

Use of Founds and Prefabricated Objects in Indian Contemporary Sculpture

Sanjay Kumar
Research Scholar

Department of Plastic Arts, Faculty of Visual Arts
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

Abstract:- Contemporary sculpture in India has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades, with artists increasingly turning to found and prefabricated objects as mediums for creative expression.

This research paper delves into the innovative and evolving practice of incorporating found and prefabricated objects in Indian contemporary sculpture. In recent decades, Indian sculptors have expanded the boundaries of traditional sculptural techniques by embracing unconventional materials and found objects, redefining the way sculpture is perceived and experienced. This paper examines the historical and cultural context, artistic motivations, and the impact of using found and prefabricated objects in Indian contemporary sculpture, shedding light on the transformative nature of this art form.

Keywords:- Indian Contemporary Art, Sculpture, Found Objects, Prefabricated Materials, Assemblage, Artistic Innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sculpture has a rich history in India, deeply rooted in traditional materials and techniques. However, the evolution of Indian contemporary sculpture has been marked by an increased experimentation with materials, including the incorporation of found and prefabricated objects. This transformation reflects not only a global shift in contemporary art practices but also a desire to engage with societal, environmental, and cultural changes.

Before defining the found object, I would like to tell the object, that it is of two types a man-made and second natural object. Human creates an object for its use and when the object is created for its use the utility of the object is most important to them. When it increases from utility to its appearance and beauty to form it, it begins to form its own emotion and mood and we find those Compositions as artwork. It was a matter of creation but sometimes we get a glimpse of our thoughts, feelings, and mood in the object.

And these objects are used directly in their art forms called "found objects in art".

Artists used to have their methods some even put that artwork directly such as Marcel Duchamp in "Fountain" 1917.



Fig. 1: Fountain (1917, replica 1964), Tate Marcel Duchamp
Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573>



Fig. 2: Bull's Head, 1942 Pablo Picasso
Source: [https://www.pablopicasso.org/bull-head.jsp#prettyPhoto\[image2\]/0/](https://www.pablopicasso.org/bull-head.jsp#prettyPhoto[image2]/0/)

Another Assembling some of the two objects to the third form, such as Picasso in "Bull Head" 1942.

In the 1940s Abanindranath Tagore used found objects like sticks and roots and made a form known as "kattam kuttam" he found in his sculptures towards the end of his life. In the early forms of Indian modern sculpture, we see the use of found objects. Another class of Indian contemporary sculptors has expressed their thoughts and emotions by making found

A. *Research Objective*

The objective of this research is to comprehensively investigate the utilization of found and prefabricated objects in the context of Indian contemporary sculpture. This study seeks to achieve the following specific goals:

- To trace the historical evolution of sculpture in India, from its traditional roots to the emergence of contemporary sculpture, with a focus on the adoption of found and prefabricated objects.
- To examine the characteristics and defining features of found and prefabricated objects as mediums of artistic expression in the realm of Indian contemporary sculpture.
- To analyze the works of pioneering artists who have played a significant role in popularizing and innovating the use of found and prefabricated objects in their sculptures. Which also includes some prominent artists Subodh Gupta, Sheela Gowda, Arun Kumar H G, and Sudarshan Shetty, to explore their contributions and artistic practices within this context.

By achieving these research objectives, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolution and impact of found and prefabricated objects in Indian contemporary sculpture.

B. *Methodology*

The research methodology for this study is designed to systematically investigate the use of found and prefabricated objects in the context of Indian contemporary sculpture. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, to gather, analyze, and interpret data effectively.

A qualitative content analysis will be performed on the collected data to identify common themes, artistic techniques, and the cultural and socio-economic influences behind the use of found and prefabricated objects in contemporary Indian sculpture. In-depth case studies of prominent artists, such as Subodh Gupta, Sheela Gowda, Arun Kumar H G, and Sudarshan Shetty, will be conducted. These studies will involve a detailed analysis of their works, artistic philosophies, and contributions to the field of contemporary Indian sculpture.

The research findings will be presented in a structured manner, with clear explanations and visual aids to enhance the understanding of the audience.

By employing this multi-faceted methodology, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the use of found and prefabricated objects in contemporary Indian sculpture.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To understand the current use of found and prefabricated objects in Indian contemporary sculpture, it is essential to examine the historical context. Ancient Indian sculpture primarily utilized stone, metal, and wood, often reflecting religious and mythological themes. The departure

from these traditional materials became apparent in the post-independence period, with artists like Vivan Sundaram and Mrinalini Mukherjee embracing modernism and experimenting with new materials.

The influence of modern and contemporary art movements on the use of found and prefabricated objects in Indian sculpture is a crucial aspect of this research. Modern and contemporary art movements have played a significant role in shaping the artistic landscape, and this influence is evident in the materials, concepts, and techniques employed by contemporary Indian sculptors.

III. DISCUSSING TECHNICAL CHALLENGES THAT ARTISTS ENCOUNTER WHEN WORKING WITH UNCONVENTIONAL MATERIALS

Working with unconventional materials in art can be both rewarding and challenging. Artists who choose to explore new mediums often face technical challenges that may not be present when working with traditional materials. Here are some of the technical challenges artists encounter when working with unconventional materials:

A. *Material Suitability*

The first and most fundamental challenge is determining whether the chosen unconventional material is suitable for the intended artistic expression. Not all materials can withstand the test of time or environmental conditions, and artists must assess the longevity and stability of their chosen medium.

B. *Combining Materials*

When artists incorporate multiple unconventional materials into a single artwork, they must ensure that these materials will interact harmoniously and not degrade one another over time.

C. *Sculptural and Structural Integrity*

Sculptors, in particular, may encounter challenges related to the structural integrity of their unconventional material sculptures. Ensuring that the artwork will not collapse or lose its form is a critical consideration.

D. *Finishing and Surface Treatment*

Artists must address how to finish and protect the surface of their artwork, especially when unconventional materials might not readily accept traditional art finishes like varnishes or sealants.

Overcoming these technical challenges often requires a combination of artistic innovation, research, and collaboration with experts in related fields. Artists who successfully work with unconventional materials can create unique and thought-provoking works that push the boundaries of traditional art.

IV. CONTEMPORARY SCULPTOR'S USE OF FOUND AND PREFABRICATED OBJECTS METHODS ARTISTIC APPROACH IN INDIA

Contemporary sculptors in India have been increasingly incorporating found and prefabricated objects into their artistic practices. This innovative approach allows them to explore new dimensions in sculpture, both in terms of materials and artistic concepts. Here are some common methods and artistic approaches employed by contemporary Indian sculptors in their use of found and prefabricated objects.

A. *Assemblage and Collage Techniques*

Artists often use found objects such as discarded tools, industrial materials, or everyday items to create intricate assemblages. These objects are combined and rearranged to form a new, often abstract, composition. This method of assemblage creates a dynamic interplay of materials, shapes, and textures.

B. *Ready-Made Art*

Artists may embrace the concept of ready-made art, popularized by artists like Marcel Duchamp. By presenting an everyday object in an art gallery or exhibition, artists challenge traditional notions of what constitutes art and provoke discussions on aesthetics and meaning.

C. *Narrative Sculpture*

Found and prefabricated objects are used to tell stories and convey narratives. Artists construct scenes or scenarios with these objects, inviting viewers to engage with the storyline.

D. *Combining Traditional and Contemporary Elements*

Certain artists blend traditional sculpting techniques with found and prefabricated objects, creating a juxtaposition of old and new. This approach highlights the evolving nature of Indian sculpture.

E. *Transformed Medium*

Transferring one medium to another medium of the found object is also a way of expression.

F. *Appropriation*

Appropriation in art and art history refers to the practice of artists using pre-existing objects or images in their art with little transformation of the original.



Fig. 3: Lobster Telephone, 1938 Salvador Dalí

Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dali-lobster-telephone-t03257>

V. PROMINENT INDIAN CONTEMPORARY SCULPTORS

This section explores specific case studies of contemporary Indian sculptors who have successfully incorporated found and prefabricated objects into their practice. Each case study delves into the artist's background, motivations, key works, and the impact of their contributions on the Indian contemporary art scene.

Subodh Gupta is a renowned Indian artist celebrated for his exceptional contributions to contemporary art, particularly in the context of found objects. His artistic journey is a testament to his ability to transform every day, ordinary items into profound works of art that resonate with viewers on a deep and often introspective level.

Gupta's work with found objects is a striking example of how he marries traditional Indian craftsmanship with modern sensibilities. He often utilizes discarded, everyday objects such as stainless steel kitchen utensils, vintage tiffin boxes, bicycles, and even cow dung to create thought-provoking sculptures and installations. Through these materials, he engages in a rich dialogue with Indian culture, history, and the rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape of the country.

One of his iconic works by Subodh Gupta is "This is not a Fountain," a colossal installation that features a seemingly cascading flow of shiny stainless steel vessels. These objects, once utilitarian, become a reflection of contemporary consumerism and the transformation of the everyday into the extraordinary.



Fig. 4: This is not a Fountain, Old aluminium utensils, water, painted brass taps, PVC pipes, motor, Dimensions variable

Subodh Gupta

Source: <https://naturemorte.com/artists/subodhgupta/selected-work/9957/>



Fig. 5: Three Cows, Bronze, Chrome, Variable dimensions
Subodh Gupta
Source:
<https://naturemorte.com/artists/subodhgupta/selectedwork/2398/>

Gupta's ability to breathe new life into found objects is not only a testament to his artistic innovation but also to his keen awareness of the socio-cultural dynamics in India. By incorporating these objects into his creations, he invites viewers to re-evaluate their relationship with everyday items and to contemplate the deeper cultural and historical contexts that inform his work.

Subodh Gupta's remarkable artistic journey in the context of found objects continues to challenge conventional notions of art, redefining the boundaries of contemporary sculpture and prompting viewers to see the world around them in a new, thought-provoking light. His work stands as a testament to the power of creativity and the potential of found objects to convey profound messages in the realm of contemporary Indian art.

“The objects i pick already have their own significance. I put them together to create new meanings.” – Subodh Gupta

Sudarshan Shetty is a highly esteemed Indian contemporary artist known for his innovative and thought-provoking sculptures that incorporate found and everyday objects. His artistic journey has left a profound mark on the landscape of Indian contemporary art, challenging traditional artistic norms and redefining the boundaries of sculpture. His work in the context of found objects is characterized by its uniqueness, depth, and the transformative power of ordinary materials. Shetty's artistic practice often revolves around the exploration of ordinary and discarded objects, which he reimagines, reconstructs, and presents in new and captivating ways. His sculptures, installations, and assemblages are a testament to his keen ability to find beauty and meaning in the mundane.

One of the key aspects of Shetty's work is the relationship between objects and memory. He often integrates objects from everyday life, imbuing them with emotional and narrative resonance. This evokes a sense of nostalgia and a profound connection with the viewer. His approach transcends mere aesthetic considerations and delves deep into the human psyche.



Fig. 6: Untitled, 2018 Porcelain and wood, 14 3/5 × 41 7/10 × 10 2/5 inch
Sudarshan Shetty
Source: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/sudarshan-shetty-untitled-56>



Fig. 7: Untitled (from the show "The Pieces Earth Took Away"), 2012 Clay, glass, steel vitrine, diasec, 23 4/5 × 36 × 2/5 inch
Sudarshan Shetty
Source: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/sudarshan-shetty-untitled-from-the-show-the-pieces-earth-took-away-2>

In his assemblages, Shetty combines seemingly unrelated objects to create intricate and thought-provoking narratives. His sculptures often have a surreal and dreamlike quality, blurring the lines between reality and imagination. This fusion of objects from different contexts challenges the viewer's perceptions and invites them to reinterpret their understanding of the world.

Sudarshan Shetty's use of found objects not only redefines the scope of contemporary sculpture but also underscores the importance of recognizing beauty and significance in the everyday. His work encourages viewers to see the world through a different lens, urging them to appreciate the hidden stories and emotions embedded in the simplest of objects.



Fig. 8: Untitled, 2016, Brass and wood, $7 \frac{9}{10} \times 13 \frac{4}{5} \times 3 \frac{1}{10}$ inch
Sudarshan Shetty
Source: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/sudarshan-shetty-untitled-15>

In summary, Sudarshan Shetty's contributions to Indian contemporary art through his use of found objects are profound and influential. His ability to infuse ordinary materials with rich meaning, his skill in narrative creation, and His work is a testament to the power of art to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Arun Kumar H G is a celebrated Indian artist known for his innovative and thought-provoking work in the realm of found objects in contemporary art. His artistic journey is marked by a deep exploration of found materials, transforming discarded, everyday objects into powerful pieces of art that challenge conventional perspectives on art and aesthetics.

Arun Kumar H G's artistic practice can be characterized by several key aspects:

- **Recontextualization of Found Objects:** Arun Kumar's work is centered around the recontextualization of found objects. He takes items often overlooked in their original state, such as discarded machinery parts, weathered wood, and rusted metal, and imbues them with new meaning. By placing these objects in an art context, he prompts viewers to reconsider their inherent value and significance.
- **Narrative and Conceptual Depth:** Each of Arun Kumar's artwork tells a unique story. He weaves rich narratives around the found objects, drawing from his own experiences, as well as broader sociocultural themes. These narratives invite viewers to engage on both intellectual and emotional levels, often raising questions about consumerism, waste, and environmental consciousness.
- **Sculpture and Installation:** Arun Kumar's preferred mediums encompass sculpture and installation art. He crafts intricate sculptures using found objects, assembling and manipulating them to create aesthetically pleasing and conceptually resonant pieces. His installations often invite viewers to step into immersive environments where found objects come together to create new and intriguing landscapes.



Fig. 9: Infringed III Upcycled wood from an industrial scrapyard, found object, wood glue, industrial floor paint, $50 \times 36 \times 30$ inches, 2022
Arun Kumar H G
Source: <https://www.galleriespace.com/artwork/infringed-iii/>



Fig. 10: Processor Fibreglass, Astroturf, aluminium, found objects, etc., $72 \times$ inches, 2006
Arun Kumar H G
Source: <https://www.galleriespace.com/artwork/processor/>

In summary, Arun Kumar H G is a renowned Indian artist whose work in the context of found objects challenges conventional notions of art, aesthetics, and environmental responsibility. His innovative use of found materials and the narratives he constructs around them inspire viewers to reflect on the profound stories hidden within the everyday objects that surround us.

Sheela Gowda is an artist living and working in Bangalore, India, who has made a significant impact in the realm of contemporary art with her innovative approach to using found objects. Initially, Gowda began her artistic journey as a painter, honing her skills and artistic sensibilities. However, it was during the 1990s, a transformative period in India marked by rapid economic and cultural development, that she shifted her focus towards three-dimensional art, incorporating found objects into her work.

Gowda's use of found objects in her art is a testament to her ability to encapsulate the essence of this period of rapid progress and change. She ingeniously repurposes discarded or everyday materials, such as industrial and domestic objects, to create thought-provoking sculptures and installations. Her work often serves as a commentary on the societal shifts, cultural complexities, and environmental concerns that emerged in the wake of India's economic development.



Fig. 11: A Blanket and the Sky tar drum sheets and blanket, 88 x 157 x 262 cm, 2004
Sheela Gowda

Source: N. Enguita and L. Aspesi, (4 April – 15 September 2019). Sheela Gowda Remains, Pirelli HangarBicocca. pp 31

As a renowned Indian artist, Sheela Gowda's work stands as a vivid representation of the evolving Indian art scene, where the use of found objects serves as a reflection of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of contemporary India. Her ability to fuse traditional artistic forms with innovative concepts and found materials has made her a celebrated figure in the global art community, showcasing the power of art to capture the spirit of an ever-changing society.

Now Gowda is known for producing large-scale installation art in which she transforms everyday materials. She has used and transformed common yet symbolic materials, including human hair, incense, cow dung and red kumkum powder. These materials are associated with everyday rituals in India. She also works with architectural and found materials including wood, metal and stone. [8].



Fig. 12: Behold, 2009 Installation shot at Tate Modern
Sheela Gowda

Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/sheela-gowda-18148/who-is-sheela-gowda#None.1>

'Behold' 2009, pictured here, is one of Gowda's largest installations to date. The artist used four thousand metres of rope hand-woven from human hair. Hanging entangled within this black, knotted mass are twenty steel car bumpers. The Arsenale, where the piece was first shown in the 53rd Venice Biennale, was used by the Venetian navy as a rope factory centuries ago. This industrial heritage is mirrored by the tradition of motorists in Bangalore tying woven hair to car bumpers as a talisman for their safety.

These artists have played a significant role in reshaping the contemporary sculpture scene in India by incorporating found and prefabricated objects into their creations, offering unique perspectives on culture, identity, and society through their innovative use of materials. [8].

VI. CONCLUSION

The use of found and prefabricated objects in Indian contemporary sculpture represents a dynamic and transformative approach to artistic expression. This evolving practice has challenged the boundaries of traditional sculpture, enabled artists to comment on critical societal issues, and expanded the horizons of artistic creation. By embracing a diverse range of materials, contemporary Indian sculptors have propelled their art form into the global art discourse, creating a more inclusive and multifaceted artistic landscape.

These artists have made significant contributions to the contemporary art scene in India and have expanded the possibilities of sculptural expression by incorporating found and prefabricated objects into their work. Their innovative approaches have garnered international attention and acclaim, showcasing the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of Indian contemporary sculpture.

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