



# Painted Walls: An Exploration Of Street Art Politics In India

Arunima S<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Arunima009@Gmail.Com Research Scholar Department Of English Mar Ivanios College Trivandrum, 8281032675

**Citation:** Arunima S (2024), Painted Walls: An Exploration Of Street Art Politics In India *Educational Administration: Theory And Practice*, 30(2), 844-845  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i2.2423

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Street art is not a novel phenomenon to the Indian society, the history of Indian street art can be traced back to the Ajanta Ellora cave carvings ,or tribal paintings on the walls of the communities . The practice of making marks or painting some designs started in very early ages itself . But the modern street art practices gained momentum during the 1970's and it still in vogue . Communication stands as the primary objective of street art ,and obviously it started as a communication tool from time immemorial. The paper tries to explore the works of a few Indian street artists and their works to understand the present street art scene in India.. The artists try to address the audience through their works and projects displayed in the urban streets of India.

**Keywords:** Street Art, politics , visual communication, urban rejuvenation.

Street art turned as a powerful medium for reconstructing the urban spaces of India. Street art movement goes far beyond being part of developmental and beautification processes, it imparts new horizons to cultural expression, preservation of history and social commentary. Cultural narratives take a new shape in the form of street art in Indian scene. The rich, diverse culture and tradition get vibrant colour through the new medium. The neglected city spaces became more colorful and thought provoking. The narrative technique of street art has a lot to do with urban spaces and the neighborhood.

Cities and spaces crowded with sign boards, paintings, posters, and advertisements are not a rare or unusual phenomenon. Works of art appearing in public spaces became a practice dating back to the advent of human civilization. Scribbles and scriptures were found on the cave neighborhoods of the ancient human beings. Later pictures, representing natural objects, complete and incomplete, started to appear in the neighborhood. Even before the fruitful development of modern languages, the tendency to picturize objects and ideas started to keep the human life more live and engaged. Later on, there rose the tendency to investigate the pictures and scribbles made by unknown human intelligentsia of the past, sometimes of past's past, began to be modern man's panorama for a quest for what life was in the ages past. The nature, ways and life of people is easily reflected in the physical in which they makes their living possible. Hence the importance of the pictures, posters, graffiti, and the all-inclusive term for all such objects appear in the public space – street art. The life in real gets reflected, the politics, the society, the voices of the voiceless and marginalized find space in such cultural markers and it is what Leila Haghghat argues , “ negotiation of hegemony takes place not only in the realms of politics and the economy, but also in the realm of civil society. Culture, education and art play a critical role in the domain of civil society, shaping common sense” ( Leila Haghghat,76) .

Art in the public spaces includes pictures ,paintings, sculptures and whatever piece of art that is located in the streets or public spaces . Any work of art that is located in a particular geographical location that is accessible to the general public is assumed to be the public's .Works of art appearing in the public spaces could be tagged as street art in general, as it forms part of the street at least for a temporary period .Being in the public places ,especially in streets, this form of art has the capability to evoke various emotions in the receivers .It tries to function as an opinion maker, awareness creator, also sliding through different political functions in the society. Sometimes the pictures and scribbles on the walls of the street mediates the voice of the voiceless, who are there at the peripheral level.

Street art, for Indian cities today have become a fashion of the day. Street art India festival, St+Bombay,

Hornbill, Kochi Musiris Biennale are festivals conducted in India can bring about a positive change in the acceptance of the art form in the country. Leena Kejriwal, Jheel Goradia and Jas Charan Jiva are a few among the eminent painters or artists who work in the streets, painting on walls about current socio-political scene. The artists who are named above are among the few contemporary Indian female artists who try to restructure the Indian cityscapes through their thought provoking art work projects.

Not only literature, arts including paintings and pictures also function as equal media through which life gets perfect reflection and representation. As is the case with representation of reality, arts and literature can also reconfigure the structural patterns prevalent in the society. It could make a possibly perfect correction mechanism work through the paintings or street art projects in general.

Leena Kejriwal, the illustration artist and photographer has primary focus on the structures of the society. Most of her photographic installation works are found in and around Kolkata, Delhi, Tehran, Berlin, and Weimar. She works with numerous NGOs who try to keep their focus primarily on issues of human trafficking and prostitution of young girls. MISSING project of Leena Kejriwal addresses women trafficking prevailing in India through art and activism. Man missing is given utmost importance, the project titled 'MISSING' tries to create awareness about the missing of girl children, and the worst and meanest thing associated with most of the women missing cases is women trafficking. Large cutouts of girls who are missing appeared in black colour in the streets.

Jheel Goradia, the Bombay based street artist tried incorporating the possibilities of digital media with street art. Jheel Goradia is basically a multimedia designer by profession. Jheel Goradia is the name associated with the famous "Breaking the Silence" project. The aim of project is to inspire and emancipate the female community of Indian society. The innovative project uses popular Bollywood stereotypes to talk about the prevailing stereotype projection of women image in Bollywood films. The pictures of women in Hindi films are pasted on the streets for projecting the women stereotyping and gender injustice that rules not only the films, also the entire society that sees itself as a very liberating and free space. The images of women are accompanied by hitting dialogues that turn upside down the sexism projected in the films. Jheel Goradia strongly influences women and children to raise their voice against the injustices they face in the society in which they live in. Most of the Bollywood women characters she pasted in the streets are as secondary characters in the films. Through the project titled 'Breaking the Silence' she points her fingers against issues like rape, prostitution, LGBT rights and gender equality. She makes a statement against the social injustices and tried to make use of the streets and public spaces in revealing the structures of power and ideology that truly want to suppress the voice of women and the marginalized groups.

Jas Charanjiva, another notable figure in the contemporary Indian Street art scene made her presence in the Art Conspiracy festival that brought about the talented street artists in and around Bandra. Jas Charanjiva is famous for her work titled as 'The Pink Lady' or otherwise known as the 'Don't Mess with Me' project. She created this work in the aftermath of the 2012 Delhi rape. She stands for everyone who demanded social change. She tried to represent the victim and the citizens who do not want such an atrocity to happen again in the society. As in the case of most of the street artists, Jas Charanjiva too laments at the cause of a social evil named rape, and tries to bring about a change in the society through creating an awareness through the media of street art.

Street artists colour the city spaces to mirror the society, they try to make the inhabitants aware of the social realities of the neighborhood, urge to resist the power structures that operates through. Colourful and beautiful paintings or installations created as part of urban planning and city beautification processes could be seen as narratives of the rich and beautiful heritage of India, and at the same time those happy pictures demand that this happiness in the social lives of the people of the neighborhood. Things as they are and, another various practices that are not to be there, and the huge lot which are to be altered get representation in the streets through street art seeking the reconfiguration of the existing society scapes.

## Works Cited

1. Bhasin, Aparajitha. *The Evolution of Street Art and Graffiti in India*. DOI:10.25765/sauc.v4i2.149
2. Campos, Cristian. *Street Art*. Loft, 2015.
3. Deutshe, Rosalyn. *Evictions. Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996.
4. Haghghat, Leila. *Hegemonic Struggles in the City: Artist-Run Spaces and Community Art in the Anti-Gentrification Movement*. European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes. vol 3, no.1. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2612-0496/10321>
5. Lacy, Suzanne. *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Bay Press, 1996.
6. Waclawek, Anna. *Graffiti and Street Art*. Thames and Hudson, 2011.