESENTATION OF TIME: SEQUENTIAL AND CYCLICAL NARRATIVES

The manner the time is treated in a still picture can be considered as one of the most unique aspects of traditional visual storytelling. Instead of focusing on a single instant, the various temporal layers of a given moment are often folded into a single work of painting by the traditional painters. Continuous narration enables the family of one and the same image to arise repeatedly playing out variant stages of a story.

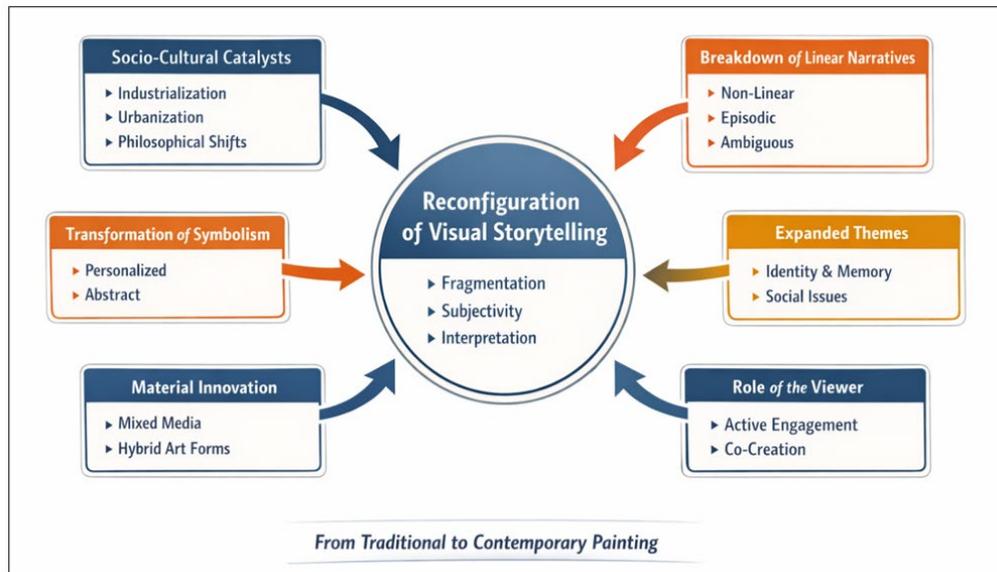
These methods are often applied in series or in cyclic patterns, which are often on multiple panels or surfaces dividing the storytelling into miniature paintings, and this approach is called instead mural and miniature painting. These spatial narratives cling to the viewer reforming the viewer to traverse through the piece of art reassembling the story as it is seen. These methods show how the painter is able to play with time as a visual effects to make images of static objects into movements of the narrative.

## 4. TRANSITION TO MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

The Modern and Contemporary painting mode of transition is one of the radical changes to the convention of visual storytelling. Contrary to old-fashioned painting which presupposed some sort of stable iconography and linear or cyclic discourse, contemporary and modern art was the consequence of a climate of disruption in society, philosophical

discourse, and experimentation with art. Such a shift did not imply the elimination of the narrative in the painting; on the contrary, it implied a re-staging of the narrative logic, the control and the attention of the viewer. The visual storytelling turned out to be not a common language of the culture, but a subjective and more fragmented and interpretative process.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** Transition to Modern and Contemporary Painting

#### 4.1. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CATALYSTS OF CHANGE

The modern painting appeared along with the significant transformation of the social, political, and intellectual life. The transformation of perception of reality and identity was caused by the industrialization, urbanization, scientific rationalism and the decay of traditional religious influence over people. Artists started doubting the traditional stories as well as visual clichés that could no longer resemble the modern experience [Sharma and Jha \(2024\)](#). Gradually painting began to lose its role in supporting ideology of collective mythology and started to reflect individual perception, social commentary as well as psychological nuance. All these socio-cultural changes provided a foundation that subsequently led to a concept of a different method of visual storytelling; an approach where exploration was more important than explanation.

#### 4.2. BREAKDOWN OF LINEAR NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

Among the main transformations of the transition into modern painting is the problem of the line of narrative disruption. The classical styles of storytelling which led the viewers through the definite chains of events were replaced by the discontinuous and disjointed visual forms. The contemporary painters tend to focus on a single moment, a single feeling or impression rather than narrating a whole story [Ottaviani et al. \(2024\)](#). This fragmentation is the reflected image of the fragmented way of life in modernity, where there is no previous or next: only uncertainty and complexity.

The creation of narrative coherence in contemporary painting often relies on visual rhythm, harmony of colors or repetition of narrative as opposed to stated narrative. Lack of distinct beginnings and endings stimulate the audience to experience the work contemplatively to create their meaning through association, not by chronology [Rowe and Chung \(2024\)](#).

#### 4.3. TRANSFORMATION OF SYMBOLISM AND VISUAL LANGUAGE

This stage of transition is when symbolism is radically changed. Conventional painting means that symbols are used in a well-stated cultural framework that guarantees mutual meaning. However, contemporary and modern artists redefine or destabilize these symbols, giving them a new sense or meaning, which is personal or contextually specific.

Pictorial elements are made expressive tools instead of narrative markers. Color, form and texture play an increasingly important role of emotional and conceptual vehicles. A deformed figure can be an indicator of a psychological tension, and abstract shapes can be used to create the feelings of social alienation or existential doubt. In tale telling, therefore, a transition is made not between the outside world and the inner one but applying experience more than a graphic approach.

#### **4.4. EXPANSION OF NARRATIVE THEMES AND SUBJECTIVITY**

With the shift toward modern painting, there is a more extensive variety of narrative subjects. Artists are no longer engaged in mythologies and historical themes but instead in identity, memory, gender, trauma, migration and social inequality. These stories tend to be both autobiography and uncompromising political as well as are expressive of personal experience in the context of greater socio-cultural units.

Visual storytelling in the present is difficult to interpret as a one-sided idea, and instead, it embraces pluralism and contradiction. The artist does not provide narrative authority anymore but rather provides fragments that engage in dialogue. This transparency enables painting to be a place of introspection, and subject to the negotiation of meaning by the viewer on both individual and cultural levels.

#### **4.5. MATERIAL INNOVATION AND HYBRID STORYTELLING PRACTICES**

Experimentation with material holds an important position in the reinterpretation of the narrative strategies. Modern artists are using mixed media, digital images, found objects and irregular surfaces which are provoking a shift toward what painting is. These practices are in-between painting, installation, and conceptual art and widen the range of visual narratives.

Stories are a result of not only image but also process, material selection and space. The material construction of the piece of art becomes a constituent of the narrative and focuses on temporality, changing, and impermanence. The methods denote modern anxieties about complexity and interrelation.

#### **4.6. CHANGING ROLE OF THE VIEWER IN NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION**

Narrative structures are becoming less prescriptive and the role of the viewer is greatly transformed. Traditional painting leaves interpretation in the familiar visual codes where modern and contemporary painting is dependent on the viewer to fill the narrative. Symbolic openness, abstraction and ambiguity require active involvement. Meaning is not fixed any more but is also negotiated, it is always determined by a personal perception, memory and even culture. This change is consistent with the reception theory which focuses on interpretation as a process. Visual narration turns into a participative production, with the viewer being a joint construction of narrative meaning.

#### **4.7. CONTINUITY AND REINTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES**

Although the changes are radical, modern painting tends to converse with the time-honoured storytelling methods. Artists can allude to the classical music or mythological motives, or further refer to the images of history, rewriting them in contemporary terms. This recontextualization shows both continuity and critique in visual storytelling, proving that it is still based on tradition as it continues to develop.

When the modern and the contemporary painting were introduced it was a movement of organised, culturally integrated narratives to culturally diverse, subjective and interpretative techniques of storytelling. Narrative clarity is replaced with ambiguity, symbolism is personalized, and viewer becomes a key factor in the process of the meaning-making. Instead of giving up storytelling, modern and contemporary painting reinvent its purpose, shifting the storytelling expression to emerging perceptions of reality, identity, and artistic mission.

### **5. VISUAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES IN CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

In the current painting practice, a vibrant extension of visual narrative is conceptually deep, plural and experimental in its form. Contemporary visual narrative, in comparison with traditional painting which fundamentally depends upon

common symbolic schemes and progressive narratives, is characterized by ambiguity, hybridity and subjective interpretation. Contemporary painting does not always have the interest of telling a whole or comprehensible story; instead, painting may tend to give bits, visual metaphors, or experiences that invite the viewer to build his own meaning. This part analyzes the essential methods of storytelling characteristic of the modern painting.

### **5.1. NON-LINEAR AND FRAGMENTED NARRATIVE STRUCTURES**

The abandonment of narrative flow is one of the attributes of modern visual storytelling. Modern artists often no longer stick to chronological order, often adhering to fragmented or stratified paintings. Space is organized in a way that proposes more than one potential storyline by having visual elements arranged together to imply the various possibilities of the time periods and their connection to the story. This non-linearity is an expression of the modern experiences that are determined by digital culture, globalization, and high rates of information flow.

It has some fragments of images, sudden transition, and overlap of visual planes, which prompt viewers to interpret the painting in an intuitively way. Association is how meaning can be produced, rather than sequential, which means that the narratives will be experienced differently by the viewers. Such a practice makes painting a narrative field and not a narrative statement.

### **5.2. PERSONAL, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL, AND IDENTITY-BASED NARRATIVES**

Personal experience as a central source of narrative in the painting is the tendency of the present-day world. Memory, identity, trauma, and lived experience are used to create intimate and subjective visual narratives by artists. They show that these autobiographical stories are opposed to the conventional storytelling through the focus on the individual rather than a focus on a myth.

Some themes, which are explored through identity-based narration, are gender, race, migration, and cultural hybridity. Visual signs are usually referenced to local or intimate contexts, and the audience needs to respond in an empathetic manner and not an interpretive one. In this way, painting will be a channel of self-expression as well as social statement, a mix of individual story with general cultural communication.

### **5.3. CONCEPTUAL STORYTELLING AND VISUAL METAPHOR**

Thinking conceptually takes an important place in the modern visual storytelling. Most artists do not tell the stories rather offer visual connotations to indicate the concepts, feelings, or social realities. Objects, abstract forms and spatial layouts act as symbolic trigger instead of being descriptive.

Narrative meaning is created during an intellectual process and the viewers need to make conceptual interpretations into images in the art work. This approach makes the narration a shift, not description, but proposal, in which the painting does not provide answers, but raises questions. The metaphorical visual, therefore, becomes one of the main narration tools, which allow complicated stories to be reduced to small or abstract ones.

### **5.4. MIXED MEDIA, DIGITAL INTEGRATION, AND HYBRID NARRATIVES**

Mixed media and digital application have considerably increased these narrative possibilities of modern painting. Artists often involve paint with photography, text, digital images, collage or found objects. Such hybrid practices break the conventions of narrative storytelling and they create several layers of narratives in one piece.

Digital aesthetics also have impact on the visual storytelling by being repetitive, distorting, and montaging, representative of the disjointed visual culture of the modern world. Narrative uncertainty might be brought forth through text features (e.g. narrative) or by context (e.g. contextualization), and permanent and temporary contradict each other. Storytelling is multidimensional and is not limited to the area where the image is painted.

## **6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: TRADITIONAL VS. CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

Comparative analysis of the visual storytelling in traditional and modern painting shows little essential differences but also some latent similarities in the practice of storytelling. Whereas in traditional painting the emphasis has been

placed on the structured narration based on a common set of cultural systems, contemporary painting has utilized fragmentation, subjectivity and an openness to interpretation. The paper systematically draws comparisons between the two methods with respect to the major dimensions of narratives; this is done to bring out how the visual storytelling has evolved without losing the essence of communicating.

**Table 1**

<b>Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Visual Storytelling in Traditional and Contemporary Painting</b>		
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Traditional Painting</b>	<b>Contemporary Painting</b>
<b>Narrative Structure</b>	Follows linear or cyclical narrative structures with a clearly identifiable beginning, progression, and conclusion. Stories are often complete and unified within a single composition or across panels.	Employs non-linear, fragmented, or open-ended narrative structures. Stories are suggested rather than completed, allowing multiple narrative pathways.
<b>Story Progression</b>	Narrative progression is guided through spatial hierarchy, repeated figures, and sequential arrangement, enabling viewers to reconstruct the story with clarity.	Story progression is discontinuous and associative. Meaning develops through visual fragments, conceptual links, and viewer interpretation rather than sequence.
<b>Symbolism and Visual Codes</b>	Relies on established iconographic systems and culturally shared symbols that ensure consistent interpretation across audiences and generations.	Symbols are personalized, recontextualized, or deliberately ambiguous. Meaning is fluid and varies according to context and viewer experience.
<b>Artist's Role</b>	Artist functions as a visual narrator with authority over meaning, guiding the viewer through predetermined narrative cues.	Artist acts as a facilitator or provocateur, offering narrative fragments and conceptual prompts rather than fixed meanings.
<b>Viewer's Role</b>	Viewer primarily decodes and understands the intended narrative using familiar visual conventions. Interpretation is guided and relatively stable.	Viewer actively constructs narrative meaning, becoming a co-creator of the story through personal, cultural, and emotional engagement.
<b>Representation of Time</b>	Time is structured and intelligible, often compressed through continuous narration or sequential scenes within a single visual frame.	Time is subjective, psychological, or abstract. Chronology is frequently disrupted or dissolved in favor of experiential temporality.
<b>Spatial Organization</b>	Space is organized hierarchically and symmetrically to reinforce narrative order, clarity, and focal emphasis.	Space is fragmented, layered, or dislocated, reflecting conceptual depth and non-traditional narrative logic.
<b>Materiality and Medium</b>	Uses conventional materials and formats (murals, manuscripts, canvases) aligned with ritual, architectural, or commemorative functions.	Incorporates mixed media, digital elements, text, and unconventional surfaces, expanding storytelling beyond traditional painterly limits.
<b>Thematic Orientation</b>	Focuses on collective narratives such as mythology, religion, history, and moral allegory that reinforce shared cultural values.	Centers on personal, political, social, and identity-based narratives addressing contemporary realities and lived experience.
<b>Narrative Closure</b>	Narratives are largely resolved, offering moral, spiritual, or historical closure.	Narratives remain unresolved or intentionally ambiguous, encouraging reflection rather than conclusion.
<b>Continuity with Tradition</b>	Establishes foundational storytelling conventions and symbolic systems that shape visual narrative practices.	Reinterprets, critiques, or subverts traditional narratives, maintaining dialogue with the past while redefining meaning.

Comparing traditional and contemporary painting, it can be seen that there has been a change of organized culturally cohesive narrative of stories into fragmented, subjective and interactive methods of narrative telling. Classical painting is all about clarity, symbolism, and common meaning whereas contemporary painting is all about ambiguity, interpretation, and engagement of thought. Nevertheless, both methods are based on the basic desire by humans to express a sense of experience in visual form. The awareness of these differences and similarities intensifies our admiration of painting as a narrative medium that is dynamic with respect to the transformation of the cultural and artistic environment.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at discussing the practices associated with visual narratives in both traditional and modern painting, in the purpose of developing an understanding on how the process of a narrative has changed over the years and retained its central communicative nature. Based on a comparative and theoretical approach, the paper has

established that throughout its history; painting has always been employed as a very strong narrative tool, and it has the potential to express highly multifaceted stories, feelings, and cultural significances, without the need of verbal language. Nevertheless, the ways, in which these stories are created, conveyed and perceived, have been changing considerably throughout the centuries. Classical painting is typified by the order of narrative intelligibility, fixed symbolism and common visual language which determines meaning. In this context, storytelling is highly cooperative based on mythology, religion, history, as well as moral allegory. The artist has managed to restrict orchestrate narrative meaning through composition, iconography and temporal organization to guarantee continuity of meaning both among audience and across generations. The paintings are not only the objects of aesthetics but also the texts of culture, which keep the memory of the collective and social values. Visually, however, modern painting reinvents visual narrations through fragmentation, subjectivity, and interpretative openness. Narrative structures are non-linear and unresolved and represent the modern experience of daily life in the complex social, globalized, and digital era. Instead, symbolism is made individual and shaken, material practices are enlarged with hybrid and mixed media and the role of viewers is centralized in the construction of the story. Contemporary painting encourages discussion, consideration, and several interpretations, instead of communicating a set narrative. Comparative analysis has shown that the transformations occurring in the visual storytelling between the traditional and the contemporary are no longer a break but a rearranging. There are fundamental narrative drives, e.g., the adoption of symbolism, emotional expression, space structuring, which over time shift in terms of their form and functionality. Traditional narratives are often approached by the modern artist through reinterpretation and criticism and the persistence of visual narrative in art proves the flexibility and applicability of storytelling in art. Placing the tradition and modern in a single analytical perspective, the study can add to the better understanding of the painting as a changing narrative structure than a visual one.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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