



Jagdish Swaminathan's Visual Language: Realms Of Freedom And Imagination

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ABSTRACT

Jagdish Swaminathan is regarded as one of the finest visual artists from Indian visual art practice scenario. Along with his practice of painting, Swaminathan was also a poet and writer. One the major contributions in Swaminathan's artistic journey was his contributions towards the establishment of the Bharat Bhavan which is a multi-art complex in Bhopal, India, established in 1982. Swaminathan's visual language reflected realms of freedom and the imagination in neo-tantric art in visual arts practice of India. Swaminathan was prominently one of the twelve co-founders of one of the formed visual artist groups entitled 'Group 1890' from India. This research paper is based on an analysis of Swaminathan's representations of visual art practice in India, existing in the visual arts practices of the regions in India. The history of Indian visual arts has a prosperous existence in tantric forms. Tantra found its artistic impressions with the various symbols like the lingam and yoni in sculptures and scrolls of ancient India. According to Tantra, the individual being and collective, universal being are the same and one. Thus the visual language all that exists in the universe must also exist in the individual body. In the art practices of Swaminathan, reflections of neo-tantric forms has been identified with expression of realms of freedom and imagination. The research study gives a clear understanding and vision into the precise depiction through the evaluation of case studies. The study aims to develop a framework through focusing the Jagdish Swaminathan's art practice.

Key Words: Jagdish Swaminathan, visual language, realms of freedom, imagination.

INTRODUCTION

Swaminathan's early works include many robust paintings and drawings of figurative subjects. Over time, the artist evolved towards abstraction. Underlying Swaminathan's composition of art practices is a deep spiritual admiration that pursues to reveal truth through nature. In the late 1960s and 1970s, his artwork series "The Colour Geometry of

Space”, where the artist explored flat geometric planes of colour, Swaminathan created combining elements from nature in his conceptual landscapes. Implementation of the metaphorical quality of the surrealists while preserving the formal qualities of Indian miniature painting, the artist juxtaposed mountains, trees, rocks and animals against pure expanses of colour. The meditative stillness they induced became the artist’s obsession (Swaminathan, 1974).

EARLY LIFE ART PRACTICE OF JAGDISH SWAMINATHAN

Swaminathan was born in Simla, India. Regarding his education, he pursued from the Delhi Polytechnic; subsequently, he received a scholarship to study in the discipline graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw of Poland. In the year 1962, Swaminathan developed as one of the founding members of the Group 1890 and also wrote its manifesto (Swaminathan, 1974). By the late 1960s, he had grown recognition as a significant Indian painter and was the recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship in the year 1968. In accumulation to his several solo exhibitions, Swaminathan’s work was part in the Tokyo Biennale in the year 1965, and included in the first International Triennale India, in 1968. In the same year, the artist was selected as an international jury person for the São Paulo Biennale art event. Swaminathan left the world in 1994 (Swaminathan & Khanna, 1995).

JAGDISH SWAMINATHAN’S ART PRACTICE : COLLECTIVE ASSEMBLAGE OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS IN FOLK AND RELEVANT OTHER CULTURAL ELEMENTS

Jagdish Swaminathan believed that art belonged to the realms of freedom and the imagination—that real art is reality; it does not translate nor recreate reality, and it does not aspire to represent or narrate life. As the artist has written, “The face of art is somewhat like that of the sun. It does not communicate but gives” (Swaminathan & Śukla, 2008).

Swaminathan’s art practices reflected upon the collective assemblage of myths and symbols in folk and relevant other cultural elements. Through his art practice, Swaminathan transformed the context and relationships in his painting. In this way the artist represented a confluence of traditional and contemporary. The research study tries to find that because of Swaminathan’s sensibility; in his art practice, was a born of a motivation that coerced a continuum towards the development of Indian visual art practice.



Plate I : Jagdish Swaminathan, Untitled (Bird, Tree and Mountain) 1982, oil on canvas, 32 x 44 inches

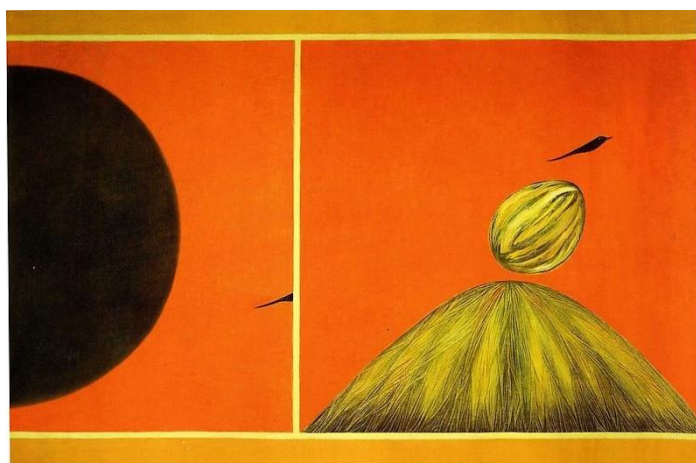


Plate II : Jagdish Swaminathan, Untitled (Mountain And Bird Series) ,Oil on canvas , 29 x 40 inches

CONCLUSION

The research study identified that Jagdish Swaminathan's artworks were painted with captivating simplicity. The artist's paintings explored the pictorial possibilities of his limited imagery which were emblematic of elements necessary for man's survival on earth interpretatively the numerous permutations and combinations of the imagery and bright colours. These kind of art practice by Swaminathan suggested the ascent of man's inner being leaving the gross and the sullied. The research study find that in Swaminathan's paintings of the nineties , the artist broke away from his earlier well ordered colour-geometry and brush paintings.

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