



Ideology and Medium: A Creative Journey

Sunil Babasaheb Ningule, Research Scholar, Department of Visual Arts,
Banasthali Vidyapith, Banasthali

Dr. Megha Atrey Purohit, Research Supervisor,
Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Banasthali Vidyapith, Banasthali

Abstract: Across sculpture, painting, video art, and installation art, Shakuntala Kulkarni has done much to become a distinctive artist in Indian contemporary art. She has conducted extensive research on difficult subjects such as tradition, urbanization and the role of women in society. This paper highlights the artistic evolution of one of India's leading contemporary artists, from her early painting attempts to her later installation art studies. It highlights how the artist's creative journey reflects her deep connection with her identity, cultural history and social narratives. Her career progresses from vibrant, subtle paintings to rigorous, immersive installation artworks that push boundaries both conceptually and visually. The paper concludes with a discussion of the broader context of Indian contemporary art, including how its transition from painting to installation art reflects significant changes in the global art scene.

Keyword: *Sculpture, painting and installation in modern art*

EARLY ART EDUCATION

Shakuntala Kulkarni began her art education in a traditional environment, where she developed her skills and gained a basic understanding of various art techniques. Born in Mumbai, Kulkarni's early interest in art was influenced by the rich cultural environment she was exposed to. She completed her undergraduate studies at the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, a prestigious institution known for its emphasis on traditional art forms. During her time at the Sir J.J. School of Art, Kulkarni developed strong technical abilities in drawing, painting, and sculpture.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI

Shakuntala Kulkarni's art is distinctive as it deals deeply with themes of tradition and the hardships of contemporary life. Her first works focused on the female form and used vibrant colors and symbolic images to explore the role of women in Indian society. She expanded her themes, moving from painting to installation art, reflecting her growing concern with urbanization, gender politics and the interaction between the body and space.

Institutional art has evolved significantly as a genre over the past few decades, allowing artists to find new ways to interact with space and audience. Within this evolution, Shakuntala Kulkarni has emerged as a prominent figure, known for creating immersive and thought-provoking environments with her distinctive approach. Her installations challenge conventional art, while also engaging with personal, cultural and environmental issues. This article comprehensively analyses Kulkarni's installation art and focuses on three of her major works, which demonstrate her innovative use of space and material. We aim to highlight the thematic depth and artistic significance of Kulkarni's contribution to contemporary art through these installations.

THEMATIC AND ARTISTIC ANALYSIS

Kulkarni's installations are characterized by their innovative use of space and materials, creating immersive environments that challenge the traditional boundaries of art. Her work often uses minimalist aesthetics to focus on the interplay between light, texture, and form. By integrating natural materials with modern techniques, Kulkarni bridges the gap between the tangible and the ephemeral, inviting viewers to experience art in a new and dynamic way.

3.1 Echoes of Silence

exemplifies Kulkarni's ability to evoke emotional and intellectual responses through simple yet profound means. The use of translucent fabrics and intricate embroidery creates a delicate, introspective environment that encourages the viewer to contemplate themes of memory and absence.

3.2 Resonant Landscapes

Demonstrates Kulkarni's skill in combining tactile and digital elements to create a rich, multi-sensory experience. The combination of natural materials with digital projections not only enhances the visual impact of the installation but also emphasizes the fluid and interconnected nature of the natural and built environments.

3.3 Caryatid - A Viewpoint

The static rhythm of the vertical pillars and fences helped create the experience of a fragmented space and controlled the movement and vision of the viewer. It also helped create a border zone for questioning, sometimes inquisitive gazes that could frame and penetrate the female body, thereby addressing issues such as fear and isolation experienced by women in a male-dominated society. The expression of physical space was explored at a different level. The viewer designed (defined) the entire physical and temporal space by moving between the pillars, thus transforming the role of the viewer into an actor.

EARLY EXHIBITIONS AND RECOGNITION

Following his formal education, Kulkarni began his professional journey as an artist. His early exhibitions showcased a variety of works that reflected his evolving style and thematic interests. These early shows played a significant role in establishing his presence in the art community and attracted the attention of critics and collectors. Kulkarni's ability to integrate traditional motifs with contemporary themes set him apart from his peers and marked the beginning of his artistic identity.

DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC STYLE

As Kulkarni's career progressed, she began experimenting with installation art, a departure from her earlier focus on traditional mediums. This shift allowed her to explore new ways of engaging with space and material, resulting in immersive and thought-provoking installations. Her works began to reflect complex themes such as memory, identity, and environmental concerns, demonstrating her innovative approach to contemporary art. This period of experimentation and evolution was significant in defining her artistic identity and establishing her reputation as a leading contemporary artist.

THE JOURNEY FROM PAINTING TO INSTALLATION ART

Kulkarni's shift from painting to installation art represents a change not only in the medium but also in artistic philosophy. This section will examine how his initial focus on the two-dimensional canvas gradually transformed into a more detailed and spatially elaborate form of expression. The reasons behind this shift will be explored, such as the limitations he may have felt in expressing certain socio-political issues through painting alone.

7.1 Painting

Shakuntala Kulkarni's early paintings reflect deep social and cultural contexts towards women. In her paintings, the blend of the rules of traditional society and the complexities of modern life is visible with the female figure. Her choice of colors, texture of figures and background elements highlight the issues faced by Indian women.

Shakuntala's work has evolved through many transformations over the decades. Beginning with painting, drawing and graphics, she moved into sculptural installations and sculptures in unconventional materials, working with traditional artisans. She has been associated with theatre and film, and furthering this interest, she has explored the mediums of video and photo-performance. Her recent notable works include multi-channel video performances and several cane sculptures, first seen in her exhibition at this gallery, titled 'Of Bodies, Amour and Cages'. She continues to work on an ongoing series of cane sculptures.

Shakuntala will undoubtedly continue to explore different mediums to express her evolving concerns. This exhibition of her paintings has given us a chance to focus on an essential element of the artist's creative processes. It underlines once again, if it needs to be underlined, the power and versatility of the oldest medium available to us - drawing.

TABLE 1
STRUCTURE OF ARTIST SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI PAINTING WORKS

Sr. No	Title	Period			Size	Year of artwork	Usable Materials
		Up to 25 years	From 25 to 50	51 to present			
1.	And when she roars the universe trembles			✓	4 feet x 6 feet	2007	Mixed medium on canvas
2.	Untitled		✓		76 x 57 cm	1988-89	Water colour medium on paper



Artist: Shakuntala Kulkarni

Title: And when she roars the universe trembles Year :2007

Medium: Mixed media on canvas

Estimated size: 4 feet x 6 feet

Image Rights: <https://www.gallerychemould.com/exhibitions/82-and-when-she-roared-the-universe-quaked-shakuntala-kulkarni/>

And when she roars the universe trembles

Shakuntala Kulkarni sees the woman's creative and constructive body in this painting as a site of both "otherness" and empowerment. She confronts the limitations of epic, "timeless" stories and their cultural representations, angrily breaking them or subverting them, especially about women's embodied identity, by adopting her unfamiliar body, terrifying paradoxes and a vocabulary of sculptural gestures.

Kulkarni strongly resists the fantasy of an "eternal" and "natural" order, which is uniformly arranged to maintain stability. She also rejects the reductionism of speaking from the position (all men are perpetrators, all women are victims), just as she deliberately avoids representing an "acceptable" female body. Hence, women who have aborted the fetus from their wombs, which can cause deep wounds to others, in Kulkarni's work; they scream and tremble; they are strangely (sometimes comically) "excessive" and are serious, disciplined, messianic warriors.



Artist: Shakuntala Kulkarni

Title: Untitled **Year :**1988-89

Medium: Watercolor on paper

Estimated size: 76 x 57 cm

Image Rights: <https://jnaf.org/artist/shakuntala-kulkarni/>

Untitled: This painting represents his transformative approach, conveying deep social and personal messages through the use of coolers. Kulkarni was obsessed with cooler, form and abstraction in the early years of her career, as most second-year artists are. In the mid-80s, her concerns shifted from the human plight to gender-specific body politics. Since then, Kulkarni has expanded her perspective to look at violations of the body in public and private spaces, in addition to offering glimpses of the lives of urban women.

Through coolers, he has depicted the inner sensitivity of a woman and her reaction to the outside world. The blend and spread of coolers in this painting have special significance, which reveals the unseen layers of a woman's soul.

TABLE 2
STRUCTURE OF ARTIST SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI'S PAINTING WORKS

Sr. No	Title	Period			Size	Year of artwork	Usable Materials
		Up to 25 years	From 25 to 50	51 to present			
1.	Head Gears			✓	Variable each	2012	Weaving threads and wooden stand

INSTALLATION ART

Shakuntala Kulkarni's installation art gave a new direction to her art journey. Through installation art, she established a direct dialogue with the audience. In this medium, she has presented deep and wide social issues through sculptures, videos, and performance arts.



Artist: Shakuntala Kulkarni

Title: Head Gears Year: 2012

Material: Thread weaving and wooden stand

Size: Variable each

Image Credit: <http://www.shakuntalakulkarni.com/bodies-armor-cages.html>

BODY, ARMOR AND CAGE 2012

The body of citizens, especially female citizens, faces pervasive threats as we live through an era of increasing terror and violence. No longer confined to declared battlefields and conflict zones, these forces have infiltrated both public and intimate spaces, civilian and domestic contexts. The bodily self can be humiliated, subjugated, imprisoned, or controlled by the religious order, dictatorial whim, or popular sentiment. It can be denied the right to mobility and expression. A body in need of protection has to resort to Armor: an outer skin that cannot be easily dented or pierced, an armored body can extend its capabilities through mailed fists, spiked helmets, radiation-proof bodysuits, or enhanced fight/flight reflexes. But the body pays the price of this protection with its freedom. The Armor becomes a cage, protected by an exoskeleton, yet trapped within it.

INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ART

More than Kulkarni's achievements, her impact on contemporary art is widespread. She has influenced other artists by making innovative use of space and materials and has contributed to the development of institutional art. Scholars have written articles and critical studies on her work, highlighting her important role in contemporary art discourse. Kulkarni is an important figure in the ongoing dialogue between cultural heritage and contemporary artistic expression because she can combine traditional and modern methods.

CONCLUSION

Shakuntala Kulkarni's journey from the beginning of her art education to her career as a leading artist reflects the depth of her vision and the social issues she raises. Her journey from painting to installation art marks a significant shift, where she established a deeper connection with the audience through space, form and interactive elements rather than being limited to the canvas alone. Her art, especially her installation art, holds an important place in the Indian art world. This research paper is an attempt to understand various aspects of her art journey and highlight her approach to art.

REFERENCES

- 1) Geeta Kapur, When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India, Tulika Books, 2000, page .185.
- 2) M. R. Joglekar, Nature of Painting, Publishing House, 2005, page. 112.
- 3) Aruna Dhere, Review of Culture and Arts, Sahitya Niketan, 2011, page. 78.
- 4) Anshul Avijit, Contemporary Indian Art: Perspectives, Marg Foundation, 2012, page. 65.
- 5) Vasant Nayak, Contemporary Art: A Study, Publisher Library, 2009, page. 145.
- 6) Jayant Lokhande, Pattern of Art, Kalasanskaar Prakashan, 2010, Page No. 99.
- 7) Deepak Ananth, Conversations in Contemporary Art, Penguin Books, 2015, page. 142. Ranjit Hoskote, The Art of
- 8) Mangala Godbole, New Direction of Art, Mumbai Kala Sangam, 2014, Page No.204.
- 9) Veena Tharpare, Artistic Trends, Rajhans Publications, 2012, Page No.153.
- 10) Nancy Adajania, The Thirteenth Place: Positionality as Critique in the Art of Navjot Altaf, Tulika Books, 2016, Page No. 210.
- 11) Yashodhara Dalmia, The Making of Modern Indian Art: The Progressives, Oxford University Press, 2001, Page No. 97.
- 12) Partha Mitter, Indian Art, Oxford History of Art, 2001, Page No. 255.