

The Lecture Contains:

-  Plato's Theory of Art
-  Three Qualities of Art and Design
-  Traditional Art and Aesthetics
-  Traditional Art

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Module 3 : Art & Aesthetics in Design

Lecture 7 : Plato's Theory of Art; Three Qualities of Art and Design; Traditional Art and Aesthetics; Traditional Art

Plato's Theory of Art

Plato's reference to 'art as imitation' raised many questions regarding the role of art and its nature of creativity. According to Plato, art imitates from nature. Artist paints trees, flower, rock, mountains, human beings, animals, etc. that exist in nature. According to Plato, artists merely copy them from nature that cannot be claimed creative work. Art is representative. It represents various forms that exist in nature. And representation is not real, it is illusion. For ages, philosophers and artists have been trying to examine the relationship between art, aesthetics and creativity.

Aesthetic has a wider meaning- philosophically and artistically. Indian Classical literature has studied **rasa** ('essence'), which denotes a necessary mental state and is the dominant emotional theme of a work of art. The primary feeling that is evoked in a person, who views, reads or hears such a work. Expression of a suffering human being is certainly not beautiful; however, it does express the aesthetic beauty (qualitatively). However, both the conception and the execution are 'beautiful' in an aesthetic sense. In a stage play when an actor/actress expresses the agony (**Karun rasa**) of a suffering human being it expresses the aesthetic beauty. In the Indian performing arts, a **rasa** is an emotion inspired in an audience by a performer. Hence, aesthetics has multifaceted expression that revolves around creative works of various forms.

Three Qualities of Art and Design

Ultimately one can judge three basic qualities that are present to varying degrees in every true work of art and design- **skill, originality, and aesthetic quality**. Out of these three elements **aesthetic** quality may be the most difficult to judge. Aesthetics is a relative experience. '**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder**'. Present day **originality** is the most sought-after in comparison to earlier, **aesthetics**. In order to appreciate aesthetics one has understand society, culture, tradition, believes, rituals and range of practices. Irrespective of modern or traditional art form, creativity develops its own vernacular. Vernacular that reflects the essence of the creative work in respect to its association. In the process skill and originality can be recognized much easily while aesthetic evaluation becomes quite critical.

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Traditional Art and Aesthetics

Every ancient traditional culture is enriched by its myths, symbolism and metaphors. The aesthetic beauty emerges out of such symbolism and metaphors. Hence, it is imperative to understand the meaning of symbolism in order to appreciate the beauty of the art and design. The term tradition means, 'handing down of beliefs and customs by word of mouth or by example without written instruction or an inherited pattern of thought or action' (Webster). Therefore, while it can create wonderful interwoven rich heritage of folklore and tales at the same time it may create large number of irrational and confusing arguments. Traditional art emerges out of such interwoven fabric of believers and thoughts with the help of myths, symbols, metaphors, iconography, etc. In many instances, the original concept of a practice could have shaped due to certain practical reasons. However, in the course of long practices the origin of the practice or believe is being completely forgotten or misinterpreted. The quality of ornamentation has always attracted human being is a well-recognized phenomenon. Worship of gods or goddesses is to recognize various human characteristics and natural phenomenon and represented in the form of god (human form).



Plate 2A Indra on Elephant
(Terra-cotta, Angkor Vat)



2B Indra,
Mathura



2C Indra, Nepal



2D Indra, Ellora

(Source: https://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&q=god+indra+sculpture&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bvm=bv.1354675689,d.bmk&bpcl=39650382&biw=1318&bih=600&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=W8_GUJS3BMTprQe11YCAAg ; Dec. 11, 2012)

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Sun God Indra (plate 2A) represents the power and various qualities of Sun. It is not *Indra* the human being is important; it is to recognize the importance of Sun. Indra represents the star Sun in human form. The strength of Sun is symbolically represented through the human form of Indra demonstrating the strength of Sun. Indra is symbolically associated with the *Iravat* or the Elephant. Interestingly you may follow that the same god Indra at Angkor Vat, Nepal and in India (plate 2A-2D) in different styles. However, various decorative motifs and symbols would remain same. Thus, such traditional believes and practices require correct interpretations and reasoning.



Plate 3A Parvati, Bronze
(10th - 12th C AD Chola Dynasty, Tanjore)



3B Tribhanga Gesture



3C Ardhanariswar,
Bronze

(Source: http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&sugexp=les%3B&gs_rn=0&gs_ri=hp&pq=tanjore+art&c p=13&gs_id=30b&xhr=t&q=tanjore+sculptures&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bpci=39650382&biw=1318&bih=600&um=1&ie=UTF8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=_IHBUIffNoWrrAfXtYGoAQ#um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&tbn=isch&sa=1&q=12th+C+AD+tanjore+metal+sculptures&oq=12th+C+AD+tanjore+metal+sculptures&gs_l=img.12...133043.138418.2.140835.10.10.0.0.0.0.205.1546.0j9j1.10.0...0.0...1c.1.3tGT pfN_nZ0&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&fp=c358a20ea5e83982&bpci=39650382&biw=1318&bih=600 ; Dec. 7, 2012)

(Read more: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tradition> ; December 12, 2012)

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‘All traditional arts are ‘conceptual art forms’.

What is conceptual art? – ***‘Conceptual art is the mental summery of visual perception.’***

Conceptualization of Parvati (plate 3A) is based on the observation and perception of the artist. It is full of metaphors and symbolism. It is a human form but not a real human being, an expression of Ideal Human Form. The composition is based on the traditional Tribhanga Gesture (mudra) (plate 3B) that became one of the popular rhythms of Indian Classical Dance. The elegance of female character is displayed through the soft and dynamic gesture. The observation of human characters synthesizing with the ideal concept of human being has given birth of gods & goddesses. The Chola Dynasty Bronze sculptures are excellent example of such aesthetic that brings out the true Indian aesthetic beauty with the help of balanced structural composition with decorative quality. Ardhanariswar Shiva (plate 3C) from Tanjore is an excellent work of art. The Tribhanga Gesture is applied in the sculptural composition to create rhythm that is not static yet not dynamic. Creating such wonderful part-taking dynamism has made Indian art rich, which brings out the aesthetic beauty of the work. It presents the late classical period symbolism and metaphors of Ardhanariswar through the image of Shiva in Tribhanga Gesture. The elegance of Shiva through ideal proportion and balanced decorative quality brings out the true spirit of aesthetics in Indian subcontinent.

One has to perceive (eye sees and brain perceive) in order to conceptualize a form. When we try to give a visual form, it could be drawn, painted, or sculpted directly by perceiving an object. However, in traditional art form, the expression of the form is based on the experience of perception. One conceptualizes the form by observing, meditating, and then expressing through various creative art forms. The forms may not confirm to the actual or real human being or the object. Because the visual expression of traditional form would have full of myths, metaphors, symbols, magic and iconographical (A visual representation of an object or scene or person produced on a surface) details. It is the synthesis of reality based on observation or perception with the desired expression of the character. In such forms, the abstract elements of metaphors and symbolism play very important role. Understanding those symbolic representations is the key to the aesthetic appreciation. Thus, the forms are created not realistically the way we see. The characters confirms to the spirit of the object may not represent the exact normal forms or expression. It is more of a representational form expressing the spirit of the object. The human form in most cases is embedded with various metaphors and abstract elements. The traditional forms are the ideal concept of human being. Therefore, in traditional art, forms may appear relatively easy to appreciate but without understanding the abstract elements of the metaphors or symbols, the forms are not understood fully.