

ARTISTIC MEDIA ARTIVISM: EXPLORING ARTISTIC MEDIA ACTIVISM IN SUDARSAN PATTNAIK'S SELECT SAND SCULPTURES

Sanghapal Uttam Mhaske Asst. Professor & Research Scholar Graphic Era Hill University
Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Department of Visual art Graphic Era Hill University

Dr. Mandakini Sharma Associate Professor Department of Visual Arts Graphic Era Hill University

Dr. Amarjeet Singh Assistant Professor Department of Applied Art Institute of Music and Fine Arts
University of Jammu

Himani Upreti Assistant Professor Department of Commerce Graphic Era (Deemed to be
University)

Abstract

The present Research paper is an attempt to trace the contours of artistic activism and to understand patterns of artistic expressions of media activism through the select five sand sculptures of renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik's sand sculpture namely 1. Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision, 2. Save Our Ocean, 3. #Covid19, 4. #Mask India Stay Alert, 5. Kerala Elephant Death.

An attempt has been made to understand how artistic artwork forms the shape of activism. The attributes of artistic media activism of Sudarsan Pattnaik's sand sculptures have been studied. The forms of sand sculpture, the subject treatment, and life span of the artwork, impact and effectiveness of the sand sculpture in making people aware about the happenings or the subject matter of sand sculpture have been studied in the present paper. Limited attempt is also being made to understand role of art in campaigns for change effects and relationships. The study will aim to explore the sand art of Sudarsan Pattnaik through the lenses of art activism and to identify effects and praxis of artistic media activism.

Keywords: - Media Activism, Sudarsan Pattnaik, Sand Sculpture, Artivism

I. Introduction –

Sudarsan Pattnaik is a Sand-Artist recognised for his artivism, he hails from Puri, Odisha, India. The five painting of the sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik have been chosen namely 1. Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision, 2. Save Our Ocean, 3. #Covid19, 4. #Mask India Stay Alert, 5. Kerala Elephant Death. Activism often perceived as systematic efforts to uphold, prevent, express, mediate or intervene in social, political, economic, or environmental reform or awareness with the aspiration to make changes in the attitude of society toward a perceived greater good. Activism may be performed on a day-to-day basis in a wide variety of ways, including through the creation of art (Artivism), computer hacking (Hacktivism), or simply in how one chooses to spend their money (Economic activism) (Wikimedia Foundation, 2018). Artist is a portmanteau word combining "art" and "activist". Artivism developed in recent years while the antiwar and anti-globalization protests emerged and proliferated. In most of the cases artivists attempt to push political agendas by the means of art, but the focus on raising social, environmental and technical awareness, has increased exponentially. (Stands4, 2018)

In recognition of unceasingly creating socially relevant seashore sand arts, he was honoured with the Padma-Shri award in year 2014. In a successful Guinness World Records attempt aimed at promoting world peace and raising awareness about the art, Sudarsan built the tallest sandcastle ever on the beach at Puri in February 2017 (Swatman, 2017).

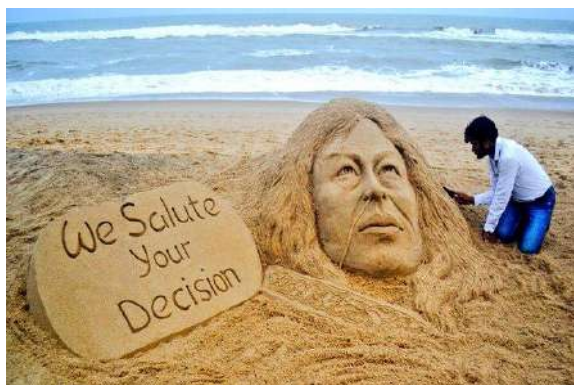


Image -1¹



Image -2²



Image -3³



Image -4⁴



Image -5⁵

He has represented India in 60 international sand sculpture championships and festivals all around the world and won 27 championship prizes for the country.

II. Literature Review

BORIS GROYS² in research article 'On Art Activism' argues that Art activists undertake deliberative efforts to either change the situation or serve as an agent of change, to make the world a better place while maintaining their status as an artist. NGOs or the civil societies that for different reasons cannot or will not fulfill their role for various reasons the Art activists intervene or react to the escalating social issues of the state so as to registered protest the author concludes (Groys, 2014).

GAVIN GRINDON³ critically analyzed in his research report 'The crisis in Copenhagen', how artists have acted as activists, and their contribution to the local and global protest movements in promoting responsiveness through art. He further argues that the attempt made by the Copenhagen cultural institutions through a number of visual and artistic projects to engage directly with the democratic process have paved the way for activism. Their activism explicitly affirmed their intention to engage – and build – a public sphere around the issue of climate change. Further In his analysis, he observes that the change in the art activism- how it has become very fashionable. Listed and commented on a wide range of art practices- from ideologically critical practices within institutional

^{1 2 3 4 5} Image source official twitter handle @sudarsansand of sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik

² BORIS GROYS (1947, East Berlin) is Professor of Aesthetics, Art History, and Media Theory at the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and Global Distinguished Professor at New York University.

³ GAVIN GRINDON is a research fellow in the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre at Kingston University, where he is writing a history of art and activism in the 20th century.

art forms, to community-orientated art projects, to playful street art, to extra-institutional practices of invisible theatre and tactical media within social movements in his research work. (Grindon, 2010)

Emily Wilcox⁴ In her thesis work titled ‘An Investigation of the Intersection between Art and Activism’, she explored social relevance of art as an effective means of activism. In the times of social and environmental crises the author substantiated that art-based activism have become more relevant. She did exclusive interviews with artists and activists from all over the world to put the certain creation of the artists in activism perspective. In achieving social and environmental justice, empathy is necessary, and it is the art-based approach stimulates empathy suggests the author as the most suited and a positive alternative. To effect real change, activists need to work through cultural means points the author. Problems with prevailing views on art prevented many artists from seeing themselves as agents of change and thus emphasis the need of some established views on art to change in order for artists to become more empowered. Author termed Art as a good tool for cultural production through which protest can be registered subtly. Globalization makes culture-based activism even more pertinent today observes the author. (Wilcox, 2009)

Artist as Activist

Most of the art forms of Sudarshan Patnaik are about current and burning social issues. His art depicts and intensify the deep forms of social evils, social and ethical degradation of today’s society through sand arts. He believes that these issues should be discussed in today’s world and putting it out, artistically will draw a lot of people’s attention. It is through art the people get connected with the real issues is what he believes in and made deliberate attempts to attract people’s attention through his sand art. At the tender age of seven he sculpted images on sand and has designed hundreds of sand art and consistently doing it since then. The sand art is temporary art, despite that due to the style, format, aesthetics and treatment it draws attention of lots of people. The Konark International Sand Art Festival of Akshay Tourism is held every year, where more than 500000 of people visit, in five days. Sand art is the practice of modeling sand into an artistic form, such as a sand brushing, sand sculpture, sand-painting, or sand bottles (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.,, 2018).

Art is a highly assorted range of human activities engaged in creating visual, auditory, or performed artifacts— artworks—that expresses the creators’ inventive, creative mind or technical skill, and are intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power (Lumen Candela, 2016). Recognizing the power of art that invokes emotions and create attachments Pattnaik consistently sculpted many social message orientated sand arts to make people aware and sensitize them towards particular contemporary social issues.

In an article posted on the Center for Artistic Activism by Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert, they suggested that Artistic Activism is a dynamic performance combining the creative power of the arts to move us emotionally with the strategic planning of activism necessary to bring about social change (Duncombe & Lambert, 2018). The deliberative and collaborative efforts undertaken to promote, impede, direct, or intervene in social, economic, environmental or political reform or initiatives with the desire to make change attitude of the people towards an issues or sensitize society toward a perceived greater good is what the Pattnaik’s sand sculptures activism attempts to achieve.

The Five Sand Sculptures

Art is nothing but a form of expression. Pattnaik chosen sand sculpturing to illustrate narratives and perspectives, which are open to interpretation, and getting people to connect to a social issue issues. The select five sand sculptures namely:-

⁴ Emily Wilcox Fulbright Research scholar USA

1. Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision,
2. Save Our Ocean,
3. #Maskup India
4. Stay Alert #Covid19,
5. Kerala Elephant Death.

All the works depict style and intention that the artist through his art work attempts to sensitize or wish to connect to the people for a social cause. And he is consistently into it on event to event or cause to cause basis. *Due to the communicative nature of art, artists are often also activists; devoting their artistic output to a cause near and dear to their hearts. From fighting for AIDS awareness, to protesting government censorship, artists have been at the forefront of activist movements throughout time. Due to the highly visible nature of their output, not to mention the powerful cogency of their communications, they are often influential voices within their sphere* (Campbell, 2014). Five such arts of Pattnaik attempt to communicate an issue or tries to be influential voice to make people realize there is an issue or information needed to be looked into or get engaged with.

Image 1 - Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision - #IromSharmila to end her 16 yrs old fast today; My SandArt at PuriBeach with message "We Salute your decision" is what he tweeted as a mark of salute to her 16 long years of fasting. The sculpture is an act of Act Of Appreciation and Act Of Acknowledgement to her long determination and new choosing new path in the form of active politics. The sculpture depicts it all her struggle her struggle against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) repealing, to determination to continue the fight through active politics.

Image 2 - Save Our Ocean - My SandArt on Stop Plastic Pollution, "Save our Ocean " Won the People's Choice Prize at USA in #Boston International SandArt Championship/ Festival 2019, says the posted tweet. The sculpture in itself a strong message how the plastic has become hazardous and poisonous threat to the ocean's life cycle. This sculpture is an Act of Educating/Awareness and Appeal to the global citizen that immediate action is call of the hour.

Image 3 - MaskUp India - My SandArt with message PLEASE WEAR MASK 😊 at Puri beach in Odisha. #MaskUpIndia #Unite2FightCorona says the tweets. Through this art work he tries to Educating/Awareness the people to acknowledge impending danger of covid pandemic and Appeal to act sensibly

Image 4 - # Stay Alert#Covid19 while unveiling the sand art Pattnaik tweets- Stay Alert! #COVID2019 #coronavirus "I stayed at work for you", "You stay at home for Us". My SandArt at Puri beach, India. #StayHome. #StaySafe. Through sculpture forward his Appreciation towards the doctors and all the covid fighters, Acknowledge their efforts and Appeal to the India citizen to be at home and stay sage.

Image 5 - Kerala Elephant Death. He tweets, "Mom! Couldn't see the light & humanity." I'm outraged by the unfortunate death of a pregnant elephant in Kerala. My #SandArt at #Puri beach. May such things never happen again? Is depiction of artistic emotionality and sensibility, it is through the sculpture he strongly Condemns the inhuman behaviour and appeal to be sensible human beings. The earth belongs to all, a message he tries to convey to the mass audience Ways of utilizing art for activism are many and varied. Art can move people emotions and attachment. The tabulation shows sculptures depicted 'activism forms'.

Table 1 – The Sand Art Activism Depiction

Sr No	Sand Art Title	Depiction of Activism Form
-------	----------------	----------------------------

1	Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act Of Appreciation ▪ Act Of Acknowledgement
2	Save Our Ocean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act Of Educating/Awareness ▪ Act Of Appeal
3	# MaskUp India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act Of Educating/Awareness ▪ Act Of Appeal ▪ Act Of Appeal
4	# Stay Alert Covid19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act Of Educating/Awareness ▪ Act Of Condemnation
5	Kerala Elephant Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act Of Condemnation ▪ Act Of Appeal

The forms of sand sculpture, the subject treatment, life span of the artwork, impact and effectiveness of the sand sculpture in making people aware, sensitize and appeal of act before too late about the happenings around the globe become the prime act of Pattnaik’s sand art sculptures.

Social Media Platforms

With the emergence of social media platforms, the reach of an artist have increased manifold, and provided global space for protest and discussions. Today, when we speak of social activism, it seems we are referring to a diluted version, one in which posting photographs in the name of a cause is sufficient action. With the accessibility of media and social networking outlets, our political consciences have never been more in tune, yet the ways in which we protest have been reduced to transient “likes” or “dislikes” on social media platform. (Daria, 2015). The superlative forms of protest on social media may be a cause of concern but the artis like Pattnaik manage to reach out to the better sense of the people through his activism consistatly.

Table 2 – The Sand art Media Converge

Sr No	Sand Art Name	Date of Post	Retweet	Likes	Media Coverage
1	Irom Shamrila We Salute Your Decision	Aug 9, 2016	296	541	National & Regional
2	Save Our Ocean	Jul 28, 2019	215	1912	National & Regional
3	#MaskUP India	Feb 22, 2021	29	419	National & Regional
4	Stay Alert #Covid19	Mar 19, 2020	66	383	National & Regional
5	Kerala Elephant Death	Jun 3, 2020	12.7k	77.1k	National & Regional

He uses social media platforms to propagate his message of change and making a world better place of all living begins. His sand art may having life in days but through social media and other digital platforms it remains and appeal to the better sense of human to be a part of change.

III. Conclusion

Art Is characterized in terms of mimesis (its representation of reality), expression, communication of emotion, or other qualities. Art has a powerful capacity to illustrate narratives and perspectives, that’s precisely the sand sculpture of Pattnaik does it educates, appeals, create awareness, acknowledges the efforts put in by institutions and individuals. The important attributes of the

Artivism of Sudarsan Pattnaik Sand Sculpture are mainly Act of Condemnation, Act of Appreciation, Act of Educating/Awareness, Act of Acknowledgement, and Act of Appeal.

A good activist does Condemn wrong act, he appreciate good deeds, educates/aware, acknowledges and appeal to the people to make changes in the attitude of society toward a perceived greater good.

References

- [1] Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.,. (2018). Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.,. Retrieved November 4, 2021, from Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.,: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sand_art_and_play
- [2] Campbell, T. (2014). Artland. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from Artland: <https://magazine.artland.com/the-art-of-a-movement-protest-art/>
- [3] Daria, D. (2015, February 16). Is a New Artistic Activism Emerging via Social Media and Forms of Public Protest? Retrieved November 16, 2021, from Artnet News: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/is-a-new-artistic-activism-emerging-via-social-media-and-forms-of-public-protest-250223>
- [4] Duncombe, S., & Lambert, S. (2018, April 9). The Center for Artistic Activism. Retrieved November 5, 2021, from The Center for Artistic Activism: <https://c4aa.org/2018/04/why-artistic-activism#:~:text=Artistic Activism is a dynamic,different work in the world.&text=Simply put%2C the goal of,action to create an Effect.>
- [5] Grindon, G. (2010). Art Monthly (333), 9-12.
- [6] Groys, B. (2014, june). On Art Activism. e-flux journal #56 .
- [7] Lumen Candela. (2016). Lumenlearning. Retrieved November 11, 2021, from Lumenlearning: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-arthistory/chapter/what-is-art/>
- [8] STANDS4. (2018). STANDS4. Retrieved November 5, 2021, from STANDS4: <https://www.definitions.net/definition/artivism>
- [9] Swatman, Rachel;. (2017, February 15). Guinness World Records. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from Guinness World Records: <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/indian-news/2017/2/indian-artist-breaks-world-record-after-building-48-foot-sandcastle-462671>
- [10] Wikimedia Foundation. (2019). Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., . Retrieved November 2, 2021, from Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., : <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activism>
- [11] Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. (2018). Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activism>
- [12] Wilcox, E. (2009). An Investigation of the Intersection between Art and Activism. An Investigation of the Intersection between Art and Activism , 1-91. Kentucky, USA: Western Kentucky University.